

= THE MENTOR =



THE EDITORIAL SLANT:

by Ron Clarke

Well, here we are with another issue of =THE MENTOR=. For those interested, I've settled down in to my flat which is in an

fairly densely populated suburb of Sydney with a high proportion of Asians. What is the neighbourhood like? Well, several months ago a Vietnamese was stabbed to death in the local Club's car park at the north end of the road I live in, and at the other end about a month later a gang of youths attacked another man and beat him up. Not *quite* the neighbourhood to go around alone late at night. On the other hand, someone was attacked at 3 PM on a Sunday afternoon in a nearby shopping centre car park....

The format of this issue of =TM= is what you can expect

to see in the future: columns, the odd article, the R&R DEPT and reviews for Oz readers. I have taken out the comments from LoCs talking about the fiction in past issues and have sent them on to the authors concerned; thus there is no remarks about fiction in that Dept. Poetry will still be seen in this mag - I like publishing it, as long as it is short.

Being alone in this flat, I've been looking to continue some events that I had had to drop several years ago when I was in the Blue Mountains. One such activity was going to SF club meetings. There are several SF clubs I make it a point in visiting - the Penrith group, which is held on a Saturday night every three weeks, and the Lugarno group which is held on a Saturday afternoon every month. I also visit the monthly meeting of the Sydney Horror Society at a pub some ten minutes from where I work. The Penrith and Lugarno groups are held in two of Sydney's suburbs (though Penrith is about 50 km from the centre of Sydney); the Lugarno group is about 45 minutes drive from the city centre.

Where these groups met was the principal reason for Graham Stone and myself reviving the Futurian Society of Sydney and having the meetings in the city centre at the (Sydney) University of Technology, which is at Central Station. Eric Lindsay has managed to obtain permission to hold meetings in a large room there on the third Friday night of the month - and the venue is free. The cost of the meals at the Student's Union cafeteria is a real plus also - most meals are under \$3 and you are given a heaped plate.

Some NSW readers of =TM= might be interested to know that I am setting up a Speculative Writers Group in Sydney. This is open for any SF, Fantasy or Horror writer (or would-be writer) who wants to hone their craft. The first meeting is to be held on December 9, and quite a few writers have already expressed interest. There are no fees. Because I have had to drop the fiction from =TM=, with any luck the group will be an outlet for any creative energies that Sydney's authors can muster and hopefully sales will ensue from its activities.

There have been comments in various overseas mags that the number of SF fanzines is dropping. Here in Oz this seems to be truly the case. At least for regular, generally distributed ones. For instance the only regular zines I get are the Melbourne SF Club's *ETHEL THE AARDVARK*, Marc Ortlieb's one-page

newsletter *THE BULLSHEET*, Alan Stewart's *THYME*, John Foyster's *FNAC* and Mike Hailstone's *BUSSWARBLE*. I haven't seen an issue of *THYME* since the July issue, and in the latest *BUSSWARBLE* (which came out about every two weeks), Michael says that he is dropping publishing. Other zines come out irregularly from Bruce Gillespie, Van Ikin, Jean Weber and Eric Lindsay. Lately Rod Marsden has published a new fiction mag covering the genres of SF, Fantasy, Horror and Crime but he has only been able to do an issue every six months. And of course there is the Futurian Society's new mag *SYDNEY FUTURIAN* which covers SF news in Sydney, and which is also roughly monthly. This list is quite a different one from any list of zines from several years ago, when there were many more zines being published.

I'm having a flat-warming party on Saturday afternoon, the 10th of December. This will be a "greening" party - the flat is pretty bare as far as greenery is concerned and I'm asking party-goers to bring along a live plant in a pot. I'll be providing munchies, but if you want specific drinks, please bring them along. Any help with eats will also help - my mortgage repayments just went up.

I was also hoping that if I mention this warming in =TM= it will enable readers to attend, thus this offer is open to all readers of this zine - it will be a good opportunity to meet other contributors and LoCCers. There aren't many people who read this who don't contribute in some way. Hopefully the lead time will be enough for people to make it.

The address is flat 2 (which is on the first floor), 141 Chapel Rd, Bankstown. Do NOT send mail to this address. The flats are on the corner of De Witt St and Chapel Road. It is that part of Chapel Road south of the railway line. If you are coming by train, you get on the Bankstown line, get off at Bankstown station, turn left at the station entrance and walk south through the plaza to Chapel Rd. The flats are a fifteen minute walk south from Bankstown station on the left hand side of Chapel Rd. My business hours number is (02) 213-2918 and my home number is (02) 796-8895.

Please let me know if you are coming so I can have some idea how many to expect; and I hope you can make it. - Ron.

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THE MENTOR 86, April, 1995. ISSN 0727-8462. Edited, printed and published by Ron Clarke, PO Box K940, Haymarket, NSW 2000, Australia. THE MENTOR is published at intervals of roughly three months. It is available for published contribution in the fields of poetry, an article, or letter of comment on a previous issue. It is now available for subscription: A\$20 or US\$20 (cash) for 4 issues surface mail. Air Mail add \$5 per issue. Sample issue available by request.

Contributions 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.

24.11.94.

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A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH

BY MAE STRELKOV

This is the story of a bulldozer in a steamy jungle. It is the story of myself, born in China, married to a Russian refugee, with children born in South America.

We live in a particular limbo. The world swirls by and is not aware of us. This place in the mountains in the heart of South America still belongs to its pre-Columbian past, although the voices of the present come over the air-waves nightly, when the sun sinks behind the high range of Santa Barbara.

That name is but a recent one, dating back to the Spanish Era, and their Golden Colonial Age. But our valley is timeless, even though down its centre runs a gravel highway used constantly by timber-trucks. But they only pass by, and the breath of distant cities is all that remains in the clouds of smoke from their exhausts. Oh, we're not forgotten by our rulers in the great cities. We faithfully make the long journey four times a year to Jujuy town to pay our taxes, so that we may go on feeling "at home" in this wild and lovely spot. But it isn't the "world" that is recognised as a "reality" by most of its inhabitants. It is however, Earth, but an "Earth" still lovely and unspoiled. Certainly, the natives have no hesitancy in spoiling what they can, cutting down the natural jungles and burning what cannot be sold as valuable timber or good firewood.

We, for our part, are slowly reforesting the portion of land we now own. Where mere second-growth tangles have taken over on the nearby slopes, following lumbering done by previous owners years ago, we've been clearing away that awful tangle and gradually putting in pine and eucalyptus and other saplings by the thousands. As our youngest son, Tony, says: "I'd rather work at this than spend my life in some office! We are far from civilisation, culture, all the entertainments city-dwellers take for granted. But we have the skies and the bright sun, we've the roaring gales too and the endless rains of summer. At times there are avalanches and floods. But the challenges are never boring."

I have wondered how far to go in identifying the protagonists. It's possible that my "characters" will hear about it and recognise themselves, with their eyes popping and their guns popping also. It's all very well for weekend travellers to return home and write a book about Latin America. They can tell what they like; in any case, their memories of their visit will be blurred by the time they sit down to present their learned opinions to a trusting public. But I can't "go home" to write; I live here, among the people I'm writing about.

My possible audience consists of a wide assortment of folks. My own family, first, and that's tough. They were distressed when "Mumma" describes them too starkly, for we all need to blur our memories to be able to live with our past and its grip upon us.

Our kingdom is almost twice the size of Monaco, but its citizens are the birds and the trees, the reptiles, insects and wild animals. On its borders, others lurk. Months ago there were rumours that members of Peru's Sendero Luminoso were lurking in our mountains and jungles here, but they never did show up anywhere; perhaps they were just rumours. The utter peace of this lonely valley that has become our home seems undisturbed, like some backwater where the river almost never reaches.

So this is the world that "swirls around us", here where we live in the most quite and forgotten of sites, shielded to our west by the Santa Barbara Range, (perhaps 2,500 metres high, or higher maybe); to our south by the valley's own heights where lie the vast

domains of El Fuerte... and beyond it there's a national park, too far to reach easily from here, at the very centre of a geological fault, so that severe earthquakes can occur. To our east just beyond another ridge stretch the wastes of Chaco, becoming more and more swampy as the great rivers coming down from Brazil encounter difficulty in emptying their burdens into the Atlantic Ocean far to the south-east of us here. Somewhere in the wilds to our east, moreover lies the mysterious homeland of the Guaranies, now called Paraguay.

To our north there are not cities, just some sugar-producing *ingenios* employing thousands of peones, so that small thriving towns cluster around such sites. The brisk north wind, whoever, by the time it comes roaring across our own piece of land where we are, halfway up this great valley, is so pure it's a pleasure to have it as our steadiest wind the whole year through. Gales come from the east or west, tremendous storms at times, though they likewise can swirl in from all directions and sometimes uproot huge trees and carry off the corrugated-iron roofs of humble folk as well. (We too have corrugated zinc roofs. Moreover we have bought yet more corrugated roofing, but this time of aluminium, and hope to add more rooms to our little place gradually, as and when we can.)

Beyond the edge of this most northerly Argentine province, looms Bolivia, ever remote and mysterious too, from whence comes the coca leaf that all the natives of this province seem to chew. There too, as one learns from the occasional news-magazine in English that comes our way, attempts to eradicate this coca plant have come to naught, and once again the force used to accomplish this task (with the urging and help of the USA) was misspent. Those who *have* to have cocaine at any price will continue to provide a steady market, and we do not lack all those drug-barons of the USA and of Latin America who will keep such purchasers supplied, at gun's point where necessary.

What are we doing here? How did we get here in the first place? With the world so huge, and we such roving folks at heart, how did we ever settle here at the last?

Perhaps the condors are to blame, up on the high plateau seven kilometres away from us here in the valley as the bird flies, and much, much further by a winding steep trail. There they are, forever circling, and they rule the plunging heights well over a kilometre high. In fact, the top of our property that ends at the peaks of the Santa Barbara Ridge must be well over 2,000 metres high. Even 2,500, who knows? Other peaks around us are shown on the maps as around 2,500 metres and more.

Our property is seven kilometres long and half a kilometre wide. Why, I for one haven't yet climbed all the way up to the Plateau of the Condors, from whence it is certain a stupendous view awaits me one day. All the way across the central plains of Jujuy Province, and westwards to the snowy foothills of the Andes, incredibly high!

The people around us have also watched us intently ever since we arrived to live here nearly twelve years ago. And we in turn have been intently studying them, since they are to be our neighbours for the rest of our lives. But one also feels the way Nature watches us. The way the great birds circle and dip to study us in our valley, where we are gradually clearing away the giant weeds and thorny thickets, so as to plant saplings of eucalyptus and pine. Snakes slither out of sight, and an occasional huge iguana flashes by. A peon swings his machete at it, perhaps achieves a hit. Proudly, then, he carries the stricken reptile to his home to carefully remove the beautiful skin - it is bought by occasional truckers who visit; then they cure the meat and cook it and have a great feast. "Poor Iguana", I think, but recognise that in the forest ecology here, the native peoples have as much right as do the wild creatures, to live as they do... no fanatic hunters with powerful guns bother us here, and that's good.)

##

Where to start?

In July of 1983, I was on my own for that day and heard a voice shouting at the *tranquera*. This is a very crudely-made "gate", composed simply of long poles stuck each into its own hole in a pair of posts of ancient *arce* wood that never decays. It has stood there for decades already, long before we bought this land.

The voice was harsh and masculine - and impatient. I dropped my chores and hurried out. A man was leaning down from

his horse...

"Buen dia!" I said hospitably, recognising Moral, our neighbour.

"They are stealing your wood!" he shouted back, leaping off his horse and coming up to me at the gate.

"Will you come in?"

"I haven't time." He had a bit of paper fluttering in his fingers. "Where's your husband?"

"He drove to San Pedro. He'll be back tonight."

"A pity. The Forestry Inspector is here, if your husband had wanted to speak to him. Here, keep this paper to show your husband. Tell him the timber is on our *cancón* and the Inspector says he'll hold me responsible if it's moved."

I tried to decipher the scribbled note on the paper. "*8 rollos de quina*" it seemed to proclaim.

That's all that's left," explained Moral. "The rest has been carted away. How was I to know they'd stolen it from your land? I can't be blamed for everything. It's your husband's responsibility now."

"Yes, of course," said I, soothingly. "Who was stealing our wood?"

He raised his eyes to heaven and shrugged, his hands lifted palms up, as though offering his innocence to Deity. Rotund and short of breath, he glared back at me panting. "How can I know?" he said. "I thought it was from the land next door to yours... but there's a lawsuit now over it and neither side will allow the other to take out any timber. So someone went to complain to the Forestry Authorities in Jujuy town, and this inspector now announces the wood has been dragged, obviously, from your property up there... it's not even from the land in litigation. So the inspector has sealed it with the Forestry Authorities' seal and threatened to make trouble if it vanishes now."

"I see," said I. But of course I didn't see. I had no idea even what a *rollo* was or what *quina* might be.

"Well, that's all," Moral said. "You tell your husband. He'll know what to do." (Women, obviously in his view, were just for household and wifely occupations, worthless in any other milieu.)

He leaped back on his horse with a jingling of spurs and a flapping of the huge leather guards used here by horsemen to protect their legs and knees when they ride. Off he galloped, cutting a fine figure in contrast to my own helpless stance, looking after him as he vanished down the highway.

Back in our new little place, (as yet only three metres by eight in size, for we'd so far built only the first room of the house that has been growing ever since then), I kept on with my chores, setting the house to rights and wondering vaguely what a *rollo* was and why people want to steal *rollos*.

We had hitherto been living in Central Argentina - Cordoba Province - a wondrously civilised location compared to where we had now come to dwell, about a thousand kilometres further north, in the Province of Jujuy, right below Bolivia. Buenos Aires is far, far away. (We lived there for years...) It's full of "foreigners" - Italians, Spaniards, Anglo-Argentines, and any other nationality you might name. The central province of Cordoba, in turn, where we also lived for years, has a more insular people... the old inhabitants there own vast properties and are considered to belong to "the best blood of Latin America", dating back to early Colonial times.

But here where we are now, everybody looks Indian, chews coca leaves (unheard of in Cordoba), and - while Spanish in outlook and speech - they are usually Indian in their stolidity. (By Indian, I mean of course "native Americans, of pre-Columbian stock". How I dislike having to call such natives by the incorrect term "Indian".)

As an illustration to what it's like here, we brought north with us two townwriters. Whenever we take one of them for fixing to distant Jujuy town, they charge a lot, return it "fixed", and it breaks down anew, so we take it next just to San Pedro, a hundred kilometres from where we are now. The mechanic there takes it apart to demonstrate that there are no new parts put in to replace the faulty springs. The Jujuy town's mechanics had just patched up the old springs and cords, etc "with a lick and a prayer", and charged as if new spare parts had been used. Months later, the spare parts for my little Japanese-made "Brother" being unobtainable, the mechanic in San Pedro offered to use his own ingenuity to put it into shape. He'd

already charged five "Australes" just to look at it so we expected a bigger bill.

So he fixed it with wirings of his own invention and refused to charge another centavo. "Just bring me one tomato from your place."

"We didn't grow tomatoes this year." My husband said. "But I can get some from our neighbours."

"No! I want only those you grow yourself!" he said cheerfully. A really nice and decent man!

The other, heavy-duty, long-carriage machine will be given to him shortly to fix. He's a dear!

So it goes... Some folks are marvellous but some are real vivos. We are in Jujuy now. That's why! We must learn to take such things for granted. For the old traditions of the pre-Columbian natives have long since been superseded by imported European mores, and the Quechuan mores, "Don't steal, don't lie, don't be lazy", have been replaced by another, "Don't do it unless you can get away with it."

Of course there are some lovely exceptions. Is it easy to get away with log-stealing here? Not so easy, but people try and some have gotten rich in the process. There's a stand of *quina* on our Ridge, of the Wild Pigs, just above us to our west, (not the stand of *quina* from whence those eight *rollos* came), where much cutting has been done - hopefully without our knowledge at first - and till recently our next-door neighbour (whom I'd just better label "Mudwall") kept inviting possible buyers up to study it and perhaps take a risk and "buy it cheap" from him. It is still there, and just today, as I write, a trucker asked us about it. "I wanted to buy it, when your neighbour offered it to me. So I went up to look, and from that height looking back down I could clearly see it's on your land, not his, so I refused. I would like to buy it any day now, but from you," he said. We said we'd see if it could be hauled down to the roadside, one of these days, and placed on sale openly. This Mudwall is a dear old fellow, the least annoying but most devious of all of our timber thieves.

Of course, back in July of 1983, we didn't know what we'd let ourselves in for when we bought this property, and came to live here. (The actual purchase had been made almost a year earlier, and our initial absence from the region had encouraged an all-out endeavour on the part of every big and little timber-thief in the region, to try to reach a vast fortune in natural pine and cedar near the very top of the land we'd acquired.)

It's turning out to be a terrible responsibility, and all we'd wanted was the portion of the valley, some 15 to 18 hectares of semi-cleared and fenced-in land along the river-side and with the highway cutting through it higher up. The jungle-clad mountain-side above it, came in the bargain; we had to "buy it all", for there's a law forbidding the cutting up of these huge lots for re-sale.

So we'd decided at the first: we'd till the valley land and keep our horses here. As for the jungles and wilderness above us, we'd let Nature continue to run her show there in her own way. We were not timber-men at heart.

It was only when we learned that the poor forests up there were being nibbled at mercilessly on all sides by furtive timber-thieves, that we had to go into action and learn our way about in those wilds also. Wilds containing *anta* or tapirs, a few leopards, many pumas, all types of wild creatures, and serpents galore. Also legendary *ucumari* (or *ucumarú*) "semi-human", whose only ambition, reputedly, is to mate with passing members of the opposite sex of the (to them) new race of humans.

"No wonder they all look like *ucumarus* here!" Vadim laughed when he heard that tale. In a book on South America's fauna, however, a *ucumari* is a very shy Andean bear, a herbivore and harmless.

But we've never met one ourselves.

As Vadim would put it, "We can cope with the descendants of *ucumarus*." (His is a Russian type of superiority complex.)

Our youngest, Tony, is now thirty-six. When he got back from a month in Mendoza, (by the Andes, where there is another son and wife and children), I read a bit of an earlier draft of this to him. I could see a tightening of his features though he said only, "Oh, yes, and it's all very nice", so I said,

"Really, Tony, it is you who should be telling the story, now I."

"The trouble is I'm *living* the story and have no time to sit down to tell it."

"But you could put the action in, better than I - a mere observer - can. Where I you, this is how such a story would have begun..."

"The first time I encountered the bulldozer was when Metilda drove up late one night crying wildly, 'The bulldozer's come and it's waiting at Palma Soia to be unloaded. Come and help at once! Blase's not here!'"

Mattie and Blase (not their real names) are among the chief characters in this story. I will have to discuss them with great caution...

Well, Tony grinned a tightish grin and said quietly to me, "Yes, one could have begun the story like that. We got to Palma Soia near midnight, and of course there was nothing that could be done to get that enormous bulldozer off the truck without some sort of a platform on to which it could be driven. So we just looked and came back again, and the next day we did get it off - we dug out a place for the truck to back into with spades, with hither ground at the rear, and we got the bulldozer off the truck, and then our assistant bulldozer mechanic put the treads on backwards. We had to take them off and put them back on properly..."

"And," I broke in, "the bulldozer got 'first blood' out of you right then, as you worked underneath to fix it. It flung a wrench back at you and nearly cut your lip in two."

Tony didn't like of putting it that way. "No, not 'first blood', mother. (He's a black-belt in karate and likes accuracy when discussing conflict of any type. In his view bulldozers do not hit back. In my view they do. And I envisioned the waiting jungles already resentful that the bulldozer was finally about to arrive.)

The bulldozer was in our midst for almost six months, driving other would-be renters crazy with envy in the process, for to obtain it in the first place had taken nearly two years of political manoeuvring and dancing to every tune, on the part of Blase. He'd used us to give his requests respectability as we came later to recognise. If we were part of the scheme, such innocents as ourselves), surely it was all "honest and above board".

And if, (people thought), we'd be the victims of some clever trickery, well, "live and learn". "*Derecho de piso*" they call it here. You pay for the right to have your place, to have a place to stand in, as it were. (Not easy to translate, that phrase!)

Our two youngest, Sylvia and Tony, shining examples of innocents brought up to trust God and Life and Everybody (formerly by silly me), were to be the victims, obviously, as the observers supposed.

As to how a mere bulldozer in use might bilk us, it would obviously do so by somehow making a road to reach our Forest of Forever at last, with our cognisance, and yet due to the nebulous "guesses" made by residents as to boundary lines, we'd not even know it when much of our good wood was carried away by neighbours like Blase and Midwall, as their wood, when in reality everybody knew it grew on our land. Only we ourselves, (anxious not to poach on neighbouring properties), might be fooled, in the interests of "honesty and fair play".

The trouble was, just as the bulldozer reached the heights, land surveyors appeared on the scene, officially appointed to make certain whose land was whose, and they discovered that *all* the surviving "Forest of Forever" (as I have dubbed it) is on *our* property, and not on the lands of neighbours. There were loud outcries. As for ourselves, appointed thus by the fates as the "Guardians of the Cedar Forest", (all that's survived till now), it is evidently our task to stand guard.

How will we manage it? Have we, thus? That is possibly the kernel of this story. As also is the pang of conscience and the twists and twinges of "need" tempting us at times to "cut down just one more tree", ourselves.

It has been a long and troubling experience... especially for me, I confess, for I care more than most folks here about trees.... For me they are like friends... not "things".

I am the "silly, sentimental Mummy" who recounts the tale. How I watched our youngest son and daughter coming to terms here with Life-in-the-raw! How I worried....

##

That day in July 1983 right after we first got here, Vadim returned that evening and settled down to supper and I handed him the scrap of paper Morla had given me.

He also did not know what "*8 rollos de quina*" might mean, and he said to me,

"I stopped at Pedro Viltes to deliver a message somebody asked me to give him, and there, parked outside on the road, was a huge truck with a short of trailer - they call it a *diablo* here (it's just a platform on two wheels attached to a big timber truck.) And there on the truck and with the top end on the trailer, was the biggest tree-trunk I've seen in my life. The lower part was almost as big as the truck. They hadn't sawn it into convenient lengths. And as I stared, all the fellows on the porch who'd been drinking, ran down to cluster around me and laughed away, studying my face up close. Was it from *our* land? What sort of tree was it? How would I know? One could feel them laughing at my ignorance and helplessness in the situation. So I just nodded: "Big, isn't it?" and kept on going. What else could one do?"

"Really!" I agreed. The trees of these jungles of Jujuy grow so huge, I think only the redwoods of California might be compared for example. Perhaps that is exaggeration, but I do recall my shock and awe the first time I entered the jungles, while trying to explore, out here.

There, towering above us so loftily, was a ceiling of whispering foliage casting deep shadows on the undergrowth (tangled and spiny) below. And there was a strange silence, punctuated by the occasional cry of a frightened bird; but you felt the forest watching, waiting... observing you as you pushed your way in. And there were countless observers.. the noiseless puma; the band of wild pigs (or boars), of which two types are said to inhabit these heights, some deadly; and the huge *iguanas* - well the list could go on and on. Till now we were still encountering new-to-us varieties... just as I was ending an earlier version of this, five white "condors" appeared across the river to our east, studying us closely.

It is all so lovely, but deadly, also. And then there are the ticks that reputedly originated in Spain but were brought here to the New World with the first cows that came over on the Spanish caravels and galleons. They have found the new environment so pleasant, there are untold billions now. In winter they shower down like black powder when you brush against shrubbery, and they burrow all over your flesh temporarily till they drop off anew to continue their cycle. (Actually, we kill *every one* on our flesh with alcohol and iodine.) By summer, only a few huge ticks survive in the wilds.

The ticks from Spain find humans as palatable as cows. They also infest our horses and our domestic pets. That is to say, they did so, till we gradually fended them off our own valley land. It can be done, by clearing away the brush, by keeping the neighbours' cows out, by burning dry branches here and there. Once under control, ticks cease to be a problem where lands are fenced in and cattle kept out. Also, each winter, the *garapateros*, bands of white herons, arrive, and follow our horses everywhere, picking up any stray tick they can find, and the horseflies also. (*Garapata* means "tick", so their name means "tick collectors" or "tick controllers", etc.)

That first year of our stay here, we used to comfort ourselves (when we kept hearing about timber-thieves on the prowl and could as yet do nothing about it, for we were still feeling our way); we reminded each other, "We didn't come here to work timber on the hills. We can for the 18 hectares or so valley land. It was all we wanted. So the horses would have a place, when we had to move from Cordoba, and so we" - (the old folks, Vadim and myself) - "wouldn't have to spend our last years cooper in or near some big city." We'd always loved the wilds, Vadim and I. And Cordoba, for example, was getting more and more populated.. the wilds there were being turned into nice little suburbs surrounding ever-growing big towns. (It had happened earlier in cities like Buenos Aires, Rosario, and a necklace of towns, so a bus-ride to Buenos Aires from Cordoba took you through an endless procession of towns and suburbs, merging gradually into each other, as populations multiplied everywhere.)

- Mae Strelkov

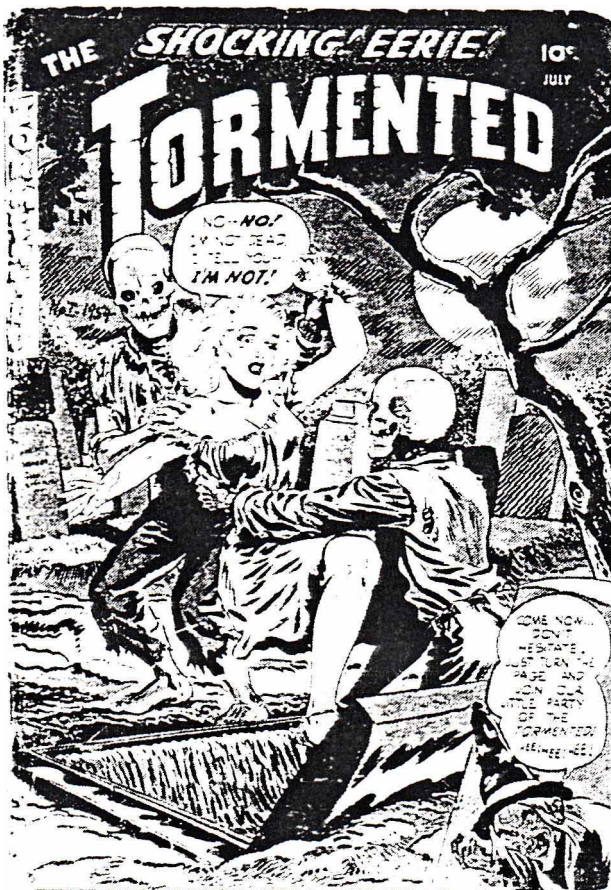
TERRORS FROM THE CRYPT OF HORRORS

by Andrew Darlington

Midnight. The graveyard.

A huge moon and the twisted reach of a haunted tree. And two foul skeletons drag her into the gaping mouth of an open grave. Her blonde hair is thrown back in shocked disarray. Her dress torn so the low neckline intersects her clearly outlined breasts which heave and tremble in frantic terror as she screams "No... No! I'm not dead I tell you - I'M NOT!" The skulls merely grimace horribly, the last scraps of putrefying flesh dripping from bare bones.

It's *shocking! Eerie!* This is THE TORMENTED #1. A ten cent package from July 1954. And it's guaranteed to scare you rigid.



Then there's TALES FROM THE CRYPT #33 (December 1952). "Open the cover if you dare!". Read as "the rotted decayed thing grinned... reaching outwards! Its flesh crawled with the slime of death! Its voice rasped like a worn-out gramophone cylinder... the thing closed its flesh-tattered bony fingers around Howard's wrist...!"

Today our self-appointed moral watchdogs tut-tut as MORTAL KOMBAT computer kids explode heads, and DOOM players lop off on-screen limbs. Tabloids stir up sensation. Politicians advocate censorship, bans and curbs on the corruption of innocence. The brutalisation of children. Ten years ago it was Video nasties that incurred their wrath. TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE. Ten years before that they attacked the corrosive

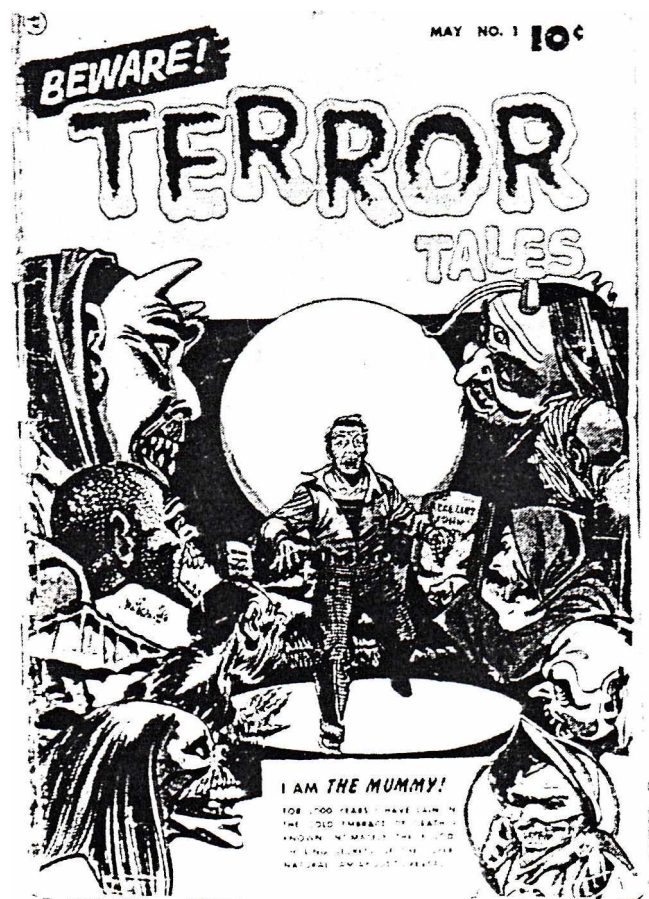
effect on vulnerable young minds of the SKOOKIDS ISSUE OF OZ, and pilloried it at the Old Bailey.

Every age has its bursts of moral outrage aimed at those who shove and tease at the boundaries of what's considered respectable and proper. All that changes is the technology carrying the tide of terrors into the nation's front room. Even so, the Horror Comics of the American 1950's were a special case. There's probably a higher goro quotient in the average issue of this week's 2000 AD, but exactly forty years ago *now* - such was the shock-wave of delighted revulsion among kids, and the outrage of their elders and betters, that within five years of their birth, they were driven into extinction. A censorial "Code of Approval" was imposed on comic-books. A code that sanitised, and survived clear through to the end of the 1960's.

Launched by Horror-Buff Will Gaines through his "E. C. Comics" company, his three classic titles - TALES FROM THE CRYPT, VAULT OF HORROR, and HAUNT OF FEAR, were destined to leave a lasting imprint in the psyche that you glimpse in Michael Jackson's video for "Thriller". It, too, was censored, deemed too grotesque for peak TOP OF THE POPS viewing, and exiled to a bleak after-midnight slot. It also lurks in the movies of George Romero. His THE LIVING DEAD films reanimate the fiendish walking corpses that Will Gaines' readers thrilled to. And they live in the novels of "Hell-Raising" Clive Barker and Stephen King too. King devotes a long passage of spine-chilled affection to Gaines' time-lost oeuvre in his DANSE MACABRE. "In almost all the weird comics of the '50's" he writes, "the women are seen as slightly over-ripe, enticingly fleshy and sexual, but ultimately evil, castrating murdering bitches who, like the trapdoor spider, feel an almost instinctual need to follow intercourse with cannibalism..."

"For 200 years I have lain in the cold embrace of death, known intimately the blood-chilling secrets of the supernatural, I am almost about to reveal... I AM THE MUMMY!"

(BEWARE TERROR TALES #1 - May 1952)



Dead. But not as we know it.

Death. And what lies beyond it. Silent tombs and monstrous evils. Things from beyond the grave. Fearful trysts in the realm of nightmare.

Why Horror? Horror has an eternal fascination because we all know, deep deep down, in the most secret pit of our fears, that we will die. Me writing this. You reading it. We are spirits trapped in a material world. We carry meat bodies around that are subject to decay and corruption. Bits of us can be crushed and broken, cut off, pierced and eviscerated. Then we die. Horror flirts with that secret shared inevitability. And so it touches us all. Edgar Allen Poe. M R James. Denis Wheatley. H P Lovecraft. Boris Karloff. Peter Cushing. Bela Lugosi.... Will Gaines.

Read TALES FROM THE CRYPT #23. There's a story here called "Reflections of Death", written and drawn by Gaines' co-conspirator Al Feldstein. The very air within each frame crackles with tension. And it speaks directly at the reader. "You. DEAD? You gasp. You look around! A mirror! You get up. Stagger toward it... and look in! You scream! You open your rotten, torn, decomposed mouth and SCREAM!!!"

Horror. Where did it come from? Max Gaines, father of young William, published a handful of non-too successful mild-mannered comic-books through his E. C. (Educational Comics) imprint. But Will was already into more esoteric stuff. The movies of Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. Radio Horror playlets that were the audio counterparts of TV's THE TWILIGHT ZONE to come. And pulp magazines such as the groundbreaking WEIRD TALES with its creepily erotic art by Margaret Brundage and Hannes Bok. For there were already long-established traditions of terror that included the 19th Century "Shilling Shockers" and "Penny Dreadfuls" with work by Poe, Lovecraft and James. But they were text stories.

Comic-books are for children.

It's the cross-over into that kindergarten of fiction that outraged social values.

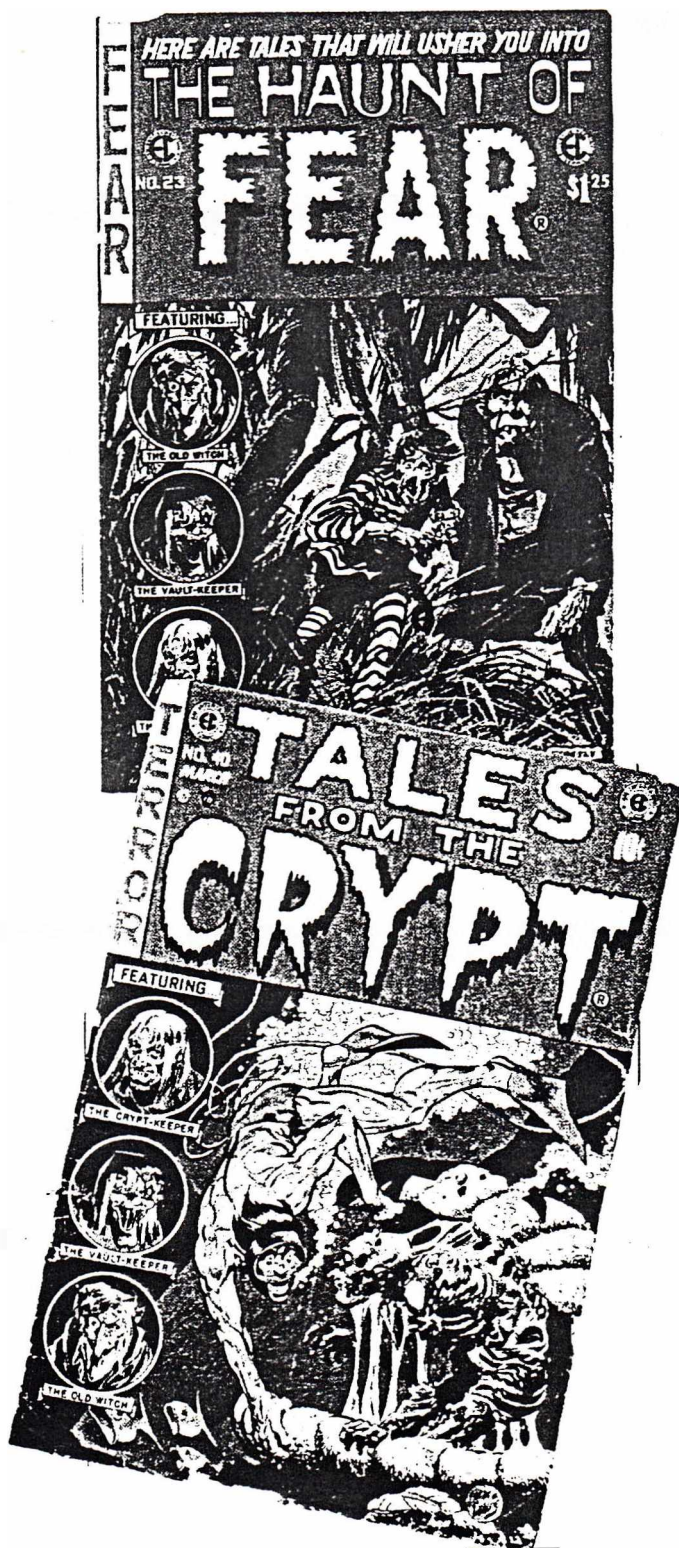
The two worlds first met directly through the intermediary of "Classics In Pictures", "Masterpieces Of Literature From The Pens Of The World's Greatest Authors", "Educational" Fiction in strip form. Throughout the 1940's spiritually uplifting (and out of copyright) picturizations of TREASURE ISLAND, OLIVER TWIST and IVANHOE appeared. But publishers were quick to note that the titles that flew from the news-stands fastest were visual adaptations of DOCTOR JEKYLL AND MISTER HYDE or FRANKENSTEIN. The covers credit Robert Louis Stevenson and Mary Shelley. But the artists took their cue from the movies.

Already the foul stench of embalming fluid was permeating the News Vendors.

ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN, dated Fall 1948, is entered into the grimoires of terror as the first *real* all-Horror comic-book while its mix of Werewolf, Ghost and Zombie tales was still wide enough to later include legitimising "classics" like Horace Walpole's THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO. But by then Will Gaines was about to make his lunge into notoriety. Daddy Max was unexpectedly edited from the scene when a fatal motorboat accident left his son in charge. But Max's loss was Will's gain. Already one of his father's titles - a kind of lack-lustre Wonder-Woman cash-in called MOON GIRL, had become the vehicle for his first foray into the gruesome. The fifth issue experiments with a back-page shocker called "Zombie Terror". The blood-letting had just begun....

Then - in April 1950, the same month and the same year that EAGLE blasted off with Dan Dare's debut Space Adventure confronting the Mekon on Venus, E. C. became "Entertaining Comics", and launched its first two crawling nasties, THE CRYPT OF TERROR and VAULT OF HORROR. The following month Gaines drove a stake through the heart of his father's ailing GUNFIGHTER Cowboy magazine, and revitalised it as HAUNT OF FEAR. Gaines may have plugged his company into a "Dying Tradition", but his deranged Gothic Shockers and tales to shred your nervous system to a million twitching fibres, were an instant X-rated hit.

Each of his magazines lead off with a Master (or Cruel Mistress) of (Satanic) Ceremonies. HAUNT OF FEAR has "The Old Witch" inset into the garish cover; long nosed, pointed chin, one eye gleaming malevolently, she cackles "Hee Hee! So you got your grimy paws on one of your old Man's dimes, bought my muck-mag, and now you're hungry for another slime-serving from my cauldron..." Such a subversive erosion of respect for parental authority combines with the lure of the "World's Weirdest" plots - a strategy calculated to appeal to rebellious adolescents, and it is an approach shared by the cadaverous "Crypt Keeper" and "Vault Keeper". They are the most visible inducements to sample the macabre feast beyond. And within those covers each EC issue contains a bloodbath of four complete strip tales, plus a text story, with a slender life-support of ads and reader's letters. And here roam the Living Dead, the Night Spectres, the Demonology, the Pagan Rites, and the Spirits of the Walking Undead that send tidal waves of adult outrage through conformist 1950's middle America.



Will Gaines soon assembled a fine team of accomplices in his mission to corrupt and deprave gullible youth. EC artists included Jack Davis, who drew for almost every EC comic-book from 1951 to 1955. Then there was Johnny Craig, who also wrote the dialogue (richly spiced with exclamation marks!), and served as editor too. And Graham Ingels. Half of the plots were co-written by Gaines and editor Al Feldstein, often ransacking their memories of old radio and pulp Horror story ideas, given new visual frameworks lifted from the silver screen. But there were other inputs too. HAUNT OF FEAR #18 includes a Feldstein adaptation of Ray Bradbury's dark Carnival story "Black Ferris", a story originally run in its full text incarnation by WEIRD TALES (May 1948). And issue #26 is completely written by Otto Binder, a S. F. pioneer who also moonlighted scripts for CAPTAIN MARVEL. But as the genre opened up, and a contagion of other publishers - Marvel, Ace, Fawcett and ACG (American Comics Group) rushed in to feed the gore-hungry, a new generation of perpetrators, including a young Harry Harrison, were there to take advantage of the situation.



Comics historian Mike Benton, in his richly researched exercise in creative grave-robbing THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF HORROR COMICS (Taylor Publ -1991), calculates that from EC's horrific inception, to the frightful manifestation's premature burial in 1954, one hundred new Horror titles emerged with a combination total of 2,400 separate issues! A proliferation that included an inevitable garbage percentage. But a madhouse of necromantic gems too.

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED (Summer 1954) features George Evans daemonic "The Slithering Horror Of Skontong Swamp". NIGHTMARE #12 has "Horror On The S. S. Malabar", in which shipwrecked victims survive by turning to cannibalism. Then there's WORLDS BEYOND - "Stories of Weird Adventure, Shocking! Terrifying! Supernatural!", BEWARE TERROR TALES, WEIRD TERROR, and other grotesque incendiaries designed to stretch the credibility gland out of joint.

It's only a matter of time before Big Brother strikes back.

What comics connoisseur Denis Gifford calls "the darker side of the dime" climaxes in HAUNT OF FEAR #19 (May 1953) with a story "Foul Play" in which a baseball player is dismembered, and the game continues using his various body-parts as match accessories: "see the long strings of pulpy intestines that mark the base lines. See the two lungs and the liver that indicate the bases, the stomach rosin-bag, and all the other pieces of equipment that once was Central City's star pitcher, Herbie Satten". Gifford comments wryly that "the words are stomach-turning enough without the lovingly detailed full-colour illustrations by Jack Davis" (in THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK OF COMICS - Hamlyn, 1984). But it wasn't just the unravelling welter of gut that threatened complete social collapse. A story called "The Orphan" - also in HAUNT OF FEAR, was brandished as an offending object of disgust in British Parliament, yet it portrays no explicit violence at all. Instead "Little Orphan" Lucy begins by making a play for the reader's sympathy as Mommy goes to the Electric Chair for murdering Daddy. And poor Lucy has to go to live with kindly Aunt Kate. It's only in the final frame that Lucy winks at the reader, explaining that all this "is just the way I'd HOPED it would work out when I SHOT DADDY from the FRONT BEDROOM WINDOW with the gun I KNEW was in the NIGHT TABLE, and went downstairs and put the gun in Mommy's hand and started the crying act..."

This is the most dangerous subversion of all. It directly attacks cherished adult illusions of childhood as a period of innocence. It undermines the whole wholesome Little Orphan Annie myth head-on with a sophisticated black humour far in advance of what was acceptable then, and intimating at issues we're still coming to terms with in the 1990's.

"No... no... it CAN'T be! That NAME he's cutting on the gravestone... that's MY name! and MY DATE OF BIRTH! But the DATE OF DEATH... that's TODAY!!!"

(TALES FROM THE CRYPT #1 - October 1950)

Like the "negroid" rhythms of Rock 'n' Roll, parents hate Horror Comics. They are symptoms of moral decay and degeneracy. Blueprints for sin, crime, and juvenile delinquency. Proof of unhealthy preoccupations in the young. But like Rock 'n' Roll, the kids love 'em. Much like Video Nasties and Computer Shoot-'Em-Up'.

It was ever thus, and evermore shall be so.

Long before EC's first perverted dream became diseased flesh "it was thought that "Penny Dreadfuls" were the origin of all youthful crimes, and parents not only banned them, but - when discovered, burned them" too (John James Wilson writing in PENNY DREADFULS and PENNY BLOODS). These are sentiments echoed in the current preoccupation with "Childsplay" and the fascination for fictions about Hannibal Lector and his real-life Serial Killer counterpart Ed Gein (who used body parts of his victims - a belt of nipples, and nine vaginas kept in a shoebox). And in the debate surrounding the killing of James Bulger. Or the earlier murders committed by pre-teenage Mary Bell.

Meanwhile, Will Gains personal nemesis was to be an avenging McCarthyite obsessive called Dr Fredric Wertham. From the start he campaigned rabidly against the Comic-Book with a fanaticism that was questionably Freudian. His most complete text - SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENTS, was part of a long drawn-out guerilla assault designed to draw parental attention to picture-strip depravity. "The recent output of Horror Comic Books, a refined - or rather debased form of Crime Comic, is especially apt to interfere with children's sleep" he argues reasonably. And Mr and Mrs America nod

their agreement. Elsewhere - less rationally, he extends his field of attack. Would you buy a claim that "Batman and Robin are like a wish-dream of two homosexuals living together"?

But, in hearings up to Senate Sub-Committees and U.S. Senate Investigation level, he was able to point with justification to chained and tortured hand-maidens of Satan, the living and the undead taking advantage of the unclothed beauties trapped in garish Comic-Book frames. Horrors riddled with obscene and lascivious overtones that, unlike the fleeting cinematic images at the Movie House, could be lingered over and studied in slow private masturbatory teenage indulgence. The angry blare of adverse publicity began pricking the commercial conscience of the billion-dollar

Comic Publishing world.

Gaines did consent to a moderating title change from CRYPT OF TERROR to the marginally less explicit TALES FROM THE CRYPT. He even removed a meat cleaver originally impaled into the head of a walking cadaver on the cover of VAULT OF HORRORS #32. But beyond that point he cleverly fought his position with verve and style. Called to testify, a Senator Estes Kefauver demanded "this (cover) seems to be a man with a bloody axe holding a woman's head up, which has been severed from her body. Do you think that's in good taste?"

"Yes sir, I do - for the cover of a Horror Comic" responded Gaines. "A cover in bad taste might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it!"



But despite his protestations, through a combination of gathering threat and persistent legal actions the publishers were eventually forced to adopt a self-censoring voluntary code - before one was imposed on them. On 23rd October 1954 the first appearance of a logo announcing "Approved By The Comics Code Authority" marked the effective end of the Horror Comic. Excess became immediate taboo. The code unambiguously declares "all scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism, shall not be permitted". The U.K. imposed its own Parliamentary ban around the same time - "The Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act" supported by an unlikely alliance that included Roy Jenkins and Michael Foot.

A genre died. But a legend was born.
They shall rise again.

"UNKNOWN WORLDS #1 (June 1952), available for just the standard 10 cents, leads off with photographically perfect cover-splurge of a blonde fleeing in terror from the pursuing skeleton, her dress rides high over her thigh, her cleavage cuts nearly to her navel. The blurb screams TERROR! HORROR! SUSPENSE! Stark Terrifying Horrors Lie Behind That Closed Door! Will YOU Venture To Meet THE UNKNOWN?"

Horror Comics. Were they any good?

They were certainly innovative. Introducing Present-Tense narrative. And First-Person voice-overs.

Of course on this side of the Atlantic we only got to read them sporadically, and not necessarily in the correct intended sequence. They arrived - either at the docks as marine ballast from where they seeped their way into the neighbourhoods most disreputable newsagents, or as UK "reprint" editions reduced to a less graphic black and white format. But collectively the horrific highlights and unspeakable peaks of evil found in their pages established a style that - despite suppression, survived - and survives as an influence. As all devotees of Horror know, that force of evil can't be killed off as easily as that!

The "Comics Code" remained intact for over a decade, until the Hippie's acid-frazzled Underground Press again stormed the ramparts of decency. It was only by the later late-60's that Comics protagonists like Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton began freaking out picture-strip conventions with generous infusions of sex, drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll. There was SKULL and SLOW DEATH in a mutated zone of neo-EC look-alikes, and even DR WIRTHAM'S COMIX AND STORIES in an even more twisted reference to what had gone before. Then came the virulent detonation of Independent Publishers and the more literary pretensions of the Graphic Novel which combine to shove comics way beyond all previous limits. Into areas where psychedelics and Smart Drugs inform Sci-Fi. But the muck-mag spectre of Will Gaines' dark obsessions lurk behind them all, often with direct picturized reference to the Old Witch or the Vault Keeper, or merely a regurgitation of that 1950's long-banned style.

But this is not the story of one man's struggle against the stultifying censorship of small-minded bigots. Just as it's not the story of one man's battle to stem the vile tide of corrupting ultra-violence warping the minds of small children. You and I both know the situation is far more complex than such patronising simplifications allow. The 1950's Horror Comics outrage is more one incident in an ongoing conflict as basic as that between good and evil, a dialogue that's still being fought out in today's tabloids, TV Docudramas, Court Rooms - and Parliaments.

And Will Gaines himself? He moved on. EC produced MAD MAGAZINE, impaling the establishment not with the switch-blade, but with mocking satire, and hence birthing a new legend of a different kind.

- Andrew Darlington

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS IN PRINT IN 1994

This is a A5 booklet published by Graham Stone which lists all Australian science fiction books in print, related books, a title index, publishers and addresses, and a chronology of Australian science fiction, 1848-1994. It is \$5 a copy, though you will have to write and see if that includes postage. Well worth the small amount of cash for those really interested in SF worldwide.

Published by the Australian Science Fiction Association
GPO Box 4440
Sydney 2001

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

CHAPTER FIVE.

In the first quarter of 1953 the Futurian Society of Sydney was largely occupied with the implementation of the recommendations of the Futurian Court of Inquiry. The library recovered from the Australian Fantasy Foundation had to be protected and preserved both legally and physically. The Society's Constitution had to be amended in various ways to make certain it would always exercise control over the library, and the physical tasks of collecting it, cataloguing it, determining who were and who were not borrowers, and putting it back into operation, had to be carried out. Finally, at Meeting #187 (23 March 1953) Les. Raethel was elected Librarian, and with the assistance of Martin and the co-operation of Haddon, the library was put into operation at the Thursday Night social meetings in April.

Here souvenir booklets, copies of S.F. NEWS, VERTICAL HORIZONS and UGH were distributed, and exhibits shown by the A.S.F.S., the North Shore Futurian Society, and Futurian Press. Master of Ceremonies for the afternoon was F.S.S. Director Ken Martin. Messages were received from Tom Cockroft, Eric Russell, Frank Bryning and Harry Brunen.

Speakers were Vol Molesworth ("Science Fiction as a Development of Modern Literature"), R. D. Nicholson ("The Historical Development of Science Fiction"), P. Glick and G. R. Meyer ("Science in Science Fiction") and G. B. Stone ("Fandom").

Afternoon tea was provided by the Vertical Horizons Group, headed by Miss Simmons.

On Saturday night, a programme of films was screened by Don Lawson.

On Sunday morning, an auction of some 200 books and magazines was conducted by Don Lawson.

The formal business session was held on Sunday afternoon. A professional stenographer, Miss Woodlands, was hired to take down reports and motions. Reports were delivered on A.S.F.S. (Stone), F.S.S. (Molesworth), N.S.F.S. (Veney), Melbourne (Crozier), Brisbane (Veney), Adelaide (Mrs Moyes), the F.S.S. Library and the Thursday Night meetings (Raethel), VERTICAL HORIZONS (Miss Simmons), FORERUNNER (Nicholson) and Auctions and Films (Lawson). There was also a



SECOND CONVENTION

Concurrent with this, planning had been proceeding for the Second Australian Convention, to be held over the weekend May 1-2-3. Once again circulars were inserted in an issue of ASTOUNDING, and publicity was obtained in several U.S. and British magazines. Considerable publicity was also provided by Australian fan magazines.

As a result, 84 people attended the Convention. These included delegates from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, and from country areas of N.S.W., including Katoomba, Newcastle, and Woolongong. The Convention began on the Friday night, May 1. This was attended by about 38 people and proved a very enjoyable social evening. On Saturday morning a preliminary rally was held at the Sydney Bridge Club, and in the afternoon the Convention proper got underway at the G.U.O.O.F. Hall in Castlereagh St.

report on "Operation Fantast", an international commercial venture, by David Cohen, about which more will be said later.

During the business session, three motions were carried unanimously:

1) That a collection of Australian professional and amateur science fiction publications be despatched to the next US Convention;

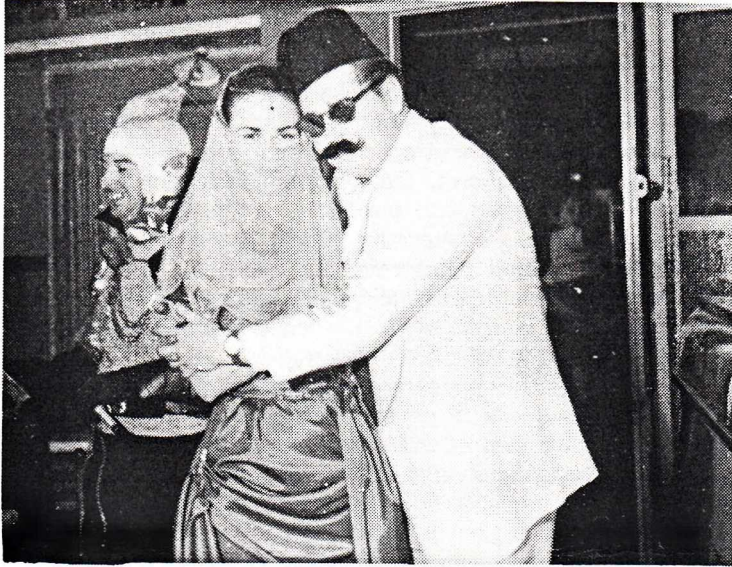
2) That a Third Convention be held in Sydney in 1954; and

3) that one person be appointed by the F.S.S. to organise the Convention.

On Sunday night, a further programme of films was screened by Don Lawson.

On the whole, the Convention was a considerable success. It had accomplished its main aim, to bring together

fans from all over Australia, and to report to them what each section was doing. It was, however, marred by two factors: very bad weather, and some lack of organisation.



LEGGETT, GILES, GLICK

members of the Convention organising Committee. He claimed that the Woollahra Golf Club had been booked in January, that its manager had said no cash deposit was necessary to confirm



UNKNOWN & LYELL CRANE



FINCH, HEMMING, MELLOR

It had been decided to hold the cocktail party on the Friday night at Woollahra Golf Club, and 42 tickets had been sold at one guinea each. At the last minute, it was discovered that the booking had not been made, and the venue was hastily transferred to the Chiswick Gardens, at a financial loss. The opening arrangements on both Saturday and Sunday mornings had also been unsatisfactory.

Reporting on the Convention in a Melbourne fan magazine, Veney wrote: "The morning session on Saturday was a very dismal affair. Apparently all the work had been left to Arthur Haddon, and when he failed to make an appearance the whole Convention came to a halt."

The matter was discussed at Meeting #139 of the Futurian Society, held on May 4. The Liaison Officer (Haddon) said he had great difficulty in communicating with the other



MELLOR, LAURIE GILES, LEGGETT

the booking, and that the manager had subsequently cancelled the booking despite his promise.

"Communication" is a relation involving two parties, and Haddon's complaint that committee members failed to get in touch with him, was also invoked by some of the committee themselves who claimed Haddon had failed to get in touch with them. It should be remembered that Haddon had been the last Librarian of the Foundation, and that during and after its dissolution, he had been personally antagonistic to several Sydney fans. Whatever the reason, there had obviously been breakdown of communication among the people given responsibility for organising the Convention, with the results which Veney and others hostile to the Futurian Society criticised.

To avoid a recurrence of this, the Society at its 190th meeting (25 May 1953) appointed Walter Judd as Organiser of

the 1954 Convention, with power to co-opt his own committee. He was also required to submit regular progress reports to the Society. It was decided that the Third Australian Convention should be held over the Easter weekend in 1954.

In discussing the financial outcome of the Convention just held, the question was raised of the 15 pounds which had been advanced by the Thursday Night "group fund" towards Convention expenses. Should this be repaid? Molesworth pointed out that the Futurian Society had organised the Thursday Night meetings and both Conventions, and if any of those had been a financial failure the Society would have had to foot the bill. Raethel said he regarded himself as custodian of the Thursday Night takings and he did not regard the Futurian Society as being entitled to access to the money.

Throughout the year, Thursday Night meetings had been held at the Sydney Bridge Club the average attendance being 31, with a maximum of 46 on May 21. It was seen that if such numbers continued to attend, larger premises would have to be found. At the same time, the Futurian Society proper was notified that it would no longer rent the G.U.O.O.F. board-room for meetings, as the space was required by the owners. It was decided to look for new premises in which both the formal Society meetings and the informal Thursday Night gatherings could be held.

At the 192nd meeting of the Society (28 July 1953) the following were elected:

Director:	W. Molesworth
Vice-Director:	P. Burke.
Treasurer:	I. Raethel
Secretary:	D. Lawson
Asst. Sec:	Miss R. Simmons

The Director appointed B. Finch public relations officer, L. Raethel manager of the Thursday Night social gatherings, and re-affirmed the appointment of W. Judd as Convention organiser.

Meanwhile, the search for premises had gone on, and an offer had been received from a Darlinghurst tailor, Mr. Neil Eady, to make available an attractive clubroom on Monday and Thursday nights and all day Saturday, for six guineas per week. At a special meeting (#196) held on October 19 it was unanimously decided by the 18 present to accept this offer.

The new clubroom at McIlwraith's Chambers, Taylor Square, was officially opened on Thursday, December 3, with an attendance of 43. The premises contained a lock-up section for the library, a kitchenette, notice-boards on the walls, and a number of tables and chairs. It was gaily painted and modernly furnished.

At the last meeting of the year (#199, held on 23 December 1953) Raethel resigned from his positions as Librarian and Clubroom Manager because of lack of time. Mrs. Laura Molesworth was elected Librarian, Miss L. Giles, and Messrs. W. Judd, Brian Finch, Don Lawson, J. Earls and Alan South had increased membership to 24.

Membership in the Australian Science Fiction Society climbed steadily throughout 1953. At the end of 1952, Graham Stone had written off the deficit resulting from running the organisation largely out of his own pocket, apart from the nominal 5/- per annum subscription. In March, 1953, this was increased to 10/- per year, which entitled members to received, post free, copies of Rex Meyer's SF REVIEW, FUTURIAN SOCIETY NEWS and VERTICAL HORIZONS as well as A.S.F.S. circulars and newsletters. By the end of 1953, membership had risen to 150, with members in the A.C.T., six States, and New Zealand.

Over the weekend, August 8-9, the First Interstate S.F. Conference had been held at Albury. It was attended by six Sydney and five Melbourne fans, with Albury fan John

O'Shaughnessy as host. This conference was very successful because of the enthusiasm of those attending. Reports were given on various activities in Sydney and Melbourne, and suggestions made for the 1954 Convention.

Activity in Melbourne grew steadily throughout 1953. The Melbourne Science Fiction Group, with McCubbin as Chairman enrolled 58 members, of whom about 15 turned up each week to the Thursday Night gatherings at the Oddfellows' Hall, where the library was open for borrowing, auctions were held and films were shown. Mervyn Binns, Dick Jennsen, Race Mathews, Leo Harding and Ian Crozier formed the Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia (AFPA) and by pooling their resources, purchased a duplicator and supplies. The group's newsletter, which had been produced irregularly by McCubbin, was taken over, completely remodelled and produced by Ian Crozier under the title of ETHERLINE.

ETHERLINE appeared in a roneod folded foolscap format, beginning with 12 pages and growing to 22, fortnightly for the rest of the year. Containing news, reviews, articles, and occasionally fiction and verse, ETHERLINE was the best roneo publication ever produced by an Australian fan. It was also the longest-lived, bringing out its 100th issue 5¹/₂ years later.

Harding and Jennsen produced PERHAPS, a roneod 4to journal, the first issue (February) containing 28 pages, the second (May) 48 pages, featuring mainly science fiction. Race Mathews produced BACCHANALIA, identical in format to PERHAPS, but devoted to fantasy. The first issue (April) contained 30 pages. Appearing in alternate months, the two magazines were intended to be complimentary. Leo Harding produced a roneod 4to publication entitled WASTEBASKET, with the editorial slogan: "We print what others throw out". Bruce Heron and Kevin Wheelahan produced another roneod 4to-sized journal, QUESTION MARK, bringing the total of AFPA magazines to five.

During August, discussion were held to place all AFPA publications on a regular schedule, to avoid overlapping of material and publication dates. The outcome was that the AFPA was reconstituted, with Binns, Wheelahan and Crozier full members, McLelland and Heron associate members. The AFPA would continue to publish ETHERLINE and QUESTION MARK, the other publications reverting to the care of their authors.

As the year drew to a close, the steady growth of activities indicated that a larger clubroom and a permanent home for the library was needed. Binns suggested that his garage could be converted for this use. It was decided to advertise in the newspapers for suitable premises.

In Adelaide, strictly informal meetings were held every second Sunday at the home of Mrs. Joyce, with an average of 10 fans attending. The library grew during 1953 to 620 items.

In Brisbane, the pattern of fan growth was the same as it had been in Sydney and Melbourne. On Saturday, February 14, a meeting of twelve fans was held at the home of Frank Bryning, including Ted Butt on a visit from Newcastle. The group decided to meet regularly each Thursday night at a coffee lounge in Queen St. A library was started, and Veney began publishing UGH, an irregular 4to roneo magazine of news and comment.

In Canberra, however, activity was begun on formal lines. On November 8, the Futurian Society of Canberra held its first meeting, with five members joining. Geoffrey R. Bennett was elected Director, and Peter Jones Secretary-Treasurer. The meeting decided to adopt the constitution of the F.S.S.

In Sydney, Nicholson had produced the second issue of FORERUNNER. The cost of the semi-professional magazine, however, was making its mark: although still excellently prepared, the second issue contained only 44 pages, as against 80 in the first issue. Between January and June,

1953, Graham Stone published SCIENCE FICTION NEWS on a monthly basis. This was a four page newsletter, printed by photolithography; the first fanzine to present good photographic illustrations. The seventh issue did not appear until 1954.

The big event of 1954 was the Third Australian Convention, which was scheduled to be held over the Easter Weekend (April 16-18) in Sydney. At the first meeting in 1954 of the sponsoring body, the Futurian Society of Sydney (#200, held on January 4) a number of questions were asked about plans for the Convention. As the Organiser (W. Judd) was not present, and had not been seen for the past few meetings, it was moved Lawson, seconded Martin, that "a transcript of part of the proceedings of the meeting be forwarded to Mr. Judd for his benefit, and if necessary, guidance." The motion was carried by five votes to four (Finch abstaining).

At the following meeting (8 February 1954) the Director inquired if the transcript had been sent to Mr. Judd, and was informed by Asst. Secretary Miss Simmons that it had not. The Director also asked Secretary Lawson if the agenda for the meeting had been sent to members at least seven days beforehand. Lawson replied that this had not been done.

Later on in the meeting, Judd asked what was to be done when officers of the Society failed to carry out directions - was the Society just going to accept this, or could something be done to see that legitimate instructions would be observed? The Director replied that if an executive officer was not prepared to carry out his duties, he should not have accepted nomination for election in the first place. He added that there were two reasons why a fan might seek a seat on the Executive Council - one, a sincere desire to accept responsibility and work for fandom; and two, a desire for self-aggrandisement.

Nicholson then moved, seconded Dillon, that the entire Executive Council be asked to tender their resignations. Nicholson said the policies of the executive over the previous six months called for censure. He claimed that the executive had "interfered with, attempted to dominate, control, and bleed of funds, every activity related to science fiction which Sydney had seen." Nicholson also claimed that "the Society's veteran members" had "systematically manoeuvred inexperienced individuals into key positions, then as often as not caused them humiliation by direct and indirect attacks on their conduct, and also on their character." Nicholson also criticised the executive for "laying out what is for this Society an enormous sum of money on a pathetic little room".

Molesworth said that after hearing Nicholson's explanation of the import of his motion, he could not remain in the Chair, and asked Cohen to act as Chairman while the motion was debated.

Stone moved, seconded Judd, the amendment that the Society should ask for the resignations of the executives individually, and consider them in turn. "I submit there is no justification for the impeachment of all of the officers: I have every confidence in some of them, and do not see why all should be censured because of the defection of some", he said.

The chairman ruled that Stone's amendment was out of order, and discussion on the motion proceeded for one hour and ten minutes. Unfortunately, the debate was not recorded by the Secretary. Finally the motion was carried 10 in favour, 5 against, Dunk recording a negative vote, and Miss Simmons abstaining. Each executive handed in a written resignation from office, Burke also resigning from the Society.

Of what crimes had the executive been guilty? The key words in Nicholson's attack are "interference" and "bleeding of funds". He was referring to the taking-over of the Library of the Society from the Australian Fantasy Foundation, and the transfer of the Thursday Night meeting from the Bridge Club to

the new clubroom. Perhaps also some fans had been alarmed by the Society's anxiety that it had not heard from the Convention organizing committee, and supposed that the Society intended to "take it over", too. Some members of the executive had also been critical of fans' failure to support the new clubroom, and this was resented.

The Society proceeded to elect a new executive, as follows:

Director:	V. Molesworth
Vice-Director:	W. Judd
Treasurer:	L. Raethel
Secretary:	B. Finch
Asst. Sec:	N. Cohen

The Director then appointed Thurston public relations officer.

In the last section it was mentioned that a former F.S.S. member, David Cohen, had set up an Australian agency for an international commercial science fiction organisation, "Operation Fantast". This organisation bought and sold books and magazines, and arranged subscriptions to periodicals. For some months Cohen had carried on his business at the Society's Thursday Night gatherings. Cohen was approached by several dissatisfied fans, including Nicholson, and agreed to pay the rent for a new Thursday Night gathering at the Sydney Bridge Club. The breakaway group held its first meeting on April 1, 1954, and continued to meet on Thursday Nights.

At the 203rd meeting of the Futurian Society, held on April 5, Purdy moved, seconded Stone, that "the organisers of the recent walkout be banned from the F.S.S. clubroom."

Nicholson, who had allowed himself to become unfinancial, attended the meeting as a visitor. He claimed that six fans had formed the breakaway group because one of them had been repeatedly insulted at Taylor Square, and because the North Shore Futurian Society had "met with every possible hindrance."

The North Shore Futurian Society had been set up to service fans on the north side of the harbour: later it had changed this policy and had gone into open competition with the Futurian Society as a library operator. It had set up its library in the F.S.S. clubroom, and had traded in competition with its host's library only a few feet away. The clubroom manager had asked the N. Shore Librarian to take down a large advertising sign and to occupy a position less central in the clubroom. The N. Shore members then decided to join Cohen's gathering.

After nearly every member of the Futurian Society had spoken against Purdy's motion to ban the breakaway group leaders, the motion was defeated by 10 votes to 2, with three abstentions.

Whatever the justice or injustice of the matter, the fact of the breakaway movement sounded the death-knell of the Futurian Society's new clubroom. It had been opened in the expectancy that at least 60 people would visit it each week, the breakeven cost being 61 visitors at 2/- per head to meet the weekly rental of six guineas. Even before the breakaway, the average weekly attendance had been only 50, the breakdown being nine on Mondays, 32 on Thursdays, and nine on Saturdays. Visits to the clubroom by Dr. Blatt, from the University of Sydney on February 25, and by U.S. author Robert A. Heinlein on February 25, had attracted 37 and 58 fans, respectively, but it was obvious the Society could not continue to run the clubroom without a subsidy from its annual subscriptions, library income, and other revenue. With a rival clubroom operating elsewhere in the city, the breakdown requirement of 61 visitors per week was most unlikely.

The breakaway movement had also been well timed, as the Third Australian Convention was little for than a fortnight away, and new fans attracted by it would now find two separate Thursday Night meetings competing for their patronage.

The Convention was the first to be held in fine weather. It attracted 95 people, including delegates from the A.C.T., Victoria and Queensland, and from Newcastle, Cessnock and Tamworth in N.S.W. The Convention began with a "get-together" at Federation Hall, Phillip Street, Sydney, on Saturday morning, April 17. Displays were erected by the Convention



Heinlein in clubroom.

Committee, the F.S.S. Library, the A.S.F.S., and the fan publishing group in Melbourne. Fifty-five people attended this session.

The afternoon session, chaired by Rex Meyer, took the form of a symposium. Addresses were given by N. Cohen ("Science Fiction Calvalcade", prepared by Stone), S. Dunk ("The Future of the Machine"), H. Brunen ("The Future of Man") and V. Molesworth ("The Future of Culture"). Mrs. Gore and Messrs. Glick and Crane then commented on the preceding speakers. D. Lawson then spoke on the film as a medium for science fiction. This session was attended by 66.

On Saturday night, 60 attended a film programme screened by Lawson.

On the Sunday morning, 37 attended the auction of books and magazines conducted by B. Purdy.

The business session, held on Sunday afternoon, was chaired by Molesworth and attended by 48 people. Reports were presented on the F.S.S. (Finch), Melbourne activities (McCubbin), Newcastle (Butt), A.S.F.S. (Crane) and N.S.F.S. (Hubble).

In reporting on the A.S.F.S., Crane said it had about 180 members and produced a mailing each month. However, as fan groups were growing up in other cities, the purpose for which the national organisation had been established had to a considerable extent been achieved, and the need for the A.S.F.S. to continue in its present form had become less urgent. In the discussion, Glick suggested that the F.S.S. should take over the A.S.F.S. and finance it, perhaps with help from Melbourne and other clubs and then appoint Stone to run it, as it had appointed Judd to run the Convention. Haddon moved, seconded Bos, that the A.S.F.S. organisers settle or plan a new policy of action, present it to an F.S.S. meeting, and the course decided on to be notified through the usual F.S.S. channels. This was carried unanimously.

It was then moved Haddon, seconded Bos, that the N.S.F.S. be responsible for the organisation of the 1955 Convention. Haddon said this would "relieve the F.S.S. of some of its burden" and give the younger fans a chance to show what they could do. Bos added that the N.S.F.S. "had the help of some members of the F.S.S. who had left". After discussion, the motion was carried, 22 in favour, 14 against.

Nicholson then moved that the Convention advise the science fiction groups in Sydney to settle their differences with regard to the locale of their separate meetings and that representatives get together to discuss this. When this was seconded by Glick, the Melbourne delegation obtained permission to withdraw as it was surely a domestic matter for Sydney fans. After brief discussion, the motion was carried by 18 votes to 2.

On Sunday night, a live three-act play, *THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES*, written by Norma Hemming, was produced by Mrs. N. Gore. It was an outstanding success. Two tape-recorded plays were presented by Molesworth, and three films screened by Lawson.

At Meeting #204 of the F.S.S. (3 May 1954) Judd presented his report on the Convention. He said it had achieved 1) greater numbers; 2) greater profits; and 3) less fiction, than either of the previous two Conventions.

Throughout the weekend, Bill Turnbull and Terry Clarke had kept two tape recorders running, and the tapes had been edited by Molesworth into a 50 minute documentary tape. At the meeting, the tape was unanimously endorsed as the official precis.

The meeting was then read a letter from Burke, who complained that an advertisement submitted by him had not been included in the official Convention handbook. Judd explained that the copy had arrived too late. This explanation was forwarded by the Society to Burke.

At Meeting #205 (7 June 1954) a constitutional amendment was proposed that a council of seven be elected annually to carry out the affairs of the Society. Fifteen members voted for the motion (More than 50% of those entitled to vote), so the amendment was adopted.

The meeting's attention was then directed to the continuing financial loss being incurred by the clubroom. It was moved Turnbull, seconded Bainen, that henceforward the clubroom be opened only on Monday and Thursday nights. The first step in the ultimate abandonment of the clubroom had been taken.

Between April 1 (when the breakaway group opened its rival meeting) and June 26, the average weekly attendance at the Taylor Square clubroom was 19 on Monday, 20 on Thursday and six on Saturday - an average total of 45 per week, or an average deficit of 32/- per week.

From the first week in July, 1954, the proprietor (Mr. Eedy) agreed to charge 4 pounds a week for use of the premises only on Monday and Thursday nights, which would require a weekly attendance of 40 visitors at 2/- per head to break even. In fact, the attendance book indicates that the average attendance between July 5 and December 30, 1954, was 9 on Monday and 14 on Thursday - an average attendance of 23 per week, a weekly deficit of 38/-, a total loss over the six months of 47-10-0.

During the whole of this period, the breakaway group continued to meet at the Bridge Club. While no accurate figures are available, it was reported in August that "every Thursday Night sees a roll-up of around 20 or so."¹ Although 2/6 per head was charged, this was not sufficient to cover rent and supper, and the deficit was made good by David Cohen from his trading activities. In August, the charge was raised to 3/6 per head.

In July, the group began publishing a weekly roneoed newsletter, *SCANSION*. A different editor wrote the contents each week, the editors during 1954 being Burke, Dillon, Norma Williams, Earls, Nicholson, Duggan, Haddon and Veney.

¹ *SCANSION*, #7.

SCANION quickly became a vehicle for attack on the Futurian Society of Sydney.

At the Futurian Society's 207th meeting (5 July 1954) Nicholson entered the Taylor Square premises at 9.25 pm. The Director declared that the meeting to be *in camera*, and requested Nicholson to leave, which he did. At the same meeting Lawson was expelled for failure to hand over minutes



TURNBULL - 3rd CONVENTION

which he had taken while Secretary.

The Executive Council for 1954-55 was elected, with Stone becoming Director, and McKenna, Purdy, Raethel, South, Thurston, and Turnbull Councillors.

The minutes of meetings held in the latter half of 1954 are handwritten and almost illegible. Only nine members attended the last meeting of the year, held on November 2. It was reported that the Treasurer, Raethel, had left Sydney for Ballina, and had taken the Society's account books with him. Brunen was elected a Councillor to replace Raethel, and a new member, Miss Pat Smith, became Treasurer. Since F.S.S. NEWS had been appearing erratically because of lack of help, it was suggested that more vigorous counter-publicity be engaged in by the Society to offset "the constant stream of abuse against the Society, most of it incorrect." Nothing came of this suggestion, however.

In Melbourne, group meetings continued throughout the year at the Oddfellows' Hall, newspaper advertising having failed to discover alternative premises. Bob McCubbin remained Chairman, the average weekly attendance being 12. ETHERLINE continued to appear every fortnight, varying in the number of pages up to 44, still excellently laid out and duplicated. In August, Crozier announced that Wheelahan had left AFPA due to pressure of other interests, and that

QUESTION MARK (which Wheelahan had edited) would appear on a quarterly basis. AFPA had also purchased BACCHANALIA from Mathews, and it would be published yearly. Late in December, Crozier announced that ETHERLINE would be taken over and published by the Melbourne Science Fiction Group, and that a statement of policy would be made shortly by the new publisher, McCubbin, for the Group.

In Brisbane, the increasing numbers forced the group to give up meeting in a coffee inn, and venue was changed to the home of George and Betty Tafe. About 15 fans turned up regularly.

The Futurian Society of Canberra held five meetings during 1954, all at the home of Director Bennett. It was decided that the Society would not seek its own clubroom until membership increased. A sub-committee consisting of Bennett, Arthur Porter and David Kerr was elected in May to arrange a series of film nights, and later six members of the Society visited Mt. Stromlo Observatory.

In Adelaide, the fortnightly Sunday afternoon gatherings continued to be held at the home of Mrs. Joyce, but on May 19 the Adelaide Science Fiction Group was officially created, the constitution of the Futurian Society of Canberra being adopted with slight modification to suit local conditions. Ron Gum was elected President, J. Johnson Vice-President, Mrs. Joyse Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian, M. Downes Financial Officer, and D. Walsh and O.D. Denton assistant librarians.

During 1954, Graham Stone published only three issues of SCIENCE FICTION NEWS, dated January, March and May.

In Tasmania, Donald H. Tuck produced A HANDBOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, a oneed foolscap book of 154 pages presenting in alphabetical order information on most of the writers of science fiction, books, magazines, and to some extent fans and fandom.

During the year, Graham Stone, who was opposed to the North Shore Futurian Society organising the Fourth Australian Convention, had circulated a oneed newsletter, headed "No Convention in 1955". This created hostility towards Stone and the F.S.S., and drew scathing comments in SCANSION and ETHERLINE.

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THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE

BY PAVEL VIAZNIKOV

Soon after coming back from Turkmenia, I went to Magnitogorsk. That's a big industrial city, with a giant metallurgy plant. I was accompanying two Japanese engineers, whose task was to repair a pile-driver machine and it examine two others. It proved to be a difficult task for them, as the defect was hard to detect. But we were received like kings, on the top of courtesy; we lived in a cosy two-storey house with a kind lady who was cooking, cleaning and doing all other necessary jobs; a room maid, a cook, an administrator, a receptionist, a waiter and a supplies officer all rolled into one. They also took us to a beautiful lake 40 km from the city; it's a beautiful bowl of crystal-clear water surrounded by mountains, as picturesque as if specially designed by an artist. Also, we saw a salt lake - almost like a sea, even with waves, and with water as salty and bitter just like in a sea.

But what impressed me most was a neon-lit slogan over the city: "Slava Udu!". It used to be a "Slava Trudu!" once - "Glory to Labour!"; but two letters' neon tubes broke, so "trud" - "labour" - turned to "ud" (pronounced almost like "hood", with "h" silent) - "penis" in old, literature Russian. The result was quite funny, something similar in English could have been produced by a punk who used to study Shakespeare's language.

After returning from Magnitogorsk, I had two weeks of hard work, without any weekends and with long hours. I used to sleep for three hours (two hours, one day) and twice stayed in the office overnight. We had a big contract to prepare. And to sign it, we went to Yakutiya.

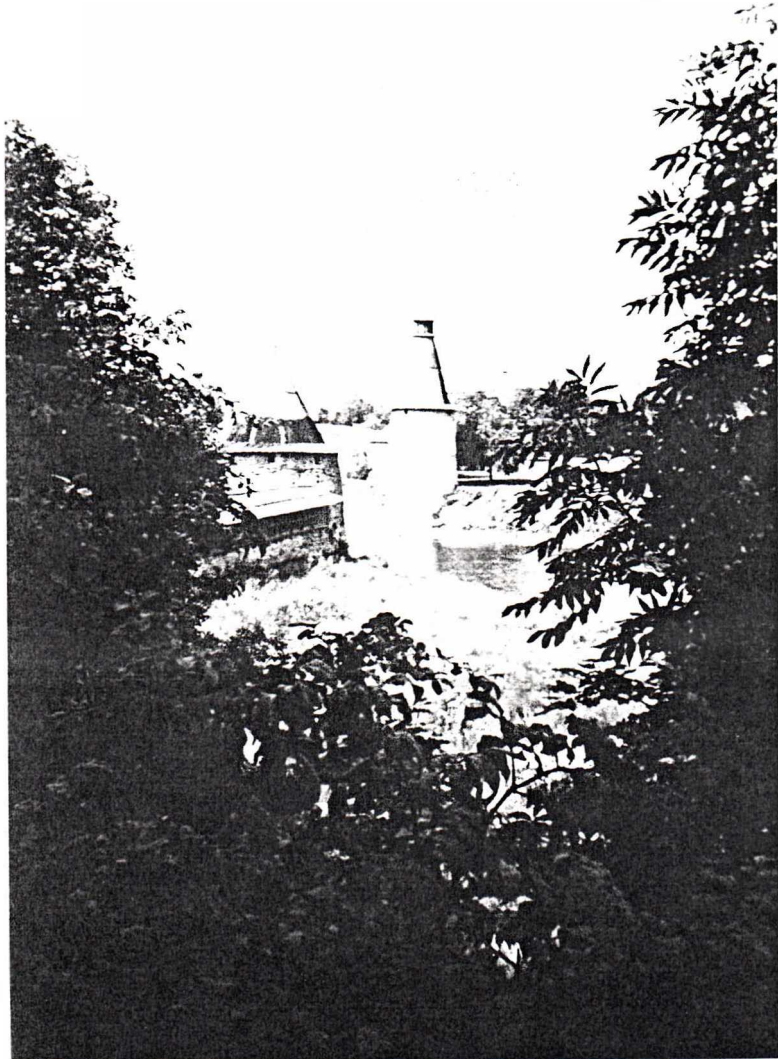
Yakutiya, or Saha, is a part of the Russian Federation, but they have their own economy, government and President. Their economy is not in a bad condition, taking into account the tremendous deposits of gold, diamonds, copper and coal (geologists say that of these, Yakutiya has the biggest resources in the world, more diamonds and gold than South Africa, more copper ore than Chile), rare-earth metals, oil, gas, iron, semi-precious stones, U and Pl ores; also there are many fur animals, lumber, large water resources and rivers good for building power stations... And what they also have, are misquotes - and the resources of these are really unlimited.

Try to find the city of Neryungri on a map - that's south Yakut Region, about 350 km from Yakutsk and not so far from the southern border of Russia. Here winters are severe, sometimes the thermometer drops to minus 60°C and below, but summers are hot, even if short. We arrived on a Friday night, and on Saturday noon they took us for a picnic at a very nice spot by a swift and very clean river. The river originates 65 km from the city; there's a 10-metre thick plate of permafrost ice, which melts and gives birth to the river. Later, springs add their water, and the river swells, but remains clean - the water needs no boiling, filtering or any other treatment for drinking. We were roasting *shashlik*, and there was a Russian log bath - so we were steaming ourselves till we could stand it no longer, and then plunged into the cold, crystal water of the river. And the surroundings were so beautiful! Pines, fir-trees, cedar pines, juniper bush - bah!

One would have to see it to believe it. So good! The fast stream plays on the flat stones, which makes the river bed, the air smells of pine needles and resin, and also of the bitter smoke of burning pine wood from the bath: and you enjoy the cold, soft water against your red-hot skin....

... And about the ice. It was quite hot here, by our standards, of course - plus 28°C, but imagine - in the ravines and depressions you can see plates of ice. Of course it's covered with dirt, porous on the outside and slowly sweating with winter-smelling water, - but still, that's ice, sometimes more than half a metre thick. They say, it holds till next winter. And it's surrounded with green grass and juniper bushes (by the way, juniper's the thing they make gin out of). And the bees buzz heat-lazily over these shards of winter. To be frank: I got divinely drunk (not senseless - I was just as pleased as punch and pleasantly dizzy), which added a lot to the beauty of nature. And the steam-bath boiled out all the alcohol, thus preventing the quiet drunkenness from turning into a nasty hangover.

Recently I asked my boss for a short leave and decided to spend this time travelling. First I went to Pskov, an ancient Northern Russian city on the Velikays (Great) River. This is the city of Russian glory, the city of St. Princess Olga, famous for her political wisdom



A VIEW OF PSKOV KROM (KREMLIN)

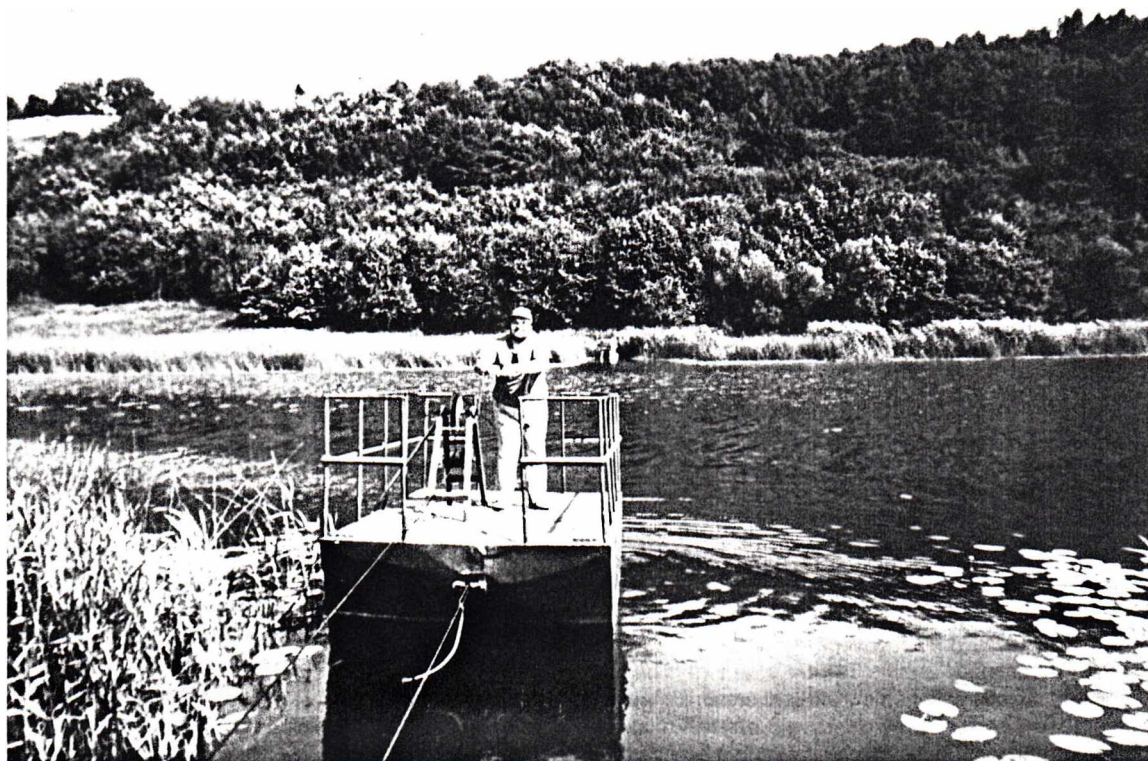
and for spreading Christianity; St. Prince Alexander of Neva, who won a fabulous victory over German and Swedish metal-clad knights (Alexander chose the lake ice for a battlefield, and at the critical moment the knights, who had cut through the Russians but at the next moment found themselves surrounded by (much lighter) Russian warriors, crowded together to fight in a ring-defence - which made a too heavy burden for the ice, and it broke.... Many great warriors and

holy men lived here. Prince Truvor, one of the legendary Varlag princes who were invited to rule Russia, settled here, near Pskov, in Izborsk. They still show "Truvor's Cross" to tourists.

Pskov also was one of the centres of medieval Russian democracy: Pskov were feudal republics, ruled by "veche" - people's assembly, where everybody had a vote, except for slaves (well, nothing's perfect, you know. Of course it would be so much nicer to boast of a democracy where even slaves all have civil rights and freedom, trade unions, etc.)

It is a beautiful city, with many churches, with a mighty fortress and many interesting places around. Northern architecture features strong walls, small windows, a strange mixture of heaviness and proportion. When Stephen Batorious, a famous Polish ruler, came to the walls of Pskov with a strong united army, he wrote: "What a beautiful city, it's bigger and more beautiful than Paris!" If you go to the South-West, you find other fortress cities - Porhov, Ostrov; in oak forests, rich with berries, mushrooms and fowl, aristocrats had their summer houses, where they escaped the heat and noise of St. Petersburg. Alexander Pushkin, a famous Russian poet, and his grandfather, general Hannibal, Ethiopian by birth, ex-slave, friend of Peter the Great, also lived here. To the West, you find on the Russian-Estonian border Pecherski Convent ("Pechora" in old Russian means "cave": caves under this holy for Orthodox Christians place hold a church and graves of monks). As with almost all Russian

story says that the springs were discovered by an old peasant, who drank his fill and returned to his wife being once again black-haired, strong and full of vinegar. His old lady was quite impressed and immediately ran to the miraculous springs, but neve came back; her husband thought that the woman was admiring her returned beauty in the mirror of the Slavyanskoye lake, and went there. Alas! The old woman was too greedy: her husband found but a heap of clothes and a baby girl of no more than a year old in them.... Try to count at leisure the volume of holy water consumed by the woman, even if at that time a person of more than 45 was already considered as an old one... Actually, this makes more than 100 litres at least, counting each glass as a standard one, ie 200 ml. It is often fun to count. For example, once a friend of mine wrote a story about a monster, who was stealing kids (for gastronomical purposes) from "a small forest village - several poor huts, covered with moss and lichen". Each week the brute stole "at least three or even five little ones", and thus misbehaved "for more than three years". Even if the villagers multiplied like rabbits, the monster should have starved. Or, the "small village" was rather a small county. At the rate of 3 pieces per week, multiplied by 52, the ghoul's game makes at least 156 kids per year, and then multiplied by three, makes 468; that's the minimum, and I think the monster who relieved the inhabitants of several poor huts of a burden of half a thousand (or most probably more) hungry mouths was rathe a blessing for the poor forest dwellers - otherwise,



A FERRY NEAR MALY VILLAGE

monasteries, this also served as a fortress, defending the borders of Russia. The Path of Blood here - a long slopy path from the main gate to the central square - is named in memory of a Father Superior, executed by Ivan the Terrible - according to the legend, the old monk met the cruel tsar at the gate with reproaches for the bloody repression of the Novgorod mutiny (Ivan replace the veche rule with his own). The tsar had the priest beheaded on the spot, and the head rolled down to the holy water well on the square....

Another town is Izborsk. I have already mentioned it; here are the remains of several fortresses, but the most interesting thing is the Slavyanskiye Springs. Once they were powerful enough to move a water-mill, but even now they look like a waterfall coming out of a wall of white stone. The water is sweet and clean, and is believed to have healing properties. In winter, ice festoons frame the running water, and since its temperature is always above zero, moss and weeds prosper there even in the coldest winters. Once I was there in early February, and bathed under this - quite refreshing - shower, and that was good! It wasn't that cold then, though, just -5°C. Old people say that each glass of this water rejuvenates you by a month. A folk

thy should've turned to cannibalism themselves. But back to Izborsk.

This time I went there with my third cousin, Svetlana. I thought to do only a little walking around the fortress and bathing in the lake under the hill. But Svetlana suggested going to the village of Maly, where there are the remains of an old convent - a church, a belfry and several other buildings. Not far, she said - just three kilometres or so. But she lost her way and we had to go through tall undergrowth, through biting nettle and swarms of mosquitoes, and were quite tired when we arrived at last at Maly. Quite a place it was: an old bearded priest was painting the doors of his church and his wife was milking a goat; these were the only people we met. The church was very nice, and the local lake clear and warm, so we bathed, rested, crossed the lake twice by a hand-driven ferry, and started back. But this time I insisted on going "staright", not by a looping road, and led the way. Too brave, that was. We had to walk around some ravines and prickly raspberry bushes, once, and then twice, and again... found ourselves in an ominous-looking deserted cow-farm with empty buildings and the echoing footsteps of accidental visitors. Visitors, who can get in - but when they want to get out, they run into

a barbed wire fence. Most of all the picture looked like a Nazi POW camp after the Nazis fled, but before the allies arrived. Nobody there, just thorns, growing through cracked concrete slabs, and flies, whose buzzing made the silence even heavier, like the buzz of electricity on the deserted space base in Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. And to top all that, there was the carcass of a truck, which looked as if the driver had met a Boojoom and vaporised like the captain of the *Mary Celeste*, and the machine was just left there to rot... And more - on a lonely pole, a withered cow's skull was sitting, reminding me of the *Lord of the Flies* and so many horror movies. If, at that moment, somebody had told me that humankind was no more, I would have believed it.

All in all, we made a cross-country walk of more than 20 kilometres, and were, to an extent, exhausted. So much for a rest in a quiet nook.

* * * * *

I've recently come back from another business trip - this time I went to Novorossiysk - the biggest Russian Black Sea port (excepting Sevastopol, which is not Ukrainian territory but it seems that it'll remain a Russian naval base). Well, it is a nice city: four ports - trade, timber, oil and cement. Clean water but a very bad beach with sharp stones, lots of small restaurants, a mountain range - not a high one, but serving as a good protection from cold winds. After work, at night, I used to enjoy coffee-and-brandy in a small open air restaurant at the seaside and marvel at the weather brewing behind the mountains: the clouds try to boil over the tops, lighting sparkles - but nothing gets through, just a handful of cloud-cotton. The city is mostly known because it is where the Little Land is - the place where a big and bloody landing was made by the Soviet Army during WW2. It was a badly prepared operation with heavy losses, but Leonid Brezhnev took part in it, so it was declared the #1 Operation of the war. Many monuments commemorate it... it really was a heroic thing, but if not for Brezhnev's participation, it would have been less well known.

Another interesting place there is Abrau-Dursav - the place where the best Russian wines are produced, among those is a very rare, excellent sparkling wine. Otherwise, the city is not much to tell about. So I'll tell you about a game I played there. I tried to imagine myself fifteen years ago - you know, I was a good boy and a model Young Communist League member. I thought that foreigners must be quite dumb not to enter the USSR as Soviet Socialist republics so that they could also enjoy all the niceties of socialism. And I was much grieved to know about Comrade Brezhnev's death. Well, on the other hand Brezhnev was a symbol of stability. He was always there (there was a joke: a Russian and an American went into suspended animation for a hundred years. They wake up and ask for a newspaper. The Russian asks for *Pravda* and the American for the *New York Times*. They look at the front pages and faint, because the *New York Times* says: "Collective farmers of Minnesota gave more corn to their socialist Motherland, the USSA"; and *Pravda* announces: "Seventy Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union opened today in Moscow. It was inaugurated by a speech by the Secretary General of the CPSU, twelve times Hero of the Soviet Union, Comrade Leonid Il'yich Brezhnev...."

Well, here I was again - the old me of fifteen. And I was at the Black Sea, enjoying myself and walking. The smell of sea and of cypresses, a gentle warm breeze, brown people around - everything so familiar... but hey, a nice car there! A foreign car! I wonder, where does it come from? Foreign cars are a rare thing, especially far from Moscow... And there are more strange things: a small shop with ads for chewing gum and Marlboro cigarettes, both an abomination and a symbol of bad taste and bourgeois immorality (but kids will do anything for a chewing gum!). Unbelievable. Doesn't the City Party Committee see this? What's more, the shop offers, among other things, porno magazines... uck... and even condoms, which shouldn't even be mentioned, because they are for sex (sorry, I know that this world also should not be said. We don't have sex, as sex is but a dirty thing only existing in corrupted imperialist society). These things - well, those made of rubber, which sometimes kids buy to play with because they can hold a lot of water and then can be thrown as water-grenades - they are used, you know, for making love without making babies, which is dirty, if you know what I mean. And these here are

coloured! With whiskers! And they are called with that word on the label - whereas even in production reports they are referred to as Production Item #2 (Item #1 is the A-bomb). Why didn't anybody report on them? And here.... It is said: PRIVATE SHOP. What do you mean, *private*?! How can anything be private? To top it all, they are laying a record of AC/DC, which, as everybody knows, is purely anti-Communist propaganda.

Next stop: a book shop. Where is the obligatory big department of "Political Literature"? And how come that they sell not only SF in big quantities and in a wide choice - not need to get the books through friends in the Party committees, or in the Society of the Blind (no joke - when I was a schoolboy, there was a guy in our class whose mother was working there, and the Society was regularly getting good books for distribution among the people with poor or no eyesight!) Also, there are such books as MEIN KAMPF, the Holy Bible, the GULAG ARCHIPELAGO, STALIN: KILLER ON THE THRONE, LASSES OF THE KREMLIN MASTERS, volumes of Fleming, with no lines after them, and even porno books (actually, not quite porno - but we were told that they are porno): De Sade's JUSTINE, STORY OF "O", CHINESE TORTURE GARDEN... I managed to impersonate the "then me" so well that I started to feel giddy.

And what can you think of policemen with submachine-guns, handcuffs and rubber batons, carried openly? Or is it, perhaps, somebody is shooting a movie about some capitalist police state, and these are actors?

The weirdest thing is the two-headed eagle on the police car. Because the emblem of Tsarist Russia itself is already a violation of public order. Just like... a swastika (!) worn by that boy, dressed as no decent YCL member (and he must be one, at his 15 or 16 years) would dress. He also has multicoloured hairdo and earrings. Phew!

Now, the flag above the municipal building is the old Russian tricolour. This is a crime. And the inscription, instead of "City Party Committee" or "City Soviet" says just "Mayor's Office"....

The worst thing is comes when I buy a newspaper. First of all, I notice ads, something which is totally new. Some of these ads... "For Sale: Houses in the USA, Cyprus, Greece"; "Nice Girls will render different services to rich people (massage, etc.)"; "A businessman seeks a good-looking slim boy of under 20 for spiritual friendship and will sponsor him"; "Shop tours to Turkey, China, Greece"; "Ex-SPETSNAZ soldier, tough and professional, will serve as a bodyguard (payment in hard currency only)"... "Church School Opens".... Also, there are ads for different goods, totally unfamiliar to me. "Snickers", Tampax, whatever those are.

The news: "Azerbaijan-Armenian War Doesn't Look Like Ending Soon", "Parliament of Chechnya Accuses Russia of Interfering With Internal Affairs of an Independent State", "War in Bosnia: New Assaults", "Lost Russian Troops to be Moved out of United Germany", "Communists Out for a Anti-Government Demonstration, Nazis Join" (say what?), "Rouble Down to 2170 to US\$, (and it used to be US\$1 to just 60 kopecks - 0.6 Rouble!)", "More Jobless in 1995. (jobless in this country! Dear me!)", "Russia Can Be Admitted to NATO, Says Europe" (to where?), and so on and so forth.

Well, I shan't go on: you get the idea, I think (and perhaps it becomes boring to you). But it was really interesting. By the way, there was a US film for children, THE VOYAGE OF THE NAVIGATOR, I think. A boy goes from 1970 into 1990 (I don't remember exactly). Well, the kid is most surprised when, asking for a Pepsi ("I hope that *this* did not change, at least"), gets a choice of many drinks of different flavour. And what about *you*? If you were miraculously transported to this year of 1994 from, say, 15 years ago. What changes can you see which would be unexpected for the "you" of 1979 or so? That people still haven't landed on Mars? That the Cold War is no more? That you have not become the #1 football player of the world....

My next trip was to Kemerovo, a coal mining centre. But there is hardly much to tell about it: a giant pit, lots of mining machinery, etc. The city is quite pleasant, the houses in the centre look nice, but the air is polluted by the local chemical plant and some other enterprises....

- Pavel Viaznikov

POETRY, TOO

1969 - X

It's like the Dark Ages never happened.
Us and the Germans racing to the Moon.
Top sound's The Four Postmen's, 'Is it like fuck?'
We grok on leisure verse for the Light Age
Everyone has the dream of flying
And death seems like someone else's mistake.
The Press say: no one looks more alive.
When they get to see our new costumes,
They won't ask us why we flattened China.

- J. C. Hartley

ASYDRAN WORE INPUTS HER JOURNAL

Went with a veteran of the Shark Wars;
He'd lost his part in some fish-face's jaws.
I told him that to look you couldn't tell,
Just bad luck; they'd rebuilt him very well.
He got a nice pension and the tank-grown grafts;
Bigger than average compensation;
I just laughed, I've seen them all and brother,
There's shafts you'd need Olympus Mons to smother.
It wasn't bad, thought short of my best ever;
He had a gentle touch, light as a feather.
I asked him how it was, to show I care,
He said it was enough to have been there.

- J. C. Hartley

IF POETRY FOR THE PERPLEXED

for Steve Jeffery

It's an unusual creature, I'll admit,
Half science fiction and half poetry,
Yet that odd mixture helps to strengthen it.
A futuristic muse that's been set free
With all of space and time in which to flit,
Imagination set upon a spree.
A form that is both flexible and strong -
The sense of wonder woven into song.

- John Francis Haines

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #21

by Buck Coulson

Since I am just finishing supper, my mind is still on food. This is the top period for eating, if one has a garden, and one of the top foods is corn on the cob. I don't know how Australians feel about corn. Tom Schluck, the TAFF winner a good many years back, wouldn't eat it; corn was animal food. (Since we were trying to make him welcome in the US, nobody pointed out that humans were animals. This wasn't at my home, either, or I might have done it, but be polite to the fellow guest.) One problem with eating corn is that the longer the time between picking and eating, the poorer the taste. Frozen corn is edible, and groceries in this area get fresh supplies shipped in daily, but it still doesn't compare to fresh out of the field. What we had tonight used to be called "roastin' ears" because it was roasted in the shucks (leaves) in the coals of a fire. I've never tried it that way, though the name was still in evidence through my childhood; today the shucks are stripped off and the ear is plopped into boiling water. (Ideally, the water is boiling before the housewife goes into the garden, and the corn is cooked and eaten immediately. Taste evaporates with time.) However, the corn in our garden this year didn't grow, so we're buying ears from a farmer's stand along the highway. That way, it's picked and eaten the same day, which helps.

What one eats, of course, is usually "sweet corn", which contains more sugar than "field corn", which is animal food and mostly starch. There is a secret that only farm wives know; field corn can be eaten, and some people including me consider it superior to sweet corn. But the period when it can be eaten fresh is very short; a week or two at the most, and it must be picked at the right time. One wants it in the period when the kernels are firm but before they begin to harden. For that period, I've always thought it tasted better than sweet corn, but the timing is everything, and there's no way to do it commercially. Juanita usually "borrows" an ear or two from the cornfield next to us at the right period; in fact, that's what I ate tonight. But the sweet corn season is about to end; I've had several roasting ears and Juanita has frozen a lot of kernels for future use.

My eating, these days, is rather circumscribed, since I've had diabetes since 1968, high blood pressure since some time after that (I don't recall how long I've taken heart medicine, though it's fewer than the years I've taken insulin) and, since 1985, less than a complete heart. Plus, I've had asthma and hay fever for as long as I can remember, which means over 60 years, and severe wheezing cuts down on my ingestion of anything. With enough sinus drainage in my stomach, anything I eat comes back up. Fortunately, there's not much I can't eat at all; I just have to restrict the amount, and keep it especially digestible when I'm wheezing badly.

When I was younger I shot a good deal of the meat that I ate in the fall and winter - the hunting season ran from November through January. In those days there was no deer in Indiana; civilization had driven them out. More recently, demands of hunters have caused the state to re-introduce deer, and the herds are so large they had to allow hunting in one state park last fall because it held so many deer that they were eating all the forage for themselves and every other animal in the park. There are plentiful deer in this area, where there were none when we moved here 20 years ago, but I've only hunted deer a couple of times and come up blank both times. The wild food supply when I lived with my parents consisted of rabbits, quail, ringnecked pheasants, and ducks. Squirrels were hunted, but squirrel season coincided with hay-fever season and after trying it a few years, and bagging a very few squirrels, I gave up on that. Rabbits were the mainstay. I went with my father on my first rabbit hunt - and killed my

first rabbit - when I was 5 years old, so small that I couldn't reach the forearm of the .22 rifle I was using, and had to support it with both hands around the trigger guard. I've been a hunter and target shooter ever since, though I suppose I was 7 or 8 years old before Dad allowed me to go out by myself with a gun, and of course if we went very far I was dependent on Dad's driving to get us there. But I could hunt around the edges of Silver Lake, which had cottages only on the east side; a walk of a few hundred yards would put me into fields. I didn't really do a lot of hunting until I graduated to a shotgun at age 10; a .22 rifle meant that I had to locate a sitting rabbit and be facing away from the cottages when I found it. Once I had a shotgun I supplied a share of the family meat during the winter.

We had 4.5 acres of land at Silver Lake, and Dad kept a cow, mostly for the fresh milk and butter. (I churned a fair amount of butter as a small boy, and hated the task.) Most years he'd breed the cow, and slaughter the calf in the fall, using that same .22 rifle that I'd killed my first rabbit with. If the weather was right, a quarter or two of beef or possibly veal (I've never been sure just when the term changes) would be hung on our front porch - which was unheated - and the meat would be cut off as required. The rest of the meat, plus any from the front porch which was left when the weather warmed up in the spring, would be home-canned by Mom. I don't believe I've ever tasted anything as delicious and tender as that home-canned beef. In those days, a lot of people used "cold-pack" canners, which were somewhat dangerous for use with anything but acid vegetables like tomatoes, but we had a pressure canner, good for anything at all. As long as Mom watched it; by the time I was old enough to notice things like that, the safety valve was stuck, so Mom had to keep a close eye on the pressure gauge.

We also had a large garden; sweet corn, green beans, tomatoes, squash, spinach and kale for greens, radishes, onions, lettuce, cabbage, and so on, which was eaten fresh in season and canned for winter. Plus a rhubarb patch which never did very well, a row of red raspberries, and a large patch of blackberries which was used for fresh berries, blackberry juice, and blackberry wine. And a few fruit trees, and a grape arbor. I always preferred blackberry juice to grape juice; a different flavor and more tart. Can't find it in stores, of course. Mom made some jam and jelly, but I don't recall having a lot of it. Stocks in stores were more limited back then; I never heard the term "supermarket" until I was a teenager. Groceries had meat, butter, milk, and canned goods and very little else. Soft drinks, but soft drinks were expensive; 5 cents a bottle. I drank some in the summer, but I never had a lot of spending money, and for the price of 5 soft drinks I could buy a box of .22 cartridges. The only times I got money, until I began earning my own at 13, were my birthday in May and Christmas in December, so I learned how to budget before my age got into double figures. (And when I did start earning money, a good share of it was put away in posted savings, to help the war effort; I was eleven years old when Germany invaded France.)

Chocolate was a rarity; there were candy bars, but mostly I couldn't afford them. Mom made a few cakes in the summer and a lot of fruit pies in the winter, and now and then in the winter I could prevail on her to make doughnuts. I had to eat them at the table to avoid strewing crumbs, but some of my happiest hours were spent munching doughnuts and reading a book. Today you buy doughnuts at the grocery (miserable) and the bakery (acceptable but not really great eating. Doughnuts should come hot from the kettle.)

I disliked the red raspberries, I think because they were so hard to pick, and because I was required to help pick them. Search around under the leaves, get struck a few times, and find one berry. Then repeat the process. As a teenager, I discovered large patches of wild black raspberries in our area. There were just as many stickers, but the fruit grew in clumps so one got stuck less for the same amount of eating, and I liked the taste better. (We now have black raspberries growing wild on our place here, and they get picked, eaten on the spot, and frozen for winter, and they still taste great; my favorite berry.)

In the spring there were greens to pick; curly dock, dandelions, shepard's purse, lamb's quarter. Dock was the basis of our greens; the rest were added for flavoring. Pokeweed, known just as "poke", was eaten by itself when enough could be found, and was a marvellous green. I have a US government pamphlet (cont.p20)

SFWA HANDBOOK

reviewed by James Verran

Someone once said: "People asking for advice are really seeking approval." Unless writers of SF&F are fortunate enough to know other devotees of the genre, they are faced with a dilemma: where to obtain good advice, let alone approval. Mainstream writers are a dime a dozen (just like clichés), but try asking the average (or even brilliant) mainstreamer for advice on SF&F, and watch the eyes glaze over. Sure, some may offer helpful advice, often in the form of a thinly disguised opinion, but apart from the nuts and bolts of writing in general, any advice is likely to be little more than well-meaning condescension. In their eyes, SF&F is not legitimate writing.

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America have published a manual to redress the dearth of informed advice for SF&F writers in *The S.F.W.A. HANDBOOK*, subtitled: *The Professional Writer's Guide to Writing Professionally*. Edited by Kristine Kathryn Rusch and her husband, Dean Wesley Smith, it goes a long way to answering the most frequently asked questions, as well as a lot you never thought to ask. Granted, *The HANDBOOK* is strongly weighted toward writing for the U.S. market, but very few writers in any genre can afford to ignore the world's largest and most lucrative market.

The contents pages contain an intriguing list of chapter titles written by several respected SF&F writers, many of whom have previously expounded their particular expertise in regular articles for the *S.F.W.A. BULLETIN*. The *HANDBOOK* is divided into six sections: The Professional, The Sale, Post Sale, Significant Others, The S.F.W.A. and The How-to-Write Section. Three of the major sections are broken into related subsections.

SECTION ONE: THE PROFESSIONAL

In "The Science Fiction Professional", Frederik Pohl lays it on the line with an interpretation of "professional". Early in his piece he mentions that apart from improvements in the money, fame and prestige, SF writing has changed in other ways. The contemporary SF professional needs to function as: a literary agent, contract lawyer, publicist, performer (TV, radio, lectures), apparition (which he defines as one who helps to keep pro and fan organisations functioning), teacher, critic, secretary, editor, proofreader, futurologist, and scientist (Mr. Pohl gives a two line qualification to this). The list finishes with: an artist, and of course, a writer. His nineteen pages of advice contains several anecdotes, drawn from his own experiences, about various aspects of the above list. Yet, in summing up, he states that having written the article he must confess that he is not entirely sure what it means to be a professional science fiction writer. However, in supposing that he is one, he intimates that he does not always feel that way. Even Frederik Pohl admits to having occasional, grave self-doubts, and periods of wondering what the hell ever made him think he had a chance of making it as a writer. Having met and spoken with him, all too briefly in 1990, my impression of him remains the same: Frederik Pohl is a generous and friendly, yet surprisingly modest man.

Dean Wesley Smith follows with, "Are We Having Fun Yet?" in which he bemoans the problems of wearing two hats. As a successful publisher, albeit recently arrived, he attempts to enlighten writers on the difficulties confronting publishers, while claiming to still remember what it is like to be doing it hard as a lonely writer; starving and scrambling to make the rent on the garret. His article is largely devoted to winning the writer's sympathy vote -- God, it must be tough at the top -- and even sets out the criteria for being a publisher's ideal writer. Nevertheless, it contains sound advice for the writer with a tight hat.

SECTION TWO: THE SALE

In "A Beginner's Guide to Contracts" Damon Knight very briefly covers what you may reasonably expect when that awesome moment arrives -- negotiating the contract.

Dean R. Lamb's, "Negotiating Magazine Agreements", is a comprehensive article on how, with whom and for how much, which every writer will find useful.

The "New Copyright Laws" by Ellen M. Kozak, Attorney at Law, outlines the recent changes to US copyright law under The Berne Convention for Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. Riveting stuff -- fortunately, clearly presented by Ms. Kozak.

"Book Copyrights" by Richard Curtis deals mostly with the "rights" inherent in copyright, and warns of some contractual clauses inserted to disadvantage the imprudent writer. He also explains such niceties as: Form (hardcover, trade paperback etc.), Language (usually English), Territory (where your publisher may publish and distribute), and Subsidiary rights (farming out the work). Read this before signing away your rights.

Ellen M. Kozak returns with, "Work For Hire: A Red Flag For Writers". The lady really hits her straps in this revealing look at writing-to-order. In short, she warns that writing for hire turns the copyright laws around. The commissioner of the work owns the copyright, and that means totally! No matter how much the writer puts into the work, s/he takes the money, and that is about all. An important warning, and essential reading, along with Ms. Kozak's subsequent piece: "Of Time, Duration, and the Public Domain".

PAYMENT

"Advances: Or, Hold Onto Your Wallet" T. Jackson King gives examples of the various potential pitfalls of: Advances, Break Points, Royalty Rates, Retained Rights and Subsidiary Rights Equal(s) Money, Multi-book Contracts and Advances, Payout Schedules, and Bargaining.

In "Royalty Statements", "Model Royalty Statement", and "P & L" Richard Curtis takes twenty-five pages to carefully explain royalty statements with examples of statements and the facts relevant to establishing Profit & Loss figures. And it does not get any easier.

"What to do When the Publisher Won't Pay", another contribution by Dean R. Lamb, wherein he advises the writer to get everything in writing. He also offers help with understanding the rights you are selling, while emphasising that you should save every bit of (relevant) paper. In a subsection, "Prying the Payment Loose", he advocates putting your agent to work, writing a polite enquiry letter, or seeing a lawyer, and taking legal action. His advice also encompasses, filing a claim in a bankruptcy action (if your publisher stiffes you by declaring bankruptcy), and if all else fails, sharing your grief (spilling the beans) -- all dangerous ammunition in the hands of an unhappy writer.

SECTION THREE: POST-SALE

CLEAN COPY

"Editorial Courtesy" by Damon Knight is a whimsical look at coping with brash editors. He opens by stating that writers are human, but warns that editors sometimes doubt the validity of that statement. Of course, being accommodating, and reasonable people, writers are easy prey to unscrupulous editors.

"An Open Letter to Copy Editors" is John Dalmis' way of enlightening writers by taking a dig at copy editors -- a delightfully informative, tongue-in-cheek piece.

Nina Kiriki Hoffman takes up the cudgel in "Typesetter's Blues". Her concise, but good natured article explains why writers should adhere to the seemingly fussy little conditions imposed on them when preparing a manuscript for submission.

PROMOTION

"Cover Story: Authors and Cover Art" is Kevin J. Anderson's exposé on the foibles of art directors, and why books seldom get the covers they deserve.

"The Gates of Heaven (or Hell)" by Jennifer Roberson is only recommended for thick-skinned writers. Those lacking in self-confidence had better skip this one.

"Self Promotion: Crass Commercialism or Good Sense?" Betsy Mitchell gives her suggestions for getting out and flogging your book in this one. She provides several examples of how to create a demand for your published works, after the distributor has put them around. The writer's work does not necessarily end with the sale of the manuscript.

Susan Schwartz's "A Neo-Pro's Guide to Fandom or Con-dom" continues the theme of promoting and selling yourself as a writer. Her advice for writers who feel inclined to brush off the people who buy and read their books -- don't!

"Wooing Book Dealers" Kristine Kathryn Rusch gives her slant on the subject of post-sale promotion and keeping book dealers happy. After all, if they have met, and like the author, they are more inclined to promote that writer's book, which in turn means greater profits for all concerned.

RESALES

"Multiple Usage of Existing Resources: Yet Another Dull Essay" by Edward Bryant brings an often overlooked aspect of writing to light: recycling. A story need not be finished with after its first sale. There are opportunities to sell it again, once the conditions of the original contract have been expended, providing the rights have reverted to the author. Mr. Bryant's examples of how he has recycled stories is worthy of careful study.

SECTION FOUR: SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

"Agents" by Raymond Feist offers excellent advice on establishing a relationship with, and the benefits to be derived from having an agent. He explains what an agent is, why you need one, what to look for, and how to deal with your agent.

"Author-Agent Agreements: A Case Study" D. Alexander Smith sets out the various stages of striking a workable agreement with an agent. This article includes a template contract/agreement with comprehensive examples and explanations of the various clauses.

BOOK PACKAGERS

"Book Packers" Richard Curtis returns with more advice for the confused writer who, having sold a book, is considering an offer of financial assistance on a further manuscript. However, life is not all that simple. There are pitfalls, and unless a writer is willing to accept the role of "factory" scribe, said writer should study this article carefully.

"Writing for Packers" Jerry Olton looks at book packaging from the writer's point of view. He discusses The Offer, The Contract, and The Book Itself, then asks, "What's in It for You?" He ends with his thoughts on Literary Quality and its relationship to series books.

STRANGE NEW CREATURES

"The Specialty Press" is another aspect of publishing, close to the heart of Dean Wesley Smith. He gives an example of how he has made specialty publishing work for him, and equally important, for the writers concerned.

"Electronic Publishing: Ten Years Down the Road" Greg Bear looks to the near future, and how publishing technology is already changing. The age of the electronic book is here, and Greg discusses the technologies involved. He also passes on some advice and a timely warning.

SECTION FIVE: SFWA

"Selected Officer and Committee Descriptions" and "By-laws" provides an insight into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Inc. All you need to know, and more, with various subsections written by a collection of past and present office holders within the S.F.W.A.

SECTION SIX: THE HOW-TO-WRITE SECTION

"Collaboration" Larry Niven, a collaborative writer of note, passes on the benefit of his experience. He has certainly worked with some eminent collaborators during his continuing career. He acknowledges that collaboration is not for every writer, but if you

strike a sympathetic chord, why not?

In "To Make a Short Story Long" Orson Scott Card explains why a novel is not an extended short story. Naturally, he goes on to give his reasons why, and describes how he "unlearned" short story writing to become a successful novelist. Incidentally, Mr. Card ends with a request for advice on how a novelist may learn to write short stories.

Charles de Lint's intriguingly titled "Death Threats" contains the equally intriguing subsections: "What if I Die Before the Book's Finished?", and "The Book's Crap...." He expounds his theories on the blues that writers frequently suffer, sort of a mid-manuscript crisis, and how to resist the temptation to write: "And they all died. The End" half way through your book.

"Writing a Series" by John Morressy reinforces Orson Scott Card's premise that a novel is not just an extended short story. He astutely observes that a series is not just an extended novel, any more than a marathon is merely a very long sprint. This, the final word on writing in the HANDBOOK, contains some obvious, but often overlooked techniques for writing a series. He's been there and done it, so his advice is well worth noting.

Members of the S.F.W.A. receive a copy of the 248 page HANDBOOK (ISBN 1-56146-406-6) as part of their membership package. As with most S.F.W.A. publications, it is also available to non-members by ordering direct from PULPHOUSE PUBLISHING, Box 1227, Eugene, OR 97440. In the foreword, and occasionally within the text, there are mentions of a revised edition, so write for details about price (approximately US\$10 plus packaging and posting charges). Perhaps the revised edition will explain why the S.F.W.A. has chosen not to include the extra F (for fantasy) in its initials.

With few exceptions, authors of "how to write" books have struggled to find different ways of saying much the same things: only the teachers and their methods have varied. The S.F.W.A. HANDBOOK is not another "how to write" book; in fact, it gives a low priority to writing per se. It achieves its purpose of passing on the essential survival skills by contributing to a better understanding of the business side of writing. Certainly, there is more to being a writer than just writing. Although some of its content is heavy going, the contributors have all approached their respective pieces with a sense of fun. An important reference/inspirational book for writers submitting work to U.S. publishers.

- James Verran

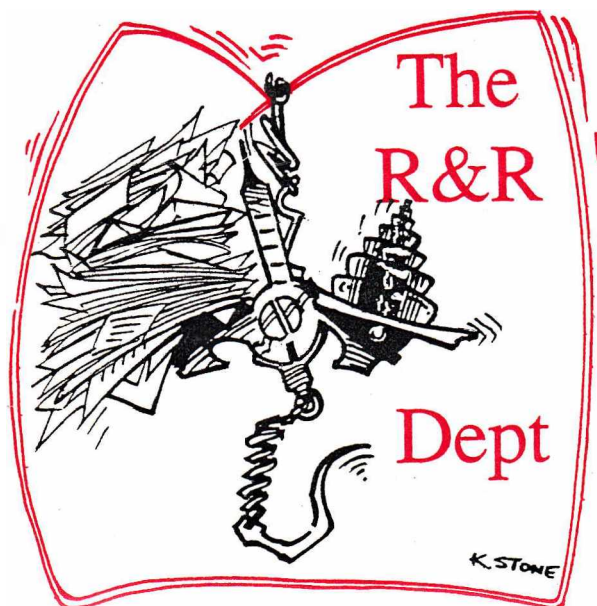
YANKEE PRIVATEER #21 *cont. from p. 18*:

which says that all part of the plant are a deadly poison, in which case I've been dead for years. When poke is young, the leaves and stalk are among my favorite foods. I'll stay away from the berries, though. They probably are poison. (There's a line from a folksong that runs something like "... died of a large overdose of my pokeberry wine," which is intended as rural humor; nobody in his right mind would make pokeberry wine.) I dunno; maybe a little poison was good for me; helped develop my character.

Christmas was the time Mom made mince pies. Her "mincemeat" had very little meat in it. The basis was apples, which were relatively cheap (and free, when our trees bore well.) Then there were raisins, spices, and candied orange and grapefruit peel. I'd hang around while the pies were being made, hoping to snatch a piece - or beg a piece - of candied grapefruit peel. Probably the favorite candy of my youth, and I could usually talk Mom out of a few pieces. There was less of the orange peel, and I didn't like it as well anyway, so I left all of it for the pies. The only bad thing about the grapefruit peel was that it was somewhat sticky, so I had to be careful when I was eating and reading. (I was usually reading when I ate - I still am.) I always took good care of my reading matter. If it belonged to the county library, then it was other people's property and if I damaged it I'd get punished; and if it was mine, if I damaged it, it wouldn't get replace and I'd be stuck with an incomplete book. Most of my childhood books survived both my childhood and Bruce's, and we both have several - not in ideal condition by now, but still readable - which belonged to my mother. Copyright 1898 on one of them, which is probably not the oldest but was the easiest to pull out of the bookcase. Anyway, no getting the pages sticky, if there was any way to avoid it.

And after typing all this I'm hungry again, so I'll get it ready to mail and then have a snack.

- Buck Coulson



CHRIS A. MASTERS, PO Box 7545, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, VIC 3004.

It's 2.33 am and I've just finished watching three hours of Royal Rumble '94 on video (that's wrestling to all you uncultured sci-fi twits). Well, the tape finished about an hour ago, and I've spent the time from then till now flipping through and reading various bit'n'pieces of THE MENTOR 84, which seems to have put me in the mood to start writing another one of these locs that keep offending ye all.

Now that you've got a photocopier perhaps you might consider doing TM in A3 .. so it'll look like a real magazine, instead of an imitation.

[TM isn't trying to be a real magazine. I use A4, which is half the size of A3, but is only 1/2 the price. A5 may look better, though you lose more in the interior margins, which A4 does not have. However you need a good guillotine with an A5 zine to make the zine not look scruffy. Of course if you are one of those lazy ten who get their fanzine run off by a printshop, why should other fans listen? - Ron.]

Are you implying that the use of expletives is indication of a poor grasp of the English language? Yer entitled to yer opinion supposes me. Nevertheless, I'll continue to be the crass asshole I've always been despite your disapproval. If yer approval was all that important to me I'd put out a nerdy sci-fi magazine wouldn't I?

[Who said I disapproved of how you expressed yourself? I certainly didn't. - Ron.]

Rodney Leighton: If you wanted God or Satan to answer your prayers make sure to include an SSAE next time you get on your knees and say your hail marys. Pamela J. Boal: (heh, heh, heh...) My letter an abomination! Why thank you for the compliment. Offending the tight-arsed little worlds of people such as yourselves always gives me pleasure.

Shane Dix: You asked about censorship and children. Yes children should be censored. Preferably with a large axe. Seriously though, I think kids face much greater dangers from media brainwashing, Macdonalds and the Americanization of our culture (why is it that it's only its worst elements that are pushed upon us), school, parents, rap, and each other, than say, accidentally catching a glimpse of a bit of porn or TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. Yeah, there was all that fuss about CHILD'S PLAY 3 and that Bolger toddler incident. It all made great copy and the media went into a frenzy over the whole thing. But like most of the shit that appears in the papers or on the TV News it's more fiction than fact. When what's-is-name's (one of the kids who killed the toddler... can't remember his name right now...) parents revealed that their kid had never actually seen CHILD'S PLAY 3, and that he got so scared when his parents played horror movies on the VCR that he would run into his room. This only received minor coverage in the newspapers and on television. (In fact, I wouldn't have even known about this had not a friend of mine sent a clipping to me.) Why? Because it wasn't sensational. What I'd like to suggest is that "consensus reality" (ie the bullshit fed to us by the mass media) is far more dangerous to us (and our children, for

those of us silly enough to have them) than pornography or the simulated - and usually heavily stylised - violence we see in films. One is something we choose as entertainment and as escapism, the other a deliberate campaign of brainwashing and the manipulation of opinion (usually for profit!). (27.6.94)

[That, of course, applies to those of us glued to TV - news and other pap - and devour the pages.. - Ron]

BILL CONGREVE, PO Box 3542, Parramatta, NSW 2145.

One of the problems with an individual's right to the freedom of speech (not protected by law and being constantly eroded by new legislation in this country.) is the refusal of some individuals to think about what they've got to say before they stick their brain in neutral and the soles of their boots between their teeth. I mention this in this way because the title of Row's article in The Mentor 82, A BOOK FOR BURNING, suggests that he proposes just such a form of censorship. There is another exquisite irony in this, for the problem lies not in Tepper's novel, but in Row's reading of it. Herein lies another problem with fundamentalist censorship arguments: 'If I don't like it, it's not fit to be read and I don't want other people to read it!'. I know you don't actually say this, Mr Row, but it is implicit in the title of your article, and in the attitudes you take within the arguments you present. Contained within this argument is a more insidious one:

'I've read this book, and I don't like it. Trust me on this, don't worry your pretty little brains over it. I'll do all the hard thinking for you so that you can crawl back into your little slot and enjoy your meaningless role in today's legislatocracy without ever having to think about anything ever again.'

All I can suggest is that Mr Row go to his history and anthropology textbooks and spend a little time studying societies that burn books. And, if that doesn't get the point across, perhaps he could spend some time researching the fate of book burners when the revolution comes.

I support absolutely the right of Sheri Tepper to write and publish whatever novels she wishes. I also support absolutely the right of Bradley Row to make a fool of himself in public.

Change of subject. For Sydney Bounds on the subject of the amounts of British and Australian SF being published. A lot of it is economics. Much of it is the inability of Australian publishers to come to grips with the concept of 'commercial fiction' after having being caught in the navel gazing 'literary' merry go round for so many decades. (A form of autistic communication if ever there was one -- publishing for a peer group of academics and critics who control government grant money rather than publishing for readers.)

As for the economics -- a British multinational adds ten or twenty thousand onto their print run for a midlist title to cover Australian and NZ sales. This is the icing on the cake and a large percentage of the profit from UK publishing. The whole package represents a firm sale to a subsidiary in another country. From the Australian point of view, a local branch of a multi-national will only print a total of ten or twenty thousand of a local midlist title. The economics are against this simply due to the much smaller print run. This local title then must compete with the imported books which the local publisher must sell to make money on. The local title, if successful, reduces the number of books the local branch of the multinational can then import from its larger British parent, hence reducing the profits of that parent.

Am I being cynical?

A representative of a major British publisher recently did a report on the Australian market and told the Australian subsidiary to stop publishing so many local titles as they weren't as profitable for the whole organisation. A number of prominent and quite successful, even bestselling, Australian writers had titles dropped. I wish I could mention names.

As for Australian SF being published in England? There is a little: Paul Voermans, George Turner, Greg Egan, Rosaleen Love are the names that immediately come to mind. Why can't more of us make it? Well, I once had a story rejected by an SF magazine (US - one of the majors.) because Sydney Harbour was too exotic a location for SF readers to identify with. Okay, there were other problems with my story which that editor also picked up on, but I wonder how that editor justified buying stories set on Mars, or an orbiting space station, or Alpha Centauri?

Herein lies the other side of the problem. Overseas editors

must recognise that Australian writers have something to say, or have a story to tell, before books will be bought and published. (11.7.94)

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

Oh! Chris! Chris! Chris! Way bad moves! I am most feline and definitely not a sheeple! I should be clawing you like our cat does the carpet but fortunately for you I'm slightly amused by your totally *unreal* conception of me - cranky old eccentric "little ol' lady with blue rinse". Short. It's just as well for you cos I've been under a *lot* of stress lately and your behaviour nominates you as a very acceptable scapegoat for displacement of negative energies.

One - the intelligent response to a rhetorical question which by the way you didn't answer! should be thoughtful *not* a bout of hysterical swearing you smeghead! (Actually I have no idea what a smeghead is but I like RED DWARF and the sound of that particular word!)

You didn't answer the question - Is it better or harder to be the person doing the damage or the person trying to stop damage before it starts? Have some sympathy for the poor censors. Think how bored they must get!

Two - I have never yet met a feminist fan who's into heavy metal! Why should one want to support a genre whose media destroys one's hearing? Since many feminists are humanists in the best sense of the word I doubt they would be keen on things that reduce human capabilities. Real art encourages one to be more human. *Poison destroys* - be it drugs, bad "lit", porn, (as opposed to erotica which enhances sexuality, example - good ST slash links sexuality to character development, "bad" slash = boring sex) excessive noise or pollution. I have had my hearing lessened by exposure to industrial noise and my lungs damaged by pollution, allergies and infections so that I have chronic bronchitis (= getting asthma or being at risk for attacks after every or any viral infection) and as a consequence of other people's thoughtlessness have had my social life limited to almost nil. If I want to stay healthy I have to avoid smoke, smog, bad air conditioning and a long list of foods. This is why I do not attend interstate or overseas conventions any more or very few Australian ones.

Three - Logic was never one of my strong points. I'm better at ethics and have not yet mastered syllogisms despite being able to read Aristotle in the original Greek. Stupid I'm not! though maybe masochistic since I'm doing an MA that combines philosophical and literary studies on Imperial Platonic erotica - doesn't that sound gloriously obscure!!!

So bratling what's your excuse for being so adolescent? Like really what's so logical about a statement like "I'll express myself any way I bloody please" A five year old could say that! and its simplistic as well. This is a value system!???

"I can do whatever I want regardless of how it effects other people" - well its a great method for generating bad karma!

I do hope however I'm not an idiot just a poor befuddled poet and scholar who freely admits to sometimes, many times, being confused by the world's complexities. Unlike Socrates I do not wish to become a martyr by proving the extent of ignorance amongst humanity. He believed ignorance was error and certainly the Athenians' misunderstanding of his quest for knowledge via definitions of reality was dangerous for him.

Rod Marsden. I am not a French Symbolist and feel no compulsion to produce black and dangerous flowers. The occasional weird and intricate hybrid flows forth into patterns of ink from my pen though but sometimes I like to create lighter verse to contrast with metaphysical seriousness.

Oh Pavel! Pavel! *Boo!* There are many feminist fans out there! Dear boy have you met young Masters? "Aggressive, crude and doing their best to look and act ugly." Let's translate this - Angry, honest and realising there's more to life than pleasing men. Get real. If all those media reports about the Russian economy are true where do you expect women to find the energy to do more than survive? Beauty or beautification as a process is a luxury for many not a necessity!

Sigh, angry young men are a cliché but rage is real. Some of us have to struggle to channel the fire in our souls. I have a temper myself but I don't enjoy fighting despite my feline shadow. Sometimes I think the meaning of life is that its one unending process of learning as well as change. (-.7.94)

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

#85 was a good issue of all fronts. Steve Carter's cover shows what he does best: all types of four-legged animals with lots of teeth and no tits.

Andy's article on DOCTOR WHO was his best yet. It's the best overview of everyone's favourite time lord that I've ever read, in fact. That isn't to say that I agree with his opinions on all counts. Harnell seemed to me the perfect Doctor and the show never seemed the same after Pat Troughton took over, but Pertwee was the one I thought you would put your trust in, if you happened to run across the Tardis in your travels. Tom Baker seemed to regard the part as a joke, until later on in life when he decided it was time to cash in on his popularity. I agree that the scripts during his stint were superior to those in Pertwee's time, but it's only in the "fullness of time" (or middle-age nostalgia) that's forced me to appreciate his contribution to the show.

Katy (Jo Grant) Manning never appeared in PLAYBOY: it was in a British publication, PLAYGIRL. Katy is often seen around Sydney and barely shows her years. A hell of a nice person and always willing to put in free appearances at local conventions. Peter Davison I thought played his part to perfection, unlike the cardboard cut-out that followed him. That was when I switched to another channel....

Don't think there are any cruise ships sailing to Antarctica. Dick Smith used to organise charter flights when 747's appeared in this part of the world but they didn't land, simply flying briefly over the continent before returning to, I think, Melbourne.

Pavel's trip to Ashkhabad gave me a few good laughs, concerning his host's rules for drinking. That's one place to stay well away from. Maybe the local chap is hell-bent on killing off as many Russians as possible! (30.7.94)

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

Many thanks to Brent Lillie, Andy Darlington and Steve Sneyd for their kind words about my poetry. Yes, it was Kubrick who pulled A CLOCKWORK ORANGE off screen - seems it was causing copycat-type criminal activity. Pity that had to happen, as it's a great film.

Andy's CAPTAIN CONDOR article was super - I missed that one, must have finished before I first saw LION.

VSE OF THE TWO HAND SWORDE was a chortlesome attempt at cod Middle English (but beware, there is no such word as ye - it is a solecism for the - Old english had a letter called thorn - þ, giving the "th" sound of "then", "ye" is a misreading and miswriting of "p". Ye, meaning "you", is a different word entirely). That bit of pedantry aside, I liked it!

Good to see some art getting a decent spread (pity it wasn't in colour, though) and Steve Sneyd's THE DOUBLE RAINBOW OF DUTY struck me as the most effective poem.

Buck Coulson must have a cast-iron constitution as well as a dicky ticker for being able to write so calmly about such events in his life. Glad you're still with us, Buck - keep taking those tablets! (30.7.94)

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

I was interested in your comments on changes [in TM 84]. I too, remember milk being delivered in large cans aboard a horse drawn cart. The milkman would ladle your order into your mug. Beer was sold in a similar manner from the "corner shop". Both went into uncovered, open jugs. Meat hung uncovered outside butcher's shops industriously gathering all the germs floating up from the droppings of passing horses or the dust raised by carts. No TV, our radio ran off batteries and the low tension one had to go to the local garage for a re-charge every few days.

Darlington also came up trumps with another excellent bit of SF history on Captain Condor and others. These were all well after my time of course, so I never encountered them, so it's nice to read of their creation and exploits. Certainly, the artwork was of a very high standard.

Sorry, but I managed about four sentences of TWO HANDED SWORD[E] before giving up. Life is too short to waste time laboriously deciphering such stuff.

YANKEE PRIVATEER was over my head this time as I try to avoid heart attacks. I always wonder what happens if one has one whilst sitting alone at home. I much preferred James Verran's look at some less well known magazines. I'm afraid that I don't share his enthusiasm for NEW SCIENTIST though. Firstly, and this is my own fault, I am not interested in the biology, geology, plant life, physiology, and medical articles. Buying the mag for the small section which interests me is poor economy. My second reason is more serious. I object to a science magazine, supposedly unbiased, frequently descending to political jibes against Tories, (never against the Labour Party). I don't object to an article exposing how Tory scheme A has proved ineffective and a waste of money, that's fair comment; but how do you rate impartiality when articles have such phrases as "as thick as a Tory politician", "As skinny as John Major" or "typical Conservative stupidity". That's not unbiased scientific comment and I hate the magazine for including such stuff.

Cheering up again, Mark McLeod's portfolio was excellent despite the drawbacks of reproducing pencil (?) sketches. The small character in the Michael Angelo illo looked familiar though. Where have I seen him before?

Congreve on TV and advertising. Both violate Sturgeon's law as they are more than 99% crud - 99.999% I'd say. As long as people watch those idiotic soaps (many of 'em from Australia I'm sorry to say), then TV companies will serve 'em up. POETRY 2 (yecch). AUSTRALIAN FANDOM, sorry, not my cup of tea. LETTERS, excellent and they neatly round up an issue which violates Sturgeon's law - only about 5% is crud - which 5%, well look under "POETRY".

(30.7.94)

RACHAEL MCGRATH-KERR, 17 Fitzalan St, Kambah, ACT 2902.

Wow - what a cover for TM 83! I know that you have to pay for colour covers with your own blood, but they look great. I'm afraid I've stopped reading about Oz fan history anymore. Granted, it would be far more meaningful to me if I recognised/knew more people who feature'd in it, but I can't expect to be pandered to!

Andrew Darlington's feature on Mercury's portrayal in fiction was enjoyable. As an avid reader of s-f in a rather old Tasmanian library, most of the books I read in the mid-70's were by then way out of date in their explanations of planetary conditions (they'd been written in the 50's). I had a good background in Asimov and Heinlein, and even some novels by Capt. W. E. Johns, one of which was set on the Moon which had creatures living in mud. Hmmm... I only read those because I'd hoped that Biggles would turn up. Dream on!

Thanks Bill for IN DEPTH #10. I'm doing communication of sorts as part of my psychology course, meanings of messages, physiological responses, etc. Where's the line between psychology and philosophy? Some would say one is speculative and the other is empirical. Maybe, maybe not.... Please, help me keep my sanity chip running, and don't let me be drawn into a debate about education. I probably didn't have a large number of ideas and by the time I finished teaching last year, virtually everything had been wiped in a desperate bit for survival as a human being.

Thank you, Joe Fisher, for saving me from feeling obliged to write about RED DWARF. My little brothers (actually 6'1") introduced me to the series, and I've made sure I watched it ever since. Actually, it's necessary in order to keep up with their "in-jokes". They're particularly fond of saying "I don't do the W word" when asked to do a chore.

(5.8.94)

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

The best poem in this issue was by Anon, in your editorial. So I must be getting old, too. Andy Darlington turns in a good article, as usual. I didn't know Brian Lewis worked for the Boys' papers.

Well, I hope Buck is now recovered and going full steam ahead. It's not everyone who can get a column out of a heart attack. Verran was interesting, but keeping to science magazines is restrictive. THE ECONOMIST, for example, is not only about economy. It covers technology and anything else that might affect the economy.

A Portfolio is a good idea that I hope you will continue in future issues. It would be nice if the artist could be persuaded to write a short piece about his technique. I agree with Bill Congreve on advertising, but is there an editor bright enough to put it into effect?

The Aussie fan history continues to interest, and proves again that fans are no better than any other group at co-operating. If fans can't, why should we expect politicians to do any better? Nice to see Bill Temple getting a mention; he was under-rated. Unfortunately Bill died a few years ago. (31.7.94)

Thanks for TM 85... it seems I have barely read 84 when thud on the mat and...

[Yes, I would say that the PO delivered TM 85 to you by airmail. They do that sometimes, if they have space on a plane (or mis-sort it. - Ron.)]

The cover, yes, well, if you like that sort of thing. Well done, of course, but can we now put Jurassic Park behind us? I much prefer 84's cover, with a list of contents.

Your editorial bring back memories of my young days as a fan. I don't think that MEMORY, LAME quite came off. A neat idea, well handled but it lacked punch at the end.

James Verran continues to educate would-be writers, an unusual series in a fanmag. Well I take characters names from the RADIO TIMES (they change every week.) Place names from a map of the area: first part of one name and last part of another.

Andy gets better all the time. Did you try this on the Dr. Who magazine, Andy? You might have got paid.

Molesworth's History mentions Ted Carnell and Frank Arnold (both no longer with us) to bring back more memories. I notice you are reprinting some poems. Is this deliberate policy?

[No, did I reprint them?? - Ron.]

I usually find myself agreeing with Bill Congreve, but... "given fiction's immense popularity as a source of entertainment" raises a hollow laugh. Short stories appear in women's magazines; novels are mainly reprinted from the USA. If he means fiction in the form of video films, yes. In printed form, no. Caxton's day has passed and we are now in the electronic age.

I hope Mae's letter does not mean she won't be writing letters to you. This one, about living in Argentina was fascinating. Michael: Orwell's 1984 was first published in 1949 and was certainly well known long before any TV broadcast. (7.8.94)

HANS PERSSON, Rydsvagen 232B, S-582 48 Linköping, Sweden.

I must confess to not having read the entire zine [TM 82] yet, firstly I haven't yet gotten through the article on Australian fan history (I'll read it next time it rains which, hopefully, is soon. We've had about 30°C here now for about a month which is far more than usual and my lawn makes crackling noises when I walk on it.).

I really liked the introduction about religion and also the A BOOK TO BURN rant, even though I haven't read the book. One thing that struck me while reading the letter column was that it seems to have an unusually high amount of comments on things that have actually been mentioned in THE MENTOR recently. Most of the lettercols that I read seem to, at least largely, skip over the part of previous issues of whatever fanzine they are in and then go off along some tangent or other. Not that I think that's boring, just, well... strange. I wonder if it is because of a firmer editorial hand on your part or just that letter writers in Australian fanzines are more debate-minded.

By the way, you mention that overseas readers tend to get a shortened version of the 'zine with no reviews. That's a pity. I often find that the review section is one of the parts of most fanzines that I like the best. (2.8.94)

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

Steve Sneyd's article on #80 on the proto-SF poem he found while researching early local poets was pretty interesting. I don't care at all for poetry but was intrigued to learn that an early 19th century poet had been drawn to using SF imagery.

Andrew Lubenski's "Short" history of Russian fantasy and science fiction appears to be short only in the sense that this is not book length. But I did find his account of SF publishing under Stalin interesting and look forward to further chapters.

Andrew Darlington's many articles on the science fiction of the 50's and 60's and in particular the boy's comics of the time have become some of the best sercon writing I've seen. I do read Bruce Gillespie's SF COMMENTARY when it comes out but I often have trouble relating to the reviews there because I often have trouble

relating to the books being reviewed. Andrew writes about the science fiction I like. U.S. kids didn't have the sort of weekly comic strip magazines like COMET or TIGER, though we did have a variety of monthly comic books, not that I got to read those as a kid. I'm sure I would have enjoyed Jet-Ace Logan if I'd read him back then and had a lot of fun reading Andrew's recreation here. I'm surprised he was able to get Ron Turner to produce a 6 page comic strip for free.

At some level I have trouble believing Elizabeth Garrett's story that a Marion Zimmer Bradley novel was rejected by its publisher because of a fan having a Darkover novel set in the same era. For one thing most Darkover novels are set in one of only three or four eras so duplication of setting would hardly be grounds for a plagiarism suit. And presumably she keeps some kind of record of when she starts books, copies of early drafts and such by which she can prove primacy of work. And finally it just seems like there's too much money involved for her publisher to willingly reject a new MZB novel.

On the other hand, assuming that all this is true you have to admit that Bradley brought more than a little of this on herself by allowing and even encouraging fans to write in her Darkover universe. Sure it's an easy way to suck up to fans but it's her intellectual property and livelihood. If Bradley is having novels rejected because of fan fiction then she has lost control of her own material.

Buck Coulson cavils at the idea of forests and farms on O'Neil space colonies with good reason. Trees don't grow on steel floors and dirt is more complex than ground up rock. Heinlein based a whole book around this problem - FARMERS IN THE SKY. Soil is a mixture of eroded rock and organic material kept loosened by the tunnelling action of earthworms and the like. Most of that organic material comes from recycling last year's leaves but some of it has to come from plants that do extract their nutrients from organic rock, how else would soil begin?

But perhaps Buck is wondering why O'Neil colonists would go to all the trouble of creating soil for traditional dirt farming when most crops could be grown just as easily hydroponically? The fertilizer used for that could be extracted from the asteroids as the essential minerals (phosphorous, calcium, carbon, potassium, nitrogen) would be present in abundance, if not in the most convenient forms. Hydroponics aside there is good reason to have forests and meadows in an O'Neil colony: picnic grounds for people who get tired of living in a sardine can day after day. You don't need as much soil to sod over a picnic grounds - except for the trees which are often as large underground as they are above. You'd have to plant them in really big pots for them to grow well.

Terry Jeeves lists a lot of practical considerations that would hinder the construction of an O'Neil colony but the one big one not mentioned is the one that has concerned NASA the most - namely how hard it is to do work in space in a spacesuit. The suit is stiff because it has to be thick enough to hold air pressure against a vacuum and because it is holding pressure against a vacuum tends not to be flexible. Moreover, in weightlessness there is no place to brace yourself when turning a bolt or hammering a nail. But more than that, the object you're working on will float away with the least little touch. When NASA had all that trouble trying to capture a satellite to return to Earth that was the reason. It bounded away a lot easier than simulations on earth ever suggested. Considering how much time was spent making the relatively few repairs to the Hubble telescope it raises serious questions about the feasibility of any of any kind of large space construction project.

Andrew Darlington's review of NEBULA in THE MENTOR #81 was so enticing that I'm tempted to drive over to Howard DeVore's garage and see what he has of that magazine. I'm sure Howard doesn't have the entire run but I'm sure he has quite a few issues, Howard's garage is the stuff of legend. He has more SF crammed into there than you would expect to find in any two ordinary garages, and that's in addition to his letterpress and guillotine. NEBULA does sound like it has a lot of good fiction far out of proportion to its time. A lot of the American prozines from the 50s are just loaded with forgettable, embarrassing dreck.

I saw bits and pieces of BARBARELLA on cable recently. It remains one of the silliest movies ever made - for a movie that wasn't meant to be silly. And it only gets worse with time. Much of this stems from the origins of the character as a quarterly 8 page cartoon

strip. No one expects an episodic strip to be consistent or develop unifying themes. No do people expect cartoon characters to have fleshed out personalities or for concepts to be fully developed. Everything is just surfaces. There are no depths. This is not a problem for a comic strip that's read in ten minutes time. It does become a problem in a ninety minute movie because we have time to sit and think. Barbarella was also one of the first visibly public products of the sexual revolution. The Free Love movement argued that there's nothing wrong with sex, it's just two bodies rubbing together, and therefore women should put out any time a man wanted. This is a pretty good deal if you're a man. Invariably it was left to women to discover the downside to casual sex (deadbeat dads, venereal disease, etc). Thus appears the image of Barbarella having sex every eight pages with someone else and, because of the frequency of the sex, not being allowed to form any emotional attachments to the act which results in her apparent detachment. Add to that the standard Sex Kitten IQ of about 2 and you can see why this movie had problems. Outside of the lasciviousness of Jane Fonda in all those skimpy costumes this movie has no redeeming qualities, quite unlike the deliberate sex farce, FLESH GORDON which is funny, sexy, with a viable plot and good dialog.

Buck Coulson's review of SHAME THE DEVIL fails to mention what makes it a fantasy novel. I don't consider the idea of a "lost race" of Vikings living in southern, modern Indiana itself to be a fantasy element. [Later in the R&R DEPT] he can't think of anything that is banned nationwide as obscene - might I suggest child pornography. Also the high price of pornography reflected not so much the scarcity of the product, although I'm sure that had something to do with it, as it did with the knowledge that people buying pornography would willingly pay a lot for it.

#82: you ask, in the EDITORIAL SLANT whether people today really need "faith, in the form that organised religion provides." No, but they do need a mythology, that is, a sense of the overall organization of the universe, something along the line of "hard work will be rewarded" or "the government owes me a job." Much of the decline in civilization, I think, can be linked to the rise of that second mythology.

Bradley Row's review of THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY by Sherri Tepper was darned interesting. I have read elsewhere that studies of small children find that while boys are typically aggressive pushing and shoving, little girls are aggressive, too, only socially. They form cliques and who they let in and who they expel is done just as calculatingly as the boys pushing and shoving. This equal but different aggression really shows up in the Tepper novel where, in the name of "Never Again" women are doing it all over again.

I was never sure that Buck Coulson was wrong about VANGUARD SCIENCE FICTION magazine having only one issue because I had - I thought - an issue from somewhat later but it suddenly comes to me that the magazine I was thinking of, the sister publication to THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, was called VENTURE SCIENCE FICTION. It appears about the same time, in the late 50's, lasted for maybe a half dozen to a dozen issues and was devoted to a more adventurous type story. It was also revived a couple decades later but didn't last long. There were a lot of short lived science fiction magazines in the 50's, including two different runs of SPACE (3 issues and 8 issues) by different publishers and editors.

How strange - at least it seems to be - that Moorcock can't remember all the stories he wrote back in the late 50's when he was breaking into the business. I suppose tho that these were largely comic strips or two page text features produced as needed to fill holes in an issue's layout and hence being exceptionally unmemorable.

It seems that I've read Vol Molesworth's HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM before....

[Yes, I first published it in THE MENTOR back in 1973/4. - Ron.]

In answer to John Alderson, so-called "stony" meteorites are comprised of a calcium carbonate matrix.

In your response to Bill Donahoe's letter you wrote that "having laws and rights preserved in pieces of legislation straight-jackets such rights" an opinion that I suspect every American correspondent you have will disagree with. One reason the US does

not have official boards of censors is because the First amendment is quite clear about Speech being protected. Likewise the Fifth amendment is quite clear about what the government may not ask a person (self-incrimination) and the Fourth amendment is quite clear that the government can't just burst into our houses and homes or confiscate what they wish. It's important that these rules are embedded in the Constitution because government so often finds them impediments. Common law, based on no documents or charters, easily becomes whatever the rulers want it to be because the rights and privileges assumed to come from Common Law merely exist because the government hadn't gotten around before this to take them away.

[One of the problems with your Constitution is that it can't evolve with the times. Though I do hear (from fanzines like FOSFAX), that the judges, through legal "interpretation" of said Constitution, are able to get around most of your arguments. - Ron.]

#83: As ever color covers, particularly with purple backgrounds are quite striking.

... I just want to note Andrew Darlington's latest article, this time on historic Mercury. Andrew leaves out two other mentions of Mercury. One was that Mercury was the birth place for Leigh Brackett's Eric John Stark. None of Stark's several stories took place on Mercury but his days as a feral child there is usually mentioned and sometimes described. The other mention of Mercury appears in E. R. R. Eddison's THE WORM OUBOROS. While this is a rather breezy inconsistent, difficult but strangely beautiful early fantasy (from before J. R. R. Tolkien's stories steamrolled the genre) and not science fiction, it is set on Mercury. Even if it is a Mercury that has no hot and cold problems. (14.6.94)

ROD MARSDEN, PO Box 19, Spit Junction, NSW 2088.

The cover of THE MENTOR #85 is really something. I tell you now you're playing with fire here. A human corpse ravaged by two dinosaurs and drawn by Steve Carter?! You'll get complaints. Where are the angels and space ships, some people will say. Others will want to put the artist on a comfy couch and psychoanalyse him....

I found Andrew Darlington's article on the good Doctor very informative and very enjoyable. If asked who my favourite Time Lord of all time was I'd have to say Hartnell - the grouch. He would be closely followed by Tom Baker, then the original "Master" and in fifth place would be the dandy - Pertwee. I agree with Andrew, it was not the best thing in the world to do to trap our favourite Time Lord on Earth. I found it too limiting and so, for that matter, did poor Pertwee.

I, too, preferred the Doctor Who episodes to the movies that were based on them. I, too, believe Colin Baker was hard done by in having Bonnie Landford as a companion and that Peter Davison never really took to the role of [the] Doctor very well and didn't contribute much to the mythos. I never really liked the 2nd Doctor but at least he kept the show alive long enough to be replaced by the dandy. Peter Davison, however, can be held partly responsible for why the show isn't still going strong. Colin Baker tried his best to make up for ground lost and so did McCoy, whom I'm only now warming to, but maybe by then too much rot had set in.

Of the Doctor's companions my favourites are Jamie and the savage. Now, I would like to see them teamed up with the Doctor! Any Doctor. All three, together. For enemies my favourites remain the agro salt shakers or malevolent dust bins - the Daleks. Coming up a close second would be "The Master", followed by the Cybermen. Then would come the Santavans. Some great scripts were worked around "The Master". Mind you, REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS is good value. A Dalek civil war and the good Doctor stuck in the middle in 1963 not long after the original Doctor's visit, what more could you want? Anyway, I'll keep an eye out for THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD and hope it doesn't come to \$100 or more like I suspect it will. Great article, Andrew. Among other things it brought back memories. I hope the Doctor, in one form or another, a yank or a pom, lives forever.

Didn't care much for the poetry. I guess that just reinforces writer J. C. Hartley's view that I simply hate poetry. In reality I'm just a bit fussy. But no apologies for that.

I appreciate Mae Strelkov's support in the matter of religion and how it has contributed to overpopulation. Living in Argentina the results are no doubt painfully obvious. "Death Squads" for unwanted children. How horrible. Better for them not to have been born in the

first place. Free contraception clinics and family planning would be a good idea but Mae is, unfortunately, right, the Catholics and a few other powerful Christian bodies simply wouldn't go along with it. Pity.

Reading the review of STAR TREK MEMORIES by William Shatner took me back. With all their faults both STAR TREK and DOCTOR WHO have meant a lot to me over the years. Can't say which has had the most impact. By the way, did you know that DOCTOR WHO script writer Nation went on to do some of his best work in the SF series BLAKE'S SEVEN? I don't like English science fiction movies for the most part but I do love their science fiction TV shows. At present I'm rather enjoying RED DWARF. Mind you there are STAR TREK - TNG episodes that are top rated.

I agree with Bill Congreve's assessment of Kate Orman's first novel THE LEFT-HANDED HUMMINGBIRD. She will improve in time but it was a great first effort and I'm proud to have it as part of my Doctor Who collection. Her Ace comes closer to the television Ace than other recent Doctor Who novels and I like her overall description of the Tardis and its enigmatic nature. (12.8.94)

MATTHEW RAYNER, 2 Guildford Pl., Leumeah, NSW 2560.

As a major DR WHO fan I can't let Andrew Darlington's article slip by without remarking upon it. My immediate reaction is that it should be called DOCTOR WHO: CONFESSIONS OF SOMEBODY PRETENDING TO BE A SPACE TIME TRAVELLER! For somebody who claims to be a WHOatic he made a surprising number of errors and omissions. He failed to mention the NEW ADVENTURE novels series aimed specifically for adults, that there is a debate amongst fandom whether Susan really is the Doctor's granddaughter, that the police box exterior was chosen because the producers and Sydney Newman decided that the exterior needed to be in what was then a common-place form for audience identification. If they couldn't afford to build a spaceship model for the TARDIS exterior, as Andrew claims, then how do you explain the abundant spaceships used even in the program's early days!

FURTHER MISTAKES: Roy Castle only appeared in the first Dalek film, the Kaled race which the Daleks evolved from were mentioned as being called Dals in the original Dalek story, Ace is no means a "Punk" although she does share some of the same attitudes and can be as feisty, Pertwee has three companions including Jo Grant, but she was second, Liz Shaw (played by Caroline John) being his first companion if you don't count UNIT personnel. UNIT, itself, during the Pertwee era and early Tom Baker stories was the British section of UNIT only - thus the "Tommy"ness about it; however UNIT did re-surface in the McCoy era as a more cosmopolitan outfit led by the female (and Anglo-African) Brigadier Banbera, although Lethbridge-Stewart did come out of retirement for that story. Bonnie Langford only worked with Colin Baker in the last six episodes of TRIAL OF A TIME LORD and before this the companion was the popular Peri (played by Nicola Bryant). Langford then worked with McCoy until the end of the next season. THE DAEMONS was more than just computer coloured... the colours were taken from an authentic colour NTSC standard colour copy that an American fan had taped from TV about a decade ago, and these colours were fused with a black-and-white copy from the BBC archives with the help of a computer! This process was repeated with great success for other Pertwee stories which only existed in B&W in the Beeb's archives. Lastly, the part of Romana was originally played by Mary Tamm, but after a year she left and then Lalla Ward took the part. (Remember that this was possible because Romana, like the Doctor, was also a Time Lord). Also, Lalla and Tom's wedding ended in divorce sixteen months after they were married because of their respective career commitments.

If Andrew wants to see that Katy Manning picture it was reprinted in the book TIMEFRAME: THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF DOCTOR WHO by David Howe. Also, my suggestion of the different ages the Doctor says he is in different stories... the Doctor is living up to his Edwardian influence and isn't telling this true chronological age but rather the age he would be if he lived on various different planets!

See... told you all I was a huge WHOVIAN! A quick hello to Kate Orman if she's reading. Thanx for signing that ancient issue of TWG and Thanx for writing such a brilliant novel. Hullo also to Neil & Robert from SDWSFFC, and to be penpals Mel, Matt and Dennis.

(- .8.94

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

From your editorial in #79, I surmised that Australians have the same kind of commuting problems we have. I work only ten miles from home. However, if I drove myself, I would have a humongous parking bill. Therefore, I carpool. This means I have to get up at least ten minutes earlier every morning. Carpoolers get subsidized parking. Carpooling is pushed pretty hard here in an effort to cut down on smog. Some areas have special commuter trains or buses, but I'd have to drive too far to catch one of these.

Lloyd Penny wrote in #82 about the sloppiness of publishers. I belong to a group trying to promote more care in publications. It is called the Society for Preservation of English Language and Literature (SPELL). The members send "goof cards" whenever we detect a grammatical, spelling, or similar errors in professional publications or in the presentations of a professional speaker.

My next point is unrelated to the zines. I met Jean Weber for the first time when she and Eric Lindsay attended Westercon here last month. The *Australia* in 1999 bid seems to be going well. I think it has a good chance. I'll be helping with the bid party in Winnipeg.

(10.8.94)

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

After some 5 issues, I'm beginning to notice a certain sameness creeping into THE MENTOR. I suppose a large chunk of this comes down to Vol Molesworth's AUSTRALIAN FAN HISTORY, now (or at least as I write this) in its third instalment. What started as being quite intriguing and fun, with its factions and bickering within and between these oh-so-earnest fans and Futurians, is now starting to wear. The club, bogged down in procedural moves, votes and resignations and re-elections, starts to read like a strange fannish version of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party.

Try as I might, I really couldn't come to terms with James Brodie's *Erudite Elucidation* in the Use of the Two Hand Swords. It's worse than 50s fanslang. I wait to see if anybody is tempted to loc this in similarly archaic style.

Julie Vaux's SIGMA OCTANIS was the pick of the poems in this issue. I liked Steve Sneyd's THE DOUBLE RAINBOW OF DUTY, though I couldn't see the connection between the title and the poem itself.

I won't harp on much about the Row/Tepper question in the letters, except to note that most of the "avoiders" seem to be those who either haven't, or wouldn't, read the book, and are confirming a sense of guilt by association.

This is the first I've heard of a film version of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN. To my knowledge, it's not, rather surprisingly, been shown at any conventions I've attended.

Robert Frew asks about the Aldiss story that I and several others mentioned in respect to his A NEW ORDER. I don't think there's any question or intimation of plagiarism here, certainly not on my part. I was commenting here on the stylistic differences between the two versions of a similar idea. The Aldiss story, a rather minor one to be fair, is the 1958 WHO CAN REPLACE A MAN, first published in INFINITY, and anthologised in various places (my copy comes from James Gunn's THE ROAD TO SCIENCE FICTION (1979)). But as the body of SF grows ever larger, how is anyone expected to know of every minor or fair-to-middling story that may have surfaced briefly and died before we took any interest in SF, and in this case, almost before I was born. All you can do is be aware of the "classics" (and I'll leave it to others to fight over what constitutes those, outside the Hugo and Nebula listings) and avoided obviously re-writing the more well known plots. Plagiarism is indeed a serious charge, but it goes beyond the similarity of idea that Robert's story shares with Aldiss'.

Are you printing Masters' letters because you're afraid he'll throw a charge of "censorshit" at you, or because he parodies himself far better than we ever could, or is he actually contributing something more than his own brand of bigotry and ineffectual abuse to this column that I've missed? 'Oh god, mum, he said "fuck" and "shit" again in the letters page'; We are deeply, deeply shocked. Not. Boring, boring, boring.

There's another enjoyable typo in this issue, this time from Catherine Mintz, with Bradley Row "...commending" on Sheri Tepper's THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY". I don't think that was quite

his intention, but if publicity like this worked for the Sex Pistols....

JOHN ALDERSON, Havelock, Vic 3465.

The monsters on your front [of TM 85] do not endear me to S.F. art, or do any internal ones. I must class them with S.F. poetry as a dubious form....

Enjoyed Andrew Darlington's essay on Dr Who, always a favourite of mine in all his guises, though not having a TV of my own and no friends I seldom see the good doctor.

Now I am delighted to see in John Francis Haines another language purist. Of course fen is awful and I don't use it myself. I was painstakingly taught at school that two square headed blanks are not German, but Germans and there are a lot of other words ending in "man" for which the plural "men" is used and which I doubt is correct. Whilst Manu may well have been the eponymous ancestor of the Indo-europeans the word man is derived from the verb "ma" to make (thus a very ancient mother goddess) and "n" a negative, a diminutive or a descendant. Man is thus the descendant of ma or the child of woman. Alderman comes from the verb, man to think, and aldermen I believe to be a wrong plural. The word "man" to handle comes from an entirely different source, an ancient glyph showing a hand, and with the invention of vowels one was placed within it to make a word, so I suggest the plural of workman is workmans... but I may have centuries of misuse against me.

It's good to see Mae Strelkov with a letter, and to hear about Vadim again and to know he's still on deck. But I guess that Mae hasn't read any genuine books about the Arabs or she would know the women are not beasts of burden but are very redoubtable creatures in their own right, often with considerable property and wide business interests. In Pakistan (Islamic but not Arab) the women are very fierce and use quite bitter tongues in public. The man take even quite young children to work with them, and children are more usually seen with men than women. I cannot see how three suicides in six days underlines the failure of Christianity... the kids weren't Christian.

Perhaps the point of the book of Tepper's re A BOOK FOR BURNING is that authors often set up situations which they wish to explore. In a book I am presently trying to write I set up a situation where a strictly monogamous society was faced with a situation where there were five women for every man. Needless to say I am monogamist myself (well at heart as I have remained a bachelor). So they decided on polygamy for this once as the only answer to the problem. The poet who disapproved nevertheless retorted quite stiffly, "I shall do my duty."

I cannot but deplore the banning of David Irving from Australia... I gather he casts some doubt on the holocaust but has been denied what factual basis he may have, his theories and even actually what he said. If he denied *en toto* the extermination of millions of Jews then he does so in the face of massive evidence, not only that collected by people like Lord Liverpool, but the oral and written evidence of survivors. But I cannot agree with you, Ron, that automatically "the truth will out". For example a few of us are still pushing up-hill in saying that the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England was bullshit; we have the weighty of the whole English historical establishment against us and the racism on which it rests.

The A.B.C. (now for heaven's sake, Radio National) recently carried a feature "Boys will be girls" on the feminising of humanity due to various chemicals being inflicted onto the environment. After also looking at male animals in the wild they naively suggested the problem has not apparently cropped up in domestic animals (sheep, etc). They overlooked the careful selection of male breeders, in which process at least 95% of males are discarded and sexual abnormalities would cause discard without comment. The human male is apparently less fertile than of yore.

J. C. Hartley wishes to know what Reiver family ancestor I possessed. Prominently they were Robsons, and Robson featured for several generations as a christian name thereafter, only being lost in this generation. Pretty well ever family on the Borders were reivers, but murderous they were not (a killing would start a nasty feud); cattle lifters they were. Both sides were encouraged by their national governments, but in a national war they were never opposed to each other by commanders as they could not be relied upon to fight their fellows very fiercely. "Riding" was a euphemism for reiving, derived from an ancient form of bereave, to rob. However I understand that "blackmail" originated amongst the Highlanders, an early form of

insurance against being robbed.

The Royal family doesn't actually cost the British tax-payer anything... I don't know what the figures are now but at her coronation Elizabeth had to cede the income of the family estates (then 500,000 pounds per year) and receive in lieu a Privy Purse of 100,000 pounds, that is in effect paying 80% of their income in tax. We in Australia could well become a republic by default, that is with the break-up of the United Kingdom. The Labor Party has adopted a policy of a parliament for both Scotland and for Wales but unless they also give one for England, there will be trouble. It will be seen as an English Government giving autonomy to two backward provinces. I am told that part of the trouble is caused by a certain Mr Murdoch having been refused a knighthood a little while back... before he became a Yank, who it seems are not so fussy.

Some ninety years back a historical study was published on the effects of climate on history and maintained that it was the climate, not the Franks who defeated the Moorish invasion, similarly in the east of Europe with the Turks. As far as the church goes it does seem to me that much time and effort is wasted on efforts to get an order of priestesses into the church. The reality is that Jesus came to abolish all necessity of a priesthood (as has Islam), allowing direct approach of the believer to God; so we should be abolishing the priesthood, not trying to extend it, and I write this as a church member and a Christian. Paul, in my opinion, fell over backwards to accommodate the Gospel to the Greek world, and in doing so lost too much of the love of Jesus. Worse than that it does appear that the translators of the A.V. of the Bible didn't have the foggiest idea what Paul was saying. However, I have very high regard for old St Paul who at least knew about creative writers. He said, All writings are inspired by God and worthy of study. Have Blish or Amis or Turner said as much?

I am planning to visit Europe next summer and I may be able to meet some of the overseas fans. (16.8.94)

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

I enjoyed Andy Darlington's continued look at British comic-strip SF of the 50's and 60's in TM 84, with his focus on Captain Condor. Darlington's words on writer Frank Pepper's opinions of his own work are interesting, though: "he was always dismissive about the importance of his work, regarding it as ephemeral junk culture... the continued interest in it, is something he greeted with incredulity".

Pepper's views are not unusual. I recall an interview with Charles Chilton, creator of the Jet Morgan classic radio serial JOURNEY INTO SPACE, shortly after the serial was rebroadcast a few years ago. Chilton seemed to dismiss his involvement in this, perhaps the most influential work of British SF in the 50's, as hackwork; not something to be ashamed of, perhaps, but certainly not the part of his working life of which he would want to be remembered.

Some of this may be a problem over the fact that such writing is essentially for children, yet the people who make up the collecting circles are adults, and it is not confined to SF. "School stories" have similar, if not as large, fandoms associated with them. The stories set in Frank Richard's Greyfriars School and other sagas described in the MAGNET and the GEM are still seriously sought after today. When I was working as a children's librarian. I spoke to Mabel Esther Allan, whose school stories were rather popular in the 1950's, who was somewhat amused by the little fandom which has built up around her and caused her to track down and reprint obscure magazine stories in small-press editions.

Much of this interest (as in the current upsurge of Gerry Anderson product) is nostalgic in origin, but I also think that when we return to the literature we read as children we read it in a different way and this is as good a reading as anything else. For example, Andy lays great stress on the artwork in his series on the picture-strips. This may be obvious. Yet in years of reading all sorts of comic books as a child I can not remember a single instance when I consciously reacted to the quality of the artwork. You learn to appreciate artwork as you learn to appreciate the written word, but in our culture the written word is foremost and while most people who become literate in fiction gain some idea of the grammars of sentences and longer pieces of narrative, it takes much longer for people to be able to look at a picture or series of pictures and examine how it is put together and see it in the context of similar pictures which have been put together more or less well (which is the process by which we assess

whether we "like" or "dislike" a piece of writing.

[I don't know... when I read DAN DARE in EAGLE I knew it was good artwork, when I first read it. Young people can recognise good art when they see it. - Ron.]

So there's room for re-reading our children's fiction. Another point, of course, is that children's fiction is as worth serious attention as adult fiction and from my own viewpoint I would rate people like Pepper, who were doing their best to create interesting stories for an unsophisticated young readership, as considerably finer craftsmen than people who simply reflect the prejudices of adults who will not bother to exercise their mind-muscles. To create good "ephemeral junk culture" is not to be sneezed at, and I think in any case now everything is post-modern we are looking at junk culture in a different way. Much of it, of course, remains disposable junk by anyone's standards but any form of anonymous craft attracts people whose interest it is to be good workers in whatever medium they are working in. And these people can't help but produce work which will live at least a little bit longer than their times. (19.8.94)

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

In your editorial [in TM 84] - the term creche is SFish - I presume it means that Down Under this is the usual name for what we call Day Care?

[Yes. - Ron.]

I'm not a proponent of censorship but there is a new movie out here (no I don't recall the name) which I find totally useless as something offered for public consumption. I say that because while it may be said you can choose to go or not - many people will go for curiosity and a lot just "go" to movies - [it is] totally violent. It is being pushed on TV specifically, because of the amount of violence. Supposedly it gave the "review"?? "ratings" board problems with the amount of violence and even had some scenes cut/altared and still had problems with the R rating and has some sort of comment with it. At any rate it is about two killers and (from what I saw in the clips) was pandering of the media to them for ratings and filming the actions - break out, etc. According to the announcer on the news show the clips were representative of the whole movie - Yecch. So I'm not so certain doing away with censorship is such a good thing. There is the philosophy that what the public wants is what it should have - whether that is good or bad for it as a whole.

The poetry strikes me as the type that would be visually striking if done up individually and illustrated.

CAPTAIN CONDOR I presume was limited to "local" distribution. I am by no means a comics' fan but I do take a book every now and then and this was new to me.

[CAPTAIN CONDOR was, I would say, distributed over most of the English speaking world (that is, the Commonwealth), except for the USA. We saw it in Australia. - Ron.]

Aha, so when teachers interminably ask you to write about what you did on your summer vacation, they had fan columnists in mind! I also note that, aside from desires of torture, having you write a set of (useful and useable) directions has merit every time I give directions.

I, intermittently, come across some of the prozines when doing various cleaning chores... prozines I subscribed to back when they were cheaper and I had more money! As best I can, I have bundled them up for protection and nestled them in open spaces - tend to wonder what the mice and other vermin think when they come across them - but I suppose pulp (if you'll pardon the expression) is pulp to them once they have gotten into the metal trash cans and then through the plastic covers or casings. Some of the names in MAGAZINES: THE LIGHTWEIGHTS are familiar to me and some are not. I tend to think that it because we happened to have a duplication (ahem) of names here - not that I have seen these zines.

Ah, nice portfolio - do you or any of your readers happen to remember an American fanartist named Jim McLeod (think the spelling is the same) - know the pronunciation would be.) Very different styles - but interesting to note the names might have artistic talent! (12.8.94)

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

The Mark McLeod pictures I think work best when his odd

"future people" are present - ie the last two, both of which call out for the right story to illustrate.

Had enough of coping with earlier spellings recently trying to take on board Spenser's FAERIE QUEEN, or bits thereof, to be more honest, so skipped the Two-Handed Sword pastiche. Other than that, found the various articles all interesting in different ways, but without inspiring any meaningful comment reaction. Only Strugatski I've got Buck Coulson doesn't mention is THE FINAL CIRCLE OF PARADISE (Dobson SF, UK, '79 - refers inside to an earlier US edn, DAW '76).

Surprised at Pamela Boal saying that only in some Islamic states are Church & State still linked... the Church of England is still an "Established Church", is officially the state religion, headed (as chief layperson) by the Queen; bishops and archbishops are appointed by the Prime Minister etc... of course this doesn't impinge on a largely post-Christian society to any noticeable degree, but it is nevertheless one more of the curious fossils which render this country's governing system so badly able to cope with social and economic change. The Tibetan government-in-exile, also, is headed by the Dalai Lama as both religious and secular leader, and presumably if/when Tibet regains independence, that system would continue. And I'm sure I've read of other Buddhist countries (Thailand for example) where the secular head of state is also in a situation of religious primacy to some degree. Then, of course, the Pope is also a secular ruler, albeit of a tiny state, Vatican City. So Islam isn't unique, though I suspect that outside the USA and countries where it has strong influence there is nowhere that Christianity, or sectarian forms of it at least, has the same kind of "fundies" trying to establish theocratic dominance over state and public life.

The loc (effectively an article) on Soviet life was fascinating - wish Viaznikov had talked about STALKER, though - I've love to know more of its problems at the time with the Soviet authorities, and whether, in particular, its problems were due just to its difficulty for the audience (the director himself somewhere called it a "tunnel of pain" for characters and audience alike), or because the censors either thought that a religious message had been smuggled in or, an even more intriguing theory I read somewhere, that "the Zone" was suspected to be a coded reference to the areas of the Soviet Union contaminated by radiation accidents (earlier ones long before Chernobyl) which had been hushed up. (19.8.94)

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

TM 83. A striking cover. I cannot decide if the mer-snake is impaled on a spike, or not. It is colour photocopied isn't it, or are you doing a Ken Cheslin and hand-colouring your covers?

[Yes, it's a colour photocopy. - Ron.]

I loved Vol Molesworth's Chapter 2, everyone at everyone else's throat, made me feel quite at home, just like the 50s in England.

Rest of the issue great, as usual, with a fine selection of letters. Andrew Lubenski's AUYCL letter is a marvellous example of the work of men with large desks and small minds - it must be true as it reads like an excerpt from a Ministry of Truth circular from Orwell's '1984'.

Liked the cover drawing [on THE MENTOR 84], looks like a meeting of the Sydney SF Club in 1942.

Buck Coulson complains of having to lie flat on his back for one day and the problems of using bottles and bed-pans. Have a hip replacement (I have two) and you lie flat on your back (no pillow and the bed foot raised to reduce risk of thrombosis in the legs) for 10 days and sleep on your back with a triangular pillow between your legs for six weeks (to make sure that the hip heals with muscles and tendons stretched). Bottles and bed-pans are difficult to use but try eating meat and two veg, or drinking soup, with the plate on your chest - soup tends to run down your cheeks into your ears and swallowing is very difficult. I found it so bad that the nurse swung the bed so that the head was raised (it swivelled across the centre) whilst I ate and drank.

I read Vol's Chapter 3 with great interest as I became an active fan in 1947. I met John C. Park twice in 1951, first time at the London Festival Convention, second time at a small one-day Convention I ran in Bradford in October 1951. John was staying in England for about a year, travelling around the country but based in London.

I am saddened by Chris Masters' letter in that he believes

that people are shocked by his using two four letter Anglo-Saxon words, they are not shocked, just bored by inadequacy. By the way, Chris, I do know the words, what they mean and how they are spelt, as well as very many more, but use them when necessary, not because of a limited vocabulary. Have a go at me if you want Chris, but let me tell you that in my time I have been verbally abused by experts who have spent lifetimes developing their skills, so the efforts of a tyro will not disturb me. (24.8.94)

SHANE DIX, 1/14 Arthur St, Richmond, S.A. 5033.

Brad's little book review stirred up quite a bit of controversy, eh? Best response so far has been from Bill and Harry who had the decency to read the book first before making comment. Always admired that in a person. Better than simply stampeding for the jugular or blindly patting the reviewer on the back.

Pavel V's comments re feminists were of... interest. However, I find myself disagreeing with virtually all that he said. I have met my fair share of "women's libbers" over the years and have, for the most part, found them to be well educated people who simply have strong feelings on certain issues. The radicals I have encountered - the real "men-haters", if you will - quite often are women who have had some traumatic experience involving a man (ie abused by father, raped, bashed by husband, etc), and to this end I can understand their strong feelings. (Having said this, of course, I must also add that I don't make a habit of staying too long in their company, partial as I am to my testicles and all.) As for them being "aggressive, crude and doing their best to look and act ugly", well, I don't know what it is like over there Pavel, but Christ, we have our share of men over here doing precisely the same thing. Is this really wrong? Or is it only offensive because these women are no longer living up to man's expectations of how a woman should be? Because they are no longer happily conforming to the dress and behaviour codes that society has imposed upon them over the centuries? And I must say that your comment about women being best suited to the role of homekeeper is absolute horseshit. No offence meant, I assure you. I just feel that the woman has filled this role in the past mainly because this is what society dictated, in the same way that men have always been regarded as the "breadwinner". But times they are a changin', I'm afraid, and the people they're evolv'n'. I don't believe that women's lib has been a plague on this century - just another of the movements needed to help drag our species out of the dark ages, which are, as Vonnegut noted, still with us.

[I don't think it's dragging our species out of the dark ages - really only the rich Western culture is allowing it to happen, as it thinks it can afford to; the rest of the world is a long way from such change... - Ron.]

Nice to see something on DR WHO, as well. My all time fave show, and to hell with its decriers. It has staying power, which is more than can be said for the other 99% of SF shows. God knows what will happen to the show now that Spielberg's people have got their grubby little mitts on it. Will the scripts suddenly become bloated with sentimentality and morality? Causes one to break out into cold sweats, I tell ya. The strongest rumours I have heard so far is that it is to be called THE NEW ADVENTURES OF DR WHO (a bad start as this displays a complete misunderstanding of the show; as Andy pointed out, "Dr Who" is the name of the show, not the character), Peter O'Toole is to play the Doc's dad (oh dear...), and Pamela Anderson is to be the companion (big breasted blond bimbo - one could be forgiven for assuming that she wasn't chosen for her acting abilities). But rumours being what they are, perhaps none of the above will come to pass. Two brief points though, Andy: There have actually been 2 incidents in the show's history (that I'm aware of, anyway) where the Doctor has been referred to as "Dr Who". The first slip up came from the computer, WOTAN, in THE WAR MACHINES, while the second and most notable occurs in the title itself of one of Pertwee's stories, DR WHO AND THE SILURIANS. Which only goes to show that even the writers and producers can fuck up now and then. Also, you state in your article that THE SONARAN EXPERIMENT was "filmed on location at a house in Devon". As far as I am aware this story was filmed on Dartmoor and there wasn't a house to be seen anywhere. I am open to correction on this. I mean, what with my declivous intellect and all, I could be mistaken.

Nice to see Kate Orman doing so well with the New Adventure series, too. THE LEFT-HANDED HUMMINGBIRD has

been received very well from critics and fans alike, and I believe she has also been contracted to write another two books, which I think is great. Not a big fan of this series myself, but it is good to see Oz authors making a few ripples in that great big pond which is the publishing world.

Begins... Trying to "trap" you, Peter?!? Dear Christ, it must be hard to turn the other cheek when your head is so far up your arse... ends.
(2-8.94)

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

I'm unable to pass up commenting on Brad Row's *THE GATE TO WOMAN'S COUNTRY*. It's been a long time since I read a review where the reviewer has managed to so completely miss every subtlety and nuance. It would be something of a cheap shot to pull Brad's review apart, as anyone who's read the book can see how he ignored anything that didn't fit his view of the novel.

Suffice it to say: I didn't like the title, because I have strong objections to the kind of censorship that implies - "if I don't like it, you don't get to see it". The review itself was shallow. And I note that at least one loccer has made comments along the lines of "I dislike feminists" - which is stupid as saying "I dislike blondes/men/Queenslanders". Some feminists are raging loonies, and some are truly wonderful people. You have to know them individually to find out.

Mae Strelkov says it's a cop out to say "anything goes as long as it doesn't hurt children" in the censorship debate. I'm sure I said something along those lines. My feeling is quite simple: children are more vulnerable than the rest of us, especially in terms of exploitation and their impressionability. We have a responsibility to provide them with some protection until they are reasonably capable of caring for themselves - and that responsibility goes beyond food and shelter. Of course, as Mae pointed out, the question is when does child become an adult. That's half the problem with censorship - who gets to make the decisions for who, and up to what point? But until a better definition comes along, I'll accept the legal definitions of adulthood; generally 16 or 18 years. It's just as much a cop-out to say we can't define a child and to abdicate all responsibility. Responsibility is crucial and a 5 year old just doesn't have the same capability as a 20 year old.

The Doctor Who phenomenon has always fascinated me. I've never seen a single episode, and it's clearly not one of those things you can understand by reading articles about it. Andrew Darlington's article amused me, though.

Molesworth's history of fandom is rather fascinating. The detail doesn't really mean much to me, of course, not knowing these people. But they don't seem to have had an awful lot of fun. It comes across as one meeting after another, with everyone taking everything so very very seriously.
(23.8.94)

BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St, Togun, QLD 4224.

I liked the cover illo on TM 85. I didn't notice the shredded human remains at first. Only on perhaps the sixth glance did I become aware of the subtly-depicted carnage involved. Very good.

Verran's piece on character names I adjudged to be his best article to date. Most enlightening and humorous as well. Thanks, James.

Not being a Dr Who fan, I cautiously dipped a couple of toes in Andrew Darlington's article before taking the plunge. Swimming's like that, isn't it? Seems a bit cold at first, but it's great once you're in. I enjoyed the article immensely. It was well-researched, informative and amusing. The 'amazing facts' at the end really capped it off.

Some nice poetry, CYBORG being my favourite. No matter what happens, keep the poetry. It's like taking a short spell under a shady tree.

Read the latest piece on fandom history. I found myself matching the names up to the faces in the pictures, musing on personalities and studying expressions, anticipating what happened next by making flickering black and white movies out of still photos. I don't know - the people interest me more than they did. Is that the effect the whole thing's meant to have?

The news that the fiction will be dropped from TM came as a rude shock, Ron, but if temporarily dropping the fiction is what it takes to keep TM afloat, then so be it! It's just that the fiction's my favourite part. I love reading other people's contributions and receiving critical

comments on my own submissions. It will probably be good for me in the long run, forcing me to seek out alternate markets for the material I'd usually send to you. But maybe, just now and then, you could find room for a story, huh? Come on. Once in a Jovian bombardment?

(31.8.94)

[From this issue on, comments on the fiction is being sent directly to the author rather than being printed in TM; it is getting to them. - Ron.]

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

Your editorial [in TM 84] was powerful, though I don't share some of your memories. To me, milk always came in bottles and dinner still comes from the oven. You will probably come in for some criticism from the politically correct for your views on race, but I think there is some truth in what you say. Where I would differ from you is in your contention that nothing will make some races equal to others. It seems to me that in some cases blacks are equal or superior to whites, and it is important that those individuals get their chance of advancement in society. On the other hand it must be accepted that the generality of blacks in some areas are inferior, if only because the best of them have already advanced out of their ghetto, so that the use of quotas to ensure that the residue are treated as equals is anomalous and self-defeating.

I skipped Captain Condor because it wasn't part of my youth. I'm afraid I skipped altogether the piece about the two-handed sword. As far as I'm concerned life is too short to try to read something not written in plain English.

It was shock to hear about Buck Coulson's heart attack, but there is no doubt his account makes fascinating reading.

Bill Congreve's piece was well written and sensible, though I could have sworn I had seen the name of Veronica Hart on other pocket books.

Vol Molesworth's history of Australian fandom lacks the drama of Moskowitz's *IMMORTAL STORM*, once described as the only account in which World War 2 appears as an anti-climax, but is still interesting reading.

I was interested in reader Elvey's suggestion that missionaries be sent to Northern Ireland to help us forget Jesus. I don't think it would help, because the people who are causing the trouble have already forgotten him, and he was never more than a symbol to them. Admittedly some evangelical Protestants regard the Pope as, literally, the anti-Christ, as do their equivalents in the USA and, probably, Australia, but I never heard of this being advanced as an argument for violence, which is purely ethnic in origin.
(30.8.94)

DANUTA SHAW, 217 Sandgate Rd, Birmingham Gardens, NSW 2287.

I read the poetry [in TM 85] and was particularly drawn to J. C. Hartley's *MARRIAGE A LA MODEM*. I enjoy haiku type poems - the small image that says a lot. But the article I really enjoyed was Bill Congreve's *IN DEPTH 12*.

The first feminist dystopia I had ever read was *THE FEMALE MAN* by Joanna Russ. Well, it wasn't the first, because I have fleeting images from younger days, but those memories have been eaten by roaches. (I really did like the idea for that story. Mmmm). Now, it is hard to determine what was the exact dystopia in *THE FEMALE MAN* as there were so many different worlds, so many different women. The ultimate future world I suppose was utopian, or was it. It has been so long since I have read that book, but I do remember it having an effect on my personal development. I think, after reading that book, I began to respect men again. Hmmm.

This kind of links in with Bill's question about the roles of science fiction (sci-fi, SF - it's all the same to me. Why do we have this perpetual evolution of jargon? Are we insecure with our identity with the classification of SF as a genre? Some one, who was probably wise, once said to me that you can change everything, but in the end there is still you.) Anyway, I feel that science fiction has the same role to play as all other fiction, and it is a role that I believe science fiction and fantasy - and I want to deliberately include horror in this list - is particularly well adapted to. It is the role that the shaman and the priestess fulfilled, myths of old had, its the role that fiction is to often not fulfilling these days with its poorly written stereotypes and bland prose styles. This role is embraced by some, and for different people it is a different one. I think that is why we snap

up the stories like fixes and then end up skulking in bed with hangovers the next morning.

The role is one of meaning. No, meaning isn't the right word. Joseph Campbell puts it better, but I can't exactly remember how at the moment. The thing is a really good tale somehow makes me more alive and I think that is what such tales do for others. But, as I get older, and read more, the good tales, the ones that do this "making more alive" are getting fewer. I know what they are saying before they say it. I long for the novel that I can read right through, the novel that I can't just read the first, last and a random middle ten pages and feel that is all there is to it. I don't like to skim read. I want that fix, and now find it hard to get where I used to buy it.

I can accept that enjoyment is important, but as John Stuart Mill put it, there are many different levels of enjoyment. To me, and to many others, groping around in the gutter at 2.45 AM is not enjoyment - well, not always. I want more than rehearsed trash - more precisely, poorly written rehearsed trash - in my life. I want something that talks to me, that teaches me something more. The plot can be the basic boy meets girl, or axe-murdering mother protects son, or whatever, but the actual story has to tell me something about life I don't know. It has to reawaken in me some part of my humanity that is currently dormant.

As most humans are pretty similar, for example our gene structure etc, doesn't differ too much, old stories can be told again and again and still have this effect. The retelling is enough to shed new light. Look at all the different versions of the Arthur Legend, or the Orestes/Electra/Agamemnon story. Look at the lust we have for the past. The movement into those romantic dark ages, the druidic rites, the Egyptian temples, the island of Lesbos where Sappho longed for her love. We want to stick our hands into the earth and to feel like we belong or something. I don't know. But somehow stories are good for us. They make us more than machines.

And the sad thing is that too many of us are forgetting that, and our writers too often write like they are writing for machines. They don't know what they are doing, and they wouldn't know how to do it if they did. Perhaps, when the enlightenment that so many are craving for finally wakes us up there will still be enough people left to enjoy a good book, if any are still written. (2.9.94)

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

CAPTAIN CONDOR I'd heard of before but had no idea where he fit into the canon; again another fascinating article from Andy. Buck's heart attack was good value, what can you say about someone's heart attack? While I appreciate what Bill Congreve is saying, because I don't watch his/the LOCUS SF reader profile I felt a bit at odds with the conclusion of the piece. Enjoyed Jim Verran's review of mags & thought the Mark McLeod Portfolio an excellent innovation.

POETRY TOO, well it finally happened, a really excellent selection. Though I'm not always comfortable with the style, all the poets had something in terms of ideas or images that hit home. Thought the Julie Vaux "What they wish us not to sing?" was a terrific notion articulating something I've thought about but never been able to express. Robert Frew's **GHOST NET** created a monster we're all imagined, in fact the multi-tentacled thing seems to be a standard nightmare for writers, washed up from some collective memory of the species, obviously. Cecelia Drew's **SWEET SEVENTEEN...** chartered psychological waters many of us would prefer to be left unexplored, the hinted ambiguity of "believing I am doomed" left a horrible uncertainty more effective than the finality of the assault. Her **CHILDBIRTH...** had a powerful resonance too effective even from the title & the clinical description of the rape rack/factory farming approach to the birth process made for a range of interpretations depending on one's stance. I know people say the time travel thing is overused & played out but it's my favourite together since I read Wells & Sneyd's **DOUBLE RAINBOW** was right on the button again.

I recently found Milton Lesser's **SECRET OF THE BLACK PLANET/CHILDREN OF THE BLACK CHALICE**, a 1950's Sci Fi thing, in the great book hoard at the top of my in-laws stairs and one day I will write a perceptive review highlighting its attitudes & its pre-echoes of Clarke/Kubrick ho ho. One of the fascinating things is its treatment of interpersonal relations. You can sense Lesser wants to create Sci-Fi women who are smart & tough & can handle a blaster & think for themselves but aw shit, Lesser is a guy & this is the 1950's

so they still burst into tears & need to be slapped when they get hysterical & cuddled when they get snitty & well, like Lesser says "She was still a woman". This cute quaint "women are another species ain't they" attitude is fine in the 50's but what about LesserWorld II, a parallel construct still orbiting in the pages of THE R&D DEPT? Hey Fellas, most women, in fact most people, don't want to rule the world. People who do want to rule the world, which includes all politicians, are crazy anyway no matter what they say. The majority of women who think of themselves as feminists are more concerned about equal pay & conditions at work & being able to go out of the house without everyone staring at their tits, rather than creating a matriarchal society and removing men's balls with their teeth. So what's up? Were all your correspondents beaten by nuns at convent school? Let's try & be mature.

Nice to see that scientists in the "most egalitarian society in the world" (my quotes) have established that "females are better equipped" to cook & clean & change shitty nappies. Nice one, Pavel. Interesting reference to the late Pleistocene, obviously the most a woman in Moscow can expect from comrade Viaznikov is to be clubbed to the ground & then dragged by the hair back to his cave.

Come on, Steve Sneyd, a tiny bit critical about punch line to SLIP-KNOT. I wasn't really dealing with one of the most powerful core images of the psyche, ie when did you last shag your mother? so much as a favoured SF trope.

Finally, one of the surf bums, on a strange TV show over here, **PASSENGERS**, showed a "craze" in Perth for sand-surfing or sand-boarding, basically scooting down dunes on an abbreviated board. The programme tried to make out this was the next big thing but all we ever saw was a half dozen dickheads going arse over tip in the sand. Does anyone over there actually do this? (-.9.94)

LLOYD PENNEY, 412-4 Lisa St, Brampton, ON, CANADA L6T 4B6.

More great stuff on Australian fanhistory. I would wonder what the requirements for membership in an SF club would be... these days, the requirements are simply to have enough money to pay the dues. Given the details of some of the minutes, exclusions, both deliberate and inadvertent, courts of inquiry, feuding, and much more, I rather think we've loosened up in the intervening years.

Ah, for the days of **CAPTAIN CONDOR**, a gosh-wow era, where imagination could take us on trips alongside our hero into the umpteenth Dimension. We're too sophisticated to truly enjoy the Captain, or any of his snail companions, and that is our loss.

To add to Molesworth's fan history, just to add a little background... Jack Bowie-Reed created a lot of clubs in Canada, and in a short time, helped to launch clubs in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and several small Ontario towns. (24.9.94)

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

I'm writing to comment on an article I have not seen: a review titled **A BOOK FOR BURNING** by a Bradley Row. From what I can glean from THE R&R DEPT in TM #83 and #84, this is a review of Sheri Tepper's novel, **THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY**, and he didn't like it, likening it to Hitler's MEIN KAMPF and thinking it should be burnt and describing it as portraying a kind of feminist utopia. Strange indeed. I read the book a few years ago and reviewed it in the last **MATALAN RAVE** to come out, #20 in 1990. Anyone who still has a copy thereof will see that I thought well of the book, describing it as dealing with sexual politics - which is not necessarily the same as a rabid feminist rant. While I'm certainly no rabid feminist - indeed I have amongst my credentials the honor of having been labelled a male sexist in your lettercolumn, a label that doesn't greatly bother me - I thought it had a good message. Row and his critics alike seem to miss one essential point about the book: it is set in a world that has been devastated by a nuclear holocaust, thus Women's Country is no utopia but rather a matriarchy set up in a way to stop such a catastrophe from ever happening again. The premise is that men are responsible for all the destruction in the world, oppressing Nature, women, children and other men, especially with such quaint warlike ideas of honor and glory. While I think it is highly dubious to blame men for all such evils, the book does make a good point, besides which Women's Country is just a way of dealing with the problem in a devastated world, not a prescriptive answer for all time. I don't see it as anti-male. Indeed, while conceding that Tepper does show a lot of anger, I praised her novel for not degenerating into hatred for men.

Her matriarchy deals with the problem of men's warlike nature, not by trying to suppress it or turn men into wimps, but by giving it free reign, allowing it to be expressed in a comparatively harmless way.

Above all, one should see the book as just a possible future, not a feminist prescription; at least that's how I've always seen it.

Chris Masters does tend to go a bit over the top, but I feel he does a lot to liven your lettercolumn up. Indeed I found his letter in TM #84 rather hard to read - for laughing. I find it hard to laugh and read at the same time with only one good eye. Being nearly a generation older than he and therefore having grown up in a world where bad language was not acceptable in "mixed company" (how quaint that phrase sounds nowadays), I feel bound to respect others' feelings about language. While it's probably true that "those [of the] self-righteous blue-haired brigade... think themselves so morally superior to the rest of us poor wretches", they don't bother me. It's the politically correct twist who dictate to the rest of us what we should and should not say, think and write about that get my goat, and I admire Chris for not being afraid to offend that brigade. To listen to them, we must have all been a lot of evil fuckers a generation or more ago, that is, those of us old enough to have been around that long ago. How have we so suddenly become so upright and enlightened in such a short time? I have a lot more in common with Lloyd Penney: I think we both tend to see the world as it really is more clearly than most others, we tend to go overboard in being fair and reasonable, yet we are timid and afraid to offend by being outspoken with our views. This is not paranoia, as experience has borne this fear out.

The statement that the use of coarse language shows a poor vocabulary is a bit of a cliché, but this cliché is at least true in one hellishly tiresome scene in the film, BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, where two of the crippled veterans (one played by Tom Cruise) during a visit to Mexico quarrel and fall out but can't think of anything better than to keep screaming back and forth to each other *ad nauseam*: "Well fuck you!" The script writer must have been pretty short on imagination and vocabulary.

Who sees RED DWARF is not sciencefiction? Of course it is, but it's also a comedy at the same time. I have no problem with that concept.

Reading Molesworth's fan history, I can't help wondering how uptight and bureaucratic those early fans were. But were they any worse than fans today? Probably not, just different.

Looking at TM #85, I see that you printed my last letter after all. Ow! I've dropped a really embarrassing clanger. Somehow I thought Bob Brown was an American who had settled in Tasmania. However I heard him on the radio a couple of weeks ago and again on television last evening, and he sounds as Australian as anyone. Furthermore he doesn't look old enough to be the family man I met at Bicheno back in 1972. I must have gotten him mixed up with somebody else, but I have no idea who that could be.

What review of GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY is Harry Andruschak thanking you for printing? (9/13.9.94)

CATHERINE MINTZ, 1810 South Rittenhouse Square, 1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837, USA.

I hope "The Magazine Ahead of It's Time" does not actually represent a future trend. It's nit-picking, I know, but I'd like to see that extra apostrophe go.

The language seems so beleaguered sometimes.

I was watching Cable Network News' coverage of US troops going into Haiti, and one woman officer briefing the press used several sentences in which all of the verbs were nouns. Not just the usual "Tasked to do thus-and-so", but a whole legion of shambling new mutants came lurching out of the box. Hastily swatting them with a yellow pad of paper, I used my pencil eraser to turn the TV off, and survived to write another day.

You mention history being re-written in your editorial. It is a continuous process, and nothing new, it's just that as record-keeping becomes more general - and more dispersed and thus harder to destroy - it becomes more provable that the past is being tweaked by the present. No longer is it a matter of "That's not the way I remember it," you can haul out whole masses of data in support of your contention. But notice how little difference that often makes? The will to validate the present by citing the bad old past or the good old days is stronger than mere reality, and that's to say nothing about the "history" that never gets recorded. Some historians contend that if

it is not recorded it is not history, but mere inference or perhaps archaeology or something like that. Until this century most of most people's lives were an-historic, which can seem pleasant when you think of our own existence, netted about by dozens of bits of information in computer data bases. Use a phone, or a credit card, or pay your bills, and they know your shoe size, your taste in scotch, and where you were Saturday night.... (21.9.94)

TOM FELLER, Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39236, USA.

In my experience, not all SF readers are as they are profiled in Bill Congreve's article. I know fans who have never been to college, make below average salaries with little hope of advancement, are strongly set in their ways, and/or are not in the least bit ambitious. A certain taste in reading is not a good indicator of demographics.

Obviously it has been a quite a few years since Harry Andruschak read Plato's REPUBLIC. In Book V, Plato writes

Then it is likewise true that one woman has the qualities of a guardian and another not. Were not these the natural qualities of the men also whom we selected for guardians?

They were.

The women and the men, then, have the same nature in respect to the guardianship of the state, save in so far as the one is weaker, the other stronger.

Apparently.

Women of this kind, then, must be selected to cohabit with men of this kind and to serve with them as guardians since they are capable of it and akin by nature. (Italics mine.)

I believe Plato was the first thinker to assert that, except for the ability to bear children, there is no essential difference between men and women. (27.9.94)

BRADLEY ROW, Mortdale, NSW 2223.

It seems that my review of Ms Tepper's work has aroused some degree of heated reaction.

At the outset I think I should say that in retrospect the title A BOOK FOR BURNING was perhaps a little inappropriate as it is apt to generate the wrong impression. It was a provisional title which I gave to the review while writing it and was to some extent prompted by what I felt like doing to the copy in my possession. Unfortunately the review and its title escaped into print before I had seriously considered whether or not I wished to retain the latter. For the record I would not in any way wish to suggest that the book should be censored or that people should be discouraged from reading it. Like Voltaire, I believe quite passionately in freedom of speech *especially* for those with whom I happen to disagree. There are enough people calling for censorship of one form or another these days (the "politically correct" are an obvious, noxious and far too numerous example) and I most certainly do not want to be counted among their ranks.

Mr Harry Andruschak thinks that the book should not be compared so much with MAIN KAMPF as with Plato's REPUBLIC. This is an interesting point but rather hard for me to comment upon as my only encounter with the latter work consisted of Karl Popper's perhaps rather jaundiced account of it in his seminal thesis THE OPEN SOCIETY AND ITS ENEMIES. In a sense, though, I don't know if it matters. Both books were really blueprints for a pair of rather revolting utopias whose respective barrows each author was attempting to push. If Popper's argument is to be accepted the REPUBLIC was no abstract theoretical dissertation but a concrete programme of political action which Plato definitely desired to see implemented. Hitler's work was composed in precisely the same spirit. Both men did in fact have a lot in common. Both were possessed of a powerful animus against democracy, both desired an authoritarian political system, and both believed in the rule of leaders endowed with preternatural qualities of which they saw only themselves to be the holders. If Popper is correct Plato was definitely putting himself forward as one of the "philosopher kings" who would preside over his perfect state and Hitler's deluded view of himself as some sort of Nietzschean superman is scarcely subject to debate.

Whatever their superficial differences Nazi Germany, Plato's republic, and Women's Country certainly possess one thing in common: a government prepared to use no end of abominable methods in pursuit of what it regards as noble objectives. If it pleases Mr Andruschak to compare the third with the second and not the first

by all means let him do so; but I do not think that it deflects much from the force of my criticism.

In this vein several other contributors thought that the comparison to Hitler and his tract was, if not excessive, a trifle unfair. In my opinion that comparison is not only just and proportionate: it is inescapable. In both societies, Nazi Germany and Women's Country, we find a secret conspiracy, orchestrated at the highest levels of government, to improve the human race by exterminating those whose genetic complement is thought to be responsible for all its ills. In one case it was Jews; in the other men considered to possess an excessive potential for violence and aggression. No doubt the female elite might have kidded itself that its methods were kinder and gentler than those of the SS but it just won't wash. Murder is still murder, no matter how "humanely" it is done, and in any event orchestrating wholly futile battles in which huge numbers die horribly from untreated war wounds, as the female elite were quite prepared to do, does not rate much more highly on the Bush scale of kindness and gentleness than marching them into a gas chamber and dropping down the capsules of Zyklon B.

Many said, however, or implied that Hitler's work was one of serious political intention whereas Ms Tepper purported only to write a novel for entertainment. Mr Jeffery, for example, alleges that I have made the mistake of confusing the author with her work and of improperly seeking to place some sort of blame on her for what was, after all, written in a work of fiction.

This defence is frequently employed on behalf of a story and its author but in my opinion it only goes so far. It is quite absurd to suggest that under no circumstances can moral responsibility be sheeted home to an author for what is said in a work of fiction. Was not Orwell making a devastating critique of Stalin's Russia when he wrote *ANIMAL FARM* (subtitled "A Fairy Story")? Was not Sir Thomas More pleading for what a later age might call communism when he wrote his *UTOPIA*? Was not H. G. Wells making some reflections upon genocide and Europe's treatment of less powerful societies when he wrote *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*? Did not Ayn Rand advance a case for individualism when she wrote her novels? I do not think that Ms Tepper's apologists can divorce her from moral responsibility for what she has written simply by arguing that it is only a work of fiction. A message comes through loud and clear in her novel and in my opinion she must be taken to mean it.

Mr John Alderson makes some interesting points. I too was reminded of the same things: ancient Sparta, the English public schools and the men's houses and male initiation rites which exist in numerous tribal societies. Conceivably such social and sexual divisions may arise again in the future - the propensity for them is demonstrably present in the human psyche. If Ms Tepper had been merely writing about such a society I should not have had any quarrel with her. *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* was more than that, however: it was a tendentiously rendered tale of an elite endeavouring to improve the human race by eliminating what that elite regarded as the race's less satisfactory members. The ancient Spartans and the traditional English education system were guilty of many crimes but not, I think of that.

Ms Catherine Mintz suggests that the irony which I observed in Ms Tepper's novel is precisely the point which the author intended to make, ie: that in the end the women turned out to be not much better than the men they were seeking to improve. Ms Mintz draws support for this view by reference to an interview which she and a Mr Clovis conducted with the author herself. Of course what an author has to say about her work is not decisive of a debate such as this: if the author had intended to say something then she should have said it in the novel and if she does not then her opinions expressed elsewhere bear no more significance than those of any other critic. Once published a novel is out in the open, so to speak, and must stand or fall on its own merits.

Ms Mintz's view certainly is the most charitable conclusion one can draw but it just won't stand scrutiny. If that truly has been Ms Tepper's thesis, she would certainly have done a lot less to help us stomach the internecine behaviour of her heroines. To furnish only one of many examples; when Stavia's mother, Morgot, eradicates the leadership of the city garrison (through male intermediaries of course!) the author uses every trick in the book to win our sympathy for Morgot and to destroy any which we might have felt for her victims. They are

depicted to be vile, lecherous and murderous creatures who only receive the treatment which they themselves had sought to administer. Would the author have gone to such lengths if she had truly intended to leave us wondering whether Morgot's moral position was any better than that of her victims?

Ms Julie Vaux accuses me of being young. Well, as a man who has just observed his thirty fifth birthday I certainly like to think so! More to the point, she suggests that I should re-read the book, or at least its last three chapters. Unfortunately my intestinal fortitude, and my endurance, will only stretch so far.

According to Ms Vaux:

"As for the selective breeding - Row gives the impression its (sic) for docility but its (sic) 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."

Julie, so what? Even if I grant you everything you say are you seriously suggesting that it somehow makes the selective breeding more acceptable? Murdering legions of innocent men and inseminating an even greater number of unknowing and unconsenting women is a no-no if it's to obtain docility but less deserving of censure if one's goal is to "cull out genetic damage" (shades of Adolff!) and to obtain "higher intelligence and emotional stability"? Are you really offering this in defence of Ms Tepper and her novel?

Ms Vaux notes that the elite calls itself the "Damned Few" as if this indicates that Ms Tepper, is not critical, is at least ambivalent about its moral position. It does nothing of the sort; if anything it suggests the opposite conclusion. Ms Tepper employs every literary device in the canon to deflect from her heroines the revulsion which most readers would justly conceive at their behaviour. Naturally, characters who are totally oblivious to the appalling enormity of their actions are far less compelling candidates for our sympathy than ones who are; and our sympathy is what Ms Tepper desperately wishes to win for hers.

So what if the elite calls itself "the Damned Few"? Every monster in history who sought to justify his or her (in this context perhaps I should emphasise the latter pronoun) actions was the first to concede "yes I know it was a terrible thing to do, but...". Basically the expression signifies little more than an attitude on the part of the female elite that yes, these are truly appalling things we have to do, but somebody's got to do them and we are the chosen few, the thin blue line as it were, selected by indifferent fate for the prosecution of its demanding, thankless but nevertheless inherently worthwhile enterprise. Would Eichmann have thought any differently?

If Ms Tepper had genuinely intended to call into question the moral status of the female elite and the programme of genetic intervention it was implementing she would have endeavoured to elicit from her readers some degree of feeling for that programme's victims and this she most conspicuously fails to do. The two categories into which those victims may be divided, the warrior males and the women who consorted with them and bore their children (or so they thought) were at every stage depicted in the most unflattering light. The rather unattractive character created for Stavia's sister who falls in love with, and pregnant to, one of the warriors taken alongside the equally unpleasant portrait which the author paints of the young man concerned forms only one of the more conspicuous examples. If you are writing a novel about a concentration camp don't try to tell me that you are seeking to condemn the system when it is the inmates and not the creators of that system who attract your scorn.

I could go on but I think that the point has by now been well and truly made: *THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY* is a deeply unsatisfactory novel: not so much because of the hideous society it depicts (ones far worse abound in the pages of science fiction and they cause me not the slightest degree of discomfort) but because of the extent to which the author looks upon that society with evident approbation and seeks to advance its case. While perhaps not a book for burning, or insertion into an Index of forbidden reading, it is a piece of literature for which very little can be favourably said. (19.8.94)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

Duncan Evans, Jim Verran, Alan Stewart, Maria-Louise Stephens and Pamela Boal.