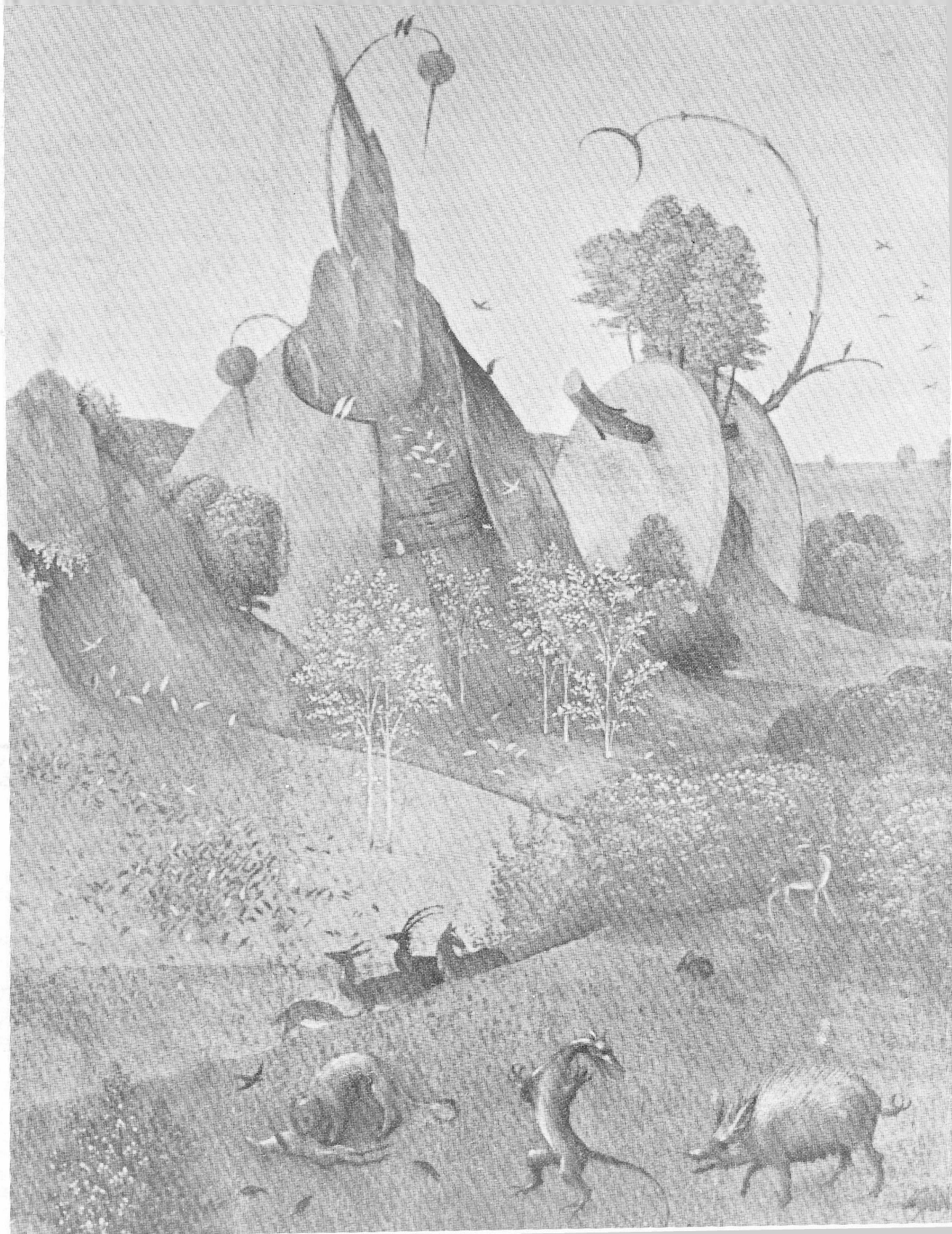


Australian Science Fiction Review



AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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	EDITORIAL	page 2
K. U. F. WIDDERSHINS	CEREAL MUSIC	3
NORMA WILLIAMS	THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION	10
	REVIEWS	14
LEE HARDING	THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE	22
BOB SMITH	SMITH'S BURST	28
The Editor & HSV7	TELL THE TRUTH, YOU ROTTEN SF PERSON!	31
A. BERTRAM CHANDLER	STILL RUNNING THE RIM	33
	LETTERS	33

Reviewed in this issue...

MACK REYNOLDS	SPACE PIONEER
KEITH LAUMER	RETIFF'S WAR
KEITH ROBERTS	PAVANE
R.G. BROWN & KEITH LAUMER	EARTHBLOOD
POUL ANDERSON	THE ANCIENT GODS
FRANK HERBERT	HEISENBERG'S EYES
ROBERT HEINLEIN	THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS
MICHAEL SHAARA	GRENVILLE'S PLANET
COLIN KAPP	HUNGER OVER SWEET WATERS
JOHN PETTY	THE LAST REFUGE
SUSAN COOPER	MANDRAKE
J.G. BALLARD	THE TERMINAL BEACH
SHEPHERD MEAD	THE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED RAPE OF THE WORLD
ISAAC ASIMOV	FANTASTIC VOYAGE
FRED HOYLE	OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE
DAMON KNIGHT (ed)	ORBIT 1
WILLIAM F. TEMPLE	SHOOT AT THE MOON
DOUGLAS HILL (ed)	WINDOW ON THE FUTURE
KATE WILHELM	ANDOVER AND THE ANDROID

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THE COVER of this issue is a detail from the left panel of the triptych
THE GARDEN OF DELIGHT by Hieronymus Bosch in the Prado, Madrid.

THEMES ARE NOT WHAT THEY SING ...

The great takeover bid continues. More and more mainstream writers are turning to quasi-sf themes. The latest big-name writer to do this is Irving Wallace whose next novel, *THE PLOT*, is set in Paris in 1970, where a summit meeting has been called to discuss the banning of the proton bomb. Hardly a stunning feat of the imagination, this idea, but it's certainly a sign of the times when a writer with as astute an eye to the main chance as Irving Wallace takes to the future. I have read most of Wallace's non-fictional books, and enjoyed them. He is the ultimate journalist, and a very fine writer in this quite legitimate field. Though many whose opinions I respect lavished praise on *THE MAN*, I have yet to read one of his novels: *THE PLOT* may well be the first.

I wonder where it's all leading...? Harold Robbins will set his next epic of sex and cynicism on the moon; Nicholas Monsarrat and Richard Llewellyn will bolster their waning reputations with things like *WATCH THIS SPACE* and *DOWN WHERE THE RADIATION IS SMALL*; Irving Stone will write a huge sentimental novel about H.G. Wells - or maybe Hugo Gernsback, if it really takes on that big; Morris West will retail the spiritual struggles of a Martian who becomes the first alien Pope; and Colin Wilson will rush into print a polymathic tome called *SCIENCE FICTION AND SEXUAL REPRESSION*, wherein he will claim as the finest exponents of the medium Friedrich Nietzsche and Miss Read - the latter having by then written her masterpiece, *YULETIDE ON PHOTON FOUR*.

This year of disgrace, Nineteen Sixty-Six, may yet go down in the annals of fandom as the year of the Australian sf renaissance. If so, one man should be honoured as its instigator: John Foyster. He it was who organized and conducted the Seventh Australian SF Convention in Melbourne last Easter - the first convention since 1958. From it emerged this magazine, and through ASFR fans in Australia have been brought into contact with one another, and with the sf fraternity overseas, in a manner which has not been possible since the subsidence of *ETHERLINE* years ago. John Foyster has been one of the mainstays of the magazine, its no.1 contributor and gadfly. Next month he departs from us for England. His association with ASFR will continue, however, and as well as writing for us from time to time he will do a great job for us as Chief Booster, U.K. I know all our readers will join me in wishing John and Elizabeth success to their ventures overseas.

Mervyn Binns reports renewed interest in the Melbourne SF Club, with increased membership and excellent attendance at film nights. On the professional side, the year has seen three Australian authors (one home-grown and two imported) break into *ANALOG* - John Baxter and Ron Smith, with their Library Service stories, and Jack Wodhams. Jack, an expatriate Englishman, now lives at Caboolture in Queensland, and has also had a story accepted for *NEW WRITINGS*. John Baxter has also appeared regularly in *NEW WRITINGS*, and has seen his first novel published in Britain and the United States. Bert Chandler has continued on his distinguished career: his latest work he talks about on page 33 of this issue. After a break of many months, Lee Harding is back in action again, and has recently sold several stories. Stephen Cook, also... but I don't feel at liberty to divulge what he's been up to.

(Continued, p.41)

C E R E A L M U S I C

K. U. F. WIDDERSHINS

The day of the great science fiction serial appears to be over. A casual glance at the products of this last year reveals nothing but an empty shadow of past performances. A closer examination suggests an oncoming doom: magazines will soon only be able to buy serials after they have been purchased by paperback houses.

Below, some of the trivia of the last twelve months is discussed - unwillingly, for it is not a pleasant task. And one must really try to find something pleasant to say about the latest outbreak of verbal diarrhoea from some fledgling Eugene Sue,...

Science fiction has constantly changed, and has generally evolved towards more complex forms, or to more complex use of ideas. Two recent serials in leading magazines - SPACE PIONEER, by Mack Reynolds (Analog, September-November 1965) and RETIEF'S WAR, by Keith Laumer (If, October-December 1965) - seem to indicate that this trend is no longer common.

Time was when any sf story, and particularly a serial story, had to present a new idea, or a radically new treatment of an old idea. As time has passed it seems that these requirements have been diluted and weakened until the stage has been reached when simple adventure stories can masquerade as sf. Remember Bat Durston? Mack Reynolds has a sheriff in his yarn, and not much else.

Those who have read sf for a long time will recall Edson McCann's PREFERRED RISK, and the reception it enjoyed. Basically the story was only a slight twist on the then current Kornbluth-Pohl futures. To describe reader reaction as unfavourable would be to understate the case. But when Colin Kapp's THE DARK MIND was published in 1964 there were no complaints, despite the fact that it was virtually a rewrite of a very famous sf novel. And now these two fairly minor writers can get away with straight adventure yarns. While one might congratulate Mack Reynolds on being one of the few writers for Fantastic Adventures to make good, one cannot thank him for material like this.

Let's look at the sf elements in these stories. First, Reynolds's SPACE PIONEER. Well, there's a spaceship. I think this is a good strong sf element - a kind of symbol. As I remarked to a friend recently, 'a western isn't really a western until someone rides a horse.' So full marks to Reynolds for this. Then there are blasters. Just a while back someone was complaining, in If, I think, that everyone uses lasers in sf these days. Again full marks

to the courageous author. Then there are 'aliens' who turn out to be human colonists who have been wrecked and then regressed; this a radical idea which can only have been used before a few hundred times. Then there's (er, you understand that sf is basically gimmicky, so it's a bit hard, and perhaps a bit unfair to try, to find more ideas in one story).... a feud between the passengers and the crew, and one between the protagonist and another character! And the passengers make crude liquor from local fruits... That's the finish. I can think of no more.

The gentle reader is no doubt thinking - but it read well! Perhaps so, but it wasn't sf, chum.

And now, RETIEF'S WAR. Here we have some friendly (and not so friendly) aliens to play the Riffs, a bit of gun-running, a tough-guy dictator, an agent from Another Power, and James ~~Bold~~ Retief. Come back Magnus Ridolph, Kendall Foster Crossen, please! Here it is, then, more degraded in sf content even than Reynolds's novel: a genuine basic adventure story with aliens instead of Arabs.

I can remember when things were different.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the revamped Impulse is Keith Roberts's series of stories set in an alternate England. Admittedly, apart from the first issue of the magazine, they have appeared in lacklustre company, but even by themselves the PAVANE stories are pleasant reading.

The stories would never have been published in Unknown. The trouble is that although Roberts has gone a long way to construct a believable England, he hasn't quite reached the standard of logical necessity which Campbell, for example, would have required. Although the author says that the Church has good reasons for suppressing inventions, none of these reasons emerges from the stories. Accepting this fault, however, we can investigate what Roberts has to say.

PAVANE itself simply reveals something about the world Roberts dreams of. The Guild of Signallers is a good idea, but one obviously worth expansion to novel length, as perhaps are many other ideas in this series. For no apparent reason, Roberts uses a flashback technique which only serves to confuse the reader slightly. The end of the story is not at all clearly resolved, with two entirely contradictory endings appearing consecutively. Doubtless this has something to do with the unexplained 'people.'

The other stories - THE LADY ANNE, BROTHER JOHN, LORDS AND LADIES and CORFE GATE - deal with an episode in the history of Roberts's England. They cover a couple of generations, and each of them suffers the fault of appearing to be truncated; for each the resolution is unsatisfactory. It is as though the author himself didn't really want to finish off the story. Sometimes, as in the case of the original 'Anne,' the character is removed in a subsequent story in a way entirely at odds with the character's previous behaviour. This makes the overall impression rather unsatisfactory, too.

The last story, CORFE GATE, is obviously intended by Roberts to be the best, with characters overflowing with life and reality.

As the series now stands, many questions are unanswered: who are the 'people'? is Brother John the same man as Sir John the seneschal? (and if not, why not?) We may never discover now the secrets of Cordwainer Smith's world, but let us hope that Keith Roberts will reveal, in time, just what makes his delightful world tick.

The Rocketeers Have Shaggy Ears. The Incubi of Parallel X. The Beast Jewel of Mars. Leigh Brackett. Gardner F. Fox. Poul Anderson. Paul L. Payne. Jerome Bixby. Murphy Anderson. Stanley Vestal. All brought to life, or back to life, by the careful planning of Frederik Pohl. Or so it seems. It may be coincidence, but the trend in the Galaxy publications (and particularly If) has been towards the action-adventure kind of sf that was popular in the heyday of Planet Stories. Planet didn't run serials, but of late the serials in If have been rather like long Planet stories. It is over these yarns that the editor has most control, and obviously Pohl has commissioned the serial I'm about to consider, and possibly some of the others published lately. He seems to have hit the right mood, for If received the HUGO as best magazine for 1965, and could well repeat the performance at the next convention.

I'm writing about EARTHBLOOD, a serial by Rosel G. Brown and Keith Laumer - an unlikely combination if ever I heard of one. And this is a long serial, too - over 200 magazine pages. It's not easy to tell how this collaboration was effected, as I've only previously read F&SF-type shorts by Mrs. Brown, and my reading of Laumer has been brief and painful. It could be that they wrote chapters in turn, or even shorter sections, for the style seems to change from place to place, not to mention the characterisation.

I don't think Merwin or Mines would have run this in Startling as a novel - it's rather crude, from the SS point of view. And it would have been too intellectual for Palmer or Hamling or Browne. But round about the level of Planet Stories - only much longer - fits EARTHBLOOD. It's Dwight V. Swain all over, without the weaknesses of race-hatred and plotlessness. EARTHBLOOD couldn't have been strung out much more, since it already covers the hero's life from before birth to around the age of thirty. The ingredients are a 'pure Terran', a Galactic Empire (recently deceased), plenty of aliens, space pirates who are really in the Imperial Terran Navy, decadent Terrans (when the hero eventually gets to Earth) and a fight to the death with a vicious dog. As far as plot is concerned, it has almost everything.

But it can't ever be the 'literature' which sf once wanted to be. The hero has no emotions at all, nor do any characters other than Iron Robert, who for no good reason is killed off. Friends and enemies alike die, leaving nothing but a fading memory in the mind of the reader.

Pohl is taking sf back to its infancy with this kind of venture. I believe he is right. It was here that sf really was worthwhile: in the days of Planet and Startling and Thrilling Wonder. Not for sf the prettiness of F&SF or the harshness of Gold's Galaxy or the inflexibility of Analog. It is

with stories like this that young readers can be attracted to sf, and, with the features Pohl is trying to provide, held.

Back in 1955 a great issue of Astounding Science Fiction was published; one wonders whether the sales of this issue which contained the first episode of Poul Anderson's THE LONG WAY HOME (and a most attractive Freas cover) were higher than issues before and after. Anderson's story was the first I had read, and it was a good one - real, unabashed space opera. Sadly, in the years between, Anderson's talent has declined, and this is exemplified in his latest serial for Analog, THE ANCIENT GODS. On the other hand, Freas's illustrations are as good as, if not better than, they were ten years ago.

THE ANCIENT GODS is a tired story, as may be expected from an author who has produced so much sf. It has little to recommend it. The characters are less well developed than those in THE LONG WAY HOME; the science is negligible; the writing is flat. Even the ending is so inevitable as to be painful. Perhaps this is what is wrong with Analog: Campbell is tired, and so are his worthwhile writers.

A short time after THE LONG WAY HOME, Astounding published another pretty good serial - Frank Herbert's UNDER PRESSURE. This was not strictly sf, perhaps, but it certainly created some excitement when it was published. Herbert did not produce much in the ensuing years, but recently we have been plagued by an apparently unending stream of Herbert yarns, each seemingly more intolerable than the last. HEISENBERG'S EYES (Galaxy) is no antidote.

There are superficial resemblances to Philip Jose Farmer's MOTH AND RUST, and it is perhaps this as much as anything else which makes Herbert's novel seem second rate. It may be second rate in its own right, of course, but comparison does not help in this case. Farmer's writing is always bristling, bright, from THE LOVERS right up to THE SUICIDE EXPRESS (first written some years ago, by the way), whereas Herbert's ideas seem laboured, a singularly suitable match for his style.

There's a considerable amount of scientific hogwash in this novel, not the least of which concerns the onset of old age as a consequent of observing violence. Fortunately the characterisation is handled masterfully, since most of the characters are robots, androids, sterile or immortal (and bored). Herbert handles such half-dead characters with consummate skill, ever attempting to outdo himself in banality. The illustrations, by Adkins, are equally as sterile and unimaginative as the text they adorn.

James Blish's THE HOUR BEFORE EARTHRISE (If, July-September 1966) reads like a warmed-over reject from Analog, for it contains all the gimmicky essential to a Campbell serial. Perhaps it is not so well warmed up, however, since it hardly makes any impression on the reader other than that of an over-imaginative writer at play with half-serious ideas.

It is certainly a juvenile sf novel, in ways which Heinlein's juveniles never were. It is equally obviously slanted (now) to If's audience, which is, as I've already remarked, very much like the readership Startling and Planet used to have. Blish has written better; this is just a space filler.

At the April Convention in Melbourne, John Baxter said with his mouth: 'Heinlein is a good writer because he writes down to people. I was reading this thing about Mars - THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS. I started to read it; and here's the same old character, this lovable, jocular sort of fellow with a straw metaphorically sticking out of the corner of his mouth, telling you, "You know, I'm just an ordinary bloke: look, I'm going to tell you what a good, ordinary, honest, 100% type of person I am (even if I am a Russian)" - and then he goes on to describe how terribly keen he is, and we get this description all the way through, exactly as we did in that wretched thing about the one-armed beggar (CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY) which was exactly the same, really, in its total falsification of reality and of people. But it's readable, and that's the terrible thing about Heinlein. He's an immensely good... he's not a technician exactly... But because all this comes out of him he thinks it's inspiration.'

To an interjection of 'He's a good dialogue writer,' Mr. Baxter replied: 'Yes, true. The sentences are short, they begin with ands and buts. They tail off, they're grammatically bad, but they are very like dialogue: they are just like ordinary conversation. This is why people like him: he's not a good writer by normal literary standards. The worst part of it is, of course, the content which makes them so incredibly.....'

At this point, Mr. Christopher Jay interjected: 'I want to make a point here. I've heard it from a number of fans - a criticism which is not of Heinlein's qualities as an sf writer. As sf novels THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND are obviously top class. But there is a very strong objection to the ideological content which Heinlein is putting over at the same time - as it were riding on sf the way TV rides a carrier.'

Mr. Lee Harding: 'Sf fans aren't used to this.' Mr. Baxter: 'That's not fair.' Mr. Jay: 'The objections which are made are moral objections, rather than sf ones.'

Mr. Baxter then finished the discussion: 'When I mentioned the standards by which one judged an sf novel, I said some of the writer should be in the book. I didn't suggest that any book should be a total expression of a writer's views. I don't think that's the writer's function at all. Heinlein's entitled to be a Goldwaterite or a Bircher but I think there ought to be some sort of limiting factor. One just can't make every book a sermon.'

The reader of every work of fiction is searching for some affirmation, some justification of his way of living. Not necessarily in the act of reading, for the actions of characters in the novel may be satisfactory. At the simplest level, the reader of mass literature seeks some suggestion that

the common man is the greatest possible good: to be a common man the most fortunate thing possible. He may also want to find some reflection of his view of life: in a crime novel he may look for the punishment of evildoers - because that is the way he lives, expecting those who offend him to be punished. Thus in many ways the mass adult is an overgrown child. In reading an erotic novel he may seek justification of his sex habits. Many Bunyans come to a Sticky End.

This is a treatment at the simplest level only. The more intelligent reader may seek a justification of his reading, but generally his reasons for choosing to read are only extensions of the ideas suggested above.

One thing which any reader finds difficult is a character, or a set of characters, who acts from motivations which he, the reader, cannot understand. Of course, there will be many occasions on which this happens simply because the writer is incompetent, and has not provided his character with any philosophy. But there are many cases where this is simply not true.

For instance, the most difficult fiction for the Westerner to read now is that produced in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. And the reverse is true also. Much of the East/West disputes in matters of literature arise from an inability to comprehend the motivations of the characters in the works under discussion. The communist cannot understand the motivations of Western Man, with his concern for his (overt) sex life, his need for capital, for free speech (?) - these things are not at all important in a communist country, at least not in public. Free Speech is only a myth, and speech is free anyway in a communist country: no one wants to criticise. Similarly, in the West, readers cannot understand the genuine excitement manifested in characters as they first achieve, and then surpass the norm, finally perhaps becoming the best collective in the Soviet and actually meeting the Party Secretary.

Let us not be so foolish as to suggest that either of these points of view is incorrect: they are just different. And the fact that a novel written in one half of the world is not easily understood in the other half doesn't make that novel a bad one: it just gives it a rather restricted readership.

And there are other works which are difficult to read. De Sade is difficult because his ideas are unusual. They may strike home and seem entirely justifiable after some thought, but they are not as readily assimilated as, say, those of Kierkegaard or Sartre.

In THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS (if, December 1965 - April 1966) Heinlein writes about a society whose morals and motivations are unlike those of our own, and the result is that his readers are frequently upset or puzzled. The reaction of John Baxter is perhaps typical. He accepts the idea that Heinlein's novels are good, possibly on the basis of past performance rather than present achievement, but finds the 'ideology' hard to swallow. He seems to think that THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS is a total expression of Heinlein's views, which it probably isn't, and that a book cannot be a sermon, which it can.

This ideology is really laissez-faire gone wild, and isn't very interest-

ing. Heinlein's society is not a mobile one, and the fact that a computer can turn out poetry indicates the line of Heinlein's thought. His society would turn out Sears Roebuck catalogues, but not ULYSSES.

But the fact that the society Heinlein imagines is unworkable and unproductive doesn't make the book any less worthy as sf. In the world of sf, the one-eyed philosopher is king.

So the sad and weary tale ends. The serials not discussed (those in Amazing and Fantastic, and Mack Reynolds's BEEHIVE) are no better, and in one case, that of AXE AND DRAGON, the work is particularly poor. The last worthwhile serial was Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION in Galaxy a long, long time ago, and we may have to wait as long again for another one of its worth.

* * *

Footnotes, by The Editor and Professor Glover:

Dr. Widdershins has raised some interesting points in his review, and I don't intend to underline them: go back and read it again, and think about it for yourself. I've sometimes wondered why it is, with my particular (and peculiar) views on life, that I get so much enjoyment out of writers whose views are totally different from my own. Oliver Wendell Holmes, for example, or that charming old bigot George Borrow. A clue is provided by something D.H. Lawrence once wrote: 'I am no democrat, save in politics. I think the state is a vulgar institution. But life itself is an affair of aristocrats.' Another by T.R. Glover, in a lecture he gave on Horace in 1932: 'Carlyle and other critics have told us to read books in a spirit of acceptance, without criticism in the first instance, but just acquiescence and enjoyment, till you read yourself into the mind and mood of the writer, see things with his eyes, put his values on them, and live (you might almost say) in him. If you call this a lazy way of reading a poet, do! but it is a very delightful way; and... this way of reading brings great contentment to the mind, and sometimes something of insight - the slow kind of criticism which isn't in the least brilliant, the kind that in an affectionate way wants to know why I find this poetry so congenial, why it stands so much re-reading, why it wakes such echoes of my own past and of the story of the race. After that I sometimes turn to the professed critics and receive a series of shocks. It appears that I have missed a great deal in Horace; that, if I had noticed what I had been reading, and had analysed it, and tracked down its implications, and in short been terribly clever and awake - well, the effect might have been very different. I daresay it would. And then I take up Horace again, and I say to all these clever people: I dare say you are right on every point; there is certainly something wrong here...and perhaps you are right in saying that the philosophy of the man won't do; and as for his social ethics, and his religion, and economic principles, and so on -; but I don't mind all that. But I really do mind all those things, you know, in real life; at least I flatter myself that I am not a pagan, nor an Epicurean, nor a bachelor; and yet I do enjoy Horace.' Try reading that again, substituting Heinlein for Horace...

THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION

NORMA WILLIAMS

Maybe I'm being old-fashioned and square, but if we're going to have labels I like my sf to have some reasonable relation to science. If an author likes to write fantasy, so okay - I like fantasy, I'll read it, I'll even buy it. But if either explicitly or implicitly he labels it sf, then it should not run counter to well-established scientific knowledge, unless he is prepared to give a really good and logical explanation for it doing so.

All this is provoked by a story called GRENVILLE'S PLANET by Michael Shaara, originally in F&SF, later in Edmund Crispin's BEST SF THREE.

Grenville's Planet is entirely covered by water; its few small islands are artificial. Circled by four moons, it is subject to a 600-foot tide every 112 years.

Now, these islands have sand on their beaches. Apart from the question of whether the sand was put there on purpose, or whether it gets washed away every 112 years, how did it originate? - on the beaches or elsewhere?

Sand may be of two types - what one might call a 'primary' sand, coarse and irregular grains of quartz from the weathering of granite or other such acid igneous rock; or 'secondary', from the further weathering and erosion of primary sand down to smaller rounded grains (or from the weathering of sandstone, originally formed by the consolidation of secondary sand). One can also, of course, have non-quartz sands, but these are less durable, and originate in much the same ways.

A little over a century, exposed to wind, weather, chemical action and wave action, on an artificial island, is hardly long enough to form a bucketful, let alone a beach of sand, from granite (which weathers fairly easily, surprisingly enough). Comes the tide, that bucketful gets carried away. Do the mysterious inhabitants of the sea put it back? Even if they do, their islands must have been in existence for millions of years, for it takes no less to form sand in sufficient quantities for a beach.

Weathering does not take place in the ocean, beyond a small zone of wave action (and again, for wave action, the islands must have existed for millions of years). There are no extremes of temperature or abrasive movements in the depths, and not much of the type of chemical action required for rock weathering. Sands and silts found on the ocean floor came from dry land - or, like globigerina ooze, are the skeletons of life-forms.

Next: what of the possibility of a planet without dry land?

Statistically, our Earth mountains and highlands are probably more than balanced by the ocean deeps; that is, if a giant bulldozer smoothed the whole crust of the Earth, water would cover it to quite a depth and leave no dry land at all.

But, in the long term, give or take a few million years, dry land would reappear. The thicker rafts of SIAL beneath former continents would rise relative to areas formerly underlying oceans and emerge from the world-ocean. The higher the former land masses, the higher the SIAL rafts would rise. When mountains erode naturally, the SIAL block of which they formed the upper part rises so as to restore the proportion of above- and below-sea-level mass (and in so doing, can cause earthquakes, though usually the process is so slow as to be virtually unnoticeable).

If Grenville's Planet got that way by catastrophic or artificial means, someone would have to be working pretty hard to keep it that way. Anyway, how did it happen in the first place? Shaara doesn't tell us.

Apart from tectonic movement, what about vulcanism? New Zealand and Hawaii were formed by volcanic action on the ocean bed, building up to raise successive lava outpourings above sea level and form islands. Is Grenville's Planet so ancient and its crust so thick that this cannot happen? It would take a lot of 600-foot tides to wear down the result of one small eruption - have a look sometime at the Mauna Loa and Kilauea eruption films...

Setting aside unexplained catastrophic or artificial interventions, how could a planet evolve naturally so as to be entirely ocean-covered?

In the stage of primary cooling - whether from a mass of gas or an aggregation of originally solid material heated by friction and gravitic energy (take your pick of origins) the planetary material tends to aggregate, just as any other aggregation of materials of differing melting points will. Rafts of higher-melting-point materials will form, floating in a sea of lower-MP materials like oil droplets on the surface of water - and they will tend to coalesce to form larger masses.

Variations in environment, mainly pressure, may produce different results; a number of varieties of igneous rocks can originate from one type of melt under different conditions producing varying degrees of segregation and speed of crystallisation. Ultimately, rafts of lighter SIAL will form the land-masses. Why didn't this happen on Grenville's Planet?

But what happens when those land masses erode down to sea level? Apart from the hidden roots of the SIAL raft pushing upward, the eroded material, now lying on the ocean bed offshore, will upset crustal balances by its weight, and smaller-scale local uprisings and tilting will again bring it above sea level. This has happened over and over in the history of the Earth; it is doubtful if anywhere there still exists surface rock of the primary age. The processes will continue as long as there is water on the surface of Earth, and as long as there is an atmosphere in which clouds can form and precipitate; as long as there are gases such as oxygen and carbon dioxide, and a little moisture, soil will form and wash away in rain and

rivers, to be deposited elsewhere and consolidate into rock. But unoxygenated water, saturated with mineral salts, won't weather rock into soil (hence, below the water-table, there is no weathering and our foundations are safe).

Grenville's Planet is a good example of an author out of his depth; the story, to anyone with even an elementary knowledge of geology or geophysics, is the wildest fantasy, not sf. Shaara would have been far safer had he plunged a few million years ahead, perhaps in the field of biology, far beyond the present state of knowledge. Geology may still have some great discoveries to come, but it is not likely that the basic logical physical observational deductions outlined above will be superseded.

An afterthought: could it be that Grenville's Planet, from the beginning, had a vastly greater content of water than the general run of primeval planetary masses? If so, again why? And why hasn't it lost it?

It could well be possible to write a good sf story based on geology, but no one seems to have done so yet. The trouble is it would take someone as meticulous in detail as Hal Clement to do a good job, because - unfortunately for authors - geology is one of the sciences most easily understood and followed by the layman; he can for himself observe most of its basic facts and test his theories against reality in the field, and logically deduce the story of the country around him from what he sees.

Colin Kapp's HUNGER OVER SWEET WATERS, in New Writings In SF 4, is a far better story than GRENVILLE'S PLANET. It has people in it - not very believable people, but rather more human than Shaara's non-characters. Personally, I find it hard to believe in people expressing themselves in quite such turgid language as Blick and Martha, but maybe they do. However, that's only incidental to the science in the story.

I'm willing to go along with the ion-exchange-resin extraction of metals from sea-water; it sounds fairly reasonable, except that I rather doubt that extraction could be as thorough or as selective as described: all chemical reactions tend to oscillate to some extent.

The idea of the boat, though, electro-deposited copper on a mould of wax, is very bright. But Kapp tends to make difficulties of the simpler parts and take no notice of the really difficult items which would inevitably arise. I wonder has he ever tried electro-plating or -moulding, in copper or any other metal? It's one of the most maddening trades there is, I hear, for unexplained slip-ups. I've tried copper-casting on a small scale, and know a little about it.

First of all, why silver the wax mould for the boat? He is very vague about just how this is done, and from what I have read on the subject, it is pretty difficult.

Elsewhere in the story it is indicated that for the recovery of gold and platinum the resins are not regenerated, but burned off. Presumably this is done at the out-station, to save transport, so Blick could have quite a

quantity of carbon black handy. Why not dissolve it in a spirit-resin medium, paint on to the wax, and flame-off? It forms a reasonably good conductor - I have used it - though finely powdered graphite is better. Also, Blick is terribly careful to make his silver conducting layer absolutely perfect; not nearly as necessary as Kapp implies, for the copper deposit grows laterally as well as in thickness once it gets started, and any pinhole - or even larger - imperfections would quickly fill up, and would disappear altogether with a light burnishing later on.

Talking of growing laterally: Blick would have to counter that trouble, especially as he has his solution spilling over the edge of the mould. The lateral deposit has a tendency to thicken and get spongy, and would have to be curbed continually.

Next - current source. I use acidified copper sulphate solution and a copper metal electrode; I do not know, but assume Kapp does, whether solution alone would work, if the copper content were kept up, but I see no good reason why not. But Kapp goes to a lot of trouble explaining his current source, and one gets the idea that a fairly high voltage has to be generated. Here again though he is very vague.

Actually voltage is very important - and very low: I use a $1\frac{1}{2}$ volt bell battery, and have to cut it down with a variable resistance to half or less. Too-high voltage gives a deposit of crumbling non-coherent crystals. Similarly, pH and temperature are critical. Depositing just doesn't take place (perceptibly, at any rate) below about 60°F. Too little acid - insufficient conduction and no deposit. Too much - crumbling deposit. Additives such as alum help to form a coherent solid deposit: why doesn't Blick use them?

Kapp does make one good point - constant stirring of the solution to prevent stratification - but misses quite a few finer ones which might have added suspense to his story. The operation proceeds much too smoothly. For instance, bridging would inevitably have occurred at the bow, where the sides approached each other, and would presumably have been undesirable because of weight imbalance.

Many years ago in Sydney, when electrocasting a large piece of sculpture, the unhappy contractors, so I understand, had to stand round-the-clock shifts to prevent bridging, spongy deposit, stratification, lateral growth, and innumerable other problems. All these occur even on a very small scale, in my experience, and I can imagine the headache they would be in a big project.

I'd be inclined to think, too, that Blick's boat would require some bracing. Time was limited; if depositing were allowed to proceed fast, the shell might be fairly thick, but spongy and unable to withstand stress. If slowed down to produce a solid deposit, it would be very very thin for the size of the shell. Immersed, it would buckle from the pressure of water and require internal bracing of ribs or at least thwarts. However, Colin Kapp deserves credit for a very ingenious idea; I'll have to try electrocasting my own boat some day when I'm vastly rich.

REVIEW S

JOHN FOYSTER K.U.F. WIDDERSHINS
LEE HARDING DIANA MARTIN ALAN REYNARD

JOHN PETTY: THE LAST REFUGE (Whiting & Wheaton: \$2.65)

Ronald Whiting is a publisher with a confessed determination to raise the standards of hardcover sf publishing in the UK - yet here is a novel which W&W issues as general fiction. John Petty has written two previous novels; one wonders if his publishers are trying to protect him from some kind of stigma by not labelling this one as sf. (Are there two sets of customers in the book-buying community, who buy or reject a novel depending on whether or not it is labelled sf? Perhaps Mr Whiting could enlighten us.)

THE LAST REFUGE differs to a marked degree from previous British essays in this field. It has none of the moral seriousness of, say, Orwell's grim NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR, but is all the more believable for that. I suppose it is impossible for a novelist to write about an individual's battle with an all-powerful state and not be pessimistic. Petty's plot is unoriginal, but his treatment of it has much to commend it. He does not waste our time by describing his 'utopia' to us; rather, he allows it to reveal itself in the actions and words of his characters. 'I'm a curiously old fashioned man,' says a superintendent, 'I'm all for progress and the scientific way of life. But every man should have the right to go fishing.' This is Petty's dilemma - and ours. How to equate the boon which science has brought, and continues to bring in ever dizzying spirals, in terms of the human individual. Petty doesn't labour the point. Our hero suffers torture, sexual degradation and other humiliations, but doggedly refuses to give in to the system. The difficulty with this sort of novel is finding a satisfactory way of ending it - satisfactory, that is, to both reader and writer. Petty manages as well as his predecessors, but no more. But while we read we are involved, and that is what the author has set out to achieve.

Petty seems to have read some contemporary sf, because the plot and style and much of the imagery in this book is pure Pohl-Kornbluth. I am not suggesting unconscious plagiarism, but rather that this story suffers from none of the ponderous excesses of similar anti-utopian novels. It is slick, smooth, and moves very rapidly. Petty's economy with words is marvellous, and so is his sense of humour - which is something Orwell never had, and which contributes much to the success of this book. The hero finds time to make us laugh as well as grimace, and the reactions of the people he meets are far more human than any of Orwell's monsters.

This is the best sf novel to come from W&W to date - despite the publishers' feelings that it isn't sf. The hell it isn't.

Alan Reynard

SUSAN COOPER: MANDRAKE (Penguin: \$0.60)
J.G. BALLARD: THE TERMINAL BEACH (Penguin: \$0.70)

The basic sf plot is that in which the Earth is threatened by an unknown (or misunderstood) force, generally invented by a 'mad scientist.' The variations on this simple plot must just about have been used up, particularly since the advent of the sf film, but many stories, or rather novels, appear today which would not have been out of place in a magazine of the late twenties or early thirties.

This subdivision of sf is most widely practised by English novelists who have apparently been protected from developments in sf since 1930. These isolationists include Wyndham, Christopher (to some extent), Bowen, Mantley, and a few more recent writers - Keith Roberts and D.F. Jones, for instance. The similarities of plot of these novels has been noted in these pages before, and will doubtless be noted again. What the writers lack in originality of plot they attempt to make up with development of character; in many ways they represent a sportsman who, having failed to make a success of the sport he has some knowledge of, decides to take up one completely foreign to him. Not many succeed.

For Susan Cooper, Conan Doyle's WHEN THE WORLD SCREAMED is apparently the ne plus ultra of modern sf. It is probably also the most recent work in the field she has read. The plot of MANDRAKE is both remarkable and stupid; I guess it would be fair to describe it as remarkably stupid, maybe even exceptionally stupid. But it is hard to judge such things accurately. So I shall make do with these weaseling words and hope that my feeling has got across to you.

When the atom bomb was dropped in 1945 the earth got angry, so it plotted to destroy the parasites living on it - i.e. us. Some time after 1970 it goes into action, in England through a man called Mandrake. He is Minister for Planning. He is going to destroy the Earth by returning everyone to their birth places ('where their roots are'), raising the hatred of strangers in the Britons, and thus, er, destroy the world. That's not quite right, actually, for the destruction is to be achieved over all of Britain by catastrophe. This, as you might imagine, makes all the guff about returning to one's place of birth rather pointless. Correct. It does.

So here we have achieved the ultimate, an old-fashioned sf story which is not even coherent. Is this the start of a new, even lower trend of mediocrity in what is conventionally called sf? Perhaps so: certainly there is nothing in this novel to commend it. One can only hope that it sells horribly and that Susan Cooper goes away and writes more commentaries on American life.

THE TERMINAL BEACH is a very different kettle of fish. Ballard is also inclined towards primitive plot-forms and, indeed, many of the stories in this collection are hardly sf. A comparison between the work of Ballard and that of Cordwainer Smith might well prove rewarding, especially since

they have written trilogies which are in some ways similar. I suspect that such a comparison would reveal the shallowness of Ballard as compared with Smith, but this is not my purpose here.

It is extremely difficult to attempt to review an author's collection of short stories; a simple catalogue and a reference to an occasional originality of plot seems to be the reviewer's stock-in-trade. But Ballard is markedly different from other current sf writers, both on his own declaration and in some current criticism. Ballard supposedly writes about inner space, a term which I have heard much used (usually while the user has a mystic or maybe slightly bemused look upon his face) and less frequently abused. Since I am not in the habit of reading the British magazines I've not had much opportunity to read Ballard's work and this is really the first serious excursion I've made into it.

I cannot really comprehend what all the 'inner space' is about. Doubtless some kind soul will be able to take up six or ten pages of a future issue of this magazine explaining it to me in simple terms and then I too shall be able to grovel at the feet of the master. But as of now it seems to me rather like that peculiar attempt of some months ago to deify Philip K. Dick as a preacher of the apocalypse of the new reality, the naked heart of existence, undsoweiter. That this came from Michael Moorcock is hardly surprising, for he is in the position of having to pass off as remarkable some stories whose only claim to fame is their consistent mediocrity. If 'inner space' as opposed to 'outer space' is simply an investigation of the character's psyche then why not say so, and admit that it is only an attempt to join the mainstream, and not sf.

Nevertheless, Ballard is a good writer, and many of his stories have a warmth about them which is desperately missing from current fiction in the American magazines.

A QUESTION OF RE-ENTRY is by no means sf. It is simply an adventure story which happens to have a couple of scientific instruments in it. I do not subscribe to the belief that because characters in a book consult so advanced an instrument as a clock the work is one of sf. Nor is the story internally consistent, for at the beginning Pereira is portrayed as reluctant to assist Connolly, yet for no reason at all he later gives every possible assistance.

THE DROWNED GIANT is a quiet story which attempts to reveal something of the way in which humans react to an abnormal situation. I don't think the calm destruction of the giant's body by the locals is particularly realistic, but by writing in an extremely flat manner Ballard manages to impress a feeling of immense horror, which would not have been satisfactorily expressed by more vigorous means.

END GAME is not sf. The threat of death has been better handled, but probably not by a writer of sf. Moorcock and his cronies have been playing with Kafka's name, but it is stories like this one which make that reference justifiable. But there can be no reason for describing this as sf.

THE ILLUMINATED MAN is most certainly sf. This story was the seed for THE CRYSTAL WORLD, and is probably much better than its outgrowth. It is sf in the sense of dealing with the completely unknown - a sub-genre once known as science-fantasy. The writing is suited to the plot, but I wonder if all Ballard's knowledge of the world is as accurate as his understanding of the customs of the Presbyterian Church. Unless, of course, between now and the time of his story the Presbyterian Church takes on many of the characteristics of an Eastern Orthodox one...

THE REPTILE ENCLOSURE is an interesting idea, but again the 'science' is completely unfamiliar. Ballard is, in this respect, like Van Vogt in expecting you to believe in his sciences. Lemmings rather than reptiles. THE DELTA AT SUNSET is not sf. Unless such works as Cocteau's OPIUM and various other works on the subjective side of drug addiction are to be understood as sf. No, I don't think so.

THE TERMINAL BEACH is possibly the story which started Ballard on his new path. Here he writes a fairly simple story, describing the mental breakdown of a scientist on Eniwetok. The writing is moderate, the plot fair, the impact considerable.

DEAD END is interesting, as sf, but does nothing to convince the reader that this-can-happen. When something unusual, totally unfamiliar, is predicted in an sf story it is essential to do something to make it seem real. This is obviously opposed to what Ballard believes of his work, for he writes of unreality. But in this case, and in others, the reader's reaction can only be one of dismissal - 'Fuck Rogers for half-intellectuals.'

THE VOLCANO DANCES is not sf. Nor does it have a point or a plot resolution. BILLENIUM actually uses a conventional plot of sf - the Malthusian one. Ballard just doesn't make quite clear why a government should try to kill the population by overcrowding (when it is encouraging at the same time a growth in family size) but it is just this sort of contradiction that Ballard fans seem to thrive on. The story is lightly handled, which is rather sad, considering just how important the solution to that particular problem is.

THE GIACONDA OF THE TWILIGHT NOON, which is not sf, is a beautiful little story about the magnificence of blindness. However I cannot help but feel that Ballard has not seen OEDIPUS REZ performed. THE LOST LEONARDO is not sf, but is one more variation on the Wandering Jew theme - and better-written than most.

Of these twelve stories at least five are not sf by any stretch of the imagination. They are well-written - very well-written - if we take as a standard the work of other sf writers. By other standards the writing is mediocre. Perhaps it is better to be a big fish in the small pond of sf. But for sf readers, this collection is a good one. The stories are fresh and far better than those obtainable in almost any other sf book. Another collection from Penguin soon, perhaps?

John Foyster

SHEPHEARD MEAD: THE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED RAPE OF THE WORLD

A fascinating book. The jacket blurb is quite misleading if one has already read Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD or Wyndham's THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS, because the 'unspeakable' is quite easy to take in Mead's presentation of these concepts - the ultimate control of genetic development, and the impregnation of human females by agents from another world. This is the basic substance of the plot, and the handling of the story line is so delicately witty, so archly satiric and gently barbarous, that one finds it impossible not to read on compulsively to the provocative conclusion.

When sf is utilised as a vehicle for illuminating the frailties of human nature it can develop a very high standard of satire. By contrasting mankind with a 'perfect' but alien being, many absurdities and attitudes common to us all can be exposed for what they are. I appreciated the fairness (and the humour) with which Mead describes the reactions of the world's leaders when they are confronted by the 'threat from space', and also to the punishment meted out to them after their abortive nuclear invasions of each other's territories.

Characterisation is well done considering the scope of the book. One really becomes concerned with the development of the three families involved in the tale, and with their ultimate acceptance of their fate. Beauford Abel is the hero, if that is the right word, who is at last caught up in a web of his own spinning and suffers neat poetic justice for his earlier sins. The heroine, Frances, Beauford's sister, follows a healthy line of respectability and normalcy in what can only be described as a cataclysm to the human race, and her reward is no less than proper in the circumstances.

Shepherd Mead is a new name to me, but a name to remember. The simplicity of his style and the dramatic feeling evident in this book, make his story quite believable. I cannot look on it as just another sf romp, or even a send-up, since Mead's earnestness over-rides the casual approach of other writers, and we are left with some rather disturbing ideas.

Would mankind accept the conditions described in Beauford's travels on Phycyx through the Om-Tel mechanism? With our history of a universal acceptance of a divine plan, I imagine this would be very difficult indeed for human minds to accept and approve, and as a minor character comments - 'It may be dull, kid, but it'll be peaceful.'

The form of the Newmods born to Earth's women is the most unkindest cut of all, though it is pointed out that they follow the genetic pattern of the most beautiful and desirable life form in the Galaxy. I won't go into details about the Newmods, but I feel, as a mother myself, that one would need a very tolerant, mature mind to accept such offspring - but mother-love being what it is it seems possible that the problem would eventually be overcome as the final pages of the book show.

I was pleased to discover a refreshingly cheerful trend in Mead's writing, and the optimism which makes him show us aliens as helpful and kindly

rather than, as is so often the case, the reverse. We may not like Mead's ideas but we cannot complain that they are not designed for our salvation. This is the bitter pill Mead wants us to swallow - that is, if we are the self-righteous ethical and religious moralists he outlines.

So I can recommend this novel to all who are bored with the current crop of mainstream writers with their sex novels, their psychiatric novels, their message novels - and also writers of heavily technical sf. I do not recommend it to maiden aunts (of either sex), upright citizens who believe in the value of commercialism, or noble souls with strong religious beliefs of certain kinds. The latter probably will be put off by the title anyway. But those who seek pornography will be sadly disappointed. If they probe this book for spice they might discover there are other ways of dealing with sex in a novel which can be most refreshing.

Diana Martin

FANTASTIC VOYAGE, by - oh hell! - I don't know. (Dobson: \$2.65)

This book described by the publisher as being 'a novel by Isaac Asimov' seems rather to have been written by someone's Second Eleven. The title page mentions these names: Asimov, Harry Kleiner, David Duncan, Otto Klement, Jay Lewis Bixby (known as Jerry to his friends?) and in the preface Otto Klement adds the names of Saul David, Richard Fleischer and Dale Hennesy.

Great authors all, no doubt, but it is hardly surprising that the novel turns out to be the most appalling mishmash of writing I have ever seen. It certainly doesn't read like Isaac Asimov. But it does offer some goodies to the sf reader. An exciting climax in every chapter, and characters with names and not much else. There are unfortunately no footnotes, but this is amply made up for by the spreading of gratuitous information through the story and a fascinating reversal of the square-cube law.

The story line is simple: for some reason it is necessary to save the life of a scientist (who used to work for Them) and who has a clot in his brain. It is never made quite clear just why he is so important, apart from bringing military information (such as how to put a battalion in your pocket). Unfortunately overmuch is made of the other, and inadequately explained, advantages of having Benes alive.

So five people are shrunk to fit inside a midget submarine - I kid you not with the use of that word 'midget' - and travel through Benes's circulatory system until they reach the clot (which is to be destroyed by laser beam). Their mission is successful, you'll be pleased to know, despite the attack by giant white corpuscles. (Back to Posi and Nega, Wynne?)

The book is filled, as I have remarked, with parenthetical pieces of scientific information. Unfortunately I still haven't been able to puzzle

out how a machine could travel 100,000 miles (p.93) at 200 miles per second (p.30) (figures to our scale) (say - elapsed time of ten minutes maximum, which seems to have been 'Asimov's' intent) and yet, on the miniaturised scale to take only a few hours to travel half a light year at 15 knots (pp.98,99). It's little goodies like this, as I said, which must have given those engineers of ANALOG a lot of fun.

Still, I suppose it's better than reading DUNE or THE CRYSTAL WORLD or...

FRED HOYLE: OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE (Heinemann: \$2.30)

The market for 1930-style sf seems only to be exceeded in size by the market for bad 1930-style sf.

Those readers who find Hoyle's cosmology hard to swallow would be well advised to steer clear of this, er, novel. Hoyle writes about a world in which Earth becomes divided into time-zones in a rather unconventional way: Hawaii and the U.K. are in 1966, Europe in 1917, Greece in 450 BC and also some 6000 years into the future, etcetera. There doesn't seem to be any reason for this happening, unless it is something to do with the modulations of the sun's output which are introduced early in the story, but which were certainly not explained while my faculties were in good shape. The trouble with reading a book like this is that as time passes one's mind becomes progressively blank (in a frantic attempt to match that of the author) and one's awareness not only of the book and its contents but indeed of the world around fades to nothingness.

Nevertheless it was possible to make out that the main character was a musician, and that Fred Hoyle is most desirous of demonstrating his profound knowledge of music. When this is put together with his fantastic knowledge of the writing of fiction he becomes the kind of giant which only the bravest tailor would kill seven with one blow.

With C.P. Snow, Hoyle tries to cross the cultural barrier, and in so doing only succeeds in making it quite plain why such a thing is necessary. It would be better for Mr. Hoyle to play in his own creation fields.

K.U.F. Widdershins

DAMON KNIGHT (ed): ORBIT 1 (Whiting & Wheaton: \$2.30)

Two images remain engraved on the mind after a reading of this book. One, a hypodermic needle being plunged into a woman's eye. The other, a flying black cloak-like creature, silhouetted against the dim sky of a strange desolate planet.

The first comes from a brief, chilling story by Sonya Dorman, called SPLICE OF LIFE; the second from the best story in the collection, James Blish's HOW BEAUTIFUL WITH BANNERS. There are seven other stories, most of them competent, interesting, and ultimately forgettable. Damon Knight, in his

introduction, says they are the best stories he could find in eight months of reading manuscripts. They constitute, he claims, 'a collection of unpublished stories good enough to stand beside an anthology of classic sf.' Balderdash!

Kate Wilhelm's STARAS FLOUNDERANS is about a primal fear buried deep in the human mind. Some clumsy attempts at characterisation, a smug unhelpful alien, and an unconvincing plot. The late Richard McKenna's THE SECRET PLACE is a much better story, but hardly sf. James Blish's story is beautifully written, and is moreover genuine scientific fiction. Concerned with the accidental introduction of a revolutionary (though, on Earth, rather basic) new experience to a strange life-form on a strange planet, the story is not perhaps one of Blish's best, but it's certainly miles ahead of anything else in this collection. Why? Well, it contains a real human, real aliens (not humans in outlandish clobber), a real alien planet (not a plastic and foam rubber film set), and a plot which is ingenious, which develops, and which culminates in a dramatic, convincing, and important event.

Poul Anderson's THE DISINHERITED is a nicely written variation on an old theme: the 'Come on now, like good chaps: we've given up space exploring and you've gotta come home' theme. Allison Rice's THE LOOLIES ARE HERE is an ultra-colloquial and inconsequential escapee from Ladies Home Journal - or maybe an American fanzine. KANGAROO COURT, by Virginia Kidd, is the longest story in the book, and the dullest. Kangaroos are rather stupid, if picturesque. Miss Kidd's aliens who look like kangaroos are pretty bloody stupid, too, and not the least bit picturesque. The story rests on a sort of time-travel gimmick - the 'a day is as a thousand years' one - and a good writer could put it over quite satisfactorily in two pages.

Sonya Dorman's piece I've already mentioned. It is something of a minor masterpiece of horror, depending for its considerable impact on one word, an adjective, and that word is the second last in the story.

Lee Harding reviewed Thomas Disch's THE GENOCIDES in ASFR3 and concluded the man has a sick mind. 5 EGGS does nothing to alleviate this impression: it contains elements of bestiality and cannibalism. Disch can write, though; if I may coin a phrase, 5 EGGS is good in places.

Keith Roberts's THE DEEPS is further evidence of this young writer's ability, but he doesn't quite do justice to his theme. Population increases to the point where the land is so crowded that some people take to the sea and build their cities there. This is a wonderful concept, but Roberts makes it sound not much more exciting than any new housing development.

In short: interesting, because none of the stories have appeared before - but if Damon Knight reckons these are the best unpublished stories he's read lately... well, I guess it just wasn't his year.

John Bangsund

THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE

LEE HARDING

A REQUIEM FOR NEW WORLDS?

The readership for sf, particularly in England, has been increasing steadily for the past few years, and it seems likely that this general upward trend will continue for some time before levelling off. The publishers of Penguin Books have done much to bring the genre to the attention of a new and literate public, and other paperback houses have been quick to follow this excellent lead and present their sf titles in a reasonably adult manner. Hardcover publishers seem to be selecting carefully from the excess of titles available, and we now seem to be leaving behind the sausage-machine precision of the Gollancz organization for the more unpredictable offerings of such adventurous firms as Whiting & Wheaton and Dennis Dobson.

As John Carnell pointed out in ASFR 2, the market has never before been so good, and the generally high quality of the recent novels is indeed a far cry from the False Boom of the early fifties, when there weren't enough good and experienced sf novelists to supply the demand from libraries - when, in England at least, just about every hack in that peculiar trade jumped on the bandwagon.

But what of the magazines? Carnell has predicted the slow demise of the specialist magazines, and it seems he could be right. After all, the crime and detective genres no longer need specialist magazines to support them, now that they have been taken over by popular novelists. Can we expect the same for sf? It seems likely. ANALOG, the most specialised sf magazine of them all, may always have a market (and deserve it) but nowadays the American magazines seem occupied merely with serialising paperback novels; there is relatively little difference between the fare they offer and that of the paperback houses. Their demise might not be wholesale and at once, but it is certainly imminent. In England it may have already happened.

For some time now disquieting rumours have been reaching us here in the antipodes about the future of NEW WORLDS and IMPULSE. First the magazines were in financial difficulties - not connected with circulation figures, but with that rather mysterious though vital part of a magazine's life, distribution. We held our breath, for we were used to such rumours. Later we heard that IMPULSE was dead and that NEW WORLDS might soon follow - and that the British credit squeeze was of little help. Our last word was that both magazines had been suspended until well into 1967, but apart from that there is little further to go on.

I think it only fair to point out that if these magazines have floundered

it is not because they were bad or didn't sell well - at least in the case of NEW WORLDS. IMPULSE, of course, is another matter entirely. Even in its heyday as SCIENCE FANTASY under Carnell it never boasted the circulation of its stablemate, and existed more as a prestige magazine than as a great money-maker. It may have been less than breaking-even under the Roberts & Vinter banner, but the case would be different with NEW WORLDS.

Mike Moorcock's editorship has certainly come under a lot of fire in the last year or so, but in the last few issues to arrive in Australia one can see the beginnings of an exciting new period in British sf finally emerging. Mike is well and truly over the hill, as he has claimed, and it seems all the more incredible that such a fresh and original approach to sf editing has been cut short - not for lack of writers, for want of readers, or for lack of enthusiasm on the part of the publishers. COMPACT have launched an excellent series of sf paperbacks along with the two magazines and, if their general production inside is low by British paperback standards, they have certainly spared no effort to give their little books the most handsome appearance on the stands of any sf product. And they have favoured British writers at the expense of the more familiar American names, and for this I most sincerely thank them. But COMPACT have suffered at the hands of their distributors and there is nothing new in this. When a major distribution firm goes under it takes a lot of magazines with it, sf and otherwise. When this happened in America some years ago many of the best sf periodicals disappeared overnight. Magazines of this specialised nature are usually shoestring affairs fondly guided by genuine enthusiasts - like Larry Shaw, who saw his INFINITY die such an ignoble death - and who have little capital to absorb such a disastrous disruption in schedule. COMPACT, while having an excellent list, are a relatively small company. Penguin, Corgi, Pan or any other of the giants might manage to recover from the catastrophe which has befallen COMPACT, but I fear that Moorcock's publishers have very average chances of coming out of this in one piece. And Mr. Wilson's policies aren't helping one bit.

Many years ago John Carnell and his magazines managed to survive a similar crisis. Perhaps NEW WORLDS will yet stagger on. It seems hard to imagine our little microcosm without a British professional magazine - more difficult when one considers that the first major advance in sf writing in a decade was in the hands of a British editor and publisher.

HOW WILLIAM F. TEMPLE TURNED SF BACK THIRTY YEARS
or: I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE BUT...

Once upon a time Bill Temple wrote a great sf novel. THE FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE is one of my favourite books, one I re-read with pleasure and lend to people who hate sf or have only a vague idea of what it's all about. The book was widely reprinted around the world and made into a rather awful movie in the mid-fifties. But Bill had been writing sf long before that singular success. His stories had appeared in the American pulps, and when John Carnell's two magazines got into their stride in England he became a steady and highly individual contributor to both NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY. Ever since, his stories have appeared sporadically in magazines on

both sides of the Atlantic. Mainly in the so-called 'low' quality magazines - not because his stories were bad, but because in an age of hack writing his style was so distinctly personal that it met with little success among the moguls of ASTOUNDING and GALAXY. He has kept up this stream of delicately fashioned short stories for some time now and, apart from a series of outrageously simple tales written for the defunct NEBULA, they have all been of a consistently high level. So good, in fact, that I have often wondered why some perceptive publisher has not gathered some of them together in book form.

Because of my high regard for Temple as a writer (and also because he is a Trufan from way back when), I fell upon his latest novel in a fit of something approaching delirium. A Temple NOVEL, after all these years! What wonders and pleasures lay before me after all the crap I'd been forced to read lately...

SHOOT FOR THE MOON (Whiting & Wheaton: \$2.30) is the novel that has purportedly 'made' Bill Temple. (See THE MARKET FOR SF - ASFR 2.) I don't know why. The jacket is a pop-art joke that jaks at first sight but suits the book's contents admirably. For this is an awful book, and I'll tell you why.

Remember the days of the space-ship in the backyard? Well, that's the first of Temple's resurrections. And the beautiful girl scientist who comes along with the hero and - ? But wait, let Bill list them for you (p.48):

"Consider. In one common cage would be confined:

A brutal megalomaniac.

His neurotic, unpredictable, self-willed daughter.

A mystery man, or worm on the turn, with persecution mania.

A spiteful snob-cum-schoolboy idiot hoaxer.

My difficult self.

A cat (?)"

And yes, the cat does make it. For a while. And this, mark you, is the crew selected for England's first nuclear-powered rocket! Of course Bill has very good explanations for the crew being so, but they are those of a very low-level sf, the language of cliches. Occasionally, as in the fascinating character shifts of the 'self-willed daughter', he slips and lets us see just what he's capable of when it comes to characterization. But the rest is on this level:

"I was the only survivor of that Matto Grosso expedition... That is, apart from Thornycroft, our medico. He went down with fever... the rest of us went into the forest. It was unexplored country beyond the area where Colonel Fawcett vanished. So far beyond that even the speculators in San Pao hadn't found the boob who would buy a square mile of it. The Indians daily grew more threatening. They scared our bearers into quitting us altogether. Then at last they made a full-scale attack on our camp. It was our guns against their arrows - poisoned arrows. There were four of us... until I dropped my gun and ran..."

He's the conscience-stricken coward, y'see. And there's more. Oh, by golly, there is. The final gimmick is even pinched from one of Bill's old NEBULA yarns - the one about the composition of the mysterious 'rays' of the

moon. Crikey! - flying kleenex tissues, I'll be bound! This novel hasn't even the saving grace of being written tongue-in-cheek. From a library hack circa 1952 it wouldn't bear a notice. From a writer of William Temple's proven ability it's a downright insult. If I thought that he meant this book to be taken as a serious work of sf I'd publicly burn my tattered copy of THE SMILE OF THE SPHINX. I like to think it's just something he dashed off in an idle hour or two, and I hope that the financial success it has brought him will enable him to sit back and write the novel he is capable of - and for which he has kept us waiting so long.

KATE WILHELM AND OTHERS

Sometimes, but not all that often, in the process of building up my cosmological eye-strain, I experience a little of John Keats's emotion - when (as he nearly wrote) I feel 'like some watchdog of the skies When a new planet swims into his kennel.' Two recent anthologies showing markedly different degrees of aquatic ability are Douglas Hill's WINDOW ON THE FUTURE (Hart Davis: \$2.65) and Kate Wilhelm's ANDOVER AND THE ANDROID. (Dobson: \$2.00)

These two books provide an interesting economic - and aesthetic - comparison. The first is well-presented and typographically excellent, a worthy addition to any sf shelf. For the same number of pages it costs sixty-five cents more than the Dobson book - and is worth it. The latter seems to have been reproduced photographically from the Berkley paperback and looks very sloppy indeed. But let's look at their insides...

Douglas Hill, the editor of WINDOW ON THE FUTURE, is a new name to me. He may be real and then again he could be another of Ted Tubb's pseudonyms. Either way he has put together an excellent collection of seven stories, all by British writers. Perhaps this is not as unusual now as it was fifteen years ago when John Carnell edited the first all-British anthologies for Boardman and Museum Press, but British writers are certainly worthy of some extra attention like this, being, at present, in the vanguard of sf. This anthology helps us to see why this is so.

The stories have not only been selected for their general excellence, but also because they exhibit a common theme: the day after tomorrow - the extrapolation of current sociological trends into the near future. There are no BEMS, no aliens, and none of the stories depart from terra firma.

J.G. Ballard begins the book by tackling market research in his unpredictable way in THE SUBLIMINAL MAN. David Alexander contributes THE DISPOSAL UNIT MAN, one of those utterly grim pictures of tomorrow, and one of the two less-than-excellent stories in the book. I have always considered John Brunner one of the vastly underrated talents in sf; his series of adventure novels for Ace Books has managed to conceal his more serious abilities. WASTED ON THE YOUNG gives us all a chance to reassess his work, and he emerges triumphant. This is a stunning story, economical with words almost to excess, but using a very few pages to apply such a pressure as few writers nowadays seem to manage. The theme is the waywardness of youth, and Brunner raises it to nightmarish proportions.

Arthur Sellings gives us CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE, which dates from Galaxy in 1956 and shows it. The story is saved from mundanity by Sellings's deft sense of humour. THE FACTS OF LIFE, by one Martin Hillman, is outrageous. A homosexual's jest at the battle of the sexes? or is that just complimenting the author on his verisimilitude? This one hasn't been published before, and I can see why. Basically, the denouement is a variation on the problem expounded at length (and in a decidedly more serious vein) by Theodore Sturgeon in VENUS PLUS X. Very amusing, though. SENSE OF PROPORTION is very routine Ted Tubb. Tubb was once the most prolific British hack in sf. Lately his short stories have been appearing occasionally in NEW WORLDS and IMPLUSE, and he hasn't changed a bit. This offering extrapolates the TV series THIS IS YOUR LIFE to a horrifying conclusion, but because Tubb is essentially a very heartless writer we never really care much for what his characters endure. Finally, we come to Brian Aldiss's CIRCULATION OF THE BLOOD, which appeared as recently as IMPULSE no.1. It's about immortality, sacrifice (of a most unusual kind), love and people. And who but Aldiss could mix such diverse elements into a moving, at times exciting, science fiction story?

I recommend this anthology strongly, particularly to followers of really modern sf, but I can find little worth in the second book under consideration.

Kate Wilhelm is a relatively minor, but promising, writer - but I think Damon Knight has done her a disservice by helping this first collection of her stories into print. Miss Wilhelm certainly appears to have talent, but these are very much beginner's stories and as such exhibit more than a permissible number of flaws.

I tried very hard to find a readable story in this collection, but had to abandon the idea. Briefly, there is THE MILE LONG SPACESHIP, which appeared in Astounding and gave the collection its American title. It is a minor gimmick yarn and no more. ANDOVER AND THE ANDROID, the title story of this British edition, was, so I understand, turned into a successful TV play in England. I can understand why. It is vapid, meaningless, and utterly moronic in its treatment of the android plot. The dramatic development of the story is on a level with the average women's magazine (I'm sorry, Miss Wilhelm, but that's the bitter truth) and I get good and mad when something like this succeeds in another medium - when something as similar, but as uncompromisingly REAL, as Keith Roberts's SYNTH gets by-passed.

THE LAST DAY OF THE CAPTAIN is supposed to be sf. Certainly it was published as such in Amazing. But is it? Take a look at the plot: A terran colonised planet is about to be invaded and destroyed by aliens. The entire population must be evacuated in double quick time. A young woman is separated from her husband and son, and has to travel several hundred miles across the planet to the blast-off area, accompanied by a ship's captain, and the two of them are crammed into a tiny land-craft. During the long arduous journey they are thrown together, and on reaching the spaceport go their separate ways again, the woman not even asking after her husband or her son as she morosely boards the ship to leave. This is sf? I wonder what Mr. Blish would have to say? Similarly, FEAR IS A COLD BLACK takes a swipe at the James White sort of tale - but even White wouldn't back out of a plague problem

by making the villain an invisible and unexplained 'entity'. This is one of the five stories in the book which have not been previously published, and they are all pretty poor stories. JENNY WITH WINGS is just that. Other attempts by other authors on this idea have often succeeded as surrealist or weird fictions. Miss Wilhelm tells this one in such a dead-pan, realistic manner that it becomes impossibly ludicrous - or perhaps that was her intention? Her style is so inconsistent that it is difficult to make out exactly what she is trying to accomplish with any given story.

I read a few more stories from this collection - there are eleven in all - then had to give up. Perhaps it is the duty of a reviewer to read every story in a collection, but after forcing myself half-way through this book I just had to abandon that noble idea. You don't have to eat all of a banana to know that it's rotten.

Kate Wilhelm's stories are not really bad, but merely awkward and incompetent. As most writers' first efforts must be. Perhaps in a few years she will have improved her craft to a very high standard indeed, which is why I am more angry at Damon Knight (who reads for Berkley Books) than at anyone else. He should know better. For the rest, I have high hopes for Miss Wilhelm becoming a major writer. Her faults in this collection are those of a journey(wo)man. On the credit side her writing exhibits a rough masculinity worlds removed from the gushing femininity of most of her female contemporaries. Only occasionally does she slip into the much-maligned women's attitude and produce a pedestrian piece of magazine fiction such as THE LAST DAY OF THE CAPTAIN - merely adding some useless sf flavouring to an already bad narrative.

And, as I indicated earlier, the frowsy appearance of this book didn't help my appreciation of Miss Wilhelm's earnest efforts one little bit.

* * *

Like Old Dame Nature Rushing In To Fill An Abhorrent Vacuum, That Implacable Space-Stealer, The Editor, Grabs The Remainder Of This Page For An Important Announcement Or Two...

MR. PATRICK TERRY, of 4/13 WYONG ROAD, MOSMAN, SYDNEY, N.S.W. is willing to correspond with any person in this whole wide world who likes sf. The Editor and his colleagues recommend this offer to anyone who desires a faithful and stimulating pen-friend. Publishers of fanzines who care to send him copies of their publications are assured of letters of comment.

We would like to make clear our own feelings about fanzines, for the benefit of fan publishers who may be wondering about trading. Already we have received such publications as RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, SCOTTISCHE and ODD, and their publishers are now on our mailing list. We are quite happy to trade with any fanzine of serious (though not necessarily grave) intent. We may even review them, eventually. We are not terribly interested in the more excruciatingly dull apazines hacked out merely to meet a deadline. But on the whole we're pretty easy to get on with. Try us and see.

SMITH'S BURST

BOB SMITH

'Would you (wrote the Associate Editor of ASFR) like to do a free-wheeling nostalgia-type fan column for us?' If some fan editor had asked me that a few years ago I would have jumped in with both feet, toes twitching eagerly as I visualised standing most of fandom on its pointed head with my witty prose and caustic pen dipped in a fluid pinched from H.L. Mencken.. However, I have matured slightly since then (I hope) and, gripping a cool tumbler of my favourite scotch in an effort to stop the pounding and ringing in my ears, I thought about it for all of five minutes before dashing off a cool, calm, and suitably humble reply to the A.E.

As the editors have pointed out to me, ASFR is pretty well heeled in the reasonably sercon material department, and there has to be a certain amount of 'balance,' for, after all; ASFR is a fanzine. We are publishing for the sf fan, and those who may be (the poor wee innocents) working up a certain amount of curiosity for this strange phenomenon called fandom, and let's not scare them off with too much solid, serious literature about their favourite reading.

About eight years ago I was fortunate enough to become the proud owner of a dozen copies of Harry Warner Jr's pre-war SPACEWAYS, and I thought it was marvellous. It always had two or three columns of the kind I'd love to copy (although the gossip got a bit vicious at times) and there seemed so much to write about. Nowadays in fandom the free-wheeling column appears to be out of favour and you seldom see one. Just about everything has to be an 'article' now - usually deadly serious and lofty minded. Remember the sf story that had a comedian amongst the space craft crew to stop 'em tearing at each other....? Often a fanzine needs a column like that.

So call me a comedian, if you like. I'll attempt to appeal to your sense of humour, your more nostalgic senses, your (if you'll pardon the expression) sense of wonder. To veterans of fandom in the U.S.A., Britain and Australia who may think me presumptuous....bear with me.

Reading Buck Coulson's letter in ASFR4 pointed out something to me which, investigated more thoroughly, provided fascinating reading. Buck - who, with his wife Juanita, publishes one of fandom's better magazines, the veteran YANDRO - compares ASFR with U.S. fanzines like ZENITH and RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. I began comparing fanzine NAMES...

As one wanders up through the fan years, the names and titles of fanzines alter considerably: the tendency nowadays is towards a much more 'respectable' name. Pruning the list by eliminating all the apa fanzines and the 'one-shots' still leaves one with some of the weirdest name concoctions ever dreamed up. Some kind of peak appears to have been reached around the zany years of 7th Fandom, 1953-54 (known as the 'Phony Seventh', for reasons it would take all my wordage to tell you about) before it began to slide and editors became more sober in their name-creating.

It almost seemed that as sf grew out of its pulp and gaudy-cover stage, the fanzines produced by its readers gradually did the same. Promag and fanzine could now be openly read, without fear of ridicule or eye-raising from the curious and the uncouth. (Progress had its problems, though. Like when parents found that naughty subject s-x being discussed in the pages of their offspring's favourite fanzines.) Fanzine titles today reflect this: SF HORIZONS, SF REVIEW, VECTOR, AUSLANDER, TOLKIEN JOURNAL, EPILOGUE, our own AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, ZENITH, RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY (the title of which gives, to me anyway, the distinct impression that pipe and slippers are required extras while reading). Any good current fanzine with a decent fanzine-review section will provide the names of dozens more - all solid, serious, utterly respectable, and usually full of highly stimulating material on any aspect of your favourite reading you care to mention; their names such that you could leave them lying around on your desk at the office without the Boss writing you off as an idiot, or the gals in the typing pool wondering when you'll grow up... Ah yes, being In can only be taken so far, and only in the right places, it seems.

Some fifteen years ago, in his SF NEWS, Graham Stone reviewed one U.S. fanzine by describing it as 'a publication with a silly name, backed by an organization with one even sillier. But behind the mask of tittering imbecility this magazine presents to the world is something very different.' Well? That laddie at the back with the spinning beanie...? Well done! Yes, it was of course RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST. Go to the top of the class. A fairly decent fanzine ruined by a shocking name, and up through the years there have been dozens like it. We would, I imagine, say the same about so many of our favourite pulp sf magazines of yesteryear, but there were some great yarns in those pages.

Graham never failed to have a blast at a name he considered idiotic, but Ghu knows what he would have done if he'd ever been hit by a certain publication called THE CHATTAHOOCHEE, OKEFENOKEE AND OGEECHEE OCCASIONAL GAZETTE COMBINED WITH THE WASSAW AND OSSABAW BACKWATER JOURNAL AND TANGENT PLUS ROTOGRAVURE-TYPE SECTION: A LA TABUNKO WITH ADDED FEATURE: PORTIONS OF LUNA PONO LEE HOFFMAN: DIRECTOR! Ah yes...the horror with the beanie again ...Of course. This massive tongue-twister sizzled out of the mind of that fan-loving gal from Down South, Lee Hoffman. 1952 vintage.

FANDOM IS FUN! was the cry in those days, and anybody who tended to take sf too seriously got called rude and strange names that eventually ended up in the various guides to 'Fanspeak.' It appears to me that some of the fun has gone out of both sf and fandom, and we shouldn't get too

steamed up and go clanking off in either direction. Let us temper our sercon discussions with the refreshing splash of good humour now and then, and in the words of the Oldest Fan Of Them All, Bob Tucker: WELCOME TO OUR JUNGLE.

Some months ago I purchased a reasonably current issue of IF, and after ploughing through some not over-exciting yarns I came across what appeared to be a column for fans, by Lin Carter. 'Gosh-wow!' I thought (if that's possible), 'A fan-type column, after all these years! And in a science fiction magazine yet. What will they think of next...?'

Now Lin Carter has been around fandom for a heck of a long time, and I have always admired his writing (in a multitude of fanzines over the years, and on the widest imaginable variety of subjects), but this particular column, describing the then up-coming World SF Convention in Cleveland, left me with a slightly sick feeling in my noggin. This excellent writer was obviously attempting to get through to the young element that eagerly grabs up every issue of IF, but it was being done in a painfully simple, almost cloying, over-hearty style, as if the author was aware that he was dealing with an exceedingly adolescent audience, and Gee Whiz Gang! this is the only way I can get through to you dumb-bells... Lin, to me, sounded almost like a fresh-faced young neofan himself. It would serve him right if all those young IF fans turned up at the Convention and threw themselves upon him with screams and whoops of delight. (Nothing like a zap-gun right in the ear, you know.)

* * *

Scholarly Appendix And So On, by The Editor:

I have assumed - and from our correspondence it seems I'm not wrong - that ASFR will be falling into the hands (as the Act says) of a number of people who belong to what I call Underground Fandom: those people who read and love sf but who have never come into contact with fandom, who have perhaps not even suspected its existence. For their benefit I will continue to translate some of the more esoteric terms used by ASFR contributors.

Fanzine = a magazine produced by fans (in case you've forgotten).

Sercon = serious and constructive.

Apa = amateur publishing association (there are many).

One-shot = special fanzine not intended to see more than one issue.

Spinning beanie = a kinda skull-cap with propeller - the traditional identifying symbol of a fan, especially in fan art.

Bob (and gentle reader), you may be interested to know that the naming of ASFR was a terribly heart-searching task that lasted for several months. In fact I wanted desperately to call the magazine THE INVISIBLE WHISTLING OCTOPUS... You may also be interested to know why I have dubbed your column SMITH'S BURST. My indebtedness to Brian Aldiss is obvious. (If it isn't, refer to ASFR3, p.28.) For further light, refer to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, p.238, col.2, definition 5 of 'Burst, sb.'

TELL THE TRUTH, YOU ROTTEN S.F. PERSON!

Prepared by John Bangsund

In Melbourne we call the show TELL THE TRUTH. The idea of the show will no doubt be familiar to you, whatever they call it in your neck of the woods. You get these three blokes (or sheilas) all making out to be the same person, and a panel asks them leading questions to find out which of the three is the real McCoy (or Schnitzelgruber, as the case may be). Finally the moderator says, for example, 'Will the real Toulouse-Lautrec please stand up!' and the guy in the middle disappears. That sort of show. Well, our revered Associate Editor, bearded, brachycephalic Lee Harding, startled viewers of Channel 7 recently, and I took the liberty of recording and transcribing his segment of the programme. Here it is - but, just to see how clever you are, I have not indicated the real Lee Harding...

The Moderator: Mike Williamson

The Panel: Tony Evans, Peggy O'Byrne, Kevin Dennis, Judy Jacques

The Statement: I, Lee Harding, have been interested in sf ever since I learned to read the comics, and was a foundation member of the (Melbourne) Science Fiction Club. I have written dozens of sf stories for publication overseas. I do not go in for the 'thud-and-blunder' or space opera, but am more interested, for instance, in depicting dehumanised man in the computerised society. One of my stories depicted him as a limbless, faceless blob. The difficulty today is that sf tends to be outstripped by science almost before it is published.

The Questions:

T.E. Who wrote the first sf story, and roughly what was it about?

1 Jules Verne. There were probably some before that, but - Jules Verne. It was 'A Trip to the Moon.'

T.E. Do you know of any funny sf stories?

2 Oh, one or two, but humour's never been one of its main functions.

T.E. Do you seriously think it might be possible for science in the future to provide an extra two or three sexes to vary the monotony?

3 Well, it all depends if the need arises. I think sf has in the past had a great deal to do with various developments, but I can't see this coming in in the very near future.

P.O. Do you ever have a BEM in any of your books?

3 I beg your pardon?

P.O. A BEM. All right, do you know what a BEM is?

2 I think it's a beautiful-eyed maiden.

P.O. That's it. Do you ever have one in your books?

32 The Questions:
T.E. Who wrote the first sf story, and roughly what was it about?
Jules Verne. There were probably some before that, but - Jules Verne.
I It was 'A Trip to the Moon.'
2 Never.
P.O. Do you think the people you are talking about are any different from the people there are today?
Well, it all depends on the time period. I think the theme of the future is that there are people who are different from the people there are today.
P.O. Do you think the people you are talking about are any different from the people there are today?
Well, it all depends on the time period. I think the theme of the future is that there are people who are different from the people there are today.
2 I've never really looked that far ahead. I think of it in terms of the 'bread and circuses' of Rome.
P.O. Do you ever have a REM in any of your books?
I beg your pardon?
P.O. A REM. All right, do you know what a REM is?
K.D. What is 'thud-and-blunder'?
3 Well, it's a play on words of course, but it's a more gutsy kind of thing. Do you ever have one in your books?
P.O. That's it. Do you ever have one in your books?
K.D. What sort of people do you think we'll find on the other planets when we all get there?
2 I haven't the faintest idea.
K.D. How can you write about them if you don't....?
2 Well, that's the point of writing. You've got to stretch your imagination to see what objects and people you can dream up. You don't really believe in them.
K.D. Why do you think we're all going to finish up being linkless, faceless blobs in the future?
1 I think it's pretty obvious the way we're going now.
K.D. You speak for yourself?
1 Our environment's changing, we're getting less and less, and becoming more inactive, because things are being brought to us and done for us.
The Questions:
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1 I think it's pretty obvious the way we're going now.
K.D. You speak for yourself?
1 Our environment's changing, we're getting less and less, and becoming more inactive, because things are being brought to us and done for us.

Will the real Lee Harding please stand up!

And he did.

Maybe next issue I'll tell you which one he was.

STILL RUNNING THE RIM

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

Too right I am - literally and figuratively.

As Master of a vessel engaged upon the trans-Tasman cargo service I seem fated always to load in Australia for ports in the South Island of New Zealand, and the shortest way, in terms of distance, is via the Foul Bay Strait, at the southern extremity of the South Island. And if that's not rim running it's about as close as one can get to it on this planet...

Well, I re-read my article in ASFR 3. It closes with the brave words anent BRING BACK YESTERDAY - 'Even so, it was the last of the Rim Runner stories...' And that dates the article more than somewhat. Perhaps my own laziness has been to blame. Here was I, with my own private empire on the tattered fringe of the Galaxy, inhabited by my own people... As James Elroy Flecker remarked - 'Seek not excess, God hateth him who roams.' Lorn, Ultimo, Faraway and Thule may not be Baghdad - but I have yet to find my Samarkand.

Oddly enough, in the later stories Commodore (originally Captain) Grimes has been playing a larger and larger part. I've come to like the crusty old bastard. There's just one thing that I rather resent about him, though. When I had only three rings on my sleeve he had four - and now that I have my four rings he's sporting the single broad ring of a Commodore. But I'm getting my revenge. In the novel just completed - THE ROAD TO THE RIM - I go back to his early life and hard times as a very newly commissioned Ensign. (That, by the way, is dedicated to Admiral Lord Hornblower, R.N.) And in the one that I'm working on now he will tangle with my ex-Empress Irene. It's too early to say who will come out on top - but I'd be prepared to bet on Grimes.

LETTERS

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER, Woollahra N.S.W.

My everloving did not forward ASFR 3 (saying that it would give me a swelled head) so I had to wait until I got home to find out what it was all about. Anyway, enclosed herewith is a little updating in re the Rim Worlds series. With reference to the review of GLORY PLANET - as John surmised, it was more than somewhat hacked about by Avalon, and the plot suffered slightly in consequence. With reference to the profile - there's a couple or three corrections I'd like to make. To begin with - and most important - GIANT KILLER is all my own work. Ted Sturgeon was among John Campbell's weekend guests when the final version was discussed but, apart from that, has no connection with the story. There were, however, two Sturgeon/Chandler collaborations - TOWER OF DARKNESS (Astounding) in which Ted rewrote the ending, and THE SHIP FROM NOWHERE (U.S. Argosy) in

which Ted's main task was to write out all references to the wicked Russians. In each case I was in mid-Pacific when the rehashing was urgently required, otherwise I'd have been able to do the job myself. GIANT KILLER, as a matter of fact, was anthologised. It appeared in WORLD OF WONDER - Twayne Publishers, New York, 1951 - edited by Fletcher Pratt, in which quite a number of today's science fictioneers rubbed shoulders with Rudyard Kipling, Franz Kafka and O. Henry. To conclude, both Susan and myself are impressed by ASFR - and not just because of the kind things said about me. It is a most professional job.

HARRY WARNER JR., 423 Summit Avenue Hagerstown Maryland 21740 U.S.A.

John Carnell's item (in ASFR 2) was thoroughly encouraging, as well as entertaining, as an antidote for the endless laments we hear up on this slope of the globe about the complete collapse of sf. The same jeremiads were sounding through the land when the first atomic bombs went off, they resumed when tv came into every home, and I feel no more trust in them today than I did on the former occasions. It's hard to understand why so few fanzine contributors share Carnell's optimism, when the healthy nature of the sf book market is so plain to see, and when this nation's tv is turning more and more to entertainment with sf or fantasy themes. Apparently the pessimists try to add two highly dubious causes for concern together to reach total annihilation of the field: the beginnings of space travel and the decline of the prozine. There is no real reason to fear that the first flights to the moon and to Mars will stop the creation of space opera, any more than World War Two finished off the sf stories that contain big battles, and only the person for whom sf is the entire universe would fail to see that the fiction magazine is what is losing its hold on life, because of the competition from better-bound, cheaper-per-word, and longer-on-the-newsstands paperback books, not sf magazines.

I may have conjectured when John Baxter's article first appeared that some of fandom's disinterest in the film could be ascribed simply to social custom. Reading is a solitary occupation, now that the 19th century tradition of the family circle clustering around Father as he reads the latest instalment of THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP is gone. So the occasional individual with an all-encompassing interest in sf simply reads all by himself. But in this country, at least, going to the movies is something that is generally done in the company of someone else. The person who goes alone to the movies is almost as much an object of suspicion as the one who drinks alone. The real fan will have considerable trouble finding someone else who will look at the sf movie with a similar attitude, and he may stay away from it instead of persuading someone with only a mild interest in that particular picture to accompany him. However, all this doesn't explain away everything. Why, for instance, are fans all so uniformly eager to insert in convention reports the fact that they didn't watch any of the movie that was shown after the second speech on the second afternoon?

John Foyster seems more convinced than I am that Dwight V. Swain existed as a real person. It sounds like a house name, and surely there wasn't yet another writer as untalented as Palmer, Hamling and Shaver in that era? It is even more suspicious that Swain is identified as a script writer for the University of Oklahoma film unit, because in the 1950s that particular institution had no money to spend on luxuries like this, owing to the concentration

on financing a famous football team. Those tiny little sentences quoted as samples of the Swain style sound like Hamling. I've never forgotten the two- or three-page letter he wrote me, while still a fan, after Palmer had just gone to work on him. Poor W. Lawrence was so anxious to become a hack that he wrote that entire letter in sentences that averaged one-half of one line apiece. Of course, the strangest thing about the Amazing preoccupation with short simple sentences is that stupid people are more likely than not to get involved in sentences even longer and more complicated than mine. I'm sure that hard words, not distance between periods, are what really alienate the duller readers.

Lee Harding's column was the most entertaining part of a high quality issue. He realizes, I assume, that Sam Moskowitz has been overlooking important matters when he writes books for a long while. THE IMMORTAL STORM mentions Australia on page two, in reference to a professional publication, and overlooks the entire continent's part in the history of fandom completely for the remainder of the book.

One final reaction: it's such a relief to see an Australian fanzine that can write cheerfully about sf just like those in the U.S. and Great Britain. For so many years, during the chronic sf famine down there, I felt guilty every time I read an Australian publication - like a surfeited glutton in the midst of starvation.

CHRIS PRIEST 'Cornerways' Willow Close Doddinghurst Brentwood Essex U.K.

Thank you very much for sending me ASFR. It came as a complete and welcome surprise to find that it is of a good, uniform level. I hope that you can continue to go places with it, since it certainly deserves it.

Having received both the first and second issues together I find I'd like to take up points from both of them. In particular, this somewhat insular attitude that is reflected generally by the magazine and specifically by John Baxter in his article (AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION? - ASFR 1). The feeling is expressed that no true indigenous sf has emerged from Australia. I haven't read all that much Australian sf (though I've kept up with the work of Lee Harding and John Baxter as it has appeared in this country) so I cannot judge how much of the total of what is written is truly native. But wouldn't you agree that a lot of sf, British, American and Australian, is written (consciously or unconsciously) about the colonisation, exploration, civilisation, development and eventual exploitation of new lands? The American West is usually held up to be the Last Frontier this world has known, but in fact at the time Australia was first opened up by the British colonists it was an almost totally alien environment. The American West was more of a barrier, or an obstacle, than a frontier. All these stock sf plots that stagger on and on, the ones about Planetary Exploration Teams etc., are straight transcriptions of the old Colonial policies and their side-effects. The point I'm trying to make is that although I will agree that there haven't been all that many stories which are exclusively Australian in origin, I do feel that there is a certain type of sf story which has as its nearest Earthly equivalent the development of wild lands such as Australia.

In the second issue, I found Ted Carnell's article by far the most interesting. But it emphasised the gulf which is developing, in this country at least, in the body of sf. (Or should that be corpse?) This is best demon-

strated by Ted's own choice of novels: SHOOT AT THE MOON and CRYSTAL WORLD. Ted calls SHOOT AT THE MOON a 'very good' novel, yet admits that CRYSTAL WORLD left him 'a little bit at sea.' This of course must only be Ted's opinion. My opinion is that CRYSTAL WORLD is very good, and that SHOOT leaves me somewhat in space, if you see what I mean... This, in its essence, is what the gulf is all about. There are two schools developing amongst British sf readers (or, more particularly, amongst those readers who bother enough to make opinions heard): the group that is constantly trying to relive the glories of the past and who complain when Heinlein's new novel isn't as good as PUPPET MASTERS or DOOR INTO SUMMER - and the group that isn't satisfied anymore by spacesuited heroes, swashbuckling supermen, formalised plots, 'second-generation' settings and deadpan styles, and who require that sf does a little more than merely use gimmicks. This is reflected, in part, by the two contemporary (I use that word advisedly) British sf magazines. Harry Harrison's 'straight-down-the-middle' policy hasn't been properly sampled as yet, but it indicates a swing away from the more interesting approach taken by Mike Moorcock. Kyril Bonfiglioli's policy was vague, to say the least, but it did produce stories that were extraordinarily good, as well as those others...

Ted accuses me, in mentioning my article, of being too obsessed with the symbolism that has been appearing in sf lately. With respect, I should like to differ. Perhaps my article was not written clearly enough, but I don't recall once mentioning symbolism, either explicitly or implicitly. It is my own belief that symbolism, used carelessly, can detract from a story. Unless the symbols are clear or vivid, and used in a way which is entirely natural to the author - and they are, after all, only the author's personal symbols - then they can be deftly misplaced, or even passed, when read. It becomes rather too easy for a writer to cover up his own inept technique by confusing imagery in the hope that the reader will be able to apply guessed symbolism. At least one writer I know has done this in a story which is soon to appear in NEW WORLDS: the symbolism is somehow empty, in that the reader can choose whatever he likes to give meaning to the props and action. This is sloppy - it is writing in the hope that the reader will be able to finish the writer's work.

There are very few writers who can use symbolism properly. In the sf field there is, of course, Ballard, whose symbols, although entirely personal, can be experienced by the reader because they are so vivid.

I certainly look forward to seeing more of ASFR. It has a blend of professionalism, style and informality that I find most entertaining.

BOB SMITH, no-man's-land. (There's no stopping this feller...)

This is Smith the subscriber writing, not Smith the eager young columnist, with a few brief comments on ASFR 4.

You've probably hit some kind of peak in Australian fanzine publishing with that excellent wrap-around cover, but to be honest the mediocre reproduction inside and the few typos I found didn't come up to the cover's standard. The front illustration doesn't seem to get any credit anywhere: who did it?

If, as John Foyster suggests, we don't take Editor Campbell's editorials too seriously, then that article was much too lengthy, I think. In places John is almost as guilty as Campbell, when he comes out with personal opinions

but assumes they are facts. Tsk. Of course I agree with John's definition of what a good editorial should be, and Campbell is the closest we've had, I imagine.

I must confess to a sneaking admiration for your reviewer, 'K.U.F. Widdershins' whoever he may be. I'm sure that in places there are tiny clues that almost tell me who he is, but not quite! He appears to have a fairly thorough background in both sf and fandom, yet the style is not that of the individuals I'd connect with this... Harding or Foyster, for example. His reviews in no.4 were, I thought, excellent.

Norma Williams's mention of Norma Hemming brings out that old query - 'whatever happened to...?' but is more the subject of an article on Australian fan history, rather than one on the current writers in this country. Both Norma Hemming and Vol Molesworth could be found in the most diverse magazines, incidentally: I have read articles by Molesworth in Radio & TV Hobbies (this is some years ago, of course) and a humorous short sf yarn by Norma Hemming in Ken Slater's Operation Fantast Sidetracks, 1954. (And poor old Authentic had its moments, you know, Norma...)

JB: If you only knew the strife we had with that issue, Bob... I was in Perth while it was at the printers, and Lee copped a right royal runaround. When I got back we still were about 200 copies short on one of the pages and the cover. One of our major disappointments was that only about a dozen covers had turned out as black as we wanted. When the reprint finally eventuated it was wrapped neatly in a parcel with a flawless jet-black copy taped on the outside. When I opened up the parcel, there were 200 grey covers - all printed skew-whiff and badly trimmed... Re the cover illustration: In an effort to elude copyright owners I've not credited recent covers, however this one was foisted (in both senses) from a Hungarian literary journal; the artist I know not, but the subject is Lunacharsky's DON QUIXOTE LIBERATED. Re K.U.F. Widdershins: The good doctor is a modest sort of chap who shrinks from fandom's glaring limelight, but let me assure you - he lives! As for your 'tiny clues' I should warn you that any effort to identify him on stylistic criteria could perhaps fail due to my editorial interference: on this criteria even you yourself could be identified with him. For example, neither you nor Dr. W. nor any other contributor to date has my somewhat pedantic outlook on apostrophes. Furthermore, all rumours to the contrary, Dr. W. is not Graham Stone.

And now, with vivid recollections of the last issue going just a few grammes over the four-ounce limit, I reluctantly declare this letter column closed. My apologies to the authors of the many other interesting letters received: among them, Pat Terry - (Pat, I've just had a thought: why not produce a fanzine yourself? Seriously. I'm sure some of the Sydney fans would give you a hand.) (Mr. Terry is a prolific and immensely readable correspondent, and is also ASFR Benefactor No.1.) Norma Williams - L. William Saxby - Paul Willis - Jack Wodhams - Bruce Taylor - Tim Hildebrand - G.B. Kingsbury - and the indefatigable Bob Smith. We almost had a letter from Stephen Murray-Smith, too, but I ran into him at a launching-party for one of our new books and he contented himself with just telling me he had enjoyed John Foyster's article on John Campbell, rather than putting it in writing. Ah well...

STOP PRESS! - FROM OUR MAN IN UPPSALA

STEN DAHLSKOG Tuna Backar 17A Uppsala 16 Sweden

Some unknown well-doer sent me ASFR 3. It was a very pleasant surprise, and my gratitude should be evident from the enclosed bank check... As I mostly agree with the opinions of the reviewers in no.3, I believe that your magazine will be a great help to me. Once I did not need any help in screening: one could buy every paperback published by Ballantine, Bantam or Signet without being disappointed ruinously often and avoid some other publishers without missing anything of real value, but either I am more discriminating now or else the field has really expanded to the degree that no publishers have a near monopoly on good sf. Look at Ace, for instance: a publisher who seemed synonymous with indifferent space-opera and lesser-works-by-better-authors suddenly moves into the top rank by publishing two first-rate new talents - Samuel Delaney and Ursula K. LeGuin. (If you haven't read LeGuin yet, do! I'd like to read a review of her work. In my opinion she has Poul Anderson's ability to plot, Norton's to make the reader feel 'a sense of wonder', Clement's to describe an alien ecology - and hers ring truer: I am a biologist and should know. She has something of Sturgeon's insight into character and more than something of his stylistic brilliance, and to top it all she has something of Tolkien's ability to convey a sense of history.) I do not agree with all the opinions voiced in ASFR. If I did, I would not want it. The one way I learn is by encountering new ideas. But I do prefer new ideas with motivations to new ideas without. So I would like to ask Mr. Harding to explain just how he can find that 'the scientific background has been plausibly allied to the people in the foreground' in 'the recent novelettes of Roger Zelazny' (that ought to refer to Zelazny's F&SF stories, including AND CALL ME CONRAD) and 'just about anything by J.G. Ballard.' Certainly Mr. Harding implies that the 'scientific' background in Zelazny's and Ballard's work is plausible, but I hope I have misunderstood him: to me it seems that both these authors use science in exactly the same way a fantasy writer uses magic. They seldom if ever try to explain anything, and when they do their 'science' falls apart at the first hard look. They write speculative fiction, yes, but science fiction - hardly. And I would like to get some explanation for the anti-ANALOG feelings voiced by Mr. Foyster and more or less implicit in the reviews by Mr. Reynard and Mr. Harding. This more or less leads over to one of my favourite ideas: review the magazines! One might argue that books are more permanent and therefore more important than magazines, but I wonder if that is true: most sf first appears in some magazine. Don't review every issue - most of them are not worth the bother - but do review each new volume after completion. A stack of six issues of a magazine should provide more rewarding material for criticism than even a thick hard-cover anthology, and above all it would provide more information about current trends and progress. In the unlikely case that magazine editors are serious when they state that they take reviews and criticism seriously, reviewing of their work might even do some good. If nothing else, I might learn why Messrs. Foyster, Reynard and Harding seem to be as exasperated with Campbell as I am with Pohl.

JB: Ett stort glas mörkt öl till, och en kopp is kaffe med grädde. Skål! And thanks, Sten, for your comments and subscription. We look forward to more letters from you: perhaps you could tell us something about the state of sf in Scandinavia - our news from that quarter is rather meagre.

MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB REPORT

by MERVYN LINNS and CASPAR

On the whole, this year has been one of the best-ever for the Club. The film shows in particular have been very well attended, despite the fact that many of the films shown have had little connection with sf or fantasy. Our last show for the year, on Friday December 16, will include the Peter Sellers film THE WRONG ARM OF THE LAW.

We have started mapping out programmes for next year and will be happy to listen to your suggestions. We are hoping to get SEVEN DAYS IN MAY, THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE, and THE SEVEN FACES OF DOCTOR LAO. We will be showing more of the Chaplin films and some other silent classics. The editor of this journal wants us to try to get A HARD DAY'S NIGHT (for all his talk about Berlioz, Bach and Mahler, I think he's a rocker at heart) - and we'd be interested to know what you think about that... We always have a bit of a job finding suitable films: so few good sf movies have been made and even fewer are available in 16mm.

The future, however, looks promising for sf films. Very soon now we will be seeing FANTASTIC VOYAGE, which by all reports is a very fine film indeed. Considerable interest has already been aroused in it, here in Melbourne, by a pretty dramatic TV advertisement. One of the national weeklies has begun serialising it, but this shouldn't harm the film's prospects too much.

Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451 has been threatened several times in the past, and has now been made under the direction of Francis Truffaut. It stars Julie Christie and Oscar Werner - as you will know if you looked at the back cover of ASFR 4. Julie Christie, this year's Academy Award winner, will be remembered also for her part as the original Andromeda in the B.B.C. serial version of Fred Hoyle's A FOR ANDROMEDA.

But the real blockbuster looks like being Stanley Kubrick's YEAR 2001, written by the director in collaboration with Arthur Clarke. This could possibly be the most important sf film yet made. With the help of NASA experts, the space vehicles and interplanetary scenes have been constructed as accurately as possible, and the few people who have penetrated the barrier of secrecy which has surrounded this production have been very impressed by the sets.

Other films on the way include SECONDS, directed by John Frankenheimer and starring - Rock Hudson; a re-release of ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS and CRACK IN THE WORLD; AROUND THE WORLD UNDER THE SEA, with Lloyd Bridges and David McCallum; and a new version of Jules Verne's ROCKET TO THE MOON.

In my remaining few lines I would like to mention a couple of items which the Club has for sale. First, new hardcover U.S. editions of Heinlein's THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and Sam Moskowitz's MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SF: \$6.95 and \$6.60 respectively. And the special limited edition, in two volumes, of BUCK ROGERS - the first 198 daily comic strips: \$11 the set.

ASFR CHECKLIST

of new and forthcoming books in the sf, fantasy and related fields

AMIS & CONQUEST (ed)	Spectrum 4.	Berkley	\$0.75
ANDERSON, Poul	The corridors of time.	Lancer	0.60
-	Trader to the stars.	Berkley	0.60
ASIMOV, Isaac	Nine tomorrows.	Panther	
BRADBURY, Ray	Fahrenheit 451.	Bantam	0.60
BRUNNER, John	The long result.	Ballantine	0.60
BURROUGHS, E.R.	Sword of Mars.	Foursquare	
CAMPBELL, John	Invaders from the infinite.	Ace	0.60
CARNELL, E.J. (ed)	New writings in sf - 7.	Corgi	0.60
CHRISTOPHER, John	Cloud on silver.	Hodder	0.60
CLARKE, Arthur	Earthlight.	Pan	
-	Childhood's end.	Pan	
- (ed)	Time probe.	Gollancz	2.30
DEXTER, William	World in eclipse.	Pocketbook	0.60
FAST, Howard	Edge of tomorrow.	Bantam	0.60
FRIEDBERG, Gertrude	The revolving boy.	Gollancz	2.30
GATEHOUSE-HARDY, J.	Chameleon.	Hale	3.15
GORDON, Rex	Utopia minus X.	Ace	0.50
HEALY & McCOMAS (ed)	More adventures in time and space.	Bantam	
HEINLEIN, Robert	Beyond this horizon.	Signet	0.60
-	Revolt in 2100.	Pan	
JONES, R.F.	The alien.	Belmont	0.60
KNIGHT, Damon (ed)	Nebula Award stories.	Gollancz	3.15
LAUMER, Keith	Catastrophe planet.	Berkley	0.60
LE GUIN, Ursula	Planet of exile.	Ace	
+ DISCH, Thomas	Mankind under the leash.	Double	0.60
MADDOCK, Larry	The flying saucer gambit.	Ace	0.60
MERRITT, A.A.	The metal monster.	Avon	
-	The ship of Ishtar.	-	
MILLS, Robert (ed)	The worlds of science fiction.	Panther	0.80
NIVEN, Larry	The world of Ptavvs.	Ballantine	0.50
NORTON, Andre	The defiant agents.	Ace	0.60
-	Quest crosstime.	-	0.60
-	The Sioux spaceman.	-	0.50
POHL, Frederik	Gladiator at law.	Pan	
- & KORNBLUTH	The wonder effect.	Gollancz	2.30
RACKHAM, John	Time to live.	Ace	
+ CARTER, Lin	The man without a planet.	Double	0.60
RANDALL, Robert	The dawning light.	Mayflower	0.60
REYNOLDS, Mack	Space pioneers.	Foursquare	
SHECKLEY, Robert	The tenth victim.	Mayflower	0.60
SIMAK, Clifford	Way station.	Pan	
-	Why call them back from heaven?	Gollancz	2.30
SMITH, G.H.	The four day weekend.	Belmont	0.60
TOLKIEN, R.R.	The Tolkien reader.	Ballantine	0.95
VANCE, Jack	Eyes of the overworld.	Ace	0.60
VAN VOGT, A.E.	Rogue ship.	Berkley	0.60
VIDAL, Gore	Messiah.	Foursquare	
WOLLHEIM, Donald	The secret of Saturn's rings.	Pocketbook	0.60

Other people are writing, too. Lee and I have read a number of manuscripts submitted to us by readers, and we have given John Carnell's address to several others.

So, all in all, a great year for Australian sf. And there's more where that came from.

Hail and farewell... Hail to Miss Harding, latest girl-fan born to Lee and Carla on November 29th. At the moment of writing Miss H. has yet to be named; I suggested Sophonisba, but was howled down. One reflects that the advent of Erik, Lee and Carla's first, sparked off the publication of CANTO ONE; perhaps now CANTO TWO will at last eventuate. But I have the feeling, if this is the basis for Lee's publication schedule, that Carla is not looking forward to CANTO TWELVE.

Farewell to Jenny's Cellar, alas, and to Sonya's schnitzels. Jenny's was a candle-lit basement restaurant in Degrares Street, a place which in the last couple of years has witnessed scenes of great moment in Australian fan history. Ah, memory. Four tables jammed together, and around them ten of us planning the Convention - John Foyster producing his file and calling us to order. My first meeting with the redoubtable Dr. Jenssen - the night he paused in mid-Pernod to demonstrate his uncanny facility in ear-wiggling, to the utter confusion of our fellow diners. The night I arrived to find John Baxter, looking for all the world like a contented bishop, leaning back in his chair reading the poetical works of some obscure American novelist. And now a new proprietor has moved into our cellar, has taken away the candles and transformed the place into a sort of Viennese smorgasbord... Jenny's Cellar wasn't the White Hart, but it was the nearest thing to it in Melbourne. We mourn its passing.

We've just endured another federal election in Australia, and the so-called Liberals have been returned to office with a thumping majority. Some people have expressed concern at my dragging politics into ASFR - maybe I can justify it this way: Many of our readers are in their late teens and early twenties. They are among the people our government is conscripting to fight in Vietnam. Before the war is over many of these young men will be dead - among them perhaps ASFR readers. We can't afford to lose subscribers! Further, the way the war is going, it won't be long before it spreads to other parts of South East Asia. More conscripts will be needed, and sooner or later they'll catch up with my age-group. Then what will you do? - they probably won't let me produce a fanzine in jail, you know.

No, the only thing I approved of in this election - and how fitting and proper it is - is that I, the editor of a journal devoted to science fiction and fantasy, voted in the electorate of Batman.

John Bangsund

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