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# ANIME MINE

by Peter Brodie

The history of Japanese animation; known as anime (pronounced “ahnimay”) along with its sibling comic art-form manga, (pronounced “mahnga”) would take up far too much space to more than give you a squizz at a dabble, even if I was to use several issues of this magazine. Indeed, the potted history of one particular popular anime series, GUNDAM, would (and has in Japan) fill many volumes of books, so.... I prefer to give you a list of answers to the most answered questions regarding this most very Japanese adaptation of what was, at first, peculiar to the Western sphere, and leave the rest up to you. Hoping that I've stimulated you enough to search it out for yourself; even if only to satisfy a curiosity. Who knows, you could end up with a new hobby or at the very least a new way of looking at life. Yes, you at the back, there will be some extra answers when all is mostly said, don't worry. Now... settle back and come with me....

**What's in a name:** Anime or manga? Many Westerners new to this are unsure. So many mags and people who seem to know what they are talking about refer to “manga animation/video”. Eh. This is a bit like the bods who would pretend to know SF called it “sci-fi”. Yes, nails across the blackboard it is to most of us; so is the case amongst anime fen (known as otaku, but we'll get to that elsewhere), who hear their fave fun thing being referred to as “manga” or “manga video”. Ok ... back to bizz. A number of years ago a UK anime distributor took the name of Manga Video (this is *not* a commercial!) and started to release lots of very good anime in dubbed form. While not exactly the first to do this they were the first to do it in bulk and seriously; releasing new items every month. Many fans who discovered anime via this company started to call anime manga or manga video. Others equally at a loss, (even

other distributors) took up the name and it has since crept round the world; but only amongst the newbies and uneducated. Basically, anime is animation and manga is comics. Go into any Japanese store in your town and ask to see the manga and you'll be shown the comics section. Your protestations that you don't want comics but animation will be met with a dubious “ah so” and you will be directed to the anime section while the Nipponette who served you will once again wonder at the sanity of foreign devils while she gets as far from you as possible. Anime and manga do interbreed, with favourite comics being turned into anime series and vicey versey and all points in between from sound tracks to model kits, with the merry go round never slowing down. Anime and manga co-exist. Just don't get them confused, ok? Right.

### **Howda hooja get abart, then?:**

Some anime terms tend to confuse the new viewer; especially if they have access to Japanese cattledogs or have just glommed a few fanzines devoted to the stuff, so we'll see what's what about ... now. CHARA is short for character. MECHA applies to all machinery, no matter how mundane, but especially to complicated futuristic items. MECH is either a shortened form or used to refer to smaller items such as pens, calculators and so on. OVA is Original Video Animation, that is, something that has by-passed tv or movie theatre showing and has been made especially for tape or laser disc. Some of the best anime is made this way as there is much greater creative freedom for the animators and a tad less censorship, so they can get away with more. OAV is just another way of saying the above. Mostly used by the Japanese while Western fans tend to use both at a whim. Confusing, OAT is Original Sound Track as in the exact thing heard in the anime. This can be a combine of both background music and dialogue.

IMAGE ALBUM is a re-rendering of a show's music pieces, often by expensive overseas orchestras, into amore aesthetically pleasing listening experience. PERFECT ALBUM can often be the synthesised experience of the anime itself, in both words and music, that often bears little relation to the original but manages to conjure in the mind of the fan exactly what the anime means to them; hence the title. The last two terms can also refer to printed matter, as well. Confusing, isn't it? Only at the beginning. Lastly, as far as "technical terms" goes there's SD. This means Super Deformed and refers to squashed down kid type versions of anime charas, usually in a send up of their original show with even the voice actors doing their best to help the insanity along. In the past few years SD shows have been proving even more popular than the originals and sometimes a new show will even be SD from the start. Such as is the otaku's penchant for originality and change! Ah, that name: OTAKU. OTAKU is a word you'll be hearing more and more as you get into anime and while it has no technical meaning I thought I'd better include it, as I'm using it here and there in this piece through familiarity. OTAKU loosely translated means "fan-boy" and was a term invented by the popular Japanese press some years ago as a derogatory way of referring to fans who'd left the straight-jacketed life of most Japanese to live the "fan life" of total immersion in their particular fancy; be it anime, manga, or even video gaming. Fans being fans no matter where they live, the "otaku" took this word to heart and now use it with pride. It's now actually becoming quite commonly used in the West by fans who live the fannish life; whatever the interest. Japanese fans, however, are more fannish than most, and some really *do* live the fan life. If you've ever attended a two day con devoted to one particular show, manga, game or even chara, you'll see how far gone they are. This ties in with one of the characteristics of the Japanese. If you're going to do something do it to your "utmost". This applies to pleasure as well as duty. Otherwise, why bother? Half-hearted is going nowhere and not living your life to the full. Forget that!

**It's all in Martian, innit?:** Up till about a decade ago anyone who wanted to watch anime (aside from the adapted shows targeted for child audiences in the 60's, which, while anime are so far removed from the current crop as to be a different breed of cat as

far as this article is concerned) had no recourse but to swap tapes with various sources in the US and Japan (and in some respects Europe) and put up with programmes in total gibberish, unless you spoke fluent Japanese. The strange thing is, most of the shows were of the type where actions spoke louder than words, so with a bit of extended viewing of various source materials you could soon make out the general gist of what was going on. The only drawback to this was "relationship" shows such as ORANGE ROAD, MAISON IKKOKU, and so on, where breathy long sections of charas yacking away could throw you into a spin; especially given the Japanese penchant for convoluted plots and audio puns. Still, it was the intensity of the Japanese voice actors that often made the chara they portrayed seem so real and which still makes the aficionado cringe when they hear a dubbed version of a favourite chara or piece. "SUBS!" they cry, and given the obvious embarrassment of many Western voice actors suborned to the task of making very oriental plots cohesive for the foreign devil who might not be too familiar with norms of anime tied into their lack of training in the right "feeling" for each chara, you could well say "ABSOLUTELY!" Still, without a number of companies taking the plunge and offering a slim selection of dubbed anime to test the waters we wouldn't be seeing such an interest in anime at the moment, nor would it be influencing Western animation techniques and even live action to the degree that it is. I'm a purist, I admit, but many people would be the poorer for never having seen a wide selection of anime, excruciatingly dubbed or not. At least they can see what they've been missing, and with a suitable background in the appreciation of anime, their otaku friends can then set about showing them the real stuff without frightening the stuffing out of them, neh?

**Jeez, check those optics!:** Yes, the eyes of most anime charas are very large, even more so than is usual for the animation medium per Western standards, but there is a reason. In the '30's when Osamu Tezuka, who ended up creating ASTROBOY, KIMBA and so on, started writing the first proper comic (TREASURE ISLAND) as opposed to small drawings intended for newspaper consumption he took the Disney output as his inspiration; Mickey Mouse in particular, which was causing a sensation in Japan at the time. The large-eyed expressive style appealed to not only Tezuka but many up

and coming animators/manga artists, so they copied it direct while putting in their own Japanese “essence” to make it more appealing to a Japanese audience. This has gone on up to the present. Using large eyes is actually a very effective way of showing emotion given the limited expressive range that animation offers. The Japanese just happen to make more profound and versatile use of it than other countries. The Japanese fans are so used to this style that the recent approach of using not only much smaller eyes but distinctly oriental looks overall has still to meet with general approval.

**Then it all went pear-shaped:**

Having spoken of the use of large eyes to express intense emotions I’d best explain the Japanese use of “extreme” drawing to allow anime charas a greater range of histrionics as this sometimes put prospective Western viewers (who are unfamiliar with what has become an accepted norm in Japan) right off after only a brief attempt at viewing. Ganbare! Quite often, during an anime show, a chara will suddenly undergo radical body and/or facial changes in order to give the audience some idea of how upset/excited/disappointed/aroused/bemused and so on they are. Eg: an argument begins between a boy and girl in a romantic “relationship” show. Girl gets more angry as boy pretends to ignore her, let’s say ... so ... girl grows horns, face swells twice its size, colour changes drastically, mouth enlarges to four times normal with fangs and she then proceeds to produce a huge wooden mallet out of nowhere and whack him one; screaming near obscenities all along. She immediately goes back to normal, having “proved” her point. Boy now either behaves or stupidly repeats his behaviour and gets a worse dose. The Japanese audience sees nothing unusual in this. The “reality” of the chara hasn’t been destroyed, neither has the emotional intensity. In fact, it’s been upped, as the audience (and the boy) now understand how hurt the girl was. All these “tricks” (especially the mallet) have been a standard in anime for many years and to actually have a show where at least some of them aren’t incorporated (even just a totally blank - and I do mean blank - expression to express confusion) would be considered abnormal. Some of the newest “serious” shows and movies don’t use these techniques but on the whole they are the norm and are expected, even looked forward to and are quite standard in anime. After everything

settles down it’s on with the rest of the show. Almost endless variants on the theme abound, so don’t be too put off when you see them. Just take them as another way the Japanese have made animation more accessible and also as an example of the wacky Japanese sense of humour. They really do have one.

**You’re new around here, aren’t you?:**

This actually follows on, in a way, from the above. This time it’s the style of body and face. Japanese audiences know that when an anime chara has small or slightly slanted eyes and sharp features that they’re bound to be up to no good, no matter how charming they might be from the off. Ditto with the body. Slim means “watch out!” Even the voice. A coy, slightly “oily” voice from either a male or female chara gives the audience to expect something bad will happen soon. And these are just a few examples from a vast assortment of “standard” chara designs. These and other visual “cues” are what actually make it possible for Western anime fans who have no knowledge of Martian to follow the plot to a fair degree, providing there isn’t too much talk. Recently, there has been a tendency towards sharp features and slim body in many of the newer anime shows and movies (just to prove me wrong) but this is more a case of fad or creator style than anything else. Also, there are many variants on a theme regarding the voice/body/looks connection with which the animators explore new possibilities of expression. And, of course, there is the SD version, as has been explained, of ALL the above just to make it “interesting”. But all in all, the “cues” mentioned above still apply if you watch and listen carefully. The animators wouldn’t want to alienate their target audiences, after all. A popular anime show/movie can earn a fortune for its creator(s).

**The square peg in the oblong hole:**

In Japan anime is targeted to various audiences, from pre-school to teen (sub-groups for male and female) to adult and even (gack!) educational. While some series, OVA’s and movies do tend to have an overall bigger impact across the board due to sheer excellence, you will find that the producers of anime know their audience (as do their sponsors) and will adjust sights accordingly, either in content or even the actual animation. One other thing: most anime is still produced for teenage boys so don’t expect serious plots or anything approaching depth; though there are some amazing

exceptions. I know many otaku who will argue this point since *anything* that is anime is *great*, but no. Sturgeon's Law .. ("90% of everything is crap) applies here, too. Don't be disheartened. There's so much to choose from that you'll probably never be bored and who's to say that a show made for a particular audience (see above) won't appeal to a wide Western audience? Just start looking and make up your own mind; but be advised of the audience marketing approach and adjust viewing angle to save sanity or give it away. Up to you.

**Tentacled sex in a demonic spaceship form 2,000 BC:** Anime comes in all shapes and sizes. Funnily enough, that staple of Western animation, the musical or story told with the occasional song is totally unknown in anime. Perhaps because the Japanese have always been a visually oriented people and so don't differentiate between a moving image that is "real" as opposed to one that is "unreal"; as long as the story and charas are interesting. You always feel that Western animation is trying to justify itself and feel it can only do so by peddling itself to the lowest perceived denominators such as children; hence songs to keep the kids happy and move it along and heaven help the sad ending. Oh no. Anime has never been tied down by this cultural cliché so has always been free to express itself in any form the creators have in mind. And many can be the forms. Adult sex dramas told in explicit detail, both from a contemporary point of view to the fantastic. Relationship dramas that can be as convoluted and long-winded as the audience will allow. (The Japanese love ambiguity and complexity in their stories). This type of show is popular with both young girls and housewives! SF goes without saying; but a much freer kind, that explores areas that Western Lit SF has fixed on for years but still sees very little contemporary Western equivalents, animated or otherwise. (Funnily enough, many of the most Western films of recent years have drawn heavily on anime influences and in a great, and typical, turnabout, the anime creators in Japan have taken these new Western images and expanded on them again!). Shows specifically targeted for boys (such as sports) and girls (such as ballet) whilst still indulging any or all possible niches and even school dramas/comedies made for both sexes. Historical dramas that both stick to the facts and mess about with them. Fantasy that

explores every aspect of humanity and its fixation with the impossible. Shows on all the above themes but designed for the tens and unders; the Japanese being very "liberal" in their views on what children should be watching. Strict gag shows that are one long prat fall, designed mainly for the very young. Even series that are designed to teach many varied subjects in the guise of entertainment. These shows in particular are popular with adult Japanese because they are seen to have a two-fold effect. The kids have fun and learn what they need to know in order to get by in their regimented, result-fixated society. Sports anime (as briefly mentioned) is huge; especially baseball, soccer, car racing, and sumo. Relationship shows (as said) are popular with girls as they can identify with their fave charas and act out through them situations and behaviour they would never be allowed to indulge in reality. Tons of shows based on popular video games. (The STREET FIGHTER II games have been made into both a hugely successful movie and series. FATAL FURY is another. Both translated into English, with varying degrees of success). Even pachinko and mahjong get a nod! And when the otaku have had enough of watching the "normal" thing the creators produce the SD (Super Deformed) version of a few of their shows. These are sometimes even better than the originals they set out to massacre, TEN LITTLE GALL FORCE being a particular standout. In other words, you can think about it, anime has probably done it; many times in many ways. And yet it still remains fresh and continues to expand its horizons. This is reason enough to expand yours by looking into it.

**Spoil for choice:** I wasn't going to weigh you down with a tedious list of shows but since, as has been said, much anime is not as worthy of your time as you might like, I thought a brief mention of various series, movies, OVA's (you know what this is not, don't you?) would make your first anime viewing experience or your next few if you've already indulged a bit more pleasurable. **Series:** DIRTY PAIR, MACROSS (this 26 episode show made up the first part of the translated ROBOTECH series and to this day the translation is probably the best ever done. MACROSS, by the way, is credited with creating the first ever anime "idol singer" from one of its regular cast of charas: Lynn Minmei. She became so popular that albums and even music vids featuring her sold huge.

Could this sort of thing happen only in Japan? Time will tell. Fantasy knows no boundaries. The other two unrelated anime series that came to make up the ROBOTECH pantheon are best forgotten, in either language!), ORANGE ROAD, URESIE YATSURA (roughly translates as "Those Annoying Aliens". Trust me, it's as weird as it sounds, but *fun!*), SECRET OF BLUE WATER (also known simply as NADIA, the young heroine of the show), MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM, RANMA ½ AURA BATTLER DUNBINE, MAISON IKKOKU, NEON GENESIS EVANGELION (one of the "new wave" anime shows that has recently swept all before it in Japan and is set to do so in the West via a fairly decent and accurate translation to video), NUKU NUKU CAT GIRL. **OVA's:** (Most of these are limited episode series, though some are one-offs at less than movie length. You'll find access to these far easier to gain than the series so I've listed many more of the most popular ones hoarded by the Western otaku. A few of the movies listed after this might also be classified as OVA's as they went straight to tape/laserdisc), PROJECT A-KO (actually a very popular movie but proved even more popular when it went to tape/laser and then around the world... anyway, they made five more AKO OVA's strictly for tape/laser, so there!), BUBBLEGUM CRISIS, AD POLICE FILE, GUNSMITH CATS, STOP: YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, AH: MY GODDESS!, DANGAIOH, ICZER I, ICZER III, GOKU MIDNIGHT EYE, BORGMAN, GUNBUSTER, PATLABOR, GALL FORCE, BLACK MAGIC MARIO M-66, ANGEL COP, DOMINION, SOL BIANCA, TEN LITTLE GALL FORCE (if you only get to see one SD show try to see this!), RIDING BEAN, STARSHIP TROOPERS (yes, *that* TROOPERS. Done years before that crap movie and much more in line with the book), OUMA, ROBOT CARNIVAL, LEGEND OF LEMINEAR, LEDA: FANTASTIC ADVENTURE OF YOHKI, FANDORA: DREAM DIMENSION HUNTER, SUPER GAL, LOCKE: THE SUPERMAN, ARMoured HUNTER MEADOWLINK, BATTLE ANGEL ALITA, DRAGON BREEDER, FIRETRIPPER, MADOX 01, COSMO POLICE JUSTY, APPLESEED, DIRTY PAIR (several series, in fact). **MOVIES:** PROJECT A-KO (as said), AKIRA, VENUS WARS, WINGS OF HONNEMAISE, MY FRIEND TOTORO, LAPUTA, PORCO ROSSO, WINDARIA, NAUSICCA (translated and not badly many years ago by an independent company into WARRIORS OF THE WIND ... one of the better translating jobs, even if it was cut), DIRTY PAIR: PROJECT EDEN,

DIRTY PAIR: AFFAIR OF KAMUI, GHOST IN THE SHELL, MACROSS: THE MOVIE, PHOENIX 2772, STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE, THE ANGEL'S EGG, MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: CHAR'S COUNTER ATTACK. That should be enough to be getting on with. Any reasonably complete listing ould take up this magazine. Easily.

**That bit at the end:** Ok .. I've purposely kept the names, dates, places, ephemera of anime to a minimum so as not to confuse anyone who has either never heard of anime or is only passing familiar with it. Nothing like a progression of learned mutterings to put you off. The more anime learned, hopefully, have still gotten summat out of it. If you have had a new interest piqued and would like to get hold of some of this stuff I suggest that if you know of a few SF fen or SF clubs in your area, especially those devoted to media SF, that you'll more than likely find a few anime fiends amongst this lot. Go on ... ask and you shall receive. Even your local comic speciality store is the likely haunt of a few anime otaku and the shops owner might even be one; especially if he/she get in lots of adapted material for the fans. Just walk in and ask, right? Like fans anywhere, whatever the interest, anime otaku are always ready to welcome new potential fans. More so than the usual as this fandom is still small but growing and needs support. Strength in numbers and all that. And this stuff is so good you just naturally want to share it so others can feel as bloody good as you. For the "nattable" (or whatever the new flo-thru phrase is at the mo) simply type the word *anime* into your PC and start up a decent search engine. There are literally thousands of sites worldwide and if you can stand the pace you'll get far more than you ever imagined. The one last thing I want to pass on to you about anime at its best is that it's something that, when you see it, is like watching and experiencing something you always wanted to see and feel but didn't know you did until you saw it. If the sense of wonder and delight this art-form can impart to your life has come across in this little bit of scribbling and if you proceed to indulge that fantasy you thought was never there, then it's all been worth it. Otaku rule.

- Peter Brodie

# HIT DELETE

by Brent Lillie

BY MID-AFTERNOON on a Tuesday the news room was a dead zone. His police rounds completed, Gerard Anderson tapped away at his computer, putting the finishing touches to a story about a boating accident on the Pioneer River. The paper's owner and editor, Fred Schuman, peered over his chief reporter's shoulder and gave a derisive snort.

"The word's *'flips'* not *'flies'*, Anderson," Schuman growled. "The boat flipped, it didn't fly, for God's sake. You've been with the paper for ten years, can't you bloody spell yet?"

"If a boat flips hard enough it might fly," countered Gerard.

"You'll be flying out of here if the quality of your copy doesn't improve."

"Blow it out your arse, you fat turd," Gerard muttered under his breath.

"What was that?"

"I said how is your wife today, sir?"

"Just as displeased as I am with the standard of your work. Smarten up. Remember, we've just laid off two employees."

Yeah. Thanks to Schuman's dropout son-in-law, who'd promptly voted to downsize the regional daily's staff as soon as he'd been booted upstairs onto the board - after serving his 'compulsory' twelve month apprenticeship, that is - which mainly consisted of standing around the coffee machine and putting the hard word on the female staff while everyone else did his share of the work.

Gerard highlighted *'flies'*.

"You missed the *'f'*."

"Thanks."

His boss left the room grizzling and shaking his head.

Gerard watched him go. Flopping back into his chair, he sipped at his lukewarm coffee and sighed. Jesus Christ, what was he doing, still slaving away at this rag? It wasn't that he hated his job. As a child, writing had been his escape: his rocket to the moon, but he needed a challenge and pulling the paper out of the stone age was his one great ambition. The town was getting bigger while the paper's sales figures dwindled - a dangerous equation in anybody's books.

Even with insolvency staring them in the face the powers-that-be refused to cater to the new blood moving into the area from down south. Cut down on the sugar content a little and give the daily a more cosmopolitan edge, that was Gerard's suggestion, but his ideas had been ignored so many times that he'd simply given up - and that's when he'd started to shrivel and die.

Gerard stared out the window at the grey columns of smoke rising from the stacks. Day after day, a sugary blitz. The brownish, molasses-scented pall sagged over the town, miring everyone, everything in place. Even when he was a thousand miles away, he woke up smelling it. Sugar City never let you go.

He should have taken up that cadetship in Melbourne when he had the chance.

But he'd chosen to stay, marrying his high school sweetheart - an attractive member of the debating team who hadn't stopped practicing on him since.

Mortgage, three kids, overdraft - same old, sad story. If only Schuman and his family would get abducted by aliens or something he could make a go of this paper, he really could.

A fly settled on the rim of Gerard's coffee mug just as he tapped the computer's delete button. Abruptly, the fly disappeared. It did not buzz away, nor did it dive into what remained of his coffee and complete three quick laps of the mug in a relaxed, proficient backstroke, though poor Gerard could not have been more dumfounded if it had. The fly had simply vanished when he'd hit the delete button on the computer.

Gerard arched an eyebrow. In his spare time he'd written numerous stories along this line and submitted them to science-fiction magazines, selling a few. Sure, he'd never really got the hang of computers, and maybe he *did* lack the necessary gumption to tell the Schumans to wad their precious regional daily into small balls and poke them up each other's derrieres with a stick of sugar cane, but Gerard Anderson knew pure magic when he saw it. At the precise moment he'd deleted '*flies*' on the computer the fly on the mug had been deleted as well. Which led him to an interesting hypothesis.

Quickly and methodically, Gerard gathered every pencil he could find, positioning them at various points around the office. On the computer he typed '*pencils*' and hit the delete button. Zip. The pencils vanished. What's more, there was no doubt in Gerard's mind that there were no more pencils in existence anywhere in the world at that particular moment.

A tremendous sense of power overwhelmed him.

Just as methodically, he disposed of cockroaches, instantly reducing the building's population by thousands. Gerard was about to

type '*murderers*' when he came to his senses. He checked '*murder*' in the computer's thesaurus.

*Slayer. Butcher.* Alarm bells rang.

The definitions were much too generalised. He didn't want to wreck things, like some moronic protagonist in an SF story. What if his computer was a modern-day genie in a bottle? Now that was a good collation. One reckless wish could upset the delicate universal balance.

Delete '*death*' and billions of mindless zombies could rise out of the dust to ravage the earth. Cancer? Yeah, deleting cancer would be okay. Maybe a few doctors would be out of a job but what the hell, they wouldn't starve. Gerard knew he couldn't afford to be selfish. Everything he deleted would have to be for the common good.

Except *one* thing, that is.

He grinned and typed '*Schumans*'. There was a noise from the outer office. Gerard hurriedly highlighted the word and hit the delete button.

\* \* \*

Empty vehicles clogged the freeways, roads and backstreets. Shops and offices, parks and homes were deserted in the city, the country - all over the world.

In the office of a small, regional daily an unattended computer sits on a battered desk. There are two letters on it's monitor screen: '*Sc*'.

Gerard Anderson had never really mastered the damn thing.

- END -

# THOMAS BURNETT SWANN: Into The Wander Wood

by Andrew Darlington

*“Out in the dark blue sea lies a land called Crete - a rich and lovely land, washed by the waves on every side...”*

*(Homer THE ODYSSEY)*

I never quite understood what Homer mean about the “wine-dark seas” of Crete. Until I came here and saw the setting Cretan sun flame the Aegean to something as richly intoxicating. Now - in the courtyard of the Palace of Knossos, just 5 km from the Heraklion airstrip, I see Thomas Burnett Swann in new illuminations too. Knossos is Swann in stone. A fusion of myth and archaeology. This, the palace of King Minos, was discovered by Greek historian Minos Kalorairinos, and controversially reconstructed by Sir Arthur Evens. But its labyrinths were planned and executed by Daedalus. Here, in Swann’s *THE BLUE MONKEYS*, mythology fights its last “War of the Beasts” against the encroaching forces of human rationalism. Here the hybrid man-beast Eunostos, the last “Bull-that-walks-like-a-man”, unites with the beast-princess Thea, niece of King Minos, in a doomed attempt to resist the island’s Achaeon conquerors. Crete is a land of 30 million olive trees. Home to the world’s oldest viniculture. Up from Piskopiano there’s the stark limestone of the Dikti cave - birthplace of Zeus. Suddenly, here, Swann’s elegiac stories becomes tangible and real.

I don’t know a great deal about Swann’s life. Little more than fragmentary glimpses salvaged from book jackets and magazine profiles. I know he was born in Florida in 1928. That he served in the US Navy during the Korean War, but that he was an academic by nature. To the editor of his greatest fiction home - the British *SCIENCE FANTASY* magazine, Swan was a “putter-in” who built “a phrase round a “boss-word”, a sentence round a key-phrase, forms paragraphs of carefully-matches sentences, and inlays them with epithets until their colour and texture is exactly what (he) envisages.” I’m also a “putter-in”, and this sounds about right.

Swann’s education yields impressive qualifications including an A.B. from Duke University, a Master’s from the University of Tennessee and a Ph.D. from the University of Florida, which enables him to become a Professor of English Literature at the Florida Atlantic University, a position he uses to authenticate the “framing” sequence for *THE BLUE MONKEYS*, his most powerful eulogy to the power of dream. Through the medium of his narrator Swann commends “the accurate historical framework, the detailed descriptions of flora and fauna, the painstaking fidelity to fact in costume and custom of his own work. Other writers use mythology before him. H Warner Munn took his lost Roman legion through remnants of Arthurian, Atlantean and Toltec quasi-history as early as the 1939 *WEIRD TALES* serial *KING OF THE WORLD’S EDGE*. But Swann’s vision is cleaner. He is most closely attuned to the roots of all story-telling in dream and wonderment. He is a writer who retains “an ear for the well-turned phrase, the elegant (yes, even the flowery) epithet”. His ornate enigmas of the past are located where species divisions are fluid, where history dissolves and melts into myth. He deifies the natural world. And few have done it better.

It's possible to argue Fantasy as the intellectual inferior of its more rigorously disciplined neighbouring genre, Science Fiction. At best the latter has an ability to stimulate the imagination to a degree seldom achieved by any other form of popular fiction, whereas Fantasy's effect on the imagination is more often than not somnambulistic. Although both can be considered escapist forms of literature, and while admitting that Fantasy is part of an eternal Bardic tradition that goes back beyond Homer (from which SF has itself evolved), the current phase of post-industrial, anti-materialist, trendy-mystic catch-all of Swords-&-Sorcery, psi-mutants, and endearing Diskworld Hobbit-fascimiles seems a poor, if predictable development in reading taste.

There are exceptions. Lovecraft's elaborate and mesmeric Cthulhu mythos has a sparingly compulsive breadth of vision that provides its validation. The sheer poetic beauty and outlandish grotesquerie of Mervyn Peake gives his work a quality that defies any attempt at limited categorisation. It's essential to make special mention for CS Lewis and Leigh Brackett too, while conceding that the degree of fascination still exerted by Tolkien must make him a candidate for any list of honourable exceptions.

And I don't want to imply that Thomas Burnett Swann automatically qualifies for inclusion in such an elevated pantheon of Fantasy writers. Merely that his tales are quaintly individualistic and imaginatively original enough to be afforded a degree of serious consideration I'd not readily extend to many of his contemporaries. Swann produced work for a number of years, most notably through the pages of the fondly remembered SCIENCE FANTASY, and later through his slim novels. And in doing so he built up a stylistic identity that is unique. He uses his awesomely imaginative bestiary of mythic characters as metaphors for wonderment. Michael Moorcock - himself no stranger to rich prose, recognises Swann's WHERE IS THE BIRD OF FIRE? as one work which "has shown uses to which Fantasy can be put", one which "has done more than entertain on an escapist level". While even the "glittering adjectives" of a much earlier story - THE PAINTER, playfully animates the real into the wonderfully phantasmagoric. Here, the surreal monstrosities of Hieronymous Bosch's GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS become a virtual intrusion into the artist's actual life - "demons exploring the sky in their fish", amid opulently poetic prose where "apples glisten like Venetian goblets, twisting their fine-blown spheres to catch the moonlight", and horror floods his body "like water invading a swimmer".

The man Theodore Sturgeon describes as "a remarkable writer", decided to drop academia in favour of the pen in the early 1960's. From then on Swann lived as a poet, an essayist (publishing work on the poet "HD") and a fantast. He died from cancer in 1976. To these bare bones of a life I add Kyril Bonfiglioli's musings on his creative technique, "one could no more trim down his work without damaging it hopelessly than one could clip a few inches off the side of a good painting".<sup>32</sup>

This sounds about right.

## 2

*"In the tall green flame of the cypress, I see his shadow, flickering with the swallows. In the city that crowds the Palatine, where Fauns walk with men and wolves are fed in the temple, I hear the rush of his wings. But that is his shadow and sound. The bird himself is gone. Always his wings beat just beyond my hands, and the wind possesses his cry. Where is the bird of fire?"*

The degree to which Tolkien plunders Anglo-Saxon mythology and language is well documented. At his best, Swann goes back further into the classical roots of mythology, to Virgil, Homer and beyond. He sculpts landscapes and texts redolent with the rural imagery of "the worlds great childhood before the Trojan War", a time of "daffodil-whistering breeze" and "leaf-cleansed air", a time when even anger was poetic - it "clawed at (the) throat like an ice-encrusted branch"<sup>20</sup>. A time when "wonders were as numerous as sparrow's nests in spring"<sup>26</sup>.

John Carnell describes Thomas Burnett Swann as an American "unhonoured and unsung in his own country". But it<sup>26</sup> was Carnell, as founding editor of the elegant SCIENCE FANTASY, who was largely responsible for building that first phase of Swann's strange evolution. The earliest stories, published while Swann was still studying for his PhD, had yet to assume the enhanced mythological complexity that was to become his most hypnotically powerful form. VIEWPOINTS for example, has a contemporary setting and flirts with a kind of post-Chernobyl horror in which a radiation-blasted woman has skin of "weathered green brass". But her choice to remain on the mutant's reservation,

accepting her role as part of a newly separate race already anticipates Swann's later preoccupation with a biodiversity of sentient species (there's also, incidentally, a car called Ariel!). THE DRYAD TREES- to Carnell, is "a light fantasy in a modern setting... that conjures nostalgic memories of the defunct UNKNOWN WORLDS". It envisages an unconventional trans-species menage-a-trois in which Cloe, an Italian Orange Tree, is jealous of John's new wife Mari. Again, the resolution comes not with violent confrontation, but through gentle assimilation.

But it's through the stories that follow that Thomas Burnett Swann discovers his style, and his audience. In the novel GREEN PHOENIX he chronicles items from the history of Aeneas' arrival in Italy - incidents that classical Roman writer Virgil apparently forgets to mention. There are no Dryads or Fauns in Virgil's THE AENEID (and while Swann refers to the wandering Trojan's son as Ascanius, his predecessor usually calls him Iulus), yet the framework of Swann's novel can be placed without difficulty within a couple of the penultimate chapters of Virgil's epic. Swann uses King Latinus, rescued intact from the text of THE AENEID, and also his daughter Lavinia, although her GREEN PHOENIX marriage to the hero of Troy is considerably more placid than in Virgil's version. Swann omitting Turnus to whom she was originally betrothed. But such nit-picking comparisons are misleading. Swann's research is voluminous. Each of his tales comes complete with a list of academic esoterica he's consulted to aid its fabrication. But he merely uses Virgil, as he uses textbooks on Minoan or Etruscan history, as stepping stones to the creation of his own mythologies.

A qualification that *can* be applicable, however, relates to the exact delineation of his fantasy species, and the apparent confinement of the scope of their world. There are Dryads, Centaurs and Fauns - creatures elaborated from mythology, phantasms condensed out of superstitious rural imaginations, grown from shadowy patterns across forest floors, the movement of random clusters of foliage, the rustle of leaves disturbing silence. They should be inexact, insubstantial and as inconsistent of form as in the tales of Ovid's METAMORPHOSES. Yet Swann veers close to making them endearing and decorative, defusing the elements of both mystery and menace. It's like taking the beautifully complex draughtsmanship of a Pre-Raphaelite painting without also accepting the decadent fin-de-siecle element of evil omnipresent darkness. Anthologist and critic Judith Merrill concurs. To her, Swann's fictions are "a far cry from the earth-dark tragedies of such Ancient World chroniclers as the late Henry Treece, and the lighter approach inevitably diminishes the stature of the myth-figures. If, however, you prefer your blood-spilling flavoured with charm, rather than taken raw, then Swann blends these ingredients with considerable skill".<sup>33</sup>

That sounds about right. But GREEN PHOENIX is one element of an oeuvre that should be considered as a whole. The novel was first published (in the USA) in 1972, and is a coming together of ideas that Swann had been developing in short story form for a decade. Mellonia, Aeneas' Dryad lover first appears in the 1962 story WHERE IS THE BIRD OF FIRE? Written by a Faun with a reed pen, it tells of Mellonia's relationship with Remus "the Wolf", the founder of Rome, and how through him she makes good her promise to found a second Troy in Italy. The story, according to a contemporary blurb, "received more praise than any other in recent years". THE SUDDEN WINGS, a voyage into painful beauty, follows its success. Set at the time of Roman expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean, it concerns the loneliness of the last member of a winged human species. Eros, the Dragonfly Boy is an "eternal" who had gamed with a Princess of Ur and is "older than evil". In DOLPHIN AND THE DEEP the Etruscan Bear searches for lost Circe, while THE MUREX is set among Amazons and ant-like Myrmidons on the island of Aegina.

There is a strange gentleness to the stories, and little violence. "Most of the world's harm, it seemed, was done by ignorant, essentially decent men"<sup>26</sup>. There is much talk of love, a love that not only tames wild bears, but, helped by the correct alchemaic catalyst enables mortals to sprout "Sudden Wings". A love that lures Amazons into polyandrous marriages. A love that is romantic, maternal, paternal, or the love of a comrade for comrade, or sometimes even a love will ill-defined incestuous or homosexual aspects like that of Eros and Mark<sup>6</sup>, or Herrick and Nicholas ("what makes a man a god is people to worship him. Even one person if he worships enough"<sup>26</sup>). There's a pleasing andrygyne SATYRICON-esque ambivalence of blurred sexual identities. Rather, a feeling of *universal* sensuality devoid of the need for imposed gender divisions. "I understand" comments the Amazon Daphne "that men could be manly in tenderness"<sup>8</sup>. The ambiguity of sexual roles, as this quote indicates, is extended to include the leading protagonists of the stories. Heroes who are not only heroic, but live up to every outmoded definition of the term. Herrick for example has "Bare legs splendid in the sun, his bare arms

like those of a blacksmith, the archangel hair". These heroes also tend to possess a childlike youthfulness, and are given to displays of emotion and even tears that more contemporary modes - unlike those of Homer's time - find unmanish. Probably such decompartmentalisation of roles reflects none of the sickness of our own society than upon those created by Swann. Heroines are similarly beautiful, yet complex. Matriarchal societies and "covens" abound - in *THE MUREX* the Amazon society is dominated by Gorgo, just as Judity, the charismatic leader of the Gubbings, and Volumna, leader of the Dryads, are her direct counterparts.

There are not villains.

3

*"Before Romulus, the entire Mediterranean world abounded in Satyrs and Centaurs, Tritons had played in the sea-pools, and even the air, it was said, had throbbed with sudden wings as boys and girls had tumbled through the clouds, but now, thanks to the depredations of man, such creatures were almost extinct..."*<sup>6</sup>

Following the eventual demise of *SCIENCE FANTASY*, and the publication of *GREEN PHOENIX* came further novels including *THE LADY OF THE BEES* drawn from the same mythic sources, *THE DAY OF THE MINOTAUR* expanded and rewritten from *THE BLUE MONKEYS*, and *THE TOURNAMENT OF THORNS*. *MOONDUST* even enters the fractured Jewish crypto-history of The Torah and "finds fairies in the foundations at the battle of Jericho"<sup>34</sup>. Swan describes the Biblical city infiltrated by the non-human wizardry of sciences older than history, with an attendant subterranean realm called Honey Heart, populated with winged females and intelligent foxes.

Thomas Burnett Swann had by now become the centre of a minor cult which climaxed with the 1976 appearance of *WILL-O-THE-WISP*, a novel set in "post-Elizabethan England". Here, the underlying sensuality of the earlier fantasies remain, but its wondering, somehow chaste innocence is a little more knowing. The sense of menace a little more fully realised. Swann writes that "when God had come to England with the Romans, the Pagan Gods had scuttled from field and fen, and the Devil, who gave them asylum in Hell, appeared to be permanently routed and tidily exiled." But the element of Puritan guilt gives evil a Freudian psychological basis, validating the mutterings of dark submerged sexuality. The attributes of sensuality are even extended to embrace the inanimate. Dartmoor, under "the first light of dawn had begun to flush the toors. Usually they assembled huge jagged tombstones, but now they were what they had been to her ancestors before the fall, unabashedly phallic, earth's virility yearning to the fruitful sky." This is an essentially Pagan vision of the world, of Sky/MOther/Earth-Father as in virile pre-Christian belief. Yet the novel lies well within the tradition of Swann's mythos. Robert Herrick the poet, in pursuing and being captured by the remnants of a supernatural race living on Dartmoor, does for the novel what Virgil had done for *GREEN PHOENIX* (while not only Virgil but also Dryads and Satyrs are alluded to in the later work). There are other points of cross-reference that serve merely to update the outer limits of Swann's terrain by a fistful of centuries. The research and settings are meticulously exacting, detail from Herrick's own life, to the Devonshire Folklore of the persecuted "Gubbings", to lists of furnishings and materials described in archaic or unfamiliar terminology. A list of research source material is credited.

The Gubbings, like the Myrmidons, and the Dragonfly Boy, are winged.

In *THE NIGHT OF THE UNICORN*<sup>12</sup>, also from 1976, Swann finally brings his location back into the twentieth century. It tells of a Mexican village which awaits the appearance of a Unicorn, an ex-whore anticipating that, although the creature will not approach her, a single glimpse will make the wait worth while.

Thomas Burnett Swann is the teller of gentle mythologies in which duels are fought in "Trials of Verse". In which beautiful women of strange hybrid species woo human lovers, Mellonia is torn between her allegiance to the Dryads and to Aeneas, just as Stella is torn between Gubbings and Herrick, or Daphne between Amazons and her former prey, the Myrmidons. He uses poetic imagery to create an internal world to consistently encapsulate his vision - the moon is described as a "bird of fire", the Gubbings' diminutive wings are "thwarted flames", tents are "grounded birds yearning for flight" and the forest is "so dark that the sun was a dim constellation in the night of foliage above them". In Swann's stories a youthful world of childlike innocence and purity is receding in time to be replaced by a more dour and world-weary maturity. His tales speak of a world, and of life-styles that

are in harmony with the earth. A world, and a value-system that have somehow subsequently been misplaced, that simultaneously dissolved like childhood with the first public hairs of maturity, to be destroyed by the intimations of evil that adulthood brings. An analogy perhaps, with the Judeo-Christian Fall alluded to by Swann in WILL-O-THE-WISP, in which wisdom again creates the knowledge of evil. Or then again, perhaps the Eden myth itself is just a parable of lost childhood?

Perhaps he's writing a symbolic paean to childhood *and* the childhood of the world. There's "a great sadness, for what I had lost and more, for what I must lose, stirring in me like the grey moth of autumn. I felt the wings and a chilling dust of snow..."<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps he's writing parables of the despoilation of nature by human technology pollution, the theme of species nearing extinction recurs – the last fugitive Gubbings, the last Dragonfly Boy, the last Centaur. Or perhaps he's just writing magical tales with their own internal logics. Swann's fiction, like the simile of the tents, yearn for flight.

Whatever the motives he weaves oddly compelling, strangely individualistic tales that even those with a bias against pure Fantasy can find charming.

The images that reach us from Minoan Crete – the bull-dancers, the "Prince with Lilies", the "Blue Ladies", have been painstakingly reconstructed by historians from an incomplete jigsaw of mosaic fragments found in the ruins of the Knossos Palace, their gaps imaginatively fleshed out. Splinters of what is known from the deep past, elaborated into what is conjectured. Thomas Burnett Swann worked in that way. Knossos *is* Swann in stone. He was here – in Crete, to research DAY OF THE MINOTAUR. Its scroll of papyrus, inscribed with its ancient manuscript, was supposedly excavated from a cave near the "ancient town of Phaestus" – modern Phaistos adjacent to the Roman archaeological site Gortys. Here there are still "oak trees older than Saturn". Swann stood beneath "hills terraced with olive trees and vineyards, which climb gradually into the Range of Ida and the Country of the Beast:. I recognise the first. I can now believe the second. From these shores, into the wine-dark seas of Crete, the Beauty-and-the-Beast story of the Minotaur ends as Eunostos sets sail to find the Isles of the Blest, leaving Crete to human occupation.

The loss, here, is almost tangible.

*"Hide it if you must, deep as the deepest trireme crusted with coral, but beauty will burn into light" - old Dolphin proverb.*

- Andrew Darlington

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- (4) "The Painter" (SCIENCE FANTASY #44 – December 1960).
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- (6) "The Sudden Wings" (SCIENCE FANTASY #55 – October 1962)
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# HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

by Richard Reeve

A human being behaves from the moment it is born until it dies. It is arguable as to when a human is considered to be born or when it is dead. It is therefore essential for this discussion to define birth and death. Given various “authorities” and “pressure groups” that would argue these starting and ending phenomena it is necessary to create a definition which, hopefully, will be accepted by the unprejudiced majority.

For the purpose of this discussion, behaviour is defined as that which is observable in a human being from the moment that it utilises its natural environment, e.g. natural conditions, until other human beings, preferably those with some skill in asserting an end to human behaviour is death, e.g., Doctor of Medicine.

It is obvious that we now require a definition, a boundary of limitation, of acceptable behaviour. Again the writer must assume that an acceptable definition is possible and, with limitations, use the definition used by psychologists, that is that behaviour is the function of the personality interacting with the environment. An alternative would be behaviour as a function of the personality interacting with the situation. The latter definition is rejected for the purpose of this discussion because it implies a sense of immediacy, e.g. killing something interpreted as menacing which later is found not to be.

The next problem is to define personality. It would be a mere rhetorical exercise to define personality as that which we are, that which is capable of being “tested”. Personality must therefore be defined as a potential, genetically determined but with great elasticity for learning and adaptation. To accept either as a strict definition of heredity or, alternatively learned, would not be able to account for Mankind’s ability to adapt to rapid

change. A Darwinist notion - man has adapted both temporally and spatially therefore, man is proved to be an adaptable animal and even more, an animal that can/will adapt very rapidly and not only to environmental factors. Hence the notion of describing a human being’s behaviour as “improving” or “deteriorating” is a little like stating positively “the length of a piece of string”.

In nature it is as important that the carrion succeeds even though the more “noble” creatures die. This implies a notion of equality and this notion has no ethical content. The notion of ethics and the notion of survival are incompatible. They do not touch at any point, they are more than often diametrically opposed. Loadings of “good” and “bad” are not relevant in the process of survival. Examples of this phenomena proliferate through human history, such extreme examples as Jesus and the Pope; Socrates and Plato; Nietzsche and Hitler’s fascism, etc. The majority of humanity is by nature followers. It is both necessary and important for the survival of humanity that few, so called great men, “heroes”, “leaders” are in a minority. They are the engine of human survival but not capable of mundane living.

Mankind is, physiologically natures “Frankenstein”. The only thing that Mankind has, and despite evidence to the contrary, is intellect. It was with intellect that he defeated both the environmental changes in Earth’s “spasms” and his eventual dominance of that planet as such. That is what we believe, perceive and rely upon.

This notion of equality is, evidently, a myth. Mankind spends massive amounts of money to support Homo Sapiens against, what Shakespeare called outrageous fortunes. The “brainpower” of Mankind simply holds at bay the natural evolutionary forces which continue.

While Mankind plays the minor

games, politics, wars, “social evolution” etc. nature is simply grinding on. If, for example, the dinosaurs had developed a “social structure” would they have existed for a longer period? They lasted longer than Homo Sapiens has, or is Mankind the “unique”, the first, the only ... the GOD that can defy all time and evolutionary processes. Is Homo Sapiens God’s gift to Earth as the religious dogma would have us believe ... or more “scientifically”, is Mankind “high” on the notion that he is the CHOSEN ONE, the super race. This is not an original notion, nor a viable one viewed historically.

Mankind has a great potential, his Brain. If he chooses to use that physiological advantage he may last longer than the

Dinosaurs but there is little evidence that this is what he chooses. Mankind is drunk on notions of equality, supporting those of the species that lack the “fitness” of intellect that has given Mankind dominance of Earth.

Man has chosen to ignore the truisms of Socrates, Aristotle and later the philosophers that attempted to display the only dimension that was viable.

The species known as Homo Sapiens is an historical fact. Who, we can now reasonably ask, will be our historians, our archaeologists. What form of “life” will enthuse on our “success”!

- Richard Reeve

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*Cont. from p.17:*

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A poem (by HD) supplies the titles for “Where Is The Bird Of Fire?” And “Only Night Heals Again”.

# HIGHEST GROUND

by Peter Brodie

The shuttle Atlantis manoeuvred closer to the drifting speck that had caught the Commander's eye. With all missions accomplished the crew had been about to begin turnaround when he'd noticed the "item" where nothing should have been; at least according to the registry. Mission Control had no info to give when questioned except that it might be some old space debris. Its position was out way too far and too misplaced for it to be a Comsat. A bugger in space. Having ascertained that the shuttle had enough fuel to go out and take a peek, the bods had given the nod and the Commander had begun the shuttle's approach with a quick snort of the appropriate thrusters.

Stationary to the object a quarter of a click away, the closest the Commander wanted to move, the crew observed through binocs that it was, indeed, a satellite. Scarred, pitted, round and brassy to look at with no discernible fittings except for what may have been the stubs of antennae. Size maybe several feet down to two. Hard to make out even at this distance. It simply sat there in a topsy-turvey way.

'Fitter, you in the mood for a closer look?' murmured the Commander into his mike while taking photos with his Leica.

The Mission Specialist he questioned happened to be down in the bay, getting a snack, when the query came over. She grinned and shot back: 'I deploy five deep-search units within a four day period using what amounts to insulated ski gloves ten sizes too big for the fine adjustments and you want me to take dekkko at this oddball from Galaxy Five up close because I'm so brill at my job?'

"Ah, yup, that's about it ..... Um... what's a dekkko?'

'Never mind. You Septics have limited slang appreciation.' She pulled a stray lock of hair out of her face and sighed. 'OK, guys. Another epic for the space journals is about to

begin. Where's my bloody suit? Conray, have you hidden it again?'

About halfway there Fitter turned around in her Thrustpak and gave the usual wave and one fingered salute. Why these shots never made it into National Geo was a mystery. She snickered and turned around; headed on.

The Atlantis crew were listening in on her link. Just her usual steady breathing and the occasional snatch of off-key rock song. 'Hey, oogie-boogie man. Comin' t'visit!'

'What? Say again.'

'Nothing, Commander, nothing..... Almost there. Shutting down.'

The waiting crew watched as she stopped within a few feet or so of the satellite. Her breathing rate increased dramatically in syncopation with this. Too dramatically. 'Fitter! Fitter! What's up? You OK?..... Repeat. You OK?'

The Commander's words were lost to the astronaut, drifting out there amongst the light of a billion suns, orbiting a blue haven. The satellite was only about three feet across and the passage of years had chaffed it's surface and some of the finer details but up close there was no mistaking, on the side away from the ship, the sharp outline of the swastika emblazoned across it's dull gleam.

END

# THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE

by Pavel Viaznikov

Since I had quite a lot of leisure time, I decided to go to Prague again. This time, there had to be eight of us: my sister Kate and myself; my schoolmates Alexander (Sasha) and Stanislav (Stas) with their spouses; and Sergey Lukianenko the SF writer, also with his wife. We decided not to use the services of any tourist companies, but to do all arrangements ourselves. In fact, we got everything much cheaper this way, except the air tickets. The demand for tickets to Prague was so high, that nobody was offering any discounts, more than that, those buying APEX tickets (as we did) had to pay for the tickets on the day of the order only! I had a discount, though - I suddenly found out that when I bought my Hungary tickets last August, Aeroflot had a special discount program, and by producing my tickets to Budapest, I could now get \$200 off on my Prague ticket. Now, the cheapest accommodation offered by tourist companies was \$30 per person per day, newspaper ads for private apartments in Prague quoted \$25 per person as the cheapest variant; while I, using my Frommer's, found ourselves a hostel (doubles with bath and toilet attached) for \$10 per person per day. The hostel was located quiet conveniently, too.

Sasha and Natasha (his wife) went to Prague two days before us and had to leave Prague for Moscow also earlier, as Sasha had to conduct a seminar on the psychology of death (he is a specialist); so there were six of us in the Sheremetyevo-2 airport on 5 January. As usual, the airport was crowded and busy; I was a bit anxious as I was carrying more currency than is permitted by the customs regulations, so I had to go to a bank and buy a permit. But the customs officer never asked any of us about the

amount of currency; in fact, he didn't ask any questions at all and waved off our bags which we were about to put into the X-ray machine. I wonder,

whether it means liberalisation or just laziness....

Upon arrival the hostel looked, on the outside ... well, like a hostel. It used to be one of the hostels of the Polytechnics College renovated (a bit) to accommodate budget tourists. But it was located very close to a metro station, being a 5-storey building it had an elevator. It was very clean, rooms had baths (not just showers but tubs as well) and toilets, fridges and table lamps; for an additional fee, guests could also hire a TV-set. In hostels, you do not expect to find small items like cakes of soap, glasses, shoe brushes and two towels per person, but here they supplied all of these, too. So, the hostel proved to be a great bargain. They do not serve any food in the winter season, though - but on my previous visits I also never had breakfast in the hotel since it's much nicer in Prague's many "kavarnas" (coffee houses) or pubs. Even though breakfasts were included in the room price!

At Reception we found Sasha's message - he suggested meeting at the Orloj (the famous astronomic clock in the Old Town Square) at 7 PM. So, we dropped out luggage, changed our clothes (it was +10°C in Prague and -22°C in Moscow, so our warm coats and sweaters were out of place here) and went out.

The first thing we did was buy a 7-day city transportation pass. We lost 30 minutes in a long queue, but the municipal authorities of Prague have introduced a new payment system (with distance zones, line changing fees and other complexities, tickets varying in price and type quite confusingly for foreigners) and also,

they let loose a horde of ticket controllers, and the first thing we saw in the first tram were controllers fining some tourists.

It was the famous Tram 22 - properly nicknamed "tourist tram" by tourist guides (as it goes past almost all places of interest in central Prague, so tourists often use it. Taking this fact into consideration, you will easily understand why this line is more often referred to as "pickpocket express".



Prague

Well, pickpockets or ticket controllers, but it took us to Kradcany - Stas and Larissa were in Prague for the first time, so it was proper to start with the route which could help us past the most famous and spectacular places of interest. So we did, making only a couple of stops for a couple of beers, we walked past the Loretta, the Prague Castle, the St. Vitus Cathedral, the Charles Bridge, etc. On our way, I entertained my friends with stories and legends connected with the places we walked by. My sister added colourful details - mostly from the funny "Prague Ghosts Guidebook" which we bought on our first visit. You know, I was feeling almost at home, not only that the city was rather familiar to me, but most people we saw in the streets were speaking Russian. Prague is very popular with Russians now, and besides, most tourists from the West normally go home after 1 January, while the Russian Orthodox Christmas as I have already mentioned, is 7 January, so many people (from private companies) were still enjoying their holidays.

Russians were easy to notice: they were wearing clothes that were too heavy and hot for the warm weather - they walked with their coats unbuttoned (unzipped), but could not leave their parkas and fur coats in their hotels because the wind was still chilly; many were wearing "shit-stompers" - thick-soled, heavy boots, most practical in deep Moscow winter-slush, composed of feet-beaten snow, salt (for melting the snow) and dirt, - but a bit awkward in warm Prague... (by the way, it is much cleaner now. Prague is. On my previous visit, I had to be very careful in order not to step on droppings left by dogs, but this time, on many streets there were special houses where dog-walkers can take special bags).

Well, we spent our day in the most pleasant way; we watched the Magi who rode on their camels out of the gates of the Archbishop's palace (which is also known as "the Three Storks' House" because of the coat of arms on the house, with three storks on an ornate shield) ... a bit late for the Magi, I think (that was 6 January). We had delicious black beer at "The Black Ox", and we enjoyed organ music during a mass in the palace church; we walked all the way to the Old Town Square and met our friends there.

This evening we did not open our cognac, either; nor did we open it on the next evening, nor the one after the next ... In fact, we kept the bottle corked till the very last day, when... Oh well - let's not put our cart in front of the horse. I'll tell it later.

The next morning, we were up very early as we decided to go to Karlstein - a castle, about 1 hour from Prague by train. Despite the fact that there was no information available in any languages except Czech at the station, we managed to find our train (on a track which was not very easy to find - it was behind the station building, around the corner - aside from all other tracks) with proper tickets and a bag of sandwiches and bottles of beer, for breakfast

and to last us till we could get to a proper beer place.

The conductor (very helpful and friendly, as most of the public transportation service officers, except, of course, ticket controllers) warned us in time - in fact, we saw the castle ourselves, about two or three kilometres from the railroad, on a hill towering over a small town, a river and vast empty hills. A short walk revealed that the castle was not the only place of interest in Karlstein; there were, for example, a curious rock formation - a natural monument - marking the boundary of a nature preserve, and a museum showing troughs from different regions - you know, those charming (though much vulgarised by Xmas sales ads) scenes with the Holy Family in Bethlehem, made of wood and straw, of clay and cloth, and whatnot. Several trough scenes were lovingly arranged as if not for a museum exhibition but for the Christmas celebrations in a church or a peasant's house, with touching offerings of small cookies and sweets. There was also a cellar; narrow stone stairs went even lower, but the passage was barred with a wooden grid and a spectre-like set of knights' armour - as if a runaway ghost from the castle lost its way in the damp saltpetrious underground passages. The stone steps were covered with a carpet of coins.



Karlstein Castle

Outside, a greenish, mossy stone statue of St. Sebastian, with pieces of rusty wire sticking from it, was hiding beneath an old, crooked tree. A winding path was leading up,

between restaurants, guesthouses and souvenir shops, to the castle. Almost all of them were locked; a terrible suspicion came to us - after all, is the castle itself open for visitors? It was not; so all we could do was enjoy a view from the top of the castle hill and then, since the day was rather cold and very windy, with heavy clouds swiftly flowing over the castle towers and the surrounding hills, losing shreds of mist to the trees on their tops - then, of course, we had some spicy wine in the only operating tavern. Some fried cheese, too; just the kind of food to have "when breakfast is over and lunch is still far away".

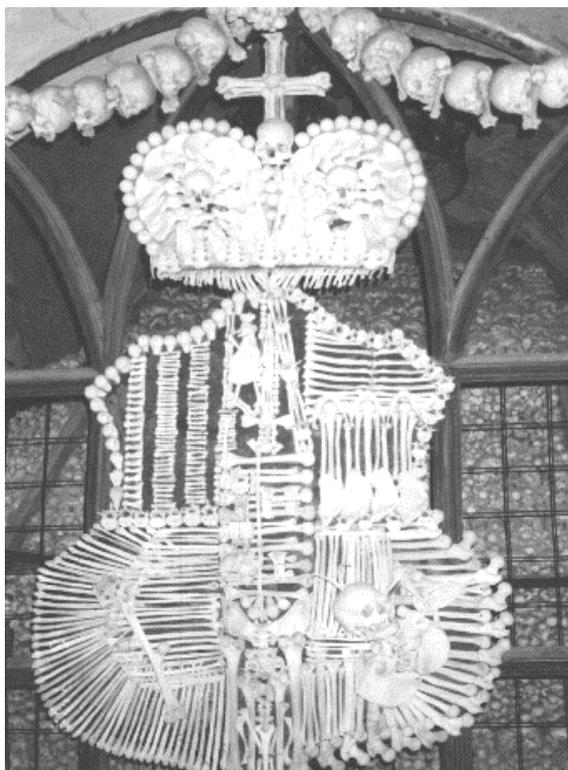
Over the hot wine we discussed the schedule for the rest of the day. Deciding to spend it outside Prague, we returned to the station and after two hours were in Kutna Hora - a city famous in the Middle ages mostly for silver mines, the biggest in the country. Besides, Kutna Hora was perhaps the Czech place most swept through by the Black Plague. Two "plague columns" commemorate the victims of the terrible epidemics. Besides, there is the Kostnice chapel - probably the greatest tourist attraction of the city. Kostnice is actually outside the city limits, and the name suggests the whole idea of the place: it is derived from the Slavonic *kost* - bone - and means *ostiary*, a chapel where human bones

are displayed, and usually they are arranged in decorative patterns. Such ostiaries were quite popular in medieval Catholic Europe. Indeed, the interior is suppressing visitors with great piles of shin-bones, like hills with caves from which skulls stare at you, garlands of skulls and bones, an intricately designed coat-of-arms made of ribs, phalangi, pelvis bones and shoulder-blades, a bone chandelier and the like. The crypt keeper - not

the creepy thing from a TV serial, but a kindly plump lady - told us that the chapel was several times used for shooting films, one of them a fairy tale, one a horror, and of course, several documentaries. I wish I could meet the person

who designed these bone decorations; he must have been a strange fellow.....

Upon emerging from the macabre chapel, we argued if we should try to catch the next train to Prague, or have a dinner and go by the last train. Then, the clouds at the horizon parted and the red evening sun outlined a most refined Gothic silhouette of a cathedral. Obviously, that had to be the St. Barbara's cathedral, the heart of the town. But, hell, there were not taxis nearby; the only cafe was closed for unknown reasons, and so we could not call a taxi. So we just walked - and perhaps out of some strange pride, decided to walk all the way, without trying to call a taxi from some other



place. Thus, when we approached the magnificent cathedral (and magnificent it really was) it was already night. The cathedral looked even greater in the dark; the moon was full and bright behind the spires, and clouds, silver upon

#### Kostnice Chapel

the black sky, were running fast, making the scene absolutely fantastic. Hidden lamps highlighted details of the cathedral ... Luckily, Stas had a video camera - it could get the picture even with low light, so we managed to show this magical view to our friends at home.

But it was high time to have a little something; the first and most obvious choice was a small cafe over the cliff which overlooked the city - right beside the cathedral, in the end of a long line of statues of saints, richly decorated with bones and skulls - stone

ones, for a change. The cafe reeked of overcooked oil, but we rejected it for another reason - namely, all tables near the windows were occupied, so the view was not on the menu for us. The second place was packed with policemen; generally speaking, this is a good sign - it means that the place is not for tourists but for the locals, but it was very smoky inside, and there were problems with getting a vacant table.

The third restaurant, called "At the Plague Pillar" ("U Morovoho Stulpa") was wittingly decorated inside with water-pumps, sign posts, etc, and on every table there was a book for the customers' notes ... but menu cards had no prices: an alarming sign! The place was overpriced, service poor and food most uninspiring. So we had only a couple of "creamed coffins" for Kate and Larissa (who never missed an opportunity to have some whipped cream) and started our explorations anew. And just in the end of the Plague Pillar Square we found a modest sing of a "Vinama" - a wine restaurant. It proved to be just the right place. I think that it was the best dinner we had during our stay in the Czech republic, well worth our long search. This time there was no possible problems with a taxi, and the maitre d'hotelle personally called the station to check the time of the last train to Prague. We were in time, even a little before time. The night was rather cold by that time, and we had to dance "letka-yenka" (you stay in a column, jump simultaneously - forward, forward, forward and backward! - following the leader, snake-like, jerking legs like a cancan, left, left, left and right! - and thus, jumping to a tune which we were singing, we approached the doors of the train, when it pulled to the platform, in a neat line which helped up board in perfect order.

Next day, Stas, Larissa, Sasha and Natasha went to Karlovy Vary. My sister and I decided against going there - we had been to that famous resort on our previous visit, and though it is really a very nice place, we preferred to go to the suburb of Zbraslav, where, in an old Cistercian convent and the Zbraslav castle (in fact, it's a palace) there is a museum of sculpture. Unfortunately, it was closed for renovations, so all we could see was the convent buildings, a dozen or so sculptures in the park - by that time the weather changed to a drizzling water spray - and a 400 year old pub (where we had our breakfast of beer and

stewed leaver (mysteriously called a “veprevy jatra” in Ukrainian, that would’ve been “boar’s balls”!). The real attraction here, though, was the waitress - perhaps the most unfriendly one in the whole country, perhaps a heir to the famous boor tavern-keeper Palivec, a character from “Sweik”. Well, she did not actually say “scrac” or other Czech obscenities, but you should see her hurling our plates to us and asking “anything else?” in a voice and with an air which suggested that if we dare to ask for a coffee and a strudel, our fate will be sealed.

Then, we went to Vysehrad. The weather in this district was different again, and we admired a fantastic view of Vltava. The river was wrapped in thick mist, and the mist was all red and golden, because the sun was shining through. We spent almost an hour on the walls of the Vysehrad castle, and I nearly dropped my glasses and my camera from the high cliff, trying to get the best picture. I was taking photos against the sun, too, but so thick was the mist that none were overexposed (my new Samsung camera proved to be very smart and reliable, too). Then, we strolled in the Vysehrad cemetery where many prominent figures of Czech culture, like Smetana, Capek, Dvorjak, Bozena Nemcova and others are buried. Visited the St. Peter and Paul cathedral, which we failed to see on our previous visit, and it looked great - it was lit only by the light from the high stained glass windows, and a dim lamp lighting the Bethlehem through scene. Puffs of mist were cautiously drifting in through the open doors, and multicoloured beams of light were standing clear in that cool vapour.

It was lunch-time already, so we dropped in the vinarna right opposite the cathedral doors. It used to be very good once; this time, though, they served everything, even mushroom soup and grilled trout, with sweet whipped cream right from a pressurised can ... no, this is far from my idea of good cooking! (The only good thing was young champignons stuffed with blue cheese, dipped in whipped egg and flour, and swiftly fried in boiling oil: just the thing for matured Rulanske white wine! Try it some day. I know what I advise - ask anybody from the Russian FIDonet echo-area of kitchen cranks - SU.KITCHEN.)

The rest of the day we spent in St. Ann’s convent - it is the main part of the National Museum of Art, and it was there the paintings of Karlstein were exhibited. Other collections of the museum are also quite worth

seeing ... but if - no, when! - I go to Prague next time, I shall try to do it in a more pleasant season, and spend more time not in Prague, but other places. I have not yet seen the famous spa resort of Marianske Lazne, there are quite a few places in and around Brno (like the “Antropos” Museum, or some beautiful parks, lakes or natural preserves). There are other castles around Prague and there are the Tatry mountains...

After the museum tour we met our friends, climbed one of those beautiful Gothic towers, looked at the city below, and crowned the evening with a gargantuan dinner of roasted pork knuckles with beer - with our favourites, black Velkopopovicke Kozel and Budweiser lager (no relation to the American Bud).

A very fine morning of the next day saw us on our way to the Old Jewish City - a small district, all that is left of the famous Prague Ghetto. As the visitors are required to cover their heads, we bought keepahs (I am not sure of the spelling). Normally, as far as I know, they are fastened with hair-pins, but these were made of plastic, with the name of the memorial area and some emblems - menorah, mogendovid and the like, but no pins, nor a band. The plastic was very smooth and the caps kept falling off. Now, the idea was quite simple but effective: one had to rub his keepah a bit against his hair, so that it would a static charge - and that did the trick! But the way, I looked very natural in a keepah, and a museum keeper addressed me in Hebrew.

The memorial consists of several old synagogues and an old cemetery. I have mentioned that cemetery in my previous columns about Prague; but as for the synagogues, one contains a good collection of ceremonial robes and things used in religious services; another one’s walls (on the inside of the building, of course) are covered all over with the names of Jews murdered during the Second World War, and the third one was closed for repairs. There are more, but perhaps the most interesting part of the memorial is the cemetery. The grave stones stand so close to one another that in many places it is impossible to walk (and it is forbidden to go through the cemetery, the visitors just walk around it). On many gravestones there are small pieces of paper, pressed down by pebbles - “wish-notes”, as we were told. Near the grave of the great alchemist and cabbalist Rabbi Lev ben Bezazel, mostly known as the creator of Golem, the clay

robot (and it's the only grave with a kind of sarcophagus upon it, instead of the gravestone) there was a Hasid praying Rabbi Lev is still very much revered by the Judaists, especially the by Orthodox.

Then, we took a funicular car to Petrin Hill. This time I refrained from climbing the observation tower - I had been there, and besides, it's too tiring. So I just settled down on a bench and enjoyed a bottle of beer, while at the same time casting looks at the panoramic view of Prague below (not quite as good as from the top of the tower, but good enough for me at that moment) and also reading a book of legends about Rabbi Lev ben Bezalel in Russian, just bought in the Old Jewish Town. The stories were very interesting; some hinted at the possibility of Rubbi Lev using techniques, quite unique for his time, like a powerful projector ("laterna magica") or "automatons" - proto-robots (clockwork devices). His chemical skills were also great for his time, I believe.

Then we walked past several frescoes with scenes from the life of Jesus (the tower is on the territory of a monastery) to a mirror labyrinth; went halfway downhill to "Nebozizek" restaurant and had some coffee, still admiring the city view; walked to the Prague Castle through the hill garden and spent the rest of the day in the numerous museums there.

Next morning Sasha and Natasha had to go back to Moscow. So a small party was held in the evening - in the manner of pub-crawling.

\* \* \*

Just a couple of days ago I had an adventure which could seem amusing to you, I think. I was going home from of meeting of SF&F fans which was hosted, as usual, by Alexander Kashirin - owner of the only SF&F bookshop in Moscow. A nice place, his shop is. They also sell adventures, mysteries, videotapes (mostly SF), souvenirs and stationary; they also have a small snack bar, and the wooden panels near the bar are covered with signatures and inscriptions by SF writers. By tradition, twice a month, on Friday evenings, a writer is invited to meet his readers, and after the meeting he (or she) signs his/her name on the wall.

Now, this time there was a meeting with Alexander Gromov, author of the very good novel LEMMING YEAR (the plot is some mysterious force starts purging human kind, making these useless or harmful for the survival

of the human species commit suicide. Mostly these "lemmings" are what are usually called "bad guys". The main character - the head of the medical service and one of the four highest executives in the country - gets to know what is happening, and he also gets to know how those "lemmings" can be saved ... but he also knows for sure that if the "lemming syndrome" is stopped, human kind is as good as dead in about a hundred years.

After the meeting with the writer, we celebrated 15 years of the "Three Parsecs" SF club. Naturally, some beer was there; all was well, but when I was nearly home, I was detained by the police. I did not worry, as I was not really drunk and my papers were in order. But then I was taken to a police station and searched and all my money was gone. That day, I had received my salary, in cash, and the money was in my bag. I started to protest, but the policeman who did the searching, explained to me that I had no money on me, but that he was sure that, if he searched carefully enough, he could find some drugs, for example. I got the message and resigned myself even to signing a paper that I was indeed drunk; for such obedience I was rewarded - the cop gave me back some of my money. A friend of mine advised me to complain to the department which controls the police - but I considered the chances of me obtaining justice against the cops (who now have my name and address) getting me this or that way ... and chose to forget about the money. They say that such things must not remain without punishment ... but in this case, I preferred to bend down and hush up...

Shit happens. But there is shit and shit, you know ... I don't want the readers to conclude that what happened to me is a common thing in this country. It isn't, but on the other hand, it is still more possible here than in most other places.

What to end with? Robert Sheckley and Harry Harrison reportedly have signed contracts with a Russian publishing house and are going to write something new exclusively for it. So, their new stories will be first published in Russian. And a popular Russian writer, Nick Perumov, has moved the to the USA.

- Pavel Viaznikov

# Poetry, Too

## GRAVIMETRICS

by Giovanni Malito

The heaviest strongest man can  
cast a shadow so much bigger  
than your own

but like your own shadow  
his is not heavy enough to bend  
even a solitary blade of grass.

## POPULATION

by Richard E. Reeve

In one door and the aged go to die  
And at the other women queue  
Before orders that coldly say  
The population is too high,  
But duty must be done.

Those that clutch the valued card  
Allowing them to work today,  
Their holy day of Labour  
For which they paid so dear,  
But duty must be done.

And there a woman hides away  
The infant she should never love  
In a crowded, clouded world,  
Condemning it to future life,  
But duty must be done.

## BEFORE THE EVENT HORIZON

by Bill West.

Before the black hole's horizon,  
where even light cannot come out,  
space and time turn strange:  
gravity stretching space out,  
and time slowing down,  
disappearing things growing long and longer  
until they snap,  
their light turning red, then redder,  
before they simply fade,  
gravity pulling the thing's bottom,

its top unable to keep pace,  
the thing stretching, until  
it breaks,  
the future streaking by,  
its memory lost in the hole,  
which whirls things out of the universe,  
returning just x-rays.  
Forever split,  
electron and positron,  
their perpetual place-trading forgotten,  
oh, where the light was spilt,  
the black hole sends back only x-rays  
from the light's last reddened dance,  
as the mass slowly shrinks,  
shrinks so slowly into the past.

## MORE SENRUY

by Peter Brodie

## THE OTHER ANIMALS

Long ago you gave  
it over and yet still I think  
your waiting sublime.

## REVENGE

Empty of all it  
wants to be is the only  
way it will fulfil.

## HAPPINESS

That old new feeling  
of always being a part  
of it all for now.

## VICTORY

Battlefields are the  
same no matter the size of  
the feeling of loss.

## MUSIC

Swept towards the one  
that is so minute that it  
leaves room for us all.

#### NEED

Waiting until the  
desperation calms enough  
to make it okay.

#### A PAGE OF HAIKU by Richard Reeve.

Still the stars shine there  
In space beyond Man's pollution  
Safe from his folly.

Pigs will never fly  
With gene therapy who knows  
Can we call that truth

The Millennium  
Two thousand years of Mankind's rule  
Is there a future now.

In the nightmare dreams  
We see the horrors we know  
That only we can know.

In times of danger  
Reason and wisdom must rule  
Men of emotion.

Far off stars beckon  
Enticing mankind's efforts  
Driven by their greed.

Is this universe  
Big enough for both of us  
Alien and Mankind.

Star struck astronauts  
Shooting through the alien void  
Going to nowhere.

When we reach the stars  
And find there is only dust  
Gone the twinkle then.

#### A PAGE OF TANKA by Richard Reeve.

Can we ever know  
What future days show us now  
But would we want that

For all life is mystery  
And death is the certainty.

Do we have the best  
Of all possible worlds or  
The most probable

Given the nature of Man  
Half angel and half devil.

Lonely lost alien  
Wandering across the earth  
Finding no kinship

Only wars and disasters  
In the nature of Mankind.

Listen, listening  
To the deep infinite void  
For the sounds of life

The lonely ear of Mankind  
Dreading the alien voices.

#### THE PROBLEM WITH NOISE

by m. -l. stephens

Do they really think  
that I can write, when they make  
so much noise? Plates clatter,  
spoons clink, the children shout  
so they talk louder, and the small voices  
in my head tumble around,  
trying to make sense, but cannot come out.  
I can feel them in my brain, they hurt,  
by not being allowed to come into the open.  
My head aches, my hands tremble  
wanting to put them on paper.

I look for peace in the garden  
but a flock of black cockatoos  
swarm the pinetree  
and amidst their cries I hear  
dull thumps of cones  
falling on tank and iron roof.

So, I retreat to the house again,

smile at the people still chatting,  
lock the bedroom door, close  
the windows, pull down the blinds  
and sit on my bed and try to calm  
myself by reciting a mantra: "what am I?  
Light or Shadow, Shadow or Light?"....

Slowly, ideas trickle into my pen -  
there is suddenly a whoosh of thoughts,  
freed... chaotic...  
the editing will have to wait....

#### GAZING AT A NIGHT SKY ...

by Meryl Brown Tobin

How would you react  
To find aliens exist?  
Would you stay silent?

#### HAGOCYTOSIS

by Tom Kretz

Phagocytes are a lot like the Witches  
patrolling straits leading to the Goddess,  
for cell eaters have earned a sinister  
reputation for doing their duty  
while the lovely arcane Macrophages  
purify earthlings of vile piggybacks.

I sing of the milk-white Leucosia,  
swarthy Ligeia and fair Parthenope,  
leggy Sirens living in electronic  
microscopes, extending svelte and gracile  
pseudopods to ensnare green and greedy  
Escherichia coli, lima beans

at six thousand times magnification,  
contenders for red wine chasing pasta,  
swaying the loyalty of confused cells.  
I praise the gentle-voiced Himeropa,  
coaxing long Latinized bacteria  
to become one with a sweet-singing cell.

I laud the range of Thelxiepeia's psalm  
as she overcomes the most truculent  
with contra-octaves and then like a dove  
soars up into thinner air to persuade  
bacteriocins struggling not to fall  
into the eternal darkness of sleep.

Born in cold bone and rising to surface  
these creatures have the chemical make-up

to digest parasites of any world,  
becoming more alluring in the act  
of metabolism, salamanders  
with new tails, surviving holy fires.

Following upon the efficient heels  
of phagocytosis there are certain ways  
to preserve the songs of Macrophages.  
It comes to this, and do not wax your ears:  
any particulate matter must be  
absorbed by the superior being.

#### PREMONITION

by Tom Kretz

Standing on the desert strand  
naked and vulnerable as I was born  
at the moment my shadow and I were one,

The sea beckoned me to be one with her  
as she was one with the shore and the sky.  
I began sinking slowly into ferrous sand

scalding my white skin as I descended  
until only an empty head remained  
tied as some forgotten beach ball.

A mounted warrior rounded the bend  
sword whirling to the ready point  
leaning down from a gleaming saddle.

Not fear but dazzle at the thought  
of the long aftermath of separation  
and exciting way of continuing life.

A dolphin flew out of the water  
knocking the warrior from his mare  
crushing demonic life out of him  
at the same time impaling herself  
upon the sword. The horse dug me up.  
Together we buried the willing victim,

left the hefty warrior for the albatross.

#### PONDERING A DISTANT, ANCIENT LIGHT

by Lloyd Michael Lohr & M. S. Raper

I sit alone upon an asteroid and ponder the many  
days events,  
my drill silent, for the silver ore can wait,  
I long for a gentle breeze and the green fields of  
Earth,

but all I see are the pinpoint sparkles of distant,  
ancient light,  
a multitude of solar cardinal points before me  
pointing the way to the unknown.

And they remind me that I am so far from my  
home,

Out there somewhere,  
another star is born,  
another particle of frozen matter is deposited on a  
barren world by the solar wind,

Out there somewhere,  
another life form crawls from the primordial  
slime,  
and begins to speak the sounds of social  
discourse,

Out there somewhere,  
the truth lurks in the ethereal deserts of dark  
matter,  
growing cold from the lack of remembrance,

Out there somewhere,  
a thousand eclipses dance behind an endless  
penumbra of stardust,  
and their shadows form little Mandelbrot patterns  
in my dreams,

Out there somewhere,  
another entity,  
not unlike myself,  
ponders the secrets of the distant stars.

#### MADAME MONIQUE'S BONETIÈRE

by E. D. Paul

Madame Monique sometimes  
pulls a boarder into her parlor  
to show her antique cabinet,  
lower half, one door  
upper, another -- housing  
apéritifs and digestifs.

Madame informs me  
it's called a bonnetière.  
a long-ago storage  
for milady's bonnets.  
Amuse-toi. She turns away:  
I go to preparer du jasmine.

She waggles back a finger.  
Make good attention  
to bonnetière --

a carved dragon  
on da door protects  
my special cognac.

Stepping up, I hear  
a soprano chorus  
of bottles clinking in harmony.  
Madame calls out, Hungry?

No, thank you.  
Not you! she tells me.

Am I not alone?  
I open the old door,  
a wooden tails flinches.  
Brown jagged bottles like teeth  
slip over my head, and  
slurp! -- like a spaghetti noodle.

#### THE SHARER

by E. D. Paul

Why me? An endless echo!  
For three lunches now, at Mae's Fried Onion  
Near my office,  
Some glass presence,  
Invisible and uninvited,  
Has been sharing my Noon Special.  
He, or it, helps himself to a good half  
Of what I order. Today, it stole  
Three of my six fantails, a divided portion  
Of ketchup-fries. Honest-to God,  
The food rises from my plate, swings over,  
Pauses, then zeroes into nothing.

I can't tell Mae. I like her, especially  
Her lively walk-away which reminds me of  
A teeter-totter of boxing gloves. I always  
Leave a two-buck tip, but not anymore --  
My sharer pinches one for himself.  
Sometimes he even makes change.

I would never tell my wife, because she  
And her old lady are convinced I'm cuckoo  
As it is. I haven't slept for three nights.  
Tonight, after two hours at the kitchen  
Table, drinking warm milk, I decide I must  
Get some sleep.

I tap Alice's rump to move over. She rolls  
Toward me. "Again? This must be my  
birthday!"

# Science Dictionaries: Part of The Fun

by Jim Verran

During a recent spate of light technical writing I found my rapidly dating collection of dictionaries wanting. Sure, after some hunting I tracked down most of the essentials, but the explanations were mainly superficial -- there had to be something better. What I needed was a convenient source of concise, authoritative explanations of frequently encountered, but awkward to define concepts.

After returning to fiction I soon discovered a similar, previously overlooked dilemma. Even though my speculative fiction usually contains minimal hard science, it still has to survive informed scrutiny.

Although contriving pseudo-science is part of the fun of SF writing, warping prevailing science beyond a tolerable suspension of disbelief can be risky. However, if you set firm criteria for the fabricated science during outlining, and adhere to the precepts, you have a better chance of fitting it convincingly within the story. If 'fabricated science' is an oxymoron, so what? The much abused 'science fiction' is also a contradiction in terms, right?

Fabricated or otherwise, writing about science usually involves some background research, so I figured that a science dictionary would provide an ideal resource. My search for a suitable tome soon proved one thing: choices are limited. Whether this scarcity is a consequence of meagre demand, or publishers' over-conservative expectations is unclear. Nevertheless, I did manage to find two current volumes.

For the writer, or student reader, The OXFORD CONCISE COLOUR SCIENCE DICTIONARY (ISBN 0-19-280069-8) provides no-frills access to crucial information.

This PVC-covered volume from The Oxford University Press retails for \$A24.95, and surprisingly, was printed in Hong Kong, on the cusp of, or post hand over.

The only justification for mentioning colour in its title are the headwords -- they are blue -- the sparse but adequate illustrations are all black and white. Physics, chemistry, biology, biochemistry, palaeontology, and the earth sciences are covered in its 8500 entries.

Key entries include terms used in astronomy, mathematics, and computer technology. As well as nuclear and particle physics, there are entries on nanotechnology, supramolecular and even fullerene chemistry, for those with a burning desire to know about buckyballs and tubes.

The local library provided a copy of the Hutchinson Dictionary of Science (ISBN 1-85986-243-8), which is a large paperback retailing for \$A29.95. Although 1500 entries shorter than the Oxford Science Dictionary, the Hutchinson Dictionary of Science is generously illustrated in shaded mono-chrome, and contains many useful tables and chronologies as well as up-to-the-minute reports and 'news flashes', mostly featuring science-related trivia. The at-a-glance appendices contain all the usual quick-reference charts, and an impressive set of chronological lists of key events in science.

This book has more the look of an encyclopedia than a dictionary. With finer-grained paper and a slightly smaller type-face than the Oxford Science Dictionary it is very appealing to the casual browser.

To establish an approximate benchmark I used a recently acquired, and similarly priced, Pocket Macquarie Dictionary (PMD) with

encyclopedic entries for comparison with the Oxford Science Dictionary (OSD) and Hutchinson Dictionary of Science (HDS). The PMD defines Natural Science in 17 words, while the OSD and HDS score zero -- OOPS! However, both the PMD and OSD describe Natural History in 18 words, and 15 words, respectively, with nary a mention of either in the HDS.

Moving right along -- I then began hunting down entries vaguely relevant to SF, and antimatter seemed a good place to start. The PMD crams antimatter into 4 lines, (21 words), with separate entries for antineutrino (5 words), antineutron (5 words), and 15 words on antiparticles. The OSD refers the reader to antiparticle and contains a comprehensive description, complete with examples -- 28 column lines, in fact. The HDS provides 8 column lines of information on antimatter, and 11 on antiparticle; no mention of antineutrino.

In SF, much is made of gravity, the lack of, or its manifestation. While, understandably, the PMD spreads the topic between 5 headwords -- some 25 column lines, the OSD devotes one and a quarter pages under 10 headings to various aspects of gravity. The HDS contains 5 gravity-related headings in more than 60 column lines. It naturally followed that mass, as in a body of matter, should also be checked out. The PMD describes the various attributes of mass in 18 column lines, and the OSD, half a page, while the HDS provides 3 headings over 32 column lines.

The hypothetical tachyon occupies 20 lines in the OSD, while the PMD draws the line after defining tachy-, and the HDS does not waste ink on such frivolous hypotheses. Incidentally, the OSD dedicates 12 lines to repudiating the existence of wormholes and

white holes, while postulation on the topic is beneath the dignity of both the PMD and HDS.

Driven by idle curiosity, I flipped back through the PMD for mention of buckyballs and such -- zilch. Likewise for fullerene. In the OSD buckminsterfullerene rates 41 column lines under 5 headings, and the HDS has 18 column lines devoted to fullerene, plus 2 headings and a further 9 column lines on buckminsterfullerene - - for those who missed out first time round.

The ever-popular Collins Gem series of mini-reference works offers Science Basic Facts (ISBN 0-00-470304-9) for \$A8.95, but, due to its size, is more of a memory jogger than a serious reference source.

So, did I blow my hard-earned cash on the Oxford Concise Science Dictionary? Given the preceding comparisons, the expense is barely justifiable for speculative fiction writing alone. From a purely general reference point-of-view, the Hutchinson Dictionary of Science is a more attractive book, and would have been my choice, had it been available at the time. Whether for writers of technical essays or speculative fiction, both contain a wealth of real science. However, the humble Pocket Macquarie lists most of the target information, and, like other general-purpose dictionaries, provides guides to pronunciation -- something the publishers of both science dictionaries completely overlooked.

The following, courtesy of the Hutchinson Dictionary of Science, is a quotation from the French mathematician Jules Henri Poincar,:

Science is built up with facts, as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house.

A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH

Part 8

By Mae Strelkov

Nearing the end of January, 1987, with a scorchingly dry heat (that nonetheless causes people to sweat so they go about in their private little clouds of steam), I am almost impatient at the thought of “merely typing” the draft that was done a month earlier. So much that’s new continues to happen! At timed distressing... a half-grown puppy we were raising choked to death yesterday on a bone and we didn’t know it in time. Found him dead. But meanwhile, our old Tom, Spica, who is drying out till he seems almost mummified, clings to life with calm dignity, eating (in little portions) whatever is given him, still looking up into our faces with trust and love, though his green eye is almost yellow (so faded) and his blue eye was never paler. (He’s only three or so years old as yet, young, really. He’s the father of our most beautiful two female kittens - they’re well over a year old but never have “become cats”. Blue-eyed - a wonderful blue with no green to it - and fluffy, they are almost too lovely to be real. Their mother, Spica’s sister, is a delicate white cat, also charming.)

When you have animals, you are continually faced with “Life and Death” in competition, acted out before your eyes. At times, you are helpless to give the trusting little creatures aid. Spica, for instance, seems to have acquired what other male cats in the region at times get: something like tumours in the hind-quarters and they are half-paralysed in their hind-legs. (Spica’s testicles, to be exact, were affected, though our neighbours male cat, long-since spayed by him, has similar symptoms, nonetheless.) One morning we noticed Spica’s rear-end was crawling with fly-larvae. *Curabichera*, (used also for wounds in cows and horses, by everyone here) was applied. It is also a healing powder. That was a week and more ago, and we’ve repeated the treatment.

Twice, Spica had something like fits, each time we thought he was surely dying. But both times he rallied and came looking again for food and attention. He is dearly loved by all the other cats - he the patriarch - and they all take turns sitting near him companionably. “Spica”, I say, “Don’t you want to be a little kitten again?” For one sees that it is his stubborn will that keeps him alive. Obviously, he feels he’s not going to abandon us willingly, he’ll not risk having to “go elsewhere”, he’s that attached to us all! If there were a vet anywhere near we’d have taken him there, but we’d have to go for that long, exhausting drive to San Pedro or Jujuy with him, and he’d probably die on the way. Here, at least, he is happy... Actually so! (Sylvia, who knows a lot, is in Mendoza).

But we’re all so sad about the puppy. Buster was his name.

I have long since come to recognize that every last, least thing in our Universe is of vital importance in its relationship to the Whole. God cares for sparrows; we’re worth more even than “many sparrows”, and much more than the mere world, for if we love our souls, or “lives”, gaining the whole world won’t compensate. Buddhism never lost this awareness of the importance of even lowly forms of life. It’s so important to try to be aware of life’s value in all it’s appearances, so that when we must kill insect pests, it should be with full awareness of the “solemnity” of the act. Reckoning the consequences, in terms of the ecological whole. Well, at least lately, we’ve been letting the chickens run through the tall grasses, (so burnt by the sun, for the rains have failed to arrive so far), and how many insects the chickens eat! They are scarcely interested in the grain we also give. As for, say, flea-powder for our more delicate kittens, we hesitate. (Once we almost killed several with

“harmless flea-powder”, as advertised.) Tony when resting from hours of hard work in the hills or below here, will pick up a kitten and hunt and kill its fleas one by one, and - amazingly - it keeps them down. Vadim, each time he must drive to town, (loaded up with neighbours hooking a ride), comes home full of “people-type fleas”, and he doesn’t hesitate to drench himself with strong poisons to free our family from joining the “flea-bitten folk” around us everywhere. (Vadim worked for years manufacturing and testing insecticides and scorns them as “poisonous” where he’s concerned.) So ... fleas, we kill, mercilessly, not seeing what role they play of value, ecologically. Ticks, too. Gnats? Flies? Who wants them but birds? but the trouble is, birds do want them, especially the bugs, in their larval states. We’ve a pair of tiny *tacuarita* birds that have made a nest under the edge of a zinc chapa of our roof, in a hole in a hollow cement block, and the amount of worms and bugs they carry there constantly is beyond belief. These - and several common local birds - live totally unafraid of all our cats; a constant “game” is played as birds flirt to tease our cats - but in Spring, how they sing! Once, on a very sad-for-us day, a Reina Mora bird passed by and alighted on a high *guaran*, an “ordinary” soft-wood but such a very tall and lovely tree, and sang its heart out; and how that cheered us that day.

Incidentally, yesterday, again three “white condors” (if that’s what they really are, but the natives call them so) reappeared across the river, and I thought: “This time they *have* come to fetch Spica”. (For, symbolically, they must play most important roles.) Instead, it was young Buster that departed so suddenly. We buried him deep.

Another increasing problem in Argentina of late is - they say - lice. Especially among school-children. Our daughter-in-law Nilda told us that each day when her two kiddies come home from primary school and kindergarten, she hunts through their hair and clothing, to be certain they’ve not been boarded “yet again”. She is constantly having to delouse them, for the schools (what with all the poverty and depression) swarm. A newspaper report just the other day speaks of a thousand children starving in Resistencia town right now, and that some 300 are on the point of death if not saved by medical care. Why is this? Because we squandered all our reserves in the “glorious years”, when our rulers became rich as Croesus

practically overnight, and the height of proud squandering was reached when it was decided to send a gift of choice race-horses by plane to Gadaffi, (just before we “lost the war”.)

\* \* \*

I have just discarded some 30 pages of the earlier draft. (Indeed, I am quite unable to copy word-for-word an older draft of any sort. what’s “already said, is said”, I feel, and to repeat it seems - to me deep in myself - a “waste of time”. Other things still wait saying!)

And to whom do I chatter, finally? I know that in fandom (in North America, England, Australia), my “locs” - as “letters-of-comment” in science-fiction fanzines are called - always seem to get printed, almost whole, and it puzzles me, for *I* find my own former outpourings always “boring” when I reread them at all. I’m always “on to the new”. Well, wasn’t it Paul who spoke of “forgetting those things that are behind, we press on...”? And such texts, read aloud at morning worship since my babyhood in our home in China, were more formative than I’ll ever know. So we’re supposed to “forget and press on”, ever onwards! What I do!

My private letters too, (if I feel the recipients will accept what’s said comprehendingly), are long frequently, and there is no better reward than the usual answers, “Mae, how your letters always cheer me up!”

One friend wrote me, “Your presence is so real in all you write, one feels you right nearby, when reading your letters!” Such remarks spur me on to tell more, to tell all, for “all is wonderful”, even the seeming hurts. A tremendous process is going on throughout Creation, and those aware of it are “used”. If willing....

At the start of this century, people still believed in Utopia ahead. When our third boy Danny (now dead) was born in 1945, and the next day there was a tremendous drama in the streets of Buenos Aires, (Eva Peron, as yet unmarried, rousing her *cabezas negras* to come forth to fight for Peron), I lay in a free hospital in the center of the city with the little golden baby in my arms, and the pro-Peronista nurses were so breathless and aglow with inner fires, watching me - the *inglesa* (so out-of-place) - with guarded eyes. I was open and friendly and they had half-ways accepted me, but always with doubts ... my Englishness was against me.

And as I lay there with the lovely, perfectly-formed child, (for my newborn babies never looked wrinkled or queer), I told him, "The world will be different by the time you grow up. People are learning ... things are changing. Science is improving things for us all." I believed it then. I was a devourer of science-fiction from that brighter era before we learned we'll "always fail" .. even "reading the Moon" only made us see it wasn't worth reaching.

So, by the time Danny was adult, having gone through many hard times with us, he was so disgusted by the madness in this country by then, he dreamed of leaving it somehow. Which he did, in that final way for which there's no undoing. He was about to graduate from the University of Cordoba right then, one of their most brilliant students. (But all our children were equally brilliant when studying, as it transpired. Though they never "swotted", just glanced through the textbooks swiftly so as to return to their daily entertainments, sports, friends and so on, they seemed to have photographic memories. I do too, as far as the gathering of facts is concerned.)

As I sit before the typewriter this new morning, (earlish, for soon the heat will be too great for typing), I contemplate the growth of this present version of SAINTS & LUMBER-MAN and wonder, "Does it need yet another rewriting?" But that would be risky ... in each new re-writing I depart still further from my original breathless "telling of the tale", as I apply to the telling the new viewpoints one develops constantly. And yet, having gotten this far, I hate to leave it unfinished - this manuscript discarded as so much I write gets discarded by me - for by now I have not "the rest of my life" for continuing to "find a way to tell all". (I ask myself, what lies ahead? Years, months? When you near 70 you have to be realistic in planning the rest of your time left on Earth. And so I ask myself, "Is it worth it, what I'm writing now? Shouldn't I stop trying to tell a personal story and return to the 'Tale of the Word' in us all? The study of our most ancient language roots, that is for me bliss to discuss, or study ever deeper.)

But my friends abroad have asked me to write this present sort of a story, (just about us here, not only just about my studies), and so I shall keep on trying till I reach some semblance of "an End"....

Yesterday evening, (yes, another "yesterday"), the four workers by the river below, burning branches and leaves and weeds to clear the place for planting eucalyptuses, by accident set fire to some piles of logs cut short for sending the Paper Firm, and Vadim had to show the man how one fights such fires. (Tony had just left to drive up to the Fuerte to see if he could get some oil for the power-saw.) One thing after another of this sort has been happening lately. The heat seems to trigger such mishaps. Why, even our Buster might not have choked if he'd sat up properly to chew his bone, but dogs do love lying on their backs (when it's a hot and lazy day), with a gone in their mouths, playing with it. But these "might-have-beens" are not worth discussing in remorse. Only in a fabled "Hell" do foolish souls mourn the "might-have-beens".

The more we get to know animals (spending so much time in the outdoors, these days, with them here), the more we learn to respect life in all its forms.

Even chickens... And a problem lies there. Why raise them if they turn out to be "just more pets"?

Could you stand a chapter just about chickens" I have it already written in the former draft, and hate to omit it, for I shall enjoy retyping and adding on more as I go....

\* \* \*

Thinking back, my first personal encounter with chickens was not an intimate one ... that is to say, when we lived in Southern China, though not at first permitted by our oldsters even to have a spade, they were very eager that we acquire chickens, "for eggs", which we did, from our native (Mapuche) neighbours. They became at once "Granny's chickens", and used to sit on her shoulders, while old Gran (my father-in-law) exulted to me, "Look, even *cheekuns* love Granny!". (I'd smile politely and a bit nastily, as I watched the streaks of white bird-lime accumulating on the back of her jacket. Now nasty indeed I used to be, I recognize at least, even in my attempts back then - in the first flush of being a Catholic convert - to "follow the steps of St. Terese of Liseaux" as the priest I'd met in Valpariaso felt was my destiny. Hard work it sure was, while I tried it back then.)

As for the eggs of Granny's *cheekuns*, they were laid all over the mountain-side and it was our task to hunt for them. Later, in that

suburb of Buenos Aires where we lived for years while Vadim and I worked in the huge city, Granny still had her *cheekuns*. The old folks used to have our bread-man - in his little horse-drawn cart - come twice a day to our place to make sure they'd not have to eat dry bread, (not even half-a-day old), and as huge mountains of "dry bread" thus accumulated, the main staple of Granny's *cheekuns* was that so-called "dry bread". When I'd suggest that we buy, perhaps, less bread, not to "waste it so", how indignant did the poor old dears (defending, no doubt, the rights of their *cheekuns*), get. I leaned never to stick my nose in household affairs, just keep hunting higher-paid jobs constantly, to keep up with our costly way-of-life. (They also felt it beneath their dignity to bargain with any shop-keeper or *vendedor*, and people soon caught on to what suckers our family were and charged double for everything. But cultured Russians of noble family had an all-purpose saying for such matters: "What's money? Money *nozzing* for us!") (But, boy, if you did not keep them well-supplied with it, ouch!)

Ah, well, one lives and learns. I'd pity today any surviving third-generation "refugee" of Cazarist extract, if he or she got into my clutches, I'm afraid. I've turned ruthless, where folks who sniff, "What' money?" are concerned. It's the blood of hard-working folk. To extract the gold of the Andes for maintaining the pride of the nobles of Rome and Spain, how much native blood was shed! True, in the case of our own home-life during the times when my in-laws ruled the roost (right back to the chicken-yard), my patience - believe it or not - finally touched the old dears' hearts, so my mother-in-law by 1966 begged me to obtain from God a favour, that she might be my daughter in our future lives, so she might "Learn happiness" from me. I promised I'd wangle it somehow, and she clung to me (like my baby already) weeping happy tears, and laughing with glee with me laughing too, very touched as I was by that astonishing request. (As for how it was "fulfilled", how she turned up as my first granddaughter, trying to right that error on God's part and - the moment she learned to speak, in Spanish - announcing that I must be her mother, and her own mother must be her aunt, it was the cutest thing and it melted me. I type this with hap[py] tears, for I never can recall the wonder without a surge of inner delight.)

She's no Russian refugee nowadays. She's the bell of every ball, up in Canada, and so beautiful it's beyond belief! In her teens, already. (Time sure flew!)

But the tradition of "loving *cheekuns*" (in her absence in her old form) has descended to me. I'm now the chicken-lover of our Strelkov family. (Never thought I'd end up that way.)

But I resisted this role of chicken-lover sturdily for years even after she'd left her old shell to rush urgently (a day and a half later) into her new ... in a Buenos Aires posh *sanatorio*, where our first daughter-in-law studied with anxiety the stupefied, wizened baby she'd just borne. (It isn't usual, I gather, to rush from death to a new birth, but this was a special circumstance - her "last chance" to be renewed, and she'd taken so *long* to mature and be "ready", or willing to abandon her old, "set-in-its-ways" form.)

The "little wizened old woman" lying there as a new baby, took a fortnight to accept the change, and "act-as-a-baby" at last, turning rosy and round and beautiful more and more.

I recall years ago a funny best-seller called THE EGG & I. We thoroughly enjoyed it. (Later the authoress wrote - but we didn't get to read - THE PLAGUE & I, how she had T-B, and the story of her cure. And I seem to recall she later divorced her husband, but it was all so long ago and by now I'm not sure of the details.)

My own story won't deal with a mere "egg", though I should love to discuss an egg symbolically in its old Chinese form. ("Scarab-beetle rolling its ball of dung", is the character represented, that in most ancient world-wide beliefs symbolised the rising sun of resurrection, as I would show by examples; but that'll have to be discussed apart.)

Yes, for years I avoided all contact with chickens. On that posh estancia in Cordoba where we lived for 22 years, while Vadim managed it, there used to be a chicken-farm with a thousand chickens being raised scientifically. (An authority on chickens came regularly to control procedures.)

Every time I went anywhere near it, I sneezed ... awfully allergic I was, to the least speck of chicken-manure.

Then came the new owners. The chickens were already gone from the yards, the peones in charge were also gone. (Only a skeleton staff was keeping up the estancia, after

the death of its aged former owner.) The new owners decided to keep pigs in the splendid quarters where a thousand chickens had formerly been at home. The pigs ruined everything in the process, even managing to dig into the stone-and-brick Colonial-style walls, and ruin the floors and all. Broke the big plate-glass window too. (Windows with glass because in winter it's cold there.)

Those years for us were dark ones ... the new bosses tried all sorts of tricks to convince the remaining peones to let themselves be turned into unpaid serfs (and Vadim opposed it so strongly the new owners tried to turn him into an unpaid serf too, so the battle grew daily worse). When our son Ed and his wife Nilda and kids came visiting, Nilda advised us,

"You should at least keep chickens of your own. So you'd have meat and eggs..."

I was shocked. In our minds, the old owner, (Don Ed, as we thought of him still), had not really "died". We still felt his concern over the beauty, the immaculate perfection, he had formerly maintained - with a huge staff of workers - throughout the vast property. Endless hectares of neatly-cropped lawn; groves of lovely old trees; beautiful colonial-style buildings, for the very workers and even for the chickens!

Even with almost no workers left, we ourselves had maintained the traditions ... Tony kept the flower-beds around us immaculate, the lawn always cut. To have chickens? Don Ed would suffer even in Heaven, if he knew! Chickens running around our elegant house and even on the porches? I vetoed the idea, and the family agreed. We were loyal to the old traditions of the place, resisting the new innovations quietly, best we could. (Mostly, we couldn't wish those pigs ruining the formerly elegant chicken-houses and yards.)

So we came to live up here in Jujuy, still chicken-less. On the final drive up (bringing our many cats and the dog Jinny), not a chicken was present in our menagerie.

The local folk here, studying us with acute attention, observed our chickenless state, and some kind old ladies called to us at the *tranquera*, each of them eager to welcome us with a gift of "a cock and a hen". We said, "Many thanks, but first we'll build a chicken-yard", and we didn't do anything more about it. The first year passed. No chicken-yard, no sign of one. The dear old ladies tried again,

"You don't need a chicken-yard to keep chickens! Our just roost in the trees

around our place, and it's seldom an opossum gets one." (*Comadreja* - which translates as "weasel", they call opossum's here).

"No, we will do the chicken-yard soon! we insisted, but didn't, of course. To let chickens into one's life is a big step.

Chickens in Latin America play many roles. They've provided similes that are very colourful in local speech. "To drag the wing"... what would you think it would mean? Here, it evokes a cock turning sideways with one wing dragging and the rest of his body angling to mount a hen in great haste. That's the local significance if someone says some lad is "dragging the wing". I never had noticed that habit in fowls till I heard the saying, but not - sure enough - they do.

Chickens are useful in witchcraft too, it appears. I heard the following story of someone up at el Feurte, (a minor boss there), whose daughter had ailments no doctor understood or could cure. So they in desperation went to a *curandero*, (just the parents, not the girl). The fellow told them to bring a used garment of hers, also other garments of other people, *and a cock*. They did so. The garments were placed on a table together with the cock. It studied each garment, then turned upon the one the sick girl had worn and in an absolute fury pecked it to bits. The witch-doctor then told the parents, "Now your daughter will be well. She was bewitched by an enemy your father cheated and he was getting even this way." Sure enough, the girl was henceforth well.

And if that's weird, I could tell story after story of this sort, for the whole country believed not only in *virgenes* but in all this. And here's the story Tony heard just last night while up at El Fuerte, having supper with a darling couple there, friends of us old folks too. It seems she had a terrible toothache one Saturday and sought a dentist in Palma Sola (forty kilometres north from where she is), in vain. So someone told her of a *curandero*. The pain was so great she was read to grasp at any straw and went.

The man said, "Lend me your right shoe."

It hurt so much, she didn't argue but blindly handed him the shoe. Off he went out-of-sight with it for a few moments. He the returned, gave it back, she put it on, and he said, "You will to have one last terrible pain on your

way home, and then that tooth will never hurt you again.”

And thus it transpired. A terrible pain. Then nothing more.

What do I think of it?

Firstly, I'd want to start thinking seriously re the symbol “slipper or shoe”. (I know it's important, but I'm not really gone into it yet, overmuch.) Then I'd wonder, “Are ‘pains’ in the province of little imps somehow, as folk here suspect?” And after wondering for a day or two, I'd decide, “No, I'm not solving it,” and turn to some other more “friendly” symbol to study in detail instead. For I don't like this one, somehow. Shoes and slippers, etc., in archaic Chinese characters, are represented by phonetics placed beneath a radical of the “Seated Dead Ancestor” of our pre-history, and anything that's the province of the Dead, I do not want to take seriously. Though I studied that “Ancestor” a lot, unavoidably, true. But with acute dislike, always....

\* \* \*

When Ed and Nilda and their kids came for their second visit here, to Jujuy, (all the way from Mendoza, on holiday), they were shocked to see we still hadn't put up any chicken-yard. At once they climbed back into their car and rode to San Pedro and returned with twenty metres of nearly two-metre-high chicken-wire.

There was no further excuse for delaying... Well, we promised to “put it up” as soon as their visit was over. Meanwhile, we were all happily entertaining them and weren't wanting to tackle anything “extra” right then. (Any excuse!)

They'd no sooner gone, holidays over, than a neighbour brought Tony our first hen, in gratitude because he'd coached her in preparing for entering high-school in Palma Sola, and he'd refused to charge any fee. This black hen did need a chicken-yard, indubitably, and we all agreed “we must put it up, any day now.” Meanwhile, as our kids (Sylvia and Tony) were away that afternoon, I propped the roll of chicken-wire against a nearby little tree, and made it circle around it, and thus Vadim and I had a chicken-yard “meanwhile” with one chicken in it. (One had to watch that it couldn't push out from beneath the wire.) The kids complained when they got back ... it was “sloppy”. It was “too near the house”.

“It's near so I can watch it,” said I.

“Chickens smell!”

“Not just one hen!”

“It'll smell too,” and the arguments began heatedly re how far from our house any chicken-yard should be, At least a hundred metres lower towards the river, the kids thought.

“You won't get me running all that way just to feed a chicken or find an egg,” said I.

“Do you good to run,” said Tony heartlessly.

“I'm running all day cooking for you already.”

“But I have to!”

“Break it up,” said Vadim, who doesn't enjoy when the kids and I have a real hearty spat. He loves peace. (Had enough of drama in his childhood and during the years of his marriage to me, particularly back when his parents ran our show persistently, and I dodged battles by staying away from home at my jobs - anyway unavoidably, thanks to our standard of eating. I don't say “life”, because “eating-is-all”, in olden Russian views.)

With grim determination, now Tony stalked off with a spade. (Yes, we have an old spade. well, we had a nicer one but when Tony took it once to dig a jumping-pit - and also to fetch sand to fill the pit too, at the nearby grade-school for a sports-meet, he laid the spade down when the job was done and he had to go off for a minute, and when he returned the spade was gone. “All the children” had run off with it, and all their parents later insisted, “My child didn't steal your spade”, also that “the other fellow's children steal everything. Ask him”. So we never got it back, and someone gave us another old spade to replace it.

So Tony went way, way off below our house to put up a chicken-yard. He got as far as putting in the posts, then came back for tea. When we looked out again, all the horses were scratching themselves (full-force) against those lovely new posts, and so the posts stood already at drunken angles. How I chortled!

“You'll just have to put the chicken-yard inside our garden fence,” said I. (This fence includes the small vegetable-garden and new orchard. Before the kids had put it up, fencing off thus one big corner of the new valley land, the horses used to stand right around our house, trying to peer in at the windows and push in through the doors. All

very nice, but you couldn't have any sort of a garden!).

So Tony put up the chicken-yard as far away as possible, below, but within the fenced-in part around us. (Say fifty metres below.)

At once the kind old ladies who'd observed all as usual, insisted we accept the long-promised gift of a cock and a hen from each of them. We didn't need that many cocks, so we accepted (very touched and grateful), in all one cock and three more hens, one bird from each donor.

The chicken-run was (as you can figure out) eight metres long by two wide, and the far end was roofed with tar-paper, while to the sides were added woven branches which Sylvia then tried to plaster with mud. The chickens liked the place a lot. (Better than their former accommodations.)

However, the last hen to arrive was rejected by the others, and so she ended up "my hen". But before that, Tony and Sylvia - greatly ambitious to increase the population in the new chicken-yard - had run off to buy a pair of young turkeys. It was this pair that took over the domination of the chicken-run, the cock helping to keep the other hens under control.

It's not as simple as it sounds. To add to the confusion, a beautiful young heron fell in love with the handsome male turkey and kept trying to fly into the run. Once it actually did, and was nearly pecked to pieces till Vadim rescued it. It then spent its time pining, just outside, looking in, till finally it gave up and joined the other herons, having lost hope of a turkey/heron match.

In the two-by-two covered "chicken-coup", there was a roost for roosters, and boxes for egg-laying hens. But only one box did they care to use - turkey-hen and two hen-hens, as one might call them to distinguish.

Then all three female birds tried sitting on their conglomeration of eggs together, fighting for central place. The turkey won, but at least one hen (the black one) clung to her place in a corner of the same box, while the other hen (*la paraguaya*, as they call her type here), fought to get in, at least to lay an egg there daily too.

Finally, since we couldn't figure out whose eggs were whose in the battle, we abstained from egg-eating for a spell, and the eggs there continued to mount up, with competing would-be mothers taking turns.

Meanwhile, the male turkey tried to organize the roost by extra-loud gobblings and attacks on all present, with constantly, the cock as his second-in-command. It was, I tell you, too horrible to watch so I abstained from watching.

At least, (if you'll excuse a vulgarity), the hens were still getting laid, every chance they took to reach the place where there was good and water.

As I say, I studied the herons instead, so white and proud and stately, coming ever nearer to our house in their fascination ... such strange beings, they seemed to think we humans were!. (Summers the herons aren't around, like now.)

One lonely hen was not on her own and apart from the pandemonium of the chicken-run. They'd nearly killed her when we'd put her in with the others, so I'd tamed her and she now liked to sleep just on the ledge at the other side of the mosquito-screen of our bedroom window, peering in at me as I slept, just a metre or so from her. We were by then "best friends", you see.

We couldn't put her with the other chickens. When we'd put her into the chicken-run with the others, the turkey had led the attack and her head had been reduced to a bloody mess by the time she got rescued. Which is why she became a pet around our home. Wherever we were, she joined us. If we sat, she sat right at our side. If we chatted, she listened. If the cats came too near, she sent them flying, teaching them respect for royalty.

When she began to dream of laying eggs, we put a box for her beneath my bedroom window, and sure enough, every day an egg appeared, for months on end. And every time, she had to be rewarded and praised, as she boasted of her achievements raucously, each day.

When the cock was let out with the other two hens, (or one hen, for soon the black had fallen asleep permanently on her eggs, apparently), a tremendous romance began. Our *coco* as we called her, turned boy but beguiling. The other (the *paraguaya*) grew jealous, and so on.

When the turkey cock began to fail, (pining for the wide open spaces), he was let out also, but - too late. He no longer gobbled or strutted, he simply sat around sadly till one day he died. (To our secret relief!) Then the turkey hen quietly laid down her head for good and

followed her mate to the land where martyred turkeys go. The black hen now could preside over all the eggs, but the turkey-eggs kept getting in her way. She tried sitting on them also, but to sit on dozens and dozens of eggs of all sizes is no joke, I'm sure!

Months passed.

Towards the occupants of the chicken-coup I maintained an icy distain. Vadim watered and fed them, doggedly. The children accepted this with tacit gratitude, hardly able to bear the confusion of the situation. That black hen! How many months had she been sitting? Would the turkey-eggs ever hatch? Tony in desperation finally opened a turkey-egg, and a tiny turkey in it stirred feebly then died. So he didn't open another. More time passed. A turkey-egg appeared outside in the run, discarded by the hen apparently; rotten. Daily more turkey -eggs vanished till none were left.

The black hen continued sitting, sitting, on all the chicken-eggs still there.

Months, years, eons passed.

We really feared the black hen too would soon give up the ghost, but - what to do?

At last one, just one lonely little black chick appeared. The mother hen approved of it, clucked at it, but she went right on sitting for another day or so. Then the baby chick, one night, vanished too. That was when we all agreed, "Enough!" We carried the black hen out to join her hubby, and fellow-hens, and threw the remaining eggs away. (Most were rotten.)

As for opossums, they do get into the chicken-run, sometimes, but haven't yet made off with any chicks, as far as we know. (Save maybe that one above-mentioned.) Two opossums so far had to be killed to discourage them, and we felt very badly about it. I had a baby opossum once I raised from when it was still blind and hairless, (rescued from a mother the peones at the Cordona estancia had killed). I carried it for two months in a pocket I sewed for it next to my skin and it was wonderfully tame and trusting and clever. It drank milk and apple juice, and also meat juice. The first time I fed it a bit of soft-boiled egg, it chocked on it and died. We were just broken up, Vadim and I. (It was soon after our Danny had died, and it gave us an excuse - somehow - to cry our hearts out over the poor little opossum, as we'd resisted crying over-much over our Danny, knowing *he* was happy to have been released from an ailing body, and have a new chance, as

we were sure, to start again.)

Later we had to liquidate more and more invading opossums and move the chicken-run still nearer, after losing a few. Now it's a real covered cage, wire netting even under the chapa roof. No more problems!. We let them all out by day. They even run over the landscape or came for naps to sit at our doorstep with the cats. The baby chickens try to sit on our laps or on top of the kittens already there. (And dammit, they are quite clever.)

Each night they assemble at their coup, and one by one walk solemnly in like worshippers entering a church. We can't yet get up enough heart(lessness) to kill one. (We will do so when Ed and Nilda come with their kids. If the kids allow it, for they'll love our tame chicks, too!)

Meanwhile, the one we called the *coco* decided she wanted to have chickens of her own, right under my bedroom window. Which she did, successfully. Seven of them, (eggs obtained from a neighbour, because we'd eaten all she laid, and also the cock wasn't with her daily when they were being laid so we couldn't count on all her own being fertile, always.)

The seventh chick (newly-hatched and yellow) died when the silly *coco* knocked a stone over on it by accident. The other six are big and beautiful now, and so when I sit outdoors, *coco* and all her young hens (three out of the six - the others were cocks) sit around with me, cosily. (None have yet begun sitting on my shoulders. I don't need birdlime down *my* back.

The *paraguaya* in this story vanished one day. After much hunting, I found her behind towering weeds, amid a stack of boxes way back. (Old fruit boxes and such.) Some animal (opossum?) had been pulling all the feathers off of her back, but she didn't budge. So we had to leave her on her "oh-so-precious" eggs. One day she too came forth from that terrible place with seven newly-hatched chicks, all - of course - her own. She was so wild she flew to attack at any movement, and it took me days to tame her; but today she has her own box under my window with her wee chicks, and *coco* and her big chickens do not approve, and they have her somewhat cowed. (She, who used to help peck out that hole in *coco's* head when back in the chicken-run.)

While this was happening here, we learned that at Blasé's place, all Matty's hens had vanished. Then, one by one, daily, they

reappeared from between the great heaps of stored lumber out in front of their place ... every hen with her own chickens, hundreds of chicks! What a bonanza.

Happiness for Matty for a day or so! Then her pigs also discovered “happiness” in the taste of new-hatched chicks. Till the last went down the gullet of the pigs!

Unhappiness for Matty....

It was she, no doubt, who inspired Blasé to want to inaugurate a *puesto*, in the charge of that one-eyed old derelict, up by Miguel’s *aguado*, where the pigs might be kept, for a change.

When Ed and Nilda come nowadays, how they tease me. “You didn’t want chickens running over your lawn in Cordoba, and now they roost right under your bedroom window, and sit beside you wherever you are!”

How sheepish I feel....

The Buddhist streak in me is coming to the fore, though I still feel it’s okay to *eat* eggs. (I’m all in favour of birth-control in all situations, when necessary.) Hens, we shall “never eat. Cockerels? We’ll save them for the next visit of Ed and Nilda and the kids. And meanwhile, what dramas I preside over daily, as the *paraguaya* and our *coco* compete for first place in our affections; and the cock tries already to seduce them anew and we chase him away, and so on and so on. Never a dull moment!

As of mid-April, 1986, right now, I really will have to add a few details. One midnight we were woken by horrified screams. Nothing is more blood-curdling than a bunch of chickens screeching in terror! Forth went Vadim and Tony with flashlights and machetes, and found an enormous opossum trying to escape. They killed it. (The smell opossums leave is disgusting, by the way.)

That night, all the chickens settled on our back porch. They never again entered the chicken-run. (Sylvia by then was in Mendoza.)

“Well, people,” I said to Vadim and Tony. “You’ll just have to take the chicken-run to pieces and build it nearer, and like a cage, the top also covered with chicken-wire, under the *chapas*.”

They agreed it should be done, though postponing each day the task. (Other jobs were always so urgent.)

The weeks passed. If you’ve ever had twenty chickens roosting in boxes stacked up right under your open bedroom window, you will

sympathise with my growing disgust. What a smell! I tried increasing my nagging. In the abandoned old chicken-run, that night when the opossum had to be killed, we’d lost three small chicks during the melee. (Newly hatched by the black hen.)

Now? Came a midnight when beneath our bedroom windows we heard the same horrified screeching of horrified hens. Vadim and Tony rushed out! Another huge *comedreja* (or opossum) had just bit off the tail of a half-grown hen. It was lying there semi-conscious, and died, later. They killed the opossum.

I increased my nagging. “You’ll just have to!”

“Oh, another opossum won’t come right away.”

Grimly, I went forth to undo the chicken-wire fence of the old run myself. Still more grimly, Vadim came out to help, muttering at my tiresome impatience.

“Three weeks of stink!” said I. “And now the *comadreas* are coming closer. It’s got to be done - *now!*”

Two days later, the new chicken-run, a veritable cage, was done, by Vadim and Tony. Just a few steps from our house, but at least it doesn’t smell as badly as having 20 chickens right under your bedroom windows, on the back porch. And the chickens love the new place. They enter it voluntarily each evening, like true believers entering church each Sunday, one by one, with reverent slow steps. *Comedreas* still arrive by night ... a chicken screeches ... forth go our men. More *comedreas* are sent to join their ancestors unavoidably. And we, meanwhile, keep an eye on the chicken-wire, for the old run had a huge hole in the wire (as we found) patiently chewed through by those chicken-eating pests. (Poor things.)

- Mae Strelkov

# BEYOND THIS WORLD

by Meryl Brown Tobin

Emily pushed at the four walls crowding in on her. If it wasn't for them, I could feel quite comfortable here, she thought. The satin lining was cold but luxurious, and the smell of the flowers wafting in made her close her eyes to heighten its beauty further.

Suddenly she wobbled sideways as her resting-place tilted. "It was bad enough being manhandled even if done gently," she said trying to grimace. "But that's life." A tiny smile tugged at her lips.

"It's time I roused myself and stretched my wings." She smiled at the angel image her words conjured up.

As she left the coffin and soared skywards, light drizzle splattered her face. And how cold it was, she thought. Her mouth dropped open to see the huge number of mourners gathered under umbrellas in a three-quarter circle about a hole in the ground and the large mound of earth beside it. Rising high above them into the huge gum tree towering over the grave-site, she did a quick count. "Goodness, 50 or so people have come."

Lined up out the front of the gathering she picked out her immediate family and their families. In the middle stood Edward, her husband. Flanking him protectively on one side were her older daughters, Rita and Gwynneth, while on the other stood Wyn, her youngest daughter, and her two oldest sons, Ronald and William. Ranked on either side of them were Emily's sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren. How she loved them all! How proud she was of them all!

Her youngest son, Richard, stepped forward. "We are gathered here today to pay our last respects to Emily Jones."

With a shock, she realised the words applied to her, and a chill shuddered through her. "It's funny," she mused aloud, "but I don't think of myself as dead, ... as nothing."

As she looked around the group standing forlornly in the light rain, she realised that they did not have the comfort of knowing that she was still there, that she was a part of the congregation at the graveside service, floating above them and looking down on all that was being done and said.

"As a minister and as her son, I have the honour of conducting the service of my mother, Emily Jones." Richard's carefully spoken words penetrated her thoughts.

What a strong voice he has, Emily thought, a smile creasing her face, and he was always such a quiet child, almost withdrawn really.

She floated lower, her eyes seeking out Edward. "Oh, Edward," she cried, "how drawn you look, how old!"

The night three nights before flashed into her mind. Though she tried to blot them out, events that night started to replay themselves in her consciousness.

It was 10 o'clock. Emily and Edward were getting ready for bed. Suddenly she pressed her fingers into her stomach. "I've got a bit of a pain."

Edward studied her closely. "Not bad enough to stop us going on our trip to Bendigo tomorrow?"

"Oh, no - it's probably just a touch of indigestion or something."

At 3 a.m. a deep persistent pain woke her. After thrashing about for a few minutes, Emily got up and went to the bathroom in the hope of relieving it.

Suddenly she pitched forward. Vaguely Emily remembered Edward slapping her cheeks

gently, then half-carrying, half-dragging her back into the bedroom. "You'll be right, my darling," he was saying over and over. "I'm ringing the doctor. Stay there."

How tired she felt and why couldn't she open her eyes. Was that Edward calling her? She couldn't be sure. But then she felt him lift her up into his arms, his warm tears splashing on her face. Suddenly a bright light appeared above her, and her whole being reached towards it.

"She was a wonderful wife and a wonderful mother." Richard's voice cut across her reverie. After listening to a long eulogy of this wonderful person's virtues and several anecdotes about the wonderful things she'd done, Emily said to no one in particular, "It is nice of Richard to be so generous." But privately she felt just a little embarrassed.

"She was a wonderful mother," Richard said yet again. But this time his voice broke and he could not go on. While he rubbed frantically at his nose with his handkerchief, the rest of the group, standing by with sombre faces, seemed likely to join him in his tears.

Plummeting towards Richard, her whole being reached out to comfort him, Emily crooned, "It's all right, son, I'm here." But though she put her arm round him as she had done when he was a small boy, he seemed unaware of her presence and continued to sob.

After a few moments Ronald left the group of mourners and went to speak softly to Richard. A few moments later Emily was pleased to see Richard somehow regain his composure and continue his strong address.

Then he walked over to a small organ next to the graveside, sat down on a stool and began to play. Music filled the small rural cemetery. The voices of the mourners rose as they sang *The 23rd Psalm*. The beautiful words, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*, calmed Emily's heart and filled it with peace.

All these people, she thought as she listened to the comforting words, all my relatives, friends and neighbours, all coming out for me on a terrible day like this. Suddenly a tremor ran through her. "They're saying goodbye to me," she cried out. "I'll never be able to speak to them again! Not in the life they know anyway."

Rushing to Edward, Emily reached her arms out to him. When he did not respond, she threw herself at him and hugged him. But he

continued to stand like a man on his way to the gallows, his face etched with a lifetime of tears.

At a creak behind her, Emily turned her head. The beautiful polished casket Edward had chosen for her was starting its downward trek into the bowels of the earth. Glorious native blooms, waratahs, banksias, dryandras and hakeas, sitting on top of the casket trembled slightly as though perceiving their fate.

Wild-eyed Emily looked about her. No one acknowledged her. "I'm not here! I don't exist anymore!"

Trying to subdue her feelings of panic, she ran from one mourner to another. No response. Not even her baby great-grandson gave her his usual gurgle as she desperately tickled his cheek.

Like an automaton, Edward stepped forward to throw a clod of earth down after the casket. A dull thud echoed back up from the hole.

Like a bird beating its wings on cage walls, Emily rushed round the group once more. "Don't say goodbye! Don't bury me!" But her daughters, handkerchiefs pushed into their faces threw in their handfuls of soil. "I'm here! This is me! I'm alive, alive!" But all continued to play their part in the sad ritual.

Soon after the group began to break up as the mourners walked up to Edward to offer their condolences.

Emily hovered above him. "Yes," he heard him say, "I guess we can be glad we had her with us so long - she was in her eightieth year." For a moment his face puckered like a baby's. "We can be glad she went with so little suffering. The autopsy showed hardening of the arteries and the doctor said she should have had a lot of pain."

Emily moved from one to another of her relatives, friends and neighbours, willing at least one of them to acknowledge her presence. Unaware, they talked on, all saying such lovely things about her that she cried out, "No, it's you who should be thanked - it was you who did lovely things for me!" Again they showed no sign of hearing her.

Then they started to troop off down the hill. Emily stared after them. "Stop, stop, I want to come too!"

Unheeding, all the people she loved, even Edward, kept their backs to her and

continued down the hill. Emily gave a choked sob and fluttered listlessly about.

When she glanced down towards the cemetery gates again, Emily saw cars starting to pull away from the parking area. As she picked out the small brave figure sitting in the passenger seat of the first car, a great sadness overwhelmed her. "Goodbye, Edward," she called. "I love you. You were a wonderful, wonderful husband." Unable to look at his hunched figure any longer, she turned away.

Through the clearing rain, she focussed on the huge gum tree next to her grave-site. As she floated past one of its branches, it warned her to think that it threw a protective arm over her resting-place.

From the top of the tree, she looked out over the sheltered bay she had known and loved since she and Edward had come to live at their rural seaside retreat. "What a magnificent view! Oh, than you, Edward - this is the spot for me if I can't be with you."

Suddenly she looked down into the deep pit below her. How black it was. Involuntarily she shuddered. The smell of the imprisoned blooms rose from below, and she shuddered again.

"I can't help you," she whispered, "...not any more than I can help myself. You are a living sacrifice to me."

But as memories of walking with Edward through his native garden and at the thought of the flowers' beauty, Emily smiled. "I do thank you though - you have helped make the unbearable bearable."

At that she took a deep breath and plummeted down into the earth. As she re-entered her body, she said, "You silly old thing, you've really let us all down, haven't you? I was ready for another eighty years, a hundred, a thousand, maybe even an eternity, but you, ..."

Squirming around, Emily made herself comfortable. "Well, body, to be fair, I guess I should be thanking you for what you did achieve for me. After all you are only human, and you did give me nearly eighty good years. ... Some people don't get even eight or eighteen years."

Emily closed off her stream of consciousness and all went black.

- Meryl Brown Tobin

# THE YANKEE PRIVATEER

by Buck Coulson

Writer's block? I got a copy of THE MENTOR, sent a loc, intended to send another column with it - and couldn't think of anything to write about. Still don't have any ideas; if I start writing, will ideas come?

I did get an extremely odd publication the other day. Title is PULP FANDOM, and it's a 16-page tabloid, evidently published in Cookeville, TN. Has a \$5.00 price on it and *no* address anywhere to send your money to. Not that I intend to send any, but it seems a little odd. Maybe the address was on the envelope, but people don't save envelopes, as a rule. Publisher seems to be G. W. Brown; I deduced this from the amount of material with his byline on it; no information is given. This is issue #2.

The contents include local election news; GW seems to be in the habit of running for office and not being able to get his name on the ballot. Despite the title, most of the articles have to do with comic books, which the editor seems to believe are what's meant by the term "pulp". There's an article on comic book heroes who made good in the movies, assorted advertising, etc. There's also a very short - and very bad - story about an "Okefenokee Monster", and publicity about something called "Carpathian Quarterly Magazine", also with no address given. A half-page of ads does give addresses; surprise! A lot of them from Baxter, TN, which may give a clue as to the address of this publication. All in all, one of the weirder items I've received in the mail.

Otherwise, Juanita and I went out of our usual convention area to be Fan Guests at DeepSouthCon in Birmingham, AL. This is a southern regional convention; only previous one we'd been to was some years back when it was combined with a Rivercon in Louisville. It seemed rather small, though one fan said it was larger than the usual DeepSouth. I gather that the consite is voted on each year, with various fanclubs bidding on it.

It was about a 600-mile drive each way for us. We took 1½days driving down, spending the night at Cornersville, TN. Or that's what the

motel bill said; if there was a town there we didn't see it. There were a motel and a truck stop at a freeway exit, and food and sleep were all we needed. If there was any more to the town it wasn't visible; not even a glow in the sky denoting streetlights and/or other businesses.

Bob Tucker was Toastmaster. He spent a good part of last year's Chambanacon telling me - or, actually, hinting at - all the things he was going to say about me at the con. Of course, he actually gave a perfectly ordinary introduction. A few fans there that we knew; Charlotte Proctor, who used to publish ANVIL, which I did a column for, and a few fans we recognised from Rivercon, which is the farthest south we usually do. Michael Bishop was Pro Guest, and was so pleasant that I'll have to try another of his books. (I didn't like the first one I tried.) All in all, a quite pleasant weekend.

Last weekend was Inconjunction in Indianapolis. Much closer, much more profitable, not quite as interesting, though there were more people we knew, and more that we talked to. And we did get taken out to dinner by Barry and Sally Childs-Helton and spent some time after the con with John and Sandra Miesel, who didn't attend. Next convention is Rivercon, at the end of the month, in Louisville. I'm already scheduled for a panel on little-known books, so I'll do some research. (Probably the day before the convention, considering my dilatory approached to research.) I can always spend some time on George Turner, and maybe an English writer or two. Ted Tubb, maybe. Vargo Statten? Nah, I wouldn't inflict that on innocent young fans.....

While we were safely in a hotel at Inconjunction, we had a downpour up here. Cornfields inundated, with large parts of them - sometimes a couple of acres - still underwater when we drove over to get the dog back from the boarding kennel. At least, the crops that survive will produce remarkably well; plenty of water and sunlight.

- Buck Coulson

# Editorial.

What a cosy place to commence an Editorial – halfway through the issue.

Well, this has been an interesting year, with many things happening. There has been some SF related events taking place in Sydney: one was the banquet given by Transworld Publishers to announce the inaugural George Turner Prize at the Gazebo Hotel in Parramatta (about 30 km west of Sydney) on the 11<sup>th</sup> July. When I arrived, after finding a well-lit parking space for my Suzuki Alto, I found Bill Congreve sitting in the lounge. He shouted me to a Coke and we had a chat before the doors to the reception room were opened. As we filed in I was directed to a table near the lectern. When I seated myself Terry Pratchett was ushered in by the Transworld staff. Also sitting at my table were Shona Martyn, Transworld's publisher Louise Thurtell, Commissioning Editor of Fiction at Transworld and Maggie Hamilton and Karen Reid of Transworld's Publicity. Also sitting at my table was the eventual winner of the George Turner Prize – Tansay Rayner Roberts, a twenty-year-old from Tasmania, and her husband. Author Sara Douglass had to leave early because of the flu.

There followed the awarding of the \$10,000 Prize and an excellent meal and conversations with the other occupants of the table. Tansay's novel, *Splashdance Silver* concerns the activities of the daughter of a pirate king and two good-looking villains (reviewed in the latest WHAT'S OUT, my book-review zine). The entries for 1999 closed on the 29<sup>th</sup> January. The authors on the short list for the 1998 Prize were Tom Dullemond, Elaine Edwards, Narrelle Harris, Edwina Harvey, Luke Kendall, Kim Matheson, Leslie Peterson, Tansey Rayner Roberts and Joel Shepherd. I think that we will be seeing more works from these authors later.

There were several score people attending, in fact quite a lot of Sydney fandom, both media and literary SF, were in attendance.

Another event I attended was the preview screening of the movie *Cube* at the Dendy cinema on the 18<sup>th</sup> November. *Cube* is a Canadian SF horror movie that won Best

Canadian Feature at the 1997 Toronto Film Festival. The film is a psychological study in which six individuals wake to find themselves alone in a room which quickly reveals to them that they either move from the room or die. And moving through a door (one in each wall/floor) is not a guarantee that they are safe. The action is continuous and the film is very intense. The sets and simple and help keeping the pressure up.

I found the movie absorbing and the time flew. Also in the audience was David Stratton, one of the reviewers in the SBS Movie Show. When I first stepped out of the lift on Level 19 at the Columbia Tri-star Theatre the first person I saw was Graham Stone. Then I saw Neil Hogan, who handed me a copy of his zine WEB, which is the seventh issue of the "Web Monthly Newsletter" and was the special occult issue. It listed Web sites with occult leanings, from Hammer posters, to Wicca and what ingredients to use to bleach your skin to be more Gothic.

I have been receiving quite a few poetry submissions. This issue I have managed to return the material without entering into the data-base the poet's home details.

Does anyone out there know where

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MERYL BROWN TOBIN

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lives? If you do, please drop me a note.

Talking about poetry, I received a copy of Marie-Louise Stephens' chap-book *Songs Of My World*. This is a full coloured-covered A3 booklet of 75 pages filled with 48 poems. The volume is in five sections, with a lead-in poem, *Where Is Her Home*, then the sections, which are titled FIELDS CLOSE TO THE BALTIC SEA; PRAGUE; INDIA AND PAKISTAN, THE KINGDOM IN THE NORTH and AUSTRALIA. Marie-Louise (a regular contributor to THE MENTOR), was born in Northern Germany, near the Baltic Sea and was educated in Rostock and in Prague. She came to Australia in 1972 via England, Pakistan and India. The poems are very readable and enjoyable. They are published by Poetica Christi Press, 493 Edgar Rd, Box Hill North VIC 3129 (fax/tel (030 9890-5885); I presume that anyone interested would be able to obtain a copy from them. (cont. p.66)

# Whitman Press and Fantasy Fiction

by Sean Alan Wallace

The Whitman Press (Pty Ltd), located initially at 21 Macquarie Place, Sydney, and then 80 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, published a series of thin 5.5" by 8" pamphlets over the period 1949 to 1951. The project of William Lynch, the Fantasy Fiction<sup>1</sup> pamphlets faced strong competition by *Thrills Incorporated* (1950-1952), Australia's first science fiction magazine, and *Scientific Thriller*, a pamphlet series of crime/fantastic/futuristic fiction (1948-1952). Lynch soon lost his shirt on this venture and eventually went bankrupt in 1954. Nothing else is known about Mr Lynch except that he wrote Westerns extensively for the Cleveland Publishing Company in the early 1950s.

All six unnumbered and undated issues featured unauthorized reprints from American science fiction magazines, most notably stories by Eando Binder (pseudonym of Otto Binder, though once used jointly with his brother Jack), Frank Belknap Long, and Oscar J. Friend. The first pamphlet, *The Three Eternals*, by Eando Binder, featured the immortal Anton York and his wife, a popular series in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (TWS) which encompassed "Conquest of Life" (TWS, August 1937), "Life Eternal" (TWS, February 1939), "The Three Eternals" (TWS, December 1939), and "The Secret of Anton York" (TWS, August 1940). All four stories were later collected and published as *Anton York, Immortal* (New York: Belmont (pb), 1965).

The other pamphlets featured a wide variety of pulp science fiction, mostly notably Robert Heinlein's "Lifeline", his first story<sup>2</sup>; Stanley Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey", a classic in its own right, and Eando Binder's "Adam Link in the Past". The latter represented a significant shift in the usual

depiction of robots with its sympathetic portrayal of Adam Link, a sentient machine. Adam Link first appeared in "I, Robot" (*Amazing Stories*, January 1939), which was later filmed as an excellent episode on *The Outer Limits* television series. Otto Binder then followed up with nine more adventures of Adam Link over the next three years. With the exceptions of "Adam Link Fights a War", "Adam Link Faces a Revolt", and "Adam Link in the Past", the rest saw book publication as *Adam Link – Robot* (New York: Popular Library (pb), 1965).

Of some interest is the strange inclusion of a short story entitled "Cables Parting!" by Steve Hail in *The Molecule Monsters* pamphlet. Far from being science fiction, "Cables Parting!" is straight-out general fiction, as evidenced by its blurb: "The locomotive lurched and began its plummeting crash between steel decks, to crush the gang below before they heard the cry..." In synopsis, the Pacific Stevedore Company, running in the red for several years, finds itself forced to accept a temporary overseer sent from the bank. Despite warnings from Johnny Quinn, a company supervisor, the arrogant and stubborn overseer manages to dump a 55-ton locomotive into the ocean. It's possible that this untraced piece of fiction was reprinted from an American pulp magazine, but it's entirely likely that it was written by a pseudonymous Australian writer, or even by William Lynch himself.

The three-colour pictorial covers also originated from the same science fiction magazines, though re-drawn by local artists without permission (refer to the checklist for full details). As noted by Australian Graeme Flanagan in his landmark *The Australian*

*Vintage Paperback Guide* (New York: Gryphon Publications (tp), 1995), “the highlight (is) the cover from *Roar of the Rockets*, which features a huge dinosaur-like monster destroying the Sydney Harbour Bridge”. The remaining covers are simplistic and bland, but strangely appealing, especially *The Three Eternals*, drawn by Australian artist Montague Wedd (signed Monty Wedd). The worst appears to be the cover for *The Molecule Monsters*, drawn by the pseudonymous H.E.G.

As the series progressed, the Whitman Press encountered printing problems, as outlined by this short announcement in both *Roar of the Rockets* and *The Molecule Monsters*:

“Owing to further increases in the cost of paper, it has been found necessary to reduce the amount of pages in this book. However, by using smaller size of type, we have been able to print this book in its entirety.”

With the size change in font type, the text was now re-arranged, from a single-column layout to a two-column layout. The page count also subsequently shrank from forty-eight pages to a mere thirty-two pages, as a result. This was done for *Molecule Monsters*, *Roar of the Rocket*, and *Where Eternity Ends*.

The series was launched without much fanfare, and was pretty much ignored or even noticed by science fiction readers or local fandom. In addition, advertising was almost non-existent, but the series saw some advance announcements, which appeared only on several other Whitman Press pamphlets:

“This is something new... You have no doubt heard or read of the new type of fiction that is sweeping America. It is called FANTASY FICTION – and who can say whether it is fantasy or not? Not long ago tales of “flying machines” were regarded as being figments of the imagination. Space ships, ray guns, war between planets – are these also fiction or a forecast of things to come...? Would you like to judge for yourself? Here is one of the latest and most popular Fantasy Fiction stories from America, published for the first time in this country. “The Three Eternals”, by Eando Binder.”

Whitman Press also published several other genre series at the same time, which included **Stop Press Stories**, **Tales of the Turf**, and **Texas Westerns**. In any case, the company soon vanished, with little else known about Whitman Press – or its ephemeral publications. In retrospect, it was a bad marketing decision to issue these thin offerings of science fiction, especially in such a package – poor art, average fiction, and irregular publication, all of it handicapped the series from the first. A later better attempt by Malian Press, the *American Science Fiction* series, would prove much more successful a few years down the road, through its skilful use of Australian artist Stan Pitt, and its excellent editorial selection of science fiction. However, *Fantasy Fiction* itself was a brave but misguided attempt. Copies are now uncommon, and actively sought after in fine condition, though perhaps undervalued by American and British collectors.

### **An Annotated Checklist to Fantasy Fiction**

The following publications are listed in their chrono-logical sequence, together with dates of publication, page count, price, and first magazine appearances. (There has been much debate regarding the dates and sequence order of these publications – it’s unlikely to be absolutely sure based on current research.) All publications have been recorded as the titles shown on the cover, though in some cases the title story is accompanied by other short stories – in effect, an anthology rather than a novel.

- *The Three Eternals* by Eando Binder. Subtitled: A Tale of the Future. 1949. 48pp. 6d. (Thrilling Wonder Stories, December 1930.) Cover artist Montague Wedd.
- *Parasite Planet* by Stanley G. Weinbaum. Cover Quote: “Thrilling Adventure on the Planet Venus”. Cover artist: Montague Wedd. 1950. 48pp. 6d

### Contents

“*About Venus*”, an Introduction to *The Parasite Planet*. Anonymous (Don Wollheim, from his “Flight in Space” anthology, published by Fell in 1950 and Cherry Tree in 1951).

*The Parasite Planet* by Stanley G. Weinbaum. Astounding SF, February 1935.

*Lifeline* by Robert Heinlein (his first short story). Astounding (British Reprint Edition), August 1939.

- *Adam Link in the Past* by Eando Binder. (Amazing, February 1941.) Cover artist Leo Morey, but redrawn by H.E.G. 1950 32pp. 8d
- *Where Eternity Ends* by Eando Binder. (Science Fiction, June 1939). Cover artist: Frank Paul, but redrawn by Montague Wedd. 1950 32pp. 6d
- *The Molecule Monsters* by Oscar J. Friend. Anthology, included the following:
  - The Molecule Monsters* by Oscar J. Friend. (Thrilling Wonder, October 1942)
  - Galactic Heritage* by Frank Belknap Long. (Thrilling Wonder, October 1948).
  - The Impossible Highway* by Oscar J. Friend. (Thrilling Wonder, August 1940).
  - Cables Parting!* By Steve Hail. Cover artist: HEG (unidentified); jumbled elements of original illustrations, but is an Aussie “original”.
- *Roar of the Rocket* by Oscar J. Friend. (Thrilling Wonder Stories, April 1940). Cover Artist: H.E.G., an unknown Australian artist that mixes up original *Thrilling Wonder* cover by Howard Browne which actually illustrates Henry Kuttner’s “Beauty and the Beast”. The artist has substituted the Sydney Harbour Bridge for the Capitol Building.

<sup>1</sup> “The word “fantasy” is misapplied to this series, as all selections were SF.” Bates, Dave and Su.

“Under the Southern Star.” *What About Paperbacks?* Volume 3, Number 3, undated.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, Lynch himself wrote western short stories for the Australian market, and acted as a literary agent – particularly for Robert Heinlein. The publication of Heinlein’s “Lifeline” soon prompted him to “complain that Lynch had sold the story to himself, deducted 10% - and then never paid him at all!”

- Sean Alan Wallace

# THE R&R DEPT

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

Catherine Mintz mentions Julie Vaux's comments on phonetic spelling and her difficulty with Banks's FEERSUM ENDJINN, which I struggled, but eventually came to grips with. More difficult, on several levels, is Russell Hoban's RIDDLEY WALKER, where the fractured and degenerate language also mirrors both the plot and background to the novel. I note that Alan Moore's VOICE OF THE FIRE, a several thousand year shamanistic history of a small area around Northampton, also starts (though not as intense as Hoban) from a pre-literate and semi-phonetic language. Middle English is also bloody difficult to read, too. (Thank you, Julie, for the translation/transformation of LAMENT OF THE MARAKIS. My history being what it is (minimal) can anyone care to supply notes on the various people named in Dunbar's poem? Oh, I see Andy Sawyer had obliged in R&R in the next issue, and I do tend to agree with him in the more measured "disturbeth" on the final lines, even if it does compromise Julie's transformation of the poems.)

A lovely typo creeps into Richard Reeve's H. G. WELLS THROUGH OTHER'S EYES (should that be "Others' Eyes?" - I digress) in a reference to "Jules Verne". That conjures some intriguing possibilities, and wonder of any of TM's poets might care to run with that idea.

Similarly, while I'm playing the grammatic pedant, there's another typo in Andy Darlington's CHILDREN OF THE ATOM in the threat and fear of "nuclear shriek" which is equally felicitous - conjuring Dan Simmons's razor-edge avatar of Empathy and Pain. In the context of the Shrike's ever-present threat of indiscriminate destruction without warning it becomes even more serendipitous.

How many non-UK readers might catch that allusion to "Doomwatch teams"? (Come to think of it, how many UK readers under the age of 30 would remember the eco-SF DOOMWATCH TV series?)

And from Andy's article to the wonderful synchronicity in the next issue of Darren Goossens' "... was hypothesised that its testing might cause the Earth's entire crust to explode. Then they went and tested it."

This is science a la Molesworth (Nigel, not

Vol), crossed with a large dose of 1066 AND ALL THAT, especially when Darren comes out with something like, "But it was good to have atoms, because people now had something to be made of", and probably deserves to be collected in a little book of its own.

I'm dubious about Brad Row's explanation of the word "homage" in CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT (TM 91). It sounds plausible, but John Alderson has already picked him up over heard someone on the radio claim that homosexual means "love of men" from that same root "homme", completely ignoring the Greek root for words like "homonym" ("a man's name", are we to believe?) As I say, it's more plausible in Brad's definition, since it's more likely to be a Roman (even French Norman?) derivation. I haven't tried looking it up in Bryson's MOTHER TONGUE, which is a wonderful cornucopia of the shaping of the English language. Anyone know when it entered the language? (7.9.97)

**SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20883, USA.**

A change of pace in the cover(s)....  
SPLIT - for me needed closure - I felt left in limbo.

This ish seems to be quite a melange of topics. Mae Strelkov's looks at life could be a popular book - has anyone tried to market it?

Buck and Juanita made it through a wet spring and now we're heading into another winter - hope they fare as well!

Got my first Aussiecon PR was wondering (since I'd joined before LA and hadn't heard *anything*....) if the membership had gone through.

I was surprised that some of the letters in the lettercol didn't elicit more comments from you (I leave it to the imagination as to which letters I refer!)

I think the most intriguing aspect this is the cover(s) - very interesting experiment.

(20.9.07)

**MAE STRELKOV, 4501 Palma Sola, Jujuy, ARGENTINA**

I've resolved to tone down my effusions, now I'm fully 80 since July. Gotta "prepare to meet my God!" Arrive there with a scrap of dignity, leave my nonsense buried with my home hopefully. So let me try to enter my new saintly stage, quietly. Our would-be jailers here are deeply grateful we didn't go

on the war-path in revenge last year, but went on being friendly. Such infants they were - so unsophisticated. Kicking children? Not we. So we help them pick up anew their dignity, though folks seem puzzled that our indignation lasted so briefly and again we're glad of renewed friendliness all around. (At fiestas, principally. We're still not bosom friends). I see you pubbed, Ron, the part about poor Mudwall; he's dead a good while by now. We recall him affectionately, and as for Blase, we're still buddies when we meet by chance anywhere. We like being tolerant. The main guy in the attempt to put our men in prison on false charges now dances the Samba lovingly with Sylvia with wild applause at *gaucho* shows. Poor dear, he is usually too drunk to keep his balance, but sometimes he manages it.

Am I really nasty? Yes, years ago, I was chock-full of sweetness and light. But old age does perfect and hone one's nasty streaks and cynical reactions at long last.

..... I'm at ease when writing to your MENTOR, Ron - though recognising the forbearance shown by some of your loccers who might love to lambast me, bless-em - I trust the good will of your general readership. Entertaining, even clowning for them, has been my pleasure so far. If each of them lived "around the corner" instead of so far away, what fun we'd all have having coffee together and arguing.

Being a true believer in the goodness (of our Creator, of our universe, of people if you're patient enough for long enough), and believing that things get sorted out by the "born-again" system (=Karma) I don't fret but rather think, "All these nice friends abroad I'll be meeting in time ahead when our mortal flesh fails me and the spirit shines bright", so I think of those I've been in touch with - those who approve and those who disapprove - as "friends beyond" (friends I'll love to meet "on the other shore", eventually).

Maybe I gush less lately, maybe I poke fun at things, including myself, more, but I *do* care. I do care about Michael of Matala... old friend that he used to be, not touchy at all. Why now? Just because I disillusion anyone who ever thought me nice? It always happens. My real self isn't nice at all. But enough breast-beating and *Mea Culpas*.

Tony, wife and three little kids abandoned their Palma Sola place where they'd settled, to move right to the Hot Springs, where a new house is going up plus cabins for visitors. A better class begins to arrive (crowds of lovely people from afar and near - 600 in just one day of Winter holidays). They are dignified, eager to live up to our expectations. The hooligans of the opening day - peeing all over the walls and ceilings uninhibitedly and shitting in a bathtub in a small room reserved for old people to take a hot water bath) no longer make trouble. If and when they come, they try to behave to please Tony and all the other visitors. The news has gotten around: "The Hot Springs of Vinalito are safe to take

our children to, and your old folks". Everybody is watched carefully and individually. Tony thinks as I do - everybody is bound for "Glory" eventually, where we'll all gather to rejoice before our Creator when we reach the end of our endless-seeming struggles and lessons learned. So Tony makes people feel he cares because he really does. Vadim too is that way more and more. Also Sylvia. As they turn nice and nicer they watch worriedly as I turn nastier and nastier in contrast.

Having bent over backwards to be "terribly nice" for 80 YEARS? It's a gorgeous release to be downright nasty. Bad influence of our hogs, at the foot of our big garden, in their pens. Me, primary Pig. Nasty labels welcomed. I shall wallow happily.

Well, maybe I wasn't very terribly nice. Don Wollheim (who pubbed DAW books) once referred to my style as full of "spit, sugar and vinegar".

Say, John Alderson, very old friend that you've been. I've teased you in MENTOR's pages. You never snarled back. Too fine a Scot? Well, you are a great person, no joke there. We love you, here, and recall our friendship back before our Danny died. (He drew the cartoons for your CHAO.)

In Ben Peek's story, the aliens say: "We live off white blood cells". That spooks me. The Calgary interest in our "mysterious gene" is related to our white blood cells - they're "abnormally fat", as I understand it. Now, I *don't* suddenly think: "They want our blood regularly, for the white blood cells, *to eat!*" Coincidences do occur, quite meaningless. Yet, somehow, I'm suddenly uncomfortably conscious of my "abnormally fat white blood cells"! What a laugh! It was a scary story; impressed me a lot! Also, the matter of color. Uh! I *do* love color (my former hectographs, sent around fandom in the 1970s, retouched with bright crayons, prove it!)

We're right below Bolivia, which is a *very* rugged place and here too coca-chewing and drinking of medicinal alcohol (watered) is a very old custom, even amongst respectable-seeming males. There are many here like our Tony, Sylvia and their spouses, who wish to see this forgotten remote province brought into civilisation (of our present age). Yes, you may sneer at civilisation, but ignorance and superstition leave pitiful little folk unaware of their own dignity and that of their fellow humans. One struggles against that apathy. (My long-going story from 1984/5 tells of the earliest bouts.)

The map of Argentina shows the province of Jujuy stuck away in the northwest corner, and the province looks like a wrinkled boot. Its toe is packed with hot springs, dozens of them (often too hard to reach in the hills). But it's said that the Hot Springs Tony now manages, helped by his wife and her hard-working clan is unique curatively. The map is not very precise, but you can see Villamonte (where we live) and further north, down valley, Palma Sola. Still further north where it says "Aguas Calientes" are also "Termas de Vinalito"; that's where Tony and family live now. And so much has it captured Tony

especially, on the rare occasions he drops down on a visit, he feels the place pulling him back - tugging at him in a strange symbiotic way.

(21/9/97)

David Tayler's story (in Mentor 93) is scary to think about. It *could* occur....

Darren Goossens is really funny and prankish. I enjoyed it a lot.

Most of the zine is very neatly typed, but I'd say your computer went into a state of panic, as surely any semi-intelligent machine might, over the "nonsense" I mused upon back in the 1980's, (the earlier part of it was begun about 1983 or 4 already).

Buck's column was a delight - another topic that fascinates one: "Indians".

And Pavel! He's so good and vivid. You really have an international scope.

Peter Brodie's haikus stir deep responses. If I memorize same I'll be in danger of forgetting the author and feeling "it's my own wisdom encapsulized. Peter ought to be pleased that he can affect us so!

Brent Lillie's story has a clever twist ending. Hope it never becomes possible!

Reading James Verran reassures me "computers are not for me!" Too involved.

To Lloyd Penney - I've dropped a short note to answer his question immediately. In Edmonton resides our eldest George; also our married-to-a-Canadian daughter (Alice French) She works in cancer research, having a doctorate there.

Yes, to Lloyd - I'll be 81 come July 9. It feels real good. I've left my former stormy ways far behind somehow.

You've told us nothing about yourself, Ron, this issue. We're all interested and eager to have news of you, *yourself*.  
(24.6.98)

**PAULINE SCARF, Sydney, NSW.**

Brent Lillie's cover certainly made an interesting change. Although I'm not a comic buff I thought the idea of a cover featuring a story to be entertaining.

Good to see the fiction re-introduced Ron. Also enjoyed H. G. WELLS and VISIONS OF VENUS.

The artwork in this issue really appealed to me particularly the Tonia Walden on page 9, and Peggy Ranson on pages 18 and 21 and I must say I've always appreciated work by the latter artist.

I always enjoy the overseas article especially Mae Strelkov's contribution, and also Pavel. One wonders what part of the world he'll visit next, and it is particularly fascinating to note his comments and experiences when you have also visited the same country and even those I would one day like to visit but haven't got around to.

I would also like to add that in 1976 I visited Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and found it a fascinating experience, enjoying the art, museums and palaces.

(1/10/97)

**BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St Tugun, Gold Coast QLD.**

Seems there are some momentous events that will be etched in the memories of the current generation. After all my waffling on in my previous LOC about history not dwelling on an individual long enough for their death to make any real difference, events proved me wrong and in a way I'm glad they did. The funeral was genuinely moving. During the three minutes silence, with the breeze gently moving the trees, I looked outside and noticed that there was barely a car travelling along the Gold Coast Highway. I tell you, that's an achievement in itself! After a suitable period of mourning, the Diana jokes. The Denver jokes. I have heard them, and, God forgive me, I have told them. Some call it a panacea, but I doubt it, because they don't make me feel any better. The only laughs they get are to cover the embarrassment.

I thoroughly enjoyed Ben Peek's SEEING BLACK AND WHITE. One of the best pieces of fiction I've read in TM, it kept me involved from start to finish. The fallibility of the protagonist and effective ending made for a truly entertaining story, easily of professional standard.

Also liked the HG Wells piece and THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE. Goosen's latest was entertaining but I didn't think it was up to the standard of his previous offerings.

We've reformed a band I toured with in the early eighties and I tend to be channelling more energy into the musical side than the literary, lately. Playing music comes quite easily and I enjoy the rehearsal and the performances, but writing can be a real bastard, sometimes. It's what I do best out of the two, though, so after finishing this LOC I plan to herd up all those ideas stampeding around in my head and write you a story. It's good to sit down in front of the old PC and let it all pour out. Now, that's a panacea!

Saw *Men in Black*. Good fun, but I thought Mars Attacks! was much better. Contact is next on my list. My kids are downstairs on the other PC playing X-Wing vs Tie Fighter. I realise many females enjoy SF, as evidenced by the number of contributors to the letters column, but it can't be denied, on sheer weight of numbers, that SF is something of a boy's club. When I saw MIB there were plenty of females in the audience but I sense that most of the females, and most of the males, were there to see Will Smith.

Just what is SF these days? Big budget movies, toys and mass marketing? There are some great books around: does all the hype encourage people to read SF, to delve a little deeper, or does it have an opposite effect?

Do any other readers believe, as I do, that nowadays it's all a bit Hollywood - enjoyable, but ultimately unsatisfying? The editors at Aurealis rejected my latest contribution on the grounds that it seemed contrived. Maybe I'd better cut back on the movies.

(27.10.97)

R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, 29217 Stonecrest Rd, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90275-4936, USA.

We bought a house last summer. Moving and all the related activities really put a crimp on other activities.

This is the first house I've owned. I find that it's much more time-consuming than owning a condo. It took us several months just to unpack everything and put everything away. As soon as that was done, we had to start looking for a contractor to break up the old patio and put in a new one. The old patio had to come out for two reasons. The slabs had grown uneven over the years (The house is thirty year old.) and presented a safety hazard. The patio was over a large olive tree, whose roots probably helped to make the slabs uneven. After the old patio was taken out, we had the tree removed. I also started designing the new garden. Work on that has not yet started. We have also found little things that need repairing and are hiring a handyman to do the work.

I must respond to Buck Coulson's comments in #91 about Californians being wimps. I don't believe he and Juanita understand. Yes, we have problems dealing with humidity. It is generally much drier here than in the Midwest. However, the temperatures here get much higher than 100°F. Summer temperatures in some parts of Southern California can get to about 115°F. Inside temperatures could be higher. The heat, together with the low humidity, is a health hazard. The most dangerous problem is dehydration. People not used to living in a dry climate don't know anything about the hazards of dehydration. I used to live in upstate New York, so I know from experience. The first time I went to the Grand Canyon, I almost passed out from dehydration. It was not particularly hot, only about 80°; but I had not experience with a dry climate and didn't take in enough water. Even after I gained this knowledge, I don't always gauge my water requirements accurately. At least, I can recognize dehydration when it approaches. It rarely gets hot enough to be dangerous, of course, but there have been times when schools were closed because of the heat. With year-round schooling, it is a particular problem.

Thank you for the patience. We are planning to go to Australia for the Worldcon next year. I hope we get the chance to meet. (7.3.98)

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

In response to Brent Lillie's letter in which he pondered if those under the age of 25 remember any situation-associated momentous events (games). I believe we do. Although I can only speak for myself, (as a 21 year old), I find the Challenger explosion, the Chernobyl disaster, the Soviet coup and the end of the Soviet Union (and thus the Cold War), the end of the Berlin Wall, the release of Nelson Mandela (and his election as President), the Strathfield massacre and the Port Arthur massacre

are events I remember by association with personal events which were happening at the same time (along with, of course, the Gulf War which Brent Lillie mentioned). Other people my age would probably mention Kurt Cobain's suicide, but I am not a grunge music fan and didn't know who he was until he killed himself.

I've just finished reading I. ASIMOV: A MEMOIR. Great book. I now feel almost as if I knew him. The book had a sad ending (as, of course, it would have), but I don't think Isaac would have wanted us to feel sad.

By the way, a great fanzine I recommend to everyone is Sian O'Neale's STRANGE MATTER and not just because I'm a regular contributor or because Sian is a friend, but because it is a very good zine!

(2.8.97)

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

The cover story of TM 92 is well done, and SPLIT is good - this one could be picked up by a pro anthology later. The quotes on HG are interesting.

Andy's article on Venus is fine, one of his best. but Cyber-scribe was frightening and made me glad I stick to my trusty typewriter.

Another good travel piece by Pavel but why, on a visit to Holland, no mention of Rembrandt? This seems especially strange as he mentions Rubens and other painters in Brussels.

Glad to read that Buck is still kicking (and I'm writing this with the rain coming down. A few minutes back we had the loudest peal of thunder I've heard in years; it sounded about six feet overhead.)

Darren, as usual, was amusing. The poem I liked best was SUPER-STRINGS by Bill West.

Mae turns in another fascinating article, and a letter; I agree, in old age we need more humour. If I'm stuck for a book in the library, I look for one that will make me laugh.

I don't read a lot of sf these days, but one I've got at the moment - HARD QUESTIONS by Ian Watson - is good as far as I've got; about halfway.

I expect you saw Fantasy Annual, published by Phil Harbottle; this has an interesting article on Australian sf (amongst other things).

There should be another pro fantasy/sf magazine starting up in this country soon. I wonder how long it will survive? (6.8.97)

Thanks for TM 93; and thank you Chuck Ross.

Another interesting issue, with an interesting cover. David's story isn't bad, but lack originality.

Andy on Quatermass is very good; one of your best, Andy.

HISTORY OF SCIENCE is amusing, and I think Darren was right to keep this short; humour usually works best at a short length.

Mae was interesting, as usual. Liked Peggy's illo on page 14.

Pavel was especially interesting this issue: Finland is not a country I've read much about. I started to read the *Kalevala* many years ago but, alas, never finished it.

Trent Jamieson was the star turn with poetry this time around.

And now we come to the big disappointment of the issue. Brent's IN SPIRIT ONLY. He has an original idea here and I'd just settled down to enjoy the story when it was all over. It would be worthwhile, Brent, if you rethink this at longer length, with some story development. An idea like this is wasted on a short-short. In my opinion this could sell professionally.

James V has convinced me I'm right to keep to my portable typewriter.

There is an interesting article on N. K. Hemming in Phil Harbottle's *Fantasy Annual #2* by Sean McMullen and Russell Blackford. (6.7.98)

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

I wasn't too taken by the cover of TM 92. Hard to tell back from front or locate the title. It was well drawn but the story line was too trite. Lillie did far better with his lead story SPLIT which with a little polish could make a pro-slot.

The piece on Wells was interesting but to be fair his characters were "ordinary people" suddenly thrust into unusual circumstances. They react pretty much as we would do in similar circumstances. Wells was an acute observer of people.

VISIONS OF VENUS - well researched but not a topic dear to my heart. I tended to avoid the "Vengeance on Venus" sort of tale - much preferred lost cities on Mars. Nice artwork repro thought - pity Muscovite's photos didn't come out as well.

James Verran on computers made me very envious of anybody capable of getting so much on top of his subject. Pity Jim can't nip over to upgrade my nearly 4 meg of RAM and swap my 40 meg hard drive for a 2 gig one - ah wishes. Buck Coulson waiting for woodchucks to come out of holes reminds me of how we caught crabs on Juhu (Bombay) beach. Sit still and wait with a handful of sand. Once a crab left its hole you threw the sand to block it - and caught the crab before it could dig a new one.

LOCs excellent coverage but the artwork was a bit spotty - some good, some not so good.

(-.8.97)

I really enjoyed Tayler's THE SMART HOME, far better than many a pro-published story. I also enjoyed the Quatermass saga and remember odd fragments - the monster creeping over the Houses of Parliament - the weird sound effects in Q and the Pit - and the feeling of cop-out when the aliens never really came on the scene.

Mae Strelkov was as entertaining as ever - who needs a score of unwanted picnic guests? We used to get regular tea time visits by one fan and his

family. After an afternoon's shopping they popped in for a free nosh.

Muscovite adventure also good, but oh! that pretentious, unrhymed "poetry". James Verran's piece was great until I got lost about three para's in. How I wish I knew enough to understand it - and save all the files I lose after using CTRL/ALT/DEL. (30.7.8)

**WALT WILLIS, 9 Alexandra Rd, Donaghadee, N. Ireland BT21 OQD.**

Thanks for The Mentor 92, and for being so patient with me during that long silence, which was due to our moving house. We are now crammed into a bungalow, along with several thousand books in the hall and all the rooms, not to mention the garage.

SPLIT was full of menace, but I wasn't sure what the menace consisted of, even after reading it twice.

I was interested in the views of HG Wells, who used to be my patron saint. All that is left of his influence on me is my support for the European Common Market.

VISIONS OF VENUS is nostalgic for something that never existed. I used to feel the same way for Perelandra, the unforgettable creation of CS Lewis.

SEELING BLACK AND WHITE worked for me; being instantly comprehensible.

James Verran's article was fascinating reading, especially for someone new to the world of computers, like me.

THE TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE made fascinating reading. I was specially grateful for his reviews of the porno films, so often suppressed by reporters, and his description of the old Russian lady was poignant in the extreme.

Coulson was fascinating, especially on the Greek Westerns.

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE was well up to standard. I specially appreciated his explanation of Relativity.

Mae Strelkov was as readable and profound as ever. This time I especially appreciated her tribute to the Jews. I too have always seen myself as a pro-Semite. (13.8.97)

I was not intending to comment on THE MENTOR #93 because of pressure from other commitments and the laziness induced by my advancing years, but the standard of material in it swept aside my reservations. It started off unexceptionally enough, but the Quatermass article was magnificent. I had thought myself fairly knowledgeable about the subject, having lived through it all, but the article contained much information which was new to me. About all I could add was Arthur Thomson's account of how a door to door salesman called just while a new Quatermass was starting on TV; Arthur just said "Quatermass. Sorry", and shut the door.

Darren Goossens' HISTORY OF SCIENCE was a gem of its kind. I particularly liked the bit

about the Chinese never having produced a girlie calendar.

Even Buck Coulson seemed more interesting than usual which is quite a compliment, and Reeve's article about Poe was fascinating. Both however were dwarfed by Viaznikov's travelogue, which is not only fascinating by virtue of its strangeness of subject, but is well written by any standards.

Brent Lillie's story is telling in its brevity, and I wish I understood Verran's article as well.

(7.7.98)

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

#91. I'm glad that Andrew Darlington says that the threat of a nuclear Armageddon has only been postponed as documents have just been leaked that show that the US is spending about \$4.5 billion on simulating nuclear tests of new weapons on special computer programs. Gets the US round the Test Ban Treaty but provides new warheads without having to dig mine-shafts or destroy coral islands. The Cold War isn't over but merely gone into another phase - wait till the Mafia get taken over by the Russian gangsters who are already moving in.

Mae Strelkov's story of the gold-laden ox-cart disappearing into a quicksand reminds me of King John's Crown Jewels and treasure that went the same way in the Wash (East Anglia). Poor old John, he'd devised a new means of squeezing money out of the wealthy by ordering that all land holdings and their boundaries had to be registered with his clerks and that the due fees be paid for this service. John's order settled a lot of arguments between adjoining land-owners but it also put a lot of money into his money chests. John really needed all of the money he could lay his hands on - even if it meant kidnapping the wives of his barons and demanding ransoms - as he reigned in a time of inflation and was fighting a losing war with the French, the latter causing his barons to lose their estates there. He debased the coinage and upped taxes. This wasn't much different to Richard's behaviour except that Richard spent most of his time out of England and won lands in France - Richard only came home to raise money to fight in Palestine otherwise he didn't bother the barons.

Brad Row: I was told by my history master in 1942 that when the Angles invaded England the Right Angles marched north and the Left Angles marched south. Never had any reason to question this statement as the Right Angles were really the (b)Right Angles and we lived in the north of England.

Loved the picture on the bacover, just like a photo of the Bradford SFA in 1952, except *we* men all wore ties. Very satisfying to put faces to names I have known for forty years. And just what I expected, handsome, distinguished and only two beards.

#92. Interesting wrap-around cover strip, a case of hands-on the dolphins instead of the usual hands-off.

Liked Andrew Darlington's VISION OF VENUS, took me back to my early days of reading sf. We can't be too hard on the scientists and writers not knowing what lay beneath the Venusian clouds, we only have to look at an 1870 map of Africa and see a blank interior with "here there be dragons" (or pygmies or whatever else the cartographer fancied.)

I'm not only a BOF but, after reading James Verran's article, an ignorant BOF. Are you going to publish a translation next issue as I honestly don't know what he's writing about? I have an obsolete (but very cheap) AMSTRAD 8256, I switch it on, stick in a disc and boot up, stick in another disc and away I go.

I don't have to learn DOS or burden my brain with AUTOEXEC.BAT and/or CONFIG.SYS files (I don't know what they are and life is too short to spend time finding out). I repaired a faulty drive for a cost of £2 and twenty minutes work. The PCW is faster than my typing and much neater than my handwriting. I don't want to play computer games, I don't want to go on the Internet as I find it hard enough to handle my conventional mail, I don't want to store masses of statistics.

I have re-read James's article (and taken the aspirins) and have discovered that my cheapo machine has a Ram Drive - so that's why files on Drive M print out faster than from Drive A. I don't know, you learn something new every day.

The rest of the issue is up to your usual high standard and another good letter column.

(20.8.97)

#93. I enjoyed Andrew Darlington's QUATERMASS, it brought back lots of memories. Andrew mentions A KIND OF LOVING (by Stan Barstow) - I know Stan Barstow, he was a regular customer at my Saturday market bookstall in the 50s and 60s and autographed my copy of the 1st Penguin edition of his book. We also shared an interest in films - I had been a long-time member (from the mid-40s) of the Bradford Film Society, Stan was (I think) chairman of the Wakefield Film Society.

Mae Strelkov writes with love and humour, two marvellous attributes. I always read her contributions first. Mae's description of the polluted water supply and consequent infections reminds me of numerous TV holiday programmes where tourists have gone to equatorial Africa or the Caribbean and been ill there and on return home. I don't have much sympathy with people who believe the descriptions in the holiday brochures and don't understand that if you go to a Third World country you get Third World water and sanitation.

*[Yes. And if you had come to Sydney a week or so ago you would have had the situation where the Water Board had 3 million plus people boiling their drinking water because of pollution in the filtration plant at the main reservoir. - Ron.]*

Darren Goossens made me laugh - especially Leonardo da Vinci bellydancing (which he really did do with younger men - no-one in their right mind ever turned their back on him).

I liked Trent Jamieson's COLONEL GEORGE... lovely little sting in the last line.

I misted over again at the sight of James Verran's text and its impenetrability - e.g. on page 33, column 2, he takes a paragraph to tell you how to copy a file, this involved typing a command just slightly shorter than the Bible. With my cheaper PCW, to copy a file I press a key to copy, press "Enter", move the cursor to the destination, press "Enter" again and move the cursor back to the original position.

To change the subject. I had a total knee replacement operation at the end of October 1997. I was told it would be six months to a year to recover and forgot about it. Well, it's nearly ten months and I can say that there has been a gradual improvement until the last two or three weeks when I have been out walking and suddenly realised that I had begun to walk normally and not "favour" the leg. (12.8.98)

**JULIE VAUX, 2A Oliver Rd, Chatswood, NSW 2067.**

The response to my Dunbar translation, from late medieval Lallans Scots to modern literary English, is a pleasant surprise. Mmm maybe it might be worthwhile translating the Kingis Quair into modern prose or verse.

Re: Coulson's trouble with groundhogs and large dogs -

Having been "owned" by an inveterate chain-around-ankle-wrapper I sympathize with your tolerance for Elli though fortunately my househound was much smaller. Some dogs become good judges of characters. Wouldn't it be useful if Elli learns to distinguish not only Jehovah's Witnesses but Mormons and Scientologists and other public nuisances? I hope Elli hasn't also discovered the walk-backwards-out-of-your-collar trick, though that's more a dachsie speciality.

On the subject of dogs I have often wondered why given the large number of German immigrants to our state of South Australia and to the Middle West of the USA, and problems with rabbits and groundhogs, that no-one tried to import trained packs of Earth hounds - also known as Dachshunds. There is an Internet site (yes, there is!) devoted to working Earth Hounds which describes how to train and qualify them for a certificate. Apparently there is at least one working hunt pack down in the Canberra region.

A note for Steve Sneyd and other History lovers. As someone with an interest in systems collapse theory I have often wondered why more attention is not given to plague scenarios to explain the fluctuating populations in England during the transition from Roman Britain to the Saxon kingdoms. Ammianus Marcellinus records several epidemics on the continent, particularly in Gaul. Some of these surely crossed the Channel. Given the breakdowns

in town administration, which would have led to lower standards of maintenance for the plumbing and sewage systems, a vicious circle probably developed of people fleeing cities to escape plagues, technical experts dying because they lived in cities, and the survivors unable to do repairs, or import replacement specialists from the continent because of the plagues there.

Virconium is the classic example, with wooden buildings being built within the shells and courtyards of larger Roman structures, presumably because there were no stone masons available, but Celtic or Saxon carpenters could be trained locally. Tiles for roofing were being salvaged from older buildings because there were no Ceramic specialists left to run the as yet undiscovered kilns. We know there were kilns nearby because the tiles and other ceramics were local river clay.

Alderson's reference library seems to be rather uneven. He may have six books of Scots poets (Buchanan probably being the best known) who wrote in Latin but his collection seems not to be very solid in other areas, like archaeology of the Dark Ages. Sigh, which brings us to the "An Gaels"?? Groan.

The Anglii or Angles as a tribal group were named after their region of origin - the Angle - a perfectly good and proven Old English and North Germanic word - basically the "Corner", north of the River Elbe, where the North German plain rises up into the Danish peninsular. The Romans were the first to record the name Anglii, and as for the Saxonici or Saxones, they were probably named after a weapon, the Seax, a throwing axe. Other weirdly prosaic tribe names include the Allermanni and the Marcomanni, whose names I am often tempted to change into Everybody's and Border Guys, rather than the more possibly correct Allfolk and Frontier Folk.

Belgic Gauls? Belgica (one of the four provinces of Roman Gaul covering the area from the Rhine to the Loire and northwards to the coast of the Netherlands) was further west than Saxony and I think if the Saxons had anything in common with Gauls, in terms of culture or language, the writers of the Frankish chronicles might have mentioned that, as the Franks and the Ottonian emperors were in conflict with those Saxons, who did not emigrate, but remained, mostly pagan and very rebellious against central authority imposed from without, in the old country, ie what became "Saxony". Since they slandered the Saxons for back-sliding into paganism they would not have missed a chance to add that to the record. Gregory of Tours regarded them as "Germans" and since he was a Christian Gallo-Roman aristocrat, charitable as he was, compared to some of his contemporaries, believe me this is the sort of thing he would have noted.

Finally, groan, "bags" is slang and *not* derived from breeches, or the Gaulish *bracae*, and *rex* is definitely Latin, and my name, thank you, does have an initial consonant sound! I refuse to

comment on attempts to link areal typology to genetics.

What does Alderson use for reference books? No, wait, I don't want to know! Suffice it to say that Alderson's method of argument demonstrates why it is important to look at both the artefact evidence as well as that from literary and linguistic sources. Not just the bits that fit one's pet theories. I realise not every one has access to a university library, but most of the information I cited in my letter can be found in local library books, a decent dictionary, or an online or hardcopy encyclopaedia. (2.11.97)

**HECTOR PESSINA, Casilla de Correo 3869, Correo Central, Buenos Aires 1000, ARGENTINA.**

I especially liked Andrew Darlington's A VISION OF VENUS which I found full of new things I didn't know about although I know a lot about space fiction, I noticed, too, reading the lettercol that Darlington has been doing similar articles about stories on different subjects, I suppose that CHILDREN OF THE ATOM deals with stories about nuclear energy and atomic wars and the dreaded atomic mutants, doesn't it?

[Yes, it does. - Ron.]

One of your readers, Sheryl, mentions *The Fifth Element*, the movie by Besson with Bruce Willis. The four original elements are: earth, fire, air and water and the fifth, according to the move is ... Love!

After so many years I have to rediscover both fandom and fanzines and I notice from the few ones I have received so far, that the emphasis is on the high quality of the reading material without neglecting the layout and the printing standard. Your zine is neat, well-printed and with a nice balance of text and drawings and reproductions which makes it easy to read.

I especially enjoyed Darlington's A VISION OF VENUS, because I am now interested in reviving (and re-reading) the space opera yarns of the 30's and 40's so unjustly ignored and forgotten by present-day publishers. When I began to look for Hamilton books for my researches on his "The Star Kings" saga I found only a few second-hand copies - at outrageous prices - offered on the Internet...

Darlington's article contains as much info on literary works about Venus as is possible to put in a few pages and quite a thorough knowledge of the old pulps which had already been mentioned to me by several people. There should be more articles like these and I think that "Visions" of Venus and other planets in the movies and the TV should be done also to complement the purely literary visions. I would like to call his attention to two works by Robert A. Heinlein about Venus which he didn't mention, LOGIC OF EMPIRE and BETWEEN PLANETS, both interesting views of the Veiled Planet. I would like to do the "visions" in the movies and on TV, if you like.... (- .98)

[Sounds a good idea to me: I'd like to see such an article. - Ron.]

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

I was surprised to see by the loc dates (in TM 93) that a year had passed since the previous issue. Interesting cover which appears to be computer-generated. I enjoyed David Tayler's "end of world" story. A "done to death" scenario but still a competent piece of writing. Andrew's excellent article on the *Quatermass* story brought back memories of the Peter Cushing/Christopher Lee movie NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT in which aliens very thoughtfully create a heat wave during Winter. For some reason I've always confused this movie with THE CREEPING UNKNOWN, probably because I saw the former movie on TV before the advent of colour. I write this having only just discovered that NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT was shot in colour, in 1967. A listing of this movie proved difficult to track down until an early edition of Leonard Maltin's TV MOVIES came to the rescue. It was released in the US as *Island of the Burning Doomed* (aka *Damned*). An unspectacular movie shot mostly at night (hence the more sensible British title!), populated by an excellent cast, NTBH always comes to mind whenever British horror/sf is discussed. As for *Quatermass* aka *The Quatermass Conclusion*, I wasn't aware that this movie had ever been made. So thanks for that piece of useful information, Andrew.

Darren Goossens' article was a scream. Mae's was full of good-humour, wit and charm. We're all better off from having the privilege of reading her words. Good grief, I actually enjoyed the poetry, with Trent Jamieson's COLONEL GEORGE... being the pick of the bunch. Brent Lillie's IN SPIRIT ONLY was okay but James Verran's DOS REVISITED sent my brain into a spin. Having *finally* given away my old Amstrad CPM pc (I found a bloke who needed a replacement dedicated monitor and happily took the system off my hands), I find myself quite happy with the Mac SE. It has faithfully fulfilled all tasks although I still haven't managed to find a s/h Stylewriter II printer. Thus everything has to be converted and printed via Barbara's Pentium pc, which involves a hundred-mile-round trip to the lower reaches of the Blue Mountains. It's simply a matter of saving things up and doing the job once very few weeks. A good excuse to get away from the smog-polluted city and breathe some fresh mountain air.

Back to James' article which imparted a number of useful tips in the first few paragraphs but degenerated into technobabble thereafter. I've no interest in how a pc works, just tell me how to get it to do what I want in words of one syllable. I'm now writing web pages (note that I don't write "constructing" which is a pretentious term, considering the fact that the programme I'm using, FRONT PAGE EDITOR, does all the dirty work) on a regular basis for our book collecting site. Something

I wouldn't have thought possible at the beginning of last year, which goes to prove how simple the task has become. As for Email, I still prefer the written word but that's likely to change once I have access to it here at home. I've taken on bookselling with online catalogues, and that looks like being a winner, given time. (30.6.98)

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

... I have been very lax in acknowledging and LOCing your zine. Some of this may be mounting health problems, from serious (thyroid) to comical (flat feet) to painful (dental) to just plain irritating (having to buy new prescription glasses every two years and health insurance pays for none of this).

However, I can still go on vacations. I have yet to visit Australia. But last February I had a two week sailing cruise on the barquentine *Mandalay* in the Caribbean, and was able to view the total solar eclipse on 26 February 1998. Next November I hope to visit Turkey, and China may be visited in April 1999. All this is being paid from my salary from the Post Office.

Somehow, somehow, I seem to have totally missed *Quatermass*. I cannot honestly remember seeing a single episode of it. Most strange. Some day when I get a TV and video player, I'll have to rent out the episodes (assuming they are available in the USA) and check them out.

Buck Coulson mentions Indian gambling casinos. Right now California is having a struggle on this subject. Some politics and ethnic pride is involved, but most of all it is money. Who gets it? The Nevada casinos want to shut down the Indian casinos for obvious reasons, money is flowing into political coffers, and the whole subject may wind up on the ballot this November.

As for James Verran, he might be interested to know that I may have to give up my hermit ways and buy a computer for Internet use. I am now thinking of the new Apple iMAC. (5.7.98)

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

Received MENTOR 93 a few days ago.

I wouldn't lump AUTHENTIC in with VARGO STATTEN; AUTHENTIC was at worst mediocre, with a good story now and then.

Juanita and I enjoyed the three Quatermass movies; they were a notch or two above the US "sci-fi" films output of the times. But I'd never previously heard of *The Quatermass Conclusion*; it was never shown anywhere in our area and never listed as a film at a stf convention that we went to, and it's never been on TV here that I know of. We did enjoy *Quatermass and the Pit* on tv a few months back; it lost a little on the small screen, but not too much.

[I had the four hour (colour) TV series/telemovie *The Quatermass Conclusion* recorded on Beta, but unfortunately the reception

at the time was not good and when I cross-taped in onto VHS three years ago, it came out worse. What I presumed was the actual movie was shown about a year ago on TV, and I didn't tape it as I did not want a cut down version. John Mills as Quatermass was excellent and the Conclusion was an epic end for Professor Quatermass. I rate it up with 10 Million Years to Earth as the best of the Quatermass movies. - Ron.]

Mae Strelkov's article was very interesting; we used to correspond, but I hadn't heard from her in years. (However, a short letter from her arrived a few days after MENTOR did, so I'll see if we're back in communication.)

I'm one of the writers James Verran comments on; still using a manual typewriter. Of course, I'm not writing much besides letters. Professionally I'm a very junior editor these days; or more specifically, a "first reader".

I'm opposed to changing our national anthem from "The Star-Spangled Banner" to "America the Beautiful", Lloyd. Of course, "Banner" is a war song; it was written while the author was in a US fort undergoing bombardment. But "Beautiful" contains the most unabashed bragging of any song I know, and telling everyone how wonderful we are is no improvement, in my opinion. Everyone says that it's easier to sing, but I can't sing anyway, so it makes no difference to me. And, for God's sake, the tune of "Banner" is a British drinking song, "To Anacreon in Heaven", and if Americans can't sing as well as British drunks we're in bad shape. As for leaving behind our warlike face, what do you want? We've composed our differences with the USSR, and China is looking at least as warlike as we are. Hussain will die eventually and he's no real threat anyway. (To us, anyway; I wouldn't want to be a citizen of any of the countries bordering Iraq.)

Never having tried to go out with any Australian women, I'll accept Rod's opinion. The few I've met have been polite enough. (In any US fanzine, anyone who said what Rod did would be jumped on in the next issue by every female reader; I'll see what happens here.)

7/6/98 - Letter interrupted by our attending Inconjunction in Indianapolis. Our seventh convention so far this year; we have 5 more scheduled. Generally a mediocre convention as far as conversation goes, but a good one for sales. Juanita did the driving; I'm now capable of doing it but she says I'm not getting the car back. Don't make me no nevermind; driving was always more of a duty than a pleasure. If I wanted to get to work, get to conventions, get in town to buy groceries, driving was a necessary, so I did it. I never got a thrill out of it, even as a beginner. No particular challenge to driving. Getting a bullet in the bullseye of a target is a challenge, as is hitting a flying quail (and the latter provides a delicious dinner as well.) Any idiot can learn to drive, though in this country most of the idiots don't bother. The only time I've killed an individual was while I was driving, but it was his

fault, unless my assumption that he knew what he was doing was a fault; I've never lost any sleep over it. (30.6.98)

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

Martial stilt vehicle on cover [of TM 93] appropriate to centenary of WAR OF THE WORLDS. Actual megasculpture of one has been put up in Woking, Surrey, which features in the book - I've seen photos of and looks highly impressive.

Andy Darlington's Quatermass piece a feast of nostalgia as well as insights, bringing back memories of when/where saw the progs. (The Q & THE PIT omnibus resharing in a club where I wasn't a member, expecting any minute to be unmasked and thrown out, or for someone to demand to watch something else, for eg). Q a very Sfnal name, but apparently a genuine Isle of Man one.

Despite the oft-usedness of theme of computer starting nuclear war, SMART HOUSE gave it a freshness of terror (chimed neatly with Verran's expose of how to, almost, control yr PC - can see why folk feel computercidal - wonderful neologism). Despite its surface jokiness, IN SPIRIT ONLY made furiously to think - a technotake on the shapechanging the boy Arthur does into animals and fish at Merlin's control in T. H. White's SWORD IN STONE.

Buck Coulson's piece re Miamis fascinating, the left with nagging puzzle how one in Indiana, if, had disbanded as a tribe, could still use the reservation loophole re bingo and sue for the government tribal subsidy. Good lawyers I suppose.

Mae Strelkov's more philosophical overview of her/Latin America's symbiosis a bit like keystone of arch to the more physical/anecdotal earlier strangeness. Enjoyed the tales from Russian journeys, as usual, and others' views of Poe (in an odd sort of way, Whitman was commenting on himself as much as Poe - but then we usually criticise in others what we sense as lack in ourselves - Whitman seems to be shouting, albeit beautifully, in a willed attempt to deny emptiness and alienation in himself). Of the poems, particularly struck by GOD and POETRY among the Senryu, and LITTLE BOY - the treasure more treasured for its shock powered and the take on Schrodinger's cat. (3.7.98)

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

I found Goossens' THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SCIENCE in THE MENTOR #93 fun as usual. There are a few points, however, I'd like to make. One of the reasons, during the Renaissance, there was a lot of "arting about" was the discovery of oil paints. This allowed an artist to take his time painting and thus do a better job. Doing a better job meant more happy patrons and more happy artists producing lots of art. Also banking took off with the Medicis. Italians had found a way around the problems past Popes had associated with Christians lending money and so the non-Christians suddenly

found they had plenty of competition in the trade. More banks meant more wars, trading convoys and buildings being financed by loans. Even the Popes during the Renaissance borrowed money and got into hot water with the Germans when they tried to finance their building projects by selling indulgences.

As for the Chinese, I think you will find they did invent the girlie calendar or, at any rate, the girlie poster. Believe you me, there's plenty of naughty bits showing in some of those 16th Century Chinese and Japanese prints. Some of it way too hot for Europeans of the day to handle. I don't know how old erotic art is in Asia but my impression is it drifted across from India where it had taken hold sometime during the Indo-European movement. The sculptures one can see on Indian temples to this day can be eye opening. They can also be extremely honest and extremely beautiful in their honesty. Breathtaking is the way to describe some Indian art. And then there's the KAMA SUTRA. It is said to be the oldest European book ever written and it was written in India during the Indo-European movement.

Perhaps it should be noted here that the French in the 19th Century invented the naughty but nice post card. A common theme on them was the naked or semi-naked, charmingly smiling Femme on a push bike. Needless to say such post cards did extremely well and didn't do push bike sales any harm either. Strangely enough, many of these post cards were collected but very few were actually ever sent anywhere.

I found EDGAR ALLEN POE THROUGH OTHERS EYES by Richard Reeve interesting. I agree whole-heartedly with D. H. Lawrence's view but totally disagree with what one Walt Whitman had to say. No "heat" in Poe, says Mr Whitman. If he were alive today I'd tell hem to read THE TELL-TALE HEART. There's plenty of "heat" there. Rufus Griswold pegs Poe nicely. I had read somewhere that Poe was rough on other writers and a bit of a perfectionist. Also I liked the way Leslie Stephen compared Poe to the earlier Hawthorne. Both had a New England feel to their work.

The poem ALIENS by Richard Reeve was amusing. Yes, the metre is reminiscent of Sir Percy's poem THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL in, of course, the classic swashbuckler that played beautifully with the secret identity, "The Scarlet Pimp ernel". Also I think he's having a playful go at the X-Files. A nice tongue-in-cheek effort.

Well, in the next couple of months my new magazine MASQUE NOIR should see the light of day. The first issue will carry an "Avant-garde" article by Don Boyd plus one of his Martian invasion yarns. It will also carry an article on "Film Noir", and on the relationship between Russians and Klingons. There will be costumes, heroes and gum-shoe detectives. There will be a lively review section and lots and lots of great art.

PROHIBITED MATTER will continue past issue 10 but in a reduced capacity. Issue 10 of PM should be out around November. (4.6.98)

**SHERYL BIRKHEAD, 23629 Woodfield Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20882-2819, USA.**

Somehow TM "feels" a bit different this issue. If you're not careful you'll end up as a national treasure and a source of historical articles from just about everywhere.

Sounds as if Mae Strelkov's brood is setting in - with international geography spreading them out a bit.

Good luck to Robert Frew - starting up a business is difficult - just stick to it.

Buck - I've been reading the Tony Hilluman mysteries lately - with all the neat final twists in the mysteries. With all the Indian references in his books, I am finding mentions about "Native Americans" even more interesting.

I double checked, hoping to find an editorial - then decided I'd have to settle for the last snippet at the end of #93. I hope you get a bit more chatty next issue.

*[Last issue I cut about four pages of letters out, and any editorial I had[n't] planned because I thought I was at the end of my mailing weight. I wasn't, but it was too late - everything was wrapped. - Ron.]*

Interesting cover - almost looks as if it's an actual photo that's been melded into an illo.

(18.7.98)

**LLOYD PENNEY, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, CANADA M9C 2B2.**

David Tayler's THE SMART HOME in issue 93 of THE MENTOR is an all-too-familiar tale of how warlike America would become if the Big Red Button wasn't controlled by a human, but by a machine intelligence. I suspect that American readers may object to this scenario, but to see ourselves as others see us, that would be truly the greatest gift.

I have always enjoyed reading Mae Strelkov's articles about life in Argentina, even if I haven't made much comment on it in the past. I guess my letters in the letter column must have sparked something, for just a few days before this letter was written, we received a wonderful letter from Mae, describing where her children live in Canada, especially around Edmonton and Winnipeg. We will respond to it soon.

Buck Coulson says that the American Indian Movement is busy with getting rid of humiliating stereotypes. There is a similar movement in Canada, but it's more interested in land grabs, especially in British Columbia. It really makes Canadian Indians more greedy than bankers. Native stereotypes should be done away with, but especially in North American sports, team names like the Washington Redskins, Cleveland Indians, Atlanta Braves and Chicago Black Hawks will remain. Money talks, and these trademarks bring in millions

of dollars each year. (When you look at it, these names were given Indian names because of the admiration for their being warriors, definitely a quality to instil in a sports team, but there's always someone who's eager to be offended.)

Pavel Viaznikov has met Robert Sheckley, and so have I. Some years ago, Yvonne and I attended a convention in Montréal where Sheckley was the guest. Media SF has more followers in Montréal than literary fandom does, so Sheckley wandered the halls largely ignored. I approached him with a short stack of his paperbacks, and that craggy face lit up with a smile. I hope I wasn't, but I think I was the only person to approach him for autographs that weekend. I know of his long history of writing fine science fiction, but when I found out he'd written a Star Trek: Deep Space Nine novel, I felt a little let down. How the mighty have fallen.

It's been quite some time since that last letter of mine - since that letter was written, I left the stock brokerage to do freelance proofreading, and now, I'm with an engineering company with interests in publishing, and I'm the circulation manager for one of the company's magazines. I have a boss worse than Dilbert's, and he makes life a living hell, but I like the work ... I'm still distributing resumes.

Life since that letter ... we did attend that con in Montréal as the guests, and had a fine time, and we both won the Aurora Awards we were nominated for. The Sawyer book did debut with me as a character, and I am on the final ballot for the Auroras this year, too. (19.7.98)

**YURI MIRONETS, Oktyabrskaya St. 2, apt. 15, Vladivostok, 690000, RUSSIA.**

Looking at the cover artwork to THE MENTOR 93, I immediately recollected my childhood somewhat 45 years ago. I was presented a Russian translation of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS by H. G. Wells (that was my first acquaintance with the Great Master of Science Fiction) and the Martian on the cover of the book looked very much like the one of the cover of THE MENTOR 93 (but, of course, there was no airplane).

A few words about our life in Vladivostok. Thank God, the academic year at Far Eastern University is over and the students (and the professors, as well) are on vacation till September. This year I had five graduate students, writing their research graduation papers on English-language SF writers and their works. All the graduates defended their graduation papers successfully - three of them received excellent marks, and the other two - good marks. The range of the themes of the papers was rather wide - just look at the titles:

1) "Juvenile" novels of American SF writer Robert Heinlein; (received an excellent mark).

2) Alien Civilizations in the Chanur Saga by American SF writer C. J. Cherryh; (received an excellent mark).

3) Social and philosophical problems in the Saga of Pliocene Exile by American SF writer Julian

May; (received a good mark) (and I sent a xerox copy of the title page to Julian May, with whom I correspond occasionally).

4) British SF writer Brian Aldiss and his *Helliconia* trilogy; (received an excellent mark).

5) Analysis of the octology *Chung Kuo* by British SF writer David Wingrove; (received a good mark).

After the successful defence of their papers, my students and I decided to celebrate it by having a small dinner party in my apartment. We drank some wine, and the first toast was to Science Fiction, an miraculous means of uniting SF fans all over the world....

In general life in Vladivostok is far from being pleasant. For about a year there has been a severe shortage of fresh water in Vladivostok, due to the absence of rains in the vicinity and over the town, thus the city's reservoirs of fresh water are almost empty. (And the situation is getting even worse). There's no fresh water (fresh water is supplied into the apartment houses only for 23 hours once in 2-3 days), but there are mass strikes of people of various professions - workers, miners teachers, doctors and so on, as their salaries haven't been paid for 56 months, and some people don't have money even for bread....

Well, in order not to sound too pessimistic, I wish you and all the readers of *THE MENTOR* to have a good and pleasant rest in summer!

Clear Ether! (21.7.98)

[*And a much better time for you ahead, also, Yuri! - Ron. ]*

**JOHN J. ALDERSON, PO Box 72, Maryborough, VIC 3465.**

... I am shocked at the shrinkage of *THE R&R DEPT*. Under whatever name I usually find it the most interesting part of a journal ... and that includes newspapers. I confess I have not been the greatest of correspondents in the last year or so. This was not helped by four bouts in hospital. Contrary to any evil reports floating about this was not caused by an over-indulgence in that excellent Alderson's homebrew. Come to think of it I don't think I've had a taste for a fortnight. Something to do I think, with some of the pills I have to take. Anyone wishing to become a teetotaller can get the type of pills from me, but they are a health-hazard. (-.8.98)

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

I'd gradually working through a pile of fanzines I wanted to loc before I went away on holiday, so thanks for *TM 93*. Excellent description of life in South America by Mae as usual: I'd really like to see all her reminiscences collected together. (BTW it's interesting how fandom brings people together: I was looking through a number of twenty-year old fanzines recently which I'd kept because I had locs in them: in more than one of them there was

also a loc or contribution from Mae. Oh yes, we go back a long time!)

I enjoyed Andrew Darlington on Quatermass. What interests me about that British sf of the 50s was its strong humanitarian and ecological component. In *JOURNEY INTO SPACE*, for example, a very strong message about how the human race is ruining the natural resources of the planet is inserted into the scenes where Jet Morgan and Co are transported back through time into a "past" Earth. The only thing I'd quarrel with is where Andrew refers to three sf images which escaped the sf ghetto in the 1950s: Quatermass, Dan Dare and *JOURNEY INTO SPACE*. He's missing, of course, John Wyndham's *THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS* which as book and radio serial brought sf into millions of homes. More so than the others, of course, this was "disguised" sf: Wyndham became published as mainstream (remember that horrible bit on the Penguin covers about "decided to try a modified form of what is unhappily called 'science-fiction'" which I think may have been written by Wyndham himself) and had this identification of being middle-class and "cosy", which is largely misreading what is there.

Only a handful of critics have really *looked* at Wyndham, I think: Owen Webster's *JOHN WYNDHAM AS NOVELIST OF IDEAS* was written in 1959 but not published until Bruce Gillespie featured it in *SF COMMENTARY* in 1973 and apart from that it wasn't until the '90s that people like Rowland Wymer in *FOUNDATION* and (most recently) Maureen Speller in the fanzine *BANANA WINGS* really tackled the cliché of Wyndham and the "cosy catastrophe". But even if one discounts this revisionism, the triffid was the other big image of 50s British sf. Certainly I remember listening to the radio dramatisation of *THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS* which confirmed what I'd decided on hearing *JOURNEY INTO SPACE*, that there was this thing which I was later to hear called "science fiction" and it was rather wonderful. (Incidentally, although I know of Dan Dare and thought he was great, I never saw the *EAGLE* regularly and never really liked it apart from Dan Dare, and because we didn't live permanently in England until 1963 and never had access to British TV until then I never saw the Quatermass serialisations first time round - though having seem them since I entirely endorse what Andrew has to say about them. (27.8.98)

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

I was surprised and pleased to see a new issue of *THE MENTOR*. It seemed like such a long while since I had had anything come from Australia, and I miss your commentators when I don't get a regular dose of their wide-ranging views of the world.

This time read Andrew Darlington's piece on Quatermass with more than usual attention, for one of our cable channels has been running the

films. Unfortunately, they start them at a time inconvenient for me. I was able to identify what I was seeing as a BBC production - I've watched enough DR WHO and BLAKE'S SEVEN to know their style.

I may be excused for this gaff, because what I was seeing was the edited version of QUATERMASS AND THE PIT, which does retain that serial quality. Had I known there were to be more I might have done some research and set the VCR. AS it was I got to watch the aliens being dug out in the tube station, a party that does have the highly identifiable quality of the BBC's special effects of the fifties and sixties.

Mae was as interesting as always. Shyer than she, I might not view being cheek by jowl with some of her neighbors with such unfailing good will. About the time my faucets ran yellow I might have been in the streets with blood in my eye. Mae is too wise for that, I guess.

Buck was especially interesting, since Pennsylvania, despite the early settlers best efforts to exterminate the local tribes, does have Indians, and they are proud of their heritage. I was surprised that Blue Jacket was not better remembered in his native area, since there was at one point a book about him, YA-level I think, that was used in schools, the point being that the Indians were more accepting than the whites.

I doubt any honors should be handed out to either side, since human beings frequently behave horribly when the opportunity arises. Look at southeastern Europe, for example, or the slowly boiling stew of the Middle East.

At any rate, a welcome issue, and I hope to hear from you again sooner than Real Soon Now. Special thanks to Chuck Ross, without whose assistance my copy might never have wended its way to me by seemail. (4.9.98)

**JOHN MILLARD, Laidley, Queensland**

Andrew Darlington's QUATERMASS article

was one of his best. I noticed that QUATERMASS CONCLUSION (filmed in August 1978) was first broadcast, in Britain, in late 1979. I don't know when it was first broadcast here, but I did see it in 1983. I missed the last episode because we were moving house at the time.

The THROUGH OTHERS EYES articles by Richard Reeve are a good idea. It is interesting to see the differing views people had of writers like Wells and Poe. John Clute, in his book SCIENCE FICTION: THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA, writes: "Poe is of endless interest. He was a terrible man - an alcoholic and a paedophile, who lived in self-induced, depressive squalor - and, many think, a pretty bad writer. There is a noisy, posturing inflatedness about even his best work, as though one were being orated to by a confidence-man whose tricks have long passed their sell-by date. But at the same time, he is deeply original: he

virtually invented the short story as an art form, he created the detective tale, and mixed together supernatural and scientific elements with considerable sophistication in stories that continue to mesmerize."

There are some people who believe he may even have been a murderer. His story THE MYSTERY OF MARIE ROGET (1842) is based on the real life murder of Mary Rogers. The body of the 21 year old was found in the Hudson River, New Jersey, in July 1841. She had been sexually assaulted and strangled. Though it is accepted by most that he knew her, he was never questioned by the police. In the story, which he writes with extensive knowledge of the case, he does not reveal the murderer.

For John Haines (TM 92), PIG ON A LEAD (1963) was written by Derek Ingrey. (18.9.98)

**MICHAEL HAILSTONE, 14 Cecil Road, Blackheath, 2785.**

Firstly, note the postal address.

Andrew Sullivan's IN INFINITE NIGHT AND MEMORY is very good, in that he sets up a good mystery that keeps the reader turning the pages, the mystery unravelling as he flashes back and forwards in time, but the science is hopeless. To reach one tenth of light speed (0.1c) one would need to accelerate continuously at one gravity for about five weeks, or a whole year at a gentle acceleration of one tenth gravity. In the former case the spaceship would travel about 300 astronomical units, about eight times the distance of Pluto's orbit, in the latter, ten times that far. And using Jupiter as a slingshot in such a case is an utterly ludicrous idea. This works for the NASA probes, which travel at much lower speeds. I'm not sure exactly how this works, but I think it's a combination of Jupiter's strong gravity together with his orbital speed of about 13 kilometres per second, a tiny fraction of the speed of Sullivan's spaceship. The story could have worked quite well with no mention of all the mechanics of getting up to 0.1c, as this is not at all essential to the plot. I liked the name for the disease that afflicts the surviving crew members: Resnick-Simmons syndrome, which shortens to R-S. Nice pun there. Was it intentional?

How come nobody in the Futurian Society thought to include Heinlein's REVOLT IN 2100 amongst the sundry rebellions in science-fiction?

I was puzzled by Pavel Viaznikov's mention of the lack of "AC" in his hotel room in Bombay. I thought he was saying something about the electric current, and it took me some time to fathom what he meant. Did he somehow gather, when he learnt English, that we usually refer to air-conditioning by its initials? I have never come across such usage anywhere else.

I had a few laughs at his dialogue in Indian English, though I understood very little of it; it reminded me of the strine craze here back in the sixties. I ought to reproduce a few examples of that here, but I no longer have Afferbeck Lauders little

book with me, but I'll try to give a couple of short examples here:

Tigers eat mite - "Please sit down"  
 Ah would never glue - "I don't know"  
 Gloria Sarah Titch - our homeland  
 Gloria Soame - a suburban house (esp. for sale)  
 Carmen F.T. Withers - an invitation to dinner  
 Guise along henga Tarzan ong sly cat - hirsute musicians and their ilk.  
 Money - the day after Sunny  
 Aorta - the vessel carrying the lifeblood of strine  
 public opinion.

And of course, as you published in TM #44 all those years ago:

Aorta mica Laura genst all ease prairlers an sleshers an pervs. Aorta puttem in jilen shootem. Atted fixem!

Brad Row is not quite right in saying that no traces of the Frankish language survive in modern French. Some germanic words do survive, such as *guerre*, akin to our *war*, and *guerra* in Spanish and Italian) replacing Latin *bellum*.

I am just flummoxed by some of Julie Vaux's "phonetic" (note the quotes!) spelling: "akos th ratha brood aksen". She's got me there. What strange kind of English does she speak? Putting a "z" on "since" and "vengeance"? Not I, never in a screaming fit. And how on Earth does she get "dedth" out of "death" instead of "deth"? But does Bridh Hancock believe in *phonetic* spelling rather than just reforming it? I feel I should put in two bobs worth here on phonetic spelling. I disagree violently with the late Harry Lingren, who was not willing to settle for less than 100% phoneticity. As far as I'm concerned, that just won't work. Harry went so far overboard as to propose that, not just individual words, but *sentences* should be spelt exactly as pronounced in everyday speech, rather as in strine above. I feel that this would only make spelling harder, not easier, because one would waste most of one's time writing in trying to work out exactly how one pronounces every word in a given phrase or sentence. For example, the word "to", which has just one spelling in the present form, would have *three* spellings in his! Writing and speaking are two distinctly different activities. Samuel Johnson two hundred years ago made a very good point, that pronunciation is too fickle and variable for phonetic spelling to be practicable. Since pronunciation of so many words varies from place to place and between individuals, classes and generations, the only feasible reformed spelling would be one that is sensible, logical and consistent and makes an honourable compromise between the different forms of *educated* spoken English. Even Harry agreed with me that the final "r" in words like "grammar" should be kept, since this is sounded in most of North America, much of Britain and Ireland.

Terry Jeeves accused me of "lashing out in all directions in my loc in TM #90. He could well be right. I need to remind myself now and then to stick

to the point and concentrate on the most important issue, which here was the right to discuss and question the received wisdom on WW2 in Europe without being branded a social outcast. He wants examples instead of generalisations, or example, the British skulduggery. All I sed about that was, "Never mind the skulduggery on the part of the British and Americans behind [the sinking of the Lusitania]", when I sed *never mind*, I meant exactly that: it was irrelevant to the point I was making. I put that in only because I thought that that skulduggery was common knowledge nowadays, but maybe Terry hasn't heart of it. I refer to Churchill's dark machinations of luring that ill-fated liner into the path of a U-boat, and the unlawful stowing of munitions aboard her. If Terry is really interested, I can refer him to a book titled LUSITANIA by Colin Simpson (Penguin 1972, 1983), which he may find in his library. When I was in La Paz, Bolivia, I came across the April 1994 issue of NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC carrying an article on Robert Ballard's dive to the wreck, reporting that he could find no evidence of the ship having been sunk by an explosion of a cargo of munitions, thus the massive internal explosion must have been caused by white damp or coal-dust. This seems to have sunk the Titanic's sister ship Britannic, which, as a hospital ship, struck a mine in the Mediterranean and sank in only 55 minutes just eighteen months after the sinking of the Lusitania. And she was a lot more unsinkable than the Titanic!

But I was not lashing out at skulduggery. Terry suggests that I am judging WW2 by today's social standards. Well, yes and no. If anything, I was lashing out at one of my pet hates: hypocritical double standards. Indeed, I was judging WW2 by the standards of WW1 and earlier. I need to remind myself and others that the mindset behind the atrocious allied holocaust bombing is still with us today, a point that has been largely sadly missed by the peace movement throughout the cold war.

Let me tell you a tale. In the early eighties somebody invented the nuclear winter. As a result people were going around more depressed than ever. I found this very odd. This implied the hideous notion that nuclear war would be too bad if it were not for the winter. A television program on this stated that the normal aim in warfare was to inflict the maximum damage on the enemy. Hence the nuclear winter was an inevitable outcome. But who ever sed so? If that's the case, then how come the British didn't nuke Buenos Aires and other cities in their war with Argentina? Why didn't they touch the Argentine mainland, let alone inflict maximum damage?

The really monstrous notion was, that, since the Allies bombed both enemy and enemy-occupied cities to rubble in WW2, it was logical for the first atomic bombs also to be dropped on women and children. As soon as that war ended, the cold war began, and the common idea of a third world war was of planes or missiles lobbing megaton nuclear

bombs on cities. But the peace movement was born out of fear rather than out of anger that the mad warmongers should hold the world's civilians to ransom. I tried to point this out in the early eighties, after having just come to look at it that way myself, only to make deadly foes. By God. No, it's true; I really don't understand people. What am I missing?

By the way, has Terry, who lived through WW2, any idea why the Allies bombed civilians in *occupied* (not enemy) countries, such as Hungary in early 1945? That makes no sense to me; it wouldn't even if I believed in the need for "strategic" bombing (to use one of those ghastly warmonger's euphemisms).

This evening on television there is showing THE DAY OF THE ROSES, a docudrama on the Granville disaster. In a letter written in 1994, which he took nearly four years to send me, Eric Lindsay told me that he was on that train. He owes his life to getting off at Parramatta, the last station before the crash, since he had been riding in one of the crushed carriages. Creepy eh? What about you, Ron? You too lived in Faulconbridge then (I take it) and probably commuted daily to the city.

*[I was off on three days leave at that time (I can't remember what kind of leave). I usually caught either that train, or the one later. I was lucky. - Ron.]*

Later: it's on now. During the election campaign that brought the Wran Labor government into office, I was involved in the public-transport campaign, going on television one evening wherein a number of speakers aired their grievances about the service. The second-last speaker was a middle-aged man from Emu Plains (I worked that out from the list of crash dead), although he belonged to a Penrith-based transport-user's group. He had a good sense of humour. I learnt of his death at a meeting of our group eight months later, a few days after the disaster. Little did he know how unsatisfactory his service was. I don't remember his name, but the only victim who fits him on the list is Milton Hunter (Tony) Walker, 45, agronomist of River Road, Emu Plains. (18.10.98)

Ben Peeks SEEING BLACK AND WHITE fails to make sense at the end, as all god sleuth fiction should. We learn who did it, but how? How did the aliens in the dig manage to murder the victim in the dome? Did they use psychokinesis? I also had some misgivings about the boyfriend jumping to his death. How far would one need to fall in the weak Martian gravity to kill oneself? I have no idea myself. I don't even know how far one needs to fall on Earth, but of course that depends on a number of factors such as the hardness of the ground one hits.

James Verran's piece on word processing only left me more confused than before.

Pavel Viaznikov's tale of his visit to the Netherlands (that's the country's proper name, not "Holland") reminded me of my own visit to Amsterdam back in 1969. It was summer when I was

there though and quite not. I'd just published my tale I my latest very-small-circulated zine. It includes a walk around the red-light district. Why why is the snapshot of the beer temple printed back to front?

I'm a bit puzzled by Darren Goossen's obsession with lead in the fifth installment of his history of science. I know that lead is the end-product in the radioactive decay of uranium, so maybe that has something to do with it, though in one case he has clearly made a grammatical error: Obviously line 3 in paragraph 4 in column 2 should read "This *leads* to her death..." Third person *singular*, not plural.

Mae Strelkov should be grateful to Britain and Maggie Thatcher by defeating Argentina in that way they freed the country of that horrible junta and allowed the return of democracy. What an irony!

You know, I was reading in *New Dawn* last week that genetic research has shown that the English are really Celtic. I goggled at that. I was going to acknowledge that John Alderson could well be right after all, but then the bloody accursed magazine underwent singularrhosis – or rather, more accurately, it failed to make it back from a trip to Penrith (DMIB from Penrith, as I record such happenings, which prove to me that the university is totally irrational), so I'm afraid I cannot follow up this matter any further. (10.2.99)

*(Editorial. cont. from p.46)*

A major event coming up this year is the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Futurian Society of Sydney, on the 20<sup>th</sup> November.

After Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* sponsored the Science Fiction League in 1934, to quote from a pamphlet from the 59<sup>th</sup> event: "at least three proposals for branches in Australia were made, and the Sydney Science Fiction League met for the first time on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1935 and lasted about a year. Leaflets placed in second-hand magazines seem to have been the only attempted publication.

"Continued group activity began in 1939. Several high school students started a Junior Australian Science Fiction Correspondence Club. But it was soon realised that a local group was a better idea. FSS (The Futurian Society of Sydney) was the name adopted when the club held its first meeting on 5 November 1939. The first idea was to revive the League branch which they had heard about, though they had not had contact with it. There was still a loose association of local bodies abroad with some free publicity to be had in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*.

But these readers had already been in touch with Don Wolheim and Frederick Pohl in New York, dissidents from the League (which was by no means the united force it seemed) and prominent in a live-wire alternative clique that had just adopted the name of Futurians. The Sydney club did the same, showing their position in a controversy of the time.

So, the Futurian Society of Sydney it was – and still is, though it has not been continuously active over the years."

There is some thought being put into what event/s to hold to celebrate in November, but at least there will be a dinner/meeting. Drop a line to the FSS, care of the address of this zine.

There are certain SF topics that crop up perennially – one concerns some of the people who stand for fan funds. It is obvious that they are only in it for the free trip and accommodation. No-one had heard of them outside of their own clique, and they only put out a short-term fanzine until they win the trip. After the trip is taken they gafiate.

The second topic is how to differentiate a "real" fanzine from the semi/commercial breed of magazine for the Hugo's/other awards. My proposed definition was that a fanzine is a publication that *is not printed commercially*.

This would disclude magazines such as AUREALIS and EIDOLON which are principally commercial magazines, and other magazines that are aiming for the commercial banner, and which are not really amateur publications....

This is the last planned issue of THE MENTOR for the foreseeable future. It is beginning to be a chore getting it out. So it is time for me to have a break from pubbing. With any luck, the next series of issues will start in a couple of years, in 2001. Best of luck to THE MENTOR'S faithful readers, thanks to the contributors, and yes, I would will like to see LoCs on thish. - Ron.

# The Mentor 94

## March 1999

### CONTENTS

ANIME MINE	Peter Brodie	p. 2
HIT DELETE	Brent Lillie	9
THOMAS BURNETT SWAN	Andy Darlington	11
HUMAN BEHAVIOUR	Richard Reeve	18
HIGHEST GROUND	Peter Brodie	20
TRAVELLING MUSCOVITE	Pavel Viaznikov	21
POETRY, TOO	Giovanni Malito, Richard Reeve, Bill West, Peter Brodie, M.-L. Stephens, Meryl Brown Tobin, Tom Kretz, Lloyd Michael Lohr, M.S. Raper, E.D. Paul	27
SCIENCE DICTIONARIES	Jim Verran	31
A PLANET MUCH LIKE EARTH	Mae Strelkov	33
BEYOND THIS WORLD	Meryl Tobin Brown	42
THE YANKEE PRIVATEER	Buck Coulson	45
FANTASY FICTION	Sean Alan Wallace	46
THE R&R DEPT	Letters	51
ARTWORK:	Cover – Tonia Walden Peggy Ranson p.10, 19, 26, 32. Terry Jeeves p.41; Anon Russian p.44	

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