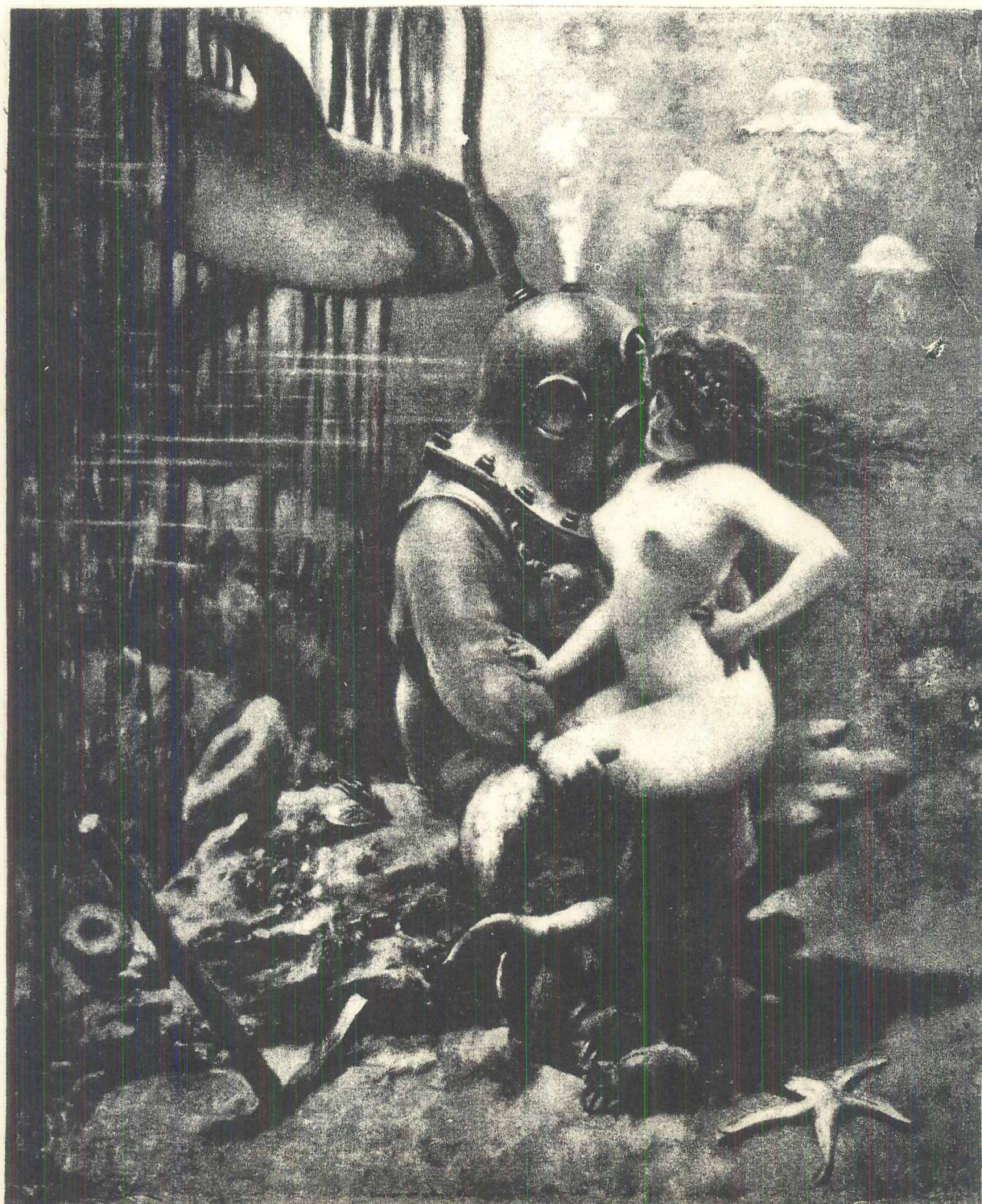


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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW



Australian Science Fiction Review

NUMBER TWELVE : OCTOBER 1967

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M I S T F O R T H E G R I L L

That eminent thinker, Karl Jaspers, taught me long ago that one does not construct a philosophy - one philosophizes. I have a sneaking suspicion that this is just an excuse for being unable to organize one's thinking into a coherent whole, but no matter: this month, instead of writing an editorial, I will editorialize. And since paragraphs are the in literary thing, I will paragraphize.

A Harsh Mistress is a Lovesome Thing, Dod Rot

At the moment of writing (but not of stencilling) I am sitting in a motel room at Albany, Western Australia, which is a beautiful place, a marvel of nature, defaced though it is by the town itself which is just like any other Australian town and can't be blamed for it. It is Monday, September 18th, and on Friday I shall be home again; home, I hope, to the Hugo results. Thanks to Anne McCaffery, who wrote to Pat Terry in Sydney, who wrote to John Brosnan in Perth, whom I have visited (hay, more important, whom I have seen MORGAN with - a marvellous film) during my stay here, I am able to tell you that Robert Anson Heinlein Has Done It Again.

Yessir, THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, but the fans gave her a Hugo. I am informed also, in this roundabout fashion, that Jack Vance won the award for his novelette, THE LAST CASTLE, and Larry Niven took the prize for his short story, the title of which I can't remember.

I should also mention, irrelevant though it may seem, that while in Perth last week I had a moment of satori and realized, shocking though it may sound to some, that what those Egyptian mummies are wearing are ankle-length turbans!

Niekas: Kaip Istariama Sitas Zodis?

Thank you, Andy Porter. Here I am, back in Melbourne, home of the brave and the freezing, and here, courtesy of Andy, are the Hugo Awards:

Best Novel:	Robert Heinlein: THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS
Best Novelette:	Jack Vance: THE LAST CASTLE
Best Short Story:	Larry Niven: NEUTRON STAR
Best Dramatic Presentation:	Gene Roddenberry: THE MENAGERIE (Star Trek)
Best Artist:	JACK GAUGHAN
Best Magazine:	WORLDS OF IF (editor: Frederik Pohl)
Best Fanzine:	NIEKAS (editor: Ed. Meskys)
Best Fan Writer:	ALEXEI PANSHIN
Best Fan Artist:	JACK GAUGHAN

A victory for conservatism, in the main. But - wu wei - congratulations all around, and particularly to Jack Gaughan, who it would seem is one popular fellow, and deservedly so. Last month I said something about having a sneaking suspicion that NIEKAS is the best general fanzine of all, and it would appear I am not alone in this opinion.

Total attendance at the WorldCon was 1,450 - a new record - and registration over 1,700. Next year's convention will be held in the Bay Area, California, and the Guest of Honour will be Philip Jose Farmer. If I under-

stand Andy's report aright, in future World Conventions may be held outside the United States every four years. Would you believe Melbourne in '84?

Don't laugh: we could do it. All I'm wondering is whether Melbourne will still be outside the United States in 1984...

Some Serious Remarks to the 1968 WorldCon Committee

Gentle Bayfen, congratulations. Now, down to business. You may observe that a few Australians were members of the NyCon. Not many, not even 1% of the total membership. Do you know, fellow fans across the briny deep, that ASFR is purchased by 140 Australian fans? That I have the addresses of a further 100 or so fans who may see this journal but do not buy it? Think of that number, friends. Two hundred and forty Australian fans - all, or most of them, potential members of your World Convention. But, brethren, before you go budgeting for those subscriptions, ponder a moment: What's In It For Us???

Andy Porter has done a marvellous job for ASFR and for the NyCon. How he manages to do so many things (full time on Sam Moskowitz's magazine, part time on F&SF and some time, Ghod knows when, on his own SF Weekly and Algol) is beyond me. Maybe he doesn't sleep. When I contacted him some months ago with my sad tale of Australia being neglected by the NyCon, he did his utmost to set things right. But it is hard to arouse enthusiasm for something like a WorldCon in two months, especially after years and years of apathy. Timing is so important. I don't think all the Australian members got a vote in the Hugo ballot, for example. IFor those who did, the ballot cards must have been sent airmail - and this would just about eat up their subscriptions, let alone the cost of mailing other information at various times.

I suggest, worthy Bay Folk, that you appoint a WorldCon Agent in this country, to take care of all your publicity and services to members, and I think you will find yourselves with rather more than a dozen or so Australians signed up for your Convention. Hell, a dozen is all that signed up for the NyCon from Oklahoma, West Virginia, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Maine, Nebraska, and Idaho - but would you neglect those states because there are only a few people there interested? (Put it another way: there were 27 states with less than a dozen members each.)

There are people here with ideas about what you could do to give overseas fans a bigger role in the WorldCon, and I will be pleased to communicate these ideas to you. Let's make it a real WORLD Convention!

Congratulations, John W. Campbell Jr.

Thirty years at the helm! We salute you, Mister Science Fiction!

...and Harry Harrison

On your first appearance in ASFR? No sir, on becoming editor of AMAZING and FANTASTIC. We wish you luck - much much better luck than you had with your English venture - and look forward to reading, and perhaps even buying, these two once-great magazines again.

There's A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends Rough - Hew Them How We Will

How's this for a science fiction plot...? There's this engineer, see, and he discovers a fabulous process whereby he can liberate all the atomic energy in coal - or any other fuel for that matter - leaving absolutely no waste whatsoever. (Ho hum, you say? Read it in ANALOG? Saw it on STAR TREK? Read on, skeptic.) Result of this marvellous process: whole cities can be supplied with power for weeks on a ton of coal; cars can be powered with pellets; etcetera etcetera.

However, the engineer discovers, to his no small consternation - he being a devout agnostic and skeptic like yourself, dear reader - that anyone who goes near the atomic plant while it is working goes into a sort of religious ecstasy; get a strong enough dose of radiation and you start working miracles, reading minds, levitating, and so on. Very perplexing, until the engineer - being well-read in the classics like yourself, my friend - remembers his Spinoza and realizes what he has done: he has released God from His confinement in matter! - the by-product of his process is God, pure and unconfined Absolute, in a chemically pure form!

Has possibilities, do you think?

It certainly has, and Karel Capek just about exploited them to the full when he wrote his delightful novel, THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE, back in 1927. From the basic absurdity (or is it?) of the idea, Capek takes the story on from one crazy thing to another, until eventually he mounts a devastating World War, involving armies of millions, of which but thirteen men survive. Moral: God is just fine as an idea, but once let him loose on the world and everything goes haywire.

I'm a Capek fan from way back. He wrote better books than THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE, but I doubt a more entertaining one. I don't think it's in print: some enterprising paperback publisher should investigate it. My copy from The Red Cross Book Shop, Perth, for ten cents.

Viva Fantascienza!

I have just received a copy of Ugo Malaguti's excellent little magazine, NOVA SF. It contains stories by Ray Bradbury and Pohl & Kornbluth, articles by Bradbury and Ugo Malaguti and other material. All, I hasten to add, in Italian. If you read the language, or have sf-reading Italian friends, or if you are simply something of a completist, I will be pleased to take your order, since I have the honour to be NOVA's Australian agent. Price 600 Lira, frequency - I confess I don't know.

Unsung Fantast

- and satirist extraordinary. That's Arthur Horner, one of whose panels appears at left. Creator of the inimitable Colonel Pewter, Horner often ventures into sf in his strip, and I'm surprised not to have seen his work mentioned by fans. To the next ten Australian subscribers I offer free a copy of COLONEL PEWTER IN IRONICUS, a 9x12 64-page book. There are a further six available at 50¢ each.



speech delivered at the Boston
Convention, 2nd April 1967

In the beginning, there was Gernsback. And the world was without form and void.

Let us pray.

What Gernsback actually did, it would now seem - but he may have had some help from the dime novels that began to appear in the late 1800's - was to ghettoize science fiction - to make of it, what it had not been before, a separate and despised genre - published in magazines with gaudy covers and read by a little group of nuts.

Now I don't know whether the dime novels and the pulp magazines took up science fiction because it had ceased to be respectable, or whether it ceased to be respectable because the dime novels and pulp magazines took it up. Some research on this point would be of interest.

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course we can't know what we might have got in the way of science fiction from literary writers of the early 20th century. But I think it's quite clear what we would have missed: E.E. Smith, Jack Williamson, Henry and Catherine Kuttner, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. Heinlein, and so on right up to Roger Zelazny and Samuel R. Delany.

I have a personal reason for feeling this way, too: if there had been no Hugo Gernsback, I honestly don't know where the hell I would be now or what I would be doing. It gives me a peculiar feeling sometimes to realize that my whole life has been determined, in the strictest sense, by the existence of this gentleman, now in his eighties, whom I have never met. If there had been no Gernsback, praised be he, there would have been no August-September 1933 issue of *Amazing Stories*, and I would not have read it; there would have been no fanzines for me to imitate and I would never have published *snide*; there would have been no Futurians and I would never have gone to New York to join them; I would never have got a job with Popular Publications or with the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, praised be it; I would never have met my wife and my children would not exist. I don't know what in the world would have happened to me: I suppose I would be back in Oregon still, doing God knows what. So you see Gernsback has a heavy responsibility.

But aside from such personal considerations, I must tell you that I believe the concentration of science fiction into a ghetto was essential to its growth. A ghetto - and I use this ugly term deliberately, because it is apt - a ghetto is a kind of hothouse. Science fiction writers, instead of being scattered and absorbed by the literary world, were crammed into this narrow little field, where every writer was intensely aware of what the others were doing. They wrote for each other and for a coterie audience of people who knew what they were talking about; they picked up ideas from each other and fed them back; they built up a body of common assumptions and knowledge - and it was this concentration which made science fiction the fantastically rich and vigorous field it is. Last year 213 science fiction books were published. About 20 of these were anthologies, and this happens year after year - 20 anthologies, most of them in hardcover, of stories from this little bitty magazine field. To realize how incredible this is, you have to compare it to the much older and more respectable mystery field, which considers it has done well if it cranks out three or four anthologies a year.

The reason for this vigor and explosive growth, I believe, is the same thing that outsiders have always complained of - the over-technicality of science fiction, the in-group jargon, the things that make most science fiction just incomprehensible to the general reader. Science fiction writers did not have to water their stuff down to make it acceptable to the man on the street, because they knew he was not going to buy it anyhow. They could write for a specialized audience who would not have to have every damn thing explained to them in simple terms, and therefore they could tackle any idea they could understand themselves and make it into a story which would be published and read with understanding and pleasure.

Now this may seem like an odd stance for anyone to take who belongs to what has been variously described as the Blish-Knight axis or the Milford Mafia. If any of you have read the recent debate in *HABAKKUK*, edited by Bill Donaho, you will know that I am supposed to be one of those who are trying to ruin science fiction by importing literary values into it.

Let me try to explain. I was struck particularly by one thing that was said during the HABAKKUK debate. A couple of people, including Donaho, made the point that for them literary values in science fiction are not only unnecessary but actively interfere with their enjoyment of the story. These people say that they are not literary troglodytes, that they read mainstream fiction with pleasure - but that if they want that kind of thing they can get it from the mainstream: they don't want it in science fiction, which they read in a different way and for a different kind of pleasure.

Let me say that I understand this attitude perfectly, because I feel the same way about mystery fiction. I have been told, and I believe, that the mystery novel in the last decade or so has staked out serious claims to consideration as a literary form, and I couldn't care less. I read mysteries, when I do, for pure entertainment, and I often like them when I know they are bad.

Is it not inconsistent of me, then, to be trying to import literary values into science fiction? I don't think so. The mystery field, like science fiction, covers a broad spectrum. There is the pure-entertainment stuff, like James Bond, for people like me. There is the highly technical deductive mystery novel for those who like it, and the literary mystery novel for those who like that. The mystery tent is big enough to cover all those people, and the science fiction tent is big enough to cover me and Bill Donaho. And I submit that we should all be glad there is this much variety in science fiction, because if there were not - if it were all one kind, no matter which kind - three out of four of us would be left out.

I've been using a term pretty loosely without defining it. When I talk about science fiction with literary values, I simply mean stories which are well written. I have no interest in making science fiction more like the mainstream, or, heaven forbid, more like the avant-garde movement. I simply want it to be well enough written that I can read it with pleasure, and stand some chance of being able to read it again, ten or twenty years from now, without finding that it has gone ricky-tick on me. I have tried to reread some of those stories from the 1930's Amazings, and I know that most science fiction does not stand this test, but this to me is simply another illustration of Sturgeon's Rule - "Nine tenths of everything is crud." I want a science fiction story to have exciting ideas, logical development, and, all right, the sense of wonder - but I also want to be able to get through it without tripping over gross grammatical errors, cliches and cooky-cutter characters.

In my Father's house are many mansions.

If we have anything to be grateful for, it is this pluralism of science fiction - the fact that new things, oddball things, can get published for those who like them, and that there is still room for traditional things for those who like them.

Now about the general reader again, the man on the street. Look. I am not toadying to him, I think, or to the editor who knows nothing about sf and therefore likes it only when it is least like itself. But science fiction is being read by more people than ever before, and it is losing its stigma. I think this is a good thing, and I want to support and protect it. It really does make a difference how many people buy and read science fiction. If we could magically increase the science fiction audience -

let's say if we could double it tomorrow - there would be more science fiction published because there would be more money in it, for the publishers and the writers. The proportion would stay the same - 90 percent of it would still be crud - but numerically there would be more good stories.

All right, but what can we do about that? Science fiction is not big business, but it is business. We have always had the feeling that decisions concerning it were being taken by vast, cool intelligences somewhere over our heads, and that we were really helpless to affect them in any way. The scale is all wrong. There are perhaps a thousand or two thousand science fiction fans. How can we possibly do anything to increase a readership which is already in the neighbourhood of a hundred thousand?

Some of you may remember F. Orlin Tremaine's each-reader-get-one new-reader campaign; or Gernsback's essay contest on "What I Have Done For Science Fiction." These things may have helped some, but not enough.

But I believe there is a way. And now we come to the real reason I am here. I seriously believe there is a way in which we can significantly increase the readership of science fiction, and that we can do it now.

The number of people who are interested in science fiction has increased dramatically. But the sales of science fiction magazines and paperbacks have not increased in proportion. The audience is there; the publishers are in no way reluctant to sell more copies. The trouble comes in the middle - in distribution.

Science fiction magazines and paperbacks are distributed in the following way. The publisher makes an agreement with a national distributor, of whom there are several. The national distributor then ships these magazines and paperbacks to local wholesalers. The wholesalers, in turn, distribute them to dealers, that is, to the places where this stuff is actually sold. Now the interesting thing is this: There are about 800 of these wholesalers in the country. And the wholesalers are the bottleneck in the distribution system. A potential audience of at least double the present maximum of 100,000 readers is there, is waiting; but the stuff is not getting through the bottleneck.

You know how hard science fiction is to find on most newsstands. If you are like me, you have probably asked, "Why don't you have more science fiction?" And you have probably been told by the dealer, "I've asked for it, but I can't get it."

It's the wholesaler that the dealer can't get it from. Now why isn't the wholesaler distributing more science fiction? I believe the answer is simply indifference. Science fiction is a very small part of his business; the wholesaler gets a commission on each copy sold, but there aren't enough sales to amount to much: it just doesn't matter much to the wholesaler whether or not he puts out a lot of science fiction.

Other publishers, big publishers, have field men who visit these wholesalers. This clears the bottleneck. Science fiction publishers can't do that; they can't afford it. But we can do it. If there are a thousand of us, and 800 wholesalers, we outnumber them.

Now let me make it clear just what I am proposing. I'm calling for a

concerted campaign by science fiction fans to visit these 800 wholesalers and persuade them to put out more science fiction. I believe we can do it. I propose to call this "Project Boskone"; I think that's appropriate for two reasons - in honor of this conference, and because, as you remember, Boskone was a highly organized and effective conspiracy.

I have copies of this speech and I hope as many fan editors as possible will publish it. I want to suggest the following steps:

First, if you haven't already done this, visit at least one dealer in your area and ask him that question - "Why don't you have more science fiction?" If he tells you "I don't want it" or "I haven't got room for it," go on to another, until you find one who tells you, "I would, but I can't get it." Then find out from the dealer the name and address of his wholesaler.

Then go to see the wholesaler. Bear in mind that these people are not villains, they are just businessmen who don't happen to know much about science fiction. Don't approach them with a hostile attitude, be friendly; you will probably find out they are human. Explain to them that you and many of your friends want to buy more science fiction but can't find it on the stands; be sure to mention the name of any dealer who has told you he would handle more of it if he could get it. If you are polite and friendly, if they like you, these people will probably be interested and intrigued: they have never met any science fiction fans before. This is the point: they may agree to distribute more sf just to do you a favor, just because it does not matter much to them one way or the other.

If we can do this, it will be a thing to be proud of. And it will have consequences as profound and far-reaching as the consequences of that first issue of Amazing Stories, published by Hugo Gernsback. I hope some of you here will want to help.

I'd like to get fans from at least half a dozen areas to undertake this as soon as possible, and report the methods they used and the results they got, so that other fans can profit from their experience. If possible I'd like to have these reports by next September, so that I can bring this up, in more detail, at the NyCon.

Meanwhile, I'm here, I'm in the mood for talking and listening, and I'll be glad to answer any questions.

* * * *

JB: I have published Damon Knight's speech without alteration or omission, assuming that you would rather read all that he said than excerpts. Australian readers will understand that our local paperback and magazine distribution system is somewhat different from the American. From my observations in three states (Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia) I would say that, at least in these places, British paperbacks are widely distributed, American paperbacks and magazines not at all outside the capital cities. That there is an enthusiastic following for sf here is evidenced by the fact that secondhand-paperback exchanges can't get enough of the stuff; many, in fact, won't sell you sf - you have to bring one to get one. Readers might care to advise me of their own supply situation.

[illegible][illegible]

Both these examples come from my "Okie" series, CITIES IN FLIGHT. In volume three of that cycle, EARTHMAN, COME HOME, Karst the peasant sings a sort of folk-song which turns out to be crucial to that part of the plot. The song, which is on page 237 of the 1966 Avon edition, and page 240 of the 1965 Faber & Faber edition, goes like this:

Black with their blood was the brick of that barrow,
Toppled the tall towers, crushed to the clay.
None might live who flouted Maalvin,
Earth their souls spurned spaceward, wailing,
IMT made the sky
Fall!"

But it doesn't have to be. Some years after this part of the novel-cycle was published, an American fan named G. Evans sent me his own, original setting of the song.

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Moderato



Clearly, Mr. Evans heard "IMT" sounded as three separate letters - and his tune is a good long distance away from Moussorgsky, too, though it has a sort of Hebrides-like character that might suit some parts of BEOWULF nicely. Certainly it suits me; I only wish I could have worked it into my book.

*

My other example is to me even more moving: a dissonant sonnet by Karen Anne Emden (who is, if it matters - and I don't think it does - the daughter of my ex-wife by my ex-wife's previous marriage, which must make Karen some sort of relative of mine) which I think not only highly striking, but which does something with the material of the cycle that had never occurred to me in the whole four volumes:

THE OKIE CHILDREN

Ancient children of a wintry hive, longevity
Gives them wings to span the rifts; most transient
Of workers, tomorrow's swarm without a tree
To nest in, used and forced on, their day is never spent.

Bees on their milky way to pollinate
Grave fields in which the stars are lonely flowers,
Polluting as they go the honeyed freight
That time has pilfered from this Earth of hours,

Instinctive, furtive search for a seasoned planet
Drives them on through their unfinished dance.
Parched in nomad haste for frequent showers,
Intrinsically they wander, haunted faces set,
Toward the elusive night, seeding lawns by chance.

'Could we trade our journey for this hearth of yours?'

Some day, if people keep on reprinting these Okie books, I am going to persuade some publisher to include both of these tributes (and if that is not what they are, please don't disabuse me) in the cycle. In the meantime, I cherish them like love letters; and entirely aside from that, they strike me as interesting in themselves, not just as responses to my work, but as works per se.

* * * *

- Copyright 1967 by James Blish

FROM THE BIBLIOFILE:

"G.H. Bondy sucked meditatively at his cigar.

'And how did you find it out, old chap?' he asked at last.

'By the effect on myself,' said the engineer, resuming his march up and down the room. 'As a result of its complete disintegration of matter, my Perfect Karburator manufactures a by-product: pure and unconfined Absolute, God in a chemically pure form. At one end, so to speak, it emits mechanical power, and at the other, the divine principle. Just as when you split water up into hydrogen and oxygen, only on an immensely larger scale.'

'Hm,' said Mr. Bondy. 'And then - ?'

'I've an idea,' continued Marek cautiously, 'that there are many of the elect who can separate the material substance in themselves from the divine substance. They can release or distil the Absolute, as it were, from their material selves. Christ and the miracle-workers, fakirs, mediums, and prophets have achieved it by means of their psychic power. My Karburator does it by a purely mechanical process. It acts, you might say, as a factory for the Absolute.'"

(Karel Capek: The Absolute At Large)

AA
A FOOTNOTE TO THE
ECONOMICS OF S. F.

HARRY HARRISON

AA
I have the April 1967 issue of ASFR to hand, and it contains an article by John Brunner on writers' economics. It contains too many errors to let slip by unnoticed. Let me amplify the picture a bit.

First off - John and I agree in principle. Writers are badly underpaid, and always have been. My ambition for years has been to earn as much as do the American printers who set the type for my books. But every time I get a bit more, they get another rise. If this is because they have a trade union, then I am for a writers' union. Yet this is the culture we live in and we must make the best of it. The nurses in Boston discovered that they were earning less than the local garbage men (read dustmen) and went on strike and earned more. As one of my favorite fictional characters said - "What do you expect - justice?" The world is as it is. You either accept it or try to change it. You don't complain about it.

Am I saying that John is complaining only? Perhaps, though I didn't realize that when I started to write this response. Perhaps I am wrong, but I think I do detect a thin note of self-pity keening through his article. Or perhaps I am just annoyed by his errors of fact.

Let me get the personal error out of the way before tackling the others. John, you know perfectly well that I alone wrote the FLASH GORDON stories for ten years - so why the "... heaven alone knows who else"? Heaven, hell, you know. And why is this "keeping afloat in sf by a devious expedient"? This is earning a living as a freelance writer, a thing I have done since 1955, and no more devious than writing confessions, detectives, men's adventures, or anything else I have done. And just for the record, the rest of that paragraph is hogwash as well. Jack Williamson was offered a lot of money to write BEYOND MARS for a year. He did, he got his money, the strip folded, and he continued with his teaching, untroubled, and slightly heavier in pocket. And I don't know any sf writers who are prey to your "common disaster" and "beat their brains out on a tv serial." From time to time a lot of them have turned the odd buck by writing for tv, and Harlan Ellison makes his living that way. But - so what? What makes this a disaster?

I want to attack your basic argument about writers, but before I do that I'm going to weaken your case by pointing out a few factual errors in your text. Page 2. ANALOG's top rate is 5¢ a word, not 4¢. Also on page 2. You know wrong. 1¢ a word is still a common rate for sf in this

country, and a few years back a creep of an sf writer bragged to me that a creep of an sf editor paid him $\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ a word - instead of his usual 1¢ - because he wrote the cover story. John, you don't know half the horrors of life in this uncivilized country.

Let me get to the core of my argument. You say that there are basically two ways to keep afloat in sf. One - to get the hell out of the United States. Two - to be prolific as hell. You have ignored the third: write so well that you get paid more per unit of labor. Terrible as the writing profession is, there are greater rewards as the popularity of one's work increases. In spite of themselves, the publishers reluctantly pay more to hold onto their selling authors. Have you ever heard Heinlein complain about making a living out of sf?

Your imaginary Frishblitz sounds like a pretty crummy writer to me. I know that the real writers buried in his name make much more money than this dull hack does. Ted Sturgeon, Blish, Vonnegut, all demand good prices for their work. Let us forget this imaginary drudge and get back to facts. You Reveal All about the income from your books. I should do at least the same.

The first novel I ever wrote was DEATHWORLD. I sold this to Bantam who paid me \$2500 for it. John Campbell took it for ANALOG and paid a total of \$2800. Penguin paid a £200 advance and have shelled out another £56 since then. With more to come since they have just reprinted it. The Japanese bought it for \$100, the Italians for \$115, the Germans for \$400, and the Dutch for \$175. I first sold this book in 1959 and it is still alive. Last month it sold in Spain for \$130. That's a total income, to date, of nearly \$7000.

These figures indicate that publishers have money, a fact we have long suspected. They like to make more. Give them a product that they think they can sell at a profit and they will reluctantly turn over a small percentage to you for your labors. If they think you will sell more they pay more. It's just that simple.

The trouble with John Brunner's article is that it is incomplete. He writes about the plight of the science fiction writer in western society in the second half of the 20th century. And only one kind of sf writer at that. He has the blinders on. John, excuse me if I remove those blinders. And at the same time wildly excite the fen by showing that sf writers do have feet of clay: what they have always suspected.

Ancient wars produce yawns, and political speeches a thousand years old are just as boring as the ones we hear today. Past cultures are valued by their arts, their plays, music, writings, poems, paintings - the whole gorgeous lot. Yet, with minor exceptions, artists have had the tacky end of the stick all through history. Michelangelo and his Popes, Rembrandt and his debts, Johnson and his lawsuits. The heirs almost always make more than the artist. That's the way it is, that's the way it always has been. I attempt to dissuade all budding artists, since it is a bum's game. If they must do it, they will, and they cannot be turned away. Then the writer who must write, writes. He may earn a living at it, he may not. Some do, some don't. The world is not on the writer's side. Some lucky ones, who naturally produce a product that has consumers waiting for it, have money showered upon them. Bully. An accident of time and space,

nothing else. Writers have ulcers, athlete's foot (on clay?), bad tempers, drink too much, change wives, suffer and occasionally write. Some of them write very well indeed, and leave the world a little bit better than they found it. These are the great authors, great painters, great musicians. I would happily trade every politician, living or dead, for one Bach.

I like to feel that sf has already produced some greats, who will forever be a part of world literature. Will the early Heinlein novels ever be bettered? Is there another artist alive who can capture the essence of sf feeling as did Charles Schneeman? And we have books. Won't it be nice if our children's children read Aldiss in school rather than Hardy? Wouldn't you have preferred GREYBEARD to a hundred bloody reddlemen?

John Brunner, take off those blinders. We are all hacks on Mount Olympus, earning our bread and butter wooing the muse. (Moskowitz does not have a monopoly on mixed metaphors.) We may be poor in pocket, but we are rich in soul. (And this from a confirmed atheist.) We create for ourselves and we create for others. There is a great pleasure in doing this. All we can do is our best. We are rewarded irrespective of our labors. The fashionable bad writer earns far more than the unfashionable excellent one. Be happy that you are an sf writer, in a field so destitute of talent that even the incompetent can sell. Be happy that you can eat well and drink well doing what you enjoy. Remember Thoreau? "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." They still do. Be happy you have left their ranks. Sit in your flat in Frognal and think of the sweating hordes in Notting Hill Gate. You don't have it that bad. You don't have it that good either but that is the way the world is made. Ours is an underpaid profession for a number of reasons you know all about. Wriggle on the hook if you like, but don't pretend you don't enjoy being hooked.

Think of the unique pleasure of writing sf. Screen writers make more, as do the tv hacks. So does almost everybody. But who printed your complaints, and my answer? Fans, John, in a fanzine. Fans who read, enjoy, hate, and argue about the sf we write. SF would be the poorer without them. This is positive feedback that exists in no other form of writing. Lie back and enjoy it. For while the publishers are shafting you from the back, someone is asking for your autograph from the front.

I, for one, would not have it any other way.

* * * *

JB: I won't be asking for your autograph, ol' cobber, if you keep saying nasty things about Thomas Hardy. :: Now, how can I fill this page up? Here I am, sitting at my faithful portable, in my rented dungeon beneath the Coercial Trammellers' Club in Perth, Western Australia... around me my employer's wares in tasteful array - books, books, books, and hardly a handful of them I would want on my own shelf... let's see what I can find to pinch a short quote from. Ah, Thomas Keneally - there's a writer for you. BRING LARKS AND HEROES, a great book. Here's poor old Ewers, the convict artist, being rowed up-river:

Ewers sounded easeful; lolling on his back and looking here and there across the sky through nearly closed eyes, as if he were Michelangelo about to quote a price for illuminating the firmament...

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE J. G. MAXWELL and JOHN WYNDHAM

William F. Temple

(Thomas Bailey Aldrich)

You give yourself a shot of adrenalin and climb grimly to the top.

Wyndham has been blocked in the middle of a new novel for all of two years now. His publishers keep hoping to feature it in their autumn list. Last year (1964) they had to remain satisfied with re-issuing the TRIFFIDS, KRAKEN and CHRYSALIDS as a Wyndham Omnibus.

More than one writer has stymied himself by a too drastic change in the climate of living. A northern novelist who has made his name by realistic depiction of life in the Black Country moves to London, believing it to be the heart of things. And finds himself rootless and lost in the prattle and pretence of Chelsea (as was - now Islington) and dries up. For the Black Country was the true heart of his work.

Wyndham spent all of his writing life, i.e. from the early thirties, in sophisticated Bloomsbury, until a couple of years ago he moved to a cottage in a village deep in Wiltshire. Other authors seeking peace to write have done likewise, vegetated and quietly wilted away from lack of mental stimulation. Bright "with it" people, intellectuals or pseudos, can be irritants or bores, yet also they can stir up your ideas. If you have been used to mixing with them, you are apt to miss their stimulus.

But if Wyndham wilts in Wilts, I doubt if the reason is as simple as that. In summer he holidayed much in the country and was familiar with the climate. The cause is more likely to be internal. Even before he moved he told us of a fear that he was drying up creatively. This is an occupational obsession with many writers, which worsens with age. You begin to feel you have mined out your particular lode, and you are only rewriting yourself, as Rider Haggard did in his later works (QUEEN SHEBA'S RING, THE PEOPLE OF THE MIST, etc.).

It may be that Wyndham puts his own finger on it in the SUN interview: "The problem is not to plagiarise myself."

Sometimes I regret once accusing him of continually rewriting THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. That is, harping on the theme of the break-up of ordinary, everyday life by the eruption of monsters in some shape or form, be they the "Invisible Monsters" of a short story of his way back in the thirties, or the Kraken, or the little horrors of Midwich, or the famous Triffids themselves.

I didn't really mean it seriously, of course, because he'd written about many other concepts too, including the notable CHRYSALIDS. Later, though, I wondered if he'd taken it seriously, for he remarked in company: "Bill here says I'm always rewriting THE WAR OF THE WORLDS."

Now his new novel concerns a desert island where spiders are (so to speak) top dog, and their leaving the island to try to conquer man. Unlike ordinary spiders they act together in packs, similar to ants.

One's triggered reaction is: "Wells-inspired again. VALLEY OF SPIDERS crossed with THE EMPIRE OF THE ANTS."

The fear of self-plagiarism arises, I suspect, from the employment of the Monster Menace theme yet again wedded to the group-mind idea, which John has used at least once (the children of Midwich) and which Stapledon used before him and Dr. David Keller before Stapledon (THE HUMAN TERMITES).

However, I think he's being over-scrupulous.

When I was younger I had a horror of plagiarism and regarded stealing ideas as a crime. I prized originality and thought it the hallmark of genius. What I didn't realise then is that ideas are common property, free as the air around us, which we breathe communally.

I forget who said: "Originality is the sign of the second-rate writer." That seemed to me nonsense once, but not now.

Everyone plagiarises, consciously or not. Even the greatest. Shakespeare and Brahms did it consciously and didn't care a fig. They knew a good

thing (be it Marlowe's or Bach's) when they saw it, and delighted to play their own variations on it. The creation of the variation, often making a silk purse from a sow's ear, was their own personal achievement and justification.

Despite my respect for originality, I have plagiarised, too, though not always knowingly. I remember being well satisfied with my first published short story, which concerned an animated and perambulating tree, a sort of early Triffid. I thought it original until I re-read a story of Ambrose Bierce's and saw with a nasty little shock that quite unconsciously I'd lifted the pivotal idea from it.

So let us take the afore-mentioned VALLEY OF THE SPIDERS, which I had imagined had sprung, like all Wells's works, new-born from its creator's brow. In a recent (1962) book, H.G. WELLS AND HIS CRITICS, by Ingvald Baknem, a Norwegian, I find a long chapter in which Wells is accused of plagiarism. Says the author: "VALLEY OF THE SPIDERS is another story in which the critics discovered traces of Kipling." And goes on to show that in general idea, plan, and atmosphere it could be regarded as a re-telling of the adventure of Morrowbie Jukes.

And obviously, THE FLYING MAN owes much to Kipling's THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING. Also instanced is a parallel I had noticed myself: the chapter, "The Saying of the Law" in THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU, was clearly inspired by Kipling's "The Law of the Jungle" from the SECOND JUNGLE BOOK.

THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND is remarkably similar to Remy de Gourmont's D'UN PAYS LOINTAIN, a fact which critic Edward Shanks had earlier drawn attention to. THE STAR is almost a condensation of the astronomer Flammarion's novel THE END OF THE WORLD - and Baknem claims: "Wells alludes to things he could have found only in Flammarion's book."

Wells has also been accused of plagiarising Verne. The early chapters of THE FOOD OF THE GODS are remarkably akin to DR. OX'S EXPERIMENT. And Baknem implies that the short story IN THE ABYSS could be an amalgam of ideas from 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA and Poe's CITY OF THE SEA.

THE TIME MACHINE is regarded as Wells's most truly original story. It's the father of all time-travelling yarns. But even here one of its most memorable incidents (the escape of the hero, via the Fourth Dimension, from the hollow Sphinx) was anticipated by one of Wells's contemporaries, Oscar Wilde, in THE CANTERVILLE GHOST. The Ghost, similarly being crowded by a mob, employs the Fourth Dimension to escape through walls.

Whether that was conscious borrowing or not, Wells did admit that he had lifted some of his characters from other people's works, including one rounded and complete from Mrs. Humphry Ward's MARCELLA.

Maupassant's LA HORLA, about an invisible creature, may have had something to do with the genesis of THE INVISIBLE MAN, but Wells himself said it was owed to - of all things - W.S. Gilbert's BAB BALLADS, in particular to a couple of lines from one called "The Perils of Invisibility":

"Old Peter vanished like a shot,
But then - his suit of clothes did not."

Previously, in fairy tales and legends, the invisible prince (or whatever) was totally invisible, clothes and all. Wells reflected: supposing only flesh and blood were rendered invisible, while the clothing remained unaffected? So he wrote the most famous ever story of invisibility. Its success arose, not from the basic idea, but from the convincing treatment of it.

For treatment is more important than originality. The real magic lies in the art of persuading the reader to adopt a "willing suspension of disbelief." And this is the trick that Wyndham can pull off better than most living sf authors, and, additionally, in an admirable prose style (TROUBLE WITH LICHEN was beautifully written).

As Carlyle said in HEROES AND HERO-WORSHIP: "The merit of originality is not novelty: it is sincerity. The believing man is the original man."

So it were best if John Wyndham forgot about plagiarism, self or otherwise, and concentrated on sincerity and style.

John Christopher is another with this gift of making something fresh from something well-worn. I hear that two American (B-type, unfortunately) companies are bidding for the rights to his novel, THE POSSESSORS. The story is about a takeover bid for Earth by creatures from space infiltrating into men's minds... Echoes of Wells again: STAR-BEGOTTEN? And hasn't this theme already been tackled successfully in a film: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS?

No matter. Christopher's variation can only be a personal one, pure Christopher, and generate new magic from old ideas.

For there is no new thing under the sun.

Excerpt from a letter to Mr. Temple:

John Wyndham

It is an excellent article, and I wouldn't change a word of it - except that it is Hants, not Wilts. It is also a most encouraging and consoling article, for which I genuinely thank you.

I think that by self-plagiarism I really was meaning the tendency to harp too much on the old world-menace: it does become monotonous. Perhaps it was depressing to know that I had landed myself with yet another. In fact, that may be the basis of the whole trouble - which began, by the way, about a year before I removed here, so that I think that environment has little to do with it. The chief trouble seems to be now that the thing has become a kind of challenge. Several times I have said to hell with it, and started on something else, only to find that I have later drifted back to it with the feeling that I must get rid of it somehow... I think I see a way now, and shall plod on.

I was interested in your remarks on origins of ideas - and, of course, you are perfectly right. Something has to trigger them off. The Wells example from the BAB BALLADS is a perfect one. They crop up from the most unexpected places, and from the most improbable seeds, but there does have to be a seed.

"Science fiction?" your friend might say, "Ah, yes, I remember a story about plants - er - triffids."

For a large proportion of the public, Wyndham's work must typify sf. They may have never read any sf, but they have heard of the triffids - or perhaps of THE KRAKEN WAKES.

These two novels, together with THE CHRYSALIDS, have been issued as THE JOHN WYNDHAM OMNIBUS by Michael Joseph, and although this was done some time ago - 1964 - the publication of the volume allows one to examine the most popular of Wyndham's works at one sitting.

Wyndham is tremendously popular in the English-speaking world, and even fairly popular in America. (James Blish writes: "When John Wyndham is good he is very very good.") It is the purpose of this article to try to discover why this is so.

Is Wyndham a good writer? He uses, for example, almost as many "said-avoidances" as Arthur Zirul, who was pilloried for his efforts by Mr. Blish. His characters prompt, announce, remark, conclude, offer, cut off (!), agree and comment with the best of them. And these examples are taken from only four pages of THE KRAKEN WAKES. But perhaps Blish is not thinking of this when he describes Wyndham as a good writer. Without dwelling on the matter, it might be worth while commenting that on the second page of THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS a comma appears which renders an otherwise quite satisfactory sentence almost unintelligible.

John Wyndham's earliest writings appeared in WONDER STORIES and AMAZING STORIES in 1931-34, where he wrote as John Beynon Harris; later his pseudonyms were John Beynon, Wyndham Parkes, and, after the war, John Wyndham. He must be one of the few writers to have collaborated with himself, but this happened when John Wyndham and Lucas Parkes wrote THE OUTWARD URGE. His stories mainly appeared in the lower-class American magazines in the later periods, with the exception of occasional stories in ASTOUNDING and the like.

The three novels in this omnibus volume have many elements in common, but the links between the first two are more than considerable. Both stories are basically re-writes of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, with an unknown invader forcing mankind into small areas and primitive conditions. In both cases the novel ends with victory for man in sight.

This is hardly science fiction. These two novels, however, are very close to the public's idea of what constitutes sf, and for this reason they have won ready acceptance. Not for Joe Public the novels of the more intellectually challenging writers, such as Sturgeon, Vonnegut, Farmer. Such works are disturbing; Wyndham's plots just leave a gentle feeling of "It couldn't really happen, but if it did our side would win anyway."

In THE CHRYSALIDS, Wyndham does tackle a more unorthodox theme, from the point of view of the non-reader of sf. But to the sf fan who has read SLAN, or any other mutant novel, THE CHRYSALIDS is really creaky, as far as novelty of plot and idea is concerned.

It must by now be clear that Wyndham's novels are not written with the reader of sf in mind. There is no attempt to introduce anything which might be original. What Wyndham does try to do is to appeal to as many people as he can with what can only be regarded as hoary old plots. He does this in a variety of ways.

All three of these novels are written in the first person, a device which can make it easy for the reader to identify with the protagonist, but which can also be a disastrous failure, and if attempted seriously challenges the best writers. Wyndham does not approach the task seriously. He tells the stories in the first person because in this way he can describe the feelings of one of his characters adequately. The type of plot he uses also lends itself to a diary approach, which does in fact appear in places.

His male leads have solid names - Bill, Mike, David - and the names of their girl friends have just a trace of the exotic about them - Josella, Phyllis, Rosalind. These characters are good averages: plenty of "common sense" but very little imagination. No attempt is made to make them human, nor do we obtain any real insight into their strengths and weaknesses. This applies even more to the other players, who pop in and out of the novels without leaving the slightest impression on our minds.

Wyndham's view of human behaviour in the future is generally pessimistic. Although there are always enough people like his hero to make the hero believable, there are also large numbers of people, usually violent, who act selfishly and/or thoughtlessly. There are always petty dictators setting up their own tiny states, and enough weaklings to support them.

But this is only a cover for the immense blandness of Wyndham's leads. He succeeds in attracting a large audience only by making playthings even of the important characters: never does he describe them too closely, for fear that the reader of the book will dislike them. Characters are black and white, and no shading of reality can be permitted to distract the reader's attention.

Wyndham is, simply, not an original writer, and not a particularly good writer at that. He has succeeded only by taking the old plots of sf and clothing their bones with weak, uninteresting characters.

However, his service to the genre - and it is considerable - is that from his books so many people have gone on to discover good sf. (Penguin Books, for example, have virtually built their sf list around him.) For this we have to thank John Wyndham - but not necessarily read him.

* * * *

JB: PLAGIARISM IN SF appeared originally in BINARY no.8, edited by Joe Patrizio, and appears here by courtesy of author and publisher. The article has also been published in VECTOR no.36.

Judging by readers' reactions to John Brunner's article in ASFR 9, which also first appeared in VECTOR, it would appear that (a) VECTOR is not well circulated either in America or Australia, and (b) that by reprinting articles we are providing a welcome service. I have several articles on hand which I would like to reproduce, and I would be interested to have readers' comments on whether or not we should keep doing this.

it's still salami) and all the other writers heaved a sigh of relief and threw the limiting speed of radiation out of their hair for ever. Another convention was successfully born.

Some bright bird suggested that telepathy would operate faster than light, instantaneously, no less, (no-one ever, to my knowledge, suggested why it should) and so we were able to join minds across the universe without any trouble (or any expenditure of power, either). How useful, said the writers; don't let that one get away! It has been with us ever since, unquestioned.

In the dear dead past, back in the thirties, much popular nonsense was not only questioned by the readers but firmly put back in its box. The two-ton amoeba died with a tired splash when Sprague de Camp pointed out that such a structure could never become a ravening sphere of devouring fury but would in fact be a thin puddle of slime until it discovered how to grow bones. The interplanetary hero went into a decline as irritated readers pointed out that flying a space ship by the seat of your pants is a quick road to nowhere; it's a job for computers. Fewer and fewer Terrestrians married the winged princess of Venus as it was gradually realized that genetic complications enter into the matter and that members of alien races don't really have much urge to fall in love with each other unless their perversions are showing.

Such conventions died unlamented and one wishes to heaven that some of the newer ones could go after them. I stick my banner in the ground here and now, and call for more creative imagination on the part of the writers who (if the propaganda is to be believed) have the most active imaginations in literature. (They haven't, by several light years, but let that pass.)

SF has been in the doldrums before and come out of them with a flurry of fresh thinking. It is not unreasonable to point out that this process can be forced by doing some thinking. My suggestion is that the writers should take a long, close look at all the ragbag of conventions they take for granted and use ad nauseum. They should study these basic ideas with a view to testing their validity, and either toss them out or reconstruct them in a fashion which is less of a burden on the reader's attention and patience. My bet is that the first result would be a crop of new ideas, fringe benefits from the effort of reconsidering the old ones.

I am not by any means the first to suggest this, but previous complainants have raised their howl and let it go at that. I propose now to stick my neck out and my hat in the ring and list a few of the conventions due for scrapping, plus some suggested lines of thought for the rejuvenation of the basic ideas behind them.

Here follows the list, with comments, but don't expect anything easy; the proposition is that new thinking is needed. The list covers only a few of the possibilities which have been degraded into gimmicks to help lazy word-spinners over the tough spots in their plots. Readers (and writers) may find entertainment, and possibly some fresh ideas, in extending the catalogue to include some of their own pet irritations.

Telepathy: All our fictional telepaths (even when they are the only specimen in the world) have great control over their gift. Where did they

learn? How is it done? What is the basis in known scientific fact, and how does the gift equate with the universal laws? (Knowing nothing about telepathy is accepted as a licence to invent as you please. That isn't sf, it's fantasy - and lazy fantasy at that.) There are good stories to be written about telepathy considered on a severely practical basis. While we're at it, has anyone considered that telepathy may be a non-survival trait, and therefore unlikely to develop, save as a freak effect? There's a sound argument to say so, and a story in it.

Psi Talents: These are in the fantasy class, but could be brought into the hard-core fold if someone considered them in relation to the law of conservation of energy (which has not been disproved or relegated, despite some hopeful attempts). Now, the existence of psi talents has not been proved, although the evidence indicates their possibility. There is contemptuously, argument and private satisfaction for the writer who takes a long look at these indications and writes a story suggesting that in fact the evidence adds up to something else. What else? Do your own thinking.

Sub-Space: It's a handy bolthole when the Fenachrone are on your tail, but how do you get there? (You go into your undescribed changeover routine, of course, get a queasy feeling in your tummy and emerge smiling into a friendly universe of solid green cheese.) I can't recall that anyone has ever tried justifying the existence of sub-space, or inventing one with a set of consistent laws and attributes and a comprehensible method of entry. (Why not try it? Extrapolation is permitted, but no "holes in the fabric of space" or snow jobs about "compression along the temporal line" unless you are prepared to relate these things also to known or theoretical science.) It isn't such a tough imaginative feat. Consider the properties of the neutrino, the existence of anti-particles, and the dual nature of energy/matter, and you should see several possible lines staring you in the face. And plot situations to go with them.

The All-Female World: This inevitably turns out to be just like home while father's away at work. What would it be like? Now, when men and women are segregated, one of the first results noticeable is a change in the moral climate, usually downwards, because male and female act as powerful moral brakes upon each other. (In the armed services this can be seen clearly, and the community is held together by rigid discipline and the full use of everyone's time.) Think on this when dreaming up your next Amazonia. On the physical and technological side we know that women are capable of all male achievements save in the area of brawn, but would they, left to themselves, move in the same direction as a male-dominated world? Their interests are different, for biological reasons reflected in their psychology (and not to be changed simply because there are no men in sight) and their community development would surely be along different lines from that of a heterosexual group. What lines? No-one seems to have observed the problem yet, and the subject is used strictly for laughs. The story of an all-female community should be written by a woman who isn't afraid to speak her mind, and let the males beware!

Robotics and Automation: There has been as yet no end to the worlds fallen into helpless apathy because the machines do all the work. Is such a result possible? Think it over in connection with evolution, schizophrenia, paranoia, the sexual urge, politics, education of the young, and what to do with your spare time - and I think that apathetic world will vanish in a hail of burst boiler-plates. As for the robots of the Asimov type

(with all due genuflection to the good Doctor), are they so all-fired useful? If so, for what? In fact, do we need them, save for a few specialized functions? Have they, as a breed, survival value? Please don't tell me how useful one would be about the house; tell me rather about the economics of a civilization whose housewives can afford one.

Werewolves, etc.: Fantasy? It ain't necessarily so. James Blish made a successful and professionally hair raising attempt to put lycanthropy on a scientific basis (THERE SHALL BE NO DARKNESS). A little ingenuity could do the same for precognition, sympathetic magic, accident proneness, spiritualism, fortune telling, the déjà vu, things that go bump in the night, and all the everyday superstitions of the "thirteen is unlucky" variety. All these things can be related to facts already known but not explained. Add dowsing to the list and think what might be accomplished if that ability could be isolated and developed into selective sensitivity.

Re-education of Criminals: We all know the one about how you catch your criminal, then brainwash him and make him a useful member of the community. Such a technique would almost inevitably be spread to crime prevention, with periodical checkups and adjustments. (Philip Dick took a quick glance at this in THE ACADEMY some years ago.) What would happen to us without our criminals and the ordinary human-to-human risks of daily life? Such a programme would require some drastic schematization of moral values, with an acute definition of right and wrong. Who then would judge and decide and perform the operations on the "sick"? And how about a sweet, cosy, utterly horrifying little tale about family life when every member will at intervals return home from the mind doctor just a little bit changed? This is one of the "black" Utopias, but might be examined with profit, and such examination might even result in a few writers realizing that basic human characteristics will affect the direction of the future as surely as technological changes will affect humanity. "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."

Population Explosion and Food Supply: A few writers have prodded the fringe of this one; most are satisfied to come up with cannibalism, genocide, food capsules, and mass emigration (usually forced - the total resources of earth could not, in a foreseeable future, provide transportation on a scale to match the birth rate of a population of ten billions, which is a figure in the horrifyingly foreseeable future). How about a genuine look at the problem, in terms of technology, politics, genetics (survival of the fittest) and psychology? Why not a novel about a starving world? This need not be a picture of unrelieved gloom; there are quite a few starving nations who still struggle upward and onward in their desperately underpowered way, which may very soon be our way.

One-World Government: This is a popular wish-fantasy for the future, and not confined to sf. Could such a world-wide authority exist without an opposition? What would be the constitution and purpose of such an opposition? What would happen to the world government if the opposition stood fast on a matter of policy and produced a political deadlock? Would the world government split apart and resolve itself into the familiar warring states? In fact, can such a world state exist, and is it desirable? This Utopia should be questioned very closely indeed.

This could go on indefinitely. Present day sf is altogether too derivative of itself. It's all very well to claim that the writer should have absolute

freedom, but absolute freedom has one thing in common with absolute power - it corrupts absolutely. It is time for a few restrictive rules to emerge. The mark of an artist is his ability to produce good work within the rules of his medium; once he has achieved that he can go on to break them and to discover, as every rule-breaker does, that he must set up others in their places.

And let no sf writer claim that he is no artist, only an artisan. He may not be a good artist, but as soon as he shuffles off the claim to artistry he degrades his calling. What is worse, he assists in the degradation of the minds of his readers.

The writer's business is first to think, then to write. All of us are derivative in some form, because none of us can fail to be influenced by the work of others. The thing is to use what we learn from the others to further our own conceptions, not to simply repeat their habits because it is easier than dreaming up new activities.

And, just for a farewell flourish: My compliments to James Blish as being one of the rare few who really thinks about the subjects of his choice, and writes with some insight into the implications of change, decay and advancement.

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From The Bibliofile:

Youth is a time during which the conventions are, and should be, ill-comprehended - either blindly fought or blindly obeyed.

Paul Valery

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R E V I E W S

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Brian Richards p.27

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FRITZ LEIBER: THE WANDERER

KEITH LAUMER: A PLAGUE OF DEMONS

FRANK HERBERT: DESTINATION VOID

PETER GEORGE: COMMANDER 1

JOHN BRUNNER: THE LONG RESULT

PHILIP JOSE FARMER: THE GATES OF
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Mike Montgomery 45

Brian Aldiss 46

FRITZ LEIBER: GATHER DARKNESS

Four Square: 60¢

It is always most pleasant to welcome an old friend - particularly an old friend turning up in such a splendid new

cover as added ornamentation. Tom Boardman Jr. in his preface describes it as "a classic from the golden age" and when he writes this he is being neither fulsome nor mendacious, for after all, what is a classic but a work which has stood the test of time? You may rest assured that this book has achieved that noble objective.

When your critic first made the acquaintance of this story it was running as a three-part serial in ASTOUNDING. This was during the dark days of the battle of the North Atlantic, circa 1943. It then lightened life during the infrequent off-watch spells aboard HMS CLARE, an old American four stack destroyer, and assisted materially in preserving a small oasis of lunacy in an altogether too sane and too brutal world.

One treasured those three magazines for a couple of years until they met an unfortunate and ignominious end as the sad by-product of an attack of dysentery in Italy just before VE Day. One still has the poignant memory of the separate very soiled pages floating one at a time down the Grand Canal in Venice. Sic Transit Gloria Mundi.

Leiber expanded and revised for book publication in 1950, and managed, as always, to project himself into his writing to the point where he is very high on the list of people who would be welcome here at Mortgage Manor for a very long stay. One confesses to be being biassed - outrageously biassed - in favour of this book. A story of the second atomic era, where humanity has retrogressed to the point of mixing science and witchcraft; the protagonist a ludicrous, inept, kindly, ultimately triumphant, bumbling Brother Jarles. You will be sorry if you miss this.

FRITZ LEIBER: THE WANDERER

Dennis Dobson: \$2.65

It will be evident that Fritz Leiber has long been regarded by your critic, and by others even more illustrious, as a

sound writer, a most competent craftsman who writes well but infrequently. Perhaps the infrequency of production is caused by a surfeit of reprinting and anthologizing, with their concurrent removal of financial incentive, or perhaps each story is retained and repolished until it satisfies the author fully; these are questions that only Mr. Leiber can answer. The undoubted fact remains that those of us who are rabid Leiber fanatics remain deprived of joy, except when the depraved Cohen and his minions see fit to pad out the dismal remnants of once great magazines with his work. One can imagine the comments of the late revered Gernsback if confronted with the AMAZING of today.

Having fallen into the trap of climbing on to a favourite soap box, back to Leiber. His previous work is written - one might almost say, emphatically written - in the Cherokee dialect of the English language. This is a little off-putting, but it has the great advantage of allowing him to exdigitate the plot development with great economy of expression. On superficial examination his stories have been full of borborygmia mirth and broad slapstick humour, but on closer inspection one finds a wry sadness underlying the comedy, and a satirical, saturnine, trenchant wit, exposing itself as a mordant, incisive, sometimes even savage commentary is made on aspects of contemporary

civilization, projected to past or future scenes. THE WANDERER is atypical yet unmistakable Leiber; the superficial humour is gone, and we are left with an astonishing example of the writing of one who has after years of work achieved the full flowering splendour of maturity. The basic plot is not original (indeed it would take something of the order of a "second coming" to produce an original sci-fi plot today, and as yet no new bright star glows in the firmament), but the treatment of the plot, with three major and eight minor sub-plots, combined with the expert handling of a huge cast of characters, is a literary tour de force, comparable to any novel in print today; it is almost as if WAR AND PEACE had been transliterated from the verbose pedantry of Tolstoy to the crisp exuberance of Hemingway. The book is an enriching experience, and the craftsman has produced a masterpiece.

KEITH LAUMER: A PLAGUE OF DEMONS

Penguin: 60¢

First serialized in IF, November/December 1964, this expansion starts as a nicely off-beat little story. The

opening chapters deal quite placidly with an American special agent being transformed into a cyberneticized superman to help win the cold war still being waged in the not too distant future, who suddenly comes into contact with ferocious canine-type BEMs who are stealing human brains to control very advanced-type extraterrestrial war equipment for use on other planets.

The story develops very well until Mr. Laumer apparently lost the thread a little - allowed his hero to be brain-napped and transferred to being a 5000-ton tank six stories high. From here on the story is as tall and unconvincing as the tank, and the ending degenerates to comic-style thud and blunder. The book is readable - will pass an idle hour quite well in fact - but borrow it from your local library rather than lay out money on it.

FRANK HERBERT: DESTINATION VOID

Penguin: 80¢

Another of Frank Herbert's erudite dissertations on the folly of mankind. This time he has wrapped it up in a space

ship bound for Tau Ceti. The people who send the ship really are not sure that they want it to arrive at its destination. The people on board are (a) not sure they want to leave, (b) not sure they want to arrive. The plot, such as it is, deteriorates from the obscure to the ludicrous, finally arriving at the point where the three organic brains guiding the ship have gone quietly daft; the computer controlling the physical well-being of the ship goes berserk, and the characters deteriorate to the point where they soliloquize wildly on the theme of "little does he know that I know that he knows that I know" &c &c. Your critic's patience reached the point where with great self control the book is dropped by the chair rather than thrown into a corner.

PETER GEORGE: COMMANDER 1

Heinemann: \$2.65

It is difficult to know whether to be pleased or disgusted when patent and obvious sci-fi comes into a publisher's

general list instead of being classified. One should be pleased to see the end of segregation because the advantages are obvious - librarians and booksellers are deluded into buying it, the book becomes available in places where it would otherwise fail to reach, and the odd convert may be made to the cause. Other side-effects may consist of encouraging "general" authors to enter the field, a consequent raising of literary standards, and an increase in social status through the accretion of respectability. Conversely, disgruntlement can well be caused to the less literate who look

only at sci-fi listings and thus fail to read and enjoy superlative work. This leads to the retention of the current low standards of publication, particularly in paperback form, for it is manifest that as long as garbage remains profitable, garbage will be supplied.

COMMANDER 1 is one of the aforementioned general listings which your critic was particularly fortunate in acquiring as a hardcover remainder at the astonishing price of 88¢, the book being currently available as a paperback. The adjectival phrases which jump to the mind are all calculated to delight the publishers (though the extent of their delight may be limited by the fact that they have obviously not had a huge sale for the book), and are along these lines: a splendid book, awe-inspiring, thought-provoking, outrageous malice, brilliant satire, sardonic parody, and any one of a thousand and one similar critical cliches with which you are all familiar. There is one important difference, though: that any words of praise used, however exaggerated they may seem, verge on absolute truth.

Make no mistake, this book is a classic, a great work of science fiction, destined to live until the armageddon of which it writes finally arrives. Read it, learn, and inwardly digest it. Buy a copy for your MHR, then bully him until you are sure that he has read it, too. The theme is a sombre lesson to us all. The author is a fabulously talented Welshman who co-authored DOCTOR STRANGELOVE. The book is so brilliant that even the chauvinism of a Welsh character cluttering the all-American scene is excusable, if needless.

Only one grouse: if Heinemann had not concealed this in their general list it would undoubtedly have swept the boards for a Hugo award. Still, it is sufficient reward to own the book.

JOHN BRUNNER: THE LONG RESULT
Faber: \$2.30 (also in pb)

Another of the incredibly expert blends of sf and thriller which one has come to expect from the pen of John Brunner - different in that the sciences fictionalized are psychology, sociology and social dynamics. (Dear Reader, if you are gadget-minded, do not read this book: it is not for such as you.)

In the story Earth is old and has reached a developmental plateau, whilst one of the colony planets has at last reached the point where it surpasses the home world in all aspects save that of culture. The development of a plot in which the colonists are trying to break away is equated to the American Rebellion (or War of Independence, if your politics are that way inclined) and is of much contemporary interest to those of us observing the current Commonwealth scene, where a similar situation has existed for some time.

However Brunner, ever the master of paradox, has the wise old Earthlings very knowledgeable about all this and trying to give the colonists absolute freedom without causing feelings of abandonment to ensue.

At this point, just where one feels that it is all nicely wrapped up thank you, the plot thickens like a Verdi libretto.

Anything written by Brunner is worth reading, but this is more so, an altogether delightful book to add to the permanent collection.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER: THE GATES OF CREATION

Ace: 50¢

Farmer is one of the rare writers who your critic prepares to read firstly by

arranging a comfortable chair, then by filling several pipes, then by arranging a stack of mood music at low volume on the record player. After all this one settles comfortably and starts off an evening of sheer joy. Farmer shows such coruscating brilliance of imagination and such contempt for the merely possible that one's brain is assaulted with psychedelic clarity. Farmer's work must be the closest approach to prose-poetry in the entire field of sf.

Farmer is not really read; rather is he experienced; and this book, no exception to the norm, represents the quintessence of sf as it should be but rarely is.

ROBERT HEINLEIN: STARSHIP TROOPERS

Four Square: 80¢

First published in an abridged form in F&SF under the title STARSHIP SOLDIER, this expanded version won

the Hugo Award in 1959. Generally speaking 1959 was rather a poor year for sci-fi and the Hugo committee must have scraped the bottom of the barrel to find competition for this book. Thinking back, one really wonders why they bothered, since consideration of anything other than STARSHIP TROOPERS must have been purely a formality. It is quite manifest that Heinlein would have scooped the pool with this effort even in a very good year.

Happily dedicated "to all sergeants everywhere who have laboured to make men out of boys", this is the story of a professional soldier. It is a book which on the surface only glorifies war, and while it holds philosophies liable to make a pacifist bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window, these philosophies on closer examination may well be compared to Mailer's NAKED AND THE DEAD in the viewpoints pushed - namely that war is not a natural outlet for man to sublimate his aggressive instincts but is a mental disease. Also, that however mechanical and roboticized war becomes, in the final analysis it is man who is obliged to capture and hold enemy territory. "It is no use destroying the enemy with atoms if you cannot occupy and use his territory afterwards" - conquest, not destruction, is the theoretical aim of war.

The story describes the training of a green recruit, from square bashing to warfare on an alien planet. This warfare is the most realistically described I have ever seen in sci-fi. The meticulous writing and expert extrapolation of current strategy and tactics to the far future are hallmarks of the artistry which makes Heinlein famous and still today one of the most inspired master craftsmen in the genre.

MADELEINE DUKE: CLARET, SANDWICHES AND SIN

Four Square: 60¢

Madeleine Duke is undoubtedly known to most of you far better as a retired lady spy,

autobiographer and expert thriller writer, rather than as a sci-fi authoress. I must confess that I wot not if this is her first venture into the field; certainly I hope it will not prove her last. Anyone who can write a book like this is an acquisition to the genre. The plot is thoroughly original and plausible, indeed a most telling satire, a glorious romp, hilariously striking a blow for sanity. Not since Lewis Padgett first shewed that humour has a place in sci-fi has the fantastic been so lightly tripped.

Brian Richards

CHAPMAN PINCHER: NOT WITH A BANG
Four Square: 80¢

Reviewed by IAN GODDEN

A few years ago Groff Conklin edited a collection of sf stories which had been written by scientists. The result, while interesting, seemed to point out the obvious... that profes-

sional writers are much better at the job than professional scientists. (Unless of course they were both, like Clarke, Asimov, Oliver, Clement, Hoyle, and to go further back, Taine.) What can we expect when a science journalist as eminent as Chapman Pincher writes his first novel? Pincher is a highly qualified scientist, an expert in genetics, the author of several scientific books, and has for many years been England's best known science columnist. A man like this with his finger on the pulse of the world's latest scientific developments over a period of years should have dozens of ideas for sf stories. What then does he choose for his first venture into fiction? The answer is that he writes a longish novel about a longevity drug called SP47. (And in so doing covers much the same ground as John Wyndham in THE TROUBLE WITH LICHEN.)

The discovery of a drug to prolong life by retarding the natural ageing process is no doubt one of the most interesting scientific discoveries that could be imagined. The ramifications of such a discovery would be enormous to say the least. Here then we have a pretty substantial theme for a writer to let his imagination play around with, and Pincher does this to the tune of about 250 pages.

The book begins well with an authoritatively documented account of the discovery of the drug by Dr. Robert Harvey and his assistant. When there can be no more doubt that results obtained in laboratory experiments with rats can be duplicated in humans, Harvey sees that he has something really big on his hands. To seek permission to publish his findings in the British Medical Journal, Harvey has an interview with the secretary of the Medical Research Council. Here again Pincher is on ground he has obviously got to know very well as a journalist: the world of high public office, politicians on the make, parliamentary decision-makers keeping the wheels of government turning, the back rooms of Whitehall and Downing Street. Pincher knows politicians and how they operate, and his detailed story of the political reaction to the life-prolonging drug is the best thing in the book.

Instead of being given permission to publish, Harvey finds his discovery marked Top Secret while the politicians thrash out what is to be done. After Cabinet has met and adopted a wait-and-see attitude the whole issue is made public by a science journalist who is conveniently having an affair with Dr. Harvey's female assistant. Because the (Conservative) government has kept the facts of the discovery and its potential from the public, the Opposition uses this fact to bring the government down and assume power following the greatest election promise of all time... that the longevity drug, now called Juvenex, will be made available to all.

The effect of the drug on the human takers is that they soon seem about twenty years younger and remain at that age as long as they continue to take the drug. Pincher explores the many social and economic side-effects of this very well: the reawakened sexual drives of the old, the reduction in job availability leading to massive unemployment, the decline of religion, the rise in the divorce rate, the growing dissatisfaction of the young who are prevented from making careers for themselves. These aspects of the

changed nature of day-to-day life are convincingly portrayed, as is the account of the growing administrative problems.

However, in the latter part of the novel, Pincher becomes so engrossed in the world-view of the results of taking Juvenex that he loses track of his individual characters, and they receive less and less attention. After a few years it is found that the takers of the drug are highly sensitive to radiation. The Russians, who have never taken the drug, discover this and start testing atomic weapons at a prodigious rate, causing the fallout to increase to such a level that weakened Westerners die in their millions. The novel now starts to read like any one of a hundred post-atomic holocaust novels. It could be said that it, like the world it describes, ends not with a bang but a whimper.

The novel has serious faults of construction. The action and main narrative are constantly kept at a snail's pace due to the detailed account of the numerous love affairs of all the main characters. There is a long Profumo-type scandal involving the Foreign Secretary and a call girl who is a dupe of the Russians. All of this is rather tedious and the novel could have been pruned of a great deal of it.

Four Square have been publishing a lot of good sf lately, and all of it has been labelled as such on the covers. This one does not carry the sf label. I wonder why.

LEONARD DAVENTRY: A MAN OF DOUBLE DEED
Pan: 60¢

This first novel by an English writer, originally published a few years ago, was well received

by critics, with the notable exception of Miller in ANALOG.

The man of double deed is Claus Coman, a professional telepath (yes, this is yet another novel about telepathy, but this time quite a good one) having semi-official status in the world of the year 2090. Coman is one of a small group called keymen who have these telapathic powers and use them to assist the World Government of the time to solve some of the many problems it faces.

Daventry depicts his twenty-first century society very well indeed. The world has been largely rebuilt following the Atomic Disaster of 1990, but despite the many advanced technologies available, is a world of cynicism and boredom, violence and cruelty. Here is Daventry on the gladiatorial combats, reminiscent of Roman days, which seem to be the most popular form of public entertainment: "Here it seemed was the perfect outlet for a race encompassed by machines, marshalled and controlled by ingenious instruments that thought for them, coddled and suffocated by marvellous electronic devices that gar-nished and suckled them - a race no longer troubled and alerted by the threat of imminent war but smothered by the luxuries of peace, the terrible apathies and ennui engendered by too little work, and too much time."

At the time of the story the World Government is concerned about a wave of violence, murder and suicide among young people. A committee is about to vote on whether a War Section should be established as an experiment. This would be a large area set aside for the commitment of those found guilty of crimes of violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Here they would be left "to fend for themselves in conditions of primitive savagery." (This idea is somewhat akin to that used by Russell Braddon in THE YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT.) Most of the action of the story concerns a visit by Coman to

the city where the World Government is to discuss and vote on the War Section proposal. Coman is to use his influence to persuade Marst, the chairman of the committee, to vote in favour of the proposal, since the small but powerful group of keymen consider this to be in the best interests of society. The forces of organized crime have a strong vested interest in the non-establishment of the War Section, and they oppose Coman's group. The Fifteenth City, where this takes place, is a fascinating area - a vast city built on huge pillars over the South Pacific Ocean. Here Coman stays with an old friend who has contracted some ghastly disease in space which has necessitated his being partially rebuilt, so that he is virtually half-man half-robot. Understandably enough he is more than a little mad, and a fascinating character.

There is much of interest in this quietly competent novel. I hope Mr. Daventry will continue to write, and that next time his theme will be a less hackneyed one, allowing greater scope for his considerable ability.

Ian Godden

FREDERIK POHL & JACK WILLIAMSON:
UNDERSEA QUEST
Dobson: \$2.00

Reviewed by DIANA MARTIN

Robert Louis Stevenson under water!
All credit to these talented men who can produce STARCHILD and then trot out this excellent adventure story of an eminently credible future of undersea living. The hero is a young man beset by all the powers of a mighty tycoon who tries by the foulest means to gain the lad's inheritance. Despite his efforts, right triumphs over wrong.

I understand that in America this book was published for a juvenile public, but Dobson Books have apparently published it for an adult audience. As an adult story it will not hold much appeal for the old hard-bitten coterie of sf readers who have been weaned to meatier stuff, but if you should pick it up to vet the story for a young reader you will probably enjoy it. It's rather like comparing KIDNAPPED with THE CRUEL SEA: both are dramatic books but geared to different levels. In fact, to be rather hard, one could almost parallel KIDNAPPED with UNDERSEA QUEST: only the venues are different - the plot is almost the same. But then is any plot really new? The handling of this story is well done, not much moralizing, not too much technical data, and a swift flow of events carries it to a satisfying conclusion. Pohl and Williamson can also get their characters across to a reader, and in a book which will be read more by younger folk this is an important achievement, as one must be able to identify oneself with the hero in a first person narrative.

Get this for a young friend, but it's quite good reading in a spare moment for yourself. The cover and flyleaf give a good summary of the contents.

RANDALL GARRETT: TOO MANY MAGICIANS

Reviewed by JOHN BLATTMAN

The success of alternate timetrack stories depends on a logical reason for the difference between the author's world and ours, and on his

ability to maintain the illusion. This story is part of a series which assumes that Richard the Lionheart was not killed in 1199 but outlived Prince John and began the long line of Plantagenet kings who have ruled a combined France and England until the present day. Late in the 13th century

a monk discovered and formulated the Laws of Magic, so that thaumaturgical science has become the leading field of knowledge.

Fortunately Mr. Garrett gives his stories a light touch (one was called THE MUDDLE OF THE WOAD), has feasible characters, and uses some very interesting plots. This story, which I read as a serial in ANALOG, has a background of spies and mysterious goings on, but develops into a classic locked-room mystery, in which a number of magicians attending a conference are the suspects. The laws of magic are precise, and spells leave traces just as our murderers leave behind fingerprints and so on. The solution is as good as any by John Dickson Carr.

Some of our fictional detectives have been transferred to this era. Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe appears as the Marquis of London, a huge lazy man with brilliant deductive logic who specializes in growing rare herbs (not orchids) - and his assistant, Archie Goodwin, appears as Lord Bontrionphe, a transformation which would have astounded the original.

The plot is too involved to summarize, but moves swiftly and doesn't bog down in interminable discussions about Life. The story and the people enable us to evolve a picture of this slightly familiar world. I can recall only one scene where I thought the author was stretching the bounds of credibility a bit far, and in a story of this length that is an achievement.

ROBERT E. HOWARD: CONAN THE WARRIOR
(ed. L. Sprague de Camp)
Lancer: 70¢

I feel sorry for authors whose characters become a cult. If the hero has blue eyes in one story and brown eyes in a story some years later, some

learned person will write a thesis about the appearance of contact lenses in the wrong era and deduce time travel. I wonder if Robert Howard realized that he had created one of the immortal characters of sf, and that thirty years later some of the big names in sf would collect his stories and issue them in sequence? The order is a little confused as the cover calls this book volume two and the editor calls it the fifth. The hero is supposed to be in his late thirties, so I suppose the latter is more likely.

The best review of this book is in the Introduction: "Of all the many kinds of fiction, the one that gives the purest entertainment is heroic fantasy: the story of sword-play and sorcery laid in an imaginary world where magic works, all men are mighty, all women beautiful, all problems simple, and all life adventurous. In such a world, gleaming cities raise their shining spires against the stars, sorcerers cast sinister spells from subterranean lairs, baleful spirits stalk crumbling ruins, primeval monsters crash through jungle thickets, and the fate of kingdoms is balanced on the mighty blades of broadswords brandished by heroes of preternatural might and vigour."

If you like heroic fiction, this is a wonderful example of it. I can't think of a better refuge from TV on a wet Sunday afternoon.

John Blattman

AN ALFRED BESTER OMNIBUS
Sidgwick & Jackson: \$3.85

Latest in S&J's excellent series of omnibus volumes, this one contains TIGER!

TIGER!, THE DEMOLISHED MAN, and the story collection THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH. Snow jobs or not, these are very delightful stories and well worth the hardback price.

JB

JACK VANCE: THE KRAGEN
 Fantastic, July 1964

The point which first and most strongly strikes me about this story is not the idea of a landless world (which I dealt with in a previous article in ASFR 5), nor its far-fetched chemistry, etc., but the absolutely appalling writing. Vance never uses three short words where two polysyllabic ones will do. His style is late Victorian, reminiscent of the poorer grade of boys' adventure stories of that period, over-Latinized and pretentious. Worse, he extends this style from direct narrative into the dialogue and oratory of his characters.

The characters in the story live a fairly primitive life without advanced social or technical organization. They descend from a batch of convicts who mutinied and took over their prison spaceship and landed on this planet of boundless ocean. Presumably they originated on Earth, or at least come of quasi-human stock, of a fairly high level of civilization. It is scarcely likely, however, that after hundreds of years, working hard to continue to live in a semi-hostile environment, they would have preserved a resounding vocabulary abounding in such words as "gluttonous", "sloth", "pudicity", "heinous", and "designated." Surely their word power would have declined - and probably for the better - to essentials and simplicities.

Despite the fact that Vance himself, in one passage of 150 words, manages to use 91 different ones, it is not really likely that in the whole 25,000 words of the story he uses a vocabulary of more than 4,000. I define different words as words not obviously related: e.g. "habit" and "habitually" are not different, but variations of one root word. In the signal system described by him, such variations would be denoted by a symbol for the root word and a symbol for the kind of variation (and this second symbol would be appended to many different words for the same purpose). Why then do his characters find it necessary that their signallers know at least 4,000 symbols, with some knowing up to 9,000? Even used for the keeping of records, so great a vocabulary is highly unlikely in the circumstances. Basic English gets along with less than 2,000, and you and I in our daily speech probably would be working hard to use more than 2-3,000, except in a technical discussion.

On their watery world the people live on surface-riding "pads" of sea-plants, depending on these and other plants for food, pollen flour, fibres, saps, membranes, shelter, clothing. The rafts formed by the pads, and there seems to be some indication that these rafts are not entirely natural, support epiphytic plants.

How come air-supported plants - land plants? What evolutionary necessity drove them into existence? What ecological niche do they fill in the ocean world?

Moreover, from scraps of description - the use of the word "pistil", for example - one gathers that either the sea-plants or the epiphytes or both are angiosperms. What reason have flowering plants to develop in an ocean world which has not birds, insects, or land animals, and in which propagation and dispersion are more efficiently accomplished in water than in air?

The community is menaced by a monster, whose depredations have slowly reached the stage of requiring the death of the monster and of its smaller counterparts. The inhabitants, of course, have no stone, no metal, merely bones and such wood as the sea-plants supply. Vance shows how, in his view, a metal-electricity technology could develop, spurred on by the half-understood records of human technology written down by the first settlers. Oddly enough their distant descendants seem to understand fairly well what electricity is and does, and they have preserved, miraculously corrosion-free in this sea-side atmosphere, certain scraps of metal from the landing, so that they can identify iron and copper on sight, even in a very crudely smelted state. Supermen indeed. Their first effort is to produce glass, iron, and copper, using as a source of heat the sun's rays concentrated by a lens of water held in a membranous bowl. Have you ever tried to burn a hole in a piece of paper with a hand lens?

I have seen a film of a French installation in the Pyrenees in which the sun's rays are concentrated by a huge parabolic mirror; a billet of wood thrust into the focus instantaneously bursts into flame. Is it, or was, used for metal smelting among other purposes. That is rather different from an inefficient water-lens on an unstable foundation, with no timing device to hold the focus.

Yet, apparently, they manage to get temperatures of the order of 1500°C . I understand that the hot flame of a Bunsen burner goes up to 1000°C . My references tell me that 2800°F is necessary for glassmaking (a bit over 1500°C), $900 - 1090^{\circ}\text{C}$ for reduction of iron, and that the melting point of copper is 1981°F .

For glass, silica, lime, and soda ash are required, plus additives for better grades. To make the 200 one-quart containers for batteries produced by this super-technological team from the skeletons of diatoms (plankton), must have taken several oceans-full.

Copper they obtain from the blood of their enemies, the kragen, by smelting; iron from their own blood. Apart from the temperatures required, both processes require carbon, and the charcoal obtainable from burning the types of plants available would be pretty low-grade, probably. Lime as a flux for iron would not be difficult, supposing that the rafts support a crop of barnacles, oysters and so forth.

So far, I am willing to suspend disbelief, though it seems remarkable luck that they hit the right methods first off.

I have no information on the copper content of kragen blood, so I am even willing to admit they might obtain enough.

But - however willing the blood-donors - the whole body of a hefty healthy human contains only four grams of iron, of which 2.8 to 3.0 grams is contained in the whole blood supply. How many humans, at a pint a fortnight, for how long, would be required to produce a pair of kragen-harpoon heads?

Incidentally, how do they shape their materials, once won? No sand, no pottery, nothing to make moulds but wood - and to melt iron takes 1535°C , much higher than the smelting temperature, which produces only sponge iron. Nor have they stone for hammers, and it would take a lot of beating to convert their sponge iron into anything worthwhile: wood and bone hammers just

wouldn't be heavy and hard enough. To make copper wire, dies would be necessary for the drawing - after, of course, purifying it and casting ingots - and again wood and bone are useless: steel and diamond are not available, glass is too soft.

Actually, Vance has made things too difficult in respect of the production of the raw materials. Once his ingenious electrical machine (which I don't know enough to criticize) produces electricity, and hence a means of making acids, electrolytic means of making pure iron and pure copper would be far easier. The copper, in any case, would have to be electrolytically refined if it were to be used for an electrical conductor.

Also, his batteries are a longwinded way of getting the charge he required to kill King Kragen; it might have been far less trouble to build a man-powered electrostatic machine with the materials available. The women, noticeably almost nonexistent in the tale, could have been set to work weaving an endless belt from plant fibres; much less glass would have been necessary, and probably a better charge obtained.

If Vance had used more of his 25,000 words to lend technical verisimilitude instead of interminably padding the inconsequential portions of his unconvincing narrative, it might have been worth the pulp it was printed on - but only just.

Dammit, I'm getting as sesquipedalian as he is!

* * * *

P L U C K E D , T R E M B L I N G , F R O M T H E Æ T H E R

Some Notes and Comments by JOHN FOYSTER

The International SNAFU Award, 1967: ANALOG

Although Mr. Campbell's magazine has revealed itself in recent years to be a candidate for this award (printing the same letter in successive issues, not remembering Anlab ratings of 1.00) it is only in the past several months that by meticulous efforts the magazine has scaled heights which make the 1967 presentation mandatory.

Item: December, 1967, p.80: John Campbell states that ANALOG circulation is 12,000.

Item: January, 1967, p.161: P.S. Miller states that Raymond J. Healy was one of the founding editors of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION.

Item: March, May, June, July, 1967: Christopher Anvil stories are published. With one small fault which a careful editor could have attended to. I quote opening phrases from each story: "Richard Verner stood..." "Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Doyle glanced..." "Vaughan Roberts glanced..." "Nels Krojac lay..." Since I don't read Christopher Anvil stories, I don't know how important these blokes are. But this is now a firmly established characteristic of the Anvil story, and a very boring and depressing characteristic it is.

- Item: May, 1967: BURDEN OF PROOF, by Bob Shaw. Where are all the smart engineers with slide rules who normally write in to explain how the author has fouled up his science?
- Item: June, 1967, p.171: Reviewing Walter Miller's THE VIEW FROM THE STARS. P.S. Miller asks: "Why did these stories have to wait fourteen years to be collected?" More to the point: why did the book have to wait two years to be reviewed?
- Item: July, 1967, p.5: Editorial: "Too, of course, no one man could really represent the needs..."
- Item: July, 1967, p.34: "Harry Harrison's THE TIME-MACHINED SAGA took first place so solidly - so nearly unanimously - that it has a point score of 1.57." Yeah, real solid. If it was rated only 1 or 2, then 57% voted 2, and so on. At least 15% of readers voted it other than 1.
- Item: July, 1967, p.163: Miller reviews A PLAGUE OF PYTHONS, opening with "You'd never recognize the Frederik Pohl of SPACE MERCHANTS and the other social satires in this one...". Next he reviews THE EYES OF HEISENBERG, opening with "You'd never recognize the Frank Herbert of DUNE or THE DRAGON IN THE SEA in this one." True, but the reviewing style is vaguely familiar.
- Item: July, 1967: (This is a bad month.) JWC reviews STUPIDTHEOREMS, a book selling for \$2.00. He says: "You're paying about 10¢ a word for this book", but his direct quotations consist of more than thirty words, or twenty-three different words, in case someone tries to wriggle out.

Well, there are some of the reasons for the award. Doubtless there are others which your committee did not discover. Is Walter J. McBride a dero, by any chance?

What's In It For Me?

I present below a table showing the prices of U.S. sf magazines at Australian newsstands. I show the U.S. price, its Australian equivalent, and the local price, in that order. The last is not universal, but wouldn't vary by more than 5¢ up.

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SF	50¢	45¢	45¢
IF	50¢	45¢	45¢
WORLDS OF TOMORROW	50¢	45¢	50¢
AMAZING - FANTASTIC	50¢	45¢	50-55¢
GALAXY	60¢	54¢	55¢
ANALOG	60¢	54¢	70¢

I direct your attention to that last figure. There was a time when the sf magazines sold in Australia were returns from the States, but this is not the case now. When it was, the prices for the magazines involved was lower. But now all are on the same footing. Why is it that ANALOG costs so much more? The price increase was absorbed in the U.K. - they were paying a little too much anyway. But why 15¢ difference between GALAXY and ANALOG?

The Philosophy of Relative Existences

If your name happens to be Philip Jose Farmer, beware of reviews whose first paragraphs run:

"Farmer's latest, BRAIN-CRYSTALS OF JUPITER V, though quite good, is not nearly up to his earlier successes such as INSIDE OUTSIDE, A WOMAN A DAY, or THE GREEN ODYSSEY. Although his handling of the love-relationship between the bacterium and the elephant was extremely sensitive, it lacked some of the finesse which we have come to expect of Farmer. The rape scene, though, was unnecessarily violent."

Come to think of it, though, if your name is P.J. Farmer you've seen so much of that sort of thing that you know it is to be avoided without any outside advice.

Farmer is in the awkward position of having started at the top, so far as sf is concerned. Although each novel is on much the same level of technical skill and innovation, some readers expect the phenomenon they have observed in other writers - a rise from mediocrity to competence and occasionally beyond. Farmer's apparent stasis is therefore quite foreign to them, and it seems as though his work is becoming less interesting.

Now in fact Farmer's first stories (THE LOVERS, MOTHS AND RUST, SAIL ON! SAIL ON!) were so good that he has not always written quite so well as these first efforts. On the other hand, he has written better stories than these - OPEN TO ME MY SISTER springs immediately to mind, and I OWE FOR THE FLESH, written so long ago and only now appearing, is certainly at least as good. And THE GATE OF TIME (October 1966) though perhaps not as imaginative in some ways as his earlier work, is certainly one of the best alternate timetrack novels. Farmer handles the theme with ease (I believe it is his first venture into so orthodox a plot) and his treatment of the slight differences between "that" world and this is quite skilled.

The plot twist is admittedly slight, and I was handicapped by suspecting it right from the start, but the interaction of the characters, who are slightly out of phase, shows how much Farmer's handling of complete "aliens" has prepared him for this sort of thing.

An excellent book.

Foyster's Top Ten

AUTHORS:

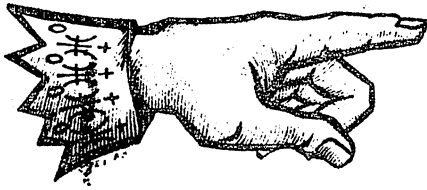
Cordwainer Smith
Philip Jose Farmer
Theodore Sturgeon
Walter M. Miller Jr.
Henry Kuttner
A.E. Van Vogt
Alfred Bester
Leigh Brackett
Kurt Vonnegut
John W. Campbell

SHORT FICTION:

Smith: The Burning of the Brain
Russell: Metamorphosite
Farmer: Sail on! Sail on!
Sturgeon: Baby is three
Miller: The Big Hunger
Ballard: The voices of time
Clarke: The Star
Shiras: In Hiding
Matheson: Born of Man and Woman
Budrys: The Executioner

NOVELS: I can't think of any.

(to be continued)



LETTERS

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE
Folkestone, Kent,
England

I've left it so late replying to Lee Harding's defence of his blitzkrieg on SHOOT AT THE MOON that I find it doesn't matter a damn now and can't work up even a mite of berserk fury. It belongs to the realm of "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago." And a Tweedledum/Tweedledee battle, at that: Lee will keep knocking himself out before I can hit him. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit.

No.9 was the last issue I saw, so my comments doubtless also belong to the faded past. So I'll keep them brief.

Admired Al Cox's witty cover illo which, like the spaceman victim it depicted, was most neatly executed.

Maybe too much of the issue was devoted to the old controversy over the question: Does J.G. Ballard know what he means? I think he does. Some readers think they do, too. And some are damn sure they don't. I expect the debate will continue but I doubt if the upshot will ever amount to more than that.

I wish (from the financial aspect) that I were as hooked on writing as John Brunner is. So far from suffering withdrawal symptoms when some other matter comes between me and writing, I snatch at the excuse as if it were the drug. Buying this big, old seaside house and garden has provided me with 2002 ready-made excuses this year, for each needs 1001 jobs done on it. Urgent ones (I tell myself).

Lee Harding wouldn't believe it, but I try to avoid cliché writing, and the strain of fashioning new but fitting phrases that I haven't already used too often myself is the wearing thing. Also, so often in sf one has to keep creating whole new functioning universes out of nothing. Even God only had to do that once - and got pooped after only six days and had to take a rest. And, dammit, he got good reviews.

MAURICIO KITAIGORODZKI
Aguirre 688-3°B,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

For an agent, I have been quite neglected by my employer these last weeks. That, at least, is what I thought until I received your anniversary issue. Sorry, I mean Anniversary, with capital

A. Great, just great. If you like to bask yourself in appraisals from good friends, help yourself. My admiration is of about 40° Centigrades. And besides, to have my name mentioned twice... and spelled correctly both times... gee, you are a genius.

The Anniversary ASFR is so dense with material that it is difficult to ascertain what is best. Of course, some of the stories are very good, especially NAVAL ENGAGEMENT. As to Turner's commentary on Bester's DEMOLISHED MAN, I

agree with most of it. I just am not too convinced about the necessity of a foolproof basis, be it technical or sociological. Why can't a story be just a good yarn, without so much analysis? Of course, this may sound, according to Turner's basis of evaluation, childish and unintellectual. But I would like to ask: How many currently serious sf analysts started reading the stuff just for kicks? A lot, I presume (present company included) and although the intellectual interpretation is very good, and very necessary for a mature understanding of the field, a little of pure kicks is always refreshing, don't you think? And besides, what else can you get from, for example, Ballard's PRIMA BELLADONNA, which is a very good story?

JB: "Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print;
A Book's a Book, altho' there's nothing in't.

.....

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save Censure - Critics all are ready made."

I admit it, Mauricio. In fact, since a theosophical friend of mine discerned a muddy aura about me I have been known as the "genius with the light brown air."

RON CLARKE

78 Redgrave Road,
Normanhurst,
Sydney, 2076.

ASFR is the best fanzine I have seen and issue number 10 is ASFR's crowning achievement so far. I only hope that you can keep up the magnificent work over the next hundred issues.

Barry Tompkins deserves his kudos for the cover. The paper and the illustration blend beautifully, and the paper seems to add extra depth. Very eye-catching. So are Cox's illos on the title pages. Your editorial is a suitable subject for a gripe, which is: why didn't you make it longer? It made good reading and I'm pretty sure overseas readers would have liked more of it. THE CHAMPION BULLOCK-DRIVER brings back fond images of school days. I think our English teacher would have liked your editorial and its comments about Australian bush tall stories.

George Turner's criticism of THE DEMOLISHED MAN strikes a chord in my memory. The general impression I had after reading TDM was a rough - gritty could almost have been the word - image in my mind. Something like Foyle experienced when his senses were short circuited. Something like a taste, not in the mouth but in the mind. I had a similar experience with some of Dickens's novels, though in his case it was a warm mellow feeling (though "feeling" isn't the right word). Strangely, after reading Simak's WAY STATION I had the same sense impression as after reading Dickens. As though both authors had written their novels to their fullness. I realize that all this is not the basis for reviewing a book. People seem to think that a book is not good in itself, even though the mind says it is complete (in that sense of fullness and satisfaction in the reader's mind, even after reading through the book many times). In my experience I have found that the majority of books I've had this feeling about, other people have liked, too.

I liked the stories. More please! John Baxter's piece is an advertisement maybe for a novel he's writing? Stephen Cook's "article" - hilarious! It saddens me that he won't be writing any more. He would perhaps have made a great writer someday.

JANNICK STØRM
Ejbyvej 142
Rødovre, Denmark

Thanks for ASFR 10. I really think your fanzine is of a remarkably high quality. ... I have seen somewhere that there will be an article on Scandinavian sf, by Sven Eklund, in a forthcoming issue.

Sounds interesting; he hasn't printed his own zine for about a year or so. I don't want this to scare you, but it seems to me that when I start subscribing to a zine, no matter how regular it has been in the past, it starts being unregular, and often folds. Maybe I am just fold-prone...

In Denmark nearly nothing of interest for sf fans happens. Yet a publishing firm has started a sf series. For their first two books they chose Judith Merrill's THE TOMORROW PEOPLE and Robert Silverberg's REGAN'S PLANET: I wrote a murderous review of both books - which were badly translated, too.

This autumn an original sf novel will appear - Cecil Bødker's PAP (the title means "cardboard"). I may be able to write a small review for you. This author - who is a woman - has published some short stories in 1961, mostly stories about catastrophes, but among them three sf stories, which show that she knows the genre and has seen its possibilities. They are really quite good, even measured by international standards.

This winter I may be leading a course in sf at the local night school - that is if we get ten people together, which is the number the law requires to support a course. At least I am in the programme - between porcelain painting and first aid.

This autumn Brian Aldiss is going to visit Scandinavia. He will also come to Copenhagen, so I will meet him here. I look forward to this very much: he is one of my real favourites (others being Ballard, Dick, Sheckley - if that interests you). In one article I called him a genius, in another "the Shakespeare of sf"!

In a literary magazine here I have written an article about the landscapes of sf. The issue has just appeared, and I haven't seen it reviewed yet. I should like to be reviewed sometime, too. I was, once, when I wrote about sf movies in the two leading Danish newspapers. One said that I was idiotic and shallow, the other that I was skilled and competent... Criticism is wonderful!

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER
A-2762 Ortmann
Felsenstr. 20, Austria

ASFR 2 to 10 arrived yesterday and I read them in the night, although by God I should be writing my doctor's thesis and studying for the final examinations. It is really a fine publication you have there and I'll do my best to make it known in Germany.

I was, of course, especially interested in those reviews of books that I have reviewed myself. In many cases there is so much agreement that it makes me uncomfortable: I have always held that if I wanted to read my own views I could write them myself. I noted only a few blunders. For instance, one reviewer seems to think that Jack Vance's THE BRAINS OF EARTH is a reprint of a STARTLING novel; that's not correct - it is some new hackwork that has never been published before.

John Foyster and Prof. Widdershins are your best reviewers; and Lee Harding informs entertainingly. But most impressive is the response from contributors and readers - something that is quite impossible in Germany.

JOHN FOYSTER
12 Glengariff Drive
Springvale North
Victoria 3170

It has been suggested to me (by no less a person-
age than the editor) that there is some conflict
between the article, THE DOUBLE STANDARD, by Mr.
George Turner and my review of THE EINSTEIN INT-
ERSECTION, both of which appeared in ASFR 10. I
must confess that I couldn't quite spot it, but Mr. Bangsund's firm hammer-
lock suggests that some rationale is necessary.

1. Mr. Turner says: "There is no double standard, but there are differing
functions among assessors of books." This is one of the main reasons why I
believe that there is no essential disagreement between us. ASFR is a rev-
iew, with critical pieces occasionally appearing, generally not in the rev-
iew section. Towards the end of my review, some criticism appeared: that
is all.

2. Essentially, Mr. Turner is concerned only with the position of THE DEM-
OLISHED MAN "in the sf canon". That is, accepting the idea that literature
is stretched over a wide range of success, and that sf is generally some-
where in the middle, where does TDM fit in? This may seem like a double
standard, but is not. The question is simply whether a given "level of
criticism" is appropriate to a particular work. PARTISAN REVIEW, for exam-
ple, is hardly likely to publish a piece on Kuttner's FURY, but nor, I
think, would J. Bangsund be at all interested in a critical piece on Harry
Mathews's JACKSONGRAD.

I think that sums up the position as I see it. I would disagree with Mr.
Turner on several minor matters (TDM was not a Hugo-winner, and I doubt
whether GALAXY readers ever wrote letters as impassioned as that), and sug-
gest further that he might have been a little more consistent himself: at
the bottom of page 13 he says, "The non-telepathic majority would very
quickly adopt effective baffles to prevent 'peeping'", yet on the next page
spends a great deal of time abusing Bester for using this very device, and
even goes so far as to suggest "it's time sf writers really thought about
how such things would work".

But on the other hand, I actually believe in "the double standard", though
I haven't, to my knowledge, noised this abroad.

URSULA K. LeGUIN
Portland
Oregon USA

Professionals are born not made, or something.
I haven't seen many fanzines, but most of those
I have tend to be ingroupish & cultish - amateur-
ish. Whereas you go at sf not as a clubmember
but as a critic of literature. This is awfully refreshing.

Well actually I can't stand Whitman, and it was Thoreau I was cribbing from
in my book; but as for the Weakness, you are absolutely right in my opinion
and your agent is wrong. Alas.

You may of course have done this in an earlier issue of ASFR that I missed,
but if you haven't I should very much like to see what you had to say about
Philip K. Dick. I find him one of the most fascinating writers going in sf,
and have never seen any adequate criticism of his work. He strikes me as
more competent and more original than most of the current new wave, Ballard,
Delany, et al., whose essential contribution to sf may perhaps be preciousness
- which is a good thing, but not a new one. But Dick is doing something

really "modern" with his sort of plain, almost stolid penetration farther and farther into dislocated, out-of-joint domains of mind: sanity exploring insanity and coming back sane. Most writers who try such trips contort their style terribly in doing so, and get obscure, or fancy like Bradbury, or just fake it by using private symbolisms. Dick never seems to fake anything. I often get the feeling reading him that he has been there, which is quite frightening in a book like DR. BLOODMONEY. Anyhow I wish you would do something on him.

I'm sorry I didn't answer your letter before; I enjoyed it - but I was in Georgia this summer, and in Georgia in summer typewriters melt.

Long live the Australian Socialist Way of Life!

K.U.F. WIDDERSHINS
69 Rampole Street
Wantirna South
Victoria 3152

Got your jolly little fanzine (no.10). The characters on your index page are easily recognizable, of course. They are, from right to left, John Foyster, Lee Harding, John Brangsund (I know now that that's the correct spelling of your name, because that's how it was in THE AUSTRALIAN; you shouldn't be ashamed of your R's, John), Isaac Robot, The Incredible Leaping Frog of Contra Costa County, O.B. Ball, John Bransungd, (above, Representative of the Taxation Department), Albert Viking, The Fly, The Thing Behind The Fly, (foreground, the three US editors of SF magazines), The Creature That Is Interested In The Thing Behind The Fly, Iron Man, Mulch, Z.Q. Adamski, another fly, another similar lot, (foreground, Mike Moorcock), FEM, BEM, GUM, BUM, (above, ICBM), Iggle, Robert A. Heinlein (with revolutionary tracts), Irate Reader of Tweeting, Worcs., Cowbird, Jack Wodhams and Frank Bryning, Robin, (above, Cele Lalli... Cele Lalli!!), John Foyster, Merlin; not to even attempt to list the assorted coves on the first page. Let someone else use up their typing paper.

The general level of material was quite high, I feel, and dare not comment upon it.

Mr. Moorcock continues in his grandiose fashion, I see, dismissing Mr. White's lengthy letter in lordly terms. He treats me in the same way, but then I suppose it is easier to abuse the reviewer than to defend a lousy book which one published oneself. How an editor who writes sentences as inept as Moorcock's penultimate one in this letter ever got a grant from the Arts Council is beyond me: behold the beam in thine own eye, young fellow!

Whilst dwelling upon the editor of NEW WORLDS (I presume the magazine is still being published), I was surprised to read Judith Merrill's letter, because I had not noticed that Ted White gave away any big secret pseudonyms. Hastily I turned back to the issue in question, eager to learn the other names under which Moorcock wrote - Ted Tubb, perhaps, C.P. Snow, or maybe William Burroughs. But no, just "Edward P. Bradbury", a name which anyone with half an eye could see through: or am I being unfair here? I am, after all, an ignorant lay fan (to paraphrase that world-renowned professional writer, Charles Platt - or was that Plait?), and I have no damn right to think for myself, to recognize as the author of a series of rotten novels the one-time editor of TARZAN ADVENTURES. No, I should wait until the manna drops from the heavens, or the ambrosial liquid from the Almighty

Pros. If Judith Merrill thinks that EPB could only have been recognized as Moorcock as the result of external information, then she is style-deaf (in Mr. Knight's phrase) as I have suspected all along, and what is more she thinks everyone else is.

p.s. Is it still true that you pour sugar into the duplicating ink, John?

JB: No, Dr. Widdershins, I do not pour sugar into the Roneo. The sweetness (and light) always so evident in ASFR comes from my own temperament, which sometimes plays havoc with editorial discernment. ... AN APPEAL: Is there anyone, preferably but not necessarily resident in Melbourne, who knows German, Italian or Spanish well enough to read and comment on various fanzines we now receive? Franz Rottensteiner has sent me his QUARBER MERKUR, Ugo Malaguti his NOVA SF, and Carlos Buiza his CUENTA ATRAS, all of which look excellent, but I can't read them. ... Curiously enough, Mrs. LeGuin, in our first issue John Foyster reviewed THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH, and from subsequent comments elsewhere by Phil Dick, John must be one of the few reviewers who has seen the book in the same light as the author. This is just one of a number of excellent things in ASFR 1, and I am thinking seriously of reprinting it. The Australian Socialist Way of Life is rather wishful thinking on my part, I'm afraid. Though we started off with a fine flourish of socialist legislation, and led the world for a time, we have now fallen far behind. Do you know that Engels predicted (in a letter to Marx, 23.9.1851) that Australia would become "an astonishing example of what a State of unconcealed blackguards can do in the way of miracles"? He continues: "They will beat California hollow. While in California at least it is the blackguards who are being lynched, in Australia one will lynch the honnetes gens, and Carlyle will see his aristocracy of rogues established in full glory."

MIKE MONTGOMERY
21 Washington Street
Denver Colorado
USA 80203

Thanks for ASFR 10. I can see why you got nominated for the Fan Achievement Award. The first thing I noticed about the issue as a whole was the good quality (and quantity) of reviewing.

John Foyster and George Turner stand out in particular, and the other reviews were, for the most part, better informed than most fan reviewers seem to be. The in-depth analysis of THE DEMOLISHED MAN to make his primary point was done well by Turner. The Chandler story is good; otherwise I can't say much for the fiction. But then, I don't like fan fiction as a rule. I do wish you would have more artwork; what little you have is great. More things by Cox would be welcome.

Why in hell they give you junk like TIME TUNNEL instead of STAR TREK is beyond me. Admittedly, ST does have weaknesses, but it is far above stuff like LOST IN SPACE or ~~LOST IN TIME~~ TIME TUNNEL. It seems that people here are either fanatically for or against STAR TREK. Why, I don't know. We have people like the Coulsons, and then others like Ted White...

THE SPECIALS was released here in paperback as PSYCHEDELIC-40, for those interested.

It seems that the most recurring complaint of conventioners is hotel res-

taurants. I've been to only one con where the service at our eating places satisfied me - we ate at a local self-service hamburger place most of the time. Then, at another one, there was a waitress who seemed to think that my friend's new magazine belonged in the same tray as the dirty dishes. It took a while for us to convince her otherwise. Oh yes, I did notice the lack of any references (usually derogatory in a report of this kind) to the hotel elevators. But otherwise, Mervyn Barrett's conrep was very entertaining. I do wish, though, that you could have run those pics with it.

St. Louis in '69!

JB: At the moment of typing, only the first episode of STAR TREK has been shown on Melbourne TV. It is being shown at 7.30, which seems to indicate that the channel realizes it is a children's show. I can't say I consider it much above LOST IN SPACE, but then it's too early to judge. TIME TUNNEL hasn't reached Melbourne yet. At this point, let me pass on some information that will amuse overseas readers and distress those Australians who are not yet aware of it:

"AUSTRALIAN CENSOR LOPS STAR TREK

Australian channels have struck censorship troubles over STAR TREK. The Commonwealth Film Censorship Board has banned four of the sixteen episodes imported to Australia from the U.S. The rest were given an A (adult) classification. Most had scenes ordered to be cut by the censors. Some cuts ranged up to 25 feet. Censor's instructions included such remarks as: 'Reduce close-up of creature's face and reduce groaning sounds.' 'Delete rabbit chop and number of blows.' Other instructions to the film-cutters included reduction of scenes showing agony caused by fire and more scientific dangers such as 'neutralization'. A spokesman for one importing organization said: 'The rejections were made for several reasons. These included violence, sustained suspense and horror angles.' An appeal has been lodged with the Censorship Board against the ban on the four episodes."

Of course, there are still those in this country who feel that censorship is not rigorous enough. The Ashfield (Sydney) City Council has decided to withdraw from its library all books which have ever appeared on the Commonwealth's banned list, whether subsequently released or not. Well, there goes ULYSSES again... and LADY CHAT, ANOTHER COUNTRY, LOLITA, and, dammitall! if they're being really consistent, THE DECAMERON and Chaucer: in short, all those books that every schoolboy knows about.

Long live the Australian Obscurantist Way of Life!

BRIAN ALDISS
Jasmine House
Holton Wheatley
Oxford England

I've not yet received ASFR 10 (8.8.67). No doubt it is sitting in one of those ships stuck in the bloody Suez Canal. I long to have young Barrett's report on the recent deplorable events at Bristol.

... This year, at last, I began to find myself, and in consequence my subject; it's late, I must go to it instead of piddling about. Interested to hear Foyster is doing a thing on PROBABILITY A; just sorry he couldn't wait

till the full-length version arrives from Faber next Spring. That is a beautiful still book: tedious, of course, even slower than the version Mike ran. I love this book, best of all I've done - out of perversity maybe; just wish now I'd done it better. All works flawed. But suppose you put out only one ever five years and that turned out imperfect too? The question of the passage of time is all important - and a question I deal with better (though indirectly) in PROB A than in AN AGE... Dear old sf, an inexhaustible field, hardly nibbled by its champion grazers... how I love it, if only because my small talent shows up well when there are so many chuckleheads writing it!

I can't be helpful on Stapledon, I fear. He never seems to turn up in local bookshops. Mrs. Stapledon could be still alive. I heard that fandom contacted her once; she was naturally terrified.

Margaret and I had a young Norwegian here during July, name of Jon Bing. He and a buddy have sf sewn up - not sewn up but expanding - in Norway. Norway is bigger than the British Isles but with only five million people. But they are really getting with it. I'm engaged to do Norwegian Broadcasting a series of five programmes on sf and they're starting up publishing in a small way: next year, two vols of short stories: Ballard and Aldiss. Bing taped me yesterday, and I was glad to find they are (as you'd expect from Scandinavia) pretty avant garde and no nonsense with space opera. Bing was a very pleasant guy indeed - couldn't be more than twenty, but it was pleasant to find him thinking and feeling along same lines as myself. I'm getting very radical now, more deeply committed every month, and the stuff I'm turning out now is frightening: not a new departure but a decided big development.

Wish you could smell the English air now. Now everyone but the politicians have got it in their heads that we are a second class nation something very toxic and pleasure-loving has been released. All sorts of signs in the air: International Poetry at the Festival Hall, Hippies meeting in Hyde Park, mini-skirts now revealing the lower curves of those delightful little rounded asses - not to mention absolute droves of nubile young beauties who never were before! - the crazy 'Whiter Shade of Pale' now ruling in its sixth week at the top of the pops, LSD everywhere... I seem to have imbibed a psychedelic touch myself, and a new series of stories I'm doing is in some very strange language indeed.

I'll try to send you proofs of AN AGE. Therein is a trace of the way I've come since; just a faint trace. Already the novel is old-fashioned to me. Since then Faber have accepted REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. That should really infuriate the square fans. Wonder how you like the new NEW WORLDS? It looks a real magazine of the sixties and I thought the Tom Disch was the best thing he's done. They start running AN AGE soon. Just been reading Dick's PENULTIMATE TRUTH - he and Jimmy Ballard are about the only two sf writers I can tolerate in my present crazy psychedelic cantankerous pontifical &c mood.

JB: I do like the new NW, Brian, and I agree with you about Tom Disch's novel, or what there was of it in 173. I notice McGill's now have copies; I must ask Mervyn how it's selling. Thanks for the proofs of AN AGE! John Foyster has read it, and only the hazardry of time and space excluded his review of it from this issue. May I spill the beans a bit and say that he is wildly enthusiastic?

T H E N A M E I S M A R T I N M c C O Y

J A C K W O D H A M S

the Sickie twins, the Long Valley Thompsons, Gunt Tunger, Hio Vewihoy, Anton K. Willenhein, and Harry Standup Willing.'

He looked at me hard. 'Well?'

'Did you say Eddie Gunther?'

'No, I didn't.'

I did not like the purposefulness behind his shifting weight.

It is amazing how many people a man can be related to. The only thing more amazing is the number that he is not related to. Spreading through the universe like a virus coughed out by Earth, the thousands of relatives form only a fraction of the total migrating millions.

'There must be some more,' I said, my brain racking names and trying to recollect any hint of a mention of a Henderson, a Michell, or a Thompson.

I thought for a moment that he was going to be satisfied with the current negative result and go ahead and annihilate me with his conscience clear. But he said, 'I'll give you the outside rim. I don't want you to think that Jim Henderson is not one hundred percent fair.'

He smiled, an event that made me unhappy. I figured that he thought he had me vacstuck.

'Jody Bellman, Amy Dansen, Earl and Curly Early, Hingset Hang, the Jameson brothers, Salvador Jinx, Flagline Krotzner, One-Way Nolan, Matilda Petersen, Hiram T. Sandlebrough, Amalhidad Sur...'

'Matilda Petersen!' I cried. 'She's my... my... ah,' I snapped my fingers, 'my three-back great-aunt!'

He frowned. 'Oh yeah?' He seemed disappointed. 'How do you tally to her?'

'Her sister, Elizabeth, had an illy named Catherine,' I said, inspired to total recall. 'Check it on the records. Catherine had two daughters and a son, Carol, Grace and Phil. Grace married three times, at least, the second one being a man named Potts, who took custody of their two children, a boy and a girl, named Ferdinand and Rosalina. Ferdi married a woman named Unzle, who had six children already. They had another four children, all Potts, Patsy, Dick, Armand and Fiona.'

I stopped for a breather. 'Young Fiona married Clyde McCoy, and I'm their son, legitimate and legal.'

Jim Henderson scowled. 'Way out here,' he said disgustedly, 'and the thievin' cachemole has to be blood-kin.' He spat. But I was relieved to see him close up the foofer.

'Okay,' he said nastily. 'I follow you to the Pottses, but have to take your word for the rest. Even so, I don't want you 'round here, see? So you'd better not tempt me. Climb back in your sneaker. Light her up and burn her out quick, d'you hear? or I might even so change my mind.'

I was only too glad to obey. Under his hostile eyes, I climbed back aboard my Wisperin.

Before I closed the hatch, I heard him loudly say again, 'Blood-kin!' And he spat once more.

I did not think it wise to tell him that I had been an adopted child.

* * * *

MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB

On Wednesday, 27th September, the MSFC conducted its first Annual General Meeting & Election of Officers. A committee of five was elected: John Bangsund (President), Mervyn Binns (Secretary & Treasurer), Paul Stevens (Librarian & Film Group Secretary), Dick Jenssen and Tony Thomas.

Mervyn Binns reported that the Club was meeting its financial commitments, but that the Film Group was losing money. The meeting agreed that some rationalization of finances was necessary, and voted that in future membership of the Film Group should be by a subscription of \$3.00 per year. Club membership remains at \$2.00 per year. A motion to combine the two fees and charge all Club members \$5.00 per year was defeated.

The Club continues to meet on Wednesday nights at 19 Somerset Place, Melbourne (behind McGill's, off Little Bourke Street). Local fans and visitors always welcome: contact Mervyn Binns at McGill's for details.

MELBOURNE SF CONFERENCE: EASTER 1968

Plans are now in hand for the Conference, to be held April 12-14 1968. The programme will include guest speakers, auctions, films, and business sessions, during which latter the 1969 Convention will be discussed. It is hoped that a city theatre may be found for the film sessions, and for this reason a Conference membership fee of \$2.50 will be charged. In the event of a theatre not being found, part of this fee will be refunded or credited to 1969 memberships.

Chairman of the Conference is Mervyn Binns, Secretary Dick Jenssen. Non-attending memberships welcome: \$1.00. All cheques &c to be made payable to Melbourne Science Fiction Club.

SYDNEY SF GROUP

Sydney fans interested in forming "a kind of unofficial and friendly sf group" are invited to contact Miss

Betsy Holt at the Department of English, University of Sydney. (Phone: MW 0522)

Changes of Address:

TONY THOMAS, Flat 2, 109 Albert St., East Melbourne, Victoria 3002.

JOHN & DIANE BANGSUND - from 23rd November - 11 Wilson Street, Fern Tree Gully, Victoria 3156.

ARNIE KATZ (publisher of QUIP), 42b Oxford Avenue, Buffalo, New York, 14226, USA.

SF WEEKLY

- for the best coverage of American sf news. Eight for \$1 through John Bangsund; ten for 8s0d through Ethel Lindsay in U.K.; fourteen for \$1 from the publisher: Andrew Porter, 24 East 82nd St., NY, NY, 10028. All overseas subs sent airmail.

NOVA SF

Rivista di critica e narrativa diretta da Ugo Malaguti. L.600 from Ugo Malaguti, Via Pascoli 1, Bologna, Italy. Australian sub to be announced. To secure, send \$1 to John Bangsund; sub will be adjusted in due course.

TRANSLATOR-REVIEWERS WANTED!

If you are proficient in German, Spanish or Italian, and would be interested in translating and/or reviewing overseas fanzines for ASFR, I would be pleased to hear from you.

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