

THE MENTOR

88

"The Magazine Ahead of its Time"

If Every Tree Grew Apples

by Brent Lillie

It was the note of panic in his wife's voice that made David Cornwell turn around. The way she called his name that made his heart jump in his chest.

"What is it?" David shouted, his voice cracking slightly.

"Another one." Mardi-Lee said, leaning her head around the front door. "They're showing it right now. Hurry."

"But what..." Too late. She had gone back inside. "I want to watch the news, Troy," David said, tugging at Snapper's lead. "We'll go for our walk later."

Troy mumbled something loud enough to be insulting but not quite distinct enough to be punishable and kicked at the wet driveway. The rubber sole of his sneaker left a black scuff mark on the concrete. He was seven. And seven-year-old boys enjoy racing boats in the gutter when it rains. And because Bunker Street was on a hill the gutters flowed particularly fast.

"But, Dad..."

"Troy. Come and watch. Don't you realise how exciting all this is, for God's sake? It's the biggest thing since... Jesus, I don't know...since Christ rose from the dead!" David had never been a religious man, but there were more biblical references in that one short outburst than in some preachers' Sunday sermons.

Jiggling the half-dozen 'boats' in his pocket, (ice-block sticks, snapped in two, and dry ones because ice-block sticks that have been in the rain too long just sink), Troy sighed heavily and began trudging up the driveway. He supposed it was exciting in some ways but it just wasn't as exciting as racing boats down a flooded gutter.

The family dog, Snapper, however, had cats and pissing on his mind, and would not so easily be deterred. Cannily, he circled the metal post of the letterbox twice, sniffing at the lawn. David sensed the dog's plan immediately and hauled on the lead.

Troy stopped and turned around, watching proceedings with one corner of his mouth turned up, the way kids always do when adults start getting a bit of their own back.

The chain-link lead rattled and scraped against the stainless steel pole, getting tighter all the time, until the pole supporting the letterbox seemed it would squeeze into an hourglass shape. David had a sudden burst of inspiration and let go of the lead. Snapper unwound himself and took off, barking wildly at imaginary cats and desperately searching for somewhere to relieve his swollen bladder. Lying flat on the grassy verge next to the concrete footpath, David was left clutching at a handful of weeds.

"To hell with it," he muttered. "We'll get him later."

When they entered the living-room, Mardi-Lee was leaning forward on one of the living-room chairs with only about one half inch of her behind balanced on the seat. Head cocked, open-mouthed, she was focused on the television set in the corner in the same way a compass needle focuses on magnetic north. David stood behind her chair. Mardi-Lee's

cigarette burned steadily away in an ashtray on the glass-topped coffee table. The ash was about an inch and a half long.

"They showed it already," she informed David without turning around.

"Shit! I..."

"But they're showing it again. Different station. It's on them all."

"What is it?"

"Shhh! Just watch."

On the screen four, no, five people were standing against a flaking metal railing. It was night-time and windy; black, oily water chopped and seethed restlessly in the background: unhealthy-looking water, not at all the kind you'd want to swim in, even on a bet.

A cool night, if not downright chilly, judging by the scarves and heavy sweaters, and all their faces were similarly sallow and heavily-shadowed under the sickly glow of some source of illumination just out of frame.

Maybe they'd just enjoyed a nice seafood dinner at a dockside restaurant, along with a bottle of wine or three or four. It could have been that the light spilled from the front window of the restaurant in which they had dined. Impossible to say. They were all laughing and joking and lightheartedly jostling each other around. What one would term the classic convivial group.

"Following on the heels of yesterday's incredible events," the male voiceover announced in a tone that for once sounded as though the seriousness was not just a put-on. "Another seemingly random example of inexplicable phenomena, this time in New York city. This video footage was captured by a member of a Brits -America touring party, just a few hours ago."

Coloured lights bobbed on the water behind the tourists' heads. They were boats: ferries, fishing trawlers, pleasure craft. They could just as easily have been planes, because it would have been impossible to discern where the cold, dark waters ended and the sky began except for one important factor: the Statue of Liberty, jade-coloured and way back in the right-hand corner of the picture, so far away in fact that it could have passed for one of the mass-produced plastic statuettes that they flogged off to the tourists in every souvenir shop in New York, the same as every loyal Australian souvenir-shop operator flogs off toy koala bears. David had once actually owned a miniature Statue of Liberty, when he was about Troy's age. His grandmother had brought it back from one of her overseas trips, along with about a hundred other portable mementos of strange and distant lands. Suitcase-stuffers, she'd called them.

Abruptly, the television screen went blank. David's initial thoughts involved power failures, and the panicky notion that he'd miss the climax, the revelation, because up until now everything about that amateur video had been so commonplace, so everyday, that he knew deep down in his guts that whatever happened next was bound to be big. Really big.

It was a power failure, all right, but in New York, not on Bunker Street. The lights on the harbour still bobbed in the background but everything else was black as pitch.

Voices babbled in the dark. Someone barked 'power failure' and they were like magic words, because the lights came back on then and there they were - the five happy tourists, standing next to the railing on the pier.

They were still smiling, but now fear lurked behind their grins, tainting the pleasurable moment - like an insidiously vile fart clouding the air at a preschoolers' Christmas pageant. During those few seconds of utter darkness, they'd

probably all realised that New York blackouts could be extremely hazardous to their health.

So what, David thought, is that it? Five semi-intoxicated English tourists, leaning against a railing in New York? What was so incredible about that?

As if she'd read his mind, Mardi-Lee said: "The statue, David. Look at the statue."

David squinted at the television, ignoring the happy English tourists, ignoring the gaily-lit craft plying the harbour, ignoring the inhospitable waters, until every ounce of his attention was focused on the Statue of Liberty. There was something, but he couldn't quite pinpoint it.

"I don't know, Mardi-Lee," he began.

"The torch."

"The torch?"

Then he saw what she meant, and when he did it was as though someone had punched him a good one in the abdomen. He felt dizzy and groped for the back of Mardi-Lee's chair. How many years had the old girl been holding that torch aloft? Who could blame her if her arm got tired? He felt his perception swing like a pendulum.

The living-room tilted like the Enterprise does when it cops a good blast from a Klingon Bird of Prey. Shields, Mr Sulu! Shields! The world was suddenly made of smoke and mirrors, and his brains were made of clouds. David Copperfield, eat your fucking heart out!

"Jesus Christ," David whispered, and for once he really meant it. Then he felt a persistent tugging at his elbow. He looked down and saw his son.

"Dad, it might rain again soon," Troy said impatiently. "Don't you think we should go and find Snapper now?"

The rain was a misty, weightless precipitation that clung to David's skin like warm sweat. There was no sign of Snapper. They took a break, standing on the corner at the bottom of Bunker Street. David watched as the rainwaters poured down the metal grate, into the stormwater drains.

"Well, I don't know," he sighed. "We've tried everywhere."

"Maybe he's at Mr Samuel's place," suggested Troy. "He goes there sometimes. Mr Samuels feeds him. And he's got cats."

Sounded fine to David. Anything would sound fine just now. His thoughts were drifting again, weightless as windblown dandelions. Thoughts of ambidextrous monuments: he tried to imagine it, how she moved. Did she smile when she swapped the torch from one hand to the other? In that utter darkness, did she grin a small grin, like an unfaithful wife who swaps her wedding ring to her other hand as she sits in her car at the traffic lights, bound for a rendezvous with her lover? An 'I know a secret and you don't' kind of grin. It was the grin, and not the fact that the Statue of Liberty came to life for five seconds that made David angry. Actually, it infuriated him! David was shocked to realise that he was grinding his teeth together, a childhood habit that had cost his parents thousands in dental bills. He put his arm around Troy's shoulders.

"Good idea." David closed his eyes for a few seconds, let the rage dissipate, and then, with his arm still draped around his son's narrow shoulders, they began the slow walk towards Len Samuel's house.

Len had lived alone since his wife died, a couple of years before the Cornwell family settled in the neighbourhood.

His weatherboard, two-bedroom residence lay about two hundred yards away from the Cornwell house as the crow flies; well, as the Sacred Ibis flies, if the truth be known, be-

cause the damn things had virtually taken over the entire town. The plague had become so serious that the local gun club had offered to cull them for free.

Len Samuel's place was on the other side of the next block. Because of their position on the lower slopes of the hill, Len's back yard was visible from the Cornwell's front verandah. Sitting with a mug of coffee and the paper some mornings, David often watched as Len pegged washing to the rotary line. It always struck him as kind of sad, not so much that an elderly man had to hang out his own washing - David pegged out the washing, too, when the situation was absolutely unavoidable - but the fact that there was so little of it. Those few flapping items in the backyard were like a cry for help. He was no signaller, but anyone could read the message if they wanted too: loneliness.

Len was in the front yard, spraying his letterbox with Mortein.

"Redbacks," he offered, in way of explanation. He straightened up painfully and rubbed at the small of his back. "Snapper's in the kitchen. I dried him off and gave him some milk and a bowl of cat food. He loves it. I think he needs some psychiatric help, David."

"Snapper was never what you'd call fussy, Len."

The old man chuckled.

"You want some Milo, Troy? I can make it on milk."

"No thanks, Mr Samuels." Troy regarded his father hopefully. "Dad, can I play boats now?"

"Okay," David said. "But come back inside if it rains."

"Will you play with me later, Dad?"

"Maybe. We'll see."

The runaway dog was in the kitchen, the loop of his lead hooked around the handle of Len's saucepan cupboard. When he saw David, he started running on the spot and making high-pitched happy noises.

"Jesus, Snapper," Len commented. "You sound like a pair of skeletons tap-dancing on a tin roof!"

Len gestured David into a chair, then walked over to the bench and switched on the electric jug. Still massaging the small of his back, he took two mugs out of the dishrack and placed coffee and sugar in each.

If you disregarded the dicky lower back, Len was in good shape for a man of seventy-six. His hair was grey, but as thick and wavy as it had been five decades earlier. David examined his own features in the mirror-like surface of Len's stainless steel toaster and hoped it was just its convex shape that made his forehead look so wide.

As he poured boiling water, then milk, into the mugs, Len jerked a thumb in the direction of the television in the living-room.

"Watch the news?"

"Yeah, pretty amazing, wasn't it?" David replied. The television was on, but the volume had been turned down. It was an old set, with curved legs like the ones on antique dining tables. Yet another bulletin. The bulletins never stopped now that the weirdness was happening all over the world. There was something wrong with the colour. The faces on TV had patches of amorphous bluish-grey on them that reminded David of potter's clay. Or statues.

"Amazing's not the word."

Len placed a mug of steaming coffee on the kitchen table in front of David. He sat down on the chair opposite, wriggled his flawed lower backbone into a tolerable position, and stretched out his legs.

"I was talking to my next door neighbour yesterday, just after those half-dozen unicorns turned up at that picnic area outside Auckland. By Jesus, you should have heard him.

He said the unicorns were a sign, that they're some terrible portent of evil." Len shook his head. "As though they were a plague of locusts, or a river of blood. Sad thing about it is that lots of people are beginning to think like old Percy does."

David nodded and folded his arms across his chest. To many, the conclusion was obvious: Judgement Day, and the miracles were just a string of support acts leading up to the main event.

"The unicorns were harmless enough, but there was something eerie about the way the statue moved. Or didn't move. I keep thinking about it all the time," David said. "How the torch got from one hand to the other, in the darkness."

"The thrill will wear off, believe me. By tomorrow we'll be so sick of the Statue of Liberty that every time the news comes on TV we'll groping for the remote and madly searching for The Brady Bunch."

"Not if there's another miracle tomorrow, we won't. And the day after that. And the day after that!"

"Interesting thought. And what if tomorrow's miracle is that, hmm..." Len rubbed his chin. "...That every tree grows apples?"

David stared out the kitchen window at the trees in Len's backyard, the coffee mug poised half way between the table and his lips. The wind had grown stronger. Branches swayed. Leaves danced.

"Well, I suppose it would be great at first," David said, with a shrug. "But we'd soon get tired of eating apples."

It was raining again, a soft patter on the kitchen windows and a steady, comforting thrumming on the roof. David sipped at his mug of coffee. It was hot and sweet. The backyard beyond the window was all subdued greens and sooty greys. Len didn't say anything for a long time. He twirled his coffee mug on the table, absentmindedly, then raised an eyebrow and regarded David.

"Now turn that around. Say tomorrow's miracle meant that there'd be no apples at all, ever again."

David considered the premise for a moment, then shook his head. He was about to say something along the lines of 'No more apple pies? Sorry, Len, but I still don't get it' when a notion impacted heavily on his mind, just like a large, green frog landing on a lily pad. And like a large, green frog on a lily pad, the notion sat staring at him from inside his head. It had to do with Troy, the rain, and apples, and it was a vague and fearful notion, indeed.

David had just started to push himself out of his chair when the front door slammed. His son came hurrying down the hall.

"Dad." Troy was puffing. His green eyes were almost bulging out of their sockets with excitement. "Dad, come outside and look at this! Quick!"

Troy grabbed his father by the arm and dragged him down the hallway. Once outside, Troy led David over to one of the many shrubs in Len's overgrown front yard.

"Here," he said. Bending down, the boy parted the branches. David squatted down on his haunches. Troy pointed at a spot deep within the foliage, where a butterfly was emerging from a cocoon, a beautiful butterfly, with orange wings decorated with complicated latticeworks of shiny purple-black. David watched, entranced, his son close and warm and real, his shirt sticking to his back. By the time the butterfly emerged, he realised that he wasn't angry anymore, or scared.

The butterfly tested its wings, clumsily at first, as though they moved on rusty hinges. After a while David backed out of the shrub and turned around to see Len standing on the steps, holding Snapper's lead. He was grinning down at the pair with a look that said: "Well, maybe the answer has something to do with appreciating what we've got, David. Maybe it takes a few unicorns to help us appreciate the apples."

David regarded his son: "Have you still got those boats, Troy?"

"I sure have."

Sunlight abruptly burst through a gap in the clouds. The shrubs and trees and flowers in Len's front yard drank in the light and swelled with vibrant colour. Troy held out his hand. In it was a broken ice-block stick.

Percy Holman stood on his front porch with one hand in the pocket of a pair of trousers that were worn so high around his middle he risked catching a nipple in his belt buckle every time he put them on. Sucking occasionally on an unfiltered cigarette, he watched in silent disapproval as a full-grown man played in the gutter.

"Crazy," he muttered under his breath, and when he turned and went back inside his lonely living-room it wasn't to marvel at how the specks of golden dust danced in the sunbeams, or at how he moved, and breathed, or reasoned; it was to sit himself down in front of the television and wait for the next miracle, or Oprah - whichever came first.

- E N D -

A Matter of Sex!!

by Lyn Elvey

(At the May 1995 meeting of the Southern Science Fiction group, Graham Stone talked about Australian authors. Only one woman author was mentioned, which I commented on, as well as remarking on the excellence of the plot of a book set in the future where women were in charge. This brought a remark from the editor on my "Feminist" attitude. My reply was that I was not so much a feminist as that I found little to recommend men (and I am not gay).

I am an intelligent (40 year old) female. I have a university degree (Science) and hold a responsible job (Analyst/programmer) on a good salary (your guess!!). I have managed to run the Southern Group for three and a half years. I am involved in Church, Neighbourhood Watch, Playing Darts, and take an interest in the news, the arts, crafts and most sports as well as being an avid reader.

Like most women I am an organised, multi-tasking individual, able to juggle a busy working life with a large range of commitments and a good circle of friends. I do my utmost to do my work as quickly and as efficiently as possible and to keep my "customers" happy. I endeavour to keep in touch with as many of my friends as possible, meeting them for meals or just having a chat. And from my list of commitments above you can see I devote time to a number of other causes.

So, I ask you, why can't men be like that too? Heaven help you if you ask a man to do two things at the one time. At work if you ask a male if he could please put a new water bottle in the cooler at the same time he is getting a cup of coffee, let me let you the coffee will make it back to the desk, but the water cooler will stand empty. And ask a man if he can go out two weeks ahead and he will look at you astounded. How could he possibly know two weeks ahead what he is doing? Right now I have a diary with items entered up to Christmas - I have to if I want to run a Group successfully. I can certainly go for a meal Friday week - what is the male's problem? I have decided that there is such a wide difference in attitude and approach to life that it is a wonder that males and females ever get together at all. Married, and committed females have exactly the same problems when you talk to them, they have just learned to live with it. Most of us who are divorced wonder how we ever managed in the first place.

Where I work, if someone wants a job to be done, who do you think gets the work - me. Why? Because unlike the rest of the males in the section who put it aside or forget it, I do it. And who answers the phone in our department of 8 males and 3 females, let me assure you it is not the male in the office next to the ringing phone. They seem to have selective deafness when it comes to hearing a phone. Who organises morning teas, nights out, presentations - the women. Not because we have the time but because we get the job done.

So, do we get to management level at work? No - nearly all the management personnel are men. This has been true at all jobs but one where I had a female boss (she was great to work for). And if a vacancy crops up the position is filled from outside by a male. We have a junior staff member at work - he has been with us one year. But he is one of the "boys". So he gets a business card and a title of "manager". I'm still waiting after 5 years!

This may sound a little like sour grapes, but it seems to be a failing of men that if you do the job (and do it well as all women do) then rather than be appreciated you are taken for granted. I have just heard a sigh from all married women who's husbands act exactly like that at home as well. They are no different at work! But don't do the job or make a mistake and let me tell you my boss can break the land-

speed record getting into my office to find out what I did wrong (even if it's not my fault). For that is another quirk - all problems no matter who caused them become your problem if you are the person who fixes it. And why should any man want to bother fixing a problem - let one of the "girls" handle it.

So lets now talk about men as companions (not necessarily a husband). I have spent the last 5 years looking for that impossible person. Because you see despite all men's failings I do still like male companionship occasionally, and let's be honest most of my girlfriends do not really want to go to the footie next week or talk about the game the next day.

Maybe I have set my sights too high, but I have been looking for someone who can handle an intelligent conversation, like Thai, Indian and seafood and follows the football and cricket. Playing cards and reading would be advantageous, and I would like to think they had some kind of hobby or interest. But, the men I meet either work six or seven days a week with no time to develop a relationship or no conversation apart from work, or else they have no hobbies/interests. And they expect women to find them fascinating! Plus most men don't want to commit themselves to a social outing more than a day or two ahead. What are they waiting for - a better offer? Haven't they heard of booking ahead, and planning ahead to have something to look forward to?

And have you read the ads in the papers - no matter what the age they all want slim, stunning, intelligent, liberated... women. Have any of these men looked in the mirror lately, or listened to themselves talking? And what is wrong with being cuddly? I may not be slim but I'm one heck of a cook. And I would be quite happy with a John Goodman look-alike.

Let me tell you I have found my girlfriends (all of whom are still around after ten or twenty years, as opposed to the males in my life who all seem to disappear quickly) much more reliable. They don't drop out at the last moment, or forget about the date, and they will book in ahead with you. They also have more tact and open honesty than males. The last male I went out with left a message on my answering machine of "Forgot to ring you, forgot you were away, forgotten where you've gone, will ring you". Which he didn't. He is probably still wondering why I didn't ring him back. I guess I have to admit failure to have made an impression there but then we had been going out only eleven months (yes, months). Heaven help him if he ever gets serious about anyone!

Where is the man who's dream in life is a room wholly dedicated to being a library, who uses a diary for his personal life, and who thinks there is more to life than work? Who is looking to his retirement not with foreboding but as a time to do the multitude of hobbies, interests and travelling he wants to do with the partner of his choice. Where is the man who wants a companion of his own age and experience rather than a dolly bird twenty years younger (who is not after his body, let me tell you).

He doesn't exist.

Am I a feminist, or have I met all the wrong men? I can't help feeling that women are much more the superior sex. We live longer and manage better single than married (married men live longer!). We are more realistic, practical and let me tell you from daily experience, better drivers.

And if you don't agree with me, why do authors keep writing stories about future societies with women in charge? Because it is the logical conclusion for the superior sex, of course. Rather than being a frightening prospect, it is the golden vista that one can hope and dream for. Do you think women are going to spend multi-millions on armaments rather than food or clothes?

As a final argument to the "logic" of men, in several Asian countries it is the policy to restrict family sizes. Because they value men, these societies have "disposed" of the baby girls and only keep the sons. So now they have populations of adult males in their twenties, thirties and forties with many less females about. They can find wives because there are not enough to go around. What a brilliant piece of logic!!! Particularly when they want sons to carry on the name, etc. Who did they think were going to have them?

The Yankee Privateer #22

by Buck Coulson

I turned 67 today, and resolved to never again go to three conventions on three consecutive weekends. We did that, the last three weekends, and I don't really recommend it unless one is young and healthy.

May 21-23, we drove to Detroit for Contraption. Small convention, fairly nice people, but I *loathe* driving in Detroit. If anything, it's worse than downtown Chicago, and the annual Chicago convention is held out in the suburbs, anyway. Once we arrived, things were better, except that our huckster table didn't entirely pay expenses. In the dealers' room there was a nice black woman selling cupcakes-- *huge* cupcakes. Chocolate and bran, and both were delicious. She also had herb tea, which was okay, and some other stuff I didn't try. Her presence would almost draw me back next year -- almost. We'd agreed to share a room with Margaret Bumby, as we've done before at several cons. She's a year younger than our son Bruce, but if anything we get along better with her than we do with Bruce; a testimony that age really doesn't matter in fandom. Unfortunately, she'd found a fourth person to share the room, and he snored. Loudly. Constantly. He got a polite heave-ho the next morning, but Juanita got very little sleep that night, even with my pillos over her head. My will-power got me to sleep after an hour or so. One of the attractions of the con was seeing Howard Devore again. "Big-Hearted Howard" was *the* magazine dealer in the midwest in the 1950s. I bought stuff from him at the first regional con I went to, in 1954, and he's still selling, though he's changed with the times and had several tables full of paperbacks and a few hardcovers. Also still telling outrageous -- but funny -- stories, mostly about the "good old days". Another old-timer and former member of the "Detroit Mob" was George Young, who surprised me by looking exactly the way he did the last time I saw him, some 15 or 20 years ago. Juanita and Margaret and I went out to dinner with him on Saturday night, which was fun for us but hard on the waitresses because we stayed until they were trying to shut the place down. Driving home was another bitch.

The next convention was in Dalton, Georgia; Magic Carpet Con. This is somewhat out of our usual range, but the convention asked us to come, and Juanita wanted to see, and in a sense say goodbye to, Marion Zimmer Bradley, who is in a bad way after a couple of strokes and other medical problems. Marion and Juanita were in a feminist fan club in the 1950s, before either had sold anything. Then a bit later after Marion had turned pro, she took one of Juanita's stories, revised it, and sold it; Juanita's first sale. Later on, when she was making cross-country trips between her home in California and her family's home in New York state, she occasionally stopped overnight at our house. I talked to her a couple of times at the con. The first time she remembered incidents from 30 years ago, the name of the very bad poet whose works we'd read aloud and chortled over, and so on. The second time I'm not perfectly sure that she knew who I was.

The main reason we went was that we told the con-com that we weren't going to drive to Georgia in our 1978 station wagon with 200,000 miles on it, so the con would have to pay for a rental car. And the con did. We left around noon on

April 27, after boarding the dog, picking up the car, getting it packed, etc. Spent one night on the road, and arrived at the con around noon on April 28. Convention was in a example of the old-fashioned motel; rather small individual rooms, no connection between rooms except outside walks. The actual convention sessions were in a different building, a sort of community center, some distance away, but (surprise!) quite easy to get to. We did the usual bit of selling tapes, being on panels, Juanita had a folk concert, etc. Come to think of it, I wasn't on any panels; the convention wanted Juanita, not me. Suzette Haden Elgin was the other major guest and one of the other major filkers, who did a concert. Juanita and I had a table to watch, but Juanita went to the first half of Suzette's concert and I went to the last half. The Elgin huckster table was next to ours; her husband George handled it most of the time, so he and I got better acquainted.

My most stupid move of the year was to leave our cash box in the huckster room Friday night. *All* our money was in the box, so we had very little to eat that night; we'd brought some cheese sandwiches to eat on the road and a cooler with Cokes in it. (I mentioned this to Samanda Jeude the next day and was threatened with severe bodily harm if I ever did that again and didn't ask to borrow some money from her.) But we got by, and the box was still there when we arrived the next morning, which actually didn't surprise me.

When the convention closed on Sunday, around noon, we drove to Chattanooga, TN (Dalton is just across the state line from Chattanooga) to the duplex of our adopted niece, Marie Miesel. (She did the adopting...) She guided us around Missionary Ridge and some of the other Civil War sites inside the city. The storming of Missionary Ridge by Union troops is one of the marvels of the war; now that I've seen it, I can see why. The thing is straight up and down. I now believe the story about Sheridan throwing his whisky bottle up the Ridge and saying "Let's go, boys!" Sober men would never have made it. We stayed overnight at a Chattanooga motel, and the next morning drove out to the Chickamauga battlefield and toured it; one more bit of US history we've seen. Drove home that afternoon. One difference between the time it took us to drive down and drive back is that due to time zones, we lost an hour going down and gained an hour coming back. We were driving almost straight south and back north, you understand; time zones have strange quirks in them. Arrived home late May 1.

May 5, we were off again, this time to Marcon, in Columbus, OH. Not a long trip, but probably our biggest con of the year; around 1800 people present. This year they'd imported some of the actors from BABYLON 5, but the lines for autographs were long and I haven't really paid a lot of attention to the show -- or any TV show, for that matter. Big huckster room, which wasn't set up when we arrived, so we decided to get stuff into our hotel room, which we were sharing with our son Bruce and family. I went to get keys. No Coulson registered. Called Bruce; he suggested I try Vasquez-Coulson, since Emily had made the reservation. No. Swartzmiller (the third adult member of Bruce's family)? No. So the luggage went under the huckster tables, where there wasn't room for it, until somebody showed up. There was a room reservation okay, but the hotel wasn't giving it out to anybody but Emily. As it turned out we shared our room with con committee member Kathy Hamilton; Bruce and party went home to sleep. (Lee Swartzmiller and I went to pay for it jointly.)

Marcon is big, but it's familiar. We know the older Columbus fans from visits years ago to meetings of the Columbus Science Fiction Society, and a good many of the younger ones because Bruce knows them. One of them al-

ways calls me "Dad", because some years ago, somebody thought that he and Bruce were brothers. *(Cont. page 10)*

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

by Darren Goossens

Part I

Introduction: An understanding of the processes of science is vital in today's world. The practical results of the scientific method permeate our everyday life. From the laser in your CD player to the Greenhouse Layer and the Ozone Effect, science is everywhere. Unavoidable and all-pervasive. And any understanding of science must begin with a knowledge of its origins, its founders and its history. Such information has not been available in a concise yet exhaustively researched work. Until now.

The Origins of Science: In prehistoric times, there was no science. The people lived from day to day, satisfied that their crops died, their children died and their parents died because the Gods so decreed. They hunted and gathered and chipped their flints, but without any systematic directing of their efforts. This was, of course, how the dinosaurs became extinct (although they are not thought to have chipped flints). Time passed, many aeons of chipping and ploughing and being recklessly unsystematic. Brainy people with pen-holders in their breast pockets (or stylus-holders, as they were then known), wandered around, wondering why they had nothing to do.

The Babylonians came, and the Assyrians and the Hittites, the Lamnites, and the Stalactites. And then there were the Egyptians and their unhealthy and rather unscientific obsession with death and cats. At that time, the Earth was well known to be a dinner plate balanced on an elephant's trunk. The sun was a golden chariot, the moon a vast pearl, and there was a titanic book full of maps holding up the sky - a sky which was dotted at night with the campfires of celestial gypsies.

Then somebody invented science and it all came crashing down, gypsies, campfires, marshmallows and all.

Greek Science: As is widely known, science was invented by the ancient Greeks - indeed, one of their Gods invented zoos. And triangles, for example, were invented by Pythagoras (500 to 570 BC), when in a flash of inspiration he added an extra point. Contrary to popular belief, however, the so-called Pythagorean Theorem was first constructed, not by Pythagoras, but by a young Latin pupil of his called Hypotenuse. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Even less well known - indeed, only recently discovered scrawled in spray-fresco on a newly unearthed temple wall - is Pythagoras's Other Theorem (POT). Quite simply, it states:

A profound statement indeed, followed by:

Pythagoras woz ere.

Upon decoding (it is suggested that Pythagoras wrote left-handed in a mirror with his eyes closed while inebriated to encode the meaning so only his closest disciples [and perhaps not even they] would be able to read it), it is hoped that some universal truth will be revealed.

That or a truly juicy bite of Classical Greek gossip. (Recent comments that the message reads, 'Eudoxus is a centaur's nether regions,' are completely unfounded.)

Chief amongst the Ancient Greeks Who Were Not Pythagoras (AGWWNP) were Aristotle (322-384 BC), who invented the Universe, Euclid (circa. 300 BC), who invented axioms, and Archimedes (212-287 BC), who invented baths.

Aristotle divided the world into four elements - dirt, fire, air and water - from which everything else was constructed. Slime and snails and puppy-dog's tails were not to come for several hundreds of years. These four elements were classified as 'Earthy,' as they were found on the Earth.

Further, Aristotle thought that our world, the Earth, was a sphere in the middle of everything around which everything that was not the Earth revolved. This was somewhat unfortunate for the Earth, as it had previously been flat and separated from everything else by the Pillars of Hercules, and therefore had rather a lot of reorganising to do.

Aristotle also invented the Aether, which was a fifth element, the stuff of the celestial spheres, and which in addition tended to put people to sleep. He then invented logic, which would seem at odds with his previous assertions. Before Aristotle, people had leapt out windows to wash their feet and climbed mountains by digging holes, lacking as they were in logic. After Aristotle, they could fall back on the law of the 'Excluded Middle' (not a diet aid), which stated that a proposition was either wrong or right but not neither. This was unpopular with politicians, who in retaliation formulated the law of 'Either, Neither or Both,' (ENOB), which was rather more flexible.

Lastly, Aristotle invented Aristotlianism. However, this is not such a great achievement, as whatever he invented would have been called Aristotlianism, since his name was Aristotle.

Euclid invented the axiom (not a woodcutter's tool), which, in conjunction with postulates, paradigms and anagrams, formed the basis of his geometry (known, predictably, as 'Euclidean Geometry'). This geometry involved impressive words like congruence, ellipsoid and polygon, which were rearranged according to a rigid set of rules to prove things. These things were then used to prove other things, which were then used to prove other things... etcetera. The endlessness of this process has led certain historians to suggest - unfairly - that what Euclid really invented was a lifetime's employment for himself.

The other important AGWWNP was Archimedes. Most famous for making the water in his bath fluctuate in level (and

possibly, therefore, in purity), and for running naked through
the streets yelling, *(Cont. p. 10)*

Daredevils of the Stratosphere

by Andrew Darlington

For juvenile magazines, the late 40's into early 50's is a runt among decades. The effects of post-war rationing distorts an already volatile concoction of social drag-factors to produce a mutant rash of weirdly wonderful periodicals. But Denis Gifford loves them all indiscriminately. A comics connoisseur and active ingredient in the creation of Krazy Krockitt, Captain Climax, Speedsmith - Trouble Shooter, The Moonites, Jet Black - Rocket Man, and Flip & Flop (for which he wrote as Belteshazzar Oakworm or Clubtwee Gleeb!), Denis loves those publishers who know nothing about publishing, the artists and scripters who know nothing about basic draughtsmanship or the craft of writing, and the rocketships, astronauts, and alien landscapes ineptly executed with all the skill of a retarded educationally subnormal ten-year-old. This, he enthuses is the "tomorrow that might have been!"

Lift-off beyond the stratosphere begins with SPACE CONQUERORS, from the April 1940 THRILL COMICS, a story of "two Earthmen who dared space to find a marvellous but terrifying underworld inside the moon". It's followed by Crash Carew's journey to the Ice Planet, his submarine-like spaceship hurtling through melting droplets of cosmic menace, "Rotten luck to be caught in a meteoric storm" says Crash grimly, while the caption runs "it is tricky work evading the molten balls". Then there's the modest CRUISE OF THE SPACEBIRD from SUPER SCIENCE THRILLS - billed as Britain's first all S.F. comic book, with Irene and Bobby reaching the moon in the space of four picture frames in a tadpole-shaped craft designed by their unnamed "famous scientist uncle". The luna "air tests out O.K." so they don't need spacesuits, and once outside they discover the "footprints of a giant bird just recently made...!"

Writing for the Summer 1950 issue of NEW WORLDS (#7) editor John Carnell acknowledges that such "boys magazines and comics have for long been a medium for good juvenile science fiction stories". Gifford himself confirms that "a taste for space never deserted me", tracing his own special passion back to the Korda movie version of H. G. Wells' THINGS TO COME in 1936, and to an adventure strip called ROBOT THE ROVER in the 2d PUCK. For the eight-year-old Brian Aldiss the Amalgamated Press weekly MODERN BOY snares his imagination with the heroic exploits of CAPTAIN JUSTICE, an "adventurer of the highest order" operating from a mile-high floating tower and an invisible airship. It was written by the obscure and long-forgotten pulp hack writer Murray Roberts. "I know nothing about Murray Roberts" admits Aldiss (in SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS), "yet I owe him as big a debt as I do Aldous Huxley or Thomas Hardy, greater writers whose influence touched me later".

Denis Gifford's SPACE ACES: COMIC-BOOK HEROES OF THE 40's AND 50's (Greenwood Press - £8.99 ISBN 1-872532-89-6) is a beautiful meticulously assembled large-format tribute to these naive early picture strip days. Pages alternate full-colour flash-spreads of garish comic-book covers with smaller monochrome interior inserts and detailed career

breakdowns of each "hero", the silk-smooth high-gloss paper often investing cheap and nastily printed originals with a post-humous veneer of credibility. But initially it's all fairly low-key unambitious stuff, enlivened by the advent of the derivative but comparatively more imaginative sweeps of artist Nat Brand. He's followed by Denis McLoughlin who is even better, despite a tendency to filch imported "Flash Gordon"-style Americanisms. His finest creation is the SWIFT MORGAN series. With girlfriend Silver, Morgan could be found on THE PLANET OF DESTINY, IN ATLANTIS, or rescuing Mars from vile Saterian predators, and he's the first recognisably pre-"Dan Dare" space hero, the ground rules of an emerging genre already visible beneath McLoughlin's often inspired penmanship.

From its first ignition the American comic strip rapidly develops its own internal logics as a separate and self-contained continuum, perhaps reflecting its origins in the "funny papers" section of the daily press. Coming from a more text orientated background its British counterpart instead aspires to (but seldom achieves) the status of pictorial science fiction. McLoughlin, significantly, is S. F. literate, working in the "legit" medium illustrating book jackets for T. V. Boardman paperbacks. The technically skilled and creative Ron Turner - responsible here for some fine SPACE ACE frames and later for Rick Random, Jet-Ace Logan, and even Judge Dredd, does the same for the Scion pulp editions of E. C. Tubb and John Russell Fearn novels. There are other such genre cross-overs. JET COMICS is an ambitious all-S.F. magazine from 1953 with cover hero JACK TRENT: SPACE FLYER voyaging to Saturn's moon Titan when his radarscope "shows an object where only empty space should be". 'Jumping snakes' cries Jack, spotting a damaged Flying Saucer and its mummified Martian pilot, the plot escalating from then on. JET COMICS, which survives for only a single issue, was launched as a juvenile spin-off from the success of the adult AUTHENTIC S.F. magazine. The same publishers - Hamilton, also produced an excellent one-off "annual" - THE AUTHENTIC BOOK OF SPACE (1954). This 100-page volume included a long two-colour space strip by AUTHENTIC regular Joh J. Deegan as well as colour plates, articles and fiction by star writers Ken Bulmer, E. C. Tubb, William F. Temple and columnist Forrest J. Ackerman; "no value to equal this has ever been published before" boasts the ad., "nothing like it costs so little" - just one shiny shilling coin. In a similar vein the oddly named LAURIES SPACE ANNUAL of 1953 - from publishers T. Werner Laurie, alternates picture strips including Ron Turner's Space Scouts escapade DEATH OF A PLANET, with fiction by Sydney J. Bounds and BBC-TV writer (of THE ANGRY PLANET etc) John Keir Cross.

I remember with exquisite pleasure coming across two of the large format books which Gifford drools over, in a jumble sale as a schoolboy. The three SPACE KINGLEY annuals are lavishly illustrated by R. W. Jobson mixing text and script stories around a common theme - the arrival of the Lemmas "Venus Moon" into the solar system disrupting the balance of alien life on each planet in turn chapter by chapter; or Kingley's SECRET SQUADRON trip to the complex star Argonaut 198 with its retinue of 34 worlds as they drift close to our solar system. These fine books remain highly valued collectors items. While the SPACE STORY OMNIBUS - again one of three, is from Glasgow-based Collins Childrens Press in 1955 blending Nat Brand's final strips with Edward Boyd fiction. His MUTINY IN SPACE begins "in a room high above the octagonal city of Arcton, a piano is playing a man". The adventure of Ztl, Supreme Commander of the 24th Civilisation and its giant insectoid Milit-Ant defenders in their battle with Synthetic World 859, made a deep impression on my prepubertal mind. So much so that I refashioned the idea of a musical instrument

which “plays the musician” for one of my own short stories in a German S.F. anthology two decades later. Like Aldiss’ Murray Roberts, I don’t know who Boyd was, but his work in this musty volume is as good as much of the material intended for the contemporary adult market.

There’s a detonation of new titles as the 40’s gives way to the 50’s, many of them from the prolific Mick Anglo and Norman Light stables - CAPTAIN VALIANT: ACE OF THE INTERPLANETARY POLICE PATROL, SPACE COMMANDER KERRY, SPARKY MALONE: SPACE COMMANDO, and CAPTAIN FUTURE star of SPACEMAN: COMIC OF THE FUTURE. and although inevitably many of them are dire or at best solidly workmanlike space romps, more pedestrian than stratospheric, there’s also a perceptible quality shift upwards too. Gifford explains that “it was the 50’s before sci-fi really got started, first with George Pal’s astounding semi-documentary DESTINATION MOON ripped at the cinematic post by Robert L Lipert’s B-Movie ROCKETSHIP XM. Where the cinema led, comics followed”. The advent of EAGLE on the 14th April 1950 is an even more obvious catalyst in establishing new benchmarks in art and plotting that Turner, Sidney Jordan (JEFF HAWKE), and McLoughlin were more than equal to. In a sense even better

was to come as Harry Harrison, Michael Moorcock and Ken Bulmer hit their stride scripting for the early-to-mid 60’s strips with artists Brian Lewis, Don Lawrence, Gill Gillatt, Keith Watson and Turner (again).

But there’s a sneaking suggestion in the contagious enthusiasm of Denis Gifford’s tactile introduction that his allegiances lie earlier in the medium’s evolution, when it was a chaos of one-offs, irregular schedules, and a comic hisbian’s nightmare of inept publishers operating from the back rooms of run-down bookshops on a shoe-string budget. His own first editor/publisher, Ronald Flatteau, was an “underfunded dealer in foreign stamps” who managed to produce nine issues of the monthly CLIMAX (4d), a modest comic advertising itself as THRILLS: SUSPENSE!, and two-colour red-and-blue strips. Gifford later graduates through Mick Anglo’s SPACE COMICS to the big league with CHIPS.

But - as John Carnell writes in the summer of 1950, many an adult reader would admit “that it was those juvenile “horrors” that first set him along the road to regularly reading futuristic stories”.

Denis Gifford’s SPACE ACES pays more than a few such long overdue debts.

(Cont from p.7)

Nice, profitable con. I chatted briefly with a couple of younger authors and with Lois McMaster Bujold (who is also a younger author, but a somewhat better-known one.) Had a panel with Lawrence Watt-Evans. One of the drawbacks to this Marcon was that panellists were given no advance warning as to what panels they’d be on. This one was titled “The Year in Review” and one really would like to take notes ahead of time for something like that. Fortunately, Watt-Evans dragged some generalities out of his memory; I didn’t say a whole lot. As usual, I talked to people I knew and people I didn’t, though I’d talked to more people that I didn’t know at Magic Carpet Con, where I knew particularly nobody. At one point I walked into the “Chicago in 2000” bid party and Bill Roper grinned evilly and presented me with badges for myself and Juanita, proclaiming that we were members of the bidding committee. He’d told us this earlier, after we’d been startled to receive committee literature. “Oh, didn’t anyone tell you? You’re members of the committee.” Hal Clement stopped by our huckster table to say hullo. I got hugged by various women friends,

friends, though I’m prouder of the warm hug I got from a lesbian acquaintance at Magic Carpet Con. Maybe I’m “with it”, after all.

Then we drove home and collapsed. Eleven days on the road at three conventions, with six days at home in between the cons. Of course, as soon as we got home, the county began putting asphalt on the road in front of our house. We found out when we came home from town and the asphalt glued the passenger-side front door shut. Had to take the car to a mechanic to get the door opened, and while the latch now works, the mechanic is hunting through junkyards to find another one for us. I may bill the county, once I get the bill. I don’t have to pay until the better latch is installed. Meanwhile, the inside door panel is lying in the tailgate. The grass is a foot tall, the garden needs to be tilled, the fruit trees need to be sprayed, and we head for another convention on May 25. In Wisconsin, this time.

- Buck Coulson

(Cont from p.8)

“Ευρεκα!” (“Eureka!” or “I’ve found it!” - though presumably it had been there all along), he also, along with his wife, invented the Archimedean Screw, involving the raising of , and the expulsion of fluid from, a cylinder.

Archimedes also invented π (pi), thus standardising the shape of circles, making them a great deal rounder in the process - a boon to anyone travelling by cart.

There is, unfortunately, a sad story to his death. Kneeling in the sand in the process of bequeathing the world Noughts & Crosses (Tic-Tac-Toe), Archimedes was approached by a newly invading Roman. He challenged the Roman to a game and promptly won. The Roman accused him of making the rules up as he went along (which indeed he

was), and ran him through with a sword. A tragic end for a great man.

But Greek science does not end there! Not by any means. Forget not: Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Eratosthenes (a disciple of Aphrodite) and Cellophanes (a disciple of Hermaphrodite), Hippocrates (who invented medicine), Hypocrites (who invented lawyers), etcetera, etcetera, all great men and women (though not both at the same time in most cases), all great scientists, great thinkers and all-around swell folks.

- Darren Goossens

(With apologies to Sellar & Yeatman who wrote 1066 AND ALL THAT.)

A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH

BY Mae Strelkov

There were two bulldozers working to reach our Forest of Forever, when we arrived suddenly in mid-1993. Bypassing the terrible precipices of the Pedregosa Ravine, the bulldozers were converging above it, from either side of our "Wedge of Eternity", aiming to cart away all the wood up there, in competition. They had already sent in men to start felling the wood (hundreds of cubic metres of pine had been cut and were still waiting, in 1986, to be hauled out). They were thus carrying out a pincer movement.

Because we were strangers, and obviously very alien folk, all the local residents kept it a secret from us, of course. They watched ironically. Never would "those *gringos*" go up-hill to check.

And even if we managed to crawl half-way up, we would discover at our feet that terrible precipice and surely get no further. How would we ever learn of the competing timber-trails, aiming in a made sort of race, to reach the rest of our land which was surely "forever unreachable" to us. We'd never even know! The approaches were so far away.

For, you see, one entrance, to the first timber trail, goes through the patch of valley-land Blasé considers to be his own. That's about two kilometres from here, to our south. And the other entrance goes through the property of those representatives of Coca-cola (which Morla manages) about a kilometre or two to our north. This second way up followed the Ravine of the Pedregosa Canyon, as it curved steeply valleywards, and the trail up had been in use from time immemorial. Giant forests grew in that depression, showing how long that land had remained undisturbed by floods or avalanches. And yet an old air photo obtained for us by Ed, our geologist son, shows that the Pedregosa canyon and ravine must have formed a wide highway for terrible avalanches, periodically, for as long as the Santa Barbara Range has stood there. Santa Barbara is the saint of army men, the weapons and munitions, by the way! Yes, we live here "between the River of Last Resorts" and the thundering mountains of a "barbarous" goddess of armies! Indeed, a new air photo of that zone today would reveal the Pedregosa shorn of vegetation... only boulders remain.

I can state as a fact that the southern timber-trail being redone so hopefully by a bulldozer back then, "belonged" to Blasé, who was cleaning out all the valuable timber on high, including what grew on his neighbour's lands; but he had not as yet reached our Forest of Forever, only because there was some impassable shale on a canyon-like slope there, high above the actual Pedregosa. As for the other, northern way up, winding through the sombre forests, beside the Pedregosa's boulder-strewn river-bed that plunged steeply downwards, the project was masterminded by a timber-man named Ponce.... I thought at once of Ponce de Leon, seeker of El Dorado (and the waters of Eternal Youth), when I learned his name. I will call him "our Leon", henceforth, not to be constantly peppering these pages with his real surname.

I have not changed Morla's surname. I don't think it's necessary. I might have called him "Merlo" instead... it means "blackbird".

Since the Pedregosa timber-road had been there for years and years, it had a "right-of-way". It could penetrate the properties of various owners freely and people could use it without asking permission, (as long as they kept the *tranqueras* closed, which they often didn't bother to do). Morla tried to make sure the gate leading from the land he managed onto the highway was always kept shut, but he often got embittered when he found it too left open.

The Pedregosa Trail didn't reach our land (up high) for quite a ways. First it meandered through the place managed by Morla, then through the "Barberi land", (they're very nice people, not related to Santa Barbara either, it's just a coincidence their surname's similarity). The trail, raising gently ever higher because its soil is well-settled and smooth, then entered the property in litigation, "No-man's land"; and from thence entered ours, skirting the foot of the Pedregosa Cliff, that loomed spectacularly, overhanging the terrible ravine, as if about to crumble at any instant. Yellows and oranges - and the greens of moss where waterfalls trickled during the rainy seasons - predominated. Across the ravine northwards (then as yet shrouded with tangled greenery and giant trees), rose another cliff, but it too was rich in vegetation and old with moss in its rocky face. (It faces south, so gets little sun.)

As we now know, the competing timber-trails aimed for the virgin pines and cedars on the other, higher side of the Pedregosa, in the western heights. Leon was trying to reach them by hewing a way still higher (and beyond the well-worn first six kilometres of trail leading up to a *canchon*), but his trail would have remained always "under" the nearer cliffs, using the stream bed, after some huge boulders were blow up, he hoped. The other trail of Blasé went above the terrible Pedregosa precipice instead, but its goal was the same Forest of Forever.

As I say, we never knew about the timber-trail being hewn by that bulldozer rented by Blasé till Sylvia and I ran onto it, up high there, by accident. She and I were full of high spirits, ready to conquer even the Aconcagua of the Andes were it necessary, for we'd just learned of the result of the elections (at the close of the year 1983). Wonderful, splendid, dignified and idealistic yet realistic President Alfonsín would now guide us all out of the mess we were in (we hoped).

So, full of a wish to turn cartwheels and dance (had I only been younger!), I said, "Sylvia, let's go exploring! Never mind the ticks!"

We took a few oranges in a plastic bag and set off in summer blouses, but wearing pants and boots to the knees (Vadim insisted on it) and Sylvia - machete swinging - hacked our way straight uphill. It was the day of All Souls or All Saints (I forget which), and all the local populace were at their cemetery. We met, therefore, no timber-men as we climbed.

When we reached the Ridge of the Wild Pigs (hauling ourselves upwards by roots and branches, while Sylvia hacked a tunnel through tangled undergrowth, following a dim trail already opened there by cows and boars), we found a lot of enormous logs lying newly cut and each marked with a number painted on in red; all very neat.

"Oh," we surmised, "We must already be on our neighbour's lands. I wonder which one's been doing all this cutting! Poor trees... poor, lovely trees!" (That, as I recognise now, was the Ridge of the Wild Pigs, and those were our *Quinas*, being cut!)

We continued climbing, scrambling over the ranks of fallen forest giants, and perhaps they had a mute message for us both, but if so, what could it have been? "Cut us not? Spare the forests? Revenge our deaths?" I do not know....

We left those fallen logs far behind us as we continued this cutting-of-a-way through the jungles, and hauling ourselves ever higher up the steep inclines, hour after hour. The ridge rose steeply skywards and we followed it steadily.

Sylvia grew worried. She was leaving marks of our passage on standing tree-trunks that we passed, but still we must find our way back before nightfall, or we'd have to stay in the jungles till the next morning. On either side of the ridge that we kept climbing (still leading us to the southwest) plunged tremendous ravines, so thick with giant trees and undergrowth we didn't even think of scrambling down that way to explore.

As we went on arguing and climbing, Sylvia anxiously insisting, "Mother, don't you think we've gone far enough? Aren't you tired?" we suddenly broke out onto a lovely "highway" of red earth, newly bulldozed. But no human was visible, nor any tracks of humans... just the bulldozer's marks, which its treads had recently left.

We stopped to argue still more. "Let's follow it up!" said I, bewitched by the adventure.

"Mother, we'll never get back before night and daddy'll be terribly worried. But if you wish, we can explore this road down!" (I have to get *her* permission to do things - not the other way around).

So down we trotted, singing, even dancing a bit with glee. It seemed a magical road, its views were spectacular. I felt it was a real "mobius Strip" leading us to new dimensions of adventure. "Travelling onwards to a city bright and fair!" we sang, a hymn my mother had loved.

Suddenly the gradient steepened, the road turned sharply, descending valley-wards, and we heard voices far below.

"I'm afraid we're reaching Blasé's!" Sylvia said.

"No far, magical dimensions for us, today!" I mourned. I'd been hoping we'd have reached them, somehow... Lands Unknown, Mysteries Unexplored. (I'm incurable!)

It was great shock to Blasé and Matty when we trotted light-footedly by their little *ranchito* below. They called out for us to stop by, under a porch of thatch, and offered us some gaseosa (fizz like Coca-cola or Sprite.) Politely, we accepted, but we remained standing as we sipped. We could see they were stunned.

"How did you come from there? How did you get there in the first place? Nobody saw you pass..."

We explained the long up-and-down route we'd taken - some twenty kilometres, they reckoned - and they listened amazed. So they saw we were not, after all, mere stick-in-the-mud city folk. We could penetrate even the most savage of Santa Barbara's formidable domains, turning up at any instant where and when our presence might be least desired!

It really seemed to knock them out; take away the former eagerness to keep on bulldozing, on... and on! (And right after it the owner of that bulldozer got killed as mentioned, and the heirs demanded the machine sent back, so Blasé had to hunt to rent yet another bulldozer to finish his plans for that season up there.)

What with the way ravines and ridges and tangled jungles turned and twisted on our mountain-side, we might repeatedly push our way upwards exploring, but we were never sure if the land at any given moment was our land or our neighbours, for the only way to keep track of our surroundings was by observing the sun, plus rare glimpses through all the foliage down to the wide, long valley so far below.

Thus, when I later asked Leon about all those fallen logs each with a number painted on it, he black eyes flickered, his features froze like brown carved wood, and he answered coldly, "On the land of Lopez". (Lopez is a name for a van-

ished owner of a property quite far away from our place, to our south.)

We didn't know either back then the name given by local folk to the ridge that started ascending right above us, "of the Wild Pigs", since it had always been their favourite stamping-grounds.

Nonetheless, it seems Leon wasn't really alarmed by our propensity to suddenly pop "anywhere", exploring. Tony and Sylvia had also frightened him in the past when Tony could come visiting on a free weekend, but I'll mention that occasion in a minute.

Leon was too deeply into his project to desist. He *had* to despise us, simply for self-assurance. He put his teenaged sons to spy, ostensibly "clearing worthless trees" on Mudwall's valley-land right near our new house. They knocked several trees down onto our fence, whooping. Then, there they sat, arrogant and scornful, for we didn't make a scandal; so they remained brazenly, watching us still running back and forth with pails of water for the newly-planted peach trees (presents of the Barberí family). How they guffawed at times, as we sweated like Chinese coolies, desperately doing what had to be done, to turn these wilds into a mini-paradise. (Today, those trees have produced abundant peaches.)

Well, by now those same lads hero-worship Tony and Sylvia, and are much in awe of Vadim and me. But one can't blame the neighbours around here for having misread us at the start. When Vadim and I spilled out that first day from the station-wagon, accompanied by an army of cats and an aged dog, (Jinny, female) and started between the two of us carting into that shell of a hut our most essential belongings... bags and bedding and a mattress and a bed frame (of slats of wood, which we propped up with cement blocks on the gravelly slanting floor inside) and as I hung up the plastic sheets in lieu of window-glass, what could they do but sniff in scorn? Hobos, aged, penniless hobos, slumming it! That's the impression we gave at the start. When Tony came by bus for a weekend so Vadim could drive back to fetch Sylvia and bring more things, I got Tony to put up a temporary lean-to at the back (with a mere canvas wall) and that added to the impression people were obtaining. (Tony put it up with loud protests, while agreeing it had to be done. He's replaced it with a huge, lovely kitchen and a front room and porch of "cement blocks" and, before he built on that portion, we'd had builders in to add two bedrooms and a bath of brick and pack porches, and so on, so that first impression people got of us is greatly changed by now.)

The people here had never seen the likes of us. It is rare (perhaps never) for "foreigners from afar" to come to sojourn, shoulder to shoulder, with these natives out here. And Sylvia so blond and blue-eyed, like her dad Vadim. Tony is brown-eyed and brown-haired, more in the pattern of my side of the family. To the people here, admiring Sylvia, it looked like a movie goddess from Hollywood had come for a spell for inscrutable reasons... perhaps to help her doddering parents (or grandparents?) to settle in, before she'd depart. I'm white-haired now, and was oldish even when I had these last two children, (Sylvia when I was thirty-seven, and Tony when I was forty-three.)

Well, as I say, our own "Ponce de Leon", seeker after his own dream of an El Dorado, refused to give up his plans just because we'd suddenly arrived to infest the hitherto peaceful scene. (Formerly his only problem was Blasé, in competition with him to "get there first". But even so on a stretch of richly forested mountain-side five hundred metres wide and a kilometre long; surely there's be enough for all. Blasé nibbling at the southern side, Leon at the northern, for all they were worth, once they'd get there!)

When we first arrived, and before we'd laid eyes on Blasé and his woman, Blasé was very curious to know what our reactions might be towards timber-thieves, so he sent a peon to warn us, when Leon and Mudwall between them continued to have wood cut on our land, right above us.

The peon called out and Vadim attended at the tranquera; the fellow pointed to that Ridge of the Wild Pigs right above. "They are cutting wood up there on your land. Don't you hear the power-saws going? Blasé sent me to warn you." (We, right then, had no idea who this Blasé might be.)

By then Morla had officially introduced us to Leon who'd agreed to cut some wood for us, so Vadim answered, "It's all right. It's Leon, cutting wood for us."

"Well, if that's what you believe..." replied the fellow, shrugging, and a bit puzzled, for certainly it was Leon's workers cutting wood up there, but for Leon and Mudwall who would share the profits half-and-half. Not for us at all!

When I'd asked Leon direct who was cutting wood up there, and wasn't it on our territory?, he looked me straight in the eyes with his most handsome, Luciferin expression, and told me, "Sounds are deceptive. It's on the land of your neighbour there, next to you."

Well, we either had to trust him - and Morla, such a nice new friend - or we might as well not trust anybody and stay here with hands tied. Leon kept warning us, moreover, against Blasé, who was "stealing all the wood - and even the lands - of everybody up there".

Surrounded by so many timber-thieves, for each of them warned us against all the others, we really had a hard time "taking sides", at the start. Whom could we finally trust?

It was a question of doing something, not to lose all chance of winning the respect of the people who'd been living here for years and in some cases generations. But they'd all seemingly ganged up against us, we the new owners of an incredibly rich forest and not even aware of it as we grubbed around our little shack, trying to "make ends meet"... raise some vegetables, plant a few fruit-trees for the future!

Still, we approached the problem with great caution, sounding out each person individually, giving them our seemingly undivided trust, (though in reality we watched each one closely, measuring each word and deed on their part). And so we "gave them rope to hang themselves with", as it were. They were too full of self-confidence and so sure that we were incredibly trusting idiots; and so they rushed on....

We trusted that the "Father of All", (who makes the sun shine and the rain fall on both the just and the unjust), would at last sort things out to the advantage of all concerned.

And so, as I said, we observed closely and waited....

Once we had settled in somewhat, (it took ages - till we finally could get a black-well dug [Tony helping the peon dig it three metres down and more] and installed a flush toilet: for eight months in rain and shine we had to "go to the wilds" - as most people here still do when requiring a W.C. There wasn't one)... so once we had extra rooms added on and I could resume my studies of archaic Chinese and other languages with all the echoes that matched, I no longer fretted so much about watering the fruit trees as Vadim and Sylvia helped equally doing so. Things were going well....

Then things came to a head. Land surveyors appeared on the scene, officially appointed to make certain whose land was whose, and they discovered that the remaining "Forest of Forever" is on our property, and not on the land of neighbours. There were loud outcries. As for ourselves, appointed thus by the fates as "Guardians of the Cedar Forest" (all that's survived), it is evidently our task to stand guard.

** ** **

A question might be: is anybody stealing wood from us right now? (As of mid-January 1986, when this is being written....)

The answer is a positive "No". Mudwall knows it can't be done, but he was here just minutes ago as I type this, reminding Tony, "If it's proved your land is mine, I hope you're keeping an account of those trees you cut, so as to pay me the full value!" He never will give up that forlorn hope of even yet also collecting collecting on the *quina* he tried (with Leon, seeker of "El Dorados"), to harvest back when we first arrived. If he could only prove somehow that that ridge of the Wild Pigs is his, then of course all the land above it automatically will also be his.

We our own makr now for placing on logs, at their cut ends. It is an archaic Chinese character for "me, mine", now pronounced *wo* in Mandarin, but *gro* or *ngo* (=) in the older Shanghai dialect I knew. It represents "swords in opposition", hence "ego". Adding "hills" to the side, it becomes the 0 of Omei, name of the sacred mount where Buddha's Shadow within a rainbow can sometimes be glimpsed. (A natural phenomenon there.) I was born nearby in 1917, and to please me the children have named this present property "Omei".

A branded log here takes on a new vitality. There's magic in a brand. I think of the old days of the Near Eastern Mesopotamia, and the Dravidian times in India, also, where a mere stopper of clay on a container, with a brand pressed in while the clay was still moist, protected the item from theft. Perhaps the old tales of genies confined in bottles go back to that time. A brand proclaimed that a protective genie was hidden within and would attack if the branded stopper was broken.

Once in a while when we hear of left-over cut logs stacked somewhere on our land, (and not carted away because the would-be thieves got cold feet), Tony or Sylvia might brand such logs, "for the sake of order". It impresses our neighbours tremendously that we do this. Those 8 *rollos de quina* also, in turn, got branded with our mark, but that didn't save them from being rolled about and ruined by that avalanche and flood that rushed by that place in March of 1984. This custom of cutting wood "just in case a road can be made to bring the wood down later" is terribly hard on the ecology of the region. Even when buyers are ready to pay us in advance to do this sort of thing on speculation, we have constantly rejected the very idea.

Buyers often visit us to try to convince us we ought to give them a right to work our forests for a certain period of time, (or to take out a certain number of *cubos* of pine and cedar), and they are ready to pay down big sums in advance. But we do not want to let such timber-men loose in our heights. They would show little mercy to the trees! And they'd cut recklessly, even before one could be certain a road up might finally be opened, as everybody insists *is* possible, given time and much hard work.

As of this minute the tremendous native walnuts, *parcarás*, *tipas*, and other forest giants that grew thickly along the river shore at the foot of our land are down, but by the same boys that cut the wood on the Ridge of the Wild Pigs in mid-1983 for Leon. Tony and Sylvia were introduced to the representative of a Re-forestry Association sponsored by the Government, and he offered - in the plan available - the cost of clearing a portion of jungle, then re-planting it with tame saplings (pines, eucalyptus, etc) and the only proviso is that we must not cut any of the newly planted trees for some years. (Six or seven, usually, depending). The wood then is ours. One does not return anything to the Re-forestry Association. All it asks is that we comply with our task - replacing forests, planting tame saplings where native jungles used to be.

I have not gone down yet to see the newly barren place where young eucalyptuses must take over next. For me, the great walnut and their companions still rear high, for I've not faced the shock I'll experience when at last I go to see.

(I'm limping right now; hurt my heel somehow, the other day. It "protects" me from a need as yet to see the change and mourn secretly.

The Oz Scene

by Ron Clarke

The first fanzine this time is **THE AUSTRALIAN SF BULLSHEET**, not so much because it was the first fanzine I received after TM 87, but because of the sheer *number* of issues received. The **BULLSHEET** is edited by Marc Ortlieb, of PO Box 215, Forest Hill, Vic 3131. It is a coloured A4 sheet printed both sides with recent news of fans and a few pros in Australia. As well as some club/group listings and cons coming up. #28 is dated 17th March, 1995 and #34a is dated 16th June 1995. A fanzine definitely to be supported. \$6 for 10 issues - cheques to Marc Ortlieb.

THYME is the other regular national newsletter, though in size at 22 pages it is more a magazine. Published roughly bimonthly by Alan Stewart of PO Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, VIC 3005 #102 comes with Merv Binns' AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS 62 and Ian Gunn's ARTYCHOKE tacked on the back. There are articles as well as news and reviews - this has a list of fiction eligible for the Ditmar Awards (including some publishing in TM). #103 has more of the same, with more book reviews and con reports: *Potlatch 4*, *Force 1*, a repeat of the Isobel Carmody interview and more LoCs. Sub is A\$12 for 5/6 issues - or the usual. If you get both these zines you are covering most of Oz fandom (both reprint some of the news published in SYDNEY FUTURIAN).

ETHEL THE AARDVARK, the magazine of the Melbourne SF Club, is up to #60 in this incarnation. The issues are folded A3 and are 18 pages each. Sub is Club membership (\$15 standard, \$20 "family", \$20 overseas), or the usual. There is the editorial, Presidential, Club news (new library books, etc), book reviews, some erratic reports by Ian Gunn, an interview with Isobelle Carmody, Oz SF published in 1994, a couple of articles and a letter column. If you are the secretary of an SF club then Ethel makes a good trade for your clubzine, or if you would like to contact some Oz pen-pals.

CHIMNEYVILLE ALMANAC #3, edited by Johnny Lowe of 1152 W. 24th St, #1, San Pedro, CA 90731, USA. is a 12 pp zine with contents "Why *Didn't* Death take a Holiday?" in where Johnny tells of the deaths of some close relatives, T2 Revisited where Johnny reviews Terminator 2, the special edition; an interesting article on the X-Files; a reviews of some sci-fi films, including ED WOOD, STARGATE, then some LoCs, and a head-jolting cartoon. The CA is a fannish zine, quite light hearted, but not lightly written: ie the editor has put some thought into what he says. Available for the usual.

TIME BRAINS 2013, #s 17 & 19, April & June 1995, the newsletter of the Sydney Dr Who SF Fan Club; issued monthly by Neil Hogan. \$12 per year. Cheque/MO payable to Neil Hogan. This is only a 6 pp newsletter, but Neil packs a lot into the format. Mostly news about Dr Who, but also other SF TV shows, such as the X-FILES and the fact that Channel 7 is restarting BABYLON 5 on June 20 (at 11.30 PM!!). Would you believe that most of my SF media info comes from this newszine? It includes cuttings and correspondence from overseas - such as a long piece on the Star Trek VOYAGER. Excellent value for money. I don't know if Neil wants to trade: you could try him.

METALUNA 41, produced by John Tipper of PO Box 487, Strathfield, NSW 2135. 48 page A5 multi-media SF fanzine. Contents: BABYLON 5, BLAKE'S 7, DR STRANGELOVE, ESCAPE FROM JUPITER, NSW Fandom, THE XFILES, How To Be A Fannish Tart, a story by Shane Dix LOST IN PARADISE and LoCs. The red cover illo is a scene from RED DWARF.

Actually, the first article is **THOUGHTS ON RED DWARF** by Sue Bursztynski... followed by lots of news, zine reviews, etc etc. An excellent zine. I watched DR STRANGELOVE on tape the other night (it had been screened several weeks ago at about 2.30 AM) and loved it all over again. Also enclosed is the **BOOK AND MAGAZINE COLLECTORS ADVERTISER** - the name says it all. Ask for a copy of this also.

BLOODSONGS #4, edited by Steve Proposch. PO Box 7530, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic. .66 A3 folded pages, 4 issues for \$18, 6 issues for \$26. The issue looks good, though thin. Fiction is: THIRST/Sarah Hoyt, VIDEODEATH/Ken Goldman, and DONT MOVE/Renny Willins, articles: "Pulp Fiction in Oz" by Steven Paulsen, an interview of Joe Lansdale by Bill Congreve, "Nights of the Celluloid Dead: A History of the Zombie Film - Part 1" by Robert Hood, an interview of artist Kurt Stone by B. J. Stevens, a comic strip *Taxi Murders*, (which unfortunately is one of the worst strips I've seen), followed by "Cut" by Michael Helms reviewing upcoming horror movies, then a short article "Horror in the USA" (actually about written horror), then book reviews, and ending with a chat with Dan Simmons. The best fiction was THIRST. As you can see, you get quite a lot for your \$4.95.

FOSFAX is one hefty zine - #s 174 and 175, dated Jan/Feb 1995 and April. US\$3.00 gets you 66 and 68 pages of print smaller than that used in TM. FOSFAX is edited by Timothy Lane and Elizabeth Garrott for the Falls of Ohio SF & F Assn., of PO Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281, USA. Editorials by Tim Lane (*The Editor's Cage*) and Eliz Garrott (*Queloue Peneses*). The contents includes in-depth book reviews by Joseph Major, Charles Lipsig & Dainis Bisenicks among others, poetry reviews by Freda Westford, Con reports, an on-going critique on Heinlein's novels, which is really in depth, plus much political commentary, which spills into the large (33 page) letter column, which also discusses past issues, abortion (big in the USA at the moment), the past status of slavery and many other topics. Nearly on every page are small illos to break up the pages of print. A really neat zine for current topics.

BUSSWARBLE #24, edited by Michael Hailstone of 14 Bolden St, Heidelberg, VIC 3084. It is available for the usual and is a perzine - as well, Michael uses SR1 (Spelling Reform 1). In this 18 pp A4 issue Michel gives a film review of STARGATE, continues his tale of travelling to South America in 1994 to view the solar eclipse - which is 14 interesting pages - and comments on the facts re a cooling Mars. There follows two pages of letters on past issues from Joseph Nicholas and Bruce Gillespie. There are lots of fans out there who don't like some of Michael's expressed opinions (or their reading of them...) but a new reader can only see for themselves what he says as to whether they like this zine. I find it worth reading.

FILE 770 #107, edited by Mike Glycer, of 5828 Woodman Ave, #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401, USA. Available for the usual, or sub of US\$8 for 5, or US\$15 for 10 issues. 32 pp and is the only US newszine I receive and read. #107 has the one-page ANSIFILE issue - quite a good spoof of ANSIBLE, the UK one-sheeter newszine. The rest of the issue covers marriage in Chicago, obituaries, tributes to Robert Bloch, in-depth coverage of ConAdian: the 1994 World SF Convention by various people, the Aurora Awards, a con report on the Deep South Con by Janice Gelb, a long book review of STAR TREK CREATOR: THE AUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY OF GENE RODDENBERRY by Kathleen Toth, as well as letters of comment. Worth subbing to.

SPACE CADET #2 edited by R. Graeme Cameron of 1855 W. 2nd Ave, Apt #110, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6J 1J1. SC is a folded A4 zine of some 32 pp. It is available for the usual or \$1 per issue. The contents of this issue are: an Editorial, an article on how the editor started reading SF pbs, a film review of WIZARD OF MARS, a continuing trip report to the ancient cities of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, a reprint from a 1986 fanzine on meeting Fred Pohl, part 2 of his grandfather's account of the front lines in World War I and letters from a whole lot of fans. The zine ends with an appeal to help save snow monkeys. This issue is 32 pages, and I found it worth reading.

HANDSHAKE #4: The Time Machine Special, featuring poetry with a focus on time machines (THE TIME MACHINE, by H. G. Wells, was first published in 1895). The poems are: Time After Time by L. A. Hood, 100 Years of Time Machines by Brian Maycock, Time Up? by Neil K.

Henderson, Time Machine by Ed Blundell, Thankyou Morlocks by K. V. Bailey, The Truth about the Time Machine by Richard Lung, I Explained it again in Circles of Stone by Steve Sneyd, Nightmare by John Howard, The Past by John Light, What the Time Traveller didn't Tell by J. C. Hartley, Time Flies by Steve Sneyd, Edgezone Syndrome by Steve Sneyd and Our Special Correspondent in the Day after Tomorrow Reports/The Reverse Cat Problem by Andrew Darlington. I enjoyed reading these poems by British authors. I'm sure it would be available from John F. Haines of 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd, Padgate, Warrington, WA2 0QG, UK.

DRAGON'S BREATH, April 1995 is a one-page zine review zine published by Zine Kat C/- Pigasus Press, 13 Hazely Combe, Arretton, Isle of Wight, PO30 3AJ, UK. In minuscule print the editor has reviewed some 25 or so fanzines covering subjects ranging from esoteric sex to SF (like TM). Copies are available for trade or UK subs £2.20 for 12 issues. Oh, and the May issue is also out. The editor gives ratings from groovy to anal, so you nose what you are getting if you write for the zines reviewed.

THE NOVA SCOTIA HERMIT #4 is a perzine from Rodney Leighton of RR #3, Pugwash, N.S., CANADA B0K ILO which is an account in diary form of happenings in his daily life and the zines he's received. There is other material in here other than SF - he mentions wrestling zines, 'facials' in porn, and other bits and pieces. It's only 4 pages, but Rod has succeeded in getting his personality into it. He is wanting to trade for fanzines, so if you are interested in receiving Canadian zines, drop off an issue or two.

WONDERING & WANDERING #5, published by Don Fitch of 3908 Frijol, Covina, CA 91722, USA. Available for the usual. This zine is a continuation of SUNDAY TO SATURDAY, and continues the page numbering from those issues (I presume). Don leads off with an editorial combined with journal extracts talking about fanzine fandom, his Minneapolis trip to Minicon, the existence of mail art and his idea for a cumulative index of MIMOSA. There follows an article on FACTSHEET FIVE, then some fanzine reviews and LoCs covering subjects such as copyright, clothes, chocolate, fan publishing, cacophony, computers. The issue finishes with several short con reports - quite a lot for 18 pp of readable (10 point) type.

SPENT BRASS #s 23-27. Edited & published by Andrew Hooper & Carrie Root, of 4228 Francis Ace, N. #103, WA 98103, USA. 8-12 page issues, mimeographed on coloured US4to. Issue 23/24 had an editorial in one page-wide column at about 9 point, which made it very hard to read. The contents are worth reading though, and include articles/stories about "The Grave Little Toaster" by Andi Shechter, "Indispensable Zines" by Andy, a piece about collating a mailing by Jae Leslie Adams, "A Sense of Stress Relief" by Carrie about a bad 1993, "Results of the 1993 Spent Brass Poll" give the favourites in the zine scene (best zine being MIMOSA), "Uffosh Thots" by Teddy White, "Confrancisco Worldcon 1993" by Bill Rotsler (w/artwork), an article on Readercon by Scott Custis & Jeanne Gomoll, plus other articles and the LoCol *Blowback*.

CANBERRA SF SOCIETY INC NEWSLETTER, May & June 1995, edited by Katrina Weeden, GPO Box 47, Civic Square, ACT 2608. 16 pp. A4. Sub is \$24 year, \$12 students, or arranged trades. This newsletter is strictly club news, though the bulk of the issue is fiction. There is a short editorial, news and "snippets". The fiction in the May ish is A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE by Barry Rosenberg. The two characters are Maloney and Baloney. I gave up reading after the first couple of paragraphs of the story. There is a list of the (monthly) club meetings - Canberra in August... Arghh! - and a list of upcoming Oz conventions. Good for fiction, or Canberra news.

THE FROZEN ROG #11, edited by Benoit Girard of 1016 Gullaume-Bolsset, Cap-Rouge, CANADA GIY 1YE. 28 pp of folded f'cap II didn't know this size still existed!). Available for the usual. This is a zine I always enjoy reading - Benoit always has something interesting to say, as well as articles that have information that is useful. In the editorial he talks about the interview he went for that netted him his latest job, and his logging onto the Internet. There follows a 24 pp lettercdm, which shows that this zine is really reacting with its readers. Topics range from Canadian history, through to comics and polygamy.

The editor's personality comes across well in his editorial and in his fairly lengthy replies in the LocCol. A definite trader.

SO YOU SAY #11, edited by Shayne McCormack, 49 Orchard Rd, Bass Hill, NSW 2197. 13 pp A4. Available for the usual. This is an opinion zine that Shayne uses to keep in touch with her friends and other interested folk. Shayne is a media fan (both sf and other) and so the topics covered thish profile this: The editorial is "Blood in the Water - Paramount and Star Trek fandom in Australia" set out her views on the latest threats by Paramount against ST fans and fan clubs in Oz. Paramount are really pressing their © of the TV show and all its fans, which only goes to show what dead-shits they are. The Second part is a personal look at "View to the Interview" about a certain vampire film. There follows a good LocCol. From one of the original pushers in ST in Oz.

THE REASONABLE FREETHINKER #4, edited & published by Tom Feller of Box 13626 Jackson, MS 39236, USA. Available for the usual. Thish is 32 pp of US4to. Xerox/offset (as are other zines, if not mentioned as otherwise). The majority of the material herein is written by the editor. First off is the editorial, wherein Tom gives some background to his job working for a hotel company, and various fan functions. The next article is "Back to Basics" and he mentions the movie THE PUPPET MASTERS as a lead-in to other vampire and sf movies and books. Next is a long look at INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE, followed by "The nuts and bolts of Frankenstein", a review of FACTSHEET 5 by Johnny Lowe, then con reports on the World Fantasy Con, the Porno City Halloween Party, the Eaton Conference by Diane Miller, a review by Tom of GENERATIONS and lastly LoCs. A good, rounded zine.

THE NYARLATHOTHEP NEWSLETTER is a one sheeter, edited & published on dot-matrix by Jack Lance, C/- E. Hartley, Rippenduff Via Rappville 2469. It has slithered its way to me through a warp in space from one of the Old Ones. Jack is a fan of horror and he has his own idiosyncratic style. The letter has odds and end of news, and comes covered with cat-skin. It also has zine reviews, plus LoCs. Jack edits, along with David Tansey, AVATAR, of which I haven't seen a copy....

REVIEW ZINE #36, edited by Susan Smith-Clarke of 6 Bellevue Rd, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776. 12 pp A4. Available for SSAE & donation of stamps. Thish contains news of the various media club meetings in Sydney (the sci fi media half of Sydney fandom news) and lists some 14 events up to November 1995. There is also overseas news gleaned from various sources. Oh, and there is 5+ pages of book reviews covering sci fi, crime, fantasy and TV shows such as Quantum Leap. Susan is thinking of having this available for sub (about \$1 per issue). Great to keep up with Medtrek & media news.

QUIPU 5 July 1995, 6 pp, written by Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Rd, 6-R, New York, NY 10034, USA. QUIPU is a perzine, available for the usual. In thish Vicki writes about politics in the USA; then she mentions the Las Vegas Corflu, the 90th Anniversary of the NY subway, and ends with a book review of TRAVELS WITH LIZBETH. Vicki writes interestingly - this is a zine I hope to continue to receive.

Next follows a whole nest of notices and publicity releases:

PLATYPUSSARY #1 - news from the Australia in 99 bid. Available from PO Box 99, Bayswater, VIC 3153.

MEDTREK V - PR #1, info about the 1997 SF media con. Always excellent value. 6 Bellevue Rd, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776.

TORONTO IN 2003 Worldcon bid- info & presupport (Can\$10) from 3026-300 Coxwell Ave, Toronto, Ontario CANADA M4L 2A0.

PAUL COLLINS' book release list from *Tragically Hip*, of PO Box 310, Prahran, VIC 3181. There is a total of 30 titles listed.

MIRROR-DANSE BOOKS list from PO Box 3542, Parramatta, NSW 2124. Lots of Oz authors at excellent prices. Bill Congreve runs thish.

TERROR 95 - the Melbourne Horror Con. 27/29th October for \$45 to PO Box 7545, St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, VIC 3004.

THE AUSTRALIAN SF FOUNDATION has a new logo - a bear up a pole, which looks much less faanish & more businesslike.

THE VICAR OF MORBING VYLE by Richard Harland (scabby horror) is \$10.95 from Karl Evans, PO Box 134 Wollongong East 2530.

In Depth 14

by Bill ConGreve

Please forgive me, this time around *In Depth* will be as much a road story as it will be a review column. Forgive? Maybe you'll like the idea. Let's face it, THE MENTOR is becoming more cosmopolitan these days.

After spending two and a half years tied down in Sydney, I've finally gotten off my butt and gotten myself back on the road, where sometimes I feel I belong. Sydney is a lovely city to live in: the scenery, the beautiful people who are always fascinating to observe, the pubs, the blues bands, the bookshops, the beaches, the mountains, the idiots in the state government, the traffic jams, the pollution.

There comes a time.

Driving through the north-western suburbs on my way out of Sydney knowing I wouldn't be back for a month offered a great deal of pleasure. After spending several hours packing it was great to just sit in the car and relax. I didn't have time to get the car stereo fixed -- when I push in a tape the radio comes on -- but that chore can come later. I guess I'll have to listen to JJJ and Radio Australia for a few days. That or listen to my own thoughts. Give me a break from the heavy metal (Queensryche, Hawkwind, Gunners, Blue Oyster Cult) I usually prefer.

First came Pennant Hills Road, with its outrageously priced petrol stations all queuing up to relieve motorists of their money before they get on the freeway to Newcastle. I filled the car up and bought a couple of chocolate bars to make life more interesting before getting that far. The freeway goes all the way through to the New England Highway now. Instead of cutting through Cessnock and joining the New England in Branxton -- where the road signs say: 'Please drive carefully -- we have no hospital' -- I stayed on the freeway. The new stretch is a road I haven't travelled before, which is good, but I wonder if it's worthwhile. All two and three lanes of a 110 kph bitumen boredom. Thank heavens the scenery was nice. But it has been built for traffic going north up the Pacific Highway and was about twenty kilometres longer for the route I wanted to take, even though the road signs directed me that way, so I wonder if I wasted my time. And the road through Cessnock keeps a driver *awake*.

Just north of Scone, on the New England Highway, there is a place called Burning Mountain. Back when it was first discovered by Europeans, it was thought to be Australia's only active volcano. The truth came out shortly afterwards. At some unknown time in the past, some phenomenon has set alight a coal seam. It may have been lightning, or a bush fire, or perhaps the old aboriginal trick of corralling and killing wildlife by controlled burning; whatever the cause, the fire has headed deep underground. It is possible to follow the track of the fire into the past, by following the effect it has had on the landscape as it has burnt its way south. The soil is a burnt orange: it will still sustain vegetation, but the trees are of a different species and there is less undergrowth. Walking up the trail, the observer will finally reach the place where the fire

is hottest. The ground is cracked, burnt, and covered in ashes. There are no trees for twenty metres in any direction. The fire burns alongside a steep embankment, but it must follow the direction of the coal. If heat went sideways, rather than up, it would have a much easier path to the surface. This fire has been burning for longer than humanity has had recorded history. It is quite possible that mankind had nothing to do with starting the fire, and will have nothing to do with putting it out. It isn't at all spectacular. just a couple of hundred square metres of ground devoid of grass, with hot gases smelling of sulphur coming out of the cracks. Local authorities have built an elevated pathway across the top of the affected ground. Whenever I go there, I stand along this path, looking into the cracks and feeling the heat come up from the earth. It feels strange to have the natural order disturbed in just this fashion, yet comforting and also wonderful at the same time.

The coal seam burns along at a rate of several metres a year. I haven't been there for two and a half years, and I'm looking forward to see how far the heat has progressed. In front of the fire is a bluff that drops away for several hundred feet. Another thing I wonder is just what will happen when the fire burns out the side of the bluff. Or will it? Is it deep enough so that it will burn along underneath the sheep pasture below the bluff?

I have a ritual. Whenever I drive north to Tamworth, I visit Burning Mountain. Yesterday when I came through, it was too late. I would have broken my neck getting up the path in the darkness. Yet now I'm wondering if there is any light given off by Burning Mountain. How far underground is the fire? I may have to go back there at night, risk my neck, and search for an orange/ red glow.

And now it really is time I got out of here and reviewed some books.

#

On a trip like this, it may be more appropriate to talk about the books I'm currently reading. The first of these is THE WARLORDS, by John Rowe. This novel was first published back in 1978, and concerns a future China and India, both of which now have populations in excess of a billion people, both of which are incapable of supporting their own populations, or curbing their population growth, and both of which are slowly absorbing world reserves of food, where ruling generals are beginning to consider a genocidal war as a solution to population control. Rowe has a very bleak, very cynical vision. His novel is set in 1999, and is as much about a lack of political foresight, and a lack of human empathy, as it is about a problem which, despite all warnings, the human race has ignored.

Why do we have economists who see that the solution to the world's problems is a larger population, just so that we can have an artificial economic growth sponsored by population growth, where the amount of wealth per person is actually falling, just so that they can have larger numbers to play with? Obviously, we must factor population growth into our definitions of economic growth, and rely on a definition that has more to do with an average standard of living than it has to do with amounts of money in circulation, or on inflation. This novel parallels George Turner's thinking (of whom more in a moment) from the novel, THE DESTINY MAKERS. Rowe has a background in military intelligence. His first book caused his resignation at a time when he was attached to the US Defence Intelligence Agency. He has written other novels with strong political themes (most notably McCABE, PM), but THE WARLORDS, with its theme of overpopulation and political/military solutions to the same, is his only claim to an SF novel. It is also interesting that Rowe has made some attempt to build a coherent future into his speculation, and also indulges in a little technological speculation. Even with seven-

teen years of hindsight, Rowe's politics are convincing and cynical, as you could expect from his background, but his other attempts at speculation (sociological and technological) are quite shortsighted. The novel is horribly sexist, but that sexism is a product of the political thinking of Rowe's time. Perhaps the lack of strong female characters is the greatest failing in Rowe's speculation.

The other novel I'm reading is Tim Winton's thriller, *IN THE WINTER DARK*. Winton received two senior fellowships and was put up at the Australia Council studio in Paris for a few months while writing this thing, and it is nothing but a very short (130 page) attempt to write a bit of bush phobia into a horror novel. It's been published as a 'literary' thriller without a mention of the evil word 'horror' anywhere in the packaging. Personally, I find it a little demeaning and discriminatory that Australia's literary figures, the 'members of the club', are lauded and supported in writing stuff which fits purely on the horror shelf, while nobody else in the country can get what they're doing recognised. This isn't the fault of the writers. There is a club of hangers-on, academics, critics, publishers, public servants, would-be-if-they-could-be who control publishing and government funding of the Arts in Australia who will read a literary work from a recognised 'literary' figure, and enjoy it for its dark nature, its use of horror metaphor and imagery, who would faint if the word 'horror' was used in connection with what they've just read. This ain't that genre stuff, this is serious literature!

You can tell that this annoys me a little.

IN THE WINTER DARK tells a story of four people in an isolated West Oz farming community in human conflict with each other and in deeper conflict with the bogeyman -- this time an unknown creature that is mutilating and killing their farm animals. Winton succeeds in allowing the reader to identify with all four characters -- a worthy feat of storytelling in itself. Despite the bogeyman, it is the human story, the history of his characters that provides the resolution to the story. The bogeyman is more of a catalyst for a human story than it is a force on its own. It is a typically imperfect, restricting, human ending which doesn't confront the external bogeyman and which doesn't fully satisfy on the level of resolving the complex situation the characters find themselves in. I got the point, but so much more was possible. Perhaps I'm simply thinking commercially.

Once I'm done with these two, I'm looking forward to reading a few of the writers I find inspirational, not simply for their style, but also for the kind of fiction they write. One of my purposes on this trip is to do some research for a road novel, another purpose is to finish a number of short stories that have been hanging around, unresolved, for too long. Some of the writers I'll be reading to kick start me in this are Melanie Tem, Stephen King, Peter Straub, the cynical British war novelist Derek Robinson, Jonathan Carroll. I'll read a couple of the horror and SF *YEAR'S BEST* anthologies and re-read the superb new Dowling collection, *AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NIGHT*. English readers who want to track down some of Dowling's work should get in touch with Paul Gamble's Unlimited Dream Company (address in *INTERZONE*), which now handles all *Aphelion* and *MirrorDanse* titles. I've got a Karl Wagner collection to read, some Barker, Nancy Collins, Joe Lansdale who, with Robinson, is another major inspiration... As you can see, I've got a lot more to read than I'll get around to, especially if I want to do some writing as well.

Here's a few Australian novels I've recently enjoyed.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT by Veronica Hart (Mandarin, 485 + viii pp, \$8.95) is a psychological horror thriller in which a bunch of inner-city university people hold a seance during a drunken party. They manage to invoke the shade of Jack the Ripper, who then relives his life of crime as he slowly

kills off the people who attended the party. But then the pattern changes, and new possibilities emerge, possibilities which are only seen by one person who attended the party. Will she be the next victim, or will it be her daughter?

It's an old idea, but it has been very well handled with gruesome imagination and a strong storytelling skill. *THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT* is a page-turner that leaves you not wanting to guess the twist in the ending.

What the world needs like a celery juice enema is another epic fantasy trilogy. *MORGANA'S LAW*, comprising the short novels *PARCHMENT*, *ROSEWOOD* and *MORDANTIEM*, by Nicholas St John, has been self/vanity/small press published by Coster Stewart Publications, PO Box 194, Blackwood, SA 5051. (569 + vi pp, \$14.95) A slightly more thoughtful typesetting job would have resulted in fewer pages, a lower printing cost for whoever the poor person was who paid for the printing, and a bigger budget for cover art and design. The cover is ordinary, to say the least.

I managed most of the first novel before I gave up. The thing is just too routine, too mechanical, too unsurprising in its exploitation of standard cliches. Not enough happens. If you are interested, try the larger specialty dealers or the publisher.

Another Australian epic fantasy which, if you walk into a bookshop in the next couple of months you won't be able to miss without tripping over, is *BATTLEAXE*, by Sara Douglass, published by Harper Collins, \$12.95. A truly bad piece of artwork. Harper Collins have gone to so much time, effort and expense establishing their line of Australian SF, Fantasy and Horror, that I wonder why they then jeopardise the sales of the first book with a poorly executed, patronising, cover that subliminally tells the potential buyer that the publisher thinks the buyer's reading tastes are a crock of the proverbial. Please ignore the cover. Like St John, Douglass mechanically exploits the cliches of the genre, but her work is given authenticity and depth by her own background as a historian, and she has a gruesome imagination, a sense of humour, and a true empathy for her characters that carry the reader on regardless. I enjoyed the novel. For Janny Wurts and Raymond Feist lovers.

THE GATHERING, by Isobelle Carmody has a strong claim on being the best Australian horror novel yet published. The other two contenders are *STRANGE OBJECTS* by Gary Crew, and *DEL-DEL* by Victor Kelleher. Note that all three are young adults: given the nature of Australia's publishing industry at the moment, this is no accident. R.L. Stine eat your heart out. You don't compare to these books. *STRANGE OBJECTS* has recently been republished in adult clothing by Reed. Two of the three have won the Australian Children's Book of the Year for Older Readers award -- when Australia's young adult writers do a horror story, it is usually very highly regarded, though nobody mentions that naughty word, 'horror'.

Nathaniel moves into Cheshunt with his mother. Immediately, he senses something wrong. Gangs of adolescents are taking over the town and the local authorities initiate a curfew and are considering other methods of restricting individual freedoms and increasing their own control. Nathaniel falls in with an eccentric group of youngsters who realise that the gangs of youths and the authorities are in the plot together, and that they must gather to fight the evil. (266 + xiv pp, I would love to tell you how much this is, but Penguin didn't put the price on it.)

An engrossing dark fantasy. Recommended.

As with most of the books for this column, I had to buy *THE GATHERING* in order to review it. If I were to rely on publishers sending me their Australian genre stuff then this column wouldn't exist. I do get some support from Penguin but, like most of the other larger publishers, they are incapable of sending me what I need and ask for. The stuff they do send

then gets swapped indiscriminately at a local bookstore for stuff that I can use, but this then holds up reviews by a number of months and forces an amount of research which is a pain in the proverbial. Okay, THE MENTOR is only small fry, but I also review for AUREALIS, SIRIUS and occasionally MEAN STREETS, and there are a number of major newspaper reviewers I know who face the same problem. The problem won't be solved until the publicity people get off their rounds of incestuous job swapping and actually start doing their job.

I'm going to start bitching about something else while I'm in the mood. I hope you don't mind. This year's Ditmar nomination forms were only distributed to the readers of one particular Melbourne based fanzine. There was no effort to distribute to the listing of Australian SF clubs that another Melbourne fan has put together, neither was there an effort to distribute to people who attended previous Australian Natcons. I've been to the last three natcons, and I also helped put together the list of eligible publications for the people running the awards, yet neither of these apparently qualified me to nominate this year. The people running the awards then saw fit to distribute nomination forms to Sydcon, a gaming convention held in Sydney some two weeks after nominations closed. I submitted one of these nomination forms anyway but, knowing it would be late and disallowed, just mentioned some items I felt deserved a bit of recognition (some of them written or published by myself) rather than ones I would otherwise have mentioned. I would also like to mention here that none of the three Australian magazines with claims to professional quality, AUREALIS, BLOODSONGS and EIDOLON have been allowed to be nominated for best periodical. In the same vein, there is also a move planned at the coming convention to restrict the Ditmars to purely fan fiction, hence depriving the writers and publishers struggling to create the emerging Australian genre publishing industry of a recognition of excellence and a greatly needed publicity tool. Ditmars will be restricted to people writing Star Trek pornography and D&D game plotlines. Obviously, there will be no serious award for best novel.

If the Melbourne fans responsible for these moves succeed, and they're really just pissed off that nobody asks their permission to publish anything these days, then the Ditmars will disappear into oblivion and will be replaced by a set of professional awards given by the slowly emerging network of professional Australian writers and publishers.

I strongly suspect that Greg Egan and Leanne Frahm will clean up at the awards this year, and the reason will have nothing to do with the quality of their work, rather it will be that neither of them live in Melbourne and that Melbourne fans will dominate the convention and voting. You see, Melbourne fans won't vote for each other.

I hope this has confused a whole bunch of overseas people. So you should be confused. If I could explain Australian fan politics in so few words to an outsider, then I would be a genius.

A novel that did get nominated for a Ditmar this year is George Turner's GENETIC SOLDIER. The paperback should be around in the specialty stores by the time you read this, with any luck the local distributor with rights to Avonova will have given it a much wider release. GENETIC SOLDIER is set several centuries after Turner's familiar milieu of near future dystopia. As such, it provides two differing, conflicting, and yet inspiring visions of humanity's far future. The storyline stretches Turner as a speculative writer beyond his usual

concerns. The parallels with McMullen's VOICES IN THE LIGHT, a far future novel of a dystopia emerging emerging from a dark age, are fascinating. Both novels are set in outback Australia, and the writers have a similar vision as far as their technology is concerned, yet a vastly different vision in terms of their sociology. Turner's is more utopian, more idealistic; McMullen's is more hard-headed. Further speculation on the nature of the novels I leave to the reader.

With THE SEA AND SUMMER, and BRAIN CHILD, GENETIC SOLDIER is a cornerstone of Turner's SF lifework. Recommended.

Victor Kelleher's PARKLAND, (Viking tpb, 256 + vi, \$16.95) is a young adult novel deserving of a wider readership. The future is a dystopia where a group of humans from an interstellar civilisation have created a zoo containing genetically engineered, intelligent, representatives of all the great apes (including humans). The zoo is in an otherwise isolated location. Cassie is a human girl with a gorilla and chimpanzee friend who embarks on a rite of passage. The three manage to escape the zoo, leaving behind them a deal of mayhem, and manage to contact a number of feral human tribes living in the wilderness.

The symbolism of all this is quite obvious -- a standard Kelleher trait which I'll leave the reader to discover -- yet the story is strong and exciting. However, the thing is more expensive than it needs to be. Recommended, but wait for the standard paperback.

#

I'm looking forward to carrying out another another favoured ritual in a couple of days time. There is a mountain in north-western NSW, Mt Kaputar, which is all but 5000 ft tall. Not much for Nth American or Sth American readers, but bigger than anything in the UK and a pretty good height for Australia. Mt Kaputar is the remains of an old volcano; there are a couple of craters, volcanic plugs, granite cliffs, and similar things all over. Kind of like the Warrumbungles only 2000 feet higher. Makes me wish I had seen it all a few million years ago when the thing was at the height of its glory. On a clear day it is possible to see a couple of hundred kilometres from the peak, and in these days of clear, dry, drought weather, the visibility is superb.

The ritual is this: I drive up the mountain to the Dawson's Spring camping spot near the peak, set up the tent, grab the camera, and walk up to the peak to watch the sun set over the perfectly flat western plains. I'll leave that one to your imagination. After this I go back to camp, have dinner, and after full dark, walk back up to the peak. It's safe; there's only one 200 ft cliff I can fall off, and I know where that is, even in the dark.

This part of NSW is quite empty. Mt Kaputar at night gives you a perfect view of just what towns are around. What I do is try to guess which set of lights on the horizon is which, and then use the torch to compare that with the compass view set in a metal plate at the peak.

Even better than the towns is the stars. The air is dry and clear at night. This is the part of Australia where the Sidings Springs telescope -- the largest optical instrument in Australia -- is based. Yet, as I've already mentioned, the view of the stars from Kaputar is aided by an extra couple of thousand feet of elevation. Do I really have to describe this? Poul Anderson was right. Space isn't dark.

Poetry Too

The Sa'vanti Solution

They could, it was said,
Incite Suns to go nova,
Reduce whole systems
To orbiting slag.
Beyond Fomalhaut, I saw
Naked women and children
Herded through air-locks
Why did this act seem to be
The greater obscenity?

- J. C. Hartley

The Mind of Man

What a wonder is the mind of man!
We shall look and we shall see/
We shall look until we see/
Altho our eyes & ears hav gon
with rockets as robots to other worlds,
our minds become a guiding part of
protein-electro-computing-relays,
we shall look and learn and know
what are the very oriijns of
absolutely everything,
and, in the course of this incuiary,
make icons to our oh-so smugness.

- Bridh Hancock

The Sorry Cows of Castelreagh

Parousia
all the reeling stuff
the coming on
the getting got
I'm going out in green
And it's coming here
He's coming
Reacationary
Devastation
middle class kitchen
twenty years in the making (the dream)
pots and pans shaking
sky is baking
angels cut it with their knives
the dust in come
obsidian chunks have found my skull
obtund all but fear
Here, I rest, incase
the morning will not come.

- Trent Jamieson

The Projected Man Returns

Unseasonal rain melting the windshields
Soaking spectral girls in striped pyjamas,
Shaved to the nub, with boys in brummer pants.
He sees himself in the gunstore window;
Confederate shirt, waistcoat, jeans and boots,
Aesthetes hair an affront to bullet-heads.
He thinks: where have my researches brought me?
Feral kids offer to blow or beat him.
Gas-guzzlers cruise, churning a thick ooze
Of condoms and excrement sidewalk-ways.
He is aware that this could be his world.
The apocalypse outside the shelter.
Moral philosophy and zen physics
Have not prepared him for the human stew;
Science just a fetish in a doorway,
A decaying feather and bone tabu.

- J. C. Hartley.

Home Bound

Inside, the cabin is comfy tho cluttered.
"Comfy" is not the operative word, for
space aboard is very pricey, and we are here to work.
Outside is ded:
too hot, too oold, with too little air, and no water anywhere;
a place to rove to keep the heat of day at bay.

Apollo's children return to Earth.
Luna exploration is discontinued.
Fire rockets. Life-off. Home, home and away! for a while.

About us is the stellar void,
its temperature measured in degrees above absolute.
Out there it is not far above zero, tho
our rockets burn with solar heat.

We are heding home.
Home is a world built for and by life;
all space the teeming territory of many.
From there we will return
when affluence and imperative impel us out
towards a destiny we shall surely shair.
We mite stay home for all the frigid future cairs,
but imagination demands we not.
The Moon, Mars, Magellanic clouds
and all the mass of stars beyond still call us on;
and, riding the heat of the sun thru the chill of space,
to worlds with air, water and life we will go,
home to the ends of the universe.

Bridh Hancock.

Writing to The Point

A review by James Verran

Algis Budrys assures his students: "What makes writing is your ability to arrange imagined events purposefully, transmit them, and transmit their meaning." His approach to teaching the craft of writing is drawn from a long career as a successful writer and editor, and, as he modestly puts it: "...learned at a hundred hands...."

After considering the man's list of impressive accolades, the observer can only be awed by his horrendous, self-imposed workload. His management and editorship of TOMORROW SF Magazine is remarkable in that TOMORROW continues to hold its place as the SF magazine with the fastest response time in its class -- around two weeks for Australian submissions -- and he manages to reply personally to each submission.

In his most recent aid to writing and selling fiction, WRITING TO THE POINT: A Complete Guide To Selling Fiction (ISBN 1-886211-00-0), Mr. Budrys demonstrates his cunning for driving home his point: there is no contents page; although, one-word chapter titles are printed at the top of all right-hand pages. A short way into the 63 page book it becomes apparent that this is no oversight -- probably his subtle way of pointing out that the important stuff will still be there to reread later -- he intends it to be read from cover to cover. Contents lists, as found in most instructional books, tempt the reader to seek out the chapters with interesting titles, and skip the seemingly mundane but often crucially important sections.

In the introduction to WRITING TO THE POINT, Algis compares his treatise with the Arthur Murray diagram of dance steps -- promising to teach the reader enough to tour the dance floor (of writing and selling fiction) with confidence. While such instruction offers the chance to progress further; step around the ballroom with uncommon style, give exhibitions, and even teach, if desired. His allegory ends with a leveller for the reader: "But none of those additional things will have much if any relationship to your actual earnings." He asserts that to sell, writing need not be fancy. The ability to write fancy has its own rewards, but money is not always one of them.

His aim is to put aside the erroneous perception that writing successfully involves some kind of mystique (whatever that may be) incorporating the likes of voice and style; although important, and may come later, they are not basics. WRITING TO THE POINT is about the basics of a skill which involves work. Work, which he warns, the writer may, or may not enjoy. In short, Algis Budrys maintains that the least important part is writing down the words. What really matters is the creation process that occurs in the writer's head -- the tying together of the elements of a story into a whole -- nothing omitted, and nothing left over.

Chapter one: THE BASIC BASICS, begins with a plausible scenario for the prehistoric beginnings of writing -- "written" in memory, at first -- not in the form of encoded symbols, but as the telling of experiences and observations of day-to-day events. These attempts to rationalize and explain the seemingly miraculous almost certainly led to the birth of fiction.

He then explains how to short-cut the learning process by removing the error from trial and error as early as possible. If there is one apparently obvious phrase over-used by teachers of story writing, it is: "A story must have a beginning, middle, and an end." Algis Budrys is one of the rare individuals who not only knows the meaning of this, but is able to explain it clearly. With a simple hand-drawn

chart, he sets out the seven essential components of a story, and relegates them to their respective positions within the beginning, middle, and ending. The rest of the chapter is devoted to explaining the seven vital components, and revealing where they should appear in the story. He makes it clear that a story lacking even one of the seven parts is less than a complete, satisfying story. All seven must actually appear within the manuscript, unless, as he demonstrates in a later chapter, the writer is extremely skilled in the craft.

Not surprisingly, Chapter Two is titled THE BASICS. Anyone fortunate enough to have attended one of Mr. Budrys' many workshops will already have met his fictional heroine, Sarah Jane. He uses this wholesome example of contemporary American "stick-to-it-ivity" (sorry, Mr. Disney) to construct a basic story incorporating the seven essentials

In Chapter Three: SARAH JANE AND WHAT SHE MEANS, the short story from the previous chapter is used to introduce another vital skill of the successful writer: making the reader care. Sarah Jane's story is enhanced, not only by adding written detail, but also by what is added by the reader's imagination. Mr. Budrys points out several things inherent in the story that never actually appeared in print, but were there, nevertheless. When the story has been told, the audience feels an empathy with the character -- the story has purpose -- and the audience has been moved by the trials of Sarah Jane. Toward the end of the chapter the author includes a few succinct comments on critics, and why readers will always be more important to the writer.

Chapter Four: THE STORY AND THE MANUSCRIPT. The Seven Step Short Story Syllabus continues by explaining why some pieces of fiction are not actually stories, but japes (jokes, not necessarily hilarious), and uses Damon Knight's "Not With A Bang" as an illustration. Naturally, such pieces are seldom published, and then only from writers with a particular talent. Incidentally, talent, which Mr. Budrys considers a vastly over-rated commodity, may, in his opinion, be supplanted by persistent hard work.

The reader is not only educated, but entertained with the author's inclusion of two excellent, drastically abridged examples. He examines Roald Dahl's "The Man From The South", and John Collier's "The Chaser", in which the writers have skilfully told stories where some of the essential elements exist by implication, without being in written form. At this point, the reader should have an understanding of why the manuscript is not the story, but only the written means of transferring the story in the writer's mind to the consciousness of the reader.

Chapter Five: CREATIVE LONELINESS looks at what makes and motivates a writer. The question of whether you want to be a writer, or someone who writes, is examined frankly: Mr. Budrys has very definite views on the subject. Anyone who has attended a book launch, or a gathering of writers will immediately recognize the types of "writers" he describes. Would-be writers are invited to take a very long and close look at themselves, then to decide whether they want to be writers (of fiction), or to write as a means to some other end.

Chapter Six: ODD SCRAPS, begins by assuming that having read the previous five chapters, you now know how to write. Early in this chapter the discussion of the essential loneliness of writing is expanded to cover the physical loneliness as distinct from the mental loneliness of the previous chapter. The importance of reserving a time, a place, and being able to create a mental environment free from distractions is explained. Where a writer works is not so important as being able to write without interruption for whatever time is available. A writer must take some hard-headed decisions, even step on a few toes, to optimize that precious time for writing. The rest of chapter six is taken up with assorted advice on accumulating a businesslike collection of manuscripts, and sending them out. There is also some excellent advice on coping with editors, their opinions and rejections.

Chapter Seven: AGENTS. There is plenty of commonsense advice in this chapter on when and how to approach an agent, what they do, and of equal importance, what they do not do. A whimsical little line drawing depicting an agent as a Big Bad Wolf probably sums

up the feeling many writers have toward agents. Conversely, what do good agents do? According to Mr. Budrys they "agent", that is all. An agent works for her or himself, not the writer -- their duty is simply to represent the writer. The matter of rewriting is between writer and editor, not writer and agent. A good agent will not rewrite a manuscript, either for a fee, or without charge. The author warns that there are agents and "agents". While the latter may offer free editorial direction (rewriting), they will likely be less than competent, and if a fee is charged, the manuscript will probably be handed to an agency writer -- someone, probably a novice, working to earn some "ready" while developing their own writing career. This chapter contains a lot on what makes agents tick. Later in the book the relationship between writers and agents is likened to a marriage, rather than indentured servitude.

Chapter Eight: HOW TO DO A MANUSCRIPT. It is amazing how many books on writing fail to cover this subject in detail. Mr. Budrys lets go with both barrels on how, and how not to present a manuscript -- starting with the size of the envelope. Any writer who ignores his advice is in for a long period of obscurity. He intimates that there is little room for entrepreneurial flair in manuscript presentation. The message is: do it right, and he tells how, or forget it. Not only does this chapter tell, with illustrations, how to set out a manuscript, but why it should be that way, then goes on to tell what happens to the writer's precious submission before either rejection or acceptance.

Chapter Nine: REVIEW. Apart from mentioning that the title refers to reviewing the preceding chapters, and not how to review your writing, there is little else to comment on. In reviewing the preceding chapters, Chapter Nine almost makes the content of this article unnecessary.

The rest of WRITING TO THE POINT is collectively titled APPENDICES. It consists of essays previously published by the author at various times, and used as resource materials in his many workshops.

The first, IDEAS...HOW THEY WORK AND HOW TO FIX THEM, is an almost esoterical depiction of how a writer's mind should

work. It reads like a flow chart for a computer program, which it is, in a way; however, there is no flow chart diagram provided, so it requires careful study to fully understand. Some down-to-earth advice on the sourcing of ideas, and combating burn-out would have been worthwhile inclusions.

WRITING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. This article has been around for a while, and is one of the most widely read of the Budrys Essays. WSFAF defines Science & Speculative Fiction, explains how a story should affect a reader, and why. Using cunningly chosen grabs from a story, Mr. Budrys demonstrates and explains the principles of establishing a strong central character. He does this so successfully that the reader is left unsatisfied when he concludes with: "And so, scene by scene, the story grows." After extolling the importance of drama in communicating with the reader, he kindly reveals how the previously mentioned story ends by way of an example of validation -- wrapping up a story to the satisfaction of the reader.

WHAT A STORY IS, another of his widely read essays, encompasses the topics: The manuscript is not the story, Writing is not the reverse of reading, Tell only your story, and ends the book by revisiting the all-important seven parts of telling a story successfully.

There are one or two omissions in WRITING TO THE POINT. Surprisingly, naming characters, upon which Mr. Budrys placed considerable emphasis in at least one of his other articles, has been overlooked. Parts of the text read like a who's who of SF -- Algis Budrys name-drops with consummate ease -- but then, he knows, or has known most of the "Big Guns" in the Science Fiction & Fantasy business.

Overall, this book tends to make it all sound too easy, but the author is earnestly attempting to pass on the essential skills, and discouraging budding writers has never been on his agenda.

WRITING TO THE POINT by Algis Budrys is available by mail order for \$US11.50 (overseas) from: The Unifont Company, Inc., Box 6038, Evanston, IL 60204, U.S.A.

- James Verran

To challenge David Tansey's point about religion and poor/rich countries, I would like to ask him why the U.S. has such a strong religious community? Believe me, all the religious Americans are not poor. If they were, I and others like me wouldn't be so uncomfortable about the situation.

Julie Vaux's sympathy regarding the quake is appreciated even so long after the fact. It was pretty spooky to have the Kobe, Japan, quake happen on the anniversary of our Northridge quake. At work, one of my tasks is looking after the database tracking the damage from the Northridge quake. Although I was not personally badly affected by the quake, I know that many were.

In #85, Don Boyd speculates about a copier that interfaces with a computer. There have been such copiers for many years, at least fifteen if I recall correctly. (17.3.95)

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

So a new look MENTOR [TM 86]. Actually, I'm in two minds about the loss of the fiction from this issue on. It did set you apart from most of the fanzines I see, which only feature the more obvious humorous type of "fan fiction" - parodies and spoofs with a lot of inbuilt fannish name dropping (fun if you know the people and the in-jokes; often incomprehensible if you don't).

You don't really give a reason for dropping the fiction from TM. Was it lack of response (although it wouldn't seem so from the letters' columns) or that it seemed to be getting a "club" thing - with just the same few writers contributing each issue?

[No, purely a matter of \$\$ for postage - I plumbed for dropping the fiction, rather than columns, articles or letters... - Ron.]

With that, and the paring of the reviews from overseas copies of TM, this issue feels slightly thin in terms of content and variety. Particularly since I really can't bring myself to go much further into the History of Australian Fandom, which is all getting rather dry and earnest. Probably worthy, as a historical record, but not very gripping.

Re-reading J C Hartley's A HYDRAN WHORE... brought a smile in the light of a recent TV program on a rather controversial penile extension surgery that's being performed by a South African surgeon. Don't all rush (fellas, anyway); it sounds a gruesome procedure with rather marginal benefits, certainly when set against the possible complications. It may not drop off, but you may end up with a bruised willy that resembles the colour, shape and size of an aubergine, or with a bend like a banana (fine, if you learn to pee side-saddle).

Thank you, John Haines. That's the first bit of poetry I've had dedicated to me outside of birthday verses. That "sense of wonder woven into song" is also the subject of a Ken Bailey article, Alien and Kin' on the shared imagery between certain examples of SF and poetry, notably the sense of wonder of the more "poetic" writers, like Cordwainer Smith, Olaf Stapledon and Brian Aldiss. I hesitate to offer, in reply:

POETRY FROM THE PERPLEXED.

What is this stuff that scans and rhymes,
and you can tap you[r] foot in time
to words and phrases, similes
that stretch the limits of the line
"Best words, best order" Coleridge said
plant their visions in your head
And we who do not have the trick
pour out doggerel and limerick
and iambic 'tum tee tum's instead
like this

Or perhaps Ron will gracefully declare this correspondence closed at (or before) this point.

I hesitate to use the word "anorak" re Matthew Rayner's reply to Andy Darlington's DR WHO article, but - is it possible to be that preoccupied over the details of a children's TV series. Even the BBC clearly weren't, since they apparently lost or taped over batches of early episodes. Why is there a debate in fandom over Susan's grandparentage, when I am sure she refers to the Doctor as "grandfather" in one of the films (or perhaps it's considered honorary, like the use of "uncle" or "aunt" when you were little for your parent's friends).

I like the idea of R. Laurraine Tutihasi's "goof cards" but don't hold much hope for their effect on publishers. The postage alone

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

Undoubtedly the star of the issue this time (TM 86) was Mae Strelkov, and I look forward to more in the future.

Closely followed by Andy's article. The horror comic arrived too late for me - I was brought up on the pulps - but it looks like I missed something.

Buck Coulson was interesting and so was James Verran. The history is something we all ought to read, I feel, but I wish it wasn't all feuding. Pavel's travels interested me in parts.

The poems I found difficult to read because of the type. I appreciate you wanted this page to look different, but please use readable type in future. And the cover - can we have a change from pre-history now? I think you've run these beasties into the ground.

Andy's letter interested me. A year or so back I reread some of the Greyfriars school stories, and it is indeed a different experience when one reads them late in life. Another point is that without children's authors there won't be readers for adult fiction later.

I agree with Lorraine that the history comes across as everyone taking sf seriously. I remember the first London fan group, and we did. Part of this was because there wasn't much sf around, and even fewer fans. Things have changed dramatically since those days.

Danuta makes an important point when she says stories are good for us. With a surplus of critics and talk about the economics of publishing, we sometimes forget this basic fact.

Just recently Dillons, one of the big chains of bookshops here, has gone bust. There's talk of someone else taking over but I suspect, as usual, this will mean some shops closing. And fewer shops means fewer books available for readers. (3.3.95)

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

I recently read THE MENTOR #83, 84, and 85....

In #83, Joe Fisher goes on at some length about RED DWARF. While I wouldn't go quite so far as he in praising it, I do enjoy the show. There are very few comedies that I appreciate, and this is one of them. The best always seem to be British. The only pity is that RED DWARF was rather spottily shown here. I tried to tape it off the air with little success. I bought the third and fourth seasons and am waiting for a friend to make copies of his first and second seasons for me. He has been experiencing difficulties with his second VCR. My life now has changed to the extent that it soon might be easier for me to make a copy if I can borrow his. An English pen pal gave me a copy of the book.

To continue with his letter, the educational systems of many countries seem to be breaking down. I don't know how many years it's been since English grammar was taught here. I may have had the last of the good teachers in that field. My eighth grade English teacher, who was the best for grammar of all the teachers I had, retired the year I finished her class. Even then, I wouldn't have as good a grasp of English grammar as I do if not for the grammar I learned in French.

would be crippling. I can't remember the last (genre) book that didn't contain a type or some silly error.

Some publishers, like Headline, are notoriously bad. Even when you catch half a dozen at the proof or galley stage, they still fail to correct some of them, and then let others creep in.

But we shouldn't have to put up with this, and fans should start pressuring for rather better quality from publishers; it's not as if these books are any cheaper than the average novel (sometimes the opposite) and with anywhere between 1-2 years in preparation for some of them, there has to be time to eliminate what are often just silly or lazy errors.

Dave Langford has started to collect some of the more glaring examples and expose them to public scrutiny as part of "Thog's Masterclass" in ANSIBLE and convention newsletters. Perhaps someone should take up collecting these, and then sending copies in the form of a "league table" to various publishers and editors.

Is John Alderson correct in his figures on the cost of the Royals? I'm sure the Civil List is a damn sight more than £100,000 (the Royals have lately agreed to pay tax anyway). That income sounds more typical of a reasonably successful business director than "the richest woman in Britain", and would hardly seem to cover the upkeep on any number of minor Royals, estates, functions, police protection or the Royal yacht.

I have no basic objection to the Royal family, but they're nowhere near as self-funding or cheap as John suggests.

We come, at the end, to Bradley Row's response to various comments on his Sheri Tepper review. I'll accept that the title was provocative and a mistake. But a title is important; it sets the tone of how you read an article and the conclusions you tend to draw from it.

Yes it is a work of fiction, and yes, it poses a moral question which is presented within that work of fiction. The problem, on which Brad Row and I disagree, is whether Tepper can be considered to personally be supporting or promoting the turn of event[s] in that particular book. Having read most of her other works, and been involved in various critical discussions of them as a whole, I can see Tepper posing a number of moral questions (about gender, violence, religion, populations, ecology) against a number of not very convincing (and sometimes contradictory) answers. I suspect, from this one book, that Bradley Row is overestimating the strength of Tepper's convictions, at least on this particular subject. Yes, Orwell, More and possibly Rand (who I haven't read) might be considered to be making an overt political or moral case in those works, but that can't and shouldn't be generally held for all fiction.

This really rests on the view of GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY as a utopia. Which I don't think it is, or is even presented as such, in the same way that LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED or Delany's TRITON are also ambivalent about the "utopian" societies presented.

In reply to Julie Vaux's comments, there seems a certain amount of special pleading, and if Tepper so "desperately wishes to win" our sympathy for her candidates, she must be judged conspicuously unsuccessful, since neither Bradley Row, or those who take issue with him, see this society as anything but desperately flawed.

At the risk of beating this one to death, we are going to have to leave it on this basic disagreement. We have both read the same words but, it appears, completely different books.

Interestingly, a very similar scenario appears in Harry Harrison's latest Stainless Steel Rat novel, THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT SINGS THE BLUES. (19.3.95)

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

I read Pamela Boal's comments concerning censorship and she fails to realise that only *with freedom can* you have responsibility. Still, if she wants some government agency telling her what she can see, read and contribute to I suppose that's her business. Quite a few adults, however, want to take responsibility for what they see, read and contribute to.

I read Joe Fisher's comments concerning my reaction to Darlington's DOCTOR WHO article. Maybe I was a bit harsh with Peter Davison. I suppose Davison's "Doctor Who" just wasn't "dark and unpredictable" enough for me. Colin Baker fit this bill nicely and did, in fact, remind me a little of the original Doctor, Hartnell. The only problem with Colin Baker's "Doctor Who" was that his companions didn't come up to scratch. Except, maybe, the cagey red-head who appears in

THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD. Like the savage, she was a woman of action and no winger.

Well, Joe, Ron was right in saying that my last letter was handwritten, like this one, and certain words did get garbled in the transcribing. "The Santavans" were indeed "The Sontarans" - the flat-headed mush-mouthed super-strong creeps we all love to hate.

I also checked out Mae Strelkov's letter with some interest. So, I take it there just wasn't enough gore for your taste on the cover of THE MENTOR 85 and you'd love to see dinosaur-like creatures getting down and dirty. Maybe you should check out Steve Carter's comic book FEMOSAUR WORLD (illo work also by A. Rydyr) or maybe for really heavy gore/horror you should check out Steve Carter and A. Rydyr's SPORE WHORES. Couldn't hurt.

Australian artist Glenn Lumsden and Australian writer David De Vries have just put out a 3 part Phantom comic book series through Marvel and the art's not bad - not bad at all. How about that?

I read Chris Masters' and your (Ron's) comments concerning my ad for PROHIBITED MATTER which features one "bimbo in bikini" and skull. Personally, I think you two guys are just jealous. Maybe, Ron, I can get you a skull just like it to end this jealousy but I'm making no promises.

By the way, Kate Orman who wrote THE LEFT-HANDED HUMMINGBIRD has finished her second DOCTOR WHO novel. It should be out by May. (11.4.95)

TERRY JEEVES, 56 Red Scar Dr., Scarborough, N. Yorkshire, Y012 5RQ, England.

Can't say the cover did anything for me - two spotty lesbians saying "how do"? The Contents listing had me fooled, Reviews - page 37 - only there wasn't a page 37. Collating snafu maybe?

[No, just I didn't do a separate Contents for the overseas copies, which, because of weight limits, don't have Reviews. - Ron.]

Jim Verran on punctuation (etc) was interesting although actual examples would have helped make his points clearer - "an extra stop to an ellipsis" sounds OK, but to iggerant me, I don't know how many stops an ellipsis *should* have before thinking of an extra one. Similarly, I thought ems (and ens) were printer's spacing measurements and not actual marks such as - or --. More iggerance by me.

Molesworth - sorry too dated without having any high drama points or humour. Re the fanzine reviews - I haven't actually folded ERG, but after the last low response I've dropped all the non-respondes, cut circulation to the bone, cancelled publishers' review copies and reduced the page count. That way I've cut the cost by 60% and still get as good a response as before. No. 129 should be with you by now.

In the LOCs, Chris Masters flaunts his limited vocabulary and considerable lack of tolerance. If so anti-everything, why stay in touch with fandom? There's a vast difference between criticism and vituperation. As for "what is art?", surely we all have our own ideas on that - and each individual's views are valued for him or her. There's no "good art" or "bad art" only what x likes or dislikes. (20.4.95)

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

[I've] ended up joining the club of those who've looked up Jujuy on the map - a Tolkienish sort of setting up against mountain frontiers. Can't remember the title, but have a feeling it was that province of Argentina which was setting for a political thriller read years ago, a plot to proclaim an independent State and play off Chile, Bolivia and Argentina against each other - all the details are long forgotten, but one scene remains vivid, where a British mercenary working for the plotters is in some sort of show-down with them, and is suddenly shot by the intellectual ideologist of the group - the mercenary's final comment for some reason stuck in my mind, "not just a blinkin' feorist after all.")

Of the poems, SUB-STATION ONE stands out for the witty treatment of a bleakly plausible idea, and A BIT OF THE MIND OF GOD for an outstanding last 3 lines, a powerful and self-contained poem in themselves.

Intriguing to finally know what the title FOSFAX abbreviates - FO as Falls of the Ohio much more colourful, than, as here, Foreign Office!

Alun is a case, not of phonetic spelling, but of the name Allan in another language, ie Welsh - I've been told in Welsh would be pronounced nearer Alyn than our Alan.

The bit I remember from Vonnegut's GOD BLESS YOU, MR ROSEWATER is one character's explanation of why SF and porn turn up in the same bookshops, that they both offer admission to impossible hospitable worlds - a wild oversimplification, but a neat and memorable explanation all the same. Grant Lillie says he was "chuffed" about the fiction being dropped, but the sentence clearly implies he is "dischuffed", if the word "chuffed" means the same in Oz, ie *pleased* (slang opposite used to be sloughed/stuffed, for displeased, but both words now seem obsolete - not heard either in yonks).

The mention of censors etc visually altering movies and videos - this is now in the reach of ordinary punter, saw a mention that you can get software which, as you transfer your old home movies to video, lets you remove individuals from scenes - your ex-wife from that beach party, whatever - background pixelled in to fill gap, or some such. Presumably, will soon be readily available programme to add folk in, as well - our present wife's image from on in the memory store, or Elvis at your child's christening, whatever. Zelig time for everyman.

Along with SFan, think term SFanzine also needed, to reduce the confusion/need to define caused now fanzine has escaped so successfully into the koinos kosmos and is used for such a myriad of different publications on different "themes" from Gothic to footie to wrestling to anarchism to you name it. (23.4.95)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, VIC 3465.

Now that cover: two pointed-eared types, probably both female, apparently indulging in that unhygienic human habit of kissing; what is the point of the whole thing? I am not questioning the craftsmanship of the drawing, just its point and purpose. I suspect that I am asking: should not art have some human interest?

... the gremlins have taken the latest issue of THE MENTOR, so I cannot reply in particular to those excellent and regrettable types who either praised me or abused me. But I remember several points and these I shall refer to sans the ??? names. Firstly the point raised that didn't anyone get killed in the cattle lifting of the Borders. Probably they did but it was something very much avoided because of the generations-long feuds it could cause. Remember that these people mixed freely except when cattle-raising. There were indeed feuds enough either side of the Border amongst neig'hours, and in any case the Border was drawn by men hundreds of miles away and clans were cut in half by it, or moved across it, eg the Maxwells and the Kennedys. Of course this was all before football was invented, and the descendants of these Borderers now play a certain bum-sniffing game which I did not mention in Ron's family journal.

So Mae Strelkov threatens to call me an old patriarch. Apart from the "old" slur I would not object except that I am not, not having fathered any children. There is certainly nothing wrong with a good patriarchy, far better than the damned matriarchy we mostly live in. Now I have often thought of popping over to South America and dropping in on Mae, but for the unfortunate happenstance that they have summer when we have summer, and besides I work in the summer. That land of her's seems great.

Now an interesting thing has cropped up here. Many and varied reports of big cats infesting our bush, eating sheep and calves have been drifting in. So a lot of research has been done and it seems that pumas were introduced into Victoria in 1869. But if these are pumas then there has been some modification of behaviour and colouring. The female appears to be brown and the male a sooty black with no variation in colouring at all, that is the under parts are just as dark as the upper parts. They are as cunning as hell, refuse to be trapped, do not return to a kill if disturbed, do not engage in serial killings or blood drinking, and none have been seen up trees. I had a good sighting of one myself, it was definitely a cat and nearly two metres long and would probably girth 90 cm. The Australian Museum have admitted their almost certain identity, only needing a captive or dead specimen to clinch the identification. Considerable nonsense has been written in the Melbourne Dailies who have the idea that non-city types are obviously morons. Now I am not going to suggest that Buck Coulson is responsible for this, but I think he had better get Jimmy Carter over here to stop an international incident before our

Mad Emperor insults President Clinton on the subject. I mean, what are we/you going to do about this predator killing our kangaroos, which as all American conservationists know, are dying out.

(23.4.95)

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

I do hope your plea results in your receiving plenty of art work. Lesbian flappers from the 1920s hardly seem relevant to the cover of TM, with or without pointy ears. After your years of presenting good reproduction of high standard art work I would have thought you would be treated more generously by fan artists. I haven't the time to accurately research but it is my impression that there is a general decline in the quantity (not the quality) of artwork in zines. There just does not seem to be any new names coming up and the long established faithfuls have all presumably reached that time of life when earning a living and family matters must take over from fan ack.

I greatly enjoyed the second episodes of both THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE and A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH. What a fascinating kaleidoscope of time and place you provide in TM. The obituary for Vol Molesworth really gave a keener perspective to the HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM. Writing in retrospect mature males do not tend to state, "I was just fourteen years old when I became involved in fandom.". Yet of course the vast majority of first fans were indeed teenage boys. Doesn't that say a great deal about the power of the dreams and aspirations for the future of mankind through science, embodies in prewar SF. Teenage boys get involved in numerous hobbies and interests mostly put aside and forgotten before they reach their twenties. Various collecting hobbies have world wide adherents and professional aspects, most sports have international fans but I would suggest that only in SF Fandom has the activities of a handful of boys grown into a world wide network of men and women interacting as we do today.

Another excellent article by Andrew Darlington. I seem to recall Garth prior to 1943 but would rather trust Andrew's research than my memory. I do recall that I found his adventures much more entertaining than Jane's and it wasn't just the male female thing (after all I still followed Pip, Squeek and Wilfred) but the whole scope and style of the adventures. I disagree with Andrew to a certain extent. Garth did always represent Good, also he is more intelligent than most Schwarzenegger characters, he can always understand his friend the Professor's explanations. I don't bother reading his adventures any more, I feel sure that is less my tastes changing with age and more to do with the writers losing the essential Garth by updating him. Perhaps Andrew knows if Garth replaced the Belinda spot? Few people seem to recall Belinda but to my mind (at the time) she had more gumption than Jane, then again maybe my liking for Belinda was to do with my fond Mum saying, "You used to look just like her.". (25.4.95)

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

Pavel's article [in TM 87] was much more interesting this time; I hope he's just getting into his stride.

I'm always interested in Bill Congreve on Australian writers. This time I can report that I've read a couple of short stories; one by Sean McMullen (nice idea) and one by Terry Dowling (reads as if modelled after Ballard); both in F&SF (Feb and March 1990). Yes, that's how far behind I am with my reading.

Verran, as usual, interesting.

Mae, very good (and the bonus of a letter). I'm not surprised you had a problem with an agent and editor, Mae; commercial writing is very restricted, and you're not. The mass media's loss is the MENTOR's gain.

I enjoyed SUB-STATION ONE by Cecelia. That font is hard to read and not fair on your poets, Ron. Please go back to ordinary type.

Your own column of fanzines is useful because I only see one of them.

Andrew on Garth was of particular interest because I've recently been collaborating with Phil Harbottle on scripts for this script. We sold two, and (hopefully) have another coming up in the summer. Phil has also done three on his own. But similar to Superman? I don't think so. Garth seems to me very English.

It was a bit of a shock to learn that Vol Molesworth died back in '64. The obit was very interesting.

I strolled along the river Thames this week on a sunny afternoon to visit my old friend Peter Phillips who lives at Surbiton. For the older generation who remember him, yes, he's still with us, but no longer writing. For a younger generation, one of his best known stories will be once again in print in an American anthology. The story is DREAMS ARE SACRED.

I've been reading the early Terry Pratchett, stuff he wrote before the Discworld novels. STRATA, sf and funny, and THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN; almost straight sf with a few funny bits in it. Pity he doesn't do more sf. (28.4.95)

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

What's with THE MENTOR (no number?). Lost count or something? Or can't you count past 83 or whatever the last one was?

[I think all that horror reading is affecting your eyesight, Chris. Have a look at the bottom left hand corner of the front page. - Ron.]

Great to see me mate B.J.'s artwork gracing yer front cover. Bryce is one of the most underrated artists in this country. If you're going to use A4, corner stapling is much preferable to two or three staples down the left side.

Whether you want to start publishing fiction again is up to you. I'm just glad to see the end of Vol Molesworth and his ultra-bore of an article. What a dweeb he must have been.

The other news here at Melbourne Mafia (Love the term, Ron. Mind if I start using it.) headquarters is that we - The AHS - will be running Australia's first horror convention on the 27th, 28th and 29th of October (1995) at the Caulfield Arts Complex. The convention is called Terror95: The Anti-Con. Guest of Honour is yet to be confirmed, but there's a good chance it'll either be Dario Argento or Peter Jackson. Terror95 will also be a Star Trek Free Zone: anyone caught giving weird hand signals or wearing those silly little boomerangs will be immediately locked in a room where a tape will be played of someone reading Vol Molesworth's article in a deep monotone.) Other guests will be Richard Harland, Michael Helms, John Fox and Big Bad Ralph. Film armourer John Fox will also demonstrate how he blows people away in the movies, by staging somebody getting blown to bits with a shotgun. As far as I know this is the first horror convention to be held in Australia. And unlike all the SF boreathons we won't be charging a fortune. Wait for it... Registration for all three days is only \$40 if you send in your registration before 1st June. For more information you can send me an SSAFE or Email me at cmasters@melbourne.DIALix.oz.au; or even ring me on: (03) 509-0766.

The other news is that Channel 10 in their finite wisdom has chosen to take the scissors to many of their shows, including one of the few things on TV worth watching: namely THE X FILES, which has to be one of the best horror shows ever put on television. Seems that the resident censor at Channel 10 has been taking the scissors to any scene that she deems as "too scary". Isn't it wonderful how they care so much about our sensibilities. And they don't mind in the least when the subject us to endless hours of drivel with shit like THE RICKI LAKE SHOW, OPRAH, NEIGHBOURS etc.

I'm glad to see that Bill Congreve's column is still going strong. Bill is easily one of the most knowledgeable people on genre publishing in Australia.

Loved the picture - complete with dork holding piano accordion - at the end of Molesworth boreathon. Never have I seen SF fandom better summed up in one picture.

Oz Scene: good idea, but after I started reading your mini-reviews, I really began to wonder how many of the mags you had actually read. How can you say "the set-out is very professional" for PROHIBITED MATTER is beyond me. No offence to Rod Marsden but the layout and editing in PM is a disgrace.

[I read all the zines reviewed. And of course the opinion is mine, as your opinion is yours. - Ron.]

You also comment on the lack of Australian material in BLOODSONGS. As co-editor of that issue, I believe I can speak here. The simple fact is that we print the best of what we get. We don't limit ourselves to one country. Our aim is to put out the best horror magazine we can and to include the best material we can get our hand on

regardless of its origin. And the reason for featuring so much from S. Darnbrook Colson (which was only one short column and two interviews he conducted) is that Mr Colson is one of the few writers I know that delivers what he says he will and on time.

Since the publication of issue 3 of BLOODSONGS I have pulled out as co-editor, due to wanting to concentrate more on other things, namely my own writing and film projects. (29.4.95)

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

I recently got a letter from a professor in the former USSR who is teaching a course in American science fiction. Since a number of your readers are American, and some of the others may wish to broaden his horizons, I am enclosing his address. He is looking for donations of books, since English language literature of any kind is difficult to obtain, and the cash to buy it abroad nonexistent. He is also interested in the connection between fandom and professional authors, and so I will be sending him some of the zines I have gotten recently, including THE MENTOR. If anyone wants to put him on their mailing list I'm sure their publications will be eagerly received and circulated to his students. Remember this is a complete neophyte, so if you want letters of comment or to trade other materials, you will have to be specific; and, although his English is excellent and I am sending him a short list of slang terms, he may have trouble deciphering anything not in plain English. His address:

Mr. Yuri A. Mironets
Oktyabrskaya St. 2, Apt. 15
Vladivostok 690 000
Russia.

I was amused to see the July issue in April. Plainly you have conquered time, if not space, and have not told the secret to the rest of us. I found everything of interest, although I was at first puzzled why anyone would bother with an in-depth analysis of popular grammar references, but as I went through the article I found several of my own favorite peeves, the single en dash, the question of four versus three dots in an ellipse, and national variations in spelling. All useful commentary. As an addendum, I will mention that it is wise to check anything that looks odd in an electronic reference against another source. As map makers sometimes add a nonexistent street to make it easy to check for copyright violations, so do electronic publishers. (26.4.95)

RODNEY LEIGHTON, R. R. #3, Pugwash, N. S. CANADA BOK 1L0.

One thing about not publishing fiction is that the loccol will doubtlessly become a bit more varied and complex. Rather than commenting on previous stories, one can discuss terminology and get upset at Chris Masters.

Maie Strelkov's article and article-like loc read as an adventure story. I didn't doubt a bit of it until I came to that bit of foolishness about drakes (male ducks) killing the female ducks. Since the natural method of procreation of ducks is for the male and female to get into water, the male climbs on the female's back and grabs the back of her head with his beak for a steady influence and they bob about until he effects penetration and ejaculation and then falls off sideways, and, male duck's "members" are less than 2 inches long, methinks the dear lady is tossing in a bit of fantasy. Then again I suppose her old papa duck might have been exceptionally well hung... or low slung. Or maybe they have different ducks down there than any I've encountered in North America or at agricultural colleges.

I was interested in the various comments on the term "fen". Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, B. C., CAN., VOR 1S0, in his zine ZERO-G LAVATORY, published an article on fan jargon. I wrote in and mentioned J. F. Haines' argument. Apparently, in issue #4, upcoming, Scott and I are going to have a "feud" over this term. I've suggested to him that he contact you. I haven't really given it all that much thought but then the thought that Steve Sneyd expresses occurred to me, except that I thought of it as: fen = swamp; thus fen would be people who live in swamps. Granted that there are certainly people in fandom who should be considered swamp-creatures (and some who would label me as one!), there are also some really nice people as well as a bunch of folks whom I've had no contact with but I have high opinions of. Damned if I want to think of Catherine Mintz as a swamp-thing! So, I have decided to use "fans". I do see that most of the re-

sponse this issue was positive; I guess it's a matter of personal choice.

Did you see in HABAKKUK that some critter compared me to Peter Brodie? Humph! Never would I use such abominable slang spellings!

Methinks that little extra bit after my loc actually belonged to Rob Frew, no? (30.4.95)

[Sometimes computers manipulate text rilly strangely... - Ron.]

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

John Tipper made the comment that I wasn't tolerant and didn't care about other people's opinions. I'm very sorry if this is how I came across in my first letter. I have a strong belief in infinite diversity, especially in opinions, so you can understand how that criticism made me feel.

To Jason, I'll have to say, I too am a fan of Colin Baker, and RED DWARF. I'll get around to subscribing to CADMIUM RELEASE one day, I promise.

Mae has the nicest and coolest perspective on religion I have come across. She comes a lot closer to the stated ideals of religion than any other religious person I know of. I'm an atheist myself, though I'm open to the possibility of there being a God.

My reasons for being Atheist are:

- 1) Most of the atrocities, and wars, and hate crimes have been committed throughout history in the name of religion.
- 2) A large proportion of those crimes [are] by Christians.
- 3) Religions at their fundamentalist level can be extremely elitist, dogmatic, xenophobic and oppressive.
- 4) There's a lack of real scientific evidence to support religious belief.
- 5) If God created the universe... who created God?

I also think we should move beyond religion in order to progress to a higher level of civilisation that is truly mature and equal. I also think we should move beyond politics and government. But those are my opinions, and I have respect for anyone who thinks [the] opposite. I'm willing to listen to anything they have to say and absorb and digest the information they tell me.

LLOYD PENNEY, 412-4 Lisa St, Brampton, ON CANADA 1G7 4B6.

I've seen you've gone for a touch of shock on the front cover illo. Doesn't shock me, but it may do so to others. A new Canadian movie is coming out; don't recall the title, but the advertising has two women kissing passionately, much like this illo. We'll see how liberal Canadian society is after this movie premieres.

I think dropping the fiction is a good idea. I think trying to please both the fanzine fans and the writers would result in pleasing neither. Science Fiction South Africa seems to be in stasis right now. I receive issues of PROBE, their regular clubzine, but I haven't received an issue now since the end of last year. Such gaps in their publishing schedule aren't out of the question in their history, so they may be regrouping.

Pavel Viaznikov's contains A. Stolyarov's speech... I always thought one of the writer's tastes was to educate the mass of the readers, and to paraphrase Stolyarov, make them competent. If the audience was indeed as competent as Stolyarov wants them to be, I'd think he'd worry about not writing up to their intelligence. The mark of a good writer is to be a creator of words that all can enjoy and learn from. If you are entertaining, you encourage further reading.

James Verran's list of books for checking punctuation, grammar, and English usage is handy. I can add some other books that would also help. There's Strunk and White's THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE, now in its third edition, which is, to me, necessary for any writer in producing crisp copy. I also have on hand A HANDBOOK OF COMPOSITION by Douglas M. Brown, THE ABC OF STYLE by Rudolf Flesch, and for a Canadian audience, THE LITTLE ENGLISH HANDBOOK FOR CANADIANS, by James B. Bell and Edward P. J. Corbett, with its second edition freshly released.

The usage of *los Estados Unidos de Norte America* by Spanish-speaking countries to mean the United States or North America interchangeably bothers me to some extent. Many people in those nations think that Canada doesn't exist, because they must think there is only one country in North America. Believe me, in Mexico, Ameri-

cans are Norteamericanos, but Canadians are Cadadianos, and very welcome.

So, the Molesworth fanhistories come to an end... I shall miss them. After his death, did anyone else pick up the recording of fanhistory, or did fandom here fall apart after the departure of such a binding force as Molesworth?

[There has been no coherent history of Oz fandom from 1964 to the present day, though there are fans still active from that period. Of course the longer the gap is, the harder it will be to fill it. The Second Stage of Fandom commenced with the 1966 Melbourne Convention and has lasted up to the present. - Ron.]

I am surprised at the number of loccers who like Dr. Who. Andrew Darlington might want to ask about getting that article reprinted in ENLIGHTENMENT, the big Dr. Who fanzine produced by the Doctor Who Information Network of Toronto. Even with this big club in town, watching the Doctor isn't easy. I think the youth channel, YTV, shows it at 3 AM on certain days. It's used as filler.

The usage of words like fen, fanac, bacover, thish and even loc have established themselves in the fannish lexicon over time, and because of tradition. Publications like THE NEOFAN'S GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM, published infrequently, list glossaries of fannish terms, and many fans still use them, although they are slowly being phased out by consensus. I look at it as part of the fun. Every speciality and interest group has its own vocabulary, so we're no different.

Some Whofen I know are fairly pedantic, but so are some fans from every fannish interest group. I figure that if you're going to have an interest, it seems only natural that you're going to want to know everything about it. And if you can remember it all, good for you; just don't spout it off to all who want to know, and all who don't.

In my own letter of comment, I said that I should scrape together the money and join an editor's association. I did just that, the Editors' Association of Canada, and not long after joining, I got myself a new job with Maclean-Hunter, the largest publishing company in Canada, working in the circulation department of their industrial magazines group. (7.5.95)

BUCK COULSON, 2677 W 500 N, Hartford City, IN 47348-9575, USA.

The Kirgistan navy base does seem a bit odd, but then the US used to -- may still have -- a navy base in Illinois, which is pretty close to the center of the continent. Of course, it's possible to sail from the Lake Michigan shore of Illinois all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, but the ship has to be relatively small; there are canals to go through in spots.

There have been US writers who have made comments about writing for the Educated Tasteful Reader, but most of them dropped out of the field when they weren't properly appreciated.

Enjoyed Molesworth's fan history. Fan feuds generally amuse me even if I'm a participant, and fan feuds conducted by strict rules of order are hysterically funny. Certainly US fans have done the same thing; they're equally amusing.

Good letter by Pamel Boal, though my association with fan fiction -- as writer and editor of a fanzine -- is that the fans who constantly essay serious fan fiction never -- or hardly ever -- "graduate" to professional fiction, while the fans who write humorous material or avoid writing fan fiction altogether are much more likely to become professional authors. I have no idea why, and of course one can point to exceptions, but in general, very few serious fan writers in the US ever make the grade professionally. No speculations on the reason for this. But fans who eventually became professionals -- Terry Car, Ted White, Greg Bedford, Joe Haldeman, F. M. Busby -- were all humorous fan writers.

I'm not sure that the trend for unusual spellings of names has increased, Sheryl, at least not in our area. Juanita and I regularly scan read the obituary columns in our newspaper, looking for -- and finding -- very odd names, and these people have been alive for anywhere from 50 to 100 years with their names. (Longevity is increasing; newspapers in small towns didn't use to run obituaries of 3 or 4 people over age 100 in the same day's paper.)

Excellent letter by Vicki Rosenzweig. I think the bit on total ancestors equalling the population of the planet if you go back far enough is a cute mathematical trick which has little validity in real life; in fact, some populations were isolated and didn't mingle all that much

when they did find each other. Which is not to say that there isn't a good chance that all white readers of MENTOR have what might be vulgarly expressed as a nigger in their woodpile somewhere along the line. (I haven't, if the two aunts who composed our family's genealogy were correct, but I certainly wouldn't object if I did have. I came close enough to providing one for my descendants.)

Yes, I expect that pigs are the easiest animals to raise in Mae's area. They're smart, they eat anything -- including people, if they get a chance -- and they grow fairly rapidly. Juanita comments that modern viewers of THE WIZARD OF OZ don't really understand the reason for the excitement when Judy Garland falls in the pigpen early in the movie; city dwellers don't realize that it's to get her out before she loses a few bodily parts. There were more farmers in the audience when the film was first released. (Not that most pigs do eat people, because they're mostly kept well-fed. But the possibility is there.) They also kill and eat poisonous snakes.

Somehow I doubt that Chris Masters would turn out to be pleasant in person. Or interesting. He's sort of amusing in print, the way one finds a velvet painting amusing (assuming one does -- I do), but I shed no tears over the fact that I'm never likely to meet him.

(11.5.95)

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

Mae Strelkov is a strong asset in the columnist department. As always, the photo portion is *really* great - on top of history, it gives all the world a chance to see what the Aussie contingent looked like.

Interesting logo for R&R - comment "hook"?

It appears that ~~even~~ (??appropriate term??) Down Under there is a problem getting fanartists to submit work. Having the text go almost to the edge of the page doesn't seem to be much of a problem. The letters are legible - maybe a tad difficult to read, but not enough to be a real problem. (The narrow margins was not a problem except for pages pulling loose towards the end). I get 6 of the 22 zines listed - a bit more than 25%. While I tend to think I get fewer zines from other countries, this is not much lower than my "usual" receipt value (runs to about 33%).

Garth? Guess copyright prohibits a sample...?

Whew, you are nosing out the hardback versions of fan history (nice that Harry Warner Jr's latest book includes more international flavor).

I'm certain all the Hugo nominations are out - but the only one I know for sure is Peggy Ranson - whose work has graced your pages.

There seems to be a perennial moaning/groaning over the lack of new blood into the fannish ranks. Lately, I haven't heard much about it, but when I read about cons, it seems more and more prevalent that the attendees are not readers... may be solely media or game fans (just an observation). If this is, indeed, true it remains to be seen where the trend is headed. It seems to me that, historically, readers became convention members and if that is no longer happening, I'm not sure where fannish fans (such a concept!) will come from. That can be expanded to, more or less, include fanedns.

(12.5.95)

DON FITCH, 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722 USA.

[A] previous trip, by the way, included Corflu (a small (ca. 100 attending) gathering of (mostly) fanzine fans, in Las Vegas) and Minicon, in Minneapolis. The name of the later comes not from the site (though some of us have been known to write it as "MinneCon") but from "miniature"; it originated as a tiny get-together celebrating & giving thanks for the local fan club's decision to back out of the bidding for the 1973 WorldCon which, the members decided, would be far too much work for them to undertake. This year's Minicon had an attendance of 3,456 (+ a few more last-day at-the-door memberships, perhaps), I understand - somewhat larger than the most recent (and probably the next) WorldCon. And they do it every year (almost) - Minneapolis Fandom's fondness for Partying, and for discussing Science Fiction, is legendary, but I can't help feeling that there may be such a thing as going too far.)

Anticipating a bit... is the computer-generated text of THE MENTOR likely to be available on disk? I ask [partly] because I've been thinking that the production of future issues of FANTHOLOGY, and of

other reprint publications (of which there should be more), would be expedited if much of the material did not need to be keyboarded anew. (For reprinting, of course, permission would need to be acquired from the copyright-holders, but I suppose that an electronic version of a fanzine would be considered as simply an extension of the original print-run.)

[Yes they exist, mainly as a 400,000 byte file in Microsoft Word for Windows, whatever # it was. - Ron.]

I'm not sure that Gary Farber's suggestion/intimation (in recent correspondence) that the publishing market is now such that any reasonably well-written short fiction can be sold to the professional market is accurate (though he's worked for a major book club & publisher) or applicable (the sort of work and skill involved in Selling is not the sort involved in Writing; the two aspects aren't always (& perhaps not often) associated in one individual), but do find that very-short fiction (the kind most often published in fanzines, due to cost limitations) needs to be especially excellently-written if it's to be even passable, and that (at best) my appetite for this sub-genre is quickly satiated.

But then... I've stuck with the fanzine microcosm for thirty-some years because it seems to be the only place one can find good (or for that matter, bad, and mediocre... *sigh*) writing in a genre for which there appears to be almost no commercial market - the Personal or Familiar Essay. (Not often identified as such, in fanzines, but commonly appearing as "Articles", "Editorials", "Reviews", or "LoCs".) Naturally, I try to encourage the presence of this material in fanzines, and discourage that of fiction, which can easily be found elsewhere.

On the other hand.... Though I don't know if THE MENTOR started out in the common (and admirable) fannish way ("Publish the sort of fanzine you want to publish, and they will come if it's any good at all, the readers who like & want that sort of fanzine will accrete to it"), if you've long made a regular practice of publishing fiction in it, a certain... unfairness might easily be perceived in an abrupt and total change from this policy. You will, quite properly, do as you wish, and seem to be quite capable of handling the inevitable flak.

Pavel Viaznikov's pictures (or glimpses) of Russian/Slavic Fandom manage to be both entertaining and informative, and I especially like the parallels that can be drawn to U.S. fandom and Prodom. (The Strannik Prize suspiciously influenced by the sponsoring commercial organisation, for example, and A. Stolyarov's insistence that the genre must spurn any hint of the popular gutter in which it was spawned.)

I somewhat regret Bill Congreve's in-depth report on current Australian s-f - though I may sometimes, of late, put-down the genre in general, I do read a fair amount of it, and these Australian titles are not readily available over here (especially to those of us who mostly rely on just chancing-across things).

Much the same applied to your THE OZ SCENE - the Australian zines (which, rightly, make up the bulk of the reviews) actually could be obtained, but not without considerable expense (and some guilt feelings, since the prices (when quoted) probably don't cover the cost of production & overseas postage, and I'm not likely to be able to find time to write LoCs). Perhaps that's just as well - not many of them seem to correspond closely to my peculiar tastes. Withal, it should be of great use & benefit to Australian fans, as an adjunct to greater Communication.

Let's face it, Ron, many - perhaps even most - of the readers will consider Vol Molesworth's HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM dreadful dull. Indeed, it is primarily a compilation of (often trivial) facts rather than the lively and insightful interpretation of the broader trends of Ozfandom that I'd like to see, but I hope that most of the readers will recognise its importance as historical documentation, and thank you properly for giving it widespread modern circulation. I'm not hopeful, mind you, that it will serve your stated purpose of helping today's clubs & groups avoid the disastrous errors of old ones. In the speedier (and hence more readily-observed) sphere of (North American) ConRunning, for example, there have been a vast number of ConReports and ConRunners' Guide Articles published widely, pointing out clearly and in detail both bad and good points about specific conventions, yet hundreds of later conventions have made the same errors, and have failed to pick up on the suggested (and generally easy-to-effect) good points. There seems to be something about groups of

people (perhaps especially fans, or perhaps not) that causes them to need to re-invent the wheel - starting with a square slab - whenever they embark on a Project in an area new to them.

THE MENTOR's Letter Column is especially impressive - you seem to edit very little out (the amount printed under most of the names is greater than one often sees), yet almost nothing appears that's so trivial as to cause me to wonder why it got published and at least eight of these letters (including those from Sneyd, Boal, Coulson, Rosenzweig, Strelkov, Masters, & others) contain passages that would make respectable free-standing articles in themselves. Remarkably high level of quality, here.

[I take the view that the writer of a letter follows a "flowing" pattern with their thoughts when they write - once one edits out large pieces (or moves them around) it disrupts the flow and the letter reads "chopped up" and smoothness is noticeable interrupted. - Ron.]

Perhaps even more remarkable is Mae Strelkov's A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH. Even though it doesn't deal primarily with either science-fiction or fandom - the two mainstays of most fanwriting - it's a pure & appropriate gem in the context of a fan/fanzine setting. I hope it's given very serious consideration by whoever edits FANTHOLOGY '95, a few years from now. In a sense, I guess, Mae has always been rather on the fringes of fandom, largely for geographical and economic reasons (and sometimes her own preference, perhaps), but the personality revealed here indicates why she really belongs right in the center of things.

Someone (... I no longer remember who...) has recently claimed that the use of "fen" is running about neck-&-neck with "fans" in (presumably fanzine) current usage. Not in my observation. It's sometimes (rather too often, perhaps) used by neos who are trying to display their knowledge of (& sense of belonging to) the microcosm, and (much more rarely) by old-timers, with tongue-in-cheek, when they want to nod to Tradition. Like much fanspeak (now sometimes written "FanSpeak" with the InterCap form derived from Computerist usage), it seems to have been devised partly to save space, and partly indicate a specific connotation (i.e. "members of 'fannish' science-fiction fandom"), with (in this case) an overtone of poking fun at the Rules imposed on English (and at their inconsistency); similarly, "arrive>arrove" (in analogy to "drive>drove") once enjoyed a brief flurry of fannish popularity. I know that Graham Stone (like some others) detests such neologisms, and indeed they cease to seem clever or amusing rather quickly, but - like the coined terminology of most ingroups - they can and often do serve the double function of conveying a specific shade of meaning not otherwise obtainable, and of reinforcing a sense of Group Identity. They can, I think, be useful, though some care needs to be taken to avoid over-using them.

(12.5.95)

JULIE VAUX, 1/4 Bellevue Rd, Armidale, NSW 2350.

A quote from Augustine writing to a pagan called Maximus:
"Seruime aliquid inter nos agimus, an iocari libet?"

and no, I'm not going to give the translation until the end of the letter!

I'm not going to bother correcting all of Chris Master's various miscomprehensions, but perceiving me as a Neo-hippie is definitely way off line and Chris, I was referring to displacement as a psychological phenomena *not* as New Age channelling. If you really think Stellarc and Mapplethorpe are great artists instead of trendoids... sigh, you have a problem. Anyone else read about bored chimps who like to clean up their cages by throwing waste matter through the bars at keepers and bystanders alike? This image remind anyone of someone?

Back to the adults-

Mae - when are you going to collect all these essays into an autobiography? They would make a great book. Esjay, who ever you are - I like your alien owl. Very striking!

On the subject of Plato:

1) A good book is Paul Shorey's WHAT PLATO SAID.

Unfortunately it is out of print and probably only available in university libraries. A pity as it a great reference aid for students of all ages and levels. It summarises all the dialogues with cross references including the dubious ones which are probably by later Hellenistic Platonists.

2) Plato himself, I suspect, came to regret his remarks in THE REPUBLIC and in THE TIMAEUS and LAWS makes his views clearer on the equal talents or rather capabilities of women and men.

3) When reading Plato and Aristotle I tend to apply a biblical verse as a standard of criticism -

Hold fast to what is good and reject what is evil.

(or what could lead to evil if misinterpreted by others. Literalism is an equal and opposing error to over-allegorising and finding subtext that wasn't there!)

Finally, that Augustine quote in translation.

"is it a serious discussion we are engaged in or do you want only to be amused?"

Here's a quote from Jerome - one of his more sensible remarks:

"Crebius lege et discite quam plurima"

"Read often and learn all you can!"

(22.5.95)

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

I enjoyed Pavel and Mae's reminiscences of parts of the globe I will no doubt never get to, although you never know: I've done my share of globetrotting in the past.

Rodney Leighton on the use of words like "fen": one of the Internet groups I belong to had a long-running discussion on SF vs sci-fi as abbreviations of science fiction. It seemed to break down to fans and pros strongly feeling that sci-fi was offensive and patronising and people with no connection at all with fandom who felt that if sci-fi was good enough for the media it was good enough for them. (Interestingly, despite this apparent breakdown into fan/non-fan, users of sci-fi seemed to be aware that it was originally coined by Forest Ackerman). What interested me was when one person said that he'd been reading the stuff for thirty years and had never come across the abbreviation SF. I was recently looking at some of the books and magazines which got me into SF, and by far the vast majority used SF in publishing blurbs, marketing symbols, or author prefaces - not to mention the magazines which virtually all referred to their contents as SF. I never got around to asking what the guy had actually read, partly because I didn't consider the whole debate as earth-shatteringly important. It was finally put to bed by someone else (not altogether seriously) wondering whether, considering that we *should* abbreviate science fiction by initials, we should write SF or sf....

James Verran's piece on GUIDES TO ENGLISH USAGE was interesting, though I wish that more people - especially writers and publishers - would pay attention to such things; even running a text through a spell-checker to eliminate obvious typos would be useful. But it looks as though no-one dares copy-edit someone who's going to sell in vast quantities anyway: some of the things I've seen from writers in the best-seller charts (I mean the *real* best-seller - not the SF writer who's sold two copies to his mates *and* another two to people he's never seen before!) would make you shudder. Mind you, some of the most illiterate stuff I've seen comes from publishers' press releases - errors of fact, mistakes in punctuation and spelling, and shitting on books by another of your own writers so that you can hype the current author - and this in a production which is supposed to interest you in whatever it is they're trying to puff. Though I shouldn't talk, I suppose. I blame the word-processor myself: I'm writing this on a lap-top with a subtly different keyboard to the one I use at work, I'm making dozens of typos and I've already lost the first version of this letter through apparently saying that [I] didn't want to save, thank you very much, when in fact I did. My most useful Usage Guides are Eric Partridge's USAGE AND ABUSIVE for its sensible advice on hoary old chestnuts like the split infinitive - damn, I wish I hadn't mentioned the split infinitive, there's always someone who's got an opinion on it - and Ernest Gower's THE COMPLETE PLAIN WORDS for its plea for simplicity which is being comprehensively ignored today.

Ah, it was Buck Coulson's letter which got mangled with mine. Odd thing was, it seemed to make some sort of sense at first, only when I read on did I realise that if I *had* written this it must have been in some sort of alternate reality.

Vicki Rosenzweig: I've just been reading Stephen Jay Gould's THE MISMEASURE OF MAN; I asked for one of his books for my birthday and I think my daughter chose one at random, but it's fasci-

nating stuff. What's most interesting, I think, is the way that while some of these investigators into the mysteries of racial differentiation are clearly not competent to be left in charge of a test tube, others (Gould points this out on several occasions) certainly did *not* consciously fake their findings but when through a complicated procedure of rounding down all figures which would show the opposite to their case while rounding up figures which supported them, making sweeping generalisations on unrepresentative samples, and generally arguing through circular logic - Intelligence is a function of large brains/non-white races have small brains/therefore non-white races are less intelligent/some non-white individuals in the sample have larger brains/some criminals and insane people also have large brains/we all know that the inferior races have marked criminal/insane tendencies/therefore these individuals must have been criminal or insane/therefore the contention that non-white races are inferior because they have smaller brains is proved.

There are still people who believe all this, but then there are people who believe in alien abductions and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. I see that Oklahoma was the work of the FBI. Is that a fairy I see fluttering past my window? (18.5.95)

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

At the risk of dragging out the Sheri Tepper review saga too much further, I'd like to say, despite my disagreement with Bradley Row's review, a thanks you to both you and Brad for running this and then continuing with the ensuring debate over the next few issues. It's sparked off a lot of comment on both sides, and it was hotly argued without descending into tedious mudslinging. I don't think anyone's radically changed their opinion. Possibly counter to Brad's aims it might even have sparked a few people to go and pick up the book to see if it indeed justifies such a strongly negative review. I don't think anyone's radically changed their opinion. Possibly counter to Brad's aims it might even have sparked a few people to go and pick up the book to see if it indeed justifies such a strongly negative review. I don't think so, but then I've started to despair of Tepper's irksome eco-feminist moralising getting in the way of the actual story-telling in more recent books. And particularly the quite naff and seriously marred SHADOWS END. Oddly, I've come across nearly the same theme (although without the contentious gender political aspects that Bradley found so objectionable) in Alasdair Gray's THE HISTORY MAKER. This is set in a near/alternate future Scotland (is alternative future a tautology, by the way?) where the menfolk indulge themselves in large scale bloody wargames as their only outlet, while women run the social political life of the communities. The men and their wargames are seen as heroic and ultimately pointless and childish acts of bravery, whose rules and bounds controlled by Geneva, while egged on by the media. The parallel to football and football hooliganism is quite overt and deliberate. It's only when a foul move starts a process of gradual "extension" and breakdown of the rules that the story starts to take a grim turn towards the return of "real" all-involving warfare that the women have defused by their toleration and tacit indulgence of the games.

A neat crop of poems here in POETRY, TOO. Trent Jamieson's A BIT OF THE MIND OF GOD repays several reads, and Steve Proposch's COSMOSIS carries an echo of Stapledonian vastness compressed into less than a dozen brief lines. It's a shame though about the tricky font (Matura Script?) you've adopted for this section. The capitals are over-ornate for use at the start of lines. Poetry takes some work to get the best out of, and perhaps the less other distractions the better.

GARTH is one of those things (for the UK newspapers, certainly) that is always there, and seems to have always been there), although you might not pay any real attention to it most of the time. A similar strip, in terms of longevity, if not content, is JANE - who always manages to remove her clothes by the second frame of each strip (sorry). As with GARTH, I was surprised to find quite how long this had been running. I discovered, not long ago, that the partner of someone we have been writing to for ages was responsible for the JEFF HAWKE strips in the DAILY EXPRESS. I'd be intrigued if Andy turns his attentions to some of the other SFnal strips.

Walt Willis confirms my thoughts on the "prick-cheese" etymology of "smeghead" as a Red Dwarfian term of endearment. I suspect this is totally lost on American cable TV programmers, bidding

away for the subsequent series. I thought it was pretty risqué of the BBC to run it (although after the 9 PM "watershed" if memory serves), and American friends always wonder what creases me up about the word.

Certainly more cheerfully inventive than a certain person's sad attempted riposte to me in this issue. (27.5.95)

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

Sigh - I've come to realise that I'm just not as keen to sit down and write a LoC now that the fiction has been dropped from the magazine.

It was interesting reading the various comments on the subject in TM 87. Certainly there are those who would prefer to see no fiction at all in the magazine. Fair enough. But one thing's for sure: having stories published in past issues of TM did me a world of good. It increased my confidence in my own ability to write, for a start. The great majority of criticisms levelled at my stories were constructive, and a number of those constructive criticisms were valid. Let's face facts. There are people out there who are experts in certain fields, and when they point out errors in my research, I'll usually take note, and correct those errors.

It's amazing the things you miss, even after twenty readings. You can have two points of view on throwing a story to the open market: you can envisage your critics as a pack of dingoes, tearing it to pieces, or you can envisage your critics as a pack of hyenas, tearing it to pieces. Whatever, something good always comes of the exercise. If all the dingos and hyenas reckon the story's a load of crap, then they're probably right, and it's time for a major rewrite, or relegation of the ms to the bottom of the cardboard box for a decade or so. It'll pop up again some day and you'll probably mentally shred it quicker than the hyena did. Then again, you might experience a flash of insight and build a new, improved story on the bones of the old.

I always enjoy Bill Congreve's contributions, and IN DEPTH 13 was no exception. Must get hold of ALIEN SHORES. Verran and Strelkov were entertaining, informative and involving, as usual, but I'll tell you what I thought the best thing in the magazine was: SUBSTATION ONE, by Cecelia Hopkins. What a fantastic poem! More like a short story than a poem. I found myself mulling over the mental pictures conjured up in those three short verses long after I'd put the magazine away.

THE OZ SCENE, so many magazines, and so little time. Shit, what have I been missing out on here? Time to take out a few new subscriptions, I feel. And to start contributing stories to some of the many publications mentioned (but I'll have to write them first).

Final chapter of fandom history, eh? Can't say I'll miss it. Good while it lasted, but enough is enough.

The LoC section seems strangely sad and bare without comments and criticisms on fiction. No decent baggings, payouts or anything. And I don't experience that wonderful sense of excitement any more when TM lands in my letterbox, just a sense of excitement. Kissing alien twins in black evening dress on the cover? Hmm, most provocative. (29.5.95)

MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, Argentina.

To Pamela Boal: how I agree not "a little editing", but a great amount I need. I'm incapable. If I even try, I "chop it up" till there's literally nothing left. For that reason I'm no "great writer" and never will be. Less and less so, as I dodder into my new status of a great grandmother! That 18-year-old grandson and the 30+-year-old girl have produced by a cesarean operation a boy 1.5 kg (eight months in the womb), but he grows nicely. As the girl's brother is our son-in-law we get the news. They've called him Lucas, (Luke), and it's eerie because for the past year or so I've been trying to put into shape a book on THE LIUK MUSHROOM THAT STANDS LIKE A MAN, *Liuk* as Luke?

It's a funny feeling, as your zines arrive, to reread after some ten years when it was all so new. Things have changed... I see our ridge-top now as the "Highway of the Tapirs"; studying "tapir echoes" in myths and languages lately has been a bewitching experience. The Guarani of Paraguay call the Milky Way "the Way of the Tapirs", and native myths about it are so lovely and eerie.

Page 12 of #87: the tiny human figure sitting on that enormous tumbled tree is our Sylvia.

I'm beginning to like poems again. They're all so good but Peter Brodie's gets me... in pursuing our dreams we do "box in" the dreams of others unwittingly. Yes, Peter - we understand each other better now. Both of us trying to evoke the unknowable for our fellow-mates, understandingly. Then "letting it take its course". Only way.

Maria-Louise Stephens! I am waiting for your letter all ready.

C. R. Ross: couldn't you tell us about the Potomonas? They sound fun!

Steve Sneyd - our whole planet is "alien" in a way. We visit it briefly and there are other planets, other "flesh" to experience, I'm sure. Other lifetimes call me yet afar.... It "hovers like a dream between our real". When it does impinge on our normal senses it can be scary. There was an incident years ago at high noon, sun blazing, when our Danny rode by through the thick pines above and behind us, where no bicycle could go, but I had a trail there beside a dry-stone *pirca*, where one climbed over boulders and branches barring the way.

Hearing the jingle of a bicycle and its bell, I didn't dare look back uphill. Our Sylvia and Alice crouched beside me terrified, also not daring to see. But tiny Tony, age about seven, stood up to watch: we watched him watching and I asked, "What do you see?"

"It's Danny on his bicycle." The sounds continued, bicycle bumping over stones, bell singing, metal parts jangling, rising further southwards, till it faded away at a height *our* hill top didn't reach.

Brother Danny in a dual dimension? It still frightens me to remember. All his friends used to run into this doppelgänger of his, and it would linger among them quietly then seem to step aside and they'd say, "Where's Danny gone?"

When our real Danny used to hear about his double he'd be upset, even angry. He died in 1976.

I think: what if I'd dared look up at that "Danny on a bicycle"? Would it have ridden downhill to us? Would it have triggered *our* disappearance from this, *our* mortal dimension?

Oh, Steve! Wertham was a lovely man. I sent him my little zine w/hectoillos in the 1970s and he used to like it a lot and answer. We were friends with Donn Brazier in his TITLE.

Yes, Pamela, our "small, sad person who has so little joy" preoccupies me more and more. Can I say "I love him"? The feeling grows but it would infuriate him to recognise our "blue-haired" concern.

There's a misprint in my loc, (Freudian?). Ron has it: "Chris: Tell us about your momma and young (!) grandma?" "Young" for "your". Well, I for one am a *great* grandma, now that our naughty 18 year old grandson has produced his first little "Liuk" for me. That's scary too, I feel....

Ah, *mestizo* Spanish means a "half-breed". Mestized would probably be the spelling. Not *masticized*, anyway. Makes me think of *masto*- "the breast", etc.

Sad ending to the old "Futurian Saga" of long ago. Not an exciting story, but very real.

July Vaux. We didn't *choose* to plant eucalyptus and pine. That's what the government's Forestry Association told us to plant 10 and more years ago and they paid *some* of the cost, but it came to a lot more out of our own pockets. The local weeds and young trees aren't inflammable and they keep growing no matter how they're cut, so the young pines scarcely race the local vegetation; even pines now 10 metres high are still unseen and hard to reach too. (Such tangles! And endlessly needing new cutting-down of weeds.)

The stands of eucalyptus (a couple of hectares by the Santa Rita's flow) are enormous. (No weeds could compete). We use the wood for fences, walls, etc., constantly, and new shoots replace what's been cut. (A self-replenishing stand). Very lovely! We still hope to build a small log cabin of those eucalyptus trees' generous growths!

Ah, Walt Willis! Did you know you fascinate me too. You fascinate us all, in world-wide fandom.

Joe Fisher: "like a piece of fiction" all life is. City streets when I was younger, thronging with people, thrilled me equally. Reality so consumes me with delight, I failed years ago when I tried to write novels. A "love-affair" with all that's real made it impossible for me to invent a fancy dream. But I *love* reading (novels by those who *can* dream.)

John Alderson. Now! *That*, I'm interested in! Naughty Anglo-Saxon words occur in Chinese too? That's true, especially as per reconstructions of its pronunciation as spoken over 3 millenium ago? Tell more!

I guess I'd better mention the following mistypings: #87, page 9: "He wrote... assuring Vadim we'd never know *want* in our old age." (*want* is missing). Page 34: Could I possibly have said that Satanists are so "ploddingly dull and humorous?" They're *humorless*! Lower down: not "dying myself" but *dyeing* surely?

I've been thinking about you and your MENTOR. What make it so unique for me? It's a question of presence. You don't intrude, you're very quiet but we know you're smiling in the wings as your shadow-people do their stuff throughout your pages. Our "Ron" watches and is interested, amused, never angry. It's like a miniature "reflection" of the way I envisage our "Father in Heaven". Watching, understanding, amused.

And we shadow-people try to entertain each other and sometimes fight. Chris Masters sets off wet squibs whenever there's a place to let him stutter, "Fuck, Fuck, Fuck!" Pok-Pok-Pok would be its prehistoric version, but you're the *Pokosa* person, not he. In our dictionaries, the Quechuan *Poccosa* would be the *Pukka* or *Pukka-sahib* of India. A real gentleman in full control no matter the provocation.

(3.5.95)

CHUCK ROSS, PO Box 268, Mossman, Qld 4873.

There is one thing that you could help me with, providing that I've got *my* facts correct.

Sometime in the late '60's or early 1970's, there was an author that had a connective series of stories published in ANALOG, under the name of (I believe) Tac Hallas. Some time later, he started writing under his own name (also forgotten by me), explaining that the pseudonym 'Tac Hallas' had some esoteric meaning, but that others considered the 'name' to be offensive, so that he was changing it.

My question is what was the name that he changed to? Since I have some connection with "Pandora's Books" in the USA, they have supplied me with several books, always providing that I can tell them the author's name, so hence my question.

Incidentally, "Pandora's" are very accommodating, and have quite a large 'library' of used books. Using their catalog #161 as a reference, the categories that they have listed are:

Adult books and mags (from Devlin to Gilbert)... other names in later catalogs.

Hardcovers (Fitzgerald to Kahn)

Magazines (F&SF to Imagination)

My Page in which he gives info re. things he considers to be of interest or importance... ex. Compuserve)

Mystery/Detective/Thriller (Similar listing of names)

SF & Fantasy paperbacks (As above)

Special Catalogs on disk

TV series (Same break-down on names)

Westerns (As above)

This chap also sends by Airmail if requested, of course this runs a little extra. Surface mail takes about 3 months. I have had very good results in my dealings with him. Also, he provides a catalog every month or so, carrying on where the previous catalog left off, and repeats this service every year! One fine person to do business with!!

His address: 'Pandora's Books' Neche, North Dakota, 58265, USA. (15.6/95)

R LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, 2567 Plaza Del Amo, #209, Torrance, CA 90503-7329, USA.

That story about a machine translation of English to Russian and back to English (mentioned by both Terry Walker and Steve Sneyd in #81) is an old one. I first heard it back in the late 1950s. In that version, it came back as "blind idiot."

Where did you get the idea (expressed in #86) that the U.S. Constitution couldn't change? We have the amendment procedure just for that. It is part of the constitution.

[*The general idea I was expressing is that, from here, a majority of US citizens seem to take the US Constitution as perfect as is, and wouldn't let anyone re-write it if needed. - Ron.*]

I'm sure I've said this before. There is no period in my name.

[Whoops! Usually when I see a single letter in a name, I take it there is a full-stop after it. Sorry. - Ron.]

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN was shown once or twice on PBS, our Public Broadcasting System. I think someone said it had been shown more recently by others. I would love to get a copy of it if anyone has it.

Interesting article by James Verran in #87 about "English Usage and Punctuation Guides". Too bad he typed typos as "typo's."

[Err, yes. That may have been me.... - Ron.]

To reply to Lloyd Pe nney, the Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature is not an editor's association. It is a group of people interested in the English language. Although there are many people in professions related to his interest, such as English teachers, who are members, anyone can join. The address is PO Box 118, Waleska, GA 30183, USA. The initial membership fee is US\$20.

I have enjoyed Mae Strelkov's more recent articles about her home and countryside much better than the language and philosophy ones she used to submit.

Like many of your readers, I haven't enjoyed the history of Australian fandom. It seems too dry. The histories I've enjoyed of British and American fandoms are much more anecdotal and therefore more enjoyable. (22.6.95)

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

Pavel Viaznikov's column is always interesting. It was surprising that Irkutsk had the #3 art gallery in Russia. This place seems very remote from the world, just above the Gobi Desert. Could the art have been removed there by Stalin to avoid Nazi sacking? The bombast of writer A. Stolyarov is easily settled under the free market system - the proletariat will buy the books they like and no central edict from on high will change that. A. Stolyarov will be rewarded automatically by the invisible hand of Messrs Ricardo and Adam Smith.

James Verran's guide to grammars had me looking for that Grammar On One Card. It sounds useful. I could whip it out at the Pizza Hut.

Mae Strelkov's adventures are virtually identical to ON OUR SELECTION, one of a series dealing with the ordinary struggle of a pioneer Australian family to beat a homestead out of the Australian bush. This classic is being remade as a feature film by, I think, Mel Gibson. The struggle to survive on the land is a powerful streak in every Australian's character. We all have an uncle with a farm. My unc's in Minyip. Bushfires, flood and drought, and Vicki Rosenzweig knows what's burning, millions of the things.

Andrew Darlington's seemingly never-ending series are always jam-packed with nostalgic info. I remember Garth in the newspaper when I was a little kid, possibly the Melbourne AGE? I kept waiting in suspense to see if Garth would escape a monstrous thing like a sea anemone the size of two phone booths. Garth was ship-wrecked at sea on a log about a hundred feet long and ten feet in diameter. He was at one end and the anemone was at the other. Each day when he woke the anemone was ten feet closer. I can't recall why Garth couldn't swim around it - there might've been a plesiosaur shadowing the log.

HISTORY OF FANDOM was rather melancholy, with Mollsworth's obituary - imagine what that guy would be doing now with desktop publishing -, Kevin Dillon left polishing the bar in Tombstone and Graham Stone riding his pinto into the sunset to take up a job as Federal Marshall. Pity all those Futurians in the photo couldn't be 20 year olds living in 1995 - all their SF dreams have come true with nanotechnology, Internet, Moller aircars, flat-screen wall TV and space stations about to burst big time. This's a great time to be living in a modern Western utopia like Australia.

Steve Sneyd's interesting lore on changelings follows John Francis Haines' LoC wondering what we can do for new plots. I have rehashed Julian Jayne's book on the evolution of human consciousness often enough in LoCs. Colin Wilson examined how the evolution of the early novels, PAMELA, SORROWS OF WERTHER, etc, evolved new memes (thought modules) which allowed people to think in a new way. Wilson claims modern sexual perversions and fetishes could only arise once these memes were invented (I can't follow his argument because I thought perversions had always existed, but what do I know?). Getting back to Steve Sneyd, one interesting library book I devoured was Evans-Wentz's FAIRY FAITH AMONG CELTIC

PEOPLES, which is chocka with direct accounts of encounters with the fairy folk of West Ireland at the start of this century. I feel human consciousness is continually evolving and weird things will turn up and have revolutionary effects on literature. The new physics is part of this. A friend of mine emigrated last week to Rainier, Washington, to his farm in sight of Mt Rainier. This interesting mountain has had a mystical reputation in Indian Lore for centuries. People wandering its slopes are met by mystical beings who warn them off certain areas. Mt Rainier is famous for the guy flying over it in 1947 and seeing three of what he termed "flying saucers" thus popularising the modern term. Did this tilt our literary antennae to metaphysics and the life beyond Earth? Who knows? The TV and movies are certainly awash with pretty strange concepts compared to 1940. Even mainstream fiction often deals with some pretty odd beings and situations.

A bit of chatter in the LoCs about censorship... I always point to John Milton's 1644 essay *Areopagitica* against the British parliament's reintroduction of press censorship. Milton's appraisal still covers all the arguments made by today's smart young things. Speaking of protecting the feeble-minded (or morally challenged) from dangerous print, I was reading Exodus 35:2-3 which declares the Sabbath to be "a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death". Can't argue with that. God doesn't lie, so children should obviously kill teachers who work on Sunday. It is a divine deed to go around on Sunday and murder taxidrivers or supermarket staff. It has the ring of Psalm 137 I think which says blessed is he who dashes thy baby against the rocks - that's at the end of the famous "by the rivers of Babylon". Funny how they always leave the end bit off. The song might've become a heavy metal classic otherwise. If you dashed out the brains of a baby who was driving a taxi on Sunday you'd be doubly blessed by Jehovah, wouldn't you.

To Buck Coulson - it's not the fans wearing suits in those old photos that bother me, it's the ones with the accordions you worry about. This guy is probably the Chief Literary Censor now - or Bill Wyman. Show me an accordion player and I'll show you a serial killer.

Steve Jeffery's xero musing doesn't go far enough. I was thinking of the problems of Ron's scanning images and manipulating them. What I imagined was a selenium drum that was intelligent with half a million selenium dots on it. It is very slow to scan a laser beam across a drum to get a page. Images have to be scanned in at this slow pace (6 pages a minute say). The exposure of a xerographic drum in a photocopier is a lot quicker. At the moment Ron arranges his print on the CRT screen, leaving a blank spot for pictures. He then tells his laser to tediously scan and eventually print out a page. Ron glues a picture onto the empty space with laser-printed text set around it. Ron then lays this composite sheet on the xero-plate and photocopies a few hundred, losing fidelity in having to photocopy a photocopy. If the selenium drum had half a million or a million dots connected directly to Ron's software it would in effect become flat screen TV (CRTs with all be flatties in about 5 years because they've currently reached 50% of total screen production which makes very cheap prices now practical - this includes your mythical 6-foot flat-screen wall TV as in TOTAL RECALL, which doubles as wall paper or Mona Lisa). Bugger, I feel like Steve Sneyd - the explanation's longer than the original poem. And Steve Jefferey's probably not following us anyway. Sorry about that.

I'm totally mystified at the hoo-ha about Bradley Row and THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY. I think it was Harry Andruschak who first twigged that it was a parable of Plato's REPUBLIC. Very sharp guy, that Harry. I would never have spotted this. But it wouldn't matter to me if it was not. Women can write novels sticking it up the men can't they? What's the problem? A novel where the blacks reverse-role all the whites would be just as acceptable. It has the effect of putting the reader in the other person's shoes.

Novboracensian Vicki Rosenzweig is probably right about the fossil record showing no pterosaurs the way Tonia Walden drew one, but the wing membrane anchored to the leg is pretty much the same as Oz's flying sugar gliders. I think the anchor line of right arm to left leg is a reflection line in the glass window. Flying glider foxes are okay Down Under.... it's the carnivore drop bears that make New York tourists nervous. A bunch of them could bring down an adolescent if he was not quick enough to avoid their glide paths. However I

believe there hasn't been an American tourist killed by drop bears in the Blue Mountains for several years. Anyway, Tonia Walden's anatomy of the human face is excellent. The small pterodactyl silhouetted in the sky is good. This chick can draw.

I see a hint of desperation creeping into Chris Masters' LoCs with you, Ron. Seems every assumption he makes about your attitude to him is followed by your "No, actually..." The disapproval or dislike from you he is always assuming is not there; it always seemed to me to be kindness and goodwill towards the lad. The Americans seem to give him a tolerant pat on the head, too. He is in reality quite a cheerful fellow.

It was colder than Walt Disney's head last night. The drop bears will be migrating up north if this cold snap keeps up. Did you know the venom from a platypus sting can make a man's arm triple in size overnight and the pain is incredible? The excruciating pain can keep recurring in flashback for 10 years. The strength of a man's arm is not enough to prise the platypus off the other arm and the animal continues to pump venom. So don't let these suckers have sex with your leg, baby. At least blue-ringed octopi are fatal in eight minutes. And we've got anti-venene for funnel-webs. (- .6.95)

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

I love the continuing lid-lifting expose of the doings of the Futurian Society and the photographs - as Walt Willis said of some I

put on display at the 1952 London Convention (of Shelby Vick, Linwood Carter and assorted Floridianian and New Orleans fans) "They look quite normal really."

In fact the group photo in TM 86 (page 10), looks just like one I have of the Con I ran in Bradford in 1951 and one that Vince Clarke has of the 1951 Loncon - even to the suits and ties. I met Lyell Crane in 1951, he was on his world tour at the time.

I enjoy Andrew Darlington's articles for, as you know, I was in the book and magazine trade from 1947 until 1958 and saw all the publications he mentions. I remember the "Horror Comic" nonsense caused by Mary Whitehouse and idiot MPs, none of whom had ever heard of, never mind read, any of these "dreadful publications" they banned.

To try to make up for the shortness of this letter I am enclosing a gift, a photograph that has some historic value, as you will see from the label on its back. If you want to publish it for the 'edification of your readers go ahead and let Aussie fans of the 50s see their UK counterparts. (28.2.95)

WAHF: John Tipper, Darren Goossens, & Deidre Cheers,

1951 London Festival Convention, Royal Hotel. All fan editors/publishers in the UK (except Ken Slater who was in the army in Germany). L to R: Mike Tealby (*Wonder*), Derek Pickles (*Phantasmagoria*), Fred Robinson (*Straight Up*), Walt Willis (*Slant*), Bob Foster (*Sludge*), Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer (*Science Fantasy News*).

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Book Reviews

WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES by H. G. Wells. Everyman pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. Intro © 1994 (novel published in 1899). 247 pp including notes and comments. A\$14.95. On sale now.

WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES is one of the seminal works of SF; there are untold novels that make use of some of its premises. One of the more noticeable are attacking aircraft flying in wedge formation.

This version of the novel is the one that was serialised - the later edition, which has up till 1994 been the only one in print, has been changed, adding more Negro references and deleting the girl the hero falls for. The story of Graham, the young man who had too many stresses in his life and who had fallen into a trance-like state is well known. He had been kept alive by intravenous drip as he lay in a coma, and the two men who had befriended him - one the man who had talked to him before he fell into the coma, the other a friend of the latter - had, being childless, bequeathed him their considerable fortunes. These had been invested wisely by the trustees, and when Graham had eventually been awakened (but not by the trustees), he found he was the owner of half the world. The masses were in revolt and he, being from a former age who still had romantic ideas of democracy, later found himself on their side, especially when he met the women he fell for. Many later movies have also use this theme, most notably Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS

The only negative thing I found with the novel were the numerous spelling mistakes. If you haven't read this novel, then you should. A must for your library.

MAZE OF MOONLIGHT by Gael Baudino. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1993. 351 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

MAZE OF MOONLIGHT is Book Two of this fantasy series.

The novel is set in the time of the Crusades, and tells the tale of Christopher, Baron of Aurvelle as he returns from the Crusades and his meeting with Vanessa, a peasant girl with the Sight, who finds a band of Elven. The Elven have other varieties of the Sight and can see patterns in the past, present and future. They see these two are in the nexus of some pathways that could alter events as they occur in the days of violence and danger.

Vanessa is attacked and Christopher rescues her, though they are both wounded in the fray. The Elven tend them and set them up to help them deal with coming events..... A moderately well written fantasy.

THE DARK QUEEN by Michael & Teri Williams. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1994. 313 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This is the first novel that the Williams have done outside of the Dragonlance saga worlds. THE DARK QUEEN is a quest novel - the questors are a mute slave, a long-in-the-tooth druid and a cursed bard and her magic hawk. The band is helped along by a group of Elves. Their main foe is the Goddess Takhisis (described on the back-cover blurb as "the evil-most queen" - the Americans' grammar is really deteriorating! and in the text as having a "masculine, faceted body"). It is the first of the Villains Series.

The print is rather large and the writing clear, so most readers will find that it will not require much concentration and can be read in a few hours. The series will "explore the corrupted origins

of the malevolent minions of Takhisis, Queen of Darkness."

SHROUD OF SHADOW by Gael Baudino. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1993. 352 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

SHROUD is the third book in this fantasy series by Gael, the first two being STRANDS OF STARLIGHT and MAZE OF MOONLIGHT. It is set in the Middle Ages, in the time of the Inquisition. The existence of Elves is taken for granted. The Elves had a bad time of the Inquisition, and there was only one left on Earth. She did have friends, though, and some of those friends were victims of the Inquisitor. So she decided to harp her way across the land to the place she would depart the world the mortals dwelled in.

The novel is written for the general populace; though fantasy fans will enjoy it also. There is a bit of violence and blood, but the bulk of the novel is fantasy of quite high quality.

BARONESS OF BLOOD by Elaine Bergstrom. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 309 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This work is the tenth in an open-ended series of Gothic Horror novels set in the Ravenloft dark fantasy setting.

Ilsebeth's father was the previous ruler, and the peasants had shouted with glee when he had been assassinated. She, however, had other plans and had married the new young ruler. Little did he know what an evil woman she was. He found out though, when she poisoned him. He spends much of the novel lying in bed listening to the goings on. By the end of the novel events have come together and most of the characters are dead on just-as-well.

For the gothic horrorfile.

KNIGHTS OF THE CROWN by Roland Green. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 316 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

KNIGHTS OF THE CROWN is volume 1 of the War of the Lance.

The Knights of Solamnia were the greatest order of chivalry in the history of Krynn. All those who wished to become Solamnic Knights must first enter as squires of the Knights of the Crown, with whom they begin their training in the virtue of loyalty. This novel is the story of Sir Pirvan the Wayward, whose reluctant and inauspicious beginnings as Pirvan the Spell Thief bore few clues to his potential as a Knight of the Crown.

Roland Green is the author of the Starcruiser Shennandoah and Wandor series, numerous Conan novels and is co-author of the Jannisaries series. This one is basic fantasy adventure; pre-teens and early teens will love it.

SHADOWS OF DOOM by Ed Greenwood. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 314 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

This one is volume 1 in the Shadow of the Avatar series.

It was the eve of the Time of Troubles. The chaos of spilled blood, lawless strife, monsters unleashed, and avatars roaming Faerun was still to come. Unbeknownst to mortals, the gods had been summoned together, and among them was Mystra, grown proud and willful in the passing aeons. With the others, she was about to be stripped of her godhood. The secret of her power gave her an idea. She made certain preparations, looking always for one who would be her successor. But until that person's ascension, her power must be preserved....

There is a fair bit of wordage in this small-print volume, and the author has a workmanlike ability in wordsmithing.

SHADOW OF A DARK QUEEN by Raymond E. Feist. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 560 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Volume one of the Serpentwar Saga.

Something dark is moving in distant lands and powers from the far past are readying themselves for the final conflict. A Dark Queen has raised a standard in remote lands and is gathering armies of ferocity that has not been seen for millennium. Into this battle for good and evil comes a troop of desperate men whose only hope of survival is to travel to face the hoary power and try to outwit it. It is a quest that for all intents and purposes the world depends on.

As usual Feist has come up with a work that is both well written and engrossing for fantasy fans. It is also good money for the quite thick beastie.

DRAGONCHARM by Graham Edwards. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1994. 504 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

DRAGONCHARM is about just that: Charm, which is something like magic, but under another name. It seems Charm is leaking out of the ancient world, taking with it the dragons' powers - to have fiery breath and to have magical abilities. Fortune is a young Natural dragon who had no fire in his mouth or magical ability. He did have something in him, though, that could save the dragons. He had an enemy though, Wraith, who was the leader of a group of Charmed dragons. He is determined to awake the Guardian to gain the Seed of Charm....

I've heard a lot of this before, of course (even though the blurb on the front covers says "The Ultimate Dragon Saga"...), but the writing is fresh and the plot not too convoluted. An easy read for the general reader.

THE SECOND GENERATION by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1994. 440 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The DragonLance series of novels told how the Heroes of the Lance won their war against the Queen of Darkness and defeated her. Defeated, but not killed. Time passed, and the Heroes grew older, raised families and basically settled down. The children of the various unions grew up and went on adventures of their own.

This novel tells of how the world grew complacent and the people forgot the old legends and mostly past wars. The Queen took stock of what was going on and her plans started to hatch....

Fans of Weis & Hickman will like this one - beginning of another Quest?

THE GIANT AMONG US by Troy Dennish. TSR pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1995. 314 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now

Book two of the Twilight Gods trilogy.

The rise of a new queen has shattered the ancient peace of the Ice Spires. For more than a year, the Giant tribes standing ready to invade Hartsvale have been held at bay by a lone scout armed with a single golden arrow. When Giants trap Queen Brianna in a remote citadel, Tavis Burdun must undertake a harrowing journey to summon help - entrusting Brianna's safety to a rival for her love. The scout soon learns that the greatest danger to his beloved is posed not by the horde of Giants gathering to storm the citadel, but by a spy lurking within. To save his love, Tavis must unmask the traitor....

Action adventure fantasy.

THE DEUS MACHINE by Pierre Ouellette. NEL pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. © 1993. 443 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

An actual SF novel! The author appears to be a main-stream writer attempting to break into the genre.

The year is 2005 and a long-lasting depression threatens to collapse the government of the US. A military cabal sets DEUS - a secret AI - on a deadly course, to pull itself up by its bootstraps with the orders to create a powerful new weapon. As the machine proceeds to create new and potentially deadly life, two people join up in an attempt to stop the experiments: a computer genius and a fatherless boy...

The last two pages of the book list technical sources for the background of the novel - so I suppose if you don't believe the author you could look it all up.

THE LAST WIZARD by Tony Shillitoe, Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1995. 436 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This novel looks to be the first in a new series by Australian Tony Shillitoe

THE LAST WIZARD is the story of Tamesan, the daughter of the Dragon Head, which tribe of warriors from Harbin go south each year with the intent to kill a dragon. Only male warriors are allowed to go south thus; women must stay with the rest of the troupe and do what women always have done.... Tamesan liked to go trail-walking on Dragon Mountains, where she met and befriended the Herbal Man, who was well known for the intricate knowledge of herbs and medicines he had collected over the years. One time she had been caught out in a violent snow storm and would have died if it had not been for the Herbal Man, who found her and brought her to his home. It was there that she discovered the truth about the dragons, and the ancient secret that was hidden in Harbin.

Shillitoe is an excellent novelist - if you like well-written fantasy, get these.

MIRRORSHADES edited by Bruce Sterling. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1986. 239 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

The subtitle of this anthology is "The Cyberpunk Anthology".

The stories forming this book were written and collected in the 1980's as a representative collection cyberpunk writing from that period by the editor, Bruce Sterling. They are written by the leading lights of the cyberpunk movement and are: THE GERNSBACK CONTINUUM by William Gibson, SNAKE-EYES by Tom Maddox, ROCK ON by Pat Cadigan, TALES OF HOUDINI by Rudy Rucker, 400 BOYS by Marc Laidlaw, SOLSTICE by James Patrick Kelly, PETRA by Greg Bear, TILL HUMAN VOICES WAKE US by Lewis Shiner, FREEZONE by John Shirley, STONE LIVES by Paul Di Filippo, RED STAR, WINTER ORBIT by Bruce Sterling and William Gibson, and MOZART IN MIRRORSHADES by Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner. All the stories are excellent; some are quite New Wave, but are understandable, which is something else going for them. There is also quite a long introduction by Bruce Sterling, which gives a background to the early days of the cyberpunk movement and background to the authors. This is one of those "get this" book. Exceptional value.

PALACE CORBIE#5, edited by Wayne Edwards. Merimack Books, PO Box 83514, Lincoln, NE 68501-3514, USA. © 1994. 227 pp. US\$10.95. On sale now.

PALACE CORBIE is an on-going magazine of horror, well worth reading if you are a horror-file.

This issue is full of shorts this time around. They are well written horror, with not so much of the pure "blud and gore" that characterises much of the slackly written stuff being published these days. There are some 48 stories and poems included in the two pages of contents. The authors are Egrend Slye, Sheila E Murphy, William Andrew, James S. Door, Sean Doolittle, K.K. Ormond, Douglas Clegg, John Marshall, Holly Day, karen verba, Norman Partridge, D.F. Lewis, Jonathan Yungkans, ce elle, Ron Dionne, Edward Mycue, Wayne Allen Sallee, Bobbi Sinha, Charlee Jacob, Jacie Ragan, Yvonne Navarro, Andre Scheluchin, Edo van Belkom, John Grey, John Benson & Tina Reigel, Charlee Jacob, Yael R. Dragwyla, Bob Cook, Gregory Norris & Kimberly Wade, David Schindler, J.N. Williams, Bruce Boston, Deidra Cox, Maria Vega, Marge Simon, Denise Dumars, William Kopecky, Bob Cook, Sue Storm, Gemma Files, Richard Levesque and Michael Arzen. A cornucopia of horror.

FALLEN ANGELS by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Michael Flynn. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1991. 394 pp including acknowledgments. A\$11.95. On sale now.

One of the topics at the April 1995 meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was "The SF in SF", and one of the novels mentioned in this discussion was FALLEN ANGELS.

The novel is set in the near future: the Greens have got into power (apparently all over the world) and the atmosphere is mostly pollution free. Most technology has been deemed "inappropriate" and banned. There are two space-stations still in orbit (from the time of Big-science) but they are running short of some materials. One of which is nitrogen. On mission to scoop some up from the atmosphere, a shuttle is shot down over the USA. The pilot and navigator are still alive on the surface but there is not much hope for them. Because of the low pollution of the atmosphere, the ice-age which had been held back by that pollution continues, and the glaciers are advancing all over the earth. With technology banned, people are forced to endure the advancing ice, and the Greens, now firmly entrenched, send out search parties to find the astronauts. However when they arrive they find the men gone - and dog sled tracks leading off the ice-sheet. Why has rescued them? Why, one of the only groups that still believes in space flight... science fiction fandom. I loved this novel. *Recommended* - get it!

THE GAP INTO MADNESS: CHAOS AND ORDER by Stephen Donaldson. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1994. 743 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

I can't really tell you how surprised I am (though I really shouldn't be, I suppose) that Donaldson could turn out such good SF, even though it is space opera.

In CHAOS AND ORDER Morn Hyland and Angus Thermopyle escape from Captain Nick Succorso several times, but he keeps on coming back and managing to take over. The last time, however, he

makes a mistake - from lack of ultimate knowledge of how Angus is controlled. He thinks that *he* is the only one who can control Angus, but he hasn't thought it through.... *Trumpet* escapes the asteroid laboratory where Morn had hoped to get more control of the machinery in her head that enabled her to keep sane in hyperspace, but it was not to be. The action is fast and furious. I loved it - this really *is* great SF and the Sense of Wonder permeates the whole series. If you have a chance, get all the novels - there is only one more after CHAOS AND ORDER, so you don't have much time. *Recommended*.

FLUX by Stephen Baxter. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1993. 366 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Stephen Baxter is turning into one of the best "hard" SF writers in the world today.

The novel starts out with this second line: "There was something wrong. The photons didn't smell right. Her hand floated before her face, dimly visible, and she flexed her fingers. Disturbed electron gas, spiralling dizzily around the Magfield lines, sparked purple-white around the fingertips. The Air in her eyes was warm, stale, and she could make out only vague shapes." Dura was part of a band of human beings who would shortly be decimated because of the out-of-the-ordinary forces that would change the world that they lived in. That world, however, is the interior of a star. The band of humans had been forced to flee civilisation centuries before and they now lead a nomadic existence, floating around in the "air" and foraging. When the Magfield lines killed most of her band, the adventure started, and would end light years away at the neutron star sped towards a destiny the protagonist could not have imagined in her wildest dreams.

Fantastic SF - "Highly Recommended".

THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT SINGS THE BLUES by Harry Harrison. Bantam pb, dist in Aust by Transworld publishers. © 1994. 229 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Slippery Jim diGriz was hard at working robbing the Mint when things went wrong for him - the Galactic League grabbed him. Fortunately for Jim they weren't thinking of putting him away, at least not yet.... Or was that really good for him??

The League had other ideas for him - such as giving him a thirty day slow acting poison and a job to do - apparently they wanted him to heist an alien artefact that had disappeared - something that was the only evidence of an alien presence that had ever been found. Unfortunately for Jim this item was being held on a really nasty planet - inhabited by Fundamentaloids, Machmen and a *really* strange dude called Iron John. Of course with the poison in his veins Jim didn't have much choice in the matter, so he was soon in the thick of (more) things, rocking along, you might say.

The Stainless Steel Rat has many followers in SF readers, and they won't be disappointed with his latest adventure.

FATE by Mary Corran. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1995. 363 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

FATE is about just that. When Asher's father held the one year old infant in his arms over the pit, the Oracle uttered its pronouncement. It was, as usual, couched in esoteric terms, but it basically said that she was his "luck".

When the girl grew up, she found herself one among a group of religious women in a community that was down-trodden and subjugated. Their country had been overrun by an odorous Invader and to pay the tithes men, women and children had to work much harder than usual. The novel is well written and shows that the author may have a good career ahead of her. FATE is fantasy and is pretty obviously aimed at women readers... though how this will fare among the general readership is something else again.

Still, well written and constructed fantasy is a basic requirement for good reading enjoyment.

RONAN THE BARBARIAN by James Bibby. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1995. 260 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now

"First came Conan, then came Rincewind... look out world here comes Puss, the Donkey from Hell" so reads the blurb on the front cover of RONAN THE BARBARIAN.

The tale is of farce and humour. It tells of Ronan the barbarian and his adventures and deeds with his friends Tarl, whom had met and befriended as he travelled through the countryside. Tarl had

thought that the big man was not all that bright, until further conversation revealed that this was not so. Tyson was the third of the trio - he was able to match Tarl, who was a rough-and-tumble type, in drinking beer and having a rousing good time.

Nekros was the killer of Ronan's father and Ronan was determined to find the Singing Sword and put the evil one to death. Whether this would be the end of the adventure only time would tell. This edition was "Translated from the original Gibberish by James Bibby."

A TIME OF JUSTICE by Katharine Kerr. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1994. 465 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

A TIME OF JUSTICE is the conclusion of the Westlands cycle and ties up the loose ends nicely.

Arzosah and his rider, Rhodry have teamed up with the dwarf warriors to try to rescue the besieged town of Cengarn, where the pregnant Princess Carra is trapped behind its walls. She is under the eye of two sorcerers - Jill and Dallandra who are attempting to ensure that the mother and child are free to pursue their destinies. The vast hordes of Horsekin are surrounding the small town and Arzosah has probably the only way in. It is what has been described as a "Celtic" fantasy - an area of fantasy that is of growing popularity. Adventure fantasy.

POWER RAY by Anne McCaffrey & Elizabeth Ann Scarborough. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1995. 306 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This collaboration between McCaffrey and Scarborough is the third in the series of novels about Petaybee, the first two being POWERS THAT BE and POWER LINES.

As the story takes up, Petaybee is about to become an independent planet. The leader of the humans, Yana Maddock had been summoned to appear before the committee on Gal 3 to discuss the world's future. As a living entity the whole planet was living proof of harmonic living. Except for Matthew Luzon, who had been beaten in one battle but was determined to undermine the independent stature of the newly accepted world. A rash of tourists arrived - some were wildlife hunters, others were entrepreneurs, and other religious cranks. Then Yana was kidnapped.... Scarborough is an excellent writer and this novel shows it.

THE MOST AMAZING MAN WHO EVER LIVED by Robert Rankin. Double-day pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1995. 267 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

This is another of Rankin's way-out novels of humour, though this time it is about life death and the afterlife. Kind of.

When Norman's father fell out of nowhere and flattened him (dead) Norman found that all that insurance wasn't that good any more. Unfortunately for him, the afterlife wasn't that good, either. You see, God had decided to close down Hell and Heaven was getting a little crowded.... So the Universal Reincarnation Company was recycling the souls. This wasn't so much of a bad situation except that someone had worked out how to rot the system - at least they had found out how to get themselves born again and again on their original birthday. And with all their memories intact. Neat, huh? Think of all the things you wouldn't do the same again. Nut-cracking fantasy.

SWAMP FOETUS by Poppy Z. Brite. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1994. 190 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

SWAMP FOETUS is a collection of short fiction by Poppy Brite. It seems to be her first anthology.

The author has been interviewed in BLOODSONGS, so I was interested in reading some of her works. I would say that this collection is a good introduction to her works. The stories included here are a mixed bunch - some don't really take off. On the other hand, most of them do have some bite. Those stories are - ANGELS; A GEORGIA STORY; HIS MOUTH WILL TASTE OF WORMWOOD; OPTIONAL MUSIC FOR VOICE AND PIANO; XENOPHOBIA; THE SIXTH SENTINEL; MISSING; FOOTPRINTS IN THE WATER; HOW TO GET AHEAD IN NEW YORK; CALCUTTA, LORD OF NERVES; THE ELDER and THE ASH OF MEMORY; THE DUST OF DESIRE. I thought the weakest were XENOPHOBIA; MISSING and FOOTPRINTS IN THE WATER. The best were those three at the end of the book: CALCUTTA, LORD OF NERVES, about the dead not staying still; THE ELDER about a Christ-

mas that really lit up, and ASH AND DUST, a story about having to let go of the one you love in the end.

Poppy Brite is an upcoming horror author - and she promises to get much better as the years go on.

BATTLEAXE by Sara Douglass. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1995. 674 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

BATTLEAXE is the first book to be published in HarperCollins new Science Fiction/Fantasy list. The author was a resident of South Australia and teaches both medieval and early-modern history at the University of Bendigo.

Would you know that this is the first novel of a trilogy? The back-cover blurb partly tells the story: Axis, bastard son of the dead Princess Rivkah, is sent to the battlefield at Gorkenfort with his elite Axe-Wielders. Once there, he must hand over command to his hated half-brother, Borneheld. But travelling north, Axis falls in love with Faraday - Borneheld's betrothed, and meets two priests who challenge the very essence of his beliefs.

Douglass has quite an engrossing writing style and readily draws the reader in. The plot is not overly complex and the characters are boldly drawn. This promises to be an interesting series when completed.

LEGACIES by Alison Sinclair. Millennium h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1995. 325 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now.

I was not sure when I started reading this whether I would like it - it gave me a sense of unease. This feeling lasted for the first third of the book, then, when I became better acquainted with the plot, I found that LEGACIES was quite good.

The novel is set on an alien colony planet. The colonists there were fifth generation. When their three ships had left their mother world, the three star-drives had acted in unison, something the scientists had warned about. The last thing the ships had seen, as they left their home world, was fire etching the disc. For five generations they had been afraid to go back to see the damage. There were natives on the colonial planet - and some of the colonists had gone part native. One of the children brought up with the natives was the protagonist, who had been severely hurt in a childhood fall from a dome roof. After winning their argument to return to the mother planet, what they found surprised them - and they decided to land....

I think that Sinclair has a good career in SF, as long as she has more than one story under her belt.

THE WILD SHORE by Kim Stanley Robinson. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1984. 343 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

I didn't like PACIFIC EDGE when I read it, so I approached THE WILD SHORE with something like trepidation. I need not have worried.

Apparently this novel is part of a group of books that Robinson wrote about Orange Country. This is the first of the series that I have read. It takes place after the US was virtually wiped out in an atomic attack. The rest of the world still exists - the UN is apparently keeping watch over the wrecked US and making sure that nobody gets out of its borders and that no expansion of its existing "industries" (mostly cottage) takes place. Onofre Valley is a small fishing town that escaped most of the carnage, though there was starvation for several years. Henry was seventeen years old and just beginning to expand his horizons. He met up with a group of men from out of town and, along with others from the valley, journeyed on their rail-car to San Diego, where they met the "American Resistance". It was later on in the book that we find out just how these resistance fighters work out.

The print size is pretty small, so you get a lot of story for your dollars. I thought this was reliable after-the-bomb writing.

TANK GIRL by Hewlett and Martin. Penguin graphic, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1993. 132 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now.

Well, after I've read this comic I can see what all the hoo-ha is about with Tank Girl.

There are about three storylines in this collection, which is in full colour, by the way. The adventures of Tank Girl, her kangaroo mate and various paranoid koalas are run right past the nose of the reader with quiet intensity. The plots are also paranoid enough to last any reader but most are believable given the premises. I did notice that the spelling of Sidney had been corrected in a later story to Sydney.

ney, but that was about the only bit of misinformation I saw. The volume is done in stiff covers so it will last much longer than the usual comic and is bound well.

I haven't seen the other comic versions (some of these herein are dated 1990) but I presume that they were in black-and-white.

DEATH ON DARADO by John Light. Overspace pb, obtainable from 25 Sheldon Rd, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 0BP, UK. © 1992. 94 pp. £2.99. On sale now.

Even though this novel has only 94 pages, the print is about 7 point, so you get quite a lot for your money.

This is a self-published SF novel by John Light - the cover is glossy and the size is A5. I enjoyed reading this SF detective tale, set on the planet Dorado. Dorado is a totally Capitalistic world - there is no government as such and businesses take care of their own. When there is a murder - as happens to Edlin Borrowitch - there is no regular police force. Instead the Insurance companies investigate the case and put forward the evidence to the Justice Machine. Sarn Denson is a Tech (detective) who is hired by the accused woman, an art dealer who worked for Borrowitch, to gather evidence as to the real killer. He begins the investigation by interviewing the man's wife, and later, mistress. Events become complicated when an attempt is made on Denson's life and he finds the case becoming more complex.

Well written and enjoyable, though it did take a few pages to pick up pace.

VOICES by Vohn Vornhold. Del pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishing. © 1994. 246 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

VOICES is Book 1 of the Babylon 5 series, based on the TV show of the same name.

The personnel on Babylon 5 should have known something would happen when the Earth government decided to have a Psi Corps convention on the giant space station. The Psi Corps did not have a good reputation after various events that had taken place there earlier and the finding of a bomb on board had heightened tension. There was one person who was naturally suspect: Talia Winters. She starts running. Unfortunately she had the Psi Corps after her - in the persons of Bester and Gray (where have I heard that former name before??) and is pretty scared, since neither Ivanova nor Garibaldi can overtly help her.

The events of the novel take place in time shortly after the events of the second year episode *Points of Departure* and prior to the events in *A Race Through Dark Places*. Well written space opera.

TRAVELS OF A WISE MAN by Donald Macdonald. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1995. 244 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

One of the things I don't like about Australian fantasy by authors outside the genre is the use of Capitals for people and events. In this case The Wise Man, the Boy, and Evil One, and the Child. Arrr!

Having gotten over that, we can look at the caption on the cover: "Don't fear - just trust and believe". I won't go into the novel itself ... I'll just quote from the first two paragraphs: "Last night I dreamt I met a Wise Man...."

"It was the beginning of a journey that would take me into another world. An uncharted world, mysterious and magical. There I would meet the Wise Man. And I would find myself."

Who bought this nonsense? The author is an actor and is

the author of CARAVAN, which is one of the most successful comedies ever produced in Australia (says the back-cover blurb). Well, Macdonald may write good scripts, but he can't write fantasy. This is definitely one you can give a miss, unless you are into theatrical themes.

RHINEGOLD by Stephan Grundy. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1994. 858 pp. A\$16.95. On sale now.

This large paperback is a re-telling of the Sage of Siegfried, using modern grammar.

The author tells the story of how the Rhine's gold had been stolen by a god and ended up being guarded by a man-turned-dragon. Quite a time span is encompassed by RHINEGOLD - some six generations of Woden's descendants with the eventual outcome Sigfrith's victory. Grundy has woven the Norse myths with the history of the

European continent at the time of the fall of Burgandy and the invasion of Attila the Hun and he has done a good job of it.

There are many novels that suppose themselves to be telling Epic Fantasy. I can say without any doubt that with this novel Grundy has succeeded in this and in producing a work that the reader can sit down to dig into as in a feast. When you start this one, leave enough time to finish it - Saturday morning would be a good time to commence.

LAST HUMAN by Doug Naylor. Viking h/c, dist in Aust by Doug Naylor. © 1995. 310 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

The cover of LAST HUMAN is of a field of human bones with a shadow of a man with what appears to be a beer can in his right hand. In the foreground is a grinning skull wearing a pair of mirror-shades.

Poor Lister comes into the plot in a bad position. The scene opens with him handcuffed, along with dozens of other in the same position. Unfortunately he is the only human in the ship - the others are genetically different or androids. Lister had been sentenced to some unmentionable term on the Desert Moon which was the local's penal colony. How he got there and how he (hoped) to get away is another story.

Doug Naylor is half of the Red Dwarf writing team. The other half is Rob Grant, who as the frontispiece says, decided in 1993 to write a novel of his own. Presumably this left Doug Naylor to continue writing a Red Dwarf novel for Penguin. He has caught the essence of the show pretty well, and I think that the fans of said RED DWARF will enjoy this one.

THE TEA PARTY by Charles L. Grant. Raven pb, dist in Aust by Random House. (c) 1985. 312 pp. A\$10.95. On sale now.

Deerfield was a village in a remote section of the Appalachians. Near it was an old stone house that had been there since 1699. Around that house was a scarcity of animals and the stone filled fields that surrounded it. Doug and his wife Liz decide to spend some time in the area and move into a log cabin that Doug was living in. Unfortunately the house was not build for humans and many had disappeared into its depths.

By the end of the book all hell brakes loose as the house tries to expand its sphere of influence over even more people. However it was limited physically to the field surrounding it, where mist had from time immemorial drifted. Excellent horror writing.

ELEVENBLOOD by Andre Norton & Mercedes Lackey. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. (C) 1995. 412 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This novel is the second in the Halfblood Chronicles series.

Sheyrena an Treves was a young female elf who had hopes of finding a life outside the usual one that someone of her lineage would hope to find. She had grown up in a time that was dangerous for those of elvish/human blood - and wished to be like Shana, who had fled the easy life to spend time with the dragons. History was in the making, however, with Shana, the dragons and wizards joining forces to shake the magic of the powerful elves to the core.

Mercedes Lackey is a smooth writing author and ELVENBLOOD is a novel that will grip most readers of fantasy who like female lead characters and who also can spin a tale that keeps the reader engrossed right to the last page..

POTIONS TO PULSARS by Sue Bursztynski. Allen & Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1995. 96 pp. A\$9.95. On sale now.

POTIONS TO PULSARS is another of Melbourne writer Sue Bursztynski's books with a set theme. This time it's Women in Science.

The women featured are Hildegard of Bingen, Ada Byron Lovelace, Hypatia of Alexandria, Agnodike of Athens, Jean Macnamara, Caroline Herschel, Marie Curie and the various women in space. The author's aim is to show that women have made great discoveries in science, although they have had to fight against the odds in a male dominated world. It has only been in the last few decades that the rigid customs in the main have begun to be loosened. However this book shows that genius does win through, though the success of the ladies has only begun to be appreciated by the mass of people relatively recently. An excellent book for broadening children's education.

ARNOLD by Phil Janes. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1995. 280 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

ARNOLD is book three of the Galaxy Game, the ongoing humorous series by Janes.

Arnold is an android (though in the book the words androids and robots are used interchangeably) who is used to doing things that most androids don't usually do - such as answering back humans. And running for President. One of the tasks that Arnold and his human companions have been given is the task of finding a runaway android by the name of Rudy, who had in the opening pages of the novel left a young woman reclining in the cusp of a climax, if I may mix metaphors. Also in the book are aliens, godlike beings that are having a contest, various maniacs, and numerous other strange types.

As mentioned above, Janes is well into this three-book (and counting...) series that bases its popularity on humour.

MOTHS TO A FLAME by Sarah Ash. Millennium tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1995. 296 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

MOTHS TO A FLAME is a fantasy novel set in Myn-Diel, which is ruled by the House of Memizhon, a place which pleasures and treasures harkens to Byzantium, and tells of rulers powerful and decadent: the Arkhan and his queen Arkhys.

Laili Dhai and his twin sister Lai were followers of the Goddess of the Grove, who had a sacred duty to the Moonmoths, who emerged from their chrysalises one night a year, to sing, mate and lay their eggs, before dying. Unfortunately before the ceremony could be completed, however, the quiet was disturbed by slavers, who killed the Eldest priestess, grabbed the twins and fled with them to a boat. This was only the beginning of the twins ordeals; it was their fate that they be brought before the rulers of Myn-Diel for their destiny to be determined. Well written fantasy.

THE NANO FLOWER by Peter F. Hamilton. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 1995. 566 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Judging by the titles of his previous novels, at least one - MINDSTAR RISING - is in the same series as this novel.

The nano flower of the title is a bloom which is hand-delivered to the most powerful woman in the world by a female courier, who happens to be a courtesan. When the flower is analysed it is found to be an alien bloom. Since at this date humanity still has not got much past Jupiter, this is a hell of a shock to the woman and her confederates. Some months earlier her husband has disappeared of his own free will and Julia Evans had been searching for him. The flower had a card with it from Royal, warning her of something. It was at this moment that what appeared to be alien design technology was being offered on the market and Julia had some decisions to make, fast. The first was to find the courier and find out just *where* she had obtained the flower. Then the race was on, with tech assassins also on the scent.

After reading THE NANO FLOWER I will definitely be looking for any other novels by Peter F. Hamilton. Excellent Sf and *Recommended*.

THE DOLPHINS OF PERN by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam tpb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1994. 300 pp. On sale now.

The Pern saga continues with this latest volume.

The story takes up just after the dragon-riders have flown to the planet of the red sun from whence the Tread comes and exploded the settler's ships anti-matter engines to shift the planet's orbit. 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. She, however, had hysterics and forbade him to go near the sea alone again. He reluctantly agreed. In the meanwhile the Landing sight had suffered an accident with the killing of two important members of the human delegation, and the turning off of the activated computer.

McCaffrey has done a good job with this novel and it is believable - except I still can visualise dragon's eyes 'whirling'.

STRANGE FRUIT edited by Paul Collins. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 1995. 233 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

I'm not sure what kind of genre you could fit this collection into - it isn't horror, or fantasy or sf, but a something like the mainstream version of a combination of horror and fantasy.

The stories are: MARTIN FALVEY by Thomas Shapcott, JADE ELM by Jack Wodhams, POOR RECEPTION by Garry Disher, HURLEY'S LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON by Morris Lurie, ROGER by Richard Lunn, BACK OF BEYOND by Cherry Wilder, THE ARROWS by Dorothy Porter, THE FOSSIL EVIDENCE OF MAN by Michael Wilding, HOLDING HANDS by James McQueen, THE CAT by Nancy Cato, OLD WOOD by Steven Paulsen, PEEKING by Robert Hood, THE SEAS OF CASTLE HILL ROAD by Rick Kennett, A TELEPHONE CALL FROM GENEVIEVE SNOW by Carmel Bird, SKIN HOLES by Kaaron Warren, THE LADY WITH THE ERMINE by Lucy Sussex, and an Introduction by Paul Collins. They are all quite readable and enjoyable - those I liked best were THE SEAS OF CASTLE HILL ROAD by Rick Kennett (which I've read elsewhere, but it holds up very well) and SKIN HOLES by Kaaron Warren - which is one of the best 'horror' tales I've read in quite some time.

RE-RELEASES:

THE TANGLE BOX by Terry Brooks. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1994. 341 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. Ben Holiday was thinking that all was going well in Landover, what with Questor Threws giving him good advice. That was before Horris Kew turned up, having been forced out of Earth by the Gorse. Next thing Ben knew, he was a Knight in the Tangle Box, along with a Lady and a Gargoyle. He had no idea who he was, nor did he know who the Lady (or the Gargoyle) was. They were actually the Witch Nightshade and the dragon Strabo. All three had received a note, purportedly from the others, telling them to meet in a certain place. That was when things started going really wrong....

THAT WAY LIES CAMELOT by Janny Wurts. HarperCollins pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 1994. 381 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. This book is the first collection of Janny Wurts short stories published. In the preface she says that most short stories she attempts grow and turn into novels - it takes a real effort on her part to keep them down to size. That she *can* write shorts is shown by the stories herein. They are a mixed bunch - some sf mixed with fantasy. Nearly all are politically correct; the nearest Wurts comes to showing she is capable of fresh ideas is in the stories of Mackenzie James, the criminal skip-ship captain who is the protagonist Fleet officer is betting his career on capturing. This volume is worth reading.

THE GREATEST SHOW OFF EARTH by Robert Rankin. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1994. 318 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Rankin's latest is done in his typical style - Raymond is the protagonist, who is kidnapped on a fly-by alien and after various adventures is taken in by a travelling circus. It travels, all right - around the solar system. Raymond has a friend by the name of Simon, who is taken in by the police for questioning about him being a serial killer. Naturally they don't believe that he didn't do it, and it takes quick thinking to enable him to show them a clean pair of heels. This latest offering is up to the humour level of Rankin's previous novels and if you are into off-the-cuff humorous writing this will be to your taste.

SOUL MUSIC by Terry Pratchett. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. © 1994. 378 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now. Susan is the grand-daughter of Death. Her parents had been killed when their coach went over a cliff - they both died instantly. Every so often Death gets depressed. It's happened before when he wandered off - people stopped dying and there was Hell to pay. Th is time, however, Susan takes over and does her best. However one of those who has to die is a certain boy called Imp who is in a band playing something that could be called Music With Rocks In. Susan saves Imp (now called Buddy) and from then on events take a turn to the musical.... Definitely a book to acquire.

BLOODSTONE by David Gemmell. Legend pb, dist in Aust by Random House. © 1994. 298 pp. A\$10.95. One sale now. The Jerusalem Man, Jon Shannow, has long vanished. The Deacon and his Jerusalem Riders are massing over the area they had taken under their domain and created a time of hatred and death with their war against unbelievers and mutants. It seemed the last straw when the church in Pilgrim's Valley was burnt to the ground and the inhabitants killed.

Then the Jerusalem Man returned to the area, tracking down and killing with his guns, those who had done the deed. David Gemmell created an enduring character in Jon Shannow; readers of adventure fantasy will find this easy reading. Excellent adventure.

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RANDOM HOUSE: ORIGIN OF SPECIES - Charles Darwin
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THE LOST WORLD - Michael Crichton
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CALIBAN'S HOUR - Tad Williams
MAKING OF APOLLO 13
EMPIRES IN TREK - Gross/Altman/Flynn
FAHRENHEIT 666 - Andrew Harman
BRIDE OF THE RAT GOD - Barb Hambley
GENELLAN: PLANETFALL - Scott Gier

PAN MACMILLAN: MOUNTAINS OF MAJIPOOR Bob Silverberg
ON WINGS OF MAGIC - Andre Norton
THE NEW DAWN by Martin Middleton

PENGUIN: INVADER - C. J. Cherryh
GOLD UNICORN - Taniith Lee
THE SHIP WHO WON - Anne McCaffrey
JAYDIUM - Debra Wheeler
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RAMA REVEALED - Arther C. Clarke
FEERSUM ENDJINN - Ian M. Banks
DJINN RUMMY - Tom Holt
THE KING'S EVIL - Haydn Middleton
OTHERNESS - David Brin
THE PRIMAL SCREEN - John Brosnan
BYZANTIUM: DECLINE & FALL - Norwich

ALLEN & UNWIN: THE WHITE GRYPHON - Lackey & Dixon
SINS OF THE BLOOD - Kristine Rusch
RONAN THE BARBARIAN - James Bibby
AXIOMATIC - Greg Egan
CONCRETE JUNGLE - Nathan Archer
THE FURIES by Suzy McKee Charnas

TRANSWORLD: BLOOD OATH - John Vornhold (Bab 5)
SHIELD BETWEEN THE WORLDS - Paxson

HODDER HEADLINE: HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT - Bob Silverberg

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