

S F commentary



URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT 1

For the first time since the inauguration of the Hugo Awards, an American World Convention Committee has distributed the Hugo results immediately they were announced in America.

Courtesy of Ray Fisher, and the Committee of St Louiscon, held over the weekend August 28 - September 2, 1969, here are

THE HUGO AWARDS 1969:

Best Novel	STAND ON ZANZIBAR	(John Brunner)
Best Dramatic Presentation	2001 : A SPACE ODYSSEY	(Stanley Kubrick & Arthur C Clarke)
Best Novella	NIGHTWINGS	(Robert Silverberg)
Best Novelette	SHARING OF FLESH	(Poul Anderson)
Best Short Story	THE BEAST THAT SHOUTED LOVE	
	AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD	(Harlan Ellison)
Best Professional Magazine	FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION	
Best Professional Artist	JACK GAUGHAN	
Best Fanzine	PSYCHOTIC/SCIENCE FICTION	
	REVIEW	(Richard E Geis)
Best Fan Writer	HARRY WARNER Jr	
Best Fan Artist	VAUGHN BODE	

Information supplied via John Bangsund
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URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT 2

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

SUCCESS ! Both Ron E Graham and W H Smith write to say that
W H SMITH & SON LTD will "be handling VISION OF TOMORROW
on a test basis for a period of three months". Page 33
- therefore ignore
oooooooooooooooo

URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT 3

Have YOU registered for S Y N C O N 70 ?

Bigger - better - crunchier - all this and the sights of Sydney !

Friday 2nd January, Saturday 3rd January 1970. -

THE SYDNEY SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION - \$3 membership.

Membership fee should be mailed to The Treasurer, Syncon,
P O Box A.215, Sydney South, N S W, 2000. Make cheques payable to
the Treasurer, Robin Johnson.

Exciting events include A Panel Discussion, A Guest of Honour Speech,
(and possibly other great speeches), Films, An Auction, and
(shudder) one whole morning devoted to comics fandom (John Ryan).

So Synney in Seventy. It must be seen to be believed.

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bunyips

[illegible]

(May 15 1969)

I am very interested in your series of articles on me. The reviewer is doing a good job, although he does not agree with me that MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE is my best book.

By the way -- He wonders if NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR might be an alternate title for COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD. No, it is not; it is a Doubleday hardback novel. I hope very much that he can locate a copy of it and can review it.

***brg** That reviewer who "is doing a good job", is, I must admit - me! Thanks for the help in obtaining the latest three Philip Dick novels. More on that score in several issues time. Meanwhile, thanks for the letter in which you Explain All concerning the central thesis behind the novels. It has been very useful while I have been reading NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR and DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP. However, it is a certainty that I will disagree in some way or another.

ROBERT SILVERBERG

(May 27 1969)

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U S A

S F COMMENTARY No 1 has just reached me. I'm dismayed by your mimeography and depressed by George Turner's review of my book THE MASKS OF TIME, in which he offers a paragraph of unalloyed praise discouragingly

embedded in patronizing and inaccurate put-downs. And it seems to me that some of your own despondence over the present state of s f is unwarranted, though I agree with you that the magazines are certainly in poor shape. Despite all this, I much relished the issue.

***brg** I wrote back to Robert, explaining that George's attitude to MASKS OF TIME was shared by quite a few other Australian science fiction readers. I explained that we were under the impression that Robert was trying something new in MASKS OF TIME - that at long last he was breaking away from what I termed as his "old hack style". In writing this way I was unaware of the extremely derogatory tone that the word "hack" has in all s f fields but the Australian. I've heard the word used many times by many different people. Unfortunately I didn't bother to look it up in the Oxford Dictionary (where it means "common drudge". Gulp.)

The meaning that I've always used is - a writer who must write "x" amount of fiction for "x" amount of money in "x" time. On that score, Vivaldi, Dostoyevsky, Mozart and Dickens may be included among the world's greatest hacks. In other words, any writer who works at frantic speed is thought of as a "hack". The word seems to have nothing to do with the quality of the work turned out under such a system. (This explanation will need to cover my description of BUG JACK BARRON, by Norman Spinrad, which I called the "greatest hack novel of the decade" in ASFR 19. Too many words too speedily written - but to what arresting effect?)

I've also thought of the word as an opposite to "anti-hack". MASKS OF TIME, George was saying, was the first self-consciously "literary" novel that Robert had published up to that time. George liked MAN IN THE MAZE better. Perhaps, like myself, he still thought that MAN IN THE MAZE was in s f workman's prose - efficient, non-self-conscious prose - "hack" prose? A matter of terms, but it is easy to insult novels when all that was intended was to describe them. A propos of my letter, Robert sent back the following letter:

(July 26 1969)

I remain unconvinced and undelighted by congratulations offered me on my breaking free from "the old hack style". It's now close to ten years since I consciously wrote hack s f, and I don't see how what I did for a living in 1955 - 1959 can be very much relevant to what I wrote in 1964 - 1969, except as historical footnote. In this country people have been approaching my work as though the current Silverberg is unrelated to the old one, which of course is equally fallacious; but I'd be grateful for an examination of the current

production taken on its own terms, without the usual pat-on-the-head for having Gone Straight. I submit that the series THORNS-MASKS OF TIME-MAN IN THE MAZE-NIGHTWINGS-HAWKSBILL STATION-UP THE LINE-TO LIVE AGAIN represents as respectable an oeuvre as anyone in this field has compiled over the past four years, the much touted hotshot newcomers included. (I admit that much of this stuff has not yet reached Australia and so George Turner etc have no real perspective on my output. MAN IN THE MAZE, by the way, appeared in IF in a castrated version stripped of 15,000 words. The complete version was done by Avon last winter.)

brg** MAN IN THE MAZE arrived about a month ago, but some of the other books are taking their time to reach these barren shores. Would anybody like to do an article on those six novels? Do I hear the answer: "No"? Are you readers drowning in books as well? We'll try to look at those books, as well as the other 50 - 100 titles that swamp us each month. We try. Meanwhile, see John Bangsund's review

LEIGH EDMONDS

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The trouble with S F COMMENTARY No 3 is that it is so full of transcripts from the Conference in 1968 (long may it rest in peace) that there is no room for anything which I find interesting. Jack the Wod didn't do too bad when you got to read what he said, but of course, he had a lot of prompting from the audience and he would not have said much at all if he had been forced to speak all on his own. The start of the transcript (complete with cheers and all) indicated fairly well what the spirit of the Conference was like (before the authors and their panel got to work anyhow). I had enough trouble trying to sit through the Author Panel without squirming, so you can imagine what I did with your transcript. In all fairness to yourself, I did try. However, try as I may, not past the fifth page did I get.

I hope for your sake that we will be (sorry about that - Paul is talking in one ear and REVOLUTION 9 in the other; REVOLUTION 9 is by the way a pretty incredible thing when you know what is happening in my humble opinion it is an audio type acid trip which turns bad - bad, very bad - and then comes out good in the end so you can see that concentration is something which is not easy to obtain). What I meant to say was, I hope for your sake that other people will read it, otherwise you have wasted quite a lot of time and money and paper and effort. Still, best of luck and all with your next issue which I am really looking forward to and please make sure that you have a good picture of me in it if you are having pictures in it after all.

***brg** (I repeat) we will try, we will try. Those Convention pictures still loom on everybody's horizon, but they don't seem to advance very fast. Next issue will have to be the Convention Issue... or the next issue? I need some of J G Ballard's time flowers to defend the magazine against the galloping months. ::: Other people did read No 3 - people such as John Brunner (see next issue) and Jack Wodhams, who was horrified (see this issue). All I can hope is that the Sydney-siders can put on as exciting a turn.

JOHN FOYSTER

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Re S F COMMENTARY 2: In replying to George Turner, and concerning Koestler's THE ACT OF CREATION, you ask "review, anyone?" I saw the definitive review today. It appeared in ISIS in 1966 and was written by

G G Simpson. Simpson delicately pointed out that all Koestler did was to dredge up old ideas, out of a vast possible selection, and present them as new and complete. He was not amused.

I've already said something about I Q tests - in my previous letter. You mention other kinds of tests this time. Practically, it seems to me, the only sound way to construct a test is to pick out two groups of people - those you wish to select and those you wish to avoid. You then give these people tests and pick out the questions which make the correct distinction. The element of chance then comes in, for your two groups may not have been sufficiently representative. The test constructed in this way should at least have a chance of doing the job for which it is designed.

(August 11 1969) Re S F COMMENTARY 4:

George has a point with my "generation gap" problems, but I don't think that in my case age has much to do with it. Since I have not, since about 1960, regarded s f as so important that I must try to read all that's going and indeed, have never ranked it particularly highly, I don't suffer the pangs of discovering later that it ain't all that good. Nor have I really had the problem of finding that something which once seemed fine now seems less so: indeed, my only concrete experience of this has been precisely the opposite: works which didn't appeal to me in the past now seem much finer (SWANN'S WAY was a drag at 17, but great at 23; USA was good at 18 but magnificent at 26, and I'm glad I didn't ever finish ULYSSES until I had a daughter born on Bloomsday). In all this time those stories which I enjoyed in the past have become no less: it is rather that I have found further flowers, if you like.

But this may not be quite what George is getting at, for he talks of the solidification of opinions, something I dread. I may not like changing my mind, which is probably why I tend to keep my options open, but I haven't yet found that it has stopped changing quite independently of my efforts. It seems to me that opinions stop changing when their owner decides that all the evidence is in, and I avoid making that decision.

The generation gap problem I do have is with some younger people who have turned off their minds (quite understandably so, since all they get is TV crap anyway). Feiffer did it well in a cartoon some time ago, with a young bloke explaining the problems of the world: for panel after panel he worked up to making his point, speaking in roughly the language Damien used in his piece on Vonnegut: in the final panel he explains what he has been talking about: "Like, y'know man". There is a communication barrier, but it is caused by people who can't or won't speak. There is some point in Louis Armstrong's "If you can't feel it..." tag, but humans, except for Scientologists, are not yet telepathic.

George says a lot of very sensible things, in other words. With respect to your own enquiries about Delany, I do think he will

become a good writer. He's going modestly well now, and works hard at it. His virtues are valuable ones, though his faults be many. It seems to me easier to remove faults than to inject virtues.

George is correct in suggesting that DECLINE AND FALL was "slight and tossed-off" but not quite accurate in surmising reasons as to why I had not followed up the point he raises. The actual reason was that I thought that particular angle had been worked to death. The real point seemed to me to be the attempt to show that one, if any, of these apparent Golden Ages, was truly such, and that there had been a decline. (I notice that I haven't convinced Mr Piper).

That's a very good idea you put into Gary Woodman's letter (shooting all the U S editors and putting a fifteen foot wall around the place): make it twenty and I'll support you. My point of view, however, continues to be that no one takes any notice of fanzines. Gary's ideas about 2001 seem more sensible than any I read in ASFR 17 and the backbone spoof is very good.

Don't go claiming to know my mind too often: I don't happen to think that a couple of strong editors would make everything rosy again (who said it ever was? Well, you don't quite).

I don't find David Piper's comments on DECLINE AND FALL very convincing: of course quality and quantity aren't the same thing, and there's no suggestion on my part that they are. If I wanted equals for MacApp and Saberhagen I could have done quite well with Sol Galaxan and Carter Sprague III. Frankly, Messrs. Delany, Zelazny, and Disch don't seem too hot to me, from the quality point of view: as several people have pointed out, Zelazny's reputation is largely fraudulent, and I am not impressed by those pieces of Disch's I have read. Delany will certainly be a very good writer one day, but maybe not now. As I recall it, by the way, just before I wrote that article, MacApp and Saberhagen had been touted to me as currently great writers (come to think of it, that probably started me off). They are bad, but so are Lafferty and many more others than I could conveniently list.

Now the argument David Piper advances is the outwardly meaningful one that people always see the reasonably immediate past as better than is the present. This can be extended with meaning to the case of the reader who likes best the first s f he ever found, a common and explicable phenomenon. But the point of my article was that there is considerable evidence these days to suggest that there's something operating besides this nostalgia bit. In this article I presented Buck Coulson's YANDRO POLL, in which relatively recent readers of s f plumped solidly for stories written a long time earlier (only three of the Top Ten less than 14 years earlier). Now this ain't nostalgia, for the voters weren't reading s f anywhere near the dates in question, and some of them weren't even born when the stories were published. The evidence from Miller is much the same.

In an article last year I tried to show that the average age of a story in an anthology was increasing with time. A random selection of anthologies, other than annual bests, showed that while fifteen years ago the average lag from original to anthology publication was 5 years, the figure by 1966 was about 12 (and up to 14) years. There are arguments against this sort of thing, but I'm prepared for most of them: for example, some argue that there were more

magazines in the old days - this is true, but how unfortunate that stories are picked from them for anthologies very rarely. And so on.

Finally, of course, it seems to me that Anderson, Blish, Boucher, Brackett, Bradbury, Brown, Budrys and Co are a pretty fair team to set against Delany, Zelazny and Disch. Bradbury may be less stylish than Delany, of course, Anderson less scrupulous than Zelazny and Dick less imaginative than Disch, but they have their moments; and there are almost thirty more names to go with them.

Delany's name was first mis-spelled, to my knowledge, by his Great Fan Miss Merrill. P S Miller, who'd had it right up to that point, caught the habit and it spread like wildfire.

Re THE UNDERPEOPLE: George seems to me to have missed the point: but the point is a complex one: a theorist of psychological warfare could scarcely help but be persuasive, for instance, and the "beastliness" George finds is merely reaction to Linebarger's political philosophy. Since Smith's universe is wholly artificial, it doesn't matter too much that ^{he} introduces out-of-date Australianisms, does it, cobber?

A good issue, Bruce: pretty punchy. Keep it up, but remember that the number of pages and the number of copies printed are not indices of worth.

***brg** But lively contributors help, don't they, John?

I received from Gollancz the other day a volume edited by Damon Knight, entitled 100 YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION. The original intention of the volume (I haven't read the introduction yet, so I'm not sure) was to present a span of science fiction stretching from approximately 1869 to 1969. That presumes the long-suffering reader believes that there were s f stories in 1869. However, in this mine of rare goodies, there are 5 stories from the 'sixties, 1 story from the nineteenth century, 3 stories that originated between the years 1900 to 1949, and no less than ten stories from the early fifties. It's fairly easy to see which is Mr Knight's Golden Age.

I also think that George misses the point of Cordwainer Smith's work, but I'd better read THE UNDERPEOPLE before arguing it out with him. If Smith's universe is brutal, since when has it been so surprising? Smith's motto seemed to be: in delightful things, find delight; in horrible things recognize the horror; in all things recognize the simultaneous presence of both delight and horror. Ah well... on to my next non sequitur. ***

DAVID BOUTLAND

(19th June 1969)

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Thank you for the pleasure of S F COMMENTARY 3 which was read front cover to back on the same day that it sweetly clunked - as Podkayne would say - into my mailbox.

I wonder if it's coincidence but the arrival of your fanzine has happened

at the same time as my reawakening interest in s f. Must be the cold weather.

This Wodhams is quite a character! I wish I'd been there in '68.

I've been reading PODKAYNE OF MARS, but halfway was as far as I could stomach. "Challenges the concepts of morality and social organization..." "Unobtrusive exposition of provocative ideas..." are the back cover blurbs. Well, maybe in the second half Heinlein challenges and provokes but it will all be lost to me.

I know it's just an adolescent girl telling a story through her diary, but "Poddy" is the most sickening adolescent dewy eyed bud breasted silly superior daughter of the American Way anybody ever dreamed up.

I haven't picked up a book I couldn't finish for a long time. And I haven't been as angered by a book for a longer time. The New English Library edition, which cost me a dollar, is printed very very badly on very very cheap paper. In "Poddy's" dear immortal words:

"Oh, unspeakables! Dirty ears! Hangnails! Snol-frockey! Spit!"

***brg** All those illusions... gone! Since PODKAYNE OF MARS was one of those books that weaned me from Enid Blyton to science fiction, it's only logical that I thought it was very good... way back then. But did Heinlein write it when he was 15?

I'd like to think (but since neither of you have confirmed the idea, I won't go on thinking) that S F C 3 was partially to blame for the reckless decision made by Lee Harding and you, to go freelance. Perhaps it was the midwinter climate, after all.

RICHARD E. GEIS

(3rd July 1969)

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW magazine Re S F COMMENTARY 3:

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U S A

Poor Wodhams comes across as a dunder-head, I'm afraid, in his speech and in the discussion. Which is about my speed, too. I'm inarticulate in person, face-to-face, and just get by

at the typer.

The debate on Pages 30 - 31 on accuracy of science and procedure in s f is interesting, and again poor Wodhams comes through as appearing slothful and muddle-headed. Accurate or technically plausible science is required, I should think, even in small amounts, in order to lend the story a life-like aura of realism. In fact, in s f, such a "reality" is absolutely essential to buttress the reader's willingness to believe. In s f the illusion of reality is critical, and sloppy science, even sloppy pseudo-science, is often fatal and always stupid. And if you are going to take s f seriously in a discussion, you cannot with justice sneer at a man who reads 90% s f and very little "outside" material. It simply means he is specialising... as historians do, as any specialist does. If you are talking about an escapist of the extreme type - a schizoid - who is losing contact with reality on a deep emotional level, then that is another matter, of course. So, I think Moorcock wrong in that quote. He says "nothing else", and I assume he does not mean that literally.

Well, S F COMMENTARY 3 is a fine issue. The Discussion Panel transcript makes it a "Must Keep" fanzine.

***brg** After Leigh Edmonds sitting there snoring in the back row, I'm glad someone feels that way. Number 3 was originally put out as a service to those Australian fans who attended the 1968 Conference, and as a stopgap until the 1969 Report could be prepared. However, Number 3 has boomeranged in all sorts of peculiar ways. Further details later.

"Poor old Jack Wodhams", hey? Here I was thinking that the transcript was one of the most entertaining things I had read all year, and Jack's "speech" one of the funniest and most informative pieces published in S F COMMENTARY. But my belly-laughs have turned out to be Jack's skeletons in his cupboard. I must have an instinct for les Danses Macabres.

"The illusion of sloppy super-science"? Wouldn't that be what you would get if you took Jack's words dead seriously? Science is science (i.e. a process of critical examination, among other things) and I don't really think there has ever been much of it in science fiction. A science fiction "specialist" presents an odd image to the mind - sort of smelling of pulp paper and plastered with rejection notes from John W Campbell, Michael Moorcock and Hugo Gernsback. Besides, a specialist in history (for instance) is distinguished by the width of his reading, not the narrowness of it. ***

R J N GIBSON

(June 6 1969)

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N S W

One of Campbell's favourite phrases is: "Imagine yourself to be absolute dictator of the world..." Well, never mind about you or me, Bruce,

but imagine John W Campbell or Robert A Heinlein as absolute dictators. Horrifying, isn't it? Come to think of it, most s f fans would probably vote for Campbell's kinky nightmare, if one is to judge from all the back-slapping letters published in ANALOG.

What Campbell and Heinlein are pushing is that 19th century notion which grew out of Darwin's evolutionary theory. You know the one: survival is the only justification for particular actions, ergo laissez-faire capitalism is just, ergo superior nations are more aggressive, ergo those who do not succeed do not deserve to succeed, and so on. Mixed with this dubious fixed idea is the most unhealthy form of authoritarianism. Campbell and Heinlein are right because they appeal directly to the laws of the universe, the rest of us are wishy-washy do-gooders, sob-sisters and sentimentalists. Campbell sometimes writes as though he had a hot line to God (see GOD ISN'T DEMOCRATIC); Heinlein bases his "scientific" principles of moral philosophy on Survival. Well, you just can't argue with people like this. It's like wasting one's time talking to religious fanatics.

Re S F COMMENTARY 2: I disagree with Aldiss's contention that a f should get away from spacships, other worlds, etc. Although I

don't like unnecessary gadgetry (for example, the gadgetry of 2001), I think the semi-scientific nonsense of s f is part of its vulgar joy. The explanations Wells advanced for his time machine were fascinating to me, and so were the numerous other weird inventions and ideas thrown up by s f authors. (Sherred's E FOR EFFORT gave us the time-scanning TV set; Sturgeon's KILLDOZER presented an electron-based life form and a bulldozer with real personality; Miller's I MADE YOU gave us a mad military machine). What Aldiss wants is either pure satire or pure fantasy, perhaps,

The thing I object to is the extravagance of most s f authors.. They aren't content to throw in just one good idea and elaborate on it; they throw in blasters, androids, robots, space travel, telepathy, mutations, aliens, etc - and all in the one book. I have even read all these ideas in the one short story. This is why most novices to s f throw away the books in disgust. H G Wells anticipated this criticism of what he called "wonder stories": "Nothing remains interesting where anything may happen". The good s f writers understand this rule: one basic idea - expand it, make it credible. Examples of the one idea concept are: Stapledon's SIRIUS, Wells' INVISIBLE MAN, COUNTRY OF THE BLIND, etc, Knight's FOUR IN ONE, Dick's MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, Keyes' FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON.

As for the new ideas everyone seems to be screaming for: I don't think there are very many new ideas anywhere. Love stories and westerns don't have many original plots. ANNA KARENINA was the old hack yarn about adultery. It's how well the story is done that matters, not whether it has some new gimmick for the jaded tastes of the dilettantes (and I mean "dilettantes" in its worst sense).

***brg** I think you crossed some wires there, somewhere, John. Wasn't that what Aldiss said? - that the old gimmicks had worn so thin that the mere idea of looking for a gimmick has become a vain exercise. Hence the New, or as I would prefer to call it, the English Wave. The gimmicks dissipated their own savour, so the better New Wavicles have attempted to see the implications of these ideas that the original gimmick-makers should have seen in the first place. Granted the gimmick, or element of social change, that the Golden Agers posited, what real effect might these things have on the minds of individual human beings? The quest has become very much more serious (even desperate) but now fulfills some of the promises that the original scientifictioneers made. And that's what I took Aldiss to infer in WHERE HAVE ALL THE SPACESHIPS GONE? (And I took the Charteris stories as the best example of what he was talking about). ***

(28th August 1969)

brg** A propos of some correspondence, the topic of which may interest Australian, English and American boob tube viewers

I think the reason why you thought THE PRISONER was so good was because you only saw about three episodes of it. There were at least 26 episodes. I saw most of them and I wasn't terribly enthralled, mainly because after you had watched about six or

seven, you could predict exactly what the Prisoner was going to do. He had a bad habit, for instance, of going into hysterics and shouting at the controllers of the little village that he was "not a Number! not a Number!" He was "a NAME!" ... and all the rest of that.

Of course, he was only expressing his own individuality, whatever that was. We never really did find out what he stood for as an individual. We didn't even get to know him terribly well as a character. He was more like a convention than anything else.

I'll admit that I was extremely enthusiastic about THE PRISONER when it first started, but after about ten episodes, I think the enthusiasm waned, and I watched it more as a kind of habit than anything else, because everything on television at that time was pretty boring anyway, and this was the best of a bad bunch. But there were individual episodes of THE PRISONER when it did shine, and perhaps the last episode was one of these.

***brg** The Prisoner was "more like a convention than anything else"? More than anything else, you've hit the nail on the head with this sentence. THE PRISONER was one of the best s f series ever on tv (unless, as John says, you saw all 26 episodes) because the characters were the same old paranoid stereotypes of forty years standing, but the metaphysical notions were always the stars of the show. One episode could have been straight from a Philip Dick short story, another was pure Fellini, others had the ring of Frankenheimer. Derivative, perhaps; but derivative from the right sources. ***

PAUL ANDERSON

(14th July 1969)

21 Mulga Road
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S A 5051

As usual s f on the South Australian idiot box is pretty poor, with the later STAR TREKS as no exception. The Seven network usually ignores science fiction completely, but they

have recently concluded a short run for a SCI FI THEATRE on Wednesday nights, which was hosted by some woman masquerading as an alien from outer space. From the little I saw of her, I came to the conclusion that she was worse than the South Australian Deadly Earnest (Hedley Cullen). Unfortunately the films Channel 7 dug up for the screening were really terrible. Some of them were worse than LOST IN SPACE. Channel 2 are making an effort by screening the British OUT OF THE UNKNOWN, but it is hidden away in the 10.30 pm time-slot on Monday nights, and even these are repeats of an earlier series. Channel 10's contribution to the fan's entertainment is their regular series AWFUL MOVIES WITH DEADLY EARNEST. The quality of the s f films shown varies considerably, with some excellent films shown while others are too painful to watch. Deadly Earnest himself was very good when he first started the series, but now the show has degenerated into a children's show (although screened in A O time) and a better title for the show would be UNCLE ERNIE'S KIDDIE TIME. Therefore the censors have now begun to ban several of his programs after they have been released to the press. "Uncle Ernie" is now selling Deadly Earnest dolls to cash in on his young viewers.

***brg**A recent survey of children's TV tastes in the state of

Victoria showed that AWFUL MOVIES WITH DEADLY EARNEST is the favourite television program among the growing generation. Victoria's "Ernie" looks like a cross between Dracula and Wolf Man. He "hosts" very old, very bad s f films late at night, and originally aimed to scare the wits out of late watchers. Now Ernie is the folk hero of the Wide Brown Land. You can't say we don't get what we deserve. ***

(5th August 1969)

The Australian censors make some unusual decisions at time. I was expecting some difficulty with their self-appointed deputy, the Post Master General's department, after the furor over the attempted squashing of DEAD MEN RUNNING, over Spinrad's BUG JACK BARRON. Spinrad certainly overworked the word that the P M G objected to! In fact I'm surprised that Customs let it into Australia after the fuss over LADY CHATTERLY'S LOVER. BUG JACK BARRON was competently done and I agree on most points with your review in ASFR 19. The portrayal of Howards was very well done, even if Spinrad did leave himself wide open to attack at times. As ruthless and self-centred a man as Howards should have made a better effort at eliminating Barron. Although Barron was labelled the hero of the book I am certain that it would require only minor rewriting for him to be given the role of villain. A sequel set about 100 years later would show Barron as being even more cruel than Howards, if he could retain his sanity. Barron's treatment of his vanquished victim is straight sadism.

(15th August 1969)

The Discussion Panel transcript (SFC 3) was very interesting, even if the panellists digressed from the subject frequently. My own answer to the first question is that a large proportion of the s f printed is bought and published only to fill up another issue. There is only so much good s f around and when an editor restricts himself by buying only a certain type of story the quality of the s f is bound to drop. Apparently this is a legacy from the great crash when many good prozines died overnight. The current crop of editors are trying to avoid this by moulding their magazines to cater for certain sections of the public, and thereby to create an almost guaranteed readership. The trouble starts when the writers catch on and try to tailor their products to suit a particular magazine. After a while all the s f printed begins to read the same, with only the names and places changed to protect the guilty. The average reader drifts toward buying the paperback books where the editorial biases are not quite so distinct.

The fan is greeted by a profusion of s f books of all kinds, which promise s f that is worth reading. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case because of the large number of companies printing science fiction. I think the s f paperback industry is in the position now that the prozines were in before the Big Crash, and unless the quality improves rapidly, there will be another crash - only bigger and more disastrous than before. Perhaps if GALAXY and IF could now cater for all fandom instead of just small sections of it, the prozines could be jolted into action again. The paperback industry desperately needs active competition from the magazines.

***brg** Ah - what a bright picture of gloom you paint, Paul. However,

you happen to be fairly accurate in your assessment of the situation. Until I read your letter, I had not noticed just how many paperback companies had opened s f sections during the last year (with Avon as the most prominent example) or expanded existing sections. I suspect that much of this activity is purely speculative, and profits on s f are not expected for several years. By which time there will be ten to twenty other publishers scrabbling for their buck apiece.

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

(June 8 1969)

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Felsenstrasse 20
Austria

Thank you very much for your letter with its encouraging and unjustly flattering words. Perhaps I need some encouraging, although the Army here is an Austrian Army and therefore

unlike any other Army in the world. Still, I spent about 6 weeks creeping around in the landscape, carrying a gun and some useless U S surplus equipment; but happily, this is over and now I'm installed as a clerk in some bureau, only 28 km away from home. So I can return home almost any weekend, and even there I now have time enough to read and write letters. And, my term isn't 2 years as in many other armies: it's only a period of nine months, and I'll be out just before Christmas.

I enjoyed S F COMMENTARY 1 very much. The reproduction leaves something to be desired as you'll undoubtedly know, but the text was very good. I'm quite unable to read a U S s f magazine from cover to cover; nevertheless I'm sure that I would agree with most of your comments did I read the stories you discussed. But I've just happened to read SEND HER VICTORIOUS in Brian Aldiss' new book and this is a very fine story indeed. As to ANALOG, I don't understand what John Foyster professes to find in the magazine. Now I don't read the magazine, but to judge from the stories and novels that get reprinted, the magazine must be pretty dreadful. The trouble with ANALOG is that it seems to be the most politically oriented magazine; this would be a good thing if it didn't also happen that it seems to be written by people who understand very little of politics.

George Turnersays some sensible things about the cult of I Q in s f. The reason for this love of high I Q is quite clear: the incompetent writer, impotent at characterization, seeks easy solutions and shortcuts, and finds them in numbers and titles. To write down an I Q requires much less effort than to show us an intelligent man.

I was especially fond of ASER because it offered an opportunity to write about the s f of other countries besides those of the English-speaking world. In the rest of the world a sometimes vigorous s f is developing, especially the one-man s f in Poland and the rich Rumanian literature. Adrian Rogoz, Rumanian s f author, has recently sent me some issues of the only Rumanian s f magazine POVESTIRI SCIENTIFICIO (now in its 15th year, with over 300 issues published), a fine publication with a varied and internationally oriented programme.

***brg** This magazine will always include information on s f in non-English-speaking countries, provided there is room for information of any kind. More on Poland's STANISLAW LEM in following issues.

**

(July 18 1984)

I think it was George Turner who said that s f tends to dim our understanding of morality or something like this. That's a true observation, I think. The defenders of bad authors often tend to defend their "philosophy", assuming that they are being attacked on ideological or political grounds. But what is really wrong with all those systems is that they are so primitive, that it's not only particulars that are wrong with those systems but the very system itself: that they have no understanding of the nature of moral systems.

Recently Stanislaw Lem told me that he has sought for a criterion to distinguish s f that contains some real knowledge of science from the many works that pretend to put science into them, but contain only fictions (he was thinking of the work of Asimov and Blish, in particular) but couldn't find one. He concluded that there is no easy way of analysis and that you have to look at any single work. I must say that I am of his opinion.

But what exactly is wrong with their stories? It surely partly is, as Delany has suggested, a lack of sensitivity (but on the other hand, I do not find Delany - like you - very concerned; his stories, I mean). Perhaps it is an ability to see isolated facets that may or may not have some connection with real science as part of a larger context, a whole, the human existence: to give those isolated parts that remain mere play in the work of Blish or Asimov some meaningfulness for us. Immortality surely is a nice thing to have - but what makes the Okies of it? Nothing. Likewise Spindizzies - but the book EARTHMAN COME HOME is, as Lem once remarked, a cosmic race between good and bad cities: and what has this got to do with the structure of science?

You seem to think that I have rather outspoken views on anything. That's not true: I'm unsure of a lot of things, and personally I think that my greatest weakness has always been that I very well know what to dislike, but am not quite sure what I really like. Granted, this is something very difficult in s f, and it's only when I read some great literature that I fully realize how infantile and dull most s f is.

The puzzling question is why do we read the stuff any longer, although we clearly see how inferior it is? Can you give a satisfactory answer?

***brg** I can give plenty of unsatisfactory answers. The simplest, and probably the most correct answer is that it takes about half the time to read a science fiction story or novel as it does to read a similar number of words of more literate fiction. But these days, I notice so many absurdities in s f that I take nearly as long to leap over these, as it does to pick up the subtleties in other forms of fiction. I could also say, again almost at random, that readers who grow up with the medium keep looking for the delights of the first stories they read. They can't help doing this, but it makes it kind of hard when those delights fade, and the medium changes. But I like the new medium as well as the old (NEW WORLDS style, at least).

In other words - answers, anyone? Letters should not exceed 10,000 words in length.

****brg**** Aha. You thought you had escaped me, didn't you? Try as we may, neither John Foyster nor I can find the slightest trace of Ortmann on a map of Austria. I spent (or, rather, my auntie spent) about an hour the other day searching a very detailed map of Austria for your village, Franz. Until Franz sees fit to release details on that score (the most likely explanation is that he lives in an Austria in another dimension in which Vienna was renamed Ortmann after the Third World War in honour of national hero Gerhard Ortmann who beat Adolf Hitler in single-handed combat, thus ending the war), here are some details about Franz himself: "I'm 27, a Ph D in journalism, history; also studied physics, astronomy and Anglistics at a time. I'll become a librarian, and hope also to find a place with some publisher(s). But I do not intend to write fiction; think in fact that I'm quite unqualified to do it." And do not send letters to Dr Rottensteiner, or he'll never write to me again. *******

SAM MOSKOWITZ

361 Roseville Ave
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U S A

(May 27 1969)

Enclosed 9 issue sub to S F COMMENTARY.

I like the whole idea but I can't read it! It hurts my eyes.

****brg**** And it hurts my bank balance. I hope you enjoyed later issues. *******

DEREK KEW

16 Helena St
Bulleen
Victoria 3105

(1st June 1969)

I am somewhat inclined to the view that s f will "merge with the mainstream", though that phrase bothers me since I am never quite sure what it is that sets s f apart in the first place.

I think it is the physical concepts involved. The idea of a spaceship was once something very wonderful, more so in fact than the crew! Not that I wish to suggest that space travel is the distinguishing characteristic, but is an example par excellence. And while one can see plenty of lousy characterization in s f, I think that the difference between s f and the "mainstream" is something more positive than a lack of characterization. I was interested in John Foyster's arguments that s f is declining. Is this confirmation that some original aspect in s f is losing its power, and has yet to be effectively replaced by virtues long present in "mainstream" literature?

Someone might want to point to ANALOG, and certainly Campbell's magazine contains a lot of what I could call technological s f. But any effect on me is lost because of the endless messages. Many of the topics Campbell discusses in his editorials are vehicles for him to make back handed swipes at the common man as opposed to his beloved "geniuses". And yet the criticism of ANALOG that I see in Australian fanzines seems to revolve around his partiality to engineers. Could the antagonism towards engineers be an aspect of

the differences between the "two cultures"? To me any partiality Campbell has towards engineers is overshadowed by his fundamental division of the human race into geniuses and poor dumb bastards who can't help it because they were born that way (see his Editorial June 1959, ANALOG, British edition).

***brg** I could answer at length, not entirely supporting Campbell's claim that engineers see Things The Way They Are, that the engineers have a hot line to God because they service the telephone lines and repair the Heavenly exchange. However, I won't enter this absurd debate, because Mr Kew is a teacher in Physical Chemistry at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and he might know more about the mind of an engineer than I do. ***

JOANNE BURGER

(June 15 1969)

PEGASUS magazine
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Lake Jackson
Texas 77566
U S A

Your Raison d'Etre (S F COMMENTARY 1) reminded me of something that should be passed on, I think. I heard, this week, from Edmond Hamilton, who mentioned that the Popular Library reprints of the CAPTAIN FUTURE series are being published without his

permission. Although I have enjoyed reading them (which may give some idea of the kind of s f that I like), since Mr Hamilton didn't want them published, feeling they are too juvenile for today's audience, I shouldn't support the publisher by buying the mags. Especially since I can pick up the original pulps for about the same price as the paperbacks. I have also heard, but don't know how true it is, Mr Hamilton isn't getting paid for these reprints. I do hope that's not true.

***brg** It probably was then, before many people began to complain very loudly, with some success. Reprinting of very old material has become big business, now, and Ron Graham is thinking of a reprint magazine as a companion to VISION. Both authors and editors should take note of the troubles that this process can give to just one author and one publisher. ***

JACK WODHAMS

(27th June 1969)

P O Box 48
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Queensland 4510

My God! the fearsome ad lib. I must learn to keep my mouth shut. What a thing to do to a man. Gillespie? Yes, I remember you. Reasonably tall and broad, serious, with a quietly

brooding air. Humour to brush the surface, but underneath solidly sober. Trustworthy, unsuspected of capacity for plotting an expose. The written word can be much more carefully chosen.

***brg** I have been called many things, but that is the most extraordinary form of address that has ever been thrown my way. The character description is accurate, which just shows that s f authors can characterize successfully. ***

However, S F COMMENTARY 3 brought back memories. And George Turner

still annoys me with his overlay of condescension. More clearly now I can see how fatheaded was the question that initiated the 1968 Discussion Panel. It is the most fundamental of facts that no two humans think alike. Tastes differ, radically, and thank the Lord they do. What is "good" s f, and what is "bad" s f, is entirely a matter of personal opinion. If some persons interested in the subject form a coterie where some mutual agreement can be reached regarding standards, then each such individual may gain some comfort as being a member of a self-elected priesthood. Good luck. Priests, as we know, preach and deplore, and almost uniformly have a penchant for forecasting doom. It is wrong to smoke, to gamble, to drink, to fornicate - but these things a majority of the people do, have done, and will continue to do. There is a constant market for it. In like manner there is a constant demand for every kind of literature, from Enid Blyton's NODDY, right on up.

The (perhaps) over-indulged, steeped, well-s f informed aficionado has a short memory, the same as everyone else. He forgets that he was once a beginner. He forgets that time when he did not know so much, the time when, interest caught, he could not read enough s f. It is inevitable that as an intelligent person becomes more and more acquainted with a subject, his critical faculties grow keener. Thus, always the quality we knew in the old days seems superior to current quality - simply because in the old days our critical faculties were yet unhone'd.

S f is not what it used to be, but then, as an editor of PUNCH classically replied to a similar plaint: "It never was". If latter-day s f appears to be deteriorating, in the eyes of the s f cognoscenti, this is not because present creators have lesser ability than their predecessors, but because age and experience in the observer dwindle the chances of discovering novelty. It is the natural offspring of familiarity.

Take a child of six from the country, and let him see the ocean for the first time. His jaw drops, clang! Man, he can be frightened witless by the enormity of so much water. He's never before seen a bath so big. But at 16, the ocean? So what else is new?

See, at some time we are all six-year-old kids. We learn, uniquely each so much in his own fashion. A young man is not backed by the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime. The old jokes persist, the old corn persists, simply because there are always young green people coming along, youngsters who have yet to meet and hear this "old hat" stuff. Look, an editor writes back to me about a story, and he sniffs and says: "Bugsy Snitzel wrote up that idea way back in '42." Bugsy who? I am supposed to know what this Snitzel crumb was knocking out way back when? I was a kid at that time, and more interested in plasticine and soapboxes than in... what? s f? what's s f?

The learned self-appointed adjudicators do so have a predilection for comparing the present unfavorably with the past. The Golden 1930s, and the revered High Lama, Hugo Gernsback. Now Hugo G is just a name to me - as are so many s f names preceding the fifties. I'm not an historian. Maybe I should lock myself away with heaps of back-numbers and spend a year or so trying to catch up, huh? Do you think it might improve me? Those gloriously stimulating and brilliant stories that you may have read in your teens and twenties - do you think for one moment that

for one moment that I, reading them today, would not find them bulkily crude and corn, chock-a-block with "old" ideas that I am acquainted with presented in later, more up-to-date and present-pertinent style? Speak to me not of Talbot Mundy or Alfred Bester. I have not even read Tolkein yet. Some of us haven't, you know.

From KORKY THE CAT onwards, my taste expanded to become quite catholic. I must have read hundreds, thousands of stories in my time, all sorts. Who the authors of these stories were I cannot for most part say. As a common member of the public, I well remember my lack of interest regarding the name of the writer, even of what I thought were good yarns. This, I feel, is much the way the general reader responds. Take a man off the street and casually persuade him to read an excellent magazine story. Let him return the magazine in his own good time. After a couple of days or so, circumspectly query to find if he enjoyed the tale and, if so, question him about the plot, the style, the meaning. His appreciation may be oblique, but you will discover that his recall of content is quite high. Then ask him the title of the story. The odds are better than 50% that he will not remember. And then ask him the name of the writer. The odds are better than 99% that he will not remember.

The vast, vast majority of writers are unknown except to those interested, fan- or trade-wise, in their special field. You have, I suppose, seen a great number of films in your day. Apart from your particular interest, s f, can you name a handful of screen-writers and the film-scripts that they wrote? Do you know the names of the men who write Bob Hope's gags? After spending an evening watching TV, can you cull from your brain one, just one, of the writers who dreamt up your entertainment? The credits roll before our eyes, and we say: "Yeah, yeah, get on with it." Producers and Directors, even though ^{they} their names write singularly and large, seldom rise above anonymity in the minds of Mr and Mrs Public. Who produced the film TOM JONES? Who directed it? Who the co-scriptwriters? From an original story by...?

Out of the many thousands of writers in this world, it hardly requires two hands to count the household names. He ^{who} would think to become famous by writing would be wise to re-appraise such a choice to achieve ambition. The writer is largely an unknown man, the circle recognising and acknowledging his status usually small. And being so small, the writer is always hungry, which is why George Turner is willing to patronisingly and at length blab so to an audience that appears to lend him half an ear.

Ah, warming it may be to receive modest acclaim from our contemporaries, but it is the proletariat that decides with cash. I certainly do not write s f to with anxiousness specifically gratify pseudo-eggheads - 1. Because the market is so small, and 2. Because such egghead groups invariably applaud with near 50% disputation. To write like Nabokov might be the height of literary elegance - but the more the allusion the more the confusion, and the greater the disparity in interpretations. To keep even complexity simple; to reach the most people; to remember that we, too, once were young.

From the transcript of the '66 Discussion Panel, I am sure that the audience would have had only the vaguest notion of what Damien Broderick was talking about. Am a bit hard-pressed myself. And that

Harding fellow, although he did not say a great deal, is revealed as being more astute than was realised at the time. John Foyster, of course, is another rather over-burdened with knowledge of past performances. He's like an s f GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS.

But enough is enough. Let us recall Buck Jones, and Charlie Chan, and the Dead-End Kids, with nostalgia for uncomplicated pleasure given - but let us not employ such happy memory to form criteria whereby to judge cruddy GOMER PYLE, McHALE'S NAVY, or THE SAINT. Enough is enough.

***brg** Indeed yes. Messers Foyster and Turner must already have the fight ring drawn up. Lay on Macduff.

Meanwhile, I insist on a few preliminary objections to Jack's point of view. The main objection is that, like all other science fiction fans, I do not regard myself as just another consumer of reading matter. As you said yourself, Jack, any reader with any intelligence at all keeps maturing in his tastes. The end result of such a process, if the interest in literature (or science fiction, in this case) remains, is an interest in criticism: i.e. an interest that goes beyond what one likes or dislikes to what is in fact good or bad in the field. The search for objective standards may be a hopeless quest. However the search itself is a more abstract, a more intelligent, activity, than the mere ferretting among the trophies of nostalgia.

The search for objectivity, although conducted in a light-hearted matter, was at the centre of the '68 Panel Discussion. Who cares how many people read how many copies of Mr X's latest book? Mr X and his agent are two people, what about the rest of the readers? As you've admitted, 90% of the readers couldn't care less about the work or created, or the creator. If this figure were extended to 100% then there would be no fiction writers at all. The writers would go back to advertizing copy-writing, or school-teaching, or brick-laying, or whichever other menial jobs first spawned them. You'd make more money in each of these jobs than in writing. Why write? One of the reasons must be that you hope that there is somebody Out There (and I don't mean Somebody Up There, because He's probably too busy anyway) who actually gets what you are talking about. And to hope that, you must have something that is worth talking about....

And so back to Base One. What is worth talking about? Are there any responsive readers? Can you expect intelligent readers to read s f? You must go after the minority, because when the chips are down, there is nobody else. Just the vast blank space of money-paying, non-thinking customers towards which you must make conciliatory gestures.

There are more sinister undertones in your letter, Jack, but I'll leave them to other people to notice. For instance, I would like to know why some vague amorphous mob should rule my tastes? In an economic democracy, do you really want the majority to smother all minorities, just because there are more in the Majority? Comments, anyone?***

JOHN BANGSUND

(5th August 1969)

HALLIFORD HOUSE
P O Box 109
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Victoria 3156

Thank you for S F COMMENTARY No 4.
It was a delight to receive such an
interesting Australian publication
through the mail, knowing nothing about
it before it arrived, having had
nothing to do with its assembly or

production. Suddenly, at long last, I think I have had the
experience people used to get when they received ASFR, and the
experience puts a few things into perspective for me, as well as
making me come over all sentimental for an instant or two.

What did I like about SFC 4, that I should read it from cover to
cover within two hours of receiving it? The brief answer is -
Gillespie. There are times, Bruce, on the rare occasions when we
get together, when your single-minded earnestness makes me want to
scream, gaffate and emigrate to Cuba the same day; but on paper
your earnestness and your wry self-deprecation (though one could
have too much of that eventually) come over very entertainingly.
From which you will gather that the letter column made the strongest
impression this time. I'm glad you said nuts to Harding and
Bangsund: do your own thing, by all means. But - please -
could you just indent your comments a little to save confusion?

"Analyze" is a nasty and unforgivable Americanism, Bruce. The
ending comes from the Greek lusi (the act of setting at liberty),
and is not remotely related to the -ize ending. (Just keeping up
the old image there, you understand).

I enclose for consideration (there there, don't go off like that)
a couple of reviews. Apart from having been rejected by the
Editor of VISION OF TOMORROW, their only recommendation is that
Harding seemed to think they were passable.

I blushed when I read Harry Harrison's remarks about his tape and
the profound silence which followed its despatch. I blushed again
when I read your remark about its being at the bottom of my slush-
pile. How could you? For a start, since all my material is piled
vertically, the slush-pile is bottomless. (I hereby take credit
for inventing the bottomless slush-pile.) But, coming at your
meaning from another tack, the transcript of Harry's speech is not
even at the back of the slush, that is, contributions file. Tony
Thomas put in an incredible amount of work transcribing that tape -
Harry and listeners will recall that it sort of became, shall we say,
unintelligible halfway through, and continued, more or less, from the
other end: this was just a little confusing to listeners, and
enormously challenging to Tony (who shortly after attempting to rise
to the challenge started smashing his car up and committing matri-
mony and having his flat pulled down about his ears, though there
may be no connection between these experiences) - and I would hate
to think it was wasted. Just ask if you want to publish it, Bruce.

I recently read through the entire Vonnegut opus in something like
five days, and for about a week I was on fire to write the ultimate
analysis of this (raspberries to you, Clarke and Turner!) great
writer. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE contained so much that expounded,
expounded or re-presented ideas and incidents from the earlier novels
and stories that I was forced to re-read him. The result of this
experience was a renewed fervour of enthusiasm and an even more

heightened respect for Kurt Vonnegut Jr. I think I know what he's at, and that Broderick doesn't, and - by crackey! - if I'd been to University, what an article I could write! Fortunately that's all out of my system now: I've subsequently been reading Thurber and Updike, and getting Different Perspectives on Things.

***brg** Needless to say, an envelope not only containing a Letter of Comment from John Bangsund, but two reviews as well, sent me into euphoria for a week or two. I'm glad you realize at last how important ASFR was to Australian readers in particular, and to readers all over the world.

I'll be glad to have that Harrison transcript anytime. It's more than I'll get from the 1969 Convention, to judge from the present situation. And, as you can see, the format of the Invisible Whistling Bunyips section has been sufficiently changed so that you know who wrote what, and whether it was worth writing in the first place. The editor has formally left the stage, but insists on peeping through the curtains once in a while, just to wink at the audience. There! Didn't you see my wink? ***

DAVID PIPER

(15th August 1969)

24 Dawlish Drive
Ruislip Manor
Middlesex
England

The Discussion Panel (S F COMMENTARY 3) is hilarious of course. Held, I gather, in 1968, we have these learned gents and Foyster rooting about "What's wrong with s f" and the bad treatment and poor standards of

s f writing and writers. Oh yeah! Laughable! The examples chatted about (and I can hardly credit this myself) include... wait for it... THUNDER AND ROSES which is at least 20 to 25 years old. SLOWUPS HAPPEN... the same. Bradbury's effort, a short story about 1950 and a novel somewhere around '53 or '54. THE RUUM... donkeys years old. NIGHTFALL... two donkeys years old.

If you haven't read Delany's novels then you've missed 10% of the best of today's s f.

Make that 20%.

If Aldiss (at least in 1968) still thought that space travel features prominently in the best s f then he has got delusions. Unless he's referring to his own rubbish. When an author (to quote Brian Aldiss) "larks about the galaxy" surely even he (B A) can realise that they don't lark about for the sake of larking about... they do it to get from a to b. It's a device. It's like Cath saying to me: "Oh well, now they've reached the moon your science fiction's washed up". Grrrrr.

brg** I'm glad somebody writes "Grrrrr" instead of "nice boy.. nice boy". Everybody likes the idea of a good old-fashioned airing of differences, but few people are willing to raise the important issues, and, most unfortunately, fewer people are willing to face the fact that they may get hurt in the verbal brawl. One can only call for a little less hedging, and a bit more penetration, and for everybody to abide by the rules of the game. Some people fight dirty

GEORGE TURNER

(27th August 1969)

14 Tennyson St
St Kilda
Victoria 3182

Having at last got my C L F opus off the typewriter after three years of the usual blood, sweat, tears and tantrums I can turn to fulfilling some of the promises made (God help me)

to the fanzine editors who wrote me nice purring letters which artfully made me purr too. Too late I realise I have let myself be conned into writing some 15,000 words of articles and assorted bits. And I haven't even got subjects for most of them.

Your series on Dick continues interesting, but I still feel that in attacking the books in detail rather than using them as material for an overall statement you have let yourself in for much more work than you need have done and have not yet reached the core of Dick himself. (Nor, I imagine, has anyone else.) I know that in the past I have pointed out to you that a number of the books appear to be inter-related, particularly those involving the Perky Pat game, and have suggested that they should be considered as offering facets of a consistent Dick universe. I am now not so sure of this, and feel that perhaps the similar ideas in these works are merely conveniences which lie handy to Dick's purpose, and that the books represent variations on a theme rather than mutually reinforcing stories. This feeling has been intensified by the Ace collection THE PRESERVING MACHINE, which thoughtfully lists the publication dates of each of the fifteen tales. Reading them in order of these dates provides a most interesting insight on his progress, both technically and intellectually. Aside from two or three which are obvious sports, attempts at a different method, they show that the Dick of today is not the same man as the Dick of fifteen years ago. So much so that it may no longer be wise to discuss the earlier novels in the same context as the later ones. Your own letter from Dick may throw some light on these matters, and I look forward to seeing it in print.

Your comment on the unacceptability of the Hobart Effect in COUNTER CLOCK WORLD is of course dead right. One simply rejects it out of hand. Though the progress from effect to cause rather than cause to effect may be philosophically tolerable (there is also the theory once bruited by s f writers that the future pulls the present into being as strongly as the past pushes it) it falls down on purely physical grounds. Time reversal has been dithered over by other writers, and generally dropped like the conventional hot brick after a tortured short story, mainly because they have failed to understand just what the time reversal theory entails. (I dare say you are aware that the particle physicists are being troubled by sub-nuclear reactions which appear to occur before the necessary triggering action takes place, and are postulating time reversal as an answer.) The theory does not involve any consideration of living backwards, of regurgitating before eating or any such stomach churning, and can perhaps best be clarified by simple analogy. Consider it as a mirror effect. You approach a mirror and so does your image, though it is moving in the opposite direction to yourself. No reversal of actions is involved. In the same way the theory postulates that we move in a given direction in time, and if this direction is reversed, we have simply begun to move in another direction. If a man walking in a straight line wishes to reverse his direction he does not start to walk backwards, but turns round

and walks forward. So with time - if it reverses itself, we reverse with it. Cause and effect are not violated. If time reversed itself every ten seconds we would simply not be aware of it unless we were able, like the physicists, to observe it in a local and limited manifestation. In this case another person would appear to take his hat off before he put it on, but it would not seem so to him. He would think that the rest of us were out of order - literally.

The only way I can think of in which the Hobart Effect would work would be in a world where each person operated in his own time scheme, so that some would appear to be living forward and others backward, when each group would consider the other retrograde. And that raises the possibility of a third group operating at right angles to the others. That one you can work out for yourself if you really want to go round the bend. If you ever strike such a world, avoid traffic jams - the thought is mind-boggling.

Your remarks about reviewing (RAISON D'ETRE) brought a wry grin. Like the rest of the world you have missed the fact that my ON WRITING ABOUT S F (ASFR 18) was not a how-to-do-it article, but a warning against the things not to be done, with a few indications of what I feel is the business of a reviewer. I would have not a thing against your friend's review of PATHS OF GLORY (save that I feel he missed the real point of the final scene) as a thumbnail effort, saying much in little. It's a pity you have not seen the film (a very good one) because you might have found material to argue against his factual observation. You would, I am sure, have been intrigued by it and emotionally affected, but have also had some reservations about his interpretation of the events. This is why I favour the objective approach. But that is a personal matter; the subjective approach may be just as good, so long as the basic principles of evaluation are not violated. I could evaluate a Dick novel only objectively, but wouldn't waste objective criticism on such a book as STAR WELL (and in fact didn't) because the writer's aim was emotional rather than intellectual, and one can in fairness only meet him on his chosen ground. To criticise a thriller objectively is only an exercise in butterfly breaking.

In the letter column John Foyster carries on his gay habit of destruction by selecting a detail for comment and missing the broader issues. His opening comment that my "notes on I Q are essentially crap" could be applied equally to his own comments, save that I don't favour the use of meaningless pejoratives in a rational exchange. He writes: "I Q... is just an aptitude test whose meaning is as clear as that of any other aptitude test." And therein lies a trap for the reader who feels that such a positive statement must be accurate. In a very broad sense it is accurate, but...

An aptitude test is administered, in some cases, for the purpose of deciding in which direction a person's mental and physical capacities can best be used. The Commonwealth Employment Service has a whole section devoted to such testing, but does not test I Q. The result is not definitive, but merely suggests that the testee has the capacity to enter successfully into a broad field, such as mechanical, clerical, etc. In other cases, such as the armed forces, industry, etc, the test is far more concentrated on specific abilities, narrowing down the field to individual jobs within the broader

categories tested for by the C E S and vocational guidance organisations. Having administered and evaluated several hundreds of such tests during my industrial career (abandoned and unregretted) and having had the opportunity to follow up the results of the consequent job placements, I can state that they are very reliable within their defined limits. Their weakness is that they give little guide to the existence of emotional factors, which have to be summed up in personal interview, with all the resulting subjective distortions of the interviewing officer. But in general they aim at a limited objective and attain it with a high degree of accuracy. You require knowledge of the subject under test, and you get it.

Can the same be said for the Stanford-Binet or any other I Q tests? It certainly cannot. The prime difficulty is that we have no universally accepted definition of intelligence or mental capacity. (The dictionaries won't help you). We do not in fact know what is being measured. And, having measured this amorphous thing and evaluated it on an arbitrary scale, we have then no physical means of deciding what we have measured. In fact an I Q can only be measured against other I Qs; the scale used is its own standard; it has no quantitative meaning which can be translated into terms of practical usefulness. John's statement that you could, if you wished, use it as a measure of your chances of getting a Master's degree at Monash, is only true if all other factors not measured by the test are equal. Interest, fact-retention, intellectual orientation and the things we term (loosely) drive and ambition are crucial - and not at all easy to measure. Determination and a one-track mind are notoriously successful (in the mere sense of obtaining knowledge and disgorging it at the right time) where intelligence complicates itself with diffusion of interests and the sheer laziness indulged in by those who accomplish too easily.

The I Q test may be a measure of possibilities; it is not a measure of the subject's capacity to use them. A useful discussion of the subject will be found in the introduction to Eysenck's KNOW YOUR OWN I Q, which reduces the whole thing to a parlour game (quite a fascinating one) while admitting that nobody really knows what the results mean.

So the I Q test is not one "whose meaning is as clear as that of any other aptitude test". In fact it doesn't even measure aptitudes, so far as we know. So, like John, I can't see anything wrong with an I Q of 184 - but I can't see any practical use for it either until I know what it means. No doubt a useful thing to have around the mental attic, but just what is it?

***brg** I'm reminded of the astonishment the Arts students felt when they finally met up with the Science students in Diploma of Education year. The Science students tested out on the I Q tests at an average of about 170, while the other faculties averaged about 120 to 130. The astonishment was not so much at the scores of the Science students, but at the complete absence of differences between the external behaviour of the Science students, and that of the members of the other faculties. The only thing we could see was that the Science students threw twice as many paper darts in lectures as the rest of us. You could achieve something with an I Q of 100. ***

GARY WOODMAN
164 West Como Pde
Parkdale
Victoria 3194

(24th August 1969)

I'd be eternally grateful if you could explain what a picture of a FEMALE is doing on the cover of S F C (unless it's Di Bangsund, which still doesn't explain anything but at least

makes sense).

***brg** Over in the land of the Great Long Policeman's Truncheon (ie U S A) they even have female science fiction fans! I've even had letters from several of them. (Now don't go on like that, Gary). So I thought I'd present something for them....

What am I talking about? That wasn't the reason at all. Stephen had drawn a miniature picture inside the cover of an old exercise book. I took one look at it, and said: "That's magnificent. Could you blow it up, and make a few changes, and we'll use it for a cover? It'd go well with red Gestetner paper." So, thassit. I liked the face because it is so magnificently cynical... not quite Mona Lisa, but nearly there. And what better picture for S F COMMENTARY than a super-cynical Mona Lisa? ***

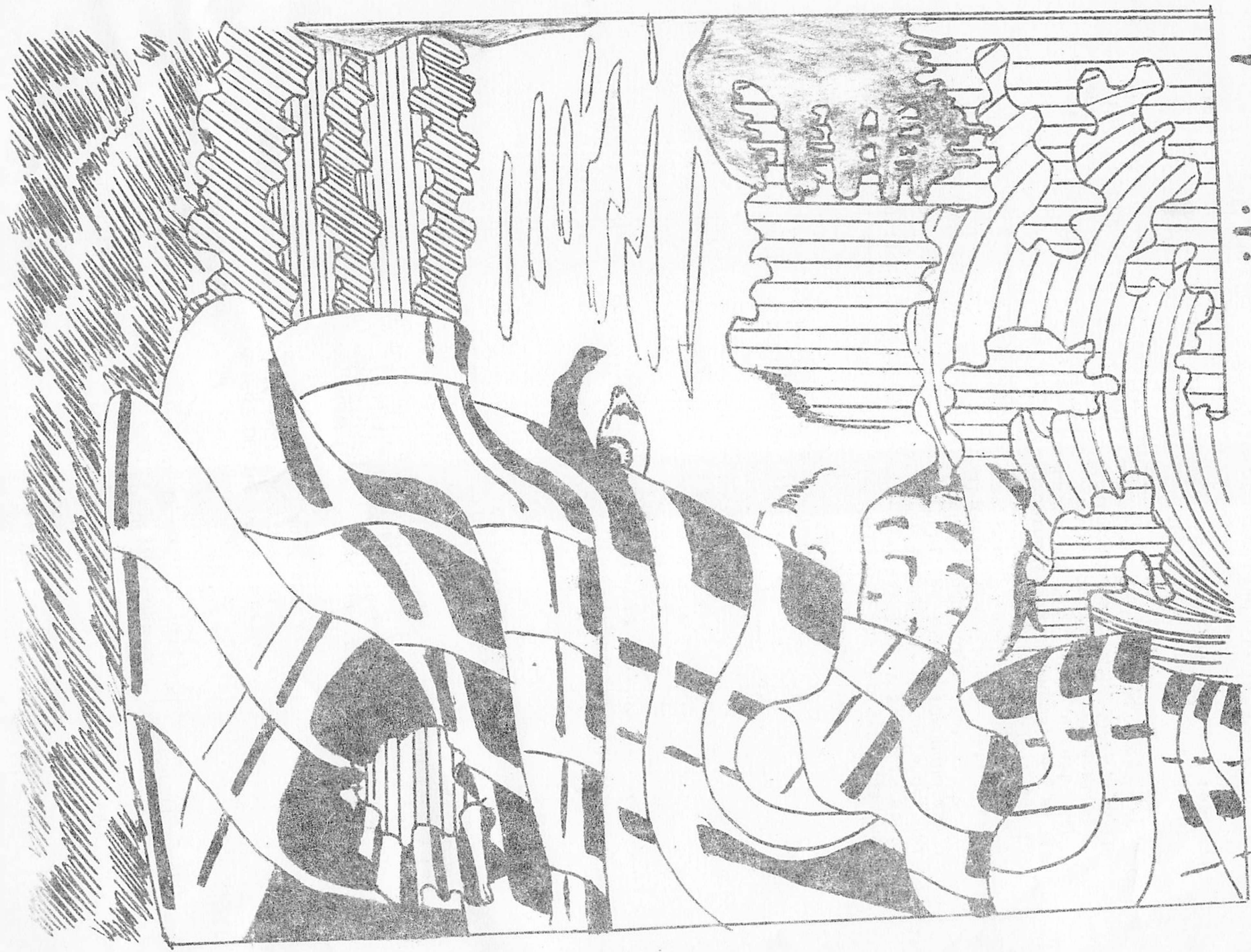
The phenomenon of the New Wave seems, at least vaguely, linked to the inception of the New Left, a nebulous grouping which seems to embrace all those who are crapped off with the last New Left, normally the "young avant-garde intellectuals". (I very much want to do a survey into bandwagonism). The situation in s f is different, of course, but there are a remarkable number of similarities. With very little pushing, I might be persuaded to do an article on this very subject.

Gillespie, you have been hereby presented with Woodman's FUF Award (before you cut out my jejenum, let me explain that it's the Finder-of-Unknown Fen Award). Congratulations!

Someone's pinched my copy of STARSHIP TROOPERS, and it's been at least 18 months since I read it, so I can't argue authoritatively (authoritarianly, R J ?). But I seem to recall the basic idea put forward in STARSHIP TROOPERS being a slightly less controversial (and slightly more obvious) suggestion that a person need work for his vote in a "democratic" society... or possibly I misrepresent Heinlein's thought that a bloke must fight for his vote. I don't recall RAH suggesting, or even mentioning, violence for its own sake (or, as you say, purposeful violence). Violence is not emphasized - it's hardly "violence" to speak of "mowing down Skinnies as they emerged, or dropping mini-A-bombs on them as I bounced over..." Heinlein's matter-of-fact reporting style removed most of the sense of violence, and one subconsciously considers "Why, it's just a story".

***brg** I would hope so - one might have to place in jail anybody who took STARSHIP TROOPERS too seriously.

I would like that article on New Wave/New Left, although NEW WORLDS have more to do with their time than engage in politics. FUF Award? - surely Banger rates that with honours. If it hadn't been for ASFR there would have been no S F COMMENTARY. On that melancholy note I hand over to the reviewers.



criticanto

Bruce R Gillespie reviews

John Bangsund reviews

Andrew Escot reviews

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Reviewed by Bruce R Gillespie

The Contents Page looks promising. Three well-known Australian

Australia has its own sf magazine at last. Published by Sydney's Ron E Graham, and edited by England's Philip Harbottle, VISION OF TOMORROW can be called as much Australia's as England's. At first sight, the first issue (August 1969) looks like a cross between a pulp magazine and Carnell's NEW WORLDS, and so one expects the fiction to be not much

writers (Jack Wodhams, Lee Harding and Damien Broderick) sit side by side with two very well known English writers, William F Temple and Kenneth Bulmer, an unknown (to me) English writer, Michael G Coney, one Polish author Stanislaw Lem, who is rapidly becoming well-known, and the legendary fan writer Walter Gillings. Layout can improve (and Ron and Phil promise a 100% improvement over the next few issues), but one must have a stable of authors of this calibre to have any chance on today's market.

If one reads the stories from the front of the magazine to the back, one could be very disappointed. Kenneth Bulmer's SWORDS FOR A GUIDE (the lead novelette) is almost unreadable. The colonists are beaten up by the colonized, so the "hero" wants to know why the poor defenceless colonists can't be protected with atomic guns against all those nasty savage natives. This story features such droplets of blood 'n' guts as:

There, aboard that blood splashed raft under the alien sun of New Bangor, Jeff Grant went savagely into the battle-frenzy that knows nothing, feels nothing, thinks not at all, until the last stained sword drops and there is nothing left to fight.

There are more "stomach-wrenchings" and "stabs of pity" and "He knew, then, that he couldn't take it any more"s than you would find in the entire contents of than average issue of IF magazine. This is kid stuff, intended for bullet-headed youngsters who read as little as possible, and fight as much as possible.

The best thing to do would be to follow my normal practice and start from the back of the magazine.

Franz Rottensteiner has publicised Stanislaw Lem as Poland's answer to... well, I never did find out. Harbottle says that this is Lem's first story published in the English language. Compared with the Bulmer story I was discussing before, ARE YOU THERE, MR JONES? is an entertaining playlet about a company that tries to repossess its products, and a defendant who has the best reasons in the world for refusing to be repossessed. The story has a ring of F&SF about it - it certainly shows that Polish s f is not lagging too far behind anybody.

Lee Harding's CONSUMER REPORT was written five years ago, and one presumes that Lee has written better stuff than this since then. However, this is the kind of story that is really going to please the thousands who were left in the cold when NEW WORLDS closed their particular doors. Like Lem's story, CONSUMER REPORT is founded on a simple idea with limited implications, each of which can be delineated within the short story framework. The discoveries of the ultimate inter-galactic expedition could have filled a novel, but Harding does well with his short story, and we hope he writes the novel.

Michael Coney's SIXTH SENSE is by far the best story in the magazine. With Jack Wodhams' story, this tale justifies the establishment of a "conventional" s f magazine again throughout the British Commonwealth, and raises the problem - why not sooner? Structured with all the finesse and attention to inter-personal relationships that marks (for instance) a BBC radio play, SIXTH SENSE is probably the best story about telepathy that

I have read. A few days before I read this story I was thinking that no author had ever written about telepathy properly - that is, showing what it would really be like to live in an all telepathic society. But that's giving away too much of the story anyway. Mr Harbottle, I suggest that you mark down this story already for your first BEST OF VISION OF TOMORROW collection.

You may by now detect a note of enthusiasm in this review. Reading VISION OF TOMORROW demonstrates the one central commonplace of modern marketing - that the correct appearance for the product decides its fate in the market place. One can take whole issues of rubbish from NEW WORLDS and ANALOG because one can always look at the pictures, or stroke the fine paper; even if you can't read the stories. VISION's present design was prepared in haste, we know - but the reader must finish half the fiction before he knows that this is a good issue. More power to your Design Editor, Phil, when you get around to hiring one.

THE VAULT is not good Broderick but it is set in Australia, and again, it has a solidity of structure which justifies its presence in the magazine. At least it is not dull - none of these stories are - and for this reason I can say that Harbottle has successfully escaped from the Carnell influence, and is buying stories that are very different from those currently favoured both by England's leading literary agent, and by the American editors. Like most of the stories in the magazine, THE VAULT is over-written. There are too many exclamation marks, italics and other flourishes. The story would have hit harder if it had been under-written and not over-written.

Jack Wodhams has been obviously improving upon his early efforts for ANALOG, but I did not realise how much he had improved until I read SPLIT PERSONALITY (in ANALOG) and ANCHOR MAN (in VISION) within months of each other. ANCHOR MAN is as over-written as most of the other stories. The reader continually tries to reject the presence of the story-teller, the "I" character, because he over-reacts to situations, spits blobs of emotion instead of sentences of assessment, and speaks in very rough-hewn sentences. However, the reader finds that he cannot escape from his sympathy for both the man and the situation. The detective's partly telepathic assistant, the story-teller, is rendered neurotic by his own capacity, so Wodhams involves the reader in an intricate double plot in which the detective plays Sherlock Holmes while the necessary assistant tries to avoid being a neurotic Doctor Watson. The end of this magnificent detective story is not shown very clearly because Harbottle has not seen fit to edit the last thousand words or so. The language degenerates into long strings of sentences like this one: "We crossed a vacant lot-cum-dump, and I was soggy outside and parched inside and thinking of nothing now but getting out." Sentences like this one can draw an adequate picture, but the colours become lurid when sentences like this are used for several thousand words at a time. What is made clear from the ending is that the detective discovers he may carry some responsibility for his terrified "helper", and that he acts upon this realisation. This is more than Sherlock Holmes ever discovered.

There is little to say about WHEN IN DOUBT - DESTROY! except that it is too long and is far below William F Temple's best. Perhaps this was another story that Carnell didn't know what to do with.

VISION OF TOMORROW is a magazine of contradictions. It is presented as the first stf magazine for years to a British public who have read only NEW WORLDS for two years. This may now be a far more sophisticated market than it was then. VISION has a confessedly reactionary air about it - among other things, it wants to publish fiction NEW WORLDS would never touch. /On the other hand Moorcock has never catered for more than a small part of Carnell's former audience, and there will be plenty of people (like myself) who will enjoy most or all of the fiction that Harbottle presents. Even on this first performance I'd say that VISION already betters most of the American s f magazines. The next few issues will be critical for the magazine's eventual success, but I think VISION OF TOMORROW will make the grade as an important and interesting science fiction magazine.

FOOTNOTE:

Despite the optimism expressed in the review printed above, it is plain that some people are not nearly as friendly towards VISION. The major distributors in Great Britain, W H Smith & Sons Limited, have refused to handle VISION OF TOMORROW after the first issue. If they continue with this policy, the magazine will lose an awful lot of sales, and will probably be unable to continue publication. The only reason Ron Graham can suggest for this ban is the more than dubious similarity between VISION and NEW WORLDS. As you may remember, W H Smith nearly ruined NEW WORLDS when they refused to carry Issue No 179 some time back. On that occasion Smith's charged NEW WORLDS with being an obscene publication, but were forced to retract after a vigorous campaign which went as far as the Arts Council and Smith's Annual General Meeting of share-holders.

Whatever the reason, Smiths' ban is patently ridiculous. To make the company realise this, this magazine suggests that all readers take pen to paper, or typewriter to paper, and write as quickly as possible to

W H SMITH & SONS LIMITED
Strand House
Portugal Street
London W C 2
England

urging the company to continue distributing VISION OF TOMORROW. Fans, and especially Australian fans, will not be so deprived. Remember that Harbottle is still committed to carrying as many Australian stories as possible, so it is to the advantage of every Australian fan to join this Write-in Campaign.

NEW WORLDS Nos 185 - 190
Dec 1968 - May 1969

Edited by Michael Moorcock
Charles Platt
James Sallis
and, lately, b
Langdon Jones

Reviewed by Bruce R Gillespie

From December 1968 to May 1969, NEW WORLDS went through another of its perennial crises, and merged looking not much the worse for wear. June's issue has not yet arrived, so one must presume that yet another crisis is upon the magazine. A pity; NEW WORLDS always seems to hold its crises towards the conclusion of its serials. A CURE FOR CANCER, by

Michael Moorcock, is due to finish in June's issue.

Michael Moorcock finally gave up his attempt to edit NEW WORLDS, make money, and remain sane at the same time. Langdon Jones has had a sufficiently long apprenticeship to be entrusted with the slippery baby, and so he took over editorship from Issue No 189 (April 1969) onwards. Sallis shared the honours for awhile, and Issue 187 stars the extraordinary triumvirate of Moorcock, Sallis and Platt. Now Sallis has quite properly gone to make his pile in America (or at least seek the solace of Milford, Pennsylvania, after the madhouse of NEW WORLDS, London), and Platt has "retired" to get with the creative life once again. The stable element in NEW WORLD's unlikely editorial mixture continues to be Gabi Wasemann. His splendid work on layout and artwork for the magazine remains the one element that keeps NEW WORLDS at the top of the pile.

Distribution continues to be the main problem. America is surely the next place to go, because it is the only place where the magazine could really make money. The British Commonwealth still exists shakily as a copyright area, but as a money-making area it has long since had its day.

Because of these editorial disruptions, it is only to be expected that the magazine's policy might change. NEW WORLDS has been publishing the same kind of fiction since it recommenced in quarto size following the first of the current series of crises. Much of this fiction has been allusive, playful, bloody-minded or just plain confused. Very few of the "typical" NEW WORLDS stories have been genuinely the products of complex or mature minds. However, there has been a constant cream of competent, stylish yarns written by the Over-30 age group writers. Writers such as Aldiss, Disch, Jacobs, Moorcock and Delany were trained in more conventional schools, but felt they could only stretch their intellectual muscles in the pages of NEW WORLDS. Because of this uneasy, but constant relationship between the pros and the poets, NEW WORLDS has continued to be the best s (f) magazine in the world. There are very few pros or poets still publishing in the American magazines, and the best American novelists would prefer Ace publication to GALAXY serialization.

However, I can see a change of sorts during the last few months, as Moorcock's influence has decreased, and Langdon Jones has slipped into the editorial chair. The change is not obvious until Nos 189 and 190, and so I will discuss it later.

In the meantime, one heritage that Moorcock did hand on to Jones was the search for Big Names. It is probable that until recently the magazine could not pay Big Name prices, but writers such as Leiber, Spinrad and, at last, Delany come flocking anyway. In the meantime the magazine has actively encouraged new writers, and the New Writers issue (No 174) included some stories that were at least up to average NEW WORLDS standards.

In Issue No 185 (December 1968) the search for the important s f writers of today is carried so far that Moorcock could assemble a troupe of the 1968 Nebula Award Winners. However, it isn't a great issue. There are some "interesting" stories, but nothing that is brilliant. Samuel R Delany's TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES is one of the stories with which this author is trying to win me over to his side. The story is even more complex than most of

the other Delany stories that I have read, and the language is equally allusive. At many points the story nearly snarls into an oblivion of finely-cut sentences. What do you make, for instance, of a story that commences: "Day ordinate and abscissa on the century. Now cut me a quadrant. Third quadrant if you please. I was born in fifty. Here it's seventy-five." ? Granted that the first word of the story is a mis-print, the rest of the paragraph reads... how to say it?... unnecessarily. The problem is that Delany is still writing conventionally enough to want to provide An Explanation for the background of his story. At the same time he wants so much to write densely that he leaves out many explanations that genuinely are needed. Many NEW WORLDS stories work simply because they presume that the reader's disbelief is already suspended. Delany makes it hard on himself by not trading on this expectation. Then he does not leave himself sufficient rope to fully explore the emotional drama of his story. Apart from this basic fault in the rhetoric of all Delany's stories, it must be said that the thematic material of this story is extremely interesting. It shows Delany as one of the most satisfying thinkers in science fiction today. Presumably he will soon become a great writer as well.

And the other Nebula winners? Aldiss' ..AND THE STAGNATION OF THE HEART seems loosely related to his TOTAL ENVIRONMENT, a story which excited nearly everybody but me. Apart from the same Indian/decadent/over-populated atmosphere, within which may lie the seeds of a new series-novel, there is little of interest in the story.

Michael Moorcock's first Jerry Cornelius story in the present series, THE DELHI DIVISION left me unimpressed, but Cornelius has since been turned into the Perry Rhodan of the New Wave. I will discuss the Cornelius stories when all of A CURE FOR CANCER is printed.

NEW WORLDS went off-set for Number 186 (January 1969). The visual excitement of the magazine now obliterates the wonders or otherwise of the prose. This should be remembered while reading the rest of this review. The photo-collages continue to improve with each issue, and Mal Dean's savage drawings illuminate Moorcock's THE TANK TRAPEZE.

The fiction also improves, after a couple of issues in the doldrums. NEW WORLDS has so spoiled us during the last few years, that we expect a couple of near-classic stories in each issue. Both Harvey Jacobs' EPILOGUE FOR AN OFFICE PICNIC and the last of the Simon Charteris Acid Head stories DUSPENSKI'S ASTRABAHN qualify as stories worthy of the magazine.

You could almost call EPILOGUE FOR AN OFFICE PICNIC the diary of an s f fan. "When I was a youth my Uncle Adolph gave the family an obsolete BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE" writes the gentleman who discovers love like a footnote to a page of the dusty volume. "The problem was, since the books were years out of date, all the futures inside them had already been achieved... 'Energy will leap through hot wires to illumine the lamps of America', I would write, and get back in the margin: 'We got that - ELECTRICITY' ". The story could be a parody of the view of science achieved by the hard core science fiction fan, but turns out to be the comic-tragedy of a 40-years-old emotional dropout trying to collect his thoughts after an unusual office picnic. Not genre science fiction, perhaps, but the story has a lot to say about the s f mentality.

SUSPENSKI'S ASTRABahn is the longest of the Acid Head stories, and although certainly not the best, brings the series to a satisfactory close. The story romps along on a Speedway of priceless puns, but it does romp. The ending of this story reminds me of the ending of FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD more than anything: therefore not a great ending for the forthcoming novel, unless one considers the idea that each story has its own "end", and that Charteris is a multiple wraith whose adventures and fade-outs reflect an acid head weltenschauung that transcends the "character" of Charteris. We still await the novel, to test some of these hypotheses.

Sladek's latest "New Form", the ANXIETAL REGISTER B is very funny, but unfortunately differs little from many query forms actually used in U S A and Canada. Sladek's Form is the ultimate breakthrough the Public Service has been waiting for.

Ballard's THE SUMMER CANNIBALS is as oppressive as any of the other "encapsulated novels"; and there are two other bad stories in No 186, as well as the second of the current Cornelius stories.

The contents of Issue No 187 (February 1969) are so various that it is impossible to deal with them adequately. Big Names romp across the Contents Page, but they deliver very little: Mervyn Peake's posthumous entry is only a fragment from a children's story; Norman Spinrad's THE CONSPIRACY is only a muddy vignette, and Thomas Pynchon's ENTROPY is a good story, but laughably over-literal in its treatment of one of NEW WORLDS' major themes.

The best story is Giles Gordon's Ionesco-like fable CONSTRUCTION, which manages to be as amusing as it is sharp. Gordon describes some of the antics on the Construction:

A photographer has appeared eight storeys up, on the girders. His position is about where the eighth storey will be... He draws out the telescopic lense, and shoots. Shoots again. Two dead photographs for posterity. Posterity will be interested. He will give them no choice. A voice calls up. The words reach him. Are you a gentleman of the press? He nods. Which press? the voice asks. Stop press, he replies.

As interesting as Gordon's story is J G Ballard's article SALVADOR DALI: THE INNOCENT AS PARANOID, which no doubt overpraises Dali, but Ballard traces the relationship between the art of Dali and other twentieth century media, such as science fiction. The article shows several of Dali's pictures that have probably never been seen in Australia before.

The change in policy that I mentioned begins to be apparent in Issue No 188 (March 1969). We see the unbelievable spectacle of a Real Live Story from J G Ballard. Australian fans presumed that the odd snippets of "old" Ballard that turned up in the American magazines (COMSAT ANGELS in IF; CLOUD-SCULPTORS OF CORAL D in F&SF) were written before Ballard started on his "encapsulated novels". However, perhaps we were wrong, for THE KILLING GROUNDS shows that Ballard is keeping all his options open. "Even with twenty million men under arms, the Americans could spare fewer than 200,000 soldiers for the British Isles, a remote backwater in their global war against dozens of national liberation armies." The Vietnam War is shown as a world cancer, as the over-irrational forces of undifferentiated Liberation

Armies continue to slog it out over the ruined fields of England. The wealth of implication in this story is so much richer than that contained in the Ballard stories we have learned to know and hate during the last few years. We must wonder whether conventional story-telling is not returning to fashion within the pages of NEW WORLDS.

I get the same feeling from D M Thomas' MR BLACK'S POEM OF INNOCENCE which I would prefer to call a story not a poem. The style is resolutely complex, but the implications of this unusual case of psychological therapy are lucid and entertaining. Other well-written, though not so exciting stories from the same issue are Carol Emshwiller's THE WHITE DOVE and J J Mundis' THE LUGER IS A 9 MM HANDGUN WITH A PARABELLUM ACTION. You can't call NEW WORLDS escapist (as if you ever would) - its fragments over the last few months cover the disintegration of the world of 1969 far more ably than the best of current journalism.

Langdon Jones takes over for Number 189 (April 1969), and one can only wonder (with some delight) whether reaction and lucidity accompany him. Harlan Ellison's A BOY AND HIS DOG is as foolish and as delightful a yarn as he has ever written or NEW WORLDS has ever published, and there is not one obscurity in its pages. There are plenty of the milder four-letter words, and a twist at the end which may have frightened off the American magazine editors, but looks just a tame piece of fun in a magazine devoted to much less tame drolleries. Harlan's deserted city, his murderous gangs, his underground village, his tempting bird, are all cliches of the mouldiest vintage (and, I suspect, so is the ending). The hero is as omnipotent, graceless and energetically despicable as a Heinlein superman. But the story is fun, and Ellison doesn't often write stories as readable as this, and NEW WORLDS does not often publish them.

The "reactionary" trend is vigorously noticable in the latest NEW WORLDS to reach Australia, Issue No 190 (May 1969). There is little sign of Stephen Dedalus in Aldiss' THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE, which opens the issue. Aldiss' forte remains the deceptively simple story that contains many overlaid implications. THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE is superficially a horror story, but can also be seen as a parable of decayed love, even of permanently unobtainable love. There is a natural explanation for some horrors, but there is no natural restoration for the harm caused by them. Aldiss' carefully-controlled rhetoric is both sensual and metaphysical - there are so many intellectual spin-offs from the story that it can only be called "speculative fiction".

Harvey Jacobs' power as a writer increases with each story published. Langdon Jones tells us that THE NEGOTIATORS originally appeared in ESQUIRE, and Jacobs, far from being a new writer (although only two years new to science fiction) has appeared in THE REALIST and MADEMOISELLE and he currently plans to publish a collection, THE EGG OF THE GLAK. All of which tells nothing about Jacobs' story, but shows that NEW WORLDS now (justifiably) thinks of itself in terms of the best American slicks, and not the shoddiest American s f magazines. The story itself is surely the best story that has yet been written about the Vietnam War - or rather, about those who control the direction of this and every other war. What kind of war games are being played in Paris? How do the negotiators endure the years of waiting for compromise? What kind of people can engage in such a charade? What is the charade, anyway? The sneaky answers

provided by Jacobs are a lot more likely than those touted by the popular press.

I suspect that Marek Goltulowicz's THE HURT contains little that is worthwhile, but enjoyed it as much as the above two stories. Fraught with melodramatics, this very New Wavish story should keep you reading for an hour or two and thinking hard for several hours more. At least some NEW WORLDS writers are still having fun with words.

It would be too much to ask that NEW WORLDS become a high quality popular magazine of fiction. The division between the two terms seems to have become absolute in the last few years. However Jones is having a good try at capturing the largest possible audience with the best possible fiction. I doubt if he'll ever have much luck with the science fiction fraternity, but when you have a magazine like NEW WORLDS, why worry?

FEETNOTE:

- 1 I have complained in previous reviews of NEW WORLDS that the reviews do not match up to the fiction. This still holds true, and some day I will get around to looking at the reasons for the disparity. John Foyster wanted to know what I thought of James Sallis' critical article ORTHOGRAPHIES. When the promised second of these articles appears I will look at them both in the light of the type of fiction that NEW WORLDS publishes. Lang Jones has also had a few words in print about his attitudes to fiction writing. Neither gentleman is likely to win round people to his views, but the opinions of Sallis and Jones help to explain some of the idiosyncrasies of NEW WORLDS fiction, if not its logos.
- 2 I have deliberately left out all mention of the Jerry Cornelius stories. Moorcock's novel in this series, A CURE FOR CANCER, was due to be finished in No 191. As yet I don't know whether there is a No 191. However, when I see the last episode, I'll look at all the Cornelius stories. They probably reveal more about the mythical "New Wave Approach" than all the Orthographies placed end to end. ::: I would be grateful if someone could sell me a copy of Moorcock's FINAL PROGRAMME, too. Missed out on it.
- 3 Meanwhile, pray for Lang Jones' baby. According to Leland Sapiro, and Charles Platt in a letter to SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, the magazine still needs something drastic to ensure its survival.

THE ISLE OF THE DEAD

by ROGER ZELAZNY

Ace Books No 37465 : 1969

190 pp : A.70c

an Ace Science Fiction Special

Reviewed by John Banasund

Philip Jose Farmer, Thomas Burnett Swann and Theodore Sturgeon are outstanding and respected men in our little world of science fiction, and when they unanimously praise a book (as they have this book) one is reluctant to differ from their judgment. However, differ I must.

Let it be clear from the outset that I enjoyed ISLE OF THE DEAD. It is

as entertaining a story as one is likely to find on the s f shelf.

Like the Kallikanzaros Conrad, and other Zelazny characters, Francis

Sandow in this book is immortal. He is also vastly wealthy - owns a couple of planets, for example. To one who is neither immortal nor wealthy, this might seem sufficient good fortune for any man, but Sandow has, through his deep knowledge and experience of the alien Pei'an civilization, become one of that race's gods, and when circumstances require he becomes the divine Shimbo, the Shrugger of Thunders - a sort of hammerless Thor.

The Pei'ans, an ancient and intensely civilized race, are partial to vengeance, and they will cheerfully plan for centuries (yes, they are well-nigh immortal, too) to execute a neat, just and aesthetically pleasing revenge. It happens that one Pei'an is vexed that his race should have allowed the alien Sandow to become a god, and he has been plotting away for some time to bring him low. He himself attains godhood as Belion, the enemy of Shimbo, and the story concerns his toying with Sandow's efforts and their final titanic struggle on the eerie Isle of the Dead.

On the action level, this is an exciting and eminently satisfactory novel; there is intrigue, mystery, and a breathtaking climax; there is also a nicely depicted future world which differs sufficiently from other s f writers' future worlds to be of independent interest. One could hardly ask for more. But the three gentlemen I mentioned in my first paragraph have claimed other virtues for it, on the back cover of the book. Zelazny, says Farmer, "wrestles with immortality". He doesn't; he just uses it as a plot device. ISLE OF THE DEAD, says Swann, "is a book with illimitable excellences". I'm not entirely sure that I know what that means, but I do think this novel's only excellence is its entertainment value. The hero of the book, says Sturgeon, may be readily identified with and is "intensely human". And here we come to the basic flaw of the book, for Sandow is neither.

There are heroes and heroes. There are those who in pursuit of their normal business find themselves thrust into a situation calling for the risk of their welfare to ensure that of others, and respond courageously. There are those who labour conscientiously and unsung to alleviate human suffering. There are the heroic professionals. There are also the professional heroes, those who decide they are heroes and go looking for trouble to prove it. It is the professional hero that the general reader, in and out of s f, identifies with; the knight in armour, the galactic crusader. Sandow is not a hero in this sense; he's too human (and too humane) for that. But he is also not quite the heroic professional; he has too much power, is too far removed from the grubby realities of everyday life, for that.

Sandow's closest counterpart is the rich, dilettante amateur detective, beloved of thriller writers and readers, who has no cause at all to go about righting wrongs - except for our entertainment.

But the mixture of hero, ordinary bloke, immortal, dilettante and divinity doesn't quite come off, and one feels at times that Sandow himself is uncertain of his true role. A lesser author than Zelazny would have made Sandow more two-dimensional, a more conventional hero figure, but Zelazny has aimed higher, and missed.

Roger Zelazny is a fine writer. He is young, ambitious and dedicated to his craft. One day he may produce a really great, classic s f novel; all his work points in this direction. I cannot agree with Messrs Swann, Farmer and Sturgeon about this book, but

I enjoyed it, both for its own sake and for the promise it shows of great things to come.

THE MASKS OF TIME

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

Ballantine U 6121 : 1962

252 pp : A.90c

Reviewed by John Bangsund

Robert Silverberg has for more than a decade been a popular and prolific science fiction writer - possibly, when his pseudonyms are taken into account, the most prolific. The time has now come when he is no longer a struggling writer who needs to churn the stuff out to keep wolves, creditors and Harlan Ellison from

the door; he now has, apparently, the leisure to take time over his writing, with the result that his recent work has been very fine indeed.

His 1967 novel, THORNS, nominated for both Hugo and Nebula awards, made us aware of the new Silverberg. This book had its flaws, chief among them that the characters did not entirely command one's interest, but it was a good story for all that, and showed enough signs of greatness for most readers to eagerly anticipate his next.

We were not to be disappointed. THE MASKS OF TIME is the finest work he has done, and an extraordinarily good s f novel by anyone's standards.

The story concerns a gentleman from the future, one Vornan-19, who travels backwards through time and, to the (shall we say) astonishment of those in the vicinity, materializes in Rome on Christmas Day 1998, hovering complacently a few feet above the pavement, stark naked. As soon as the world at large becomes aware of his arrival, a very large group of people feels compelled to denounce him as a fraud and a charlatan, since this group believes quite fervently that the world is due to end on 1st January 2000, and therefore there couldn't possibly be a future for him to have come from.

Those who do not believe the world is about to end are nevertheless unsure what or who Vornan really is, nor for that matter do they know what he wants with their world and time, so an immensely learned bunch of psychologists, historians and scientists is detailed to travel about the globe with him and try to fathom the mystery surrounding him. Among these scientists is the narrator of the story, a physicist who has struggled unsuccessfully for years to discover whether and how one may travel in time.

The novel has basically four stories to tell: the outer story of Vornan's effect on the world (and he has an impact something like Mao-tse-Tung, Billy Graham and Casanova combined and magnified fifty times); the inner story of the relationship which develops between the members of the group accompanying him; the inmost story of the relationship between Vornan, the physicist and a couple of his friends; and intertwined with these three, causing and rebounding from them, the story of Vornan's changing view of his own role.

Every last character in the book, and there are dozens of them, is fully delineated and convincingly presented, according to the part he has to play. There is action aplenty, as skilfully

handled as one would expect from a past master like Silverberg, and there is insight and humour and provocative comment on all kinds of subjects; but above all there is warmth. The author is so obviously involved in the lives of his characters - he cares about them - and because of this the reader becomes involved with them too, to an extent rare in science fiction.

The story's inevitable climax is the revelation of Vornan's true nature and purpose. That the denouement is unexpected goes without saying; that it is controversial, and by some may be found distasteful, must be said; but that it is utterly brilliant and utterly logical in the light of what has gone before, few will deny.

THE MASKS OF TIME is a triumph. I for one await Silverbob's next book with the impatience of a devotee.

THE JAGGED ORBIT

by JOHN BRUNNER

Ace 38120 : 1969

397 pp : A.\$1.10

an Ace Science Fiction Special

Reviewed by Andrew Escot

Mr Brunner's thesis is that a large part of the violence in society is sparked off by those very few members of society who stand to gain by it: in general, arms manufacturers and in this particular novel, just one firm, which seems to be the only one in existence. There are, of course, tensions already present, but these are

exploited, heightened, and twisted by the employees of the Gottschalks so that profits may be maximised: Mr Brunner's novel recounts the success of these efforts. Mr Brunner does explore a secondary theme as well, although this is by no means as thorough as his investigations of violence: he believes that the precise nature of "individualism" must be carefully expressed if man is not to diverge from a true individuality to a collective isolationism.

The inspiration for the major theme, newspaper cuttings of early 1968, is incorporated, though sparingly, in the novel, together with Mr Brunner's comments: he makes no such efforts on behalf of his feelings about individuality.

Using these clippings, then, Mr Brunner extrapolates the world as it now is forward to 2014, although there doesn't seem to be anything in this world of the future which might not have been expected in a much earlier time - perhaps 1984. To obtain a perfect picture of Mr Brunner's achievement we should have to investigate the accuracy of his projection, but not many of us can wait 45 years. Brunner also argues that many attempts have been made to diagnose the problem in the present, but that no satisfactory solution has been found.

In introducing his story Mr Brunner uses a technique which certainly enables us to rapidly gain an impression of the world he plans to use, but this quick tour of the U S in 2014 can be a little confusing. It also tends to give away the plot, for it is fairly apparent that Mr Brunner will draw all of these characters together in order to make his point. He does so, and at the same time off skilfully the many loose strings which dangled throughout the

plot, with one exception which will be discussed later. As the novel progresses the length of the chapters increases, so that whereas initially we hardly have time to become oriented to the situation before we are whirled off to face another (an effective technique, and well used in this case which deals with a world where no one ever seems to have time to get things straight) by the time the book is three-quarters through, the chapters are longer and we move at a far more leisurely pace through the story. Indeed, it may be said that some of the last few chapters even move too slowly, but it is here that Mr Brunner is making his point.

The novel revolves around Matthew Flamen, a "spoolpigeon", who seems to be the last of the gentleman muck-rakers. His program, already only fifteen minutes long (less commercials) is in constant danger of being done away with completely, and his motivation throughout the story is a desire to save the program from extinction (and to retain the salary provided from the advertising). Other characters fall in line with his actions, though for differing reasons. Matthew Flamen's problem is that all of his dirt he presents on his show must be "comped" (that is, verified by computer) as having a high degree of reliability, and a satisfactory rating requires much data and computer time: Flamen's opponents always have the edge on him in these departments. The readers have more data, too, and this may be a flaw in the novel. We are not quite so surprised at some developments as we might have been had Mr Brunner kept some pieces of information to himself. But THE JAGGED ORBIT is not a detective story, and there are no prizes for guessing the finale.

As the novel progresses Flamen and the others increasingly come to understand the methods by which violence is being promoted in their world: when the book opened this was already understood by most of them, at least unconsciously. No matter what their walk of life, they all felt as though they were being manipulated: if this were so in general, it is hard to see just how such a situation could have come about, unless it be argued that the amount of manipulation was universally underestimated.

But all's well that ends well, and the future looks bright on Page 397, both for the players in Mr Brunner's drama and for the firm of Gottschalk: these two happy endings are locked in step, which weakens Mr Brunner's basic point. But perhaps he would assert that the Gottschalks outsmarted themselves, rather than that the universe is basically good anyway.

Mr Brunner writes briskly, or, as Mr Robert Bloch says in one of those seemingly unavoidable blurbs which these days clog up the back of paperbacks, "at breakneck speed". They don't come much faster, in fact.

The one strange thing about the novel is that in a world so different from our own, filled with scientific-fictional devices, as it were, the characters should react to new marvels in just the same way as we would. There are strange weapons, drugs, acceptance of ability to foretell the future (particularly well-done, via 'pythonesses' who deliver oracles) but no space travel. All this is accepted by the players and is acceptable to us as readers: but the one point at which something "new" is introduced is totally unacceptable to the majority of the circle around Flamen, but quite reasonable, even obvious, to today's readers. Perhaps, as was suggested above, this is because the reader has an advantage over the characters, but

it is still disconcerting.

There is nothing remarkably new in the novel from the point of view of ideas, but the way in which current s f ideas are used and blended is extremely skilled, and leaves us with a novel which can almost live up to the blurbs mentioned above - a rare feat! It is even worth £1.10, in these days of inflated prices.

FRONTIER OF GOING:
AN ANTHOLOGY OF SPACE POETRY

Edited by JOHN FAIRFAX

Panther : 1969 : A.80c

Reviewed by Andrew Escot

The difference of opinion between the editor of this anthology and his publisher shows itself in the obvious division of the 49 poems into "science fiction" poems (the publisher's view) and "space poetry" (that of the editor), with the latter slightly exceeding the former in number

and generally appearing towards the beginning of the book. The difference is well exemplified by considering the first and last poems (which also happen to be among the best), George Barker's IN MEMORY OF YURI GAGARIN and John Heath-Stubbs's FROM AN ECCLESIASTICAL CHRONICLE (which reports the installation of a computer as Bishop of Stevenage.).

There are few poems which do not fall easily into one of these two classifications. There are bad poems whose sole purpose appears to be to tell the reader just how gooey the poet feels inside at the thought of SPACE; there are bad poems about sun-scarred spacehound: none of them are as bad as they might have been. On the other hand Nathaniel Tarn's THE SATELLITE and D M Thomas' LIMBO are fine representatives of the two classes.

Apart from an aside on the first page in the publisher's blurb there is nothing to suggest that these poems are restricted to those written by English poets. Given the magnitude of the subject, this makes the anthology rather parochial. John Updike and Archibald McLeish have both written space poetry, and poems like Alexei Surkov's A SPACEFLIGHT SONG are common. On the science fiction side Kingsley Amis meets all the requirements, while Sweden's Harry Martinson (ANIARA, a genuine space opera) fails only to be English.

Science Fiction poetry from science fiction writers would probably be easily disqualified by its quality. Robert A Heinlein's thumpity-thump ballad, THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH ("I pray for one last landing / On the world that gave me birth..."), is an obvious example, but the snatches of poetry and song that appear in the stories and novels of Samuel R Delany and the late Cordwainer Smith are at least as good as anything appearing in this anthology.

The editor himself inclines to the "gooey" vision of space, both in his introduction and in his poems. But there are many pieces which offset this attitude. D M Thomas' LIMBO is a re-writing of Tom Godwin's short story, THE COLD EQUATIONS, Ben Dunk's TURTLE TURN is a very funny poem about a brain transplant and there are several other worthwhile poems in the science fiction vein. Such poems as Robert

Conquest's THE LANDING IN DEUCALION, Peter Redgrove's THE YOUTHFUL SCIENTIST REMEMBERS, Paul Roche's INNER SPACE and George Barker's IN MEMORY OF YURI GAGARIN are excellent examples of space poetry.

Within the restrictions the editor set himself, he has done well. But he may have done better had he been willing to look further afield.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE VILP

by PAUL ABLEMAN

Victor Gollancz : £2.70

Reviewed by Andrew Escot

Mr Ableman's first novel is such an odd piece that one would have been justified in believing that he would never write another. However he has eluded the fate which might have been expected for the author of I HEAR VOICES (1958) (in which a man eats an egg

- soft-boiled, I think) and THE TWILIGHT OF THE VILP is his fourth and most recent novel. This does not mention eggs, or descend to so obvious an inversion of the earlier plot as Egg Eats Man.

On the other hand, Egg Eats Man might almost have been a primitive inspiration for this wild story. Novelist Clive Witt, bowed down by an uncountable family, a thoughtless publisher, and a minor case of writer's block, advertises for heroes. From the seventy-three replies he selects the three most likely characters, writes to these respondents, and later visits them. His intent is to weave into one plot the lives and desires of Guthrie Pidge, Professor of Zoology (cum Literary Agronomist), Henry Glebe, inventor of a revolutionary earth-borer, Pad Dee Murphy, an Irish Buddhist, and Sonya Guildenkrantz, Professor Pidge's attractive assistant.

Witt's attempts to write a conventional novel (THE MIXTURE AND THE BAG) fail, after great efforts, because of a combination of inherent plotting difficulties and interruptions to his simple work program by wife, children and publisher. Only when he realises that he should be writing a science fiction novel (THE SILVER SPORES) does he make rapid and satisfactory progress.

Mr Ableman is a careful and amusing writer. Although he does not hesitate to borrow techniques from Brahms and Simon, S J Perelman or the Goons, for example, he nevertheless speaks with his own voice. Though the reader may momentarily feel annoyed at what appears to be overlong nonsense this is invariably interrupted by the discovery that Mr Ableman is commenting on the ways in which most contemporary fiction seems to be written.

While Clive Witt is writing THE MIXTURE AND THE BAG he is frustrated, disappointed and completely unsuccessful in his attempt to escape from his own madcap life. But when he comes to write the science fiction novel, THE SILVER SPORES, he breaks away, and is able to plot his novel from start to finish, only to be drawn back to reality on the last page.

Mr Ableman suggests that much of contemporary fiction requires an insane existence. He is more caustic on the subject of science fiction, for he does not hesitate to suggest that in that medium anything makes sense.

By making the novel short, Mr Ableman ensures that readers will be able to recall the early events with ease, which is essential for the fullest enjoyment. By being serious in a frivolous way, Mr Ableman can dodoe the most severe criticism.

EDITOR'S NOTE : Although Mr Escot may be any age from eighteen to eighty (and probably is - his contributions come in plain unmarked envelopes addressed by a plain unmarked typewriter, so I don't know) it is plain that the honoured gentlemen suffered a slight lapse of memory when typing his credits for this review. He mentions during the review that TWILIGHT OF THE VILP is Mr Ableman's "fourth and most recent novel" but does not mention a copyright date. Mr Escot also mentions that Ableman makes this novel short, but does not include the number of pages at the top of his review.

No doubt Mr Escot will now rush me those details with a horrified apology. In the meantime, would it be too inconvenient for all reviewers to include such details as publisher of the edition used for the review, number of pages, original copyright date, and Australian price? It makes the review so much more... authoritative? Thanks, in advance.

[illegible]

STAND ON A SLUSH PILE...

And that's it. What happened to the long review of Brian Aldiss' INTANGIBLES INC, Franz Rottensteiner's review of GARBAGE WORLD, and Paul Stevens' and Peter Ripota's eye-opening revelations about SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION? They're all here: you can look at them anytime up at Ararat if you are passing through. In the meantime if you can wait those extra few weeks, all these goodies, and many more, will appear in S F COMMENTARY 6. You have been warned.

In the meantime, I remind you to look at the inside front cover of this issue (after having been mind-expanded by the outside front cover) to see the Hugo Results. Charlie Brown reports in LOCUS that there were between 800 and 900 ballots cast, and I think this might account for the much higher predictability of the results this year. Congratulations, John and Stan and Art and all those other highly favoured creators... at least somebody likes you.

This makes it the second issue running in which I have not talked about my favourite fanzines. The Browns' LOCUS is a must, Ron Clarke's M13 makes this humble Australian journal look very shoddy (and there is a good Gary Woodman story, would you believe), SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW 31 ensured its Hugo with a magnificent issue, and Gary Mason's NEW FORERUNNER continues to be as necessary and interesting as ever. The ANZAPA members are having a glorious barney about a trivial incident. Stephen Campbell is still drawing furiously (does he ever do anything else?), and SCYTHROP will arrive with the Millenium (or, that's what I thought you said, John). The Millenium is still due in October.

Thanks for the use of your eyes.

5.9.69