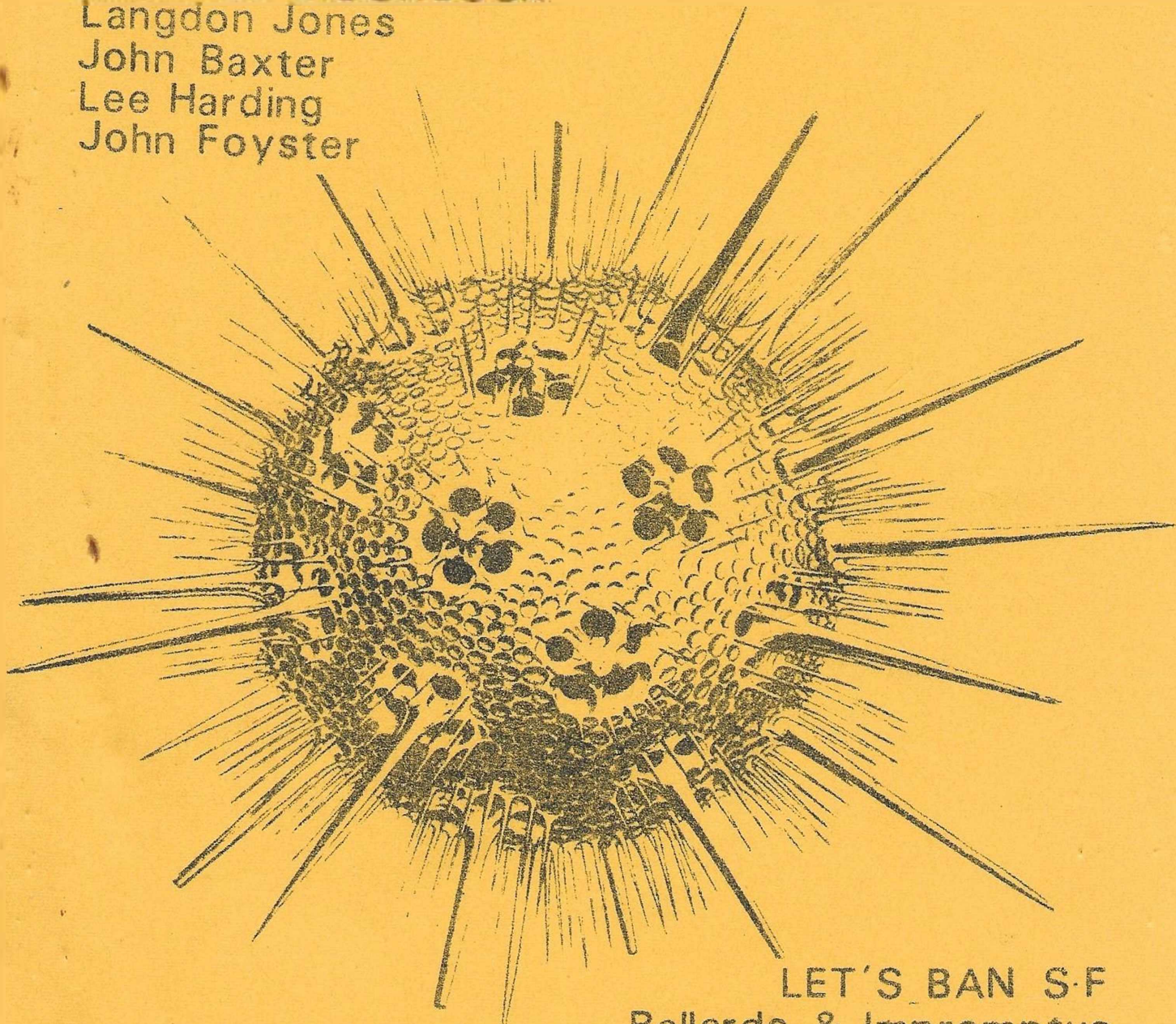


australian

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

BRIAN ALDISS
MICHAEL MOORCOCK
Langdon Jones
John Baxter
Lee Harding
John Foyster



LET'S BAN S.F
Ballards & Impromptus
News Reviews Booklists

No.1 JUNE 1966

20 cents

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Australian Science Fiction Review

Editor:
John Bangsund

No. 1
June 1966

In this issue...

We take the liberty of reprinting two paragraphs by the eminent Australian writer and critic STEPHEN MURRAY-SMITH, from his magazine OVERLAND no.33. JOHN FOYSTER, school teacher, editor of THE GRYPHON and WILD COLONIAL BOY, and organiser of the Easter Convention, reports briefly on that occasion. The universally loved and respected BRIAN ALDISS is represented (or misrepresented!) by a transcription from the tape he sent to the Easter Convention - as also are MICHAEL MOORCOCK and LANGDON JONES, editor and assistant editor respectively of NEW WORLDS. Please don't think these three gentlemen write like this - or even talk like this! By the time Lee Harding had transcribed their tapes and I had turned Lee's transcript into something resembling English, little was left of the flavour of their highly entertaining and enlightening messages to the Convention. JOHN BAXTER, freelance journalist and critic from Sydney, and one of Australia's top two or three sf writers, comments on Australian sf and discusses the Australian-ness of several local stories. There follows a poem by BERNARD O'DOWD which, even if it is familiar to you, is worth your re-consideration. 1966 is the poet's centenary year, but we regard this reprint not so much as 'doing our bit' as taking our bit. LEE HARDING, photographer, first exponent in Australia of the 'new wave' in sf, writes about Avram Davidson and the first issue of IMPULSE. Sydney p-r man, BURT KAUFMANN, reviews Kurt Vonnegut Jr., and JOHN FOYSTER makes his second appearance in this issue reviewing Philip K. Dick. A pseudonymous reviewer, K.U.F. WIDDERSHINS takes a devastating look at some recent ANALOG stories, and two more pseudonymous gentlemen, JAY WALLIS and SCRIBARIUS, both of them associates of the Editor in the publishing racket, review, respectively, the full-length version of FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON, and a brilliant new Australian novel, TRAP. ASFR #1 concludes with news items, MERVYN BINNS' Melbourne SF Club report, and book lists.

Acknowledgments....

THE COVER shows the Radiolorian 'Haeckeliana Darwiniana', named by John Murray, biologist of the 'Challenger' Expedition (1872-76). The picture appears in a magnificent book, THE DISCOVERY OF NATURE, by Alfred Bettex. (Thames & Hudson, 1965: \$23.60)

THE POEM by Bernard O'Dowd is reprinted by courtesy of the holders of the copyright, Messrs. Thomas C. Lothian Pty. Ltd.

ART WORK: Cover, as mentioned above, with ASFR title printed by Peter Innocent, and inept sub-title printing by the Editor. The cartoon of Brian Aldiss is by Quentin Blake, and is taken from a Faber advertisement in a recent 'Bookseller'. The gentleman surrounded by books is by James W. Ellis - a gifted Melbourne artist of whom great things are expected. Anything else may be blamed on the Editor.

'The whole worl's in a state of chassis!' says one of my favourite Irishmen - Captain Boyle, in Sean O'Casey's JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK - and Science Fiction, no less than anything else in this great wide world, is in 'a state of chassis.' Langdon Jones, assistant editor of that lively magazine NEW WORLDS, goes further than this - 'Make no mistake about it,' he says, 'there's a war going on.' And that war, as most wars are, is being fought between traditionalists and progressives - Between Heinleinists and Ballardians, Campbellites and Moorcockians, Analogicians and Neocosmists.

Most of the writers in this first issue of ASFR could be called progressives in this context, but this is accidental: ASFR does not intend to side with any faction. Our purpose in producing this magazine is

- TO provide a forum for the intelligent discussion of all aspects of science fiction - and, particularly, to examine the possibility of Australian writers producing distinctively Australian science fiction;
- TO provide news, reviews and information of interest to Australian science fiction readers;
- TO promote and encourage the reading, writing and discussion of science fiction in Australia.

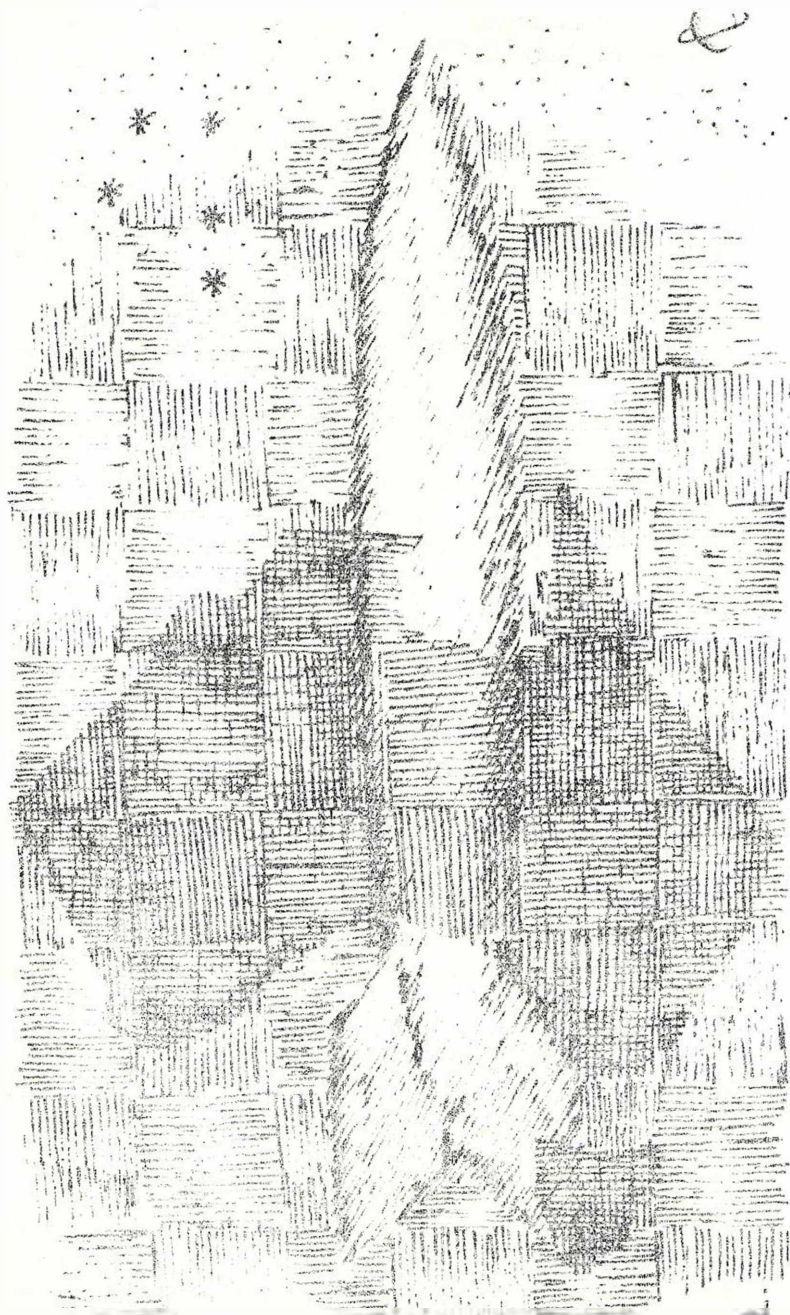
ASFR had its origins in the Seventh Australian Science Fiction Convention, held in Melbourne last Easter. It was felt a pity that unfinished discussions at the Convention should be held over until the next; that contacts and friendships made at the Convention should lapse until the next; that so many people interested perhaps didn't even know about the Convention. To continue discussions, to preserve contacts, and to publicise forthcoming Conventions, the present writer suggested that a magazine might help - and, through the curious logic of enthusiasm, since I have little spare time, being regularly away from Melbourne on business for weeks on end, and being newly married, having no money to speak of, and being relatively such a newcomer to sf, it was obvious that I should become the editor of such a magazine!

Thanks to the incredible patience of my wife, and the willing co-operation and hard work of Messrs. Foyster, Harding, Binns and Baxter, this first issue now sees the light of day. To continue producing ASFR, and to keep to a monthly schedule, will require your support. Please write to us, and please take out a subscription.

You know, one of Captain Boyle's other memorable lines is, 'As it blowed an' blowed, I often looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question - what is the stars, what is the stars?' This, really, is where sf starts. And where ASFR starts. We hope you will like it.

I've often wished I could publish some good, locally - written science fiction in OVERLAND, and I'm reminded of this by one of the books I'm reading down here at Port Fairy, where I'm writing this. In his excellent PROFILES OF THE FUTURE, Arthur C. Clarke says: 'Only readers or writers of science fiction are really competent to discuss the possibilities of the future. It is no longer necessary, as it was a few years ago, to defend this genre from the attacks of ignorant or downright malicious critics; the finest work in the medium stands comparison with all but the very best fiction being published today... A critical reading of science fiction is essential training for anyone wishing to look more than ten years ahead. The facts of the future can hardly be imagined by those who are unfamiliar with the fantasies of the past.'

It seems a pity that so few Australian authors have any competence or interest in the scientific and technological world. I can't think of any country where the literary culture is so bloody literary. We've got tight little imaginations when it comes to choosing subjects for writing, as you can see by the novels published here and the stories that arrive in the mail for magazines like OVERLAND. It would be a pity if the new mature mode of writing about relations between people (in many ways a welcome diversion from bushwhackery and romance and adventure stories should make us forget that the relations between people and things are also of prime importance to a literature...



A Brief Report, With Digressions

The Convention, held over Easter weekend, certainly seems to have been successful from the point of view of publicity gained. There can be no doubt that the articles appearing in the SUN, AGE, and BULLETIN in the weeks after the Convention were the most accurate (with the possible exception of that in the SUN) ever to appear in Australia, if not in the world. And the remarkable thing is that they were favourable.

This relative success is undoubtedly due to the interest and intelligence of those writing the articles: besides having a basic interest in the subject they were able to apply reasonably critical minds to an occasion which could so easily have been guyed.

It is regrettable that the publicity in the fan world was not as good. It is understood that there has been some criticism from the Australian Science Fiction Society. There was also some criticism, at the time of the Convention, by Convention members. Some wanted the auction at a different time; some thought the local author panel a waste of time; some thought the overseas tapes a waste of time; some disliked a particular film - I suppose we can be grateful that no-one (as far as I know!) complained about the displays or the free food and coffee.

Certainly the Convention has brought about some resurgence of interest in science fiction in Australia. This journal is a direct result of the Convention. And two further Conventions have been planned for the next two years. The Committee are certainly grateful that their efforts have been rewarded in these ways, and have managed so far to stand the buffets of outraged critics.

The membership of the Convention was 76, and of these roughly 60 attended at least one session. The average attendance was 45. Ten visitors were present from Sydney, and there were many from Victorian country areas. For their \$1.50 members received four feature films plus about two hours of short features, about five hours of opportunities to buy over 500 items in the auction, and an opportunity to buy other material at very low prices. They received free coffee, biscuits, cakes and sandwiches at most times during the Convention. Talks and lectures totalled about five hours (and most of the material discussed then is just inaccessible to others.) And best of all, the members had time (unfortunately limited) to meet and talk with others who have the same grand passion. Future Conventions will offer at least as much.

At present a complete Convention Report is being prepared by two members of the Committee. Only the first twenty pages of this have been completed to date, but it is hoped to finish the task during the next few weeks.

I enjoyed this Convention, because it is rather like a day-dream come true. When I attended the 1958 Convention I was so impressed that I wanted to attend another. As it turned out, the only way I got to attend another was by doing some of the work involved myself. But fortunately the

other members of the Committee managed to make sure that I was able to spend some time as an ordinary Convention member. And as such I was able to do a few of the things which other people did. I bought some books. I had some coffee. I watched films, I listened to overseas tapes. But most of the time I was cut off from the Convention.

There were so many people I wanted to talk to - mostly the people from Sydney, almost all of whom I knew long before this Convention was first considered seriously, eighteen months ago. But I wasn't able to do that. I would have liked to sit in the audience and ask the difficult and embarrassing questions during the author panel: but someone had to be moderator. I would have liked to sit right through the films, but there were always some small jobs which had to be done.

And as an organiser there were things I wish had happened. I'd have liked a chance for a panel of people who are acquainted with sf readers in other countries through their fanzines to talk about this to other members of the Convention. I'd have liked some more tapes to have arrived. But there wasn't time for these things, and the Convention ran for almost three days as it was.

Perhaps in these pages there can be some discussion of what constitutes an ideal Convention for Australians. Perhaps there would be room also for discussion of overseas fanzines. I trust the editor won't mind my sneaking a review in right here! (Not at all, John: be my guest! Ed.)

NIEKAS is edited by Ed Meskys and Felice Rolfe: the address of the latter is 1360 Emerson, Palo Alto, California 94301, USA, and the cost is \$1.00 for three issues.

The current issue of NIEKAS is no.15, and it contains over sixty pages, each the size of an issue of SCIENCE FICTION PLUS! The editors discuss their own doings, usually in a rather interesting way, for about seven pages. There is a two-page note of recent theories regarding Stonehenge, and a three-page column of jottings from someone in New York. Then there are three pages of discussion of children's fantasy books.

John Boardman discusses the importance of cliques in the spreading of ideas (in particular relation to the Gnostics) and the argument is joined by Ray Nelson for a further five pages, after which John Boardman replies with a further.... Then the importance of Myth is discussed for four pages, Ray Nelson reviews C.P. Snow for three pages, and a Wallace West letter appears just before a three-page discussion of sf in Italy. There are four pages of fanzine reviews and five pages of book reviews, followed by the letter-column (twenty pages, of which seven discuss the Tolkien excitement). Letter-writers include Avram Davidson, Michael Moorcock, and Robert Bloch.

That doesn't tell all, for NIEKAS is duplicated in two different inks on nine shades of paper. There are many illustrations, and the front and back covers are offset printed! Some Australians already read NIEKAS - Meskys and Rolfe won't mind a few more subscriptions!

It would be a waste of your tape and your time if I didn't say something about science fiction today, dwell ponderously for a minute or two on future trends, and have a hand at a little home-made philosophising and extrapolation, etcetera. But I'm always careful about going this... When a writer does it you'll generally see the same processes at work: either he's a raw and unashamed egotist and will just tell you what he's going to do, or he's subtler and wraps up what he's going to do in such a way as to make it sound as if he's telling you what everyone else is going to do. I don't particularly want to do either of those things - for one reason, because I don't know what I'm going to do - but I think a general principle might be aired. It's so obvious that it's often forgotten: and that is that science fiction would profit from being of a better literary standard. This is something quite outside all the various trends and platforms that various writers have.

Good writing is always worth attaining - and equally there are all ways, all sorts of reasons, why it shouldn't be attained. We've seen some of these in sf - the factors that operate for and against good sf, and they change from time to time.

I think that in the early thirties good sf was at a premium, not because it was a medium that hadn't been long established, but because the people who wrote it were interested in putting over scientific facts - or indulging in a scientific lecture. Now often these were exceptionally banal lectures: the points that were made were perhaps concerned with, shall we say, the fact that if you get it cold enough oxygen turns into a liquid. This is very exciting - but it only excites the first time.

But as the thirties wore along you got a period when the writers were writing for thrills and excitements, the solar system was being milked for every possible horror that could be dug up, and again the author's eye was not actually on the writing as such. Since then we've gone through the various phases - sociology, radiation, telepathy, psi - and in all of these I think it's true to say that the major interest was directed away from the story-writing.

Of course the other point that is always brought up as militating against good writing is the fact that sf is rottenly paid. In fact, a good writer works well however much or however little he's paid, all else being equal, but I don't think it's true any longer that sf is badly paid. A sf writer is at least as regularly paid, and in many ways, since the sixties anyway, is in a much better position than many of his colleagues writing in other fields.

Sf today has no major preoccupations. By this I mean the situation where you can get a story into Magazine X simply because it happens to be about, shall we say, lycanthropy - because the editor of X happens to want only lycanthropy stories, and therefore he will take even a story that is poorly written, if it happens to be about a werewolf. There's less of this today, and in consequence I think writers are more likely to concentrate on

the writing - and I'm quite convinced that this is the only possible thing that can make sf Respected, Worthwhile, Better-Selling - however you like to put it.

We are inside the field of sf, and we may love our Skylark Smiths and our Homer Eon Flints, but we shouldn't persuade ourselves that by any ordinary standards of literacy those writers write acceptable works of fiction. They don't. Their interest, in a way, is that they are so - I was going to say, unmitigatingly horrible! but I flinch from it - they are so very poorly written. What the writers were concentrating on was something other than fiction - and in any form of fiction you just can't do that.

I would certainly be classed as a Utopian though, if I thought that improved standards of writing would greatly increase the audience for sf. I think that standards have improved, and yet I was told by a publisher last week that paperback sales of sf in Great Britain are decreasing by half-a-percent per month. Now, how ominous this is I don't know, but it does suggest at least that the public isn't flocking in.



As a centenary offering, **Brian Aldiss** bears a tribute copy of his latest SF and fantasy collection, "The Saliva Tree", to the father figure of modern science fiction **H. G. Wells**, on his galactic eminence. The great man, born a hundred years ago, makes an appearance in Mr. Aldiss's spectacular title-story - which has already won the highest praise (and a joint first prize)

from the *Science Fiction Writers of America*.

There's only one way to deal with this, and you know what it is. It's to declare PROHIBITION: to ban sf entirely, to stop publishers publishing it, hunt out the writers, shoot the agents against the wall. And then - then we would finally see the desired renaissance for sf. Everyone would want it - everyone would be printing bootleg copies on the sly. Sales would bound and bound as never before. I'm sure you'd find that somewhere right out in the Outback, by Alice Springs, there'd be a little illicit publisher who was printing genuine old vintage Heinleins, turning them out on a hand press in little limited editions that would sell for the earth in the big cities. And all around the world it would be the same glorious story...

BALLARDS AND IMPROMPTUS

MICHAEL MOORCOCK
& LANGDON JONES

Michael Moorcock

You've probably heard that things are in a state of conflict in the British sf scene. Lots of discussion goes on about the place, future, and functions of sf - its literary possibilities - whether it should entertain on an escapist, crossword-puzzle, level or whether it should try to do more. This discussion is heated, and not always friendly by any means, but it's about the healthiest thing that's ever happened to sf.

Those with extremist intellectual or philistine views are not likely to be the people who will be satisfied when the field sorts itself out. This isn't a destructive civil war, not the last death-throes of a decadent medium. These are the birth pangs of a new and better kind of sf where an author's individual talents are valued and allowed to develop more than ever before.

Tomorrow's author must have individual talent - not be a second-rate Heinlein. He won't be able to get away with tired twists on an old gimmick, or cloak-and-dagger historical settings in umpteen galactic empires. He'll have to exploit his imagination, skill and intellect to write what he wants to, and he'll have to be bloody good because in time the market for decent sf is bound to decrease and stay steady. There won't be so many magazines and paperbacks about - and those that are will be better.

One of the reasons for sf improving is that an ever-increasing literate public is interested in it. Popular standards are rising all the time and there are more people to read good fiction of all kinds. The corny sf story sells, or sold, primarily to children and the semi-literate section of the public. Whether you like to think so or not, these are the people who have kept the field alive since the thirties - without them we wouldn't have a field today.

If you discount the 'Golden-Agers' who feel that American sf of the fifties reached the peak, and that only explicit technical sf is pure, then you're left with two predominant schools of thought in Britain today. There are those, like J.G. Ballard, who feel that worthwhile sf should be experi-

mental, metaphysical, neo-surrealist - and those, like Brian Aldiss, who, rather in the manner of the good Victorian novelists, feel that naturalistic plots and credible characters, coupled with a fresh imagery and a literate style, can produce a kind of sf that uses a sound, conventional narrative to carry a solid moral argument or observation of some kind, not necessarily explicit.

There is merit in both opinions, and we on NEW WORLDS are seeking to encourage both kinds of writing. If sf is to appeal to a literate audience, a wholly literate audience, then it must use the terms and tools of good literature, whether experimental or conventional, to improve itself. It's the only way to ensure survival.

Langdon Jones

Make no mistake about it, there is a war going on - a war in which feeling is running high and patience low. The literal-minded grumblers who mutter in their beards about Heinlein, pausing to drop such gems of literary criticism as, 'I think Ballard writes a load of old rubbish, because he doesn't have any blasters,' seem to forget a natural law as unbreakable as the law of gravity. Sf writing is an art, and all art must develop. The law, simply put, is Change Or Die.

If a composer today wrote music in the style of Bach, however good a musician he was, his music would be mannered imitation. Similarly, one cannot expect to write sf like, say, Alfred Bester, and hope to produce anything of value. THE STARS MY DESTINATION and THE DEMOLISHED MAN were very good novels, written under very strict limitations. The limitations have altered, the picture has changed, and a good novel of this nature will never again be written.

This is an exciting time as far as sf is concerned. A renaissance is taking place that will have far-reaching consequences. Today the aspiring writer must look to such great imaginative and visionary writers as Borges, William Burroughs, and...Kafka.

You know the kind of writing we're looking for in NEW WORLDS. There isn't much of it about. So, you Australians, if you can produce it (and if you catch us in a good mood) we'll be happy to consider your submissions.

MM: I was thinking about that remark of yours - the comparison with composers was a good one. And really, I think one of the points I'd like to make is that even if you write like a first-rate Heinlein now, it still isn't good enough - good though Heinlein was in his time.

LJ: Well, the thing is that it's really impossible - in the same way that it's impossible to write like a first-rate Bach nowadays - because one isn't writing from one's own immediate experience. The whole thing would be bound to be false.

MM: Yes. Well, this is it, what you're getting a lot of now. I think it's really the death-blow to a certain kind of sf, a tremendous amount of pastiche, and you always get this at the end of any movement.

LJ: These arguments apply to every kind of art generally. In music you get people like Stravinsky who wrote very similar music to Bach's but focussed it to the needs of the twentieth century. In sf it hasn't even gone as far as this - you get people still writing stuff like we were getting in the forties, and this element is still very much with us.

MM: You say 'art' - but a lot of people don't know the word!

LJ: I agree. In fact, one of the basic troubles is that sf still doesn't appear to have got out of the period when people were writing largely for money, and you still get many writers who talk mainly of markets and rates and so on.

MM: I wonder what went wrong there, because there never was very much money in sf, but there certainly seems to be money in it now, and people like you and I can make a decent living at it. I think the tendency in America, for instance, to emphasize the market, as opposed to the actual creation of the stuff, is really creating some pretty bad habits. I know there are writers in the States, particularly the younger ones like Roger Zelazny, who are now writing out of their own feeling, but the older ones seem to have lost their enthusiasm. Here we talk all the time about sf - but in the States they seem to have put all of that behind them. I think it's possible that this sort of discussion was going on in the late forties, producing writers like Pohl, Kornbluth, Matheson, Heinlein, Blish, Judith Merril and people like this, but now they've become a little bit blasé.

LJ: I think this just indicates the decadence of some forms of sf...

MM: Well, maybe. You know, when we are old and tired probably Australia will be producing the best sf... We'll be sitting in our wheel-chairs moaning about 'the new sf' - and ANALOG will still be publishing the kind of sf it published twenty years ago.

LJ: Well, if it keeps on as it is at the moment, it won't last at all!

MM: But ANALOG has a specialist market, remember. It hasn't got a market like the others. Probably the NEW WORLDS market, for example, is only touched by some ten percent of ANALOG readers: people who buy all the magazines - and who probably don't think much of NEW WORLDS.

LJ: I wouldn't blame them...

MM: But I think that, as you say, ANALOG will just die under its own inertia. It keeps repeating itself. Magazines in which you see a more open policy - like F&SF, or even GALAXY - are the ones more likely to survive in the States.

LJ: This is a strange thing, actually, that sf - which has always been regarded as a radical medium - should be so conservative. It's really so strange that any magazine of any kind could go on printing the same sort of stuff it's been printing for the last twenty years. It seems to me that it's possible there could be a split, a complete and absol-

ute split in sf, between the genuine stuff and the fake stuff - in the same way that you get fake cubism in art, and things like that. This doesn't seem to have happened yet, but I suppose it's possible.

MM: Well, I don't know. We have the ACE company which publishes, on the whole, semi-juveniles - and some good stuff too. But their main market is the juvenile, adolescent audience. They'll probably go on producing the same stuff, just as the blood-and-thunder thrillers keep coming. This sort of work doesn't get any prominence - it just goes on and on and on - and there seems to be no motive for it but a commercial one. But the sort of sf we are interested in is a different thing altogether: it's as different from that kind of sf as it is from mainstream fiction.

Since we're talking for the benefit of Australians, I'd like to talk a bit about Australian sf writers, because there's obviously some good talent there: John Baxter for instance, Lee Harding, and of course Bertram Chandler, who has always been a very efficient sf realist. I got a manuscript in today from an Australian sf writer I'd never heard of before, and it shows that although the influence of the standard American form is still strong there's also something fresh and new coming out of Australia. But what I'd like to see is some Australian sf about Australia!

LJ: Exactly what I was going to say! In fact, they've got the perfect surroundings: after all, they're almost living in Ballard-Land.

MM: Well, of course, there's Patrick White. People have noticed the similarities between White's VOSS and Ballard's DROUGHT, and indeed they are very similar. In fact Ballard, if he'd known that sort of country, might well have written not sf but a novel just about Australia.

LJ: It's quite surprising actually - in the little Australian sf that I've read, not a lot of this comes through. It's the old trouble, I think - they're imitating the wrong people.

MM: Yes - and I've just thought of something else... It is a trend now in British sf that has been, with all respect to the States, the salvation of the field. British writers are on top at the moment, and are receiving a lot of kudos for it, but this was only achieved when British writers started writing in a British style about their own background. For instance, Arthur Sellings and Brian Aldiss write about the England we know.

LJ: This is one of the basic troubles with most sf, that it is so easy to provide your own background. Instead of writing out of your own life and experience you set up some facile background - and I think this is a mistake.

MM: We're still not out of the sf equivalent of the 'locked room' mystery. We think of a standard plot gimmick and just rehash it. This is just not good enough any more.

- LJ: Well I don't know about you, but I often catch myself putting in stock ideas, and I kick myself for it. It's a very easy thing to do.
- MM: Of course, I think it's quite permissible to use a stock idea - if it has come out of yourself for some important reason. If you've made it your own for some genuine, honest purpose, then it isn't a cliché.
- LJ: Perhaps... The trouble is that the advantage and main disadvantage of sf are one and the same thing - and this is the very easiness of the approach. You don't have to sit down and do research and all that sort of thing. You just sit down and invent a background.
- MM: It can be difficult. I find this, for instance, in trying to make an imaginary background authentic. It helps - if it works it gives your writing a texture it otherwise wouldn't have. I don't think there's anything wrong with detailed, naturalistic backgrounds...
- LJ: No - it's just that it's so much easier to set your story in, say, a post-nuclear world, and utilise the same picture used by countless other writers, and just start tapping away without really thinking.
- MM: A lot of the manuscripts we see are like this, aren't they? Very much the same from start to finish. Generally then it seems that sf is not really exploiting its resources. What I don't like to see is the tendency to write what are essentially social novels in sf. I don't think this is really an effective use of the medium.
- LJ: Perhaps every sf writer should write out one thousand times - 'If I can make this a mainstream story, I will.'
- MM: Hmmm. All very well. But I hope they don't!

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION?

JOHN BAXTER

'Tell me now, you folks down under -
Do you have your sense of wonder?'

The question expressed above is one of the unpublished works of Robert Bloch, part of a poem addressed to a now-forgotten Australian SF Convention and lost to posterity, with the exception of a few scraps clinging to the memory of Lee Harding and other old stagers. The sentiments, however, are fresh. They were aired as recently as last April, when some of the people sending tapes to the EasterCon made apparent a similar concern over the state of Australian science fiction. We have the writers, they suggest, but are they any more than carbon copies of overseas authors? Is there any really Australian science fiction? Perhaps more important, can there ever be such a thing?

It's an interesting question, especially for the writers themselves. Very few science fiction writers aim at universality, but I think

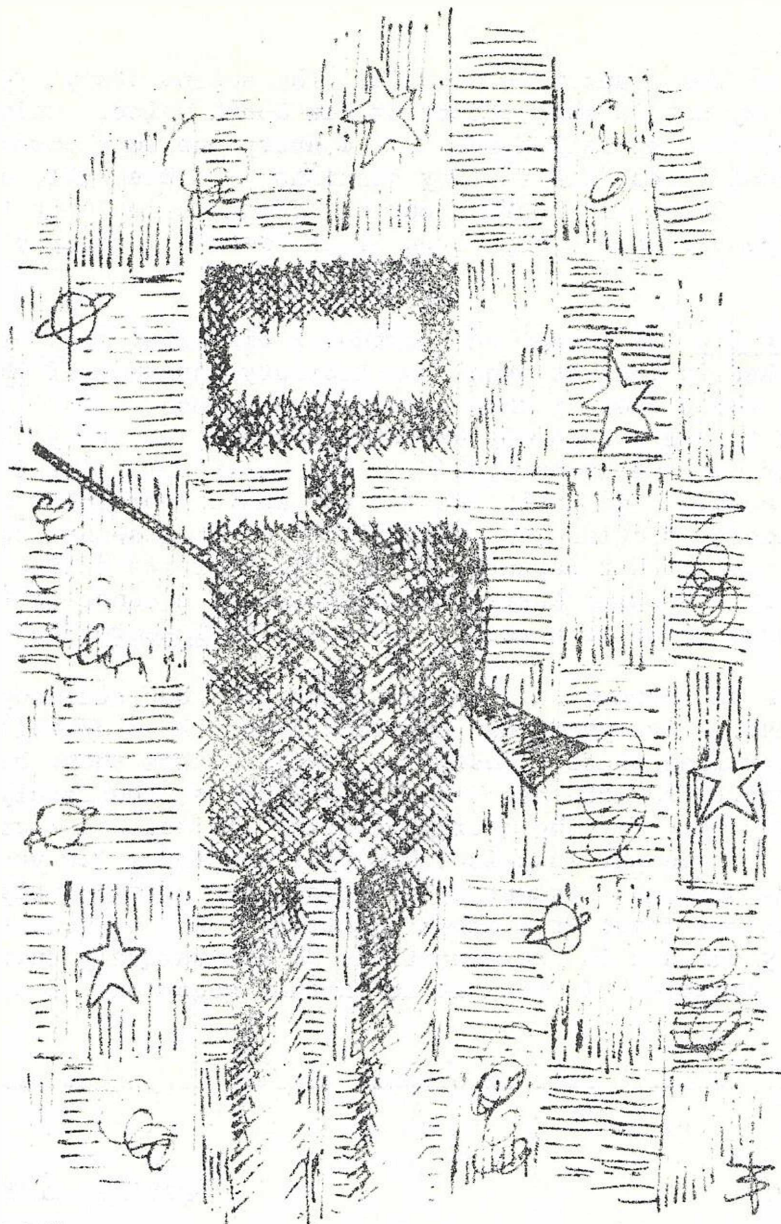
most of them attempt to make their stories personal statements. And, being personal, it would also seem that their stories should reflect some sort of national spirit, or at least a consciousness of environment. To have it suggested that one's work is not individual either from the personal or national point of view can be disturbing and, worse still, depressing in its implication that one is not doing anything new or worthwhile. The first question that arises from this is, of course - has the criticism any basis in fact? In the case of Australian sf, it seems that it does.

Australian science fiction is rare. Only a handful of stories by Australian writers have had any sort of distinctive Australian background - Bryning's Place Of The Throwing Stick, Lee Harding's Sacrificial, my own Takeover Bid - and all of these have been failures to some degree. Place Of The Throwing Stick let an interesting image - the primitive aboriginal faced with a modern rocket ship - stand in for plot and, perhaps more important, any real evocation of the conflict the story was supposed to be concerned with. There is certainly a contrast between Australia's natural untouched nature and the imported sophistication of places like Woomera, but it needs to be dramatised to become art. Sacrificial is magnificent, but it is a story that depends on its atmosphere to make its point, and the atmosphere is not peculiarly Australian - the idea of a haunted house is hardly exclusively national - so it says little about the country.

This really is the problem. The established sf and fantasy themes are rooted in the mythology of America and England rather than of this country. Class conflict, problems of sovereignty, moral standards, and other distinctively British fiction themes have little relevance to Australia, just as social progress, the problems of man in a mechanised society, and the conflict between individuality and the necessities of organised existence, are more American than international. Australian writers can and do concern themselves with these questions, but they can at best consider them second-hand. There are no especially Australian national social problems. In fact, it sometimes seems that we have no social problems at all. As far as contemporary science fiction is concerned, Australia is lacking in the basic material that makes it possible.

Other writers have already faced up to this fact - and here is where science fiction has not made any attempt to think the problem out. Patrick White, more than any other local writer, has made something personal and individually Australian out of his environment by attempting to manufacture his own myths. Nobody before has ever tried to transform the basic figures of our early history - explorers, governors, convicts - into personalities rich enough in ambience and in symbolism to provide focuses for a novel. In this he has been preceded by the painters, who have taken the same basic figures - Ned Kelly, the convicts, early settlers - and even the landscape itself, with special reference to the sun - and charged them with a symbolic importance that few people had seen in them before.

I don't suggest that science fiction writers should people their stories with one-armed convicts, upside-down birds, and bushrangers in empty iron helmets, but there should be some way for us to manufacture our own symbols. The landscapes of Sydney Nolan that stare with a sort of horrified fascination at the flat sun-dried plains, scarred and scorched



Kelly in space

trees, smooth muddy rivers, have a hint of this. So do the suns of Coburn and Whiteley, those fat orange orbs that seem to drip heat like blood. Australia is an odd country, a very special and fascinating place, but one most people find it hard to come to grips with. Science fiction writers are no exception, but it seems they should be among the first people to work at it.

The attempts that I have made to write Australian science fiction have been failures. Toys - a short that appeared in NEW WORLDS in 1964 - was a conventional story about the possible effects of violent toys - cap guns, rubber knives - on the minds of children. It touched on themes like the influx of migrants into Sydney, but only peripherally and without examining them. Even if it had examined them, the story would still be a failure. Social questions just don't concern Australians enough to make

them important to the country as a whole. The second story, The New Country, was a fantasy set in the outback of New South Wales, using locations I remember well from my childhood. A country pub surrounded by a shady verandah, red dust roads, old railway stations - above all, a bright sun and a blue sky. Calendar stuff, but it seemed to me that this was the Australia that people knew best, even if it wasn't strictly an accurate picture.

Takeover Bid is, I suppose, rather a different sort of story. It has a setting that is just as banal and touristy as that of The New Country - Woomera, the gibber, rocks, spinifex and abos - but it makes some sort of attempt to use a uniquely Australian theme, a story that couldn't happen unless it was set in Australia. The story sold, but I don't think it's at all successful, probably because the whole approach I was using to Australian science fiction was at fault. I realise now that it isn't enough to have a plot that depends on Australia for its action unless this is accompanied by a special Australian imagery and a sense of the country. These I don't have - and as a result stories like Takeover Bid fail.

Is there an answer? I like to think so, but defining its limits is something else. Everybody who has looked at a Boyd or Nolan painting, or read the Australian poets, must have realised that these had something that set them apart from the art of other countries, but analysing it has always seemed too hard for the average critic. If science fiction writers - and critics - have any function this year and for a few years to come, it is to make a serious attempt to analyse the particularly Australian impulse that sets us apart from other countries - and to form that impulse into a tool they can use in their writing. We are uniquely suited for this. Whether we are capable of doing it is another question. I would like to think we are.

AUSTRALIA

BERNARD O'DOWD

Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space,
Are you a drift Sargasso, where the West
In halcyon calm rebuilds her fatal nest?
Or Delos of a coming Sun-God's race?
Are you for Light, and trimmed, with oil in place,
Or but a Will o' Wisp on marshy quest?
A new demesne for Mammon to infest?
Or lurks millennial Eden 'neath your face?

The cenotaphs of species dead elsewhere
That in your limits leap and swim and fly,
Or trail uncanny harp-strings from your trees,
Mix omens with the auguries that dare
To plant the Cross upon your forehead sky,
A virgin helpmate Ocean at your knees.

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REVIEWS

COMMUNIST CHULTEX RAPED MY WIFE!

LEE HARDING

* Avram Davidson: The Masters Of The Maze

No less a personage than Spike Milligan has been so moved as to take pen to paper and ask, 'Why is there no monument to porridge in this land?' The sad goon's pleasures are his business - for my part I am equally disturbed by the way those who should know better have managed to overlook the magnitude of Avram Davidson's contribution to sf. Perhaps some day a suitable monument might be established - meanwhile, I would like to redress this appalling lack of appreciation immediately. Admittedly, his short tenure as editor of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION caused hardly a ripple in the moderate pond of sf - but at least he performed no worse than his predecessors, or indeed anyone presumptuous enough to assume editorship of that unique magazine after Anthony Boucher retired. I have always held the opinion that Avram was rather a lame choice to succeed Bob Mills - as a writer he seemed too individual to adapt to the demands of editing, and he never did manage the transition successfully. Perhaps one day Ted White will regale us with his memoirs, and Reveal All about that particular period in the short history of magazine sf: for the moment it is Avram Davidson the writer I wish to discuss.

Easing gradually into the writing of short sf via the men's 'true' adventure magazines and the mystery pulps, Avram's first stories began to appear in the mid-fifties in magazines like F&SF and GALAXY. From the very first they were unclassifiable and unlike anything else being published. In a market dominated by senile hack writing, his stories stood out immediately as the product of a rich and fertile mind uncluttered by the formulae of the genre. Somehow he managed to sneak around editorial taboos as if they never existed - although he never sold to ANALOG, and I don't see why he should: the man's a writer, not a subsidised technician. If your appetite for contemporary sf is jaded, you could do worse than sample the unique Davidson blend of wit and humanity in either of his two short story collections, OR ALL THE SEA WITH OYSTERS and WHAT STRANGE STARS AND SKIES.

With the April 1962 issue of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION he became editor, and while he raised the literary standard of blurb writing to an unprecedented high very little else of import was engendered. Towards the end of 1964 he resigned his post to devote himself to writing full-time - and already we have seen the fruits of his immediate labour.

Avram the writer of superb shorts we knew well: now there suddenly came a rash of novels, inevitable from a man devoted to writing, now, for a rich living. The first of these appeared in truncated form in WORLDS OF TOMORROW under the title of Valentine's Planet, then as a paperback from Pyramid entitled MUTINY IN SPACE. For a first novel from Davidson it was a disappointment: little more than the standard space opera enlivened here and there by the genial wit we had become so familiar with in his stories. Perhaps he regarded it as an overture - for his next novel, ROGUE DRAGON (F&SF and Ace), took a mighty leap forward and actually read like any good novel should, which is to say that the style was sound and traditional, and the plot and scenery straight from the richly medieval sector of Avram's mind. Both these books, however, revealed the unmistakable plot machinery of magazine sf. Davidson gleefully dispensed with this in his next work, and it is MASTERS OF THE MAZE that I really want to talk about.

One is so enchanted by the richness of invention in MASTERS OF THE MAZE that one can't help but decry the absurd practice that helps so many really bad books into hard covers yet allows genuine masterpieces like this book to become lost beneath the chunderous tide of paperbacks. This novel can't be recommended to the Poul-Anderson-Forever brigade, nor to lovers of Philip K. Dick originals - but if you've ever been enchanted by a really well-written book then by all means buy a copy of MASTERS OF THE MAZE. There is a continuous thread of joy running through the book that makes one believe the author enjoyed writing every minute of it. It has seen no prior magazine serialisation, nor 'truncation' into a single issue of a magazine - a bad practice, which says something, I'm not quite sure what, about American editorial policy these days. As a novel it would be impossible to break up into instalments and it would fit rather uncomfortably into the moribund magazine field. On the other hand I can imagine it feeling quite at home in either NEW WORLDS or IMPULSE.

I have no intention of indulging in detailed synopses in these pages. Rather, I would like to pass before you some of the more interesting products of an author's imagination...

Meet Nate Gordon: hero, protagonist, what-have-you. By profession hack-writer-extraordinary to a string of 'men's adventure' magazines with titles like BRUTE, RUT, GONAD, purveyor of exciting articles to the same magazines, with titles like Love-Starved Arabs Raped Me Often, Man-Eaters Of The Malayan Peninsula, Communist Crocodiles Raped My Wife, Woman-Eating Arabs Of The China Coast, and such-like. Meet the Chulpex from beyond the Maze. Meet the Maze...

'The Maze was, is, and will be. When the magnablock exploded into infinity, the Maze was formed. 'There was light' - and the light shone upon the Maze. Co-eval and coexistent, neither of the same substance nor the same essence; having the attributes, the incidents, the accidents of neither terrene nor contra-terrene matter, the Maze is both immanent and transcendent of both. It traverses space, it transects time. Ancient of years, the worlds form around it...'

The Maze is Davidson's complex interdimensional escalator, a Gateway to a myriad universes, on Earth the Doorways guarded by an ancient Lodge. Our hero stumbles through one of these Doors and so becomes embroiled in a vast plot to destroy the Maze itself and unleash a gaggle of monsters upon this world and a thousand others. Structurally, this may be a bad book, because it reads like the work of a short story writer. There is nothing of the familiar paperback formula that hasn't happily been dispensed with by the gleeful Avram. The book is crammed with aphorisms and famish in-group asides ('that slimy son-of-a-bitch Donaho...DONAHO! whose attitude notoriously was, If it smells bad, by all means throw it into the fan!') Here you can meet Ambrose Bierce (honest!) and Elias Ashmole, Oxford lawyer, courtier, soldier, astrologer, alchemist - almost Ye Lotte. And that is precisely what typifies this novel so much, as it has typified Avram's short stories - the stylish richness of imagination that makes so many of today's sf writers seem weary hacks.

Meet Avram Davidson, the Master who will guide you through this tantalizing Maze of a book to, finally, grapple with an eternal Something-Or-Other that doesn't quite come off. Or was I just taking the whole thing a little more seriously than the author intended? But please read this book. There has been nothing quite like it before in sf. The rewards for the general reader are many - for the avid galaxies-as-all-get-out sf fan, less so - but if your appetite has become slightly jaded, by all means give this rich and heady brew a try. You'd better be quick because it will soon be swallowed and forgotten beneath the great tide of paperbacks being churned out. Mr. Gollancz continues issuing his 20-year-old rubbish while books like this, and Pangborn's DAVY, and Leiber's THE WANDERER, and Brunner's SQUARES OF THE CITY, can only find publication in paperback format. Wake up there in England!!

Having said this, I now stand back and stare in horror at yet another Davidson novel that has just arrived, with the appalling title of RORK! Well, maybe, but I don't know. Could be a gag. Then again, maybe not. Tune in next issue for episode two in the canonisation of Avram.

* Impulse: Vol.1 No.1

Magazine sf in America continues to plod. Fred Pohl alone seems to be trying to inject some life into the field - but then he is responsible for three magazines: GALAXY, IF, and WORLDS OF TOMORROW. It has been left to the once moribund and consciously imitative British publishers to enliven the field with the first significant advance since Horace Gold launched GALAXY in 1950.

John Carnell, since retiring from his long-held editorial post at the defunct Nova Publications, has so far edited seven quarterly collections of NEW WRITINGS IN SF for Corgi (paperback) and Dennis Dobson (hardcover), and although the avowed intention has been to produce new forms of sf writing along with the old, editor Carnell seems to be steering much the same steady, middle-of-the-road path as he did with NEW WORLDS and its attendants, SCIENCE FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES.

On the other hand, Michael Moorcock and Kyril Bonfiglioli have been editing NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY for well over a year now, with widely dissimilar results. From the beginning Moorcock set out to make NEW WORLDS a vehicle for new ideas, and a pacesetter for the field. With his long experience in the publishing world he has produced a reasonably sophisticated and well-finished product. Not so Bonfiglioli, who has disgraced the field on a number of occasions. His strange blend of dilettantism and sophistication has resulted in some really awful magazine issues, and some embarrassing blunders. Who but Bon could run out of space at the end of a magazine, leave a ten-page story unfinished, and print the last four pages of it in the following issue?

It is a source of irritation that this editorial fumbling has tarnished the first issue of IMPULSE, the new SCIENCE FANTASY, for it has been many moons since a single issue of an sf magazine has given me so much to get excited about. From information gleaned from an earlier issue one realises that the contents of this issue were specially made up from stories submitted on the theme of Sacrifice. Bonfiglioli, in his editorial rambles on in his customary manner - but forgets to mention the rather unique character of the stories thus commissioned, and so must repeat himself ad nauseum in the blurbs that precede each story. That is, when he decides to write a blurb. One of the annoying things about him is that he can never seem to make up his mind whether to write blurbs or not.

IMPULSE vol.1 no.1 departs from tradition and does not continue the numbering of the now defunct SCIENCE FANTASY. The stories that are included - perhaps because they were written not so much with monetary reward in mind, but rather to contribute to a general pattern - are, with only one exception, of a very high class indeed, and in at least two of them we find writers producing better work than they have done for years.

A Hero's Life has James Elish revisiting scenes of former triumphs, and more successfully than in recent years. Here you will find the calculated cynicism that has so permeated his more recent work merged with the

dream stuff of his earlier stories. If I personally find the result unsettling, I suspect that newer readers will find here something surpassing much current sf in form and content. Poul Anderson too seems to be more genuinely involved with the people of Treason than with the Dominic Flandry opi, and all those other streamlined space operas he has been forced to write because he writes them so marvellously well.

J.G. Ballard, you will recall, authored a comment on William Burroughs in the first of the 'new' NEW WORLDS, concluding with a panegyric to the new idol of the avant-garde. With You, Me And The Continuum he offers the first fruits of his assimilation of Burroughs' techniques. This is a Second Coming, sort of, and if I can't say that I particularly liked what I read that is because the work is so obviously fragments of a broader canvas - related perhaps to the forthcoming Assassination Weapon in NEW WORLDS. Suffice to report that Ballard's highly individual style takes a further inward twist, and we have here a series of short paragraphs of related images without continuity. The title, incidentally, was mooted as far back as 1957 as the title of Ballard's first novel-in-the-works, which never eventuated. There's possibly some cosmic significance even in that.

Harry Harrison contributes what editor Bon would happily describe as 'good, solid-fuel stuff,' very well done. Richard Wilson offers the only routine story in the bunch, and that reads like a GALAXY reject. Jack Vance has a moving little allegory in The Secret.

The issue begins with one of the best stories in the magazine, The Circulation Of The Blood by Brian Aldiss. Nobody can match Aldiss when he really gets going. He is all that was good in Blish, but without the cynicism and with more humanity - even if occasionally he clutters his concepts up with conventionalities.

But the best story by far in the book is Keith Roberts' Signaller. This is the first of a new series running in IMPULSE under the general title of Pavane. What makes the story so outstanding is the glowing richness of Roberts' writing, his great fund of sensitivity and warm humanity. With this story alone, Bonfiglioli has justified all that has gone before in his apprenticeship as an editor. He discovered Roberts and has encouraged him consistently in both writing and illustrating. I recall John Carnell remarking how impressed he was with Roberts' work and what a grand future he could predict for him. Well, on the strength of this story, and Manscarer in NEW WRITINGS 7, I would say that future is already upon us - and sf will be the better for the arrival of this extraordinary new talent.

IMPULSE no.1 will certainly be a collector's item - but don't let that deter you from going out and buying yourself a copy and reading it from cover to cover. The cover, incidentally, is the work of Judith Anne Lawrence - otherwise Mrs. James Blish.

'Everything is terrific,' said Sharon Brand. 'Only some things are terrificier than others.'

Edgar Pangborn: A Mirror For Observers

* Kurt Vonnegut Jr.: Cat's Cradle

Too often books dealing with The End Of The World are confused with polemics, dogma, or (heaven forbid) science fiction. It's refreshing then to discover first-rate sf satire embracing with wit and erudition the amorality of the scientific community, the immorality of the power politicians, and the mortality of humanity-at-large.

With Swiftian deftness, Vonnegut - in a wildly funny swipe at the world's organised religions - involves the reader in an ingeniously improbable theology called Bokononism.

But this is merely the vehicle which reveals in stark simplicity the ridiculous nature of the human condition. After the author's description of the Bokononist technique of love-making (opposite sexes rub the soles of their feet together) you're left with the feeling that more conventional methods can never equal its sensations. The philosophy of Bokononism, briefly stated, is that humanity is organised into teams, teams that do God's will without ever discovering what they are doing. Such a team is called a karass by Bokonon, the New York-born founder of the sect.

As the non-hero Jonah states: 'If you find yourself tangled up with somebody else's life for no very logical reasons, according to Bokonon, that person may be a member of your karass.' The story takes place a few years hence in the island nation of San Lorenzo, somewhere in the Caribbean. Jonah's real name is John - 'If I had been a Sam, I would have been a Jonah still - not because I have been unlucky for others but because somebody or something has compelled me to be certain places at certain times, without fail...and according to plan...this Jonah was there.' And this microcosmos can be said to be concerned with a karass of Jonah's which eventually engulfs all the world's population with an inevitably fatal conclusion.

How this happens (through something called Ice Nine) and the innumerable fascinating sub-plots, drily humorous dialogues, chastely sexual exchanges, and lyrically descriptive calypso Bokononist dogma, makes this book irresistably funny. It is unfair to tell you how and what Ice Nine does to our hero, the island, and the world... but the plot and characterizations will be hard to forget years from now when more sophisticated doomsday weapons are added to our armoury.

THREE MARKS FOR P.K.D.JOHN FOYSTER* Philip K. Dick: The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch

The reactions of the three leading sf reviewers to Philip Dick's THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH have been mixed, to put it as politely as is possible. P. Schuyler Miller, in August 1965 ANALOG, is just confused. He takes a minor aspect of the novel and presents it as a plot-

summary. He describes it by likening it to Van Vogt, or maybe to a Pohl-Van Vogt collaboration.

Judith Merril, in the June 1965 FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, is less confused, but damning. She regards it as a minor Dick work: one which could have been better-written. The novel is supposed to contain a 'riotous profusion of ideas,' and her complaint seems to be that the novel is insufficiently well organised.

Algis Budrys, in the August 1965 GALAXY, presents the views of a convert. For him, this is 'an important, beautifully controlled, smoothly created book.' He takes up four pages of the magazine trying to get this point across. Of course he does spend a couple of those pages discussing the nature of reality (which Dick only treated incidentally). Dick's confusion of reality only arises from the inability of the protagonist to distinguish our-reality from the drug-reality. Jack Vance's The Men Return (INFINITY, July 1958) dealt with this aspect of sf rather more satisfactorily, and introduced the idea to sf. He thus made possible Vonnegut's THE SIRENS OF TITAN, which bears certain resemblances to STIGMATA. The two leads, Eldritch and Rumfoord, have similar powers.

Budrys goes on to produce a plot-outline which fades off into a standard paean from a believer, in which he expands Dick's treatment of reality far beyond reasonable limits. But, despite this, his is the most satisfactory of the three reviews. Dick has written a good sf novel: certainly better than THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. I doubt, however, that it could function (as Budrys suggests) as a 'holy book in itself.'

The conflict is between two drugs, Can-D and Chew-Z. The first transports the taker (a colonist on Mars or... The reasons for having colonies in these places are not clearly stated) to the world of Perky Pat (and Walt), which is earthlike but depends for its luxury on the money spent buying parts for the taker's Perky Pat layout. Naturally the PP layout manufacturer is also the distributor of Can-D. The first is legal and the second isn't. I don't know why: it is rather like permitting the sale of opium pipes but not opium. In the drugged state takers live out the lives of the highly-sexed Pat and Walt according to their own fantasies and within the limits indicated above.

Chew-Z enables the taker to enter a world where time does not exist, but which exists in the mind of Palmer Eldritch. Since this is a science fantasy novel, we need not worry about the various scientific impossibilities which are sprinkled through the novel. Naturally the two manufacturers fight, and that's the plot-line of the novel.

Now the idea of a drug-novel in sf is not new - PLANET STORIES and STARTLING STORIES ran many of them. But Dick's treatment is far more orientated towards sf, and, as I've indicated, STIGMATA is rather like THE SIRENS OF TITAN in other respects.

It's worth reading, but shouldn't be taken too seriously. That was Budrys' only fault. Having said that, I can recommend his review.

* R.C. Fitzpatrick: Half A Loaf / Second Seeded

Two stories by R.C. Fitzpatrick have appeared lately in ANALOG - Half A Loaf (August 1965) and Second Seeded (January 1966) - and more in the series should follow. The basis for them, which I am told is considered to be daring, is that minds or heads may be swapped from an ailing person to a healthy one. So much for Dr. Frankenstein.

Now although the series is probably to continue, it is quite reasonable to start judging the parts of it right now. And it is equally reasonable to use as comparison those stories most like Fitzpatrick's in theme - Wilmar Shiras' stories which made up CHILDREN OF THE ATOM.

The most obvious difference is that although great play is made of caring for the children in the story, the author is not at all concerned with them. Though they are presented as pitiful objects for whom we are supposed to generate sympathy, they never appear as anything more than vague shadows. Timothy Paul and the other children were far more appealing because of the particular barrier which separated them from the world, but they also played a role. The mental vegetables whom S.S. Jensen cures are made literary vegetables by R.C. Fitzpatrick. So that as pieces of fiction these two stories must be regarded as failures, using as a standard a work in the same field.

The idea is only a slight extrapolation, for almost similar operations can now be performed. And of course this is the only sf element in the stories. But this should be expected since the stories take place so little distance into the future.

Moral, religious and medical difficulties are ignored or toyed with. Legal difficulties were dealt with in Frank Riley's A Question Of Identity (IF, April 1952) where, in my view, the whole idea was better managed. It seems unnecessary to point out that the writing is right down to ANALOG's standard: 'The hospital corridor was muted' is the first sentence of Half A Loaf.... I have a mental image of a hospital with a derby balanced over the front door.

And if my name was R.C. Fitzpatrick, I'd change it.

OF MOUSE AND MANJAY WALLIS* Daniel Keyes: Flowers For Algernon

Many readers of ASFR will be familiar with the short story of the same name on which this novel is based. This story has been included in almost twenty collections, and has been translated into several languages. It has also been the subject of a successful television drama (perish the thought!) and is soon to be made into a moving picture. My advice is - Don't see the film: read the book.

Let me make it clear at the start that the novel is not a 32-page short story plus 256 pages of padding. This will be made clear later in this review, but first let us look at the basic theme - for the benefit of any who may not have read the story.

Charlie Gordon, 32-year-old baker, I.Q. 68, is selected as the subject of a brain operation intended to increase his intellectual capacity. A similar operation has been performed on a mouse, named Algernon, who has been successfully transformed from a rodent of very little brain into a veritable genius among animals. The operation on Charlie is also successful and it is soon obvious that he is rapidly developing into a genius. He outstrips Algernon, to his intense gratification, and eventually, inevitably, the doctors whose guinea-pig he has been. However, before he has time to come to grips with the problems resulting from his mental transformation, a crisis occurs. From his observation of Algernon's increasingly erratic behaviour, he begins to suspect that the experiment is not as straightforward as everyone thinks. The book ends with Charlie frantically trying to find a solution to the fatal flaw in scientific reasoning he has discovered.

Now, about those 256 extra pages.... Apparently, Daniel Keyes has spent the seven years between the publication of the two versions expanding and developing his theme, and the result is astonishing. In retrospect the short story is seen as a bare outline of the brilliant psychological study which is the novel. Formerly the reader sympathised with Charlie - but now he also understands him. This has been achieved in two ways...

First, Keyes incorporates into Charlie's narrative a masterly case history. We now know why Charlie was retarded in the first place, having been given a horrifying but entirely credible account of his mental sufferings in early childhood, and his consequent failure to adjust to his environment. (Just wait until you meet his mother and several other monsters in his past!)

The second line of development is an equally brilliant study of Charlie's problems as a genius with the emotional maturity of a low-grade moron. He encounters sex and love, alcohol and the arts, and grapples with them. The fact that his fight to gain complete maturity is destined to failure is perhaps the most tragic aspect of the story.

Daniel Keyes' greatest achievement is that despite the basic sadness of this novel it is a very funny and compassionate book. At every stage of Charlie's development he not only compels our sympathy and respect but also makes us laugh - more often with him than at him. Consider this glorious extract from Charlie's 'progris report 2 - march 4':

'He explaned me it was a raw shok test. He sed pepul see things in the ink. I said show me where. He dint show me he just kept saying think imagen theres something on the card. I tollid him I imaggen a inkblot. He shaked his head so that wasnt rite eather. He said what does it remind you of pretend its something. I cloed my eyes for a long time to pretend and then I said I pretend a bottel of ink spilld

all over a wite card. And thats when the point on his pencil broke and then we got up and went out.

I dont think I passé the raw shok test.'

The other characters are also drawn with tremendous insight - including Algernon. I never hope to meet a greater mouse.

How the author acquired the abilities he reveals in this novel I am sure I can't imagine. Personally, I'm content to remain mystified, and wait eagerly for another book.

NOT-SCIENCE-FICTION-BUT-TOO-GOOD-TO-MISS-REVIEW

SCRIBARIUS

* Peter Mathers: Trap

The word 'original' has been so over-used in publishers' blurbs and publicity handouts that it is wonderfully refreshing to read a novel, and more particularly an Australian novel, that really substantiates this claim - in concept, form and rule-shattering style.

If comparisons are to be drawn (and they inevitably will be) then TRAP could conceivably be the product of Patrick White and James Joyce, locked up in an unsalubrious Australian suburb with Rabelais and Jonathan Swift. In their early years, that is, for this is the author's first novel and his obvious talent has yet to be fully tamed.

Jack Trap is part aboriginal. But he has disquieting strains of English, Irish, and even Tierra del Fuegan blood. He is also highly improbable in that his apparent intelligence and militant social awareness are not the products of Gertrude Street, Fitzroy. Nor is his spectacular history very likely in the subdued suburbs of Melbourne or Sydney. But no matter. Trap the man is not important. Trap the influence is all - and all who come into contact with him are indeed influenced.

His chronicler is young David David, clerk at the Town Hall and already well under the influence when his diary is opened. So is Mrs. Nathan, astrologer to the Toorak set and businesswoman extraordinary. R.G. Free-Rutt, a product of our university system, and Adamov, the reactionary wine-shop proprietor, are affected by Trap. Then of course there are Jack's strange ancestors - their stories told in a series of irrelevant but highly entertaining flashbacks: Maria, taken off the beach on Tierra del Fuego; Armstrong Irish Trap; Wilson, the cedar-cutter, (who nearly fells The Tree Of Man); Colonel Sancty Mony, the grazier; and many, many more.

Peter Mathers, in TRAP, is the first Australian author to make successful use of the 'new writing' which has been at the forefront of English and American literature for several years. He mixes his unusual and highly workable prose with (for a change) satire that carries more than a dulled barb, and a bawdy humour which is a joyful noise after the smug propriety of recent Australian fiction.

IT HAS COME TO OUR ATTENTION...

Tom Takes TAFF. The 1966 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund campaign to send a European delegate to the Cleveland Convention in September wound up on April 13 with Thomas Schluck of Germany elected after a hard fight with Eric Jones, Peter Weston and Bo Stenfors. While at the time of writing final returns have not arrived, it would take some thirteen last-minute votes to arrive at the home of American administrator Terry Carr to make necessary even a second count - Tom having collected well over 50% of the first-place vote on the ballot-forms already to hand. Provisional figures, which include the final European vote (subject to checking), of the first-place votes collected by Terry Carr in the U.S.A. and Arthur Thomson in London, break down as follows:

	<u>U.S.A.</u>	<u>EUROPE</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Thomas Schluck:	35	48	83
Eric Jones:	17	22	39
Peter Weston:	15	5	20
Bo Stenfors:	2	3	5

'Hold over funds' netted two votes, and there was one write-in vote for Len Moffatt. ASFR joins Ron Bennett, from whose fanzine SKYRACK 39 this report was extracted, in congratulating Tom on his election.

Of Mouse And Man, Continued. Physiologists at Melbourne University, busy recording electrical impulses from the brains of rats, got a shock recently when one rat said, 'Vacant car Flinders Street, pick up Mrs. Smith.' They'd accidentally hooked up to the local taxi service...

Tolkien. Some weeks ago in THE AUSTRALIAN, Max Harris related the Tolkien vs. Ace story for, I think, the first time in the Australian press. It was interesting to see him complaining about the paperbacks being unavailable in this country, since at least three bookshops in Melbourne have them! At about the same time as this article appeared, a Fantast (Medway) Limited bulletin arrived from England, and in it was the following note: 'It would seem that Ace Books and Professor Tolkien have settled their differences, and a sizable payment has been made for the use of 'LORD OF THE RINGS' by Ace. So will everyone please down weapons?'

It was most interesting to note Tolkien's name on the list of translators and collaborators who worked on the fabulous JERUSALEM BIBLE, due for publication later this year. (Another interesting name on the same list is that of James McAuley, the Australian poet.)

Computers. There's a story doing the rounds just now concerning the introduction of computers into the armed services... A brasshat feeds into a computer the question, 'Given situation X, should forces advance, retreat, or stay where they are?' - to which the machine replies, 'Yes.' The irate military gent immediately slams in a further question, 'Yes what?' - and the computer answers, 'Yes, air!'

Edmund Crispin. That is, Bruce Montgomery, well-known under his pseudonym as editor superb mystery writer, and present President of the British SF Association, is in hospital - we gather, as the result of an accident. We wish him speedy recovery...

Pen Friends. Our U.K. agent, Mrs. Doreen Parker (Hon.Sec., B.S.F.A.) advises that the following people would like to correspond with Australians: MICHAEL C. HENDRY (17), 2 Kearney's Villas, Gulladuff, Knocklougham, Derry, Northern Ireland. (Likes Asimov, Clarke, Russell, Van Vogt, Del Rey, pop music, soccer.) JOHN NIELSEN HALL (15), 9 Mill Crescent, Bexley, Kent. (Likes Wyndham, Aldiss, Zelazny, model kits, stamp collecting.) LEONARD F. SHEPPARD (48), P.O. Box 356, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. (Accountant - likes Aldiss, Clarke, Pohl, cricket, golf, music, films, photography.)

The Publishing Scene. The big news on the magazine front comes from England: from the March issues both NEW WORLDS and IMPULSE increase their number of pages to 160 and their price to 50 cents Australian. Better cover stock and, in the case of NEW WORLDS, better interior layout, make the changeover a good one.

A year ago the old Ziff-Davis magazines AMAZING and FANTASTIC were ailing badly. Since being taken over by Sol Cohen (late of GALAXY) they have recovered, and AMAZING has increased its circulation by a phenomenal 10,000 plus. The increase for FANTASTIC is even more astonishing: close to 15,000. Cohen has achieved this remarkable recovery by jettisoning the poor-quality material his predecessor was accepting, and has turned both magazines into 99% reprints - utilising fiction and illustrations from the back files of both magazines. While this practice has assured the survival of the magazines (and one would hate to see AMAZING, the original sf magazine, disappear forever!) one certainly hopes that the present small percentage of new material (sometimes one story per issue, sometimes none at all) will gradually increase.

The only other notable increase in circulation is ANALOG's 4,500 rise.

In England, Ronald Whiting, sf editor for Dennis Dobson, has formed his own publishing company, to be known as Ronald Whiting & Wheaton. Their first books are included in ASFR's booklist this month.

Advertisement

FOR SALE: The following items have been donated to ASFR to aid our precarious finances... LAFCADIO HEARN: Gleanings in Buddha-Fields (Travellers' Library, 1927) - \$1.00. THARUNKA vol.X no.11, containing the celebrated 'God in the Marijuana Patch' by Mike Baldwin - autographed by the author! - \$5.00. Two copies only, PARNET: THE SYMPHONIES OF SIBELIUS (Cassell, 1959) the standard work, now out of print - \$1.50, brand new. All post free. Contact Editor ASFR, 19 Somerset Place, Melbourne.

ASFR Advertising Rates: DISPLAY: \$20.00 per half-page per 12 issues, \$10.00 per 6 issues, \$2.50 single issue; \$10.00 per quarter-page per 12 issues, \$5.00 per 6 issues, \$1.25 single issue. CLASSIFIED: Free to registered subscribers, one cent per word to others.

Since the demise of ETHERLINE, we have been patiently waiting for somebody to fill the gap it left. The AUSTRALIAN SF NEWSLETTER was an attempt to fill this gap, and it doubled as the Club's news-sheet. Now it is to be replaced by AUSTRALIAN SF REVIEW, to which we intend to give our full support. All functions of the Newsletter will be taken over by ASFR, including lists of books, movies, reviews and so forth.

The Easter Convention was a great success although we were let down by quite a number of local people, including Club members, failing to take any interest. Interstate and country fans saved the day, however, and all attending enjoyed themselves. Maybe in some people's eyes this was not a True Convention, but whatever you like to call it we are having one next year, and another the following year.

Through the publicity received from local newspapers, and the article in BULLETIN, the Club and sf in general are in the news more than ever before. Now is the time to make the most of this publicity. You can help by joining the Club - or, if you are a member, by remaining financial - and by supporting ASFR.

The next meeting of the FILM GROUP will be on June 17th. Not our first choice, but one that everyone will enjoy: Buster Keaton in THE NAVIGATOR, plus shorts from State Film Centre and N.A.S.A. Programme starts at 8.00pm sharp. Next month we will be showing THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON; the August programme is not quite finalised, but in September we will have DOCTOR STRANGELOVE.

In future all details of Club activities will appear in this section. For further information, you can always contact me at McGill's, at the Club on Wednesday nights, or at home - 'phone 47 1348.

THE MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB

cordially invites your
attendance and
membership enquiries

Meetings are held at
the Club Rooms
on the Third Floor,
19 SOMERSET PLACE, MELBOURNE, C.I.

General informal meeting Wednesday nights.
Fantasy Film Group meetings third Friday
each month.

THE CLUB HAS AN EXTENSIVE SF LIBRARY

ASFR BOOKLIST

Each month we intend to list new and forthcoming books, with such details of price, number of pages, and publication dates as we can ascertain from publishers and trade journals. The lists will not be cumulative, but where little is known about a title the first time we list it that title will be repeated when further information comes to hand. This month's list was, frankly, compiled in a hurry, and will reappear in July ASFR with as much more detail as we can discover in the interim. It will be observed also that this list contains very few paperbacks and no American publications.

ALDISS:	The saliva tree.	Faber
	The canopy of time.	..
	Best sf stories of Brian Aldiss.	..
AMIS:	The anti-death league.	Gollancz
ANDERSON:	The star fox.	..
ASIMOV:	Fantastic voyage.	Dobson
	Asimov Omnibus.	Sidgwick
BALLARD:	The crystal world.	Cape
	The terminal beach.	Penguin
BARREN & ABEL:	Trivana One.	Gibbs & Phil.
BAREBUSSE:	Hell.	Chapman Hall
BIGGLE Jr:	The fury out of time.	Dobson
BLISH:	Mission to the hearth stars.	Faber
BOULLE:	Monkey planet.	Penguin
BRUNNER:	Telepathist.	Faber
CALISHER:	Journal from Ellipsia.	Secker
CAMPBELL:	Analog 3.	Dobson
CARNELL:	New writings in sf 7.	..
	New writings in sf 8.	..
CHARBONNEAU:	Way out.	Rockliff
CLARKE:	A.C. Clarke Omnibus.	Sidgwick
& KUBRICK:	A space odyssey, 2001.	Gollancz
CLEMENT:	Close to critical.	..
COOPER:	Mandrake.	Penguin
COPPEL:	Dark December.	Jenkins
CRISPIN:	Best sf 6.	Faber
DAVIDSON:	Best from F&SF 13th series.	Gollancz
	Best from F&SF 14th series.	..
DAVIES:	Psychogeist.	Jenkins
FOWLES:	The Magus.	Cape
GALOUYE:	The lost perception.	Gollancz
HARRISON:	The plague from space.	..
HEINLEIN:	A Heinlein triad.	..
	Space cadet.	..
	Heinlein Omnibus.	Sidgwick
	The menace from earth.	Dobson
	Methuselah's children.	Pan
HENDERSON:	The anything box.	Gollancz
	The people: no different flesh.	..
HERBERT:	Dune.	..

HILL:	Window on the future.	Hart Davis
HOYLE:	October the first is too late.	Heinemann
KEYES:	Flowers for Algernon.	Cassell
KNIGHT:	A century of sf.	Pan
	The dark side.	Dobson
KORNBLUTH:	Science fiction showcase.	Whiting
JONES:	Colossus.	Hart Davis
JUDD:	Gunner Cade.	Penguin
LOVECRAFT:	At the mountains of madness.	Gollancz
MCCUTCHEON:	A time for survival.	Harrap
MOUDY:	No man on earth.	Whiting
NORTON:	Lord of thunder.	Gollancz
PANGBORN:	A mirror for observers.	Penguin
POHL:	Drunkard's walk.	..
	Alternating currents.	..
	Star fourteen.	Whiting
	A plague of pythons.	Gollancz
	8th Galaxy reader.	..
& WILLIAMSON:	Undersea quest.	Dobson
RANKINE:	Interstellar two-five.	..
RAPHAEL:	Code three.	Gollancz
SELLINGS:	The Quy effect.	Dobson
SHECKLEY:	Mindswap.	Gollancz
SIMAK:	All flesh is grass.	..
	Worlds without end.	Jenkins
VANCE:	Star king.	Dobson
WELLS:	The new Macchiavelli.	Penguin
WHITE:	The watch below.	Whiting
WILHELM:	Andover and the android.	Dobson
YOUNG:	The worlds of Robert F. Young.	Gollancz

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Our agents and chief boosters are Mr. John Baxter (Sydney); Mr. H. Connelly (Brisbane); Mr. Michael O'Brien (Hobart); and Mrs. Doreen Parker (U.K.). Volunteers for this fascinating (and, need we say, honorary) work welcome.

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- | | | |
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Hudson 'World of Art' series. | \$5.30 cl |
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Available shortly...

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| * <u>ANOTHER COUNTRY</u> | The tremendous novel by James Baldwin,
to be published in Australia early
in July. | \$3.15 |
| * <u>FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON</u> | Daniel Keyes' outstanding novel, to be
published in England in July, and in
Australia early in September -
shipping strikers permitting. | \$3.40 |



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