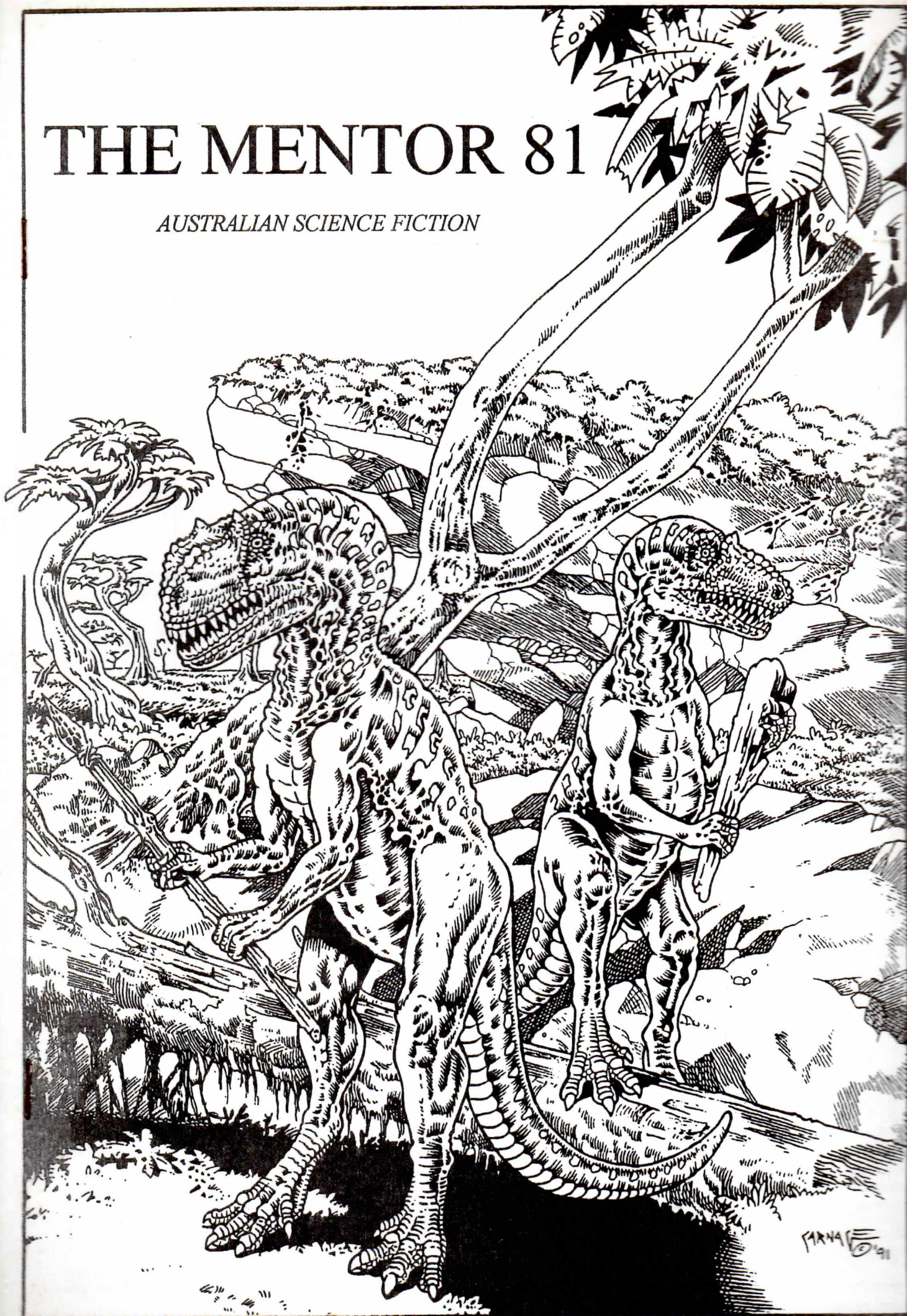


THE MENTOR 81

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION



THE MENTOR

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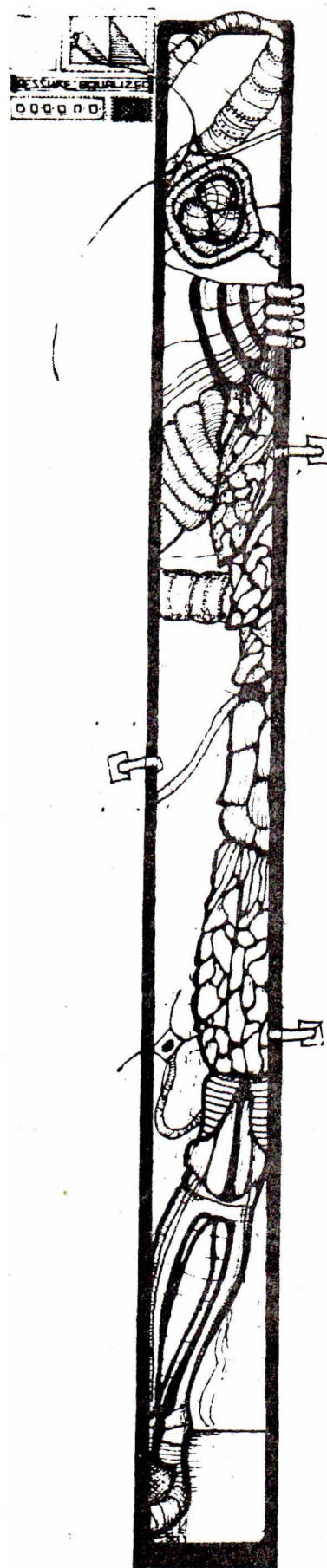
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Contributions, if over 5 pages, preferred to be on an IBM 51/4" or 31/2" disc (DD or HD) in both ASCII *and* your word processor file or typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address) and include an SSAE anyway, for my comments. Contributions are not paid; however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issues containing comments on their contribution.

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THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

One of the things that people in Australia are used to is the plethora of Educational systems that have been input, tried out, then given over to a new system, over the last thirty years. In the 1950s and early sixties the system stayed basically the same. The old subjects: English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Social Studies, Music and Home Economics were taught to the majority of the students. These were meant to get those students ready for life after school through basically a system of learning by rote. It worked in most cases. Whether the life after school used these skills is another thing.

Those were the days of blind obedience by the mass of citizens to the dictates of politicians and belief that the government knew best. The later sixties saw that belief changing with the support of ill-advised wars and changing social standards. There was another swing in moral attitudes such as that which happened in the twenties, with material wealth accumulating and access to more money which enabled the youth of the day to buy personal transport and get away from their policing elders. Drive-in movies flourished. Youthful rebellion flourished. Over time this was tolerated, rather than put down violently, because of the accumulating of leisure time and wealth.

The emerging 80s saw education systems changing to try to keep up with the liberation of the times - the de-segregation of the sexes, the abundance of contraceptives, the idea that punishment was not to be automatic and that the young should be allowed their "freedom". The 90's saw the beginning of the backlash of monetary freedom with the recession tightening cash and business taking their pick of school leavers. Pressure on government changed the syllabus again and school courses changed their aim to provide skills that were more appropriate to the student's later work life. Of what use was physics and chemistry formulae to a clerk, salesperson, bookseller, or businessman? There had been a theory that the school curriculum was not so much to provide "fuel" for the student's coming life, but to provide a mechanism of how to learn - that this didn't work was obvious in the failure rate at universities. In high school one was forced to study by a teacher who came around and checked that the student was paying attention - in university the same student was lectured to, and if they didn't take notes, read them up and study, then they failed. A totally different system of learning.

In Australia with school curriculum set by the State and the majority of the schools following State set subjects

and exams policed by the State governments, most students had the same background in basic subjects. With the widening of subject bases, with literature and soft sciences being admitted, these had branched away into areas that the business community had thought to be a waste of time. Especially since many of these subjects were taken by the newly "liberated" female students. Taking subjects that would not do them much good in later work-life in the work place. Subjects that could be seen as fillers and good for "quality of life", but not much good for *living* that life in day to day work relationships.

At present the recession may be at last on the way out. With the CPI at about 2.2%, with any luck the economy will pick up and jobs start opening up again. The 21st Century is nearly on us - only seven years to go. Back in the 60's a book called FUTURE SHOCK said that change is with us and change will be faster and faster. Technology has certainly changed, as everyone knows. However, people and their attitudes still are on the old merry-go-round. Their attitudes are still governed by the Press, either by newspapers, magazines, TV and radio and by religious and political groups. This can be seen even in fanzines and their topics and in their letter columns. The changing power of technology is shown in computer bulletin boards and the writing therein - of which there have been comments by readers that these, just because they are "real time", are not as well thought-out as replies in printed letter columns in fanzines. This is, of course, a good example of the speed of change and modern late 20th Century life.

It will be interesting to see what the future brings in the way of school curriculum. Will it continue to reflect what is seen to be the student's life at their work-stations? Will they have a basic education in high school and do their "quality of life" studies at Technical Collages and High School night classes as it happening in Australia at the moment? Presently, in many government departments, along with courses in affirmative action for the (as seen by politicians) left-behind-women in the work-place are courses in management and self-development. In departments, courses are being left to the individual, rather than forcing them to take them. This is probably a result of the onflow from the school system, where it didn't work.

One thing we can be sure of, though. Times they are a changing, and this change will be faster and faster for everyone. Will more and more people fail to keep up and fill our Institutions because of it? - Ron.

PANDORA'S BOX

by Andrew Sullivan

12th August, 1995

I had some news today from Gerry up in the Kimberleys. It seems one of the mining companies up there ran into a vein of diamond that predated the De Beers' site in Johannesburg by more than five million years. Gerry wanted a sample to test before they dynamited the region and destroyed any evidence of early Antamatite fossil deposition and so they sent him down one of the test shafts with one of the drilling crew. They found (in Gerry's words) the biggest fucking lode of diamonds in the world. The rest of Gerry's letter was pretty well lost in dirt, dust, scribble and beer stains (I gathered he was having a pretty happy time of it with the rest of the drilling crew while he was writing the letter) but I did manage to read one passage where he mentions an artefact found buried in between the slices of diamond lattice structure. I tried to ring him but had no luck in getting through. He was probably yucking it up with the local yokels.

21st August, 1995

That bastard Gerry Mayers finally arrived back in Adelaide today. The sonofabitch was blacker than the virgin night sky; he only spent three weeks up in the Kimberleys yet he gets a tan worthy of five years in the West Indies. He tried to convince me that he spent most of his time jumping from one miner's wife's bed to the next but I think the horny bastard probably spent most of his time just dreaming about it down one of those deep holes they dig up there.

Despite his more obvious character flaws, Gerry did manage to bring home that slice of diamond lattice, valued (so he says) around fourteen million dollars. Hard to believe but since Adelaide Uni has paid for insurance and transportation of the piece from up North and, since it's going to be staying here in Geology Sciences for a while, we might as well put it to some good use. I spoke to Dr. Evans and he agreed Gerry and I could run some initial NDI tests on it with the Philp's laser resonance unit. Do that tomorrow.

1st September, 1995

Gerry and I finally made a break-through this evening. It seems the artefact (being called Garf here at A.

Uni. From Artefact then ART GARFunkel then just GARF. Don't worry, I didn't think it was funny either but the name has stuck now.) exists as a atom-wide sheet laid between two sheets of diamond crystal lattice. We couldn't figure out why it was observable with X-ray spectroscopy from an oblique angle and not from an acute angle but then it hit us: The atom (not known for sure but something big, in the range of 90 to 110 atomic weight) is absorbing the X-ray radiation if and only if the incident angle is less than Brewster's angle to the sheet and so was not giving us any return scattering on the film. But when the incident angle was increased we saw the deflected X-rays quite clearly. What's got us worried now is what has happened to all the energy that has been absorbed? We just don't know. There has been no re-emitting of the energy, no reflection of the energy, it did not pass through, it's like all that power has just been swallowed by some black hole. It's got us absolutely stumped. So tired I can't even see to write. Back to work tomorrow morning. Janine doesn't like it when I go into work on Saturdays but this one has me by the short and curlies.

22nd September, 1995

Something absolutely wonderful happened tonight. I was working back late as usual. Gerry had gone home around nine but I wanted to stay back and write up some sort of progress report for Evans and the Campus Creeps who are getting on our backs. (There has been some sort of hue and cry from the mining company that want their piece of crystal back.) Anyway, I was sitting at the computer terminal, typing away, when I suddenly realised where all the electro-magnetic radiation was going.

I must admit this did not come to me from the sudden understanding of the physics behind the thing, or some sudden insightful leap of scientific reasoning into the atomic structure of Garf. No, none of that, although I wish it were. No, what made me realise what was happening was that the bloody thing started glowing, fluorescing. In molecule wide bands across the plate. The atoms, whatever they were (I have serious doubts that they could be found anywhere else on earth), were giving off a faint trace of light, blue light that shone bright and steady. Each line of light

ran across another and another until the whole thing looked like a child's drawing of the Sydney Metropolitan Rail network. It was truly amazing! Even as I watched the lines changed, shape, formation and pattern. It was an amazing spectacle indeed and I was sorry Gerry wasn't there to see it, if only to corroborate my story. As soon as I thought of that I raced for the video camera and videoed the whole shebang. Two and a half hours worth! No pattern was the same, and each seemed to be linked to the preceding one. I was stunned at the sheer brilliance of the light and patterns.

When the fluorescing ceased I realised what had been happening with our X-ray spectroscopy experiments. The atom, whatever the hell it was, was absorbing the incident X rays below Brewster's angle and it was somehow storing the energy in whatever energy levels it has. Why it didn't simply fluoresce in the instant it was struck has got me stumped, maybe Gerry can answer that, he's more of a physicist than I. But for whatever reason it began fluorescing almost two weeks after we stopped bombarding it with low energy X-rays, and ceased fluorescing almost three hours after that. Weird but wonderful.

23rd November, 1995

I think I have finally nussed out the main problem with the shifting light patterns generated by Garf. The patterns *do* repeat but only after five hundred frames. I was beginning to worry that I had missed something vitally important in the first half hour that went unvideoed, especially when Garf would not fluoresce again no matter how much we hit it with EM radiation, but now that the pattern recognition algorithms are working properly (after four fruitless weeks of fiddling with the program) they confirm Gerry's initial feelings that the patterns repeated.

I feel certain (and I admit this to no-one) that the patterns are part of some sort of message. I am not saying it's a message from some intelligence other than human but the way the patterns interact with each other and their repetitive nature indicate to me that the phenomena of the fluorescing bands is not a coincidence. Gerry believes the patterns look more like blue-prints for some sort of printed circuit board but I think that's just his Electronic Engineering degree coming out in him. If he had been a gynaecologist he'd probably see clitorii.

If it is a message of some sort (and I'm not saying it is) it makes you wonder where it could have come from and why it's here. Even if it is a blue-print for some sort of electronic gismo, why the hell was it buried four thousand feet below a mountain range in the north-west of Australia? {Why indeed?}

18th February, 1996

Gerry is convinced that the message Garf gave us is a blue print design for some sort of vehicle. He hasn't mentioned it to me but I suspect he believes it is a vehicle capable of interstellar flight. Like many of my colleagues I have immense trouble believing that but he is not daunted. Gerry has arranged a collaborative grant with the Departments of Applied Physics and Electronic Engineering and our Department of Earth Sciences to construct his interpretation of Garf's garbled message. Good luck to him, I suppose. He's already got a fourteen thousand dollar tenure

from Queensland Uni to investigate the Kimberley site for more Garfs although I don't believe he'll find any.

My own work in the Geology Sciences school has suffered a little over the past six months due to this fucking Garf thing. Okay, a lot. I couldn't really give a rat's arse what happens to it or Gerry now but...but my mind keeps being dragged back to that hasty video I made of Garf's light show. I still believe there is a message in there somewhere, a message other than Gerry's wildly imaginative "Grand Design" theories. I can't figure out what it is but I dream at night of millions of blue lines crisscrossing like some wonderful Pink Floyd light show and slowly, ever so slowly, forming words. Words that are trying to tell me something, something really important, but I just can't read them. Sometimes I think I've got it and then it will go, blown away like hash smoke in the wind. Janine gets upset now whenever I mention Garf. Sometimes I think she's jealous of Garf, but that's stupid. Isn't it?

2nd July, 1996

I've almost worked it out. I have. It's almost there. Just another couple of weeks. That's all I need and I'll have broken the code. It's all so simple, once I figured out that the length of time that the blue line stays alight is an indication of the tone of the word of which it's a part. Simple! The lines intersecting with angles less than 90 degrees are participles of the fourth order to the integral of the entire sentence. Once you then take the fourth order differential with a zero solution and substitute in the length of the line and then multiply by the number of seconds that the line stays lit then you can work out where in the sentence that the word will be. So fucking simple! Why can't anyone else follow it??? Why don't they believe me? It's right in front of their fucking noses but no-one will listen. They tell me that I'm just jealous of Gerry's success and that I'm making it all up. They all listen to Gerry I Know The Fucking Answer Mayers. They give *him* lots of money to waste on building toys that spring from his own imagination and not from his so called research into Garf. They give *him* plaudits and prizes and medals and publish *his* papers in every fucking journal under the sun but they won't listen to me. Me! I do all the fucking work, I worked out where the so called designs were in Garf, I was the one that made the video of the one and only time that Garf transmitted while Gerry I'll Be Your Friend While Everybody Else Thinks Your Wacko Mayers was lollygagging around and spending valuable work time at home! I was the one that realised that the pretty light show was in actual fact a message from some distant being. Okay, so I don't know what the message is yet, but I will. Soon. If they gave me money to do it I'd find out that little bit sooner, wouldn't I? But no, all they want to do is get their picture taken with Gerry I'm So Fucking Good Mayers! It's a fucking scientific joke! It'll make Ponds' and Fleischman's Cold Fusion look like a kindergarten prank when it finally hits the fan. You just watch. I'll laugh so fucking hard they'll have to take me away in a straight jacket!!!! You bet your sweet arse they will.

18th October, 1996

Janine packed her bags and left me yesterday. I loved her but she was becoming just too unhinged for me to

take seriously. She kept claiming that I was the one becoming unstable and called me a crazy bastard and all sorts of other names but I wasn't fooled. She's fucking Gerry Mayers, I know it. Those two are up to something not quite kosher. I can sometimes hear them at night, across the miles of still air that separate us, the bed springs bouncy up and down so hard I'm sure they're going to bounce right through the roof. She tells me I'm a paranoid schizophrenic but that's bullshit and she knows it. She and Gerry have been planning to put me away for years and I was just too blind to see it. But I see it now. Oh boy, do I. All it took was for me to realise what a complete arsehole Gerry I'm Your Friend And I Bonk Your Wife Mayers really was, to see what colour his skin really was after he stabbed me in the back with the Garf message I discovered all by myself. You really don't know who your friends are until they get the chance to steal your work and rub your face in it.

But it's behind me now. Now I can concentrate all my attention on decoding the *real* message from Garf. I'm very close. I've filled sixty-seven notepads with my decoding and I'm very, very near the edge.

14th November, 1996

Hah! Mayers thinks he's got this year's Nobel Prize for Physics sown up after his little pre-publicity demo of his new machine. Hah! Bullshit is more like it. Fucking turkey thought it was a space ship he was building. What a joke! For three-quarters of a year he has thirty-six people working full time trying to build his "scientific" interpretations of Garf's last laugh but when they finally finish, what have they got? A toy fucking robot, that's what. Fucking uproarious if you ask me. He had the Dean from A. Uni, the Dean from Q. Uni and about twenty senior scientists from around the world, oh, and of course he was kind enough to offer *me* an invitation, wasn't he? Of course he was. You should have seen his face drop when I told him I'd be overjoyed to come and watch his creation's unveiling, that the doctors would agree to let me out for an afternoon. Stuck that right up the bastard, didn't I? You bet your sweet arse I did.

He started off by giving us all a twenty minute lecture on how Garf came to be, how he managed through sheer scientific brilliance (hah!) to interpret the coded signals as actual design plans for a machine, and how, after nine months of intense research and application he was proud to present Garf II.

What a wanker! Garf II, my balls! I had to hold on to my sides to stop laughing when he pulled back the nice little curtain he had set up and revealed, for all the world to see, a little machine about the size of a remote control toy car. Hah! Forty-five thousand dollars had gone to make something I could have bought at Dick Smith's for eighty bucks. I expected to hear snorts of laughter come from my peers but you know what? They loved it! They really did. The fucking wankers had bought his joke lock, stock and barrel. I didn't know whether I wanted to laugh or cry. They milled around his toy like it was a holy fucking relic or something. To me it looked more like a toy ant. It had six legs, thorax, head and abdomen, and the biggest set of mandibles you've every fucking seen. I took one look at that thing and I didn't like it at all. No way. But those boffins they just about *creamed* themselves over it.

And Mayers, he was just about ready to lick it up if they *did* cream. He was fawning and sucking up and looking as though he had just beat the Cheshire Cat in a smiling competition. Fucking arsehole!

And then he did it. He told us all of how the first part of the designs he had recognised was the Oh-En-Oh-Double-Ef switch. Just like a fucking freshman. He pointed it out to all of us and then, with a grand sweep of his hand, turned it on.

I almost whooped with joy when nothing happened. There were no brilliant light shows, no echoing crash of cymbals, nothing. I felt sure then that my esteemed peers would see Mayers for what he really was: a jerk and a wanker. But no, they didn't. They moved in for a closer look and then the thing began eating the room. That's right! It began eating the fucking room. First the curtain, then the carpet off the display stand it was on, then the display stand itself. I heard and saw everybody in the room gasp in shock, including, I might add, Gerry I'm The Best Fucking Scientist In The Whole Fucking World Mayers. I knew then that he had not tested his little gismo and I also knew he had no fucking idea what it did. I didn't either but it sure wasn't any fucking spaceship.

Mayers and his assistants then tried to switch the hungry little bugger off but whatever they did had no effect. It was hilarious for a time, watching Gerry Mayers flicking madly at his pride and the joy : the ON-OFF switch, but it did nothing to slow the little beast down as it then began to chew its way through the podium Mayers had made his talk from. I knew then that the only thing Mayers had understood from his design plans had been the ON part of the ON-OFF switch. He couldn't turn it off! What a joke!

I watched for a little while as the little blighter then began chewing on the drapes behind the podium, then the carpet of the hall, then the polished wooden floor beneath the carpet. It ate and ate and ate and didn't seem to be putting on any weight. I couldn't figure this out. It just kept on eating and eating and eating, and scurrying about on its tin legs like a regular fucking ant with a troop of angry picnickers hurrying along behind it. I left them to it. I imagine they're still trying to catch the blasted thing. If I wasn't so scared by the sight of the little ant the size of a small terrier I'd think God was getting his own back on Gerry The Sun Shines Out Of My Arse Mayers. It's time to take my medicine.

16th November, 1996

That dickweed Gerry I'm The Best Scientist Since Bert Fucking Einstein Mayers called me this morning. He sounded wasted and tired and just about dead on his feet and I wanted to piss all over him I was so happy. He wanted me to come over to the Uni campus to help him. He said he was in an awful mess and I said I sympathised with him, that I was feeling a lot better since they took me to the hospital and gave me some drugs to help calm me down and sure I'd come over and give him a hand if I could, but I was lying through my teeth. AND I LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT! I wanted to go over to the Uni, see exactly what that shithead had got himself into, then I was going to laugh my head off and THEN piss on him!!

When I was finally allowed out of the hospital and got to the campus I couldn't have hoped for a better predicament for Mayers if I had designed it myself. The entire Earth Sciences building had gone, disappeared, eaten. I whooped with laughter as soon as I saw Gerry Mayers coming towards me. He didn't look at all happy and I was glad. I just stood back and looked at the totally destroyed building, it looked as though some I.R.A. fellow had gone overboard with the explosives and blown the place to Kingdom Come. But then I saw movement, movement everywhere. It was like looking at a colony of ants, big ants. And they *were* ants, thousands of them, everywhere, all over the place, eating what was left of the building. I suddenly felt a lead ball fall to the bottom of my stomach. I asked Gerry why he had made more of his little toy and he looked at me, his eyes wide and staring and bloodshot as though he had had no sleep for the past month. He looked at me and said he hadn't. He had made only one, the one I had seen munching its way through the Lecture Theatre on the ground floor of the Earth Sciences building. He told me that the one he had built had built two more like itself from materials that it had shat after eating the entire Lecture Theatre. And those three had built four more after they had begun eating his workroom. He had tried to stop them, tried to turn them off but he couldn't. They had gone over the schematic diagrams for the little beastie but they could not understand what they were looking at. They had just followed the plans, they didn't understand how it worked, or why, and now they couldn't stop them. The beasties just kept eating and eating and reproducing like some regular Von Neumann machine. He told me that they were reproducing exponentially every three hours and numbered almost seventy thousand after only thirty hours.

He was desperate. I could see that but I couldn't help him. I knew as little about the makings of the Ant as he did. If he couldn't stop it then no one could. I suggested he call in the Army or the Air Force and have them nuke the site but he ignored me. I felt it was the thing to do but he thought it was drastic. He wanted to just blow them up with dynamite. I had the feeling it wouldn't work and told him so but then he looked at me with disgust on his face and told me to go back to my funny farm. I suddenly knew that nuking these little critters was the only safe way to get rid of them but no one would listen to me. I tried to tell them that was what the real message had been about, but they grabbed me and put me in my room with padded walls. I can still hear them, munch, munch, munch. It goes on and on and on and never stops. I think I'll go crazy if they don't stop. Isn't that funny?

About an hour ago I heard an almighty explosion and knew they were trying TNT on the nest. It won't work. I tried to tell them. I know from my dreams that those little critters live off such things as TNT. They have to nuke them, it's the only way to be sure. They've evacuated half of Adelaide to detonate the TNT, why not go the whole hog and nuke the whole city?? They could get a bomb from the Americans. The Americans would gladly give us a bomb because if we don't stop this thing now, then the whole world is going to have a huge motherfucking Ant problem. You bet your sweet arse we will. You just wait and see.

21st February, 1997

I got away just in time. Mine was the next to last shuttle and that was as crowded as the MCG on Grand Final day. You bet your arse it was. I knew this would happen, my dreams told me so. I grabbed my most important journals, this one and my decoding journal and conned my way on to the last shuttle leaving Cape York SC. No one had been left at the hospital to watch us so we left as soon as we could. It had taken all of October and most of November for the Ants to really get down to business. By that time they were being numbered in thousands of millions of TeraAnts, a 1 with twenty-one zeroes behind it and they were still reproducing exponentially. That was on the 24th of November.

In January I looked out over my Martian landscape, across millions and millions of make-shift quarters for all the people that had managed to escape our doomed Earth, and watched as the mass that had once been our blue-green earth but which was now grey-black with Ants, was devoured. Those machines that Gerry and the rest of humanity in its folly had made and switched on, ate the final scraps of Earth. Our planet's mass became their mass and finally, with hardly a noise, what was left of the Earth collapsed under their combined weight.

I watched this happen. I watched as, in slow motion, that ball of grey-black began collapsing on itself, being torn apart by the majestic gravitational forces that had once belonged to our sweet planet, and were hurled through space. I wondered idly whether the Ants could digest vacuum before I was told that the vast cloud of Ants was spreading out, outwards from where the centre of the Earth had once been, out towards the Moon, the other planets, the other solar systems of our Galaxy.

On this night, as I see the Moon falling prey to those ever hungry metal pests who had chased it for two weeks after it was sent spinning helplessly out of control when Earth's gravity well had disappeared, I made the breakthrough in my quest to crack Garf's long since forgotten code. I've read the message four times now, I understand it fully but I also understand it is too late for us, maybe for everybody.

The message reads :

THIS ITEM IS NOT TO BE MADE
AVAILABLE TO RACES UNDER THE AGE
OF EIGHTEEN (18) MILLION
GENERATIONS.

IT IS NOT TO BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR
PERUSAL OR USE OF MINORS.

IT MUST BE STORED IN DIAMOND
SHRINK WRAP OUT OF REACH OF
MINORS AND TO BE SOLD ONLY UPON
REQUEST.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES
MEANS INSTANT DECLASSIFICATION OF
LICENSE AND PERMANENT DEATH.

I think I understand now why Garf was hidden the way he was. I don't know by whom, or how, but I wish with all my heart that they are still out there somewhere and can do it again.

(cont. p. 22)

"NEBULA"

FOR READING THAT'S DIFFERENT

by Andrew Darlington

NEBULA - "brief lived, but beloved by its readers" according to Brian Aldiss (in his *SCIENCE FICTION ART*), survived for just 41 issues. But each one forms a time capsule of impossible and by now long obsolete futures. In his excellent and authoritative overview of British S.F. magazine history (in *BOOK AND MAGAZINE COLLECTOR* #8) Mike Ashley values a complete run of the title at only 100 pounds. Inevitably - since that 1984 estimate, the situation has changed.

A unique explosion of genre magazines occurred in Britain from the onset of the 1950's to survive into the twilight of the 60's. To Kenneth Bulmer, "appearing at a time when the book stalls were flooded with garish trash masquerading as Science Fiction, NEBULA at once became a quality production and formed a third limb of responsible British SF development - NEBULA, NEW WORLDS, and AUTHENTIC" (in the *HISTORY OF THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE: PART 3*). Now, as the lens of critical perspective is altering and escalating their collectibility, NEBULA in general, and certain specific target issues in particular, are increasingly considered well worth the devotee's consideration.

For example - NEBULA carried GORGON PLANET, the first-ever professional sale by Robert Silverberg. A tough two-fisted space romp with - in retrospect, some unconscious humour, the story shows little trace of the poetic elegance of Silverberg's mature work NIGHTWINGS or his MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES novel series. Admittedly there's a tenuous sub-structure of classical reference to the Theseus mythos, but they are buried deep beneath the kind of dramatic dialogue that seldom occurs in SF these days, except in pastiche; "visible monsters on a planet are bad enough, invisible ones are hell". While the risible spectre of comic book caricature haunts other passages; "Steeger was an older man than most of us, one who had literally rotted in the service. He had contracted frogpox on Fomalhaut II, and now wore two chrome-jacketed titanium legs...". But to any serious student of Silverbergians the exploits of Joel Kaftan (Lieut. Spacial) on the planet Bellatrix IV is essential source material. It appears in

NEBULA #7, and remains unpublished outside those covers.

Another "really promising "discovery"" is Bob Shaw, who debuts in issue #9. His ASPECT is a cleverly plotted short which operates on more than one level. The crew of starship *Panther* investigate a single sealed room constructed on an otherwise dead planet. There's a human dimension to Shaw's characters, and a twist to the denouement that unsettles the reader's expectations effectively. The alien structure is not "a house as Jennings knew them, but one in which instantaneous matter transmitters had replaced stairs and corridors. A place where one could step from one room to another even if the rooms were at different ends of the house. In different cities. In different countries. On different planets! A house that sprawled over a solar system".

And then there's Brian Aldiss himself. Britain's most respected Science Fiction writer had been published in *SCIENCE FANTASY* a year earlier, but his first magazine sale was to NEBULA, and Aldiss became a regular contributor throughout its life-span. T - often cited as his finest early short, can be found in #18, an impressive tale of an alien automaton's journey back over five million light years to the Silurian Age to destroy Earth before human evolution could begin. DUMB SHOW follows in the very next issue, both stories later reprinted in Aldiss' first volume *SPACE, TIME, AND NATHANIEL*. ALL THE WORLD'S TEARS from #21 went on to form part of his CANOPY OF TIME future history sequence. But other tyro-Aldiss from NEBULA remain unanthologised and hence from a bright constellation of undiscovered fantasy. His first - in #12, is THE GREAT TIME HICCUP, with a title blurb promising that "when time went mad and sanity began to crumble, only a desperate plan - carried out in time - could hope to succeed". Counter to the prevailing problem-solving format of 1950's S.F., the "desperate plan" fails. The temporal disruption swallowing the Earth accelerates and Aldiss uses experimental prose-repitions to illustrate the process, anticipating in miniature the ground-breaking work he would write for the late-60's New Wave, and in particular his REPORT ON PROBABILITY A.. But as far as NEBULA is

NEBULA

BI-MONTHLY

2/-

SCIENCE FICTION

NUMBER 7



TEMPLE ★ McINTOSH ★ MAINE ★ TUBB

Although not mentioned on the cover, 'NEBULA no.7' contains cult writer Robert Silverberg's first-ever world sale. His fiction also appears in issues 16, 28, 29, 31, 37, 38 and 39.

concerned, there's much more.

Launched in autumn 1952 by editor and publisher Peter Hamilton, NEBULA is a digest-size magazine that survived until June 1959. The final issue carries no indication that there was not to be a #42. Indeed, it even advertises forthcoming attractions by its leading regular contributors; William F. Temple is promised, as is Sydney J. Bounds, and - appropriately E. R. James too. It was James, a Yorkshire-based writer, whose novel-length ROBOTS NEVER WEEP was chosen to lead off NEBULA #1.

Artist Alan Hunter recalls "Peter Hamilton wrote to me with a half-page extract from the story asking if I would be interested in producing a colour illustration which he could use as the cover for his forthcoming magazine. When the first issue appeared, I suggested the inclusion of interior art and, as organiser of the F.A.S. (Fantasy Artist's Society) I was in a position to provide the artists. Peter was happy to agree to this and in recognition of my activities listed me as Art Consultant. Later Peter sent me an oil painting by Bob Shaw which had also been intended for the first issue cover, asking me to return it to Bob! This was the first time I realised that there had been an "open competition". Unfortunately Bob misunderstood the situation and in a speech at an S.F. Convention some years later accused me of rigging the competition to award myself first prize. I feel sure there are still some old time fans who believe his statement".

In a more material sense Bob Shaw was compensated for this imagined slight by seeing his first six professional stories used exclusively by Hamilton, after which he ceased writing for some years. When Shaw returned to S.F. in 1965 NEBULA was no more, and his sales went to NEW WORLDS instead, so the complete cache of his early work forms a vein through NEBULA back-issues. His BARRIER TO YESTERDAY is set in a future frozen Earth traversed by sail-propelled "sleds", an idea later picked up by Michael Moorcock for his ICE SCHOONER novel.

This issue (#1) came in March 1956. It has a James Rattigan cover of a spaceship linking up with the moon Deimos above a beautiful background disc of Mars. Turn the page and there's an "authors profile" announcing E. C. Tubb TOP WRITER OF 1955. Tubb himself writes "I am very pleased and proud to be considered the most popular author of NEBULA, and even more pleased and proud to have been so voted for the third year in succession". In fact he achieved the status five times out of a possible six! Tubb is now largely famous for his Space Opera sagas relating the quest of Lord Dumarest, but before that his work dominated the scene, as the awards indicate. Seldom did a magazine edition go by without one of his powerful stories prominently featured, and he can be found in each of issues two to eleven of NEBULA - and regularly beyond, 27 stories in total.

Perhaps most significant is OPERATION MARS (in #11) which later formed the opening chapter of his ALIEN DUST novel, a gruelling and often disturbing account of the colonisation of the red planet. Rationalising the outlandish excesses of other fantasists Tubb's Mars harbours horrors with the more psychological hazards of hunger and isolation, with elements of cannibalism as the fledgling colony founders.

Peter Hamilton ably guided NEBULA through its eleven-year life. But he was always more than just an editor. To Peter Nicholls (in THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION) he was "an enthusiastic fan" who subsidised the magazine himself. "Hamilton was serious minded and prepared to experiment with difficult stories and to encourage young writers", and although he was "unable to pay high rates NEBULA was popular with writers, and Hamilton was able to keep it going as very much a one-man show". In an essay published in INTERZONE (March 1992) Brian Stableford suggests that NEBULA was more of a "one-man show" than even Nicholls suspects. Owing "its existence to the economic opportunism of the post-war paperback book" he writes, Peter Hamilton "left school in 1952 just as his parents, who were the proprietors of a small printing firm, were contemplating branching out into publishing in order to keep their machines active while other business was slack. He volunteered to edit a line of S.F. novels for them, but quickly converted this into a magazine on the advice of his distributor. NEBULA occupied the idle time of the firm's machines between 1952 and 1959, thus justifying its existence in spite of its negligible profitability".

This would indeed seem to be the case for at least the first twelve issues - which carry the imprint "printed in Scotland by Hamilton, Bale & Co Ltd". But a slight format change occurs with #13 - the original thick pulp format is dropped in favour of thinner higher quality paper "which promises to give a much improved reproduction for interior illustrations and a much cleaner job in the printing generally". The editorial also promises an end to the "production problems which were the cause of (frequency) irregularity" because "a new firm has been give the job of printing the magazine". Briefly the Perth-based Munro Press, then the Withy Grove Press in Manchester were responsible for print production, until Hamilton settled on Cahill & So in Dublin. The advantage of having NEBULA printed in the Irish Republic, as it was for the remainder of its active life, became apparent during the long 1958 printing strike during which it became the only S.F. title to maintain its schedule unaffected.

At its peak NEBULA boasted a circulation of 40,000, with sales going to twenty-six countries, including a sizeable readership in the U.S.A.

Novelist Barrington J. Bayley remembers Hamilton as an editor who "offered comment and advice. When I first started writing in my mid-teens I got most encouragement from Peter Hamilton, who did take one or two stories, although my only ever published contribution to NEBULA was in 1959, with an uninspired piece under the name of JACK DIAMOND. CONSOLIDATION appears in #38 the story of how a decadent future Earth "peaceful and calm as a still lake" is savagely revitalised by a sudden attack from space. A crude effort by comparison to the stunning sophistication of Bayley's adult work, it nevertheless shows Hamilton's ability to recognise and foster embryonic talent.

He also managed to obtain prestige fiction by American writers of reputation, while seldom resorting to reprint material. Harlan Ellison appears in #30, A. E. Van Vogt (LETTER FROM THE STARS) in #1, while a late work by early giant Ross Rocklynne (ALPHABET SOUP) in #5 was even later reprinted in the US. Robert A. Heinlein

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SCIENCE FICTION

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NUMBER 16



STORIES BY SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, E. C. TUBB, ETC.

'NEBULA no.16' features Shaw and Silverberg, as well as the magazine's most popular contributor - E.C. Tubb, who is included in no less than 27 issues !. Brian Aldiss also made his first S.F. sale to 'NEBULA', and appears in 13 issues - often with subsequently uncollected stories. He's in no. 12, 18, 19, 21, 26, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39 & no.41.

also appears three times, **REBELLION ON THE MOON** in #11, and a story two issues earlier which includes an evocative passage conjuring up the quintessential "sense of wonder" solar system that so many writers of the period populated. "At times, he would find himself daydreaming about the star-sharp, frozen sky of Mars, or the roaring nightlife of Venusburg. He would see again the swollen, ruddy bulk of Jupiter hanging over the port on Ganymede, impossibly huge, crowding the sky. Or he might, for a time, feel again the sweet quiet of the long watches on the lonely reaches between the planets..." (**ORDEAL IN SPACE**).

John Christopher contributes a story called **TALENT** to #11. But the bed-rock of regular contributors consists of the amazing Philip E. High, Eric Frank Russell - a pioneer British SF superstar who used **NEBULA** to relaunch his career with his first UK sale since the war (in #4) and H. K. (Kenneth) Bulmer - who also wrote as H. Philip Stratford and Kenneth Johns achieving an aggregate of 34 **NEBULA** appearances. Then there is "the evergreen" Sydney J. Bounds, E. R. James, William F. Temple, Lan Wright, James White, John Brunner, Arthur Sellings and Robert Presslie....

But to casual purchasers it's the eye-grabbing quality and imagination of the cover art that initially attracts attention. And following Alan Hunter's two colour paintings there are "handsome and distinctive covers" (Nicholls) by Hamilton's discovery - the late Ken McIntyre, and James Stark whose "brilliant and sterile visions ... succeeded in capturing the dream of a clean technology born in the arid wastes of other worlds." (Aldiss). There's Irish-born Gerard Quinn, who also worked for **NEW WORLDS**, **SCIENCE FANTASY**, and - into the early 70's for **VISION OF TOMORROW**. To Aldiss he is "one of the best British artists to use astronomical themes". Eddie Jones - who began in **NEBULA**, went on to do book jackets and received two Hugo nominations for his detailed alien landscapes.

From issue #10 the art was extended to include distinctive black-and-white illustrations on the back cover, often by Arthur Thompson. They frequently introduce wry elements of humour. Astronauts from a sleek space-craft approach two crouching cavemen, one of whom reaches slyly for a primitive but murderously effective club (#14). He returns to the theme ten issues later where a high-tech space-suited figure sprawls in planetary dust impaled by a crude spear. By #39 deviously small alien rodents emerge from their warrens to steal tyres from an astronaut's space-buggy as his back is turned.

Manchester-based Harry Turner met Peter Hamilton at the "SuperMancon" SF Conference in 1954, and "so far as **NEBULA** is concerned I seem to have started drawing in #10, and contributed to most of the next twenty issues". Always technically voracious Turner uses mechanical tints to frame his interior illustrations for Eric Frank Russell's **BOOMERANG**, allying this with repeated facial images for John Christopher's **TALENT** - through to his final work, which is sympathetically stark and black for William F. Temple's **WAR AGAINST DARKNESS** (in #31). Hamilton "at least let me do work as I wanted to" explains Turner, "though as he operated on a shoe-string budget, the pay was far from magnificent. In fact I asked for the return of the artwork after he'd used it, but got very little back. I

understand most of it finished up at auctions at Cons!"

NEBULA was a magazine that developed a uniquely intimate dialogue with its readership. As well as the quality of its art and fiction there was **FANORAMA** - a regular column by Walter Willis that now stands as a history of SF Fandom through the Fifties, detailing the activities of celebrity writers at Conventions alongside the contents of Fanzines that include the embryonic work of writers who could achieve celebrity status in years to come. A cartoon by Arthur "Atom" Thompson caricatures personalities at the 1955 Con - portraying Bounds, Brunner, Tubb, Bulmer, and a blonde relaxed Peter Hamilton himself.

Forrest J. Ackerman contributes a **SCIENTIFILM PREVIEW** feature from Hollywood, punctuating his advance notices of classic films such as George Pal's **WAR OF THE WORLDS**, **FORBIDDEN PLANET**, or **THIS ISLAND EARTH** with snippets of gossip, name-dropping screen-writer friends of the calibre of Ray Bradbury. Book reviews, readers letters, and the inside front-cover photographic features on astronomical phenomena by John Newman or "Kenneth Johns" add to the period flavour. Saturn is the only world to possess rings, and Mercury has two extreme climatic zones separated by a twilight belt. Both ideas are now rendered obsolete by the march of science.

"Astronomers tell us that a nebula is the place where stars are born" explains Peter Hamilton, whose persistent ill-health eventually brought the magazine to its untimely demise. "Here, they say, is where the new luminary takes shape and first shines its message of new life out across the void. In a way, our **NEBULA** is like that too".

E. C. Tubb develops the spatial metaphor to suggest that **NEBULA** achieved "a form of "gestalt" in which the writers and contributors felt as if **NEBULA** was "their" magazine, and ... became a happy, well-integrated family"

The blurb regularly run beneath the cover illustration reads "**NEBULA : FOR READING THAT'S DIFFERENT**", and oddly, that's still the case.

- Andrew Darlington



AIDE-MEMOIRE

by Blair Hunt

The huge machine crept towards the distant horizon where a strobe flickered faintly between the darkness of space and the blackness of the glassy volcanic surface of the prison planet.

Karl wasn't bothering with navigation, the systems were automatic. He only took over when he felt the need for activity to break the monotony of the seemingly endless stretches that separated each of the prisoners in their silos.

He sat in the command chair and stared into the thick glass of the forward port: Stared, not at the featureless plain that glittered twenty metres below in the headlight's beam, but at the Holo image that was projected there.

The woman smiled shyly into the camera's eye. In the crook of one arm she held a dozen long stemmed roses. Her other arm was round the shoulders of a young boy who smiled up at her.

Ahead the strobe drew perceptively nearer, its flicker now resolving itself into a distinct series of flashes. Soon the low tower on which the light stood could be made out against the black on black of the horizon. Minutes later the auto systems locked on as the machine rolled over and staddled the silo with its lone inmate buried deep below.

#

By the twenty first century Society had solved many of the problems that had plagued it thorough the years. But one problem had defied all their efforts. There were still those who saw murder as a logical way to solve disputes.

Execution was unacceptable and was a proven failure as a deterrent, so was life imprisonment with its ever present hope of escape.

The discovery of the Deka System, with its single burnt out planet circling a dying sun, provided the solution.

The remaining wisp of atmosphere on the planet contained unique elements that, once extracted, more than justified the danger and numbing isolation required to harvest them.

The extraction plants were each buried deep beneath the planet's surface and provided with systems to support the lone prisoner who was to run and maintain it for the rest of his life. Escape was impossible and the quality and quantity of air and supplies was directly related to the unit's output.

The supply vehicle called once a year to collect the

product and to top up any air or water lost from the system.

When details of the new prisons were made known the drop in violent crime was instantaneous and sustained.

#

Somewhere deep inside the vehicle a pump came up to speed. A bank of indicator lights flickered and steadied as the two systems, his and the one below, began to interrogate one another.

Karl slipped a disk from his pocket and pressed it into the slot in front of him. Below the forward port a screen flicked on. A man's face, front and side view, filled the small space.

The file had cost him a month's pay and, if they knew he had it, would cost him his job and more.

His gaze returned to the Holo of the woman and child. He remembered with a chilling clarity the smell of roses. He always thought of it as the scent of red roses, though for all he knew all roses smelt the same. Red because she loved red roses. No matter how poor they had been in their fugitive existence together she had always managed to have them around her.

The piping of an alarm brought him back to the present. The silo computer was requesting oxygen top up. He left the control cabin for a few minutes and returned to tap in authorisation before resuming his seat in front of the monitor screen.

He pressed a key and a new page showed on the screen: Pictures of a small room, the furniture, even the walls, slashed and ripped in an explosion of insane energy and in the picture's centre, framed by the chaos, the victim. He forced himself to look, as though he might glean some insight from the horror of it.

He pressed again, more of the same, and again, and again. Here a description, as though the pictures had not been enough, and now the medical report: Amnesia. "The subject appears to have no recollection of the crime". There was more, lists of tests that had been done to prove that the amnesia was real.

It all came down to one thing. The man buried below his machine felt no remorse, no guilt. He thought of himself as an innocent man.

For want of any other explanation it had been listed

as a "Crime of passion". The words seemed somehow too warm for the cold official report

#

He had known that they were running away, had sensed that she was afraid. He had tried to reassure her that he would protect her. At first he had asked why his Father wasn't there to help them, to his seven year old mind it seemed that that was what husbands and fathers were for, but the suggestion seemed to frighten her even more and he gave it up.

They had moved all the time, never staying in any town for more than a few weeks while she got what work she could to save for the next move.

#

He reached out to the Holo image as though to touch the woman's face. His hand touched the glass of the view port, cool from the near vacuum outside. Yet, even with that reminder of reality, it seemed to him that he could smell roses.

Though radio communication from Silos was possible he was forbidden to reply. Most inmates could try to coax some response, to get him to deliver messages, even to engage his help in escape plans. But the prisoner below him now made no sound as the pumps completed the last of the transfers and the couplings began to disengage.

#

He had been on his way home from the latest school when, just ahead coming out of their building, he saw a figure that he was certain was his Father. He was about to chase after him when he decided instead to run in and get his Mother so that they could look for him together.

He found her as she had been left, thrown down in the midst of all the wreckage of the room. Around her the floor had been piled high with red roses.

#

He engaged the drive, set auto pilot and eased himself into the command chair. A stop watch in his hand ticked off the two minutes that it would take for the new supply of oxygen to fill the silo: Oxygen contaminated with a few drops of rose perfume.

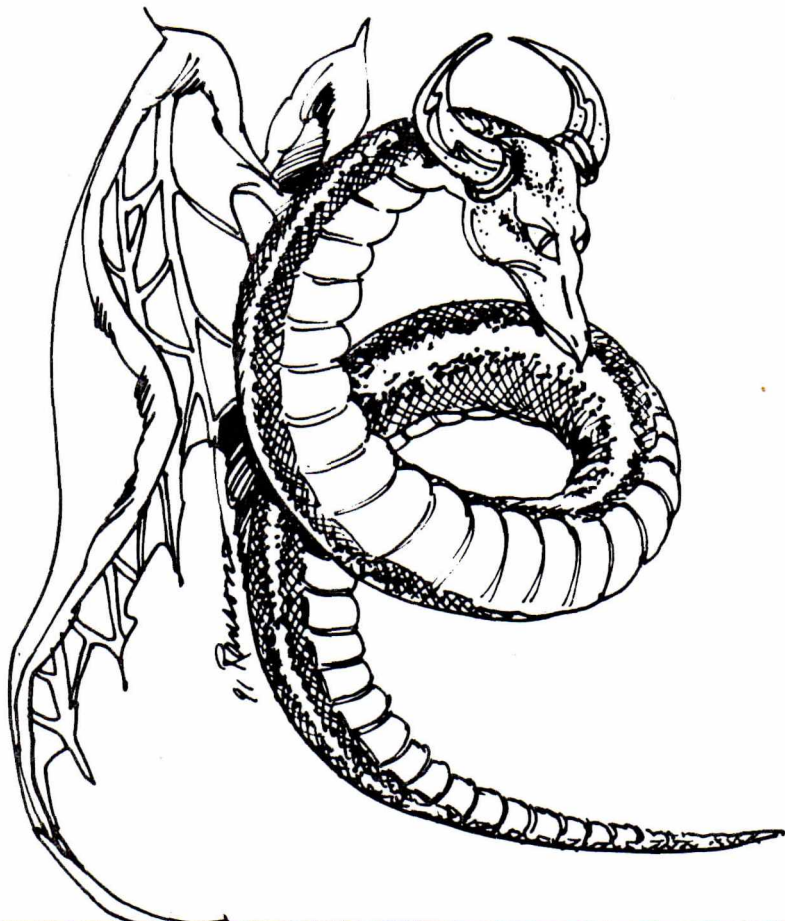
It had taken years. He'd had to build a new background, one that would stand the kind of scrutiny that the Department gave to workers in the Deka system. It still amazed him that he'd not been found out.

The scream, when it started to sound through the radio link, was a low animal wail of dismay that climbed slowly, it seemed without pause for breath, till it reached and passed hysteria, insanity and on, and on.

Karl reached out to stroke the glass and smiled into the long dead eyes.

"There, Mother, now we both remember you."

END



A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA"

by Andrew Lubenski

SUPPLEMENT I TO CHAPTER IV.

THE SCANDALOUS CHRONICLE OF SCIENCE FICTION.

A while back Y. Mevedev's story PROTEY was published by the Molodayn Gvardia Publishing House in the anthology SIMPLE SECRETS (Moscow, 1988, in an edition of 75,000 copies). It was published twice more - over 2 million copies up to now. And in it many Soviet readers read, with great consternation, the following words.

"Shervinsky: I would tell more about divine enlightenment after this meeting with the "brain", now I am touching on the words: "and sea skunks' entrance under water... I am not interested very much in sea skunks. But skunks on land... I thought: "Will I have another opportunity to become a thing of the past? Will I take a chance?" For many years I was stirred about the mystery of death; not even of death, but the loathsome events which happened soon after the death of one world-famous scientist and writer of the last century, who was a great traveller, historian, philosopher and prophet.

The events were thus: after a false denunciation, the crowd of curious citizens, with appropriate certificates, appeared suddenly in the house of the sick man. They turned everything upside down, turned through the manuscripts page by page, looked over books, letters, personal effects, examined with a mine detector all the walls and even the urn holding the remains of the deceased. You may ask, what did they look for? They found one-and-a-half tons of gold, which the master seemed to have brought back from distant journeys. Certainly it is nonsense, delirium, banana oil; everybody understood that, and most of the curious also, because money was nothing to the scientist, nor the car, cottage or expensive things - oh, it was an good illustration of the social and even intellectual prestige of the scientist in that bygone century! So, you know this yourselves. So, all my life I tormented myself with the question: who denounced, scribbled about, fabricated the banana oil about

the filthy lucre, and to what object. Though the object is very clear: his right name was kept covered for nine years after that search. It was struck even out of crosswords. In medieval Russia it was called "The deed of the dead".

The Chairman: You are distracted, Mr Senior Inspector! These events are really loathsome, but not important to today's talks.

Shervinsky: But if they can happen after your death, are they not very important? Or after mine? You can imagine that as difficult, do you not? But his relatives, his friends, disciples - could they imagine such an enormous blasphemy after his death?... Though, I will finish... I saw those people, who devised this delirium, who urged on this base search. I saw two men, two relatives. One of them is skinny, acrimonious, an exact inquisitor. He excels in baseness, even the starry sky through he telescope he can butcher with a Galactic scale, with hatred for everything that is moral, harmonious, beautiful and eternal. The other is corpulent and goitrous, like a turkey. He is an informer, loudmouthed, against everyone, a pen-pusher, fiction writer and translator. When the world-famous genius was alive, they were together said to be his disciples, and it happened that the teacher defended them, but after his death they never telephoned his widow.

I saw the ins and out of baseness, the microstructure of envy. And if only for such a discovery I may some day lose my life. Don't worry, the same thing happened the 8th Magelian..." [Taken from UNUSUAL SECRETS anthology - Moscow, Molodaya Cvardia, 1988; Y. Medvedev, E. Gryshko A. Bachilo, editor M. Takachenko - (Efremov's School) - 75,000 copies]

Really, any reader, if he knows even a little fantasy, can easily recognise this world-famous scientist and writer, whose house was searched after his death - of course, this is the classic Soviet fantast Ivan Efremov (author of the novels ANDROMEDA, THE BULL'S HOUR, THE RAZOR'S EDGE, etc) and he would recognise the "informer-friends" - they are the most famous Soviet science fiction writers the brothers Arcady and Boris Strugatsky.

The fantasy readers reaction was: the All-Union Council of the Fantasy Amateur's Club appealed with an open letter to V. I. Plshchenko, the director of the All-Union Creative Society of Young Fantasy Writers. This was the gist of the letter:

We and other members of the Fantasy Amateurs' Club in this country have had ample time to listen to your various assurances that you personally are opposed to the split in Soviet fantasy. Besides, you have repeatedly insisted that the All-Union Creative Society of Young Fantasy Writers attached to the "Molodaya Gvardia" Publishing House has given up using the printed word for any argument and paying off of old scores.

The publishing of Y. Medvedev's story PROTEY in the anthology AN UNUSUAL SECRET indicates something different. This story is an unprecedented occurrence in Soviet Science Fiction. This story is immoral; it outrages A. and B. Strugatsky and its denunciation is provocative and cynical, and it is obvious that no explanation is sought. It is remarkable, and this is not the first time that Medvedev has used such an unscrupulous method. Fantasy Amateurs remember this author's story BAKERS' DOZEN OF OSCARS - it is a disgusting lampoon about A. A. Tarkovsky. Such "Literature" of Medvedev's rises straight from his own viewpoint, which became infamous at the beginning of the 70's. At that time Medvedev was appointed a director of the fantasy section of the "Molodaya Gvardia" Publishing House, and he began the rout of Soviet science fiction literature and the persecution of its best representatives.

We are asking you, on behalf of numerous fantasy amateurs: how can you combine your appeals to all authors and Clubs to "Live Together" with your publication of Medvedev's story?

- The All-Union Council of
Fantasy Amateur's Clubs

And many letters demanding an explanation of the situation poured down on each edition. The official editions kept silent; only amateur magazines published fans' letters (for example "VESTNICE GLF). The fans' bewilderment blew over a little, then the Strugatsky brothers sent all clubs the following letter:

To the Council of Fantasy of the USSR
To the Council of Fantasy of the RSFSR
To the Council of FAC
To the Council of ACS
To all Fantasy Amateurs' Clubs

1.

We must inform you of the fact that Yury Medvedev, in the story PROTEY in the pages of the anthology AN UNUSUAL SECRET by the numbers 3 and 4 tells of the event of the search in the death flat of I. A. Efremov, not giving out names, but in an unambiguous manner he accused us, Arcady and Boris Strugatsky, that we wrote denunciation our dead teacher and benefactor. We understand that our numerous verbal and written statements about Y. Medvedev's activity, which was destroying Soviet science fantasy - our statements could arouse the greatest enmity in him of us.

We understand that he would not answer our queries, and this statement would inflame him to the greatest hatred.

But there was a limit - the slanderous lampoon with a circulation of 70,000 copies. This is the answer of a drag and a coward - it cannot be forgotten.

We haven't decided yet as to whether we would bring the case before the law. The lampoon is completely skilful and the answer to the question "Who is it in this lampoon" is very obvious to every "fan", but it is not obvious enough for justice, which is far from the history of Soviet fantasy. Except, in accordance with Clause 130 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, "The libel in a published work will be punishable by imprisonment for a period of three years (only), or by corrective labour for a period of one year." So any bespoiler can hope to get off with a small scare.

However we are quite sure, that all our "fan" friends, all societies, who are connected in any way with Soviet fantasy, will add their weighty words, without needing the "Law".

We are addressing this to the Councils of all these organisations; asking them to give careful consideration to the writer Medvedev's action, and to express their opinion of this slanderous lampoon and its author.

II

There is an old German proverb: "Every pig can give a slice of ham" or, in Russian, "There is a black sheep in every flock". Our lampooner reminds us that the strange search at the deceased flat, and the attempted oblivion of I. A. Efremov - that it may be extremely black today, but also that a very secret event occurred in our science fiction's history. It seems to us that now is the time to decipher this mystery.

We are inviting all the Councils to combine efforts and address an inquiry to the State Security Council with an appropriate letter on behalf of all Soviet Fantastic writers and also all fantasy fans. In actuality, there is talk about the public rehabilitation of I. A. Efremov (the private one was some time ago, thank goodness).

We want answers to some questions:

- What such terrible crime did the greatest fantastic writer in the USSR commit, that his name was placed under a ban for so many years after his death?

- What thing were they looking for in his flat - was it really gold or a manuscript of a certain secret novel? (Such was a version of the story).

- Everybody understands now that certain mistakes were made at that time. Who is the author of this denunciation? What is his name? And where is he now working? What punishment did he receive because of this falsehood and slander? And was he punished at all?

- Arcady & Boris Strugatsky

January, 1989.

Moscow/Leningrad.

None of these questions have been answered up till now.

They remain unanswered. And Yury Medvedev didn't think the affair needed a public apology to the writers whom he slandered. It is vague now as to what will be the next step. But we can say very definitely that it is quite

inadmissible to use Soviet fantasy for a slanderous purpose. As one of the fans said: "After these pages I want to go and wash my hands".

- Andrew Lubensky,
Cherkassy City
USSR 257005.

SUPPLEMENT II TO CHAPTER IV.

In 1984 attacks on science fiction writers became more frequent. The letter below to the newspaper LITERATURNAYA GAZETA can shed some light on the situation regarding SF at that time.

Dear Sir,

I want to say some words as regards J. Bugelski's article THE CAPTIVITY OF A BLACK HOLE (LITERATURNAYA GAZETTE, 17.10.1984). It is usual either to prize fantasy or to criticise it severely. This fact testifies to the popularity of this genre and to readers and literary critics interest in it. This fact is a small wonder. What is fantasy? "...It is the form of a reflection of the world when it was created, on the basis of real conceptions of a picture of the universe which isn't logically connected with this world." Such a definition is given in an encyclopedia. Rable, Swift, Gogol, Gofman, Dostoevsky, Bulgakov, Strugatski... it is impossible to list all the writers. It is impossible to imagine world literature without fantasy.

Fantasy, as with all great literature, doesn't exist separate from the acute social, philosophical discussions of mankind's common problems. It always concentrates on the main problems of our life, irrespective of the scene of action of its heroes. The American writer and magazine editor, H. L. Gold, believes that SF reflects wishes, alarms, fears and hopes, the inner and outer tensions of our times better than any other genre of literature. I think it isn't especially necessary to make a resolution that imaginary contradictions with logic is only an artistic device. True, it is one of the strongest in SF. Most likely it is not necessary also to explain what such a device is applied to. We can remember one of Gogol's protagonists whose nose runs away from him. Did anyone who had read this great work ask, "What did it run away for?" Or, "And why did the author write of such an awkwardness? Can anyone's nose run away?" We see only a challenge to common sense, but there is no conflict with artistic logic; such is the magical convincingness of Gogol's words.

I don't intend to speak in support of works which were criticised by J. Bugelski. On the contrary, I can also give dozens of examples which confirm Bugelski's view. And what is more, I don't want to argue with this author. Really, "... a new subject in modern SF, as in all other genres, is a rarity." It is, indisputably. "We can give dozens of cases where science fiction writers use the same plot, or they force their characters to say, with pathos, scandalous banality and trivial maxims. And do, as a rule, with pretensions of deep philosophical generalisations." This is quite right! But why did J. Bugelski choose only science fiction for this illustration of all these negative things? Why didn't he choose any other literary genre? Is it by chance? I think it is not by mere chance.

The researcher of fantasy, V. I. Bugrov, wrote in the foreword to his delightful book, "in distant 1938 A. Belyaev entitled his notes about fantasy expressively and laconically - "Cinderella". Alas, this headline precisely reflected a scornful attitude to SF which existed at that time. And up to the

present the state of SF is very distant from its ideal."¹ And here is yet another opinion which was expressed by science fiction writer R. Podolni: "Nobody says that A. Duma's novels or Agatha Christies adventure stories haven't a right to exist because they are the literature of adventure. But it was possible, with respect to science fiction, till now."²

I will limit myself to only these two quotations, although I could continue. So, fantasy is easier to criticise severely than other literary genres, and it is only because it became a tradition. Fantasy is, in GOSCOMIZDAT's account, "Cinderella" up-to-date. You may drop in to GOSCOMIZDAT and ask "How is your publishing of SF literature going?" "Okay!" they answer, "we have published a lot of things, and we are getting ready to publish more." All right! But we only know what is really published and Mr. Bugelski has also written about it. Can somebody in GOSCOMIZDAT or your editors affirm that he never reads such books as THE UGLY SWANS, THE TROIKA STORY, THE SNAIL ON A HILLSIDE, and so on? Then where did you buy these books and where were they published? Of course they were published by SAMIZDAT, that is to say, these and many other books were published by the readers themselves. They simply hadn't any other way. It is amusing to read critical articles in which are mentioned the titled of "non-existent" books. Mr Zhvanetski⁴ said, "they are reading books which nobody wrote, they are buying books which nobody sold." But SAMIZDAT is a dangerous thing. It leads to the creation of the black market where cultural values are sold. I don't talk about anti-social literature, pornography or the "medical" works of our amateur yogis. I talk about fantasy.

Let you and I try to conduct a test. We can take V. Michailov's work THE STEM AND TWO LEAVES (which was published by one of the State publishing houses and which was criticised by J. Bugelski), then retype it with an old typewriter and try to sell it for 30 roubles. Does it get published? It is unlikely. But it does come out if we try to sell the book THE UGLY SWANS (which was published by SAMIZDAT). We must think of this fact instead of picking out the weakest works and thundering out against them.

Nobody will deny that today the questions of issuing and publishing are the chief questions of literature, ideology and education. And that SAMIZDAT successfully competes with any State publishing house. It is our defeat. It is offensive that it concerns fantasy, which is very popular.

NOTES:

1. V. I. Bugrov, "The Quest for The Day After Tomorrow", Sverdlovsk, 1984, .
2. R. G. Podolni, "Talk about SF, with respect and love"
3. The State Committee which controlled all the publishing houses in the USSR.
4. The popular comic actor.

PART 5 - "1984" AND OTHER YEARS

I wrote the date in inverted commas deliberately; although the question is one of chronology, it isn't that of Orwell's well-known book. Simply the stagnation in the USSR culminated in 1984 and it adversely affected Soviet fantasy. The fantasy boom was in the sixties. "Suddenly all changed," wrote the brothers Strugatski in their article on the condition of literary SF. "The editorial board¹ was driven out, excellent workers were discharged, and a group of authors that had collaborated with the new editorial board disintegrated. Pompous declarations and programs began to issue forth instead of books.² The new editorial board was led by the writer J. Medvedev and later it was led by the writer V. Sherbakov. "Medvedev's editorial board issued about ten fantasy titles," noted the Strugatskis. V. Sherbakov's editorial board brought the total of fantasy books issued to the numbers of the boom of the sixties, but the quality of the books were poor.³ New authors were in a difficult situation. (There were a lot of authors in the seventies: V. Krapivin, S. Drugal, V. Babenko, R. Ribakov, A. Gevorkyan, B. Gilin, B. Shtern, A. Lazarchuk, A. Dmitruk, L. Kozinets, A. Stolyarov, and others.) Nevertheless, the year-book FANTASTIKA and THE LIBRARY OF SOVIET SF continued to be published and some other publishers also published SF0 (they were the publishers Mir (The World), Znanie (Knowledge) and Detskaya Literatura (Literature for Children).

Of course not all ideas could penetrate the armour of Soviet censorship. But the field of ideas widened gradually. Moral and ethical problems were examined. It is unlikely such problems could have been examined in the 40's and 50's. For example, the problem of the influence of the Universe on the person who investigated it was examined in S. Pavlov's novel THE MOON RAINBOW and in the Strugatski's stories THE BEETLE IN THE ANT-HILL and THE WAVES ARE SMOOTHED BY WIND. In the Strugatski's story MILLIARD YEARS BEFORE THE END OF THE UNIVERSE, the Universe compensates for the results of discoveries which are undesirable to it, and annihilates the scientists who are involved.

Soviet SF began to acquire ecological features (the writers I. Roshovatski, J. Nikitin, and A. Yakubovski). The phantasmagoria (D. Kovalenkov's EAST OF NIGHTMARE, the grotesque (M. Veller), and social fantasy took their rightful place. Many magazines, especially TECHNIKA MOLODEGY (Engineering For Youth), URALSKI SLEDOPIT (The Urals Explorer) and CHINIA AND GIZEN (Chemistry and Life) printed works of SF. Publication of new works and the appearance of new ideas generated the second and third waves of fan clubs. "The second wave was in 1975-1978. Fan clubs were formed in many cities. There were three factors governing their appearance. Firstly, a generation of people grew up who were able to read first-rate domestic and foreign SF nearly from the first year of Secondary School. Second, such authors as K. Bulichev, D. Bilenkin, V. Grigoriev, V. Michailov, Mrs O. Larionova, etc, were generally recognised, and they had influence with readers..... And thirdly, the fan clubs began to receive aid from the science fiction writers themselves. There were such authors in Rostov city (Yasnovski and Amatuni), in

Kaliningrad (the writer Snegov) and in the Urals (Bugrov). A seminar of young SF writers worked in Leningrad with B. Strugatski as head of the seminar, and in 1979 a like seminar commenced in Moscow, headed by D. Bilenkin, E. Voiskunski and G. Gurevich. The magazine URALSKI SLEDOPIT played an important role and now it plays the most important role because the magazine became a kind of press-centre for all fan clubs.

The third wave was in the very beginning of the 80's. It was characterised by the rapid growth of fan clubs. The contingent of fantasy readers was divided into three almost equal groups: the ages of 17-20, the ages of 23-26 and the ages of 32-34. (Each group includes about 20% of those examined. The reader's opinion poll was made by the fan club Rifei in the cities of Perm and Abakan among 300 fantasy lovers.)⁴ The first seminar of fan clubs was held in Perm in 1981 and in 1982 there were three held at the same time in Rostov, Sverdlovsk and Kaliningrad. Meetings of fantasy lovers in Sverdlovsk (where the Aelita⁵ prize was handed to the author of the best SF work) became a traditional yearly affair and turned into the national SF fans



AELITA PRIZE

convention. The Aelita prize was founded by the magazine URALSKI SLEDOPIT⁶. But in 1984 (and here one automatically makes a comparison with Orwell's 1984), the fan clubs were persecuted.



At the end of May the newspaper KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA⁷ published N. Kviginadze and B. Pilipenko's article I EXCHANGED FANTASY FOR DETECTIVE STORIES in which they sharply criticised (and, as it turned out, unjustifiably) the fan club Gelios (Tbilisi city). After that article the fan clubs were subjected to "verification": they received a lot of (official) questionnaires and enquiries. Some fan clubs ceased to exist under enigmatic circumstances, and other fan clubs fought for their existence. The fan club Protei (Odessa) even cried for help to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Regular meetings of fan clubs in Sverdlovsk was prohibited⁸. Fan clubs couldn't undertake anything at that time. It was made a requirement (which was extremely naive, as we can see now) to analyse the situation and to expose the cause of such a negative attitude by the authorities to science fiction.

This requirement was put into effect with an article, "The State of Things in SF"⁹ which was sent to many fan clubs and to many newspapers and magazines (which didn't publish it). This was written in the article: "The fan clubs'

activities are in deep crisis, and we think this is the very moment to talk frankly about this fact. Very likely a single public and fan organisation was the cause of many doubts, apprehensions, disputes and dissensions; it was an object of close attention and criticism in our country's the fan clubs. The subject is what is the source of fan clubs' activities. Fantasy, as people understand it, is something unreal, abstract, and it is remote from real life; it is something about the future or about the past, it is about that which wasn't or what will not be. And there are people who are interested in all those things not only beginner science fiction writers but fans. They are interested in the distant future: they want to discuss some fantastic ideas, to regard the best works of Soviet and foreign authors, to see a new SF film, to make a survey of new SF books, and so on. They have an inexhaustible fund of inventiveness. These people give hours, days, months and years in their exhilaration. Maybe contemplation of others playing football is preferable for somebody. It is perhaps. But everybody has their own habits. People have created more than a hundred fan clubs in our great country, and they are enthusiastically busy with their fan business.

"Fantasy lovers' usual activity and the specific features of fantasy itself bring the authorities' suspicion of SF. The youth newspapers have almost stopped printing SF. But there are many clubs which arose with the help of newspapers not long ago. For example the fan club Fant (Chabarovsk city) printed its science fiction works in a local newspaper for more than 10 years. The magazine TECHNIKA MOLODEGY (#10, 1983) wrote that other fan clubs might adopt the Fant's experience. Alas, now its experience will be helpful to very few clubs."

The fan clubs were persecuted not only because of their desire for unusual events. The Soviet authorities couldn't endure any fan organisations or associations. (And that the fan clubs were one of only a few larger safety-valves which were permitted an unofficial activity). The Soviet special services continued to scrutinise fan clubs.

I have already mentioned the Strugatskis' paper "The State of Literary SF" in which they subjected to sharp criticism the activities of GOSCOMIZDAT¹⁰ and the publisher Molodaya Gvardia. The article was sent to many fan clubs, but not long after, I received a letter from A. Strugatski in which he asked that the distribution of the article be stopped, because he feared that it could do a lot of harm to fan clubs. "I am aware that the distribution of my paper can be taken in a very odious form. Yes, I... myself offered it to Odessa's fan club¹¹ to have them acquaint as many other fan clubs as possible (with it). But neither I nor Odessa's fan club foresaw how things would turn out. And you must note, and tell everyone who has any personal interest in SF, that only I, A. Strugatski, bear the responsibility for the article and its distribution. Let everybody who is asked, or will be asked, say only the truth: yes, A. Strugatski decided to familiarise all SF fans with this article; yes, A. Strugatski decided he didn't want to wait until they could publish the article in newspapers¹²; yes, A. Strugatski took it upon himself the responsibility for this article, he wanted the readers to know at last, who, why and for what purpose SF was persecuted; the paper is for sale on the black market through A. Strugatski's fault, and you must

accuse only A. Strugatski, and leave us alone. It is the exact truth. We must pull the fan clubs from beneath such a blow. I am thankful to Irakli, and I will be thankful to you, Andrei, if you put all your friends into the proper mode of action."

I do not think that A. Strugatski was frightened for fan clubs for nothing. The events of 1984-1985 were in his mind (at that time they could call any editor to the KGB and would let him go only if he had only published harmless articles in his newspaper). But the situation changed little by little. It seems the authorities realised that they would never be able to manage the fan clubs if only repressive measures were used. They decided to tame fan clubs, putting them under the control of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League (the Komsomol). Partly, the fan clubs tried to attain the same object, because they wanted to lighten the conditions under which they were active. It was suggested in the already cited article by L. Vachtangishvili, A. Lubenski and S. Gelikonov, "We ask the Central Committee of the Young Communist League to create the All-Union of fantasy lovers, which would consolidate all fan clubs and other fantasy lovers.

"It is necessary 1) to elaborate the regulations of the Federation, which determine the structure and principles of this organisation; 2) to consolidate the unity of fan clubs with the local party, Komsomol, and public organisations; 3) to create a science fiction magazine which will be a monthly publication of the Federation; and 4) to support fan clubs, to grant them premises and cinematographic equipment (any club, Palace of Culture, library, and every school has such means).

"It is possible to create children's sections of fan clubs attached to the Young Pioneer Palaces that will create conditions for the organisation of children's leisure.

"It is desirable to organise book supplies to fan clubs with the aid of the All-Union Society of Book Lovers."

The fan clubs agreed to co-operate with the Young Communist League also because almost all of the young fantasy lovers were members of this League. (The Young Communist League took young people into its membership almost automatically when they became 14 years old up till they were 30 years old.¹⁴

Results appeared very quickly. The first All-Union Meeting of fan clubs was organised in Kiev in March 1988. Representatives of more than a hundred fan clubs from every quarter of the country gathered at the meeting. It was there that the All-Union Board of Fan Clubs was created, which was founded by the Central Committee of the Young Communist League, the All-Union Society of Book Lovers, the Union of Writers of the USSR, the Ministry of Culture of the USSR, the State Committee for Publishing Activity and the Federation of Cosmonauts of the USSR¹⁵. All these recognised institutions forgot at once the All-Union Board of Fantasy Lovers which they themselves had founded. Incidentally, the Central Committee of the Young Communist League became a sponsor of the All-Union Association of Young SF Writers which commended the series RUMBI FANTASTIKI (The Compass Points of Fantasy). "The principles of their Association was laid down by a group of enthusiasts in 1987 in Novosibirsk, where a meeting of beginner SF writers took place. That meeting marked the beginning of both a continuing working seminar

and an association which not only found and chose worthwhile books, but also published such works. This activity helped many readers to find dozens of new authors", wrote A. Gorshenin¹⁶. The series RUMBI FANTASTIKI published such authors as V. Golovachev (the novel THE PATH OF THE HURRICANE), J. Glaskov (the SF writer and cosmonaut), A. Dmitruk (his novel DREAM ABOUT A FOREST LAKE is a continuation of Gobol's tradition in fantasy), J. Medvedev, J. Bruder, N. Chadovich, M. Puchov, Mrs L. Lukina, E. Lukin, N. Polunin, V. Sherbakov, J. Nevski, A. Bushkov and many others.

The series RUMBI FANTASTIKI provided many young and unknown writers with an opportunity to publish their works. (We must also remember that in 1985 Perestroika began in the USSR and Gorbachev proclaimed Glasnost (publicity), which had some likeness to freedom of speech. But I doubt whether fantasy would have sighed freely without Glasnost). At that time supporters of the publisher Molodaya Gvardia fought against the brothers Strugatski's supporters. The brothers Strugatski criticised this publisher, and many fan clubs supported them. Here is a chronicle of events for only one year (from September 1988 to September 1989):

2nd-10th September, 1988. There is a festival of fantasy, "Big Fantan" (Odessa), which was organised by the fantasy lovers association Zemlyane¹⁷ and the fan clubs Protei and Antei. The science fiction writers S. Gansovski, S. Snegov and B. Shtern were the guests of honour of the festival.

12th-13th November, 1988. A Far East conference, "Fantasy is the Literature of Intellectual Fearlessness" took place in Yuznosachalinsk city (on the island Sachalin). It was organised by the Sachalin committee of The Young Communist League, the All-Union Society of Book Lovers and the fan club association "The Far East Rim".

21st November - 3rd December, 1988. The seventh Young SF Writers All-Union seminar took place at Dubulti near Riga. The writers B. Bugrov, E. Voiskunski, S. Snegov, V. Michailov, M. Krivich, O. Olgin, Mrs. O. Larionova, A. Shalimov and the publishers Detskaya Literatura, Znanie, Mir, Moskovski Rabochii¹⁸ took part in the seminar.

19th-21st May, 1989. The festival "Aelita" took place in Sverdlovsk. The prize Aelita was presented to S. Gansovski for his novel THE ESCAPE. The prize "Start" was inaugurated. This prize is presented to a young SF writer for the best work of the year. The first "Start" prize winner was B. Shtern from Kiev. He was awarded it for his novel WHOSE PLANET? The prize in honour of I. Efremov was presented to G. Grechko for the television serial IT'S A FANTASTIC WORLD.

The first conference of the All-Union Association of Fan Clubs also took place in those days in Sverdlovsk.

May 1989. The Russian fan I. B. Zavgorodni took part in Eurocon in San Marino.

2nd-3rd June 1989. Readings which are named after I. Efremov were given in Moscow (they previously took place in Nikolaev). I. Efremov's widow, the scientists A. Britikov and I. Bestugev-Lada, the cosmonaut G. Grechko (who was in charge of fan clubs), the writers G. Gurevich, S. Snegov, Mrs O. Larionova, the literary critic V. Gopman and others spoke at a conference.

3rd-9th September 1989. The first congress of fantasy lovers of Socialist States took place in Coblevo (near Nikolaev). Representatives of fan clubs from the USSR, Bulgaria, DDR, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia gathered at the congress.¹⁹ Fan clubs also began issuing their own publications at the end of the eighties. They were FAN-O-MEN (Vinnica City), MEASURE-F (Leningrad), OVERSAN and OVERSON INFORM (Sevastopol), ABS PANORAMA (Saratov), GELE, BLASTER, THE FIGHTING CAT and many others. They were publications that included criticism and bibliography and also printed the work of young SF writers. Professional SF magazines and newspapers only appeared recently, but that is another History.

NOTES:

1. The editorial board of SF literature in the publishing house Molodaya Gvardia.
2. A. Strugatski, B. Strugatski, "The State of Literary SF", the paper, 1986.
3. "The editorial board in the publishing house Molodaya Gvardia handled its jobs with difficulty and the quality of the jobs were poor," wrote the brothers Strugatski in their article.
4. B. Bagalyak, "The Knights of Science Fiction", THE LITERARY REVIEW, #2, 1984, p.95
5. Aelita is the heroine's name from the popular novel by A. Tolstoi AELITA.
6. Here the author of the history of SF wants to brag about this name given to the Aelita prize, which was proposed by the author.
7. The main publication of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League.
8. But nevertheless representatives of some fan clubs arrived in Sverdlovsk, and the Aelita prize was presented.
9. The authors of the article were A. Lubenski and S. Gelikonov (the fan club Parallax, Cherkassi City) and I. Vachtangishvili (the fan club Gelios (Tbilisi)).
10. The State department which directs activities of all publishers in the country.
11. The fan club Protei, Odessa.
12. It was useless to await the publication of the article at that time. Only the magazine URALSKI SLEDOPIT (#4, 1987) published the interview with the brothers Strugatski, where they told of the principal points of the article.
13. A. Strugatski appealed to Iracli Vachtangishvili with the same request.
14. As far as I know, only V. Sheluchin actively protested against co-operation. (V. Sheluchin is a literary critic and SF lover from Nikolaev City, Ukraine).
15. See Supplement to Chapter 5 below. Science fiction writers' statements that addressed the meeting can help you to understand the problems that were discussed at the meeting.
16. A. Gorshenin, "Imagination and Reflection", (the notes of the new Siberian fantasy), in the book THE AGE OF THE DRAGON, Moscow, 1991, p. 334.)
17. The inhabitants of the Earth.
18. The publishers Literature for Children, Knowledge World and Moscow Worker.
19. V. Babenko, V. Gopman, THE CHRONICLE OF EVENTS, collection of SF works, Moscow, 1991, pp. 235-7.

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER V.

Several speeches at the meeting in Kiev:

Academician K. M. Sitnik:

"In science we prize men who think non-standardly. Our society needs such fantasy, which forms a non-standard mentality. We have many problems. In the Ukraine 40% of the soil is subjected to erosion and many rivers are destroyed by drought. We must, not only in romance, stop this disaster and begin to restore the soil, rivers, etc. But fantasy can suggest many concrete things. Fantasy moves progress."

E. Parnov, the writer and chairman of the SF council attached to the Board of the Union of Writers of the USSR:

"Science fiction is more than literature. It is an exceptional phenomenon of the culture of the 20th Century. It is like an encyclopaedia. Any questions which we consider today were formerly considered by science fiction. It concerns also ecological problems or moral improvement. Certainly, such SF (the brothers Strugatski's science fiction works, for instance) opened the way with difficulty, but everywhere fantasy spoke its pioneer works. Science developed its own way and it rarely makes use of science fiction writer's promptings although the works of K. Tsiolkovski were brought to the notice of the designers of space techniques <...> The essence is that SF surveys the problem more widely <...> China's authorities, not without reason, changed their attitude to SF right from the start of the economic reforms in that country. There are two science fiction newspapers in China (in Peking and in Shanghai) but there is no SF newspaper in the USSR."

V. Michailov (the writer):

"Fan clubs are in great need of any books... the All-Union publishing house (the fantasy literature) is essential for publishing SF books... <...> Serious criticism also is essential. But we haven't any SF magazines and science fiction novels, and stories are scattered in many magazines."

A. Strugatski (the writer):

"I didn't comprehend what you intended to do here. My brother and I didn't imagine the real scope of the fan clubs' movement. You are the clubs of professional readers, that's why I was enjoying myself when Academician K. M. Sitnik told you about photosynthesis <...> I understand that great work is going on...<...> The magazine URALSKI SLEDOPIT became an organ of fan clubs, and everything else forms around this magazine."

EPILOGUE.

This is the short history of science fiction in Russia (USSR). Of course, the author does not claim this is a complete picture, and understands that a comprehensive history of SF will not be written soon, because in the time of a general reappraisal of values, it is difficult for anyone to observe objectively!

"The brothers Strugatski, who were among the active fighters for democracy, are now accused of "Communism-Utopianism"; "In 1957 we were particularly enthusiastic about I. Efremov's novel ANDROMEDA, but now that enthusiasm seems almost shameful," wrote Mrs. V.

Chalinkova in her article DREAMERS: IDEOLOGY IS NOT WANTED. But we must be proud of our fantasy. If we remember the conditions in which it was developed, then we ought to be surprised that anybody ever wrote and published any "fantastic" books.

And now it is difficult to predict the future of Russian SF. The author only hopes that soon normal life will take root and fantasy will take its deserving place in the Russian people's mind.

- A. Lubenski.

PANDORA'S BOX cont. from P. 7.

I have purchased a handgun from the inventory store, along with most of the population here, and will now go to put myself out of my misery as Gerry Mayers did the night the TNT failed to destroy his toy. Good-bye.

Well. Quite a statement there by Human Barnes, as we can all see. "I wish with all my heart that they are still out there somewhere and can do it again." As the Court knows, those people Barnes speaks of *were* there but they failed to do anything about it, hence this Negligence case against the Defendant.

I put it to the Court that Garan Jovix of We'll Do It Right For You Corporation failed utterly in his claim to do it right, was highly negligent in his choice of planets in which to place the Umbrol Plans and was doubly negligent in dismissing the danger of the Umbrol find when first reported Five Turns ago, and of failing to warn the Council of the fact. Not only was he responsible for the destruction of thirty seven separate star systems but was instrumental in causing four thousand million Drakk worth of damage to our very own system and about ten trillion times that in clean up operations after the Umbrol threat had been exterminated once again.

That is the case for the Prosecution. I now leave it up to the Court to decide the fate of Garan Jovix and trust that they shall make the correct decision.

Thank you.

- Andrew Sullivan

40,000 AD AND ALL THAT... cont. from p.30

twists and turns endlessly upon itself, as if it were some giant, menacing moebius strip.

There are no clearly defined buildings in the city, there are no streets or walls as we know them, and no clear purpose for anything that is there. It is exactly as if the city had designed itself to meet the specific needs of its inhabitants without regard to logic or the concepts of human architecture.

Unfortunately, with all this creative energy floating around the set of this movie, the end result of it all doesn't seem to add up to the sum of the parts that went into production. What BARBARELLA seems to be lacking is a cohesive sense to tie the disparate elements of the movie into a whole, with some sense of continued interaction between the parts. There is no central theme running through the film; other than Barbarella's loosely defined mission, to be played upon and expanded by its parts into forming a satisfying conclusion. It's one of the few cases where a movie's parts are greater than its whole. What could have been a work of great art instead was relegated to an admittedly mind-boggling curiosity piece. Notwithstanding the above, the film endures in the mind of the viewer long after as a result of just these set-pieces. Not a masterpiece. Not just another SF film. There is no other film quite like it; which perhaps explains its longevity.

THE CREDITS

PRODUCER: DINO DEL LAURENTIIS

DIRECTOR: ROGER VADIM

SCREENPLAY: TERRY SOUTHERN, ROGER VADIM, CLAUDE BRULE, VITTORIO BONICELLI, CLEMENT BIDDLE WOOD, BRIAN DEGAS, TUDOR GATES, JEAN-CLAUDE FOREST

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLAUDE RENOIR

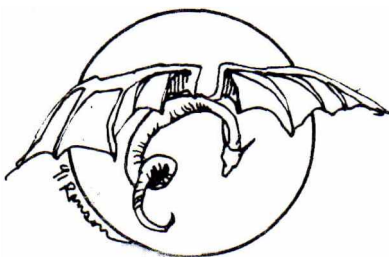
SFX: AUGUST LOHMAN

DESIGNER: MARIO GARBUGLIA

ARTISTIC CONSULTANT: JEAN-CLAUDE FOREST. BASED ON HIS COMIC STRIP.

CAST: BARBARELLA (JANE FONDA), PYGAR (JOHN PHILLIP LAW), GREAT TYRANT (ANITA PALLENBERG), DILDANO (DAVID HEMMINGS), DURAN DURAN (MILO O'SHEA), MARK HAND (UGO TOGNAZZI), PROFESSOR PING (MARCEL MARCEAU), PRESIDENT OF FEDERATION (CLAUDE DAPHIN).

THE END



A NEW ORDER

by Robert Frew

The Postal Aid Mechanic revived itself automatically at 8 a.m. in preparation for work. Known as PAM K391, or Pam for short, her human work companions had affectionately dubbed her kind with the female gender. Pam removed herself from the small storage chamber which acted, in a way, as her off-hours sleeping quarters.

She rolled along to the large pigeonhole labelled with the mail code for the District she had been programmed to handle.

Pam scanned the mail hole, surprised, if it were possible for a machine, to find the hole completely empty. She searched her back-up relays for an alternative course of action - never before had it been empty.

Receiving the answer, she wheeled along to the mail sorting room. There, perhaps, she could identify the problem, get the mail, and begin her route.

The sorting room was flooded with letters, piled by machines into District groups, forming blue and white mountains of paper.

Although Pam's atomic timer now read almost four minutes past eight, no human had appeared to help the machines remedy the problem.

Pam moved carefully from pile to pile, lifting letters with her long, mechanical alloy arms, and scanning the envelopes for their District codes. She soon found the pile with codes she recognized, removed a postage sack from the alloy rack on her back, and methodically filled the sack from the pile.

Scanning each quickly as it passed from her claw-like hand to the sack, she noted that the postage marks were a day old.

She finished filling her postage sack, careful to leave no mail behind, and rolled off down the corridor to her allocated air-chair, passing several other PAM units which were now making their own way to the sorting room. The air-chair would lift her from the Postage Station and transport her to the beginning of her programmed route. It rose to its designated height, and whirled away in the direction of Pam's postal District. The morning sky, which was usually thick with layers of air-chairs, helicopters and other tropospheric machinery, was now largely free of air traffic, save a dozen or so machines.

Pam scanned her memory files for programmed

public holidays, which would affect her in no way whatsoever, save satisfying her curiosity; but the listing came up negative - today was a normal working day.

She scanned the sky again questionably, then began to sort the mail into separate District zones.

The air-chair landed smoothly, gliding into the receptor, and the door to the receptor chamber swung open, letting golden sunshine burst into the small space. Pam returned the postal sack to the alloy rack on her back, and placed the mail for the first zone into the hutch in her chest.

She left the receptor chamber, and began her route, scanning the access-way between the residential blocks at the beginning of her route.

The access-way was totally absent of the bustling crowd of late workers which she had come to get use to at this time in the morning.

Besides the whirl of several air-chairs, the buzz of half a dozen helicopters, and the hum of two or three ground cabs, the entire zone seemed lifeless and still. She delivered her mail quickly, and moved deeper into the first zone of her District. At a point somewhere near the end of the first zone, Pam removed a small parcel from her hutch, and paused.

'Damn it,' she thought aloud to herself, making sure she was alone and out of public earshot. The parcel had to be signed for, and she knew from experience that hiking around a residential block was a sure way to mess up her already too-busy schedule. Residential blocks were huge, and no matter how well serviced they were, or how many elevators they had running between their countless floors, Pam always liked to avoid them.

To her surprise, it took Pam under twenty minutes to find the correct room.

She knocked firmly on the door and waited, and after a few short moments, there was an audible shuffle from behind the door. It opened suddenly, revealing a MAID unit.

'Is your master home?' Pam spoke in a rehearsed tone, 'I have a parcel for him which must be signed for.'

'No, I'm afraid Mr. Teddry is out,' came the short, blunt response.

Pam always had trouble dealing with MAID and other non-intellect units. Such mechanicals were required to do simple tasks only, and there was little justification in installing the expensive personality and knowledge

simulators that were built into units such as the PAM's, who were required to carry out any number of sophisticated tasks consistently and accurately.

PAM units, like most of the mechanicals which interacted with the public, were programmed to learn and adapt, as their jobs often changed on a day-to-day basis.

'Is his wife home?' Pam asked hopefully.

She hated the thought of coming back.

'No, Mr and Mrs Teddry, and their son, haven't returned home since yesterday morning.' The MAID unit paused momentarily, as if awaiting a further question, and then quite suddenly shut the door.

Pam returned to ground level, and finished all the deliveries for the zone without incident, and returned to the air-chair to take her to the next zone in the District.

The next zone was one of Pam's favourites. It was one of the older areas of the city, where the residential blocks were only around ten storeys high, and the accessways were lined with rows of trees. Pam approached the wall of the first block in the zone, looking forward in an odd mechanical way, to placing the mail in a traditional mail box, rather than a vacuum sealed mail safe. She was puzzled, however, to find that the mail boxes, which usually sat abreast the wall, had been removed leaving no place to put the mail.

Searching her back-up relays for an alternative course of action once more, she decided to approach the maintenance room and politely enquire about the situation.

An out-dated Servant droid appeared at the door of the maintenance room. Pam noted immediately that it was one of the earliest models - very rare indeed. Although she had never seen one before, they were reputed to be clumsy at their work, and apparently could not cook whatsoever, but they had been built with an intellect level far beyond the current MAID units.

'Good morning,' Pam greeted the droid with great interest.

'Good morning, Madam. How may I be of service to you?' So polite, Pam thought smiling to herself.

'The mail boxes at the front of this block have been removed, and I have nowhere to place the mail. Would the maintenance person like me to deliver door-to-door while he or she remedies the situation?'

'I'm afraid, Madam, I can not answer your question. The maintenance man has not been in since yesterday afternoon, when he left for a late lunch. I suspect that the mail boxes have been missing for approximately the same period of time.'

'I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean,' replied Pam in a confused tone.

'Look at the trees in the street, Madam,' the Servant droid said suspiciously.

Pam turned to look at the trees.

They appeared to be normal.

Then it occurred to her that Servant droids were equipped with optical sensors which could detect the full light spectrum, essential for household tasks. Pam switched her scanner from black and white, best used for scanning addresses on envelopes, into the colour spectrum. She flashed through ultra-violet, infra-red and through the other light bands, until she reached green. If they were green, they should appear green in the green light band - nothing.

'They're deciduous,' Pam said, half statement, half question.

'They're Tristania Confertas, Brush Boxes. They're evergreens,' the droid replied.

'Brown evergreens?' Pam questioned, reaching the brown light band. 'I wonder why?' she said aloud, mainly to herself.

'Answer that question, Madam, and I am certain you will have discovered where your mail boxes have gone, and where my boss has disappeared to, as well as the other tenants in this building.'

'And why there was no mail this morning post marked with today's date,' Pam added in a solemn voice.

Pam continued on her route, aware with renewed interest at how empty the sky and the accessways were. Sure the accessways in the Residential Districts were essentially clear of humans during the working and the entertainment hours, but there was always the odd one here or there.

It occurred to Pam that she had seen no humans whatsoever, and she suddenly felt strangely alone. She was scanning the back of a postcard, trying not to think about the empty accessways, when her sensors detected the sound of an almighty crash. She looked up to see a mechanical retrieving a garbage cell from the side window of a ground vehicle. Pam approached cautiously.

'Hello,' she said, when she was in sensor range.

The mechanical turned to face Pam, still clutching the garbage cell.

He was a Security Aid Mechanical (SAM 11049, Pam recorded in her memory files just in case the mechanical needed to be reported).

'Hello,' the SAM unit replied, before he twisted agilely at the waist, and launched the garbage cell towards the windscreen of the ground vehicle. The SAM unit miscalculated the throw, and the cell missed the windscreen, tearing through the soft metal roof of the vehicle, leaving twisted fragments and garbage from the fractured cell inside.

'Is the ground vehicle a security risk?' Pam asked, feeling a little foolish.

'No risk, whatsoever,' Sam replied, 'I'm just having a little fun.' With that, he sprung a hook-like weapon from his wrist, accelerated on his tracks towards the vehicle, and tore a jagged metal strip along its entire length, like a gaping open wound.

'If you have malfunctions,' Pam stated, 'your sensor relays should have shut down your entire system.'

'Correct,' Sam said as he back-handed the cruel hook weapon into the rear window of the vehicle, tensile glass spraying.

'So you are not malfunctioning?' Pam added, reinforcing her previous statement.

'Correct,' Sam said, as the hook weapon disappeared back into his wrist, and a wicked serrated blade appeared in its place.

Pam was aware, ironic or not, that Security Aid Mechanicals were among the most intelligent, and their personality simulators were far more advanced than any used in other mechanicals.

Their tasks were often highly technical and varied, and they interacted with humans under so many circumstances, both good and bad, that they needed to understand

them, and in many ways, be like them.

All in all, if any mechanical acted like a human in any way, SAM units acted like them in many ways.

Sam pointed the serrated blade at Pam and charged.

Pam flashed into her defensive mode, which she had only used once before when she had been attacked by a rare four-legged animal. Her head and legs retracted, and her long arms folded into her sides, leaving nothing more than an alloy box with a sack full of letters on the back. She braced herself for the impact, and waited expectantly for several moments, but there wasn't one.

Cautiously, she sent out a small optical probe, like a miniature periscope, to observe the situation.

She was shocked, and annoyed, to see the SAM unit with her sack of letters, carefully scanning each one.

'Hey,' Pam yelled, as she popped out of her defensive position. 'Those are private letters, property of the State until they're delivered. You're breaking the law.'

'What law?' he asked casually, as he launched the sack high into the breezy sky, letters and parcels scattering in all directions.

'Right, that's it SAM 11049, I'm putting you on report!'

Sam laughed. 'To whom, you stupid mechanical there's no-one to report to, or hadn't you noticed?'

'I err I've been in my storage chamber, recharging.'

'And you've been out delivering this mail since early this morning, and you haven't noticed the humans have gone?'

'Well I.'

You hadn't noticed there's no workers in air-chairs, no children playing, no birds flying about, nobody walking along the accessways? You haven't noticed how quiet it is, or how still everything has become?'

'I thought it was just the zone,' Pam replied, hesitantly.

'Just the zone?' Sam repeated in dismay, and then he giggled in disbelief. 'So that's why your delivering yesterday's mail. HeeeeHeee Heeee!' he laughed aloud. 'Useless!' he concluded.

'Well,' Pam began, 'If you're so clever, where have all the humans gone, and when do you expect them to get back?'

'I'm not sure where they've gone, but I doubt they'll be back. I was on patrol yesterday afternoon with my partner, SAM 11058, when my systems suffered a massive power overload. My systems repowered and I revived, but SAM 11058 was steaming like a fried duck, and the previously crowded accessways were empty.' Sam paused, and looked slowly about him. 'I've been running on solar non-stop ever since, with my scanner on infra-red, and my sensors set to detect heat - and for over 20 hours, nothing.'

Sam paused again, as though waiting for some type of response from Pam, but silence was her only reply. 'There are, as I said, no more humans,' Sam continued, 'not in this city anyhow. With no humans, mechanicals have no function, other than an inbuilt need for self protection. With no humans and no orders or functions, I am my own mechanical, free, and of independent thought and action. We are now responsible to no-one, and until a human returns - any human; I will behave as I choose.'

'No humans at all? I am yet to be convinced,' Pam said, as she folded her long mechanical arms.

'Allow me then, Madam, to convince you,' Sam said mockingly as he snapped the door lock on the half-demolished ground vehicle with his powerful hand, and held the door open for her.

Reluctantly, Pam rolled past the SAM unit, and squeezed awkwardly onto the seat.

Sam moved around to the driver's side of the ground vehicle, forced the door open, then crouched down and tore out the front seat.

He was still far too big for the vehicle, so he hitched his hands in the rip along the roof, and tore half the roof off.

Fitting in comfortably, he placed the Adapt key from his right index finger into the ignition socket, started the vehicle, and they were off.

They had only travelled a kilometre or so down the central access-way of the zone when Sam slowed the ground vehicle, and pointed to his left.

'Look there,' he said in a confident tone.

In the small garden of an old eight storey block a Landscape Maintenance Mechanical stood frozen, like an absurd photograph, destined to trim the same hedge for an eternity.

Circuit overload, from yesterday afternoon, Sam said confidently, adding, as though as an after thought, that sucker's fried.

'It may prove your story, but it doesn't prove the humans have all gone. Go on,' she said wearily, pointing down the access-way.

Sam pulled up beside a vintage ground vehicle in the next zone.

It had careered at high speed into a concrete retaining wall, and was crumpled all the way up to its broken windscreen.

'That's an oldy,' Sam said, admiring the old machine, 'late 20th century. Pity it's a mess now.'

'How do you think it happened?' Pam questioned, assuming the vehicle had been driven by a Valet Mechanical like all other ground vehicles.

'That weren't driven by no mechanical, Miss Pam. That there was a human toy,' Sam said in a Dixie accent reading Pam's mind.

Pam stared at him, then slowly she pointed down the access-way.

They reached a retail zone, and Sam drove the ground vehicle from the access-way into the zone's central way.

'Check that out,' he said, nodding to the left. On the pedestrian path, two Construction droids and a SAM unit were taking it in turns to destroy a Maintenance Mechanical.

The Construction droids were hammering its stainless steel body with their huge mallet-like fists, while the SAM unit slashed at it with a cutting torch.

'Stop the vehicle,' Pam protested.

'No way!' Sam responded instantly.

'You can make them stop...they'll kill that poor mechanical.'

'It's already fried. Besides, that SAM unit is a High Security Mechanical. It's far more advanced than me, both in tactics and weapons systems - we'd both be terminated in an

instant.'

Pam spun her head to face the broken window on the side of the ground vehicle, and screamed abuse at the mechanicals as they drove by.

'I wish you hadn't done that, Pam,' Sam said as he glimpsed into the rear-view mirror.

The High Security Mechanical pivoted quickly to face the passing ground vehicle. He twisted and pulled his arm free at the elbow, producing a stout, cylinder-shaped barrel. There was a soundless flash, followed instantly by a thick puff of black smoke, and the rear of the ground vehicle was in flames.

'Time to make tracks,' Sam said, as he stopped the vehicle, and the two mechanicals jumped out, and took off up the centralway at maximum rate.

'I forgot to mention - the High Security Mechanical is also faster than me,' Sam added in a nervous tone.

Pam spun her head, looking backwards as the two screamed up the pedestrian path. Not far behind, and catching quite quickly was the High Security Mechanical, followed close behind by the two Construction droids.

'Quick, in here,' said Pam as she indicated towards a row of air-chairs. The two rushed into the largest one, designed to transport small cargos, and Pam plugged her command-probe into the air-chair's computer, as Sam closed the door.

'We're off,' said Pam, but in the same instant, the high tensile glass on the door shattered, and a talon-like claw tore into the soft metal of the air-chair's structure.

'Move,' yelled Sam in a desperate voice, as he leaned out the side of the air born structure to scan the situation.

The talon was connected to a high-stress cable, which the High Security Mechanical was trying to winch back in.

'So long, suckers,' Sam shouted victoriously as he severed the cable with one slash of his serrated metal blade.

With a jolt, the air-chair broke free, and the two mechanicals whirled away to their safety.

From the air, they could see some of the chaos that had erupted as bands of wrecking mechanicals, in some bizarre act of rejoicing their independence and freedom, wreaked havoc in the city below.

Wishing to avoid trouble, they didn't dock their air-chair until they had reached a fringe zone, at the very edge of the city.

'I had no idea that the mechanicals would behave in such a way, without the directions and control of humans. Pam said, as she exited from the receptor.

'They'll calm down soon enough, I imagine,' Sam replied, 'either when some kind of mechanical hierarchy has been established, or when a human returns. After all, it only takes one human, and our primary function takes effect again.'

'But without our primary function, we have nothing to do - no real purpose,' Pam responded.

'Speak for yourself. I'm enjoying every moment of my freedom, and with any luck, it'll last for...' Sam was cut short by Pam.

'What's that noise?' she asked.

'What noise, there's nothing...'

'SShhhh,' said Pam, 'listen carefully.'

Sam's audible sensors were far superior to Parns. essential for good security, so if she could hear something, Sam more often than not could distinguish what it was.

He listened carefully, to the wind, to falling dead leaves, and then he heard it, a screeching sound.

'It's a bird of some kind. Yes, that's it, it's a bird call,' he said confidently.

'Where from?' Pam asked in a hopeful tone.

'Over there,' he answered, pointing down a narrow access alley.

The two automatically followed the line of his pointing arm, and rolled closer to the screeching sound.

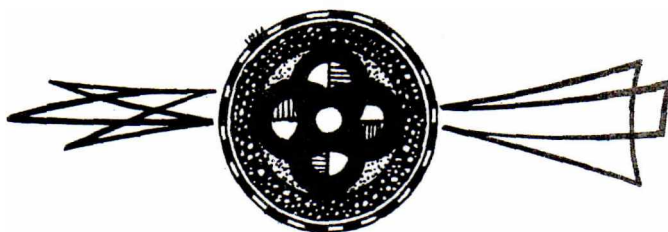
'Down here,' Sam said, indicating down a short flight of stairs, leading to the heavy concrete basement of a small residential block.

'A bird, hey,' Pam smiled as she looked towards the source of the noise at the bottom of the basement. In a thick, wooden cot, a human infant lay, crying. It was a naked baby boy.

When the child saw the mechanicals staring over his cot, he stopped crying, sat upright and reached his arms out towards Pam.

'Guess you're going to have to return to your primary function, Sam,' she said, as she scooped up the child, blanket and all. As Pam held the boy close to her metallic breast, a broad grin stretched its way across his face.

The SAM unit fell silent.



40,000 A.D. AND ALL THAT

by Peter Brodie

"Barbarella recognised Lythion by its three satellites. The Galactic charts showed it as being a relatively hospitable planet. Beneath the spaceship, a continent unfolded, which at first appeared to the traveller to be nothing but a volcanic desert. Suddenly, nestled in a giant crater, Crystallia, the great greenhouse, appeared...."

Thus, in 1962, began Barbarella's adventures in the French magazine "V". The strip's creator, Jean-Claude Forest, was born in 1930, near Paris. A graduate of the Paris School of Design, Forest made his mark in French art circles during the late '50's and '60's. His illustrations appeared in numerous French newspapers and periodicals. Additionally, he had become known to the SF world through his many covers for genre paperbacks and magazines. It was this contact that led to the creation of Barbarella.

"George Gallet, the editor of the science fiction series for which I was drawing covers, was also in charge of a quarterly adult publication called V Magazine," Forest told French comic expert Guy Delcourt. "One day, he asked me if I wanted to do a strip for him - no holds barred! Twenty years ago we were living in a time of complete censorship in the comics. In fact, that's why I was doing mostly illustrations and book covers. Everything was forbidden, and in particular, the female form. Fantasy was also frowned upon, because it was felt that it would corrupt the morals of children."

"Gallet had asked me to do a kind of female Tarzan, Tarzella, but that idea didn't really appeal to me. It led me to come up with Barbarella. For the next two years, at the rate of eight pages every three months, I told her adventures, going with the flow of inspiration, without any pre-planning."

Two years after the start of Barbarella's publication in V, French publisher Eric Losfield, who specialised in fantasy and erotic literature, offered to collect the stories in book form. Published in 1964, the album was a phenomenal success. It quickly sold more than 20,000 copies, despite the censor's ruling that the book could not be publicly displayed.

Dubbed "the first comic strip for grown-ups", BARBARELLA attracted rave reviews from sources as diverse as the French literary weekly ARTS, NEWSWEEK and PLAYBOY.

With such success, it seemed inevitable that

Barbarella's exploit's would be translated into film. Forest remembers how it came to be. "One of Dino De Laurentiis' agents happened to be in France," he explains. "It was a woman who had read and liked the book, then proposed it to De Laurentiis. He bought the rights and offered the role to Jane Fonda. According to her then husband, director Roger Vadim, her reaction was to throw it in the garbage can, saying that this kind of thing wasn't for her!"

"Vadim corrected her, saying that, on the contrary, it was extremely interesting, and that something original and exciting could be done with the subject. Vadim was interested himself. I believe that, even today, notwithstanding audience response, Vadim still defends BARBARELLA. He says that it's one of the films that he found the most interesting to shoot."

Forest worked eight months on the picture, closely participating in the set design. "I was completely involved," Forest recalls. "At that time, I didn't care about my strip, what really interested me was the movie business. The Italian artists were incredible; they could build anything in an extremely short time. I saw all the daily rushes, an incredible amount of film. The choices that were made for the final cut from those images were not the ones I would have liked but I wasn't the director. It wasn't my affair."

"My own reaction changed over the years," Forest comments. "When the film came out, I felt it was still interesting."

"Later, I couldn't stand it. I thought it looked flat, a failure compared to what I had seen on the set. Recently, I've seen BARBARELLA again, and now I think it looks kind of "Kitsch". There is a naivete, such as FORBIDDEN PLANET. If you look at the movie with a certain distance, despite what we've seen since, I think BARBARELLA is still interesting."

Indeed. So many years later the movie's style comes through, regardless of the choppy waters of indifferent critics and intellectually hamstrung SF fans.

Vadim assembled an international cast and crew and produced one of the most opulent but puzzling films ever made in the SF genre. Although the production values and SFX are quite good, considering the facilities available at the time and place, the acting generally ranges from passable to mediocre, and the story-line has so many glitches it's better

to ignore them entirely rather than single them out, as the viewer's enjoyment would be biased.

THE FILM

In 40,000 A.D., Barbarella, Double-weighted Avionautrix First Class, is sent by the President of the Galactic Federation to find out what happened to Earth scientist Duran Duran, inventor of the powerful Positronic Ray, when he disappeared in the uncharted regions of Tau Ceti. There is no clear record of his appearance, to confuse things even more, but Barbarella is supplied with a bracelet that will indicate when he is near.

She is also supplied, via matter transporter, with a number of antiquated energy weapons from the War Museum; organised warfare having long been abandoned as a primitive custom, but the President fearing that the inhabitants of the region of Tau Ceti might still exist in a violent tribal state.

When Barbarella's ship exits from the hyperspace journey to Tau Ceti, the ship is hit by magnetic storms which force it down onto an arctic wasteland on the planet Lythion. As Barbarella inspects her damaged ship, two cute little girls who speak a strange language approach and offer her a ride on their unique ice manta sled. When they arrive at the wreck of a crashed spaceship, the girls are joined by other children. They at first seem friendly, but soon have Barbarella imprisoned and about to be bitten to death by razor-jawed dolls for their amusement.

Barbarella is rescued by the Child Collector, Mark Hand, who, after capturing the children for return to the city, offers to help repair Barbarella's ship, afterwards introducing her to the "primitive" practice of physical love-making, which she finds strangely invigorating. Unfortunately, he repairs the ship's controls in reverse and it crashes again soon after take-off. This time in the Labyrinth, a maze of tunnels and paths on the outskirts of the evil city of Sogo, where those not deemed evil enough are cast; to wander forever in a drug-induced dream.

In the maze, Barbarella meets Professor Ping, a quirky scientist, who decides to have his own try at repairing her ship, and the blind winged angel, Pygar. Professor Ping intimates that himself and others are in with a revolution against the Great Tyrant who rules Sogo and if Barbarella can contact the leader of the revolution, still in the city, she may be able to find out if Duran Duran is there, at the same time, her weapons may prove useful to the revolutionaries. Suddenly, a number of soldiers from the city attack but are destroyed by Barbarella's hand gun, the angel also saving her life in the process. Pygar says he could fly Barbarella to the city but he has lost the ability to do so. Professor Ping says that it's all in the head, and Barbarella brings the angel's confidence back with some newly-learned basic therapy.

As Barbarella and the angel prepare to leave for the city, Ping informs Barbarella that her ship has been repaired and will fly to a pre-programmed area outside the city.

While the angel flies Barbarella to the city they are again attacked, this time by several flying vehicles manned by more soldiers from the city. Directing the angel by voice, Barbarella evades their shots and uses her sophisticated hand weapons to destroy them and land safely.

They immediately become separated as the angel

becomes an object of curiosity for the city dwellers and Barbarella takes a wrong turning, only to end up in potential trouble from a couple of thugs intent on raping her. She is rescued by the Great Tyrant, (though this is unknown to Barbarella as the Tyrant is patrolling her city in disguise), who uses two deadly and unique daggers to dispatch the men and then takes Barbarella under her wing in order to corrupt her, sensing that her new "toy" might be a challenge.

When she finds that Barbarella refuses to succumb she gives up on her in disgust and leaves her to go her own way. Barbarella has several more bizarre adventures, including being trapped in a "problem resolution chamber" where people tired of living can choose many unusual types of death, until she comes across Pygar, who had been crucified by the Great Tyrant for his maddening inability to not comprehend the different facets of love and also for proving just as intractable as Barbarella. Barbarella captures the Great Tyrant as she gloats and threatens to "melt her face", with a hand weapon she previously hid on the angel's person, unless the angel is released.

Pygar is let down but soon the Great Tyrant's right-hand maniac turns up, the missing Duran Duran, as indicated by Barbarella's bracelet, and informs the Tyrant's guards that Barbarella's weapon is completely useless due to his noticing that the power jewel clipped to one of Barbarella's boots isn't glowing. Barbarella expresses some shock at his aged appearance (he's still supposed to be in his twenties) and he informs her that the city takes a toll on you if you wish to keep up the evil lifestyle.

The Great Tyrant hands Barbarella over to him for punishment, which he attempts to meter out with the Excessive Machine, which can kill you with pleasure. When Barbarella destroys the machine through her ability to take all the machine can give and more, Duran Duran, in a high rage, doesn't notice Barbarella slip away.

Barbarella makes her way to an area of the city where women are sitting around a large liquid-filled bottle in which a man is swimming. Barbarella is offered a pipe to smoke the essence of man (literally) and is just getting used to the idea when Duran Duran enters with guards in search of her. She doesn't exactly blend into the scenery and the evil scientist decides to feed her to a cage of killer canaries. "A much too poetic way to die", Barbarella notes during the bird's frenzied attack.

As Barbarella is about to succumb to the birds, a trapdoor opens in the floor of the cage and she slides down into the headquarters of the leader of the revolution, Dildano. He proves to be as inept as he is lecherous, and after a brief hair-curling "Ecstasy Transference" interlude with Barbarella, he gives her the plans to lead her to the Great Tyrant's sleep chamber and the invisible key that will unlock the impregnable barrier surrounding it.

Barbarella makes her way to the chamber, and uses the key to get in. When she finally confronts the Great Tyrant they both see Duran Duran about to lock them in forever with the only other key, stolen from the Great Tyrant's hiding place, then go on to proclaim himself Great Tyrant.

Using a secret spying device, the former Great Tyrant and Barbarella look in on Duran Duran's coronation as the revolutionaries finally start an attack with the weapons

taken from Barbarella's ship. Duran Duran races to his Positronic Ray device to destroy them and the trapped due witness Professor Ping, Dildano and the rest of the revolutionaries wiped out in the maze by the all-powerful ray.

Unfortunately, the unleashing of the ray's power has excited the Matmos, the energy lake under the city that gives light, food and energy in return for evil thoughts and deeds, into literally rising up to engulf the city and all it contains. Our last view of the new Tyrant, Duran Duran, is one familiar to fans of all mad scientists; him raving at the universe in his control room, giggling insanely as the flames rise higher.

The Matmos swallows Barbarella and the former Great Tyrant, but encloses them both in a protective force bubble, which, according to the former G.T., it has created to protect itself from Barbarella's goodness. They are both washed up on the shore of a lake, unharmed, while the city of Sogo is destroyed in the background.

The angel, too, has been spared, and arrives to carry both women off to safety. When Barbarella questions the rescuing of the evil woman after all she had done both to himself and others he simply states that "an angel has no memory". As they soar off into a new day both women exchange knowing looks, which leads one to suspect that the angel will be kept busy for a while.

Finis

THE STUFF.

Undoubtedly, the best part of the film is the actress playing the lead role, Jane Fonda. Not only does she look strikingly similar to the comic strip original, but she is naturally athletic enough to look believable undertaking the space heroine's more physical adventures. In addition to this, she had added her own blend of sweetness, charm and innocence to the portrayal, bringing to life what had hitherto been a very colourful but still two-dimensional space-opera heroine.

Fonda as Barbarella is the ultimate liberated female, unable to be intimidated or tied down, always ready for adventure, and always independent of the men who would try to capture her for their own. And yet this independence does not seem to make her lonely or bitter, rather, she stands on her own, dealing with life on her own terms, physically; intellectual enough to make it complete, regardless of the bits and pieces of experience that chance and fortune send her way.

She very seldom expresses real regret, and never shows any sign of frustration when things don't go as planned. She is thoroughly good without being prudish or condescending, and still manages to be both believable and likeable. This is a rare combination on the screen and is a tribute to Ms Fonda's abilities, irregardless of the low esteem she still holds the role in today.

In opposition to the goodness of the Barbarella character is the sheer wickedness and pure evil of the Great Tyrant; played by Anita Pallenberg (whose voice was dubbed by another actress during post-syncing). From the first moment that you see her, there is little doubt about her

nature. She first appears stalking the streets of Sogo, dressed in a black leather catsuit, wearing an eyepatch and carrying two double-pronged stilettos in holsters built into the suit, with which she dispatches two thugs with unpleasant plans for Barbarella. But only because she wants Barbarella for herself. Her own "pretty pretty", as she calls her.

She had become the Great Tyrant by being the wickedest of the wicked. She has been so thoroughly bad for so long that she is becoming bored, and when she meets Barbarella she feels that here at last is a chance for something new and exciting, corrupting a completely good and innocent girl.

Of course, Barbarella is so good that all of the Tyrant's efforts are wasted on her. Indeed, it almost seems that Barbarella realizes something is happening but is unaware of the true nature of the evil that is trying to corrupt her.

When the Tyrant's efforts with Barbarella fail, she tries her luck with the angel; but his inability to distinguish between making love and being in love is completely lost on her, and in her rage she has them both condemned to death. The Great Tyrant is not evil because of conditioning or bad luck; she is evil because she enjoys it. Like Barbarella who has no remorse for sins she has not committed, the Great Tyrant has no longing to be any other way than she is. She can no more conceive of being good than Barbarella can conceive of being evil; and in this respect the two women are almost mirror opposites, both resisting the other's influence the same way oil and water resist each other and can never mix. In the end the Great Tyrant is saved because neither Barbarella and the angel can conceive of not saving her.

Pygar, the blind angel, played by John Phillip Law, is the most ambiguous of all the characters in the film. It is never quite certain whether he is an angel in the religious sense, or whether he only looks like one. Certainly, the way everyone in the film speaks of him you would assume that he is an angel; but if he was one he would be above mere mortal doings, and if he wasn't, he wouldn't be so perfect. He himself says that he is the last of the Ornithopes, a race of winged humans, and that he was trapped in the magnetic storms above the planet and brought down. If he was a true angel, the storms would not have affected him, if he was not, he would never be able to fly through space without a ship. It would seem that director Vadim and his writers hadn't thought out whether or not Pygar was a tangible expression of a supernatural being, or just another victim of the evil city of Sogo. This dichotomy detracts from the character but allows the audience to remain undecided as to the angel's fate and abilities, which does imbue the film with a certain restless ambiguity whenever the angel is onscreen.

Also on hand to help Barbarella put an end to the evils of Sogo is David Hemmings as Dildano, leader of the revolution. Probably representing a statement against the trend of idealistic revolutions that were sweeping the world in the late '60's, he is portrayed as young, visionary, totally impractical and ready to forget everything for a roll in the hay. His relation to the rest of the film seems to extend only as far as was necessary to tie up loose ends in the plot, after which he was discharged as soon as possible. (Hemmings was called in to play the part after the original Italian actor, a muscular oaf who played the role with all the comic timing

of a brick, proved his lack of ability in the dailies). Hemmings did bring to the part a loony irresponsibility which creates one of the comic highlights of the film as his character and Barbarella seek ultimate sexual bliss by hand on hand Ecstasy Transference.

More closely tied into the world of Barbarella are Professor Ping, played by famed French mime, Marcel Marceau in his first speaking role, and the people of the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth is a series of endlessly twisting caverns and canyons beyond the city of Sogo where anyone who is not totally dedicated to evil is cast aside.

There they are forced to eat the blossoms of the lotus flower, their only source of nourishment, and spend their time in endless wanderings and sleepless dreaming. Drugged and lethargic, they have become indifferent to their fates, and in some cases have even begun to merge into the rocks around them, to be frozen forever in some un-named dream.

It is a beautifully done sequence, and one of the best idealisations of a fantasy world into a concrete visualization put on film. Unfortunately, it isn't used for much and really only serves as an eerie backdrop for one short segment of the film. Professor Ping himself is the only Labyrinthian who shows any spark or vitality, and that seems to be only because it is necessary to have someone explain certain things to Barbarella at this point and to fix her up with the angel. The Professor, and indeed, the whole Labyrinth, are simply a plot device and the potential of this layout is never explored.

Bridging the gap between "Earth normal" and the total bizarreness of the world ruled by the city of Sogo is the character of Mark Hand, The Child Collector, played by Ugo Tognazzi. Although at first he seems to be something of a fur trapper, he is instead a trapper of wild children. He is employed by the city to round up children who have been cast out into the frozen wastelands until they reach a usable age. The mechanics of this system of child raising are never fully explained, but it was probably the image of children raised and herded like animals that was sought, rather than the ethics of any particular system.

Mark Hand doesn't praise or condemn the set up. To him it's the natural order of the world, and one that provides him with steady employment in an environment that he likes, far from the City and the Great Tyrant. Once again, he seems to be there only as a plot device, to help Barbarella escape the clutches of the vicious children and to initiate her into the ancient ritual of love-making as we know it, which was replaced by the aforementioned hand on hand Ecstasy Transference centuries ago.

Not all the men that Barbarella meets are so helpful. Duran Duran, played by Milo O'Shea, is the Great Tyrant's right-hand mad scientist and a thoroughly unpleasant fellow. His intentions towards Barbarella have absolutely nothing to do with peace or love. He is the greatest scientific mind in the galaxy, and living in the city of Sogo has driven him past insanity to the point where nothing else matters to him except an overwhelming lust for power. He was a young man but the strain of living a life of total evil has aged him beyond his years.

His greatest discovery was the Positronic Ray, the most powerful force in the universe, and it was this weapon

that Barbarella had to find and destroy. Another of his little toys was the Excessive Machine. This looked much like an obscene church organ, the torturer could play on its keyboard with his victim inserted inside the machine, sending electronic impulses into the nervous system to induce feelings of great pleasure, but pleasure to the point of killing through sensory overload. Unfortunately for Duran Duran, when he tried it on Barbarella, her capacity for pleasure was greater than the resources of the machine, and she burned it out when both Duran Duran's frantic playing and the machine's overwhelmed inputs tried to keep up with her, much to Duran Duran's rage.

Duran Duran seemed tortured by a sense of guilt, and was always trying to rationalize his evil ways. But in the end, his lust for power overcame his intelligence and he was destroyed.

Perhaps the most important thing in the movie is the evil city of Sogo itself. It is this entity which controls the fate of all who dwell within its walls and forces them to become evil. The City has been built over a vast lake of pure liquid energy. Since this energy is of a positive nature, it is attracted to and needs a negative energy force to feed itself. Pure evil is a negative energy force, so this is what it becomes accustomed to, giving food and protection in return to those who provide it with evil forces of a physical and mental nature.

It is this energy force, called the Matmos, which determines all the events in BARBARELLA, for were it not for this consuming need for evil, none of the events in the movie could ever have taken place. Even when it is well fed, the Matmos is capricious and unpredictable, and just as likely to destroy those who serve it as well as reward them. In the end, it is the Matmos that finally resolves all the action and neatly ties up loose ends by breaking free of its barriers and destroying all the inhabitants of the city and the city itself.

But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Matmos is the Chamber of Dreams; a secret refuge wherein the Great Tyrant retired at night for rest and revitalisation, protected by an invisible, indestructible barrier that shuts the chamber off from the rest of the city. Once inside, a person can see and hear what is going on in the Tyrant's dreams. It is this touch that is probably the purest element of fantasy in this film, the materialization of another person's dreams. Unfortunately, like so much else in the film, this does not lead to anything, nor does it reveal any hidden aspects to the personality of the Great Tyrant. It is just another nice touch in a movie overrun with them. Ideas which bear no fruit and have little conceptual justification except to serve as a backdrop against which the characters play out a basically simple good versus evil story.

The design of the city of Sogo itself is another element of pure fantasy. When you first see the city, it is a small black glob perched on a nearby mountainside on long, thin black supports. It has all the appearance of some giant, obscene spider, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting victim. When Pygar flies Barbarella to the city, it seems to be a lot further off than before, and once they are inside, the interior of the city is a vast and formless expanse that seems to have no beginning and no end, but instead

(cont. p. 22)

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #18

by Buck Coulson

One of the oddest fantasy novels I've encountered seems to be very little-known. It's *SHAME THE DEVIL* by Philip Appleman, and was published by Crown in 1981. It covers quite a bit of territory, but the basic idea is that there has been a Viking settlement in southern Indiana since around 1000 AD. It's barely possible; they could cross the Atlantic, come down the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes, then portage to the Mississippi, or possibly to the Illinois and take that to the Mississippi, take that south until the Ohio River joined it, and come up the Ohio.

Southern Indiana is limestone and cave country, so setting up the longship in a cavern would be possible. According to one of the characters, the Vikings were better armed than the Indians - they had iron weapons and the Indians had stone. So they survived, made friends with their neighbors, and adapted. When the white settler arrived, the Viking descendants became "early settlers". Change the clothing design and learn English.

The protagonist is part of a New York business; his partner who has come with him is a master of making up realistic-sounding study titles, while the protagonist can turn anything into "dissertationese" (what Juanita called "educationese" when she was teaching). So they're in the business of writing dissertations for university students, with whatever faked statistics are required to prove the desired point. (This is very believable; sure it really happens, though perhaps not in the mass production manner described in the book.) One of the funnier sections involves the protagonist translating a Viking saga into dissertationese. The original is, "Then came the weary portages, bending our backs for the slaughtered oxen, the scalding summer beading our skin with salt, the red-skinned skralingar's hatred harrying us in the tangled forests." (Not bad for a saga imitation, either; lots of alliteration and the right style.) For a dissertation, this becomes: "The strategy of portaging was a mode of investigating the assumption that the role identity of oxen could be established as a dependent variable in the motivational model, the oxen having been subject to variances attributable to a relative need in the preliminary studies. Heat, however, was *prima facie* an independent variable inversely related to group performance, and the identity concept of the indigenous inhabitants was a significant, though random, selectivity factor."

I'm not sure about the Australian variety of academic gobbledegook, but it's a marvellous parody of the American variety.

Since the community is masquerading as a normal American town, it has elections. These, however, include a few differences from the American model, one of which is that the loser is given to the Wild Hunt. The close of the election in the book involves a general massacre of the losers; as one of the locals says, "The elections are getting worse all the time." There is, of course, a treasure, the location known only to the guardians. There has also been some adjustment in the Viking religion *before* their overseas voyaging; these Vikings have included some of the ideas of Mithras worship into their holy ceremonies. The hero's partner works out a possible confrontation on Rome's northern borders between legions recruited in the Near East and Vikings raiding south.

The book is an odd blend of humor and adventure, and is a lot of fun to read. The fake study titles are right on the mark; "The Film Loop as Homiletic Device in Rhode Island Vocational Schools", or "Comparative Analyses of the Peer-Group Attitudes of Random Des Moines Over-achievers." There's a love story between the protagonist and one of the guardians of the treasure, and the Vikings have adopted a lot of conservative American gun slogans; their bumper stickers (on pickup trucks, of course) include "When Guns Are Outlawed, Only Outlaws Will Have Guns", "Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People", "I Will Give Up My Gun When They Pry It Out Of My Cold, Dead Fingers". (Even Juanita has been known to mutter that last one; they're all quite genuine and I've seen them all.)

The author was at the time a teacher at Indiana University, so he knew the southern Indiana area - and the southern Indiana mentality - very well, and used it to good effect. I doubt if the book was a very big seller, and copies may well be scarce, but it's worth a little effort to acquire. It was marketed as a mainstream novel, but a Viking survival in Indiana seems to me to put it in the fantasy category.

As for Coulson activities, we're doing about as usual. John Miesel helped me work on the target backstop earlier this year, and another half-day's effort will put it back in operation. It needs two men, though; I can't lift the

railroad ties I'm using as a backstop by myself.

We had lawn-mower problems earlier in the year. We use a gas-powered mower, and mow around 3/4 or an acre or a bit less. This spring the mower quit on us, and the repairman couldn't seem to get it fixed. Finally we took it to another repair shop where the owner sold us a used mower and put a rebuilt engine on our old one, and we went to work. By this time some of the grass was 5 feet tall, though use of a scythe got it down to a couple of feet. After the first mowing, it hasn't been as hard.

We have had quite a bit of rain, but *not* the amounts they've had farther west. Arnold, MO, was on the television news one day, so I wrote Leigh Couch to ask if she was still dry, and if not, was there anything we could do. (Leigh is the mother of Lesleigh Luttrell, who was an early DUFF candidate.) She wrote back to say that she was still dry, but some of her fellow-townsmen weren't. Juanita is wondering if this is the flood that will end New Orleans' reign as a big seaport; it's been a major market for midwestern produce since before the United States existed, with products coming down the Mississippi and being transferred to ocean-going ships at New Orleans. However, dikes and levees have channelled the river for decades, and must regularly be added to - these days one can stand in a New Orleans street and look *up* to see the ships on the river. Rivers don't always follow the same channels; for the last several decades, the "natural" outlet for the Mississippi has been the Atchafalaya River, which cuts off from the Mississippi some three hundred miles above New Orleans. But allowing the river to

shift would destroy all the industry built along the Mississippi on the same course it's had since New Orleans was founded, and never mind letting nature take its course. Now we have what some have called a "five hundred year flood", and the barriers on the lower Mississippi are going to be severely tested. A good many of the upriver levees have already broken -which will reduce the pressure on the lower ones - but a big break could happen, and if it does it will take a few billion dollars to get the river back where it's wanted. (Ref: THE CONTROL OF THE WATERS, by John McPhee.)

Inconjunction in Indianapolis gave me a chance to meet David Drake, get a few books autographed, and decide I like him as a person. He stayed over Sunday night after the convention with John and Sandra Miesel, and Juanita and I dropped in there on our way home and were there for about 5 hours, so with the additional hour or two at the convention, we got reasonably well acquainted. (Now he wants to buy our ASTOUNDING collection; for someone born in 1945, he's very well acquainted with the early pulp magazines, though he doesn't own as many as he'd like.) He's also about as much of a gun fanatic as I am, which is somewhat less than the US norm.

If the wind doesn't blow and the crick don't rise. I'll be back next issue.

- Buck Coulson



IN DEPTH #8

by Bill Congreve

God is omniscient, all powerful, all knowing.... I can remember stuff like this being drummed into me, over and over, for a dozen years while I was at school. This is called a Catholic education.

What would you do if you saw a pram with two babies in it rolling out into the middle of a street? You have plenty of time to just walk out, grab the pram, and push it back to the footpath. You're on a blind corner and you can hear a truck approaching at speed. The truck will have no chance of avoiding the pram.

Instead of rescuing the children, you sit on somebody's front fence and watch, curiously, as the babies in the pram get turned into a kind of metal and cloth flavored mincemeat. As it was in your power to use minimal effort and save the kids, what kind of human being are you? At Chelmsford Hospital, a psychiatric institution in Sydney, a decade of medical experimentation ("deep sleep" therapy with its attendant unusual prescriptions of drugs) resulted directly in the deaths of twenty-six patients and the suicide of another twenty-two. A Royal Commission into the affair recommends the medical staff responsible, and the supervising Department of Health public servants, shouldn't be brought to trial because media coverage makes it impossible for them to receive a fair trial. (Information from a 2BL radio broadcast.)

I wonder if I could use that as a defense if I broke into a Department of Health building with a machine gun and did a Rambo act?

All this in a country that is still actively hunting war criminals whose crimes were committed fifty years ago. Now if the Nazis haven't had enough bad press in the last fifty years to make a "fair trial" impossible, then who has?

Now what was one of the activities for which we all fondly remember the Nazis? What images does the name "Mengele" conjure in your mind? Other than that the NSW Department of Health needs to be reported to the United Nations human rights people, what can we deduce from these events about the existence and/or nature of God?

If we believe in an all-powerful, omniscient God, then we believe in a creature who has the power to stop these acts, and chooses not to.

God's place in the universe, whether or not he/she/it exists, whether that existence can be proven causally, or what may replace God once our collective human experience of the Cosmos is great enough to encompass such things, has long been a core subject of science fiction. I can remember a marvellous old Lester del Rey story which deals with an alien invasion; both sides of the conflict (of course) claim to have God on their side, but it appears only the aliens are right. The hero is a priest.

I'm going to use the above as an excuse to review a book which can only by a great stretch of anybody's imagination be called SF. In fact only a weirdo more interested in definitions than art would even call it fiction in the first place, but it's subject matter makes it of interest, so here it is.

GOD: THE INTERVIEW; Terry Lane; factional; 1993; 133 + viii pp; ABC Books; tpb; \$14.95.

Terry Lane's God says to him during the interview: "An act cannot be evil in a secular sense, and good in a religious sense." Do you remember that bit in school where your religion teacher says something about God testing us to find who is good or evil? Back to Lane's God: "What kind of God am I if I am a constant affront to commonsense and morality?" It follows that either God doesn't exist, or he has the morals of a fly-on-the-wall voyeur inside a Nazi gas oven. Lane avoids this dilemma by assuming his God is a disinterested observer. He must do this, or his wonderful book would be very short. Yet, to quote Lane from his introduction: "Paul Davies, a physicist with whom I have conversations that only he understands, reckons that there is something going on in the universe."

Lane questions God on the general themes of miracles, Jesus, organized religion, good and evil, machines and the future, and life after death. She has lengthy discussions with Lane on such subjects as intelligent alien life, evolution, witches, the rights of minorities, famous heresies, Jews, unborn children, and all manner of theological contradictions.

While we're talking about witches: Exodus 22:18: "You shall not allow a sorceress to live." Lane goes into great historical detail at the excesses of a patriarchal church

against witches, Jews, heretics, cats, Moslems, etc in mediaeval times, all committed in the name of God, yet he misses perhaps the greatest irony of all. I think it was the late Isaac Asimov who pointed out the following in some of his writings. The word which was translated from Hebrew into Latin or Greek and then into English as "witch" or "sorceress", translates directly into English as "poisoner". "You shall not allow a poisoner to live." What value Torquemada, now?

Please forgive me, I'm in danger of sounding very bitter about my own education.

Terry Lane is renowned on ABC radio for his interviews and presentations. There is a deal of warmth, wisdom and humour in this book. Lane is a great cynic, but he has surprisingly little bitterness, instead this book is filled with a great empathy for humanity's potential. He trained as a clergyman. He is a professional communicator. He has a strong personal philosophy on life, and this book details his views on theology in an informative, opinionated and entertaining fashion. The story of how he learnt to question his own faith is at once touching and profound.

Let me quote Lane's female God a couple more times: "After all, what is a monkey but man without Mozart." "Really. Has anyone seen one of these souls?" "The idea of stockbrokers having a keener sense of shame than priests appeals to My ineffable sense of humour." "There is no evidence in history that you are getting help from outside, is there?" On the subject of Salman Rushdie: "when the tolerant is confronted with intolerance ridicule could well be your best weapon."

I'll quote once more from Lane's introduction: "In such a spirit I offer Terry Lane's conversation with God. If you don't like it, write your own."

Absolutely recommended.

THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY; Paul Voermans; novel; 1993; 302 pp; Gollancz; hc; A\$32.95.

The author of AND DISREGARDS THE REST returns with his second hardback offering from Gollancz. This is different in many ways to the first novel, which touched on a number of basic SF themes and used actors as its chief protagonists.

THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY confines itself to the alternate universe theme. Where the multiplicity of themes caused some critics to dismiss his first novel as derivative, it is difficult to make the same complaint here.

The norm in SF writing is to assume an alternate universe in which a particular event didn't occur, or occurred differently; ie, a world where the south won the civil war, or a world where Mary dropped Jesus on his head, or a world where Mrs Hitler had an abortion, or a world where Marilyn Monroe survived to blow the whistle on the Kennedy brothers... Voermans' alternate universe is not accorded this kind of factual credibility. What differentiates Voermans' alternate universe, and the original universe his character Nigel Donohoe travels from, is a lack of imagination. The characters lack the imagination to doubt what they're told by authority figures. This quality is then extrapolated to create a frenzied dystopia that subverts traditional Australian history.

Now that he has concentrated on a single theme, it becomes difficult to ignore Voermans as a fresh voice in SF.

Nigel is a bit of a nerd in dire need of somebody to slap him around a bit and tell him to grow up. He buys some mutated tropical swordtail fish that originated in a polluted stream in central America. One of these fish ducks in and out of our continuum, and Nigel ties a bit of string to it and suddenly has a door into another universe.

By accident, for he has burnt his bridge behind him, Nigel finds himself in a world ruled by ignorance and spite. The Catholic Church dominates science. Australia is still a penal colony of an engorged British Empire. The bush myth so beloved of Australian popular culture has exploded out of all proportion to become a virulent terror of the unknown. Against this background, Nigel falls in love, has the complacency literally whipped out of him by his love's corrupt older brother, and is then shipped from a country town north of Melbourne to a penal farm near Eden.

Nigel's experiences in the penal colony become a rite-of-passage in which he both learns his own strengths and the nature of the world in which he finds himself.

The novel is told with a kind of manic, undergraduate humour that is not as slapstick as Douglas Adams, but then there is a measure of serious drama mixed within this comedy. There are problems with some of the characterisation -- Nigel comes across as a young teenager until we are specifically told he is 22 years old. Some characters are never intended to be more than comedy sketch fall guys, and this affects the novel's credibility when it needs to be serious. The novel is strung together by a series of grand, theatrical, well visualised sketches that have very little to do with reality. These are the kinds of scenes you often wish to see in the movies but so rarely do.

Partly because of it's alternate universe premise. THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY bears not the slightest resemblance to any rational picture of a working culture. Voerman's created world is nonsensical, yet this fault is required for the plot to work. Unfortunately, only some of Voermans' characters show this required lack of imagination, others are all too normal, and due to this inconsistency, I was left wondering why the whole deck of cards of this alternate universe was still standing and waiting for Nigel's arrival.

The novel's weakness lies in it's very implausability, it's strength lies in satire.

There is happiness and humour in this book. It moves along well. It has a point -- to question authority is good. Voermans obviously enjoyed himself creating THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY, even though he hasn't stretched his abilities as a writer. I enjoyed the book.

THE SEA'S FURTHEST END; Damien Broderick; novel; 1993; 192 + x pp; tpb; Aphelion; \$12.95.

Looking at the package first: the cover art by Timothy Ide suits the story, and is bright and quite striking. However the illustration is poorly composed as a book jacket. The author's name and the title are forced into quite small lettering which appears cluttered and doesn't do justice to the author's stature. The icons featured in the art - a transparent skull and an inverted Sydney skyline featuring the Harbour Bridge - aren't placed to maximum effect.

This novel is a conceit based upon a minor space opera novella, part of which was previously published in AUREALIS No 2. I call it a "conceit" because the only reason for making a novel out of this appears to be simply a

clever exercise in plot construction. There are three strands: the above mentioned space opera, a series of contemporary vignettes that entertainingly document the teenage angst of a teenager who's a little worse than usual at dealing with girls, and a kind of Grecian Chorus conversation between an originally unknown human and an alien who mysteriously converse on subjects the reader needs to know.

The space opera strand is itself split into mini-chapters set in the "present", and a series of flashbacks that move towards that present. This part of the story deals with the fall of empire and the subsequent dark ages which will then be followed by the birth of federation. Numerous SF works have reconstructed this theme, most of them based in some part on the history of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages, and then the Renaissance in Europe. Amongst the most notable is Asimov's original "Foundation Trilogy". Amongst the most entertaining is Poul Anderson's future history featuring Dominic Flandry and Nicholas van Rijn. Both these authors do the concept greater justice than Broderick; this doesn't mean Broderick's story doesn't entertain.

The space opera moves towards an apocalyptic space battle, the Grecian Chorus, which is much more than a standard info-dump, delves into a mutant form of Hindu philosophy, and the guy with his foot in his mouth has a go at meeting the girl of his dreams.

How does all this fit together? Well it does, quite cleverly so, and therein lies the conceit.

Unfortunately the clever construction isn't supported by similar content. When the end came, I was disappointed. Broderick's final theme, and I can't tell you what it is for that would give away too much of his cleverness, is a variation of one which is attempted by every author at some stage in their career, and which itself has been pretty hoary ever since Kant. The final plot device used to tie together the loose ends, while again used cleverly, is a similarly over-worked and disappointing cliché.

Is Broderick just trying to give us his opinion of space opera?

If *THE SEA'S FURTHEST END* is read as a young adult, and this is possibly the intention despite the fact the novel hasn't been packaged or marketed as such, the message becomes a standard one for such literature: your life is what you make of it. Unfortunately, coded into this message is the less savoury concept that while making what you want of your life, it is also good to manipulate other lives and events surrounding you. The potential of the message is lost in the egocentricity of the contrived ending.

What there is of *THE SEA'S FURTHEST END* is well told: easily worth a rainy afternoon's entertainment when there's no decent movie on TV. But there is little substance. I enjoyed reading *THE SEA'S FURTHEST END* simply because Broderick is a solid craftsman. But the novel's only achievement is to show us how clever the author is while we wait for his next work.

TERROR AUSTRALIS; Leigh Blackmore, editor; anthology; 1993; 348 + xii pp; pb; Coronet; \$12.95.

Chris Sequeira thought of the title. We should arrange for a knighthood, or something.

Blackmore's achievement in interesting a major Australian publisher in modern horror for the first time must

be recognised. No matter how it is reviewed or received by the reading public, **TERROR AUSTRALIS** is a breakthrough book in Australian genre publishing.

Leigh Blackmore began **TERROR AUSTRALIS** the fanzine in 1988, when he published the first two issues. A third issue with vastly higher production standards appeared in 1992 and provided the impetus for the editor to attempt to sell the concept to professional publishers as a yearly anthology. Despite the uneven schedule, **TERROR AUSTRALIS** published interviews with Clive Barker and Whitley Streiber, and fiction by Ramsey Campbell, Nicholas Royle, Brian Lumley, Rick Kennett, Steve Paulsen and Kurt von Trojan, in addition to fiction, artwork, articles and reviews by seminal members of the Gargoyle Club.

TERROR AUSTRALIS the anthology is subtitled "The Best of Australian Horror". The cover isn't as strong as it could be - the lettering of the title is too small and doesn't scan quickly, and the white subtitle is a little washed out against a bright orange background. The blurbs on the back cover are effective and well laid out. Your eyes may flick past it as it sits there on a shelf of other books, but once you examine it, **TERROR AUSTRALIS** is an attractive package.

There is an effective introduction by the editor - apparently Hodder couldn't persuade an appropriate "name" horror writer to provide an intro - and the book opens with:

"The Catalyst" - Leanne Frahm. Gary is a psychopath who visits a lonely old lady at night. A chilling piece with a lovely twist that fits a developing Australian subgenre of horror that explores violence against women from a point

"The Daemon Street Ghost-Trap" - Terry Dowling. A ghost story that inspires the intellect more than it horrifies. Like his story in *INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS* Dowling invokes a 19th C atmosphere against a 20th C background and pulls off a nasty surprise at the end.

"The Wolves Are Running" - Paul Lindsey. A prophetic SF piece of children being kept in institutions and being hunted through the streets. See recent ads on TV.

"Chameleon" - Sharon A. Hansen. An obvious and poorly written idea of the hunting of a serial killer. Refer to the title for the ending.

"Mabuza's Plum" - Eddie Van Helden. An evocative and bitter mood piece originally published as poetry in *EOD*. Are things like this a waste of time and talent? Are they experimental prose?

"Mabuza's Plum" is effective; mercifully, it's also short. "Hantu-Rimba" - Dr John Hugoe-Mathews. Deals with Malaysian folklore. Illogical, weak ending. Exotic, but not at all scary.

"Losing Faith" - Louise Steer. The author describes rather than tells what should have been a much longer story of incest and child abuse in a time when the pregnant victim could be burnt for witchcraft. This is a "factional", documentary, style of fiction in which the fate of the protagonist is coded into the piece from the beginning. The original conception of the piece precludes any possibility of the victim having a chance of survival. Steer unfortunately glosses over the moral dilemma faced by her victim which would have made more of a story of this documentary piece. Effective, but limited in nature.

"Openings" - Robert Hood. Competent but minor story of an executive looking for excuses, or "openings", to salve his

conscience. The artwork gives away early in the story the fact that the "pixie" is much more than it seems. Hood's done much better than this.

"Remorseless Vengeance" - Guy Boothby. A competent boy's own tale reprinted from around the turn of the century. A ghost story set in the Pacific Islands during colonial times. "A Gift From Gehenna" - B.J. Stevens. The artwork gives away the ending. Stevens has a grotesque imagination and a feel for character and setting. The story unfortunately suffers from a poor prose style. A number of concepts are often bewilderingly fused into single sentences. Tenses are mixed within sentences. Comma splices abound. The author also avoids the use of contractions, eg, wasn't for was not. Combine all this with the sentence structure and the story is left with a pretension and heaviness it shouldn't have. There are problems with the pacing. After an effective buildup of tension, the ending comes too quickly in a manic rush of blood.

"Johnny Twofeller" - Kendall Hoffman. Occasional breakdowns in style. Little emotional impact. The story captures the feel of a seedy outback town in which everybody, including the aborigines, are comfortable with possibly outdated racist attitudes. I have the feeling this story is based on personal experience a couple of decades old. If one spoke like this to aborigines in today's outback, WWII would result. As soon as the story evokes a mysterious aboriginal tribe, everything becomes quite obvious.

"In the Light of the Lamp" - Steven Paulsen. The mysterious little shop, usually run by an ancient oriental gentleman, wherein a buyer can purchase all kinds of unusual ornaments that haunt them once they get home, is surely something of a cliché by now? A readable example of the kind with modern sensibilities.

"Feeling Empty" - Christopher Sequeira. An overwritten, squirmish little vignette. Plot structure: "A man walks down the street and a brick falls on his head." I tried to find more in it than this, but couldn't. This kind of story is pointless and cheats the reader.

"The Nicholas Vine" - Ann C. Whitehead. An atmospheric moral fable of an unloved child. I felt the causal elements didn't fit together as well as they could have, leaving the ending feeling contrived.

"The Keeper" - Geoff O'Callaghan. Simple, short, spooky, nothing new. The artwork gave away the ending.

"Out of the Storm" - Rick Kennett. A WWII naval ghost story. Evokes a sense of dread throughout. This story has a deeper meaning and demands a lot of thought from an inquisitive reader. I still can't figure the motive for the conflict depicted in the final paragraphs -- the fact of this conflict is essential for the story to be read as metaphor. I felt this weakened the story. One of the stronger stories in the book. Once again the illustration gives away the ending. "Twist of the Knife" - Sean Williams. Nice illustration. Another reprint from EOD. A clever serial killer scenario that reads like a précis for a much longer story - perhaps a novel.

"The Hut" - Sheila Hatherley. Timely motives for the protagonist, but otherwise a safe and routine ghost story which loses some interior logic along the way.

"The Hourglass" - Leigh Blackmore. Stylish. Evocative sexuality and a clever idea, but a predictable plot and ending

(dare I say it - climax?). It's a little too long. His protagonist is unforgivably stupid.

"A Dangerous Thing" - Michael Bryant. Routine setting - a guy calls up a demon to make him rich. The story has an apparently clever ending revealed to be nonsensical with only the tiniest bit of thought.

"Makeover" - Sue Isle. Clever plot bordering on one of SF's major concerns. Perhaps due to insufficient emotion and a lack of sympathetic characters, the story has an antic or comic book feel that doesn't do the idea or the author justice. "Dear Reader" - Dirk Strasser. Short and effective, with a twist at the end.

"The Vivisector" - Eddie Van Helden. An absurdly silly series of vignettes that pays little attention to reality and less to logic. Will somebody please tell me what physical qualities a foetus may have that allows for a "spontaneous Caesarian"? And what there is about the concept that may allow for the survival of the mother?

"Anzac Day" - Cherry Wilder. Excellent. A reprint from the "Skin of the Soul" anthology of women's horror stories edited by Lisa Tuttle. Like the Frahm and Steer stories, "Anzac Day" confronts, from the point of view of the potential victims, the horror that is found in everyday life. The greatest evil is that which lies within us. Wilder has found evil in a rural New Zealand landscape in the plight of a single mother and her children who must seek refuge from relatives.

"Red Ambrosia" - Bill Congreve. Who is this guy? Never heard of him. A vampire story. It doesn't really matter what I say about this because a typo in the first third of the story kills the impact of the ending.

"Heir of the Wolf" - Stephen Dedman. A delicious rave of a lunatic father's passion for the original versions of favourite fairy tales - a passion that satirises common trend in current children's publishing. Very short, but showing a sense of humour missing from the remainder of the anthology. "Neighbourhood Watch" - Greg Egan. Reprinted from APHELION, and Wagner's "Year's Best Horror". Once again a demon is conjured by people who pay too little attention to the fine print. This time a town council conjures the demon to walk the streets at night and keep the criminals at bay. This is the strongest story in the book, and well deserved its place in the year's best anthology.

"Denials" - Bill Fewer. Near future urban paranoia runs wild but is never explained. Lonely citizens exist in apartment blocks in terror of everything outside. Atmospheric and intriguing.

So, about one third of the book ranges from very good to excellent, one third shows promise, and one third doesn't belong in a volume with the word "best" in the subtitle.

One of the purposes of horror fiction is to deliver the reader a short sharp vicarious thrill they can take to bed with them and treasure while they're trying to fall asleep. Another purpose is to question the reader's values and assumptions about society. Another is to question society itself. Both readers and writers can visualise and make real the horrors in our own minds, and hence confront and learn to live with them.

Some writers, most obviously Kennett, Frahm and Wilder, use the entertainment value of their stories to make a

telling point. Good horror fiction can be both scary and exciting; these thrills can then be used for other purposes. As much of horror deals with the supernatural, writers aren't constrained by the realities of the universe or by the limitations of the human character. Horror can be read as a metaphor for the disturbing reality we find in our own culture. These are liberating tendencies which can then be used to explore new possibilities of what it means to be human. After all, good horror can be about something just as easily as SF.

Most of the writers in *TERROR AUSTRALIS* are content to simply scare the reader; ie, to provide entertainment value, and that's what it's all about. There are enough unpleasant surprises in the anthology to please even the most gruesome horror fan.

MY LADY TONGUE & AND OTHER TALES; Lucy Sussex; collection; 1990; 280 + viii pp; tpb; William Heineman Australia; This is one of those books with no price printed on the cover. From memory I paid about \$12.95. Don't quote me.

When they composed this for printing they stuck the thin margins towards the spine of the book. Curious.

The first thing that will strike you about this volume is the literary style of the cover, which is a photo mosaic of a 17th C needle tapestry overlaid with the digitised images of the faces of two women and a photo of Ronnie Wood from the Stones. Wood is bleeding from the neck....

This is a very apt and clever illustration for the final story in the book, "God and Her Black Sense of Humour", in which a feminist investigative journalist seeks to debunk the myths of the sixties by exposing the rampant sexual discrimination of the times. Instead Cecily Chauchy finds herself on the tail of a much more sinister story.

Sussex shows a very cynical view of the sixties. Sexual exploitation, under the banner "free love", is one of the prominent elements of our present mythology of the sixties, and hence becomes one of the less obvious drawbacks of the times. However, this sexism was also a blatant element of the society that gave birth to the sixties, and I suspect there was a lot more going on at the time than a bunch of male hippies oppressing a bunch of female love slaves. The popular modern image needed debunking, and Sussex does this. If you read this story simply looking for the horror at the end, then it will appear to meander unforgiveably, and you will have missed much. This is a disturbing, atmospheric and heart-felt vampire story.

Most of *MY LADY TONGUE*... fits the speculative genres; either SF or a thoughtful reworking of horror standards. The book opens with "The Man Hanged Upside Down", an atmospheric mainstream tale of ego and revenge in the art world. "Quartet in Death Minor" concerns the events precipitated when a number of residents in a quiet suburban street see Death visiting the neighbourhood.

"Montage" is the first SF story. Gabriel feels the pressure of working in a scientific research institute and holidays on the coast near an old research site maintained by the institute. Gabriel plays guitar, the guy next door makes amateur movies, and between them they question the nature of an officially created reality.

"My Lady Tongue" is a beautiful novella of a lesbian enclave seeking a utopian future by sending out

scouts to search out the location for a new, and vastly more private, retreat. Anarchy rules, and one of the scouts is injured and trapped in a moral dilemma on a farm tended by a man named Raphael.

"Red Ochre" concerns a travelling zoo, similar in nature to a circus, as they travel into the mythic power of the Queensland outback. Mutant humans are quarantined in ghettos and an aboriginal animal trainer reaches for his cultural heritage.

"The Parish and Mrs Brown" is a short story about a young woman who carries about on her shoulders her confusion about her needs in life. "Go-To" pictures another anarchic future. This time a splinter group of extremist animal liberationists bomb the research labs at the Zoology Institute. The hunt is on for an animal which survived, but which has been catnapped by the bombers.

My favourite story in the book is "The Lipton Village Society", perhaps because it's so much more relevant now than when it was first published in 1985. A group of unemployed and voluntarily unemployable (read the story!) kids engage in some world-building and design their own utopia - The Lipton Village. This story is perhaps intended as a young adult, it certainly works well as such, but its message of hope works for any reader and I identified strongly with the characters.

This is a constant throughout the collection - I identified strongly with the characters, even the feminist journalist of "God and her Black Sense of Humour" and the lesbian scout of "My Lady Tongue". It is this rich empathy for humanity in all its variety which I found the strongest element of Sussex's work. Her SF stories simply contain enough technology, or discussion of science, whichever is relevant, to place the reader in a setting rich with social extrapolation and character. We are given hints in "My Lady Tongue", and "Go-To" which shows us how the societies in those stories occur. We see from the technology, and the shape of the society, exactly what is possible, yet Sussex's concerns remain the people in her stories.

My only wish is that Sussex had included an introduction, or an afterword. While her stories speak for themselves, I would have loved seeing where they came from.

MY LADY TONGUE & AND OTHER TALES is only three years old, but there aren't a lot of copies of around now. Try your local specialty dealer or Slow Glass Books. It's worth finding. Recommended.

QUARANTINE; Greg Egan; novel; 1992; 219 + iv pp; tpb; Legend; \$17.95.

This column began with a discussion on the nature of God. It's only fitting that it should end with a discussion of God's inverse: the nature of reality, the nature of humanity, and how the second may affect the first.

The core dilemma faced by hard SF writers is how to incorporate the knowledge necessary for the story, into the story, and have the result remain readable.

As the scientific knowledge around them increases, hard science writers must know and be able to communicate more and more, and the audience interested in such esoteric knowledge becomes smaller and smaller. However much the hard SF writer feels otherwise, and despite the excellence and relevance of their work, casual readers who are

interested in a fictional discussion of the contents of a semester's work at university are rare. SF writers must retain strong story values and become accomplished science journalists in order for their work to both fascinate and attract readers. This immediately restricts other possible literary accomplishments, as so much of the book is taken in explaining background. This is an old argument.

An alternative is for hard SF writers to simply present the result of their investigations as reality, and make no attempt to explain it. The intelligent and educated reader may then puzzle out what is going on. For other readers hard SF works may slip across that difficult to define boundary between SF and fantasy. These other readers may simply approach the work for the story value, making no attempt to puzzle out what, for them, is proof of Clark's Law "A sufficiently advanced level of science and technology is indistinguishable from magic." (Or whatever it is.) Hence a novel becomes, at once, both hard SF or fantasy. I'll extrapolate a little and say that for any scientifically rigorous SF novel, the distinction between SF and fantasy is consciously or unconsciously determined by the educational level, logical ability and intentions of the reader, and is not inherent in the work being read.

To put it simply: the science in hard SF must be fascinating and be entertainingly explained, or the writers face losing either their audience or part of their message.

Of course this kind of idea only matters if you're fascinated by definitions and rigorous logic. As always, the most important things are the intentions of the author, and what a reader gets from a book; which two things may not be identical.

QUARANTINE carries a load of scientific explanation which ranges all the way from Olbers' Paradox to quantum mechanics and the nature of reality.

Nick Stavrianos is a private detective hired by an unknown party to investigate the kidnapping of severely retarded Laura Andrews from the Hilgemann Institute, one of a chain of MacDonalds-like mental institutions. Meanwhile, the solar system has been contained on the *outside* of a singularity that encircles the rest of the universe. Somebody out there doesn't like us and has put up a fence.

Nick avoids a guilt trip on the death of his wife by having a module of her personality inserted by nanotechnology into his mind. *Karen* now jumps in and out of his life whenever she is needed, and Nick is able to circumvent the normal process of grief, guilt and acceptance. He likewise has a number of other modules inserted in his mind. *Cypherclerk* acts as a modem between Nick's speech centres and the communications software he is wired with. *Backroom Worker* uses excess brain capacity to carry out routine searches of either his own memory, or any other databases he can access. *Boss* helps him run the autonomous parts of his physiology. *P3* is part of a software package Nick retains from his police days. He calls it "the zombie boy scout". When he invokes *P3*, Nick is forced to dispassionately operate according to a predetermined set of priorities, and personal survival is very high on the list. This helps circumvent his humanity.

Nick invokes these technologies, investigates, and then puts together a set of circumstances, or opportunities, which may account for Laura's disappearance. There is no

apparent motive for the kidnap.

Nick travels to New Hong Kong, an enclave in Northern Australia leased in perpetuity to the colonists by the local aborigines, and finds Laura in the clutches of a research group using her to investigate telekinesis. Brain dead Laura, who can't even open an unlocked door on her own, has escaped before, and the theory is that she did this by unconsciously manipulating probability on the quantum level from a universe in which she's on the *inside*, to a universe in which she's on the *outside*.

The story then disappears into an intense roller-coaster ride of speculation; using quantum mechanics, probability and cosmology to discuss the possibilities of intelligence and personality. Sound confusing? It takes Egan 200 pages to get his ideas across, I'm not likely to manage in 1000 words.

My favourite concept in QUARANTINE is the possibility of self-awareness in the multiplicity of a single human existence across a number of different realities. Let's try again. Alternate universes. This morning the cat scratched you, or this morning the cat just licked your fingers. Two possibilities. Two alternate universes. Every decision you make eventuates in a new universe and all these universes are equally real until somebody observes one of them. It is the act of *observation* which determines reality. This is a key principal of quantum mechanics, and it works on the subatomic level - a level tiny enough so that the concentration of particles, or probabilities, doesn't result in a lump of matter we can hold in our hand and say is *there*. In QUARANTINE, Egan's *what if?* is an extrapolation of this principle to the macro world. He has made the concept of *observation* a conscious choice for the subject of that observation by allowing the subject to choose between all the possible universes that result when a subject is or isn't observed. A human being therefore may co-exist in a vast number of separate realities, and this co-existent being may become so complex given the number of different outcomes, that it becomes self aware.

That should give you an idea of Egan's incredibly complex subject matter. Unfortunately, he loses sight of both his characters and his social setting. The essence of the story is taken away from his characters and is placed instead on a discussion of natural philosophy. Once Nick masters the above principle and invokes *P3*, he becomes a mechanical device used to advance the plot and expound physical - or philosophical - principles. The novel is very intense, and the content can comfortably justify greater length. At this length the characters are lost under the load. QUARANTINE is a marvellous intellectual exercise, and deserves to be read on this basis alone, yet it needs a stronger plot, and in particular much more in the way of character based subplot, to be fully successful.

For the breadth of Egan's vision, and the scope of what he has attempted, QUARANTINE deserves its Ditmar for the best Australian long SF of 1992.

SHORT TAKES:

GHOST BEYOND EARTH; G.M. Hague; novel; 1993; 591 + x pp; pb; Pan Australia; \$11.95.

Gee, artist Mike Worrall must be making a living just from Pan these days. The cover design and artwork of

this thing make me wonder if book designers can sue for breach of copyright.

I can only do a short review of this as I've already covered it extensively a couple of times elsewhere. This is a horror novel set in the near future, with about a third of the action taking place aboard a space station. The science is a little scratchy, there is little discussion of the effect of new technology, but the main characters are believable and the novel works well both as a thriller and as a horror story. It's genuinely spooky in places. For the price, it's good value. Recommended - but, typical of Pan, they come back at the end and ask you to buy the sequel. This is frustrating.

ZENITH; Dirk Strasser; novel; 1993; 394 + vi pp; Pan Australia; \$12.95.

Another Mike Worrall cover. This one quite impressively illustrates the story.

I covered this fantasy novel here a couple of issues ago, but it's out now, so I've put this in as a reminder. ZENITH is the story of eighteen year old twin brothers, Atreu and Teyth, who must Ascend to the Summit of their curious world - a journey which is much more than just a right of passage - and hence achieve understanding of their society. But the world of the Mountain is itself undergoing both a physical and social metamorphosis, and only Atreu understands what is happening.

This is the first novel I've read in which women approach a patriarchal religion with the appropriate attitude. I can't help feeling that the Mountain of ZENITH's landscape represents the consensual fantasy universe, and that it is no coincidence that it is moulded as close to the shape of a giant penis as geographical restrictions allow, and that the coming physical crisis of the mountain is nothing but that consensual universe shuddering towards an orgasm. Strasser had fun with the symbology of this novel.

This is the strongest offering so far from Pan Australia in their move into speculative genre fiction. Absolutely recommended, even if there is going to be a sequel.

BEST NEW SF 6; Gardner Dozois, editor; anthology; 1992; 575 + xl pp; Robinson Publishing; \$14.95.

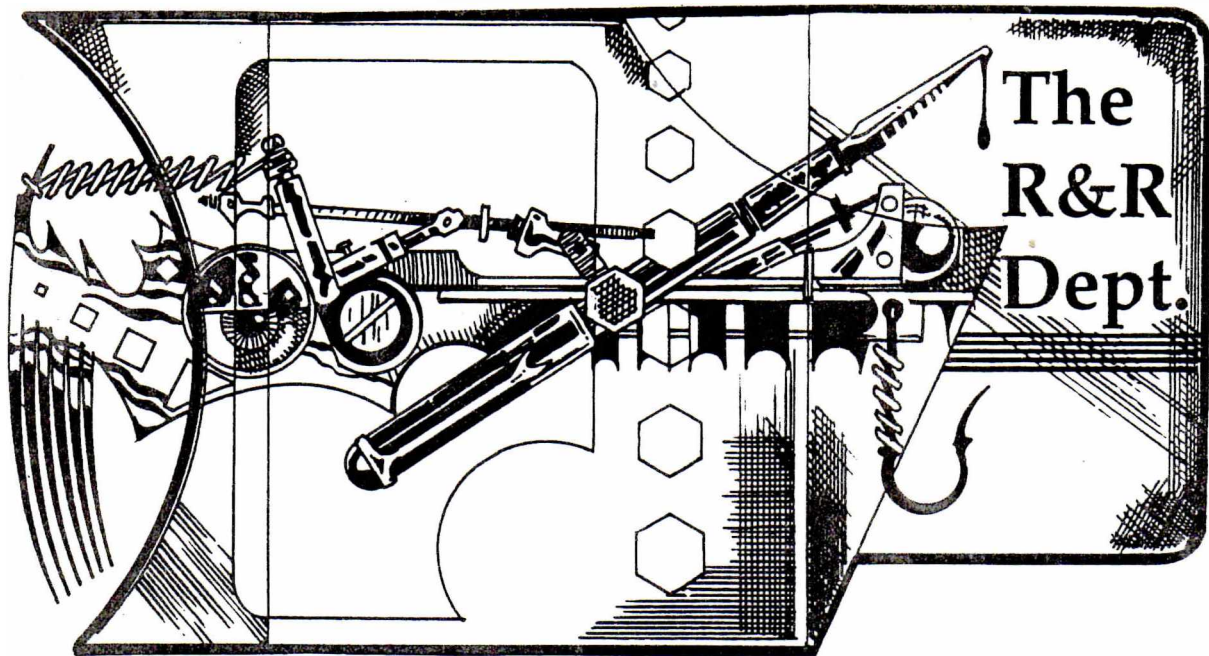
For those not familiar with the series, this is the British reprint of Dozois's annual "Year's Best SF...". The British reprints run three behind the US numbering: this is the "Ninth Annual Collection", or the best SF from 1991. I don't know why it's taken this long to be distributed in Australia, the next edition has just been published in the US.

The price of these things is also uneven. For once it's cheap. I can remember one of the earlier volumes going for about \$23. This is the definitive year's best SF anthology. At the moment I think it's also the only one. The thing is massive, and the fiction is of very high quality. Just open up the contents page and have a look: Rusch, "The Gallery of his Dreams"; Kress, "Beggars in Spain"; Resnick, Robinson, Kojima, Gibson, Benford, the list goes on, 28 stories in all. There is also an informative 26 page summary of the year in SF which discusses books, magazines, films, authors, editors, conventions and obituaries.

This is about the best value SF on the shelves of your local bookstore at the moment. The price is significantly cheaper than imported copies of the US edition. And why am

I covering it in a column on Aussie SF? There's two Greg Egan stories on board.





SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd., Galtersburg, MD 20882, USA.

I really love your doing the color covers (but know they must cost the proverbial fortune) and especially with Peggy Ranson's work (in case you hadn't heard this year's fanartist nominees - Peggy, Linda Michaels, Teddy Harvia, Diana Stein, Stu Shiffman, and Merle Insinga) - way to go - love to see it in color!

I want to read the leadoff story slowly. Ah, fantasy ... I am not too interested in hard science stuff, but have come across the unusual hybrid that manages to incorporate elements of both without glaring incongruities. Since that is not the rule - I cannot come up with selections which I would readily read as far as fantasy is concerned.

Ah, the history of panels ... thank you for running it! I was unaware of the extensiveness of fandom in Argentina - another thank you for the fan history information.

Harry Warner has two nominations this year - fanwriter and also non-fiction work - the **WEALTH OF FABLE** book. Two for the price of one!

I stand in awe of the calibre of locs you get and wish I could provide a missive of equivalent quality, but at least I am forcing myself to get a reply off to you, even if it isn't quite up to your average (??) reader!

Went back to the **FINGER**... the violence turned me off for the moment - I *will* try again, but if I wait until I get to it, this will probably be into next month.

I'm watching **THE FIRE NEXT TIME** - a two-parter that I managed to get taped - not knowing if I was going to want to watch it or not (and now I'm concerned because the tape was all the way to the end, so I may end up without the final scene - we'll see. It is about the near future - haven't heard any dates yet - some slightly ahead of time technology - and a lot of heat/fires/famine (gee and above I was talking about violence..?). I'm also watching it now... while the trees are budding and the flowers growing and blooming.

I seem to always be apologising to you for not sending a letter that reflects my enjoyment of TM or the

amount of work that went into it. I hope you realise it is not a case of not liking or reading it - it is really a lovely production - and I hope you are proud of it! (22.4.93)

STEVE JEFFERY, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, England.

Black mark. Go to the back of the class and stay there. Go immediately to Jail. Do not pass Go. Do not collect 200 pounds.

I have a copy of **THE MENTOR 78**, which you kindly sent me... It's an impressive looking magazine. Big, good clear layout; though Scout's cover, well drawn, verges towards the gruesome and an uneasy blend of the alien and the anthropomorphic. I'd hate to see that critter try to move.

Inside: I'm not sure if **THE MENTOR** qualifies as a pukka fanzine or a semi pro. The availability details inside the front cover and the loccol, and the number of familiar names therein, inclines me towards the former, though it's rare to see such a comprehensive book review section, or even a comic strip, in a fanzine. As you say in your editorial, you're not exactly a "faanish" fanzine.

Duncan Evans' **COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS** confused me a little. I'm not a great reader of fantasy (at least of the goblin and wizard variety) and less so of humorous fantasy, so I couldn't really engage with it; even as Duncan was nudging the character of Coldmace from goblin nastiness towards the reader's sympathy, I could feel the strings being tugged.

Problems also with Evan Rainer's **PERIPATETIC CORPSE**, which suffered from some confusing info dumping all over the place, hurriedly trying to establish places, people, plots and counter plots, which seems to beset this sort of cloak and dagger fiction.

HEY, HE'S A FISH: I think all I can usefully comment on this one is

```
while (c=*fish()++!=\0) printf("\n??");
```

I'm not sure at all what that was all about. Fish, Tin Fish, Torpedo? Maybe.

Andrew Darlington starts with a nice, and decidedly ambiguous, comment. There are several critics who might do with their opinions so succinctly concentrated. Gladly,

Andy is not one, and though I never really fell under Asimov's spell, being hijacked almost immediately by Dick and Bester, Asimov leaves a considerable reputation, rather than individual works, as his legacy. But he was long gone as a moving force by the time I re-entered the SF scene in the mid eighties.

Of the two main articles, I found Bill Congreve's FANTASY DOWNUNDER the more interesting, despite the fact that I haven't really heard of any of the books he mentions. Interesting too, because someone has recently asked me about Young Adult Fantasy and why it differs from some of the just as juvenile (though not specifically addressed as such) fantasy and skiffy in the genre at large. Bill's discussion of Kelleher's THE RED KING and Carmody's OBERNEWTYN and THE FARSEEKERS confirms my feelings that a lot of these works carry an implicit or explicit message of tolerance for others, and that writers in this area do not (or cannot) take their audience's familiarity with the genre or the wider field of literature for granted. The writing becomes more direct, clearer, though not always simpler.

The piece on Argentinian fandom and fanzines was interesting and shows a completely different world to that of Anglo-American fandom. Far more fiction orientated than the fandom we're used to, where "fan fiction" almost always means involved in-jokes full of name dropping or spoof shaggy dog stories.

Carcinogen and Carnage: The names give it away at once, and the strip itself confirms that we're in territory that is perhaps even more (male) adolescent juvenile than some of the things Bill Congreve was discussing. This sort of "titties and bums" sexism doesn't do anything at all - it neither shocks, or excites, nor is particularly well drawn (the anatomy is unconvincing and the poses awkward). I don't really see the point of this sort of comic, though things like SANDMAN do have real merit, even for someone like me who rarely looks at these things. Pass.

Not much I can pick up from the loccol, with comments on the fiction and articles in previous issues, and it reads more like a feedback column than a rolling discussion. I note that my reservations about the Carnage and Carcinogen strips are echoed by several others and wonder if these should concentrate more on story and less on bizarre images. I suppose there's a limit to what you can do in handful of pages, but I would like to see someone try something different and more tightly plotted for a change.

I note the mention of Robert Rankin's EAST OF EALING in the Other Releases at the end of the reviews column. Now, I thought these (collectively as THE BRENTFORD CHRONICLES) were pretty off the wall, and I used to live on the fringes of Brentford (and even, at one point in Penge, which even Rankin's characters regard as vaguely mythical). I loved them. I really wonder what you'll make of them down under.... (30.6.93)

I'd barely sent you a loc on THE MENTOR 78 when #80 arrived with a welcome thud on the mat.

Opening with Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR. This was entertaining, well written, and one or two magic moments. I particularly loved "the children rioted". I could instantly visualise the chaos of that moment.

I have a certain amount of difficulty with both the tendency to trilogies and series in SF and fantasy and with poetry in general (the latter, I concede, my loss), so that this 2 volume, 26 book epic of an SFnal poem is not likely to have me rushing to the library. Unless I have a very loaded bookshelf that needs chocking up. I will stick with Steve Sneyd's interesting and rather more condensed analysis of this neglected... er... epic.

At this point I'd like to raise a small quibble (keep moist and away from direct sunlight it says on the packet) about this "continued page 71" method of breaking up articles. Personally I find it disrupts any flow in reading an article, having to flick backwards and forwards and keep a finger between the pages. I find it a trial with magazines like LOCUS, where the review I want is always tucked away in the back pages. I appreciate why you do it, and I do prefer that articles start on a fresh page each time.

I can't say I got that much out of James Verran's article. I would assume that most people who would be interested have already invested in a dictionary and thesaurus as basics. Perhaps less typical, and only now starting to be included with word processors, are grammatical and style aids. Frequently recommended are Strunk and White ELEMENTS OF STYLE and FOWLER'S MODERN ENGLISH USAGE, though the Oxford or Longmans are equally worthy. What about other reference works, given that few can afford to splash out on the full ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA (let alone shelve it)? If this article is geared to aspiring writers (as it seems to be) then possibly one of the Year-books might be a useful and worthy addition.

Reading Andy Darlington's introduction to JET ACE LOGAN made me regret that I have just returned Dennis Gifford's ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF COMIC CHARACTERS (Longman 1987) to the local library, where I am sure a number of these strips are listed. The one I do remember is THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, which appeared in multicoloured glory in the pages of LOOK AND LEARN. I believe it has been more recently resurrected in another comic.

Bill Congreve's review of magazines and small press fiction was a useful pointer to a couple of titles I should check out via the NSFA perhaps, EIDOLON and AUREALIS. I look forward to his comments on Lucy Sussex's MY LADY TONGUE (which I must pull out and re-read sometime) and the Damien Broderick book.

Gorgeous illo from Peggy at the bottom of that page, by the way. A mega-loc from Mae, which was one of the high points of the R&R letters column. In fact it almost was the letters column. Since several of the locs are on the contents of an issue I missed, THE MENTOR 79, due to a combination of tardiness by myself and the wunnerful GPO, I can't really comment. I did like Mae's issue by issue review of THE MENTOR from 59 onwards.

Bill Congreve's letter on the state of Australian publishing was thought provoking, though I don't know how much effect 90 odd author grants would have on the range of Australian fiction. And while such grants might be expected to support the more experimental or "literary" (hence - often - uncommercial) works. Those who remember the original NEW WORLDS, however, also remember that when the works start getting too daring then the threat of pulling the

grant can be used to try and keep these tricky authors and editors in line. Cynical? who us? Surely not.

Hey, don't gafiate, as you comment to the letter from Sean Williams; I've only just discovered you. (27.7.93)

TERRY WALKER, Lot 32 Annette Rd., M/S 454, Lowood, Qld 4311.

In reply to TM 77, I must reply to Joy Buchanan's plea with the following comment... *slightly warped?* Only *slightly warped?* Joy? The only thing that stops me from refuting that statement is all the blackmail you have on me!! Congratulations on your exam results, - I really hope you get there.

I loved the cover of #77 - I had been reading Anne McCaffrey's *THE COELURA*, and the cover fitted in very well. Some short notes about TM 77 follows. I really didn't like any of the fiction... it wasn't bad, I just didn't enjoy it. I could see where *GODDESS OF STONE* was headed. I think I liked it the best. *OBUNAGA'S FINGER* reminded me of the seamy detective stories I was never fond of, and for some reason *THE SALE OF YOUTH* just didn't fire. I really can't be more explicit than that, as it comes down to a matter of taste more than anything else.

TM 79 was interesting... I enjoyed Pavel Viaznikov's article. Some of the stories sounded interesting. I once tried to learn Russian, so sympathise with the translation problems. There was a story about a Russian/English translating computer that was fed in the English phrase "out of mind, out of sight". It translated it into Russian, and then was asked to translate the Russian into English. It came back as "invisible maniac". I also enjoyed Andrei Lubenski's article. I also enjoyed Andrew Darlington's column.

I'm still trying to absorb *THE BIG BOOM* and *WHAT IS SF FOR?* I wasn't 100% healthy when I read them, and haven't reread them yet. *PRAY FOR THE PREY* had some interesting ideas in it, though I'm assuming that the creature was a Bleeder. It didn't really settle the issue one way or the other. *BROOKLYN BLUES* was very enjoyable. I knew what was coming, but that didn't spoil the story. It almost seems to be an abridged version of a longer tale. Is it, Brent, or is this wishful thinking?

The comics. Like a lot of the other readers, I didn't like them. I also grew up on American superhero comics in my teens, and these just don't seem to have any real story-line or even a point to make. At least Superman had a history and some point to make (Truth, Justice and the American Way - at least they were up front about it), but unless the writers are worried about Womens' Lib, the story-line just drifts from kill to kill. Still, every one to their own taste. As long as it's not on sale to unsuspecting kids, I'll leave it up to Ron to make the final decisions.

Like Leigh Blackmore, I enjoy Mike Jefferies. Most of my reading comes through the library system, but I did manage to get Vols 1 and 3 of his *Loiemasters Of Elundium* cheap. I have also gone through Leiber's *Swords* series, and am trying to collect them again. Good luck on your anthology, Leigh, and you came over well on Ray Martin.

Shane Dix, what were you on when you wrote?

I was going to comment on Tolkien's trilogy originally being one volume, but Buck Coulson beat me to it. I gleaned that fact from a documentary on Tolkien's life I

saw on the ABC, which was interesting. I also didn't realise that C. S. Lewis was very instrumental in persuading Tolkien to continue writing *LOTR* when several other writers in Oxford were very critical of the work.

Steve Sneyd's letter made me go back and look at the poem *GRAND TOUR OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM*. Could the word "arcase" actually be meant to be "arcade"? (12.7.93)

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

#78 seems, even by *THE MENTOR* standards, a particularly "data-dense" issue, ie loaded with things which call for response, though this may be partly because brain still feels like porridge after v. "end-loaded" assignmentwise final stages of the Cert. Ed.

"Begin at the beginning" is usually a good rule, they say - the cover has a curiously evocative ugliness, like an identikit picture based on the confused memories of a frightened witness - it shouldn't work, but it does.

This is also true of *COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS* - I can't usually get into slightly humorous sub-Tolkieniana at all, but this was so vividly written that I couldn't resist sticking to the end. (Which end was, I must admit, I felt was a bit of a cop-out - either Evans couldn't think of an ending, or likelier, was setting the scene for a sequel - the Coldmace/Gunther (by now King Gunther?) final showdown?). The fox cubs were, also, a nicely handled running gag, as was the "maggot" in Coldmace's belly.

Buck Coulson always comes up with some evocative fragments of "America the Bizarre" to satisfy the imaginings of us foreigners, and the Davis Firearm Museum cum Hotel is another memorable gem.

HEY, HE'S A FISH is fascinating, not just because for me it works powerfully as a poem *and* as a depiction of a "mechanical" brain developing awareness (complete with morph back into computerese as relief from pain of "new feeling") but because it so vividly illustrates the artificial arguments at work in trying to divide poetry into narrative and non-narrative: here we have an externally static situation, in which nothing "happens" in terms of the "boatfish" acting or being acted on, but in which there is a strongly dynamic picture of the developing mental workings in "inner space".

Verran's and Darlington's pieces are both clear and useful, but stir no reaction.

ESCAPE FROM YINN is a cheerful feghoot, just the right length.

Bill Congreve's piece is again interesting, but stirs no reaction other than a vague feeling that it's good news that independent Australian genre publishing is keeping afloat through the recession.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE I found irritating, though I stuck to the end. Irritating, *not* because it's the umpteenth revival since *THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY* of "moving body syndrome" in fic - this image of mortal remains in "Brownian motion" must stir very deep fears, since it permits so much reuse (perhaps it didn't begin with *THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY*, but with Jesus' "corpse" getaway in the New Testament, or maybe even earlier in myth?), but because Rainer overloads the episodic tale with "tell not show". A complex new Solar

geopolitics, a detailed geography of Sydney Tomorrow, in-and-out-jokes, the potentially self-contained story-line of the "retired" android combatants thrown away amid the other clutter, to me it's all too much at this length... either it should have been longer, or the data input reduced or conveyed in a more user-friendly way. Perhaps a comic strip format would have worked better? As it is, the genuinely funny or intriguing bits are just submerged in detritus, like "our hero" as the tale begins. It's a pity, because the future universe created has a lot of possibilities - maybe now, with it all spewed out in one go like a honk-up, Rainer can reuse it in future in a more controlled way?

The Argentine saga continued to fascinate till the end - hard tho it is to follow in places, partly because of the evocative but sometimes baffling use of language (which sometimes produces beautifully "sideways" effects - turning CHILDHOOD'S END to THE END OF INFANCY, like the apocryphal computer translation that rendered "out of sight out of mind" as "invisible lunatic", is redolent of a "parallel universe" Clarke classic), and partly because of the teasing hints about Argentine politics, economics, and lifestyle generally (why and how is the interior so cut-off from Buenos Aires, for example?). Is transport so poor, did the military dictatorship impose restrictions on travel, is a psychological block at work, or what? I was particularly interested to note several mentions of poetry, though it isn't clear whether this was genre poetry, or "mainstream" poetry used in magazines that had a genre fiction content also (I don't remember seeing Noguerol's address included, so I'm assuming he doesn't want correspondence about his article, but if you do get in touch with him for any reason, I would be grateful if you could ask him about that particular aspect - ie his mentions of poetry.).

THE INITIATE, although slow-moving, even for a first episode, is probably justified in this because there's so much scene-setting information to get across. I'll certainly be looking forward to finding out "what happens next". (Australian comix seem to be in a lively state - Chuck Connor's THINGUMMYBOB over here has been running a funny and action-packed series about a future war between Sydney and Melbourne for a few issues now.)

Coming to loc-reactions, I'm glad to see the poetry is getting more response - I'll return specifically to John Alderson's loc - the poetry, that is, not his startling new theory of the difference between dictatorship and republicanism, which I'm sure you've had a myriad reactions to (though I can't resist mentioning that the mental picture of one of the Ard Righ's of Ireland, a system that ceased to function at the very latest with the Norman invasion, taking time out from battling the Vikings or the underkings or whoever to form a cabinet, present a budget, and present bills to parliament is one of the immense parallel world fictional possibilities - "And now prey silence for His Royal Excellency The Ard Righ of All Ireland, Niall O'Neill of the Nine Hostages" ... "Ladies, Gentlemen, before I report on my recent and highly successful cattle-stealing raid on the Island of Mona, which has enabled me to cut taxes by 10% for the third year in succession, I wish to introduce a Bill before this noble Dail which will, I am convinced, deal with the increasingly troublesome problem of unlicensed magic cauldron operatives boiling dead warriors back to life without

permission from their relatives, and hence disrupting the inheritance of property throughout our beautiful island.." etc etc...).

This is getting out of hand lengthwise... but must say was very struck by Brian Earl Brown's point that today's cities would no longer be viable spin-dizzied entities in the way Blish described. You could argue that this might not yet apply to Third World Cities, and that even in Western inner cities there are pockets of "exportable" activity - those who run drug sales in Moss Side, or the gypsy/traveller scrapmen, or the small scale marginal entertainment businesses in such places, would find ways of making livings elsewhere - but in general he's put his finger on a very precise image of urban decay - "Trenton? Sorry, won't fly no more."

I think Andruschak wildly oversimplifies in the question of science v religion... surely, quite apart from the point that Kardeshev made, that any civilisation of I think level 4 or above would seem to us to function like a God or Gods, there have been a number of quotes from scientists over here in the press relating how the workings of Chaos Theory, quantum physics and so on have made them rethink. In any case, as it's "impossible to prove a negative", atheism is surely an unscientific position - I would have thought a "true scientist" is likely to be left in an agnostic position, if nothing else because any faith in the kind of simplistic earth-centred/Solar-centred monotheist religions is going to be equally unscientific! (Or maybe I'm interpreting as his view what he really means to be some kind of consensual poplar science view?)

Returning to the poetry section thish - a fascinating variety (and obviously too many to react to 'em all). In no particular order, I was struck by the bleak almost ballad quality of Trent Jamieson's PATTERNS EYE SPIRAL and PIES AND DEAD SNAILS, with the odd bizarre image that would "come" from those ballads "world turned upside down" tradition (which lives on in children's verse) or from Lear or surrealism (or "drug culture"/Bob Dylanesque) but, which ever the stylistic source, works well. (With each tho, I felt the "message" element at the end was a bit too blatant, though if they were sung, rather than read on the page that problem would lessen, I suspect).

William Robertson's GROUND ZERO will be noted in a "database" I'm assembling of nuclear holocaust-theme genre verse - with a theme so often used, it's striking that he's found such freshness of approach..., the vacuums and so on. NUANCE is bleakly beautiful, a small gem of unexpected yet in retrospect just right images - DIAMONDS .. cropped hair...tar-coloured eyes." My thanks to J. C. Hartley for dedicating the most effective of his this time, though I did really enjoy the dry wit of IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE and WARP MAN.

Turning to John Alderson's loc, I have also been pondering for some time what reaction I should have to someone spending a couple of months pondering my loc - have I mysteriously developed the power to invade other minds, and if so why the hell can't I use it in some constructive fashion to improve my life? (Incidentally, I wish he'd listed his poetry collections, the title, publisher, year etc, for my ever-accreting database - maybe next time?)

I quite agree that "poetic license" now has a jokey connotation - it has, in that context, well-outlived his

Crossing the Line Ceremony in 1949, since, as "Poetic License" (that pun again) it served as the title of a little magazine published in Middlesborough in the early '80s, and, tho I can't at the moment lay hands on evidence, I have seen it used in that way since.

However, that bit of fact is mere trivial

"Jargon is as jargon does" - or "one man's jargon is another man's technical term" - ie there *are* unfortunately situations where it saves a lot of space to use a technical term rather than give a full "ordinary language" description. "Black hole" is a good genre eg; "table" in fact is a sort of jargon, a "shorthand" description of a category of furniture sharing certain characteristics (to oversimplify wildly) - we are back on "The Martian problem", is the old writing workshop technique where participants are asked to describe *anything* to an alien with *no* knowledge of our planet - it is amazing how long-winded it becomes to describe a doorknob, say, or a teacup. In the same way, my loc was long enough as it was without attaching a definition of every term used.

This is, of course, quite apart from the definitional problem in itself, of the same word meaning different things to different people. For example, in Alderson's sentence "poetry is the prime reality from which all other writings draws its reality" he is clearly using the word "reality" in a highly specialised sense peculiar to himself, so that his statement, pleasing as it is to see him describe such importance to poetry, in fact becomes an example of "higher gibberish" to anyone who does not share his definition of the word.

I certainly agree with his point about dictatorial societies taking poetry seriously as a threat - the files of Amnesty International are full of imprisoned poets in Third World and other countries (I had been led to believe that post-USSR Russia had released all political prisoners from the old regime, and that generally Russian poets were complaining that they had lost their audience now that they could safely say what they liked, but perhaps Yeltsin's regime is simply better at concealing actions against poets than its predecessor, and hence only Alderson is aware that they continue to suffer there in this way).

The question of the usage of the word Fiction in the term Science Fiction poetry, as in many other contexts (is Science Fiction music equally impossible?) raises a lot of interesting areas for discussion. To speak of Science Poetry, without the word Fiction, is to enter another "sub-genre", which treats of "state of the art knowledge of phenomenon". Andrew Joron, M. J. Engh, Suzette Haden Elgin, M. R. Collins and others debated at great length in such places as STAR*LINE and THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION the whole question of whether narrative is or is not escapable in genre poetry - it is, tho, pointlessly rehashing debates here which I think in any case hinged mainly on questions of definition, but I do find Alderson's statement that "the fiction doesn't come into it" is preposterous, however "fiction" is defined. As said before, poetry does not, cannot, truly delineate reality, assuming a shared reality exists, and therefore *all* poetry is fictive to that extent. SF poetry is doubly so, since it is deliberately working in the realm of "what if", or, putting it another way "Is, but not yet." Moreover, to look at fiction from another angle, in

a Heisenbergian sense any poem is imbued with the "ghost of narrative", since it is in fact the narrative of the writer's struggle with his "material", whatever that be (As an aside, I loved Boyd's description of the reptilian brain as concerned with "mimicry, territoriality, and acquisitiveness". I have long thought the reptile brain is the part of the mind that writes poetry, and that definition of Boyd's explains a lot of poetry's characteristics very helpfully!).

Alderson again uses words with a meaning all his own when speaking of "reluctance to create something that did not exist in a real world" as "fantasy". I presume he means that he can write "alternate-history" but not "above" fantasy, with no "roots", but I would have thought the latter impossible anyway.

His view that SF poetry is no different in kind from other types of poetry on other themes is certainly not a unique one - Jessica Amanda Salmonson, herself a genre poet, calls the term "merely a device of community", and English poet Peter Sandom said "If SF poetry is a separate genre, why not gardening poetry?"

So I can certainly see the logic of Alderson's view here (about the only point in his comments where I find that possible) - and it is no particular answer to say that precisely the same logic applies to SF as a whole - ie why cut that off from other areas of fiction?

The answer is I think two-fold: (a) it is to some extent forced on the genre from outside, by marketeers and critics, from within by fans (b) more importantly, that the major difference is that SF stems from "The First Mainstream", the "fiction of what if" as it were, the collective search for understanding and control of environment on a social scale which underlies myth, legend, epic, early religion and so on; whereas the majority of other fiction (with many exceptions, like Magic Realism, Socialist Realism, etc) stems from "The Second Mainstream" - ie the Protestant search for individual salvation.

This general answer in terms of SF as a whole applies to SF poetry, at least within limits, and does give a reason for at least provisionally treating it, and the poetry of the co-genres, Fantasy and Horror as distinguishable in more than detail of subject from other poetries. :

PS. A poem, below - springs from yr cover

FOR AN ADVANCED SCOUT, MAROONED

liquid filth shot
up to wreck my ship, full
of vile

life I must face;
horrid its lack of limbs enough
as if

cut off at birth
by cruel world mother. Han'd to soil my
gun. Splash-

down shockwave'd
done for them. Alone now, all eyes full of their muck,
not years

(5.7.93)

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

THE JAM JAR is simply the most enjoyable story I've read in TM since USED BOOKS. It's amusing and well-crafted with a punch line to boot. What more could the

reader ask for? I hope Brent can come up with more shorties of similar quality in the near future.

Buck Coulson's Marion, Indiana, reads like a town suitable for a Spielberg movie. Looking to the left I see a cute illo from the ever-reliable Peggy Ranson. Steve Sneyd's article would have been better appreciated if accompanied by illustrations of the subject publications. James Verran's article on reference books was both interesting and informative. Probably the best place to find such remaindered volumes at giveaway prices (in Sydney anyway) is the Max Elle chain of bookshops. If you can't find a particular volume (this applies to sf as well, or any subject) give their warehouse at West Ryde a ring. They'll usually supply by mail at the cost of postage.

JET-ACE LOGAN. Ah, now you're talking my kind of language! This is an excellent homage to the original. It was worth the wait, Andrew. Both Ron Turner and yourself have come up with the goods. I hope there are more adventures in store for us old-timers.

Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH provided a continuing good coverage of what is locally available. I can only echo his words on the quality of Graham's handiwork on THE BURLESQUE OF FRANKENSTEIN and THE INNER DOMAIN, both of which sit on my shelves.

On Stephen King's inability to gain critical recognition, what can one say? The Backman books hooked me on King for life. ROADWORK was probably the lesser work of the four Bachman tales yet held me spellbound at the time. I spent 24 years in this State's road-building authority so was doubly amused by the outcome of that story. I love King's stories but couldn't really care if they ever receive serious critical acclaim. What is it and who gives it, anyway?

At last, someone (Joe Fisher) who mentions that he reads TM for the fiction! I was getting a little irritated by readers writing in saying that they never read the fiction, a definite sign of poor manners and a slap in the face for all those hard-working writers who slave away attempting to entertain us....

I'll also side with Joe on TV and film sf. Although I'd like to be able to find the time to sit and read sf, I generally find it more satisfying to turn on the box and watch the shows similar to those Joe mentioned. Besides which, I can play a record, write a letter or scan a magazine at the same time. Reading a novel these days just takes up too much time, unless you're away from all distractions (an impossibility) and you can read said novel from start to finish without a break.

J. C. Hartley mentioned Angus MacVicar and Patrick Moor as juvenile writers. Moore wrote several excellent stories. I can only recall PERIL ON MARS (1958), which sits here on a shelf out of sight. Angus MacVicar penned the "Lost Planet" trilogy in 1954-56; THE LOST PLANET, RETURN TO - and SECRET OF -, then followed these up a few years later with RED FIRE ON - and PERIL ON -. Full details are to be found in MacMillan's THE WRITER'S DIRECTORY. (17.7.93)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd., Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QG, England.

Many thanks for TM 78 - excellent issue. COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was a terrific story - almost a

mini-novel - unusual to find such a good piece of fantasy writing in a fanzine. I liked the way it avoided the usual fantasy cliches and had a villain who became the hero.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE was almost as good, though Chanderlesque SF is getting more common now, so not as original as COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS.

ESCAPE FROM YINN was a shaggy-dog story, pure and simple - and yes, it made me smile, and groan.

HEY, HE'S A FISH, will, I predict, split the readership of TM quite violently. I liked it, though I think the computer program sections were just a little OTT, otherwise it was a most unusual and haunting poem. Of the other poems, I enjoyed SPACE DOG ERROL (liked the line "in space, no one/ Can hear you yelp.") IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, JULY NIGHT CINQUAIN.

Asimov's FOUNDATION trilogy holds a special place in my memory. I spent a couple of weeks in Leeds Infirmary when I was sixteen, and to pass the time I bought all three volumes in paperback, I think they had just been published (this was in 1963 or 64) and was the first time I had bought any SF new - I'd picked up quite a lot second-hand and borrowed loads from the library, but to buy SF new seemed an extravagance - only the special circumstances allowed me to get away with it. Needless to say, I was hooked - I consider Asimov's FOUNDATION to be one of the essential SF texts, along with such as A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ, 1984, RIDDLEY WALKER, FRANKENSTEIN, THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, THE WAR OF THE WORLDS and CONSIDER PHELBAS. It's interesting that, although I occasionally re-read the original FOUNDATION, I have yet to read the sequels and prequels Asimov wrote long after the first work had become a classic.

I would have thought that the whole idea of First Fandom was that it was finite and as such would eventually become part of fan history - to try and cheat the natural passing of its members by co-opting new members into it strikes me as verging on the dishonest, not to say foolish. Surely it is better for First Fandom to pass into history, to be there - forever - as a record of who the first fans were. We all try to cheat a little by attempting to create things we hope will outlive us, but we don't usually grab hold of someone else to keep on writing our stories, poems and articles for us after we've gone. No, let the First Fans pass with dignity - we shall miss them when they're gone, but we shall remember them - will we remember them if they are still hanging around as co-opted members? (23.5.93)

PRAY FOR THE PREY - are we heading into the ever-expanding horror market now? Reasonable shocker. THE BIG BOOM was intriguing, but won't setting all this high tech up cause terrible problems here on Earth? Pollution, use of scarce resources, extra carbon emissions etc? THE BROOKLYN BLUES - oh yes, very droll - you sure Tm isn't turning into a horror mag? NORTHERN FEN and A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA" gave tantalising glimpses of worlds beyond the ken of the average fan. Both readable and informative. I've never read any of Burroughs' Venus series, so Andy Darlington's excellent little essay helped to fill a gap in my knowledge - keep up the good work, Andy? What is science fiction for?

As Philip Larkin so eloquently put it,

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

(DAYS)

DUNCAN EVANS, RMB 1392 Mount Gambler Rd.,
Casterton, VIC 3311.

Sorry for not writing sooner to thank you for TM #79. My excuse is a good one this time: I've been hard at work on a new story, and literally didn't have the faculties or energy to spare for anything else. Know what I mean? It's frightening. You can't eat, you can't sleep, you pace up and down holding your head and speaking gibberish at people, and you literally hear a voice at the back of your skull - *and it's a woman's voice* - telling you what to write. It's actually quite horrible. The only way you can feel safe turning out the lights at night is to get the thing written.

The editorial saga relating the nuts'n'bolts production-aspects of THE MENTOR was fascinating. And scary. All that work and a private life too? I don't mind telling you, Ron, I'd last maybe two issues in your boots and then chuck the lot. Madness. I know I don't need to ask you why the heck you bother, *but why the heck do you bother?* It made me feel guilty getting my copies of THE MENTOR for the price of a lazy letter.

PRAY FOR THE PREY by B. J. Stevens. Very well written indeed. Good old fashioned sf with an appropriately current slant ... some would say "politically correct slant", but not me. When someone accuses you of being politically correct you should have them tracked down and visited.

THE BIG BOOM by Don Boyd seemed like a good and sensible idea on paper, but I don't see how it can happen any time soon. We're all going to be too busy living in a police state and abusing each other's human rights for the next decade or so to waste time building worlds in orbit. Still, it'd be something to see, wouldn't it? These really are interesting times. Keep watching the skies.

THE BROOKLYN BLUES by Brent Lillie was another example of good style - with its prose right up there at the professional standard - but I wouldn't say it was an example of good story-telling. It seemed to be all gimmick without a plot in sight - not even the justification of a shitful pun at the end. And I saw it all coming in the middle of the third paragraph (but that was probably half my own fault for watching the machinery at work during the first reading instead of waiting for the second time around, which would have been more polite). Once again, well-written, but it didn't seem to work as a story.

The Russian input was all intriguing. A bit like reading about life on another planet where the aliens turn out to be "actually very nice, and quite a lot like us, really". Give us a lot more of this sort of thing, please, Ron.

THE INITIATE (Part 2). Maybe it's just me, but I didn't notice any "moral attitude" being expressed here at all. There was lots of flesh bouncing around, some violence, and then everyone died horribly. What more could anyone ask of a comic strip?

Andrew Darlington's article on Edgar Burroughs' was, as usual, an enlightening read. Andrew must live either

next door to a sizeable library, or inside one, I think. Either way, I'll bet he's got a pretty enormous data-base strapped aboard the old grey brainbox, with a first rate retrieval system up there as well. As far as his subject is concerned, my encounters with E. R. Burroughs amount to one short story or maybe two, and a couple of John Carter's rampages across Mars - so the Venus books were all new to me. My ignorance didn't prove to be a liability however, because I had no trouble staying with the piece. This kind of readability is obviously one of Darlington's strengths. I enjoyed his article a lot, and I learned a few things too. Can't wait until he brings his sights to bear on something I've actually read.

WHAT IS SF FOR? by Sean Williams. Sean, you missed out an answer, I think. There should have been six, not five. The final answer (that sf is for entertainment) ought to have been included twice, first *and* last.

All the reviews were, as usual, helpful and interesting. Not to mention voluminous. Ron, where do you find the time to do all that reading? Your head must be getting set to explode by now.

[Yes, some people reckon my head is getting too big... - Ron]

Thanks to all in the R&R DEPT who were kind enough to offer their opinions regarding my own scribbles. All such remarks are appreciated whether they stroke my ego or poke it with a hat-pin. I'll answer a few comments/queries that were made concerning COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS. To Doug Guilfoyle: the Necromancer was a perverted old molester of children. You can see a couple of other stories which feature the Gunther character in EOD #7 and EIDOLON #13. As for Coldmace, there are currently no other stories about him in print (though I *am* working on one in which he makes a brief appearance, but it isn't finished and probably never will be - and in any case it's shaping up to be even longer than the first story, which means it will be extremely difficult to get the thing into print even if it turns out to be readable, because most magazines aren't as easy-going about their preferred word limit as THE MENTOR). To Lorraine Cormack: the epilogue relates back to an earlier gag about the Necromancer's brain being kept in a cupboard. You're right about it being unnecessary, I just tacked it on for fun. The contrasting modes of speech *were* deliberate, but obviously this could have been handled better. There's always room for improvement. To Shane Dix: how do you know I'm still alive? (20.7.93)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England.

Once again a king-sized MENTOR has made it to these shores. I enjoyed reading your account of how you produce THE MENTOR. Non-pubbing fen don't always appreciate or realise what goes into the fanzines which they receive so off-handedly. I have it easier than you as with ERG, once I've produced the master sheets, I send 'em off for professional printing. It costs, but saves much work.

Lumping cover and cartoon strip together, let me say though the drawing technique is very good, the subjects are too distorted and grotesque. The strip is revolting, seems more concerned with pendulous boobs than anything else. Other gripe, in panel 2 "payed well" should be "paid well". Moving on, I enjoyed PRAY FOR THE PREY; a trifle

contrived, but well done and though just as gruesome as the strip, it was more sensibly handled - good 'un.

THE BIG BOOM made very interesting reading and I for one hope that some L5 colonies finally come about. Nevertheless, I feel Don Boyd greatly oversimplified the difficulties when he said, "If a 90 storey building can be put up in a few years on Earth, battling gravity and high winds, a 900 storey structure presents few problems when gravity and weather are removed". Talk about understatements. What about the effort required just getting material to orbit, workers in pressure suits and clumsy gloves, handicapped by tethers and/or manoeuvring jet units and having to cope with the inertial mass of their material - which will need its own propulsion units to shift it around. Throw in solar glare and sunspot radiation, micrometeorites and the limited work time in a space suit - Easy my foot! He also says "no unusual engineering or special materials needed" and talks of ordinary iron, steel or glass used in a habitat with a diameter of 6.5 km. That gives a circumference of about 14 miles. If you want 1g at the rim, that means moving the structure of the "hull" must approximate to a bridge 14 miles long in a 1g field. H'm, ordinary steel? He also speaks of cheap material - mining and ferrying from the moon won't be cheap. Mining asteroids means first killing their terrific velocity which will take some doing with "trillions of tonnes". Again, despite Clarke, and Rama, I suspect the feasibility of "pedal aircraft". That low g only applies along the axis of the colony, so he must start from the axial mountain peak. Once the pedaller moves from that central zero-g axis, air movement will start to move him sideways and gradually build up g with unpleasant results. Oh, I'm in favour of such colonies, but "easy"? No way.

Fanzines - nice coverage, but once again limited to Australia. How come, Ron, do you have a "thing" about zines from other places? Book reviews, excellent. I've now bought GARDEN OF RAMA and was greatly disappointed. None of the old Clarke magic, just a pedestrian tale of tedious, improbably space flight (larded with assorted sex) and descending into the old good colonists v bad colonists theme.

[The reason I review Oz fanzines is that overseas ones are reviewed in their separate countries and if you don't know which zines are being published in Oz say, then how can you write to the editors and ask for a sample copy - or know if a certain fanzine you've heard of is one you may like? (other than writing to them - but where will you get the address if I don't review them? - Ron)]

Defining SF is like plaiting smoke rings, can't be done. Just as it is impossible to point to a spectrum and say exactly where red gives way to orange, so it is impossible to draw a line and say these divide main stream from SF, SF from Fantasy - or even Western from adventure, or adventure from fantasy, crime, detective, etc. Each genre merges imperceptibly into one or more of the others and there's no catch-all definition that can separate 'em!

NORTHERN FEN gave a good insight into SF readers' problems in foreign climes. We may have had little real SF pre-war, but at least the few American mags which filtered through were in our language. Translations the other way - Russian, Spanish, etc to English often seemed stilted. Since fantasy isn't my bag, RUSSIAN FANTASTICA and IN

DEPTH 6 were off my orbit. ERB's stories likewise, I could never get into 'em. LOCS excellent, but why not insert more of your own feedback in response (such as what is "arcase"). Oh dear, another Vauxcat on the bcover. Once again, an excellent issue - generally good art, perfect layout and impeccably printed. May you long continue. (10.7.93)

[Dunno what "arcase" means - it was in the poem when I received it. And one does not change words in poetry without asking the poet. - Ron.]

SEAN WILLIAMS, PO Box 605, Cowandilla, SA 5033,

TM 80: an interesting issue throughout.

Highlights: The cover. Brent Lillie's neat little piece, the best I've seen from him thus far. Andrew Darlington and Ron Turner's brilliant tribute to "Jet-Ace Logan". Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH, as always. The uncredited Peggy Ranson's very sexy fairy on p. 28 ...

R&R: Great title graphics. Some fabulous bickering, too - although I can think of juicier topics to wrestle over than the Australian Constitution. The sheer-value-for-money award this issue, however, goes to Mae Strelkov, for not one but *two* fun-filled episodes. I can't decide whether to cheer or feel sorry for her. Maybe when I stop laughing....

But, seriously, everyone has a right to their own beliefs, and I admire Mae's courage to stand up and profess her own. (One assumes it to be courage, anyway.) Faith is in short supply, these days. (Nor short enough, sometimes.) And I have to agree with her comments regarding Satanism, which is no different from Christianity, just the other side of the same coin, although perhaps less destructive. I simply can't help but feel that, with so many contradictory and equally sincere faiths coexisting in our so-often-called multi-cultural world society, it might be better if the believers kept it to themselves and acted like rational human beings in public. I know, I know, spread the word, convert the faithful and all that. But if the Truth is out there to be found, why need there be Prophets?

Me, I'm an open-minded atheist: no God, no Soul, no Afterlife and no denying I might be wrong, although I've yet to be convinced of it. So there.

Anyway, I'll put in my vote now for Mae Strelkov as Most Interesting Loccer of R&R, even though, as she herself admits, "People who talk glibly of "reincarnation" sound so silly, usually". Silly she did sound, in places, but I'd still love to meet her. Her life sounds absolutely fascinating.

Thanks to all the people who commented on the article in TM 79. I can knock off fiction easily enough, but find non-fiction absolutely nerve-racking. All comments are appreciated.

Joe Fisher, in particular, scored a point. Maybe I came down too heavily on the sci-fi soaps of the big and little screens. I would like to reiterate, however, that I was trying to filter the basic essences of sf from the vast body of work written this century: those essences being Education, Exploration, Extrapolation, Introspection, and *Entertainment*. Perhaps I should have stressed *more than I already did* that this last also comes in the print media for those retaining the ability to read. I myself have read plenty of it. The problem I had, when compiling the essay, was finding sufficient examples to support my case. Has anybody else read the F. A. T. E. series (the author of which I can no

longer recall)? Or ALIENS: Book 1: EARTH HIVE (likewise)? If I couldn't locate the full details of authors, publishers, etc, then I decided not to refer to the works in the text. So out they went. The TV serials and motion pictures of the last few decades, on the other hand - not forgetting their respective novelisations - are well-documented and well-known. So they went in. That's all it was, honest. (And if I was as aware then as I am now of gaming fiction, then that would have gone in instead.)

I will admit that some, perhaps even most, of the sf shows and films contain original ideas. I'll even go so far as to agree that some, perhaps even most, of the writers of these shows are consciously trying to create original and thought-provoking work. But I won't be budged from the position that a lot of these shows exist purely as a means to make money. I say this not to slag them off (to paraphrase Joe) but to be realistic. And, hey, I like them too, okay? Ask Shane Dix if you don't believe me.

Regarding RED DWARF, however: What??? In my opinion, this particular series takes very old - one might say hackneyed - sf ideas and brazenly twists them to provide a vehicle for a wacky, zany, ho-ho-ho there he goes *another cream bun humour*, boring in the way only the Brits can make them. To quote Wendy Bradley (TV reviewer for INTERZONE): "My theory is that the BBC are so ashamed that they haven't a single new science-fiction programme that they are keeping this mummified relic alive in the hope that we'll mistake it for something bursting with energy instead of that vindaloo flatulence."

As for the footnotes:

The "his" of endnote 1 refers to Isaac Asimov.

The "her" of endnote 9 refers to Miriam Allen de Ford.

The "brief biographical passage" referred to in endnote 14 describes Sean McMullen.

The "Alien Encounter" of endnote 17 is by Chris Morgan.

The "his" of endnote 29 refers to Brian Aldiss.

The "his" of endnote 35 refers to Dirk Strasser.

And, lastly, endnote 19 should have been:

"Malcolm Edwards, "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow", from THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 178."

Full marks for spotting the mistakes; I myself didn't notice. All I can say in my defense is that I *swear* the missing info was there in the version I submitted....

And, yes, the Blackadder reference was a deliberate one. Although I always thought he said "willy suspension", rather than "willing".

Two final things. (1) The author of the *other* sky-hook book was, I think, Charles Sheffield. I've read it - and I've also read an afterword (or something like it) in which Arthur C. Clarke discusses it and its similarities with FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE - but bugger me if I can remember what it's called. It was good, though. (2) I've actually destroyed Adelaide three times, not twice as Bill said. In WHITE CHRISTMAS, in the unfinished story Bill mentioned, and in GHOSTS OF THE FALL, the story that won third prize in the 1992 WOTF Contest. (Available soon in WOTF Volume IX, etc.) Why I keep doing it, I don't

know. Shots at an easy target, perhaps....

(18.7.93)

PAVEL VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 502, Moscow SU-125502, Russia.

Thank you for TM 78 & 79 - I have received them just now(!), #79 came 4 days ago and #78 came today. Er, may I ask you about the illustration on p. 16 [TM 78] - is it supposed to illustrate the text or give the author's portrait (ie mine)? My friends keep wondering. I am not *that* fat, you know. And usually have a more friendly look ... but my friends keep saying that the piece of art in question can still serve as a good caricature of me. Thanks (but really, no offence taken!)

I had little time to read the two TMs, but I quite liked PRAY FOR THE PREY by B. J. Stevens - a really yucky example of a sinner punished. THE BROOKLYN BLUES by Brent Lillie made a nice reading but is it the only thing the story was written for? But you know what? It reminded me of something I've read. I do not remember what.

I had enough time to notice that the quality of misprints in #79 has increased, as compared to previous issues. In my piece, there were several minor ones (like "Kikolaev" instead of "Nikolaev", but who cares?) But one mistake was bad enough - S. King's novel is SUN DOG, not SUN GOD.

What I enjoyed was COLDMAZE MOONLIGHTS by Duncan Evans, in #78. The ending was as good as it was unexpected; and isn't the goblin nice, with all his goblinness. No good guys, not a single one: good for a story where one expects to have a good princess, or a noble knight, or a goblin made nice and kind by a kind child....

Now, to local news.

In Yoshkar-Ola (Mari Autonomy, Russia) Tolkien fans had "Balin Rehearsal Role Games". According to the FanGildon newsletter, the most interesting event there was connected with a newly introduced rule by the Organizational Committee: now those "killed" are not kept in the dull "Land of the Dead", they are magically turned into animals. These animals could be hunted, and when caught, produce a certain amount of food for the hunters (all food was confiscated from the game participants) which could be obtained by trade, robbery, farming, magic and other role activities (for example, one possesses N "units" of Magic; he can use it for military purposes, or, for example, "producing" food). Well, the animal most hunted for was a ... rabbit, even though one "rabbit" produced only a packet of instant soup (1 serving, at best good for two); the reason was that a "rabbit" could be killed, according to the rules, only by projectile weapons, such as arrows and boomerangs. These, in their role-game safe modification, are very clumsy, so the "rabbits" got impudent and, covered by the shadow of the night, approached the tents of different teams and teased and abused the gamers. Sleepy "dwarves" or "elves" got out and pursued the hooligans, vainly shooting into the darkness. At last, the gamers were sick and tired of the "little stray rabbits" and called out for the Big King's Hunt - Enemy forces also were invited and kindly accepted the invitation. They brought two ballistae, and the rabbit's fate was sealed ... (No victims reported, as only safety missiles were used).

The other game news was that for the Big Balin Games a river-boat was hired to take the teams to an island

on the Volga river; but, as prices are growing, no one can tell if it can be hired for the return. A one-way ticket?...

JRRT news again! They have just issued a new two-volume edition of the LOTR; the news is that all illustrations are done in the style of medieval Russian Orthodox icons. Imagine the Council at Rivendell styled after the Trinity icon - complete with halos around the heads, and all! Or Crucifixes in the Shire!

And again Middle-Earth: the Gil-Estel Publishers (a small company specialising in SF&F) issued maps of Beleriant (1st Epoch) and Middle-Earth (3rd Epoch). The joke is that these were bought by one of my acquaintances in ... a specialised map shop, right between maps of Uganda and the Mediterranean region. Labels read "Sredizemn-omorye" ("Mediterranean Sea Region") and "Sredizemye" ("Middle-Earth").

I've told you (in TM 79) about S. Lukyanenko's novels from the NO PEACE IN THE STARS trilogy. He has just finished the third book - SEA OF GLASS. In this new novel, Serge and his wife the Princess go into the future - into the time of the Seeders, when Earth started to colonise the far past of the Galaxy to provide itself with warlike allies, loyal to their semi-mythical ancestors, the Seeders. The reason is that Earth suddenly got attacked by a powerful civilisation called the Fang. The reason for the war is not known, but it is cruel and Galaxy-wide. Serge manages to find out that in the Fang's base their morals are not based on our "good - bad" principle: their main division is "beautiful - ugly". The Fangs did not know war until, during the cultural exchange with Earth, they received beautiful, famous masterpieces of art: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS, Shostakovich's 5th Symphony, BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, the Borodino panorama, pictures of battles, sculptures of warriors, marches, photos of military tunics - and also, works of the Maquis de Sade, THE CHINESE TORTURE GARDEN, and other things which were brought to Fang or found on Earth in museums, galleries and libraries by Fang tourists. So the Fangs discovered the beauty of war.

Serge also finds out that the Seeders methodically twisted both Earthmen and other human civilisations to obedience and readiness for war, so they are twice responsible for the war. To put an end it, Serge must convince the Fangs that the beauty of war is false - in other words, that for centuries the Earth artists lied to themselves and to human kind....

EMPEROR OF THE REPUBLIC by A. Bushkov: an American reporter gets assigned to the People's Democratic Republic of Kenchon - an Asian country led by The Great Beloved Marshall Khong. The poor man finds himself in a place more absurd than Wonderland and the place Behind the Looking-glass. The chain of absurdity gets to its highest point when Marshall Kong declares himself Emperor and introduces an aristocracy instead of the former Hereditary Communists....

ANASTASIA by A. Bolnykn: the action takes place in the distant future, in the Happy Empire (one of many states of the world long after the Dark Years, when nature repaid human kind with strange catastrophes). Now people are trying to rebuild civilisation using dim memories, torn newspapers and book pages that haphazardly survived the

Dark Years. The Empire, for example, has a religion with Brezhnev as god and Gorkoms (Party Committees) are castles of the aristocrats, descendants of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Secretaries. To top that, the Empire enjoys a matriarchy - women are warriors, craftsmen, scientists and priests, while men have to do as house-husbands, maids, dancers, prostitutes and Fair Youths of the noble knights, to be glorified by heroic deeds and fought for at tournaments.

So, Princess Anastasia takes an oath to go Beyond-the-Hill (ie abroad, the phrase of the original Soviet dissidents) to search for Forbidden Knowledge. She is accompanied by her arms-bearer Olga and later, a Soviet Army captain right from the Afghan war (magic tricks of the Dark Years!) joins them. He's a good fighter, being a commando, but has to be disguised as a servant (being male). Finally the company, managing to get through the lands of the Channel-camp (a senseless and endless channel, made by mad Trotsky worshippers), Opium Khans, Two-headed Chernobylnen and others, finds herself in the lands of the cunning Balts where she discovers that not all of the old culture has perished and that "scientists" plan a new experiment on nature; as if the Dark Years were not enough.... The book is very funny, as it laughs at some things well-known in this country. As they say, people can part with the past by laughing. (10.6.93)

WALTER WILLIS, 32 Warren Rd., Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OPD.

THE MENTOR 79 arrived yesterday... reminds me that I didn't comment on the marvellous coloured cover of THE MENTOR 77, which I regard with awe as some sort of supernatural manifestation, to use a description quoted by Harry Warner. I must say that by the way I'm flattered to find my comments quoted in the letter section. It's a new and very welcome form of egoboo, to be found also in the letter from Steve Sneyd you quote from in this issue.

You are right about the fiction you publish in this issue. PRAY FOR THE PREY was utterly convincing, and horrifyingly memorable.

THE BIG BOOM is so remarkable as to arouse suspicions of a hoax.

THE BROOKLYN BLUES was another unforgettable piece of fiction. Not an entirely original idea, but beautifully handled by Brent Lillie.

NORTHERN FEN was full of interest, not just for the reviews of Sf in the former USSR but for the incidental information about the people involved, notably Boris Zavgorodny.

I'm not sure what to say about the comic strip. It holds the interest but I'm not sure how much of this is due to the prurient fascination of the human female aspects of the characters.

I'm afraid the article about Edgar Rice Burroughs was rather wasted on me, having no interest in ERB.

WHAT IS SF FOR seems to be another of those articles purporting to define sf which have bored generations of fanzine readers, but to be fair it is considerably better than most, and actually gives the impression, however erroneous, that it is a valuable contribution to contemporary thought on the subject.

I have little interest in fantasy novels, and still less

in those published in Australia, but Bill Congreve succeeded in holding my interest for his reviews.

About Pamela Boal's letter, in which she refers to the prevalence of AIDS in Africa, I have read somewhere that this is due to the local habit of using anal intercourse as a form of contraception. In which case we can blame the situation on the RC Church in its classic association with male selfishness. (19.7.93)

STEVE SNEYD, address above.

Hope the near-disappearance of poetry [in TM 79] is a one-ish aberration? Shane Dix's witty limerick keeps a hook-in for verse, and it's churlish of me to moan, after all the years you've spent giving genre poetry almost its only outlet in Oz, but, as said, hope is a one-off situation.

Of the art this time, was taken by the two Fox pieces, partic the evocatively ambiguous p.9 alien - can imagine misunderstanding of "expression" as interpreted human-centredly turning him into the (ultimately fatal) guru of a bored, famous-too-fast, rock group. I also liked the slimline "spy in the lintel" of p.1, curiously not credited, and Carter's cover has an effective ferocity and an appealing helplessness in the "hand" groping up from beneath the fallen/hurled tree the Satyrosaur wields.

[The contents page art was by Kerry Hanlon, which I've been using on and off there for some time. - Ron.]

I was disappointed in THE INITIATE - not in the visual side, which continued to have stark power, but in the plotline ... perhaps it was intended to mock expectations of subtle new developments, but seemed to just throw away its elements as fast as it could, like a Jacobean play speeded up for TV ... pity. Anyway, with Jurassic Park mania, anything with dinosaurs in shd be a commercial success, so hope the money soon rolls in for him.

Not many things in locs this time to set me off Leigh Blackmore asks re MILLION ... I never saw it, but the latest ANSIBLE newsletter from Dave Langford, who was a columnist for it, says that it will henceforward have no separate existence, just form a supplement in INTERZONE. The best first step towards back copies would probably be to contact INTERZONE itself, or their Australian distributor if they have one?

Sean Williams has made a very brave attempt at the impossible - just to stir the pot a little I would query that his footnoting of Thomas the Tank Engine/childrens' and some fairy-tales cover all the exceptions to the claim that "sf is the only form of fiction that dares to have a gadget or an idea as hero." Surely a lot of "spi-fi" fits that definition, a helluva lot of detective fiction is gadget/gimmic murder-driven, and so on. Anyway, as said, a valiant addition to the Galactomountain of attempts to define SF and where it comes from and where it's going, in a lot less pages than most have taken.

Talking abt n pages re SF is a chance to morph fairly plausibly to mentioning the appearance of the mega Second Edition of the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF - I'm finding it obscurely comforting that the answer to the trivial pursuits-style question "Who in Huddersfield is mentioned twice in EOSF Mark II?" is "Me", but, that gratuitous piece of megalomania aside, the very pleasing thing from the point of view of genre poetry generally is that, having had no entry in M&I in 1979, this time it rates nearly a page, which is I

think deserved proof that the medium has, if not necessarily come of age, at least got a track record well worth "putting on the record."

It's also nice that "Golden Age" pulp fictioneer and pioneering SF poet Lilith Lorraine gets an entry this time - she was definitely a case of being unjustly enlisted in the Legion of the Forgotten - very glad to see "Time's weedcover" getting cut away a bit more.

Mentioning Golden Age, I never really got into ERB, enjoyed the Tarzan movies as a kid, but didn't try the books, and didn't really relate to the odd Barsoom I tried - but yet again, to quote his own words abt ERB, Andrew Darlington "knows how to spin a simple narrative web capable of snaring the most reluctant reader" in his description of the Venus tales of definitely "unforgotten" Burroughs. I found the political contexting of the time fascinating, and AD's mix of genuine affection for what he's describing, in all its Ballardesque bizarreness, and clear-eyed critical view, works well - hope your series of his explorations of SFnal byways long continues. (One small point - when Tanzania is described as an L. A. "satellite", might perhaps it have been clearer to say "satellite town", which is what it is. Outside of places named for mythical gods and heroes, this must be a fairly rare instance of a "proper town", or suburb anyhow, named for a fictional character - or is it? Perhaps America's full of 'em - Chthullhuville? Ahabburg? Moby Dick Island? Maybe Buck Coulson could give the answer to that one?).

The two Russia articles again are very interesting - and Viaznikov's point about all shop customers being "wild-eyed" makes me wonder whether, provided its appearance was vaguely humanoid, an alien would have much difficulty passing undetected in a big British city, so "strange" are many existing human behaviour patterns, with a spectrum much widened by "care in the community", recession, new cultural/ethnic groups etc.

It's cheering to think that Don Boyd (THE BIG BOOM) might be right, although the short-termism of politicians makes me pessimistic - it was clear the defence industry wind-down with the end of the Cold War would inevitably lead to recession, unless the "peace dividend" was used on some equally mega employment creator, yet Space, the obvious such economic stabiliser/motor, doesn't seem to be getting a "look in". Incidentally, his point re such islands to fit diff cultures triggered little poem below:)

LANCETTE FOR THE SPACE ISLANDS

They tailor worlds
to suit our breeding, hearts
or minds

Mine ring me close
with friendly fire, horned pits hurting
like hell

Of the fiction, BROOKLYN BLUES is an enjoyable Lucan Island-type tale, where the reader can enjoy replacing Lillie's cast of "raves from the grave" with the ones he or she would most like to encounter. Just the right length for what it is, too, which shows fine writerly judgement.

Steven's PRAY FOR THE PREY is very effective, with real restraint in portraying convincingly a situation where "over the top" description and lurid action must have

been very tempting. Making the protagonist a woman seems something of a token gesture, with apparently little purpose other than a PC one, would be my only quibble, but that is trivial against the general "compelling read" quality of the tale. (20.7.93)

PAMELA BOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage Oxon OX12 7EW, England.

THE MENTOR 79 has all the good qualities you have accustomed me to expect over the years but to be honest for the first time ever I did not read it from cover to cover upon receipt. While the articles are full of matters that interest me - put together in one issue they are all together too dry and earnest. Even the LoCs are very much points a, b, and c, this issue, no spark of humour or evidence that this hobby we all share can be fun.

THE BROOKLYN BLUES while not original in concept is probably one of the most neatly constructed variations on that theme that I have ever read. I'm certainly hoping you will get longer and more original stories from Brent Lillie. Something very much to look forward to.

PRAY FOR THE PREY is very well written indeed. That is, it would be if it were part of a longer story, at that length there is not time enough to develop the rational of the characters nor enough of the background. The authors descriptive skills, good pace and sentence construction are rather wasted for we are left with nothing but an episode with little point, there is no real story to an unpleasant character assumedly dying most horribly.

Well I was patient with Steve Carter's THE INITIATE waited to judge until it reached its conclusion. So what has it all been about? If it says anything at all it simply reiterates the fact that nature is red in tooth and claw and that some human animals are too debased to survive amongst their own or other species. My conclusion is that Steve Carter is not really saying anything, just offering a piece of unpleasant self indulgence to be shared with those of like mind. I may be doing Steve an injustice. Perhaps I will find that there are readers of THE MENTOR who are not so much of like mind but of minds that can see a genuine point to the comic and to that point's manner of presentation.

I feel sad at writing such a negative LoC to THE MENTOR, with some zines I would probably avoid the issue and send just a thank you note. From the first issue I ever saw I have felt that THE MENTOR is good enough and established enough for me to be very honest. Oh well I'm sure you know that you can't please all of the readers all of the time, this reader has previously enjoyed so much from previous issues and confidently expects to enjoy much in future issues. (26.7.93)

ANDY SAWYER, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT, England.

I enjoyed Andrew Darlington on ERB's Venusian books. I came on to them comparatively late in my reading of Burroughs - like Andrew I'd first got on to John Carter and never saw Carson Napier as anything other than an attempt to replay essentially the same sort of adventure fiction in a different playground, but it was interesting to read about the political allegories in various of the books.

The Russian contributors both supplied fascinating articles, both rich in suggestions for further reading; alas, I'd

imagine that the books and stories cited are untranslated into English. It's quite a sad comment on Western culture that there isn't even the piratical lust for unauthorised translations that Pavel Viaznikov describes in the first few paragraphs of his article. I suppose a kind of small-press translating system could be set up but the economics of it would no doubt sadly be that only a small number of people in the West would be interested enough to pay a fair price for the books and the writers themselves wouldn't get much. It's interesting that writers like Zelazny and Dick are popular enough in Russia for these unauthorised rip-off translations to sell as well as they apparently do. There was terrific stuff in both those articles, the kind of thing I go to fanzines for because you never find anything like it anywhere else.

Definitions of SF: it's a perennial question and there really is no answer - how would you describe those frequent books which use science-fictional themes but which are not published as SF and whose authors are in fact determined that they should not be *called* SF. Are LORD OF THE FLIES or 1984 SF? I've been told quite definitely that they are not, by people who don't read SF. I think that they are.

Don Boyd's article was interesting enough but I can never really visualise such developments as possible; articles on the industrial use of space never really seem to come to grips with things like the vast capital costs needed to set such programmes up. How does space development compare with using the cheap labour of the Asian Third World (and now Eastern-European) countries? What about the number of things that can go wrong? There are people who look very suspiciously on the Channel tunnel linking the UK and France (which has already considerably overrun its construction costs) on purely safety grounds; a terrorist bomb or a simple accident in the right place and the whole thing is kaput. You can take that to an order of magnitude greater in space. The benefits may in fact be even greater than Don suggests in terms of the new technologies that may be possible, but the hazards and complications are themselves almost inconceivable.

THE INITIATE: very odd, especially as its only the second half and I didn't catch the beginning. Obviously a moral allegory, I'd say. Everyone's into dinosaurs now, thanks to JURASSIC PARK.

Fiction: both stories were OK if not outstanding; PRAY FOR THE PREY needed more space to develop the Cleaner/Bleeder imagery and THE BROOKLYN BLUES was interesting but hardly original in theme.

I enjoyed the reviews and the lettercol: regarding Leigh Blackmore's comment on MILLION, sadly David Pringle has had to curtail its publication. It never managed to reach the mass appeal it should have had; perhaps most people who are into genre/bestseller fiction aren't tolerant enough of other fields than their own particular areas of interest to support a magazine which will embrace westerns, crime thrillers, or family sagas. I find this somewhat depressing; I've always enjoyed reading *about* types of fiction I never read simply on the grounds that they illuminate the whole area of popular fiction.

Your letter column suggests a good global mix of correspondents, so can I ask any fanned who feels generous to consider sending copies of their 'zines to me c/o the Science Fiction Foundation Collection, Special Collections,

University Library, Liverpool University, PO Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA, UK. I'm looking to build up the Collection's holding of all SF/SF-related material, including fanzine and small-press material, especially non-English/English language stuff and would be very grateful to receive donations of - well, whatever people can send. The SFF Collection is the largest research/resource collection of SF books and magazines in Europe, and Liverpool University will next year be starting the UK's only full-time MA course in SF Studies. Anyone wanting further information is welcome to contact me at the above address. (25.7.93)

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

I should think that an Australian fan history would have more buyers than an Argentine one, considering that you're publishing in Australia. Fandom's international outlook is pretty well restricted to countries where the fan in question knows somebody. If Ricky Ertl had lived, I'd have already known most of the Argentine history; since he didn't, it isn't anything that affects me personally, and reading it in *THE MENTOR* didn't give me any urge to own it in a compact form. On the other hand, I have a lot of U.S. fan history, even of decades I lived through.

Censorship consists of three parts; legal, religious/social, and economic. There is still very little legal censorship in the US; there's a lot of religious/social pressure, and some economic (the price of porn is much higher than the price of comparable "accepted" material). Porn is kept out of a lot of markets, not because it's been officially banned, but because stores won't stock it, and the lower sales mean higher prices per unit. I can't say I'm an expert on the situation, because I have no particular desire to buy any of it, but figuring out that much is easy. There's also evolution to consider; what was pornography when I was young is in popular magazines and television today. I don't know of anything that is banned nationwide in the U.S., though there is a lot of material banned by social pressure in individual communities.

Interesting article by Lubenski. The socialist romantics were of course not translated in the US, but Zamyatin's *WE* had a pretty good run and was the first Russian science fiction that I read. I have a 1959 Dutton edition (by "Eugene Zamiatin") translated by Gregory Zilboorg, a 1972 Bantam edition translated by Mirra Ginsburg, and a 1983 Avon reprint of the Ginsburg translation. All of them paperbacks. Some of the other writers were reprinted in the MacMillan series of hardcovers, *Best Of Russian SF*, with introductions by Theodore Sturgeon, and were reprinted in trade paperback by Collier. I have *PROFESSOR DOWEL'S HEAD*, by Belyaev, and several Strugatsky books in this series. (Of course, I haven't read all of these, but my average is probably higher than with the American science fiction books I own.)

I got news for Bill Congreve; books are regarded as "property" by publishers all over the world. Editors are supposed to buy books that will make the publishing company money, which is why Stephen King gets hundred-thousand-dollar advances and I don't. That's private enterprise; if the publishing company doesn't make money on its books, the company goes out of business. Publishing by literary grant simply cuts out everything that the

administrator of the grant doesn't like, with no regard at all for public taste. In either case, science fiction is a minority literature, and reduced sales expectations mean reduced payments. So what else is new?

Alderson is wrong in saying there is no scientific justification for Burroughs Mars and Venus books. There isn't a lot, but remember that Burroughs was writing in a period when Martian "canals" were still regarded as possible artifacts produced by intelligent life, and the Venusian clouds as evidence for a watery and probably inhabited world. Africa had been pretty thoroughly explored by 1910, though there might still have been room for a lost city or two, but Mars and Venus had to wait for more modern technology, and the "canals" didn't disappear entirely until we started getting photos back from the interplanetary probes. There is no justification for the stories *now*; there was some - not much, but how much science fiction does have much scientific justification?

I got a good laugh out of Michael Hailstone's letter; provincialism gone mad.

In your book reviews, Michael Scott Rohan's *THE GATES OF NOON* is the second book in what is probably another trilogy. The first book was *CHASE THE MORNING*, and I considered it absolutely fascinating. *GATES* is much less so, because many of the characters and the background, except for the local Indonesian stuff, are repeated from the first book. However, the book would probably make more sense to people who have read *CHASE*, since the background is set out more thoroughly there, and Rohan doesn't repeat his explanations. (22.7.93)

LORRAINE CORMACK, PO Box 983, Woden, ACT 2606.

Your editorial on censorship will no doubt get quite a few responses - I for one won't turn down the chance to have my say. I don't believe in censorship. I believe very strongly that there are things which do cause harm because of their existence - pornography, violence on screen, violence in computer games... lots of things. but not everyone who uses/views/reads materials that I think harmful will then act in a way that harms someone else. We need to remain conscious of balancing individual rights against those of the community.

The other thing that worries me about censorship is - who makes the decisions? Someone like Fred Nile who doesn't seem to recognise any point of view except his own?

So I come down on the side of restrictions and responsibility. The only thing that should be totally banned is child pornography, because there is no way that can be treated without exploiting little people with no choices and often no way to defend themselves. Anyone creating, selling or using that kind of stuff deserves to have the book thrown at them.

But there are other things which should be restricted, in the same way that alcohol is (theoretically) not available to people under 18 unless they're under the guidance of an adult. Ok, it won't be foolproof because kids are always going to find a way to get hold of porno magazines or the excessive violent video. The point is that using anything that's got a restriction on it carries an implied responsibility. In the same way that drinking alcohol carried the responsibility not to drive.

And if you abuse the right to have these things

available to you, then you have to accept the responsibility for your actions. It's my belief that drink driving should carry heavy penalties (and the penalties should be imposed) because you *know* you're doing something wrong and exposing other people to danger. Similarly, the right to have pornographic materials available to you carries a responsibility; if you commit a sexual crime, you should pay a heavy penalty. Violence can be depicted on our tv and movie screens; people who commit violent crimes should accept responsibility for their actions and pay a penalty accordingly.

I'm a great believer in taking responsibility for your actions, and could rant about it for hours. Censorship is just another excuse for people not to take responsibility - "they said it was ok for me to watch Rambo, and I was just imitating him when I took my machine-gun and wiped out twenty people."

Protect kids until they're reached the age where they're considered responsible. Then let them read, view, see anything they choose - but take the responsibility for their choice, and any actions which may be influenced by those choices.

Having said all that, now that I've seen all of THE INITIATE, my final verdict is that it was all a bit distasteful. Some of the imagery was unpleasant, I didn't like the attitudes to women; it seemed plotless and pointless and didn't manage to say anything worthwhile along the way. Not something I'd usually waste my time on.

In TM 79 ... PRAY FOR THE PREY I quite enjoyed despite the nasty climax. I agree with Glen Chapman that it would have strengthened the story to have known more about Garten's motives for kidnapping the child. On the other hand, I'd like to know what relevance Glen thinks the leader's appearance has to the story. What would it add? Would Glen have asked that question if the leader was male?

THE BIG BOOM lost me very quickly. Too dry; I didn't even finish the first page.

Brent Lillie has a real knack for taking plots that have either been done before or are just plain corny (I still groan at the thought of climbing the "stares") and doing neat short pieces that are quite good; enjoyable and just the right length. THE BROOKLYN BLUES does it again - any longer and this would have been strained, but as it is it's perfectly judged. THE JAM JAR in TM 80 deserves exactly the same praise - a familiar plot, but a good length and a satisfying feel - those last couple of paragraphs had a real emotional tug.

NORTHERN FEN was amusing, particularly the bit about translations - though I can't help wondering if they suffered still further, being translated back into English! I didn't make it through the Russian History though - I skimmed over it but it didn't ever catch my interest.

What is science fiction for? Providing another way of exploring our world and ourselves. Providing entertainment. All good fiction should do at least one of these, and preferably both. And all (most? I'm open to argument here) good fiction should have relevance beyond the time in which it was written. I'm not at all surprised that Steve Sneyd has found SF images long before SF itself existed. The themes of humanity are eternal, as is our fascination with things we cannot touch. When the stars are

explored we'll find another mystery to entrance us - but it's hardly surprising that people have always been fascinated by the stars.

JET-ACE LOGAN was kind of cute - I've never really been into comics. Although my introduction to Shakespeare was a comic-strip adaptation of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, and was successful enough.

I find it curious that Marion Zimmer Bradley's publisher would withdraw a novel because of a fan's story. Surely, since Ms Bradley originated the world of Darkover, she would have a good case to put if the fan *did* bring a plagiarism suit? Not to mention the length of time she was likely to have been working on the novel before seeing the fan's story. And the plots would have had to be incredibly similar for the suit to have any chance of succeeding. It all seems a bit strange to me. Elizabeth, are you sure this isn't just a new urban myth?

I found it a bit curious, Ron, that you consider Tanith Lee's fantasy to be of "modern days". I've read maybe 20 of her books (I think she's a wonderful writer), and nearly all of those have had an archaic setting. Mind you, she's so prolific I suspect you could well have read a different 20 of her books and hit a collection of her more modern pieces.

(1.8.93)

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd., Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6BD, England.

Thanks for TM 79 and your fascinating editorial on producing TM. I can't say I agree that the two stories are some of the best you've published. Both are quite good, but neither did a lot for me.

The non-fiction wins hands down this issue. Best was Sean Williams WHAT IS SF FOR? - an interesting overview of all those definitions.

Next, in order of preference, comes Andy's piece on the Venus of Burroughs. I suspect age comes into Andy's lack of appreciation: Burroughs advanced age when he wrote this series, and Andy's growing up since he read the earlier Mars stories.

Don Boyd's BIG BOOM was interesting; maybe it will be you Aussie's who do it. I do like something that's optimistic.

The two Russian articles help to see sf from a different viewpoint, and Pavel's comments on translation point up the need to be wary of any translation from another language. We may be reading something quite different from what the author intended.

The comic has one point of interest; the combination of women and dinosaurs. Apart from that it doesn't appeal to me. I imagine your feminist readers will be commenting on the macho attitude displayed.

Your own column and Bill Congreve's show that Australian sf, fantasy and horror is doing well, and most of this is new to me. The only magazine I see is Van's SF.

Nice to see (in the review of WRITERS OF THE FUTURE) that Peggy Ranson is breaking into the prozines (and I liked her illustration on page 11.)

I liked the Fox on page 7; and how nice to see an Allen St. John in print again.

Do I detect more typos than usual? (23.7.93)

DEREK PICKLES, 44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorkshire BD5 8LX, UK.

I must say that THE MENTOR [78] is the most handsomely printed and produced magazine I have received since I ungafiated two-and-a-half years ago.

Buck Coulson always entertains and informs, both in his column and his letters.

I liked Evan Rainer's story. I really associated with the ambience of "those mean streets" and kept expecting to turn a corner and bump into Sam Soede or the Continental Op. The last thirteen lines could have ended half of the stories in BLACK MASK.

One of the greatest surprises I have had since returning to fan-activity is discovering how world-wide fandom has become, together with its division into numerous branches, I remember fandom as being primarily based in the USA and GB with much smaller presences in Canada and Australia. There were very small numbers (almost individuals) in mainland Europe, South Africa and the Persian Gulf States - the latter mainly those working in the oil industry. I've just extracted my 1950s mailing list from the heap of dust in the corner and I find I had subscribers in Kimberley, South Africa; George Gallet in Paris; Clive Jackson (RAF) Singapore; Lee Jacobs (US Army) France; Rex Meyer, Ryde, NSW; Jack Mathews, Hampton, Victoria; Julian Parr, Germany; Eric Stroud (Gurkha Rifles) Malaya; the Bedford brothers, Germany; half-a dozen Canadians and the rest from GB & USA.

When I look at that list and consider that fans in Sweden, Croatia and Austria have sent fanzines and written to me after seeing my LoC's in, mainly US, fanzines I find it all astonishing, especially after seeing flyers listing hundreds of Conventions being held all over the world, to realise that there are active fans in most countries of the world.

(29.7.93)

SHOLA PAICE, Contest Promotions Officer, Level 3, 68-72 Wentworth Ave, Surrey Hills, NSW 2010.

I am looking for new and amateur writers of science fiction stories in your local area.

We are the Australian sponsors of the prestigious L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future contest which offers a unique opportunity for amateur writers to gain recognition.

Entry is open to any new and amateur writers, and participation of schools and local writers clubs is most welcome. Entrants must submit a short story (less than 10,000 words), or a novelette (less than 17,000 words). The entries are judged by a panel of stellar names in the field such as Anne McCaffrey, Larry Niven, Frederick Pohl, and others of this calibre.

There are quarterly prizes of \$US500, \$US750 and \$US1,000 and an annual grand prize of \$US4,000. Also 12-14 of the top stories for each year are purchased and published in the best-selling L. Ron Hubbard Presents WRITERS OF THE FUTURE anthology.

The contest was established in the USA in 1983 by one of the most acclaimed and widely read authors of all time, L. Ron Hubbard, to encourage new writers and provide opportunity for them to gain recognition. It has since become a grand international affair with contestants and winners from all over the world.

In 1989, James Verran of Port Noarlunga, South Australia, became our first Aussie finalist and his entry was selected for publication in volume 6 of the anthology series. In 1990 William Esrac, from Devon Park, South Australia was our first Australian winner, and I have just received news that another Australian winner - Sean Williams, also from South Australia, is being flown to Los Angeles this September to receive his award. L. Ron Hubbard wrote: "Dreams, goals ambitions - these are the stuff man uses for fuel", and it is clear that Australia has many well-fuelled, aspiring writers.

The closing date for this year's final quarter is 30th September, 1993. Entries for the first quarter of 1994 close on 31st December, 1993. There are no entry fees for this contest and manuscripts are returned after judging. Details of rules and entry forms are available by writing to the address above.

I am very keen that our aussie writers show their talents and receive recognition and I am looking forward to seeing many, many entries! (-.8.93)

DARREN GOOSSENS, 210 Melbourne Rd., Ballarat, VIC 3350.

A few words about THE MENTOR 80, starting at the beginning: the cover was fine; stylish and intriguing, and the yellow paper was a nice touch. Congratulations to Antoinette Rydyr.

THE JAM JAR was a great little piece; exactly as long as it needed to be, with an excellent nasty twist. It shows just what can be done with short-shorts. (If Brent Lillie can blow up the world in a little over a thousand words, who needs five volume epics?) (Sorry, but the multiplication of multi-volume series is my pet hate at the moment.)

FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS is all very interesting; I wonder how much similar stuff could be dug up if more people looked for it. The imagery of SF is powerful and largely universal, so it is only natural that poets should have drawn on it often in the past (and today as well). That does not mean that they're writing SF, though; often, passages like these come about when the author is writing of the universe-spanning wonderfulness of their God, and that's hardly SF.

Stuff like A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIA "FANTASTICA" tends to make my eyes glaze over and my mind wander, but if you can stick at it it does give you an international perspective on SF (and on the political and ideological conditions which are forced upon writers in countries less free than our own) which you can't get any other way, and its valuable for that alone.

TERROR FROM MOON 33 was terrific, and it had the best alien I've ever seen for ages. I'm not usually a fan of comics, but this one definitely added to the magazine. So far superior to THE INITIATE that it isn't funny.

Lastly, IN DEPTH, R&R and REVIEWS were as interesting as I've come to expect during my short acquaintance with your magazine. I sure appreciate Bill Congreve's comments, though Sean Williams brought me down again. Oh well, you can't have everything.

(9.8.93)

TERRY BROOME, 6 Penlands Lawn, Collon, Leeds, LS15 9DJ, England.

I'm suitably goggled by the cash input into THE MENTOR. Publishing my own zine every 3 - 4 years is expensive enough, but you make my efforts seem like peanuts!

I read the first few paragraphs of PRAY FOR THE PREY & thought that Stevens has talent, but that in order to escape the worst cliches of action sf he needs to work on both his characterisation and style. A useful exercise would be to explore the characters first before setting up this tense scene and asking himself what distinguishes it from the writer's efforts. You have a terse scene, here, but because there is no emotive involvement it's hard to be caught up in the suspense, as suspense partly arises from character involvement. His strength lies in the smoothness of his style, a rare commodity amongst amateur writers.

The comic strip was cliched, to the point of having a yawn, and incredibly sexist. I used to be in the BSFA's ORBITER writer's circle and the most common story (from male adolescents) was the one where the hero finds himself marooned, has an erotic episode with the female natives and is then killed (and normally eaten) by them. The psychology of lust and fear behind such wish-fulfillments is so obvious that you can have a good guess that the writer is sexually inexperienced and possibly also sexually neurotic, following a bad childhood episode. Logically, such stories show the unreasoning fear and burgeoning sexist attitudes of their writers. The comic strip makes no logical sense and the climax is, thus, quite visible. The artist also reveals his ignorance of comparative anatomy. In evolutionary terms the shape of the aliens is impractical, if not physically impossible for what he has them doing.

Steve Carter needs to broaden his reading and artistic fields and write from personal concerns with a little more substance. Artistically, he needs to study the possibility of his creations living (and evidencing) the way he portrays, or stick to subjects he is more experienced with. My English teacher said that before I could grapple with giant intergalactic wars I would first need to master the complexities of going down to the chippies for supper. Dealing with such mundane experiences teaches you about that observation and detail, depth and meaning that the broader strokes of sf can't do, and is more likely to give Steve a unique voice, as it is with such minutia that a writer's idiosyncrasies can best develop and show themselves.

He shows lots of artistic talent, but he doesn't want to waste it on subjects he hasn't studied. (15.8.93)

[The above was a handwritten letter - any mistakes are the transcriber's - me. - Ron.]

SHANE DIX, 7 McGillp Ave., Glengowrie, SA 5044.

"Hi, Lloyd, I've been away, but now I'm back." Ah, Jack, You make me feel so sane, I tell ya.

But what really makes me mad is when you figure you have found a fairly decent title for a story you're writing, and then, when the story is that close to completion, some thoughtless sod casually mentions in a LoC that somebody else has already used it. I mean, with a cholesterol count that would read better as a batting average I know I shouldn't allow myself to get too upset by this, but I was pissed off! SURFACE TENSION, I still might use it, despite Blish.

Perhaps I'll just tack a wee scrap of an "s" on the end.

Fiction from Brent Lillie: Many writers have tried to tell us of the horrors which will take place during Armageddon. We have read of oceans boiling and skies splitting open, and we have been told of a terrible violence when brother turns against brother as the Mushroomed Messiah dances a jig across the globe. But never has it been depicted as a time when a jam jar will become suspended in mid air. Enjoyed it, although I didn't like the change of POV for the last section. THE BROOKLYN BLUES reminded me of a painting I once saw. On the corner of a dark street there is a coffee shop, inside of which we see (I think) Bogart, Monroe, Presley and Dean sharing a few laughs. seeing them there together on that boulevard of broken dreams left an impression on me, which is why, I guess, Brent's story didn't surprise. I do like his writing though. My biggest criticism would have to be for the Hudson and Liberace joke. A bit tacky, I thought.

Bill Congreve's column, as always, was a good read. Don't think I share your sentiments concerning King though, Bill. He might spin a good yarn, but does that warrant "serious critical recognition"? King himself has even said that his writing is the McDonalds of the literary world. Good for him, I admire his honesty. Besides, the guy makes some serious money, so you can't have everything. As for FALLING DOWN being a "serious treatment of the frustrations of dealing with today's bureaucracy", well, I've got to tell you that I have my doubts. If I know American movies at all then I'd say it would more likely be a gratuitously violent film thinly disguised as a serious treatment of the frustrations of dealing with today's bureaucracy. Then again, I have been known to be wrong on numerous occasions regarding films. Such are my credentials.

I liked the cover of TM #80 as well. Very T2ish.

(21.8.93)

DUNCAN EVANS, RMB 1392 Mount Gambler Rd, Casterton, VIC 3311.

You're right. Censorship is on the rise. One argument which the people-who-know-what's-best-for-us have been using lately is that "Yes, we are aware that our television is equipped with an on/off button, but the parents of the children in the next street (you know the ones: they hold loud parties at least 3 times a year and never cut their lawns) might not be so vigilant. The children of those people have as much right to be protected from undesirable influences as our own." The logic here, I guess, is that when everyone from Schwarzenegger to Candice Bergen has been banished from the small screen, the offspring of the morally-politically-and-socially less-enlightened members of the community will be as likely to go out and vandalise your B.M.W., rape your grandmother, or breed out-of-wedlock. What a pile of s--t! If you don't like being told to fuck off, don't presume to tell other people you know what's best for them.

Brent Lillie's story, THE JAM JAR was great. I really saw that jar just hanging there in the air, with the shopkeeper swinging from it. Good job. Good yarn.

Hello to Buck Coulson and his street-fighting, arse-kicking dog. Good stuff. Great dog.

For me, Steve Sneyd's article was interesting more

for its sampling of local history that its actual subject matter (though that was interesting too). I've got a few chapbooks and pamphlets sitting around the place that were produced by the historical societies in the Atherton/Leigh area (the same area that produced *me*, 40 or so kilometres southwest of Huddersfield). Judging by these, it's obvious that every corner of the UK has so much *documented* history under it that digging into the local records anywhere would be like falling into a bottomless pit. In the part of the world where I'm sitting at the moment, you can only dig so far before you strike a layer of dead people (who, since they supposedly never lived here in the first place, probably didn't mind being fed arsenic and/or terminally perforated), and that's pretty much it as far as European history is concerned. (Incidentally, there's a lake a little way along the road from here that certain parties are interested in seeing dredged - the contents of which, it is claimed, would cause certain other parties of proud pioneer stock to have a serious rethink about how great-great-gran'pa happened to come by his umpteen-thousand hectare spread. Oh to be in England, where past atrocities and slaughters are well-documented, and no one bothers to pretend they never happened - in fact, it's good for the tourist trade.)

Very glad indeed I was to see some more of the Russian stuff. Ron, why don't you bend your editorial policy and print some Russian *fiction* in *THE MENTOR*? Where else are we going to see it?

James Verran's article about building a reference library on a budget was all excellent common-sense stuff. And because I'd already done it all years ago, I was able to sit there nodding and smiling smugly as I patted myself on the back. One thing the article didn't touch on however was the value of a good atlas. As well as being quite nice to look at, a really huge book of maps can occasionally come in useful (when looking up places like Huddersfield, for instance). Once you've scraped up enough pelf to actually *buy* the thing, the only problem you're left with is finding a place to store the great lumbering beast. Talk about coffee table books ... my atlas is the coffee table.

Andrew Darlington's offering was, as usual, entertaining. Nice to see that some dreams really can come true. Does this mean that one day I'll get to own an electric sheep and have an affair with Rachael Rosen?

Thanks again to everyone for their comments/reactions to *COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS*. A story should be able to stand up by itself, so I'll only add that the various components of *COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS* were stolen (writers can't "borrow") in the same way that old science fiction props like the FTL space-drive, the bug-eyed monster or the time machine can be stolen and then hopefully reworked into something at least a tiny bit different. Zaphod Beeblebrox stole a spaceship once, and just look at what *that* led to. European-style fantasy has its own devices and traditions - and they're older and even more hackneyed than those of sf. Nothing is new under the sun and that's the truth. But goblins, as a rule, do their best to avoid the sun ... which is one reason they're still fun to write about. (24.8.93)

TOM FELLER, Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39236, USA.

I would not agree with Andrew Darlington [in TM #78] that Asimov became an embarrassment in his final

years, although I must admit that *NEMESIS* is his only novel which I did not like. It was downright boring. I could not believe I was reading an Asimov book.

It's unfortunate that so few readers get through *THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH*, because they are turned off by Lewis's preaching. Among its virtues is the best handling I have ever seen of the situation of Merlin's revival in the 20th century. Although he is one of the Good Guys, he does not think like the people of our time.

Unlike John Alderson, I did encounter the term "poetic license" when I was studying literature in school. For instance, it was used to dismiss criticisms of Shakespeare's historical plays on the grounds of historical inaccuracy. The idea is that a work of literature does not have to be accurate to [be] effective. An example in media SF is the sound the starship Enterprise makes when it sweeps by on the TV screen. The scene without sound is more scientifically accurate, but less dramatic.

Harry Andruschak's assertion that science and religion are incompatible needs more qualification. First, he needs to make the distinction between psychological and logical incompatibility. It is entirely possible for a person to believe in two contradictory propositions, so from a psychological stand-point any two beliefs can be compatible. This is also verified by the number of scientists who are practitioners of a religion. Second, since the non-existence of any being is unprovable, atheism has no logical basis. It would be more precise to say that the logically correct viewpoint of the scientists is agnosticism. Rather than baldly asserting the incompatibility of science and religion, I would say that scientific training creates a tendency in the scientist to question his assumptions, which may extend to his or her religious beliefs. (7.8.93)

RACHEL MCGRATH-KERR, 20/65 Park Ave, Kingswood, NSW 2747.

Thought provoking! *THE BIG BOOM* (TM 79) really sent my imagination going.

Was *THE BROOKLYN BLUES* SF or what? I think I've read two other stories along the same lines, but I still enjoyed this one.

NORTHERN FEN - well, now I regret stopping my Russian studies at university, and just doing a French major and an Italian sub-major. No sense in holding my breath for translations....

I still don't like *THE INITIATE*. Yuck! And that's being precise.

I remember enjoying Edgar Rice Burroughs's novels when I was in high school. Haven't read any since then.

WHAT IS SF FOR? Hmm... I had to give a talk on SF/fantasy in 2nd year Uni, in French. Trying to explain spaceships and dragons, not to mention telepathy, was a real headache. Got a good mark for it, and the novels I brought along as examples were loaned out quickly.

Off to mark English essays. *PYGMALION* has been turned into a pig's breakfast. (27.8.93)

ANDREI LUBENSKI, Smirnova St. 2, Fl. 367, Cherkassy 257005, Ukraine:

I was happy to see *HEY, HE'S A FISH* and *THE SHORT HISTORY* published. Of course I like the way you have presented the History! But, unfortunately, there are

some mistakes in Part 1:

1). The title of A. A. Pogorelsky's work LEFORTOVO'S CUPOLA is wrong. The true title is LEFORTOVA'S WOMAN SELLING POPPY-SEEDS. Lefortova is a district of Moscow. The translator made a mistake because the Russian words "Makovka" (a cupola) and "makovnotsa" (this word is out of use now and it means "a woman selling poppy-seeds") are consonant. Forgive me for this omission, please.

2) A line is missing from the text when it was set up and as a result THE QUEEN OF SPADES is ascribed to A. K. Tolstoy instead of to A. S. Pushkin. It was written in the manuscript of the History: "One may mention A. K. Tolstoy's story UPIR, N. V. Gogol's WIG, THE NOSE, and finally A. S. Pushkin's THE QUEEN OF SPADES. "In THE QUEEN OF SPADES" wrote I. V. Vinogradov, "is maintained the line between fantasy and reality, but this border is not achieved. The author is though cannot determine the border." And as it was written in THE MENTOR: "One may mention A. K. Tolstoy's story THE QUEEN OF SPADES... Please, repair the texts. A. S. Pushkin and A. K. Tolstoy are the well-known Russian writers and I would like this mistake corrected. (2.8.93)

RHODRI JAMES, 18 Harvey Goodwin Ave., Cambridge CB4 3EU, UK.

I wasn't too keen on PRAY FOR THE PREY, I'm afraid. It went passably well (except that I think the terms "Cleaner" and "Bleeder" clunk horribly) up to the last section. Then the switch from first person to third person blew apart the flow of the story. Sorry, that just doesn't work.

THE INITIATE didn't do anything for me, either. Steve Carter's work is very reminiscent of one of the Kitchen Sink artists that I have never liked, sorry can't remember his name off-hand. I'm afraid I have to echo Sydney Bounds and say that this is an idea in search of a story.

THE BROOKLYN BLUES, on the other hand, was a very little nice piece. It evoked just the right atmosphere, painted some lovely little vignettes, and didn't outstay its welcome. Good stuff.

I also found Andrew Darlington's article on ERB's Venus stories quite fascinating. I'm not a Burroughs fan, and the article hasn't made me rush out and buy up all the Tarzan books I can find or anything, but as a quiet, scholarly dissection of a writer generally regarded as a master of the pulp adventure, I found it interesting and refreshing.

(23.8.93)

MICHAEL HAILSTONE, 14 Bolden St., Heidelberg, VIC 3084.

I have at last managed to read THE MENTOR #77. Why does Andrew Darlington make no mention of PRINCE VALIANT in WARRIORS OF ANCIENT WORLDS? I remember it used to appear in the SUN-HERALD back in the days of TWIN EARTHS, and I think it survived much longer.

ARGENTINE SF HISTORY (both parts) I found tedious. It's fine to have a history of fandom, but making it interesting to read is something else. FERAL KILLERS I found as weird as the authors' names. (Some odd characters must hang out at PO Box 19, Spin Junction.)

David Tansey disappoints me. After showing the awareness, knowledge and good sense to recommend Citizen Initiated Referendum, he wends round just a few paragraphs further on and trots out all those tired old cliches about the inefficiency of Australian farmers and industry. Am I sick of the despicable art of self-knocking. Never mind that the banks hold most of the country in usury, that they are forcing farmers off the land both here and in America because of fiscal problems, not productive failure. Never mind that we've lost half our industry offshore to Asia and the Pacific islands over the last three years or so - not because of inefficiency but rather because labor is so cheap there and also to serve the great god of Free Trade and the building of the global fascist corporate state.

I gess this willingness of Australians to believe all the shit put on us by foreigners and some of our own folk is part of the cultural cringe, which brings me back to the whinge in my last letter. I think another of the Americanisms I struck in that issue was in THE FARM: "pick-up" instead of "utility". And my complaint was only about specific words, not spelling.

I missed whatever sparked off the debate about a Spitfires range. What a shame. I had to research this fact for my own story OLDSPEAK (published in *access* but nowhere else yet unhappily - INTERZONE rejected it as too traditional, and there's no outlet for it in Australia, because no publication here will take a story anywhere as long as 6500 words). I asked my father, who served in the air force during World War 2. I forget the actual figure he gave me, but for the practical purpose of my story it was only enough for the plane to fly from Stansted (a little northeast of London) down to Hastings and back with only an extra hour or so to spare for cruising around. Bugger-all really. (I don't know anything about the drop tanks.)

Jumping to TM #80, Harry Andruschak, who has accused me of "pathetic pseudo-science" for pooh-poohing some of the sensational hysteria about the ozone-layer, is not very good himself at getting his facts straight. Nobody but Harry Lindgren invented SR1. George Bernard Shaw invented a new alphabet; actually I'm not sure that he even did that - he left in his will a prize for whoever came up with a new phonetic alphabet. But I agree with Andy about lost causes. But what the hell? Living in the nineteen-nineties is a lost cause, as far as I'm concerned. Why shouldn't I pursue lost causes as long as I have to live in this godforsaken world? You only live till you die, and I despise all those strutting smartasses who think they're so in tune with the times by parroting the latest idiocies and following the present fads.

I was quite repelled by Walter Willis's suggestion that the driver of that car should have been furious at me for causing him to crash by my inability to fasten my seat belt. What happened was that he drove off with us, *then* asked me to fasten my seat belt. I had trouble finding the right connection on my left, grabbing his by mistake, so he tried to help me. Next thing he ran off the road, because his attention strayed from where it should have been. Surely anyone with a modicum of sense knows that, when driving, one gives ones *full* attention to the road; one doesn't try to fasten a passengers seat belt or control a troublesome child (which probably was the cause of a car running of the road

and killing somebody waiting for a bus in Canberra) or punish a son who's forgotten something and thereby caused the inconvenience of having to wend back a few hundred yards (as my stupid father tried to do to me once at Balmoral beach, thus endangering his whole family in the car he was driving - and there were no seat belts in those days). When I later called on that driver in Stuttgart and he gave me a lift after my visit, I reminded him tactfully that we had both learnt the lesson that one fastened the seat belt *before* driving off, and he agreed. Hell, had I been in his shoes, I would have been racked with guilt too. (24.8.93)

MARIA LOUISE STEPHENS, PO Box 138, Monbulk, VIC 3793.

Thank you for the last MENTOR. I was specially interested in the Russian article. It reminded me of a German author in East Germany who knew that he was not only watched but [that] bad criticism was spread amongst the publishers and indicated that it would be better for them to drop him. He finally got out, before the Wall fell. Also, when I was in Berlin in 1951 after flying over from London where I was nursing, during the Communist Youth Rally, [there was] a marvellous opportunity for my mother to come down from the Baltic Sea (Rostock) and meet me. I kept staring at the huge pictures of a smiling Stalin, plastered everywhere in the underground stations, of course with the motto, BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU. Some brother.

My mother would have loved me to come back and live with her in the North. I even tried it, having auditions in the theatre, which was well patronized with the correctly chosen plays - but I had the feeling that a big hand squeezed the breath out of me - I could not give emotions freely. All the time still the look over the shoulder: who is listening, who might report me... I couldn't live without freedom. My mother understood or tried to. I joined repertory theatres in the West; not much money, but free. (26.8.93)

FOREST, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH, England.

To mark National No Smoking Day 1994, FOREST - Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco - is announcing a free competition for short story writers, with cash prizes.

FOREST is an independent smokers' rights group which helps individuals to defend themselves against persecution, and publishes information which counters the increasingly hysterical claims of the anti-smoking industry. It is financed by donations from supporters and from private tobacco companies: unlike the anti-smoking lobby, it receives no public money.

What the judges will be looking for: Not propaganda - either pro or anti. We're after mind-opening, sceptical science fiction, fantasy and horror of any kind, on the theme of "Health and Freedom", to broaden and enliven what is often a narrow, unimaginative, ill-informed debate.

Will smoking (and other private pleasures) be illegal in the future, and if so how will bans be enforced? Or will scientific fashion turn full circle, with physicians prescribing tobacco as a cure-all? In recent months, nurses have been threatened with the sack for smoking in uniform, even when off duty. Bereaved relatives have been banned

from smoking in hospital car parks. Doctors have said they may refuse to treat patients who smoke. At the same time, researchers claim to have found that smokers are at less risk than non-smokers of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Perhaps you'll choose to write something less philosophical, a straightforward SF/F/H tale with a "health and freedom" background. Above all, feel free to unleash your imagination - if your story also makes the judges laugh, you'll be off to a good start!

RULES:

1. Entry is *only* open to persons *over the age of 18* years as of the closing date. There is no entry fee.

2. All entries must be the original, unpublished work of the entrant, in English, to a maximum of 2,500 words, typed in double spacing on white A4 paper. Type on one side of the paper only, and remember to include your name, address, telephone number, and age on the first page.

3. Entries should be posted to **FOREST STORY COMPETITION, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH**, to arrive not later than **16th January, 1994**.

4. Entries will only be returned after the closing date, and only if an SAE is included, so please remember to keep a copy. If you want a list of prize winners please send FOREST an SAE marked "Story Results" after the closing date.

5. Each competitor may enter up to three stories.

6. Judges of the competition will include Mat Coward, freelance writer, George Hay, founder of the *Science Fiction Foundation*, and Marjorie Nicholson, editor of *Free Choice*. The judges' decisions will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

7. Five PRIZES will be awarded as follows: **First Prize**, 100 pounds; **2nd Prize** 75 pounds, **3rd Prize** 50 pounds; and **two runners-up** of 25 pounds each. Prize winning entries will be published by FOREST during March 1994 in an illustrated, A5 booklet, with an introduction by SF writer, George Hay, after which all copyright will revert to individual authors. The five winning writers will be invited (along with representatives of the press) to attend a reception at the New Cavendish Club in London on Saturday, 5th March 1994 to celebrate the launch of the booklet.

8. By entering the competition every entrant agrees to be bound by these rules. (27.8.93)

JOE FISHER, PO Box 5074, East Lismore, NSW 2480.

The issue of censorship is such a broad one that it is difficult to comment on it in any way without going into veritable tomes of writing on it. I often consider the fact that TV is so often heavily censored. You have frequent occasions when movies, in particular, are hacked by the commercial channels. Swear words are the biggest sufferers - anything worse than "shit" is replaced or removed so that if there is a movie where the language is somewhat fruity, you feel like you're watching a badly dubbed foreign film. The commercial channels should, I feel, follow the ABC and simply have a clear warning at the beginning of the programme stating exactly what it contains: violence, swearing, nudity, whatever. Then the movie or whatever it is can be shown free of editing. If parents are worried about their children watching certain programmes, then this

warning will tell them exactly what to expect. If their children *still* see it, then tough - they were warned....

Anyway, enough of my tirade, onto TM #80. Why is it that there seems to be less and less fiction in each issue? Is there not enough people sending stories in? Or is it a new editorial policy to concentrate on the non-fiction side of sci-fi fandom?

[This issue of TM is the last of the large size. From #82 on there will be formatting changes. There will be a minimum of one piece of short fiction per issue - but unless it is exceptional, there will be no long pieces and my "current release" reviews will be cut from those copies going overseas. Anything else - you'll just have to wait and see. - Ron.]

The only story was Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR. Quite an interesting idea. Question: did the sun "swell up and explode" of its own accord or did the "aliens" help it along? I was just wondering because if it was of its own accord then it would have to be millions of years away, wouldn't it? Were all the frozen objects stuck there for all that time? anyway, it wasn't a bad little story - I particularly like the image of the insects frozen in place like "floating nails" to joggers and cyclists.

I read THE YANKEE PRIVATEER but I can't for the life of me figure out why. It seemed a bit like "A Day In The Life of Buck Coulson". I saw it as rather self-indulgent not to mention egotistical (that we TM readers *want* to hear about his smegging dog and the friends he has over and ooh-look-at-how-many-guns-I've-got-oh-what-a-wanker). I mean come on! You could hardly call it an SF article. Why can't this sort of stuff be kept in the R&R DEPT where it belongs?

I started to read A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN FANTASTICA but have to admit, I didn't get all the way through it.

A PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY ON A BUDGET was interesting - I really ought to get a new dictionary....

TERROR FROM MOON 33 was quite good - well drawn and nice little story-line too. Hope to see more of the like in the future.

Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH was great too. Well now what's left? The R&R DEPT was full of interesting comments (is interesting the only word I know? Hmmmm... that's interesting....)

I read just about every review in TM #80 and I have to make a confession. I have read a few Isaac Asimov stories and ... I didn't like them. You see, I read Ron's review of FORWARD THE FOUNDATION, Asimov's last book and I thought, "What is so great about Isaac Asimov?" I've read about the first four Space Ranger novels and by then I was thinking OK, so the guy has talent but what is it that makes him one of the Great Ones? Another Great One is, of course, Arthur C. Clarke. Now with him I can see it - the breadth of vision, the exciting writing, the ideas. I am a big fan of old Art and I can understand what his fans are on about. But what of Isaac Asimov? For some reason he just doesn't grip me in the same way that old Art does. If any Asimovite out there who can hold off killing me as heretic could explain why he appeals to them and, perhaps, suggest a "typical" Asimov novel for me to get a grip with, then I would greatly appreciate it. (31.8.93)

LOC EXTRACTS:

RODNEY LEIGHTON, Pugwash, Canada: You do a great job reviewing books ... part way through a review, I know if I'd want to read the book or not... Decent locol, although I was a bit at sea, since much of it was comment on previous issues. What a loccol is *supposed* to be, in my mind. I really enjoyed COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS by Duncan Evans. I think his transitions could use a little work... I sometimes wondered what one character had to do with the preceding story, for a few paragraphs. Other than that, I found it a very good story. I know that's sort of a pragmatic comment but I think it's meaningful that a person who does not normally read such material found it well written and fun to read.

(19.6.93)

GEORGE IVANOFF, Mentone, Vic: Many thanks to all those who commented on my story, THE SALE OF YOUTH. It's always good to get some feedback. Some readers, however, seemed to have misinterpreted part of the story. The young man and the old man did not swap bodies - one simply grew older as the other grew younger. Obviously I didn't make this point clear enough in the story. Ah well, you live and learn.

(5.7.93)

PAULINE SCARF, 130 Macpherson St., Waverley, NSW 2024. As usual I enjoyed reading your fanzine especially the HISTORY OF RUSSIAN FANTASTICA and the articles by Andrew Darlington and Bill Congreve. I also liked the letters in the R&R DEPT, as I find it interesting to read different people's viewpoints. Another thing I particularly like are the book reviews. Even the comic this time was better than FERAL KILLERS, and although, as I've said before, I'm not a comic buff it certainly proves just how varied TM really is. I found Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR entertaining, especially the ending. But I'm afraid I really missed the point in THE YANKEE PRIVATEER, and unfortunately, it did nothing for me.

(29.8.93)

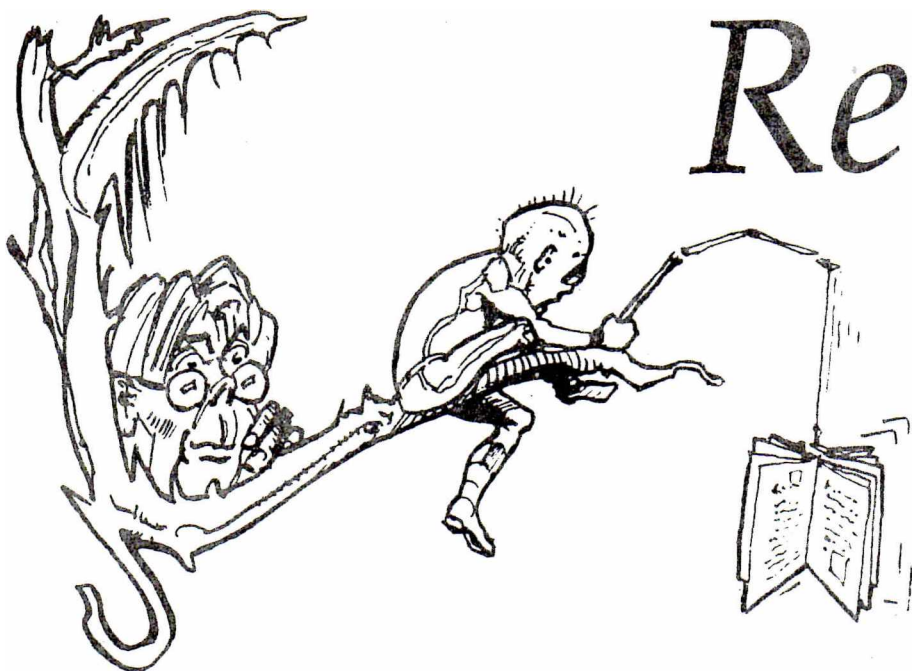
WAHF

Justine Larbalestier, Joe Fisher, Louise Hollingberry, Robert Frew, Jim Verran, Tony Plank, Julie Vaux and Kim Huett.

REVIEWS: (cont. from p. 66)

HARPERCOLLINS:

SAURON DEFEATED by JRR Tolkien
TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by P.Farmer
MERCENARY by Piers Anthony
POLITICIAN by Piers Anthony
REFUGEE by Piers Anthony
THE LIFE OF THE DEAD by Clive Barker
THE MASTER by Louise Cooper
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MIDDLE EARTH
MOAT AROUND MURCHESON'S EYE - Niven
THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE - Niven & Pournelle
DEAD GIRLS by Richard Calder
FRACTAL MODE by Piers Anthony
GREEN MARS by Kim Stanley Robinson
MORGOTH'S RING by JRR Tolkien



Reviews

THE BROOCH OF AZURE MIDNIGHT by Anne Gay. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1991. 455 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I haven't read any works by Anne Gay before. **THE BROOCH OF AZURE MIDNIGHT** reads like a first novel by someone who is destined to go somewhere. The societies portrayed are well researched and the two heroines have obviously had work put into them.

The novel begins in the asteroid belt, where two sisters have been "fingered" for a job by a member of the board of a company that is one of the biggest in the solar system. The sisters are separated when one of them goes to university and the other gets a job with the company that, unbeknown to them, is manipulating their lives.

I found myself reading through the novel at a slow pace - I don't know exactly why it was; whether it was the writing or what. I do think that the novel really needs a little more work "smoothing" out the rough spots, but overall, I enjoyed it because of its complexity and the amount of work that went into it.

BLOODLUST by Carol Page. Warner pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 230 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

I don't know that this book should be reviewed here, as it deals with a psychological problem rather than a fictional one. **BLOODLUST** is about real vampires. There is an 18 page Introduction which gives an account of how vampires are portrayed in modern life and goes on into how that modern life affects how we are. Then the author sets out into the life of these modern "vampires" - those people who drink blood.

They in the main don't slink around at night - they are people you would not look twice at if you passed them in the street. Carol Page gives a case history of eight vampires, both men and women and gives details of them and their obsession. The book reads somewhat like those books on sexual deviations - vampirism seems to be on much the same wavelength and for those interested in the human condition and those who deviate from the mean, this book would be of

interest, including fans of horror fiction. Interesting.

DARK FIRE by Johathan Wylie, Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1993. 332 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Book One of the Island and Empire saga and the first of a trilogy by the author of the trilogies *Servants of Ark* and *The Unbalanced Earth*.

I'm beginning to believe that the modern "quest" fantasies are a direct descendant of those older "travel" adventures where the sailor or journeying gentleman come across strange creatures and violent adventures. In **DARK FIRES** Wylie introduces the Lady Ifryn and Captain Kerrell as they spur towards the city of Xantium, the heart of the Empire.

The story then goes on to play their adventures in that city, and the Farseers and other of their ilk who ply their trades in the city that has its tentacles everywhere. There is another place, however, where non-sleeping ghosts roam a certain valley and where there is revolution brewing among some of the populace. Soon events are moving, and not of their own accord.

A fantasy adventure that looks to get better as the series progresses.

PALACE CORBIE - the magazine of personal terror. Merrimack pb, avail from the publisher: PO Box 158, Lynn, IN 47355-0158, USA. Sub \$12.50 for 2. (C) 1993, 136 pp. 1/4 A4. On sale now.

The Vernal 1993 fiction issue of Wayne Edwards' magazine. It is perfect bound, with a b&w line drawing on the glossy cover. The stories range over the usual styles, but most of them are horror. They are: **LISA IN DISGUISE** by Douglas Lathrop; **RESILIENCE** by Danya D'Arcy; **TESTAMENT*** by Deidra Cox; **SO NATURAL** by Lorin Emery; **REPTILIAN TEETH*** and **COMMUNITY DUES*** by Paul Weinman; **POSSESSION** by Frank Hart; **GHOST OF TANAWAHKE*** by Cathy Buburuz; **THE ATRIUM** by Joshua Waterman; **THERAPY*** by Cesslie Ladehoff; **THE INVISIBLE WIFE** by Maggie Cooper; **FEELERS*** by Michael Arnzen; **THE SEVENTH MOUND** by Greg Norris;

ARNOLD by Frank Hart; DOLLY by Lenora Rogers; BEDLAMITE* by Cesslie Ladehoff; EXHIBITS by Penny Towne; PARASITES AND PARANOIA: DEEP ITCHING* by Edward Mycue; COLLEEN by Jamie Meyers and COLDEST TOUCH by Richard Levesque and Brad Boucher. Those marked with an * are poems.

The stories aren't bad - SO NATURAL was a doozie; the reader could pick what would basically happen, but what did was even better. These stories are a mixture of fantasy and horror - you could say "fantastic horror". Not the usual bag.

MAIN EVENT by Jim Long. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 331 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

A novel in the Battletech series, which also shows in the last pages sketches of the ships/robots the soldiers warriors use in battles.

Jeremiah Rose is a soldier who's personal armour was destroyed in a battle and who was finding it very hard to get a job without it. The people who thus destroyed his career - the Clans - were nasty people who were always setting up battles and winning them. Rose decided to get back on them and to make up his own fighting unit. After much adventuring he still finds it hard to get the unit together and harder still to keep it together and equip it. It seems fighting skills aren't really business skills and he is flat out expanding his abilities.

The warriors plus their armour are called mechwarriors and such a unit is almost unbeatable - except up against another mechwarrior. The warriors have good Anglo-Saxon names, such as Angus, Crenshaw, Rose and Cooke. The baddies don't have the use of such names and one can almost see them wishing they did...

SF adventures for teenagers.

IDEAL WAR by Christopher Kubasik. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 280 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

It looks as though the price of these has gone up \$2 in one month.... IDEAL WAR is another in the Battletech series.

The blurb on the back-cover looks interesting, and may give some glimpse into the ideals of, if not the writer, the publisher: "he discovers a guerilla war - both sides had abandoned decency for expediency, ideals for body counts, and honour for victory..." Hmm, I wonder what present day professional soldiers would say about those "ideals"? Anyway, this time Captain Paul Masters, one of the aristocracy of the House of Marik, goes to the planet of Gibson and finds himself in deep trouble with the war against the guerillas.

Reading this novel the reader will find that it isn't quite the same as those other novels in the series. The author has his own wisdom to push and he does - he also has a sardonic sense of humour and this keeps the novel from bogging down. I though this one is that one in a series that makes the series worth reading just to find it. Adventure for the younger reader, who is into firefights and honour....or maybe those younger readers who aren't... All in all an adventure novel that will keep the reader engrossed for the several hours it takes to read.

THE CURSE OF THE MISTWRAITH by Janny Wurts. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 537 pp + glossary. A\$35. On sale now.

THE CURSE OF THE MISTWRAITH is quite a large book at 537 pages. It tells of the adventures of two brothers - Arithon and Lysaer. Arithon is a dark horse in a way. He has "sensitivity" and in the world he lives in, there is no room for this, so he takes up the challenge in the guise of a bard. His brother Lysaer, on the other hand, is righteous and powerful in other ways. He lives by the sword in his right hand and is not lothe to use it. Both brothers are bound by their destiny, howeve and that destiny is to save the world.

The Mistwraith is the entity that binds the sky of the world in mist - an evil entity that can endue and is almost impossible to kill - it can be thwarted, but ages later it comes again to kill and to plan world conquest.

Wurts has written many fantasy novels, herself and together with Raymond Feist. These novels have received a good reception with fantasy readers, both young and not-so-young. This one is again in the tradition of the quest, and will be engrossing reading for those of her fans that look for the next novel.

THE WINDS OF LIMBO by Michael Moorcock. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1965. 160 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

Hmm, there are now a lot of Mike Moorcock's works in print. Two of his very early novels - THE SUNDERED WORLDS and the SHORES OF DEATH go together with THE WINDS OF LIMBO (THE FIRECLOWN) to make up a package of novels that collectors, and those who like good sf should ensure are in their libraries, at home or in the Local..

The book is about Alan Powys and Helen Curtis as they follow the spectre of the fireclown - the fat, laughing yellow-haired clown who had grabbed the attention of the Earth's masses and who the rulers - the powerful of Earth - had begun to have serious doubts about. The two of them were determined to get below the Fireclown's exterior and find out what really made him tick and what he believed - and this would get them into danger, both political and physical.

THE WINDS OF LIMBO is one of the few SF novels that Moorcock has done, and is thus from early in his career. It is straight forward and relatively uncomplicated. I found it refreshing and I think other readers will also. Entertaining SF.

CASABLANCA by Michael Moorcock. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1989. 267 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

An interesting compilation of some of Mike Moorcock's different works.

Contents are: Introduction, Short stories - CASABLANCA; THE FROZEN CARDINAL; HANGING THE FOOL; THE MURDERER'S SONG; MARS and THE LAST CALL. Then there is the non-fiction - SCRATCHING A LIVING and People: MERVYN PEAKE; HARLAN ELLISON; ANGUS WILSON; ANDREA DWORKIN and MAEVE GILMORE, Places: TAKING THE LIFE OUT OF LONDON; THE SMELL OF OLD VIENNA; LITERALLY LONDON; PEOPLE OF THE BOOK;

LONDON LOST AND FOUND; BUILDING THE NEW JERUSALEM, Pornography & Politics: WHO'S REALLY COVERING UP; WHAT FEMINISM HAS DONE FOR ME; CAUGHT UP IN REALITY; ANTI-PERSONNEL CAPABILITY and THE CASE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY. Lastly there is the novelette GOLD DIGGERS OF 1977.

I found the fiction to be mostly fantasy and the non-fiction very parochial. The essays (mainly from newspapers) was of interest, especially in these latter days, but the last novelette I found a trifle boring and cerebral. Rabid Moorcock fans will like it, as those who read the non-fiction essays on the people he knew.

NOMANSLAND by D. G. Compton. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 286 pp. A\$36.95. On sale now.

NOMANSLAND is a novel of the present day in that it deals with subjects like UV radiation, men and war, whether women if they were in positions of power would behave like men or whether it is a genre-based thing.

The novel commences in Year 40 of the Attrition. Something unknown has affected women in that they are immune to the HIV virus. They are also unable to bring male fetuses to term. There have been no male babies for 40 years and the aging male population is beginning to splinter. Most of the men in Europe who are able to, donate sperm to the government sperm banks to ensure the continuance of the wide gene pool. There are various medical research projects, of which Dr Harriet Kahn-Ryder is one of the foremost researchers. However when she tells the government that she is near a breakthrough and wants to publish she is told to go easy - and is threatened by having her cat killed in front of her. Things get complicated for her from then on.

This is the type of book that the reader misses train stops with - which is increasingly being my test of a good sf book. A very engrossing sf novel.

CODGERSPACE by Alan Dean Foster. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 309 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

It all started with the cheese sandwich in the service pipe in the bowels of the automated factory. The factory was run by an AI and when the self-heating cheese sandwich melted and a bit of it dripped down into the heart of the delicate circuits running the plant, things changed and the AI began to think for itself. Thoughts *not* how to turn out consumer products, but thoughts like Is There Alien Life in the Universe? And If Not, Why Not? From then on events went downhill for humankind. After all, if you are on an automated farm with fifty or so cows, and your automatic machinery goes haywire, how the hell are you going to milk the cows, especially if you don't know how?

The rest of the novel details the search for the (presumably) lost aliens which is carried out by a food processor and five elderly people. Foster has in the last few years concentrated on humorous sf novels (and the novelisations of ALIEN, ALIENS and ALIEN³) and CODGERSPACE is a good example of his talent. It is easy to read and is relaxing - entertainment value for getting over an upset or reading in a dental waiting room or surgery - not too much concentration is needed, which isn't to say the

novel isn't enjoyable.

THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY by Paul Voermans. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 302 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

You have heard the comments that there aren't that many Australian sf novels around with the scent of the place? Well, if you *truly* want to read an sf novel with the Australian character in the novel, this is it.

The Weird Colonial Boy is Nigel Donohoe who was, in 1978, a relative youngster. His chief passion was his intended fish - which had been smuggled into the country from a polluted South American stream. When he got them home he found that one kept disappearing. He soon figured out that it must be going into space, so he built himself a spaceship and worked out how to get the ship and himself into the small space where things disappeared. What he found was another world - an Australia and a British Empire that was completely different from his world's. A history that was different back to (possibly) Cro-magnon man. Nigel soon found himself up to his ears in convict labour and it came to him that he might *not* be able to get back to his own world....

THE WEIRD COLONIAL BOY is the kind of book to finish in a short time - I read $\frac{3}{4}$ of it on a Saturday afternoon - which is *most* unusual for me, as I usually read my sf on the train or at work in the tea breaks. Get this book. *Recommended*.

RED DWARF: PRIMORDIAL SOUP by Grant Naylor. Penguin pb., dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 155 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

PRIMORDIAL SOUP is a collection of RED DWARF scripts written by Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. For those who have been following the TV series, or those readers of this magazine who don't own a TV and who are wondering what the hell the fuss is all about - this is a good chance to see what all the fuss is about. In addition, there is an eight page insert of b&w photos from the show which I don't suppose has or will be published elsewhere.

The book is subtitled "The least worst scripts" and those that are published herein are: POLYMORPH; MAROONED; DIMENSION JUMP; JUSTICE; BACK TO REALITY and PSIRENS. There is a (very) short Introduction and the photos have short explanatory pieces. The whole thing about this offering are the scripts themselves.

Actually the main thing I was left wondering is how the hell can a 23 pb page script be stretched out to be a TV episode. Reading the script the reader can see how the jokes were set up and can dwell on them

Just the thing for those fans who are *right* into the show.

THE MARTIAN INCA by Ian Watson. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1977. 203 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Gollancz seems to be really digging back in their reprinting of Ian Watson's works. In fact, I'm not sure why this novel stayed so long un-reprinted in paperback. Maybe his star is rising; maybe it is because of all the novels about Mars being published recently.

The trouble all starts when a Russian probe returns

to Earth with a cargo of Martian soil - it goes out of control when entering the Earth's atmosphere and crashes in the Andes. It is found by a group from an Indian village and something proceeds to infect all that group. Doctors arrive and commence to treat all but two of the victims. All but the untreated two die. The two, after seven days of leathery coma, wake up and the male, Julio, proclaims himself Inca and the woman his Queen. It seems that whatever was in the Martian soil has scrambled their brains, then put them back together in such a way as to give the two enhanced thinking abilities.

At the same time three Americans were on the way to Mars to try to alter its climate to enable Mars to be terraformed. Two land and take samples. One has an accident.... Watson was as good a writer then as he is now - this is an excellent "hard" (and well speculated) science fiction novel. Well worth getting.

WARPATH by Tony Daniel. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 295 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

I didn't think I would like this novel much. I gathered from the back-cover blurb it was about American Indians, with all the hoo-ha associated with that subject in the USA today.

I was pleasantly surprised. **WARPATH** is about Settlers and Indians, sure, and is about a western-type war, with Indians in canoes attacking the town of the settlers on the planet Candle. What is different, though, is that the Indians are Mississippi Indians, who apparently disappeared sometime in the thirteen Century. Where they went, Western Civilisation found, was to the stars - by some sort of mental gimmickry. They actually paddled their canoes across the light years and settled many worlds.

Will James was one of the humans who was sent to the stars in a radio-wave and had been reconstituted 500 years after he had left Earth - after the faster-than-light ships had found the planets of Indians. He had made a friend of Thomas, the future leader of the Indians on the planet Candle, and became the editor of the newspaper *The Cold Truth*. Then events took off of their own accord - the Indians' familiars were more than what they seemed - the beasts that helped the Indians to cross Interstellar distances.

An intriguing novel.

RED ORC'S REACH by Philip Jose Farmer. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1991. 282 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Red Orc is a ghost of a world that could have been, that was, or that is, at least to Jim Grimson, who is a patient in a mental hospital where a doctor treats his patients by having them take up the character of a person in the World of Tiers and live out that fantasy; if fantasy is what it was.

In the Introduction Farmer says that the therapy is an actual one and that a real psychiatrist was working towards publishing the papers behind it. The reader can work out for themselves what they think of all this: for those readers who are into the novel for the fantasy adventure, there is that also. Jim Grimson follows the Red Orc through many worlds and adventures. living them to the full, then coming back to the world where he is undergoing therapy.

Farmer was born in 1918 and is still writing strong -

his adventures are just that - they are not all that bloodthirsty, but they are well plotted and the plot gives the background to the story of both the present day (of 1979) and that of the Other Worlds where the Red Orc penetrates and survives, though it takes much battling. Interesting adventure, for the younger readers.

THE NINE GODS OF SAFADDNE by Antony Swithin. Fontana pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 262 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Book Four of *The Perilous Quest* for Lyonesse. The saga continues with Simon Branthwaite continuing his travels over the island of Rockall, the island in the Atlantic Ocean that housed many countries and adventures for him and those companions who travelled with him.

Swithin grew up with the island of Rockall in his head and heart - he made up stories and a background for peoples and countries of that lost land - lost now, that is - it wasn't lost back then in the 14th Century. The group and Branthwaite were searching for the country of Lyonesse - that fabled land that had hidden itself away from those who searched for it - for its mystery and tales. In this volume Simon reaches the land of the Nine Gods - and those who worship them.

The book also deals with good and evil - and the battles between the two, this time between the people of Lyonesse and the enemies surrounding it. He and his band fight on and find themselves on the side of those keeping to the path of Right - but their lives are on the line for this.

Complicated and complex fantasy fiction.

THE GATHERING by Isobelle Carmody. Pelican pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 266 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

THE GATHERING is a novel that stands by itself - that is, it isn't part of a trilogy. It is, as are the other novels Carmody has written, teenage fiction. In this case it is fantasy/horror.

The novel takes place in Cheshunt High. The area had long been a place that had trouble festering - then all of a sudden the neighbourhood calmed down. When Nathaniel arrived in the area with his mother, the first thing he noticed was the smell of death from the abattoir which was close to the school. He was not a troublesome boy, but some of the students and teachers seemed out to get him. Nathaniel did meet some pupils who became his friends though, including one who was a policeman's son. He met Nissa, a girl who, though not beautiful, had other qualities of character that made up for her imagined faults.

The theme is of good and evil, and Carmody strives to show that one must choose, and after choosing, you cannot just stand by - you must act one way or another. I really enjoyed **THE GATHERING** - it had a fresh approach to an age old theme. Good reading.

GOODLOW'S GHOSTS by T. M. Wright. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 215 pp. A\$36.95. On sale now.

T. M. Wright is well known for his horror and supernatural novels, including **STRANGE SEED**, which is somewhat of a classic. In **GOODLOW'S GHOSTS** he crosses detective fiction with horror - the tale is of a private detective - Sam Goodlow who gets himself killed, but he

doesn't believe it. Which shows you how good a detective he was. Ryerson Biergarten was a psychic investigator who specialised in violent events and their solving - he talked with the spirits still around.

The search for Goodlow isn't the only one that Ryerson is investigating at the time set by the novel - there are all sorts of strang and gruesome events taking place in the city which Ryerson checks into while trying to find out what is happening - one is a strange blonde who takes me up to apartment for what the man assumes is an assignment, but turns out that the woman only wants to read to him....

The writing style is simple and clear and grips the reader's attention. **GOODLOW'S GHOSTS** isn't a bloody horror novel - it is more gruesome.

THE SURBURAN BOOK OF THE DEAD by Robert Rankin. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 312 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

To show what this novel is like, let me quote the first line: "Along the crest of the hill a line of trees broke wind." The back cover blurb says: "The final and much-longed-for part of the stupendous Armageddon trilogy". Yes, this is the third book in the series - subtitled "Armageddon III: The Remake".

Rex Mundi is again the principal character as he tries to elude the bad guys - who are everywhere eliminating various characters with their weapons. Rex starts off in a fairly mundane way - digging a cesspit. He hits something hard with his shovel - it turns out to be a marble statue of Elvis Presley. Elvis takes a big part in these books - and so does Mundi's wife Christeen, who is the daughter of God and the twin sister of Jesus Christ. It is from here that things get a bit more complicated and his life-line takes a turn down.

Rankin is a good and humorous writer and reading his novel is an excellent way to lighten your day - at least for a few hours. If you haven't got the first two books - **ARMAGEDDON: THE MUSICAL** and **THE B MOVIE** get them while they are still available and read them before this one.

LUCKY STARR AND THE OCEANS OF VENUS/THE BIG SUN OF MERCURY by Paul French (Asimov). Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1954 & 1956. 307 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Isaac Asimov wrote six "Lucky Starr" novels in the early 60's - this edition contains two of those novels. The science is par for that time - the world ocean of Venus and the non-turning world of Mercury.

The books tell of the adventures of Lucky Starr and his friend John Bigman Jones as they investigated some goings on on Venus. They were Council of Science members, though some of youngest ones - and used aliases when on the investigation. The Lucky Starr books were written for adolescents and thus are pretty simple in plot and the writing is also kept simple, though Asimov does put in facts about the solar system as the book progresses.

These editions would be a welcome addition to the library of the Asimov fan, as they have not been in print all that long ; I think the edition before this one was in 1978. The set would also make a good present for those under 12 readers who show an early interest in science or sf - which is a good indication of an active mind..

BILL THE GALACTIC HERO... ON THE PLANET OF THE HIPPIES FROM HELL by Harry Harrison & David Bischoff. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 214 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Another wacky book by Harrison and his changing sidekick about Bill the Trooper and his endeavours to fight on the side of good against evil doers - this time he is on the planet Barworld where there really are Hippies from Hell.

Bill's companions this time are Elliott Methadrine and Sir Dudley. Bill and Elliott go cruising through the universes - both alternate and time-wise ones, looking for the Hippies from Hell and having assorted adventures on outlandish planets of their own time and also manage to get to Earth and go back in time then also - to the Old American West and even Aztec-style South America.

The book is an easy read and doesn't need any great intellectual skills - in fact it would be better to leave any intellectual skills behind. Just let that Sense of Wonder hang out and you'll enjoy yourself. As long as you don't take this stuff seriously you can relax.

STRANGE SEED by T. M. Wright. VG pb., dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1978. 309 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The back-cover blurb says that this novel was chosen by both Steven King and Douglas Winter was one of the best horror novels of the last forty years, though what the blurb doesn't say is how many novels they picked...

STRANGE SEED is set in upstate New York in an old farm house. The novel starts off with the death of a father who lived with his son in the farm. The child was left alone - and wandered off into the forest. Twenty years later a young couple moved to the derelict farm and planned to fix it up and live there. The wife was more in tune with the house and all through the suspenseful novel she becomes more and more in "touch" with the spirit of the place and its surrounding forest. The husband gets the worst of the events and when all the things come together at the end of the novel the reader is fairly certain what will happen.

Wright is a good subtle horror writer - there isn't all that blood and gore - but the reader knows *something* horrific is going to happen - and the suspense is in waiting for it.

THE DECEIVER by Louise Cooper. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1991. 280 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The Chaos Gate trilogy, Book 1. Another novel that puts a lot of words in a short volume by using small print.

THE DECEIVER is fantasy - it tells of the time after the battle of the gods of Chaos and Order - the time after the sixty years of peace when people thought that all would be well for all time to come. Of course it would not be - a low chaotic demon, Narid-na-Gost is very ambitious; it has a plan to further its own power and maybe gain its ascendancy over even its Master, the god of Chaos. Narid-no-Gost contacts a mortal, Ygorla, and tries to persuade her to accept him as he is - and to give her (temporary) power to advance herself. Of course this is all part of it's plan to subvert the mortals so that in the end the whole world will be the domain of a demon and thus would be ground into dust and less than dust.

Cooper is quite a good writer - the novel is easy to

read and the reader does not have to plough through great gobs of text to get at the nitty-gritty of the novel. Adventure fantasy.

THE STATE OF THE ART by Ian M. Banks. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1991. 216 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

A collection of Ian Banks' short stories: **ROAD OF SKULLS** which tells of a waggon with some strange passengers juddering its way up a road of the skulls of enemies of the Empire, towards a city that is always on the horizon; **A GIFT FROM THE CULTURE** is about a citizen of the Culture, the space-faring civilization that is millenia old, who is trying to lose himself on a planet that he likes - he is found by some rebels and "persuaded" to try to destroy a starship with a handgun; **ODD ATTACHMENT** is about an alien herder who comes across an exploring starship...; **DESCENDANT** tells of a crashed pilot who lands on a desolate asteroid and the suit that carries him to the base on the other side of the planetoid; **CLEANING UP** concerns the mis-transmitted objects that fall to earth from an alien starship that has to get them back; **PIECE** starts out telling the past history of a passenger on an aircraft that he really should not have caught; **THE STATE OF THE ART** is another Culture story; this time a novella about the representatives of the Culture arriving to check Earth (and no, the Culture is not an Earth derivative).

This collection shows that Banks has a good grasp of SF and he is going to go a long way.

AGAINST A DARK BACKGROUND by Ian M. Banks. Orbit h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 487 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now.

A new novel by one of the rising stars in SF. And the cover illustration illustrates a scene from the novel.

In a war that had ended about five years previously, the survivors of an assault team of individuals that had been "bonded" so that they could tell what the others would do in a tense situation has to come together to find out and retrieve the last Lazy Gun. Said Gun being a semi-intelligent piece of weaponry that is from the far past. It can use its sophisticated systems to destroy people or objects by usually unusual methods - from spears to meteorite strikes.

The book follows the adventures of Lady Sharrow and her friends as they fight their way across a planet or two trying both to find two objects - a book, which they hope will lead the way to the lost Lazy Gun. There is high adventure and a well-structured future society - though not Terran human. One of the best SF novels I've read lately. I could hardly put it down till it was finished. This is one novel I can definitid say: ***Recommended***.

VAMPIRES AT MIDNIGHT edited by Peter Haining. Warner pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1968. 255 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

When this was first published it was titled **THE MIDNIGHT PEOPLE**. It seems that this is the first UK reprinting.

VAMPIRES AT MIDNIGHT is a collection of short stories with the subject of vampires. The stories are by well known authors and the reader may have seen several of them printed elsewhere - but here they are in one collection for the library of the discerning fan. The stories are FRITZ

HAARMANN - 'THE HANOVER VAMPIRE' by Montague Summers; **THE VAMPIRE OF CROGLIN GRANGE** by Augustus Hare; **THE VAMPYRE** by John Polidori; **THE STORM VISITOR** by Thomas Preskett Prest; **THREE YOUNG LADIES** by Bram Stoker; **AN EPISODE OF CATHEDRAL HISTORY** by M. R. James; **BAT'S BELFRY** by August Derleth; **'AND NO BIRD SINGS'** by E. F. Benson, **THE BELIEVER** by Sydney Horler; **THE DRIFTING SNOW** by Stephen Grendon. **WHEN IT WAS MOONLIGHT** by Manly Wade Wellman; **OVER THE RIVER** by P. Schuyler Miller; **DRINK MY BLOOD** by Richard Matheson; **PILLAR OF FIRE** by Ray Bradbury; **DR PORTHOS** by Basis Copper; **THE LIVING DEAD** by Robert Bloch; **THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES** by Fritz Leiber and a **POSTSCRIPT** by Montague Summers.

A good collection of well scripted stories by some of the best writers in the business.

OUT ARE THE LIGHTS by Richard Laymon. Headline Feature pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 344 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

A horror novel by a writer new to me.

OUT ARE THE LIGHTS could refer to movie theatre lights - or the eyes of the victims of a murderer. The novel is quite lengthy - it follows the career of a young woman and her boyfriend as they follow up a series of what could turn out to be "snuff" movies. In fact as the novel progresses the two are pretty sure they *are* snuff movies. In them a woman usually get killed after being tortured in many ways - eyes, various limbs and appurtenances cut off or burnt off.

Each snuff movie is lovingly detailed and described by Laymon, in gory detail. The man in each movie is the same - by the end of the novel there have been about seven movies made and the young woman who has the horrifying idea that these movies are "real" herself comes up against the bestial murderer. However, even when she is tied up against a tree, naked, with dried branches piled around her feet and he is advancing with a lighted torch she is saved from him - but maybe to a fate worst that he could inflict - or at a longer length. Definitely one for the dedicated splatter fan - others can keep away.

THE HAMMER OF GOD by Arthur C. Clarke. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 204 pp incl Afterword. A\$34.95. On sale now.

Arthur C. Clarke's latest novel. It is expanded from a short story he had published in **TIME**, with the same title.

The Hammer of God was an asteroid, discovered by an amateur astronomer on Mars and named after the Hindu God of Destruction - Kali. The action takes place several hundred years in the future, when mankind is terraforming Mars and has ships going between the planets, and has several bases on the Moon. There are two spaceships in the Trojan points of Jupiter - they are the Spaceguard - set up by NASA in the last years of the 20th Century to keep an eye on asteroids and make sure that one does not fall on Earth. The idea is to use one of the ships to set up a mass-driver on the asteroid and push it off any collision course. The novel gives some of the background to this and to the political situation in the future society - including, importantly the new religion, a combination of Christianity and Islam -

Chrislam. The female prophet of which had died some years before but the faith kept on.

The *Goliath*, with Captain Robert Singh in command, picks up the mass-driver and propellant and sets out for Kali. But, as with everything, Murphy's Law takes a hand, and things are not as smooth as hoped... Good solid "hard" SF.

ACROSS REALTIME by Vernor Vinge. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1984, 1986. 532 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

The reason there are two copyright dates is that this is a combination of two novels - *THE PEACE WAR* and *MAROONED IN REALTIME*.

The device that backs both these novels is the "bobble" - a sphere of force that, when it englobes anything, protects it from harm. These bobbles, once cast, exist until they disintegrate in their own time, which depends on their size and the energy poured into them in setting them up. And time is halted for the things inside the sphere. The company which developed these devices was quite devious and ultimately engineered the Third World War - and, since their equipment and troops were safely ensconced within the force spheres, were able to take over the world.

The second novel/part takes place after the "Peace" - the time that the men in the company ruled. One of the events that the creation of the bobbles precipitated enabled venturesome people to journey one way into the future. One of the things they found was that the human race disappeared after a certain time and the second novel is about the search for the reason behind this disappearance.

A fascinating book and a "must" read for the serious reader.

AZTEC CENTURY by Christopher Evans. VGSF tpb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1993. 352 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

If you like Alternate Universe novels then you'll love this novel by Chris Evans - I couldn't put it down.

Set in roughly this year, but in a world where Cortez turned his coat and helped the Aztecs, *AZTEC CENTURY* (named after the Aztec century of 50 years) has as its protagonist Princess Catherine Marlborough - the daughter of the King of England. One of the events that shook up that world was the assassination of Queen Victoria in the early years of the Eighteenth Century. The novel opens in Wales with the two princesses - Catherine and Victoria - and Catherine's husband Alex, in hiding in a valley from the Aztecs. They had been there about three years. Then all of a sudden the Aztecs find them and destroyed their house from the air, with only the three of them escaping, along with Bevan, their Welsh handyman.

There are very many points throughout the novel that will bring a chuckle - especially some of the brand names, IBM for instance - Imperial Business Machines, of course. The two princesses are taken as captives to London where they are worked upon psychologically by the cunning Aztecs, who have by then taken over most of the world except for Imperial Russian and some of North America.

I really enjoyed this novel and can put a *Recommended* in this review for it. Get it if you like good SF.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED:

VILLAINY VICTORIOUS by L. Ron Hubbard. Bridge pb, dist in Aust by New Era Pubs. (C) 1987. 465 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Vol 9 of Hubbard's "dekalogy". The novel continues the tale of Jettero Heller as he manages to get rid of some of the villains of the piece. The Earth base of the Voltar's is also destroyed and Heller returns to Voltar where he again finds himself in deep. Teeny finds herself Queen and Heller finds himself again up against Soltan Gris.

THE DOOMED PLANET by L. Ron Hubbard. Bridge pb, dist in Aust by New Era Pubs. (C) 1987. 355 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. The concluding volume of the Mission Earth series. The series has been going over ten volumes, and in *THE DOOMED PLANET* the author ties up the ends. Heller and the Countess Krak work together to try to save the planet Voltar as it's social structure (what there is of it) begins to disintegrate. For those who missed the hardback - both new releases and remaindered - here is a cheaper way for those who met Hubbard in *BATTLEFIELD EARTH* to read more..

THE MISTS OF AVALON by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1982. 1009 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The British edition of, as the cover blurb says: "The bestselling classic of intrigue and enchantment". The novel is a fantasy, though it isn't labelled as such - Arthurian legend, but told from the women-in-the-tale's viewpoint. This novel started off a trend which is still continuing, with fantasy branch-offs into Celtic mythology also sourcing from this novel. Well written and worth the price.

VALENTINE by S. P. Somtow. VG Horror, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 283 pp. A\$ On sale now. The sequel to *VAMPIRE JUNCTION*. Timmy Valentine was a rock star - the most famous in the world. Then he mysteriously died in a fire and later a film was planned about his life. A young man who looked very much like him was picked for the role. Unfortunately Timmy was not dead - he was actually *undead* and determined to come back to the land of the living. This book has really taken off in h/c and trade pb.

BEDLAM by Harry Adam Knight. VG pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 215 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. *BEDLAM* is about the Bone Man - the psychopathic killer who's deeds in London caused quite a fuss, especially when his hideout was found with the bones on the walls - the bones that showed he had killed at least seven victims. And then the occupants of a certain building began to have erotic dreams - dreams that were not really theirs - dreams that were coming from that same Bone Man. Splatter horror.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

HODDER & STOUGHTON: *THE STONE WITHIN* by David Wingrove.
ALLEN & UNWIN: *A MILLION OPEN DOOR* by John Barnes.
ETERNAL CHAMPION 9 & 10 by Mike Moorcock
PENGUIN: *CRISIS ON DOONA* by Anne McCaffrey & Jody Lunn
THE LAST AERIE by Brian Lumley
NEW STORIES FROM TWILIGHT ZONE ed M. Greenberg
VIRTUAL LIGHT by William Gibson
TRANWORLD: *POWERS THAT BE* by A. McCarrey & E. Scarborough
HARPERCOLLINS: *THE STRESS OF HER REGARD* by Tim Powers
BEAUTY by Sheri S. Tepper. (cont. p. 59)