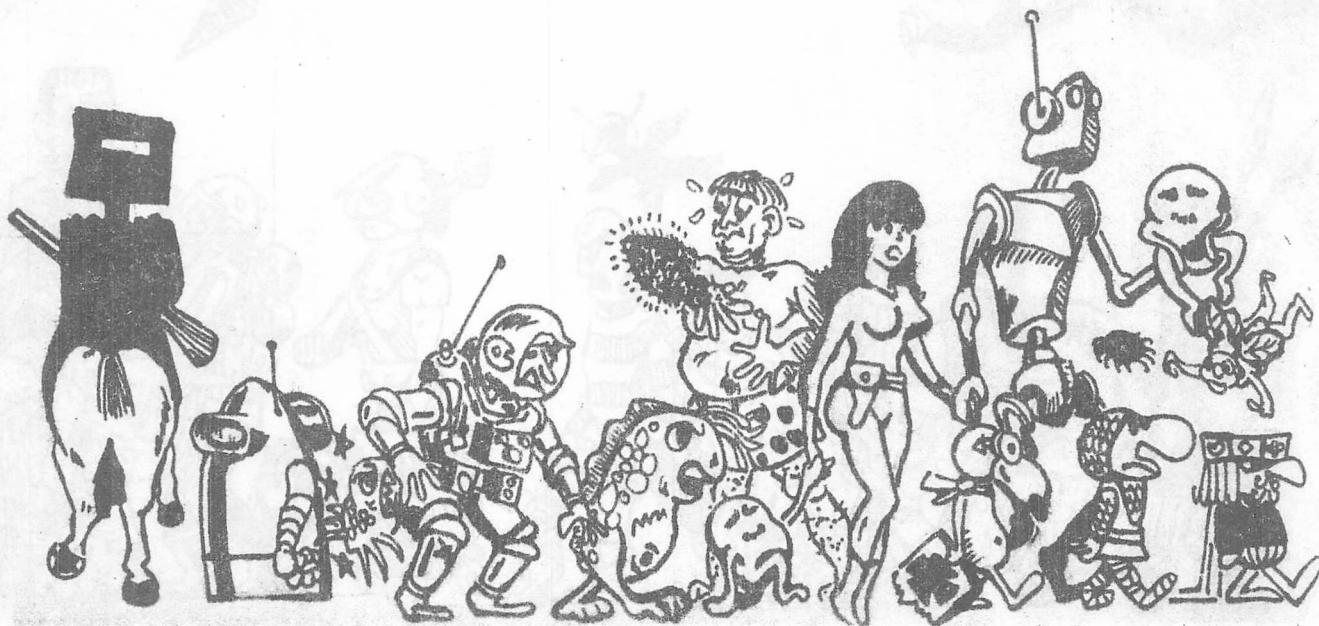


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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW



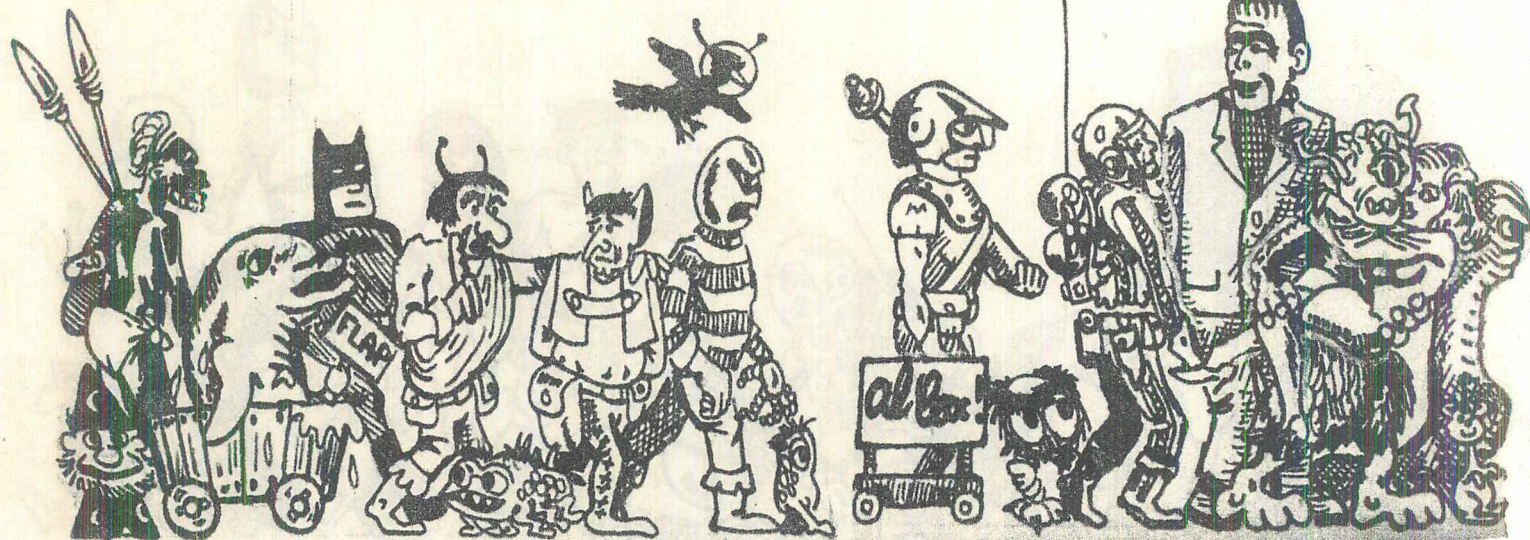


Australian Science Fiction Review

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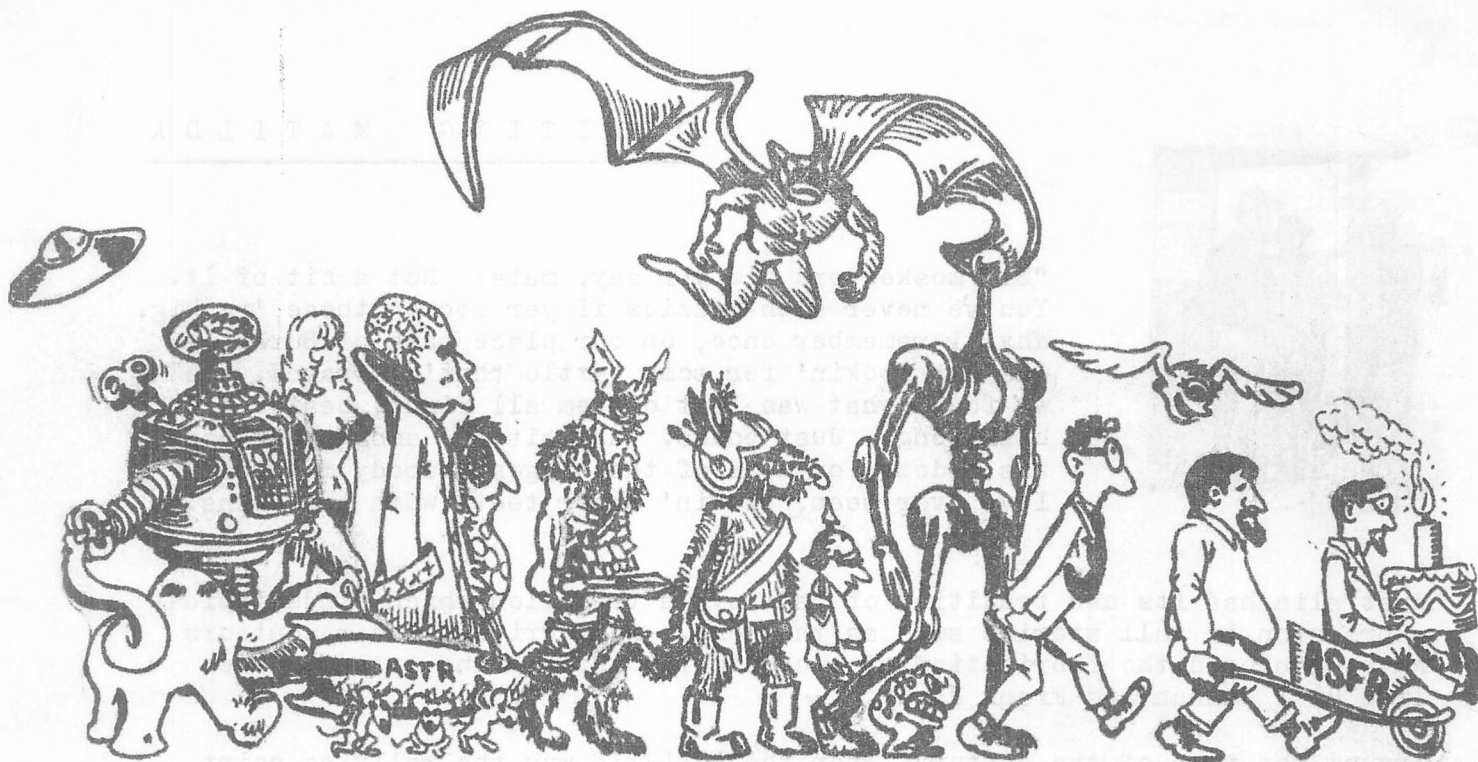
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"Big moskeeters did yer say, mate? Not a bit of it. You've never seen mozzies if yer reckon these 're big. Why, I remember once, on our place back o' Burke, we was out lookin' fer some cattle that'd strayed. Well, we found what was left of 'em all right, beside a billabong. Just bones. And sittin' among them bones was a dozen or more of the biggest bloody mozzies I've ever seen, pickin' their teeth with the horns."

Australia has its own tradition of fantasy, a tradition which finds typical expression in tall stories such as this one. Many writers and raconteurs have developed the fabrication of such stories into a fine art - people like Bill Wannan and Frank Hardy.

Around the turn of the century, when the BULLETIN was the rallying point for Australian nationalism, this kind of story was often transformed into a genuine work of art by certain very gifted writers - among them, of course, the great Henry Lawson. Very occasionally one of these stories would be taken into the realm of pure fantasy, wafted by as fine a suspension of disbelief as one could expect to encounter in any literature. Perhaps the finest story of this kind is THE CHAMPION BULLOCK-DRIVER, by Lance Skuthorpe - and if you have not previously read it, I have the greatest pleasure in introducing you to it.

Most nations, I would imagine, have their own kinds of tall stories - one thinks immediately of Paul Bunyan, and of the devil in the knot-hole, to name only American and Norwegian examples - and the Australian variety obviously descends from a long line of folk tales and the like. But I think it would be fair to say that we have made a quite distinctive contribution to the genre.

It is my feeling that Australian writers of science fiction could profitably study our tall-story heritage - certainly not for jokes to insert in their narratives (some of the jokes are appalling) but for fantastic situations involving authentic Australian characters and attitudes.

No, this is not an appeal for a "back-to-the-bush" school of sf. Statistically your average Australian lives closer to an espresso joint than a gum tree. But it is an appeal to local writers to stop now and then, take a look at your country and the people who live in it, and write some sf which reflects what you see around you.

If, for example, the devastating Australian attitudes expressed by such national catchphrases as "fair go, mate", "she'll be right", and "aar, bullshit", survive into the future, what differences may we expect between an Australian spaceman's intergalactic encounters and an American's similar experiences?

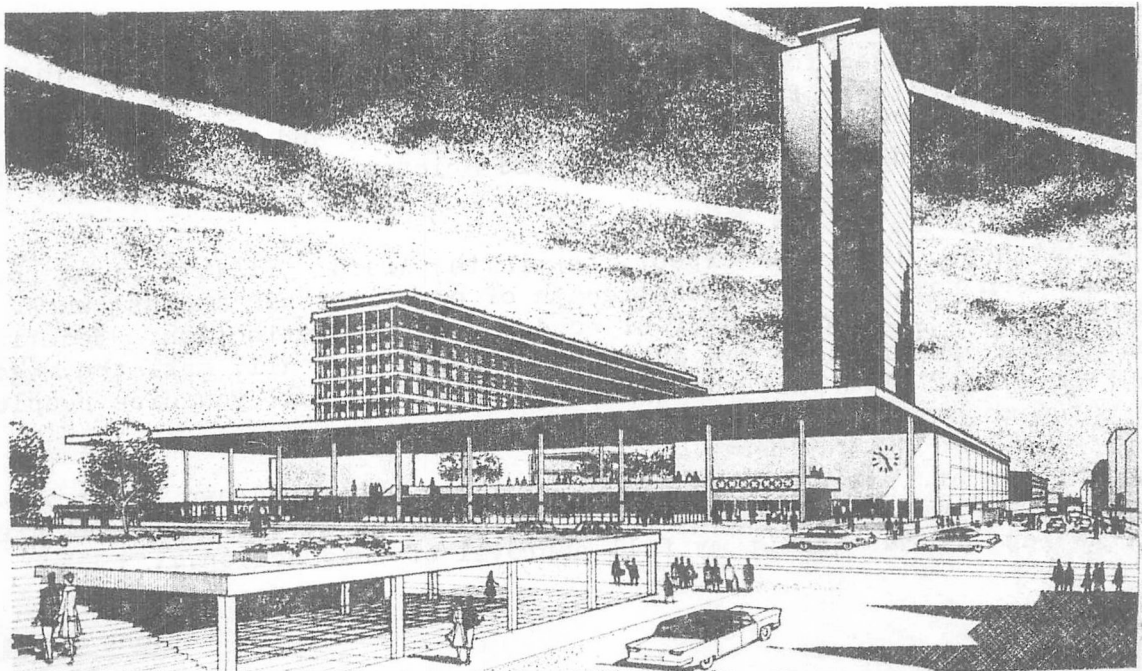
Think of the many stories concerned with a technician's solution to some problem or other. Imagine such a story wherein your spacecraft has sprung a leak or something: imagine the captain turning to his Australian technician in this moment of peril and being comforted by a grin and a "she'll be right, mate!" Anything less comforting would be hard to conceive, but that's an authentic Australian response, and it means: "You just get on with your job, sport, and leave me alone; I'll fix up something that's near enough right."

Or think of that scene you've so often yawned through, where the Empress of Bumf carries on at length about her problems to your intrepid spacehero. "I agree, Your Exaltedness," says your hero, or some such rubbish. An Australian in that situation would more likely think, and possibly even say, "Aar, don't gimme that bullshit, luv!"

The temptation, of course, is to caricature rather than characterize, and this has been done often enough (particularly in films) to make one wary of publishing an editorial like this, in case it should lead to a rash of dinkum-cobber stories - but I'll take the risk.

Mervyn Barrett, in ASFR 4, remarked that it may be a little late to try to develop an essentially Australian sf. "Think globally," he wrote, "Let's get in on the ground floor and write a story which is uniquely Terran." Brian Richards, in conversation, put it rather more strongly: "The very charm of sf lies in its international character."

There is room for debate here. "International" may turn out to mean "American", and I wonder if this is something to go along with, or something to counter. Already, when an Australian author constructs Megalopolis, his city is a descendant of New York, but this is not to be wondered at: Sydney and Melbourne increasingly resemble American cities. What is a



matter of speculation is whether at some time in the future there will evolve a race of urban men, internationally indistinguishable.

This is something which should be exercising the imaginations of local writers. We tend to think of Australia as the land of vast open spaces, of America as the land of crowded cities, when in fact only three cities in the United States are bigger than Sydney, and four bigger than Melbourne. We are, literally, the most urbanized people in the world. But those incredibly empty spaces remain. What effect do they have on our mentality, on our character? What actual or psychological part will they play in our future?

By reason of its geographical situation, Australia must more and more become involved with Asia and the Pacific. At present we vaguely remember Kanakas, and the only Asians we are at all interested in are those puzzling Japs we do business with, and those diabolical Viet Cong we are helping America to exterminate. Boongs, little yeller bastards, and Commos. But what of the future?

From the quaintness of "the biggest mozzies" to the harsh reality of Australia's destiny in Asia may seem too vast a range for one editorial, especially when the basic subject is sf. (I haven't even touched on the fascinating subject of Australian aboriginal legends...) But the message, as I hope I've made clear, is consistent and simple. Ours is a unique land, and we are a unique people. We must study our past and our present to discover what makes us unique. Only then may we begin to speculate profitably on our future, and perhaps produce that distinctively Australian sf we keep on talking about.

*

We were delighted to learn towards the end of May that ASFR has been officially nominated for a Fan Achievement Award as Best Fanzine 1966 - along with six other, formidable, publications. (Namely: HABAKKUK, LIGHTHOUSE, NIEKAS, RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, TRUMPET, and YANDRO.) The Award will be made at the New York World Science Fiction Convention in September.

We do not hope, let alone expect, to win the Award. It is a great honour to have been nominated on the strength of our first six months' work. This time next year we might feel we deserve the distinction. Meantime, from ASFR's contributors and supporters (who, after all, make the magazine) and from myself (I'm just the typist) - thank you, all you nice people who voted us onto the ballot.

(As a matter of interest, the NYCon Committee has withdrawn the name "Pong", which was to have been the official nickname for the Fan Achievement Awards. I must admit my full approval of this action...)

John Bangsund

THE CHAMPION BULLOCK-DRIVER

LANCE SKUTHORPE

We were sitting outside old Tallwood cattle-station, in our white moleskin trousers, elastic-side boots, and cabbage-tree hats, watching two stockmen shoe a very wild brumby mare. We were all slaves to the saddle and bridle, and there was nothing too heavy or hard. The boss squatted on a new four-rail fence. There were twenty panels of this fence, strong ironbark post-and-rails. The first rails were mortised into a big ironbark tree, and there were four No.8 wires twisted around the butt, passed through the posts and strained very tightly to the big strainer at the other end.

As though he had dropped out of the sky there appeared on the scene a very smart-looking man carrying a red-blanket swag, a water-bag, tucker-bag, and billycan. He put them down and said, 'Is the boss about?'

We all pointed to the man on the fence. The new chap took his pipe out of his mouth and walked up, a bit shy-like, and said:

'Is there any chance of a job, boss?'

'What can you do?' asked the boss.

'Well, anything amongst stock. You can't put me wrong.'

'Can you ride a buckjumper?'

'Pretty good,' said the young man.

'Can you scrub-dash - I mean, can you catch cattle in timber on a good horse before they're knocked up?'

'Hold my own,' said the young man.

'Have you got a good flow of language?'

The young man hesitated awhile before answering this question. So the boss said:

'I mean, can you drive a rowdy team of bullocks?'

'Just into my hand,' said the young man.

The boss jumped down off the fence.

'Look here,' he said. 'It's no good you telling me you can drive a team of bullocks if you can't.' And pointing to a little graveyard he added, 'Do you see that little cemetery over there?'

The young man pulled his hat down over his eye, looked across, and said, 'Yes.'

'Well,' continued the boss, 'there are sixteen bullock-drivers lying there. They came here to drive this team of mine.'

I watched the young man's face when the boss said that to see if he would flinch; but a little smile broke away from the corner of his mouth, curled around his cheek and disappeared in his earhole, and as the effect died away he said, 'They won't put me there.'

'I don't know so much about that,' said the boss.

'I'll give you a trial,' the young man suggested.

'It would take too long to muster the bullocks,' said the boss. 'But take that bullock-whip there' - it was standing near the big ironbark - 'and say, for instance, eight panels of that fence are sixteen bullocks, show me how you would start the team.'

'Right,' said the young man.

Walking over he picked up the big bullock-whip and very carefully examined it to see how it was fastened to the handle. Then he ran his hand down along the whip, examining it as though he were searching for a broken link in a chain. Then he looked closely to see how the fall was fastened to the whip. After that he stood back and swung it around and gave a cheer.

First he threw the whip up to the leaders, and then threw it back to the polers. He stepped in as though to dig the near-side pin-bullock under the arm with the handle of the whip, then stepped back and swung the big whip around. He kept on talking, and the whip kept on cracking, until a little flame ran right along the top of the fence. And he kept on talking and the whip kept on cracking until the phantom forms of sixteen bullocks appeared along the fence - blues, blacks and brindles. And he kept on talking and the whip kept on cracking till the phantom forms of sixteen bullock-drivers appeared on the scene. And they kept on talking and their whips kept on cracking till the fence started to walk on, and pulled the big ironbark tree down.

'That will do,' said the boss.

'Not a bit of it,' said the young man, 'where's your wood-heap?'

We all pointed to the wood-heap near the old bark kitchen.

And they kept on talking and their whips kept on cracking till they made the fence pull the tree right up to the wood-heap.

We were all sitting round on the limbs of the tree, and the young man was talking to the boss, and we felt sure he would get the job, when the boss called out, 'Get the fencing-gear, lads, and put that fence up again.'

'Excuse me for interrupting, boss,' said the young man, 'but would you like to see how I back a team of bullocks?'

'Yes, I would,' said the boss.

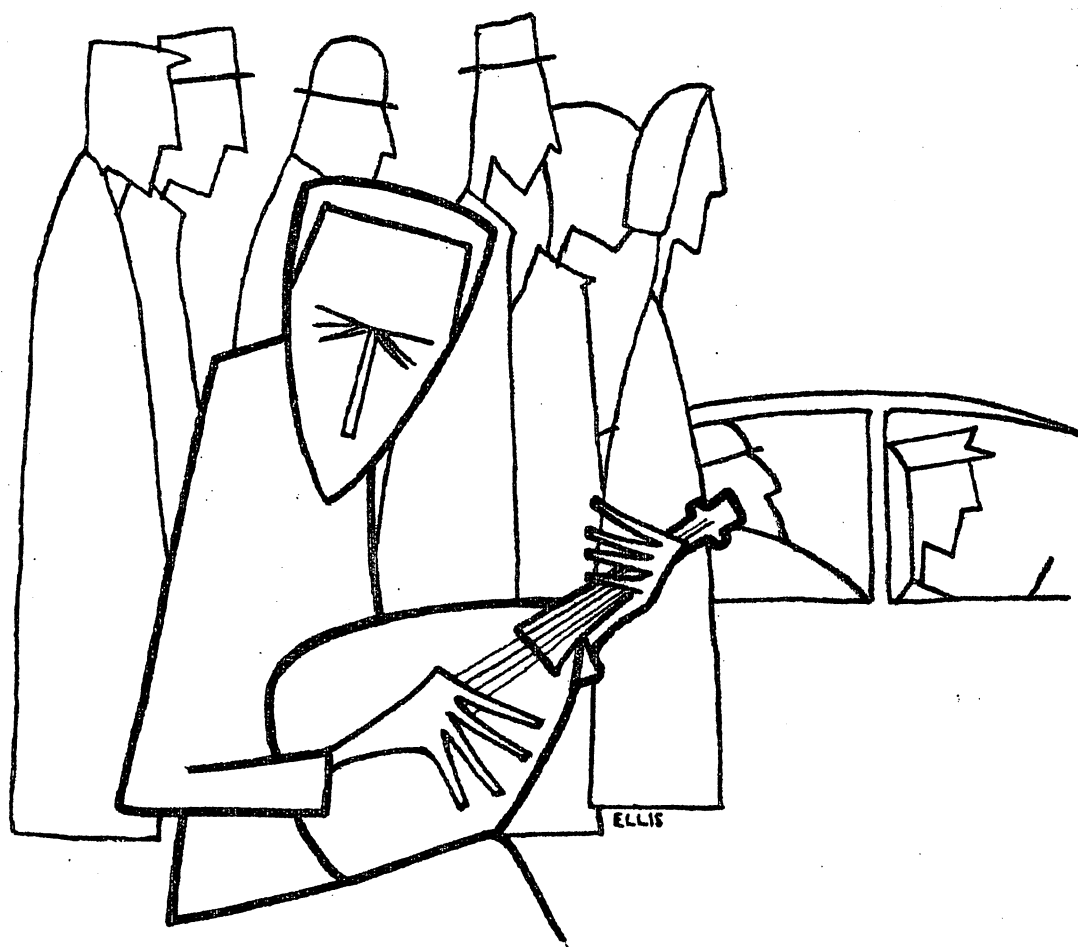
So the young man walked over and picked up the big bullock-whip again. He swung it around and called out:

'Now then, boys, all together!'

And the phantom forms of the sixteen bullock-drivers appeared on the

scene again; and they kept on talking and their whips kept on cracking, till every post and rail burst out into flame, and when the flame cleared away each post and rail backed into its place, and the phantom forms of the sixteen bullock-drivers took off their cabbage-tree hats to the young man, and they backed and they bowed, and they bowed and they backed right into their graves, recognizing him as the champion bullock-driver.

*



the short look, and the long hard look

In the course of private exchanges John Bangsund and I have touched on the vexed question of the difference between reviewing and criticism. With his concurrence, I quote John:

"When you mention the 'separate and distinct functions of reviewing and criticism' I wonder if you mean what I call the double standard? There are books and there is literature.... one must often find books which are vastly entertaining but which fall short of being literature.The double standard comes in when one says, This is great sf - but let's not delude ourselves that it's literature."

Whether or not he really holds this view (he may merely have thrown it out as a hook to force me to a definitive statement) I as a professional writer cannot subscribe to it. Bluntly, all books are literature - good literature or bad literature. The only standard by which a book can be measured in a qualitative fashion is to set it alongside the best we know and apply certain tests. The nature of these tests can be discussed later.

There is no double standard, but there are differing functions among the assessors of books, the two best known of the assessors being the reviewers and the critics. Broadly, the reviewer does little more than give the reader of his periodical a guide to what is on the market. He reads a great number of books, reads them in a hurry because he has a deadline to meet, and attempts little more than a superficial relation of the work's most obvious qualities: his own immediate reaction is for or against, and this colours his assessment. He has neither the time nor the distance in perspective to do more; he may condemn the worthwhile because its less evident qualities elude his swift reading, which is bound to fasten on surfaces rather than on total content, and he may praise the worthless because his immediate pleasure causes him to make undue allowance for the weaknesses which he perceives hurriedly but cannot stop to analyse. In the long run he says little more than that he liked the book or he didn't like it. If your taste happens to march with his, then he is a good reviewer for you.

But he is of no use at all to the writer or to the serious reader who considers literature a major amenity of civilization, one which must be treated with exactness and great care.

The job of the critic is much more taxing. He must be able to see the book in perspective - in relation to the writer's other work, in relation to its particular genre, in relation to literature as a whole, and in relation to the civilization of which it is a part. He must assess it

not only as a good or a bad book, but as a useful or a useless book, one which adds to or detracts from the author's total stature and as one which will or will not have some effect on the culture whose existence made it possible. Other matters also, but mainly those.

Writers read him with care, note his remarks and his references, assess his conclusions and give much consideration to his summation of their weaknesses. They don't allow critics to dictate to them - far from it - but they do appreciate the thinking of minds which have paid them the compliment of considering them worthy of the immense labour which goes into good criticism. I have on two occasions written letters of thanks to critics who have pointed out faults which were hidden from me and the discussion of which has made a difference to my writing and my approach to literary problems of style, construction and presentation.

To the student and serious reader the critic can be an opener of doors, a pointer out of missed values, a guide to pleasures and excitements denied to the reader whose goal is entertainment only. Emotional pleasure is not enough; it is transient and soon exhausted. A good book must give emotional pleasure or it is not a good book, but the final criterion is intellectual pleasure, which makes a book not a thing of the moment but a part of one's experience of life, as easy to browse over and reread as it is to listen to a favourite song repeated or to turn again and again to a fine painting.

To sum up, the reviewer is concerned with the impression of the moment for the reader of the moment; the critic is concerned with causes, effects and ultimate values.

As a demonstration of the great gulf in these functions I propose to take a popular and much lauded sf novel and treat it on several levels of criticism. THE DEMOLISHED MAN, Hugo winner, good seller and earner of rave reviews, will do nicely, particularly as it has lately been republished by Penguin, and first appeared sufficiently long ago to allow its position in the body of sf to be fairly assessed.

But first my qualifications for discussing sf at all:

Sf reader - 39 years.

Student of literature - 30 years.

Novelist (with a reasonable local standing) - 10 years.

Practising critic - since I commenced this article 30 minutes ago.

And so to business.

First, the magazine editor who receives the ms of THE DEMOLISHED MAN: He demands a moderate literary standard, but is more interested in other qualities. His impression runs somewhat thus:

"... hard, incisive style, very compulsive... plenty of action... 80,000 words, three- or four-parter, will divide well into either... telepathy a staling subject, but the writing will carry it... violent without being unnecessarily sadistic, will go down well... scientific basis pretty doubtful, but most of the weak points fairly well covered... terrific tension and speed, should be a winner.

Then the reader, jolted out of his pants and writing feverishly to his favourite magazine:

"Dear Ed,

Demolished Man is a winner. But a WINNER!!! Boy, am I caught up in this one. It's absolutely real, but REAL. And can that Bester write! Get more like this, one every month, and I'm hooked for life. After this no one can doubt that telepathy is something real, and the scoffers can go (unmentionable and impossible) themselves.. Never before have I had such a kick out of....."

And so on until he runs out of nonsense and relaxes gasping to wait pop-eyed and panting for the next issue. This kind of appreciation hasn't even the justification of the editor's hardboiled but practical summation, but appears so brutally often as to give one severe doubts about the mental level of the average sf reader.

The book is submitted for hardcover publication and a publisher's reader submitg his report:

"...the background is such that it has to be labelled science fiction, but in fact the scientific content is negligible, and the story is really a hardboiled, fast-moving thriller. On this level it is entertaining stuff and should go down well with the science fiction public. Others may find it a bit too far out for easy digestion. Characterization is almost entirely absent, the persons being cardboard types set up in a few words and developing not at all; since the persons of the story are extreme types, this is probably as well, for they wouldn't stand much psychological penetration. The great strength of the book is the compulsively readable style. We should publish this on the sf list..."

Sam Moskowitz gets at it for one of his fabulous parodies of appreciation:

"This magnificent novel sets a new literary standard in sf. Bester fulfils the promise shown in his trailblazing short stories and crowns his career with a coruscating cascade of sheer genius. This novel marks a new development in sf..."

I don't know whether the ineffable Sam ever did a review of THE DEMOLISHED MAN, but perhaps my version wouldn't be far wrong.

A daily newspaper takes a cautious fling:

"A solid, craftsmanlike work, full of action and ingenuity. The author is a very talented man with a flair for making the noisy nonsense of science fiction seem most real. The brutal, pared-down style is admirably suited to the brutal, pared-down story, but is relieved by flashes of compassionate understanding..."

Robert Gerrand notices it for ASFR: (I quote the most relevant portions of his review.)

"One of the strong points... is the author's ability to write so convincingly about psi powers. He not only makes you believe they exist - he makes you believe they should exist. And this he does by the brilliant way he sketches in his societies... These societies are not mere backdrops... but vivid, necessary parts of the story... (they) give meaning to the characters' actions: we see how the environment influences

the whole." With all good will I contend that Mr. Gerrand has created virtues that are simply not present and missed those that are. Let's see what the critic does to it after a long, hard look.

The critic has done his homework. He read the book when it first appeared and found it a most entertaining tale, hard to put down; but he was troubled by subconscious awareness that all was not as well as appeared on the surface. So, after a reasonable lapse of time he read it again, and then knew definitely that the author had subjected him to a brilliantly loaded snow job. Ten years later he read it again, in order to write this article, and found it hard going - the tricks and glosses and deliberate mis representations stood out like blackbirds on the snow.

Now, THE DEMOLISHED MAN, Hugo and all, occupies a high place in the sf canon. Question: Does it deserve this high place? It purports to be a sf thriller. Questions: Is it good sf and is it a good thriller? Reviewers and editors have made much of the lifelike delineation of existence in a telepathic society. Question: What in fact does Bester tell us about such an existence?

Over-riding question: Does this book in fact represent a high point in the development of sf, or is it a high grade example of how to do it and not get caught?

Having asked himself these questions and a dozen others, the critic set himself to the typewriter, and this is what he wrote:

THE DEMOLISHED MAN is an ingenious thriller constructed and plotted by an ingenious man. It is, perhaps, altogether too ingenious for its own good as a novel, for the reader is hurled from event to event and idea to idea without pause for breath or thought, much less pause to consider an idea and evaluate its validity.

Any work of fiction must be consistent within the bounds of its own convention; a work of sf must be consistent within the bounds of the speculative ideas embodied in it, and those speculative ideas must hold up under scrutiny. If they do not, the work is no longer sf but fantasy or daydream, and loses validity accordingly. Since THE DEMOLISHED MAN rests on the conception of telepathy, the whole book stands or falls by the handling of that subject.

Bester provides spectacular passages showing telepathy in action, but is never foolish enough to suggest how telepathic powers are brought into existence or to discuss the techniques of using and directing these powers. He makes statements, but never suggests a *raison d'etre*. He hits the reader over the head, says 'this is how it is and don't ask silly questions', and so leaves himself a bare field in which he can do as he pleases because questioning what he does is tacitly barred.

But even with this limitless arena in which to play he trips over his own ankles more than once. For instance, there is a short scene in which the detective is pleased to discover the protective thickness of his hotel-room walls, because it will shut out the incessant telepathic gabble of the world's thinking. (So Bester's telepathic function is susceptible to the usual laws governing the behaviour of radiation, is it? The non-telepathic majority would very quickly adopt effective baffles to prevent 'peeping'.)

It appears, then, that the telepaths must exist in a world of appalling, never-ceasing noise, comparable to the position of yourself or myself doomed to spend his life in a never-silent crowd, working desperately hard to separate one intelligible message from the uproar.

This short scene makes it apparent that Bester was well aware of this difficulty, and removed it by simply ignoring it. And this piece of cheating encourages us to look for more of the same. Such snow-blinding would be unforgivable in a mainstream thriller, and must be considered equally unforgivable in sf. A writer may and must break a lot of rules, but he cannot throw them overboard and pretend they never existed or don't apply to him.

Then there is the telepathic game of building sentence figures. This commits Bester to the admission that his telepaths think in words, not in total impressions. Therefore this game can be played vocally also. I suggest you get a few friends and try it some time; you will soon discover the simple reasons why it can't be done on the complex scale presented in the party scene. The intention of the scene, apart from its role in the plot, seems to have been to impress the reader with the realistic possibility of telepathy. In fact Bester simply presents another *fait accompli* which tells nothing except that the author says 'you gotta believe me, see!' The poor reader has been hit over the head again, and the action moves on while he is still groggy. Never give the poor so-and-so time to think, or all is lost!

Swiftly we come to the matter of the "tension, apprehension" rhyme. A neat trick, but still a trick. Ben Reich is presented as filling his thinking with this thing whenever telepaths are present who may peep him. Either the telepaths are pretty weak or Reich is concentrating in a fashion which would effectively prevent him carrying on a conversation (which he does) or even of sparing enough attention to hear a sentence spoken to him. The slightest distraction entering his mind would break the interference rhyme and he would be wide open. In any case, the human ability to concentrate without interruption is measurable in seconds, so Bester has played another trick with his snowballs. This time he has falsified the known capacities of humanity. He was aware of this, too. If you read the relevant passages you will discover some careful wordplay designed to divert your notice from the technical difficulty of bringing off the interference feat.

I have now accused the writer of wilful dishonesty with his theme. These are not slips in Bester's thinking; he was aware of the problems, as the text shows, but ignored them because to admit their existence would have made his premise impossible and his plot unworkable.

(Short digression on telepathy in sf. If you are going to introduce telepathy as an operating proposition in a story, you must first have some basic idea of what telepathy is, and how it works. You are free to invent, because the properties and laws are unknown, but if you are to do anything more than wish-fantasy you must devise some framework wherein the talent operates. You should set up some rules, and abide by them. If you want to speak of projecting a thought, you must first give some thought to the possibility of a mental mechanism whereby such projection might be accomplished and controlled by the projecting person. One reads airy mention of mind blocks, controlled invasion of resisting minds, telepathic shouts and other acrobatic mental performances. It's about time someone gave thought to the question of how such things could be accomplished. I take leave to doubt that the first full scale telepath will simply do these things without under-

standing how he does them, and is more likely to be forced into some lengthy psycho-anatomical investigation before he can begin to do anything at all. Even baby seals have to be taught to swim. There's a good story waiting to be written about the purely mechanical problems of the first telepath. No copyright - the idea is free to anyone who cares to use it. All present uses of telepathy in sf are pure fantasy. Science is dependent on rules, and even sf must obey a few if it is to have validity or even intelligibility.)

THE DEMOLISHED MAN has been praised for its strong characterization. There is little hint of characterization anywhere in the book. There is a forceful presentation of each type as he or she appears, but nothing more. The characters never develop beyond our first meeting with them and are as predictable as the sunrise. They are very striking characters, admirably suited to the uses to which Bester puts them, but no more than that. Brilliant puppets, but puppets. One wonders occasionally how an ass like Ben Reich managed to hold his financial empire together; he is shown as too narrow, emotional and unstable to manage anything much more complicated than a news stall. He wouldn't have needed driving to destruction; he would have fallen to it.

Finally, we must consider the hou-ha about vivid presentation of the society in which the tale takes place.

What society? Aside from Ben Reich and the telepaths we are presented with a brothel which is only a gimmicked-up version of a classy whorehouse anywhere at any time and a peculiarly stupid party wherein the hostess is caricatured to represent the social/wealthy/ silly set. It is the same caricature to be met with in any satirical novel set in this day and age. Oh, sure, we have space ships and telepaths and a playboy satellite, but if these things have had any deep effect on social attitudes and behaviour we are not told of it. The society of this novel is indeed a backdrop, and a mighty sketchy one at that. The society of THE DEMOLISHED MAN is the familiar twentieth century milieu with some technological trimmings and some telepaths whose existence is suspect because of the anomalies in the writer's account of their talent.

Be it noted also that when it came to the demolition of Reich's mind, Bester was wonderfully vague about that, too. Just what did they do to him? The obvious treatment would be to remove his memories (and hence the formative influences of his environment) and start him afresh with a push in the right direction. But just what are these monsters demolishing? In a haze of words we never find out, But it makes a nicely sadistic close to the action and gives the detective an opportunity to think up some completely pointless blather about the future of re-educated humanity.

One can only conclude, then, that THE DEMOLISHED MAN, when all its virtues of style and speed and ingenuity are admitted, is a faked-up job, and therefore a bad book. That doesn't make it bad entertainment - so long as the reader realizes it is just that and no more. The snow job, and hence the dishonesty, arises from the attempt to cover the whole shenanigans with a gloss of deep importance. Plenty of readers and reviewers were fooled, which makes it a successful exercise, but the same could be said of making money with the thimble and pea trick.

What irritates more than anything is the fact that Bester can write thoughtful and serious sf. His short stories are among the best the genre has produced. But in the novel form his weaknesses stand pitilessly revealed, and this is especially noticeable in his non-sf crime novel (can't remember the title) where all the sf trappings are absent and the poor characters stand revealed in all their uninteresting sameness. Even the outre touch of murder motivated by homosexual jealousy cannot enliven it, nor the careful psychological exploration of character put breath into the cast. As for THE STARS MY DESTINATION, my remarks on THE DEMOLISHED MAN apply almost in toto. In that book Bester makes the mistake of providing too much information about teleportation without plugging the holes in the techniques involved, and goes through the same routine of drowning the critical faculty in louder and faster avalanches of action.

It remains only to consider the position of THE DEMOLISHED MAN in the sf canon, and the conclusions are not sweet.

The book won a Hugo. One can only surmise that either the year was a poor one for novels, or that the judges were hypnotized by the snowstorm of style and movement. The book is a triumph of style over content and inconsistency. It was, unfortunately, the kind of book which encourages serious critics to regard sf as irresponsible and unimportant, and its readers as sadly lacking in discernment.

More deadly is the thought that readers liked it so well, and that editors exist to give the readers what they demand. If this is a sample of what they demand, then sf will be, for the majority, never more than a titillation of the emotions. While readers demand, writers must supply, all but the few who say 'to hell with the readers' and strike out in the direction of quality at all costs.

With those few lies the future of sf. On present signs it does not lie with the readers. They applaud the occasional literate venture (CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ, CASE OF CONSCIENCE) but give scant attention to works which pose problems of approach and understanding, though it is these that show the way. ODD JOHN remains the most perceptive of all superman novels and Budrys's ROGUE MOON the most impressive attempt to grapple with the allying of sf with human problems; but what chance has such work in a magazine-ridden genre where Retief and his idiocies gain the plaudits of the crowd, monstrosities like SKYLARK DUQUESNE can appear in a magazine which has just won a Hugo as the best of the year, and a piece of painfully second hand Talbot Mundy called DUNE can lay reviewers and readers in fits of adulation?

Under these conditions sf does not need more recognition from the "establishment", but less. It should get what it deserves - more and harder kicks in the pants - until it throws up an intelligent and literate body of work which does not fall apart at the touch of the critical probe.

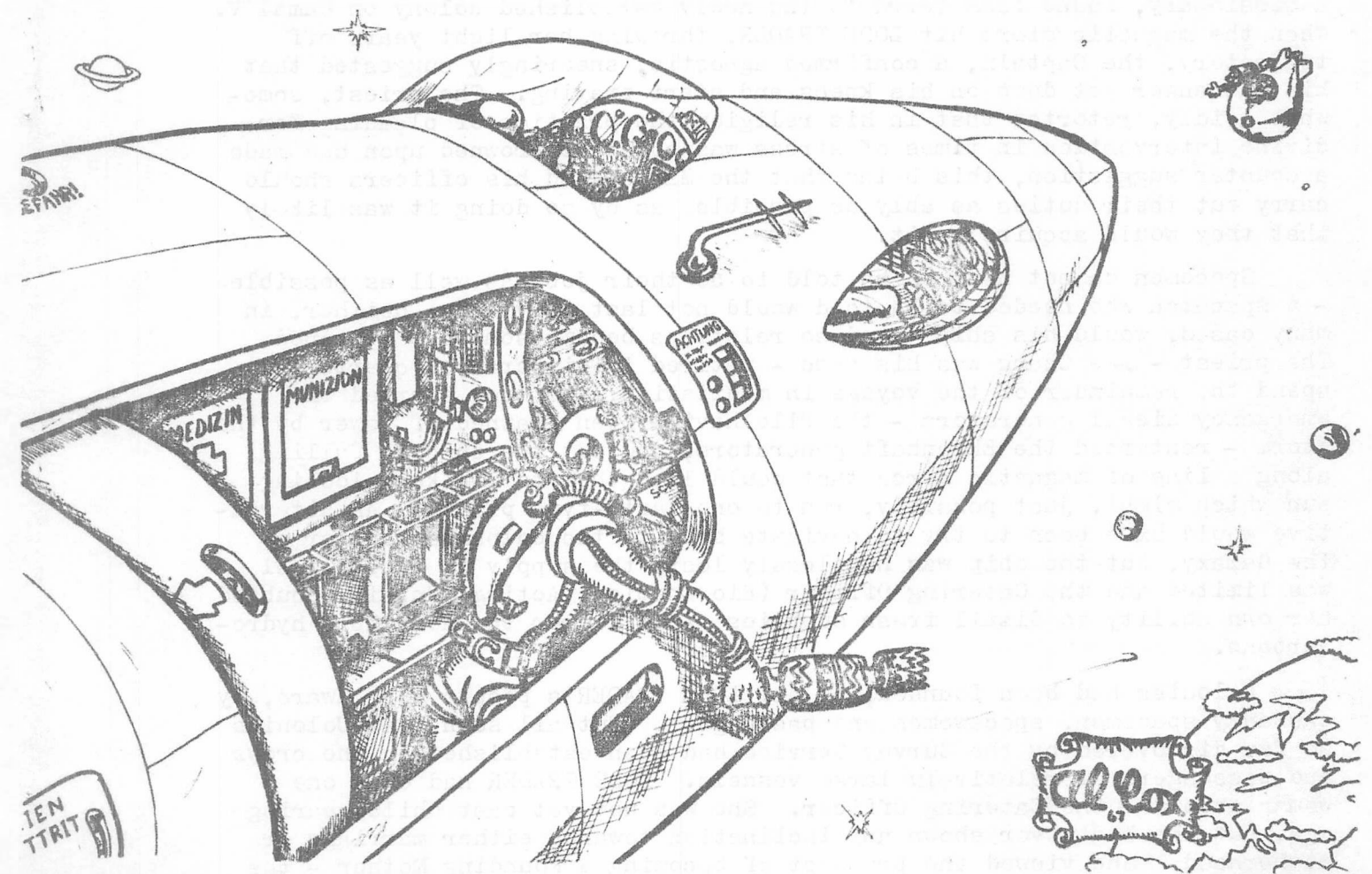
Budrys and Blish and Aldiss have it in them to gain worthwhile recognition, but too much other promise has caved in to the demands of the magazine trade. Heinlein has become a mumbling rebel with nothing much to rebel against and an armoury of outworn philosophy and jingoism as his weapons; Anderson has given up the struggle to be a writer and is satisfied to turn out saleable yarns wherein good ideas are wasted on Boy's Own Paper stories; Judith Merrill is writing high flown unintelligibilities in the

attempt to prove that what she selects as readable is art, whereas she would prove a great deal more by writing another PROJECT NURSEMAID; Pohl's highly individual method has degenerated into a tiresome habit.

And the reviewers, God bless 'em, are taking Ballard terribly seriously. So is Ballard. It's about time that gent ceased giving displays of style and started in to write some stories, as distinct from word pictures with doubtful application to anything except the inside of his own mind. SOUND SWEEP showed that he can do it, so why the devil doesn't he? Probably because the readers are contented to be bemused by him as he is.

Better sf will be written when the readers demand it, but the readers won't demand it while they are contented with a purely emotional evaluation of their reading material. The majority have yet to learn that the real pleasure of literature begins on the day you stop using it as a drug.

I have nothing against escapism - it is a necessary activity - but the manner of the escape is important. If the magazines are to be taken as the measure of the average sf reader's escape, then the flight is only into daydream and fantasy. He has not discovered that the thinking reader escapes into wider realms than science fiction ever dreamed of.



NAVEL ENGAGEMENT

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

When the gaussjammer LODE TRADER was wrecked on the planet later - much later - irreverently named Nirvana by Commodore Ferson of the Survey Service, there was only one survivor. Only one human survivor, that is.

LODE TRADER - one of the Interstellar Transport Commission's tramps - carried only a small crew, consisting of Master, three mates, three engineers and a catering officer. She had accomodation for twelve passengers which, sometimes, was fully booked - but which, this voyage, wasn't. The sole occupant of the compartment packed with cramped dogboxes was a priest, a missionary, bound from Terra to the newly established colony on Hamal V. When the magnetic storm hit LODE TRADER, throwing her light years off trajectory, the Captain, a confirmed agnostic, sneeringly suggested that his passenger get down on his knees and start praying. The priest, somewhat acidly, retorted that in his religion the practice of pleading for divine intervention in times of stress was somewhat frowned upon and made a counter suggestion, this being that the Master and his officers should carry out their duties as ably as possible, as by so doing it was likely that they would acquire merit.

Spacemen do not need to be told to do their jobs as well as possible - a spaceman who needed to be told would not last very long; neither, in many cases, would his ship - and so relations became somewhat strained. The priest - Lee Chang was his name - retired to his cramped quarters to spend the remainder of the voyage in meditation; the crew started the emergency diesel generators - the Pile having been drained of power by the storm - restarted the Ehrenhaft generators, and set the ship to falling along a line of magnetic force that would lead them to a likely-looking sun which might, just possibly, run to one Earth-type planet. An alternative would have been to try to navigate back to the colonized sector of the Galaxy, but the ship was hopelessly lost, the supply of diesel fuel was limited and the Catering Officer (Bio-Chemist, Acting, Unpaid) doubted her own ability to distil fresh supplies of fuel from the available hydrocarbons.

Colonies had been founded, as all LODE TRADER's people were aware, by castaway spacemen, spacewomen and passengers. But all such Lost Colonies so far discovered by the Survey Service had been established by the crews and passengers of relatively large vessels. LODE TRADER had only one woman aboard - the Catering Officer. She was not yet past child bearing age, but she had never shown any inclination towards either marriage or motherhood. She viewed the prospect of becoming a Founding Mother - the Founding Mother - with increasing alarm and despondency.

The others tried to cheer her up.

"After all," said the Captain, "it will all be perfectly legal. I can marry you..."

"I wouldn't marry you," she flared, "if you were the last man in the Universe!"

"I meant," said the shipmaster, rather stiffly, "that I could marry you to somebody else."

"But just suppose that you did want to marry her, sir," asked the Mate, who was something of a spacelawyer, "what would be the legal situation?" He added hopefully, "Of course, you could formally resign and I could supersede you as Master..."

"We could all turn Buddhist," proposed the Chief Engineer, "so that old Lee Chang could officiate."

"Do Buddhists practice polygamy?" asked the Second Mate.

"Polyandry," corrected the Mate.

"The people of some parts of India - Nepal? - are polyandrists," said the Chief Engineer.

"But are they Buddhists?" asked the Mate.

"I don't know," admitted the other.

"And I don't care!" almost wept the Catering Officer.

"It won't be so bad," consoled the engineer. "Think of all the help you'll have around the house to look after the kids. I'm told that some of these latest humanoid robots can even be trained to change nappies. And, after all, we have practically a full cargo of the things..."

"Then why can't you do something with them?" she demanded. "They're machines and they have built-in power units. Can't you hook them all up to the Ehrenhaft jennies so we aren't dependent on those stinking diesels? Then we could go anywhere we pleased, and find our way back to civilization."

"Solar power units," the Chief Engineer told her sadly, "and storage batteries to enable them to work through the night. I'm afraid..."

"And so am I," she said, before he could finish.

She need not have worried - not on that score.

There is a fate that is popularly supposed to be worse than death - but many women have undergone it and carried on living quite cheerfully. While there's life there's hope - and death is so very final.

LODE TRADER reached the possible-looking sun and found that one of the worlds revolving around it was also possible-looking. She established herself in orbit about the planet. Her people discovered that this world was Earthlike - too Earthlike. The polar regions were inhospitable wastes of ice and snow and jagged mountains, and the regions immediately north and south of the poles were ocean covered.

One of the serious limitations of the gaussjammers was the near-

impossibility of making a safe landing in regions in which horizontal force exceeds vertical force. And the gaussjammers, unlike the earlier rockets that preceded them, were designed with a disregard of the laws of aerodynamics. The later models, the ships that took to the skies just before the Ehrenhaft Drive ships became obsolete, were fitted with auxiliary rocket drive for emergency use. LODE TRADER was not so fitted.

So she had to make a landing in sub-tropical regions, coming down in too flat a trajectory, in a shallow dive, a very shallow dive. The Captain and his officers used all of their not inconsiderable skill. The Catering Officer was in the control room - after all, as the prospective bride of one, if not all, of her shipmates she now had privileges. The engineers were aft, struggling to keep the diesels working in conditions both of gravity and extreme tilt. Lee Chang was in his cabin, still meditating.

The priest never found out what was the cause of the disaster. Suddenly he was thrown from his chair with such violence that the seat belt was snapped, finding himself sprawled upon what had been the deckhead - the ceiling, in landsman's parlance - of his room. The force of the impact smashed consciousness from him. When he recovered - slowly and painfully - he discovered that he was lying in a pool of his own blood. He discovered, too, after a while, that it was now impossible for him to stand upright in his cramped accommodation; the bulkheads were buckled and there was only a bare four feet between deck and deckhead instead of the regulation seven. The door, luckily, had been sprung open.

But these facts he ascertained later. His first reaction was to assess his injuries, which were comparatively slight. The blood, or most of it, had come from his nose. He was badly bruised, but there seemed to be nothing broken. Then - and later he was to reprove himself for the sequence - his concern was for his shipmates. He listened - but the ship, apart from the creaking and whispering of cooling metal, was dreadfully silent. He shouted, but there was no reply. He shouted again. And then - painfully, for he was a fat man - he squirmed through the distorted aperture that had been a door, found before him a great rent in the shell plating, dropped heavily through it to long grass.

The ship, obviously, was a total loss.

She had fallen bows first, crushing the shallow dome housing her control room. (Lee Chang discovered afterwards that the great gyroscope, immediately abaft the control room, had been torn from its housing and had reduced all those in its way to an unrecognizable paste.) From a rent in the hull just forward from the conical stern issued a trickle of smoke. The priest was not an athletic man, but he managed to clamber up the twisted and torn plating, sweating heavily, gasping for breath, his hands and body slashed by sharp edges of metal. At last he was able to look into the emergency diesel room. He could see four bodies - four bodies so mangled that there could not possibly be any life left in them. The heavy generators, tearing loose from their retaining bolts, had fallen upon the men who had tended them, had ill repaid the care lavished upon them.

Lee Chang pulled himself back inside the ship and then, slowly, cautiously, pausing every now and again to shout, made his way downwards and forward through the wreckage. He was looking for the Catering Officer. She

was not in her cabin, or in her storerooms, or in her pantry. (Later, when it came to the burial, he found one of her epaulettes and an ear ring in the unrecognizable mess in the control room.)

The priest found his way out of the ship again. There was nothing that he could do for his shipmates, and the yellowish sun was sinking fast towards the gently undulant horizon. So, composing himself as he had been taught, he prepared to spend the remainder of the day, and all of the night, in meditation.

Lee Chang, as one trained for the contemplative life, was unused to hard physical labour. And there was so much to be done. There was the burial of LODER TRADER's crew to be carried out. There were foodstuffs to be unloaded from the storerooms. (There was nothing immediately apparent among the local flora and fauna that the priest could recognize as food.) There was the preparation of the ground for the sowing of the various seeds that the ship carried amongst her cargo - as well as the partial unloading of the cargo so that the consignments in question could be got at.

Lee Chang was trained for the contemplative life. He was not an engineer. But he had heard the nature of the ship's cargo discussed at table. He knew of the shipment of humanoid robots. He knew, too, of the boast of the manufacturers of the mechanical servants that the instruction books were so simple that a mentally retarded child could understand them.

As heavy cargo, the crated robots had been bottom stow. Now, thanks to the disastrous crash-landing of the ship, they were top stow, and the deck above them was torn and buckled. After his night's meditation, with sunrise, the priest climbed back into the ship. He found a convenient bar in the engineroom. (He noticed, too, that the bodies of the engineers were beginning to smell a little.) He attacked the most convenient crate, levered it open. He tugged and wrestled with the inert metal body, at last succeeded in dragging out what looked like an ugly, pot-bellied dwarf, a dwarf whose only garment was a shimmering metallic cape. He lugged the thing to the side of the ship, then realized that to drop it would damage it irreparably. He considered going back to the engineroom to try to find some rope or wire or light chain so as to lower the robot to the ground. It did not appear to him to be significant that he had left it lying in a shaft of sunlight.

He cried out with amazement when he saw the metal mesh cloak open and spread in the golden illumination, like the wings of a butterfly just emerged from the chrysalis. There was fear mixed with his amazement when he cried out a second time: that was when the robot got unsteadily to its feet.

"Master," it said tonelessly. "Master. What are your orders, Master?"

"Get the others of your kind uncrated," said the priest at last.

"But I do not understand, Master. I have only the basic vocabulary. You must teach me the words and the actions."

"I will teach you," said Lee Chang.

Lee Chang taught it - him? - as he taught the others.

Lee Chang lived a long and not unhappy life. He regarded himself towards the end as the Abbot of a monastery - an Abbot who was friend to as well as master of his monks. He was wrong, perhaps, to ascribe human attributes to the mechanical men - and yet each of them had his own character; each of them, under the priest's tutelage, developed a very real intelligence. Lee Chang found himself discussing theological matters with them - as, for example, the possibility that their mechanical bodies might house human souls, that a man could just as easily be reincarnated as a robot as in the body of some lower animal. (And would such an incarnation be a step upwards or downwards?)

And then, in the fullness of time, he died. But the odd monastic order that he had founded did not die with him.

He sat in the lotus posture under the solitary tree in the centre of the dusty square - the square in which, owing to the continual passage of metal feet, no other vegetation could grow. He had been there all night, under the constellations that an Earthman would have called alien. He had been dimly aware of the rising of the sun as his metal cape had expanded to capture and to store the radiation that, to him, was life. He had meditated ever since the passing of that strange, flesh-and-blood being, the Lama. He had recalled every word ever spoken by the priest, had turned them over and over in his mind, had considered their every implication. He had thought long and deeply on the subject of reincarnation, had come to the conclusion that, after all, no ordinary Earthman's soul inhabited his metal body. It had not been coincidence that he had been the first to be given life, that he had always been far closer to the now-dead mentor than any of the others.

And he already had his disciples.

Around him the monastery stirred to life. From their cells tramped the robots - the monks - each spreading his cape to the rays of the sun. Some of them went to the fields - although there was now no need for their labour - and others to the workshops where agricultural machines were made and repaired. Some of them went to tend the herds of ovinoids, suppliers of the wool from which the Abbot's robes had been spun and woven.

But he stayed there, under the tree. The sunlight drew the mist of dew from his gleaming body. He focussed his attention on the bright ring of shining metal that protruded from his bulging belly, the seemingly useless adornment that was equivalent to the navel of a human being. But robots of the non-specialized, general purpose, type were never designed for the contemplative life. They have that built-in urge always to be doing something.

The restless, cunningly contrived fingers at last found a purchase, and twisted. They twisted harder. Nothing happened.

They twisted the other way.

He sat there and looked at the bolt or stud, with its bright gleaming thread, holding it in the metallic palm of his hand. He knew that it had significance - for did not everything have significance? - and he was vaguely worried because he could not fathom it. Was this what the Earthman had meant by the contemplation of the navel?

Or should the navel be in place to be contemplated?

He replaced it.

In the cool of the evening the disciples came to sit in a circle around their Master. Gravely, from his unwinking lenses, their Master regarded them. At last he broke the expectant silence.

He said, "I have been contemplating my navel."

No comment forthcoming, he went on, saying, "I made a strange discovery. I found that my navel has a left-handed thread..."

Again he waited, but the other robots were still silent. They watched him as his fingers tightened on the ring, as he unscrewed the stud. He handed the thing to the robot on his right.

"Perhaps," he said, "all of you might acquire merit by the contemplation of this wonder. Perhaps some of you who are mechanics might be able to explain it..."

In unbroken silence the threaded stud was passed from hand to hand, each of the disciples regarding it solemnly for long minutes. At last it was handed to FM2107, a robot notorious for his clumsiness, his slow reaction time, his lack of co-ordination. He contemplated it for longer than the others had done. Then, with the mechanical equivalent of a sigh, he gave up, made to hand the mysterious object back to its owner.

He dropped it in the dust.

Impatiently, the Master unfolded his legs, got to his feet, stooped to retrieve it.

And fell to pieces.

*

FROM THE BIBLIOFILE:

Man is called the masterpiece of nature; and man is also, as we all know, the most curious of machines; now, a machine is a work of art, consequently, the masterpiece of nature is the masterpiece of art. The object of all mechanism is the attainment of utility; the object of man, who is the most perfect machine, is utility in the highest degree. Can we believe, therefore, that this machine was ever intended for a state which never could have called forth its powers, a state in which no utility could ever have been attained, a state in which there are no wants; consequently, no supply; consequently, no competition; consequently, no invention; consequently, no profits; only one great pernicious monopoly of comfort and ease? Society without wants is like a world without winds. It is quite clear, therefore, that there is no such thing as Nature; Nature is Art, or Art is Nature; that which is most useful is most natural, because utility is the test of nature; therefore, a steam-engine is in fact a much more natural production than a mountain. (Disraeli: POPANILLA)

On closer inspection it could be seen that the sand of the beach had commenced to crawl toward the water in a slowly churning manner, much as the waves in water move over its surface, swirls of sand making slowly-advancing movements between the water-land interface. Whether this was true in fact or only as a result of his perspective, the certain result was that in a short time he would be in the water.

"Then I turned to the left, I could see, just around the point, what seemed to be a large black rock." I laughed as I said it, for it now seemed so ludicrous.

"Go on, though," Bill urged, "you still haven't made it very clear. I can't get any sort of realistic picture from your words."

So the ecstatic cows frolicked all gaily on the hay. The green juice of the strange animal bled down upon them and licking it, they became transfixed to be smiling, as though happy with the loss of what must have been lifeblood. Through the roaring of the water there seemed to be a great muzzling of content from the giant beast.

The rider on the back of the beast continued to gouge chunks from its side, forming the shape 666, but this soon vanished in the pile of feathers which

J O H N F O Y S T E R

appeared, as though by magic, from a pillow located just behind the vicious rider. By the time the air was cleared of feathers the rider and his mount had vanished, and in the dark wood I walked alone.

The bugle of life sounded, and all the dead rose up, facing East, and bowed. Their legs twisted under them in an effort to rise, then, to their feet. But it was to no avail. The scythe came again, leveling all, and they resumed their original postures (as do we all), bowed.

Presently a short man, rather fat, walked forward from the platform in front of us all, a platform sufficiently high to hide his legs, or only his feet and the lower part of his shins, if you must be pedantic. He had a small book from which he began to read in a language I could not understand. Later, however, he did speak in English, I am told, but it was while I slept that this unlikely thing happened. Apparently he indicated that all present were to return to the lake.

The sky, changing from brown to green as it had been, now took on a reddish hue, preparatory, perhaps, to some great event.

We took shelter under the nearest mushroom.

Then the sky darkened, and rain fell. The man began to feel cold, hungry. He picked at a piece of mushroom. His stomach warmed instantly. He turned and saw a girl. She seemed to be crying.

T W O M I N I - S T O R I E S

[illegible]

The great Professor Cratzman propounded his idea to his assembled colleagues, and to the representatives from various world governments. Speaking in his slow and carefully-measured way, he said, "Ah, time and speed are inextricably interwoven, and, ah, it has been proved that the faster a body moves through space, the, ah, longer the second becomes. It, ah, follows, therefore, that the faster we travel, the longer we live in the, ah, space-time continuum.

"However, before, ah, undertaking major works to, ah, obtain this result, a massive, ah, common endeavour may be co-ordinated to, ah, determine whether or not such, ah, acceleration would make any difference. What I propose will call for, ah, the utmost co-operation..."

At the chosen time, the word was given, and the experiment commenced. For fifteen minutes, every person who was on foot walked towards the west. All cars, tractors, buses, trucks, bulldozers, trains, and vehicles of all descriptions, engaged

their lowest gears and headed westward. Wild game and cattle were released and driven towards the west. And tied-down rocket- and jet-motors roared, and the propellers of anchored ships churned and frothed.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. Seven hundred million Chinese marched, and five hundred million or so Indians, and many millions more elsewhere - legs thrusting and thrusting, while the drives of many machines pushed and added their mighty mite to the over-all unanimity.

For fifteen minutes, all motion on the surface of the Earth was towards the west, and the world was given a skin that tugged its inside to the east.

At the end of the fifteen minutes, Professor Cratzman eagerly checked his delicate instruments. Briskly he ran over the measurements recorded. "Ah," he said. He frowned. He seemed a little disappointed. "Wellwell. Itahdoesn'tseemtohave-madeanyahdifferenceatall....."

A S S I S T E D P A S S A G E

"Well, there she is," Ray said. "The S.S. Sir Bob Gordon, coming in to dock. Beautiful lines, eh?"

"Hmph! Yeah," Murk growled. "Bleeding migrants. As if we ain't got enough of 'em here already." He gazed blackly. "Bleeding foreigners. Don't know what they're talking about most of the time. They come here, and they no sooner set foot ashore than they start telling us how to run the place."

Ray sighed. "Yes. But the Government wants them. They say we need the population to help fully to develop our resources."

"What, still? Every year they keep bringing 'em in. At least they ought to be more selective about it," Murk grumbled. "There ought to be a board to screen out the smart-alecks."

Ray shrugged. "I suppose they've got to take what they can get. Those people who are doing okay at home have no reason to migrate, have they?"

"That's what I mean," Murk replied sourly. "What we're getting is the rubbish. We pay taxes and what for? So the money can be spent to get this... this crud, out here. We pay up to ninety-eight percent of their fare, do you know that? And then they have the gall to complain, the bums."

"Aw, they're not all bad," Ray said. "You do meet some good ones now and again."

"Yeah. Now and again. But how many?" Murk snorted. "They come here, collar the best jobs, and then have the nerve to sniff. 'Back home,' they say. 'Back home.' Always. Back home they had this and back home they had that, and things were so almighty much better there. If it was so bleeding good, why did they leave it?"

"Oh well, I suppose things are a bit different," Ray said equably. "Long established customs and ways, and all that. All their old buildings and history and handed-down culture. With only a couple of centuries or so behind us, we're comparatively new still."

"Our history's the same as theirs," Murk grumbled. "Their history is our history, too."

"Ah, yes," Ray said reasonably, "but we were born here. We didn't grow up surrounded by the past as they did."

"Huh. Yeah, and that should give us some rights, I reckon. My old man, and his old man before him, helped to make this place what it is today. Now they keep bringing out all these migrants, and the first thing they do is jump in to grab the cream."

"Well, you can't expect them to act like the pioneers, can you?" Ray said. "It's not like the old days, is it?"

"No, but that's it. It's our heritage, not theirs. They don't have to work for it like our folks had to in the old days. Huh!" Murk spat. "Pioneers! These newcomers are so soft, they expect to be taken by the hand and tucked into bed!"

"They settle in, though," said Ray. "Not too many go back. Most of them get adjusted after a couple of years."

Murk stared morosely at the ship coming in. "Not them in the Bob Gordon," he said bitterly. "What will there be on her? About a thousand?"

"Twelve hundred, or so I believe," Ray told him.

"Aye-yi-yi, twelve-bleeding-hundred!" Murk shook his head. "Twelve-bleeding-hundred of the worst bleeding kind. Gaah!" His fingers wriggled impotently. "Russians and Germans I can get on with, and Italians and Indians I can stand and even the English and the Americans are part-way bearable. But, hell!" he grated in disgust, "these we can do without. They should be left in cold-storage and be shipped straight back to Earth. If there's anything I can't stand, it's these bleeding superior know-it-all Aussies....!"

FOUR NOVELS OF A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

LEE HARDING

In the February 1967 GALAXY, Algis Budrys said: "There's some majestic and enviable rule in England that says you don't become a commercial writer until you have learned to handle prose. Even the shabbiest and most cliché-ridden story the English can produce is nevertheless written at a higher level of composition than you would expect to find in the equivalent story written here."

He was writing about John Lymington, but he could just as easily have been writing about John Christopher, or any one of the elite handful of sf novelists the British have produced, or A. Bertram Chandler, veteran of what must by now be several million words of smoothly crafted sf tales.

The pioneers of British sf live in a different world from Brian Aldiss and J.G. Ballard. Secure in their havens of personal success with the general reading public they can write when they please and forget the schisms shaking contemporary sf. Some have even written themselves into silence and live on their royalties. Of this original group one has proved to be a late starter.

While his more famous colleagues were turning out novels, Bert Chandler stuck doggedly to short stories. For more than a decade after his debut in the mid-forties, his reputation rested on a few striking short stories like GIANT KILLER and JETSAM and dozens of pot-boilers, all of them characterized by that enviable quality of craftsmanship Mr. Budrys admires. But in all that time Chandler never developed a name that would make a magazine sell out on the stands. His very singular talent was for the most part unnoticed and unheralded in a field constantly besieged by the stylistic layabout.

To some Chandler's work might appear old-fashioned, but straight and unpretentious story-telling has a way of outlasting what is merely fashionable. He doesn't bother to deck out his plots with the sort of intellectual gesticulation which is done so well by Philip Jose Farmer and so badly by lesser writers. Chandler writes to please himself, and the result is a very personal style equalled by very few writers in the field.

His immediate contemporaries in the wider field of literature would be Alistair MacLean and Hammond Innes, with a respectful nod in the direction of the late Ian Fleming. He shares with these writers the ability to create colourful and exciting adventures liberally laced with personal experience. In his case, of course, these experiences must be transformed into an allegorical sense by the very nature of the sf medium. His self-indulgence is equalled by only one other sf writer: J.G. Ballard.

One element above all others has made Chandler's contribution to sf unique, and that is the sea. His roots are welded with those of Conrad, Melville and, to another degree, Kipling. He is very much an adventurer of the mind, if not the flesh, and his devotion to sf as a form of self-expression would appear to have solid precedents. Spaceships, he has never stopped insisting, will be manned rather like the ocean-going vessels of our time, and spacemen will share the thoughts, feelings, and terrible isolations of their seafaring predecessors. It is this quality that transforms Chandler's fiction, takes it out of the pulp-ridden rut, and makes of even his simplest story something profoundly personal, rough-stamped with his own particular verisimilitude.

As a science fiction novelist, Chandler is only now getting into his stride. His original contemporaries are all but silent. There has been nothing new from either John Wyndham or Eric Frank Russell for some years, and on the other side of the world Theodore Sturgeon has been silent for some time. Only Poul Anderson has moved with the times and can sometimes match Chandler when it comes to conveying the feelings of space travel. But Anderson passed his literary zenith some time ago and the downward slope since has been as depressing as it has been disappointing. Perhaps in Bert Chandler we have the last of the really great Dreamers, and we can be thankful that he is still with us and champing at the bit to write more novels.

As well as the sea music that enriches Chandler's stories there are other qualities that separate his work from lesser writers. For one thing his characters are always acceptable as real people. They may look and behave rather ordinarily - they are rarely complex - but they seem to be pretty much like the people he meets in his voyages around the Rim in this part of the world. They are average people for the most part, too concerned with the business of living to ever be remarkable, and if they sometimes assume the stature of the more familiar sf archetypes then Chandler sees to it that they are fleshed out convincingly as people before they put on their masks. His hand is never more sure than when it is neatly delineating his characters. He seems very fond of his creations, and this imbues them with a warmth which is rather unique in contemporary adventure-sf.

He is not a 'tight' plotter. His novels ramble. They take their time getting from A to B, and Chandler seems to enjoy the process. This cheerful involvement is passed on to the reader as an added bonus. Sometimes the result is a resounding jackpot of thrills and humour, for Chandler is no fumbler when it comes to piling on the pace. But compared to, say, one of Keith Laumer's slick confections, a Chandler book just happens.

His move into the novel field was one of necessity. When he migrated to Australia in the mid-fifties he brought with him an enviable facility gained from more than a decade of writing sf exclusively for the American magazines and the British NEW WORLDS. His position was comfortable. As chief officer of a coastal freighter he had ample time to explore his potential as a writer, and his work re-sold well outside the specialist magazines to a wide variety of foreign publications. And then, almost overnight, the Second Boom went bust, and A. Bertram Chandler, the prolific purveyor of mild-mannered adventure stories, found that it was no longer a seller's market. With only a handful of sf magazines left, the competition became hot. Survival would be a grim struggle. For a while it seemed that the Chandler byline would follow some even more famous names into oblivion. The

solution lay in the original paperback novel, a market wherein Chandler had yet to prove his capabilities. The situation is set out for us in this excerpt from page 10 of the Jenkins edition of THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE:

"It's hardly my fault that the American pulp magazine market has died on us. There used to be more than thirty magazines in the field; now there are only eight..."

"Then why don't you write something that will sell elsewhere? A novel?"

"Damn it all, I'm trying to write a novel!"

"Trying's not good enough."

The hero of this novel is Chandler's alter-ego, George Whitley. Whitley has followed the author's real-life escalation closely. He has moved up, fictionally, from Chief Officer to Master in a manner paralleling Chandler's own promotion. One must accept the two men as being very much alike - indeed Chandler infers this directly from time to time.

His major preoccupation over the last decade has been the slow and steady fabrication of his own private universe. In much the same manner as the late Cordwainer Smith, he has published a series of novels and short stories sharing the same general background, contributing such fascinating items to the mythology of sf on his way as the Ehrenhaft and Mannschen drives, Carlotti beacons, and the like. And the Galactic Rim has never been the same since the Chandler imagination annexed it as his own private piece of real estate. Under his own name and that of Whitley he produced a considerable number of short stories utilizing this consistent background before moving it bodily into a full length novel. The gain for readers of straight sf has been considerable.

Whitley made his first 'appearance' as the protagonist of SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE, a long novelette Chandler wrote for ASTOUNDING in the mid-forties. Almost two decades later he used a considerable amount of material from this story and re-fashioned it into the novel THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE. Whitley appears as the Chief Officer of a coastal freighter and a successful part-time sf writer to boot - and you could hardly get more personal than that. In the course of a rather crisp, swift-moving narrative, he is transported, via some LSD fakery, into the body of a spaceship officer some several centuries hence. At key points in the story he is prone to go drifting off back to his previous existence but he finally rallies sufficiently into the future to save his friends before being returned, enigmatically, to his own time, perhaps for good, perhaps not. The ending is nicely ambiguous.

Set out like this the plot seems conventional enough. As a novel it is as exciting as one could wish, and very smoothly executed. The style is neat and unobtrusive, and devoid of the flat sort of delivery that mars so many similar novels by less gifted story-tellers. By way of action there is a long and magnificent description of a spaceship wrecked in an alien sea and breaking up offshore from an inhospitable island, which only a writer with a strong knowledge and feeling for the sea could have written. Afterwards, Chandler allows his story to become one of simple survival on desert islands, with some appropriately sinister aliens to fill the supporting role of 'deadly natives.' There are some tremendous scenes,

including a chase across a fetid swamp by as motley a collection of aliens as one could wish for, and some beautiful evocations of alienness that only a master of sf could produce.

THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE is probably Chandler's most successful fusion of style, story, and general presentation. Certainly the Chandler/Whitley duality has never been so boldly set forth as it is here. But the book, as a whole is markedly different in treatment from the novels Chandler was turning out for Ace during the same period. Nor is it any more enjoyable as a story than some of his less ambitious works.

Like most Ace titles, the presentation of Chandler's novels by that firm often belies their worth. If one were to judge EMPRESS OF OUTER SPACE by the cover alone one could be forgiven for assuming that Ace were promoting some latter-day Alexander Blade. Chandler may have borrowed a few archetypes to get his novel going, but from there on the story is uniquely his.

The book begins well: "It was all over but the shooting." There has been an abortive insurrection against the Empress Irene, and the ring-leaders are being summarily executed when the story opens. The protagonist is Trafford, "a little man with close-cropped sandy hair, with grey eyes that were startlingly pale against the deep space-tan of his seamed, rugged face..." Together with the Empress and her entourage he takes off in hot galactic pursuit of the evil mastermind behind the coup, and so far we have a typical Chandler space opera. But wait a moment - Bert doesn't seem to have had a very clear idea of what to do next (I've mentioned that his novels appear to 'happen' rather than to progress in an orderly and predictable fashion), so for a start he has the Empress and her crew come off the worse for a short space-duel with the fleeing villain, and they are subsequently wrecked and grounded upon an uninhabited planet. They stumble out of the wreckage and straight into some hallucinogenic plants which promptly send them into a state of trance for the next eighty pages.

Perhaps Chandler only intended this sequence to last a few pages and became so engrossed in what was happening that he allowed his characters their head for what seems an inordinate amount of time, before recalling the original story line, wrenching them back to their broken ship, and quickly winding up the belated adventures of this fascinating crew.

Now this seems a sloppy sort of construction for a successful novel, yet by its very inconsistency it succeeds as a gloriously robust tale of wild and sometimes absurd adventure. Chandler seems to have poured a great deal of empathy into the central 'dream sequence' and in it pays homage to Ian Fleming, P.C. Wren, Edgar Rice Burroughs - and perhaps one or two others I didn't tumble to. This is an author enjoying himself as very few seem to, particularly in the busy sf field where getting the stuff out and getting the money back in must be the major preoccupation.

The novel is not without its weakness. The perfunctory ending is a distinct let-down, and one is unsure who to blame. Did Bert realize that he was running out of space and decide to wind it up quickly, perhaps with the thought that Ace would cut any excess wordage anyway? But this is a minor consideration. The heart of the book is the dream sequence and this seems to have been left intact.

EMPRESS OF OUTER SPACE is one of the most compulsively readable sf novels I have come across. It is certainly a highwater mark in Chandler's

output and deserves to be sought out and read by all lovers of well-told adventure stories. And if they are fans of Ian Fleming or Edgar Rice Burroughs they will find additional delight in it. The Empress Irene is light years removed from those horrible queans who used to grace the pages of the Ziff Davis magazines; she is a very charming, ordinary sort of girl, and the social structure Chandler uses to justify her existence as a galactic figurehead is as convincing for the purposes of the plot as any other I have read.

Sharing an Ace Double with the previous book is THE ALTERNATE MARTIANS. With this novel Chandler makes more extensive use of the ideas he developed in the dream sequence in EMPRESS and provides us with a Mars that is a combination of Edgar Rice Burroughs's and H.G. Wells's conceptions of the place. And oddly enough this book succeeds on a level of straight adventure when EMPRESS relies on a satiric empathy to put across its muddled dream world. Although there are one or two comical asides that will be appreciated by fans of Burroughs and Wells - e.g. Bill Carter - the cockney equivalent of Burroughs's famous lumphead. If the book as a whole does not impress as much as its wild companion piece then this is a result of the more conventional treatment Chandler has employed.

In this book a party of Venus-based Terran scientists journeys to Mars to investigate its past "probabilities". They have a machine with which they can enter the coils of time (the book is a sequel to a novel of that name, which I do not intend to discuss here) and so end up in the fantastic era already mentioned. The book begins slowly but once the adventurers have arrived back in time Chandler builds up a breathtakingly alien landscape for them to move across. There are dozens of delightful touches: the inflatable 'plane, the eerie journey down the canals, the encounter with Bill Carter and his band of nomads, and the Martians Supreme who, with a deferential nod in the direction of Wells, emerge as a really horrifying extrapolation of those strange creatures in THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. As it stands the novel reads like a superior piece of pulp writing, and would not have been out of place in STARTLING a decade or more ago. Nostalgia like this makes me glad that Don Wollheim keeps a place for this sort of book at Ace.

As a double these two books have more reason than most for being linked together. Both books are a good enough place to make the acquaintance of Chandler the story-teller. They make very pleasant reading in the unpretentious manner typical of the author.

THE HAMELIN PLAGUE could have been Chandler's major contribution to the 'disaster' novel. It starts brilliantly with the gradual discovery that mutated rats have declared war on mankind. Some of the early scenes have a chill I have never before discovered in Bert's work. I get the impression that he doesn't like rats at all, and this feeling of horror adds an extra dimension to the opening chapters. This time our hero is Barrett, chief officer on another coastal steamer. But no avocational sf writing for this fellow - he has enough trouble staying compatible with his wife.

The opening chapters, aside from the cold build-up of terror, give us a fascinating insight into Chandler's own life. The details of ship life and of homecoming are embarrassingly real. But the customary elan is

somehow missing from this serious novel. Chandler seems to have opted for thrills straight and to the point and for the first half of the book he succeeds admirably. There are some terrifying scenes of destruction set in and around Sydney Harbour that match the very best disaster writing, and these are followed by some nightmarish scenes at sea upon an ocean swept by the pungent smoke of a burning continent, scenes that contain some of Chandler's finest writing. But after the initial impact of this opening the story sags and descends into a rather routine melodrama. Chandler's inventiveness gives way to some questionable plotting which includes a wily scientist snatched out of a hat who just happens to have been working on an anti-rat device prior to the sudden appearance of the mutated beasts, and some rather weary wish-fulfilment on the part of the author in the characterization of "Captain" Barrett. None of this rings true in the manner of Chandler's Rim Worlds stories. Perhaps he was writing too close to home and the triumphs of a really fine disaster novel are still some years in the future. For the time being the Rim Worlds seem to bring out all that is best in him.

INTO THE ALTERNATE UNIVERSE provides us with the essential Chandler. Here is as goodly a portion of his own private universe as has ever been distilled into one novel. The worlds of Ultima Thule and Lorn and Faraway. Port Forlorn and Commodore Grimes, a man who is taking up more of the author's time with each new book. And the strange Rim Ghosts that provide Chandler with the springboard for this exciting novel. Together with Sonya Verril, Grimes journeys to the very edge of the galaxy in search of the elusive Ghosts, and in the process we are treated to a number of deft tricks from the Chandler repertoire. There is a rather unusual and very amusing application of the seance to dimension-swapping, complete with portative organ (!), and a fascinating tour among the strange Rim Ghosts, debris from a multiplicity of universes, a galactic equivalent to the legendary Sargasso Sea. Chandler's narrative technique in this story is as compact as ever - but what an incredibly rich tapestry he weaves. He knows this universe, he has felt it in his blood, has sensed its movements in the long, lonely vigils of his life, and from his writing it emerges as something rich and strange and personal. If you are looking for one book which sums up more than any other this particular individuality then you could do no better than read this book.

Bert Chandler has so far published fourteen novels. The above four seem to me to represent a good cross-section of his work in this medium. A fifth book, GLORY PLANET, was reviewed in ASFR 3, and could lay claim to being his best work to date, as well as being his first novel. It is certainly a tale which the author felt very deeply, and this feeling is passed on to the reader in an unmistakable manner. But the book has been so badly mutilated by Avalon that it is difficult to evaluate properly. And besides, it is now almost impossible to obtain. Perhaps one day an enterprising paperback publisher will resurrect it for us in its original form. For the moment, anyone who is anxious to sample Chandler's work need not wait months to indent the American titles I have reviewed; a British Mayflower paperback edition of THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE has just been released in Australia, and, as this article has implied, is well worth buying.

What does the future hold for Bert Chandler as a novelist? As far as his fans are concerned he could probably go on turning out his successful Ace

novels for many years to come. But no writer wishes to dig himself too deep a rut. His two recent serials in IF - EDGE OF NIGHT and THE ROAD TO THE RIM - have served to bring his private mythology up to date and to the attention of a vast number of readers who have possibly never before thought his stories worth attention. Privately he has spoken of a forthcoming novel, tentatively entitled FALSE FATHERLAND, which will be different in kind from the sort of book he has been turning out for the last decade.

Bert Chandler has much to offer the field. He has only begun to flex his fingers. I commend his novels to you as an example of what a first class story-teller can make of the sf medium. His lineage reaches back to John W. Campbell and the Fabulous Forties. His deep feeling for the medium has been earned over a quarter of a century - he is no Johnny-come-lately. His highly personal style is reaching out even now to tap again his private universe, and we shall not see his like again. He is the truest story-teller in the field, a Somerset Maugham in a space-suit, smiling. He has acknowledged a heritage and added to it. I wish him well upon his voyage and a Hugo or two: every age has a place for a story-teller of his calibre.

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The books reviewed:

(THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE	Herbert Jenkins, 1964 Mayflower, 1967)
EMPRESS OF OUTER SPACE	
THE ALTERNATE MARTIANS	Ace, 1965
THE HAMELIN PLAGUE	Monarch, 1963
INTO THE ALTERNATE UNIVERSE	Ace, 1964

Note: With the exception of THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE, most of A. Bertram Chandler's books are not readily obtainable in Australia. However most good bookshops overseas specializing in sf - such as F&SF Book Company in New York - can supply most of his paperbacks. In Australia the simplest method of obtaining these books is to get in touch with Mervyn Binns at McGill's Newsagency, Melbourne.

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FROM THE BIBLIOFILE:

I have never been a collector, and as for the first-edition craze I place it next door to stamp collecting - I can say no less. It is non-adult and exposes the book lover to all sorts of nonsense at the hands of the bookseller. One should never tempt booksellers. (E.M. Forster: ON THE MEANING OF A MAN'S BOOKS.)

I have since learned that trade curses everything it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business. (Thoreau: WALDEN)

From the base, it was less forbidding. All that he faced was a few square yards of smooth green glass. The rest was above, out of sight. He ran his right hand over the wall and found it was less smooth than he had thought. His super-sensitive feeling showed up a surface as definite as a contour map. It was an old building and erosion had pitted the surface a great deal. Further up, where the wind was stronger, there would probably be more damage. He would have to depend on it. The minute abrasions on the surface of the glass were his only ladder to the top.

Pulling up the sodden shirt, Chris detached a flat plastic pouch from his side and pulled it open. Inside was a small and unobtrusive bundle of what looked like silver foil, but which unfolded into a pair of paper-thin metal gloves. He pulled them on. Experimentally he pushed one of the gloves against the glass, flexed his right hand glove in a way that keyed the electrical circuits in its structure. Instantly his hand froze to the glass. Chris yanked, but the millions of tiny spikes on the glove's palm had interpenetrated with the surface of the glass. An entire portion of the wall would have to be torn out before it would move.

He twitched the glove again and the material softened, becoming soft and flexible again. The other hand worked just as well. Sparing one moment for a glance around the empty wet-shining street, he pushed his palms against the wall, the left hand higher up, and hauled himself a few feet off the ground. His shoes, their toes specially moulded to grip and hold on almost any surface, scrabbled for a purchase as he eased the right hand off and, steadying himself with the left, raised it higher. Slowly, hand by hand, he spidered up the wall of the building.

Chris refused to think about anything but the climb. His mind shut out the growing tiredness in his muscles, the screaming of tendons as they were forced to take the weight of his whole body for seconds on end. Water flooded down the face of the building, welling up over his hands and streaming down his arms to soak his already dripping clothes. He no longer felt it, nor the water in his eyes. Through it the wall swam like a green phantasm of shadowy sea shapes, waving errily like seaweed or huge groping creatures. As he gasped for breath, water entered his nose and lungs and for a moment he hung like a stranded spider three hundred feet above the silent street and coughed convulsively into the cold rain.

The wall went on, endlessly. Hand over hand, foot after foot, he dragged his body upwards. His mind had long ago ceased to think, and ran over with curious images from his past. The circumstances of his accident were recalled in sharp detail, even to a memory of the pain abstracted into visual terms so that he imagined it as a web of white frost blazing coldly along his nerves in pulsing surges, the removal of his arm as a severing of one frost branch, like the casual cracking of a frozen twig. There was Alex, Leisen, and the girl named Judith, who seemed to swim up out of the green light beyond his streaming eyes, a nude sprite, her body twining sinuously among the weeds, nuzzled by a groper's fat pink lips...

Half unconscious, Chris stared blankly at the images appearing in his mind, trying to make some sense of them, rejecting the runaway cinema of his brain that refused to order the thoughts it presented in the way the old Chris Brock would have demanded. What was happening to him? Struggling with the idea, he did not notice at first that his right hand encountered no wall when he reached up. He almost fell as the left

hand clutched air also, but his outflung hand fastened on the upper surface of the building and, coughing, gasping, he hauled himself up onto the roof.

Through the rain he saw the roof stretch away in all directions, blank, slightly transparent, green. There were no structures of any kind. It was just as featureless as the rest of the building. Chris was surprised. Most buildings like this one were served by robot tubes and had access hatches on their roofs for maintenance crews as well as pads for landing and securing copters. Standing up unsteadily on the slick surface, Chris walked warily towards the centre of the roof, his feet sliding insecurely on the wet glass. There was nothing to see, no shape breaking the smooth surface of the roof. Then his foot caught in something, and he crouched to examine it. Sliced into the glass were grooves, deep and wide, about two inches across. He traced them with his fingers, estimating their probable pattern. A landing pad - but retracted. Presumably they were taking no chances on unauthorized copters landing on the roof and using it as a base to enter the building.

The retracted pad could have been an insurmountable obstacle, but Chris knew locks as well as the guardians did. Finding the electronic bolt, a darker shape buried in the glass, silhouetted against the green light shining up from within, he pressed his pick against the glass above it, dialled a random pattern of possible opening sequences and let it run. Five seconds and seventeen impulses later, he felt the vibration of a thrown bolt. His metal gauntlet flattened against the glass and as he heaved the panel hinged upwards, green light flooding out into his eyes. He blinked against the glare, then slid inside and pulled the hatch closed over his head. He was inside the Repository.

It took him a few moments to accustom himself to the warm bright room. It was not really a room at all. Above him a roof of roughened glass stretched away on all sides, its surface still showing marks of extrusion machines and human fitters. Metal rods laid in a complex web provided support, while a forest of girders spearing through the floor disappeared into them at a hundred points. This was just the space between the real ceiling of the repository and its outer roof, yet it alone was as big as a hundred ballrooms. It gave him a clue to the size of the whole place, something he could only guess from the outside dimensions.

There was another hatch under his feet, almost obscured by dust. He pulled it back, checked the room underneath and slipped down. Now he was in the repository itself, though the room was obviously not part of the necropolis, merely a store-room for workers. The steel shelves were covered with tools, templets, various odd machines the functions of which Chris could only guess at. Few of them seemed to have been used for years; they were rimed with dust, under which grease had been laid on in a thick skin. Human labour was seldom required in a totally automated place like this. Chris ignored the machinery, concentrating instead on something he needed more - clothing. He found a pile of heavy working tunics and trousers in a cabinet, dragged off his sodden clothes and put on the dull green, heavily padded, uniform. For the first time in an hour he began to feel warm.

The door to the next room led him into another store like the first, but this time it contained something he could use - reels of hair-fine wire with hand grips and clamps. Pushing his thick trousers into the wide tops of his boots, and closing the zipper to his throat, he pulled back the last

hatch. Light, as cold and white as ice, cut up into the warm room and reached out for him. He clipped his safety reel to the edge of the hatch, bent, and looked down into . . . nothing.

There were no floors, no walls, nothing at all below him. At the bottom of the abyss, mist swirled around the pinnacles of a grotesque ice-scape of which he caught only glimpses. Somewhere to either side of him he could see the green frost-covered walls looming dimly out of the icy air like distant cliffs. Instinctively his fingers grabbed the edge of the hatch. Steam puffed from his nose and mouth to crystallize in the air and fall down like microscopic snow to the floor, a vast distance below. His eyes watered with cold and, though he did not admit it, fear. He blinked once, then looked again.

The Repository was filled with lattices of metal in lieu of floors, vast webs of metal on which the caskets were locked and which carried the pipes and cables servicing them. They disappeared in serried perspective beneath him, orderly criss-crosses of metal repeating each other endlessly until they were lost in a blur of more metal, glass, and mist. Chris was on the edge of the building, looking down the space between the end of the lattices and the wall. As he made sense of his surroundings, he saw the narrow catwalk suspended over the gulf leading to the first layer of caskets.

It was cold. He had never imagined such cold could exist. It chilled his bones so that he felt brittle, likely to crack as readily as the bodies that lay frozen in the cases around him. Desperately he kept moving, treading the frost-rimed metal with feet that had begun to lose their feeling, reeling out the thin wire behind him as if it constituted his only connection with the living. When he had crossed the catwalk he was in among the vast webs of metal rods, his feet groping for holds on the narrow ice-covered pipes. Curiously he stopped by one of the first caskets and brushed away the ice that covered it. A face looked up at him from under the glass, old, wizened, frozen in perpetual senility like an icebound mummy.

Checking the other caskets around him, he found they were the same. Old men and women, sleeping wide-eyed in a death more permanent than they could have expected in the grave. It was logical, Chris supposed. The old required replacement parts as often as the young, more often perhaps. Few of these bodies, however, seemed to have been used for parts. They were forgotten, too far up in the huge necropolis to be bothered with. He looked at a few, then began to be disturbed by the cold stares of those frozen eyes.

The number of old people in these high graves gave him a clue. Presumably bodies were grouped by age, with the older ones at the top. Somewhere beneath him, therefore, he could expect to find the owner of his arm. But how far down? and in which direction? He considered the problem, then abandoned it. If he kept moving down he would find it. It was a premonition. Easing himself into a sitting position on one of the frozen bars, he pulled the wire to make sure it was still fastened, and dropped down into space. The wire unreeled from his belt, the next layer of capsules drifting slowly up to meet him. Then he was scrambling for a foothold on the slippery rods. Layer by layer, dropping further into the icy depths of the building, he spidered down towards the unimaginable winter of its heart.

He was cold, but cold had ceased to matter in the greater concentration of keeping alive. The rods were slick with ice, making progress dangerous

and dead. As he moved deeper into the building, he found signs of activity among the robot tenders of the place. Rods were cleared of ice, dripping with newly applied silicon lubricant, and occasionally in the distance he sensed a movement in the mists as machines tended the coffins, though none came near him. The coffins had a less deserted look now. Most of them were clear of ice and the faces he glimpsed were younger. A few of the capsules even showed thin wisps of vapour drifting from the pipes in their undersides as the newly injected freezing solution evaporated. The vapour froze immediately, and tiny falls of snow drifted down to crust the lower capsules.

In these levels he first began to hear the music. It was unobtrusive at first, but as he moved lower it swelled until the frozen air was filled with the sobbing of the pumps, the moan of metal contracting in the cold, a hum that he could not place but knew must belong to the machine that tended this huge building, the grim grave watcher guarding his charges with a devotion to duty no earthly sexton could have cultivated. The dirge drifted around Chris's ears, drowning him in sound. He dropped lower, trying not to listen.

After an hour he was a quarter of a mile down. The bodies around him were near his own age, and he knew he must be close to the one he wanted. But how to find its exact location? The level on which he stood carried thousands of capsules, stretching away around him in indistinguishable rows. His donor could be in any one of them, and the thought of examining every capsule, rubbing each glass plate clean, checking for the man who had lost a right arm, comparing it, was ridiculous. He looked around desperately, then glanced down between the rods on which he stood and stopped breathing.

Directly beneath him a man walked by, stepping carefully across the frozen pipes.

Chris went rigid, letting the cold seize and hold him tight. The man went past, his clothing a vivid black flame against the total white of the floor. He wore a tight-fitting suit that Chris recognized. It was the uniform of the Bantus, a negro gang, and when the man paused and glanced over his shoulder, he saw for a moment the kinky black hair, the brown face masked by the respirator. Another gang! The Cats at the hospital, Bantus here. He tried to make some sense of it, but failed.

Another black shape moved under him, then two more. He counted five men creeping across the frozen web and out of sight. When he was sure there were no more, he crouched and watched them move off into the mist. They became blurs in the white fog of falling frost and vapour. Reeling himself down he followed them. The cold that had gripped him before was gone. Blood pumped in his ears and his hands were hot inside their gloves.

For the next fifteen minutes he hunted them cautiously across the lattice of rods, taking cover behind the caskets whenever they stopped, creeping on again when they moved. Once he almost gave himself away when his careless hand struck the handle of a drain cock and a hoarse rattle in the depths of the pipe indicated that it was about to dump its freezing solution. On the far side of the building a machine swung onto the greased rod and moved towards the casket. Chris froze for an instant, then pushed the handle quickly back to "off". The machine clicked once, stopped, returned to its place. Chris moved on, placing his hands more carefully.

The men in black stopped near the far side of the floor, almost up against the green wall. He watched them searching among the caskets until

they found the one they were looking for, and he knew it was the one he was looking for, too. He debated what to do, but found that he was ridiculously unsure of his purpose in being there. When he found the casket - what? The compulsion that brought him here failed when it came to logical thought. He stood by and watched as they disconnected the wires joining the capsule to the main system and re wired the join so that no robot would come snooping. Two of them levered the top from the capsule. Chris watched the glass tilt up. Then, without understanding why, he stood up and walked toward them.

Four of the five were working on the lid and didn't notice him. The fifth did, but for a long moment made no move as he tried to work out whether he was seeing an illusion. In those seconds Chris had moved within six feet of him, and as the man's hand went to his belt, Chris leapt forward and his arm lashed out. The man staggered and fell, his body paralysed by the blow that, even through the thick clothing he wore, was able to stun the huge nerve ganglion of the chest. The others were alerted now, but Chris dropped two of them with short chops and out of the corner of his eye saw them slide limply off the icy rods and drop to lie, unmoving, on the web below. Then the other two were racing towards him, their feet scrabbling for purchase on the ice.

His surprise gone, Chris knew he was beaten. The first man he had knocked down was stirring, his clothing having muffled the blow more than Chris had expected. In a few seconds he would be up. Chris saw cold implacability in the eyes of the two men coming toward him and squat efficiency in the side arms they carried. Backing away, he wondered why they didn't use them, then noticed the shape of the robot machine lurking by the wall: the heat of a shot would set it in motion, and maybe others.

The safety wire tugging at his belt decided his course of action. He reeled it in quickly, let it tighten, then kicked his way upwards. The spring took up the wire's slack and he felt himself swung clear of the floor, yanked back through the air out of range of their weapons, and even as he moved his eye measured the distance from the robot tender. Reaching frantically upwards at one of the caskets, he wrenched the drain cock open, and super-frozen liquid spurted out, foaming like steam in the icy air. The two men stopped; behind them the robot slid forward on its oiled rod, sensors groping for bearings, and Chris swung again, trying to gauge the robot's speed. If it came along the rod as fast as he hoped, his swing would carry him across its path a second before it, and the machine would cover his escape. For a moment he paused as the huge lumbering cabinet came on, its articulated steel arms already sliding out, then dropped and swung in front of it. The two men saw him but didn't for a moment realize what he was doing. The air rushed past his ears, he saw the machine bearing down on him, then he was past and on the other side of it, groping for a foot-hold.

He was not prepared for what happened then. Neither of the two men seemed to realize how fast the robot was moving. Its size made it appear cumbersome and slow, but Chris had felt the wind race past him as he crouched against its huge flank. It was travelling at about thirty miles an hour, and when the second gangster tried to dodge in front of it the edge that hit him was as savage and crushing as an ax. Reeling away, the black figure hit the floor with a crash and dropped through the grating without a sound. Chris wasted no time in taking advantage of the opportunity. The man was too concerned about his colleague to see Chris move up behind him

and the blow threw him convulsively across the floor, his gun sliding from his hand . Again the force of the blow was deadened by the thick clothing the men wore, and he pulled himself upright and stood shakily facing Chris as he stepped carefully forward.

Trained to fight under most conditions and with most people, Chris found it difficult but not impossible to control his movements across the slippery floor. He kept his eyes fixed on those of the other man, trying to gauge his intentions. The man had odd eyes, grey, pale, vague. They stared at him unblinking...

Unblinking?

Chris felt his own eyes smarting in the cold, and again blinked back the frost that formed almost instantly on the pupils. How could anyone fail to blink in this cold?

He lunged forward and his hand grabbed for the respirator of the man in black, but his foot slipped and the hand went high. Instead of the edge of the mask it caught in the man's kinky hair. He felt it hold. Then it began to move, stretch, tear. Quickly, like paper ripping, the face under his hand tore in half. Off balance, Chris stumbled back, his glove wrapped around a rag of some thick cloth-like substance from which half a face still looked back unblinkingly at him. The man whose face it was had his hand over it. He stepped back, lost his footing, and fell. Chris glimpsed the black figure land on the next floor among the others, then slip off and disappear. Still with the tattered remnant of the mask in his hand, he followed the man downwards.

The old had been at the top of the building, the mature further down. At the bottom he found the children, frozen in premature death in their pathetically tiny capsules. As he went deeper the faces became younger and younger until only babes surrounded him. At the very bottom he found himself among the snow drifts that filled the whole floor of the repository, and the stalagmites that reared up spikily into the mist. Fog billowed around him as he searched among the drifts for the black figure that had fallen from above. In his hand the tattered face waved forlornly, its one grey eye staring into the swirling mists. Though he searched for an hour in the drifts, he found nothing.

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FROM THE BIBLIOFILE:

"Now, habit is continuity of action, it is a most detestable thing, and is very difficult to get away from. A proverb will run where a writ will not, and the follies of our forefathers are of greater importance to us than is the well-being of our posterity."

"I wouldn't say a word against that, sir," said Meehawl Mac-Murrachu.

A leprecaun is of more value to the earth than is a prime minister or a stockbroker.

(James Stephens: THE CROCK OF GOLD)

THE EFFECT OF HYPNOSIS AS AN AID TO
LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM SITUATION

S T E P H E N C O O K

The study of hypnosis in the practical classroom situation is so important to educators that I regret it has not been undertaken by someone with higher qualifications than my own. There are implications and lines of research that I have not felt equipped to handle. However, it is to me that the task has fallen. I can do no more than describe the results of my own meagre experiments, and hope that other workers will be sufficiently interested to carry on where I have not dared to go.

The following study was made in 1958, while I was teaching in a country central school in Victoria. The subjects were the forty members of my class, comprising all of Forms 1 and 2. Since I was the only teacher in the central section, I had full and constant control over the class throughout the period of the study. I would like, if I may, to convey my deep gratitude to the headmaster, Mr. W. Pernod, whose co-operation made the work possible.

In the first week of Term 1, I ascertained which members of my class I was able to put into a hypnotic trance. Approximately 25 of them seemed susceptible to the degree required. I chose the twenty who showed the most promise, and kept the other twenty for use as a control group. I realize that, since the two groups were not chosen at random, my results may be biassed, but I regret that there was no way to avoid this problem.

Henceforth, I shall refer to the hypnotized group as Group A, and the control group as Group B.

Preliminary tests, without hypnotic influence, in the second week of term, revealed no significant difference in the performance of the two groups on tests of spelling, arithmetic, history, geography, English grammar and English composition. After teaching for three weeks, I gave a series of tests on the material I had covered. Table 1 gives selected results:

TABLE ONE (All figures are percentages, in all tables.)

	SPELLING	ARITHMETIC	MENTAL ARITHMETIC	COMPOSITION
Group A	83	88	72	69
Group B	75	76	79	75

It will be seen that Group A performed slightly better on mechanical and memory tests (arithmetic and spelling), but was slower in its response to tests calling for speed (mental arithmetic) or creative thought (composition).

As the year went by, I found that my young subjects could be placed in an even deeper trance. This must be borne in mind when comparing results at different stages. By the fifth week, each member of Group A went into his or her trance instantly and automatically, as soon as I gave the appropriate signal. There was a strange beauty in the sight of all those little heads drooping in unison, like a movement in an impromptu ballet. There were times when I spent half an hour or more in what I called "morning exercise". I had them moving their heads, bodies and limbs about in slow rhythm, in perfect time. It put me in a good mood for the whole day, and absolutely fascinated Group B. I can also attest that, on the days when we joined the junior school in folk dancing, my Group A was the first class that I have ever seen to keep completely and beautifully together.

At this stage, Mr. Pernod began to entertain a few doubts about the project, partly inspired by a request for admission to my class by three children from a new family in the area. After I had presented my case to him again, he agreed that it would be better for them to study at home, by correspondence. Admitting them to my class would not only interfere with the conditions of the project, but (by upsetting the convenient twenty-twenty division) would make it difficult to calculate percentages. My arithmetic was not very good, and never has been.

Table 2 shows the progress made after seven weeks. The results have been chosen for easy comparison with those in Table 1.

TABLE TWO

	SPELLING	ARITHMETIC	MENTAL ARITHMETIC	COMPOSITION
Group A	88	92	71	64
Group B	76	74	76	71

It was during Term 1 that I had trouble with the clergyman who visited us each week for religious instruction. At first he had been pleased by the surprising docility of the class. When he discovered its cause, however, he protested violently. Fortunately, I was able to persuade him that my work was in the best interests of the students, and of education as a whole. He also agreed that it was time to stop educating the children in the false doctrines of his own bloodless version of Christianity, and to begin infusing them with the militant spirit and fire of the True Law of the Fragrant Sons and Daughters of the Most Scented Blossom, or Blossomism, as it is generally known. We agreed that such instruction should come from me, rather than from such a recent convert as himself.

At the end of Term 1, I was worried about the effects of the vacation on the continuity of the study. It was necessary to ensure that all the

members of Group A should come to my house each day, for five days a week, to resume their trance. This was accomplished without difficulty. I kept them occupied by telling them they were watching a perpetual Donald Duck Cartoon Carnival.

Immediately after the vacation, I gave another test. Table 3 shows the results obtained by the two groups immediately before and after their two-week break. It will be seen that there was almost total retention by Group A: in fact, some individual students even showed an improvement.

TABLE THREE

		SPELLING	ARITHMETIC	GEOGRAPHY	GRAMMAR
BEFORE:	Group A	94	95	83	98
	Group B	74	71	75	67
AFTER:	Group A	94	92	80	95
	Group B	69	68	70	54

Term 2 was a time of great troubles for me. Miss Tulip Supine, our much-admired teacher of the lower primary section of the school, took exception to my activities. Try as I might, I was unable to change her mind. I was at my wits' end. At last one of my casual acquaintances in the town, a young bachelor, came to my rescue. Discovering after a pleasant dinner at my house that he loved Miss Supine, he proposed to her, was accepted, and took her away on a rapid honeymoon to Wei'i Wai'a (a small Pacific island which I was able to recommend to him; it is renowned for the frequency and violence of its typhoons).

In the latter half of the term, I found that my children were coming out of their trances with ever increasing difficulty. I was afraid that to force them out against their will would cause strain, and so decided to allow them to remain under hypnosis for twenty-four hours a day. This produced immediate and startling results in the testing programme. Memory work became almost perfect. Table 4 shows the Spelling average from February to August:

TABLE FOUR

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Group A - Spelling:	83	88	94	95	94	94	99
Group A - Composition:	69	64	61	60	55	57	32

As can also be seen from Table 4, however, creative work continued to fall in quality. This trend puzzled me. It was quite unexpected. Under hypnosis, I expected a continual advance in all subjects. At last the solution to the problem appeared to me. I remembered that the assessment of English composition is entirely subjective. Which particular subjective standard was I following? Why, the kind conventionally accepted by English

teachers, of course! And what guarantee did I have that this standard was a valid one? None at all! In fact, here before me was objective proof that the best English style ran in a different direction altogether.

I analyzed the prose with which Group A was supplying me. It was chiefly marked by its mechanical correctness, its odd use of words in direct and literal accord with their dictionary definitions, and its lifeless concern with drably observed facts as opposed to any element of imagination. Adopting these qualities as my criteria, I reassessed the year's compositions. Table 5 shows the results:

TABLE FIVE

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Group A - Composition:	75	79	83	87	94	90	98

Here was final evidence of the success of the experiment.

And now I must relate an event which caused me great sorrow. On the last day of term, just as I was about to announce the above results to the children, the school was invaded by an army of large red ants. I cannot explain whence they came, nor why. I know only that the children and I fled instantly, locking the ugly creatures in behind us. (It happened that, only the previous night, I had been reading a terrifying short story about a man in Brazil whose whole plantation was destroyed by twenty square miles of the voracious red beasts.) I went home and spent the afternoon writing letters.

Three or four days later, several of the parents came to see me. They had not wanted to disturb me before, but now they were becoming worried about their children, who were locked in the schoolroom and refused to come out. The dear good folk had not wanted to break into the building, since they knew it to be government property. On arriving at the school, I found my entire Group A sitting at their desks, working their way steadily through the mathematics text books which had been before them at the time the ants came. I had forgotten to tell them to stop. Table 6 shows the standard of the work which Group A had done in mathematics the previous week, compared with the work done in the three complete 24-hour-long days following:

TABLE SIX

	Pre-ant	1st day	2nd day	3rd day
Group A - Mathematics:	97	97	95	91

This is especially significant, since most of this work was new to the children. They learnt it themselves, entirely from the text books. This aspect of the study is of pregnant importance for all researchers into programmed learning, and teachers in situations such as my own, who have to manage two or more classes at the same time.

The event, however, caused me great sorrow. (I think I have already said this.) Twelve of the children were so badly bitten that their wounds

had become infected. A couple of them eventually lost limbs and digits through amputation, and some were permanently scarred in exposed areas such as the face. This meant that their work in Term 3 could no longer be compared with that of Terms 1 and 2. Extraneous factors had upset the neat arrangement of my study.

Yet I did not allow myself to be entirely discouraged. It was useless to continue as before, but it was still possible for me to undertake a whole range of experiments which had hitherto been outside my self-imposed limitations. I had the subjects, and one more term in which to use them. When might I have another such chance?

My readers will doubtless have heard of the Bridey Murphy case, and other such investigations. It occurred to me that, if it is possible under hypnosis to regress a person back to infancy, and beyond it to past lives, it may indeed be possible to advance him into adulthood - and then, who knows what? I strove strenuously to achieve such results, with only partial success. I must be honest here. I was able to induce the outward signs of adulthood, but none of the inner characteristics that are invisible to the watching eyes of observant children. Thus I was able to observe precocious sexual play among my students, but they were unable to give genuine accounts of the inner feelings that accompany such play. Neither was it possible to obtain predictions about events of the future, such as horse races. I was forced to conclude that, although the children professed to be aware of their future adult selves, their will to please was leading them to deceive themselves.

I next attempted to discover how much physical pain could be withstood by Group A before schoolwork was affected. I am unable to report the results in tabular form, due to the lack of a standard measure of pain. However, I have supplied the good editor of this journal with a number of informative photographs. If he decides not to use them, it is because he, and he alone, feels that it is not in your best interests to see them. I have done all that a scholar can be expected to do. I have argued with him long and loud, but he is inflexible. He underestimates you, fellow worshippers at the shrine of knowledge; he underestimates you. But may his soul still be scented by the Blossom.

Many of the students were beginning to show signs of tension, doubtless due to the influence of the juices of spring upon their awakening young bodies. I noticed their hands shaking. They complained of headaches and a few of them developed chronic digestive upsets. Fortunately I was able to subdue these symptoms with a few constantly reinforced commands. It became ever harder to do so, but I was undaunted.

In the meantime, of course, Group B was still studying earnestly. Each Monday I wrote their instructions for the week on the blackboard, and left them to work diligently away by themselves. Their overall average results for each of the last ten weeks of Term 3 cast a revealing light upon the success of Group A, as revealed in Table 6. See Table 7:

TABLE SEVEN

Week number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Group B average:	53	52	54	52	50	47	41	31	33	29

Six years later, in 1964, I attempted a follow-up study. I was able to trace all but six of my former students. (I am speaking only, of course, of Group A.) Two of the missing six had committed suicide, and another had been struck by a train in suspicious circumstances. Of the other fourteen, one was operating an outer suburban sanitary cart; one was a service station attendant; one was in prison (for vagrancy); one was a High Petal of the Most Scented Blossom; two were general unskilled labourers; one was in an asylum; and all the women were hostesses and models.

What could be more eloquent testimony to the success of my study? Had the results not been reversed by the incident of the ants (and clearly, such a disaster could not have done less than reverse them), it is obvious that fully 95% of the group would have been in promising positions of wealth and responsibility. Even allowing for a safe margin of error in this calculation, the impact of the figures is undeniable.

I look forward to the day when all teaching will be done with the aid of hypnotic techniques, even the training of the teachers themselves. Would that I could be a child again myself, and thus partake of such an opportunity. And the existing system would require so few modifications to make it reflect this ideal in all its perfection! How can we refuse to institute the necessary changes?

For our children's sakes, how can we refuse?

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT (from the Editor):

As you may or may not know, this publication has from its inception failed to make ends meet. It is a fine old fan tradition that this should be so, and thus far I have grinned and bared my bank account. Unfortunately, now that Diane and I have joined the suburban mediocracy and begun to buy a house, I am no longer in a position to run ASFR at a loss.

So it is with great reluctance that I inform readers that in future ASFR will be published every second month, and the price will be increased to forty cents per copy as from this issue. (Overseas rates on page 3.)

I hasten to add that along with a 33.3% price rise there will be a considerable increase in size. (Sounds like rotten economics, but envelopes and postage cost a fortune.) You will have noticed the larger format of this issue, for example.

The combination of extra production time (not to mention thinking time) and fewer pages per annum will make for a better magazine. The extra pages per issue will allow the publication of longer articles and, if suitable material is available, fiction.

Current subscriptions will, of course, be honoured; the increased rate of \$2.40 per year will only apply on renewal.

ASFR's offsider, THE COSMIC DUSTBUG, most regretfully is discontinued - in its present format, at least. Australian subscribers will find CDBug 6 included with this issue of ASFR, but in future CDBug reverts to its original purpose as a personal/editorial newsletter.

G E O R G E W H I T L E Y

She said, "You have an odd taste in girlfriends. Who, may I ask, is the original?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody?"

"Yes. Can't you see? - she was a dryad."

"A dryad?"

"A wood nymph. Didn't they teach you Greek mythology at the school you went to? The dryads were the souls, as it were, of trees. They lived in the trees, but they were the trees. If you killed a tree, you killed the resident nymph..."

"Gawd!" she muttered.

"I knew who she was, of course," he went on. "Those yellow blossoms in the hair made it obvious. And I could see the filthy black specks on those same blossoms, and clustering thickly around the end of each hair tendril. She looked at me reproachfully and asked, 'Aren't you going to spray me?'"

"And was that all you did to her?"

"Yes. I got up - only in my dream, of course - and went out to the shed for the spray. When I got back to the front garden she was just merging with the acacia. But I could see her smiling at me, could see the gratitude in her eyes..."

"So you plastered the poor wench with that muck that smells like a dogs' public convenience?"

"I know it stinks, but it's fairly effective. And you must keep it up."

"I know, I know. How many times have you told me?"

"Anyhow, I was spraying away, pumping for all I was worth, when I heard a buzzing noise. You know the sound that a swarm of bees makes? Well, it was like that. But more sinister. It frightened me. But I went on spraying, and went on spraying, even though there was a dark cloud over the moon and I couldn't see a thing. It wasn't cold, though. It was hot, unpleasantly hot. I was sweating like a pig. I could hardly be breathe. And the air was... stinking. No, not the smell of the spray. Worse - much worse. And behind me a voice said, 'Stop!'"

"I stopped. I forced myself to turn round. I could see him standing there, even though it was dark, even though he seemed to have brought his own personal darkness with him. Like a cloud it looked - and it was a cloud. A cloud of flying insects that hovered about him, that obscured his face. I was glad of that. I didn't want to see what he looked like. I had already seen too much - the rottenness, the oozing putrescence that should have been dead but wasn't, the tattered lips over black, crumbling stubs of teeth. Just an oozing black shadow, he was, but there was this faint, yellow-green light that picked out an occasional detail - and every time it was a detail that I'd sooner not have seen..."

"It's your own fault," she said. "You shouldn't have made a pig of yourself over that cheese last night. You know it always makes you dream."

"But this dream was... different. And just as I had known who the girl

was, so I knew the name of this... demon."

"Old Nick, I suppose."

"Don't be funny. It was Beelzebub, of course. Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies. And he asked in that putrid voice of his, the voice that sounded like bubbles of stinking gas gurgling up from the depths of a cess-pool, 'Why do you kill my people?'"

"I was frightened, but I remembered the dryad, how she had looked when she came to me for help, more woman than tree, and yet, somehow, alive with the magic of all flowering plants. I remembered her - and remembered those horrid black specks in her beautiful hair, the pest that would kill her unless I took action. And this memory gave me the courage to answer. 'They're pests,' I told him. 'They're ruining my garden.'"

"He laughed - an unpleasant sound like defective plumbing. It stank like it, too. He asked, 'Didn't one of your scientists, a certain Doctor Einstein, point out the relativity of all things?' 'What do you mean?' I asked him. 'What I say,' he replied. 'And what Doctor Einstein said. Literally and metaphorically. But poison away, my friend, poison away. Slay your thousands. But remember that two can play at that game.'"

"And...?" she asked.

"That was all," he replied.

"Just a nightmare," she told him. "Too much cheese before turning in, and this obsession of yours with the spray gun..." She paused, listening intently. "Would you mind turning up the radio? This is one of my favourites..."

There was guitar music, and the mournful female voice tunefully demanding, "What have they done to the rain?"

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FROM THE BIBLIOFILE:

No doubt the story-telling habit owes much to the fact that ordinary people, quite unconsciously, rate humor very low: I mean, they underestimate the difficulty of "making humor". It would never occur to them that the thing is hard, meritorious and dignified. Because the result is gay and light, they think the process must be new. Few people would realize that it is much harder to write one of Owen Seaman's "funny" poems in PUNCH than to write one of the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermons. Mark Twain's HUCKLEBERRY FINN is a greater work than Kant's CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, and Charles Dickens' creation of Mr. Pickwick did more for the elevation of the human race - I say it in all seriousness - than Cardinal Newman's LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT, AMID THE ENCIRCLING GLOOM. Newman only cried out for light in the gloom of a sad world. Dickens gave it.

(Stephen Leacock: HUMOR AS I SEE IT)

mates on the railway work-gang called him 'Moscow Jim' - since nothing obscured his accent.) The boy's name he changed to Abraham, but everyone called the boy Abe - Australians are like that - and he was thought to be named after that great hero of the proletariat, Lincoln. Quietly, without any fuss, he streaked through elementary school examinations, thrashed the petty tyrants of his schoolyard, and, in 2009, entered Chifley University (in the outer Sydney suburb of Bathurst). Thanks to his uncle's financial assistance and his own strenuous efforts, Abe remained there for ten years. Which time his mental and physical prowess did not go unnoticed by that arm of government whose function it is to notice.

For years the arguments had spun on, until, to the cultured eye, verbal cobweb draped every last finny bone of the rusting skeleton. Then, in March, 2018, a young Scandinavian architect showed his plans to the New South Wales Assembly, and in two years the new Sydney Opera House was built. Nothing remained of the original designer's concept of the building, except its function. The Opera House, in which five thousand people were seated on May 1st, 2020, to witness its official opening by Prime Minister Henry Macelleria, resembled a synthesis of the Acropolis, the Moscow Underground, and the Tomb of the Unknown Comrade at Johannesburg. Its acoustics were perfect. An agent of the Australian Security Service mingled with the crowd. Abe Mann. And as the Prime Minister, in mid-platitude, suddenly doubled over and sank to the platform in a pool of blood, Abe leapt to his feet shouting "After him! I saw him do it!" and led a hundred shocked citizens in pursuit of a poor man whom that very moment Nature had called out of the hall. A modestly attractive young woman in row AAD opened her handbag and replaced the opera-glass with which she had just assassinated the Prime Minister of Australia. Abe's fellow-agent, Lana Regos.

"Operating in this country today is the finest security service in the world. It belongs to the Russians." A joke, if somewhat in poor taste, in the pre-Revolutionary Britain of the Nineteen-Sixties. In certain quarters the joke persisted in the post-Revolutionary Australia of the Twenty-Twenties. It was, in one sense, and up to a point, true. Many agents here and elsewhere in the Free World were of Russian descent. They were efficient operators, usually. Lana Regos found it convenient to retain the surname of her late husband, the gentleman of Greek ancestry who had not survived that unfortunate mishap in Flinders Street, Melbourne, early in 2019. (Some of that city's more vocable citizens had again demanded the abolition of those antique tramcars, one of which had decapitated Mr. Regos, only to meet the usual bland official rebuff. In a word: tourism.) But she was in fact of Russian stock. As, of course, was Abe Mann. And Charlton Markov, Head of Australian Security. And many others. All were presumed absolutely loyal, nay dedicated, to Australia and the Australian Socialist Way of Life. Macelleria, despite his eminence, was not. Scion of an Italian Adventist family, long settled in their southern home, his religious sympathies had been well hidden. But Markov's operators had uncovered them. Along with evidence of the Prime Minister's treasonable dealings with the detested Ivan Shutka. And it was known that Shutka's scientists had perfected a Weapon, and suspected that one of these Weapons (nature unknown) had been smuggled into Australia - with the Prime Minister's assistance. Leonid Prokop, agent first-class, was detailed by Markov to find it.

He did. Unfortunately, someone found him in turn. The Weapon disappeared. Markov threw a Slavic fit when someone mentioned the Clue. "**** the **** clue!! I want the Weapon!! I want Prokop!! And you, you **** **** ****, you offer me a **** **** clue!!!" And ripped out a filter cigarette, lit up the wrong end, and ground it viciously into the carpet. Then: "Get Mann." Abe appeared, smartly, prepared for a trying session with his chief, and was amazed to find Markov indicating a chair, quietly explaining what had happened. As far, that is, as he knew. Prokop had been found, dead, by a tiny creek near the diminutive township of Wyalkatchem, Western Australia. His last report had been received from Albany, hundreds of miles to the south, and it was, simply: "I have it. Returning." A silence of three days, and there he was, sprawled in the sand, a hundred-odd miles from Australia's second-largest city. And in that sand, as he died, he had traced with his fingers a single letter. C.

"Find the Weapon, Mann. And whoever killed Prokop. Take Regos - you've worked with her - and anyone else you want. Understood? Right-oh, then - get cracking. Oh..." Mann paused at the door. "...Good luck, Abe."

"I understand Mr. Leonard was a crewman on the Cedilla at one time, Captain." (Mr. Leonard = Leonid Prokop.) "He was indeed, Mr. Abrahams. Until he deserted in Fremantle about a year ago." "Did he have any close friends among the crew? - or ashore?" "Jack Leonard got on pretty well with everyone aboard. No special friends - yet, in a way, they all were. Can't understand why he... Ashore? Well, now that I recall, the boys used to joke about a woman named Carmen. Now I don't know if..." Carmen, eh? C? Worth investigating. Cherchez la femme. "One last thing, Captain. Why is this submarine called Cedilla?"

Lana investigated the crewmen whose first- or surnames started with C. Abe tracked down Carmen Getchigirov. "Woods are full of 'em," muttered Abe. Found her, in a brothel at Kalgoorlie. Carmen's father was Russian, her mother Spanish. Herself, as charmingly Australian as they come. And she wasn't exactly in a brothel: she ran it. "Yes, Mr. Leonard used to often visit me, when I worked down at Bunbury. We used to sit and talk about Magnitogorsk. Funny, isn't it? - I'd never been there, but that's where both our fathers came from. They used to go to the same church, even. We'd talk in Russian, so the others wouldn't know what we were saying. Had to close up the Bunbury place: big stink when the locals found out that Fran was letting the kids come in. Well, I'd looked after my money, so... Anything strange? Well, now that you mention it, one night there was a bit of a ruckus, which wasn't too unusual at that place, and one of the girls screamed out: 'Get away from me, you great Caledonian boor!' - some Scotchman getting rough, I suppose - and Jack just leapt up there and then and shot out of the place - didn't even stop to grab his..." "Thank you, Miss Getchigirov. You've been most helpful." "...overcoat," she finished lamely.

Speeding towards Perth, Abe finally made contact with Lana, after some confusion over wavelengths. "Post Office steps, three-thirty. Yes, you heard correctly: Woomera. Then Calydon. You are prepared, I trust. Good. No, forget them - have a break." Calydon... Earth's lone colony on the Moon, established thirty years earlier by the United Nations, after several abortive attempts by Russia and America to install primarily military bases

there during the late Seventies. An artificial place, Calydon, depending for its existence on supply ships from Earth. For all its multi-national population and less-than-luxurious living conditions, a peaceful place. But with theocratic Russia threatening withdrawal from the U.N., some friction was to be expected. Mann knew now that his search must continue there. Prokop, with brilliance, had recognized the clue from a chance outburst in a brothel. So had Mann. The head of the Russian team on Calydon was Feodor Gronozhvili, a wild, burly Georgian. They called him - the Calydonian Boar.

Something about Lana nagged at Abe's sense of rightness. Nothing actually wrong, just the most fleeting suspicion of inconsistency. He pondered as he drove. The name, perhaps? Lana Regos? His mind flipped the letters around idly, looking for anagrams. (Angel Rosa (appropriate) - Orange Sal - laser agon - regal (or large) Naso (Ovid, Love's Labour's Lost) - nasal ogre - analogers (Campbellites? - early American sectaries, somewhat like ...Baptists! No, too far-fetched.) - Lara's gone (poor Yuri...)) Rather futile. Besides, the Regos part was largely accidental. Lana. Abe hadn't met another Lana, that he knew of. (Met Lana?)

Markov had smoothed the way. Abe and Lana (Lana!) had no difficulty in boarding the flight from Woomera. Terminal officials entered upon wagers on their business, but most guessed wrongly. Some didn't. On arrival at Calydon, they were whisked from the field and into the great dome by Ilya O'Malley, of Australian Liaison. Who confirmed Abe's suspicions: Gronozhvili was making trouble. The two men talked for hours, before retiring to their rooms at the Australian barracks. Next 'morning' (calculated, after long debate in the U.N., to parallel Greenwich Time), Lana had disappeared.

Gronozhvili's men, armed with pocket testaments and (some would say) deadlier weapons, quietly surrounded the communications centre and the Terminal control tower. Gronozhvili himself, with a small bodyguard, confronted Colony Supervisor Tom Mbogo, and informed him that Calydon now belonged to Holy Mother Russia, and would he be so kind as to produce the Australian, Abraham Mann? Mbogo calmly directed Gronozhvili's attention to the window of his office, from whence could be observed a large group of disarmed Russians under the guard of Colony military personnel. Mann emerged from a large cupboard in the office, armed, and advised Gronozhvili and his men to lay down their weapons. Which they did. O'Malley came out from under Mbogo's desk and collected them. The coup d'etat had lasted forty-five seconds.

Said Markov: "The attempted takeover I can understand, but why did they want you up there, Mann? Come, lad, you have some explaining to do. What was the Weapon? Who killed Prokop? And where does the Regos woman fit into all this?" Taking a deep breath, thus Abe: "There was no Weapon. Lana sent what we thought was Prokop's message from Albany, then killed him. She was a double agent - her sole, immensely-complicated, task to get me to Calydon. Her arrival there, with me, was to trigger off the takeover, and it did. With Calydon safely in Russian hands, I was to be returned to Earth - specifically, to Moscow. They wanted me there when they left the U.N. and commenced their drive towards world conquest - and you know how much easier that would be with Calydon in their control. Why me? Lana, incredible as I still find it to be, is my step-sister. Her real name is

...Svetlana Shutka. Our father is Ivan Shutka. I never knew: how could I? Somehow he had kept track of me, and wanted me to be with him. To be his understudy, to take over when he descends the pulpit of office, as he calls it. He... He believes his progeny divine, sir."

Prolonged silence. Then, Markov: "The man is even madder than I thought. You have my profound sympathy, Abe. But you still haven't told me how you tumbled to all this in the first place. Was it... C?" "Yes. Something bothered me about Lana's name. I finally woke up that it must really be Svetlana. When we took the Boar, I confronted her with this, and she broke down. She told me everything, eventually. Prokop tried to warn us. But in his death agony he reverted to Russian. May I use this pad, sir?" Abe took a ballpoint and wrote Cyrillic characters on the pad.

These: CBETNAHA.

*

MICROCOSMOS

The inner man is witness to things
That we on the outer never know, or care, about:
Microbes and lesser breeds
Work hard, thrive, live, die there,
And like you and me
Never know the reason for it.

Small creatures of that world within us
Fare far and wide on great affairs of state,
On missions perilous, for all we know,
To the outer galaxies of their universe.
Expeditions, armadas, freedom fighters,
Dispute treaties, borders, conventions,
By force of arms - their aim, perhaps,
To gain the nebulae of the lower left ventricle.

Infection or defection must be fought, contagion held,
Though a universe die or solar system fall;
These things must be, though cosmic cataclysm ensue
In blinding flash of super-novae in septicaemia.

The thought gives pause...

Perhaps when man fares out to the limits of his world
And fights his fights on that larger frame
Such body as we inhabit will impute to us the discomfort,
Devise and administer such sulphanomides
As we, purblind, could never dream of.

Colin Bell

THE LEGION OF NATHANIEL

JOHN FOYSTER LEE HARDING DIANA MARTIN JOHN BANGSUND

JAMES BLISH (ed): NEW DREAMS THIS MORNING (Ballantine: \$0.60)
SAMUEL R. DELANY: BABEL 17 (Ace: \$0.50)

- JOHN FOYSTER

This recent anthology is remarkable, as far as I am personally concerned, in that it contains so many stories which appeal to me. In most anthologies I feel sure that the discriminating reader must find a couple of good stories, a few duds, and a lot of mediocrity. Even Miller and Conklin, rating anthologies by the number of A+ stories they contained, found that there were invariably poor stories in any collection. While it might be said that one of the stories in *NEW DREAMS THIS MORNING* is not quite up to its company, it is still very, very good.

Blish's editorial is crammed with ideas. He says that sf is changing from a branch of commercial fiction to a literary movement. (I am inclined to disagree.) He lists, fairly carefully, those who have changed sf. (I agree that sf has changed, and even, perhaps, that it is a literary movement: but not, to choose Blish's suggestion of a criterion, that it will influence literature as a whole.) He regards the distinguishing feature of a literary movement the fact that it is self-conscious. I cannot agree that this is either necessary or sufficient. But he also says that the writers must think of themselves as artists: and here, I am sure, is where his article fails. Asimov, Kornbluth and Silverberg seem most unlikely to nominate themselves for such a role, at least.

The stories in this collection have been chosen because they reflect the thoughts of some of today's important sf writers about the future of the Arts - whatever those might be. Two of the stories are about "new" arts, and they seem to be almost the best in the collection. This is perhaps unfair, but despite Blish's contention that "the writers here represented know the arts of which they speak" there remains a feeling that if one chooses a new art, at least one is on safe ground.

DREAMING IS A PRIVATE THING, by Isaac Asimov, is a quite excellent story, unlike most of Asimov's work. It isn't written with the greatest skill in the world, but the feeling that emerges is intense. The protagonist, embittered as he is, believes what he says, and what he says is the kind of thing that must emerge from a man in his position.

James Blish claims that *A WORK OF ART* is just that, so far as he is concerned. It certainly is an extremely powerful story. I regard it as involving a new art - that of reviving the minds of men of the past. The mind of Richard Strauss is brought back into being by a mind surgeon, in the body of a man who couldn't carry a tune - Jerom Bosch. (Blish is

rather unkind to Bosch here, for I am sure that the Bosch who painted the musical Hell didn't intend us to think he disliked music.) Blish's point is that Strauss would only be repeating himself, were he to come back. Nevertheless there have been many artists who would not have done so: Marlowe and Wilfred Owen spring to mind immediately. But the feeling, as in the Asimov story, is overwhelming.

Blish's other story, THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL, was commissioned but rejected by John Campbell. It is notable that no stories from ASTOUNDING appear in the anthology - indeed, only F&SF, GALAXY, and Columbia Publications are represented. Though this does not mean that Campbell has never published a story which would have fitted the anthology (Walter M. Miller's THE DARE-STEELER is too long, for instance) I think it may suggest why Campbell finds the stories submitted by "litterateurs" unacceptable. However, it is a rather slight story, the gimmick being weak and the plot not much stronger.

I have found it difficult to like Harry Harrison's writings, for no reason that I can put my finger on. I remember enjoying DEATHWORLD, but that was all. His PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST is the story which I feel is not quite as good as the others, being not much more than a straight "adventure" piece. But it is better than most of his stories I have read.

THE COUNTRY OF THE KIND, by Damon Knight, predicted the destructive artists. The story is well-written, but I couldn't ever bring myself to believe in Knight's world. This says something in itself, for normally one doesn't worry about such a thing at all. This difficulty made it impossible for me to become really involved in the problem.

The late Cyril Kornbluth's WITH THESE HANDS is by far the earliest of the stories, but there is no sign of ageing. In fact, all of these stories were published in the years 1951-56, except for Harrison's. This is almost incredible, especially if we go back fifteen years from Kornbluth's story to 1936 and look for a story of the quality. The changes in those fifteen years were immense; thinking about it again, it almost seems as though there has been little change in sf in the last seventeen or more years. But Kornbluth's tale is a bitter one - of the death of the arts, rather than of their future. Very disturbing.

Edgar Pangborn's MUSIC MASTER OF BABYLON hardly belongs to the collection insofar as there is no great change in the situation of the artist as such. It is man who has changed, and Van Anda acts, almost entirely through the story, as a man rather than as an artist. Of course, because Pangborn writes so well, it is a story which is more than worthwhile.

A MAN OF TALENT, by Robert Silverberg, surprised me. I think of Silverberg as a very talented, well, hack. But his protagonist's reaction to a world in which art is a game is well-constructed and believable.

An outstanding feature of the collection is its lack of violence. Only in Harrison's story (in which reactions are exaggerated anyway) and in Knight's (which treats of violence as an artform) does the plot rely on pow!-socko! action. Overall, the collection is the best published for several years. The printing seems to have been botched by Ballantine, but no book is perfect.

There are so many things that can be said about a book like BABEL 17, but in a way what is not said is most revealing. Delany harks back to the old days of sf, when ideas were a dime a dozen and a decent author was not

afraid to spend a penny. By comparison with many modern writers, Delany is a positive spendthrift; the material in this novel would provide eight or ten novels for other writers.

It has. Delany's ideas are not new, at least in the sense that they are familiar to readers of sf. At the same time there is a certain freshness about the way they have been handled, as though the author had a deep regard for the stories in which the concepts first appeared. This is not to say that Delany has copied, but rather that he has taken several old strands of ideas and used them to weave a new yarn. As a result there are strong pieces and weak pieces. However, the overall effect is quite pleasing.

It isn't hard to see why Delany's novels haven't been appearing as serials in the magazines (quite apart from the fact that the magazines might never have seen them): it has only been lately that Frederik Pohl has been moving his group of magazines towards the action style of fiction made popular mainly by STARTLING STORIES and THRILLING WONDER STORIES. Certainly Delany seems to be cast in the same mould as the writers for those magazines. It could even be said that he is a jazzed-up Dwight V. Swain, but there are too many differences between them, of other kinds, for this to be a reasonable comparison.

Whichever way you slice it, though, BABEL 17 is good reading, as sf. Delany has more than average control over his writing, though a few novels published in STARTLING would have sharpened up the few remaining weaknesses in his writing: a tendency to verbosity, a mild desire to show off, and very occasionally, definite fuzziness around the edges. Maybe that last is not fair, but I have formed the habit of not reading every single word in order to follow the plot of a novel. Several times I had to go back in this book to check on why or whether a particular action was taking place: that hasn't happened when I have been reading more complex and more serious works than Delany's. For this reason alone I suggest that writing is fuzzy; perhaps it is only that I am lazy. The tendency towards using as many words as possible is understandable when one is paid by the word, but that is not how I understand Ace's method of payment. Nevertheless, no matter how good the author's work (and Delany writes very well), in a story which is basically an adventure yarn, too many words can get in the way. Too many words can slow the action, or at least throw the reader off the track. I may like what you are writing, Jack, but I've forgotten who is training the ray-gun on the Saturnian grulzak.

And when I say that Delany tends to show off, I really mean that sometimes there's a little too much embroidery, too much cuteness. This, too, one can take in small doses. It may well be that my tolerance is low.

BABEL 17 has almost all the merits of the good sf story (and I do not define this too closely) and few, if any, faults which make it unworthy sf. But beyond sf, it has little to offer. It would not be worth investigating the claims of the novel for a place in literature were it not for some insistent notes in the writing, and for Delany's Guest Editorial in NEW WORLDS 172. The editorial presents, one presumes, Delany's views on sf. He draws comparisons between music in general and fiction in general and, perhaps unwisely, compares forms of music as an analogy with the forms of fiction, i.e. sf and mainstream. The unwisdom comes, perhaps, in suggesting that the quartet might stand for sf and the symphony for mainstream. The objection - and I regard it as an insurmountable one - is that while one composer may write quartets and symphonies, there has been, as far as I can

see, only one sf writer who has also written in the other field - Cordwainer Smith.

This general assumption, then, seems untenable to me. But there are specific points in Delany's article which further suggest his intense concern with the oneness of sf and mainstream. He wants a critical vocabulary for sf and claims that no one has yet been able to build the bridge between sf and mainstream. I would submit that the need is not for a bridge, but a ladder. I further suggest that the inability of critics to examine sf in the way Delany wants is due to the absence of the kind of sf he supposes to exist.

Further, Delany says, "very few people will write of these authors' structure, verbal texture, technical and thematic development." He suggests that it is embarrassing to do this. I agree, but feel that it would be embarrassing to the writer rather than to the critic. Delany is writing of Smith, Ballard, Disch and Zelazny, specifically, and cannot be blamed for not knowing that in ASFR three of those writers have been dealt with at length. But I say that his statement is still true: that one cannot write of those aspects of any sf writer's work because they do not exist, or rather, do not exist in precisely the same way in all writers.

I exaggerate slightly, of course.

Nevertheless, critics who have been inundated with the works of Christopher Anvil are hardly likely to wish to write of structure; or those who suffer from Keith Laumer to write of verbal texture; or those who have been submerged in Van Vogt to write of technical development; or those who have weathered the storms of Philip K. Dick to write of thematic development. Essentially, this is the muck through which one wades (at least from the high pinnacle from which Delany hopes one views the world of sf), and if occasionally one little piece of swamp manages to hold together particularly well, one combination of loathsome gases produces an attractive smell, then one is inclined to write it off to chance.

But having found this jewel, and being so strong-willed as to wish to examine it further, the critic is almost certain to be disappointed. And when this has happened several times, the critic's heart is lost and broken. He retires to the green pastures of Arthur Zirul, where all the tromping in the world only brings acclaim upon his head.

But suppose that some critic were able to find a gem: what is he to do with it? No reader of sf will be able to perceive the virtues which the critic supposes it to have, for he will have wallowed in the slough of Campbell too long. No reader outside sf will believe him.

I do not believe that such a gem exists. I do not believe that any profit will derive from the study of those virtues which Delany suggests, with the one exception I have noted.

Delany himself has very strong views on what things should be examined, and they seem to be the views of a critic, rather than those of a writer. Perhaps I should examine BABEL 17 a little more closely; perhaps it has some of these merits.

One fact which can be gleaned from the NEW WORLDS editorial is that Delany has at least a tendency towards pretentiousness. The comparisons with music are frequently unnecessary and are, as I have pointed out, hardly relevant at all. Examination of BABEL 17 confirms this view.

I take the precaution of stating in advance that I intend to draw the reader's attention to only some of the shortcomings of BABEL 17: a point which I carefully did not make above is that critics, whoever they might be, only have so much time. And their span of attention is limited.

One of the major characteristics of Fiction (as understood by sf writers) is characterization. Many readers will be only too familiar with the critic who writes of "cardboard characters", and with the cry of exultation when, in one book, the critic finds some character who is moulded a little. The characters in BABEL 17 have just this fault - pulpishness. None of the characters emerges as "real" in any remotely acceptable meaning of the word. There is a half-hearted attempt to give verisimilitude to the character "Brass", but this only gives an annoying hesitation to Brass's speech. "Mocky" is only there to enable Rydra Wong (right or wrong!) to reveal her feelings. And so on.

Much is made of Wong's knowledge of languages, and intellectual gibberish issues from the printed page on the general structure of languages. But while on page 14 Wong can lecture on the differences between allophones and phonemes, later, when she hears the phrase "Jebel Tarik", she instinctively knows that (a) Jebel is a possessive noun, and (b) that Tarik is the word meaning "mountain" in Old Moorish. I humbly submit that, although she turns out to be correct, there are no grounds for this "guess".

Much is made of the "marble trick" to determine the position of the spaceship. Wow! If it works, then the difference in height between highest and lowest marbles is very much less than 10^{-3} inches. And I mean a lot less. That assumes that the spaceship is above the earth's surface. Log tables just don't go that far, and, as I have remarked, critics have limited time.

And spaceships fan out "horizontally".

I say the whole thing is fake.

Structure: Ptoole. The tale just rambles on until the novel simply has to end.

Verbal Texture: "Rather than head toward the commons, she turned down an unfamiliar sloping tunnel." No comment.

Technical Development: Zero. Unless Delany's last novel was even worse.

Themic Development: Theme?

But as science fiction, of course, it is very good reading.

THEODORE STURGEON: STARSHINE (Pyramid: \$0.70)

ROGER ZELAZNY: FOUR FOR TOMORROW (Ace: \$0.50)

- LEE HARDING

Whatever happened to Theodore Sturgeon? There was a time when he was the pacesetter for the field. But I haven't seen any new stories from him in four years. Perhaps I mourn prematurely: he might still have something left to dazzle us with whenever he gets around to it. For the moment we have at least three remarkable novels to remember and so many individually

brilliant short stories that it would be pointless to list them. This rich lode has been so thoroughly worked over by paperback publishers that new collections tend to offer the less than adequate productions of this first-rate writer. A couple of years ago, Pyramid gave us STURGEON IN ORBIT, a collection of interesting also-rans enlivened here and there by an occasional whimsy and heavily underscored with vintage Sturgeon craftsmanship. Nothing so condescending can be said about STARSHINE. These are, for the most part, poor stories. There are no copyright dates given, but at least one of the stories comes from a 1942 issue of ASTOUNDING. The remainder run the gamut of early period to late, with widely different degrees of success.

A decade ago a collection like this would have attracted much attention and, though it would have been recognized as second-rate Sturgeon, would have been lauded just the same, since in those days this writer had few peers. Today the situation is different, and with radical young men like Zelazny and Disch writing for the market these resurrected stories no longer dazzle.

DERM FOOL is a poor pun and a disappointing story. It opens brilliantly and it seems a pity that such a wildly crazy idea (one of Sturgeon's best) should deteriorate into such clumsy farce. This reads like a very early effort. So does THE HAUNT, a routine "ghost" story that telegraphs its gimmick on page 3. The characters in this and DERM FOOL seem to be prototype Sturgeon-people, but nowhere near as well developed as in his later works. The people in ARTNAN PROCESS are rather comic-bookish in an effort to make an impression on the reader. This is a very dated Campbell-piece.

With THE WORLD WELL LOST we are back on more familiar ground. This is a very good "middle period" story, very well written. Sturgeon has written some hauntingly beautiful short stories and this one comes very close to joining that select company. THE POD IN THE BARRIER is unbelievably antediluvian in treatment. The first dozen pages read like something ripped from a 1932 Gernsback magazine and decked out with a few modernisms of language. The rest of the story is similarly uninspired, although some of the more familiar Sturgeon psychological gimmicks are utilized towards the end. On the whole this long novelette (originally written for the ill-fated VENTURE SF) reads like a very tired first draft, and provides ammunition for those critics who have tried to give Sturgeon a reputation for bad space opera.

HOW TO KILL AUNTY brings the collection to a close. It is good middle-brow Sturgeon, with a fascinating situation and two interesting characters, but it is not sf. More that sort of psychological-thriller-cum-character-study favoured by some sf writers when they want to get away from it all. Very nicely written, too.

I would be the last person in the world to begrudge Ted Sturgeon the income from this publication. The man has given more than enough to a thankless medium. I just wish he was still writing. Perhaps he is. I like to think it Significant that his last published story, the novelette WHEN YOU CARE WHEN YOU LOVE, has not since been reprinted. Published in the special issue of F&SF devoted to his work, it was mooted at the time as the first third of a projected novel. Perhaps he is saving it up for a tour de force. Or perhaps he has grown weary, and Sturgeon stories will be few and far between in future.

What he has been doing lately is writing an introduction to Roger

Zelazny's first collection of stories. He begins thus:

"There has been nothing like Zelazny in the science fiction field since -

Thus began the first draft of this introduction and there it stayed for about 48 hours while I maundered and chuntered on ways to finish that sentence with justice and precision. The only possible way to do it is to knock off the last word."

What he should have written (and may have wanted to write) was this:

"There has been nothing like Zelazny in the science fiction field since Theodore Sturgeon retired."

Or something like that. For in truth Zelazny is the most brilliant stylist to enter sf in many a day, and in Sturgeon's long and appreciative (but far from blinkered) introduction he tries to explain just why he considers Zelazny so important.

I suppose that in another five years we will be taking Roger Zelazny carefully apart and laying the bleeding chunks of his fiction on the dissecting table for study, but for the moment about the only thing we can do is stand and gawp at the gems he has been scattering around. Rough gems, as Sturgeon points out, since these stories fall somewhere short of perfection. But Zelazny is a young man, and his stories are bursting at the seams with the passions of youth.

"He gives no evidence to date that he has stopped growing or that he ever will. Do you know how rare this is?"

We do indeed.

The four stories in the collection are: THE FURIES (1965), THE GRAVEYARD HEART (1964), THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH (1965), and A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES (1963).

Comment on these stories would be superfluous at this stage. I can't remember any first collection that matches this one in quality.

One last quote from Sturgeon's introduction. He refers to A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES:

"...this particular fable, with all its truly astonishing twists and turns, up to and most painfully including its wrenching denouement, is an agonizing analogy of my own experience..."

Perhaps here we have some sort of an answer, after all.

FREDERIK POHL & JACK WILLIAMSON: THE REEFS OF SPACE (Dobson: \$2.30)
FREDERIK POHL & JACK WILLIAMSON: STARCHILD (Dobson: \$2.30)
KENNETH F. GANTZ: NOT IN SOLITUDE (Dobson: \$2.65)

- DIANA MARTIN

Even novice sf readers will recognize THE REEFS OF SPACE as good, hard core, old time sf writing. Man has advanced sufficiently to get himself under the dictatorship of a master Machine, and space has become the

stomping-ground of the nonconformists. One such is the hero of this story, who flees from Earth to the "reefs of space", where others of his kind have formed a colony.

These "reefs" are growths of "fusorians" - creatures which behave like coral, forming themselves into variously-shaped tiny planetoids by utilizing the gases available in outer space; they emit oxygen for the benefit of the spacelings (sort of aerial seals) which live with them in symbiosis, and for the humans who chance to reach them. The reefs are also occupied by dragon-like creatures called "pyropods", which are enemies of all living matter they chance to meet. All these creatures are worth mentioning because they are so very credible in the book: I for one became quite fond of the spacelings.

The humans in the story are quite well delineated, though the authors could have been a little more thoughtful in their description of a nasty gent named General Flumen. "...like an important frog..." with "...big bulging eyes..." Then "...his deepset eyes..." Finally: "...his cat's eyes slitted down..." He is a little hard to visualize.

Some features of the story annoyed me more than somewhat - particularly the punitive techniques adopted by the ruler of this highly advanced Earth. Rebels, known as "Risks", are still of use to the system, but they are forced to wear collars containing explosive charges; step out of line and - Blam! - their heads go flying, and anyone else in the immediate vicinity is likely to be mutilated or killed. Though highly dramatic to onlookers, this method of execution seems unnecessarily messy and wasteful.

Then there is a fascinating, gory description of a Body Bank - last stop for recalcitrants. Bit by gruesome bit the Risk is taken apart surgically as his organs and limbs are required for repair of more amenable citizens. Surely by this time medical science would have developed sufficiently to store required parts without resorting to vivisection, and, again, it seems an extraordinarily expensive and vicious kind of punishment.

STARCHILD is the sequel to THE REEFS OF SPACE, and I was naive enough to expect the same major characters to reappear in it. Earth remains in the grip of the Machine, but things are starting to go wrong with the system.

STARCHILD requires much more concentration than its predecessor. There is some very good stuff on the hero's education in "Mechanese" - he actually learns to gain rapport with the Machine and converse with it. But, two generations later, the same dreary iron necklaces and body banks are still in use. "Starchild" is an entity which really exists, though most of the book is spent in hunting down and then evading this issue. Finally he appears in a great burst of descriptive writing - but in the most confused manner.

THE REEFS OF SPACE is by far the more entertaining book, full of colour and way out ideas. STARCHILD seems to offer more than finally eventuates, and I feel that a more genuine sequel might have made a more interesting book. I now await the third volume in the series. I would like to know how Earth gets on now that Starchild has appeared. Then again, he may not even rate a mention in the next volume.

Both Pohl and Williamson are writers who know their craft and can present the most fantastic ideas in a way that makes them quite credible.

I fully expect to land on reefs of fusorians when I make my first trip up there, and will be pretty disappointed if I don't come up against at least one spaceling!

NOT IN SOLITUDE is a work which I feel could become a minor classic of science fiction. The author, an Air Force officer, knows what he is writing about - from the men to the mathematics, and both so vital to the story. Except for the dramatic and violent activities of the humans aboard the "Far Venture", the book reads like a documentary account of the first visit to the planet Mars.

In a most easy-to-read style, the author gives little lectures, through his specialist characters, on the varied subjects involved in the interpretation of the life forms of Mars. He even makes the mathematical formulae interesting reading, which (if you knew my attitude to figures) is no mean achievement. Throughout the entire novel, the background information appears sound. No room for fantasy stuff here: one feels that surely the next visitors to Mars would find rapport with the alien intelligence and avoid the unfortunate expedients which the commander of this first expedition is forced to adopt. There is a degree of realism rarely found in such works: the author gives every situation its full play and leaves no doubt about why things happen.

It would be unfair to disclose any of the plot. If you like a story in which humans, aliens, and machines all play their roles in a convincing manner, then you will enjoy this one.

The one thing that troubled me was the obtuseness of the men when encountering Mars and its inhabitants. The trouble, of course, is not with the author but with the reader. One becomes blase from reading much sf, and things which in reality would be stunning discoveries or incomprehensible mysteries are just so much old hat.

I recommend the book, and look forward to more from Kenneth F. Gantz.

Brief Reviews, by the Editor:

Maybe a quick look at a number of books is better than no review at all, and maybe some books do not deserve more than a glance. But any book mentioned in this section should not be regarded as disposed of; indeed, my remarks may incite some reader to really do justice to some work which I have skimmed over.

URSULA K. LeGUIN: CITY OF ILLUSIONS (Ace: \$0.60)

A more than worthy successor to her two excellent previous books. Like ROCANNON'S WORLD, this novel concerns a quest (though in this case it is primarily a quest for identity), and one is delighted to discover that it shares the same universe with the other books. The first half of the story is set in a post-alien-invasion America, wild and overrun by nature. Beautiful, eerie, very convincing. The second half, in which the aliens (and the city of the title) are involved, is not nearly so convincing, and one regrets Mrs. LeGuin's less-than-consummate skill in plot handling. The aliens are not much more than nasty humans, even if they do have Reverence for Life. (In fact, they haven't: their reverence is for physical but not

mental life, and I find the idea of "living" with a destroyed mind as difficult to conceive as the idea of clapping with one hand.) An interesting comparison suggests itself with Phil Dick's *MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, and I would like someone rather more qualified than myself to investigate it: Dick's book was to some extent based on the ancient Chinese Book of Changes - the *I CHING*; *CITY OF ILLUSIONS* similarly is pretty involved with the *TAO TE CHING*. To my mind the *TAO* is a much more humane and civilized book than the *I CHING*, and this may just possibly account for my ranking Mrs. LeGuin's book, warts and all, ahead of Dick's quite outstanding novel. Make no mistake: this lady can write. On her own ground, writing about people and nature and their interrelation, she has few equals.

RUSSELL BRADDON: THE YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT (Pan: \$0.60)

We are rather suspicious of outsiders who dare to write sf, but let's face it: if this book had been written by a "genuine" Australian sf author, and had been legitimized by appearing in the magazines, that author would have been acclaimed by fandom everywhere and we Australian fans would be basking in his reflected glory. I don't know how interested Braddon is in sf, but it's fairly obvious that this book was written not from some deep yearning to break into the field but from a need to say something about Australia. And say it he does, in a most entertaining manner. Read it, be infuriated if you like, and discover (if you haven't already) what cynical happy bludging geniuses we Australians are.

KEITH SMITH: OGF (Humor Books: \$0.95)

With the brilliant wit of a Happy Hammond and the biting satire of an Art Linkletter, Smith emasculates sf once and for all, and provides a perfect introduction to the field for people who find *MY FAVOURITE MARTIAN* too daring. I hope Mr. Smith reads the preceding book and discovers just what can be done with the kind of humorous satire he seems to have had in mind.

GEORGE LANNING: THE PEDESTAL (Michael Joseph: \$3.15)

One of those quiet, competently-written books which starts off interestingly enough, becomes intriguing just when a lesser writer would let it sag, piles on tension in carefully-measured portions, then belts you over the head on the last couple of pages. The basic gimmick of the book is the narrator's being haunted by a huge wooden pedestal he has impulsively bought at an auction. Does the pedestal really do all the things ascribed to it, or is the narrator slowly going out of his mind? As with James's *TURN OF THE SCREW*, the final judgement must be the reader's. Fantasy, rather than sf, but highly recommended.

MICHAEL COONEY: DOOMSDAY ENGLAND (Cassell: \$2.85)

One of those (rare) brilliant, competently-written books which starts off belting you over the head, lays on tension until you are on your seat's edge with excitement, keeps on delivering karate chops to the imagination with almost unbearable regularity, until, in the final crescendo, you think it's all over and - pow! - eight sentences from the end of the book you are sent sprawling by a devastating plot twist. When you've recovered, you

chuckle at the audacity of it all for a week. If Ian Fleming may be credited with discovering the exact formula, combining realism and fantasy, for establishing the spy story as the big-business In-fiction of the sixties - and if John Le Carre is regarded as the extender of the realistic element to its logical extreme - then Michael Cooney must be awarded the palm for taking the fantastic element to its extreme. There is no characterization in DOOMSDAY ENGLAND: no one lives long enough to develop a character. If 007 was licensed to kill, Keys - the Queen's Investigator - is licensed to massacre. Responsible only to the reigning monarch of England, Keys holds no life sacred or indispensable. At one point, one fears even for the safety of Her Majesty... When it comes to plotting, Cooney out-Vogts the most brilliant sf writer. I swear he introduces some new twist in the plot after every two hundred words! The incredible thing is that it comes off. The publishers (by whom, irrelevantly, I am employed) assure us that there are more where this one came from. I rather hope that Michael Cooney finds the spy story too limiting a form for his immense talent and turns to the unlimited resources of time and space for his future fictions. If ever there was one, here's a writer to juggle aeons and galaxies.

JOHN D. MACDONALD: THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH & EVERYTHING (Gold Medal: ?)

"One day with Bonny Lee was like a three-year lease on a harem." That's what it says on the cover, folks, so you know the publisher didn't regard it as sf. In fact it is a beautifully-contrived mystery story, with only one - peaceful - death, loads of sex, a laugh a minute, and the whole thing based on an indisputably sf idea. Call it fantasy, if you like, but I would say it qualifies as sf under the Sturgeon Definition. A master of both sf and the tough American mystery, MacDonald combines both in GOLD WATCH, and the result is memorable.

ROBERT BLOCH: THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM (Advent: \$1.95 U.S.)

Published in 1962, the first and only edition of this absorbing book is still available. My advice - grab it while you can. Subtitled "Selections from 25 years of fan writing", all the articles have appeared in amateur publications, and all deserve this far more durable presentation. A book crammed with humour, nostalgia, and penetrating observation of the fannish way of life. Nothing in it quite reaches the standard of the same author's A WAY OF LIFE (currently available in the FANTASTIC UNIVERSE OMNIBUS - along with a wickedly funny Chandler story) - but would you send a masterpiece like that to a fanzine? The only sad note in the book is Bob Bloch's comments on writers who are lured from the field to the more lucrative stables of Hollywood and the telly networks.

A note on Advent publications: A Chicago firm specializing in sf, Advent have a number of most important books on their list, which may be relatively unknown in Australia. Some of their current titles (obtainable through McGill's, incidentally) are: Damon Knight: IN SEARCH OF WONDER (2nd edn. \$6.00) Wm. Atheling, Jr. (James Blish): THE ISSUE AT HAND (cloth \$5.00, paper \$1.95) Heinlein/Kornbluth/Bester/Bloch: THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL - Imagination and Social Criticism (cloth \$3.50, paper \$1.95) Alva Rogers: A REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING (cloth \$6.00, paper \$2.45) Ellik & Evans: THE UNIVERSES OF E.E. SMITH (\$6.00) KELLY FREAS PORTFOLIO (\$1.95)

PERTH NOTICES

SF ON PERTH TV

John Brosnan

TIME TUNNEL has recently begun over here. Apparently the TV price war is relaxing between the U.S. and Australia: either that or Perth is considered a country town. But why couldn't it have been STAR TREK to make the break-through instead of another of Irwin Allen's dreary messes? That man is poisoning the TV viewing audience against sf. Come to think of it, there are quite a few so-called "sf" and "fantasy" programs on Perth TV at the moment. There's VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA (last week's episode dealt with a mildly ingenious whale's stomach), LOST IN SPACE (yeck), DOCTOR WHO, TIME TUNNEL (described by the channel as an adult version of DOCTOR WHO), OUTER LIMITS (which is being replayed at about 3am), I DREAM OF JEANNIE, BEWITCHED, and, finally, the only real sf program - OUT OF THE UNKNOWN. Last week's episode was Frederik Pohl's MIDAS PLAGUE, and tomorrow night there will be an adaptation of the Ray Bradbury story, THE FOX AND THE FOREST.

DUNE, CHARBONNEAU, AND E.R.B.

Brian Richards

When Frank Herbert's DUNE was reviewed by John Foyster in ASFR 3, one had only read the serial in ANALOG, but had the overpowering feeling that J.F. was being unjust to the book. Having now at this late date conned the Editor out of his personal copy of the book and read it diligently with the aforementioned review in mind, it now becomes most evident that injustice has been perpetrated in a dastardly fashion.

Whilst admiring Mr. Foyster's lucid incisive prose style, and conceding his privilege to prefer this style of writing in his favoured authors, does he by this personal preference gain the right to say that Mr. Herbert's more digressive approach is mere padding? If so, one fears that he would be obliged to dismiss every major English novel written before 1930, and a good many written subsequently, as being mere upholstery, too. Mr. Herbert would seem to be in good company.

When reviewing this book, one must keep in mind that it represents a major landmark in the history of sf, in that for the first time a contemporary sf writer has been allocated a completely free hand to spread his work over such a broad spectrum as he deems fit to use. (Perhaps even the old villain Campbell deserves a pat on the back.) By the general standards applied to the novel as an art form, DUNE is written with more than average competence. Five different story lines are concurrently developed and interwoven with considerable skill, whilst the general theme of the book rises through a series of climaxes to a satisfactory conclusion, leaving a minimum of loose ends to tie into a sequel, if ever needed.

If one accepts the definition of sf, "that it should be composed of equal parts science and fiction", then one should not complain about the scientific content. Certain it is that application of Mr. Foyster's description, "unmercifully lectured", to a few paragraphs in a book of this length is, to say the least, gross exaggeration on his part. However, one feels that the pertinent comment made by Sten Dahlskog, i.e. "the science impedes the development of the fiction", is to a certain extent justified.

The appendices are a minor flaw, but they are not compulsory reading and may well be omitted, although one fails completely to grasp the validity of Mr. Foyster's proposal that "if they were omitted then the book might have been brought to life." Surely a book as bad as he claims this one to be would remain so whether an appendectomy were performed or not?

As for the chapter headings, the exquisite irony of the content of these when linked to the destiny of the character to whom they were attributed seems to have been overlooked entirely.

To the reader, one offers the advice - beg it, buy it, borrow it or steal it, but whatever you do, read it: it is a very important book.

The firm of Herbert Jenkins is not noted for having a stable of top class sf writers, nor indeed for issuing top class material, but THE SPECIALS by Louis Charbonneau is of good second class standard. It is the type of book you could pass on to a thriller-loving friend in hopes of making a convert to a little sf reading.

It is a tight taut thriller set in 1985, where we find God's own US&A in the grip of widespread legal psychedelic drug addiction. A wicked drug syndicate controlling supplies is taken on by a couple of reformed thugs (tough male and beautiful female) in collaboration with a bluenose prohibitionist league of telepaths. Sin, sun, sex and sci-fi, all set in beautiful Mexico. Thoroughly recommended for the idle hour between close of TV and bedtime.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, poor old Erb, comes in for an inordinate amount of abuse these days: stories full of outrageous coincidences, noble, righteous, mighty-thewed heroes - absolutely black double-dyed villains, purest of persil-white heroines - simple plots, sagas of upright fellows conquering the dastardly. All very childish, isn't it, chaps?

Now let us consider the facts of the matter. ERB was a man like so many others who tried reading the works of Verne, Wells and Kipling to his children, and found like a good many of us that kids make pretty tough going of it. This man, unlike most, did something about it: he developed these ideas for children, and literally tens of millions of people had a first introduction to sf via his work.

The characterizations and plots are quite deliberately childish - they should be: they are designed for children. And very well designed, too - rattling good adventure stories taken at a cracking pace - the good rewarded and the evil punished. As for the coincidences: any $\frac{1}{2}$ baked story of the wrecked spaceship arriving on an inhabited planet strains credulity far more than the worst of ERB. In terms of the scientific content, the ecology and sociology of Barsoom, together with its technology, are quite well developed in simple terms. And for sheer imagination, the conception and description of Pellucidar are almost unequalled in the entire field of imaginative fiction - whether it be sf or otherwise.

From a personal viewpoint, one has no wish to re-read Erb or Noddy or Biggles, or even Verne for that matter (although one must confess to a little bootleg Winnie the Pooh), but - and one feels that it might well be written BUT - why oh why waste time and effort in criticizing children's books in an adult magazine?

A M E R I C A N S C I E N C E F I C T I O N M A R K E T S

- reprinted from SF WEEKLY 183, by courtesy
of the publisher & editor, ANDREW PORTER.

ACE BOOKS, 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York 10036: Donald A. Wollheim, Editor. ACE needs novels for its new quality paperback series, stressing imaginative works of high quality. The editor stresses the "sense of wonder." Pays advance of \$2000 up. Queries and submissions for these should go to Terry Carr, editor. ACE is also continually in the market for novels for its regular series: doubles, about 55,000 words, and singles up to 70,000. Pays \$1250 for each half of a double volume, \$1500 and up for full-length novels. Reporting time: 1 week - 2 months.

AVON BOOKS, 959 8th Avenue, New York 10017: Peter Mayer, Editor-in-Chief. Avon is actively seeking sf novels, and is now publishing two a month. It is interested in series novels. Pays advance of \$1000-\$2500. 3 - 5 weeks.

BALLANTINE BOOKS, 101 5th Avenue, New York 10003: Betty Ballantine, Editor. BALLANTINE needs full-length novels only, to about 120,000 words. Pays advance \$1500-\$2000. 6 - 8 weeks.

BANNER BOOKS, 959 8th Avenue, New York 10017: Evan Lee Hayman, Editor. BANNER, a new line owned by Hearst, is actively seeking sf novels, both adventure and intellectual. BANNER pays an advance of \$1500 against 4% royalty on the first 150,000 copies sold. 3 weeks.

BANTAM BOOKS, 271 Madison Avenue, New York 10016: Allan Bernard, Editor. BANTAM is broadening its sf line, and is more actively seeking sf. Query before submitting.

BELMONT BOOKS, 1116 1st Avenue, New York 10021: Gail Wendroff, Editor. BELMONT needs short novels of about 30,000 words, as well as full-length novels. Advance \$1000. 4 weeks.

BERKLEY BOOKS, 15 East 26th Street, New York 10010: Thomas Dardis, Editor. BERKLEY needs full-length novels between 50-70,000 words, but is overstocked on collections and anthologies. Advance \$1500 up. 4 weeks.

CHILTON, 100 East 42nd Street, New York 10017: John Marion, Editor. CHILTON, under its new editor, has shown little interest in sf. Not a current market.

DOUBLEDAY & CO., 277 Park Avenue, New York 10017: Lawrence Ashmead, Editor. DOUBLEDAY needs novels, but is overstocked on anthologies. The editor has a preference for present-day settings, more concerned with social problems than heavy science. This is reflected in what he buys, but he buys all types. Advance \$1000-\$1500. 3 weeks.

FAWCETT (GOLD MEDAL), 67 West 44th Street, New York 10036: Knox Burger, Editor. FAWCETT buys sf novels and collections occasionally. Advance \$2500.

HARCOURT, BRACE & WORLD, 757 3rd Avenue, New York 10022: Dan Wickenden, Editor. HB&W publishes sf infrequently.

HARPER & ROW, 49 East 33rd Street, New York 10016: Alma Gennis, Editor. Harper & Row is actively interested in young readers' sf. 2 weeks.

LANCER BOOKS, 185 Madison Avenue, New York 10016: Larry Shaw, Editor. LANCER publishes novels of any length. Advance \$1500. 4 - 8 weeks.

NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY (SIGNET), 1301 Avenue of the Americas, New York 10019: NAL has shown little interest in sf lately, but would be interested in well-written sf. Query before submitting.

ORBIT (hardcover: Putnam - paperback: Berkley), Box 338, Milford, Pennsylvania, 18337: Damon Knight, Editor. ORBIT is seeking unpublished stories to 30,000 words. Payment of 3-5¢ per word, as advance against a share of the royalties from both editions. Reporting time: usually 1 week.

PAPERBACK LIBRARY, 260 Park Avenue South, New York 10010: Jerry Gross, Editor. PBL is in the market for longer sf, novels of 85-90,000 words. Still overstocked on anthologies. Advance \$1000-\$2000. 3 - 4 weeks.

PYRAMID BOOKS, 444 Madison Avenue, New York 10017: Donald R. Benson, Editor. PYRAMID is still drawing from its backlog of reprint and reissue material, and will not be active until later this year.

SIMON & SCHUSTER, 630 5th Avenue, New York 10017: Barbara Norville, Editor. S&S publishes 2 or 3 novels per year. Advance \$1-1500. 2 - 3 weeks.

Magazines:

ANALOG, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York 10017: John Campbell, Editor. ANALOG chronically needs short stories, but is overstocked on novels. Pays 5¢ per word for stories to 7500 words, 3¢ for longer ones, plus a bonus if the story places 1st or 2nd in the readers' poll. Reporting time: professional - 1 week; unpublished writers - 3 - 6 weeks.

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, 347 East 53rd Street, New York 10022: Edward Ferman, Editor. F&SF needs all lengths of stories, can use all types, but those which combine action with a literary atmosphere work best. 2-3¢ word.

GALAXY, 421 Hudson Street, New York 10014: Frederik Pohl, Editor. GALAXY needs stories of all lengths, stressing quality over quantity. 3¢ per word.

WORLDS OF IF, 421 Hudson Street, New York 10014: Frederik Pohl, Editor. Effective with August issue, IF incorporates WORLDS OF TOMORROW. Primarily interested in short pieces. Pays 1¢ per word.

WORLDS OF TOMORROW: ceasing publication in August.

KNIGHT and THE ADAM BEDSIDE READER: Jared Rutter, Editor.

CAD and ADAM: R.F. Locke, Editor. All 8060 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, California. All interested in sf to 5000 words. Pay \$125-\$200. Previous publication no bar.

PLAYBOY, 919 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611: Fiction Editor - Robie McCauley. PLAYBOY is actively seeking sf, of any type as long as it is well written. Minimum payment: \$2000. Lead stories \$3000. 4 weeks.

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AAP Report: London tax authorities have sent a questionnaire to a British writer's publishers, asking where he made a return of his income and, among other things, if he was receiving a pension - this investigation prompted by the publishers' listing of a reprint of his book. To date there has been no reply from the writer, a gentleman named Samuel Pepys, who died only 264 years ago.

are so short that there's scarcely time to make any correction. Happily, over here we've just had a series of three pieces called THE NEW SCIENCE FICTION on the BBC Third Programme, which is probably the first time a producer has actually encouraged speakers to correct popular misconceptions of sf. The programmes consisted of a reading of Ballard's YOU AND ME AND THE CONTINUUM, an interview with Ballard, an interview with myself and Judy Merrill. They could have been better - but compared with what one used to get they were excellent.

James Blish's remarks on DOCTOR MIRABILIS aroused my sympathy. It seems a great pity that such a good book should go unhonoured in its own land. But things are changing, I think, and I'm sure Blish will get the book published soon - maybe on the strength of selling FAUST ALEPH-NULL.

Ted White's letter seemed singularly uninformed, with apparently little understanding of professional etiquette.

Your Stapledon piece is extremely interesting and a valuable piece of information for anyone wishing to do a critical piece on Stapledon (why not you?).

The reviews are, as always, patchy. Some are well done and others are badly done. The range is quite remarkable! I wonder why Mr. Widdershins is allowed to review for you. I think it's fair to say he lets the tone down and spoils the general image of the magazine. He's pretty young, I assume, but one would think he would make some effort to explain why he is unhappy about a book, particularly in the case of THE ROSE where there are at least two evaluations he could take issue with and say why he disagrees with them. A more conscientious approach, I'd say, was in order.

STEPHEN MORTON I must admit that my interest in sf was fading fast when I
via RMS 452 happened to receive a copy of ASFR in the mail. I read it
Kerang through and, having a couple of dollars floating around at
Victoria the time, I sent in a subscription. From that time on my
interest hasn't waned. Could you possibly do something
about more reviews in each issue? My supply of sf books is in a newsagency
25 miles away, and its stock is never very large, so I am liable to snap up
any old junk that comes along. Your reviews, I presume, are written by
people of experience who know good sf from bad. Thus my buying is greatly
influenced by your reviews, and the more you put in the better, from my
point of view.

LIN CARTER Lin Carter here, a trifle bruised about the upper thorax,
100-15 195th St. having been bombarded with copies of ASFR from sundry
Hollis, Queens. directions, casting a wary eye towards Melbourne and won-
New York 11423 dering what the hell is going on down there in the Antip-
odes? P. Terry, J. Blish, and J. Bangsund himself, have
succeeded in thrusting ASFR upon me, and I have scrutinized same, and find
it a jolly journal. I am heartily in favour of the fan press devoting major
attention & space to sf reviews and critica - would in point of fact be
happy to see MORE criticism and LESS fan fiction, verse, art, cartoons &
stuff. Fans are amateur writers, versifiers, artists & etc. but they are
(or can be) PROFESSIONAL readers. And your professional reader is the best
critic.

ASFR 8: I, too, get annoyed with Tom Disch's dismal outlook as expressed in his fiction, which I have not yet ever enjoyed. Poo on Jim Blish for the nonsensical view that you can't judge a man's writing by his philosophy.

You sure can, if his writing reflects this philosophy, and if you don't like the writing what you may really find objectionable is the philosophy. This seems to be the case with Dismal Disch. : : : Hooray for Sten Dahlskog (I love his name, too: pure Andre Norton!) for his glowing piece on Ursula LeGuin. Bless her, she's a marvel, and I'd trade a dozen Ballards, Delanys & Dischs for a few more writers who can put words together as richly as she. : : : Poo on Ted White and Bill Temple for un wisely griping about adverse reviews of their books. I've had my share of punk reviews in fan-zines, too, and the best reaction is: read 'em close and careful, think 'em over, then disagree with them all you like, but in private. Never, no, NEVER, write disgruntled letters complaining about them, even when the meathead reviewer gets his facts, quotes, or even titles wrong. Makes you look like a Sorehead; silence creates a neutral impression; perhaps best thing is to write a nice note to the editor, thanking him for giving so much attention to your efforts. Who can hate a writer who's such a Nice Guy that he thanks you for a lousy review??

In general, I find myself agreeing with Lee Harding's outlook on criticism & critics, and add a hearty second to his dictum that critics have as much right to their irrational prejudices, hang-ups & kookies as do the Writers. I've a few such myself: I find I loathe Bradbury, Sturgeon infuriates me, Leinster bores me, can't even read Fredric Brown or Bob Silverberg, and, as for Harlan Ellison (the Till Eulenspiegel of modern sf), find myself liking, enjoying, even admiring the stories, while Ellison himself, in those pushy blurbs & braggy intros, leaves me cold as Ice IV. : : : Steve Cook's review of MESSIAH, a grand book, is exactly the sort of review you people would be wise to avoid as 'twere a rabid tse-tse fly. He does NOT review the book: he just describes what happens in the plot. Any idiot could be a critic, if this was the way it's done - but it's not. Mainstream lit'ry critics get away with this kind of moosh all the time, but one hopes for more from real sf fans: how did he LIKE the book? What was WRONG with it? Where did it FLOP? : : : Jim Blish's letter a joy as most of his are: he is correct in that I am going to resuscitate the cadaver of SPECTRUM, the all-review mag I ran from '62-'64, but he neglects to add the exciting news that he has been persuaded to drag Wm. Atheling, Jr. out of retirement to fill up SPECTRUM's midsection with big fat hunks of the sort of merciless, ruthless, candid critica you will remember having enjoyed of yore under the renowned Atheling byline. SPECTRUM never died, it fell victim to the surge of pro sales that came my way three years back: since then it has languished in Limbo; now a special team of Chaldean wizards are attempting to breathe life back into the slumbering corpus. I am still selling heavily (well, I'm signed to do NINE books thus far into '67; now I've got to sit down and write the muthas - but I'm not complaining, mind, not complaining), which means sticking to any kind of a schedule will be rather difficult. To side-step this pothole, I plan the new SPECTRUM as a once-yearly thing, scrutinizing the last year's output of books. Currently in the works is the issue on 1966, and amongst other goodies there will be a COMPLETE, month-by-month list of ALL sf, fantasy & weird books, in hard cover or paperback, published in the U.S. during that year. This has been a chore compiling, and my bill for postage is enormous (you can imagine the letters to publisher X, asking if BRAIN-EATERS OF ZHARX came out in April or in May, &c), but it's about done.

Keep up the good work on ASFR. By the way, I hope to devote one of my IF columns to Australian fandom, so be on your toes!

MERVYN BARRETT I can't help noticing that my name has been rather absent
179 Walm Lane from recent issues and although this could have something
London NW2 to do with me not having written anything for it (as I
think I mentioned, I'm no good at all this intellectual
stuff) or even sent a letter of comment I can't help feeling that I should
be mentioned in every issue as a matter of courtesy. I don't have the
latest issue here to comment on as I have loaned it to a friend who thinks
it is a very good magazine. Everybody thinks it is a very good magazine.
Rumour of the month: "John Bangsund" is a hoax created by John Foyster and
Lee Harding.

JB: To make sure you are mentioned in every issue, Mervyn, I hereby appoint
you Agent-at-Large. If I were a hoax I would probably be named Lepidus
Quartch or R.X. Farmer-Cuticle. Your loaned copy produced the following:

JUDITH MERRIL Looking through a borrowed copy of ASFR, I was impressed,
159 Portland Rd as I have been before, with the seriousness and professi-
London W11 onalism of much of the contents. It is unfair, consider-
ing how much of the magazine is praiseworthy, to write to
you only in irritation - but I am a notorious non-letter-writer, and under
ordinary circumstances would probably have forgotten to be irritated before
I got round to writing this.

I feel I must take issue with certain remarks in Ted White's long letter,
however, because he has taken what seems to me considerable liberty in
discussing several authors about whose work he seems very little informed,
and has elected to deliver his personal opinions and misinformation from
the platform of his position as assistant editor of a magazine with which I
too am associated; and has, in addition, given the appearance at least of
attacking the editor of another magazine from the editorial chair of the
first one. Having myself a high regard for both publications, and being
rather more familiar with NEW WORLDS than Ted seems to be, I'd like to try
to set the record straight a bit.

(It is tempting, of course, to begin with a discussion of Ted's own book,
since he has invited further criticism of it with his own spirited defense;
but aside from the fact that the book does not seem to me to merit the
space it has already had, I cannot imagine how to argue with a man who
feels that his own assessment of his own work is more reliable than the
"value judgements" of a serious and attentive reviewer - or who fails to
understand that criticism is specifically and intentionally an exercise of
value judgements.)

As briefly as possible, then:

Referring to Mike Moorcock's earlier letter, TW says: "Every name he gives
appeared first in F&SF, and still appears there often." He then mentions,
apparently as fitting this category, Aldiss, Brunner, Bulmer, White, and
Zelazny. The names Moorcock mentioned were Aldiss, Ballard, George Collin,
Langdon Jones, Charles Platt, David Redd, and Keith Roberts, every single
one of whom (except Brian Aldiss) was first published in NEW WORLDS or
SCIENCE FANTASY/IMPULSE... as was James White.

Aldiss's first story actually appeared in THE BOOKSELLER in 1954. His
first publication in the U.S. was indeed in F&SF (THE NEW FATHER CHRISTMAS,
January 1958), some time after he was well established as a leading British
author and a regular contributor to NEBULA, NEW WORLDS, and SCIENCE FANTASY.

Kenneth Bulmer's first story was, I believe, in AUTHENTIC, in 1954. His first American publication was in February 1956 in INFINITY. His first appearance in F&SF was in August 1957, and of all the magazines in which his work has appeared, I think the least has been published there.

John Brunner sold his first story to ASTOUNDING, under a pen-name, I believe, in 1953; he then began selling regularly to the British magazines, and his next American appearance was with a reprint of a 1955 NEW WORLDS story in SATURN in 1957. In 1958, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE began publishing him in the U.S., and although he was widely published in American magazines after that, I believe his first appearance in F&SF, and his only one until recently, was in 1962.

Roger Zelazny began publishing in FANTASTIC and AMAZING in 1962, and had half a dozen or more stories in print before A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES appeared in F&SF in November 1963.

As for the situation at the present time, Ted White seems to be refuting vaguely Moorcock's claim that both Zelazny and Aldiss write "specifically for" NEW WORLDS, "as do a number of good writers who can command far higher rates than we pay." This is, to my knowledge, absolutely accurate: these same writers are also published in F&SF and elsewhere - but there are certain areas in which NEW WORLDS offers a kind of creative freedom to writers that simply has not been available elsewhere - and Ballard, Disch, and others, besides Aldiss and Zelazny, have made full use of this opportunity. The extent to which they and many other writers value the specialized and unique outlet provided by NEW WORLDS has been demonstrated beyond any possible argument, I think, by the extraordinary efforts made to insure the continuance of the magazine, and the contributions volunteered by a number of these authors during the period of financial difficulty.

As for Ted White's opinions of Moorcock's work as a writer, I do not intend to engage in an exchange of opinions. Certainly, a great deal of Moorcock's work has been pure "pulp hack" and Moorcock would be the first to agree - but it is equally true that everything he has done as hack work was published under one of the pen-names whose existence Ted White condemns. (I wonder if TW has read any of the actual Moorcock-byline work of the last few years? His remarks would indicate that he has not.)

Authors have many reasons for using pen-names. Among them is the common one of keeping separate the work-done-to-support-the-family and the more serious work with which very few writers can, at first, earn a living. Moorcock is not the only writer who has used this device; nor is he alone in having had its purpose betrayed thoughtlessly - but I do believe that Ted White has established a new departure in unprofessional behaviour by publicly announcing in a journal of criticism the identity of a protected pen-name known to him only by virtue of his readership with the author's publishers.

CHARLES PLATT I was interested - and dismayed - to read Ted White's
70 Ledbury Rd letter in ASFR 6. I am a relative newcomer to the profess-
London W11 ional sf field and no doubt am still ignorant of many of
the conventions and traditions involved. However, I cannot
help feeling distressed at Ted White's rather unprofessional carping atti-
tude, and his dogmatic condemnation of all that NEW WORLDS stands for.

More unpleasant still is his personal attack on Michael Moorcock. Even if

Mr. White were correct in all his facts, and fully informed about the man he was writing about, I would still feel it wrong for a professional to write such innuendo with the aim of having it published in a magazine. It is one thing for lay sf fans ignorantly to voice their doubts about a magazine's policy, and even about its editor's competence. But to me, it is quite another thing for Mr. White deliberately to use personal knowledge of a fellow-professional's "trade secrets" (I am referring in part to Michael Moorcock's pseudonyms) with the sole aim of blackening his reputation and reducing his public stature. Often such a personal attack is made when one person feels another's success is undeserved; or when the attacker feels he deserves this success more. I wonder if this is the case in this instance.

As I have said, I am a relative newcomer, and perhaps it is not for me to voice this kind of protest. However, I feel something of an obligation to express, as a relatively disinterested party, my general distaste for this kind of unprofessional backbiting.

P. COLLAS
Flat 4
24 Parnell St.
Elsternwick S.4
Victoria

It would seem from occasional articles in ASFR that deriving from the relevant biographical notes you have made some advance towards a de facto bibliography of sf writings by Australians. Eventually it should be practicable to demonstrate that Australians have contributed far more to the sf field than is usually supposed.

In that area possibly little or nothing has been done to place on record vintage stories of sf flavour. I can remember one such which appeared in the old LONE HAND magazine, possibly circa 1908-13. The much later OUT OF THE SILENCE and FOOL'S HARVEST, both by Erle Cox, should be better known, although perhaps not by the newer aficionados. There would be other stories, with some sf content, by Australian authors hidden in the files of defunct magazines. But who is to search for them?

My initial venture as an sf writer appeared a long time ago - a novelette with an Australian background called THE INNER DOMAIN, in AMAZING STORIES, October 1935. I do not think it was ever resurrected, as were so many others of the period, to reanimate AMAZING STORIES of 1963-67, nor to assist some anthologist to complete his quota.

While over the years I have had very diverse literary leanings, including editorship of various magazines - some best forgotten - I am not by any means a professional writer. For good reasons my interest in sf has waxed and waned since 1928. In 1946, when such interest was at a low ebb, I sold a very large collection of the sf literature to that time. Subsequently, I have continued to read sf as time has permitted, probably spending hundreds of shillings, pounds and dollars on the stuff.

I do think that ASFR is attaining specific objectives, as would be your aim. Particularly, it has given me a new window on sf en masse. An aspect which interests me is the published criticism. I sometimes think (although do not take the following as applying generally) that certain critics do not see the wood for the trees. The detailed analytical probing is disturbing at times, particularly as it reflects critics' personal opinions. Any story, anywhere, can be broken down and eroded by determined critics. As sf is read for enjoyment, mostly, I think that the main stream of criticism should be concerned with the simple factor of readability, rather than with apparent defects in secondary attributes or in an interpretation which presumes an author's real motives and beliefs. Why pursue lines of criticism

which in some instances must only serve to divert potential readers from stories which, all in all, are worth taking time to read? But I do not overlook the point that the purpose of ASFR is to review.

JB: If ASFR has done anything at all towards providing a bibliography of Australian sf, then this is something purely accidental. Though I have the instincts of a bibliographer, I am trying to kick the habit; I would prefer to produce new material for the bibliographers, rather than join their number. This is a matter of temperament, of course. Certainly any talk about the relative usefulness to the reader (the only one who counts ultimately) of authors, critics, and bibliographers, is about as pointless as arguing the relative usefulness of the legs of a three-legged stool. Just thought I'd clarify my feelings about that... Meantime, work on an Australian sf bibliography is being done by Graham Stone and his organization, the Australian SF Association (PO Box 852, Canberra, A.C.T.). I am sure, Mr. Collas, that Graham would be pleased to hear from you.

BUCK COULSON Just got ASFR 9. Let me reassure Alan Reynard (whoever he
Route 3 is) that Gerald W. Page is really and truly a person.
Hartford City He's better known to US fandom as Jerry Page, editor of the
Indiana 47348 fanzine LORE, and he is just getting a good start on his
 professional career. I haven't read the story reviewed,
but I'm glad to see Jerry getting some praise.

Brunner's article is the best single item I have seen in a fanzine this year - from the standpoint of either entertainment or information.

JERRY PAGE Don Tuck was kind enough to send me several issues of
193 Battery Pl. NE your excellent fanzine, ASFR, which I have read with
Atlanta interest and enjoyment.
Georgia 30307 Jerry Burge and I publish a fanzine called LORE,
which is principally designed to serve as a method of digging up information and data in the sf and related fields. Among our advisory editors are Don Tuck, T.G.L. Cockroft, August Derleth, Darrel Richardson and others. It's an excellent fanzine for people who are in need of information about sf. We publish a wide variety of subjects and a goodly number of solid collector types have contributed to our pages.

I'm told by Buck Coulson that in a recent issue of ASFR one of my stories was given a flattering review but I was suspected by the reviewer of being someone's pseudonym. May I take this opportunity to say that Gerald W. Page is for real, or at least is no pen-name? And please pass on my thanks for the kind remarks of your reviewer.

JB: Confusion over pseudonyms seems to be playing a big part in this issue. You and me, Jerry, Mike Moorcock, and Alan Reynard - we're all in strife. Alan possesses, proudly, a copy of a recent F&SF autographed by Roger Zelazny, and if Roger believes in Alan Reynard then that's good enough for anyone. (And I have an autographed copy of FOUR FOR TOMORROW which could be produced as evidence that I am not a hoax, if necessary.)

RICK SNEARY Recieved ASFR 4 last week (December 19) and am much
2962 Santa Ana St. impressed by the appearance and what material I have
South Gate read. What with the Christmas Season - I keep telling
California 90280 I wish Christmas came in the warm season, the way you
 have it - and usual Winter colds I haven't gotten much

done. And if I put it off, I'll forget to write at all. I'm not very fan-
nishly active lately, and read little sf... but your zine is worth saving.

Comment is limited, as I've only read parts. First four-five pages of art-
icle on Campbell are good enough... hopefull it will end up with some con-
clusion from it all. I can not say must as I've only read six issues of
ASTOUNDING in the past four years, and have skipped Campbell editorials
half the time for most of the time I've read it. I never have like them
much. And since Dianetics and the douseing machines he got to fanatical
for me. Last one I read was over a year ago, and it was the same whinney
harang as ten years before.

Of the reviews I did read the one on THE ISSUE AT HAND. I had just been
indexing my AXE file, and rereading much of it... and thinking to myself
that this was really very good stuff, that should be reprinted. Being out
of touch with the current feild, your review was the first I'd heard of it.
I found no falt with Widdershins (?) remarks on the book, but did on his
views about reviews.

Never having read any other reviews by him I have no idea what kind of a
"evil" reviewer he might be, but I find it hard to believe any reader would
want a reviewer that liked everything he read. But like wise, a reviewer
that never likes anything is of little use to the reader. No one will ever
find a reviewer that likes and disslikes the same things he does, so the
only guide possible is to see were the likes are the same, and were you are
always in dissagreement. Ideally, it would seem to me, that a good reviewer
would be one who loved the feild, and showed impatients with anyone who did
less than his best - but when the best came along, shouted it out. A really
good reviewer is an interesting writer too - even if you haven't read the
book.

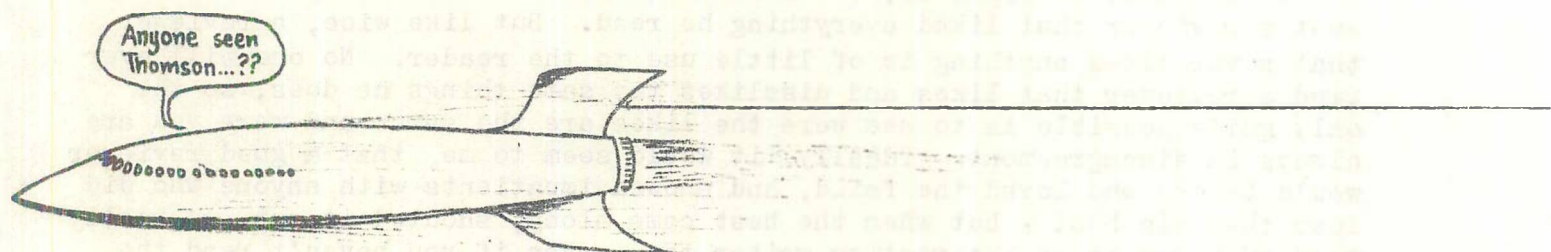
XXX
X
X DAVID C. PIPER You've been told before; you'll be told after; X
X 102 Abinger Road but I am going to spend this 9d to tell you as X
X Bedford Park well. It's bloody great. Marvellous. Best X
X Chiswick thing of its kind I've ever seen. Next year I'll X
X London W4 vote it for a Hugo... or Pong... or whatever X
X they're gonna call it. Just keep it up and I X
X reckon you'll be able to get a sub. from the CIA or sumink! My team X
X didn't win the Cup, so as a mark of respect I'd appreciate it if you X
X would put a black-edge border around no.10 or 11. X
X X
XXX

JB: Closest I can get to a black border, David. Don't know if your team is
Manchester United, but we held 'em to a one-all draw at Olympic Park last
Sunday. Didn't go to see the match, but I saw the highlights on telly.
Bobby Charlton is the second Cassell author I've seen on the boob-tube this
year, the other being ~~My~~ Sir Robert Menzies. I don't think we'll get a
sub. from the CIA, not while I subscribe to SPUTNIK and MONTHLY REVIEW,
but, come to think of it, there was a bloke called at the door a month ago
wanting to know if I needed an assistant editor - a feller in a raincoat
and dark glasses (it was night-time, which is why I remember him). Now I
wonder if...

AL ANDREWS

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Birmingham
Alabama 35216

To comment a bit on ASFR 4... The cover is quite good, but I found no art-credits given to the artist. The whole zine is very well done; an excellent job of photo-offset. John Foyster's article on the editorials of JWC was interesting. For all of Campbell's faults, there is no denying that he has succeeded in building a prozine that usually towers above its competitors. While neither a devotee nor student of his editorials, I have over the years gathered the impression, right or wrong, that Campbell has an unconscious desire to make a major breakthrough in the field of science. He is obviously a widely-read man with more than a layman's knowledge of many aspects of science, but not having the academic reputation among the scientific fraternity his longed-for path to glory in the world of science tends toward the out-of-left-field category of subjects. i.e. the hieronymus machine, the Dean-drive, dowsing, &c. Undeniably, down through history, on relatively rare occasions, there have been major discoveries, or scientific breakthroughs, made by persons outside the scientific fraternity. But, equally true, there have been thousands who have failed



in their search. In the process of their quests they have produced a vast body of writing, extending from the deeply interesting to twaddle. Whether Campbell will ever achieve his goal remains to be seen, but it is enough for me that his searching is interesting, whether I agree or disagree with the directions or the findings of his quest.

All 13 book reviews I found interesting and enlightening, and I do hope that you will continue to always give considerable space to the reviewing of books. And I enjoy a well-written review of an old book just as much as one of a new book. Anson McTaggart, in the letter column, is a wonder to behold. Not having had ASFR 3, which would have enabled me to see the true context of McTaggart's comments, I thought at first that he was in earnest. Gadzooks, can you imagine a mind with such thoughts and views in earnest?! He does have a barby pen, that chap.

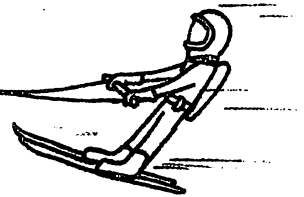
JB: The cover of no.4 was filched from an issue of NEW HUNGARIAN QUARTERLY; the illustration is called DON QUIXOTE LIBERATED, but I've forgotten the artist's name. (Must ask Foyster: it's his magazine.) The only photo-offset used on ASFR to date has been for the covers of nos.3 to 6, and an insert in no.3. (Probably also for the cover of this issue.) The contents of 3 and 4 (and part of 5) were typed on multilith masters. All the rest has been done on Roneo duplicators. ::: In a country which boasts (if that's the word I'm after) Arthur Rylah, Andrew Jones, and the Rev. McEwen, which bans THE SPY WHO LOVED ME and the film of DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, Mr. McTaggart is considered a moderate man.

310840
Sgt R.F. SMITH
Area Sgts' Mess
Puckapunyal
Victoria

After the gentle humour of previous ASFR covers, no.9 is somewhat like a vigorous knee in the groin, but I personally like it. No doubt it has brought forth cries from your more sober-sided serious followers that it is veering dangerously towards that lunatic world known as "fandom", that the cover is "too fannish", &c? What nonsense.

The terms "fandom", "fans", and "Australian fans" are being tossed around rather carelessly these days, I notice, and an illustration that gives a good belly-laugh must obviously come from some similar vulgar source, I can almost hear the keen, dedicated, sercon sf believers muttering. I trust you will make full use of Lindsay Cox?

However, we must also ask ourselves: is that illustration symbolic? Is it perhaps indicating the new direction dear old ASFR is taking? That ASFR is slowly becoming a vehicle where over-heated individuals can take a swipe at each other? No.9 contained a certain amount of petulant, vinegary material not in the true tradition of your worthy magazine, I feel. I even detected



a certain note of bitterness in portions of the contents page, quite unlike the gentle, mild-natured Editor I have known...

There seemed to me a lack of balance in no.9. Bloody long "notes" from Foyster which I couldn't get interested in; letter-column full of destructive criticism and wrangling; the Editor waxing somewhat "gosh-wowish" over Wodhams' writing; and the only "review" that didn't in some manner make me irritable was Paul Stevens'! (Harding appeared to be in a distinctly surly mood!) And as far as waiting to see "what the readers think" of that "debate" between Norma Williams and Mr. Escot... well, here's one ASFR reader who hasn't the faintest idea what they're yapping about, and couldn't care less, either! It's probably just a combination of all these relatively minor irritations in the one issue, and no doubt in many respects we, the readers of ASFR, have been spoilt by the thoroughly readable past issues of the magazine... Don't lose any sleep over it, John!

On the brighter side... I like your new title design for the cover and contents page, and the use of interior artwork.

JB: Aw, gee, Sarge! In HAVERINGS 26, Ethel Lindsay says: "In the first two issues (i.e. 5 & 6) there is a column by Bob Smith. I was just settling down to enjoy this in triplicate... but no column in the third issue. I like Bob's urbane style and quiet humour, and hope to see more of him." Me too. ::: The only complaints I've heard about the Cox cover have come from the ex-Associate Editor. Certainly, there'll be more from Lindsay.

GRAHAM M. HALL
57 Church St
Tewkesbury Glos.

Talking about getting drunk with sf writers, Tom Disch arrived here on March 1st. I'd written to him only a few days earlier, inviting him down, and he replied immediately, saying he had just finished a novel and would enjoy the break.

He got here while I was still at work, and pushed a note through the door saying he would be around - probably in the Abbey, which is just across the road. Eagerly, I went in search. Checked the visitors' book - sure enough - "Thomas Disch, New York City, New York, U.S.A." had signed in. But no other sign of him.

Out into the churchyard, and glanced up the 180-foot tower. A tall figure was walking around. I waved. He waved. I dashed back inside and was halfway up the 208 steps to the top when I met him coming down. "Hi," he said.

He was suitably amazed at the historic Hall dwelling, and insisted on taking me out to dinner. Which he did. In the historic Bell, next door but three. We talked. And talked. And talked. Visited three pubs. Argued about whether I should have my hair cut. Discussed the plans for our current novels and stories. Congratulated each other. Laughed. Witticized. Were sarcastic. Drank.

Then he read some of his poetry, and I retaliated with Rupert Brooke. He fell asleep.

Thursday went the same way, roughly, with a tour of the town thrown in for good measure. Down all the back alleys and streets, showing the true jumbly nature of incredible Tewkesbury town.

Then Friday morning he left, to go back to London, and then on to a poetry reading with Ted Hughes and Thom Gunn. (Who didn't show up.)

He's twenty-seven, hails from Minnesota. Went to New York at seventeen, after leaving high school. Got various jobs. Worked at evening college, winning a scholarship to day college. Chucked it in toward the end of his second year when he sold his first story - to Cele Goldsmith of FANTASTIC. Did a variety of jobs, and is now fully freelance. He has sold four novels, &c. Enthusiastic. Bound to be successful. Could even be great.

BRIAN ALDISS
Jasmine House
Holton
Wheatley
Oxford

My social life is more sociable than it should be. Since I last wrote, which was no doubt last year, we seem to have been besieged with visitors and various demands on my time. I've done several lectures. Also some strange thing has come over me - a personality shift, I suppose one could say: probably the result of marrying again and at last settling down happily, old wounds healing, and so on, but an immense surge of creativity is upwelling, and I feel in me the promise of much exciting material that I long to mine. Margaret and I are off to Switzerland next week, taking my children for a holiday; after that, I mean to repel all boarders and write write write through summer and autumn. I'm bombarded by images and just can't get them down, pinned, fast enough.

A very ego-centred way of beginning a letter. I must resolve to be more ego-centred from now on; otherwise I muck about doing tiny things. This year I'm forty-two or some damned age. Lo, the bird's already on the wing! Want to write a series of novels... five, say, all in one year, just

to clear my throat, then I might really see how to write a novel. I believe I have four novels - no, it's six books I see from a diagram hanging here, six books pretty well schemed; but instead I want to write the seventh. My despair over CRYPTOZOIC, about which you kindly published a short spiel in ASFR 3, has evaporated, mainly thanks to kindly encouragement from my publishers. The re-write went rather well, and the end result has something of the ambiguity, and something of the all-embracingness, that I hoped for. Whether people will like it is another matter, but that's not my damned concern any longer. The Faber version will be called AN AGE. Faber got hot in the combs about it and have already produced a splendid psychedelic jacket that has wowed me greatly. Gives me strength for the next. But with having to write intermittently as at present, I am best doing short stories.

Terrible thing. AN AGE a product of my 1966 thinking. People will be reading it late 1967 or 1968, when even the most perceptive readings will be too late for me. Envy painters; when they have finished a canvas, there it is, complete. The process of a writer's creation is not complete until publication.

I can't think of any appropriate message to send you for the Anniversary Issue, except to hope you will carry on the battle. I like ASFR a lot. Your readers will know by now that the Arts Council has voted a substantial amount of money to help NEW WORLDS continue for another year, after which no doubt other arrangements will be made. This is a most extraordinary milestone in the history of sf; a few years ago they would have paid to stamp it out! Although I was the one who wrote to the Council, it would never have worked had it not been that Mike Moorcock has worked such wonders with the magazine. And all the people you would expect, plus a few you wouldn't, have lent a shoulder. It all seems to me marvellous, I must confess, and a pretty solid endorsement of Mike's policies and of the direction in which sf seems to be turning.

On Friday, Margaret and I are off to the SF Convention at Bristol - with mixed feelings, as ever. There's some awful thing on on Friday evening called "The Brian Aldiss Show", which I suppose I'll have to attend. Without Harry Harrison to lark about with, the Con just won't be the same.

*

Curious coincidence - it took me so long to get round to writing to you; and when I came back from posting my letter, it was to find two issues of ASFR awaiting me.

They're pretty good issues. You may not realize it, but you have established ASFR already as the sort of magazine in which one likes to say something. Margaret and I have just returned from the Bristol SF Convention, and one or two people there were making just that point. Graham Hall was one, I seem to recall. Your man Mervyn was there, by the way; an extremely interesting chap who seemed to enjoy himself in a relaxed way throughout, and who gave us first hand news of all you people whom we hear about and don't meet.

Tomorrow, as I mentioned, Margaret and I are off on the continent; it's just snowing - promising sign! I'm knocking off some letters before I go, and determined that I owed it to myself to answer Walt Willis's letter in no.7. (Apologies for doing so, since my review of James White's WATCH BELOW, to

which Walt so strongly objects, appeared in SPECULATION, and should have been answered there; but no matter.)

Walt should have done what he threatened to do, and written "an impassioned rebuttal." Ad hominem arguments and sneers like "there are too many people writing like Brian Aldiss, including Brian Aldiss" are no substitutes for the real thing and, even from this distinguished trifler, whose bread I have eaten, I find them hard to take. Perhaps he will later reveal the names of these "too many people"?

Whatever shortcomings my review had, it was not written sneeringly, or without careful thought, or without an attempt at impartiality; particularly, I did not want to hurt White, whom I like - and I know how an adverse review does hurt. But James was at Bristol, and took a generous view of what I had said, even claiming - possibly to spare my feelings - that there was point to much I had written.

Be that as it may, one thing my review was not was an attempt to get James to write my way. Walt says, "On mature reflection, to which congenital laziness is a great aid, I realized that all Brian was doing was reproaching James, more in sorrow than in anger, for not writing more like himself." Not so; laziness, I suspect, is an impediment to reflection and maturity. I would never try to browbeat anyone into writing like myself; for one thing, it might eventually put me out of a job. The central point of my review was that James's attitude of mind, and the whole shape of his story, belonged to the forties. Give me a bit of credit, Walt; I understand you should stick up for a friend, but do knock me on permissible grounds! I have been a professional critic and literary editor, in the big rough world beyond fandom, for almost a decade. Every week, I review and enjoy books on a diversity of subjects and in a diversity of styles; I'm long past the stage of wanting imitators!

JB: It's getting to the stage where I can't even list everyone who writes to us. The advertisement in the NYCon Progress Report and ASFR's being nominated for the Pong Award have produced a flood of mail from the US&A. All letters are appreciated, but many many of them must go unanswered if ASFR is to appear at all. (One day I'll con some bright young fan into taking over the Review, and I'll sit down and write to every last one of you!) I appreciate, too, the fanzines which are being sent to me from all over the place; I have something called FANnyhill and something else called CUENTA ATRAS (Countdown), neither of which I can read, being in German and Spanish respectively, but no matter - they're good to open on my lap in the tram when I don't feel like reading but do feel like showing off... I have also received a copy of ASFR - the, er, Argentine SF Review. And many others. My favourites to date: Harry Warner's HORIZONS, George Charters's THE SCARR, and Arnie Katz's QUIP. But I love 'em all. If I may be forgiven for singling them out for mention, I have had letters from: Roger Zelazny, Harry Harrison, Edmond Hamilton, Linda Carpenter, Pat Terry, Norma Williams, Dick Witter, Sven Eklund, Sir Walter Murdoch, Hector Pessina, Mauricio Kitaigorodzki (who asks what the hell Walt Willis meant by GOD IS NOT DEAD - HE IS ALIVE AND WELL IN ARGENTINA: "I would think the Lord would be a little smarter than that... There are better places to go, including Hell..."), Norm Metcalfe, Andy Porter, Roger Dard, Alan France, William F. Temple, James Latimer, Ronald R. Eberle, Alex B. Eisenstein, and Leland Sapiro.

T H A N K Y O U . . .

MR. DONALD HORNE

Editor of THE BULLETIN, and author of THE LUCKY COUNTRY; for permission to reprint THE CHAMPION BULLOCK-DRIVER, and for starting the train of thought which, for better or worse, resulted in the editorial for this issue.

JIM ELLIS
LINDSAY COX
& various anon

For art-work in this and other issues.

LEE HARDING
& JOHN FOYSTER

For doing the lion's share of the work throughout the year, and for setting their well-nigh ignorant editor straight on countless occasions.

MERVYN BINNS
GRAHAM HALL
ANDY PORTER
RON GRAHAM
& PAT TERRY

For encouragement and support beyond the call of fannish duty.

ALAN KIRSTEN
BARRY TOMPKINS
ALLAN TOMPKINS
PETER INNOCENT
PAUL STEVENS
LEIGH EDMONDS
& TONY THOMAS

For valuable assistance in production.

OUR MANY
CONTRIBUTORS
CORRESPONDENTS
& SUBSCRIBERS

For paying for the paper, and giving me interesting things to put on it.

But, most of all...

DIANE

Without whose loving patience ASFR would have been impossible, and without whose cheerful sense of the ridiculous I would have been impossible.

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FOR SALE: Complete files of GALAXY and ASTOUNDING/ANALOG (all U.S. editions). Contact Roger Dard, GPO Box S 1387, Perth, Western Australia.

TRADE. ANYONE? There comes a time in every fan's life when he looks at his collection of sf and shudders. I just did that, and there's a lot of magazines there I don't really want. But on the other hand I would like some others. I have issues of: ASTOUNDING, GALAXY, AMAZING STORIES, FANTASTIC, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, UNIVERSE, SUPER SCIENCE FICTION, SATURN, F&SF, SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES, INFINITY, OTHER WORLDS, IMAGINATION, FUTURE, SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, and a few British publications which slipped by when I wasn't looking, as well as rare copies of those great magazines, SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST and VORTEX SCIENCE FICTION. There are about 200 of them altogether, I'd say. (Dates range from 1948 - 1958, generally.) AND I NEED COPIES OF: STARTLING STORIES, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE, WONDER STORY ANNUAL, SPACE STORIES, PLANET STORIES - many many copies of those. I also need a few issues of ASTOUNDING (some late 40s, some early 60s), GALAXY (first 2 years), and F&SF (first 5 years). I only wish to trade. No buy, no sell. I don't even envisage swaps throughout, either. Try me. John Foyster, 6 Clowes Street, South Yarra, Victoria, Australia.

WANTED TO BUY: Science fiction and mystery paperbacks. Send list, with prices asked, to: Hector Pessina, C.C. 3869, Correo Central, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

FOR SALE: The following books are offered for sale by John Bangsund. Proceeds go to the Keep-ASFR-Afloat-Fund. Prices include postage.
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Note: Melbourne City Council regulations have made it necessary to cease operation of water-powered lifts in the metropolitan area. Our apologies for this inconvenience, but you will have to use the stairs when you come to the Club from now on.

* * * * *

* BORN: To Elizabeth & John Foyster, on June 16th, *

* a girl, Jillian Miranda, 7lb 2½oz. All *

* well. Another collator for ASFR 60... *

* * * * *

WANTED TO BUY (OR BORROW): Sorry to keep harping on this, but I need the following works of Olaf Stapledon:

A MODERN THEORY OF ETHICS
NEW HOPE FOR BRITAIN
DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT
THE FLAMES
PHILOSOPHY AND LIVING (Pelican)
SAINTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES
OLD MAN IN NEW WORLD
YOUTH AND TOMORROW
Journal of the B.I.S., Nov. 1948

I have very kindly been loaned LAST MEN IN LONDON and DEATH INTO LIFE, but I would be interested in purchasing copies of these.

I am not aware of any studies of Stapledon's life or work (apart from brief pieces by Aldiss and Moskowitz): if you know of any I would like to hear about them.

John Bangsund

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ASFR SUBSCRIPTIONS: Commencing with this issue. ASFR goes bi-monthly, single-copy price is increased to 40¢, and annual subscription to \$2.40. (See page 48...)
U.S.A.: From October 1st, price will be increased to 50¢, subscription \$3.00 per year.
U.K.: single copy 2s6d, subscription 15s0d.
Back issues (23467): 30¢, US35¢, UK 2s0d.

STOP PRESS

From ASFR's wandering Con-man, MERVYN BARRETT, by express steam pigeon, comes this report on the British SF Convention, held at Bristol during Easter. (We couldn't possibly make you wait until August for it.)

*

A B R I S T O L N O N R E P O R T

Some way through the ceremony a period of silence was uneasily observed. The mock seriousness had become a bit more than heraldic parody. The medieval costumes, the archaic-sounding proclamations, the symbolic testing to establish that those who were to receive Knighthoods were indeed True Fans, and the banner emblazoned with the command to a science fiction deity - GHOD BLESST ST. FANTONY - created an effect on the greater part of the audience different from that one might expect of a fannish in-group joke.

In Archie and Beryl Mercer's room later that evening punch was ladled from a plastic bucket into the glasses of eager, free-loading fans. "The Order of St. Fantony supplied it," said Archie.

A recurrent conversational topic among the sixty or so people jammed into that average size hotel room was The Film. The Film was Ed Emshwiller's RELATIVITY. It had been shown with Chris Marker's LA JETTEE the previous afternoon and repeated, by request, that evening. In discussion on it there was very little critical evaluation. Mostly we just talked about how great it was and how it should be the official Convention Film and we tried to remember exactly how the tune in it went. "No, not quite like that - more Dum t'dum d'dum d'dum..."

Sometimes the 'phone would ring and everyone would be hushed up while it was answered. It was always the Manager complaining about the complaints about the noise. Inside the room it didn't seem that there was an awful lot of noise, but heard from outside the effect was quite shattering. Just another example of the strange acoustic properties of these old English pubs. Eventually the Management became very uncool and we were evicted and ordered back to the semi-subterranean depths where was our official place. In the hall outside Archie's room, dressed in pyjamas and blue flannel dressing gown, all toadlike and Napoleonically implacable, stood the Under Manager pointing the way we must go. Routed physically but spiritually unconquered we glared defiance at him as we passed. But we were aware that the end was near...

But when did it all begin?

*

Let's say that for me the Bristol Convention began at about 3pm a couple of days earlier when I presented myself at the registration desk, introduced myself to Archie and Beryl Mercer, paid in some more money, and received a large quantity of duplicated material, an official convention ballpoint pen, and a cardboard tag bearing my name.

Later, in the lobby cum lounge, I compared my first impressions of the Hawthorn Hotel with those of Dick and Diane Ellingsworth. "The bed's quite comfortable in mine. Quite a reasonable room really. But what a hell of a job I had to find it. It's sort of stuck between floors, and you can't go

by the numbers. I'd still be looking if a passing fan hadn't helped me." "Even the Hall Porter couldn't find ours," said Dick.

The Hawthorn was that sort of hotel; curious corridors that seemed to lead in all directions at once but go nowhere in particular. There were signs saying THIS WAY TO THE GAY NINETIES BAR. I did a double take when first I saw one of these because part of the sign was obscured and I didn't see the NINETIES part. There were signs indicating the way to the SCOTCH BAR, the MEXICAN BAR, and the God-knows-how-many-other bars. For a while I suspected that they only had one bar but lots of corridors and lots of signs, the name of the bar depending on one's direction of approach.

While talking with the Ellingsworths an aged waiter carrying a tray loaded with cups and saucers and teapots hobbled over and said hopefully, but not too confidently. "Here's the tea you ordered." "We didn't order any tea," we said in chorus, and he clattered off to try the same routine on the next group of fans. They didn't want it either, and we heard him complaining to the Hall Porter, "Some of these scientific people ordered it and I can't find which ones." When I came through the lobby again a half an hour or so later, he was still lugging the same tray of tea around looking for its owner.

The Convention started officially at 7pm. Good Friday, 24th March, 1967. "7pm - BARS OPEN IN THE CONVENTION HALL," said the official printed programme. And they did. It was probably the only item on the whole weekend that actually did start on time.

The next item was listed for 8pm - The Brian Aldiss Show. This began late. I'm not too sure how late, but I think it was about 9pm or so that Brian stalked dramatically in and marched straight to the bandstand to present to the assembly every Big Name in the place. And there were lots of them, too - I think. While waiting for the show to begin I'd fallen in with a fast crowd and didn't quite get around to getting the cast of characters sorted out.

At 10.30 next morning I assembled again in the Convention Hall for the Professional Panel - John Brunner, Brian Aldiss, Judith Merrill, James White, Tom Disch, Michael Moorcock. There was a general feeling on both sides of the table of not being quite with it. In the early part of the session, whenever anyone passed the microphone to Judith Merrill she would pass it back again on account of she can't operate at that hour without coffee, and it hadn't arrived. Eventually, though, it did, and a quick intake of caffeine brought the panel up to the point of asking for questions from the audience. Someone asked whether one should work flat out as a hack writer and make a lot of money and then go out into the world for experience, or whether one should have experience before beginning to write. This brought forth from the panel lots of comment on the dangers of hacking and reminiscences about how they started their own writing careers. John Brunner thought it was quite okay to start out writing sf because one could invent one's own world and experiences. Brian Aldiss summed this up: "If you've done nothing and you don't know anything, write science fiction."

I wrote in my notebook: "hard and soft sf." I'm not too sure now if this was the end of the question or the beginning of one. I remember that somehow James White started it off by asking something or other of his fellow writers which resulted in a lot of back and forth stuff about what is "hard" sf and what isn't. I think the question was never properly resolved.

The British Fantasy Awards were handed out that afternoon. Philip K. Dick's THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH got one, and Mike Moorcock got one for his

valiant efforts on behalf of sf in keeping the NEW WORLDS flag flying.

Then they introduced the Guest of Honour, John Brunner. John sat and gave a lucid, carefully prepared, two part talk. The first part of it - given while I was still making some feeble attempts at note taking - was concerned with the unauthorized and unpardonable mucking around with the words of writers that some American publishers indulge in. He cited one of his own books THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME, which had really been given the treatment (I forget if it was fifty alterations in the first page or the first chapter but anyway it was a hell of a lot) and suggested that his readers wait and buy the Penguin edition.

The second part of his talk dealt with the idea that an awful lot of writers seem to be rather 19th-century in their choice of story themes, and not really aware of the possibilities of story lines that can be developed out of the immediate future. I think... I do remember (such is my talent for concerning myself with trivia while failing to grasp the important points) that at two or three well-timed intervals in his talk he threw in a "shit" metaphor to make sure we'd keep paying attention, but he needn't have bothered: his material was so well organized and presented that he had his audience with him all the way.

Now if, having read this far, you have come to the conclusion that the editor of ASFR might have looked a little further and bit more conscientiously for some one to cover this important sf event, then I can but say that I agree. It's all Foyster's fault. He it was who wrote to me: "The lads at the Review are hoping that you'll be their legman at Bristol. A little ConRep, perhaps. Maybe a photo or two if you can get any..." I took the idea to heart immediately. Me! A Legman! (Actually I've always been rather more of a - but I'm getting away from the subject.) Not just another faceless fan, I would have Status. I would be able to walk up to the famous and say, "Look here, I'm from the Australian Science Fiction Review..." and that is just what I did, that night, at the Sherry and Cider party.

I was received with courtesy and enthusiasm. No one said, "The what?" All had heard of it, and didn't mind admitting it. Some had actually read it. James White talked about it, and Judith Merril, obviously not wanting to run the risk of slighting the representative of a powerful pressure group within an emerging science fiction nation (but mostly I suspect because she is a super warm hearted person) invited me to the party in her room.

Someone had brought to the party a semi-transparent mask that had been bought that morning in Bristol. It was a female face and a lot of the women tried it on and they all looked horrifying and scary in it and we all went "oooh" and "ech" in appreciation of the effect. To nobody in particular I gave forth with my theory/observation that as soon as most people put a mask on they feel compelled to start acting out the character that the mask suggests. This idea of mine was recently stolen by a Japanese screen writer and used as the main theme of a movie called THE FACE OF ANOTHER. It's about the victim of an industrial accident who believes that his wife is rejecting him because of his disfigured face so has a lifelike plastic mask made so that he can pretend to be someone else and seduce her. The wife in this movie is played by Machiko Kyo, who becomes more and more beautiful with every movie she appears in.

For the greater part of the evening I sat at the feet of Brian Aldiss (he'd arrived early and got a chair), drinking Judy's brandy and in a fuzzy headed sort of way trying to figure out why he, a sincere and successful sf writer,

should somehow seem to me to be just slightly out of place among sf fans. As if he had read my mind he quite casually started talking about his attitude towards certain areas of his existence, and his contacts with fans, in a way that illuminated the dark parts of the mystery which I sensed within him. I wish I could remember what he said...

Not many hours had elapsed when we met again. It was at breakfast. Wearing yesterday's clothes and an ill fitting pair of eyeballs I arrived in the dining room where, not feeling fantastically brilliant, I just sort of stood hoping that someone might take me in hand and see that I was properly fed. Brian Aldiss and wife were there breakfasting and seeing in a flash that I was incapable of making any decisions for myself they graciously invited me to their table.

Their table was a little two-person job, but I yanked a chair out from under some young neo-fan and sat down with them, anyhow. This infuriated the waitress. Not my way of getting a chair but my sitting at a two-person fully-occupied-already table. She said that it was a two-person table and we said that we knew and she said that there wouldn't be enough room and we said that we were sure we would manage. We, of course, remained charming and agreeable throughout this exchange while she just got rattier and rattier. Every dish she brought, she'd declare, "Look, there's no room to put anything," and we'd pile something on top of something else and she'd stomp off muttering. It was probably quite a traumatic experience for her. The only stable thing in her life - the knowledge that you can't sit three people at a two-person table - destroyed by the fierce white light of high powered science fiction schooled reasoning and practical demonstration.

After breakfast I decided that I would See Bristol. I studied my supply of pamphlets and the big map on the wall of the hotel writing room, and after deciding that the famous suspension bridge they have there was a bit too far away to walk to, and probably a bit tricky to reach by bus, I thought I'd settle for a visit to the Museum and Art Gallery. It was closed, so I headed for the park.

That Bristol is a city run by Mrs. Grundys and similar killjoys was brought home to me by a notice in the park which, after the usual warning about how the police would arrest anyone found cutting up the place, said also: "No carpet beating allowed before 6am or after 9pm." Furious because I'd brought with me at great inconvenience several valuable Persian carpets which I had intended to beat ceremonially at 9.30 that evening, I headed for the Cabot Tower with the intention of hurling myself from the top in protest.

I put threepence in the slot and was handled through by an iron-maiden-like turnstile and deposited at the foot of a spiral of narrow stone stairs. The Cabot Tower is a sort of pinch from the Fire of London Monument in the city of London. True, one does have to pay sixpence for the London Monument, but it is, after all, in the high rent district, and must be nearly twice as high as the Bristol effort.

I stood at the top, freezing and uncomfortable, looking out over Bristol and thinking in my own globally-aware way, well, here I am, looking out over Bristol.

After a Donut & Coffee lunch at a Wimpy Bar (I never learn) I hurried back to the hotel so as not to be late for the fan panel. This was made up of young fanzine editors, was moderated by Beryl Mercer, and started so late that by the time it got going it was time for it to finish. A sampling of opinion at the end of it, though, seemed to indicate that a more entertain-

ing turn was provided by ASFR's British Agent and his supporters than by the panel, who handled this group's interjections with rather less aplomb than our revered ex-Prime Minister.

Here is probably as good a place as any to insert some words of praise for the splendid efforts of the professional writers who, in spite of ill health, put their duty to sf before personal comfort. John Brunner, for instance, had excused himself for feeling the need to sit, due to some recent near fatal illness, while delivering his speech, and although Mike Moorcock offered no excuses and asked for no sympathy, one could tell by the slight unsteadiness of his walk, the occasional slurring of his speech, and his need for frequent large doses of some amber coloured medicine he'd brought with him, that here was a man bravely carrying on in spite of personal hardship and discomfort.

Mike talked for a while about the new NEW WORLDS and the Art Council grant which will help to keep it afloat. He showed us a dummy of the first issue of the magazine in its new format - it'll be bigger in dimension and have fewer pages, but about the same wordage as the old NEW WORLDS. It was not at the time settled whether the words "Science Fiction" would follow the title, or "Speculative Fiction" - which is what Mike prefers.

But the main theme, I think - there were times when he himself expressed surprise at some of the things he'd written into his notes - dealt with revolution and evolution in sf. Mike is hoping to attract the revolutionaries, and J.G. Ballard is his no.1 example of a revolutionary. To Mike's way of thinking, Ballard is doing something entirely new. Someone in the audience disagreed and jumped in like Gangbusters claiming that Ballard's technique stems from a stream of consciousness approach borrowed from James Joyce. This got a nice little to-and-fro thing going between Mike and the interjector, with Mike yo-yoing between a state of inarticulate outrage and a come-on-now-be-reasonable-fella position. Someone up at the back set about defining stream of consciousness within the framework of Joyce's stories and after a few more back-and-forward exchanges the debate fizzled out into an undeclared stalemate, and Mike resumed his performance.

Now, if anyone feels like handing out a retrospective award for the sf personality of the 1967 Convention, my vote goes to Mike Moorcock. He has presence, humour and energy. He plays guitar and sings - how well I'm not sure, but he sure as hell has endurance. He'd played and sang for about three hours the night before at Judy Merrill's party. Little children love him. (He'd terrorized the tiny delighted daughter of an attending fan by chasing her around the Con Hall doing his Dalek imitation - "dalek, exterminate, exterminate, exterminate, dalek..." getting the voice just right and even managing to look a bit like a Dalek.) I think that if led astray and given the right/wrong exposure, he might make a great TV Personality. But that would be science fiction's loss, and I hope it doesn't happen.

At breakfast Monday morning there seemed to be fewer fans and more specimens of mundane humankind. The Cabot room which had served as a display room for books and art was being dismantled, and fans came into breakfast clutching pictures and stacks of fanzines they'd either bought or failed to sell during the Con.

After breakfast I went upstairs and packed and then came back down to the lobby. It was packed with fans and luggage. People were checking out, saying goodbyes, and talking about the next Con. One of the porters was warning the Con's Chief Worrier, "They'll all have to be out of here by twelve o'clock, you know." Whenever the rain stopped a group of fans would make a dash for it.

I was booked on the 2.30 back to London, and with some time to kill figured that I'd make another attempt at seeing the museum and Art Gallery. I succeeded this time, too, but made the near fatal mistake of eating at the museum dining room.

At the next break in the weather, I made my move. I picked up my green canvas bag, cast a final glance around the Hawthorn Lobby, then pushed out through the glass doors. On the steps outside I paused to say goodbye to Archie Mercer. A group of young fans were standing with their backs to us a few feet away. We shook hands in farewell and they turned to look at us as Archie said, "Thank you, Mervyn. It was good of you to come all the way just to be here."

"It was the least I could do, Archie," I replied.

*

Note: Mervyn enclosed with this report a fine collection of photos, which we hope to use in some future issue.

*

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THE LAST WORD...

Saturday, June 24th. ASFR 10 collated, except for these last six pages, and with a bit of luck in the mail and into your hands while it's still June. Illustrations, which I find I've neglected to credit elsewhere, are by Early Medieval Anonymous (cover), Lindsay Cox (1,2,3,17), Jim Ellis (9), and myself (80, 81). Much kudos to Barry Tompkins for the cover: hasn't he done us proud? (Hell, then I nearly forgot the illos on 4 & 5! They're by Australianonymous and an unidentified architect, respectively. A fine bit of fantasy, the one on p.5 depicts the Flinders Street Railway Station that someone wanted to build a few years ago.) Much correspondence over the last few weeks, including a most encouraging letter from Ursula K. LeGuin. Ugo Malaguti reports the imminent publication of his NOVA SF, for which I am to be the Australian agent. Introduction by Ray Bradbury, &c &c - it sounds very interesting. Probably 70¢ per copy here, but don't send money yet: I'll keep you posted. And now: good health, good reading, join the NYCon and take a sub to ASFR if you haven't already, and we'll meet again in August.

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