

THE MENTOR

#89 January 1996

THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

In this of TM there is quite a discussion about the “differences” between men and women. In the media lately there have also been comments about women, politics and gender bias. I quote the first paragraph of Patrick Cook’s column in the August 22, 1995 BULLETIN (one of the oldest magazines in Oz, first published in 1880):

“Women forced into politics: The final insult.

“Men spent the whole of the 19th century forcing women up chimneys and down coalmines to load trolleys full of pit ponies and haul them for hundreds of miles on their knees. Other men fed women on cream cakes against their will to engorge their livers which then became a delicacy. Yet further men saw women as mere playthings, to be tossed back and forth over nets at the beach, or carried up and down football fields at a fast trot and used for “serving”. Even more men saw women as nothing more than a gratification of their animal lusts, and frequently attempted to drink them on warm days. But the worst was to come in 20th century Australia, when men forced women to go into politics against their very natures, so that women would make mistakes and men would hold them up to contempt and derision, saying: ‘Look. Women make mistakes, rather like ourselves.’ The horror. The horror.”

Mae Strelkov in her LoC in TM 88 has me down pat: “You don’t intrude, you’re very quiet, but you’re smiling in the wings as your shadow-people do their stuff through your pages. Our Ron watches and is interested, amused, never angry.” Look out, your other people, I only edit TM - you write LoCs!

Well, to show the readers of TM a little more about myself, below are the books I have liked enough to keep in my “main” (ie non SF) library:

COM MONSENSE COOKERY BOOK Book 1 -
 KAMA SUTRA OF VATSYAYANA -
 PROMETHEUS BOUND/SUPPLIANTS,7 AGAINST THEBES Etc AESCHYLUS
 SPIRIT OF MAN, THE ALLSOPP, F. J. & HUNT, O. W. ed
 ROMANTIC POETS BLAKE TO POE AUDEN, W. H & HOLMES PEARSON, N ed
 MARTIN RATTLER BALLANTYNE, R. M.
 PREHISTORIC ANIMALS BARNETT, LINCOLN
 NEW WRITER’S SURVIVAL GUIDE, THE BATES, DIANNE
 FLOWERS OF EVIL BAUDELAIRE
 I CHING BLOFELD JOHN trans
 DECAMERON, THE BOCCACCIO
 ALIEN ANIMALS BORD, JANET & BORD, COLIN
 MARY’S SHELLEY’S FRANKENSTEIN BRANAGH, KENNETH
 REACH FOR THE SKY BRICKHILL, PAUL
 MONSTERS & CREATURES OF THE NIGHT BURSZTYNSKI, SUE
 ART OF STAR WARS EPISODE V, THE CALL, DEBORAH ed
 SNOWS OF OLYMPUS, THE CLARKE, ARTHUR C.
 LOVE LOCKED OUT CLEUGH, JAMES
 RELATIVITY FOR THE LAYMAN COLEMAN, JAMES A.
 ARROW OF TIME, THE COVENEY, PETER & HIGHFIELD, ROGER
 DIVINE COMEDY, THE: 1 HELL DANTE
 DIVINE COMEDY, THE: 2 PURGATORY DANTE
 DIVINE COMEDY, THE: 3 PARADISE DANTE
 COMPLETE MARQUIS DE SADE, THE Vol 1 DE SADE
 COMPLETE MARQUIS DE SADE, THE Vol 2 DE SADE
 SENTENCE TO SERVITUDE DEGRANAMOUR, A.
 TIDES OF LUST DELANY, SAMUEL R.
 PENGUIN MACQUARIE DICTIONARY, THE DELBRIDGE, A. ed
 DARWIN DESMOND, ADRIAN & MOORE, JAMES
 IDIOT, THE DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 CRIME AND PUNISHMENT DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 EROTIC WORLD OF FAERY, THE DUFFY, MAUREEN
 MARRIAGE ART, THE EICHINLAUB M.D., JOHN E.
 STARS, PLANETS & GALAXIES ENGELBREKTSON, SUNE
 PROSPECT OF IMMORTALITY, THE ETTINGER, ROBERT C. W.
 ROYAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS EVATT, E, ARNOTT F, & DEVE SON, A
 FACT AND FICTION IN PSYCHOLOGY EYSENCK, H. J.
 HUMANKIND FARB, PETER
 A GOAT FOR AZAZEL FISHER, VARDIS
 ADAM AND THE SERPENT FISHER, VARDIS
 DARKNESS AND THE DEEP FISHER, VARDIS
 DIVINE PASSION, THE FISHER, VARDIS
 FOR PASSION, FOR HEAVEN FISHER, VARDIS
 GOLDEN ROOMS, THE FISHER, VARDIS
 GREAT CONFESSION, THE FISHER, VARDIS
 INTIMATIONS OF EVE FISHER, VARDIS
 ISLAND OF THE INNOCENT, THE FISHER, VARDIS
 JESUS CAME AGAIN FISHER, VARDIS

MY HOLY SATAN
 PEACE LIKE A RIVER(THE PASSION WITHIN)
 VALLEY OF VISION, THE
 GOLDEN BOUGH, THE
 INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS, THE
 LEONARDO
 TALE OF THE MILITARY SECRET
 EARLY IRISH MYTHS AND SAGAS
 FAUST Part 1
 FAUST Part 2
 DEAD SOULS
 SACRED FIRE
 TRUE FACE OF JACK THE RIPPER, THE
 DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER, THE
 PROSTITUTION IN EUROPE & THE NEW WORLD
 LOVE IN ACTION
 PRETENCE OF LOVE, THE
 PICTOR’S METAMORPHOSIS
 HITE REPORT
 A HISTORY OF THE SOVIET UNION
 NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE, THE
 DIANETICS
 GOLDEN AGE OF EROTICA, THE
 BIGGLES FLIES SOUTH
 BIGGLES IN AUSTRALIA
 BIGGLES AIR DETECTIVE
 BIGGLES FLIES AGAIN
 ULYSSES
 CASTLE, THE
 ART OF STAR WARS, EPISODE VI, THE
 WESTWARD HO!
 SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE HUMAN FEMALE
 BLOOMSBURY THESAURUS
 A CHRISTMAS CAROL, etc
 DARKNESS AT NOON
 GHOST IN THE MACHINE, THE
 GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY
 WAR IN 2080: THE FUTURE OF MILITARY TECH
 SONS AND LOVERS
 LADY CHATLLEY’S LOVER
 PROJECT MARS
 APHRODITE
 COCKLESHELL HEROES
 SATAN WANTS YOU
 CHILDREN OF THE NEW FOREST
 SEVEN.PERC.CENT SOLUTION, THE
 PARADISE LOST
 PARADISE LOST Books 1 & 2
 LOLITA
 THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA
 TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS, THE/ ANTI CHRIST, THE
 ROUND THE EMPIRE
 NIGHTMARE ABBEY/CROTCHET CASTLE
 A BOOK OF NONSENSE
 THUNDERBIRDS, STRINGRAY, Etc, GUIDE
 SATANIC MASS, THE
 SOCIETY OF SPACE, THE
 ROGET’S THESAURUS
 TRIAL OF LADY CHATTERLEY, THE
 JOURNEY TO THE PLANETS
 EPIC OF GILGAMESH, THE
 AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TODAY
 KING LEAR
 MACBETH
 TAMING OF THE SHREW
 OEDIPIUS THE KING
 CANDY
 WHAT FREUD REALLY SAID
 INTERPLANETARY TRAVEL
 TWELVE CAESARS, THE
 GULLIVER’S TRAVELS
 ART OF STAR WARS, EPISODE IV, THE
 FUTURE SHOCK
 QUOTATIONS FROM CHAIRMAN MAO TSE -TUNG
 SELECTED MILITARY WRITINGS OF MAO TSE-TUNG
 HISTORY OF COURTING, A
 CYBERNAUT
 AENEID OF VIRGIL, THE
 PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS, THE
 BEOWULF
 BEFORE MIDNIGHT SCHOLAR, THE
 EMPLOYEE STATUS SYMBOLS
 FISHER, VARDIS
 FISHER, VARDIS
 FISHER, VARDIS
 FRAZER, J. G.
 FREUD, SIGMUND
 FREUD, SIGMUND
 GAIDAR, ARKADY
 GANTZ, JEFFREY trans
 GOETHE
 GOETHE
 GOGOL
 GOLDBERG, B. Z.
 HARRIS, MELVIN
 HARRISON, SHIRLEY narr
 HENRIQUES, FERNANDO
 HENRIQUES, FERNANDO
 HENRIQUES, FERNANDO
 HESSE, HERMANN
 HITE, SHERE
 HOSKING, GEOFFREY
 HOYLE, FRED
 HUBBARD, L. RON
 HURWOOD, BERNHARDT J.
 JOHNS, W. E.
 JOHNS, W. E.
 JOHNS, W. E.
 JOHNS, W. E.
 JOYCE, JAMES
 KAFKA, FRANZ
 KASDAN, LAWRENCE & LUCAS, GEORGE
 KINGSLEY, CHARLES
 KINSEY, POMEROY, MARTIN & GEBHARD
 KIRKPATRICK, BETTY ed
 KNOEFLMACHER, U. C. Ed
 KOESTLER, ARTHUR
 KOESTLER, ARTHUR
 KOHLER WOLFGANG
 LANDFORD, DAVID
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LEY, WILLY & VON BRAUN, WERNHER
 LOUYS, PIERRE
 LUCAS PHILLIPS, C. E.
 LYONS, ARTHUR
 MARRYAT, Capt
 MEYER, NICHOLAS
 MILTON, JOHN
 MILTON, JOHN
 NABOKOV, VLADIMIR
 NIETZSCHE
 NIETZSCHE
 PARKIN, GEORGE R.
 PEACOCK, THOMAS LOVE
 PEAKE, MERVYN
 PEEL, JOHN
 RHODES, H. T. F.
 RITNER, PETER
 ROGET, SAMUEL ROMILLY
 ROLPH, C. H. ed
 RYAN PETER & PESEK, LUDEK
 SANDARD, N. K. trans
 SAWER, GEOFFREY
 SHAKESPEARE
 SHAKESPEARE
 SHAKESPEARE
 SOPHOCLES
 SOUTHERN, TERRY & HOFFENBERG, MASON
 STAFFORD-CLARK, DAVID
 STERNFELD, A
 SUETONIUS
 SWIFT, GULLIVER
 TITELMAN, CAROL, ed
 TOFFLER, ALVIN
 TSE-TUNG, MAO
 TSE-TUNG, MAO
 TURNER, E. S.
 VALENS, E. G.
 VIRGIL
 VON KRAFFT-EBBING, R. Dr
 WRIGHT, DAVID trans
 YU, LI
 ’78 MANAGEMENT CERT. COURSE

Several months ago my eldest daughter informed my Ex and myself that she was getting married in January 1997. After Susan had done much research into the costs of the various establishments around the area (Penrith to Parramatta) and I had several near-breakdowns when I heard the cost of reception places (Evelyn wants a “traditional” (church) wedding), we settled on a place at Penrith. What all this means

is that TM is *really* going to be irregular - you will see it if and when I find money to post it. So if you don't see it for ~~twelve~~ six months or so, don't worry.... - Ron.

A MATTER OF SEX(ISM)!

by Kirstyn McDermott

Men are lazy, insensitive, unorganised and unable to concentrate on more than one thing at the same time. Dominated by his penis, the life-long ambition of every man is to screw as many long-legged, silicone-stuffed Playboy bimbos as he possibly can. Men are unintelligent workaholics who leave all the menial tasks to women and yet delight in taking the credit for a job well done. Men cannot sew, cook or look after children. Men have no fashion sense. Men do not understand the mysteries of menstruation and female orgasm. In short, men are responsible for all the ills in the world.

Oh please!

It's because of attitudes like those expressed by Lyn Elvey in her article A MATTER OF SEX! (*THE MENTOR* #88) that I have voluntarily exiled myself from the contemporary feminist movement. Too many women these days are going overboard, claiming superiority over men instead of demanding equality. Is it any wonder that "Feminist" has become the new "F-word" of the nineties?

To purport the myth of female superiority is as equally destructive to society as it would be to assert male dominance. All the (valid) feminist arguments about psychological oppression and self-fulfilling prophecy would be just as applicable to men were they to become the inferior sex. I remember discussing feminism with a male relative a few years back when I was still one of the "party faithful". He expressed a (common) fear that women wanted to turn the tables, that we sought to oppress men, that we demanded a complete reversal of the societal order. 'Oh no,' I assured him naively, 'All we want is equality.' Why do I feel the sudden urge to ring him up and apologise?

The stereotypes and generalisations about men and women are just that - stereotypes and generalisations. I've known women who lust for power and men who are content to be dominated; men who'd cook you a meal to die for and women who barely manage to pour the milk on the cornflakes; men who revel in shopping for hours and women who'd rather wear the same clothes for ten years than go anywhere near a Sportsgirl sale; women who'd kill for front row seats to a boxing match and men who appreciate the finer points of knitting; men who are afraid of sex and women who think with their cunts. I've also known women who are the epitome of dumb-blondness and men who are no more than brainless jocks - and vice-versa.

Why would society be any better if women were the superior sex? I've got two words for you, Lyn: Margaret Thatcher. What a caring, sharing and nurturing woman she was! As opposed to Mahatma Gandhi who was, as everybody knows, a cold and inhuman male despot. Women can be just as ruthless, scheming, militant and power-hungry as men, and if anybody seriously thinks that the world would be a more caring and tolerant place if there was a female President in the Whitehouse then I wish they'd give me some of whatever they're on!

Feminism has a lot to answer for these days. It is creating and enforcing myths that are as bad as those that existed before World War II. Women are now made to feel guilty if all they want to do is stay home and have children. Women now have to be able to efficiently raise their children, have well-paid and respectable careers, actively participate in their communities, manage their households and maintain a healthy social life - and they have to be able to do it without the help of evil, selfish, uncaring men - or they are not real women! What a load of garbage!

But, I suppose that this is all sour grapes. After all, I am a traitor to the cause. True, I *ama* woman but I have absolutely no maternal instinct, never plan to have a family, and am in a very happy relationship with (horror of horrors) a *man* - a man whose dream in life *is* a room dedicated to a library, who *does* think there is more to life than work, who *is* intelligent and *can* commit himself to plans more than two weeks in advance (yes Lyn, he does exist, oh really and truly he does - I've pinched him!). And there are other black marks against my name: I do not want a well-paid, white-collar, office-type career; I have male friends whom I get along with as well as my female friends; I do not think that every man is either a potential rapist or a would-be oppressor; and I quite like (good) pornography actually.

I'm sick of all this sisterhood crap being forced down my throat. Sure some men are selfish, insensitive, Neanderthal bastards - some but by no means all. By the same token, there are some women whom I would loathe for their stupidity and shallowness if I even thought it worth the effort. Maybe it's the case that some PEOPLE are idiotic and senseless and pathetic and mean and materialistic and workaholic and self-centred, and it doesn't really have all that much to do with what sex they are.

As I see it, the problem lies with the whole equality issue - or, rather, some people's interpretation of "equality" as meaning "alike". Women and men are *not* alike. There are biological, physical and psychological differences between the sexes which will never be erased by any form of socialisation (thank god!). There are some things that men and women do differently, and there are some things which one sex (on average) is better at doing than others. Note, "different" should not be equated with "inferior/superior", although it all too often is. Do we want a society of automatons where every person thinks, acts and reacts in exactly the same way? Is this equality?

Lyn's comments are so ludicrous, so "Cleo Magazine", that part of me really wants to believe she is joking. Unfortunately, I don't think she is. I've listened to too many women exactly like her. Women who tell me to burn my copy of AMERICAN PSYCHO because it is a piece of misogynist trash. Women who tell me to sign petitions against pornography because it encourages violence against my gender. Women who tell me that I am being oppressed, that I shouldn't go out at night alone, that male editors will reject my stories, that my male lovers will use and abuse me, that I cannot do what I want in this patriarchal society because oh it's so sad but that's the way life is and that's why all men must be castrated in order to make way for the Society of the Superwoman where all will be peace and love and roses. Aaaaargh!

Note, it is women who are telling me such things these days, not men. Self-fulfilling prophecy: if you believe in something, then it will happen.

Well, I refuse to believe!

I think Lyn's "final argument" concerning male (il)logic needs to be set in its proper context. The reason girl babies are often secretly disposed of in China and some other Asian countries is more an economic one than anything else. It should be pointed out that this practice does not usually occur in richer families (usually because money has a way of talking itself around the law), but is prevalent amongst the poor. The reason for the preference of sons is not primarily because they will carry on the family name, but because they do not require a large, expensive dowry to be provided upon their marriage, and because a son is expected to look after his parents in their old age. Quite literally, poor families cannot *afford* a daughter. It is hardly an example of male logic, but of *cultural* logic.

In short, Lyn Elvey's article was *sexism* pure and simple, and I refuse to be associated with her caricature of womanhood. Sure, there is *lot* - and I mean a *lot* - wrong with our society, but the solution will never lie in inverting the problem. Women better than men? The last time I heard something so ridiculous was when men were running around claiming that *they* were the superior sex.

The answer is really simple, boys and girls. Can anybody say "symbiosis"?

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

by James Verran

No matter how comprehensive their collection of reference books, very few modern writers could manage without their hardware and software manuals. Even that mainstay of the purist, the typewriter, is supplied with a handbook, unless it was bought or inherited from a careless owner.

User's, owner's, operator's, thick or thin, manuals are often confusing, or a source of amusement, depending on where they were written. Okay, so foreign language versions written by English writers are probably just as bizarre. Nevertheless, in the "good old days" English versions were compiled by technical writers who had English as their first language, so an owner of a new "this or that", given a reasonable grasp of English, could operate the new "whatever" without much hassle.

To be fair, technical writers in the computer and software industries are often required to write authoritative instructions for complex procedures after only a minimal period of familiarisation with a product. Even with access to a comprehensive manual the end purchaser may take several months to develop a useful understanding of the same product. Assuming that software houses like the Big M (not the fast-food flogger) employ anonymous writing teams to compile documentation, it stands to reason that the manuals will occasionally contain some perplexing instructions. At best, understanding these requires a shift in consciousness akin to that employed by crossword addicts where interpreting the clues comes easier once the reader has "tuned in" to the author's perspective.

In many instances the seemingly esoteric instruction manuals only begin to make sense after considerable hands-on experience, and because of the time needed to wade through on-line tutorials, people frequently invest in independently written guides. Rectifying the shortcomings of in-house manuals has become highly profitable for many enterprising publishers.

Since the post-war industrial boom in Europe and east of Korea, we have endured several decades of fractured English in user guides and manuals. Unfortunately, just when these handbooks were becoming intelligible, the perpetrators began moving their industries off-shore. If it had taken the Japanese that long -- fast learners that they are -- how long for the "Young Tigers" of Asia to master written English? Before rushing out to enrol in a flock of Asian language courses, consider this: within a few years the multinationals will set up in yet another country with even lower overheads. Yes, Australia may in turn become the sweat-shop of Asia. Happy days -- jobs for all -- with enough money to buy the cheap goodies. At least we should be able to understand the documentation which, hopefully, will also have been produced here. Of course, this premise is based upon the dubious assumption that we will still possess rudimentary English communication skills.

For the present, setting up an essential bit of every day electronics, say an entry-level home computer, should be within the scope of the average low-tech brain with high-tech aspirations, right? The following scenario is intended to relate to a basic (not BASIC) system, so brand names and specifics have been omitted, or carefully fudged to spare the guilty. Your basic system has no multimedia kit -- you will save for that after paying for the laser printer the salesperson insisted you could not do without.

To assist with unpacking the thing there are little pictures on the cartons -- think of them as icons. Ah-ha -- to use icons a mouse (digital input device) is considered mandatory, but you can not plug a mouse into a carton. Forget the mouse, the only pointing device needed is a sharp knife -- trust me. By the time the boxes are on the floor of your domicile most of the icons on the carton will already be redundant. Scratch the cute little umbrella, forget about the wineglass and the numbers over the small image of a package, just make sure the arrows are pointing to the ceiling, then slash the packaging tape, and/or pry out the monstrous staples. Oh, about those arrows -- how the hell are you going to lift those blocks of Styrofoam from the open cartons? Was a time when cartons could be opened from the bottom, then lifted off to leave the contents free-standing. Do not despair, there are strategically placed indentations in the Styrofoam, and the whole thing can be lifted out as a unit -- if you are lucky. Of course, in the excitement you will have removed the shock-proofing Styrofoam, and discarded the copious plastic bags and bubble padding to reveal your purchase without giving a thought to how it all came apart. Nah -- it'll work -- you'll never need to repack it for shipment back to the dealer.

Okay, so you have a keyboard, and more packaging, a desktop or tower module, and more packaging, and another box containing the monitor with even more packaging. You can expect more of the same when you unpack the printer. As a matter of interest, you may have notice how the growing pile of refuse is conscientiously marked with whatever symbols represent recyclable materials in the country of origin. Yes, they too are icons. After placing the whole collection of components on a flat, horizontal surface, you are left with an enormous pile of Styrofoam and plastic film which, with luck, will fit back into the cartons.

Before congratulating yourself for successfully negotiating the first level of iconic madness, it is prudent to retrieve several plastic-wrapped items that will probably have fallen into the enormous pile of refuse. At this point it is also wise to rummage through the stuffed cartons and rescue the manuals before your little helpers stomp the lot into the garbage can. Then you are ready to make the first tentative connections, via the kilometre or more of cables. Not too difficult, they all have different connectors. Things can only get better -- there are parallel, serial, and video ports, expansion bus slots, and PS/2 mouse and keyboard sockets, most of which have been thoughtfully placed on the outside of the various modules. As soon as you untangle the cables and stuff them into their respective connection ports, the thing should work.

At least, if you have purchased from a caring retailer, the essential software has been pre-installed so you may ignore the software manuals -- for now.

Now it gets tricky, especially for the down-market purchaser. No matter where you live, the manufacturer assumes you are a US resident, and all preliminary operating warnings relate to FCC regulations in that country. Invariably, the illustrations for the power-cord connections are for types used elsewhere and only vaguely represent those supplied.

Another major difficulty is deciphering the instructions to identify apparent hardware malfunctions (euphemistically called troubleshooting), most of which are caused by deficiencies in the wetware. For instance, when the thing won't work is a good time to break open the plastic-wrapped manuals and locate the "Getting Started" section. What a bore. The first page contains an unpacking check list, followed by...well maybe a quick run through "The Carton Should Contain the Following" might be helpful.

Yes, after examining the manufacturer's labels on the components to ascertain exactly which model "this and that" you have bought, you are relieved to learn that everything is there. But it still won't work, so you decide to make a cup of coffee, and read The Book. When you return, the thing is flashing coloured lights, the monitor is displaying dozens of obscure little images which your little helpers inform you are -- you guessed it -- icons! While your back was

turned, those same little helpers plugged in -- OF COURSE -- then switched on and booted up (their terminology) the machine. However, after pushing them aside and telling them that it is a serious machine, not intended for playing "Space Invading Eco-plumbers", they leave you to your own devices, and a screen crammed with icons just begging to be "clicked". Civilisation has come full circle: pictographs and hieroglyphs, which were replaced by the written word a few thousand years ago, are now considered an indispensable modern innovation.

Unfortunately the disgruntled little helpers have donned their roller-blades and vanished, so you wade through several chapters to eventually discover that "clicking" is performed on a mouse. By the time you have unpacked, located the correct port, and plugged in the rodent, the screen, and all but one of the coloured lights have gone dead. You are left staring in disbelief at a solitary glow indicating something called "standby", which you do. Eventually, after wondering what the hell you've done to the thing, you decide to leave well enough alone until the little helpers return.

To while away the time you delve deeper into the books; wherein you encounter phrases like: "KB is the abbreviation for kilobytes, or one thousand bytes, which is actually 1,024 bytes.", then to compound your confusion you read that one MB is a million bytes, or 1,048,576 bytes. With no easily found explanation for these apparent anomalies, you skip the definitions for memory, ROM and RAM, hard disk, partitioning and the like. Recklessly riffling through to the troubleshooting section, you discover it contains gems like: "Do you hear any beeps? How many? Are they long or short...high pitched or low? Is the computer making any unusual noises?", or "Confirm that all options are correctly set on the Setup Menu." and "Check any Hot Key combinations to make sure they are set the way you want them.", which you surely would -- if you knew which keys were hot, or even which you wanted them set.

Understanding the cryptic "English" in manuals for foreign made electronic devices is, to be polite, a challenge. While devoided, dirve C:, provied and valuse, are obviously ypos, and correctly spelled elsewhere, you may discover a fair amount of creative grammar along the lines of: "Is the serial port enable? ...light continues to no flash. Use gently but even pressure to seat the chip in the socket. ...connect an standard printer cable...is designed such that it is..." Which may bring to mind a birthday, or Christmas when your well-meaning fledglings presented you with a digital watch proudly described in the accompanying leaflet as an Electronic Digital Chronograph. Despite the claim that it has eight functions, you never have learned how to use them. The instructions, which amounted to a series of: 1 X push of A-button, or 2 X push of C-button, et cetera, were simple enough for children to set the functions -- so you let them.

Then you emerge from your reverie with the bright idea to phone a friend. Jonesy has had computers for yonks, so it seems fitting that he should help; after all, it was seeing the Jones's computer that inspired you to dive in at the deep end. Ever helpful, and without waiting for you to tell him how much you paid for your machine, Jonesy interrupts with: "You bought a what? M-a-t-e, I could have got you the best price in town on an identical machine." But you are too embarrassed to ask what a clone is, and rather than endure his supercilious gloating, you suddenly remember that you have to get your latest manuscript mailed before the post office closes.

In despair, you return to the manual to peruse the index, and discover an offer too good to refuse: the manufacturer has thoughtfully provided a toll free help line, and you eagerly read how to get on-line help. Then the alarm bells begin ringing -- why the hell would they want you to have your credit card number on hand? Careful study of the fine print reveals that although your first call is free, you will be billed for subsequent calls. Of course they neglect to mention the interminable period on hold, for which you will be paying, as well as their substantial charges for the inconvenience. You wisely decide to postpone your one free call until you are ready to hit them with a beauty.

At last, the sounds of salvation: the clatter of little roller wheels along the driveway. You pretend to be engrossed with the manual when they saunter in, and before you realise what has happened, one of them has nonchalantly pressed something, and your nemesis whirrs into life. Things begin happening on the screen, but you feign indifference while you watch images expand and shrink, or appear and vanish rapidly. Then you see the screen that the salesperson showed you in the shop -- the all dancing, all singing, bells and whistles of the latest word processor -- the software miracle you eagerly spent your unearned advance on after being convinced that it would wean you from your old golf-ball slinger forever. Before your little helpers erase it from the screen, you ask, "How did you learn to do that without the book?" The younger one guiltily removes his hand from the mouse, and replies, "Oh, you don't need to read the book -- that's old-fashioned stuff -- it's got icons!"

Within a few weeks you have learned that computers never do what you want -- only what you tell them to do -- thanks to your little helpers. Of course their assistance cost you a large chunk of your hard drive which has been taken over with assorted games, mostly of dubious origin. Thankfully, you have become computer literate in time to rework that returned manuscript -- the one Jonesy's droning voice reminded you to mail a lifetime ago.

Armed with your new-found competence you have decided to tackle the VCR which, until now, you have generously allowed the children to programme; after all, encouraging offspring to hone their survival skills in this high-tech world is the least any conscientious parent can do.

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE: REVISED, UPDATED AND GENERALLY REFURBISHED.

by Darren Goossens

Part II

Roman Science: Historically, Roman science has been overshadowed by the Greek. However, they developed over many years a strong and rather more experimental approach to the subject. The

Romans were probably most active in the field of investigation involving the Human Response to Stress (HRS). Their experiments were conducted in vast laboratories before many observers, often using Christians as the stressees. It did not take long to determine that human beings, even under the greatest stress, could not outrun an active lioness. However, for some reason the Romans insisted on repeated trials of this before they were convinced - so inventing one of the cornerstones of modern experimental science, reproducibility.

In line with their practical bent, the Romans embedded many scientific principles (and slaves) in the brickwork of many major civil engineering efforts, often in the most uncivil of places. Hither and thither they built aqueducts, viaducts and taxeducts. A further example of this is Hadrian's wall in Britain, built to keep the Picts in Scotland - much to the annoyance of the Scottish. The Picts, being a non-scientific people, did not discover for centuries how it might be circumvented.

The very uppermost members of Roman society adhered to scientific principles. Indeed, the emperors themselves were often guided by such considerations. Julius Caesar himself expounded upon the importance of close observation ("Vedi, vidi, vici"), and in geometry invented his famous 'Section'. And, of course, his adopted son Brutus invented aftershave.

A fact often overlooked historically is that the emperor Nero was an ~~invertebrate~~ inveterate tinkerer, incessantly fiddling with his apparatus. Indeed, so preoccupied was he that he gained notoriety.

Not to mention Ptolemy.

Regarding cosmology, there is no evidence to support the recent assertion that the phrase 'All roads lead to Rome,' indicates that the Roman scholars were aware of the curvature of spacetime. Astronomy, in truth, was rather weak in Ancient Rome, as were (for some probably not connected reason) osteopathy and neurosurgery.

On the other hand, the Romans thought a great deal about war. They were very good at war. Very good. Very, very good. In their hands, war became a science, fitting in, presumably, between physics and biology (using as it does physics to kill biology). They developed many mechanisms to kill things with. Catapults and fire-bombs and many complex tactics, among them the Caligula turn, a move rediscovered much, much later by Immelman.

Of course, in the end the Roman Empire declined and fell, a process recorded for posterity by an unusually intelligent gibbon.

The Chinese: Living as they did in China, the Chinese were (fortunately for them) a long way away from the Romans. Blessed with a great history of continuity and historicalness, the Chinese had and have a long history of scientific endeavour. Most notable, perhaps, was their early discovery of gunpowder. (The evidence for this is rather more concrete than for the theory that the people of Atlantis discovered unconstrained nuclear fusion, though this *would* explain the fact that there *are* no people of Atlantis, nor an Atlantis itself. However, being built on the assumption that there was *at some stage* a people and place of Atlantis, the theory must be deemed shaky. Indeed, unscientific.) The gunpowder (not made from guns, despite the name) was often used in rockets. Once, in a spirit of scientific inquiry, these rockets were attached to a chair, to which a somewhat unfortunate and unwilling individual was also attached. There was, however, an undesirable asymmetry to the forces of the different rockets, resulting in the inadvertent invention of the decorative "pi n-wheel".

Another prominent Chinese invention was paper. Sadly, they did not follow it to its logical conclusion - the telephone book - and so missed out on most of the kudos. (Though they did have Judo.)

Meanwhile, Back in the West: Meanwhile, back in the west the Dark Ages (DA) had descended. It was very hard to do science in the dark, it being a pursuit requiring precision, but it was very easy to kill people. This was the feudal system, whereby when two rich and powerful men had a feud, they sent peasants in waves again each other's

castles (hence the term 'surf'). Very many peasants died (this was the feudal system also), and then the rich and powerful men made up and forgave each other. This was also, therefore, the age of chivalry.

There were a few shining lights during the dark ages, but these are thought to have been accidental rediscoveries of gunpowder (see *The Chinese*). The light was therefore very bright and very brief.

So dark were these ages, the DA, that the sphericity of the Earth became doubtful. Apparently they could not see far enough.

Learning was kept alive by the Church. Monks copied the works of the ancients, translating the Arabic copies of the Latin copies of the Greek originals into Latin copies which were then translated into English. There is therefore reason to suspect that Plato was actually the great comedic writer of his generation, and *The Republic* is in truth a rather ribald narrative poem. Generally the Church took Aristotle as *the* authority, which was rather unusual as he had been a pagan (note that *the* authority is different to *The Authority*). The other authority was Ptolemy, whose *Almagest* was a rather weighty tome, extremely thick and therefore of great assistance in reaching the books on the next shelf up (usually these books were the modern equivalents of *The Republic*). However, we are not mentioning Ptolemy.

The monks would sit in their cubicles and all mourn the burning of the great Library of Alexandria, which had been full of ancient brilliance and wisdom. All would mourn except the apprentice monks (the ones who did the actual copying). They were actually secretly delighted.

And then one day they turned around and looked out the refectory window and saw that things were Renaissancing all over the place.

THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE #3

by Pavel Viaznikov

Well, where were we? Oh yes. Travels. The last one described was to Irkutsk, was it? (About their art gallery: well, I could have exaggerated a bit, but only a bit. It's really among the best in this country).

There were a couple more winter trips, both to the small town of Noyabrsk in Tyumen Region; they drill for oil and gas, and that's it. A flat place, with rare low hills, lots of rivers, rivulets and springs which flow among marshes bordered with bogs which are surrounded by swamps; thin taiga and deer-raising Hanty and Mansi tribes. The "new way of life" shows itself in shops where bananas sell cheaper than cucumbers and onions, small booths selling Snickers bars, sneaker bras, Tampax (batteries not included), pirate videos, imitation cellular phones, plastic teenage mutant ninja matryoshkas and Turkish "Yucky" dehydrated juices (is it Turkish for "yucky"?). Also, a new church is under construction under the Mayor's order (who used to be a local Communist Party leader once). In Noyabrsk, we had a small adventure: we got stuck in snow and had to push our Niva car out of the snow-filled depression. We were wearing suits and low boots, so we had a refreshing and toughening up snow bath.

By the way, the above matryoshkas are no joke. In those Noyabrsk booths they, of course, sell normal plastic dolls of the ninja turtles, but not long ago in Moscow I've been at one of the tourist spots where they sell "Russian Souvenirs", that is painted wooden quasi-Khokhloma spoons, imitation Palekh lacquer boxes, pseudo-Orenburg wool shawls, balalaikas (also painted - while honest-to-God balalaika shouldn't be painted), and, of course, matryoshka wooden dolls - some painted in traditional ways, while some depicting, for example, rulers of Russia in succession (just to remind you, matryoshkas are dolls which are inserted one into another). Well, so one artist was selling Matryoshkas which were painted as the four turtles and the fifth was the rat, their sensay. Crazy.

Oh, and there was an old joke about pits on the road. They say that a German lady was travelling in the USSR by car, and she got into a pit on a highway. When the road police got her out, she started to complain - "You should've marked the dangerous spot with a red pennant or something!" The policeman replied - "Lady, you've crossed the USSR border, didn't you? So do you want to tell me that you failed to notice the red banner above the checkpoint?!"

Later I was lucky to get to the town of Mezhdurechensk (it's in the Kuzbass region) in a nice, hot (even too hot) season. Besides, it's a town where the tar roads end. So the rivers are very clean, and the water is even potable as it is right from the river. (I didn't try it, though). The place I lived in was the Fantaziya resthouse belonging to the biggest local coal mine, and the place was picturesque - like a picture from a "Welcome to Swiss Alps" guidebook. With clouds crawling over the mountains, it was even picturesquely and beautiful. And once, I saw a real "snowstorm" of white butterflies - they swirled in the air like a blizzard and then landed on the river bank, covering it fantastically.

I bathed in that clear and very swift river, I went to a steambath, feasted on local "juicy fishes", and, of course, did business. As for the steambath, it was as pleasant as it should be, except that I had an unpleasant surprise when I washed my bunch of fresh birch branches (used for slashing the body in traditional massage) in hot water, a dozen ticks floated on the steaming water surface. Yes, ticks are a curse of the local woods....

I heard about a nasty thing. Imagine, some bastards stole, in the mining town of Prokopyevsk, 600 metres of copper cable - which was an emergency telephone line for the rescue team... That's a real f**king shame, since large-scale accidents are not rare in the town which sits on sponge-like grounds - the mines are all over, like holes in Swiss cheese.

Just a few interesting things I saw. For example, in Prokopyevsk, there was a shop "Platon" with windows full of bottles of Greek "Socrates" brandy. I forget the English name of the root Socrates was poisoned with, but it's be difficult to persuade me to have a drink of it!

In Novokuznetsk airport, there are several info boards on the wall made in English, for the convenience of foreigners. That is, in

THE TOMJ RIVER, NEAR MEZHDURECHENSK

order to help poor pagans to find the "ENTRANCE OUT IN TOWN" or the "BAGADGE SEIF BOKS", or "SITDOWN HOLL". In case you do not

know enough English to understand, these mean, correspondingly, the plain old "Exit" (the one leading outside the airport area, though not into the "town" - it's a far cry to Novokuznetsk from there, about 35 or 40 km, I think); the "luggage room" and the "waiting room" (it's where you can perhaps find a vacant chair and sleep out several hours of waiting for your delayed flight).

All in all, the trip was rather interesting. But soon after I returned, I also retired. Changed my job again, and I think that now I've found myself something interesting.

Since my last column, I've also been to the USA (NY, a couple of places in Ohio and Kentucky) and Prague, Czech Rep. I do not think that my impressions of the USA will be very interesting for you - after all, it's less exotic for you. Anyway... a couple of notes. First of all, thank God that I do not smoke: in the USA they are really chauvinist towards smokers. Second, they always tell that the NY subway is very dirty and dangerous. Well, dirty it is, but still tolerable; and during my several days in NY I travelled in the subway a lot, and in the night too, but never saw even a hint of danger, only once noticed a drunk black guy - quite peaceful, though. The city in itself is clearly divided into the upper and lower cities - literally upper and lower, i.e. when on Manhattan you look up, where most of the city is with all of them skyscrapers, it's very nice and even beautiful; once you lower your gaze, you find yourself in a much more dirty and less inspiring place. Otherwise, I cannot tell you anything which you have not seen in guide books or movies. But where I found a real paradise, was in a SF bookshop "Science Fiction, Mysteries and More" (140 Chambers Str, NY 10007- (212) 385-8798). They sell mostly second-hand books, and the choice is fine and the guys there friendly, informative and loving SF. Don't miss the place if you find yourself in the vicinity.

A very nice spot in NY is a small park near Battery Hill, with zillions of squirrels running about. Also, the Central Park looks nice.

The only queue I saw - a long one! - was patiently waiting for several hours at a newly opened horror restaurant next to the Central Park. It's decorated with plastic skeletons and monsters, and a giant monster masque over the doors invites the crowd to "taste cold meat and hot blood". The menu card advertises a "grave stew" and a "vampire's stake". Of course all courses being normal food (I explain this in case you did not guess that it's just an ad trick and not for real. On the other hand... who knows? I, for one, once found in my stew - that was when I was in a hospital - something closely and suspiciously resembling a cut-off surgical knot. Anyway, I wasn't inside that restaurant, so I cannot tell for sure what a grave stew tastes like. Make your guess.) Also, I clearly noticed that I am under a big impact of American movies: all the time I felt as if I was surrounded by cinema settings and not the real city. All the time I was expecting some actors to appear and start acting. Generally NY really looks like a decoration, especially in the night, with steam coming from somewhere underground, the light-ads, the colourful crowds and some very specific city noise. I encountered this kind of street sounds for the first time and cannot describe it clearly, but it is totally different from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Bombay, Delhi, or even Cincinnati. By the way, the smell of each city is different, too. Have you ever noticed this?

The place I liked most was Kentucky. The state is very picturesque and people seem somehow more friendly than elsewhere. The side roads are not very good, though, but landscapes worth seeing!

The funniest thing about the Americans is their relationship with their cars. For example, in Marion, Ohio, we used to break our fast in a cosy place just across the highway (about 20 metres wide) from our inn. But to get there, one has to get into a car and ride half a mile this way to the turn, and then back. Once, I was a bit late and joined my friends in a restaurant. I - to be very frank - broke the rules by crossing the (absolutely empty at the time)

highway. My American friend told me it's not very good to hitchhike nowadays. I explained that I just walked, but the man just could not understand. And one night I decided to walk about 1 km to a supermarket (Macy's or something) to buy myself a book for the night; and while I walked, a policeman stopped me and checked my papers, since a pedestrian looks suspicious.

Another strange thing was their state prison. It looks good, it has sports grounds all around, they described the conditions like accommodation and meals - well, in *this* country many decent people would want to get into this prison! And I wonder if in the USA every decent person lives better than those behind bars. My idea of a penal institution is that a man should think twice before violating the law since such a violation would get him locked in a place which does not resemble a Sheraton Plaza in the least. Well, I agree that sometimes innocent people could be imprisoned by mistake, or that better conditions could help some criminals to "improve"; but generally, punishment should be punishment. Not a torture, but neither a recreation...

As for Prague, this is a place every devoted tourist should see. Some say that this is the most beautiful city in Europe; even if it is not so, it should be one of the most beautiful ones. It's useless to describe it - one should just go there. Besides great architecture and very nice people, you shall find in Prague the best of beer, the real tasty food (lots of cholesterol, lots of calories, lots of carbohydrates; that's why it's so tasty), good Moravian wines, good coffee in endless varieties... by the way, in the USA I always had a language problem: when I asked for a coffee, they used to bring me a concoction clearly

"DEVIL'S WIFE" RIVER IN PRAGUE (SO CALLED PRAGUE VENICE unfit for human consumption, and even had enough courage to boast that this potion is "healthy": decaffeinated coffee (also, decaffeinated and detasted) with desugared sugar and demilked milk. I wonder,

why then have coffee at all? They can have as much of the liquid as they wish right out of the Hudson River - somewhere where a gutter opens in it.

Now, take coffee in Prague: in their "kavárnás" (coffee shops) you get a coffee card which is longer than the Foundation octology (or was it a decalogy?). And a health food maniac will have to search all over the city for a place where they would serve American-style ink. Prague is proud for its sane preference for substantial, satisfying food.

Prague is also full of legends. Have you ever heard of the great Lev ben Bezalel, court alchemist to King Rudolph? The one who made Golem - a clay robot - and invented "life elixir", a delicious soup with herbs which is still served in the old Jewish Town? What do you think of the Flek's brewery which has already been making its famous "Leshak" (Forest Goblin) beer for half a millennium - you can only taste draught in this particular place! There are probably more registered ghosts in Prague than in London and its suburbs; and it's here where the Brave Soldier Sweik used to sit over a jug of beer.... If you know the excellent Chekh literature, the city will mean all the more to you - because you can walk Vikarka Street where Pan Broucek started his fantastic journeys to the Moon and to the 15th century (when Chekh reformists were fighting the forces of the united Catholic Europe); follow the characters of Carek Chapek's STORIES FROM MY POCKET; look at the military quarters where the famous humorist Hashek was declared "an official idiot" by the stupid copperheads (only they didn't wear copper at that time in the Austria-Hungarian Reich). One should walk those streets, see the art displayed in Steinberg Palace and St. Ann Convent, the Troja castle (actually, not a castle but a palace), sit at "The Black Bull" or just stand on the Charles' Bridge in the very heart of the city.

I also visited the Carlovy Vary (aka Calsbad). It's a famous hot springs resort (Carlsbad salts once were sold all over the world as a popular stomach medicine and bath salts). My sister and I were dutifully tasting water from each of several dozens of poetically named pulsating springs (and the taste was foul - though, the same water, when cooled and bottled, tastes nice). The city is famous for three things: first, for the above springs; second, for their bitterish, excellent Becherowka; third, for the city being a traditional nest and a meeting place for scores of spies from all over the world. I think that they enjoyed combining work and caring for their health, for the resort is

really good. Unfortunately, I didn't manage to find a single spy in the city. Another interesting point is that there must be "wrong" Chekhs in the city - for I could not find one place where they sell tap beer, more than that, I found only one place where you could buy bottled beer. This is totally unnatural for the Chekhs... I guess they drink mineral water and Becherowka there - both are good, but a Chekh should drink beer, otherwise he doesn't seem a proper Chekh.

An interesting thing was to compare the subways of New York, Moscow and Prague. The "Big Apple" has the biggest one of the three, but also the dirtiest one and totally deprived of decorations (also there are problems with catching the right train, since they use the same plat-

forms but go in different directions and some skip stations). The Moscow metro is decorated best. In Prague, decorations are less pompous, but adequate and the lines are the shortest of the three. But what really matters, is the mechanical gates at the entrance: in NY, the gates are always closed and you can open them only by paying a token. More than that, the machines have kind of "fingers" which push you in the ass when you get through and ensure that only one person gets in on one token. In Moscow, the gates are normally open, and they close only if you try to go through without inserting a token. While in Prague, there are no gates at all - you buy a ticket (good for all city transport) and when entering the metro, you stamp on it the current time in a machine. Then, you go in and can travel for one hour after which you have to stamp a new ticket. The tickets can be checked at the exit, but it's a rare occasion. Normally, people pay and go without any checking whatsoever.... This tells a thing or two about the people, I think.

What else? Well, I visited Pskov again - but I've already written about Pskov. Oh yes! Recently (in May) the Victory Memorial was opened in Moscow (it was 50 years after the victory in WW2). The monument as described by the sculptor himself, depicts "an obelisk shaped like a three-edged Russian bayonet, crowned with Nike, Goddess of Victory, with two angels at her sides". (There is more, but this is the main monument). Imagine Victory sitting on a bayonet (actually, the pike pierces her clothing). And the angels cannot accompany Nike, since she's from Greek mythology while angels first appear, I believe, in Judaism - in the Old Testament, therefore they belong to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Almost naked winged boys which go with a Greek/Roman goddess, clearly must be Erotes, right?...

Well, now this is perhaps the time to finish. Ron, I'd like to wish you and your readers a very Merry Christmas and New Year.

A CHAPEL IN IZBORSK, NEAR PSKOV, & REMNANTS OF THE OLD IZBORSK FORTRESS

HAIKU AS SHE IS WRITTEN

by Peter Brodie

The poem should deal with nature.

The "nowness" of the experience should be apparent.

3 lines as per the Japanese, in a syllable count of five, seven, five, but this is *not* a hard and fast rule. A little shorter or longer, even sometimes two lines, is ok. Sticking to a strict 17 syllable count can lead to artificiality when writing the haiku in English. The Japanese language is very different. Two words can easily have 7 syllables shared among them, while it's very easy to write seven words of only one syllable in English. It's the expression of the haiku that matters. Do strive for the 17 syllable count but *not* at the expense of your poem. Even the Japanese masters used less or more as the mood required. 17 is the norm tho, ok?

Use only as many words as required, no more, no less.

There should be a "season word", either direct or indirect that tells the reader what season of the year it is. The summer sun is not the winter sun and neither is anything that goes on underneath it.

Imbalance, where one line is much longer than the other is to be avoided. No "improving" on what is felt.

Objectivity with a touch of subjectivity to make it more than a bare statement.

Some of your haiku will end up more senryu than haiku but this can't be helped. Senryu deals with people and society not nature itself, and there is no need for a season word, tho the form is exactly the same. If you have something to say and it ends up senryu, so be it.

Enjoy looking for the haiku moment. It's a way of noticing the small and important things of the world around you; of making you aware. Of getting in touch with yourself and your relationship with the world.

Ganbare!

* * *

Hot wind blows scraps
of paper round the church
---- a puppy cry.

Dusk: far away, the
child's piano
--- stars over the sea.

One drop in
the bathwater, windy
dark, summer day.

Dusk: ---- magpie
stopping his bill
on a power line.
Birds flying where the
sunset touches the cloud tip.

Windblown grass and weeds
-- in the paddock owned
by the government.

Lifting its head, the
cry of the magpie's flight in
the cool evening.

Grabbing him back;
two young boys on the curb.
Wind and dust.

In the same playground,

one with leaves, one without
.... another summer.

Where flying ants crawled;
pressing my brow to the cold
railing.

Blue flashes from
the later commuter. Crickets.

The train's sound, after
I see half.

Hawk circling above
the canyon isn't flying,
just hungry.

A butterfly at
the beach -- heading out
to sea.

Girl with a red
umbrella, walking against
the Tokiado rain.

Seagull's reflection
dips its beak.
---- Crashing waves.

The little girl tugs
as she holds tight to
her grandmother's hand.

The sound of playing
children from the school
behind the buildings.

Hand on chin, she
goes by in the bus.
Autumn evening.

Another bird that
wasn't quick enough --
Hot gutter.

Many different
poems to read - all the
crickets in the dark.

The plaza pigeons
don't get out of my way -
Strolling home in the wind.

THE SCIENCE FICTION OF JACK ARNOLD

by Glen R. Chapman

From its rebirth in the 1950's till virtually the end of the 1960's, science fiction films remained largely the domain of low budget production houses. This can in no way be perceived as a bias against the genre, but a simple economic reality.

Science fiction films throughout the fifties could realistically expect to generate between 1.5 and 2 million dollars. Balanced against this was the rising cost of film production through the same period. Starting in 1950, the average Hollywood production cost around 1 million dollars to mount, rising to 1.5 million by 1955 and finally topping out at an even 2 million by the close of the decade.

Throughout the fifties motion picture companies took quite a battering at the box office, the reasons are many and varied, suffice to say producers were happy if a film could generate around 5% profit after tax.

So, armed with budgets rarely exceeding half a million dollars, a group of largely unknown technicians, actors and writers went to work. One man more than any other of the period managed to produce a body of films - interesting at worst, spine tingling at his best - while keeping costs at a minimum and actually succeeding in turning low budgets into an artform. He was Jack Arnold.

Born in 1916, much of Jack Arnold's early career as an actor is shrouded in mystery. Reported to have appeared in his first film, *THE MASKED ANGEL* (1928) at the age of twelve, he continued in films till 1942, making some thirteen appearances.

Little is known of these early films, in many cases it is doubtful if prints still exist. Based on this, it is hard to evaluate Arnold's ability, or even what level of involvement he had in those films. Most of the titles point to either juvenile affairs; for example *MR DOODLE KICKS OFF* (1938) and *JUNIOR G-MEN OF THE AIR* (1942) and others ranging to mystery/espionage such as *ENEMY AGENT* or *FRAMED*, both made in 1940.

From 1946 to 1952 Arnold produced a series of documentaries for the U. S. Army and State Department, having turned his back on acting. A total of ten films are known to have been made, three of which still exist today, including the award winning *THREE HANDS* (1950)

Arnold's first foray into science fiction came in 1953 with the impressive *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*. Based on a Ray Bradbury short story, *THE METEOR*, the film demonstrates its literary origins by breaking earlier trends: introducing basically friendly aliens. Close inspection of the film sees this concept taken one step further. The aliens are actually indifferent to Earth and it's people, an exceedingly rare theme even today. The only other film of the period to deal with this theme is the haunting *THIS ISLAND EARTH* (1955).

Jack Arnold quickly establishes the moral high ground with the character Able, who witnessed the aliens' forced landing - having him ostracised by the local community. Later at the last minute, after justifying himself, he helps the aliens to leave by stopping the community launching an attack. This use of anti-heroes was popular in 50's films, such as *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* (1956) and the lesser *I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE* (1957)

Arnold makes great use of the powerful imagery of the townsfolk enslaved by the aliens to repair their ship as a statement about communism, an attitude derived from his close contact as a film maker with the U. S. Army from 1946 to 1952.

This film helps to identify two techniques which were to stay with Arnold throughout his career of 50's science fiction films. Firstly, remote locations, in particularly desert settings, although occasional ventures into less demanding locations were common.

The other notable feature of his films is the small cast, usually no more than six major characters, plus a limited number of bit part and down-and-out character actors.

Arnold's next film, *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON* (1954) takes us briefly away from his favoured desert setting. This time a science expedition sails up an American backwater in search

of a humanoid amphibian, soon revealed in the black lagoon. The science involved is nothing short of atrocious, a flaw oft repeated in Arnold's later films, though no worse than many other offerings of the period.

THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON helped science fiction and horror to re-define itself. Rather than create grandiose imagery, Arnold refocusses it back on itself, preferring to look at man's fears in small enough quantities to be able to study the reaction in detail.

George Pal, the other great fantasy film maker of the time, delves at the other end of the spectrum. Planet wide invasions, even the actual destruction of our world was his province. Try as he might Pal was never able to convey the ordinary person's horror in reaction to events. Both strands continue to this day with films such as *STAR WARS* (1977), dealing in galactic wide destruction. Compared with such films as *TRON* (1982), dealing on a far more personal level - the injustice of evil on the ordinary man.

Arnold worked hard in *CREATURE* to invoke emotion from the viewer. Initially the creature is portrayed as a brooding killer, then as the film unwinds we see a creature confronted by a greater horror, man himself.

It is with mixed emotions that we see the creature slip beneath the murky waters having been drugged, harpooned, shot numerous times, that we are left to ponder the injustice of the moment.

Arnold explores this in a decisive way, throughout the film, the two leading male characters fight a series of running engagements - one with thoughts as pure as was required at the time - wants to study it in its natural environs, while the other prefers a more slash and burn approach: bag the creature, then enjoy the accolades.

1955 was, in terms of output, Arnold's best year. A sequel to *CREATURE* - *REVENGE OF THE CREATURE* - did rather well at the box office. Lacking much of the original's moody style, it is sheer exploitation, though highly enjoyable.

His main feature for the year was *TARANTULA*, about a giant spider that rampages through a ranching community before the Air Force intercedes with napalm. Once again Arnold returns to the desert, trademark small cast work hard to turn a fairly ridiculous premise into a workable gripping film.

Arnold continues to develop the mythos of the desert. "A strange place where strange things happen," quotes one of the characters studying a suspicious outcrop of rocks. This film signals an emerging philosophy of Arnold's: the fear of fear itself. In *CREATURE* it manifests itself in the form of what lurks beneath the water, brushing lightly against the leg. A theme re-invented by Steven Spielberg in the early 70's with such workings as *JAWS* (1975).

In *TARANTULA*, Arnold plays with another basic fear, the fear of spiders, believed to be the most common phobia reported. What's different with this film is the spider's lack of threat, unlike *Godzilla* or *King Kong* who both rampaged with great effect across whole cities.

Arnold worked hard with the special effects, choosing to use real spiders moving across model sets. Unlike his contemporary Bert I. Gordon, Arnold manages to make the process work. Using South American bird spiders, Arnold once told of how the spiders could only last around twelve minutes on the set before expiring due to the excessive heat from the studio lights.

Arnold showed his true worth as a director of special effects with his contribution in *THIS ISLAND EARTH*, asked by long time friend William Alland who Arnold had made a number of films for. Although only a short sequence, he shows his ability given reasonable budgets to work with. The imagery of the alien spacecraft cruising across the blasted Metalunian landscape - punctuated by planet shattering explosions - is surely one of the most haunting scenes generated by science fiction of the era.

1957 saw what many consider to be Arnold's finest film, *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, based on a novel by Richard Matheson, who also wrote *I AM LEGEND*, later turned into the nonde-

script film *THE OMEGA MAN* (1971). Matheson insisted on writing the screen-play for Arnold's film, and it's fair to say the base elements are kept intact.

What makes the film work is the study of the reaction of the main character, Williams. As he shrinks, his life collapses, first losing his job, then slowly alienating his wife. Firstly he reacts with anger, turning to defiance as he continues to get smaller. He fights a succession of battles including the family cat, then as he is almost to the microscopic level he hunts and kills a house spider.

This final battle brings the resignation combining with a supreme confidence in the human condition. Boldly Williams goes out to challenge and conquer the microscopic world through a beckoning drain grate. His fate we are left to guess at, but instinctively we know whatever it is, Williams will face it with the honour of a human, and not a mere animal.

Again Arnold tackles the issues of change in life, exploring it in the ultimate way. Strip man of everything - see how he reacts. Even in his two creature films Arnold explores the theme from a more obtuse angle - this time it's the creature disorientated, caused by man.

1957 saw Arnold involved in the projected film *MONOLITH MONSTERS*. Having written the script, the film was well into pre-production when Arnold was offered an in-house production by Universal Studios, *THE TATTERED DRESS*.

Arnold offered *MONOLITH MONSTERS* to John Sherwood who, the previous year, had completed the third *Creature* film for Arnold. *MONOLITH MONSTERS* has all the hallmarks of an Arnold film: desert settings, small but hardworking cast.

The monsters themselves - expanding crystals from a crashed meteor - are handled in a surprisingly believable way. The result is a truly enchanting film with superb special effects - possibly difficult to best even with today's computer driven processes.

On the strength of *INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, Arnold's career began to take off. Consequently his science fiction output suffered. *MONSTER ON CAMPUS* (1958), is a pedestrian exploitative drive-in flick about a scientist who, experimenting with a serum derived from a million year old fish, becomes a throw-back caveman, for-runner to the much better *ALTERED STATES* (1980).

The same year saw *THE SPACE CHILDREN*, essentially a remake of *INVADERS FROM MARS* (1953). This time, however, the aliens are less malevolent and would seem to actually have just cause for foiling the U. S. space program, a pacifistic theme extremely unpopular during the McCarthy era.

This time Arnold moves the action away from the desert to a secluded seaside mansion. Helped by cinematographer Ernst Laszlo, Arnold imparts a quality image, and a sense of foreboding far exceeding the non-existent budget.

Throughout the fifties Arnold had produced - aside from his science fiction - a number of films ranging from comedy through to espionage. His consistent standard and ability to work with small budgets led him to make *THE LADY & THE FLYER* (1958), with a fading Lana Turner. Following this was comedy, *THE MOUSE THAT ROARED* (1959) starring a very much in-form Peter Sellers, and finally a series of comedies featuring Bob Hope saw out the decade.

With the new decade, television gained his services, leading him to work on such programs as *PERRY MASON*, *GILLIGANS ISLAND* (1964-67), *TO TAKE A THIEF* (1968-70). Followed by *WONDER WOMAN*, *THE BIONIC WOMAN* and finally *BUCK RODGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY*, during the seventies and early eighties. Through this period Arnold continued to make the occasional feature, finally ending in 1975 with *THE SWISS CONSPIRACY*.

In 1985 Arnold made a brief return to acting in the John Landis production, *INTO THE NIGHT*, featuring many Hollywood directors in cameo parts.

Jack Arnold died on the 17th of March 1992 - leaving behind a legacy of science fiction films still watched today. Arnold was never at the cutting edge of thoughtful science fiction. However he did inspire a group of film makers including Steven Spielberg and John Carpenter a generation later. Armed with better budgets and mind-boggling special effects they led the way in a new explosion in science fiction and horror films in ways paralleling Arnold's work in the formative years of the fifties.

- Glen Chapman

SEX IN SF: from Mary Shelley to Mary Quant

by Andrew Darlington

They fire the spaceship ignition from a V.W. keyfob. Then Flexi Jerkoff, Flesh, and Dale Ardor blast on up through the monosphere towards the planet Porno. They're en route for deadly encounters with the penisaurus, cybernetic Lesbian revolutionaries and a giant horny King Kong ape; on a mission to save the world from the fiendish "Sex Ray" that keeps compelling Dale to shed her clothes at every possible opportunity. The video - *FLESH GORDON* - is an affectionately artful send-up of one of science fiction's most enduring comic-book heroes, a vastly enjoyable movie romp with its tongue planted firmly in its cheek.

But think on this cretinous text for longer than a nano-second and its hidden implications begin to present themselves.

Firstly, the film emphasises by its very over-the-top lasciviousness just how totally sexless was its progenitor. There was *no sex* in FLASH GORDON, or in the type of crude 1930's/40's SF it lampoons. But secondly, on a deeper level, sex was there *all the time*, of course it was! But it was latent, kept on a near-subliminal backburner. What the film does is remove the veils of elaborate evasion to show the hidden compulsions and sexual fetichisms in their true flesh-pink nakedness.

And yet - as early as 1947, fantacist Richard S. Shaver *did* write a short story, FORMULA FROM THE UNDERWORLD (in AMAZING STORIES June 1947) in which Mula, the god-tyrant of a lost subterranean civilisation, uses a torture ray that causes the bodies of victims to vibrate under the effect of escalating sexual desire until they succumb to cardiac arrest. A "Sex Ray"...? Perhaps this subject deserves further investigation...?

Like masturbation, science fiction is a vice mostly frequently acquired at puberty, when the soft grey underbelly of the cerebral cortex is at its most impressionable, when it is most vulnerable to attack by garish, extravagant, and lavish images of pseudo-profundity.

For me the year was 1963. I know that because I was holidaying with relations in Bridlington, and Billy J. Kramer's BAD TO ME was revolving loudly on every juke-box in every arcade along the drizzling seafront. I was 15 and bored, but rifling my older cousin's bookshelves I discovered a well-thumbed paperback of Arthur C. Clarke's THE CITY AND THE STARS. And yes, the earth moved. Here was intoxicating visions of a dying world billions of years into the future with the human race isolated into two separate cultures; Diaspar - an eternal self-renewing city where reproduction is the concern of the Central Computers in the "Hall of Creation", and the remote valley of Lys where messy sexual intercourse still persists. The protagonist, Alvin, escapes from the city to reach Lys, where he's able to contemplate what he's missed - "Hilvar had stripped off his clothes, and for the first time Alvin saw how much the two branches of the human race had diverged. Some of the changes were merely ones of emphasis or proportion, but others, such as the external genitals and the presence of teeth, nails, and definite body-hair, were more fundamental. What puzzled him most of all, however, was the curious small hollow in the pit of Hilvar's stomach".

Clarke's subsequent writing leaves you with the lingering impression that he rather favours the Diaspar attitude to sexless sexuality. A later book - 2010: ODYSSEY TWO - does feature a token free-fall bunk-up in the spaceship Leonov halfway to Jupiter, but in general his fiction seems to prefer science to sex. An outlook he shares with most early S.F.

SCIENCE IS
GOLDEN agrees Flesh
Gordon.

In his 30's pulp short THE RED BRAIN, Donald Wandrei envisages the last and most evolved species in the Universe who live on a planet of the star Antares; "each mass an enormous brain, a sexless thing that lived for thought... sex was thus destroyed". This state Wandrei presumably approves of as being the end product of billions of centuries of evolution. As science develops it will inevitably supersede the haphazard unhygienic sexual means of reproduction. In Mary Shelley's proto-SF novel

novel FRANKENSTEIN, life is created through the totally genderless processes of science, and this future trend is taken for granted by the writers who followed her.

Early science fiction was - according to Brian Aldiss, a genre which "appeared beyond the palisades of literature, outside the cognisance of enlightened criteria, and was widely despised" (editorial to SPACE ODYSSEYS, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974). The leading magazine of the period was ASTOUNDING, its most influential pilot the outrageously self-opinionated and idiosyncratic John W. Campbell. Frederick Pohl, a frequent contributor to these pulps suggests that Campbell's "weakness as an editor was that he just didn't want to talk about sexuality. All the characters in ASTOUNDING were as featureless around the groin as a barbie doll" (from THE WAY THE FUTURE WAS, Victor Gollancz 1978).

In ASTOUNDING there are two-fisted ray-run toting Space Rangers, there's parthenogenesis, cybernetics, androids, cloning, artificial insemination, robots, genetic engineering and untold wonders of future technologies. But the sex content is "rare, conventional, and thin" according to Kingsley Amis. To the adolescent SF reader this dichotomy represents the struggle between the higher ambitions - your maths homework, and the conflicting lure of the persistently tumescent heat-seeking missile in the groin. Yet through elaborate veils of evasion the early pulp magazines sneakily sought to satisfy both tendencies.

Even H. G. Wells' relentlessly sexless pioneer SF novels were illuminated with grotesquely titillating art for magazine purposes. FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES ran THE TIME MACHINE through August 1950 with an illustration of one of the future-world's hideously devolved Morlocks abducting the innocent Leela, her tunic carefully disarrayed to imply all manner of potential rape and grubby bestiality. A cover of the same journal from the following year had artist Lawrence announcing the serialisation of WAR OF THE WORLDS by sensationally picturing two giant Martian war-machines approaching an equally unconscious and diaphanously-clad girl. Her dress was provocative. I was provoked. These two Wells novels are among the greatest and most compulsively awe-inspiring that the genre has ever produced. Yet the most erotic sequence I can recall from WAR OF THE WORLDS is the one in which the narrator takes his wife for a stroll across the Heath to point out the constellations to her. This passage seriously damaged my own sexual development: such was the impression it made on me that when I subsequently invited sexual nymphets for evening strolls across the Common, much to their disappointment I merely tried to map out for them the glories of the starry

heavens. Attempts further hampered by the fact that Orion was the only constellation I could actually recognise!

But those early SF magazine artists understood better than anyone else - until the producers of FLESH GORDON that is - that while science fiction may have its idealistic eyes raised to the galaxy's most distant stars, there's a continual biological undertow of opposition from six inches below "the curious small hollow in the pit of the stomach".

So let's take a new look at yesterday's futures. At the moment I'm reading a book - 2000 AD: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION PULPS by Jacques Sadoul (Souvenir

Press, 1975). Each page is a cluster-bomb of startling images. Each chapter brings more brain-storming visions than the most expensive hallucinogenic narcotic (except, perhaps, Neptunian sidereal warpweed!). Here is where Sci-Fi's hidden agenda of subliminal eroticism goes into hyperdrive. Among the bizarre galactic cities, multi-tentacled jungles, belligerent robots, mile-long starships, and grotesque bug-eyed monsters there are girls in figure-hugging space-suits designed more to display their voluptuous curves than to protect them from hard vacuum, girls with glistening bacofiled breasts as aerodynamically poised as spaceships, girls dressed only in flesh and skilfully arranged alien flora - and there are even GOLDEN AMAZONS OF VENUS in fetishistic bronze bikinis. Ideas explode like nuclear shrapnel; escapism, poetry, sex and drama in imagination's inner dimension. A cornucopia of coy futures with no infinity of nudges to the genitalia.

But "no wife who finds her husband addicting himself to science fiction need fear that he is in search of an erotic outlet" teases Kingsley Amis in his NEW MAPS OF HELL (Victor Gollancz 1961).

Is that *really* true...?

In spring 1931 Stanton A. Coblentz envisaged a triple-sexed race living on the then-recently-discovered Pluto; they have light-bulbs implanted in their foreheads, Pluto is a dark world (INTO PLUTONIAN DEPTHS). Four years later Frank Belknap Jr suggests the ultimate gender gap in a distant-future world where the crustacean overlords of the earth - the Anatife, decide to reduce the size of all human males to a mere few millimetres while leaving the females unchanged, so as to more closely correspond with the sexual status quo of the aquatic master race (THE GREAT COLD). Then there's Ray Cummings' GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM and PEOPLE OF THE GOLDEN ATOM serialised in FANTASTIC NOVELS magazine through 1940. Ray conjures up a microscopic world beautifully illustrated by "Paul" in a reverse-Gulliver situation: a recumbent giant girl in the near-universal bronze bikini, with tiny men swarming every-which-way across her legs and thighs. While in a 1934 copy of ASTOUNDING, ex-editor Harry Bates contributes a story called A MATTER OF SIZE in which an earthman is kidnapped by benevolent aliens who need to replenish their gene-pool. This is "a favourite wish-fulfilment theme of (male) fantasy and SF authors" points out Arthur C. Clarke, just as it may be a favourite wish-fulfilment theme of SF-addicted husbands in search of erotic outlet? But - admit it, there's carnal *potential* among those tales! Potential furthered by English SF scribe (and Stock Exchange whiz-kid) William Temple Bell in his 1939 story THE 4-SIDED TRIANGLE (novelised in 1949, and later a movie). It tells of a duplicate lover created to solve the problem of two men in love with the same woman. At least such stories acknowledge the problems and possibilities of future-sex beyond the stereotypical Doctor Zerkoff/Jerkoff-style Mad Scientist's Beautiful Daughter....

In another universe there's gender role-reversal social satires like Frederik Pohl & Cyril Kornbluth's SEARCH THE SKY, or Eric Frank Maine's WORLD WITHOUT MEN....

But aliens - would you let *your* daughter marry one?

In L. Sprague De Camp's 1952 STARTLING STORIES tale PROPOSAL a spinster on the shelf saves the world by agreeing to marry a reptilian alien from the planet Wolf. While Don Wilcox imagines a "regular American guy" called Joe Banker marrying a seven-horned Martian girl called Donna - who wears a huge turban to hide her horns in order to win a Terrestrial beauty contest. The story LAND OF BIG BLUE APPLES graces a 1946 edition of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. And meanwhile, on Mercury, Henry Sharp illustrates a story for AMAZING STORIES by Robert Arnette (EMPIRE OF EVIL, 1951), in which the naked slave Margot is prostrate before the throne of her bestial master - the four-armed gorilla known as Tza-Necros.

The obvious problems involved in such trans-species matings don't seem to have concerned the writers over-much. The conjugal aspects of their relationships are left to the lurid imaginings of the reader. And indeed - sexual threats even come from machines. The robot + girl equation occurs on a STARTLING STORIES magazine

cover dated January 1950; writer and SF archivist Sadoul pointing out that "it was not at all unusual to see some of these metal creatures attack scantily clad girls with obvious intentions of rape, even though they visibly lacked the indispensable attributes of manhood"... or perhaps not! A January 1931 "Wesso" cover of ASTOUNDING shows a marauding robot wearing a loin-cloth!

One of the most successful pulp writers of the early 1900's was Edgar Rice Burroughs whose lavish science fantasies set on Mars and Venus establish themes and inspirations still very much in evidence today - from the sophisticated work of Michael Moorcock to the garish and explicitly sexual exploitation of John Norman's "Gor" novels. Burroughs began his interplanetary romps by sending Earthman John Carter to ancient dying Mars to find fantastic cities and barbarously extravagant species living in a world of dry sea-beds and ochre deserts. He becomes Warlord, master swordsman, and husband to the beautiful Martian princess Deja Thoris. As with Burroughs' contemporaries, the fact that all of his Martian women are oviparous (egg-laying) does little to discourage their mating with Earthmen. On Venus, Burroughs' hero Carson Napier discovers equally bizarre - but romantically compatible alien women; illustrating a sequence called GODDESS OF FIRE for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES in July 1940, artist Allen St John shows Napier imprisoned by the Brokol - whose babies grow suspended from trees like strange fruit.

Brian Aldiss observes that "despite a considerable amount of nudity in ERB's novels, no sexual intercourse is mentioned or even implied; we might be in a prepubertal world... yet the *danger* of sex is always there". The critic Richard D. Mullen calculates that a rape-threat situation occurs no less than 76 times in the work he (ERB) produced between 1911 and 1915 BILLION YEAR SPREE by Brian Aldiss, Corgi 1973).

"Prepubertal" says Aldiss.

Like Clarke's hero of THE CITY AND THE STARS, SF has yet to cross from Diaspar to Lys. In an introduction to the anthology SPACE OPERA (Futura 1974) Aldiss defines this Golden Age of science fiction pulps as "no copulation; a chaste kiss beneath an alien sun".

But all that was to change. The 1960's discovered sex in the shape of the Pill, the mini-skirt, LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER, Mary Quant, and Profumo. By contrast the women of the '40's and 50's - we are led to believe - knew nothing of sexual matters, and cared even less.

In Ray Bradbury's IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE the movie's hero John Putnam has a telescope in his back yard and writes Astronomy articles for publications. Like Wells' character in WAR OF THE WORLDS he want to show his girl - Ellen, the stars; while she - with dogged tenacity and ingenuity, keeps bringing the conversation back to the one subject considered suitable for her sex: marriage.

He: "Let's go see what the stars have to say".

She: "I already know your horoscope. Do you know who the stars say a man born under your sign should marry?"

He: "No. Who?"

She: "Me."

He: "C'Mere. Look at *my* stars!"

She may be a Bimbo Airhead who confuses Astronomy with Astrology for her purposes, but she's merely conforming to rôle. Putnam may be an egg-head with ideas above his station - but he's *marriageable*. And she's playing the SF part Kingsley Amis defines for her - "a gallant little wife and mother uncomplainingly keeping up the production of tasty and nourishing meals while the hydrogen missiles are landing in the back garden". Or the equally gallant little lady pretending to hate her man so that he can push off to Mars without pining for her".

Like Deja Thoris - she's there to be kidnapped by the nasty aliens, so that the John Carter character can rescue her.

The 60's had yet to melt down that gender wall.

The process was beginning just around that drab summer of '63 when I was exploring the future-world of Diaspar in the company of Alvin, in a book furtively thefted from my cousin's bookshelf in Bridlington.

Retrospectively, to an adult reader, it remains an intoxicating novel, but *THE CITY AND THE STARS* could have been market-research targeted to hit on all the key adolescent responses. Alvin, although computer-generated by the "Hall of Creation", lacks the recycled personality of Diaspar's other citizens. He's a "unique", in the monotonously inevitable way that all adolescents feel themselves and their problems to be unique. He escapes the restrictions of a shallow and superficially pointless life-style just as all teenage rebels from James Dean to Sid Vicious on, long to break out of a stultifyingly repressive conformity. The fact that sex is just beginning to figure in the equation, in a fumbling and uncertain mode of exploratory discovery, is also something that's true to adolescent experiences. By choosing the fresh air of Lys over the scientific hygiene of Diaspar Alvin tips the symbol-shift of SF priorities. Although Clarke may not have realised it at the time, and although he's backtracked into clean-machine sterility since, by choosing Lys, Alvin is breaking through SF's long pre-pubertal moronosphere, rejects the Mary Shelley-Donald Wandrei premise of science's inevitable evolution beyond the sexual function - and says "Yes" to flesh.

To quote another Arthur C. Clarke's title, it's *CHILDHOODS* END....

At the end of 1939 *MARVEL TALES* magazine experimented with what was then considered "erotic SF". Their star scribe even found it necessary to adopt a pseudonym - Nils O'Sunderland - for the venture. But the prose that resulted would now be considered strictly Mills & Boon stuff. Where was the magazine that Eric Frank Russell suggested - *FANTASTIC FORNICATIONS?* "A lot of people might still salute if that was run up the flagpole" leers an uncharacteristically prurient A. C. Clarke. Instead, artist Virgil Finlay adorned the pages of *FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES* with a hidden sexual agenda of space nymphs, phallic unicorns, angels and nubile winged birdgirls to embellish the magical symbolism of Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore tales, while Earle Bergey's garish colour-wraps continued to show bikini-clad star adventurers menaced by rapacious multi-eyed BEM's. The sexual Big Bang was yet to detonate. Even Kingsley Amis was expressing puzzlement with SF's relentless sexlessness: "in general", he writes, "the nature and direction of sexual interest in science fiction is almost oppressively normal, more so that in any other comparable mode except the Western" (in *NEW MAPS OF HELL*, Gollancz, 1961). He goes on to exclaim "it's remarkable how rarely the sinister developments foreseen (by SF) include sex".

But writers were already straining at the leash. In a speech to the 1963 "British Science Fiction Association" Convention on the subject of "Sex, Censorship and SF" Harry Harrison raised a laugh by describing how American magazine editors censored by "mutilating" his stories and by substituting "bad" words with less offensive ones. Perhaps John W. Campbell wasn't the only pulp-pilot who "just didn't want to talk about sexuality"? The debate spilled over into the letters page. A story by John Rackham (*BLINK*) describes a pseudo-utopia in which "a man can walk in off the street into the home of a perfect stranger and proceed to slap her buttocks". While ignoring any Feminist objections to what sounds suspiciously like yet another "wish-fulfilment" theme on the part of the writer, a letter appearing in the following issue (*NEW WORLDS* #108 - July 1961) protests that "I make no moral judgement on corporal punishment for women, and most of us I imagine have our sexual fantasies, but I object to the way sex is stuck on externally to this story, rendering it displeasing without contributing to the structure - like pebble-dashing on a cheap house".

Editor John Carnell replies by reiterating his policy thus: "sex should be kept in the background unless an integral part of the story".

Flesh Gordon's phallic spaceship stalls on its launch-pad. The moronosphere remains intact. The Final Frontier as yet unpenetrated.

LOVE AIN'T NOTHING BUT SEX MISPELLED says Harlan Ellison. His short story of that title dates from 1968. By then the terrain would be already mapped out, even if the war was far from won. But that is another space, time, and dimension....

- Andrew Darlington

A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH - Part 4

BY Mae Strelkov

Well, the river is still there, below us here. They might decide one day to dam it, though right now the project - under consideration for some years - has been to dam, rather, the valley across the "La Banda Hills", to our east. (They may not get around to it, of course).

This is earthquake territory. Dams have to be very well made. When *volcanoes* here collapse, the floods that resulted have already been disastrous.

When we first got here, Sylvia and I used to go down to the river to do the washing and bathe. But one day the hugest *yarará* (a deadly serpent) came forth from the water and was pointing straight at me like a thrown javelin. (I was above on the shore, coming down a trail to the water.)

It froze when Sylvia, already on the beach at one side, moved and called to me,

"Mama, stop. Don't move!" It was then I saw it... just its front half out of the water as yet, but enormous! (Big as a boat - really unusual!) Sylvia was already in swimming garb, almost nude and terribly vulnerable.

"What do we do?" said she in a little-girl voice.

"We pray!" said I firmly, for sudden movements, attempts to flee, would have sent it flashing after us to strike. We froze, but kept chatting back and forth, while the snake came out of the water. Sylvia tried throwing stones at it, but at first none hit. Then Sylvia's dog Jinny attacked it, circling, (the snake still coiled and only its front part rearing higher than our big dog), and the serpent coiled the more, following the circlings of the dog. And at last the stones began to hit, and it slipped back into the water and disappeared.

Considerably shaken, even "chastened", we returned uphill, no longer viewing the Rio Santa Rita as a mere private pleasure-resort with a beach all our own. We evidently were there on sufferance. There are also huge iguanas which feel they've more right to that locale than we, but they don't attack.

Iguanas, of course, we learned to take into our stride when we lived in the high hills of Cordoba, too. And there were *yararás* there also, but never one that huge!

But even if you omit the lurking existence of serpents and reptiles, there are the cows... all the neighbourhood's cows... and bulls too, roving freely along road and riverside alike.

I call the cows the "armoured tanks transporting the troops"... the billions of ticks in all sizes. These cows are sacred, though we're not in India. But they're property, and the owners take their existence (and their rights to graze just everywhere) very seriously. The one place where you'll never glimpse a cow is on the properties of their own owners. Never there! Out, they are sent to forage all the way up the highway to El Fuerte at the top of the valley and Palma Sola at the opening. (Forty kilometres of highway, all

theirs!). The animals are likewise "encouraged" - or at least permitted, to break into the lands of any neighbour who isn't ready to defend the property from such animals. (Oh, what a horde of cows and bulls used to trample this property, at the start. You just couldn't keep them out.)

And you can't shoot an intruding cow. The local laws are on the side of the animals, and not because we've a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals anywhere around. (Since animals have "no souls", it is not a thing to be encouraged... all the British style "sentimentality" abroad and "silly women worrying over the feelings of animals", when animals are mere *things* given to us for use.)

There was once a truck-driver who lost his wife near here in an accident caused by a bunch of cattle that were in the way. He was so embittered he started shooting all the cattle that contested the right-of-way with him henceforth. As a result, he spent much time in jail while the aggrieved cattle-owners made sure that heavy fines would be levied upon him. But, fighting mad that he continued to be, he went on shooting the animals when let out. I don't know what finally happened to him. (He's have had less of a problem just shooting a human or two! Maybe the cattle-owners... who knows? But it didn't occur to him, I guess. Or the owners barricaded themselves away on such occasions.)

To show how seriously the folks here take their rights to keep their thousands of cattle walking freely down every road and along the river-beds, I'll tell you what one neighbour said to us:

"There should be a law forcing property-owners to put up really *good* fences, and they should have to pay heavy fines if the cattle break through and get hurt somehow." But these animals here, with their strength and their long horns, break through every type of wire unless it is barbed. They do respect barbed wire, but who can afford to fence in with barbed wire kilometres of fences? Besides it's forbidden to use barbed wire (no doubt to protect the poor cows), here. And as a boss at the Paper Firm (that owns the vast territories of El Fuerte) said, "We have to fence in our tree-farms, to keep our saplings from running away!"

The animals themselves have learned, however, to respect the bigger timber-trucks with their enormous trailers, piled high with giant logs. Even the best airbrakes do not halt such a "monster" in time, and the local cattle are not fools. They merely contest right-of-way with smaller vehicles, pedestrians and such. When they hear one of the huge trucks in the distance, all the cattle make haste to reach the road-sides, cowering at the safe edges thereof.

Cow rustling is not a major occupation here. Everybody concentrates on "How to acquire one's neighbours' trees", instead. But an occasional cow or steer gets caught on the sly and butchered when a clan wants a really good *asado*, or barbecue. The owners can't do anything, for as likely as not the errant sons of these owners were in on the scheme, while courting the "rustlers" pretty daughters. The frustrated parents of such lads thunder to all and sundry,

"I know who stole my animal and cut meat from it. I found where they hid the hide, too! Next time I'll chop them up like they chopped up my animal."

But it's bluster.... If you know your teenaged son goes to bed with the daughter of that cattle-rustler and that he helped that family rustle and butcher the cow, then helped them also to eat it, you can only rumble, to show you're still "the one in authority". What else can you do?

These cattle rustlers who "borrow" a steer only to barbecue it, have no cattle of their own, so the aggrieved owner of the animal cannot "get even" by stealing another animal in its stead from the thieves.

We, here, when cattle used to intrude, (originally sometimes even with the owner's assistance, so I suspect), do not barbecue them. Vadim used to go forth with burning vengeance and he carried a long iron pole which he somehow salvaged from our bygone days of plenty in Cordoba. (The things we brought up, in boxes, selected at random, were quite crazy when examined here. A whole bunch of

plungers for W.C. toilets, for example, got here by mistake. They'd been replacements kept on store dating back to the times of the original owners of the estancia in Cordoba; charming people they were, and famous as members of the leading aristocracy, moving in high circles both in our Continent here and in the Old World also. Among their guests had been royalty on various occasions. In those days one had to have replacements for every sort of thing instantly available for the "Big House", for it was full of guests every summer, flown over from their watering-places in the Old World, back when it was summer there.)

So Vadim used that long iron bar to face angry bulls, once we were installed on our new piece of valley-land here. And his determination - and the length and hardness of that iron bar - convinced the bulls that their own long horns and heavy heads were no match. More, when the spying owners saw how dangerous Vadim could prove (as a match against such bulls), they rushed in to rescue their animals, and would appear no more on our property, rarely even breaking in on their own, these days.

If a cow or bull breaks in on its own now, it is immediately chased out. If Sylvia and Tony are around they do it, for they're accustomed to working with cattle thanks to their childhood on the estancia in Cordoba, helping their dad. If they're away and Vadim on his own must chase out the animals, he has such forcefulness they flee in terror, breaking through more wire fences to get out. (No wonder one of our neighbours said there should be a law punishing owners of property if their fences fail to keep cattle out!)

And then, with the cattle exiled, "fence-fixing" is the next item on the program. Muttering vengeance and "Down with the owners of those cursed animals", Vadim tackles that chore next, if the children are away.

In the last year or so, our children had to be absent often. On the excuse of the "bulldozer-we-must-get", Blasé and Matty found a million reasons why our kids must rush there to help them, and loan our pick-up too. Our children became more and more frustrated, and they couldn't even see how to disentangle themselves from those "silken toils", though the toils weren't really "silky", just subtle and very, very strong. How did it happen? So imperceptibly.... At first it was just, "Come over today to help us entertain a visiting dignitary. He's awfully important and if he agrees, he can help us convince the authorities that this region needs that bulldozer more than any other region in Jujuy province, this year."

This region needed the bulldozer? As it turned out, only Blasé himself needed that bulldozer and used it non-stop for over a month till the rainy season was about to return. Then he lost interest in it, and allowed it to be used to re-do some of the "old road" that dates back to "the time of Massachessi", (former owner of the property beside Blasé's to his north). That "old road" was a timber-trail that led up to the heights, (crossing the properties of various absent owners, hopefully all the way towards our Forest of Forever, but it never quite reached it either), and this Massachessi had Blasé, towards the end, working that road for him also, in a very confusing sort of way. Blasé now puts all the blame on Massachessi who in turn insists, "I trusted Blasé. I wasn't present to check."

It is the old Massachessi trail (dating back to some twenty or so years ago, at least - and probably it was an older trail before that), that Sylvia and I stumbled upon by chance during that walk up exploring and which we followed back down, to the initial shock of Blasé and his people. It was just then being re-done by that bulldozer in late 1983.

On that first encounter with Blasé and his people, I came away with the impression that I'd just met a "Jolly Pirate" and his gang, right out of a movie version of *TREASURE ISLAND*, and I began calling him by that title at our own home and in my letters out. He was handsome, jolly, debonair. His woman, Matty, is not his wife; his real wife lives in another hut to their rear, and her children (rumoured as not all his, however) are with her. She doesn't mind; she's the legal heiress

of all that Blasé possesses, and her view of his present women, Matty, is that she's a useful, unpaid serf. (Very good in running the business end of the timber enterprise, in fact indispensable.) There's no competition between the two women.

Actually, I never again paid a visit there. The only place I do visit when there's a birthday or fiesta being celebrated, is the Morlas. They'd be dramatically offended if I didn't go! Morla's wife, Seferina, is a dear, in her way, though she doesn't enter this story. I love them both, more and more.

##

Actually, it was a brother of our daughter-in-law, Nilda, who found this place for us. He is a well-known lawyer in San Pedro, of Arab extract, but born there, as were his brothers and sisters - twelve in all. (The eldest three brothers died of cancer, as had the parents. No further signs of cancer appear in the family, but the reason seems to be an act of faith so powerful on the part of Nilda and her sisters, their other brothers don't dare let themselves turn cancerous, though they'd felt originally it was a sort of "duty" to follow their parents and their elder brothers into the Other World in that painful way.)

(It is true that Nilda learned "the practice of faith" once she married into our family, her husband being our Ed, fourth of our sons. She saw that we believed that mountains can be moved by faith, and the impetus engendered can be unstoppable, so she went even further... we sometimes suffer doubts. She hasn't a one, by now, and is therefore "unbeatable".)

Miguel, the brother of Nilda above-mentioned, got into the thick of a fight willy-nilly when he (and Fasen together) bought from a brother of our Mudwall, a property situated almost exactly between our land and the one supposedly belonging to Blasé. The title deeds were all in order; everything seemed clear. But when Miguel (also representing his partner Fasen) tried to define the actual boundary-lines, which would require that the surveyors enter the adjoining properties likewise to hunt up all the old boundary-stones and take measurements, Massachessi (then still the owner of the property alongside Blasé who was working for him right then, lumbering all the mountain sides) refused permission to Miguel to bring in surveyors. In due course, Blasé would go even further, once Massachessi sold out to a certain Bernan, (who by all accounts is a straight-forward, law-abiding person, well-known in all the province of Jujuy, for many years.)

Yes, when this Bernan likewise wanted to define his boundary-lines, Blasé warned him he'd chase all intruders off with a gun, so Bernan had to go to the law too. Formerly, the law of "might-is-right" really counted here. Thanks to President Alfonsin's new government's adhering to law and justice, the old Law that Might-is-Right no longer counts quite so much, though many still cling to it loyally and try their best to behave that way.

Miguel had likewise gone to the law, (after he'd discovered that all the wood of value on his property had vanished, and the newly-made timber trails were clear to follow, leading back to that bulldozed road of Blasé's that Sylvia and I stumbled upon in late 1983), and so Miguel had requested officially-approved surveyors to be appointed by the law.

They came at last, the winter of mid 1985. We were still not certain that it must have been Blasé doing all the acquiring of logs, for the stories told us by all and sundry as to where the boundary-lines must be, had us so confused we abstained from taking sides. (More, it had seemed to us that our own land on high was incredibly narrow... scarcely a hundred metres wide, and more precipitous at that, but with all the ridges and chasms, it was difficult to judge distances by the eye alone).

Blasé is a most convincing talker. He gets his listeners so muddled in the end one doesn't have any opinions. He kept talking about a certain boundary-stone that was the "true one", (but has since been proved to have no significance at all), and he insisted that

a very ancient fence of arca posts that had stood for as long as any resident remembered, was really "very new" and had been put there to make trouble for him, on the part of the neighbours. Things like that! Sweeping arguments, spoken with the power of his tremendous personality. Local folk never argued with him; they feared his explosions of fury.

Well, Blasé made no dent Miguel's viewpoint, a cool-headed lawyer, and a politician on the Radical side, to boot. (Alfonsin is "Radical". But up in Jujuy, the old Peronista party still controlled most everything; the simple folk are slow to change opinions).

We in our family were very uncomfortable in the battle going on. We still hadn't decided what to believe....

It would help here if a map could be given of the whole region (not drawn to scale), showing to the south the vast stretches of the property of the Paper Firm (the lands there are called El Fuerte); it reaches this way as far as a shaky bridge that survived the last floods, to our south some four kilometres from us here. From thence, you cross the Santa Rita - the only remaining bridge by which to enter our part of the great valley, where we are all living on an island, with the walls of the Santa Barbara Range to our west and the Rita coiling around us on our other three sides. There used to be another old but excellent bridge spanning the Santa Rita to our north, but the last flood swept it away, and it cannot be restored, for the river-bed now, there, is much too wide. In dry seasons it can be forded, but the crossing is difficult and tricky. (Cars often get stuck and have to be pulled out by some tractor.)

During the floods of March 1984, indeed, we were isolated from the world for quite some days, till the waters abated somewhat.

At any rate, visualise the lands of El Fuerte coming to an end where Blasé's property supposedly commences, in the heights. I say "supposedly", for legally-speaking he's just another squatter like the others surrounding him on the valley portion of what he calls his property. Indeed, he has argued he has squatter's rights to all the top of the mountain ridge, and - as I'll mention later - he tried to prove this again, just recently, taking over (hopefully) a desirable part of Miguel's land, on high, with a squatter he employed to represent him.

The early white settlers of the USA had many a gunfight over territorial rights. Since we came here to live, however, such conflicts are no longer solved by actual guns, (just threats of guns), while the litigants simply run for their lawyers. They find that more effective, though such lawsuits can drag on for years, but it's like hanging a whole set of Damocles' swords over their enemy's heads. Such "enemies" have to run for their lawyers too, and suddenly everyone involved is broke. Lawyers' fees are high! Miguel often helps someone in trouble without charge, but there are many other lawyers who are quite ruthless.

Our own land (two plots side-by-side) measures - as mentioned - nearly five-hundred metres by nearly seven kilometres in all. To our south, next to us, is Mudwall's plot, half the width of ours below but it opens up fan-like at the top, as the ridge curves around. He has nearly 500 metres above, somehow, and in his private view those 500 metres extend for about a kilometre or so in either direction to encompass our land and also Miguel's, on high. Of course, he has a contestant in Blasé, but he seldom risks direct confrontations.

Miguel's land, then, has Mudwall to his north, and to his south is the property of the vanished "Lopez", which Mudwall - with the help of a very clever lawyer, unknown to us - feels he can "prove" is still his own land.

For that matter, though his lawyer doesn't help him that far, at least, we are constantly forced to listen to Mudwall "proving" that a good hunk of our land (officially measured twice already or thrice in the past and now) is really his, "if there is any justice". It's really warisome....

There's never a dull moment!

As for the land now belonging to Bernan, it lies sandwiched between Blasé's and the vanished "Lopez" and has been so "taken-over" by Blasé, (who put up fences blocking it off) when Bernan tried

to find where his land extended mountain-wards, he found himself cut off, right at the mountain-foot. Oh, the *valley* land was still his, and his plantations of tomatoes and peppers were doing splendidly, there. Like us, he'd bought the place for the sake of the land in the valley originally, but like us he found he could not stomach being laughed at by all the timber-thieves.)

Actually, I'd tried to remain totally aloof in all this turmoil. I'd gotten sore at Miguel some months ago when he excitedly informed me that he'd dug up some old maps of the region and could prove that Mudwall's property did indeed extend this way so that our very house here (which we'd raised quite near the fence dividing us from Mudwall) really stood on Mudwall's land and the southern portion of Mudwall's land should be Miguel's! "But I'll protect you," said Miguel.

I blew up. "Please do not protect us," I said angrily. "If it's really Mudwall's, let him take it over. We've had to leave our homes over and over, all our lives, and we can take it in our stride, and we're not afraid."

Well, further study of the old documents showed that the facts were otherwise... a good hunk of Mudwall's lands apparently should belong to us, all the way up, widening (as the surveyors who finally arrived discovered). "Well," we said, "where there are old fences, here below, let them stand. We don't want to pull them down and intrude those two-or-so metres onto Mudwall's place. It isn't worth the bother or the drama that would result."

Oh, if it had been proved the other way around, Mudwall would certainly have moved us out of our new little house and taken it over for himself. He's done it for other unfortunates to whom he "sold" pieces of his valley land; had allowed them to build their homes on it, then he's reneged on his agreements and "proved" that the papers signed between such parties weren't legal, and of course they hadn't been drawn up by fancy lawyers, so Mudwall always won, brought in a local judge and the police, and moved the unhappy "buyers" right out, taking over their buildings when he could. (Only one such now stands, its walls of mud bricks. Others have been dismantled by Mudwall to use the materials elsewhere.)

Miguel's wrong conclusions had been a genuine error... he'd not used the instruments used by surveyors to make his judgements, but had done the guessing by checking where his own valley-land lay, then measuring off Mudwall's land, in our direction. It was all very confusing, and besides there are nowadays squatters all along the properties lining the highway on both sides. (We have two such families with whom we're on excellent terms, and will respect their squatter's rights, for they'd lived here for years.)

It was rather a joke: while we ourselves refused to get alarmed or angry over Miguel's initial wrong conclusions, our son Ed got so furious at his brother-in-law that Miguel still feels sore. Our children have a feeling that Vadim and I are so peace-loving as to be "helpless", and - while they recognised that "God does protect" - they seem to feel that they too should enter the lists to protect their pacific parents.

Well, Vadim was not born a pacifist. His great-grandfather was a famous Russian general, (or maybe it was a great-great grandfather), a Prince Baryatinski by name. And when I first met Vadim and his parents, all they could think of was the tragedy that because of the Russian Revolution Vadim would not have a chance to become a "great Russian general" also in return. Indeed, he was a very belligerent personality when I first knew him. But he's learned to enjoy being mild (save when contesting rights here with invading bulls).

But that fiery Russian strain also comes out in our children.

As for my mother's side, (going back to the 1600's in the USA), and my father's, (from Newcastle-on-Tyne; he was a Surtees from there, and today there are long lists of Surtees in the phone books up there, no doubt second-cousins, etc., of mine), that English-American strain in our children is ever at war with the Russian side of them all. It's fascinating to watch! And gives them all tremendous charm, wherever they go! The Russians know their way around in

cosmopolitan circles. My missionary parents and their forebears were quite at home in "heathen lands" like China, in their turn.

And our kids were always very much at home in Latin America; they still are, save for the eldest (and his wife and kids) and our daughter Alice who went to Canada and are stalwart Canadians today, very much at home there.

The surveyors who finally arrived had been given the job by court order. They were the best obtainable, well known all over Argentina, and worked with the most modern instruments and techniques. They'd expected that it would take them just three days to measure Miguel's piece of land, but they ran into such hassles, (including boundary-stones they could only find by measuring where to seek them, for they'd been hidden, deliberately covered by other stones in the past), so they realised that to preserve their reputations as leading surveyors, they must measure the entire mountain-side from the property managed by Morla, and up to the edges of the Paper Company's lands to the south.

Blasé did not try to stop them; I suppose he thought that he'd do a better job discrediting them once they'd gone. And so as the bulldozer (the last one, which Sylvia and Tony had helped Blasé to obtain) worked its way in the heights, far to the south of our land as yet), the Blasé's peones often ran into the surveyors - in fair weather and foul - surveying. They literally did not leave a stone unturned. (Which is how they found the boundary-stone or stones that had been deliberately hidden, some time ago.)

There was no question of trouble till Bernan asked the surveyors to take on a job next to him: show him where his true boundaries might be; for when he bought the land from Massachessi, it had all looked good on paper, but in reality he'd found he had no mountain-lands at all. Blasé's fences cut him off from all the heights, and now Blasé told the surveyors he'd shoot them if they tried to enter that territory. So the surveyors went away, their job for Miguel completed, and in the process we learned (for free from them) that *all* the remaining precious timber grew on our property, so far unreachable up there to timber-thieves. And they laughingly told us, "The quarrels here have to do with valuable forests, not with mere boundary-lines".

We, by then, had given up the very thought of reaching the Forest of Forever that year. (It was too late. The rains would be beginning any day.) I for one was relieved. So, while we'd incurred really heavy expenses "getting the bulldozer" and "keeping it going" (for Blasé, as it chiefly turned out to be), we'd had have been utterly "in the red", had not a very small stand of cedars at the southern edge of our land (about half-way up) been reached. It resulted in three truckloads of timber for us, and with the proceeds right then we paid the workers clearing the jungle right near us (ten hectares in all) for planting the tame pines and eucalyptuses that had to be planted at the latest by January 1987. (Or we would have gotten into trouble with the Re-forestry Association.) However, we had a reprieve. We were allowed to finish in the 1987 summer, and the Re-forestry folk were so delighted with all we'd managed to do, they'd eagerly offered to finance the clearing and planting of another ten hectares. But we were wary - it was awfully costly and hard work.

More was to follow! A few days later, Miguel arranged for the Forestry Inspectors to come and check on those 400 cubic metres of cut pine and the *rollos* rumoured to exist up on Miguel's land, and unquestionably cut by Blasé and his peones.

Miguel's part-time worker Benicio (who was also our helper clearing undergrowth down here) accompanied them and later told us the story.

The poor inspectors tried to shake Blasé off of their heels but he persisted in marching uphill with them till they reached the wood, and there he sat on the cut wood, laughing up into the faces of the inspectors as if it were a great joke. (It's hard not to thaw when he turns on that charm.)

"But you did cut the wood?" asked the inspectors.

"Certainly. It is my wood."

"And how come it is on Miguel's land?"

"It is not on his land. This is my land."

"Then how come the official surveyors have proved beyond a doubt this part of the mountain-side belongs to Miguel?"

"Miguel bought them."

"You cannot allege that. We will not take you seriously. These surveyors are absolutely top-flight, as we all know. If you're not satisfied, get in other surveyors, but you'll have to pay them yourself and if they find you're wrong, you'll have to pay Miguel all his costs caused by you, in addition."

"It will not come to that," scoffed Blasé. "It will blow over." (He still counted on keeping all his enemies at bay by his tremendous temper and threats. Had it not always worked, heretofore?)

"Don't count on it," the inspectors warned, extremely annoyed with him for having forced himself upon them as they went up to examine the matter. There'd been no way to shake him off, short of making a scandal, or turning back and having another try at going up somehow another time, by -passing him where he'd waited for them to appear, having suspected this would happen.

Well, they marked all the wood with their official seal, recorded what they'd found in full detail, (to be sent - in the form of a report - to Miguel), and returned downhill, so cold towards Blasé that he failed to convince them to come by his place for a drink, no matter how thirsty the climb might have made them.

[Continued next issue]

Poetry, Too

Clouds

The first thing you notice is all the clouds;
water molecules in air-borne, wind-driven suspension,
an endless white procession
swirling in from the gleaming poles to the turbulent equator,
visually exciting from this world's one sun shining on the
great massy banks and the vast streaming fields of them,
so magically lovely with the lite burning up and thru
at the times between day and nite;
colors and shapes almost for their own sakes.
Clouds in this world of water, ice and humidity seems
almost alive, willful and erotically amorfous,
but go unnoticed by those that dwell on this
stable world of low hills, gentle gravity and biological complexity.

The first sign of life we see is the
seasonal breeding of rock in the shallow waters of the tropics;
coral spawning reefs and atolls.
The next is the monsters of the oceans, but their concern is for
survival; their minds lack wings.
There is another species of interst, a bi-ped,
in plague proportions, and a threat to all and self;
this world is Sol Three, which they variously contest and name.

Except at low altitudes, where there are these low life-forms,
clouds are strangely sterile.
Life here is very soil-bound, tho some creatures fly and
miriads fill the oceans of salty water.
Higher life here is land-based and dependent on cloud-fall

Almost the last thing you notice is how little lite
dances and shines back to distant eyes from off upper air.
One cannot imagine star-lite attracting much Earthen attention.

The last thing is the band of smoke about the equator, which is
millions of years of life of Earth being burnt.

Life is almost always a waste of capacity and potential.

I shall draw closer now to see if intelligent life is here elsewhere.

Mad Hollow Moons

Mad

I am not in the least,
but I have been young;
a teenager needing only a int of moon
to occasion the antics of inspired lunacy.

Full-moons are special,
sliding silently up and over the stellarsfere
like gigantic Norwegian cheeses on silken p iano-wire,
dropping onto the netherworld with all its
sparkling mirrors where they shall
primp and preen themselves ere they rise again,
glorious for a few evenings only;
a band of golden buckles on the starry belt of nite,
with only a quarter million miles between them and us.

I wonder:

How long before the back of the moon is mined hollow
and filled with rubbish?;
its our-side polished to improve the moonlite?
duplicates (yes! more of them) made to enhance the effect,
and perhaps to carry advertising?;
and how long before Moon Preservation Societys emerge,
like terrariums thru the sands of Mars,
to protect full moon-rites for the "Old Cheese:?"

But

endless, endless is the procession of
progress,excess, alarm and protection,
so cheer your choice and chew your cheese;
mad hollow moons fly in the solar breeze.

- Bridh Hancock

Out There.

At speeds which turn the stars to blue-shift blur
Time slows, digits in chains.
Earth becomes mere legend, Mars
Just fiction - like forests, seas.

- John Francis Haines

A Spaceman's Alphabet.

A is the airlock which keeps our air in,
B is your blaster: fierce battles you'll win.
C is a crater - deep, rugged and dark,
D's decompression (not such a good lark).
E is for entropy fading away,
F is the Force, to be with you each day.
G is the gravity holding us down,
E is for holes, be they black, white or brown.
I is for infinity - way out of sight,
J are the jumps of swift hyperspace-flight.

K are the thousands of stars that you see,
L is a lightyear - a long way to flee.
M are the monsters which lurk in deep space,
N is for Neptune, our furtherst held base.
O is an orbit around and around,
P's the new planet we've only just found.
Q is the quark for which we go hunting,
R is the robot all decked out with bunting.
S is for space - our life and our home,
T is a timewarp to view Ancient Rome.
U is Uranus, an upsidedown planet,
V is for Venus: thick shrouding clouds span it.
W's the wonder of Luna's cold stones,
X is unknown - all that's left are white bones.
Y is a yellow star just like our Sun,
Z are the zombies that we've all become.

- John Francis Haines

Snack Dispenser

'You want an apple?'

'Please!'

The unit glowed
As lasers flashed and strobed across the road
And heavy metal raphouse stunned the air;
The salepoint formed the pippin with great care.

Her slightly older streetwise brother tapped
Extra co-ordinates which duly mapped
a few stray atoms at no further cost
Into another shape as forces tossed
The ruddy fruit into the young girl's hand.

'Thank you, Peter.'

'Your wish is my command.'

Only he knew that when she took first bite
The wriggling worm would give poor Jane a fright.

- John Francis Haines

Exits

Spreadeagled by the airlock door,
His lifeline tightly round his head,
Rik floated blacktongued, bloated, dead.
We watched him slowly drift in awe.

I spun about to face the man
Who called me killer to my back:
'He volunteered to have a crack -
I'll finish now what he began.'

I suited up and went outside.
The job was hard and took an hour
Of sweat and curses, left me sour
That for one dent poor Rik had died.

- John Francis Haines

Become Destroyer Of Worlds

They bring me a new
ship I do not know
to take a route no
man yet nows, but I
am not afraid he said.
In my home on Earth
near my village in Maharashtra
lions sleep all day in
shallow valleys tawny as soil
so we need not notice
walkingby and only fear
by night their moving sound
he said. Were I go
I am the lion moving
through Space's endless night and
all if wise fear me
he said and smiled how
skull's smile is before turning
away to let the brown
ship gape and swallow him.

- steve sneyd

On

On the darkening edge of the universe
we wept the salty tears
of a sea long dead
and eyed, ashamed, the infinite
excess of a god gone mad
and lit up dull with stars
gone cold.

There were no sober recollections
of a better time, just the mirroring
of days gone by and forgotten
as we went there
in a ship made soft by eons
on a sea of beaten night.

Unhinged, the last ones
cut all loses, and made the best
of sour victory and used thin
and blasting pulses
to end it all, as all had
ended - moments eternal - before.

- Trent Jamieson

The smell of the sea.
Watching the autumn sun go
down behind the clouds.

Walking through the
pigeons landing for the feed
-- windy Autumn morning.

While pouring the tea;
that cleaned white saucer,
Autumn afternoon.
Reading a book of
haiku poets, being famous,
reading mine again.

Small birds leave,
the antenna still sways as
the magpie alights - Sunset.

Umbrellas passing
under the power lines.
---- Autumn rain.

The sound of my bum
sliding in the tub;
still spring afternoon.

- Peter Brodie

Starry Dial

Solemn rites
I settle in and gnaw the tea cup days
the rasp that grinds, undoes the door

and lets the moonlight through.
Come buzz the fly
the black mass jaw,
an evening that's bruised.
You smile to kiss the blistered thought
and stroke persistent dawn
and as the mist comes roiling in
the stars gleam out, distraught.
The featured ones are jabbering:
the night has set the torch.

- Trent Jamieson

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #23

by Buck Coulson

Late May and early June wasn't a particularly good time for us. On May 27, we were sharing a hotel room at Wiscon with Bev DeWeese when a gofer came in and asked, "Did anyone tell you they took Bev to the hospital?" Not the ideal greeting first thing in the morning, which this was. Bev had a panel the first hour and didn't quite get to it. Gall bladder attack. Eventually, she was transferred from the Madison, WI, hospital to another hospital in her home town of Milwaukee, operated on, and is currently back at her job as librarian. We got home May 30, and on May 31, Bruce called to say our old friend Betty

Gaines had died; funeral June 3. So we drove to Columbus, OH, for the funeral. (Milwaukee is a 300-mile drive; Columbus is a bit over 150.) All this driving around didn't make our dog Severian very happy, so on June 6 I let him off the chain to go for a walk with me, and he promptly ran out in front of a car and was killed, so I got my exercise burying him. June 15, Sandra Miesel called to let us know that Roger Zelazny had died of a heart attack. By this time I was beginning to wonder when and if the bad news was going to stop, but this was all for the moment. It was enough. We didn't know Zelazny, but we'd admired a good bit of his writing (and he was 8 years younger than I am.)

The luck followed us for a while in diminished form, though at least nobody else died. At Inconjunction in Indianapolis, we spent some time with the Miesels, and when we were about to start home we discovered that there was a riot at the Grateful Dead concert, which was held directly between our two routes home, and not more than a mile from either one. So we kept the Miesels up until midnight, and got home about 2:00 AM. Two weeks later, Juanita and Mike Longcor had a paid concert for the Association of Indiana Museums conference - on the hottest July 14 in Indianapolis history. 106°, with a "heat index" (which correlates heat and humidity somehow) at 116°. Not the ideal time to be strumming a guitar and singing. The concert was after dark, but the temperature hadn't gone down much. At least, we got home in good time. This was mostly Juanita's problem; I could sit down and fan myself while she was up in front performing. This has, by the way, been perhaps the hottest and driest summer in Indiana history. If not the worst, certainly one of the worst. Juanita and I lived through the "dust bowl" era of the 1930s, and the summer of 1995 reminded us very much of that era - except that back then, I lived two or three hundred yards from a 300-acre lake, and could spend the hottest part of the day in the water. Until school began - no air conditioning in rural schools in those years.

Recent conventions have done much better for us. Rivercon repeated all of its guests from Rivercon I, some 21 years ago. I'm not sure how many cons do that now, but Philip José Farmer as GoH, Andrew J. Offutt as Toastmaster, and Juanita and I as Fan GoH are still alive and kicking. All the guests were made Kentucky Colonels, as honor bestowed by the Governor of Kentucky on various members of ostensibly superior individuals. We received certificates at the convention; our membership cards from the organization came later, together with a souvenir catalog and a request for a donation. (But it's a very impressive certificate.) On our way home, we stopped at the Falls of the Ohio State Park in Indiana, so Juanita could look at the fossils there. They're marine fossils - acres of them - since the area was a shallow sea some 400,000,000 years ago. (Don't drop any zeroes there, Ron...) An impressive display if you like fossils, and Juanita does. I couldn't resist a book in the souvenir shop; PRINCE MADOC: FOUNDER OF CLARK COUNTY, IN. Okay, the Madoc legend states that he sailed from Wales to North America, sometime around 1170 AD. Even this is improbable, but Clark County was organized in 1801 and I don't believe Madoc was that long-lived. (What the author referred to was the legend of "White Indians" in America, promulgated by various people who had heard that somewhere out west was a tribe of them. They were supposed to be in Tennessee, Indiana, etc. until those states had a number of white settlers, at which point the legend moved west to the Mississippi River area, then farther west to the headwaters of the Missouri, and finally landed on the Mandans, who had conveniently been wiped out by smallpox and couldn't object. No white Indians were ever found, but the legend lives on, and since the English and Spanish explorers left records of where they went, the White Indians obviously had to be descendants of Prince Madoc, who didn't.) The White Indians were also convenient for refuting Spanish claims to ownership of the continents by right of discovery, providing England with a prior claim; spurious claims are better than none. It's now pretty well established that Eric the Red, or some of his followers, did get to North America before Columbus, but the Vikings weren't much interested in claiming the Americas in the early 1500s. (I hope you're all taking notes on this...)

A few comments on feminism that I didn't put in my letter. I haven't met that many Australian males, but most of the ones I have met

seem perfectly civilized and liberal. In the US, male fans are in general far more accepting of feminism than is the general male population. Of course, legally men and women are equal, as citizens, authority figures, in the job market, and so on. Actually - well, no. Women are, however, still gaining ground, if not as rapidly as they'd like to. It also depends to some extent on the individual. Most of the women I worked with at Overhead Door were secretaries or factory workers. One, however, went from being receptionist to shipping dock foreman to steel door designer at the next desk to mine; I was the track designer. (I'm rather proud of the fact that she once told me that I was her best friend in the office.) Lois McMaster Bujold can be considered today's top science fiction author, now that she's won her fourth Hugo.

I've noticed that quite a few British and Australian fans are academics, though I couldn't say whether the percentage of academics in fandom is higher or not. Juanita feels that academics have become habituated to thinking in terms of hierarchies; doctorates, bachelors degrees, grad students, college students, and the unwashed, to name one. Men, women, and children, to name another.... (Juanita has a college degree; I'm one of the unwashed.) At the one British Worldcon we attended, Juanita was not highly impressed by the general run of the British male fandom, though the friends we'd made by mail well before the con were as nice as we'd expected.

It looks like for the next few months, Juanita is going to be busy working out a novel based on a TSR game. (The editor sent her 3 "packages" of informational material, all of which disappeared in the mail. The fourth was sent via United Parcel Service, and arrived. We're wondering if one of the mail-sorters at the regional center is a TSR fan....) I may be, too; she showed me what looked like a tactics chart and told me I might have to help her on that. It appears to be a sword-and-spears era, which is not a large part of my military reading, but we'll see. I may be back to reviewing books for fanzines, now that my professional reviewing jobs have run out, and maybe trying some short stories; winter is coming on and typing warms the fingers. While you, lucky people, are heading into summer, heat, dust storms and brush fires.

- Buck Coulson

THE OLD WORLD, ONE RACE CONSPIRACY

by Ben Peek

1.

Date: 19/5/405 AS.

Time: 1243 hours.

Bubble Number: Forty Two of Two Hundred and Seven.

Destination: *Paper Dragon*.

There was some old blues played in the bar's background; didn't know the song, didn't know the singer, didn't really care, either. It was there, in the instant, rising and falling to the beat, floating like a heavy mist in the background, weaving its way through the air, creating an atmosphere that I am quite fond of. It was the type of atmosphere found in old Earth movies -- old private investigator and romance films would be the genre -- where the hero sat at a battered old bar, a chipped, dirty old glass of brandy nursed in one hand, battered fedora over the uncombed, unruly, hair, and finally, a heavy trench coat, ever present (even in tear wrenching love scenes) and with a heavy cigarette smell to it.

Reality intruded; the difference became easy to spot: this wasn't Earth, since Earth hadn't been for a few hundred years; the glass wasn't chipped, since the young bartender had a thing about

giving customers dirty glasses; I'd forsaken the battered old fedora; the trench coat had not the cigarette smell, since cigarettes have been proven, long ago, to be bad for your health and lastly, I'm wasn't some drunken private investigator or love sick puppy trying to escape the world -- or worlds, as it is now -- with a bottle as my forget-me-not friend.

Still, the atmosphere was there, and that was what counted.

The bar tender -- a slender twenty year old girl putting herself through University, with thick blond hair, summer blue eyes and flower petal pink lips -- brought over a bottle of cheap brandy to me. She placed it on the simulated, wooden table, dragged out a seat and leaned forward on her elbows.

"Here's your bottle," she said to me, and left the bottle alone, waiting for me to pour it myself. Carin may be the bartender, but she can't mix -- or pour -- a drink for her life. She only got the job because she was distantly related to the owner, and after her first few attempts, the regulars convinced her that she should let us pour and mix our own drinks. As long as we didn't take too much extra, which we hardly ever did, she didn't really care.

I tipped the bottle to the glass, two fingers filled with a rapid glimmer of amber, then the bottle moved away. "How's the accounting coming?"

"Great," she flashed a smile, "full marks in the latest test."

"Good girl."

"Thanks. Did you get your tax return?"

"Yeah," and this time it is my turn to smile. People like me, those who divide their time as Rift pilots and transport pilots and the odd deep space mercenary job, aren't very likely to get a tax return. If we filed taxes, that is. As testimony to Carin's talent, I let her handle this year's taxes, and got a nice fat sum in return. Nothing like that to bring a smile to anyone's face.

"Do you want me to do your returns next year?"

"Sure. You keep bringing in the returns, sweetheart, and I'll become a regular tax filing man."

She gave me a grin and a laugh that died suddenly in her throat as she looked over my shoulder, eyebrows shot up in amazement. I don't need to turn around to see that someone was there, in fact, I didn't even need Carin's expression to tell me. Whoever -- whatever -- it was, it reeked of musk.

A hand weighed down on my shoulder.

"Captain Xilantilas? Captain Xilantilas, are you he?"

The voice had a heavy accent, bad dictation and a gurgle at the end of my name, as if it had trouble with the pronunciation; it told me immediately what it was: a Saquarian. What it didn't tell me, was what it wanted.

"Yeah," I replied because a reply would be warranted. Saquarian's are notorious in their pride. Asked a question, they want the reply. Not a simple nod, mind you, it is to be formulated into a word, placed into a context. I once heard of a man who replied 'depends on who's asking' and had his throat torn out for insolent behaviour to a diplomat.

I turned around in my seat, thankful that Carin has had enough sense to move herself out of hearing, back to the bar where she can watch, ready to call the authorities to the *Paper Dragon* if needed.

"I am Kiaht'Alamri'Lraoi," it said.

I waved my hand to Carin's vacated seat and it took my offer with a polite bow, followed by the clumping amble of its feet as it took the chair. I rested back, patient, confident, my mind bringing up all the known information about them:

The Saquarian race is the only true alien race to the world; they came, so legend claimed, half way through the twentyfirst century, when the Earth was dying from a hundred types of radiation and diseases, when the population was massed to the point that the elderly were being submitted to death by injection so that children could be born, and then only one to a family, and only after they'd passed a

tight psychological, economical and genetic testing. And that didn't even make mention of the rampant cannibalism that existed in the poor.

In short, they had come when Earth had been at its worse.

What they had offered was the sundering of Earth, a sundering that had placed two hundred and seven smaller realms into the Earth's orbit. Once that had been done, the Saquarian's had created a sphere to place around bits and pieces of Earth that floated, alone and uninhabitable, so that it would become a sort of Ozone layer, except it would also act as a gravity field, with two repulsing fields on each side to keep the small piece of land floating in the middle. Once the bubbles were placed, and the Rift gates -- gates that allowed starships to travel from bubble to bubble -- working, the people that had been camped in freighters around Mars had moved back into the Earth's orbit, and back into the bubble.

Within the bubble, the small piece of Earth was grown, like in an incubator: it grew, stretching to all sides of the bubble like a giant root system, in which the people could build and live in. Kind of like a giant catacomb. Of course, that wasn't without its problems. The Root System eliminated any chance of a sky, and because of that, starship pilots like me are forced to navigate dark tunnels to reach the Rifts, or to simply traverse a bubble.

Trained, breded, created... we were the creations of the Rifts, the Saquarian's, the bubbles. With no alliance, not to any race, any bubble, we were the pure beings of the mercenary trade.

The bubbles, though, are each unique. Different. Survival changing, inhabitants changing. Making them different. Mainly because Earth was a planet of water -- and at this time, polar caps had begun their long awaited melt -- and the Earth *had* needed the water for survival, as did the people. Some of the bubbles -- about forty in all -- are full with the Earth's water supply, done in the sundering. The rest... well, they adapted and survived with technology from the Saquarian's. The technology that was placed into the bubble, a gas in form, it obscured all, and when it cleared... everything was changed.

People. Land. Everything.

From technology that was, the Saquarian's claimed, native from their home planet.

Not that anyone knew where their planet was, or even if it existed.

The Saquarian's, after the sundering, moved into their own bubble, and demanded that no one enter without their governments authority. After saving Earth, there was no real reason to deny them the one bubble, but now, after the fires of gratitude had died, and the New Races had been born, there was some doubt as to why no one ever entered the Saquarian's bubble.

Not that it was openly questioned. Just hushed, shadowed whispers by men and women who thought they knew the truth. Just dark thoughts in the backs of the minds of the New Races: thoughts of why the Saquarian's refused to acknowledge their presence, especially after the Human Nations did, and why the Saquarian's viewed them as if they were a form of anathema, a form that went against their every aesthetic belief. Personally, I believed the whispers. I had seen the horrors that Saquarian's had bought upon the New Races, and it was not something done by anyone -- or *any thing* -- benevolent.

The Saquarian's appearance was one of a giant lizardman: the skin was hard and scaled. It gleamed in the pale light, and it seemed that every scale had been polished with precision care. It stood about five and a half *chi*, just a little smaller than me, but the bulk of its frame was twice my size, and it made the simulated wooden chair creak in protest as it sat, its thick tail weaving through the hole in the back, to twitch in content. The Saquarian's face was what, exactly, lead it too look like a lizardman:

It had a thick blunt nose, with two slits -- under hard scales for protection -- for breath to be taken. The eyes were like black marble; just as hard and unforgiving as the real thing. It had a darker fin that rose from the top of its head, which ran down its spine and to the

beginning of its tail. The maw had no teeth, just thick red gums that drooled saliva, and gave the impression of a haggard old man.

The description gave no indication to the gender. There are no genitals, not as we would see or know them, and the names aren't like ours. It was as if something took a look at our society, then designed a race that defied explanation, defied anything known to human society.

And now one sat before me.

"How can I help you?" I asked, watching, hoping for something, yet not knowing anything.

"Have task. Important task, one for *Sil'Olthin'Kaiht* -- " their term for Rift pilot, used by only them, and never translated to its full meaning " -- task needful of skill you have."

"You mean my ship?"

"*The Seisachtheia*. Yes." Old word, beautiful meaning. Delightfully ironic. "*The Seisachtheia*, your ship. With your crew. Yes." It bobbed it's head in a quick group of nods. I had this strange image of a puppet, held by strings, being pulled by a puppeteer.

"My crew?" I repeated, slowly. "You are aware that my crew consists of New Races?"

Again the bob. Rapid. Strings pulled tight, control from someone else. "Matters not. Will you take the task?"

"What is the task?" I countered.

Shake of the head. "No. First answer."

"It'll cost."

"Yes. State figure."

And I did. A large figure, one which this Saquarian would be idiotic to take, and one that should tell me how important this task is.

"Yes."

My mouth opened: "Fine."

Not what I wanted to say, mind you, not even what I was thinking, but it was what I said nonetheless. I went to decline, to say I'd changed my mind. Except I didn't. The number, the cost, the fee, it floated before me, like a carrot before a donkeys eye line: goading, leading.

"Task retrieval of woman, scientist working for us. She is human," it pulled out a slender CD and placed it before me. "Knowledge of last whereabouts and image of her on disk, load into ship files. Woman important, have heard of rivals trying to get hands on her. She is in danger; will need your aid once found, for she be hidden from all at moment. Once you find, contact me, tell you where to go. The fee shall be placed in your accounts. Good-bye, captain."

It stood, muttered not a word, and left the *Paper Dragon*.

The old blues music came back: haunting, beautiful, painful, keys to my being, mirror to my troubled soul. I should of told it no. I should of, but I never did. Why?

The money, a small voice chimed, *the money, you mercenary*.

Yeah, the money. Except that doesn't sit right. Kind of like saying that a soldier isn't a cold blooded killer. Doesn't sit right, not when considered. Not in discourse. Not right, not this, something wrong. The words of the Saquarian, the job, the money... everything sits wrong. A bad feeling in the pit of my stomach, the only knowledge that something is wrong.

I shrugged, blinked, even muttered a few swear words, then reached over, reached for my bottle, my now forget-me-not friend, tipped the brandy bottle forward, filled the clean glass with a glimmer of amber, and, with only self pity, whispered:

"What have I gotten myself into?"

2.

Date: 19/5/405 AS.

Time: 1332 hours.

Bubble Number: Forty Two of Two Hundred and Seven.

Destination: Docking Bay Twenty Six: Private Owner.

The Seisachtheia sat in a cooled dock: a flat, sword blade shaped object with a thick, brick shaped nose and star shaped engine where the hilt should be. No visible cockpit, since none was needed, but with enough room to hold one hundred passengers. Scorch marks and chipped paint testimony to its long life, and its trials. It looked old and worn, as if the used by date for the model had long since passed, which in truth, it had. I doubt there would be another one of its kind in service.

And there in lies the beauty.

It was like an old piece of clothing: the general fashion having passed it by, moved on to something else, despite the fact that it still does its purpose. Ignoring the fact, the purpose, that never changed. That being to keep you warm. To protect you from the elements. Nothing wrong with it, its useability still there, just considered ugly when compared to the new fashions.

That, in short, was my ship. External appearance was left unpainted, for the simple fact that I would only have to paint it again, and, that when finished, it would look tacky. Kind of like a woman, who, passed her prime now, pulls on a short skirt and top, and walks out with the younger women, trying to compete. Laughable. Why compete on a level that you can't possibly win? Why not move to a new level? Use your different assets, the ones gained through experience, fight on a new level.

That was what I'd done. When the newer models came in, and other people traded, I upgraded. I used the ships larger capacity to store more fuel, to have larger thrusters placed in. The ships make, the hull, the density, make it allowable. Even desirable. One of my crew designed a new operating system, cut out things, brought in others, smoothed it down, made it more streamlined. I added weapons, subtracted a cockpit, and added cyro chambers for cold sleep, the type of sleep needed for deep space operations.

I made her my own. My child.

And she had my love. As with everything else I felt part of. I had dedication and loyalty to nothing more than her, my crew -- especially my crew -- and the bartender girl who was my accountant. No one bubble, no one race, just people, just metal.

"Boss, is that ye who stand before thy noble vessel?"

Almost an old speech, from a time of knights and damsels in distress. Almost. But it was bastardised, becoming a unique blend that would be hard to place for certain, if you did not know the speaker, the man, his trials.

"Yeah, Marcus. Open the hatch."

"Thy wish be mine command."

A piece of metal made the sound of movement, then the hum of hydraulics, and the ramp was lowered to the ground. I moved to the ramp, stepped up into it, pushed a button to close it and walked up into the cool, metal hull of my ship.

The inside of *The Seisachtheia* was much like an electronic forest: LED's flashing, shafts of metal extruded, wires hanging out in rapid, fast connections, looking much like vines that have wrapped themselves around dark boxes of tools. A portable lamp hung from the ramp door, not for lighting the inside, but for anyone going outside; VDU's that are blank and unconnected are like fallen nests on the floor, and other, mysterious, alien-type technology, that is classified simply as miscellaneous, sat with it, making it seem like an ancient tomb.

I followed the walkway to a front portion of the ship, watched as the door slide open, and entered the cockpit. It was a five man cockpit, lit dimly and with four seats already taken:

The first seat, at the far left, amidst a large collection of screens, was the seat for Marcus. My path finder, my door opener -- for both flight paths and computer systems. He was there now, hunched over a screen, one palm placed on a needle which feed him another world, a world of digital numbers, of yes and no, the world of secrets.

A slender, well formed man with long amber hair, dark, haunted eyes and a prosthetic left leg, Marcus El'lithian is a man who could have a job at any computer firm, but will never do such. You see, Marcus is the result of the child slavery that is rampant in home worlds such as his: primitive technology, sub-standard weaponry, low living conditions. He had been sold and placed in a mining community in the outer-bubbles, starting as a miner until someone noticed his quick mind and nimble conclusions to any problem placed before him; he had then been given extensive computer training, and spent the next ten years chained -- literally -- to a desk and terminal with no hope for escape, until I showed up, much in the same boat, that as a slave. Escape had been a desperate gamble, with Marcus using his terminal to engineer it. It cost us two companions; it cost Marcus the lower half of his leg.

The second and third seats were at the back of the cockpit, next to each other and surrounded by screens and monitors that glowed like magical ponds. The seats were occupied by the twins: Lilethia and Jilethia; both identical: brown hair, blue eyes flecked with brown, about five two and with grease and lubricant covering both clothes and skin. Their faces were smudged, and I suspected that, underneath, there were two pretty young girls, perhaps hiding, perhaps shy, or perhaps not interested in anything other than mechanics, other than *The Seisachtheia*.

Whichever it was, these two were responsible for the up-keep and maintenance of the ship, and were the primary reason for the external appearance of most of the components and the open bounty of other, alien, devices. They called it collecting, they said it might benefit us in the future, they said patching up the walls would just take too much time, and that they'd only have to take it apart again. I called it hoarding, and I didn't believe what they said for a second. But I let them gather the junk, I let them pull the ship apart and leave it as it was. No one got hurt, despite what the appearance might suggest, and they're always pulling something apart to add this and that.

Unlike Marcus, however, the past for these two was not as harsh. The twins never came from a slave camp, they came from one of the deep space stations, one were they worked in a space port as mechanics, for minimal wages and the sufferance of constant jibes and grabs from male mechanics. When I found them, they'd been sixteen, ahead of their time and ignored by head mechanics. I offered them jobs, showed them my ship, and they'd been here for two years since. Deep inside, I believed they viewed *The Seisachtheia* as their own child, adopted, but their own.

The forth seat was at the front, and was that of the weapons seat. Around the seat was a virtual reality head set gear, linked up to take close shots of opposing vessels, linked up to *The Seisachtheia*'s own weapons, where a mere flick could send out a barrage. It was the seat that held the most paradoxes: destructive, passive, redundant, needed, unwanted. It was the seat of war, never changing for its purpose, if the purpose was ever decided.

In the seat rested a figure with a feline grace, a feline grace that came from her ancestors; ancestor that were, in fact, feline. Domestic or wild, it mattered not anymore. The Rthil'olia, one of the New Races, were a fearsome, warlike society, and Katrinalinaliona (Trina for short) was the perfect specimen of her race. Perfect because she could kill in cold blood, perfect because her killing was perfect, perfect because, by her own cultures reasoning, and even mine, she was beautiful, unique and fiercely loyal. Yet flawed. Flawed because her fierce loyalty was not to her people, not to any race, but to the crew of *The Seisachtheia* to its captain and lover, me.

Her appearance was that of a woman -- most definitely a woman!-- and was covered by a soft, light, nightingale blue fur, tinged darker at the elbows and backs of her legs-- where the fur is longer, softer -- and ears and tail. She had hair like a human woman, which hung in a single braid down to her waist, and was a combination of colours: light blue and dark blue; streaks of snow white and dashes black. It was an exotic combination. Her face was also an exotic contrast: part human, part feline, with cat slit green eyes, sometimes torn,

torn between human emotions and those of a feline. She was wearing soft black leather pants, calf high boots, fingerless gloves -- fingers would stop her from using her claws when in combat -- and a close fitting, long sleeved, leather jerkin.

A warrior from a warrior's culture, I earned her love, as strange as it sounds, by defeating her in unarmed combat. I earned her friendship by saving her life, and earned her loyalty by pledging my soul with hers to the Goddess Athena at a crumbling cathedral that is the centre of her religion.

Nothing with this woman was gained easily, always earned, none of it ever together.

"Ready to leave, captain." Always captain in the cockpit. Always. "When ever you tell us what it is our task shall be, and whom we are working for."

I headed to my seat, the fifth seat, in the middle of the cockpit. The pilots seat, the seat of the strategist, the captains seat. I sunk into it and remove the CD from the folds of my coat, place it into a terminal and watched the main screen light up:

"Saquarian!"

A hiss, anger, resentment, even a hint betrayal. Expected. Planned for, and the reason for not telling them before I came. That way Trina will say nothing here, not where the rules of captain are paramount. No. She'll wait, wait 'till we're alone, where we're equals, and she can tell me all about the crimes of the race... but by then, we'll be long gone, and I should be able to placate her.

The screen continued, waiting for no man, woman or otherwise:

"The woman's name is Susan Daranon -- " dictation is better, almost as if is spoken by a human and not a Saquarian. " -- she is a scientist working in the thirty second bubble for the Saquarian government. Two weeks ago she disappeared, a Security scan of her home station has been included... "

A picture formed, pixels mixed, came together: it showed a work room, trashed, everything within broken and a tap in the background dripped in a soft, irregular pattern. The view shifted, ran through the rooms: chairs upturned, viewing monitor smashed in the middle, scorch marks -- those of low powered weapons -- mark the white walls. A holo-painting has been tipped to one side and a mug of coffee lies undisturbed.

The scan moved to her room: the bed was ripped up, feathers everywhere. A pillow lay, half burnt, on the ground near a silk black nightgown. On the bedside table there were pictures: one of two people who must be her parents, and another of a man who is either her brother or boyfriend. There was also one of a domestic cat (only the felines in the bubble that is Trina's world were changed. The rest remained the same).

The scan moved again: to the balcony, showing pot plants that had exploded, leaving soil stained across the ground with the carcass of her cat, torn within two -- Trina gave a soft moan: despite differences, the Rthil'olia were closely bonded to domestic felines -- and the railing had been snapped and shattered. Down below, the street had been cornered off, with people gathered around the white boarders, staring up and murmuring to each other, a crowd, a mob, the thing that people become when something tragic happens.

"...No sign of Doctor Daranon was found. At the time of her disappearance, the doctor was investigating the importance of the Rifts to the bubbles. It is believed she found out something important, and was, subsequently kidnapped. Our -- " I felt like asking just who 'our' consisted of, but I don't, knowing that I'd get no answer " -- sources have last reported her within bubble one hundred and six, in an establishment known as *The Black Boot* It is a low rental motel.

"A picture of Doctor Daranon has been included."

The pixels formed again: a blond woman, a classical beauty, with pink lips, pale skin and smoky grey eyes that stared at me, somehow accusing, somehow blaming me. I grunted sourly, hit a button, and get the picture printed out.

The CD swirled to a halt, I looked at the crew; Trina looked away, upset, knowing already that my mind was made up, but not knowing that I didn't want it this way.

"Questions?"

"Thy ransom for such a quest?"

I told him; fine eyebrows went up.

"Time limit?" this from Lilethia, simply put.

"No limit."

"Your choice has been made?" Trina asked, finally, voice steady, yet the others knew she was upset.

I sighed. "I had no choice."

She sniffed, turned her head away, every action with grace. In her position, I probably would of shown none of her restraint.

"Are we ready?" I asked, forced to ignore her for the moment.

"All systems go," Jilethia replied, punching into a keypad, watching the screens. "All you have to do is jack in."

Jack in, and for the first time I'm apprehensive. Trina shot me a glance, asked me what I was doing? No one else noticed, so I shot her back a grin, hoping to dispel my own fears with her own. It didn't work.

I rested my head back, placed my hands on the arms, and felt the slight sting of the needle in the base of my skull. This was jacking in, the physical part, anyway. The other side is more dramatic: my conscious melted with the ship, I felt every ounce of the ship, noted every scratch, every feature, and soon the ships hull fell away, leaving me, my conscious, floating as the ship. All I need is a thought: the thrusters lit up, the system check began.

:*Everyone ready? Everyone set?*: I asked, the words flickered to life on their screens, sent through the ship by a thought.

:*Aye*: Marcus's word floated in the air before me, cdoured with his personality.

:*Yes*: Lilethia's reply.

Jilethia a second later, :*go*:

:*Proceed, captain*: and Trina's final, cold response.

A second, a single thought, away from the collective intelligence. :*Sorry, Trina, sorry. I am, but I had no choice*:

Colder was the reply. :*Answer is not good enough, captain. Why do you have no choice? What drove you? Are you their friend-of-war? Answer me that, captain, before anything else, if you have anything felt for me, answer the last!*:

Cold, yet fearful. My heart wept blood. I wished I could tell the Saquarian no... But I couldn't, I couldn't...! :*Never, Trina, I would never be their friend-of-war. We are pledged, my soul to haunt ruined worlds if I betray you. Never would I do such a thing, but this is important, the doctor... everything. It is all wrong, yet vitally important. I know that, but... I'm sorry, Trina, I can't explain. Just trust me? Please?*:

Softened, just a little, she replied. :*We must go, captain*:

Not the best reply I could hope for, but enough for the moment. The landing gear folded into the ship; the thrusters kicked in and I suddenly felt like I was flying, flying like a bird, with elegance and grace, with power, immortal power. That was perhaps the worse part of jacking in. The feeling of power. I already knew that when the jack came out, when the ship was landed, when I was separated, I'd feel like a person coming off a drugged up high, and the urge would be to go back. But I couldn't do that, would never be able to do that... that was the way to lose your personality to the ship, to become the ship, to simply fly, starving, starving, starving until your body was nothing but skin and bones; till the mind was in fever, fever to start illusions dancing before you, fever to send you into the Rift at breakneck speed, or fever to send you into a cavern wall, ending your life, your crews life, and your ships existence in one bright, burning moment.

As it was, I felt like a God now. I only had to send a thought, one thought, and I could go anywhere in the universe, no longer fastened to these worlds by the mortal shell of flesh that was my body. I

am something else. More than man, more than machine, more than anything every dreamt or in existence...

I ignored the thoughts. There was nothing in deep space, nothing but criminals in steel boxes, nothing but pirates praying on miners... nothing of aesthetic existence. So I flew, flew through darkened corridors towards the gate. No other pilots, no other ships, were encountered, and we come to the gate within twenty minutes of flight time:

It sat there, a dark void full of vivid slashes of purple and blue, swirling, swirling with anger, with love, with all the emotions. Meeting and forming, collapsing and raising, howling and silent. All these things and more are the Rifts.

I nudge the ship forward, into the maw, into it, going slow, going slow so the ship wasn't torn up in the Rift, and keeping the number locked in my skull, the number of our destination:

One hundred and six.

3.

Date: 20/5/405 AS.

Time: 0815 hours.

Bubble Number: One Hundred and Six of Two hundred and Seven.

Destination: *The Black Boot*.

The Black Boot was located in one of the lowest parts of town: it was a shabby motel, with a holographic picture of a black boot out the front. It was made from synthetic wood and had a number of seedy looking characters out the front, each watching me as I pushed open the door and entered.

I left Trina and the others with *The Seisachtheia* back in a public port for the simple reason that I didn't want to attract too much attention to myself (and walking arm and arm with Trina tended to do that) and because I didn't trust public ports. Call me a cynic, but anything left alone in a public port won't be there when you go back, I can assure you of that.

The inside of *The Black Boot* was much like the outside: shabby. Old, synthetic wooden tables, tacky purple and red carpet, and a large vid. screen on the far wall played some sport that used more brawn than brains. I glanced around the entrance room, not really wanting to go in. A large, fat, bald man in a food and drink stained shirt grunted at me from over a table:

"Whatta ya want?"

I pulled out the picture of Doctor Daranon, sat away from him, and said: "Seen this woman?"

"Depends."

"Depends on what?" I returned, in no mood for bribes.

"On'ow m'ch it'll be worth't'ya."

"Not much."

"Eh? Aw, c'mon... she's gotta be worth someth'n', ain't she?"

I grunted in anger. "It's worth nothing, fat man, have you seen her?"

He glanced at me with wobbly eyes the were lost in the folds of flesh, and the overpowering smell of him hit me.

"Now, now, nah'eed ta get angry. Don't wan' no fuckin' trouble."

"I'm not looking for trouble. I just want to know about the woman. Who's the owner?"

He jerked a thumb at a slender man behind him, sitting at a counter, his mouth formed a grin, showing broken teeth. "But ol'Sherik donna like smart farts like yerself. Better ya stay'ere."

"I'll take me chances," I replied, fairly sure that he would be lying. A drunk man will do, and say, anything for the off chance of getting money for more alcohol. I stood and walked over to the slender man at the counter.

"Are you Sherik?"

"Yep." Simple, without so much as a glance at me.

"Seen this woman?"

He glanced. "Yep."

"When?"

"About a week ago," he glanced at me then, took me in, assessed me. "Now, look here, your not some local law fellow, are you?"

"Nope. Just looking for this woman."

"Why?"

"Family."

"Oh... "

"What?" I asked, casual, although fearing my game would be over.

He leaned under the counter, pulled out a slender envelope. "Said I was to give this to a human who came looking for her, said to make sure it was a human. You sure you family?"

"Brother," I replied.

"Don't look like her: she had blond hair, you got brown. And... well, she as a damn site better than you."

"Our fathers fault."

He shrugged. "Oh, well, least you ain't Saquarian. Had some of them looking for her as well, they were pretty pissed when I said she left a week ago. Threatened me with all types of things, trying to find where she went. You know what she did?"

"Nope. You."

"Nah. She didn't speak to us much. Just stayed in her room, phoned a few places. Had a visitor once, though. Pilot, lives around here. Name is Brian Daniels, one of 'em Rift pilots. Maybe he'll know something."

I took the envelope. "Can I have his address?"

Sherik wrote it down on a piece of paper, handed it to me, and then I left *The Black Boot*. Out on the street I pulled out the portable map system and pushed the 'ON' button.

"Destination?"

I told it Daniels address; a second later it came up with directions.

I had been hoping, feebly, that Daniels would live in a better part of town. Unfortunately he hadn't, which didn't say much of his ability as a Rift pilot. Most pilots lived in the highest, most expensive, parts of the bubbles they took residence, and took great pains in showing this to potential customers. I was the only one who didn't do that (mainly because most of my money was tied in with investments and other such things) and I was the only Rift pilot who operated out of a bar.

Daniels apartment was a dirty white, with a fair few windows and a small holographic key pad at the door. I typed in Daniels name and waited. A second later a portly man, dressed like a butler, appeared in a mixture of pixels, and when he spoke, he spoke in an old pre-bubble British accent:

"Brian Daniels is not here at the moment, sire, do you have a message?"

"Do you know where he is?"

"No. The occupation listed is of Rift pilot, perhaps he has a job. He has payed three months rent in advance."

"Thank you."

The holographic man smiled gently. "You're welcome. Would you like to leave a message?"

"No."

"Enjoy your day then, sire."

Not likely, I thought sourly and walked off.

4.

Date: 20/5/405 AS.

Time: 0852 hours.

Bubble Number: One Hundred and Six of Two Hundred and Seven.

Destination: Docking Bay: Government Owned, for Public Use.

I thought about it on the way back to the bay, and each way I thought about it, it just didn't link up. Just didn't sit right.

The doctors room was trashed, that much I knew. The CD had been checked by Marcus, and had come up as the real thing. Not faked, not created. Not a simulation. I was, of course, ignoring the fact that someone had created a whole room, trashed it, then made a security video shot of it. That just seemed like too much work. It was after the trashed room things began to come apart, like half baked cake.

The Saquarian told me she was kidnapped; my gut told me otherwise. Simple reasoning: she hired Daniels, that was fairly simple deduction, and she was alone. Alone and apparent safe enough to leave a message for the person who came looking for her. And the message was on liquid tape. Expensive, not the kind of thing someone on the run -- or just escaping -- from the bad guys would have.

So where does that leave me?

Nowhere worth mentioning.

I arrived in the docking bay to find the twins working with a droid on the roof of *The Seisachtheia*. Jilethia waved at me, then turned back to Lilethia; the blue glow from the welding droid stopped for a second... then resumed.

I didn't pay much attention to that. The twins were always doing something, always changing this or that, and they had mentioned something about a new circuit board they were going to pick up from a black market dealer. They were probably installing it now.

I walked up to the ship, up the ramp, and into the cockpit. It was empty except for Marcus, who was hunched over a screen.

I placed the liquid tape next to him. "What are you doing?"

"Checking -- " he meant hacking, just disliked the word, I guess " -- thy account. The gossamer-like Saquarian's hath payed us, an I doth be interested in locating thy employers roost for payments of services rendered."

"Just be careful," I advised.

He rolled his eyes and picked up the liquid tape. "What be thy bounty?"

"The doctor left it for someone. Someone who was meant to be following her, I'd like you to check it out."

Marcus placed the liquid tape into a slot, waited for a second, then watched as the screen flashed with words: PLEASE ENTER CODE:

"I do believe thy task shall take some moments, captain."

"Sure," I replied, easy, so easy since I had an alternative.

"Where is Trina."

Marcus ran a hand through his amber hair. "She be located in the back hold. Thy mate still be angered at thy hide, captain, for her hatred hath been strong."

"Thanks for the tip," I muttered and pushed away, moving out of the cockpit, leaving Marcus to a code, leaving the fate of the job in his hands (if he didn't crack it, I had not clue of where to go) and half hoping he would fail.

I walked through the corridors of the ship, avoiding pieces of treasure that the twins had bought aboard, and made my way to the weapons area of the ship, certain, positive of nothing else but this: Trina would be there.

And she was. She was hunched over a large black rifle, the insides ripped out and laid across the table in precision care while she placed it back together. There was nothing wrong with the weapon, mind you, she was just angry, angry and needing to do something, anything to dispel the excess energy.

The door slid shut behind me.

"Trina."

Her head spun up, her eyes flashed. "Captain."

"We're not in the cockpit anymore, Trina, s'not captain."

"Fair, Steven, for you are correct. But your treatment of me is unfair, and you have treated us in such a fashion where my only title for you is captain. You deserve nothing else. What is it you want."

"To talk."

"Fine. I am listening, but please, do not start this with 'I'm sorry'. There is no such thing. You have done what they said, there cannot be a sorry."

"Your right," I replied, agreeing and knowing that it could not be otherwise.

"Yes," she said, halting her work to look at me as I moved next to her. "And now what is it you wish to say."

"I was right in taking it."

She snorted, turned away from me. "Explain."

I moved my hand under her tunic, scratching her back gently, her muscles tensed and untensed, angry and not, confused and clear in anger.

"The doctor wasn't kidnapped. I think the Saquarian lied to me -- " she snorted, as if I was a fool " -- and I think we're being set up. I think the doctor has hired a pilot to take her somewhere, somewhere safe... The only problem is I don't know where that place is. It might be on the liquid tape she left."

Trina let out a soft purr, leant back into me. "So why take the job?"

It would always come back to this. Time to answer it, set the line straight. "I don't know. The money? Maybe. Curiosity had to play a hand in it, but other than that I don't know. Honest."

"Truth at last, Steven."

"Yeah, sorry it took so long. What now?"

Trina turned around, her eyes smouldered, but not with anger. "How long will Marcus take on the tape?"

"An hour or so, I suppose."

Her nimble fingers pulled out my shirt, mine worked on the knots on her tunic, her mouth worked up to mine, giving me a fierce, lingering kiss and whispered: "Then we have time to truly forgive each other."

5.

Date: 21/5/405 AS.

Time: 1043 hours

Bubble Number: Two of Two Hundred and Six.

Destination: Field on an Open Plain.

Marcus cracked the code: a set of numbers broken to reveal another number. No message, no clues, just a number: 2.

I puzzled over it until Jilethia suggested that it was the number of a bubble. It had been on the verge of my tongue to tell her no: two was a pre-industrial bubble, they didn't even have cities, and the furthest they had gotten with their own technology was fire. Oh, they respected ships, but didn't have any of their own. They shared their bubble with centaurs and other such mythical beasts, and refused to have any association with technology. They believed it to be the King of Hells work. It would be logical to assume that a scientist -- a being who needed technology to be -- would be seen as the devils servant.

Then it hit me, like a bullet, it hit me.

It was perfect.

The last place to look for a scientist would be a pre-industrial bubble.

A second after that we were airborne and heading towards a Rift, the destination firmly in my mind, the answers right in front of me. The only problem was, not all the answers were before me. Just a portion, a snippet...

And the rest? Well, the rest would tell me to either leave her alone or return her, tied, to the Saquarian's.

The dark corridors of the second bubble came to me; I cast my mind about, searched and found the residue of a Rift pilot and his ship. It was an interesting side affect to being a Rift pilot: you couldn't hide or flee from one of your own. You could always pick up the scent of their

thoughts, the powerful psi energy lasting in the area for weeks, sometimes months. It was said, that in the area where a Rift pilot died, you could taste the psi energy for years afterward.

Some pilots had managed to devise a way to hide their psi trail. Mainly by mixing it with other scents. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. It really relied on how bad the person following you wanted to get you. It takes a thief to catch a thief, was the old Earth saying.

Fortunately -- unfortunately? -- Brian Daniels left a trail as strong as manure.

It led me straight to him, him and his ship *The Swiftstar*, him and his passenger Doctor Susan Daranon. The ship was set on an open plain, the grass growing in the dim glow of the cavern, and further down from the ship was a large crowd, either gathering to see me, or gathering to see Daniels and his passenger.

I gave my orders, before I unjacked, as I set *The Seisachtheia* down on the plane, behind *The Swiftstar*, behind the people. *Trina, set your weapons for stun. Fire if something goes wrong. Lilethia, Jilethia, cast your scanners, keep a watch for anything coming in. Marcus, watch the lines.*

Their replies, a mixture:

:Understood, captain.

:Monitoring now.

:Perimeter defensive set.

:Lines overseen. Logged at all frequency setting.

The jack came out: the God like power I had felt left me, left me mortal, left be a shell of what I had been before. I took a breath, composed myself and rose out of my seat, walked to the ramp, pausing only to pick up a blaster and strap it to my leg. An instrument of caution.

The ramp hit the ground with a dull thud, I stepped down, slowly, hands held to out, clear and unarmed. The grass whipped at my legs: a breeze from somewhere within the vast catacombs, origin unknown, purpose and end the same. The thought passed my mind in a second, the light in the cavern left it with a pure glow, a soft light, a moment to be captured.

Broken by a voice, guttural, deep, harsh, yet without threat: "Captain Steven Xilantilas? Captain, you have been expected. Will you accompany me to the main tent to see the lady Susan Daranon?"

The speaker was a centaur: half man, half horse. The lower half of his body a muscled horses body, peak condition, a thick black; the top half of his body was human and muscles corded his chest.

"Certainly."

The centaur dipped his head. "Please follow me, then."

I stepped down next to him and began a walk across the grass, a walk that saw the people of this land gather around their tents in curiosity, no longer a mob, but still there, their presence not stifling, but neither comforting.

"I am armed," I told my companion, taking refuge in the knowledge that this was a race of honour.

"A fire-spitter?"

"Energy releaser: not as messy."

"All death is messy, captain."

I was forced to concede that point. "May I ask you name?"

The Greek like, God like, face lifted to me, pride within his dark eyes. "I am General Chiron, leader of the army."

"A prestigious position, general."

"Thank you," he returned, hint of a smile. "I must warn you, though, that we could come at an impasse concerning the welfare of the doctor."

"I do not wish that."

"Nor I."

I paused. "Then what do we do?"

Chiron crossed his arms over his chest. "Nothing. You should hear from the doctor first, then wait and see where the wind of fate takes us."

I resumed the walk: the camp was full with multi-coloured tents, easily dismantled and for easy travel. The type of camp for rovers, which is what they are. On Earth they would of followed the deer during the season, in this bubble they follow other animals, similar to the deer, but still for the same purpose.

The adults and children stared at me. Their eyes flowed over me; stopped at my weapon, went back to my face, then my ship. They

revealed nothing, but I could almost smell the scent of fear. How would they deal with my ship? Not me. I was easily killed. Spear, sword, Chiron. Any of these things. My ship, though, was different. Their questions would be: (1) how many people lie within the bowels of the ship? (2) what is that ship capable of? (3) how would we stop the steel beast?

We, Chiron and I, stopped outside a brightly coloured tent.

"Inside is the doctor."

"Thank you, general Chiron."

He nodded and took up guard outside the tent, in his hands he held a long shafted battle axe, the head wickedly tipped, which had lain next to the opening. I looked to the axe; he gave me a sad smile.

"I hope, truly, that I do not need it."

I nodded, reached up and pulled open the tent, then entered.

The inside was lit with a flash lamp, and within it sat two people. One was a plainly dressed man, young and with a familiar psi scent to him: Brian Daniels.

The other was Doctor Susan Daranon.

She took me in, evaluated me, then spoke: "Captain, I've been waiting. Before you speak, before you say a word, I will speak. It will, of no doubt, tell you why the Saquarian's are looking for me. Why they want me dead."

She took a breath -- I remained standing, silent, waiting -- and then she began: "I took a contract to work on the Saquarian's, to work on the Rifts and the bubbles, since I had already distinguished myself in this field. The Saquarian's set me up in the bubble two hundred and six; payed for everything. What I found was, to say the least, was stunning and frightening. The bubbles and Rifts are an organic life form, alive, moving, with a central -- a brain -- part. That being the Saquarian's world: two hundred and seven. The Rifts are the link, the keys in the chain, the reason for the bubbles to exist.

"You see, common belief is that the old Earth's gravitation pull takes us around the sun, and in truth, it does. But only one part: two hundred and seven. The rest are taken along in the chain, like the Moon was to the Earth. Dragged, willing, unwilling, unable to stop or change anything. Except the Rifts are different; they're organic, so they can be killed, and when one is killed, the bubble it is attached to -- and every-one inside it -- would float free, further away from the sun, where the bubble would no longer incubate the piece of Earth, where it would die, become cold, become nothing but a giant tomb for those within.

"And that is what the Saquarian's want; I found that out by accident. A Saquarian file, misplaced. Maybe they *wanted* me to know. They want their bubble as the only bubble, to live without us -- any of us. To create one world, one race, one purpose. Don't you see? They could not conquer the Earth; too many people compared to their own feeble numbers, and besides that, the Earth was corrupt, broken and dying. This way, by sundering it and buying time, they could increase their own numbers and formulate their plan further. Their plan for massive genocide.

"And that is what they want, why they want me dead, " she looked at me, eyes piecing my soul, "do you believe?"

Did I believe? It was the most ludicrous, unfounded, impossible story ever, yet I found myself believing every word said. Everything linked up, joined with sudden ease.

"Yeah, I think -- "

"Captain," Marcus, in my ear, urgent, worried. "Saquarian's doth arrive. Friendly they are not."

I swore, the two in the tent looked to me, I ignored them. "Fire up the weapons, shields and everything else. I'll -- "

My voice cut off by laser fire: strafing laser fire. Tearing up the ground, the voices of people screaming, the people in the tent up on their feet, at my side as I push out. To find general Chiron pawing that the ground while sleek, organic -- the connection so clear, so clear, but impossible to link up before now -- ships released thick streams of bolts on the ground and at the ships. Already *The Swiftstar* lay in a crumpled, smouldering heap, while my ship fought of the barrage.

"Betrayed," Chiron hissed.

"Run," I ordered him, "take you people and run. Those are Saquarian's."

He snorted and pawed at the ground, wanting the fight. He leapt out a piecing cry, a cry to his people, and they began to flee; Daniels leapt onto Chiron's back, his blaster drawn, his choice to flee automatic.

I grabbed the doctor and said: "We're not finished."

She nodded and we began our run to my ship: bolts of blazing energy tore up the ground around us, but we made it through, made it to the ship and to a measure of safety. I leapt into my chair, jacked in without hesitation.

"Your making a mistake," Daranon said, a mystic with her prophecy.

With God like power, I replied, aloud: "My choice, woman, my fate."

And then the *Seisachtheia* was airborne: I spun it through the air, sent it rolling past the enemy ships --avoiding their blasts with amazing reflexive movements --to finish in a clear line of fire behind them.

Trina purred in delight; I read her thoughts, read her the moment before she opened fire --

-- and I rolled *The Seisachtheia* out of firing range.

A blast rocked the ship. I didn't move, stunned, shocked, I did not know what I had done, and neither did the others.

"Boss?" Marcus asked, aloud.

I had no answer; another blast shattered across *The Seisachtheia's* exterior.

"Shields are falling," from Lilethia.

Jilethia added: "Their taking up positions around us. If we don't leave now, we're done for."

"Steven!" Trina called, breaking protocol, a signal to the moments peril. "Steven!"

And then the doctors voice, like a narrator: "He can't do anything. He was designed by the Saquarian's: an organic life form made from the Rifts, grown in the vats and designed for the Rifts. And inside his programming is the directive not to harm them."

"What is he?!"

"A puppet," the doctor answered, "a puppet to the Saquarian's cause."

The voices faded: I think I caught Trina pleading with me before I regressed into my mind, the God-like power of the ship still coursing through my form.

A puppet?

The word came back, haunting and damning, came back at me with the bite of a poison. I pulled at my mind, pulled at images that were important, pulled at Trina and my crew, and found myself wanting to act, wanting to attack.

Something inside my mind flexed.

I cast around the ground below me. Adults and children lay in crumpled heaps, bloodied forms, torn asunder by the blasts of the organic ships. My gaze -- with all its God-like power of a ship, a mechanical -- went to the people, took in how they fled, how they cast furtive glances over their shoulders, how they wept.

Something inside my mind cracked, a hair line crack, the barest fault, but all that I needed.

I came back to reality in a shocking jolt. Trina was before me, somehow free of the weapons console, shaking me, pleading with me. The doctor was calm, detached, as if she knew the outcome --

-- a blast cracked over *The Seisachtheia*, I felt it shake the core of my soul.

"Shields are down!"

And I ripped the ship backwards, thrusters roaring, hurling both Trina and the doctor to the ground. The ships, the sleek organic vessels around me, were caught unprepared and I tore through their formations, caught equally unprepared as I released a spray of mines from beneath the ship. They were then caught in a sky of fierce explosions, caught in a field of death, they then lagged behind in a cluster. I fled, into the tunnels, into a plan for freedom, into a desperate gambit, suicidal with its intention.

The Rift loomed before me, a dark swirling mass of violent emotions: oppression, freedom, anger, love, hatred, friendship: rising, falling, breaking, building, creating, destroying --

-- and I slammed into it at full speed.

6.

Date: 22/5/405 AS

Time: 0134 hours.

Bubble Number: Zero.

Destination: Deep Space.

The ride through the Rift was not pleasant. It threw us around and rendered us unconscious and crippled. It left us to wake floating, aimless, unprotected and vulnerable, through deep space. I was surprised, since I did not choose this destination. In truth, I had no set destination, the Rift just seemed to have send me there, like a father guiding his child through a storm, guiding them to safety.

When I came too, I found myself in the sick bay. In the bed next to me lay Trina, heavily sedated and arm set traction. We did not emerge unscathed. Lilethia told me that Trina had been thrown around harshly in the ride through the Rift, and had taken heavy hits for it, which she would spend at least a month recovering in bed from.

The next surprise -- but better -- was that the doctor had fled. A escape pod was missing, and a text had been left from me on a small not pad. I flicked it on, and read:

Captain, I hope this finds you in good health. As you may of guessed, I have left. I believe this for the best, and trust that you do not come after me. Once was quite enough. The Saquarian's found you my loading a bug into your system, probably by CD. Have your man find and destroy it. Then they won't be able find you again.

On another level, you have proven something to me: the Rifts and its pilots do not serve The Saquarian's. I believe that the Rifts have developed their own intelligence, and it is for the betterment of the bubbles and its people.

This, though, is just an educated guess. I would suggest you search for the answers yourself, for you, as your ship implies, seem to of cast of the burdens given to you by the Saquarian's. For the time.

Like your crew, I wonder if it shall last?

It was signed Susan.

I placed the pad to the side and lay back. Free? I did not know. The answer was lost, somewhere within me, within the Rifts, within the Saquarian's: floating, alone, waiting, hidden in half truths, hidden in lies, hidden in the jacks...

So many avenues, so many questions, but I pushed them to the back of my mind, where they could sit and wait. I needed time to take in what I have learnt, the implications are universal genocide, and to see if I have a purpose in it all.

I shall learn those answers.

It is my goal, my quest: I can seen the dim outline of them. The beginning or the end, I do not know, but they are resting, resting in a void, waiting, patient, always patient, always waiting, waiting for someone, anyone, no matter what race, what bubble, what existence, to come along and unlock them.

- Ben Peek

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

Recently had a letter from a Yuri Mironets, who teaches SF to 3rd Year students in the English Language Department of Far Eastern State University in Vladivostok (I'd seen an appeal for him somewhere for Eng-lang SF materials, and sent him some SF poetry material). He's wanting to expand his contacts, etc, and with your interest in ex-

USSR/Russian SF activities thought you might perhaps be interested in making contact.... (He mentioned, incidentally, 3 of his students' theses - and is doing a research paper on Harry Harrison's trilogy "West of Eden", another on E E Doc Smith's SKYLARK OF SPACE, and a third on Le Guin's LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS and THE DISPOSSESSED, so clearly covers a wide range of material in the course.)

One other thing... been meaning to ask for some time and not got round to it, how long you've been publishing poetry in THE MENTOR? I assume a lot of years, perhaps even from the beginning? Reason I ask is am trying to put together data on some of longest running poetry using publications, to make a small item for a future Data Dump. John Thiel's PABLE LENNIS has been using it consistently since certainly '76, and intermittently at least in some of his earlier zines, and Pete Presford in UK has used poetry almost from beginning of his publishing in late '60's; STAR* LINE since '72. Aside from you, haven't got anyone else with any really long "runs" of poetry usage other than the above list and two which are mainly SF cit/lit hist, tho do also use some poetry, FANTASY COMMENTATOR and RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY.

[The first poetry I published was in TM #7, which was in 1967. - Ron.]

Was a real shock to hear of Zelazny's death, abt the only SF great I ever actually met, when interviewed him abt his poetry for CRITICAL WAVE couple years back. Came across as amazingly modest. (10.7.95)

The Lillie tale this time (good to see fic back) could be taken as a chapter of an unwritten novel, of a leisurely almost Bradburyesque kind (certainly had me intrigued, to know what'd come next) or a self-contained slipstream/mood fic: either way, has the slow sure grip of a sluggish python, with an unforgettable core image, functioning like the hinge-word of a haiku, of Liberty swapping torch arms (and I admire the way Lillie milks that for wider human meaning, too). Sorry, can't really find anything to jackal or hyena abt it.

The cover art made me smile, tho I don't quite know why - I wonder if artist had Herod and Salome in mind?

Great to see the Pickles photo - pretty sure, if I'd had self-discipline not to use the caption, wd've recognised the two I've met, Derrick himself and Vinç Clarke (he's Intersection-Glasgow Worldcon - Fan GoH, by the way) despite the years - o/all, pic has a faint air of the Central Anarchist Council of Europe (all, in fact, agents for different police forces across the Continent) in Chesterton's wonderful THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY - I think the air stems part from the soapbox-like central object, but most from the sinister "secret master-cum-Mr Big" pose of the central figure - Fred Robinson. Definitely a pic that tells a misleading story.

Good to know the "big cats" story is naturalised Down Under too, they're a media perennial here, the "Beast of Bodmin" in Cornwall being current leader in headline stakes. The tale of drakes murdering females by drowning them during sex occurs in our media, too, though I have no idea of its truth if any - perhaps it's a convenient story to explain disappearances for ducknappers nicking for the pot or to resell to unscrupulous restaurants.

Mae's "Highway of the tapirs" Guarani name for Milky Way reminds... came across in HISTORY OF HONLEY (place near here) mention that "Cow Gate" was a local term for the Milky Way - gate being Yorkshire term for track or road. Could perhaps explain the "cow jumped over the Moon" image - with the right alignment, the "cow road" would appear to run behind, hence above/over.

Pigs eating anything reminds of a wonderful news story years ago, of a light aircraft making a forced landing on a farm in Cornwall and being entirely eaten by pigs (tho the pilot got away)... a staple method of disposing of the corpse in crime fic is to put in the pigpen.

The various mentions of the Molesworth fan history, and fan histories as such, reminds, have just got a copy of the (recently reprinted) Jack Speer history of US SFandom in the '30s... now that is dry! Intriguing reading, though, and quite cheap. Called UP TO NOW, it's 40 pp A5 for \$6 incl post from Arcturus Press, Richard C. Newsome, 281 Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11217, USA. Incidentally, interesting that indicates two "immemorial traditions" aren't actually that immemorial - says till FAPA started, most fzs were sold (indeed, several folded because they weren't selling enough to cover costs), and (p.7) "it is not infrequent for

professional magazines to take stories that appeared first in the amateur publications" - ie fic clearly had a regular place in the fzs then.

Branding timber with Chinese symbols, which presumably were taken by locals as witchcraft, to prevent "logrustling" is a wonderfully sideways solution of Mae's. (11.8.95)

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

Actually found myself missing the fiction last issue & enjoyed R&R DEPT as opposed to usual deep depression & metaphysical despair.

Liked Andy's piece as ever & found myself recalling JEFF HAWKE from Sunday Express. Did Andy ever do a piece on this. In its later incarnations it too fell prey to bosom syndrome but the aliens were always mighty fine. I remember one strip where two aliens discuss the events in the previous story-line as if they were avid readers of the paper. "So, Mrs Frampton didn't care that er astronaut husband had been replaced with a Venusian metamorph, given that the former was a complete prig and the latter hung like a Saturn V." Too way out for my mum but a hint of the surreal possibilities of SF for me. There was also a bare-bosomed SF strip in the relaunched SUN in the 70's with a bald time-slipped fashion model, continually losing her clothes in transporter beams.

Oz is continent of the 90's at the minute over here, my niece comes over next year & with luck may marry millionaire vintner thus guaranteeing holidays and/or booze. (26.7.95)

MARC ORTLIEB, PO Box 215, Forest Hill, VIC 3131

[THE MENTOR] is one of the few remaining true genzines to be published here in Australia and as such I value it. It's good to be able to read a diverse mixture of stuff, which is something I enjoy about fanzines.

Of course, half the fun of a fanzine is the occasional difference of opinion, and Bill Congreve's comments on the Ditmar prompt this brief missive. While I agree that more effort should have been made to distribute Ditmar nomination forms, I have trouble working out where. Australian fandom is Balkanised to the point that it is difficult to reach all parts of it. I assume that Bill is referring to the BULLSHEET when he mentions the one Melbourne based fanzine that distributed ballots. I did also distribute ballots via the Internet news-group aus.sf., but I realise that not everyone has Net access. I was under the impression that THYME distributed nomination ballots, but that is Melbourne based too. Until the SYDNEY FUTURIAN there wasn't a Sydney based zine reaching much of the Sydney populace. As far as I am aware, other than the recently launched OSCILLATION OVERTHRUSTER, there's nothing much in Perth, and I know of nothing even vaguely newsletter-ish in Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide or Perth.

With the exception of 1993, the Ditmar for publications has been for Best Fanzine. Perth, in 1993, changed the category to Best Periodical. EIDOLON won the award for Best Periodical in 1993, against AUREALIS. The award offered at Thylacon was the traditional award of Best Fanzine. (EIDOLON won the Best Fanzine Award in 1992 in Sydney.) Personally I have nothing against a professional publication award in the Ditmars, but I don't like the idea of the professional zines coming up against fanzines. Here the number of Ditmar categories could be extended. (But there is the risk of having a perpetual two horse race, with BLOODSONGS perhaps bringing up the rear.) I also remember a time when there were Ditmars for just about anything. Adelaide offered 8 plus the Atheling in 1985.

I have yet to hear of the move to restrict the fiction Ditmars to fan fiction. It's something I would strongly oppose. (By the same token though, I would hate to see the Ditmars for fanzine or fan writer disappear. The fanzine award was in the first Ditmar given in 1969, while the fan writer award goes back to 1979.)

Bill's piece carried more than a little of the Sydney/Melbourne paranoia. I am amused to note Melbourne fans wanting to promote Star Trek pornography and D&D plotlines. We're usually accused of promoting esoteric academic wanking. (13.8.95)

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

...I found issue number eighty-eight of THE MENTOR even more attractive than usual. I was glad to see the return of the fiction, although perhaps those of your story-tellers who want to see commercial

publication should read Algis Budrys IN WRITING TO THE POINT. Budrys vividly described negative reaction to very short fiction - starting with the kind of envelope it is usually sent in - suggests that an author would increase the odds of a professional acceptance by writing at greater length from time to time.

I can offer a counter-example, however. My very short piece, DARK SO SWEET, which was first published in a fanzine, has been bought by the British magazine BEYOND.

I would like to second James Verran's opinion that WRITING TO THE POINT is a particularly well-organised and useful book. Verran did not perhaps, emphasize one thing enough: Budrys' efforts are entirely directed at showing how to produce saleable fiction, without reference to literary quality....

Ellipse! I do hope that is not what I actually wrote in my last letter: the three and four period punctuation mark is an ellipsis.

[You did. It wasn't the editor's fault this time. - Ron]

The advent of the spell-checker is not going to help drive the typo to extinction because what a spell-checker often does in tired or careless hands is to alter an obvious mistake to something that is, in fact, a real word. Errors involving real words in the wrong place are one of the hardest to spot when re-reading page after page of text, especially when you know what it should say.

While I'm glad Rodney Leighton does not want to think of me as a swamp thing - even if I am one of the fen - where I live is between two rivers and barely above sea-level; the pumps run day and night to keep the basement dry. As I write, we are under a hurricane watch, the temperature is in the nineties with incredible humidity, and someone just found a five-foot alligator in a local creek. If I were a creature of the quagmires I might be more comfortable.

[Well, last week - 23rd August - the temperature reached 29° C (85° F), which is pretty hot for the middle of winter. - Ron]

I always use "fans," myself. (15.8.95)

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

Brent Lillie's story is certainly original in plot, though not convincingly plausible.

A MATTER OF SEX strikes me as a well deserved critique of men in business. I am surprised that there haven't been more denunciations of men along these lines. I am inclined to disagree however with her suggestion that less would be spent on armaments if women were in charge. Women are in charge already if you take into account the number of them in the electorate, and I see no evidence of their influence on the composition or attitude of political parties. One is driven to conclude either that women are ignorant of their power or do not choose to use it, neither of which bears out Lyn's contentions about them.

Buck Coulson was as readable as ever, and I was charmed by his pride over the warm hug he got from a Lesbian at Magic Carpet Con. Also a little puzzled. Presumably he would not have taken the same pride if the hug had been given from a male homosexual, so his pride presumably arises from an assumption that he was attractive enough to override the Lesbian's sexual preferences, a profoundly male Chauvinist attitude.

Darren Goossens' COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE was a joy to read, especially the bit about the pre-science cosmos... gypsies, campfires and marshmallows... coming crashing down. The rest of it departs somewhat from the Sellers/Yeatman tradition, but that will only grate on those who remember the original.

As usual, Mae Strelkov's piece was the finest thing in the issue. What a fabulous person she is.

About Rodney Leighton's reference to the association of "fen" with "swamp", I should mention that in 1952 Irish Fandom published a fannish version of the Pogo strip, called Fen Crittur Comical Books. It's very rare, but I have recently found a few copies of it, if anyone is interested. (15.8.95)

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

Nice to see Peggy Ranson back, and the poems in readable type. Enjoyed the photo of the 1951 fans. I saw Vince Clarke about eighteen months back and he looks much the same. I had a Christmas Card from Ken Bulmer, so he's still around.

Intrigued by Lyn Elvey's article as it echoes an article written by one of my students recently. Women do juggle many jobs at once;

men prefer to tackle one job at a time. Who says one way is better than the other?

Andy's article is fine, as usual, but to refer to Murray Roberts as a pulp hack seems unfortunate terminology. I remember the Captain Justice stories. He was a popular writer, as distinct from a literary writer who gets reviewed by the broadsheets. Personally I prefer popular writers (and I suspect Andy does too.)

Mae's article jumps into first place again. This really is a different way of life she describes.

I liked Bill Congreve's road story; I don't mind more of the same.

James review of Budrys was worthwhile; I'd like to get hold of this book.

I suspect Sheryl Birkhead is right, with media fans taking over from readers. At the moment there is an sf exhibition at our local library; a few books, no magazines at all, but a lot of TV stuff: Star Trek and Dr. Who mostly. In fact, not what I would call sf at all.

Reviews: I'm please to see there still are a few sf novels getting published, though in my library they tend to get lost among the fantasy trilogies. (15.8.95)

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

Every column [of MENTOR #88] was worth reading. I think I must be getting used to Mae Strelkov's meanderings - they're becoming intriguing rather than tedious. Her LoC was, if anything, better.

Has Andrew Darlington ever written a book? If not, his pieces are good enough to collect into some kind of book. They'd be easier to find and maybe more people would see them.

I must admit, I would have thought A MATTER OF SEX! was a LoC. And even then, it seems only tangentially connected to the magazine. While Lyn Elvey may have had an unfortunate experience, the field of written SF&F is one where it would seem women are well represented. I mean, things could always be better, but there are a number of major magazines (along with a lot of smaller publications all around the world) edited by women, and if you pick up almost any of these 'zines you'll find very often a 50/50 split (or nearly) amongst the names on the contents page.

In making all her points Lyn Elvey has fallen into the oldest trap there is - she has lumped all men together and generalised. She is, it would appear, just as much a sucker for stereotypes as anybody else. It's hard to see the point of an article like that. Unless it was a joke that I'm too dumb to get.

Poetry... I know nothing. Unless I can pick out some flow (or God forbid in this day and age) rhyme or something, it's just a bunch of words. Sometimes they seem more like plot summaries than anything else.

Nice cover, though it looked a bit like two drawings cut and pasted onto the same page. Two good drawings, though.

James Verran was good. I can imagine Budrys making writing seem too easy. His own stuff seems so effortless. He'd probably get my vote for best US SF author, though he hasn't exactly been prolific.

As to sf or SF, I think it was Judith Merrill in the 50s or 60s who put forward her case for SF. Be bold and upper case, she said, and who could argue? Besides which, it's an acronym. You don't write rspca, do you? It's RSPCA.

Did anybody see WILDScreen 17.8.95? "Once Upon Australia" - it follows using brilliant animated models the story of life in Australia from Gondwanaland and earlier. I mention it because of a wonderful last few minutes set 50 million years in the future when man is no more and our continent has crashed into Asia after its drift north. We see a rat-like animal pick up a bone and smash a dried skull or something, just like 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. The bone is then hurled upwards and it is followed by the camera - a transcendent moment - just like 2001. It come down and bonks the rat on the head - unlike 2001. The rat rubs the sore spot and wanders away.

I have read a lot of SF, but now I'm convinced: I have seen the future, and it goes "bonk!"

A powerful metaphor. That is what SF is all about. (16.8.95)

[No, I missed it. Anybody got a copy on video? I did get the one on Australian dinosaurs, though - brilliant animation. - Ron]

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

Good to see fiction returning with a fine example of really fan fic, that story deserves to be published professionally.

Lyn Elvey's article was interesting. There might be something to the idea that if either sex is superior then it could well be female. After-all, the X gene is dominant, and all foetus' begin life as female. Still, I'd like to think that gender traits are learned from our parents, rather than inherited. (Acquired characteristics cannot be inherited).

Her article still highlighted the fact that despite all the gains for gender equality, the battle is not over because some degree of sexual discrimination still occurs. Here's a case of reverse gender bias: I recently quit my job on the check-outs at K-mart, but while I was working there, I was one of only four or five guys in that job. With about twenty or thirty staff on check-outs, this shows that us four or five guys were really only token.

Oh, one last comment on Lyn Elvey's article... men generally are more aggressive than women, but there have always been aggressive women, and as far as armaments go, need I say the name: Margaret Thatcher. She did send Britain to war in the Falklands.

Buck Coulson's article was great. Loved THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE by Darren Goossens. Andrew Darlington... my, what an ecclesiastical man! A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH was slow going but enjoyable. THE OZ SCENE and REVIEWS were good, as was James Verran's review of Algis Budrys' WRITING TO THE POINT. The poetry proved fascinating.

Apologies to JOE Fisher for calling him JASON, who is in fact his brother (oops!). (21.8.95)

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

I am, as usual, amused by Lyn Elvey's comments on "why can't a man be more like a woman?". She is correct about the problems of infanticide of baby girls, but for another look at the need for a 50-50 ratio of sexes, may I suggest reading the latest book by Richard Dawkins RIVER OUT OF EDEN which covers the subject quite well.

Interesting about Dymocks opening a SF section. Most of the chains here in the USA have SF sections, although sometimes the offerings all look the same... more trilogies, more endless fantasy series, more Star Trek and other media derived writings. But by golly we have SF sections. Alas, many of the independent SF speciality stores have gone out of business or are just barely making it.

In any case, most of my reading comes from the local libraries. The problem with this is that budget cuts have meant fewer books being bought, open hours reduced, and more days when the library is closed. Not all that much new SF and fantasy comes in, so I have been reading or re-reading the classics. The problem with this is that after you have been reading something like Gibbons and get back to your average SF or fantasy paperback, the writing clunks along. I'm not saying that writers should read DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE and imitate its style of writing. I do think they need to pay more attention to how what they write on paper "sounds" when read. Most of it just clunks along.

[Well, in Sydney fans work in the speciality shops. There are fans in Galaxy, and as mentioned Lee Blackmore, a Lovecraft fan, is the co-manager of the SF section in Dymocks. - Ron.]

As for myself, life is good. Right now my doctor is working on my high blood pressure problem, and she has prescribed a change in medication. Hopefully this will work. Let's see now... I have diabetes, hypothyroidism, hypertension, and high cholesterol. I take various pills to cover all these problems. As you can imagine, my medical bills are awesome. On the other hand, it is good to be alive.

(17.8.95)

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

Donkey's years ago (some well informed fan who knows the history of printing will tell me exactly when) some unknown (to me) genius realised that you could improve a poem for the reader by the simple means of indenting the lines. This allowed you to do two things - you could indicate the rhyme scheme, by indenting the lines that rhymed together, and you could indicate the metrical length of the line by the same means. This brilliant system has now been destroyed by the late 20th C practice of page centring of the poetry - presumably a spinoff of computers, looks very pretty but has no useful function. Sadly, I note

that you too, Ron, have been seduced by this apparently "improving" way of presenting poetry (just as you were by the fancy fonts other readers have complained of). As someone who appreciates the use of indentation when it is used correctly, I'd be very glad if you stopped using it simply as decoration!

[You I earns something all the time.... - Ron.]

Excellent issue 88 - even some fiction! And I got some reviews!! Thanks too for your kind words regarding HANDSHAKE 14 - the Time Machine Special - yes, there are a few copies left, but not many... (SAE/IRC please, folks). Andy Darlington in fine form, as always - he's into an area I've no experience of at all, the only comic strips I ever saw were those run in newspapers or actual children's comics such as EAGLE, LION etc. (17.8.95)

SARAH GROENEWEGEN, GPO Box 597, Sydney, NSW 2001.

I have seen copies of MENTOR sporadically over the years. I've tended to enjoy it, liking the simple and clear layout, and have mostly enjoyed the fiction. [#]88 I received care of Neil Hogan (the dynamo of Sydney's TV SF fraternity at the moment). As I am now fanzine reviewer for DATA EXTRACT (club runners and zine editors, please, give me info/review copies at The White Fedora, GPO Box 597, Sydney 2001), I thought I'd read the zine and give it a mention.

It still looks good, but the writing seems a tad dull. The letter-col more than makes up for it, though. Ditto the zine reviews!

But, I must take issue with Lyn Elvey's piece A MATTER OF SEX!! (p.6). I am a feminist (a label I'm not ashamed of) and am gay (another label I wear with pride), so I don't know if this will skew my observations. I, too, have a degree (BA Hons, ANU in politics) and am currently studying for my Masters (by research). I'm writing my thesis on women in TV SF, and am currently working researching the fans. I also work, but at a NSW government office on a lousy salary. Because of my training, etc, I happen to look after the computers, finance, and other sundries in my section. The personnel consists of two men (both straight) and the rest (five), including the manager, are all women. All are in the forties to fifties, and all have kids roughly my age.

Because of the nature of my section, we get many, many phone calls, and the two people who most often answer the calls not for them? Myself (hence the sympathy with Lyn) and one of the men. Of all the people I have the most problems with at work, it's a woman.

In the wider workplace, it's the same. I can think of women who are just like the men Lyn described. And I can think of a list of men who are the same, just as I can list those of both sexes who are great, considerate, helpful workmates.

I could go on about my experiences in fandom, too, but I'll just note that they're similar. I've noticed that it's people who do things either well or badly, and trumpet their achievements or just let it be accepted, regardless of their race, sex or sexual orientation.

What I found disturbing, though, was the odd references to feminism. The impression I got was that Lyn was defending herself against the term "feminist". Why? And I have to ask why the unnamed editor felt he could use "feminist" as a pejorative term, and why Lyn reacted to it as such. What Lyn has written has, really, little to do with feminism (at least not any of the serious feminisms that I am familiar with), but it is a gripe about her observations of the so-called war of the sexes.

The basic thing that unites each and every feminism (because there are many different types) is that it desires to show women in a positive light, and to show up the struggle women have had to be treated as human beings. Feminism has a "bad" name from the popular, mythological and media-based idea that feminism is man-hating. Just look at all the crap that's been published in response to Helen Garner's recent book about the Ormond Affair for a sample. That's not feminism, and there is no reason to be ashamed of being called feminist - if you're either man or woman.

[I thought that writing "the editor" I was making it clear that Lyn was talking about me. As for why I used "feminist", when I am trying to get someone to write something for me, I tend to use "comment hooks" in my speech. Comes of being an fanzine editor. And the present day widely used term "feminist" has meanings that a card-carrying feminist may not necessarily think the word means. - Ron.]

Finally, I want to use this space to appeal to all MENTOR readers. As I mentioned earlier, I'm writing my Masters thesis on women

and SF TV. I am most interested in hearing from people who'd like to contribute some of their observations or experiences about women involved in SF TV fandom. (23.8.95)

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

A MATTER OF SEX! by Lyn Elvey was a strange piece to make it into THE MENTOR. I bet she doesn't work for the public service. She certainly paints a grim picture of men. But we're not all that bad. Hell, I can paint an equally grim picture of women - especially after having lived in the same house as a certain JB. Now, JB's a destroyer. She destroys everyone around her including her children and herself. Someday someone will put an end to her tearing-up lives but in the meantime she damns herself and everyone who associates with her. I hope there's not too many like her around. I've been told she's a freak of nature. Maybe so. A piece of celestial clay that went very wrong.

I agree most guys do talk about wanting slim, stunning women as companions but women, well, they still carry on about the bloke having to be "tall, dark and handsome." Slim, as we all know is a definite. You either are or you're not. Stunning isn't so easy - here we are in the "matter-of-opinion" area. Slightly plump can be stunning. Tall and dark are definite. You either are or you're not. Unless, of course, by dark women mean evil or foul-tempered. Somehow I don't think this is the case. Handsome, like stunning, is a "matter-of-opinion" based thing (thank God).

What I'm saying is that what women do to men, men do to women. Most unattached women in their 30s and 40s would like a younger man. Most unattached men in their 30s and 40s would like a younger woman. Male or female, once you hit 30, it ain't easy out there and you can figure out why.

Read Steve Jeffery's letter with some interest. Maybe when he'd dead he'll make it as a poet but not right now. Doctor Who was originally conceived to be a "children's TV series" but, over time, became something else, in my opinion something more. Steve, read a couple of the "New Adventures" novels and let me know if you still think its kid's stuff. Check out Kate Orman's work. Being a Brit I thought you'd be proud of the Doctor at his 30 years-plus success.

By the way, SPACE WHORES one and two, art by Steve Carter and Antoinette Rydyr are out. Comic book SF/Horror at its best. Gory but good.

Read Don Boyd's letter with interest. Fancy bringing up John Milton's 1644 essay *Areopagetica* to defend freedom of speech and then bringing up the Bible. I like Psalm 137's ending (blessed is he who bashes thy baby against the rocks). Maybe that'll shut up the do-gooder bible-bashers (or is it baby-bashers?) for a while. Me, I kind of like the old Biblical line: "If Thine Eyes offend thee, pluck them out." (28.8.95)

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

Re R Laurraine Tutihasi's letter and challenge to my point about religion [in #88]. If you look holistically at America, you'll see that it is basically an unreligious country, despite the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism.

There are vast tracts of poverty in the US where religion flourishes. With the better off Yanks I'll think you'll find only a few people with all the money and power, financed by a soft middle class who want to believe that "God is an American."

Despite feeling uncomfortable about the growing influence of this mental aberration called religion, Laurraine, the US is still not as bad as looney countries like Israel and Iran where the state and the church are inseparable.

Religion a mental aberration? Yes, if looked at this way. Someone says they believe in a thing which can't be proved - a being who is everywhere. The basis of belief is what was written down supposedly two thousand years ago, describing events including the dead coming back to life and other magical feats. Do we lock up a person who says these things in an asylum? Usually, yes. However, if what they are describing is a religion we automatically and subconsciously overlook the stupidity of what they are saying and accept it.

The problem with religion is that it is external. God created us, and we have to worship him for that. The church is an institution to which you have to belong. Holy men live by different rules to society in general. I would prefer a view that goodness was internal to mankind

and had to be practised for its own sake, not because it would offend some supreme being or some set of rules devised by someone else.

Before I climb down from the pulpit, I cannot let Lyn Elvey's A MATTER OF SEX go by without a blast. Lyn is a feminist. A feminist is a person who considers that women are superior to men. Like racists and other kinds of "ists", her prejudice is based on the presumption that difference means inferiority. Lyn, dear, men are *different* to women. Women are nest-builders, men are hunters; women use their emotions, men use logic; women are child-bearers, men are sexual predators, etc. etc.

If these differences didn't exist the world would be a boring place, don't you think? By the sound of it you have had a bad experience and are taking it out on the male population in general. If men are so bad why don't you just become a dyke? Why have you waited five years for a business card? Just go and get some. (For a few dollars you can have some printed instantly from those machines in train stations).

The perfect man does not exist, and neither does the perfect woman. Try to make the most of the differences rather than spouting looney feminazi propaganda.

You ask "Do you think women are going to spend multi-millions on armaments rather than food or clothes?" Hey, I didn't notice Maggie Thatcher sell off the Brit nuclear arsenal during the decade or so she was in power, to buy food for Ethiopia. From memory, she also started a war - in which hundreds of men died.

(31.8.95)

YURI A. MIRONETS, Oktyabrskaya St. 2., Apt. 15, Vladivostok, 690000, Russia.

I've read back issues of THE MENTOR with great interest, especially because we, in Russia, know very little about Australian fandom and Australian SF in general. Thank you also for publishing in THE MENTOR the letter of Catherine Mintz in which she characterizes me rather favourably and gives my address.

Up to now I corresponded only with one Australian SF writer, Damien Broderick. He sent me his book TRANSMITTERS, and an anthology of Australian Science Fiction - MATILDA AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT. Thanks to Damien Broderick and to your THE MENTOR, now I feel much more sure of myself when I give the students the talk about Australian Science Fiction.

The studies at the Far Eastern University in Vladivostok, where I work at the English Language department, will resume in September, and that is where my lectures in American, British (and now I can add Australian) Science Fiction will begin. Now the University is practically empty - everyone's on vacation till September.

Summer in Vladivostok is coming to an end - only ten more days are left. This summer wasn't good - mostly rainy and misty. I tried to visit local beach on the sunny days and swim in the sea and get a bit sunburnt, but regretfully this year such sunny days were quite rare.

Steve Sneyd wrote that you're interested in Russian Science Fiction. Frankly speaking, most of Russian SF fans now prefer to devour translations of American and British SF writers, which appeared during last 2-3 years in abundance. You know, in the former Soviet Union, British and American SF was practically prohibited (with a few exceptions), so now they are trying to fill the gap. So there are relatively few publications of Russian SF writers, but even among them there are some talented works. (22.8.95)

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

I think I have told you that we now live on our little cabin cruiser from May to October. Each time we come back here I have a months mail (zines included) to answer in a couple of days, between attending medical or dental appointments, the latter the only reason we come home at all.

I must point out to Rod Marsden that the question of censorship simply is not that black and white. I'm all for adults taking responsibility for what they could see, read and contribute to. What I do not want is those adults imposing their choice upon other peoples' children. Rod, do you really think that paedophiles should be free to travel to impoverished countries and abuse children, financing their sexual preferences by selling photographs of their activities? If you think that is a freedom too far, then who should stop them?

No way do I wish to return to the ludicrous days of "The Lady Chatterly's Lover" trial or parents feeling unable to talk about sexuality with their children. Nor do I wish the activities of consenting adults (at least in private) to be subject to laws. Certainly you can not be responsible if you are not free to choose but if so many do not exercise responsibility when they have choice, who protects the vulnerable? Your juvenile response equating my feelings of responsibility towards the young to a desire to have a government agency telling me what to read etc would indicate that protection can not be safely left in the hands of the general public. (2.9.95)

TRENT JAMIESON, 23 Ewing St, Lismore 2480.

Nice to get TM 88. Few typos in my poem, but hey, I've learnt to be lenient. You can't write and not have a sense of humour in this country. TM is still one of the best value fanzines around and one that I am proud to have been published in.

Lyn Elvey, I'm sad that you feel that way about men. We're not all that bad, really. I can't wait to see the response to this one. I have had some experiences with women that make me sometimes feel that way about your sex too. Live and let live I say. It's too easy to be bitter.

Interesting to read Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH. I was born and raised in Gunnedah, a small town not too far from Tamworth and Mount Kaputar. The nights are cold and dark out there - particularly and unsurprisingly in winter. I look back on my sixteen years spent in that town with an odd mixture of fondness and repulsion and very little desire to return. Call it the close mindedness of a small country town. Australia is such a big country and yet we are so small minded.

On the fiction front, I must admit to being a little pissed about you dropping it, particularly after you had just accepted one of my stories (this seemed to happen to me quite a bit). However, at the same time I'm kind of relieved that it never quite made it into print. I'm capable of a fair bit better - well, at least a little better.

Thanks to Sydney and Steve for their kind comments regarding my poem. It's nice to read something positive about your work. I try to do my best with the rough skills that I have been given and the even rougher humour.

Have to get down to Sydney some time soon, I'd love to meet everyone down there. Your voices in the LOCs have grown so familiar I'd like to see how well your match with my mental pictures of you. Undoubtedly you are all nothing like I have imagined. (8.9.95)

RODNEY LEIGHTON, RR#3, Pugwash, NS, CANADA B0K 1L0.

I believe the cover picture [on TM 88] is Peggy's rendition of how she believes I perceive her.

As usual, TM presents some good reading and some uninteresting material (to me). It's fairly ironic that the locol contains a number of comments on no longer running fiction and this issue also has a piece of fiction. Which was good and interesting but not the best that Brent has done, I don't think.

Ms. Elvey appears to be a bit confused as to whether she wants to be a ball-bustin' feminist or a fun loving companion. I can't dispute too many of her assertions. Although I've only known one female in my life who could drive well, I'll also confess that the absolute worst drivers I've ever known were my father and his father. And, well, I almost meet her requirements for a dream man. Other than not using a diary.... no use for one. I'd love to have a room full of books. Work is merely a necessary ingredient of life's stew, required to provide the other increments of a good life or at least one worth keeping. I'm not much for travel but a lot of that has to do with lack of money. I would love to retire right now. Spend my days tending farm animals and farm type work and part of some days doing small press type stuff and my evenings reading. A compatible female who likes to screw 7 or 8 times a week would fit in there nicely. However, I'm doubtful if I'm compatible with anyone. Not to mention not having any money. Lyn is, I think, looking for a whirling dervish who can leap agilely from task to chore to commitment to bed with never a falter nor error. I wish her luck.

Maie Strelkov's article was interesting. Especially since I hack down trees for a living and am currently on rough ground, for N. S. Reading her tale kind of makes me think I'm working on flat land, in scrub bushes. Well, that last ain't too far from the truth!

Thanks for the review. I've dropped the NOVA SCOTIAN HERMIT. For now.

I've been designating science fiction fanzines as SFzines for about 4 years. Sometimes it is difficult to decide, especially since what would pass for a SFzine ranges from two pages to over 100; from dead serious to purely for fun to various combinations. Most seem to have some sort of aura... "this is a SFzine", regardless of style or content.

The debate on fan terminology is not of any great importance, except to hardcore enthusiasts like Scott Patri. I found Andy Sawyer's remarks of interest. Some years ago, doing review work, someone informed me that "sci-fi" was offensive to all fans of science fiction. Most of the time, I try to avoid offending people, so I stopped using it. Seemed like a perfectly good and sensible term, though. But, lately, I've seen it used by a number of well known fans.

Did you actually read all those books? Cripes! (27.8.95)

[I read mostly all of the SF.... - Ron.]

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

Tonight's list of things to do include a stop at "Border's Books" - haven't been there yet and it's been open a month. It's the closest "real" bookstore and I haven't had a chance (and I dread going because I know I'll buy... and the only one I am looking for is the Dozois "Collection") and I want to compare my Hugo winner list with the Table of Contents.

A MATTER OF SEX!! Just an anecdote.... When my Toyota station wagon was totalled, I had to have a car fast - so I bought a used Corolla. I knew I'd be making a long trip that first weekend and it would push me over the limited warranty. That first night I knew "something" was wrong - so I called to tell them *now* that something was wrong but I'd bring it in when I got back. After 5 visits to the garage (and their condescending attitude... *nothing's* wrong lady!) - all they found was low levels of brake fluid. I asked why and they got *angry* - determined to prove I was just a silly woman driver. They pulled the pink slip (which I - as the new owner do *not* get to see) - and stuck it under my nose to "show me". It would have been wiser to read it first - because the car had *not* passed inspection on the first try due to a faulty right rear brake cylinder - which supposedly had been replaced (by a company they used down the road). They looked into it and no one ever 1) apologized or 2) had a reason why it had passed a second time with that faulty cylinder. I was still out a *lot* of time and my confidence in them was shaken (over the years they have been better with my *new* cars - hmmm....) But I was right. Guys - I may not *be* a mechanic, but I've taken and taught science for years - I *know* how things are supposed to work, even if I don't know their names in a car.

I *know* my analogy is not appropriate - but it seems as if going to cons (when one is retired inbetween) would be like hitting a 24 (48,72??) hour non-stop (or whatever is your choice) party, recuperating a week and doing it again. Of course that ignores travel time and stress. Um... come to think of it, I *never* managed long hours.

The multiple stamps (comic strips) to be released in October (I think) have evoked strong feelings in many (no, I don't have the list of those strips represented) as to which one should/should not be represented.

The Australian SF BULLSHEET sounds like the Down Under answer to ANSIBLE.

[Later]. I took the Hugo (winner and nominations) list with me to the bookstore and exhibited rare self-control in *not* purchasing the Dozois collection (or any book!) when it did not have all the short fiction winners. I thought it over, but couldn't justify the cost for something which didn't have all the stories I *really* wanted to read. Maybe there's hope yet. But if I go back again tomorrow to just look around I might actually *find* something I *must* have. (7.9.95)

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

Synchronicity: I mention our friend Sid, who did the JEFF HAWKE strips of yonks ago, and Andy Darlington presciently obliges in this issue with a passing mention of Sidney Jordan and JEFF HAWKE in DAREDEVILS OF THE STRATOSPHERE. A previous mention of Sid turned up in a Steve Sneyd interview in FANTASY COMMENTATOR (Vol III Nos 1/2). An interesting link here between SF poets and comics artists, both in their respective ways, perhaps, attempting to encapsulate narrative and story into the tightest and most effective form.

Fiction returns again for this issue (and also, pleasingly, the end page reviews). Although I thought Brent Lillie's *IF EVERY TREE GREW APPLES* was, for me, a bit too slight and sentimental. Shades of the old Ray Bradbury. I'm not sure if that should be a criticism or not; my opinion of Bradbury "The Sentimental Stylist" (as Peter Nicholls terms him in *EXPLORATIONS OF THE MARVELLOUS*) swings between remembered affection and exasperation.

Worthy contributions from all in this issue. With the exception, I think, of Lyn Elvey's gender winge. In this house, it's Vikki who watches football all the time. Ill informed arguments too; in China (and certain other countries) it's the women as often who "dispose" of these unwanted female babies so they don't appear on official records. And women who actually commit the barbaric practice of female circumcision (genital mutilation) on their own girl children. You can blame the patriarchy for the system of values, but you can't absolve the hand that actually wields the knife (or rusty razor blade in these quite horrific maimings).

"Do (I) think women are going to spend millions on armaments rather than food or clothes." Yes, actually. Too many years under the Thatcher government tells me just that. When you get to the top, gender is no restraint to the exercise and use of military and political power. Those blind to the possibility of corruption of woolly utopianism are likely to be the first to find their ideals corrupted.

Whizz for Pomes:

The (Nigel) Molesworth approach to grammar raises its head (sic) in Bridh Hancock's pomes. I'm trying to work out just whether this is intended variant spelling (tho god nose why), a mass of typos, or just plain illiteracy: origin, hav gon, ded, tho, thru, shair, cairs, oclد (must be a typo, I think) and temperature. What the hell is "incuiary" supposed to be?

[Actually, Bridh said that it was the new spelling, but I could change it back if I wanted to. I didn't. Some of those words are typos, as you suppose (ocld). "incuiary" means, I think, "inquiry". - Ron.]

On dangerous ground here, I must admit. Was it my or your mistake that repeated an whole paragraph in my own LoC?? I don't remember writing it like that, but it's the sort of mistake that seems typical of inattentive "cut and paste" locking on a word processor. As you observe to Don Fitch, this is not the best way to write a smoothly flowing letter. Sometimes gratifyingly) it works that way; other times I hit a block and chase things up and down the page, in a attempt to salvage what I can of a half-formed idea or sentence. It hardly ever works, and perhaps it might be best to dump the whole thing until another time.

[Which paragraph is that? I had a look, but couldn't spot it. - Ron.]

Don Boyd thinks he might be losing me in the discussion about CRT copier interfaces. Should I feel insulted by this? I have a fairly good grounding in raster graphics technology (I work in this area currently). So, yes, the idea has merit, but I still don't see the essential difference between this proposal and something like the Windows GDI Printing System, which uses the computer page/screen memory to control the printer scan. Six pages a minute is slow, anyway, by current standards. 18-24 ppm is quite reasonable on the higher spec document imagers (cost is another matter entirely).

A million dots is pretty poor resolution, too. An A4 page on my 600 dpi laser is nearer 30 million dots (and still noticeably poorer than professional offset).

There are all-in-one boxes that scan, fax and print (they're all variants of the same drum imaging engine as it stands). At least two fanzines I know of are produced entirely from PC to printer, without photocopying: *ANSIBLE* and *RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK*. There are probably a few more. It depends how much speed you want and how deep your pockets are. Up to a cool \$250,000 for one of the flashiest I know of: 25 ppm, colour and full duplex that will mix in photocopy and computer downloaded text/graphics. The size of a small shed, unfortunately, and rather wasted on my 2 sides *ALTERNATIVE REVIEW* newsheet. But if I ever win more than a tenner on the Lottery....

One problem with Don's direct to photocopy from the screen. How do you print the pages that aren't actually on the screen (or if you're not showing the full page on screen) at the time you're printing?

Can I say "fuck" now? (10.9.95)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, VIC 3465.

I have just returned from abroad to find that the indefatigable Ron has forwarded me yet another *MENTOR*, this time No. 88, for which I offer my profound thanks. It does have a story, a simple and fair enough thing by Brent Lillie, *IF EVERY TREE GREW APPLES*. A theme once considered by Gilbert and Sullivan in the song with that fine line, "When everyone wears cloth of gold/Up goes the price of shoddy."

Mae continues her fascinating saga of life in the remoter parts of Argentina and the scallywags who were cutting their timber. Here, I regret to say the blighters wait until you've done the hard work before knocking it off.

Now if Steve Jeffery checks the date of the figures I gave for the surrender of the Queen's estates for a mere £500,000 he'd observe that it was at her coronation and things have altered a little in forty five years, but I guess that the surrender of five quid to get one back might well be about the proportion. It does mean a hefty taxation slug. As for the rest of the Royal family paying tax, why not. Of course against all those expenses is the fact that they would still have to be met if the Royals all resigned, if only to fleece wandering Americans with more money than sense visiting Britain.

I did however have an interesting experience whilst in Edinburgh. I had made an appointment with my Bank to visit them one morning, and when I arrived there were several coppers there and a barricade or two and I was told to come back in the afternoon because the Queen was visiting that morning... well they were bigger than me but quite nice about it. I was about to mooch off when I recollected that I was a tourist, camera on my shoulder to prove it and an excellent position, so I stayed for the visit. Well, in Australia there would have been a solid wall of cops, hand on their batons or their guns or both, the street would have been sealed off, and police cars everywhere. Instead there were I things, three cops (not apparently armed, and no batons) and the street still carried its usual amount of traffic. Only at the last moment was the traffic stopped, and the Queen's cars arrived, pulled off the road and within two or three minutes traffic was normal again. So far so good. I may say that Her Majesty and I do not keep up a regular correspondence so I had little advance knowledge of her visit, or she of mine. Eventually the Queen and the Duke emerged with smiles on their faces, so either she got her overdraft extended or she collected the interest on her invested monies. They both waved to us all and we all dutifully waved back, and I may say she looked better health-wise than she has for a number of years. Getting back onto the road took a couple of minutes during which the traffic was stopped and during which the uncouth and impatient Scots either end of the streets began tooting on their car horns. There wasn't a single placard in sight, not even ones advocating Home Rule for Scotland, or Send Charles to Tasmania! I visited the Bank in the afternoon.

It seemed to me that the Scottish police handled things ever so much better than our own baton-wielding wallopers.

Further to wild pumas in our bush, or pumas in the wild or whatever. It seems that they have been having trouble in Cornwall and someone managed to photograph a cat (a seal-point I think, and readers might be surprised that I am not also an expert on moggies) and this was seized on by the Authorities of London as further evidence that country people are morons. Later a leopard skull was found and I heard a rumour that it was a fake or whatever. I would be grateful if somebody can keep me posted on this. Notwithstanding, there is a very tangible stuffed puma in the Inverness Museum which was shot reasonably recently in the countryside where apparently it had been released, and another was shot near Elgin. These did not phase our London friends.

One further note on inland Naval Bases. If my memory serves me well, the Pakistan Naval headquarters is at Peshawar. Presumably it is safe from enemy naval action. (11.9.95)

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

I certainly don't begrudge Brent Lillie's story in your fanzine, but what happened to the new policy of no fiction? Actually, I did enjoy the story, where the astounding miracles allow you to appreciate the every-day miracles that happen all around us.

Sigh... Lyn Elvey, my wife and I have been very happily married for 13 years, we both contribute equally to the finances, I do most of the cooking and cleaning, I help my wife with the laundry, and she drives me to the subway so I can go to work. I do most of the work around the house because Yvonne is a seamstress, and sews for others.

Now, I am dreadfully sorry that your experiences with men are not positive; perhaps that's a problem on *your* end? When I see claptrap like this article, whining and bitching about ALL men and their shortcomings, my reply is this: yes, there's many men like you describe, but they are not all like that. When you paint with a wide brush, as you do here, you lower yourself to the sexism you complain about in men. It sounds like some self-examination is required to reassemble you life, and get on with it.

Buck, I'm relatively young and healthy, and I don't recommend going to three conventions on three successive weekends, either. Last time I did it, I worked on two of them, which meant I wasn't much good for anyone. I do between 8 to 12 cons a year, and this year promises to be one of the 12-con years, so the 2-and-6 rule comes into effect; at least two meals and six hours of sleep a day, just to survive any conventions.

To Pamela Boal: I'm happy to say that I was 18 when I discovered fandom, and I'm also happy to say that I didn't discover it all at once. The discovery continues to this very day. I'm now double that age, and can say that the last 18 years have been happier than the first 18.

Update on my letter... I received issue 96 of SF South Africa's PROBE in July, but given how slow the mails can be, issue 97 might be on its way. Apparently, a new editor will be taking over, so it depends on how the new editor sees fandom, on a local basis, or on an international basis, when it comes to getting any further issues.

A note for Andy Sawyer... the discussion between "fen" and "fan" and "SF" and "Sci-Fi" does get tired after a while, so I'll remind many that near the beginning of science fiction and fandom, the terms "STF" and "Scientifiction" were used, so I'll consider that as a few drops on gasoline on the fire, and move on....

Book reviews... Ah, Ed Greenwood strikes again. I haven't read it, but I've been told his *Elminster* book is a lot of fun. Shame, I haven't read any of his stuff. After all, I went to school with the guy....

(18.9.95)

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

The covers have really changed since the old, full-colour days, haven't they? The illustration was effective though, with the young girl providing a good contrast to the shrivelled old coot in the chair.

You're lucky to have a bookstore in Sydney that caters so well to the needs of SF lovers.

[We actually have two for books -Galaxy and Dymocks; there are others which cater for the SF comic people. - Ron.]

Lyn Evey's commentary: Lyn makes a crucial point near the end of her piece. "Am I a feminist," she writes. "Or have I met all the wrong men?" Is she insinuating here that all feminists meet the wrong men? I think all of us keep repeating the same old patterns until we stumble on to the fact that we are doing just that, and start making some major changes in our lives. This can involve a lot of pain, a lot of fear and most of all, a drastic shift in self-perception. Having more women in a society is not going to change men's attitude toward them. Most likely you've asked yourself this question a thousand times, Lyn, but have you ever wondered why you keep attracting this type of man? All the complaints you air in the article - copping the blame for mistakes at work, the repetitive failings of your male partners - have you ever shared them with the offending parties, or have you been saving them all up for TM? The overall tone of your article comes across as being more than a tad defensive, so I'd suggest that some assertiveness on your part wouldn't go astray. Perhaps some counselling would help, or some New Age literature? It couldn't hurt.

Buck's piece kept me interested. I especially loved Darren Goossen's COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE. His commentary should be used as a standard referral text in schools from this point onwards, thereby whittling the entire educational process down to about four days, depending on whether he can come up with complete histories of history, geography, economics and religion as well. Before you know it, we'll all be sitting in our caves, toasty and warm in front of our fires, basking in those glorious simple days of pre-science. THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM could have done with a bit of Goossenising as well, by the way.

I looked up "dictionary" in the dictionary the other day and it was actually there! I don't know about you, but I hate it when authors plug their own work.

Andrew Darlington's DAREDEVILS OF THE STRATOSPHERE looked a bit daunting at first but I persevered and ended up enjoying it. Thanks to Mae Strelkov for another enlightening insight into her world. I thought the poetry wasn't quite up to the same standard as the offerings in TM 87.

Numerous UFO's have been reported over Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland lately. People have videoed lights in the sky on a number of occasions. What's more, the lights didn't show up on a radar, despite the fact that they were clearly visible from the control tower at the airport. Apparently some kids were igniting aerosol cans and sending up miniature hot air balloons, so maybe that's what they were. Who knows?

I've never seen a UFO, although my mother has, and my grandmother and a friend witnessed a number of small craft following a mother ship at tremendous speeds, high in the nighttime sky over Brisbane, back in the 1940's.

James Verran always seems to come up with a helpful contribution and he did it again in TM 88. I have serious misgivings about a lot of "how to write" guides, but Budrys seems to have hit upon a number of points in his book that could be of genuine assistance to writers, however far along the track they are.

Finally, the LOCS and Chris Masters' blunt comments on A HISTORY OF FANDOM, and Molesworth in particular. I find Chris' brand of humour sarcastic, cruel, unnecessarily vindictive and often downright amusing. I suppose I can't bag Lyn Elvey too much: my journey to personal enlightenment and oneness with the universe is obviously far from complete. (13.9.95)

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

Anyone who starts off an article, as did Lyn Elvey, with: "I am an intelligent (40 year old)..." is simply asking for trouble. Be honest, Lyn. You really wanted to lead off with: "All men are bastards" but since when did women become *honest* and forthright? Not that I disagree with many of Lyn's opinions. Women *do* make better friends, they *are* more reliable, and I would be quite happy to see the country and the planet governed by women. Men have been in charge of things for thousands of years and look at the job we've done. Women couldn't do a worse job, could they? The fact that many of life's atrocities have been done in the name of love (or lack of it) is - perhaps - beside the point.

Yes, most of my friends are women, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I've never been married, although I've come close to committing that act on several occasions. I've never lived with a woman, or had the desire to, for any length of time. The thought of shaming my life full-time with another individual just hasn't been in my scheme of things. There's no greater freedom than that of getting up when you like, and pleasing yourself how you're going to fill in the rest of the day. No doubt I'll soften that viewpoint as I move past middle-age and into my fifties.

Believe it or not, I was still a virgin at forty. Most readers will find that statement hard to believe. I left a number of frustrated females in my wake, as I enjoyed foreplay but not the thought of the act, itself. Yep, the mere thought of going through with it was a turn-off. As I moved through life I couldn't believe how many women in their late twenties and even early forties had never experienced an orgasm.

Women with Lyn's regimented outlook on life seem to be the Aussie norm. I never plan things more than a week ahead and have no desire to socialise with women unless they are optimistic, share my interests or occasionally listen. Although I'm smart enough to get by in these fast times I'd never describe myself as "intelligent". How does one define "intelligent"? I was the only student from my class not to attend university and have never regretted it for a moment. I preferred moving into the real world rather than spending more time in cloistered classrooms. Lyn would probably argue that women have (or had) to pursue university qualifications in order to put them higher up the list than men when applying for positions. That was probably the case once; not in these more enlightened times.

Sex. I can just about do without it. Well, for most of the time. Occasionally, it's pleasurable. Like chocolate. With the right lady. I've always found older women both far more satisfying and easily pleased.

Younger ones expect the earth to move continuously and I usually find myself making an appointment with the chiropractor the next day. Older women seem more relaxed about the whole thing. No doubt that comes from experience.

Seriously, I'd hate to be a woman, especially later in life. It's then that most discover their unrealistic expectations have left them as wizened little old ladies, destined to outlive the men they probably could have shared their life with, if only they'd set their sights a little lower. None of the men I know over the age of thirty want "a dolly bird twenty years younger". What they want is a woman with whom to share their thoughts, a partner in life. Unfortunately, few women seem to be available these days who can offer such a simple gift.

Ah, women. I penned the above a month or so ago and left it on file in case I had second thoughts. I have and made a few alterations. Back to #88. A pleasure to find a Brent Lillie short story. As always well-written, interesting, enjoyable but all too short. Darren Goossens' humorous piece generated more than a few laughs, while Andrew's DAREDEVILS took me back to my first contacts with written sf. Every time I see earthmoving equipment at work, I think of Mae Strelkov. Hate to think what *that* would mean to a psychiatrist.

Letters in R&R seem to have become a little too polite and boring over the past couple of issues. Even Chris seems to have run out of steam. So have I. Matthew Rayner makes mention of a previous letter of mine but as I pass on back issues I can't check on the letter to which he's referring. So I'll be polite and boring and simply say sorry. Matthew. I'm sure you're even more tolerant and caring than am I, most of the time!
(2.10.95)

ROBERT FREW, 1 Funda Pl, Brookvale, NSW 2100.

It was nice to see some science fiction return to the pages of TM, not Brent Lillie's best story, but at least it helps break up the hard-core sci-fi columns and the book reviews. I suspect now we've seen the last chapter of Vol's HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM, there may be a little more room in the mag.

The launching of the sci-fi department in the Dymocks book shop in town sounded like a success, and I only regret I wasn't around at the time. It would have been interesting to match a face with some of the names I keep hearing being floated around in the Sydney sci-fi scene.

The articles in TM #88 were interesting as always. I've noticed Mae Strelkov has returned from the brink of writing retirement to become one of the main columnists for the mag. I'll just keep my mouth shut regarding religion.

I read in Chris Master's Loc that he's stepped down as co-editor of BLOODSONGS after only 3 issues. This is unfortunate. I take it this means the mag is now defunct, as I've waited 6 weeks for a writing guideline sheet (even sent a P.P.E.). As far as I know, there is now no professional horror mag in the whole of Auss, pretty amazing for a population of 18 mill. You'd think we could support one?

(*Later:* As I expected, the writing guidelines for BLOODSONGS arrived two days after I sent my Loc. Like the old Benny Hill skit - never assume, 'cause you always make an "ass" out of "u" and "me". BLOODSONGS is alive and well.)

And EIDOLON (who suggest they publish horror, though I'm a little sceptical) just sent me a rejection slip for a story I mailed them over two years ago. Now there's got to be a joke in there somewhere, perhaps mentioning EIDOLON and the word "professional" in the same Loc? Anyhow, as you may guess, this isn't very encouraging for writers.

[*Well, EIDOLON did win a Ditmar for best fanzine a couple of years ago.... - Ron.]*

Finally, for those of you who think you are Dr. Who fans. I've a friend who's just returned from England with every available Dr. Who episode (commercial video and otherwise - don't ask), and I'm being forced (not against my will) to sit down every Monday night and watch one, starting with the old black and white William Hartnell episodes and finishing 2 years and three hundred and something episodes later with Sylvester McCoy. Now if that's not fanatical, what is? (Watching them back-to-back perhaps).
(5.10.95)

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

You mean large bookstores in Australia *don't* have specialist sf sections? All the US bookstores that I've been in during the last several years have them - most can't tell the difference between science

fiction and fantasy, but both of them are in a section to the mselves, at least. Very few have grand openings for the stf section; it's just there.

[*Many might have several shelves of sf and fantasy in with other genres, but not sections of the shop devoted to sf and fantasy, in this case about a half of the basement, and labelled as such over the escalator. - Ron.]*

I sympathise with Lyn Elvey. There are some men in US science fiction that possess the attributes she wants, but I'm already married. (And son Bruce is living with his wife and mistress and on good terms with his ex-wife...) Of course, I'm also *in* my retirement, and spending it going to conventions, and I don't think Juanita is the sharing type.... On the other whole, most US fem-fans who married fans seem to be getting along quite happily; maybe fans really are slans....

Enjoyed Mae Strelkov's article. I'd read the essentials before, in her letters, but it's nice to have it as one complete-to-date story.

The Burning Mountain that Congreve mentions sounds fascinating; one of the myriad bits of Earth that I'd love to see and never will.

I second Catherine Mintz's comments about Yuri Mironets; I sent him some stuff and intend to send more, and have been corresponding with him for some time. He's an interesting correspondent; you don't have to consider this "charity for the poor heathen".

I use "fans" rather than "fen" myself, but Rodney Leighton's theory is in error; I believe that the fannish "fen" originated in the US, where "fen" does *not* equal "swamp" for any large percentage of the population. I never heard the word so used until I began reading British writers (before I got into fandom, admittedly; also before "fen" was used in fandom. I think the fannish term is a product of so-called "Seventh Fandom", though I wouldn't bet money on it.)

The complaints about the lack of new blood in fandom seem to come largely from the fanzine fans, who aren't interested in new readers as such, but in new readers *of fanzines*. I know one fan couple who make their entire living by selling books at conventions, and it seems to be a pretty good living. Of course, they usually have 5 tables of new books, and they go to a lot of conventions - sometimes they or their representatives have been at two or three cons simultaneously. In addition, a *lot* of hucksters sell a *few* books at cons. A lot of fans read books, a lesser number read science fiction magazines, and a much lesser number read fanzines. Which is as it should be, as far as I can see.

Unfortunately, they seem to be on their way to proving that Oklahoma (the disaster, not the state) was the work of the FBI. It's not nice to find government officials breaking the laws they swore to uphold, even if the nut cult was a small loss. So far, at least, nobody has conclusively proved anything, and of course they never will, to everybody's satisfaction.

For Chuck Ross; according to WHO GOES THERE a 1979 compendium of stf pseudonyms, "Tak Hallus" was actually Stephen Robinett. And in 1979, only one "Tak Hallas" story is listed.

As usual, I haven't read many of the books you review. I agree that FALLEN ANGELS is fun for fan readers, though I didn't think that it was technically that good a novel, at least for the general reader. But then most books centred on fandom aren't that marvellous; the two Gene and I co-authored may or may not be funny, according to your taste, but they certainly aren't great literature

(.10.95)

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

Brent Lillie's IF EVERY TREE GREW APPLES was an odd little piece. My overall impression of it at the end was that it was quite good. However, there were a few things I didn't like about it - they're all just things I personally found "wrong" (and I use the word cautiously). After all my opinion is that, *my* opinion. I felt the story was a bit slow at the start and a little confused. It didn't seem to pick up until just before the half-way point and then it bounced me on rapidly to the end, which was good. I like a story that takes me for a ride and just doesn't let me off until it damn well wants to. So, the second half was good in that respect. Specifically, with the first half of the story there were a couple of bloody awful similes - "Like an insidiously vile fart clouding the air at a preschoolers' Christmas pageant". It would have been okay if it had been a lighter piece, but the tone I got from it was a more serious one and this image just didn't click. The other was a gratuitous and misplaced Star Bleach - sorry Trek - reference. "The living room tilted like

the Enterprise does when it cops a good blast from a Klingon Bird of Prey" - I mean, come on! I mean "the living room tilted like the deck of a ship caught in a storm" is crap but it would've been better than a silly reference to some bollocking TV show! Sorry Brent, but a Star Bleach reference to me is like a matador's arse to a bull. It just makes me so mad! Oh the red mist! Anyway, as I said the second half or so was good. It was just the beginning that didn't quite work for me. Perhaps I'm going mad. Still, nice day for it.

Lyn Elvey's A MATTER OF SEX was an interesting piece. Being a disorganised, single-tasking group (I'm sorry, I'm being deliberately and rather too literally obtuse) I find myself almost, but not quite disagreeing with you Lyn. To say that all women are as organised as you (and I doubt you on that subject not a jot) is rather too much of a generalisation. I know of women who are absolutely shocking at organising things and refuse to think beyond the next day. I, being a man (at least male) like to plan ahead. I hate indecision and vagueness and like to know right down to the second when something's going to happen, if possible. I'm not saying I'm perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I would hope I'm not the vague, useless piece of distended rectum that your piece suggests all men are. I know we males can be complete sods a lot of the time and I'm not making excuses, but you can't be saying that there isn't a decent human male out there, surely?

Darren Goossen's THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE was quite a humorous little piece. Nice to see someone taking the piss out of science. A lot of scientists seem to me to be little farties who mouth all this guff about the way things work and how the universe exploded from a ball of matter. If it was all there was, then what was around it? There had to have been something there for flip's sake. Anyway, they all seem to be farties who say all this stuff and they're just making the stuff up, I'm sure. So, it was great to see someone treating the oh-so-serious subject of science with a little fun. I'll look forward to Part II.

As ever, Mae Strelkov's A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH was great stuff! Once again, it was beautifully told and had me hooked all the way.

Bill Congreve's IN DEPTH was damn informative. I don't think I've ever consciously sought out a novel by an Australian author. I tend to be rather cautious about trying new authors, probably out of an entire fiscal fear that I'll spend about \$13.00 on something which turns out to be utter shash. Of course, I've done that with authors I normally like well. Then again, if I had never gone out on a limb and read authors I'd never heard of I wouldn't have read any books at all. I think what I'm saying (in case you got lost along the way) is that I should read some of the books Bill mentions in his columns. Although I'm sure that living in a rural area means that half the books I read reviews of never turn up in the local bookshops here.

In the R&R DEPT Matthew Rayner seems to have me confused with my brother. It was I - that is Joe Fisher - who wrote about your comments on the Doctor Who article. My brother - whose name you seem to have plucked from somewhere - did not. We both edit CADMIUM RELEASE which is perhaps where the confusion has occurred.

Rod Marsden said that the Sixth Doctor's companions "didn't come up to scratch". Well, he only had two and then you went on to defend the indefensible by supporting Bonnie Landford's Mel!! Bloody hell! If there was ever a companion of the Doctor's that deserved to die horribly more than Adric did, then Mel would have to take the biscuit, the cake and any other foodstuff you care to mention.

(16.10.95)

SHORTIES:

DEREK PICKLES, 44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorkshire BD5 8LX. England. TM #87 - I didn't know of Vol Mblesworth's tragic early death, what a loss to fandom. Mae Strelkov seem to be appearing in fanzines everywhere, she's had a fascinating life but sadly her three sons have all died. #88 - Cover, never could understand why a BEM should have any interest - other than as food - in human female. Glad you printed the photo - a superb example of suits & ties except for Vince Clarke who was regarded as dandy & Bohemian for having an open-necked shirt.

JOHN MILLARD, 2 Douglas McInnes Dve., Laidley, QLD 4341. In issue #87 of THE MENTOR John Haines wanted to know who it was that wrote the novel called PIG ON A LEAD. This was written by Derek Ingrey

(1963). Someone in issue #88 asked if anyone knew what author used the pseudonym Tak Hallus. According to the Clute/Nicholls edited ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION it was Stephen (Allen) Robinett. Tak Hallus, according to John Clute, is Persian for "pen name".

WAHF: Maria-Louise Stephens, Rod Williams, Wayne Edwards, John Foyster, Jim Verran, Peter Brodie, Ivan Fowler, Colin Steele,

Well, that's it for this issue. I would particularly like to thank those who sent me cash donations or stamps to help with the postage as well as those who sent subscription money as well as sending locs - these readers include Bill Congreve, Don Fitch, Darren Goossens, Geoff Jackson, Trent Jamieson, Maria-Louise Stephens, David Tansey and especially Chuck Ross. A Happy New Year to all! - Ron.

IN DEPTH #14

by Bill Congreve

Since the last In Depth column was written, I've driven the faithful Ford Telstar (the locally made version of the Mazda 626) completely around Australia. Eight weeks. Nineteen thousand and eight hundred kilometres. Lots of oil changes in unlikely places. An obscene amount of petrol at prices ranging from 62.9 cents a litre (in Brisbane) to \$1.25 a litre on the Nullarbor. A set of tyres in Geraldton, WA. Couldn't really afford it, but loved every moment of it. Want to do it again but take the time to do it properly. What I found was that I became blissed out from the sightseeing -- it would have been nice to settle into one of the many seasonal jobs going in different parts of the country and spend a couple of weeks recovering the finances and the senses. I'm tempted to continue the travelog from last issue; here's one anecdote to munch on:

At Cooktown, a cairn of rocks has been constructed overlooking the mouth of the Endeavour River (where Cook beached for repairs after striking a reef in 1770). On top of that cairn there lies a simple straw hat, weighted down with a rock to stop it blowing away. The hat faces inland, towards the sunset. That was the situation late in June of 1995, when I visited on my previous trip, the first parts of which were documented in the last In Depth column.

Six weeks later, early in August, I visited Cooktown again. This is a two and a half thousand kilometre drive from Sydney along the one lane beef highways of outback Queensland, so you can see I've been doing some hard travelling. This time, when I went back to visit the place where the cairn had been, I found that it had been knocked down to build the grave of a two year old boy who had died only days after I had previously left the town.

Here are buried two stories that I don't know, yet I find the mystery of them wonderful.

ENVOY; Shannah Jay; novel, 434 + vi pp, 1994, Pan Australia; pb, \$11.95.

Where Shannah Jay's first SF novel routinely reinvented EE 'Doc' Smith and Anne McCaffrey for a 1990s adolescent audience, ENVOY is more strongly reminiscent of Gordon R Dickson. ENVOY discusses the same themes (but using different methods) as Dickson's Hugo award winner, 'Call Him Lord'. How do you circumvent irresponsible feudal lords in a warring society? At about 30 pages, 'Call Him Lord' is vastly superior.

A vastly superior -- technologically and culturally -multi-species interstellar civilisation breaks into the war between Shavla and the Deorin. Ambassadors from either side are called onto neutral ground where the Terran mediators attempt to seduce them with new technology, new ways of living, etc, into a way of achieving empathy for other

societies. What may work for the ambassadors may then work for their people... In the meantime, the Terran mediators have the technology and the will to impose a ceasefire.

The Shavians and the Deorins are determined to hate each other, each generation teaches the one after it how to hate (kind of reminds one of Yugoslavia and Rwanda), and their restrictive societies have evolved to support war and little else.

At least ENVOY is a book about peace and a discussion of ideas on how to achieve it. I found it cliched and derivative in themes and ideas, simplistic in characterisation, and heavily padded in the plotting. Jay goes to great lengths to show her characters under pressure in threatening situations, but when the reader discovers constantly throughout the book that all the characters are going to survive these situations without much exertion and none of the dangers will ever be realised (except to minor characters off-the-page), then much of the suspense disappears. Some drama is generated by the use of the various subplots used to discuss the ideas (in this case, romantic subplots), but the dramatic possibilities of the main theme are often unfelt. To call this novel a thriller is a misnomer.

But, like Jay's earlier QUEST, I suspect a reader for whom these ideas are new will quite like it.

Driving the road from Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria down to Mt Isa in central Queensland is one of those experiences that is difficult to put aside. Karumba is a fishing town. A few years ago the prawning fleets working the Gulf brought their catch in for processing. These days, they stay out on the water, meeting Japanese factory ships offshore. Still, king prawns sell for about \$15 a kilo, and barramundi is also cheap. The fish the locals like to eat, a thing called 'grunter', is as cheap for boneless fillets as is a good piece of steak. Interesting outback town. Interesting cemetery -- only four headstones. The ground the cemetery stands on is a little higher than the surrounds yet most of the other graves get washed away in the wet seasons. Not a lot of history, and what there is, is hard. The locals are too busy to dwell on the past. Nowadays, the fishing draws in crowds of retired tourists, travelling the country in four wheel drives, staying in caravan parks.

We enjoyed the stay, but sharing a night of entertainment with all the folk at a free fish barbecue in one of the van parks was a little strange. Felt like a sing-a-long in a retirement village.

ESCAPE FROM JUPITER; David Ogilvy; novelisation, 232 + vi pp, 1994; ABC Books, pb, \$8.95 (I think. There's no price printed on it.)

The novelisation from the young adult ABC TV series of the same name.

This book is more the responsibility of some TV executives than it is of the publisher. I can only assume those TV executives (like most of the people who have produced SF for films or TV in this country) know very little about science fiction.

I was reminded more of a children's soap opera than I was of a science fiction story. The attempt to translate the one to the other has resulted in very little more than an exotic background. The characters are embarrassingly one-dimensional-stupid (the plot has gotta come from somewhere), the story is pure padding based on a set of contrived incidents worthy only of a short story, the science is a bit strange: if you want to go from Jupiter to Earth, why go via Saturn just so you can put the word 'slingshot' into the story? The trip from Jupiter to Saturn and back to Jupiter's orbit will be much longer than the trip from Jupiter's orbit about the sun back to Earth. Yet in the book this time (in reality several years) is presented as just a few days. Why not just pick your time of leaving Jupiter so that the mass of that planet achieves the same effect?

There aren't that many asteroids.

Watch the TV series if you want to, but your reading time is more valuable than this.

I was about to tell you about the road... That part of Queensland is fairly flat. The dry season is too long and harsh for much vegetation to survive, so there is a lot of low scrub which yields good grasslands for cattle and kangaroos when the scrub is cleared. There is bore water for the cattle.

The road is one of those old, one lane, 'cattle highways' driven through the Queensland outback in the middle of the century so that trucks could get in and get the cattle out to the markets. Trucks:

three bogey road trains, usually fifty metres long. These things are so unstable on the road that the rear bogey sways from side to side, often hitting the dirt, in a cross wind. You are driving along, and you see one of these approaching, you get off the road and use your indicators to make sure the truck can see you get off the road. Most other traffic you can share the road with: both vehicles simply drop one wheel onto the dirt and slow down a little so there aren't too many rocks kicked up. The bigger the vehicle coming the other way, the more rocks it will kick up, and the further you get out of its way.

Cattle, kangaroos, and massive trucks. The things that stay with you as you drive this road are the sight of rotting carcasses and the smell of death. Roadkill is the chief reason for the resurrection of the wedge-tailed eagle in Australia.

TOMORROW, WHEN THE WAR BEGAN; John Marsden; novel, 286 + viii pp, 1993; Pan Australia, pb, \$9.95.

Why, when Pan Australia publish such great books for children, do they publish such trash as Martin Middleton and Shannah Jay for adults? The young adult stuff outsells the adult stuff a couple of times over... stuff it. This is an argument I'll never win. Another question. When is a book not SF?

Tomorrow, When the War Began is set in a world where Australia has been invaded. There is no futuristic technology and, with the exception of the invasion itself, there is no evidence of an alternate universe scenario. This is normal, country Australia under the heel of an invader.

There were a bunch of these things published just before WWII, usually featuring Japanese invaders. Recently, Eric Willmot published *Below the Line*, in which the author names his invader. Today, the most common reaction to those volumes is that they are racist. So, why has nobody branded Marsden racist? Perhaps it is because he is wise enough not to name his invader, even though history identifies quite well which country it is most likely to be. We live in times where our politicians, so active elsewhere in the world, bend over and take it up the rear in fear of insulting our near neighbours to the north who have lots of oil, a massive human rights problem, and a history of invading foreign territory and enslaving not only foreigners but their own citizens. Marsden hasn't identified his invaders, yet the invasion itself will have the ring of prophecy to a wide range of readers.

With the exception of an unlikely invasion plan (An invasion involving massive air-raids and then beach and harbour landings from the south? Where did they come from that they haven't at least been seen? By a fisherman? By an airline pilot? By a US spy satellite?), this is a compelling and convincing story. A group of teenagers on a camping trip to an extremely remote mountain location come back to find a world gone mad. Their families have been captured, their homes looted, their animals killed or dying of starvation. Given an original suspension of disbelief, Marsden has created a great coming-of-age story in which even the humanity of the foe is discussed with sensitivity.

Obviously, the kids decide to fight back. By this stage of the novel I expected something more than a guerilla warfare plot, but the novel finishes inconclusively and I'm sure the children will continue to grow and change in the already published sequel.

I'm not sure it's SF. If it is it comes under the alternate universe category, but I did enjoy it, and I'm looking forward to more.

Recommended.

SHE'S FANTASTICAL; Edited by Lucy Sussex & Judith Raphael Bucrich; anthology, 260 ppp, 1995; Syballa Co-operative Press, tpb, \$22.95.

It's pretty enough, in fact it's quite beautifully produced, but when it's \$22.95 too much to pay for an average sized trade paperback? Especially one which has had its contributors' costs met by a government grant?

Political correctness is the major concept I want to discuss with this book. While it is quite unfair to judge the contents by this standard, it is fair to so judge the publishing process, and this may make for an interesting discussion.

Yet it is wrong to totally dismiss the contents. SHE'S FANTASTICAL is a solid anthology with many worthy stories yet few really memorable ones, which addresses its role of 'the first anthology of Australian women's speculative fiction...' in a humanist and approachable

manner. The book succeeds in being greater than the sum of its parts. A welcome and necessary addition to Australian SF.

So what am I bitching about? While humanist, SHE'S FANTASTICAL is quite faithful to the tenets of feminism; there are no dissenting viewpoints presented here even though such viewpoints are common in Australian women's writing. As the book was filled by invitation only, the question remains as to whether the book is fully representative of Australian women's speculative writing. SHRIEKS also suffered a similar problem in the horror field, though for different reasons. A number of interested writers simply did not have their letters of enquiry replied to and submissions were not solicited from known Australian female horror writers.

SHE'S FANTASTICAL only got off the ground because of a government grant to cover payments to contributors. No similarly conceived anthology of Australian men's speculative fiction writing (on male social themes) has ever been published. In fact I have absolutely no idea if anybody has ever applied for a grant for such a project. This is a genre which doesn't exist in Australia and this kind of questioning of political correctness is usually not encouraged. Australian women writers (in fact women writers worldwide) must be congratulated for having the genre of women's fictional social comment recognised and supported, yet their success really only highlights the fact that a similar male genre doesn't exist. This leaves a gaping hole in the politically correct administration of the arts that you could drive the NSW State Government's anti-discrimination legislation through. Another question I would like to raise is this: is the subtext of the publishing process involved here the concept that male writers either can't, or cannot be allowed to, write convincingly on women's issues? Women certainly allow themselves the freedom of writing convincingly on male issues. There seems to be some kind of denial of the role of the imagination in today's politically correct arts funding process. This book deserves to exist in its own right, yet to complete the concept we also need volumes of men writing on women's issues, men writing on male issues, and women writing on male issues. Yes, I am being pedantic.

It is curious to note that of all the small presses in Australia I'm aware of that publish genre fiction to a greater or lesser extent: Aphelion, Chimaera, Eidolon, Bloodsongs, MirrorDanse, Syballa, Mean Streets, Women's Redress Press, Artemis, the only presses which restrict submissions to a single sex are the feminist ones. This is not an allegation. It's their money, they can publish what they want. Yet it is also curious to note that women authors in Australia are peculiarly successful in genre fiction with the major publishing houses, only in the genres of crime and young adult and children's speculative writing. Yet it is also quite true that the mainstream publishing industry is driven by the profit motive, shareholders interests, and ugly things like that which both men and women are quite capable of embracing. Given the success of women writers in the mainstream industry in Australia in recent years (and their willingness to embrace this industry) it seems hypocritical to call this a male dominion. The women's market is also quite a distinctive market. There are other forces at work than mere political correctness and government funding.

It is also strange that this questionable process of political correctness is the only way this otherwise financially successful (from all reports) book would have been published.

On to Ursula K Le Guin's foreword. To quote: 'There are areas of society, however, where women do run things, and take responsibility or have it thrust upon them; ; all responsibility for pregnancy...' Yes, women are able to take all responsibility for pregnancy, chiefly because, when they choose to use it, they have the power over the pregnancy (however much paternalistic elements of society dislike it). This is one of the core tenets of feminism. Yet, should it be so? Now that women have the power, should they not force some of the responsibility back on those people with whom they tangoed, the fathers? Women must hold men partially responsible for pregnancy. We all know what will happen on a wide scale to any group of human beings who are told continuously that they don't have to be responsible for their actions. Kind of perpetuates the situation that caused the problem in the first place.

The point I want to make here is one which (like a lot of this discussion) is quite irrelevant to SHE'S FANTASTICAL. To what extent is this desire to keep responsibility for pregnancy, despite what a sense of ethics and logic might indicate, being used, consciously or unconsciously, to maintain the belief system which preaches it? To me, this

seems part of feminism the religion, not feminism the system of social justice.

Le Guin also quotes an English poet on why English poets are so nasty to each other: 'Well, the smaller the territory, the oftener you have to spray the boundaries.' I pity the male critic who honestly finds reason to dislike this book. Any such critics should be rare because, despite any criticisms that can be made of the publishing process involved, and any restrictions inherent in the type of fiction being presented (often quite literary with little plot), the editors have presented a beautifully produced and enjoyable volume.

I've run out of time to keep up the travelog, so I'll have to let my thoughts of Uluru, Kakadu, the Kimberleys and the freshwater crocodile in Tunnel Creek to next time.

F.R.E.E. LANCERS by Mel Odom. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 311 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This novel is based on the "gaming system" TOP SECRET/S.I.C as are others of the TSR books which are based on their games or series.

The F.R.E.E. Lancers is a group of mercenaries that are managed by a woman, Lee Won Underhill. As with most groups of this type, in TSR novels, they are a hard living and fighting outfit that usually wins their battles. This time their opponents are ones that they had come up against before - and who have additional resources at their command. There are some down points in it - why should the technology in this future world have computer discs and private transport? I don't really think such things would survive in such a future world.

Other than that, the writing is fast and furious. And the dedication is one of the best I've seen.

THE SHIELD BETWEEN THE WORLDS by Diana L. Paxson & Adrenne Martine-Barnes. Avon pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1994. 317 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

The second Chronicle of Fionn mac Cumhal.

Twenty four years have passed since Fionn had been born under somewhat inauspicious circumstances. His father and mother did not get on well with his grandfather and had to flee. Fionn can pass into Faerie where an odorous dragon is creating mayhem and spilling blood. Also abounding there are goblins who he must also fight. Though he does not know it, his ultimate destiny is to spread his power over more than just his own fian.

Paxson and Martine-Barnes have a free-flowing style of writing, though their grammar could be worked on: "gotten a fire going" could have been written better.

CHILDREN OF THE JEDI by Barbara Hambly. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Agencies. © 1995. 345 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

To quote from the dust jacket, "Princess Leia, Han Solo and Chewbacca set out on a mission vital to the survival of the fragile New Republic. They are searching for the long-lost children of the Jedi, a quest that takes them to the once vibrant stronghold of Belsavis - a nearly forgotten frozen world." The *Eye of Palpatine*, a star dreadnought that had been hidden by the AI which governed it, was coming on-line again and was on the way to Belsavis to destroy it. Also on the ship was Luke Skywalker.

As anybody who has read Hambly before knows, she is a very good writer and she has done a thorough job with this latest Star Wars novel.

PREDATOR: CONCRETE JUNGLE by Nathan Archer. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 306 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now

Along with *Alien* novels using the movie as a base, there is now a series based on the Predator movies.

In this instance the scene is New York on a stinking hot summer. The police are finding evidence of a rampage of death - bodies that have had been skinned hanging from racks. The more they delve and investigate the killings the more they find evidence of something diabolic happening. After some time they obtain a strange helmet that gives the wearer a different view of the world. While wearing it a police officer sees three gigantic alien ships hovering over the city.

The action is on all the way through the book and the plot is linked to the first movie - the cop in the novel is Dutch's brother.

THE NEW DAWN by Martin Middleton. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1995. 398 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now.

THE NEW DAWN is book 6 and the final volume of the Chronicles of the Custodians.

The quest continues with Undru and his companions ranging far and wide in their quest for the weapons that will enable the Forces of Light to win in their epic battle against the forces of Darkness. The weapons are those of a warrior: the Perduan dagger, the Amulet, the Talisman-pommel short swords, the Trovian armour, and lastly the Huntress's bow - together which will go a long way in defeating the ancient enemy.

Middleton writes well in this epic fantasy style and his many readers will enjoy this latest fantasy. Though other fantasy authors had created worlds using the quest motif, Middleton has ensured that his name will be sought after by readers with his latest offering.

THE FURIES by Suzy McKee Charnas. Women's Press pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1994. 383 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.

I haven't yet read the other two books in this series - WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD and MOTHERLINES - but I will now certainly look out for them.

There is a reference in the back cover blurb to the "gender wars" and the text of this novel. The publisher being quoted is of course referring to the ongoing sociological changes in society that has been happening at a more rapid pace since the abolition of slavery and the widespread use of technology. In this post-apocalypse world the (mostly male) politicians went underground with suitably endowed mates leaving the outside ravaged world to the elements. They emerged later and attempted to ensure their reign with a tightly regimented society. When some fems escaped to the plains and the horse-riding women there they had always hoped to return. In this book they do so and get their own back on the men there. And end up setting themselves up in the same manner as the men had done - effectively reversing the roles they hated. "Recommended".

AXIOMATIC by Greg Egan. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 289 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

A first collection of Greg Egan's short stories - which shows that he is master of both the novel and the short story form.

The stories included are: THE CUTIE; THE CARESS; EUGENE; LEARNING TO BE ME; BLOOD SISTERS; AXIOMATIC; THE SAFE-DEPOSIT BOX; SEEING; A KIDNAPPING; THE MOAT; THE INFINITE ASSASSIN; THE HUNDRED-LIGHT-YEAR DIARY; THE WALK; INTO DARKNESS; APPROPRIATE LOVE; THE MORAL VIROLOGIST; CLOSER and UNSTABLE ORBITS IN THE SPACE OF LIES. Most of the stories use virtual reality of some sort linked with everyday life in the future - mostly by use of the appropriate new technology. In A KIDNAPPING, for instance, a man's memory data files are copied by an outsider and the man is forced to pay a ransom to stop them being destroyed. The reason is not because of some sensitive information there, but because his wife refused to be taped and brought to "life" in a computer environment after her body dies. Thus when the man dies and his memories are activated, the wife also becomes "a live" because she is created from his memories in the computer environment so she will live along with him. Excellent SF and "Recommended".

WITCHES BREW by Terry Brooks. Legend tpb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 304 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is a "Magic Kingdom of Landover" novel.

After much ache and toil, the kingdom was at peace. Ben Holiday planned to enjoy his new parenthood with his growing daughter

Mistaya. Unfortunately she was really *growing*, passing through babyhood in months. She was swimming and learning to walk at the same time. The reason for this surge was that her background was from many climes and regions. Ben's wishes were not to be, however, as the wee mite was kidnapped and Ben found himself facing Rydall's hostile army at his border - Rydall proposed to send seven different champions to fight Ben and if Ben prevailed, he would not invade.

Well written fantasy.

REDMAGIC by Crawford Kilian. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 307 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

REDMAGIC is the sequel to GREENMAGIC, and continues the tale of Calidor and his son Nezaual as they travelled around the country studying. All was well until a strange girl was literally dumped in their laps. She was but a harbinger of an invasion by the Exteca. The Exteca were a bloodthirsty race and an acquisitive one, who not only wanted to obtain the lush lands of the north, but were determined to obtain victims to sacrifice their souls to their hungry Gods. And their magicians were powerful and their soldiers killers

Kilian writes good fantasy action-adventure novels and can really get the reader involved. He also writes scenes that are vivid and striking.

BATMAN: NIGHTFALL by Dennis O'Neil, Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1994. 391 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Dennis O'Neil is the group editor at DC comics and has been credited with introducing the back-to-the-roots basics for Batman.

A knight's fall. A heroes quest. A batman reborn. These are the bones of the novel. After a hectic fight with Bane which leaves Bruce Wayne nearly crippled, Wayne must find a way to continue to fight crime. He has to decide if Jean Paul Valley who went under the vigilante name of *Azrael*, was the right man for the job. After all, he had a style of justice that was almost the opposite of Wayne's.

Like other novels based on a comic/movie, NIGHTFALL is well written adventure aimed at existing fans who will hopefully read on.

THE WHITE GRYPHON by Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 305 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This volume is book two of The Mage Wars and is pre-history to the Valdemar series.

The novel follows the adventures of the once-black gyphon, Skandranon, as he leads his friends on a journey to find a place they can settle down and live lives of peace. They find what seems ideal in a sea-side cliff which they turn into a beautiful eyrie city. Their troubles do not depart when they settle down, however: they have internal bickerings with some of their allies there - one is a healer who forces change in some patients' minds which creates mischief. Also a fleet of three ships arrives representing a king who claims the cliff.

The two authors have written a slick novel which weaves an interesting fantasy.

ASSAULT ON SELONIA by Roger Macbride Allen. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1995. 289 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

For Star Wars fans, this is book two of the Corellian trilogy.

Following from book one, Han Solo is still imprisoned on Corella under the control of his dastardly cousin, Thracken Sal-Solo. One of his last attempts to break free means teaming up with the alien Dracmus, a political prisoner of the Human League. They learn of Thracken's plan to take over the reigns of Empire and hope to escape and warn Leia and Luke Skywalker. The second plot line is the activation of the Centerpoint Station and the reason for it. Plus other various goings on.

This author has a good grasp of how to keep the reader interested and is continuing what promises to be a good trilogy.

STORM RISING by Mercedes Lackey. Millennium h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 384 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

STORM RISING is book two of the Mage Storms, the first volume being STORM WARNING.

Mercedes Lackey is creating an interesting series of novels with her Valdemar saga. In this volume, Duke Tremane is under siege in Hardorn. The tent city has had a palisade built around it, but the weather is turning into being a nasty winter and the addition of magic to

the turbulent atmosphere is not doing anything to help things. Other events are coming to a head as the allies meet to talk about the continuing storms and assaults. The changes in the laws of magic and the way it affects Valdemar and its enemies are the background to this novel.

Skillful adventure fantasy.

THE SILVER CITY by Pamela Belle. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1994. 496 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Along with most fantasy being published these days, THE SILVER CITY is the first in a trilogy.

When Halthris, her brother Abreth and their friends were out riding hunting when they came across a good-sized stag. In their quest for it they travelled over quite a large distance and had to use a hunting cat to bring it down. As they were setting up camp that night Halthris came across a barbarous figure wielding an axe. She took off running but had to call in the cat to take the man. It turned out that he was a Ska'i, a group they found, after interrogating the man, were gathering in the hills around her city Zithirian. Also to come into the conflict were the brothers Ansaryo and Tsenit, who were fighting against each other to gain some advantage in their political futures.

Belle is a competent writer - this series looks to be a good one.

HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1993. 388 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Set some years in the future when pollution is rife and the ozone layer has given up, Silverberg's latest is excellent reading. I've read some of it before somewhere - where a tug is out to pull an iceberg to San Francisco and it comes across a squid boat which has just had a mutiny....

The world the main characters cross is well done and so is the characterisation. Carpenter was working for one of the large Japanese conglomerates that ruled most of the world's corporate jungle. He was an odd-job man - he moved around where the company told him to go. Thus it was he got the job as a tug captain and landed in the shit. Hundreds of kilometres above his head were the earth habitats - artificial worlds that had grown over the years. One was the refuge of men and women who had something to hide. It was at this time that the State of Israel and another of the large corporations found themselves strange bedfellows in that they were both working to bring about a coup on the satellite. In the end Carpenter, through his best friend, found himself up there and in the midst of all the action.

Good action adventure SF.

THE KNIGHTS OF CAWDOR by Mike Jefferies. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1994. 381 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This novel looks to be the start of another series. It could be taken to be a sequel to his Elundium series, but it takes place some time afterwards.

The old wars are over and the evil gone. The people, however, aren't sure that all is well - there have been new tales that the Nightbeasts have been seen around again, killing travellers and the like. The tunnelers, the teeny animals that King Thane let go to help keep the wilderness tidy had, it was thought, been seen with the Nightbeasts. If so, this did not bode well for the people living in the area.

Jefferies has a nice touch in his telling of this tale - and his readers I think will enjoy this novel also.

THE TIME SHIPS by Stephen Baxter. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 454 pp. A\$35. On sale now.

THE TIME SHIPS is blurb'd on the front cover as being "The sequel to The Time Machine". It is.

The Time Traveller is the same one that escaped from the Morlocks when Weena was captured. He goes back to his own time, but later decides that he was acting like a coward and decides to try to rescue her. He sets out again, with more equipment this time, but as he journeys through time he sees startling changes to what he remembers transpired. He sees cities in space around the earth and immense ships leaving earth - he presumes for the stars. The sun gets dimmer and eventually goes out. He stops the time machine and finds that the landscape is indeed dim. Near the time machine there is still the sphinx-like statue, but before he can explore much he sees figures surrounding his machine. He races back and beats them off, but is struck down by a larger Morlock with a strange gun. He wakes in a very strange place - the Morlocks have built a sphere around the sun, and untold billions of

them live there. From then on the pace gets fast and furious and time is twisted in and out. "Recommended".

THE WAR OF THE LORDS VEIL by Adam Nichols. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 372 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Adam Nichols is a new author I haven't heard of before. He looks as though he may be a talent to watch.

THE WAR OF THE LORDS VEIL is a Sword and Sorcery novel in the grand tradition, with blood and sword-play featuring prominently in the action. The action commences with a great army sweeping all before it and smashing into the normally peaceful countryside. Eventually they slow their advance as resistance mounts. Various people find themselves in circumstances that enable them to help - Tai, deep in the dungeons of Miradore Keep manages to escape with two others; Crane, Dreamwalker and a witch join forces; Jonaquil finds herself along in dire circumstances and Egil Bloodaxe also fights on.

Well told S&S adventure.

1995-1996 PEARS CYCLOPAEDIA, Pelham h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1995. 1000+ pages. A\$35.00. On sale now.

This is the 104th edition of this well-known one-volume cyclopaedia. It is updated annually.

In this volume are the following headings: Events - historical and contemporary, (from 70,000,000 BC); prominent people; background to world affairs; Political compendium; the world of music - with glossary and index of composers; the World of science; background to economic events; money matters; myths and legends; ideas and beliefs; gazetteer of the world; general information; literary companion; medical matters; sporting companion; biblical glossary; the classical world; the cinema; the environment; general compendium; atlas of the world (in colour) and an index.

Much of the above is based on the UK, but being in the English Language, most of the information is usable for anyone who reads this magazine. An excellent reference book.

GENELLAN: PLANETFALL by Scott G. Gier. Del Rey pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1995. 459 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This looks to be the first book in a series, judging by the title.

The Genellan of the title is a planet whereupon a group of humans - military and civilians, are trying to make ends meet until the Fleet picks them up. They had been stranded on that world when escaping from pursuing aliens. They found that Genellan was inhabited by two intelligent races - the winged people who lived in high cliffs, and the warlike bear people, who had learnt that the humans had the secret of interstellar flight - and were determined to get it. Gier has a smoothly flowing writing style and younger readers will find that it makes easy and engrossing reading.

Action adventure SF.

BRIDE OF THE RAT GOD by Barbara Hambly. Raven pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1994. 336 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

It is 1923 in Los Angeles. Chrysanda Flamanda is a big star on the silver screen. She enjoys her work and the giddy round of entertainment later. Then she is told that a piece of jewellery that she wore in her latest movie has linked her to the ancient Rat God of Manchuria and that the God is determined to claim his bride.

Chris is not too sure about the news, that is, until people around her are murdered and strange things start to happen. How she fights the influence of the Rat God makes up the rest of the book. Hambly has done a bit of research on this novel - and it shows in the detail and the smooth flowing landscape.

If you like well-written fantasy, you'll like this one - or if you are a fan of the early black-and-white and silent movies. Quite state-of-the-art.

FREEDOM'S LANDING by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1995. 336 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

With FREEDOM'S LANDING Anne McCaffrey has commenced another SF series. As with her other series featuring aliens there are quite an assortment, though the type that are prominent in this one are the Catteni, who are humanoid with grey skins and yellow eyes, though with a heavier build than humans. The protagonist, Kris Bjornsen, is among those captured on Earth on the initial invasion and is transported to a "holding" world, where she escapes. While loose, she captures a Catteni, and it is while she is dropping him off at a nearby city that she is

gassed. On waking she finds that she has again been transported to another world - but one that she, and other prisoners, have to "colonise". The Catteni she had been gassed with was still there - the only Catteni on the planet.

The planet was supposed to be uninhabited, but was actually some sort of farming world for an unidentified species of high-tech aliens. The novel follows the initial setting up of the "colony" run by an ex-US marine. Kris gets rather involved with the Catteni, Zainal, and by the end of this first novel is quite enamoured. I thoroughly enjoyed FREEDOM'S LANDING - it's on an equal footing to the best of the Pern novels.

FEERSUM ENDJINN by Ian M. Banks. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1994. 279 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

Anything by Ian M. Banks is a book to watch out for: you can be sure that it will be *different*. FEERSUM ENDJINN definitely is *that*.

The novel is set in the far future of Earth, when most of humanity have left the home planet for the stars. Those left are clustered about what is probably the last large city left. There are sky-piercing towers reaching tens of kilometres into the sky - the tallest of which was said to be the base of a space-elevator before it was cut off from its orbiting end. There was currently a war between the King and his cohorts and the Engineers, who were fighting over something that the general populace thought had something to do with escaping the vast dust cloud that was slowly occluding the sky. One of the major plot points was the crypt - a vast computer network which ran through the city and which housed the virtual personalities of untold generations of humans. This network also housed viruses which were said to be creating chaos which was slowly taking over the bulk of the vast storehouse of information.

There are about four viewpoints in each chapter - one of which is an autistic boy whose writings forces the reader to concentrate for pages at a time to understand his phonetic spellings. Even with that, this novel will become a classic. *Recommended*.

THE QUIET EARTH by Elizabeth Harris. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 567 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I haven't read any novels by Elizabeth Harris before, so author of THE QUIET EARTH was someone new.

The plot concerns four people - Nina and Mark, who were both engrossed in a dig in the Wye Valley monastery which had come up with the body of a baby that had died ages before; the second couple was Roese and a companion of hers, Gawne, who had a mission to accomplish. Across the ages events moved to bring these four together and the four would be involved through the baby.

The novel is fantasy, but is not S&S or that type of genre fantasy that is not usually read outside of the usual readers. It is well written and fairly engrossing for the reader.

FAHRENHEIT 666 by Andrew Harman. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1965. 307 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Andrew Harman is building quite an output of humorous novels with the like of THE SORCERER'S APPENDIX, 1001 DAMNATIONS, THE FROGS OF WAR and THE TOME TUNNEL.

FAHRENHEIT 666 starts off in the city of Mortropolis, which is full of various demons. These demons have a lot going for them but things seem to be going wrong for them all the time - there was the demon from Helian who managed to get himself into the body of a blonde 16 year old nymphomaniac and who was just flashing her three inch long eyelashes and wriggling her hips when a bunch of monks burst into her room and started an exorcism that had the demon screaming in agony rather than ecstasy.

Then action goes to Cranachan and is just as punny. The humour and action comes on with a rush and makes the book quick reading.

WARHOST OF VASTMARK by Janny Wurts. HarperCollins tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 353 pp. A\$19.95. (h/c \$35). On sale now.

Another of a continuing series, WARHOST is Book 3 of The Wars of Light and Shadows.

The long evolving fight between the half-brothers Lysaer and Arithon was crippling those who helped - both the countries and the peoples. These included the wizards who work their spells against the wizards controlling the magic on the other side. When Arithon's warfleet

was destroyed Lysaer was naturally gleeful, but when he arrived at the shipyards expecting to find Arithon helpless, he found instead nothing - the yards having been obliterated. Arithon, meanwhile had set as his goal the raising of another army on the other side of the Kelhorn Mountains. At least Arithon was on the move: Lysaer's wife, Talith, had decided to help him, but before she can reach him she is kidnapped and held to ransom.

Well written and envisaged fantasy.

RISE OF A MERCHANT PRINCE by Raymond E. Feist. HarperCollins h/c, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 406 pp. A\$35. On sale now.

Raymond Feist has many readers eagerly awaiting for his latest releases: this novel, the second in the SerpentWar Saga will be snapped up,

The Emerald Queen isn't featured as such this time, though she is always in the background of Roo Avery's mind as he schemes in his efforts to build himself a commercial empire that will ensure that his future life will be as he wants. And his hope for his future is to be a rich and powerful commercial force in Midkemia. Though he didn't think it would be easy, he didn't really think it would be as hard and dangerous as it turned out to be. The figurative knife in the back and betrayal was the same in commerce as in politics. Roo is determined, however, and his plans slowly unfold.

A slowly developing fantasy series that could rival his Riftwar saga.

FABULOUS HARBOURS by Michael Moorcock. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 192 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This latest collection of Michael Moorcock's stories is an example of his outputs in various genres over the last few years.

The stories included are: THE RETIREMENT OF JACK KARAQUAZIAN; THE WHITE PIRATE; SOME FRAGMENTS FOUND IN THE EFFECTS OF MR SAM OAKENHURST, THE BLACK BLADE'S SUMMONING; LUNCHING WITH THE ANTICHRIST; THE AFFAIR OF THE SEVEN VIRGINS; THE GIRL WHO KILLED SYLVIA BLADE; CRIMSON EYES; NO ORDINARY CHRISTIAN; and THE ENIGMA WINDOWS. There is also an Introduction and an Epilogue: THE BIRDS OF THE MOON.

THE GOLDEN BOUGH by F. G. Frazer. Macmillan pb dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1922. 756 pp incl index. A\$24.95. On sale now.

If you are a serious SF or fantasy reader then this book is a must for your library. First published in two volumes, which were then expanded to twelve, the author condensed those twelve into this 756 page volume.

THE GOLDEN BOUGH is a detective story in that the author set out more than thirty years before to explain the rule that regulated the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia. In doing so, Frazer created a work that, even today, is still a pleasure to read for its intellectual conceptions. I can't go too much into the subjects covered - the only way is for the reader to read for themselves. However, some of the broad headings are: The King of the Wood; Priestly Kings; Sympathetic Magic; Magic and Religion; The Magical Control of the Weather; Magicians as Kings; Incarnate Human Gods; Departmental Kings of Nature; The Worship of Trees; Relics of Tree-Worship in Modern Europe; The Influence of the Sexes on Vegetation; The Sacred Marriage; The Kings of Rome and Alba; ...Eating the God...Killing the Divine Animal...The Transference of Evil...Human Scapegoats in Classical Antiquity.. etc etc.

How Frazer works through the ancient (and not so ancient)

myths to prove his point and solve the puzzle is a fantastic piece of literature. *Highly Recommended*.

SLAVES OF SLEEP and MASTERS OF SLEEP by L. Ron Hubbard. Bridge Pub. h/c, dist in Aust by New Era Pubs. © 1939 & 1950. 316 pp. A\$32.95. On sale late 1996.

This is the first time that these two novels have been published in the one volume - and both have been long out of print.

L. Ron Hubbard's SF and fantasies are being reprinted by Bridge, and this is a good opportunity to read some of those stories from the 30's, 40's and 50's. Especially those like these two novels, which are considered classics of the field and which are now available. SLAVES OF SLEEP, and its sequel, MASTERS OF SLEEP, follow the adventures of the heir to a shipping fortune, one Jan Palmer. One of his uncles - the black sheep of the family - had been a world traveller and had left many curious things when he died. One of which was a sealed jar. When a profes-

sor had found out about the jar he coveted it so much that he stole into the house one night and attempted to steal it. Jan caught him out, but the jar was opened in the confrontation - and a Jinn emerged. The first thing it did was kill the professor, the second curse Jan. What happened after that is first class fantasy from golden age of SF. The sequel is as well told.

Thoroughly enjoyable reading.

SINS OF THE BLOOD by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 356 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

SINS OF THE BLOOD is a vampire novel set in the present day.

This novel could be an SF novel set in a parallel world. Or it could be considered fantasy set in this continuum. Vampires exist - they are the victims of a disease which is spreading more widely in the present day. Some of the older vampires are rich - they have been acquiring wealth for centuries. Many left Europe for the New World when the Europeans started killing them in earnest. The returning troops in WW I brought back the plague in numbers - and thus in the present many of the US states had enacted legislation enabling teams to find and kill the vampires without retribution. Cammie was one of these vampire killers. All was going relatively well until she killed a male vampire and a child came into the room at the moment she was killing it. The vampire was the child's father. From then on Cammie started to question what she was doing, and the reasons for it.

I try to read all the Rusch books that I can - she is one of the best F&SF writers in North America. SINS OF THE BLOOD is excellent fantasy.

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF CLASSIC FANTASY BY WOMEN edited by Susan Williams. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1992. 563 pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

There are a lot of stories in this collection's 563 pages.

The dates that these are written in range from 1806 for THE SPECTRE; or THE RUINS OF BELFONT PRIORY by Sarah Wilkinson, to 1936 for THE MASK OF SACRIFICE by Margery Lawrence. There are a total of 34 stories, from authors writing in the UK, USA, South Africa, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Denmark and Australia (Christina Stead). I can't honestly say that I read every one - I started at the beginning, but gave up after the fourth straight ghost story. If you are a student of English you might be able to read all these one after another, but don't bet on it. I did read selected ones - C. L. Moore's SHAMBLEAU, for instance, but the whole book in one lump was a bit too sweet.

I have no doubt that for a look at historical fantasy stories by women the volume is worth reading as a source of study, but the stories would be much the same if written by men - they would still be dated. Still, good background if you are serious about the fantasy genre.

HOTWIRE by Simon Ings. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 543 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Simon Ings is the latest author to join the cyberpunk ranks.

HOTWIRE is set in a world the sequel to HOT HEAD, where several large AIs have gotten loose and mostly wiped out the largest cities on Earth. The world has degenerated, the culture that supported the cities smashed beyond repair. There is still a mad AI in orbit, based on the programming of the original Show, a brilliant eccentric woman who transferred her personality (or parts of it) to the AIs. Ajay is a product of that world - without a conscience except concerning his raped and beaten sister - he wends his way throughout the world without a care till he meets Rosa, apparently a girl made of dataflesh who falls for him and follows him around like a faithful puppy. She is actually stronger than she makes out though, and several times saves him from himself. The shattered world is portrayed smoothly by Ings and the reader will find themselves engrossed in the happenings.

This is almost unputdownable - well written cyberpunk SF, and a good evening's read.

THE VAMPIRE OMNIBUS edited by Peter Haining. Orion tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. A\$19.95. On sale now.

A collection of vampire stories by Peter Haining and a companion volume to THE TELEVISION LATE NIGHT HORROR OMNIBUS and THE FRANKENSTEIN OMNIBUS.

With all these horror anthologies the readers who keep their books in a library will soon have all the classic stories. The cover of this volume has stills from various vampire movies - NOSFERATU, THE LAIR

OF THE WHITE WORM, a Vincent Price and lastly a Bella Lugosi shot. The stories included are: THE SKELETON COUNT by Elizabeth Grey; THE VAMPYRES STORY by James Rymer; THE PALE LADY by Alexandre Dumas & Paul Bocage; THE GRAVE OF ETHELIND FIONGUALA by Mary Cholmondeley; A TRUE STORY OF A VAMPIRE by Count Stenbock; GRETIR AT THORNHALL-STEAD by Frank Norris and twenty seven others. The book is divided into sections: The Prototypes (with the above stories), The Films, and The Archetypes. The latter has the following stories: UNCLE VLAD by Clive Sinclair; SANGUINARIUS by Ray Russell; COUNT DRACULA by Woody Allen; WEST OF OCTOBER by Ray Bradbury; FIRST ANNIVERSARY by Richard Matheson; SO NEAR THE DARKNESS by Theodore Sturgeon; DAYBLOOD by Roger Zelazny; VAMPIRELLA by Ron Goulart; GETTING DEAD by William F. Nolan; READER, I BURIED HIM! by Basis Copper; THE BLEEDER by Richard Laymon and DRACULA: THE REAL STORY by Jack Sharkey.

All in all an interesting volume (to say the least!)

THE WINTER KING by Bernard Cornwell. Michael Joseph h/c, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1995. 435 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Cornwell has written a number of books - the majority being the Sharpe series, set during the Peninsular War. THE WINTER KING is the first in a trilogy about Arthur, the man and king, titled The Warlord Chronicles.

I found this book well written and the background accurately researched, which makes the reading smooth and engrossing. Stating in the year 420 in a Britain that had been falling foul of Christianity, it tells of Arthur's birth in a deep winter. It also tells of Morgan, of Merlin and the others of that time, though the tales it tells are not of the legend, but of the actual people of that time. It is told by Derfel, one of the few who could write Arthur's tale and who was one of his spearmen.

THE WINTER KING is an engrossing read and well worth searching out.

TRAVELLING WITH THE DEAD by Barbara Hambly. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1995. 377 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Barbara Hambly has been writing some unusual fantasy lately - there was one set in 1920's Hollywood, now one set in Constantinople.

This time in TRAVELLING WITH THE DEAD, the vampires of Constantinople are having an on-going conflict amongst themselves which could ultimately effect many others other than themselves. The spy Ignace Karolyi is seen to be travelling from England with the vampire Lord of Erchester. James Asher finds out and follows them until he can alert the authorities. Unfortunately he is involved with a murder with a French spy in Paris and he has to flee the city. Still following the two, he finds they are heading for Constantinople and hurries after.

Hambly is an author who can get a grip on a reader and lead them into the grist of the novel.

SACRED GROUND by Mercedes Lackey. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1994. 381 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

In this novel Amerind magic and present day actualities clash.

Jennifer Taldeer is a private investigator who has several young children. There are manifestations that begin to occur and she needs all her skills as the granddaughter of an indian medicine man, who had taught her shaman's magic, as well as the never-given-to-a-woman warrior's magics. She needs both of these abilities, as well as her white background, as human bone bits and indian artefacts are found on a new shopping mall site. It was also there that violent events happen and there seems to be some connection between the two.

The writing is furious and the action is on-going - though an interest in native North Americans would be helpful.

IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER by David Gemmell. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (C) 1995. 283 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This is the first in a new fantasy series, The Hawk Queen, by David Gemmell.

Signari had silver hair, much like her father, Ironhand, the highland King. The path of people had been changed in the battle at Colden Moor, when they had been soundly defeated. Signari had a reputation - often undeserved, but she was definitely the daughter of her great father - and promised to help free the North from the usurpers. Of course she had his help in lessons that most people didn't have - her

father came back from the dead to help her. There is a strange Dwarf, Ballistar, who plays a significant part in what follows.

Gemmell writes fantasy well and those who have read his other series, including the First Chronicles of Druss the Legend, will find IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER as well composed.

FORTRESS IN THE EYE OF TIME by C. J. Cherryh. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1994. 773 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

C. J. Cherryh is known for her SF, though she has written some fantasy. FORTRESS IN THE EYE OF TIME is one of her fantasies - and one of her longer ones, as can be seen by the page count.

This story is about the last wizard left from the old age of the world, one Mauryl. Mauryl is troubled by the consequences of an ancient war of wizards, and he decides to attempt to try to right some of those ancient wrongs. He works some Old Magic - a Shaping, whereupon a young man is created with it, into whose hands Mauryl places a book which has in it the knowledge that Tristen will need to carry on. Unfortunately Tristen cannot read and understand those words and goes about the world in his own way, attempting to do what Mauryl wanted.

Cherryh is a creative author and this book is another to add to her growing output of widely read novel.

SHOWDOWN AT CENTERPOINT by Roger MacBride Allen. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1995. 301 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

SHOWDOWN is book 3 of the Corellian trilogy and continues the adventures of the Lucasfilm spacefarers.

The Starbuster, an automated machine capable of destroying stars and their systems is loose in the galaxy and it is following its hard-wired instructions - which means the next target is a populated system that the Rebels are determined to save. However, Luke Skywalker and Lando Calrissian are on Centerpoint station trying to find the Starbuster and neutralize it. As usual there adventures come fast and furious, with Han and Leia still separated but continuing their own actions to help the Republic.

MacBride Allen is a good choice for this series - he has a good grasp of the characters and feel for the background.

MEMORY AND DREAM by Charles de Lint. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1994. 675 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

MEMORY AND DREAM is a sort of mainstream novel by a well known fantasy writer that can be read by anyone, be they a fan of the genre or not.

Isabelle Copley was a painter who painted with a difference, or at least there was a difference in what the life of the paintings actually became. The people in the paintings actually came to a semblance of life - not that they were not apparently real when they appeared - from the time they appeared they were all real, but then later they faded back to their existing painting. She painted many people - her friends, lovers, and even herself. It was when the forces of the woods she painted became too much that she was forced to depart her home in Newford and decided to forgo the influence of the paintings and leave the old magic. It was decades later that she returned to Newford, both as a promise to a friend who had died years before, and to face the power that she had not used, but which was still latent in her.

Excellent fantasy - a good book to give as a gift to a readers who has only dipped lightly into fantasy.

BYZANTIUM The Early Centuries / BYZANTIUM The Apogee / BYZANTIUM The Decline And Fall by John Julius Norwich. The 1st two Penguin pbs, the latter h/c. Dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1988, 1991 & 1995. 405, 398 & 488 pp. A\$19.95 for the pbs, \$49.95 for the h/c. On sale now.

I remember Robert Silverberg commenting in one of his SF novels about the Byzantine Empire (The Empire of the East), that it was one of the more interesting periods in history. I had noted that comment and when I saw that the latter volume of the trilogy had been published I decided to read it. To do so I really had to read the two former ones also.

This history by John Norwich covers the years from Monday, 11th May 350 to Tuesday, 29 May 1453, and is one of the most interesting histories that I have read. Norwich covers his subjects in such an interesting way that the reader is really engrossed in the peoples and the action. The eighty-eight men and women occupying the Imperial throne are each described in varying but engrossing detail (and give the

lie to the idea that if women gained power, all would be peace and light - some of the most murderous and unscrupulous on the throne were women, including ones that murdered their own children). If you are interested in one of the most powerful and long lived empires in the world, get these volumes - you won't regret it. *Recommended*.

RELEASES PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED:

RAMA REVEALED by Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1993. 633 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. When Richard and Nicole originally escaped from the octospiders they had hoped they would not find themselves close to those aliens again. Later, on the way to Tau Ceti they had found themselves, and their children Ellie, Banjy and Patrick, together with Max and Eponine, captured by the octospiders and taken to their city, which the humans named the Emerald City because of the architecture and colours. In some places the novel is a bit slow, with some philosophising slowing the action, but on the whole I found it a good finale to the series, and excellent "hard" sf.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS by J. R. R. Tolkien HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1954. 137 pp incl. indices. A\$35. On sale now. Quite a hefty price for a paperback, however if there are any readers out there who haven't a copy of this classic fantasy, this is the time to get one that doesn't take up much space in your shelves. Many of the past editions are in three volumes. If you haven't read of Frodo and his companions that set off on their quest for the Rings of Power, or know some younger readers who have read THE HOBBIT and haven't read the trilogy, this is your opportunity to get them it. LOTR is a *must* book for anyone's library. What more can I say?

HEAVY WEATHER by Bruce Sterling. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1994. 280 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The novel starts with a sister rescuing her brother from a clinic in Mexico to which Americans of the day have been trekking to get operations that were not available in the USA, I think because of the fact that a lot of medical procedures had been banned in the USA (not that they didn't work, but they were really only available for the rich). Jane takes Alex back with her to the Storm Troopers, a group that is tracking storms so they can jack into them via various machines and ride the wild currents as well as record them. Then they come across the biggest storm of all.... Excellent SF.

POWERLINES by Anne McCaffrey & Elizabeth Ann Scarborough. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1994. 380 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Set on the planet Petaybee, this second novel in the series (the first being POWERS THAT BE) continues the tale of the colonists that are working in conjunction with the natives of this seemingly sentient planet. The bug bear is an investigator named Matthew Luzon. There is an aggressive woman to take him on - Major Yanaba Maddock, who had been sent to Petaybee on an assignment, but who had happened to fall over the truth. It was up to her (and Sean Ehoylia) together with the colonists to defeat the pushy Luzon.

ALIEN INFLUENCES by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1994. 424 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The planet was named Beautiful, but it was a planet of deserts and had days filled with the heat of the blazing sun. There was apparently only one reason for the colony to exist - there was an alien race on Beautiful, and they grew a plant from which the colonists distilled Salt Juice. Salt Juice was a euphoric, and induced a high that had, apparently, no side effects. When the colonists learned how to grow the plants themselves the aliens were no longer any use to them, and were actually a hindrance.... *Recommended*.

VON BEK by Michael Moorcock. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1992. 646 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. VON BEK contains the novels THE WARHOUND AND THE WORLD'S PAIN; THE CITY OF THE AUTUMN STARS AND THE PLEASURE GARDEN OF FILIPE SANGITTARIUS. They range in date of first publication from 1965 to 1986 and there has been some revision. The Von Bek novels follow the soldier Von Bek from the campaigns of the 1680s and on into the out-of-time world of Jerry Cornelius. It is volume one of the Tale of the Eternal Champion. Great for a low cost edition for your library of most of Moorcock's works.

LAST HUMAN by Doug Naylor. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1995. 309 pp. A\$13.95. On sale now. A Red Dwarf novel. Poor Lister comes into the plot in a bad position. The scene opens with him handcuffed, along with dozens of others in the same position. Unfortunately he is the only human in the ship - the others are "genetically different" or androids. Lister has been sentenced to some unmentionable term on the Desert Moon which was the local planet's penal colony. How he got there and how he (hoped) to get away is another story.

THE DOLPHINS OF PERN by Anne McCaffrey. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1994. 320 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The story takes up just after the dragon-riders have flown to the planet of the red sun from whence the Thread comes and, exploding the setter's ships anti-matter engines to shift the planet's orbit, come home. A young boy and his uncle had been sailing near a strong current to catch fish when a squall came up and capsized the boat. A school of shipfish had turned up and rescued the two, and had explained to the boy that they weren't fish, but mammals - dolphins, which the original settlers had brought from Earth. This made quite an impression on the seven-year-old boy Readis, and he was full of good intentions when he told his mother.... McCaffrey has done a good job with this novel.

ASIMOV, The Unauthorised Life by Michael White. Millennium pb, dist in Aust by Michael White. Dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1994. 254 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. The chapter headings basically show how White has gone into Asimov's life in some depth and they can give the reader some idea of what subjects White considers of interest both for the biography and himself (and the reader). The headings are: Emigre; Asimov's Science Fiction Heritage; College and Campbell; Robots; Marriage and War; Foundation; Family and Infidelity; The Science Fiction novels; Fantastic Voyage to Dvorce; Science, God and Everything; Divorce and New Love; Returning to First Love; Gentleman Author; Forward the Foundation. Well worth reading - and if you are a genuine SF fan - worth buying.

REVIEWED NEXT ISSUE:

PENGUIN: STAR WARTZ by Patrick Tilley
RIM by Alexander Beshar

RANDOM HOUSE: THE STAR FRACTION by Ken MacLeod
GRAVITY'S RAINBOW by Thomas Pynchon
THE LOST WORLD by Michael Crichton
STAR WARS: THE SCRIPTS

PAN MACMILLAN: MIRROR DANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold
ALICE IN WONDERLAND by Lewis Carroll
THE MOUNTAINS OF MAJIPOOR by Bob Silverberg
THE THIRD DAY, THE FROST by John Marsden

TRANSWORLD: CONQUEROR'S PRIDE by Timothy Zahn

ALLEN & UNWIN: THE EDGE OF HUMAN by H. W. Jeter
PANDORA by Alan Rodgers

THE FEY: SACRIFICE by Kristine Kathryn Rusch
KALEIDOSCOPE CENTURY by John Barnes
STORM RISING by Mercedes Lackey

HARPERCOLLINS: BELGARATH THE SORCERER by D & L Eddings
HODDERHEADLINE:
WORLD WAR: Tilting the Balance by Harry Turtledove.

OTHER RELEASES (Copies not yet received):

TRANSWORLD: THE ILLUSTRATED STAR WARS UNIVERSE

PENGUIN: DJINN RUMMY by Tim Holt
OTHERNESS by David Brin
CAPTAIN QUIRK by Dennis Hauck
THE MISTS FROM BEYOND ed Martin Greenberg
WHIT by Iain Banks
HEADCRAASH by Bruce Bethke
ODDS AND GODS by Tom Holt
THE MAGIC ENGINEER by L. E. Modesitt
THE MAGIC OF RECLUCE by L. E. Modesitt
THE TOWERS OF SUNSET by L. E. Modesitt
LORD OF THE FLIES by William Golding

RANDOM HOUSE: TALTOS by Anne Rice
THE HAWK ETERNAL by David Gemmell
BLOODHAWKS ed by David Pringle
THE TOMORROW PEOPLE #s by Nigel Robinson
INVADER by C. J. Cherryh
HER MAJESTY'S WIZARD by Chris Stasheff
DEAD IN THE WATER by Nancy Holder
POEMS by E. A. Poe
STAR TREK CREATOR by David Alexander
MAKING OF APOLLO 13 by Jeff Kluger
EMPIRES IN TREK by Gross/Altman/Flynn
FOREIGNER by C. J. Cherryh
DRAGONLANCE 1996 CALENDAR

ALLEN & UNWIN: STONE OF TEARS by Terry Goodkind

PAN MACMILLAN: THE RUINS OF AMBRAI by Melanie Rawn
SHADOW OF THE SERPENT by Shannah Jay
SILVER CITY by Pamela Belle
CHANGLING HEARTS by Simon Harding

HODDERHEADLINE
WORLD WAR: Upsetting the Balance by Harry Turtledove.
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