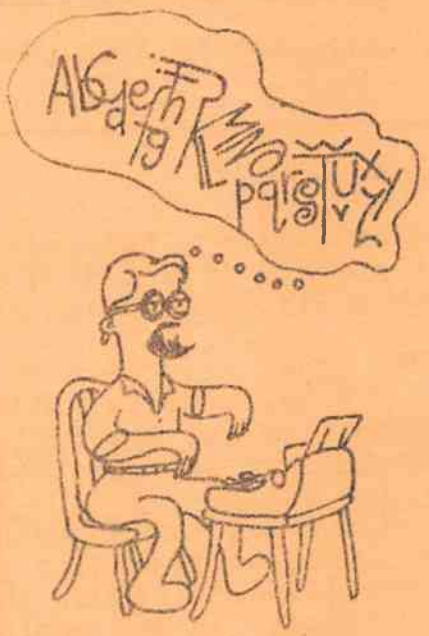

number three

T H E J A M P A C K - A Sort of Collection of Things that Should have Gone Elsewhere.....

DISCUSSED, MALIGNED, PRAISED...OR MENTIONED... IN THIS ISSUE

BRIAN ALDISS:Poor Little Warrior/34-5// ISAAC AS IMOV:Nightfall/33-4/ :Holmes-Ginshook Device/43, 45// J.G.BALLARD: Consat Angels/43// A.J. BUDRYS: Galaxy Bookshelf/46// JOHN W CAMPBELL:Analog magazine/6,7, 8, 43, 44-5// GREGG CONRAD: Mental Assassins/45// CORROSIVE ROT/20-21// SAMUEL R DELANY:High Weir/46// LESTER DEL REY:Worlds of Fantasy magazine/46// Garth/17-18// H L GOLD: Quote/11// ROBERT A HEINLEIN: Blow-ups Happen/ 25-6// HOMER:Iliad/ 19// ALDOUS HUXLEY: Brave New World/ 23-4// COLIN KAPP: I Bring You Hands/45// DANIEL KEYES: Flowers for Algernon/23// ROBERT LORY: Forever/46// J T McINTOSH: Bliss of Solitude/32-3// BARRY MALZBERG: Fantastic Magazine/45// GEORGE ORWELL: 1984/24// ARTHUR PORGES: The Ruum/31-2// FREDERIK POHL:If Magazine/ 43, 46/ :Galaxy magazine/43// MACK REYNOLDS:Computer Conspiracy/43// CHARLES SCHULTZ: Peanuts/16// SCOTT MEREDITH AGENCY/7// OLAF STAPLEDON :Last and First Men/23// THEODORE STURGEON:Thunder and Roses/24-5// GEORGE TURNER: General/28// H G WELLS :First Men in the Moon/29-30//

and JACK WODHAMS: General/5-10, 15, 37-40, 41-2, 44-5/ :Try Again/45/ Split Personality/44-5///

THIS ISSUE is dedicated to JACK WODHAMS, without whom it could hardly have existed.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED:

This is purely obligatory, because all fanzines are marvellous anyway, and you'll get a trade if you send me your sheet. However, there are avaricious blokes like myself who want advertising:

A.N.Z.A.P.A. The local apa, open to overseas members on a vaguely limited basis. $2 a year. Official Editor: Leigh Edmonds,P O Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria, 3183, Australia. Highlight of last issue was a Christian Revolutionary Interpretation of Simon and Garfunkel, by Alex Robb.:: AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW No 19. Good stuff. Better than this. Foyster edited 19, but Bangsund in charge.P O Box 109, Ferntree Gully, Victoria,3156, Australia.:: EOS A sort of odd sheet edited by Ron Clarke. Sorry I didn't answer then, Ron.:: exploding madonna 6 - the best little fanzine in the world, which I can now mention because it's folding. It's still so secret I can't tell you who published it.:: THE MENTOR No 15. Ron Clarke,78 Redgrave Rd., Normanhurst, N.S.W.2076, Australia. A worthy journal/publishes all sorts of things which I wouldn't touch, like Fan Fiction, and a cover illustration. Well worth investigation by overseas people.Subs? Only an LoC or article. NEW FORERUNNER.Australia's only newszine.Gary Mason,Warili Rd, French's Forest,N.S.W. 2086.:: SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. Creditable articles, crummy reviews, but astounding letter column. And it takes two nights to read.Richard E Geis, P O Box 3116, Santa Monica, California,90403, U.S.A. $3.00 for six.

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S F COMMENTARY No 3, is edited and typed by BRUCE R GILLESPIE, of P.O. Box 30, Bacchus Marsh ("edited from a drunken bog"), Victoria, 3340, Australia.

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T H E 1 9 6 8 M E L B O U R N E C O N F E R E N C E

GUEST-OF-HONOUR'S SPEECH DISCUSSION PANEL

Introduced by Bruce R Gillespie

ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

For some months (some years?) there has been an ugly rumour that there would <u>not</u> be a report on the 1968 Melbourne Science Fiction Conference. The successful completion of the 1969 8th Australian Science Fiction Convention, also held in Melbourne, has only added to these rumours.

But, despite skulduggery, crimes (like stealing a Conference tape for use in S F COMMENTARY No 2), and other assorted entertainments of which only Melbourne fandom is capable, we hear present the major documents of the Conference. A couple of transcriptions that American authors sent to the Conference, have not yet surfaced from the Bangsund slushpile. Fear not. They've been swimming upwards for awhile now, and any day they may reach Bacchus Marsh.

The documents presented here, are, I suggest, worth far more than a nostalgic glance to see when <u>that</u> fan twitted <u>that</u> author, and to see how many times Jack Wodhams laughed. The authors who sat on a ricketty stage out at Boronia, raised many many points that remain as important now as then. Many points are even more urgent now than they were then. In other words, I would very much like to see the reactions of S F COMMENTARY readers to the material here presented.

For instance, I feel that somewhere in the middle of the very strong views expressed by Damien Broderick, Jack Wodhams, George Turner, Lee Harding, John Foyster, and even that Voice from the Audience, there remains a central point not even touched. Damien vividly presented the rotting effects of too much science fiction. John Foyster was even more righteously indignant in his horror at the s f author's carelessness in craft. For George Turner, science fiction was mainly entertainment. (Then why does he write so well about it?)

All hedged around the point that I would have made if I'd been an author, and had not been sitting half-asleep in the audience. Damien's point is essential. Why is science fiction so destructive to the sensibilities of the unsuspecting

(Continued on Page 42)

JACK WODHAMS

THE GUEST-OF-HONOUR'S ADDRESS

transcribed by Tony Thomas — Lee Harding presiding

(Sustained applause. Cries of "Good on you, Jack", "You beauty", "Speech", &c)

WODHAMS Well, fellers, I'm very glad to be here. I don't really know what to say to you all. When I'm rich and famous I probably won't speak to you rabble again. I've learnt a lot. I don't mix socially with people up there, being a hermit, and I've sort of been stimulated to come down here...

ERIK HARDING He's a funny man, isn't he, Dad?

WODHAMS Quiet! What are you laughing at? What's so funny about that, eh? Ah, now I've lost the thread - if I had a thread - which I didn't have, a thread. Ahmmm, I don't think there's a great deal I can say.

HARDING Well, tell us how much you make from Analog.

WODHAMS How much I make from Analog. Well, not enough yet. Ah, but actually I'm hoping to get better. You're all science fiction fans here. I'm not sure that I'll go on for ever and ever in science fiction. It might be science fiction but certain persons might not call it science fiction; but I don't write science fiction purposely to write science fiction. you know, it's sort of, ah, to try to say what I want to say in the science fiction manner that happens to be a science fiction manner, you see. What I'm trying to say is that science fiction just happens to be the way it looks when it comes out.

So that's it, fellers. I can't think of any automatic way to make a fortune or anything. I'm still finding that out myself, or trying to find it out. I'm hoping to find a way. I'm not curious by any means. I write for money, purely, simply, first off. When I'm rich I can afford maybe to write other things. I don't consider myself a good writer by any means.

HARDING Modest.

WODHAMS Ah, it's not modesty, no, there's so much more to... I'm not saying what I want to say, exactly. I want to say... to become more articulate than I am. I'm thirty-five or -six years old, and when I'm fifty I might have found out if I'm lucky. I can't really advise on how to write, except that if we want to write then we have to write and write and write and write and write, and most of what you write will be rubbish like most of what I write is rubbish, even unpublished. They did publish some of

the rubbish, which helps a bit, you know. Ah, I can't say anything more. I think that's about it. If you want an address, I can give you Flo what's-her-name, but you wouldn't want that, of course.

HARDING Do you think they might have any questions, Jack? They might want to throw a few.

WODHAMS Yes, any questions? That might be an idea. Has anybody got any questions? No? Good, I'll sit down now. Who's next?

PAUL STEVENS Jack, when did you start writing?

WODHAMS Oh, I've been writing ever since I was a kid, I suppose. I've always been interested in compositions and things like that. I'm very reluctant to give away ideas. Even at school, I was always reluctant to give away ideas. You know how they give the subject and the teacher would say, "How would you treat this?" and he might pick on me and I'd have two or three ways that I'd treat it but I'd always give out with the one that I wasn't going to use. Ah, but there's a lot of flailing around. I came to science fiction by accident, mainly because they bought it. There's... I've written a lot of other kinds of things and sent them off to various magazines and so forth, and of course they come back. Well, then, if you write science fiction and get money for it, of course you tend to concentrate more on that, and that's what I have done.

What's the rest of that question again? Oh yes, how long? Over a period you write a lot and I used to... well, I've had many jobs, different things, driving a truck, bartending, mechanic and so forth, and I'd work for three or four months, earn enough money to retire on for two or three months to write, lie around. Then the money runs out and it's back to work again. Analog cheques saved me from going back to work again, by about a week, and I very much like my independence, so I'll continue writing and trying to earn a living at it.

HARDING There are lots of stories about Mr Campbell as a tyrant of sorts. How do you find Mr Campbell in your relations with him, in your correspondence with him?

WODHAMS Well, I find him... he writes to a man, and, well, that's something that's much better than a rejection slip. And he's someone who talks to you, even if he shouts. I mean, he's someone who is listening, and I welcome him, naturally, and he is very generous with his screeds. He's sent me as much as five or six pages, telling me what is wrong with my writing and so forth. He has encouraged me materially and he's given me criticism which is vital rather than the flattery or anything that you might get from your local professional man. What he says is meaningful and he knows what he wants and you have to write what he wants and not what I particularly want, you know? And he has been invaluable to me. I don't say I, like, worship him or anything like that, but he's just a good editor, so far as I'm concerned. I mean, I'm very grateful for what he's done for me.

HARDING What are your future plans?

WODHAMS Oh, develop, more than anything. I don't want to just become a hack, like. I still want to write what I want to write. It's a

coincidence that it happens to be what he likes or anybody else likes. I'd like to be a more brilliant brain than I am.

HARDING Practice, practice.

WODHAMS Practice it is. Oh, the words, you put lots of words together.

HARDING Will we let him go now, or are there any further questions?

BERNIE BERNHOUSE Are you going to continue with short stories, or are you going to undertake a novel?

WODHAMS Oh, way back I wrote two novels, and in the last couple of years I've written four, and none of them have done any good. But, there again, you've got to keep writing and every novel isn't wasted. You learn something just by writing it. And you get offshoots from it. In one novel I wrote, while the novel itself didn't sell, I had about three short stories came off it, and one of those short stories sold, so ultimately I got something out of it. But the novel is the way to make a living. I mean, short stories are a bit small. They don't really return enough. But of course it takes application. I will be writing novels, I suppose. Just to sit down and write a novel as a hack job is hard for me. I have to have something to write about. I couldn't be one of these jokers who say, Well, I'll write six novels this year. Who is it - Brunner? - who just churns them out and sort of takes a percentage. I couldn't do that. You've got to put too much into them.

BERNHOUSE Are you satisfied with Scott Meredith or would you prefer someone else?

WODHAMS Oh well, I mean, it's very handy being good enough to have an agent who wants to take a man on, because it saves a lot of messing around looking for markets for all kinds of material that isn't necessarily sf. I mean, I don't have to look for a market now because I just send it to him and if he wants it he'll sell it and I forget about it and just push it in. I hope he sells it, naturally. And I'm hoping he'll do me a bit of good over the next... in future.

HARDING You'll have to pay for this trip, won't you?

WODHAMS (ruefully?) Yes.

STEVENS Would you say that you're not exactly writing for Analog or for what Campbell wants, but writing for what you want?

WODHAMS Yes, as I say, it's more or less a coincidence that I happen to be writing what he likes. Well, you know. I mean, you're more familiar with Campbell than I am. You've been reading his editorials for ages. I've only been reading science fiction with any seriousness over the last couple of years. I'm not steeped in it or that. I think that a lot of it can be improved, and I'd like to improve it, but not necessarily through the... It just so happens, you know, you can say it in a science fiction way - it's got a lot of possibilities.

STEVENS Are we going to see you in any of the other magazines?

WODHAMS I hope so. I'd like to get into one or two other magazines. I have in a small way got into others, like there's New Writings and there's Rascal or something and one or two other places, but I'd like to be a bit more general.

HARDING It's up to your agent really, isn't it?

WODHAMS Well it is now, yes. I'm glad it is. I'm hoping that he'll lash out a bit, get me somewhere else.

HARDING Campbell will still get first look?

WODHAMS I stipulated that because I think I owe a bit to Campbell. He has been behind me in the first place and when I wrote to Scott Meredith I more or less stipulated that Analog get first crack at any material that might be any good. Scott Meredith, of course, is Campbell's agent as well, and I suppose they're pretty thick.

BERNHOUSE Have you been successful with anything else besides sf?

WODHAMS Not really, no. You can't call limericks successful, can you?

BERNHOUSE Do you intend to, though?

WODHAMS Well, I don't think you ought to be stopped by one particular medium. You see, I've tried to write about ten thousand words every fortnight to send off, written, and this is not necessarily science fiction. The last lot was two pieces that were sf and two that weren't. And it's just what comes. You don't want to be in a groove at all. You've got this free run and there's so many subjects. One of the other pieces was a bit of a religious piece and another was speculative stuff that was science fact, more or less. I don't know that it means anything. I had to write it just in case it did. And I sent this off also. That's the one advantage of an agent, because I wouldn't have known where to send this stuff.

HARDING Jack, I haven't read all your current stories, but the Analog stories all seem to be of a humorous nature. Is this intentional, or does it just work out that way when you're writing for Campbell?

WODHAMS Well, taking life seriously I find a bit hard to do. But I do like humorous things myself, humorous writing. I like Ernest Bramah and the Kai Lung stories. I think they're the greatest. I suppose you can almost bring them into the science fiction realm because they're set way back in time and that, and the language is very flowery - it's beautifully written. And then of course there's the more contemporary ones like Damon Runyon and Thurber and Thorne Smith and all of these I feel something with them, and I'd like to be something like them, because I like to make people laugh rather than cry. And of course this is Campbell's thing, too, and every other editor's. They want up-beat stuff. They talk about the way, the language. They don't like this down-beat stuff, the modern trend, whatever that is. So I'd rather come to a positive ending than a negative ending, although I have written negative ending stuff. I'm swinging a bit that way.

WYNNE WHITEFORD Do you write one story at a time or several?

WODHAMS Oh, I can only handle one at a time. Like I said with the novel now, I'm going on with it, I can't drop it and do a short story that comes off it. I just jot that down and go to work on it later. But it just sort of rolls... It's very hard to say, there are so many ways to write .. Sometimes it comes complete, sometimes it just rolls off easy, sometimes you have to work on it, sometimes you've got it but it looks a mess and you've got to straighten it out, and there's different angles you can come from. It's a bit hard to say just how a lot of these things do happen, you know.

BILL WRIGHT Do you believe what you write when you write it?

WODHAMS Where's this voice coming from? Oh, what was that?

WRIGHT Do you believe what you write as you write it?

WODHAMS Uh huh. Well, you have to have a certain faith in it. You don't believe it when it's finished, but the usual thing is you feel all depressed, especially with a novel. It takes so long and it's such a great idea when you start it, and as you go through it you're working on it and it's good in places, you know - you get good phrases, chapters and so forth - but when you get it finished and you read it through it seems a hell of a lot of rubbish. You live it so much, you know it so well, that it's very hard to tell. You can't be objective till maybe later on. I've read some of my older stuff, and later on you can be objective with it. But at the time you can't be, because you're too close to it and it's been running through your mind, this, that and the other. Plenty of this and that but not much of the other.

HARDING Jack, I have heard that Michael Moorcock writes a novel in three days. Do you think you could ever manage this if you locked yourself in a little room?

WODHAMS Not really. A tape recording, perhaps. But not really, no. Not and actually write it. Three thousand words a day I do at top.

HARDING That's about average for most writers.

WODHAMS Well, that's when I'm going good, like. It still only averages out at about a thousand words a day.

HARDING Any more questions before we...?

WRIGHT One more. You were mentioning humorous sf before. What influence did Stephen Leacock have on you?

WODHAMS Who is Stephen Leacock?

HARDING Now on that note I think we had better...

WODHAMS You mention names of people that I just don't know. You speak about a lot of science fiction writers I don't know. I've been reading over the last couple of years people I've never heard of before,

finding out what they write, and some of them are, you know, they're not good. But this is all very encouraging to me, because it's not unbeatable competition which you might find in other fields. I don't think the competition is really stiff in science fiction, not if you're a writer. And this is a hopeful thing as far as I'm concerned. I think, well, you know, there's room for me there. I can do better than this. And, like I told some of you, my credo is if you think you can do better either put up or shut up. And I've been trying to put up, and I hope to put up, and put up good stuff eventually.

HARDING Good.

WODHAMS Well, thank you very much for listening to me politely. You can all put your hands together now.

(Laughter and loud applause.)

Harding It wasn't too bad, was it?

Wodhams No.

Harding Okay.

---oOo---

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THE DISCUSSION PANEL

transcribed by John Foyster & Tony Thomas — John Foyster presiding

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This session of the Conference commenced with Damien Broderick, George Turner and John Foyster on the platform. As it proceeded they were joined by Jack Wodhams, Lee Harding and Wynne Whiteford. Messrs Broderick, Wodhams and Harding (despite the latter's disclaimer during the session) are practising sf authors; Mr Whiteford has many stories to his credit but has not written sf for some time; Mr Turner is a well-known "mainstream" novelist whose writings about sf are well known to readers of ASFR; and John Foyster - well, John has had stories rejected by some of the best magazines around. (JB)

---oOo---

FOYSTER This discussion will take the form, for the moment, of a series of questions, some of which are straightforward, some of which aren't. And after I've asked the question, I will read either someone's comment on the subject or an example from a fairly reputable book to illustrate my point. It is extremely easy to choose a very bad science fiction novel and pull something bad out of it, but if you try to pick bad examples out of volumes like these (holds up various anthologies - Healy/McComas, Crispin, Campbell) - well, I found I had to turn over a page before I got the bad example.

Now my first question, which I think will be of some interest, because I've already got an answer to it, is: "Why has so much rubbish been written in science fiction?" And the first answer I have is that of H L Gold:

"The science fiction rush produced so huge a strain on writers, who of course produce the very thing we sell, that quality just had to drop. Too many markets were competing for the output of too few skilled writers. Borderline stories which ordinarily would have been sent back for tuning up and polishing had to be bought as they were because somebody else would have bought them without change. Routine ideas and treatments had to be good enough because magazines were buying wordage to fill pages with, and writers were harried into turning out material that most of our temporary competitors were buying sight unseen. New authors sold quickly, too quickly to learn anything but bad writing habits, and were thus deprived of editorial guidance that would have taken them through their necessary apprenticeship; and, obeying Gresham's Law, the bad drove out the good. Conscientious writers were demoralized into leaving the field, and some worthy magazine titles were put to death along with the unworthy."

Now that's all very well in 1959 or earlier when there were a lot of sf maga-

zines and a lot of science fiction being published, but ten years later the amount of rubbish has not diminished - the number of magazines has.

Well, let's first of all ask George Turner why he thinks so much rubbish is being written in science fiction, and what I mean here by written in science fiction, is that this stuff has actually appeared. We can quite understand it being written. But whether it should appear in public is another matter altogether.

GEORGE TURNER I don't think you can add a great deal to what H.L. Gold has to say about it. He has struck the economic root of the problem, but I think there are several other things that apply as well. John says that in the last ten years the number of magazines has been reduced, yet still the same amount of rubbish is being produced. And this is undoubtedly true. I forget who it was, either Budrys or Blish, who remarked a couple of years back that there was only enough good science fiction to carry one magazine a month. And I think this is absolutely true.

Now, one reason why so much bad work is produced is, of course, as Gold says, that there's a market for it. And why is there a market for it? It is because the stuff is bought by the uncritical. And so long as the stuff sells to people who don't insist on getting something better for their money, then people will produce bad work.

You may have noticed that the better writers, those who have taken the trouble to learn their trade, never produce really bad work. At worst it is always competent. Even if you mightn't like their ideas or their handling, the work itself is technically up to standard. The ones who are weak are the new writers and they, as Gold says, don't get the chance to learn their trade, because they discover they can sell, and so they just don't bother to learn. Sooner or later they run out, of course, and it is interesting to note the number who disappear in the course of a year, as well as the number of new faces that turn up. I think the root of the matter is, in one sense, economic, and in the other it is simply that the people who buy the magazines should keep their hands in their pockets instead of buying them. Get the magazines off the market and the writers will have to work to sell.

DAMIEN BRODERICK It's very difficult to address a topic like this, I think, because there are so many assumptions behind the question, which themselves have to be questioned. For example, to be able to draw a distinction between good science fiction and rubbish is something which I find difficult to do because it assumes a covert agreement in the discussion as to what is

good writing, be it science fiction or whatever. George has made it clear in the pages of SFR that he is against a double standard and he thinks that science fiction should be treated as literature and that every other form of story which is published in magazines should also be treated as literature. And that one can't, in fact, come up with a separate set of evaluative standards for science fiction.

I think that this is in fact impossible, because what Shakespeare was trying to do is different from what the detective writer is trying to do, which is different from what Lawrence Durrell is trying to do, which is different from what the variety of science fiction writers are trying to do. I think they are all using words, certainly, and they are all using sentences, but the actual purpose is probably quite different in each case. Even within the genre of science fiction there can be quite different aims and so it is terribly difficult to even establish what is good and bad, because I think my training in the study of literature, perhaps, makes me feel much more antithetical towards a lot of science fiction than I would have felt ten years ago.

A lot of stories which I then found exciting and vigorous I now find to be sentimental, clumsily written, garish, and a whole lot of nasty things, because I'm using criteria of evaluation which have come from a study of much more sensitive and subtle forms of writing, which are trying to do things which are concerned with human beings and their problems and their inter-relations.

In an absolute sense one could certainly say that science fiction is a very clumsy form. That is to say, science fiction as it exists at the moment - not the ideas, or the potential of writing about people in the future or in space but just the science fiction genre we have at the moment, is a very crude, unsubtle body of techniques. But the fact is that this sort of thing does appeal to people, and we are living in a community that people like Marshall MacLuhan have analysed in terms of a drift away from lineal word sentence structures into new concepts of communication by image.

And all of these things, it seems to me, make it very difficult to evaluate a contemporary popular form, whether it is science fiction or comic strips or anything; in terms of literature, as it has developed. And so in a sense I'll dip out at this point and say that what we have to do, to discuss this further is to get on to questions like "should there be a double standard?" Does George agree with this concept, that science fiction may perhaps be a form of the television program or the cartoon, rather than of the form of linear word play?

TURNER Well, first of all I think that we have to deal with this question of deciding between good and bad. Now, in the sense of thorough-going literary criticism, I quite agree that making a distinction between good and bad is extremely difficult. And quite frankly that is not the function of criticism. But, when it is merely a matter of deciding between good and bad presentations of an idea; that is, between effective and ineffective presentation of an idea, then I think it's quite simple for almost anyone to draw a distinction.

And that is the kind of distinction I had in mind when we were talking about the amount of bad science fiction involved, and I should think that that is the kind of automatic distinction that most readers would make. An idea may be good, and be badly presented. Right: it is a badly-written story. It's simply handled incorrectly, and that is bad writing. It may be bad from the point of view of trying to do something which is beyond the capability of the writer, and failing. And failure is bad. One of the things that most writers fail at, particularly in their early stages, is naturalistic dialogue, because they try to make it naturalistic, and they soon find out that that is one thing you cannot do. There is no such thing as naturalistic dialogue in the written form. If you don't believe me, try taking a short-hand transcription of this talk after we've all finished for the afternoon.

(Watch it, George Turner: Transcriber)

(And a mighty long time it took to look at that transcription: BG)

In written form it would be impossible. For one thing the written word cannot show inflection, in the sense that the spoken word can offer it. Most of the bad writing results from a simple lack of the necessary techniques of explaining what you mean in a sense that will make it understood in the way you mean it to be understood. To fail to do that is bad writing. I'm not speaking of bad writing in the sense of literary or even poetic writing. This is something which transcends the requirements of everyday literature, and very few of us are capable of it. I'm certainly not.

Bad grammar is bad writing. And simply ignoring the everyday conventions of the written word unless, and only unless, you can provide a new and valid set of conventions to replace the ones you're throwing away. To fail to do this is again bad writing. Bad writing, in fact, is writing that just doesn't come off. And the reason it doesn't come off is that too many writers rush into print, because the market is there, and they simply never learn the basics of their trade.

FOYSTER Say a few words, Jack!

JACK WODHAMS Well, I'm not really so hot on this grammar business. Writing is to communicate, and I don't care how I put the words down. If I communicate exactly what I want to, whether it's grammatically correct or not, that is the way it goes down. The struggle, all the time, is to communicate, and in trying to communicate with somebody else with another mind, and this, at any time, is difficult. It shoudd be achieved by any manner at all. As I said, my grammar, I don't think, is very good. As a technician I wouldn't say I'm very good at all.

But if I let that worry me I wouldn't write anything. I intend to get across, and learn, and here again I must say that a writer is not born. He is made.

(This is now punctuated with table pounding).

And he makes himself and if he has no market to put out his bad stuff he will never get a chance to become a good writer. I write better now than I did ten years ago (I wasn't selling ten years ago) and in ten years time I will be writing that much better again, because I've had the opportunity to write, and I need that opportunity to write. I need to be able to sit down on my derriere and just write. I cannot work at a job and go home at night and write, as some people can. My brain is just not good enough. I need 24 hours a day to write.

But I intend to write and I intend to improve and I need someone to buy my rubbish now so that I can write good stuff later on.

(Applause).

LEE HARDING As MC for the day, is it permissible for me to come up and sit on the panel?

TURNER Sounds like "try to keep me out".

FOYSTER (Wearily) Yes, all right.

HARDING I have a question for Mr. Turner. Tell me, Mr. Turner, how would you apply your values to LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE?

TURNER Never heard of her.

HARDING Well, er, Pogo Possum? ... Mandrake?

TURNER MANDRAKE? Right down my nose.

HARDING No, no. I mean, how do you apply normal literary critical technique to the comic strip?

(Merciful heavens, kinesthesia: horrified Transcriber).

TURNER Well, if you are going to use MANDRAKE as a sample you could simply observe that it sets out to do a certain thing and because it is popular it apparently does that pretty well. The question is, is it worth doing?

HARDING Well now, that sounds like an absolute. Now, Charles Schultz and PEANUTS... for example, another comic strip...

TURNER Now, PEANUTS, of course, is a horse of a very different colour. Here we have a man who is intending to amuse on the one hand, and also presenting a private view of life. And doing it very very neatly and often with great subtlety. The fact that he does it, and this brings up that question of grammar again. I'm glad you brought this up, because in his little dialogue balloons, naturally, grammar goes by the board because here he is reproducing life as it is seen through the eyes of what is popularly thought to be the average man. As a matter of fact the average man does much better in that line than he is generally thought of as doing. But he has turned this into a convention of his own. It is his private convention, his private method of showing. It works, and he's able to ring all sorts of change on it. I'd say, yes, PEANUTS, is a technical triumph and it is also the product of a highly intelligent mind.

HARDING Well then, you'd say there are good and bad comic strips?

TURNER Yes.

HARDING Well, would you also say that there are comic strips with different intentions, different markets and different aims on the parts of the writers and illustrators?

TURNER Oh, there very definitely are.

HARDING Well, then would you be prepared to say as much of science fiction writing? Would you say there is good and bad science fiction writing, or do you apply the same values to science fiction writing as you apply to comic strips and Walt Disney films and a good book?

TURNER I think in general - I may be sticking my neck out here - yes, I would apply the same sets of values. But let us not get confused here with the functions of criticism, which is not what we're dealing with. What we are dealing with is the existance of good and bad. And why the bad exists, when it so easily could be better.

HARDING Well, why is it that I enjoy GARTH as much as PEANUTS? One has a socio-religious message and the other is purely entertainment.

TURNER I haven't an idea why you enjoy GARTH at all.

HARDING Well, one is good, and one is obviously bad. A very good friend of mine....

TURNER I would say that GARTH is bad only in the sense that if it never existed we would have lost nothing by it. But I think that PEANUTS has justified its existence.

HARDING Then do you maintain that what used to be called "message", but which could be called "content", is more important than style and technique?

TURNER No, I wouldn't say that any particular item is more important than any other. Synthesis is what counts. The only thing is, that if one particular aspect of your work is bad it jars on the reader, and instead of becoming involved with what he is reading, he begins to sit outside and look at it. And that's fatal.

HARDING Would you say, then, that it is a lack of content, serious content, in science fiction, that makes so much of it bad?

TURNER Not the lack of serious content, but the lack of thought about the content. There is so much of it that is simply a repetition of what has been done before. You might say there are stock situations, stock characters (if there are any characters at all - there are people with names, which is not quite the same thing) and there are all sorts of stock ideas. I treated some of them in an article for John only a couple of months back. And there is so little evidence, except on the part of a very few writers, of doing anything except to get a story off their chests and sell it.

HARDING It's just occurred to me that if science fiction were of a sufficiently high literary standard... would you have read it for forty years, George?

TURNER As a matter of fact, instead of getting sick of it, I might have kept on reading it all the time instead of just now and then.

HARDING Do you find that it's an essentially adolescent attraction to the medium that you outgrow, or...?

TURNER I don't know whether this is true or not. I know that my own greatest affection for science fiction was from the age of eleven to twenty, and I also notice that in these periodical surveys that some of the magazines do, they point out the general youth of both readers and writers, and perhaps this has a point. Perhaps there comes a point where you become surfeited with the sameness of science fiction and begin to become first selective and then later to move on to other fields altogether.

HARDING Wynne, this panel is incomplete. Would you like to come up and join us please?

FOYSTER This place is getting overcrowded if you ask me.

(Snickers from Turner and Wodhams).

WYNNE WHITEFORD I think personally that the things you can apply to science fiction, the things that make it either good or bad, are much the same as the standards you could apply right across the board to all sorts of literature. Now the difficulty here is that most people have said the major points of what I'd like to say.

But I'd like to reinforce that one about a thing being succ-essful if it gets across what it intended to get across. Incidentally, I'm also a GARTH fan, and I think it gets across the sort of thing it intends to. I don't think the world would be very different without it. But at the same time it does supply a sort of background, a sort of attitude that, without putting too much attention on it, is the sort of thing you can pick up, read for about one minute...

HARDING I'd go along with what Jack said - you can't take the world seriously 24 hours a day.

WODHAMS Not only that, but you develop a.... I mean, when I started reading I was reading Edgar Wallace. Well, I don't read Edgar Wallace any more. I used to read Agatha Christie. I do not read Agatha Christie any more. I've grown out of it. I've grown into better material. I have my standard, which is not everybody's standard, because not everybody likes what I like. And they can't be expected to like the good stuff from the cradle. Like Mr.

Turner said, from eleven to twenty he read science fiction. Well, the eleven-to-twenties today would read today's science fiction in the same manner, and probably get the same amount out of it and possibly go on to other things. There's a place for it : it interests young minds particularly - the market is a young market, and it creates thought. Well you do get a surfeit of this and you go on to other things. This is a good thing. We do want to branch out onto the better literature, but I'm reading this now. I read science fiction mostly under sufference now, to see what the other fellow is doing. But my main reading, now that I'm catching up, I'm reading Thoreau, or someone like that. And so I think you've got to keep it (science fiction)in its place. It's not written for the intellectual. It's written for a lively mind, and they are not too worried about characterization.

WHITEFORD There is the matter of labelling, though. After all, the ILIAD of Homer was science fiction, wasn't it?

FOYSTER As a matter of fact, if you'll pardon my differing, I don't think the ILIAD is science fiction.

WHITEFORD Well, take the part about, wait a moment...

FOYSTER Well, there's the part about the Charlie with the Wind-bags, but it's not science fiction.

(Horrid error - I am thinking of the ODYSSEY: Transcriber)

HARDING I don't hold with that view either. There's always been fanciful writing. When I look back to when science fiction started, I look to the early American pulp magazines.

WHITEFORD To Gernsback.

HARDING There's always been some sort of fantasy existing outside the field. It was the ghetto that Gernsback created. I'm sure you two guys would agree with me on one point: that what makes so much science fiction bad, by normal literary criteria that you are selling an idea.

Now when I first started writing I knew I didn't have - wait for it - the ability to write really good fiction, I couldn't characterise, I couldn't do any of the standard tricks which good fiction entailed, and I found that, perhaps like Jack, that once I'd started writing science fiction I could sell an editor an idea. They buy the idea:

if you've got wooden characters, this isn't important. It's the ideas, the Campbell dictum and the Gernsback dictum. It's the idea he wants to buy.

Now science fiction writers start selling science fiction, Jack, as you've found, usually at a rather young stage. You started a bit late, Jack, so perhaps you won't have all their bad habits. They become stuck in this, and then they become either too afraid to try to break away from it and write good fiction, or they stick in the groove, like Poul Anderson has, and just churn it out and churn it out, to a formula. Or they stop writing science fiction: they find they're sick of writing science fiction, but on the other hand they've learned so many bad habits about writing they can't write any other sort of fiction.

I think this is why there's so much bad fiction in the magazines - the sort Frederik Pohl encourages - and John Campbell perhaps may be excused because he has his own idea of the world and he believes he's supplying entertainment for young engineers. So we'd have to exclude him. But, on the other hand, I find no excuse whatsoever for Sol Cohen, Fred Pohl, nor John Carnell, if it comes to that. But I think this is why there's a lot of bad science fiction writing.

BRODERICK I'd like to suggest for a start ...I'm going to say a number of things that'll probably get me thrown bodily out of the door, but still.... I think that, for a start, this is very, very crude, but one could divide literature into two rough categories - one which seeks to create some sort of dialogue between the author and the reader, which itself involves a rather subtle mind in the author and a rather rich view of the world, to make it worthwhile his endeavouring to do this, because the reader has got to think that this 200 page book has got something in it for him. This is not simply talking about "message" or anything like this. This is a sort of real, rich, existential contact between two human beings.

The other sort is the thing were you've got sentences one after the other which are simply designed - I'll leave aside questions of grammar and things like that. I assume that if you can't write properly using correct grammar then you are outside the pale altogether.

But, in a sense, the major part of this is that a lot of the writing that I'm talking about now in the second category is purely to operate on the nerves and the bowels and the adrenal glands of the reader, and it cuts his cortex right out of the situation. This is the sort of stuff that Keith Laumer writes, and it's the sort of stuff that's all over the joint in science fiction. I've written a lot of

it, because people, in their debased and vulgar fashion, like to turn themselves off and to identify with silly wooden heroes - characters who run around doing things which make you feel all jumpy inside and it's lovely when you finish reading it. And you can get another one and do it all again.

If you're writing this sort of thing it doesn't matter how skillful you are in controlling language in some sort of amorphous absolute sense. What you are trying to do is utterly different from what the writer of what might be called "literature" is trying to do, it seems to me. I think there isn't very much in science fiction of this "literary" character. Not of writing which is high-brow and uses a lot of big words, or anything like that, but writing which is actually trying to get to the total person, and to talk about total people.

To go beyond this, I think that in a very real sense, science fiction is corrosive rot. That it destroys a person's sensibility. To talk about starting off with these bright young inventive people who start by reading science fiction, and the candy sort that teaches them science, or some crap like this, is absolute nonsense. It's a body narcotic: it gets in and seeps through the person, rotting as it goes, and destroying neurones in great scabby bits that fall off inside your head, and, at the age of twenty, instead of going on to better things, it's very difficult....

WHITEFORD Are there better things?

BRODERICK Well, this is what has been stated by Jack, for example - that one goes on to better things. I think that it is possible, if you come through this, to some extent unscarred, and with some breath of sensibility still left in you, which is pretty difficult to do after reading science fiction for ten years, you might possibly have a chance of recognizing that sick hungry feeling inside you as a healthy desire to read something which is more than a neural stimulant of some sort. And you might actually manage to get on and read some literature. But it's pretty difficult, and I think you've probably got another ten years ahead of you of kicking the habit and trying to re-align....

HARDING You've had a hard time, Damien.

BRODERICK I think this is true, in a real and almost an absolute sense.

(Tape is turned over. Missing about 30 seconds)

BRODERICK (Fade-in) ... while you are conscious, by read-ing science fiction may have some salutory effects, but if it is carried too far I think that it's an appalling thing and ultimately I would say that to talk about making science fiction better and bringing it into the main stream of literature, is to be trying to do something which is almost self-contradictory, because the very essence of science fiction, the reason why people read it, is because it is a manifestation, in popular and reasonably sophisticated terms, of a very primitive and infantile desire to get off into these cliches and run through them over and over again, and if there are ideas thrown in, as people keep saying, they are ideas which may have some sort of titillating value in themselves, but by getting one good idea - we might think of the idea of artificial mutation of human beings - now you can write an article about this, and this might be reasonably interesting. But to write a story about it entails that one is going to talk about the world in some complexity, and about real human beings, and what effect mutating people into supermen is going to have.

And it's absolutely impossible, within any of the perimeters of science fiction, to do this properly. You are bound to write sheer trivial rubbish, and in this way you are in fact doing a grave injustice to the good idea that you had.

TURNER I must disagree most heartily.

FOYSTER I think that Damien has raised a very large number of points and, as a matter of fact, the discussion has wandered quite a long way from the original question, which was nothing to do with why people read science fiction...

BRODERICK Oh come now, you asked me....

HARDING Damien, surely you're not talking about science fiction, but about the vast bulk of what we call pap literature, the romances, the thrillers, the westerns. They all have the same general deficiency. It's for people who don't think when they read. I know. But surely...

BRODERICK But science fiction is the apotheosis of this thing, because it comes from fairy stories. It's pure fantasy. It's got no relation to real life. It has got relation to fantasy life, but the romance thing...

VOICE What's real life?

BRODERICK We're doing it now.

HARDING You're doing it. I'm not.

WHITEFORD Well, how about a thing like Daniel Keyes' FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON? You couldn't say that it's not well written.

FOYSTER I could (helpfully)

(Another agreed)

That's two out of six.

WHITEFORD What do you think, George?

TURNER I only read the original short story. I would say it was an extremely good job indeed. A technical triumph for a start.... An emotional one also. And, as for having no relationship to real life, I suggest that it does. And every story does. And that conversely no story is real. Every story is fantasy, no matter whether it is MOBY DICK or LAST AND FIRST MEN. But the relationship to life is there.

Keyes was considering a problem which does exist in everyday life, and it exists in mental hospitals in particular: the problem of approaching life and receding from it. He chose a rather way-out method of expressing it, but he put the question very strongly indeed. He didn't offer any answers, because that's not a novelist's business. You might say, in the same way, and this gets back to something else Damien said, that the mainstream can't handle these ideas. Now I would point out that some of the best science fiction, or that stuff that science fiction readers have claimed for their own is in fact mainstream literature. LAST AND FIRST MEN is a novel about the nature of God. It's a theological novel, and that is what the writer intended. He was not writing science fiction. He used the science fiction trappings, but that was secondary to his intention.

HARDING Why did he use the trappings, George?

TURNER Because they suited his method of handling it. He was not writing an exciting story simply to show you what the various mutations of the future could be. He was writing a book about the nature of God and expressing it as a series of steps involving at last the entire universe.

You might say in the same way that BRAVE NEW WORLD was not science fiction. Huxley was writing a very bitter black comedy, possibly the only black comedy in science fiction, And its relationship to life is very strong indeed. He was

saying, literally, if this goes on... watch out, boys. But he was not writing it as entertaining science fiction. He was writing about a possible future, or what he considered to be a possible future, as a warning to an undisciplined present. And I think this goes for nearly all the best work which we like to think is science fiction. Basically it isn't. It's just using the method - that's all.

WHITEFORD What about FAHRENHEIT 451, which we saw last night?

FOYSTER I'd go along with George here, too. 1984 is sometimes thought of as being science fiction. In fact 1984 grew entirely out of George Orwell's experiences in the air-raids in Britain in 1940, 41 and 42. What he wrote at that time appears almost word for word in the most horrifying parts of 1984. And in fact, as Lee suggests, science fiction is what has been published since April 1926 in magazines entitled AMAZING STORIES, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE... etc. There's no science fiction that has been published outside those magazines, or outside hardcover and paperback publishers who bought stories which were <u>like</u> the ones in the magazines.

HARDING John, why did you look at me cross-eyed the other day and say that 1984 was the <u>second</u>-best science fiction novel you have ever read?

FOYSTER It certainly is. But it wasn't <u>written</u> as science fiction. What I read something to be and what it was written as are entirely different things.

oo oo oo oo

Well, we've been - that is everyone else has been talking and I've been listening, and you have too - about the ideas involved in science fiction, and whether or rather <u>why</u> these are bad, why the treatment's bad - things of this kind.

Now there is of course the <u>technical</u> side which Jack and Damien and George have all mentioned: the actual <u>writing</u> of the work. Now my contention is that in science fiction this <u>particular</u> standard, perhaps above all others , is bad. The standard is very poor.

I choose Theodore Sturgeon first - a story called THUNDER AND ROSES.

HARDING But that's a sacred cow!

TURNER Time it was knocked over.

FOYSTER Naturally, of course, I never look very far in these stories, and it took about a paragraph.

> "When Pete Mawser learned about the show, he turned away from the G.H.Q. bulletin board, touched his long chin, and determined to shave, in spite of the fact that the show would be video, and he would see it in his barracks. He had an hour and a half. It felt good to have a purpose again - even the small matter of shaving before eight o' clock. Eight o' clock Tuesday, just the way it used to be. Everyone used to say, Wednesday morning, 'How about the way Starr sang THE BREEZE AND I last night?'"

Isn't that tremendous? Beautiful writing, that. You know what he did? "He determined to shave".

(Laughter)

Now, I just pick up a razor.

(Laughter)

Some people decide to shave. A guy who doesn't talk in sent-ences ... "Eight o'clock Tuesday, just the way it used to be." .... is he going to "determine" to shave? And the answer is that no, he doesn't.

VOICE Doesn't shave?

(Laughter)

FOYSTER At the last Convention ((1966: BG)) Robert Heinlein was presented - you know, there was a lot of discussion between Christopher Jay and John Baxter - and the thing that was singled out for Heinlein was his dialogue, "Tremendous dialogue", they said. I quote from a story entitled BLOWUPS HAPPEN :

> "'Put down that wrench!'
>
> The man addressed turned slowly around and faced the speaker. His expression was hidden by a grotesque helmet, part of a heavy lead and cadmium armour which shielded his entire body. But the tone of voice in which he answered showed nervous exasperation.
>
> 'What the hell's eatin' you, doc?'"

(Laughter)

Well, you can see the contrast between the first command, the paragraph of description and this character who's been abused, in his response. This seems naturalistic enough dialogue. Would you like to hear the next thing the gentleman who said 'What the hell's eatin' on you,doc?" said? This is what he said:

> "'Just as you say, Doctor Szilard, but send for your relief too. I shall demand an immediate hearing'"

(Groans)

Now this is not naturalistic dialogue, as George said. People don't talk one way now and, in the heat of the moment, a different way.

WHITEFORD Schizophrenic....

FOYSTER Now these two blokes are supposed to be pretty good. Is this sort of thing representative of science fiction? And if it is, is it enough to wipe science fiction as literature completely? Damien first.

BRODERICK I don't know what to say, because my preconceptions are such that I've wiped it already for other reasons. Well, this is another stab in the back. To me it's a stab in the back to the people who read it, too, and those who get enthusiastic about it. You can't simply say that science fiction is grotty old rubbish without saying that the people who enthuse over it... that their standards are in some ways shabby, that their reading is lacking in perceptiveness and a number of other corollaries, which I won't go on with because I don't want to get beaten up. (Laugh..)

PAT TERRY Could we hear the original question read please?

FOYSTER Well, basically the problem is...

TERRY I asked for the original question... to be re-read

FOYSTER Well, if I had it written in front of me, Pat. What I had written...

TERRY As you read the question out will you please re-read it?

FOYSTER I think my question...

TERRY I don't want you to think, I just want you to read the question as you read it.

(Train whistle interrupts recording).

FOYSTER Why is s f so badly written?

TERRY Well, that's ... rubbish.

FOYSTER That's right. It was not read.

TERRY You said "Why is there so much rubbish being written?"

FOYSTER That was the first question, Pat.

TERRY That's the one I wanted to hear.

FOYSTER Oh I'm sorry...

TERRY And I want... to define what is rubbish.

FOYSTER Science fiction?

(Laughter)

TERRY In any case, can any one man speak?... he can't speak for everyone else.

FOYSTER This is quite true.

TERRY For any author that writes a book and he puts in any detail..... unless the author himself.... .... that that was what he wrote when he wrote it.

(Transcriber: This is incomplete, but the following answer will help to explain those parts of the question not caught from the audience by a cheap microphone).

FOYSTER What do you say, George?

TURNER This is a very difficult argument to counter, because - there is an answer to it, by the way, and I'm going to attempt it - but it may involve carrying us into some rather deep water in regard to how literary historians, critics and technicians work.

Now in a lot of cases we do know what the author intended because they told us, either in letters which have been dug out or in talks or in forewords or in afterwords and things of that sort. But this isn't the only source of information. When a man has produced twenty or thirty stories, and half a dozen novels, there are certain things which he cannot hide. And those are his attitudes. When an attitude is repeated time and time again throughout the body of a man's work, you are reasonably justified in attributing to him certain motives and certain principles of operation. And you can do this with almost any author who has published

a reasonable amount of work - say 300,000 words or better.

This is not a simple thing to do, and you can get into some rather silly positions attempting it unless you're pretty thoroughly qualified. But with fairly simple work, and most science fiction is simple, there are certain things that stick out, and you can't avoid them. Heinlein's megalomania is one. Sturgeon's sadism is another. A lot of people say it's nice humanistic thinking. It isn't,.It's straight sadism, and take a good look at it next time you read a Sturgeon story. Then tell me it isn't.

So, given a knowledge of a man's previous work we can reasonably decide what is the motivation of what we're reading at the moment. We won't always be right. Sometimes we'll do him an injustice, but in general we can tell fairly well.

But the gentleman is quite right in saying, of course, that one's man's opinion does not make a fact. It most certainly doesn't. It's only by a concensus of opinion that we can achieve, not necessarily a fact, but at least a number of ideas with which to work and try to arrive at some kind of definition or idea of our own. Anybody who goes away from here saying "I believe this bloke or this bloke or this bloke was right" is doing science fiction an injustice, because he's not doing any thinking for himself. Everyone of us is going to be wrong on some point. Every one of us has a reasonable chance of being right on some other point. But I think it's only fair to say that when any man has published a fair body of work he has told an awful lot about himself that he didn't intend to. And he's generally most surprised when you point it out to him.

I've had something like 300 clippings of my own work and every now and then I read through them, and find out things that I realise are true, that somebody else perceived, and that I didn't know I possessed, or didn't know I was producing in the work. Occasionally I find things that are unjust, but every now and then something comes through that is true. And in myself I feel it. And that is why I'm so certain that with careful reading of any man's work you can find his motives, and his intentions, and be 95% right.

HARDING Give us an example from the science fiction field, applying these techniques. I'm sure the attendees would be interested.

TURNER Well, let's see, I'll have to think fast.

HARDING Well, Heinlein, he's easy. Or Sturgeon?

TURNER No, let's go back a bit further. A book that prac-tically everybody who reads science fiction has read at some stage of the game: THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON.

Now, when anybody criticizes THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON the first thing you get is a howl about the impossibility of cavorite. Granted. And I suggest it doesn't matter a damn. Wells wanted to get his people off the ground. He did some rather sloppy thinking, which is unlike Wells, because he was generally pretty right in his ideas, but he ignored little things like the conservation of energy and the fact that you can't get something for nothing.

But he got his people off the ground, and I suggest in this case that it didn't matter because he was not writing a novel about anti-gravity, nor was he writing a novel about interplanetary travel, though both these things came into it. What he was writing about was the possibility of another type of civilization, at least as good as our own, equally as effective, and utterly different from anything we can understand.

Now, how do we know that this is what he was doing? We know because the fact is mentioned in the dialogue in the first chapter, for a start. You don't notice it when you are reading the book. It's just an odd bit of dialogue that passes by. It's only the second or third time round that it sinks in.

We know because of the way the book is constructed. Wells was a very careful constructor of his plots and he first of all got his two characters together, and alone, in space and made his first point, that as civilized human beings they couldn't get on together. Again, it passes by, not particularly noticed because it simply impinges on you as something you'd expect anyway.

He gets his people onto the moon, and then he gives you the first hint of what's to come. He first of all gives you quite a lot of detail drawn from contemporary telescopic research and scientific articles giving some general idea of what conditions could be like, and then, little by little, he opens it up further and further, getting further away from fact and more into fantasy until he's got you at the point he wanted you to be; when you're ready to accept anything.

And thenhe hits with the idea that is quite commonplace today, but which in 1901 or thereabouts, when the book was written, came home with a bang - that we are not necessarily the lords of creation. That was all he had to say. And he spent the first three quarters of the book getting ready to say it, and then he said it.

We know, from careful reading of the book, that that was his intention because every single thing that went before it built up to that one point and one statement. Now that is what I mean by literary detective work, when you're looking for motivation and intention. You cannot find it in a single reading. You have to come back to the thing and understand it thoroughly. And you discover, little by little, that all the things that seemed to be just wordage in fact had their place - were put there to prepare your mind for what was coming, and in the case of FIRST MEN IN THE MOON he gives it to you in about the third last chapter. And he spent the whole of the book preparing for that.

FOYSTER Anyone else?

VOICE What's the message of the INVISIBLE MAN?

TURNER The message of THE INVISIBLE MAN is a very simple one, that invisibility..

(Blurp) (Microphone fell over)

(Laughter)

FOYSTER (After much fooling around with the microphone) Well, shall we tackle another aspect of this subject? Or, does anyone else want to get their two cents' worth? $2.50 worth?

MERVYN BINNS There's just one thing I'd like to say...

HARDING No, no, not yet, Mervyn

FOYSTER You can ask a question, Merv.

(Chuckles)

Right Merv.

BINNS What does the panel think of the idea that good science fiction must have good scientific ideas? The science in the book is not inaccurate.

FOYSTER You must be my straight man. Lee?

HARDING I don't write science fiction, John.

FOYSTER Right. George?

TURNER I think it's essential if you're going to call it science fiction. If the science is wrong call it something else.

FOYSTER Damien?

BRODERICK I don't know why it was called science fiction but I'd roughly agree: it's not. So it doesn't have to be scientific.

WHITEFORD I think the main thing is the people in it, but if you're using science it should be accurate where you do use it.

FOYSTER Jack?

WODHAMS It's a device...

FOYSTER Now you see, here we've got a couple of different viewpoints. Some people say it's essential. Some people say it's a device. We could perhaps come in the middle and say it's important.

Well now, what are we going to do when the science is wrong? I don't mean that the guy had people walking around on their heads or anything like that, but just that it's a little bit simple-minded. I'll explain what I mean.

You probably all know a story by Arthur Porges, called THE RUUM. It's a very impressive story about this... well, it's a very impressive story. But the science part: Whether you can get a little thing like this that destroys everything within a hundred yards or not - that doesn't matter. He can invent that. But he can't do this. And this is the opening section, and it's quite separate from the actual story:

(Transcriber: Quotes whole of story down to "And on earth it was the Age of Reptiles." You copy it from a book, Gillespie).

(BG: You -----, Foyster. I've never heard of the thing before this moment. Everybody look up their own copies of THE RUUM).

I was very impressed when I read this first. Because it is beautifully built up and the problem that occurs on Earth is a genuinely-motivated one. This sort of thing could happen: the guy leaves his ruum behind accidentally and he's going to come back and get it. But he gets beaten up.

(Laughter)

But how about that billion-year orbit?

(Laughter)

TURNER Some star!

FOYSTER That's a bloody big orbit.

WHITEFORD Also remarkable is that he got to Rigel, which is, from memory, 540 light years away.

FOYSTER Important fact, important fact. Now you see, he's got interstellar overdrive, so he can crack the 540 light years within a couple of weeks all right, but... it's possible to do a little bit of mathematics here A billion year orbit around Rigel has a minimum diameter of fifty light years (Transcriber: probably meant radius). In the region of Rigel and within 50 light years of it you would find something of the order of 300 stars, one of which might just possibly have a greater attraction than Rigel.

(Laughter)

TURNER He's solved the three-body problem.

WHITEFORD Could I interrupt for a second? They talk about the Vanguard as having a 2000 year orbit, meaning that it goes on orbiting for two thousand years before it finally decays. The actual orbiting time is only an hour and...

FOYSTER He says "a billion year orbit". Orbit is usually applied to the period. I think they would say that Vanguard orbits for 200 years, but a 2000 year orbit is a different thing.

HARDING Yes, and this is relatively new. It wasn't in use at the time of the story...

FOYSTER Not in 1954.

WHITEFORD The point is that he should have made it clear

HARDING He just wanted a superlative.

FOYSTER This is the point; this is the very point. He just wanted to have a nice big figure, so that we'd be impressed. But he picked the wrong figure.

Now I've got another example here, of a bloke doing a similar thing. It is J.T. McIntosh - or M'Intosh, as Dick says - and it's no doubt a good story, but he just wants to have something impressive, and he jiggers it.

"THE BLISS OF SOLITUDE.

Ord sat in his swivel chair and surveyed the Solar System. The clarity of vision, unimpeded by the two-hundred

mile curtain of Earth's atmosphere, was such that, from his position in Pluto's orbit, he could see with the naked eye, every one of the planets except Pluto itself, hiding in a cluster of bright stars, and Mercury, eclipsed at the moment, by the sun."

(Laughter)

Hand up all those who have ever seen Mercury? From the Earth's orbit....

Now, in fact, from Pluto's orbit the Sun is a crummy little star. It's not as bright as Sirius (Transcriber: Idiot, can't you get anything right?). It is possible, we think it's possible, just possible, that you might be able to see Jupiter on a clear night.

HARDING Is it significant that this was published in GALAXY and not ASTOUNDING? Would Campbell have let that through, do you think?

FOYSTER (Despairingly) Probably. What do you think, Jack?

WODHAMS I don't think that where it was published matters particularly. I do think that this is again a little gloss that has been put on, and it's wrong.

TURNER Well, Mr Campbell is quite prepared to accept a few things so long as they're nice conventions. He hasn't objected to invisibility in spite of the fact that they'd all be blind...

FOYSTER There's another sort of problem, though, a little bit different. This is where you are reading a story which you accept but maybe there's something that troubles you about it. It mightn't be scientifically inaccurate, but you just can't believe it: how about this, Leigh Edmonds?

Isaac Asimov's NIGHTFALL. You will recall, perhaps, that in this story the sun never sets on this particular planet. It surrounds hundreds of little stars - six in fact, none of them very bright, and at the time of the action of the story only the red dwarf is in the sky. And the plot, I suppose, amounts to the fact that the sun sets.

Unfortunately there's a religious order who believe that this means the end of the universe, and they preach about the sudden coming of, in capital letters, THE STARS. And in fact old Isaac gets all worked up.

Eventually the sun sets and he looks up at the blood-curdling blackness... "Through it shone the stars. Not Earth's feeble 3600 stars visible to the eye. Lagash"(the name of this place, if you'll excuse me)"was in the centre of a giant cluster. Thirty thousand mighty suns shone down in the soul-searing splendour" etc etc. You can imagine the situation. Thirty thousand mighty suns, eh?

TURNER There are a lot of unfortunate things about that passage. Things that really stop you. For instance, Lagash is the name of an ancient city on Earth, which immediately makes you stop, and you're outside the story.

FOYSTER Don't you feel uneasy about these thirty thousand mighty suns?

HARDING It would be rather bright, wouldn't it?

FOYSTER And yet they appeared suddenly, and this when there was only a red dwarf, which glows dimly.

And yet you could not say: "No, it couldn't happen that way" because Isaac is very clever and he doesn't say how densely populated this cluster is, so you can't tell how bright these stars would individually be. They would all be brighter than Sirius, and Sirius is not visible to the naked eye in the daytime - not on Earth.

But Venus is, and undoubtedly some of these would be visible in Earth daylight. But this is not something about which one can say: you are wrong, mate. It's just something you feel uneasy about.

And I was asked.... Mr. Aldiss, this is for you. I was asked to pick out something from a Brian Aldiss story too.

This meant I had to find a Brian Aldiss story. Fortunately I had one. It's about POOR LITTLE, er, POOR LITTLE WARRIOR. A guy goes back into the past, and he's hunting for prehistoric monsters and he comes across a brontosaurus. You know what a Brontosaurus is: it's that great big long fellow who lives in the water, weighs about 100 ton. You know what he does? You won't believe this. I didn't believe it. It's got parasites. And, well, they're bigger than the bloke is, you see. And, you know what a brontosaurus looks like, don't you? It's a big slimy thing covered with fat and weeds and it eats... it's a vegetarian. He says it's got smelly breath, too.

(Laughter)

You know, does Murray Rose have smelly breath?

Anyway, you know what this parasite does? It cocks its leg...

against one of the brontosaurus' vertebrae.

HARDING Oh.

FOYSTER How would you go about cocking your leg against a whale's vertebra? - which is the approximate equivalent.

(Laughter)

Now this sort of thing is not the same as a story being sci-entifically inaccurate in the sense of, as I sa d, someone walking around on their head, or breathing ordinary air on the asteroids. This is just someone writing, and he says "I'll put in a nice bit here" and he puts it in and it's wrong. And this jars your feeling for the story.

Now, two questions, I think, arise out of this. Is this widespread? And if it is, what can be done about it? Or should anything be done about it?

TURNER Frankly, I think that that sort of thing, taking the particular example of Aldiss - I don't think that sort of thing matters very much. No writer ever turns out a perfect work, unless it is very very short indeed. And you do, you must, make certain allowances. You can't ask for perfection the whole time. What you do ask for, I think, is that the total effect of the work should be impressive. And if a couple of details strike you on the way, well, if you like the work you forgive 'em, and if you don't, you tear hell out of them.

FOYSTER Quite right... Damien?

BRODERICK I'd roughly agree. I think that this is one of the problems that s f is heir to because it takes on the whole universe and each story has got to be different from the one before it. And because it is basically, in my view, a sort of adventure-stimulus thing. You've got to have lots of lush background detail flopping through it, and to be consistent about all these things, then you've got to whip in three new sciences in every story - you'd have to be a genius or something like that. You'd have to spend a hell of a lot of time in the library and I just don't think that you can expect that of a writer

WODHAMS Well, I don't know, it sounded like a funny story to me. I find it very amusing to deal with it personally. I can just imagine one of these parasites running along and you could make something of that. You're out of context really, a little bit. Science is to be used. To say something, I suppose. As I've said before, I try to be amusing and I amuse myself. And I'm not too

serious about anything. I've got something coming up which you'll probably, mathematically, tear to pieces.

HARDING John, don't you think a lot of us take science fiction rather seriously? I recall at the last Convention Dick Jenssen asking... suggesting that it was about as worthwhile as discussing THE HEART OF JULIET JONES.

FOYSTER True. I think you've got to look at it this way, Lee. If you're going to discuss science fiction at all, then it must be done seriously. I don't think you can discuss science fiction frivolously. I mean, I can any time, but....

HARDING Yes.

(Laughter)

FOYSTER I think if you want to really discuss science fiction you have to be serious. This means you can't play around. I think it means that you have got to apply some of these tough criteria that George and Damien have been talking about. If you are not you are only kidding yourself.

But that doesn't mean that other people have to think you are serious. And so, when I read people talking about Keith Laumer being, not just a good author or writing good stories, but a Great Author... well then I have to ask myself "To what extent is this bloke kidding himself?" And I think that we are at a Science Fiction Convention: we're discussing science fiction, for want of something better to discuss. Well, let's at least do it seriously.

HARDING I think Michael Moorcock, a propos of this, said at a Convention once: "There's nothing wrong with fairy tales, the reading of fairy tales and the reading science fiction and the reading of fantasy, but there is something definitely wrong with a mature adult who reads nothing else." Would you agree with this point of view?

FOYSTER I don't know why I should have to answer the questions.

(Laughter)

No, I would not say that there was necessarily anything wrong with someone who read... an adult person who read only science fiction. There is nothing seriously wrong with an adult person who doesn't read anything.

I guess that makes me a Fireman. (Laughter)

Reading is something that some people do. Reading science fiction is something that an even smaller number of people do. Playing football is something a small number of people do. None of these things mean that there's anything wrong with a person. If you read science fiction, and you think you're Kimball Kinnison... and you take off at night... This in fact happened: someone did think this. If you think you're Superman and jump out of a window, then there is something wrong. But it is exactly the same sort of thing that is wrong with someone who does anything else and is so harmed by it. Science fiction is just another form of idiosyncracy: it's not lunacy.

HARDING Can we quote you on that? (Got you into a corner on that one, didn't I?).

FOYSTER But I think we were talking about the seriousness of it and, in particular, to what extent we can forgive scientific slips, not errors.

WHITEFORD Well, I'd agree with that. It all boils down to a definition really. It depends what you define as science fiction. I think you'd probably get as many definitions as you'd get people because it is something that blurs into other forms.

HARDING Let's not define it. Let's write it.

WHITEFORD That's the main point. I think....

TURNER I think there are other kinds of error which are far more serious. For instance, one thing you can do with any science fiction story dealing with, shall we say, the local galactic patrol, is that you can pick immediately just who has been in the Armed Forces and who hasn't.

(Laughter)

WHITEFORD And who has been in the Navy and who the Air Force.

TURNER And that sort of nonsense is unforgivable, because it is quite easy to find out how these thing are done.

WODHAMS But it is not necessary that they are done at that time, in the same way. If I wrote something about intergalactics... I have not been in the Army, Navy or Air Force because I was, ah, unfit. But I invent my own damned Army Commander, and if he wants to run it upside down, and if he has his crew running around on their hands...

TURNER Nevertheless, there is one crew I won't have,

and that is the crew of what is described as a tightly-disciplined ship wherein the local stoker or whatever he may be addresses the Admiral as "Joe".

(Laughter)

WODHAMS I got chewed out recently by a lawyer over a story I wrote. It appear d in ANALOG. And he wrote to me all about this legal jargon, saying that this is not done and that is not done. And I didn't give a damn how he ran his court. It was more or less not too far in the future, but it was far enough in the future not to be real and if I wanted my constables to call the judge Your Honour, or Your Worship... I mean I don't know how they address people in courts, or all the rigmarole, and he was upset by this. And I deliberately didn't locate the place in any particular country, to get away from this. The legal stuff was important to the story, in my opinion. I was trying to say something else, and the legal thing was just something to hang it on. I didn't want to be stuck with it. I don't want to be limited. I don't want to be limited. I don't want to be a lawyer just to write one lousy little story. And I don't want to be a physicist to write about...

HARDING You can have your reference books... Don't be lazy!.

WODHAMS But you get these blokes who know it inside out and they tear you to pieces, and that is not important. You're talking about the scientific stuff in the magazines, then the scientific stuff is not really important.

HARDING No, the writing...

WODHAMS The writing is important, and what you're doing with it. You're dealing with people essentially, not things. You're interested in what happens to the people not what happens to the computer.

HARDING Campbell is.

WODHAMS Is he?

I'm not learning any particular thing, and if I write a story about, say, a doctor, well, how he cuts his patients in half, and what he does is immaterial. Just how he achieves this I don't care.

HARDING You've got diplomatic immunity because it is in the future.

WODHAMS More or less. It's a technical....

HARDING I disagree.

(Confused murmurs)

WHITEFORD If you do want to describe an operation I thin it's a thing that... well, if I get a situation like that well I write straight through the thing and then do a bit of checking up.

(Laughter)

I come back and fix it up. And hope I haven't made a blue.

WODHAMS Put say they don't believe you. You might believe that eventually you might be able to transfer one brain from one person to another. Now the ability to do this - the technical... It might never occur. But it might. So what happens if you put one brain into another man's body? It doesn't matter how this is achieved. It doesn't mean anything. It's a gimmick, and if science fiction people are so trained that they accept this...

WHITEFORD But suppose you say people are doing it in 1975 or...

WODHAMS But so long as it is not next year, it is still not now. Now I've written a story about... which as I said, Mr Foyster here will chew up..But it involves going into an orbit again. It's a million mile or so orbit and it's done in an hour. Now they're weightless.

FOYSTER That's all right.

WODHAMS Good, now I don't know exactly what will happen in a million mile orbit, but I wanted that vehicle back in the same place every time, for my convenience.

HARDING And Campbell hasn't bought it?

WODHAMS I didn't want this thing going off into space - I wanted it to come back. And so that's the way I made it.

But I rationalized to myself, saying, Well, a million mile orbit in an hour... how far will it travel in a second? And in a second it would be travelling more or less in a straight line; for a minute more or less/a straight line. How much centrifugal force can you get out of a straight line? So I thought... that'll do.

(Gales of laughter).

And this is good enough for me.

TURNER You know, Jack, a simple call to the local... to any major city library would get you that information.

WODHAMS Yes, but how much time have I got to go flailing through all these indexes?

TURNER No, you just ring up and ask them. Tell them what you want. Then hang onto the phone and they go and get it for you.

HARDING Well, I'll improve the science in mine when I've improved the writing.

WODHAMS Well, it's to entertain, primarily, and the tech-nical stuff comes after. But I don't want to educate people, I don't want to have too much science in the story.

HARDING It bogs it down.

WHITEFORD But doesn't it boil down to what, I think it was E.M. Forster said, about writing - any sort of writing - that it depends on the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. Anything that's bad enough to jolt - like some of those things John read out a little while ago - this is why they are bad. Because they make the reader stand back from the story, and then he realises that it....

WODHAMS There's a lot of detail goes in that is not really necessary.

HARDING Like poor old Arthur Clarke's FALL OF MOONDUST. You know the ship that sinks hundreds and hundreds of feet into the dust? Doesn't seem very likely now, does it, John?

WODHAMS That's his tough luck.

FOYSTER I think someone mentioned here about entertaining

(Laughter)

Perhaps we could do some. And to close off this I'll ask these gentlemen what they like most about science fiction.

HARDING Damien's gone, you notice.

FOYSTER George, what do you like most about science fiction?

TURNER Oh I'm afraid this is theoretical. I like to read science fiction best ... this is just leading up to it... I like to read science fiction best when I am heavily involved in writing a novel of my own. Because I can read it without thinking.

(Groans)

HARDING Well, only recently I've been reading a lot of science fiction since we started this damned review. Prior to that I read science fiction for pretty much the same reasons as George. When I wanted to relax, and, perhaps, not think a little - perhaps the same way that professors read crime stories. There's the fillip of the mathematical puzzle to be worked out and in the science fiction story there's a little bit of entertainment with perhaps a little bit of fillip to it. Not so much make you think, George but stimulate the sort of process that wouldn't be there if you read something much worse.

WHITEFORD Well, I like it because of the freedom of it, actually. You've got a bigger range of possible things happening. You can at least see what happens to characters in environments that you couldn't possibly be working with in realistic fiction, and introduce situations that you don't get usually, or that have been thrashed to death, if you set your story in a factory or in an office, or in an ordinary village or something of that sort. Well, there have been so many of these that you have virtually no choice, unless you are very luckyand hit on some fresh little aspect which is very very hard to find...

FOYSTER Let me reword the question when it comes to Jack Wodhams.

(Laughter)

Do you like science fiction?

WODHAMS Some of it. I don't really because I'm a fan - because I'm not a fan. I like to read it and if I get partway through it and I don't like it... I haven't much time to read fiction at all, of any kind, these days because I am trying to brush up on these facts that I said were not important earlier.

(Laughter)

I get the SCIENCE JOURNAL, TIME magazine and books on...I'm picking up on psychology, philosophy and... stuff like that

and trying to improve my mind, you know. Which I don't think science fiction does. Not generally. Good science fiction, I hear you say. What is good science fiction?

And you go right back to the beginning.

JOHN BANGSUND I'd just like to hear why one Pat Terry likes s f.

TERRY Because it's damned good reading.

(Applause and stomping).

And if I were a science fiction author I'd like it because it brings in the money!

(Abrupt exit by audience for refreshments. Transcriber and present typist fall numb to the floor. Transcript, somewhat shakily, ends.)

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(Continued from Page 4) INTRODUCTION to 1968 MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CONFERENCE REPORT:

teenager? Not just because it is escape fiction, surely? Fantasy is an essential part of the educational process. I would have thought the obvious point, which nobody in particular raised, would be that science fiction presents a destructive, not a constructive fantasy life. Why? Not because it is careless about science or sex or any other particular feature. The most horrifying feature of most s f is surely its view of man himself - its moral objectionability.

Not that it so much offends my moral judgments, or your moral judgments, but that it blunts the ability of any of its readers to make such judgments. Where violence and trickery and Supa-Science can solve all problems, where does the independent exercise of the human judgment fit in?

These documents must inspire sermons. No matter. There's probably more than enough to keep all readers occupied for two more years. Please write.

The readable part of this transcript was typed by John Bangsund (who else?) quite... some... time... ago.

Letters and reviews and other essential services in the next issue. I'll remind the dilatory that some interest is required before receiving any more copies by post. I'm no philanthropist, like some people we were told about.

FICTION AMERICAN MAGAZINES

MACHINES OCT - DEC 1968

Bruce R Gillespie and George Turner

GEORGE TURNER : NEW YEAR BLUES

The s f New Year has certainly opened with a whimper. Christmas is usually a dull period for books, with all those ponderous gift productions and coffee table jobs rising like Babel into unintelligibility, but as I write this in mid-March little has happened to offer hope for better.

Particularly in s f.

On the magazine front we have had the December and January ANALOGs containing between them two reasonably entertaining stories - THE CUSTODIANS and PIPELINE - and all the rest of the mixture as before. Also Harry Stine's hysterical review of 2001 (the novel) as a counterweight to his previous hysterical anti-review of the film. Both must be read to be believed.

The December IF gave top billing to the worst Azimov story to appear in years. He obviously dictated it over lunch while he was thinking about something else. It also contained three dreary and secondhand short stories, plus an instalment of THE COMPUTER CONSPIRACY, which is Mack Reynolds at his wordy worst.

But it also contained - bright spot in the gloom - a tale by J.G. Ballard which was original in conception, written in English and was actually a story. Just as though Ballard had forgotten himself and returned to first principles to turn out something of interest. It is called THE COMSAT ANGELS and is quite entertaining and of no importance except that it shows the author contemplating something other than the inside of his own head.

December GALAXY offered us one of the predictable Anderson novellas featuring one of his boring Amazons as heroine and made some point or other about cannibalism and cultural prejudice, while Fritz Leiber added further con-

fusion to the Nativity story and John Wyndham returned with a story he must regret having written. Dear old political philosopher Mack Reynolds was also present, lecturing like mad.

And the short list for Award voting at the Convention has appeared. It would make a strong man blench.

BRUCE GILLESPIE :

It would be stretching a point to say that I find originality in this collection of the American s f magazines. I can say that I find some pleasure in some offerings, and this in itself is unusual. But why do I still find pleasure in unoriginality? Or perhaps do I miss some rays of hope that still glimmer from the mountains of mediocrity?

The magazines remain (barely) readable, not because of the average quality of the fiction offered, but because of the occasional surprises. The magazines do not take much longer to read than comic books with an equivalent number of pages, and one can still afford to slip through the muck to find the occasional speck of gold.

Or... speck of pyrites? Take the greatest surprise of the three months - the unexpected flare of classy writing from Queenslander Jack Wodhams. Wodhams' conversation-pieces-cum-ANALOG-lectures, are infamous. Indeed, except for one snappy little offering in NEW WRITINGS, we had given up hope that Jack would ever produce anything else. They have become less and less funny, and more and more didactic

SPLIT PERSONALITY (ANALOG, November) is therefore quite a surprise. Half the gimmick has surely been used before, but the twist in the idea is new to me. Even if it had not been, the story would still have been highly entertaining. SPLIT PERSONALITY would be a fusion between the styles of Jack Williamson and Mack Reynolds, if Williamson could write well, and Reynolds could stop lecturing. The details of this bizarre attempt to break the "light barrier" are narrated sparely and without fuss. The bisected main character does not suffer ad nauseum, or accept the situation with unbelievable bravery and arrogance. Instead, Wodhams gives a much better display of story-telling through conversation than he usually does. The story emerges as a wry, persistent interchange between the condemned prisoner and his slightly embarassed captors. In writing a

gimmick story, Wodhams does not abandon his moral sense, as most ANALOG contributors do. Butchery does not bring miracles, and the puppeteers of this laboratory seldom themselves by destroying their "laboratory rat".

Wodhams' other notable story, TRY AGAIN, turns up in the first Malzberg-edited FANTASTIC (November issue). The implication is that Wodhams has been trying to diversify his styles for some time, and Campbell did not catch on until he accepted SPLIT PERSONALITY. TRY AGAIN is once more a reworked, addenda series of traditional s f gimmicks. As in SPLIT PERSONALITY, there are sufficient gimmicks sufficiently well narrated to form a story superior to practically anything else appearing in the last three months. It would be too much to say that Wodhams presents full characterization. Let's say that he is sufficiently perceptive as to present characters we do not immediately reject, and he has the wit to dramatize colourful human confrontations.

Congratulations, Mr Wodhams, BUT... these stories do not add up to originality. Even if Jack suddenly emerges as one one of the great figures of the American s f field (and after SPLIT PERSONALITY I see no reason why he shouldn't) will such a position really prove anything? If a writer still chooses to exercise a superior version of the "flat-footed, post-realist prose that is almost a uniform, a worn-out old uniform" (Brian Aldiss, last issue), do you succeed at all in throwing off the uniform? Jack Wodhams "new" stories are superior entertainment, <u>not</u> because they are bright and new, but because they remind us all so nostalgically of the Golden Years of Campbell's magazine. There are few sights more astonishing than a genuine ASTOUNDING story appearing in ANALOG.

Generalize this analysis to my other "welcome surprises" of this quarter's magazines. Colin Kapp, for instance entertains well with I BRING YOU HANDS (GALAXY, Oct). It is a fast-paced story about an unfortunate man who tries to betray his wife. The language and the outline of the interpersonal situation, are both well-controlled, and don't tread as woodenly as most of Kapp's fiction for the English magazines. However, Kapp has always been an "ideas" man (mainly copied from other s f stories, so I'm told) and his training is still seen more clearly in this story than his talent.

The same again for most of the other stories I enjoyed this quarter. Gregg Conrad's resuscitated MENTAL ASSASSINS (FANTASTIC, December) has no new ideas, but keeps one guessing for a creditably long time about what <u>is</u> happening in this cranium explorer's own mind:::: Isaac Asimov's THE HOLMES-GINSBOOK DEVICE is as wryly ridiculous as any of

his best stories, but they were written in the 1950s:::: Even Robert Lory's lively romp HOWEVER (WORLDS OF FANTASY, Number 1, undated) does not seem so bright when you realise that the legend of the swindling traveller goes back to Aldiss' LEGENDS OF SMITH'S FURST and several hundred years before that. Fun, again... but, again, not new.

The biggest surprise of the three months was a Samuel Delany story that I liked.

I've not read the novels, and I have been unable to see much merit except verbosity in the few short stories I've read. I've been a bit puzzled by Foyster's pro-Delany twitterings. HIGH WEIR (IF, October) was not approached with any anticipation, but it still delighted me. Delany pares away some of the normal excesses of his language for this story, and has written a tale that conceals widsom instead of blaring it. Delany's Mars and his Mars-explorers are engaging mysteries, instead of pains in the neck, not only because of the deft outline of a complex human situation, but because Delany casually drops like a time-bomb one of the few new s f "ideas" since Bob Shaw's slow glass. Delany's contention is that a more useful model of the brain, than we have used so far, might be found in the holographic photograph. This contention is not lectured about. It is stitched so neatly into the story's fabric that it nearly disappears altogehter. Unlike any of the other authors I've talked about so far, Delany clearly sees that in any voyage of discovery, it is the discoverers and not the discoveries that must occupy the centre of the stage. HIGH WEIR was the only story of the quarter with future possibilities as well as nostalgia and backward-looking prose.

And the surprises go on. Despite the nauseous cover, the first issue of Pohl and Del Rey's non-promotion, WORLDS OF FANTASY, proves readable, and features two good stories, Lory's HOWEVER and the haunting AFTER ARMAGEDDON (Paris Flammonde). If these s f moguls would try to sell WOF properly, abandoning both sloppy covers and green paper, they may have a viable propostion :::: I was delighted by Budrys' incoherent and slightly inane attempt to prove that ANALOG is better than F&SF, because ANALOG's writers are doers, and F&SF's writers are only readers. At another point, Budrys seems to say that ANALOG and F&SF should be good buddies because both magazines are trying to do the same thing. Like a drunken girl, Budrys is much more fun when he's incoherent.

Keep 'em coming, Pohl, Malzberg, Campbell, Ferman, and you English blokes - surprises, I mean. Just show once in a while that there is a bit of life left in American s f publishing, and you may last a few years longer. Maybe.

ABOUT THE COVER... The drawing is by John Bangsund, and was originally executed for the second issue of that legendary fanzine, CANTO. The drawing depicts Mr Lee Harding, and may be taken as a tribute to his efforts on behalf of this journal. Lettering also by Bangsund.

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT 1...

With issue no.4, SF COMMENTARY incorporates AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. John Bangsund has recently published, and hopes soon to distribute, ASFR 20. He hopes next year to publish one further issue, which will contain an index to the entire 900-odd pages of ASFR, and photographs of many contributors. Meantime, letters of comment have started coming in, and rather than delay them we have decided to amalgamate the two magazines. John hopes to publish the first issue of his new fanzine, SCYTHROP, in October. (There's a whole lotta hopin' goin' on around the Bangsund place just now.)

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT 2...

Introducing a new name on the Australian science fiction scene:

HALLIFORD HOUSE

This is the name of Bangsund's Folly. It is also the name of Australia's most comprehensive science fiction service. We are booksellers, publishers (albeit in a small way), and a duplicating agency. We are also delighted to announce that we are Australian agents for ADVENT : PUBLISHERS of Chicago.

We will be publishing a regular monthly booklist. If you think you may not see this automatically, we suggest you write us and reserve a copy. The address - HALLIFORD HOUSE, PO BOX 109, FERNTREE GULLY, VICTORIA 3156.

Current ADVENT books...

Harry Warner Jr	ALL OUR YESTERDAYS	$7.50 cloth	
Alexei Panshin	HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION	$6.00 cloth	
Robert Bloch	THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM	$5.00 cloth	
Damon Knight	IN SEARCH OF WONDER	$6.00 cloth	$2.45 paper
James Blish	THE ISSUE AT HAND	$5.00 cloth	$1.95 paper
Alva Rogers	A REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING	$6.00 cloth	$2.45 paper
Ellik & Evans	THE UNIVERSES OF E E SMITH	$6.00 cloth	$2.45 paper
Lloyd Eshbach (ed)	OF WORLDS BEYOND	$3.50 cloth	$1.95 paper
Basil Davenport (ed)	THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL	$3.50 cloth	$1.95 paper
PROCEEDINGS of the 20th World SF Convention, Chicago			$1.95 paper
PROCEEDINGS of the 21st World SF Convention, Washington			$1.95 paper

We are primarily geared to serve the needs of Australian science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts, but for overseas readers we will be listing the best and the latest in Australian novels and general books.

Make the Bangsunds rich - send your want lists now!

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