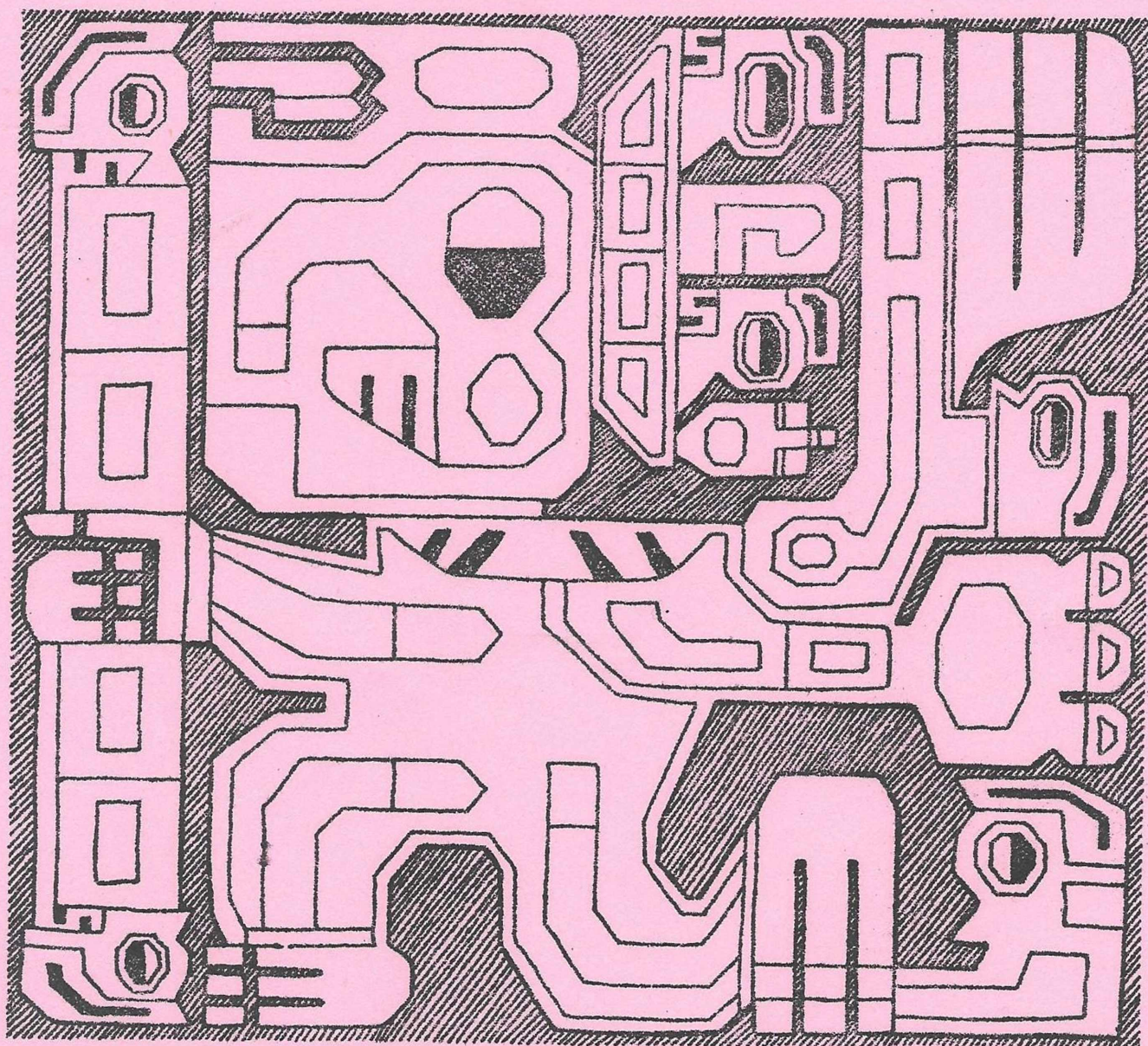


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# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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JOHN CARNELL

The Science Fiction Market

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No.2      August 1966

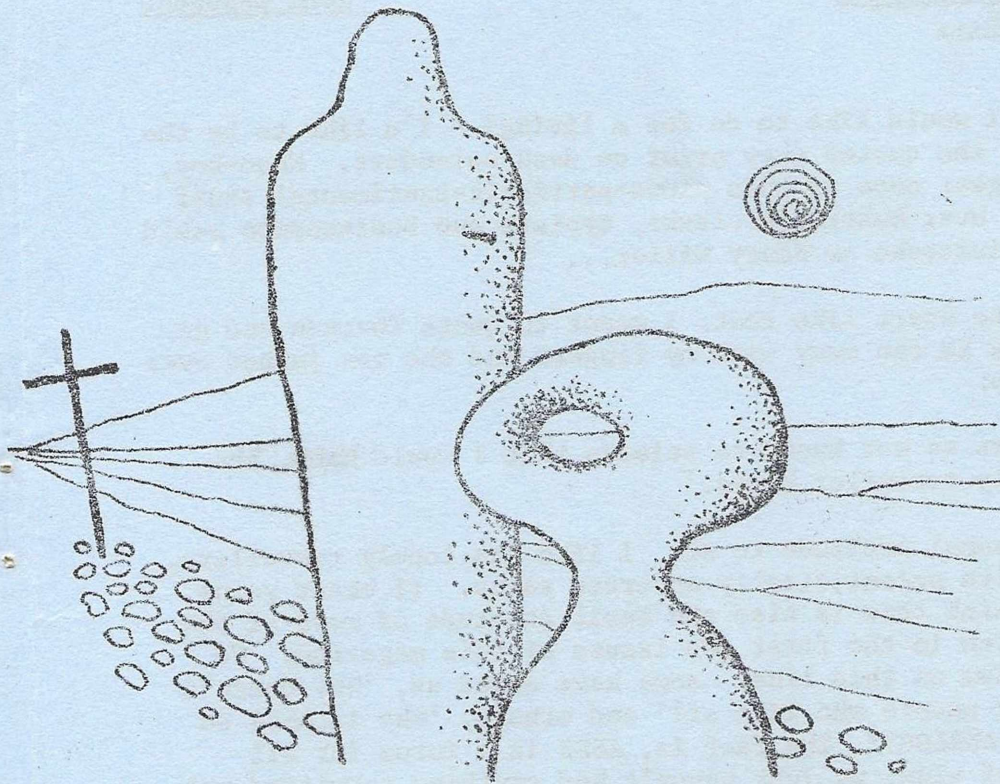
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# Australian Science Fiction Review

Editor:  
John Bangsund



NUMBER TWO / AUGUST 1966

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AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is published by John Bangsund at 19 Gladstone Avenue, Northcote N.16, Melbourne, Australia, with the assistance of Lee Harding, John Foyster and Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia.

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ASFR is an amateur publication, produced for the love of sf - and as a service to its readers. Contributions, written and monetary, are welcome.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Cover by John Bangsund, this page by James Ellis.

You know what I would like to do for a living? - I'd like to be the bloke who researches the quotes they print on desk calendars. Whoo-boy, there'd be some changes: none of this pious-patriotic-sentimental stuff for me, oh no - all over Australia clerks, typists and businessmen would start the day with Nietzsche or Henry Miller...

I didn't mean to start like that; I meant to quote Thoreau and go on from there, but my id ran away with my fingers and the cow jumped over the quotation is this:

'It is the stars as not known to science that I would know, the stars which the lonely traveller knows.'

This is my personal attitude to sf. I like the lonely travellers, not the gents who write scientifically accurate yawns. (I meant yarns, but id didn't.) I think this is also the basic attitude of most of the people who have written in the first two issues of this magazine. We have had some criticism on this line: some have asked us, 'Why doesn't ASFR print reviews by people who like sf?' and others, 'Why is ASFR so antagonistic towards ANALOG?' The fact is, ASFR is a forum for all opinions and points of view; we just haven't had anything submitted yet by people who prefer the more traditional kind of sf. There are plenty of new books available for review: capable volunteers are welcome!

While on the subject of reviews, I'll just pass on without comment another aphorism - this one from a valuable little book called THE AUSTRALIAN TRADITION by A.A. Phillips. 'Finely responsive reading is primarily an act of surrender, only secondarily an act of judgment.'

\* \* \*

In this issue you will find some pretty stimulating writing. JOHN CARNELL's article on the sf market, transcribed from a tape he sent to the Melbourne Easter Convention, is interesting not only for its expert opinions on trends in the field and its advice to aspiring writers but also for its delightful nostalgia - the quintessence of sf fandom, for where else in this wide world do you find people with a nostalgia for the past AND the future?

JOHN BAXTER was described in ASFR #1 as a freelance journalist. Since then he has become a scriptwriter for the Commonwealth Film Unit, an organisation which will profit from John's wide knowledge and fresh approach to film-making. His article on sf films is a provocative piece of writing, and underlines the fact that sf is no longer the exclusive preserve of the fans. JOHN FOYSTER does a demolition job on a school of sf writing which flourished in the forties and fifties (and still lingers on in some dark corners today) in a fine critical article on an exemplar of that school, Dwight V. Swain.



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Lee Harding's column discusses a volume of sf biography by Sam Moskowitz, the emergence of Keith Roberts as a writer of great promise, and interesting new developments in the British magazines. Then Kingsley Amis, Harry Harrison, John Christopher, William Sloane, Frederick Pohl and Charles Harness are subjected to the critical eyes of our reviewers, there are some letters, Mervyn Binns reports on fan activity in Melbourne, then some news on the Hugo nominations, further letters (which I thought at one stage were doomed to waste their fragrance on the desert air somewhere between here and Mount Gambier) - and there you have it.

\* \* \*

Reaction to the first issue of ASFR has been mostly favourable, and we have received an interesting if not overwhelmingly large number of letters, contributions and subscriptions. And, as I mentioned above, some criticism. A few people, for example, don't like our employment of fan terminology. The fact is, we don't think using such convenient terms as 'sf' 'fan' 'fanzine' and so on stops us from being quite serious and objective about the field.

Another criticism is that Australian sf is not being examined as fully as my first editorial may have promised. We did not set out to review only Australian sf: as our title indicates, we are publishing an Australian review of sf, as well as a review of Australian sf. Next month we will lead off with an introductory article by myself and Lee Harding on the Australian writers, and an article by A. Bertram Chandler on his own work. There will follow, in subsequent issues, fairly detailed critical and biographical articles about our writers.

I think we need not apologise for our articles and reviews concerned with sf overseas; quite apart from the special nature of our field, we can argue such precedents as 'Australian Book Review', which each month has a hefty section devoted to non-Australian publications. And we are proud to publish articles and letters from people overseas, no matter how eminent.

Next month, in addition to the articles mentioned above, we will be publishing a most interesting piece called 'Adrift in the Cryptozoic' by Brian Aldiss, and an article by Lee Harding about what happened when Bob Crosby 'interviewed' him on telly recently. Plus reviews of DUNE, THE SALIVA TREE, and other things too numinous to mention.

We have discovered some of the hard facts about producing even so modest a publication as this. For example, the sheer labour involved precludes future use of justified margins. And...we reluctantly admit our inability to produce ASFR economically at 20 cents per copy. However, until September 1st we will accept 12-issue subscriptions at the original rate of \$2.40. After that date we go up to \$3.60 per 12 issues. We have swags of interesting material to publish - just wait until you hear about our December issue! (Hugos have been won for less!) - only lack of finance can hold us back now. And you know who can fix that...

As a literary agent who specialises exclusively in science fiction I am looking now at the latter part of 1967 and the beginning of 1968 as far as publishing is concerned, both here in England and in the United States, and the picture is particularly rosy. The field itself is still expanding, and there is no sign at all of it weakening at this stage.

Last year there were 43 hard-cover sf books published in the United Kingdom and 65 paperbacks, plus 16 reprints of earlier paperback titles. This is a formidable number of books in comparison with the previous three or four years, particularly 1960 and 1961, which were very poor years. In 1966 I estimate that between 50 and 60 hard-cover titles will be published here, and somewhere in the region of 75 to 80 paperbacks - and this expansion will progress further. Not only is the expansion going on in the number of titles being published, but it is obvious that sales figures are rising steadily at the same time, and more publishers are investigating the possibility of adding sf titles to their lists. This is all very encouraging.

Obviously, from the writers' point of view, sf at the moment is in the peculiar state of being a sellers' market. There are not sufficient good writers in the world to fill the publishers' demands. The good thing is that standards have risen tremendously in the last four or five years, particularly the standards of writing in general, and most of the smaller poor-quality publishing firms have gone by the board and are no longer producing rubbish.

Along with this, of course, the going rates on novels especially, the occasional short story collection, and anthologies, in both the hard-cover and paperback fields, have risen tremendously. Writers are reaping the benefit of their work, really out of proportion to the value of sf as literature. A good thriller published in this country will not earn the amount of money that an sf novel will earn. Usually there are in addition translation sales for a reasonably good sf novel in Spain, Germany, France and Italy - the four main continental buyers and publishers of sf - which can add another two to three hundred pounds to the take on a single book. On the other hand, a year ago I was handling a number of writers in the thriller-mystery field, and they were lucky if they saw £130 for a hard-cover book - and certainly had little hope of selling paperback, American, or translation rights. Unless you are another Ian Fleming or Len Deighton there are little or no pickings in the thriller market, and the western market, in the United Kingdom at least, is also at a very low ebb. Recently I spoke to an American publisher who still produces westerns, and he is just breaking even on three or four titles per month.

Outside of the magazines, basic requirements for sf writing have changed considerably in recent years. Hard-cover publishers want better-written novels with much stronger characterisation, and the

paperback houses want much more complex plots in their sf novels. The days of just setting a story a little way in the future and hamming it up from there on are beginning to fade rapidly, and we are approaching what looks to me rather like the era of the James Bond type of plotting where lots of action and pretty women are incorporated in a complex futuristic plot. Would-be writers planning novels should take note of these points.

The magazine field is still very much the same as it was two years ago when I left editing. It was a depressing period when I relinquished NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY to another publisher. I was offered the editorial chair for both magazines, but after eighteen years of it I was beginning to feel that I had had enough, and the agency side of my work was increasing to the stage where I had to make up my mind which job I was going to take. So I took a gamble on sf being on an up-grade and turned to being a full-time literary agent - with the precaution of introducing and presenting NEW WRITINGS IN SF for Corgi. (I think that I should point out that this is strictly a paperback deal. Although Dennis Dobson produces hard-cover volumes five or six months before the Corgi paperbacks, this was in fact a paperback/hard-cover deal, the reverse to the usual procedure, and Corgi is the publisher who actually contracts for the collections.) Now everybody felt that this was a good idea, and certainly sales have proved beyond doubt that as far as I was concerned my faith in the paperback field was justified. I felt that paperbacks would more or less take the place of the magazines over a period of time. It now looks as though the magazines will stagger on for a while yet. In 1964 I said that I didn't expect to see any British sf magazines being published five years from that time. Well, NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY (now IMPULSE) have continued - how successfully I don't know, not having the confidence of the publishers, but I know that NEW WORLDS is doing very well. I think that possibly SCIENCE FANTASY wasn't doing so well - it didn't do very well when we were publishing it - and this may be one of the reasons why the publishers changed its name to IMPULSE, to create a new image for the magazine and possibly bring its sales up to those of NEW WORLDS.

My view of sf today is rather different from that of the young fans. As far as I can see the older enthusiasts, and writers, like such writers as Eric Frank Russell and William F. Temple. Temple has just had his first really big success after 35 years of writing. His new novel, SHOOT AT THE MOON, has been bought by Simon & Schuster in New York for an advance of \$2500, and I've just sold it here in a hard-cover and paperback deal which will bring him in about £1250. I think that the book itself, which is not outstanding but certainly very good - it's a marvellously well-characterised story - will probably make a very good film; and Bill only has to hit the jackpot once, like John Christopher did, to be able to sit back and write when he feels like it. All the older writers here who started twenty years or more ago are reaping the benefit of their long associating with sf, after all the years they put



in writing for very low rates. Well, as I say, our view of sf is totally different from the new young fans who read mainly the magazines and paperbacks and perhaps borrow the occasional sf book from the library. I was reading only this morning a rather interesting piece by a young fan named Chris Priest, who was in fact the fan on my publishers' panel at the World Convention last year. He's just had this article published in the monthly newsletter of the Science Fiction Book Club here. I think some of the thoughts he's expressed are quite interesting. It's called THE LAST LAP:

"SF is again at one of its turning points. It has passed through and survived the early days of 'thought variants' and cardboard characterisation; it has ridden the Forties on a proud wave of true scientific and sociological extrapolation, and boomed its way through the Fifties on gimmickry and experimentation. But that last boom finished several years ago and sf is now in the doldrums. It is like a racing car that having shown its paces around the track now rests in the pits, its engine ticking over, waiting to show its true potentialities. In years to come when the Sixties are dissected and examined by the sf fans of the time, these years will come to be known I fear as the period when sf was read by many but noticed by few. The paperback novel, at one time reckoned upon to be the death of publishing, now provides a stimulus to the reading of all kinds of literature. Sales in the region of 20,000 are no longer unusual for even the most mediocre of novels, and sf - which has always had a minority appeal - finds itself sharing this heartening market. A new phenomenon, the original paperback novel, has made its debut, and although more common on the other side of the Atlantic at the moment I feel it will become more and more accepted in this country.

"Much has been spoken and written lately about a growing trend towards a contemporary mood in sf. The death of space stories seems almost upon us, following in the wake of time-travel and ends-of-the-world. Some writers looking for new horizons to scan add extra lenses to their insight; others narrow theirs, exploring private worlds of 'inner space' and subjective illusions. Whichever way they are to turn, all writers must acknowledge that sf in its present state is doomed as an individual brand of literature. Eventually it will congeal and join love and crime stories in solidified routine. It will become pop and mundane, lowbrow and insignificant. Just as the romantic tale has a stock formula so too will sf acquire its own little set of cliches and plots.

"SF depends for its impact on two basic elements. First, it is the quality of surprise, the never-before-visited feeling of originality; and secondly, it is the much-maligned sense of wonder, the mention alone of which is sufficient to provoke alternate reactions of argument and apathy. A better definition of this might be the sublimation of a writer's imagination into the narrower confines of the reader's. It is these two traits which sf has now lost. There is no more power behind the



punch, or vice versa. To escape from the morass into which it has begun to sink, sf must become more ready to change its image. The advent of surrealism and imagery into sf has been greeted with the pretence that it doesn't exist. This escapist attitude is now being replaced by shrill voices claiming that sf is no place for obscurity, and that a story is preferable to symbolism. Change is like that - it provokes and shifts the lethargic, shatters old ideals, and sets up resistance. Symbolism is a passing phase in sf, but I feel sure that it is itself a symbol of things to come.

"Wherever it is that a writer researches for his plots - on a far planet or in the depths of his mind - from now on he has an added problem. No longer must his plots rest in a conventional and wearisome style; no more must he think in terms of a purely human response related to the situation; never again can he add that extra twist to the long long tail. His writing, in terms of technique, style and conception must be new. It isn't a case of seeking another aspect to an old vista, or another angle to the eternal polygon. SF is supposedly a fiction above the general run, but its assimilation into that general run is close - frighteningly so. To regain that sublimation - call it sense of wonder if you will - sf must become first of all literate, and then imaginative, and then experimental. When these qualities have been recovered - and they are something that have been lost - then sf will find itself possessed of a new and invigorating element: originality.

"That lap is still awaiting the racing car. The engine hasn't yet stalled. SF hasn't run out of fuel, nor is it short of drivers. This next lap could be the most important in the history of speculative writing, and we are in at the beginning of it. Does it take all that much to get it started?"

So ends Chris Priest's article - on a question mark - and although I admire his perceptiveness in rationalising what is going to happen to sf, I'm afraid I can't entirely follow his thinking. Undoubtedly there is a great wind of change with us. One of the things that I have tried to do in the stories we are publishing in NEW WRITINGS has been to introduce the feminine element into as many stories as possible so that they read naturally. This of course has been a problem in sf for years. The old days of mechanisation and man against the universe or the might of the atom were alright in their time, but modern literature requires both sexes to provide the proper background for a story. It's been tried many times in the past and failed, but I think that in the stories in NEW WRITINGS, and certainly in many of the new novels, we are beginning to get an equality of sexes which makes for interesting reading - as removed from sexual debauchery. Priest of course was getting at Jim Ballard's inner-world and inner-space thinking, and this has rubbed the fans here on the raw. I think it was an interesting new development in sf, and one that probably only Ballard himself can produce satisfactorily. The discussions and arguments about his recent works have been pretty fierce in recent months,

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and even the newspaper critics have taken sides one way or the other on 'what is Ballard getting at?' His new book, THE CRYSTAL WORLD, will be published by Jonathan Cape here in June and has already been published in America by Berkley Books. Cape are spending a small fortune advertising it as a new type of sf story. This is one that I read about four years ago in its original novelette form, and I'm afraid that it leaves me a little bit at sea. I much prefer the type of book that Temple for example has just produced, or the writings of Keith Roberts and Douglas Mason, both of whom now have had books accepted in America for publication during this year. I think that basically Chris Priest has been too absorbed with the symbolism which has appeared in short stories, especially in the last year or two. Mike Moorcock, who took over NEW WORLDS from myself, set out deliberately to change the policy in that magazine by wide experimentation - and some of the stories have been very good, and some have fallen by the wayside. This is the cross that any editor has to bear once he tries to experiment. Bonfiglioli, in IMPULSE, tried an even wider sweep with his experimenting into different 'types' of stories, getting perhaps further away from the accepted norm of sf in an attempt to get at the wider general reading public who would never buy an sf magazine.

At this stage I don't think even they know whether they are being successful, but at least they are experimenting. Basically I think that providing sf stories are good entertainment this is the most that anybody can really hope for when passing his money over the counter. It's whether they get good value for that money in their own minds that counts. After all, the best that any editor can really hope for is to please half his readers all the time - but which half he's pleasing at any one time not even he can tell.

I feel that the new young fans today don't really know how well-off they are. I walk into Leslie Flood's Fantasy Book Centre in London and see a whole wall full of sf magazines and paperbacks, and think of the days in the thirties when you had to grub around amongst the second-hand bookstalls looking for a copy of ASTOUNDING or AMAZING, and the many lean years which followed, when everybody who was interested in sf was trying desperately to interest publishers in the possibilities of this literature. I suppose that it was the vast technical strides made during the last war that developed sf as a literature so fast. The fact that we're almost on the threshold of space, that it's possible we shall see men on the moon in the next few years. These were dreams that none of us 35 years ago ever anticipated would become realities in our own lifetime. I have a press cutting book here of the years 1937-39, when I was Press Officer of the British Interplanetary Society, and it's full of jokes and cartoons at our expense. Whenever we had a meeting in London it would be covered by the press and treated as a great joke. I remember Willy Ley came through London about 1937, leaving Germany on his way to America, and discussed the German Rocket Society with us. My press cuttings show that this was treated as one great big joke, and the next day there were three or four cartoons in the papers about our crazy ideas on going to New York by jet



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in a couple of hours - or was it the moon? In the long run the joke has turned out to have been on them. We were lucky in those early days to get one magazine a month, and the odd book from the library every few months: and these were talking-points whenever we had our meetings. Now you are surrounded by sf in just about every other book shop. This is all to the good of course. This is part of the progress of sf, which, although Chris Priest doesn't seem to think so, I am quite convinced has now settled in as part of general literature. Perhaps at this stage it hasn't gained any status as such, except that it outsells thrillers and westerns - and I don't see any reason why it shouldn't continue to occupy that slightly exalted state over those two particular types of literature. Certainly a lot of the sf I read (excluding the amount of junk which has to be read) is often far more pleasing than the average good general novel; and I read widely in general fiction. But often I come across a very well-written sf novel which has all the ingredients of a good general novel, but which also contains a lot of thought-provoking ideas, and it is this that lifts it above the general novel.

What a lot of the newer younger readers don't seem to realise is that sf has become an international literature now, as international as the thrillers and westerns were. The past tense is deliberate. There are fan groups and clubs in Italy and Germany; not so many in France. There is wide interest in sf in Russia. In the last two years I have sold books like Pohl & Kornbluth's SPACE MERCHANTS, Aldiss's STAR SHIP (i.e. NON-STOP) to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Whether the Russians have picked them up afterwards and published them, we're never quite sure, because in any case even if you sell them a book legally you never get the money - you have to go to Moscow to spend the roubles. The South American countries are printing sf in both Spanish and Portuguese. Admittedly small editions: they only pay about \$100 per book. In Spain and Portugal it's the same, but they pay more. In fact, there's hardly a country in Europe and nearer Asia which isn't publishing sf. Only last week I had a contract from Finland; and the Scandinavian countries, Holland and Belgium occasionally publish sf.

So we have this situation of the newer readers being dissatisfied with the progress of sf, when to people like myself it is almost part of a dream come true. Here we have sf as an accepted part of our reading life. You don't have to hide sf under plain wrappers - you can read it openly. We're having more and more sf plays on television: both of our Channels at present have good quality serials for children. The BBC is now planning another series of 13 one-hour plays for the coming autumn and have already bought stories by Pohl, Bester, Tenn, Nourse, and Kate Wilhelm. Tremendous interest is being taken in sf by the big film companies. Arthur Clarke's new book - 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY - is being filmed here by Stanley Kubrick. This is nearly finished now, but one that we'll see before it is Isaac Asimov's FANTASTIC VOYAGE. Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451 is shooting here at the moment, and Pohl & Kornbluth's SPACE MERCHANTS has just sold to Hollywood for \$50,000, which indicates a big production.

Yes, from where I sit it looks like a pretty good future for sf. I'd like to see more Australian writers sending material this way. Lee Harding, John Baxter and Damien Broderick are very welcome writers to our lists, and if there are any more of you there thinking of trying sf, you can get my address quite easily from the Editor of this magazine!

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN S-F CINEMA

JOHN BAXTER

\* \* \*

EXTERIOR, CEMETERY, DAY

1. Long shot of a small country churchyard from above, as from a steeple. At right a man and woman are standing at the front of an old grave. After a moment they move left along a path between the graves. Camera moves in to medium shot, panning along to follow them.
2. Medium shot, still panning, of man idly glancing at graves as he passes.
3. Tracking shot, knee height, of graves. Keeping pace with the couple camera shows headstones left frame, walking legs right frame, then moves slightly ahead, stopping at new grave and stone. Legs move into frame again, then stop abruptly, obscuring stone.
4. Camera begins moving again, around legs and in across grave onto stone and inscription.

"Here lies my wife between poverty and vulgarity."  
 Zoom continues until frame is filled with the edge of one carved letter.  
 Grain of stone becomes apparent.

Superimpose credits:

THE GRAVEYARD READER  
 by  
 Theodore Sturgeon.

\* \* \*

There was a time, many years ago, when I wrote for the fun of it and not for publication. The quotation above is extracted from one such labour of love, a film script based on a favourite fantasy of mine. It is not such a bad script, and if I can find two actors I'll gladly shoot it in 8mm just for practice. However I mention it here not in an attempt to find volunteers - but rather as a preface to some remarks on the cinema



and its present role in science fiction. Unlike many fans I have never had that overwhelming prejudice against sf films that is supposedly the mark of a 100% fan. Naturally I share their contempt for the poor technique that mars so many such movies, but usually one can make allowances for the fact that no sf film made by outsiders can ever come up to the standards set by long-time readers. How could any producer succeed with us when we look on 'It's Been Done Before' as the supreme insult, the critical atom bomb? In the cinema, 'It's Been Done Before' is often an accolade. Many modern American and European films depend almost completely on references to and parodies of other films to make their points (e.g. Malle's ZAZIE DANS LE METRO, Richard Quine's PARIS WHEN IT SIZZLES). To complicate the problem further, we all have preconceived ideas about settings and characters that make it impossible to adapt any established sf story to the screen without alienating almost everybody who has ever read the original. One imagines the cries of 'It doesn't look anything like him' that would greet the first appearance of a Gully Foyle or John Amalfi on the screen, rather like the reaction drawn when an actor tries to play Jesus Christ without a beard.

Nevertheless, a great many good sf films can and have been made. The script for THE GRAVEYARD READER was relatively easy to write, characters and settings dictating their equivalents almost automatically. In part this indicates that the treatment is poor work: masterpieces always take time. However it also suggests that some sf and fantasy is easily adapted for use on the screen, providing care is taken to choose a suitable subject. The film's long slide into oblivion keyed by the introduction of TV has now slowed and if anything the trend is towards more and better pictures, though of a different type to those shown before TV. SF is no longer taboo. In films, on TV, and even occasionally in the theatre, we are seeing a new attitude to science and science fiction. The result of this combination of new attitudes has been a resurgence of sf in the cinema - and the production of the finest sf films ever made. Yet the fanzines are empty of sf film reviews except those panning the duds. The current sf news-zines list few if any promising productions. TV shows like THE OUTER LIMITS are damned almost universally. Although I can recall at least a dozen superior sf films which I've seen in the past year as well as a similar number of excellent TV adaptations, I can think of only one or two other fans who have also seen them, and in all cases they are, like myself, as keen fans of the cinema as they are of science fiction. The general reaction from fandom has been zero.

Part of this negative attitude may stem from the fact that some of the films are British and therefore not on general exhibition in America, but this hardly explains why Joseph Losey's THE DAMNED received little or no praise from English fans; nor why THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE, and CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED - the last one of the most intelligent sf films ever made - were almost entirely ignored. As for America, the output has been much larger than Britain's, while the reaction has, if this is possible, been less. Films like Ray Milland's PANIC IN THE

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YEAR ZERO and THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES, George Pal's SEVEN FACES OF DOCTOR LAO, John Frankenheimer's THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE and SEVEN DAYS IN MAY might almost never have been made if current fan publications were to be taken as evidence.

The only explanation that suggests itself for this attitude is an increase in the snobbishness of fandom. The unprecedented reaction to Resnais's LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD and Fellini's LA DOLCE VITA, both of which had fantasy aspects but were not science fiction films by a long chalk, and the eventual nomination of MARIENBAD for a Hugo, seem to bear out this theory. 'Acknowledge your bastards' is a rule sf has never clung to with any consistency, so it is to be expected that the field, in entering what may be called its 'maturity', would turn its back on the more disreputable parts of its output and search for more intellectually acceptable substitutes. Curiously however this rejection has been followed by a sharp increase in the popularity of sf films in the cinema world generally. There is now a Science Fiction Film Festival annually at Trieste, organised by people unconnected with fandom. Roger Corman, the producer of most fantasy films based on Edgar Allan Poe's works, is revered by French and British critics but ignored by sf fans everywhere. The articles and reviews in film magazines examining modern sf films are written and read not by fans but by cineastes. It's curious that the people who most enjoy sf films are those whose interest should be least.

Fans of course have every reason to dislike sf films. The cinema, like almost every other art, including fiction, has never taken sf very seriously. Invariably it has been used as a basis for parody and satire, and where a succes d'estime has been scored (e.g. METROPOLIS, THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME) it has been at the expense of science. True to traditional Hollywood values, a humanistic solution to the world's problems has always been preferable to a scientific one. The same is of course true of literature in general. Books like 1984, ATLAS SHRUGGED and ON THE BEACH succeed not because they are better-written than sf novels - they seldom are - but because they present a story in terms of human situations whereas sf deals in Things, some of which happen to represent People. Any work of imagination presented in humanistic terms will almost certainly find a following, and sf films despite their often crude technique are no exception.

However during the past decade we have learnt to live with the popular version of sf. We no longer howl at the green plastic Martian in the corn flakes packet, nor wince at the inanities of a B-class Hollywood space opera. The years to come will force us to compromise on an even more ambitious scale. Whether this is good or bad must be decided by those whose bent is towards sociology more than cinema, though there seems to me to be little point in maintaining the fiction that sf is an independent intellectual force in literature. SF succeeds commercially and artistically in direct proportion to the extent to which it compromises with current social attitudes. The time when sf might have changed things is



long gone. We exist now as entertainers, not prophets. This attitude should be extended to cover sf films. Once we might have demanded with some justice that the producers comply with our ideas of what good sf was. We wouldn't have been heard, but we could have demanded. Now we should be grateful that there is still sf in the cinema, good or otherwise. There is one course left to us now: to look at the films which are being made and try to understand why they are as they are, and what they are trying to say. A B-picture will still be a B-picture: there is no point in trying to get anything more than a laugh from I WAS A TEENAGE MARTIAN and HORROR BEACH PARTY. But we can find something to chew on in THE DAMNED and SEVEN DAYS IN MAY.

Does it matter if these films are basically anti-science? I think not. The intellectual climate today is against uncontrolled technology and the better films follow this trend. Good directors are saying in their films what we should have been saying twenty years ago. Losey in THE DAMNED and Stanley Kubrick in DOCTOR STRANGELOVE show us the total absurdity of giving fallible human beings the ability to tamper with creation. John Frankenheimer goes deeper, into the nature of science, the meaning of it all. He sees in the instruments of destruction a hint of the 'terrible beauty' that Yeats perceived in war. Aircraft carriers, helicopters, tanks, even military bases and the eerie war machine of the Pentagon become in his hands the pieces and settings for a twentieth century power game. Just as a medieval knight in armour seems at least part machine, so Frankenheimer's machines seem partly sentient. After seeing SEVEN DAYS IN MAY one never again looks at a TV set without the passing fear that, Kuttner-like, it may open a big blue eye and look back.

Frankenheimer's films represent a significant break-through in sf cinema. Without ignoring humanist values they make science an integral part of the story, although not in the way that most critics of sf writing would prefer. All sf is a romanticising of technology, but it is seldom adequately allied to the human beings to whom this romance means anything. Frankenheimer has at least partly completed this amalgamation by making his machines partly human and his characters recognisable adjuncts to if not extensions of the science they serve. His films are also, incidentally, fine entertainment, beautifully shot and directed. But regretably sf fans are ignorant of them and their quality. Nobody cares, nobody watches.

Except perhaps the TV sets.

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\* Dwight V. Swain: Cry Chaos!

Dark Destiny.      The Weapon From Eternity.

Planet Of Dread.

(Four short novels  
from IMAGINATION:  
9/51 3,9/52 2/54)

Swain first appeared in science fiction magazines in late 1941 (in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES) with a story called Henry Horn's Super-Solvent, and for about two years seems to have produced a considerable amount of material for Ray Palmer. But then he stopped almost completely, and it needed Bill Hamling of IMAGINATION to get him going again.

Now it cannot be said that Editor Hamling was unable to obtain good material: in the issues in which these stories appear are others by such writers as Kris Neville, Damon Knight and Richard Matheson, and at around the same time stories by Bradbury, Heinlein, Sheckley, Dick, Zenna Henderson and I.M. Bukstein were used. But Swain's novels were really bad. Even the readers of those days recognised this: 'a story so bad as Dark Destiny' - 'the cheap tricks of sensationalism' - 'Dark Destiny was the last straw' - wrote one long-suffering reader. Hamling indicated in his reply that Swain had been commissioned to write stories like Dark Destiny. And this is quite believable, for Swain's The Transposed Man (in THRILLING WONDER STORIES: 11/53) is more than readable.

Swain, judged by the novels listed above, may be ranked with such greats of the literary world as Berkeley Livingstone, Alexander Blade, Guy Archette, Richard Shaver, E.K. Jarvis and John Bloodstone. This is hardly surprising, since Hamling came from Ziff-Davis, where he learnt the appalling habits of Ray Palmer, who, with this same kind of material, managed to appeal (through AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES) to the blood lust of hundreds of thousands of war-hysterical Americans in the early and mid-forties. The stories published by Palmer graduates (Hamling, Howard Browne, Paul Fairman) and by Palmer himself have been of this same type, with the culmination perhaps in the issues of AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC edited by Paul Fairman, and in Hal Annas's trilogy in OTHER WORLDS (1955-56).

This policy was unsuccessful because, though they will believe anything in wartime, people tend to become a little more skeptical in time of peace. Thus the magazines edited by those listed above have changed their editors or perished. They were maintained only by readers in the first throes of enthusiasm for sf, old-timers from AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES who knew no better, the people who would now read James Bond, and a large ephemeral readership. (The observant may notice a difference between the covers of these magazines and those of other magazines of the period. The magazines can still be bought - in secondhand shops and, occasionally, at inflated prices, at science fiction conventions.)

Now Swain was quite possibly a competent hack: an 'autobiographic sketch in IMAGINATION 9/51 indicates that he was a script-writer for the University of Oklahoma film unit. One dare not enquire just what that entailed. But these short novels would indicate otherwise.

The first three use a semi-common background. They are set in a future which is remarkably like up-dated medieval. The Federation rules the Solar System, after a fashion, and sometimes it is good (CC!), and at other times it is bad (TWFE). How it rules is not clear. The heroes are rather similar. In CRY CHAOS! Shane (no christian name) is Gar of the Chonyas (read, captain of the benevolent pirates, or Robin Hood, et cetera). Polite people call him Sha - others use such tough terms as chitza, starbo, and others which I would blush to mention. Haral (hero of DARK DESTINY) drinks kabat, and this time the Gar (Sark is his name) is evil. Haral rides a hwalon dragon. His skin is burned blue by the light of many suns and so on. Jarl Corvett is another chonya-gar.

None of these heroes has any especial power, but they all come through alive. Some may feel that Swain cheated in DARK DESTINY, for Haral is only saved by a former enemy who is suddenly taken with an attack of conscience. I don't believe that giant beetles have conscience, even if they are called coleoptera.

The women are incidental - often treacherous - always difficult to understand. They generally have no motivation. We are not told that they are attracted by the hero's manly chest or whatever, because the heroes are never described; if this were done, some readers would exclude themselves from the plot.

PLANET OF DREAD is set on a far planet, but a Federation agent is sent for - thereafter the action is similar, only the names have been changed to protect the editor. (And even that is not always well done, either. In a later novel, GIANT KILLER, in IMAGINATIVE TALES 5/58, the names John Storm, Wasseck, and Krylla are used: compare with Jarl Corvett, Wassreck, and Kyla.)

Death becomes meaningless in Swain's novels: all the heroes really want is power. The heroes were never really intelligent - not so it showed. They are pretty efficient when it comes to dealing out the passionate kisses, but never seem to have time for much more. And Swain appeals to the sweaty little adolescent in more ways than these. Each of the novels listed has at least one bloody gladiatorial contest:

'...The steel struck home. The end bit in along one side of the Thorian's bulbous head. It made a moist, explosive sound, like the bursting of a melon hurled onto pavement. Vile, grey-green sludge gushed forth.'

And there are evil Martian falas (they are 'fiendishly cruel' - in earlier days they were played by Nazis or Nips), and other unpleasant racial groups:



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only earthmen are really A-OK and don't have BO. Swain dislikes handicapped people: many of the villains have 'misshapen heads' or are 'hybrids'. 'Misshapen heads' sounds rather like the typical Lovecraftian 'unspeakable' (and it's rather a let-down, as Edmund Wilson has pointed out, to discover that the unspeakable is only an invisible whistling octopus). Most earthly hybrids are not nearly so unpleasant as Swain makes his aliens (compare the average Eurasian with, spare us, Quos Reggar!)

So Swain appeals to the child's insecurity about his own body, his insecurity with the other sex, his violence towards smaller creatures, his distrust of those not like himself, and above all his own striving for power over his environment.

Thus was some of the worst science fiction written and published: it was only Robin Hood, or a pirate yarn tricked up as sf, injected with appeals to the reader's lowest tastes, pregnant with....but Hugo Gernsback would never have published it: there is no science. My title refers to the fact that in each of the stories the hero 'sucks in air.' As one who spends most of his time pushing air out of his lungs, I should like to see that done, in time of emergency.

Shall we close with a 'wild Chonya song'? (The Chonys inhabited the asteroids, chump!)

'Oh, they've hunted us for ages,  
Through the Belt and to the Stars;  
They have sought advice of sages,  
And they've set up puppet gars.  
But there's Chonya blood within us,  
And when Chonys take their stand,  
There'll be blood upon the hatches  
And a blight upon the land.'

Indeed, there was a blight upon the land.

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'All the old crud-talk that people seem to need to shore up their vanity and avoid the risk of looking honestly at themselves. ...People said: "All slaves stink." They never asked: Who lets them have a basin to wash in or time to use it?'

\* \* \*

'Wishing for the impossible in the future is a good exercise, I think, especially for children; wishing for it in the past is surely the emptiest and saddest of occupations.'

Edgar Pangborn: Davy

WHO WAS WHO WAY BACK WHEN

One of the dangers of becoming a successful sf writer is that some day you may become the subject of one of Sam Moskowitz's potted magazine biographies. Sam's been at this for quite a while. Graduating from the halcyon days of American sf fandom of the thirties, he enshrined its turgid history in a fan-sponsored book called THE IMMORTAL STORM. In the last decade or so he has become prominent in the field as editor of the ill-fated SCIENCE FICTION PLUS, as paperback anthologist, and as a quasi-historian of the sub-genre we call sf. In this latter capacity he has acted as an advisory editor to AMAZING and FANTASTIC in their choice of so-called 'classic' reprints, and has contributed a steady stream of articles on different aspects of sf and fantasy to numerous magazines.

In the mid-fifties he turned his attention to examining the influences of the classical figures of fantasy upon present-day sf. The articles were received enthusiastically in the American AMAZING and the British SCIENCE FANTASY because they were unique, in that they represented the first concentrated effort by a man within the field to trace the precedents of pulp magazine sf. World Publishing Company in New York finally issued the revised series as a hardcover book in 1963 under the title EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE. Before that volume had appeared, Sam had already embarked upon a fresh series of articles destined to trace the careers and influences of the first generation of sf writers to appear within the pages of the specialist magazines towards the end of the thirties. From literary figures of the stature of Olaf Stapledon, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, Sam now began to deal 'in depth' with professional wordsmiths like Edmond Hamilton and Murray Leinster - a rather different kettle of fish - and it's not surprising that the finished works are a good deal short of the standard of EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE.

World has now got around to publishing a fresh volume of these articles entitled SEEKERS OF TOMORROW (World, N.Y., 1966: \$6.60 approx.) - as you can see, Sam has a penchant for grandiose titles that complements his preference in stories. Each article has been revised from its original magazine form, and some new material added - notably in the penultimate chapter headed Starburst, wherein Sam casts a quick eye over some authors he hasn't yet got around to packaging for posterity.

In a book of close to 450 pages we get a run-down on 22 writers of sf whom Sam feels have been foremost in the development of modern sf. They are - Edward E. SMITH, John W. CAMPBELL Jr., Edmond HAMILTON, Jack WILLIAMSON, Murray LEINSTER, Mort WEISINGER, John WYNHAM, Eric Frank RUSSELL, L. Sprague DE CAMP, Lester DEL REY, Robert HEINLEIN, A.E. VAN VOGT, Isaac ASIMOV, Theodore STURGEON, Clifford D. SIMAK, Fritz LEIBER, C.L. MOORE, Henry KUTTNER, Robert BLOCH, Ray BRADBURY, Arthur C. CLARKE, and Philip Jose FARMER.

Chronologically the articles begin about 1920 (with Murray Leinster) and end with the arrival of the fifties (and Philip Jose Farmer). That explains why some of your favourite writers didn't get a mention - although you just might find something about them in the concluding section previously mentioned. Perhaps because originally magazine policy dictated the length of the articles, each author gets an average of 20 pages, and this means a brief biographical sketch interpolated with a running description of his more important published works, together with some clumsy and hastily-formed conclusions. As a sort of animated Who's Who (or Who WAS Who) the articles are interesting in the way a longish book jacket blurb would be, and nowhere near the craftsmanship of similar works in other fields, e.g. FIFTY FAMOUS COMPOSERS, and odd things like that.

Regular readers of sf, whose addiction doesn't go back more than a few years, will find some interesting anecdotes buried here and there amid the bibliography. Older fans may wallow uneasily in the nostalgia of the early days, and find constant irritation with Sam's scholarship. A word of warning: the book is dreadfully dull. Sam has a tin ear and a literary style of the consistency of porridge. It's heavy going. Cannier minds than mine have already tromped apologetically on Mr. Moskowitz's literary shortcomings (e.g. James Blish and P. Schuyler Miller) and questioned some of his historical conclusions, but for all that the fact remains that Sam has courageously blundered in where others have had neither the wit nor the desire to explore, and for this we should at least be grateful. SEEKERS OF TOMORROW is essential reading in some ways, but I'd hesitate to hand it to a non-addict - someone who borrows Wyndham and Bradbury from the library, for example - because he would understandably demand to know what all the fuss was about.

Where this new book fails is in its presentation of the pulp writers as great figures. One can't get involved with the lives of these people. And I think I know why. Heaven knows there's enough material for fine biographies in the lives of E.E. Smith, van Vogt, Bradbury or Sturgeon, to name but four. The failure belongs to Sam himself and his bewildering inability to make his subjects live. When he was dealing with people like Stapledon and Verne, he had literary precedents to draw upon, but when he waded into the field of the pulps he had to go it alone - and it is embarrassingly obvious that he just doesn't have the ability to pull it off with any degree of success. One plods through this dull book more from a sense of curiosity than anything else, and I found one chapter, one author, per night about as much as I could comfortably absorb. Not even a sense of humour to liven it up here and there - just a noble devotion to sf as a serious art form.

SEEKERS FOR TOMORROW, unlike its predecessor, is best read as a series of extended jacket blurbs. To expect more is to court disappointment. I for one find it incredible that in a book dated 1966, that includes in its text references to stories and books published during



1965, there is not one word devoted to the revolutionary work of J.G. Ballard, only one line on Brian Aldiss, and nothing at all about Avram Davidson, Roger Zelazny, John Brunner or Jack Vance. Damon Knight gets a single line in a long article describing the rise to fame of one of the most singularly inept writers of the whole period - Lester del Ray. I mention these names in passing, not because they are personal deities, but because to me they represent appalling lapses in scholarship. No doubt you will find more. I haven't the space to go into them here. James Blish is dismissed as a 'workmanlike writer', Philip K. Dick - one of the phenomena of the current field - is barely mentioned... No, I'll leave it at that. I realise that Sam had limited space in his Starburst chapter, but his preoccupation with minor writers to the exclusion of really important ones is beyond me. He has publically admitted his preference for the Old Writers - and anyone is entitled to his favourite authors - but this should not bias the thinking of even a quasi-historian like Moskowitz.

I have a suspicion that Brian Aldiss could do a book like this and make a devastatingly good job of it - witness his long article on relatively minor writers like Donald Malcolm and Ian Wright in the second issue of SF HORIZONS. Two other writers, Damon Knight and James Blish, also come to mind. All have so far concerned themselves primarily with the criticism of individual works and have eschewed, wisely it seems, detailed biography.

One last point: pay no attention to Sam's clumsy attempts to psycho-analyse the authors....although, on second thoughts, perhaps these moments provide the only spots of light relief in the book. For all this, the book deserves to be read - nay, bought! - simply because there's been nothing like it ever before, and it may be a long while before a better book on the subject appears.

SEEKERS FOR TOMORROW, like many of the books mentioned in this magazine, is not generally available in Australia. Any good bookseller should be able to get it for you.

#### BEWARE THE FURIES

Now I have an apology to make. Last month I implied that the new British writer Keith Roberts had been discovered by Kyril Bonfiglioli, editor of IMPULSE. Well, I was wrong. John Carnell was the man responsible for unearthing this astonishing young author. Roberts has just had a novel published in America entitled THE FURIES. It appeared serially last year in SCIENCE FANTASY, and is scheduled for British publication in the near future. The book is derivative and hardly representative of Roberts's more recent work, but as a typically British novel of the apocalypse it is certainly streets ahead of Ballard's first

offering - THE WIND FROM NOWHERE - and would certainly repay your attention, if only for its freshness of invention. Perhaps this is as good a time as any to fill in the background of this young man who I firmly believe will be a Big Name in the sf world not too long from now.

KEITH ROBERTS was born in 1935 in Kettering, a market and manufacturing town in the East Midlands of England. He attended the Grammar School there, and remembers with pleasure being taught by E.E. Kirby, the man who first discovered and fostered the talent of H.E. Bates. He later studied art for four years at Northampton, qualifying finally as Book Illustrator Without Prospects. A protracted experience of the entrance ritual of the Royal College of Art convinced him his talents were either in excess of, far short of, or different in kind from the requirements of that seat of learning; he toyed briefly with the idea of teaching, but rapidly gave up the notion. He had always cherished an ambition to work for the film industry, but could find no opening in it; instead, he filled in as, among other things, a door-to-door salesman, garage hand, cinema projectionist and driving instructor. At some time during this stormy period he was lent a book of sf short stories. The collection, by the then new writer Brian Aldiss, triggered something of an explosive spiritual awakening, and he has been a sucker for the medium ever since.

At the ripe age of twenty-three, he moved south to work for a film company specialising in cartoon animation for cinema and television. He spent four years as background artist and layout man before being struck amidsthips by one of the waves of redundancy peculiar to the profession, and has since worked for a variety of studios and advertising agencies in and around London.

For some years he had been experimenting with writing, mainly without thought of sale; early in 1964, with an sf novel script already lying among the bottom drawer shirts, he contacted John Carnell, then well into his stride with the NEW WRITINGS series. Sales followed rapidly: to NEW WRITINGS, to American outlets, and to SCIENCE FANTASY. The novel, finally resurrected and completed as THE FURIES, was serialised by Bonfiglioli, placed with Berkley Books in New York as a paperback, and is to appear as a hardcover book from Hart Davis early in 1967. A second book, the full-length story-cycle PAVANE recently concluded its initial run in IMPULSE, and he is hard at work on another novel tentatively called THE INNER WHEEL, an elaboration of a long novelette of the same name which appeared in NEW WRITINGS 6.

In the autumn of 1965 Roberts claims to have slightly outquoted the redoubtable Bonfiglioli during a Shakespearean discussion in a Henley tavern. This feat led to his being offered the associate editorship of IMPULSE on the customary part-time arrangement. This magazine had featured many of his stories and had begun to benefit from his imaginative cover designs.

He is essentially a 'new wave' author, a convert to the Ballardian concept of 'inner space' - and prefers to place his stories in everyday surroundings and to write wherever possible from experience. He is opposed to the notion that sf is a separate and inferior branch of literature, feels popular appreciation of the form to be growing apace, and believes the days of the fan clubs and the specialist magazines are numbered. His stories tend in fact to move between mainstream and sf - possibly because of his confessed inability to detect any difference. He dislikes regimentation of thought, feels much of sf to be bounded by conventions more strict than those governing the classic genre form of the thriller, and has been heard to grumble loudly at what he terms the editorial knack of PIGEON-HOLING THE INFINITE. His favourite authors include Kipling, Shakespeare, Salinger, Aldiss, Ballard and Bradbury. He has most of the usual vices; among his interests he lists the cinema, Saluki dogs, sports cars, and the county of Dorset. He sometimes feels he would like to marry but doubts he ever will; his ambitions include retiring to Dorsetshire and owning an XKE.

If all goes well with THE FURIES and PAVANE, he may well have his Jaguar, but there seems little hope of his immediate retirement. He will shortly join Roberts & Vintner, publishers of IMPULSE and NEW WORLDS, to take up a full editorial job along with organising artwork and layout for that company. At the same time.....

#### HARRY, THE GALACTIC EDITOR

.....none other than Harry Harrison will assume the editorial chair of IMPULSE, left vacant by the recent retirement of Kyril Bonfiglioli.

I would like to say, as one usually does at times like this, that Bonfiglioli will be sadly missed, but the truth is that his departure will pass unmourned, concluding as it does the most uninspired editorship in the history of magazine sf. His singular achievement has been to drag sf down to its lowest common denominator in an effort to attract the support of a wider segment of a supposedly sophisticated public. The fact that he has failed almost tragically in this pursuit illuminates once more that, paperback sales to the contrary, magazine sf caters to a minority market - and if the magazines are to survive at all then they must acknowledge this lesson.

Harry Harrison's reported policy of publishing 'sf, straight down the middle' (his emphasis) comes at a time when many fans like myself have come to regard the British situation with dismay. NEW WORLDS has laboured for over two years and brought forth David Masson, a writer of quite genuine talent and excellent promise. But nothing more. The bulk of Moorcock's writers seem obsessed with introspective narrative, and issue after issue is devoted to their precious short stories. And I do mean short. I know there are difficulties. The big name writers just don't



seem inclined to write for the home magazines - but two years is a long time to wait for a fresh crop of authors to turn up. I can't recall John Carnell ever being forced into such a position as Moorcock and Jones are in. Perhaps Mike is doing his best, but I don't see how it can be called good enough. At the moment he shares with John Campbell in America an autonomy which allows him to pursue what he thinks is the Right and Proper path for sf. And like Campbell he favours a group of writers who seldom if ever appear elsewhere. What bothers me is this: how much longer do we have to wait before we can regard NEW WORLDS as some sort of stalwart instead of the embarrassing adolescent it is today?

Perhaps it's too much to hope that if Harry Harrison manages to lift IMPULSE out of the doldrums and makes a success of his 'straight down the middle' policy then this might have an oblique influence on the people at NEW WORLDS. Is it possible that writers like John Brunner, Brian Aldiss, Kenneth Bulmer, James White and a few others will be so revitalised by the sight of a traditional sf magazine once more before them that they will return to their typewriters with new vigour and toss off the occasional short story for the home market?

NEW WRITINGS apart, the British magazine field was becoming dangerously ingrown and incestuous. I would find it hard to think of a better choice than Harry to kick some life back into it. So keep your fingers crossed, all of you - we need IMPULSE.

\* \* \*

Sad Footnote, by the Editor:

I've had a Distressing Experience. Calling in recently for a cup of tea with my favourite sf columnist's wife, I discovered none other than that bearded gentleman himself, crying into his typewriter... Readers, I kid you not: there - the thought of it humbles me still - there sat one of Australia's finest sf writers and commentators - 'the Tom Collins of Australian sf', 'the Australian Sam Moskowitz', as he has been variously hailed - weeping tears of shame and chagrin into his beloved Optima... From the clenched fist of my poor friend I disengaged the sheet of paper he had torn from the machine on my approach. On it were typed but four words: RORK! IS A ROCK!

You will doubtless recall Lee's valiant endeavours in ASFR #1 to rally support for the Canonisation of Avram Davidson. Oh, Mr. Davidson, what have you done!

But all is not yet lost... When he had regained coherent speech, Lee told me that Avram still has a Chance. In the May issue of FANTASTIC is an excellent short novel called THE PHOENIX AND THE MIRROR, the first part of a longer work to be called VERGIL MAGUS. But two other novels have been announced: we hope they will not, like RORK!, prove fodder for some Devil's Advocate of sf...

AND HELL'S DESTRUCTIONJohn Foyster\* Kingsley Amis: The Anti-Death League (Collancz: \$3.85)

During the author-panel session at the Faster Convention much time was spent trying to discover whether a profitable distinction could be made between science fiction and non-science fiction. It would be unfair to the participants to say that a decision was reached, for although arguments were brought forth against the idea of 'compartmentalisation' the authors obviously felt that there was something about sf which made it different.

But to discover just what is the difference is rather difficult. Obviously it isn't the fact that a story is set in the future (for two very good reasons: that this would eliminate the story based on alternative time-tracks; and that very many of the best stories are set in the present, or in a future which is so near to the present as to be almost indistinguishable from it), nor, equally, that such a story is set in 'outer space'. Considering the origins of sf, one might be forced to the conclusion that the identifying feature of sf is that it is written in 'the pulp style' - and at this point one would clearly have to dilate upon this style.

However one may face this question, one can sometimes be surprised - or astonished - at what is regarded as sf by other people. And the strangest of all opinions is that held by some publishers. Kingsley Amis's THE ANTI-DEATH LEAGUE has been listed as sf, and comes from a publisher who has distinguished himself by his excellent choice in the past, not the least outstanding example of which is Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN.

The book is upsetting - physically - in two ways. Our habit of looking for the familiar yellow jacket and...interesting comment thereon ...must be put aside as we seize a book obviously intended for the Fleming/Deighton market. And internally the layout is reminiscent of books of the John Buchan type and era.

THE ANTI-DEATH LEAGUE is set in the future, just like stories such as Blish's THE FROZEN YEAR and John Wyndham's stories for little ones. That is, the time location is tomorrow, not the day after on any account. And yet the story could have been published in Campbell's ANALOG, for it is just the sort of contrived mish-mash which he would enjoy - or expect his readers to enjoy. And because THE GOLDEN HORDE stirred his readers so much, he might have been tempted had this been offered him. There would, of course, have been the task of cleaning it up... As sf, this novel doesn't succeed, but then it's not really trying to be sf. Amis, in investigating death, simply chose a setting which could, under other circumstances, have led to an sf novel. However, as a novel it does merit some investigation.

It may just appeal to sf readers because of the puzzling way in which the plot is unfolded. One of the attractions of modern sf, probably as a result of the work of Van Vogt and others, is the constant introduction of totally surprising elements - a new character, a character unveiled as really being someone else - and this element of surprise is present in THE ANTI-DEATH LEAGUE (and it is in this case, as in most others, an element spurious to the foregoing section of the novel). What will displease sf readers, who generally have to have everything spelled out for them, is that so much of what happens during the action of the book is not described in it, so that the reader is rather like a character in the book, without having a part to play. And certainly those accustomed to reading sf magazines will not take to it easily. This is not a novelette boiled down to 6000 words to fit this month's issue. Development is painfully slow.

I have never, I regretfully admit, been much of a lover of Amis's work. What I have read has not interested me overmuch, and there has been no incentive whatsoever to examine his work closely when greener pastures are so near. NEW MAPS OF HELL, if incompetent, was at least readable, and to some slight extent enjoyable. THE ANTI-DEATH LEAGUE, if enjoyable, is to some extent incompetent.

I did expect something a little better than a few names when Amis tried to evoke the Bond atmosphere, revolting as that atmosphere might be. Certainly there were many opportunities for redundant erudition, but occasionally, when these opportunities are taken, the whole idea fizzed. One can imagine the letter-hacks in STARTLING or AMAZING having a great time with this. 'On page 37 where Joe X uses a .... it is made clear that yellow is the result. According to Einstein's Theory....'

In trying to present an insane doctor Amis also fails, in a way, since Terry Southern did a very similar thing much better in his FLASH AND FILIGREE. But that wouldn't matter, provided that the doctor had to be insane to support the novel. He didn't. His insanity is quite unnecessary to the basic plot.

Amis is shooting at God and the pattern of random death which exists in the world. His characters are all trying to create a more certain kind of death, and because of this the idea of random death is appalling. But when the Anti-Death League is formed, the only true member is the author. Possibly some of the characters who are otherwise engaged at the time are also members.

And there is a constant attempt to show that one of the leading characters is insane, whereas he is merely uninformed. Perhaps Amis is here suggesting that although the deaths we see are random it is simply that we do not understand their cause. This would certainly be what he hopes his readers are thinking when, in the last few paragraphs, he



needlessly kills the padre's dog. So death does triumph, and although the meaningful death of millions of Chinese has been avoided, there are still millions to die uselessly.

Surprisingly, I feel, there has been little room in this novel for character development and change, as contrasted with character revelation. What we learn of the characters has been there all the time, hidden. Only James Churchill shows any signs of change, and this may simply be revelation, too. Under the circumstances of the novel, if the characters are to be anything other than that brittle cardboard of the pulps, then they must change. And they don't. Does Amis believe that people never change, that each must continue as he is no matter what experience he undergoes? What a grim reversal of Lysenkoism! If this is so then we learn nothing in this existence and leave it as we came into it. Here must be the horror of Amis's novel. Yet if life is so meaningless, why does it matter whether one kills millions of Chinese or not?

This is not at all the sort of novel I would wish to read myself. Perhaps some will enjoy it.

For its sex.

For its humour.

For its irreverence.

And for its fear of destruction.

---

#### LITTLE CRAWLY FINGS FROM OUTA SPACE

Lee Harding

\* John Christopher: The Possessors (Hodder n/b: \$0.60)

If I had read this book ten years ago it would have scared hell out of me. Too long an exposure to the best and worst in sf have blunted the impact of this recent Christopher novel, but I have to admit that to the newcomer it will provide an excruciatingly terrifying evening's reading. To quote Amis's cover endorsement: 'Don't pick up this book unless you've got a spare evening ahead of you.' Weary fan though I am, I have to admit that I finished it at a single sitting. It's that sort of book.

Christopher has never been a really original writer. Safe in the security of his income and Swiss home, he reworks the standard plots of sf to conform with his (and no doubt his publisher's) ideas of what the general public expects from sf. The result is somewhat different from the work he did in earlier days when writing specifically for the smaller audience of the sf magazines.

This story is the one about the parasitic spores from outer space which land and infest the bodies of human hosts. Christopher selects a ruse from the traditional British murder mystery writers and has his cast isolated at a remote chalet in the Swiss Alps by an avalanche, and plays

out his unquestionably thrilling account under these circumstances. It has worked before, and there's no reason to suppose it won't work another hundred times or so when writers of Christopher's technical ability tackle it. Despite the oh-so-familiar plot I was carried along by the sheer power of Christopher's writing. Time and again I would have to let slip a grudging sigh of admiration as I found myself forced to keep turning those damned pages... So: recommended - with reservations to older fans; definitely recommended to aspiring writers as an object lesson in skill overcoming a lack of originality in plot. The cover on this paperback is a knockout wraparound.

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THE MUDLARK OF SPACE

K.U.F. Widdershins

\* Harry Harrison: Bill, The Galactic Hero (Collanz: c.\$2.30)

Harry Harrison, long known as a skilled writer of sf, has written what is perhaps the best sf novel of the year in his BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO. In this novel Harry describes acutely the trials and tribulations of an apprentice latrine technologist\* in a decadent Galactic Empire. Bill's innocence in this world of connivance, distrust and buck-passing is most moving, and it is not until the final scene that we realise that even this noble soul has succumbed to the evils of his day. This is disappointing, for Bill, in his simple way, avoids contamination by heresy (he can't understand what the missionary is saying), whores (he can't afford them, or is hauled away to duty at the critical moment), and horse-manure (by being in the Empire Space Corps). To find then, at the end, that his fine character has been ruined, will surely give cause for thought to those who recommend the army as 'making one a man.' Harrison keeps the novel moving with in-group jokes (like calling the space-ship the CHRISTINE KEELER - daring, for one who now lives in England) and with many witty and amusing puns. All in all, this novel must be extremely highly rated, for its entertainment value is 'tops.' I recommend it strongly to all readers.

\*The Editor would like to point out that Dr. Widdershins used a rather Vulgar Phrase here. I am not against Vulgar Phrases, indeed I have been known to use them myself, but since this issue of ASFR is being submitted to the Postal Authorities, in an endeavour to obtain the Departmental Imprimatur with all its financial blessings, I deemed it wise to replace the offending words. I will, however, be pleased to send a copy of that Vulgar Phrase to any reader who cares to send me a stamped addressed envelope. On the other hand, if I get a knockback from the P.O., I'll use it to describe them in my next editorial...

And having wasted this much space I might as well finish the page... Some readers have complained about Dr. Widdershins's reviews, on the grounds 'that he obviously doesn't like sf.' I trust the above review will put their minds, so to speak, at rest.

THE RESURRECTION MENAlan Reynard\* William Sloane: To Walk The Night.. .. The Edge Of Running Water (Panther: both \$0.60)\* Frederick Pohl: Alternating Currents (Penguin: \$0.60)

The first two of these three books were written by a young American in 1937 and have long been out of print. Panther's pseudo-Gothick packaging will probably cause them to be relegated to the 'weird' shelves in most shops, but in fact one of them is a fine piece of early sf, and the other, if not quite traditional sf, is certainly a superior and unusual work.

TO WALK THE NIGHT is a strange, eerie novel which utilises a familiar theme: the alien stranded on Earth. Sloane's precedents for this work, however, are not the pulp stories of his day but the classic British novels of the supernatural. His style is oblique and takes full advantage of the fact that what is implied can often be more frightening than what is described. We are never given a complete explanation of the beautiful Selena, and her background is only briefly and tantalisingly sketched in. But this is enough. Sloane's strength is his writing, which holds up well today despite the book's age. It is not a novel which benefits from a synopsis of its surprises, and I don't intend to give one. It is a fine imaginative work, and one well ahead of its time. All credit to Panther Books for resurrecting it for us.

THE EDGE OF RUNNING WATER was written immediately after TO WALK THE NIGHT and is nowhere near as original a work. The plot is blatantly gimmicky: a scientist is constructing a machine to communicate with the dead. The idea itself must have been startling for its time, and even today would provide a basis for a fascinating exercise a-la-Ballard. But Sloane drags in the paraphernalia of the British detective story of that vintage, complete with spooky house and queer housemaid. The characters are a trifle silly, and the book ambles along in a rather obvious and contrived way. Yet its climax almost attains the heights of the earlier book, and for this reason it is worth reading.

As far as I can ascertain, Sloane wrote no further novels in this vein. He went into publishing, and his last contact with sf seems to have been in the early fifties when he edited a huge anthology called STORIES FOR TOMORROW for Cassell.

I have mentioned the physical presentation of these two books as tending towards the 'supernatural.' A reading of them will soon make one realise how astonishingly well the artist has captured the essence of the works - in the case of TO WALK THE NIGHT, the most unforgettable image in the book.

Reading ALTERNATING CURRENTS brought to mind a statement made by



Alfred Bester in an editorial he wrote for SCIENCE FANTASY #12 in 1957. He said: '(American) sf is nervous, high-strung, generous but confused. It is a painful striving for The Answers. We in the States want The Answer To Everything. It must be definitive, short and quick. Eternity must be explained in a sentence, our galaxy in a phrase, our place in it in a formula....and then off to more important Answers.'

And from the land of the digest comes this collection of Pohl stories. Published in America in 1966, it represents the penultimate barrel-scraps from this writer's early production, and in it you will find many of the faults or virtues mentioned by Bester. The stories originally appeared in magazines like GALAXY, BEYOND, FUTURE and PLANET. Most of these magazines are no longer with us, and this collection helps us understand why. They represent a transient period in the development of sf when all was slick and superficial. The values in this collection are twofold: First, the stories are worth reading as examples of a dead style. Was Kingsley Amis in his cups when he singled out Pohl as the best writer sf has produced? Since the untimely death of his collaborator Cyril Kornbluth it has become increasingly obvious that Pohl solo produces mostly lukewarm fiction. With the occasional exception....which brings me to value no.2: In this book you will find The Tunnel Under The World which is Pohl's finest novelette and a really outstanding story. The rest of the collection is a mixed bag - as the umpteenth collection of any writer's work (with the exception of Ballard) is likely to be. Two stories, Grandy Devil and The Ghost Maker, are entertaining fantasies. The rest are slick, superficial, and difficult to recall afterwards. If you haven't a copy of The Tunnel Under The World, the book is worth acquiring.

#### IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

K.U.F. Widdershins

Those who sell their souls generally demand more than four cents a word in exchange. One may excuse most of those writing for John Campbell's ANALOG because in many cases they obviously know no better and can write no better. But one can hardly extend this consideration to a writer of the stature of CHARLES L. HARNESS, who has prepared two short stories to strict Campbellian requirements.

Harness wrote only a few stories, in the early fifties, and for the markets which, though they were publishing the best sf, did not have the highest rates. The best, and probably the best-known, was his great FLIGHT INTO YESTERDAY, which was written in the manner of Van Vogt and generally considered superior to the works of that once-great writer. Recently another novel, THE ROSE, was reprinted by Compact Books.

But Harness's two stories for Campbell, AN ORNAMENT TO HIS PROFESSION and THE ALCHEMIST, could almost have been hewn from Campbell editorials. The first, dealing with the summoning of demons, and the second, dealing

with alchemy and psi, probably form only part of a series: a series which will laud those whose ideas are unorthodox for that reason alone.

The old style of Harness is there, but readers of his earlier work will be sorry to see this great writer prostituting himself to blind customers. After all, surely there are now no readers of ANALOG who have any idea of what constitutes good writing. Old John himself won't let it appear in his sacred, ignorant, unreadable pages.

#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

Donald Tuck

Today the sf magazine collector does not have to find so much shelf space annually as he did in the early 1950s. In one or two years then over 150 magazines were produced, and the completist could soon get stuck for storage. They were bigger magazines, too - pulp-sized compared with today's digest-sized publications. Even today about 80 are produced annually. A run of a magazine can certainly use up a lot of space - for example the June issue of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION is No.181. F & SF is now the third largest of the current magazines, being ahead of GALAXY (now at 143) because that magazine turned bi-monthly in 1959. ASTOUNDING/ANALOG leads the way, June being its 427th issue, while AMAZING has dropped slightly behind since becoming a bi-monthly - its 40th Anniversary issue in April was its 420th. There are some foreign-language magazines with higher issues - the German UTOPIA being around 462, for example, and TERRA around 430 at the end of last year, but these are weekly publications. The French FICTION has passed 100, as also of course have such other English-language magazines as IF, FANTASTIC and NEW WORLDS. Defunct magazines include WEIRD TALES (279 issues, 3/23-9/54), FANTASTIC ADVENTURES (129 issues, 5/39-3/53) and THRILLING WONDER STORIES (112 issues, 8/36-11/55). The latter may be considered 189 if one counts in the previous titles of SCIENCE WONDER (6/29-5/30) and WONDER STORIES (6/30-2/36). Its companion, STARTLING STORIES, saw 99 issues (1939-54).

Another long-lived publication was the somewhat borderline magazine DOC SAVAGE, which ran for 181 issues from March 1933 to June 1949. Hence the reprint pocket book series from Bantam Books has a long way to go! I have read only one of the ten volumes they have reprinted, and found it quite readable if somewhat slow-moving. In its day the magazine was well-liked and had its own band of devotees.

I understand that among the best-selling sf paperbacks at the moment are the Pyramid reprints of the late Edward Elmer Smith's Lensman series. The titles are TRIPLANETARY, FIRST LENSMAN, GALACTIC PATROL, GRAY LENSMAN, SECOND-STAGE LENSMAN and CHILDREN OF THE LENS. Though most of Smith's situations are naive by today's sf standards, the books are still great fun to read, and it is good to see them made available to a new and wider audience. The Fantasy Press editions are collectors' items.

BRIAN ALDISS (U.K.)

The first number of ASFR arrived last week. I read it all with great enjoyment from cover to cover. I was happy to see you had managed ~~to~~ reduce my tape-recorded mutterings to some sort of sense.

It was certainly good to see the old campaigning spirit swinging along. That rather seems to have been lacking from British fanzines recently, maybe because fans to a certain extent have got the sort of recognition they wanted - or at any rate thought they wanted.

To mention just one thing, I particularly enjoyed Lee Harding's analysis of my friend Bon and his IMPULSE No.1, which made me laugh somewhat. It must be admitted that he could have presented our sacrifice stories with a little more of a flourish, since their genesis was a fairly noteworthy occasion. It took place one evening at my old house in Marston Street, just after the London WorldCon. Bon, Harry, Jim Blish, Poul Anderson, Jim Ballard, Karen Anderson and Judy Blish were all drinking with Margaret and me when I conceived this idea of our each providing a story on one theme for Bon's magazine. We were all keen on the idea, drunken fools that we were, except Bon; we forced the notion on him; I guess he got his own back in the end!

RON CLARKE (Sydney)

ASFR looks like shaping up to be a good magazine, going by the first issue. The cover is very professional-looking. The articles I liked, too - especially John Baxter's on Australian sf and John Foyster's on the Melbourne Convention. But the one that really makes ASFR worth the money is Lee Harding's article on Avram Davidson. Please keep on with the book reviews and the illustrations.

One thing I noticed was that although the index - whups! I mean Contents Page - listed the contents by page number, there wasn't a single page actually numbered. A trifle inconvenient, I should say. I also got a bonus - two page sevens. I'm not complaining. News of the release of the novel FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON is enough to brighten the heart of any sf fan. I thought the short story was terrific, and if the novel is better than that - wow! Keep up the good work!

COLIN A. BELL (Melbourne, pro tem.)

Thanks for the first edition of ASFR: I hope it will be the first of many more. I regret not having seen any of you since the recent Easter Convention, due to circumstances. However, I certainly hope to see future issues and possibly contribute from time to time, if I can rise to the occasion. In mid-July I expect to go up to Northwest Cape for six months to work (and write) in seclusion, as I am struggling to get my first three books into shape to foist onto some unsuspecting publisher or agent.....

Wishing you all the best with future issues, and 'Lang may yer lumb reek,' say I, waving a thistle and disappearing over the horizon.



PETER PIKER (Ettamoggah)

Having read the first issue of this new journal with great interest, I would like to offer my congratulations on several counts.

Firstly, I am delighted to notice the consistently delicate tone of the illustrations - a technical achievement which will undoubtedly astonish both your readers and the artists concerned.

And what a splendid idea - omitting all details of price, publisher and availability from your book reviews! The reading public has been pampered far too long. Now we may hope to see a revival of the lost art of book-hunting - a healthy, stimulating sport.

It is regrettable that your valiant attempt to provide a similar stimulus for would-be subscribers to the journal has been ruined by a single mention, accidental no doubt, of the editorial address.

However, not failure but...&c.

\* \* \*

The Editor comments: Last weekend my wife and I moved from our flat at Coburg to my old place at Northclump, salubrious suburb, sometimes called 'New South Rome' by the cynical, situated on the slopes of an extinct volcano and bounded by the noble Merri Creek and mighty Yarra River, a suburb called 'home' by the illustrious Bernard O'Dowd, the great Joe Fogg, and now, once more, by myself. In the rapture of my home-coming I managed to mislay some letters which should have appeared here - or they may be irretrievably lost in the wildernesses of Western Victoria, where I spent the last four days conning humble shopkeepers into buying my employer's publications and the last three nights typing stencils in motels en route. (At a guess I'd say I'd be one of the few reps on the road who travels with an electric typewriter, a pile of sf, and selected volumes of Hardy, Peacock and Hazlitt in the boot of his car.) Anyway, that's why you're reading this instead of a couple of excellent letters from Bob Smith and Mervyn Barrett. Quite a number of other letters, expressing enthusiasm, congratulations, bewilderment, etc. were received. Burt Kaufman was 'impressed' - particularly with the Vonnegut review, which I think he originally sent for Lee Harding's CANTO. N.R. Cronk of Tweed Heads sent a two-year subscription: by far the best letter I had that day, and I'll not disparage imitators! Robert Gerrand works on the Monash University paper, LOT'S WIFE, appreciates the elbow-grease involved in producing something like ASFR, and also uses those delightful words, 'Please find enclosed...' Carolyn Addison in Sydney did the same after recovering from the shock of seeing my name in bigger type than Brian Aldiss's. Graham Stone sent me a most interesting long letter from Canberra, which I don't feel at liberty to reprint without his permission. (I'm off to Tasmania on August 1st for a fortnight's hardsellsmanship, and perhaps will find time then to write to all the people who've gone unanswered.) Don Tuck has sent a lot of useful material from Tasmania, and his fellow-islander Michael O'Brien has been active in spreading the word in Hobart. Unmentioned correspondents are assured that we appreciate their support. There are some unmentionable non-correspondents, too.

MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUBMervyn Binns

The Melbourne Science Fiction Club is the longest-running sf club in Australia and is at present more active than it has been for years, with more new members joining this year than in any year since its foundation. The club's big attraction in the early days was its collection of the then rare American magazines. Today the main attraction, apart from the chance it gives one to meet and talk with fellow-enthusiasts, is still the library. The club-rooms are not the most beautifully-appointed you've ever seen, but they certainly have atmosphere! Here, every Wednesday night, members meet to play table-tennis and darts, exchange their books, browse through a fabulous collection of comics and other off-beat magazines, or just lounge around and natter. Once a month, on a Friday night, there is a film show; and we see some darn good films. On July 15th, for example, we watched THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON. Coming up soon is DR. STRANGELOVE.

An important club activity over the years has been the production of fanzines. The first was Lee Harding's PERHAPS, produced on McGill's duplicator by Lee, Dick Jenssen and myself. Then came the club's Roneo machine, from which has come a noble stream of amateur publications - including this one. ETHERLINE ran for 101 issues. Others to appear have been BACCHANALIA, WASTEBASKET, QUESTION MARK, and more recently John Foyster's SATURA, THE GRYPHON, and THE WILD COLONIAL BOY, and Lee's CANTO. And now we see in the club-rooms again those mad scenes familiar to anyone who has ever tried to produce a duplicated magazine. ASFR is the kind of publication we should have had years ago, a magazine of Australia-wide interest and, I am confident, of international significance - and the club is proud to be associated with it.

In my report last month I mentioned the part the club played in staging the Easter Convention. We feel strongly that sf conventions and conferences are not a thing of the past. Quite apart from being enormous fun, they give us the chance to talk (or argue) things out with the writers, to air our views in the presence of our peers from all over the country, and through tapes and messages to experience a sense of community with our fellow-fans in other parts of the world. Next year there will be another convention or conference, either in Sydney or in Melbourne, and we hope to have definite news about this in the next month or two.

A few weeks ago, one of our most prolific readers (and one of the most industrious workers at the Easter convention), was interviewed by the Melbourne AGE. There, holding a toy rocket-ship, for all Melbourne to see over breakfast, was Margaret Leckie - and she did us proud! This article was followed up by an interview on the ABC's country radio network. More welcome publicity. SF is booming in Melbourne, folks!

Our old friend Bob McCubbin, who has been laid up with the current wog over the last few weeks, tells me that his friend Stu Hoffman has an

extensive bound collection of sf magazines to sell: you can contact Stu at Box 13, Black Earth, Wisconsin, U.S.A. 53515.

As I mentioned above, the library is one of the Club's main attractions. I repeat this as a subtle appeal to the conscience of those members who have had books out for longer than a month...

\* \* \*

A.S.F.A. AND E.S.F.A.

J.C. Maxwell

The AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION is an organisation almost entirely devoted to sf bibliographical work. It publishes A.S.F.A. JOURNAL - of which three issues have appeared to date. This publication will be found of considerable value to anyone who likes to keep track of everything published in the sf field. The Association is open to new members, and particularly welcomes people who are able to assist in bibliographical projects. The Secretary of A.S.F.A. is Graham Stone, P.O. Box 852, Canberra, A.C.T. and membership \$3.00 per year (overseas \$2.00).

The BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION is a large and active organisation which conducts conventions, maintains a library, and publishes two magazines - TANGENT, devoted to amateur fiction, and VECTOR, which is its official journal and a magazine similar in intent to ASFR. The Association welcomes overseas members: subscription is £1.0.0stg. per year, and the Secretary Mrs. Doreen Parker, 38 Millfield Road, Deeping St. James, Peterborough, U.K.

\* \* \*

THE HUGO NOMINATIONS

(from Ron Bennett's SKYRACK)

NOVEL: Heinlein: THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS; Herbert: DUNE; E.E. Smith: SKYLARK DUQUESNE; Zelazny: AND CALL ME CONRAD.

STORY: Ellison: REPENT HARLEQUIN, SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN; Zelazny: THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH; Leiber: STAR DOCK; Anderson: MARQUE AND REPRISAL; Farmer: DAY OF THE GREAT SHOUT.

MAGAZINE: IF ANALOG GALAXY F & SF AMAZING

ARTIST: Freas; Morrow; Frazetta; Schoenherr; Gaughan.

FANZINE: ERBDOM; DOUBLE BILL; NIEKAS; YANDRO; TRUMPET.

The Editor comments: If there's anyone present who doesn't know about the Hugo Awards, he should do himself the favour of purchasing immediately THE HUGO WINNERS (Penguin, 80 cents), a splendid volume worth the money for Isaac Asimov's editorial remarks, let alone the outstanding stories...



BOB SMITH (Puckapunyal, Vic.)

Congratulations - an excellent job! It's good to see something like ASFR appear in Australia, and I only hope it lasts as long as the old ETHERLINE did. Once you get moving properly I'd like to see a news column from most of the states, club items, and so on. If there is any interstate activity worth reporting, and someone willing to report it, this might assist to bring Australian sf enthusiasts closer together. A really nice piece of work, this first ASFR, and I sincerely hope it doesn't deteriorate into a vehicle for back-biting and mud-slinging, or a repository of uninteresting fanzine review columns, or a place for overseas writers and fans to air their views, their hack writing: above all, let's hope ASFR never becomes too high minded, too intellectual... I most certainly like your reasons for creating ASFR and hope you receive a lot of support from Australians. Perhaps Brian Aldiss is right and sf should be banned. Then perhaps we'd see authors going back to writing about 'what is the stars?' - and we'd snatch the treasured books and magazines up eagerly, as we once did, and find that (pardon me) sense of wonder still there! And Stephen Murray-Smith is right too, of course... I think that John Baxter, in his article, is pointing the way that our sf should go. Australia IS an odd, fascinating and special place, and has its own atmosphere that should be brought out in our sf. Australian writers perhaps should make the effort to leave their comfortable city dwellings and sniff the almost alien mood of our outback. We certainly have good writers in Australia. What they need is to get the feel of Australia into their stories, that special imagery and sense of the country which John mentioned. I didn't particularly like the Moorcock/Jones tape chit-chat for some reason... I look forward eagerly to no.2.

MERVYN BARRETT (Ibiza, Spain)

Well, when I said goodbye to you all - how long ago - I thought to myself, 'It's goodbye to old Bagdad too, in all its celluloid incarnations.' Fate had decided otherwise though. Yesterday morning while ambling down the Avenida Espana I noticed that the Cine Salon Ibiza was showing THE THIEF OF BAGDAD. Of course the title was in Spanish (and if you think I'm going to tell you what the Spanish is for THE THIEF OF BAGDAD, you're crazy) but they couldn't fool me - I recognised what it was immediately. The stills of Sabu, Conrad Veidt and Rex Ingrahm pinned up outside helped a little, of course. To make a long story even tediously longer - I went that night armed (?) with a foam rubber cushion (the seats are like church benches) and I saw it and it wasn't bad at all. The fact that the soundtrack was in Spanish (except for the songs) didn't make the slightest difference since even if it had been in English I probably wouldn't have understood a word of it: true to the principle of Spanish acoustic design - 'the maximum resonance from the minimum sound' - the interior of the Cine Salon Ibiza lacks any sort of material which might help to reduce echo, and the walls are plastered concrete and opposite surfaces parallel. The sound at the Melbourne SF Club is of Ampex quality by comparison. Still talking films for the moment: I saw a jolly good (for one sequence anyway) German film based, they claimed, on an Edgar Wallace story. I don't know which story;

the Spanish title translates roughly as THE HANDKERCHIEF MURDERS. It has an excellent sequence in the room of an old house where all the victims are assembled: one of the prospective victims, a woman, is standing in her room with her back to a large painting of a nude - the sort that usually hangs over the bar in Westerns. The camera zooms in onto the right breast of the nude and focusses on the nipple, which suddenly slides away and reveals an eye peering into the room. Great stuff!

In London I met quite a few fans, Mike Moorcock, and Ted Tubb - the latter a jolly nice type, good at mixing drinks. London fandom has no official headquarters. The older fans go to the Globe pub and the SF Club of London meets at a hall in the apartment block where Ella Parker lives. I appreciate the news from Australia: it's read by two other Club members, Jill and Judy, as well as myself. Egad! - what other Mediterranean island can boast such a crowd of displaced MSFC members? No space for further international gossip so I'll finish by giving my regards to all those creaky old-timers who still remember me.

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Anthony Clarke, 103 Linacre Road, Hampton S.7, Melbourne.

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