

# AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY

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No. 1 December 1970

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EDITORIAL	2
GEORGE TURNER : EARTHMAN COME HOME	5
JOHN BANGSUND : THE SF REFERENCE LIBRARY Part One : A Brief Survey	9
BOOK REVIEWS :	
Turner : Three for Tomorrow	11
Toomey : 50 Short SF Tales	12
Foyster : Far Rainbow The Molecular Cafe	13
FILM REVIEW :	
Zeman : Alphaville	14
COMORG CONSTITUTION	17
NEWS	18

Cover illustration by LIZ KINNAIRD

## Editorial

YOU know how it is with authors; they have all, according to the dustjacket biographies on their books, worked as bulldozer-drivers, shearers, short-order cooks and used-car salesmen. If you can't claim to have done all kinds of romantic things like that while writing your magnum opus, you are nothing. Fortunately, however, you can claim to have done these things; there's nothing to stop you, and believe me, there is often more creative fiction on the dustjackets than in the books.

WITH people who write science fiction, or write about it, it is similarly mandatory to claim that they started reading the stuff when they were twelve, or eight, or four. When I hear some of these stories (and I have no doubt that they are true) about people teaching themselves to read at an incredibly early age by spelling their way through SKYLARK OF VALERON or THE RADIO BEASTS, I am reminded of that hairy aristocrat, Lord Greystokes, who accomplished something similar - and I am also awfully jealous.

Jealous because I learnt to read at a perfectly normal age by spelling my way through (\* blush \*) THE MAGIC FARAWAY TREE and all the Biggles books, and all the William books, and I don't know what other mind-warping stuff. I also read comics, of course, but about the age of nine I graduated to western stories (and didn't read another comic for twenty years). After devouring the entire output of Zane Grey and his hosts of hangers-on, I looked about for something interesting, and at this stage - about age twelve - I could easily have discovered science fiction. But I didn't. I discovered P.C. Wren and P.G. Wodehouse and Leslie Charteris. I left school at fifteen, determined never again to look at those frightful old bores, Shakespeare, Hardy, Masfield, Dickens, Lawson and all that lot, and thoroughly inoculated against poetry.

But a funny thing happened. Out in the big world of commerce and office-girls and pay-packets, I discovered that Captain Johns and Messrs Grey, Wren, Wodehouse, Charteris et alii no longer had much to say to me that was relevant to where I was at. Distressing, I can tell you. Desperately I looked about for something that would, in the old Quaker phrase, "speak to my condition". This was before television. The Beatles were still at school; indeed, the very word "rock" still meant something you threw at a rabbit. I was forced to go



back and look at those frightful old bores, Shakespeare, Hardy, Dickens and all that lot, and I discovered poetry - incredible stuff: it taught me things about myself and the world I live in and I thought people only wrote it to make school-children miserable! And I went on, happily discovering George Borrow and H.G. Wells and Shaw and Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Camus, Nietzsche, Peacock, Purphy, Ibsen, Fitzgerald, Maupassant, Conrad, Kipling, Lawrence, Byron, Chaucer, Turgenev - oh and hundreds more - and I enjoyed myself immensely for a decade or so, wallowing in the world's best books, and if anyone ever mentioned the words "science fiction" in my presence I would just look pityingly at him, as an Olympic champion might look at someone talking about the fun to be had playing dominoes.

At the ripe old age of twenty-five I met an amiable sort of bloke who was as interested in good books and classical music as I was, and we talked for hours about these things, and he introduced me to all kinds of new intellectual and social experiences - at least they were new to me. I knew right from the start that he not only read science fiction, but also wrote the stuff, but everyone has some harmless eccentricity you have to forgive if you are to get on with people, and he was tactful enough not to talk much about it. Tactful? The man was diabolically cunning! Before I had known him six months he had turned me into an addict! I scoured the secondhand bookshops and carried away armloads of paperbacks from his collection every time I saw him. Sad, really, isn't it? The funny thing is that I was on my guard all the time, but he broke through it: he handed me a story by Arthur Clarke, called "The Star", and asked me just to read it so we could talk about the theology in it. That's how it all started. So I want it clearly understood: anything I have done in the science fiction line is all Lee Harding's fault. He can disclaim responsibility all he likes; the fact is he started me off, and he can't squirm out of that.

Lee introduced me to the Melbourne Science Fiction Club - in 1964 the only club of its kind in Australia, that I know of. The MSFC has a fabulous library, shows a lot of good films (and a lot of deliciously bad ones), and has a magnificent table-tennis table. Unfortunately it did not then, and does not now, conduct any planned programmes at all, and there is a certain lack of intellectual stimulation about the place; otherwise it's great. In 1966, John Foyster organized the Seventh Australian SF Convention - the first to be held in ten years - and this took place at the clubrooms. There

were many interesting people there, among them John Baxter, Wynne Whiteford, Stephen Cook, Damien Broderick, and maybe some other authors I've forgotten meeting there. There was a tremendous enthusiasm evident at this convention, and towards the end of it I suggested we try to keep the spirit of the occasion alive by starting a magazine. Me and my big mouth. So that's how I came to produce a journal call Australian Science Fiction Review. A journal? No, let's call things by their proper names right from the start; it was a fanzine - a magazine produced by sf fans.

ASFR lasted for twenty issues, from the first in June 1966 to the last in June 1969. (In December 1969 it changed its name to Scythrop, but that's another story). It was not the most popular fanzine ever produced in Australia, nor the longest-running: the MSFC's newszine, Etherline, probably holds both those records. But it was certainly the most popular Australian fanzine overseas. It appeared on the "Hugo" ballot in 1967 and 1968, and a lot of people in America and Britain and elsewhere were pretty excited about it. But it would never have survived without the backing of Australian fans, and, vice versa, a large number of Australian fans became active because ASFR aroused their interest. New clubs were started, more conventions were held, fanzines started popping up all over the place, new authors emerged. ASFR cannot claim the credit for these things, but it certainly helped create the right climate for them.

Today there are something like fifteen sf clubs or organizations in Australia, to my knowledge. I suspect that there are more. About twenty fanzines appear regularly. Well, maybe not regularly, but they appear. About thirty authors are writing science fiction, some of them writing very well and making names for themselves overseas, if not at home.

During 1969, Ronald E. Graham, Sydney businessman and sf collector, launched a magazine called Vision of Tomorrow. This was a professional magazine, not a fanzine. Published in England, Vision featured many Australian writers and was becoming very popular with fans around the world when, this year, distribution problems effectively killed it - after twelve issues. The magazine gave considerable impetus to science fiction in Australia, mainly by publishing new writers, publicizing local activities and inspiring the fans. It is not altogether coincidental that at the two conventions held while Vision was forging ahead the decision was made to bid for the honour of holding the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention in Australia.



Over the last few months it has become more and more obvious that Australia needs some kind of central organization to act as a clearing-house for information about sf clubs, publications and activities; to help aspiring writers by telling them where to send their manuscripts; and to more or less act as a public relations body for sf in general.

With this in mind, we have launched the AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION COMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATION, abbreviated (George Orwell has a lot to answer for) "Comorg". You will find Comorg's Constitution and office-bearers in this issue, and we will be interested to hear what you think of the idea.

Also during the last few months I have been busily creating more work for myself by setting up a shoestring publishing business and preparing to launch several new publications. Two of them, the AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK and AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION DIRECTORY, are described elsewhere. The third is this magazine, AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY. I felt at an early stage in this project that if it succeeded it would give me just too much work to handle. After all, these things are all done in what I laughingly refer to as my spare time. So there seemed to be even more need for something like Comorg. And after we discussed the whole business it seemed pretty obvious that ASFM should be the official journal of Comorg, rather than my personal magazine. And so it is. I have been elected to the committee of Comorg as Editor, and in my private capacity as a publisher I also have the contract to publish ASFM. This takes a fair amount of the administrative burden from me, but it also allows the Organization in the future to appoint someone else as Editor, and even someone else as publisher, if it wants to.

I would like to make it clear that there are two ways of getting ASFM regularly. You can join the Organization, which entitles you to receive the magazine; or you can subscribe directly to the magazine. In the first case you are dealing with Comorg; in the second case with me.

And the other thing I must mention is that this is a sample issue only.

In future issues, commencing with no.2 if possible, and certainly with no.3, ASFM will contain about 40 pages. The material in each issue depends a lot on you, the reader. We want you to write articles and reviews for us, and letters of comment. Later on, if all goes well, we will be paying for material.

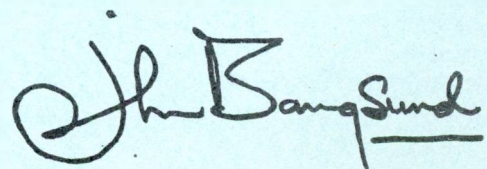
The content of this issue is fairly representative

of what we have in mind for the magazine generally. Each issue will have at least one lead article/essay. There will be reviews of books (including children's books), films, television programmes and anything at all with sf content (pop songs, for example). Two special series of articles, one of which commences in this issue, will cover in some detail "The Basic Science Fiction Library" and "The Science Fiction Reference Library". We will regularly publish interviews with local and overseas authors, and reports on conferences and conventions. There will be a certain coverage of news, though not as detailed or wide-ranging as you will find in the better newszines. Activities of clubs and organizations in Australia and to some extent overseas, will be reported, and there will be some coverage of fanzines. From time to time we will publish original fiction, and we will pay for this; the payment will be fairly modest, but we believe that if a story is good enough to publish, it is good enough to be paid for.

In our January or February issue we will be announcing a competition which we think you will find of considerable interest. We want to find and encourage Australian writers and artists interested in science fiction - particularly, but not exclusively, young people. So we will be conducting a competition, with twenty-seven cash prizes, for the best original science fiction stories, the best reviews of science fiction and the best series of drawings or paintings illustrating a recent work of science fiction.

Several people have agreed to act as judges, among them Dr Stephen Murray-Smith of the University of Melbourne Faculty of Education, editor of Overland and well-known critic. In time we will have an international panel of judges, and we have some pretty exciting announcements to make about this competition - but you will have to wait a month or so for the full details.

We hope you will like ASFM. If you feel there's not much in this issue, bear with us until we get into our stride. We had the choice of producing a normal issue for a small number of people or a small issue for a large number of people, and we chose the latter.





# George Turner

## EARTHMAN COME HOME

THE Earthmen are coming home.

They have spent a few generations out among the stars, ever since Jules Verne took his first step Moonward, seeking excitement. Most are still seeking and finding it, but some have discovered that excitement is all they find, and it is not enough.

When they set out, the search for the universe was the challenge, the gratification of curiosity and the shimmer of high adventure the desired end. But at length curiosity gives rise to questions older and deeper than challenge and shimmer.

Whence, and why, and where to?

To answer, even to probe, requires consideration of one's beginnings and environment and capacities and limitations, and this knowledge exists most accessibly in the world of men. This world.

And so the novelists are coming home.  
At last.

TO make this plain we must first set aside the vague diminutive, "sf". It stands for too many things, such as "speculative fantasy" and, with thanks to Schuyler Miller, "speculative fantabulation" (whatever that in its turn might stand for). I suggest also "soporific fun-and-games", "sadistic flapdoodle", and "semantic finagling".

But in order to discuss the subject one must draw a line somewhere or become unintelligible. So, when I write here of "science fiction" I mean fiction founded structurally or thematically in the sciences and including, necessarily, their effects on the lives of men and women both now and, via extrapolation, the day after the next lustrum.

Fantasy, knowing no law, is not subject to rational summation and cannot concern us here. And if this slices away ninety-five per cent of what passes as "sf", I shed not a tear for its absence.

So much for definition. There remains a basic fallacy to be kicked out of the way; the fallacy which states that only science fiction can deal effectively with certain subjects.

The number of contemporary writers who have announced, in one variation or another, that "I write sf because it is the only literary form in which I can express my ideas" defies counting. It is a standard gambit. The implication is that without science fiction certain statements could not be made. And this in the teeth of the fact that science fiction has yet to produce a single new statement!

The effects of alien contact and cultural shock? James Fenimore Cooper did it more than a century ago in THE PIONEERS, dealing with white men and Indians.

The impacts and problems of galloping technology? Try Mrs Gaskell's NORTH AND SOUTH, a novel of the industrial revolution in England.

Escape into new levels of thought and appreciation? Huysmans is your man, with de Sade for the adventurous.

All of science fiction's themes that relate to the behaviour of man (and what others are there?) have been stated and re-stated by novelists who found no need for intellectual foraging beyond the structure of everyday life around them, and stated rather more forcefully than the average sf writer has the technique to match.

Writers who grasp at science fiction as "the only way" fool only themselves. Behind their saying it lies no more than an inability to deal with realities on their own terms; they have not the clarity of vision to discuss their ideas within the context in which these ideas exist, but can only project them by fantasy-analogy. Whether or not the reader receives the identical idea that the writer is trying to project is a matter of luck and empathy - but that is the stumbling-block of all analogies.

What science fiction can do extremely well is to present technical matters in a form intelligible to the lay reader. To make a story, these matters must also have sociological and/or psychological effects, but, since our knowledge of these things is confined to what we have and are, these

extrapolations turn out to be precisely what non-science fiction writers have already discussed in concrete and down-to-earth terms. The science fiction form is apt to be more entertaining in its exotic detail, but it cannot claim basic originality on such ground alone.

Another thing science fiction can do is to take an idea already known as a possibility - control of aging, psychological treatment of crime, genetic manipulation and so on - and give it a future framework wherein the results of such activities are examined. This method could and occasionally does give great impact. But one finds, pitifully, on reading the relevant scientific texts that the scientists and sociologists are a lightyear or so ahead of the mythmakers in anticipating these results, and the ideas of the fictionists are almost always out of date. Science fiction is, alas, apt to be behind the times.

So what is left for the unfortunate science fiction novelist to do?

He could, of course, write novels. That is, he could write books wherein theme dominates mere entertainment and ideas are presented which, without vainglorious pretence at novelty, are calculated to pass on the writer's insights to the reader and offer him cause for thought.

Faced with this demanding choice, what did the science fiction writers actually do? They settled for entertainment. There is nothing wrong with that, but much wrong with the pretension that tries to blow it up as significant art.

SO, because the challenge was not taken up, for seventy years or so after the peak of H.G. Wells (who never forgot that he was a novelist rather than a purveyor of dreams) we suffered the reign of the dream-masters, from E.R. Burroughs to the present eruption of Delany and Zelazny and Vances.

But their day is drawing to a close. The Earthmen and the science fiction novel are coming home. In plain terms, some influential science fiction novelists are preparing to join the mainstream, wherein a novel is a novel no matter what its form, wherein the statement is more important than the decoration. All else is romance.

Finding the way home has not been simple. In the wilderness of galactic warfare, fantasy-distraction, New Wavery and sheer reader demand for excitement on a level of noise and complication, the road has been easy to lose.

It has had to be surveyed afresh, and a few have

done it. To succeed they had to turn the conception of the function of the science fiction story upside down - to consider first what makes a novel and only then how to use the science fiction approach in this form.

Let's step outside science fiction for a while and observe how the same trick has been turned in another genre which has the same history of degradation at the hands of sensation-mongers - the thriller.

The thriller as we know it today began with THE WOMAN IN WHITE and THE MOONSTONE by Wilkie Collins. These were conceived and written as novels with exciting themes, not as genre works; that they fathered a genre was unintentional on Collins's part. His successors seized as always on the entertainment factor and discarded the artistry; inevitably the new thriller became a formula production with three or four basic outlines to be filled in with ever wilder and more outlandish complications. Precisely what happened to science fiction some fifty years later. Not until the nineteen-twenties did a few writers revolt against the cheapening of their art and attempt to rescue the humble thriller, to make it respectable, make it a novel again.

John Buchan tried one way of doing it, the way of "good writing". That is, he presented his yarns in careful, literate prose, avoided cliché, skilfully covered over the more conventional aspects of his he-man heroes and produced - some rather more smoothly written thrillers.

So that way didn't work; mere stylistic competence was not enough.

Dorothy Sayers did not need this approach, being nearly incapable of bad writing to begin with. Her problem: how to write a detective story as a serious novel? Obviously by accent on characterization and motivation and background, with soft pedal on the thrills. So she offered us the delightful GAUDY NIGHT that prose poem of Oxford's dreaming spires and poison-pen letters. But somewhere the detective story got lost; it was there, but one could have done without it. She had thrown out the baby and kept the bath water, written a lovely novel and forgotten to include the thriller. Which obviously was also the wrong way to go about it.

Graham Greene tried, in his "entertainments", to do it by realism and psychological treatment. The result was an uneasy balance between the thriller and the straight psychological novel, neither one thing nor the other. But he came closer than any before him, particularly in BRIGHTON ROCK.



It was left for John Le Carré to rethink the problem and arrive at the answer. He began where Wilkie Collins began, by saying "I am going to write a novel", not "I am going to write a superior thriller" (as Eric Linklater did in a regrettable moment).

He was going to write a novel about human beings, their motivations and actions, their environments and reactions, and allow conclusions to be drawn about the world they lived in. Because the particular world they lived in was dominated by espionage, their activities would be dominated by melodrama, usually against their wills. The nightmare was handmade but within the limits of everyday realism. For these people melodrama was the norm, robbed of glamour by its very persistence, elevated to true drama because it was natural to their type of existence.

His first two attempts failed because plot was too obtrusive a factor. So he made the next long step of allowing character to determine the action (plot is often defined as "character in action") and the triumphant outcomes were THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD and A SMALL TOWN IN GERMANY. In each the action is rapid and chilling in the true thriller tradition. In each the action occurs because the people are what they are, not because a chain of unlikely events has been forged to shackle them to terror. They create the events.

Le Carré had finally brought it off. These were true novels, defying genre and formula. Neither is an immortal work of art; each is a novel of far more than ordinary competence.

So it can be done - by someone who finds the right way to go about it.

IN science fiction the job should not be so difficult, because the tradition of the novel has not become utterly submerged. There have always been a few genuine writers to keep it alive.

But the few were not avowedly science fiction writers; they were mainstream novelists with mainstream points of view. And - mark it well - theirs is the science fiction which survives, not only inside fandom but in the vastly larger literate world outside.

When in the thirties science fiction laboured in the doldrums of ineptitude and dreariness, and SKYLARK OF SPACE was still the model of perfection and success, Aldous Huxley made the whole genre look like a heap of rubbish (which it was) beside the

brilliance of BRAVE NEW WORLD. It was a novel, not a romance, concerned with people and what they were doing to their civilization; all the splendour of its biological trappings could not outdazzle the central theme of concern and warning, nor all its futurist setting divert attention from the fact that it spoke loudly and harshly of the present. It was a mainstream novel simply because theme was paramount above plot and decoration - the lesson Le Carré was to learn some thirty years later. Huxley followed with the savage AFTER MANY A SUMMER, jeering not at immortality but at human greed for possession of a gift whose implications are more deadly than delightful.

Neither of these books was science fiction, no matter how many devotees swore they were, in the genre sense. Their intent was not science fictional. One was a sociological sermon, the other a philosophical tract, each cast in the form of a novel, and it is in these senses that they were and still are read. Both are still available in several editions; neither has ever gone out of print. Simply because they are serious novels, unconcerned with the melodrama inherent in their themes, they survive without dating. And science fiction has yet to produce anything to match the impact of the final chapter of AFTER MANY A SUMMER.

Soon C.S. Lewis produced OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET with all the style and polish of the fine writer he is. The fans received it with open arms, and he then went on to prove that he was not writing science fiction as he developed his theme in the two sequels, PERELANDRA and THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH. C.S. Lewis is known as a science fiction addict, but the genre of his trilogy is the religious novel.

EARTH ABIDES was a sensational success in both popular and critical esteem. But this after-the-holocaust vision was not science fiction either. It was a novel about survival; more, it was about survival under specific conditions. Its true forefather was not Jules Verne but the Defoe of ROBINSON CRUSOE.

Others could be mentioned, but these three are sufficient to illustrate the point that the great difference between the novel and the genre work is in concentration on theme instead of on story and decoration. (Which is why Clarke's PRELUDE TO SPACE, which never gets into space, remains the only outstanding space story since THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON.)

None of these four excellent and successful novels was written by a member of the science fiction establishment, and each one of them made the establishment look cheap and nasty by comparison.



Slowly, slowly, the lesson was driven home, and a handful of science fiction writers made the attempt at writing true novels. Wilson Tucker nearly succeeded with *THE LONG LOUD SILENCE* as did Clarke with *PRELUDE TO SPACE*; both books were well above the science fiction ruck, but the real triumph is only for the very few.

The big men never managed it. Heinlein at his best never rose above his material, Van Vogt and Asimov never tried to. Even James Blish, who considers his material with respect, is still a genre writer, though *FALLEN STAR* came close to escaping its trappings and in *DOCTOR MIRABILIS*, wherein he stepped completely outside the genre, he demonstrated that within him is a novelist scratching to get out.

The real breakthrough, the demonstration that the form of science fiction could be used by a traditional science fiction writer to support the structure of a true novel came with Miller's *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*.

The fans, of course, just knew it was science fiction; the mainstream critics were less sure of this, and they were right. *CANTICLE* is not a genre novel. Its story lies in the future, its theme in the historical past. It is a retelling of how the Church preserved the accumulated knowledge of the western world through the murderous ignorance of the Dark Age suggesting that in a Dark Age to come (tomorrow? - next Wednesday? - why wait for 1984?) she will take up her role again and save the treasures of the intellect until men are once more ready to use them. It is also a grim commentary on human inability to escape the cycle of achievement and destruction.

There is little science in it, and that incidentally. A space ship appears at the end, but even before the American moonwalkers the presence of a space ship did not create instant science fiction. *CANTICLE* is a true novel and its drama is true drama, owing nothing to blood and sensation. In any year it would stand beside all but the very best of the thousands of novels published.

*CANTICLE* had no immediate successor in the field, though Edgar Pangborn springs to mind as one who tried and continues trying, hamstrung only by an undeveloped technique and a too narrow approach to his themes. Brian Aldiss stepped firmly across the gap with *REPORT ON PROBABILITY A*, using an intricate technical mode to state and restate his theme, but the book is too demanding for any but the intellectual reader and is unlikely to have imitators in the field.

For ten years after *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*

the scene remained virtually unchanged.

Then, after a promising but unsensational beginning in routine fantasy, Ursula Le Guin launched *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* like a rocket in the night sky.

Here at last is a science fiction romance which is also a true novel, a completely successful synthesis of plot, setting and characterization dominated by a theme utterly relevant to the human situation of today. Mrs Le Guin as from this book is a novelist, one who writes with restraint and a care for credibility, who uses technique unobtrusively instead of hitting you over the head with it (cf Delany, Zelazny, Aldiss, Bradbury, Ballard, Disch and so on) who prepares her effects with attention to minutiae and then brings them off as though it were all too easy. Which it isn't.

Her theme is not science-fictional. It is the common difficulty of proper understanding between people which she discusses, and this is a theme treated in dozens of mainstream novels of recent years, particularly since the rise of black militancy in America. Most of these novels fail because their authors are involved on one side or the other - they have a point of view to state. Mrs Le Guin has risen above this difficulty by using the science-fictional device of an alien setting and an alien people, so allowing her to state the problem without bias and to turn the very neat trick of persuading the reader to identify with both sides.

It would be too much to say that *LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* is as good a novel as *CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*. She has not yet the complete mastery of material displayed in the latter work, but her rate of growth has been so phenomenal that one may hope this will come.

Only Mrs Le Guin knows whether or not she was deliberately revolting against the shackles of melodrama and monstrosity, tatty philosophy and psychological double talk, but she has certainly shown that a revolt can succeed by using the basic armament of the sf establishment in support of the more powerful weapons of artistry and clear sight. And in winning the Nebula and Hugo awards she has shown that fandom and her fellow authors are happy with her revolt.

The popularity of her work indicates that this may well be the type of writing that is really wanted. But just let the old standards try to do it by imitation! Hers will not be a simple bandwagon to climb on to.

Because it isn't a bandwagon at all. Every true novel stands on its own; the imitator courts disaster.



MRS Le Guin's success may be solitary at the moment but it will not stand alone for long. Watch carefully the development of D.G. Compton in England and Wilson Tucker in America. Tucker's YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN is no award winner, but his treatment of his themes is moving closer to the mainstream with each new novel; he has not yet found the theme he needs to let talent fly. Brian Aldiss, struggling amidst the stylistic attractions of the New Wave, has given up pretending to be a science fiction writer; he is a novelist with much to say, but has yet to produce a work of true urgency and power; one feels he may drown in the welter of his experiments, but at least his interest is in the human condition and not in the pyrotechnics of holocaust and far stars. He may yet justify his awesome talent.

Others one can only wonder about, but possibilities are there. Joanna Russ, loaded with literacy and insight, is seriously hampered by plot and too great a concern for what is expected of a science fiction work, but surely she will struggle free. For Roger Zelazny I have lost hope; he began as a writer concerned with his craft but has become lost in his own maze of symbolism and violence; he may find his way out, but perhaps it is too late.

Strangely, considering that I slam his books both in public and private, I see a novelist in Samuel Delany. His writing to date has been smothered under the ebullience of youth and verbal excess masquerading as style, but there is genuine talent present. When one day it bursts on him what a novel really is, he will sit down and write one.

It would be easy to mention a dozen more who have begun to use science fiction instead of sitting down under it (the Budrys of WHO and ROGUE MOON for one) but that would be mere list making. We need no lists with the writing so clear upon the wall.

The Earthmen are returning home at last and - to change the metaphor - science fiction will be all the better for a dip in the mainstream. The genre will remain with us, imperishable as the detective story and the shopgirl romance, but the real work will be done on a higher, human level.

Perhaps it is as well that Doc Smith did not live to discover that the Galactic Patrol will not be needed. We're all going to be far too busy at home, discovering Earth.

## BOOKS

### The SF Reference Library

#### PART ONE: A BRIEF SUMMARY

THERE seems at first glance to be a scarcity of books about science fiction, but this is mainly because you so rarely see most of the available literature on one shelf. (Particularly on my reference shelf: I'm sure I have about thirty books of this kind, but people keep on borrowing them. And that's my excuse if you think I sound rather vague about some of the titles I mention here...)

In this preliminary article I intend to skim very briefly through the books I know about, and mention some I have never seen. Subsequent articles in the series will examine individual volumes in detail. If you know of books which I do not mention here, whether in or out of print, I would be pleased to hear about them.

PERHAPS the most interesting book yet written about sf (even though that is not its specific subject) is W.H.G. Armytage's YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS (Routledge, 1968: \$6.35). Subtitled "A Historical Survey of Future Societies", it contains a staggering amount of information about sf, proto-sf and utopian fantasy. While details could be corrected here and there, the book is utterly indispensable to any serious student of the genre. George Turner wrote an excellent review of it in ASFR 18 (copies of which are still available at 50c from Parergon Books). Professor Armytage has written other books which are valuable to sf students, including HEAVENS BELOW, a history of utopian experiments in England, and THE RISE OF THE TECHNOCRATS.

Kingsley Amis's NEW MAPS OF HELL (Gollancz, 1961 / Four Square, 1963) is the most popular book about sf, and surely the only one to get into a cheap paperback (but perhaps his name rather than his subject was responsible for that). Amis points up particularly the social-philosophy aspect of sf, as might be expected of this Angry-Young-Man Emeritus.



Patrick Moore's *SCIENCE AND FICTION* (Harrap, 1957) is rather dated now. Moore, well known as a popularizer of astronomy and an author of children's sf, tends to over-rate the scientific aspect of sf.

The other approach to sf was well represented by Roger Lancelyn Green in his *INTO OTHER WORLDS* (Abelard-Schuman, 1957). An interesting book, but somewhat biased towards the C.S. Lewis / Burroughs kinds of fantasy and against "hard" sf.

L. Sprague de Camp's *SCIENCE-FICTION HANDBOOK* is designed for the aspiring writer of sf. Published by Hermitage House, New York, in 1953, it is a most valuable reference work, but copies are hard to come by. (The copy on my shelf belongs to Don Tuck; this borrowing business works both ways.)

Some fairly recent volumes on the genre include *THE FANTASTIC MIRROR*, by Benjamin Appel (Pantheon, 1969: US\$3.95), which is written for children and doesn't seem to give much coverage to recent sf; *INTO THE UNKNOWN*, by Robert M. Philmus (University of California Press, 1970: \$6.95), which traces "The Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H.G. Wells", according to its subtitle; I.F. Clarke's *VOICES PROPHECYING WAR* (Oxford, 1966 / Panther, 1970: \$1.55) which necessarily contains a lot about sf and proto-sf as well as prophetic fiction.

Faber & Faber have recently published Brian Aldiss's *THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS* (at \$5.25). Despite an unfavourable review in the Times Lit Supp, this is a book very much worth having, not only for its notes and comments on sf but also for the fascinating insight it gives to the mind of one of the very finest writers in the genre. Brian mentions that *SF Horizons* - a sort of pro fanzine put out in 1964/5 by him and Harry Harrison - has lately been fetching fantastic prices as a collectors item. The two issues contained some excellent material, and it's a pity the journal did not continue.

Philip Harbottle's *THE MULTI-MAN* (published by the author, 1968) is a "biographic and bibliographic study" of John Russell Fearn by a young fan who subsequently edited *Vision of Tomorrow*. The book has considerable value as a (limited) portrait of a writer who could turn his hand to anything, who churned out vast piles of nigh-unreadable bilge and a few minor masterpieces, and whose place in the sf hall of fame is still fiercely disputed in certain quarters.

George Hay has edited "a symposium of speculation" called *THE DISAPPEARING FUTURE* (Panther, 1970: \$0.80), containing fiction and critical articles. It is chiefly valuable for Dr Christopher Evans's article on "Sleep, Dreams & Computers" and Samuel R. Delany's "About 5,175 Words". The editor's Fore-

word is valuable as an example of how not to write a Foreword.

Sam Moskowitz has a reputation as the historian of sf, despite the complaints of some of the people he has written about that it's difficult to know sometimes whether SaM is writing history or historical fiction. *THE IMMORTAL STORM - A History of Science Fiction Fandom*, I blush to admit, I have never seen. Harry Warner Jr quotes someone as saying that the book was "badly translated from the Slobbovian". That's pretty much the impression I got from SaM's *EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE* (Meridian, New York, 1963: US\$1.95) and *SEEKERS OF TOMORROW* (World Publishing Co / Ballantine, 1967: US\$0.95). The former deals with the "shapers of science fiction"; the latter with "masters of modern science fiction". Frustrating works, but indispensable.

*Soviet Literature Monthly* 239 (May 1968) contains stories, interviews and articles by Soviet sf writers. Most interesting, but I understand only about half a dozen copies went on sale in Australia, so you'll have a job finding one.

J.R.R. TOLKIEN - *CULT OR CULTURE?* edited by Dr J.S. Ryan (University of New England, 1969: \$3.50) is a massive volume on a subject of interest to many sf students. I would love to know what it has to say about *THE ANCRENE REWLE* and *THE JERUSALEM BIBLE*, but I haven't time to read the book just now and, in the finest fannish tradition, the volume has no index.

I have no space to list the volumes devoted to sf bibliography. One of the foremost scholars in the world in this field lives in Hobart - Don Tuck, compiler of the mammoth *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* (which should be published Real Soon Now) - and I rather hope that one day he will desist from his Sisyphean labour long enough to write an article for us about the state of the art.

Another Australian writer, John Baxter (someone was wondering in an American fanzine recently "whether that was the same John Baxter who" - and of course it is) has published a very comprehensive and most readable book on *SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA*.

My notes tell me that Sprague de Camp wrote a book called *LOST CONTINENTS: The Atlan tis Theme in Literature, Science & Adventure*; that a P. Yershov wrote a book called *SCIENCE FICTION AND UTOPIAN FANTASY IN SOVIET LITERATURE*; and that someone else (my handwriting is getting dreadful) published a book on *UTOPIAN FANTASY*. Glancing around my study I see Arthur Clarke's *THE COMING OF THE SPACE AGE*, a paperback called *UTOPIAS AND UTOPIAN THOUGHT*, edited by Frank E. Manuel, Jerome Agel's *THE MAKING*





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WHY THE DIRECTORY? Primarily to facilitate communication within Australia between people interested in science fiction and closely-related fields. Then, to impress people overseas (and ourselves, probably) with the extent of active interest in sf in this country. We are hoping to conduct a World Science Fiction Convention here in 1975, yet there must be thousands of people overseas who imagine Australia has only a handful of active fans and one or two clubs. We know there are thousands of people interested, and we would like to demonstrate the fact. Finally, the Directory could very well be used by people who have something to sell you: publishers (amateur as well as professional), booksellers, fan groups, convention organizers and (who knows?) backyard spaceship-builders looking for crewmen. (Happens all the time in the stuff we read!)

-----  
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# Do you have any photographs or artwork which we might be able to use in the Directory? We would be pleased to see them.

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OF KUBRICK'S 2001, a stack of Science Fiction Review, Riverside Quarterly, SF Commentary and Speculation (which, together with ASFR and Extrapolation, provide masses of information about the genre) ..... and no less than eleven volumes from Advent: Publishers Inc of Chicago.

Ten of the Advent books are in print. The only one I have which isn't is Bob Bloch's THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM, a superb collection of fan-zine articles by the author of "A Way of Life" and some film or other, the name of which just escapes me.

I haven't even room to list the ten Advent books. Believe me, you need them all. Fortunately they are listed for you in an advertisement in this issue. A word to the wise: the Australian agent doesn't carry a large stock, and some of these books are on their way out of print.

To conclude, I should mention that Parergon Books will be publishing a volume of George Turner's sf criticism and reviews during 1971, which I am hoping he will let me call PLUMBERS OF THE COSMOS; and we have ideas and a certain amount of material for a hefty book about Cordwainer Smith. We would also like to publish a guide to sf for young readers, listing and commenting on everything in print which is suitable for readers from about 5 to 14. If you can help, we would be delighted to hear from you.

John Bangsund

Clarke, Silverberg, Zelazny,  
Blish  
THREE FOR TOMORROW

§ Gollancz A\$3.65

IF ever a book were fashioned to become hard-core, basic science fiction, this could be it. In the end it is not, but it is your money's worth.

Arthur C. Clarke provided a challenging thesis, offered in sufficient detail to allow variety of approach, and the other three each wrote a novella on the theme. This method of compiling a book is not new and has never been fully successful. THREE FOR TOMORROW is the best attempt yet, though two authors shirk the final demand of the thesis and only one really bites on the challenge.

The thesis, fined down from Clarke's four hundred words, is that "with increasing technology goes increasing vulnerability..." That is, the more we discover and misapply, the more perils we create for ourselves: pollution, thalidomide, electronic bugging and so on. And also the concentration of too much power in too few hands.

No writer took on the last proposition, though it lies smokily in the background of all three stories.

Robert Silverberg kicks off with a typical Silverberg 25,000-word novella, "How It Was When The Past Went Away". It is a better-than-average magazine story, tailored rather than imagined, and relieved of the dull passages of "good writing" which mar his later novels. His angle is the potential for harm of ordinary, unnoticed people in a world where dangerous agents are too easily obtained - drugs, for example. His unnoticed little man dumps a load of assorted amnifascients (such things exist) in the San Francisco water supply, and the city suffers varying degrees of loss of memory. The results are terrifying. Think of what could happen to the Stock Exchange, the transport system, professional expertise and government.

Silverberg does think of such things, but only in passing. Having polluted the water supply, he dumps Clarke's marvellous theme and concentrates on the affairs of eight or ten individuals. These are interestingly worked out in a story which is entertaining in itself but does not fulfil the purpose of its genesis. But there is, at the end, a wry and distressingly realistic comment on one use to which an amnifascient could be put.

Similarly, in Roger Zelazny's "The Eve of RUMOKO", the theme is present but buried under the story. RUMOKO (Maori volcano god) is a project for relieving population pressures by using technology to heave up new land from beneath the sea. The story also contains some rather way-out consideration of the activities of the individual in a world of centralized data collection.

Like Silverberg's contribution, the story runs to about 25,000 words and is no better or worse as passing entertainment. Zelazny does make a belated attempt to implement the Clarke message, but in general he also is concerned with story-telling rather than thesis. The story centres on sabotage and a hero who is an ingenious renegade from the data banks. Towards the end the hero begins to have doubts about the real benefits of RUMOKO, but by then the melodrama is over and Zelazny is only paying lip service to his original commitment.

Let it be immediately admitted that it is not easy for a writer to confine himself within the limits of another man's idea: his personal creativity is constrained. However, both Silverberg and Zelazny have evaded constraint by writing about something else, with the theme of vulnerability no more than hinted at. Each story could have been based on almost any theme you like to supply; one is a study of people under stress, the other a goodies-&-baddies encounter.



Theme and plot are not mutually dependent, and this is one of the main differences between art and talent in literature.

It might be noted in passing that RUMOKO would not fulfil its purpose of relieving population pressure, but merely create opportunity for more of the same.

James Blish's "We All Die Naked" is utterly different. Here theme and story are indistinguishable; neither could exist without the other. But Blish, aside from his penchant for writing the occasional money-spinner tailored to the market, is a better artist than either Silverberg or Zelazny and is also immeasurably better able to cope with scientific detail and extrapolation. Few in the field can match him in this latter respect and none can approach him as a welder of theme and plot.

Here he accepts Clarke's challenge, bases his story on a present-day problem, extends it into a shockingly close future and in 16,000 or so words drives the message like a wedge into the consciousness.

His theme is garbage disposal. You have heard of injection wells, wherein liquid wastes are pumped into wells sunk far below the water table? There are several in operation in America, the sinks have been warned that they might cause minor earthquakes, some local tremors have been noted and the knowledge is publicly available. Nevertheless more are to be sunk. That is one aspect.

In Blish's future, only a couple of decades ahead, present problems of waste disposal (have you ever seen a photo of the mountains of abandoned cars along the Hudson?) have mounted appallingly but quite believably. By 1989 even the climate and the sea level have changed - and you'll believe it when you read his close reasoning - and garbage-well earthquakes are a very present menace.

What he describes is the end of civilization, in our lifetime, using nothing but the idiocies we are already committing.

Like Silverberg he concentrates on character, but to far better effect; his people behave as they do because they are what they are. And plot, as someone remarked, is character in action. The final destruction of his main female character, trying to save her cats, is a little masterpiece. She is the ultimate "little person" of civilization, unable to comprehend doom, embodying the attitude so common and so wrong: "I haven't done anything to die for".

This is the only memorable story of the three, though the other two are above average. Pitched in a lower key than its competitors, "We All Die

Naked" deals with far more deadly events and does precisely what Clarke's thesis required.

A question which intrigues me is this: Why were Silverberg and Zelazny selected as contributors? Neither, on past showing, is capable of the close fusion of plot and theme demanded, and both are story-tellers, melodramatists, orientated towards fantasy and magnificence rather than technology. Possibly the publishers had no-one else available? That is one of the hazards of the game.

But - how many sf writers could have handled it? Heinlein is an obvious thought, but he doesn't seem interested in outside offers (see Panshin's HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION). Hal Clement could handle the technological detail, but he is simply not story-teller enough to bring it to menacing life. Isaac Asimov could have done it with fluid competence; so could Poul Anderson in one of his increasingly rare moments of real writing. And Clarke himself, of course. Anyone else? Perhaps Frederik Pohl.

Are these all that are left who can write science fiction?

It is drearily true that all too few sf writers are any longer interested in where we are going or how far. The great majority are story-tellers bent on snaring the editorial dollar; a few are concerned with the philosophic future of mankind; only a bare handful are conscious of the realities of the world we live in and have the extrapolative resource to make meaningful fiction of it. SF has become the country of the wish-dream and the black fantasy, and to hell with life.

And that is what happened when the Golden Age, whenever it was, went away. As Gully Foyle had it, "Millions for entertainment, not one cent for entropy".

GEORGE TURNER

Asimov & Conklin (ed)  
50 SHORT SCIENCE FICTION TALES  
\$ Collier US\$0.95

IF all the definitions of science fiction were gathered in a heap they would (assuming you could restrain yourself from making a bonfire of them and toasting old Ray Cummings novels there) certainly sink to the centre of the earth and reverberate from there until the end of time.

Therefore, since reviewing sf has become something of a sub-career with me, I do hereby solemnly swear that I will never attempt to define the



medium, an oath anyone with half a mind should applaud. Anyone with more than half a mind wouldn't be reading sf anyway, so I feel fairly safe.

Having said this, I turn to a curious book called 50 SHORT SCIENCE FICTION TALES, of which a goodly proportion probably isn't sf by anyone's definition. It's certainly a generous volume, with 287 pages and a couple of poems thrown in for good measure. And the measure is pretty good throughout, although you'll be familiar with at least half of the stories. If not, rush out and buy the book; if so, buy it anyway, and give it away to less informed friends: it's an excellent example of tasteful editing and sturdy packaging in a paperback as well as being one whale of a bargain.

The stories range in length from W. Hilton-Young's bitter little "The Choice", which barely takes up a full page of type, to James Schmitz's nasty "We Don't Want Any Trouble", which runs all of eight pages.

Around and about those two you will find classics like Fredric Brown's "The Weapon", shoulder to shoulder with the late Anthony Boucher's "The Ambassadors". Jack Finney's "The Third Level" is there, Heinlein's "Columbus Was a Dope", Knight's "Not With a Bang", followed by Kornbluth's "The Altar at Midnight" and Leiber's "A Bad Day for Sales". Familiar, right? But good, and they wear well. There's Alan Nourse's understated horror story, "Tiger by the Tail", and Eric Frank Russell's "Appointment at Noon", which I would call fantasy if I were a man for definitions.

Included is Howard Schoenfeld's "Built Down Logically", a mad little gem of nonsense which isn't half the story its predecessor, "Build Up Logically" was. I wish they had included the latter, and wonder why they didn't. (Still, it's in Aldiss's MORE PENGUIN SF, if you haven't read it.)

Asimov is on hand with an introduction that is brief and witty. Unfortunately I disagree with its basic premise - that it's fair in sf to skip on character because the background is so vital to the story. Without character a story doesn't exist; instead it becomes a machine. I'll admit that some machines are fun to watch, especially the ones with all those gears going around, but they are not stories. Fortunately, Asimov doesn't always follow this rule, and when he settles down to write books like THE CAVES OF STEEL he can create real characters and real backgrounds and a dozen other impossible things both before and after breakfast and why should he apologize for burns who aren't fit to carry his typewriter? You tell me.

Paradoxes are paradoctored in Jack Lewis's maddening "Who's Cribbing?" and Mack Reynolds's "The Business, as Usual".

If anything is missing from the collection it is people. Except for Mildred Clingerman's "Stair Trick" and a couple of others, the joy is in being led gleefully down the garden path, then bopped over the head with the spade. Otherwise the stories are short, almost always surprising, mostly bitter and hardly ever disappointing. One of the best collections I've ever seen, more than deserving of hard covers and recommended above all others so far this season.

ROBERT E. TOOMEY

(Note for Australian readers: My copy of this book is dated 1963, so apparently it has been re-issued. Quite a few Collier anthologies were remaindered in Australia and might still be found in some shops at around 60 cents. - JB)

Arkady & Boris Strugatsky  
FAR RAINBOW

Various authors  
THE MOLECULAR CAFE

§ Mir Publishers, Moscow

THE Strugatsky brothers seem to have written around a half-dozen books in the last ten years, FAR RAINBOW having been originally published in 1963. In the collection THE MOLECULAR CAFE they contribute a short story and an introduction, the short story having already appeared in International SF. As a novel, FAR RAINBOW would make an excellent half of an ACE double. It is of the right length, and superficially appears to be a simple adventure story. However there would be some difficulties. The amount of physical action involved is quite slight: the tendency is rather towards mental or spiritual action. And then again the plot itself seems slight, and not well developed. But what the Strugatskys have attempted in this novel is not quite what Emil Petaja is attempting, and consequently it would be unfortunate to attempt to measure the products with the same yardstick.

Like many Soviet authors, the Strugatskys' primary concern is for the reactions and interactions of human beings. And if these seem stilted and simplified to Western eyes then it may well have become time to widen our eyes and our horizons.



The action is simply the evacuation of a planet in peril, a planet on which reside people who act rather strangely and irresponsibly, it seems to me, until the time of crisis when one or two manage to make a decent fist of things. It is piled fairly high with super-science and all that stuff but this is so incidental that it hardly gets a chance to become convincing. The writing is quite classy, but the translation down to standard.

Translation is a problem I face again in looking at the 1968 collection *THE MOLECULAR CAFE*. There are probably good translators, but the style of many of those used for works like this is that of 1930s bourgeois but leftist middle-aged ladies with some distaste for the material they are handling, and quite apart from the fact that I find it hard to believe that present-day writers could use so archaic a style, I feel a certain resentment towards what seems to be definitely second-rate work and, alas, this most certainly interferes with my enjoyment of any story I am reading.

Ilya Varshavsky's "The Molecular Cafe" is a short-short which may originally have had some touch of the Bradbury style. Varshavsky apparently writes frequently at this length and on this sort of subject, and there is certainly nothing wrong with this rather gentle satire.

The Strugatskys' "Wanderers and Travellers" has already appeared in ISF, as I remarked above. The translation for general Western consumption was, though this seems scarcely possible, slightly worse than the one under consideration. With the present translation, however, the story is rather obvious.

The preface describes Anatoly Dneprov as a pioneer of post-war sf, and the story here printed, "Crabs on the Island" as "one of his earliest". It does seem rather dated, and here one may choose either this translation, the one in the second issue of ISF, or the one in *Soviet Literature* 5/68. Though the story is dated, as I remarked, it is no more dated than some other stories of its period despite the uncertainty about that.

"The Secret of Homer" by Alexander Poleshchuk, is an F&SF-ish story of the gimmicky time-travel variety: the fact that I don't really like this kind of story makes it difficult for me to appreciate this or any other example.

"I'm Going To Meet My Brother" by Vitaly Krapivin is a tear-jerker which, in this translation, is certainly a failure. The original may have avoided the pitfalls of bathos into which the English version so gaily steps.

Romen Yarov is an author whose single short story here appeals to me sufficiently to make me want to read more of his material. "Goodbye Martian" as you might expect from the title, is Bradburyesque, but it is very well done.

The long story (about the same length as *FAR RAINBOW*) is "The Black Pillar" by Evgeny Voiskunsky and Isai Lukodyanov. It is a hard-science, world-disaster story, and that pretty well fixes it. It does struggle manfully against these bonds, and that of being written as history, but finally succumbs in an orgiastic eulogy.

Mir Publishers have done far more with these two volumes than did the Foreign Languages Publishing House, but I hope that something can eventually be done about the standard of translation.

JOHN FOYSTER

## FILMS

### ALPHAVILLE

§ Directed & scripted by Jean-Luc Godard; produced by André Michelin; photography Raoul Coutard; with Eddie Constantine, Anna Karina, Akim Tamiroff, Howard Vernon. 1965

CESARE PAVESE has written that although science and science fiction prophesy that the future will be controlled by machines (for benefit or woe), since all that has happened until now has progressed in a rather continuous manner, we shouldn't expect to have a future radically different from the present. Jean-Luc Godard, in *ALPHAVILLE*, argues somewhat similarly, but with a cynical twist: the future may turn out as badly as some prophesy, but it will be no worse than the present and the past that it succeeded.

The battleground of *ALPHAVILLE* is occupied by Lemmy Caution, "brother" of Philip Marlowe



with his trusty automatic and successor of Dick Tracy and Flash Gordon, and Henri Dickson on one side and Professor Leonard Nosferatu (shades of Murnau's Dracula), alias von Braun with his all-encompassing, all dictating computer, Alpha 60, on the other side. Godard himself has characterized the film as "Tarzan versus IBM."

Of course, there can only be one outcome. Lemmy Caution kills von Braun, destroys the computer and then escapes with von Braun's brainwashed daughter, Natasha. Thus, on the surface, it would seem that the good again triumphs over the evil and all will be well. But is Lemmy Caution's physical victory quite the moral victory that it seems to represent? Is Tarzan more civilized because he is "primitive" or is he just a more personal and human representation of the impersonal and mechanical IBM? In Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY we are shown that man in the twenty-first century touches the monolith with the same wonder and bewilderment as the ape. Kubrick implies that there really isn't much difference between twenty-first century man and the ape; Godard seems to say that the ape is no better than the twenty-first century man.

The first hint we receive that the above is true is when we see the set of ALPHAVILLE; it is just present-day Paris. Godard never actually left Paris to find Alphaville, the city of the far future. Alphaville is all around us if we just look for it, Godard implies. We receive another clue when we first visit Alpha 60. It is stored in a building whose corridors resound with the words "busy....free." These words refer directly to the sign that appeared on the entrances to Nazi concentration camps: "Work will make you free." Other references to Nazi Germany include the number tattooed on Natasha's back - concentration camp inmates had numbers tattooed on their wrists, and the elevator button marked "SS". Von Braun existed in Nazi Germany of the "wonderful" past and von Braun exists in Alphaville of the "inhuman" future. There will always be a von Braun among us.

During the film, Lemmy Caution talks with anyone who will listen - with Natasha, Henri Dickson Drs. Heckell and Jeckell (no relation to the magpies), and the computer, and even to some who won't listen - von Braun for instance. Godard uses Lemmy Caution and his adversaries to disseminate his own ideas (and he has plenty of those). Godard (via his characters) tells us at one point that birth and death are on the same circle of life. At another point, we hear (or rather, we read in the subtitles if we don't speak French): "Time is a circle, the descending

arc is the past, the ascending arc the future, there is only the present." When man traces out the circle of life, he returns to where he had started; birth and death occupy the same point on the circumference of existence. But what is birth, but the past? And what is death, but the future? Alphaville, the future, is the same as Paris, the present and past.

Alphaville, (both the city and film) is full of labyrinths. We see Lemmy Caution walking endlessly along corridors, forever turning corners (Godard conveys the feeling of endless time with his jump-cuts - while Caution is walking, the corridors keep changing in the background) and ascending and descending winding stairs. Alpha 60 itself seems to lie at the centre of a labyrinth.

The philosophical implications of these labyrinths are, of course, enormous. The labyrinthine theme can be discussed on many levels. For instance, Godard implies that life itself is labyrinthine. We "forever" look for the golden rainbow, always seek the unattainable and at the end, when we finally come out of the labyrinth of life, we find ourselves back at the entrance.

Another approach is reminiscent of "The Theologians" a short story written by Jorge Luis Borges, the author of LABYRINTHS. The story is an account of two philosophers who are forever quarrelling. Finally, one of them succeeds in framing the other who is then put to death at the stake. As the first philosopher lives on, many of the events that had happened to the dead philosopher occur again to him. Finally, the philosopher realizes that he is reliving his rival's life. He is, in effect, his rival. At the end, he dies by being burned by lightning. Godard, in a sense, does the same thing. He equates Alpha 60 with Lemmy Caution. As Caution seeks Alpha 60 through the labyrinth, we find that Alpha 60 and Lemmy Caution are just opposite sides of a two-headed coin.

We witness an Alphaville "execution". The condemned man is put on the diving board of a swimming pool and after he is shot into the pool, girls dive into the water to retrieve him (and finish the job, if necessary) to the applause of the spectators. But we also witness Lemmy Caution in action. He knocks down a guard (from whom he steals a car), places him strategically, and drives the car (a Ford Galaxy, naturally) right over his head. (We only see the car going over a bump. The rest is left to our imagination.) When Alpha 60 arrives at his decision of execution logically (a computer



is always "logical") Lemmy Caution as he himself states, shoots first and asks questions later. Between them, the film is littered with corpses.

Although Lemmy Caution murders his way through ALPHAVILLE, Godard does present a favourable side of him. As a matter of fact, most of the audience usually "sees" only this side. Caution is a curiously intellectual roughneck (reminiscent of the many literate tough-guys in the films of Preston Sturges). When Henri Dickson, who has preceded Caution, dies, Caution extracts from under the dead man's pillow a book called *CAPITALE DE LA DOULEUR* (The Capital of Sorrow), the most renowned book of Paul Eluard, one of the finest modern love poets and one of the founders of Surrealism; Lemmy Caution quotes from the book a number of times in the film.

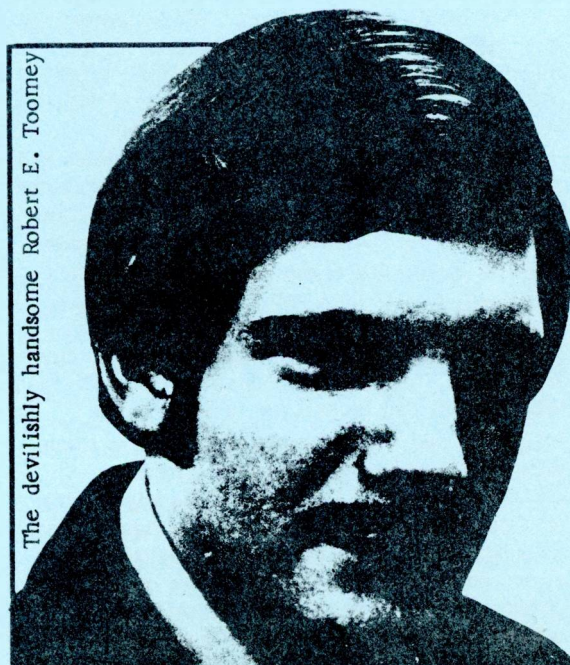
The surrealists encompassed both love and anarchy. They were capable of tearing the place apart after a particularly pungent performance. (After the showing of Luis Buñuel's *L'AGE D'OR* at the Studio 28 in Paris, they caused a riot leading to the banning of the film - a ban which, incidentally, has still not been lifted almost forty years later.) These two contradictory traits are quite inherent in ALPHAVILLE.

Godard also has a love-hate relationship with the US. (One must remember that Lemmy Caution is distinctly American; Eddie Constantine, who plays the role, is an expatriate American.) Godard loves American films (or at least, he did during the making of the film. Now, the only films he likes are those made by the Red Chinese. Griffith is a fascist - along with Robinson Crusoe. Chaplin and Keaton are no good. Jerry Lewis, an American surprisingly, is the only comedian worth seeing). The directors who had especially struck his fancy were the more "right-wing" directors (politically, and the political message at times enters their films): John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks and Samuel Fuller (who even made a short appearance in Godard's *PIERROT LE FOU*). He also likes the films of John Wayne - the most ardent exponent of the Right in cinema. But at the same time, Godard has attacked US policy, especially in Vietnam. He has become the most ardent exponent of the Left in the cinema. Godard himself has commented on this dichotomy in his journal, part of which was published in *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1966: "Mystery and fascination of this American cinema. How can I hate McNamara and adore *SERGEANT LA TERREUR*, hate John Wayne upholding Goldwater and love him tenderly when abruptly he takes Natalie Wood in his arms in the next-to-last reel of *THE SEARCHERS*."

At the end, Lemmy Caution succeeds in blowing up the computer. As he drives to "freedom" with Natasha, he teaches her the conjugation of the verb "to love". But a curious thing happens on the soundtrack. The voice that represents Lemmy Caution in the narration suddenly begins to recite statistics and become perilously similar to the voice that had represented Alpha 60. The two sides of the two-headed coin become one. The coin turns out to be moebius.

One last comment on fiction in general and science fiction in particular. When an author (or director) creates a period story (or interprets one), he attempts to imbue his characters with traits and mannerisms which he feels are consistent with the period at hand. In a story taking place in the past, the author has something to go on, while in a story of the future the author feels free to use his imagination. However, in both cases I feel that since the author's sensibility is that of the present, this sensibility often invades the work and the characters exude traits which place them irrevocably in the present. This is understandable since a person can best create what he knows most about. This occurs in unlikely cases. One critic, for example, saw in Laurence Olivier's *HAMLET* (1948) a typical forties hero. Thus Godard who has Lemmy Caution and Alpha 60 act similarly differs little from other creators of science fiction who imbue, perhaps unconsciously, their futuristic characters with traits of the present.

MARVIN ZEMAN



The devilishly handsome Robert E. Toomey

(Reprinted from SF Commentary)



# AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION COMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATION

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1. The organization shall be called "AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION COMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATION" (hereinafter referred to as "the Organization").
2. The principal object of the Organization shall be to disseminate knowledge of the literary genre usually referred to as "science fiction", and of ancillary and associated areas of interest, such as fantastic literature in general, cinematic and theatrical presentations of science-fictional and fantastic themes and subjects, and the activities of persons and groups in Australia and overseas who share these interests.
3. In pursuance of its principal object the Organization shall publish, or be associated in publishing, such journals, books and other publications as it shall see fit. One of the Organization's main aims shall be to encourage and assist in the organization of seminars, conferences and conventions. The Organization may also conduct regular meetings of its members, and may conduct seminars, conferences and conventions.
4. The principal publication of the Organization shall be a journal called Australian Science Fiction Monthly. A proportion of each member's annual subscription to the Organization, as determined by the Executive Committee, shall be set aside for the purpose of publishing this journal.
5. An Executive Committee of six persons shall be elected annually to conduct the affairs of the Organization. They shall include a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary/Treasurer, an Editor and two Press Secretaries. No person shall hold more than one of these positions at the one time. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once every two months. Three members shall constitute a quorum, provided that those three include the President or Vice-President, the Secretary/Treasurer and the Editor.
6. Membership of the Organization shall be open to individuals or groups on payment of the prescribed fees. Charges for journals, books and other publications of the Organization shall be determined by the Executive Committee, which shall at its discretion vary or waive such charges in consideration of an exchange of publications or in consideration of items contributed for publication.
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9. The Executive Committee shall have power to bind the Organization in contracts with any legal or actual person in pursuance of the objects of the Organization. Such contracts shall not be subject to ratification.



# NEWS

KEITH ANTILL, an electrical technician with the PMG in Sydney, won the 1970 Dame Mary Gilmore Award for Australian Literature with his sf novel, MOON IN THE GROUND. Keith has not published any fiction, though he has been writing for many years and has a drawer-full of novels and stories. At the moment of writing MOON IN THE GROUND has not been accepted for publication, but there seems a good chance that some enterprising publisher will issue it next year. Meantime, Keith is planning to go to India to write for a while in peace.

DAMIEN BRODERICK's novel, SORCERERS WORLD, has just been published in a Signet paperback. An excerpt from another, unpublished, novel - THE JUDAS MANDALA - appeared in the Monash Literary Society's magazine, Ancora.

JOHN BAXTER's SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA has been reprinted in a Paperback Library edition. John went overseas early this year, and was last heard from in Finland.

LEE HARDING's first novel, A WORLD OF SHADOWS (Lee's title), is expected from Berkley early next year.

Australia's only resident Hugo-winner, Ron Smith of Sydney, is reported to have left Horwitz Publications. While Ron worked for them Horwitz published several sf titles, including novels by John Baxter and Bert Chandler. His departure casts considerable gloom over the local sf publishing scene; in fact, unless Angus & Robertson plan to continue their Pacific Book collections, there doesn't seem to be any scene. (Mind you, if thousands of people subscribe to ASFM we might be able to rectify this dismal situation...)

The Sydney SF Foundation plans shortly to announce details of its proposed Patrick A.M. Terry Award for Humour in Science Fiction. Pat, a lifelong sf reader and voluminous correspondent, died early this year at the age of 86. His world-wide circle of friends included famous authors and unknown fans alike; one of the former, Andre Norton, has dedicated her most recent book, UNCHARTED SEAS, to him.

Recent appearances by local authors in the magazines include: Bert Chandler - "The Wandering Buoy" and Jack Wodhams - "Top Billing" (Analog,

September); Jack Wodhams - "Big Time Operator" (Analog, December); Lee Harding - "Cassandra's Castle" (Vision of Tomorrow, September); and coming shortly: Bert Chandler - "What You Know" (Galaxy, January); Lee Harding - "The Immortal" (If, January). And if we had paid closer attention to John Foyster's Norstrilian News, we would have noticed also - Jack Wodhams - "Enemy by Proxy" (Amazing, November).

Ballot forms for the annual "Ditmar" awards have been sent to members of the 1971 Australian SF Convention. Only members may vote, and ballots must be returned to John Foyster by 20th December. The voting is in three categories, and the following works and publications have been nominated: BEST AUSTRALIAN FICTION: Bowden - "After Ragnarok"; Chandler - "The Bitter Pill"; Rome - "Squat"; No Award. BEST INTERNATIONAL FICTION: Calvino - "Time and the Hunter"; Ellison - "The Region Between"; Silverberg - "Towers of Glass"; No Award. BEST AUSTRALIAN FANZINE: SF Commentary; The New Forerunner; The Somerset Gazette; No Award. "No Award" was nominated in each category, and Messrs Harding, Foyster and Edmonds, the convention organizers, declared themselves ineligible for awards. For details of the convention, see advertisement next page. John Foyster can be reached via PO Box 74, Balaclava. # Last-minute news is that Stan Pitt might not be able to attend the convention.

SOUTH AFRICA might make a bid for the 1975 World SF Convention, writes Our Man In Pretoria, Tex Cooper. The way things are shaping up there, Australia could face some pretty stiff competition. The SASFA, formed only 18 months ago, claims 250 members and is growing fast. (As a matter of interest, the Melbourne SF Club has about 150 members and a mailing-list of about 800.) Tex has an article about sf in South Africa in the forthcoming AUSTRALIAN SF YEARBOOK.

IN James Blish's "We All Die Naked" (reviewed in this issue) appears a character named Bang Johnsund - author of "an interminable 3V serial named THE T.H.I.N.G. FROM O.U.T.B.A.C.K." Sheer coincidence, of course. What Jim doesn't mention is that the 3V serial was based on a story called "Who Goes There Down Under?".

FRANK BRYNING, Brisbane author of the much-reprinted "Place of the Throwing-Stick", writes that he has never seen two of his stories in print: "Poor Hungry People" appeared in the December 1956 issue of Satellite SF and "I Did, Too, See a Flying Saucer!" in the August 1958 Amazing. He would be pleased to hear from anyone with a copy of either to sell. Write c/- COMORG.



# 10<sup>th</sup>

## AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

FIRST & SECOND OF JANUARY 1971

at the UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The Tenth Australian SF Convention is organized by John Foyster, Lee Harding and Leigh Edmonds. Guest of Honour is STANLEY PITT, eminent Australian fantasy artist; Fan Guest of Honour, ROBIN JOHNSON, our representative at the World Convention in Heidelberg, Germany.

The programme includes addresses, discussion groups, a play, the laugh-a-second Paul Stevens Show, an auction of rare sf & fanzines and - no films.

Membership is limited to 120. Fee \$2.50 until 31st December, \$3.00 at the door. Non-attending membership, \$1.00.

For further information, write to Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183, or COMORG.

The MELBOURNE FANTASY FILM GROUP will conduct a film show on 3rd January. Contact Secretary, MFFG, or COMORG for programme details and fees.

## SF COMMENTARY

is published about eight times per year by  
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No. 19, to be published shortly, is an extravagantly large issue containing the full run of John Foyster's "Exploding Madonna" and "Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology". Authors include JOHN FOYSTER, JAMES BLISH, FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER, STEN DAHLKOG, SAMUEL R. DELANY, GEORGE TURNER, HARRY WARNER Jr and STANISLAW LEM.

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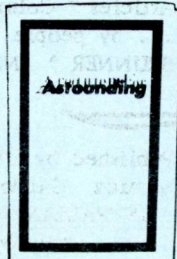
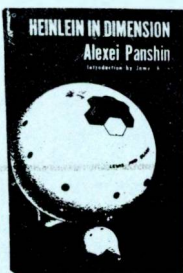
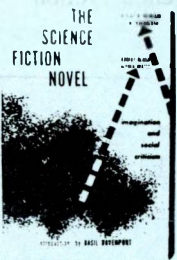
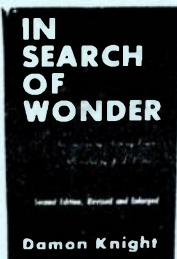
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# Melbourne Science Fiction Club



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## Advent: Publishers

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