



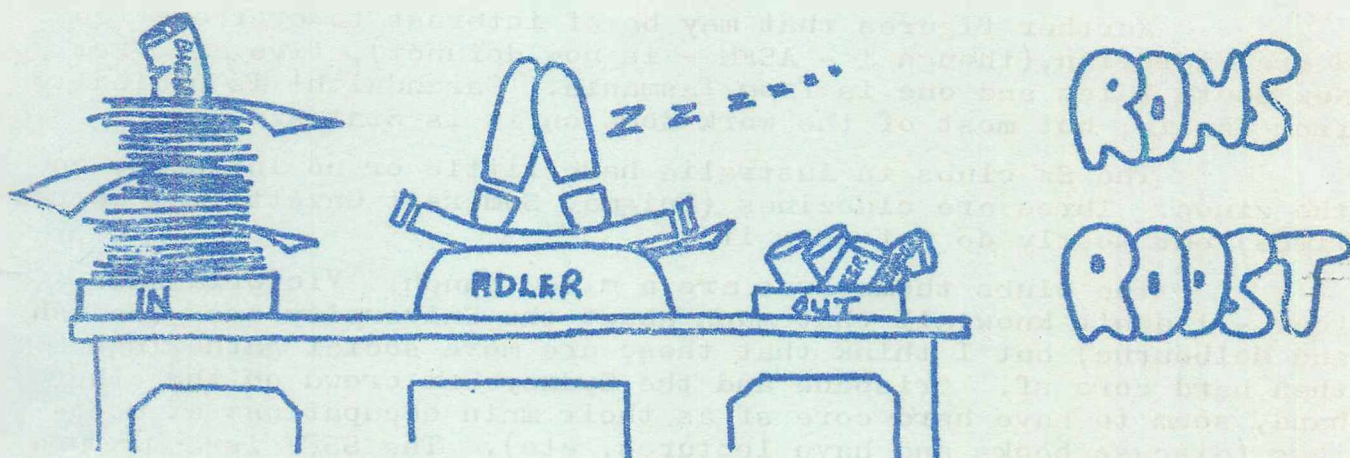
02

NOTES

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### AUSTRALIAN FANZINES - TOO SERCON?

It has been the custom in the past that to have a zine have the label 'Sercon' stuck on it is its detriment; at least the general feeling was that for your zine to be called Sercon was no at all that good. Even now the title is not welcomed by much of Australian fandom. A fanzine described as 'fannish' has usually a better reputation than one which is 'Sercon'.

Why?

Well, some of this is undoubtedly a carry over from the Feuding Fifties of Australian Fandom, when most of the activities were centered around Serious Constructive (Dest..) activities - whose practitioners are mostly out of current fandom. It is a peculiar thing that with the almost worshipful attitude to 'fannish' orientated writings /activities of various fen - their trials and tribulations; humorous writing slanted to comic strip-like activities/ the majority of fanzines in this country are Sercon.

Below are listed fourteen fanzines which have been published this year in Australia. I have noted alongside each one whether it is mostly Sercon (S), partly Sercon ( $\frac{1}{2}$ S) or nil Sercon (F). I have taken the discussion of science fiction as prerequisite for Sercon.

A.S.F.M. (S)  
AUST. IN '75. (S)  
BOY'S OWN FANZINE (F)  
ENIGMA (S)  
THE FANARCHIST (F)  
GEGENSCHNEIN ( $\frac{1}{2}$ S)  
CHAO (S)

THE MENTOR (S)  
NORSTRILIAN NEWS (S)  
SCYTHROP ( $\frac{1}{2}$ S)  
S F COMMENTARY (S)  
TOLKIEN BULLETIN (S)  
TERRAN TIMES ( $\frac{1}{2}$ S)  
SOMERSET GAZETTE ( $\frac{1}{2}$ S)

Which gives us 8 S's, 4  $\frac{1}{2}$ S's and 2 F's - both Victorian.

Further figures that may be of interest to overseas fans: 8 are Victorian, (though 1 - ASFM - is now defunct), five are from New South Wales and one is from Tasmania. 'Carandaith' is nominally from Tassie, but most of the work done on it is Stateside.

The SF clubs in Australia have little or no influence on the zines. Three are clubzines (Enigma, Somerset Gazette and Terran Times) but mostly do not show it.

The clubs themselves are a mixed bunch. Victoria has four - I don't know all that much about the University ones (Monash and Melbourne) but I think that these are more social gatherings than hard core sf. Brisbane and the Sydney Uni crowd on the other hand, seem to have hard core sf as their main occupations at meetings (discuss books and have lectures, etc). The SSFF is a mixture of both and it is only when the meeting is actually underway can one know just what is going to follow. DUSK is something in itself. I have almost nothing on Adelaide Uni's activities, but I suppose it too is mostly social at the moment.

I think the main reason that the fanzines are Sercon in the main is that there is so little organised discussion of sf going on. And the luke warm reception of 'fannish' zines from the vast mass of readers (potential and otherwise) is because most of the fans are sf orientated. After all, interstate fans, unless they have a fannish interest beforehand (like, have met the fellows who write the stuff - it is surprising how many potential fans are turned off when they read the so-called 'feuds' that fly back and forth between fans everywhere. It is also surprising the untrue picture readers get from criticism of other fans whose true attitude is different from their image that is created from their /too often nasty/ comments to each other. At least they always seem to be taken the wrong (worst) way. So much for communication.) would not notice some of the nuances in fan writings. On the other hand, articles, reviews and discussions of sf have a common ground with the sf reader.

Australian fandom has always consisted of individuals who seem to resist organisation, or who at least resent it - as can be seen in the breakup every so often of relations between interstate fans and fan clubs. Another thing about the individuality bit is that I don't think, in the history of Australian fandom (some 50 years) than any fans have married each other.

The whole history of fandom in Australia is or has been Sercon orientated - from the early Cons to the publishing of bibliographical material by various clubs. It is high time that some less serious approach was taken to sf in this country. Too much moaning about the sudden demise of the prozines and the current insistence of the literary worth (or worthlessness) of sf - sf is what it is - entertainment. It started out as Scientific Romances, and still continues in the entertainment business. I don't say that sf can be literary, but first and foremost it's entertainment. And so are fanzines. Its time for a change in direction - too dry and you lose entertainment and readers and enjoyment. Which I, for one, don't want. - Ron.



# THE EXPEDITION

BY ROBERT BOWDEN

They beached their three wooden vessels at the high tide on a barren and windy cove. The seamen plummeted from the bows into the bitter sting of the salt surf and drew up the black ships until they lay, heeled slightly over on the sand with their grey sails furled. Then they began the wait for dawn and let the tide cringe back like a wounded and frightened animal from the deadly shore. Later they drew the two longships and the bulkier transport further up to where the dunes began, far above the high-water mark, to make them secure with ropes like stranded, air-choked kraken from the great ocean deep.

And so with the beginnings of the dawn that gleamed bright off the ships' propellers, had come the sea creatures to feed on the ebb; many strange sea birds and other, unrecognisable living things, with no names the simple seamen could remember. And so the all encompassing and often inaccurate label, for many such organisms were much the same as before the Holocaust:

The Changed Ones. For the shifting post-nuclear ecological balance had brought once rare species into profusion. Much of their former competition, including to a large degree, man, had been exterminated.

When everything else was stowed, the seal was broken on the transport's horse-hold. The horses were stirred from their hibernation and once they were fully awake, urged and goaded down the ramp by sweating men-at-arms.

Soon the landing-beach was black with steaming horses, scraggy sheep, men-at-arms, seamen and one or two thralls; loud with curses and laughter and shouted orders, and over all, the wheeling, crying clouds of disturbed gulls. Supervising the chaos of activity was a tall warrior, who despite his youth had the bearing of innate confidence. His features were strong, yet sensitive, with a thin boyish beard, and a gleaming, chiming suit of chain-mail that seemed out of place hanging on his shoulders. His kite-shield bore the Winged Chariot device of the House of Copenhagen, whilst all the men-at-arms carried unadorned, round bucklers.

Then there was a sudden pause in the bustle. A ragged band of warriors drew itself together, buckled ready and moved out over the dunes with the young aristocrat at its head, pushing tattered horses through the scraggy thin scrub and into the desert.

With morning, the fearful ball of the Sun was tossed skyward. The expedition moved out from the narrow coastal strip and into the central wilderness, guiding the sleepy horses out over the great flats of dry earth. Turbulent curtains of heat and dust wavered in the middle distance, and occasional washed-out and steep gulleys, etched away like the pox infected wrinkles on the face of an old crone, barred their way. But they pushed their reluctant animals down into them, through the waterless bowls of clogging powder at the bottom and up the crumbling steep at the far edge. So they pushed the horses on through the arid oceans of heat.

"How far in are the places of death, Harald Ottarson?" asked a thick-set warrior.

"Many lengths yet, friend archer." replied the young leader.

They were Northerners, large and muscular, hardened with many voyages and many raids, brutal in their bland barbarism with the finely wrought swords and the skilled ship-building technology of Northern Europe behind them. They were feared for their ferocity throughout the Old World from the negroid kingdoms at Romeburg and Gyptus to the mongoloid empire of Southern Siberia which even still possessed a rudimentary firearm technology.

The legends concerning the New World had drawn them to this coast, across the Burning Ocean with its endless days without sight of land, with hunger and thirst. But a craving far stronger than actual hunger or thirst had drawn them; a craving for gold. Like the ancient warlords of distant Gyptus, the ancient ones of the New World had their tombs. This land was said to be laden with the treasures of the ancient ones, who had almost attained the level of gods in their limitless power. Such tales had been started by the return of the greatest of seafarers, Ragnar Dragonsbane, who was almost a demi-god now among the peasant folk and the simple warriors, and had been confirmed by other wanderers. So this band had skirted the immense seas of black obsidian and the flowing ruins whose ethereal glow had illuminated the bright shore, to beach their ships on the desert of gold.

But Harald Ottarson was a good deal more learned man than any during the first great upsurge of Nordic barbarism except perhaps Charlemagne and very many in the second such upsurge. While these simple House-earls had made the arduous transoceanic trek for the loot of the new continent; the gold and other trinkets and as many of whatever native girls there were ready for rape, Ottarson had made the journey to gain whatever of the science and technology of the ancient ones there was to retrieve from the irradiated ashes of their antique empires and the residue of the subsequently departed centuries. And the irreverent plundering and vandalism of other Northmen.

He was one of the few that knew what had happened to Dragonsbane and his comrades. In the great stone-built fortress of Copenhagen, in which he had been brought up and which had actually overlaid the remains of some ancient city, he had seen the only remaining radio receiver in Northern Europe. A thrall technician

5.  
from Middle Siberia had been coerced into repairing it. Soon after, Njal Fairhair, the shrewd old Warlord of Copenhagen, had blood-eagled that slant-eyed thrall. The thrall's transient usefulness had been finished and aristocrats had no liking for yellow Marxists.

The peasant legends told of Woden's chariot which had come to take up Dragonsbane and his lieutenant Ottar Haroldson, Harald's own father. But listening to the strange messages that crossed the sky unseen, had revealed that the "chariot" had been the winged vessel of a great skyfolk who were skilful shamans but no gods. There had been trouble in the sky. Which was to be expected, considering they had taken Northmen. There had been trouble and some strange and terrible calamity.

But it was never clear. What was clear was that the skyfolk had gained the knowledge of the building of winged vehicles from the learning of the ancient ones. That knowledge might still remain in the ashes.

And so the bastard son of Ottar Haroldson and Helga Heimirsdottir had been brought up in the alien court of the Lord of Copenhagen with the study of what meagre ancient writings were there, and once old enough and experienced with expeditions down past the forests of the Danube to the Middle Ocean and Romeburg, he had led his enterprise in the footsteps of his father, across the Burning Ocean.

The series of ragged horsemen trekked on across the cracked face of the desert. In the evening, their lances were black needles pressed against the inflamed red wound of the dying sun. Ottarson called a halt for the meagre evening meal of salted ship rations.

With very little warning the second day opened out like a square cut blazing jewel on the slouching line of riders, holding the expeditoon almost stationary in the oppressive prison of infinitely blue brilliance. Bearded and gaunt, Ottarson pushed his horse through the gusts of gritty sand, leading his motley cavalcade through a tunnel of red light. Each day during the very worst of the midday heat they rested themselves and the horses and shared some water. The daytime extreme, more than the severe night cold, wore at them.

There seemed to be no natives, although some of the earlier mariners had been said to have seen them.

That evening, a sheep was made to offer up its throbbing throat to Ottarson in sacrifice and surrender its life to his dirk as it drank into a thickly resigned spurt of blood. The fresh meat seemed to give them all strength. Some warriors sat by the evening fire and polished their equipment to pass the time. Some of the bucklers soon reflected the flame brilliantly and later caught the morning Sun blindingly. Others played chess on a board that one had brought in a saddle bag. Many just slept.

On the fourth morning Ottarson and his retinue moved into



the graveyard of the ancient ones. from the distance the sprawl of cylinders appeared like an expanse of insect eggs laied by the old civilisation like some huge dying butterfly.

As they had moved nearer, it was seen that the great cylindrical metallic cocoons had been set at respectful distances from each other in neat and orderly rows. They had all once been antiseptic white, but now the purity of their clinical exteriors was marred by dirty scabs of irreverent rust.

As the warriors dismounted and walked down, leading their horses between the rows, the whole area took the appearance of the dying place of some strange huge variety of elephant with the ivory clutter of its skeletal remains all round.

Lying on the sand, before the first of the cylinders, there had remained the dilapidated message boarding of the sign that would have once stood before them. It was inscribed in the ancient runes, reading:

#### GREEN PASTURES FREEZATORIUM

Medical marvels march on, and between the time when your loved one passes on, the discovery by those marvelous doctors of the cure and your loved one's inevitable rebirth, why not have your loved one accomodated in the idyllic, pastoral and scientifically guaranteed surroundings of GREEN PASTURES FREEZATORIUM.

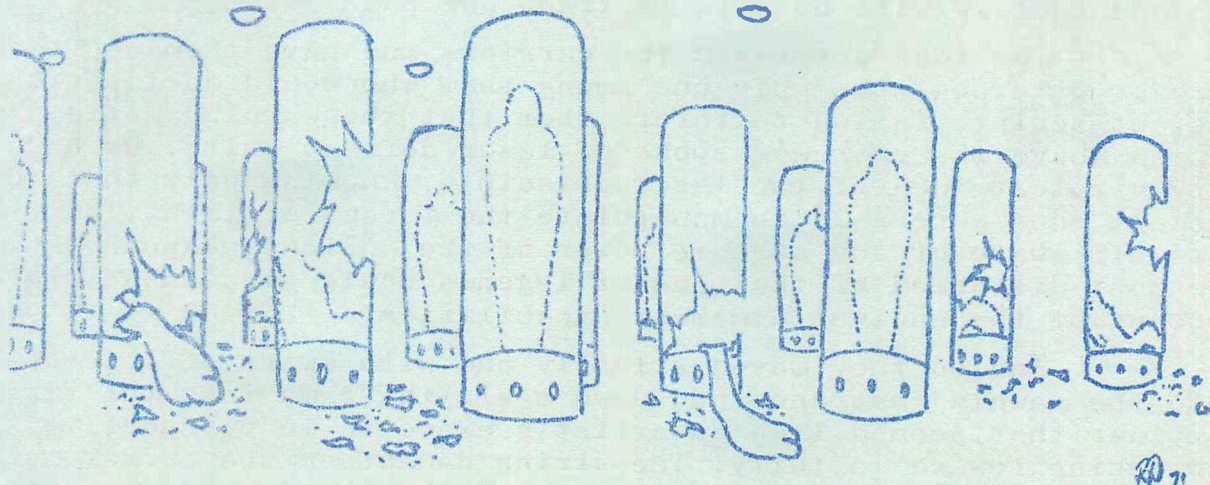
Ottarson noticed that many cylinders had been broken into long ago, the valuable contents stolen and the perishable contents left to thaw in a steaming puddle of liquid nitrogen until they either were scavanged by the mountain wolves or rotted to the point where they finally disappeared in the gusty clouds of radioactive dust.

The remainder had been broken into more recently....

The odor was all-pervading and the warriors were happy to move from this outer region and up to the beginning of the catacombs.

During the age before, it had been said by many that you could not take it with you. But the ~~proprietors~~ of Green Pastures Freezatorium had shown otherwise. Even in their earliest capsule prototypes they had made provision for the storage of any material the deceased might have hoped to be valuable to him in the Second Life. Though the economists pointed out that it had very little intrinsic value and probably would be worthless to a futuristic society, gold was the most popular choice. Platinum was the alternative usually chosen if the customer did not want his tomb interior gilded. One or two had enough faith to include stocks and bonds. A very few took out insurance policies.

Thus the gravest problem, even long before the Freezatorium was abandoned, was with tomb robbers. Initially the proprietors had installed the most modern security system available to them, but



the incentive proved so great to the plunderers that often their ingenuity managed to overcome these mere mechanical devices and get themselves through. As a result of such systems the pillaging and willful destruction only abated temporarily, and then was taken up again on even a larger scale as large criminal organisations took up the challenge.

So deep beneath the Freezatorium area the cryonics company began to construct the most modern capsules; each designed to resemble some marvelously science-fictional spaceship so the occupant would not be ashamed of his cubicle when he woke in the twenty-fifth century. Each of these was housed in a cooling unit large enough to contain two hundred Loved Ones, and the finest IBM computer was permanently hired to co-ordinate the security-defense system. It had been found that human guards could be bribed, or even do some pilfering themselves. All this was placed deep beneath the earth behind the defensive screen of a number of laser units and a maze of corridors. The key to the computer release mechanism of the defensive system had been known only to the proprietors of the Freezatorium and a copy had been placed in the vault of the U.S. National Bank, to be held in trust and released only when it was certain that the individuals enclosed in the capsules could be revived and cured.

But of course all that had gone up in the Holocaust.

"It would seem," said Ottarson, "that there is a major cache of ancient gold and artifacts hidden within these passages. However the former parties only sent tentative expeditions down into them. Nothing was found and several men did not return from

the labyrinth."

There was a murmur among the assemblage of warriors.

"But we shall not be lost in the maze. The party will keep together and like Theseus we'll attach a length of twine outside the catacombs. It will be unwound as we pass down the corridors and thus we will be able to trace our path out."

The idea surprised the warriors and gave them confidence. However Ottarson, the only one among them who would decipher the ancient script, failed to inform them that the warning notice posted above the entrance spoke of laser defense units. He had the very simplest idea of the laser principle, knowing only that the ancient ones were able to manipulate the forces of light, but he was well aware of the awesome power of the ancient weapons. Even the most distorted of the peasant legends could give an accurate account of the ancient armament capabilities.

And so they moved silently and with swift efficiency into the yawning entrance and down a sloping ramp into the first corridor that seemed like an artist's exercise in perspective stretching toward infinity. The string caught on the corner as they passed down into the passage from which there branched a number of anonymous side-galleries. There were light-fixtures set at regular intervals on the ceiling. Most were still operative, but many had long ago imploded in a dying burst of incandescence. And there had been no repairs.

The warriors stalked warily, rings of mail jarring and chiming faintly as they moved. Some held their swords, stark and ready. Some of the corridors were thrown out of plumb with the main artery, collapsed downward and disjointed by up to six inches. Sometime in the past, Ottarson reasoned, there had been an earthquake.

The party turned into the thirteenth entrance on their left, through that passage past six more ingresses; into the seventh. Then they found themselves in total darkness. Every fixture in the passage was fused and useless. They passed feelingly down that corridor. Armour chinked in fear. There was a dry cough. The faint arch of entrance light was gone. Without realisation they had passed beyond that catacomb section. The string trailed behind them like a bedraggled reminder of the sunlight they had left.

Then they were on a slight downward incline. One of the fixtures was giving out its friendly emissions. It was a welcome sight. Its light glinted on the sweat on men's faces. It was soon left behind, but fixture beacons appeared with increasing regularity in the sweating wilderness of darkness. As the party advanced further through the maze, the lights suddenly became very abundant. Fear evaporated and jubilant archers began to practice their marksmanship on selected fixtures.

Then there was more of the night. But up ahead was yet another oasis of light. This time, only a few warriors moved ahead in jubilation. Most were becoming accustomed to black areas. Suddenly, as a warrior stepped beyond the light, a voice issued from the sentient darkness beyond:



"Halt. All personnel pass beyond this point at their own risk. Passage beyond this point is prohibited. Trespassers will encounter a laser defense unit.

"Repeat. Trespassers will encounter a laser defense unit.

"You have been warned."

The warrior's sword whipped out instantly. He moved out to make it drink blood. Parallel bolts of liquid light-intensity lanced in from the walls and the warrior dissolved in a pink fountain-spray of blood and flesh.

Only the light-fixture remained to transform the corridor into a perfect luminous egg. An archer remembered that the warrior had been standing silhouetted in front. His arrow sliced out and fractured the fixture in a violet splatter of albus light and glass shell. Blackness clapped in.

The voice echoed hollowly: "You have been warned." across the darkness and the ignorance.

Ottarson moved the men back. They were cowed by such terrible magic and easily directed. Silently, he assessed the situation for a few moments. He could not afford to lose more warriors.

So he called forward the thick-set archer and commanded: "Erik, I want you to fire arrows through the barrier, shooting high and low in succession."

He did so, and at no matter what levels they were fired the lasers sliced out as they reached that certain point. Apparently there was a detection screen that encompassed the whole corridor. In breaking that screen the arrows activated the lasers. And there was no way to avoid the detection beams.

So somehow they had to pass through the screen of laser fire. Ottarson knew some of the simple properties of light: he knew that no matter how intense a light the ancients could create, it was still subject to reflection.

"Eric," he snapped with urgent command, "bring forward some of those bucklers"

The simple archer moved to fulfill the command.

"Not those. The highly polished ones only."

He accepted the mass of shields and carrying them awkwardly under his arm, moved forward gingerly toward the grey singed puddle-mess that had once been the warrior. He then carefully placed the shields on the floor, slowly, so he did not lose his balance forward; retaining one. Then he extended that one forward parallel to the walls. The grid of light burnt blindingly in front of his face.

The buckler was punched through instantly. Then it began to melt and fuse. Ottarson screamed and dropped it, now a molten mass, to the floor. He staggered. A band of warriors rushed forward

and dragged him back, his hands raw.

As they sat in the corridor huddled and resting, he thought of the mistake. He had faced his mirror away from the source of the beam, which was on the steering oar side, and the terrific heat had been quickly absorbed by the unpolished interior metal and leather of the shield hollow. They ate of the rations and slept, before Ottarson decided he could move forward again. He came up to his pile of shields and took another. Again, he edged it in, and the laser grid sprang outward.

But there was a black gap behind the buckler that grew larger as the shield continued through to its full diameter. The reflected beams played on the wall as Ottarson's hands wobbled in the red web of pain. More often than they did not, these reflected beams struck the generating unit. Within instants it was a burnt out case and each one in succession up and down shorted in billows of putrid black vapour. The grid was eventually shorted right out and the units a blackened, smoky, cratered column of circuitry that fizzled and crackled occasionally.

The line of warriors rose behind, took up their bucklers and moved through silently. A voice echoed stupidly in the passage behind them:

"Halt. All personnel pass beyond this point at their own risk..."

Although they moved ahead with care, shooting arrows ahead every few hundred yards down the passage, they encountered no further laser grids.

Finally they came through into a huge and cavernous passage stretching into a distance. In a row through the hollow were lofty capsules crowding the ceiling and leading away down the tunnel.

There was a click in a mechanism on the wall beside the entrance. A voice broke the dusty silence:

"Welcome ladies and gentlemen to our freezatorium. If you understand the language please depress the red button on your right."

One of the warriors casually stretched over and pressed the button.

"Ah, it's good to see that English is still the major language. If you had failed to depress the red button I would have continued through any number of languages until I established communication."

There was a satisfied pause.

"On your left gentlemen is a computer console into which we hope you will type any questions you may have. It too is now set to reply in English, but if you prefer any other language, type your request in and if possible the computer will handle it. The computer contains the information on the thawing apparatus we have on hand for any set of patients. If your revival techniques are more

advanced please do not hesitate to go ahead."

Ottarson smiled at that.

"The computer also has on hand any data you may require on our culture, science, technology, customs, social structure, history, literature, and almost anything else you may need. No doubt you are far ahead in all these fields, but some of what we have may be useful to you especially in any problems you may have in reorientating the patients.

"Well gentlemen, I won't keep you any longer, but before you go, please consider that reawakening will be a traumatic experience for many of our patients. Please treat them carefully."

And with that, the barbarians proceeded with their looting.

Ottarson turned to the computer console, and selected a random question which he tapped onto the key board: "What year is it?"

Barely before he lifted his finger from the last letter the machine was printing out its answer:

"2985 A.D."

It was later than he thought. The best estimates of their Copenhagen scholars had placed it as in the 2800s on the old scale. The age of tribalism had lasted longer than they had imagined. He gave his next question a good deal more thought:

"How does one construct a Winged Chariot?"

"The terms of the question are unclear. Please specify. If by a 'Winged Chariot' you are referring to any variety of flying vehicle, which type of vehicle do you mean?"

"One which enables the skyfolk to traverse the distance between the heavenly orbs."

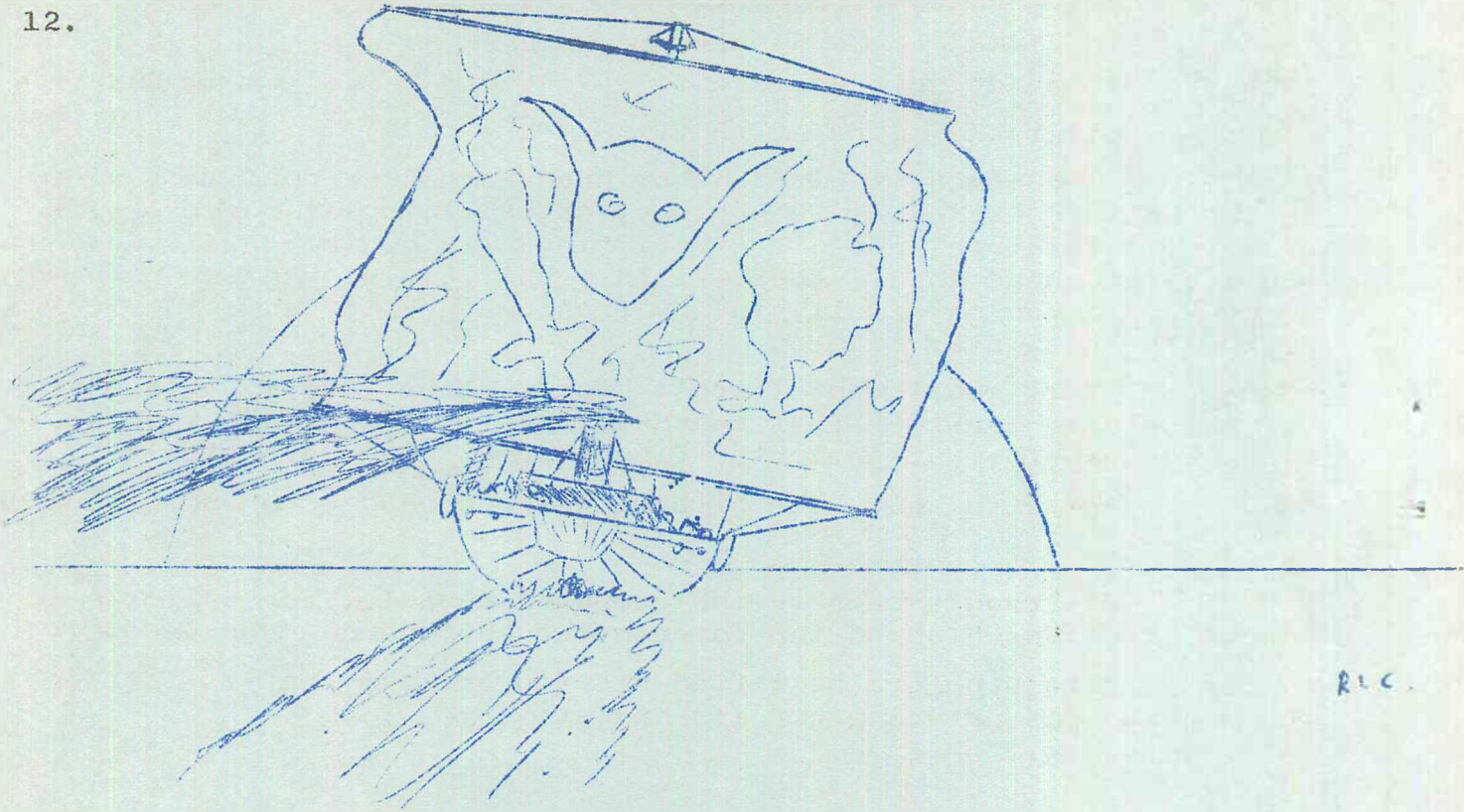
"Spacecraft: Chemical. Atlas, Saturn, Nova.

"Spacecraft: Nuclear. Nerva, Phoebus, Advanced Ion Propulsion."

Then the computer fed out an amount of information, specifications and mathematical equations that quickly left Ottarson far behind. On the basis of his queries, it then fed him the banks on Astronomy and Astronautics; then to clarify further matters it gave him General Science and Mathematics. Soon it was printing out the work on Advanced Maths and Engineering; then Astronautical Engineering and Advanced Construction. If it had been sentient it might have begun to wonder whether he was as highly developed as its designers had imagined he would be. He had long ceased even attempting to understand what the computer printed out, merely fed it leading questions and gathered up the bundles of material that provided the answers. They would be taken back across the ocean.

Then he asked for information on the unseen messages of the skyfolk that were known to cross the heavens. It gave him





Telecommunications: Theory and Practice, making reference to the material on General Science and Mathematics. Ottarson began to gain some understanding of what was going on. On the basis of some of the material in General Science, he asked some exploratory questions. As a response he was given Scientific Method: Its History and Applications; Basic Scientific Experiments; Biology: Geology and Geophysics; Physics; Chemistry; Cosmology. Biology interested him, and so in further response he gained Medicine; Medical Technology; Surgery; Pathology; Anatomy; Biochemistry; Genetics and Evolution; Cryonics.

The roles of paper were beginning to swathe his knees. He realised that soon he would have to pack all the material into his shoulder bag and move away. Meanwhile the warriors were at work; breaking through the outer husks, prodding out the brittle corpses in their pools of fast evaporating coolant, hacking their way down into the ancient treasures. Already they had broken out more than they could possibly transport back across the wilderness or even fit into the storage holds of their wooden ships. And still there was no sign of their activity abating. Ottarson could imagine the pattern. They would leave a trail of loot out back across the desert and huge piles of it on the beaches where it would be found that the ships could not carry it all. He knew too that some would die of the radiation sickness on the return trek. To linger longer was dangerous.

Erik the archer was breaking into a tomb nearby, despite the hoard of booty he already had. Ottarson looked over and saw that it was the tomb of a young maiden. Her hooded eyes stared at him in silent accusation from a face that was like an exquisite

porcelain mask. He became fascinated by her strange and vividly deathless beauty; the long copper hair streaming out along the floor as if an entrained time-wind. He imagined in the past life, in the age before, she may have swept past him on a rainy street outside a library; her long, delicate fingers holding back her hair in the silver rain: her love like a finely shaped urn holding the warmth of a Flower-Sun.

But now the hope of Sun was gone in steaming vapour of burst nitrogen: the Sun which would have warmed the world in warming their bed and found their walls its sphere. Darkness of hopelessness clapped in on him.

The morning brought with it a realisation that while ever the ancients, in their age past, had considered there was a chance of life-giving warmth of such a Sun being rekindled, of their loved ones being resurrected, the northerners were committing murder every time they robbed a tomb. Even if it had only been one chance in a million as the ancients themselves might have bargained on. His mourning mixed with revulsion at his own blighted age. He felt suddenly sick, up from his stomach and across the glistening floor. He gathered up the imprinted rolls of paper into his bag and then rushed out through the corridor into the darkness, past the burnt out laser unit, following the path of twine. After eternity, he reached the clean light and air.

And so he waited for his warriors to dribble back in ones and twos. He wept as he sat looking out at the bones of antique elephants stretching toward a murky horizon. A sickness gathered in him to rise and mix with the disgust.

When the warriors returned to the night sky they found Ottarson dead of radiation poison. In respect of his stated wishes they gathered up his booty to be carried back across the Burning Ocean, even though they saw little value in sheets of paper. They built his pyre on the hill above the labyrinth, and under the direction of Erik the archer, gave him a warrior's funeral. Then they fled away from his muddy flame and back across the desert.

- Robert Bowden.

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The above story is a sequel to "After Ragnarok" (Vision of Tomorrow no.5) and has not been printed previously. There is a third story in the series, some twice the length of the above, called "Impasse", and which is lined up for a future issue of The Mentor, unless it is sold first, of course.

RUNE

Baby ivory and black elephants  
 swaddled in the grey winding sheets of afternoon dust,  
 heavyscented and thick goldengloom;  
 Quivers of bluegray light, blobs of sportsflame,  
 soft pantyhose mesh of romance  
 explode in soft yellow mothflame,  
 even the hard redleaves of sunlight  
 browncurl and die,  
 float onto glassyfire black asphalt.  
 Pianomold, gelatinous, tellyjelly, faunleaf  
 all faunleaving death, dullpain suburbane.

Craggy edges of broken eggshell mix,  
 conglomerate sandochre sharp  
 shapes twisted, gnarled desire root  
 tufts of brownblack steelwool fur  
 scratch and scrape,  
 claw and serrate cut blood deep  
 chaotic broken smiles, branding  
 stabbing at the rawred sky;  
 Jagged root clump defying,  
 erect oldiron cold, stark  
 sliver of singeing piercing night.

Bird, whiteflash in the blacknight  
 delicate white featherstroking the soft bluesilt  
 spuming with cloudfroth  
 swooping gaily through all colours  
 blueballoon bursting, air puff-buffeting.  
 Scraggle of pubebush, blackwiry  
 twisting, light seizing, parallel wire humming,  
 jangle of blackthreads, throttle the sky  
 and the bird.  
 Hangs, sways flat golded black eyedisk  
 alone.

.. Leith Morton.



# SF - THE BREADBASKET

BY JACK WODHAMS

A basket, as every Pommie knows, is an English euphemism for bastard. Thus the title, a play on words - very clever. Just mentioned in case you'd like to know.

Now - after an extended period of bovine rumination, absorbing considerable sf, sf comment and opinion and denunciation, and after mentally chewing over, as it were, the sf cud - CUD, sir! there is no 'r' in the month - it ... Oh, I don't know though. We do begin to wonder which is the greater crap, sf, or what is written about sf. But to continue - thus as stated, after a few years sf contact and experience, and much inner debate, there is here prompting from within to deliver a preliminary draft upon SF: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU, ME, AND HUMANITY, and SF: WHY PEOPLE READ IT, and SF: IS IT LITERATURE? and SF: QUO VADIS? and SF: PROPHETS FOR PROFIT, and SF: SYMBOLIC SYMBOLLIX, and SF: I HAVE NO SCREAM BUT A MOUTHFUL OF FALSE TEETH, and....

SF was probably invented to supply an unconscious need. Or maybe the need of henceto unconscious people. For SF is indeed God's gift to critics.

Where, we might well ask, would we be if it were not for SF? Is there, anywhere in the pantheon (or pantheoff) of written work, material to be found so vulnerable, so openly naive, so incautiously venturesome and begging a bugging, as SF? By the very nature of its labelled content an SF yarn meets scepticism before its first page is turned. At the outset it is known that the credulity of the reader is going to be stretched somewhat - it is just by how much, and how well, that decided between unanimous condemnation, and condemnation with a percentage of dissenters.

As literature, SF is basically farthest out on the limb. A contemporay western, thriller, romance, or suchlike non-SF trash, deals largely with readily comprehensible situations that impose no real strain upon the intellect of the mutt reader.

X "You dad-blamed claim-jumpin' son-of-a-gun!" and Zeke clawed for his Colt .45 and....

X James Bond whipped out his Walther PPK, which she thought was quite a change, and said "allright, Belle Bayre, where have you hidden the Goldfinger?"

She fluttered her eyelashes. "You'll never guess..."

X "Oh, Marsha!" - "Oh, John!"

And then she... and he tenderly.. and she passionately... and he ripped... and she had tears in her eyes... and a lump in her throat - a pill. And she coughed and choked, alarmingly, and he had to send for the doctor, and, really, it quite spoilt his whole night.

This kind of fiction entertains, sometimes passably well, but in the main its authors shy from that which is implausible, and they make great effort, often in vain, to abide by the known in order to achieve conceptual veracity. This, what - mainstream? - stuff does not give reviewers a great deal to work on - characters, characters, nothing but characters, in everyday conditions that a reader can appreciate without sweat. Such mainstream story may be poor, but what intrinsically does it have that can be grasped, nakedly exposed and nailed, to be gleefully flogged and derided?

Friends, the mainstreamer plays it safe, stays within limits and postulates nothing unbelievable. There may be fanzines covering the fictional spy - love - crime - or western fields, but if such exist they can be but anaemic sisters in comparison to those that flourish on the SF scene.

SF is so criticisable! The SF writer, with her/his tiny brain, tries to conceive of the world of the future, of human meeting alien, of the impact of a weird invention, of a society beyond our ken, of monsters and Time-bombs and brains scrambled for breakfast. And SF writers - oh, ha-ha-ha, oh fat innocent lambs - present some of their wildest ideas with the utmost sobriety. Oh, joy! Oh, Blish! This is not JANE EYRE, or THE BIOGRAPHY OF BALDWIN. This is DOOMWORLD TOMORROW, and THE GLOKENSPIEL WALKS AGAIN. "My oh my, manna from heaven, what lovely, lovely rubbish," the vultures crow. "What glorious gorging on gaffs and gone-astray gumption to do, what holes to pick, what faults to find, what delicious gripes, grouses, grumbles, groans and grouching this SF permits us to indulge."

Is so. SF cries out to have its nits picked, its flaws flailed, its boo-boos booed, its dubious dogma of doom disparaged.

SF, as declared, is so criticisable. It's an open slather for anybody. Folk who cannot tell a Tolstory from a Blytale feel enough qualified to pass judgement upon any SF that they might peruse. Why, any fool can see that - would know that - preposterous! - and for another thing -

The people who criticise Picasso most harshly are those whose painting knowledge is limited to house, persons who could not tell the difference anyway between a Renoir and a Degas. Picasso is simply not understood by the majority. SF is in similar case, and of current literature, is the most annoying, aggravating, irritating and fulmination-worthy.

What is wrong with SF is that it is SF. The malaise, if malaise it is, is inherent and inescapable. Of necessity the farther afield an SF writer may roam in time and space, the less is his/her speculation likely to add up to score 100. The Super Beings, the futuristic city, the 1,000 I.Q. mind, the conquest of planets -

for any visualisation to be anywhere near correct in detail and transpiring actuality, would require not merely a vivid imagination but a superlatively prodigious imagination, and supported by a reliable crystal-ball. And at that, truth being stranger than fiction, a trouble could be that no-one would believe it, and it probably wouldn't sell, baby.

The SF writer ponders facets, what might be, could be, partially, perhaps. So he's off-base, forgets this, doesn't allow for that, fluffs in physics, and falls flat-faced while juggling chromosomes. She/he is got to be ominipotent? Hell. He/she thinks it is better to dream in error than never to dream at all. And critics seize the outstretched neck, gladly and with pleasure, like every day is Xmas with a turkey to be despatched.

This is why the people who read SF read SF - for the dissatisfaction they get out of it. No other literature dissatisfies so consistently. To read SF is to see shortcomings, (shoes have laces in 2304? Will there be shoes? Will there be feet? If so - why? If not - why not? Every damn little thing) and any Percy Lippsup can find meat for his white-man's forked tongue. The average happily steaming critic does not get paid for her/his elegant and erudite discoursings upon the demerits of SF - and that the producers of their subject matter do get monies for such congenitally adulterated verbiage does, quite possibly, add fuel to their scorn.

There is protest and lament and disenchantment, and complaint that SF writers are a bunch of meatheads. The quality of SF is bemoaned. This, we are asked, is literature? What literature has to do with SF is highly problematical. The SF tag places the SF work for judgement in an exclusive class of its own. SF is not read for its literary merit. Any fan who wants to suck up 'good' literature will find his local library chock-a-block with it. Alas, the SF addict finds that 'good' literature tends to be somewhat pedestrian in the concepts it expounds and the imagery that it conjures.

We can decry the SF writers that we have, but they are, after all, the only ones we've got. We can't create a new batch overnight. The SF fraternity is an ideas crowd more than anything, and is conscious of being on the Outer Limits of the writing arts. No other section is so bold, so brash, so downright cheeky in presenting codswallop. It is this nerve, this colossal gall, that fogs the glasses of its critical readership. And yet - the reader reads on, despite everything.

It could be that SF is more interesting in spots than other literature is in its entirety. What could tickle the curiosity buds more than to learn that a modification to a disintegrator has changed it to become merely a time-lapse dematerialiser? Is there a reader who would not want to know what happens when 'annihilated' enemy, armed and unharmed, begin to reappear all over the place a couple months or so later? Again, the fertility rights of the Ubangi might be very intriguing to an anthropologist, but the SF imbiber can get much more wrapped in the mating customs of the

concave-titted humanoid femmes on Riga's 121st planet. And the Riga-121 males, with no, uh, aw, you know, thing... ah - how do they do it? And will our lone and stranded space Crusoe find out? and manage to get his chop? and what it will be like, and what happens, and...

But above all, the core, the heart, the best in SF disseminates thoughts that otherwise might not be thunk. By portraying the extremity, we can be given to conjecture the consequences of certain lines of development - BRAVE NEW WORLD - MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! - NO FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON - ON THE BEACH - 1984, and all that. Paradise or Purgatory, SF warns and suggests and proposes and points out and supposes like no other brachh of literature. SF draws pictures of things that haven't happened yet, things that will never happen - ridiculous, some of them. But as a warning system it is the most popular one that there is - because even puerile forecasts stimulate us to use our minds to shoot holes in the author's created fabric, that we can jeer and say "Nonsense!" - and end up with an opinion on something that we had never thought to have an opinion on before.

It is not the answers that are important, so much as the questions. SF has no answers, but it can sure pop out those questions. It is the dearth of answers that makes SF so aggravating and frustrating. Which enables us to repeat : SF is the most satisfying dissatisfying literature that there is.

One safe prediction is that there will be plenty to moan about in SF in the future.

- Jack Wodhams.

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### THE MOMENT OF WAKENING

by Leith Morton.

White twists of swan  
in the black pool of mind,  
dappled-yellow straw light branches  
into the cold water clear as glass.

Thought is a taut water-line  
(the ripe black skin of water  
composed in cool deep pools)  
stagnating in calcified bone.

Golden in the gray light  
glinting ivory flesh decays,  
rots the sweet black leaf  
parturating the silver belly of night.

Sense erupts into hot yellow  
cracks the egg of time,  
blood-red yolk gushing,  
and blasts the black night white.



# No Room In The Stable

BY A. BERTRUM CHANDLER

It was a cold night, and dark, with wind and driving rain.

The refugees, sheltering in the old barn with its leaky roof, had lit a fire. This was risky, but not too risky. It was unlikely that They would be out in force in this kind of weather. They did not like water in any shape or form. They never had liked water.

The two men and the three women huddled around the flickering flame, grateful for its feeble warmth. They were in rags, all of them, with broken, disintegrating shoes. Their clothing, when new, had been of good quality, but not suitable for life on the run. Two of the women were young and might once have been pretty, the other one was middle-aged, as were the men. All five of them looked old - and all of them looked as though they had known better days. The girls, perhaps, had once worked in an office. The woman must have been a comfortably off, bridge-playing housewife. One of the men - a shopkeeper? - had been fat once; his skin was now as poor a fit as his clothing. The other one was in better condition physically and by his speech and bearing suggested that he was accustomed to command. Whatever it was that he had commanded was irretrievably lost in the past. Perhaps, if this little band survived, he would become their leader; its members had come together, quite by chance, only a few hours prior to their taking shelter.

Ready to hand was their scant weaponry - a .22 rifle, a shotgun, a small axe, two kitchen knives. Of them all the shotgun, belonging to the ex-shopkeeper, was the most useful - but only five cartridges remained for it.

The woman, hugging her still ample breasts, complained, "It's cold..."

"We daren't build a bigger fire," the tall man, the one who had never been fat, told her.

"I don't see why not..." grumbled one of the girls rebelliously.

The tall man, speaking slowly and carefully, said, "They have sharp eyes..."

"It's more than their eyes that are sharp!" exclaimed the other girl.

"I miss the News..." whined the ex-shopkeeper. "On the radio, on the TV... What's happening? What's the Army doing?"

"How did it happen?" demanded the woman. "And why aren't the Americans doing something about it?"

"They'll be having their own troubles," said the girl who had wanted a bigger fire. "And the Russians, too. I heard something about it on the radio before They killed everybody in the town. Almost everybody."

"I thought They were only here," said the woman. "How could They get to other countries?"

"They're small," said the tall man. "And they've been stowing away aboard ships ever since there were ships. And now they have the intelligence to stow away aboard aircraft..."

"But how did it start?" asked the ex-shopkeeper.

"A mutation, I suppose... One of them born with superior intelligence, and other improvements... Tom-cattling around and spreading his seed over the entire country... It's possible. It must be. It happened."

"But why do they hate us so much?" almost wept the woman. "I was always good to them, to the ones I had. The best food, and expensive, no scraps... Their own baskets to sleep in..."

"Why shouldn't they hate us?" countered the more intelligent of the two girls. "I've been thinking about it quite a lot - when I've had time to think, that is. We did give the bastards rather a rough spin. Having them doctored, males and females. Drowning their young ones..."

The tall man laughed bitterly. "That's what I should have done - but I was too soft hearted. You know..." he laughed again... "I'm inclined to think that this is all my fault..."

"What the hell do you mean?" growled the ex-shopkeeper. "How the hell can it be?"

"I may as well tell you," was the reply.

+ + +

It all started, I suppose (said the tall man) a long time ago. Not so long really, but it seems centuries. We, my wife and I, lived in an old house in a quiet side street... I don't know what happened to her, to my wife. I'm still trying to find her. But...

Anyhow, this street was infested with cats. She hated cats, although I liked the brutes. I used to like the brutes, that is. My wife'd raise Cain if ever I talked to one, and she used to keep the high walls around our garden sprayed with some muck that was supposed to keep them off.

Well, at the time I was Master of a small ship on a nice coastal run - about a week away from home and then about three days

in port. At times, though, I used to run late; I was having a bad spell with head winds. My wife had arranged to go away for a week at a holiday resort, her booking coinciding with my absence. I should have been in and out before she left - as it was, I got in just before she left.

About the first thing she said to me when I walked into the house was, "You will do something about the cats."

"What cats?" I asked.

She told me. During my last voyage one of the local females had given birth to no less than eight kittens in our carport. It wouldn't have been at all hard to dispose of them when they were newborn - just a bucket of water and a fairly hard heart. But she not only hated cats, she couldn't bear to touch them.

There were other jobs lined up for me as well (he said reminiscently). Some inside painting, the chandeliers to clean, a few minor repairs around the place, a spot a gardening. But the cats had priority.

They were rather charming kittens; although their mother was grey they were black and white. They were lively - and they were full of fight. My first intention was to drown them. I half filled the garbage can with water, caught one and dropped him in. But he was a good swimmer and put up such a fight, trying to jump out, that I hadn't the heart to go through with it. I rescued him and turned him loose - and, naturally enough, he and all his cobbles bolted for cover. That was the first day.

The next day I decided to get the R.S.P.C.A. to do the job. I rang them up, and was told that they collected unwanted animals in our district only on Mondays - and I was sailing at midnight on Sunday. The alternative would be to take them round to the Dogs' Home in person. So, on Saturday afternoon, I had a large empty carton ready and had a lively time catching kittens. By this time they realised that I bore them ill will. Finally I had five in the carton - I was covered with sweat and scratches and stinking of cat - and decided that this was at least a start. I went back into the house to shower and change. When I was cleaned up I didn't ring at once for a taxi but went back outside, hoping that I'd be able to catch the remaining three kittens. I saw their mother leading four kittens up the drive. Then I saw that she had overturned the carton, freeing her offspring. One remained inside the box. He swore at me. I swore back and left him there, deciding to make a big effort the following day.

Now you have to visualise the lay-out. There was the carport, with a shed at the end of it. There was no room under the shed, but there was a space at the back, between it and the back fence of our property. This space was too small for me to squeeze into, but there was ample room for cats. After I'd started my attack on them the kittens had taken refuge there.

I didn't like having to do what I did do, but I'd promised my wife that the place would be clear of cats on her return. I used the garden hose to flush them out, one by one. They were

stubborn. I could feel them hating me, and by this time I was rather hating myself. Their mother was hovering around, not daring to intervene - but if looks could have killed I'd have dropped dead on the spot.

But, one by one, I caught the poor, half drowned little wretches, opened the front gate just a crack and threw them out into the street. They were yelling blue murder. The last one of all was more than just half drowned when he finally gave up the struggle and crawled from behind the shed. Even so, he gave me a nasty scratch.

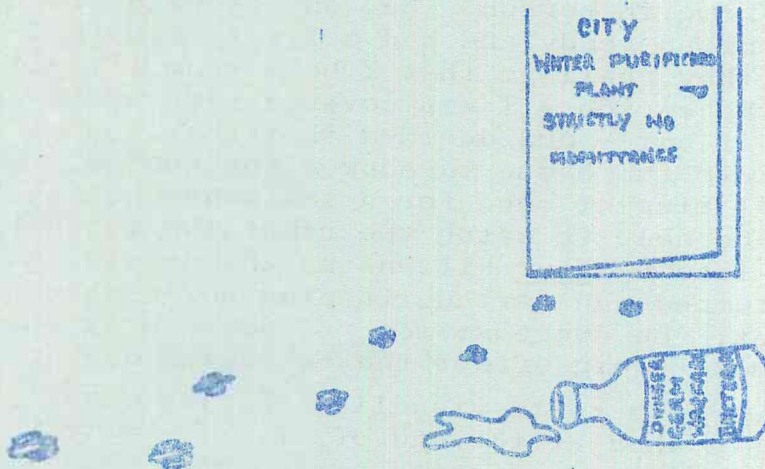
I went outside to make a last check, to make sure that I'd evicted all eight of them. I had. Their mother was lying on her side in the gutter, giving suck. She looked at me very reproachfully.

But...

But that wasn't what worried me. It was something that I saw, something that I heard - although I didn't remember it properly until They came out from hiding and started to take over the world. I suppose that He, even then, had powers, although they were yet to be developed. He must have inhibited my memory somehow - although, then, nobody would have believed my story.

As I picked Him up I saw that his front paws were more like little hands than paws - and it is the hands of His children that, with their brains, have enabled them to fight us with their acts of sabotage.

And I heard in my mind a voice, not a human voice, saying, "You will pay for this..."



"You will! You will!" screamed the woman, reaching for the shotgun.

The ex-shopkeeper snatched it from her before she could use it. He said slowly, "Leave him for Them to deal with. Then, almost whispering, "I'd have drowned the little bastards..."



# REVIEWS.

## I WILL FEAR NO EVIL

Reviewed by Z.X.

By Robert A. Heinlein.

Galaxy magazine. July/December, 1970.

This was a very interesting story, if you like to believe that women will all be inclined to nymphomania in the future!

The idea of a brain transplant is not so very farfetched now as it might have been before the heart transplant occurred. Main organs can and are being transplanted successfully in our lifetimes. So I can go along with that part of the story easily. The problems that arose due to the body being a young woman's and the brain that of an old man were as one would imagine. That part was also very well done, the lessons in make-up, dressing, etc were well done. Enough conflict between the mind and the body's natural instincts to make it believable, although I do not think that women will be quite so casual about sexual matters even then.

The living conditions are also quite possible; we see some hint of it today in the big cities. That was well done and I found that the story held my interest. One thing struck me though, that Heinlein was not quite as good as I have always found him. It is very difficult, mostly, for a man to write from a woman's point of view. Some men come close and this he has done, with the exception that women no matter how emancipated they like to think themselves, are basically shy of being fully emancipated when it comes to sex. They do not indulge in bi-sexual relations and hetero at the same time. It is one or the other.

The sperm bank donations for future use by donors or others is feasible and the use as put to in the story was in line with the character: although, this man wanted to live longer in order to continue with his multiple business interests and that being the case, he would not have gone on to have a child without (a) checking to see the risks involved, and (b) thinking logically of how it would affect his business. A man such as he was just wouldn't have done it. There are several points like this that pulled down the level of the story. It could have been excellent, but I found it hard to think that the ego or whatever that remained in the donor's body could rule his emotions to the extent that they did. I always have been under the impression that the brain ruled the body.

Apart from the sexual behavior of the people of that time, Heinlein gave very little background of the society as a whole. A bit here and there, but so much was clouded and left me confused as to how the country was really run.

During the trial to prove his identity there was again a great play about how she/he was thinking of bed games again. Oh sure, they were discussing the case but it seemed to me that the main interest was sex. This as a woman made me quite cross. Women, unlike men, are not thinking of sex all the time, especially under those circumstances, they would be very concerned about the money angle, as witness the behavior of his women heirs. Apart from that, there was very little about Johann Smith, his thoughts and personality; it got swamped by Eunice. Now, he didn't strike me as being that weak a character. He had made a fortune, built up an empire - that took strength, mental and physical, so all of a sudden he stops thinking of all that and runs around trying to seduce every available male in sight, including the donor's husband. Really....

Smith also runs about doing good deeds, not in his former character would he have dreamt of doing that. So once again the tale fell flat. I will admit that his characterization of a rampant nymph with a heart of gold was very good; he must have known one or two. I also thought that bringing Jake into his/her mind was bad. Eunice was at least reasonably acceptable. But Jake??

Frankly the story as a whole disappointed me. Even the ending was trite. Giving their life up for a child. Oh boy, in True Love or mags of that kind yes, but in SF? Really Mr Heinlein.

The idea was good but somewhere along the line it fell by the wayside. Which was a pity. Of course I am looking at it from a woman's angle, which Ron wanted, but apart from that side of it, what I have said still stands and many SF readers will agree with me. I do think, however, that it had its moments, although I would have thought that there would have been further advances by that time in space travel, rather than just a colony on the moon, especially one where one took nothing in the way of worldly wealth. In order to advance, money, etc, is necessary. Idealism is all very nice but impractical in the extreme. OK, so Earth was supporting it, but there were those against the project too, and the colony would need resources that were purely orientated to the needs and its well-being.

All in all, it struck me that the story was written as an exercise, to bring a sexy yarn into the field : wrap it around a brain transplant and call it SF.

Why bother?

There are those who probably liked it. I like Heinlein, but I think he could have done better.

- Z.R.

BEAUTY

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder:  
 how true,  
 I see that  
 every time I see you;  
 no matter what others think,  
 no matter what they do,  
 I know I'll always  
 love you.  
 beauty is in the eye of the beholder:  
 and so are you.

PREGNANT

All I feel :  
                   frustration.  
 ashtrays continually filled,  
 my life constantly emptied--  
           cigarettes burned end-to-end,  
                   my fingers, yellow stained...

Till the sun  
 stretches forth claws of wrinkled bronze  
 to clasp the voluptuous earth  
                                   in spring;  
 and she can even forgive the snow  
           that drips down her hips  
                   strides the thighs,  
 and dies, in one last, passionate embrace:  
 the sun shining away the cool.

And then she wakes,  
                   from tired turfs of grass  
 to sails full-borne with life.

- Cy Chauvin.

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= In the still night I hear the crisp ticking of a watch =  
           :                  :                  :

# THERE IS A SUN...

BY VAN IKIN

She looked like the incarnation of a ticker-tape parade. Her shiny silver suit was zipped up tight, fitting her young body close and snug. Thin conducting wires ran over the surface of the suit, masked by strips of yellow plastic, and squares of red covered the places where tiny transistors were fitted into the wiring system. The dazzling silver flashed in the glare of the powerful illumination, making the gaudy strips stand out so that she seemed a figure of fun, a clown.

But within the gaudy shell there lurked a black shadow. One could tell that by coming near her, watching her. She did not belong in the sparkling spacesuit : her true self was alien to it. Her soul was a pungent, corrosive vapour locked within that candied sarcophagus, and at any moment her vaporous, corrosive self might eat through and dispel the tizzy outer veneer.

The crew of the shuttle rocket stood around in little groups, talking amongst themselves, awaiting transport to their craft. She stood aloof from them, pensive, bound up in herself.

The personnel car came round, its engines emitting a low whine, and the crew climbed aboard, the girl going last. They took seats within the vehicle and sat back to endure the pre-launch formalities. The captain of the spacecraft resumed talking to his friends, oblivious to the officials moving about and asking for papers and identification.

The girl sat alone, her soul on a different plane from the others. She saw the movie-selector man coming down the aisle and tried to look away, fearing his intrusion into her isolation. He stopped to talk to the man in front of her, and she held her breath with apprehension, wondering if he would come to her.

"It's a good idea, you know, sir," he was saying. "Pick out a few good movies - it won't cost you much, and it'll stop you getting bored. I suggest you glance through this catalogue..."

Involuntarily she shuddered. Must this man come to her? Must she smear herself in this oily ritual? She just wanted to be left alone, to be given time to think. Time would heal all wounds, and she wanted that time to pass so that perhaps, when it was gone, something would have emerged, something would have resolved itself.

"Pick a few movies, Miss? It's a good idea, you know - won't cost you much. What do you like, romance or realism?"

"And what is realism?" she parried coldly. "To the rich, Dickens is escapist romance because his novels are about that incredible thing called poverty." The man looked taken aback, and



she felt pleased. The cold intellectualism of her answer had parried his intrusion into her being. She rather enjoyed thrusting him off. "On the other hand Dickens would be starkly real to a poor person, would he not?"

"True. So what's your reality?"

Her soul recoiled, invaded to its depths.

"Let her be, friend," said the man in front, not even bothering to turn around. "She's had a rough time - just let her be. Give her time to think."

The movie man passed on, looking back uneasily. Perhaps he was trying to decide if he owed her an apology. But perhaps he would pry. Yes, she thought, perhaps he was wondering if he could come to her and ask a few questions, try to insinuate his way down into her life.

She stared at him as he moved down the aisle, and a cold resentment suffused her heart. She thought of the man sitting in front of her : he had been listening to what she said to the movie man, and he too had interfered, for he had dragged up her past and used it to send away the movie man. Why didn't they leave her alone? Always they held her past against her, never letting it slip back into time to be forgotten.

Her mood of apprehension passed when the transport car began to move off. She stared blankly at the dust-crusted walls of the launch terminals as they passed by. She had seen them all before, but it was restful to let her eyes ponder the tall steel shapes whilst her mind peered deep into her itself.

They reached the rocket and she boarded along with the others, following them so she knew where to go. The man who had sat in front offered to show her to her duty station, and she smiled in acceptance. She no longer resented him, and it filled her with a gladness that they were friends now.

"Thank you, I'd like that very much," she replied. "I've never been on a rocket before, you know."

The man smiled and collected a packet of anti-grav clasps for her.

"A nurse is going to need a lot of these here things," he grinned.

He showed her to her cabin, then gave her directions for reaching the sick wards. She knew that it was her duty as a nurse to help her patient endure the agonies of blast-off, yet she approached his room uneasily. She was afraid of the blast-off herself, so how could she comfort another? Besides, how would she behave with her patient? If he was irritable and cranky she would get upset, and anything could happen then. She might even go into a fit of that fearful, fearful screaming, like before.

But no, she thrust that notion from her thoughts. All she needed was time, time to let all that slip into the past. If only she could hibernate within her gaudy spacesuit, and not wake up for a long time, not until the past was all forgotten.

She went into the patient's cabin.

An old man lay within the sleeping capsule, but at first she hardly noticed him, for the capsule itself drew her attention. She had known that they did not use conventional beds in space-craft, and from her reading of modern novels she had known roughly what the sleeping capsule would be like, but still it jolted her.

It was more like a futuristic steel coffin displaying a body lying in state.

Coming closer to the pastel-painted steel cocoon she stared through the capsule window at her patient's face. Surprisingly he looked happy. He was strongly tanned, and badly wrinkled, but the creases of the face had fallen into lines of happiness. Age had moulded upon him a perpetual smile. Just a gentle, very slight smile - but a smile all the same.

"Hello, little girl. Don't tell me you're my nurse!"

She paused a moment, happy but taken aback. He was not cranky or in pain - that was good; but what had he meant about her age? Was he going to ask that someone older be sent to tend him?

In that second of uncertainty her mind filled and brimmed with images. Space was the thing that had lured her. She cared little for nursing, but she had allowed herself to become a nurse to get into space. The vision that had led her to sign up for the position came to her again, as strong as before. She saw herself in the midst of the black emptiness of space. She was in a rocket cruising slowly and silently through the void. Everywhere there was stillness and solitude and calm - rich, thick silence, a soft noiseless blackness like plush black satin. The extreme sensuousness of it tingled through her, rouging her cheeks with a blush: she had yearned so deeply for that silence, that solitude. She had wanted so badly to get away from everything, to withdraw from the progression of time and think: to let time mould and fashion her being: to ignore the progression of existence until she could again know in what relationship she stood to that progression. But now, would he ask for someone else?

"I see the insignia on your arm. You are my nurse, then? I wouldn't have believed it... my luck's never been that good."

"Your luck, sir?" She seized the phrase and spoke it forth, happy to have a momentary reprieve from the question of age.

"Getting a pretty young thing like you. Even if you do fish for compliments," he added, smiling knowingly.

"You don't object to my age then?"

"Not at all, little girl!"

She smiled in relief. They would not take her vision away from her.

The blast-off preparations took ten minutes to complete, then there came the dreaded torture as gravity bred and multiplied

to an incredible degree, then died out.

Perspiration streaming from her brow, the girl sat up. She unclasped her safety harness and lay still, sighing in relief.

"You're not used to lift-off," the old man stated from within his steel case.

Brushing back strands of sweat-dampened hair, the girl looked across at him. A queer sensation of terror came over her for a moment, and she thought she was on the verge of a scream. The man in the capsule brought back thoughts of all her reading : so many times she had read twentieth century novels prophesying the era of the machine; so many times authors had branded into her mind the danger of letting the machine dominate man. And once she had read a story of a man who had married his sweetheart and made love to her, and when the intercourse was over the girl's protection circuits had automatically collected and discharged the semen before it shorted her wiring.

Now, as she gazed at the steel cocoon from which the old man's voice arose, she felt that this terror had finally been brought to pass. Yet it was not true : she knew that, and she made herself repeat the fact over and over to dispel the webs of terror. The machine had never dominated man, never. If only she would use her intellect, not be guided by her emotions.

"Have you ever been in space before, little girl?"

Still feeling a slight repulsion, she approached the talking capsule. Some perverse imp of thought was still cavorting at the back of her mind, telling her that the face she saw through the viewplate was the only piece of living tissue within the capsule.

"No sir, I've never been in space before."

"I thought so. But you endured the lift-off very well in that case. For a beginner, I mean."

"Thank you."

Pretending to be busy, she went to the other end of the cabin. She liked the old man - his voice was very gentle - but still she preferred solitude. She would do her job and care for him, but he could not expect her to do more than that - not if doing more meant talking to him.

During the long silent hours the spacecraft planed through the blackness, and down in the sick ward she worked mechanically, her thoughts meshing fast in a complex web. She had not wanted to be a nurse - in fact she had strongly opposed the idea, for it would mean much contact with others - but now she was glad. Because she was a nurse, the others had left her alone. They regarded her job as important and demanding, and they allowed her to have privacy. Which was more than you could say for the others, for one day she had seen the captain of the ship pinch one of the hostesses on the bottom, and she had overheard an argument about whether all the passengers should be forced to line in the central dining area.

Fortunately they left her alone, which was what she wanted. Thinking ahead, she mused that perhaps in a few years time - if she emerged from her hibernation as a socialite - she would look back upon her present isolation in pitying perplexity. But that was future, and did not matter. Right now isolation was a therapeutic necessity.

The days dragged on. Days that were not days, just a perpetual string of hours. She longed for night: not the artificial night of the spaceship, when all cabin lights were switched off for nine hours, but pure, natural night - the night of a planet deprived of its sun.

She devoted herself more and more to him. He was cheerful and happy, and made few demands upon her, yet she was happiest when she was busy preparing his meals or carrying out his six-hourly medical check-up. During those times she gave herself over to his service completely, submitting her very thoughts to his needs. And whilst she was so absorbed, she was happy.

In her spare moments she would dwell upon odd, miscellaneous thoughts. Once she wondered why the universe was so large. Another time she tried to understand why man had chosen to colonise space rather than live from the seas of Earth.

But at times she dwelt upon her own problem. She was constantly aware of the things she did and of their effect upon her. She knew it made her happy to care for the old man, and often she thought very seriously of taking up her old passion for social work. But she could never make up her mind. Besides, she had noticed that occasionally she would deliberately neglect her patient. Once, at night, he had rung for a cup of water and she had pretended to be asleep.

She lived her life in solitude, speaking only to her patient, dining only with him, keeping aloof. She drank in the wild loneliness of her position, swooning in joy at the awesome solitude of space. She could almost feel the beautiful stillness seep into her body and work its sublime therapy upon her soul. It was so real she could almost feel it - so real she need only bide her time and wait.

Yet once, several million miles out into space, her complacency broke down. She began to have her doubts. One misgiving sprang into life - a feeble, single-celled thing - and gave birth to ever-multiplying offspring. For the first time her purpose faltered.

She was thinking too much; all along she had done too much thinking. It was thinking that had given her this notion of isolation and promoted her so-called need to be alone. Now she was alone, but still she could not be free of the past, for the strands of thought flew haphazardly between past and present and future. So she decided she must plunge yet deeper into her work, submerging her thoughts and self to her job. Let space form a black satiny cocoon about her, let her person and being melt into sleep within



that cocoon, and let her eventually emerge recreated, a new being.

"Last night, little girl, you had a bad dream."

"I did?"

"You did. You muttered all the time, but what you said didn't make sense - just incoherent sounds. It seemed to me you were pretty upset."

He waited for her to say something, but she remained silent and aloof. Her nerves were tingling, for she sensed he was beginning to pry.

"When I think of it," he probed, his voice ever soft and gentle, "you have been acting rather oddly for quite a while. Is there anything wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong - not that it's any of your business anyway."

"None of my business' - ah, you remind me of my son!" The old man smiled broadly, and the girl knew that on his face there was a far away, reminiscent look. "Just like my son. When he was small - just beginning to talk - he used to play with the child from next door. That child was slightly older than my Bobby, and the other child's pet phrase was 'None of your business!' And my little Bobby picked that up, and one night, when my wife and I were showing him off to relatives - which all parents do, little girl, which all parents do - that night, when we were making him say the names of all the things in the room, all of a sudden he comes out with 'None of your business!'."

An involuntary little snort of laughter burst from the girl.

"Yes, it was funny. But all children are funny. Goodness, just wait till you have your own! They'll say things to make your hair stand on end."

Silence. Silence as the old man tried to ponder the girl's unresponsiveness, silence as the girl felt the apprehension rising within her.

He was prying. She felt that so strongly that she almost believed she had a sixth sense, or at least a special set of nerve cells that were sensitive to pryers.

And yet, what did it matter? That was a rebellious thought, but did it matter? He was a gentle, kindly old soul. Would it hurt to talk to him? She remembered the doctor saying, "It would do you good to confide in someone, you know. Humans should not be alone." If ever she was going to confide, there could be no better person than this.

But the matter of taking someone into her confidence was serious - too serious for a spur of the moment decision. Nevertheless, he was a harmless old soul and it could not hurt to talk to him a little. It would make him so happy.

"What was your wife like, sir?" she asked. As she said

the words she blushed, and a little part of her mind said that a writer would have described her blush in terms of a maiden on her wedding night. And that thought elicited another silent little snort of laughter at the thought of her being a maiden.

"My wife died many years ago, but I still remember her. When she died, she was just middle-aged, with hardly any grey in her hair. She hadn't aged all that much, but still she was different from when I married her. My bride was a young, freckle-faced brunette with very big eyes and a small mouth. Very small mouth - like so." He pursed up his lips and the girl grinned, but she was thinking how quaint it was that his wife had been freckled. It seemed right that this happy old man should have had a freckled spouse. "By the time our son was going to school she had filled out a bit - got fatter, you know - and time had started to change her. She seemed to mellow, if you know what I mean. When I married her she was very much a distinct entity, with her freckles and all, but gradually she just slipped to the stage where she was a plain old housewife like any other. Not that I loved her any the less, you understand - I loved her more and more as time went on - but I perceived the change."

He paused a moment, and smiled.

"It sounds like a lesson in philosophy, doesn't it, little girl? Well, it's not meant to be a lecture, but the principle behind the thing is true all the same."

The girl looked away, agitated, for she knew what that principle was. A principle of change, uncertainty. You could never be sure of anything - and, more important, you could never be anything. Never ever be anything : always you would be changing, all through your life your character and appearance and environment would change. Nothing would ever be definite.

A deep, immense sorrow bubbled into life within her soul. She saw the silver fabric that clothed her body and wondered how long it would be before she advanced beyond that stage of life. How long before this silver-suited self would pass away and she would be someone else, in a different uniform, in a different place?

As if beseeching help she gazed out at the stars, trying to probe through the emptiness of space to the solidity beyond. But there was no solidity. No matter how far her imagination might peer, no matter how many blazing nebulae it might pass, there was never any ending. It went on and on and on, limitless, formless, indefinable.

For a moment she realised where she was. She was seated in one tiny compartment of a tiny little rocket that was smoothly snailing its way through the mind-bending immensity of the cosmos. If the steel shell of the spaceship were to melt away she would be one minute grain falling forever through the immense black sky of space.

A fearful sense of terror entwined her. To be lost like that, to be forever wandering through nothingness - God, how horrible!

How horrible! And the images from her own life pressed forward to her vision, as if to give proof of the horror. The labourer, the poet - she saw them all. Days spent studying, days of pleasure, days of hiking and walking, aimless wandering.... It all came back to her, and the images seemed to float in the void, as if signifying the eternity of their existence.

The tears rolled from the eyes, minute bucketfuls of salty tepid water. She buried her face in her hands, letting the tears come. In her very soul she felt the terror, knowing it was real, knowing her intellect could never dispel it. And in despair of finding a solution she let her emotion choke all reason and restraint.

She saw the old wrinkled face through the glass of the sleeping capsule. The sight arrested her sobs, and she tried to analyse her feelings. The old man was a pryer, yet her heart was mellowing towards his prying. Yes, she wanted to talk to him - talk to him so they could verbally intertwine their lives and together fight off that vast, impending wave of nameless horror.

"May I talk to you, sir?"

"Yes, little girl - if you want to." He was surprised at her sudden responsiveness.

She stood up and manipulated the controls to open his sleeping capsule. He looked at her in surprise.

"It's quite safe," she said. Then, seeing this did not answer his unvoiced question, "I want to talk to a person, not a machine. You understand?"

He nodded. For a moment he was quiet and reflective, as if wondering whether he should speak.

"Was it a boy, little girl?" he asked at length.

She looked up, startled.

"You seem surprised I ask that. Well then, what did happen? I've raised a family of my own, you know. I can tell when someone is upset."

"No, it wasn't a boy," she sighed. "It was a baby."

"Abortion?" he asked, his face hardening grimly. Her heart froze at this evidence that he could be so easily displeased.

"No, it wasn't abortion because there wasn't really a baby. My boyfriend used me a while, then he began to grow distant and our dates became more and more infrequent. I knew he was going to leave me, and I thought, 'If only I would get pregnant! Then he would not leave me!'."

She paused a moment breathing heavily. She could not yet determine how her soul was reacting to this unveiling of its nakedness.

"I was in such an emotional state that a mad little thought like that came to have great meaning to me. At night I would dream of falling pregnant, and in the times I was with him I tried my

best to make it so. Once we make love in the woods in the pouring rain, and I caught pneumonia - or a fever, or some such thing - and I was sent to hospital.

"I don't know what happened there : I remember nothing. They tell me I dreamed at night I was in the agony of childbirth, and during the day I would act as if I was months pregnant. A type of pseudo-pregnancy, I guess. But whatever it was, it passed."

"And then?"

"Yes, everyone asks that. I don't know. They sent me to a rest home - that much I know for sure - and I know what I did there, but I don't know why I did it. I don't think anyone really knows why - not even the doctors.

"But the things I did while I was there....." She sighed. "To be brief, I went walking. The rest home was up in the mountains, and they told me I needed exercise and fresh air, so I went for hikes through the valleys. At first they were genuine hikes - you know, when you set out to walk from a certain place by a particular route to reach a specific destination, walking briskly all the while to get as much exercise as possible. At first my outings were hikes like that, but gradually they became mere walks, and finally I just wandered through the valleys because I wanted to be alone, to get away from everyone in the home."

"Why? Were you ill? Or just sad about your lover?"

"If I could answer things like that I would not be here. I think I was sick - sick mentally. Certainly that was one of the things that was wrong. You see, nothing made any sense. I somehow got detached from the world that is. When I went hiking I became hot and sweaty - and the flies used to plague me to tears - and after a while I asked myself why I went to all that trouble. My brain told me I did it so I could get well and go out into the world again and live a normal life.

"But the moment my brain gave me that answer I gave up hiking and took to walking through the valleys to get time to think. You see, it was madness for me to bother with anything that was aimed at the future, for I had none. I kept on asking myself, 'What will you do in the outside world? What do you want to do there? What are you suited to do there?' And I could find no answers. It was just like before : every time I tried to think ahead I began to sink into a morass."

"What do you mean by 'before'? The time with your lover?"

"My lover? He was nothing to me - not really. For a while he was the hub and passion of my life, but the time when I was under his spell was in itself unimportant. It was just one little incident in a sea of incidents - a sea in which every drop was unrelated to every other drop.

"But I don't really know what I mean by 'before'. It's not as if I can go back to the start and recount the whole thing, because I don't know when it began. Though I have an idea," she

added, "that it began at the time when primitive man first started to wonder just what it meant to be alive."

For a moment she paused, staring ahead blankly, her mind peering back over the events of the past, trying for the thousandth time to analyse and explain what had happened. It all came back clearly - as clear as ever and as confused as ever.

She saw first of all the little girl sitting in a dingy classromm, her maths book propped up in front on the desk. And behind the maths book she was absorbed in a novel - a twentieth century novel, her favourite era. The teacher called out a question to the girl and in her mind she watched the child sit up and try to answer. She smiled in sympathy at the startled young girl. There was pity in her smile, too.

Then, a second later, she saw a similar scene. A different classroom, with the girl grown older and more mature. This time the girl was studying, her pen biting deep into her notepad in its lust to store up knowledge.

Those were the days when she had thought she knew herself. Her future then had been clear and precise : she would study hard and do well, then she would get to the university where she could prepare to become a social worker, one who went out into the world to help others. That had been her goal, and as long as she had been able to hold onto that goal she had been happy.

Around that time her social life had begun to blossom. The hormonal changes that had forced her to wear a bra now forced her to think of the gay life. All round her there were people - close friends of hers - bubbling and beaming with talk of parties and outings and sweethearts. And as she had watched those people she had asked herself for the first time the question. What am I?

What was she that she was so different? Why was it that she was not automatically caught up in the same things that enwrapped her friends? Why? What differentiation was there? The questions kept bounding through her mind, and she woke to the sense of her own individuality. Everyone was a different person, and she was no exception.

Of course she had come across that in books, and she knew full well what the concept of individuality was, but now for some reason it was all different. Confronting an idea in a book and confronting it in real life were widely separate experiences, she saw. And so, anxious to fully undergo this experience, to properly resolve this question of identity, she began to scrutinise the world about her.

She saw that a large part of everyone's life was social. There were parties, friends, outings - the entire social circuit. And within her breast she felt the first stirrings of an urge to join in this circuit too. And so, acting ot once upon the intoll-actual impulse, she went to her first party.

Many of her girlfriends had gone to their first party and lost their virginity, but she lost something even more precious.



In that four hour burst of wine and fun she lost her goal.

"I came home a little bit drunk and feeling very very guilty because I had completely neglected my studies for that night. Up on the wall above my bed was a 'Serve Others' poster. The Social Workers Committee had given it to me when I helped them on a fund-raising crusade. When I got home it was the first thing that caught my eye, and I thought to myself, 'Well, did you serve others tonight?'

"I guess that was the beginning of my disillusionment. I didn't notice at first, but after that I became more and more concerned with how I shaped up to the ideals of social work. I went to other parties - and then to outings as well - and I began to have no guilt about neglecting my work. I enjoyed the social life, and that was all that mattered. In short, I drifted away from studying to serve others and began to serve myself. My matriculation exams came, and I failed. My parents urged me to go back to school and try again, but I said no. Then I realised I would have to go to work, so I changed my mind and said yes."

She remembered the scene well. How happy her parents had been! Their prodigal daughter had seen the light and returned to the fold. Or so they thought. But in actuality she had not changed. She still truanted from school, and on the few occasions when she did attend classes she took no notes.

And, yet, gradually, she did begin to change. Ever engaged in exacting self-analysis, she saw clues to the change in her ideal of a husband. During the peak of her life of pleasure she had been fanatical about wanting to marry a labourer - someone brawny and muscular, able to give her exquisite physical satisfaction. But no labourer had come along; instead there had only been a young teenager who thought himself a poet - a very lovesick poet.

Naturally she had found no time for him in her gay life, yet gradually, as the image of the brawny labourer began to fade and become repugnant, the poet began to attract her. Here was someone far removed from the world she knew, someone quiet and shy, who saw life from a vastly different point of view.

She became his sweetheart. He taught her that the gay life was a false thing - an attempt to find pleasure that looked in all the wrong places. One night they went to the observatory and looked through the mighty nuclear telescope. The attendant focused it upon Mars - ruby bright Mars - and her poet had said that this was real pleasure. Beauty, he had said, real pleasure lay in Beauty.

And so, for a time, she had lived his life, seeking the beauty of nature. Her poet, however, became more immersed in the intricacies of his craft, whilst on her part the lure of Beauty began to fade. The stars were lovely, but they could not put their arms around her, kiss her. And so her poet went one way, marching on toward his goal, and she went another, casting around for new purpose to life.

Surprisingly, she drifted back to her studies. The social worker goal did not return, and her unsatisfying brush with Beauty taught her that Knowledge was no fit goal. So she studied for study's sake.

She passed her exams but decided against going to university. She took a job as a factory worker - an easy mechanical task that gave her time to think.

"I didn't realise it then, but my crisis was coming on. To tell the truth I had been afraid of the university. To go there you had to be so certain, so self-assured. You have to stride into the university like a king going to be crowned, full of pride and purpose, all puffed up and pompous with certainty. And me, I had no certainty. I had lost myself.

"So I worked in the factory. The factory asked only that I should be prepared to come home with tired arms from raising and lowering lovers. I could work in the factory without having to know myself, and it gave me time to think.

"But for all my self-analysis and all my reading, I still stayed lost. My entire life seemed airy and redundant. No matter what I did, nothing was really me. One day I would be studying for a future, the next day I would be idling on a beach, and the day after I would be suffering fits of depression trying to reconcile the two. I just couldn't find any true identity for myself! No matter how hard I thought about it, I could only see that my life was like a spoked wheel with no central hub; there were all the hundreds of little facets of my behaviour - the labourer, my studies, the gay life - but none of them added up to the central thing that was me. I was lost... the whole thing was beyond me... beyond my ability...."

She paused, her breath coming fast with the pain of remembering.

"I could find no answers. Perhaps, if I had looked long enough, I might have found an answer, but instead I fell for one of my fellow factory workers. At first it was just attraction, but it quickly grew into love."

"He was the boyfriend you were talking about before?"

"Yes. I loved him, I let him use me, and he left me. I was taken to the hospital and I never saw him again. After that came the aimlessness and the boredom of the rest home."

She was silent. The old man lay still and gazed at the ceiling, his mind travelling down misty corridors of time and memory. Neither of them spoke, and in the silence of the moment a line of poetry came to her mind.

And there is only the quiet noise of planets feeding.

"Slessor - 'City Nightfall'," she whispered.

"Pardon?"

"Nothing. A poem I once read. Australian."

Again, silence.

Through the port the stars caught her eye. Did they evoke again that sense of terror within her? She held her breath, as if trying to hear her heartbeats so they might give an answer. No, no terror. Had she then laid the ghost that haunted her, that image of the thin life wherein there were no solids of surety? She could not tell. Emotionally she might have done so, because for the moment the terror was gone and she was at peace. But intellectually she knew the ghost could not be laid until she had told the entire story, and that she had not done.

"Your adolescence has been stormy," said the old man. "Yet perhaps it is true of everyone, at least in a way." Silence a moment, as he reflected on that. "Yes, perhaps everyone's life is stormy."

Suddenly wanting to be alone, she went out to get his dinner. Striding down the corridors of the metal spacecraft, the girl found she no longer feared the cabin doors lining the corridor. No longer were they menacing threats to her privacy - she almost wished someone would come out of one of the doors so she could speak to him.

As the old man took his meal she sat in the corner thinking, trying to assess her feelings. She had confided a large part of her secret to him. So having done that, how did she feel? Should she take the one final step and tell him the rest? Once again, questions she could not answer. Only one thing was definite: people said that when you told your inner secrets to another you gained a sense of relief and happiness. She had proved that saying untrue. She felt no joy, no relief, no exultation. In fact, she felt no new emotions at all. And in her mind she knew that she had merely reflected upon her life out loud instead of doing so internally.

"You spoke before of your 'crisis'," said the old man. He had finished his meal, and spoke as if his mind had never once departed from the sequence of thoughts her story had aroused.

"My crisis. Yes, there was one - but it's not important."

She stayed in the corner, turning away to look out the viewport.

"You don't want to tell me, do you? You're just like my son - 'None of your business!' You only said as much as you did because something made you cry. But tell me then, what was it that brought on the crying? Were you thinking about this crisis?"

She could not resist making an answer to that, even though she knew it would lead on into further conversation.

"You're talking in terms of sure answers and correct analysis, old man," she said. "But those things are my bugbears." She had tried to seem dry and cynical, but instead it came out

rather whimsically, inviting his sympathy.

"Tell me what happened," he begged softly. "I am only an old man, so it can do no harm. Tell me, for your own sake. You sit there all tight and compressed like a rock, so heavy with the burden of yourself that you cannot move, cannot be free."

She saw she would get no peace if she remained silent. Besides, it would not matter. And she was not sure she did not want to tell him.

"It was after my time in the hospital," she began, "after the time of the hiking and the walking. I had come to the stage where I just wandered around, quite aimlessly, as if perhaps I was thinking I might someday stumble across whatever I was seeking.

"One day, when I was walking, I discovered a waterfall. It was fairly big - lovely and wide, with plenty of cold splashing water - and it was in a nice secluded spot. I went there each day for many weeks. Then, for a time, I didn't go, though I'm not sure why. I think it was because I found a cigarette packet lying on the bank one day - but maybe it was something else. At that stage, Whenever I was back in my room at the rest home I used to feel sick and confused. I can't explain it really - I was just fed up with life, with the way things were. The only time I was happy was when I was down by my waterfall.

"I could sit there for hours and watch the life in the bush around me. I would sit dead still and become nothing but a pair of eyes, watching the world of nature. Once a kookaburra flew up into a gum tree with a snake it had caught, and another time I saw a willy wagtail bathe himself in the little river that led to the falls. He was a cute little bird."

She smiled, sympathetic and condescending toward her by-gone gentleheartedness.

"It was beautiful. And I would sit there for hours, just sit and let it all seep into me until my soul flew out of my body and was carried away on the breeze, carried away to any place the breeze might choose. And then I was happy - oh, so very happy! I seemed to belong to the birds and animals, as if they were my friends and the waterfall our meeting place."

Abruptly she was silent. Her cheeks lost their smiling plumpness and hollowed a little. Her nostrils flared.

"They destroyed it for me, of course." Her voice was harsh as rusted iron. "They could never leave me alone, never let me be happy. I found the cigarette pack, and for weeks I didn't go there any more, but then a funny thing happened. I didn't forget about finding the cigarettes, but somehow I never thought about it at the right time anymore. I only thought about it after I'd been to my waterfall - whereas previously I used to think of it before I went and that would stop me from going.

"So for a few more weeks I spent hours of happiness out in the bush. Then one day they came for me. My two nurses came

down to the falls and saw my waterfall and the banks of my creek, and they grabbed me and took me back to the rest home. Of course, I don't really know that's truly what happened, but that's what everyone said.

"Actually I only remember seeing people standing on the rock where I used to sit. Other people said that when I looked up and saw them there I shrieked and started to run off, then suddenly I stopped dead and began to cry real funny. You know - crying without tears and without noise, when just your body shakes like you had a bad case of shivers down deep in your soul. They say that's what happened.

"But I only remember waking up in a pitch black room in the middle of the night. I could tell I was alone, and I lay perfectly still and thought all kinds of things. For how long I don't know.

"In the morning they came in to see me, and asked hundreds of questions. Mainly they wanted to know why I went to the waterfall and why I tried to run when they came for me."

As she spoke her voice became husky, and the old man stirred uneasily in his bed. She was becoming caught up in whatever suffering she had undergone before.

"They kept asking those questions, and I suddenly started to shriek. Madly - really madly. I knew perfectly well I was behaving like a lunatic, but I screamed and screamed all the same, and then everything went woozy and I blacked out."

For a long time she said nothing. She was resentful that the old man should know so much about all that was private to her. Moreover she was still shaken by the affair. Even now she could fully understand and identify with that lunatic outburst. If people came in and questioned her now she could do it again, fully aware of what she was doing. And as her words had travelled over those things of the past, she knew she had felt some inner questing vacuum momentarily reach out and identify with that howling, foaming moment of lunacy.

"They called it a nervous breakdown. I call it a crisis."

"It doesn't sound like a nervous breakdown," the old man said timidly, "but more like -"

"It was not a breakdown!" she snapped. "It was a crisis - a turning point! They're wrong if they say different - wrong! How can they know! I hardly know myself. But whatever it was, I was closest to it, I gained the best impression of its nature, and I know it was no breakdown."

She became agitated, her hands gesturing feverishly in the shadows, her face faintly illumined by the silver-blue of the stars.

"The doctors all dismissed it quite out of hand. They scrawled down quick diagnostics, jotted out prescriptions for sedatives, and told me to be a good little girl and it would all be



okay. It was nothing unusual, they said, nothing unusual. A whole lot of other garbage, too. But what could they know?

"God!" she sighed in frustration. "I knew. It was a horror. Not the crisis itself, but what led to it. From all the things that I said and did I could extract no essence of myself. I could find no identity, no definition of what was me. Sometimes I literally racked my brain till I was hot and feverish and my head ached, but nothing! I found nothing. And yet every moment spent within my room would be taken up by torturing my mind with the same problem time and again, working the same mental processes over and over until the very monotony of it made me bilious.... I don't know. It left me weak and quivering with cold sweat. It was horrible."

As if his brain were at one with hers, the old man knew she was finished. He lay quiet for some moments, listening for her disturbed breathing to become peaceful and calm.

"Our lives have been so very different," he said, nodding a glance in her direction in the same way as he had glanced at his own child whilst telling a story many years before. He let his head hang down a bit to one side, so he could speak without strain. He closed his eyes, as if his words would project images onto a screen in his mind.

"Our lives have been so different. For you the crisis came within yourself; for me it came in the midst of nothingness, far, far beyond this galaxy."

He closed his eyes as he spoke, the memories coming back in vivid clarity. He had been a cadet at the time, a cadet with only two years of training and a mere six hundred hours of piloting experience. He had been assigned as Trainee Commander to an exploring ship, which in effect meant he was being given the opportunity to get used to life on big spacecraft.

His ship, the Nodus II, was an immense steel monument to man's technological genius. Built within the massive space station orbiting Neptune, the craft was three quarters of a mile long - a lengthy conical needle with its rear half covered by huge pod-shaped fuel tanks. Two thirds of the hulking machine housed the mighty rocket engines, the rest of the ship's area being split up to house its human personnel and the computers which monitored all aspects of its function.

The Nodus II had been assigned a four year voyage to travel to and examine Unknown 415.2, an unidentifiable object which had been detected by observatories on Neptune. He recalled the times he had consulted the ship's mission chart just to gaze at the photos of that round white dot so far out in space. In his own opinion the Unknown was a dust cloud - a swirling vortex of tiny particles forever drifting through space - yet expert opinion believed it was a planet which had changed its orbit and begun to reflect more light. To pass the time he had spent hours puzzling over the enigma, never knowing that the Nodus II was fated to go nowhere near Unknown 415.2.

A pioneer voyage was no picnic for anyone, not-even seasoned astronauts, let alone a trainee cadet. He remembered that his time had been devoured by the demands of study and the gruelling process of becoming familiar with every aspect of the ship's operation. And there had been hours of misery and loneliness too - the hours when the young man thought only of the family and friends he had left behind. Four years was a long time - long enough for a person to carve out a life in which he did not belong. He thought especially of his girl, Carleann. Would she think of him, wait for him? He wished to God she would, but he knew she would not. She could not. How could you expect anyone to live four years in abeyance, to sweep aside four years of life and wait only for the return of one's star-travelling lover? Four years was too long for anyone, let alone anyone young.

When he came back he would have to begin his life again - new friends - new girl, everything new. He would even have to start firming out the relationship between himself and his family all over again. Still, that was just one of those things you had to take in stride. Once he was older, and the arduous training period over, then he would establish something permanent.

"For a year everything went according to plan," he muttered. Rather than speaking to the girl he was merely voicing aloud his thoughts. She had just been the catalyst for the process of his memory.

"By that time we had gone further into that sector of space than any man had ever gone. Yet the distance we had come was nothing compared to the distance yet to go. The abyss between stars is more than man can begin to fathom."

And it was there, in the midst of that unfathomable abyss, that trouble had come. For some reason - perhaps owing to damage by tiny particles - one of the small booster fuel tanks had come askew on its pinion, thus making a small change in the balance ratio of the spaceship's weight. This meant that the ship's course, which was mathematically plotted and pre-set according to the ship's ballistics, would be imprecise to a few millionths of a degree. Seemingly an inconsequential error - except that in the immensities of space a few degrees of error caused one to end up some thousands of miles off-target.

Thus the faulty section had to be repaired and the ship's squad of navigators had to pool their skills and set about computing a new course. And whilst the astrogators covered blackboard after blackboard with their neat chalk figures the crewmen were uncovering the second problem.

Long before it came loose from its pinion - perhaps right from the beginning of the voyage - the fuel tank had been leaking. The fuel, which was vapourised and stored under incredible pressure, had found its way into a tiny pocket within a fault in the metal. There it had liquified and gradually seeped out into space. Which meant that the ship's balance ratio had not only been vastly different from the ratio on which the original course had been computed,

but that the discrepancy between the original ratio and the real one had been continually growing larger at an unknown rate. Which meant they could by now be several light years off course.

At first he had found that hard to believe. Weight could not matter that much - surely his own weight would vary infinitesimally from day to day. But then he recalled that the personnel areas of the ship were located at the ship's centre of gravity, and that these areas maintained a steady weight pattern through releasing or increasing the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere reserve system. The fuel tanks, on the other hand, were evenly distributed around the circumference of the ship, and thus their effect on trajectory was crucial.

It was impossible for anyone aboard the craft to work out their own location. Not even the highly skilled astrogators could do it, for the ship was in the midst of uncharted space: very few of the surrounding stars were familiar, and without detailed knowledge of a planet's orbit and orbital speed it was impossible to make any sort of calculation. Thus they had no choice but to contact Earth for data, even though it would take months to get a reply.

As he recalled that time of waiting the old man smiled. Human psychology was so strange and confused! In space there was never any sense of movement, not even when a craft was travelling at many times the speed of light. Yet during the long wait everyone had been acutely aware that they were coming no closer to their journey's end, and boredom and temper had begun to increase.

"We finally got our answer," the old man droned, his voice dreamy. "A plain everyday human voice drawled out the figures for a new course, and within hours we were on our way."

So the long journey had continued. But still there had been something wrong. Each day the instrument readings showed they were drifting further off the newly-set course, and it soon became apparent that something, somewhere, was exerting a force so unimaginably powerful as to draw the Nodus II off course.

It had to be some species of mutated orbital attraction, the young cadet had reasoned. A sun had gone nova, a planet had exploded - something like that had happened, generating an immense magnetic field. And now they were caught.

It took several weeks for them to get the first inkling of the source of that lethal magnetism. The forward probe scopes detected it first - just a bright point in the far depths of black space. Gradually they drew closer, their speed accelerating fantastically as they did so, and by then it had grown large enough to fill the entire viewscreen.

It was a sun - or rather, the vast swirling explosion of gases and chemicals which would eventually compress to form a sun. He spent hours staring at it through the viewport, fascinated by the savage barbaric splendour of birth on a cosmic scale. Every second great rending explosions erupted into brilliant, undying

redness, and long coiling fingers of luminous gaseous particles spiralled out into the void, to dissipate over the coming millenia.

As he watched he saw that the swirling, nebulous world of fire was drawing everything down into itself. Vaste tracts of tiny dust particles were slowly being swirled into the boiling concoction, and the faint luminous glow of surrounding space indicated the presence of numerous gases which were steadily being sucked into the vortex. This then was the power that had seized them, and now they were being drawn down into that turbulent gestating holocaust.

It was with awe rather than fear that he realised his life might end within that fiery sun. It would almost be an honour to die in so stupendous a conflagration of twisting, naked energy. Yet as he stared at the gaseous coronas of flame he realised the extent to which the thing lacked body, lacked substance. It was an empty, shifting concoction of intermingling gases, forever moving, forever changing, forever in turbulent uncertain upheaval. Yet he knew the soaring sheets of fiery gas would one day be still, that the chemical reactions would cool and stabilise. And then, transformed to a constant, steady source of light and heat, the sun would emerge as the monarch of a solar system.

"Our situation was desperate. The external temperature was increasing daily, and the ship was being drawn faster and faster into the flames. How long it would take for us to actually reach the sun we could not tell, for we had no cues to distance. Space was dotted with particles which I thought were glowing dust motes, but they may have been immense asteroids seen at a distance. There was no way to judge these things.

"We racked our brains for answers. Our rocket engines could never provide enough thrust to save us - and even if they could there would be so little fuel left that we could never return to our solar system. Some of the men felt we should try to manoeuvre into one of the spirals of gas exploding out of the central vortex so we could use its velocity as thrust to pull clear. But we would have been incinerated by the heat of any one of those fiery clouds.

"It seemed there was nothing we could do - nothing. Death was staring us in the face, and we could only stare back - stare at death for days, maybe weeks. Just sit back and wait to die."

He gulped, reliving the fear.

Then, abruptly, he smiled.

"Of course, that was all we had to do - just sit back. Usually there was always one man at the controls, manipulating our weight and thrust ratios to try and jar us out to the left of the sun. As the days wore on and despair set in he abandoned his post to join in our council-of-war sessions."

He paused, almost as if for effect.

"That's how we were saved. All our thinking and pondering

got us nowhere - except to magnify the problem out of perspective and destroy our morale. Yet all we had to do was just ease off and let the laws of physics take their course. Just let things be.

"You see, the sun was ahead of us - just a little to the right - and we were trying to break course by pulling out to the left. But what we didn't know was that the sun's vortex was operating in an anti-clockwise motion to suck the gases down into it. That is, anything approaching the sun on the plane of our trajectory would have to be pulled sharply to the right before it could be drawn down into the heart of the thing.

"Of course we stupid fools had been pulling to the left, which was as silly as trying to swim against the current. But when they abandoned the controls we were swung into line with the current. Then we just applied minimum thrust of the rockets and broke free - with still enough fuel to get back to Neptune.

"The whole thing was nothing to worry about really. And it would never have been anything to worry about if we'd laid off the intellectualising and let things be. Still, I was young then - young and intense and excitable - and it's hard to see things clearly through youthful eyes."

He was quiet for a few minutes, musing, his mind treading the echoing corridors between the past and present, memory and reality.

The girl gazed out the viewport, moved by the story. The image of that flaring sun had come alive to her, and she scanned the twinkling stars as if hoping for a momentary glimpse of its savage fiery magnificence.

She saw nothing visually, yet in her mind there came a faint, phantom rumbling - a deep thunder of explosion muffled only by the vastness of the universe in which it took place - and gradually, from the darkened edges of her mind, there came a thousand swirling, glowing particles rushing together to form a nucleus, intertwining and weaving in a swirling explosive mixture. For a few seconds the gaseous ball heaved and broiled in its turbulent nativity, then gradually the fires began to relent, to fall back to a steady, constant glare. And in the black vacuum of her mind a sun came into being, the eternal incandescent monarch of a newborn realm.

She felt her heart respond in relief to the image, yet her mind could with no reason fathom it. She tried to hold onto the momentary sensation afraid lest it would fade since she could not comprehend it. It was a wonderful, moving sense of promise that had settled upon her, and a tear of joy trickled from her eye in surprise at the emotion. It was as if the stars outside the viewport were giving her some message of eternal, unshakeable hope; and though her mind could give her no reason nor explanation for it, she began to see that such things did not matter. She basked in the warmth of the feeling itself, letting it take her where it would.



She must have been caught up in that inexplicably joyous sensation for a long time, for when she looked at the old man again he was asleep. She went across to his capsule and touched the dry old hand, her heart peaceful and happy. Feeling the warmth and reassurance glow within her she bent down and kissed him, then gently lowered the lid of the capsule.

She stretched vigorously, as if awaking from sleep, taking a smug pleasure in the way her young breasts thrust up under the spacesuit. She went over to the little table on which the old man's personal effects were scattered, arranging her hair before the mirror. Glancing down she saw something she had not noticed before - a photo of the man's wife and son.

She took the picture over to her table and held it in the light, searching for the woman's freckles. Yes, his wife was more or less as she had imagined her. With a little happy sigh she turned the photo over and read on the back

My eternal love,

Jean.

Jean, she thought. So Carleann had left him because of the voyage. She knew what it must have felt like to get back from that long, lonely trip and find that to the person you loved you were no more than a stranger. Yet he had found another love, someone who had not deserted him.

She looked at herself in the mirror, her heart still bubbling with its strange sense of promise. Yes, she would find a true love one day just like the old man had. She felt ahead to the future, letting her heart go forth into those unfathomed corridors of time. She saw herself as a mother, middle-aged, the monarch of her little family, a woman who had come past the turbulent thinness of formative years.

END.

- Van Ikin.

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### MIRROR

I look deep in the faces  
of the people I pass by;  
I look deep, into their eyes;  
And I see hate, distrust, fear...  
I wonder if I appear the same to them:  
are these people only mirrors  
reflecting our own hidden tears...?

- Cy Chauvin.

We Claim These Stars

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

by Poul Anderson

Ace : G-697 \$0.60

Copyright 1959 121 pages.

Ace have prominently billed this book as "A Flandry of Terra novel" and that is an apt description of it. Although the length of the book would infer that it is nearer to a short novel or a novella rather than a novel.

It is set in the customary far future when Terra is gradually losing her far-flung empire to other younger races that are in their ascendancy. Most of the time Anderson is able to capture the effect of the long eons of Terran glory that have lead up to the creation of their empire and the now inexorable forces that are acting to bring the long night a little closer with every concession made by a now decadent and ineffective government. Dominic Flandry is described as a minor noble in the court of the current ruler and, more important, as one of the few man able to live up to the task of maintaining the heritage of the past. In the former role he has a near perfect connoisseur's knowledge of matters of style and grace. He is as fond of soft luxury as any young fop of his time. Here he appears to have been based on the aristocracy of the more enlightened Middle Ages and all to often he has the hint of being a bit of a snob with his superior knowledge. The other half of him shows Flandry as a suave and devious master spy that prefers to obtain his own ends by outwitting the opposition rather than by using brute force. Of course this situation is usually forced upon him because of the limited forces available to him.

The Terran empire finds itself in the unenviable position of being pressed on many fronts without adequate space navies to repulse those of the enemy. In this book the terms are for the most part dictated by the aliens who do a fancy job of trying to split the Terran navies into many smaller ineffectual pieces. As a whole it is still quite capable of holding its own against anything that can be thrown against it. So, of course, Flandry finds himself with the task of thwarting an alien invasion of one of the outposts of the empire. He is sent to see what he can do to upset their applecart mainly because the enemy may use it as a base for taking more of Terran territory rather than as aid for an invaded ally. He wins out in the end because the conquering Ardazirho are still only barbarians who have not progressed beyond a feudal society composed of a number of warring tribes or states. The impression is given that they are only dangerous because they have been given vital information and scientific knowledge by Terra's enemies. Naturally, though, Flandry is able to unravel the loose ends of his problem in quick time with the help of his superior technology and techniques of interrogation and the leaders are remarkably easy to find and capture. He is not without his share of good fortune as the following shows :

"Great unborn planets. It had been a slim clue, and Flandry would not have been surprised had it proved a false lead."

That was hardly likely with a mere 10 pages in which to wrap up the book for its tidy conclusion.

As may be expected from the above, the actual plot is fairly lightweight and straightforward, but at least the ending gives only a partial success and remains in character with the basic premise of its decadent future.

One fault of the novel is that while the portrayal of Sir Dominic is quite good the incidental characters only get superficial descriptions from Anderson's pen. His valet is rarely given an opportunity to be more than a convenient cliché that grows wearing on the reader after a short while. He is supposed to be an old slave of Dominic's that has on occasion refused to accept his freedom. This is probably because he realises that he is better off serving him than he would be on his own in this society where position is everything and great emphasis is placed on the superficialities of life. The colonists of the invaded planet are everything that one might expect them to be from any number of other similar books. Unfortunately they barely rate as characters at all.

Still, considering the short length of this book, Anderson has done a pretty good job in sketching his background and it remains a competent adventure story worthy of a few spare hours.

#### A Gun For Dinosaur

by L. Sprague de Camp

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

Curtis 123-09018 : \$A1.20

313 pages : Copyright 1963.

This reprint of an old Doubleday book is long overdue, unless Curtis are again reprinting a book without giving all its full copyright history. Most of the stories in this thicker-than-usual volume are all typical de Camp and are taken from a fairly representative selection of the pro SF magazines of the early and middle 1950's.

Some are very well known and should speak for themselves like the title story, 'A Gun For Dinosaur' which originally came from Galaxy and 'Aristotle And The Gun' from Astounding. Two completely different but entertaining stories built around the effects of irresponsible meddling with time. The latter is sufficiently downbeat to possibly qualify as New Wave although it was written well before a story had to be sub-classified into New and Old Wave with the better ones being rated one or the other solely on the prejudices of the reviewer.

The next section is a group of 5 stories under the uninspired heading of Gadgets and Projects. The Guided Man is a fairly

straight forward tale of a gadget that allows a person to relinquish control of his body to an operator many miles away who can guide him through potentially embarrassing situations. The thing is well written but the treatment is rather superficial in places and it is a bit too predictable. Cornzan The Mighty is a little better even if it is a bit merciless in its treatment of poor old Tarzan. However it is still the standard parody of a Hollywood studio, although a fairly good one of its type. Judgement Day is a trite tale of revenge dependent on a lightweight idea and the well known casual sadism of young children and their treatment of anyone who is in the slightest way superior to them.

The group of stories labelled as Suburban Sketches consists of four stories. The best of which, naturally came from Galaxy. Gratitude is a deceptively simple story of a group of suburban friends who plant and raise the seeds of three unknown extra-terrestrial plants. The succeeding events are rather unusual but de Camp handles the gimmick plot very well. I would consider it typical of the normal Galaxy novelette of that period before Gold handed over to Pohl. The remaining three are just lightweight single idea stories that have no particular faults or virtues to make them stand out from the rest of those included in this good quality collection.

The final group leaves the Earth for far off planets with two novelettes and an abrupt short story. 'Impractical Joke' is a message story that tells of the events that follow as a result of a practical joke that back-fires with a pretty spectacular blaze of burning phosphorus.

The stories in this book are many and varied, ranging from near classics of this author to others that would best be left forgotten. On the whole the book comes out on top for its entertainment value. It is at least as good as many of the highly rated collections of more recent times. In any case a collector would be hard put to put together a volume of similar worth from the magazines of today! However most of those in this selection are still only just above average for their period but I still recommend this volume to those who do not have the title story and 'Aristotle And The Gun' on their bookshelves already.

Please disregard the dreadful cover which has nothing to do with the contents. It does a great disservice to a well respected author.

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The Authentic Touch

Reviewed by Ron L Clarke.

by Jack Wodhams

Curtis Books 502-07142-075. \$US0.75.

This is Jack Wodhams' first published novel, and is written in the style that is becoming Jack's trademark. Blurbed as a "Science-Fantasy Novel" (which it isn't - it's science fiction),

'The Authentic Touch' is one of the best new humorous sf novels to come out of the genre for some years.

The planet Anakron is a sweet set up for a recreation planet : the usual recreation tours are usually tied down to planned schedules and the gloss of tourism shows through. Not so the five States of Anakron - situated on the third largest continent. The five consist of recreated periods of Earth's history and a rigid border patrol ensures that travel between them does not allow incongruities to build up - such as having Roman legions marching through the dusty streets of a cowtown.

The five states consist of Dwardia (Early 20th Century), Regium (18th Century France), Alatin (Early Rome), UKD (American West), and Principair (Age of Chivalry).

The novel follows the exploits of seven of the 'applicants' for a 'holiday' on Anakron, and their adventures as they muddle through the various countries. They are a mixed bunch - two young women, three men (white collar workers they might be called) and a husband and wife. They all seek a holiday away from the boredom of civilization of that time - and they get it. From the time they arrive on Anakron and step out of the transmitter booth they are in life on Anakron to their necks. All is not what it seems might well be a good description of the goings on in this society they find themselves.

Each chapter is broken up into sections, some only a few paragraphs long, some pages long, which deal with each group and the consequences of their actions. Wodhams uses a very personal (even fannish) approach in his writing - which can be noticed in the asides he uses to denote passing of time. Some are only three lines. An example of which is:

'Mimi Fansidat was taking another bath. Oo-la-la. But this time in an ornate Louis XIV tub located in an elegant house in Fontainrouge, the capital of Regium. How she got there is another story - who cares? She looked gorgeous, her mammaries thrusting uninhibited and just asking for....

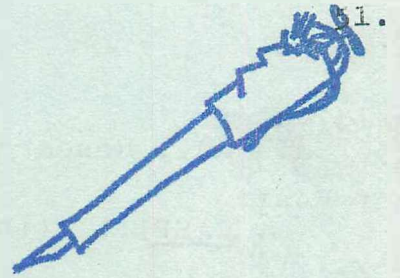
'Oh, hell. Back to the war.'

The sections of the chapters chop from one scene to another, but still the novel is eminently readable. 'Touch' is a satire, too, of the various regimes and is a capsuled history of the times, in as far as the planet Anakron begins as a planned recreation ground and ends up with War raging between Dwardia and the rest of the states, fostered by the Kaiser of Dwardia. The use of wax bullets (to avoid bloodshed) and the ruse used by the inhabitants of Knox City to throw the invading Dwardian troops off guard is one that will linger on in my memory for a long time.

'The Authentic Touch' is good for a first novel, though it was written perhaps a little too light heartedly. The style of writing used is mostly used for fanzines; whether it will be successful commercially will be interesting to see. It is a novel in the tradition of 'The Castle of Iron' and 'The Girls From Planet 5' and is well worth buying. Congratulations Jack.



# the R & R dept.



Robin Johnson

2/28 Ardmillan Rd., Moonee Ponds 3039.

Dear Ron,

THE MENTOR 19. Marvellous cover, beautiful repro. I hope you had some spares done. I've seen it before, but a lot smaller. /.../ Due to fast response, I have not yet read David Grigg's story MOSAIC: I liked the Evens poem after I mentally made it prose, forgot the nursery-rhyme rhythm and just thought of the images. Sorry, but poems do not work for me. Neither does Michael Black's story IDENTITY. No J.J. Pierce I, but for a story to work I'll agree with him that a story must have something to which one can relate. Here, the different sections all pull apart, and no visible connection is made..

He's trying to New Wave us, and I'm not going with it. (\*\* The first two pages of IDENTITY was printed in TM 9 (July '68) as DECEIVE ME NOT. - Ron.\*\*)

Reviews by Paul Anderson of more old books - how about something new? /..../

Nice to see your letter from Andre Norton; glad you mentioned the Terry Award. Bob Vardeman's letter about the hazards of gafia-attacks being greater for small bidding committees sounds like good ammo for us to use on those who complain about the size of the A75 Ctee.

It's Glicksohn who puts out ENERGUMEN: (\*\* Whose name I managed to spell wrong in two different ways; sorry Mike. - Ron.\*\*) one of the best-looking fanzines around. I saw one he sent to Noel in trade for Somerset Gazette and the name of Rosemary Ulllyott kept appearing; I thought she was English. Maybe another migrant?

The Nova Mob lives. Information - write Bossa Nova, Box 4946, GPO, Melb. 3001.

What have you done to Wodhams? The ectoplasm is emerging from his nostril and appears to be forming a hand clutching his throat. I like having contents on the back. I stack my copies face down, so the latest is on top, and thus the contents list is visible immediately. Do you recommend those teaching places for learning touchtyping? (\*\* I learnt at one of them - in about 3 weeks. Though it was human tuition; the woman there said girls who did the TV/machine course came to her course to to learn it properly. - Ron.\*\*)

Robin.

David Grigg  
1556 Main Rd., Research, Vic. 3039.

Dear Ronl;

GASP!!! (the cover, says he in awe and envy and jealousy....)

Graham Stone and Kevin Dillon, there's an interesting combination...

What's this cruddy piece of fan-fiction doing in THE MENTOR 19, Ron : it's a bit much you know, twenty pages of such cruddy material as MOSAIC just doesn't belong in a classy 'zine like yours (with a Finlay cover, yet). I didn't like this at all : it was overlong and clumsy, the plot is virtually non-existent, and the characterisation is Blaah! The illustrations aren't too bad, though, but please tell Mr Grigg to keep his infantile efforts to himself, next time. (\*\* Actually, David, though I thought the plot was a bit slow starting, I thought maybe it was the first of a series...? - Ron.\*\*)

Seriously, Mosaic needed a good re-write and re-think, but I hadn't the energy. Dunno what your readers will think of it. I should write more so that I write the faults out of my style, but what with one thing and another, I don't seem able to.

Th poem was a bit weird. Is Don Herbison-Evans the real name of the poet, I've never seen him around fanzines. (\*\* Yes, it's his real name. Don's a Professor of Astronomy at Sydney University and he's been in TM quite often with letters of comment. He had an article in TM 13 /COMPUTERS ARE ONLY HUMAN/, and a fact article in M31 /UFOs/. - Ron.\*\*)

Identity was, well, I think possibly a little overwritten, if that is the word (where's me Thesaurus gone?), but not bad: Michael Black shows glimmerings of some talent. Like the illo with it.

Letters! You get rather more than I, I think. Next FANARCHIST will be printing a lot of letters, more than usual, to get them off my chest, from then on, I will probably only print about four or five of what I get. This probably will have a tendency to chase off LoC writers, but damn it, I need the space, and surely articles and original material are more important than letters? Are they? Still, your letters of great interest.

Some well-informed (not to mention heated) discussion of Reality F in the issue before, which interests: I actually only skimmed the article when I got TM 18 (maybe I'm only skimming the surface of life, skipping the articles and events I should be concentrating on... sigh\*), but you should be glad that it stirred up so much interest, tho just about all negative. Some science lecturer at Uni once said that virginity was a quantum state: that is, you either are or you aren't, no in-betweens. And since the reaction is non-reversible, it would seem to me that undertaking it should merit some thought on behalf of the person concerned. (\*\* In a movie on TV last night (A NEW KIND OF LOVE) the girl was

described as a "semi-virgin", that is, she had tried it once, and didn't like it. - Ron.\*\*)

Sex-before-marriage certainly isn't a sin. But I think illegitimate children are, in the sense that in THIS society, the child is likely to be under strains and difficulty the rest of us aren't, and I don't think any child should have this kind of handicap. Not to mention the difficulties of the unwed mother if she tries to bring up a child on her own. This all merits thought on behalf of the people involved. Still, like just about everything in this world, it comes down to free-will. Do what you like, brother, to yourself, just don't hurt me. Ah, I ramble.

Your fanzine reviews are extensive, but no sense of criticism, more like ads. Jack the Wod interesting (veerrry interesting...) Like the back page: such command of language, such imagery!

I remain, sir, yr Humble Servant:

David Grigg.

"The First Australian Crudzine With An  
Original Virgil Finlay Cover." (\*\* Yeah. - Ron.\*\*)

Cary Handfield  
2 Banoon Rd., South Eltham, Vic. 3095.

Dear Ron,

Thanks for the reprieve. After receiving TM 18 with a - this is your last issue unless you respond in some way, I thought I had received my last Mentor. Thanks for TM 19. Rather than trust my luck I thought I better send a LoC before you drop me from your mailing list.

One thing I like about The Mentor is its irregularity. Three issues between February and the end of May is very good going for a quarterly fanzine. I hope you will keep it up. David Grigg has been doing the same thing with the FANARCHIST. Originally it was meant to come out on a bi-monthly basis, instead it had been coming out on a monthly basis.

Now to get back to THE MENTOR 19. The cover is one of the best I have ever seen on a fanzine. Congratulations.

I don't know whether I like Mosaic more now than when I first read it in 1969. (I was David's agent then). When I first read it I was a bit confused by the idea of two worlds. Maybe David could have made it a bit clearer or maybe it is just my own ignorance. Anyway I am glad to see that David is getting some of his work published without doing it himself. When you write to him next ask him about his JUDAS story. Maybe you could publish it in The Mentor if he ever finishes it.

Your letter column reads like a who's who of Australian Fandom - well almost. It makes me wonder, you receive so many letters - maybe I should start my own Fanzine (what a laugh!).

54.

Ron's Roost - gee I didn't know you were that old - discovered fandom in 64 - that was a long time ago. I have only one criticism. If you think that Foyster, Bangsund, McCormack, Richards and Darling are the only active fans in Australian fandom then you should have your head read. (\*\* You missed the \*etc, Carey. - Ron.\*\*)

Cheers

Carey Handfield.

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E.B. Lindsay  
6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge 2776.

Dear Ron,

I guess I will start with the cover and just work through to the back of The Mentor 19. Otherwise I won't know where to start. It really looks good.

You should get a lot of comment about the Finlay illustration so I will only mention that the one on my copy came out very well on the glossy paper.

Your editorial, and especially the remarks on the average sf reader tend to make me wonder if perhaps fans in general, and faneds in particular, waste too much time on sf, fandom and printed attempts at communication. What is the point? Social interaction with those of like interests - you point out the poor response to previous issues of The Mentor. I wonder if it is all worthwhile. - End of depressing comments. (\*\* Worthwhile? I must think it is, otherwise I wouldn't be putting out TM, would I, and you wouldn't be putting out GEGENSCHNEIN yourself, eh Eric?. - Ron.\*\*)

I liked Shayne's illos. She seems to be willing to try to do illos to suit a particular story, and this adds to the interest of the zine.

"Mosaic" by David Grigg was very enjoyable. The contrast between the various worlds was well done. I think the character of Meradil, and of Wasserman should have been developed earlier, and the "evil" characteristics of Meradil played down. The effect of these two characters "explanations" of the phenomena was excellent, two verbal explanations in confusing terms, of something that may not be explicable. A web of words, that sometimes help, sometimes hinder, understanding. I wonder if David was influenced by A.J.Ayer. I could quibble about some things, the inclusion of Hell's Angels as misplaced knights are an instance, but since David rides, is perhaps understandable. By the way, bike chains are not real good weapons. The return stroke is too slow, and the chain tends to wrap around anything it hits as well as being difficult to swing with any accuracy. Overall "Mosaic" reminded me a lot of Fred Hoyle's "October the fifth is too Late", but it was very entertaining, if a little depressing towards the end.

No comment on Interferometer.

"Identity" by Michael Black. A lot of form without a lot of content, still this is much a matter of taste.

The reviews were good, but as before I would like to see more up to date ones.

I was interested in Gary Woodmans remarks on drivers and pedestrians, but I feel sure I have seen a short story about that (a number of years ago).

Nice to see Mike O'Brien and Ron Graham commenting on your duplicating, you had me worried with your remarks. Now they are in line for any criticism about immoderate praise, as well as me.

I was very interested in your COLOUR PROBLEM. Often wondered why fanads used so many different coloured papers, now I know. (\*\* Er, yes. Actually David Grigg wrote and gave me a different reason for using coloureds - when you don't have the money for the whole issue you gets the paper when and where you can - hence the different colours. I still think it gives the zine a personal touch that others - more 'staid' - don't have. - Ron.\*\* ) Matter of fact I dislike coloured paper, which is why I use white. The stuff used in GEGENSCHIEIN cost me \$1.15 a ream, and print through was not a serious problem though it was somewhat more noticable than in The Mentor. The price I mentioned for Mortype stencils was a bit out. They are \$4 per box of 48; this is a fraction over 08 cents. If you would like any just let me know.

Enjoyed the Info Page, all those fanzines to read, lovely.

Well, I think I better close now. It is as usual after midnight, in fact just about the time I usually get around to doing LoCs.

Regards,  
Eric.

Steven Phillips  
140A Parkes St., Helensburgh, 2508.

Dear Ron,

Thanks for The Mentor 19.

Generally, I dislike fan fiction, especially if it is so frighteningly long as Mosaic by David Grigg. You may now be expecting me to say "... but I read this piece and thoroughly enjoyed it." But I did not read it.

The Interferometer by Don Herbison-Evans was almost appalling. Its pathos did nearly inspire in me a little sympathy for its creator.

Gave the next bit of fan fiction a miss too.

Don't like book reviews.

Do like letters. While skimming through them I notice remarks on previous covers, which immediately reminds me to compliment you on the excellent cover of this issue. Production-wise, without a doubt, you have a magazine to be proud of. (\*\*Thanks.-Ron)

Everyone seems to like the work of Mr Wodhams. I detest it. He is the most over-rated egotist to marr the pages of a fanzine. In his humerous pieces he strains to copy artists like Thurber. I see he condecendingly throws you some scraps for your Australian SF Fan feature. How nice of him. Nuts to you, Jack - even though you may be making money.

Leith Edmunds' letter was my favourite piece of writing. Next came your editorial - an unpretentious and worthwhile two pages.

Probably the most worthwhile two pages in the whole of The Mentor 19.

Keep up the good work,  
Steve.

Archie Mercer  
21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall, Pommiland.

Dear Ron,

THE TORMENTOR Nos.17 and (would you believe?) 18 recently arrived - by devious postal routing which is at least in part Our Own Fault - at this address. You are to be thanked for the kind thought. (So - many thanks!)

I rather like the cover of No.17 - at any rate the eastern sector thereof. (Until it mentioned it inside, however, I wouldn't have dreamed of associating the western sector with your wellknown beardecked self. I suppose it could be you - but only by a considerable stretch of an exceptionally vivid imagination.) (\*\* Oh? I thought anyone could recognise those noble features in any disguise. Anyway, it did not help me through Australian Customs - I got recognised. - Ron.\*\*)

I hate to say it to such a welcome guest-that-was, but I'm not all that gone on the contents. The best thing in either, I thought, was Bros's obscenity thing - largely, possibly, because I tend very much to agree with him. Unfortunately, he used a couple of words (or was it only one? - but I haven't time to go back for a recount) that are becoming somewhat fashionable nowadays - and get increasingly on Beryl's wick as a consequence. In fact, when she sees them she tends to throw the magazine aside in disgust as representing the same old contemporary rubbish. So she didn't give herself the chance to see the basic worthiness of John's article. Pity.

The remainder of the contents of both issues seems to comprise short fiction leavened with poetry. Short fiction I seldom care for, whether pro or amateur, and poetry likewise. Which doesn't leave much for me to get my teeth into. A bit of heavy-handed (or so I thought) satire from Jack the Wod, a few reviews and general notes, a couple of biographies of people I hadn't before heard of - not consciously, anyway - and lettercols discussing stories I hadn't/haven't read.

Still, the things were appreciated - and it's nice to hear



(if only indirectly) that you found your way safely back down under.

It occurs to me, as a sort of footnote to the above, that had I been au faitier with the Aussiefan-ingroup, I might have derived more enjoyment between the MENTORian lines. As implied above, the failure is still mine rather than yours. (\*\* I really think that it is I, Archie. After all, the information had to come from me to you and I will endeavour to try in future to get this across to people overseas. - Ron.\*\*). Thanks again, from us both.

Archie.

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Jack Wodhams  
Box 772, P.O. Cairns, Q 4870.

Dear Ron,

David Grigg does not put the words together too badly at all, does he? MOSAIC was loose and, apart from not knowing what it was all about, it did not make a lot of sense to me - which science-fantasy rarely does anyway. But it was readable, which makes it all the more remarkable. Actually he has tackled a very big apple with a very small nibble. You should encourage this boy.

THE INTERFEROMETER, okay, but did not dig Michael Black's IDENTITY. The vague brooding dooms and grimmies we got enough already. In the LoColumns it was nice to have all but a twit or two, like Gary Woodman, mentioning me kindly. Readers should keep in mind that you have to suffer yoghurt and get extremely little cream off the top.

THE MENTOR seems, to me, of the Aussie fanzines, to have the Murdoch touch (Murdoch? The newspaper tycoon, yes? Truth, News of the World, Daily Mirror, and etc.) in that you are producing a format that has general popular appeal. (\*\* I don't think I quite like the above comparison, Jack. After all, I don't need sex to sell TM. [Come to think of it, that could be the reason I don't seem to sell TM...] - Ron.\*\* ) THE MENTOR 19 was pretty well-balanced, maybe could have done with one or two more reviews. If my copy is anything to go by, Mr Ron Graham should not require his extra-strong trifocals to detect some legibility. And I told you the Suttie thing would hit a nerve, am smug. Say what you like about sex, but it sure sells papers. Now, I have an article explaining the scientific reason why humans are endowed with pubic hair. Ask me nicely and you still won't get it - a world-shaking discovery, and patents are pending.

Another one to encourage, of course, is John Brosnan. His tribulations in London, recounted in 'Wombat', went down well. He has that essential ingredient that a writer most needs suffer - namely and to wit, he is a mutt. Commendation to Steven Phillips' SITTING ON MY ROOF. Gary Woodman is a twit. Hi, Gary. And bow-wow, now,

Jack W.

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Van Ikin  
4 McDonald Cres., Strathfield 2135.

Dear Ron,  
/.... / And now, about TM 19 -

That cover. Wow! Do you know her address? Seriously, 'twas simply fantastic. I guess the glossy paper is a bit too expensive to use continually, but it does have a tremendous effect. I'm not really familiar with fanzines, but when I think of what a fanzine put out by me would look like (& when I think of the church paper I used to edit - till they stopped me), then I come to the conclusion that TM is a mighty fine piece of work. (\*\* Work is right! - Ron.\*\*) (Especially that typing. - And to understand that comment just peruse the enclosed manuscripts.) (\*\* I dunno, Van, you should see the corflu on these stencils when they get run off! And even then some mistakes get missed. - Ron.\*\*)

You mentioned John Baxter in your editorial. Does he get TM? (I'd love to know more about that guy. His writing on the cinema is really something.) (\*\* No, I'm afraid he doesn't; mainly because I don't have his address. - Ron.\*\*) And, just for the heck of it, I'll say I'm glad you liked Paradise Lost. Actually I did too, but just at the moment I've got a 2500 word essay on it to write, & that tends to smother one's enjoyment a bit.

Very often I miss the point of poetry, but not with Don Herbison-Evans' poem. (Was he the fellow who invented a device that had something to do with UFO's? I read about it in the papers a few years ago, but was never able to get one.) (\*\* Yes, it is he. He did a article for me, in M31, called "UFO"; in which he mentions the device, which can be carried in a few cardboard slide holders. - Ron.\*\*) The poem was enjoyable: funny, smooth-flowing (except for an intentional break or two) & yet with merit on more than just that level. Sort of seeking out & celebrating that which is poetic amidst that which is scientific (& thus traditionally un-poetic). Very good.

The same goes for "Mosaic" & "Identity" - both good, though they work on such different levels that one can't really compare them. When I say I liked "Identity", that doesn't mean I could totally sum it up & write a precis on what it means. And maybe it's a criticism of the story that I feel I must say that. All I know is that I enjoyed having "Identity" jogging at the mind-strings. A much better story than Solitude (in TM 18), I think - though I guess some might disagree very strongly with that.

"Mosaic" was like something from a prozine, though I guess its literary presentation would make it get rejected. (K.G. Murray, the people who publish the Man group magazines, reject stories for nutty little reasons like that.) Having said that I liked it, I must point out that it's the type of SF story that bothers me. Once you've read "Mosaic", & caught on to what is going on & why the pieces of the mosaic are scattered, there is very little left of the story. You can't re-read it just to enjoy its effects (like you can with Paradise Lost or D.H. Lawrence), & sometimes I think people want something that they can go back to,

time and time again. It's a bit unfair for me to say that about David Grigg when my own short stories are subject to the same sort of criticism, but I do feel that way. Really there's not much SF that does bear a second reading to the extent that P.L. will bear it, though I would say Childhood's End & 2001: A Space Odyssey are two novels that do. (Guess who likes Arthur C. Clarke?)

Well, I guess that's all for now. Looking forward to number 20!

Regards,  
Van Ikin.

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Bob Smith  
1/64 Elouera Rd., Cronulla, NSW 2230.

Dear Ron:

Enclosed is \$1 for three issues of TM, it being a practical way of excusing my lack of acknowledgment on the previous issues... I hope. Problems with my part in the AUSTRALIA IN 75 Committee (now ~~devered~~, as you will know) seemed to slow down most other fannish activities, and although fanzines were thoroughly read and usually enjoyed I couldn't get around to actually sitting down and commenting on 'em... Terrible situation, of course.

However, its a bit difficult to completely ignore that fine Finlay cover on TM 19, and a fascinatingly fine issue. And your editorial plus a couple of the letters ask and answer questions that I feel are important in an Australian s f fandom's ideas about 1975.

I guess obtaining the last Finlay for a fanzine cover must be some kind of "first" (particularly in this country), and Ron Graham is to be thanked and you congratulated on doing it justice. (\*\* The printer is to be thanked too - both for the trouble he went to to get the stock and the fact that he didn't charge me for printing it. - Ron.\*\* ) (I go for his more "bubbly" illos myself, but ain't complaining, you understand....)

Perhaps one of the differences between the sf fan and the faan is that the former does find things to make him "think" in sf-slanted fanzines; the faan begins to get a bit sloppy in his attitudes towards fanzines and spends most of his faanish career wandering through those that keep him in contact with other fanns...? (Hmmm. . Probably condemned myself to a faanish Coventry now...) In my opinion the faan has always been a rare bird in Australian sf, and the real genuine ones can probably be numbered on one hand. I think you tend to ignore a more realistic gap between the sf fan and the (as you call him) "reader", and the transition from reader/enthusiast/casual-or-confirmed to sf fan is not always such a desirable thing for the mature, intelligent reader of sf. This is not of any great importance, I suppose, until the phenomena of a "World Science Fiction Convention" is heard in the land, and then the attitude one takes towards such an event and what one expects

from it can be seen to have a large slice of vagueness down the centre. The socializing functions and activities of Fandom are probably different only in minor aspects from the rest of the world's professional and non-professional societies, clubs, hobbies, etc., as far as I have seen in many years of reading, collecting, 'socializing' within the field of sf; one of the differences is that the sf enthusiast can practically ignore Fandom yet extract the essential science fictional elements from it that he/she wants. Fandom, of course, tends to pretty well ignore them, and this can become a damn ridiculous attitude at times. They are not "fans" and they most certainly do not have to "help" Fandom, but they do have a stake in any part of the sf field that proclaims itself "World" or "International" because you are talking their language. You are talking about a function that includes a Heinlein, a Clarke (uh... the Big name one, that is), a Asimov, a Leiber even, a Chandler, etc., and that is what they expect of such a Convention. They are a vast untapped people and should be approached as science fiction (and associated) fellow beings, not as possible converts or "fandom", and most certainly not be dismissed as "readers", Phew... (\*\* Heaven forbid! Fandom can do a hell of a lot of harm if approached by the unwary. (I was thinking of doing an article with the heading of a pile of fanzines labeled '10¢ an oz' alongside a spoonful of heroin labeled '\$32 an oz', and call the article "Which is the more Insidious?" - Ron.\*\*)

David Grigg I am finding is full of surprises, and "Mosaic" is another of them. No doubt the Writer would cut great holes in David's style, technique, plot and background, but I found it very readable. The odd typographical errors irritated a bit and there was some grammatical confusion in places and I guess a little too much of David's philosophy was hammered home... but I enjoyed it.

Hey, did you send Professor Brown a copy of that poem? (\*\* Who?? - Ron.\*\* ) Maybe that Stellar Interferometer isn't quite what it seems, huh....? (or the poet had had an over-dose of visual Wells via the film. It was very good, I thought.

"Identity" didn't do anything for me, I'm afraid.

Paul Anderson's review of "Iceworld" was fair, until he came out with that strange comment that "I classify this as a very well done juvenile that should be read by a large number of older fans". I began to mutter about another juvenile who should be well done...

There is something about a good long letter column, and of course more than one fanzine has discovered that this can be the answer to popularity and regularity.... You apparently publish every letter of comment you receive, and with the minimum amount of editing...? This has its 'problems' too, of course. (\*\* Yeah, it has. Though I think a zine that prints most of the locs it gets is pretty well insuring that it will get plenty of locs /feedback, in the case of TM/. In fact, if I wasn't getting the amount of locs I am getting, TM would have come to a finis before now. - Ron.\*\*)

I suppose one of the main problems with consistently turning out first-class legible fanzines in the economic one. Perhaps

Ron Graham didn't think of that, which is understandable. One can be a reasonable typist, and correct the typos, etc., and one can work out a format that will not have the reader scratching his head, take advantage of lettraset, etc. But if one does not own one's own duplicator one has to take pot luck. With an apa mailing, of course, the wide variety of dupering is only too apparent, but as its only going out to thirty odd fellow chums one tends to not become too sensitive about ampubbing blunders. No excuse really, I guess.

In all honesty I have to agree with Ron Graham that Harry Warner's HORIZONS can be a heavy diet at times, and I imagine that has something to do with why I went off his mailing list rather smartly back in the early sixties. I would like to know what Ron thinks of Harry's earlier publishing venture, SPACEWAYS, since he has praise for another fine and long gone fanzine, THE NEW FUTURIAN. Fans like Michael Rosenblum knew the secret of laying out their fanzines in 'magazine' format, and they knew who they were aiming at. Almost anything can be made interesting and readable, if the Editor puts it in the right place. PEON, I always thought, did this particularly well... and had some good contributors!

The term "fan" as applied to science fiction addicts and associated non-mundane believers is, in my opinion, being tossed around much too vaguely and lacking the Great Traditions of Fandom.. .. as you hint to Christine. I really think its time for the equivalent of a FANCYCLOPEDIA III....

I hope by this time someone has told Ian McDowell about The Space Age Bookshop or that Mervyn has noted his name and address for future issues of their newsletter.

And that the AUSTRALIA IN '75 Committee have noted Margaret Oliver's letter, and if nothing else sent her A 75 B No1..

And I enjoyed WOMBAT....

Regards,  
Bob.

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Victor Markwart  
International House, University of Sydney, 2006.

Dear Ron,

Thanks a lot for The Mentor 19. It is amazing how you manage the quality of TM (\*\* One of the reasons is that the paper for TM 20 costs me \$5 odd more than the stuff for 19. - Ron.\*\*) I just hope that you manage to keep it up. (\*\* Probably till I get thrown off shift-work. - Ron.\*\*) When compared with our own magazine -- at least it as an example of what can be obtained, and gives us a target. (\*\* That's one of the nicest compliments I've had for TM. Thanks, Victor. - Ron.\*\*) By the way I hope you received the copy of "ENIGMA", if not, please write, and it will be posted out immediately, if not sooner. (\*\* Thanks, I did./See the Info Page this ish./- Ron.\*\*)

"Mosaic" is very good, though it does remind me somewhat

of "Black Easter" by James Blish, but it is very interesting, and also well written. Where do you manage to get the writers from? Here at Sydney Uni there are about 16,000 potential Science Fiction writers, and of these we only get at most ten. (\*\* That's pretty good odds, since out of about 13 million I have got about ten fairly good writers. - Ron.\*\*)

The poem "The Interferometer" interested me, especially since the author is in the Physics department at S.U., I think you have a better P.R.O.

"Identity" I didn't like as much as "Mosaic", possibly because the first time through it confused me slightly, and I still do not understand it fully but it will give me something to puzzle over.

I think I will find the "Info Page" very useful when I have finished my latest Maths assignments, for I would like to contact members of other associations.

By the way, I received this copy on Sunday. I am certain that it wasn't in the letter box yesterday, how did you manage that? (\*\* Working at Sydney Mail Exchange has some advantages...- Ron.\*\*)

Sincerely  
Victor.

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John Brosnan  
Flat 1, 62 Elsham Rd., Kensington, London. W14, UK.

Dear Ron,

Clarkian fanzines have been flooding my mail recently. First the two issues of THE MENTOR arrived (the Bank of NSW slipped up... I actually received them) then came WOMBAT. I was impressed with the Mentors, I hadn't realised that you'd done so much work on them, I was expecting a couple of skimpy things. The covers were especially good, in particular the one with you and that girl. Wombat, I'm afraid, was a bit skimpy. It could have done with a lot more material, but of course I know that's not easy to get.

I'm typing this letter at my new place of employment. I'm now, technically, the publicity manager of Fountain Press. An impressive title but it doesn't really mean much. The place is so small that practically everyone is called a manager of some kind. I got the job as a result of putting an ad in the BOOKSELLER magazine, the trade mag for publishers. I was really after a copywriting job but was quite willing to take this. There is some copywriting involved, and it's a hell of a lot more interesting than the tax office.

(\*\* Sounds great, John. One of the things I would be interested in hearing is the copyright rights of the limited circulation magazines - ie fanzines. - Ron.\*\*)

Yours f.....,  
John



Alex Gas

Monash Uni. S.F. Assn., c/- Union, Monash Uni., Wellington Rd.,  
Clayton 3168.

Dear Ron,

As I mentioned in my last letter, I read lettercols before any other part of a fanzine as it sort of gives you the distinctive flavour of the 'zine and puts you in the mood for what's coming. Now, right after the lettercol you had something called "TM's INFO PAGE" and as luck would have it, my eyes grazed down the page and WAK! ... no mention of MUSFA! And especially after I mentioned it in my last loc seeing that you seemed to be in doubt about its existence. That's a definite naughty Ron, consider your hands spanked. I could say more but Carey tells me that he's already written to you about it so I just mention it in passing... (\*\* Yeah, sorry about that, Alex. Its the fault of the way I print TM. I usually cut the stencils of the locs when I get them, and cut the contents in between locs. I had already cut the stencil for the Info Page when I got your letter, and I thought the mention in it would suffice. Ah well.... - Ron.\*\*)

Now about that cover. Yeah. Well. I suppose it's great for ogoboo to have a Finlay cover but somehow it didn't seem to be all that great to me. But then again it wasn't bad....

And now we come to the painful part. This is where I have to admit (shudder) that David Grigg can write, and good. Apart from strange things like "Davis realized with an illogical shock that she could be barely twenty-five.", and the difficulty in swallowing the notion that someone could actually bring himself to produce a doomsday machine, not to mention the interesting typos, it was great. (\*\* Typos are something you get extra - makes you think a little more...- Ron.\*\*) In fact in places I thought it was brilliant (e.g. the second last paragraph on page 18). Mosaic gave a lovely new angle to the old theme and was beautifully done. "The Dwarves of Earth" I think could stand as a nice short story by itself.

I find it hard to describe my reaction to Michael Black's piece, I was definitely impressed and I am glad I managed to get past the beginning. After that I was caught up in it, not so much in the plot as this only became evident in the last page or so, but in the imagery. Yes, I liked it but whether or not I got the effect Michael wanted I dunno.

The Info Page(s) was good (the fanzine reviews I mean) and I hope you keep it up along with S.F. Fans. Interesting person that Jack the Wod.

This would have to be the best Mentor I've seen so far and if you slip down I'll definitely come up and do you an injury.

P.S. What's the difference between a fan and a faan? I suddenly realise I don't know. (\*\* I think that Bob Smith in his LoC answers that nicely, Alex. Mostly a fan is primarily interested in fandom from a science fiction viewpoint, whereas a faan is in it purely for the mundane social kickswith others of like interest, not necessarily

sf, which many faans drop as an interest. - Ron.\*\*)

What does FWAYAF stand for? (\*\* Clue: 2nd line of "Advance Australia Fair". - Ron.\*\*)

Yours sincerely,  
Alex Gas.

Cy Chauvin  
17829 Peters, Roseville, Michigan, 48066, USA.

Dear Ron,

Your editorial (in TM 18) was quite revealing, I suppose, to younger fans, who wonder why people put out fanzines, though I've known the "true" reason for a while now. Not that big fanzines don't, or couldn't make money, but even Richard Geis said that "I have this overwhelming lust for mail, mail, and more MAIL!" ~~Female will even do!~~ It's what drives people to do it. Not that Geis couldn't have charged 60¢ or even 75¢ for a copy of SFR, and live off his zine, but Faneds are very contentious. There's other reasons for pubbing, too -- the satisfaction of putting out a good zine, providing a forum for your interests and opinions (whether they be on sf-fantasy/fandom/politics/or even sex) etc. Though perhaps it really is addictive like you say... (I know writing is!) The people who don't loc or contribute should realise that the more you put into a fanzine, the more you get out of it.

But enough of that. Michael Black has always been famous (or should I say infamous?) for his short, incredibly puzzling-mystic story pieces. And "Solitude" is yet another to add to his long list... I wish I really understood what he was trying for; it would be easier to criticise it that way. It would seem he must mean to express some feeling of absolute horror (not in the usual Lovecraft or Poe way, however), but I don't know if it is sufficiently rationalised. Or let's say developed : what's happening on, behind the scenes in the story? Usually, sf and fantasy pieces interest people more for their backgrounds than anything else. So Michael should try for a little more length in his pieces; surrealistic horror is a nice thing to fool around with, but you've got to develop it more slowly, lead the reader gradually up to the horror part.

Paul Anderson's reviews aren't bad : they're nice, competent pieces of work. But he might make his reviews more interesting if he picked something that was interesting, in the first place, to review. Keith Laumer's serials, I'm afraid, usually aren't. Now I don't mean to pick on Laumer - he can tell a good story, and I've enjoyed some of his stuff as much as the next fan. But his material is a bit predictable-- you can usually sense ahead of time what the reviewer will say. Why not pick one of the serials in AMAZING, GALAXY, or FANTASTIC to review instead? They'd probably be more interesting. Also, Paul should try to be a bit more colorful, descriptive, flamboyant! And there's no reason on Earth why you have to be completely serious while reviewing a book-- Leon Taylor

(one of the most entertaining fan writers around, I think) often is humorous in his reviewing, and to good effect. He doesn't use his humor to run down a book, but rather to keep the reader's attention engaged. Read one of his pieces in EMBELYN, Paul, to see what I mean.

Jack Wodhams is in good form with his "Tourney Questor". I don't imagine that he's had much problems with old-money-eating dragons, though-- I understand from the short piece they had on him in VISION that he lives in a Stone Hut!! (I wonder if it has indoor plumbing...?) (\*\* Actually, he now lives in a grass hut, and is served his meals lying in a hammock by his typewriter by gorgeous girls in short grass skirts - Jack had previously trimmed them with a hedge-cutter. - Ron.\*\* ) And his illos to go along with the article are rather good, too. Maybe we'll see him illustrating his own story next time in ANALOG, eh?

Which gives me a chance to mention the big improvement in the artwork which has occurred. Dimitri's cover is really excellent, almost I must admit that I preferred his backcover on THE MENTOR 16 (FIFTH ANNISH) to this one. A pity the cover had to be bent. And Bob Dobson's work isn't bad, either, though I think he's better at the funny stuff than at serious illustration (his bit for "Ron's Roost" was really marvellous!!!). And of course, to have someone actually illustrate your own story is very egobous!!! I hope they all are encouraged to continue drawing for you (Your repro is also very nice and black). (\*\* Thanks, Cy. Is Roneo 250 ink /British/ - Ron.\*\* )

I have only one objection to "Reality F" and that is Sheila Suttie's implication that one shouldn't be "virgin", that that is wrong. Hey, Sheila - you're just exchanging one restriction and adding another!!! Instead of saying before that you must be "virgin", you're saying you must not be virgin. That's not freedom; it should be completely one's own choice, I suppose : if they want to remain "virgin" (there is really no scientific basis for that term, by the way), let them, don't cast ridicule their way, or imply it's wrong. It sounds too much like some of the cruddier "underground" newspapers around here who are forever ridiculing John Birchers, & other right-wing radicals, for seeing "no-good pinko commies" under every bush, but whenever they see something wrong in society they blame it on the "fascist chauvinistic\* imperialistic pigs". It really makes me laugh-- they're both paranoid!!!

Your "R & R Dept" (stands for "read & review" - right?) (\*\* Err, no, it doesn't. Nearly, though - it stands for something a leetle more 'paranoid'. - Ron.\*\* ) is getting interesting, at least Aust. fandom seems to be waking up. Though whatever happened to Bruce Gillespie... John Foyster... Peter Darling... and all those other Guiding Lights (well, how about Candles) off Aussie fandom...?) (\*\* Well, Bruce puts out S F COMMENTARY, and the others are deep into promoting AUSTRALIA IN '75. - Ron.\*\* )

You could do well to edit your lettercol a bit more carefully. Sometimes people stick their foot in their mouth (grammatically speaking) and fixing their own errors is always thoughtful

Besides, it helps to make them easier reading!! Sometimes, too it's a good idea to edit out ~~repetitious~~ comments, or rather one word things like : this is good, this is bad-- oh's that's fair, etc. It doesn't make interesting reading, and besides, everyone wants to know why a person thinks something is wrong/bad/good/or indifferent. So that next time the writer can do better, and the loccers have something to argue about!! (\*\* The thing is, Cy, that if I print a sloppy loc as I get it - its sloppiness is noticed, whereas if I edit it and the locwriter doesn't take notice of the corrections - what is the use? I do amend the outright mistakes, but there are times when I just can't help myself in certain ways and I leave something in that is outrageous - for comments . - Ron.\*\*)

Re: the Info/SFA column.. Wouldn't it be wise to give your readers a few hints as to what's in those back issues of THE MENTOR? (\*\* There should be an Index to the first 20 issues of TM coming out with TM 21. - Ron\*\*) And I certainly wish you success with your '75 bid for Worldcon... I can't say if many U.S. fans oppose it or not. Sometimes I think the more fervent con-oriented ones (which I haven't really come in contact with) might, but perhaps the majority wouldn't really object. But in so many of these things, especially Hugo voting and such, the votes/wishes of a lot of people go unheard. Just supporting membership for the NortheastCon costs \$4. Ridiculous! And the Los Angeles one an unbelievable \$7!!! Only the rich can afford to vote anymore it seems. (Not that I couldn't afford \$7... but you don't get anything tangible back for your money, like, say, if you spent it for a sub to F&SF.)

Shayne McCormack says "I don't really see why there should be any interest... in me..." but she is obviously being (\*gasp\* \*pant\*) very modest. We all have an interest in you Shayne, right Ron? (And what was this I hear about you publishing a foldout in TM...??! (\*\* Beats me..- Ron.\*\*)) (Instead you settled for a small, not even quarter-page photo!!! Selfish!!) Actually, seriously, and all that, it looks like someone hypnotised your dratted female (\*\* My fatal charm. - Ron.\*\*)) competitor and then snapped her photo. She is a bit glassy-eyed. (\*\* Shayne never knew what hit her - you should see the other photo. - Ron.\*\*). Her biography isn't as interesting as Peter Darling's was, either; Shayne should have been a little more specific and detailed in her descriptions of her sf interests, etc. Merely listing (almost) "I like this, that, the other thing..." isn't much fun to read. She shouldn't stick in things like "I hate writing about myself, I'm so boring". Really, if you were, I doubt if Ron would have asked you to write about yourself! Perhaps it's just that we're all a bit self-conscious, you know; your mind usually goes a complete blank when you have to write a bit about yourself. I have to admit that I sympathise with Shayne, since I feel much the same way about it all. I wish your amateur auto-biographers would tell how they entered fandom - I also find that an interesting experience ( I guess because it's something easy to identify with) and there's so many odd ways you can stumble on it.

Yours, Cy.

Robin Johnson  
Flat 2, 28 Ardmillan St. Moonee Ponds, Vic. 3039.

Dear Ron,

I'm sorry that you did not feel able to join the Committee. I'm also sorry you appear to be underinformed about such things as the choice of Melbourne as site for the Worldcon bid, but if you don't go to Cons and don't ask those who do, how can you expect to find out? Telling the near-hundred Mini-Melcon and near-50 QCon attendees hardly constitutes keeping it a secret, you know.

I know Margaret Oliver will have received A75B by this time so her questions should be largely answered too. If anyone else feels there is more they should know, they should send either \$2 or a note to the effect that \$2 of the money they have previously donated to the Australia in '75 Committee should be considered as a sub to : Leigh Edmonds, 2/28 Ardmillan Rd., Moonee Ponds, Vic 3039. /..../

Best,  
Robin.

Edgar H. Lepp  
1 Essex St., Nth. Blackburn, Vic 3130.

Dear Ron,

I received your sample issues of TM (Nos 18 + 19) after I replied to your letter, so this comes separately. First, I hope you can read my handwriting. Many people have already derided it and if you do so I shall not be startled. (\*\* I can read it, Ed, which if more that some of the script I have tried - and without much trouble, too. - Ron.\*\*)

Now to TM. I received them last night and as this is the morning after I've only read the letters which have raised some interesting points. I disagree with Noel Kerr (TM 18) regarding poetry. He thinks that poetry is a restricted way of telling a story; I disagree PROVIDED that the verse does not become a jumble of rhyming lines and nothing else. Epics such as the Illiad and Odyssey (I once saw the claim that these are SF) were naught but poetry until transformed into prose. Poetry, to me, is an "image catalyst".

Poetry is something that alerts my imagination, which allows my imagination to do as much work as the poet. Verse is not poetry if it tells me everything. My favourite poetry comprises the following : 'Kublai Khan' by S. Taylor Coleridge, 'Poems from the Late T'ang' a Penguin anthology, and many SF stories (Delany is an immediate choice) since sf often deals with images (wondrous, fantastic, unreal). Of course not all sf can provoke vivid images. Some provoke none but are nevertheless interesting because they contain some new idea or attempt an interesting writing style or portray some character as a real person. I do not condemn these other stories but merely say they are not poetry.

Now, my second point. I have not read "Voyage" but this story did entice a comment from Van Ikin (TM 19) which I agree with, regarding science and the explanation of science in sf stories. If a writer invents some device or devises some new theory in a story he must explain it. If he gives us a straight dose of science it will read like a "chatty textbook". Even a character's soliloquy or revealé may not be always possible. This inclusion of science in a story is a tricky point and a weakness if not very carefully dealt with. I have seen the fault many times in stories by pro-writers and it does spoil a story.

My third point : SF plays. A long time ago I listened to a radio play about rockets and interstellar travel. I cannot remember any more about this play except that I was not stirred in any way. Sometime later I heard 'Chocky' by John Wyndham and it did not leave me satisfied. About a week ago I listened to 'Operation Vega' (I do not remember who wrote it) and it was not worth the hour it occupied. Earth was divided into two blocks Australia had been overrun in the 1970's, I think) and the Free States (or something like it) attempted to get the aid of the Venusians (a group of human prisoners, political, murderers, the lot). Anyway, these are the only sf plays I've listened to, and all were pathetic. (\*\* Did you ever hear "Rocky Starr" and the "Space Patrol" series back in the 50's? I remember joining the Patrol and getting this cloth badge; and proud I was of it - I was about 7 or 8 at the time. - Ron.\*\* ) It appears to me that SF plays are almost non-existent and the only worthwhile TV series (a long time ago) was 'Outer Limits'. My question is - do any other plays exist and if so by whom?

Now look what you've made me do. This must be the longest letter I've yet written.

Oh, TM production good, cover illustration superb and my sentiments have already been expressed in complimentary letters so I'll say no more except

Goodbye and best wishes

E.H. Lepp.

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Paul Anderson  
21 Mulga Rd., Hawthorndene, S.A. 5051.

Dear Ron,

The Mentor 19 to hand with its impressive Virgil Finlay cover which I liked very much. However I do have some misgivings about your using it as what can you do as an adequate follow up to it because anything less will naturally suffer from unwelcome comparison. As good as Dimitri and Darryl are they are not yet up to Finlay's high standard. Perhaps a suitable artist would be the late Hannes Bok. (\*\* Come on now, mate, I'm not all that good. -Ron.)

Your editorial was good, as usual, and was quite a bit more cheerful than the others. The path of your fall from grace



as a reader of only mundane fiction was slightly similar to mine as I was introduced to SF as a consequence of haunting a certain auctioneers for hard cover 2nd hand Biggles books, which incidentally quickly succumbed to the threat of the insidious fiction in some old Astoundings. Notably the main killer was Asimov's novella 'Profession! The August, 1961 Galaxy is also familiar to me as I have just bought a copy of it in attempt to fill some gaps in my collection of American prozines. I now have two copies of it, unfortunately!! I wish that the current issues could be as good as the zines seemed when I read them back in those days before I discovered fandom. Still I can say that one has not changed much in that decade, F&SF is still as inferior as ever.

On the subject of conventions my own favourite is the one over Easter, '70 although the others have had their highlights which really makes it unfair to compare them. All cons have their good and bad points, although we will be trying to minimise those (the Bad points that is) at our con in Adelaide over the New Year holiday next year. It should start on the New Year's eve with a party or some such arrangement at an Adelaide fan's place and then the con proper is intended to be live-in and to be as self-sufficient as possible. The program is still open to suggestions for panels and films to be shown. So if you have any favourite films to suggest now is the time to give me or Alan your thoughts on the matter. We would like to see as many of the Sydney fans in attendance as possible. My first con was the Syncon and it would be fitting if the first con that I have a hand in organising has a lot of fans from NSW.

Now to the rest of the ish. In regard to Leigh's comments on The Mentor 18 I agree with him concerning my pair of reviews as I think that I can do better. His comment on Sheila Suttie's Woman's Liberation article was somewhat surprising in view of his earlier statements on the inevitability of one's fate. Surely the reason that she was wasting time at the typer was that that was what was pre-ordained! Not to mention the small matter of choosing a suitable partner. Most of the other letters were well thought out and at least logical in their rebuttals to her comments. Regarding the Alan Sandercock letter I agree that Brosnan's comments are out of date and have been for a fair while. The main thing these days is to occasionally protect the film-viewing public from undue violence on the screen as shown by the treatment of The Vampire Lovers which lost only about 5" and those mainly of decapitation scenes. Violence is still being censored but it is usually left in where it is an integral part of the plot as in the famed Catch 22 and Soldier Blue. I appear to be seeing many more films this year than in previous ones, although that may only be because I am making a note of them. I finally finished up voting for No Blade of Grass in the Hugo awards this year, although this was mainly to help ensure that the records did not win it as I fail to see how an LP could be a Dramatic Presentation. No doubt I will be enlightened in a future R & R Dept. The other awards almost choose themselves: The Dillons, Ringworld, Vision, etc. I only hope that we are spared seeing another award going to F&SF by default.

One small question: when will we read a review in The Mentor reviews written by the editor, after all Dick Geis wrote a lot of them for his great zine. (\*\* Yes, but Geis put out a review zine. Anyway, how about the review in this ish? - Ron.\*\*)

What were the statistics on locs for TM 18 & 19? I would imagine that TM 18 was fairly good with a 27 page letter col. The fanzine column was not quite so welcome as it reminded me of how many other zines I should be sending locs to!! Still their zines are rising quickly to the surface of the pile and it should only be a year or two now. I mainly agree with your comments on them though as I think that they are worth supporting, especially Dave Grigg's The Fanarchist. Of the overseas zines I think that the most promising is Jeff Smith's Phantasmicom - a good large zine which is an achievement in itself (\*\* Haven't seen it. I posted about 110 copies of TM 18 and got about 25 locs - that is, about 23% - not too bad. It's too soon to say about comments on 19.-Ron.)

Oh well that's it for now, until The Mentor 20 arrives for much-deserved comment.

Yours

Paul

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Ed Cagle  
Route 1, Leon, Kansas 67074, USA.

Dear Ron,

First, AUSTRALIA in '75' !! That's how I feel about it! Let me tell you why:

It might get a bunch of you up here in '73', to bid, when we could ~~carouse around all night long~~.... discuss things and get to know one another better. Only good can come of that.

There are other reasons why I favor the '75' con in AUSTRALIA. One reason, and perhaps it's selfish, is that I want to visit Australia someday, and who could imagine a better way to kick off a visit than circulating among the people you are visiting. I doubt there is a better source of information about the country one is visiting than a group of people with interests similar to one's own. It wouldn't be necessary to search for the best places to ~~depart~~.. assimilate the culture.

Of course I want to correct the bad image Americans have in the world today as much as anyone else... (Now is that a wry bit of goods, or isn't it?) What I mean to say, is that we are a tolerable lot any way you take us... (My BS level seems to be extra high this morning. I mark it at mid-forehead level, which is why my eyes are so brown, too, I guess.) No, actually I think relations between us'ns and you'uns could be improved to a point of...of... Why not come up in '73', and we'll talk about it, huh? It ought'er be a ball! (\*\* At the moment I hope to make it, and so does a fair swag of Aussie fandom.- Ron.\*\*)

/..../ that's about all. Not that I wouldn't enjoy getting

chatty and going on for a few more pages, right now, but I have a feeling that might intensify your suspicion that I'm ~~drunk...insane~~.  
~~...illogical.... a/dedicated/butt/watcher/female/division/motoric...~~  
 just another typical American.

So have a little fun, and grin every chance you get. It'll make life so pleasant you'll begin to feel ashamed of yourself.

Wishing you the best,

Sincerely,

Ed Cagle.

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John Ryan  
 P.O. Box 24, Yeronga, Qld. 4104.

Dear Ron -

As I write this you're, probably, watching Gary Mason say, "I..I.. Dooo!" and I hope it is a sufficiently sobering experience as to persuade you not to take the same step, in the immediate future. There seems to be dreadful disease sweeping Australian fandom, these days...LOVE! Not love for their fellow fans...but love for the female of the species, fannish or otherwise. And as we all know, the only cure for this dreaded disease is marriage.

The fact that Aussie fans are beginning to feel their oats has become only too apparent in recent times. Take that surprise announcement of Gary's, which was titled "SURPRISE!" and surprised no one except, perhaps, Gary himself. There he was...declaring his undying love for the lady of his choice.. and in front of all those fans. Incredible! No self-respecting fan of yesteryear would even admit his interest in a bird...let alone commit it to print. And right on its heels came John Bangsund's version of 'A Fan's True Love Confessions' in SCYTHROP 22 when he editorializes about '...a person I love very dearly, a person whose love and wisdom and humour and everything-she-is I need and desire more than I can say...' This may be fine for LADIES HOME JOURNAL but, I ask you Ron, what sort of name is this sort of thing going to give fandom? As a group, fans are considered to be a bit odd -- but if all this Love, Dove, Moon, Spoon, June nonsense keeps appearing in our fanzines the public will begin to think we are normal (eg. Just like them). I don't know about you, Ron, but I don't want to be considered that kind of "normal".

But Mason and Bangsund aren't the only ones doing this kind of thing! No, sir! In WOMBAT 1, there was John Brosnan... of all people... writing about a lass who could be described as "almost beautiful" and admitting to making plans to ask her out. The thought of a love-sick Brosnan gives me a hearty belly laugh...but the thought of Brosnan committing himself to print on the subject gives me a belly-ache! And to make things worse, I think we are going to hear more about Casanova Brosnan in the very near future!

And have you been taking note of the various remarks David Grigg has been making about Shayne McCormack in his recent writings??? Oh,

there's been no outright declarations of love or anything of that nature -- but I know the signs, Ron. Lennon and Yoko will have nothing on the Yoko and Montgomery merger, if it gets off the ground. Another well known fan is making coo-ing noises and will, probably, announce his betrothal before the year is out.. but, thank goodness, he has the sense to confine his romantic life to private correspondence. (They make better blackmail material, that way!)

And why, you ask, am I telling you all this? Well, Ron, it's simply because I get the impression you could be going down the same path. I think the first sign was that photographic cover of Brian Richard's daughter... then you came up with a cover that featured Jan Somerville and in the same issue (TM 17) you devoted an editorial to your mock horror of the emergence of femmefans. (If you pay a visit to Bangsund's psychiatrist, he'll tell you that this editorial reveals your suppressed desires to be dominated by a woman!) In this same issue 50% of your letter-writers were women.

Then came THE MENTOR 18 -- a very interesting issue from a number of aspects. You tell us the cost of producing TM and the number of readers who don't respond. On the surface, that seems fairly normal -- but it's not. What you are really indicating is that you have begun to take a closer look at your finances. Why? Because you may be contemplating plonking-down a deposit on an engagement ring. (\*\* Wrong - a block of land.- Ron.\*\*) At least, one half of you is thinking that way. The other half is saying, "Fellow fans, help me! Write me lots of letters praising my efforts...so I will truly believe that Fandom Is A Way Of Life.. so I will not succumb to some feminine wiles...help me..." (Christ, Ron... you are in a bad way! Maybe you'd better see that pie-chiatrist, pronto!) With your traumas behind you, you then hand over your pages to Sheila Suttie so she can expound the causes of Women's Liberation. (\*\* Wrong again, it'll be Christine McGowan.- Ron.\*\*) A fair go is one thing -- but I can't imagine Gough Whitlam letting Willie McMahon address the Labour Caucus. As if the Womens' Lib bit isn't enough, you then let Shayne McCormack take charge of your S.F.A. Department! At this stage, it has become fairly clear that you are no longer Misogynist Clarke, the last bastion of Male Freedom in Aussie Fandom. You've thrown in the towel.

To confirm all these suspicions, up bobs TM 19.. with the boobyful Virgil Finlay cover. Any doubts that remained as to your feelings towards ~~photography~~ the females was eliminated by that effort. (And my thanks, also, to Ron Graham for allowing you to print it.) Don't go away, Ron, there's more evidence yet. TM 19 is dedicated to Carolyn Somerville (either the sister, mother, aunty or grandmother of Jan.. or so one assumes). (\*\* Right first time, John. - Ron.\*\*) Once again, your letter pages are full of feminine names..Cy Hord, Christine McGowan, Margaret Oliver, Shayne McCormack -- and while their masculine style would seem to indicate otherwise, their names betray the fact that Robin Johnson and Leigh Edmonds are, also, females.

So, there you are, Ron. And what the readers of THE MENTOR want from you is a clear statement as to where you stand in this romantic

romp that is rampaging through fandom? Also, please tick one of the following:

- ( ) I am interested in Jan Somerville.
- ( ) I am interested in Carolyn Somerville.
- ( ) I am interested in both of them.
- ( ) I intend to remain a celebrate fan who will continue to publish THE MENTOR.

(\*\* That would be signing my own Death Warrent: Ron.\*\*)

And if all this doesn't discourage you from indicating, on the back of TM, that you'd like some kind of LoC from me -- nothing will!  
(\*\* You are right there, John.- Ron.\*\*)

Ron Graham's praise on the legibility of TM is justified, as is his criticism of some of the eyestraining efforts in ANZAPA. I agree, in principle, with the idea of a legibility clause being incorporated in ANZAPA's Constitution (CAPA-alpha does have such a clause and, generally speaking, the overall reproductions are very good.) but the time is not right for the introduction of such a clause. As you know, as an ex-member, we are always hardpressed to fill our Roster. A legibility clause, if enforced, would eliminate a few more members.. and make our numbers even smaller. Australian Fandom is still relatively small -- and I think we can endure a little eye-strain, every now and then, in the interest of retaining some form of contact with interested people, even if they can't turn out a fanzine like Bangsund, Clarke and Kerr. What was disturbing, in Ron's letter, was the statement that although he is not a member of ANZAPA he has purchased a copy of every mailing up to the time of writing. This is against the whole idea and principle of ANZAPA. I think there were some sets of ANZAPA sold at some past Sydney & Melbourne Conventions...so Ron may well have bought the first 7-8 mailings there. I can only assume that he has purchased more recent mailings from a current member, who has no interest in collecting... as there is no other way that he could get them. I'm sure Ron wouldn't be offended if I said that Harry Warner Smith and the Australian National Library are far more deserving of copies of ANZAPA -- yet the membership would not agree to either of these getting copies. With Ron's apparent interest in ANZAPA, it's a wonder he doesn't join. He'd certainly be welcomed by all current members, I'm sure.

Leigh Edmond's comment on Sheila ("...I wonder why she wasn't out there fucking instead of wasting time at the typer.") was a classic -- and belongs to my group of "Things I Wished I Had Said".

The above reminds me that TM has changed, over the last few years. And for the better, in my opinion. It's not all that long ago that discussions on sex and the use of four-letter words would have come under the friendly editor's blue pencil. You had something of a reputation as a Censor..though you preferred to call it "editing"... which didn't sit too well with many fans and may explain the scarcity of contributions to earlier issues? (\*\* The enlightenment comes from working for Australian Customs - Ron\*\*).

All that is in the past. These days, TM shares with SOMERSET GAZETTE the distinction of being the best (both in material and appearance) regularly published fanzine in Australia. And if we don't see another issue of SG soon, TM will become the best! But gird your loins... Bangsund is on the comeback trail.

Jan asked me to be sure and tell you that she thinks that the Finlay cover is the best she has seen on any fanzine. When my wife takes time out to comment on something you've done, you've got it made. (\*\* Thanks, Jan, for the compliment... I agree with you, though I hope an Aussie artist may be able to do as good in the future...- Ron.\*\*)

Bestest,  
John.

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I also heard from:

Dennis Stocks - "Tremendous cover for The Mentor 19.

David Grigg's MOSAIC was very good - but isn't Gormenghast spelt with an "H" in the appropriate place? Not being very familiar with "bikies" or Hell's Angels - I'd hate to comment but I doubt if they'd ever heard of Camelot or Gormenghast - I would imagine their reaction to be expressed in terms of Drugs or Sex..."

Bruce R Gillespie - "I've been meaning to do extensive locs for the last two MENTORS, but I just haven't had time. Yes, Cy Chauvin is right: there are quite a few good women writers who have come out of hiding during the last few years, esp. Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm, and Ursula LeGuin. Although I'm still very suspicious of it, AND CHAOS DIED is one of my favourite s f novels of the last few years. I didn't particularly like LEFT HAND myself, but I think I can see why other people did." (\*\* And what did you think of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, Bruce? - Ron.\*\*)

Max Taylor - "Thank you for the latest Mentor.. and the Wombat...I like them. I have read the previous Mentors you sent me with great interest and enthusiasm. I shall be writing about them in my book review columns, and when the material appears will forward a copy to you. I hope soon to be doing a general item (for radio probably) about Australian magazines of the type you are producing (those that emerge from the underground, as it were) and hope to be talking about The Mentor in this item." (\*\* That sounds very interesting. I wonder, though, how many faneds consider their fanzines to be 'underground magazines'? - Ron.\*\*)

I also heard from Wasyli Zacharszenko, who says that foreign magazines do not get too great a distribution in Moscow and that he has not seen The Mentor around (something that I am trying to change.). Also from John Bangsund, Noel Cronk, Bert Chandler, Bill Bowers, and Alexandre D. de Bettencourt, Jr.

There will probably be a couple of changes in the next issue of TM, something which should prove interesting. Last stencil typed 13/7/71.



Please note that the Info Page is a source of information,  
it does not pretend to be of news.

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ACTIVE AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CLUBS.

- NSW. - Down Under Space Kooks : President (Shayne McCormack)  
49 Orchard Rd.,  
Bass Hill,  
NSW 2197
- Sydney Science Fiction Foundation : President (Peter Darling)  
Box 4593,  
GPO,  
Sydney 2001.
- Sydney University Science Fiction Association :  
President (Richard Faulder)  
68 Phillip Rd.,  
Ryde 2112.
- QLD. - Brisbane Fantasy & Science Fiction Association :  
President (Dennis Stocks)  
Box 2268,  
GPO,  
Brisbane 4001.
- TAS. - Australian Tolkien Society :  
Michael O'Brien  
158 Liverpool St.,  
Hobart,  
Tas. 7000.
- S. AUST. - Adelaide University S.F. Assn.: c/- John Hewitt  
11 Kyre Ave.,  
Kingswood,  
S.A. 5062.
- VIC. - Melbourne Science Fiction Club :  
Box 1267L,  
GPO,  
Melbourne 3001.
- Melbourne Uni. S.F. Association :  
c/- Union House,  
Melbourne Uni.,  
Parkville 3052.
- Monash Uni. S.F. Association :  
c/- Union, (Cary Handfield)  
Monash University,  
Wellington Rd.,  
Clayton 3168.
- The Nova Mob :  
Bossa Nova,  
Box 4946,  
GPO,  
Melbourne 3001

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Noel Kerr has an electro-stenciling service for those who want electro-stencils of artwork, headings, etc. Is \$2 a foolscap sheet, return post free, in a week or two (interstate). Contact him at 85 Morgan St., Carnegie, Vic. 3163.

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There are several people overseas who I've heard from who are interested in seeing Australian fanzines. They include Cy Chauvin, of 17829 Peters, Roseville, Michigan 48066, USA, and Ed Cagle, at Route I, Leon, Kansas 67074, USA.

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Space Age Books Pty Ltd is a bookshop run by sf fans in Melbourne. Mail orders are taken for sf books. For further info write to: Space Age Bookshop, Box 1267L GPO, Melbourne 3001. They also put out a newsletter for books - see 'fanzines received' this ish. They ave a wide range of sf and related topics.

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Bill Bowers, editor of OUTWORLDS, writes : "When you get No 8, you'll see mentions all over that I'm really not going for too bigger a circulation, right now. However, I do have a definite goal for the monies that Dennis (Stocks) collects for me; and that is to make AUSTRALIA in '75! (It'll probably be the only way I can manage it, if I can build up a fairly substantial fund Over There...)

"In case you should feel inclined to mention OUTWORLDS, there is now a new rate structure, this way: Ow's 4,5 & 6 are 40¢; Ow's 7 & 8 are 50¢; Ow 9 will be \$1.00; after 9, starting with No 10, the cost will be 50¢ per...(..all of this Australian \$'s & ¢'s; US is higher)..." Dennis Stocks address is Box 2268,GPO, Brisbane 4001.

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And a reminder for those who didn't read the index page of this ish too closely - from now on, The Mentor, starting from this issue, is 2 for \$1 (Aust & US) and 14 for £2 (UK) in cash.

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There were a couple of mistakes in TM 19 which no one seems to have noticed. The John Foyster issue of SF COMMENTARY was number 19, not 16 as quoted in the Info Page and the 'old' NSW high school system went for 5 years, not 6 as mentioned in my comments in the R & R Dept. (I repeated 4th year and so I did the six years).

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AUSTRALIA IN '75 jewellery (tie-pins, badges, brooches,) can be inquired about from Peter Darling at Box A215, Sydney South, 2000, Australia. They are quite good, too. Manufactured by the Ryan clan, in Qld, apparently.

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## FANZINES RECEIVED:

SPACE AGE NEWSLETTER No1. Edited by Lee Harding and published by the Space Age Bookshop at Box 1267L GPO, Melbourne 3001, Vic. May, 1971. This 26 page booklet has lists of new paperbacks and short 'breviews' of some of the new books as well as a photo of the cover. Can be obtained on request. The prices aren't bad for a mail order firm - about 15¢ over current Sydney prices, by the look of it.

ETHERLINE '71. Vol 4, Ish 1, is a far cry from the old E. This is a 7 page newszine put out by (for) the Melbourne SF Club and the Melbourne Fantasy Film Group. It has an editorial by Paul Stevens, which gives a brief summary of what he intends to do - ie use it as a club newszine; this is followed by a 'Policy Statement' by Mervyn Binns, which is muchly a backing up what Paul says. Then comes an interlude with the Horras, and a flash review of The Vampire Lovers by Paul Stevens and Peter House, the Gouls of Ye Olde Melbourne. I wonder how they'ol follow this issue up? Available for \$¢, trade, LoC, news item.

NORSTRILIAN NEWS. No 28 (May 23) and 29 (June 6) 1971. Edited by Bruce R. Gillespie from GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne 3001, Vic. @ \$1.20 or a book of stamps for 20. USA: 10¢ each, from Charlie Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, New York 10457. UK: 3np ea, from Mervyn Barrett, 178 Walm Lane, London NW 2. The only good newszine in Aust. Has news culled from LOCUS, too, as well as Aussie news. As well as book releases it has fanzine reviews. Well worth the money.

BRUSH SCIENCE FICTION ASSN LTD NEWS. Various minutes etc. This organization is well worth joining if only for its journal, VECTOR, which, I don't seem to have received for a while... Address: (of which there are various, this one I know of, anyway), BSFA LTD., c/- Archie Mercer, 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall, UK. It costs £1.50 to join for Overseas.

ENIGMA Vol 1 No 1. This zine is put out by the Sydney University Science Fiction Assn, and it can be obtained from: Box 126, Sydney Uni. Union, Sydney Uni, 2006. This first issue (I don't know then what the other Enigma I reviewed last ish was) is spirit duped. The cover is in five colours and is, unfortunately, not of a quality that this mag should be capable. Of the interior illos, the ones illustrating 'The Space-Drive' are the best in the 21 page issue. The print is on one side of the page and everything is double spaced. This makes for easy reading, but you'd save on paper, fellows, if you used both sides and typed single spaced. There are three pieces of fiction (two by Van Ikin and one by Richard Faulder) which are quite good. The best piece in the issue, however, is an 'article' on the 'Space-Drive' which ranks with the best fan writings around. It might, with some brushing up, make Analog. Edited by R. Faulder and W. Whight. Artwork by R. Faulder. Membership fee of SUSFA is 60¢ for students. For outsiders...?

A75B. No 1, June 1971, and is the "Australia in 75 Bulletin" and costs 20¢ from the Bidding Committee for the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention and is edited by Leigh Edmonds. Can you guess

what is it about? Well set out and produced (by John Bangsund) it is  $\frac{1}{2}$  American quarto (ie 4"x10 $\frac{3}{8}$ ") and is 8 pages of news about the proceedings of the bid and a background study of how it all started. (the Aussie bid, that is). It should come out by the first Friday of each month, and it costs \$2 for 12. The fans in this country have now some up-to-date ideas of what is going on, and I hope A75B keeps the fans informed. The \$2 is worth keeping in touch with the doings of the Committee and is well worth sending for.

YGGDRASIL 3 - Term 1, 1971. This is the organ of the Melbourne Uni. SF Assn and the blame for it lies with Clive Morley. Seriously, the ish has a fair share of interesting material, though unnumbered pages...all 11 of them... There is a Rebirth notice, an editorial of notes, an article on a neofan's, ah, intro to sf fandom...sf?? Fanzine reviews..., review reviews... and a mention of the Three Day wonder - ie the Mini Melcon '71. Yes. Interesting to see how the second ish turns out. Editorial address: Flat 8, 280 Cardigan St., Carlton, Vic. 3053. Presumably you can get it for the usual.

SANDWORMS 11, 12 & 13, from Bob Vardeman of PO Box 11352, Albuquerque, NM 87112, USA. I is available for 2 for \$1 US. 11 is 15 pages in which resides a Heicon Report (funny, I'm mentioned in it...) - real groovy- and lotsa little pityas... interesting freudian one on page 9.... The Con report is very well written and I laughed all the way through it. Interesting fried eggs they have in London, you know.. Number 12 has some comments on U Hess Hay politics - Nixon type and various good book reviews and LoCs.. from such fans as Harry Warner, Bob Tucker... Mfff. Number 13 has a cover made up from newspaper cuttings the like of : "Hiccoughs are messages from departed spirits". Goodly done. Inside is a whole lot of things including poetry, stuff on drugs and prohibitions in general. (Census forms.?) There is a discussion of 'The Political Outlook of the City-in-Space' by Alexis A. Gilliland, one on Anti-Art and the Mass Media... Book reviews...lots of em, by the editor... More LoCs by Tucker, Koontz..etc...yaaah. Good reading all the way through. Bob comes through well in the pages long editorial ramblings. Also available for the usual (ie LoCs, trade, contrib...),

Q CON '71 - A Personal View by Dennis Stocks. For anyone who did not make it to Q Con - like me, this gives a good idea of what you missed. In it are 3 interviews done with people in the Con by radio and TV. They are with Dennis Stocks, Frank Bryning (twice) and a monolog by Dennis of his impressions of the con from an organisers viewpoint. Also in it is Frank Bryning's Quest of Honour speech (which is very interesting) on the early days of Sf, and a Q Con registration list. Total pages 41 and well done, too. A Good Con report. I suppose that if you contacted Dennis at Box 2268, GPO, Brisbane 4001 and included some stamps he may have some spare copies.

MISCELLANEOUS INTELLIGENCE ENTERPRISES, is I believe, an Apazine, though it stands on its own two feet easily. It is put out by Dennis Stocks and if it is an Apazine, its really well done. An article on the Monkey War leads off an issue of a really good zine I read it from cover to cover in one reading. Couldn't put it down. Following the short pieces after it is a lengthy article about the Sopwith

Machines. There is also an article on the known facts of Venus, the planet, and two editorials by Frank Bryning from "The Australian Electrical World" about sf subjects. There is also an 'article' on "Silicone Therapy: or Keeping Abreast of New Developments", which is, needless to say, very witty. An interesting zine; it's not small at 43 pages. I wonder what it's circulation figures are?

SF COMMENTARY 21. The very good sf review zine from Bruce R Gillespie who resides in GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001. This issue there is an article 'A Symposium of Innocence' by Franz Rottensteiner who tells us again of the dire straits sf is in and asks why hasn't sf had any Marxist futures. Anyone read any Soviet SF? Reprinted is David R Grigg's 'Highway 31 Revisited' ('A Fannish Odyssey' in Fanarchist 3) which is Davids trip to Sinny. There follows four in-depth reviews of books by Bruce. There are also a fair number of LoCs from a wide selection of people. 50 pages. May 1971 and can be had for the usual or \$3 for 9. US agent Charlie Brown. UK Malcolm Edwards. Monthly. Acknowledged as one of the world's best review fanzines.

GRANFALLOON 12. Is from Linda E. Bushyager, Apt. B211 - Sutton Arms, 121 MacDade Blvd., Flossom, Pa. 19033, USA. Ahum. Cover by Alicia Austin, editorial by Linda who casually mentions that she and her husband don't own a car. And haven't got one, either.... there are some people in Australian who don't have a car; most have transport (or wheels of some description -ie a honda). Oh well, it keeps one healthier, I suppose. Me, I have a hand cranked duplicator. There is an article on an Apollo 14 launch..er, the Apollo launch, a neofans meanderings into trufan territory; a column by John D Berry who goes on about the current zines and some of the past glories of fanzines. There is a column (or the beginnings of one) by Mike Glicksohn on how he entered fandom and became an art junkie. Among lots of other things (it's a big issue at 50 pages) is a play by Ron Miller (you know -- drama??), then there are book reviews... and a book review column by Richard Delap /reviewing Tower of Glass - Silverberg; The Standing Joy - Wyman Guin; The Year 2000 - coll.; and an ace double/... and of course the Letter col.. Like from Ted White...Harry Warner Jnr, etc. Back cover by Austin too. Can be had for the usual or 60¢@ or 4/\$2 (US). May, 1971. One of the best things about this zine is the good artwork it has - I love Grant's sketches.

TOLKIEN BULLETIN 2, Edited by Michael O'Brien at 158 Liverpool St., Hobart, Tas. 7000. Only short this issue (four pages) it has a news item about the Annual Tolkien Conference, a review of TOLKIEN-A LOOK BEHIND THE LORD OF THE RINGS, by Lin Carter, by Paul Walker, and a LoC. For those interested in Tolkien. Write to Mike for details. Published by the Australian Tolkien Society.

SPECULATION 28. January 1971 - held up by the UK postal strike, no doubt. From Peter Weston at 31 Pinewall Ave., Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, UK. available for the usual or 3/- (40¢) @, or 5 for 15s (\$2) cash. This ish is a special review ish, as well as having a series of photos of the Heicon (I see me on 4th page with my back to the camera to the right of the bloke with the white hat, LHS.).

There are no illos in this zine - so you get 56 pp. There are articles and reviews by Panshin (of 1 WILL FEAR NO EVIL), a column by Fred Pohl, and others by Greg Benford, Andrew J Offutt, Christopher Priest, lots of reviews by people such as Bruce Gillespie, etc; a letter col and a list of books that came out in the UK around that time. Can be got for trade, contrib or 5 for \$2 (US). I subscribe....

YANDRO 206. Before I get near issue nos like that I'll be long in the grave. Put out by Robert and Juanita Coulson in Indiana, USA. Possibly the best known of all the fanzines. 34 pages of good, clean fan writing, which includes a column each by the editors, columns by Jackie Franke, Liz Fishman (about Rotten, who I had heard of in other zines. but had not had the (dubious) pleasure of reading of) whose writing I found nice and fresh - and vivid. Reviews of books by Bob Coulson, LoCs from various peoples...like Thomas Burnett Swann..., fanzine reviews, and scattered throughout, quaint illos.. and the best cover illo (by Frolick) that I have seen on Yandro.

THE FANARCHIST 5 emanates from David R Grigg of 1556 Main Rd., Research, Vic. 3095. With a good offset cover and 26 pages this is probably the best fannish fanzine out in this country. There is the usual (for Aussie faneds, anyway) editorial, followed by a column by David on HUGOS /article, maybe?/, in which the editor writes of his preferences for the HUGO nominations this year. There is a column by John J Alderson on Heinlein's Waldo & Magic Inc., an autobiography by Steven Phillips - on his Fall from Grace, lots (it's 11 relative) of LoCs, the best of the bunch being St Bakers voyages in the wake of Flinders... and there are also some good illos by Campbell on various pages. For the usual or 5 for \$1 Aust, UK 5 for 50p, USA 5 for \$US1. Agents are Peter Roberts in the UK...US agent is Bill Bowers -see contents page.

MOEBIUS TRIP 8 from Edward C. Connor of 1805 N. Gale, Peoria, Ill. 61604, USA. Available for the usual or 3 for \$1, 6 for \$2 and it comes out every 2 or 3 months. Aussie fen are making a determined attempt to fill this zine. In this 50 page issue there is a discussion of Philip Jose Farmer by the editor, which is very interesting to me, as a Farmer fan from way back...; there is a Con report (on PECON 2), by the editor also; followed by an article by Gary Mason on the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation (reprinted from TERRAN TIMES), columns by William Bliss, Joseph Pulilia, Bill Wolfenbarger; articles by Mary Legg, on the events leading up to her wedding, one on se-serpent thingees by Rosemary Pardoe; LoCs from various peoples... and books that are reviewed. Quite an International fanzine, as can be seen from the above.

Space Age Newsletter - Horror Movies is the main mention in no 2 of the newsletter (July) which was mentioned previously in this column. The address of the Shop is 317 Swanston St., Melbourne 3000, and the books are about 5¢ dearer, not 15 as I mentioned before /I had a wander around the Sydney bookshops today while waiting for the printing of the cover for this ish/ and looks like a good buy if one is not willing to buy from overseas direct. There are mentions of new books coming out and a list of the paperbacks covering said films, which I am sure will come in handy for Paul Stevens as he waits by the lonely crypt for the Vamp to emerge. 12 pages. 1/2 US quarto. Not stapled.



# Australian S. F. Fans -

/fourth in series/

## A. BERTRUM CHANDLER



Ron asked for it, so you've got it. Such as it is.

I was born in the Army Hospital at Aldershot, England, on March 28, 1912. The reason for this apparently odd choice of hospitals is that my father was a member of the British Regular Army. So far as I know I'm the first seaman in the family since an ancestor, Roger Chandler, was hanged from his own yardarm for piracy quite some years ago. Like me, he was allergic to hard work. Like me, he was a good agnostic. He was Master of a small sailing vessel on the Mediterranean trade in the days when the Barbary Corsairs were making nuisances of themselves. His ship was captured by the Barbary Corsairs. He was given the usual choice, the Koran or the rowing benches, so embraced Islam. He then became a Barbary Corsair himself, rising to command. He was one of the victims of Admiral Blake's grand clean-up of the Mediterranean.

I was exposed to education mainly at the Sir John Leman School - a venerable institution founded in the days of Lizzie 1 - in Beccles, Suffolk, England. I was invariably Top in English and Practical Chemistry, Second in Theoretical Chemistry, Physics & Mathematics (because of my bad handwriting and general untidiness) and Bottom in French and Scripture. Today I think that I would score much more highly in the last named subject, having learned that an agnostic should know what he's being agnostic about.

Poor grades in French and Scripture prevented me from passing into the Remove at the appointed time and so, rather than have an additional year at school before I could matriculate (I still think that the people who say that their schooldays were the happiest days of their lives either possess short and highly selective memories or are bloody liars) went to sea as an Apprentice in the Sun Shipping Company, a tramp steamer concern with all the



faults to be expected in those days, 1928. Their ships were engaged mainly on the Indian Coast Trade, with occasional voyages further afield - to Java, as it was then, to China, to Burma, and once to Fremantle to load grain for Karachi, and once to Manila to load tobacco for Spanish ports, and once from Calcutta to New Orleans with jute. But it was the Calcutta coal trade for most of the time.

In 1932 I completed my indentures, returning to England to attend the King Edward VII Nautical School in London before sitting for my Second Mate's Certificate of Competency. Having gained this I rejoined the Sun Shipping Company as Third Officer. During this tour of duty I passed for my First Mate's Certificate in Calcutta - what was called in those days a "Curry & Rice Ticket". As there was then no Navigation Schools in India I think that it should have been regarded more highly than a similar qualification gained in England...

After this second tour of duty I'd had tramps in a big way and, in 1936, entered the service of the Shaw Savill & Albion Company as Fourth Officer. Whilst in their ships I came to know Australia (but only the coastal fringe) and New Zealand quite well.

I was with Shaw Savill throughout World War II, rising to Second Officer. During this period I gained my Master's Certificate and, shortly thereafter, commenced my writing career. I was lucky inasmuch as Shaw Savill's ships had been shunted off their wellworn tramlines by the War and used to call quite often into New York, where I made the acquaintance of John W. Campbell, George O. Smith, Murray Leinster (Will F. Jenkins), Theodore Sturgeon, Lester del Rey and quite a few more. At the same time, in Sydney, I started selling sf shorts to MAN.

As Chief Officer in Shaw Savill, in 1955, I met my wife when she was travelling out to Sydney in my ship. In 1956 I resigned from Shaw Savill and entered the employ of the Union Steam Company of New Zealand, rising rapidly from Third to Chief Officer and, eventually, to Master.

But this series is supposed to be about fans, not about low seafaring types. As a writer I am, of course, a low seafaring type; that is glaringly obvious.

As far as I can remember I was first bitten by the science fiction bug at the age of 12 or so, when I discovered H.G. Wells' THE TIME MACHINE in the school library. And it was at about the same time that I discovered Burroughs (I needn't specify which one); his Martian novels still stick in the memory. Tarzan? Only the ones that were science fictional. Then there was the Hugo Gernsback SCIENCE & INVENTION, and from that I graduated to AMAZING STORIES.

My first contact with organised fandom was towards the end of the War, when Wally Gillings was lining up writers for a new s/f magazine that never got off the launching pad. Then, of course, there was the weekly gatherings of fans in the White Horse, in Fetter Lane (immortalised by Arthur C. Clarke in his TALES FROM

THE WHITE HART) which was later transferred to another pub, the Leather Bottle. It was not long before I was attending fan gatherings in both Melbourne and Sydney during my visits to those ports.

Unfortunately the nature of my employment prevents me from becoming as deeply involved in fandom as I would wish; it is more by luck than judgement that I am ever able to attend a Convention.

Still, I count myself lucky that I became a science fiction writer instead of becoming just a writer of, say, sea stories. (No unkind comments, please.) In no other field than science fiction does a writer get to meet so many good and interesting people with whom he has so much in common.

- A. Bertrum Chandler.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lots of interesting things lined up for the next couple of issues of TM, which are more likely to be coming out on the quarterly schedule mentioned on the Contents Page, than not.

May I remind people that Wombat (or M31 no 2) will only be available for loc on no 1, contribution, or trade. Issue number two will be out relatively soon, and has some material which has not been seen its like in Australia.

That looks like it for this issue. Unfortunately, troubles were had with the running in of the Roneo 250 I have, and the print run this issue was drastically under what I aimed for; which means - there are no spare copies.

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW

- THE SLEEPER WAKES -

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# THE MENTOR

SCIENCE FICTION

SPRING 1971

NUMBER TWENTY

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Cover art by E.H. Lepp; illos pages 7 & 22 by Bob Dobson; photo enlarging (ASFF) by Nigel Suleau; electrostencils by Noel Kerr; offset by Smith & Lane.

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THE MENTOR science fiction. Number 20, Spring (August/October) 1971. Published quarterly. Available for Letter of Comment, contribution, trade, or 2 for \$1 Aust & USA, 5 for £1 UK (cash).  
 Queensland agent - Neil Rahman, 54 McLay St., Coorparoo, 4151.  
 UK agent - Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol BS4 5DZ.  
 US agent - Bill Bowers, Box 87, Barberton, Ohio 44203. Edited, printed and published by Ron L. Clarke at 78 Redgrave Rd., Normanhurst, N.S.W. 2076, Australia. Back issues available of 8,14-19.

(✓) We trade zines (?). ( ) You subscribe. ( ) You sent a contrib.  
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 ( ) This is your last issue unless you respond in some way. ( ) Yes, well