

# THE MENTOR

## AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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### CONTENTS #79

#### ARTICLES:

- 8 - THE BIG BOOM by Don Boyd
- 40 - WHAT IS SF FOR by Sean Williams

#### COLUMNISTS:

- 14 - NORTHERN FEN by Pavel A Viaznikov
- 17 - A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA" by Andrei Lubenski
- 32 - SWORDSMAN OF THE SHEPHERD'S STAR by Andrew Darlington
- 45 - IN DEPTH #6 by Bill Congreve

#### COMIC SECTION:

- 20 - THE INITIATE Part 2 by Steve Carter

#### DEPARTMENTS:

- 2 - EDITORIAL SLANT by Ron Clarke
- 49 - THE R&R DEPT - Reader's letters
- 61 - CURRENT BOOK RELEASES by Ron Clarke

#### FICTION:

- 4 - PREY FOR THE PREY by B. J. Stevens
- 23 - THE BROOKLYN BLUES by Brent Lillie

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Contributions, if over 5 pages, preferred to be on an IBM 51/4" or 31/2" disc (DD or HD) otherwise typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address) and include an SSAE anyway, for my comments. Contributions are not paid;

however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issues containing comments on their contribution.

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# THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

I was thinking about just what the readers of THE MENTOR who don't put out fanzines know about what goes into an issue. Since I am doing these longer editorials, this is a good place to start.

As some of you know by the change of address - Susan and I have split up. I didn't really want to move back with my parents, so I asked around the fans I knew both in the "literary" and "media" side as to who had a room I could rent. The choice was down to two fans, when the brother of one moved into the house she had, and he and his girlfriend took up the extra space. That left Anne Stewart, who has allowed me to move into a spare room in her house at 34 Tower Street, Revesby. She was a bit short of cash, being on a pension, so the extra money I put into food and electricity helps her and her daughter Dale along.

The big change with living in Revesby is in the time it takes to get to and from work. The Sydney head office of the Australian Customs Service moved from Clarence St (near Wynyard Station) which was right in the heart of Sydney's shops, to a new Commonwealth Offices just alongside Central Railway, which is near the centre of Chinatown, but there aren't many large stores around. Oh well, I need the walk for my blood pressure....

To get to both the Blue Mountains and Revesby, the trains leave from Central - when I was at Clarence St I had to get a train from Wynyard to Central (two stops), then change to a Mountains train. I used to leave get up at 5.50 in the morning, and arrived at work at 8.10 am. Then later that day I left the office at 4.45 pm and arrived at Faulconbridge at 6.30 pm. Now get up at 6.45 am and arrive at the office at 8.05 am, and later I leave work at 4.35 pm and arrive at Revesby Station at about 5.15 pm, then I have a short 12 minute walk to the house. It also means I can sleep in an extra hour in the morning. Of course I don't have that extra hour reading going

home in the train, but I make up for some of that reading at morning and afternoon tea-time.

When I get to the house I usually read the mail, change and have a shower, then eat tea. After tea I sit down and input into the computer the day's locs received. I read any story or article I received at least twice, with several days between readings. Usually the writers send their offerings on disc - this is a great boom for me. Not only does it save me considerable time typing them in - it takes me, even touch typing, a half hour per page to type in single spaced MSS, but it also saves the authors having to put up with my typos. As anyone who has input information knows - the computer spell-checker picks out misspelled words but not those spelled correctly, but mistyped - eg ate/the.

After an hour or so typing, with breaks of ten minutes each half hour - with a cup of coffee between breaks - I go for an hour or so's walk up or down Tower Street. It is a quiet neighbourhood as far as crime is concerned, but after about ten at night cars going along Tower St tend to go at speed. By the time I get back I am pretty pooped, so tend to have a cup of tea and retire for the night.

Other things that take up my time on week-nights can be SF meetings. The Penrith Group usually meets every three weeks on a Friday night; the Gargoyle Club meets monthly on a Friday or Saturday night. There are also SF meetings on weekends - the Southern Sydney SF Group meets on Saturday afternoons, usually at Lugarno and every so often I go to a Bounty (a Star Trek ~~boozers~~ partying club) meeting on a Saturday, which oftentimes goes on throughout the night, with members sleeping on airbeds and whatever else they bring with them; by that time they aren't usually in any condition to drive.... Then there is the Sydney Fans Inc, who meet monthly also on Saturdays.

Of course the closer it gets to the deadline I set for an issue of TM, the more time I spend polishing up the issue.

This is the more intensive and time consuming time. I type up the stories, articles, LoCs, Reviews and poems in separate files, then I combine them, usually putting what I regard as the best story first as a leader, then an article, another story, another article/column, comic, poetry section etc. I leave my reviews and the R&R DEPT last as these I type up as I read the book/receive the LoCs. The Contents Page is the last page I type, usually after I laser copy the rest of the zine.

When I laser-copy the zine, I go through my artwork folder, and cut out and paste in the artwork at the end of the stories/articles. I try to find artwork that fits the mood or subject of the contents, but sometimes it is hard. And of course, I sometimes use an illo, then next issue or so receive a story that particularly fits that piece of artwork. Grrrr@%\*@!

When I have the issue "print ready" I do the plates for it. The plates are paper and are done in a photocopy-like procedure. The machine is like a long photocopier - you lay the original on the glass screen on the top and lower the rubber cover. It uses dry toner and developer like a photocopier. After it has done its pass/es the plate is put through a fixer(heater) to seal the resin. I can do about 30 plates per hour, so an issue takes about 2 1/2 hours to plate-make.

The next time I have a day to spare (the next weekend, or flex-day) I start about 9.30 am and set up the offset press. It is an ABDick 360. I take off the rubber printing mat when I finish printing as when I used to leave it on, the printing rollers indented it, and ruined it. I then run the ink and etching solution (ferrous cyanide) through until the ink is thoroughly over the rollers, and then proceed to put the plates on and run off the zine. I usually run the press at 6,000 copies per hour (100 per minute). An issue of TM usually takes about 6 hours to run off, as I usually also run off the local Amateur Astronomers magazine on the same day. At the end I clean up the press (a dirty job - you end up with printing ink under your fingers and the only way to get rid of it is to let it wear off - which takes about a week). That takes about a half hour.

After I clean up the press I usually have tea, then collate the zine that night and sometimes several hours the following morning. I hate to have an issue printed, but not collated and posted. The collating takes about three hours, and I usually have classical music playing in the background. After collating I staple the zines and place them in the plastic envelopes and heat-seal them, then prick them with a pin; otherwise the air trapped in them allows them to slide off each other when piled. Unfortunately neither the Breville heat sealer nor its spare parts are any longer available, so I taking extra care not to damage the teflon strip the plastic bag is cut against.

When I have collated the issues, I always have copies missing some pages - about ten different pages with usually one or two copies needed, so I have to photocopy them before I have the whole print run done. I keep one copy in a hard-backed binder, and three file copies - though sometimes I have to use one or two of the file copies if I find I haven't sent a copy to one of the contributors....

I then take the plastic bags of zines down to the local post office and send them off into the wilds of the post, usually paying the postage with a credit card.

Since I own the offset press and the platemaker (the platemaker cost \$1,300 and the [reconditioned] press \$3,000 some eight years ago) printing TM does not cost as much as it would if I had it done "professionally". I originally sold \$100 shares in the platemaker and original reconditioned (tabletop) press to raise enough to buy them (the press was \$800). The tabletop press only had one inking roller, so was pretty useless for artwork having much black, so I sold it for what I had bought it for and bought the present press. That is a model from about 1955, and it is still going strong - the outer covers are 1/4" steel, so it is built to last. The only thing is, the vibration loosens the nuts, etc and at 100 rpm when things go wrong (eg paper gets stuck on rollers), you have to know *exactly* what to do, otherwise you have a really messy job tidying up. And I have lost part of one finger-nail when it nearly got caught in a metal roller....

Offset presses are cheaper to run than photocopiers - the paper costs are the same - about 1c per page, but the chemical costs are cheaper - to run off other magazines I charge \$1 per plate, and \$17 per ream of paper, printed both sides and including the cost of the paper. This covers the cost of materials, and I usually make it a condition that the person helps run off their issue. That way, if things go wrong, they can see what it is, and since I only charge cost of materials, they can see why I charge for the extra pages (eg printed upside down... or the wrong page on the back.).

After all that, I sit back and, usually after about two weeks, I get my first LoC on that issue from Australia. Since I publish quarterly, and it takes about two months for the issue to reach the UK and USA by sea mail, the LoCs from overseas fans are usually one issue behind. As it is, the postage is more than half the cost of the issue, unless it has a full colour laser cover, then the cost of the postage is about the same as the cost of the colour cover.

And that is what it usually takes to produce an issue of THE MENTOR. Though I haven't mentioned the work in writing letters commenting on stories rejected, writing to artists in an attempt to get them to submit more of their work, buying the paper at \$500 for 100 reams... or the plates at \$100 a box, the etch at \$35 for 5 litres, or the toner at \$35 for a 300 gm bottle....

Though, I must say, the trades, and especially the LoCs, make up for it all (as do the free review copies of books ... I couldn't afford to both buy books *and* put out THE MENTOR. With the review copies of books I can do both). What *did* make it all worth the effort over the years was the request from the (then) Soviet fans to go to Volgacon and represent Australian fandom. I had been publishing articles and fiction from the Soviet fans for about eight years, in an effort to give them overseas exposure. As you can see from this issue, they are still sending contributions and being published. though I think it will be some time, because of the economic conditions over there, before they have another convention in the style of Volgacon. Though I hope they do get around to it.

Because I have more time on my hands, there is a possibility that issues of THE MENTOR will come out more often. As I am typing this, which is Easter Friday, I am getting ready to go to my parents' 50th Wedding Anniversary, at which I am paying half the costs, and next week I am taking three of my children down to my parents' cottage near Nowra

for a weeks holiday. Which means I am flat broke. I have most of this issue ready to go, and I have materials to print TM 79, but no way do I have the \$240 odd dollars to post it. I want to get my credit card down to zero before I post this issue, so though it won't be a July issue posted in July, it probably won't be a July issue posted in May.

I think the fiction in this issue is some of the best stories I have published. I hope you think they are too, and I hope the writers continue to send them in.

-Ron.

# PRAY FOR THE PREY

by B. J. Stevens

The air was thick with swamp gas. The job was unpleasant and I wondered if I'd been wise in accepting it. Still, there was no way I was going to suffer without dragging Hearn down with me.

'Enough!' he snarled, half turning. Then by way of retaliation Hearn roughly jerked the shoulder of the man between us. Our prisoner grunted dissatisfaction but said nothing by way of complaint.

Hearn snagged the toe of his steel-capped jungle boot on a hidden root. It was comforting to see that his reflexes were as fast as I'd heard tell. As he fell, Hearn's left hand tightened on the arm of the prisoner; his beefy right hand snatching the portable ECT unit from his belt. Hearn landed on one knee and twisted his lean body, bringing up the weapon toward the prisoner's face. We stood for a moment in anxious silence. Looking into Hearn's angry face was never a pleasant experience.

Our captive had already been on the receiving end of what Hearn called his "cattle prod." It was in fact an Electro Convulsive Therapy unit; its old purpose being to alleviate symptoms of psychosis from the mentally unstable. Its present use was for defence. But try telling that to Hearn.

'Just a moment, Hearn!', I said in what I hoped was a commanding tone. 'Easy now. He's not giving us any trouble. Calm down. Remember, you're the one who tripped.'

Hearn glanced at me then searched the face of our prisoner. The latter warily eyed the ECT unit waving under his nose.

'Goddamn rock spider,' Hearn growled, snapping the "prod" back onto his belt. 'Goddamn kid fuc...'

'Shut up!' I snapped. 'We don't know that.'

Hearn scanned the overhead foliage.

'The hell we don't. The creep's admitted abducting her. Far as I'm concerned the bastard's guilty as all hell.'

'That's all he's admitted to,' I reminded him.

Hearn gained his feet and jerked the prisoner forward, pulling me with him.

Hearn grumbled saying: 'Yeah, well this boy's goin' to get his whichever way.'

'Hearn,' I shot back. 'No-one is going to get theirs. Not even Garten here.'

I looked over at Garten. He was staring ahead, his mouth set in a tight line.

We trudged through the shallow marsh, thick, stinking mud sucking at our boots. Islets with bloated trees - liana draped - bordered our laborious route. Early afternoon sunlight filtered down through the treetops. All around corpulent insects flew and hopped and bit; while unseen marsh life shrieked and barked at our intrusion.

'Break for a drink and a bite to eat,' I said wheezing through clenched teeth. I knew Hearn had rolled his eyes in exasperation. He always did that when he was pissed off.

'You're not actually going to feed this arsehole, are you?' he snapped, giving Garten a backhand under the ear.

'Yeah,' I retorted with indignation. 'Yeah, I am. Your problem, Hearn, is you're too quick to judge.'

'Me?' he almost shouted. 'Me? Spare me the sentimental crap. He knows what he's done. Don't you boy?' he added roughly pushing Garten away.

'Hearn,' I said stepping towards him. 'That'll be enough of that. You touch Garten once more, you'll wish you had never crossed me. You got that clear?'

Hearn tried to outstare me, realised that he couldn't and gave up.

'Over there,' I said pointing to a stand of trees on dry ground. We sat sipping from the water bottles, with the child abductor between us.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had never dealt with Garten before he kidnapped the girl, Moran. He was just one of those unobtrusive people that follow your orders. I guess there is some truth in what is said about the "quiet ones."

We were like any other bunch of rag-tag surveyors. Lumped together by the unseen bosses and dropped in any number of strange, often hostile environments. Our job was to survey and make safe the more habitable parts of a planet for the colonists.

Well, the colonists arrived all right. But to one family's dismay, the first thing to happen was the abduction by Garten of their little girl, Christ. The base went berserk. Order was eventually restored. Garten admitted to the deed. The only way to stop the people from taking the man apart was for me to put him under protective custody. I have no doubt that my decision made me a few enemies. But the colonists were made to see that without Garten, we would have little chance of finding Moran alive.

Hearn was my choice to accompany Garten and me to deliver Moran back to her parents. It was an eerie sensation to see normally rational people become emotionally ugly and menacing. But the primal urge of protection of the young in any species is ingrained.

Hearn could be an aggravating bastard when he was riled. To be honest he was put out at my being a woman. It wasn't taking orders that was his problem; it was taking them from me. One thing though, he was capable and a good man to have on anyone's side. As much as I detested predators of children, I also hated to admit that I had feelings akin to Hearn's. Most things about Hearn grated me. With Garten it was different. He was, in his own way as fucked up as Hearn. But he had the excuse of being mentally unsound.

Our mob, including Garten, had the tag of the "Lump em and Dump em Brigade." This was on account of our lumping and dumping colonists onto their new home and then leaving for another contract. How the hell Garten had got past the psycho people, I'll never know. But I suppose they miss the occasional one.

Hearn stoppered his water bottle, got up and moved away from us. He muttered something about the bad smell of a certain person. I knew he did not mean me. I looked over at Garten's profile as he stared into the gloom of the swamp. His nose was humped and bent to one side, as if it had suffered a few breaks. Curly blonde hair hung down over one eye. It was difficult telling the man's age as he had one of those boyish faces. I suppose he sensed I was staring, because he turned to me and for the first time that day he spoke. Although a little shaky, his voice was deep.

'I never touched her...sexually, I mean. I...'

I felt my features harden as I pressed my lips into a thin line. Garten saw this and he dropped his gaze from mine.

I took a couple of breaths and asked him to continue.

'She, she's safe. About half a kilometre from here. Straight ahead.'

I waited for him to continue. He said nothing.

'Why?' I asked as pleasantly as I was able. 'Why a little nine-year old girl?'

'I don't...I can't explain it. I know I need help. Don't I?'

I stared at the vapours rising off the surface of the marsh.

'Yeah,' I said at length. 'Yeah. You need help. But you'll be beyond that if Hearn has his way. I'm going to have to keep my wits about me if I'm to save your sorry arse. You realise that Hearn is going to try to kill you.?''

Garten stiffened but did not look at me. I guessed he somehow knew this for a fact. But hearing it from me brought the realisation home hard.

Now that I knew little Moran was safe, I changed the subject.

'You've been here before, Garten. Is there anything we should be wary of; fauna, I mean?'

I handed him a vitamin tube. He had committed an unforgivable act against a child. But what I wanted right then was to try and understand a little more of what made him tick. Getting him talking seemed a good way to get inside his head. A person can tell a lot about another by their tone of voice and their body movements.

Garten swallowed some of the vitamin paste before answering.

'From what I've seen, there's only one thing here that is dangerous. But that usually hides out on higher ground. You can find them where the trees don't grow so close together. I suppose it's because of the poor soil. They must like it for some reason. But we don't need to be worried if we stick to the shallows.'

'Anything else?' I asked.

'Well, there is another weird shit of a creature that isn't dangerous. It's kind of like a big ant, about the size of a person's foot. It's a cleaner. At least that's the name we gave to it in the company log.'

'What d'you mean, a cleaner?' I asked, my curiosity rising. All the while I was watching Garten's face as he spoke.

Garten handed me back the vitamin paste tube. I felt a little uncomfortable at having his fingertips accidentally brush mine. I slapped away a hungry insect and watched him closely as he scrunched a leaf up between his fingers. He turned, saw me staring and looked away.

'Well,' he said. 'I've watched several of them on occasion. They seem to clean other small swamp dwellers of parasites.'

'Go on,' I urged, swallowing some of my own paste.

'So, these ant-things have stations. That is, places where they wait and have other animals come to them for cleaning. What happens is the other animal comes along and waits while the cleaner runs over its body and picks off leeches and things. So one gets de-loused while the cleaner gets a feed.'

'Sounds like a strange relationship,' I replied putting my paste back into my shoulder bag. 'What else?'

'Only one other thing. It's a creature that mimics the cleaner. We've marked it down in the log as a "Bleeder". The Bleeder fools another swamp dweller into thinking it is a Cleaner. When the unfortunate animal opens its mouth to have its gums cleaned, the Bleeder darts in and starts taking chunks of flesh from inside the mouth. I've seen this happen once. Not nice to watch.'

I recognised the term Bleeder. Hearn had mentioned something about it, before the incident involving Garten and Moran.

I guess my ignorance of these things was due to me trying to keep the outpost running smoothly. I had spent precious little time in the physical surveying of the terrain. Those tasks I had delegated to Hearn and the like.

\* \* \* \* \*

We found Moran on a twig platform up in the crook of a tree. Although physically none the worse for her ordeal, I wondered what emotional scars would remain. She seemed in good spirits and was obviously pleased to see us. But she remained silent; only nodding or shaking her head to my questioning. Her reaction to seeing Garten again was not as I had expected. She did not seem to mind his presence. Moran simply glanced at him and then held her arms out so I could catch her when she jumped. Right then I knew for sure that Garten had told me the truth about not having sexually molested her.

My guess is that in leaving Moran safely in the swamp, Garten was crying out for help; desperate to be noticed. I suppose that in leading us to Moran, he was in some warped way justifying his actions. Showing us that he wasn't all bad. I thought that perhaps he just wanted a young friend. But that wasn't for me to judge. I'd leave that to the psychs to determine. Moran drank deeply from my water bottle and downed most of a spare vitamin tube.

Hearn behaved as cold as ever. Without so much as checking Moran for cuts or bruises, he simply stated:

'It's getting on. I think we should be heading back. Maam.'

I loathed the way he accentuated the "Maam" whenever he addressed me by my rank. But I had never, and would never let him have the satisfaction. I could tell that he was rolling his eyes while waiting for my go ahead. I relished the moment before agreeing.

'Yeah. It'll be dark in a couple of hours. We should make it back before nightfall.'

Turning to Garten I spoke harshly; just to let Moran know I was definitely in charge.

'All right, Garten, move on ahead. Five steps between us. No more. Got that?'

'Yes, Maam,' he muttered, leading the way with Hearn flanking.

'I wouldn't step too far onto the high ground if I were you Hearn.'

Hearn spun around, eyes flashing anger, hand reaching for the "prod".

'What was that, boy?'

'I only meant...'

'What was that you said, boy?' Hearn repeated menacingly. 'Are you telling me something here?'

'Hearn,' I snapped. 'You know this place. It's not safe to walk up there.'

Moran was gripping my hand and had moved closer to me. She was visibly frightened by the arguing. Meanwhile Hearn had taken a step toward Garten. Then it happened.

There was a rustle in the ankle-high undergrowth around Hearn's feet. Then there was a hissing swoosh. It happened so fast that I missed most of what took place. At first there was Hearn advancing on Garten. Then the ground erupted around Hearn. There was a flash of spines shooting up out of the ground. The next instant Hearn was on the ground howling fit to deafen.

Moran whimpered and hugged my waist. Garten was looking wildly around. I wasn't sure if he was trying to find a weapon, or if he was thinking of making a break for it.

'Garten,' I shouted above Hearn's cries. 'Stay put.' He did. His face had drained of colour as he watched, sickened at Hearn's predicament.

'Stay here, Moran,' I said quietly in her ear and ruffling her hair. I tried to keep my voice from quavering. She had to know that one of us was strong enough to protect her.

'Garten,' I said with sudden venom in my voice. 'Stay well away from her. Understand?'

'But I wasn't going...'

'Just do it!'

'Oh, and Garten?'

'Maam?'

'I'll use more than just the prod if you fuck me around.'

He looked away.

Hearn had quietened down somewhat. I turned to him and strayed only as far as the edge of the shallows. Squatting down, I spoke quietly to him.

'Got your leg, aye? How bad is it? Can you tell me where the spines went through?'

Hearn sweated and cursed under his breath. His eyes were screwed shut from the obvious pain he was in.

'It's right through my thigh. I think it's scraping the bone. Oh shit. It feels like it's cooking my flesh.'

Veins were standing out on his bull neck.

'Hearn,' I ventured, trying to keep my voice calm. 'Can you reach your ECT unit. Maybe you can convulse the thing and crawl out of there.' I knew that it was a crazy thing to ask of him. The other spines had moved back into the undergrowth. But we both realised that if he moved they might strike him right across his body. 'No. Can't reach it. Besides,' he panted, 'We both know what's goin' on.' He looked into my eyes and I saw desperation in his dilated pupils. 'Listen. All my muscles feel like they're seizing up.'

I saw the impaling spike shift. It drew halfway out of Hearn's thigh. Then without warning it stabbed back right up to its squamous-skinned hilt. Hearn screamed as I've never heard a man scream. Right then I began to feel real scared.

An idea occurred to me.

'Hearn. Listen. If I throw you my ECT unit... Hearn?'

I glance quickly back at Moran and Garten. They had not moved. Both were staring boggle-eyed at Hearn.

'Garten,' I said softly. 'What the hell's happening here?'

'Paralysis, Maam,' he said quietly.

'What?'

He came over to me. Fear showed in his eyes as he continued to stare at Hearn's leg.

He lowered his voice. 'He's being paralysed. In a moment he won't be able to move.'

I swung around in my squatting position. My heart felt as if a fist had grabbed it.

'But there must be something we can do. Come on, Garten. You bastard! You're supposed to be the bloody expert. What's the go in a situation like this?'

'There is nothing we can do for him,' he whispered.

'Nothing we can do? Or nothing you want to do?'

'Nothing, Maam. There is nothing we can do.'

'Get out!' I shouted. 'Stand the hell over there. Away from Moran. You move and so help me...'

I turned back to Hearn. Tears of rage and pain were wetting his tanned, stubbled cheeks.

'Hearn,' I spoke in a rasping whisper. My voice trailed off. I saw his mouth stretched wide as if in a long, silent scream of agony. It was like he had lockjaw. His fingers were powerful claws clutching at the damp soil. He was completely motionless. Paralysis had set in. But I did not believe that there was nothing we could do for him. I knew there were drugs and weapons back at the base. I got to my feet and backed away.

'Hearn,' I spoke evenly. 'Just hang in there. If you can hear me, listen up. We're going back to the base to get help. Garten's going to have to lead us out.'

I paused, indecisive. Then I spun around. 'Moran, honey. Come here to me, dear. Garten, move on ahead. Quickly, man!'

The three of us set off through the marsh at a trot. I held onto Moran's hand, repeating over and over; 'It's all right, dear. Just an accident. It's all right. Everything is going to be OK.'

I did not believe a word of it.

It's kinda strange. But the more I think about Garten's actions, and my responses, the more I see a parallel with the Cleaner - Bleeder situation. I can almost see Garten as a Bleeder, a preyer on the innocent and unsuspecting. This, I guess, has me playing the part of a Cleaner, but someone has to do the job.

Moran would probably have a distrust of men. Garten would probably do a little time back home. And there was no doubting that Hearn was a dead man. There was no way we could get back before morning. I felt for him. That was no way for anyone to die.

Me? Well, I would carry on in the shitty job as best I could; being shunted from planet to planet.

No. Nothing was right. Nothing was ever right in this lousy job. Ever.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hearn could not shift from his cramped position. His muscles simply would not respond. Tears of frustration rolled down his face. He knew he was going to die alone, in the dark so far from home. His mouth ached from being frozen, stretched wide. The acids from the tip of the impaling spine had already begun the process of digesting the flesh around his femur.

Something moved within Hearn's field of vision. He watched, unable to move. Unable to blink. Shadows of the approaching twilight crept down from the surrounding trees. Swamp creatures would follow. A shadow detached itself from the undergrowth. It moved stealthily towards the stricken man. Hearn's heart was still functioning, although weaker, and it began thumping against his ribs. A new feeling settled on him. For the first time in his life he felt real fear. The shadow crept closer and took definite shape. It ran up over a rotting log and into Hearn's field of vision. He was relieved to see it was only a Cleaner. It crept hesitantly up to Hearn, its antennae flicking wildly about. Then, scuttling around behind Hearn's head, it began looking for parasites. Hearn felt a tickling on his cheek. This momentarily took his mind off the agony of what was happening to his thigh. He was desperately trying to blink when something brushed against his bottom lip. He moaned with fright. He knew then that the Cleaner was going to try and clean his gums.

With jaws stretched wide, Hearn felt the loathsome creature begin to enter his mouth. He let his bladder go and felt the warmth of his piss fill the front of his overalls.

A thought struck him in a devastating blow. In another first in his life, Hearn began to pray.

'Please. Oh, please God. Not a Bleeder. Don't let it be a Bleeder.'

Hearn began to weep as the creature filled his mouth.

END

# THE BIG BOOM

by Don Boyd

Herman Kahn had an IQ of 200. He was a forward-thinking polymath with a wide range of interests like Isaac Asimov. He was one of the powerful intellects active in the Hudson Institute, one of America's futuristic think-tanks used for long range planning.

Kahn authored some ground-breaking books like *THE YEAR 2000*, and *THE EMERGING JAPANESE SUPERSTATE*. He argued that economic wealth and prosperity were inevitable and analysed coming new sources of energy, social organisation to save energy (such as electronic commuting), and replacement of dirty, un-green substances (like iron and concrete), with new synthetics that were easy to produce and non-polluting. Buckeyballs and room-temperature semiconduction were as everyday to his thinking as are zero tariffs to the geniuses in our Treasury.

When arguing for his future of great wealth and abundance for all, he side-stepped the issue of space-based industries, usually saying, "And of course, if we include space industries as well the argument is even more powerful." He pointed out that space was a little too unusual for dry government economists to get a handle on. It was best not to use this powerful economic card in the argument but it was clear he knew what an explosive factor it was.

When the extraordinary stock market collapse of 1987 occurred, Dr David Clark wrote in the *AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW* about enormous long wave cycles in Western economies.

The stock market collapse had aroused interest in the 60-year cycle postulated by the Russian theoretician, Nikolai Kondratieff. Building on Kondratieff, Dr Clark posed the question that we might have come to the end of an enormous 200-year wave of growth which had its origins in the industrial revolution.

And we have to ask ourselves, will we be saved by the onset of some new, as yet unknown wave? If the latter exists, it could carry us into another 200 years of unprecedented boom.

Before any novice sharemarket player invests a cent you would advise him that it would be common sense to at

least take a look at the past ten years of stock market peaks. Similar advice should apply to us: if we want to look at the next super longwave boom we ought to be able to learn a little from the last super longwave boom. Maybe there is a pattern of inventing, replacement of old systems and massive growth of new networks that is part of human behaviour in large social networks.

Historically the tremendous and continual famines of the seventeenth century kept population down and economic growth connected to the cycles of crop failure. The average life span of European citizens in the period 1656 to 1676 was 21 years, and 30 later. A relatively wealthy France had 13 widespread famines in the 16th century. These were real famines, where people dug up dead horses to eat and there was cannibalism upon the young and the weak (the *Pied Piper of Hamlyn* tale is a piece of that era - guess what really happened to all those disappearing kiddies?).

And France was wealthy. Elsewhere things were even worse. Those left weakened and dying succumbed to plague.

With the cross-over into industrialisation there arose methods of transporting food from afar, improved animal and plant yields accompanied by a relocation of previously enormous, starving peasant populations into industrial cities. Population and trade began their long, boom cycle.

Quite remarkable economic growth was achieved via the triangle of shipping slaves to the colonies, bringing raw materials from those colonies to the mother countries and then converting the raw materials to goods for export back to the colonies.

This is rather the position of Australia to Japan at the present time, minus the slavery.

French exports increased fourfold over the 70 years up to 1789. Britain's exports doubled from 1720 to 1763. And with the stabilisation of England's currency in 1719 and France's in 1726, the gold value of the pound and franc did not change for two centuries, as a matter of fact not until after the First World War.

Having seen the world's mightiest money markets crumble in ruins about our ears, is there anything glistening on the horizon which might present itself as the beginnings of another tremendous 200 years of expanding markets, of unprecedented growth, of huge profits to be made and lost?

One might cynically think that those golden years of world trade expansion and population growth were behind us, because anything which suggested otherwise ought to be well visible at the present time. New ideas aren't gladly received. Nikola Tesla invented the "impossible" alternating current generators and all the mathematics to go with his polyphase system but was virtually hounded into labouring jobs till he sold the rights to George Westinghouse for \$1 million. Yet Tesla's name is all but impossible to find mentioned in textbooks on electrical engineering.

And in 1975 Dr Gerard O'Neill, a professor at Princeton University, put to paper the basic physics and engineering required to build colonies in high Earth orbit. These were encapsulated in a popular book called THE HIGH FRONTIER.

The mathematics for startling economic growth - boom times on a scale unprecedented - lie within that book.

O'Neill's larger colonies, known as Island Three types, are 32 kilometre long cylinders rotating to give normal gravity on their inner surfaces. They are filled with forests, rivers, hikers and hang-gliders and cities of a million people in each 1,300 square kilometres of land surface.

The greed that the pre-1987 market kindled will be as nothing compared to the forest fires lit by the graphs of growth in those colonial cylinders above our heads.

The speed with which large space cylinders could be built is an area for surprise to the layman. Rather unimaginative materials are called for, like iron and glass and aluminium. If a 90-storey building can be put up in a few years on Earth battling gravity and high winds, a 900-storey structure presents few problems when gravity and his ugly sister, weather, are removed.

Professor O'Neill makes fairly conservative calculations for constructing the slightly smaller Island Two colonies, whose population is 140,000 each. Assuming some mild rates of construction and assuming all the work forces were employed on building more colonies instead of in ordinary commerce, he comes up with the following growth rates of population that are possible in space.

We start with one colony in space in say 2010 AD.

Year	Population
10	290,000
15	1.5 million
20	9.2 m
25	68 m
30	631 m
35	7.3 billion

It is unlikely that anyone would want to go on building colonies at this rate after a certain land area was achieved, but anything can happen when the avarice of the developer is untrammelled by earthly constraints. For instance, will these "lands" be under any sovereignty of their terrestrial "mother" land?

The point Professor O'Neill makes is that even with the productivity rate we already achieve on Earth, then within

two generations we could achieve a production rate in space of new land area great enough to accommodate the population growth on Earth. And this is *not* an optimum scenario. The Malthusian dilemma proves false.

A few paragraphs on we will be looking at bonanzas of nickel-iron lodes measured in trillions, if not hundred of trillions, of tonnes there for the picking. But first we should get an idea as to what these colonies will look like and how easy or difficult it is to build them.

Professor O'Neill dubs the different types of colonies in increasing order of size as Island One, Two and Three. His conservative depiction of Island Three is very attractive to a young couple wanting to start a family.

Island Three uses a cylinder 32 kilometres long and 6.5 kilometres in diameter, spinning slowly to simulate normal gravity on its inside. It is paired with another cylinder for spin reasons.

Its total land area of 1,300 square kilometres could support around 10 million people, but such cylinders could be built quickly by the land developers. There would be no need for each to house more than a few million, most likely far less.

The interior of the cylinder would have forests, lakes and rivers as well as normal weather and clouds. O'Neill's ideal colony would have many small villages with a large city of a million or more near the endcap.

The 6.5 kilometre diameter endcap, being hemispherical, would represent a 3,000 metre snowy mountain range. Towards its "top", or centre, gravity would approach zero, because the cylinder's spin produces its "gravity". Here is where the space shuttles would dock and unload.

Island Three is of moderate size, far below the largest that could be built. No unusual engineering or special materials are needed.

The largest colonies that could be built in today's normal engineering terms, using unimaginative structural materials like iron and aluminium, could be as much as four times as long and wide with a land area half the size of Switzerland. Remember, we have to sustain another economic boom lasting the next 200 years!

That's a cylinder in high Earth orbit 130 kilometres long and 25 kilometres in diameter. We could end up with hundreds of them.

Gigantic corporate symbols often have a seduction to their authors way beyond hard economic desirability and unlike in the land of glasnost these symbols often come to fruition, even after the previous egomaniac goes broke.

It is interesting that Alan Bond and Rupert Murdoch both had or have military-industrial companies among their vast holdings. And that sleepy old koala, AWA, has come out of its coma and is belting at the market looking for a high-tech niche. If they nurture the Cape York spaceport Australia will be an early starter in the next super longwave boom.

So who would want to live in orbit? Again knowledge of future economic booms comes from studying past ones.

In the 17th Century, colonies were seen as a source of raw materials and an extra market. They were also looked upon as a bit of a pressure outlet for population problems when agriculture was poor.

All these things worked way too well because by the end of that century it was commonly complained that too

many of the best people were flocking to the colonies, and they rarely returned.

Life in orbit will exert an attraction. All of the normal sports and activities of Earth will be available there - windsurfing, forest hikes, skiing, hand-gliding, horse-riding - but many new ones will be an outgrowth of the decreased gravity which occurs as we climb up the mountain range at the endcap.

There would be football, ballet or high-diving in 1/10th gravity. Adults and children could pedal around in man-powered planes. And it would not be in odd-seeming surroundings because, since it takes about 1,200 metres of air to produce a blue tinge, these places will have blue skies for their clouds to scud in.

The markets of sporting goods manufacturers therefore certainly look good in the long term. If you like visiting foreign countries it will take two minutes to get down from low Earth orbit, but it might take a day's travel to get from high Earth orbit.

A number of difficulties in constructing these colonies do not arise so much on the engineering site as in the place where the glass and girders are to come from. Professor O'Neill solves this problem by having a mine on the Moon and raw materials boosted to lunar escape velocity via an electric sled-track along the ground. The gravity-well of the Moon is very tiny by comparison to getting payloads free of the Earth's grip, so much so that an electric sled could easily do the job in a continuous, conveyor-belt fashion.

The lunar mine is probably the hardest part of space colonisation to establish, but O'Neill has not dealt with the many asteroids, known as "earthgrazers" or Apollo asteroids, which pass inside the orbit of the Earth around the sun.

Here we are in Lang Hancock heaven par excellence, with lumps of almost pure nickel-iron weighing trillions of tonnes! I was looking at a piece of one in Sydney's museum a few days ago.

There are a couple of dozen big earthgrazers clocked and probably thousands of smaller ones not yet spotted.

When the asteroid Hermes was discovered in 1937 it came within 780,000 kilometres of the Earth and its orbit suggests it might come within 320,000.

Here are raw materials for our orbital colonies. Hermes is about 1.5 kilometres in diameter and weighs 12 trillion tonnes. If you like to feel nervous, its orbital period is every 1.47 years and it hasn't been seen since, so it's conceivable Hermes could clobber us any tick of the clock.

The asteroid Adonis, period 2.76 years, mass 12 trillion tonnes, comes within 2.4 million kilometres, and the asteroid Apollo, period 1.81 years, mass 102 trillion tonnes, comes within 11 million kilometres.

Fred Whipple, an American astronomer, estimated there might be many Apollo-type asteroids undiscovered. He suggested there might be at least a hundred larger than 1.6 kilometres in diameter and thousands less than that but capable of putting a big hole where New York used to be ... or the Sydney Opera House

The economy must surely boom when the first scrip to mine these beauties is floated. A single nickel-iron asteroid 1.6 kilometres across contains enough metal to supply the Earth for the next 10,000 years. How many colonies would that

build? With the discovery of raw materials in space our model begins to conform more closely with early American and Australian booms.

It would be difficult to try to change the orbit of a 1.32 kilometre-wide, 12 trillion tonne asteroid, but if it comes by every 14 months it could be tapped for the short period while it was within range, much as supply ships from England turned up during our colonial history. Automatic mining machines could be chewing and stockpiling during the silent portion of the asteroid's circular trip.

The slavery element of the past 200 years' boom can be equated with free energy. Energy in space is free to the extent that you need only string up an aluminized sheet of plastic a half kilometre wide and this mirror will vaporise steel or produce steam for power and industry. It is free in the sense that George Washington's slaves harvested his tobacco for free - in fact he had to pay a small sum initially to establish them at Mount Vernon.

Such orbital lodes of nickel are enough to fund migrating and industry booms comparable to Australia's and California's gold boom. But is this a single element region?

Although exact figures can never be known, possibly 40 per cent of the asteroids are carbonaceous chondrites if we extrapolate from the meteors that bombard the Earth. This is a material similar to oil shale and rich in hydrogen, nitrogen and carbon. Another similar percentage are nickel-iron bodies that are often almost pure metal. Oil and nickel are worthwhile raw materials indeed.

The interior landscape of the colony Professor O'Neill describes is American oriented in its spaciousness but there is no reason why other nationalities should not want say densely packed Mediterranean towns or snowier seasons.

On the dark side perhaps some will have slave labour camps full of space-age Zinovievs. It is conceivable that whatever nation is the Iraq of 50 years in the future could fund its own space colonies yet be your basic stone age dictatorship cemented by murderous death squads.

Other colonies could be unpopulated and used as poacher-proof reserves for endangered species, breeding up to colossal herds or flocks. The fertilised ovums of African elephants could be orbited in the wombs of rabbits to populate a wilderness Island Two or Three. The same applies to rare eagles, condors, rhinos or koalas. A tourist flux to such a primaevial world could dwarf the monetary value of Australia's present tourist bonanza.

We would expect colonies of many industrial nationalities to be readily accessible to one another, apart from the odd Zinoviev preserve. It could be culturally exhilarating to travel from the French colony, no doubt with left-hand threads on its Gallic airlock, to the Swedish one to the Canadian one. They would cluster at L5 points. Picture half a million people within an hour of each other.

What is an L5 point? The five optimum stable points in orbit near the Earth and the Moon were calculated by Lagrange in the 18th century. These five Lagrange points are places of natural stability. Today the L5 point is regarded as any stable point where engineers feel a colony could be situated. Engineering considerations will therefore ensure a cultural diversity clustered around one of these zones.

There are L5 societies in most space industries and universities. Large city science fiction bookshops often have some listed on their notice-boards.

I feel the construction of O'Neill colonies is inevitable on a number of counts - economic, cultural and intellectual. At present there is only a small fleet of shuttles owned by one nation. China, Japan and Russia are developing theirs, and the European version is to be flown from Cape York spaceport.

But just as private enterprise is taking over the satellite communications launch business, lucrative industries will develop in orbit and large numbers of people will grow to be employed in the space population. Private fleets of shuttles must surely be around the corner.

The power of cut-throat competitiveness will fuel this. It has been pointed out that ball bearings made from liquid metal floating in zero gravity would be almost perfectly spherical. Theoretically such ball bearings would never wear out for all intents and purposes. That is, the machine they were in would deteriorate before they did. What ball bearing manufacturer could survive if his competition got into space and he didn't? On top of that, there's no land rental, it never rains or hails, nothing rusts, the energy's just about unlimited, free and without pollution hassles, and the metals and resources are abundant and cheap.

In zero gravity you can make a foam of glass and steel. On Earth such a foam would immediately sink flat because of the huge weight of liquid steel. What sort of properties would varying proportions of this mixture have? No one knows. A three-metre cube of air weighs about 35 kilograms. If you foamed up 35 kilograms of molten aluminium to 280 cubic metres, that is a 3 metre cube, it would have neutral buoyancy on the Earth's surface. If it displaced 281 cubic metres, it would float. Knives and forks made out of this foamed aluminium would float up to the ceiling. So would clothing made of foamed glass fibres or suitable synthetics. So would a motor vehicle. We don't know if this puffed, foamy metal would be strong enough or powdery, however.

On Earth, metals should be from 10 to 100 times as strong as they actually are. When molten metals cool, the crystals form with tiny fractures which weakens them. Today we can grow whiskers of metal or carbon that have great strengths (carbon fibre golf clubs etc). What products might come from whisker metal techniques in zero gravity? Picture today's skyscraper or bridge, its 25 centimetre thick girders replaced by 2.5 centimetre girders, or if we get 100 times the strength, 2.5 millimetre girders!

Picture today's 1100 kilogram car weighing 110 kilograms... or an amazing 11 kilograms! Do you think companies are not going to rush into space if products even more bizarre and profitable than the above turn up?

Can free enterprise do the shuttle cheaper? In 1987 two US engineers, Tom Pace and Dan DeLong, with experience in the Cape Canaveral and space industries, published details for an adjunct to the present space shuttle.

It was a thriftier version perfectly tailored to the maximum payload that could be piggyback launched off an ordinary Boeing 747, thus needing no launch complex other than an airstrip and no first stage launcher, which is the part that blew up.

Its figures suggest startling cheapness to build and

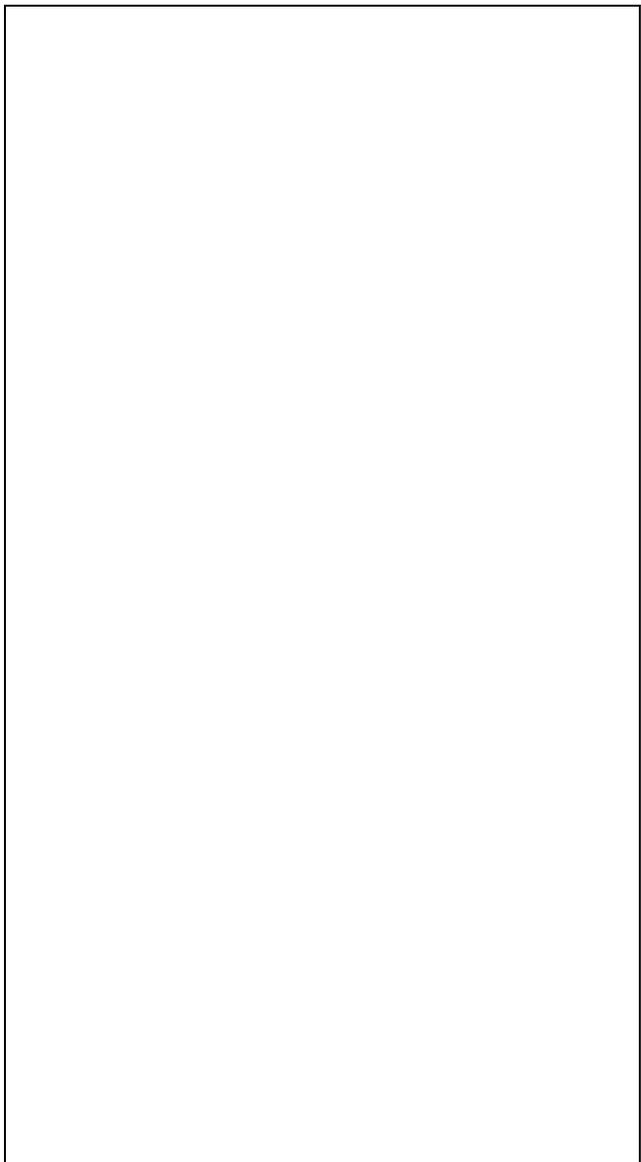
economy to run. Having an air-breathing first stage, the Boeing, it would be ideal for the Australian industries which will be operating out of the North Queensland spaceport. Whoever those pioneer companies are, they will have their foot on the escalator of the greatest economic boom in the world's history.

I cannot predict when these first colonies will eventuate, but since the US Freedom space station is to go up in 1998, I'm guessing that some time after 2010 seems likely.

Australia's participation in this economic growth run will begin with the turning of the ignition key in that first shuttle launcher at Cape York, Queensland.

- Don Boyd

For an address of one of the eight L5 space societies in each State, send an SSAE to National Space Society of Australia, GPO Box 7048, Sydney, NSW 2001.



# THE BROOKLYN BLUES

by Brent Lillie

DAVEY HAD STUMBLLED upon the nightclub in a trash-strewn alleyway in lower Brooklyn. He would have missed it if it hadn't been for the antiquated neon sign, flashing out its message in short, spastic bursts, like an old man taking his last ragged breaths.

## ED MAN'S BAR AND GRILL ENTERTAINMENT 24 HRS

The doorman grinned around his cigarette.

'You wanna watch it, buddy, jaywalkin' like that,' he mumbled, nodding towards the street. 'The traffic here'll eat you alive. Especially the cabs.'

'Thanks,' Davey said.

The doorman, who bore an uncanny resemblance to James Dean, ground his cigarette out on the pavement and slumped his narrow shoulders against the wall. To a casual observer, it was the action of a very tired, very jaded man, but his eyes were at odds with his demeanour, smouldering like two hot, bright little suns.

'No cover charge,' he said, gesturing toward the entrance. 'Go right in.'

Davey was an 18-year-old Aussie in New York. Two years scrimping and saving as a carpenter's assistant in Sydney's western suburbs had finally delivered him to his personal Utopia: The Big Apple The city that never sleeps.

He glanced down, checking over the clothes he'd bought that day. The jeans, the powder blue, long-sleeved denim shirt. All was in order. He felt smooth and indestructible. Hitching back his shoulders, he pushed through a beaded screen, into the club proper.

There was a small stage at the rear and a bar at his left, all dark wood and high, leather stools. With its bright lights and colourful array of liqueurs it reminded Davey of a semi-circular carousel.

The barman looked just like Roy Orbison: dark shades, black clothes - the whole bit. He was polishing beer glasses and bobbing his head up and down in time to the music. On the stage, four musos were just winding up an old rhythm and blues standard that Davey couldn't quite place. As the final chord faded away there was a polite smattering of

applause from the handful of patrons scattered here and there about the room.

Davey found a stool and squinted into the club's secluded corners. Be buggered if Rock Hudson and Liberace weren't snuggled up at a table, whispering sweet nothings and holding each other's hand.

'Jesus,' he muttered. 'He'll be in later,' said Roy, from the bar.

Two stunning women were perched on stools nearby. One of them winked in Davey's direction. It was Natalie Wood. The other woman, a dead ringer for Marilyn Monroe, seemed fixated by two men seated at a table near the stage. Davey recognised the pair instantly: the ex-President and his alleged assassin. They were engaged in earnest conversation, discussing, most likely, how they were going to get back at the CIA.

Marilyn rose from her stool, smoothed her dress down over her shapely behind, and sashayed her way over to drape her arms across JFK's shoulders and nibble his left ear.

Rudolph Nureyov flitted about the place, dressed in skintight leotards and a pink tutu, selling cigarettes. The band was playing a rollicking version of Blue Suede Shoes, but no-one seemed really interested except Davey, the bartender, and the band members themselves. Davey studied each musician individually.

Lead guitarist - Buddy Holly. A baby-faced John Lennon coaxed silken chords out of a Stratocaster, harmonising with an Elvis clone in full regalia, who was grinding his hips and wailing just like the real McCoy. Drums? Keith Moon, naturally. The bass player looked a lot like Phil Lynott from Thin Lizzy.

'This has got to be one of those Clone Clubs I heard about,' Davey said to himself. 'Where they get impersonators to dress up and act like the real thing. What a great gimmick!' He had just decided to head over to the bar and get ol' Roy to mix him up a whisky and soda when he felt a tap on his shoulder.

'You gotta leave, buddy,' James Dean said.

'But why? I...'

'You gotta leave, really,' he insisted.

Davey did so, reluctantly. He checked the time, standing in the alley, but his damn watch had stopped.

A crowd and flashing lights had turned the street into a carnival and he ambled over to the source of the commotion.

'What's going on?' he asked a big, black man in a Dodgers cap, but the guy ignored him like he wasn't there.

Through gaps in the crowd he could see something sprawled in the gutter.

'Dumb mother,' the black guy said to the women standing next to him. 'Done run right out in front of a cab!' He laughed, baring huge white teeth, and shook his head. 'Dumb fuckin' mother!'

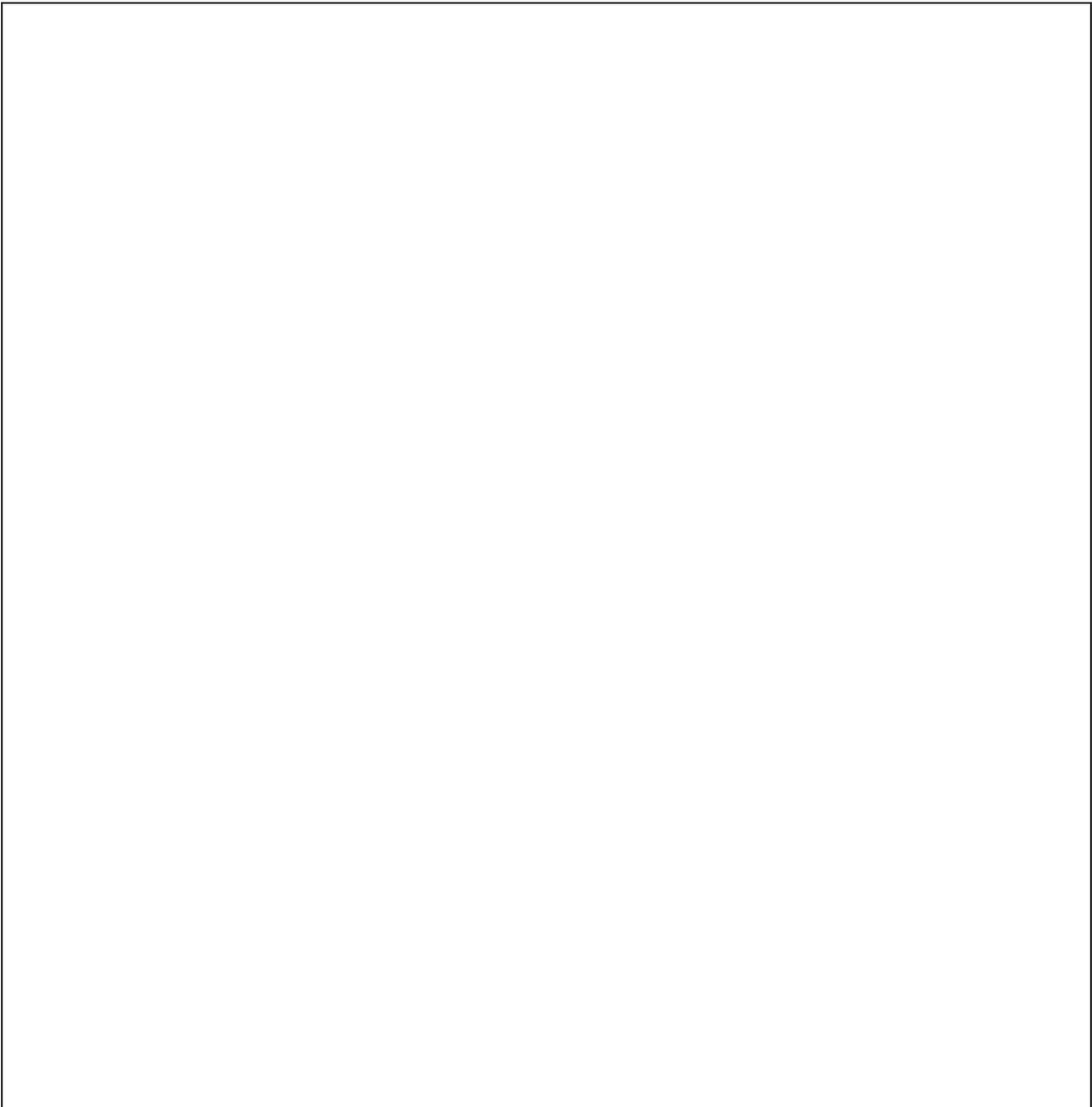
Davey edged to the front of the crowd, to get a better view. The lump in the gutter was a young man, clad in jeans and a torn denim shirt. Blood oozed from his nose and ears,

down a grate, and into the sewers. Davey recognised the clothes. They were his own.

The doctors told Davey he'd been clinically dead for almost five minutes before he'd been resuscitated. Davey went back to the street, the alleyway, but of course, the club wasn't there.

There were many times during the next few years when he wished they'd taken a bit longer to bring him around, so that he could have wandered over to the bar and had a drink with Roy, and watched as more and more of the late arrivals drifted into the Dead Man's Bar and Grill.

- THE END -



# NORTHERN FEN

by Pavel A. Viaznikov

Thank you for your letter, Ron, and please excuse me for hand-writing. I am a bit ill right now and the typewriter I used is in my office where I could use it after work. I have only a Cyrillic typewriter at home, so please bear with me.

As for things connected with SF here: right now we have a boom in publishing translated SF. The reason is simple: people buy SF, so it pays, and the current laws let the publishers take foreign books from before 1972 without even as much as informing the author. Soon, this will be all there is: who here can afford hard currency royalties? But all the same we have "pirates". They publish a book (for example they stripped Roger Zelazny naked!) either giving a false address for their company or immediately sending all the money to some other place where it disappears without trace, and even when their property is forfeited, it comes to but a couple of well-used typewriters and, say two or three thousand roubles (with US\$1 = 450 roubles today, that's not a very impressive sum, is it?). And it is impossible to call back the stolen book as it is distributed among thousands of street vendors. And there you are, Mr King, free to use bad language as there's nothing else to do.

I mentioned Stephen King as he is also one whose books, even the most recent, are seen aplenty on those street stalls. But the worst thing is not loosing royalties (he has money enough anyway, has Mr King!) but I can compare the translations of such books. I read English: Stephen King, Roger Zelazny, Isaac Asimov, Phillip Dick, Frank Herbert - all are badly mutilated by translators. "Murder! Help! He has translated me!" - as some old verse goes. (it was a 19th C. epigram to the translator of Marcialls, I think).

You know, I am now translating Frank Herbert's DUNE, and mine will be the 4th translation in the market. But I am very careful and besides dictionaries and books, consult an Arabist, a specialist in Buddhism, and others, While these other translations feature such wording as "a statistic gun" (static), or "a device which makes a bird's cry louder than that of a reconnaissance plane"; or, translating back into English the description of a stillsuit, we have: "Two levels of cloth include some fibres for cooling the salts. Salt is revived. Body movements, especially when asthmatic, are fulfilled with the help of a pump. The water passes through brakes and

comes to a neck clamp - clutch. Excretion and urine are subject to processing in baskets on thighs." (Try comparing this to the corresponding passage in DUNE! No joke....)

And poor Zelazny! We've got, I think, 3 different translations of the Amber books - none good and all different. And hideously disfigured Harrison and Heinlein....

The reason is that some "businessmen" would not pay not only the authors, but the translators and editors as well. You see when, during our "stagnation period" (Brezhnev's era) SF was under certain ideological pressure, fans used to translate well-known books, usually translating into Russian from Polish translations of English books (it was much easier to get Polish editions). More often than not, they did it only out of pure enthusiasm, lacking skill and knowledge. They used to put translated texts onto magnetic discs and exchange those, copy and print them - many fans still have shelves of home-bound books, printed on dot-matrix printers. With no editing, it's quite understandable why the level of those translations is awful. So, now some "publishers" (damned be their names!) just take "system translations", as they are called, and - ....

As for fanzines - their fate is pitiful. A year ago we had many excellent zines: among those, INTERCOM - a very, very good critical zine on a really professional level, featuring articles, reviews, and useful information; FANGORE - a mini-pocket sized (A4 quartered) zine of criticism and some stories of interest to fans (such as "in-depth criticism" of a book by talented authors, written by an old-time SF writer for the purpose of whipping mentioned the authors who were on a Commission of Literature); GUARD-BIRD - a small funny fanzine, collecting mostly anecdotes about fans, writers and parodies; MAD LAB - horror stories and BATTLE CAT - military aspects of SF.

Their fate can be seen with the example of BATTLE CAT. Three issues are ready - texts, illustrations and all - but there's no chance of publishing: a Xerox copy of such a fanzine would now cost about 300 roubles - you pay this for a good, hard-cover, illustrated book by a popular author, with a jacket and colour on the fly-leaves. A bit too much for a 70 page Xerox copy of a fanzine....

Some zines, though, managed to survive: they turned into prozines. One is SYZITHES (please correct my spelling: I have no reference book on Greek mythology in English; that's the tzar who was punished by the Gods and had to roll a stone up to the top of his punishment hill, and which kept rolling down again).

SYZITHES featured stories by participants of the Brothers Strugatski's Seminar in St. Petersburg (Leningrad then) and discussions of those stories. Now, it's a good SF magazine - only, I haven't seen it lately.

There are still quite a few SF fan clubs. Many of them unite the fans of certain authors: for example, there's no end to Tolkien clubs, of which I have already written. One club - the Moscow University SF Fan Club - unites fans of STAR WARS; the article which I have sent you [showing how the weapons used in STAR WARS were mainly German WW II guns slightly altered] caused quite a conflict between BATTLE CAT and the club. They even play clips from the STAR WARS films on their video before club meetings - as a kind of an anthem.

So you can see that fan movements here face lots of problems - all of them coming really from the two main problems:- prices (also, prices for train tickets, accommodation, fares, etc - which is why it's difficult now to have conventions; before perestroika problems were of an ideological type) and the division of the former USSR. For example, from 1993 I'll have to truncate correspondence with my friends in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, as letters will cost too much. I'll write to them, of course, but much less....

I'd like to comment on a book which was quite a surprise to me. I speak of Stephen King's novella THE BODY (published in his collection DIFFERENT SEASONS). I used to think of King as a professional "frightener". A skilled man, but, er, sort of "not serious". (Though I enjoyed his stories - for entertainment and because they told me something about life in the USA). To scare, he sets his macabre pieces in mostly common, I presume, environments. Thus life is so dull, that only a monster can revive it... a bit. Why, in THE SUN GOD, a shop assistant remembers Mr. X. because he bought two packs of Polaroid film "with a wild expression in his eyes"! In *this* country, *all* customers have this expression; and when I ride in an overcrowded bus and an old lady starts quarrelling with her neighbour, I think that a Freddie Krueger or a Library Policeman, or an Alien would have no chance to be noticed if they chose to appear in the same bus!).

But here, I found a brilliant story about life and one's losses in life. It has a lot of four letter words in it, but all the same reads as lyrical. For me, it was one of the best American books I've ever read - and I think I can recommend it to you.

Next, I'd like to tell you about some "top hits" in Russian SF, well worth knowing about abroad. I wish that they'd be translated.

The first is THE MISSIONARIES by Yevgeny and Lubov Lukin (a married couple).

A group of (I think Australian) scientists (very young ones) finds a "hole" to the past, to the period just before the discovery of certain islands by the Europeans. They decide to help the poor locals protect themselves from the cruel exploitation by the colonizers. So they take all the books they can - and walk in. But the aborigines would not take modern knowledge from the white strangers, even though

they were in constant tribal warfare: "ancestors made do with spears and wooden swords, why do we need thundersticks?" So, the missionaries throw bombs from a crude glider onto one tribe and make this tribe believe that it was their enemy who accepted the gift of the "white strangers". And hoop-ja! the isles develop an arms race, the Strateges (that's what they call the scientists) divide and help both sides to develop military technology without mutual destruction. The islanders prove to be apt pupils. They divide and colonize many islands, which also enter their civilization - and the war. They invent heliographs (sun telegraphs, with mirrors) and replace most of the iron in the weapons with ceramics and wood (the isles are poor in ores). Having no oil, they start distilling cane-alcohol for fuel and instead of taking the Latin alphabet, develop knot-letters into a perfect "writing" system.

So, when the Great Enemy - the Europeans - arrived on caravels, proud of brass guns and muzzle-loading, misfiring muskets... they receive a welcome committee of now-united aborigines on aircraft carriers (sailing ships with emergency alcohol turbines, armed with rocket launchers and equipped with rocket gliders); the locals excel in modern warfare and, though they don't wear any clothes, carry automatic rocket guns... The islands are polluted and old arts and crafts forgotten, since early childhood aborigines are being prepared for war - even girls. But who cares? Two caravels are burned by the Tahai Tiranga aircraft carrier, and the third is allowed to go... so that the United Fleet would know the route to Europe, rich in resources and yet to be civilized to the level of the islanders....

THE KNIGHTS OF THE FORTY ISLANDS by Sergey Luckyanenko is brilliant adventure SF for, mostly, teenagers. A 17 year-old boy, Dima, is kidnapped by some aliens and put on one of 40 islands with many other boys and girls. They are really duplicates of Earth children, but this makes no real difference. They have to participate in a cruel Game: children of the island who manage to conquer all other islands, can go home to Earth. It's an impossible task, but the kids have no choice.... Of course they win in the end - but do they? (By-the-way, the "baddies" here are the Lotans - enemies of the Earth people in many Luckyanenkos' stories). There is a strange parallel with William Golding's LORD OF THE FLIES: though here the kids do not lose their humanity - they remain normal, but have to kill and are killed.

NO PEACE IN THE STARS, same author. Part 1 is THE PRINCESS IS WORTH DYING FOR: a young man gets... engaged to a whimsical princess from another planet. For her, that's but a game; he does not even know it, but he's her last chance to legally get out of a bad mess (namely, her homeworld is invaded and the enemy leader - naturally - plans to marry her to become the legal ruler of the planet; only an official groom can challenge him for a duel). Serge (the boy) agrees to help and - of course - wins. For this, he also uses some devices from the ancient mysterious race called the Seeders, who planted human life in the Galaxy, built the Temples - giant spherical-buildings packed with mysteries - on all planets and then disappeared. Serge wins his battle, but not the Princess: he comes from Earth - the "Damned World". The Seeders never built a Temple there and always discouraged visiting it. So Serge cannot marry the royal daughter. So he chooses, as a reward, a spaceship to look for Earth, otherwise it can be reached only by a chance space-

jump (jumping is usually done through Temples). Here is where Book II - THE PLANET THAT IS - starts: Serge and his friends have to find Earth before the fanatics, who wish to destroy the "Damned Planet", or "The Planet That Is Not" to please their gods - the Seeders. Of course, the fanatics had no way to know that the Seeders came from Earth - from its future.

IN THE GREAT CRYSTAL is a cycle of novels by Vladislav Krapivin, a well-known writer, famous for books for children. His novels have some common character and plot connections, though events take place on different Earths, situated on different facets of the Universal Crystal. In all the novels there are children who possess strange, almost supernatural powers, but all the same are defenceless before the cruelties of the insane world of grown-ups.

We do have some well-known fans and some tales told about them. One phrase told is "the sleeping bag of Boris Zavgorodny". He is a Truefan! Let me tell you some stories from the late GUARD-BIRD fanzine - at least they claim the stories to be true....

Once somebody posted a letter from abroad, addressed simply "USSR, to Boris Zavgorodny". You know what? Boris received it.

Once LOCUS sent a money-order in from overseas in payment for an article, addressing it to the local State Labour Saving Casse (Savings Bank). Which never handles hard currency. So the Casse wanted to pay Boris in roubles, according to the exchange rate of that time. Naturally, Boris refused - at the time you could not buy nothing pretty much

for roubles. Then they asked if Boris wanted to give the money to the State. Boris turned and left. They say that the money is *still* a headache for the local Savings Bank office.

Once Boris wanted to go to Volgograd from Murmansk. He had no money, which was not uncommon for him, and his Sleeping Bag had everybody sick and tired in Murmansk, so they (his friends in Murmansk) just brought Boris to the railway station, and left him.

However, nobody can say that Boris is ever at a loss. He found North (the sun was sinking), said "Northward Ho!", tried the door of a baggage car, found that closed and climbed onto the roof.

He woke up when the train stopped in an empty field and armed guards swarmed out of the first car. Then they began taking confinees out: the train was a prison train that brought convicts to a prison camp!

The chief train warden started a roll-call, and then he noticed one badly shaved and wild looking man on a car roof: an obvious attempted escapee. Boris was ordered down ... but the story had a happy ending. They just sent him home to his place of permanent address - ie to Volgograd - all expenses paid by the State. (These stories were taken from the GUARD-BIRD #11 (1), edited by Gornov and Didenko of Kikolaev, Ukraine, and are about 2 years old).

- Pavel A. Viaznikov

# A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN "FANTASTICA"

by Andrei Lubenski

## PART ONE:

There is no point in beginning the story of Russian fantasy much too distant in time than from popular fairy tales in which there were flying carpets, seven league boots, and a table with 24 hour food. It wasn't SF then. But to give the beginnings of Russian fantasy closer ties to our time means paying no attention to the considerable stretch of time which Russian fantasy had passed through. The fantastic narrative became a genre equal to Russian prose in the middle twenties of the Nineteenth Century. V.M Marcovich has written, "At the end of the (Eighteen) twenties and by the thirties Russian prose writers began to write" in a fantastical way. "The number of works of such kind increased uninterruptedly".<sup>1</sup> He considers the beginning of Russian fantastical literature to be the year 1825 when there was published A.A. Pogorelsky's work LEFORTOVO'S CUPOLA and A. A. Bestudjev's ASHEN CASTLE (the first title of this work was BLOOD FOR BLOOD).

Marcovich points out that these works were influenced by Hoffman's fairy tales, but he recognises they were quite original. Soon new novels put in an appearance: THE DOUBLE, OR MY EVENINGS IN MALOROSSIA by Pogorelsky-Perovsky (1828), EVENINGS IN A HAMLET NEAR DIKANKA by N. V. Gogol (1831-1832), MIXED FAIRY TALES by V.F. Odoevsky (1833), EVENING ON THE HOPER RIVER by M.N. Zagoskin (1834), and many others.

V.F. Odoevsky's utopian novel THE YEAR 4338 depicted the Russia of the forty-fourth century. According to Odoevsky, the colossal speed of technical progress would not affect Russia's social life; there would be a Monarch and privileged estates, but the latter would consist of scientists and poets. According to this utopian story Russia would be a prosperous country owing to achievements in science and enlightenment, and the West would be in a deep crisis. The failure of the West's profit motive was also predicted in his book THE NAMELESS CITY (1839).

Fairy tale fantasy of that period of time is represented by such authors as I.V. Kirevsky, K.S. Aksakov, and A. A. Pogorelsky. A. A. Pogorelsky's narrative THE BLACK HEN,

OR INHABITANTS OF THE VAULT (1829) is still in print and is popular with children (the author indicated his work to be "a magical narrative for children"). Using the theme of the story, records have been released as well as an animated cartoon.

Also at that time were published stories by A. A. Bestudjev-Marlinsky (THE TERRIBLE DIVINATION, 1831), E.A. Baratinsky (THE RING, 1832), O.M Somov (THE ORDER FROM THE NEXT WORLD, 1830), KIKIMORA (THE FRIGHT), 1830 and THE KIEV WITCHES, (1833). It is interesting that O.M. Somov justified the incredibility of the plots by quoting folklore tradition, which was always strong in Russian romanticism. One may also mention A.K. Tolstoy's story THE QUEEN OF SPADES. "In THE QUEEN OF SPADES", wrote I.V. Vinogradov, "the border line between fantasy and reality is attempted to be defined, but this is not achieved. It is as though the author cannot determine it." This statement by the well-known expert may be attributed to many literary works of that time. And still, in spite of the "border", F.M. Dostoevsky considered THE QUEEN OF SPADES was "the height of perfection in the art of fantasy," noting that after reading the story, "you cannot decide whether it was only Herman's imagination, or was he really a man who was on the verge of another world. That's art!"<sup>2</sup>

You see, Russian romanticism didn't continue alone, without fantasy; neither did the West's romanticism. V.M. Marcovich has written in his long preface to the anthology RUSSIAN FANTASTICAL PROSE IN THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM, "The development of Russian fantasy in the twentieth and thirtieth decades (Nineteenth Century - A.L.) turned out to be a complex process. But despite an apparent remoteness between some branches of Russian fantasy there is a common trend in fantasy which attempted to express as clearly as possible the new ideas about the undiscovered fundamental laws of the universe. <...> All forms of fantasy contributed to the progress of art."

V. M. Marcovich attributed the utopian tendencies of early Russian realism to the influence of fantastical prose. His statement was supported by I. V. Vinogradov, who remarked that the fantasy of romanticism "is first of all the fantasy of

intelligence and of the imagination." He observed also that "it is very logical and rational despite an apparent disorderliness."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the fantasy of romanticism is nearer to the Middle Ages than modern times. The fantasy researcher T. A. Chernishova is of that opinion. She wrote, "The old system of fantastical characters, which was formed in the depth of the pagan world and early Christianity, underwent a crisis at the time of romanticism. It had little to correspond to the spirit of rationalism in modern times and to the conception of the world which changed its central characteristics. Late romantics began to change their orientation, but the formation of the new system of fantastical characters falls to modern science fiction."<sup>4</sup>

## PART TWO

So, Russian fantasy passed under the banner of romanticism in the nineteenth century. Of course, there were works which still interest us in our time, because they contain a fair amount of scientific and technical pre-visions. Such works may be attributed to science fiction, as we understand it today. (For instance, in N. Shevlonski's novel *IN THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE*, 1892, was depicted a journey to the North Pole which was put into practice using a large vehicle). There were utopian and anti-utopian works, parodies and literary mysteries such as K. Sluchevski's *CAPTAIN NEMO IN RUSSIA*. This narrative was written and published in 1898 as an accidentally found work of Jules Verne. One of the main characters of this talented mystery was an Australian by the name of Mr Tick Roy (Fich Roy) who decided to change the climate and to settle in New Zand island in the Russian North. The insensitive Australian built greenhouses there, which were surrounded by electric fences and wherein were grown palm trees and cacti. He utilized wind energy and even "the magnetic power of the northern lights", which aroused Captain Nemo's envy.

But little by little romanticism, which revealed a person's mystery and soul, moved aside, letting social research take its place. In 1907 the magazine *THE IDEAL LIFE* was released in St. Petersburg. The magazine aimed to make its readers acquainted "... with the more outstanding works of that kind of literature, which was interested mainly in the life of the future". The well known historian V. Bulgrov wrote "The Russian magazine differs much from Mr Gernsback's *WONDER STORIES*, which valued "... a special bewitching type of a novel which included some science facts and daring pre-visions.." very highly. Only the feasibility of the principle inventions in engineering and science interested the father of American fantasy. But it was not the technology of hypothetical tomorrows that was most interesting to those in Russia, which was torn by the storms of revolution."<sup>5</sup>

The publishers of the Russian magazine especially marked out utopias, ie the social not the technical aspect of the future which must be the main part of literature "interested in the life of the future". Hence one can understand the name of the Russian magazine".<sup>6</sup>

In 1908 A. Bogdanov's socialist utopia, *THE RED STAR*, was published. In that utopia "...the sanguinuous, energetic and boiling communist world was depicted". A. Bogdanov wrote yet another two utopias, *ENGINEER MANN* (1913) and *THE HOLIDAY OF IMMORTALITY* (1914), in

which, as V. Bugrov noted, "was visible the indecision interpreting the Proletarian Revolution. (At first they must raise the culture of the Russian Proletariat to a proper level and then lead them in the struggle)."<sup>8</sup> V. Lenin who, as we know, carried his utopia into effect without any preliminary raising of proletarian culture, criticised A. Bogdanov harshly.

Russia buzzed with excitement; its literature buzzed with excitement.

In 1914 the First World War descended. The bloody XXth Century came into its own. In that year a writer, Y. Perelman, introduced the term "science fiction" for the first time in Russia. But one year before that event (In 1913), A. Ossendovski's narrative *THE SHIP HORROR*, which used the genre's background extensively, was published. The plot of the novel is very simple. Some scientists bred a new species of gigantic fungus, which was called "Plasmody". The fungus reproduced quickly and it also heated the soil. It seemed all was well, but the plasmody went out of control because the scientist Yacov Silin, who dreamed of controlling the whole world, infected the ocean with the fungus. The fungus annihilated fish and even fishing boats. The scientists were forced to struggle against their own creation. "A fantastic story about a gigantic fungus which was created for the public weal, but suddenly was changed into a colossal disaster, and rings true for contemporary readers", wrote V. Bulgrov, "and in our own time this "suddenly" repeats too frequently. Remember: common to all mankind is the basis of the struggle against fascism and the monstrous mushroom over Hiroshima... genetics' colossal progress and biological weapons... men's journey to the Moon and a finger lying on the firing button of a ballistic missile..."<sup>9</sup>

In 1914 A. Ossendovski published the novel *THE APPROACHING STRUGGLE* in which he foretold of the rise of technology and its bankruptcy because technology could not ensure mankind's happiness. In 1922 A. Ossendovski settled down in Poland and wrote many books in both English and Polish, but his first fantastic novels were written in Russia.

The year 1917 divides Russia's history into two parts, which are "before the Revolution" and "after the Revolution". From 1917 we speak of Soviet fantasy, and the first Soviet writer was V. Itin, who wrote a novel *THE GONGURI COUNTRY*. V. Itin was born in 1894 in Ufa city. He studied jurisprudence at Petersburg University, but the Revolution changed a lawyer into a commissar. V. Itin was in the war with Kolchak; in 1920 he joined the Bolshevik party and after the Civil War was finished he settled in the Siberian town of Kansk, where he was the editor of a local newspaper and a Disciplinary Court chairman. In Kansk he wrote the novel *THE GONGURI COUNTRY* which was published in 1922. The book was printed "by faded type on rough paper which formally had been used for wrapping sugar-lumps and it was bound in board because of a shortage of paper".<sup>10</sup> V. Itin depicted a future life which was without war and crime. The well-known researcher A. Britikov wrote of *THE GONGURI COUNTRY* in his major work *THE RUSSIAN SOVIET SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL*: "There are optimistic and new (for that time) natural science surmises in the story. The story plot depicted the way to the future as a long and hard struggle against class enemies and also against the barbarity of people that must travel this road. V. Itin thought that communism would be built by the "laws of the heart".

In 1924 Mrs Marietta Shaginyan published a novel MESS MEND or YANKEES IN PETERSBURG and hid under the pen-name "Tim Dollar". In the novel are described the adventures of an American inventor's son in Russia. The authors of the novel ATLANTIDA UNDER WATER (1927), O. Savich and V. Piotrovski also hid themselves under the pen-name Rene Cadu. The heroes of this novel set out to search for a world which, so they believed, did not exist (the expedition worked for its image - it was created for advertising) and suddenly they discovered a real universe, Atlantida. There were other novels by "foreigners" and a special term "the spurious novel" came into use. V. Bugrov attributed it to such novels and also to a novel THE NEW LIFE VALLEY (1928) which was written by Teo Elli. Of course, it was a pen-name. The author's real name was F. Ilyin, who was a scientist from Bakul. THE NEW LIFE VALLEY was really "an exclusion from the spurious novels of the twentieth C", wrote V. Bugrov, "because F. Ilyin sought shelter under a pen-name not wishing to mystify anybody. He simply followed an old tradition which existed among scientists."<sup>11</sup> Another spurious novel BLEF (THE BLUFF) (1928) told of a practical joke. An American journalist group, for the purpose of increasing the circulation of their newspaper, impersonate Martians arrival on Earth and write reports about the event. But the practical joke backfired. It was written that the author of this novel was a certain Ris Whilki Li and the well-known Soviet writer A. Tolstoi in the pre face wrote of his meeting and conversation with that mythical American. (The real author of the novel was B. Lipatov.)

The true pearl of fantasy is A. Tolstoy's novel AELITA. The novel was first published in the magazine KRASNAYA NOV (THE NEW RED) in #6 (1922) and in #2 (1923), and is subtitled THE DECLINE OF MARS. As was written in a commentary to the third volume of A. Tolstoy's collected works, "AELITA is a science fiction novel in which the topic of interplanetary flight combines with social and political problems. Describing life on Mars and the Martian society, it shows the stormy revolt of the oppressed inhabitants of the planet and the hesitation of their leader, Mr Gor. The writer, thus disguised, entered into a controversy with H. G. Well's social theories, with Spengler's advocacy of the "Decline of Europe", and several other bourgeois theories. It showed the Martian Mr. Tuskuba, who wanted a civilisation for certain selected persons. A. Tolstoi exposed Mr Tuskuba's anti-populist views and his traits common with fascist ideology" (p.708).

The heroes of the novel, (Mr. Gusev and Mr Los) arrived on Mars<sup>12</sup> where a Martian woman by the name of Aelita told them about the history of Mars: In time immemorial a fierce tribe of Magacites moved to Mars from the Earth. When Gusev and Los arrived on Mars there was a civilisation for "selected" persons on the planet. The civilisation was slowly declining, and the newcomers actively intervened in its current events. An interesting subject is the combination of

exercises into the history of Mars and the Earth with A. Tolstoy's talent, which did its part and the novel was a best seller for decades in the Soviet Union.

In 1924 the producer Ya. Protazanov filmed the novel. The major SF award in Russia is named in honour of AELITA. Another of A. Tolstoy's science fiction novels is ENGINEER GARIN'S HYPERBOLOID (1926-1927)<sup>13</sup>, which was also a great success. In addition A. Tolstoy wrote an SF play THE REVOLT OF THE MACHINES and a story THE FIVE PERSON'S ALLIANCE in which he cautioned against the danger of using the achievements of science and engineering to seize power. The author pre-supposed that American capitalists pursued such an object. In the Twentieth Century SF novels and stories by such famous literary artists as M. Bulgakov, Vs. Ivanov, V. Kataev and N. Aseev appeared. "The Revolution swept away the old capitalist world. The new socialist world was only just conceived and it was the natural course of things that young Soviet writers wanted on the one hand to settle accounts with the world of capitalism, to show all its insolvency and, on the other hand, to represent in full measure the joyous world of the future" wrote V. Bugrov in the book THE QUEST FOR TOMORROW.

And nobody knew what real socialism would bring and how many human lives it would annihilate. But it appears that belief in a glowing future, in social and engineering progress was a sincere belief.

- Andrei Lubenski

1. The blow of fantasy. Anthology RUSSIAN FANTASTICAL PROSE AT THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM, Leningrad, 1990
2. F. M. dostoevsky. THE LETTERS, V.4., Moscow, 1959.
3. I. Vinogradov, THE STRUGGLE FOR STYLE, anthology, Leningrad, 1937.
4. T. A. Chernishova, THE NATURE OF FANTASY, Irkutsk, 1984.
5. V. Bulgrov means the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907.
6. V. Bugrov, THE QUEST FOR TOMORROW, Sverdlovsk, 1981.
7. V. Bugrov, Ibid, p.124
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid p.127
10. V. Samsonov, "The first Soviet fantasy writer" in the book THE GONGURI COUNTRY, Krasnoyarsk, 1985, p.62.
11. Ibid p.140
12. A. Tolstoy's fantasy was founded on K. Tsiolkovski's work "The exploration of outer space with jet devices" which was published in 1903.
13. The Hyperboloid was a device which concentrated light into a narrow ray. It was an SF prototype of the laser.

























# "SWORDSMAN OF THE SHEPHERD'S STAR": EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS' VENUS SERIES

by Andrew Darlington

Never one to squander an idea in a single book when there's scope sufficient for a series, Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote 41/2 novels set in the jewelled jungle strangeness of Venus. A late cycle in the prolific output of this most prolific of fantasists. Two decades earlier, his most famous and influential contribution to SF, John Carter's heroic exploits on dying Mars, had ignited his career (in 1912). They were followed by the Tarzan, Caprona and Pellucidar myths, all of which spawned movie adaptations. But in many ways his Venus vision fails to illuminate whatever imaginative pole Burroughs achieves on Barsoom, at the Earth's Core, in the Land That Time Forgot, or even in Lord Graystoke's African rainforest.

And it's difficult to explain quite why.

The ingredients are much the same, romance, adventure, exotica, and "circumstances so harrowing that the mind of mortal Earthman may scarce conceive them". There's even a certain amount of innovation with some sly humour and nudging satire. "What is golf?" asks the lovely Duare. "Golf is a mental disorder" answers Carson. The novels read as effortlessly and as mindlessly as that. Even at his least inspired E.R.B. knows how to spin a simple narrative web capable of snarling the most reluctant reader... and yet... and yet....

For all its lushness, Venus - or Amtor to give its correct Burroughsian designation, is too deliberate a construct. Barsoom is an internally consistent world, despite its outlandish exaggerations. Its haunting decadence, extreme cruelties, and senile devolutions legitimised by the dark spectre of planetary extinction tinting every aspect of its ancient landscape. Amtor is neither young nor old, there are

monsters and RRay pistols, Apemen and Fishmen, super-science and necromancy, giant spiders and humanoid amoeba all co-existing for no other reason than to provide Carson Napier with regular adversaries to defeat and terrible dangers to overcome. Amtor is little more than a global adventure theme park; THE AMAZING WORLD OF THRILLS.

Even Duare, petulant daughter of Mintep, Jong of Vepaja. loses out to oviparous Martian princess Dejah Thoris in the charm stakes; but perhaps that's too personal a bias. I already loved Dejah Thoris as a teenager. The first cut is always the deepest.

But if all this is so, why bother to read the Venus novels at all?

"You are the judge," invites Burroughs. "Arrange your reading lamp a little to the left of and just behind your favourite chair, and scan the evidence".

PIRATES OF VENUS opens the series, and immediately it's apparent that, within the narrow parameters of the ERB-ian cosmos, there are changes worth the scholar's attention. John Carter reaches Mars through a confusing imprecision of psychic wish-fulfilment. Carson uses a rocketship; or more exactly "a giant torpedo" weighing 60 tons launched from "a mile-long track". This mode of spaceship propulsion was one seriously conjectured well into the 1950's and is used in such movies as WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE. Burroughs also goes to some length to explain exactly why Venus is incapable of supporting life, dragging the theories of James Jeans into the brew to provide up-market scientific verification. There's even some cheeky self-referencing as early indication that Burroughs is perfectly capable of writing tongue-in-cheek.

Carson Napier is a tall blue-grey eyed tow-headed Aryan hero as ERB-ish action-men tend to be. It's easy to see Buster Crabbe playing the film role fresh from his latest FLASH GORDON or BUCK ROGERS romp. Napier leaves from Tarzana - the L.A. satellite named after Burroughs' most lucrative creation. He's in constant telepathic contact with the "real life" Burroughs who records his exploits for our benefit while receiving similar mental linkage from David Innes at the World's Core. Napier blasts off from Guadeloupe. His finely calculated astrogation thrown awry by the forgotten factor of lunar gravity; "I had aimed at Mars, and was about to his Venus, unquestionably the all-time cosmic record for poor shots" he telepaths to his Earthbound "amanuensis". And once parachuting down through the dense Venusian cloudbelts all thoughts of James Jean's theories evaporate in a single sentence ... leading Burroughs into his second innovation.

The slice of Amtor he discovers beneath the mists is a crudely post-revolutionary domain with obvious reference to Bolshevism, too clumsily handled to be classed as true political satire. The exiled Vepajans - human, uniformly beautiful and potentially immortal, live in elevated communities in massive trees 1,000 ft in diameter, 6,000 ft high, "their lofty pinnacles enshrouded forever in the eternal fog of the inner cloud envelope". Napier has already arrived on what he calls the Shepherd's Star by page 26, but it takes a further 50 arboreal pages before he sets foot on the planet's surface. After various conflicts with Targo (giant spiders), Basto (daygo bison), lion-like Tharban, and Klangan (winged men) he meets the brutish Thorists responsible for ousting the tree-dwellers from their ancestral land. Their manifesto claims "the absolute destruction of the cultured class. Those of the other classes who opposed (the revolution) were to be subjugated or destroyed; the Jong (king) and his family were to be killed. These things accomplished, the people would enjoy absolute freedom; there would be no masters, no taxes, no laws". But in reality "the people had exchanged the beneficial rule of one experienced and cultured class for that of greedy incompetents and theorists". Zog, a former slave, preferred his bondage - "I had one master, now I have as many masters as there are government officials".

As if the political allegory is not already clear, the Thorists conform in physical type, as thuggish and slow-witted as the Vepajans are beautiful and wise. The Thorist officer regards his aristocratic prisoners with "the sneer of the inferior man for his superior". It is their very ignorance that makes them gullible to "specious arguments that would have made no impression upon intelligent minds".

Edgar Rice Burroughs is essentially a romantic writer. To state the obvious, his issues are not those of the real world, and such simplications can't be seriously entertained for too long. To American fantasists, working in the world's oldest democratic republic, concepts such as "royalty" and "aristocracy" are correctly relegated to the realms of fantasy. As unreal, and hence as wistfully appealing as unicorns. Burroughs' analogies operate on this level. In Europe where feudal class and monarchy remain an embarrassing political reality, we can't afford so benign a viewpoint. But Burroughs' idea of a social aristocracy is implicitly in, and an extension of his vision of a greater order of nobility in nature. "It is true, I believe, that man *descended* from the beasts, and it took him

countless ages to rise to the level of his progenitors. In some respects he has not succeeded yet, even at the height of his vaunted civilisation". The ghost of Tarzan lurks in that assertion; both an English Lord, and - as often pointed out, the personification of Jean Jacque Rousseau's "Noble Savage". And the ERB-ian philosophy is as simple as it is brutal: "we saw titanic battles between monstrous leviathans - the age-old struggle for survival which must exist upon every planet of the universe upon which life exists; the reason perhaps, why there must always be wars among nations - a cosmic sine qua non of life".

Carson Napier is the chivalrous son of an English Officer and an American mother, a self-proclaimed "rugged individualist" and a natural aristocrat in Burroughs elitist pantheon. But one rich with folksy Americans ("as happy as a gopher with a carrot") and with oddly parochial American concerns. On route for Thora he organises a shipboard counter-coup of "Soldiers of Liberty" united by a secret grip "reminiscent of my fraternity days in college", and known by its Amtorian initials "K.K.K." - at which Carson is "compelled to smile at the similarity they bore to those of a well-known secret order in the United States of America"!. This rather inept joke about the Ku Klux Klan sits uneasily with supposed natural aristocracy. But although certain prejudices - or at least preoccupations, tend to resurface at intervals through his prose, consistency is never a hobgoblin E.R.B. allows to trouble him. As other aspects of the books indicate.

Throughout Venus, the only world they believe exists, there is a single Amtorian language. Yet the Vepajans show no surprise at Napier's sudden appearance in their midst speaking American! After learning Amtorian and studying their writings the Earthman is merely surprised to observe that the texts use no colons! Within a context of so monstrous an alien punctuation it's difficult to invest political allegory with such intellectual credibility. And anyway, no sooner has Napier set himself up as a sea privateer on board the Stofal preying on the fleet of the Thorist Rule of 100 Klolygon, than he's snatched away into new lands and new horrors.

"Literary critics, judging Edgar Rice Burroughs by absolute literary standards, have never been kind" observes SF historian Sam Moskowitz (in an essay in SCIENCE FANTASY #41 in June 1960). "They have pointed out that his plots are repetitious, his prose construction often hasty, with an overwhelming emphasis on action and violence and the fact that some of his novels seem to be a pointless procession of incidents rather than a completely co-ordinated whole". More damningly he writes "most sternly. They condemn him for lack of significance to our times in the themes which form the essential framework of his efforts". And certainly beyond the opening chapters of LOST ON VENUS all thoughts of Thorist tyranny are forgotten in a highly readable blur of fast-action and frequently quite silly adventures. Napier and Duare, who he loves but is unapproachable - destined by Vepajan lore only for a mate of equal rank, are marooned on mysterious Anlap. From being menaced in Kapdor by the Trial of the Seven Doors - from



which no man has ever escaped alive, they are soon threatened by the Living Dead in Skor's City of Kormor. Until finally they reach Havatoo, a city of scientific sophistication and eugenically pruned population, where Napier constructs an "anotar", a propellor-driven aircraft fuelled by limitless Venusian power sources, a kind of nuclear annihilation. But no sooner is it complete than they are forced to use his invention when their benign and enlightened hosts suddenly condemn Duare to death as part of their "ethnic cleansing" policy.

And so to CARSON OF VENUS with the duo's continuing travels in search of Duare's homeforest. Their first encounter is with the Samary women warriors of Houtamai. "Women are peculiar" muses Napier, "as peculiar upon Venus as upon Earth". Burroughs' satire - or his "theme" significant "to our times" is temporarily content with such reactionary jibes at what he sees as the idiocy of "modernity". ERB later extends his contemporary sniping to include "the abominable atrocities called modern art" with its "drunken surrealists". While the box-like buildings of Kapdor, with "no hint of artistic or imaginative genius" are "reminiscent of the so-called modern architecture that was just making itself felt before I left Earth". The Houtamai sequence itself illustrates the "unnatural" situation of a society ruled by women, its male population despised and emasculated. This Burroughs contrasts by example with Napier's courteous and protective attitude to Duare, "cursing myself for a beast and a cad" when he falls short of his own code. In the writer's defence, Duare is portrayed as increasingly skilled and resourceful. Having finally admitted her inevitable love for the American she accepts the wrath of her people, and faces the perils of Venusian exile with exemplary bravery and resolve. Yet as if to define the exact status of their relationship, at one point she proudly asserts that she "belongs to a man".

But the cycle's general playfulness is not limited to grouchy carping. In an ESCAPE ON VENUS sequence originally published as THE GODDESS OF FIRE in the July 1941 issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES where it is imaginatively illustrated by Allen St John, Napier encounters the Brokol. Hairless and of "a sickly greenish hue" their young grow like fruit suspended on trees! "Here was a race of people" writes Burroughs, "who not only had family trees, but family orchards", adding with rare wit "I might mention that no dogs are allowed in the orchards". In one of the book's more original diversions the Brokol's human "goddess" Loto-El-Ho-Ganja turns out to be "Betty of Brooklyn", apparently teleported to Amtor in some mysterious way never fully explained.

It has to be said - concurrent with Moskowitz's "literary critics", that there's also a certain promiscuous amorality about Napier's outlandish capers too. Caught up in a mechanised battle fought between rival land-dreadnaughts in the "War on Venus" sequence he's captured by the Falsans. When the crew of a T-Ray battery are wiped out Napier takes over their position, not from any sense of the rightness of their cause, but just - supposedly, because there's a job that needs to be done. His T-Ray disintegrates the protruding foot of a crewman on an enemy Pangan destroyer, and as his unfortunate victim falls to the deck, bringing the head into range, he shoots that off too. Later, while attacking the Pangan's fortress city they shell buildings beyond the

walls, presumably occupied by women and children. However, when the Falsans are defeated, with an equal lack of qualms, Napier switches sides - assisting the Pangans to raid the lands of a third force, the Hangors. When he again finds himself on the losing side Napier deserts the war without a backward glance. "It was a short fight" reflects Burroughs' hero, "but a sweet one while it lasted". Of course, the violence is not real violence, its morality not a considered morality. It's video-game violence. Its only purpose to accelerate the action, to keep it fast-paced and rapier-sharp. It's comic-strip plotting with no motivation beyond that.

The scope of subject matter should have resulted in a better end product; certainly the potential strains to exist.

There's a beguiling strangeness to the description of the Amtorian world-concept as a saucer floating on an ocean of molten rock surrounded by flames and protected from sky-fire only by the cloudbelts. There's material there to generate imagery of awesome power, but he seldom takes advantage of it. The storm in SLAVES OF THE FISHMEN which predictably throws Carson and Duare's anotar off course is caused by a chance cloud-rift allowing full exposure to the furnace-heat deluge of the sun, evaporating the ocean in tornado's of steam. Briefly the prose takes flight and is atmospherically convincing. Elsewhere his descriptions of the eerie Venusian forest seems to strive for a level of poetic expression he's not quite capable of - "there is something beautiful about the Amtorian landscape, beautiful and unreal. Perhaps it is the soft pastel shades that make it look more like a work of art than a creation of nature."

And briefly there's a second, more accomplished shot at political allegory which raises the interest quotient by managing to fuse ludicrous caricature with a genuine sense of menace. Carson and Duare, escaping Havatoo, reach Korva, a country in the grip of a new totalitarian cult which controls all but one of its cities, the besieged Sanara. In Korva "it is obligatory upon all loyal citizens to preface every greeting and introduction with the word "Maltu Mephis" (and to) never criticise the government or any official or any member of the Zani Party". With "Zani" an obvious Nazi anagram and "Our Beloved Mephis" (Mephistopheles?) - a "small insignificant-looking man", a Fuehrer in all but name, Burroughs' intentions clarify. The history of the Zani's, with their distinctive Mohawk coiffure, mirrors the rise of German Fascism closely; "following a disastrous war in which the resources of the nation were depleted, a strange cult had arisen, conceived and led by a common soldier named Mephis".

Magazine serialisation of the novel begins in the 8th January 1938 issue of ARGOSY, before the outbreak of European hostilities and well before such distant concerns were of general interest to the isolationist American public. So it's all the more impressive when Burroughs sharpens his attack. The Zanis kill Atorians because they have large ears, to "keep the blood of the Korvans pure". Perhaps the vehemence of his denunciation of Fascism is also evidence of ERB's disenchantment with the eugenic experiment he had championed just five years before in the earlier novel? In a city described as "utopian" and which Napier once recommended as a model society "breeding had done for the people of Havatoo what it has done for our prize-winning dairy herds; it had advanced them all toward perfection". Those deemed unfit for passing their genes on to future

generation were casually exterminated. "I shook my head as I thought of the mess that Earthman had made of government and civilisation by neglecting to apply to the human race the simple rules which they observed to improve the breeds of dogs and cows and swine" soliloquizes Burroughs through the mouthpiece of Napier. I "pray that there might arise in my own world" an identical system. In Hitler/Mephis that reality comes a little too close even for ERB-ian fantasy. So the Zanis are an "aggregation of ignorant thugs, bums and gangsters" who believe themselves to be a "superior race". And if his distaste is not already apparent Burroughs shoves the "silly flubdub" of their ritual into comic overdrive with a slapstick march extending the goose-step into John Cleese territory, and an enforced civilian gesture of support that includes standing on one's head!

Literally an inversion of reason.

Infiltrating the Zani-occupied capital city Napier assumed the nom de guerre "Homo Sapien". Unfortunately what Burroughs may have intended as a metaphor for common humanity is somewhat defused by its abbreviation to "Homo" - "so Homo I became" he announces innocently. But to complete his subterfuge Napier also fakes the Zani oath "I swear' I said, but I had my fingers crossed".

The adventure closes with the cult destroyed and monarchy restored. Napier becomes the adopted son of Taman, and hence Tanjong (Prince) of Korva, as a reward for his part in the struggle. For Burroughs it's one of his better and more sustained sequences. But as a piece of serious writing, despite occasional stabs at Kafkaesque "Police State" terrorism, it's too flawed by coincidence and poor structure. The first person Napier meets and assists in Korva turns out to be ... Taman, returning incognito from an espionage mission. Then, within days of becoming a Zani Napier, very conveniently, is put in charge of the Gap Kum Rov island prison which holds ... Duare's father Mintep.

But Edgar Rice Burroughs is essentially a romantic writer.

The manuscript for the final Amtorian episode - THE WIZARD OF VENUS. is dated 1941, nine years after Napier's launch from Guadalupe. Little more than a sketch of a tale, as light and insubstantial as Kleenex, it exploits the psychic abilities Napier had learned from Indian mystic Chand Kabi, but which he's irrationally only previously thought to use as a mental link to his amanuensis on Earth. Whether intended as the basis for a future novel or just one of a projected series of short stories, it was discovered in a cache of papers thirteen years after Burroughs' death and first published as part of a groundswell of renewed interest in all things ERB-ish in 1964.

In a sense these 4 1/2 books hardly even conform to the definition of novels. There is no plot development, subplot, or denouement. As Sam Moskowitz's "literary critics" accuse, they are merely a series of loosely connected sequences; usually the arrival at or capture by a city or race of people. Each race has a central peculiarity - they are amphibious Fishmen, they are green Brokol, they are amoeba, or they inhabit medieval-gothic castles in thrall to the wizard Morgas. Burroughs toys with this singularity in a non-systematic way that might involve the fall of a Jong,

imprisonment and escape, or even a naval battle, until he tires and moves on. Napier is enslaved, separated from his beloved Duare, is reunited; they face death and living death, none of which can be taken too seriously. The ideas and imagined cultures occasionally have an appealing oddness, but seldom rise above that level to wonderment or awe. The writing lacks style and depth. Yet Burroughs is ludicrously easy to read, and remains popular while his contemporaries - Otis Adelbert Kline's fantastic romps on a similarly baroque Venus (including BUCCANEERS OF VENUS), or Ray Cummings' sagas of Tama, winged princess of Mercury, are now all but forgotten.

Edgar Rice Burroughs is a populist writer, and can never be anything beyond that. It's his very lack of literary sophistication, his bold simplicity and use of the most basic symbols of romance and heroism that gives his stories such long-distance appeal. The present DAW uniform reissues of the Amtor books carries Carson Napier into the 1990's, treating the harsh findings of the Venera, Mariner, and Magellan Venus probes with the same effortless disdain he treats the up-market theories of James Jeans. And he leaves a persistent suspicion with even the most hard-headed cynic of a reader that just perhaps, beneath that superheated vortex of poisonous gases that make up the atmosphere of the Shepherd's Star, there lurks the beautiful ghost of Vepaja.

- Andrew Darlington

#### **EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: THE VENUS CYCLE**

PIRATES OF VENUS - first of a series

A 1932 ARGOSY serial

Bodley Head book edition 1935

Pinnacle Allen UK paperback May 1954

Four Square edition 1963

New English Library 1972

LOST ON VENUS - second in series (1935)

Foulden Allen UK digest Feb 1953

Published in USA by Canaveral Press 1963

Four Square paperback 1965

New English Library 1971

CARSON OF VENUS - third in series

serialised in ARGOSY from 8th Jan 1938

Published in book form 15th Feb 1938

Foulden Allen UK digest March 1950

Four Square edition Jan 1967

New English Library April 1971

ESCAPE ON VENUS - fourth in series (1941/1942)

Published as a story series in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES consisting of SLAVES OF THE FISHMEN, THE GODDESS OF FIRE, THE LIVING DEAD and WAR ON VENUS

Published in book form 1946

Four Square edition Nov 1966.

WIZARD OF VENUS - last in series. Dated 7th Oct 1941

Published posthumously by Ace 1964 as part of TALES OF THREE PLANETS

New English Library edition (with PIRATE BLOOD) Jan 1973

# OUT OF OZ #3

## SNIPPETS OF FANNISH HAPPENINGS

by Ron Clarke

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mutation of Van's earlier ENIGMA, the clubzine of one of Sydney Universities - NSW, I think. The latest issue is #34.

The articles listed are *SF, Genre and Conservatism* by Mark Loney, quite a scholarly work, which I must confess I skipped through, and *Clarke as Constructor* by Van Ikin. The latter discusses Arthur C. Clarke's memoirs ASTOUNDING DAYS and his novel THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS. Van makes some interesting and arguable comments about how Clarke orchestrated the above two volumes, and makes for thoughtful reading.

The reviewers are various, and cover MY LADY TONGUE (Sussex), THE TOTAL DEVOTION MACHINE (Love), WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD and MOTHERLINES (Charnas), THE START AT THE END OF IT ALL (Emshwiller), THE SILENT CITY (Vonarburg), WOMEN AS DEMONS (Lee) and SKIN OF THE SOUL (ed by Tuttle). The two columnists this issue are Jean Weber and Van himself. Weber's is subtitled *Women, gender and SF*, but Ikin's is a list of the ratings of Oz authors from LOCUS. There are five pages of letters and two poems.

SCIENCE FICTION is an unusual size - 18 cm by 26 cm. This issue is 36 pages and sells for \$16 for 4 issues in Oz and 4 issues for A\$24 (\$36 air) overseas. It is obtainable from Van Ikin, Dept of English, Uni of Western Australia, Nedlands, W. A. 6009, Australia.

The Spring 1992 EIDOLON (#10) came out recently. It is the usual white cover, with the Eidolon in green foil. The name and colophon is now on the cover. There are the usual Departments - the Editorial, subtitled Directions [in which the magazine is going], Fresh Ink (book reviews). Letters, an Article by Sean McMullen which had a different title on the contents page to the actual article. It's

This time we have a mixed grab-bag. First off is a magazine which has been around for quite a while, and in the same format. It is Van Ikin's SCIENCE FICTION.

Sub-titled *A Review of Speculative Literature*, it's distinctive bright yellow cover has been publishing in-depth reviews and critiques of SF for years. It is somewhat of a

subject is Australian women SF writers, Critical Embuggerance, an article by Robin Pen dealing with Ewoks, various pieces of artwork illustrating the stories - and well executed artwork it is too - some of the best appearing in Australian SF magazines.

The highlight of the issue is, of course, the fiction. The lead story is COUP DE GRACE by Pam Jeffery, a story of Toorak matrons, which is well written, but I can't really see why it was published here in an sf/fantasy magazine, as it is neither. The second story is THE LAMADIUM AFFAIR by Leanne Frahm, which is a powerful story of aliens, sex and alien bonding that could well be expanded into a novel - the best story in the issue.

There followed COMPOUND INTEREST by Jim Heath, a story which would be light in a fanzine, and is not for people who dislike cockroaches. Next is GHOST CARD by Martin Livings, a very good fantasy which I have no doubt will be anthologised in the future. Lastly is MEMORIES OF THE COLOUR-FIELD by Geoffrey Maloney. It is sort of "hard" sf, with a colony nearly being wiped out by human greed. It is interesting that this is the second story in this issue dealing with human colonies either withdrawing or nearly being wiped out.

Overall a good issue, and well worth the \$6.95. Available from specialist bookshops, or \$24 for 4 issues in Oz, or A\$44 (airmailed) or A\$34 (surface) overseas. Cheques payable to Richard Scriven, PO Box 225, North Perth, W.A. 6006, Australia.

Issue Ten of AUREALIS came out in March 1993. It has a three colour cover - black, orange and sea green, with a humanoid robot and a robot rock lizard featured on it. It has an 84 page count and is available from several bookshops and newsagents. There is an editorial by Dirk Strasser, two pages of letters, reviews of George Turner's BRAINCHILD, Paul Voermans' AND DISREGARDS THE REST, an SF HALL OF FAME and contributors details.

The thing one buys the magazine for, though, is the stories. This time we have DEFECT by Misha

Kumashov which is set on an outlying planet of the Confederacy. The two main characters are a robot who seemingly has a screw loose, and the man in charge of a rapidly decaying station. THE STONE LANES by Darren Goossens is a vignette set in a Gargoyl type castle and shows a young man having to choose between his separated parents and a life of his own. I am *still* not sure what he does in the end, though.

The third story is TOO MUCH TO REMEMBER by Janet Fennell, which started out ok. but never did explain itself and ended on a limb. THE RETRIBUTION OF GEORGE POOLE by John Jarvis is a horror story about a nasty young man whose deeds catch up with him - one of the better stories in the issue. IT'S ALL IN THE WAY YOU LOOK AT IT by Michael Pryor is one of those stories about artists and Art which tries to be humorous, and may succeed with some readers. BY STARS ABOVE by Blair Hunt is short, has a strong grip on the reader, and has a twist ending which needed a little more build-up.

ONE FINAL STORY is an excellent fantasy by Sophia Peters. Though this sort of story has been done in F&SF, it is very readable and almost worth the cost of the magazine. AUREALIS is available from Chimaera Publications, PO Box 538, Mt Waverley, Vic 3149, Australia for A\$30 sea, A\$33 air from NZ; A\$31 sea and A\$39 air elsewhere overseas.

Both EIDOLON and AUREALIS are worth subscribing to by overseas fans who like reading fresh sf.

The second issue of DAARKE WORLDE is out from the Melbourne Horror Society. The zine has the address: c/- Tony J. Brook, PO Box 512, Bacchus Marsh, Vic 3340, Australia. He is quite a Dark Ghoul, rather than a Dark Master, judging by his ~~ravings~~ writings.

The zine is divided up into 6 "sections" - Dreaditorial, Daarke Fiction, Solution to the "Kuraria" X-Word, Final Word, article on "Magick" and "a little more"

about *Mummies*."

Colour of the cover is arterial red, with black printing. Size is A5 folded. The fiction is most noticeable, and consists of MADAME CLAUDIA by D. F. Lewis, SPEED LIMITS by Steven Proposch, SUCH A PRETTY THING by F. W. Whimple, NIGHT SCHOOL by S. Darnbrook Colson (the best of the bunch - a *very* chilling tale, and worth the issue), MIDNIGHT MASS by S. Darnbrook Colson, IT'S SAID THAT HE'S A CHARMING MAN by The Dread Master, THE OLD MIRROR by T. Jonathan Brook, LAST RITES by Baron M., THE PALE TREES by Mark McAuliffe, THE GREEN BUS by P. J. Roberts and THE BLOODSUCKER by Luis Zatar. All this in 42 pages!

Oh, and there is a column by The Stygian Stalker, who seems a companion to The Dread Master. There are now numerous small press magazines featuring horror being published in Australia. DAARKE WORLDE's editor is one of those who treats his subject with typical fannish irreverence.

The zine appears to be available for "the usual" - there is no mention of filthy lucre.

- Ron Clarke



# WHAT IS SF FOR?

or

## A Beginner's Guide to the Search for a Definition of SF

by Sean Williams

*I suppose it is a measure of the richness of the field that no two of its practitioners are liable to agree on even something so fundamental as its definition ...*

The search for a brief definition of science fiction (sf) has been exhaustive and, one might argue, ultimately doomed to failure.

In analysing sf, it is simplest to begin with the factors that distinguish it from other genres. By tracing sf back through Speculative Fiction (SF), we can see that it differs from other forms of fiction by virtue of its surreal background, which may be the surface of another planet, may feature alien life-forms, may involve travel (sometimes instantaneous) through space or time, may incorporate technologies and societies that presently do not exist, and so on. The late Isaac Asimov sums up the superficial aspect of Speculative Fiction thus:

"Science fiction and fantasy ... deal ... with events played out against social backgrounds that do not exist today, and have not existed in the past."

In order to narrow the definition, he continues:

"... the surreal background of a science fiction story could, conceivably, be derived from our own by appropriate changes in the level of science or technology." [2]

This is all very well, but it ignores an essential dichotomy within science fiction which is infrequently acknowledged. When it is, it is usually portrayed as being in conflict with what is perceived to be the "true nature" of sf:

"What I find strange about the term 'sf' is that it is made of two components: 'science', a traditional left-brain activity, and 'fiction', a traditional right-brain activity. No wonder it's so hard to define." [3]

Science fiction combines the rational and the intuitive, the logical and the emotional, in a manner unique to literature. It is itself a contradiction in terms. Where science attempts to increase human knowledge of reality by pushing back the boundaries of mystery, fiction creates unreal states in which unreal characters enact unreal situations. Science has become, in this genre, a tool by which the writer manufactures an illusion that can have little or no basis in the universe that science attempts to understand.

Therefore, in order to understand this uniquely paradoxical genre of (mainly) twentieth-century literature, it would be more appropriate not to begin with the question, "What is science fiction?" but, "What is science fiction *for*?"

*The hardware in science fiction is vital to its existence -- surely sf is the only form of fiction that dares to have a gadget or an idea as a hero.* [4]

Sf, in all its complexity and diversity, is many things to many people. Purely as a form of fiction, it provides the writer with a means of creative expression and a source of income (along with the industry that supports him/her); and it provides the reader with a source of fascination. This fascination may be encouraged by emotions (such as fear and

curiosity), by plot-devices (eg. suspense or romance), or by cleverly-constructed characters.

With the appearance of purely sf magazines -- first in Sweden and then, with considerably greater success, in the U.S. -- sf began to receive recognition as a sub-genre of fantasy. The Golden Age of sf, however, which began with Hugo Gernsback's AMAZING STORIES in April 1926, had very definite ideas of what sf was for and how it should behave, as distinct from other forms of fiction. Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr. (ASTOUNDING STORIES) made this absolutely clear in the editorials of their respective magazines.

"Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading -- they are always instructive. They supply knowledge ... in a very palatable form." [6]

Sf (or "scientifiction", as it was first known) was intended not only as a fascination, but as a means of educating the reader via the medium of fiction. Stories heralding the age of space, robots and ray guns may now seem to border on the fantastic, in light of discoveries since, but they were consistent then. Sf in its purest form did not permit the author to bend the rules of science in order to accommodate the plot, for the perceived purpose of sf would thereby have been compromised.

As a consequence, the stories themselves frequently suffered. They presented, quite often, problem-solving dilemmas of a sort normally found in crime fiction, with the "villain" being an aspect of physical science (as in Larry Niven's "Neutron Star", although this was first published in 1966) rather than a sentient antagonist. In early sf particularly, "the dramatic emphasis is on gadgets and machines and consequently the exclusion of individualistic humans". [7]

Although this idea of sf-as-science-teacher has been largely superseded, the technology-oriented mode of sf has survived in the form of "hard" sf and is still regarded by some, including Gregory Benford (author of TIMESCAPE), as "the core of the field". [8]

*Science fiction deals with improbable possibilities, fantasy with plausible impossibilities.*

One important function of sf, and hard sf in particular, is to explore the possible. As the century progresses, this mode has leaned away from household gadgetry to focus its attention on the more arcane implications of the physical sciences. "The science fiction writer can invent anything, so long as no one can demonstrate that it is physically impossible." [10] As fast as scientists produce ideas, sf writers snatch them up and incorporate them into fiction.

Two notable writers of this mode are Robert L. Forward (DRAGON'S EGG, STARQUAKE) and Arthur C. Clarke (2010: ODYSSEY TWO, THE GHOST OF THE GRAND BANKS). Both take great pains to comply with known scientific laws, while at the same time producing locales or situations that seem utterly fantastic. Significantly, quite apart from their successes as sf writers, both are qualified scientists. In the fiction of both, characterisation and plot take a back seat, acting as mere vehicles for the exploration of the possibility that confronts the reader.

There are, despite this drawback, numerous

successful writers of the mode (including Greg Bear, Charles Sheffield and Kim Stanley Robinson), which suggests that it may have some bearing on the overall purpose of sf. Although it demonstrates the gadgetry of earlier sf expanded to a much larger scale (and Clarke himself is one of the most successful "gadgeteers" to have emerged from the Golden Age), there is one crucial distinction that enables it to flourish.

This mode of sf evokes (or aims to evoke) the much-lauded Sense Of Wonder, that "basic science fiction energy" [11] which is elusive and highly sought-after, and regarded by some as the most desirable aspect of sf. It reawakens our amazement at the universe, produces an almost religious feeling of awe and reaffirms our belief in Mystery.

Just as "art, concerned with the unknown, strives towards the unknowable," so too does this mode of sf remind us that "mystery has energy" [12], all the while without breaking the code of Gernsback and Campbell. In this sense, "science fiction is fantasy fiction written under the strict, new rules of science". [13]

Of course, if the Sense Of Wonder becomes the principal aim, then the laws of science will inevitably begin to flex, in order to provide the reader with a bigger and better thrill. Good examples of this include RINGWORLD (by Larry Niven) and ORBITSVILLE (Bob Shaw). Both novels explore artefacts that are so huge as to be incomprehensible (especially the latter) which do not themselves contradict scientific laws although other aspects of the stories definitely do (including such well-known sf tropes as faster-than-light travel, instantaneous matter-transportation and artificial gravity).

It is by following this scent of Wonder that the reader may eventually find himself reading fantasy, provided he is prepared first to bend and then to forgo entirely the laws of science.

*[Science fiction] allows us to try out many different futures without getting hurt.*

Another aspect of sf is its use as a predictive tool. By extrapolating the present -- most importantly, its rate of technological progress -- the sf writer can attempt to build a model of the future. This speculative device is often highlighted as one of the main purposes of the genre.

The facts that Arthur C. Clarke presaged geostationary communication satellites decades before they were placed in orbit and that H. G. Wells similarly presaged the use of weapons of large-scale destruction in global warfare are often used to give credence to this theory. These two may, however, have been the only writers ever to get anything right so far in advance. In the words of Jerry Pournelle:

"Technological projection isn't easy, but the science fiction writer doesn't have to do it. We don't need to predict the real future; we're only interested in a plausible one." [15]

That is, no sf writer seriously believes that the future will occur the way in which he has envisaged it to do so. He is simply constructing a convincing fabric into which he will weave his characters. (NEUROMANCER, by William Gibson, demonstrates this more than adequately, with its vision of techno-anarchy in the shadow of intercontinental corporate power.)

Most commonly, if the writer is genuinely concerned with prediction, he will begin with a society that presently exists and then explore the ramifications of one change imposed upon it. Such *ceteris paribus* conditions were used in John Brunner's *THE STONE THAT NEVER CAME DOWN*, in which the author explored the effects on the individual and on society (a "near-future" Great Britain) of a technological breakthrough that resulted in increased empathy and better memory-recall. In similar ways have other writers attempted to "perceive the potential of new technologies." [16]

Far from taking us on a journey to meet the future, this branch of sf attempts to demonstrate what will happen when the future meets us.

*When examined closely, the alien in science fiction is most of it.*

Just as the Sense Of Wonder began to overtake the scientific sensibilities of early sf, so too did the emphasis itself of sf begin to change. Spearheaded in Britain by Michael Moorcock during the 1960's and becoming a self-professed "movement" world-wide by the 'seventies, New Wave attempted to shift the focus away from the universe and technology, back to the human condition, by rebelling against the "power-fantasies and speculative notions of the old science fiction". [18]

Instead of being a means of exploring the possible, sf became a means of exploring the boundaries of humanity. Using the tools of sf as a means to an end, rather than the end itself, such writers as Christopher Priest, Ray Bradbury, J G Ballard and Roger Zelazny attempted to prove to the world (in general and sf-fandom in particular) that "inner space rather than outer space is the most fruitful subject matter for sf". [19]

The sur-realities in which the protagonists found themselves rarely warranted more than a brief paragraph or two of scientific rationalisation, and little of that would have held its own in the face of hard sf, thus propelling the reader into the world of Fantasy. Science had gone out the window, it would seem, and sf had become a vehicle for contemporary commentary "that [wasn't] seen as philosophical or religious proselytising". [20] One could even argue that, on occasion, physical impossibilities were actually flaunted in order to distinguish the new "type" of sf from the old.

Hand-in-hand with this shift in perspective came a dawning awareness of Golden Age sf as a child stunted by "awkward characterisation and workaday prose". [21] A new generation of sf "poets" emerged, concerned with qualifying sf as truly a genre of "literature" rather than a mere juvenile entertainment. Whether the efforts of the New Wave movement in this particular area were successful is still open to debate.

Naturally, New Wave was a backlash against technology and authority similar to that of the Free Love movement of the same time. Much of its produce may seem, today, to be "trite, obscure, or self-indulgent", but, "the movement as a whole can now be seen as the single most important development in the science fiction genre". [22] As sf has matured into the 'eighties and 'nineties, the sentiments of both the Golden Age and the New Wave have been assimilated quite satisfactorily.

It is now generally accepted (and indeed demanded) that good sf should in some way comment upon the human condition. Some believe that it is "concerned with the dehumanising tendencies inherent in an ever-increasing stress upon ... technology" [23]; others that it "liberates us from the narrowness of our humanity". [24] It also provides, by means of its surreality, a method of analysing our own society. "Science fiction, at its best, illuminates our time by turning a mirror towards the future." [25] If not literally the future, then the alien (within the society or the individual) will do just as well.

Science itself has returned in the wake of the New Wave, because, "any fiction which discusses these issues [those of the nature of humanity, of consciousness, and of reality] is, almost inevitably, science fiction, for these are scientific issues". [26] Also, although "science and technology are often seen as the domain of sf, ... psychology, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics are also part of that domain". [27]

The sf of the eighties and nineties still has robots and ray guns, but now has people as well. And herein lies the conflict discussed in the introduction to this essay:

"To the sf writer there is a fundamental crisis of importance; to concentrate on fiction is to deny space to the fascinating but superficial features that make sf different." [28]

*Science fiction is no more written for scientists than ghost stories are written for ghosts.*

The fifth and last purpose of sf as a genre is simply to provide entertainment, without regard to either scientific accuracy or literary merit. Although this form of sf fiction (often termed "pulp" or "sci-fi") flourished in print up until the early 'sixties (including the "Norstrilia" fantasies of the late Cordwainer Smith), it is best exemplified by television space operas (*DR WHO*, *STAR TREK* or *UFO*) and, later in this century, motion picture films (*TERMINATOR*, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* and *THE PLANET OF THE APES*, amongst many others).

Indeed, the progression from magazine to TV to motion picture is itself noteworthy, for it demonstrates the innate purpose of pulp -- to make money -- and the media best-suited to the achievement of this purpose at different times in the last seventy years. In order to ensure its profitability, pulp sf provides visceral rather than intellectual excitement, thus guaranteeing itself the widest possible acceptance, by planting tried-and-true plots on an sf base.

Sf as whole "eases the 'willing suspension of disbelief' on the part of its readers by utilising scientific credibility" [30], but pulp sf does far more than this. It is "a form of fantastical fiction which *exploits* the perspectives of modern science". [31] It takes for granted certain aspects of sf (such as matter-transportation, time travel, faster-than-light propulsion, alien life-forms, artificial intelligences, etc), offers no explanation for their manner of operation (thereby relaxing the prerequisite of intelligence in its patrons), and simply uses them as "spice" in a otherwise unoriginal recipe.

We have, for example, sci-fi adventures borrowed more or less blatantly from other sources: *ALIEN NATION* (alias *DRAGNET* or any "buddy" cop story), *OUTLAND* (alias

HIGH NOON), LOST IN SPACE (alias ROBINSON CRUSOE), BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS (alias THE SEVEN SAMURAI), etc. And there are films that lean heavily upon other genres for inspiration without actually committing plagiarism (BLADERUNNER, ALIEN and STAR WARS are three notable examples). All more or less fail to meet the standards of true sf:

"Sci-fi is fantasy dressed in hi-tech with its own laws of science -- very similar, indeed almost indistinguishable, from reality ..., but desperately *wrong* nonetheless." [32]

Is it any wonder that some writers and editors, seeing their beloved genre invaded by poorly-regarded pulp, have bewailed the fate of sf? "Many modern science fiction writers ... do not hesitate to throw scientific plausibility overboard, and embark upon a policy of what I might call scientific magic, science that is neither plausible nor possible". [33] "If the 'proper study of Mankind is Man' ... [then] conventional sf has contributed little since Orwell's 1984". [34]

It should, however, be noted that this form of sf is probably the most lucrative and well-known -- *definitely* if cinematic sf is included -- and therefore cannot be dismissed entirely. The question is: should it have more merit, when discussing the purpose of science fiction, simply because it is more popular?

*John W Campbell ... once said, 'Science fiction is whatever science fiction editors buy.' ... It is probably more accurate nowadays to say science fiction is whatever sf book publishers will place under their sf label ....*

So, what is science fiction for?

The five answers to this question provide a means of categorising sf, as well as illuminating some of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to define the genre. Sf is obviously many things to many people -- from science manual to "serious" literature -- and has become too wide a genre to be glibly encapsulated. The closest one could come would be to say that, if a work of fiction contains a measure of "hard" science without which the plot would be rendered meaningless *and/or* inspires a sensation of awe at the potential of the universe *and/or* speculates on the effects on the individual as a response to societal change (or vice versa) *and/or* uses the mechanisms of science to tell stories about people and what makes them tick *and/or* presents basic entertainment behind a technological mask, then it is *probably* science fiction.

At least, however, the individual works can be classified.

There remain, even so, a few works that are not easily compartmentalised. HYPERION, by Dan Simmons, readily fulfils the Sense of Wonder criteria, while at the same time provides insights into the nature of self-awareness. Interwoven throughout are instances of Pulp Entertainment (employed by most sf writers as a means of ensuring that the readers remain fascinated). It also presents us with a number of predictions for the distant future, and consciously mimics one of the oldest literary forms (the collection of the travellers' tales).

This cross-referencing is not merely confined to works written on such a large scale. Edward Bryant's "Particle Theory" [36] uses the mysterious worlds of subatomic

physics to explore a cancer victim's relationship with the universe in a manner not dissimilar to that of the New Wave exponents. It is well-written; it is compassionate and dramatic; it features technology and medical techniques that lie in the near future; and it evokes, above all, a powerful sense of Mystery.

It is worth noting that both HYPERION and "Particle Theory" received acclaim from editors and readers. Each is eminently satisfying as a work of fiction and as a work of SCIENCE fiction. Perhaps the ultimate work of sf would contain all five of these elements, in perfect balance, instead of just one or two.

So, from the emotional depths of Moorcock's BREAKFAST IN THE RUINS to the giddy intellectual heights of Bear's EON, the sf reader is alternatively entertained, educated and amazed. It may well be that -- having graduated from the infantile preoccupations of the Golden Age and the adolescent rebellion of the New Wave, and by learning to mix science and humanity in a manner similarly demanded of this planet's ruling species at this period in its history -- sf is becoming an adult, at last.

#### ENDNOTES

1. From his Foreword to the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 6.
2. op cit.
3. David Tansey, from a personal letter to the author.
4. Except, perhaps, for some childrens' stories (eg. THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE) and fairy-tales (which are themselves fantasy).
5. Harry Harrison, "Machine As Hero", ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 88.
6. As quoted by Robert Holdstock in the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 10.
7. Dr B. H. Slater, as quoted by Frank C. Bertrand in "The Arena", SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, #26, p. 46.
8. Gregory Benford, "How to Sound Like an Expert", from WRITERS OF THE FUTURE, Vol. 2, p. 203.
9. From her Foreword to ELSEWHERE, ELSEWHEN, ELSEHOW, as quoted by Brian Aldiss in TRILLION YEAR SPREE, p. 30.
10. Ben Bova, "John Campbell and the Modern SF Idiom", from FANTASY REVIEW, Vol. 9 #7, p. 13.
11. Jack P. Railings, "Confronting the Alien: Fantasy and Anti-Fantasy in Science Fiction Film and Literature", from BRIDGES TO FANTASY, pp. 160-174.
12. John Fowles, as quoted by Robert Holdstock in the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 11.
13. David Kyle, A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 10.
14. From a brief biographical passage in GLASS REPTILE BREAKOUT, p. 156.
15. "Building Plausible Futures", WRITERS OF THE FUTURE, Vol. 2, p. 357.
16. Marshall McLuhan, THE MEDIUM IS THE

- MASSAGE [sic].
17. "Alien Encounter", from the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 106. (Also worth noting is a comment by Michael Tolley, from "Mastercard", APHELION #4, p.48 "Science fiction is written by aliens ...")
  18. Christopher Priest, "New Wave", from the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 165.19. Malcolm Edwards, "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow", from the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, p. 178.
  20. Orson Scott Card, as quoted by Francis Spufford in TLS, 12th April 1991, p. 12.
  21. M. H. Zool, GOOD READING GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION, p. 37, referring to Arthur C. Clarke in particular.
  22. Christopher Priest, op cit, p. 164.
  23. Kirpal Singh, as quoted by Dr B. H. Slater in "Lesser Literatures?", SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, #21, p.69.
  24. Terry Carr, BRIDGES TO FANTASY, p. 164.
  25. Robert Silverberg, source unknown (quote courtesy of Michael Tolley).
  26. Greg Egan, from a brief biographical paragraph in GLASS REPTILE BREAKOUT, pp. 153-154.
  27. Van Ikin, from his Introduction to GLASS REPTILE BREAKOUT, p.6-7.
  28. Robert Holdstock, op cit, p.9.
  29. Frm his Introduction to PENGUIN SCIENCE FICTION, as quoted by Steven Paulsen, AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION NEWS, #1.
  30. Sam Moskowitz, SEEKERS OF TOMORROW.
  31. David Pringle, as quoted by Jeff Harris in "An Oddly-Shaped Tree Root", this author's italics.
  32. Robin Pen, "Critical Embuggerence. A Jungian Analysis of Rubber-Suit Monsters Part Two: The Latex and the Self", from EIDOLON, Vol. 1 #3, p. 45.
  33. Hugo Gernsback, op cit.
  34. George Turner, "Science Fiction, Parafiction, and Peter Carey", SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, #28, p. 15.
  35. From his Editorial, AUREALIS, #6, p.4.
  36. First published in ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION/SCIENCE FACT, February 1977.

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THANKS TO: Michael Tolley, David Tansey and Shane Dix.



# IN DEPTH #6

by **Bill Congreve**

So much for all the fantasy novels. The point of these columns is to attempt to cover everything published in the SF, Horror and Fantasy genres in this country. This is getting more and more difficult. No sooner do we do two columns dedicated to Australian fantasy than Pan Macmillan publish another two fantasy novels. Aphelion is coming out with another two publications quite soon - a novel by Damien Broderick and the next Tom Tyson collection by Terry Dowling. There are a few more recent Australian publications I haven't even had time to look at yet: Wynne Whiteford's most recent from Ace, Kurt von Trojan's MARS UNDER SCORPIO, and Lucy Sussex's MY LADY TONGUE AND OTHER TALES. These are a couple of years old now, but what the heck. One novel I didn't even know existed until very recently is ILLICIT PASSAGE by Alice Nunn. Then there's Greg Egan's QUARANTINE. Rosaleen Love is due for a new novel. After that is Leigh Blackmore's TERRA AUSTRALIS and later in the year the second INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS. Does anybody else out there get the impression that our genres are picking up speed in this country?

In the last column I mentioned that Dirk Strasser was the editor of AUREALIS. He is of course the co-editor with Steve Higgins. My apologies to Dirk and Stephen. The publication date for Dirk's ZENITH is now July 1993.

Simply because I have read them, I'll open with the two fantasy novels. As with all of Pan Macmillan's efforts in this genre these are quite routine, but then a solid ninety percent of fantasy published today, including most of the best-sellers, is quite routine. That's my chief problem with reading fantasy.

\* \* \*

KINGMAKER; Tony Shillitoe; novel; 1993; Pan Australia; pb; \$12.95.

GUARDIANS left off with Andra and his surviving companions being stranded in a bit of a cliff-hanging situation. With Kingmaker, disappointingly Shillitoe fudges the situation and opens after the characters

have escaped their predicament. Young Andra is left for dead, his companions have returned to the Great City to take their places in the King's armies, and his magical sword finds its way into the hands of his fated nemesis, A Ahmud Ki.

A Ahmud Ki continues his machinations for power in the Kingdom of Thana. The Haagii sub-race continue their invasion under the leadership of the resurrected Dragon Lord with the aerial support of the dragons themselves.

Andra has in fact been rescued by Aelendyell scouts and spends some time in their magical forest recuperating.

learning new skills, teaching old skills and falling in love. Then the Aelendyell forest is attacked by Haagii. Dragons burn the trees with the aid of Haagii guerillas, and the Aelendyell must use all their magic and fighting skills to resist and save even small portions of their forest. The time comes when Andra realises his destiny is back in the world of humankind and he leaves the forest for the Great City.

A Ahmud Ki uses Andra's sword to recreate the legend of the Saviour who carries the magic sword of Abreotan - the only weapon a human may use to kill a dragon. It becomes obvious that the A Ahmud Ki's mythmaking is not all it seems to be and the search is on to find the real sword of Abreotan. The new quest reunites Andra with several of his old companions - all under the leadership of A Ahmud Ki's manufactured Saviour, a brainwashed Guardian named Liam.

KINGMAKER carries on the story of A Ahmud Ki and Andra, the warrior who appears to be the power-seeking magician's nemesis and partner. Much of the novel was implicitly obvious from the events of GUARDIANS, only the details needed to be filled in. As with GUARDIANS, KINGMAKER doesn't stand alone. It relies very heavily on the earlier novel, and it sets up several loose ends which will be taken up in the next novel. Even more than most trilogies or series, "Andrakis" has been written and conceived as one work, with artificial breaks inserted for the sake of publishing. Even though there is very little original in either novel, I still enjoyed reading them. Shillitoe has a solid understanding of what makes a fantasy trilogy work for readers. I'm looking forward to the next novel.

\* \* \*

FORTALICE; Martin Middleton; novel; 1993; 273 + x pp; Pan Macmillan pb; \$11.95.

Pan Macmillan are at it again.

This is marginally more interesting than Middleton's last outing. The fight sequences are slightly more convincing than before, but we still have the phenomena of single fighters able to defeat any number of similarly armed combatants in the space of meagre phrases. At best Middleton's characters are stereotypes with the odd identifying quirk; at worst they are identified by name, sex, and the kind of weapon they carry, and very little else. While Middleton has obviously put more effort into characterisation than before, FORTALICE suffers from not having one or two key central characters. The story is told from the viewpoints of too many characters for the reader to build up an affinity for any one character. The plot jumps around all over the place and there are still a few places where Middleton seems to introduce a threat for the characters to combat simply because a nameless "dungeon-master" requires it. There is an enormous amount of effort wasted with unnecessary loose ends. However Middleton has picked up on the flashback and the increased sophistication (as distinct from complexity) is an improvement.

The background of the world of FORTALICE is q

uite well realized, better than any of the Chronicles of the Custodians trilogy except for the last - SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. As a result there is more feeling in the way the characters and their environment impact on each other. Some of the underground sequences were effective.

In places the novel loses continuity; eg the characters are able to steer a raft floating in a river current - this is a bit analogous to putting a rudder on a hot-air balloon. At one point the characters emerge from an underground river that we are told empties into a larger surface river, but suddenly we find ourselves on the shore of an inland lake with the river nowhere in sight.

The set piece climax where the companions end their quest with an underground battle against an evil wizard was effectively told, but after that the novel just fades away. The scene where the surviving companions who have quested and fought together for so long take leave of each other is so emotionless it may as well not have been written in the first place.

By now you will have guessed that the novel concerns a quest by a group of warriors through a landscape at war with itself in search of the evil wizards who started the war in the first place. The broad outlines of the plot are quite clever, but there is nothing very original about any of it - this is the same problem I find with most fantasy. For something quite different, and far superior, check out Dirk Strasser's forthcoming ZENITH.

FORTALICE has been published as a stand-alone volume - this is indicated by the packaging - but if sales demand it there are a number of loose ends Middleton could work into a sequel. The cover art and design are a bit of a letdown after the work Mike Worrall has done for both Middleton and Shillitoe in the past.

As far as Middleton is concerned - when will somebody at Pan get off his/her arse and edit the poor guy.

This novel could have been improved a hundred percent with a little advice and just one re-write.

\* \* \*

AND DISREGARDS THE REST; Paul Voermans; novel; 1992; 256 pp; Gollancz hb; \$29.95.

An out of work Australian actor in London supporting himself with odd-jobbing sells a couple of novels while he's waiting for the next stage play? As likely a scenario as any.

I'm not certain if Noam Chomsky was partly responsible for the inspiration of AND DISREGARDS THE REST. It remains that this novel contains the first convincing treatment of the implications of Noam Chomsky's theories of deep grammar to interpersonal and interspecies communication that I've read in science fiction. For a field that prides itself on originality of thought, and which is loaded to the brim with scientists interested in First Contact, it's highly ironic this novel should come from an actor.

The next most memorable thing about the novel is the awkwardness of its style. This is the one that escaped while Gollancz's copyeditor was out to lunch. Voermans often seems to confuse the subjects and objects of his phrases. Take the following example: "The blond, taller, more reserved one is giving a briefing. This concerns a play which will take place to the north-east of the city, and especially one member of the company who is by their lights planning a crime." So, is it a crime by the standards of the guy giving the briefing or, instead, by the standards of the theatre company? Perhaps Voermans, as an actor, is so concerned with dialogue, which can be given extra meaning by inflection, tone of voice, emphasis, body language, etc, that he has forgotten that prose must be more precise. There is nothing wrong with the dialogue in this novel, the problem lies with the descriptive passages, the thoughts of the characters, etc.

Kevin Gore and Martin Leywood are two retired actors who, eleven years ago, were involved in an attempt to broadcast Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST to the stars using miniature thought amplifiers to be worn by each actor. That attempt ended in tragedy as the CIA had also stumbled across the thought amplifiers, originally developed by a Soviet research team, and they didn't like somebody else playing with their toy.

Now, Gore and Leywood are stumbling about in the dark, Gore driven by voices in his mind, and Leywood driven by the guilt of a lost love, trying to justify their actions of eleven years before. Leywood has written a book about the tragedy of the first play, and Gore tries to find a producer, either on stage or on the screen, for the book. Both manage to forget old love affairs and begin new ones. The casual reader will get an insight into the lives and loves of the acting profession. Life here is not always as it is elsewhere in society.

In the wider world, people from all nations and walks of life are being driven to insanity by the voices in their minds. These voices are different from the ones that torment Gore. The original broadcast of THE TEMPEST was successful, and the aliens from 61 Cygnus are on their way. This is where the Chomsky reference fits in. (Noam Chomsky's theory is that there are certain structures within the brain, or within the psyche, that have been set in place by the action of evolution on the nature of human communication. These

structures are developed by the social learning of language at a young age and reveal themselves as a form of deep grammar common to all human language.)

The voices in Gore's mind are from an alternate future that will be eliminated if the aliens reach Earth. The nations of man will struggle too hard for the knowledge the benign aliens bring. He discovers the voices come from a person he knows well and cares for very much...

If there is anything wrong with AND DISREGARDS THE REST, it is that there are too many ideas. Time travel, aliens, thought amplifiers, alternate universes (becoming synonymous these days with time travel), psychic contact with an alien race... George Scithers once said something about going to the Wells (H G, that is!) once too often in one story. It is the human story of Gore and Leywood that saves the book from being too cluttered. Voermans's concern for his characters is, as it always should be, the core of the novel. For his first novel Voermans has chosen a subject he knows well: the theatre. The novel has credibility. Given the ages old nature of some of the ideas, his is a fresh treatment. This is not only due to the theatrical angle. Voermans shows himself to be either very much an original thinker, or one refreshingly uninfluenced by SF's past.

Despite the problems with style, I enjoyed AND DISREGARDS THE REST. The story rattled along at a pleasant rate. It had characters I identified with, and whose motives I believed in. It had ideas. We will hear more from Paul Voermans.

\* \* \*

HAIR-RAISING; Penny Mathews (ed); anthology; 1992; 141 + vi pp; Omnibus Books pk; No price marked, but I got it for \$8.95.

Omnibus Books are part of the Ashton-Scholastic Group, and HAIR-RAISING and its companion volume, SPINE CHILLING, are evidence of this publisher's growing interest in horror for the young adult market.

I'm not too certain Penny Mathews knows what kind of horror story she wanted for these juvenile anthologies. I'm certain many of the writers didn't know either. Perhaps the assignment was simply to produce a story that scared the writer.

Alison Stewart opens the book with an atmospheric piece in which a girl spots a snake inside the house, faints as she steps on a pin, and comes to convinced the snake is curled up asleep on her stomach. Verity Laughton strikes closer to home with a moody piece about choosing the right friends, and how those friends may then betray you. The pace hots up again with Ursula Dubosarsky's tale of a ghost returning to its family from a war. Good stuff, this one. Caroline MacDonald comes up next with the first of a series of stories from a number of writers in both books featuring women being pursued by unwanted ex-lovers. Given the prevalence of that theme here, and remembering also some of Louise Steer's work in EOD, this is obviously a subject of great concern to Australia's writers.

Gary Crew's SLEEPING OVER AT LOSA'S is perhaps the strongest story in the volume. Once again a young girl obsessed with loneliness chooses the wrong friend in her search for companionship. Nan Hunt contributes a story of a pack of dogs in a sheep pen at night. Joanne Horniman tells a strong story of a self-centred boy and his fascination with a

devil's head mask from Hong Kong. I felt the contrived, happy ending weakened the story greatly, and contradicted the internal logic of an otherwise effective piece. Carolyn Burns contributes a moral SF fable on responsibility and freedom of choice. A solid, ironic story, but not horror. Brian Caswell's PAY TV is another SF piece which uses a clever time travel device to look at personal responsibility. This story also uses the unwanted ex-lover returning as a subplot. Libby Hathorn contributes a minor story of a student much too clever for his own good, and not nearly as clever as the "opposition" he has tried to outwit.

One of the more interesting aspects of the volume is the brief afterword from each writer about the stories they have written, and why they are horrifying for them. This is a feature of both volumes. The covers of both feature some fine modelling and photography by Mark Thompson. If you see the these volumes in the kids section at the local bookstore, pick one up and have a good close look at the cover. The effects are quite subtle. One complaint I do have is that while each book is about 140 pages, at least 25 pages of that in each book is blank paper. I'm glad they only cost \$8.95.

There are a number of interesting stories in both HAIR-RAISING and its companion, but their purpose as horror anthologies must be questioned.

\* \* \*

SIRIUS, Issue 1, March 1993; Garry Wyatt (ed); magazine; \$7.50.

Available from PO Box 188, Curtin, ACT 2605, Australia. Subscriptions are \$30 a year in Oz, Overseas Economy Air \$50, Overseas surface mail \$40. Australian currency only.

This is a long-awaited review magazine from that vocal crowd in Canberra. Issue one has a strong emphasis on horror, perhaps due to Dan Simmons's presence in Canberra at The Australian National Word festival. On the horror theme Gayle Lovett looks at Dan Simmons, Christine Arthur looks at

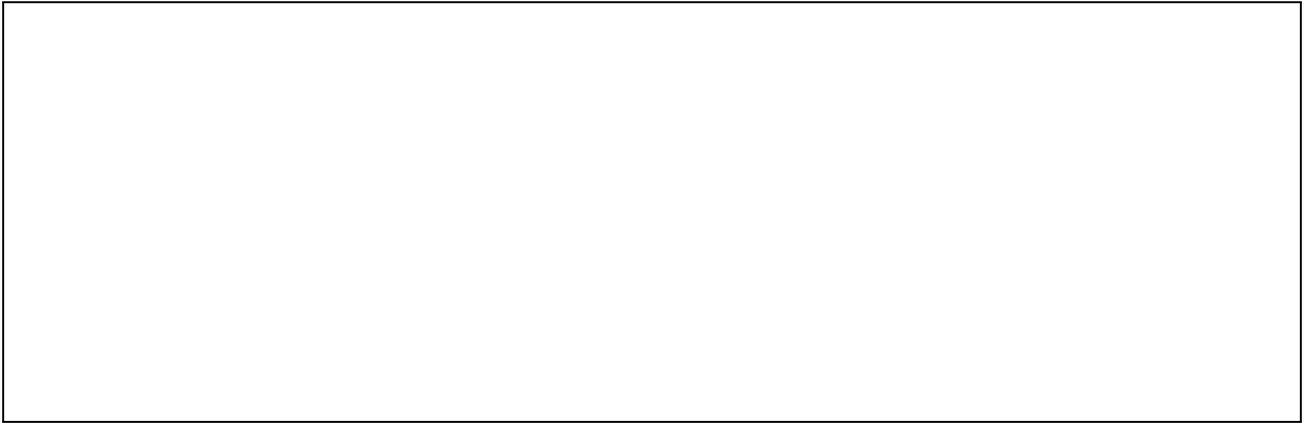
a few recent vampire novels, Pamela Klacar reminisces on her time working for Hammer films, there is a bibliography of Charles L. Grant's Shadows series of anthologies, and yours truly does a couple of reviews.

Fantasy also gets a bit of a going over - perhaps because that is the genre where SIRIUS is getting the most support from publishers. Steve Paulsen's interview with Martin Middleton has been reprinted from ASFWN. Sylvia Kelso looks at Sherri Tepper's True Game trilogies, and Catherine Rayner takes along look at David Eddings and doesn't find much, other than the plots, to comment on. Graham Stone charms with a reminiscence on some of the good old days when Australia was just discovering SF. Colin Steele does a retrospective on Aussie SF over the last decade, and there is a bunch of reviews by such people as Colin Steele, Lucy Sussex and Garry Wyatt.

All interesting stuff, everybody seems to have something to say and says it well. However the issue seems to suffer from the lack of one really central, cohesive, important article or interview. I suspect this situation will be rapidly corrected in future issues. There isn't much advertising (yet). Some of the layout where the spaces between the lines has been stretched to make the print reach the bottom of the page looks a bit awful, but that sort of thing comes with experience. Perhaps they can commission a bit of poetry or artwork to fill blank spaces.

Available from the above address. Useful for solving (or in the cases of several of the items mentioned below - creating further debate!) those old taproom arguments where you and your best enemy are having a long drunken discussion about the ecological significance of salt in SALT, whether or not Roadkill Press reprinted BANISHED DREAMS, on the number of starving rats featured in METAHORROR, and why the date 1937 keeps coming back to Graham Stone's mind. Do these kinds of debates still happen? They don't in my local. Read it and enjoy.

- Bill Congreve



LEIGH BLACKMORE, PO Box A281, Sydney South, NSW 2000

Many thanks for THE MENTOR 77, which I thoroughly enjoyed reading. The mixture of content is quite to my taste. I always enjoy non-fiction, so the review columns and historical articles were the bits I read first. Bill Congreve seems to me a brave man to tackle fantasy books in his series; I must say his reviews support my already-formed opinion (maybe it's a prejudice) that most of the stuff isn't worth the paper it's printed on. In my younger years I was a great fan of S&S, having written at age 15 a pastiche called STARBREAKER which was an ill-advised attempt to meld Moorcock and Clark Ashton Smith, and I still look nostalgically back at the great years of Leiber's *Swords* series, and the even earlier years of the pulp greats such as Kuttner, C. L. Moore, Talbot Mundy and so on. I confess to re-reading Howard periodically. I think Karl Edward Wagner's Kane stories are brilliant. But in the late seventies Donaldson's turgid fantasy epics threw a wet blanket over my interest in fantasy, and you wouldn't get me near an Eddings or a Robert Jordan with a team of wild horses. I occasionally skim one of these modern-day three-decker monstrosities on the bookshop shelves to see whether the formula is changing, or whether an original writer has struggled out of the pack, but opening pages at random usually leads to a shaking of the head - not only at the writer's standard overburdening of the plot with trappings of maps, glossaries and other stuff that suffice to pad out the book in lieu of actual imagination, but also at the sheer laxness of the editors who commission this stuff. I guess editorial illiteracy is not restricted solely to the fantasy field - we are in an era where even major sf and horror titles seem to be given only the most cursory proofreading for spelling and grammar, the editors at the major publishing houses often seem simply not to know how to perform this function. Lest I sound too negative, I did enjoy a recent fantasy novel called THE SHADOWS IN THE WATCHGATE by Mike Jeffries, primarily because it didn't involve elves, quests or the other done-to-death para-phernalia that seems to be par for the course with this sort of writing. And I'd like to put in a plug for Cherry Wilder's Riders of the Hylor series - now there's a writer who can characterise, plot originally, involve the reader, and within a superficially-standard historical framework, tell a damned gripping story that justifies a continuing series. You never get the sense in reading Wilder that (like others one could name) she's come down with a case of verbal diarrhoea and hacked a massive novel with one plotline into three-parts merely to suit the market. Hey Bill, what about a retrospective look at this series as part of your commentary on Australian fantasy - Wilder surely qualifies even though she's an ex-patriate.

Speaking of spelling and such matters, as I was above, Michael Hailstone's comments in his letter about spelling reform struck a chord with me. The debate that flourished some years ago about this does seem to have died down, which I can only attribute to the same frightening burgeoning of semi-literacy in our society. (I'm tempted to go off at a tangent here about the Americanisation of Australian culture, but will spare you). I see nothing at all wrong with using "simpler" spellings; the only problem of course is that consistency is going to be sacrificed because some will use the "reform", some won't. But at least if a given writer is consistent in his usages, this is preferable to picking up books

with the same words spelled different ways (which I have encountered more than once). On the other hand, I'm also very interested in experimental fiction, and techniques used by the surrealists, William Burroughs, the new-wavers like Ballard, the post-modernists like Kathy Acker all advocate radical forms of fiction which extend not only to the structure of a piece but to its grammar and spelling. I'm by no means averse to this either, since "conventional" structures and grammar place severe constraints on the imagination. The Temple of Psychic Youth, a libertarian order with a world-wide network of information exchange, is another example of a group which advocates spelling *difference* purely for the sake of its "jarring" effect, in that encountered unusual spelling jolts the mind out of its well-worn and habitual paths. Try writing everything with "ov" instead of "of" and "thee" instead of "the" and see how different and "strange" the writing seems; yet this is an elementary experiment compared to what might be changed/transfigured in writing. All this experiment-ation, or deliberate radicalism of style, is a far cry from the unintentional grammatical idiocies that hack editors perpetuate these days between hard and soft covers - I'm all in favour of the former, but deplore the latter.

Well, to return to the content of the magazine! Andrew Darlington's piece on the S&S comic strips was great - all too often these areas of popular fiction are neglected, and decent analysis such as Darlington gives is always welcome. He struck a nice balance between fannishness and scholarship in his piece. I confess I skimmed the Noguerol piece about SF fandom in Argentina, but again this kind of thing is commendable; many of the South American and European countries have rich histories of publishing (fan and professional) that are well worth knowing about. I was amused to note in Noguerol's article the translation of the title of Lovecraft/Derleth's THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD as THE ONE WHO SPIES IN THE LINTEL (p.42). The world of foreign translation raises a host of editorial questions additional to those I touched on above in regard to spellings. I wonder whether the novel actually appeared titled with this clumsy translation, and whether the text suffered in a similarly clumsy fashion - the resultant novel would surely be almost a different work than its English counterpart if so!

I enjoyed seeing Steve Carter's work in your magazine, though I feel the piece used doesn't represent the best of his work. I suspect he submitted something he felt would fit, but frankly Steve (if you're reading this), I would rather see a story using human characters; the fascination with dinosaurs is OK as far as it goes, but I think your audience for that particular type of graphic story is bound to be limited. Some of your Spicy Alien Detective material would be more suited for publication here - just my opinion.

The other fiction and poetry in the magazine was enjoyable but I'll restrict my comments to simply that, as none of the three tales were really my cup of tea. Appearance-wise, the quality art and colour-xerox cover makes THE MENTOR an extremely attractive magazine; I'm sorry that I haven't followed it regularly before now, and hope to see future issues.

I'm glad to see the attention given in this issue to the horror small press. There is certainly a boom happening and I take this opportunity to mention a couple of related events your readers may not be aware of. First is the imminent publication of my anthology TERROR AUSTRALIS: BEST

AUSTRALIAN HORROR, a 100,000 word book of original horror stories to be published by Hodder & Stoughton Australia in mass-market paperback in June 1993. Horror fans are in for a treat with this one, and sf fans would also be advised to check it out since a number of the writers included are known primarily for their sf - Terry Dowling, Greg Egan, Cherry Wilder, Leanne Frahm, Dirk Strasser, Steven Dedman, Sean Williams, amongst others. There are 27 stories in the book, it's illustrated throughout, and it consolidates the shot in the arm given to Australian horror by Bill Congreve's recent INTIMATE ARMAGEDDONS. No foreign sales have been negotiated yet, but I'm hopeful the anthology will be sold to both the US and the UK. Almost certainly, if it sells well here, Hodder Australia will turn it into a continuing series - so horror and sf writers capable of producing first-class dark fantasy work should bear TERROR AUSTRALIS in mind as a future market. (Please note well: this is *not* to be constructed as a request for submissions at this time!) Needless to say, I hope that everyone who wants to encourage the development of professional writing markets in this country will buy a copy of the book - if that's a shameless plug so be it, but I feel Hodder's faith in the future deserves to be supported.

I'm excited to announce that Dennis Etchison, current President of the Horror Writers of America, has asked me to act as Australian Representative for the HWA, which is currently looking at doubling its 500-strong membership, and in doing so is seeking to enlist more members outside the USA. There is a motion afoot to change the society's name to Horror Writers Association to counter the perception that HWA is parochial and ethnocentric. More details when I know them, but it looks though I will be coordinating memberships and information about the HWA, and I see a strong link with that society as benefiting Australian writers in several ways. One - HWA has published at least one anthology (UNDER THE FANG) by member writers; if memberships are open to Australian writers, then so, I guess, will be the chance to contribute to HWA-published anthologies - thus the potential for more USA exposure for local writers. Additionally I imagine there will be a change to the structure of the HWA Bram Stoker Awards whereby international categories will be added - thus it may be that an Australian horror story or novel will be able to be nominated for the Bram Stoker for the first time. I intend working towards this possibility as the local HWA rep - I'd be glad to hear what others think they'd like to see happen now this link has been established.

Bill, I've also been contacted by a Russian gentleman who runs a literary agency there and is seeking material for translation into Russian. It may be fruitful for us to discuss this, bearing in mind your existing Russian contacts, before I reply to him.

A reader request - anyone out there have any back issues of a glossy UK publication called MILLION which concentrates on popular fiction? It's published by the same publisher as INTERZONE, and the one issue I've seen is a mine of info on pseudonyms, publishing history, and the obscure by-ways of genre fiction (westerns, romance, sf, gothics, boys' fiction, lurid pulp paperbacks, etc). If anyone can help with copies of other issues, or if I can get photocopies, please drop me a line at the above address.

(2.3.93)

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

It is with a feeling of guilt that I finally get around to writing a loc for THE MENTOR 77. As usual it was a pleasure to find in the mail-box and an enjoyable read. Plenty of articles, a few stories, a couple of poems and a comic, not to mention the always entertaining R&R Dept and Ron's reviews.

Still, I found the stories a little disappointing. Though all of them were fairly well written, I found them either a little too predictable for my taste or I just couldn't get into them. OBUNAGA'S FINGER needs another read I think before I pass any judgement. Which must say something for it.

Sean Williams' GODDESS OF STONE was usual slickly written but it didn't have quite the same appeal to me as his story LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK. Sean Williams is an interesting writer. He grabs the old cliches and twists and turns them till they offer us a new perspective. This is the sign of a good science fiction writer well on the way to becoming an even better one. He must be good - he makes me jealous as hell.

THE SALE OF YOUTH didn't do much for me but I put this down to personal taste. The story seemed a little too predictable and the only character I really liked was the infamous "man dressed in black" and I'll put that one down to me being a real bastard.

All of these stories though must have had some worth or they wouldn't have inspired me to comment, however clumsily, upon them.

The comic wasn't exactly my cup of tea either. These may be a result of an upbringing of primarily American Superhero comics. If I don't get a good dose of melodramatic adjective-filled dialogue and muscle-bound brooding neurotic heroes in a comic then I feel cheated. Put it down to immaturity, I guess.

THIRST by Monique DeMontigny was good with some superb imagery and a sense of true pain. J. C. Hartley's poem rode the other end of the spectrum - light and fun.

Ron, your OUT OF OZ article was a real eye opener and when I can get the funds I'll be sending off several postal notes and doing my best to subscribe to as many of the mags as possible. Australian fantastic fiction is getting so interesting at the moment that I feel it would be cruel not to try and help these mags out. But as usual money's tight. I've been meaning to subscribe to EOD for nearly a year but a flood of Uni work, lack of money and general apathy have stopped me. This I will rectify.

Bill Congreve's statements in FANTASY DOWNUNDER I found sadly true. Tolkien clones abound as do clones of Tolkien clones. Enough said, I say, of pre-pubescent characters who save the universe from red-eyed Dark Lords all the while suffering from a bad case of acne and an awakening sexuality. Fantasy has become a cynical marketing exercise but with that said, it is still a genre that manages to suck me in whenever I have the flu or grow softly nostalgic remembering the day I first read the LORD OF THE RINGS (I had the flu, of course!).

Well, the other articles were all quite interesting and the artwork very impressive. All in all THE MENTOR 77 was pretty damn good. (-.3.93)

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

First off, my profound thanks to whoever among your readers nominated my poem EXE THE ALIEN IS SHOWN THE REWARDS OF POWER, in #74, for the Rhysling awards of the Science Fiction Poetry Association - I really do appreciate this.

This will be a sort of "fitte ye firste" of a loc, ie that things are a bit overfacing at the minute, so is a part response, basically to areas of #77 other than the fic and the "serial art story", entertaining as the latter looks to be from odd frame I've glanced at (and good to see Dino-woman getting her story told "in full"), and Andy's article, which is another treat I'm saving for a quieter time. The cover... dunno who the artist had in mind, but to me it's Rydra Wong to the (imagined) life... a much better BABEL 17 cover than the one they actually used.

It's interesting to read your and Bill Congreve's different looks at what is happening in Australia, but irrelevant to comment. On the face of it, that would seem also the case with the ongoing Argentine saga - but as well as being a fascinating glimpse of a "parallel world" of SF (there are a number of books there which, if they live up to the description, I'd love to read, particularly the "Trafalgar" series which sounds a tremendous idea - the "parochial local" interfaced with the strangeness of "Out There".) there's an extra pressure in the sly, almost throwaway humour of Noguero's little passing touches (the brief deadpan description of the group of psychologists getting together to write SF is just one instance) and the bracketed explanations of words peculiar to Argentina have a sort of "Encyclopedia Galactica footnote" effect in giving a vivid capsule picture of the country itself.

Both the poems are very powerful this time. THIRST is a fine example of that intriguing cross-genre, SF horror - the "props of Poe", but with a setting which is redolent of a future or alternative non-Earth or post-Earth, and the line "the desert revolves lop-sided" in particular portmanteaus a host of sensations, heat dizziness, mirage, thirst-crazed running in circles, etc, with fine compression.

The TOSS ("Tour Of Solar System") poem has been done so often that it takes real skill to remind the idea and make us look freshly, and that "Grand Tour" achieves the unexpected but "Just so" image... "cracking skulls", "snigger under pressure", "picking up strays" all conjure a whole gestalt of images in a couple of words, and the final ambiguity of "big sleep", with its Chandler echo, prevents a let-down ending. One tiny puzzlement with the poem - "arcase" - I can't find the word in my fair-size dictionary... will try the mega OED at the library, but I just wonder if it's a literal, but if so what for? "arcane" wouldn't fit... "hard-case"? "Carcase"? And yet *arcase* is a word that certainly looks as though it ought to exist!

A few loc-on-loc comments/reactions... re HWJ's endorsing of Walt Willis suspicions re art... a "strategy" I find very useful is to "impose my own agenda"... ie, if the artist doesn't say what the work is "about", I think, sodit, he/she has put the work on show/into the public domain, so I'll decide for myself what it means to me/reminds me of/represents. I've recommended this to others who feel uneasy with /put under attack by art... it restores psychological control to the viewer,

and thus permits actually deciding whether or not the work actually relates/gives pleasure/arouses interest etc.

I don't worry about "bad" or superseded science in SF, just think of the situation as a "parallel universe" one... after all, these *are* fictions, folktales of the future if you like, so to hell with it... and the mistakes are often as interesting as the "reality" or more so, anyhow.

The "development of consciousness" argument sounds dubious as hell to me... folk went on for years how low-tech "primitive" man was, then Stonehenge got "decoded" as a highly sophisticated astronomical computer... I suspect if they'd left us written poetry or whatever, equal sophistication would be present. Consciousness changes its framework, certainly... the Protestant shift to obsession with individual salvation through works rather than faith, for example - but I doubt the nature changes.

I've got news for David Tansey... we Brits didn't vote for this Queen either... the royals are as much of an imposition here (though of much longer standing) as in Oz (and I say that even though I suspect, if there was a referendum here on the monarchy, it would get a big yes majority, though probably a lot smaller than a few years ago, before the recession and the Windsors' various marital hassles banality.).

Loved Don Boyd's capsule description of the matter of SF poetry.

Hailstone's mention of Hubbie triggered a lot of memories - my wife's grandfather was buried there, and, on a Roots-type trip a few years back to the parts of the Scots Borders her father and his brothers lived as farm-workers (it was a near-feudal system there pre-WWII, job security only six months at a time, then if the farmer didn't like you, you'd move on) before he got out to join the army, we went to the curiously eerie graveyard... might return to that in "Fitte Ye Seconds", as and when.

Walter Willis's remark about poetry "data compression" also raises thoughts I'll need to clarify, so again "next instalment"ised. (27.2.93)

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

Excuse hand scrawl, but there's a blizzard raging outside, so an easy chair by the fire is preferable to a cold computer room. Many thanks for the superlative issue of THE MENTOR 77. That cover alone is worthy of a Hugo or two - and it almost fits that excellent opening tale OBUNAGA'S FINGER. A really well-written and gripping yarn. Far better than the current pablum served up in ANALOG - and that cover was greatly superior to ANALOG's "art".

Not being a fantasy fan, the large coverage of that genre didn't really grip me - and when you limit much of it to FANTASY DOWNUNDER you miss my wavelength. Darlington's WARRIORS was very good and again, its artwork was beautifully drawn - and brought out the similarity of presentation of each panel. ARGENTINE SF - fair enough if you're interested in a documented history of SF world-wide.

FERAL KILLERS lowered the standard with a bang after Darlington's article. Crudely drawn and pointlessly bestial - what made you spoil the issue with it? SALE OF YOUTH went well - good fanzine fiction, but I'm afraid GODDESS OF STONE made me give up halfway - not my cup of tea.

Again, your OUT OF OZ covered a field in which I have no interest - and by limiting it to Oz meant I'd never heard of the titles or authors.

Book reviews excellent - so I went to buy GARDEN OF RAMA only to be told it was only available in *hardcover* - how come you lot get a pb?

LOCs also good and varied - verse, I pass on that little lot. One plea, please don't go the way of certain other Australian fans of only printing material from Australia. Fanzine world-wide use material from all over - it seems insular (and often boring) to fix limits on where contributions or themes may originate.

No doubt about it, a damn good issue and well worthy of a Hugo Award. (28.2.93)

**SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd., Surrey KT2 6BD, UK.**

Thanks for TM 77. As usual an interesting read. I liked the cover and the new logo on the contents page, and the illustration on page 14.

OBUNAGA'S FINGER was good until the ending, which rather faded out.

Like Bill Congreve. I tend to avoid the deluge of Fantasy trilogies, but I still believe reviewers should avoid branding such books as "property". A writer puts in a lot of work on a novel and deserves not to be referred to in such a put-down manner. It's nice to see Australian writers getting published.

GODDESS OF STONE was quite good, but I thought the background to the story could have been developed a bit more.

Andy Darlington, as usual, turns in an interesting article, even though I disagree with his first paragraph. Surely the roots of sword and sorcery are Howard's Conan stories? It looks as though Andy will soon be getting nominated for Best Fan Writer.

THE SALE OF YOUTH was okay, though this theme has been rather done to death.

Claudio's history of sf in Argentina was fascinating and makes me wonder how many other countries produce sf we hardly ever hear of.

Your own column reveals that Oz is a real hotbed of small press magazines; also, in this country, the recession is beginning to bite fans too. With redundancy, some here are biting the dust.

FERAL KILLERS: The drawing is okay for a comic strip and the background shows imagination. Unfortunately, the strip lacks a storyline. The artist needs a real story, with a character struggling to solve a problem and, hopefully, succeeding.

I'm afraid the poems didn't do much for me.

An interesting bunch of letters as usual. I enjoyed the sign advertising Cyclone Tracy.

The best read I've had lately is GOOD OMENS by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman. (1.3.93)

**JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd., Padgate, Warrington AW2 0QG, UK.**

TM 77 arrived safely, many thanks. Super front cover painting, makes the mag look real classy.

OBUNAGA'S FINGER was slick, stylish and littered with misprints; oddly enough the rest of the mag wasn't too

bad where this was concerned, why should this one story be so affected? Anyway, typos apart, I enjoyed the story.

Bill Congreve's FANTASY DOWNUNDER was highly entertaining, though I have grave doubts about his assertion that "his decision was made for artistic purposes." regarding the splitting of LOTR into three - from what I've read my own impression is distinctly the opposite, but I've not the necessary books to hand to quote from so I'll pass on that one and leave it for a better informed Tolkien fan to put Bill right.

GODDESS OF STONE was OK - I found Gay an intensely irritating character. The ending came as no real surprise, it's a fairly well used idea.

Andrew Darlington manages to steal the show again with a terrific article. I used to get the EAGLE, and though I don't remember specifically any ancient warrior strips I must have seen at least one in EAGLE or LION as I turned on at a very early age to that type of historical/fantasy type novel. I know I sought out Wren's Beau Geste books as a result of reading the LUCK OF THE LEGION strip. There is a distinct link between certain types of "historical" fiction and S&S, but it is a bit chicken and egg, I suspect a lot of cross influencing from both sides.

THE SALE OF YOUTH was a good variant on the *Faust* theme, though I'm not so sure a character with as much experience as Martin would have fallen for it - I think a slightly younger person whose life had been a failure, or a much older person facing certain death would have been more credible.

GRAND TOUR was a terrific poem, well presented. the history of Argentine SF continued to open a window on an unknown world, and the OUT OF OZ survey made interesting reading. Sorry, I don't like the FERAL KILLERS strip. THIRST was another good poem. (5.3.93)

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

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of THE MENTOR 77. I particularly liked Peggy Ranson's dragonette on the front cover even though I suspect it would not be a very successful species. A meat eating beak without talons to hold the prey is not a good design.

Oh dear! This edition strikes me as having the ambience of a professional journal with readers rather than a fanzine with an interactive family of readers. I know the excellent reviews and the OUT OF OZ columns are by you Ron but as a person you are hardly there this ish, a few very short comments in the R&R and no separate editorial chat.

*[I hope you liked TM 79, this and future issues - I will be endeavouring to have more than just editing input with the zine in the future - Ron]*

The above para has nothing to do with my being unable to write more than a thank you note this time, simply I'm just not feeling too well. Probably no more than a combination of grey winter skies and giving up smoking playing hell with my metabolism. Sadly enough if I wait for my malaise to pass you are unlikely to get even a thank you as I have a very full calendar for the next several months.

Poorly or not I certainly read every word and looked at every bit of artwork. I will just take the time to comment briefly to Sheryl Birkhead. I feel confident there is a Diabetes Association of America, there certainly is one in Britain. A

simple and basic explanation for the eye damage, and not so much circulatory problem as damage at points where circulation is poor in any body, the excess sugar in the blood converts to an acid that attacks tissue at points of restricted blood flow. (2.3.93)

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

The unexpected is always more interesting - for better or for worse - than the expected. So too this issue of THE MENTOR [#78]. I think the only reason I wasn't consciously preoccupied with its imminence was that I wasn't in it. (And I can imagine quite a few people breathing a sigh of relief at *that*.) All in all, a pleasant surprise.

Firstly, the cover. Characteristically graphic, yes; good, yes, although not up to dear Peggy's standards. What I found most interesting was the *inside* of the cover. It's good to see you are getting some advertising at last. No doubt it'll help pay the bills. If anyone has the idiocy to claim that you're "sold out", ignore them as fools should be.

The Gargoyle Club sounds like fun. I'll be sure to look them up if I ever make it Eastward again. How's Dale Stewart, by the way? Recovered?

*[Yes, though for a 16 year old she was uncharacteristically silent for most of the meeting... - Ron.]*

Duncan Evans' COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was great - the best fiction in the issue. Another talent to watch, especially after ELROY'S NEW ROUTINE in the latest EIDOLON. His style is refreshingly ... *fresh* ... although a little muddy in places. (Is that a contradiction? I don't think so.) His characters are well-drawn, some new variations on old clichés, and competently handled. The details, though, are what I love the most, in particular the necromancer with his brain in a cupboard. A fine *frisson* indeed. More, please, Duncan.

Buck Coulson's column ended on an intriguing note: the Mysterious Matter of the Mistaken Moniker. There quite a few explanations for this type of phenomenon. One is that a distant, dying relative might have psychically called his name - perhaps a relative who privately thought of "Buck" as "Bob". Unlikely, but possible if you believe in this sort of stuff. Another is that, just as only salespeople refer to Buck as "Bob", so too must there be a part of Buck that responds to the "Bob", even if only negatively. Maybe the "Bob" part was stirring, or the "Buck" part was calling for "Bob". I'd be interested to know more about the dream that was, apparently, unconnected to the phantom voice. More research required, here. A third possibility is that on a parallel Earth there exists a "Bob Coulson" who has never been called Buck, who is for some reason trying to contact his distant cousin. Untestable, unless this "Bob Coulson" tries again. Keep a notepad by your bed, Buck. I'll be looking forward to hearing more about this.

HEY, HE'S A FISH by I. Lubenski. Hey, this was fantastic! No more needs to be said.

Good advice from Jim Verran, which I've heard before and still have yet to act upon. Maybe seeing it in print will jolt me into life. Andrew Darlington's Requiem for Isaac Asimov was written with all the appropriate delicacy it required. I think he summed up everyone's feelings quite well.

Brent Lillie's ESCAPE FROM YINN was cool. I like puns, even terrible ones. (A secret, that - don't tell anyone. And that's another reason why I liked COLDMACE

MOONLIGHTS; almost a pun in the title which I didn't understand until I read the whole story.)

Bill Congreve keeps hitting the nail on the head.

Unfortunately, no matter how many nails he drives home, the lid on the fantasy coffin just won't stay shut.

Evan Rainer's THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE was much better than the earlier THE AFFAIR OF THE MARTIAN CADAVER (#76). I particularly like the scene where Ray attempted to lose his tail, Vladimir, and failed. That section alone is a parable of sorts - many covert agencies could learn something from this. The triumph of simple pragmatism over unnecessary complexity. Also, where did the picture on p. 34 come from? My only major criticism was the line on p. 36: "Arthur was a big snickered..." If I don't find out what it means, I'll never rest in peace.

*[Of course "big" should be "bit". But I refuse to use the grammar checker... The picture was out of one of the US science mags, and is of a Moller from the story - Ron.]*

The history of fandom in Argentina I skipped again, despite the fact that it looked more interesting than Parts Two and One. Oh, well, My loss.

The POETRY, TOO section had one real gem: Trent Jamieson's PIES AND DEAD SNAILS. The rest didn't stick with me - ie, I've already forgotten them, and I only read them half an hour ago.

Carcinogen and Carnage's THE INITIATE was better than FERAL KILLERS. Something horrible's going to happen in the next issue, I just know it. What exactly I can't guess. Either the politically incorrect protagonists are going to get the chop in some explicitly violent way, or else they'll win the day (as these types always seem to). I'll be hoping for the former, betting on the latter.

R&R was enjoyable, as I have come to expect. Buck Coulson mentioned that AIDS is not a serious disease in The States, which it isn't. But I heard recently (can't remember where, so this may be wrong), that in some parts of Africa HIV has infected up to ten percent of the population. If true, this is a hell of a worry. A lot of people are going to die there in the next few years, as the disease reaches its final stages. Glad I don't live there.

It seems the response to GODDESS OF STONE was somewhat divided. I, after some thought, tend to side with Grai Hughes and Shane Dix - not one of my better efforts. If I tell myself enough times that even the likes of Greg Egan write the occasional stinker, I might keep suicidal depression at bay. Thanks overall for your suggestions, comments, and the simple time spent reading it. The next one, I hope, will be of superior quality.

To the review column, and only a couple of comments, both to do with Kim Stanley Robinson. (1) RED MARS was, to put it simply, easily the best book I have read so far this year, and (2) the final line of the review of DOWN AND OUT IN THE YEAR 2000 reads: "A mixture of fantasy and sf they {the stories} are all written and enjoyable". One would hope that they are indeed written. Finger-painted could be an option, I suppose, or carved in wood. How about moulded from plasticine? (I love your typos, Ron. Keep 'em comin'.) (11.3.93)

**DOUGLAS J. A. GUILFOYLE, RMB 695 Gundaroo Rd., via Bungendore, NSW 2621.**

Whoops, now how did that happen? Two issues of THE MENTOR slide by without me commenting. Anyway, down to the serious comments.

Right, my list of stuff that made me sit up and say "Wow!" in #76 and #77: IN DEPTH (both times), NOTHING NICE, USED BOOKS, TREES ALONG A DELTA, THE FARM STORY, the back cover of #76, the front cover of #77, OBUNAGA'S FINGER and GODDESS OF STONE.

I was interested by NOT BIG BROTHER, RECOLLECTIONS OF SYNCON, LOOKING FORWARD ..., ... MARTIAN CADAVER, THIRST, FERAL KILLERS, OUT OF OZ and THE SALE OF YOUTH.

WARRIORS OF ANCIENT WORLDS was readable, but unfortunately I could not work up *much* enthusiasm for SF IN ARGENTINA.

This last I regretted because the article was obviously full of information - for my tastes, too full. I found the reading soon became dense and difficult. The style in which it was written was good, but the constant supply of small pieces of information left me feeling a little overloaded. It was a valiant effort to cover a very large piece of history and, when I finally had a spare moment, I shall certainly give it a second chance.

To return to "Wow!" material. IN DEPTH continues to be fantastic reading, all I can ask is that Bill Congreve keeps writing them and Ron keeps sending THE MENTOR to me.

As for cover art, I'm from the "I know what I like" school of art criticism so I'll just pass on my heartiest compliments to Jozef and Peggy. (And Ron, the laser photocopied cover was an absolute delight - thanks for going to the trouble and expense.)

NOTHING NICE: fantastic opening, vivid descriptions and a delightfully sinister, but not entirely serious, mood right from the first sentences. Effective, with a delightful twist at the end. When am I going to read more of this guy's stuff? (No, no! Americanisms! Agh!) Seriously, Mr Evans greatly impressed me.

USED BOOKS. Great. Wonderful. Hell, Shane, you've read what others have said in TM #77, why waste your time with more adjectives? Just wish I'd finished a certain story of mine featuring a mysterious bookshop about six months earlier. But then Cupola's revival of Dracula has already made my current obsession with vampire stories look a little silly....

TREES ALONG A DELTA I found to be a refreshing and original approach to the time-travel theme. I'm not sure I agree with other's suggestions to expand/explain the story further. I felt the drug-induced, unreal air was quite convincing. I've been under anaesthetic often enough to remember clearly that sense of total disorientation upon awakening.

THE FARM STORY was simply wonderful. The story had genuine emotion and left me feeling for the characters. Good work. Enough said.

OBUNAGA'S FINGER. I've been meaning to read some cyberpunk SF for a while now, and this may well have made up my mind to do it. The narrator's distinctive dialogue also rang true for me (having just returned from a month living with a family in Germany, where I picked up a habit of saying

"ja" myself). I must admit to a certain amount of confusion as to what the hell was going on at the beginning of the story, but it unfolded nicely. Lovely ending. I let it wash over me and had a great time.

GODDESS OF STONE seemed to have much more emphasis on characters and situation than LOOKING FORWARD.... All up it was a far more personal story, and so I felt it was more effective. The future society portrayed in GODDESS OF STONE was interesting and deserves further development: I'd enjoy reading a story set in the mainstream society of this barbarously secular and sceptical world.

Finally a word on FERAL KILLERS. The artwork and ideas were great. Together they created a rich and complex world which seemed oddly real and imminent. Though the gore, violence and rapacious nature of several of the creatures disturbed me deeply. I would be very interested to see a comic in the Gothic Horror genre from Carter & Carcinogen. (-.3.93)

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

Please excuse the lateness of this letter - time just seemed to disappear for me the last 4 or 5 months. My copies of THE MENTOR ended up getting buried under school books, clothes that needed name labels, car parts, etc. Following are my comments on Issues 75 and 76.

Issue 75: I did like THE PEASANT WITH THE PHEASANT. I'm not really into modern poetry, especially those that are free verse, so this poem was a bit of a surprise. Most of the stories were extremely depressing, with GREY CLOUDS being extremely disjointed. It probably would have helped if Louise Hollingberry had connected the three parts better. ASHTA THE FOOL was whimsical, which I really liked. I'm sure I've met some doctors who are the spitting image of the village sage, (and had them diagnose medicine for me!). James Blish got me into Science Fiction, so it was great to see an article on him, especially as I had just borrowed A LIFE FOR THE STARS from one of the libraries I have joined. I didn't mind Michael Hailstone's article, although the bad spelling did irritate after the first few paragraphs.

Issue 76: THE FARM, to me, isn't science fiction; not fiction at all, if you read the papers. I still haven't worked out TREES ALONG A DELTA - did the hiccups cause time travel hop, amnesia, or both? It's a toss-up which I liked the best - COMPACT or AFFAIR OF THE MARTIAN CADAVER. COMPACT again appealed to my sense of whimsy (Joy Buchanan always thought I had a weird sense of humour!), and THE MARTIAN CADAVER appealed with the confusion of Ray Bilinsky over the numbers of his superiors. I also liked the American's use of multi-syllable words for simple words. It is so true to life. (Just look at computer terminology.)

NOTHING NICE - there seemed to me to be no point to it. Either that, or it wasn't finished. If the boy was important enough to have a technologically superior bodyguard in his Teddy bear, then who the hell was he? Why was he so important? There were too many loose ends in this story. Sorry, Duncan Evans, because I did like the main idea behind it. Again, the article on C. S. Lewis touched a chord. I first came across THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE in Grade 5, (about the same time as Joy Buchanan - remember Joy?) and ended up introducing the

Narnia series first to my younger siblings, and now to my children. I've never managed to read any of his science fiction books, though I did find THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS amusing, especially with the ending.

I suppose I should end this letter with a quick biographical note about myself. I am 10 months younger than Joy Buchanan, whom I've known since Grade 9. We chummed up then and have always been good friends since. It is not true that I am the god mother of her 18 year old daughter as *I am not that old!* She may be, but I'm not. I tend towards fantasy rather than straight science fiction, enjoying Anne McCaffrey, David Eddings, Terry Brooks, (good name!), and Elizabeth Scarborough. I also read a lot of other types, like historical fiction, crime, and even trashy romance. I also crochet, and cross stitch, but don't bother too much about housework. Hey, who would rather mop floors when they could read? (12.3.93)

**CUTTY SARK, PO Box 124, Penshurst, NSW 2222.**

I've just finished digesting THE MENTOR #77, and here are my comments. Firstly, there was no editorial. I want an editorial! We readers are coerced into baring our souls in THE R&R DEPT. the least you could do is bare a bit of yourself in an editorial. By all means you can play the strong silent type at barbecues, but as the editor of THE MENTOR, you have a responsibility to share. Give your family a break (I'm sure they deserve it) and talk to us, your readers. I recommend a regular editorial of say 400 words which includes private thoughts, personal doubts, small fears, and any good jokes you've heard lately. Think about it.

Moving right along, I liked the cover illustration, at first anyway. I thought it was very attractive, but then looking at it again, I was not so sure. It was a bit too glamorous, a bit too "you-too-could-look-like-this-if-you-buy-dragonpoo-shampoo". The cover could happily sit on the wall of a hairdressing salon. In my books, that spells danger.

As for the contents, I preferred the stories and letters to the non-fiction articles. In fact, I didn't think there were enough stories. I enjoyed very much GODDESS OF STONE and OBUNAGA'S FINGER. THE SALE OF YOUTH was a good read as well except the ending, it didn't quite gel.

What I thought was really terrible, and a major waste of space, was THE FERAL KILLERS comic. The back of my breakfast cereal box is worthier of attention than this comic. Why did you publish it? Do you have a morbid fascination for women with sharp teeth, or what? I think you been bottling things up, Ron, it's not good for you. Mark my words. (18.3.93)

*[Well, I did get your attention with it... And if I am going to go "baring my soul", I at least would like those who send LoCs to append their real names to them. I think that anyone who spends time writing a LoC, story or article, then this would show that they have some pride in what they have done. - Ron.]*

**DOUGLAS J. A. GUILFOYLE, RMB 695 Gundaroo Rd., Via Bungendore, NSW 2621.**

Ron. AUTUMN DREAMS. Thanks. I have now been published in the world of speculative fiction. My name is out there, sort of. Not that I expect this particular poem to be my beginning. I do have a soft spot for it certainly, but it's

hardly my best material. It was composed at a meeting of friends who are interested in poetry by Lake Burley-Griffen last autumn and I never thought much would come of it. It is not perhaps a strong platform from which to offer constructive criticism of other's work but here are my thoughts anyway.

DANGEROUS WAVES. Julia, I cannot pretend to have understood this poem until the third or fourth reading. The last three lines could use more judicious punctuation (perhaps placing brackets around the second last line, or by placing comas after "darkness" and "shadows'?) As it stands the ideas seem to run together. THE FULL MOON'S FACE was lovely and I enjoyed EVOLUTION, although the line "Mystic and scientist alike" seemed to be missing a verb. (Perhaps: "... scientist wait alike"?) I realise poetry is an emotive issue and that I'm always sensitive to constructive criticism, but please give it a few moments thought. After that feel free to tell me to go and get stuffed, or point out flaws in my own piece.

Trent Jamieson. I liked your pieces a great deal, especially PIES AND DEAD SNAILS. The imagery was fantastic, especially as I read it two days after seeing the Surrealism exhibition at the ANG. Have you experimented with blank verse? With your tendency to lines of around ten syllables and an obvious liking of rhyme it may well suit you.

THE INITIATE. Good art, but I found the moralising rather heavy handed. Male chauvinism [is] something that anyone with an ounce of grey matter will revile, but I believe the message can be better conveyed with subtlety, symbolism or actions, rather than with explicit dialogue. The Gothic tale can be a useful medium for exploring oppressive patriarchies. (Yes, I do want to see a strip by you guys in this field!)

I hear you Bill, I'll read THE RED KING. I've been meaning to ever since I missed it on sale at a bookshop in Canberra and two weeks later I heard Kelleher speak about it. Pity the surprise about the "key to freedom" being within the protagonist has now been revealed to me by both the author and a reviewer! I'm sure I'll survive. I have to agree with your comments; "young adult" fiction in Australia has great potential for innovation. I'll take on anyone in a duel to the death for the right to be INDEPTH'S biggest fan. I really enjoy reading your reviews. (Shame is, I haven't gotten around to reading any of the books yet. As ever, time is our great enemy.)

COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS was stunning. Whimsical, dryly humorous with the odd touch of slapstick. The classic line though has to be "'Broken,' he muttered, and because it seemed the obvious thing to do, he fixed it." Not only was it a nice chuckle but my heart had really gone out to that little fox puppy (I'm incurably sentimental at heart - or "soft and squidgy" as one friend puts it.) The dialogue was marvellous and the characterisation fresh and original. The one thing that still puzzles me is precisely what emotion drove the Necromancer to act? At first I thought he referred to love, then after the "uncle" reference perhaps jealousy (if he really was an uncle), or maybe greed if he wanted a ransom (though that would seem out of character). I know it's up to the reader to find their own interpretation and all that, but care to enlighten me? Are there any more of these stories? If so where are they being published and can I subscribe? (Subscriptions I've got to do something about as well. I have

to stop this unreliable ad hoc borrowing of pieces of AUREALIS from a semi-reliable friend.)

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE was also highly entertaining and in the best tradition of Australian/British farce. What was especially sublime was the way [~~none of the~~] havoc focused around the protagonist but never actually touched him! Nice work Evan.

The cover was sort of icky this issue (just me being "soft and squidgy" again probably - damn the lady who coined that phrase!) but had some lovely detail work. I know I only date back to TM #74 but is there a policy of alternating between tranquil and violent covers here?

*[No, its what artwork I have on hand to use. Usually I only have one large piece of art suitable for a cover at the time the issue is due. - Ron]*

On a last personal and geographical note: where are you David Tansey? There are two listings for "Tansey, D' in the ACT Region 'phone book, are you either? I'm just curious about the man who would seem to be the only other local recipient of TM.

Oh, yeah. Good to see the return of the Editorial, Ron. It always sets the tone for an issue. Gives an insight into the mind of the man putting it all together. Keep up the fabulous work. (22.3.93)

#### **DARREN GOOSSENS, 210 Melbourne Road, Ballarat, VIC 3350.**

... I must say, however, that I discovered THE MENTOR via ASFWN, which I received with my AUREALIS subscription, which, in turn, I came into after finding that magazine in a newsagency. I know no SF people personally, and so, if not for those two magazines (and the fact that AUREALIS is widely distributed), I would never have come across Australia's fanzines at all. I wonder how many others come to know of magazines like THE MENTOR in the same way.

A small comment on the magazine; I liked the variety of contents, and I found it entertaining and thoughtful, especially the reviews by yourself and Bill Congreve, and I compliment you on it (though I can't say the comic was to my taste {that's probably just me!}). (-.3.93)

*[The majority of this zine's new readers are coming from writers who see its title in things like ASFWN, and from bookshop sales. - Ron.]*

#### **BUCK COULSON, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA>**

Not too many comments this time on THE MENTOR 79. Andrew Darlington was wrong when he said that Asimov had not been "the kind of art-literary writer who attracts respect and admiration outside the genre ghetto." In fact, Asimov was probably the best-known science fiction writer in the US, as far as the general public was concerned. Not for his science fiction, of course; for his popular science articles, his TV appearances, his articles for TV GUIDE (which was at one time and may still be the best-selling magazine in the country) and the tremendous variety of his writing. Anyone who read at all probably read something by Asimov.

Enjoyed the concluding instalment of Noguero's Argentine history; this time it was all new to me.

The historical tape appeared as "What's A Hoosier?" and is selling well in fandom. (Mostly because Michael Longcor is a "hot property" in the filking world.)

For Grai Hughes; mature women can be as hot for a young stud as dirty old men can be for nymphos, so why shouldn't a planetary mother spirit be "horny for some jet jockey"? It might not be very intelligent, but take a look at human history and tell me that the gods are intelligent. *Any* gods.

Don Boyd's comment on the rarity or lack of it of wood in the future neglects a few details. Such as who guarantees that O'Neill colonies - if there are any, which I doubt - will be designed the way O'Neill wanted them. Then there's the cost of transportation, which could make wood very expensive (and thus relatively rare) anywhere that it isn't grown. It's a very bulky object to ship, not to mention less necessary than a lot of other things.

We just got back from Millennicon-8, in Dayton, OH. The concom started with a count-down; if it lasts until the year 2000, that will be the year of Millennicon 0. Pleasant, since a lot of our friends were there to talk to. Pro authors included Roger MacBride Allen, Diane Thornley, and us. Rebecca McLuch was supposed to be there, and may have been, but I didn't see her. (I guess she was, though; Juanita mentioned being on a panel with her.) We huckstered by day and partied by night. I was on the neofan panel - explaining conventions to newcomers - and we had 4 panelists and 1 neofan, not the ideal arrangement. Earlier in the month we were in Wisconsin for Wiscon; also pleasant but unmemorable. Though I did get to meet Kristine Kathryn Rusch for the first time, and talked some with Lois McMaster Bujold. (I talked much longer to a young woman I'd never seen before; we chatted for a couple of hours in one of the parties, solving all the problems of humanity. Have no idea what her name was; it didn't matter.)

One more pertinent comment. Bill Congreve in his comments on trilogies neglects the point that there are two types. One is simply a long novel; Tolkien's was this sort. The only reason it was in three books was because publishers didn't want to think of the price that would have to be charged for one enormous book, and of all the potential customers who would have shied away from it. The other type of trilogy comes in three distinct sections; Asimov's "Foundation" trilogy before it became an extended series. These days most authors don't bother with the second sort of trilogy; they start with the idea of an extended series to begin with. At least theoretically, each book of such a series should be able to stand alone, and a lot of the series can be read in any order. (22.3.93)

#### **BRIAN EARL BROWN, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, Mi. 48224, USA.**

THE MENTOR 77 arrived just recently. I was very much taken by the color cover by Peggy Ranson. I see from the lettercol that I was unimpressed with a previous cover of hers. It must have been a full moon, or something, causing me to howl. This quite takes my fancy. Maybe I'm just a sucker for purple colors.

Mustafa Zahirovic's opening was quite a grabber but I'm afraid he didn't keep up the pace and I lost interest by the second page. I will look forward to Bill Congreve's comments in a future column about Keith Taylor's Bard series as I thought Taylor's series in FANTASTIC many years ago (written as Dennis More) were quite good. But on the whole

I've read so much fantasy fiction that I skip past most offerings without so much as a glance. About the only fantasy I still read are comedies by Terry Pratchett. Easter Friesner or Tim Holt. I'm not all that hot on much of the science fiction being written these days either. I seem to be stuck in the 30's as the time of my favorite SF, which is strange because I wasn't born until 1950....

Andrew Darlington continues his series of excellent articles on the fringes of SF - boy's magazines. This instalment, with its look at a variety of historical/fantasy adventures was a treat. And thanks for reproducing these representative pages from the major strips discussed. At times like this I think British kids had it lucky with so many neat, weekly comics.

The reviews of Oz semi-prozines was also appreciated. SIRIUS sounds like a pretty ambitious project with, potentially, a strong stable of contributors. EOD, though is pretty confusing since the Esoteric Order of Dagon is a long running apa in the States, as well as in the UK. I don't think the world really needs a third E. O. D, even if it is from another continent than the first two.

I was surprised to find the cover to a previous issue of THE MENTOR returning as the splash page for a comics strip, FERAL KILLERS. Well that explains the strange characters in the drawing. The strip is both interesting and repulsive, which I suppose is the desired effect sought by "Carcinogen" and "Carnage".

Recently I read the two book adaptations on Red Dwarf: RED DWARF and BETTER THAN LIFE and found them confusing because only occasionally did they resemble the few episodes of the show I saw broadcast in the States. Did I miss something (the show was harder to hear or understand than most British shows) or did the authors take enormous liberties with the plot as they worked on the book. Maybe Joy Buchanan's friend, the resident Red Dwarf expert could explain how the book differs from the shows.

(24.3.93)

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

Steve Carter's covers, FERAL KILLERS and THE INITIATE are the most exciting things to happen to THE MENTOR in ages. I disagree with the person in R&R who said that the femosaur scene was "too much". Carter's unashamed innovation is refreshing.

I don't want to waste space in an SF zine talking about politics, but I cannot let three glaring inaccuracies from letters in #78 to pass unchallenged.

Firstly, to Grai Hughes: the American equivalent of ACT is DC, not Wash.

Secondly, to John Alderson: the Australian Head of State is the English monarch. The monarch's representative in Australia is the Governor-General. In 1975 the Queen, via the puppet of the Governor-General, dismissed the government elected by the Australian people. This could happen again at any time until we become a republic.

Thirdly, again to Mr Alderson: Australia does not have a representative government. For the benefit of overseas readers, Australian has just gone through a Federal election. There are two main parties (Labor and Liberal - read "workers" and "business") and a number of small parties. Under our preferential system, you can vote twice - if you vote for one

of the small parties (eg the Greens, Nuclear Disarmament etc) these votes are added onto either of the large parties' votes at the small party's choice. The result is that it is quite common for the party that receives the MOST votes to LOSE.

As a footnote, the successful Labor candidate in the election announced that he was going to bring retribution down on the business community for daring not to support him in the election campaign. We may not be North Korea, but democracy Australian style can sure leave a sour taste in your mouth. (30.3.93)

#### **VLADIMIR S. SALIV, Poste Restante, General P.O., Kiev -1, Ukraine 252001.**

I have never read Australian SF till this time. The Australian continent and your SF were Terra Incognita for me like they were for the great seafarers in the past. When my friend Alexander showed me some issues of THE MENTOR I was interested. The appearance of TM was very unusual because of the good artwork and the colour paper of the cover which looked very attractive. And the words "Australian SF" was very enigmatic for me.

Alex said: "Try to read it, it's very interesting" and told me about your meeting him. I was urged to give it a try and I was not disappointed. It was wonderful! I found it very interesting. Thank you very much for this labour, you did very excellent work. My discovery of Australian SF is done! The quality of your fanzine is very high. The articles, fiction and poetry are, in the majority, very interesting.

I have read issues 74, 75 & 76.

In TM 74 I very much enjoyed THE JEWELLED MIRROR.

What made TM 75 very good was the article by Andrew Darlington about James Bligh.

HEARTBREAK HOTEL is the best story in this issue. I have read it twice. I enjoyed it more the second time I read it. ASHTA THE FOOL is also a favourite story. Very short and very effective. The best thing in TM 75 is Peggy Ranson's art on page 24. Very successful.

In TM 76 the best story is USED BOOKS by Shane Dix. Simple but very masterful. Very original view of the bookstore.

The History of SF in Argentina is rather unique and it enabled me to imagine Argentine's SF. This is only Part One and I hope to read the other parts in TM.

Of course I enjoyed IN DEPTH by Bill Congreve. I have never read the works by Terry Dowling but now I desire to familiarise myself with Terry's novels.

Andrew Darlington's C. S. LEWIS is very smart. A very capital analysis of the classic Space Trilogy.

The book Reviews. A very valuable part of your fanzine. The Reviews give the image of new books to the readers and it helps them to find and to buy the books which they need.

Some words about myself. I was born on the 28th of May, 1970 and I live in Kiev. I am a student at the Kiev Technical University of Construction and Architecture and I am a member of the SF club "Zoryany Shgah". (17.3.93)

[Sorry, Vladimir, but I think I've spelt that last word incorrect. - Ron.]

**ROD MARSDEN, 6 Blackwood Rd, Merrylands, NSW 2160.**

It was good to see a Steve Carter gore-out on the cover [of THE MENTOR 78]. What fun! But I think you will offend a few people who like nice as opposed to nasty Science Fiction. Also, if you run all of THE INITIATE you may well come into some robust controversy. You already have with Carnage and Carcinogen's FERAL KILLERS. Still, there's nothing like controversy to spruce up a magazine.

Well, I won't go too deeply into British comic papers versus American comic books. Let's say that the 1950's scene in which you grew up was quite different from the 1960's in which I grew up. Still, I doubt if the comic books that were put out by William Gaines under the E. C. banner in the 1950's could be considered crude or grossly drawn by anyone's standards. Shocking, yes, horrific, yes, but grossly drawn? Crude? Certainly not, with cover artists such as Johnny Craig. In fact I think I'd put guys like Wally Wood (an exceptionally talented Science Fiction illustrator) and Johnny Craig up against the Dan Dare artist any day. Then I'd probably throw in Jack Kirby and Gene Caban for good measure. Still, companies that became big in the 1960's, such as Marvel, were not much to talk about in the 1950's and there were a few less than professional artists around giving people a bad impression of American art. But it is all a matter of opinion. As I have stated, Judge Dredd drew me to the British scene and, nowadays, they're doing well.

I remember hearing about Isaac Asimov's death over the radio. I searched the Sydney newspapers that day for a halfway decent article mentioning some of the things the great scientist and science fiction writer had accomplished over the decades - nothing. Sure, Fairfax and co are waiting for the weekend to launch something *big* about Asimov. The weekend came - nothing. Are we so damned provincial?! Good on Andrew Darlington for his article ISAAC ASIMOV, FOUNDATIONS AND EMPIRES. It's a bit late. The rest of the world paid its respects long ago, but someone here had to. He has given us science fiction writers and readers a lot. And no doubt he will continue to live on in his work - the work he has so generously left to future generations. Keep Andrew Darlington on. He's a good researcher. I wish I could steal him for PROHIBITED MATTER or, at least, borrow him for a while.

*[Actually, I saw mentions of his death on TV on several channels shortly after he died, and I am fairly sure I saw articles in the newspapers also. - Ron.]*

On the poetry scene, there doesn't seem to be much substance to Julie Vaux's work. SHADOW THINGS by Trent Jamieson was a real treat, a nice blend of moody science fiction with horror. Maria-Louise Stevens' poem HIDDEN VORTEX is good stuff but it isn't science fiction, horror or fantasy. How does it fit into THE MENTOR format? At best her poem WHAT AM I? has an element of light fantasy.

*[THE MENTOR's format is what I like to put in... - Ron.]*

A bit of news. The 2nd issue of PROHIBITED MATTER will carry an article titled THE PHANTOM FIGHTS CENSORSHIP. It examines some of the problems Australian publishers have had with censors in the past and how certain present day publishers are trying to make up for said past. We will also be reviewing Australian writer Richard Hartland's new novel THE VICAR OF MORBING VYLE plus we will be commenting on a number of science fiction fanzines, both Australian and overseas. (7.4.93)

**DUNCAN EVANS, RMB 1392 Mount Gambier Rd., Casterton, VIC 3311.**

The cover and interior artwork [of TM #78] was again excellent, and it occurred to me as I sat there taking its brilliance for granted that the high quality of the *reproduction* was probably also - as with all the other issues of TM I've seen - something to be remarked upon. So consider it remarked upon.

EDITORIAL SLANT: Speaking of workshops: for those of you who have only recently become Undead, Chris Masters of EOD Magazine (Hi, Chris!) has a horror writers' workshop operating in Melbourne. Coward that I am, I moved out here to the safety of the sticks before the beast grew legs long enough to come after me, but I hear that any slavering horror which lurches in from the dark is welcome so long as it brings something-or-body to eat.

COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS: Why wasn't I warned this was coming? *And it's not even science fiction?* as no doubt you've already been made aware. What happened to that special Fantasy issue you were planning, Ron?

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER by Buck Coulson: So the mysterious voice called you "Bob" ... just be thankful it didn't call you "The Purifying Light" and tell you that your family and friends must become "as one with the serene wholeness of creation" but first they would have to become shrieking spurting nightmares of pleading humanity flopping spastically on the tarpaulin while you helpfully facilitated their "becoming" using only a handful of rusty tent pegs, a pipe-bender, and a *Bosch*<sup>TM</sup> angle grinder with diamond-saw attachment. Nope, at least the voice didn't say anything like that. No indeed.

HEY, HE'S A FISH by I. Lubensky: Is this some sort of a riddle? I've only read it twice, but I keep thinking about some kind of autonomic Trident Submarine or something. Hey, he's a fish ... and Evans is an idiot.

PRESENTING: THE STARS OF OUR STORIES by James Verran. In spite of my possibly mistaken impression that space operas (and -westerns, and -fantasies, and other sub-creatures of that ilk) had recently fallen out of favour with the Illuminati, I'd been thinking for some time that I really ought to get myself a nice big book of starmaps like the pair Mr Verran discusses here. Not that I'm given to writing space operas, of course - I just think, as Mr Verran does, that it would be a nifty idea to have a book of starmaps in easy reach ... just for interest's sake, you understand. One day soon I'm going to stop putting it off and buy one.

ISAAC ASIMOV, FOUNDATIONS AND EMPIRES by Andrew Darlington: never been much of an Asimov fan myself. I've read the first three "Foundation..." books, plus I ROBOT and a few others, and I enjoyed his columns in THE MAGAZINE OF F&SF. But that's about it. Basically, I agree with everything Andrew Darlington said here, although this doesn't, of course, mean that either of us is right.

ESCAPE FROM YINN by Brent Lillie: As long as they're short enough I really don't mind these cruel little jokes where the entire story is just a flimsy excuse to make a bad pun (and that's a tautology since the "good pun" is a creature so rarely seen as to be virtually a myth - at least, if one ever existed, then I mythed seeing it). Provided that the delivery stage gets jettisoned quickly enough, these gags can be

relatively painless. In the next room there's a book called 100 GREAT SCIENCE FICTION SHORT SHORT (and that's not a typo) STORIES. Its table of contents reads like a who's who of big name SF writers, most of whom were guilty of precisely this kind of heinous prank. So, with ESCAPE FROM YINN, Brent Lillie is in some pretty auspicious company. Oh yeah, and I liked it.

FANTASY DOWNUNDER #2 by Bill Congreve: Here you can apply the comments I made last time about FANTASY DOWNUNDER #1 - and add that I've heard good things about THE RED KING from other sources, and now that Mr Congreve has confirmed these reports in such detail, I'm actually going to hand over some money for this one the very next time I see it.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERIPATETIC CORPSE by Evan Rainer: I have a real soft spot (just behind the left ear) for this sort of caper, and was happy to see that *this* gem was free of the slight flaws which marred its predecessor. Well done, Evan Rainer. And good luck, Ray Bilinsky, wherever you are.

ARGENTINE SF HISTORY by Claudio Omar Noguero. I'm now officially overdosed. Thanks a lot.

POETRY, TOO: God help us! Most of these were actually quite good indeed. And, again, none were awful. Can't ask for more than that. "Well written" to you, you various poetry folks. And well selected, Ron.

THE INITIATE (Part 1) by Steve Carter. I haven't bought a comic book since before Robin caught something nasty off Batman and got packed off to a sanitarium in Switzerland to be quietly euthenased, but I'll say for now that the ambience (best that I, or my thesaurus, can come up with) of THE INITIATE reminds me slightly and favourably of some bits in an old book by Philippe Druillet, which I think I've got sitting around somewhere, so ... yes, LONG SLOANE: DELERIOUS its called - though the connection does seem pretty tenuous since the one did remind me of the other, there must be something there. I'm not prepared to spout any opinionated drivel as far as "the moral attitude expressed" in THE INITIATE is concerned until I see the other half of it, but it looks pretty interesting so far.

In THE R&R DEPARTMENT, a few people were apparently moved to offer examples of fat SF characters in non-stereotyped roles (with reference to Rachel McGrath-Kerr's piece NOT BIG BROTHER in TM #76). No one mentioned a character called "Professor Faustaff", who gets the girl, the red convertible *and* saves the multiverse in Michael Moorcock's novel THE RITUALS OF INFINITY. I'd have brought it up last time, only I had the impression that the author was more interested in seeing examples from film and television.

P.S. i sold NOTHING NICE to an outfit called "Legends" in Canada. (15.4.93)

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

How many surrealists does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Fish. Hey! He's a *Fish!* Help, I'm a rock.... I'm going to go out on a limb here:

I fear Alderson's claim is unfounded  
When he says poetry cannot be grounded  
In the beloved SF genre,  
But one day he's gonna

See the definition of fiction's unbounded

Though having said that, I totally agree with you, John. (A limb is no place for a rock.)

Asimov's dead. So it goes. Duncan Evans is still alive. Is it just? It just is. Coldmace rules, okay? Who can write better than that? (-4.93)

**LORRAINE CORMACK, PO box 983, Woden, ACT 2606.**

Would you believe that three months after I've moved, I'm down to half a dozen unpacked boxes, and I still haven't found the one in which I packed everything I was currently reading? It gets worse every time I move - I'm never ever moving again in my entire life.

Anyway, I still haven't found TM 77, and all I can remember of what I had read is the comic. And I didn't like that much; although it was well drawn, it didn't seem to lead anywhere. The comic in TM 78 has lessened that complaint, as I assume they're linked. I still didn't particularly like it, for the same reason I've never really liked comics - it's pretty hard, almost impossible it seems, to give any real depth to the characters. I can't say much for the view of women expressed by the comic either, but I suppose it would be a bit unfair to complain about that without reading the entire piece. Though what I've seen doesn't encourage me to seek it out.

There seems to be less fiction in this issue, but maybe that was just because Duncan Evans and Evan Rainer both provided quite long pieces?

I quite enjoyed COLDMACE MOONLIGHTS, though I do think it could have been tighter. The epilogue, for example, was quite unnecessary, and didn't really add anything to the story. Things kept moving along nicely, though, so it didn't drag. Perhaps you should look at the dialogue again - sometimes the mixture of formal and casual expressions seemed more a result of wavering than deliberate contrast.

ESCAPE FROM YINN made me groan - no doubt as it was supposed it! Just the right length for something like this, though.

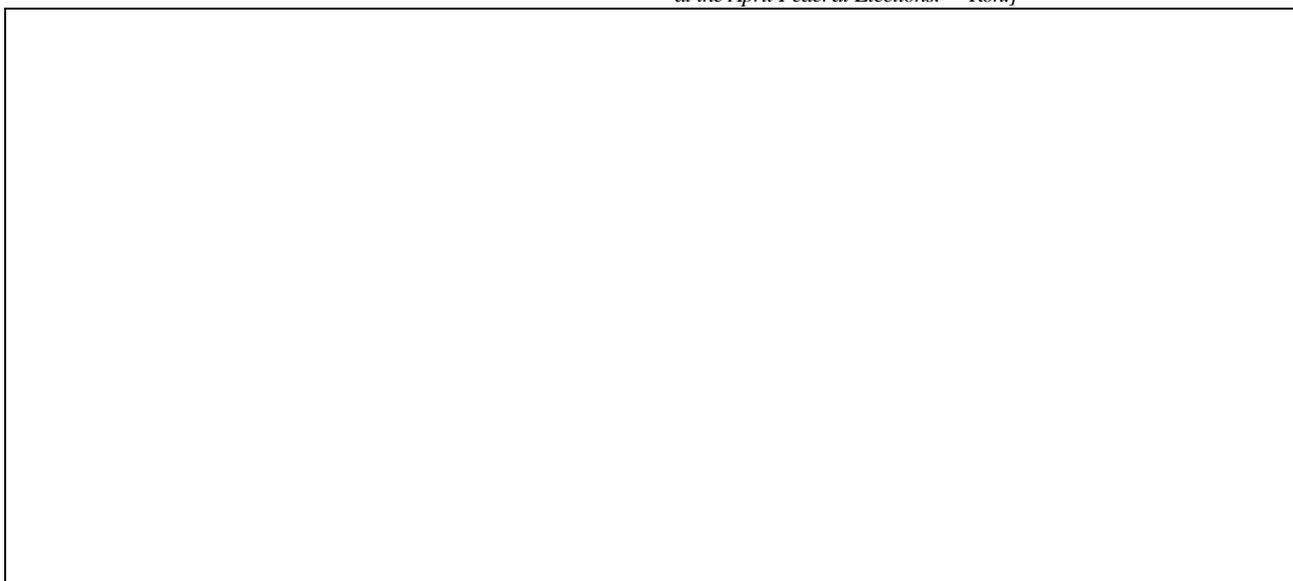
Once again, I didn't manage to finish Evan Rainer's story. I don't find them even mildly amusing and they're just too wearing to wade through if you don't. Too many completely irrelevant and unnecessary things thrown in an attempt to give a sense of place and time. And if you're going to complain about bludging public servants with irrelevant degrees in every single story you write, for heaven's sake give it some bearing on the plot, or grind you axe elsewhere.

I haven't actually read much Asimov - because he didn't excite me enough to actively seek out - so it was interesting to read Andrew Darlington's short overview. I tend to agree that Asimov lacked a sense of wonder. But you can hardly dismiss someone with a name that well known, can you? I don't think it'll really be possible to put his work into perspective till more time has passed.

I still think Bill Congreve gives away too much of the plot when he reviews books. Which is a pity, because I find his views interesting, and he often comes up with books I haven't heard of otherwise - but I always have to think about whether I really want to know so much of the content of a book before I read it.

I don't mind trilogies, incidentally, as long as they're clearly labelled as such so I know what I'm getting when I buy them. And it really helps if they're conceived as one work instead of volumes two and three being tacked on because the first sold well. I do tend to read them as one work - as I'm a fast reader and often read an average book in an evening. I'll buy a trilogy and read it over three or four nights. So in a way they're just a longish book for me. Same as an ordinary book for a slower reader. (And before you ask, yes, I've a high rate of comprehension and retention.) If they're done well, ideas and characters can be developed to a greater degree over three volumes. I don't think I agree at all with the "traditional structure" of trilogies that Bill has postulated (heroes winning at end of volume one, baddies fighting back strongly at end of volume two, and everything is fixed in volume three). There are plenty of trilogies out there which don't fit that structure at all. Maybe Bill just hasn't read enough of them? (24.4.93)

## WE ALSO HEARD FROM:



Kurt Stone, Mark McLeod, Pauline Scarf, Maria-Louise Stephens, Mustafa Zahirovic. Mavluda Ibragimova, Sahiba Abdullaeva, B. J. Stevens, Darren Goossens and Robert Frew.

*[You may have noticed by the publishing date on this issue that I am getting ahead of my publishing schedule. At the moment, as mentioned in the editorial, things are well up in the air, so I am publishing when I can. At the moment I have the time and the money - I don't know how long this will last.*

*Last weekend I met with Dick and Leah Zeldos Smith from the USA at a party held at Jean Weber's and Eric Lindsay's place. Needless to say Dick and I had a long talk about printing in mimeo, photocopy and offset. We both agreed that it is cheaper if you own an offset press to print with that method. A most interesting conversation - apparently offset presses of the type I have may cost less to buy second-hand here in Oz. Some things, such as photocopying paper, are less in the USA, probably because of the 20% Sales Tax here. At least we voted Consumption Tax (VAT) out at the April Federal Elections. - Ron.]*

**THE FARSEEKERS** by Isobelle Carmody. Puffin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 326 pp, A\$9.95. On sale now.

Well, that is good timing - last issue Bill Congeve reviewed this novel in his column FANTASY DOWNUNDER #2, and here it is being reissued. Readers will be relieved to see that the price is only \$9.95, not the \$16 odd that Bill saw it for in h/c.

The book is the second in the Obernewtyn Chronicles (as it says on the cover) and continues the saga started in OBERNEWTYN. Those who have read Bill's column will know most of the background of this novel and those who did not - sorry, I don't have any copies left. The cover of this edition has the same artwork as the older printing, but Isobelle Carmody's name is at the bottom in larger type. The earlier edition was a hardcover Viking edition.

The world of the Misfits is an interesting one, and the older readers will find that it is worth reading, as well as

those younger readers that it was aimed at. Isobelle is said to be working on the third of the trilogy and hopefully it will not be long before it is completed. I am sure that copies would be available to readers overseas if they ask any Oz fan, and sent enough to cover purchase and postage....

**INTO THE SHADOWS** edited by Jordan K. Weisman. RoC pb., dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 281 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

These nine stories are set in the year 2050 and the world where both magic and science co-exist. (Actually it is a world where *technology* and magic co-exist). Goblins and supercomputers plot and dragons fly across the jetting sky.

The stories are : A PLAGUE OF DEMONS by Tom Dowd; GRAVEROBBERERS by Elizabeth Danforth; TAILCHASER by Paul Hume; STRIPER by Nyx Smith; WHITECHAPEL ROSE by Lorelei Shannon; TURTLE IN THE TOWER by Ken S. Andre; FREE FALL by Tom Dowd;

WOULD IT HELP TO SAY I'M SORRY? by Michael Stackpole and IT'S ALL DONE WITH MIRRORS by Michael Stackpole. There is a glossary of 2050 slang and a resume of contributors to the volume.

The stories are quite a mixture of both plots and styles. With all the novels about this created world being released I am sure that there are quite a few readers whose reading has created interest in this creation and they will find that this anthology is worth getting for the world-view by the different authors.

**AFTER THE KING ed by Martin Greenberg. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books. (C) 1992. 525 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.**

This book is a collection of stories especially written for this volume, celebrating Tolkien. The authors and stories are very diverse. The stories are supposedly written in the Tolkien vein, but some are sf and some I don't quite see the connection....

The stories are: REAVE THE JUST by Stephen Donaldson; TROLL BRIDGE by Terry Pratchett; A LONG NIGHT'S VIGIL AT THE TEMPLE by Robert Silverberg; FAITH by Poul and Karen Anderson; IN THE SEASON OF THE DRESSING OF THE WELLS by John Brunner; THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DRAGON by Patricia McKillip; THE DECOY DUCK by Harry Turtledove; NINE THREADS OF GOLD by Andre Norton; THE CONJURE MAN by Charles de Lint; THE HALFLING HOUSE by Dennis McKiernan; SILVER OR GOLD by Emma Bull; UP THE SIDE OF THE AIR by Karen Haber; THE NAGA by Peter Beagle; REVOLT OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRIES by Mike Resnick; WINTER'S KING by Jane Yolen; GOTTERDAMMERUNG by Barry Malzberg; DOWN THE RIVER ROAD by Greg Benford and DEATH AND THE LADY by Judith Tarr.

The volume is well worth getting - the majority of the stories are excellent. It is interesting to see the different subjects and the fantasy backgrounds in the stories by the men and women. It *is* noticeable. Many of the women wrote of dragons and elves and espers. The men were more of the "real" hard or even soft sciences.

**MISTWORLD by Simon R. Green. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 253 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.**

Simon Green has also written BLUE MOON RISING, which is much the same SF adventure novel as this one is.

Mistworld is an outlaw planet. The Empire doesn't like outlaw worlds, and has just crisped the second last one, leaving Mistworld alone. The planet itself is harsh and inhospitable - cold and snow and ice. The spaceport was Mistport - the only "city" on the planet, and has outlying farms. There were also wild animals, which sometimes ran through the port. Being criminals, if people didn't have shelter they froze to death, or were killed for their possessions, or body parts.

Things came to a head when a certain crystal, which was an important part of the shields of the forces over the city, was stolen and replaced by a copy. Then the hobhounds broke through into the city and the city Watch was kept busy. The third problem was Typhoid Mary, a programmed esper who was out to destroy as many people as she could... The writing is straight-forward, and the plot, although following about four sets of characters, is easy to follow. Good action SF.

**ILLUSION by Paula Volsky. VGSF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1991. 700 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.**

I'm not sure why this novel is marketed as sf - plainly it is fantasy. It is a medieval fantasy - set not in the Middle Ages of Earth, but in another world. The peasants are ruled by the Exalted, who take the place of Dukes of the Middle Ages. They have absolute power.

The story follows the career of Eliste, a pampered daughter of one of the Exalted Marquis who runs the district. It starts off innocently enough with her maid pouting and generally running around being sulky. Eliste finds out that the promised of the maid is going to be punished for reading some pamphlets he should not have had. The maid's brother is a well-read peasant (a contradiction in terms) and Eliste promises to approach her father about having the punishment stopped. She fails, the boy dies, and she begins her journey to the capital to be maid to the Queen. Revolution is afoot, though, and she finds herself caught up in rapidly escalating events.

The novel is well written, the characters believable, and the plot, though slow and steady, builds up background convincingly.

A good book for a satisfying read.

**THE STONE AND THE FLUTE by Hans Bemann. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1983. 855 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.**

This was translated from the German by Anthea Bell in 1986.

Basically, it is the tale of Listener, a young boy who has a flute and who inherited a gem that had some qualities he was not aware of for some years. The novel is quite long and the young lad has many adventures as he sets out from Fraglund and into the wider world outside that country. He meets Gisa, who in her castle Barlebogue has many secrets; he works for the minstrel Barlo and learns well his trade; later he meets Narzia who shows him magic. Throughout he knows of Arni, the green-eyed girl who throughout the novel continues to meet him and to whom he forms an attachment.

The translator appears to have done a good job with the book, The prose is clear and easy to read and there is no ambiguity. There are some stories that stand on their own as fables and there are some fantasies that are too obviously a refresh of other stories. THE STONE AND THE FLUTE is a fresh look at legends, and fantasy readers who are getting tired of rehashing will like this novel.

**THE BROKEN GODDESS by Hans Bemann. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1990. 234 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.**

This novel is also translated by Anthea Bell, but in 1993. I presume with the English discovery of Bemann, the publishers thought to publish his earlier works also.

THE BROKEN GODDESS is brought to the reader's attention right at the beginning - the mutilated statue of what could have been the "goddess of love", a taxi-driver says. When the narrator meets the woman who entrances him, he has a vision of the woman overlaid with certain features of the statue as she comes towards him after his lecture on myths. Later he finds a brown frog in his pocket which instructs him

to follow an elusive scent, which the narrator does, and ends up in a strange land with beasts that can talk and other fantastic things.

Much of the action follows the journeys of the narrator as he goes about looking for his elusive woman. In the beginning of the novel she says that myths are about "life". She also meant that to cover "faith", as by the end of the novel he eventually comes to believe....

This writer looks to have a career in being reprinted in English - the fables are unique enough to create a breathe of green.

**WARHAMMER: DRACHENFELS by Jack Yeovil. Boxtree pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1989. 233 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.**

This is a release from a new UK book imprint on the Australian market. The company is Games Workshop<sup>(6)</sup>.

Drachenfels is an ancient fortress in which lives the wizard Drachenfels. Into this fortress goes Genevieve the immortal vampire, along with Detlef Sierck, the playwright and general actor. The world is that of Warhammer. Back in Year 50, Sigmar, founder of the Empire, took his magic Warhammer back to the Dwarves who made it, and never came back. The world the novel is set in is a fantasy world - goblins, dwarves and elves abound.

The novel does not seem to be seeped in blood - which would be a different matter if this was an American gamer-written fantasy. I could comment about the other titles put out by this publisher - INQUISITOR and SPACE MARINE by Ian Watson, but I won't.

The sentences also tend to be longer than the action novels from the US and the author lathes his background with more depth. Certain readers of fantasy adventure may find that these titles are more to their taste than others of the "blood and gore" books from over the Atlantic. Try this one out and see for yourself.

**TERMINAL VELOCITY by Bob Shaw. VG SF pb, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1975, 1978 & 1991. 160 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.**

You might think that this is a small novel by that page count - but it has bloody small type! Don't try to read it in bad light.

TERMINAL VELOCITY is set in the 21st Century, where the invention of a "contra-gravity" harness means that everyone can fly. It must not cost much to buy one, either. The lines of force are cut off by walls and mountains/valleys, and the device is only good for the mass of a human body, as it needs (battery) power to go.

Hasson is a English cop who is injured when he tackles a rogue flyer. He is sent out of the country as the Mob is after him. He goes to Canada by seaplane and lodges with a Canadian Air Police officer. Hasson's back is still playing up, as is he, psychologically. Against his will he finds himself embroiled in local politics and by the end of the novel has to make up his mind whether he wants to keep his own self image, or toss it all in.

I thought the plot was a little simple, but Shaw creates characters one can believe it. He makes them human. Good basic sf.

**THE PRICE OF GLORY by William H. Keith, jr. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 370 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.**

A Battletech Book and in the series The Sage of the Gray Death Legion.

This is a novel in the future mercenary tradition - about mercenaries, what is, not about the publisher. The protagonists use manned transformer-like battle machines for their fighting. There is much fighting throughout the novel, with armies, clad in Mech-units, having to be small because of the cost. Each machine, on the other hand, is quite able, with beam and particle weapons, to obliterate whole armies of foot soldiers.

When Colonel Grayson "Death" Carlyie and his troops return to their base camp after a successful campaign from service to the House of Marik they area had been destroyed. Apparently some scumbags had been spreading rumours that the Legion had been committing certain crimes and they had been branded as bandits. Of course all these rumours were lies, but the Legion had been besmirched and they must get their reputation back - "death or glory"....

For mercenary/military sf fans.

**THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S by William James. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 535 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.**

This volume is the start of another trilogy. The difference is that this is an SF trilogy.

The universe this book is set in is some five thousand or more years hence. The Second Empire has fallen some time before, Earth is lost in the mists of time and the Third Empire is probably waning. The humans of the Imperium all seem to sport Russian names. The Navy keeps some planets quarantined - one is Tarvaras, part of the surface of which had been poisoned in a long-past nuclear war. The admiral plus several of his men are marooned on the planet and they have to insinuate themselves into the local customs to survive. The people who are on the up-and-up were nomads who were very adept soldiers - "born to the sword". The novel follows the fortunes of Rostov, the admiral, as he works his way into the local Khan's graces as an able soldier and leader.

The series looks to be another of those "military SF" plots, but James seems to know what he is doing and the background and situations seemed believable and would be quite "sense of wonderish" for the younger reader. By the end of the 535 pages I was beginning to think that the Khan's people couldn't be beaten - but that will probably be the central theme of the series. Good adventure SF.

**THE BALANCE OF POWER by Michael Williams. Warner pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 292 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.**

THE BALANCE OF POWER is the concluding novel of a trilogy, the previous books being A FOREST LORD and A SORCERER'S APPRENTICE. This book can stand by itself, though and can be read thus. On the cover the publisher has a quote on how good a writer Williams is, but it is from his co-author in the Dragonlance series - Margaret Weis. A bit incestuous, people!

BALANCE... opens with the scene at a peasant's hut as he rushes back to find his wife and children dead of the Plague. As he is getting over the shock a column of peasants following a figure on a horse goes past and he joins them, for what ever end. The plot itself tells of the quest of Brenn, a sorcerer's apprentice, to destroy the evil King Dragmond and his equally evil lover, Ravenna. The once fair country of Palerna is overrun with disease, death and eldrich horror. Brenn has a long and arduous task, but in the end it is good that must triumph.

Williams has a workman-like style and his novel are readable fantasy. Though they are not brilliant, they do offer several hours of entertaining reading.

**EAST OF EALING by Robert Rankin. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1984. 284 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.**

The concluding book in the Brentford Trilogy, the two previous books being THE ANTIPOPE and THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE, which have been reviewed in past issues of this zine.

The end of everything is coming closer - Lateinos and Romiith, the company with tentacles everywhere was at last on the final straight as it brought its plans to have banks dispense with money and institute a single credit card for all purchases, to the final offing. But it was all happening east of Ealing. Norman had at last engineered something that appeared to be a working model - a perpetual motion machine. His acquaintance, Pooley, has been spying on this through the grimy, kitchen window, but soon the two of them would be up to their elbows in intrigue.

It is later into the novel that things begin to go definitely haywire as images from the computer run by Lateinos and Romiith began to dogglegang around the streets of the borough and Pooley, Omally, with the help of Slocombe and an out-of-time Sherlock Holmes, are not quite at their wits end fighting the burgeoning figures. If you like pub satire....

**THE WITHLORD AND THE WEAPONMASTER by Hugh Cook. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 716 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.**

This is the final volume in a dekalogy (10 volumes); the previous titles are: THE WORSHIPPERS AND THE WAY; THE WIZARDS AND THE WARRIORS; THE WORDSMITHS AND THE WARGUILD; THE WOMEN AND THE WARLORDS; THE WALRUS AND THE WARWOLF; THE WICKED AND THE WITLESS; THE WISHSTONE AND THE WONDERWORKERS; THE WAZIR AND THE WITCH and THE WEREWOLF AND THE WORMLORD.

This latter volume has Guest, who is the son of a warlord and is a self-styled Weaponmaster. He was not all that bright, and when he became in lust with the beautiful blonde bombshell Yerzerdayla, he was about to create for himself a slight problem that would hound him for some time. It would bring him into contact with demons and with all sorts of adventures. Get this if you want to complete your collection.

I can imagine that the end of this series is a relief for Cook. The writing has that sense of "God, I'll have to finish this so I can rest" and in places said writing has obviously gushed forth from his word processor. I wish the maps at the front of the book had either been redrawn by someone

competent, or left out. They look as if they have been drawn by a 5 year-old.

**LABYRINTH OF NIGHT by Allen Steele. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1992. 353 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.**

LABYRINTH... is another book in small type - though I suppose if it had been in normal type it would have had to have been much larger.

There has been a rush of novels set on Mars - this would be the third in the last few months. The labyrinth of the title was found in the depth of one of the pyramids near the famous "face" on Mars - photographed by the Viking probe. It is much like the artifact in ROGUE MOON by Algis Budrys - it kills the men (and women) who are out to explore it, but eventually they win through. In both cases the aliens are not from the planet (or moon) concerned - they come from the Stars. In LABYRINTH OF NIGHT it is politics which nearly destroys mankind's chance for those stars. The aliens are insect-like beings, who had been in catacombs inside the largest pyramid when a meteor destroyed one of its faces and depressurised the chambers under its surface and killed all the aliens. However, they *did* leave some artifacts and the humans came across these, much to their detriment.

I liked this "hard" sf novel, and other readers will also - and you will find the climax is not what you expect...

**WRAITHS OF TIME by Andre Norton. Tor pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1976. 248 pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.**

This is a strange one. It is a mixture of a Mills -and-Boon lookalike and a fantasy novel. I would suppose that Norton fans would find it a simple plot and they would guess what is coming - it reads as if Norton is writing for the general public with this one. It is a very formula written book - and dates from the beginnings of the feminist penetration of literature.

Tallahasee is a black woman who is an archaeologist. She comes across a box containing an artifact that pulls her across into another continuum where the descendants of the African nubian Egyptians are still holding out with their psi powers. Tallahasee is a look-alike for a high ranking priestess and finds that, after the evil people have been destroyed, that it is a world where she can live without much pain. Of course the nubian civilisation is ruled by women, so she doesn't have to worry about the so-called male superiority much vaunted in her world - in this world, she and her kind are on top - though in a diminishing elite.

As I said, regular Norton fans may find this plot a bit simple, but give it to your friends who show an interest in fantasy.

**A DANGEROUS ENERGY by John Whitbourn. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Jacaranda Wiley. (C) 1992. 317 pp. A\$38.95. On sale now.**

A DANGEROUS ENERGY won the BBC Bookshelf/Gollancz First Fantasy novel competition.

The book is set in an alternate Britain where the Reformation failed and the Catholic Universal Church ruled supreme. And did so to the present (and on into the future at least 400 years). The rate of progress had been halted in most areas. The one noticeable thing that differed in that world

from ours is that with the religious nature of power, reality had continued in the old mode. With scientific thought lost, magic and demonology was supreme - the Church was all powerful, and the priesthood made sure that their magicians were brought up in the true faith, though there were pagan magicians.

Tobias Oakley was the son of a man who in the small town where he lived, was middle class. Up till the time he met the elf woman Joan he was a typical boy. After the meeting his life had a purpose and he would pursue his own interests, leading a life which became for him more and more deadened.

The novel is an account of Tobias's life in that world - it ends with his life's end. Other than that, nothing much really *happens*. It is, though, an excellent account of what life would be in that alternate world.

**MERCENARY'S STAR** by William H. Keith Jr. RoC pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987. 402 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

I noted the copyright date of this series - the popularity of military sf is obviously putting the pressure on publishers to delve deeper into their files. As before the mechs in the novel are transformer-type robots (the illos in the last few pages of the novel have been reprinted from previous volumes) and the hero is again Grayson Carlye of the Gray Death Legion.

This time their job is to train the rebel farmers of the planet Verthandi. This looks to be quite a job, as they are an individualistic culture, and the soldiers opposing them were under the control of people who were of the same calibre as Carlye. Also they had control of the spaceport and the only way off planet was through that spaceport.

As always, these sf adventure books are full of action and fighting for those young bloods who read them. I've often wondered what percentage of these young people are females....

**THE GRAIL OF HEARTS** by Susan Shwartz. Tor pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1992. 340 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

From the cover you would never pick this to be a fantasy; rather a romance. THE GRAIL OF HEARTS is a retelling of the Parsifal legend and the Holy Grail. It is told from a woman's viewpoint - ie the protagonist is a woman. There was an article in the BULLETIN last week on the meaning of the myths of Easter, and that you cannot take the event out of the context of the time it was created. There are several modern novelists who do this - yet back in the 1940s Vardis Fisher was writing his novels of the Testament of Man this way, by immersing himself in the creations of that time and writing his novels as if living then.

I don't know how accurate a modern woman can write of an "ordinary" woman of that era and leave behind here all the prejudices that are her modern makeup, but Shwartz has tried. Whether she has succeeded is really up to the reader to decide. There are many eulogies from other (mainly female) writers, but whether her creation stands or falls depends on the reader. And time itself, of course, as to whether the novel is still viable in forty years time. An interesting attempt.

**THE ANGEL OF PAIN** by Brian Stableford. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1991. 396 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

1893 was a good year for graverobbers.... David Lydyard had spent some time in Egypt some twenty-three years before he started having more visions. It turned out that what was trying to communicate with him were the angels who had fallen in grace from heaven. He found himself on a quest - one that would go literally from heaven to hell.

There are some strange beings in the novel - the Clay Man, from a time that had been - there was the Devil (the Angel of Pain of the title) and others, such as Hecate. Lydyard journeys through some very peculiar realms and has some adventures that would be dreamlike to him if they had not been something that affected his life and future.

Stableford has written two other books recently - THE EMPIRE OF FEAR and THE WEREWOLVES OF LONDON. He is rapidly creating a following in fantasy readers who can be sure of having a good read when they obtain his novels.

**WARHAMMER: KONRAD; SHADOWBREED and WARBLADE** by David Ferring. Boxtree pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1990x2, 1993. 220, 239, 255 pp. A\$11.95 ea. On sale now.

These three books use the same timeline as DRACHENFELS, reviewed above. Actually they form a trilogy, and by releasing them this way, Random House has given fantasy game readers an opportunity to read them in one set.

The books are fantasy adventure of the blood and violence type. The hero is Konrad, who when the trilogy commences is about twelve years old. He saves an equally young girl from an attacking Beastman who tried to take the girl off her horse and (presumably) eat her. Through the three novels Konrad progresses in age and stature. Soon he reaches his adulthood and strength. But he is still fighting his way through Beastmen - half animals and half beasts, and beast-women - animals with the bodies of women.

The series is quite well written and the plot, though not overly intellectual, is enough to tie the three together. Younger fantasy readers who have a good imagination will like these - as will those who like fantasy games.

**WARHAMMER 40,000: INQUISITOR and SPACE MARINE** by Ian Watson. Boxtree pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1990 & 1993. 246 & 264 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The Warhammer 40.000 series, this time set in another universe, in the 41st Century. Humans have conquered space, then fallen back under the attack of the Warp creatures, as if from demons from hell. The Emperor is the greatest man of his time, but is becoming more and more alienated from his people. The two great forces of this era are the Inquisition and the Space Marines. Both battle their way through the space-lanes to support the Emperor.

These two books are sf adventures. If you have read Watson before, you will find these two novels quite different to his usual fare - they are obviously written for the younger sf reader who likes action and a straight plot and easy to follow ideas. Boxtree seems to want to follow the lines of the American publishers who are basically gamers who are trying to break into the literary fold, but bringing their gamer heritage

with them. I know that the younger reader will take to them - it remains to be seen if the older reader will also follow the marauding spacers into battle with the forces fighting for the human domination of space and the galaxy.

**THE SUMMER QUEEN** by Joan D. Vinge. Pan trade pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1991. 1091 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now.

The sequel to THE SNOW QUEEN is one hell of a large volume, though this time it is not in eye-straining print.

The long Winter of the planet Taimat is coming to an end and the colonists are getting prepared for the Change. Also the window open to the Hegemony is near to closing and that escape will soon not be available.

Vinge has written a novel that past readers of THE SNOW QUEEN will revel in, and newer readers, who have not read that Hugo winning novel, will, after they have finished THE SUMMER QUEEN, be sure to seek it out. The journeys and adventures undertaken by the young 17 year old girl Moon Summer as she struggles to continue her life and undertake her destiny to become Summer Queen makes up the bulk of the novel. I think that Vinge has reached her goal in continuing the earlier story of Taimat and has succeeded in building on that - quite an achievement.

This book *is* quite dear, but I can't really see a paperback of it coming out in the near future - at nearly 1100 pages, it would be getting close to the awkward stage for handling. So this opportunity is a good one to get the volume; it may be some time before a paperback comes out and it may not be all that much cheaper. An excellent read.

**THE GREEN ANGEL TOWER** by Tad Williams. Legend trade pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1993. 1083 pp incl glossary. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Another thick volume, though this novel is on thinner paper than the book reviewed above.

THE GREEN ANGEL TOWER is the final volume of the Memory, Sorrow and Thorn series, which consisted of the novels THE DRAGON BONE CHAIR; STONE OF FAREWELL and TAILCHASER'S SONG. The series itself has had featured lots of adventures and battles - this final volume is not bereft of them, either. In fact, as in other final volumes of latter-day fantasy, it deals with the end of the world which is wracked with battles between the godless (or evil-godded, if there could be such a word) and those on the side of good, and there is still adventure, conflict and battles aplenty.

Basically the plot details the final battles undertaken by Josua Lachand and his army, aided by the remaining members of the League of the Scroll against the evil minions of Sithi, and then the ultimate encounter to determine the fate of their universe.

Tad Williams has also created some engrossing fantasy for those with the endurance (and time) to read through these massive books. Still, he *can* write novels that fantasy readers can get stuck into, so all the best to him.

**THROY** by Jack Vance. NEL h/c dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1992. 186 pp. A\$39.95 (trade pb \$19.95). On sale now.

The third volume of the Cadwal Chronicles, set on that world. The group consisting of the higher socialites and the moneyed are still trying to get the Yips onto the Mainland.

though up to now they have only tried politicking their way. Glawen and Chilke are sent offworld by their Security service to find more about the tycoon Barduys and his beautiful companion Flitz who seem to have made a deal with the LPF party.

The thing that I like about Vance's books, and I am sure that this applies to other readers, is his style, the use of exotic names that he dreams up, and the social types he creates. The plot of THROY is simple, but the colourful and fascinating human and place names he writes about makes the volumes that much more readable. Vance's worlds are some of the more creative in SF.

THROY isn't a thick novel, but is is very engrossing and entertaining.

**HEART READERS** by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Millennium trade pb, dist in Aust Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 250 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

Rusch's books are both well written and eminently readable. Her characters are well fleshed and believable. HEART READERS is a fantasy, and those readers of her first book, THE WHITE MISTS OF POWER, will enjoy this one also.

Pardue is a king who attained his throne by killing his twin. One can imagine his shock when he attended the birth of his pregnant concubine and was quite delighted when she delivered a son. Shortly followed by another son. He had not been devoid of all human feelings, though, so forbade killing that second son to ensure one of his sons secured the throne. He did separate the mother from the sons, though, and hoped that when they grew up he could have them "heart read" in order to find which of them was pure of heart, so that that one could rule: only those pure of heart could rule, though how *he* obtained the throne and ruled is left out of the "pure of heart" path.

As I mentioned above, Rusch writes well, and a reader would do worse than reading this novel.

**THE LAST OF THE RENSHAI** by Mickey Zucker Reichert. Millennium trade pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1992. 533 pp incl Notes. On sale now.

Fantasy series are continuing: this is Book One, and thus another opportunity to get in on the ground floor. I notice in the credits that this book is (C) by Miriam S. Zucker. Is this to take the Mickey out of chauvinists?

The world where the warrior Renshai fought was one where four wizards looked after things through the ages. They ensured that trouble was fleeting and that the equilibrium was kept by quests undertaken by heroes. There had been a legend that events would end in a Great War, and even the wizards had it tough fighting a rear-guard action delaying the events leading to the War.

When his people were wiped out "to a man" by their enemies banded together, Rache vowed to avenge them. He was a man seeped in the lores of destruction and he would ensure that his people's name would live on, even if he had to become the Champion of the Great War.

Reichert uses short, stabbing sentences when she is writing action, and longer ones for descriptive passages. She is definitely one to watch.

**SAILING TO UTOPIA** by Michael Moorcock. Millennium trade pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1966-75. 463 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

Volume 5 of The Tale of the Eternal Champion. This volume included the novels/stories THE ICE SCHOONER; THE BLACK CORRIDOR; THE DISTANT SUNS and FLUX.

With Arflane and Ulrica piloting their ice schooner across the frozen wastes of the Matto Grosso, with Ryan aboard the spaceship escaping the dying Earth and becoming trapped in his psychological problems, in FLUX and the adventures of Max von Bek (well met from the previous volumes of The Eternal Champion) and lastly with Jerry Cornelius in his voyage to the worlds of the Distant Suns, all these stories are of Champions and adventure: this time SF adventure.

In the Introduction Moorcock mentions his debt to three SF writers: Robert Sheckley, Alfred Bester and Philip K. Dick. The reader can see the influences of the three in these four stories - the pyrotechnics of Bester's word games, the wry humour of Sheckley, and the world-view of Dick and his prevision of ecological issues well ahead of his time. Of course Moorcock has created his won style over the years, but these novels show that he can write in other styles and make an excellent read for most readers. And they are not his usual Sword and Sorcery.

Moorcock's novels and short stories are spread through many years and magazines - this is a good opportunity to get them together in several volumes.

**THE SAMARKAND SOLUTION** by Gary Gyax. Roc pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1993. 284 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Dangerous Journeys is a fantasy series written by Gary Gyax and published by RoC. It is set in ancient Aegypt and the plots deal with Gods, wizards, priests and other dark pests.

in THE SAMARKAND SOLUTION the Pharaoh's best Magister, Setne Inhetep is again pitting his wiles against the forces of dark magic. This time another god is trying to usurp Thoth's place in the scheme of things and is using the Dance of Death to speed destruction. After a Master assassin begins his work against a meeting of wizard-priests, Setne is hard pressed to protect those remaining and to try to track down the evil magic to its source.

Gyax is really getting stuck into the action in this book, and throws facts of life about the Third Kingdom around like cats. He is building up a background to the series that will enable him to set other novels in this time period.

Action-adventure fantasy for those younger fans of the genre and of Games and their followers who also like literature.

**WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Vol. 6, New Era pb, dist in Aust by New Era Publications.** (C) 1990. 409 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The latest volume of the continuing series of compilations of the winners of the Writers of the Future competition.

The stories in this edition are: KANSAS CITY KITTY by Michael Scanlon; RED EYES by Stephen Milligan; WINTER'S GARDEN by Sharon Wahl; A FOREIGN EXCHANGE by Matthew Wills; DANCING WITH

DINOSAURS by Charles Eckert; WATER by John Randal; A BRANCH IN THE WIND by Bruce Holland Rogers; RICHES LIKE DUST by Scot Noel; EULOGY FOR LISA by Jason Shankel; THE DIVE by James Verran; FLUTTERBYES by Jo Etta Legerwood; THE MAGICIAN by Michael Landweber; THE BOOKMAN by David Ira Cleary; THE VINTAGER by James Gleason Bishop; MOTHERS OF CHAOS by Pete Manison; THE CHILDREN OF CRECHE by James Gardner; THE SCHOLAR OF THE PEAR TREE by Annis Shepherd and UNDER GLASS by David Carr.

The stories were illustrated by the Illustrator's Contest, the first story being illustrated by Peggy Ranson - in a style quite unlike her usual. The other artists were: Timothy Winkler, Kevin Dzuban, Derek Hegsted, Allison Hershey, Beryl Bush, Kelly Faltermayer, Daniel Oman, Jeff Fennel, Ruth Thompson, Timmothy Standish and Kevin Hopkins. There were also short articles by L. Ron Hubbard, Alex Schomburg, Ben Bova, Algis Budrys and Frank Kelly-Freas. Not a bad buy at all, for fresh talent.

**THE MOAT AROUND MURCHESON'S EYE** by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1993. 402 pp. A\$39.95. On sale now.

The sequel to THE MOTE IN GODS EYE; the authors continue the story of the Empire blockade of Mote Prime and all the hassles that go with it. Bury and everyone else is 25 years older and the politicians are thinking of cutting funding for the Crazy Eddie squadron. Renner and Bury have spent that last 25 years working as spies for the Empire and Bury is getting "signals" that things may not be all that good at the squadron, and he decides to ask the Navy to let him go for a look see. Unfortunately his old enemy Blaine still has a lot of power, and Blaine is determined that Bury shan't go.

After much arguing the group realised that the data provided about the collapse of a Proto-star in the Coal-sack that will provide "tram-lines" to the Moties that will enable them to escape their star and erupt into the Empire of Man given to them by the Moties may be incorrect. Only three ships are in place to go to the new Jump point where the Moties may come through (if and when the proto-star collapses) and Bury and Renner, together with their companions must face a threat they have been dreading for the past quarter century.

THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE won the Hugo when it was first published. I would not be surprised if this novel also wins it - it will surely be nominated. \*Recommended\*.

**DOMES OF FIRE** by David Eddings. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 584 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. Book One of the Tamuli. From one of the best fantasy writers of the present day - the continuing saga of Sparhawk as he and his companions battle the Troll gods and the undead they have raised to keep the peace of his kingdom and his wife and queen. A nice thick trilogy in the making.

**KINGDOMS OF THE WALL** by Robert Silverberg. Grafton pb., dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 348 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The hardcover was reviewed several issues back. The tale of Poilar Crookleg as he trains with others of his year and joins the trek and attempts to gain the summit of the enormous mountain Kosa Saag as generations have

attempted before him. What the summit revealed changed both his life and those who followed him. Excellent sf.

**DAMIA** by **Anne McCaffrey**. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 380 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The sequel to **THE ROWAN**. This edition has been out in h/c, trade pb, and now ordinary pb. The tale of Damia's growing up and her training to control her psi powers in order to become one of the best Primes. And to hopefully contact the aliens who were even then approaching the worlds of the Nine Star League. If you liked **THE ROWAN** you will enjoy this novel.

**THE KING'S BUCCANEER** by **Raymond E. Feist**. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1992. 623 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The Riftwar Cycle continues with this volume and is set 10 years after **PRINCE OF THE BLOOD**. The novel follows the career of Nicholas, one of the sons of Prince Arutha as he learns of the destruction of Crydee and the kidnapping of two Noble girls. The novel is well-written and entertaining, as are those others of the Saga. Well told fantasy by one of the better known practitioners of the craft.

**THE SHADOW RISING** by **Robert Jordan**. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1992. 1031 pp incl Glossary. Book 4 of the Wheel of Time. The story of the Dragon Lord and his ultimate fight with the Dark Lord over the fate of the world. Well written fantasy - and a nice thick book for those long winter nights coming up. Those who read and liked the first three books will definitely like this one. The Forsaken and all their kin are there to be battled against and who knows what the end will be?

**CHUNG KUO: THE WHITE MOUNTAIN** by **David Wingrove**. pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1991. 677 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. Book 3 of the series, and the plot thickens, with DeVore the ex Security officer, really getting his revolution in gear. Bombings, assassinations and fear tactics are gaining pace with the end the destruction of the Chinese hold on the world. Excellent SF and \*Recommended\*.

### **OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:**

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