Australian Science Fiction Review

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NUMBER ELEVEN : AUGUST 1967

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is edited published & printed by JOHN BANGSUND at 19 Gladstone Avenue Northcote Victoria 3070 Australia (from 1st December 11 Wilson Street Ferntree Gully Victoria 3156) - Assistant Editor ROBERT GERRAND - Chief Editorial Advisors LEE HARDING and JOHN FOYSTER - Production Assistants this issue RUTH BANGSUND and ALAN KIRSTEN ASFR is published bi-monthly - rates & agents listed inside back cover

When, last June, it first occurred to us - or, more exactly, to John Foyster - to publish something about Cordwainer Smith, we were not to know that that great writer had but a few weeks to live. The first draft of John's article was in my hands during June. In August, Dr. Paul Linebarger - Cordwainer Smith - died. We decided to publish a memorial issue, and started looking for people who knew him.

From the foreword to SPACE LORDS, we knew that Dr. Linebarger was an Anglican and that he had a stockbroker named Mr. Greenish. From other sources we knew that he had been in some way connected with the Australian National University. After much correspondence we located Mr. Greenish and Dr. Burns, and during December John visited Canberra and talked with them.

The partial result of John's investigations is now in your hands. To John, Lee Harding, and myself, who have been so involved for the last year with Cordwainer Smith, the material in this issue seems terribly incomplete; it is a conscious effort to realize that for many readers this will be the first introduction to the amazing man behind those amazing stories. We offer this material, then, not as any kind of definitive statement about the man or his work, but as some information and some thoughts about them.

To Dr. Burns and Mr. Greenish, who have helped us so much, we offer our thanks - and our apologies that we have not honoured their friend in as lavish or significant a way as he deserved or we would like.

* * *

We were not to know, either, that while this issue was being prepared we would lose two other people dear to us.

On Sunday, 9th July, Stephen Cook died, of his own hand. We mourn his passing; he was a good friend and a very talented young man. In our sorrow and our confusion we try to realize that the decision was his, as it is every man's. Adventitious death is so much more easily comprehended; so much easier to rage against; there is no doubt about who is the victim and who the victor.

Stephen Cook: a young man of unfulfilled promise. We also report, with perhaps a different kind of sadness, the death of a man full of years and full of honours, the founder of an era, a man whose name will be known and revered while science fiction is written or talked about: Hugo Gernsback.

* * *

Science fiction is fun, most of the time. But every now and then one reads or writes a page such as this, and there is no fun, no suspension of disbelief, and the sense of wonder gives way to a sense of mortality. And then... we realize what a wonderful fraternity we belong to - this madcap international association of fans - that we should feel our losses so deeply.

JB

P A U L L I N E B A R G E R

A R T H U R B U R N S

What first struck one about Paul Linebarger was a considerate formality of manner - an odd trick of introducing himself as though he were a third person, his own ego not obtruding. I had just shaken his hand when a newsagency telephoned for particulars about him. Waiting till I had hung up, he affably demurred that his name had not four syllables (I had stressed the first "e") but just three, reinforcing the point by way of the Chinese characters on his invariant ties (the same pattern in mauve, rose, midnight blue and other shades of silk), which he pronounced something like "Lin-ba-leh." Many months later he translated them, "Mr. Forest of Incandescent Bliss."

Paul was partly Southern by extraction and had been raised in Republican China's governing circles, where his father Judge Linebarger was for decades a leading adviser to Sun Yat Sen; these two influences had given him the punctilio found only in traditional societies, and a sharp perception of racial and cultural differences. But these actually furthered his capacities for coming to know all kinds of men and women and to enter sympathetically into the hearts and minds of subject races, as readers of the Old Norstrilian stories will recognise in his treatment of the part-animal underpeople. The negress who came in as daily help at his house in Washington was a personal friend to Paul and to his wife Genevieve.

He was above medium height, terribly gaunt, bald, high-nosed, narrowing in the chin; he wore severe excellently-cut suits; his favourite hat was a soft black velour like an Italian film producer's. He was constantly ill, usually with digestive or metabolic troubles, and had to put up with repeated surgery, so that in middle age he always lived close to the vital margin. He took time off from a dinner party in Melbourne for a long drink of hydro-chloric acid, at which a guest, quite awed, remarked that Linebarger probably <u>was</u> a man from Mars. The Lord Sto-Odin in UNDER OLD EARTH had his vital output increased to the limit of his reserves by the one-twelfth turn of a screw at the nape of his neck while he rode down into the depths to find neo-Akhnaton. That expressed Paul's attitude to his physical being - though sharp in sensory perception, and active, he seemed easily able to dispense with bodily substance. I do not hold with spiritualism, but if a typewriter were to start now reeling off a Cordwainer Smith story, my disbelief would not be nearly strong enough to surprise me.

In 1957, when Lord Lindsay was Acting Head of the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University in Canberra,

Paul and Genevieve came as Visiting Fellows to work on their history of politics in Southern Asia. (When I visited him, very ill, in hospital late in June 1966, he talked of retiring to settle in this country. I certainly wish he had lived to do so.) His allegiance to Nationalist China, his cheerful derision of all forms of Communism, his support - despite hereditary Democrat commitment - of Eisenhower, for whom he campaigned, caused shock amongst the expectably Leftist academics, including us who are socialists of the R.H. Tawney persuasion. I think it fair to say that the current Red Guard phenomena in mainland China would have surprised him far less than it has the best Australian Sinologists. I remember him as a light-hearted and somehow comic duellist in political debates with eminent Australians then on the Left, e.g. John Burton. He conducted a series of seminars on the principles of psychological warfare, which I think are here worthwhile enlarging upon.

After college and doctorate and plenty of travel, Paul Linebarger had rejoined his father who was propagandizing for the Kuomintang and for an American-Chinese entente. He learned much at that time about the sense of vocation in man to which revolutionary Communism, with its conviction of historical destiny, appeals. As he says in the 1955 edition of PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE (a classic in that sinister subject, and shamefully entertaining), "There is no better way to learn the propaganda job than to be thoroughly whipped by somebody else's propaganda." From 1942 (against the Japanese) to 1954 (in Korea against the North and Communist China) as an officer of the U.S. Armed Forces, he practised the art of political seduction - or, as he once described it to some scandalized academic psychologists and social workers, "persuading the enemy to participate in group activity." I too was shocked; but in one of those seminars he said, offhandedly, that he would rather seduce a man from his allegiance than have to kill him, and posed a serious ethical problem for us: most traditional Protestants have been convinced by the Kantian version of the Protestant ethic, according to which the one thing more valuable than a man's life is his integrity. At the opposite corner from Paul Linebarger was the German officer, a Kantian, who escaping from Swiss internment in the Great War insisted on killing the guard, whom according to his fellow-officers he could much more readily have bribed, on the grounds, first, that it was his own duty to escape, and second, that he would injure the otherwise-irremoveable guard less by taking his life than by taking his honour.

Paul himself, for his own self-respect, would have died sooner than surrender to a power that was evil; but he was persuaded of human frailty, and of the beneficent vitality that supports cowardice, as no Kantian could be. He knew professionally about brainwashing and about what he called, with no donnish inhibitions, "de-brainwashing." He knew that even without the aid of drugs or torture almost anyone will crack if worked on long enough by people trained in efficient "re-educating" techniques. He considered it the duty of a prisoner-of-war to hold out as long as he can, but almost solely because he thereby costs the enemy a maximum of brainwashers' man-hours. He also maintained that the most useful soldiers in such situations were those who harboured the least guilt for having eventually succumbed, and who maintained a certain humour regarding themselves; they were the soonest de-brainwashable, though no brainwashing treatment, he said, survives a few weeks' good feeding, freedom, and uncensorious welcome. In the contest between a sense of duty and the deeper emotional relations and dispositions, he would back the emotions any time. (See

DRUNKBOAT and particularly THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO, where old Tiga-belas ensures out of his own yearning that the young girl who is to be projected over so many light-years is endowed with enough "Daughter Potential" to keep her safe.) For that disposition, the characteristic danger is sentimentality, which Paul did not succumb to. Instead, he cultivated a feeling for cats.

Some intelligent and sensitive people have found the cat stories, particularly THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON, quite creepy. They seem to me less creepy than uncanny. The Linebargers' Washington house population of cats varied from seven to eleven, and they lived in all three and a half levels of it. Paul's communication with each of these cats, as individuals, suggested a distinct variety of ESP. It was as though one were watching a subtle and moody conversation amongst grandees who took care to respect each other's dignity. The house itself I cannot recall without a pang, for I mostly remember it with Paul tapping away upstairs at his typewriter, or as another feline presence in the bow-windowed living-room, flicking through some elegantly-bound work from the curve of bookshelves. Beyond the living-room arch, an oblong dining-room displayed a New Year card, two or three feet by three or four feet, bearing in great Chinese characters greeting from Sun Yat Sen. In the basement were yards of bookshelves, some open and some encaged, and most devoted to science fiction. I have never seen so much of the latter in one place. This was also especially cattish country. In the attic were two collections of objects - the more predictable, firearms, notably pistols and revolvers including a lot of weapons dropped to World War II resistance movements; the less predictable, dozens of more or less antique typewriters. Genevieve's picture as a girl was in the living room, over where a fireplace would have been in Australia; and on a half-wall facing it at my last visit was a bronze sword from Persia dated about 1400 BC - as Paul said, the age of Abraham. Paul's study upstairs was piled high with the manuscripts, first editions and scoria of his numerous writings.

Besides Cordwainer Smith's science fiction, which was a deliberately segregated aspect of P.M.A. Linebarger's life, and his work on psychological warfare, the house carried abundant traces of the researches of Professor Paul and Genevieve Linebarger on the politics of Southern Asia. After publishing three studies of Republican China (the latest in 1941, THE CHINA OF CHIANG KAI-SHEK), and suspending further academic operations until late in the Korean War, he wrote with D. Chu and A. Burks, FAR EASTERN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS. By his first 1957 visit to Australia, he was a Professor in the School of Advanced International Studies, in the Washington branch of the Johns Hopkins University, as well as a leading light in the Operations Research Office of the U.S. Army, on the reserve of which he was then a Lieutenant Colonel. Paul was proud of his Army connections, and it was fitting that he was buried with military honours in Arlington Cemetery. Academically, Central and South America became a field of interest only secondary to the politics of Eastern and Southern Asia. On their second Australian visit of 1965, he and Genevieve were revising their voluminous work on the latter subject, and Paul was also selecting contributors for a book of essays on "small wars," for which of course Africa and Southeast Asia are fruitful fields. They went off to Australian New Guinea for several weeks, and Paul produced a little memorandum on that country, very much in the character of his academic writing. It began with a geographic, ethnographic, economic and sociological sweep of background, concerned

itself with questions of social development and internal and external security, illustrated by bizarre, comic and sometimes outrageous anecdotes, and concluded with recommendations which many Australian academics would find startling; for example, increased recruitment of Papuans and New Guineans into the Pacific Islands Regiment as a principal instrument of civilization, integration and development.

Most dons have a streak of scholarly wowserism, and in this country it is certainly strong. As I have said, Paul rather shocked the academics in 1957 by his Kuomintang party card (issued, he would tell them, earlier than Chiang Kai-shek's), his support for Eisenhower, his military commitments, the black humour of his lectures on psychological warfare, his academically unorthodox prose style, but above all, I think, by his uninhibited, unbridled intellectual imagination, which of course had free rein secretly as "Cordwainer Smith." That imagination clearly had native sources but was also liberated by psychoanalysis: Paul was given a training course as part of his psychological warfare work, and afterwards continued in analysis, once a week or so when not travelling, for fifteen years. It seems to have been a kind of inward exploration: he said there was always more to find out.

He must have been quite a patient. In the 'forties, before analysis, he had published two novels (the one I can remember the title of is RIA, New York 1947) under the pseudonym Felix C. Forrest. Both were written exclusively from the viewpoint of the heroine, and each involved its heroine's travelling from China through Japan to Central Europe, much as Paul had in youth. These too, I think, were explorations - of a possible alternative dimension of feminine self-experience which had not been given by Nature to the decidedly masculine Paul. He loved outlandish cultures: read avidly Professor W.E. Stanner's Oceania monograph on aboriginal religion, and much admired his friends among the Nisei (Japanese-Americans) in the Allied Forces in World War II Europe, for their traditionally Japanese fantasy, courage and honour.

Paul was a High Church Anglican. He and Genevieve went to Sung Mass on Sundays, and he said grace at all meals at home. The faith extended and shaped his powerful imagination, and gave his emotions their qualities. I believe that it explains much in the science fiction, and not merely the recurrence in his distant futures of the "Old Strong Religion." But he simply ignored contemporary religious movements, especially the secularizing ones directed to social problems. The God he had faith in had to do with the soul of man and with the unfolding of history and of the destiny of all living creatures - He is not concerned with the sharp practices of business and politics. In his personal life, Paul was a man of strong and deep feeling, with a gift for friendship that makes us regret him greatly. He was one of a half-a-dozen friends of mine who nourish one's imagination whenever we meet. Also he was a wonderful audience for one's formal academic work, very quick and perceptive, extremely intelligent, but utterly uninterested in chopping logic: in a remark of two sentences he could open up an untouched aspect of one's subject. But one had to catch that remark as it came - he never laboured a point.

Paul is survived by two daughters of a first marriage, both in their twenties and highly gifted. He and Genevieve, who had once been his student, had no children, which was a pity as they have been so charming and interest-

ing to ours. He died while being prepared for a difficult and possibly not very hopeful operation, at the age of fifty-four.

We often conversed about science fiction - his own and others'. Characteristically, he admired the craftsmanship and consistence of Arthur C. Clarke's Defoe-like tales, while feeling that there were vast dimensions of human experience that Clarke never touches. Cordwainer Smith's stories were a kind of important "playing" (Paul was greatly impressed by Huizinga's HOMO LUDENS): through them are dotted irrelevant cryptograms, geographic allusions, and names transliterated from foreign languages. He once said that Cordwainer Smith was a "pre-Cervantean" - the stories are like cycles of medieval legends, without the Aristotelian beginning-middle-and-end of classic tragedy, and certainly without the same structure as transposed into the modern novel, which Cervantes began. They are legendary cycles of the future, rather than future history, and were meant to be connected with and consistent with each other on the legendary and not the historiographic model. They are not the logical development of some concept of social existence, like the main line of social-science fiction, but are evocations of the emotional and imaginative responses of people in bizarre social relationships and situations, whether the fighter-pilot relying upon telepathic communication with a cat, or the "gentleman-suicide" dancing into existence a religion of sorrow as well as of joy in a world where it was impossible for men to be anything but boringly happy.

Arthur Burns

* * *

He took them, killed them, cut them;
Took the brains and burnt them.
His words the Sun-god loved
And coyly stole.

From the shattered bones & sinews
Grew his world.

The Soul he saved and the earth
And Sun-god smiled:
And opened his hands
And saw -
For a price:
Cheap at half - a bargain, sir!

When he had paid, he turned;
And offered it, free, to all.

And children sang.

John Foyster

* * *

CORDWAINER SMITH

JOHN FOYSTER

There are few writers of science fiction of whom it can be said that their work needs no exposition. But Cordwainer Smith revealed himself so completely in his writing that any attempt to explain, to describe, is redundant. Nevertheless, because relatively little attention has been given to Smith's work, there are a few things which might profitably be said.

> "I think that Cordwainer Smith is a visitor from some remote period of the future, living among us perhaps as an exile from his own era or perhaps just as a tourist, and amusing himself by casting some of his knowledge of historical events into the form of science fiction."

Thus Robert Silverberg, in AMAZING STORIES, June 1965. The feeling Silverberg expresses is surely one which most of those who have read Smith's stories have felt at one time or another. The utter strangeness of the words in our ears, and the easy familiarity with which Smith juggles them, give precisely this feeling of, almost xenophobia. Yet if we examine the stories a little more closely we find that Smith was very much a man of our time, and that his feelings and thoughts were very much those of his contemporaries.

In THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN, THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL and A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL, to choose only three stories from his collection SPACE LORDS, he writes strongly and with great feeling of the racial problems which surrounded him in his own land. His love of Australia is revealed in the Rod McBan stories. It isn't fair to Silverberg, but there is one way at least in which Smith shows himself very much tied to his time. His story ON THE STORM PLANET deals with an attempt by Casher O'Neill to assassinate the turtle girl, T'Ruth. If one turns to page 38 in the February 1965 GALAXY, or to page 69 in QUEST OF THREE WORLDS, one finds, despite the interference of both editors, the acrostic KENNEDY SHOT. Several pages later a second acrostic appears: OSWALD SHOT TOO. (Mr. Arthur Burns, who had it from the author, is responsible for this information.)

But not only was Cordwainer Smith very much a child of his time; he wrote what are in fact fairy stories. He suggests as much himself in his introduction to SPACE LORDS. This helps to explain the language which Mr. Silverberg had so much trouble with.

A less well known story, ANGERHELM, reveals his ability to write a story set solidly in the present.

Despite Cordwainer Smith's obsession with our time and the condition of man in it, rather than because of his strangeness, he has been able to bridge many ravines, one of them the most important for science fiction. Now in fact, when these attributes are considered, the appearance of his stories at all is

quite remarkable. It is even more remarkable if the circumstances under which he was first published are considered.

The year 1948 was a good one for science fiction readers. By that year the sf magazines had recovered from their wartime problems, which varied from shortage of worthwhile stories to shortage of paper, and were able to produce issues which contained by far the best sf written to that date. AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, unfortunately, were not able to take part in this general revival of story quality, due to poor editing, but the other magazines managed rather well. ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION continued to feature material of the high standard of former years, though perhaps the first signs of the coming decadence might have been detected by discerning readers. At this time PLANET STORIES published the better sf adventure yarns - far better than those it was to present in later years. STARTLING STORIES and THRILLING WONDER STORIES were well on the way to their peak, with Xeno and Wart-Ears almost forgotten; increases in pages and price went hand in hand with continually improving lead stories. FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and FANTASTIC NOVELS, though really running short of the best material, continued to produce fine issues, well illustrated by Finlay and Lawrence. And even WEIRD TALES seems to have been worth reading at this time. In the near future, nineteen years ago, were the golden years of 1949 and 1950 when, along with many other magazines, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION and GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION were born. These two magazines, more than any others, were to change the face of science fiction.

But back in 1948 there was another event which, in its humble way, also changed the face of sf. In a small West Coast sf magazine called FANTASY BOOK (which thought so much of itself that it printed "collectors' copies" on book paper) appeared the first story under the name Cordwainer Smith.

SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN was in many ways unlike its contemporaries. The editors of the leading magazines were striving to rise above the needs of the pulp market and to publish non-pulp sf, but they were still working with pulp authors. The result was that although characters in stories were now carefully defined, they were hardly ever lifelike or human. It might be said that this was a period of inhuman humans. In many ways we are still in this period, despite the attempts of some editors to create a more literate sf.

Cordwainer Smith was the first writer to write science fiction which could possibly be accepted as "Literature."

I do not make this claim for him. His work does it for me, and for anyone who chooses to look. For me, it is enough to point out a few of the virtues of his writing. His imagination, his style, his freshness; these are so prevalent in his work that only line-by-line quotation could possibly do him justice.

I intend to make a few comments, first, on Cordwainer Smith's attitude towards the writing of science fiction, and then about his style.

Smith's approach to the revelation of the future is almost unique. Most sf writers have difficulty in convincing readers of the reality of the future they create. Some ignore the problem, and hope the reader can accept their ideas. Others attempt to make them credible by explaining what is occurring, as it happens. For example, in THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER, when Cayle Clark arrives at the gambling gallery, Van Vogt describes with care the mechanism by which the various chance machines work. Now this is not a matter of interest to Clark, since he can only sway luck in his favour, not physical events; the description is only there to lend verisimilitude to the novel. The reader becomes fascinated by this complex machine - which doesn't really do much more than toss a coin. By contrast, Smith reveals the workings of his world in a natural manner. In

SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN, for instance, the nature of the scanners and the habermen is made plain to the reader by the recitation of a ritual or catechism which is vital both to the character Martel and to the plot. It is not something tacked on "to make it all seem real."

Robert Silverberg writes of Smith's world as being "so tiresomely familiar to him that he does not see the need to spell out the details." This is not quite true. The details of Smith's future are only made clear as this becomes necessary, and those who have read the bulk of his work will realize that it is filled with cross-references which help to give the whole a remarkable unity. Smith has achieved something that no other sf writer has: the ability to make his fiction read as truth, through the careful use of facts and explanations, or rather revelations.

In THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL, the technical details of the sailing ships are revealed only as the plot necessitates, yet the reader feels that it is all necessary and essential. In a regrettably oft-ignored story, THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO, Smith explores the concept of the sailing ships in greater depth, adding to the meaning and richness of THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL, but having a magnificence of its own in many ways unrivalled in his other stories.

In the recent story, UNDER OLD EARTH, Smith starts a new section of his "Future History" and here, at the beginning, the facts, the realities, feel slight and scrawny. But is not this the way history unfolds? - at first a skeleton, then, with study, the body takes on flesh and meaning, and finally the whole stands as a consistent unit. This would not make any part of the history wrong, or badly written: it is simply written at a different level of sophistication. Thus any given story by Smith may seem to contain things not seen, not explained. To see, to understand, one must refer to another, perhaps remote, story.

There are two levels on which the reality of Smith's future is intense: in the story itself, by virtue of the story, some fact or more is revealed, which the reader cannot fail to perceive; the contiguity of the stories lends a third dimension. Thus C'mell, as revealed in, say, ALPHA RALPHA BOULAVARDE, has an inner meaning and charm and intensity which may intrigue us. But it is in the context of THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH, THE STORE OF HEART'S DESIRE, and THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL that we come to understand, or partly to understand, her role in Smith's future. Each image is a fractured one, just as each view of reality in Durrell's ALEXANDRIA QUARTET is fractured.

Here, too, one must make the point (which Silverberg mentioned in his review) again, that every one of Smith's stories falls within the one series - called by some the "Instumentality" series. There is not one Smith story which does not fit into this future. There is one story - ANGERHELM, I think - in which the connection is rather tenuous, but there is a link in theme with the later NO! NO! NOT ROGOV! Too many readers fail to make the necessary connections. But these references are often passing ones - just as they would be in "real" history.

In this section I have attempted to reveal Smith's approach to the craft, to writing believable science fiction. He decided to take a consistent future and to develop this slowly. Each story reveals something of the future - but only because this is necessary to the plot. I don't feel that it is necessary to investigate closely the consistency of Smith's creation from an historical point of view. I know that minor inconsistencies exist, but believe them to be of little importance by comparison with the overall scheme. They are probably no more than occasional lacunae resulting from the truncation

of Smith's writing career, when he had really only started (SPACE LORDS: epilogue).

Now let us examine a small portion of what might be called "style." Simply the way in which Smith starts and ends stories, compared with some other writers.

> "His mother's hand felt cold, clutching his.
> Her fear as they walked hurriedly along the street was a quiet, swift pulsation that throbbed from her mind to his."

Thus A.E. Van Vogt commences his celebrated SLAN. We are immediately in the middle of the story: telepathy is to play a part in it, and there is trouble.

> "The idiot lived in a black and grey world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed."

Theodore Sturgeon starts his MORE THAN HUMAN in intense description. Feelings are rammed down our throats before we are properly seated.

> "Were they truly intelligent? By themselves, that is?
> I don't know and I don't know how we can ever find out."

Robert Heinlein, in these opening words from THE PUPPET MASTERS, plunges us into a world of action. Some of his stories do not use this approach, preferring to start with a description of ordinary events. But something exciting is always happening.

> ""George, I wish you'd look at the nursery."
> "What's wrong with it?""

Thus Ray Bradbury, the "poet" of sf, starts with action in THE VELDT.

> "The stone door slammed. It was Cleaver's trade-mark: there had never been a door too heavy..."

Immediately, James Blish is pouring out characterization, in A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

> "Late on a day in 1959, three men sat in a room.
> Edward Hawks, Doctor of Science, cradled his long jaw in his outsize hands and hunched forward with his elbows on the desk."

From here, in ROGUE MOON, Algis Budrys goes on to develop his problem starkly, his plot sweating as profusely as that suffering young man.

> "Everyone now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself. But mankind wasn't always so lucky. Less than a century ago men and women did not have easy access to the puzzle boxes within them. They could not even name one of the fifty-three portals to the soul."

Here is a slight change. Kurt Vonnegut, whose novels are always remarkable, has a slightly different attitude. Nevertheless, by the bottom of page one of THE SIRENS OF TITAN, we realize that this is just a prologue, and the action starts immediately.

Alfred Bester goes further. His prologue to THE STARS MY DESTINATION is

several pages long, and is designed to lull us into a relaxed mood, to prepare us for the tremendous action to follow. But when the prologue is over, the fireworks commence.

Now, by contrast, let's drift into a Cordwainer Smith story:

"Later, much later, people forgot how Rod McBan had bought the whole Planet Earth without even knowing that he had done it..."

This is an action-packed start for Smith. Notice how he reveals the entire plot of THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH in these opening lines, a practice not commonly found in this field of the snap ending. But Smith is more frequently even slower in his start. In THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO, he begins thus:

"Before the great ships whispered between the stars by means of planoforming, people had to fly from star to star with immense sails - huge films assorted in space on long, rigid, cold-proof rigging."

"Assorted" is probably a misprint - "assembled" would be a better word. But here Smith starts by going over a familiar road, coaxing the memories of the reader back into action.

"You already know the end - the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy."

In these opening words of THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN Smith is referring to events which have no causal connection with the story he is presenting. The words are simply there to make the reader feel at home. *

Now let's look at the latter ends of those stories by better authors which I have quoted:

SLAN: "It was at that point in his thought that Kier Gray's voice cut across the silence with the rich tones of one who had secretly relished this instant for years: "Jommy Cross, I want you to meet Kathleen Layton Gray... my daughter.""

Pow! To say the least.

MORE THAN HUMAN: "He stretched out his arms, and the tears streamed from his strange eyes. Thank you, he answered them. Thank you, thank you... And humbly, he joined their company."

Sturgeon is too good a writer to foul up an ending, but one does sit stunned.

THE PUPPET MASTERS: "We are about to trans-ship. I feel exhilarated. Puppet masters - the free men are coming to kill you! Death and Destruction!"

No comment needed, I think.

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* Ford Madox Ford, in his novel THE GOOD SOLDIER, makes masterly use of a "weak" opening:
"This is the saddest story I have ever heard."

THE VELDT: "The lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink. A shadow flickered over Mr. McClean's hot face. Many shadows flickered. The vultures were dropping down the blazing sky. "A cup of tea?" asked Wendy in the silence."

In the context, this is horrifying.

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE: "Nevertheless, when Father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, sometime Clerk Regular in the Society of Jesus, could see again, they had left him alone with his God and his grief."

ROGUE MOON: "Hawks was no longer paying any attention to him. He opened the note, finally, and read the blurred message with little difficulty, since it was in his own handwriting and, in any case, he knew what it said. It was: "Remember me to her.""

THE SIRENS OF TITAN: "We're - we're going to Paradise now?" said Constant. "I - I'm going to get into Paradise?" "Don't ask me why, old sport," said Stony, "but somebody up there likes you.""

No need to comment on any of these. Bester, in THE STARS MY DESTINATION, allows the novel to fizzle out. The action, as I have suggested, is so immense that he has little choice.

But this was not Cordwainer Smith's choice. In places he does end his tale fairly conventionally (for him). But there are strongly contrasting examples.

UNDER OLD EARTH: "She was one of the principal architects of the Rediscovery of Man and at her most famous she was known as the Lady Alice More."

THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN: "In that year there was born the man who was to be the first Lord Jestocost."

THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL: "Jestocost lay back on his pillow and waited for the day to end."

In the first two cases the sentences are not just tacked on to soften the ending. They are, quite simply, the climax of the story. The third example is a little different: it is still a climax, a tremendous one, yet Smith is still able to write about his principal character.

And what of the general style of the stories? Well, we can refer to Smith's own introduction to SPACE LORDS.

He is talking to children; in his stories he is producing history as fairy tales. This is explicit in one story, THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL, where the familiar old story is told by a mother to her daughter. But it is implicit in many of his verbal mannerisms, in other stories. This is not to demean, in any way, the intelligence or maturity of his readers; myths and legends have always been told in simple language, by father to son, and to do otherwise would spoil much of their magic.

Because of the casual approach to the opening of a story, and because of the child-like language used, Smith's technique could easily fail; in writing thus he walks on one side of the narrow gap between beauty and

fatuity. But his foot is sure. As an indication of his masterly control - indeed, to use the two sentences by which I would be prepared to let his reputation stand or fall, I will quote the ending of a story sometimes forgotten: THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN.

> "Magno Taliano had risen from his chair and was being led from the room by his wife and consort, Dolores Oh. He had the amiable smile of an idiot, and his face for the first time in more than a hundred years trembled with shy and silly love."

Assuming that any other sf writer had written the story, it would have ended with the word "idiot." Go further; try to find any writer who would have finished the sentence more or less in that way. It would not be the same. For the words "and silly" are unique with Smith. In these words, these two words, he transcends the petty world of science fiction and reaches out into the world of reality. The words scream out of the page. The agony of space, introduced in SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN, comes down to Earth. Other sf writers, and not only Harlan Ellison, "have no mouth, and cannot scream."

If I emphasize Cordwainer Smith's separation from other writers as far as style is concerned, then I should equally make some distinction between his view of the future and that of his contemporaries.

Science fiction is a cumulative thing. A story written in 1967 will often rely on stories written much earlier for background. Heinlein's waldos, the law of robotics, various forms of hyperspace drives - these, and other things, are permanent fixtures in sf. But Smith did not borrow from earlier stories: his future is unique.

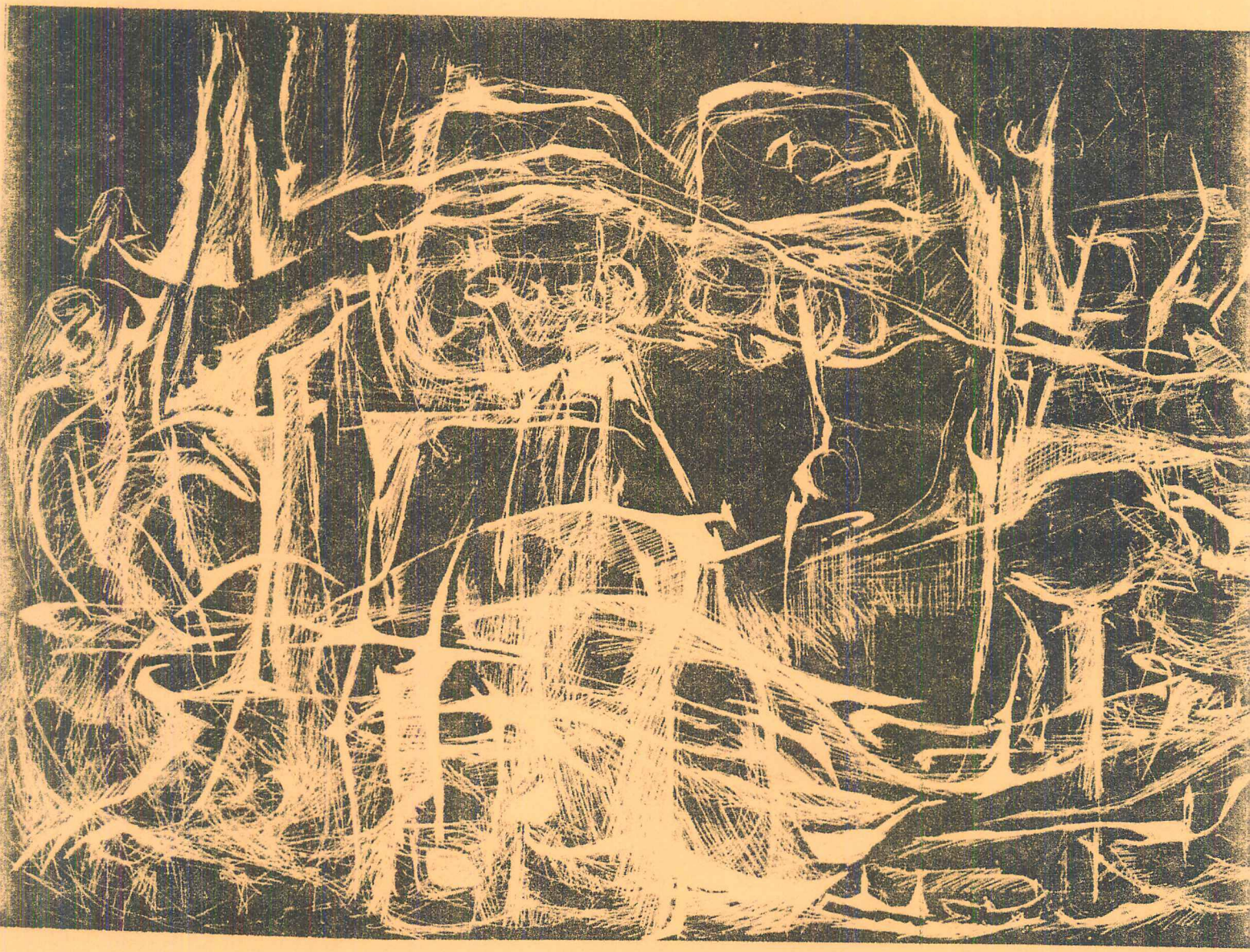
This is quite unusual. It is true that in some of the stories near to our time he relies upon present-day knowledge, but once he steps to the Rediscovery of Man all of his work is original. If anything, it is likely that other writers have begun to borrow from him.

Furthermore, his attitude to the future was rather different. Perhaps this is because he was telling fairy stories, but nevertheless he seems to have had a more responsible view of humanity. In sf in general two things happen to humanity. In the more common mode, nothing happens, or at least nothing discernible. The writing is so bad that we can see and understand nothing of the workings of society. Alternatively, the changes are revolutionary - for example, in Evan Hunter's TOMORROW AND TOMORROW. Smith writes of small changes, of characters behaving like human beings, or as nearly like human beings as they themselves are. His characters are responsible and moral. In many ways they reflect his own feelings.

Smith was serious in his intent. Very few writers of sf take their work seriously, and sometimes those who do are amongst the least of its practitioners. While being Cordwainer Smith was relaxation for Paul Linebarger, it was also very, very important.

His writing career was cut short, terribly short; as is this attempt to outline some of the virtues of his writing.

"We can admire more or less, but a sincere impulse, a little impulse toward admiration is always necessary, if we are to receive the phenomenological benefit of a poetic image. The slightest critical consideration arrests this impulse by putting the mind in second position, destroying the primitivity of the imagination." (Gaston Bachelard: The Poetics of Space.)



EXTRACTS FROM A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JOHN FOYSTER AND DOCTOR BURNS

A.B. Let me see if I can say some other things which would give you some sort of insight into his very strange kind of personality. Now before he wrote any sf he wrote a story called ATOMSK, which was the first sort of Russian nuclear spy story - and it got a very savage review, I remember, in a Russian journal. He also wrote under the name of Felix Forrest those two novels, both with the names of women as their titles. They are very interesting in that they are not only novels about women but are written as if by women. He'd done a lot of that kind of writing. However his main professional activity while he was still a fairly junior academic: he took a commission in the American army and became a psychological warfare bloke. It was in this capacity that I found him most scary. Psychological warfare is a very scary thing, and in his book called PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, written under the name P.M.A. Linebarger, is the classical text on the subject. In the course of this work he had a training psychoanalysis, and this explains more about the kind of personality and, in some senses, the style of his writing, than anything else.

The first impression people here had of him was that he was a real reactionary, a bit tough and a bit bloody minded and that kind of thing. He was here for the whole of 1957 and he took on a lot of the academic left wing, and quite a lot of the non-academic left wing, and made lots of speeches about China, wrote a number of articles, and that kind of thing. But you had to get to know him to realize that a great deal of this was simply the uninhibited expressions of aggression that you get from people who've been analysed. In fact, he was in many ways an extremely humane man. In his stories one sees this, incidentally, in the sort of allegories he was constantly writing. For instance, in his stories about the Instrumentality like THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH and that kind of thing, and the very last one, that very queer one, UNDER OLD EARTH, the underpeople keep on coming out - these animals which have been made over into human beings. Now this is a sort of social allegory for the American Negro.

He was an Anglo-Catholic, a very high one by American standards, and his religion in a strange way meant a great deal to him - in a funny way, one might even say loosely. Often he was unserious about it. Once he was very ill in Mexico - and, by the way, he was a man who was ill practically every year of his life; he'd had dozens of operations, and that was one of the reasons why he died so very young - well, when he was ill in Mexico, he said he thought he was pretty bad and that the only thing to do was to invoke the Virgin Mary, because Mexico was her territory. This was very much his attitude.

He grew very fond of Australia when he was here in 1957, and again last year (1965) for a few months. When he was here last year he went up to New Guinea with his wife, and spent about two months up there, and wrote, in my view, the best paper that's yet been written on the development of New Guinea. But it was an extremely "wild" kind of paper. ... His analysis was a very complex one, and it wasn't very

popular because he was saying some of the things that neither the Australian Government nor Australian officials really want to have said. ... It was characteristic of him that in no more than a couple of weeks he was talking Pidgin without trouble: he was very quick.

His liking for Australia comes out in the Old Norstrilia stories. Once again it was characteristic of him - it was very much a part of his sf writing - that all of his stories, in some sense or another, were oblique comments on contemporary politics and society. Take for example an early story of his, MARK ELF. Paul had lived for some time in Germany, and there were some things about Germans that he admired, but there were many things which he thought extremely dangerous; and this sort of Gothic romance - because that was really what MARK ELF was - was meant to be a comment, as it were, on the strain of barbaric Gothic nationalism that can always come out in Germans.

He was never one to attempt to draw a terrific moral - I mean, any morals in his stories were all concealed. They were meant to amuse, to be fun; they were something he did because he liked it. He called himself a Pre-Cervantean. By this he meant that if the European novel - a connected story dealing with a group of persons, having a beginning, a middle and an end, and that kind of thing - was started by Cervantes with DONQUIXOTE, then he was a Pre-Cervantean in the sense that his stories were more like medieval stories - more like parts of a legend or cycle, such as Malory collected in THE DEATH OF ARTHUR.

J.F. This is evident. Why do you think he chose this method and made his stories consistent?

A.B. He made them consistent in the sense that he gave them a common background, but he didn't make them continuous.

J.F. There are a lot of internal inconsistencies.

A.B. That is true. I don't think it's too pretentious to say that he had a sort of view of mankind and of human nature which he saw as something that was changing and developing in a most complex kind of way, and I think that he saw it as going through certain stages. The period of Instrumentality, for instance is really a period of considerable human decadence, brought on by the perfection of something that he often spoke about as having already developed in the Twentieth Century - something that he called the Pleasure Revolution. One of the things that interested him about Australia when he was here in 1957, in contrast to the U.S.A., was that the Pleasure Revolution had not yet struck this country. I don't know what he'd say now; he didn't really get around amongst the young people in particular very much when he was here last year. But on his first visit he said that in Australia people were still accustomed to doing without, whereas in America affluence had got to a point where it really was perfectly possible for people to avoid discomforts - or rather, use drugs to avoid discomforts - and use their affluence to get what they wanted. He felt that this did inevitably produce a certain sort of slackening of the human drive and dynamism. And of course it is in this context that the analogy of the underpeople is very interesting. ... As to his general view of man and of human nature, he had a variety of types of character in his stories. He had the Go-Captains, who are adventurous and expansive, men of action, and men like Casher O'Neil, men with initiative.

J.F. What is the connection of Casher O'Neil with Egypt?

A.B. Oh, I gather Casher O'Neil is, if transliterated into Arabic, the name of a street in Cairo. The planet Mizer is obviously Egyptian. But he picked a man with an Irish name because he wanted the idea of an adventurer. You remember that in THE STORM PLANET he is initiated into Christianity at a time when all religions are sort of contraband. I think the Egyptian context there is simply a vehicle: I wasn't aware of any kind of allegory. He never worked his allegories out; there was never any deliberate attempt in his stories to say, I have now proposed to write an allegory; what he did was to allow, for instance, his impressions of Australia to work on his imagination, and to produce a story which he wrote for fun.

But as well as these men of action he also had his Administrators, the Instrumentality, those people who were the natural rulers; he had the underpeople; he also had, every now and then, the kind of romantic individual character. Now, ALPHA RALPHA BOULAVARDE contains a great deal of literary sophistication, and that one is a French romance, in a sense a comment on French literature and character.

J.F. I will admit that I had more trouble with it than any other story. Whereas with one of his more "ordinary" stories you can pick up things very quickly, the Abbadingo and those things pass me pretty easily. ... What would be the reason for his much increased output in recent years? More leisure time, or...?

A.B. Partly, being more and more sick. He was confined to bed a great deal and he'd often write these stories when he couldn't get up and lecture - that kind of thing. He and his wife were writing a great political history of South East Asia and when he wasn't well he had to put that and his lecturing and his army work aside, so he wrote more and more sf. He had written a great deal of other things, and you must remember there was this ATOMSK story and two other novels, and he was a man who wrote naturally and very easily. He'd sit at his typewriter and just knock it out. I've never seen anyone compose so fast when he had it on him.

J.F. This might help to explain the sick sheep of Norstrilia. The sheep were permanently sick and...

A.B. Now I hadn't thought of that...

J.F. They had to be sick to produce this drug.

A.B. I think he felt that there were some kinds of sickness that were not along the lines he suffered from that did produce at once a sort of grossness, but also something that only came out... this, of course, is a main theme of romantic literature and he was in that sense very much a romantic.

... He had a very quick mind, but at the same time a deep one; that is, he'd read something or listen to what you had to say, and he'd make a comment which indicated... it would be a very deep comment - he was very fast - and he'd never elaborate it. I'm the kind of person who builds up a kind of complex structure; he never played that game at all - he wasn't a systematic thinker. In some senses, once he'd made his point, there was no sense in elaborating it; he went on to something else. That's why I think his stories just fall short of being major literature, in the sense in which, as you'd say, Wells or Orwell... He didn't have that kind of consecutive mind. On the other hand, the

penetration of his imagination took him a long way, and I often used to think after having a conversation with him, well, what's the point really of being terribly systematic and rather pedantic about getting all your structures down, when you can fit it all up in this kind of way, with these kind of deep insights that he had.

J.F. This is what I have felt, too. Most sf I read doesn't impress me very much, but the more I read Cordwainer Smith the more obvious it is that he's close to being major literature.

A.B. Yes, but of course he never bothered about his prose - that was the other thing. When he revised he would enrich his story, he'd bring in more and more detail, he'd cut out some things, he'd try to give the story more of this sense of looking at a particular society - looking at a whole complex, personal, social, and indeed historical and religious situation - but he never fussed around with his sentences. ...

Over the years he developed this picture of the succession of human society; beyond the stage of the Instrumentality there's what he called the Lords of the Afternoon. This is when human society has reached even beyond this kind of thing and is not exactly the decadence of the Pleasure Revolution - it's got beyond that - but it's a bit... odd. You know, it's... There are certain limits to this sort of thing and despite his romanticism he did feel that there were some kind of limits: there were some things that you transgressed at your peril.

J.F. I gather from this that there are more stories to come?

A.B. There are quite a few. He used to work on them, three or four stories at a time, and often there would be an interval of six or seven years between the first version of a story and the final revision, and I would think that most of the ones that there are at the moment are still in this incomplete stage.

J.F. There haven't been any published about the Lor ds of the Afternoon.

A.B. No. The Lords of the Afternoon was his name for a set of stories that he was talking about, and I think that UNDER OLD EARTH was one of these.

J.F. It's obviously the start of a series, and it must have been finished in the year before he died, at least.

A.B. Yes.

J.F. What were his feelings about sf in general? - the fans, other writers...

A.B. He said that he had actually feared getting in with fans. It wasn't that he disliked them; he said, "They make me nervous." He felt that if he became known as... He knew that there were a lot of people who did like his stories, but if once he got, as it were, into the hands of his fans, this would stop his own development of his stories, and for that reason he couldn't... He knew a couple of the sf writers - quite well and quite personally; he would talk to them, but he never wanted to become part of that kind of thing. He was a very difficult man in that sense in any way to pin down. He saw no reason why he should become a part of anything, any kind of organization. In that way his membership of the Episcopalian Church worked in very well because, as he said, he didn't have to go along and hear some damn fool clergyman lecturing on politics or something which he knew nothing about.

As far as other sf writers were concerned, he read in the way of opposites. He was very strange about Arthur C. Clarke. I mean, sometimes he would say, "That man does not understand a single thing," by which he meant about people. On the other hand he would say that there is a certain classic kind of sf writing, and nobody does it better than Clarke; that, in a way, that's the way the stuff ought to be written. He could admire somebody like Clarke who is in the tradition of Defoe; somebody who tells you everything, who has worked everything out in an enormously complex manner, with attention to scientific detail and all that kind of thing, and who has a classical beginning and end and no loose ends. He thought very highly of this kind of writing. On the other hand it was exactly the opposite to the vision which he had.

J.F. Would he have expressed any opinion about Robert Heinlein?

A.B. Yes; he thought well of him, but thought that he often went astray. Some of his stories were nowhere near as good as others. He liked some of Van Vogt's work, and he confessed to enjoying Fritz Leiber. He felt that in a way some of Leiber's work was very much like his own way of thinking - but he was never as much of a Nietzschean as Leiber, nor was he, in a sense, as hard a man. There's a streak of very considerable hardness in Leiber; it's quite impressive in some ways but it's also very tough, and Paul wasn't tough in that way.

J.F. The remarkable thing about him is that he's tremendously genuine in his stories, and this contrasts so very much with his work.

A.B. I think that's true, but I also think that one of the clues to this is that he really did feel psychological warfare to be a more humane way, and he was not in the least pretentious about this work. He gave four lectures on the subject at the University here, and they were the funniest lectures I've ever heard.

... He had a great sympathy for the Japanese. In the Italian campaign in the Second World War he worked closely with some Nisei, and he got closer to them than any other anglo-saxon type I've ever struck. He never tried to make them anything that they weren't, but he did admire qualities that they had. Other people might have found them strange and uncomfortable. He spoke very highly of one chap who had, I think, volunteered as an American soldier, and his Japanese family went through this rather strange ritual Japanese apparently do when a soldier goes off to war: he's dead, and they have a sort of ritual burying. They wash him with rice spirit and that kind of thing - in other words, you're dead. And he said the reason why these Nisei were so incredibly brave was that every morning they'd wake up and say well, I should be dead! And he had an insight into those kind of characters.

* * *

Recorded December 1966 by John Foyster, at the Australian National University, Canberra.

Transcribed by Lee Harding, and edited by John Bangsund - who thanks everyone concerned (including Professor J.D.B. Miller, whose suggestions led us to Dr. Burns) and apologizes for any misrepresentations unwittingly caused by this rather complex editorial process.

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A NOTE ABOUT NAMES

FELIX FORREST is easy enough to decipher, as John Foyster did, when you remember that "Lin-ba-leh" means "forest of incandescent bliss" (see p.3). But why CORDWAINER SMITH? "Cordwainer's myth" is obvious, but doesn't explain "cordwainer." I found a clue in a letter written to Joseph Furphy (reproduced in Miles Franklin's JOSEPH FURPHY: THE LEGEND OF A MAN AND HIS BOOK): "You know the story of Apollo and the cordwainer," writes William Cathels. Well, I don't know the story, and neither does anyone at the Melbourne University Classics Department. But John Foyster has somewhere dug up the fact that Apollo's cordwainer (or shoemaker) was Hermes. And Hermes was, among other things, the god of dreams, the messenger of the gods, and the inventor of the lyre. From what Dr. Burns has told us about Dr. Linebarger it is certain that we are missing any number of allusions and subtleties in our speculations about his pen-name. I'm sure I've read somewhere, though neither John nor Dr. Burns mention it, that Dr. Linebarger also wrote as "Carmichael Smith." Information, anyone?

(JB)

* * *

AN ADMONITORY EXERCISE

WILLIAM ATHELING, JR.

There are some nasty people in the world, of whom I unfortunately am one, to whom the sight of a man deliberately sticking out his chin represents an irresistible target, just as some men cannot see a girl running without feeling the instant urge to give chase. Such a target is presented in the July issue of IF, in which Frederik Pohl, in an editorial inexplicably entitled WIPED OUT, essays to define criticism for the unwashed.

The editorial itself is chiefly a brief critical essay, devoted to Mr. Pohl's opinions of "the New Wave of British Science Fiction" - its history, its practitioners, its pretensions and its possible promise. This may sound like a lot of ground to cover in two pages, but the subject-matter may be rather small; at least, it's clear that Mr. Pohl thinks so, as is his privilege.

Toward the end of the editorial, however, Mr. Pohl tackles a very large subject indeed: the nature of criticism. In order to avoid the pitfalls of paraphrasing, and to give Mr. Pohl the earned opportunity of stating his own case in his own words, I quote here (with his permission) what he has to say about the critics:

"Derivative, second-order, parasitic, they can be entertaining only when they have something entertaining to review, only fresh when they espy something fresh in what they are discussing. This is why every literature and artistic put-on of the last few decades has received its deadpan adulation from critics who don't know, or can't afford to know, that they are being taken in.

"Would you like to know the definition of a good science fiction story? It is a story that, after reading, you are glad you read.

"That's all there is to criticism. But of course no one could build a critical career on saying that in print...."

(The dots do not represent a cut in the text; the editorial ends with them.)

I cannot say that I am glad to have read this statement. By the very same subjective criterion which it proposes, its hastiness, its shrillness, even its wobbly grammar strike me as the work of a man prosecuting some private vendetta. Subjectively, again, I don't find it difficult to identify the critics this critic of critics has in mind.

However, subjective criticism is exceedingly dull, and what is even more important, it is of no use to the reader. Let us consider instead whether or not Mr. Pohl's statement is valid - that is to say, whether or not it has any factual content that might be assessed objectively. Looked at in this light, the editorial does make certain statements which can be compared with the real world. In this light it is as close to being wholly untrue as any critical statement I have seen in all my life; and I speak as a writer who has made a

secondary career of criticism, both inside and outside science fiction, for some twenty years.

In documenting this contention, I would prefer to take up the major points in order of importance, but this is not the way they are stacked in the editorial itself; so, again in the interests of fairness, let us consider them as they fall.

There can be little doubt that criticism is a second-order art, if it is an art at all. Plainly, it could not exist without something to criticize. It is not, however, derivative in the sense that that word is almost always used in criticism itself (and let us bear in mind that "derivative" is a critical term, and a strong one). A work is said to be derivative when its style, its structure, or its attitudes can be seen to be influenced by another work of the same kind. For instance, Greene's FRIAR BACON AND FRIAR BUNGAY is said to be derivative of Marlowe's DOCTOR FAUSTUS (or the other way around, depending upon which play you think was written first); almost any monster-movie plot of the past twenty years derives from FRANKENSTEIN; almost any lead novel in STARTLING STORIES derived from A. Merritt. All of Sam Moskowitz's criticism leans heavily on such influence-detecting (which can be a trap for the ambitious critic with a tin ear).

A criticism of a Shakespeare play cannot usefully be said to be derivative of the play, any more than a Moskowitz criticism of a science fiction story can be said to be derivative of the story. The criticism does not resemble the play in any important particular, and does not pretend to. It exists only to pass on certain kinds of information (and there are many different kinds possible) which either do not appear in the object being criticized (for example, the historical circumstances under which MACBETH was written, which both illuminate why the play is so lop-sided and can offer valuable cues to potential productions about what parts can best be emphasized to increase the play's effect) or are present in the work but hidden except to the close student (for example, the pervasive clothing-symbolism in MACBETH, which again offers valuable clues to the reader and cues to the actor as to what the play is about, and what some otherwise absolutely impenetrable lines are trying to convey). In works as complex as those of late Shakespeare or James Joyce, it is probably safe to say that no man can hope to enjoy them as fully as they deserve without becoming his own close student and critic of them, and getting as much help from other readers of like mind as he can possibly run down.

But at no time does the criticism attempt to substitute for the work, as a derivative work of art attempts to substitute for or copy its model. Where critics are derivative, they derive from each other, as a moment's exercise of common sense would make plain. The IF editorial, for example, is a late echo of the critical school of Spingarn, the impressionist school, which held that since it is impossible really to know what the author's intention was, the best a critic can do is react emotionally to the work and then compose his own work of art from his responses. ("It is a story that, after reading it, you are glad you read.")

Now it is quite possible that the editor of IF has never heard of Spingarn; but the type of criticism he practises is recognizable and familiar nonetheless. This is not derivative criticism, but some case could be made for calling it parasitic, since the impressionistic critic is not out to tell the reader anything but how he feels, and he would not have felt that way had it not been for the primary work he is using as a springboard. There have been some good examples of the breed - for instance, ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER - but they are very rare, and this editorial is not one of them.

As my citation of Spingarn also notes, critics may be derivative of each other. Thus we have had large numbers of Marxist critics, Freudian critics, folk critics, biographical critics, explicative critics, evaluative critics, moral critics, and so on; and in each school it is possible to find one or two men who have decisively set the style and approach for their successors. I see nothing reprehensible in this. Most forms of criticism are in fact scholarly rather than creative activities, and no one scholar can possibly exhaust his subject. (See, for example, the Variorum edition of MACBETH for an example of the amount of work entailed simply in deciding what words in the play were intended, and which may be only the product of typographical errors; or, try to guess without any knowledge of the period what part of the play was not written by Shakespeare.)

To go on to call any of this activity "parasitic" is only to indulge in a swearword. Scholars are not parasitic in profiting by the work of previous scholars in their fields, any more than scientists are. A technical critic of music, or painting, or fiction is not parasitic in attempting to use his special knowledge of his field of interest to show the layman how a given work is put together (or, for that matter, where it fails to hang together). He is not living a wholly borrowed life, as a parasite is; he has a function of his own, and there are, it will be observed, many readers who welcome it... including other craftsmen in the field. The good critic, as any serious craftsman recognizes as he matures, is essentially a teacher - and the existence of criticism in printed form makes available to him many more teachers than he could possibly study under in person. It is, of course, up to him to decide which of these many kinds of teachers are of the most use to him.

It is quite possible (if I may return to the subjective, that is, to guessing, for a moment) that Mr. Pohl's use of the word "parasitic" has a special significance for him. He may mean by it that the critics of science fiction (which is, after all, his ostensible subject) have not themselves produced any notable body of work and so have no right to criticize the writings of the creative workers. There are plenty of defenders for this position - it was vehemently espoused, for example, by Ezra Pound - but I think the best answer for it was provided by P. Schuyler Miller, who noted that the excellent criticisms of boxers by the late A.J. Liebling are in no way invalidated by the fact that Liebling never knocked out Sonny Liston (or anybody else, to my knowledge).

One need not debate its philosophical validity, however, if the position has little factual substance in the first place. That is obviously the case here. Anyone is at liberty to make up his own list of the people he considers the chief critics of science fiction, but if we are going to limit ourselves to those who have been operating since the New Wave became noticeable, such a list most likely would include Aldiss, Amis, Atheling, Budrys, Knight, Merril, Miller, Moskowitz, Panshin and (mostly orally) Ted White. Obviously there is a wide spectrum of creativity represented here, but there is no name on the list which has not been responsible for at least one published sf story. (I think the bottom figure is two, the top one over two hundred.) And no matter what you may think of the creative contributions of any single figure on the list (and I would agree that as creators several of these people are insignificant), collectively these ten have produced a high percentage of the science fiction of Mr. Pohl's own era.

Of course, I repeat, this may be a phantom argument, since this may not be what Mr. Pohl means by "parasitic" at all. Maybe he is referring to the fact that some of these writers have not been active lately; or that some of them have devolved into anthologists, an admittedly parasitic lifeform. One cannot be sure from the text. As a characterization for the group, however, "parasitic" is not a defensible term in any of these senses.

"...they can be entertaining only when they have something entertaining to review, only fresh when they espy something fresh in what they are discussing." Barring recourse to another specialized, highly personal definition of "entertaining" and "fresh," this pair of dicta is completely contrary to the experience of anyone who has read even a small amount of criticism. A moment's reflection should recall to Mr. Pohl's mind many examples of criticism which were entertaining because they were gleefully tearing apart something utterly awful (Mr. Pohl is good at this himself), fresh because the critic's way of expressing himself is fresh (often a good deal fresher than the stale subject he is discussing). In our little puddle, Damon Knight is such a critic; in letters in general, George Bernard Shaw.

As for the deadpan adulation of put-ons by the critic who is taken in, or is weather-cocking, or is afraid of the judgement of posterity, we have no doubt seen plenty of that - perhaps in counterpoise to the plethora of critics in every art who have greeted valuable innovations with cries of outraged conservatism. This tells one nothing about the function of criticism in general. It tells us only that there are more bad critics than there are good ones. As Ted Sturgeon long ago pointed out, of what form of human endeavour might this not be said? It is up to the reader to winnow the chaff. If he buys opinions from a critic with a record of having been taken in by past put-ons, he has only himself to blame; to put the matter bluntly, the reader so victimized cannot have read enough prior criticism to be allowed into this field without warm woolies and his governess.

This brings us at last to the heart of Mr. Pohl's statement: "That's all there is to all of criticism." It does not matter what the antecedent of "that" is, for there is no humanly achievable way that the sentence quoted could be justified by any antecedent, even were it the concluding sentence of an encyclopedia. There are, as I have already said, many different kinds of criticism (some of which I have already listed), and some of them are quite antithetical (biographical vs. imp ressionistic; moral vs. technical; Marxist vs. Catholic; evaluative vs. explicative, &c &c). Were Mr. Pohl interested, he might acquire a useful insight into how many mansions there are in this house simply by reading Stanley Edgar Hyman's THE ARMED VISION and its companion anthology, THE CRITICAL PERFORMANCE (both available in paperback).

Mr. Pohl is in fact already thoroughly familiar with technical criticism, which is the kind he practices every day in pursuit of his daily bread, as does every editor who knows his job. I have received story criticisms from Mr. Pohl in the mail which were as astute, merciless and useful (and sometimes as entertaining, too) as anything ever written by Damon Knight. They were written in the interest of making my story more suitable for his magazine. Every writer has had this experience with every good editor. This is one of the most important and most practical kinds of criticism - and it will be observed that it falls completely outside Mr. Pohl's sweepingly simplistic definition.

Sometimes, of course, the editor fails to do this, and then a critic like Damon Knight performs on the printed version of the story the operation the editor should have performed on the manuscript. If the critic does a good job, its value will extend well beyond the instruction of just one editor and one writer. As the serious craftsman may by this process have many teachers, so the serious critic may have many students.

The relationship is one of long standing, and happily, is not likely to be wiped out by one thoughtless generalization.

* * *

the tyranny of distance

LEE HARDING

Early in 1968 Angus & Robertson will be publishing SCIENCE FICTION BY AUSTRALIAN WRITERS, edited and with an introduction by John Baxter. The collection will appear locally in the Pacific Paperbacks series and will have a limited distribution as a hardcover in the U.K.

A project like this would have been unthinkable a few years ago. During 1961/62 I was the only Australian writer selling steadily to the overseas sf markets and my predecessors had been few and far between. But the times have changed remarkably. We now have people like John Baxter and Ron Smith and Jack Wodhams selling regularly to ANALOG, and even John Carnell is thinking about a special volume of NEW WRITINGS IN SF devoted exclusively to the work of Australian writers.

Faced with this sort of activity - and the success of ASFR in its field - it would be nice to assume the beginnings of some bold sort of takeover of the international sf market by a dedicated group of Australian writers. But my heart tells me otherwise.

The Australian sf writer has been and will always be a very occasional creature. We have no local markets to worry us and subsequently have none of the pressures and the friendships that are responsible for a goodly portion of the world's sf. We stumble along as best we can, mailing our little mss. off into an impersonal vacuum and meeting from time to time with a modicum of success. If we are lucky we manage to keep up a steady head of sales, but if something else more lucrative distracts us from our work there is no one around within telephone distance to say Shame!

For the local writer there have always been two roads to success. The first, time-honoured, has been very precarious. It consists of sitting down at a typewriter and hammering away until the story is completed, and then posting it off to one or other of the magazines. If he is known to the editor of the magazine to which he has submitted his work then the author can expect an acceptance - or rejection - in anything from two to three months. If he is very well known, then it might be a few weeks earlier. But if he is not known by anybody then he must be prepared to wait somewhat longer. And these times only apply if you can afford to send your ms. by airmail.

So much for the first road. The other, more personal one, has been open to Australian writers for many years, and it goes via the London office of John Carnell. John has always been more than tolerant to Australian writers and a ms. sent to him stands a much better chance of finding a home than anywhere else. Even while he was editing NEW WORLDS so successfully John was an established agent. He has even gone on record on a number of occasions that the success of NEW WORLDS was the result of publishing the good stories rejected by American magazines. So a writer who takes the plunge and decides to send his stories to Carnell is aiming at a larger target. If the story is not quite right for NEW WRITINGS, then John might find a home for it elsewhere. If he

doesn't then he'll do what he can to direct the would-be author onto the right-of-way for improving his material, which is only what any good editor should do.

On the average, the previously unpublished Australian can expect a reply from Mr. Carnell in about two to three months, which is on a par with the American magazines. But once he is established then acceptances (and rejections) can become very swift indeed. On a number of occasions I have mailed away a ms. on a Monday and received an acceptance contract the following Monday. Of course one must always make allowances for editors and agents getting sick, being snowed under, and the like!

These figures seem to be the norm, although I know of one local writer who had a story accepted by NEW WORLDS two years ago and it hasn't appeared yet. Is this what is called encouragement? Long range editorship may be all right for the occasional writer but it is hardly the way to build up a solid core of practising sf writers in this country. The tyranny of distance has imposed an awkward working order upon us and if we are to maintain any sort of contact with the wide field of international sf it must continue to be on the same tenuous basis as it has been in the past. There are just more of us at the moment - that's all. How many of us will still be writing five years from now?

If John Baxter had moved to the U.K. after the success of his first sale to Ace then he would probably have published three more books by now. Instead he chose to stay on in Australia and carve out a career for himself as a journalist. Writing, like the rest of the arts, is not only a cerebral exercise. Any writer benefits enormously from working in the proper environment and reacting to the editorial pressures of his field. We work for the most part in a vacuum, so is it any wonder we dissipate the major part of our energies elsewhere? (Even in fanzines like this...) If we want to write sf then it seems a good idea to establish ourselves securely in some other creative niche and write the occasional sf story when the time is ripe - the only trouble being that as time goes by we are inclined to find our work demanding - and getting - more and more of our energy, so that eventually our sf activity tails off. As Frank Bryning's has. And Wynne Whiteford's. As the late Stephen Cook's did - a young man who had much to offer the field if he had not turned elsewhere.

There has been talk here and there of the need for an Australian professional sf magazine. I know that for some time John Baxter and Ron Smith worked actively for just this. They even got to the stage of stories selected and a cover drawn up, and then the project folded for lack of finance. And a good thing it did for it couldn't have lasted more than a few issues. Magazines devoted to fiction are dying everywhere, and if Australian writers are ever to establish themselves locally it can only be through the medium of paperback publication.

Ours is a very small paperback industry, devoted for the most part to reprints of hardbound Australiana and the like, all very very middlebrow. But in HORWITZ PUBLICATIONS we have a publisher who deals in genuine pulp. Sandwiched in between the comics and the magnificent art books this publisher manages to put out is a vast chain of crude paperbacks designed to appeal to the lower middle class of reader, the TV addict of The Man from Uncle and that sort of thing. The books are well produced and the writers turn out their thirty or forty thousand words with machine-like precision.

Horwitz specialize in contract writers, people who sign up for so many novels a month under a variety of pseudonyms. Their most famous is Peter Carter Brown. The remainder have come nowhere near his export quality, and they concentrate for the most part on war, medical, western and crime subjects.

Most of the books are innocuous and in no way comparable to their carefully doctored covers. The publishers pay a flat rate of A$200 per book, and this keeps their writers very busy indeed. In the past they have published a few tentative sf titles of notably inferior quality (mostly reprinted - for some reason - from the defunct British Hamilton books: novels by Jonathan Burke, for crissakes!) and in 1963 they did issue a collection of Damien Broderick's stories, called A MAN RETURNED, which Damien managed to foist on them in the approved Ellison manner. But they have since showed little interest in sf. Until now, that is. For we have in this gargantuan publishing empire a man who is in a position to really do something for Australian writers and instigate what could develop into a local sf series of comparable quality to what Hamilton were doing in England with Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer a decade ago. It certainly wouldn't be much, by today's standards, but it would be a beginning.

When Ron Smith emigrated to Australia in the early sixties he left behind in the U.S.A. an enviable record as a fan publisher. INSIDE has since been transmogrified into RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, while Ron's career has become much more colourful. Since he settled in Sydney with his family he has experimented with a number of jobs, finally working his way into SQUIRE, a local girlie magazine. SQUIRE managed, in one way or another, to survive its shoestring operation, and Ron eventually made it to assistant editor. He introduced a number of new ideas into the magazine and worked closely with John Baxter on a number of articles and fumettis. Eventually they got together and collaborated on an sf story called AN OUNCE OF DISSENSION which was snapped up by Campbell, and they quickly followed this up with a long novelette called THE CASE OF THE PERJURED PLANET. And there are more Library Service stories in the works, I am told. In the meantime Ron Smith has had stories published in SQUIRE and F&SF and a novel published by Horwitz. It was on the strength of the latter that he was appointed Chief Paperback Editor at Horwitz and he has wasted no time in putting some of his ideas into practice. In a few months Horwitz will be publishing - in their upper middlebrow series I hope - John Baxter's THE GOD KILLERS (published by ACE as THE OFF WORLDERS) so at long last John will have some of the benefit of publication in his own country. But what of the future? Has Smith thought seriously of encouraging local writers onto his lists?

David Rome, a roving journalist once based in Australia who did a stint at writing for NEW WORLDS a few years ago, has recently returned to this country, and has had published two girlie novels for Horwitz. I wonder if Ron has approached him about sf, and if he would be interested at $200 a book? And what of Bryning and Whiteford? - would a contract from Horwitz lure them out of retirement? A single book might prove a chore, but a solid contract for, say, four to six books a year might interest them. I know it would interest me if only to get some sort of a start for a local industry of <u>any</u> sort.

Just what are your plans, Mr. Smith? Would you really like to do something to encourage Australian writers to try their hands at sf novels? The results would probably be primitive by other standards but then so is most paperback Horwitz fiction, and who wants to do a re-write at $200 per book? And there's no reason why someone like David Rome couldn't write a pulpy sf thriller as well as some of your hacks write their jaded war stories. And who knows what they could do under editorial pressure for so many books on schedule?

Perhaps I hope too much. If Ron still feels anything for sf as a medium - and he must since he still writes the stuff - there may be still limitations to his chair of office. Perhaps it would be wrong to assume that he has as much freedom as we would like in his new position, and any progress of an sf nature must of necessity be cautious - and successful.

Ron Smith is currently in an enviable position. He is in a place of

influence equalled only by Terry Carr and Don Wolheim, and I do wish him well if he can manage to exercise a science-fictional prerogative. It would be nice to think that some day an Australian sf writer would be able to sell the local rights to his novel as well as overseas: it would be something of a millenium. And Ron Smith might just be in a position to bring that day much closer than any of us would ever have thought possible.

* * *

Two Responses to The Cosmological Eye:

RON SMITH
Editor
Horwitz Publications
39 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Thanks for the copy of the article. I've been meaning for months to write to ASFR regarding my tentative plans and, incidentally, to let you know that I do enjoy it and think it a very worthwhile effort. But correspondence takes time and I am continually behind in my writing even to various of our authors. So I haven't had the time to do the promotion I've wanted to do on some projects, particularly the sf program.

Anyway, here's how things stand. I have a pretty free hand here and can publish any book I want to, provided I'm willing to take the consequences for its failure. I will be publishing some sf. As you know, THE GOD KILLERS is the first title. (I was looking over a completed ms. by David Rome last night, while staying over at his place, and this is a possibility.) John has contacted Bert Chandler for me and he's informed me that Chandler will be in touch when he's completed his next book, to negotiate for Australian and New Zealand rights for Horwitz. In the meantime, I've written to Terry Carr at Ace regarding reprint rights on some titles, but this was some time ago and there's been no reply.

As I say, I can publish anything as long as it sells. Consequently I'm being cagey about the first two or three titles. I've been hoping to get good books by top autyors for these, which is why I've contacted Ace and also Lancer and would have, if I could have found the time, put out other feelers overseas. The problem is, if the first two or three titles don't sell there won't be any more.

I want to develop the local sf market. I want to use original books by local authors on a regular basis (though I don't believe it will ever be possible to publish more than one title a month) and, hopefully, help some of these authors to sell overseas rights. This is, I can see, more or less what you envisaged, and the opportunity is obviously with me.

But the question of the correct selection and presentation of the initial titles remains. I'll have to have sales figures on these before I can make any but tentative plans.

This is, unfortunately, a long process. I'm editing 8 to 12 original titles a month, around 10 reprints, 2 westerns for overseas sale, a man's magazine (MAN'S WORLD - I have a story in no.3, incidentally - under the name Kevin Alexander - which was my sale to Horwitz, not a book; I got an OK on a sf book based on the story but never had time to write it; this job and a momentarily unsettled life have left me with no time for writing anything the past four months; my writing is now confined to other people's stories and about 40 blurbs a month; end parenthesis) and various incidentals. That's only part of the job, of course, so you can see the problem facing me in getting the sf program off the ground. But it will come.

I'll just mention that on the sf mag I planned for DB Publications, Cindy (my ex-wife) did all the work and John wrote a lead story. Gordon & Gotch killed it. None of our writers are doing more than one book a month, by the way, though several are keeping to that schedule. It might interest you to know that John Slater, J.E. Macdonell and (of course) Carter Brown are our top sellers. Slater is an interesting story-teller, I feel, and I have been working with him closely with half a mind to developing a lost world series. (His major works to the present have been of the Nazi atrocity/Jap POW type). I have introduced a faint fantasy element into his next book (VALLEY OF SLAVES) and the sequel, which will appear two months later (JUNGLE CAPTIVE). So faint you may miss it, but a great deal of caution is necessary in changing the formula of a best selling author.

When the sf titles begin to appear, by the way, everybody better buy 'em. In fact, maybe it would be a good investment if we started a campaign for everyone to buy two copies and, as well, issued kits for selling on street corners. What do you think?

I was Associate Editor at Squire. I just like to clear up these minor points of fact. I've been on the verge of writing several times to ASFR because every time the ANALOG series has been mentioned the facts have been different, and always wrong. Very annoying.

Anyway, I think you've got your answer. If the local newsagent pocket book market can absorb a steady sf diet, it'll be fed. If.

JOHN CARNELL
17 Burwash Road
Plumstead SE18
London England

THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE is a most interesting article, although I disagree with your title; it should be THE ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE, but then I am thinking in different terms of reference!

While it was not true in the early days of sf writing - all writers in the field were then semi-pros and getting together with others was an asset - I see more and more confusion arising from today's writers attending fan gatherings and conventions, where workshop ideas no longer apply but where individual writers try to impress their colleagues with the rightness of their own new conceptions in sf writing. I know that the outline of the genre is changing but it will be a slow change not a revolution and established writers will do better sticking to their own style than forcibly trying to emulate other, perhaps more sensational, writers, where I feel the outcome is ephemeral. Sales figures both in the UK and USA have yet to justify the experimental sf novel and I would want another year or two of statistics before I could give a definite answer.

It is an incontrovertible fact that the British authors on my books who earn the most money each year are those who have no connection with fellow writers, fan activities or conventions! Some of the old hands run them close, of course, usually by great production. This may sound like sacrilege coming from such an old hand but, unfortunately, it is true. Sf is now a very professional writing medium and authors who concentrate on its advantages are likely to do far better than the ones who get too close to the main unprofessional bodies.

That is why I say that distance is an advantage rather than a liability. It is also the reason why I have championed Australian writers. There has been a freshness blowing out of the Antipodes for some years; writings uninhibited by too close a contact with the UK or USA. From where you are you can see the advantages and disadvantages of what both countries are publishing without

without having to listen to the reasons verbally.

Your news, therefore, of the juxtaposition of Ron Smith as an editor and Horwitz as a publisher is exciting. It has always required a combination of two such to set the fusion going - one without the other is a negative. It will probably mean a slow start but the potential is now there and I very much hope that it will come off. You have already premised that there are insufficient Australian writers to support such a venture but this can and will come given the fountainhead, although I am doubtful whether a magazine would be successful. A section for sf novels published by Horwitz, with an occasional anthology, could well be the right answer. After all, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain started sf publishing with the novel and most of the other European countries are now following. They didn't need the background of magazine short story publishing to get them going - the trail had already been blazed for them beforehand.

* * *

In the twelfth issue of AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, which we hope to publish (lord willing, weather permitting, and with due cognizance of the Landlords & Tenants Acts) in October, you will find the following goodies:

James Blish
EINE KLEINE OKIE-MUSIK

Damon Knight
THE "PROJECT BOSKONE" SPEECH

William F. Temple
PLAGIARISM IN SCIENCE FICTION

Harry Harrison
A FOOTNOTE TO THE ECONOMICS OF SCIENCE FICTION

George Turner
NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THE CHAINS

Jack Wodhams
THE NAME IS MARTIN McCOY

R E V I E W S

BRIAN ALDISS
REPORT ON PROBABILITY A

New Worlds 171 : 50¢

JOHN FOYSTER

A glance at current issues of NEW WORLDS reveals no obvious sign of the magazine's founder, John Carnell. His magazine would never have published many of the stories which now appear there. He struggled to reach thirty or forty issues, after which publication became (I hope) somewhat easier. Moorcock, on the other hand, had managed about thirty issues before he ran into trouble. But all this aside, the magazine NEW WORLDS has been in fact two magazines. But a closer examination reveals that Carnell, after all, is responsible, for he encouraged Aldiss, Ballard, Moorcock: without his magazine they could hardly have become writers of science fiction at all.

But who is to blame for REPORT ON PROBABILITY A? Not Carnell, certainly, for this was not the kind of story Aldiss wrote for him. Moorcock? Perhaps - all the stories in this issue (or almost all) were donated. Perhaps he should not have done this. Aldiss? He was only trying to help out a friend.

There are some things seriously wrong with REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. Elementary things which a re-write, ordered by an active editor, would have removed. But to see what these faults are, the structure of the story must be examined.

Aldiss has tried to imitate Samuel Beckett, I think, or if he has not then he has written unconscious parody. His style, the way the sentences are constructed and their subject matter, is so similar to Beckett's and yet, or perhaps even as a result, it fails. Beckett writes the thoughts of an old man; Aldiss the report of a spy, even a spy on something totally unfamiliar. Beckett's language is appropriate to his subject; Aldiss's is not.

Aldiss writes of spies upon spies. A little boy and his father invent "a time machine or something." Looking into it they see some other men (in New York, Congressmen and engineers) who have invented a robot fly which has entered another world and which transmits pictures of that other world back to New York. They, all of them, watch the Distinguishers, who in turn, by chance, have come across a mirror into another world, which mirror shows a man called Domoladossa. Domoladossa is reading the REPORT ON PROBABILITY A, written by the man who is observing a chance between his world and the continuum called Probability A. In Probability A three men, C, G, and S, (Mr. Aldiss is putting us on) spy on a Mrs. Mary, who is believed to be "the key to the whole matter" by Domoladossa. It turns out that she watches the watchers.

Well, it is quite a possibility as a plot. In the hands of most sf writers it would have become an adventure story, with robot flies invading further worlds, watched attacking watcher, the fabric of the universe parting et cetera. Aldiss follows the pattern of New Mature Avant-Garde Literature, however, by imitating the twenty-year-old methods of Beckett. He fails for the mechanical reason that Beckett wrote from the inside out; he described the world as seen by X. Aldiss describes the world in which X lives, as seen by Y. And he fails because Y records things he could not possibly know. To wit: "G was aware that this date was incorrect." "...for a day in April of the preceding year..." "G had kept this sheet of newspaper because he found its contents more interesting than the contents of most newspapers." "When G was a child of seven years, an uncle had taken him to see this ship." "G entertained the theory that the clock still worked." Well, those are the difficulties I found on page 8 of Aldiss's 109-page novel. We cannot reasonably suppose that the watchers can read the minds of the watched, for if this were so there would be no mystery of Mrs. Mary.

And then there's the fact that although the universes are different, the languages are constant; that is to say, that conversations are intelligible. But all

the observers are aware of many things which may be different - rate of time-flow, scale, molecular structure. This does not stop our ever-capable reporter from giving measurements (in centimetres) at every opportunity.

Nevertheless, all the faults in the story could undoubtedly be removed by a little careful re-writing. I'm not sure that many people would want to read the story, however.

In the same issue Moorcock publishes this blurb: "J.G. Ballard's THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY CONSIDERED AS A DOWNHILL MOTOR RACE employs a technique first used by Alfred Jarry. It is full of wit and pungent, deeply-considered comments on Kennedy's death." My reading failed to uncover any wit, or any pungent, deeply-considered comments. Maybe I looked too hard.

ANTHONY BURGESS
THE WANTING SEED

Ballantine : 60¢

This novel by the author of A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (and editor of A SHORTER FINNEGAN'S WAKE) received only cursory notice when it appeared in 1962/1964, the date depending on which publication you wish to choose. Avram Davidson reviewed it in F&SF for April 1964, noting it rather briefly (giving a great deal of attention that month to books which were not sf), but handing out a fair ration of praise.

The Ballantine edition is charmingly slanted towards the queer set, though this is not in fact the tendency of the book.

Burgess describes a world in which overcrowding is the main problem. Many solutions are proposed, and all are chosen. (Davidson suggested that Burgess "offers no solutions.")

Tristram Foxe is a man ruled by his heart and not by his head. He sees world philosophy as alternating between the view that man is good and consequently perfectable, and the view that man is bad and that no good can ever be expected of him. He sees these opposing views as being linked, and, in fact, as being consequences of each other.

In the story the philosophy of government towards the population problem varies in more or less this way. Initially the attitude is one of suggestion and of encouragement of homosexuality; the overt heterosexual will not obtain preferment. Then the attitude changes, and heterosexuality and fertility are praised, the reason only becoming clear in the closing chapters of the book: more human s means more food is available, rather than that more food is needed. Between these two phases the government becomes extremely repressive, and this repression enables Burgess to examine the society's defects through its effects on Tristram Foxe.

Burgess's philosophy is that of De Sade: the powerful are in power because they are evil, and they will remain in power because they are evil. The good man does not stand a chance. Thus Foxe's brother, Derek, feigns homosexuality to gain advancement during the time when homosexuality is being encouraged. At the same time he cuckolds Tristram with his wife. When Tristram discovers this, Derek arranges for him to be imprisoned. All of Tristram's prison companions are more evil than he is, but they are released because of friends in high places. As soon as the swing is to heterosexuality, Derek claims his children by Beatrice, thus becoming an OK chappie in the new regime. Tristram escapes at about this time. When Derek discovers this he arranges for Tristram to join the army. The army consists of those who are to be slaughtered for food. He even escapes from there, to find his way back to civilization and to wait for the swing back to the kind of philosophy under which he can lead a peaceful life. Derek continues in power.

Burgess's treatment is very light, and because of this the reader never takes the very serious proposals seriously. He even emulates Wilson Tucker: on page 145, during an orgy, the following couples are paired - "Jim Weeks with Pam Asimov, Tristram Foxe with Ann Onymous, Ron Heinlein with Agnes Gelber and Tommy Eliot with Kitty Elphick."

The novel contrasts strongly with many of the "heavy" views of the horrors of the future. THE FURIOUS ROSE, by Dean Evans (GALAXY, January 1952) is such a story. The protagonist, like Derek Foxe, is an amoral opportunist. He takes every chance he can for his own betterment. As soon as he shows any sign of humanity his life is in danger. The emotional impact of the story is considerable, and yet, in a way, the story is less believable than Burgess's frolic. Whatever virtues THE WANTING SEED has, moral truth is one of the greatest of them.

SAMUEL R. DELANY
TWO SHORT STORIES

Worlds of Tomorrow
If

Samuel R. Delany is one of the few authors whose every appearance is important. Philip Jose Farmer and perhaps Budrys, Vonnegut, Zelazny and Ballard would be others. Farmer in particular should be noticed (and hasn't) but the others generally make some contribution.

Delany has recently embarked upon the writing of short fiction, with THE STAR PIT (WORLDS OF TOMORROW, February 1967) and DRIFTGLASS (IF, June 1967).

THE STAR PIT is a conventional tale of the old Galactic mechanic who hates those in power, &c &c. Nevertheless is is as well-written as any of Delany's novels, and consequently stands out in its company.

However, Delany does have that trouble with scientific facts that I mentioned when reviewing BABEL-17. Vyme lives, at the beginning of the story, on a planet circling a red-white binary pair (Sigma and Sigma-prime) which I can't identify, and which would seem, therefore, to be some distance from Earth. Well, mechanics often have to go off to attend to their jobs, of course, and one day off Vyme goes to Tau Ceti. He gets back five days later. Then he goes to Aldebaran, and is gone a long time on this job. Now Aldebaran and Tau Ceti are separated in space by about fifty-eight light years. The sun is almost on a line joining them: well, the sun is about 64 light years from Aldebaran and a little more than ten light years from Tau Ceti. If that is the territory Vyme works, surely he'd be happier, and nearer his work, on good old Terra?

Those aren't the only places he visits, of course. Oh no, on page 12 he is "somewhere off Aurigae." That "somewhere" is the operative word: he could be anywhere. H.L. Gold would have frothed at the mouth at this sort of thing - remember Lance, who climbed to the top of the Empire State Building for a look at fading Alpha Centauri?

There's not much point in being smart about paramecia and ecologaria if you don't know where your hero is.

DRIFTGLASS, which is set on Earth, is much closer to our time. The story moves more smoothly than THE STAR PIT, as though Delany had become accustomed to the shorter form. The plot is far less remarkable than most of Delany's fiction, but the story seems more successful, and is certainly more modest, than Delany's novels. But the novel remains his best medium at this time.

JANE GASKELL
THE SERPENT
ATLAN
THE CITY

Were it ever my misfortune to be wrecked upon a desert island with just these three books, I can imagine myself reading them again. For two reasons, one being the obvious likelihood that I

Sphere: 80¢ each

would read anything on a desert island; the other that, supposing I were in such dire straits, I might read them continually in order that I might thank the Lord more exultantly, more earnestly, that I had been isolated from a race which could produce such utter garbage.

In past months, writing reviews for this magazine (or, to be honest, thinking about doing so) I have been much concerned at the thought that I so rarely find a novel which I can honestly recommend. In an attempt to hand out praise, at least in one review, I chose to read this group of books. Miss Gaskell, I argued to myself, must Have Something. She was, and still may be for that matter, a child prodigy, her first book being published when she was very young. That was some time ago, and I knew that she had written much in the intervening years. In the interim, as her talent developed, no doubt she would have improved greatly. Thus I reasoned to myself.

Friends, I goofed. Miss Gaskell ain't got nothin'.

She does have the ability to write sentences like these:

> "I knew that I am at least as safe with Smahil as no other woman can ever be."
>
> "His face, which he had cleansed, seemed to hold an intense gravity."

Both of these monstrosities appear on page 292 of the Sphere edition of THE SERPENT. Actually the first is the one which caught my eye, but the second is just below it. I'm rather fearful that you won't read the sentence in the book here, though, as it contains so many errors that anyone typing it just naturally tries to correct it. I did so myself, in copying it from the book, even though I was trying to avoid doing so. The second sentence I quote simply to allow a little light to fall upon the style of Gaskell.

Well, if the book is so bad, how is it that it was published? Maybe it isn't really bad. Perhaps I just have standards which are artificially high. But I do have objections which I regard as fairly serious.

For a start, I found it hard to stomach the bibliography, into which Miss Gaskell piles writers such as, on the one hand, Robert Graves and William H. Prescott and, on the other, H.S. Bellamy, James Churchward and Harold T. Wilkins. She does not suggest that there is any difference between the two kinds of book represented by those authors. The Bible gets a mention, too.

Nor do I find introductions about "the proofs or otherwise that Atlantis and Mu did exist" entertaining. But these are only objections regarding the factual background of the story: minor matters, really.

Miss Gaskell's story is supposedly a translation from an unbelievably old Diary. Setting aside any obvious difficulties one might think of about the mechanics of such a thing, let us see why such an arrangement has been used. Well, strictly speaking, it hasn't, because ATLAN starts with a piece which is not in the Diary, and about which Ciya could not possibly have heard.

So we have the Diary of Ciya. Ciya writes bloody poor Atlantean, or whatever it was, or else the translator did a very bad job. We do not expect a girl of that primitive time to write well or clearly, perhaps, but it is surely reasonable to ask the translator to try to make her translation English. I have indicated above just two examples of Miss Gaskell's terrible prose style: there are faults in the plot as well. The vital point, that Ciya should plot to kill Zerd (pardon those names: they are the choice of the author), is omitted from the Diary. Although in at least one other place Gaskell interrupts the narrative to explain events, she does not do so here. Quite frankly, reading the re levant section, pages 30-31, I was certain that a page was missing from my copy. But there wasn't: the book is just badly constructed.

Then there is the immense problem of Ciya's keeping possession of this Diary through incredible adventures. It happens in a quite offhand way, naturally.

But does the author succeed in either of two important ways? That is, does she bring out a picture of the world in which the story is set, or does she convey a vivid image of her heroine?

I don't think it's fair to say that any real feeling about the world of Ciya is forced upon the reader other than that of total revulsion. Not that the world is violent, or cruel, but rather that it is dishonest and unbelievable, inconsistently unbelievable. Useful props appear when needed, and then vanish with no explanation or reason.

Ciya herself is a loathesome creature: a vindictive Candy, a stupid Lolita a scheming Nana. She has no appeal whatever, although it seems as though the author has tried to make her appealing. She is unintelligent, almost incapable of learning, never kind - when she goes to rescue a child she succeeds in killing it.

But in the end everyone lives happily ever after. But how was it that Ciya managed to get through most of the series (over half), having most of the active adventures, finally reach Atlan, marry Zerd, and after a year of marriage have her first child, followed by a second child later, and that second child reach the stage of being able to speak - all in five years? A small matter of plot inconsistency - why worry about it? The public will read anything - or rather, buy anything.

These books have no redeeming features.

John Foyster

CLIFFORD SIMAK
ALL FLESH IS GRASS

Berkley: 70¢

ALAN REYNARD

ALL FLESH IS GRASS finds Clifford Simak flailing around good-naturedly in one of those pitfalls which await the indulgent writer. WAY STATION was a fine controlled exercise in sf, but one of its shortcomings - the tendency of the author to spend an inordinate time describing scenery and setting down fresh situations - has been dangerously extended in this new book. Simak simply takes a long time to tell what is essentially a rather uninteresting story. A good third of the wordage could have been dispensed with, without adversely affecting the book as a whole. What we have is over-written, and this seems a shame because Simak obviously had the ingredients of a very fine novel in his head but somehow allowed himself to make a botch of the finished job. The familiar style is there, in abundance: who else could convince us that a mess of intelligent flowers are about to take over the earth? or that money can grow on trees? The intense humanity which has enriched so much of Simak's work is present here on just about every page, and it seems to me that it is this indulgence that - just this once - has bogged the author down and stopped him short of another major work. The story line is tired and doesn't hold the attention the way it should. Some of the effects are marvellous, but this is not enough to bring the book to life. One wishes for a less laboured style and then realizes that pace would kill the sort of book Simak likes to write. If his next books contain more story and less pondering of ideas, they should be great. Simak is a fine writer, but ALL FLESH IS GRASS is not Simak at his best.

THOMAS M. DISCH
ECHO ROUND HIS BONES

Berkley: 70¢

Perhaps all writing is therapeutic to a greater or lesser extent. If this is so then Tom Disch's latest novel seems to belong to the former category. THE GENOCIDES was a grandly-styled unpleasantry and

ECHO ROUND HIS BONES suggests some fresh orientation on the part of the writer. Talent which constantly renews itself to this extent is worth watching. But this is a strange, puzzling book. For one thing it falls short of the earlier book in the matter of prose - but its plot is a considerable advance. However Disch doesn't seem to have known what to do with the scalding-hot idea he thought up. The result is often confusing but always arresting. What begins with the casual ease of the latest Keith Laumer novel is soon rambling uncertainly between philosophical and theological posturing, some wild and woolly metaphysics worthy of a Van Vogt or Vonnegut, and some fascinating episodes of self consciousness. This last used to be rare in sf, but I must confess that although I quite like some of the Newer School I find this sort of thing distracting and out of place with the plot Disch has used. The whole thing becomes a mess of false starts and muddled construction, but every word is worth reading. Disch seems to have got hold of the tail of a great sf novel and then let go of the damn thing.

There is a certain family resemblance between this book and Fritz Leiber's YOU'RE ALL ALONE, but whereas Leiber was writing strictly for a pulp audience Disch seems to have been writing exclusively for himself, and it is where the resemblance to the earlier book ceases and Disch's wild imagination takes over that the fun really begins. He has conjured up some marvellous incidents and some breathtaking character work, for example a tremendous scene inside a chu rch that really shakes one. Perhaps it would be better to forgive him for not developing his ideas the way the book warranted and be thankful for what we have. At times awkward and clumsy, at times forging ahead with the red-hot imagery of a Zelazny, Disch is never less than compulsively readable. The book is not a masterpiece, not even a flawed diamond, just an impassioned stab in the right direction. And the sum of the parts is somehow greater than the whole. The ideas, taken individually, may not be all that original, but the writing is - and the ending is tremendous. I urge you to buy this interesting little book in whatever version comes most quickly to your hands. It was originally published in NEW WORLDS 169/170.

Alan Reynard

BRIAN ALDISS
EARTHWORKS

Four Square: 60¢

DIANA MARTIN

"The dead man drifted along in the breeze..." "He was coming out of Africa, moving steadily for me..." "With the dead I'm on fair terms..." I couldn't resist these sentences which seemed to spring out from the opening paragraphs of EARTHWORKS. At once I was enmeshed in a grisly narrative of disease, desolation and death, told in a poet's tongue by a master story teller.

Brian Aldiss has the gift which makes his hero's tale seem vividly real, set down in the way a sick man might have seen events and portrayed them. Now a scene from the past, then a slip of the mind into fantasy, here a bit of present happenings, and there some introspection - all welded into a chilling picture of man's future not too many generations hence.

Briefly, the score is that all but the African states have finally done it - overpopulated themselves and drained their soils of natural resources, so that powerful chemicals must be employed to force the poor leached earth to produce anything. The hero, Knowle Noland, by a devious route has become captain of a nuclear freighter transporting sand from Africa to England to help keep up a supply of soil for the all-powerful Farmers, to be worked by their gangs of convicts and robot labourers. Knowle himself was in such a situation and obviously never recovered from the shock, although his delightful condition of "scintillating scotoma" and hallucinations dates back to an earlier time of nutritional deprivation in an orphanage. The cities now in existence are giant

constructions above the land, teeming with diseased and near starving people, driven apparently only by the need to eat and procreate. Writing and reading are almost lost arts, though how the doctors and other technical men get by is not made clear. But Knowle can read, and thereby learns of Justine Smith, his ideal woman, whom he finally meets, and who in the end uses him as a tool to change the world. Whether this wild enterprise succeeds is left to the imagination (thank you, Mr. Aldiss) but one can only assume that something happens because briefly at the start of his history Knowle lets drop a maddening little hint that things have improved - for him at least.

The first impression I got from reading this book was of unrelieved pessimism; I felt the author must have something against our poor human race; but then I started to think about the matter. Then to disagree with the conditions so deftly portrayed, and then to argue about this pitiful concept of the future. I am the sort of reader who likes things straight, and there are some points in EARTHWORKS which just don't fall properly into place.

Why must civilized man reach this sorry state? Where have the thinkers and the doers gone? Surely the peoples of the world would wake up to themselves before Knowle's cities became reality? Even if they do continue to populate so freely the garbage and sewage from such masses ought to supply enough organic matter to maintain soil composition. (See gardening books on compost heaps.) Has the plant life gone mad, too, that it no longer can produce wholes ome materials from chemical fertilizers? And what of the oceans - are they completely drained of life so that man cannot glean some subsistence from them? Why must a nuclear war be the answer, Justine? Can one ever be certain that the survivors will be there, and if the Travellers are to be those survivors the race is doomed anyway? (See page 48 re sexual life of Travellers.) In fact things don't look nearly so black if you can get over the first impact of the book.

As anyone with half a mind may gather, when I read a book I like to live in it, so I probably feel these things more keenly as a possible inhabitant of Brian Aldiss's world. This is of course a compliment to the author, since the story holds the interest and gives rise to argument. Don't give it to any educated rodents to read as they'll probably get guilt complexes and inhibitions about breeding - nor do I recommend it as a Mothers' Day gift. That's what my copy is, though I chose it myself.

Diana Martin

HARRY HARRISON
SENSE OF OBLIGATION

Dobson: $2.00

ROBERT GERRAND

I had just finished reading SENSE OF OBLIGATION and was thinking what a tremendous book it was, when a friend who had read the last few pages over my shoulder said, "What dreadful writing." Now Harry Harrison had just dragged me by the eyeballs at breakneck speed through the novel, and the writing had seemed anything but dreadful. So I asked for an example. "All the scenes between Brion Brandd (the hero) and his girlfriend Lea. Sample: 'Lea was frozen by his words. They revealed a truth she had known, but would never permit herself to consider.' Or: '"I know, I know..." she said sobbing into her hands. He held her now and she didn't pull away. "I know it all as a biologist - but I am so awfully tired of being a biologist, and top of my class and a mental match for any man. When I think about you, I do it as a woman and can't admit any of this."' They're Woman's Magazine level."

And yes, looking at them again, the personal relationships were pretty unreal though to be fair these examples are about the worst; probably Harrison was tired, in a hurry to finish the book. But this all brought to mind the question

of characterization in sf. How much space should be devoted to it; to what extent are people relevant to the stories?

If an author uses people in telling his story, then I think he should try to make any contact between them as real as possible. Obviously he is not writing primarily a story about personal relationships but about ideas. However this does not remove the necessity of making the characters lifelike. Just as you should not toss in a bit of romance or sex or violence or whatever (it is either something necessary to the book - in which case it will arise naturally - or it should be eradicated), so conversely, any characters used should be as convincing as possible.

In SENSE OF OBLIGATION Brion Brandd is working under harsh conditions with Lea Morees, and Harrison assumes quite rightly that there will be some sort of personal reaction between them. For most of the book he is unsentimental about the characters - perhaps an occasional dialogue will ring false - but at the end it gets out of hand.

Luckily Harrison writes so well that you don't notice this on a first reading. You are wholly absorbed in a fascinating ecological thriller. Still, Harrison has shown elsewhere his abilities in describing people vividly, and it's a pity that he doesn't quite manage to do so in this book.

FREDERIK POHL (ed)
THE "IF" READER OF S.F.

Whiting & Wheaton: $2.65

Here are stories by Young, Pohl, Saberhagen, Bixby, Van Vogt, Brunner, Brand, Laumer and Leiber, in that order. There's not a bad story in the selection, but neither is there a really brilliant one. Two are worth singling out for their original treatments of ideas: Fred Saberhagen's THE LIFE HATER and Fritz Leiber's THE 64-SQUARE MADHOUSE. The former has a new twist to the men-vs.-machine war story, the latter wittily describes the first international chess competition involving a computer and includes quite an accurate account of a computer's abilities, and potentials - what it can and can't do. The rest of the stories are not as unforgettable as the blurb suggests. Any recent F&SF or GALAXY anthology should be read before this one.

Robert Gerrand

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL
SINISTER BARRIER

Dobson: $2.65

STEPHEN COOK

Today we'll write a novel. Unless you have a better suggestion, we'll make it about the Alien Threat to Mankind. If we're really cunning, we can chuck in all that weird Fortean material we were reading the other day in those old copies of DOUBT.

Okay. So we'll begin with a few scientists being killed by invisible Things. Then we need a hero: call him Bill Graham. He may be only a "government liaison officer between scientists and the U.S. Department of Special Finance", but he's a bright boy, is our Bill. Through sheer intuitive genius he becomes the leader of world opposition to the Things - the first man to see the invisible Things for what they are, and live - the discoverer of the Secret Weapon and the first man to fire it in action.

That leaves us with a few loose ends to tie up. How does Bill escape destruction while he deduces that the invisible Things (change that word - let's call them Vitons) can read minds, and will destroy him if they catch him thinking about them? That's easy; a guy as brilliant as Bill will have a Hunch. But won't it seem odd that, while our story is set in the next century, most of our slab of genuine Fortean evidence comes from around 1937? Oh, what the hell - poetic licence.

The story's dragging a bit and we're only half finished. Say, why not have the Vitons churn up a World War? Great, great.

And let me handle the gory bits. I've got some good lines ready. How's this for openers, after somebody's fallen sixteen floors: "The dead had no face. Its sodden clothes were surmounted by a ghastly mask like one made of scrambled blueberries and cream." Or a man being attacked by a Viton: "A human face, fearfully distorted, made leprous by the ghastly illumination, sweated directly in the luminosity's path - a homoburger waiting the bite!" Or a grand fight: "A stricken dupe writhed snakishly on the floor, snatched at Graham's left leg. He used his right to kick the other's schnozzle into something resembling a squashed strawberry.... He saw Sheehan shove the muzzle of his gun straight into a slobbering mouth and let her blow. Gobs of noggin, slop and goo flew in all directions as the part-headless victim toppled under his stamping feet."

Bill and his sidekick, Lieutenant Wohl of the police, are even quicker off the mark with girls than they are with Vitons. They meet a nurse in a hospital corridor: "'Surgery's sugar-babe,' he told Wohl, with unnecessary gusto. Wohl gave her an appraising up-and-down, and said, 'I'll say!'" They barge after her into her office, where Wohl notices a photo on her desk: "Pointing to it, he said, 'To Harmony from Pop. Harmony, eh? That's a nice name. Was your pappy a musician?' The ice broke a little. Taking a chair, Dr. Curtis smiled. 'Oh, no. I guess he just liked the name.' 'So do I,' Graham announced. He threw her the I-spy eye. 'I hope it'll suit us.' 'Us?' Her finely arched brows rose a trifle. 'Yes,' he said, impudently. 'Someday.'" Hot stuff.

Friends, I have bad news. The novel has already been written. In a way this is fortunate, since anybody reading it hot from your pen would have little hesitation in pronouncing it a lousy book. As it happens, Eric Frank Russell turned it out in 1939, and some of the powers-that-be would have me believe that it's a classic. SINISTER BARRIER is no classic. John Smith, 1967, or Eric Frank Russell, 1939 it's still a bad novel.

The blurb on my copy quotes UNKNOWN MAGAZINE as pronouncing it the "greatest imaginative yarn of two decades... It will go down in history along with H.G. Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS." A weighty, impartial assessment? Hardly; UNKNOWN was using the story at the time to kick off its first issue.

As a literary historian, I might be interested to know that SINISTER BARRIER was the first treatment of the "we-are-property" theme. As a critic, I don't particularly care. The novel fails because of its turgid style, infantile characterization and sloppy plot structure. As evidence that an extravagant melodrama needs just as much control as a more confined work, let me suggest a story by Charles Harness called THE PARADOX MEN.

CHARLES HARNESS
THE PARADOX MEN

Four Square: 60¢

I won't insult the book by trying to summarize the plot. It covers more ground and grows out of more imaginative ideas than at the moment I can remember ever having seen within one book. It takes us from beneath the surface of the Sun to the far reaches of the universe, from daggers and poison darts to superhuman powers from prehistoric man to the fourth dimension, from sedan chairs to travel at the speed of light. Fragments of sociology, science, history and philosophy flow past as we read. Characters scheme, counter-scheme, and counter-counter-scheme.

Absurd, over-concentrated? Not when handled by Harness. With the sure touch of a man who is master of his material he blends his wildly contrasting ideas into a tense, brooding structure in which suddenly nothing just happens - it belongs. Brian Aldiss calls the style Widescreen Baroque. Edgar Allan Poe, raised on Fleming, writing at the speed of light. THE PARADOX MEN rises in my

mind like a huge black diamond flawed, but magnificently cut, catching and holding the spectrum in its sombre facets.

Russell gives the impression, in SINISTER BARRIER, that he rarely plotted more than a page ahead. The novel stumbles forward on the strength of arbitrary catastrophes and Bill Graham's hunches. When Russell introduces a World War it's just one more bolt from the blue. When Harness does the same thing, in Chapter 20, my surprise is followed by the realization that I should have expected it - the inevitability of the attack was outlined as early as Chapter 6.
6
Time and again, a throwaway line or a simple event on one page is given an entirely new dimension elsewhere. Each of the characters (and the reader) sees a little of the truth, but not until the final pages do we discover the full pattern. Paradoxes are revealed and reconciled. One by one the major characters - heroes and villains alike - are destroyed, sometimes after torture, until nobody survives - but there is a happy ending.

The twists and turns are incredible but convincing, each new development appearing as a loop in the thread of the total tapestry not as a pin thrust through from the outside in the hope of tacking the whole thing together. Like a magician's knot, the complex plot unravels itself into a single strand....

Stephen Cook

MICHAEL MOORCOCK (ed)
NEW WORLDS Speculative Fiction Vol.51 No.173 July 1967

JOHN BANGSUND

"Arts Council grants are always a matter for conjecture, often for dissension, but this time they've really done it. They're giving £1800 to a science fiction magazine called New Worlds." Thus an article in THE SUNDAY TIMES 11th June 1967 - an article which tends to give the impression that English literary blokes have all lapsed into second childhood and wasted a vast sum of public money in the process. Whether or not the grant is extravagant, and whether or not NEW WORLDS is worthy of the grant, are subjects outside the scope of a review. I will confine myself to an attempt to give you some idea (since it is quite unobtainable at present in Australia) of the appearance and contents of the new-look NEW WORLDS.

The first reaction is shock. Knowing it is to be in the $8\frac{1}{4}$ x $10\frac{3}{4}$ size, one expects something looking like the pre-digest-sized ANALOG. Rather, NEW WORLDS now looks and feels like HISTORY TODAY - or, if you are not familiar with that worthy journal, like TIME MAGAZINE, if you can imagine TIME with a blue cover and better quality paper.

Two things about the cover then compete for your attention: the words "Speculative Fiction", and the brilliant multi-dimensional lithograph by M.C. Escher. (The issue is worth acquiring for that picture alone.) Apart from the covers, three of which bear advertising matter, there are sixty-four pages - editorial and book reviews in three columns, all other material in two. Allowing for illustrations and headlines, there is probably about as much reading matter as in the former pocket-book format. There are forty-five pages of fiction, one of poetry, two of editorial, five of book reviews, and ten of articles, plus contents page. The whole magazine is nicely designed and, physically, very readable.

Mike Moorcock's editorial contains much food for thought, and I must resist the temptation to argue at length with him. "The past may have its lessons to teach, but they are, like lessons in Greek, superfluous - at best an adornment, at worst an escape." I'm afraid I disagree: we need the past to give us perspective for the future (and if we fail to learn from it there may be no future). Is it true that we are "confronted with a future in which precedent

is of so little assistance"? Surely one of the functions of sf (stf or spf, as you will) is to show us how "precedent" may be applied to strange and difficult future situations? "We all stand in need of the 'new sensibility' that can enable us to handle experiences and ideas for which nothing in our past lives has prepared us, and this sensibility can be won only by an act of sustained and informed imagination." Fair enough. "It is to be hoped that this magazine can provide, in some degree, imaginative works that will fulfil this need." Amen to that: it is a noble aspiration.

Whether the "new sensibility" requires a new insensitivity to certain words (called by a good friend of mine "in-and-out words") infrequently encountered in sf, is perhaps a debatable point. Certainly there are plenty of them in this issue, and this may offend mums and dads and clean-thinking fans of good old sexless sf. Tom Disch, I feel, knows how to handle these tabu words and subjects, and I enjoyed the first instalment of his CAMP CONCENTRATION, which appears as lead fiction. Esoteric enough to flatter the literary reader (it is in a similar vein to his SQUIRREL CAGE), it is sufficiently intriguing to please Joe Fan.

J.G. Ballard contributes THE DEATH MODULE. We've been here before: Kline, Coma, Karen Novotny - and, of course, that damned white Pontiac. I'm beginning to get the feeling that I know what it's all about (the same feeling I had the third time I saw MARIENBAD), but I'm probably just kidding myself. Where it's all leading I couldn't begin to guess, but I have the feeling that Jayne Mansfield is likely to show up in the next instalment.

John T. Sladek's 1937 A.D.! lets the side down somewhat, and it's quite straightforwardly written so one doesn't have the pleasure of trying to untangle it to see if it means anything. THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE is Miss P.A. Zoline's first story, and it's quite interesting - all about Sugar Frosted Flakes and cancer and thermodynamics - though the point of it rather eluded me. David Masson's NOT SO CERTAIN is an exercise in alien linguistics: a poor story, very dull, but it does show man coping with a strange future situation. Roger Zelazny's IN THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD appears to be the first part of a serial, and it is, as you might confidently expect, quite a brilliant piece of work; but not, I feel, stf, or even exactly spf.

There are two articles. SLEEP, DREAMS AND COMPUTERS, by Dr. Christopher Evans, speculates on the purpose of sleep. He remarks that some of his "fabulous ideas... are a bit too fabulous to put into orthodox scientific publications as yet" but that he "can think of no better market at this stage than NEW WORLDS." Charles Platt presents some very interesting work by the Dutch graphic artist, M.C. Escher. There may be better artists around, but this bloke is worth knowing about.

The issue concludes with reviews of nine books. Brian Aldiss's three page article on two books about Hiroshima is very thoughtful and illuminating, and strangely enough, this struck me as the most professional and worthwhile piece of writing in the whole issue. Even if it does contain a few lessons from the past.

At the risk of being tedious, I enjoyed thoroughly six of the eleven items: the editorial, Disch, Zelazny, the articles on sleep and Escher, and the reviews. And I read it from cover to cover, which is something I haven't done to a magazine for some time. I would say that if Mike Moorcock can maintain this standard then he has a very fine magazine going. If there is a weakness (and I might just be dense or hard to please) it is in his second-line fiction. I have no idea of the marketing arrangements, if any, for Australia. Your best bet might be the publisher: NEW WORLDS, 87 Ladbroke Grove, London W.11 - the subscription 48s0d per year.

John Bangsund

L E T T E R S

ROBERT BLOCH
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Los Angeles
California USA

In your lettercol, Lin Carter suggests that writers who are reviewed in fanzines should send a nice note to the editor, thanking him for giving so much attention to their efforts; this should be done even if the review is adverse. Well, I enjoyed the brief comment on THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM, didn't find it adverse, and even if I had I would be writing anyway to thank you for the first anniversary issue, which I much enjoyed.

To revert to the reading notice for a moment, I too find it a bit sad to realize I'm out here in Hollywood and playing footsie with films and telly rather than hewing to the line with more printed sf and fantasy. My criticism of these areas still stands, I think, and I get constant first-hand corroboration whenever I try to inject "pure" elements of either genre into a screenplay or teleplay, only to see said same distorted or eliminated by somebody's arbitrary rewriting or changes. However, I do try whenever possible and continue to hope that some day I'll be given free rein as I was, on a few occasions, with THRILLER or HITCHCOCK shows. I've done a few STAR TREK episodes recently, and while again I was subject to alterations in script, I keep plugging away. My idea of heaven would be to write exclusively for fanzines, a la the content of THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM, but you see I'm hooked on this habit of mine - eating, sometimes three whole meals a day - and it's expensive.

The content of ASFR is a delight and any nominations and/or awards you receive are richly deserved. I learned a great deal from this issue - the analysis of THE DEMOLISHED MAN shows just how superficial my own findings were, some years ago, and I'm grateful for the incisiveness demonstrated by George Turner in his disquisition.

I was even willing to stand on my head to read page 25 - just as I imagine you folks Down Under had to stand on <u>your</u> heads to read all the other pages.

And it's a nice, one-worldish sort of feeling to see mentions of or by Brian Aldiss, Graham Hall, Mike Moorcock, James White and others whom I had the pleasure of seeing at the London Convention two years ago - or that eminent philologist, Rick Sneary, whom I bumped into at our own Westercon here last month. As far as I'm concerned, sf performs a far better job of global unification than the UN. Granted, Ted White is no U Thant, but then nobody's perfect.

JB: Page 25 of ASFR 10 so far has drawn more comments than anything else in that issue. Being in a circular form, with no actual beginning or ending, John's story posed problems of presentation which I attempted to overcome by printing a page of it upside down. Ideally, I would have liked to print it on an endless roll of, say, toilet paper, and to mount the roll in a couple of slots on a blank page; that way, the roll could have been fed through the slots until the reader grew tired. Or... No, that way lies madness. (Have you ever <u>tried</u> twisting a quarto page into a Moebius strip?)

STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH
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Melbourne 3001

Congratulations on the honors proposed for ASFR, richly deserved - I always look forward to it. I thought the idea of reprinting Lance Skuthorpe

brilliant; and I liked the question you raise in the editorial - Australian or otherwise. Perhaps the answer is - Australian if it can be unselfconsciously so, like the best of the contemporary American-Jewish novels - i.e. both Jewish and American (Bellow) - otherwise stick to the international genre.

JB: Only one other correspondent to date has mentioned my editorial in no.10. I don't know - maybe I should stick to rubbishing LOST IN SPACE and pontificating on the Pong Awards, instead of crusading. ::: Most local readers, I imagine, would know Dr. Murray-Smith's excellent quarterly, OVERLAND. Overseas readers interested in contemporary Australian writing (fiction, poetry, criticism, documentary, &c) should find OVERLAND very interesting. A$2.00 per year, 50¢ single copy - through me, if you like.

JOHN BROSNAN
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Floreat Park
Western Australia 6014

Good grief, no wonder you're having financial troubles: I almost fainted when I saw the size of no.10. Sorry to hear that from now on ASFR will be bi monthly, but I don't blame you, and it will certainly be worth it if the result is more issues like this. On the whole I enjoyed it very much. The cover was good - simple and effective. Your editorial was very inspiring, so much so that I'm writing a story called THE BILLABONG THAT ATE PERTH. Seriously, though, it did provide food for thought.

All the fiction was worthy of being published in ASFR. Best were Jack Wodhams' two mini-stories. I preferred them even to Bert Chandler's efforts. John Foyster's EXTRACK was either a well-done spoof or a load of rubbish. I hate to admit it but I'm not sure which.

The book reviews/criticisms were the main attraction as always. George Turner's, though interesting, annoyed me. So did John Foyster's, for the same reason. Mainly because they were both condescending towards sf. Turner says that sf has a long way to go before it attains the quality of mainstream writing and Foyster says of one of the novels he reviews that as mainstream writing it stinks but as sf it is good. Phooey! I don't say sf is better than the best mainstream writing, but I do claim that it is unique. And I am fed up with these people who say that sf will have come of age when it can't be distinguished from mainstream. When that day arrives there won't be any such thing as sf. Sf always suffers in comparison with conventional writing because the same standards are applied. This is wrong. The elements that go to make good sf are not found in any other t ype of writing. Sf, as far as I am concerned, can be defined in one word: alien. The images and feelings that that one word conjures up are the essence of sf.

JB: John unless I win Tatts or get a hundred or so more subscribers, there will never be another issue like no.10. I am aiming at 50 to 60 pages in future issues, but even this is difficult, both in terms of finance and of the ruthlessness required to keep it down to this size. (Right now I reckon I could fill about 300 pages with quite readable, unpublished - and, I regret to say, largely unanswered - letters.) ::: A couple of points in your letter I should comment on, since they are typical of remarks made in a number of letters about no.10. George Turner began his article by quoting me on the subject of the Double Standard. The purpose of his article is to show that, since all writing is literature, literary criticism may be applied to sf; and when this is done it is seen that sf on the whole is not good literature. Don't confuse "literature" with "mainstream"; and don't be led astray by considerations of subject-matter or non-literary values. "The elements that go to make good sf" are precisely the elements that go to make good literature - and both George and John Foyster find sf lacking in these elements. John, in his review, concludes that Samuel R. Delany's BABEL-17, as an sf adventure yarn, is

good. However, since Delany proposes in his NEW WORLDS editorial that sf should be judged by certain tests, which he enumerates, John applies those tests to Delany's own book - and judges it bad. Now whether John is thereby practising the very Double Standard that George deprecates is a matter which those two gentlemen may decide for themselves.

JOHN KNIGHT
No.2 R.D.
Rakaia
Canterbury
New Zealand

I received the tenth issue of ASFR with pleasure a few days ago. ... Ref. p.48 announcement: I would prefer not to see any fiction in ASFR; if it's any good it will sell, if it's not I don't want to see it. For drivel I can always read the F&SF shorts. Articles, discussions and reviews are welcomed, but not fiction. Another point: in reviews could previous publication be mentioned in detail? If the pb is a retitle of a STARTLING novel, could the original title and date of publication be given? e.g. the fact that the Pohl-Williamson efforts, reviewed in 10 were serials in IF could have been mentioned, with dates. I am always glad to see reviews especially. US pbs get very little retail business here and the sf pbs virtually none. Consequently I have to order, generally, direct from the USA, and reviews are about my only means of keeping up with the newer writers and books.

HARRY HARRISON
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California 92032 USA

Finally having a good old read and working my way down through the pile of ASFR. Great stuff. And I have found a story by A. Bertram Chandler which I did enjoy. In fact I enjoyed it enough to want to put it into the YEARS BEST SF that I am editing for Berkley here. ... It will be a lot of fun to print this story. Also heap glory on your journal. I can't think of any other fanzine that has ever had a story in an annual best anthology.

JACK WODHAMS
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Hard to know where to start. And there is reluctance to run into high wordage. I think Mervyn Barrett's A BRISTOL NON-REPORT was the cream of the crop. This supremely individualistic accurately uninformative account is journalistic indifference at its breezy best. Such leaven does much to offset the bursts of inordinate passion that occur here and there.

To George Turner I would like to say that great literature is not necessarily great reading. From the analysis given of THE DEMOLISHED MAN, Bester would appear to be an sf Edgar Wallace. Of course, the standard Mr. Turner applies is Mr. Turner's standard. The test, he says, is to compare the book with the best we know. But what is the best? WUTHERING HEIGHTS? Or THE FOUR JUST MEN? We have John Foyster later in aside snides sniping Asimov Harrison, Anvil, &c, and he obviously has a different standard of "best" entirely. Needless to say my idea of "best" would probably cause these two gentlemen to foam in the dome; mindful of their lack of need for such distress, I shall decline to elaborate my preferences here.

I was glad to read in Lee Harding's review that THE HAMELIN PLAGUE (at least in his view) was not Chandler's "best." Making a start on the Captain's works, it was perhaps unfortunate that this was the first volume to fall into my hands. Maybe will have better luck next time.

Stephen Cook takes my mark in the fiction section. Would try this educational system upon my young nephew but he won't watch the watch.

Disagree with Lin Carter's predilection for criticism; the potpourri is more generally readable. Also Al Cox could maybe develop well and should be encouraged by the outlet. Agree with Charles Platt and, lordy! a man could spout reams giving his opinion in answering the letter section alone.

JB: Opinions on the wisdom of publishing fiction in ASFR vary, as do opinions on the relative merits of the particular stories chosen for no.10. (Of the eight published, six have been nominated as best in the issue.) With respect to John Knight, I think the question of whether our stories would sell to the professional magazines is somewhat irrelevant. Go a step or two further, John, and you have a statement like Ted Carnell's on p.30 of this issue: "Sales figures... have yet to justify the experimental sf novel." Sales figures have yet to justify the publication of ASFR. All these things are worth doing, and if writers and publishers lose money in the process perhaps they gain something that doesn't carry a price tag. ::: Maybe an editor, even an amateur editor, should not express preferences about the material he publishes, but I'll stick my neck out and say that I agree with Harry Harrison about the fiction - I liked Bert's story best - and with Jack Wodhams about the issue in general - I keep turning back to Mervyn's non-report and chuckling over it. Jack asks me not to make a fuss about his now having made five sales to ANALOG so I won't. But I wouldn't worry too much about Sergeant Smith's strictures, Jack: he may not see you yet as Australia's Heinlein (or whoever), but he's a nice guy for all that.

DAMON KNIGHT
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I like ASFR & would be delighted to have you use PROJECT BOSKONE or any part of it. ... I do think most of your critics & correspondents are fuggheads, but at least they are arguing about sf as if it mattered, & not many fanzines do that any more.

ETHEL LINDSAY
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6 Langley Avenue
Surbiton
Surrey England

(Re ASFR 9:) You are to be congratulated upon your new artist, but then your layout has always been good. The dearth of typos should make me hang my head in shame! I have been enjoying John Foyster's articles on Ballard very much. I was amused to see he had got Mike Moorcock on the defensive about some of his extravagant claims for Ballard. I suppose what first antagonized me against Ballard was the attitude of some of his admirers. The assumption that one didn't like Ballard's work because it was beyond our comprehension annoyed me more than somewhat. Perhaps there are fans who read nothing but sf and have that only as a yardstick but I am pretty sure they are in the minority. I also enjoyed John Brunner's article, which was a real eye-opener in many ways. But then, John is never dull! As always the letter column is of a very high standard - but, dear me, such a tantrum from Keith Roberts. Authors, even the nicest of them, do hate adverse criticism - or what they think is. Only - don't we all? But I've nothing but praise for ASFR.

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER
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USS Co of NZ Ltd
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Please tell Lee that I am considering a libel action. So my novels just "happen", do they? On second thoughts, I'd better not sue. After all - I admit it - a novel that just happens is at least as much fun to the writer as to the reader. For example, when I started the one now in progress I had no idea that I should get involved in voodoo and marine salvage. The only really tightly plotted book was FALSE FATHERLAND, and although every bastard who reads it says how good it is nobody (except AMAZING) wants to buy it.

Meanwhile, I'm settling down in PATEENA - or, to be more truthful, PATEENA is settling down around me. Even though I seem to be doing nothing but pilotage - an awkward berthing and unberthing (requiring a contortionist and an escapologist rather than a ship handler) in Sydney and about three hours on the

bridge arriving at and departing from Port Huon - somehow I've been able to settle down to work. Two chapters southbound, another two northbound, each trip - weather permitting. ... Am somewhat annoyed that every time I think of a brand new gimmick for a novel some other bastard gets in first with the same gimmick in a short story. Makes one rather wonder how many ideas come from Inside, and how many from Outside. Huxley seems to have had something in his GATES OF PERCEPTION... Nothing much else to report from this end, so will close. Some day, when I get around to it, I'll do a review of THE WATCH BELOW for you. Rather late in the day. I found the book very interesting, as other reviewers conveyed the erroneous impression that the tanker drifted, submerged, for years and years and years - whereas, far more credibly, she grounded in soundings. Insofar as the ship herself was concerned, during the war years (World War II, I mean) we saw, and sailed in convoy with, some very peculiar specialized ships. The working out of a closed ecology was very cleverly done. My only quibble, in fact, is a legal one. As the vessel was still under the Red Ensign when she was torpedoed, her command would automatically devolve upon the senior surviving MN officer remaining on board, the Chief Officer, not the Lieutenant Commander RN. However, since the Mate was all by himself insofar as his Service was concerned, all other personnel being RN and badly injured to boot, that is only a legal quibble. Damn it all, there is your review. You can say that the book was thoroughly approved by both my personalities - the shipmaster and the sf writer.

p.s.: Tried to watch STAR TREK the other night. It was a fine soporific.

JOHN BRUNNER
17d Frognal
London NW3 England

Thank you for ASFR 9, and in particular for so promptly running the reference to my trouble with New American Library over their edition of PRODUCTIONS OF TIME.

In answer to your query regarding the serial version of the novel: well, it was an abridgment, which meant that something had to be left out, but I prepared it myself and I never object to carrying the can back for my own shortcomings - it's only when someone else's ineptitude is anonymously fathered on me that I tend to raise the roof. On the whole, in fact, I was reasonably well pleased with the F&SF version, in the sense that I wasn't compelled by editorial fiats on maximum lengths per instalment to omit anything indispensable. (There was not, by the way, anything left out between Part I and Part II - if you look again, you'll see that the reference to "on your head be it", spoken by Delgado, carries directly over the break to Douglas's head splitting from his imaginary hangover.)

Further footnote to my article on THE ECONOMICS OF SF: there has been a shakeup at Penguin, the gentleman who without actually liking sf was prepared to tolerate its presence in the list was given the boot by Sir Allen Lane, who actively detests the stuff, and as a result you may disregard what I said about Penguin offering decent advances for original novels. Why didn't I take up a stable occupation - say pearl-diving?

310840 Sgt R.F. SMITH
Area Sergeants Mess
Puckapunyal Victoria 3662

Congratulations are in order, I think, for your first Annish, and I fear that Mike Moorcock will have to revise his opinion of ASFR - even I am not game to call it a fanzine anymore! Others may disagree with me, but I do not think Australian fandom has seen anything quite like this publication of yours before in its history. And the names that are appearing within its pages now... in some respects it reminds me of the keen, genuine interest that Bergeron's WARHOON used to receive from the BNF's and filthy pros, yet... ASFR is decidedly Australian! Although I have contributed little to its creation I have become immensely proud of ASFR, as a "fan." I have a feeling that at last you are doing what you want with this magazine of yours... in the repulsive parlance of 1967, the first Annish "swings", I feel.

Interesting editorial... still trying to work out if you were grinning when you wrote it, but it makes one think. As an ex-Englishman I am a sucker for the Australian "character" who is often a mixture of Chips Rafferty and McGooley, although I should know better after sixteen years, because as you say, statistically the average Australian does live closer to the espresso joint than the gum tree. On the other hand, though, a whole new set of statistics could be developed for the Australian who dwells outside the City, and I could raise my own figures and facts on the Australian who dwells in the forces. If you want "characters" who continue that image, that's the place to find 'em, believe me!

As a semi-barbarian in the ranks of the professional military, who sometimes foolishly ventures into the City, I am tempted to suggest that your race of "urban men" is already pretty much in evidence and often I have noticed, as I hitch my side arms, finger my Mark 3 sub-machine gun lovingly, peer grimly from beneath my Mark 8 battle helmet, and roar for Wine, Women and Women... oft times I have noticed these robotic urban City dwellers move away in horror and disgust... "Arr..." I mumble, and toss a grenade into the Ladies just for kicks, "What a lot of bloody poofters!"

Seriously though... Australian characterization seems to come through more effectively in short stories articles newspaper columns (Ron Saw of the Sydney newspapers gets this across well, I think), but whether it has any place in sf is indeed debatable. It already has a place in fantasy, of course, although I would like to see some Sprague de Camp type of shenanigans with an Australian flavour in science fantasy. But I agree with you that ours is a unique land, and this is where I think Australian sf writers are neglecting an almost "alien" atmosphere and landscape in their own backyard.

I liked George Turner's article. No nonsense, no mucking about - in fact, rather like a bucket of refreshingly cold water. THE DEMOLISHED MAN has always been a favourite of mine but Mr. Turner's axe job in no way makes me irritable. I still like the book, and I do not wish to kill Mr. Turner, for of course he could have chosen a dozen similar examples of "dishonest" writing. (I suppose Mr. Turner isn't Damon Knight in disguise...?) It is interesting to note that Bester, who has also made some honest statements about his writing, considers those short stories written ten years before TDM as "drivel" and TDM as the product of his "experience", a coming to grips with "reality" and the developing of an "attitude"! Bester was honest enough to admit that, to him, sf was a writing form to muck about with but not to be taken seriously, and he further admits that he is an "amateur" in the field. No, 1953 wasn't a bad year for novels, and I do not believe that the fans were hypnotized to the extent that they were not aware of the faults in TDM. I am willing to admit that TDM undoubtedly did receive the International Fantasy Award for its "style and movement", and surely new aspects of sf, however lacking in that queer atmosphere known as "Literature", should be recognized? Let us put things somewhat in perspective by remembering that another book was receiving the IFA that same year and causing just as much excitement - MORE THAN HUMAN.

And even if TDM was a sample of what the sf reader wanted then - 13 years ago - times have apparently changed. IFA and Hugo awards up through the years since then have indicated that the sf reader and fan knows what he likes and he damn well let's the world know if he isn't satisfied. And this business of "better sf will be written when the readers demand it" has been thrashed up and down the years almost as long as we've had the field, and it's a load of bushwa, Mr. Turner. I believe you ask too much of sf, and you have a poor and inaccurate impression of the sf reader and enthusiast.

Page 25 was upside down in my copy, John.
Ho ho! Jack Wodhams not only knows how to be funny - he also has a bite!
Page 29 was duplicated in my copy, John.

John, I wish you would write things like OVER THE SKY TO C more often! Here in five pages was a gem that should satisfy Mr. Turner and his thirst for "Literature" in sf, those who feel Australia isn't getting a fair go in sf, those who still like to chuckle at a piece of outrageous nonsense, but mainly those who like to relax with John Bangsund having fun...

ASFR's letter column is becoming a fascinating place to escape for a few hours, and I tend to paddle around contentedly examining the speakers (but not getting too close, for that way madness or peculiar buzzings in the ear lie) and wondering if they are cardboard characters or for real... No, I am not being sarcastic or smart, for it is well known that letter columns in ~~fanz~~ amateur magazines can have strange and mind-warping effects on otherwise sober sf citizens, and one examines carefully to see if it is Jekyll or Hyde letting forth...

Haven't yet decided if I prefer Jack Wodhams' letters or his yarns, but both are certainly...er...different. I too was a snot-nosed evacuee duringthe war, and wish I could remember the name of the quiet country village that in true British fashion endured with dignity the scallywaggism of the young Smith in those days of the "phony war" (or peace... which was it?) I believe I gave my mother what is commonly known as a hard time, and good milking cows in that village were never the same again.

Mike Moorcock seems rather formal in that letter... quite stiffish, in fact. It doesn't really marry up with what Mervyn has to say about him at the Con. And listen, mate, there is nothing wrong with your "image" and I sincerely hope you don't go for that "austere approach" in ASFR. I think you've pretty much found your niche in the befuddling world of amateur publishing.

I think Lin Carter has hit the nail on the head with his remarks about fans being professional readers, but it usually takes the right fanzine to appear before they become really enthusiastic enough about this. It has to be the sort of vehicle they can relax and feel comfortable in, and I think ASFR is just this. And of course when the Names and the Writers use it as a medium for expressing their views....well, then you have got a publication indeed! I may be curious enough to shell out hard cash for a copy of IF when Lin Carter devotes his column to Australian fandom... blimey.

Although it's very nice to see Rick Sneary in the letter column for me there was a certain sadness in his revealing that he is not very active fannishly these days and reads little sf... Ghod, this is almost like J.W. Campbell Jr. stating that he's leaving the sf racket... it's mind-croggling! I am tempted to cry out impulsively: SOUTH GATE IN '68!

Ethel Lindsay liked my "urbane style and quiet humour"...? Wish she had told me that six or seven years ago: there would have been no stopping me!

Now Mervyn crams more "urbane style and quiet humour" into one paragraph than yours truly is ever likely to achieve in half a dozen pages, and he was the ideal choice to cover the convention for ASFR and Australia. It is even possible that Buck Coulson who has shown his friendliness to us Aussies before, might find the conrep palatable! A thoroughly entertaining report in the best Barrett manner, and you should hang on to him as a regular ASFR correspondent. Mervyn Barrett is a Trufan!

JB: Strange, Bob, that real Australian characters have names like Rafferty and McGooley; makes yer think, begorra! I'm tempted to comment on your letter, but I must finish. I have had to omit some excellent letters but I hope to run them next time. Recent correspondents have included: Brian Aldiss, Ted Carnell, Mervyn Barrett, Ron Clarke, Robert W. Gersman, Phil Muldowney, Rick Brooks, A.M. McBurnie, Ian Godden, Pat Terry, K.U.F. Widdershins, John Blattman, Franz Rottensteiner, Michael Gilbert, Brian Richards, George Turner, Alan France, Hans Alpers, Noel Cronk, Kevin Dillon, Ron Graham, Per Insulander, Nigel Jackson, Gary Mason.

A SELECT GUIDE TO CURRENT FANZINES

compiled by the editor

Fanzines are fun. Some more than others. Some are superbly produced and hardly worth reading; others frustratingly badly put together but excellent reading. Some are deadly serious about Our Sacred Literature; others never mention sf. But however it is produced, whatever its range of interests, a good fanzine is a great delight. In these pages I want to point out to you some good ones that I have enjoyed reading, and others which I have only heard about. Frankly, someone else should be writing these notes, since I do not know the field well yet; but, as it says up there, this is a select guide, and you will understand that it is a purely personal one, with no malice intended towards any omitted. Let's start with the Best Fanzine nominations for this year:

YANDRO — Robert & Juanita Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, Indiana 47348, USA. Published monthly, subscription 4 for $1.25, 12 for $3.00. One of the liveliest and longest-running. Current issue about 173 or some goddam incredible number. Generally informative (and provocative) about sf, but other subjects are aired, usually entertainingly.

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY — Leland Sapiro, Box 82, University Station, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Quarterly, 35¢ per copy. Probably the best there is for no-mucking-around serious talk about sf, fantasy, and related topics. A bit too serious for my liking, but I wouldn't wish to go without it. Last issue I've seen, no.8, contains among other things the fifth part of Alexei Panshin's extremely well thought out study of Robert Heinlein.

HABAKKUK — Bill Donaho, PO Box 1284, Berkeley, California, 94701, USA. Available for trade or contribution. A little sf, a lot of fandom and other subjects, and a usually vastly entertaining letter column written by eminent pros and fans. HABAKKUK has given me a better view of the West Coast hippy scene than any TV documentary or other publication. Recommended, if you can get it.

LIGHTHOUSE — Terry Carr, 35 Pierrepoint Street, Brooklyn, New York, 11201, USA. Last issue was 25¢, but I've heard a whisper this is being increased to 50¢. A huge fanzine, full of excellent material, of sf interest and otherwise. Currently running travel notes by globe-trotter Tom Disch. Lucky Terry has access to many pro writers through his job, and his contents pages are usually star-studded.

TRUMPET — Tom Reamy, 2508 17th Street, Plano, Texas, 75074, USA. This is one I haven't seen yet, but it appears to enjoy a considerable reputation. Try sending Tom 50¢ for a copy. The fact that it has been nominated seems to indicate that you wouldn't be wasting your money.

NIEKAS — Ed, Meskys, c/- Physics Department, Belknap College, Center Harbor, New Hampshire, 03226. I saw a copy of NIEKAS a couple of years ago, and I was most impressed. Again, try sending Ed 50¢ for a copy. I wish I could say more, since I have a sneaking suspicion that this one is the best general fanzine of all.

FENATTIC

Alan G. France, 241 Lawrence Street, Nodonga, Victoria, Australia. Fortnightly, for cost of postage. Extremely limited circulation, since Alan has no duplicator and produces the whole thing with typewriter and carbons. A pity, since FENATTIC is better than many overseas fanzines. Most of its material is contributed by young teenagers, and it is a remarkable effort.

JOURNAL OF THE A.S.F.A.

Graham Stone, Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, A.C.T., Australia. Free to members of the Australian Science Fiction Association. Membership $3.00 per annum. The A.S.F.A. exists for purely bibliographical purposes, or so I understand. At 75¢ a time, the Journal is not particularly good value - not to me, anyway. But it is something you should know about. If the A.S.F.A. does anything apart from produce the Journal I've yet to hear about it.

DOWN UNDER

BOOMERANG

John Ryan, 12 Barkley Street, Fairfield, N.S.W., Australia. Both comics fanzines, of little interest to sf fans, but worth mentioning as local publications. I'm not sure about availability or frequency, but DOWN UNDER costs 25¢.

OPUS

CANTO

THE WILD COLONIAL BOY

Just to round off the Australian fanzine scene. If there are others I don't know about them. OPUS is to be published sometime by Paul Stevens, Flat 3 6 Maleelah Grove, Rosanna, Victoria, but currently held up for lack of finance. I've seen some of the material; you could do worse than send Paul a dollar for a start. CANTO 1 was published by Lee Harding, Olinda Road, The Basin, Victoria, back in 1964. CANTO 2 could be out any year now. WILD COLONIAL BOY is a SAPSzine, published by John Foyster, 12 Glengariff Drive, Springvale North, Victoria, and not generally available outside SAPS. (For the unitiated, The Spectator Amateur Press Society.) Maybe I should also mention

M.S.F.C. NEWSLETTER

the Melbourne Science Fiction Club Newsletter, issued by Mervyn Binns to members of the Club. It contains booklists and news of forthcoming Club programmes and film nights. Since it is unlikely that ASFR will be running booklists in future, if you don't already get Mervyn's Newsletter it might be worth your while to get onto his mailing list. Write him c/- McGill's.

SCOTTISHE HAVERINGS

Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England. Quarterly; 4 for 7s0d. HAVERINGS alternates, and consists of fanzine reviews. Maybe you have to publish a fanzine to get it, or maybe you just have to ask nicely; I'm not sure. SCOT is always worth reading; Ethel writes a lot about offbeat sf and fantasy; there is usually a lead article of special interest (e.g. an incredibly dull piece by someone named Bangsund in no.44); and plenty of good letters.

THE SCARR

George L. Charters, 3 Lancaster Avenue, Bangor, Northern Ireland. Quarterly, I think. Very personal fanzine, mostly written by the editor, but often with articles by James White, and letters. One of my favourites. George has the sort of humour I appreciate. Sample interlineation: COPPER NITRATE: Overtime for policemen on night duty. (Sorry about that.)

SPECULATION

(formerly ZENITH)

Peter Weston, 81 Trescott Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31, England. The fanzine to which ASFR has often been compared, with, I think, some justice. Quarterly; 2s6d for one, 10s0d for five. Issue 15, the only one I've seen, contains articles by Leiber, Silverberg, Coulson, Brandon, Pelz, and Busby. Good letter column, many reviews, 52 pages altogether.

LES SPINGE — Darroll Pardoe, 11 Cheniston Gardens, London W.8, England. Sample available on request, but some response expected. Good artwork, fairly interesting articles - in the issue I've seen all are by British fans - and fanzine reviews. Nicely produced.

VECTOR — Official journal of the British Science Fiction Association. Secretary: Mrs. Doreen Parker, 38 Millfield Road, Deeping St. James, Peterborough, Northants, England. I seem to have mislaid my information on membership charges, and VECTOR's frequency is uncertain at the moment. The latest I've seen is no. 41 published in December. Usually good material in this journal, often by British professionals and there are book and magazine reviews.

For other British fanzines I have to go on hearsay, since I haven't seen them. Most of the following then may be regarded as Ethel Lindsay's judgements, unless otherwise credited. (And referring to HAVERINGS for this information, I see that there is a price quoted: 7s0d per 6 bi-monthly issues.)

ECLIPSE — David Copping, 121 Springfield Park Road, Chelm sford, Essex. One shilling per issue, or for letters of comment, etc. Contains fan fiction, good editorial, general articles.

COMPASS — Another genzine from Robert Wood, 27 Rochford Avenue, Shenfield Essex. Just started and worth encouraging.

PHILE — Graham Charnoc, 1 Eden Close Alperton, Wembley, Middlesex. One shilling or letters of comment, etc. Article by Charles Platt in no.2, a story, and editorial about British sf.

BADINAGE — Bristol & District SF Group, 61 Halsbury Road, Bedland, Bristol 6. A very interesting and amusing fanzine. Quarterly for two bob.

THUD F — Chris Priest, Cornerways Willow Close Do dinghurst, Brentwood, Essex. "To whom no money should be sent." Sounds interesting, but no schedule advised.

Surely there are other British fanzines! I've heard of one called CRABAPPLE, for example. Anyway they'll have to do you for now. Let's look at a few foreign publications, then on to the Americans.

ARGENTINE SF REVIEW — Hector Pessina, Casilla de Correo Central 3869, Buenos Aires. 20¢, irregular. No.3/4, the only one I've seen, has two short stories (one with parallel Spanish translation), articles on neglected classics and astro-philately, reviews and letters. This other ASFR is produced by multilith, which gives scope for good art reproduction. ASFR is in English.

CUENTA ATRAS — Carlos Buiza, Atocha 12, Madrid 12, Spain. The title means 'countdown', and the issues are accordingly numbered backwards from 100. The one I've seen is no.98/97, and it contains, among other things, reviews of Lee Harding's stories. Poor Harding is still trying to decipher the Spanish to see what his first critical appraisal says about him.

QUARBER MERKUR — Franz Rottensteiner, A-2762 Ortmann, Felsenstr. 20, Austria. Haven't seen QM yet, and I won't be able to make much of it when I do, since it's in German, but apparently it's worth the effort of translating if you know the language or have helpful German friends, at least according to RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. Lee Sapiro has very kind things to say about QM (and ASFR) in RQ no.8.

DYNATRON — Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road, NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87107, U.S.A. Quarterly; 20¢. A fanzine with character, which is the best kind. I've only seen one issue, and that was by courtesy of Bob Smith, but I keep hoping that Roy will exchange with me. That one, no.28, included a rambling editorial and reminiscences by the editor, and articles on defining sf and starting fan clubs by John Boston and Art Rapp, plus an interesting letter column.

ODD — Raymond D. Fisher, 4404 Forest Park, St. Louis, Missouri 63108 U.S.A. Bi-monthly; 50¢ or 6 for $2.00. Free for contributions & letters published. A genzine with good artwork, well produced. Big, and always readable.

QUIP — Arnie Katz, 98 Patton Blvd., New Hyde Park, New York, 11043, U.S.A. Bi-monthly; 50¢, letter, contribution, but no subs. The fabulous-fannish-fanzine, QUIP is not everyone's meat (like Buck Coulson's), but I like it. No.5 boasts a 6-page multilith cover, fifteen articles, and letters; 102 pages in all.

THE TWILIGHT ZINE — Cory Seidman & Leslie Turek 56 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, Massacusetts, 02138, U.S.A. Complicated schedule; 20¢ or contributions. Produced for the M.I.T. SF Society, and parts of it tend to reflect both facets of the Society's name. Interesting articles, good artwork, but some of the subjects discussed are way over my head.

ANUBIS — Paul J. Willis, Route 1, Box 156, Festus, Missouri, 63028, U.S.A. Someone's absconded with my copy, but I've only seen the one so I guess it's quarterly. More or less devoted to the weird and the occult; quite fascinating and beautifully produced.

THE PULP ERA — Lynn A. Hickman, 413 Ottokee Street, Wauseon, Ohio, 43567, U.S.A. I lent this one to Lindsay Cox, because he loves old aeroplanes and there have been lots of them in TPE lately. A beautiful fanzine, with I would say about the best artwork I've seen in any of them. The pulps discussed and illustrated are of all types; not just sf.

ALGOL
SF WEEKLY
SF CRITIC — Andrew Porter, 24 East 82nd Street, New York, 10028, U.S.A. I am Australian agent for SFW and recommend it strongly. $1.00 gets you 8, by airmail, fortnightly. I could also be the agent for ALGOL; I'm not sure. Irregular schedule; 50¢, and worth it. SFW appears weekly (but of course) and is an excellent method of keeping up with sf news from America and elsewhere. SF CRITIC is a supplement which appears every so often, and is worth reading. ALGOL is a 70 page monster, the latest devoted to Harlan Ellison. Ted White has a provocative column, and Dick Lupoff reviews offbeat books. Support the Porter-Bangsund Axis! Buy them all!

Now I'll fill the remainder of the page with publications generally recommended, but which I haven't seen.

STROON — Anthony Lewis, 124 Longwood Ave., Brookline, Mass., 02146. 25¢

AMRA — George Scithers, Box 9120, Chicago, Illinois, 60690. 35¢

DOUBLE BILL — Bill Mallardi, 369 Wildwood Ave., Akron, Ohio, 44320. 30¢

HIPPOCAMPELE-PHANTOCAMELOS — Fred Hollander, Lloyd House, Caltech, Pasadena, California, 91109. 25¢

But if you really want the dope on all the fanzines, subscribe to HAVERINGS...

ABOUT STEPHEN COOK

Farewell, this world! I take my leve for evere.
I am arrested to apere at Goddes face.
O! mightyful God, thu knowest that I had levere
Than all this world to have oone houre space
To make asithe for all my grete trespace.
My hert, alas! is broken for that sorowe:
Sum are today that shall not be tomorowe.

Although it is not likely that Stephen ever read the anonymous 15th Century poem of which this is the first stanza, there is in it much of the life of Stephen Cook.

For when he died, these same thoughts had been in his mind.

Lee Harding and I met Stephen some years ago, at the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. Lee drove us both home, and we found Stephen a quiet but thoughtful conversationalist. He was not at all what we expected to find as the author of POROUS PASTERNAK, a comic strip then appearing in the Melbourne University newspaper, FARRAGO, and later in a Canberra newspaper. POROUS used to ask in short, "what does it all mean?"

And now it seems that the same question troubled Stephen. His visits to India apparently meant more to him than similar trips have meant to supposedly engagé beat poets.

He looked at the world, and one day he saw it.

This feble world, so fals and so unstable,
Promoteth his lovers for a little while;
But, at the last, he yeveth hem a bable,
Whene his peinted trouth is torned into gile.
Experience causeth me the trouth to compile,
Thinking this, too late, alas, that I began,
For foly and hope disseiveth many a man.

John Foyster

AN INDEX TO THE FIRST TEN ISSUES OF AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS

FICTION

BOOKS DISCUSSED

Stories or articles contained in collections are not listed here, but the authors concerned are; page references are then given in parentheses. Initials following page references are those of the critics or reviewers.

	New Dreams This Morning	10.57 jf
	(1.20) (5.20)	
BLOCH, Robert	The Eighth Stage of Fandom	10.65 jb
BRADBURY, Ray	(4.34)	
BRADDON, Russell	The Year of the Angry Rabbit	10.65 jb
BRAND, Jonathan	(7.14)	
BRODERICK, Damien	A Man Returned	3.25 jf
	(3.8)	
BROOKE-ROSE, C.	Such	7.18 kw
BROWN, Rosel G.	- see Laumer	
BRUNNER, John	(3.31) (5.25) (9.36)	
BRYNING, Frank	(3.5)	
CAMPBELL, John W.	The Editorials	4.5 jf
CARNELL, John	New Writings in Sf	9.19 ar
CARTER, Lin	(7.14)	
CAUSEY, James	(4.34)	
CHANDLER, A. Bertram	Glory Planet	3.24 jf
	Edge of Night	8.32 jf
	The Deep Reaches of Space	10.29 lh
	Empress of Outer Space	10.29 lh
	The Alternate Martians	10.29 lh
	The Hamelin Plague	10.29 lh
	Into The Alternate Universe	10.29 lh
	(3.3) (3.11) (5.33)	
CHARBONNEAU, Louis	The Specials	10.68 br
CHRISTOPHER, John	The Possessors	2.25 lh
CLARKE, Arthur C.	(7.14)	
COLVIN, James	The Deep Fix	7.18 kw
COOK, Stephen	(3.8)	
COONEY, Michael	Doomsday England	10.65 jb
COOPER, Susan	Mandrake	5.15 jf
DAVIDSON, Avram	The Masters of the Maze	1.17 lh
	The Kar-Chee Reign	4.32 lh
de CAMP, L. Sprague	(4.29)	
DELANY, Samuel R.	Babel-17	10.57 jf
del REY, Lester	Step to the Stars	4.33 jbr
DENTON, Kit	(3.9)	
DICK, Philip K.	The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch	1.22 jf
	The Crack in Space	4.32 lh
DISCH, Thomas M.	The Genocides	3.18 lh
	Mankind Under the Leash	7.12 jb
		8.16 sd
	(5.20) (9.2)	
DORMAN, Sonia	(5.20)	
ELLISON, Harlan	(7.14)	
ESHBACH, Lloyd	Of Worlds Beyond	4.26 kw
FITZPATRICK, R.C.	Half a Loaf / Second Seeded	1.24 kw
FREE, Colin	(3.9)	
GANTZ, Kenneth F.	Not In Solitude	10.63 dm
GOULART, Ron	(7.14)	
GREEN, Joseph	(7.14)	
HARDING, Lee	(3.6)	
HARNESS, Charles	The Rose	7.18 kw
	(2.28)	
HARRISON, Harry	Bill the Galactic Hero	2.26 kw
	Make Room! Make Room!	7.10 lh
	The Stainless Steel Rat	8.35 ps

HEINLEIN, Robert	The Moon is a Harsh Mistress	5.7 kw
	(4.29)	
HERBERT, Frank	Dune	3.29 jf
		10.68 br
	The Green Brain	3.25 ar
	Heisenberg's Eyes	5.6 kw
HILL, Douglas	Window on the Future	5.25 lh
HILLMAN, Martin	(5.25)	
HOYLE, Fred	October the First is Too Late	5.20 kw
JAMES, John	Votan	8.35 br
JONES, D.F.	Colossus	7.14 jf
KAPP, Colin	Hunger Over Sweet Waters	5.12 nw
KEYES, Daniel	Flowers for Algernon	1.24 jw
KIDD, Virginia	(5.20)	
KING, Vincent	(9.21)	
KNIGHT, Damon	Orbit One	5.20 jb
	The Other Foot	8.33 dm
KORNBLUTH, Cyril	- see Pohl	
KUTTNER, Henry	(4.34) (7.14)	
LAFFERTY, R.A.	(7.14)	
LANNING, George	The Pedestal	10.65 jb
LAUMER, Keith	Retief's War	5.3 kw
	Catastrophe Planet	7.17 ar
	A Plague of Demons	7.17 ar
& BROWN, Rosel	Earthblood	5.5 kw
LeGUIN, Ursula K.	Rocannon's World	7.12 jb
		8.17 sd
	Planet of Exile	7.12 jb
		8.16 sd
	City of Illusions	10.65 jb
LEIBER, Fritz	Night of the Wolf	9.26 lh
	(7.14)	
LORAN, Martin	- see Baxter	
MacDONALD, John D.	The Girl, The Gold Watch & Everything	10.65 jb
MASON, Douglas	(9.21)	
MASSON, David	(7.14)	
MATHERS, Peter	Trap	1.26 scr
McINTOSH, J.T.	Time for a Change	8.33 dm
McKENNA, Richard	(5.20)	
MEAD, Shepherd	The Carefully Considered Rape of the World	5.18 dm
MOORCOCK, Michael	The Best of New Worlds	3.31 kw
MOSKOWITZ, Sam	Seekers of Tomorrow	2.17 lh
NAGEL, Morris	- see Cook	
NIVEN, Larry	(7.14)	
NOLAN, William F.	Almost Human	4.34 kw
OLIVER, Chad	(4.34)	
PAGE, Gerald	(9.21)	
PANGBORN, Edgar	Davy	7.8 sc
	A Mirror for Observers	7.8 sc
PETTY, John	The Last Refuge	5.14 ar
POHL, Frederik	Alternating currents	2.27 ar
	Star 14	7.14 jf
& KORNBLUTH, Cyril	The wonder effect	9.23 rg
& WILLIAMSON, Jack	The reefs of space	10.63 dm
	Starchild	10.63 dm
RACKHAM, John	(9.21)	

RAPHAEL, Frederick	Code Three	7.15 dm
REYNOLDS, Mack	Space Pioneer	5.3 kw
	Of Godlike Power	7.17 ar
RICE, Alison	(5.20)	
ROBERTS, Keith	The Furies	3.32 kw
	Pavane	5.4 kw
	(1.20) (5.20)	
RUSSELL, Eric F.	(9.21)	
SABERHAGEN, Fred	(7.14)	
SCHMITZ, James	(7.14)	
SELLINGS, Arthur	The Quy Effect	9.22 ig
	(5.25) (9.21)	
SHAARA, Michael	Grenville's Planet	5.10 nw
SIMAK, Clifford	Way Station	8.36 ar
	(7.14)	
SLOANE, William	To Walk The Night	2.27 ar
	The Edge of Running Water	2.27 ar
SMITH, E.E.	(4.29)	
SMITH, Keith	Ogf	10.65 jb
SMITH, Ron	- see Baxter	
SPENCER, William	(9.21)	
STAPLEDON, Olaf	Latter-Day Psalms	7.3 jb
STURGEON, Theodore	Starshine	10.61 lh
SWAIN, Dwight V.	Cry Chaos!	2.14 jf
	Dark Destiny	2.14 jf
	The Weapons from Eternity	2.14 jf
	Planet of Dread	2.14 jf
TAINE, John	(4.29)	
TEMPLE, William F.	Shoot at the Moon	5.23 lh
TUBB, E.C.	(5.25)	
VANCE, Jack	The Many Worlds of Magnus Ridolph	3.32 ar
	The Brains of Earth	3.32 ar
	Monsters in Orbit	4.30 lh
	The World Between	4.30 lh
	(1.20)	
VAN VOGT, A.E.	(4.29)	
VIDAL, Gore	Messiah	8.30 sc
VINGE, Vernor	(7.14)	
VONNEGUT, Kurt, Jr.	Cat's Cradle	1.22 bk
WHITE, James	The Watch Below	3.18 lh
WHITE, Ted	Phoenix Prime	4.30 lh
	Sorceress of Qar	9.25 ps
WHITEFORD, Wynne	(3.5)	
WHITLEY, George	- see Chandler	
WILHELM, Kate	Andover and the Android	5.25 lh
	(5.20)	
WILLIAMSON, Jack	(4.29) - & see Pohl	
WODHAMS, Jack	(9.2)	
WOLLHEIM, Donald	World's Best SF 1966	7.14 jf
YOUNG, Robert F.	(4.34)	
ZELAZNY, Roger	This Immortal	4.25 jb
	The Dream Master	7.17 ar
	Four For Tomorrow	10.61 lh

REVIEWERS: key to initials

jb JOHN BANGSUND	jbl JAMES BLISH	jbr JOHN BREDEN
sc STEPHEN COOK	sd STEN DAHLSKOG	jf JOHN FOYSTER
rg ROBERT GERRAND	ig IAN GODDEN	lh LEE HARDING
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br BRIAN RICHARDS	scr SCRIBARIUS	ps PAUL STEVENS
gt GEORGE TURNER	jw JAY WALLIS	kw K.U.F. WIDDERSHINS

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WALT WILLIS	7.25				Ireland
JACK WODHAMS	9.30	10.72			Australia: Qld

MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
and
ELECTION OF OFFICERS
will be held
at the Clubrooms,
19 Somerset Place, Melbourne,
on
WEDNESDAY, 27th SEPTEMBER

A SCIENCE FICTION CONFERENCE

will be conducted by the Club during Easter next year, and a full-scale CONVENTION in 1969. The Conference will be held at the Clubrooms on Good Friday evening, 12th April, and all day Easter Saturday. Club members and ASFR subscribers will be notified shortly of membership and programme details.

SF SOCIETY FOR SYDNEY UNIVERSITY?

If you are interested, contact Mr. Warren Glass or Miss Betsy Holt (English Department).

BIRTHS / CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Born: On 5th August, to Margaret and Brian Aldiss, a son, Timothy Nicholas, 9lb 5oz. All well.

Mr. Ian McLelland has moved to Flat 9, 5 Coleridge Street, Elwood, Victoria, 3184.

Mr. John Foyster and family have moved to 12 Glengariff Drive, Springvale North, Victoria, 3170.

Mr. Paul Stevens has moved from Rosanna, and may be contacted for the time being c/- 19 Somerset Place, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.

Advance Notice: From the last week of November, Diane and John Bangsund will be at 11 Wilson Street, Ferntree Gully, Victoria, 3156: telephone FTG 163.

SF WEEKLY

- for the best coverage of American sf news. Eight for A$1, airmail, through John Bangsund. Ten for 8s0d from Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England. In U.S.A., three for 25¢, fourteen for $1, from the publisher: Andrew Porter, 24 East 82nd Street, New York, 10028.

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