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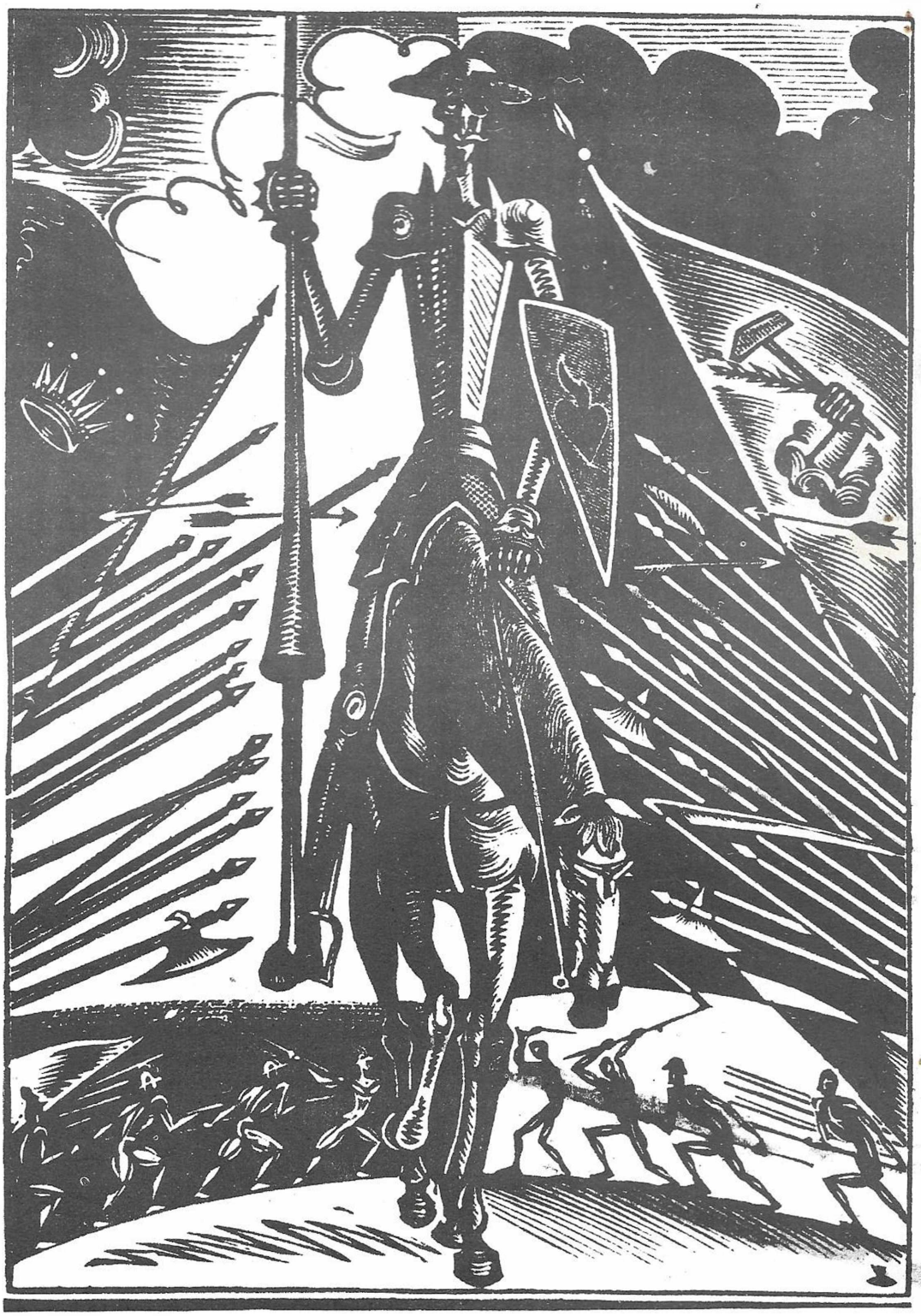
SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

THE EDITORIALS OF JOHN W. CAMPBELL



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I don't know about you, but I read for fun. There are very few books I have to read in the line of duty, and even these I usually manage somehow to get out of. I sell books for a living, and my customers expect me to have read everything I show them - just as their customers expect librarians and retail booksellers to have read everything. Some people can review books after reading their blurbs: I don't see why I should do more before selling them. Of course, there are exceptions. I have the good fortune to work for a publisher who handles books like FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON, VOTAN, TRAP, THE PLACE AT WHITTON, THE FEAR, THE HORSE'S MOUTH. That we also publish, and I have to sell, serious texts such as READINGS IN AUSTRALIAN ECONOMICS and sensational middlebrow novels like VALLEY OF THE DOLLS doesn't particularly concern me. (Well, doesn't concern me too much - though I must admit that producing ASFR is partly sublimation, since the editor can say VALLEY OF THE DOLLS is crap, whereas the salesman can't.) Some people think that to work in the book trade must be very heaven. It isn't. (I wonder how Brian Aldiss found it? - I must track down THE BRIGHTFOUNT DIARIES some day.) Let Thoreau have the last word on that subject, then I'll get back to mine. 'I have learned,' he wrote, 'that trade curses everything it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business.'

No, when I read, I do so for pleasure - but I quite realise that what is pleasure for me could be the utmost boredom for you. Medieval history, for example, I find fascinating - yet while I'm enjoying, say, Previte-Orton, some poor blighter at university is struggling through the same volume on his way to a degree, and gaining no pleasure from it at all. I don't distinguish between reading for instruction and reading for pleasure, since all learning is a pleasure when you don't have to. Think of your favourite authors. Did you discover them at school? - or in spite of school? There's something tragic about being innoculated with certain writers at an early age, and thereby becoming immune to them later.

Lee Harding accidentally, or perhaps by tactful design, adopted the right approach to arousing my interest in science fiction: he talked about it, but never insisted I should read it. Eventually curiosity got the better of me - and look at me, hooked for life!

I read sf simply for pleasure. I don't object if I learn something in the process, but I don't read it to learn. I have no objection to the Russian idea that sf should be written primarily for instruction - I think the kids in Russian schools are lucky to have science presented to them in such a palatable form - but please don't ask me to read the stuff. This is why my reviews are usually favourable: if I finish the book, I like it - if I don't like it, I don't finish it. Sometimes, particularly with volumes of stories, I just keep on reading (and skipping) in case something to my taste turns up. Maybe this makes me a dilettante. It's not such a bad thing to be.

'Dilettante' comes from the Italian 'dilettare' - to amuse, to delight, to charm. If the word also meant to inspire, to transfix with awe, to engage the highest levels of one's intelligence, then I'd be quite happy to be called a dilettante, since something which does all (or at least some) of these

things is what I most enjoy. This, of course, applies not only to sf and books in general, but to music, art, films - and people.

And comic strips...

If you have read THE WIZARD OF ID in The Australian or elsewhere you'll no doubt be as delighted as I am to discover 250 of these strips collected in a large paperback volume, now on sale at 75 cents. For me, Parker and Hart's WIZARD OF ID ranks with Hart's B.C. and Kelly's POGO as the best humorous strips around. All your favourites (except The Kissing Bandit) are in this collection: the Wizard himself, King Id, Sir Rodney, Troob, Bung the jester, the Spook, Robbing Hood, and the rest.

The strip at its best, which is most of the time, relies on a perfect teaming of dialogue with drawing. Most of the jokes fall flat when retold, since you can't see the characters' expressions. But just in case there is any reader who has not struck the WIZARD, I'll recount one of my favourites - and take the consequences:

The King and Sir Rodney are standing by the castle window. It is night. Rodney asks, 'Shall we attack or retreat, sire?' The King summons the Wizard, who leans out of the window to consult the stars. Turning to face the King, he cries, 'Surrender, sire!' 'You saw that in the stars?' asks the King. 'No,' returns the Wizard, 'there are fifty Huns on the roof.'

News of the HUGO AWARDS presented at the 24th World Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, early in September, has just come through. For the first time there has been a tie for Best Novel: Roger Zelazny's AND CALL ME CONRAD and Frank Herbert's DUNE share the honour. Other awards were - Best Short Fiction: Harlan Ellison's REPENT HARLEQUIN, SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN - Best Professional Magazine: IF - Best Professional Artist: Frank Frazetta - Best Amateur Magazine: ERB-DOM - Best Series: Isaac Asimov's FOUNDATION series.

A few surprises there, eh? ANALOG missed out, for the first time in years. And the best amateur magazine is one devoted to the cult of Edgar Rice Burroughs. But I'm glad Asimov at last has his Hugo: as I've said before, he deserved one for his introductions to the Penguin collection THE HUGO WINNERS.

We are still, I'm pleased to say, receiving favourable comments about ASFR. One we really appreciate came recently from Ron Bennett, who described the magazine in his SKYRACK as 'embracing the entire field in a definitely slick and professional manner; a really outstanding production.' Bob Smith, in a letter this month, talks about 'mutual back-slapping' - but, hell, it goes on all over the place, so that won't stop me calling SKYRACK one of the most valuable publications in fandom. In fact, if you want to keep up with all the news in the field, you couldn't do better than subscribe. Ron's address is 52 Fairways Drive, Forest Lane, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England.

We're not resting on our handful of laurels. We're not - John Foyster, and myself - hogging the magazine, either. It's open to all comers.

Articles, reviews, poems, art-work - please don't hesitate to submit them to us. We're trying to maintain a high standard, of course - I'm the editor, but you should see the loads of my stuff that Lee rejects! - and we don't offer anything but glory as reward for your efforts - but we'd like to see what you can do. Who knows? - you may be another Atheling, another Virgil Finlay, another Widdershins!

Talking of high standards, have you seen the two issues of SF HORIZONS? Old hat, maybe, to some readers, but there may be some who have not read this great little magazine.

The first issue contains a discussion between C.S. Lewis and Kingsley Amis on sf - a brilliant long article on Jack Williamson's LEGION OF TIME by Brian Aldiss - Harry Harrison on (the lack of) bad language in sf - a study of style in sf by G.D. Doherty - James Blish on the distinction between 'hard' sf and 'science fantasy' - and a hilarious piece by C.C. Shackleton, about eggs.

The second issue contains an interview with William Burroughs - Brian Aldiss on J.G. Ballard, Donald Malcolm and Lan Wright - a survey of sf criticism by James Blish - reports on sf activities in Japan and Italy - an article on the science in sf by Harry Harrison - another humorous piece by C.C. Shackleton - (Is there such a person? We'd love to hear from him.) - and a poem by C.S. Lewis.

SF HORIZONS is edited by Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss, and it costs 45 cents. Copies are somewhat difficult to get: if you have trouble finding them, write direct to the business manager, Tom Boardman Jr., Pelham, Priory Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire, England.

On August 6th a very sad thing happened to science fiction. On that day Dr. Paul Linebarger died - the man known and liked by countless readers under his pseudonym, Cordwainer Smith. He was fifty-three.

Dr. Linebarger lived and worked in Australia for a number of years. Hence his evident affection for the place and its people in his stories. One has only to read the Prologue and Epilogue in his SPACE LORDS to realise that here was a great man. We wish we had known him in person. As it is, we have his stories, and they will remain permanently in our affection. He had a unique vision, a very special view of life, which was humane and inspiring. We feel a personal loss at his passing.

By one of those strange twists of fate or what-you-will, we had been planning to make our December ASFR a Cordwainer Smith appreciation issue. Now it becomes a memorial issue. We have invited a number of Dr. Linebarger's friends, and a number of distinguished people in the sf field - some of whom knew him personally and some who knew him only through his work - to contribute to this issue. John Foyster is writing the main article, a lengthy appraisal of his work.

John Bangsund

THE EDITORIALS OF JOHN CAMPBELL

JOHN FOYSTER

As ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION has evolved, in a guided fashion, through the years to its present title ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION - SCIENCE FACT, John Campbell's editorials have become increasingly long. During the great days of ASTOUNDING Campbell rarely wrote more than a page; in 1954 his editorials averaged roughly three pages; and today it's a rare Campbell editorial that runs under six pages. The reasons for this are not, I think, hard to perceive. In the early years Campbell was pleased with his magazine: the ideas it presented were his ideas, and they were presented in a form which was acceptable to a large reading public. As time has passed the readers have become overwhelmed with other magazines, which sometimes have offered better stories, and John Campbell has become older, and more given to annoyance with those who cannot see that he is right.

I doubt that exposure to Campbell editorials does much harm to anyone Frequently they are stimulating reading, and for teenagers can form exercises in logical thinking. But after ten years they do become a trifle intense. Campbell would probably be the first to admit that 'zealous' and 'fanatical' are two sides of the same coin, and the impression one gains after some years is that of fanaticism rather than zeal.

Now, in the United States, an anthology of Campbell's editorials is to be published, with Harry Harrison as editor. One wonders just what kind of people will buy the book. Ayn Rand fans, and Heinlein-lovers, certainly. But if regular readers of ASF are the only buyers, then the whole point of Campbell's arguments will have been lost. I am sure that Campbell does not want to reach just the same old group of dedicated readers. At his age Campbell needs more recognition than this.

I intend, in this article, to discover some things about the way that Campbell thinks. I suppose one could safely recall the past and the Donald Kingsbury article - The Right to Breed (June 1955) - which stirred up so much fuss. It may well be that Campbell is copying Kingsbury in order to obtain the maximum reaction from his readers.

My difficulty is that while I agree strongly with Campbell on some matters, there are others upon which we are entirely at odds. This will give a very biassed view, then, and another person writing this article might well praise those editorials I damn, and vice versa. I trust there's no one who agrees wholeheartedly with everything Campbell writes!

I intend to discuss here a set of editorials chosen in a random manner - those for July 1965 to June 1966. It would be unfair to hunt around through

past years searching for the weakest arguments, the flimsiest evidence. Further, these editorials should be freshest in the minds of readers. In places those reading this seriously may have to refer to their own copies, but I don't imagine many people read articles about Campbell editorials seriously.

The editorials will be discussed as they appeared. There are linked groups, but, unfortunately, to discuss them in these groups would be to commit just the sin I am trying to avoid: that of having groups of bad and good editorials. For plainly I must regard as 'good' a group of editorials with which I agree, and as 'bad' those with which I have little truck.

KEEPERISM (July 1965)

In this editorial the important point that 'what I want is not necessarily what the other fellow wants' is made very forcefully, but Campbell's method of getting this idea across is perhaps too strongly worded, and involves quite a few swipes at some of Campbell's favourite targets.

The primary example that Campbell uses is Viet Nam, and here he points out that the U.S. is barging into the country, assuming that it knows what the Vietnamese want. John here has the peculiar fantasy, in common I suppose with many Americans, that the U.S. is in Viet Nam for the good of the Vietnamese, when quite clearly the U.S. is there for the good of the U.S. and A., mainly, firstly, and only. One rather telling argument in favour of Campbell's viewpoint has been omitted, but I presume this simply means that he is not aware of Ho Chi Minh's role in the liberation of Vietnam. This would be as good a reason as any for not objecting strongly to North Vietnamese control of South Vietnam.

There are a couple of other peculiar things too. Campbell says, 'Buddhism is closer to being a philosophy than a revealed religion,' when Buddhism is a system of philosophy. Campbell's phrase is rather like saying, 'Melbourne is nearer to Melbourne than Sydney is.' And throughout his editorial he uses 'Equalitarian' instead of the perfectly good word 'Egalitarian'. Why?

Campbell commences by demolishing the egalitarian fantasy from a biological standpoint. He then goes on to discuss the difficulty of decision, but soothes his readers by ascribing the 'deep yearning for stability and security and freedom from having to solve new problems' to the 'low end of the distribution curve.' Why is it so important to describe those people over there as 'low'? Previously Campbell has made it clear that he believes that all characteristics can be described by some approximation to a distribution curve, and that it applies to different phenomena. But he equates 'low on the moron/non-moron scale' with 'low on the ability to make decisions scale.' It doesn't seem at all justified. In fact, I would assert that far from restricting 'unwillingness to make decisions' to the moron class, Nature has made a majority of human beings to fit this group. To speak then of the 'low end' is to make an error both mathematical and psychological.

Campbell applies this idea to the U.S. 'Fair Trade' laws, which, as he explains it, makes it necessary for U.S. firms to make excessive profits and

not to reduce their prices. Well, that's the way he explains it, anyway. But I'm willing to believe anything about U.S. law.

Now Campbell diverges again and says: to capitalize on this unwillingness to make decisions, we must make use of the moron by giving him a method for making them - give him a slogan. Now why the hell it has to be a slogan I don't know - I suppose it is mainly because Campbell doesn't like slogans such as 'Freedom', 'No Discrimination', et cetera. The man could equally have been given a religion: in fact, history would seem to reveal that this is a far more satisfactory way of solving the problem: God himself could think of no better.

But of course, for Campbell, this leads on to the idea of the Law Being Infallible, and our Simple Faith In The Law. Campbell's effort at describing a Society which doesn't have infallible laws is a trifle weak: he chooses Moslem-Jewish law. You will recall this, of course: an eye for an eye, etc. Frightfully inhuman. Campbell describes this as Justice. The point which he cannot grasp would seem to be that, although the law may be fallible, it is far less so than any individual's judgement. With Law, we try to approximate to Justice. Whenever something thought to be unjust happens because of a particular law, efforts are made to correct the anomoly. The Law is a guide. Of course, the Law didn't stand for Krebiozen, or creatine. Campbell wouldn't be biassed on this point by any chance, would he?

Now he returns to the main point, that being 'my brother's keeper' is all right provided my brother agrees with what I'm doing, or at least, if this is not the case, that I am 100% correct in my actions. Campbell makes the telling point that in Vietnam the U.S. is going in and telling the Vietnamese what is good for them. Rightly, he doesn't think this to be a good idea. Campbell has written this piece very forcefully, but his introduction of the idea of egalitarianism, which was only a side issue, spoiled quite a good article.

PANACEA (August 1965)

One of John Campbell's main problems is that he tends to set up a straw man and then attack it tenaciously, furiously, to the applause of all his readers. There are no objectors, for the simple reason that no one could be so foolish as to believe the things Campbell attacks. This happens a couple more times in his editorials, and I shall point out the occasions. One can obtain a pretty good idea of Campbell's mentality from the preposterous beliefs he gives to his 'opponents'. Surely one of the first signs of maturity is to recognise that your opposition has a case: Campbell rarely manages to do this.

Now in this editorial he intends to talk about 'Education'. He says that 'liberals' - (who are they? - our conservative politicians in Australia are called Liberals: 'liberal' is just a word, to which any meaning can be given) - believe that Education is a universal panacea. Maybe some people do believe that. I would certainly suspect that the majority of those people would be referring to the finished product rather than to the process. But

don't let's let that get in JWC's way: HE knows that they mean the process of education, and no one is going to stop him.

His first point is that 'Education is Slavery.' Campbell discusses the case of the captive who is forced to learn new ways and to serve his master. He then asserts that slavery is the process of being forced to learn a new way of life not of your own choosing. And this is bad, of course. He then describes the essence of slavery as the loss of freedom of choice. Seems reasonable enough: but wait a minute, isn't this just what life itself is? From birth the child has to learn a new way of life, and pretty soon it loses its freedom - it needs food, and air; it is subject to gravity and other forces, all new. Then what Campbell describes as slavery, as an artificial, man-made thing, is actually a natural process. Being forced to learn is natural. In fact, Campbell has probably written an editorial proving just this point.

That means, of course, that the introduction of the idea of slavery is completely out of place. We now face the situation where, stripped of this false idea of slavery, (which must now have a different definition, since Campbell's is quite unsuitable) he is attacking the process of Education because it follows the laws of nature. Those inclined to attack Campbell at the least provocation now have an ample opportunity to do so.

But let's go further with this editorial, because as usual Campbell manages to make some telling points. He says that it is necessary to distinguish carefully between teaching and learning. I'll drink to that. If there's one thing I'd like to see in this world it's a John Campbell who can clearly distinguish between two words. He goes on to instance the case of the boy who wants to learn baseball scores and has to learn the piano. Here the distinction is obviously concerned with immediate rewards. But no, says Campbell, actually it is the fact that the boy has to be taught piano which causes the trouble.

I guess a point might be conceded here, and we might admit that education can be a painful time for some children. But this is the learning process. Quite often it is painful to do something that you don't want to: often you learn something from it. But all learning is painful, especially the learning of physical laws. There's no reason why we should turn our backs on education just because some children are unhappy with it. Campbell reveals, at this point, some peculiar ideas about education. He is many years behind the times in his belief that memory is the same as learning. He literally considers that memorising baseball scores is the same as learning chemistry. There are some similar elements in the processes involved, but not many.

In education today we strive NOT to fill the child's mind with useless facts. The effort is primarily directed towards teaching the child to think. I know; I do it every day. There are still places, of course, where a child has to remember how to do something, but the emphasis is on learning to think, not on learning the electromotive series. I'm being unfair here: how can we reasonably expect so busy a person as JWC to keep up with developments

in that unimportant field of knowledge today - education?

After three pages, though, Campbell gets around to the simple point that he could have made in the first paragraph: people want to be 'educated' - they don't want to have to go through the learning process. Naturally he can't say it as clearly as that; he has to use complex, and incidentally incorrect, syntax. He does make an excellent point on one cause of juvenile delinquency: that the children are better educated than the parents. I have seen this happen, in just the way he describes. The problem of parental authority arises in just the way John sets it out here.

The editorial concludes with a discussion of the exposure of two races to a sophisticated civilization. He concludes that some people can learn to adjust more quickly than others, and he is correct. Of course this has nothing to do with the problem of whether or not education is a panacea. Campbell deals only with one generation of the two races, and the imposition of new ways almost always creates social strains. It may be that in one hundred years the problem will have vanished. Campbell dwells upon the possibility of racial discrimination arising out of this unwillingness to learn on the part of the Crees. (Notice here that it is unwillingness to learn - both had the same education.) I think he's right here, though of course Americans will seize upon any difference as a justification for their own self-righteousness. One should note that this long case does not deal with teachers teaching, but with pupils learning, and therefore has little reference to the initial argument.

HOW LITTLE WE KNOW (September 1965)

This is one of Campbell's editorials discussing the state of scientific knowledge, and before going through it I want to say some things about the role of the scientist.

Scientists, strictly speaking, are not in the prediction game in the way that science fiction writers and editors are (pace H.L. Gold). The scientists' predictions of the future are limited to repetitions of experiments, to tests of theories. The scientist is the fellow who waits and says: lots of things are possible, and it's not much use to speculate upon them until we come to them. When the scientist is put on the spot and is asked to predict the future, he is usually rather conservative, basing his predictions upon fairly simple extrapolations of what he sees today. When he does make a prediction, he likes to assign some kind of probability to it. The sf writer or editor can afford to be wrong nine times out of ten or more: the scientist would be out of a job if he did this. The sf writer can pass off his errors and say, but look, back in 1944 one of us was right. It isn't good enough for the scientist. Later in this article I'm going to nail Campbell for a prediction he made in an article some years ago which was dead wrong. He couldn't have made a worse mistake.

When the scientist makes his prediction, he always admits that something new could turn up. Let me give a couple of examples.

> '...unforeseen events (such) as major and prolonged wars or revolutions could throw (any predictions) out.' (LORD TODD)

'...I am resigned to Orwell's grim picture...unless, of course, there arises somewhere a new Messiah...' (PROF. ABDUS SALAM)

'Speculations about the work in fundamental science must necessarily be very uncertain...' (SIR JOHN COCKROFT)

'The most dangerous of all predictions would be a too-narrow projection into the future of the details of science at the present time.' (PROF. NORBERT WIENER)

'My long-range prediction is that astronomy will someday introduce a major revolution in physics.' (PROF. FRED HOYLE)

Well, I think the point is made. In making predictions, the scientist extrapolates what he knows, but always remembers that major upsets can occur.

Now let's tackle Campbell's editorial. He states: 'Science says with resounding certainty that no one can ever exceed the speed of light.' Note that he cloaks this assertion in anonymity. No one can pin him down by asking who. The fact that everyday instruments in scientific labs are based upon the fact that objects can travel faster than light seems to have escaped him. But then he's only an sf writer; he doesn't have to deal with facts, only speculations. What a scientist might say is that according to currently-accepted theory, to which no exceptions have been found, it is not possible for material objects to travel at the speed of light in a vacuum.

Campbell goes on to discuss other matters in which scientific knowledge has only recently become enlightened: the reactivity of the noble gases, the atmosphere of Mercury, the Solar Wind. With regard to the latter, Campbell refers to the 'overlooked' factor. He means, of course, the unknown factor. But naturally, to his way of thinking, the scientists should have predicted this effect of which they had no evidence. He is all for the acceptance of ideas with little or no evidence, as witness his plugging for psi and so on in years past.

Campbell does mention one point of interest, though, the problem of drawings of Mercury, which have been made in past years. A possible explanation has been that because of the size of their number it could be that all those making drawings were actually looking at the same side of Mercury! Campbell goes on to discuss consequences of Solar Wind.

All this is good stuff, but in writing it Campbell shows that he doesn't really know what a scientific theory is about: he thinks it is a law, whereas it is only the best explanation we can think of. His ignorance of this point is embarrassing.

He goes on to laud the work of engineers, which is only right since most of his readers are engineers. 'Engineering techniques' always work, says JWC. Maybe, but they're always based upon a mathematical idea or scientific theory (which therefore must always be right) or upon trial-and-error guesswork. The errors can be pretty painful. Anything discovered in this way will always work: knitting, sewing. But it doesn't make them laudable activities.

In 1966 John Campbell wrote an article damning the work of engineers! Of course he disguised it a little by talking about 'scientists.'

THE NATURE OF LITERATURE (October 1965)

Only the most naive person would really expect this article to be about literature. Campbell really writes about 'litterateurs.' But this is an important editorial, because it stands shoulder to shoulder with Heinlein's declared passion for the Sears-Roebuck catalogue.

Campbell opens by declaring that 'it' is held that because his degree is in physics (let's not be nasty and argue that point) he has not training fitting him to make comments in the field of liberal arts. He doesn't say who holds this view. By 'training' he presumably means 'all forms of training' whereas someone else might mean 'academic training.' But no matter. John has just made up a nice sentence.

Considering the type of fiction which John Campbell has published over the past years, one is not unjustified in viewing his writings on literature with a sceptical eye.

He starts by asking one of those interminable questions. What is literature? His answer can only be described as one-sided. But let's see how that answer is developed. The first question he asks concerns the number of graduates in literature courses who become successful (read 'commercial'). Now in one of those fields the answer is simple: I suppose that as many Journalism graduates are as successful as would be the case in any other faculty. But Campbell goes on to question the nature of literature courses. Are they places of training, he asks. He knows damned well they aren't, one hopes, and he expresses this in a subsequent paragraph. His terminology is a little vague, for he writes of graduates of college courses, which are rather like our Matriculation courses: obviously these are not preparations for anything.

Successful writing can't really be taught: I don't suppose many people would hold that it can. It's just that some people can be helped in particular ways. Some people might be helped by postal writing courses, though I venture to suggest that what they write eventually may not really be worth reading. And some people consider that one way to discover something about the stuff of writing is to examine the work of other writers. Some would even go so far as to spend all their lives just studying other writers: presumably this is a useful function. But the English Lit. student might just discover some ideas which help him with his own writing. Let's put it this way. Campbell suggests that the Litterateurs are a self-perpetuating body of examiners, a group who decide for themselves what Literature is. I don't really think this is so, but supposing it were, I'd feel happier taking their advice on the worth of a novel than that of the editor of a pulp fiction magazine.

At this point Campbell begins to attack particular ideas about Literature; or rather the ideas which he supposes his Litterateur to hold. Most

of his ideas of their ideas are pretty half-baked, but let's pass over that. First he suggests that Litterateurs hold thay Joyce was great because he re-wrote his stuff very often, polishing each phrase. In fact, there are many other reasons for holding Joyce to be great. Then he instances Shakespeare, a 'multi-million word hack' and says that he didn't work like that, polishing each phrase. The plain fact is that Shakespeare did re-write, quite a deal, and further, one play a year isn't very much. And if we remember that many of Shakespeare's plays aren't often performed today, that many of them are considered to be of the second rank, then we must get rid of this notion of someone writing a play a day, and a masterpiece at that.

No, not many people would hold that you must re-write to be great. Campbell may suppose such a person to exist, and in fact there may be some few who do - but attacking minorities isn't much sport. Let's look at Proust, though; he died before he was able to re-write. He only wrote a first draft of the later volumes of REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST. Okay, if Campbell is right then he should be able to get a large number of these Litterateurs who will say that Proust was not a great writer.

The next straw man is the role of Sex. Campbell thinks that all Litterateurs hold sex to be the one motivation. I don't think more than a very small number will consider that to be true, but most would consider it a motivation. Certainly anyone who considered it wasn't a motivation would be on fairly shaky foundations. I know a certain sf magazine which doesn't allow sexual motivation on its pages. Anyway, aside from that, Campbell proves what many of us have believed for many years - the man can't read. He claims that there's no sex in, specifically, HAMLET and JULIUS CAESAR. I guess there's nothing to be gained by arguing with him then, if he can't perceive such elementary things as this.

The next point about which Campbell feels strongly is 'the Apotheosis of the Common Man.' In a way he is right. Present-day literature does deal with more down-to-earth heroes. I'm not necessarily defending it, I just want to discuss it. In the past there has been a considerable concentration on the activities of the great men, the kings and the princes. But, I think naturally, writers have become interested in the Common Man - what is it that makes him tick? An interest is not deification.

Campbell asks just what is so wonderful about the Common Man, raising the situation of a CM cast back in time so that his modern devices would not be available to him. He rightly points out that he would be in a mess, but ignores the fact that most people would be, and that the degree of difficulty in living would not be determined by 'commonness' but by the sort of life the man leads. Are all soldiers uncommon? It may be that in the U.S. Army the ability to shoot women and children is desirable, and this would certainly aid in continued existence in any era, but is that the sort of uncommonness which JWC would want?

The section which was cut from the editorial for lack of space dealt with the necessity for 'delving into the individual's psyche.' Once again, this is an unsupported assertion, but there is some truth in it. A story

which reveals something about its characters will probably be more enduring than a simple adventure yarn. The case he cites, of Robert Louis Stevenson's yarns, is quite legitimate, but they haven't survived so long as that, and most of them do tell something about the characters, as do the works of Charles Dickens, which will probably last longer than those of Stevenson.

Campbell finishes with a piece of statistics so flawed that even he must know what is wrong with it: that he receives more printable stories from engineers than from Eng. Lit. graduates.

There are two reasons, at least, for this. One might just be that Eng. Lit. graduates don't read ANALOG, and therefore don't submit stories to it. And the second is just as obvious. If they do, then their stories are being judged for acceptability by a man who has already judged them - with this editorial.

In this issue, Robert Conquest is a Litterateur. His story was ranked bottom on the An Lab. And the readers of ASF are engineers who haven't even had JWC's advantages of literary training.

Campbell is just out of his depth.

COLLOID AND CRYSTALLOID. (November 1965)

This is a fairly straightforward editorial summarising present-day knowledge concerning machines, and particularly robots. Campbell presents telling arguments that the colloid is a better medium for building robots than is a crystalloid. He may well be right; this isn't my field, and it probably isn't his But guess who the guys were who wrote all those stories about metal robots? Engineers rather than scientists, I'd say.

BREAKTHROUGH IN PSYCHOLOGY (December 1965)

Once again Campbell is off on the rampage, attacking beliefs that few if any people hold.

He suggests that all psychologists have held that all punishment is bad, and that a discovery that it isn't is thoroughly 'amazing.' Ho hum. It's like a merry-go-round One imagines Campbell sitting down to plan his editorial. He starts by asking himself: hmm, nice day today, must try to enjoy it - now, what's the most preposterous thing I can think of? - hmm, yes, that'll do - I reckon I can really take that one apart - pity no one believes it, but if I say it abstractly then it'll be okay... And so another editorial is born.

Campbell develops this theme, making it quite clear in our minds that punishment is necessary for satisfactory development. There are a couple of peculiar statements: 'It's been proven that babies given every objective necessity of life - food, warmth, cleanliness, excellent medical care - have a near one hundred per cent death rate if they get only the objective necessities. But a baby born in a cold drizzle, deprived of shelter, undernourished by a half-starved mother, survives and grows - if that half-starved mother

strives to care for it and keep it.' That's enough. I feel that this 'experiment' would be pretty hard to carry out, to say the least. And to assert this without proof is rather extreme.

He goes on from here, to deal with the problems of race and punishment which arise from a lack of self-discipline. There are many dubious points in his argument, which is frustrating because it seems that his conclusions are correct. Campbell attacks the idea, probably moderately common, though possibly not held by a majority of people, that punishment of criminals is bad because it is only a desire for vengeance. In some cases punishment is desire for vengeance, particularly when crime is considered, but mostly punishment for crime is regarded as a deterrent. It may just be here that it does not work. Campbell moves on to capital punishment for murder, and it is here that the idea of a deterrent does not work. For a murderer, surely death is the ultimate deterrent - this is why he commits his crime - but murder continues. And here we can get facts. The murder rate in England declined after the removal of the death penalty. In the U.S.A. it has continued to rise. And here's an interesting thing. Back in the July issue, Campbell was lambasting people so stupid as to think that the Law was Infallible - here he's attacking those who think that capital punishment should be done away with because the Law isn't Infallible.

He next manages to distort yet another fairly sound idea - that rehabilitation is better than destruction. He says that he feels that the idea is that the criminal should not be clouted, just encouraged to do better. This falsification of ideas doesn't really advance his argument.

Then he demolishes in fine style the old ideas that absolute power corrupts absolutely: if this were so, he says, then God would be the ultimate in corruption. But, let us rephrase that statement and make it true. Let's make it, 'absolute immunity corrupts absolutely.' That's the great Campbell mind in action. I hate to be difficult, but isn't this definition just as invalid as the previous one: surely God is the ultimate in immunity?

But let's not stop - there must be more funnies. Campbell makes the telling point that criminals are becoming immune by virtue of standover tactics, though he doesn't say as much. Next he goes back to basics to discuss the solution of problems. You can't, he says, solve a problem by denying it exists, or by denying that its actual cause is its cause. Right, says I, asking at the same time just how you are going to determine its cause. Then, says I, you must be sure you are right, i.e. infallible. Campbell now asserts that the Chicago and Los Angeles race riots were actually caused by young barbarians, and that the racist side of it came in later. Maybe this is so, but if he is going to bring it in as anything other than a side issue then he should attempt to document his statement. He doesn't. Why then does he write this? Because he wants to talk about race, and the negro in particular.

In writing of the ghetto, Campbell denies that such conditions automatically breed crime: he talks of other sections of the community in ghettoes which have not resorted to crime the way the negroes have (?). He

also interestingly refers to the 'arrogant defiance of the law' by civil rights groups. But, John, you spent a whole editorial five months ago proving that the law was fallible!

Campbell speaks of the Chinese and the Jews, largely. Neither of these groups has been treated as badly as the negro: I can't recall many lynchings of Chinese. And of course, for the negro, the terrifying thing is that before a court of law, where supposedly all men are treated equally, they are statistically discriminated against. That's another small matter Campbell overlooks. By this century, or at least in the last thirty years, Chinese and Jews have been admitted to schools in just the same way as anyone else. Campbell has tried in this editorial to make the point that Chinese and Jews have overcome discrimination against them from an educational viewpoint. Now when there was any real discrimination against them education was a thing for the rich anyway; it was far more a private matter. With education today supposedly universal, there's only one group in the U.S.A. which misses out. This doesn't by any means invalidate what he says, it just casts suspicion. The Chinese have been a smaller group in the U.S.A. and therefore any persecution must have been on a smaller scale - not nearly sufficient to reach the newspapers back in the days when they were persecuted.

Sometimes Campbell really does appeal to the audience. On page 157 he proposes something which he knows no one in power can hear, and then goes on to declare that no one would implement it anyway. Once he wrote an editorial on this kind of argument - he called it the self-fulfilling prophecy.

For some reason he thinks that all that has happened to the negro has also happened to the other racial groups he mentioned, though not on so large a scale (though he doesn't get around to saying that).

Campbell believes that the problem lies in the difference between punishment and torture (which may well be true, to some extent at least) and goes on to suggest that the distinction lies entirely with the recipient. This denies the existence of sadism, to start with, and quite possibly just the sort of race-hate which Campbell believes (ultimately) to spring from this confusion of torture and punishment.

He makes up a little story about two men, one who believes he is being tortured while the other believes he is being punished. The resulting conversation makes me glad that Campbell is no longer writing fiction.

Any discipline is painful - that's how the next paragraph starts, and it isn't very hard to recall that previous editorial in which he talked about Slavery and Education.

Campbell concludes this editorial by asserting that negroes commit more crimes per capita than others. Again he fails to name names, to state facts.

But nevertheless it is true that the negro must help himself. What Campbell fails to realise is that the whites must find a way to do this, if possible.

KUDOS FOR NASA (January 1966)

In the August 1961 ANALOG, page 101, referring to the U.S. favouring liquid fuel rockets over solid fuel rockets, John Campbell wrote: 'As things are now arranged, however, this means that America is inevitably committed to surrendering the future to the Soviets.'

He was referring to the future of space exploration. It is rather a refreshing change, then, to read this editorial in which he lavishes praise on the NASA folk, and admits that the U.S. is still in the Space Race.

He makes the quite important point that because the U.S. had only low-powered launch vehicles in the early days of space exploration they had to learn to miniaturise equipment, and this meant the use of transistors, which were less prone to failure as well. The Russians, with their large vehicles, didn't have to worry about such things. But now that they also have to miniaturise, they have to start from the ground up, and learn what the U.S. learned four, five and six years ago.

Specifically, Campbell is concerned with the results from Mariner IV, and in particular the dust-clouds and craters observed. He tries to offer an explanation for the dust-clouds, and concludes with the suggestion that Mars may really prove to be a death-trap, being covered by a sea of dust.

He then goes on to discuss the nature of the planet in general, and discusses possible surprises in the investigation of other planets. He suggests once more that 'scientists' have cut-and-dried ideas about the planets, whereas in fact scientists are extremely hesitant. He quotes one of his authors as predicting the sort of thing which would be observed on Mars, forgetting, conveniently, that fellow Webb and his article. He goes on to speculate about possible surprises in the rest of the solar system. His guesses may well be right, but guessing is not particularly meritorious: guesses can be wrong, and no one minds. But a scientist cannot base any theories upon an absence of evidence, as was the case with the Solar Wind and the craters of Mars. These things had simply not been seen before.

'IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG TIME...' (February 1966)

This is one of the few editorials in which Campbell discusses advances in technology and leaves aside recriminations dealing with his own personal recognitions of the solution many years past.

He writes, fairly simply, about the shift in emphasis in electronics from vacuum tube to solid-state. His point is that it is wrong to think that because solid-state devices are best under certain circumstances they are best in all circumstances. He documents this point carefully. He believes that those involved in the construction of electronic devices have developed a mental set under which they see the solution of all problems in terms of solid-state devices whereas (and he gives an example) it used to be the other way round.

Before going further it might be wise to consider just who it is who has

this mental set. Not scientists, but engineers - Campbell's beloved readers. He doesn't say that, of course. For once, he is not attacking orthodox science, but the fellers who apply it.

He goes on from this point to consider the problem of the mental set as a barrier to discovery, and here he starts to write about the scientist. He admits that no one knows what these barriers are at the moment, nor even whether they exist, but as an example he considers that present-day nuclear physicists have a Ptolemaic explanation of subnuclear structure. Bully!

For the last three years I have been telling my Matriculation students just this: that they should take our present explanations with a grain of salt. And I'm not exactly a world-shattering figure on account of this radical belief. Before he died, Norbert Wiener wrote (and this was over two years ago, for the benefit of those who can't see the significance of the point):

> 'There is a general feeling that the multiplicity of fundamental particles in physics is intolerable and is bound to be replaced in the near future by a much more unified physics in which both quantum theory and relativity are to be recast and in which the origin and disintegration will be of the nature of quantum jumps.'

Science fiction falls behind science again! The emphasis is mine, but the importance is obvious: it isn't the scientists who have the fixed ideas - if anyone it's the science-fictionists! But this is not the point. Campbell can't really be expected to keep up with the entire field of science (nor can anyone else!) but certainly he might have checked this small point before devoting half a page of editorial to it. By the way, the scientist is not going to give any half-cocked alternative explanations until he has good reason to. We may not like the present theory, but it explains what we observe, and whenever it doesn't we can still ad hoc it. The time to change is when we get a contradiction, or a simpler explanation.

Campbell goes on to discuss the relation between the mathematical explanation of the universe, citing the 'proof' that a bumblebee can't fly. This was, of course, simply an application of mathematics to the world - a wrong application. This sort of job is done by a bloke with a slide-rule!

Finally, he brings up the point that it may be that one of our theoretical fixations prevents us from making radical discoveries, such as an 'antigravity unit and (a) position-displacer.' Maybe, and maybe not. If an example from the past could be cited it might help, but fairly obviously this sort of thing would be covered over by the passing of time. Until the phenomenon is there, I see no reason for believing: I save my faith for other things.

Nor do I think it likely that shoving a few present-day valves together will make an antigravity unit. Campbell seems to believe that this is the way scientific discoveries are made. In fact it is how an engineer might work.

Hey John, get off your readers' backs!

CRACKPOTS IN GOVERNMENT (March 1966)

This is the last of the editorials to be considered in this article in which Campbell rides one of his hobby-horses: Krebiozen and the Federal Drug Authority. There are quite a few points here upon which it is worth challenging him.

By omission, he implies that all men seeking power are 'crackpots, fanatics, and bigots,' and that they wish to do so only to impose their own beliefs. Now he knows, and you know, that there are many who would not fall into any of these groups, nor have that motive. And just how are we to tell the sheep from the goats? It just depends whose side you are on: obviously the 'crackpots, fanatics and bigots' are on the other side. If they weren't so bigoted they'd be on our side. This is really the point: it's a matter of 'Whose side are you on?' - at least in the matters which Campbell discusses. There have been some few people in positions of power, and somewhat more who have tried to achieve it, who have perhaps been a trifle unstable, but their numbers have been few and their time of power relatively short. This is beside the point: John is gunning for the F.D.A., so let's examine his ammunition.

I don't think anyone would be expected to accept as truth any assertions made in an argument of the kind Campbell wants. We want evidence, and dragging up thalidomide just isn't enough. But there can be some discussion of that when the time comes. So when Campbell says, 'Typically, convinced of their own indubitable rightness and righteousness, they know those who question their arbitrary rulings are necessarily doing so for venal reasons. Their enemies must be seeking personal gain, and be indifferent to the welfare of the human race.' we may heartily laugh, 'Oh, yeah?' and pass lightly on to the next witticism. But just what is he trying to do here? I think he is trying to establish in the reader the frame of mind necessary to accept anything of what follows. As the sentences stand they are meaningless. There is one important point, however. The Government has (presumably) appointed the F.D.A. to cut down the sort of thing that happened as a result of thalidomide misuse. In a sense, they <u>have</u> to be right: it is their <u>necessary function</u> to be always right, not their own conceit. And the same applies of course to the rulings of the Church: once again, it is necessary to be absolutely right.

Campbell then admits that just about all competent people have a say in the decisions of the F.D.A. This means that it is a pretty good government organ: most of them seem to choose their members on their unsuitability. Therefore, if someone <u>does</u> attack an F.D.A. ruling (perhaps someone from the Brontosauric Drug Company) then the F.D.A. is not going to say, 'You're just trying to make money' - it would have the view that, although the guy may have a point, it is probably better not to risk it. And risk is the word. A lot of money has changed hands over the thalidomide schemozzle. I doubt very much that the Krebiozen mob brought forward incontrovertible evidence that their product did what they said it did. That's the only occasion on which the F.D.A. would be justified in changing its ruling.

And today there's not nearly close enough examination of the dangers of drugs. The F.D.A. is not sufficiently rigid and harsh. Most birth-control pills (make that 'all') haven't had nearly enough testing, particularly over

long periods. The F.D.A. is soft, flexible, rather than monolithically conservative as Campbell suggests.

The matter of thalidomide interests him, and justifiably, if what he claims is true. But I doubt that any firms are going to being forward thalidomide in the near future, under that name, unless they can correct the unfortunate side effects - it is so expensive! Campbell thinks that it was publicity that stopped the F.D.A. from allowing thalidomide to be used any longer. A more accurate picture would be that the publicity prevented drug companies from continuing to market it. Campbell also thinks that the public reaction to the use of gas in Vietnam was because it was new and modern, whereas it was because the use of gas is contrary to the Articles of War, as signed by the U.S.

And then he pulls the blooper of the year. He says that while the thalidomide effect is specific to humans, caffeine produces a similar effect in mice. He then says that it is only the fact that caffeine is traditional that prevents it from being banned. (I think he's joking!) He goes on to suggest that penicillin should be banned because of its effect on pigs - or rather suggests that this would be possible.

Hold it! Okay - penicillin is bad for pigs: don't use it on them. Caffeine is bad for mice: don't use it on them. Thalidomide is bad for humans: don'e use it on them. This seems fairly reasonable. We have a multiplicity of drugs available to us now: why use one which has to be assisted with counter drugs when another can be used? Well, says John, there are strong indications that thalidomide inhibits cancer. Wow, says I, and where is this written up? But he does not reply. He just asserts, that thalidomide might inhibit some cancers.

From this point Campbell just discusses the F.D.A. vs. Krebiozen case. And it is difficult to assess the rights and wrongs of the matter, since, despite his allegations of 'trial-by-newspaper', his is the only report I've read, and I like to think that I try to keep up with events in the U.S.A. However, I think the facts can be left, and their implications, as produced by Campbell, be examined instead.

First, he suggests that by charging Krebiozen with fraud and so on, as well as with violation of F.D.A. rulings, the F.D.A. is trying to gain a non-losing position. Good for them! He then goes on to say that if this were done in a criminal case, then even though the alleged criminal were found not guilty of the major crimes, and guilty of only a minor one, then in the mind of the public guilt will have been established. Okay, maybe some people think like that. But in this particular case I don't care about the others - the fact that John Q. Public does is no concern of mine. What does concern me is that the company has been found guilty of violating a ruling of a government-appointed body, composed of universally-acknowledged experts, and that there may be subsequent dangers to the human race. This is the point at issue: Krebiozen was found to be worthless and, by implication, dangerous.

Next Campbell deals with the detection or non-detection of active agents in Krebiozen, and suggests that the F.D.A. would not use the correct tests - tests they used to discover the presence of insecticide residues. If indeed this happened, is Campbell seriously suggesting that Krebiozen cures by an accumulative process, over forty or fifty years? Because that is when the insecticide residues become dangerous. If Krebiozen is as dilute as that, then doses must be massive - and expensive. If the makers of Krebiozen have a worthwhile product, surely they could produce a slightly more concentrated form - so that they could market their product. I assume they took the matter seriously, of course...

But there it is. Krebiozen really failed a scientific test of its existence, and no one worries about its curative powers, according to John. John is only interested because this represents another case like psionics, like the Dean machine, where an existence proof was wanted.

But when Campbell is asked why he's so upset, he says it's because he wants health for his family. He goes on: 'Remember that a tradition-oriented, conservative orthodoxy can base its judgements only on the past.' A telling point, one might think at first glance: these traditionally-minded people are a damned nuisance. But how many of you would trust a person who based his judgements on the future? You see, Campbell is gesturing. He just wants people on his side, and forget whether they think or not!

He goes on to false panegyrics concerning the desirability of the Status Quo. All very sharp satire, I'm sure.

But I just want to make sure that future developments concern pieces of apparatus that work, and are not dangerous. If possible. And this is only possible by screening out those things which are demonstrably unsuitable.

'THE BEST MADE PLANS...' (April 1966)

This editorial is actually an article on the Light that Failed in the U.S.A. in November, 1965. Campbell examines the causes, as known, of the Blackout, his main point being that this happening just could not have been predicted.

John discusses the nature of Errors, and indicates that three types appeared in this crisis: that of Ignorance, that of the Real Goof, and that of the Deliberate Choice. He says that since the behaviour of the system is unknowable, all of its properties could not have been predicted. For this reason, engineers in other countries are now worried. I think it is pertinent to ask here just why such an immense system was erected. Campbell suggests that this was to avoid the very thing that happened, the idea being that each power station would have the assistance of all the others, rather like a number of mountain-climbers roped together for safety. The trouble is that the system is now rather large, so that a few climbers can slip and fall, taking all the others with them! Here's a point Campbell might have made, I think. He didn't, because engineers designed the network, and engineers can't be intentionally wrong.

The Real Goofs occurred when someone, not an engineer, decided that a given piece of apparatus was not essential, and didn't need a power supply. Naturally, it was essential. This is quite an interesting thing, and Campbell does very well to bring this sort of thing to the public eye.

He does equally well in suggesting that many hospitals just don't have emergency power supplies of the right kind, so that in these circumstances, just when their services are most needed, they are helpless.

This long (eleven pages) editorial is in many ways a fine analysis of a situation, and is certainly of interest to readers of sf. But why, one wonders, doesn't JWC plead for simplification of the system?

'THE PUBLIC BE DAMNED!' (May 1956)

Or John Campbell Discusses The Evils Of Capitalism. At various times he has uttered uncapitalistic remarks, and some people may recall an editorial in which he set out to prove that the U.S. was a communist country and the U.S.S.R. a capitalist one.

In this case, Campbell tries to analyse the capitalism-gone-wild of the New York Transit strike of last year. I don't think this was given much publicity locally, but in the U.S it was of considerable interest.

In New York the City was trying to run a subway system on a fare of five cents. That was the main trouble, of course: even with fares of five to ten times that, Melbourne's railways cannot make a profit. Campbell thoughtfully discusses the results of this attempt to charge the public what it wants to pay (as opposed to what it needs to pay) and in passing says a lot about the capitalist system. He makes the excellent point that a strike of this kind is a strike against the people, rather than a strike against the robber-barons.

The other interesting thing that Campbell reveals is that different State instrumentalities in New York (and presumably in the rest of the U.S.) have different wage scales for the same job. I wonder if he'd like to change that system for the one in Victoria, where the State-employed teachers have to wait until an independent Commission has decided whether the State-employed turners and fitters should get a pay-rise before their case is even thought of!

OBSERVER EFFECT (June 1966)

Here Campbell eventually gets around to one of his favourite subjects - dowsing - and on the way he manages to say some quite interesting things. His basic idea is that often an effect from the observer prevents the discovery of the real nature of a phenomenon. Naturally he cites observations of the electron, but then goes on to discuss cases where the observer effect is negligible but present. His unfortunate habit is to use the word 'irrational' in place of the phrase 'not yet understood.' The fact that we cannot explain something doesn't make it irrational, perverse, or cantankerous, just a trifle annoying.

Now Campbell moves on to Albertus Magnus, with the claim that with his recipe for a rainbow he was far ahead of Newton. Of course he is here introducing this as a perverse phenomenon, but Magnus, the engineer, was unable to make any use of the phenomenon. It needed a scientist - albeit a peculiar one - to make use of the rainbow, and to try to relate it to other phenomena.

Campbell describes the situation in present-day psychology as being in much the same position as was alchemy in Newton's day. Since he regards alchemy as the science which became physics and chemistry, this is not unreasonable. Psychology is a new science, and the birth pangs have not yet even become prolonged. Here is a 'science' in which the Observer Effect is considerable, if ever there was one!

Now John likes the idea that what we term the Observer Effect may only indicate something about which insufficient is known. Actually, the Observer Effect is not quite the solution to the problem of data. The important thing about the Observer Effect is that it repeats itself, that it happens every time. Dowsing, however, only allegedly occurs with some individuals and, so far as I can see from this reading, some of the time. Not quite the same thing as not understanding why it works!

Summary

As indicated early in this article, I am quite aware that my views are biassed, and I make no apology for this. The result has been that in many cases I have seized upon matters which others would have thought to be unimportant, and disregarded those things essential to the future of civilization. But that's the way I said it would be.

However, I think this article does make clear my admiration for the man who has edited the best science fiction magazine for almost thirty years. And in his own writings we can see just why his work has been so outstanding.

Campbell is a maverick: he just won't conform to any mould. The result is that somewhere, sometime, he must offend everyone. But he is always interesting, always challenging. One may think that a given article is meaningless twaddle, but one must always admit that it is well-written, interesting twaddle.

Just whether such writing should appear in a science fiction magazine is another matter.

Most editors seem to find the writing of editorials real torture, and only Merwin or Mines, to my knowledge - and perhaps Lowndes - approached Campbell in this department, just as their magazines were the only ones to really challenge his.

I don't think that editorials in sf magazines are places for the discussion of next month's, this month's, or last month's stories or articles, or for digests of news releases that have some vague connection with science. I think Campbell is doing the right thing: writing about mildly scientific subjects, mostly unorthodox, and generally having some application

to the future in which John Campbell is so interested.

I enjoy reading them, and the challenges they present. For me, that's enough. What you think is your problem, if I may leave you with so Campbellian a problem.

* * *

The Editor, Seeing nearly a Whole Page Blank, Sneaks In before Someone Else can Use It:

By the time you're reading this, I'll be in sunny (I hope) Perth. A quick trip this time, with a week each in Perth and the South-West, so I may not get around to seeing all our colleagues there. But I do intend to see more of King's Park than I did last time: it's a magnificent spot. I love Perth. A clean, spacious city, with trees and lawns in abundance - and that beautiful expanse of water, the Swan River.

Interesting people in Perth, too. For example, the Chief Justice who recently disallowed the application of a young chap there for exemption from national service training. In his summing up, this worthy lawman said: 'The commandment, Thou shalt not kill, has long been accepted to refer to murder, and not to military operations.'

Whatever else may be said about the case, I think the judge was correct, in a way, in his decision. Australian law seems to recognise claims for exemption when the applicant can prove he belongs to a denomination which is 'against war.' Quakers, for example, have no trouble. But you can't get out of it just because you believe something strongly: you have to have a recognised organisation behind you. In the Perth case, the applicant was a Catholic, and the judge evidently felt that the Catholic Church has this strange view on acceptable killing.

Now, I'm no authority on Catholic teaching. But I do know a number of Catholic friends who wouldn't have a bar of the judge's statement. And I also know that the founder of the Christian Church once said: 'You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement." But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire.'

But it's no good telling the judge what Jesus thought about something. I recall my own experience in the dock some years ago. On that occasion the prosecutor and I hurled quotations back and forth at each other until we were blue in the face, but it was still the fact that I belonged to a church which had made strong statements about war that got me my exemption, not my own beliefs. Now that I am no longer associated with any church, I can expect to find myself in a very sticky situation if I'm ever called up. (Isn't it strange that so many sf fans are anti-war, anti-violence, when you think how much of both you get in science fiction?)

R E V I E W S

JOHN FOYSTER K.U.F. WIDDERSHINS
LEE HARDING JOHN BREDEN JOHN BANGSUND

JOHN BAXTER: THE GOD KILLERS (New Worlds 163/164)

It seems that the works of one's acquaintances are rather more meaningful than those of strangers. In John Baxter's writings I have found much which is familiar and expected. His first novel, THE GOD KILLERS (to be published in Ace Books as THE OFFWORLDERS) does read very much like a Baxter product.

No one expects a first novel to be perfect, at least not in the world of science fiction. Actually the word 'perfect', which one might reasonably expect to be rather restricted in application, is applied carelessly to many novels which are far from perfect - as witness Neil Jillett's description of Ballard's THE CRYSTAL WORLD in the Melbourne Age. I don't think even Ballard's closest friend would wish that upon him.

THE GOD KILLERS is, at least, a novel in the sense that it would have to appear as a serial in any current magazine. I am reminded of a recent ANALOG serial which ran to two forty-page episodes. Of the magazines currently appearing, both F&SF and GALAXY have published one-shot stories which were longer than that. This brings to mind another point - that only magazines which carry serials survive: STARTLING and THRILLING WONDER, for example, were at least as good as some of the magazines which survived - but they didn't carry serials.

John seems to have considerable trouble running a story to this length, which is hardly surprising - I don't think John has turned out any novelettes yet. And the story itself isn't really up to much.

Of course the editing doesn't help. I was just sitting down, getting used to the style of the novelist-Baxter when (on page five) a typo leapt out, making a sentence meaningless. I suppose this sort of thing isn't regarded as very important, since the editor knows that most of his readers can only just read anyway, but it does do the writer a considerable disservice.

At no time is it clear what the novel is about. The protagonist seems to be doing something, but just what it is is never made clear: events just happen. Of course, this may well be the way John sees life: events just occur, manipulating humans who then go off and do things purposelessly. I hope I'm wrong in this conjecture.

None of John's characters ever really understand each other: they are always isolated, alone in the world. Nor is there any sexual warmth, only

performance. There's no trust in Merryland. I found it difficult (or maybe impossible) to identify with any of the characters in this work - and I did try. John can do better.

John Foyster

MARTIN LORAN: AN OUNCE OF DISSENSION (Analog, July 1966)

The title may be John Campbell's - it sounds very much like it - but the fact is that this is the first story by Australian writers to be accepted by Campbell for his magazine. The writers are RON SMITH (actually an expatriate American) and the indisputably Australian JOHN BAXTER (who once had a pet bunyip, as though to prove his nationality). The story mightn't appear in a classy issue - there are a couple of other unlikely names on the contents page - but the story is certainly of ANALOG standard.

It's the first in the Library Service series of yarns which Smith and Baxter have sold JWC, and if this first one is a foretaste of things to come, then the locals obviously have a novel/collection on their hands. It's a light piece, contrasting strongly with John's other recent story, THE GOD KILLERS. And it seems to be far more successful. In a way it puts a bit past Campbell, for this is the first ASTOUNDING/ANALOG story I've read in which the hero tries to sell pornographic pictures. Another first to Australia!

I don't think the motivations of the characters, either individually or en masse, hold a great deal of water, but there are no scientific errors, and three cents a word is three cents a word. More power to Martin Loran's elbow, says I!

K.U.F. Widdershins

ROGER ZELAZNY: THIS IMMORTAL (Ace Books: 50c.)

THIS IMMORTAL appeared originally, in shorter form in F&SF, as ...AND CALL ME CONRAD. Under the latter name it has been awarded the Hugo for Best Novel, jointly with Frank Herbert's DUNE. A dissertation of considerable length could be written on this joint Hugo: there has never been one before, and one cannot imagine a more contrasted pair of books. For me personally, DUNE isn't within streets of CALL ME CONRAD, yet I can well picture many of our readers becoming indignant about the what-they-might-call-insult to DUNE in not letting that book take the Hugo by itself. De gustibus, etc.

I could give you an outline of the story, but why spoil it for you? It's the kind of book which reveals its background to you as it progresses, and it's a magnificently conceived, entirely credible background.

Let's just say the time is future and post-cataclysmic. The central characters are Conrad Nomikos and Cort Myshtigo, a Vegan alien. The former is the protagonist, an ugly virile young Greek, who through some accident is apparently some centuries old. His name means judge or lawgiver. But he has other names which keep turning up to embarrass him. One is Karaghiosis - which, if you've read as far as page one of ZORBA THE GREEK, you will

recognise the name of the Greek Punch. And he is supposed to be a kallikanzaros. (Which my dictionary translates as ghoul, but I gather it's more of a bogeyman sort of thing.) Anyway, whatever his true name, age, career, Conrad is a superb creation. Almost as superb as Zorba - and I refer to Kazantzakis's Zorba, not Anthony Quinn's.

Cort Myshtigo, the inscrutable Vegan who gives Conrad most of the headaches in the book, is one of the best aliens I've struck. Although man-like, he is definitely alien, no mistaking that - not Spencer Tracy with third eye and plastic antennae - but just as alive as the human characters. Such as Hasan the assassin, who has theological problems of an unusual kind; or George Emmet the bug-man, who mutates and dissects insects and things, and would like to raise children the same way; or Phil Graber, poet and writer of epitaphs.

Zelazny has a fine sense of humour. There's lots of fun with names and allusions - I'm sure Cort Myshtigo means something quite hilarious if I could only grasp it - but, unusual with this sort of thing, it in no way detracts from the story. Maybe it's because the puns and so on are more gentle, more subtle, than other writers manage: in Thomas Pynchon's V, for example, or in CATCH 22, the names Scheissvogel and Scheisskopf, though funny the first time, tend to obscure the characters they adorn. (No, I won't translate: how can you live without a German dictionary?)

The book is almost faultless. Vivid language, distinctive characters, expertly interwoven science and future history, a good yarn to tell - these are some of the ingredients. My only complaint is that it's far too short. To invent such an intriguingly credible world, such marvellous characters, and to splurge them in 174 pages, is wasteful. Everything's there - I don't mean it's incomplete as it stands - I just wanted more.

THIS IMMORTAL isn't an easy book to get hold of. Pester your favourite bookseller until he gets you a copy, or wait for some enterprising British publisher to do it, or steal one. You'll love it.

John Bangsund

WILLIAM ATHELING Jr.: THE ISSUE AT HAND (Advent, $5.00US)
LLOYD ESHBACH (ed): OF WORLDS BEYOND (Dobson, $2.30)

The field of science fiction is not, apparently, one which lends itself readily to criticism. Until 1949 or 1950 there were no serious attempts at criticism of sf in the professional magazines, and precious few in the amateur magazines. In 1950 Damon Knight was editor of WORLDS BEYOND, and in that magazine printed the first real criticism of sf. At about the same time, Robert Lowndes was editing the Columbia pulps - FUTURE, SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, and later DYNAMIC and SF STORIES - and he soon introduced this more rigorous mode. Knight was one of his reviewers, and for a time he carried a series of articles on sf by James Blish.

Since then relatively serious criticism has appeared in various magazines by those already named, and by Lester del Rey and Theodore Sturgeon, but usually only for a short time in a given magazine. Right now Algis Budrys, in

GALAXY, comes nearest to these ideals of former years. In fanzines, too, serious criticism of sf appeared, and James Blish, as 'William Atheling Jr ', was perhaps the most prolific. His early reviews appeared in Redd Boggs's SKYHOOK (Boggs himself being perhaps the most able exponent of criticism in the fan world) and the later ones in Larry Shaw's AXE and Bergeron's WARHOON and the Lupoffs' XERO. Some of his writings have been collected and published as THE ISSUE AT HAND.

In some ways Blish has done what the reviewers for ASFR are trying to do. I think that in general these people do take sf seriously. And this, naturally, produces the situation where the critic (a word I'll employ rather than 'reviewer', for reasons I'll mention later) must present more adverse criticism than praise. Few of the short articles I've written here, for example, describe the fiction in glowing terms. We've been picked up for this, both in letters and in conversation. But as far as we are concerned it would be unreasonable to write a good piece on a book we know to be bad. Okay, someone else may think the book is good - if you want your opinion re-echoed, read <u>their</u> review. I've been told that I should be replaced by 'someone who likes sf.' That attitude seems to me to be typical: get someone who will praise sf, and to hell whether the sf is good or bad!

And I don't think you'll find many <u>reviews</u> in ASFR, in the form of plot summaries. This is an art-form whose value I cannot appreciate, but I imagine that there are people for whom this is necessary. This is how I imagine the thought-processes of the typical fan who likes book reviews:

The fan arrives home with his copy of ANALOG, thrilled to the back teeth with the possible wonderment which will grasp him by the testicles from yet another Joe Poyer novelette. 'Jeez!' he thinks, 'another great Joe Poyer novelette! Wait till I tell the boys in the machine shop about this!' Now he turns to his favourite page (after John Campbell's world-shaking editorials, that is) - Schuy Miller's penetrating columns of book reviews. 'Jeez, there's another Andre Norton out - let's see what it's about...' As he reads his eyes widen and he scratches his head in amazement. 'Jeez!' he thinks, 'another ruined city story...my favourites! Jeez! Wait till I tell the boys in the machine shop about this one!'

And off he goes, with his ANALOG under his arm and his hard-earned cash in his hand. We may deplore his choice of reading (and prefer Harry Harrison perhaps) and his punctuation (at the same time realising that his education has come largely from John Campbell's story-blurbs) but we must admit that he is typical. In many ways this is what the fan wants to know - what happens in the story? - will I like it?

Now here we don't try to tell you what happens in the story: we try to decide whether the yarn is good or bad sf, or at least offer some guideposts. By now most readers should know our tastes, and whether to follow the criticism of Writer X or go contrary to it. But we write about the Book, not about the Plot.

This is what James Blish (and Knight and the others I've mentioned) has

done in the past, and rather better at that. This collection of essays covers the field rather lightly between 1951 and 1964. In many cases one would like to know what Blish thought of a book not discussed here, but there is enough to interest even the least demanding fan.

Blish is down on bad writing, first and almost all the way through to last. In sf he has a field overloaded with bad writing, of course, and his essays make this quite clear. And he says why the writing is bad. But he rarely blames the author for his shortcomings - he feels that it is the editor who is at fault, and he makes a convincing case for this. He writes (with justification) of Howard Browne as an editor 'who wouldn't buy a bad story if a worse one was available.'

Blish takes Sturgeon's definition of good sf very seriously:
'A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content.'
He takes this definition as a law, and will exclude any story which fails to meet all its requirements. He is pretty close to being right, but this definition would exclude, for instance, Walter Miller's THE BIG HUNGER, and many of Cordwainer Smith's stories. If the phrase 'human beings' is treated rather loosely, this difficulty is removed. Using this definition, Blish would obviously exclude just about all of Keith Laumer's output (all that I've read, anyway) and many of the other stories which have been disapproved by this magazine. I would contend, for example, that DUNE is not sf by this definition, since the scientific content could have been done away with completely. This by itself does not prevent DUNE from being enjoyable reading, just from being sf.

One of the problems which an editor must face is that of the author who is determined to get as much out of the story as possible, because each word means another three cents. The result is what Blish calls in one place 'phony realism.' Some may recall a story in ASTOUNDING (yes, in the old days) in which there was a great deal of cigarette smoking. Someone (Bob Shaw, I think) went through all the motions described in the story, lighting and smoking the cigarettes when directed by the author. He found it impossible to keep going at the rate required. This is only an example, and occurs in many ways. For example, in one of Frank Herbert's recent stories there's a description of an operation which is above the heads of most of his readers, and which is padded to extract the maximum number of shekels from the GALAXY coffers. And it isn't really tension-building, either. But for this we can hardly blame the financially-depressed author - he is working in a shockingly badly paid field.

In this book Blish covers most of the follies of modern science fiction. One may disagree with him on particular points, but one cannot fail to respect him. This book, THE ISSUE AT HAND, is regrettably rather expensive and difficult to obtain, but it contains some of the most important things ever said about science fiction.

Lloyd Eshbach must have been rather uncertain of his audience when he

first produced OF WORLDS BEYOND for Fantasy Press in 1947. The market for sf magazines was not even as big as it is now, but on the other hand the readers of those days were probably more enthusiastic.

Seven writers have produced short articles on varied aspects of the writing of sf. Just who would want to read such a book must be discovered from the book itself, and here the answer is quite obvious: OF WORLDS BEYOND is directed at the fledgeling writer. But even more importantly, it is devoted to those who wish to become writers of sf of the old style - just as these writers were or are.

Robert Heinlein gets to the heart of the matter, in a way, writing mainly about the plot. The ideas are much the ones we might expect from Heinlein: make it solid, make it new. John Taine, who apparently had a better name in 1947 than now, discusses 'the science novel.' He is concerned with scientific accuracy, and with the importance of up-to-date references. Since sf is always ten or twenty years behind the times this hardly seems relevant.

Jack Williamson writes about 'logic.' I confess myself unable to follow his argument closely, but he seems to be talking about the development of plot and character. Van Vogt, of course, revealed his method in his article, and makes quite a convincing case for its use in sf. But here is given away the main point: this book is directed towards the production of standard, pulp, negligible-as-literature sf. It would be extremely difficult to use Van Vogt's precepts in a conventional novel, or even to follow the rules of Williamson at the same time.

L. Sprague de Camp makes the point, rather well, that it is difficult to write humorous sf. Possibly only Eric Frank Russell and Robert Sheckley have succeeded in this limited field. De Camp also produces a set of rules. One could hardly expect E.E. Smith to have much to say of meaning to present-day readers. Yet his SKYLARK DUQUESNE, written in that same old style, was nominated for the Hugo this year. Obviously the tastes of readers have not changed in the last thirty years. So much for the changing face of sf! And this essay, perhaps, most closely links sf with general fiction. Smith had been trying to write high-class fiction, then?

John Campbell's article might easily have been one of his present-day editorials: advice to writers, homespun philosophy - intertwined, not very sensible. But it follows the pattern of the earlier writers - okay, fellers, here's the way to do it.

Clearly this book was intended for the beginning, or about-to-begin, writer. It is also clear, from this book and from other sources, that many if not most readers of sf regard themselves as successful authors of the future. The fact that so many of them succeed can hardly be said to recommend this limited field.

K.U.F. Widdershins

THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE

(So much material in this issue I've been done out of my special pages and relegated to the review section... Such are the trials of being a shadow editor. You don't find Foyster or Widdershins's stuff being mucked about with, do you? If the truth's known, Bangsund will probably even re-write this paragraph...) *

Since I've been reading sf steadily for review purposes I've managed to gain an advantage over my fellow slaves in ASFR in that, so far, I've been able to select books which I feel I will enjoy and write about appreciatively. I've been reading sf long enough to have learned to separate the wheat from the chaff and, naturally enough, I have my own personal favourites - and I have a rough idea what the general reader likes. It's not always quite as easy as that of course. New writers are cropping up everywhere, and the reader must approach some books completely blindly. No matter how cautiously you pick them, sooner or later you'll come up with a stinker. Which I did recently, in the mistaken belief that an editor of a leading sf magazine would surely provide a change of pace from his fellow hacks.

TED WHITE: PHOENIX PRIME (Lancer p.b.: 70c)

is the silliest book I've read this season, sf or otherwise. Actually I suppose it's science-fantasy, but it's a really awful book. As well as being on the F&SF editorial staff, White has written stories and a couple of novels under his own name and a pseudonym or two. This latest offering he should have buried under the least traceable pseudonym he could think of. It starts out promisingly enough, with White writing heavily about himself and being Real Serious about subjects like jazz, love and copulation. Discarding the dreadful inadequacy of the plot - which is another not-too-clever variation on the Jonathan Hoag theme, and which introduces us on page one to yet another tiresome superman - there is certainly a sense of urgency and desperate search for style in the first few chapters. And then on page fifty-four White flips and plunges his superman into an alternate world borrowed from a hundred other stories (which find their way into paperback form with yawn-provoking steadiness) and the carefully-contrived writing of the early part is dispensed with - and we are faced with yet another version of the lone man thrust into grim survival techniques and in search of a Lost Love. It's all very unoriginal and tedious. White has his hero go wandering through the desert in one l-o-n-g stretch of fifty pages. And, not twenty-four hours without food, his hero eats the raw bloody flesh of an alien animal with relish. I find this hard to believe. Only last week there was a fisherman stranded for almost a week on a lonely island in Bass Strait: he had access to all the raw fish and rats he wanted - and he just couldn't get round to it. Really, this is taking fictional license to the extreme. A small point, perhaps, but it makes pages 54 to 189 simply unreadable - and exceedingly dim-witted. I expected better from a professional. Avoid this book at all costs.

JACK VANCE: MONSTERS IN ORBIT / THE WORLD BETWEEN (Ace Double: 55c)

I turn with pleasure to this Jack Vance collection. MONSTERS IN ORBIT is actually two

* (I did.) JB

novelettes from Thrilling Wonder Stories, circa 1952 - ABERCROMBIE STATION and CHOLWELL'S CHICKENS. The flip side is a selection of five stories from Vance's 1950-56 period of magazine writing.

It's about time some well-meaning hardcover publisher got around to packaging some of Vance's best stories. These stories were written when Vance was at his peak. His recent novels - THE STAR KINGS, THE KILLING MACHINE, SPACE OPERA - have all suffered from that current disease in sf, elephantitis. Only the recent BLUE WORLD (THE KRAGEN in Fantastic) harks back to the admirable style of his earlier creations, and the keen reader will find a wealth of wonderful writing in the collection under review - as well as in others previously mentioned in this magazine. The only trouble is that the Ace editions seem to be thrown together with little thought of editorial balance. Small complaint perhaps, when the stories are at least available.

ABERCROMBIE STATION was probably written to Merwin specifications, if one is to judge the obviously spiced-up passages examples of his policies in Thrilling Publications at that time. This was the year of THE LOVERS and NO LAND OF NOD and all that sort of thing, written when Merwin, and later Sam Mines, encouraged their writers to produce fiction that titilated sensually as well as philosophically. This story fills the prescription nicely. The protagonist is an exceedingly un-innocent teenage girl named Jean Parlier. Less than two pages underway, our heroine puts 'her hands to her sides, to her neck, to her waist, to her back, to her legs' and stands naked. Wow! they don't half write like that any more! There's also a kinky young man who fondles specimens from his alien zoo, first removing his clothes, and so on. But you get the message. The delightful part of Vance's writing is that none of this juvenile erotica emerges as crude or grafted on: it's all nicely integrated into a quite gorgeous futuristic romp. Not art, but damned good fun. CHOLWELL'S CHICKENS is a sequel, and nowhere near as good. In this one Vance's inventiveness is lacking. In lieu of his customary vividly delineated alien background we are offered just another 'frontier' planet surprisingly reminiscent of western scenery. Towards the end he manages to start wringing out the chuckles again, but the story is way below his best.

The best of the stories in THE WORLD BETWEEN - THE MEN RETURN - was referred to by John Foyster in ASFR#1 in connection with Philip K. Dick's PALMER ELDRITCH, and I can only echo his sentiments. This is a great story, difficult obviously to write, difficult to imagine when reading, but worth several tries. THE DEVIL ON SALVATION BLUFF is a superb example of the Astounding tradition of fiction-writing in the forties. I don't believe I've ever read a better 'straight' Vance story than this. Terran missionaries try to impose their own concept of time upon a world which has several suns and wildly erratic day and night periods. THE WORLD BETWEEN, THE MOON MOTH, and BRAIN OF THE GALAXY complete the collection. The first is rather pulpy and roughly written, though it contains some excellent ideas. The second is the most recent in the book, and not too good. It indicates the direction Vance was to go: all colour and background, and little interesting motivation of plot or character. The third shows glimmers of the great Vance, but that's all.

Not a very well-balanced collection, then, but well worth the price. Now perhaps Mr. Dobson or Mr. Gollancz will do a proper job for us? I'd gladly supply them with a list of really good Vance stories...

This looks like being Ace-Month...

AVRAM DAVIDSON: THE KAR-CHEE REIGN (Ace Double: 55c)

This one has a flip side. Something called ROCANNON'S WORLD by Ursula K. LeGuin, which I couldn't bring myself to read.

THE KAR-CHEE REIGN is placed somewhat earlier in time than ROGUE DRAGON. You may recall my paean for The Master in ASFR#1. It's becoming painful to observe a man of Avram's talent trying to adapt himself to the pulp medium. I guess he has to do it to Make Money. But I do wish he'd adopt a more thorough-going COMMERCIAL attitude. It's distressing to come across great chunks of real, honest-to-goodness writing in a story like this. There you are wading through the mud in your knee-boots, and suddenly you're treading on flowers. THE KAR-CHEE REIGN isn't even ingenious, though it's mildly diverting in a frustrating half-written way. Better than RORK! for example, which was an abomination. If you like Davidson, you'll have to have the book. If only it was meant to be funny...

PHILIP K. DICK: THE CRACK IN SPACE (Ace: 50c)

Not very good Dick. His formidable series of novels for Ace have always reflected the fantastic pace at which they are written. Don't expect anything like THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE or THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH. From a lesser writer this one would be fair enough, but not from Dick. You'll find the symbols of Dick's World all here, but the story is limp and uninteresting. The idea of a negro president is thrown away, perhaps because basically the book is just some extra wordage grafted on to CANTATA 140, a short novel published in F&SF in July 1964. It wasn't an outstanding story, and the re-write hasn't made it any better. If you haven't read PALMER ELDRITCH you'd be wasting your money reading this one, but if you're a P.K.D.-Forever man I guess you'll have to have it.

Ace have one of the most rewarding publishing lists in all sf, but they're poorly represented out here. Some booksellers have them. McGill's, for example. If you're stuck you could always write direct to Ace Books, (Dept.MM), 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036, U.S.A. with a money order plus 5 cents for each book. And if Mr. Wolheim would like to send us some review copies we'd be able to do more justice to his list...

BRIAN ALDISS: SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL (Four Square: 60c)

It is with - I was about to say relief - with a sense of pleasure undimmed by my sojourn in pulpdom, that I turn to Brian Aldiss's collection: STAN, as we afficianados know it. First issued by Faber in 1956, and now reprinted (God Bless You, Mr. Boardman) with a new foreword by the author.

If the stories of J.G. Ballard tend to focus upon a distinctly personal vision of the universe, then those of Brian Aldiss always seem to look in two directions at once. In his later works we can find evidence of pulp writing and the finer style that have made Aldiss the dean of sf writing of this decade. Sometimes the two elements conflict with each other to the detriment of the product - nowhere better seen than in EARTHWORKS and THE DARK LIGHT YEARS. There is much in his output to make us despair as well as cheer, but in these early stories, all written a decade or more ago, there is none of this literary schizophrenia. Aldiss was a journeyman, learning his craft in the British magazines of that period, and the stories in STAN sum up what I like to call the Carnell Period. Writing within the rather strict limitations of the field at that time, Aldiss produced some charming - sometimes grim, but never hopeless - stories of the future. He fleshed out the cliches of New Worlds and British sf in general with the warm glow of his humanity. The result is hardly earth-shaking but, to answer Aldiss's question in his foreword, the stories have stood the test of time very well indeed. They are certainly more readable than much of the slick and superficial magazine fiction of that era. In this collection you will find the very first Aldiss stories to appear in print, and you will marvel at the completeness of his talent even then. PSYCLOPS, DUMB SHOW, OUR KIND OF KNOWLEDGE. Journeyman's stories, not perhaps very original, but even then Aldiss led the pack.

This paperback is beautifully printed on high-quality paper. It is a compliment to the author. If you haven't a copy, get one. It will read just as well in another decade.

Lee Harding

Blimey, page 33 already, and there's oodles of stuff to come yet! Catch me giving Foyster his head again! Oh well, on we go, irregardless. If the printer has me flang into debtors' prison, at least I can catch up on some of my reading. (Please send a subscription: think of my five starving cats!) JB

LESTER DEL REY: STEP TO THE STARS (Belmont: 60c)

Perhaps it would be best to say at first that I am prejudiced against this sort of novel. Written by an imaginative person, but the kind of thing I classify as sf for those who don't like sf.

The plot concerns the building of the first space station and a boy's dream to help in the operation. The possibility of something like this soon happening in real life is very exciting, but it loses its romance when served up in story form. In my opinion, sf should be a challenge to the vastness of the imagination, and, even without any story at all, should keep the reader glued to the pages with its ideas. I know if I could write as well as this guy I wouldn't waste time and energy writing about the building of the first space station.

Of its type it's a good story. I read it, in fact, to the last page. But the story of the building of a skyscraper might have done the same thing

if well enough written. One thing, though: the science in it, to my knowledge, was very accurate. This is essential for a story of this type when very shortly it may have to compete with the diary of a space-station builder.

John Breden

WILLIAM F. NOLAN (ed): ALMOST HUMAN: ANDROIDS IN SCIENCE FICTION (Souvenir Press: $2.65)

Soon after the first anthologies of sf (edited by Don Wolheim, and Healy & McComas) appeared, an editor previously unheard of started producing anthologies. Groff Conklin's early selections (THE BEST OF SF, BIG BOOK OF SF) were excellent , but he started an unfortunate trend with his subdivision of their contents. This idea reached its height of folly in one of Kendall Foster Crossen's anthologies in which the stories were grouped according to the time in which they were supposed to occur - the last being the Delphic or Dellian Age, I can't quite remember which. The idea did bear good fruit though, in one of the three issues of IF which Damon Knight edited.

However, Conklin soon started a new kind of anthology - the 'theme' anthology. So his titles included INVADERS OF EARTH, SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES IN DIMENSION and many others. At the same time he has continued to bring out occasional general anthologies. But the idea of the 'theme' anthology has remained.

I suppose this is one aid to the selection of stories for an anthology. But I can't really believe that readers of sf have such tremendous preferences for 'types' of story to the point that they will buy or not buy a collection of stories depending on the 'theme.' I haven't counted heads, mind you, and sf fans have many weird fantasies (e.g. 'Keith Laumer writes sf,' - 'Robert F. Young is a great and sensitive writer') so perhaps it is true, after all, that there are 'invader' nuts and 'android' nuts.

Editor Nolan claims that this is the first anthology (out of 250-odd) that has been on the android theme: one must admire a man with the patience to count them up, so I'll not argue with him. Nolan himself is a rather minor West Coast writer whose idolisation of Ray Bradbury made hime produce a fanzine of considerable size on that not unworthy topic. And Nolan's own writing, even in this anthology, is rather reminiscent of Bradbury's.

The book itself was originally produced in the U.S.A. as THE PSEUDO PEOPLE, and was published by a small press which nevertheless did a very good job on the production side. This English edition has been produced from the original plates, so that the reader has every opportunity to see the quite well set up introductions to the stories.

With the restriction that no story used before would be anthologised, Nolan has assembled an excellent collection. Five of the stories are new and, one must admit, look it. The days of BEANSTALK and the like are now long gone.

Henry Kuttner's THOSE AMONG US seemed to me to telegraph its ending, but

this may just be the result of the story's age. Most of the yarns in this book seem to place man and android in opposition, and Kuttner's story introduces this subtheme suddenly. Ray Bradbury's CHANGELING is not a good Bradbury story, and is rather a let-down after the good impression created by the previous one. THE LIFE GAME by Chad Oliver is once again predictable, but only because of its age. This ageing process demonstrates only too clearly the dependence of sf upon plot as almost sole construction.

Asimov's EVIDENCE reveals its source (Astounding) both in plot and style. It's a positronic robot story, and as such has all the mystique of the others to draw upon. The result is that the reader is impressed rather by the totality of the series than by an individual story. I suspect that other stories make EVIDENCE read better. And the source of James Causey's THE SHOW MUST GO ON says a lot about it, too. It originally appeared in Orbit Science Fiction, quite possibly in the infamous Australian edition. The plot has many similarities to Richard Matheson's STEEL, a story which I can remember reading with some pleasure in F&SF.

Robert F. Young's JUKE DOLL and Nolan's THE JOY OF LIVING are not up to the standard of some of the stories already discussed, and certainly are not as good as Charles Beaumont's LAST RITES, which appeared in If during that great magazine's early incarnation. Despite the editorial introduction, the story is more than readable.

The new stories are by Shelley Lowenkopf, Charles E. Fritch, Dennis Etchison, Ron Goulart, and Frank Anmar. They are not great stories which were rejected by magazine editors on account of their challenging, tradition-defying themes, but all of them are quite readable, especially Frank Anmar's THE FASTER-FASTER AFFAIR, which deals with a certain 000000000000000 android.

When Brian Aldiss reviewed this anthology for the OXFORD MAIL, he described it as 'another good anthology.' In these days that won't do: it's better than that - it deserves to be bought, and read.

K.U.F. Widdershins

End of reviews. There are lots more on hand, and we'll clear some of the backlog in our next issue - our Best & Worst SF For The Year Issue. Also I've had to save till next time an excellent article on THE SCIENCE IN SF by Norma Williams.
And now, an apology. Throughout this issue I have spelled Donald A. Wollheim's name incorrectly. My apologies, Mr. Wolheim. The fault is all Harding's.
On with the letters - the end's in sight. JB

ROBERT COULSON, Route 3, Hartford City, Indiana 47348, U.S.A.

In addition to the Hugo winners, special plaques were given to Ric Noonan, who produced the movie FANTASTIC VOYAGE, and Gene Roddenberry, who produced the TV series STAR TREK. (These were not Hugos, but special plaques, and were more in the nature of a business venture than a genuine award; both the movie and TV

series were given a special premiere at the convention. Only luck prevented a plaque for the producer of another TV series, TIME TUNNEL; it was also premiered at the convention, but the producer didn't make his arrangements in time for the committee to give him a plaque. As it turned out, this was exactly right. TIME TUNNEL is awful. FANTASTIC VOYAGE is at least mediocre - which makes it far better than the average sf movie - and STAR TREK is the first halfway decent sf to appear on American TV. In fact, the fans who had hissed and booed all the way through the showing of TIME TUNNEL sat quiet and enthralled during STAR TREK. Not that it's great sf, but it's so much better than anyone expected. I've seen the first two shows on TV; it would help if we had a colour set because of the special effects, but it's still good in black and white. The plots may not be new to sf fans, but they are at least adult for a change.)

The Science Fiction Writers of America present annual Nebula Awards. These are beautiful things, far more impressive than the Hugos as far as physical appearance goes. Winners of the first annual awards were: Best Novel - DUNE; Best Novella - Zelazny's DOORS OF HIS FACE, LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH; Best Novelette - tie between Aldiss's SALIVA TREE and Zelazny's HE WHO SHAPES; Best Short Story - REPENT, HARLEQUIN, SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN.

I haven't really looked at ASFR too closely; things have piled up while I was spending time at the World Con. I can't even tell you much about the formal program because I was selling old magazines throughout most of it. I can mention that John Brunner was brilliant, both in a solo speech and as a member of a panel. The World Con was excellent from my point of view because I met a great many interesting people (including Brunner), and meeting interesting people is the major reason why I'm in fandom.

ASFR reminds me strongly of ZENITH, which is a moderate compliment. I wouldn't want to publish it because I'm not that devoted to a serious contemplation of sf, but it seems very well done and far more readable than such hyper-serious fanzines as RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. I disagree with Baxter on sf films, but then I always do; it's nothing to get worked up about. I'm one of those fans who ignores Roger Corman's films; I've seen a couple of them, and that was quite enough, thank you. If French and British critics 'revere' him, the more fools they. Also, I might mention that if SEVEN FACES OF DOCTOR LAO had been ignored as much as John suggests, it would hardly have been nominated for a Hugo. After all, for a good many years previously, nothing had been nominated in the drama category.

Harding's column is fine. I don't always agree with him. (I found THE WATCH BELOW a miserable book, rampant with coincidence, scientific impossibilities, borrowings from earlier and better writers, mediocre characterization, and not all that great a concept.) But the column as a whole is entertaining and thought-provoking. I may well like the rest of the magazine equally well after I've read it, but so far I've been skimming.

You reviewed editions of two of my favourite works: TO WALK THE NIGHT and EDGE OF RUNNING WATER. Incidental information: EDGE OF RUNNING WATER was made into a very good (for its day) horror movie, THE DEVIL COMMANDS. Sloane has not had any contact with the field as a writer since then, but he has published some excellent sf and fantasy, including Fletcher Pratt's WELL OF THE UNICORN, a heroic fantasy which antedates LORD OF THE RINGS and is in some ways superior to the better-known book. Sloane obviously kept his love for fantasy even though he quit writing it.

RON BENNETT, 52 Fairways Drive, Forest Lane, Harrogate, Yorkshire, U.K.

What do I think of ASFR 3? Man, I don't know how you do it. I have nothing but the highest praise for your zine, for its layout, for its balance of material, for its sheer interest, for its depth of viewpoint, for its literacy, for its wealth of ideas. And probably for half a dozen other reasons which I can't conjure up at a moment's notice. You've a bloody good magazine there and I wish you every success with it. The trouble of course is that now you've started so well you're going to have to keep up such a high standard, and that is going to be no easy task. Don't despair of course (at times you'll feel so) but stick out for your high standards. It's worth it in the long run. But really, a great magazine....and I would have got around to telling you sooner or later if your letter had not prompted me to do so, so please don't think that I'm saying all this merely to be polite. I've been in fandom too long to be merely polite to anyone.

.... The death of Cordwainer Smith has produced more replies than any single SKYRACK item that I can remember. Fandom seems to have been hit really hard by this one.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK, New Worlds, London.

We have given ASFR a plug in a recent NEW WORLDS, in the form of a letter of Lee's which we modified slightly to fit its use. You can count on our support. You seem to be doing an excellent job. The material in no.1 was lively and generally refreshing. If no.2 didn't seem to hit quite the same atmosphere, it was still very interesting and second issues often lack the stimulus of the first but can easily pick up again once the editorial people have got into their stride. I'd echo the criticism mentioned by John Bangsund that there isn't enough about Australian sf in the magazine so far - and I look forward to next month's promised features.

Ted's article was a very good survey of the scene here. John Baxter's article was interesting. Harry Harrison and I went out recently to the studio where Kubrick is making '2001.' Kubrick reckons the film is costing him more (in terms of film on screen) than any picture ever made. The place is more like a NASA base than a film studio (advisors from NASA are permanently around the studio) and I must admit that I got my first kick ever from seeing the beginnings of what is almost purely a technological fantasy, reminiscent of the best of the old ASTOUNDING's attempts at futuristic realism. If '2001' comes off (as I think it will) then I think we'll see a general improvement in 'hard' sf films. Imaginative films, fantasies, surreal excursions, etc. are already around in profusion. In fact the whole European cinema is currently rejecting realism in favour of fantasy. Recent examples from England and the Continent: JULIETTA OF THE SPIRITS, ALPHAVILLE, MORGAN: A SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT, THE TENTH VICTIM (from Sheckley's THE SEVENTH VICTIM), and coming up - Truffaut's FAHRENHEIT 451. Fantasy is infusing the screen at all levels. Some of it's what we'd call 'recognisable' sf, a lot isn't. To me this isn't important. Sf, of the kind that had its 'Golden Age' in the forties and fifties, and which produced many people's standards for the sf of the sixties, is dying or dead anyway. It can't last much longer as a distinct sub-genre, except in its most sensational form, but it has succeeded in influencing the cinema and TV in a way that is perhaps more immediately obvious than the way in which it is influencing modern

literature. Luckily, if TV has done nothing else, it has killed the pulps and more or less the pulp market which they fed and which demanded this kind of stuff.

I'm generally in agreement with your comments on the Moskowitz stuff - though I tend to regard Sam's work as breaking ground for better biographers and bibliographers. Your piece on Keith Roberts was also good and, incidentally, could teach Sam a thing or two!

I wish Harry well in his editorship, of course, but he might find that his policy of publishing sf 'straight down the middle' will be hard to implement. I suspect he has already found this out - there isn't the stuff about. Good 'hard core' sf is hardly being written at all in short stories these days. My own policy is to publish this where it can be found - but there is only so much to be mined. Your own attitude is that magazine sf caters to a minority market. My feeling is that sf magazines are not competing in the majority market where, in a modified form, they could probably survive very well. But you need a lot of money to produce something that competes (in terms of presentation and quality of production) with PLAYBOY, ESQUIRE or even QUEEN and NOVA. I'm certain that a genuine speculative magazine, largely devoted to fiction, but also running speculative articles on developments in both 'hard' and 'soft' sciences, could succeed modestly well (i.e. not sell three million, but sell an easy 100,000 in this country - and that's a very profitable circulation here). There aren't enough hard-core fans to support the magazines in this country, however much you stick (if you can) to conventional sf. NEW WORLDS' circulation has been rising steeply and has gained not, I suspect, from finding favour with the hard-core readers, but with readers generally interested in imaginative fiction of all kinds. I am well aware of NW's deficiencies - it has taken over two years to begin to produce what I feel is needed and we are only just beginning to get over the hump. I'm not sure that even then you, personally, will be happy with the result. Our aim is to produce the best conventionally done sf and the best new stuff, and we seem to be pleasing quite a few people already. We regularly get letters from America, for instance, praising us in no uncertain terms. One received this morning: 'I believe your magazine is the best being published today. Our own F&SF can no longer claim the best authors in the field, nor can it boast that it is publishing the field's seminal work...for that distinction has been or at the very least is being assumed by NEW WORLDS.' This is a typical letter. Roger Zelazny writes specifically for us, as does Brian Aldiss, as do a number of good writers who can command far higher rates than we pay. We run virtually all John Brunner sends us and would be happy to receive work from Bulmer and White. The fact is that most of these writers are not producing much short work these days - they are concentrating on novels for the U.S. market.

I must admit that I feel your comments on NW are less than fair. You say I favour a group of writers who seldom if ever appear elsewhere - but the same could have been said for the majority of writers who appeared in the old NW and who appear in Ted's NEW WRITINGS. Most of our writers are young and/or inexperienced. They are finding their feet in NW as new writers have done since Ted began the magazine. At one time neither Ballard nor Aldiss published anywhere but in NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY. Keith Roberts publishes almost entirely in the British publications. I have always done so, for the same reasons as the others - I feel there is more freedom in the British magazines

(including Ted's NEW WRITINGS); I feel that I, as an author, will be respected better and not have my work subbed to death. You can't say that Charles Platt, George Collyn and David Redd, for instance, are 'introspective' writers - in fact about the only writer who could classify as 'introspective' and who has produced any body of work is Lang Jones, and he writes infrequently.

LEE HARDING comments: My disgruntlement is not because of your encouragement of new writers, which is certainly commendable, nor for the preponderance of amateur fiction in NW - there just isn't enough good pro fiction being made available - but because these new writers will eventually become adept at fashioning the particular style of story you favour, and this certainly won't carry them to other markets. Many of the old NW boys have graduated to American magazines, and the new people Carnell has turned up in NEW WRITINGS seem capable of the same advancement, but the sort of writing you are encouraging will find little welcome elsewhere. I doubt if NW will ever wield any major influence over an American-dominated market, but it's a nice thought. More power to you if it does. It just seems to me that for a long long time England is just going to have to scrape and scrape to support TWO monthly magazines and a quarterly collection.

ANSON McTAGGART, no address given.

It was indeed pleasing to read the latest copy of ASFR. After two issues of relative vacuity I note with pleasure that you have entered the field of political and social pontification. Where you tell those lousy beatniks to get lost is real good. I mean that part where you say that sf is indiscriminately classed with 'long hair, modern music, non-representational art, anti-war demonstrations and other deplorable idiocies.' I certainly agree with you about long hair. I hate the sight of all those ugly women with their long hair. And your certainly write in decrying modern trends in music, art and clothing. The old ways are best, I always say. And all this anti-war stuff is just stupid, too. You and I know that a good war would rub out all these dumb jerks who don't like real great stuff like sf (I like AMAZING best). Jeez these creeps can't realise what a lot sf has done for the world.
P.S. Why don't you change your title to AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SF REVIEW?

MERVYN BARRETT, Flat 5, 8 Abercorn Place, London, NW.8, U.K.

Through the generousity of some unknown benefactor I seem to have received a copy of a journal labelled ASFR. A creditable effort, yes... J. Foyster's report with digressions was enjoyed as so far the only thing I've had from any of you lot are passing references to the Convention. I re-read the Moorcock/Jones dialogue and was quite amused by Jones's remark about ANALOG - 'if it keeps on as it is at the moment, it won't last' - particularly in view of that little item at the back about ANALOG's 4,500 increase in circulation. Being a loyal dedicated Campbell/ANALOG man and therefore rather one-eyed about the whole thing, it always surprises me when people in the trade make these half-baked sort of comments about the combination. A lot of people seem to have the idea that Campbell rejects good material in favour of bad, but of course if this were the case the good material would be showing up elsewhere. It isn't. One of the important things is that Campbell always knows what he wants - if

it's not being written, he'll find the guys who can write and tell them what he wants. I'm sure that H.L. Gold worked this way, too, during the initial and most successful years of GALAXY - though probably not to the point of thinking up plots or ideas for his writers. If Moorcock's remarks in this article and in NEW WORLDS can be considered examples of his editorial thinking, then it becomes pretty evident that he hasn't any real idea at all what he wants in the way of stories. John Baxter's article was a logical follow-on from the remarks of Moorcock and Jones. I rather think that it's been left too late to try and form a style of sf writing that is essentially Australian. For me that would mean a story which, even if no locale was mentioned, could be read by an Australian in London or Siam and make him exclaim - Why, this must have been written by an Australian. Or could be read by an American or an Englishman and recognized as not by one of his fellow-countrymen. Gentlemen, think globally. Let us all get in on the ground-floor and write an sf story that is uniquely TERRAN.

310840 SGT. R. F. SMITH, Liverpool N.S.W. or Puckapunyal Victoria or...

My apologies for not commenting on ASFR 2, but the army and I are playing a little game at the moment called 'Let's see who can surprise who the most' and I'm sorta living out of a half-packed suitcase. However I received ASFR 3 today, and it would be something akin to not bowing when the Emperor passed if I didn't do the right thing with this issue. Offset yet, and a really eye-catching cover. Yesiree, ASFR is shaping up fine. But I am awaiting the appearance of your first American commenter, out of curiosity. There hasn't been anything like ASFR in the U.S. for years, but I feel that will not stop 'em from being a bit patronising.

At the risk of appearing nasty, I must admit that ASFR 3 seemed to have a goodly slice of mutual 'back-slapping' in its pages, along with some good, open-minded criticism of our local sf writers. But I think I like the way your ASFR is going, John, with its no-nonsense analyses of Australian writers, its frank and revealing article by Aldiss, its very readable reviews and criticism of books and stories, and I most certainly like its appearance and layout. It makes you look forward to the next issue - and there ain't hardly any of those left now!

The Editor comments: Thanks Bob. Our first American commenter takes his bow on page 35 and I'm glad, as you will be, that you're wrong - at least about him. About that back-slapping: a few more letters like the ones in this issue and we won't need to do it for ourselves. Ever heard of Anson McTaggart, Bob? Or Jack Wadham? The latter has just sold a 10,000-word story to Carnell for NEW WRITINGS no.11, and no one around here has a clue who he is.
While I'm taking up space I might mention that Bert Chandler's latest novel, EDGE OF NIGHT, begins serialisation in the current IF. This one brings together material from the Rim Worlds stories and the mutated rats from his GIANT KILLERS. And John Baxter and Ron Smith (who look like becoming the Robert Randall of Australian sf) have sold their third novelette to ANALOG. This one, part of their Library Service series, is called THE CASE OF THE PERJURED PLANET and will appear under their joint names. The first story in the series appeared under the pseudonym 'Martin Loran' - as you will know if you've seen it or our review on page 25.

NORMA WILLIAMS, 6/5a Sadlier Crescent, Petersham, N.S.W.

I noticed the omission of Norma Hemming from your Australian writers article. I'm afraid I cannot give you very much information, except that she had two or three stories in NEW WORLDS. Another you didn't mention was Vol Molesworth, who if I recall rightly collaborated with Graham Stone in publication of their joint efforts - though I suppose that would hardly be counted as professional publication. I don't think either of them had any sf in any commercial magazine.

Among the minor writers of the Norma Hemming era you could also include me. I never made NEW WORLDS but had a couple of yarns in that awful rag, AUTHENTIC, nos. 48 and 70 - LAST JOURNEY and THE WILDER TALENTS - under the pen-name Veronica Welwood. I also wrote a number of other stories, unpublished, some of which I considered better than the above. Whether I'll ever get around to writing more, I don't know - depends on whether I get any good plot ideas and the energy to do something about them.

The other day at work I was shown a piece of PR material for some office machines outfit or something of the kind, printed offset in America. It was a shocking piece of work; your printers are doing you proud. I suppose you and your colleagues do the typing of the job - and are doing a very good one.

JB: Thanks for this information, Norma. One day we hope to have an article on all the writers we neglected last month. I'm sorry we've had to skip your science article this time: look at us - page 41 for goshsakes! All the typing is in fact done by yours truly - on a monstrous IBM which I'm trying to pay off as well as pay for this darn magazine.

DIANA MARTIN, 21 Surrey Road, Mount Waverley, Victoria.

Having just read James White's fascinating novel THE WATCH BELOW, I feel impelled to comment from an angle which is possibly a little unfair to an sf writer - from the viewpoint of a female somewhat acquainted with matters concerning medical and dietary needs. I agree with Lee Harding in his summing-up, but having read the book in one long gulp I found the frequent (and necessary) changes in the generations of both aliens and humans easy enough to swallow. A genealogical tree for both would be helpful to follow the general pattern, however, particularly for the aliens.

No, my disappointment in the story is based on fairly evident factual omissions or errors regarding the development of the clan on board the 'Gulf Trader.' As for the aliens, well, they're a fair go for the author: I'll accept anything realistic or fantastic about beings from another planet, the weirder the better, but humans are what you and me and Mr. White are, so we are subject to certain needs and react to certain physical pressures in a generally typical way. So I feel that the five people aboard the Trader would not have run to a third generation with the limited food and light as described by the author. Light in particular is needed, since humans need sunlight (or Vitamin D, as in fish oils or fresh yellow vegetables or fruit) to avoid such conditions as rickets and decalcification in older folk, and enough Vitamin C (provided only by fresh fruit and vegetables, or special tablets) to prevent scurvy. But these vitamins could not be supplied indefinitely by canned foods, unless they were specially designed for this, and this lack would no doubt affect the developmental processes of the children in the second

generation. Enough dietary deficiencies can ultimately be fatal, or at least sufficiently harmful to the biological processes to seriously impair normal reproduction. This matter annoyed me throughout my reading of THE WATCH BELOW, spoiling my enjoyment of it in a very insidious way.

One other little point also nagged at my rather basic way of looking at things, and this was 'Doctor's' very neat 'biological clocks.' Very often during severe hardship and emotional strain, biological clocks stop for quite a time without any assistance from the male of species, and the trauma of Joan Murray's burns (if she could have survived such severe burns in those conditions, which I strongly doubt) could have affected her for months. In fact it would have been easier for her to have a paralysed limb or wry neck condition without spoiling the story to a marked degree, and could still give her good reason for self-pity. These points are certainly technical, and probably wouldn't upset many readers, but I felt they should be aired, since sf is not just fiction: it is also about science, which necessarily includes biology, if one deals with living matter. James White has undertaken to create a wonderful half-world for his survivors, without giving enough detail on their means of survival. He was good on the details of the ship, the means of getting air, and so on, but failed to make the other points as clear, hence my irritation.

I loved the book, and the Game in particular, plus the rather splendid ending, when I was convinced the whole situation was going to end in a typically human shambles. It is just the fact that when dealing with one's own kind I like my facts to be real and credible when it comes to characters' physical well-being, do what you will to their minds. This applies to main stream fiction as well as sf, of course.

The Editor, typing with the bloody stumps of his wrists, makes a final comment about the letters: Patrick Terry, an 82-year-old fan in Sydney, has sent me reams of delightful correspondence. With a bit of luck, Mr. Terry, I'll edit these down to about forty pages or so and print them next month. I'm sure readers will find your reminiscences of sixty years of sf fascinating. Alan Reynard has had a letter from you, too: he's a gentle soul and isn't really upset about your thinking him a nit - after all, despite our bruises, we're one big happy family. We've had letters also from Stanislaw Ostoja-Kotkowski, Mike O'Brien, Mr. R.P. Greenish, Graham Hall, and others. Most of the 'others' were those nice ones which enclose cheques. They're very much appreciated, and we certainly need more of them.

JB: Just to fill out this page, I might mention that copies of ASFR 1 are now unobtainable. ASFR 2 can still be supplied: we have about forty copies left. ASFR 3 is going rapidly: we're down to about thirty. (If only I were being paid for all those distributed I'd be making a fortune...)

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Julie Christie and Oscar Werner
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