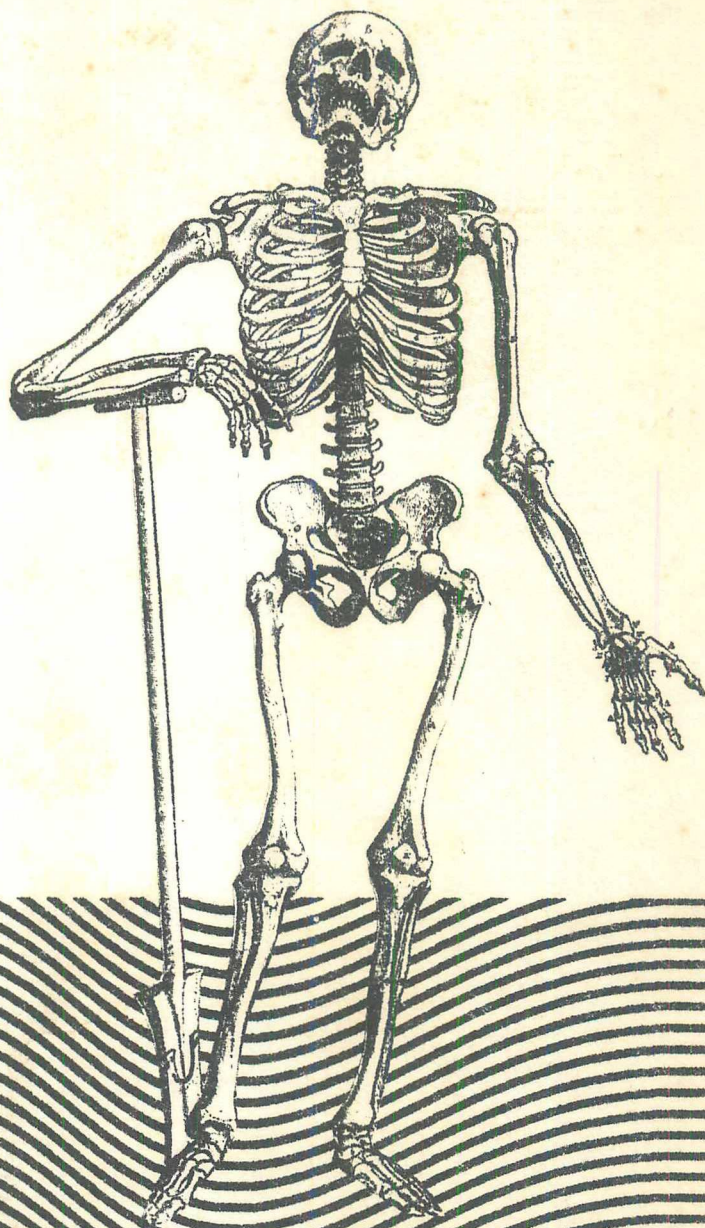


SCYTHROP



SCYTHROP

formerly AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

DECEMBER 1969

Editorial	1
ROBERT E. TOOMEY Jr London and Back	5
KENNETH SLESSOR Earth-Visitors	10
JOHN FOYSTER Bougainvillainy	12
STEPHEN COOK The Kitten	16
HARRY WARNER Jr CREATH THORNE PETER ROBERTS	
LEIGH EDMONDS JOHN BRUNNER COSMO CLAPHANGER MBE	
R. D. SYMONS THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION	
& others Swag	22
Notes on some contributors	21

Artwork: Cover collage by JB, illustration page 11 by
Dimitrii Razuvaev, photo page 14 anonymous,
letraset headings throughout by Leigh Edmonds.

SCYTHROP is edited, printed and published by John Bangsund, 44 Hilton Street,
Clifton Hill, Victoria 3068, Australia. Assistant Editor, Leigh Edmonds.

SCYTHROP is available for contributions, trades and money. In Australia 60c per
copy, in the USA 75c, in Britain 5s0d, elsewhere local equivalent of A60c.
Agents - Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England.
Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, USA. Hans Joachim Alpers,
2850 Bremerhaven 1, Weissenburgerstrasse 6, West Germany.

OF WORD-ROUTES, ARISTOCRACY & THUMBNAILED DIPPED IN TAR

Editorial

SCYTHROP? Well, the hero, if that's the word I'm after, of Thomas Love Peacock's delightful NIGHTMARE ABBEY is a most endearing transcendental-mystical-sturm-und-drang-romantical young oaf named Scythrop Glowry - a character based on Peacock's good friend Shelley (who seems to have enjoyed the joke). Scythrop, Peacock would have us believe, comes from the Greek skuthropos - "gloomy countenance".

This just won't do at all. We have to live with this name, you and I, and for my part I prefer not to see this journal referred to as the Fanzine of the Woeful Visage - nor, for that matter, myself as the Fan of La Mancha.

I propose, therefore, a different etymology for the name Scythrop. Some may object that this is an unscholarly procedure, but when it comes to a confrontation between scholarship and personal desire, I say the question is which is to be master, that's all.

I could, for example, decide that Scythrop means "a nice knock-down argument". That has a certain appeal, as well as glorious precedent. However, it seems fairly obvious to me that Scythrop is in fact a corruption of sky-thorp, an Anglo-Saxon word, as I'm sure you well know, meaning aerial village. Or space-ship.

But space-ship in turn is a corruption of spice-chap, Elizabethan cant for a drug-pedlar, and of course we know what a drug-pedlar is. Someone who takes a trip on a bicycle. Scythrop, therefore, clearly means an impoverished tourist. Or swagman.

Let me tell you what I know about swagmen.

Many Australians regard them as the most romantic embodiment of the national spirit of independence and adventure. I am sure our Prime Minister had something like this in mind when he suggested not so long ago that we should adopt "Waltzing Matilda" as our national anthem. In accounting for this romantic view, you should consider not so much the actual mode of existence of these gentlemen as the fact that so very few Australians have been swagmen.

Among other things, swagmen are said to "hump the bluey". Not many

realize that this picturesque but rather enigmatic phrase is about all that is left as a memorial to a curious practice which was widespread in earlier years. Now, of course, the bluey (or Great Blue Wallaby) is entirely extinct, but the offspring of these rather pathetic liaisons may occasionally be observed in lonely outback places. The aborigines call them bunyips. A scurrilous old ballad, which I do not intend to quote here, gives some insight into the psychology of these unusual relationships. This ballad, considerably bowdlerized, has in recent years made a great deal of money for a local singer named Rolf Harris.

My good friend Cosmo Claphanger MBE reminds me of that other old phrase, "on the wallaby", which he assures me has a similar origin.

Swagmen usually have names like Cedric, Algernon or Montmorency, and are almost invariably the younger sons of aristocracy. Some have a talent for writing verse, which they do using scraps of bark and thumb-nails dipped in tar.

Montmorency Jones was just such a versifier. On him, it was said, the mantle of Henry Lawson fell. At the time, however, the magistrate dismissed this story as unlikely, and decided Jones had stolen it. He was imprisoned for two months and the mantle restored to Lawson (who, we are told, never wore it again).

Here is an example of Montmorency Jones's verse:

There was a run, I remember,
On the banks of the Condamine.
It happened in the November
Of Nineteen Twenty-Nine.
The money ran out by ten o'clock
And the townsfolk, crying "Ruin!"
Started lynching the managers of the banks,
Since they thought it was their doing.
I sat and watched the managers
All dangling from a rafter,
And I watched the furious bankrupt crowd -
And I doubled up with laughter!
I laughed at whey-faced "civilized" men
And their stupid idea of wealth,
For all the riches of Nature are mine,
And ruddy exuberant health.
Away with Fortune! Naught care I!
I wander far and free,
Unperplexed by Mammon's cares -
The simple life's for me!

And so on, for another eighty equally nauseating lines.

An earnest young solicitor read the account of Jones's imprisonment and made it his business to visit the poor man and inform him that his

father and six elder brothers had perished on a grouse-shooting excursion. Jones - that is, Montmorency Algernon Cedric de Courcey-Jones, fourteenth Baron of Huddersfield - now lives in profligate splendour in his ancestral hall. But old habits die hard. He still writes verse - to the untold annoyance of his butler, who is forever cleaning tar from the tapestries.

That's about all I know about swagmen, I'm afraid. Professor Claphanger, whose massive erudition is matched only by his waggish sense of humour, assures me that swagmen eat "Cloncurry sandwiches", which consist of whole sheep placed between bags of flour; that they make tea in vessels called "billabongs"; and that some have dabbled in making counterfeit notes, called "jumbucks"; but I am unable to verify this information.

* * *

All of this might not seem to everyone to be a reasonable explanation for my choosing the name Scythrop, and it isn't. Scythrop is, in fact - and I admit it with some reluctance, some shame and some erisacomenin - one of those pernicious neologisms to which our age is miserably prone. I was, I further admit, prone when I thought of it. It is a collection of initials, standing for Society for the Corruption of Youth Through Habitual Reading Of Peacock.

"The world is a stage, and life is a farce, and he that laughs most has most profit of the performance. The worst thing is good enough to be laughed at, though it be good for nothing else; and the best thing, though it be good for something else, is good for nothing better." (Maid Marian, p529 in the Hart-Davis edition)

Corruption indeed, and I hope to spread a fair bit of it in SCYTHROP.

* * *

So far I have talked about the name of this fanzine, but not my reasons for changing it. Put simply, it is because I feel that a magazine title should either be entirely vague or give some indication of content; it should not be entirely misleading. To continue to call this journal a "science fiction review" would be misleading.

Lee Harding, the man you must thank or curse for introducing me to science fiction and fandom in the first place, accused me last year of being a "guardian of sf". I didn't take that too kindly at the time, but the more I thought about it the more I inclined to agree with him that the role didn't suit me. So, despite my protestations in ASFR 18, here I am publishing a general fanzine. The mantle of "guardian of sf" in this country has now fallen on Bruce Gillespie, and far from stealing it, it was flung at him. Bruce has broad shoulders for such a garment, and in his SF COMMENTARY he is very ably continuing some of the functions of ASFR. Not that sf will be disappearing from sight in this fanzine: as you will see, it still has an honoured place, but not an exclusive place.

In SCYTHROP I hope to find that asfragistic spirit which characterized ASFR at its best venturing out into the big world beyond sf.

(I think I have only defined "asfragism" in one of my other fanzines. Forgive me quoting myself: "I derive the word from asphragistos, a word the Greeks had for 'unstamped, not having a shepherd, or (ecclesiastically) not marked with the seal of baptism'. Ignoring the seal of baptism, which I regard as an unwarranted addition to the heraldic bestiary, I define Asfragism as 'independence or nonconformity, especially of opinion or philosophy, with particular reference to the criticism of science fiction'.")

Perhaps a new word is required for this new venture. Brian Richards has his own interpretation of the name Scythrop - "the cutting eye". Voila! - scythroptic. (Even though it reminds me of a spine-chilling scene from a famous French movie, it will serve.)

If you believe your outlook is scythroptic, asfragistic, Peacockian - merely enlightened, even - we would be pleased to have you write something for us. Like all sf fans, my range of interests is almost universal, so subject matter is virtually optional. The qualities looked for in contributions are enthusiasm, literacy, some knowledge of the subject concerned, and if possible, humour. I will tend to be rather hard on fiction, and merciless towards poetry - always excepting my own editorial indulgences, of course.

All contributors, including regular correspondents, will receive free copies. Circulation will be limited ruthlessly to two hundred. If ASFR taught me nothing else, it taught me that a large subscription list is vanity and affliction. SCYTHROP is relatively highly-priced to encourage participators rather than subscribers.

To conclude, I offer sincere thanks to all who, consciously or not, have helped to get this aerial village off the ground. To Mr Kenneth Slessor, for his kind permission to reprint his beautiful poem. To Redd Boggs, for sending me a batch of his fanzines, and to the Post Office for delivering them on a day when I most needed their inspiration. To all the contributors to this issue, including several who responded instantly to my urgent call for material and who now, months later, find that material postponed to a future issue; chief among them, John Alderson. Above all, perhaps, I should thank Leigh Edmonds, for his valuable assistance - and for his unflagging devotion to the truth that Fandom Is Just A Goddam Hobby.

I leave you with this thought: If all the people who go to sleep during STAR TREK were to be placed end to end, they would be much more comfortable.

Hoping you are the same.

John Bangsund

ROBERT E. TOOMEY JR.

London and Back

IN March of this year I was lucky enough to see Nicol Williamson's HAMLET at the Roundhouse Theatre in London. The theatre actually was a railroad roundhouse at one time, a place where trains were switched from track to track. The ceiling was a psychedelic webwork of steel girders. The performances are given with the audience sitting on banked tiers of bleachers grouped in a circle around a bare three-level stage. The idea of it is to allow the people of London and surrounding areas to see good theatre at reasonable prices. My seat, which was quite close to the stage, cost me five shillings - about sixty cents American. The play was subsequently taken to Broadway, where it received rave notices and the seats were going for as much as twenty dollars. I figure I got a bargain, and in more ways than one.

Williamson's performance was magnificent. I didn't have to read the reviews to know it was one of the best Hamlets ever. He was angry, slashing, sarcastic, bitter, responsive, wild and hilarious. Under Tony Richardson's direction, with Marianne Faithfull as Ophelia, it was HAMLET done, and done beautifully, as a musical comedy. You would have had to see it to believe me.

Thinking about it, that's just about the story of my life: HAMLET, performed as a musical comedy.

Four years ago when I was courting Linda, I told her that some day I would take her to England. She didn't believe it, but married me anyway. When we touched down at Heathrow Airport in London, she still didn't believe it, but she was more willing to be convinced. The baby was crying, the six hundred miles per hour jet flight had screwed up the fluid in the semicircular canals of our ears, our luggage was too much for us and I was running a fast hundred and four fever. The Hong Kong flu. Nine hours earlier I had been sitting in the emergency room of a hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts, listening to a doctor telling me to cancel my plans to fly to England. He must have been crazy! I had the tickets, dammit! I was going, and nothing short of death was stopping me. I went. Doped to the eyelids with medication, sick as a dog, I went.

London was all I expected it to be in early February. It was damp, drizzling, foggy and cold. From the air, coming in, it looked as though

the Great Fire was still smouldering. We had made arrangements with a distant relative of Linda's to take us in. I called them when we arrived and they said come on over, take a taxi. When we arrived, the first thing I did was call the operator and ask for Mike Moorcock's number. Someone in the States had suggested I call him when I got in. There was no listing for him. I thought for a moment, then asked if there was a listing for New Worlds. There was. I called and Moorcock answered. He was editing the magazine from his home. I told him my name, which meant nothing to him, and that I was a fan of his from the US and would like to come over if he could spare me a few minutes.

I was still running that fever and hadn't slept for forty-eight hours. My ears still hadn't popped. I was going on adrenalin and poor judgement. He said he could spare me a half hour or so and gave me directions. Now, whatever sense it is that helps people find their way, it was left out when I was constructed. I got lost crossing my own living room. Fortunately, his place on Ladbroke Grove was in a direct line by bus from where I was in Kensal Rise, and only about a mile or two away. I kissed Linda and told her I'd be back shortly, caught a bus - a big old double-decker, you know the kind - and rode to the corner of Ladbroke Grove and Elgin Crescent. Mike's house was almost on the corner. It only took me half an hour to find it. I rang the bell, a dog barked, and Moorcock, who turned out to be a giant with shoulder-length hair and a patriarch's beard, invited me in.

We talked for three or four hours and I told him that I was a writer, sort of. He ended up digging out an old World War II Imperial typewriter from under a stack of back issues of New Worlds down in a closet in the cellar, and handed it to me. I almost fell over. One leg was missing from it and the damn thing weighed more than I did. He brought me back upstairs and gave me a new ribbon for it, and promised he would call a literary agent, Janet Freer, and tell her about me.

I went home, put a book under the typewriter where the leg was missing, and wrote a short-short called "Pejorative", which was later published in New Worlds 192. Linda's distant relative came home and went nuts. What had I been doing using her goddam fucking telephone? Who the fuck did I think I was, setting up a typewriter on her goddam fucking table? She was really most unladylike about the whole thing.

By that time I was half-crazed with fever and exhaustion. I stood there flatfooted and stunned by the - to me and any other rational human being, I think - insane diatribe pouring venomously from that woman's mouth, and I didn't say a word. If I'd said a word I'd have said several. In the state I was in I might have killed her. I hadn't been reamed out like that - and in front of half a dozen strangers - since I was in the Navy.

We were moved down the street to a friend's house - one of her friends - stuck in a back room with no heat, no place for me to set up a table to type on, no place for the baby to sleep, precious little room for Linda and me to sleep. Somehow we managed, I'm not sure just how, but I

iasm, plus suggestions, reading each chapter as it came from the typewriter and asking What happens next? I would have given up on it. My answer to him was constant - it became a joke with us - You'll know what happens next as soon as I do.

I kept at it. The book took me about two weeks to finish. Around sixty thousand words, told in the first person. I gave the finished product to Janet and asked her to please read the whole thing and see if it was anything or nothing. Mike had told me that she had a pretty good instinctive judgement. Michel thought the book was good, and so did Linda. I had no idea what it was. I was drained. I told them it would probably be the last book I ever wrote. I'd been banging away at it twelve, fourteen hours a day. Linda was going crazy, what with being cooped up with the baby and my obsession. Here we were in London. We might as well have been at the bottom of a deep dark hole. For five days we took in the town. Wandered around. Went to movies. Janet finally called. She'd been wrong. She hadn't known where the book was leading (which made two of us). She thought the finished product was great. She loved it.

I sat down and wrote ten thousand words of a sequel in one breath. The sequel was called ANTIPATHY. This time I had made up an outline for the story, and I stuck to it. The plot was one I had been doodling with. The problems of evacuating a planet of three million people. The planet was about to be destroyed by internal pressures which had built up over millennia at its core. The evacuation was being blocked. I wrote it in a sort of hard-boiled Raymond Chandler style, and welded to the original plot a fairly savage satire on racial prejudice: the narrator of both books was black.

Three chapters into the book, Linda decided she was homesick. And just plain sick, I think, of seeing me sitting there writing and drinking coffee by the gallon and smoking cigarettes like a lunatic. She thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown from overwork. So did Michel. I didn't have the time to worry about it. She went back to the States with the baby. I knew that I had to stay to get the book done. I knew that if I went back before then I'd never finish it. Don't ask me what it is, but there really is something in the air of London that stimulates creativity. Statistics also show that the air of London is as hazardous to your health as smoking.

I finished the book about two weeks later. It was shorter but took longer to write than TROUBLE, possibly because I wasn't letting myself go as completely as I had on the earlier book. From what I have heard, a second novel is always harder to write than a first. I let Moorcock see it first for possible serialization in New Worlds. He read it in one night, said he enjoyed it and thought it would sell, but it wasn't experimental enough for NW. If I had given it to him a year earlier... I trucked it over to Janet. When I got back to Michel's flat I sat down and decided to rewrite the book from end to end, incorporating a suggestion Mike had made about the main character. I went back to work.

remember setting up the typewriter on a suitcase and sitting on the floor with my legs stretched out on either side of it. The position gets incredibly uncomfortable after a short time. Try it. At the same time I accidentally dropped the machine and knocked the other leg off.

By now nobody around there was speaking with anybody. I made an appointment to meet Janet, with Mike's help, and told her I was thinking seriously of writing a novel. I needed the money, and I was a fast writer when I got going: newspaperman's experience. She said go ahead, she'd look at it. I went back and got started. Two days later, Linda and I were told we had three days to get the hell out. No reason given, just get out.

So there we were with the baby and the luggage in the middle of London, virtually without friends and with almost no money to spare. I made a frantic call to Moorcock: for Christ's sake help me! - I've been evicted!

Less than a day later he had found us a place. It was around the corner from where he lived - on Elgin Crescent, which intersects with Portobello Road, the famous market street. The flat was a cellar place belonging to a friend of Mike's, a photographer and architect-draftsman named Michel LaRue. I was introduced to him and we looked each other over. He turned out to be one of the luckiest finds of my life. Michel was a science fiction fan. So am I. He was a movie buff. I am, too. His library contained hundreds of titles that I had at home, three thousand miles away. In his record collection were dozens of LPs that I liked, from the Beatles to the Doors. He was an inveterate talker, an all-nighter, like me. He needed money, a condition not unfamiliar to me. He needed help with the rent. He had an extra room. Three pounds a week. We moved in, with a sigh of relief so powerful they put out small craft warnings.

Michel even had a decent portable typewriter and a table I could set it up on. He was enthusiastic about my novel. If ever an instant and lasting friendship was formed, this was it. If I have ever met a finer human being in my life, I can't think of his name. Michel tolerated my daughter - as much as can be expected from a bachelor - and taught my wife how to cook a damn fine Indian curry. I started to grow a beard.

My plan for the novel was pretty dim, even for me. I had a title - A WORLD OF TROUBLE. I had an opening scene - two men and a gigantic twelve-legged lizard in a three-man scoutship landing on a planet named Jsimaj to take it over. My working outline consisted of twelve chapter titles, two of which I later discarded. Beyond that, nothing. I made it up as I went along, averaging around six thousand words a day. I gave the first ten or twelve thousand words, worked into a reasonable semblance of a final draft, to Janet to look over.

A few days later she called and said it wasn't working. Maybe I was going too fast. If I hadn't been better than halfway through the book, I believe I would have given it up. If Michel hadn't maintained his enthus-

The Easter weekend rolled around, and with it the British SF Convention at Oxford. John Brunner asked me if I wanted to go. They could use all the memberships they could get, he said. I went. Michel had gone home to visit his parents and I didn't look forward to prowling around the flat alone. By the second night of the convention I had decided to go back to London and get back to the writing. I knew then that I would have to rewrite A WORLD OF TROUBLE, too, to bring it into line with the universe I had postulated in ANTIPATHY, in spite of the radical differences between the two books.

Fifteen, sixteen hours a day, sometimes more. No sleep. I went to the movies nearly every night to unwind.

I completed ANTIPATHY again and gave it to Janet. Got going on TROUBLE. I bought a plane ticket back to Boston. I was going to finish the damn book in time to leave London at the end of the week. I called my wife on the transatlantic line and told her to get ready. I wrote like a demon.

I ran out of typing paper. I borrowed some from Mike. He gave me almost all he had. It was American quarto, a size rare in London. I ran out again. I went to the stationery store. They were expecting some in. When? They didn't know for sure. A week or so, maybe. I panicked. You can't change paper size in the middle of a goddam novel. I called Mike. He panicked, too: he needed that paper. He said to go down to Soho and work my way through the stationery stores which are almost as common there as strip joints.

I did. Six hours of wandering through Soho. No American quarto. Sorry. How about British? No, it's three-quarters of an inch too short. Store to store. Try here, try there. Panic growing. Sorry. Have you tried...? Yes, they suggested you. Well, they're the only people who... Sorry. Like to help you out, but... Sorry.

Six hours! I finally gave up. I wasn't going to finish the book. Not and make my plane to Boston. No chance.

I headed back to the underground station. Across from the station was a little hole-in-the-wall stationery shop. I almost said the hell with it, but there it was, right across the street. Might as well try it. American quarto? Sure. We have a lot of American customers: there are seventy-five thousand of them living in London, you know.

I gave half the paper to Mike, kept half myself, finished the book with three days to spare and went out to take a look at London.

Robert E. Toomey Jr

KENNETH SLESSOR

Earth-Visitors

(To N.L.)

THERE were strange riders once, came gusting down
Cloaked in dark furs, with faces grave and sweet,
And white as air. None knew them, they were strangers -
Princes gone feasting, barons with gipsy eyes
And names that rang like viols - perchance, who knows,
Kings of old Tartary, forgotten, swept from Asia,
Blown on raven chargers across the world,
For ever smiling sadly in their beards
And stamping abruptly into courtyards at midnight.

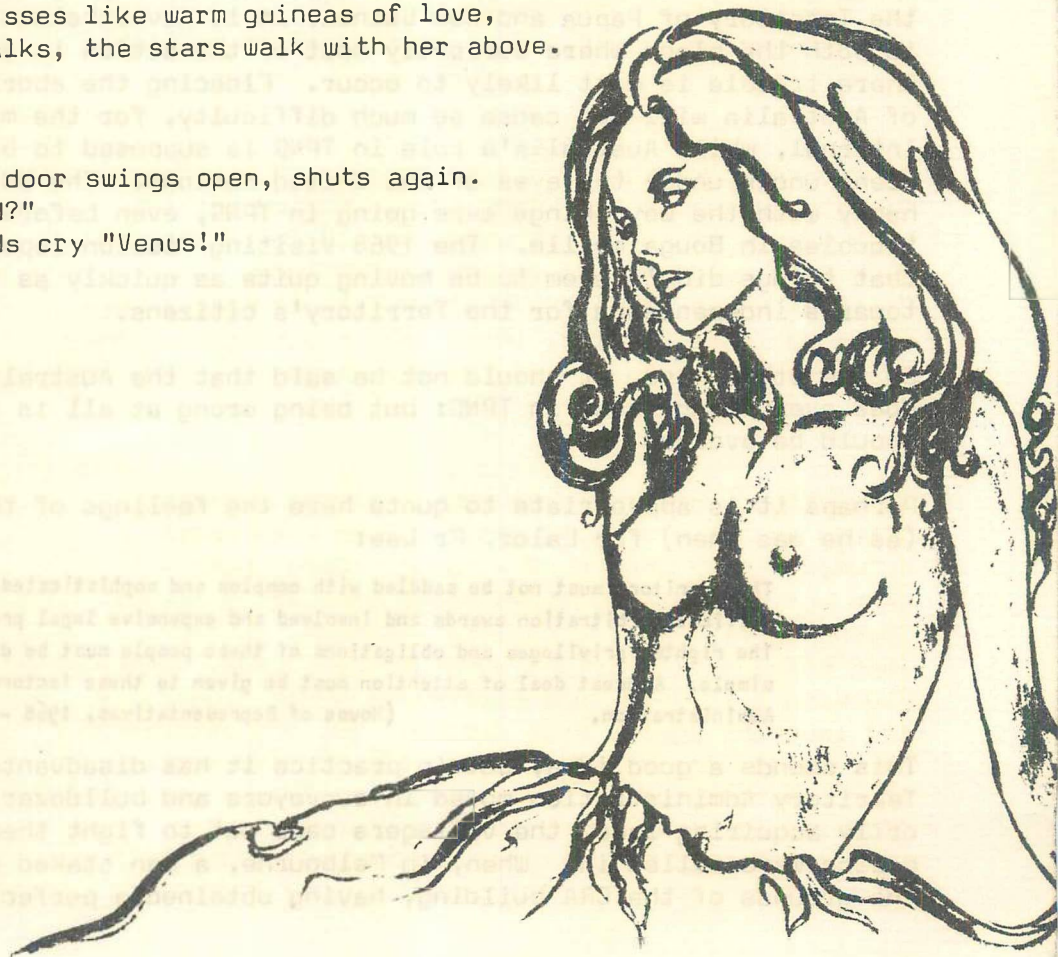
Post-boys would run, lanterns hang frostily, horses fume,
The strangers wake the Inn. Men, staring outside
Past watery glass, thick panes, could watch them eat,
Dyed with gold vapours in the candleflame,
Clapping their gloves, and stuck with crusted stones,
Their garments foreign, their talk a strange tongue,
But sweet as pineapple - it was Archdukes, they must be.

In daylight, nothing; only their prints remained
Bitten in snow. They'd gone, no one knew where,
Or when, or by what road - no one could guess -
None but some sleepy girls, half tangled in dreams,
Mixing up miracle and desire; laughing, at first,
Then staring with bright eyes at their beds, opening their lips,
Plucking a crushed gold feather in their fingers,
And laughing again, eyes closed. But one remembered,
Between strange kisses and cambric, in the dark,
That unearthly beard had lifted.... "Your name, child?"
"Sophia, sir - and what to call your Grace?"
Like a bubble of guilt, he had laughed "Mercury!"

It is long now since great daemons walked on earth,
Staining with wild radiance a country bed,
And leaving only a confusion of sharp dreams
To vex a farm-girl - that, and perhaps a feather,
Some thread of the Cloth of Gold, a scale of metal,
Caught in her hair. The unpastured Gods have gone,
They are above those fiery-coasted clouds
Floating like fins of stone in the burnt air,
And earth is only a troubled thought to them
That sometimes drifts like wind across the bodies
Of the sky's women.

There is one yet comes knocking in the night,
The drums of sweet conspiracy on the pane,
When darkness has arched his hands over the bush
And Springwood steams with dew, and the stars look down
On that one lonely chamber
She is there suddenly, lit by no torch or moon,
But by the shining of her naked body:
Her breasts are berries broken in snow; her hair
Blows in a gold rain over and over them.
She flings her kisses like warm guineas of love,
And when she walks, the stars walk with her above.

She knocks. The door swings open, shuts again.
"Your name, child?"
A thousand birds cry "Venus!"



JOHN FOYSTER

BOUGAINVILLAINY

KEEPING the bloody boongs under is one of the major preoccupations of Australian employers and politicians. It is perhaps typical that when the people of Rorovana village did make a stand against the Administration take-over recently (August 1969), the first reaction of Australian politicians should have been that "foreign agitators are behind": the hidden assumption being that the dumb nig-nogs couldn't work out for themselves that they were being shafted.

Though the exploitation of non-white citizens is by no means limited to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, it is nevertheless true that this is both the place where currently most of the action is and the place where trouble is most likely to occur. Fleecing the aboriginal peoples of Australia will not cause so much difficulty, for the matter is entirely internal, while Australia's role in TPNG is supposed to be that of benevolent uncle under the eyes of the United Nations. The UN is not altogether happy with the way things were going in TPNG, even before the present troubles in Bougainville. The 1968 Visiting Mission reported to the UN that things didn't seem to be moving quite as quickly as they might towards independence for the Territory's citizens.

On the other hand, it should not be said that the Australian Administration does everything wrong in TPNG: but being wrong at all is something which should be avoided.

Perhaps it is appropriate to quote here the feelings of the Liberal member (as he was then) for Lalor, Mr Lee:

The Territory must not be saddled with complex and sophisticated laws, difficult arbitration awards and involved and expensive legal procedures. The rights, privileges and obligations of these people must be clear and simple. A great deal of attention must be given to these factors by the Administration. (House of Representatives, 1968 - 15/1191)

This sounds a good idea, but in practice it has disadvantages. When the Territory Administration moved in surveyors and bulldozers after compulsorily acquiring land, the villagers came out to fight them off - and the police were called in. When, in Melbourne, a man staked out a claim on the grounds of the CRA building, having obtained a perfectly legal mining

right, he was arrested by police for "offensive behaviour" and that good old standby "resisting arrest". A newspaper later gave the opinion that he was arrested because before mining a garden (are lawns gardens, then?) permission in writing must be obtained from the owner. In other words, everything depends on who the local government backs. In the end it comes down to the matter of who owns which land, and to what extent. Let's examine this a little further.

The principle is accepted in Australia, though with reluctance at times, that various Government authorities may resume land for public purposes: widening roads, building high-rise flats and so on. The compensation paid to the evicted citizens is rarely generous, but rarely only nominal. To my knowledge no Australian government has yet done this sort of thing on behalf of a private company, though the impending sell-out to Ansett Airways on 24-hour operating services to capital cities might be regarded as the thin end of the wedge.

In the Territory the situation is rather different. Firstly, the Australian Administration is a temporary one, governing under UN supervision, with the indigenous population to take over in the near (?) future. Open cut mines and accompanying settlements are rather permanent features. Secondly, the take-over has been for the immediate benefit of a private company, Conzinc Riotinto of Australia, though ostensibly there will eventually be benefits for the natives. Just what does the Australian Government consider these benefits to be?

the decision to proceed will involve a capital expenditure of \$250m.
..... the Territory Administration will have the right to share 20% of the equity capital, so the prospects for taxation and for the employment of indigenes that hinge upon this undertaking are good.
(Senator Wright - Senate, 1968 - 14/593)

The benefits to the Territory, if the project proceeds, include taxation of up to 50% of the net profit from the project after the initial three-year tax holiday; employment of at least 1,000 indigenes, many of whom would receive technical training; the creation of a local market for agricultural products; improved social facilities such as education, medicine, housing, electricity and water reticulation; and expansion in export income by \$60m to \$100m, with accompanying benefits, thus assisting the overseas balance of payments situation.
(Senator Wright - Senate, 1968 - 19/1433)

On the following day, Senator Wright answered a question concerning the possible secession of Bougainville:

I do not suppose that anybody would contemplate advising the people of Bougainville, who number in total 73,000, that separation by the island could create a viable economy or would be of benefit to them.
(Senate, 1968 - 19/1489)

The most obvious thing is that the benefits to the indigenes are not particularly tangible things, firstly insofar as the Territory Administration has the right to invest and to tax the profits. These will, of



course, become available to the locals when independence is achieved. Note that these are regarded on the first occasion as being of great benefit to all the people of Papua and New Guinea, but by the time of the last quotation are not sufficient for the 73,000 Bougainville Islanders even as part of their industry. One cannot take the first claims regarding benefits too seriously.

Then there is the matter of that employment for "at least 1,000 indigenes".

"The legal minimum wage prescribed by the Native Employment Ordinance is \$4 per lunar month in the first year of employment, \$4.50 in the second year and \$5 for employees who have had more than two years' continuous service with an employer plus the free issue of rations, accommodation and clothing.

(The Honourable Charles Barnes, Minister for External Territories, HoFR 1968 - 18/1986)

Of course labour gangs are paid more than the minimum, but clearly wages are not going to be one of the big expenses for CRA. Maybe there is some immediate benefit for the natives in the form of the compensation offered by the Administration. This appears to be \$105 per acre for a 49 year lease. It has been rather less widely reported in the newspapers that a

white plantation owner in the neighbourhood received \$900 per acre for his land.

Thirdly there is the nature of land tenure itself. The UN Visiting Mission was not entirely happy with the situation in 1968 and in view of the slightly confusing situation it is worth noting the remarks of the Minister for External Territories on March 21, 1968:

.... a good deal of development can take place only if the native land-holders are prepared to sell land to the Administration, and sometimes they are reluctant to do this. These problems cannot be overcome easily and require close co-operation. (House of Representatives, 1968 - 2/355)

This tacitly assumes that the natives do hold the land, and consequently that resumption is something to be undertaken with care. In the present case there is plenty of evidence of reluctance on the part of the natives, and not much sign of patience on the Administration's side. Even supposing that the Administration genuinely believes that the copper mining will bring real benefits to the natives it must be admitted that it is not prepared to work particularly hard at bringing this benefit peaceably, and prefers to thrust it down the natives' throats. The question of whether that belief is genuine remains to be answered.

The natives think not: they are holding out, or at least still objecting. All possible legal steps are being taken to prevent the further resumption of land.

It is perhaps worth noting that while the Melbourne papers were able to devote considerable space in their editions of August 9 to the muddle-headed maunderings of that tired old man, the vice-chancellor of Monash University, and the ravings of conservative reporters, all dealing with the momentous notion that Monash should be closed down due to the violent riots which daily wrack the campus (they tell me the sky is falling in, too), they were unable to find space to report that Monash students had almost unanimously voted to donate \$1000 to legal defence for the Rorovana villagers.

The natural Australian repugnance towards boongs and other lower races is somewhat weakened by the thought that Papua and New Guinea serve as a useful barrier against the Yellow Hordes. The conflict of these emotions goes a long way towards explaining the recent events in the Territory.

It is unlikely that any real progress will be made in TPNG until the civil servants there treat the natives as something more than upper grade slaves. And that is far in the future, so it seems.

John Foyster

::: JB: John's article was written shortly after the events of early August. Some of the detail above has now been altered, but the central questions remain unanswered, the riots (?) continue, and Mr Gorton has re-appointed Mr Barnes in his new Cabinet.

STEPHEN COOK

THE KITTEN

A FANTASY

The cat belonged to Mr and Mrs Gordon Horner, childless. Its kittens, therefore, also belonged to Mr and Mrs Gordon Horner, especially since it had produced them under false pretences.

"I'm damned if I would have fed it," said Mr Horner, "if I'd known it was a female."

He took the kittens out to the shrubbery at the bottom of the garden, where they would not disturb his wife, and dropped them into a bucket of water. They swam strongly. He left them there.

Just before dark, Mrs Horner said, "Will you feed the cat, dear, or shall I?"

"Neither of us will feed the cat," replied Mr Horner. "The cat has deceived us, Emily. It must find new benefactors."

"And the kittens?"

"I'll bury them now. The roses stand to benefit most from them, don't you think?"

"Gordon, you didn't!"

When he arrived again at the bucket, he found that one of the kittens had not yet given up the struggle. In fact, it hardly seemed to have tired at all. It circled the bucket steadily. The ripples thrown out by its tiny paddling paws and its probing nose lapped gently over the bodies of its brothers and sisters.

He fished out the dead ones and dropped them into a hole beside the roses.

Two days later, he remembered to look in the bucket again. There the kitten was, still swimming strongly. Its baby eyes turned up to him. Plucky little bastard, he thought; it probably can't even see yet. He left it there.

"The cat still comes to the back door for its dinner," said Mrs Horner, several days later.

"Then why do you feed it?"

"I don't. I think it must have found somewhere else to eat, but it keeps coming back for more."

"I'll give it two more days," said Mr Horner.

He gave it two more days, then carried it down the garden by the scruff of the neck and dropped it in the bucket. It was a bucket big enough to hold a cat, as well as kittens. Any bucket will do for kittens, but a bucket that will keep an agile, full-grown cat out of its depth is something to be really proud of. The kitten was still circling steadily.

The next day, Mr Horner went to bury the corpse. Somehow he knew that the kitten would still be alive, yet he could not suppress a slight feeling of shock when he actually saw it. After burying the cat, he took the kitten in the bucket up to the house. Set in the side wall was a trapdoor that opened into a space under the floor. He used it for storing old pieces of timber and galvanized iron that might come in handy someday. It would be ideal for keeping the kitten out of harm's way until it decided to let itself drown. Brushing aside some of the dusty cobwebs, he set the bucket on the mouldy earth and shut the door.

A fortnight later, his curiosity got the better of him. He looked once more into the bucket. The kitten peered up at him and mewed feebly. It had grown no bigger, but, on the other hand, neither had it slowed down.

At dinner that evening, he mentioned the subject to his wife. "Darling," he began, "do you remember those kittens I drowned a month ago?"

"Of course, dearest."

"Well, one of them is still swimming."

"In the bucket?"

"I've kept it there for nearly a month. It simply will not drown."

"Give it time, dear, give it time. Patience is a virtue."

He waited for another month before he succumbed to the desire to look again. He strolled casually to the trapdoor; now that he was ready to see the kitten again, he felt no need to hurry. Just as he began to fiddle with the padlock that held the bolt, he heard a faint miaow from the other side. Sighing deeply, he went to tell his wife.

"Use the axe," she suggested.

"I wouldn't have the heart."

"Then there's nothing to do but be patient for a while longer."

He decided to wait for at least six months. No kitten could swim without food or rest for six months. He placed a careful red cross on the calendar

in the kitchen to mark the final day, and then, very gradually, forgot the whole thing. Six months passed, but he had forgotten what was meant by the cross. Soon it was winter, and there were three successive mornings when it was so cold that water froze in the pipes. That was most unusual, and the newspapers reported that the temperature was almost at a record low. In spring, the roses grew rapidly. Mrs Horner entered them in a local rose show, but they did not win a prize.

"Better luck next time, dear", he consoled her. "I'll take you out to dinner tonight, instead."

They went out to dinner. It was a very nice dinner, and on the way home in the car Mrs Horner literally purred with satisfaction.

"Good heavens," exclaimed Mr Horner, "That reminds me."

But Mrs Horner chose this moment to suggest that he help her win next year's rose show, by buying her a particular new variety that was very rare, very beautiful and very expensive. In bed that night, he remembered that he had remembered something, but could not remember what it was.

He bought the new rose, but not until after another year had brought yet another failure in the show. Mrs Horner accepted it graciously and asked for his assistance in planting it.

"We'll need a stake to tie it to," she said.

"I'll get one from under the house."

"Oh, there's no need - I think I left one behind the shrubbery some time ago."

Mr Horner went down to the shrubbery to find the stake. While he was there, he remembered that he had once drowned some kittens and a cat. There was something more, but he could not quite place it. He carried the stake back up through the garden.

"There's no need for you to stay out here," said Mrs Horner. "I'll put the stake in myself."

He thanked her and went inside, to her secret chagrin and his own secret pleasure, since they both knew that she had not expected to be taken at her word. Some time later, she asked him for the key to the trapdoor under the house. The stake had broken, and she had to find another. He gave it to her with cheerfulness and a thick skin, but something began nagging at his memory. It bothered him so much that he had to lay down his newspaper and think about it.

Of course! The kitten! He sprang from his comfortable chair and hurried outside, in time to see his wife emptying the bucket. The kitten lay beside her on the grass, panting rapidly, its legs twitching in an automatic parody of the motions of swimming. It had not grown a millimetre.

"Gordon!" she exclaimed. "Something incredible has happened."

"I know, dear," he said nervously. "The kitten."

"I'd forgotten all about it."

"So had I. Was it still swimming?"

"It had almost stopped, but most of the water had evaporated, and I think it might have been able to last until the bucket was dry." She had begun to scrape out the sides of the bucket with soil. "You really should have looked at it long ago. The water was filthy, absolutely filthy. I don't know how the poor thing could stand it."

"I'm sorry, I forgot all about it. The muck seems to come off fairly easily. Here, let me give you a hand."

"No, don't bother. I'm almost through." She carried the bucket to a tap among the flowers and filled it again.

"What are you doing now?" he asked.

"Putting it back under the house, of course. What's the alternative?"

"Well... I thought, you know..."

"Have you changed your mind about keeping it?"

"No, of course not," he replied quickly.

"Then you've either got to drown it, or put the axe to it."

"I'm damned if I'll use the axe on any animal!"

"And neither will I. It isn't a woman's job at all. Don't worry - Puss won't be able to outlast this bucketful. Surely not!"

"Do you think we might be able to give it away?"

Mrs Horner looked down her nose at the tiny animal. She sniffed. "It doesn't exactly look handsome, you know."

"We can clean it up - give it a bath, or..."

"Drying it out would be more to the point, Gordon, or was that your idea of a joke?"

"Heavens, no! How could I laugh at such a poor creature?"

They gave the kitten time to dry itself in the sun. Soon it came looking for food. They gave it two saucers of warm, sugared milk before it was satisfied. Mr Horner, mentally calculating its diet on a weight-for-age

basis, foresaw it eating them out of house and home. He hoped they would not have to keep it for long.

"The biggest danger of all," he confided to his wife, "is that it will come to think of this place as its home - like its mother."

"It's too young for that," she replied.

On the next afternoon, Mrs Anthony Hines paid a visit. Mrs Horner, her husband being at the office, took it upon herself to present the cat.

"Oh, no, my goodness gracious me, no!" said Mrs Hines. "I'm allergic to cats!"

"Such smooth, slinky animals, don't you think?" said Mrs Horner.

"The word isn't slinky, Emily, it's sneaky. I don't mind dogs, but I would never, Emily, never trust my life to a cat."

"But does one ever find it necessary to do such a thing?" asked Mrs Horner.

"Don't ask such things. The very look of the animal is enough to tell you. There's only one thing a cat asks from you. Comfort. Food and warmth, Emily, that's the only part of you and your home that it cares for. I don't care what they say in the biology books, dear, I know that cats are completely cold-blooded. Like fish."

"How odd you should say that," said Mrs Horner, and told her something of the kitten's history. Mrs Hines showed a quickened interest. Encouraged by this unaccustomed attention, Mrs Horner went on in more detail.

"You don't say," breathed Mrs Hines. "How very curious. It's really too absurd. And you really want me to take it, for nothing, right now? Why, I couldn't look myself in the eye ever again if I refused. Of course I'll take it off your hands, Emily dear. I'd do anything for you - you know that."

And Mrs Horner, who was just beginning to wonder if she ought to keep the kitten after all, found that she had it no longer.

When Mrs Hines left, she invited the Horners to a dinner party which she planned to give in a fortnight's time. Mrs Horner told her husband in the evening, and they both looked forward to the occasion. Mrs Hines threw magnificent dinner parties.

The arrangements were as splendid as the Horners had expected. Mrs Hines led them to a small group of strangers who proved most congenial, then made certain that they did not stagnate there all night. One of the secrets of her success was that she did not allow time for messy "deep" conversations to develop. At the proper moment, she led her guests into the dining room. The Horners' pleasure was only slightly diminished by the discovery that the centrepiece of the table was an enormous fishbowl.

Swimming smoothly around inside the bowl was the kitten.

"Naughty naughty," cried Mrs Hines, patting a tipsy guest on the hand as he reached for the bowl. "I'm sorry, but you mustn't take her out. I've got to insist upon that, you do understand? As soon as you take her out, she starts to grow."

Stephen Cook

[illegible]

*** JB: When Stephen Cook died in July 1967, in his early twenties, Australian science fiction lost a great talent and Melbourne fans a good friend.

"The Kitten" has not been published before. Though a minor story, it has the hallmarks of Stephen's style. "Not my style - my limitation," he once said to me, but then he was talking about his drawing. (He did a quite popular strip, "Porous Pasternak", for Farrago and later the Canberra Times.) Stephen did have a style, a unique one, and it was developing into a vividly effective vehicle for the unique things he had to say, when he died.

The only other unpublished work of Stephen's which I have read was a novel. It was not a good one, as it stood, but it could have been worked up into an excellent piece of writing and story-telling. It was a frightening thing. The sense of evil dominated it. Revised and strengthened, the book could easily have made ROSEMARY'S BABY read like HELEN'S BABIES. But only Stephen could have done it, I think.

I don't know where the manuscript is now. Stephen's family might have it. Bob Sessions at Cassell's read it, but I don't know anyone else who did.

Overseas readers will possibly only know Stephen Cook from his writing in ASFR. He was published professionally, sometimes as "Morris Nagel". There were stories in Carnell's Science Fantasy and elsewhere; his last appeared in John Baxter's PACIFIC BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SF, and at least one critic judged it the best story in the volume.

*** I neglected to ask Mr Slessor when "Earth-Visitors" was first published. It appeared in a Fanfrolico Press volume of the same title in 1926, and might have been in VISION, of which Mr Slessor was an editor. The poem is dedicated to Norman Lindsay, who died, aged 90, in November.

::: Bob Toomey, I read somewhere, has now sold one of his novels, but I forget where I read it, and I forget which novel. If I didn't have my heart set on getting Scythrop out by Xmas, I'd write and ask him. Bob is back in Springfield, Massachusetts, and last time I heard was writing full-time.

*** Most contributors to this issue are well known to readers. Don Symons, perhaps I should mention, is a Pommy migrant who lives near Melbourne. We hope to publish a lot more of him.

sole consolation is that the company of sinners has been great. I don't remember if I enumerated to you in a previous letter the major reasons why I've seemed to be uninterested. If I didn't, the appearance was deceiving, for I have been interested. But a fanzine which is devoted to professional science fiction automatically treats with things that are only partially known to me, since I don't read all the important new publications, while a fanzine which features fannish trivia is easier to comment on, for I know as much as any man does about how worldcons can survive without elevators and whether a mimeographed fanzine should feature justified right margins. Right there is a factor that causes me to reply to the fannish fanzine tonight while there is only a short time available for LoC writing, since I won't have to do any thinking to create the LoC, a preliminary that slows me down terribly. Australian fanzines are always late arriving, six or eight weeks after publication, and this gives me the mistaken notion that it won't hurt if I delay another week or two my letter about the newest issue, since the letter is already terribly late. Also a factor must be the lack of personal contact between Australian fans and me: I can't visualize this or that person as he physically appears when he is telling another fan how badly I'm behaving toward him by failing to write.

So I'm sorry to see ASFR apparently wither and die, and I regret any infinitesimal influence my boorishness may have had on your decision, and I believe that reasons like mine have been largely to blame for the dwindling response, not any deficiency in your editing or the quality of your material. If the time comes when the hard sf fans become as loud and as prone to write letters as the fans of fandom, the professionally-oriented fanzines will get more concrete evidence of their worth.

In ASFR 18, George Turner's article was outstanding. It would be a good fannish custom if a fanzine somewhere reprinted this on the first day of each year for the eons to come, so that the rapidly changing cast of fandom will continue to see these important paragraphs. Simultaneously, I wonder if George is asking too much of fanzines and their writers. I believe with the utmost firmness in the necessity for improving the quality of reviews and criticism, but I have doubt that their subject matter is capable of sustaining quite the extreme attention that George recommends. A dozen new books, perhaps a half-dozen stories in the prozines each year, have enough literary merit and newness to deserve the great amount of work he recommends of the reviewer. The rest? Mediocrity, for the most part, almost all of it hardly distinguishable from last year's bulk of new sf. Is it humanly possible to write learnedly about the bulk of this? The attempt would be something akin to Coca-Cola tasting projects. You might find a bottle different enough from all the other bottles to be worthy of special attention because it was filled in a city with impurities in its water, but the stuff isn't capable in general of providing the substance for mental analysis or physical reactions.

Franz Rottensteiner's review of VENUS EQUILATERAL is the kind of reviewing that George Smith's books deserve. But even Franz boggles at the thought

of reviewing the entire book, and would he be able to write as entertainingly and savagely if he were doing a lengthy essay on the entire collected works of Smith? I think not. Turner himself seems to me to go as far toward reviewing perfection as the field justifies in his discussion of LORD OF LIGHT in particular and Zelazny in general.

I suppose that Brian Aldiss is not putting us on with his discussion of how the stuff is behaving in Brazil. I can't help feeling that there is an object lesson in the fact that this happened because of a film festival. The movies are the most international form of science fiction and fantasy, and I'd like to see them receive great emphasis when the new world conventions come into being. They are the best way of getting an insight into another nation's fantasy, if you aren't a linguist, and let's not be afraid to face up to the possibility that most important sf may have pictorial form in another generation or two, if the printed word continues to lose favor. It seems impossible today in English-speaking countries with their avalanches of paperback fantasy, but I have memories of newsstands that were just as crammed with pulp magazines when I was young, and those pulp magazines suddenly were gone almost overnight.

It's a good thing that this letter is already so late. If there were time, it would now launch into an extended resume of the article I've always wanted to write in response to those who ask why we should be flying to a dead world like the moon. The article wouldn't be as well written as the excerpt from the Peacock novel, but it would be an oblique reply, in the form of a modest proposal to depopulate both Americas as soon as the changes in the Old World caused by the white man's coming to them could be discontinued. Things are terrible in the United States, but things would be quite a bit worse elsewhere without our existence.

Apologies again for my failure to acknowledge the fine job you've done. And if you think you've failed somehow by inability to keep ASFR going, stop and count the number of fans, past and present, who did not publish a score of issues of a literate, permanently valuable review of sf that won respect at the outset and held it right straight through its existence. Then relax and await the day when ASFR will be reborn in the mysterious manner that all other good fanzines of the past come back to life, like ODD and PSYCHOTIC.

::: JB: * blush * (You didn't mention the Hugo nominations, Harry!) I think George's article "On Writing About Science Fiction" was about the best thing I ever published in ASFR. Plenty of copies of that issue still available, folks. Free for forty cents. Concerning that heretical McLuhanistic bit about films: I like a good sf film as much as the next man (though possibly not as much as the next woman) - in fact I've seen three good sf films - but I hope the future of sf does not depend on this medium. I am incorrigibly biased, of course. When literature forsakes the printed word, it ceases to be literature. There may be better ways of communicating, but the game I enjoy playing uses printed words. I like to invent my own pictures from the words someone has given me. When a film is made which exercises the imagination as EARTH-VISITORS does, I might change my mind.

CREATH THORNE

The other day I was reading THOSE BARREN LEAVES, a novel by Aldous Huxley. The book is one of Huxley's best, and is filled with many fannish characters who could fit right into our own microcosm with no difficulty.

But the fact that Huxley may have been a latent fan is not what I want to talk about here. In the last few pages of the book I came upon this passage:

"It's comforting to think," said Chelifer, "that modern civilization is doing its best to re-establish the tribal regime, but on an enormous, national and even international scale. Cheap printing, wireless telephones, trains, motor cars, gramophones and all the rest are making it possible to consolidate tribes, not of a few thousands, but of millions. To judge from the Middle Western novelists, the process seems already to have gone a long way in America. In a few generations it may be that the whole planet will be covered by one vast American-speaking tribe, composed of innumerable individuals, all thinking and acting in exactly the same way, like the characters in a novel by Sinclair Lewis."

That was written in 1925. Marshall McLuhan came up with the same ideas thirty years later and got his picture on the front of Newsweek. All of which goes to show that the New York Times doesn't really know what's happening.

It occurs to me that fandom is a manifestation of this new urge toward tribalism. Our conventions, for instance, are the occasion for the exchange of talismans (old Astoundings, for instance), the uttering of complex rituals (to ward off the influence of the New Wave, perhaps), and orgiastic revels that last far into the night. But on a more serious note, fandom would never have developed if it hadn't been decided in the middle of the nineteenth century that perhaps most people should have the opportunity to get a basic education. Such a decision led to the rise of popular literature, and from popular literature sprang the great proliferation of pulp magazines. And from the pulps sprang fandom.

Chelifer goes on to say: "Education has made the old tribalism impossible and has done nothing - nor ever will do anything - to make the non-tribal society possible. It will be necessary, therefore, if we require social stability, to create a new kind of tribalism, on the basis of universal education for the stupid."

I think that anyone who has ever taught in a public school will tell you that education for the masses works, but doesn't work very well. I don't want to be accused of being an elitist, but it's obvious that if you are to educate stupid people you have to come down to their level.

And you don't have to teach in a public school to observe this. All you have to do is read fanzines.

Fanzines are supposedly produced by intelligent people, or at least by people who are supposed to have some ability at reading and writing. Yet a semi-casual reading of the fanzines being produced today will reveal that most fan writers are, at best, half-literate.

I wonder how many times I have seen "assinine" and "fued" spelt that way in fanzines. In fact, I've seen them so many times that I feel I might forget how to spell the words correctly myself. Well, Shakespeare misspelt his words, and people still read his fan-fiction, so does spelling really amount to anything? Perhaps not. But fans commit many other errors. A couple of years ago Art Rapp went through a SAPS mailing and pointed out a few of the more prominent errors in grammar present. He found them in virtually every fanzine in the mailing.

Far more important than this, I feel, are the errors that fans make in thinking. A very prominent example right now is the Holy War that a group called the Second Foundation is waging against "New Wave" science fiction. It seems to me that if these people knew anything at all about literature or about the history of literature they would realize how ridiculous their stand is. Yet apparently many people support them, including so prestigious a writer as Lester del Rey.

J.J. Pierce, leader of the Second Foundation, went through the University of Missouri, the same university I am presently attending. Somehow he got through without even understanding some of the basic principles of literature, since if he understood them he would not make the statements he makes now. That doesn't say much for the quality of higher education in this country.

The Second Foundation is only one example. The whole history of fandom is littered with examples of muddled thinking. I suppose now is the time to admit that I don't exclude myself from this category.

John, you wanted a light humorous column, but it doesn't seem to be turning out that way. I am a little depressed, I guess, after reading some particularly violent fanzines that arrived in the mail today. Violence is as fannish as mimeograph ink. But hopefully SCYTHROP will be a new avatar of Sweetness and Light.

::: JB: Smile when you say that, pardner, or ah'll be forced to narrow mah eyes at you. Incidentally, I hope I haven't spoilt your point about spelling by using the English forms I favour. I usually let my American contributors use good American, and even keep a dictionary of American-English usage within reach in case I think they have lapsed into English, but now and then, out of sheer perverseness, I suppress the more barbarous Americanisms.

In the next piece, Peter has some very sound things to say about World SF Conventions. Please note that it was written before the StLouisCon last September. New rules were made at St Louis, and more are to come at Heidelberg. Leigh comments on this and other matters after Peter.

PETER ROBERTS

Heidelberg in 70! Boston in 71! LA in 72! Dallas in 73! Montreal in 74! Melbourne in 75! Stockholm in 80! Yes, go on, just think about that last one for a moment. 1980. Eleven years ahead - that's the equivalent of forming the StLouisCon committee in 1958. And in case you're skeptical, Swedish fans aren't joking; they've already begun to organize their bid. Smiling wryly, perhaps? Well, come a little closer and look at the Dallas in 73 bid - they're already issuing newsletters and yet it's still four years away. Four years still to go, yet they've made such an impression and show of strength this year that Detroit has become dispirited and dropped out of the 1973 contest. Four years, friends. Think for a moment whether you know what you will be doing in 1973. I just get this feeling that I'm being hurried on, thinking of my life in terms of conventions. 1970? Oh, yes, that's HeiCon. 1968? That was Buxton. 1980? Good God, and it's already planned... Well, predestination always did seem too stifling a belief for me.

Anyway, phrased a little more coherently, it seems self-evident that this whole business of planning, bidding for and choosing conventions has become totally absurd. Absurd in the cost. Absurd in the preparation. Absurd in the promotion. And absurd in the divisions, the feuds (whoops! - sorry Pete, sorry Creath - JB) and the childish viciousness that seem to be the result of this idiot competition.

The cost, first of all. \$3000 is the figure quoted for the StLouisCon bid. Now that, notice, is for the bid alone - not for the convention, but just to win it. Columbus spent some thousand dollars or so just to lose it. Yet after chucking money around like that, the con committee will smile vaguely through the tears in their eyes and tell us that they're oh so sorry but Overseas Memberships will be trebled in price again this year (ah, but it's all the fault of the wicked, wicked post office, you see) and did we hear someone complain? You've no right to membership, you know - after all, you're a foreigner or something. Bitter, bitter, Roberts - you digress.

And the money goes on promotion. Fanzines. Preferably 100-page, multi-coloured clubzines oozing Big Name Fans and Professional Authors, all slickly vending their local group (and if you never knew they had one, whisper it quietly). No controversy, no slanging, no radical opinions - just the occasional cut at the opposite party and give the impression that it's really slightly obscene to mention the names of the subhumans who are attempting a rival bid. Sugar and honey for the rest, cartoons and funnies, plenty of nice letters - Hey! we're the Good Guys! Oh, and remember all the conventions in between, too - parties, banners and buttons, and if we're really lucky the mob will boo the Bad Guys and that will really put them up shit creek. Nasty, nasty, Roberts - but some people really do think this way. I suppose the dust settles down in the end, but was there ever any need to raise it? A little offering to the ogre WorldCon, perhaps - but the ogre could be dealt with.

WorldCons, International Cons, American National Cons - it doesn't really matter what you call them. If some US fans want to be chauvinistic, that's their privilege. The "WorldCons should be international" principle isn't really worth defending. Does it matter if all future conventions are called NatoCons, CosmiCons, or Donald DuckCons for that matter? - it's not worth quibbling over a name, and there'll still be the sad absurdities of WorldCon bidding, no matter what the US convention is called.

Me, I like conventions. A happy solution would be to have more of them. And a happy solution is needed - it seems until we do we'll be stuck with the ugly naivety of the Good Guys/Bad Guys concept.

oo

... LE:

... JB: Leigh? You're on, feller.

... LE: Not unless I get my name in big letters, I'm not!

... JB: I put your name in big letters, you say something nice about me, right?

... LE: Right, but don't expect anyone to be fooled. Egoboo given under duress can have a reverse effect if it's too obvious, you know.

... JB: Sort of egoboomerang?

... LE: They'll never let you rule the sevagram, you... you punster!

oo

LEIGH EDMONDS

Melbourne in 75! Well, that's an interesting proposition. It would be nice. But before you can really consider it seriously you need to know something about the state of fandom in Melbourne, the people who make it up, and the kind of conventions that have been held in Melbourne so far.

Most cities present a united fannish front. They have active clubs and their members always seem to be working on some kind of group activity. Or perhaps this is only how it appears to an outsider - perhaps most fan centres are just like Melbourne. You have probably heard of the Melbourne SF Club. It has been in existence for lo these past eighteen years, single and undivided - for no other reason than that there have never been enough active and forceful personalities as members to cause a split. Mervyn Binns is the only person who seems to take more than a passing interest in it, and so the Club goes on in much the same way it always has since Mervyn took charge. (That was maybe ten years ago.) Anyone who joins the Club and somehow imbibes the spirit of trufandom either has it knocked out of him or, if he doesn't succumb to the mindless tv-watching card-playing comic-reading tedium of 19 Somerset Place, he departs from the Club into gafia or one-man fanac. Some can't quite get away from it all, and may be seen once or twice a year at the Club, looking guilty - though the guilt is hardly on their side.

The Club sponsored the last three conventions held in Melbourne (66,68,69),

but this was because it served as a centre which was supposed to unite the active fans who were actually doing the work of organizing. In fact, once the convention concluded most of the committee members weren't seen around the Club for a long time.

Maybe there are twenty active fans in Melbourne. Fans of all kinds - sf, comics, film, horror and fanzine fans. Apart from ANZAPA there is hardly any connection between them. They don't mingle outside their own sub-groups, so there is no feeling of belonging to one big group. Noel Kerr, John Breden, Dimitrii Razuvaev and Paul Stevens stand around the Club talking comics, while John Bangsund and I sit in the study at the Clifton-Hilton discussing John Foyster's FAPA contributions (until Diane joins us, and then we play kuhn-kan). Gary Woodman and Michael Jolly run the Monash University sf group, and are rarely seen at the Club. Ken Bull, an ANZAPA member, lives a mile away from Foyster and works a few blocks away from Bangsund and me; none of us has met him. As well as the sub-groups already mentioned there is yet another which has appeared lately at the Club - a lunatic fringe wearing long hair and using expressions like "grass", "acid", "speed", "freaked" and "shooting". They are perhaps the furthest from trufandom, though one or two have shown fannish talent. There is no way to communicate with them about matters of importance to trufans.

Melbourne fandom has a few brilliant people in it - to name three, John Bangsund, John Foyster and me. There are a few more perhaps even more brilliant (if you can imagine that), but they are content not to get too involved in fandom. If we combined forces we could organize and host a fantastic world convention. But Australians are traditionally loners, and Melbourne fans somehow can't work together. Every convention ends up as a one-man show, with that one man getting minimal assistance from his committee, if he has one (John Foyster hasn't the time to fight a committee as well as organize everything, so his 1966 convention didn't have one). This year the committee had a lot of fun, but there were so many great ideas coming up all the time that the programme was completely reshuffled every second committee meeting, and by the time the convention was only a couple of months away everyone had grown tired of it; with the result that the convention more or less stumbled along by itself, and it wasn't very inspiring. We have no-one with sufficient enthusiasm, intelligence and drive to make us work as a team.

John D Berry had a strip in QUIP about a bunch of old fans and tired who sat around just quietly enjoying themselves until one day along came a bright young neofan; immediately they congregated around him and with a tremendous outpouring of fannish energy created a focal-point fanzine. We need something like this to happen in Melbourne, someone who will come along and revive the fannish spark in us to do great and wondrous things. 1975 is a long way off still, and something like this could easily happen. (Lee Harding will be due to make another return to fandom about 1971, but perhaps we need something even more dynamic than that.)

If Melbourne fans can get together and stay together long enough to win

and hold the convention, then there'll be little to worry about. There are some fine hotels in Melbourne, and more going up all the time. By 1975 the new airport at Tullamarine will be open and those gigantic 747s will be in service. US fandom could quite easily charter one of these planes, big enough for 400 (can't you imagine the first TransPacifiCon being held in flight even before the WorldCon began?), and Melbourne is certainly big enough to provide every facility you expect to find in a WorldCon site. It would be an expensive trip for overseas members, sure, but I think we would make it well worth while.

Now, if we could talk Ray Fisher into emigrating, or...

oo

::: JB: Well, for a few pages there we...

::: LE: You edited me, didn't you!

::: JB: Would you deny readers that little courtesy? Incidentally, I said back on page 26 that you would be commenting on the new rules, and you didn't.

::: LE: Well, that'll teach you to show me the script before I go on. You call me the assistant editor of this show, but I'm no better than a goddam slave the way you treat me! Why, I... I...

::: JB: There, I thought that autographed copy of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS would calm him. (I am, among other things, the most skilful forger in Clifton Hill fandom.) As I was saying, for a few pages there we looked like turning into a fannish fanzine. Fortunately I had the presence of mind to ask John Brunner to write something Serious and Constructive for us. About pop music.

oo

JOHN BRUNNER

If you're hoping for an actual article on the effect of pop lyrics on the audience, I'm afraid you're out of luck. I'm just about to leave on holiday, I was up until three-thirty this morning correcting the proofs of a major straight novel which Norton are publishing this winter, and when I come home I shall go straight to work either on a promotion book or possibly a movie script.

But it's always good news to learn that someone is increasing his range of appreciation, and right now is a hell of a good time to dig around in pop. About two years ago I started buying pop records again for the first time since I was about fourteen; I'd amassed a huge collection of jazz and folksong, and forty or fifty good classical albums, and then - well, mainly I think the BBC disc jockey (ex-pirate radio) John Peel was the guy who tipped me into pop, by broadcasting some of the most extraordinary and unpredictable songs I'd ever expected to hear in English - far closer to the Continental chansonnier tradition represented by Brassens and Brel than to the pop I grew up with: Jefferson Airplane's WHITE RABBIT, of course, and Country Joe's NOT SO SWEET MARTHA LORRAINE (which I think is a masterpiece). And, naturally, the Beatles were producing little gems

like ELEANOR RIGBY which were an utter contrast with the traditional "moon-June arms-charms" hit of yesterday... because they were about something.

This isn't completely novel, of course, but until recently the songs which were about serious subjects (Big Bill's BLACK BROWN AND WHITE, for example, Leadbelly's BOURGEOIS TOWN or Earl Robinson's FREE AND EQUAL BLUES) had received minimal exposure compared to the impact achieved by - oh - Mouloudji's recording of Boris Vian's LE DESERTEUR, or even Montand's LES ROUTIERS. (On the last, I recall hearing some snob on the BBC claim, after playing it, that no-one in Britain could write a song about a truck-driver. Bunkum. There's a better one - Ewan McColl's CHAMPION AT KEEPING THEM ROLLING. But the snob had of course never heard of it.)

Now, all of a sudden, here come a string of excellent songs discussing aspects of the human condition, not solely the economic or political protest songs which have been with us, in a kind of localized sub-culture milieu, for centuries (certainly since THE CUTTY WREN and the Robin Hood ballads), but songs about power, death, hunger, drugs, religion, travel, science, alienation, even hate. Contrast FIXING TO DIE RAG with WE'RE GOING TO HANG OUT THE WASHING ON THE SIEGFRIED LINE!

And, not unnaturally, there is a tremendous response to these songs, especially among young people. I'm certain a lot of them have been into acid (not something that attracts me) because of WHITE RABBIT and the other good song on the subject, Ultimate Spinach's YOUR HEAD IS REELING. I'm certain a lot of them have gone into Bach, too, because of groups like Fever Tree who are musically very well educated (try IMITATION SITUATION by way of evidence). Currently a song that is pure science fiction is heading the British charts, but it's a long way from the first - consider the Incredible String Band's WAY BACK IN THE NINETEEN-SIXTIES, or Pink Floyd's CONTROLS FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN.

Musically, too, we're getting into something which is genuinely modern yet reaches an audience which - say - Boulez or Messiaen can't tap. In yesterday's Observer there was a review of a new LP by the former bassist with Cream, which apparently discards orthodox harmony and strict tempo while remaining in the pop idiom, and I'm sure it'll attract a large audience. (I must get to hear it - I think I'll want it myself.)

Above all, though, I think the impact of current pop is felt in general attitudes towards the world. The Stones' I CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION expresses something which I imagine every averagely virile young man has felt in our society which encourages girls to accept presents, shows, outings, dinners and the rest of it, and then shut the bedroom door firmly in her escort's face. But someone has come out in the open and yelled a complaint about it. (I can't remember who did YOU'D BETTER GO NOW, which is also relevant to this point - I think it was Manfred Mann.)

Similarly, there's a song in HAIR about masturbation, sodomy, cunnilingus and fellatio, which people do, and until lately were terrified to talk about in public. Ridiculous.

And people who appreciate, for instance, Donovan's MAD JOHN'S ESCAPE (by far his best song, I think), aren't likely to share the bring-back-the-cat-and-the-noose attitude; they're more likely to be campaigning on the side of Ronnie Laing for an acceptance of schizophrenia as one of the many possible varieties of human consciousness... not a view I can share wholeheartedly myself, but since my oldest friend is in and out of mental hospitals regularly about twice a year I've seen a few of them from the inside and my feeling is that what we have nowadays is as likely to encourage feelings of persecution, deprivation and hatred as to cure them.

I also doubt very much whether fans of the Supremes will be found hunting blacks down the street. Though it doesn't necessarily follow, alas.

One final point: It's not the first time in history that popular songs have made a definite impact on social attitudes. Consider LA MARSEILLAISE, THE RED FLAG, AND SHALL TRELOWNEY DIE?, MACPHERSON'S RANT, THE WILD COLONIAL BOY, GUANTANAMERA, DIE WACHT AM RHEIN, even - to a minor extent - my own THE H-BOMBS' THUNDER, with which, I was told, a few years ago the twelve-year-old son of a friend entered a singing competition! What is remarkable is the twentieth-century phenomenon of massive exposure, via radio and tv and records, of a vast number of musically well-crafted songs on real-life subjects. At this big pop festival they had in the States the other week, the crowd was estimated at 450,000, yet the local chief of police said that in twenty-seven years he had never encountered a more courteous or co-operative group of young people. Not one single fight was reported. Apart from some drug-bursts, there was apparently no trouble with the law.

We used to experience this kind of situation on the Aldermaston Marches. One year, when according to a London newspaper the chief marshal Michael Howard was "moving more people in a body on foot than anyone anywhere since Napoleon marched on Austerlitz" (!), we found ourselves, about twelve thousand strong, walking through the Berkshire countryside with one - count him, one - policeman accompanying us. The whole of the rest of the job was being attended to by volunteers.

It's a very nice feeling to be involved in something like that. Similarly, at the big Stones concert recently in Hyde Park, with a crowd of around 200,000, all the policing was done by the Hell's Angels, and there was no trouble. Funny! Apparently people can assemble in large numbers and get on together. And I don't think it's beyond the bounds of possibility that their preferred songs express and/or encourage the attitude of mind that permits this to happen.

oo

JB: I kept up with you as far as the Norton - that's a group that plays naked, isn't it? - but then you lost me, John. (Except for Boulez and Messiaen, of course. Know them well. Great sculptors, both of 'em.) What gets me is that though the words of modern pop songs are often so good, you can't hear them for the mumbling and 200 MW guitars - whereas

every syllable of the corny songs I grew up with was quite clear. :::
I don't know if you were on holiday when the BBC showed WORLD IN FERMENT
(the ABC buyers must have been - it hasn't turned up here yet), but...

LE: You don't edit him, do you!

JB: Leigh... please? I'm trying to...

LE: No, fair's fair. Come on - you muck about with my stuff - why not his?

JB: Oh, Leigh, what am I to do with... Who's that? - Claphanger! - Just
the man! - Here, take this innocent young clod to one side and tell him
why I don't edit John Brunner, while I go on addressing the readers.

Our Governor-General, Sir Paul
Hasluck, has been making the most of
his new position by speaking out
frankly on all kinds of subjects. A
few weeks after his appointment, for
example, he attacked litter and
pollution in no-nonsense terms that
hit the headlines around the country.
On October 25 he told the AJA annual
conference in Perth: "The journalist
has lost the basic freedom of being
dull."

I like that. Facts are often dull,
and the journalist is under constant
pressure to tizzy them up.

In July this year the BBC put on a
one-shot news commentary send-up,
written by N.F. Simpson. His point
complements Hasluck's: "News is
processed fact. It must be urgent,
significant or moving. Fortunately
almost anything, by a little
judicious messing about or a nicely
calculated tone of voice, can be
made to seem any or all of these
things."

Without further ado, it is my
pleasure to present these selections
(pinched from The Listener) from
WORLD IN FERMENT.

Well, it seems we're not quite
ready yet.

LE: He's awfully hard to get on
with, isn't he!

CC: Nay, lad, it's his fanzine
after all, and you have to
try to see things his way.

LE: But...

CC: But me no buts, now. Tell
me, have you ever heard the
expression, "The king can
do no wrong"?

LE: Sure. It's a load of...

CC: It isn't, you know. It may
not be true, but it's
definitely expedient. Take
John for example...

LE: Bangsund?

CC: The same. Now he works for
the engineers' association,
right? Well, from 9 to 5,
Monday to Friday, John acts
on the principle that the
engineers can do no wrong.
It's a good job, good money,
and therefore a good policy.

LE: Are you trying to say that
in fanzines the filthy pros
can do no wrong?

CC: You learn quickly. Indeed,

that is so, but only if they
are last year's Hugo winners.

They're still going, over there.
I don't want to start without
the Professor: I think he'll
enjoy this.

LE: Fair enough. So John would
edit Campbell Himself if he
wanted to?

CC: Correct, however unlikely.

LE: And he would call Piers
Anthony a jerk if he...

CC: No, my boy, never!
In any other fanzine, but
not in SCYTHROP.

LE: We don't call writers jerks?

CC: You misunderstand me. We
don't mention Piers Anthony.
Nor Tony Pedro, for that
matter.

LE: Because he said a rude
thing about the Harbinger?

CC: Just so. In fact...

It's a pleasant day here at the
Oval. Sun shining. No little
dogs on the pitch.

Her Majesty is looking very
radiant, as usual. Marvellous,
really, the way she keeps on
smiling and waving in this heat.

Hundred and ten in here.

Excuse me; I'll just pop over here for a moment. Haven't you finished
yet? You're holding every-
one up!

LE: Okay... But I still reckon
Brunner was wrong when he...

JB: Out, impertinent lout! Ink
the Roneo or something, you
gangling longhaired foureyed
troublemaker!

CC: Bit rough on him, aren't you?

JB: Rough! Claphanger, you
should have been around when
Foyster was teaching me! Oh,
the cold sweats I break out
in even now when I remember
my 'prentice days! No, he'll
be all right. Just keep at
him - a few scars won't hurt -
he'll be set for a Hugo in a
few years, you watch.

LE: Ink the Roneo! Sweep the
floor! Make the coffee!
Yes, sir! No, sir! Makes
me sick, the old... Hullo!
That nice lady out there just
fainted! I'll dash out and
fan her face with this
RATAPLAN I just happen to
have about my person...

CC: Of course, when that happens you'll have to stop editing him, won't you?

[illegible]

in the foreseeable future, as the space race hots up and at the same time we become more and more overpopulated, we're going to be sending more and more old-age pensioners into space and we shall need to know how they're likely to be affected by height.

Wouldn't the answer be to send them up in balloons once or twice a week from some orthodox type of old people's home in, say, Cockfosters?

- This was one of a number of ideas that were put up, certainly, Nancy, but for various reasons we discarded them in favour of the more practical one of having them permanently at the top of the Matterhorn.

The trend is going to be, in fact, for more old people's homes at high altitudes, rather than less?

- That is going to be the trend, Nancy, yes.

NUDISM -- NANCY CHUFF IN CONVERSATION WITH GERALD PIKESTAFF

We have with us in the studio Gerald Pikestaff, who, as Director of Nudist Studies at the National Garment Manufacturers Research Association, must for professional reasons remain anonymous, but who is very much an authority on the question of contemporary nudism. I would like to ask him to what extent the whole nudist concept is in the melting-pot at the present time.

- My own feeling, Nancy, is that it's very much so. What we're seeing today is nudism very much on the offensive.

The London School of Nudism being a case in point.

- As people try to get on the bandwagon.

I believe one of their slogans is "Complete nudity in six months or your money refunded".

- It is indeed, Nancy, and I think we're undoubtedly going to see more and more nudists infiltrating themselves into positions of power in the community in the next few years. At present they are lying low, but this is possibly an ominous sign and they may well be biding their time.

What kind of places are they secreting themselves in, Gerald, in your experience?

- Well, we've been looking at grand pianos earlier in the programme. This is one likely spot where a nudist with an eye to the main chance might well secrete himself. A lilo across the wires: it's an open invitation to anyone with nudist leanings, and I should be very surprised indeed if one were to lift the lid of a good many grand pianos and not find one or two individuals in a state of nature inside - which, of course, provided they have a licence, is perfectly within the law.

In other words, you'd advocate padlocks and chains.

- That would be one answer, Nancy, yes, if the thing's to be really nipped in the bud before it takes hold and spreads from grand pianos to other things, like cocktail cabinets. Because it's no good deluding ourselves that it's going to stop there, and anything less than the most

stringent precautions is simply handing the thing over on a plate to the people who want to turn society into a hotbed of rampant nudism in all its shapes and forms.

oo

::: JB: I think I would like to see that show. Delightful as the text is, I feel it would be much more interesting in its proper visual and aural medium. Watching THE WORLD OF BEACHCOMBER over the past few weeks, I had precisely the opposite feeling. I retain fond memories of Beachcomber from reading Michael Frayn's selection of his work some years ago, and, brilliant though The Milligan and many of his assistants were, the flavour just didn't come across on the telly. Boorstin's THE IMAGE has a lot to say about what happens when you attempt to transfer work from one medium to another. If you've read it, there's nothing valuable I can add. If you haven't, you shouldn't be reading a classy fanzine like this. Go away - go on! - go and read BEABOHEMA or something. When you've caught up on the Vital Books of Our Time, then you can come back and read Don Symons on BUG JACK BARRON - a book which will probably offend you anyway, if you're not On The Ball, Trendy and Right Up With It Where It's At like Norman Spinrad, Mervyn Binns and me, to name only several.

oo

R. D. SYMONS

Andrew Kopkind, an American writing in the New Statesman, has remarked, "The agonies of America have been generously bestowed upon its children. They have come into a rich and wretched inheritance: the profits of public aggression, the benefits of uncivil obedience, the waste products of extravagant competition." BUG JACK BARRON* is a story about the American rat race set in the near future when the present generation of youthful rebels is making its own way in the world.

Life, certainly, has often been precarious: the caprices of the Caesars, the savage penalties of mediaeval courts, the treacheries of renaissance princelings have tended to promote in the individual a primary interest in his own survival. The difference in the present American situation, compared with the past, is that while it was piously believed that the wealth of America would ensure the security of the individual, one of its consequences has been the democratization of treachery and ambition. It has the Roman fault of being ungovernably large. The very size of its economy promotes private fortune to the point where it becomes corrupt and uncontrollable, as it did with the slave-worked estates of the Romans and as it does in the case of Spinrad's villain, Benedict Howards. The ordinary American is aware of this, yet he is confronted with the back-slapping, egalitarian mythology on which the country's political expression subsists. No wonder then that he is confused, that given the opportunity he may become cynically self-assertive, that without opportunity the catchcry of

* Norman Spinrad: Bug Jack Barron (Avon pb 327pp US\$0.95)

"law and order" might give him a vicarious pleasure in police brutality. We outsiders, of course, tend to like Americans while disliking America.

Spinrad's hero, and I think that for once one may call him that, conducts a television talk-back programme, made possible by the use of the video-phone, the superimposed image grey on the tv screen against Barron's living studio colour. He poses as the friend of the oppressed, with all the attendant dangers of demagoguery. He had, in fact, started out on the political left as a founder member of the Social Justice Coalition, the rising third party grown out of the students' and civil rights movements, which has provided Mississippi, of all places, with its first black governor, Lukas Greene, a former friend and associate of Barron's in placard-carrying Berkeley days. Greene regards Barron as a sold-out careerist, which he is when the story opens, though not, we discover, irrevocably.

The plot grows out of the villainy of Benedict Howards, president of the Foundation for Human Immortality, who is manipulating America in order to obtain a monopoly of cryogenic freezing. Bodies are already being frozen in America, and Simak, in his somewhat paranoid way, has attempted to deal with some aspects of the subject in his WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN?, but Spinrad's interest is rather different. It is concerned with the corrupt power which is put into Howards's hands. Those wishing to have their bodies frozen at death have to entrust the Foundation with \$50,000 in liquid assets, to be used by the Foundation at its own discretion until revival of the donor's body. At this price the offer of a free freeze becomes a valuable bribe which Howards can use to his own purposes. In addition, he derives an almost unlimited and unknown power from an immortality process which involves the buying of young children, mostly black, from their parents, on a spurious promise of experimental higher education, and submitting them to massive and fatal doses of hard radiation.

Barron becomes involved with Howards when one of the callers to his programme, a negro, complains that the Foundation discriminates against blacks. Barron plays the game fairly hard, but knows that Howards has bought two members of the Federal Communications Commission: he knows how far he can go. But Howards's power lust is unlimited; he decides to get at Barron through his estranged wife, the only woman Barron has ever really cared for. As a first bribe, he offers her a free freeze for the two of them, knowing that she would go back to Barron on almost any excuse, but also knowing that she would feel guilty if she withheld from him the chance of revival after death. Howards's real intention, though, is to put them both through the immortality process, so making them contractually responsible for the child murder which it necessitates and putting Barron completely in his power.

Barron and his wife are reunited for a brief ecstatic period. The sexual episodes in the book have that joyless intensity which springs from the puritan attitudes which still underlie American society, the lowbrow inadequacies of an official moral stance which permits sanctimonious creeps like Peale and Graham to be close to the President. It is safe to say,

I think, that no puritan society has ever maintained its early reforming and restrictive fervour. The rigours of Calvinism have been modified in Geneva; Cromwell's eclipse was confirmed by the Restoration; Aphrodite will not be denied but she may still be misunderstood. America is a heterogeneous society and the narrow puritanism which overlays it must antagonize large sections which do not believe in its pronouncements. It must, therefore, intensify the rat race. As with any other commodity, when pleasure is made scarce it becomes expensive and the race is on to get the loot to pay for it. If nude bathing brings forth denunciations from the Southern Baptists and aggressive zeal from the police, one needs a private pool, and that costs money.

Barron is the heir to these American problems. The interlude of reunion ends when his wife jumps from the terrace of his twenty-third-floor apartment while on a bad acid trip after discovering how she and Barron have been made immortal. After this tragedy, Barron uses his programme to get Howards, who evades indictment in a madhouse cell.

It is a vivid book. Only the immortality bit calls for willing suspension of disbelief; the rest has something of the savour of tragic inevitability. One of the reasons why I enjoyed the story is that it made an attempt to deal with large issues. I am heretical enough to be somewhat bored by Updikean suburbia. Odysseus is more interesting than his troops because he has greater opportunities to triumph or perish, a greater freedom of movement.

In spite of the fact that it is a moral book, there was, I understand, some difficulty in finding a publisher for it - presumably because of the language and the sexual frankness. There are two scenes of fellatio, graphically described, and a liberal allocation of "fucks" per page. But Barron is really a monogamist, despite his sexual athletics, and he is ultimately rescued from Mammon, too.

One could suspect the style of being influenced by Tom Wolfe and Burroughs (W., not E.R.) but it is, really, Spinrad's own:

"'Yeah, we all dig the smell of blood,' Barron said, glancing round the carefully musky-dusky room, clean Upper East Side shuck barroom, filled with tightly casual aging young we made it we're only one step from the top next thing to being real crowd, chicks no longer girls and never to be women. 'I like a chick with the balls to admit it. (Dig verbal possession of male organs, don't you, baby?) As you may've noticed, I'm a wee bit savage myself.' He cocked his head, caught chandelier lights off slick bartop in the hollows of his eyes, opened his mouth showing glimpse of lazy tongue behind teeth - conscious BUG JACK BARRON image-trick."

If pot ever becomes legal, as it has in Spinrad's future America, one wonders with some apprehension what flights of copy-writing it might lead to. One of Barron's sponsors is the manufacturer of Acapulco Gold, a name which has actually been registered for commercial use already in America. "Mexican peon leading burro up winding trail on jungle-covered

volcanic mountain, a fruity-authoritative Encyclopedia Britannica voice over: 'In the high country of Mexico evolved a savoury strain of marijuana which came to be known as Acapulco Gold in the days of the contraband trade....'"

The relationship between Barron and the black governor of Mississippi, Luke Greene, is well done. It is post-Baldwin: they like and respect each other, yet there is a tension. It is as if they fear that racial discrimination might be forced on them from outside, however much they themselves might want to avoid it. Barron resolves the situation in a magnanimous and unforeseeable way.

It is a book to collect, I think. It reflects something of the errors and failures and cruelties and rather desperate compassion of unwieldy America.

oo

::: JB: And that would seem to be all for this issue, unless... yes, we do have some

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CARTHAGE CLUB

(Friday, 14th November, 1969. Mr Persse-Tring presiding, in the absence of Dr Claphanger. Mr Bangsund speaking:)

Some recent critics, while applauding Jean Genet's obvious genius, have reproached him for not displaying as profound a knowledge of contemporary literature as might be expected of an author of his stature.

That Genet may not be as well-read as his critics is hardly surprising, since he has spent the greater part of his life either in prison or doing things likely to get him there. A criminal, whether on the run or locked away, does not have quite the opportunities that we well-situated law-abiding folk have to keep up with the latest and best books.

Apart from telling Genet's critics to go suck eggs, I have raised this matter to point out the possibilities it has for a science-fiction writer. I offer the idea herewith to Isaac Asimov, on a 50-50 basis...

Imagine if you will Jean Genet cast away on some far planet, where he is confronted by one of those monstrous slimy aliens which used to infest the covers of FANTASTIC and AMAZING. The details of the story I will leave to Dr Asimov, but here is the punchline: "My, what bug-eyes you have, Greeny," said the little-read writing hood.

(Interjections, catcalls and cries for "Order!")

I can hear Lee Harding saying that I never give him great ideas like that, and he needs the money more than the Good Doctor. Well, Lee, how about this? There's this city, see, and it has the hiccups. Well... I beg yours? Oh, you've done that one already.

