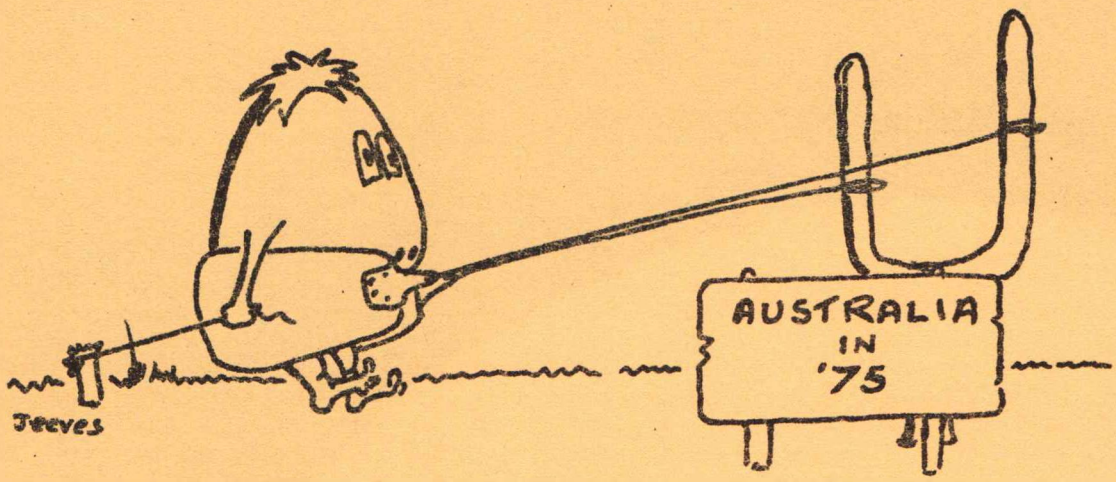
SCYTHROP 25



SCYTHROP 25

JANUARY 1972

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JB THE MARCH OF MIND

A '64 port? My god, I feel like a cradle-snatcher. (And not a cigar in the place to go with it, dammit.) Still, a very pleasant drop for all that. "Grand Commandaria" it's called, and all the way from Cyprus. I mention it, not merely because I am ever so slightly under its influence, but because as far as I know it is the first non-Australian wine I've ever tasted. Sure beats that undated All Saints port that Paul Stevens and I have been known to drink (65 cents per bottle, ladies and gentlemen, and worth every cent), but at over four times the price I should rather hope it would. The same hotelier who sold me this Cypriot port also talked me into trying a claret from the same island - no, my apologies, it's a '66 Castel Danielis all the way from Greece - and if this issue takes long enough to produce I shall give a short critique of my second bottle of non-Australian wine. And I must say (goddam'. - there I go, talking like Robin Johnson again) that I feel decidedly unpatriotic talking like this about wines produced outside this great wine country.

I did not, believe me, start this editorial with the idea of extolling the virtues of Australian wines, but since I've started this way I might as well continue. Tonight (Friday, 26th November) I have dined magnificently on minestrone soup, spaghetti bolognaise and something called (but which might or might not have been) cordon bleu, washed down with a '65 Chateau Yaldara shiraz claret, at a total outlay of $4.15. Payday, you understand: normally it's a can of steak and veg. with rough red from a flagon. Now I am not a gastronome, nor a connoisseur of fine wines, but by crikey I know the difference between steak-and-chips with coffee and a decent meal, and I don't know where in the world you could manage better than I did tonight. If I could only organize things so I had an American income and lived in Melbourne, I don't think I could ask more from life. In the eating and drinking line, at least.

In the way of flagons, we are particularly well catered for here, and with the Common Market business now under way, we look like being even better served. The abolition of special terms for Australian wines in Britain should lead to increased competition on the home market, with lower prices in the long run. Even at present, you can't complain. A really rough red costs about $1.75 the flagon; that's 78 fluid ounces, or near enough to 2¼ litres. A good flagon red - Mildara Hermitage, for example - costs somewhere between $2.15 and $2.45, and it's so close to a passable vintage red as makes little difference. A really good bottle of burgundy or claret can be found for somewhere between $1.00 and $1.60 - a '66 to '68 vintage, let's say - and, really, if you would rather have three bottles of superb red wine than the latest John Brunner hardback, that's something. (Dear John: You know that I am a confirmed Brunner addict as well as a wino, and that I would much rather your latest hardback than two flagons of Mildara Hermitage, but what are we amongst so many?)

Lee Harding started me off on my wine-drinking career, just as he started me off on reading science fiction. (He has a lot to answer for.) But it was really Don Symons who got me started on wine in earnest. During 1968, I think, I was taking rather heavy doses of tranquillizers, and he impressed on me his slogan, "Booze before barbiturates". This seemed good sense to me, since the tranquillizers I was taking were somewhat expensive; so I started following St Paul's injunction to Timothy (to "take a little wine for thy stomach's sake") and I'm afraid I've advanced considerably since then. George Turner assures me that the road to ruin isn't in sight until you start drinking at breakfast. Last weekend I experienced my first champagne breakfast, and I followed it with the most thoroughly alcoholic weekend I ever wish to go through (concluding, I am ashamed to admit, by lying absolutely oblivious on a lady friend's sofa and snoring loudly through her favourite television programme), so maybe I'm on the last downhill slide.

28th November - and I am pleased to report that the Greek red was quite potable. (I poted it last night while reading a biography of Walter Scott, which seemed reasonably appropriate at the time, though now I realize I should have saved it for next time I'm reading Byron. Or Kazantzakis. Or Spiro Agnew.)

I really intended to start off this editorial/column/thing with a lot of explanations about what's happening to Scythrop, since there has been some confusion expressed in recent letters. I hate editorials about the mechanics and economics of fanzine production, and particularly loathe the ones I write, but I think I'd better say a word or two on this subject again, if only to add to the confusion.

Scythrop 24 was, of course, an absolute and unmitigated fake. Surely no-one thinks I could have perpetrated such a thing? But I seem to have a lot of copies on hand, and no-one (well, hardly anyone) in Australia has seen it, so Australian readers will receive it with this issue (which is numbered 25 so as not to cause further confusion). Neither 24 nor 25 will count as part of anyone's subscription. 24 - to revert to honesty for a moment - was issued simply to keep up the bi-monthly publication schedule. 25 is issued to let you know that in future there will be no publication schedule. Now, have you got that quite clear? 26 will be something like the issue forecast in 24, but before it appears I have to complete the Campbell book (which is taking rather longer than I had anticipated). I can predict with almost absolute certainty that the next issue of Scythrop will appear after this one, and that it will contain many words and some illustrations. Now I don't want to hear any more about the subject, right? Right. Let's talk about something else.

David Piper suggests I increase the price of Scythrop. By crikey, I wish I'd thought of that! A darned good idea, I say. In future the price of Scythrop will be - oh, what's a nice round figure? - $23.87? - no, let's say a dollar. A dollar it is, then. That's for subscribers named David Piper only. By special arrangement you can have Scythrop for a dollar, too, but otherwise the rate remains rigidly fixed at whatever it's been lately or thereabouts, and that's final (or thereabouts).

The other thing I intended to mention in this column/editorial/whatever is kohlrabi. It's such a long time since I've seen kohlrabi mentioned in a fanzine, or anywhere for that matter, and I felt it would be nice to mention it.

And now for a nigh-witless account of the gripping adventure which I can only call -

KRUMMATTIC FANTASY

Or: That Crazy Bar-Crotchet Stuff

Carey Handfield started it. No, it goes back further than that - two days further, to Wednesday, 15th September. That was a rather complicated day, but only a rehearsal, as it turned out, for a very complicated week or so.

My boss panicked all day. (Hell, some of you don't know I've had a job since August. Don't worry about it: I finish up next Friday.) First thing Thursday he was due on the plane to Perth. I told him I had a date at 5.30, so he only gave me enough work to keep me going until midnight. Fine. I knocked off at 5.20, knowing that whatever happened that night I would have to go back to the office, type some stencils, take them home and run them off on the Roneo, and get the stuff into the 3.15 am mail in town. I would do that, I decided, and sleep in on Thursday.

I met the lady at 5.30, and we had a most interesting evening. We lingered over our pizzas and rough red at Toto's until about 8.20, then rushed to the university to see the first screening

of John Julian's film, "Carson's Watermelons". (I think of it as John's film - he was the camera-man - but actually it was made in collaboration with Ben Lewin and Clive Scollay. It's good.) We went back to her place afterwards and talked a lot, until I remembered I had to go back to the office. Hell.

Lesley is a very nice person, has done a lot of interesting things, such as school-teaching in New Guinea, and plays the krummhorn. No, I'd heard of the thing, but imagined it to be something like a contra-bassoon - about eight feet tall and more plumbing than a Board of Works substation. It wasn't anything like that, of course. If you aren't familiar with the instrument, I could best describe it (now) as looking like an almost crescent-shaped recorder, but related to the oboe rather than the recorder in that it has a reed in the mouthpiece. Played badly, it sounds like a dyspeptic bunyip. (Played well, like a healthy bunyip.)

I went back to the office, the nostalgic wail of the krummhorn echoing in my brain, and found a note from the boss. A long note. It included an instruction to be at the Exhibition Buildings at 9 am Thursday. I typed the stencils, went home and ran them off, parcelled the stuff, roared down the freeway into town and posted the parcel at 3.10 am. The rest of the night was my own.

Somehow I got to the Exhibition at 9, and went back to the office determined to just tidy up a few loose ends and go home to bed. That night we had organized a Symposium on John Campbell at the university, and I had this crazy ambition not to go to sleep halfway through it.

I didn't go home. I didn't even have time for dinner. Bill Wright and I went straight from the office to the university. The symposium went off very nicely. You can read all about it in JOHN CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE (advt). Friday I did sleep in, arrived at the office about mid-day and worked steadily until about 5. Then Carey Handfield rang, and asked if it was okay to put a lady journalist on to me. She wanted to write something about Australia in Seventy-Five.

A lady journalist is a lady journalist, and Australia in 75 is Australia in 75, so about 6 I went to the Melbourne office of "The Australian" and talked to the lady for about an hour and a half. The name rang a bell somewhere, and when I met her I stopped thinking what I had been thinking about lady journalists. Elizabeth Auld. A nice lady, to be sure, but not - you know - not what I had in mind quite when thinking about lady journalists. I had, in fact, met her before. She came to the club once, about three years ago, and wrote an absurd article after her visit. The crazy-buck-rogers-stuff angle, with flying saucers thrown in for good measure, and a few monsters. I was... wary.

I started off by asking what the article was for. Martin Collins's page. (There is no such person, incidentally. Martin is from Martin Place, Sydney, and Collins from Collins Street, Melbourne. Symbolic, sort of.) That meant the offbeat, weirdo angle. I said, okay, we'll find something odd, an interesting angle, but I'd rather talk about the Campbell Symposium than Australia in 75. So I did. The "odd" part was that I'd gone especially armed as devil's advocate, to say something against Campbell, because I thought the whole thing might turn into an out-and-out eulogy - and that would have been not only dead boring but un-Campbellian. As it turned out, just about everyone who spoke that night spoke as much against as for Campbell. My contribution - I presented Red Boggs's "Spokesman for Boskone" article - was worthwhile and set off a fair bit of controversy, but it was unnecessary from the devil's-advocate viewpoint.

Liz still wanted to talk about Australia in 75. I said I'd rather do that some other time, but gave her a couple of committee publications to go on with. She looked at me as only a journalist with space to fill and no story can look at you, and I took pity on her. I told her about Lesley, and the music group she belongs to which plays old instruments. I mentioned and tried to describe some of the instruments, including the krummhorn. Gave her Lesley's phone number and said, she will put you on to the group's secretary. Might be an interesting story there. She thought so, too.

18—THE AUSTRALIAN
Tuesday September 21 1971

Watch out for UFOs in the year 1975

Martin Collins

ALL GOING well, Australia will be the venue for the World Science Fiction Convention, 1975.

By then the world might be stranger than fiction but Australians are hoping to be hosts to overseas science fictionists who can make the journey by air, ship or UFO.

John Bangsund, a science fiction writer himself and public relations officer for the 1975 convention committee, will attend an overseas convention in Canada first to gather ideas for the Australian get-together.

Meanwhile he has been attending a symposium organised by the Melbourne University Science Fiction Association in honor of John Campbell, who has died in America.

Mr Campbell was credited with having brought science fiction out of the primitive into its modern form and was guest of honor at three world conventions.

His stories, which became the keystone of modern science fiction, were collected in two volumes, Who Goes There? (Shasta, 1948) and Colak of Aesir (Shasta, 1952).

He was editor of Astounding science fiction and developed the writers of today.

He never hesitated to express an opinion.

"Don't weasel and shilly-shally," he'd say. "Give your opponent something definite that he can get his teeth into and disprove if he's able."

Naturally, he wasn't infallible.

"So I guessed wrong," he's say. "Now we know the answers. Or at least one of them."

When Mr Campbell entered the science fiction field he was almost ignored, except by a few fans. Thirty-four years ago he took over as editor of Astounding.

Soon new authors appeared, Heinlein, Asimov, Sturgeon, Van Vogt and others now famous, writing new talent into science fiction.

In that vein, the Melbourne symposium began.

"It was almost a non-stop eulogy at first," John Bangsund said.

"'Something has to be said against him, I thought. I needn't have bothered. Everyone, with all the praise, had a lot to say against him."

But science fiction writers and fans have seen their main prop disappear and now they are wondering what the future holds.

They are also wondering whether Mr Campbell's magazine, Analog (formerly Astounding), will fold.

"In Australia we have a lot of fans but our science fiction writers depend almost entirely on what is published overseas," Mr Bangsund said.

"Captain A. Bertram Chandler, a sea captain, is one well-known Australian SF writer.

"Jack Widhams, a young man in his 30s, is our most successful.

"And our best, possibly, is a woman, Ursula K. Le Guin."

John Bangsund produces a magazine called Scythrop (formerly the Australian Science Fiction Review) but if his eyes are on the sky and science fiction, his feet are on the ground as assistant to the director of the National Association of Retail Grocers of Australia.

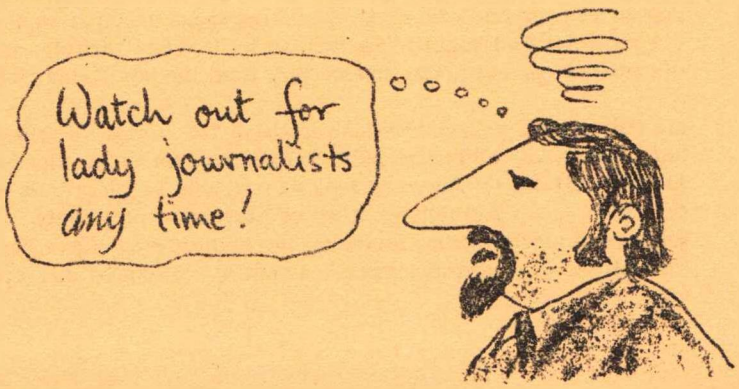
He's also a musician and belongs to a group which plays old instruments.

"I play the krumm," he said. "Or I'm learning.

"A krumm is a very old cross between a recorder and a flute with a great curve in the middle."

He's also tried playing the shawm and the serpent but his ambition is to be accomplished with the krumm.

"It's all very ordinary after science fiction," he said.



Life settled down to its normal whirlwind pace for a few days, until I arrived at work on Tuesday and received the first of dozens of phone calls about the Martin Collins article. I'd forgotten it. I went out and bought "The Australian", read the back page, and wondered whether I should gafiate, suicide or demolish the Melbourne office of the paper and all its occupants with an Asimov cocktail (one part nitroglycerine, five parts back issues of "Beabohema"). Instead, between phone calls, I wrote a scathing Letter to the Editor. At least six callers wanted to know when I was leaving for Canada; at least three wanted further information on the "krumm"; one wanted Mrs Le Guin's address; a couple asked what sf I had published; several thought I had been very nasty about John Campbell, and others wished to dispute that he had "developed the writers of today"; some merely wished to congratulate me for having my feet on the ground.

Lesley was furious. No less than I, I assured her. Not one of the quotes attributed to me in the article was anything like what I had said, and the entire business about being a musician was sheer imagination on Liz's part.

During the afternoon I had a call from Sydney. Anne Deveson's secretary, asking if Miss Deveson might interview me on her radio programme, "Newsmakers". Yes, I said, but let's get a few facts straight, and I quickly ran through the major inaccuracies in the article.

Then I panicked. Me being interviewed, live, over the telephone, by Anne Deveson on 2GB! Next I wondered what on earth I would say. Then I wondered how I would find out what I had said, after I'd said it. Robin Johnson (who knows about these things: he is the only person I know who can read, listen to the radio, watch TV, monitor the tapes he's dubbing and conduct a telephone conversation, simultaneously - and usually he's eating as well) (but he can't play the bloody krumm!) suggested I ring 3AW, the Melbourne end of the Macquarie Network, and ask if they monitored the 2GB broadcast.

So I did, and they said yes, they did, and maybe if Miss Deveson was interviewing me, Mr Taylor might like to speak to me. (Oh hell.) Don Taylor conducts the Melbourne edition of "Newsmakers". He rang a few minutes later, and we arranged that he would interview me in his programme, too.

So... I arrived home about 6.10, looked up ALL OUR YESTERDAYS and other references for answers to things I didn't know offhand, drank some rough red, wrote a page of notes - things I had to mention, such as box numbers and the Space Age Bookshop and so on - drank some more, laid out cigarettes on the table so I wouldn't need to fumble for them, and sat back and waited. At 6.45 the phone rang. "When are you going to Canada?" asked someone, jovially - some fan and former friend. "Get off the line!" I yelled. "I'm expecting a call from 3AW!" Slammed the phone down, and it rang again immediately. 3AW.

Not a good interview, I thought, during and after it. I could hear a radio going somewhere and Grushenka was scratching at the window. I sat there with my finger jammed in my left ear, the receiver in my right, to concentrate.

The interview with Don Taylor concluded about 7. I expected the 2GB call at 7. It came at 7.10. In between there were no less than four other calls - one of them from Robin, in a phony accent, wanting to dispute my definition of extrapolation. One of Anne's questions was, "Are science fiction writers zany people?" I wanted to blurt out the whole zany story of what had happened during the past sixty zany minutes, concluding with an eloquent testimonial to the quintessential zanyness of sf fans in general and me in particular - but somehow I recovered in time and said something witty and erudite about Oscar Wilde. The Sydney interview was, on the whole, a bit more relaxed, a bit more interesting.

The phone started ringing again as soon as 2GB got off the line. And kept on ringing. About 10.30 I noticed that I had smoked nearly thirty cigarettes in four hours, consumed nearly two-thirds of the flagon of red, and eaten nothing since mid-day. I went to bed and ignored the

phone. I don't know when it stopped ringing. Next morning one of the girls in the office next door asked me how it felt to be famous. I said I didn't know, didn't ever want to find out, and if she noticed a TV van pulling up outside she was to tell the crew that I had emigrated to Cuba.

The calls continued all day Wednesday. After work I went to the Degraves Tavern, and was rubbished all over again by my good fannish friends.

Thursday was a holiday, Show Day, but I worked. There was a call from a lady I had written to but not met, and we arranged to have dinner that night. Where should we meet? At your place, I said: that's easiest, because I might be a little late. Might! Bill Wright was at my flat, typing up the Australia in 75 Committee minutes, and I was expecting my new flat-mate to start moving in that night. But I made it on time. The address sounded vaguely familiar. It was familiar. Kathy lives in the same block of flats as Lesley - almost directly above her.

(Why, I asked myself, did I ever leave theological college? Life was so simple then.)

Kathy is a pleasant person, rather homely, organized, shrewd, travelled, a football and motor-racing enthusiast, and an ardent spiritualist. We talked about predestination and cars. Oh, and reincarnation: she believes in that, too. I had only logic on my side, but put up a good verbal fight nonetheless. We managed a nondescript moselle and a passable burgundy between us, and remarking (I can be really beastly even after that small quantity of liquor) that this performance didn't seem to tally with her determination to diet, we got into another lengthy discussion with only logic on my side, and I was trounced again.

On Friday I worked until 7, drove out to Fairfield and had dinner with my sister Ruth, her husband Barry (who is also my wife's brother - but we've been through all that in ASFR 16, and decided finally that I am in fact my own brother-in-law: no further correspondence will be entered into) and Leigh Edmonds. Leigh is up to his ears in music, of course (and that's not only appropriate; it's also a long way up, believe me), and Barry and Ruth play recorders and things. We had decided to attend a meeting of Lesley's music group together.

After a litre or three of the best flagon red you can buy in these parts, and much pleasant chatter about this and that, we thought we had better get moving, and one of us - Ruth, probably, since she drinks very little - decided it would be an excellent plan to find out the address. I said, it's in Eaglemont - Outlook Drive - and wondered (here we go again, folks) why I'd remembered and why it sounded vaguely familiar.

We found the place, and were greeted at the door by Chris Bennie, well-known fan of yesteryear. These days he's given over science fiction and fandom for religion and old music. (I'm tempted to join him.) We were introduced around, and someone said, "Ah, the gentleman who plays the krumm!" That wasn't a propitious beginning, but, by crikey, we really enjoyed ourselves. The people and the music were equally pleasant. I don't know offhand about Leigh, but Barry and Ruth and I have joined the group - and I actually got to blow the krummhorn. Blow, not play. I also tried, utterly without success, to get a sound of any kind from the cornette - until it occurred to me to remove the mouthpiece and blow the instrument from the wrong end.

Did you know that Lee Harding can play Beethoven's Fifth on his teeth? I'm not in his league, but having once played the euphonium (no kidding), I am delighted to discover that I can still play an almost recognizable tune on just about any hollow tube with a terminal diameter of about one inch.

Someone, during the evening, ribbed me about my (alleged) description of a "krumm". I said, well, how would you describe it? Lesley said, "It's like a large button-hook" - and that's about what it looks like, too. I was thankful I had not said anything like that to Liz Auld: she could easily have had me playing the krummhook or buttonhorn. Thankful, too, that I hadn't remembered some of the other instruments, such as the descant recorder, the sackbut, the spinet and

the viola da gamba. Can you imagine what she might have written...?

> "Mr Bangsund is also a dedicated mountain-climber. 'I recently attempted a record descent of Mt Buttenhorn with a companion, Miss Viola Dagambo,' he said. 'At one stage our lives literally depended on one very frail krummhook which had caught in a clump of spinet. A krummhook is a very old cross between a crumpoon and a hookah.'
> He has also tried descending Mt Hautboy and Mt Sackbut, but his ambition is to be accomplished on Mt Buttenhorn.
> 'It's all very ordinary after science fiction,' he said."

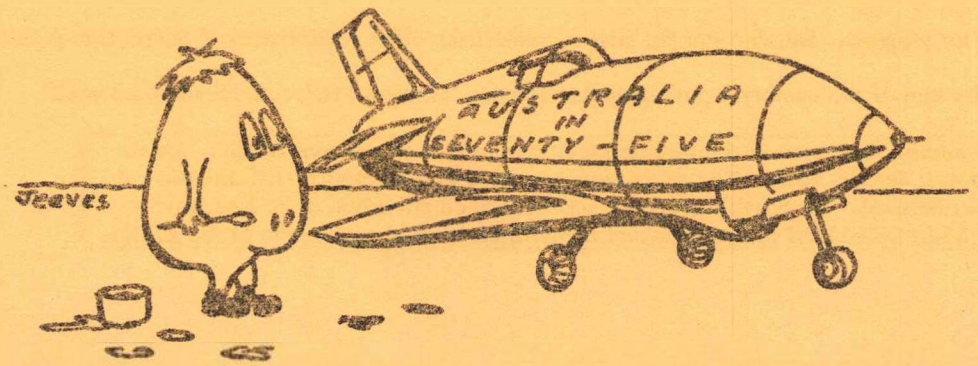
But, give the lady her due. She spelt my name correctly all the way through the article, dammit.

Footnote: A few days later there was an article on the music group, and it wasn't too bad. Then, about three weeks later, another piece on Australia in 75, cobbled together from the committee publications and comments by Mervyn Binns. Mercifully, I wasn't mentioned. Then, a week or so later, the Martin Collins page abruptly disappeared. I can only assume that some disgruntled interviewee assassinated the journalists concerned - or maybe they all came to their senses and resigned in shame. The back page of "The Australian" is now given over to sport.

12th January - and a happy new year to you all! Nearly four months since the events recorded above, and six or seven weeks since I started stencilling this editorial. Now that's what I call a publishing schedule. In the meantime I have been to Surfer's Paradise to take minutes of the NARGA Federal Conference, visited fans and friends in Brisbane and Sydney, taken another job (Carey Handfield's fault again: I'm working for his parents' public relations firm), somehow survived Xmas, driven to Adelaide and back with Carey and David Grigg, enjoyed myself hugely at the first Adelaide Convention, and just about completed putting together all the material for the Campbell book.

Speaking of which, I should mention Scythrop's New Policy. (This cancels, supersedes and entirely negates the new policy announced on page 4 of this issue.) Scythrop will appear when it appears. Okay, there's nothing especially new about that. But with this issue the price goes up to 50 cents in Australia, 60 cents in the USA and 20 NP in Britain. People who had subscriptions at the beginning of January will receive the Campbell book free and gratis. Others are advised that the book is obtainable only from the Space Age Bookshop, at A$2.00 per copy. With any luck it will be published in March. If you were not a Scythrop subscriber at 1st January, please do not order the book from me: order it from Space Age, or from your usual supplier (mentioning that Space Age is the exclusive world distributor: see the advertisement in this issue).

Next issue: some impressions of the Adelaide Convention, and very likely the Melbourne Easter Convention, too, since I confidently expect to be running as late as that; and a fascinating piece about New Guinea by John Litchen, illustrated by Lindsay Cox, and a long poem by Thomas Love Peacock (who?), illustrated by Elizabeth Foyster, and other provocative and stimulating stuff, as usual. Oh, and I hope to revert to white paper next time. Pleased? Stay tuned.



Robert Bloch

MEN, MYTHS & MONSTERS

IT HAS frequently been said that fantasy and science fiction are two sides of the same coin.

There are some writers of science fiction who disagree. I think I can understand why. In this world of ours, the average science fiction writer sees very few coins come his way - so perhaps he doesn't even realize that a coin has two sides.

But I assure you it does. And the hypothetical coin of which I speak is emblazoned with a face that is turned upwards and outwards, staring into the future and worlds beyond. This is the science fictional side of our coin, heads. Turn the coin over and we find tails - tails of dragons and monsters and demons disappearing into the past, avoiding our direct gaze, but still visible to us. This is the fantasy side, carrying the same weight and substance as the other; without it, the coin could not exist.

Our coin is counterfeit, of course. For we writers, whether we call our work fantasy or science fiction, are dealing with appearances, not reality.

We are assembled here to examine some of those appearances - appearances on film. We can learn a great deal about the relationship between fantasy and science fiction by viewing the films scheduled for showing at this festival. In order to supplement that knowledge I intend, therefore, wherever possible, to refer to films that are not being shown here. And, of necessity, I shall designate them by the titles under which they were known or released in the United States.

In 1952 a motion picture appeared as a tribute to the British film industry. It was called THE MAGIC BOX. The title, of course, referred to the motion picture camera itself. And in a way, perhaps it illustrates the strange relationship between science fiction and fantasy.

According to the realistic frame of reference imposed by science fiction, the motion picture camera is a machine. But in terms of fantasy, it is a machine that makes magic. A magic box - Pandora's Box, if you will; the box of ancient legend which opened to bring mischief into the world. The camera, then, is a reality that creates illusion.

The very first film-makers seem to have ignored this and concentrated on recording reality, documentary-fashion. They photographed parades, civil ceremonies, travel scenes. In one sense they were very modern - like some of today's film-makers, they merely wanted to "tell it like it is". I wonder if these daring experimentalists realize that their concentration on the unplanned event, their discarding of the traditional story-line and script, their hand-held camera techniques and use of natural lighting represent a bold step that will soon carry motion pictures to the heights - of 1899?

So much for progress. But who was the first to exploit the other possibilities of the motion picture?

Around the turn of the century a professional magician, Georges Melies, discovered he could

An address delivered to the International Symposium on Science Fiction, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1969. The symposium was held in conjunction with the Rio Film Festival. Mr Bloch's address is one of sixteen published in Dr Jose Sanz's SF SYMPOSIUM/FC SIMPOSIO, and is reprinted by kind permission of the author.

play even better tricks with a motion picture camera. With its aid he could out-perform any stage conjuror - making objects, people and whole scenes appear and disappear at will. In a tiny, glass-enclosed studio on the outskirts of Paris, he made hundreds of short films. Fascinated by his opportunity to achieve illusions by mechanical means, he began to use fades, dissolves, stop-motion, the speeded-up camera and other devices to create fantasies.

Drawing upon everything from traditional fairy tales to his own improvized science fiction scenarios, Melies pioneered in the field, aided by his actor friends and a corps of ballet beauties. He painted his own sets, used home-made props, designed his own costuming - and became remarkably successful.

But when he set forth to do such films as THE IMPOSSIBLE VOYAGE and A TRIP TO THE MOON, the results bore little or no resemblance to today's science fiction. By our standards, his work qualifies only as comic fantasy. Perhaps he can be excused when one considers he had no technological background to draw upon. He was trying to depict space travel at a time before the Wright brothers and Santos Dumont had made their first flights. When Melies imagined his own means of voyaging through space, there were only two ways man knew in which to get off the ground - one was by balloon and the other was by rope, at the end of a gallows. Both methods were somewhat dangerous.

So Melies's work - while fantasy in its presentation of future methodology - was also science fiction, insofar as it was correct in predicting future efforts to achieve space travel. Let us go further and say that his style was fantastic; even so, his subject-matter was definitely within the province of science fiction. And here we are, viewing again the two sides of the same coin.

Films, and even historical records of films, are perishable commodities. There is no way of knowing what the very first science fiction movie might have been. All that can be said with certainty is that one of the first we know about is the Selig-Polyscope's production, in 1908, of DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE.

Here is a title that has been filmed and re-filmed time and time again, in the studios of many countries of the world, and as a vehicle for a number of popular performers. During the past sixty years a great deal has been written concerning these motion picture versions of this famous story - but I have seldom read any specific mention of it as science fiction.

And yet DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE, particularly in its most celebrated motion picture versions - starring, respectively, John Barrymore, Fredric March and Spencer Tracy - is quite definitely science fiction, by any interpretation of the term.

It has to do with a scientist; a doctor of medicine who is conducting scientific research in chemistry, and who makes a discovery - again, scientific, not metaphysical - which concerns the transformation of mind and body physically and psychologically as the result of the effects of swallowing a chemical compound. Psychiatry - which its practitioners like to regard as a science - is invoked in the resultant delineation of dual personality; of manifestations which may be said to resemble cycloid or manic-depressive phases, or schizophrenic symptoms. Now this, I submit, is not fantasy; there are chemicals which can indeed induce such symptoms, both physical and mental. On the physical side, I would not go so far as to say that we have yet isolated a drug-product which can produce so extreme a change - that is to say, we cannot yet turn a handsome, gentle science fiction writer into a monstrous, ape-like publisher. But we do know that certain chemical compounds or derivatives can radically alter appearance, metabolism, motor reflexes; we also know that such compounds can induce conditions which seem in all ways identical to various forms of mental illness - and that such manifestations of illness may be subject to sudden and unexpected recurrences. The slight extrapolation necessary to create the film versions of DR JECKYLL AND MR HYDE most certainly places such pictures under the heading of science fiction. Science fiction, mind you, that deals with the subject of man rather than machines; and this reaching the screen as early as 1908.

Two years later, in 1910, the Edison Film Company released the first film version of FRANKENSTEIN. A still, a suspicion and a story-synopsis survive, but apparently no print. The still gives us a glimpse of a rather lumpy monster. The suspicion offers a theory that the role may have been played by an actor named Charles Ogle, and the story-synopsis tells us that the monster - though created in the laboratory in a cauldron of blazing chemicals - later evaporates into thin air. Thus the film apparently progressed from a science fiction beginning to a fantasy ending. The same was true in the second version, released in 1915 under the title LIFE WITHOUT SOUL, in which the story turned out to be a dream.

Another man-made monster - THE GOLEM - created by magical means, made its first film appearance in 1913, and has been resurrected many times since. Again, and even more definitely than in these early versions of FRANKENSTEIN, the element of fantasy predominates. But essentially, even in such outright legends as that of the Sorcerer's Apprentice with its magic broom, we can detect the genesis of a common science fictional concept; the machine that runs amok, that turns against its master, man. Call it monster, golem or robot, the theme is the revolt of the machines and this is surely science fiction.

We might find it significant to notice that in the early days of films this idea was generally presented in the form of a legend or a dream. The notion that man had anything to really fear from his machines seemed a trifle absurd - until World War I demonstrated that man's creations were now capable of destroying their creators.

This was something to think about, but when the war ended people apparently didn't want to think. It is interesting that several more versions of DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE appeared at this time, as though to remind the audience that we ourselves, rather than machines, might be our own worst enemies. Film-goers, however, were tired of enemies and strife, including the strife of inner conflict. They much preferred to see Barrymore as a lover than distorting his great profile as the hideous Mr Hyde.

So in the early Twenties, when science fiction films were made at all, they were apt to be comedies. In 1924 Fox Films made a modest picture called THE LAST MAN ON EARTH. Its title is self-explanatory, and if it presented any message at all, it was merely that of the dangers in a world dominated by women - a danger which every man is already quite aware of. You don't need to go to the movies to find that out; all you need to do is go home to your wife.

In the same year a Russian director, Jacob Protozanov, was responsible for AELITA, also a comedy, with a long dream-sequence laid on Mars. The set-designs for the film were inspired by the earlier CABINET OF DR CALIGARI. In France, also in 1924, the youthful Rene Clair offered another comedy - THE CRAZY RAY - which, with its trick camera-work, was really a throwback to the early films of Melies. These films, together with the prehistorical panoply of THE LOST WORLD, were more truly escape fiction than science fiction. THE LOST WORLD, of course, set the pattern for such later efforts as KING KONG, SON OF KONG, MIGHTY JOE YOUNG and scores of other motion pictures depending on special effects, miniatures and trick photography.

Then in 1926 came METROPOLIS, Fritz Lang's ambitious presentation of a future civilization. Never before, and seldom since, has a "world of tomorrow" been presented to motion picture audiences on such a scale. As many of you know, Fritz Lang came to the making of METROPOLIS after having directed the epic saga, DIE NIBELUNGEN. And some of you who remember my remark about fantasy and science fiction being two sides of the same coin may believe that in going from one film to the other Mr Lang was turning that coin to give us a glimpse of the opposite side. It is my personal feeling that he did not turn the coin over at all; he merely changed the date on its face - so that instead of presenting us with a legend of the past, he presented us with a legend of the future. For there is more than a hint of yesterday in this tale of tomorrow - with its imaginative shots of the machine as Moloch, devouring man; its references to the Tower of Babel; its evil robot echoing the concept of the Golem.

Lang's WOMAN IN THE MOON, together with another European production of a few years later, F.P.1, did show us the reverse image of the coin. This was science fiction as prophecy rather than as a vehicle for warning against legendary perils. And in the United States an early sound film, JUST IMAGINE, gave us another comedy of future errors.

But surely the first major science fiction effort in talking pictures was the 1931 version of FRANKENSTEIN. And here, once again, the science fiction theme - the creation of artificial life in the laboratory - was intermingled with pure and impure fantasy. The scientist as sorceror, the machine giving birth to a monster which in itself had many mechanical attributes - the concept of dead bodies dismembered and reassembled to create life, which in turn brings death; this is such stuff as dreams are made of. Dreams and nightmares.

Let us remember the year of FRANKENSTEIN's release, 1931. By this time science had come to play a more important and more immediately recognizable part in the organization of our society. And in the minds of many people, society had failed. We were in the midst of a vast, world-wide depression. We were in search of a scapegoat for our misfortunes and that scapegoat was science. So throughout the decade of the Thirties, most of the science fiction films were in reality anti-science fiction.

Time and again we were shown motion pictures which predicted and demonstrated scientific techniques that were fundamentally sound; the use of artificial organs and transplants in surgery, the theory of cryogenics, the inducing of mutations. The theories were all sound, but the scientists were all mad. Across the screen stalked an endless parade of paranoiacs - mad doctors, mad dentists, mad pharmacists. Not only were they mad, they were stingy as well. Or else how can one explain why they all had such a poor grade of assistants, every one of which was usually physically deformed and mentally retarded? Apparently these brilliant screen scientists were willing to spend a fortune on laboratory machinery and equipment, but in even the most delicate and dangerous experiments they employed nothing but the cheapest kind of slave labour. These idiots mixed up their instructions, substituted the wrong brains or organs, bungled their work, and generally made fatal mistakes which brought destruction to the experiments and the experimenters. But those stingy scientists never seemed to learn.

Anyone who wants to know how the average worker felt about his wages and his employer during the Depression can find more than a clue in the science fiction horror pictures of that era. Films such as THE ISLAND OF LOST SOULS in which Charles Laughton played H. G. Wells's character Dr Moreau, are almost a parable of the class-struggle as seen by many members of the audience in those years. It presents a view of the scientist as ruler and exploiter, to whom his subjects are literally beasts created in the image of man but held in subjugation as animals.

When H. G. Wells's view of the future, THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME, was presented midway through that dark decade, it included in its prophetic glimpses a world ravaged and reduced to barbarism by war - but held out the hope that science, employing the proper means and objectives, would prevail and restore a better way of life.

That hope was short-lived. By 1940 we were confronting World War II, and science was allied with the military in the service of destruction. The mad scientist of 1940 was DR CYCLOPS. In his world, people were diminished, reduced to helpless, doll-sized creatures at the dubious mercy of an all-powerful giant who was, significantly, half-blind. As a symbol of the distorted vision of the conqueror, Dr Cyclops represented the trend of science fiction films in the early Forties. And yet I must return to my image of the coin once again and remind you that his very name is rooted in our ancient myths, our memories of monsters.

When World War II ended, a mushroom cloud had settled over the Earth, and audiences frantically sought escape. The science they feared had created this cloud, but it could also create a means of avoiding fall-out through flight. Flight to other planets, other worlds, outer space. Unknown terrors might lurk there, but perhaps they would be easier to conquer and avoid than the known

terror of thermo-nuclear destruction. So science fiction films in the late Forties and early Fifties began to take us to the Moon and Mars and realms beyond. Even here, however, motion picture audiences did not leave fantasy behind. The magicians and the monsters encountered on distant planets bore a strange resemblance to the creatures of Earth's oldest legends. In these motion pictures, scientists created a spaceship which served as a vehicle to transport us to another world of fantasy.

And in the so-called science fiction films with an earthly setting, the past was even more alive - in the shape of gigantic monsters, rising from our prehistoric past when disturbed by today's atomic rumblings. GODZILLA and THE BEAST FROM TWENTY THOUSAND FATHOMS and all the others were really monster films rather than science fiction. Hollywood people seemed to feel at home with monsters - after all, most of them were no worse than the heads of motion picture studios.

But there were also alien presences in the atmosphere of Earth. People began to talk about flying saucers - and in films, invaders from outside nearly destroyed the world, usually with the able assistance of George Pal. I think finally Mr Pal succeeded in frightening himself, and decided to escape in THE TIME MACHINE, a brilliantly imaginative version of the H. G. Wells classic. But meanwhile, back in our own time, audiences withstood THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, coped with the evil inhabitants of the VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED and experienced PANIC IN THE YEAR ZERO.

We were beginning, slowly, to realize that our problems were right here on Earth, and they would have to be solved on Earth. And that those whom we regarded as aliens among us were not necessarily extraterrestrials, but human beings who somehow stood outside the pale of ordinary humanity. The beasts and the monsters were not necessarily strangers to ourselves - and sometimes, even in their most frightening forms, they were all too familiar.

The last time I had the pleasure of visiting the late great Boris Karloff, we discussed the amazing longevity of the "Frankenstein" monster - who died, time and again, only to be resurrected. I spoke of my theory concerning the popular appeal of the monster; that audiences consciously and unconsciously identified with this creature, particularly the adolescent members of audiences. Growing up is always an ordeal in our society, and there are times when most young people think of themselves as monsters - they feel themselves to be clumsy, inarticulate, unable to communicate with the adult community. They often consider themselves to be ugly, and rejected; they regard themselves as misunderstood, at the mercy of forces beyond their control, at odds with authority. For generation after generation, the "Frankenstein" monster has served as a self-image to youth.

Mr Karloff agreed, but wondered aloud why a more modern symbol had not come to supplant the monster for the young people of today. He suggested in his gentle way that perhaps his monster was just a trifle old-fashioned. Whereupon I reminded him that his was a very modern monster, not only in attitude but even in physical appearance. Consider the shapeless garments, the sweater or the shaggy coat, the drooping lids and the slow movements so similar to those of one in a drugged state; observe the untrimmed hair and the bangs - is not yesterday's monster the very prototype of today's hippie?

We laughed, and then we sobered. Because both of us, in our separate ways, had come to recognize the power of the symbol, the curious way in which imagination begets reality. And the old legends still return to life in new forms.

At this moment I think science fiction films are in a state of flux. The coin of fantasy and science fiction is spinning rapidly, giving us glimpses of both sides. We can see the old fear of machines - even in 2001, men must do battle against a villainous computer. We still catch glimpses of fear in the future - in 1984, THE TENTH VICTIM, PLANET OF THE APES. In some of the so-called "exploitation" films the science fictional elements are still thirty years behind the concepts of

today's science fiction writers. But gradually, motion pictures are catching up. And when movie-makers do catch up with writers, they will find that many of today's creators of science fiction are more interested in people than in technology. They are not afraid of machines, but of the minds of those who make them and sometimes misuse them. They are afraid of the range and reach of those minds, and of our own lack of understanding of their potentials.

Motion picture makers are beginning to understand that the new science fiction deals with social commentary and human problems - sometimes in sensationalized terms, as in WILD IN THE STREETS, and sometimes more thoughtfully, as in CHARLY. They are considering the power of THE POWER, learning that though the coin they mint has two sides, it is still a mingling of the same basic metals, many of which have not been properly valued and assayed.

They are learning that men and myths and monsters are not separate entities but part of the whole - men are myths, men are monsters, and gods and angels too. And so the focus of attention shifts from the far-out worlds to the inner worlds of the human psyche. The problems of good and evil are our problems, and as creators we must learn to deal with destroyers. That is the true goal of science fiction - the examination of the human condition.

For we are, at long last, beginning to realize, with that old science fiction writer, William Shakespeare, that "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves". And in ourselves we must seek salvation.

George Turner

PLUMBERS OF THE COSMOS

A PLUMBER WITH A FULL SET OF CRITICAL TOOLS

Since Editor/Publisher/Onlie Begetter JB has, for excellent reasons, declared against book reviews as such in Scythrop, opportunity arises to do something more stimulating - to ruminate on books rather than dissect them, to consider them as parts of a continuing whole or as aspects of an idea, to meditate on the writers as well as their products and to range further afield in commentary than the restrictions of reviewing permit.

And, to put it mildly, after some months of writing for the Melbourne "Age" I've had a bellyful of reading novels with half my mind's eye focussed on the salient points of a review. The new dispensation is welcome.

For one thing, I can now ruminate at length on James Blish, which is a pleasurable activity. If my frequent allusions to him seem to add up to an opinion that

he is God's gift to science fiction, no apology will be forthcoming. He is probably the most important single figure writing in the genre, not only for the quality of his fiction but for the breadth and depth of his perception and for his ability to operate outside the genre with an even greater artistry. He has been rarely applauded as such and never, so far as I recall, subjected to the frenzied adulation bestowed (transiently and too greatly) on such as Delany, Ballard, "Doc" Smith and many another, and this freedom from the distortions of overpraise may be a measure of his less spectacular but basic value.

It is not my practice to retail fan gossip, which is commonly an in-group bore, but a few notes on Blish's present standing and activities will serve a purpose in outlining his literary personality.

He is a full-time writer, which means that his point of view is fully professional. Thus the unfortunate recipient of his more devastating barbs may at least mutter, with the dying Antony, "a Roman by a Roman valiantly vanquished". Professionalism does not mean dreary hackery (but must inevitably include it on occasion) and, far from excluding the aesthetic point of view, provides the technical insight which prevents aestheticism being merely a matter of intuition and personal reaction.

He tells me (I think I reveal no secrets) that he has a lucrative contract to produce two Star Trek books a year, which he calculates can be handled in six months and provide a reasonable basic income, leaving him half the year to attend to the work he really wants to do with less certainty of large profit. Admirable. How few writers have even so much time for the exercise of personal predilection!

As an indication of the range of this last, he is able to indulge such uncommercial pleasures as the writing of verse and essays for "little" magazines.

Of his standing as a science fiction critic there is no doubt, and now his much-ignored historical novel, DR MIRABILIS, is at last to be published in America and apparently to be given the VIP treatment of a work of literary importance. So it should be: it is a work of literary importance, fit to stand with the fictionalized histories of Robert Graves.

Blish represents science fiction as it should be - part of a larger scene.

Both professionalism and aestheticism are highlighted by two recent books bearing his name. The first is a fresh volume of the "Atheling" critical essays, MORE ISSUES AT HAND. It should be read by every fan who aspires to critical writing (are there some who don't?) as a collection of pieces demonstrating how it is done in a variety of ways. But only the supremely well equipped should attempt Blish's wide-ranging examination and deep invasion of causes and effects. It requires more than a knowledge of science fiction in the writer's armoury.

This is a more relaxed book than THE ISSUE AT HAND, if only because it deals with novels and personalities and directions rather than with magazine stories, so allowing wider vision from a higher point. Consequently also, the style has become notably smoother with relief from the necessity of cramming too many items into the space of a magazine review column. Each essay presents a single theme rather than a melange tailored into a whole. THE ISSUE AT HAND was the work of a first class reviewer; MORE ISSUES AT HAND is the production of a critic with more on his mind than technique.

The field covered is considerable and, despite my general dislike of quotation out of context, the effect of the book can perhaps best be given by quotation.

On "Science Fiction as a Movement": "Writers who attempt to define science fiction inevitably suffer the fate decreed by Archibald MacLeish for poets who follow armies; their bones are subsequently found under old newspapers." "A literary genre cannot also become a movement

until a significant number of its practitioners, the writers, begin to think of themselves as artists..."

Think of themselves? Delany, Ballard, Ellison? What sort of movement would that be? But I come to praise Caesar, not to bury him, and there are some self-regarding, true artists about. Aldiss and Le Guin, for instance - and Blish himself.

On prophets of doom: "Poisoning wells is a legitimate function of the writer, and I have done so myself occasionally with considerable glee... But I venture to suggest that lately it has been overdone; I at least would just as soon not read another anti-utopia for some time to come... There is more to science fiction than just making more new maps of hell."

And them's my sentiments. But hell offers more chance for blood, screams, conflict - and magazine sales. Dante's INFERNO is swallowed at a gulp for its atrocities, but how many can claim with honesty to have persevered to the poetically superior but unmacabre PARADISO?

But one must find something to disagree with, however petty: "The only first person narrator Heinlein has created who is a living, completely independent human being is The Great Lorenzo of DOUBLE STAR." Having had a life-long connection with the stage and actors, I turn sorrowfully away. Lorenzo was an utter travesty of his profession, built of coy cliches and secondhand gossip; his transformation into a man of inner strength was, to me, utterly unlikely; he was the imaginary mountebank of a man who had never met an actor in the flesh. So much for disagreement. The remainder of this particular essay has more of value to say about Heinlein than Alexei Panshin managed in the entire length of his book on the man.

On scientific background: "I continue to feel that the Mars of Ray Bradbury, or the celestial mechanics of HOTHOUSE, is as false a territory as the America of Ilya Ehrenberg, and therefore doing just as great a disservice to Bradbury's or Aldiss's real content..." This has long needed to be said as succinctly. Faulty science makes an ultimately faulty creation; disbelief is not suspended, and both impact and intent are lost in irritation. Is it too much to ask that a writer take pains?

On new waves and wide-eyed wonder: "In criticism, as in teaching, there is no substitute for knowing the subject-matter thoroughly - and also, knowing as much of the surrounding, larger ground as you can possibly cover. People who read nothing but science fiction and fantasy... are fundamentally non-readers... They are easy to spot when a fifty-year-old story-telling innovation finally reaches science fiction. They... proclaim it the wave of the future, or they find it incomprehensible and demand the return of E. E. Smith..." But it must be noted that Blish is appreciative of genuine experiment and innovation, and in fact now and then dabbles himself.

There is a treasury of such observations spotted through the book, which contains much of interest on such diverse people as Merritt, Budrys, Zelazny and Ballard, to name but a few. For local pride be it said that, in connection with Ballard, Blish pays credit to the work of John Foyster in untangling much of that tangled skein, and adopts his view as a probably correct one. (I have reservations, but I know John has thought of those also.)

If you really care about science fiction, this book is seminal.

Now, all these quotations are the observations of a man of considerable perception and a common-sense attitude towards much that seeks to defy sense. What, then, are we to say about NEBULA AWARD STORIES 5, edited by James Blish?

He presents six of the fourteen Nebula Award nominations for 1970, including some of the most discussed stories of that year. One of these, possibly the most lauded by fans, not only contains

faults but is literally composed of faults so glaring as to vitiate the entire performance, and all save one of the others are ultimately unimportant. And for every one of them Blish has written a nice, really nice, little editorial epigraph which has something good to say.

This, of course, is Blish the professional doing what he was paid to do; he was not paid to put his name to an anthology and then methodically flay it. Even before tackling the stories I glanced through these epigraphal comments and was aware of Editor Blish sliding round some uneasy corners, of an uncharacteristic generality in the remarks, a lack of the conciseness that is born of conviction. Having read the tales I must admit that he did not sell his soul by praising what was not there, but performed some interesting acrobatics in avoiding inanities that were there.

Let me look closely at that much-hailed winner of its section, "A Boy and his Dog" by Harlan Ellison.

The setting is post-atomic devastation, wherein reasonable people have retired to underground towns and the surface is dominated by gangs of adolescents in a kill-or-be-killed community. The hero, a surface dweller, narrates the story, so that the reader is biased against the underground squares from the beginning. An old trick, but it works.

The hero is a one out, non-gang member, and has for companion a talking dog who, he grudgingly admits, is more intelligent than himself. An underground chick comes to the surface to snare a male (fresh genes for the ageing troglodytes); she gets the boy, and they fall in love. Against the dog's advice he follows her underground while the dog waits faithfully at the entrance to the shaft. Discovering that he is destined to be generalized breeding stock instead of a monogamous husband, the boy escapes, taking his beloved with him, after a week or so below ground. At the shaft-head he finds the dog, wounded and dying of hunger. And there is no meat to be had. So he feeds his beloved to Fido - or Towser or Spot or whatever.

We are intended to believe that Ellison is saying something important about the nature of love, saying in fact that there are relationships deeper than sexual love. (There probably are, though they tend to go together where love represents anything better than a roll on the grass.) In defence of the thesis he represents the boy as being wholly, consumedly, frantically in love - and then bowing to the logic of the situation by killing his beloved and feeding her to his running mate.

Consider a few points. First, the real importance of the dog is not in the man-dog friendship angle but in his intelligence; the boy is literally afraid to face the perils of surface existence without him, and this is definitively stated in the climax. Mere overpowering love could not stir the boy to make the attempt. So we must conclude (a) that the boy was not in love in any deep sense, although his previous actions indicate that he was, in which case the point about the nature of love is lost, or (b) that the boy was a moral coward, in which case the point is equally lost. It is just possible that Ellison was saying something very harsh indeed about the nature of self-interest, but, since real love and self-interest are inextricably bound, that point does not come across either.

Consider also that the world of the story is bluntly created on a kill-or-be-killed basis. That such a society would either eliminate itself or rationalize itself within a year or two of its formation is disregarded by Ellison, though there is a hint that he is aware of it in the provision of one neutral territory (a picture theatre, of all things). It would certainly have disappeared long before the boy grew to adolescence. (These impossibly motivated societies are a peculiar feature of futurist science fiction.) In fact it is a fake background dreamt up to provide a logic of sorts for the boy's final action.

Lastly, the super-intelligent talking dog. He is one of the most exploded cliches in science fiction. A dog's throat and larynx formation will not permit of more than rudimentary differentiation of vowels, the shapes of its mouth and tongue preclude most consonants and the size of its brainpan argues strongly against the development of more than high-moronic intelligence. If it

can talk clearly and out-reason a human being, then it isn't a dog. But Ellison insists that it is.

Still, the thing is urgently and strongly written, and if you can stomach a talking dog it makes sense until the climax hits you with its slick phoniness. What does not make such good sense is that this mess of misdirection and muddled thinking was voted first place in its section by the Science Fiction Writers of America. You can fool all the people some of the time... including the professionals.

In MORE ISSUES AT HAND, Blish makes reference to suspect lobbying or worse in the Nebula Awards. In his preface to NEBULA AWARD STORIES 5 he says that this situation has been cleaned up and cites some statistics to make it stick. But after "A Boy and his Dog" one wonders.

Another fan-praised section winner is Delany's "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones", a story as empty as its title. It's a cops-and-robbers bit, organized underworld and all. What the title means I don't know; it has a passing reference to one of the plot ingredients, but if time was ever "considered" the moment passed me by. If you want to make a collection of overblown metaphors which consistently overshoot their mark (and are spoken by a narrator whose background almost certainly would not allow the use of such sophisticated English) here is a rich lode for mining. How the hell does Delany get away with it? And just what do the SFWA consider makes a good story?

The only sound story in the book is Ursula Le Guin's "Nine Lives", and even here there is room for suspicion that the lady has misinterpreted or mildly distorted one of the fundamental aspects of cloning. Still, it remains well within the permissible limits of science fiction, and stands out among the rest like a jewel.

The three other stories amount to a neat but inconclusive Silverberg twist on the invaded mind theme, an unexpected and successful fantasy by Larry Niven and the first Theodore Sturgeon story in many years. The Sturgeon must have been included in the voting out of sheer reverence for the past; the master has not only lost his touch, he has become downright clumsy, finding it necessary to reorganize the world in a most unlikely manner in order to make a minor and doubtfully valid point about the nature of love.

And these (Mrs Le Guin excepted), heaven help us, were prizewinners and runners-up. Could there be any profit in wondering what Critic Blish, peeping through the eyes of Editor Blish, really thought about them?

By way of a footnote: If you want to know what was genuinely interesting in the 1970 output, spend your pennies on the Wollheim and Carr WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 1970. Now there's an anthology worth having on your shelf - and it contains Norman Spinrad's "The Big Flash", which comes close to being a one-shot justification of new wave techniques and has the advantage over most such of being completely intelligible at first reading. It is, for my money, the best story, in or out of science fiction, that I have read in a long time.

WORLD'S BEST SF 1970 is not the most exciting anthology ever produced - the old Healy and McComas volume will probably hold that spot for years to come - but it contains, in ratio to the number of stories, fewer second rate choices than the SFWA managed in their professional appraisal.

A Brief Message From Our Patron
(We haven't had one for two issues, folks!)

There is nothing perfect in this world except Mozart's music.
(T. L. Peacock: The Examiner, 2.6.1833)

SWAG

Gentle Readers & Others

TERRY JEEVES
230 Bannerdale Road
Sheffield S11 9FE
England

First off, ((Scythrop 23)) is yet again a beautifully produced issue and one which had me puzzled. HOW do you get that clear, minute reproduction?? The letters, I presume, are produced by a micro-elite typer or similar - but the reproduction bears none of the usual trade-marks of the duplicator, i.e. slightly blurry edges to the print, slightly off register pages and so on. I checked your budget sheet ((in 24)) to see if this was a fabulous all-electro magazine, but only two electrostencils are listed - and anyway, they would still show the traces of being duplicated - so HOW do you do your repro??

Although I didn't see it credited anywhere - shoot me down if I missed it - I'm taking it for granted that the character on the front cover is none other than your friendly neighbourhood John Bangsund. If I'm in error, then my second guess is Abraham Lincoln.

For your pseudo Feghootisms - would you like to embellish the idea of Henry Fonda taking a relative to hospital because of an undeveloped heart? After being kept out of the visiting ward for six months, he is finally allowed in. His relative is completely cured, and the diminutive muscle has expanded to normal size. In response to his question, the doctor replies, "Absence makes the heart grow, Fonda."

Re this Brunner Mason thing. What is a John Mason - or for that matter a Gary Brunner? No doubt both are pseudopods for some octopus wishing to hide his light under a bushel. Room for another Feghootism: Buddhist monk crawling under a haystack with a gallon of petrol because he wants - yes, I know, light his hide under a bushel. Gad, like our dog's fleas, I'm full of 'em. Reminds me of the three confidence men who took the Mad Hatter to a party. When asked who they were, one replied, "Oh, we're Cheats and Kapman." Well, you asked for it. Once I get carried away I can't be stopped without a bunch of fives up the nose - or Raquel Welch accidentally booked in as my convention room mate.

((Consider yourself shot down, Terry: the cover photo was of David Compton. Re reproduction: I have infinite patience with inanimate objects, such as stencils and Gary Mason. Typer is IBM Executive with text typeface; I type through the carbon ribbon.))

JOHN BROSNAN
1/62 Elsham Road
Kensington W.14
London England

Had a few words with Tom Disch. He's still keen on coming to Australia. He wants to live with the aborigines and study their way of life etc. I was thinking we could paint Gary Mason black.

((Who?))

BOYD UPCHURCH
455 Nth Wilton Place
Los Angeles
California 90004 USA

I read Scythrop with interest, particularly the Le Guin article. ... I could give you a lot of high-level reasons for writing science fiction but basically I write it because I grew tired of earning my living selling photoengravings. The genre appeals to me because it is an imaginative, free form, and can be made relevant if the writer has an instinct for social satire. I can write it with no holds barred and an absolute sense of freedom, swing from the poetic to the scathing in alternating paragraphs, from the conventional to the outre without having to worry about such details as: Was "twenty-three skiddoo" current in the language of 1914? Moreover, you can write it on multi-levels and know that somewhere among your readers there is a mind that swings with yours, catching the allusions and even the veiled dirty jokes.

When I decided to become a writer, four years ago, I wrote two novels,

a historical novel under my own name, THE SLAVE STEALER, and a science fiction novel, THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH. At the outset, I felt the science fiction novel was far too allusive and literary for the average reader but I don't like to "write down" to any imaginary reader. Either he can follow or he can quit reading. The publishers felt the book might have snob appeal and bought both offerings. The conventional novel made much more money but the science fiction novel, even generally, gained more critical acclaim and was endorsed by Robert Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke - God bless them both. Both men were writers I admired in a general sense regardless of genre, but I liked their genre.

Then a question of time entered the picture. For me a science fiction novel, from insemination to delivery, takes nine months. A conventional novel takes fourteen months. So, for the time, I turned to the area of maximum production and most fun. THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN was the most delightful novel to write I've ever written. I took two good ole Southern boys - no matter that one came from Ireland - and put them in a space ship. Neither they nor I knew where they were going or how they were getting back.

You ask which writers especially please me. I have an intense rapport with the writings of John Wyndham. But writers are like women, all are good but some are better than others. To carry the analogy further, if I were a bachelor with Clarke, Heinlein and Vonnegut on call, there would be little extra-curricular flirting. However, I'm an Orwell fan, no matter what genre he wrote in, and 1984 would have to rate as my top science fiction novel. There is more to Clarke than meets the eye; probably more than meets Clarke's eye, but that's the way it goes.

Insofar as the values of science fiction are concerned, I feel that the obvious value is entertainment. The only artist who ever directly influenced history was John Wilkes Booth, although Kazantzakis made a case for Homer. In some areas, any writer, particularly a poet, might condition a reader's mind for a new age that is coming to birth, or new attitudes, simply because a writer can stand apart and observe, whereas most readers are engulfed in the technology and concerns of earning a living. In a sense, science fiction lends itself to precognition of and preconditioning to massive social changes of an evolutionary nature better than any other genre except poetry.

You honor me by asking where science fiction is heading and I don't know where in the hell it has been. I know I am heading more toward the inner spaces of the human psyche and toward the soft, life sciences than toward the mechanistic, objective sciences. Both might merge at some omega point but I have a feeling if any man looks on the face of God it will probably be a molecular biologist.

Relative to fandom. Anything to keep the boys off the streets and away from pushing horse or the like meets with my approval. I read a criticism of one of my books in a fan magazine once which struck me as being one of the more trenchant an insightful into the workings of my mind of any criticism I had read. On the whole, I think an intellectual interest binds a group more than class concerns or nationality and the only organization I ever joined and took delight in was a group of Civil War buffs. Besides, such groups act as a forum for ideas, but they must guard themselves against chauvinism and the politicians which stalk them.

Thank you for the kind letter and excuse the typography in this one. I'm all involved in a science fiction version of Oedipus Rex, wherein Oedipus falls in love with his mother only to discover it is his father, going drag.

((The one thing I neglected to ask you, Boyd, was about the fourth last paragraph in RAKEHELLS. I caught the allusion, but in my ignorance I still don't know whether you meant O'Hara would be in Phoenix Park with a gun, or to stop the bloke who had the gun. From the sound of the next letter I might have even more difficulty with your next novel...))

ED CAGLE
Route #1
Leon
Kansas 67074 USA

Your remark about SEX AND THE HIGH COMMAND being the US title for THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN was extremely amusing. I think I'll send SEX & &c to you, if you will only inform me if it is unavailable in Aussieland due to being stricken by the Prude Bureau

(Her M's Censors). John Boyd, in his latest, seems worth watching. A clever writer, if a bit enamoured of John Boyd. He is, in my humble opinion, a rare specimen, as he appears in his latest book. I cannot recall ever having read any book which so obviously needed to be muted as concerns plot. Ordinarily a readable book, as I see things of this nature, could stand a bit more attention to setting the plot and making it at least as strong as the prose which carries it along. But Boyd has reduced the idea behind the text to a point of purity that is much too intense to allow a gentle reader the chance to pause and savor his manipulations. Most unusual, what?

I wasn't aware of the fact that The Good Lord handled the Outgoing Mails in Australia, and, being spasmodically perceptive, I deduced that this must be one hellishly expensive way to send things to the US. (The Good Lord and His Postmen, was it? Interesting... Tell me, does GL & His P handle only Air Mail, or do they stoop to surface deliveries? I should think that salt water would be extremely difficult to navigate with only a robe and wings.)

US Air Mail (I recently decided) is transported on Boeing 747 wings across the briny to Australia. Not an airborne 747, mind you, just the wings, with three oarsmen especially selected from the staff of The Complete Dough-Kneader's Quarterly Review, who exhibited a preference for attaining sexual gratification by caressing their knees with alloyed aluminum in groups of three. The coxswain is of necessity an accomplished anal-homosexual. The scheduled arrival, as you can surely see, is determined by the endurance of the oarsmen, and/or their sense of balance. There. Hope that clears that up.

《Sure does. But you've mistaken my reference to the Good Lord and his postmen. I meant, of course, Robert Gordon Qan, Earl of Tasmania & Kangaroo Island, who has the exclusive contract for outgoing mail and owns an airline. He also possesses the wings of various new and experimental aircraft, not including the new DaFide XP-300C. An amiable character, you can now and then see Lord Qan shuffling down Bourke Street, picking through the litter bins for goodies and singing quietly to himself, "If I had the wings of a DaFide, fly!"》

BARRY HUMPHRIES
Harry M. Miller Attractions
55 Exhibition Street
Melbourne 3000

Thank you for your letter and kind invitation to contribute to Scythrop. The speech I gave at the Seminar, however, and which you so kindly applauded, was not intended for the record, ie publication, but to be wasted on the arid air of the lecture theatre.

It is kind of you nevertheless to pay me the compliment of suggesting that it might make instructive reading. I assure you upon re-reading it myself it makes no sense whatsoever.

Incidentally, should you ever run a "books wanted" column I have for a long time been searching for Blier's Check List of Fantastic Literature published in America back around 1950.

Many thanks for writing and best wishes for the success of Scythrop.

《I still maintain that Mr H is holding out for a better offer for his fascinating talk from Meanjin Quarterly or the Women's Weekly. Nevertheless, I have magnanimously included his Books Wanted ad here. Contact Space Age Books if you want to flog your copy.》

EDWARD C. CONNOR
1805 N. Gale
Peoria
Illinois 61604 USA

Thanks for sending Scythrop 21 and 22. Sorry I didn't get around to writing after receiving the former, but at that time I was still following the bad habit of starting to write locs to quite a few fanzines with, as it turned out, little hope of finishing more than a handful of them. Was left with a large stack of zines, half of which had pieces of paper, locs in various stages of handwritten scrawl, sticking out or completely buried.

I like the cover you made for 21 as much now as when I first saw it. As for contents, I'll pass on to 22, after agreeing with Peter Roberts about the absurdities surrounding the worldcon biddings, costs, promotions etc. That leads to a comment about the Australia in 75 bid. It has been obvious for quite a long time (at least to me) that any really firm commit-

ment from the Australian fans would almost certainly be successful. You evidently got your foot in the door at just the right time, for everyone that matters to agree with you, even those who might have disagreed with many another bid consenting, at the very least, simply because Australian fandom is smaller and will have greater bidding expenses because of the greater distances involved, etc, and hence would probably find it much more difficult to try again at some other time. Scythrop 22 is less serious than 21, but neither issue really seems very serious or sercon, especially when compared with SF Commentary, which certainly seems dead serious - in fact when I read some of Rottensteiner's sermonizing it sounds deadly serious. (Sometimes I want to choke Rottensteiner.)

22 is excellent, containing material of the sort I like to see in a fanzine and which is consumed all too quickly (but worth re-reading). The bus trip, con reports, Chandler's piece and your own sandwiched-comments in particular - and your editorial, in some ways the most interesting ingredient. Thanks for printing the interview with Keith Antill. I'd heard his name mentioned before in some Aussie fanzine but hadn't paid much attention. Curious - probably I'm wrong, but I have the feeling that this award novel, MOON IN THE GROUND, may be the last we hear of him. India will swallow him up... Anyone who'd want to go to a beastly-hot climate to live must be quite thoroughly and irretrievably mad.

((Re SFC: I don't think Australia can support two fanzines trying to cover the sf field usefully and comprehensively. Bruce and I more or less have a gentleman's agreement about areas of interest, and we generally stick to it, despite the almost overwhelming temptation on my part to publish Franz, Stanislaw et al, and a similar urge on Bruce's to fill SFC with Keats & Chapman stories.))

((Speaking of which:)) Keats and Chapman once paid a visit to the Vale of Avoca, the idea being to have a good look at Moore's tree. Keats brought along his valet, a somewhat gloomy character named Monk. Irish temperament, climate, scenery and porter did not agree with Monk, whose idea of home and beauty was the East End of London and a glass of mild. He tried to persuade Keats to go home, but the poet had fastened on a local widow and was not to be thwarted by the fads of his servant. Soon it became evident that a breach between them was imminent. Things were brought to a head by a downpour which lasted for three days and nights. Monk tendered a savage resignation, and departed for Dublin in a sodden chaise. The incident annoyed Chapman.

"I think you are well rid of that fellow," he said. "He was a sullen lout." Keats shook his head despondently.

"The last rays of feeling and life must depart," he said sadly, "ere the bloom of that valet shall fade from my heart."

Chapman coughed slightly.

- MYLES NA GOPALEEN

((Yes! - excuse me while I just)) ah, that's better. Yes! - the ould original himself, folks! And that means I'm not getting many K&C stories from gentle readers. Well, there are a few from time to time, but they're - you know. Come on lads! If you don't supply them, you know, I'll be forced to write more myself, and you know what that means, don't you!
Gentle Readers: No, what does that mean?
JB: It means obscure puns of a literary, musical or other cultural nature!!
Gentle Readers: The Good Lord and His Postmen forfend!

Quite a few more letters, which I will save to publish with yours next issue, and some lovely articles and things, but this will have to be all and end all for this issue.

May I commend to your attention (as they say) the advertisements on the other side of this page? Kangaroo Feathers is a most exciting undertaking - by its very nature the best fanzine Australia will have ever seen - and I would advise you to get your name on the list before the first issue appears. Overseas readers will have time to do that, incidentally. Note that KF must be ordered from the A75 Committee, and the Campbell book from Space Age. Okay? Okay. See yez.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL

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