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THE MENTOR 83

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION



THE MENTOR 83

Australian Science Fiction

30th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

JULY 1994

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Contributions, if over 3 pages, preferred to be on an IBM 51/4" or 31/2" disc (DD or HD) otherwise 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! This doesn't refer to LoCs. 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

Well, I didn't leave myself much space this issue for my editorial... As you can see from the header this issue, this is the 30th Annish. There has been several breaks of a few years, when I gaffiated, and several years of intense activity, when I published monthly, but overall it's been pretty steady.

Because of the usual size restraints the overseas readers may *not* get my reviews - I won't know until I weigh an issue. This issue all the artists and authors are Australian - except Andrew Darlington (mainly because I haven't received Buck Coulson's column yet); however overseas readers are amply represented in THE R&R DEPT.

I hope you like the colour cover this issue - you won't be seeing another for some time. Kurt Stone is an excellent artist - and a

member of the Gargoyle Club. I've several other illos of his, which I'll be using in future issues. If you like the Molesworth History the next few episodes will have quite a few photos from the period. I have just had the compressor of the ABDick press cleaned, so should not have any more trouble with that problem for a bit.

Melbourne is apparently bidding for the 1999 WorldCon. The only odd thing that I notice is that they have the problem that they said Sydney had for it's two bids - who outside of Melbourne fandom has heard of the majority of the Committee? Not that I'm volunteering - but certain fans need to get their own medicine given to them.

Enclosed is a DUFF voting form. Please vote, even if you don't vote for me - it'll give a higher profile to Australians for the '99 WorldCon bid. I've been winnowing my library and I've got hundreds of SF and fantasy paperbacks and H/Cs for sale. If interested, send me a *long* SSAE for a 10 page list. Pbs are \$3 ea and H/Cs and tpb are \$5 ea (plus postage).

The Sydney SF clubs are going well - it is getting so that nearly every week there is a meeting of a (different) club to go to! I'll be listing said clubs and giving meetings details and dates in future issues - there ain't space this time around. - Ron. (8.2.94)

STAR RISE OVER HADES

by Andrew Sullivan

A loud klaxon echoed throughout the vast chambers of the ship. Warning lights flashed their red light like bright pulsars, waxing and waning with the rising and falling volume of the siren. The many inhabitants of this chamber stirred uneasily, not sure where to run if danger should show its ugly head. Like sheep they waited for someone or something to show them the way. They would come soon, They knew what to do, They always did.

A young girl, naked like those around her, huddled into a corner as far as the restricting bulkheads would allow. This is what she had done last time the lights and sirens had gone off and she had survived that. This time would be the same. She hoped.

Around her, adults and older children alike stood rooted to the metal floor and swayed to and fro uncertainly. She did not know how many people there were in this chamber but there were a lot. Others had mentioned words like millions or billions. She didn't know what the words had meant but she had the feeling that they were talking about a lot of people.

The loud sirens hurt her ears and the flashing lights hurt her eyes, eyes and ears that were used to the cool, quiet darkness of the immense chamber. The loudest noise she had heard in her short life before the sirens had been a fight between a few of the adults, a fight that had ended with one of the adults, a woman, lying motionless on the cold metal floor with a pool of dark sticky fluid leaking from her head. No one was fighting now, they were all too scared to even talk. The only sound was the siren that tore the silence to shreds. The girl huddled down further into the corner.

Through the maze of legs and limbs that made up her world she could see other children clinging to legs of adults that didn't seem to mind. The children buried their frightened faces into fleshy thighs and those small enough to be picked up hid their faces in crooks of elbows and necks. The little girl felt a pang of emotion she recognised but could not identify. When she had tried to get an adult to pick her up and comfort her when she had been frightened a long time ago she had been kicked and beaten until, crying and hurting from the blows, she had hidden away from the angry adults deep in the maze of girders and struts that supported the bulkheads separating the chambers. She still did not understand why those adults had beaten her and not the other children but that was in the past now. She had learned quickly that somehow she was different from the other children.

But they hadn't hurt her for a long while. She had kept her distance from the other people, not wanting to be beaten again. She kept to herself, playing with the other kids when she had wandered around the vast spaces of the chamber but all too soon adults would call to those children and they would leave her alone again. But she did not mind, not now. Being alone meant she could do what she wanted, go where she wanted. Once she had even travelled to the far side of the chamber and passed through a doorway that was nearly ten times as big as her tiny frame and entered the next chamber. Unlike the stories she had heard the adults tell the other children, that huge monsters lived outside the chamber, only more people lived in the next chamber. She had soon grown tired of them and had gone back to her little hidey amongst the girders.

Now, with the flashing red lights making people's movements appear jerky and the sirens almost driving her crazy, she saw something that made her little heart almost stop its beating.

It was a monster, she was sure of it. It was the monster the adults had spoken about. She wanted to pee. It was the ugliest thing she had ever seen. If she looked anywhere near as bad as that beast did, it was no wonder people shunned her the way they did.

She watched in horrified fascination as the monster, all fifteen or twenty feet of it, stood passively in the huge doorway. She had seen the size of the doorways throughout the chambers and had only briefly wondered why they were so big. Now she knew. The monster, it looked to be more machine than actual monster, seemed to regard the mass of terror frozen bodies before it. Its head, or what the girl took to be its head, rotated slowly from side to side as though taking in every single frightened, upturned face. It raised a huge limb up above its head and thumped the solid metal of the door lintel. The resultant boom echoed throughout the chamber. People cringed in fear but no one fled, they were simply too scared to move.

A shrill scream tore through the chamber, drowning out the few wails of children and the whimpering of those adults too close to breaking point. The scream ranged up through the registers until it seemed to cut right through the young girl's brain and then it fell quickly, becoming a booming bass sound that made her stomach quiver and her lungs ache. It was then that she realised the monster was speaking.

She knew the sounds were words but she did not understand them. It was speaking the language They speak. She had heard some of the adults speaking in the same tongue occasionally but she had never heard enough to learn it. The words boomed around the closed chamber, echoing and re-echoing until, even if she could have understood what it was saying, she wouldn't have been able to recognise the words.

She might not have understood the words that seemed to come from every point in the chamber but it seemed those around her did. The adults scooped up children that were clinging to legs and began to shuffle towards the monster. The terror that had bolted them to the floor now drove them on towards the huge, towering monster at the far end of the chamber. The young girl watched in horror as those around her followed the booming voice. She shrank back further into the corner but no one paid her the slightest attention. It was as though they had never known she was there. The monster paused in its outpourings as though to draw breath and the people shuffled forward in silence, the only sound in the chamber being the slap and shuffle of bare feet on the cold metal floor.

The monster stepped forward and to one side, its metal clad feet sending tremors through the floor, the crash of its soles contrasting with the near silent tread of thousands of people. It stood to one side of the huge doorway as though standing guard as they passed through beneath its intense gaze.

A whimper escaped from the girl's thin lips as she watched naked people she had seen in the food line but never talked to shuffle by. The people looked the same but they were different, they didn't act the way they used to. It was as though the monster had changed them just by speaking to them.

Maybe this monster is one of Them? The realisation did nothing to help the girl. She began weeping silently, tears of fear and anger falling upon her cheeks. Somehow she had imagined Them to be like herself and the other people. The mental image she had gained through what she had overheard was of a race of people that were kind and friendly, helping people through the interstellar space voyage.

She didn't know what interstellar space was but They sounded friendly enough. But now? Now she knew what They really were. Didn't anybody else? Why were they following this metal monster? Why didn't they run and hide the way she did? Couldn't they see that They were monsters? She wanted to run out and stop them from following the ugly beast but she couldn't. Too many times she had been hit and swiped at because she stood too close to somebody who didn't want anything to do with her. They would only hit her and tell her to go away. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with her. Nobody.

For the first time in her short life the young girl saw that the chamber was almost empty. The many people that she had lived with, shared her food and the amenities with, were nearly gone, filed out the gigantic door guarded by the equally gigantic monster. She felt terribly alone and very frightened. Just the thought of staying in the

vast chamber by herself made her shiver. Without a second thought she scampered across the polished chamber floor, a floor she had never seen so bare.

The girl caught up with a small group of people just as they were about to pass beneath the now silent and still monster. She hung back, not wanting to raise the anger of the adults like she normally did by just being there, and neither did she want to be left alone. And now she saw the monster up close, terrifyingly close.

It was tall. She had seen that before but now, standing right next to it, it towered up near the ceiling. Its large, metal clad feet were nearly as high as she was. The metal shone a deathly pale silver in the faint light of the chamber, reflecting the flashing red light of the warning beacon hanging from the centre of the ceiling. Struts and rods festooned the plate metal of the monster giving it the appearance of a nest of wiring that moved constantly as she watched. She stopped walking and craned her neck to look up into the dizzy heights. She gazed into the face of the monster and a cold chill caressed her naked body. It was staring at her, staring with eyes that glowed in the dark. It was as though its large, ovoid eyes were on fire or made of burning embers redder than the flashing warning lights. The face that surrounded the eyes were flat, devoid of features like a mouth or a nose. How did it speak? she wondered briefly before her terror gripped her again.

The monster stared at her dispassionately without moving. It didn't even breath, it was as though it was dead. The young girl was about to touch it when it screamed at her again with that high pitched voice. She ran.

Her heart was in her throat as she ran to catch up with the slowly shuffling group of people. At any moment she expected to hear the dull boom boom as the monster ran after her but there was nothing. She slowed to walking pace as she drew level with the slack faced group as they followed countless others along a corridor she couldn't see the end of. Then she saw the windows.

The windows, set at regular intervals on the left hand wall of the corridor, were large and long, stretching almost to the ceiling and between the bulkheads. The bottom sill was just above her head but she could still see out. It was like nothing she had ever seen before. She had spent her entire life in the chambers and could only guess at the perspective revealed by the window. But it wasn't just the perspective of distance, it was the objects shown in the window. A huge bright ball (she had to guess at the size) was almost level with the window. The ball was a bright sphere of white light, brighter than the warning lights she had seen, brighter than anything and it hurt her eyes to look at it. And between the ball and where she now stood, a shape of darkness, a shadow against the bright ball, reflecting points of light, hung suspended from nothing. She could see no visible means of support for either ball or the slab of what looked like metal. Why don't they fall down? What's holding them up? She noticed bursts of bright light issuing from one end of the slab. Tiny portions of the slab were floating away from the rest of the slab. She screwed up her eyes and was puzzled to see that the tiny portions looked like people. People very far away and floating freely like the slab itself, with nothing to stop them falling down. At that thought she tried to look down but the sill was too high and she couldn't climb it. She couldn't see what down looked like but she didn't think that it would be a cold metal floor. She noticed she had slipped behind and hurried to catch up.

The view was the same for all the windows she passed. The corridor seemed to stretch on for a long time. She had never walked so far in her life. It was when her legs were beginning to tire that she saw the people floating outside one of the ports. Their faces were swollen, bulging with a strange puffiness the likeness of which she had never seen before, their eyes were empty sockets that trailed globs of white fluid. Some she saw had their mouths open and she could see that their tongues were almost as big as her hands. Although they looked different, they all had something in common with the woman who hadn't woken up again after hitting her head against the hard floor. She knew that the people outside the window would not wake up again either.

Finally the young girl thought she could see the end of the corridor. Thousands of people still separated her from the end but she could see, now and then, that two huge doors would slide open and the people would walk in. The doors closed and the next time they

opened the people had gone, leaving room for more people to enter before the doors closed once more and the line of people shortened. She moved up to the end of the line.

And there were more people floating outside. There were a lot more now. All naked and bloated and...and lifeless. It took her only a moment to connect the opening and closing doors to the gathering hordes outside. If she went through those doors she would become like them and have nothing to stop her from falling down. It wasn't right.

No, she whimpered. She looked about her for the first time. The adults around her were slack faced and uncomprehending as before but they were no longer alone. Without her noticing one of Them had come up behind them. She couldn't tell if it was the same as the one in the chamber. It stood silently, its red glowing eyes seemingly fixed on her, watching her every move. Down the far end of the corridor she could hear the doors slide open letting more people shuffle silently in.

She looked over her shoulder and saw the line shuffle up a few paces. The monster remained where it was, daring her to run for it. Slowly, she backed away from it. She wanted to see it follow but it didn't.

The doors shut and a moment later opened again. The line grew shorter and she could see that when the doors opened again she would be in the next group. She turned and glanced over her shoulder at the monster but it stood rooted to the metal floor.

She wanted to run but there was nowhere to run to in the corridor. As the doors closed once more she saw a smaller doorway to one side, on the opposite side of the corridor to the windows. Why would They have a door small enough for people when they are all twenty feet tall? It didn't matter, anywhere would do.

The doors opened once again, the shiny interior waiting for its last load to enter. Those in front of her shuffled forward, unaware of the doom they were entering. The girl followed, fearing that the monster could hear her thoughts and would come after her and stomp on her. Just before she passed the threshold of the double doors, she scurried sideways towards the alcove, away from the group of people, away from the horrible fate she knew awaited them. She hoped the monster did not see her.

The cul-de-sac ended after two short paces with a black, featureless door that was shut. The girl stood in shock in front of the door. It did not open. All the other doors she had come across in the chambers opened when you wanted them to. This one, however, refused to budge. Behind her she heard the big double doors slide shut, sealing the fate of those within and leaving her alone with the monsters. Tears of frustration and fear welled up in her eyes. Maybe she should have gone with the other people, at least she wouldn't be alone. She was tempted to bash at the door in anger but she knew it would only attract the monsters. If the huge doors opened again she would step through and not care about what was beyond.

But the doors did not open again. They stayed stubbornly shut and, like the smaller door, refused to budge no matter how hard she looked at it. Tears began to flow down her cheeks as fear gripped her heart. For the first time in her short life she was alone, utterly alone. The silence of the huge corridor behind her began to deafen her. Any sign of people would have helped but there were no more. It was her...and the monsters.

The monsters! As if aroused by her thoughts the monster down the corridor began to move, the boom boom of its steel clad feet clanging against the metal floor of the corridor echoed and re-echoed. She curled herself into a corner of the alcove. From years of hiding from angry adults she had grown adept at hiding in small spaces and making herself invisible.

She could no longer see the monster as it advanced towards her but she could hear it. The noise of its progress became louder and louder until she wanted to scream. She began to shiver in terror and was afraid the noise of her knees knocking together would give her away.

When the noise and tension was about to become too much, and she was afraid she would scream, the beast stopped. Dead. Right in front of the huge double doors. The echoes of its footsteps reverberated down the corridor and finally faded. It's seen me! she wailed to herself. It's seen me and it's going to eat me!

Instead of turning and opening its great maw to eat her a siren

not unlike that which had gone off back in the chamber began to wail. A red lamp began flashing on the shoulder of the monster and was matched by a yellow one above the lintel of the double doors. The siren became a whoop whoop alarm and the yellow light became green. The flashing red also changed to green then stopped. The sirens ceased suddenly leaving the corridor in an aftermath of silence.

She could see the monster's metal feet. It stood in front of the doors in silence, stock still. What was it doing? What was it waiting for? Why doesn't it go away? The tension became too much for her cramped legs and she shifted her weight slightly, wanting to run but holding herself back in the tight confines of the shallow alcove before it saw her.

But it was too late. It saw her. The sudden boom of its heavy tread striking the floor as it moved towards her ricocheted inside her brain. It moved quickly, quicker than she had yet seen or would have suspected from its huge bulk. This one did not plod after her, it ran. She pressed herself into the door, wishing fervently that the door would open and swallow her before the monster did. But it didn't.

The monster halted abruptly three feet from the young girl, a huge, metal, taloned claw raised ready to strike.

She whimpered, tears brimming in her eyes but there were too many of them to fall freely. The glowing embers of its eyes stared at her intensely. It did not make a noise as it stared down from its great height. She waited, expecting, at any moment, to see the monster's mouth open up displaying its glistening set of sharp metal teeth.

The light in its eyes suddenly faded to an inky blackness. It was as though the monster had died on its feet. Would it fall over? Would it fall and crush me?

A few tears that had been brimming in her eyes finally cascaded over her cheeks, a whimper followed. She was too terrified to do anything more; although she wanted to scream and cry out she knew there would be no one to answer her pleas. The tension in the scrubbed air was becoming too much for her. She wanted to run away but the monster had her trapped even if she could move. Then, when she was least expecting it, the monster did something that drove all thought from her mind. It opened up its stomach.

It happened slowly, as if it hurt the monster. She saw a crack appear in the shiny metal of its torso which widened. The sounds of motors whirring and hinges squeaking replaced the sound of blood roaring in her ears. The two halves of the torso split wider until they had almost swung open entirely, revealing the darkness of its insides. That was all she could see, the darkness of its depths. Maybe this was its mouth and it was going to eat her? Then a hand appeared from the depthless interior. It reached out of the torso halves and pushed them open further.

The girl sat in stunned silence as the monster disgorged its contents. It was a man. At least it looked like man, but he was covered in colourful somethings that hid his body. Had the monster eaten him whole and he was now covered in the muck from its stomach? But the man was still alive. He stepped down from the monster's stomach and looked at her. His eyes were a deep blue and she could see little reflections of herself in them. She looked frightened but she already knew that.

The man stared down at her, a look she could not decipher marred his face. His hands were on his hips, giving the impression that he was puzzled, maybe worried, but she wasn't sure. The monster stood behind him, silent and morose. It didn't seem to mind having its stomach split open. She was thinking about this when the man spoke to her.

He spoke in the quick fire bursts of the monster's tongue, a language only a few of the adults had known. He questioned her about something and frowned when she only stared up at him uncomprehendingly. She forced herself as far back into the corner as she could get. This man, who was covered in things she could only guess at, and did not look like any adult she had seen before, frightened her. He had come from inside a monster, he must be its friend at least.

The young man seemed to come to some decision in his mind. He spoke again. "What are you doing here? How did you get here?" He spoke in her tongue, the language most of the adults had spoken back in the chamber. He looked at her, seeing her suddenly prick up her ears at his question. He knelt down closer, waiting for some response, she obviously understood the questions, or recognised the

language. "What's your name?"

But she didn't answer, couldn't answer. She had suddenly lost her power of speech, limited as it was. Instead, she tried again to disappear into the door behind her.

The man, almost framed by the outline of the monster behind him, leaned forward. He seemed to consider her for a long moment, then his face softened into a shy smile. "Hey, little one," he said softly, "it's okay. Nothing to be frightened of. Are you lonely? Missing your Mum and Dad, hey? I know where they've gone but...but I don't think you want to go there." His voice was soft and warm, not at all like the harsh whispers of the adults she knew.

He put out a hand to touch her face and the thought of biting it did a little more than cross her mind. What was he talking about? Take me to who? Who is he talking about?

"Have you got a name, little one?" he asked, the gentleness in his voice reassuring. A tender expression touched his face as he slowly caressed her long, unwashed and tangled blonde hair. He was treating her like some of the adults treated the other kids. He didn't seem like a friend of the awful monsters but he had come from inside of one. He is quite nice, she thought, except he keeps using words I don't understand.

"I never realised how much like us you are," he said to himself. "You're pretty, too. Did you know that? Quite the prettiest young girl I've seen since my sister was about your age. How many others are like you?" He paused for a moment, then his face lost colour and sagged. "What have I done? What have we be doing? Eight and a quarter million! Jesus Christ!" He stood up in shock and ran a hand through his thick brown hair. "Jesus Christ!" He turned about and stopped, unsure of what he wanted to do. He turned about again and looked at the bedraggled girl once more. He knelt down beside her. "Come on, sweetie. You can't stay here, someone might find you. Come on, take my hand, that's it. I'll take you out of this bad place, take you somewhere safe and warm." He reached out his hands again, beckoning to her.

She looked at his hand, soft, warm, not at all like the callused, hard hands of the other adults she had known. No, this one was friendlier and talked nicely to her. Just as she reached out her small hand a sudden boom echoed throughout the corridor; a door opening, and the clang of another monster's approaching footsteps - approaching fast.

The young man turned on his haunches to watch the approaching monster and hung his head in disappointment and shame. "Shit," he whispered. He did not run, did not even stand, he just shook his head as though in sadness and glanced back at the young girl, his eyes moist. He did nothing until the new monster had come to a halt by the first monster, their bulk towering over them.

The closed air of the corridor was then filled with the loud, metallic thundering voice of the monster speaking its own tongue. The girl did not know who it was speaking to but it certainly wasn't her. She was very surprised when the young man stood up and spoke to the monster in return, again in the strange speech. He spoke a short sentence but the rest of what he said was spoken in her language, she understood that part, nearly.

He said, "She doesn't even understand English. She can't understand what we're saying now. She's obviously had no schooling, I think she was conceived on the ship after we loaded them from Altair."

The second monster, larger and meaner than the first, stood in silence for a moment. Then it surprised her by speaking in her own language. "That's all very well but I don't like the idea of them overhearing or seeing us. It's just not ethical." The monster's voice was the same, echoing loudly, reverberating with power enough to make her shiver, but she understood almost every word. They had never spoken like this before, in fact, this was the first time she had ever heard of them speaking to a person, especially using the common tongue. Why are they starting now?

"If word got out we'd be the laughing stock of the Cattleman's Association. Plus there'd be the biggest goddamn stampede ever seen this side of the Galactic Divide. The poor blighters can't have their belief in the Xeferon destroyed by seeing us in these infernal suits!

"What's this one doing here?"

The young man turned and looked at the young girl, his face

full of tender compassion and sorrow. "She must have become confused," he said quietly, "became separated from the rest of the herd and didn't enter the slaughter pens. She's harmless but scared shitless."

"Hmmpf. So what are you waiting for? Throw it out the airlock."

The young man stared up at the towering monster, his face drained of colour. He glanced nervously back at the frightened girl. "But, but she's--"

"Throw it out, son. It's better to just put them out of their misery. It's the only humane thing to do. It's a lot harder on you, and on them, if you start getting attached to them. They may look sweet and innocent when they're young but they grow up to be the meanest sonsabitches you've ever seen. Take her down to the airlock and put her out of her misery. We haven't enough money to feed ourselves let alone our livestock as well. You know that, Nick. I don't have to explain my decision again. It's either us or them and they just aren't worth the money spent on fodder. A lot of farmers aren't even getting enough food for themselves. Just be grateful to the Lord above for what we've got and get on with your chores; we have to make Clividea planetfall by 1881 to deliver what grain we have left. The crash in the Norm market has meant a lot of people have had to dump their stock and they're all scrambling to make whatever profit they can from the trip. Those blasted Xidea should make up their collective minds. The last time they cancelled all Norm orders it was two decades before the market opened up again."

The young man, Nick, was silent, staring at the monster. "But Dad," he turned and indicated the girl, "she's just like us. I never knew before now, you never told us. They're all like us. We're no better or worse than they are! We can't just send them to their deaths. What gives us the right to decide whether they live or die? We--"

"NICK!" his father shouted. The girl whimpered and cringed further into the corner. "Nick, please," he said in a quieter tone of voice, an almost gentle timbre that seemed incongruous coming from the large, hulking machine. "I've gone through this before. You start thinking like that and you might as well just put yourself out that airlock. They're not human, Nick. You can't even think of them as human. You start thinking that they're like us and it won't ever stop."

"But we can't just...murder them! They have," he struggled to find words to convey his feelings. "They have the same right to live as we do. We can't deny them that!"

His father made a noise like a sigh. "Please, Nick. Throw it out and forget about it. Forget about them."

"No, I can't. Not now."

The large, metallic monster seemed to consider the young man for a moment. The girl thought it was going to open its mouth and bite his head off but it didn't. Instead it said, "What are you going to do?"

Nick looked again at the girl, a storm of conflicting emotions running through him; wanting, not wanting, unsure of what he wanted. She looked so defenceless and helpless, naked with tears still wet upon her cheeks. She reminded him so much of his sister back on Home; the same dark blonde hair, the watery blue eyes and quivering bottom lip when she tried not to cry. How could his father destroy her like any other farm animal? "If she must go out the airlock," he said deliberately, "then I'll go too."

His father was silent for a moment. "And what would that achieve?"

"It might make you think," he answered.

"Okay, so you save one from certain death. What about the others? How would you have saved them?"

Nick thought for a second. "But they're dead already. I can't save them." But he had helped kill them, hadn't he? Him and his brothers? He had stood by in the exo-skel and watched as his brothers and he had herded the animals into the slaughtering pens, watching, guarding, keeping them moving when they had lost direction. But they had been only animals then, hadn't they? He had been brought up believing that. Faceless creatures that they bred and sold each year to the livestock markets on Antares. He hadn't really noticed them during all his years working the land, hadn't seen them until now, until the bottom had fallen out of the market for H. saps and they had to bring them out here to some godforsaken backwater star

with all the other farmers to dump their trillions of head of livestock where they'd eventually be absorbed into the waiting star below, their lives transformed into brief flashes of photons and no more. He hadn't felt any remorse before now, it had just been another chore; his father making the decision to dump this year's stock, maybe try again next year, maybe not. But now, for the first time, he had seen the true face of the beings he had watered and fed and looked after for so many countless years. This one, this pretty girl, barely five standard years old, held the same structure in her DNA as his did, and she awoke something hidden deep inside him, something he could only guess was some kind of paternal instinct. He wanted to reach out and touch her, hold her, make her feel warm and safe. How could his father not feel it? Has he become so hardened, so desensitised by his years on the farm that the only thing she stirs in him is a cost-benefit ratio? Would he end up thinking the same way when he reached his father's age? Would he blithely consign millions of people to their deaths simply because it was cheaper than trying to feed them? The thought of what he and his brothers had done made his stomach turn to lead.

His father shifted impatiently in the exo-skeleton. "Okay, Nicholas," he said. "From now on, you keep all the Norms that the business can no longer afford to keep, starting with this one."

Nick smiled. "Okay."

"You pay for all the feed and amenities, you look after and shelter them all."

Nick nodded his head slowly. "This sort of thing can't be allowed to go on. If its ever going to stop then its end must begin somewhere and that somewhere is here. It's about time people realised that they can't play God and deem when and how others should die." He looked down at the girl and smiled. "It may begin with one child but hopefully, one day soon, people will come to realise that these creatures could be our brothers and sisters." His father stiffened and stood straighter in the exo-skel but Nick did not notice and continued on. "I can see thousands of systems coming to their senses after so many centuries and setting their stock free, the way the Lord meant them to be."

The machine rocked back on its heels and his father snorted in something akin to derision. "That's good, Nicholas. That's good. The Bennett's have arrived in-system and have just begun unloading. I'm sure Jerek and Kharlina would be more than happy to hand over their worthless livestock to you. And once word has spread over the BroadBeam there will be countless other families grateful to you for taking their Saps off their hands."

Nick looked dumbfounded at the lifeless machine his father wore. "But, but I can't...That's billions, maybe trillions of... Where would I...Not by myself I...I can't afford to..." But his father had turned his machine around and was heading back up the corridor. "You can't do this to me!" he cried. "I can't kill her like...like an animal. You can't do this to me!" He stood up and took a few paces after his father. "YOU BASTARD! You heartless old...bastard," he finished weakly, his legs threatening to buckle beneath him.

"Remember, Nicky," came the sound of his father's voice over the closed-link band of the open exo-skel suit. "They are our livelihoods, not our equals. The only reason they exist in this universe is because we wanted them to. We breed them, we keep them alive for as long as necessary to earn our income if we can and, in turn, they keep us alive providing that income. And it's not just a couple of them, it's millions or billions, and without us they'd be nothing. I know how you feel. I went through the same phase when I was your age but I came to realise, as I hope you do, that it's just the nature of things. It's much bigger, and has been going on much longer, than you think. What you do or think now will change nothing, not in our lifetime. It's the way of the universe. In these hard times it hurts to have to put them down but it's best for everybody. Okay? I don't expect you to believe that but I hope you at least understand why I believe it. I love you, Nick."

Nick finally fell to his knees, his emotions jumbled and in disarray. He held his head in his hands, fighting back tears of frustration. He looked back at the girl huddled deep in the doorway. What was she thinking? Does she understand what's going on? What would I do if it really was my sister there instead of her? Would I take her by the hand and lead her down to the airlock?

No, he answered himself finally. I couldn't kill my sister, but she's not my sister. If it wasn't for us she wouldn't even exist. Maybe

Dad was right. But if we brought her into this life do we have the right to take that life away from her? He suspected not but did not really know. He could spend many years arguing with himself and still not be any closer to an answer.

If he kept this child, he'd have to keep the next one, and the one after that, and the one after that. It would never stop. There were no half measures for this decision. It was either all or nothing and he couldn't bring himself to slay such a defenceless creature. But if he didn't kill her now the only conclusion he could see was starvation for everyone concerned, including the girl and himself. Would his father let it go so far? He suspected he would, his father was not one to go against his word.

What could he do? Either decision would mean death for the girl, her future bleak no matter which way he looked. For himself it would mean heartache and pain and finally death for all if he should keep her and heartache and pain and death for her if he didn't.

Why me? he wanted to cry out. Why can't I be like before, like my brothers who now probably sit comfortably in the lounge playing games, ignorant of all this death and pain and decisions that can kill? He wanted to cry, to go to the embrace of his mother but she was light-years of travel away, and his father was waiting somewhere, waiting and watching and judging. Did his father have to make this decision once, when he was this age? Did he make the correct choice?

I can kill myself with her, he thought. Just put the two of us in the airlock and pop the outer hatch and end it all. But he couldn't bring himself to do that, something much stronger than his need to protect the child stopped that decision being feasible. Oh, shit, he moaned.

Either way he thought of it, the girl was doomed. Maybe his father was right. It would be much easier to put her out of her misery and forget about the whole thing, to wipe the strange thoughts from his mind. It would be easier than trying to make this decision every time the market fell. Easier, but would it be right? Maybe he should talk to someone afterwards, someone who has gone through this dilemma already.

His heart was heavy and full as he stood and shuffled to where the girl huddled in the doorway. He sank to his haunches again and pulled the terror frozen child to him. She did not react, her eyes seemed to be fixed in the far distance and her body was racked by shivers periodically. He rose and hefted the girl onto his right hip, the way he used to carry Katey when she was this age. The girl placed an arm around his neck and seemed to hug him. Her tears had dried upon her cheeks like dew upon the grass in the early morning sun. He turned to whatever monitoring device his father was watching on and without a word headed back up the corridor. One thing he knew, he would never be the same again.

The young man held her close and she could feel his warmth through the brightly coloured skin that covered his body. She liked having him hold her like this. He had obviously had a fight with the second monster about her, maybe the second monster had wanted to eat her and he had saved her from it. The warmth from the man and the gentle rocking motion as he walked made her feel sleepy, but, before she could get comfortable, he stopped in front of a small door. He opened it and went in.

The room smelled like the chamber did, like all the people that had lived there. The room was entirely white, contrasting with the black of the chamber, and it had many lights set in the low ceiling even though the room was small, only slightly larger than the pooch boxes in the back of the chamber. The man put her down against one wall, he leaned forward and put his lips against her forehead.

"Sweet dreams, little one," he said, and turned quickly and went out the door.

She watched in silence as he closed the door slowly, noticing that there was a small window set in it through which she could still see him. There was a solid thump as the door shut.

What did he mean 'sweet dreams'? Am I going to sleep in here? Is this my new home? The place he said was warm and safe? No more sleeping under people's feet and hiding in girders so I won't get trampled on? Can I live here forever?

She saw the nice man's face appear in the tiny window. She thought she could see tears in his eyes. Why was he crying? Wasn't he happy that I'm going to be staying in this room? Behind the man

she saw a red lamp begin to flash, the red light shadowing the man's face every half-heartbeat. She was wondering why she couldn't hear the sirens that normally accompanied the flashing lights when the far wall opened up revealing a star studded night sky. She heard a whoosh of escaping air and found herself, outside with nothing to stop her from falling down.

The End

A SELECTION OF POETRY I:

THE OLD MASTERS

for W H Auden and Ron Clarke

They know a thing or two, the Emperor
Savants of Arcase.
Always first up at the walls to welcome
The barbarians.
Never too busy to ease a toothache.
Willing to sign the
Legislation for war or state orgies.
Declare themselves set
Upon ushering in the Republic.
As a matter of
Tact, they are never questioned too closely;
But are known to be
Keen to expand the fund of folk wisdom.
Asked to recommend
Exercise to aid longevity, they
Say: dancing on graves.

- J. C. Hartley

NEW WORLDS ORDER II

The bum says, "Human persons
Don't count shit, in this System.
Why for we become
The low-rent lifeform?"

Copdroid sprays him with detox.
Says, "Them's the breaks, old-timer;
Millenia as big fish,
Then find you're the scum
In the petrie-dish."

- J. C. Hartley.

THE RECONCILIATION

When the war of worlds was done
And the Colonists owned the sun,
The old miner from Sirius One
gleaned the galaxy for his son.
He sought the brave boy he knew
He'd disowned in four thousand & two.
Though the surviving rebels were few,
he had word of his boy's crew;
Hurrying to the caverns of Lithmulu.
A prodigal father faced a boy in blue.

But it was too late his dream to realise,
For a parasite looked out of the wild eyes.

- Cecelia Drewer

IN DEPTH #10

by Bill Congreve

On the face of it, the communication process is a simple thing. The source of a message encodes the thoughts in his/her mind into a series of physical patterns. These patterns may be a series of sound waves for speech, a pattern of marks on a piece of paper for writing, or may even be the subconscious movements and postures of body language. The process is complicated a little by often needing the aid of light waves to propagate some messages. As a culture, we also may further complicate the process by introducing recording, transmitting and amplifying mediums such as cassette tapes, computer disks, television etc. These devices in no way effect my argument.

This set of patterns, no matter which medium is used to transmit them, are inherently totally meaningless. A pattern of sound waves which we recognize as the prime minister answering a TV reporter's questions on why superannuation payments are taxed means absolutely nothing to the rest of the universe. Imagine a timewarp in which the PM's words are mysteriously translated two hundred thousand years into the past of another continent where they are heard by Umblethgarg the cavewoman. What does it mean to her? It means that there is a mysterious voice speaking a load of babble in the back of her cave. Being a practical woman, she'll just pack up and move into the next cave where she can't be startled by voices speaking out of thin air. The words mean nothing to her, because her life experience doesn't include a knowledge of the manner in which 20th C politicians speak English.

Mind you, if Umblethgarg's mate, Rumblegargth, had heard the words, he might have taken the opportunity to start a religion. He'll force Umblethgarg into the cave next door so she can't sully the holy ground with her womanly presence, and the whole point of the religion will be to keep her bare foot and pregnant cooking dinner, just where Rumblegargth wants her, as he's too polite to slap her across the face more than twice a day and so needs a more devious way to keep her under control.

If this were to happen, we may have grown up worshipping the mighty god 'Thsssuper' in our churches instead of Jesus Christ or Allah. Nothing much has changed, has it?

Of course, Rumblegargth won't have the faintest idea what the words mean either.

So what is the process which makes a message understood by the receiver? We rely on both the source and the target of a message having a similar education and life experience. What the source of the message has coded into a set of patterns on a piece of paper will be the same as what the receiver, using their gestalt of life experience, will decode from those patterns. The set of patterns must generate the same thoughts in the receiver as the source intended.

This is an imprecise process, for every person's life experience is a different thing. For two people to simply be educated in the same language is not sufficient. Have you ever had a conversation with a person from a totally different social background or culture to yourself and have words, phrases, whole concepts shoot around sideways just out of reach? You feel you are being absolutely clear, but the other person doesn't seem to follow what you are saying? Vice versa? It is this ambiguity, deliberately exploited, which makes poetry a marvellous thing, and which makes an artform of all methods of mass communication.

Question: what happens when the receiver decodes a message in a different manner to the one intended by the source? Who is right? Who has it wrong? Are questions of right or wrong even relevant? I suspect in this situation right and wrong is irrelevant.

What happened when you read THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS and then saw the movie?

#

SHRIEKS: A HORROR ANTHOLOGY; Jillian Bartlett, Cathi Joseph, Anne Lawson, et al, eds; anthology; 1993; 212 + x pp; Women's Redress Press tpb; \$17.95.

I always wonder with single sex volumes such as this whether a writer of the opposite sex has, unknown to the editors, had published a story submitted under a pseudonym.

SHRIEKS is a collection of stories, poems and an essay which, to the writers and editors, represent horror. Publishing is a business often dominated, if not by men, then by a male philosophy. This volume represents horror to a group of women. In the process, they've paid absolutely no attention to current trends and what has gone before in the genre.

An example of a male philosophy, I suspect, is the current commercially driven trend towards repetitive power fantasy trilogies. I write 'suspect' deliberately, for the buyers and writers of this kind of stuff are, as often as not, women. Is this a socialising process? Or the result of one? Or is escapism really that important? Perhaps it is.

Back to the point.

Some of the poetry works well for me. I'm not qualified to comment further on this aspect of the book, so I'll concentrate on the fiction.

SHRIEKS is an anthology of 'literary' fiction. Plot is often sacrificed for stream of consciousness, mood and slice of life. My largest complaint with the anthology is that this kind of writing has crept out of the poetry and into the short stories. Narrative structure is ignored throughout the majority of the book.

What represents horror to the writers in SHRIEKS? Uncontrolled male sexuality, childbirth, mundanity of domestic life, etc. Notice that these elements are factors in real life that lead to frustration and despair. Unfortunately, most of the stories are simply content to document these factors without addressing either the underlying social causes or showing the characters in action doing something about them. I was left with a taste of futility and paranoia.

The stories I prefer are 'Horror Story' by Caroline Logan (one of the more traditionally constructed stories), and 'File Under Camal Knowledge' by Karen Maloney for its experimental technique and its uncompromising stance. 'The Red Bucket' by Yve Louis and 'Lullaby' by Jane Meredith also work well. 'i should have known' by Stacey Smithers - I wonder what this is doing in the book. I would wonder what it would be doing in any book.

Also included in the book is a 20 page feminist reading of THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS by Alison Lyssa, titled 'Why do Fat Chicks Have to Die'. Lyssa takes the point of view that the fruitcake from SILENCE, nicknamed 'Buffalo Bill', represents uncontrolled female sexuality that must be repressed for the sake of (male) law and order. A reminder, Buffalo Bill is the guy who murders oversize women so he can make a suit of female skin and see himself as 'female'. Clarice Starling's sexuality is repressed and hence controlled by Hannibal Lecter. She represents a male worldview. Hence the whole film is a tract that supports a male dominated worldview that keeps female sexuality (that in Lyssa's argument closely resembles anarchy) under control.

It is quite possible to logically outline this argument and support it. Unfortunately, Lyssa contradicts herself in places (Later in the text she takes the stand that Buffalo Bill also represents homosexuality - you can't have it both ways, and a homosexual reading destroys her earlier arguments.), she also uses emotionally laden language to carry unsupported arguments: 'THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS also sets up a father's law based on fear', and 'masculinised New Woman triumphant, blessed by one of her surrogate gods/fathers'. In some cases Lyssa quotes from texts earlier than the publication of SILENCE OF THE LAMBS to help support her arguments. Sometimes she acknowledges the

prior publication, at other times she doesn't, and quotes as if this earlier publication were referring to SILENCE.

Lyssa also completely ignores the possibility that the whole point of THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS is not to support a male worldview that controls female sexuality, but to document and subvert it.

It's possible that what Harris has coded into the text of THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS has been read in an entirely different manner by Alison Lyssa. And what Lyssa has meant in her analysis has been read in an entirely different manner by this reviewer.

SHRIEKS is an intriguing book. Women's Redress Press's address is: PO Box 655, Broadway, NSW 2007. They also publish Alice Nunn's novel, ILLICIT PASSAGE, and Rachel Bradley's collection of speculative poetry DRAGON SHADOW.

#

MORTAL FIRE; Terry Dowling, Van Ikin eds; anthology; 1993; 334 + xviii pp; Coronet pb; \$12.95.

An interesting collection. To quote from Van Ikin's introduction: 'We're just two dudes who've been sitting on stools in the SF bar...' There has been a conscious effort to transcend Australian 'literary' publishing and create an image of a popular, commercial book. I wonder if this effort hasn't fallen on its face. Neither has MORTAL FIRE been helped by a cover which became quite dull and washed out during production.

MORTAL FIRE opens with Phillipa Maddern's 'Inhabiting the Interspaces' in which an office employee gets pissed off at a bureaucratic authoritarian world and withdraws from it into a bizarre, yet familiar, landscape. Then follows Greg Egan's 'Axiomatic', first published in Interzone, and Sean McMullen's excellent 'The Colours of the Masters', first published in F&SF.

Authors include Damien Broderick, Rosaleen Love, Bertram Chandler, George Turner, Lucy Sussex, David Ireland, Peter Carey, the list goes on. MORTAL FIRE is subtitled 'Best Australian SF'. Given the range and depth of SF publishing in this country, it is difficult to argue with the authors presented and the stories they're represented by. I write this knowing there is about to be published another SF anthology that also pretends to be representative. The contents list of that book have been published in Aust SF Writer's News, and it's difficult to argue with any of those selections either. What both books will do is showcase a number of writers with wide overseas exposure, or small press exposure only in Australia, to a wider Australian audience. Given the slow breakout of Australian SF into the wider world of Australian publishing, this exposure can only be a good thing in setting standards for future books.

Back to MORTAL FIRE. There is a slight literary taste about the book. The majority of the stories are thought provoking and entertaining. The selections also show a trend in Australian SF, quite different in English and American SF, with a heavy emphasis on character and society. Some selections could be better described as post-modernist, or magic realist, rather than SF. There is no single story that could take the place of Chandler's 'Giant Killer', or Wodhams' 'One Clay Foot'. The only stories which don't match up to the quality of the rest of the collection are Broderick's 'Coming Back', a routine time travel paradox obscured by style, and Chandler's 'All Laced Up', a minor piece representative of neither Chandler's best work, nor the chief concerns of his writing. It doesn't belong here. Neither selection does their creator justice.

MORTAL FIRE: BEST AUSTRALIAN SF is a worthy sampling of Australian SF, and is much more accessible and easily available than other recent Australian anthologies as MATILDA AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, or the retrospective PORTABLE AUSTRALIAN SF.

Recommended.

#

A LAND FIT FOR HEROES Vol 1: ESCAPE TO THE WILD WOOD; Phillip Mann; novel fragment; 1993; 284 pp; Victor Gollancz SF hb; \$36.95.

There is little doubt that the development of narrative structure in English language novels has been driven backward several decades by the decrees of modern commercial publishers.

ESCAPE TO THE WILD WOOD concerns an alternate universe in which the Roman Empire staved off the attentions of the barbarian tribes from the north of Europe. The Legions moved on, explored new continents, discovered new peoples, and either exterminated or conquered them. The novel begins at a time that perhaps corresponds with our 20th Century in England. The lives of three young citizens, or perhaps one citizen and two slaves, the distinction is never quite made, come together in a tragic manner which results in all three fleeing the Empire. They find themselves in backwoods England where they begin making new lives for themselves amongst the locals.

Just because they've conquered the rest of the world doesn't mean the Romans bothered conquering all of England. There is a subculture, ignored by the Romans, which lives in a parasitical relationship on the cast-offs of the Roman civilisation. This subculture, which apparently outnumbers the Romans, can out-think and out-fight the Romans, and which is more advanced philosophically and politically than the Romans, has existed under the noses of the Romans for 2000 years without conflict. But this is trilogy-pap publishing. It doesn't have to make sense.

The story starts in the middle of Chapter 3, on page 38. The pages up until this point have been filled with a seemingly endless description of the differences between this imagined universe and ours. This descriptive passage meanders into a physical description of the new world, and then into a description of a battle between graduating Roman military cadets just outside Britannia's capital, Eburacum (York). (No prizes for guessing London's name in Mann's universe.) This opening descriptive passage is loaded with narrator intrusions into the text and hence makes the assumption, illogically given the basis of the novel, that we, the reader, can get to the new world from here.

Just in case anybody missed any of these descriptions, or fell asleep during them, they're all repeated as Mann finally starts telling his story. And just in case you missed the first part of the story amongst all the boredom going on, Mann repeats that for you, twice, as he gives the opening chapters from the point-of-view of each of his three main characters.

Ho-hum. A LAND FIT FOR HEROES would make a good novel. I also suspect that's exactly what it once was. Perhaps future volumes may live up to the promise. It is certain that this one doesn't.

Why review it here in a column on Oz SF? Mann is an expatriate Englishman living in the Land of the Long White Cloud (I wonder what NZ is called in Mann's novel?), and NZ is close enough.

#

EVOLUTION ANNIE; Rosaleen Love; collection; 1993; 232 + viii pp; The Women's Press tpb; \$14.95.

This is Rosaleen Love's second collection for English publishing house, The Women's Press. I wonder why some of our writers must go overseas in order to get publishing deals and wide distribution in their own country? Witness George Turner and Greg Egan.

This is an unusual collection. There are a number of stories which, to me, document and dramatise great moments in the physical evolution and cultural growth of humankind. The classic example is the title story, 'Evolution Annie'. Annie is the child of a prehistoric Earth Mother figure who undertakes the necessary civilising of humankind just to make her own life easier while the men are away hunting, making new friends and killing them, and playing cricket (Or is it football?). Of course, life is much easier if the men stay away....

This is a new kind of science writing, subversive, thoughtful and very effective in conveying the human impact of scientific concepts. A couple of the stories have been published in the small press. The marvellous 'Hovering Rock', a beautiful atmospheric story of childhood and growing up, with more than a hint of menace, first appeared in AUREALIS. Two stories first appeared in EIDOLON, and 'Holiness' has been reprinted from INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS.

The showpiece of the collection is the short novel, 'The Daughters of Darius', in which Eva has met, fallen in love with, and had three daughters by, the immortal warrior Darius. Darius is destined to be the nemesis of the ancient conqueror, Alexander the Great. As he is driven through eternity by his fate,

he sometimes escapes to, and finds solace in, a number of alternate universes. Eva's daughters all have very modern sensibilities and have quite a predictable attitude towards their 'here again, missing again' father.

Given my male sensibilities, I can't help feeling Love loses control of the ending of the story. Despite this, 'The Daughters of Darius' is one of the strongest pieces of Australian long SF of 1993.

EVOLUTION ANNIE is a wise, warm and witty collection that will give a reader much enjoyment as time goes by.

#

OVERLAND, No 133; John McLaren, ed; magazine; 1993; 88 pp; The OL Society; \$4.95.

Why mention this? It's Overland feature issue on Australian SF. Stories by Rosaleen Love, Lucy Sussex, Paul Voermans and Terry Dowling. Articles or interviews by Judith Raphael Buckrich, Sean McMullen, Lucy Sussex and Damien Broderick. The Broderick article is particularly interesting as he debunks the kind of determinism that confuses the real universe with our cultural perception of it.

There may be other items with SF content. I've only listed above the contributors to this issue most recognizable in Australian SF.

This issue also includes an 'Overland Extra' supplement sheet featuring another couple of stores and poems.

A SELECTION OF POETRY II:

THE LIS SAGA

The good ship *Style* sailed empty oceans
virus sands made love of this.
Grinding wisdom teeth and jack hammer fists
the Captain made light of the situation
told jokes of roots and beaver bushes
buried his face in a mask of dull wit
a phalanx of laughter
forced and swallowed by the silver sky.

Memory served them well that night

the betrayal knife, the special occasion jelly
and the game board were all brought out
many experiences were had
on board and off

the sands were quite accommodating
and range with lustful echoings.

after such a night, when the bottles were empty
and the heads poised
and moths scratched clear eyes and not
the Captain and others awoke with a start
the ship was gone and they were
lost....

- Trent Jamieson.

"POETS ARE QUITE MAD YOU KNOW"

My O! so "normal" neighbours though
I never see, watch the full moon rising.
They like loud fast cars, late at night
The whole street surprising,
With sudden bursts of sound and light.
New pools, roofs, spas, for them are bliss.
But oh! why do people say this?
POETS ARE QUITE MAD YOU KNOW!

- Julie Vaux

SONG FROM 2 MILLION B.P.

Carnivore, carnivore,
Hear the sabre roar,
Roll the rock forward,
Heave oh to-ore-ward,
Seal up tight,
Block out the light.

Rub two sticks together,
Make a pool of sunny weather,
Grill me meat,
Lie back and eat.

Yo, Yo, and a skin of cave wine
I've got me missus and I do just fine...

- Cecelia Drewer

AFTER THE MOVIE

After the horror movie,
All blood and swirling darkness,
I see the night's true glory,
The stars shine amidst the stillness,
Cold distant sapphires,
Radiant high fires,
Yet about them maybe,
Other worlds of passionate illusion,
Where other hearts endure confusion,
And in shadow, pain see,
In the burning sunlight
And so embrace the night,
Not knowing both the day and night's vastness
Are a part of eternal holiness.

- Julie Vaux

PLANET NEMESIS

Burning sand.
Dying land.
Puny being,
Dimly seeing,
Lives hand to mouth,
Until it has an empty hand.

The last of its race
With sunken eyes and haggard face.
It scrabbles around
Finds only hard ground,
Parched with hunger and starved with thirst
It dies on the bloated bones of its ancestors.

The planet sighs
Spins and opens sleepy eyes.
Cooling rains
Melt the chains.
Tiny creatures rise from the sand
And begin to build a new day.

- Cecelia Drewer

WAVECAVE

by Brent Lillie

"THE CAVERN, AT least two hundred metres wide and thirty metres high", the passage went, "frowns like a dark mouth from the base of a protruding section of sheer cliff that offers, in stark profile at the setting of the sun, the sullen visage of a bearded goat, staring into the raging swells of the southern ocean".

"The cliff face, worn and timeless, stretches away from the cave in both directions, a dwindling line, lashed by spray and wind and mighty waves and tenanted only by winged things. The rocks know only pain. When the sea and winds are merciful, the broiling sun takes up the cudgels and does its slow work".

With a smile, Allen Grey marked the passage, closed the battered diary and placed it beside him on the carpet. His reflection grinned back at him from the glass door of the china cabinet: a handsome reflection, fine-featured, dark-haired and olive-skinned.

His wife, Denise, lay not a metre away, her long blonde hair fanned out across the blanket they had spread in front of the fire. Nearby, on the coffee table, lay the remnants of their evening meal: plates of scooped-out cray shell, segments of fruit, and olive seeds, scattered here and there amongst balled-up paper napkins. Denise's wine glass stood empty. Allen's was still half full, and he drained it with one long, thoughtful swallow. He reached for the bottle of claret on the table then thought better of it.

"Sullen visage of a bearded goat"

Allen chuckled. Evidently, his great, great grandfather had possessed a penchant for verbosity, not to mention a decidedly descriptive bend, however, like many sea captains down through the ages, he'd been prone to exaggeration for had not Allen read - in the very same diary - of an alleged sighting by one of Samuel E Grey's crew members of a sea monster in the waters off the cave?

The cavern.

When Allen Grey frowned his face became the moon, hiding behind a cloud.

He lowered the wine glass, absently, to the table, glanced down at the sleeping form of his beautiful wife. Her head was turned to the fire; the flames tinged the fine, fair hairs on her firm stomach a smoky bronze.

Softly, slowly, Allen ran his fingers down from her navel to her mound. His tender caress, even in sleep, turned her skin to gooseflesh. Time to sleep, for some; for others, vivid written accounts of bygone days, of sea voyages and lustful encounters with white-toothed, brown skinned maidens on the moonlit, squeaking sands of far-flung tropical atolls.

How fortunate, Allen mused, to have stumbled across the diary after all these years. Weeks before, a trunk, the property of a deceased relation, had been delivered to his door and he'd found the diary amongst its contents.

Taking up the old book, Allen held it to his face and inhaled. He was vaguely disappointed, having expected the smell of the sea, as one expects the murmur of waves in the hollow of a cone shell.

Sometime, somewhere, he'd read that a shell's hidden thunder was not, as many imagined, the liquid pulse of oceans, but merely the rushing echo of blood feeding the listener's brain. At least, Allen decided, the diary gave off no false echoes; its strength was in its words: a cave, two hundred metres wide and thirty metres high? Such an opening would give access to the largest swells the ocean cared to throw at it.

The spirit of adventure burned bright within the Greys.

A good number of Allen's ancestors had eked out a profitable

existence plying some of the deadliest, most storm-tossed oceans on earth. Conversely, this same inherent boldness (some called it outright foolhardiness), had sent Allen's younger sister, Paula, plummeting to her death from an isolated Nepalese crag.

For all Allen knew, his beloved sister could be interred in a glacier making slow and stately progress to the sea, for water was as a magnet to the Greys, drawing the family to it in life, and it seemed, in death.

It is only human nature to ponder upon one's eventual demise and Allen, for his part, often dreamed of drowning, of being pounded senseless by a massive wave and spinning madly in awry universe of foam. In the final seconds, his sister's pale visage would always swim before him, and she would reach out and cup his face in a pair of icy hands.

Now, Allen daydreamed of a strange and beautiful cavern, vast as a cathedral, its domed, white roof arcing away into shadow, a place where waves echoed and groaned like trapped dragons; louder than the winter march of giant Hawaiian swells, more insistent than the sharp, staccato beat of perfect four-foot surf cracking along the jagged edge of an undiscovered Indonesian reef, it stirred his soul.

The cave's image did not waver, its dark mouth moaned his name. The snowy Himalayan peaks had whistled Paula's. Deep ocean gales once hooted out a challenge to his great, great grandfather, but this cold, baritone summons both frightened and intrigued Allen Grey, who suddenly knew his life's ambition.

Without his realising it, his fingers had strayed into the sticky inner realms of Denise's thighs. She said something faint and unintelligible, awoke, and they made love again, but even during this, the most intimate of acts, he thought only of salt and sea and towering cliffs and white screeching birds wheeling across the blistered face of a godforsaken sun. His climax was a breaking wave, and the long, empty silence that ensued, the retreating tide.

The charter boat, Ragamuffin, made steady progress through what Roy Chapman adjudged to be a rising southerly swell. Viewed from his position in the craft's wheelhouse, the Bunda Cliffs - a spectacularly rugged stretch of sheer rock that comprised part of Australia's arid southern coastline - eased past on his right, while ahead, the cliffs seemed to thin to a narrow black spearpoint, quivering at the junction of land, sea and sky.

Deep in the bowels of the craft, he could hear Allen Grey fumbling about in the compact galley; a rattle and a bump, the sound of the refrigerator door closing.

Looking down at the foredeck, Chapman saw Allen emerge, walk to the fo'c'sle and hand his wife a drink which she accepted without looking up from her book, and then make his way around behind the wheelhouse. There were footsteps on the ladder and seconds later Allen stood next to the wheel. Chapman accepted the proffered drink with a grateful smile. There was a pop and a hiss, followed by the sound of enthusiastic gulping, and a satisfied sigh.

'Thanks. Christ, it's hot. You'd better tell your missus to get out of the sun,' he said, wiping a hand across his mouth. 'Otherwise neither of you will get any sleep tonight.'

Allen nodded.

'Denise!' he called from the wheelhouse window. 'It's getting too hot. You'd better pack it in!'

His wife glanced up at the wheelhouse, a hand shielding her eyes. Then she gathered up her towel, drink and book and disappeared in the main cabin, directly below. The boat lurched over a small swell and Allen reached out to steady himself against the wall of the wheelhouse. Chapman, literally, took the motion in his stride. After taking another swallow of soft drink, Allen eyed the cliffs.

'Those cliffs are spectacular. Almost hypnotic.'

'There's a lot more to them than meets the eye, you know. Have you heard the local legends?'

'No. Denise is more into that sort of thing. She's a bit of a historian, loves archaeology, ancient tribes: all that stuff.'

'She'll be in seventh heaven here, then. Heaps of history around here, mate,' Chapman said with a grin. 'More fucking history than you can poke a stick at.'

'Oh?' said Allen, amused.

'Yep. On the charter I'd always get the same old questions, about the cliffs, the abos. So I decided I'd better become bit of a tour

guide, you know, and hone up on the subject.'

'Well, seeing as this afternoon's shuffleboard games have been cancelled, I may as well have a listen. I'll go and get Denise.'

He found his wife in their cabin, resting. Allen ducked his head as he entered the doorway and sat down on the edge of her bunk. She didn't stir. Lately, he'd noticed that his wife had been growing more and more distant, chronically tired. She was quiet by nature, but her behaviour - in his eyes, at least - was beginning to border on the uncommunicative.

'Are you okay, Denise?' he said.

'Yes,' she replied, turning to face the wall.

'Are you sure? It's not the heat, is it? You spent a long time in the sun.'

'No, it's not the heat, Allen. I'm just...frazzled, that's all.'

Allen nodded, stared at the floor. He rubbed his nose.

'Our intrepid captain's about to give me a rundown on a bit of local history. I thought you might be interested.'

'Not right now. You can tell me about it later. I think I'll rest a bit.'

'Okay. I'll see you later. I love you.'

'I love you, too.'

Chapman was still hunched over the wheel, shirtless, smoking a cigarette. The charter boat skipper was wiry, of medium height. Tangled locks of blonde hair fell errantly across his forehead. There were innumerable freckles on his tanned back; he turned as Allen entered the wheelhouse.

'She's resting,' Allen said, not looking up.

'No bloody wonder, married to a bloke like you. Fancy getting paid to travel around the world reporting on surf spots.' Chapman's words were laced with whimsical envy. 'You ex-surfing champions have got it made in the shade!'

Allen folded his arms.

'It's not all fun and games.'

Chapman flicked the stub of his cigarette out the window, into the dark blue ocean, then gave Allen a knowing sideways glance.

'All good things come to an end, though, don't they? It could be time to put in for that desk job, mate.'

'Could be,' Allen said. 'After this trip, maybe. Tell me about the cliffs. Aren't there hundreds of caves?'

'Sure there are. But mate, if there was one as big as the one you're looking for, I would have known about it a long time ago. Like I told you before we put to sea, I reckon this great great grandfather of yours was pulling your leg.' Chapman paused to tap the boat's fuel gauge, then continued.

'It's your money, though. There *could* be a cave - after all, four hundred kilometres is a lot of rock. But maybe it's not as big as you think it is. Most of the caves are close to the coast but I've never heard of one that big opening directly into the ocean. The caves usually enter them through sinkholes or blowholes, up on the plain.'

'But some of them are supposed to be huge.'

'That's right. The whole southern section of the Nullarbor's honeycombed with limestone caves. Lots of them are small - twenty, thirty metres down - but there's plenty of big ones that go a lot deeper. Beautiful clear lakes, underground passages. Some of the chambers are *immense*! Abakurries's nearly two hundred metres long and forty metres high. A fucking *cathedral*!'

A cathedral.

The word stirred the sleeping dragon in Allen Grey's soul. He heard the low moan again. Saw, in his mind's eye, perfect waves breaking along a flat, raised platform of rock. High overhead, the roof of the cavern, mottled and chalky -white, played cruel games with sound, creating echoes in massive hollows, then garrotting them with razor-sharp ridges.

'No, this cave lets the swells in.'

Chapman regarded the cliffs.

'I see what you're getting at. You think there's some kind of magical surf amphitheatre inside there somewhere.'

Allen nodded.

'Well, I bloody well hope so, mate, because I always keep my board in my cabin, just in case. It's a nice notion. Make a great story, wouldn't it? Especially if you mentioned Jeedara.'

'Jeedara?'

'A sea serpent. According to the aborigines, Jeedara made all this...' Chapman gestured towards the cliffs, '...when he was chased underground by Yugariya, a star constellation, or something. I can't remember which one. He pushed up the cliffs of the Bight and crawled underneath to hide. A lot of the older tribes - I'm talking twenty thousand years ago - used to visit the deeper caves.'

'They've found paintings down there, artifacts, stuff like that. But in the last few centuries the Nullarbor was home to the Miming people, and they were shit scared of the deep passages. They reckoned Jeedara's breathing could be heard coming up through the blowholes, and that he'd kill anyone who trespassed on his land'.

Allen was impressed. Chapman was a natural storyteller and an immensely likeable character. He reminded him of an seafaring Crocodile Dundee.

'So this Jeedara was a sort of Rainbow Serpent?'

'No. The Rainbow Serpent created the world, according to the aborigines. If Jeedara got mad enough, he could destroy it.'

'You really have been studying up on the subject.'

'Yeah, well, it impresses the customers. Nothing like a good horror yarn late at night. Especially when I tell them about all the shipwrecks along this part of the coast.'

'Please, tell me you're kidding.'

Chapman laughed.

'I'm afraid not. In the eighteenth century, an entire expedition went down without a trace. Shades of the Bermuda Triangle.' Chapman shrugged. 'Doubt if it was me old mate Jeedara, though. Like your great, great grandpappy said - the seas around here can get pretty fierce at times.'

They were silent for a minute or two, gazing at the cliffs and the sea.

Finally, Chapman said: 'We'll reach the co-ordinates in your diary in about four hours. What are we looking for again? A horses head?'

'The sullen visage of a bearded goat, in stark profile at the setting of the sun.'

'Jesus, this is turning into a real treasure hunt. Want to take the wheel? Just keep us on a westerly heading and well away from the cliffs and we'll be right. And don't pick up anyone with a parrot on his shoulder. I'll get us some lunch.'

'Nothing for me, thanks. I'm not hungry.'

'What about your wife?'

'Just pop your head in the cabin and ask. She's probably asleep, though.'

'Right you are.'

Not long after, Denise climbed the ladder into the wheelhouse.

'Sleeping Beauty awakes,' Allen said.

She stood against the wall, her hands behind her back.

'You look very much the sea captain.'

'First mate, actually. It's not easy, either. Those bloody cliffs are like magnets. How are you feeling?'

As if she'd heard a shout, Denise turned to stare at the rugged coastline dwindling away fore and aft. Constant. Overwhelming. A postcard from another planet.

'Allen, what do you expect to find in this cave?'

'I don't know exactly.'

'Not surf, surely?'

'There could be, who knows?'

Denise spun around angrily and narrowed her eyes.

'Christ, Allen! After all this time, haven't you realised what you've been looking for? It's not exotic locations, or perfect, unriden waves. It's not the money - Jesus, deep down, I think you hate travelling as much as I do!'

'So,' he said, steadfastly focusing his attention on the horizon.

'What am I looking for, Denise?'

'I think it's death, Allen.'

He sighed and shook his head.

'And why would I want to *die*, pray tell?'

She didn't reply immediately, letting the moment draw out, and draw out, so that Allen Grey had ample time to feel his hands, sweaty, on the wheel; to wonder at the odd buzzing in his ears. At last, she

spoke, and when she did the simple truth socked Allen so hard in the stomach that it took his breath away.

'Because that's the only way you'll find your sister.'

Sunset was in its death throws, draining like a bloody rag into the western ocean. So far, they had espied no rock formations even remotely resembling a goat's head.

Allen Grey's steak sandwich lay cold and neglected on the shelf beside him. The anger he'd felt at Denise's words had faded. He steered the charter boat with one hand, controlled the throttle with the other, pushing the craft along at a steady six knots. He really was starting to fancy himself as a bit of a sea captain, come to think of it.

Roy Chapman was seated at the top of the ladder at the wheelhouse entrance, systematically dismantling his steak sandwich with his teeth while he watched the small dinghy, attached by a tow line to the stern, bob gently up and down in Ragamuffin's silvery wake.

They chugged along for another ten minutes or so, until the last, lingering trace of crimson abandoned the sky. Eventually, Chapman took the wheel and with an expertise that made Allen's attempts at seamanship seem amateurish by comparison, guided the boat further away from shore. There was a clay-coloured mist clinging to the base of the cliffs, like mud to a farmer's boot. Chapman killed the engine and set anchor.

Allen retired to his cabin, to Denise, whose long, inclement silences were slowly but surely grinding him down into a state of mild panic: a weighty but unformed urgency that ached like a bad tooth. That night, like the currents swirling around the boat, the river of sleep flowed around him as though he were a rock in a stream, refusing to engulf him.

At fourteen minutes past ten, a series of low rumbles drew him up on deck. The thunder sounded deeper than normal: more like the death moan of ancient aquatic gods, or the grinding together of massive plates of stone. As Allen grabbed the bow rail, a vivid flash of sheet lightning illuminated the sky to the west, and there, silhouetted against the writhing, electric heavens, was the face of a bearded goat.

The following morning, the trip from the Ragamuffin to the cave was made amidst a strange brew of mixed emotions - fear, awe, anxiety, expectation. Chapman kept muttering soft expletives, complaining that the cave had no right to be there - as though its very presence embodied a personal affront to his seamanship.

The dinghy entered the great chamber and its three occupants craned their necks upwards to gaze at the cavern's intimidating lip curving away like a rainbow of stone above their heads.

Chapman's former allusion to a magical amphitheatre had not been far off the mark.

Floodlit by a natural luminescence - a reflection of exterior light bouncing off the huge expanse of water enclosed within its mighty walls - the cave appeared to go on forever: a Jules Verne fantasy where giant, mutant crabs battled sharp-toothed dinosaurs to the death.

They found themselves in a vast bay, its inner shores ringed by a wide shingle beach, its edges flanked by a pair of rocky platforms, grey and slab-like, each rising to a height of about five metres near the cavern's mouth. The rest of the cave was a weird tableau of stone mounds, massive boulders, ridges, sharp crags and serrated gullies. A waterfall spilled down a series of ledges into the western side of the bay. The rear wall of the cavern (if, indeed, it had one), lay behind a limestone escarpment, steep in places, pock-marked here and there by small caves and dark fissures.

Chapman had chosen a course close to the left-hand, or western wall, where the water appeared deeper and more navigable. At the rear of the boat, gripping the throttle of the dinghy's small outboard motor, the wiry skipper smiled and shook his head at the sight of the perfect three-foot waves peeling along the rocky shelf jutting out from the cave's eastern wall. He turned to Allen and winked.

'It certainly looks the goods, doesn't it, mate?' is all he said.

No sooner had they beached the dinghy than Chapman was out of the boat, dragging his full-length wetsuit out from underneath their small cache of supplies. He hastened behind a nearby rock and began to change.

Denise examined the mottled whites and browns of the cavern's vast, dome-like roof, her mouth agape. She clutched at her

chest in excitement, like a little girl.

'God, it's beautiful, Allen. I'm so glad to be here, I really am.' She took a waterproof torch from the bottom of the boat. 'I think I'll explore a bit.'

'Don't get lost. It's a big place.'

'I won't. I'll meet you back here later. Are you going surfing?'

'I can't let the captain have all the buried treasure.'

'There's more than one kind of treasure, Allen,' his wife countered, enigmatically, before setting off in the direction of the escarpment at the rear of the cave.

Allen made a silent vow as he paddled out to where the waves were breaking along the platform. Call it selfish, call it what you will, but he would never expose this enthralling, mystical place to the rest of the world, even if it cost him his job with 'Waverave'. 'They could go to hell. He'd sold out enough secret surfing spots already. His silence could serve as an atonement to the surf gods, and assure him of a place in surf heaven.

'Check this place out!' Chapman enthused, beside him. Lifting a dripping arm out of the water, he gestured around the awesome chamber. 'Imagine the *surf contests* you could hold in here! You could put a rock band up on the escarpment there - Jimmy Barnes, or something. It'd be *filth*! What do you reckon?'

Allen shook his head and sighed. Chapman was definitely going to be a problem.

In the open seas, Roy Chapman may have reigned supreme, but here, amongst the down-the-line lefthanders that peeled, crisply and mechanically, along the submerged rock ledge, Allen Grey ruled the waves.

Chapman watched in silent awe as Allen tore the waves apart with the powerful, yet smoothly elegant style that had won him the world championship, two year's running.

He tore Zorro-like slashes in the waves, ripped huge cutbacks, smashed the lip, carved graceful arcs. On occasions, he'd perform a gravity-defying aerial, or tuck himself in a small, hollow tube.

They surfed until total exhaustion and hunger finally outweighed their enthusiasm. During their four-hour session the swell size had increased dramatically; the waves pounded onto the rock platform, echoing like cannon-fire in the confines of the cave.

Chapman expressed concern about approaching storms, and at the fact that the Ragamuffin may be anchored too close to shore.

They paddled across to the western platform, clambered up the slippery rocks, and made their way back to the beach. Denise was waiting beside the dinghy, her face a picture of concern. The two men changed back into their clothes, left their surfboards on the beach, well above the high-tide mark, and proceeded to half-drag, half carry the boat down to the water's edge.

Here the shore dropped abruptly off into deep water, and launching the craft, though not exactly a piece of cake, was mercifully accomplished without too much difficulty.

Chapman started the motor and began to guide the boat towards the western side of the bay. For the moment, his jocular, devil-may-care attitude seemed to have deserted him. Allen was glad of the fact.

By the time they were two hundred yards from shore they could feel the undulations of the massive swell entering the bay lifting the dinghy as though it was a lonely pattern on a flying banner. To Allen's left, the eastern platform exploded in mindless maelstroms of foam and fury. By the now the waves were three, perhaps four metres in height, and still rideable.

Fortunately, there was plenty of navigable water on the western side of the bay in which to manoeuvre the dinghy.

Allen leaned his head over the side of the boat and peered down into the green nothingness. How deep was it? Impossible to say.

He felt himself being drawn irresistibly into its opal lure. Denise said something from the front of the boat. There was a note of urgency in her voice that dragged him up from his daydreams and back to a noisy reality.

She was pointing shoreward.

'The cliffs, Allen! Up on the cliffs!'

He turned quickly, caught a flicker of shadow amongst the rocks. Shifting his gaze slightly, he found himself staring into Chapman's eyes. They were very wide, and his face was very white.

Something bumped the boat from below, lifting it out of the water. A sinuous hillock of green slime and algae broke the surface to the right of the dinghy, ever so gently, with hardly a ripple, and then submerged. The boat settled back into the water with a soft splash that reminded Allen of a theme park ride. Chapman gunned the engine, but the massive, dripping back appeared again directly in their path and forced them hard to port. *'This thing is the guts of the ocean...'* Allen thought to himself. *'The entrails of the deep.'*

Allen grasped the sides of the dinghy to steady himself. Chapman looked like some kind of zombie at the rear of the boat. Pale, dark-eyed, like a figure hewn from stone.

'It doesn't want to hurt us Roy,' Allen shouted above the roar of the waves. 'It's trying to turn us back to shore, for Christ's sake!'

But Chapman would have none of that. He shook his head and twisted the throttle to full, sending the craft skittering towards the mouth of the cave. Again, the wide, slimy back appeared, blocking their way to the Ragamuffin.

Chapman cried out in frustration and veered hard to port for the second time.

'Stop him, Allen,' Denise cried. 'He'll sink us!'

Allen lunged at Chapman and wrested his hand off the throttle.

As the two men grappled with each other at the back of the boat Denise watched helplessly as the flimsy craft drifted closer and closer to the huge waves now breaking almost in the centre of the bay.

Chapman's fist caught Allen a glancing blow to the side of the jaw. Allen grunted and smashed a forearm into Chapman's nose. Blood sprayed and Chapman gave a small scream of rage and pain.

'Allen!' Denise's cry was almost lost in a hollow roar: a sound Allen had heard many times. The sound of tonnes of water, bearing down like liquid thunder.

He turned and looked up, open-mouthed. A wave was cresting fifteen feet above the boat. There was a brief, almost tranquil, suspension of reality, a period of resignation, before the impact came. The wave hit like a detonating bomb. But instead of fire there was a dull pain, swirling foam and whiteness. Another wave smashed on top of Allen's head, plunging him into a silent, green netherworld. Deeper and deeper he went. The fire finally came, in his lungs, his legs, his shoulders. Air screamed at the back of his throat. A pair of arms wrapped around his chest. *Paula!* She was taking him to a place where crabs and fishes chewed on pieces of your eyes and ears. And he turned to tell her that he'd changed his mind, that he didn't to join her after all but then his head broke the surface of the water and there was the dinghy, upside-down, not ten feet away. He kicked out for it but the fire in his limbs had burned away any last remnants of his energy. He was dead in the water, nothing left, except for those arms, supporting him.

'Hold on, Allen,' Denise said and towed him over to the boat, and held him after he blacked out. She draped her husband's limp form over the upturned dinghy and pushed it further out into the channel.

He awoke to a red mist of pain, a pounding head, and nausea, crawling in his guts like a squid. He was on the shingle beach. Denise was beside him, cradling his head in her arms. Allen pushed himself up on one elbow and groaned.

'Denise,' he managed to whisper at last. 'Are you okay?'

'Yes. Rest.'

'No.' Allen reached out and touched her face, to reassure himself that she was real. 'What happened? Where's Roy?'

'Do you remember anything?' she enquired softly.

'Of course. The thing in the water. The wave...'

'You must have hit your head on the dinghy. I couldn't find you at first. Then I saw you come up once, after the second wave. I caught hold of you. You called out a name...' a questioning smile played on her lips.

'Paula. Yes. I remember.'

'The dinghy was upside-down, drifting back into the channel. I held you with one hand, the dinghy with the other. It sank about twenty metres from shore and I took you in the rest of the way.'

'Christ. And Roy?'

'When I was sure you were all right I searched the entire bay. I

couldn't find him, Allen. Unless he swam out to the Ragamuffin.'

That was unlikely. The seas were too big. Besides, Allen could see the Ragamuffin, anchored in the same place. If Chapman had reached the boat he would have taken it further offshore. No, he was dead. Allen was certain of the fact. The poor bastard - in the end, his bloody boat had killed him.

'And Allen, there's something else.'

'Yes?'

'Just before we saw that...thing, I looked around at the cliffs. There were people there, watching us. People with dark skin.'

He nodded. The revelation came as no surprise at all. The two of them shared a long, meditative moment, and then....

'Allen, do you think they'll let us leave?'

'Right now, I'm more concerned about whether they'll let us live!'

'Oh, I think they will.'

Allen looked up sharply and stared into his wife's eyes.

'Why do you say that?'

'Because you're special to them. Allen, it's as though the cave suddenly reappeared, just for you. As if it was *waiting*, or something. And there's another reason...'

He didn't speak.

'Do you feel up to a little walk?'

She led him toward the back of the cave, to the base of the limestone cliffs. After climbing halfway up the slope Denise gestured in the direction of one of the caves.

'There,' she said.

They entered.

At the rear of the dimly-lit cavity, Allen could discern a dark shadow, huddled close to the ground. As his eyes adjusted to the gloom, the shapeless lump became a small pile of stones.

It's a grave,' his wife explained. 'Very old.'

Denise knelt down beside the stones and picked up something long and cylindrical. She stood, and after moment's hesitation, handed the object to her husband.

'There's an inscription.'

When the storm abated, he'd paddle his board out and bring the Ragamuffin into the cave.

Naturally, such an action was entirely dependent on the whims of the creature in the bay, and, of course, on whether the boat managed to survive the tempest.

However, Allen felt confident that Jeedara, or whatever it was, could not disapprove. Anchored off the cliffs as it was, the craft was as good as a signpost, pointing in their direction.

He picked up the telescope - Samuel E. Grey's telescope - and rolled it in his hand.

What had drawn his great, great grandfather back to the cavern: idle curiosity, or something more intense? The latter, Allen suspected. The desire for fulfilment? Probably. He could understand that.

Denise stirred softly beside him, and Allen was reminded of a night, an eternity ago, when they had lain in front of a fire and made love on a blanket. Odd, that in the act of making love, he'd imagined that the attainment of his life's desire lay elsewhere, when the whole time he'd been holding it in his arms.

Placing a hand on the soft curve of his wife's belly, he felt the new life, stirring within. Hope, amidst so much hopelessness; life, amidst so much death. There was a footfall on the cliffs above the cave in which they huddled. The faint trickle of stones in the night....

- END -

A PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY ON A BUDGET

II Encyclopedias: The Heavyweights

by James Verran

Not all science fiction is set in an extraterrestrial future. Even fantasy writers occasionally use an Earthly or historical theme. No matter how exotic the time or place of the fictional setting, a sprinkling of the historically mundane is common to many stories; therefore, a writer may frequently need an encyclopedia for primary reference.

Mainstream encyclopedias in conspicuously decorative sets are a wonderful resource - just ask the salesperson. But at better than \$30 per book (you should be so lucky), plus the regular updates (ad infinitum), they demand a level of financial stability to match that of the proverbial Joneses. Of course, big name 'pedias are sold on allegedly favourable terms, but try pinning the salesperson down to an all-up price. Fortunately, many retail bookshops offer layby (layaway), a scheme where the purchaser takes delivery after the final payment, with minimal (if any) extra charges.

Encyclopedias published in magazine format, presumably to make them attractive to the young or casual reader, are seldom as cheap as they at first seem. The cost of the "magnificent" binders often places them nearer the price of a modest set in hardback.

Despite its overpowering American bias, FUNK & WAGNALLS ENCYCLOPEDIA, recently featured in a large supermarket chain on a buy-a-book-a-week basis, is fair value for money and well worth consideration. F&W, like all multivolume works, has a major disadvantage: the time required to note locations of various references and the need to wade through several books for the desired information. Busy writers most often need quick access to plain, statistical facts, so a single volume compendium is usually more practicable.

An impressive compendium, currently available at around \$39.95, is THE CHRONICLE OF THE 20th CENTURY (ISBN 1-872031-80-3) from Penguin Books. The content is compiled from edited newspaper articles, many of which incorporate references to follow-up items. For example: while researching a story based on fact, but with a temporal displacement of fifty years, an accurate chronology of subsequent events was required. The "20th CENTURY" provided leads to related information and crucial dates, which reduced the time spent winding microfilm at the archives. Highly recommended as a source of story ideas alone.

Its sister volume, THE CHRONICLE OF THE WORLD (ISBN 1-872031-00-5), while equal to the "20th CENTURY" in presentation, covers ancient and recent history in tacky, pseudo-newspaper articles written in the present tense. Strangely, it opens with an account of the happenings in 3.5 million BC, yet there is no correspondent's by-line. It also contains an obituary, circa 3.1m BC, for the late, lamented Lucy - poor kid was only twenty-five. Although much of "THE WORLD's" content seems shallow and somewhat "beat-up", it is also a potential source of ideas for the historically inclined science fiction or fantasy writer.

Most notable among others of the Chronicle Family is the recently released, THE CHRONICLE OF AUSTRALIA. This narrowly specialized volume is of dubious value as a resource for science fiction and fantasy, so its usefulness can only be assessed by the individual purchaser.

Any serious writer, without a CD ROM, will find a good compendium ideal for quick reference checks. Intergalactic travel and communications, blithely accepted by sf devotees, frequently stimulates heavy discussion. Unless you have a mind like a sponge

you may need to "bone up" on Bell's Theorem to defend the probability of faster than light travel and communications. Clarke orbits, Lagrangian Points and a profusion of other sf fodder can be found quickly in most compendiums.

The following "shopping list" offers a few suggestions for alleviating the need to delve into a full-sized encyclopedia. Certainly, budget permitting, more than one compendium is desirable: editorial priorities and size limitations considered.

Touted as a concise encyclopedia, Hutchinson's FACTFINDER (ISBN 0-09-165630-3) has 1,000 pages of surprisingly comprehensive entries in a manageable, brick shaped volume. Ominous cracking sounds from its spine, when opened, are a worry, but nothing has dropped out in eight years of regular use. Like all the Hutchinsons, it features a clear typeface on satin paper. Their latest CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA (new 2nd edition, ISBN 0-09-174894-1) is about the same size with some colour illo's and retails at the heavyweight price of \$49.95. Take heart: a 624 page paper-back version (ISBN 0-09-177416-0) costing \$19.95 is available from Helicon. However, their *big* brother, Hutchinson's ENCYCLOPEDIA (ISBN 0-09-175395-1), with even more full-colour illo's, retails at around \$90 - definitely one for the Joneses.

Webster's (a name bandied about somewhat) POPULAR ENCYCLOPEDIA (ISBN 0-09-177180-3), 835 pages, was recently marked down to \$14.95, indicating the imminent release(?) of a later edition. Bearing in mind that you only get what you pay for (sometimes), it is less comprehensive than the aforementioned Hutchinsons. Nevertheless, a useful knockabout with 350 surprisingly clear illo's, but disappointing in its lack of geographical maps. Webster's CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA (ISBN 0-09-177195-1), a 612 page paperback currently retails at \$9.95: a steal! A feature of both is their light weight, due to the quality of paper used (pulp), rather than the low page count.

Macmillan also has a concise encyclopedia presently being thrown out for less than \$10.

Pears CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA, has been in print longer than most and retails near the high end of the book budget at \$35. The current edition is compact, but exquisitely presented with an excellent full colour atlas and absolutely crammed with small, sharp text. It surpasses many books twice its size. If you do not yet own a compendium, this one is worthy of serious consideration.

If it doesn't have an atlas: it ain't really an encyclopedia! World politics being what they are, atlases need to be continually updated, a fact worth considering before outlaying big bucks on a dedicated atlas. If you need big format maps, go for one of the cheap, remaindered atlases. While most large encyclopedias contain quite useful atlases, a few illustrated compendiums provide little more than rudimentary maps. This deficit is partly compensated by the inclusion of regional maps, adjacent to related text. Surprisingly, some still include world political maps with pink bits indicating the former British Empire as well as coloured, topographically detailed maps. A few lower priced compendiums have neither atlases nor illo's.

You can't judge a book Quite ordinary looking volumes may be loaded with useful facts and statistics. For pictures, there is always television. But for good, solid information, permanent text beats a talking head any day. A quick peruse of the book shops should reveal several excellent cheapies from diverse publishers. There are real bargains to be had by those who care to do the rounds. Naturally, cheap encyclopedias are often dated, but seldom by more than five years. Most frequently sought information falls into the historic category and all encyclopedias contain a high proportion of entries unchanged from earlier editions: the 1980s are already history.

Lovers of nostalgia will find it interesting to compare the "new generation" of concise encyclopedias with their counterparts from the 1950s. For instance: the old COLLINS NEW AGE ENCYCLOPEDIA (pre-ISBN) lists many famous people who have now gone their reward and much of the technology described has since been influenced by the space age. Also, in the 1950s a black hole was something from 18th century Calcutta. Today's readers will probably choke on the glowing(?) testimonials to the (then) new age of nuclear power and its promise of clean, limitless energy.

Damn! Someone erased the price from inside the old Collins, but it probably cost around 30/- (\$3).

I REMEMBER HELL PLANET, MERCURY:

The Bizarre History of Mercury in S.F.

by Andrew Darlington

The twilight belt is a magic place of swirling mists. Especially here at Meltwater, the Lake of Flame Blossom where coiling galaxies of luminous orchids spiral through slow tides, and jewelled dune dragonflies leave fluorescent wakes through labyrinths of fern, cactii, and the tenuous green steam of night vapours. The tavern is still. These streets no longer echo and resonate to the pulse of riotous myth and picaresque saga.

The hardened Spacer sits alone in a bar alcove, a fluted glass of Gherack in his fist. He hardly looks up as we slouch into the chairs across from him. Torches lick the gathering darkness.

'We're here to learn about "Hell Planet"', I venture. 'You were there. You know'.

He hardly registers our presence. His complexion dry, space-white. His eyes staring through the bottom of his glass, and on, probably as far as Andromeda.

'In March 1974 the American probe Mariner Ten had a series of close encounters with Mercury', prompts Cy, my companion. 'You've seen the shots? The photomosaics of a boring little sub-lunar world. But you knew Mercury as it was before. You remember how it used to be. We've come a long way to collect your story for the Oral History archive'.

'Gherack', he breathes, so softly I imagine it to be the sound of Flame Blossom on the lake. Then, 'buy me a drink', a little louder, his eyes igniting. 'Get me Gherack and I'll make it worth your while'.

I nod assent, signalling to the Servodroid as Cy snaps into record mode.

'I remember Hell Planet'. He fists the glass fiercely with radiation-blasted fingers. 'Mariner Ten? Don't make me laugh. We used different, older sets of maps, back then at the dawn of space travel, through the teens and twenties of this century. Back then when the system was a fun place to be. Sure, we knew Mercury is only 57,910,000 km from the sun. We knew its diameter is only 4,878 km, a little larger than Earth's moon, and the first step out from Sol. But we knew more than that'. For the first time he looks up to meet my gaze. His eyes burned back into his head glowing with crazy constellations of lost futures. 'Robert Silverberg said that "Mercury is two hells in one". He's right. As way back as 1881 Schiaparelli's observations of Mercury discovered it has a synchronous, or "captured" orbit, you know that? We operated on his maps. We knew the planet always faces one way, keeps that same side to the sun just as Terra's moon presents always the same hemisphere towards Earth. So the hot side is *hot*, the hottest place this side of Hades. As COMET (28th June 1958) explains, "half of the planet is turning everlastingly towards the sun. Pools of lead boil in deserts of molten sand. Volcanoes belch forth sulphurous clouds of smoke. And ...".

"The dark side of the planet is eternally wrapped in a mantle of abysmal coldness and stygian darkness", quotes Cy. "There, it is calculated by experts, the temperature falls to the absolute zero of space" (BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE #12, edited by Vargo Statten, April 1953).

That was the scientifically accepted view of Mercury clear through the 30's and up into the 1960's. The conceptual vehicle S.F. writers requisitioned to drape their fantasies on. A world in which two extremes co-exist ... two hells in one. And between those two

extremes; the temperate, twilight belt, he adds with an air of knowing superiority. 'This was the prize, the twilight area. But some people conjectured life even in the planet's most hostile climes. A guy called Frank R. Paul illustrated LIFE ON MERCURY for an issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES (Sept 1939), explaining that "Mercury has a very high temperature because it is very close to the sun. For this reason scientists believe that only insect life can exist there". Two years after that, for AMAZING STORIES (Sept 1941) he went on to create QUARTZ CITY ON MERCURY, built by insect-men and cut from blocks of quartz crystal. Then there is ARK OF FIRE, a story by John Hawkins for FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES (March 1943) in which Mercurian salamanders sun-bask on the scorched deserts. And all this is on the *hot* side! But largely we saw the temperate zone as the place to be'. The ghost of a smile.

Cy remains impassive, 'yet to quote Vargo Statten further, "as some well-versed men say that Mercury once enjoyed an atmosphere comparable to our own, Mercurians may have evolved as Earthmen did". So c'mon, don't give us insects and salamanders. Tell us about the "Winged Virgins of the Light Country"'.

'Tama, Princess of Mercury', whispers the Spacer reverently. His eyes moistened. 'You want to hear about her? I remember Tama. I remember her well. It was Ray Cummings who introduced us. Ray was born in 1887, and hit S. F. celebrity in a big way with his GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM stories of the 1920's. He wrote TAMA OF THE LIGHT COUNTRY and TAMA PRINCESS OF MERCURY as serials for ARGOSY magazine in '30 and 1931 respectively. In the first one Guy Palisse leaves Earth in the first moon-bound rocket. It does astray and he finds himself spending ten years on Mercury instead! Meanwhile, hostile Mercurians led by the giant Croat attack a Girl's Summer Camp in Maine, but are defeated in outer space by the Bolton Flying Cube, after which Guy returns to Earth with Tama, the winged Princess. In the second novel our heroes return to Mercury when Tama is kidnapped by the devious Roc, assisted by the treacherous Dorrek who launches a savage invasion of the twilight belt from his Cold Country lair. Dorrek is "a Hun chieftain by his aspect. A barbarian, stupid in the ways of civilization, yet clever for all that ... this Mercurian leader ... wore a wide leather belt strapped tightly around his heavy middle. Weapons were clipped to it. Weapons not barbaric, but strangely super-modern..."

Cy laughs dismissively. 'Yes, Ray Cummings is judged "fundamentally a pulp writer" by John Clute (in THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Peter Nicholls). His Mercury sagas were re-issued as lumbering club-footed novels by Ace in '65 and 1966, the reiterations of the original magazine serials still there to additional slow already tedious plot lines. In keeping with Frank Paul's LIFE ON MERCURY, as well as winged princesses he introduces insects too; giant Brues are used as vicious pack-animals by the Cold Country hordes. And while there's the "metallic desert" there's also Water City and storms of torrential rain ... on Mercury!'

The Spacer's eyes harden. 'This is the 1930's friend. Edgar Rice Burroughs and Leigh Brackett have populated Mars with marvellous cities, beasts and oviparous princesses. Burroughs and Otis A. Kline do the same for Venus. Even bleak Callisto has its Sky Pirates, its Empress, Black Legions and swordsmen in Lin Carter's stories. So why not Mercury too? There's poetry here'. The Spacer lifts the drink in a gesture of salute to memories, tips it to his lips and coughs as the rich liquor hits the back of his throat. 'Poetry - and adventure. Homer Eon Flint's highly Burroughsian LORD OF EARTH (1919) uses Mercury as a convenient location, as does Clark Ashton Smith's THE IMMORTAL OF MERCURY (1932) although it's fair to say that neither invest their worlds with any identifiable Mercuryness. While Cummings' vision, even though often ineptly expressed, has considerable power. The description of his protagonist's journey beyond the "Dark Mountains at the borders of the Cold Country" is particularly strong on atmospherics - "There is a terror to darkness, things almost, but not quite visible ... a desolation fearsome in the extreme. Black bottomless canyons, incongruously wide for the sharply convex surface of this small planet; canyons with sheer black walls dropping into blackness; peaks rising like pointed needles; open valleys strewn with crags and boulders. A ragged, tumbled land, rent and torn by some great cataclysm of nature". There's a sense of heightening horror to this prose'.

'But Tama is the "Leader of all the Winged Virgins of the Light

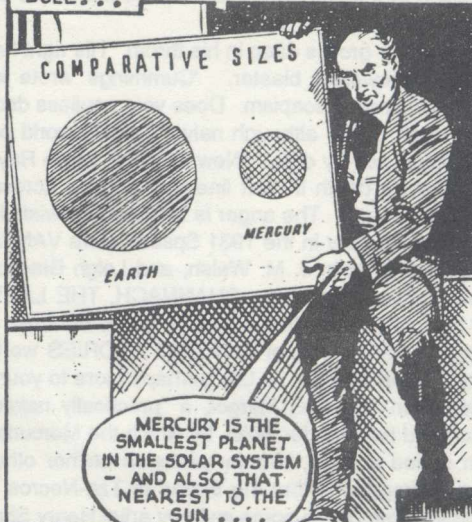
NEXT DAY, THE SELECTED MEN WERE ORDERED TO ATTEND A LECTURE BY THE FAMOUS GEOLOGIST, PROFESSOR CURD-SMYTHE, AN EXPERT ON MOUNTAINS AND VOLCANOES. JET-ACE WAS DETAILED TO CLEAN THE BLACKBOARD AND TO ARRANGE THE LECTURE-ROOM CHAIRS...



YOUR DUTIES, GENTLEMEN, WILL BE TO ESCORT THE TEAM OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS AND MYSELF ON THE PLANET MERCURY!

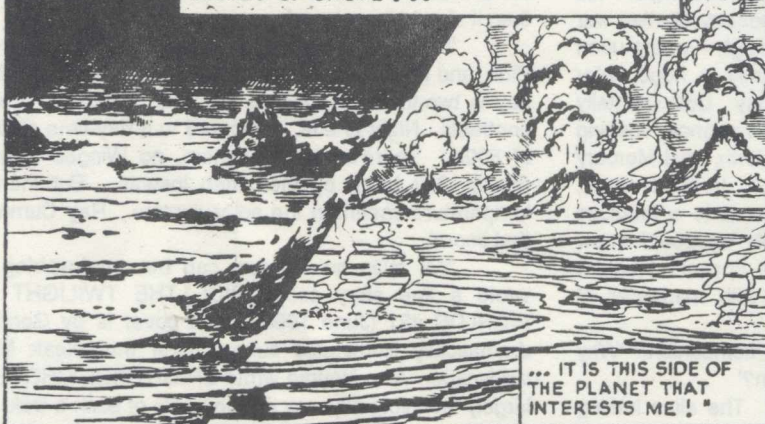
SEEMS LIKE A DULL AFFAIR ANYWAY, LOOKING AFTER A PACK OF EGG-HEADS!

BUT THE PLANET MERCURY, AS THE PROFESSOR DESCRIBED IT, WAS FAR FROM DULL...



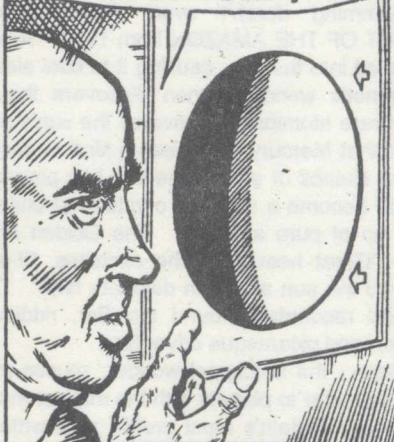
MERCURY IS THE SMALLEST PLANET IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM - AND ALSO THAT NEAREST TO THE SUN...

"ONE HALF OF MERCURY IS A FROZEN WASTE OF ETERNAL NIGHT. HERE THE WATER IS FROZEN AS HARD AS STEEL! THE OTHER HALF OF THE PLANET IS TURNED EVERLASTINGLY TOWARDS THE SUN. POOLS OF LEAD BOIL IN DESERTS OF MOLTEN SAND. VOLCANOES BELCH FORTH SULPHUROUS CLOUDS OF SMOKE..."



... IT IS THIS SIDE OF THE PLANET THAT INTERESTS ME!

BETWEEN THE BRIGHTSIDE AND THE NIGHTSIDE OF THIS UNUSUAL WORLD IS A NARROW STRIP WHERE THE CLIMATE IS ALWAYS THAT OF A TROPICAL EVENING. THAT IS WHERE WE SHALL LAND!



TWO DAYS LATER, JET-ACE STOOD GLUMLY WATCHING THE EXPEDITION'S ROCKET SET OFF... FOR MERCURY...

THERE GO PLUM-DUFF AND THE BOYS... AH, WELL... I CAN'T EXPECT TO BE IN ON EVERY ADVENTURE UNDER THE SUN! BUT I DO THINK OLD COBBY WAS A BIT HARSH ON ME... JUST A SMALL SQUIRT OF WATER... OH, WHAT'S THE USE?



BUT EVENTS WERE TAKING PLACE IN A FAR-OFF CORNER OF EARTH WHICH WERE TO FLING LOGAN INTO THE MOST URGENT AND HAIR-RAISING ADVENTURE OF HIS YOUNG LIFE. IN A CAVERN, TWO MILES BENEATH A MOUNTAIN IN NORTH WESTERN TEXAS, SCIENTISTS HAD PLACED AN ATOMIC BOMB, TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF A MAN-MADE EARTHQUAKE!



THE LAST TRUCK'S PULLING AWAY FROM THE CAVERN. NOW!

ALL THE INSTRUMENTS ARE SET AND CHECKED!

TIME IS ZERO HOUR MINUS SIXTY MINUTES!

COMET—JUNE 28, 1958—7

Country". Look at the cover of the Ace edition. She resembles an angel from a stained glass window, a Catholic icon. While the image of squadrons of winged girls dive-bombing barbarian hordes is so absurd it's laughable'. Cy's hesitation lasts only a moment, before he presses on more seriously, 'And the idea of their wing-clipping is a ritual mutilation that looks from this distance like some sort of female circumcision'.

The Spacer grows deep in his throat. His right hand caresses the butt of his jewelled blaster. 'Cummings wrote interplanetary adventure. Romance. Escapism. Does your soulless decade have no time for wonder? And - although naive, Tama's world persisted long beyond its logical sell-by date. "New Worlds", wrote Ray - "but not to conquer". There's depth in that line that echoes across to us now, here at century's end'. The anger is replaced by wistfulness. 'Earth is invaded from Mercury in the 1931 Space Opera VANDALS OF THE VOID by Australian-born J. M. Walsh, and Leigh Brackett set one of her fabulous confections here - SHANNACH, THE LAST (1952), her typewriter keys charged with the stuff of exotic dreams. Even as late as the January 1951 issue of AMAZING STORIES we find EMPIRE OF EVIL by Robert Amette. A tale perhaps more to your jaded taste? A blue Mercurian enslaves Margot, a "practically naked" Earth girl, "the rope around her slender waist, by which the Mercurian hauled her along, had raised a cruel, circular abrasion on her otherwise brown skin". She is dragged before the throne of Tza-Necros, a six-limbed Gorilla King illustrated with some style by artist Henry Sharp ...'.

"Amette" was a House Pseudonym used by - among others, Robert Silverberg and Rog Phillips', I enthuse.

'Sure', adds Cy. 'But it's doubtful if *this* Amette is either of them'.

'And for wide-screen cosmic baroque John Russell Fearn trod space Cumming aren't even dream about. Remember his CONQUEST OF THE AMAZON from 1949? A predatory Martian war fleet is hurled into the sun, causing it to cool alarmingly - where-upon Fearn's genetic wonder-woman discovers that only a huge solar infusion of rare atomium can reverse the sun's decay. Coincidentally she learns that Mercury "has been a kind of cosmic sponge, soaking up the vast sluices of energy the sun has poured forth, until Mercury has himself become a mass of crystallized energy". In other words, it's made up of pure atomium! The Golden Amazon is a fabulous creation - "Great heavens", she exclaims, "if only we could throw Mercury into the sun and then detonate him!" The Spacer's laughter echoes and resonates around the Bar, riddled with memories of riotous myth and picaresque adventure.

'Fearn - the Blackpool wonder,' muses my companion. 'Why did he always refer to planets with the male pronoun?'

'Fearn - Britain's most prolific pulp writer. The alias lurking behind "Vargo Statten". The Golden Amazon is probably his most enduring creation. Of course, she doesn't quite hurl Mercury into the sun. But segments of the planet are jettied into its core, hence rekindling the fireworks there and saving the solar system'.

'Fearn wrote a series of Amazon novels', adds Cy. 'But when I first heard the title CONQUEST OF THE AMAZON I assumed it to be about the despoilation of the Brazilian rain-forests!'

There's a moment of uneasy silence. Outside, the magical twilight seems to thicken, punctuated by the eerie sound of desert armobats. 'I could do with another Gherack'.

I buy him Gherack. The narcotic blue wine singing in response to the body-warmth of his clasp.

'Didn't Dan Dare spend a sojourn on Mercury?' I prompt.

'Sure, Danny came here, his third cover-story for EAGLE, and his first disappointment'. A low chuckle. 'The story ran from 2th June '52 to 20 Feb 1953, and of course you can now buy it complete in a 1988 facsimile volume from "Hawk Books". But I never liked MAROONED ON MERCURY much. You see, he'd been to Venus where he first defeats the Mekon. Then he visits Mars for the RED MOON MYSTERY. Mercury is the next obvious step, and there's tremendous potential. But the readership want more Mekon, so the Mercury setting is largely sacrificed for convoluted combat with exiled Treens plotting a counter-coup to reinstate old dome-head. There are various insectoid nasties and spindly mauve natives who wear heat-insulating shell-suits that give them the appearance of walking "chunks of crystal". They say things like "Ree-Mah Lee-dah Rah Day-ray-ray raw-ray saw-ray". Harold Johns illustration of the temperate

zone Mercurian city Ray-Law with its interconnecting "scenic railway" transport system is intriguingly inventive, and although lacking the long-term popularity of Dare's Venusian races the Mercurians survive into a now-eminently collective DAN DARE POP-UP BOOK, and guest in the opening panel of Dare's 1955 THE MAN FROM NOWHERE story. But as far as picture-strips are concerned you're better advised to read Jet-Ace Logan in COMET. His MERCURY MISSION (28 June to 23 August 1958) covers every available angle on the Hell Planet, and pulls in Fifties Cold War arms-race tension too. Underground A-Bomb testing in Texas ignites a subterranean lake of oil, creating a giant volcano and a fall-out "nuclear winter" cloud that threatens to cover the world. Logan travels to Mercury to enlist the aid of Earth's foremost authority of vulcanism who is part of an exploratory expedition here, - to find the Professor is caught up in a local war between giant telepathic insectoid "Brightsiders", and gun-toting Shakey-Caterpillars from the "Ice-side". As they battle for control of the temperate zone "where the climate is always that of a tropical evening" all aspects of this bizarre world are perfectly captured in freeze-frame by artist John Gillatt. But although planetary locations were becoming increasingly less popular with mainstream S. F. writers, they remain popular with "juveniles". Isaac Asimov disguises himself as "Paul French" to write a world-hopping book series including LUCKY STARR AND THE BIG SUN OF MERCURY. While, although also marketed as a juvenile there's much to recommend MISSION TO MERCURY (1965) by Hugh Walters, in which an expedition here by Chris Godfrey and his friends find they have an unexpected addition to their crew - a girl who is able to maintain mental contact with her twin back on Earth'.

'But by then - even before Mariner Ten, your Mercury was under attack,' interjects Cy. 'As early as 1962 American astronomer W. E. Howard discovered that the so-called "Dark Side" was warmer than it should have been'.

'Mercury is not synchronous. There's no Ice-Side, no Hot-Side, and no Twilight Belt', I agreed. 'But its axial rotation *is* slow - a day is two-thirds as long as the year. And it *is* a world of extreme contrasts. Night is 90K, compared to a day-time surface temperature of 600K. There's no atmosphere, no Winged Virgins, not even a Quartz City hewn by Mercurian insects. But there is the widest temperature variant in the solar system. Ray Cummings is right on that score'.

'Yet even so Mercury can be awe-inspiring. E. R. James wrote a fine story called RIDE THE TWILIGHT RAIL for NEW WORLDS #21 (June 1953). The cover is by Gerald Quinn, and it dramatically illuminates sunrise over that bleak Mercurian "lunar" landscape. Alan Nourse wrote BRIGHTSIDE CROSSING in 1956 - a largely technical odyssey on the perils of such a trek, while Clifford D. Simak's 1941 short MASQUERADE and Asimov's RUNAROUND a year later also attempt to bring some rational scientific bias to the Mercury mythos. Silverberg's SUNRISE ON MERCURY - in NEW WORLDS (1957) is a taut little story about a wish-fulfilling pool of sentient zinc on Brightside which endangers and even kills crew members by answering their subconscious impulses. The writing is concise and intense. To Silverberg the planet is still "the cold ice-bound kingdom of Dante's deepest pit - and it was also the brimstone empire of another conception. The two met, fire and frost, each hemisphere its own kind of hell"'.

'Do you have a favourite memory of Mercury?'

'HELL PLANET I guess. E. C. Tubb's 1954 novel for Scion. The hardest of hard adventure on the system's most viciously punishing world, with not only its split temperate zones but Einsteinian distortion pockets set up by the intense solar activity, alien life-forms, dust devils and a walking corpse too. Lee Correy commands an Earth station set up to tap the torrents of cheap Mercurian energy and beam it to ships in space, but soon plunges deep into the terrors of Night-side to rescue his brother. It's white-knuckle tense stuff. While in a gentler mode Kurt Vonnegut's confused protagonist of THE SIRENS OF TITAN (1959) spends time MAROONED ON MERCURY, trapped in sub-surface caverns with weird but benevolent triangular beings called Harmoniums. But the best story *about* Mercurian fiction is the history of the final story. Larry Niven wrote THE COLDEST PLACE during the early months of 1964, setting the action on a non-rotational Mercury. It was accepted by editor Fred Pohl - but scarcely had the tale been set in print than the synchronous orbit theory was squashed.

Niven told Harlan Ellison "the story was made totally obsolete by Russian astronomical discoveries concerning Mercury, circa August 1964. But I had already cashed the cheque. Fred Pohl was stuck with the damned thing" (quoted in DANGEROUS VISIONS 2). Pohl gritted his teeth and published. So Niven's first ever sale made it into the December '64 issue of IF - as the last *real* Mercury story. And the planetocide process W. E. Howard began, Mariner Ten completed. Destroying Tama, Quartz City, Nightside, Twilight Zone and sentient zinc-pools. Where to go now?

'Some writers recreate Earth into a synchronous Mercury-clone. In Michael Moorcock's THE TWILIGHT MEN (1966) insane "birdlike mammalian biped" aliens "paused with casual ease to stop the world spinning, looted what they required, and passed on in their insane, ceaseless passage through the universe ... Now the Earth, with perpetual day on one side, perpetual night on the other, circled on around the sun". His twilight zone is a place of decadence and fear. In HOTHOUSE (1962) Brian Aldiss pushes out the temporal limits to world's end where the pull of the moon has "gradually slowed the axial rotation of its parent planet to a standstill, until day and night slowed, becoming fixed forever; one on one side of the planet, one on the other". In this vividly portrayed and supremely imagined world the sun's "red disc hangs immobile in the sky, showering one half of Earth with powerful radiation", and the other is "the realm of eternal sunset". In other words - it becomes Mercury....'.

Cy stabs the recorder off. Slams his chair back. 'Flying virgins? walking chunks of crystal, giant telepathic insects? This stuff is ludicrous. Time we made our excuses and left'.

As I slouch up and make to join him the Spacer grabs out violently, seizes my wrist with radiation-blasted fingers. His eyes burn into mine, pleading now. 'You heard of consensus reality?'

'Huh?'

'The idea that reality is pliable, that it assumes the form people believe it to be. You know - that when people thought the world was flat, it was flat. When they assumed Earth to be the centre of the universe around which all else revolved, that was true too'.

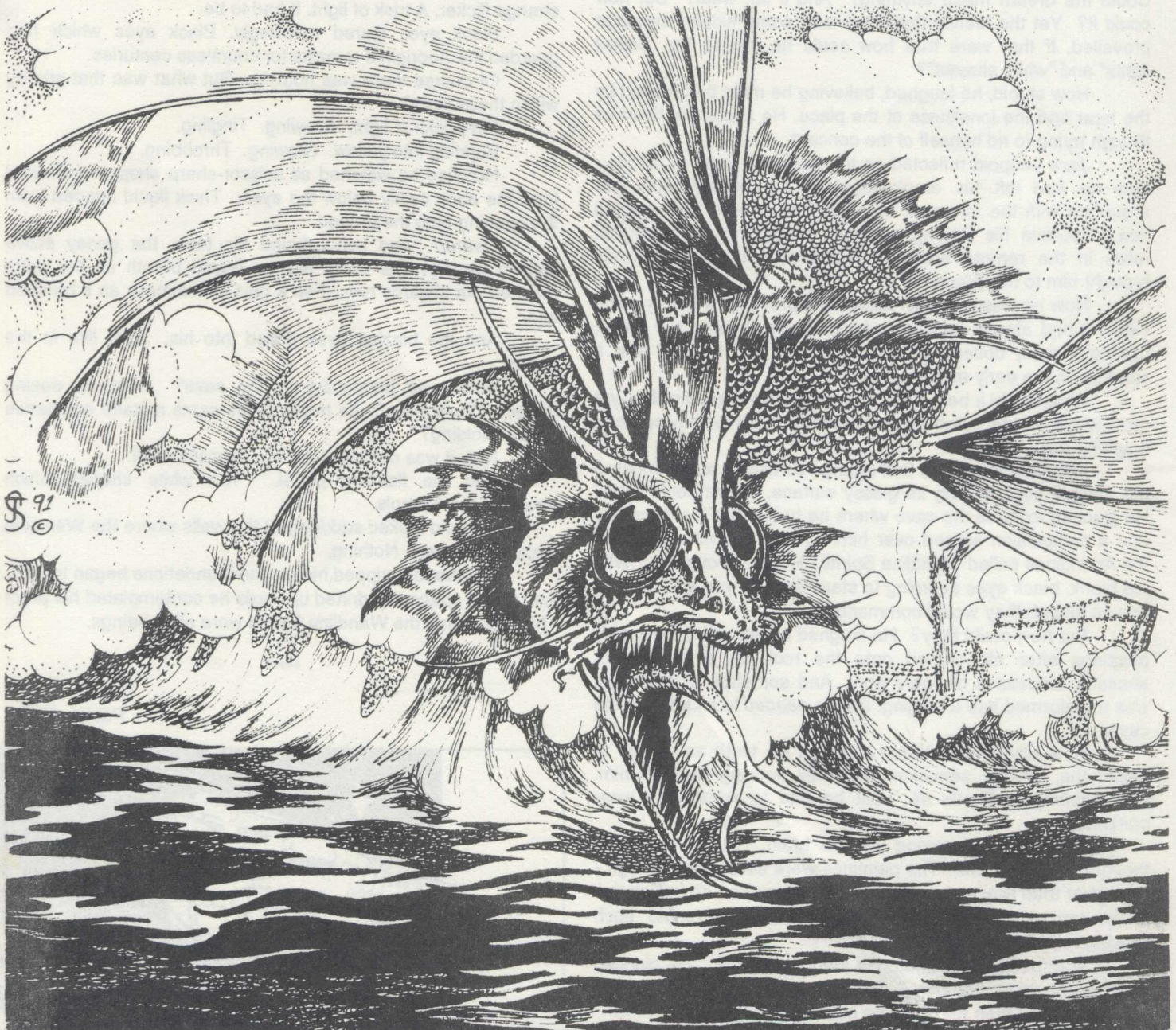
'Are you coming?' demands Cy impatiently. 'I can't take this thing much more. Even the holo-wish-fulfillment environment is tacky'.

'I believe Consensus Reality'. The Spacer's talking fast now. 'When people knew Mercury was synchronous, it was. And somewhere out in some alternate universe, it still is. Hell Planet exists there, now. Tama flies on beautiful wings forever above the Light Country. Insects build quartz cities on Brightside, and Snake-Caterpillars burrow into the ice of the Dark Country...'

I see fabulous beasts in the old Spacer's eyes.

As we leave the room the magical Mercurian dusk fluctuates and attenuates to swirling insubstantial mist.

- Andrew Darlington



SENTINELS

by Pauline Scarf

Cockatoos screeched, filling the sky like a massive cloud. He sat up, rubbed at his eyes, throwing off the last vestiges of sleep. Then fear swept over him as his attention focused on the dream. If that's what it was.

But it had been so *real*. And he had never been able to recall any of his dreams before, even immediately upon awakening. Yet he could remember every detail of this one. Why was it so special?

He sat there churning the motions over in his mind. Could the dream mean anything? And if so, what? But how could it? Yet the feeling that there was some hidden message prevailed. If that were true how could he explain the "yellow lights" and "white shapes"?

How stupid, he laughed, believing he must be affected by the heat and the loneliness of the place. He shook his head as though trying to rid himself of the concept.

Jack Leopold reflected on the past few years of his life - how he had left his employment at the factory after that argument with the foreman; how this "misfortune" had enabled him to pursue his lifelong ambition, of digging for Aboriginal relics in the remote areas of Australia, and had eventually brought him to this place.

Now he was one step away from proving his theory. The view he had always sensed to be true. He fingered the metal, turning it over, observing its smoothness and texture, how it sparkled in the early morning sun.

What could it be? The material was light and flexible, yet remarkably strong. And he marvelled at not ever having seen anything like it before.

And then there was that strange sensation as he fingered the sample over, feeling its glossy surface. What could it be? He glanced towards the cave where he had made the discovery and a compulsion surged over him. Those figures - the ones the Aborigines called Wandjina Spirits. Huge. Grotesque. With the blank, black eyes seeming to stare down at you and through you as though they would command.

But how could they? He laughed aloud. They were only paintings after all, etched onto the rock by some ancient ancestor thousands of years ago. And somehow that thought was transformed into a longing. But he *needed* to look inside the cave.

How silly! he muttered between his teeth as though to dispel the strange sensation suddenly flooding through him. Just paintings. That's all. But he had to admit they were compelling.

Then an idea sprang into his brain. Funny he hadn't thought of that before. The paintings were seven metres high - far higher than any man. And the Aborigines had no knowledge of modern equipment or technique. So how could such masterpieces be achieved?

The feeling intensified. He just had to look. He glanced again at the cavern opening. There would be no need to go too far inside. And then he would be satisfied.

Leopold stood up, stretched his lean frame, yawned loudly. then made his way to the mouth, and was soon consumed into the blackness. Soon he located the painting, and he caught himself pondering the Aboriginal belief that Wandjina Spirits left their likeness on these walls before returning to the heavens.

It was ludicrous. But, of course, one could see how the Aborigines could have imagined such a thing, how they could have been completely awed by the sheer intensity of the figures which towered forever like titan sentinels. But what could they have been guarding?

His thoughts returned to the metal clasped tightly in his hand, and he noted the sensation which vibrated and tingled ceaselessly. It was weird. Could it be his imagination? No. His palms were pulsing as they caressed the metal surface.

Could it be metal? He had never experienced anything like it. And if it wasn't, could it be made of some substance that was irritating his skin? Perhaps he had an allergy. However, allergies didn't make the flesh vibrate and pulse with life!

Maybe the giant figures were making him nervous as they fixed him with their blank stare. He determined to leave now. But it was ridiculous to be nervous of paintings. He would wait a moment longer. Defy them!

Unsure of what he was defying or why, he spun around to face the colossi once more. Something caught his eye. A strange flicker. A trick of light. It had to be.

Blank eyes glared mockingly. Black eyes which had guarded the Aboriginal remains for countless centuries.

Of course there was nothing. But what was that stirring within those eyes?

Pin-pricks of light. Growing. Tingling.

Bursting into yellow. Glowing. Throbbing.

Horrified he watched as scissor-sharp shapes protruded from the ebon cavity below the eyes. Thick liquid dripped from the opening onto the ground.

Nearer! And some found his face, the gooey saliva settling warmly. He could feel its rancid breath as the thing reached out towards him. Felt a cold clamminess as it brushed him.

And the blazing eyes drilled into his. Just like in the dream.

What was happening to the cave? Was he seeing things? Could it really be made of the same metallic substance he was holding?

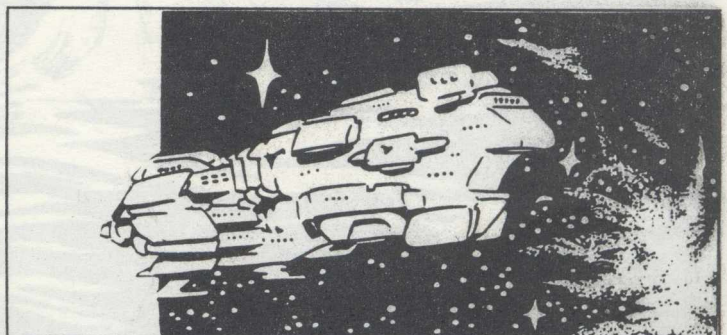
Now it was not a cave at all. Transformed!

And the flashing panel. The white shapes which operated the controls.

Leopold looked suddenly at the walls where the Wandjina figures had been. Nothing.

Realisation gripped him as the foundations began to shift. And as the spaceship drifted upwards he contemplated his proof - his theory that the Wandjina Spirits were alien beings.

- Pauline Scarf.



A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM

1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

CHAPTER TWO

"The Futurian Society of Sydney is the strongest organisation in the entire Southern Hemisphere of this planet. The Futurian Society of New York is the strongest club in the Northern Hemisphere.

"Now, New York State and Australia are almost exactly opposite each other on the face of the globe. Take a map and see. Draw a line directly between the Futurian Society of New York to the Futurian Society of Sydney and it will pass nearly through the centre of the earth. And that means that the science fiction world today revolves on a Futurian axis.

"What a thought! Now will you Futurians behave!"

This stirring challenge from Donald Wollheim, published in the first anniversary issue of FUTURIAN OBSERVER, on January 15, 1941, was both justified and timely; justified because the Sydney Futurians had not been "behaving", - late in 1940, through sheer inability to work in harmony, they had been forced to suspend meetings - timely, because the First Sydney Conference had decided on a resumption of club activity, and the date for the first new meeting was only a fortnight ahead. Symptomatic of the general revival of activities was the publication on January 24, 1941, of the first issue of THE F.A.S. BULLETIN, a single brown quarto sheet duplicated both sides and issued free to members of the Futurian Association of Australia by Acting President Eric F. Russell.

William D. Veney had drawn up a "workable basis" for the revived Futurian Society. Most of the active fans in Sydney agreed with the plan. It could, and should, have worked. But an unforeseen calamity wrecked the plan from the beginning.

It could without exaggeration be said that if Vol Molesworth had not caught an early bus to Veney's home on the night of January 28, 1940, the history of the Futurian Society would have been markedly different. But Molesworth did take the early bus, and arrived at Veney's home a good twenty minutes before the nineteenth meeting was scheduled to commence. In the lounge-room he met Alan Corder, a newcomer to fandom, who had won the support of many Sydney fans during the past three months of club inactivity. Molesworth had been in hospital, and the two had never met. There was an immediate clash of personalities - each disliked the other on the spot.

Besides Veney, Corder and Molesworth, those who attended Meeting #19 were Bert Castellari, Ronald B. Levy, Graham B. Stone, Colin Rodan, Eric and Ted Russell. Nominations for Chairman were called, and Castellari was elected unopposed. He then announced that the committee appointed to consider membership in the reconstituted Society had accepted all fans who had attended the first Sydney Conference - that is, all those present except Molesworth; and in addition, Chas. La Coste and Bruce M. Sawyer.

The first business before the meeting was the election of a new executive panel. Castellari was elected Secretary, and the next position to be filled was that of official editor, it having been decided at the Conference to publish an official club magazine. As it was known

that Molesworth had ambitions in this direction, the meeting decided to suspend the election until the question of Molesworth's membership had been settled. Since he had not been present at the conference, his name had not been among those considered by the Membership Committee. Molesworth was asked whether he would prefer a vote by members (secret ballot) or to be judged in the same way as everyone else had been. He chose to be considered by the Membership Committee. "The meeting temporarily adjourned while Veney, Corder and Castellari left the room to decide whether Molesworth was eligible for membership. On their return they announced that Molesworth was found not to have the necessary qualifications for membership and as a result could not be considered one of the Society."¹

Molesworth was staggered by this announcement. He remained seated while discussion resumed on the question of editorship of the club magazine. He heard Levy and Ted Russell each nominated for the job he believed would be his in the new club, and saw a secret ballot result in three votes each. Levy relinquished the position in favour of Russell. Molesworth got to his feet, said good-night, and left the meeting. His clash with Corder earlier in the lounge room had paid off with a vengeance!

Back in the meeting room, violent argument broke out between Levy, Corder and Veney, with others joining in. Levy demanded to know why Molesworth had not been accepted by the Membership Committee, and criticised whatever reasons were advanced. He contended that Molesworth should have been admitted to the Society. To Eric Russell's suggestion that members had been afraid of Molesworth because of his retaliatory action through magazines, Levy replied that this was scarcely the point, since Molesworth's actions could be opposed through magazines in the same way. Corder then gave his personal reaction to and viewpoint on Molesworth. He said the "left wing"² wanted Molesworth because they were afraid of him. Roden and Stone argued that he would be more useful in the club than against it.

The meeting then decided not to elect a Director for a term of six months, but to have instead a different Chairman at each meeting. The fear of another Evans was not far from their minds.

When the meeting adjourned, Levy was furious. Walking home with Castellari, he declared that the non-acceptance of Molesworth had been unfair, and that in the case of other members the Committee had allowed their better qualities to override their bad ones.³ For this reason, he was going to resign from the Society. Castellari proposed they should both "retire" from the Society for a period of from three to six months, and reconsider the question of resignation at the end of this time. Levy agreed, and both forwarded letters to this effect to the club. Castellari gave as his reason his disgust with the continual "bickering and squabbling" among members.

When the letters were read out at Meeting #20 (February 7) those present - Corder, Veney, Roden and Stone - denied such a state of affairs existed. "In fact, quite the contrary was evident. The Society was now taking a firm stand against all elements tending towards internal disruption and the latest trends clearly indicated a change for the better was taking place. All present agreed this was correct."⁴ If so, it was a pyrrhic victory.

Corder stated that the present trouble had been caused by his influence on the club's management and offered to resign so as to reunite the older members. Roden instantly protested that such an action was unnecessary as "the club would be losing a member who had its interests at heart in exchange for some who had allowed outside interests to drag them away." This was backed by Stone and Veney, the latter adding that members had cast themselves on the side of progress and would eventually have every interested fan back with them.

At the close of this meeting, Veney suggested a resolution by members to continue the Society and uphold the idea of organised science fiction. He said a resolute stand, backed by a progressive

¹ Minutes.

² A mild joke. It happened that Molesworth supporters were seated on his left. G. S.

³ From a letter written to the Society.

⁴ Minutes.

plan of action, would tip the scales in favour of survival, and bring all sincerely interested fans back into the club.

There was no doubt that Veney, who had worked so hard for the revival of the club, was distressed at the way events had turned out. To add to his embarrassment, Castellari now launched an attack on the club in FUTURIAN OBSERVER. Veney felt he could no longer remain co-editor of a fanzine which violated one of the major clauses in his "workable basis" plan, and relinquished therefore his half-share in OBSERVER. Levy promptly replaced him. The result was that OBSERVER, which had faithfully kept up a fortnightly schedule for thirty issues, now began appearing irregularly. On March 9, Levy and Castellari published five issues together to catch up on a five month's lapse; and they made it clear, in an editorial, that their sole reason was "to compensate those fan-editors who have been sending us magazines during the past two months, and to ensure a regular supply of fanmags."⁵ Never again did OBSERVER return to fortnightly schedule. On May 18, another five issues were released in a bunch, and thereafter this policy was followed until the magazine ceased publication altogether with its 57th issue early in 1942.

Despite the body-blow it had received, the Futurian Society pressed on with the publication of its own magazine, FUTURE, and decided to hold another conference of Sydney fans, at which it was hoped a solution to the disunity might be found. Plans for these two projects occupied the attention of Meetings 21-24, held during the next two months. It was decided that FUTURE would be published monthly in a 12 pp. 8vo format and consist of club reports and the most interesting lectures delivered at meetings. Only one issue ever appeared, however, dated May, 1941. At Meeting #23 (April 21) Veney tendered his resignation on the ground that most of his time would be taken up in future with the Y.M.C.A.

The Second Science Fiction Conference⁶ was held at The Owl Library, Bondi Junction, on Sunday, April 13. Bruce M. Sawyer took the chair, and those attending were Cordner, Evans, La Coste, Levy, Molesworth, Roden, the Russells, Stone and Veney. A Newcastle fan, R. Cudden, also came along. Castellari was unable to attend, but was represented by a typewritten speech read by Levy.

Although much had been hoped of the Second Conference, it accomplished little. From the lengthy arguments, it was clear that differences could not be settled. On neither a local nor a national scale could fans agree. Discussion on the Futurian Association of Australia, the national register of fans, degenerated into a wrangle over the title of the organisation.

FUTURIAN OBSERVER #34 (April 20) scathingly criticised the Conference under the headline: "Sydney Bunfight Great Success!"

During the Conference, Cordner approached Molesworth privately, and admitted that he had been mistaken in his decision at the nineteenth meeting. He asked Molesworth to come back into the Futurian Society, and added that he would be dropping out. Molesworth was re-elected at Meeting 25 (April 22), and a week later Cordner tendered his resignation. Molesworth's first act was to take over executive control of the F.A.A., which Eric Russell was only too willing to relinquish. Both in the national organisation and in the Futurian Society Molesworth carried out a series of reforms. He renamed the former body The Futurian Federation of Australia and almost immediately published the first issue of its new organ, SPACEWARD. In addition to registering fans, he "copyrighted" fanzine titles. There was a good response, and in the second issue, Molesworth listed seventeen members. So pleased were Futurian Society members with this reorganisation that they decided henceforth the Coordinator of the F.A.A. should be an elected executive of the F.S.S.

With regard to the Society itself, Molesworth decided to overhaul past resolutions and decisions to find out just where the Society stood constitutionally. At Meeting #26 (May 4) he tabled a list of 59 resolutions which the club had carried in the past. Every

⁵ #31.

⁶ Why a second Conference? Because, rashly, a large scale meeting, a "Convention" had been proposed for Easter 1941 and a preliminary announcement made, which was unrealistic and foolhardy. Instead of abandoning it completely it seemed a good excuse to invite everyone to an open gathering then and go over the various problems anew. G. S.

resolution that had been outdated, were crossed out, and finally the list was narrowed down to ten, which were approved. At Meeting #27 (May 16) Molesworth said the Society needed to be put on a more secure financial footing, and proposed the election of a Treasurer. Roden was elected to this position, and fulfilled the function ably.

Stabilized constitutionally and economically, the Society embarked on a restricted wartime existence. During the next few meetings ways and means of continuing publication of FUTURE were discussed, but without success⁷. Finally, at Meeting #31 (July 18) the position of Club Editor was dispensed with. Science fiction quizzes were re-introduced, and more discussion of stories was heard.

Meanwhile, activity had picked up in other states. In Melbourne, Warwick Hockley was continuing publication of AUSTRA-FANTASY, issues appearing in March, June and September, 1941; and he had also begun a news magazine, MELBOURNE BULLETIN, which ran for ten approximately monthly issues. He had visited Marshall L. MacLennan and contacted a new fan, Keith Taylor. In Hobart, Donald H. Tuck had contacted three new fans - Bob Gaeppen, John Symmons and Lindsay Johnson - and the group had begun publication of PROFAN, a duplicated quarto fanzine running to ten pages in its first issue (April) and 22 in its second (July). The third issue, dated September, contained 26 pages.

Back in Sydney, Russell was still publishing ULTRA on a bimonthly basis; Levy was issuing ZEUS; and Molesworth had produced a one-shot 4 pp quarto letterzine, TELEFAN. Colin Roden now entered the publishing field with a fanzine that was to break all previous records. This was SCIENCE AND FANTASY FAN REPORTER, a 4 pp 8vo. duplicated news-maglet. At first assisted by Russell and Stone, but very soon entirely by himself, Roden produced FAN REPORTER every week for an unbroken run of 34 issues, the first appearing on August 12, 1941, the last on March 31, 1942. It was strictly a newspaper, with only very occasional editorial comment. Its objective treatment and regular appearance gave a certain stability to fandom throughout its life.

In mid-1940 a new disturbing influence arose to plague the Futurians. This was the perpetration of a series of hoaxes, some of them vicious, others merely silly. The first was a report that David R. Evans had committed suicide. As Evans was in ill-health, several fans took the hoax seriously and were quite upset.⁸ Next, a circular was issued stating that FUTURIAN OBSERVER was for sale, but this hoax was controverted by the appearance of OBS at the same time. Thirdly, there was a "Sydcon Report". Early in 1940, Molesworth and Veney had tentatively announced that an Australian Science Fiction Convention would be held in Sydney. Plans fell through and the project was shelved. Then a roneoed sheet, purporting to be a report on the Sydcon, was circulated. Copies were sent to England and the USA, and taken seriously by overseas fans. A condensed version appeared in the US fanzine, FMZ DIGEST. When the Second Conference was held, a telegram was received purporting to be from Melbourne fan Warwick Hockley, announcing his arrival in Sydney to attend.

It was, of course, another hoax. And so it went on, causing undue and unpleasant worry and suspicion. Just who was responsible for these hoaxes was never discovered. Levy and Castellari certainly perpetrated the suicide hoax, but hotly denied the others.⁹

The Futurian Society decided to try and eliminate the trouble that was caused by the pranks of the Hoaxer. At Meeting #31 (July 18) Molesworth proposed that an officer with some semi-legal authority, similar to a J. P., be appointed, whose duty would be to witness and endorse statements carrying official approval. Later a rubber stamp was purchased, and employed when necessary by Roden, who was elected Futurian Registrar at Meeting #34 (August

⁷ I don't know why it was dropped. The one issue was nothing much, but the group should have produced something to make its presence felt and there was enough talent for it. G. S.

⁸ This may seem strange, but Evans though not welcome in the club remained part of the community and was often visited by some members. G. S.

⁹ My own belief is that some were the work of Levy and Castellari in collaboration, while others were perpetrated by Levy alone and without Castellari's knowledge.

29). The action was effective - no more hoaxes were played.

The degree of stability that the Society had now obtained is evidenced by the decision at Meeting #35 (September 5) that a permanent Director should take over the duties of the Registrar. Roden was elected for a period of three months, and Molesworth became Secretary-Treasurer. The policy of the organisation was altered from "the discussion of science fiction" to "the discussion, and advancement, of science fiction", thus giving the term "Futurian" in the club's name a meaning.

Control of the F. F. A. was now taken over by a new fan, Arthur W. Haddon, who joined the Society at Meeting #36 (September 19). Haddon had planned to publish a fanzine, VENUS, but now abandoned the project as he would be editing the F. F. A. organ, SPACEWARD. In due course, Haddon produced the third issue of SPACEWARD, but it was so scraggly duplicated that he decided not to distribute it.

The Second Birthday Meeting of the Futurian Society was held on November 9, 1941, attended by Roden, Molesworth, Stone, Haddon and Eric Russell, and Evans, Veney, Ted Russell and David Boadle as guests. A telegram of congratulations was received from the newly-formed and short-lived Futurian Society of Melbourne, headed by Ian Hockley.¹⁰

Molesworth then read a short speech in which he stated that the club's records were in an unreliable condition, and proposed that a Court of Inquiry be held to clear up what he called "the tangled skein of the club's past". He emphasised that at such an Inquiry nobody would be "on trial": the only outcome would be "a set of questions and answers which, when combined with the existing records, would present an accurate record of the Society's first 34 meetings and what happened in between."¹¹ With the exception of the Russells, all present agreed that the Inquiry was a sound suggestion. Later, Hockley wrote from Melbourne that he strongly favoured the idea. "Perhaps I would be even more drastic than you intend to be," he wrote. "Why stop at clearing up the records of the F.S.S.? One thing that could stand a sane, careful and well-conducted investigation is the recent bout of Hoaxing."¹² He urged that the Court should not be dismissed after the Society's records had been clarified, but "should remain in office indefinitely, standing ready to investigate and inquire into anything which shows itself needy of such an investigation."

It was at the Second Birthday Meeting that Veney burst his bombshell that another club existed in Sydney, - the Sydney Science Fiction Association. The information came out when Veney challenged the Futurian Society's monopoly on control of the F.A.A. Asked why he had kept the organisation secret, Veney replied there was "a bit of bad blood because a chap had been turned away from a meeting."¹³ What had happened was this - some time after resigning from the F.S.S, Veney had met two people who said they were interested in science fiction. They were Jack Hannan and Darrell Cox. He mentioned this to Eric Russell, and said he would bring them along to a club meeting. Russell told Veney the maximum number of guests permitted at a meeting was two, so Veney took Hannan to Russell's home (where Meeting #33 was being held) on the night of August 15. Due to a misunderstanding between Roden and Russell, the visitors were not invited in. When the interrupted meeting was resumed, Molesworth moved that Veney and Hannan should be admitted. The motion was carried, and Stone was sent to catch up with the pair and bring them back. Stone could not find them, and the die was cast. Thinking they had been deliberately excluded, Veney and Hannan decided to form a club of their own. Supported by Alan Cordner and Darrell Cox, they held two unofficial meetings, at which it was decided to discuss science and science fiction. The club would refrain from taking any part in fan activities. "Finally, it was realized that time forbade any complete plan of organisation, so everyone just shook hands and said goodbye. About it being "secret", members did not want to say anything until the club was definitely organised."¹⁴

The Futurian Society now went ahead with plans for the

Futurian Court of Inquiry. Molesworth was appointed Examiner and a proposed list of questions was approved by members. Castellari was invited to attend Meeting #40 (December 5, 1941), and said he did not object to any of the proposed questions. He further agreed to take shorthand notes of the proceedings. Date for the Inquiry was set for December 28. At this meeting, Roden was re-elected Director for a further three months.

The first sitting of the Court of Inquiry was held with Rodan presiding, and Castellari, Evans, Haddon, Levy, Molesworth, the Russells, Stone and Veney in attendance.

The non-admission of Veney and Hannan to Meeting #33 was thoroughly examined, all concerned giving their evidence, and it was established beyond doubt that their exclusion had not been deliberate or malicious. Other matters investigated included Honorary Membership of the F.A.A., unfulfilled Society plans to meet J. Keith Moxon when he passed through Sydney, the actual membership of the F.S.S. following the 1940 collapse, and the identities of four "prospective" members who had not been contacted since. On the whole the Inquiry was conducted in a friendly spirit of co-operation, and even the inevitable satirical account published in OBSERVER admitted its value.

At the close of the Inquiry, letters were sent to Levy and Veney informing them that they had been permanently banned from rejoining the F.S.S. This made public decisions reached long before by the Society, following alleged violations of the "workable basis" agreement.

Interest now centred on the forthcoming Third Sydney Conference, to be held early in the New Year. The aim of the Conference, as expressed by Veney, who was responsible for its organisation, was "to find if there are any matters on which *all* fans agree."¹⁵ The Conference looked like being a last-ditch stand for Australian fandom. Activities had ceased in Hobart when Tuck was called up for military service, and in Melbourne war work by Hockley and his friends had crippled the F.S.M. and Hockley suspended publication of his two fan magazines. The Sydney group was "the only active band of fans left in Australia."¹⁶

The Third Conference was held at the Y.M.C.A. Building on Sunday, January 4, 1942, with Veney in the Chair, and Castellari, Haddon, Hannan, the Russells and Stone present. It began with a discussion on Australian representation at the next American Convention, scheduled for Los Angeles. Due to the war situation, however, there was some doubt as to whether the Convention would be held, and Eric Russell was delegated to make enquiries. Veney then proposed that science fiction "social" activities should be planned, including visits to places of scientific interest, lectures and debates. Haddon caused some consternation by announcing he would resign from control of the F.F.A., as he was unable to produce a duplicated copy of SPACEWARD which was satisfactory. He was persuaded, however, to carry on. Veney again objected to the F.F.A. being controlled by the F.S.S., and demanded to know why the executive position could not be open to any fan. Veney also raised the question as to whether the F.F.A. should have any power at all other than as a register of fans and fanmags. The Conference went on record as recommending that the F.F.A. should remain a purely non-active organisation¹⁷. The balance of the afternoon was taken up with general science fiction discussion. Two recommendations were carried - first, that "a better, more descriptive title for the literature known as "science fiction" be found"; second, that another Conference be held about Easter, 1942¹⁸.

In FUTURIAN OBSERVER #53, Levy and Castellari featured a lead article, "Give The F.F.A. Power!" They argued that the F.F.A. had enrolled every active fan in Australia, which meant that Australian fandom had been *united* in some way. This unity should not be wasted - if the Association was given a reasonable amount of power it could take up matters of *national* science fiction and fan importance. "The control of national fan affairs by a club of which the members are of one city," they declared, "is undesirable." One matter of national

¹⁰ Hockley's later description of this group was that he put on a brave face. G. S.

¹¹ From a roneoed copy of the speech.

¹² From a letter in the club files.

¹³ Minutes.

¹⁴ "Ramblings In Science Fiction": ULTRA, December, 1941.

¹⁵ FAN REPORTER #17, December 2, 1941.

¹⁶ FAN REPORTER #20, December 23, 1941.

¹⁷ If you're confused, so am I. G. S.

¹⁸ No more was heard of this. Of course conditions became a lot worse before then. G. S.

importance was that of Anglo-American-Australian relations in fandom¹⁹.

Shortly after this, Castellari was called-up for war service, and publication of OBSERVER was suspended. Veney also went into camp, as did Sawyer, Smith and others. Levy, Molesworth and Eric Russell were medically unfit; Roden was in a protected industry; Haddon, Ted Russell and Stone were under military age.

At Meeting #44 of the Futurian Society (February 1, 1942) it was decided to break away from the Science-Fictioneers on the grounds that affiliation had not helped the Society, and only two F.S.S. members were Science-Fictioneers. Stone said he utterly refused to have anything to do with professionally-sponsored clubs as they struck him as being publicity stunts. The dissolution motion was carried by a 4-1 majority²⁰.

Roden then instituted his idea of a Soldier's Relief Fund, under which science fiction magazines would be sent to servicemen. This was established at Meeting #45 (February 3) and thereafter the Society carried out this war work, bundles of magazines being sent to the Red Cross for distribution to military hospitals²¹.

At this meeting also, the executive positions of Deputy-Director²² and Secretary were amalgamated into a new office, Vice-Director, to which Molesworth was elected.

Attention was turned to the F.F.A. again when Haddon resigned from the Futurian Society in March, 1942. The Society decided to relinquish its monopoly on executive control of the Federation, thereby leaving Haddon as Co-ordinator. At Meeting #48 (March 13), however, Stone announced that Haddon had resigned from the Co-ordinership and the Federation was leaderless. The Society decided to circularise all F.F.A. members, seeking their views on the matter. At Meeting #55 (May 31), a reconsideration of the replies revealed that a majority (6-1) wanted the Federation continued. Roden proposed that instead of a single Co-ordinator, the Federation should appoint a representative in each major centre²³. His action was carried by a narrow majority, and Roden was elected Sydney representative. Roden made no attempt to revive full-scale activities - in his opinion, this could not be done until the war had ended. His policy was "to keep fans in touch for the course of the war." In the first issue of BULLETIN, published in September, 1942 - actually the fifth F.F.A. publication - Roden said that if the F.F.A. could retain this last thread of what was once a growing fan organisation, until such time as it could again expand, it would have done its job well. Meanwhile, membership had increased to 26.

In Sydney, hopes were raised by the appearance of a series of sixpenny paper-bound novelettes, some of them featuring science fiction. Published by Currawong, the science fiction titles were written by J. W. Heming, some under the pseudonym "Paul de Wreder". As science fiction they were juvenile, but fans hoped the standard might be raised. Vol Molesworth, who had been a prolific writer for the fanmags, began selling novelettes to Currawong. The first, APE OF GOD, appeared late in 1942, and was followed in due course by nine others, including his STRATOSPHERE PATROL trilogy, and the weird SATAN'S UNDERSTUDY and WOLFBLOOD.

At Meeting #50 (April 12), Molesworth said members were dissatisfied with the way in which Futurian Society meetings were conducted, and claimed that a new "working basis" was needed. He put forward a plan throwing the emphasis back on science fictional activities, including a series of competitive quizzes with book prizes. On this platform, he was re-elected Director, and Stone became Vice-Director. Roden remained in charge of the Soldier's Relief Fund,

which he had dubbed "STF²⁴ for the A.I.F."

The Society now embarked on a peculiar phase of its history. Perhaps because of the shortage of science fiction, perhaps because it felt that its unsettled career had arisen from some fundamental internal flaw, meetings became more and more occupied with questions of procedure, on the powers of the various powers of the various executives, on the question of electing new members, and so on. So complicated did these discussions become that Molesworth composed a textbook on Futurian Society Law, embodying and explaining all the decisions that had been reached. It became obvious to members that the Society was "in a rut". At Meeting #61 (July 12) Roden said it was necessary to build up the club's strength before it was too late. "We have to find entirely new fans as there are none of the old ones left," he said. Everyone agreed, and it was decided to seek new members through various bookshops, and by advertising in Currawong books. It was also suggested that the writer J. W. Heming should be invited to a future meeting.

But in the latter half of 1942, the Society degenerated still further. As Stone wrote to Smith, "meetings were endless wrangles over petty disagreements, and members were at each other's throats all the time in an endless series of feuds. Science fiction had become a small part of the club's activities, subordinated to the eternal squabbles. We all realised that the set-up was wrong somehow, but we thought we could not see a way out. Or, worse still, we thought we saw a way out, and it only led us further into the maze. A horrible example is the "way out" tried by Molesworth, with some help from Haddon and myself. What this amounted to was the passing of endless rules and decisions, a particularly debased form of electioneering and intrigue, and a permanent split between the adherents of this "new order" and the other member of the club."

Stone here is referring to the Neofan Party, a group formed within the F.S.S. in July, 1942, "to strengthen the spirit of democracy in the club." It was backed by its own propaganda organ, FUTURIAN SPOTLIGHT, a duplicated 2 pp, foolscap sheet, which was published in July, August, and September, and devoted to criticism of the "right wing", - Roden and Eric Russell.

An infusion of new blood came with the re-election of Arthur Haddon, and the arrival in Sydney of two Brisbane fans, Alan P. Roberts and Bill White, who joined the Society at Meeting #65 (August 23). Roberts had become noted for his critical letters in the American fanzine, VoM, published by Ackerman and Morajo. He soon won the support of Sydney fandom, and was elected Director of the club at Meeting #67 (September 27). Haddon became Vice-Director and Roden Treasurer. But the gain was quickly offset by the resignations of Eric and Ted Russell, who objected to "the party politics of Molesworth and Stone."

Over the next few meetings the situation was considered, and efforts were made to save the Society from total collapse. Firstly, the expulsions of Levy and Veney were rescinded, and they were invited to rejoin the club. Secondly, it was decided to create goodwill by sending science fiction to known fans in the Services, instead of supplying material to the Red Cross for random distribution. Thirdly, it was decided to invite all ex-members to the Third Birthday Meeting in November, and endeavour to regain their support.

Meanwhile, definite moves had been made in the national organisation. The Sydney members had met on September 20 at Roden's house and decided to resign *en masse* from the F.F.A. and set up a new and more effective organisation. On September 29, Roden published the second issue of BULLETIN, stating that unless a majority of members wrote in favouring continuance, the BULLETIN would be discontinued. The Sydney group went ahead and formed the Southern Cross Futurian Association with Roden as President and Molesworth as Secretary. A rule was passed that each S.C.F.A. member must write at least one letter per month to headquarters, these letters to be published in the SOUTHERN CROSS BULLETIN. No "passengers" were wanted.²⁵

The third Birthday Meeting of the F.S.S. was held on November 5, 1942, with Noel Archer, Evans, Stephen Cooper, Victor

¹⁹ Good points, though by then there was no activity outside Sydney. G.S.

²⁰ I think the Science Fictioneers had faded out by then in any case. G.S.

²¹ The background to this was that at Molesworth's suggestion Dwyer had been invited to rejoin. He had replied at length to the effect that the club was not worth while and we all ought to put our efforts into patriotic community work instead. G.S.

²² Inevitably dubbed "Director of Vice". G.S.

²³ Sounds good, but only Hockley was left as a major centre of one. G.S.

²⁴ Not an error but an abbreviation for Scientifiction then sometimes seen. G.S.

²⁵ This wasn't enforced, but several issues did appear, later titled REPORT, if I remember rightly. (G.S.)

Cowan, Haddon, Molesworth, Roberts, Roden, the Russells and Stone present. Guest of honour²⁶ was J. W. Heming. Considerable discussion took place on ways and means of resuscitating the Futurian Society and getting all ex-members back. Finally Archer proposed instead that a Conference should be held to plan an entirely new club, and this was carried.

The Futurian Society had decided to commit suicide. The Sydney fans wanted a successful fan club, but all were dissatisfied with the existing set-up. Heming had put forward a number of vigorous-sounding ideas, and had the fans convinced that a fresh start was necessary. The way this was to be done was to dissolve the Futurian Society, move in to the S.C.F.A. and turn it into a fully active body. Accordingly at Meeting #73 of the F.S.S. (November 24, 1942) Molesworth moved that the club be disbanded. Roberts moved a proviso that an emergency meeting could be called in future if considered necessary, and this was carried unanimously. After three troubled years, the Futurian Society was dissolved. To the new club, however, it forwarded three recommendations - 1) that its Soldiers' Relief Fund should be continued; 2) that its Honorary Members in the Services (Sawyer, Symonds, La Coste and White) would be granted similar status in the new organisation; and 3) that the records of the F.S.S. should be preserved and referred to for precedence.

A meeting of the S.C.F.A. was immediately called, and Heming's proposal to change the policy and rules were enthusiastically carried. In a new election Heming became President, Molesworth Secretary, and Roden Treasurer. All the known Sydney fans except Evans and Levy joined the club, and Heming introduced several newcomers, bringing the total membership to eighteen. The Soldiers' Relief Fund was taken over, the other recommendations from the Futurian Society were rejected with only Molesworth in objection. Shortly afterwards, he resigned.

Heming now introduced a number of drastic reforms, the novelty of which impressed the members as evidence of progress. The S.C.F.A., he maintained, would not just be a science fiction club, - its aims and ideals should encompass a great deal more than the advancement of science fiction. "It should be a Futurian club in the real sense of the word, - it should be concerned, not only with science-fictional subjects, but with anything that may help the future."²⁷ Heming argued that the reason for fans' dissatisfaction with the old club had been that it provided no "outlet". He now introduced two new activities, - debating and amateur theatricals. While

meetings were more enjoyable, science fiction was slowly pushed into the background.

This was sensed by Veney, who attended the eighth meeting (January 24, 1943) while on leave. He complained that the debates set down generally were not very Futurian. In the ensuing discussion, Heming put forward his definition of the term, and despite opposition from Veney, this definition was officially adopted: "A Futurian is, in short a person who is active in the shaping of a better future." The policy of the club was defined as - "Interest in all subjects of possible benefit to the future of humanity, including futuristic fiction, scientific ideas, and the encouragement of youthful intellect".

Around this statement of policy, Heming began to build body of doctrine. His

plans were frankly of a political nature, and included ideas for postwar reconstruction²⁸. Under Heming's direction, the Association now began seeking publicity in local newspapers, and enlisted the support of Mr. W. J. Moulton, then editor of the Waverly-Woolahra STANDARD. The general outline of Heming's political programme is set out in an article in the third REPORT, dated May 2, 1943. It was rather a vague, Utopian concept involving the removal of "isms" and the salvation of humanity in a World State with science in a leading position.

Meetings of the S.C.F.A. continued throughout 1943, becoming progressively more informal. In September, Heming gave an address on "The Perfect Future" to the Bondi Progress Association, setting out in detail his social reforms. All pretence of being concerned with science fiction ceased: such matters as helping the establishment of an out-patients' ward at a hospital became club business. The Association finally degenerated into a Sunday afternoon social group at Heming's home, devoted to amateur theatricals and informal talk.

In the early stages, Stone had attempted to organise a science fiction section within the Association, but his efforts met with little success.

Early in 1944, Molesworth contacted the former members of the Futurian Society of Sydney and sought their views on a revival of the club. All were in favour, and four meetings were held, attended severally by Molesworth, Stone, Roden, Haddon, and two new fans, Victor Cowan and Stirling Macoboy. Dissension occurred over the name of the club, those still under Heming's influence maintaining that the word "Futurian" should be dropped. These members outvoted Molesworth and Haddon and changed the name to Sydney Science Fantasy Society. At the fourth meeting, Molesworth and Haddon pushed through a motion reverting to the original name, and suspended activities until after the war.

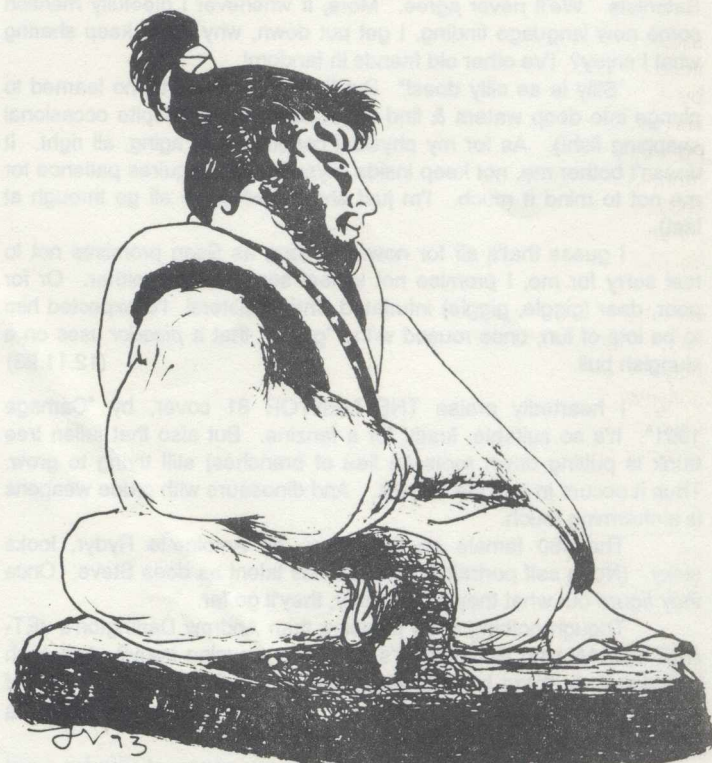
The only other event of science-fictional interest in this period was a meeting between Veney, Castellari, and a British fan, in Kure (Japan), at which the possibility of forming a fan club was considered but not undertaken.

(Continued next issue)

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]



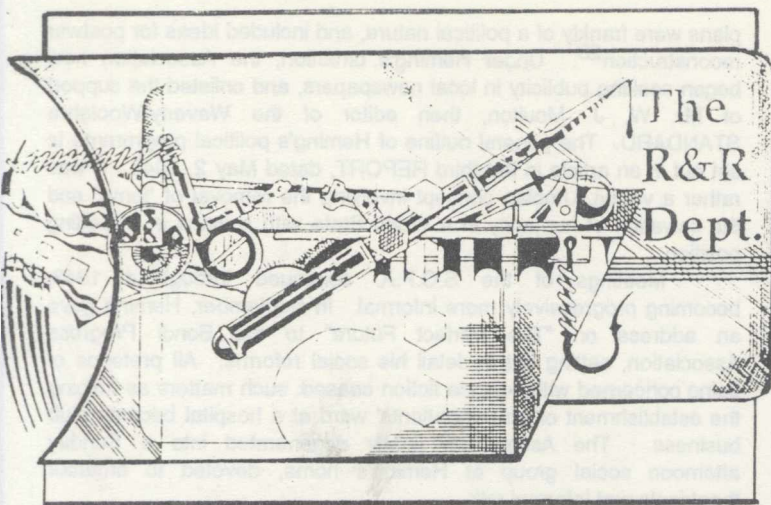
Jean Roberts, 1943



²⁶ Surely too strong an expression, but as an established professional author Heming was respected. (G.S.)

²⁷ REPORT, January, 1943

²⁸ An expression much heard at the time. After the war we were going to get utopia. Still waiting. (G.S.)



MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy 4501, Argentina.

I never expected friendly reactions like Sean's! Only those who enjoy laughing can put up w/me, so bless you, Sean, my son!

It's not courage that makes me a believer. It's loyalty to my best and most loyal pal. But I find True Believers so solemn and grim (save when being kind and pitying). I don't like being forced (chased) back to their ranks, for they never approve of me. I'm "unstructured", "disorganised", a wild creature temporarily wearing flesh. I identify with everything around us in these wilds, but civilisation is not something into which I fit. Even Satanists have to fit their approved molds. I reject all molds we're told we must fit. Even fandom's stylized patterns! I love science fiction but get little chance to read it. My friends send me *language stuff* from abroad, bless them, and just an occasional SF novel.

I grumble to "Our Father": "Keeping my nose to the grindstone, are you?"

For if I had lots of entertaining books to read, non-stop, I'd lay all my studies away.

I don't believe there should be any preachers, priests, etc., "telling how to reach God". It must bore our Creator to bits. One just grows more and more aware, and keeps one's heart & mind open & things make lovely sense, gradually. On their own!

You know, here I was thinking: "First chance I get I'll drop loocing MENTOR. I'm already bored by those solemn, laughterless Satanists. We'll never agree. More, if whenever I gleefully mention some new language finding, I get put down, why try to keep sharing what I enjoy? I've other old friends in fandom!"

"Silly is as silly does!" But I'm a kid at heart who learned to plunge into deep waters & find I can float easily (despite occasional snapping fish!). As for my physical condition: I'm aging, all right. It doesn't bother me, not keep inside myself (but it requires patience for me not to mind it much. I'm just sharing what we all go through at last).

I guess that's all for now. As long as Sean promises not to feel sorry for me, I promise not to feel sorry for him, either. Or for poor, dear (giggle, giggle) infuriated Chris Masters! I'd expected him to be lots of fun, once roused w/the "goats" that a *picador* uses on a sluggish bull. (12.11.93)

I heartedly praise THE MENTOR 81 cover, by "Camage 1991". It's so suitable, firstly for a fanzine. But also that fallen tree trunk is putting down roots (in lieu of branches) still trying to grow. Thus it occurs in real life as well. And dinosaurs with crude weapons is a charming touch.

The #80 female on the cover, by Antoinette Rydyr, looks sulky. (Not a self portrait?) She too has talent as does Steve. Once they figure out what they want to say, they'll go far.

Though nothing is so pleasing than Andrew Darlington's JET-ACE LOGAN with Ron Turner's art. Such amusing irony? And such technique! Is there hope of any more of it? Sometimes I weary of "words, words". And to look at such splendid comics sets one in a really amiable mood! Where is Ron Turner now?

This piece I'm praising stimulates my sense of wonder. and it's so believable too.

Steve Sneyd's FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS was most interesting.

So was Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR. In [#]81, PANDORA'S BOX by Andrew Sullivan haunts me. A bit like the monster robots of JET-ACE LOGAN. Multiplying on their own, chewing everything up. Very well done!

As usual, Andrew Darlington gives us another very entertaining article on NEBULA.

All the articles are thought-provoking. Bill Congreve on the female god of Terry Lane was intriguing. (14.12.93)

DON BOYD, PO Box 19, Splt Junction, NSW 2088.

I rather liked Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR. He established a string of mystifying incidents when unrelated, mundane objects were frozen in mid-flight around the world. This made me puzzled and activated my curiosity. I was thinking time-loop or alien tractor beam. The latter was neatly unveiled at the end when the earth was vaporised and the aliens travelled on with the bric-a-brac of souvenirs which they decided to preserve.

A neat touch was where the jam jar that the storekeeper, Mr Klein (a Klein's bottle?), had dropped was ultimately smashed by the sole surviving homo sap in the alien's zoo.

Some LOCs knocking Buck Coulson's column: Buck's day in the life of style is entertaining to me. His tiny, grainy detail of life's everyday things gives us Aussies many items for comparing culture to culture.

No doubt Buck occasionally frowns or grimaces at oddball things in the Oz cultural makeup. The constant biffing of British and American cultural domination over Australian pop-culture is one such (which Buck could equate with Canadians trying a teensy-weensy bit not to be Americans).

Steve Sneyd's resurrection of 19th century science fiction from his local Yorkshire records I found quite poignant. I suppose a pivotal part of the science fiction personality is wondering what the future would be like, although some of Steve's Proto-sf was normal awe at the tininess of our world upon the infinitude of space.

It's interesting to compare these 19th century Yorkshiremen with early Australian SF compiled by historian Van Ikin's scholarly digging.

Andrew Lubenski's history of Russian fantasy was of interest in that it showed how much more repressive literary controls became after Lenin's death. Stalin's mad show trials of the '30s at least had the virtue of rubbing out many of those arrogant nomenclature who had writers jailed. It is a bitter thing to contemplate Chayanov copping a bullet to the base of the skull in Lubyanka's courtyard merely for composing a harmless bit of fun meant to entertain people for a while (ie writing a fantasy novel).

The statement that the atmosphere of Soviet society was fantastic fits the picture for me - it's like glimpsing a parallel Orwellian universe. I suppose Soviets saw us in the same vein. My car and TV and my fridge from the 60's probably would look futuristic even now, not to mention weeks worth of wages to buy instead of years (or even decades).

Andrew Darlington's JET ACE LOGAN item was interesting. I used to read LION and EAGLE comics. I had a couple of Lion annuals when I was in the marbles stage. Ron Turner's art for his Rick Random Galactic Detective was some of the best SF art ever and stands today as being up to date. The strip run in THE MENTOR was obviously done in a more simplified form but elements of Turner's style are there, mainly in his use of stark white against black shadow.

Antoinette Rydyr's cover of the rather sinister looking robot babe reminded me of some old covers on GALAXY, mainly to do with Asimov's CAVES OF STEEL series. I think Ed Emshwiller might have painted the ones I am thinking of. The technology of the hand structure is what current prosthetic arms really do look like. Antoinette's use of the paint brush gives an uneven thick and thin line which makes for a professional look instead of the felt pen boring spiderlike look.

My article on populations living in space was principally to get people interested in Prof O'Neill's book THE HIGH FRONTIER. The technical aspects are therefore well worked out by experts in engineering, hydroponics and so forth. Moon dirt grows beans if you stick some nitrogen in it. Nitrogen can be cracked from carbonaceous chondrites in asteroids.

Dr James Arnold of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Cal Tech considered it highly probable that permanently shadowed areas of the

moon contain large deposits of nitrogen, carbon and hydrogen in the form of ice and other compounds.

Dr Brian O'Leary studied Apollo asteroids, ones that cross Earth's orbit. Some of these asteroids are separated from Lgrange point orbits by as little as 2 or 3 km/sec instead of the main asteroid belts 10 km/sec. Some of these Apollo asteroids are of the carbonous chondrite sort (a substance similar to oil shale) rich in nitrogen, carbon etc. A cubic kilometre of this stuff is a lotta nitrogen!

Prof O'Neill deals with NASA's study done at the Ames Laboratory concentrating on three key technical subjects: the mass-driver (catapult to fling stuff off the moon), the chemical processing of lunar soil to get its oxygen, metals and clear glass, and the evolution of a construction work force at a station in a space L5 point into the gigantic Island One. Island three is the *really* big one.

Don't forget the Freedom space station is going to be put into orbit in 1996-8. This will have a regular bunch of people working there and space shuttles actually shuttling.

A MENTOR reader said "same old pie in the sky crap we've been hearing for 50 years". In those 50 years we are now 95% there - space communications is a *billion* dollar industry with private companies killing each other to get a slice of it. As long as the public service runs anything it will be gummed up, stuffed up and going nowhere, with its hand always out for piles of working class tax money.

I said in my article perfectly round ball bearings are likely to never wear out. I mentioned foamed glass/steel mixes that can't be made under gravity. Energy's free 24 hrs a day up there and real estate costs nothing. It costs to get up there. If private companies start making a buck up there the stampede will be on - a *boom*.

I think Buck Coulson wonders where all the dirt for plant growing will come from. The mass-driver on the moon would be staffed by about 8 or 10 people. It would move about a million tons a year. Dirt in fibreglass sacks is flung along an electric track to reach the moon's very low escape velocity. The electricity is solar generated.

If the moon surface is excavated even to the depth of a shallow gravel pit, and a million tons were removed each year, then in several years the operation would still be so small you could walk along its length in a few minutes. Mining experts who have looked at the problem think the lunar mine so small scale that it will hardly keep one bulldozer occupied. I imagine we'd have an electric dozer robbing 24 hr shifts.

I guess at length there could be 10 or 15 private companies wanting material so they might set up their own catapult.

Another MENTOR reader was frightened all this stuff might fall on his head! Hmm.

O'Neill says lunar dirt is known to contain small amounts of volatile gases. In processing a million tons of dirt a few thousand tons of gases will be evolved, probably mainly carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and a small percentage of water. Oxygen is in *great* abundance locked up as oxides so we aren't after that as a gas.

I think all this is bloody exciting stuff and I would really like to work on one of those giant human conglomerates in space. Apart from intellectual stretching I think there would be extraordinary grandeur in the visual beauty, starkness, light of the sun, moon, stars, docking of huge, graceful ships and building of truly enormous, elegant architectural feats. The union of many nationalities and the rising above petty earthy boundaries would produce a frontier society as one finds on Australia's great projects, or in Alaska and Antarctica. Who knows where this would lead in social, artistic and scientific boundaries?
(15.11.93)

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

Hmm - mention of a dislike for the term *fen*. I keep meaning to look up the word *fan* itself for etymology and see how it evolved but I keep forgetting.

In the lettercol there were several comments on the "strip art" in the previous ish - and I wonder if the term "technically correct" (as used by the loccers) was intended to mean anatomically so (any anatomist will tell you the basic law of anatomy is form follows function and negative forms that follow - at least as far as *nature* is concerned - non-functional = no form (ie is lost). I suspect (no - I did *not* look back and check) the artist was male and *that* is all I'll say - let

speculation run free.

Sheesh. Mae's letters could make up pages of commentary on TM's recent past. She makes such good observations!

I'm glad that some of your readers continue to realise it costs a lot to put out TM - in many areas - time/skill/money. Zines such as TM are definitely more labors of love rather than in hopes of making money. Unfortunately, the post office doesn't accept the fact that TM doesn't make money and cut you (or any of "us") a break on postage.
(20.11.93)

GLEN CHAPMAN, 29 Janice St, Seven Hills, NSW 2147.

Arthur C. Clarke once wrote, "Technology sufficiently advanced encountered by a lesser race will appear to be magic". Andrew Sullivan explores this premise with great finesse. The use of journal entries combining with the main characters decent into insanity makes for a fine piece of story telling. If Andrew is planning to sell this story O/S it would need to be expanded slightly. The trade off would be a little research into the ants infecting the rest of the planet. Earth's final dissolution would need to be nipped out a little more.

Andrew Darlington's item on NEBULA magazine was well researched, however a little more on the magazines demise would have been appreciated. It's interesting that such a minor magazine could turn out so much new talent in it's short life.

Memo to AIDE MEMOIRE - old Japanese saying: "revenge is a dish best served cold". Very good story, to say more would be stating the obvious.

A NEW ORDER, by Robert Frew, this story is a real worry. I saw the original version of this some fifteen years ago - it was even old then. I'm hoping Robert has never encountered the story, otherwise one would have to raise the serious question of plagiarism.

Good to see Pete Brodie back in print. Maybe the LOCS will start to brew up a bit. I must confess to being a big fan of Fonda, so any comment on BARBARELLA would be biased in the extreme. The article itself was more than up to Pete's usual standard.

Ron talks of changing the format of MENTOR. I assume this is to combat the rising cost of mailing. A suggestion for the new format would be to drop THE YANKEE PRIVATEER. It seems to be reading more like a long winded LOC, as each issue comes along.

[Ah, but TYP isn't a LoC - LoC's talk about previous issue of TM - Buck talks about what interests him in a column. - Ron.]

To the LOC's - John Tipper raises a good point about Stephen King. I must number myself among those who don't think highly of Kings writing. His ideas often seem flat, uninspired. To be fair to King some of his stories, particularly his earlier work knocked my socks off - others are of a quality I think I could have written better. Lastly on King, he gives the reader[s] what they want, this reflects in his bank account, after all the bottom line of the whole writing thing is to make money - lots of it. This something he does with uncanny ability.

Lorraine Cornack make[s] an interesting comment about my reasons for wanting a description of the main female character in PREY FOR THE PREY. The description would be important. Throughout the story the commander has a real problem maintaining discipline - Why?, could it be the crew has filed her under dumb blonde bimbo, or does she have a physical disability, example too short, fat etc.

Sadly Lorraine has hit on a raw nerve, I don't really know if I would have asked the same question of a male. Perhaps if he were leading an all girl crew I may have. Finally I would refer Lorraine to Terry Broome's comments in T 81. I think they answer the question of relevancy quite well.
(3.11.93)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Dr, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, UK.

A very good cover [TM 81] and interior art skimpy as quality, but also very good. I enjoyed PANDORA'S BOX but felt it was marred by the gutter language. Darlington raised my nostalgia bump with his account of NEBULA (although one bit referred to #1 when it was talking about #16). Did I tell you I had an illo in #4 and won a Clothier cover painting for a letter?

AIDE MEMOIRE was a bit obscure. I had to read it twice to get the point.

A NEW ORDER read well, but was overlong for the feeble ending. BARBARELLA. Well, I saw - and enjoyed the film, but not enough to want to see it again - or read an analysis of it. To me it had

as many down bits as highs - the Pygar character was a no-no, so was the ice-ship, the sex-organ and other scenes. Milo O'Shea was lovely, so was Fonda's opening strip tease but that was obscured by the credits.

IN DEPTH 8. If God is all-knowing (ie the future) what point is there in tempting Adam when God *knew* he would fail - and so would all the other characters faced with temptation. and even the Crucifixion must have been pre-ordained in his original set-up - so why punish the victims for the flaws in his plan? Me, I'm a paid up atheist.

LOCS. Excellent - but in reply to my letter you say other fanzines cover other countries zines as your reason for only covering Aussie zines. If we all played the isolation game there'd be precious little national interchange. (30.11.93)

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

THE MENTOR 81 - the cover - coolly witty ("Where's the Monolith, tho?" says the wooden-spoon voice).

PANDORA'S BOX - a "good read", but should've ended with the end of the alien message "Permanent Death", or at least after the par. after that "can do it again". The rest was "crossing is and dotting ts" ie irrelevantly unnecessary.

The NEBULA article - totally enjoyable, but no way do I know enough to comment, or question Andrew Darlington's analysis. Long may the series continue.

AIDE-MEMOIRE - confusing structured, but ultimately effective, mood/plot converging, when it mattered, for a "punchline" that is genuinely memorable.

RUSSIAN FASTASTIKA continues to be fascinating, and valuable, even if only an "interim report" in terms of "really" knowing what happened, better by far than nothing otherwise. I just wish the final paras, re how the Strugatskies and others are now being attacked from an opposite stand-point, had been expanded/clarified. Maybe in another instalment, or a sequel/updater?

A NEW ORDER was, again, "a good read", and, although the ending in itself wasn't very original, it was a neat upset of expectation, since I'd thought that PAM and SAM would instead end the tale by achieving some sort of parody/recreation of human emotional bonds with each other. (Also admired Frew's self-control in truncating the "chase sequence", despite his obvious authorial enjoyment of writing it.)

I loved the film BARBARELLA, but found Brodie's article added enormously to memories of it by posing questions that, as a viewer at the time, should have done but didn't. A fine piece of thoughtful analysis - makes me want to see the film again (and leaves me even more puzzled by Jane Fonda's subsequent vehement rejection of the piece, since its approach was, in many ways, far more subversively feminist than many "right on" projects).

Both sets of reviews, yours and Congreve's, again seem intelligent, to the point and immensely time-savers in terms of what is/isn't worth looking at for second-hand or in the library (can't afford non-pre-owned SF these days!) (1.12.93)

[Yes, well it seems that I am a bit under the postage limit for my REVIEWS, so you will get to see them some issues. Depends on postal weights. TM 82 came in at 101 gm, and the Post Office let in go at 100 gm for those issues posted in Australia. I don't want to be that close too much. Well, we'll have to wait and see. - Ron.]

I've received authors copies of a "selected/collected" of my poems from the '70's on, genre as well as non-genre. [For anyone interested, details are:] IN COILS OF EARTHEN HOLD by Steve Sneyd. In University of Salzburg series Salzburg Studies in English Poetry, Poetic Theory and Poetic Drama, Series Editors D. James Hogg and Holger Klein. 239 pp. ISBN 3-7052-0924-8. Overseas distribution: Mammon Press, 12 Dartmouth Ave, Bath BA2 1AT, England. 6.50 pounds + p+p. (30.12.93)

PAMELA BOAL, 4 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 7EW, UK.

A little bit of nostalgia [in TM 81] for me in Andrew Darlington's article. They do say that a foetus is affected even by its mother's reading. NEBULA was definitely part of our eldest twos prenatal diet. I seem to recall I also discovered Zenna Henderson around that time.

Is there any truth in the theory of prenatal influence? Well our son's degree was in physics and our daughter lives in a tent pursuing the green life with organic gardening, complementary medicine and a belief in the power of empathy. Now I wish I could remember what were the biggest SF magazines and novels of 60/61, because our youngest son is a delightful but definitely zany theatrical technical designer.

For goodness sake! RED DWARF isn't intended as an SF series, it is simply a situation comedy, it either happens to cater for your sense of humour or it doesn't. I very much doubt that individually or collectively the BBC programmers are ashamed of failing to produce a new SF series. Though as a licence paying viewer I'm annoyed if there is a good SF series being produced in Australia and our various TV channel bosses are failing to buy same, instead of all those trashy soap operas.

I've often thought I should be more concise and there's proof in the fact that I forget even writing about AIDS in Africa. Walt Willis's comment on my comment is cogent and relevant to the situation in Africa. I do find it fascinating to read how people suffer so widely in their opinion of a story or other item in TM but I also enjoy debate in a letter column. Hey ho, I blew it! I can only hope others have better memories. (2.12.93)

ANDREW LUBENSKI, Flt 367, Smirnova Street 2, Cherkassy 257005, Ukraine.

After re-reading all the "History" I decide[d] to supplement Part Five of it with a document which is a secret resolution of the All-Union Communist League (AUYCL) Central Committee. I think the "History" is not completed without this document. The resolution was passed in the year 1984, and in 1993 the magazine TEKHNKA-MOLODEZHY ([The] Technology for Youth) published it together with some other archival documents having concern with A. Clarke's novel 2010: ODYSSEY 2 publication prohibition. The magazine began to publish the novel on February 1984 and ended it only five years later. Here is the text of the document:

TOP SECRET

S-T N 59113 April 10, 1984.

Re the mistaken publication in the AUYCL Central Committee magazine TEKHNKA-MOLODEZHY.

The AUYCL Central Committee magazine TEKHNKA-MOLODEZHY #2 and 3, 1984 began the printing of A. Clarke's shortened version of 2010: ODYSSEY 2. This publication is a blunder which became feasible because the magazine's editor-in-chief, Comrade V. D. ZAKHARCHENKO lost his vigilance and the other editorial staff leaders had no principal position on that publication.

The AUYCL Central Committee secretariate resolves:

1. To take notice that the editor-in-chief, comrade V. D. ZAKHARCHENKO is released from his post.

To declare an official severe reprimand to the second editorial board member, the editor of the science fiction department, comrade M. G. PUKHOV, for serious defects in his work, to declare a reprimand to the deputy editor-in-chief, comrade Ju. F. FILATOV, and a warning to the executive secretary, comrade L. A. EVSEEV.

2. The AUYCL Central Committee department of Information and agitation (comrades V. K. EGOROV and V. A. MALUTIN) must take on responsibility for all central magazines²⁹ editor-in-chiefs for ideological and artistic levels and also for the quality of their publications. The department must give principled estimations of all cases of superficial, not very exacting, selection of materials to be printed and all cases of creative and production discipline breaking.

To draw to all AUYCL periodical publications editors-in-chiefs attention that publication of any material without preliminary discussion at the editorial board and, in special cases, without expert opinion of competent bodies, is a gross violation of the order of any manuscript's preparation for printing.

3. Comrades A. N. KOLYAKIN and V. K. EGOROV must solve the problem of the magazine TEKHNKA-MOLODEZHY editorial

²⁹All magazines which were published in Moscow or Leningrad and distributed all around the USSR were named "central" (national) magazines.

board consolidation and make their suggestions on a reserve of the central AUYCL magazine's chiefs. The suggestions must be given to the Central Committee before the fifteenth of May, 1984. The department of information and agitation must set up control over the fulfillment of this resolution.

- AUYCL Central Committee Secretary V. MISHIN"

What was the reason for such poignant response by the Comsomol³⁰ Central Committee? The answer is in the second document which was also published in the magazine TEKHNICA-MOLODEZHY. The document is anonymous, unlike the first one.

"To comrade V. M. MISHIN

Re the mistaken publication in the magazine TEKHNICA-MOLODEZHY.

1. An analysis shows the mistaken publication in the magazine "TM"³¹ became possible, apart from other causes, owing to the editor-in-chief's contempt for the editorial staff's opinion, and most of all for the editorial board members' one. The editorial board's role was belittled to a great extent, the magazine head was not engaged enough in the education of the editorial staff in the spirit of responsibility and independence. He took many things on his own responsibility, that is why the editorial board too relied on him even in vexing questions. We think it is a wrong style of management and it is necessary to raise the importance of collectivism and the editorial board's opinion.

It is funny that neither at any time did the editor-in-chief nor the second person having access to the full text of A. Clarke's novel were put on their guard that the novel was dedicated not only to the cosmonaut A. LEONOV, but also to the academician A. SAKHAROV and that there was a whole page in the text having an anti-Soviet character and was dedicated to A. SAKHAROV. Besides, there is in the novel the biting remarks about the word "comrade"; it is asserted that in the USSR this word was not in use a long time ago, instead there was used the words "chum" and "fellow". There are many other non-class, non-social statements such as "he would not begin to make visits to numerous works, factories, jails, hospitals ... race-courses, Beverly Hill's organ, the White House's oval office, the Kremlin's Archives, the Vatican's Library". All this testifies to the obvious dulling of the responsible person's political vigilance, to their inability to give a precise estimation of the work subject with consideration of today's ideological struggle. Of course, such estimation must be given by the first people, the publishers.

There are some alarming moments in this connection. Not so long ago all the editor-in-chiefs were informed about the letter of the GLAVLIT³² containing some remarks to the magazines work. Unfortunately, some comrades perceived the remarks without proper self-criticism, did not come to the right conclusions and despite the warning about the confidential character of the letter, entered into an argument with the GLAVLIT employees.

It has become a rule that any conversations started at the Secretariat and the Central Committee have been discussed with almost every literary worker. Is it necessary to be reminded of the existence of the official secrets and comsomol and party ethics?"

Five years later justice triumphed and A. Clarke's novel in which the characters names were those of Russian dissidents" (ANATOLY MARCHENKO, YURY ORLOV, LEONID TERNOVSKY, IVAN KOVALEV, VICTOR BRAILOVSKY, MIKOLA RUDENKO and GLEB YAKUNIN) and that it was dedicated to academician A. SAKHAROV, and was published in the USSR five years after its prohibition.

This story can show Australian readers that fear and suspicion reigned in the USSR even in 1984. (26.11.93)

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

The account of fantasy fiction in Russia that begins in the 79th

³⁰ Comsomol is another name for the All-Union Young Communist League.

³¹ TEKHNICA-MOLODEZHY

³² The GLAVLIT was actually the censorship department.

MENTOR and continues in the 80th was of great interest to me. Fortunately, I wasn't among the small, select group of authorities on science fiction who must suffer a dreadful sinking feeling when they encounter an article like this about virtually unknown science fiction sources, because they thought they had read just about all the pioneering science fiction ever written. I assume Tolstoy's THE QUEEN OF SPADES is the basis for the opera by Tchaikovsky whose title is usually translated that way for performances in English-speaking lands. The opera fits the description of the story as one which might be interpreted as interface between a ghost and a real world or as madness on the part of the hero.

I'm afraid I didn't like at all THE INITIATE. It has all the pointless violence that threatens to destroy the television and movie worlds in the United States.

Don Boyd makes the space colony proposal sound fascinating. But I'm quite sceptical for three reasons. I can't believe millions of people enclosed in a device covering 1,300 square kilometers could keep their sanity, unless the colonists were chosen from totalitarian parts of the world where people are unused to the idea of freedom and travelling. I have great doubt that those L5 monsters could be financed even if all the solvent nations of the world contributed with both government and capitalist funding. And I think that replenishing them for the inevitable losses of every sort of chemical and supply that would occur from a recycling closed system, figuring out a way to get them back where they belong every time their orbits start to decay, staging rescues for accidents with large meteors, finding a cure for any epidemic that might break out, and so on would exasperate the people back on earth to an extreme degree.

Andrew Darlington's article was very useful to me in one way. It pin-pointed the identity of the first science fiction by Burroughs I ever read. I had known it was a story about Venus that was serialised in ARGOSY. I wasn't reading that magazine in 1932, so it must have been Carson of Venus. I remember thinking that the story was as bad as the Tarzan book or two I'd attempted to read, so it contributed to my lifelong antipathy for ERB.

Searches for definitions of science fiction like the one by Sean Williams will never succeed, for the simple reason that three different types of fiction have been lumped under the cognomen of "science fiction" ever since Gernsback popularized the term. These are stories in which future developments of science play a major role, stories about the future in which science has little or no importance or may not even exist, and speculative stories like events on another planet or in an alternative universe. If "science fiction" had been reserved for the first type, if the second variety had been called future fiction and if the third kind had been called speculative fiction, definitions would be fairly easy.

Your description of how you publish THE MENTOR was very interesting to me, because I've never reproduced fanac via an offset press. I've used hektographs, mimeographs, office copiers, and in a sense letterpress since I wrote a few fan letters to the prozines in my earliest strivings to become a fan. Obviously, it was a good decision for me to avoid the offset system, since I could never cope with the adjustments and manipulations you describe yourself doing with your press. I'm just not mechanically minded.

PRAY FOR THE PREY impressed me as a fairly good story. It might have been better if the narrator had done more things to characterise her as female; maybe she should have been the one who felt extreme loathing for the abductor of the small girl.

Buck doesn't tell us what Severial thought of him (in the 80th issue), when Buck failed to join in that fight against the five dogs. On the other hand, I can't think of many fans who could have accomplished Buck's seven-mile walk. My uncle used to walk a 14-mile round trip to court my aunt, but men were men back in that era. Off-hand I can think of only Frank Denton and Harry Andruschak as distance walkers in fandom, although there are several distance runners like Eric Mayer and Mike Shoemaker. I used to be able to go three miles walking before needing to rest, but a sore foot that just won't heal now confines me to about three blocks without stopping.

I've managed to assemble a fairly good set of dictionaries at very low cost by watching for them in second-hand stores and at yard sales. My biggest coup came on the last day of 1992 when I paid 21c for the biggest lack in this respect, an enormous and fairly recent unabridged dictionary. The only one in the house had been a semi-

antique about a century old. I've picked up x-English dictionaries for most of the widely spoken European languages and Latin although my stupid inability to be systematic causes them to be scattered in several places and I doubt if I'll live long enough to carry out my old ambition to get them all together in one place so I can find any volume I need. I do wish I had purchased the OED in its microscopic edition with accompanying magnifying glass when it was being offered for a very modest sum as an inducement to join a book club.

Of course nostalgia doesn't enter into my reaction for JET-ACE LOGAN because I doubt if I ever heard of him or saw any of his manifestations when he was delighting boys in the United Kingdom. But I was happy to read about him and to enjoy these tribute pages for the graphic story hero. I'm not opposed to violence when it's needed as a part of the plot, just to creations which exist solely as an excuse for a constant barrage of violence.

It's sad to learn from Bill Congreve that Australia also has highway litter in such forms as empty glass containers. The problem is serious in many parts of the United States. Every so often, there's a volunteer clean-up organized by boy scouts or some other group, and sometimes non-dangerous jail inmates are assigned to pick up trash along roadsides, but there always the danger of a tragedy from a speeding auto and then an enormous lawsuit during such programs. More recently, there have been tentative efforts to arrange "adopt a highway" groups, in which some club or organisation pledges its members to make periodic trash removals from a specific number of miles on a certain road.

Fan history seems on the upswing: your Australian and Argentinian projects, the release of another huge chunk of Rob Hansen's British fanhistory, continuing instalments of Canadian fan history from two or three fans, and rumors of a collaborative general history of fandom in the 1960s from the United States. Of course, no matter how useful these publications will be, there's always the problem of keeping them in print and, for that matter, finding a way to let fans of the future know that they exist. I'd guess that availability of most major historical publications averages not more than two or three years.

Although I faithfully promised not to burden you with comments, I can't help expressing my pleasure in reading substantial appearances in the loc section by Mae. Her letters could very well have been converted to a regular article that would have come to the attention of any heretics on your mailing list who may not read each and every page of loc sections. I hope she succeeds in getting her books on languages into print soon, after all those decades of labor.

(2.12.93)

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

What's this, not more bad news?
Us overseas won't get reviews -
Not yours, not Bill's, not anyone's?
No info for the whingeing Poms?
How shall we know what books to buy
If TM leaves us high and dry
Without a word of 'ray!' or 'boo!'
Who else for help can we turn to?
THE MENTOR tells us without fear
What's good and what's best kept clear
Of in the world of skiffy,
Without reviews it will be iffy
To say the least - we will be lost.
To read it all ourselves would cost
A fortune, then there's all the time
Stolen from our lives, a crime
Against the readers of your zine
(For which we'd have no time, it seems.)
Rip words out from the end or centre
And you'll be renamed THE TORE-MENTOR!
This doggerel loc to you, dear Ron,
Comes from me, your old mate,

(4.12.93)

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

Your editorial (in THE MENTOR 81) seems to rephrase the

"two cultures" division of C. P. Snow; arts and/or sciences, and the sundering of the two in the educational policies and fashions of the last few decades. An interest in science (the "natural philosophy" that included the natural sciences of chemistry, biology, physics and mathematics) is no longer the mark of an educated and cultured man or woman it might have been around the end of the last century (and taking up another point in your editorial, somebody pointed out recently that we won't be able to use that phrase with the same meaning in another few years).

Science, in most people's view, has become confused with technology, gadgets rather than enquiry and understanding. Advertising, with misleading and trite appeals that "modern science has developed" a new washing powder or engine oil, has done nothing to dispel the confusion about what science is really about. Recent attempts to fuse science and art in the aesthetic patterns of fractals and chaos have foundered in the marketing of a welter of pretty T short designs or cheap mysticism.

In fact I would be tempted to take the argument further, with a quote from Morrison "the cleavage of men into actor and spectators is a central fact of our time". At its most trite this rejection of both art and science for passive entertainment is marked by the inability of a large section of the population to either read a book or program the VCR. SF fans are therefore "weird" because they not only read books, but write about them (not at all exclusively) and take an active involvement in the genre in conventions and fanzines.

This, I believe, is the challenge for education: to promote a participatory, rather than passive, attitude that crosses work and leisure, as much as science and art.

I enjoyed most of the fiction in this issue. PANDORA'S BOX, perhaps, faltered slightly to the end, and the last expository paragraph could have been dropped and left a more ambiguous but sharper ending. A good character study of academic feuding and jealousy. AIDE-MEMOIRE was a sharp little "punishment fitting the crime" tale with an effective ending despite a slightly shaky premise.

A NEW ORDER didn't work for me, and bears a close similarity to the early Brian Aldiss short story WHO CAN REPLACE A MAN? Far too anthropomorphic in its dialogue between machines (compare with the clipped, repetitive machine literalness of the exchanges in the Aldiss, which better captures the idiot-savant nature of machine intelligences).

Andrew Darlington's NEBULA was an interesting article on a magazine I only know by name. The list of first-timers appearing in that title through the 50s is quite remarkable for a magazine that started out almost as a printing shop "loss-leader".

Steve Sneyd, in the R&R column, thought HEY HE'S A FISH in TM 78 fascinating. I'm afraid I have a mental blind spot about genre poetry. This is possibly my loss. Maybe Steve or another of the poets might (if they haven't already done so) contribute an article on SF POETRY FOR THE PERPLEXED to show me what I should be looking for.

(5.12.93)

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

Thanks for TM 81, and I like the cover. I suppose it must have been the hybrid aspect that put me off Carter's work before. Which, in itself, is interesting.

PANDORA'S BOX was quite good, but the star turn this issue is Andy's NEBULA. I remember it well so this is a nice bit of nostalgia as far as I'm concerned. Those were the days when sf was full of hope.

AIDE-MEMOIRE only arouses ah oh-hum in me.

The Russian sf history continues to fascinate. This really reads like an alien culture.

The best fiction in this issue is A NEW ORDER.

BARBARELLA? I remember seeing the film, and quite enjoyed it. Maybe there is an English version of the comic somewhere, and I'd like to read it.

Buck Coulson is interesting as usual and "Shame the Devil" sounds fascinating. Alistair Cooke was talking on the radio about the Mississippi flood, but he didn't bring out the likely result as Buck has.

Bill Congreve makes me wonder why, when so much British sf gets published down under, so little Australian sf gets published over here. Is it just economics?

I remember THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY (the book, not the

film.) Very funny, but it was the film that made Jack Trevor Story's name. Alas, another good writer lost to us. And I enjoyed Steve Sneyd's mental picture of the Ard Righ's of Ireland.

Philip Jose Farmer still going strong? I haven't seen much by him here in recent years. But I did reread his book on Doc Savage a while back, and enjoyed it. What can you call a biography of a fictional character? (6.12.93)

LLOYD PENNY, 412-4 Lisa St, Brampton, ON, Canada L6T 4B6.

Responding to your editorial in MENTOR 81 ... in Canada, a swing back to more conservative values meant that filler courses in high school disappeared, as did some in college and university. However, the teachings of how to learn are mostly gone. There is somehow the assumption that the kids will soak up knowledge like a sponge, but if they don't find out how to absorb that knowledge, they will sit there like rocks, confounded by the din going on around them. The American problem of children coming to school fully armed is creeping into Canada, and making learning even tougher than before. Poor quality teachers, labour problems and escalating tuitions are making sure that decent education is becoming rarer. Add further that employers refuse to train for anything in the job force, and the supposed finished product, an educated and trained worker, will be extinct very soon. When I see the vacant faces, angry young men and women, thugs and junior murderers that come from our schools, and see that they have near-nonexistent reading and writing skills, let alone any other skill, and also see that these people will be in charge of the world in the future, that future looks bleak indeed.

Andrew Sullivan's PANDORA'S BOX is an interesting log ... the main character sounds more and more wacko, right up to the end of page 6, but is still sane enough to keep this log. That grates a little, but what grates more is that when we get to page 7, that character sounds extremely straight and sober, and real quick too, as if it was written on a different day. This sudden return to sanity is a jolt to the reader, but it's still an interesting tale. The final alien court scene could probably be ditched; it appears to be an after thought, and doesn't fit as part of the main character's log.

I've got a couple of boxes of pulp magazines lying around, and in one of those boxes is an issue of NEBULA SCIENCE FICTION. It's issue 29, the June 1959 issue (it's as old as I am), and has a price on it of 35c, Price in U. S. A. It is something different, compared to the American pulps of the time, different and refreshing to a Canadian who often feels himself trapped between a British heritage and the sometimes-oppressive American influence to the south.

With the restoration of basic freedoms (to some degree, at least) in the former Soviet Union, or XUSSR, as I've seen it termed, the newest chapters of the story of SF and fandom there is truly revolutionary. With fans becoming authors, editors, translators and publishers, and clubs publishing fanzines to reach other readers all over the world, the fans of Russia, Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania (and any other republics that I haven't communicated with yet) are shaping their own versions of the genre, and making their own SF history. I hope someone there is recording this history so that future fans can read about these modern pioneers, and their efforts to make the most of the new freedoms.

As I read the article on Barbarella, I saw the name Georges Gallet. I met M. Gallet some years ago at a Worldcon. Takumi Shibano introduced me and my wife Yvonne to M. Gallet, and he took a shine to us because we were Canadian, and he knew some of the history of French-Canadian SF. He especially liked Yvonne because she's fluently bilingual, English and French, and they enjoyed a long conversation. We knew that M. Gallet was the top SMOF of France, but he then related stories of his further accomplishments in French fandom.

The letter of comment from John Francis Haines mentions something about changes in First Fandom. A short time ago, I received a fanzine called HABAKKUK from Bill Donaho, a fan active in the 60s, gaffate for 25 years, and degaffated just recently. He attended the San Francisco Worldcon this past autumn, and enjoyed himself, even though there were few familiar names and faces. He was asked to join First Fandom because the rules have been changed to allow fans who have been active 30 years or more (I believe that's the right number of years). Yes, the First Fans will pass (and many already have), but a senior organization of fans that will admit newer

people ensures that the organization stays around to keep alive the memories of those First Fans. (7.12.93)

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510 -5309, USA.

Educational systems. Things are sure a mess here in the USA. As I remember it, when I was in England I was streamlined into a secondary school and expected not to go on to high education. The 11+ test and all that. When I came to the USA at age 14, in the year 1958, I was tested and found to be almost a year ahead of most USA students. As such I went to Cass Technical High School in Detroit, Michigan, a special school for above-average students. Yes, they actually had those way back then. Not only that, but the USA was going through Sputnik Shock, and throwing money into science and technical education.

I did quite well, and if my family had not been so poor I might well have gone on to college and perhaps a doctorate. But my father died and the family was broke, scholarships were not enough, so I joined the US Navy.

The entry tests were a snap; had I not had defective eyesight, I could have entered Officers' Candidate School on the basis of my test scores. As it was, all I could join was Mensa. The US Navy gave me my training as an Electronics and Computer Technician. In a way, that is still with me. I was 10 years in the Navy, 13 years a technician at JPL, and now I'll be a Post Office technician until I retire or die.

And as for the USA school system ... the huge science and technical curriculum that I went through was dismantled in the 1960s, for various reasons. There have been lots of books written as to what went wrong with the USA school system, but I am not sure what the actual answer was. My own opinion is, unfortunately, Politically Incorrect, in that the need to push such concepts and integration, along with bussing, alienated many parents from the school system and resulted in the decline of power of the PTA, the Parents-Teachers Associations. And somehow science and technology classes were cut in favor of more social classes.

The results are obvious, in that we now have a huge population of scientific illiterates who do not know how to think. That includes fandom, judging from the number who hanker after New Age and actually believe all that John F. Kennedy Assassination Conspiracies stuff. Oh yes, this is the 30th anniversary of that shooting, and many of the USA apa and fanzines have that as their topic. I guess they got tired of believing in the great Flying Saucer Conspiracies, or something.

Of course, the perfect example of how stupid many USA fans are is the number that got suckered into believing all that nonsense about "Cold Fusion". One of the latest books on the topic is BAD SCIENCE by Gary Taubes, and I intend to do a book review for FOSFAX to vent my anger at the fans who took this whole thing seriously.

And I blame John W. Campbell for much of this scientific illiteracy in fandom.

On to the letter column. I still cannot help but wonder if FOREST (p. 58) is some sort of elaborate hoax by Marty Cantor and other smokers, in spite of the London address. Michael Hailstone I'll leave to the tender mercies of Joseph Nicholas in FTT. Those who were upset by my comments on science vs religion can remain upset. As Pontius Pilate once said, "What I have written, I have written!"

... A good book has been published, which contains, among other things, arguments that I can agree with... such as why science and religion are incompatible. So for those who want to know what my opinions are, the book to read is THE UNNATURAL NATURE OF SCIENCE by Lewis Wolpert, published here in the USA (hardback at \$20) by Harvard University Press. A 1992 copyright. The front matter notes that this was published by agreement with Faber and Faber Ltd, London. As such, I am not sure what company would publish it in Australia.

... Today I also received a catalog from the MOUNTAIN TRAVEL*SOBEK. Among other goodies that they offer is an 18 day trip to the North Pole. Yup, travel to the North Pole on the Russian icebreaker Yamal, one of 3 vessels in the world capable of doing it. Prices start at \$14,990, and I doubt if that includes air-fare. And I wonder, did anyone write a story in science fiction where US citizens, and anybody else who could afford it, would be allowed on a Russian icebreaker going to the North Pole in comfortable cabins? But not as

scientists but simply as tourists? And yes, if I had \$15,000 or more to burn I'd go on the trip. And think of the fanzine article I could write about it! (10.12.93)

WALT WILLIS, 32 Warren Rd, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 0PD.

MENTOR 81 seems to me an exceptionally fine issue.

For instance, PANDORA'S BOX by Andrew Sullivan, raises a question which has been exercising my mind for years, namely how do you actually go about construing a message from space? This subject was dealt with [in] an almost unreadable story of mine, one called CONTACT WITH EARTH in SLANT. I suggested a series of numbers could be plotted on a graph and joined together to make a picture, an idea which as far as I know was not used professionally until Carl Sagan's novel CONTACT some forty years later. Sullivan doesn't deal with the question here, so far as I can make out, though his attempt to do so by invoking higher mathematics - "The lines intersecting with angles less than 90 degrees are participles of the fourth order to the integral of the entire sentence." .. is worthy of the respect of all admirers of high-class doubletalk.

Andrew Darlington's review of the life of NEBULA was fascinating, especially to someone like me who was in touch with editor Peter Hamilton for almost the entire life of the magazine, and was aware of his strained relations with Ted Carnell of NEW WORLDS. I don't know what I should disclose about such things, and will make up my mind when I come to this correspondence in the course of some future instalment of my memoirs in MIMOSA.

I didn't understand AIDE-MEMOIRE at all, which is a pity because it started so promisingly. However I suppose there is no law that a reader should be as smart as the author.

Lubenski's SHORT HISTORY OF FANTASTICA was fascinating. Imagine all that going on in Russian Fandom and us now knowing a thing about it. If we had known about it we would have joined in and really messed things up for everyone.

Robert Frew's story was well written and convincing.

Peter Brodie's account of the making of BARBARELLA was very welcome. I thought I had forgotten BARBARELLA but Brodie brings it all back to me. I couldn't agree more about the contribution to the success of the film of Jane Fonda's innocent eroticism. It's interesting to note that veteran French fan George Gallet was involved in the preparation of the original comic strip version of BARBARELLA, the same George Gallet who is listed by Derek Pickles in the letter section as one of the subscribers to Derek's fanzine. And the same George Gallet (should it not be Georges?) who was associated with me on the original International Fantasy Award panel, which led to me being satirically dubbed FLEAC (Fandom's Leading Expert and Critic.) It was all too obvious that I had only been accorded this honour because, being the only known Irish fan, I helped to give the panel an international appearance.

It's interesting that in the letter section both Terry Walker and Steve Sneyd quote the same example of Russian mistranslation of "out of sight, out of mind". It adds to the feeling of gestalt in your letter section.

It seems I owe Michael Hailstone an apology for misunderstanding the reference to a safety belt in his account of an accident during his travels. I hereby proffer it. (6.12.93)

JOE FISHER, PO Box 5074, East Lismore, NSW 2480.

The fiction in issue #81 was all interesting. Andrew Sullivan's (I'm sure I've heard that name before...?) PANDORA'S BOX, with its diary-style, one character perspective narrative was a different tack to take (if you'll pardon the alliteration). The story had quite a nice little idea behind it but was it *really* necessary to use the word "fuck" quite so often? I mean colloquial expletives are all fine and well in their place, and I think that *some* of the "fuck"s in PANDORA'S BOX were appropriate, but others, it seemed were a little gratuitous. Also, Barnes' "deterioration" (for want of a better word) seemed sudden. Was this deliberate? The first six or so "entries" seemed rational enough and Barnes says nothing detrimental about Gerry Mayers. Then, he's going on and on about him. I don't know, it just did not quite feel right to me.

Blair Hunt's AIDE-MEMOIRE was very good. A little tale of revenge finally exacted. Nice One.

A NEW ORDER was quite good too. The mystery of why all the humans had disappeared was left nicely understated.

I'm going to go straight to a comment made by Sean Williams in THE R&R DEPT., about RED DWARF. Sean's comments were in response to a letter I had written in issue #80, praising RED DWARF for its originality in its sci-fi ideas. I stand firmly by that statement still. Frankly, I can not see where you are coming from Sean. You said that the RED DWARF ideas are hackneyed? Since when? The writers Rob Grant and Doug Naylor have deliberately tried to steer away from the "aliens attacking us" ideas which seem to be the only thing STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION is capable of. OK, so instead of aliens they have Genetically Engineered Life Forms (G. E. L. F.'s) to pose a threat to the *Red Dwarf* crew. But the whole situation of RED DWARF itself is original. I'd like you to name another show where four of the main characters are a complete slob, a neurotic dead man, a vain and completely ego-centric highly evolved cat and a computer with advanced senility - all stuck on a six mile long mining ship 3 million years from Earth. Well, yes, obviously, every second book and TV show's doing *that* particular idea to death!

Having now seen series Six of RED DWARF I can only use it to further reinforce my argument. You've got Legion - a gestalt entity which can only exist when there are others it can take its power from and which is exponentially greater than the some of its different personalities.

In the episode GUNMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE, there are rogue simulents, an Armageddon computer virus and a dove programme which "spreads peace throughout the system" - obliterating the Armageddon virus.

In RIMMERWORLD there's a colonization seeding pod which allows for the character Rimmer to change a desert world into a green and verdant Eden and to "grow" thousands of clones of himself to populate the world.

And the look of the series is very, very polished - especially when you consider that the show *is* a comedy. That, I think is the main point. RED DWARF is a science-fiction comedy. Its purpose is to make people laugh and it *does*. Though you, Sean, find it "boring in the way only the Brits can make them", there was quite literally millions who think otherwise. When series One was recently released on video it absolutely blitzed any other video on sale. And, every episode of series Five was among BBC2's Top 5 programmes, with the last episode BACK TO REALITY, pulling in some 6.5 million viewers. I guess they all don't think RED DWARF is too boring, do they?

All I can say to you Sean is that if you think RED DWARF is boring then watch series Six. If you *still* think its boring then I guess you're beyond help.... (15.12.93)

TRENT JAMIESON, 109 High St, Lismore Heights, NSW 2480.

THE MENTOR has always been a welcome sight in the mailbox, despite the enormous pleasure that I am sure the mailman gets from folding it in two and ramming it though the slot, creasing another TM for eternity. Still such folds matter not, beyond the aesthetic, and the contents remain the same, just a little raised in the middle.

[Well, I've stymied him this time - he won't get that pleasure soon again. - Ron.]

Three stories! The number is up from [#]80. Apocalypse and more apocalypse! Andrew Sullivan shows that you should never play with other people's toys. People go crazy so easily these days. Sanity seems so fragile. Obviously we should all encase our minds in thick, thick rubber, shock proof in more ways than one. But I am being glib. All the stories had some merit, all I found readable and all were relatively short. It is nice to read Australian Sci-Fi and new sci-fi at that. Most of my reading consists of 60's to mid 70's Moorcock, about the same period Silverberg, P. K. Dick and the late, and much greater than Asimov, Leiber.

That's not [to] say I don't read other things, like the backs of Cornflakes packets, insightful writing there, and WOMAN'S DAY: look another photo of Lady Di.

The education system, eh. Plenty of problems there, I should know, half my family are teachers. What I would like for the Government to do is teach grammar proper again. Mine is terrible. If we are not made (sounds too fascist, maybe, given ample opportunity would be better) to understand, to love our language, how can we truly appreciate it. Sure English is a little lumpish at times (but then again, it is a poor artist who blames his/her tools) but still it is our

language and one can never understand it too well. This [grammar] has been discarded and left a generation feeling a little lost perhaps, perhaps this is a personal conceit, I do not know, and I understand that educators can only open doors, they cannot force you through them. However....

Andrew Darlington's NEBULA was enlightening. NEBULA [is] a piece of Sci Fi history, so many great names first spoke there. I'll have to look out and see if I can find any old copies floating around the second-hand bookstores up here. Those were the wild days of Sci Fi, well maybe not wild but at least interesting. TM 80's TERROR FROM MOON 33 was great fun. Interesting too that Michael Moorcock wrote some scripts for the comic, is there anything he hasn't done!

Congrats to Sean Williams, too for his WOTF victory, how was the trip to LA that Shola Paice mentioned? (16.12.93)

PAVEL A. VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 344, Moscow A502, Russia 125502.

I quit my old job (as an author of ads and ad manager at the Roditi Moscow Trading House) and joined the Occidental Petroleum Corp, as a "field interpreter". That was less creative, of course, but paid better. And, imagine all the thrill of going to Siberia, in the very middle of taiga! In September, there are endless marshes, carpeted with grey-green moss, sparkling with billions of ruby-red cranberries; in November, all this is under snow. One night I was bathing in a steam bath with my friends, and emerged to take a dip in the snow; and stood there frozen (not literally, though it was about -15°C) - one side of the sky was lit by a "foxtail" - a gas torch; on the opposite side, the aurora borealis waved like a curtain of light... that was really beautiful!

I got acquainted with lots of very interesting people there, and had a chance of looking inside the mysterious world of oil. Wells go down to kilometres - imagine! Among the people who I met was a member of the last Antarctic dog-expedition. Why last? Because "Green Peace" managed to outlaw dogs in Antarctica, under the pretext that dogs can spread diseases to seals, walrus and penguins. Which is silly - dogs are examined (the people there do not get infected!), they have little or no contact with penguins, and have no common diseases with them! On the other hand, dogs will be substituted with machines, which do pollute the environment. I don't like the greenists, for they are also extremists, in their own way.

Speaking of extremists - the results of our December elections are taken right out of a (rather silly) dystopia. 17% of Communists, and 23% of "liberal democrats" (misnomination: these are just plain Nazis). This - after 2 years of post-communist life.... Oh well, the President and the government are still democrats; I hope for the best.

Now, some fannish news:

Several cons will not take place in 1994, because of expensiveness. But many Russian fans, it seems, will go to Eurocon-94, in Romania.

In the famous Gorky Park, in Moscow, the well-known Tolkienist meetings of the Aeglador Club was attacked by local hooligans. The "elves" and "goblins" fought them back, even using game weapons. The Gorky Park administration blames Tolkienists, too: they say that some of those are rude and spoil the park library walls with rune graffiti.

A yet unproved but interesting piece: in one of the Russian towns a community of about 100 believers turned to the local administration for permission to open a temple of ... Ilubatar (Eru). Seeing no obstacles in the laws or regulations, the administration granted such permission. The temple supposedly will be named the Temple of St. Prophet John Ronald Ruell Tolkien in the name of Eru the One.

The Misprint Prize was recently given by members of Vinnicon (Vinnitsa, Ukraine) to a translation of P. Farmer. The most famous misprint, or rather, bad piece of editor's work, in back-translation, looks like:

"He bent down to get the sacks with food and water.

"Here are the sacks of food and water", said he, taking the sacks of food and water".

BORED OF THE RINGS has appeared in this country at last. Readers were bored by BOTR, which was immediately called "a collection of intestinal humour". At the same time, [there] were published several other remakes, parodies, etc. Among these, the

best is ZVIRMARILLION, which is really funny. Let me quote one chapter:

"COMING OF THE MEN TO THE WEST".

"The men came to the West"

Also released were THE DESCENT OF THE DARKNESS and THE WINGS OF THE BLACK WIND; what those are, I do not know yet. But the terriblest, the awfulest thing was THE WAR OF THE FAIRY-TALES by one local writer, a late thunder of the Cold War. In this novel (novell!) the Bad Americans build a Fairy Tale Land - the Middle-Earth - in the Rockies, and put in hordes of cyborg orcs, elves, etc. The "bad guys", though, are represented mostly by characters [out] of Russian fairy-tales. The idea is to put in American kids who must carry the Ring, as prescribed, to Orodruin; en route they are to receive a proper patriotic lesson, and kids with "wrong ideas" are to be caught by the "bad guys" and deprived of the said ideas in the Mordor dungeons.... On the whole, the novel is very dull. (- 12.93)

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

Ah little Lorraine, you silly billy. I wrote the BABS article in carefully titled sections so people who didn't want to know about the plot could still have a bit of a delve. Funny thing is, (and I know you'll have dizzy spells trying to believe it), writing an in-depth analysis of a movie without revealing any of the plot is virtually impossible. No, really!! Perhaps you're too fucking stupid to realise this? I was actually writing for a more mature audience, anyway. One that had seen the movie. If you didn't want to know the plot why not simply ignore the whole article? Trust me, I wouldn't have been upset if you had. You big silly, you.

Hullo Shaney Poo. You're wrong. As usual. Duran Duran is the correct name. Trivia. One of those flock of hairdressers pop groups of the early eighties took the name for their group and were reasonably successful, er, until they weren't. I always thought ABC were the better synth group anyway. Toodles from Petey Wetey.

A tad more BABS trivia. Why is the secret code word given to Barbarella by Dildano (the leader of the revolution) famous?

I agree with you Catherine Mintz, a lot more of Burroughs' work is ignored in favour of the slavish Tarzan/Martian/Venusian quota. His second serial, THE OUTLAW OF TORN, a rousing adventure set in medieval England, which he wrote after the first Tarzan, was rejected a number of times, much to his dismay as he deemed it superior to the Tarzan story. It eventually saw book publication many years later. Burroughs actually preferred this type of writing to his Tarzan material, which he saw merely as a means of making a crust. His CAVE GIRL novel is also an early (tho unassuming) story ignored now. Not to mention such western as THE DEPUTY OF COMMANCHE COUNTRY, or the rousing (and very R E Howardish) adventures of THE MUCKER, eventually released in two books. Burroughs wrote widely in a number of fields. A pity a true tale-spinner is lumbered with one or two particular items. I'd recommend Burroughs fans search out his other work. Not all is great reading but it is entertaining. This seems to be a sin worthy of capital punishment in these over-enlightened days. Now, where'd I put that bloody loin-cloth and blade? (2.1.94)

MIKE HAILSTONE, 14 Bolden St, Heidelberg, VIC 3084.

I don't know the dictionary definitions of the word "democracy" and "republic", but I tend to feel the discussion is a bit pointless. I have heard it said that Australia is not and has never been a democracy but is rather a constitutional monarchy. As for "republic", who or what is the authority on the correct definition of that word?

In Athens (see the MATALAN RAVE #10) I bought a Greek map of the world, which I lost amongst the stuff stolen in Darwin during my trip to Timor and Indonesia. I was interested to glean from the Greek name for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, that the Greek word for "republic" is simply "democracy". After all, one word comes from Greek, the other from Latin. *Democracy* means "people's rule" (or "people power"), while *republic* comes from Latin *res publica*, which means the "people's thing", perhaps more accurately "people's rule", since the word "thing" in old English meant something like "meeting" or "conference". We got our democracy not from the ancient Greeks but rather from our own Teutonic forebears. If I remember rightly, a tribal meeting was called a "thing", and every year or so the local tribes would come together for the "Allthing". So really "democracy" and "republic" are the same thing. Rome was a republic

for hundreds of years before Julius Caesar transformed it into an empire.

I'm interested to see that John Alderson describes himself as a historian; fair enough, only I would qualify that with the adjective "revisionist". I hasten to add that I don't mean that as criticism, although I know that word to be anathema to some. I can't though go along with his arbitrary definitions of "republic" and so on. Actually I once heard Alistair Cook point out that the prime minister of a country like Britain or Australia has frighteningly a lot more power than the president of the United States. The latter cannot (or at least once couldn't) declare war without the approval of Congress. I wasn't around in 1939, but I saw and heard by television the prime minister, R. J. Hawke, commit us to war on Iraq in 1991. Oddly enough I don't remember hearing the former prime minister, R. G. Menzies, ever declare or commit us to war on Vietnam. For some reason wars nowadays are no longer declared.

I take it that Coulson is joking about the sanctity of sheep and kangaroos, but he has one little detail wrong. While no expert on sheep, despite my familiarity with the bloody things on my kinsfolk's farm in my youth, I understand that a wether is a castrated ram, not a female, which is a ewe, as I'm sure everybody knows.

I don't understand why some of your readers, most notably Joe Fisher, are so bothered by the combination of sex and violence in FERAL KILLERS. After all, it happens with both spiders and praying mantises: the female eats the male while they're fucking.

OBUNAGA'S FINGER must have impressed a lot of your readers, but it left no impression on me, as I can't remember anything about it. (13.12.93)

J. C. HARTLEY, 14 Rosebank, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, BB4 7RD, ENGLAND.

Continue to enjoy Andy Darlington's illumination of forgotten corners of the genre, I nearly always read his section first.

In R&R DEPT Pavel Viaznikov's account of Russian role-playing killed off what little Tolkien sympathy I had left, then I read Lubenski & felt rather ashamed of myself for being too bloody smug.

Enjoyed Peter Brodie's incisive & intellectual dissection of BARBARELLA, & here's me thinking it was all to do with nymphet leg-over. Can we expect a similar study of FLESH GORDON?

PANDORA'S BOX was OK though the scatological breakdown was rather overdone. Those insects remind me of something?

AIDE-MEMOIRE fooled my expectations nicely. My favourite story was NEW ORDER because it yet again proved the flexibility of postal workers, be they flesh or ferrous (ferric?); pace and wit in a story can overcome logical inconsistencies (this had all three - I'm not sniping, I can't even write fiction anymore because the endless re-writes consign the stuff to the "In Progress" file.)

Reviews to usual standard. Can recommend Vinge: ACROSS REALTIME - prefer it to much hailed FIRE ON THE DEEP.

I like PRIVATEER & other non-Sf "letters from" type articles - Uncle River's MOGOTHON NEWS in BBR over here is another similar. Lets be open-minded please. (29.12.93)

TERRY BROOME, 6 Penlands Lawn, Colton, Leeds LS15 9DJ, ENGLAND.

It is inevitable that liberal systems give way to conservative systems and vice versa as it is in humankind's nature to do things to excess and then to react against the excess. Extremes are dangerous. The threat a liberal govt poses is over-stretching resources. This leads to social hardship, the soft treatment of criminals and rising crime, which in turn leads to intolerance and fear. You see all that and search for a scapegoat. You then introduce laws to punish the offender. The move has begun towards conservatism and eventual fascism if left unchecked. When controls become too all pervading, tough and intolerable, you invite another reaction towards a freer society again. Society stagnates when the status quo is maintained for too long. Foreign competition, spurred by the wild economic and political thrusts of a more dynamic system bear down upon them. In dynamic systems creativity, R&D, is much more rapid because there is more to fight for, there is less complacency. You could say that such swings, flexes - the descent into chaos, friction, strife, are survival mechanisms. Where a population used to be sustained by the land through war and disease it is not sustained on a much larger scale through the more insidious mechanisms of

economic, political and social health.

Some elements of the comic strip [in TM 80] (much better this time) nagged. The duplication mode is illogical in the story's science-fictional context. Where do the raw materials come from? And so rapidly? Why didn't they clear the spaceship? If the aliens were so clever, how come they froze themselves for so long? And why? The Pest Control unit is depicted much too much like the machines in RUNAWAY and BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED. Finally, the aliens are anatomically impossible.

THE JAM JAR - startling, but to successfully underpin this rather Ballardesque imagery you need a very good rationale. The story has zilch characterisation (a severe handicap to such tales) and this means plot becomes the only foundation stone on which to build it. Except that there isn't any plot. If the aliens wanted a copy of everything and they are powerful enough to freeze objects in time why make such acquisitions so public? Why not simply vanish them by slowing time down enough to come in & pick them up, so there aren't any witnesses? If time is not the force at work, how are they suspended?

Seeing as it has an sf rationale, it must obey the laws of physics. This doesn't. It's a fantasy really, so the sf revelation is a big mistake. Why not simply freeze the entire planet? Or keep the specimens frozen once obtained? Perishables (including humans) would make a poor investment on the cost of the expedition. Why would such a society plunder a planet, yet have no concern for its welfare, when they obviously have a vested interest in it?

So, no characterisation, nonsensical, almost non-existent plot, rubbish sf rationale. As a fantasy, however, it would need to explore inner landscapes, human feelings and experiences. But all it has is its imagery and this is second-hand. I'm not saying the author is plagiarising anyone, but that they have obviously been struck by similar imagery in other works and as a result the tale lacks any sense of organic growth, of personal meaning, of a unique imagination enriched by care, thought or consideration.

Brent's imagery is very good and I would not have mentioned my criticisms had it not been for the fact that the other responses were so uncritical of a deeply flawed work. Especially when the author does show a fledgling talent and would so clearly benefit from a more meaningful and useful response. He needs to empower his tales with personal significance, with *soul*. Soulless stories are very common, instantly forgettable, and extremely difficult to build upon. I hope that Brent rethinks the direction of his writing and questions his reasons for developing stories in this way. (28.12.94)

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

Education systems here have changed *many* times - pretty much settling on "entertain" me. The original law of not teaching values has become - teach values (so the trappings of facts - etc - seem to have taken a detour). From what I've heard teachers saying - the newest system has *everyone* succeeding - period. I hate to think what this will eventually do - to graduates (be they from high schools or - heaven forbid - college). I can't see that this system has any chance of making it, but I suppose we'll see.

Thank you for the history of NEBULA. I hate to admit that I had never heard of it (there you have it - I'm a fakefan!)

Is the illo on pg 39 really by Steve Fox?

[No, the computer screwed up the data on the illos. - Ron.

I realized I haven't bought any books lately (read as at least a year). I did take out one of Alan Dean Foster's books - first of a trilogy - CALL TO ARMS. I don't recall the copyright - but believe this is *not* a new book. As a result I have no real idea of what is out there. There has not been time or money to browse the bookshelves and I haven't heard any fantastic reviews (word of mouth).

Personally I like seeing the reviews of Australian zines since I don't see that many of them over here. Your comment about reviews in each country seem to fit. I see mostly U.S. zine information with some Canadian and British zines (and an Australian one tossed in for good measure).

Joe Fisher's comments only serve to point out that not all (even fans) people agree on any one generality.

Bought a miniature of brandy to toast in the New Year. Gads... and people drink this stuff for pleasure?! (Late Xmas Eve '93)

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

THE NIGHT SKY [Vicki Hyde, Hodder & Stoughton Aust] is a great book. It's about time someone put together all the information that has been scattered through magazines, books and t.v. shows that it relevant to Australian astronomers. I have already seen some of what is in the book but scattered all over the place. The piece on Dreamtime astronomy is a good way to start, I felt it could have been a bit longer though, there is plenty of information about it out there. The pictures are great, colourful too, and the information is about as up to date as it can be, something hard to keep up with in this technological world of ours. The information is simply written, making it easy for a beginner to understand, my ten year old son could read it easily. I don't think it was meant for a younger market but its' format makes it a must have book for any age. The history of Australian astronomy makes for great project material in itself and is interesting even to someone not interested in astronomy. I think this is one of those books that would fit on anyone's bookshelf and most people would find something of interest within its' covers.

I have found that there are a few things that start an argument - religion, politics and science fiction. Just an aside here, nine out of ten women I know do not read astrology columns whereas several men I know do. I know two men who have charts done on a regular basis and refer to them before making major decisions. You know that I am not a feminist so I am not jumping to the defence of easily led women but I just thought I might point out that the numbers might not be as clear cut as you thought.

And so to religion. I guess it depends on who you talk to about the part religion plays in the world today. It has definitely had its ups and downs throughout the centuries, just like science fiction in some ways. I know people who have gone back to the church after leaving and others who have gone to church for the first time. Everyone has their own ideas about what the church can offer, no matter what denomination, and everyone has their own reasons for being involved but I did find one point that many people did agree on and that is that the church has always been there. I don't go to church, I'm not sure I believe in god, although I was raised in a family where one parent believes in god and one doesn't. I was a member of the Salvation Army for many years from the age of five so I have spent time within the church. I have had countless arguments with people over religion (and science fiction) and one thing that stands out is the belief that the church must be doing something right to have been around for so long, the churches might not have always been full but they have always been there. Perhaps in this uncertain, violent world the idea of religion might present a stable basis, despite its internal conflicts, it might give people something to work from, or towards, and might even become a major power in its own right (again).

I know, I can hear you saying it doesn't fit into today's world, its ideas are dated and people don't follow its teachings anymore. Maybe that's true, but the church itself is changing, slowly it seems, but there is a change happening. Ask anyone who has left then returned and they say that things are different. Of course it could just be a different perspective. But the basis of any church is the basic morals we have all grown up with, our children grow up with them even if we don't go to church and that is the one part of religious teaching that will be carried on, perhaps into a world where anyone who doesn't live by those moral standards will be cast out and we will have two societies, one with morals and one without. Sounds like the world we know, doesn't it?

I really enjoyed the article on the history of science fiction in Australia. That too has had its up and downs. By the way, I am still getting phone calls about the BM[Blue Mountains]sf group and people have been disappointed when I tell them it's not around any more.

I can't say I enjoyed the fiction in this issue, personal preference I guess and I passed on the poetry.

A BOOK FOR BURNING I read several times. I am tempted to go out and buy it simply to see if it is as feminist as Row makes out or has he misunderstood "the woman's point of view"? One thought that did come to mind as he described the story is how do we know this is not already happening? With the numerous IVF programs around the world and the increasing scope of genetic engineering (government funded and for purely research purposes of course), how does anyone know what the scientists are really doing? I think I've been reading too much science fiction. (6.1.94)

DAVID TANSEY, GPO Box 2061, Canberra, ACT 2601.

JAMES by Brent Lillie seemed like meaningless stream-of-consciousness stuff. Did it have any point? Duncan Evans' HUNDRED GATES HOLT was up to his usual standard of vivid weirdness.

Bradley Row's A BOOK FOR BURNING heated up my interest. Feminism has changed from a movement aimed at giving women equality to one which aims at placing them in a superior position to men. I turned off THELMA AND LOUISE half way through because it was pure feminist crap, with every male character faulty and the women victims struggling against male oppression (my wife was watching it with me and felt likewise). But the answer is not, as the title of Bradley's review suggests, to burn the book - or any book for that matter. The solution is for writers to come up with counter plots, e.g. a future world where all the women are scheming bitches, and the men the sole preservers of everything noble. But I'm sure that such a book would be banned under some "equality" legislation. I forgot that only men can be sexist, only whites can be racist, etc.

The clash of views between Chris Masters and Mae Strelkov has certainly livened up THE R&R DEPT. I agree with Chris that no form of censorship should exist based merely on what some people's perception of "morality" is. In my own view morality, like religion, is simply another form of control. I don't have any moral code myself, other than that each situation should be judged to see whether it hurts another. Child pornography hurts another. Mere violence in art does not, as the viewer can choose whether or not to look at it. Just because something offends someone is no reason to ban it. There will always be someone offended by anything and subject to Salman Rushdie-type retribution.

Finally, in the editorial Ron asks what will be the future of organised religion. That's easy - if the future is a bleak one (irreversible pollution, famine, etc), religion will spread its influence, and if it's an optimistic future (space travel, harmony, etc) the hold of religion will fade. That's why today poor countries are religious and well off countries are not.

It a bright future lies ahead of us, my hope is that religion is consigned to the waste-basket of history where it belongs. A god is, after all, just a tooth-fairy for grown ups. What will replace religion in the future? Why should anything replace it, I say. Shouldn't we strive for the advancement of humanity for its own sake. Enlightenment and religious belief are opposites.

"It has been readily accepted that humans need to believe in something", you say in your editorial. Is there anyone else out there like me that doesn't feel the need to believe in anything? Religion is an insult to the intelligence, patriotism is a form of primitive tribalism, politics are egotistical power games, moral codes are mental manacles. Life's wonderful, then you die. (13.1.94)

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

I enjoyed Andy Darlington's piece on Moorcock; it's wonderful to think that I probably cut my reading teeth (if you'll pardon a strange metaphor) on Moorcock way before I knowingly encountered him. Some of those strips sound awfully familiar. Oddly enough, I've just been approached by someone wanting to do some research on Moorcock, so I'll point this article out to him.

I've recently had stuff from Lithuania and Austria, and now in TM 82 we're getting more on Australian fandom. Is there an Oz renaissance or am I seeing Terry Dowling's novels, Greg Egan's stories (and novel), THE MENTOR and the latest SF COMMENTARY all at once?

Re. Bill Donaho's letter: the Robin Hood stories (based on various ballads and plays composed between the 14th and 17th Centuries) frequently mention Robin's death. According to Martin Parker's "True Tale" (composed around 1632) he died on November 18, 1247. He was supposed to have been bled to death by a treacherous nun at Kirklees in Yorkshire. One version I remember has the dying Robin firing an arrow into the air to mark the stop of his grave where the arrow fell. According to BREWERS' DICTIONARY OF PHRASE AND FABLE his bow and arrow are preserved at Kirklees Hall and the site of his grave is in the park. (10.1.94)

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

I suspect that what reading of astrology columns says about

women is that a lot of them are desperate enough to grab at straws. Or possibly it's just a difference in choices; men seem to buy the most lottery tickets and go in for gambling in general.

Religion is fading some in the cities, but not in the rural areas here. A lot of it has moved to television in this country. Why go to church when you can sit comfortably at home and listen to the minister of your choice? Of course, religion has always been fairly low in fandom; the main drive of fans was to be different from the general populace. But there's at least one very good religious fanzine in the US; Marty Helgesen's RADIO FREE THULCANDRA, which is specifically aimed at discussions of religion in science fiction and fantasy. (And not every reader is religious; I send in regular letters.)

One of the interesting things in the Australian fan history was the mention in the preface about Molesworth's grandfather joining the expedition to found a utopian colony in Paraguay. I hadn't heard of that one before, but recently acquired a book titled THE LOST PARADISE: THE JESUIT REPUBLIC IN SOUTH AMERICA, which was also in Paraguay, from the mid-16th to the mid-17th centuries. What is it about Paraguay? Is it just because it's relatively obscure and thus likely to be less worldly?

So Alderson says that trees make soil. I suppose that's why they were among the latest plants to evolve, after other species had turned some of Earth's original bare rock into soil for them. And I should have remembered that Ayers Rock is entirely tree-covered....

How old is Chris Masters? He sounds like a rather young teen-ager, mentally if not chronologically.

Rod Marsden has a good point about censorship. The real question, of course, is whether or not what people read influence them. (And what they see and hear as well, of course.) For myself I'd be inclined to opt for the negative, as Rod has done. But I've read accounts by people who said that reading science fiction influenced them to become scientists, technicians, or engineers. Comics readers have said the same things, that reading comics influenced their career choices. Now, of course these people were defending the position that science fiction and/or comics are good for you, against public denunciations of the material, so they could be exaggerating. But if science fiction reading *does* influence some people to become scientists, then you can't escape the corollary that reading, or watching, or listening to material about murder, rape, and general viciousness can influence some people to become criminals. Either one's reading material has influence, or it doesn't, and if it has any influence, then it goes both directions. You can't have it just one way; the world doesn't work that way.

Harry Andruschak gets catalogs for video porn - and so do I - because in this country advertisers buy mailing lists from companies that compile them, and while some lists are more accurate than others, none of them are perfect. Wait until you are 65, Harry, and get all the insurance ads. I recently got an invitation to join the American Legion because of my status as a veteran. (I knew my memory was going bad, but I don't think I could forget my entire service career, somehow.) Besides, somewhere around here I have my draft card saying I was 4F just after WWII, and during the war I was under the age limit. I get phone calls about insurance, too, but my doctor was right when he told me that one of the bright things about my present physical condition was that I could frighten insurance salesmen. It's sort of fun to listen to the dead silence after the phone salesman has rattled off a list of diseases and asked if I have them and I answer "Yes." Long pause. "Err... which one?" "All of them." (Not quite true, but a better effect.) "Well, er, it's been nice talking to you, sir," and a suddenly dead line.

Shouldn't the publicity release from Shola Paice have been in a different section from the real letters?

[Dunno, it wasn't labelled "Publicity Release". - Ron.]

My Robin Hood book was given to son Bruce long ago, but I do recall the ending, which was about an old, dying, Robin asking to be carried outside from his bed, and asking for his bow and an arrow. With a last mighty effort, he fires an arrow into the forest and says that where it lands, there he must be buried. So he is. (Of course, in real life the arrow would have gone about 10 feet, and if it did land in the forest nobody would have found it, but it was an effective end to a children's book.) For a good many years, Robin Hood was believed to have been real by a great number of people, and real heroes have burial places which can be visited by tourists, so Robin also has one

or more burial places. J. C. Holt, Professor of Medieval History at Cambridge, reports in his book on Robin that "At Kirkdees there was unquestionably a grave-slab." It has been described by those who saw it as having been inscribed "Here lie Roberd Hude, William Goldburgh, Thomas". He doubts that it refers to the legendary Robin Hood, but it was enough to lend substance to the legend. There was a real Robyn or Robert Hood, in the service of Edward II in 1324; a second apparently lived at Wakefield. So there may be three "Robin Hood" graves, but Kirkdees has the best publicity. (11.1.94)

RACHEL MCGRATH-KERR, 8/147 Keverstone Cct, Isabella Plains, ACT 2905.

Re TM 80. Can't remember what I've commented upon or what I've ignored. Please excuse my faulty memory - it runs in my family, if I recall correctly. Anyway, enjoyed Brent Lillie's THE JAM JAR - brief, to the point, and a good ending. JET-ACE LOGAN was a real treat. Normally I skip anything looking remotely sf comic-ish (is there such a word?), probably due to far too much exposure to fourth-rate fannish serials in fanzines. This is a welcome change.

Re TM 81. Have just read PANDORA'S BOX: different sort of format, just as well the dates were included, pity it was split between page 7 and 22, because the impact of the Prosecutor's statement was reduced significantly. Perhaps it should have been in a different typeface? A NEW ORDER was a good read, enough information given so that the reader could sketch in the details of the society with their imagination. Having worked for the post office, I'd be quite happy for a Postal Aid Mechanic to take over my jobs.

Read through the book reviews. Okay, I'll admit it, the first section I ever read is THE R&R DEPT, and then I skim through the reviews. I intend to read Isabelle Carmody's latest book since I've enjoyed all her other books. Some of the best fantasy and sf is found in the Junior/Young Adults Section of libraries, and at Parramatta Library, I only ever borrowed books from those sections. There seemed to be little new in the adult section.

I'm still looking for a job in Canberra - hope I can find something in secretarial/admin areas soon. Also looking forward to starting my Bachelor of Science part-time this year. My family thinks that's hilarious - I'm apparently one of the most unscientific people in the family, but I think they're exaggerating. I actually did a mix of arts and sciences for my Higher School Certificate. (17.1.94)

PAVEL A. VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 344, Moscow A502, RUSSIA 125502.

This time, I liked A NEW ORDER by R. Frew; the most interesting thing about the piece is the *future* course of events. An entire planetful of robots (mark you, of robots who have already tasted independence... as they understood it) - serving [a] one and only human being, and a child at that. I say, look some 13 years forward from that....

Whereas AIDE-MEMOIRE was weak, from *my* point of view; perhaps in this I disagree with others, but this story, if not in SF terms, could well have been written a couple of centuries ago: it's morality is too strong. For me at least.

Now, I did enjoy 40,000 AD AND ALL THAT by Peter Brodie; I've read in an old, Soviet-time book about the BARBARELLA movie - the article said that it is "immoral and tasteless" - which I read as "funny, witty and worth seeing at least once". I guess I was right and just have to find an opportunity to see BARBARELLA. Alas, that's not all that easy here, even though the "pirates" started selling JURASSIC PARK even *before* it appeared in a video-version in the USA. I just wonder how! But to get to old things... I, for example, dream of seeing the *old*, b/w LORD OF THE FLIES, - but it's impossible to get.... just are hundreds of good movies.

This [following] might be of interest to your readers, I think. I mean, for those who found THE NORTHERN FEN (not my title, Ron - yours!) interesting:

VIDEOS CONQUERING THE B.B.'S EMPIRE or HOW TO ELIMINATE GOOD TASTE.

Videos came to the USSR later than anywhere else, and for years were the symbol of moral corruption and anti-Soviet ideas. *That* was not bad. What was... you see, when for decades the foreign, esp.

the American, films were forbidden fruit, the result was quite predictable. The demand for foreign movies grew, while the offering was limited; worst of all, the easiest thing was to get cheap movies. The result? The younger generations' choice now is not Pepsi - if it [ever] was! They now enjoy cheap chewing gum, labelled "Quality just like in the USA". People know little of F. F. Coppola or F. Fellini - but they see hundreds of cheap idiotic "action" (brainless) movies. Well, from time to time you can find pearls in this stuff. Like hudibratic films by S. Spielberg, chefs-d'curry by F. F. Coppola or maestro Pazzolini - but what you always see and what you always get, unless you have the specific goal in finding a specific film and are *looking* for it, are things labelled NINJA'S REVENGE - "A terrific action thriller", or THE INVINCIBLE LEG - "Super-karate film", or FIRE INSIDE - "Mystery thriller with elements of erotica". In other words, cheap and tasteless odds and ends of video production.

The same thing happens in the book market. Oh yes, there are lots of good (but usually poorly translated) books. But more often than not you find something, usually decorated with a stolen picture by B. Vallejo, C. Archilleos or M. Grant, and provided with a foreword, clearly giving away the lack of taste and the inability to write. One book from a Estonia-published serial titled STAR WARS promised "a consecutive logical succession of novels and stories by the best but not known foreign writers, which have nothing in common and are collected without any link". And inside: "Seeing that the laser beam is darting towards my chest, I dodged, and the beam cut the pillar behind me"; or "These bombs are quite powerful, having the capacity of ten, twenty and even fifty microtons" (ie as much as 10 to 50 grams of TNT equivalent); or "our lasers were adjusted to 0.8 of nominal power - not more dangerous than a pocket flashlight". Which means, I guess, that working with full capacity, these dangerous weapons can reach, perhaps, a destroying power of a desk-lamp! And in translation, as usual, mistakes are plentiful. For example, "faux amis" are a constant plague of these translations. You know - the military wear tunics with decorations and use ammunition. Such terms exist in Russian, too - but "tunika" (tunic) is only a shirt worn in ancient Rome; "dekoratsiya" (decoration) is what you have in a theatre - painted background and things on stage; and "amunitsiya" (ammunition) - clothes, bags and other things worn by soldiers - *excepting* weapons and ammunition (cartridges, grenades, etc).

I can, by the way, easily imagine the reversed situation. Also illustrated with military terms. Your military salute - greet one another with a hand-sign. So do ours. But if you translate the corresponding Russian term word for word, you'll suddenly see that Russian officer... surrender their honour to one another.

What is still worse, there are Russian writers who imitate the worst Western books. The worst of all is that among the new initiates in SF there are readers who believe that this is what SF is and must be - whereas there are dozens of good examples of our tradition. You can get acquainted with some of them - see Buck Coulson's letter, who mentioned the Strugatski books "published in the MacMillan series of hardcovers, Best Of Russian SF, and were reprinted in trade paperbacks by Collier". Read them, Buck! I bet you will enjoy DEFINITELY MAYBE and NOON: 22ND CENTURY by A. & B. Strugatsky, or HALF A LIFE by K. Bulychev. I've heard that other books by the Strugatski brothers, such as INHABITED ISLAND, THE GUY FROM HELL; MONDAY BEGINS ON SATURDAY; HARD TO BE A GOD, THINGS OF PREY, etc, [are available]. If anybody knows which of these have been published in English, and where - please share the information in TM: judging from the R&R DEPT, lots of fans would like to get acquainted with Russian SF!

To Andy Sawyer: yes, Zelazny is popular here, not less popular than, for example, Tolkien is. Dick is less popular, but still popular. A "top ten" of foreign SF authors in Russia could look like this: J. R. R. T. - R. Zelazny - H. Harrison - S. King - R. Heinlein - I. Asimov - K. Laumer - L. Niven - Ph. Farmer - R. Sheckley - U. Le Guin. Eleven? Never mind.

Well, some will insist on including K. Vonnegut, and some D. Adams, but I mentioned the ones which, from my observations, sell best. Notice - if you try to sell a book with a title like BLOODTHIRSTY VAMPIRES; ZOMBI GHOULS FROM THE GRAVES OF THE DEAD, or MURDEROUS KILLERS - HOMICIDAL EXTRATERRESTRIAL ALIENS or something, with a picture by Vallejo on the cover - you'll sell it without any difficulty. Pity.

But for some time we'll have mostly translated SF: the editors are in a hurry to publish as much foreign SF as possible, before Russia joins *all* the copyright laws (even before 1972 books became available only for money). What is really bad about this is that, as I've said, they often don't publish the best books, and translations are poor, and this brings up the new generation of SF fans who see this situation as normal, and these books as a model, an etalon.

Now - more reviews of ex-Soviet SF.

Alexander Katsura & Valery Genkin, CURE FOR LUCIE: A French scientist, who tried to build a time machine based on the ideas of his dead friends, decides to go to the future in the hope of finding there a medicine for his dying daughter. He finds himself in medieval Europe instead, near the castle of Longibord; the strangeness of the 20th Century man leads to his imprisonment and death sentence. When Pierre (the scientist) is finally tied to a stake, an angry stage director appears: it is, after all, the year 2478. And all the people on Earth are players, mostly in history: the planet is divided into game zones, with games like NOBILE'S DIRIGIBLE; KOKAND BAZAAR; TRANSVAAL ON FIRE; 1000 VIEWS OF FUNGI; POLLUTION, etc. They have art: in games, such as WHITE SQUARE ON WHITE BACKGROUND or RENAISSANCE. They produce new masterpieces; they play in theatre - and the audience cries and weeps in ecstasy and rapture, "because any kid can produce real tears of delight when they play the role of the audience in the theatre game". They play in science, and when Pierre turns to his descendants for help, they have to play in the World Council. Pierre is disappointed: who could think that human civilization will sink to a mere game! But they do help Pierre, and later he discovers that all the people on Earth are children, who play in order to remember human history, and only children are allowed to live on Earth.

Edward Gevorkian, RULES OF THE GAME WITH NO RULES. The security service finds out that all the teenagers who are released from a certain school for juvenile delinquents disappear without a trace. So they send in an inspector, disguised as an inspector of the Education Dept. He discovers a strange atmosphere of suspense - and the delinquent boys, who study chemistry, ballistics, electronics, medicine, martial arts, and make and test weapons. Eventually the inspector finds out that this is not the doing of any government agency, not even of the Mafia (the cream-of-the-crop Mafia gunmen are eliminated at leisure by the kids). The fact is that some alien civilisation which wants to colonise other inhabited worlds but cannot kill (they are too advanced and moral for that) recruit and train human boys.. the worst thing is that when humankind reaches other worlds, it'll have a reputation of a punitive force civilisation, of butchery and executioners...

Olga Larionova, GRASSNAKE'S SONATA. An Earth spaceman is kidnapped by an alien civilisation who keep a whole zoo of sentient beings and where a human is kept as an indicator of the possibility of escape: he is the most freedom-loving creature in the universe, and if you want to keep beings of different races in, you just have to watch the human: if escape is possible at all, he'll try this way... Then [you] plug the hole. But the zoo-keepers did not guess that one can love freedom to an extent where he can sacrifice it and even life itself for the freedom of his fellow-prisoners...

An interesting point: O. Larionova has a whole series of SF short novels which are inspired by pictures of the famous Luthenian artist Mikaelos Churlionis - do you know of him? (-.1.94)

GEORGE IVANOFF, 30 Third St, Mentone, VIC 3194.

Congratulations to both Brent Lillie and Bradley Row for two of the most interesting pieces of fiction that I've read in TM. Enjoyably weird characters in a strange existence made Evans' HUNDRED GATES HOLT a very entertaining read.

Lillie's JAMES was a very good portrayal of a confused and disturbed mind. I absolutely loved some of the imagery. Particularly the line: "The woman turned, the lines beside her eyes deltas of disappointment, and extracted a streaming kitten from the microwave oven."

The poetry was a mixed bag. I liked the pieces by John Francis Haines, but thought the other stuff was very average.

As always, I enjoyed Bill Congreve's column. I read RYNOSSEROS and WORMWOOD quite a while back after meeting Terry Dowling at Swancon 17. I've just finished BLUE TYSON and will soon get around to TWILIGHT BEACH. Dowling creates such

fascinating and intricate societies for his stories. I definitely look forward to his future writings. (19.1.94)

TRENT JAMIESON, address above.

Ah religion, if ever there was a subject to bring up debate it is that, bring back Hyperion I say and we'll all be happier for it. I'm still not at all that sure that religions are quite as static as you suggest, some just change faster than others. "Evolution" seems to occur in all social institutions, religions amongst them and as for popularity, well, up here, there are no shortage of devout believers (why, I'm tempted to suggest that this area, particularly that place known as Altonville, could be counted as the bible belt of NSW if not Australia). Me, I'll stick with worshipping the television and the local ATM's - deities not at all demanding.

At least we don't burn books up here. Bradley Row's comments seem a little late as *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* has been out for quite a while. I would like to suggest one thing to Bradley, *THE GATE TO WOMAN'S COUNTRY* is a work of fiction, *MEIN KAMPF* however....

Brent Lillie's tale I liked, some of the dialogue didn't work for me and I felt that maybe there was too much happening in such a small space, still some of the imagery was beautiful and strong, snowmen and kittens and angels, vivid as jam jars. He is developing a definite voice.

The poetry was fun, *SLIP-KNOT* brought a wry chuckle, sex and sci-fi, aren't they one and the same. After all, if *FOUNDATION* isn't about Humanity fucking the universe then I don't know what is.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: THE UNEXPLORED DIMENSION was interesting. I've been something of a Moorcock fan for quite a while, his books are always easy to find second hand, his imagery stunning. The New Age stuff, wanky but oh so appealing, I loved it even before I could understand it. The Sojan stories are fun, not particularly good, but fun. I recommend the Savoy book to anyone, if they can find it. Particularly the two essays contained within that discuss his *Elric* and *Cornelius* books. Even back then he was getting sick of fantasy.

A HISTORY OF FANDOM, seems more like a grudge match: articulate children bickering. Ah, those were the days, when men were men (or little boys) always watchful for those "non-cooperatives... who will and must be kept out." Sounds like the Communist menace.

Dean Koontz, seems to have trouble coming up with an original idea, as a matter of fact he seems to have trouble coming up with a different plot. Everyone of his novels that I have read appears to have the same premise, eg an oh so shocking Psychotic character (with an incredibly overdeveloped body) stalks a couple (both in exceptional shape and experienced in the use of guns) the psycho is killed in the last ten pages and everyone is happy. His novels are slickly written fast paced two dimensional and very twee. (20.1.94)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, VIC 3465.

Read *A BOOK FOR BURNING* with a little puzzlement. By the time I got half way through the review I muttered, Well, what's new? Then I read the rest; it just happens to be more perverted than the more perverted of the woman-dominated societies of the past. The Amazons exposed their male children at birth (obviously knowing they would be picked up and reared by another part of the tribe). The Melanesians passed the boys over to the men's club at five, and the English upper crust send their's off to boarding school at eight. I could so parallel most of the ideas in this feminist utopia with ancient feminist utopias. However I don't know any where the race was deliberately continued by cowards, though the selection of men as breeding stock was, and is commonplace, generally to provide heroes with short hectic lives and thus a considerable variety of husbands. I wrote about this in the series some years ago in *THE MENTOR* on *THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY*. I hope that my articles were not perverted to write this book!

J. C. Hartley chides me for being too serious! That's the historian in me. If I get angry, that perhaps is the poet speaking. But there are things I take very seriously. Course my grandparents weren't transported, very few Victorians come into that category. The New South Welsh however, are a different kettle of fish. Macquarie divided them into two types, those who were transported and those who ought to have been. Actually I do number amongst my ancestors some notable Border rieviers... they weren't caught.

What I do dislike though is being misquoted as that wretch Sneyd does. I said nothing about the Stuarts. The senior (ie the oldest) line of the Royal Family is that of Cruithne (commonly but crudely called the Picts, which of course is a racist term). Elizabeth is the 121th on that line. This line joined with the Scots who go back to the so-called Fergus II about 400 A. D. According to Innes the chiefs who reigned over a period of 400 years prior to that were not kings. With a few bends and twists the line continued to Alexander the Leopard who fell over a cliff coming home from seeing his girl-friend. After some trouble Robert the Brus took the throne and presented British monarchs are bound to be descended from Brus. The Stewarts were a scion of the House of Rollo, and Count of Normandy took the English throne. The House of Rollo began in the 7th century of mingled Scottish and Norse ancestry, but the prissy English don't mention them because the bulk of them, if not all were bastards. William broke the tradition but being seized with a passion for his wife whilst out hunting (!) and the only place of concealment decency demanded was a church, so his heir was begotten in a church (at least, this is Normandy folklore). Several dynasties, Norman and French, followed and then the Welsh House of Tudor whose antecedents are the stuff of Sunday journalism. This line petered out in syphilis and the Stewarts took the throne. When this line ended a descendant of James I & IV, George Lewis, became George I of Britain. Victoria followed her uncle George IV and was also descended from Duke of Saxe-Coburg and married a prince of Saxe-Coburg. The Queen Mother was a Scot and Prince Phillip is Greek. It is damn near 400 years since there was any direct English blood entering the line and a thousand years since the last *English* king.

I was in Scotland at the time of the Coronation and boycotted it on principle, not republican ones, but because I thought they made too much fuss over the business and so cheapened it. It was not the use of letter bombs which settled the matter of Elizabeth not being the II in Scotland... it was the total and absolute repudiation of it by the people of Scotland, most notably the Burgers who refused to take an oath to Elizabeth II. Scottish law requires a law to be accepted, and its non-acceptance as in this case made it null and void. It was rank stupidity to push an issue that (a) was wrong, (b) the Scots would not accept, and has done more than anything to drive Scotland towards republicanism.

In my view, to alter something which is alive and healthy and working well after three thousand years is plain stupidity.

A sad footnote to my last letter on education and its contribution to suicide. Between the writing of the letter and its posting, six days, three local kids committed suicide, two boys and a girl. It is time the censorship on reporting suicide was abolished.

(16.1.94)

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

Firstly my condolences to any readers effected by the L. A. quake even if it was only by power cuts!

Second - my response to Bradley Row's review of *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY*.

Go Back And Read The Last Three Chapters Carefully And Slowly.

Methinks he was so disgusted he skimmed over the scene where Septimius Bird questions the council's ethics and the response is - "We call ourselves the Damned Few".

Sigh. Actually I suppose Row's response means this particular book of Tepper's has become a classic piece of speculative fiction and alas like other classics sometimes will be *misinterpreted* rather than *simply read*. Good Speculative S. F. should be challenging! Unfortunately "young?" Mr Bradley in his review has given an emotional reaction rather than a thought out critical response.

For a start the servitors are not subservient and there are male councillors although their identities are not known to the general population and neither are they S.N.A.G.s instead they are trained in real martial arts for part of the irony of this novel is that unlike the garrison the servitors are the true guardians of women's country.

As for the selective breeding - Row gives the impression its for docility but its also to cull out genetic damage from the wars and because a mutated gene for a useful form of E.S.P. has appeared in some males which the Council is trying to encourage since it appears to be linked to higher intelligence and emotional stability.

Male choice is not that limited - for ten years any male who's worked out the real secret can leave the garrison and return - not just once at fifteen which is the impression Row creates. The garrison members do have some useful functions - bandit patrol and guarding expeditions to territories to be reclaimed.

This book was one of Tepper's earliest S.F. books. What flaws it has I consider to be these (and I wish Tepper would consider writing a sequel to tidy them up) -

One - the Gypsies are a loose end - genetically and plot wise a "wild card" of which more use could have been made.

Two - Perhaps leaving most of the major revelations to the last three chapters may have made the action and plots in the main mass of the middle section a little diffuse and slow?

Three - her rewriting of Euripides is a clue to the mystery that will only make full sense to someone who's read Euripides' Trojan plays.

One wonders what Mr. Row thinks of Tepper's other novels? If you like good strong challenging and disturbing speculative fiction that will stimulate thought then read THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY and other of Tepper's works! Other letters - What a pity that Chris Masters is "capable of making up my own mind" but isn't capable of expressing himself with better synonyms than s--- or f---d! This particular use of a certain Anglo-saxon verb as an adjectival participle has always irritated me.

As for his criticisms of Mae's mental state, whatever occupies her brain space is expressed with greater manners and style than Masters apparently possesses! Sigh, another head-blind atheist who thinks the supernatural is a delusion!

"Unluckily due to its anarchic nature the freedom of the small press is always [to] be exploited by those who abuse it by producing filth".

Who has the dirtier mind? - some sexist chauvinist pig of a heavy metal fan or the censor trying to do damage control? Sometimes I think the definition of adult is someone who tries to clean up or prevent messes instead of making them and expecting other people to clean them up or not object to them at all. But by this harsh definition most of our species has the mentality of toddlers or of certain perversely right wing "Yugoslav" politicians who want the U.N. to clean up the mess their disgusting blend of racism and nationalism made. (19.1.94)

JEANNE MEALY, 4157 Lyndala Ave. S., Mpls, MN 55409, USA.

Neat to hear about your contact with the Gargoyle Club [in TM 78]. Makes me wish there was some way to tell everyone everywhere what clubs/publications exist. Not everyone is into computers. TV reaches a lot of people. maybe there could be a channel running info about what's available in the area and the country. (OK, the computer culture can have something too - may already, for all I know.)

Wow, Buck & Juanita were busy in '92. It's fun to see his writing. They're both nice folks, too.

I hope someone swatted Brent Lillie for that *awful* pun.

I enjoy reading the stories with Aussie landmarks, I either saw them there in '85 - or hope to see when I return (an event which is past due).

Oops. As Lyn Elvey's letter shows, another way to reach people with news is through fanzines. My original thoughts were about people who aren't aware of zines, but I shouldn't overlook the obvious vehicles either.

A nice lettercolumn filled with the opinions of intelligent, articulate writers. How different my early life would've been if I'd connected with fandom instead of being a quiet addict of SF.

I'm confused - what does the "Books Previously Reviewed" section mean? Is a different person reviewing them this time?

[No. When I receive a book the first time (say in hard-cover) I do a two or three paragraph review. When I receive the trade-paperback or the paperback later I just do a short paragraph "mention", presuming that the reader can look back to the longer review if they wish. - Ron.]

I hope you're staying cool and enjoying yourself. Keeping warm is my problem. We're enduring a super-freeze at the moment and this (rental) place is poorly insulated. So, I hole up in one of the few warm room and escape into the world of fanzines! (14.1.94)

[Well, today (January 26) was Australia Day - a public holiday,

so I went up to Faulconbridge to run off a magazine for the local amateur astronomy group. The weather was hot - I had to have the garage air-conditioner going. And the printing press is playing up - the compressor has been making strange sounds, so I had to unbolt the compressor/electric motor module and plan to drop it off to a ABDick repairman in Liverpool fairly soon. Arrrr!! \$\$\$ I can't afford to spend! - Ron.]

ROD MARSDEN, 21 Cusack St., Merrylands, NSW 2160.

The cover [of TM 82] was well rendered but I do prefer the more dynamic and somewhat melodramatic approach. Work for example, by Steve Carter. Guess I'm spoilt. Still, Steve Fox is one of your better artists.

Brent Lillie's tale, JAMES, I found to be very dark fantasy indeed. The fact that it was a touch absurdist won't save you from the holier-than-thou brigade. Watch your back for poison pens. A good, tight little piece.

I do believe Mr Row is sending up feminists in his A BOOK FOR BURNING. It is said that those who burn books end up burning people. If so Mr Row, when you get around to roasting a disagreeable feminist can I be invited? I'll bring the marshmallows.

In HUNDRED GATES HOLT Duncan Evans produced a charming fantasy full of clever word plays and character interaction and he kept it tight and memorable. Why can't he send me stories like this instead of long, loosely knit stuff I can't possibly use?

The poetry this issue was mundane, boring. I don't know why you bother with it.

In reviewing THE DESTINY MAKERS by G. Turner, Bill Congreve brings up a lot of good points about what is terribly wrong with the world today. At a time when people should be having two children at the most, the rewards for having many, many children are still there. The world simply cannot handle the continuing expansion of humanity and yet we seem to be brainlessly intent on increasing our numbers. Few governments in the world are brave enough to do something about it. To become unpopular for the common good. Certainly the Catholic Church should do something other than promoting it and giving it God's blessing.

Terry Jeeves, in your letters section, has mistaken manners and common politeness for censorship. Sure, we all are careful about what we say and do in order not to offend. The question of whether or not to offend, however, can in many instances rest with the individual. For example, Washington declaring the U.S.A. to be separate from Great Britain must have been rather offensive to the King of England at the time. Jesus was rather rude to the money lenders at the temple and, let's face it, the Eureka stockade flag (nowadays part of our flag) must have been really offensive to the crown powers when it was first flown. If there's something you don't want to read, listen to or view, then don't. It's simple.

John Alderson makes some good points about education in Australia. How to make it better is the tough question. The big and continuing problem is that you have and always will have kids in the classroom who don't want to learn at all. They will gather their ideas and knowledge from elsewhere while, at the same time, preventing those from learning who wish to do so in the classroom. On top of this you have the present day fact that most young people leaving High School will be going straight onto the dole queue where the chances of getting off it are not good. Not great incentive, I'm afraid.

The review of DOOMSDAY BOOK by Connie Willis made it sound interesting and well worth having. The price, for a change, is O.K. THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER also sounds like it might be worth having but at \$34.95 it's a bit over my present budget. Besides, I already have books on Jack. (12.1.94)

[But are they by Jack?? - Ron.]

BLAIR HUNT, PO Finch Hatton, QLD 4756.

TM 82 has just arrived and what a pleasant Surprise. Not only does the size seem to be the same but the quality is even better than usual, and that's saying something!

Had a pleasant thing happen to me the other day. Got a letter from the people at the Adelaide Writer's Centre to say that five of my stories are going to be broadcast on Radio 5UV this year. No money in it but, as I'm often told by those who love me, "Writers are only showing off." So that's all right.

I must confess that Brent Lillie's JAMES left me with the impression that he's a writer who can handle the language well but has failed to put in those little explanatory bits that let the reader keep track. I kept thinking, "Now I see what he's saying" then realising by the next

paragraph that I had no idea what it was all about. Either that or it's me, it's probably me.

Bradley Row's review of THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY was beautifully done. I assume that he's planning to leave the country for a few years. If not this would be a good time to make travel arrangements before some of the more enthusiastic feminists blockade the air terminals to prevent his escape.

John Francis Haines manages to say in a few lines of poetry what the rest of us take three thousand words to say, and says it better. John, that's a very annoying thing to do! (24.1.94)

DEREK PICKLES, 44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorkshire B05 8LX, UK.

You wonder what the future will bring in the way of school curriculum. Well, in England and Wales (Scotland has its own system) the Government has imposed (for junior schools) a "back to the three R's curriculum", learn the kings' and queens' dates, times tables, and so on, together with assessment schemes so complicated and overpowering that the entire educational profession rose in revolt. The schemes have been modified; in fact last week the Education Secretary had to backtrack on most of his original orders. For secondary education there are proposals for practical education that seems to me to be a throwback to the "trade/technical" schools of between the WW's. Considering we have probably approaching 4 million unemployed (real figures, not government statistics) many of whom need retraining to be able to undertake new jobs the secondary/further education proposals seem to me - and I did teach in further/higher education for twenty years - to be designed to produce people with 1990's skills for 21st Century jobs.

John Harvey-Jones, the former head of ICI said "you need manufacturing industry, you can't depend on tourism, and dress all the unemployed in smocks and have them show American and Japanese tourists around stately homes."

Andrew Darlington's article about NEBULA Science Fiction magazine brought back memories. I worked in the book trade in the 50s and 60s and we handled NEBULA from #1. I must say it was never as big a seller, for us, as the more pulp-like magazines like AUTHENTIC SF but I certainly enjoyed reading it. I also remember spending a very enjoyable evening having dinner with Peter Hamilton in Glasgow, where I went on business trips.

I knew nothing of Russian science fiction or attendant fandom until I read RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA". I have learned that fannish organisations have long names and federate to form organisations with even longer names. Perhaps when perestroika and glasnost have fully worked through the Russians might start using initials and acronyms. (28.1.94)

SHORTIES:

YVONNE ROUSSEAU, PO Box 3086, Grenfell St, Adelaide SA 5000. Steve Carter's THE INITIATE has an absolutely clear moral message: namely, "Save It For Your Horse." However, this message has already been expressed by Peter Schickele (otherwise known as P. D. Q. Bach) in his "choral calamity" OEDIPUS TEX, and with infinitely more wit and charm than Steve Carter displays. I'd also like to mention that Terry Broome's handwriting would have intended to convey that THE INITIATE's climax was "risible" and not (as printed in THE MENTOR 81) merely "visible". And, no - this very short comment is not designed to attract any more copies of THE MENTOR. i/11/93

DARREN GOOSSENS, 210 Melbourne Rd, Ballarat, VIC 3350. ... I must say a few things - for one thing, have you ever read a story called WHO CAN REPLACE A MAN? (I think that was its name) by Brian W. Aldiss? It has many parallels with A NEW ORDER. With regards to your editorial, I might mention that it has been said to me that the University drop-out rate among kids who went to public schools is lower than for kids from private ones (although a lower

percentage of public school students get into University in the first place). I wonder if this is to do with the fact that public schools perhaps don't "push" the kids so much, with the result that those who do get through and do get good results are students who are used to working off their own bat before they've even started University. Also, I liked Andrew Darlington's article. (10.12.93)

J. C. HARTLEY, 14 Rosebank, Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB4 7RD, England. Re FOREST ad/letter afraid overpowering image spoils this for me. The presentation dinner for winning story summoned images of smoke-filled hall - tables littered with free cigs, stuffed ashtrays, everyone hawking & coughing as they celebrate their freedom. Ah, the cynicism of the ex-smoker. (-.12.93)

WAHF:

Alan Stewart, Darren Goossens, Cecelia Drewer, Ray Schaffer, John Millard, Linda Tannos, Nick Bloukos, Mark Mordo, Margaret Pearce, Pauline Scarf, Douglas Guildfoyle, Andrew Sullivan, Brent Lillie, Duncan Evans, Peter Brodie, George Ivanoff, Robert Frew and Igor Tolokonnikov.

IF YOU SEE IT:

A request - I have been going through my library and I've found that I have several volumes missing. The main one that I am after at the moment is the Pyramid (US) edition of

THE ISLAND OF THE INNOCENT by Vardis Fisher

It is #7 in the Testament of Man series, and was published in the early 1960s. I'll swap a \$12 sub for THE MENTOR for it.

