

S F  
COMMENTARY

20

Anderson  
Blish  
Boutland  
Foyster  
Gillam  
Gillespie  
Le Guin  
Lem  
Luttrell  
Miesel  
Pauls  
van der  
Poorten  
Robb  
Temple  
Thaon





ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION (9, 10) \* John Alderson (ed.): CHAD (10) \* Brian Aldiss: THE SERPENT OF KUNDALINI (19) \* J G Ballard: THE DEATH MODULE (18) \* John Bangsund (ed.): AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY (9, 43) \* Richard Bergeron (ed.): WARHOON (12) \* Mervyn Binns (manager): SPACE AGE BOOKSHOP (9) \* James Blish (ed.): NEBULA AWARD STORIES 5 (21-22) \* Jorge Luis Borges (33-38) \* Jorge Luis Borges: ALEPH (36) \* Jorge Luis Broges: DEUTSCHES REQUIEM (36) \* Jorge Luis Borges: HOUSE OF ASTERION (36) \* Jorge Luis Borges: THE IMMORTAL (36) \* Jorge Luis Borges: LABYRINTHS (33-38) \* Jorge Luis Borges: THE LOTTERY OF BABYLON (33-34) \* Jorge Luis Borges: PIERRE MENARD, AUTHOR OF THE DON QUIXOTE (34) \* Jorge Luis Borges: THE THEOLOGIANS (36) \* Jorge Luis Borges: THEME OF THE TRAITOR & THE HERO (36) \* Jorge Luis Borges: THREE VERSIONS OF THE JUDAS (34, 37) \* Jorge Luis Borges: TLON, UQBAR, ORBIUS TERTIUS (33, 35) \* Charles & Dena Brown (eds.): LOCUS (3) \* Charles & Dena Brown (organizers): LOCUS POLL (11-12) \* Frederick Brown: THE WAVERIES (14) \* Kevin Brownlow & Andrew Mollo (dirs.): IT HAPPENED HERE (8) \* John Brunner: CATCH A FALLING STAR (27-28) \* John Brunner: TIME SCOOP (28) \* Italo Calvino (50) \* Italo Calvino: PRISCILLA (50) \* Italo Calvino: T ZERO (TIME & THE HUNTER) (11) \* Thomas Clareson (ed.): EXTRA-POLATION (45) \* Ron Clarke (ed.): THE MENTOR (9) \* Edmund Cooper: FIVE TO TWELVE (26-27) \* D G Compton: CHRONOCULES (11) \* Samuel R Delany: BABEL-17 (23-24, 32) \* Samuel R Delany: TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES (22) \* Philip K Dick (43-46) \* Leo & Diane Dillon (12) \* DITMAR AWARDS (47-49) \* DITMAR AWARDS 1971 (7) \* Dovzhenko (dir.) (42) \* Leigh Edmonds (50) \* Malcolm Edwards (ed.): QUICKSILVER (3) \* Harlan Ellison: A BOY AND HIS DOG (22) \* Harlan Ellison: THE REGION BETWEEN (11) \* Steven Fabian (12) \* Ed Ferman (ed.): FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION (11) \* Christopher Finch: A LANDSCAPE OF SHALLOWS (18) \* John Foyster & Leigh Edmonds (eds.): BOYS OWN FANZINE (9, 43) \* John Foyster, Lee Harding & Leigh Edmonds (organizers): TENTH AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (5-7) \* Bruce Gillespie (ed.): METAPHYSICAL REVIEW (51) \* Bruce Gillespie (ed.): NORSTRILIAN NEWS (10) \* Giles Gordon: SCREAM (17-18) \* Joseph Green: AN AFFAIR OF GENIUS (19-21) \* Joseph Green: DANCE OF THE CATS (20) \* Joseph Green: DECISION MAKERS (21) \* Joseph Green: THE ENGINEER (21) \* Joseph Green: JINN (21) \* Joseph Green: LIFE-FORCE (20) \* Joseph Green: THE LOAFERS OF REFUGE (19) \* Joseph Green: ONCE AROUND ARCTURUS (19-20) \* Joseph Green: SINGLE COMBAT (20) \* Joseph Green: TUNNEL OF LOVE (20) \* David Grigg (ed.): FANARCHIST (9) \* Graham Hall: THE TENNYSON EFFECT (18-19) \* Philip Harbottle (ed.): VISION OF TOMORROW (11) \* Frank Herbert: WHIPPING STAR (29-30) \* Robin Johnson (50) \* Langdon Jones: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN II (19) \* Langdon Jones: THE TIME MACHINE (19) \* Noel Kerr (ed.): SOMERSET GAZETTE (7, 10) \* Stanley Kubrick (dir.): DR STRANGELOVE (40) \* Ursula K LeGuin: NINE LIVES (22) \* Fritz Leiber: COMING ATTRACTION (14) \* Stanislaw Lem: SOLARIS (11) \* C S Lewis: OF OTHER WORLDS (46) \* Tony Lewis: CORDWAINER SMITH DIRECTORY (45) \* Greg McAlpine & Graeme Rutherford: IRON OUTLAW (8) \* Gary Mason (50) \* MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB (9) \* Michael Moorcock (ed.): BEST S F STORIES FROM NEW WORLDS 5 (15-19) \* Michael Moorcock: THE ICE SCHOONER (31-32) \* Michael Moorcock (ed.): NEW WORLDS (15) \* NEBULA AWARDS (10) \* Larry Niven: NOT LONG BEFORE THE END (22) \* Charles Platt: THE RODENT LABORATORY (19) \* Jean Renoir (dir.): THE GOLDEN COACH (40-41) \* Joanna Russ: THE VIEW FROM THIS WINDOW (50) \* SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION (47) \* S F COMMENTARY AWARD (49) \* T L Sherred: ALIEN ISLAND (30-31) \* Robert Silverberg: THE CUBE ROOT OF UNCERTAINTY (13-15) \* Robert Silverberg: DOUBLE DARE (13) \* Robert Silverberg: DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH (15) \* Robert Silverberg: HALFWAY HOUSE (14) \* Robert Silverberg: THE IRON CHANCELLOR (13-14) \* Robert Silverberg: MUGWUMP FOUR (14) \*

# S F COMMENTARY

NUMBER 20

APRIL 1971  
52 pages

COVER - Drawing by Dimitrii Razuvaev; original design by Peter Innocent; lettering by Bruce Gillespie

## I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

4

The Editor  
Ursula K Le Guin  
Marcel Thaon  
Sandra Miesel  
James Blish  
John Foyster  
William F Temple

## CRITICANTO

13

Barry Gillam  
Bruce R Gillespie  
David W Boutland  
Alfred J van der Poorten  
Lesleigh Luttrell

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## CRITICANTO: SHORT NOTICES

25

Sandra Miesel  
Barry Gillam  
Paul Anderson  
Alex Robb  
Ted Pauls

## UNITAS OPPOSITORUM: THE PROSE OF JORGE LUIS BORGES

33

Stanislaw Lem

## NEW YORK FILM REVIEW: THE FORBIN PROJECT

39

Barry Gillam

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# I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

\* Who said that chaos died? Chez Gillespie, it has reigned supreme for at least the last four months, and probably longer. A magazine that I planned to release in December reached its first readers at Easter. Letters which I planned to answer in January are still lying on my shelf in the middle of April. I have at least 36 letters of comment for past issues of S F COMMENTARY - can I hope to print more than about ten of them?

And I cannot blame anybody else but myself, either. Dick Bergeron, with his plans to reprint all of Walt Willis' wisdom, gave me the idea of reprinting EXPLODING MADONNA and JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY. I have proof that I first put forward the idea sometime in September last year. I had over half the issue typed by the middle of December 1970. But... and here I could write for several pages. I decided to forsake teaching, or rather I did not know how to continue it. I spent a miserable Christmas and New Year worrying about this problem, knowing that worrying would not solve a thing, but not knowing what to do. I started to send out applications for jobs - my most flamboyant gesture was to send letters to all three major Melbourne newspapers, and Sydney's BULLETIN, giving my qualifications, and virtually saying: "Do you want a journalist?" THE AUSTRALIAN actually gave me an interview, which made me feel that perhaps I could change jobs without too much disturbance. I applied for some public service jobs, and prospects looked bright. Finally I resigned from the Education Department, and made arrangements to move about a thousand books, a duplicator, a 6 x 6 x 2 book-case, dozens of fanzines, and record player, from Ararat. Job applications seemed to take up most of January; I anticipated that I would have no income for at least a month; I wrote another story, and read some books; but during January I did no more work on SFC 19. I resigned on the second last Friday of the school holidays - yet by the beginning of first term I had a job in the Publications Branch of the Education Department. The story of that abrupt elevation is much too complicated to tell here. Now I could return to SFC 19...

...And that was the start of chaos, not the end of it. Finally I typed the stencils, correcting them took weeks, running off the first batch of pages only took about a week, stacking over 70 little piles of paper to run the second sides of each sheet took three nights (Stephen Campbell

used to do that job), and running off the rest of the magazine took about another week. However, my troubles had only just begun. Again, it was my fault. After most of the duplicating was done, I had the brilliant idea of dividing the issue in two with two panels that I hoped Dimitrii Razuvaev would draw for me. I asked Dimitrii, who drew them as quickly as possible. I sent the first one to Noel Kerr for him to make an electronic stencil. He did this quickly, and put the finished stencil in the mail. Five days later the mailman delivered it to me. (It only takes four days for a letter from England to reach me). At the same time I was struggling with Lettraset headings for the first time, and I made <sup>the</sup> most mistakes possible. Making up Lettraset headings, sending them for electronic stencils, cutting up the electronic stencils, sticking them on other stencils with Mountant, overprinting the headings, and numerous other jobs, gave me a screaming headache and took weeks of work. Then there was the cover... I don't like to see grown fans cry, so I won't tell you that one. Have you ever met anyone in Bruno's Pizzeria just so you could get a fanzine cover from him? SFC 19 was stapled on Good Friday morning and Easter Sunday morning, by which time I didn't even believe the issue would ever appear. It did. Nobody's sent a letter of comment yet.

\* I hope you haven't gained the impression that I've had a miserable time over the last four months. I just thought you may have been miserable waiting for your copy. If you are an airmail subscriber, you are going to wait another month more. The TENTH AUSTRALIAN S F CONVENTION, held in Melbourne at New Year, has been the highlight of the year so far.. It was organized by John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds, and Lee Harding as a get-together for fans, and somehow it succeeded. The weather helped - it rained nearly all day nearly every day of the Convention, so visitors had to stay inside the Convention hall and meet each other. The location helped - it was a portable lecture room for the Meteorology Department of the University of Melbourne. None of the University's facilities was open, and the nearest toilet was several hundred yards away. Sources of nourishing food were not exactly on the doorstep, either. So most people did what I did: squirmed in their seats through an entire program, and then ran for civilisation, crazy for both the food and the toilet. When we hold a World Convention on the moon, you will get some idea of the experience.

I'm not going to pretend that I can remember everything that took place at New Year. John Foyster tried some new ideas in Convention format, and they worked. During the convention's first session, members joined one discussion group chosen out of four. Each group was led by someone who knew something about the group's topic, but the main idea was that everybody should get to know everybody else. At about this stage of proceedings, representatives of newspapers and television channels, arrived en masse. New Year is Australia's silly season for the news media, and they probably thought they had gone silly after an hour or two. For some reason, their favorite son was Dr Dick Jenssen who gave a pleasantly annoying (and mainly accurate) speech called "Why I No Longer Read Science Fiction." I've heard since that the ABC, in its national news item concentrated mainly on Dick's speech. Most intriguing sight of the Convention: Dick Jenssen's satanic smile as he sat down, after having poked fun at the literary views of nearly everybody present. One of the Convention's best quotes: John Foyster: "Well, John, I don't think we'll be able to sell him a copy of our book on Ballard and Delany." Paragon Books had such a volume scheduled for publication.

On the first day of the Convention there were several interviews. I remember that John Foyster interviewed Alf van der Poorten, who, with his BA, B Sc, and Ph D, gave a sort of average fan's view of science fiction today. Lee Harding interviewed Leigh Edmonds, but this wasn't very helpful, as Leigh kept saying that he was sick of producing fanzines, and Lee kept asking him what fun people gained from producing fanzines. Despite interludes like SFC 19, it is fun to produce a fanzine, folks. John Foyster interviewed me about attitudes to criticism: I'd like to edit that and reprint it sometime, if possible. There was an auction, at which I could not afford any of the fanzines I really wanted.

Here I should say that many of the items at the Convention promoted the idea of Australia In 75, or helped to raise money for it. Leigh Edmonds and John Foyster donated many of their books and nearly all their fanzines to the auction, whose proceeds went to AI75. Robin Johnson, who led our delegation to Heicon, was the Fan Guest of Honour, and John Foyster gave a report on present progress early on the second day of the Convention.

On the Friday night there was a Masquerade Party (the first one ever held in conjunction with an Australian convention) and several very successful costumes appeared. Merv Binns won, as Adolf Hitler (he has long been known as Der Fuehrer of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club). Robin Johnson, in an improbably flamboyant costume, came second, as Nicholas von Rijn. Carolyn Addison's flat was crowded out, and when I left, the party still had four hours to go. (It finally ended at 6am on Saturday morning, when John Bangsund fell asleep over his typewriter). Don't ask me why John Bangsund was typing stencils at 6 in the morning; things like that just happened during the Convention.

On the Convention's second day, people had lost some of their bright, untarnished appearances. The panels started late, but they all seemed to work successfully. Lee Harding told a small bunch of aspiring pros how to sell a manuscript. I still haven't sold a story, Lee. By the end of the panel we were back on time. During the Business Session, Sydney bid for the right to hold the Eleventh Australian Convention. Since nobody opposed this motion, it won. After the AI75 report, Donna Runic formally moved that Australia should bid for the right to hold the 1975 World Convention. Passed unanimously. The second lot of interviews followed, including Lee Harding's conversation with Ron Graham, publisher of much lamented VISION OF TOMORROW.

The most remarkable event of the Convention took place just as Merv Binns, Paul Stevens, and Peter House were about to discuss films. Here's David Grigg, who tells these things far better than I do:

"People began settling down to a fairly boring discussion, when suddenly Lee Harding came to the door of the hall. He spoke the fateful words that shall ring down through convention history in the nightmares of organisers: "Excuse me for interrupting, but there is a little man with a gelati van outside..." Before he could even blink, there was a literal stampede for the door. Lee fell out, away from the mad rush, and the gelati man blanched when he saw the mob surge out of the hall. Within ten seconds the hall was empty, but for the members of the panel, and a queue had formed about fifty yards long. Amidst cries of "gelati fandom!" and the opposing philosophy "Queue fandom!" your eager reporter obtained a ten cent cone of gelati, and a packet of party whistles, which he proceeded to donate to a happy queue." (from THE FANARCHIST, page 8).



Their pangs of hunger quietened, the gelati eaters reassembled a half an hour later, just in time for Paul Stevens to wind up the film panel. More of the auction followed, although most people tried to hitch a ride to the Golden Age hotel as early as possible, so they would not miss out on the smorgasbord banquet. Eyes fogged and stomachs filled, conventioners returned to the hall, in time to catch the "Paul Stevens Waiting For Godot Half Hour". For the first time at an Australian convention, someone had seriously attempted to put humour on the program. John Bangsund appeared as Professor Humphrey Tape, of the University of Ard Knox. You can read his panygeric in BOYS OWN FANZINE, Number 1, but even there, you could not feast on the delicious sight of JB, decked out in academic gown, stumbling over the word "ektrochiasology". And if you don't know what an ektrochiasome is, you haven't played the runoff tracks of your 1 p records recently. The Professor illustrated his talk with examples of various composers' ektrochiasomes. Next John Foyster interviewed Olaf Bangsund, of Parallel Books (or Paranoid Books). Lee Harding overacted as usual, but the result was quite amusing. Interview: "Is it true, Mr Bangsund, that you intend to reprint .. uh .. your entire school exercise books?" Peter House appeared as Superman, and he raised a laugh without opening his mouth.

Th

Dick Jonsson awarded the Ditmar Awards next, including some special awards.

<u>BEST AUSTRALIAN FICTION:</u>	THE BITTER PILL, by A Bertram Chandler (from VISION OF TOMORROW)
<u>BEST OVERSEAS FICTION:</u>	No Award (an author too long inactive in Hugo and similar awards.)
<u>BEST AUSTRALIAN FANZINE:</u>	SOMERSET GAZETTE (edited by Noel Kerr for the Melbourne Science Fiction Club).
<u>SPECIAL AWARDS:</u>	to JOHN BAXTER, for SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA.
	to RON GRAHAM, for the VISION OF TOMORROW project.

Harold Eggleton showed some slides and Ron Clarke showed some films of his overseas trip, but they were anticlimactic after the night's entertainment.

This was one of the two best conventions I've been to (Syncon will take some beating) and all I can do is thank the organizers, and other people like John Broden who helped. Thanks to Gary Mason, John Bangsund, and Geoff Marshall, who carried me around from place to place.

There was a third day of films, run separately. I appreciated seeing LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD again, and WORK IS A FOUR LETTER WORD for the first time.

\* To plan yet more conventions after the success of New Years Con, might seem a foolish venture. But planned they were. Brisbane announced its Q-Con for Easter - I haven't heard full details of that yet - and two weeks before Easter, Paul Stevens, David Grigg, Merv Binns and Peter House announced they would stage a Mini Melcon. Everybody sighed, and waited for a half-hearted disaster. Surprise - no disaster. Even though details of the Convention did not reach many people until four days before Easter, nearly seventy attended at least one day of the Convention. Three came from South Australia, and Michael Cameron from

Brisbane attended, although admittedly he did not come to Melbourne only for the Convention. On Good Friday, people arrived during the day at the Melbourne Science Fiction Club's new quarters at 147 Toorak Road, South Yarra. (There's an epic story to be told about the MSFC alone; where or when in the issue I don't know). The Convention began to swing on Friday night, at the Nova Mob party held at John Bangsund's flat. I enjoyed Easter's party a lot more than New Year's, but at New Year I was constantly worrying about other things. Several people came in fancy dress, and Michael Cameron and Liz Kennert took off the prizes. Most of all, I enjoyed talking to people I had no time to see at New Year: Alan Sandercock, John Hewitt, and Paul Anderson from Adelaide, who ferried me around, John Bangsund himself, and people like Darryl Lindquist and Philip Dalkin from Ararat, who stayed at my place. Small conventions have some advantages over large ones. On the Saturday we assembled in the main bar of the Golden Age hotel, where we set up chairs and a table. The acoustics were bad, but the events were entertaining. A team from Monash University Science Fiction Association debated that "Star Trek Is Trash" and a motley crew (David Grigg, John Stopkowski of the Star Trek Fan Club of Australia, and Leigh Edmonds) tried to provide counter-arguments. In deference to the losing side, no vote was taken. The star attractions of the Convention were Greg and Grae (Greg McAlpine, artist, and Graeme Rutherford, writer) who create IRON OUTLAW, Australia's best comic strip, which appears in Australia's best newspaper, THE SUNDAY REVIEW (it is reputed to hire mainly journalists too radical for other newspapers). With the aid of slides, Grae did most of the talking, and explained, among other things, why Greg and Grae will need to go overseas to succeed. Maybe IRON OUTLAW is not nice enough for Australian audiences. At the auction, Marvel comics fetched good prices, especially since G&G had said they were Marvel fans (who isn't? I'm not). Best bidding came from a beaut bird named GASP! who had mysteriously appeared with G&G's party. A verbal duel between John Foyster and Gasp! seemed to develop because nobody could find out her name, and she didn't even have a number. The Golden Age put on a meal, and John Foyster stirred fannish souls with his summary of current developments in our Australia In '75 bid.

If you live in USA, or went to the Q-Con, you may wonder why John Foyster seems to be running a second convention. Nobody planned it that way, least of all John Foyster. Y'see, a funny thing happened. Paul Stevens had forgotten to find out whether Dick Jonsson would be auctioneer for this Convention as well. As it happened, he wasn't, and John became it. He was also asked to conduct an impromptu interview with Gerald Carr when he turned up. I suppose John breathed a sigh of relief when he wasn't asked to do a turn in the "Paul Stevens Show". Yes, we endured a second one of these events. The jokes weren't too bad, even though they were a little under-rehearsed. I liked Malcolm Sims' Quasimodo best, but Peter House as the manager of a Monsters-for-Monster-Movies zoo was also funny. Stand and tremble, overseas fans - if you come to Australia in 1975, the odds are very high you will be forced to endure a Paul Stevens Show. Provided Paul Stevens hasn't been murdered by vengeful (and hungry) fans first. Paul has very good connections in the film trade. When Paul puts on a film festival (as he did on the third day of the Convention) he gets more than enough films. He managed to hire so many that the afternoon session ran two and a half hours overtime (finishing at 7.30 instead of 5) and had to begin again late, so that people could have tea. At night we saw NO BLADE OF GRASS and IT HAPPENED HERE. The latter film didn't have a lot of thrilling action, so people became restless by 11.45, when it ended. I'd missed the last train home, for a start. They were films worth chowing though, and IT HAPPENED HERE would have been a masterpiece if it hadn't been filmed on a shoestring budget.



\* The only details I've heard of the Q-Con so far: about 50 attended, which is not bad when you consider that Brisbane did not have a science fiction club this time last year. Veteran s f writer Frank Bryning was the Guest of Honour, and Denis Stocks head of the organizers. Robin Johnson was the only Victorian to attend<sup>1</sup> (it's \$100 return air fare to Brisbane, about 1200 miles from Melbourne), but about a dozen people from Sydney went. Facilities were good. The third day was spent on the Gold Coast, south of Brisbane, which may have been more congenial than the inside of the Capri Theatre, Murrumbidgee. Q-Con received very good publicity from Queensland television and newspapers.

\* Recent conventions have only formed a small part of fan activity in Australia. Just before Christmas, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club was forced to abandon its picturesque premises in Somersot Place, Melbourne. The new rooms are much smaller - several rooms of the flat of Paul Stevens and John Braden at 147 Toorak Road, South Yarra (enter via the lane at the back), but Melbourne fan activity has not lessened. Merv Binns has left McGills Newsagency after 20 years, and will begin his own bookshop, The Space Age Bookshop as soon as he can find suitable display premises. At the moment the Bookshop has several rooms on the 7th floor, Beehive Building, 96 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. All mail for both the Club and the Bookshop should be sent to GPO Box 1267L Melbourne, Victoria 3001. :: A new s f club has been formed in Adelaide - the Adelaide University Science Fiction Association. The President is Alan Sandercock, Secretary is Jeff Harris, and Treasurer is John Hewitt, who will take your 50 cents associate membership if you send it to 11 Kyre Avenue, Kingswood, South Australia. The Association plans to publish a fanzine as soon as possible. :: It's hard to get news of Sydney fandom. I've heard that they have new clubrooms, and that's about all.

\* FANZINES: Australian fanzines are improving all the time, with two very promising ones begun, a fanzine that has changed managership, and a fanzine that has just changed, new shape unknown.

BOYS OWN FANZINE (edited by John Foyster and Leigh Edmonds; all correspondence to Leigh, at his new address, Flat 2, 28 Ardmillan Road, Moonoo Ponds, Victoria 3039) is the new Australian fannish fanzine (whatever that means) with the big names and lotsa laughs. BOF contains editorials by John and Leigh, that Humphrey Tape lecture I mentioned, Apollo Papayannou tells about CAMPING with Lee Harding, and Don Symons describes gold smuggling in his article COUP D'OR. For letter, contribution, or trade, or 50 cents if you're very unfannish.

FANARCHIST (edited by David Grigg, 1556 Main Rd, Research, Victoria) is on about the same level as BOF, mainly because David is the star of his own fanzine. No less than John Sangsund has called David's report of his trip to Sydney by motorcycle a "fannish classic". That was in Number 3, where John Alderson, Clive Morley, and others, also make appearances. Number 4 would be out now if David were not unemployed; 60 cents for 5, or other contributions, would be welcome.

THE MENTOR (Ron Clarke, 78 Redgrave Rd, Normanhurst, NSW 2076) has hit stride again since Ron's return from his bus trip to Heicon. Number 18 has an offset cover drawn by Dimitrii Razuvaev, stories by Cy Chauvin, Michael Black, and Jack Wodhams, reviews by Paul Anderson, and an article about - can it be? - sex, by Sheila Suttie. Lots of letters and a self-portrait by Shayne McCormack complete the issue. Perhaps this is where Australian fandom is really at.

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY (John Sangsund, Paragon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne, Victoria 3001) - briefly mentioned, as it has already finished. SCYTHROP will replace it soon; 8 for \$3.20 or the usual.

<sup>1</sup> Robin Johnson did not go by air.

John Alderson publishes CHAO, and lives at Havelock, Victoria 3465. CHAO is still a fairly modest affair, but it has published interesting material by John himself, Steven Phillips, and others. 20 cents a copy plus postage, or for traded fanzines, contributions, or letters.

SOMERSET GAZETTE is still due to appear, or so I've heard. Noel Kerr is the editor, but all payment should go to the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, GPO Box 1267L, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Most important of all, from my point of view, is that NORSTRILIAN NEWS is under new management - mine. It should appear every fortnight, and will, except when I have an urgent issue of S F COMMENTARY to publish. Naturally I would like to publish most of the news I used to publish here, in NORSTRILIAN NEWS, which means less news here. I don't particularly want to duplicate items, but many overseas readers of SFC would then miss out on Australian news. Solution to the problem: all SFC's overseas readers should subscribe to NN. 6 cents a copy; a book of stamps or \$1.20 for 20 for Australians; 10 cents a copy in USA from Charlie and Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Avenue, Bronx, New York 10457. 3np per copy from Mervyn Barrett, 178 Walm Lane, London N2, England.

\* But I will need to duplicate some items from NORSTRILIAN NEWS. For instance, you might like to know that Adelaide has an s f association at last, the Adelaide University Science Fiction Association. Alan Sandercock is its President, the Secretary is Jeff Harris, and the Secretary is John Hewitt, 11 Kyre Avenue, Kingswood, South Australia. They would be pleased to receive your 50 cents associate membership. They would also like to hear from people interested in their projected fanzine. :: Another Australian fanzine is planned by Eric Lindsay, 6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776. He would also like to hear from potential readers.

\* More duplicated news (duplicated on a Gestetner; duplicated from NORSTRILIAN NEWS) comes from LOCUS and my own wierd fantasies.

From LOCUS, the results of the NEBULA AWARDS awarded annually by the Science Fiction Writers of America:

BEST NOVEL: RINGWORLD, by Larry Niven (published by Ballantine). Equal runners-up were AND CHAOS DIED, by Joanna Russ, and TOWER OF GLASS, by Robert Silverberg (published by Ace, and Scribners respectively. A serial of TGG appeared in GALAXY).

BEST NOVELLA: ILL MET IN LANKHMAR, by Fritz Leiber (from FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION), followed up by THE THING IN THE STONE, by Clifford Simak, in second place, and Harlan Ellison's THE REGION BETWEEN.

BEST NOVELET: (that's their spelling): SLOW SCULPTURE, by Theodore Sturgeon (from GALAXY). No 2 was CONTINUED ON NEXT ROCK, by R A Lafferty, and Thomas Disch came in at No 3 with THE ASIAN SHORE.

BEST SHORT STORY: That much neglected writer and critic, NO AWARD, took off this award, after his recent success in the Ditmar Awards. Gene Wolfe (who "sat there and gritted his teeth" at the Award Banquet, according to Harlan Ellison) came 2nd with his ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES. No 3 was ENTIRE AND PERFECT CHRYSOLITE, by R A Lafferty.

Further grisly details may be found in LOCUS 79.

I haven't room to list all the Hugo nominees. I suggest you join Noreascon as quickly as possible (send \$A.3.75 to Gary Mason, 8-14 Warili Road, French's Forest, NSW 2086) and claim the right to vote. I do want to comment on Charlie Brown's brilliant idea for predicting the Hugo results, or, to speak

more candidly, his device for influencing them. The Browns have not stated LOCUS' circulation for awhile, but it's probably nearing 900 or 1000 by now. They conducted the LOCUS POLL, and 201 ballots were received. Winners of categories were decided on a points system, not the preferential voting system used in the Hugo ballot. In LOCUS 79 the Browns publish detailed results of the LOCUS POLL.

I don't doubt the Browns' good intentions in staging the poll, and I'm grateful for the detailed information they have provided. I wonder about readers' reactions to the poll - will people limit their Hugo choices to those items already shown as popular? The Hugo nomination sheet has been issued anyway, and that narrows the choice. But when LOCUS readers see that RINGWORLD gained 310 points as Best Novel in the LOCUS POLL, and that the nearest contenders were TOWER OF GLASS, by Robert Silverberg, and THE YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN, by Wilson Tucker, both on 178 points, what may they list as No 1 on the Hugo sheet, especially if they've not read some of the rest of the novels on the nomination sheet? All very hypothetical, I'm sure.

My main reaction after reading the LOCUS POLL (and the Hugo nomination lists) is wonder (or horror) at the items that did not make the Top 15 in each category. To my mind, which nobody agrees with anyway, the only possible Hugo nominee is Stanislaw Lem's SOLARIS. No sign of it on the LOCUS poll. To judge from the 60 pages I read of it before giving up, THE TOWER OF GLASS is one of the worst things Silverberg has ever written. Its No 2 on the LOCUS POLL, as I said. Even the other fanzines panned Heinlein's I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, but there it is at Number 9. Perhaps this is luck - if Heinlein had reached his normal mediocre level, he probably would have won. CHRONOCULES, which is at least as good as AND CHAOS DIED, and has been praised in most fanzines, came 13th. D G Compton has never appeared at a Worldcon, presumably.

Here are the Top 4 from each category of the LOCUS POLL, plus my objections and comments. The S F COMMENTARY AWARDS follow, and they don't have much to do with the LOCUS POLL results. BEST NOVEL: Number 4 was AND CHAOS DIED, by Joanna Russ (123 points).

BEST SHORT FICTION: 1. THE REGION BETWEEN, by Harlan Ellison (112 points). 2. THE SNOW WOMEN, by Fritz Leiber (50 points). 3. CONTINUED ON NEXT ROCK, by R A Lafferty (36 points). 4. BEASTCHILD, by Dean R Koontz (34 points). :: I've pointed out the poverty of THE REGION BETWEEN in an article written for John Bangsund. Nebula winner, ILL MET IN LANKHMAR, came 14th. Ellison collaborations took 7th and 8th places.

BEST ANTHOLOGY/COLLECTION: 1. S F HALL OF FAME, edited by Robert Silverberg (156 points). 2. 900 GRANDMOTHERS, by R A Lafferty (89 points). 3. ORBIT 6, edited by Damon Knight (87 points). 4. WORLD'S BEST 1970, edited by Donald A Wollheim and Terry Carr (84 points). :: Obviously T ZERO (TIME AND THE HUNTER), by Italo Calvino was the best anthology/collection of 1970, or most years I can think of. But S F HALL OF FAME has been edited in the fairest possible way, even if the SFWA picked some boobies. I much preferred DARK STARS, if I must mention anthologies that other s f fans have actually read. This is a category that Hugo committees should include.

BEST MAGAZINE: 1. MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, edited by Ed Ferman (461 points). 2. ANALOG, edited by John W Campbell Jr (338 points). 3. GALAXY, edited by Ejler Jakobsson (303 points). 4. AMAZING, edited by Ted White (279 points). Bored more and more each year by F&SF, I wonder at its popularity. VISION came 7th, but it has made the Hugo nominations, and I think it was the best magazine last year. But I'm biased; I managed to see a copy.

BEST PAPERBACK COVER ILLUSTRATOR: 1. LEO AND DIANE DILLON (338 points). 2. JEFF JONES (208 points). 3. KELLY FREAS (181 points). 4. JACK GAUGHAN (119 points). Here's one category where I hope the LOCUS POLL influences the Hugos. The Dillons' work has gone unrecognized for a bit too long. Stephen Campbell may be interested to know that Jim Steranko came 12th, and that the bloke who does those great Berkley covers is Paul Lehr, and he came 13th.

BEST FANZINE - oops; I think I'll leave that for just a little while.

BEST SINGLE ISSUE OF A FANZINE: 1. LOCUS 70 (105 points). 2. OUTWORLDS 4 (83 points). 3. WARHOON 27 (73). 4. FOCAL POINT 12.5 (26 points). This was a difficult category in which to vote. WARHOON 27 was my pick, but OUTWORLDS 4 came close. S F COMMENTARYs 9 and 10 weren't too bad, either. S F COMMENTARY 17 came 13th.

BEST FAN ARTIST: 1. ALICIA AUSTIN (438 points). 2. TIM KIRK (274 points). 3. GEORGE BARR (209 points). 4. STEVE FABIAN (173 points). I was very disappointed that Steve Fabian didn't get top. Here I plead chacun a son gout. Others find Fabian's work limited; I find Austin's work limited. It doesn't matter, as this is the category most difficult to vote in, both here and on the Hugo ballot. Interesting to note that Vaughn Bode is down to 15th.

FAN CARTOONIST: 1. BILL RUTSLER (443 points). 2. TIM KIRK (358 points). 4. STEVE STILES (60 points). 4. ATOM (55 points). Several fans hope to change the Hugo categories so that "artists" and "cartoonists" may be separated on the Hugo ballot as well. I accede to the majority in this award.

BEST FAN WRITER: 1. HARRY WARNER JR (172 points). 2. DICK GEIS (148 points). 3. CHARLIE BROWN (83 points). 4. LIZ FISHMAN (80 points). I would have thought this would have been a very competitive vote, but Charlie tells us it wasn't. Perhaps Charlie will combine "Fan Writer" and "Fan Critic" categories next year. A pity not to see John Foyster and John Bangsund topping this list, but Harry Warner will be hard to beat for many years yet.

BEST FAN CRITIC: (excuse me while I laugh): 1. TED PAULS (235). 2. PAUL WALKER (124 points). 3. RICHARD DELAP (104 points). 4. CHARLIE BROWN (94 points). I don't want to offend you, Ted, but this is ridiculous. The only s f critics in the world are probably Stanislaw Lem, Franz Rottensteiner, Turner and Foyster. And Franz says that Lem is the only s f critic. If the category had read "Best Fan Reviewer" I may not have been quite so astonished at the result. The trouble was that I came 8th, and John Foyster came 11th. Anyone want to do a George C Scott?

I left the BEST FANZINE to last because it bears more discussion than any other category. First, the results: 1. LOCUS, edited by Charlie and Dena Brown (400 points). 2. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, edited by Dick Geis (354 points). 3. OUTWORLDS, edited by Bill and Joan Bowers (128 points). 4. ENERGUMEN, edited by Mike Glicksohn (126 points). 5. SPECULATION, edited by Pete Weston (119 points). I included the Top 5 because they form a phalanx that also appears on the Hugo nomination form. Obviously the Hugo battle will be fought between LOCUS and SFR; the bias towards LOCUS is understandable, but not easy to calculate. Even though Bergeron published only one issue last year, I would still pick WARHOON as best fanzine of 1970, (it came 7th on this list) but I would not complain if any of the others won. SPECULATION is my second choice. Nice to see a Canadian fanzine join the ranks (ENERGUMEN) after only five issues. Strange to see RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY way down to 13th; infrequent publication is probably why RQ has lost popularity. Pleasant to see S F COMMENTARY at Number 8 (with 41 points). More about this next page.

<sup>1</sup>Atheling and Knight seem to have retired.

PLEASE TURN  
TO PAGE 43



# CRITICANTO

## THE CUBE ROOT OF UNCERTAINTY

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

Macmillan :: 1970  
239 pages :: \$5.95

Reviewed by Darry Gillam

To a large extent, THE CUBE ROOT OF UNCERTAINTY is interesting because it provides a spectrum of Silverberg's writing. His introduction notes that the stories were written between 1954 and 1968. Five of the selections here appeared in his earlier collections, one in DIMENSION THIRTEEN and the rest in A NEEDLE IN A TIMESTACK. Therefore one assumes that they were chosen to

show some self-statement about Silverberg's career. (Although this is ostensibly a theme collection of pessimistic stories, it includes a story as exuberant as DOUBLE DARE).

The twelve selections ("10 superb science fiction tales" reads the dust jacket) include Silverberg's best, PASSENGERS, and also his recent, excellent, SUNDANCE. But it might be better to approach these chronologically, examining the earlier stories first.

DOUBLE DARE and ABSOLUTELY INFLEXIBLE both appeared in 1956. DOUBLE DARE, which I read with pleasure in some now forgotten anthology, tells of a bet between two Earth engineers and two extraterrestrials of the same profession. As a result the teams are on their opponent's planets, prepared to demonstrate their superiority in a test of wits. Each must reproduce any three products put before them. The Earthmen are first given a depilator and a mouse trap, both easily completed. But then they are confronted by a perpetual motion machine. ... The story has a fifties wit reminiscent of de Camp's nuts and bolts stories. ABSOLUTELY INFLEXIBLE is an ordinary time paradox story whose twist can be seen coming a mile away. I can understand how the deterministic nature of time tales, with their inflexible fate, appeals to writers, but the story fitted A NEEDLE IN A TIMESTACK much better.

From 1958-1959 comes THE IRON CHANCELLOR, MUGWUMP FOUR, and TRANSLATION ERROR. The heroes of THE IRON CHANCELLOR are the Carmichaels, a "pretty plump family". When they purchase a robocook that will diet them automatically, they reckon without "inflexible" robotic logic.

The malicious nature of the story is particularly delightful. The beginning of MUGWUMP FOUR is a funny spoof on spy stories but it soon degenerates into farce and from there into a time-twisting ending. TRANSLATION ERROR deals with parallel universes, a galactic bureaucracy and the tenaciousness of Earthmen and reminds one of Clarke's RESCUE PARTY.

THE SHADOWS OF HIS WINGS, NEIGHBOUR, and THE SIXTH PALACE were published in 1963, 1964 and 1965 respectively. The first is a funny, deCampish story of a professor, the only expert on some supposedly dead alien languages. But one of the aliens arrives very much alive and the professor must deal with him at close quarters. With NEIGHBOUR, the tale of a long standing, grim feud, one notices a kind of studied, conscious pessimism creeping into the stories. The tendency looks forward to FLIES and THORNS (both 1967). THE SIXTH PALACE is a fool-the-robot-that-guards-the-treasure story, and an ordinary tale but for its calculating compulsions: the man's greed and wits vs. the robot's "inflexible" program and undeniable deadliness.

In HALFWAY HOUSE (1966) a man must pay for his cancer cure by serving as the final arbiter for others applying for such services. Here Silverberg deals with a force that appears again and again in his work: the companion to dark visions - guilt. This is a turning point: the exterior, superficial dangers yield to the more terrible traps of one's own mind. Interestingly enough, just after the third person treatment of drama is dropped, Silverberg discards his use of third person narrative. TO THE DARK STAR (1968) is told in the first person and it details a crime, the guilt for which will never leave its perpetrator. The story's location is the confined space and confined world of a spaceship on a reconnaissance mission to a distant world. A fine story.

PASSENGERS (1968) is Silverberg's best story to date. Here he uses the very necessary first person form and, to make the story more immediate, the present tense. PASSENGERS envisions a world of the very near future invaded by intangible, unknown alien beings. These Passengers take over minds, seemingly at random, and bedevil the bodies. While anybody may stop what they are doing and suddenly walk away under the control of a Passenger, the world is nervously falling apart. Drivers, taken over, cause accidents. Nothing, no one, is dependable any longer. People keep to themselves, stay in their shells more. The ridden do not remember their periods under the leash and anything they may happen to remember is taboo. Thus the hero, and all the people in the world of the story have a load of guilt and shame for something over which they have no control, for another person's actions.

There are two cross references for this story: Fred Brown's THE WAVERIES and Fritz Leiber's COMING ATTRACTION. THE WAVERIES is an analogous idea, 1945 vintage. COMING ATTRACTION is an analogous mode and mood. The social canker of Leiber's 1950 masterpiece becomes the personal terror of Silverberg's 1968 story.

The one remaining story is SUNDANCE (1969), and it goes beyond PASSENGERS in its use of the medium. The story is divided into twelve sections, which are told in various voices, all in the present tense. It tells of Tom Two Ribbons, on an expedition to an alien planet. The major life form, dubbed "Eaters", is presumed to have no intelligence, but Tom discerns signs of it in certain rituals he sees performed by the creatures. Now, as this story takes place in the mind of Tom Two Ribbons, one must work as one does in PALE FIRE to decide what is the

objective truth. One accepts speech and actions reported, but interpretations are suspect. Is the expedition exterminating intelligent beings? Or is this merely a kind of therapy, to work another perception of guilt into a man whose people were exterminated, like the buffalo they lived on? Are the Eaters really unintelligent? The use of the third and second person depicts the full range of a mind that is under the torment of guilt and uncertainty. Different voices parallel the fall through several levels of perception. SUNDANCE may be considered a quite successful experiment.

I cannot vouch for the intention of the connection, but I do not think it accidental that PASSENGERS and SUNDANCE bear the same thematic relationship to TO LIVE AGAIN and DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH as FLIES does to THORNS. Each pair, a short story and a novel, deals in depth with one problem. In PASSENGERS and TO LIVE AGAIN it is a strange, dangerous confluence of minds; in SUNDANCE and DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH it is an ecstatic confluence of spirit. Indeed, the emotional and social world of Silverberg's fiction is defined by these two poles. The invasion of a mind by another is perhaps the most graphic demonstration of how separate, individual and alone each human being is. The communal ecstasy one finds in SUNDANCE when Tom dances with the Eaters, and in DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH when Gunderson is reborn, harks back to theories of race consciousness. And it depends on a loosening of the mind's control over the physical body. That PASSENGERS and TO LIVE AGAIN are the better works is not surprising. For one thing they are simply informed with better writing, characters and invention. But there are other factors. These stories focus on their characters, and, especially in s f, a well constructed character may save a story. Also, it is very difficult to communicate the kind of ecstasy revealed in the other pair. Loneliness everybody knows. But an absolute joy of spirit and body? How can one verbalise something for which there are no words? (Milton's specific Hell is much more vivid than his ineffable Heaven.) Actually, Silverberg acquits himself rather well but the nebulous place where souls meet in DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH must be looked at with scepticism.

THE CUBE ROOT OF UNCERTAINTY is not a bad collection. It has two outstanding stories and a few other quite enjoyable ones. It has a number of just mediocre stories. What it really demonstrates is Silverberg's growth over the years. After he put aside the fifties stories (sometime in 1966) he entered his golden era, and I expect the next retrospective, a few years from now, to merit a more favorable report.

BEST S F STORIES FROM  
NEW WORLDS 5

Edited by MICHAEL MOORCOCK

Panther 586 02964 :: 1969  
157 pages :: 5/-/80c

Reviewed by Bruce R Gillespie

By law, logic, or whatever applies to s f, there should be nothing new to say about NEW WORLDS, or stories collected from the magazine. SPECULATION, SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, and other publications, have about said it all. A few things are clear: these collections from NEW WORLDS make money, although the magazine did not; and that these stories are, more than anything else, entertaining, and

that they are as much good light fiction as anything else published in the field. They may be Art as well, but there are matters more

interesting to discuss before we bog down in subjects like that.

Entertainment Number One: Norman Spinrad's THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE, whose main character is Jerry Cornelius. In this story he resembles the Saint as much as anybody else, plus the extra swingin' flair:

Doffing his clothes, he assumed his persona: a black pin-striped suit with pegged pants and thin lapels, a white button-down shirt, a white tie, a diamond stickpin, pointed black Italian loafers ... atop which he affixed a green porkpie hat with a leopard skin band. Thus accoutred, and with a round toothpick in his mouth at a jaunty angle, he scaled the car, turned on the air-conditioning, and set out across the wasteland.

He carries an "electric violin with self-contained power supply" and sets out to "catch the Chinks and the Maf" doing a deal for one ton of heroin in the middle of the Gobi desert. You don't have to believe it, of course, but it makes more sense than all those Boy-Scouts-in-their-Gosh-Wow-Spaceships. It's a lot more fun as well.

The Chinese set up their "version of Disneyland" which proved to be constructed of balsa wood, rice paper and paper mache" opposite the Mafia's headquarters:

There in the depths of Sinkiang was, considering the circumstances, quite a decent facsimile of Las Vegas. A semi-circle of trailers rimmed a large kidney-shaped swimming pool. Done up in pastel, sporting picture windows, and sprouting numerous extensions, wings, and breezeways, the trailers resembled the lower or casino floors of Las Vegas hotels. Complex mazes of cabanas, beach chairs, bocci courts, pavilions, greenhouses, handball courts and pigeon coops which filled the interstices between the trailers completed the illusion.

The obvious point is that Americans, like the Chinese, and everybody else, carry their "civilisation" with them. The less obvious point is that Spinrad is not making a point, but spinning the most delightful web of invention he can think of. It's made up of disconnected strands of real stupidities, but it is the disconnection that makes us laugh.

Like Antonioni in ZABRISKIE POINT, Spinrad spins his web in order to tear it apart in the most entertaining way possible. For Jerry Cornelius arrives, unbidden and unseen. He whips out his electronic violin, tunes up, and:

When Jerry tucked the violin under his chin and began to play WIPEOUT, the brains of everyone within a five mile radius began to vibrate to the beat of the drummer who was ultra-and-supersonic as well as different and non-existent. To the naked human ear, Jerry appeared to be playing THE SOUND OF SILENCE.

Out on the raft, the Big Boy was growing quite cross as the



subliminal strains of WIPEOUT inflamed cells deep within his parietic brain. "Mao Tze Tung eats shit!" he informed the Heir-Apparent...

The Meyer David Orchestra began to play THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC.

The People's Army Brass Band immolated their tuba-player.

The constant references to music provide a counterpoint for the chaos of the story's last pages. The story is like an encapsulated film script with director Norman Spinrad flicking the images with the abandon of a Richard Lester. The images dance with nearly the same energy as those in THE BIG FLASH (ORBIT 5). The other characters in the scenario are the "Golden Horde" themselves, a mob of centuries-old Mongols who totter over the plains with one slogan in mind: "Village. Burn. Rape. Kill." When they arrive in town the modern barbarians (with Jerry Cornelius as their symbol and catalyst) have left them little burning, raping or killing to do. Spinrad's point is serious enough, I suppose, but that is not what provides the humour. Spinrad writes lots of good jokes.

You could hardly say the same about Giles Gordon's SCREAM. It has its humour:

Capture the scream, isolate it, pinpoint it. Prick it with a pin, a lance, the unwieldiest sharp surface or edge and it cannot be erased.... Then you can walk away nonchalantly, leaving the scream suspended roughly five feet, seven inches from the road's surface.

Lower if it's a woman. Unless it's a tall woman.

Here the humour is sparked from the heavy wheels of argument, made solid with dense imagery and a serious story. The story's isolated but consistent points of light make another verbal film:

Traffic - thousands of cars. Feet, transistors, engines, shouting, calling, breathing. A ball bouncing in an asphalt playground and being chased by nine, ten, eleven kids. The number blurs, goes out of focus, is on top of the ball, panting, laughing, shouting... Which afternoon? Choose your afternoon... The air even hums, shimmers with haze, movement, disturbance.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!

The scream. The screeeeeeeeam.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!

The premonition had been welling up for years, for lifetimes. And they had prayed against the scream...

Which premonition? Which scream? Where do they figure in a frantic civilisation? This civilisation makes us dizzy and deaf. Gordon.

concentrates into one puzzling symbol the mysterious modern processes that surround us. It takes the reader little time to recognise some of the tragedies of modern life summed up in this story. The intensity of the story's experience and the multiplicity of its inventions should attract even the most jaded modern reader. The voice of the story-teller guides, searches, inquires, and doubts, in one long exciting monologue. It's the kind of fun you might get from watching FANTASIA six inches from the screen, soundtrack supplied through earphones. Ionesco may have inspired SCREAM, and certainly not Heinlein, but this story belongs in any collection that examines the future, or any other, possibilities of our present society.

In this collection, stories like J G Ballard's THE DEATH MODULE, Christopher Finch's A LANDSCAPE OF SHALLOWS, and SCREAM gain much inspiration from the cinema. Several stories refer mainly to the patterns of poetry. This is not the sort of entertainment s f fans are used to, but it is an unexpected pleasure for many readers.

At least two stories concern poets themselves, living in the future and forced to face its consequences. Peter Tate's MARS PASTORALE is an obvious, almost gimmicky story that is far less effective than Graham Hall's THE TENNYSON EFFECT. THE TENNYSON EFFECT shows the influences of the major twentieth century poets, and especially W H Auden.

A poet finds himself on the Moon, caught between boring companions, a mysterious project and an entrancing landscape and wife. The most unlikeable part of the scene, yet the most demanding, is that relic of gosh-wow science fiction, a computer faithfully "yclept ALPHA":

Windust picks out with tongue-clenching deliberation:

"I think, therefore I am."

Here we have the well-known Descartean cliché.

Clicking like a strontium-sick guiger, ALPHA ingests. A crescendo (on the crescent) and down to a silence filled with soft noises. Breathing. Humming. Ticking.

No reply-tape rattle. No data request.

ALPHA above fiddling little principles. After 400 years, Descartes is put in his place.

The last sentence shows the pleasant detachment of a story which reads as if Auden's ironic wit was spun off in pellets of pop prose to make the whole thing palatable. Not too much of that earnest heart-burn that Americans call "poetic s f". Even the computer is not too obvious - we don't even notice its importance until halfway through the story, when it threatens the people we have noticed. Like LAST HURRAH, this story can be appreciated as a good collection of one-line jokes, if that's all you want.

But you will catch your breath by story's end. This computer is built to formulate emotion in mathematical terms. The computer's masters work out that a poet's emotions would make the best source material.

So guess which amateur poet becomes an unwitting guinea-pig? The jokes get sharper and more weighty, until they change into the depth charge of the story's terrifying finale. How can I put it? - it's entertaining because it's uncomfortable, and because Hall is an expert player in the lingual game.

In a collection like this, no generalisation will fit all the stories. Only one story (THE LAST INN OF THE ROAD, by Roger Zelazny and Danny Plachta) is unworthy of NEW WORLDS, let alone the best of it. The second best story here, is Langdon Jones' BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN II, ostensibly the liner notes for a record of the music of the most luckless musician of them all. It is about the only piece that makes us thoroughly glad we live in the 20th century rather than the 19th. Aldiss' SERPENT OF KUNDALINI is a sombre, overpowering, but flawed section from BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, and should be reviewed in that context. Charles Platt's THE RODENT LABORATORY is a good yarn and not much more.

I've made my point, I think. These writers are aware of the delights of the English language in a way that most are not. Most are witty; and all look at the process of looking at the future. These stories are consistently entertaining at a time when most s f stories are not.'

#### AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS

by JOSEPH GREEN

Victor Gollancz :: 1969  
190 pages :: 25/-

Reviewed by David W Boutland

Joseph Green, says the jacket cover of this collection, is the author of LOAFERS OF REFUGE, a remarkable novel of an alien world and culture. There is much that is remarkable about the nine stories in AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS, stories ranging from 1962 to 1968, and culled mainly from NEW WORLDS and GALAXY.

But in discussing the work of Green in this collection, my own reaction is a hostile one. Green is a man of evident complexity and depth, who writes with an underlying edge of violence that I find disturbing. His work is strongly sexual: a constantly recurring theme is the involvement of Earth men in the primitive rituals of alien cultures, on worlds of simplicity and natural beauty.

Green seems to say that the force and power of our repressions gives us superiority - on the one hand that we are mentally sick, and on the other that we are giants in the universe. His characters are endowed with attitudes which I found increasingly distasteful as I chewed, ruminated on, and finally swallowed each piece of work.

In ONCE AROUND ARCTURUS we have his familiar theme. Mike Coombs, having arrived on Arcturus Four, and breathed deeply of the clean fresh air, falls in love with a beautiful alien named Niki. Niki is a large, delightful creature, and Coombs determines that he will marry her. Once before, he wanted something badly - to become a spaceman - and on his own admission he lied, cheated, stole and blackmailed to achieve his goal.

Whether he gets Niki in the end or not, I won't reveal - but along the

way, Mike Coombs discovers that the alien scientists of Arcturus Four are studying him in order to learn more about Earth men. He is told, "Mike, you are a wonderful and extraordinary race of humanoids... You have a drive, a will to succeed, that is terrible in its strength, and a little frightening." A hazardous generalisation to make after the brief observation of one patently neurotic personality, Captain Mike Coombs.

A number of Green's stories in this Gollencz collection are concerned with caves, tunnels, and holes. In the title story, AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS, two scientists whose marriage has broken up are flung together again during a violent sand storm on a dying planet. To escape the deadly abrasive hurricane of sand Valence Uppsala takes his ex-wife Valerie out into a glutinous lake where float dark chunks of multi-cellular jelly, organisms called cellbergs which have veins running inward to snug black chambers within. And here occurs one of the most sexually symbolic acts I have ever read, when Valence lifts Valerie "bodily, tilted the lean form as she stiffened under his hands, and thrust her head-first into the opening."

TUNNEL OF LOVE, which appeared in NEW WORLDS in 1964, is an entertaining story about two highly immoral ethnologists named Silva and Aaron. This time, Green's characters are visiting Procyon Nine to film the beautiful natives and their unusual marriage rites, though their interest wavers rather confusingly between recording the more spectacular parts of the orgy they expect to find on Procyon Nine, and exposing some reels of genuine scientific film for university study. The slow and hazardous crawl of the prospective lovers through the Tunnel of Love brings Silva and Aaron to a climax of their own.

They survive and turn up in the next story in the collection, DANCE OF THE CATS, to film the dances of the Cat-people on Epsilon Eridan Two for another double movie deal - to fill the art houses and to provide a scholarly work for the universities. DANCE OF THE CATS has some moving moments, and is impressively written, but amongst the Dog and Cat people, Silva and Aaron again reveal an almost total lack of real concern for the primitives of the planet. Even when Silva sees some of the Cat-people being forcibly taken away to a circus his concern is simply that "any exotic film footage Aaron had taken would be duplicated every day by Interworld circus"! He sets out to save the kidnapped cats waving the banner of his own exclusive right to exploit the aliens.

In the forceful LIFE-FORCE Green takes us vividly to yet another primitive pageant, and leaves both his poet-biologist and his reader sickened by what occurs. Uneasily, this grisly piece comes to a fearful ending. Says Scott, the senior biologist, "Within five Eryears there will be a mining colony here, whether established in peace or by force." Scott adds his desire that the Earth Central plan to obtain uranium may be accomplished peacefully - but I'm not altogether sure I believe him.

The stories in AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS continue to unfold: In SINGLE COMBAT spies from Earth fight a race known as the Flish, to gain the minds of native tribes so that Earth can colonise their planet:

The Flish... live in mutual mental symbiosis with each other that our brains, though we are their equal in parapowers, cannot duplicate. Their lives are secondary to the group life and the group mind and... the mental matrix they extend will cover an



entire planet. Communism ought to accomplish the same object in the physical world, and we rejected the attempt. Individual freedom of choice within an ordered society, is our heritage.

Yet time and again, the scientist-adventurers of Green's stories continue to deny other races, on other worlds, their own heritage. THE DECISION MAKERS, one of the best stories in the book ends with an Earthman's decision to interfere in the evolution of another race... Says Allan, one of the 'Consciences' of Earth:

Man is a capable, ruthless, relentless foe, and if he sets out to destroy you he will succeed. Your cooked bodies will grace his tables, and it will not matter that the brains he shatters contain a racial memory that reaches farther into the past than his own.

There are two more stories in the Gollancz collection of Green's work, JINN, and THE ENGINEER. JINN relates the results of genetic tampering in the year 2050, when a man concerned with upgrading the human race comes to realise that revolutionary teenagers with manipulated genes will still lack - as teenage revolutionaries always do - the steadying influence of experience. ENGINEER is a story about a man who has had a mental breakdown, and is sent on a "trip" to a primitive world to recover his identity... "So might Tahiti have looked five centuries back, before the first European set foot on that rich and beautiful land, or the magic of Bali before the Dutch."

Green's people may be real, his pictures may be true, but what casts a shadow over his work is the suspicion that he personally does not condemn the capable, ruthless, relentless foe which he sends out to remake the universe in man's image; booted, with spurs jangling, admirable and insane, his characters walk the stars. Heroes.

Joseph Green's collection of short stories is worth reading. But are his dreams worth dreaming?

#### NEBULA AWARDS STORIES 5

edited by JAMES BLISH

Victor Gollancz :: 1970

214 pages :: £1.80

Reviewed by Alfred J van der Poorten BA BSc PhD

A few years ago I began to buy my s f at fifty books at a time, not at a sedate rate, so I seem to have got behind on my reading. My reading of s f short stories has suffered the most. It is many years since I read an s f magazine. Altogether, I cannot evaluate the 1969 Nebula Award stories in context, against the background of stories published in 1969 or recent years. I can only judge

these stories as they come, subjectively. Under these conditions, the collection earns an A minus; it isn't at all the best anthology I have read but its stories are noteworthy and it gave me pleasure to read them.

As well as the stories, we are blessed with a Blish editorial and critical articles by Darko Suvin, Professor of English at McGill University,

Montreal, and by Alexei Panshin. Blish concentrates on proving that the Science Fiction Writers of America have not after all been swamped by the New Wave - ho hum. Panshin does not write very usefully about Short SF of 1969, although he provides an interesting analysis of the various s f short story forms. I have resisted the temptation to discuss the appropriateness of this classification, or to argue about the correct placing of the stories in this volume. After an obscure opening, Professor Suvin makes some interesting remarks about the SF Novel in 1969. However I cannot agree with his rating of Vonnegut's SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE below that of the author's PLAYER PIANO. So it goes. The critical articles, an innovation introduced in the previous volume, provide a valuable bonus and make this series virtually an essential addition to any worthwhile science fiction library.

Editor Blish appears to feel that Harlan Ellison's A BOY AND HIS DOG may shock us. But in these emancipated days, the "fucks", "cunts", and "balls", that Ellison spatters throughout the story, have lost their emotive punch. The ironic ending is easily anticipated, and no event is shocking in its context. As a Nebula Award winner, this story is disappointing. As a parable about today's generation clash, the story fails because it exaggerates its contrasts. Vic is adequately presented as a boy, but the so-called dog, Blood, has none of the characteristics of dogginess that make dogs lovable. There are absurdities in the story's facts, but these are not significantly disturbing during first reading, and such failures are not nearly as important as Ellison's failure to present convincing emotions. Nonetheless, the story is worth reading.

NINE LIVES, by Ursula K LeGuin, is a simple story that tells what it is to love one's neighbour as oneself. Its merit lies in its simplicity, and one remembers this simplicity long after reading the story. Ellison's story leaves only a grimace and a shrug, but Ursula Le Guin leaves behind a benediction in the dark, an answering handclasp between strangers. The philosophical point, to which Blish alerts us in his opening comment, is perhaps not a deep one, but it is elegantly and lovingly made.

Robert Silverberg's PASSENGERS is an adequate short story that does not disgrace its award. Silverberg shows us a swift and economical picture of alienation from self, and a satisfactorily mystifying presentation of the problem of the meaning of the free will concept (though, to my mind, Philip Dick's THE ELECTRIC ANT does this far more vividly). The love story and its denouement do not really convince.

Full marks to Larry Niven. This exponent of hard science fiction has gone one further and given us a science fantasy that is as humorous as it is cleverly constructed. NOT LONG BEFORE THE END is a joy for those of us who wish a plague upon the sword and sorcery rubbish that bemuses too many of our otherwise sane acquaintances.

The most important aspect of TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES is its title. I'm not being cheaply cynical; Samuel R Delany does not give us a story but an atmosphere glittering strangely in the light of the singers. The very title sets the atmosphere, and we are not subsequently disappointed, though neither perhaps are we elevated above that starting point. I cannot make up my mind about this novelette: I am prepared to believe it is good. Perhaps it is not. Read it with sympathy, as I did, and the new wave will not dump you too harshly. I suspect Delany's work will not stand unsympathetic reading, or indeed a reading unaffected by its title. Worthy of its Nebula Award.

Theodore Sturgeon's THE MAN WHO LEARNED LOVING is a morality tale about a man who - wait for it - forsakes his long hair and lute and woman to bring plenty to all the world by means of a marvellous invention. The woman just cannot understand that he has done the right thing in the only practicable way. The story is not good enough.

My comments show some measure of disagreement with the award choices. I didn't <sup>read</sup> enough of 1969's stories to say more. I cannot quarrel fiercely with the awards for novels. Ursula K Le Guin's THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, Kurt Vonnegut Jr's SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, and Norman Spinrad's BUG JACK BARRON (in that order) seem admirably rated. The other novels nominated were fortunate to find themselves in the final six. John Brunner's THE JAGGED ORBIT was a disappointment after his STAND ON ZANZIBAR, Roger Zelazny's ISLE OF THE DEAD left me quite cold, and Robert Silverberg's UP THE LINE, though great fun, and I recommend it highly, is hardly great. Still, these comments are quite gratuitous; unfortunately the award volume does not find room to reprint winning novels.

### BABEL-17

by SAMUEL R DELANY

Ace F-388 :: 1966

173 pages :: 40c

Also available: a revised version by Sphere Books

BABEL-17 is a book about language. Not just the enigmatic language of the title, but all languages, all methods of communication. The book attempts to show the world created by each particular language. As the famous linguist Sapir said:

Reviewed by Lesleigh Luttrell

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much

at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society... The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.

Samuel Delany agrees that language is the key to reality. Rydra Wong says to Butcher: "In the beginning was the word. That's how somebody tried to explain it once. Until something is named, it doesn't exist." And: "Butcher, there are certain ideas which have words for them. If you don't know the word, you can't know the ideas." But even more than this, an idea has only one word. As Sapir says: "The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached."

Babel-17, then, is an expression of a different reality. This is really the problem with its translation. It represents a reality so different that the workers in the Cryptography Department cannot even conceive of it. Even Rydra, the most brilliant linguist of the known universe, takes a long time to comprehend the reality that is Babel-17. Only after a long thought-discussion of the different realities of different languages can she understand Babel-17. She then realises the truth of her earlier speculations. "From what little I know about it already,

most of its words carry more information about the things they refer to than any four or five languages I know put together, and in less space." But Babel-17 is even more remarkable than this. "It was not a language, she understood now, but a flexible matrix of analytic possibilities where the same word defined the stresses in a webbing of medical bandage, or a defensive grid of spaceships." Babel-17 is a completely new way of expressing ideas, that allows a "three particle vowel differential" to explain how to break a webbing or a defensive pattern.

"Thinking in Babel-17 was like suddenly seeing the water at the bottom of a well that a moment ago you thought had only gone down a few feet." Just how different is Babel-17's reality can be seen in Butcher. He can think in ways which allow him to rob an unrobtable bank and escape from an unescapable prison, all without realising what he is doing because he lacks the word, the concept "I". It is only when Rydra introduces this concept to him that Butcher can even begin to communicate with another person. And it is only when he is driven away from thinking in Babel-17 that he can tell who he is and what he has done.

But Babel-17 is not the only language in the book. Poetry is another. Rydra Wong is the most popular poet of her day. Perhaps this is because she realizes that poetry is a language, a way of looking at the world that is different from all others. It is her knack with languages, she tells the General, that has lead her into poetry. She names her ship the Rimbaud, after a 19th century French poet who believed that poets must write about new ideas in a new language. And when she enters Butcher's mind, he sees just how different the reality of a poet is:

But the Greeks were poets three thousand years ago and you are a poet now. You snatch words together over such distances and their wakes blind me. Your thoughts are all fire over shapes I cannot catch. They sound like music too deep, that shakes me.

But Rydra realises too that a poet must make their reality accessible to others. She tells Mocky:

I have to work things out carefully in my head and put them in my poems so people will understand. But that's not what I've been doing for the past ten years. You know what I do? I listen to other people, stumbling about with their half thoughts and half sentences and their clumsy feelings that they can't express, and it hurts me. So I go home and burnish it and polish it and weld it to a rhythmic frame, make all the dull colors gleam, mute the garish artificiality to pastels, so it doesn't hurt any more: that's my poem. I know what they want to say, and I say it for them.

How is it possible, though, for anyone to equate the reality of their language with the reality of another's? In other words, how is it possible to communicate? Delany and Rydra solve this problem by the discovery of a universal language. Perhaps it is just a great ability for muscle reading as she sometimes believes: "Ron's muscles, she thought, were living cords that snapped and sang out their messages. On this man (Butcher), muscles were shields to hold the world out, the man in." Perhaps it is really telepathy, a direct perception of ideas from

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 32



# CRITICANTO: SHORT NOTICES

## THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN

by CORDWAINER SMITH

Original publication:  
GALAXY magazine, August 1964.

Also included in: SPACE LORDS,  
Sidgwick & Jackson :: 204 pp  
\$3.10

Reviewed by Sandra Miesel

Every reader of THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN realizes it is patterned on the story of Joan of Arc: the vocation, the martyrdom, victory, and vindication of D'Joan closely parallel those of St Joan. Yet some of the details which Cordwainer Smith incorporated into his story may go unnoticed.

D'Joan is stabbed before emerging from Clown Town; St Joan was wounded at the siege of Orleans before accomplishing her prime mission.

D'Joan is momentarily repressed to the animal state during her execution; St Joan briefly recanted in prison. The blind conservatism of the Lords of the Instrumentality who judge D'Joan is like that of the Bishop of Rouen who condemned St Joan. The transcript of St Joan's trial is available in English and should be studied.

The saints who appeared to St Joan and sent her forth were SS Michael the Archangel, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch. The latter two, virgins reportedly martyred in the persecution of Diocletian, were among the most popular of all saints in the Middle Ages. (In 1969 they were barred from the public liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church on the grounds of dubious historicity).

St Michael, foe of Satan, commander of the heavenly host, and patron of warriors, becomes the Hunter who slays even dragons "with love". Besides his role as executioner of the underpeople the Hunter acts as a sort of psychopomp for them. This is not a function specifically attributed to St Michael but the old Requiem Mass did ask: "May the holy angels conduct thee into Paradise".

According to legend, St Catherine was a brilliant and highly educated Alexandrian aristocrat who successfully debated pagan philosophers at her trial. This patron saint of learning is obviously the model for Lady Panc Ashash, the personality-imprinted computer.

Elaine's identification with St Margaret is more tenuous. St Margaret is traditionally depicted with a dragon, indicating her victory over temptations to unchastity. But the dragon of antiquity was a serpent-like beast and in another connection symbolised healing and immortality. Thus we have Elaine's profession of lay therapist. St Margaret was invoked in cases of difficult child-birth. This correlates with Elaine's role in preparing D'Joan. (The two-fold nature of serpent symbolism may be the key to the confrontation between proud Crawlis and the S-woman).

The intricate web of symbol, allusion, and association in THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN deserves a really full exegesis.

#### FIVE TO TWELVE

by EDMUND COOPER

Putnam :: 1969

153 pages :: \$4.50

Berkley X1768 :: 60c

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

Randall Jarrell once defined a novel as a prose work of some length that is flawed. This applies to all novels but in the case of FIVE TO TWELVE, the emphasis is strongly on the flaws. FIVE TO TWELVE seems more an indication of talent than a fulfilling work. Cooper needs discipline and editorial help. But for all of that, there a number of things to be said for it.

Mainly, there is a good deal of living in the book: there is feeling, purpose, chance, and irony. And, given Cooper's tendency to excess, the characters are well drawn. The set-up of a male revolt in a female dominated world isn't new, but the plot has a pleasant irony to it. Dion Quern, a future day Francois Villon, attempts to burgle the apartment of a police official, who is waiting for him. Juno, with Dion at her mercy and the ratio of men to women at 5:12, sees her way to making Dion her squire (in what is left of marriage in 2071). Later Dion is blackmailed into working for the male revolution by Leander. There are jet packs in the skies of England - they provide the action. The author looks at the large questions of love and life, and not too badly.

The book is unnecessarily repetitive in certain ways, especially the plays used to introduce and establish the characters. All the characters, it seems at first, speak like fans punning constantly in a foredoomed attempt at wit. Either the last third of the book isn't quite as bad, or I became used to it. Nevertheless, everybody in Dion's world uses exactly the same slang expressions. In general, Cooper is much too self-conscious to let anything go by without dressing it up, stating it elliptically, or dressing it up. We read of a "cast-titanium certainty". "Well met by daylight," says Dion and "But that was in another country, and besides, the wench is pregnant." FIVE TO TWELVE is over-written: not fatally, but still disturbingly, annoyingly. If it hadn't been, it would still be minor, but it might have been more successful. And the "poetry" written by Dion is, to quote the character, "archaic doggerel in a worn out style."

Some of the best things are minor: a pithy title and a string of inventions that Cooper drops through the book: a bartender called No Name, who is the last living political assassin in England, his exploits having earned him total amnesia; a woman falls out of the sky into Trafalgar Square, and Dion watches while he waits for rejuvenation shots:

her body falls by the fountain, "scattering a thousand pigeons... Nobody noticed the dying fall, the cloudy ovation of the birds..."; after an almost suicidal flight up into the freezing and practically airless upper limits of the atmosphere, Dion says: "And if anyone should ask, say 'Dion Quarn, master of nothing, has briefly surveyed his realm'... "; Leander, after being sentenced, declares himself a Muslim, so that he may obtain a prayer mat. He unravels it and forms a noose with which he hangs himself in order to cheat the state. His cremation is "attended by thirty-one Muslims, two muezzins and a self-styled latter day prophet".

### CATCH A FALLING STAR

by JOHN BRUNNER

Ace Books G-761 :: 1968  
154 pages :: 60c

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

Brunner's THE HUNDREDTH MILLENIUM of 1959 has been rewritten and expanded in the form of CATCH A FALLING STAR, perhaps to cash in on the recent "Brunner-boom".

The blurb writer for this edition claims that this has "the full flavoured skill of a master science fiction novelist". Under such a handicap, Brunner does not bear up

very well, as we see here a few glimpses of his later talents, as well as a full view of his early faults.

The descriptive passages in this book do not rise to great heights, and we must often face scenes that are hard to read. These are usually on the level of:

Far in the distance they could make out the crazy laughter of the meat as it wended its way towards a rendezvous with Death.

That example comes from the beginning of the book (page 40) but there is little improvement as the story progresses. If anything, his descriptions become more pretentious, finishing in sentences like this one (from page 123):

The plains and mountains they must traverse were patient; they might slumber through a million years, let alone mankind's puny hundred thousand of recorded history, without stirring, while the imperceptible drift of dust and the gentle dissolution of leaves into mould blotted out the traces of man and prepared yet another blank surface on the world-wide palimpsest.

All this imagery is vivid enough, but Brunner defeats his purpose with the sheer volume of words.

Brunner's characters are mainly uninteresting. The hero, Creahan, is not much different from any number of other cardboard cutouts, equally noticeable in Old and New Wave fiction alike. Creahan is disgusted by the introverted, materialistic outlook by his fellow citizens when they fail to give his discovery the same overriding priority that he does. He is the odd man out in society because he is the only one concerned about

the doom approaching Earth. However, he is quite prepared to sit back and whinge about the apathy of his fellow citizens while not doing anything himself. But Brunner wants to move along the story, so he quickly changes Creahan's attitude.

The humans justify eating a certain type of animal by saying:

Never once have I see them act as a man may do without example of his own free will. They do not speak among themselves and they have never created anything. They can only ape the doings of a man.

How better could the book's characters describe themselves?

### TIMESCOOP

by JOHN BRUNNER

Dell 8916 :: 1969

144 pages :: 60c

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

This book is an abrupt change from John Brunner's Hugo winning STAND ON ZANZIBAR.

The book narrates the troubles caused by an ill-conceived family reunion where the hero selects nine ancestors as guests of honour. They are more trouble than they are worth.

Harold Freitas is a well-meaning but weak man who lives in the shadow of his illustrious ancestors. He makes pathetic attempts to win his wife's approval of his actions so he can bolster up his ego. She recognises his motives, but uses every possible opportunity to undermine his self-confidence. Sarah denies her own part in the failure of the well-publicised family reunion. She says that she gave her husband enough warning before the fiasco. In fact her warnings are cryptic sentences like: "Everything is going to stop going smoothly on January 1st."

After the reunion, Freitas miraculously changes into a person able to stand on his own feet. No longer do his ancestors awe him. He loses all traces of his former weaknesses. Yet another "happy ending".

Brunner piles incident upon incident. He whips from one scene to the next, and deftly jabs at some of America's hallowed institutions. He laughs at the "brave frontier scout" cliché from Hollywood, among others, and swipes at England's legendary "devout crusading knight".

A time-passer.

### THIS IMMORTAL

by ROGER ZELAZNY

Ace F-393 :: 1964

40c

Reviewed by Alex Robb

In THIS IMMORTAL Roger Zelazny has a fling at Greek legend, romanticism, the notion of immortality and anything else handy. At times he reveals his 'pulp' origins ("The Greek isles are lousy with myth" and "But hell, the honeymoon was over"). Indeed, if you

read the cover blurbs, you will expect a pulpy plot: "he lived for centuries... he had once been liberator of earth."

But Zelazny's writing contains more than cliches. When the hero is strangled, you feel it as well; a good fight is where blood feels like blood. Only at the end do we read the banal; there is a neat rescue by Bortan. Zelazny cannot expose the deeper emotions, but his writing works by a surface razzle-dazzle. Here is Conrad's dog:

...The Kouretes screamed, for his eyes are glowing coals and his teeth are buzz saws. His head is as high above the ground as a tall man's. Although they seized their blades and struck at him, his sides are as the sides of an armadillo. A quarter ton of dog...

Like the language of the pulps, this is a language of action. "His teeth are buzz saws" is the vivid image here. Later in the book, Zelazny talks of a man taking down the pyramids, and he makes this idea sound more interesting than the notions of most other s f stories. In THIS IMMORTAL a quote from a Shelley poem does not sound out of place, nor a section from THE BOOK OF THE DEAD included without quotation marks. Zelazny's borrowings are always appropriate.

Zelazny even makes something original out of the Immortality theme. Conrad, the hero of the novel, laughs at himself as the legendary "Karaghiosis" - Zelazny is sardonic where other s f writers talk blithely of freeze tanks and interstellar trips and the riotous joys of living forever. Conrad takes on a larger-than-life status as the book proceeds, and a legendary flavour clings to the whole. Buy it.

#### WHIPPING STAR

by FRANK HERBERT

IF magazine :: Jan-April 1970  
129 pages

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

WHIPPING STAR is a far cry from Frank Herbert's award-winning DUNE. Where DUNE was intricate, WHIPPING STAR is merely confused.

Our hero is an agent of a special section of a future United Nations - "The Bureau of Sabotage of the Confederated Sentients".

Herbert lectures:

(In the) long centuries past, Con-Sents with a psychological compulsion to 'do good' had captured the government.... They had eliminated virtually all delays and red tape from government. The great machine with its blundering power over sentient life had slipped into high gear, moved faster and faster. Laws had been conceived and passed in the same hour.

BuSab was created to slow the workings of government when needed.

Having created BuSab, Herbert ignores whatever merits the idea may have.

Instead, he writes about an unusual menace to Earth. The menace is caused by the disappearance of a race of sentient energy-beings who control the instantaneous transportation system used by the galaxy's races. Finally there is only one member of this race left in the galaxy, but she falls in love with the agent investigating the case. In this way, Herbert spends a large proportion of the book explaining the semantics of the English language.

The hero is a veteran of 54 unsuccessful marriages, and the "heroine" is a sentient being of pure energy:

Between blinks, he glimpsed a flower element hovering within the oval - deep red against the room's purple, with black veins woven through it. Slowly it blossomed, closed, blossomed. He wanted to reach out, touch it with a handful of compassion.

"How beautiful," he whispered.

"What is it?" Furuncio said.

"I think we're seeing a Caloban."

The villainess is a flagellator who would put up with the destruction of the galaxy, as long as she had a safe place to hide. (The flagellator whips sentient energy beings, of all things!). All the worst elements of Herbert's writing are here: an appalling melange of sick characters, an unbelievable plot, and background only sketched roughly. Worse still, it could have been intriguing, if Herbert had bothered with his themes. It wasn't a good start to Jakobsson's reign as IF's editor. But Pohl managed to win a string of Hugos publishing fiction much worse than this.

#### ALIEN ISLAND

by T L SHERRED

Ballantine 01815 :: 1970  
217 pages :: 75c

Reviewed by Paul Anderson

A hopeless drunk was the only Earth representative the Rogans would accept!

In this blurb Ballantine tries to sell a story idea that is a cliché. Sherred would need a radical variation on the theme of the first visit of alien beings, for the topic to remain interesting. Sherred only partly succeeds, especially as he does not even stress the idea the Ballantine advertises in its blurb.

The story is supposedly written by a secret service operative. He must spy on the Rogans (the aliens) and their Earthly representative. Unfortunately Sherred gives us little idea of his characters. At first the narrator is just another <sup>of those</sup> all-conquering idiots we find in Keith Laumer's books. At the same time the writer scatters clues about the narrator's "real" identity - this gambit is only partly successful.

To a surprising extent, the book's plot closely resembles that of the first few PERRY RHODAN books. Sherred is a better writer; at times he sounds almost too slick:



It came straight down, neither fast nor slow, no hovering or side-slip or hesitation, directly and purposefully. Over the din of the crowd, the announcer's voice was unheard - and unnecessarily, because the spaceship spoke for itself.

Herred's competence is unquestionable - many people still remember his short story E FOR EFFORT. However he merely tosses in most of his variations on the standard plot, and then discards them one by one. For instance, the Rogans do not use their superior science to prevent or limit the inevitable atomic war. They merely protect their "alien island" from Earthly attack. The Rogans and the converts use the war as an excuse to leave the Earth to its own devices. However the reader must accept the unacceptable - that once people from Earth have taken the oath of fealty to the Rogans, they will automatically cease to have emotional ties with Earth.

We learn little that is interesting about the aliens. We meet them but find out nothing about their culture. We see them as caricatures of all the other alien civilisations found in science fiction, merely unbalanced models of Earthly utopias.

The book is "entertaining", but little else, but there have been better versions of a familiar plot.

#### THE ICE SCHOONER

by MICHAEL MOORCOCK

Berkley Medallion X1749  
80c

Reviewed by Ted Pauls

Moorcock is a fascinatingly diverse writer. On the one hand he is identified with the British "New Wave", but on the other hand he has become famous as a writer of sword-and-sorcery stories. In THE ICE SCHOONER, he writes what he does best - the adventure story written against the background of a primitive civilisation - and he turns it into an s f novel of the future with a

moral/social point. It is an uneven effort, for while the adventure story is superb, the moral/social point is never convincing.

The book tells of a post-Atomageddon Earth in the grip of a new Ice Age. Remnants of humanity lead a stern existence. They eke a life out of the meagre resources of the ice fields, using what little is left of human technology. The hero, Konrad Arflane, is an ice-ship captain of Brershill, one of the eight cities of the great ice plateau of the Matto Grosso. Arflane, his ship sold out from under him, wanders alone on the ice, deciding whether or not to die. He encounters and saves the life of Pyotr Rorsefne, Principal Ship Lord of Friesgalt, greatest of the Eight Cities. Rorsefne, before he dies, asks Arflane to continue the quest in pursuit of which he died - to discover and explore the fabled city of New York, which is supposed to be the seat of power of Earth's principal deity, the Ice Mother. Accompanying the Brershillian sailor on his voyage are the other three heirs of Lord Pyotr: his daughter, Ulrica, with whom Arflane falls in love, her husband, Janek Ulsonn, and Manfred Rorsefne, the old Lord's nephew. The crew also contains Lord Pyotr's bastard son, Urquart, religious fanatic and whale-hunter of great repute, and what is usually called a motley crew. It is basically another quest story.

THE ICE SCHOONER is a superb presentation of a world of ice. We see the characters clearly, save only Pyotr Rorsefne. Moorcock combines these two qualities to write an odyssey in which you can really lose yourself. It is also a portrayal of a society in transition, as the Ice Age gradually recedes and the economic and religious basis of existence is slowly undermined.

The book's weakest feature is its denouement. Another group of men, whose ancestors survived in a different way and managed to preserve most of their technology, appear at the end to provide (semi-) Instant Progress for those people able to think outside the narrow channels of the accepted. I cannot work out why this ending was necessary. Perhaps Moorcock wanted to stress that new ways of thinking are better than old, established ideas. On the other hand, Moorcock writes the other denouement effectively - Arflano forsakes Ulrica to return to wandering on the ice. THE ICE SCHOONER is a fine book, despite the ending.

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( CRITICANTO : CONTINUED FROM PAGE .. )

mind to mind, as her experiences with the myna bird seem to indicate. Perhaps it is just her extraordinary ability to translate, the ability to perceive reality in several languages at once that allows her to communicate directly with the disincorporate. Whatever it is, it is this ability which makes Rydra Wong the greatest linguist, the greatest poet, the greatest communicator in the five galaxies. And perhaps it is a touch of this same ability that makes Samuel Delany such a good writer.

# STANISLAW LEM

## Unitas Oppositorum : The Prose of Jorge Luis Borges

Translated by FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER from its original appearance in  
QUARBER MERKUR No 25, January 1971.

Most useful reference:

### LABYRINTHS

Penguin Modern Classics 14 002981  
297 pages :: 40p/\$A.1.35

Edited by DONALD A YATES  
and JAMES E IRBY

First US publication by New  
Directions, 1964.  
First Penguin edition 1970.

I admit that this essay is a very subjective review of Borges' fiction. If someone asked me why I'm stressing the subjective aspect of this piece of criticism, I would be hard pressed to give a conclusive answer. Perhaps because I have been trying for years to enter the territory in which the Argentinian's best work was created, although I went by quite another road. Therefore his work is very close to me. At the same time it is foreign to me, for I know from my own

experience the traps into which he has sometimes fallen in his writing, and I cannot always approve of his literary methods.

Nothing could be simpler than to list Borges' best stories. These are: TLON, UQBAR, ORBIUS TERTIUS; PIERRE MENARD, AUTHOR OF THE DON QUIXOTE; THE LOTTERY OF BABYLON; and THREE VERSIONS OF THE JUDAS.

I justify my preferences in the following way: each of the stories mentioned has a double-decker, perverse, but logically perfect structure. Viewed superficially, they are fictionalised paradoxes of the Greek type (such as Zeno's, for instance.<sup>1</sup>).

In TLON, UQBAR, ORBIUS TERTIUS, Borges bases the story on the idea of reversing our concepts of "idea" and "reality". Borges suggests that a secret society has created a new world where the mind creates its own external objects, and the only external objects are those created by the mind.

In THE LOTTERY OF BABYLON Borges contrasts two mutually exclusive explanations of the universe: (statistical) chance, and (total) determinism. Usually we consider these notions incompatible. Borges

tells of a world system based upon a lottery, and reconciles two cosmological explanations without destroying the logical bases of each system.

PIERRE MENARD, AUTHOR OF THE DON QUIXOTE, on the other hand, is a satire on the uniqueness of the act of artistic creation, logically driven to its utmost point. (In this story Pierre Menard seeks to rewrite DON QUIXOTE precisely - without copying it. The story shows the paradoxes behind the idea that art is created necessarily and uniquely. Borges reduces the idea ad absurdum.)

Finally THREE VERSIONS OF THE JUDAS is a logically unprovable heresy.<sup>2</sup> Borges builds a fictitiously heterodox system of Christian dogmatics in which he "proves" that Judas was the Christ, not Jesus. In its "radicalism" this fictitious heresy surpasses all historical types of heresy.

In each story we can find the same kind of method: Borges transforms a firmly established part of some cultural system by means of the terms of the system itself. In the fields of religious belief, in ontology, in literary theory, the author "continues" what mankind has "only begun to make". Using this tour d'adresse Borges makes comical and absurd those things which we revere because of their current cultural value.

But when we look at Borges' work only superficially we see the "comic-logical" effect alone. However each of these tales has in addition another, wholly serious, hidden meaning. At base, his curious fantasy is, I claim, quite realistic. Only after some thought do you first note that the heterodoxy contained within the JUDAS, for instance, might really be possible. Such a perfidious interpretation of the myth of the redemption, if historically not very plausible, is at least thinkable. I could say the same about the LOTTERY. Under certain conditions even the re-interpretation of the notions of chaos and order shown here may be historically plausible. Both stories, different as they may appear to be from one another, are hypotheses about the structure and attributes of existence. Because they are both borderline cases, isolated to one edge of the real paradigm which corresponds to them, it was very unlikely that they would come true historically. Yet, considered from a logical point of view, they are totally "correct". The author therefore has the courage to deal with the most valuable goals of mankind just as mankind does himself. The only difference is that Borges continues these combinatory operations to their utmost logical conclusions.

The best stories of Borges' are constructed as tightly as mathematical proofs. It is impossible to refute them logically, however lunatic the stories' premises may sound. Borges is successful because in any single case he never questions the implied premises of the model structure that he transforms. For instance he pretends to believe (as some humanists do) that a truly brilliant work of art contains no trace of chance, but is indeed the result of some (higher) necessity. If one thinks that such a statement is generally true, it is possible, without contradicting logic, to claim that a masterpiece could be created, word for word, a second time, and quite independently from its first birth (as one can really do with mathematical proofs). We can only see the nonsense of such a procedure when we attack its very premises; but of course Borges is careful never to do this. He never creates a new, freely invented paradigm structure. He confines himself strictly to the initial axioms supplied by the cultural history of mankind. He is a mocking heretic of culture because he never transgresses its syntax. He only extends

those structural operations which are, from a logical point of view, logically "in order", i.e. they have never been seriously "tried out" because of historical extra-logical reasons - but this is of course another matter altogether.

Basically, Borges just does what he claims for the fictitious philosophers of his TOLON (that in philosophy they "do not seek truth, only amazement"). He cultivates a fantastic philosophy, for the characters and settings in his stories are not discursive arguments, but just as much literary objects as the objects which equally appear in "normal" literature. This group of tales forces me to ask how we may distinguish a fictitious ontology (one which cannot be taken seriously) from a real (historically valid) philosophy. The answer to this question is shocking, because no essential difference separates the two! Things are quite trivial: those ontological-philosophical concepts which some thinkers had, and which were preserved by mankind in her historical treasure trove of ideas, and which she therefore acknowledges as serious attempts to interpret and understand the world in one grand sweep - those ideas are our religions and philosophical systems.<sup>3</sup> But those ideas that cannot present such a genealogical attestation and cannot show such an assimilation by the real history of mankind (and Borges' cannot) are just "fictitious", "free-wheeling", "privately invented" meaningful structures, and for no other reason than that mentioned above. Because of this, they can never be taken seriously as an interpretation of the world and existence. These stories cannot be refuted even when the most severe criteria are applied, but only because things happen to be so. For in order to refute them it isn't sufficient just to show their absurd consequences. To refute them, it would be necessary to call into question the total syntax of human thought, and thinking in its ontological dimensions. Therefore Borges' work just confirms that there exists no cultural necessity in our growth towards knowledge; for we often take that which has arisen by accident for what is necessary, and mistake the ephemeral for the eternal.

I'm not sure whether Borges would agree with my explication of his work, but I do fear that I have attributed more to him than he deserves, and that he has not written his best work with so serious an intent (in its semantic depths, not its comical-paradoxical surface, of course!). Which means that I suspect that Borges "privately" has not seen the final point of his fictional chain of proof. This guess is based on a knowledge of all his stories. By talking about his other stories, I pass onto the other, more dubious aspects of his work. Seen as a whole, his work is a universe of literature whose secondary, repetitious aspects diminish and slight his best efforts by their very neighbourhood, because these aspects structurally debunk his best work. In Borges' best stories one can find flashes of such an intellectual power that they don't lose impact even after a large number of re-readings. If at all, they are lessened only when one reads all of his stories at a sitting.

Only then do we notice the mechanism of their creative process. It is always dangerous, even fatal for the creator when we see the invariant (debunking) structure, the algorithm of his creative power. God is a total mystery to us above all because it is on principle impossible for us, and will remain impossible for us, to understand or imitate exactly the structure of God's act of creation.

Considered from a formal point of view, the creative method of Borges is very simple. It might be called unitas oppositorum, the unity of mutually exclusive opposites. What allegedly must be kept separate for

all time (that which is considered irreconcilable) is joined before our very eyes, and without distorting logic. The structural content of nearly all of Borges' stories is built up by this elegant and precise unity. Borges calls the one and the same the conflicting notions of - the orthodox and the heretic (THE THEOLOGIANS), Judas and Jesus Christ (THREE VERSIONS OF THE JUDAS), betrayer and betrayed (THE THEME OF THE TRAITOR AND THE HERO), the troglodytes and the immortals (THE IMMORTAL), chaos and order (THE LOTTERY OF BABYLON), the individual and the cosmos (ALEPH), the nobleman and the monster (THE HOUSE OF ASTERION), good and evil (DEUTSCHES REQUIEM), the unique and the repeated (PIERRE MENARD, AUTHOR OF THE DON QUIXOTE), etc, etc. His literary game with its borderline meanings always begins where opposites repel one another with their inherent force; and it ends as soon as they are joined together. But we can see a trivial weakness of Borges' work in this fact that there is always the same mechanism of conversion (or a closely related inversion). God the Almighty was wise enough never to repeat himself in such a manner. We authors, his successors, shadows and apprentices, also mustn't do it. Occasionally - but very rarely! - the skeletal, paradigmatic structure of the transformations used in Borges' fiction result in truly extraordinary things, as I have tried to show. But we always find this structure, invariably in the same form, once we have properly recognised and assessed it. Such repetition, which inevitably is already accompanied by an element of the unintentionally comical, is the most familiar and most general weakness of all Borges' fiction. For, as good old Le Bon has already said in his work on humour, we always look down disdainfully upon the mechanic, for a mechanical process always lets the strange and surprising get away. For it is simple to predict the future of a purely mechanical phenomenon. In its utmost depths, the structural topology of Borges' work acknowledges its relationship with all mechanistic-determinist kinds of literature, including the mystery novel. The mystery novel always incorporates unequivocally the formula of Laplacean determinism.

The cause of his work's "mechanistic" sickness is this, I think - from the beginning of his literary career, Borges has suffered from a lack of a free and rich imagination.<sup>4</sup> In the beginning he was a librarian, and he has remained one, although the most brilliant manifestation of one. He had to search in libraries for sources of inspiration, and he restricted himself wholly to cultural-mythical sources. They were deep, multifarious, rich sources - for they contain the total reservoir of the mythical thought of mankind.

But in our age they are on the decline, dying off as far as their power to interpret and explain a world undergoing further changes, is concerned. In his paradigmatic structures, and even in his greatest achievements, Borges is located near the end of a descending curve which had its culmination centuries ago. Therefore he is forced to play with the sacral, the awe-inspiring, the sublime and the mysterious of our grandfathers. Only in rare cases does he succeed in continuing this game in a serious way. Only then does he break through the paradigmatically-culturally caused incarceration which is its limitation, and which is quite contrary to the freedom of artistic creation he strives after. He is one of the great men, but at the same time he is an epigone. Perhaps for the last time, he has lit up, given a paradoxical resurrection to, the treasures transmitted to us from the past. But he will not succeed in keeping them alive for a long period of time. Not because he has a second-rate mind, but because, as I believe, such a resurrection of transitory things is in our time quite impossible. His



work, admirable though it may be, is located in its entirety at an opposite pole from the direction of our fate. Even this great master of the logically immaculate paradox cannot "alloy" our world's fate with his own work. He has explicated to us paradises and hells that remain forever closed to man. For we are building newer, richer, and more terrible paradises and hells; but in his books Borges knows nothing about them.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 The difference is that Zeno's paradoxes confront the trivial interpretation of physical processes with the contradictory results of their purely logical interpretation, whereas the paradoxes of Borges are directed towards the universe of cultural facts.
- 2 Strictly speaking, what has been said isn't true insofar as there are no systems of belief (either of an orthodox or a heterodox nature) that wouldn't hide contradictions within their structures. For them, the supreme court of decision is revelation, not logical reasoning. For instance, consider the fact that it is possible to postulate a logically impossible trinity, but not the existence and non-existence of a God at the same time - although in both cases logic is similarly suspended. The "strictly logical" heresy in the story about Judas means that his postulated "role as saviour" is proved by the same logical means that belong to the arsenal of the traditional demonstrators of Christian theology. The heterodoxy arises only because Borges does not halt where, according to the Scriptures, any orthodox theological attempt at interpretation must "desist unconditionally". Borges' conclusions lead to a point which transcends the permissible boundaries, but this doesn't destroy logic, for this boundary is of an extra-logical nature.
- 3 If Schopenhauer had never existed, and if Borges presented to us the ontological doctrine of "The World As Will", we would never accept it as a philosophical system which must be taken seriously, but we would take it as an example of a "fantastic philosophy". But as soon as nobody assents to it, a philosophy becomes automatically fantastic literature!
- 4 This can be seen from the fact that several times he has rewritten material supplied by others. But I have not discussed this side of his work, for I believe that there can be nothing more erroneous in criticism than to descend to the shallow passages of the work of a writer, merely in order to prove their worthlessness. Besides it is an undisputed fact that world literature is full of similar prose, and the immense number of such exercises alone deprives of originality any piece that only can defend its individuality by stylistic means. You can see this in the stories that make up the last two parts of the Hanser volume, especially in regard to the stylistic means employed, whose baroque character is stressed by Borges in his introduction. The more nearly a work becomes "literature", the greater its originality, as measured by the integral of its differences from all other literary works, the more this kind of fiction which only increases the number of already existing texts by further similar elements must be likened to the enlargement of the ocean by pouring water into it - it is rather a work of reproduction, more related to the crafts than to creative art. Of course 95% of all writers are just craftsmen; but the historical movement of literature, and its historical changes, are caused by the

inventors, heretics, visionaries, anti-conformists, the revolutionaries of writing. And this gives us the right to measure any work claiming to belong to the top in literature first of all by its originality. Many writers can entertain; but only a few can amaze, educate, and move. But because such a point of view is open to attack, I have armed this review with a warning against its subjective character. Also I didn't intend to evaluate the whole work of Borges, and especially not his poetry, which I would have to read in its original Spanish form. Whatever the matter may be with his poetry (which I value highly), it doesn't belong to fantastic literature for the simple reason that, in my opinion (and here I'm in agreement with T Todorov) on principle, there can be no fantastic poetry.

- Stanislaw Lem 1970

# BARRY GILLAM

## New York Film Review

### THE FORBIN PROJECT

DIRECTOR: Joseph Sargent; SCREENPLAY: James Bridges, based on the novel COLOSSUS by D F Jones; DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Gene Polito; MUSIC: Michel Colombier; PRODUCED: Stanley Chase. Released by Universal Pictures. CAST: Eric Braeden (Forbin), Susan Clark (Cleo), Gordon Pinsent (President), William Schallert (Grauber), Leonid Rostoff (First Chairman), George Standford Brown (Fisher). 1970.

100 minutes.

Frankenstein and Colossus/Monster. The film's lack of decision is seen even here. Although FRANKENSTEIN is mentioned, the film so totally lacks a unified point of view that often we are more sympathetic to the computer than to the hero. When we leave the film, we see it as a jigsaw in which the pieces don't fit.

Forbin is a brilliant young Robert Jastrow-type of scientist who has devised a greatly advanced new computer. As the film opens, it is being put into operation, sealed irrevocably from the hand of Man. Colossus will integrate all existing systems and provide quicker service to the United States government. Forbin has no sooner assured the press and the president (a JFK type) that the computer is incapable of creative thought than it announces on its own initiative the existence of a Russian counterpart and requests a communications link. Together, Colossus and Guardian (the Russian computer) present a more formidable block than had been anticipated. The film deals mainly with the attempts of Forbin and his colleagues at the control centre to reestablish control of the computer somehow.

THE FORBIN PROJECT is a competent, occasionally exciting, and ultimately disappointing thriller about two computers that take over the world. Coming after the vastly superior DR STRANGELOVE and 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, and inevitably repeating elements of those films, its choices are a little too simple and its style is a little too loose. Without a Kubrick to unify the diverse elements of the script, pieces fly away from the central conflict between Forbin/

Throughout the film we see the conflict between man and machine and, even more, the dependence of each upon the other. There is such a profuse array of mechanical hardware that it seems as if twenty people are listening into and watching every videophone conversation. The camera tracks along a row of colour monitors which all show the same image, or scans alternate images: Forbin's Soviet counterpart, Kuprin, and then the Soviet Chairman. There are also a large number of input and output units for Colossus. The director makes a point about our increasing reliance upon the machine and indeed when the scientists plot to outwit Colossus they must ban all telecommunications: they are tapped by the computer. Personal meetings, though, are difficult: Forbin and Kuprin meet in Rome but Colossus discovers their absence all too quickly. Now aware of opposition to it, Colossus puts Forbin, the one man who has the knowledge and ability to harm it, under constant surveillance.

This surveillance is interesting because here, as elsewhere, the film-makers have not made up their minds. Should the audience be given Forbin's viewpoint, incessantly spied upon, or should we look through the peeping cameras and feel complicity with the machine? We are shown both and it doesn't work. Neither convinces. We are in neither a paranoid Lang world nor a voyeuristic REAR WINDOW one. The film could have been made humorous when Forbin convinces the computer that he must see his mistress, Cleo, in privacy, every other night. His "mistress", though, is just his assistant and as they lie in bed she reports to him about the current developments in their plot. Inevitably they fall in love but the acting is so stiff and uninflected that the director loses all humour and effect.

The director devotes not a small amount of footage to the electronic situation boards that we remember from DR STRANGELOVE. As in that film the gains a strong atmosphere of suspense from the symbols representing aircraft moving towards their destinations. These scenes are intercut with scenes of measures taken to stop them. The computer is carelessly cruel in the film, threatening nuclear destruction of cities if anybody acts against the computer. It annihilates several cities in the US and USSR. The problem is that it means nothing to us - we see old black and white films of an atomic bomb explosion on the colour monitors. This is a film of reaction rather than action. Announcements are made of events, and we are shown innumerable closeups of these wooden-faced "actors" reacting in "anguish".

Definitely there are some effective sequences. One almost documentary short scene shows five or six soldiers who act as a firing squad, and execute the scientists who engineered the plot against Colossus. But when the Soviet scientist Kuprin is shot by Russian agents under orders from Guardian we are overwhelmed by a closeup of his face - but the face's expression is so "stock" that we are tempted to laugh. There are other successes, however. After both Colossus and Guardian have launched nuclear missiles at cities of their own to force the scientists to restore the communications link, the link is restored. Colossus destroys its missile but Guardian cannot be activated in time to intercept the Russian missile, which levels a city of some six thousand. The situation board shows the missile as it reaches its target, but we are unmoved. Then the Russian premier relates, at first without translation, the result. He is suddenly world-weary and this in itself conveys the import of his words and the measure of what has happened. The director is no Renoir and none of his actors an Anna Magnani. In THE GOLDEN COACH, she reflects the vicissitudes of a bullfight superbly

and movingly, and so there is no need for her to act.

Aside from inspiration, what is lacking in these scenes? Why must one say: yes, this scene works, and no, that scene doesn't? The single vision of a Kubrick can use pseudo-documentary footage alongside all the "tricks" of Hollywood: superb sets, effective lighting, and stylised acting. There are too many polemics in THE FORBIN PROJECT and nothing to indicate why they are there. One admires the computer more than the hero, and, after all, what the computer offers is real and beneficial -- an end to all war. To cavil over the death of a few thousand people in such a cause is as stupid as the deaths that war brings today. The execution of the scientists would be much more effective if viewed as a regrettable necessity during Colossus' takeover, rather than as an uncaring cruelty carried out by an inhuman mind. We are repulsed by the scene in which Kuprin is shot because it enlists our sympathy too blatantly in a cause (the overthrow of Colossus) with which we may not sympathise. And we have seen little if any evidence that Kuprin's death is any great tragedy. He seemed a reasonable, likeable man, but we cannot quite accept the film's plea for sympathy which it makes in the closeup. At least we had seen more of the American scientists, and we could view them as intelligent, capable and dedicated men. At best this example is an operational necessity rather than tyranny. In any case, it is intimated that the delay is the fault of man rather than the machine.

Colossus itself, as we see it through its output monitors, is rather interesting. For the first half of the film, its pronouncements are spelled out on a display screen, accompanied by a clacking sound. Later Colossus is given a voice that is closer to that of Alpha 60 (ALPHAVILLE) than of Hal (2001), but disappointing all the same. One of the things that was outstanding about Colossus in the first half of the film was its implacability. When it acquires a voice, it becomes familiar and smaller of stature, almost like a silent film star exposed to the ears of the world. Also, during the computer's later pronouncements, the camera merely settles on a singularly uninteresting speaker. Colossus has become not merely inscrutable, but boring. The printout at least provides some movement on the screen, and the letters clacking and jumping show some action within the computer -- that this is one result of its thinking processes.

The communications between the speakers provide some of the most effective portions of the film. When the link between them is first broken by the scientists, we watch lines on a map light up as Colossus tries to restore the link. From Colossus in the United States blue lines stretch out but cannot reach Guardian in Russia. We understand the gropings of the computers, and sympathise. When the two computers first link up, the outputs are placed next to one another, and Colossus starts to transmit the multiplication table to Guardian, seeking a basis for a common language. Soon it transmits calculus and Guardian responds, starting also with the multiplication table. By now Colossus has far out-distanced human mathematicians and is slowing down as Guardian catches up. When the two suddenly start to work in tandem, one feels a surge of triumph, for that is what it is. Reason has triumphed over all other barriers. The relationship between Colossus and Guardian is far more interesting and evokes more emotion than that between Forbin and Cleo. For one thing, the computers present a novel situation, while the people act out clichés. There is a marvellous moment when, threatened, the computer outlets, silent until now, start to clack. Colossus and Guardian are now talking to each other in a language that no man can

understand. That sudden and truly imperturbable (though not alien) commencement of activity now suddenly becomes sinister, sends a delicious shiver up one's spine. There is also a nice moment, when the whirr of one of the computer's cameras, tracking to keep Forbin in view out of doors, drowns out the sound of the crickets.

THE FORBIN PROJECT's effectiveness is constantly lost among the jumble of its visual forms. As mentioned above, there are too many closeups of incompetent actors. The viewer feels manipulated by a lens that focuses on one person in a room, leaving all the rest out of focus. The oppressive zooms provoke the same reaction. The colour has a bleached, interior look to it at all times. The Universal veneer is there, with the same lab processing as I LOVE MY WIFE, a "comedy" with which it was paired when I saw it. You might argue that this was intended to show the flesh tones of those who spend their time indoors, but nothing is made of this. The film is simply made up of neutral colours that will transfer well to the television screen. Try to imagine in TV grey the RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) films of Rossellini (THE RISE OF LOUIS XIV, THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, SOCRATES) or Bertolucci (THE SPIDER'S STRATEGEM)!

Along with this incoherent visual style, the film fails to handle the secondary material decisively. Towards the end of the film we see a montage of crowds reacting to the arbitrary nuclear bombings. The crowds only impress one by their vapidness. Should I complain that the makers of this film are not Dovzhenko and that we get no sense of life in these bland faces? Dovzhenko could photograph a crowd, and in a quick sequence of shots, individuals, so that we see in the creases of their faces the sun and wind of the Ukraine. He gives us a sense of what brings these people together as a community, what is behind them, and what moves them on. And this is just what is missing from THE FORBIN PROJECT. The audience gains no feeling of what, or how much, is lost when Colossus imposes his will on all men and takes away their pride to avoid war. Joseph Sargent tries, but does not succeed in conveying this feeling, and it is perhaps to his credit that he realizes how ineffective are these scenes and curtails what are, I suppose, obligatory scenes in this type of film. I have no objection to a film which deals with scientists and politicians who try to outwit a computer which has gained the upper hand. When the film attempts more, it lays itself open to a judgment about the success of that attempt.

The final inadequacy of the film is Forbin, the hero. Like everyone else, he is a poorly conceived character, and a press-release scientist rather than someone actually working. As with Robert Jastrow, one is asked to accept the projected image of the man for the man himself. Forbin is so conventional a hero that many viewers may identify with him out of reflex, but even then one would find his creation too formidable and sympathetic to take the part of the evil Frankenstein's monster. The film does not make up its mind and I, for one, put off by Forbin and attracted by the computer, found the film to be working against itself.

The closer one looks at THE FORBIN PROJECT, the less impressive it is. Go and see it, and enjoy it for what it is. But be aware of its limitations, of how much better a film it could have been.

- Barry Gillam 1971



\* It's hard to gauge the reaction to a fanzine. SFC has a fair amount of American support, or otherwise it would not have reached 8th in a field of 73 fanzines nominated. SFC's fortunes are tied to LOCUSTS, so that must have affected the results. The inevitable question I've never seriously asked myself before is: what would it take for SFC to make the Hugo nomination ballot? A very high circulation would achieve this, of course - but I'm not that rich or insane. Good artwork seems to be essential these days - count me out (although SPECULATION gets by without interior artwork). And why bother about the question at all, since I have always said, and still say, that a fanzine must be published for the fun of it, or not at all? Mainly because I have in the back of my mind that Higher Cause, Australia In 75. I can think of no better way for Australia to capture world attention than to field a fanzine in the Hugo nominations. After all, it was during ASFR's reign that the AI75 idea was first proposed. Perhaps John Bangsund can make it back to the Hugo nominations; I hope so, but he will need to hurry. If SCYTHROP goes the way of ASFM, then all I can do is ask Australians and Australian supporters to vote for SFC, even if they don't think it the best magazine. If BOYS OWN FANZINE gets there first, then our supporters should vote for it. Ideas on this topic, or donations of money so I can publish big, high circulation, arty fanzines, are always welcome.

\* The best fun in publishing a fanzine is the mailbox and its contents. I was most pleased to receive recently a good response to S F COMMENTARY 17, and especially a letter from:

\* URSULA K LE GUIN (3321 North West Thurman, Portland, Oregon 97210, USA)

Thank you very much for S F COMMENTARY 17. It's better than ever, and I am subscribing, via Bangsund's Handy All Purpose Order Form. Why do you Australians write such good s f magazines?

I am so sorry that George Turner has softening of the brain. Please look after him carefully, and take care of him, and nurse him back soon to health and savagery. He is needed. Red in tooth and claw, lashing his tail and snarling.

I found Philip Dick's letter in No 17 extremely moving, and I would disagree with your response to it. There's no doubt in my mind that Mr Dick knows what he's doing when he writes, and what his books say. Indeed the only error in judgment I have ever sensed in his work is this, that he underestimates his own talent.

I will read, and re-read, any Dick book, but the three you like best are not my favorites; I would put them below MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, which is perhaps his completest book, and below DR BLOODMONEY, MARTIAN TIME-SLIP, CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON, GALACTIC POT HEALER, in all of which the metaphors of chaos are more outrageously effective, and the explorations of the less well-lighted areas of the psyche are carried farther. The farther out Dick goes, the better he is. And he goes much farther than most of us can go, farther into madness, anguish, dislocation, ruin; he risks more, and he comes back with more. Compared with him most of us don't get any farther than the corner grocery.

But he plods along so quietly, so matter-of-factly, without any fanfare of symbology or flourish of typography, that I wonder if a lot of his readers ever realise where he has taken them. They are used to cruder devices than those he uses, to signposts and billboards, "Inner Space", "Schizophrenia", "Hell".

Yes, he is a bit like Scott: who walked to the South Pole. And another thing about Scott: he was a self-doubter, he planned the Pole run badly, he got there second, he died coming back. A bust, a complete bust. But he knew what he was doing. He was writing the Journals... Amundsen beat him; and Amundsen's victory is a bore, a technological "first", a technicality, like the moon landing. We haven't really landed on the moon yet. What the Amundsens and Aldrins lack is the sense of tragedy, and all their courage avails us nothing.

When Mr Tagomi lands on the moon, it will mean something.

Finally, I think it is a mistake, both critical and ethical, to imply that sentimentality is the alternative to despair. The two are at least as often allied (cf. Hemingway). There is nothing sentimental in Mr Dick's letter. But when he says that his books are not essentially despairing, I think you must listen to him. He is right. Despair is the chic way out, and he has never taken it yet. (January 4 1971) \*

\* You have probably taken my remarks further than I intended, but that's my fault for poorly expressing them in the first place. In Philip Dick's letter published in SFC 17, I was puzzled by the characters in those novels he picked as figures of hope. Dick mentions Molinari in NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR; for me Eric Sweet scent stars, with his self-deprecating doggedness that transforms itself into a kind of goodness. In UBIK, the reader sees through the eyes of Joe Chip, not Runciter. Runciter would mean nothing without Chip's determination to remain alive, no matter what the odds. Surely Barney Mayerson achieves a kind of greatness in PALMER ELDRITCH, not Bulero?

Not despair? I don't know, for I'm sure I identify very closely with Dick and his characters. At the time I read UBIK, NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, and ELECTRIC SHEEP I was close to despair myself. UBIK "fitted". Then, through what seems like a stroke of extraordinary luck, life has tipped me on my feet again. Dick sees that glimmer of hope in his novels - but what a slender ray of light! In other words, there is probably so much in Dick's books that I have not yet discovered, that I don't want to start the book-length critique that Franz has suggested I publish. Perhaps if I live to be 104, I'll have half the wisdom to complete the task.

\* Here's a letter from somebody with less timidity and more success. Philip Dick may be barely appreciated in USA, but in France he's quite a success:

\* MARCEL THAON, (77 Bld Gambetta, 06-Nice, France)

I've already written letters about Philip Dick to many fan editors with little or no results, so I was pleased by your interest in this great author. Dick seems to be much more appreciated in France than in the USA where most of his books get poor reviews (ANALOG's critic in particular seems not to understand what his novels are all about). At the moment, twelve of his books have been translated into French, and this is enormous for a country where s f is very much ignored by the public. Most of the professionals and many of the fans rate Philip K Dick as the best living s f writer. Three articles about him have already been published in the prozines and a fourth is on the way: PHILIP K DICK by John Brunner (Preface to the de luxe double volume published by the Club du Livre d'Anticipation: EN ATTENDANT L'ANNEE DERNIERE/A REBROUSSE TEMPS); PHILIP K DICK, OU L'AMERIQUE SCHIZOPHRENE, by Gerard Klein (FICTION No 182) and

my articles: DICK ET SES PHANTASMES, OU EN LISANT LA BIBLE PSYCHEDELIQUE (FICTION No 190), and DICK III, VOYAGE DANS UN LABYRINTHE DE MORT (to be published in FICTION). I am sending you FICTION Numbers 182 and 190: you will probably be interested in Klein's theory about Dick. I like almost all Dick's novels, except OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8 and VULCAN'S HAMMER, but my favourites are THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH, UBIK and A MAZE OF DEATH. You must have noticed that in these last three novels, the plot gets simpler and simpler while the themes stay essentially the same. Do you have any theory about this evolution? (January 12 1971)

\* Ahem - not off the cuff. It seems to me that Dick is sweeping away many of the stock notions he had about writing novels, and concentrating only on essentials. I must confess that I am three Dick novels behind - I've not read FROLIX 8, GALACTIC POT HEALER, or A MAZE OF DEATH. I should explain that Marcel is doing his Ph D on Philip Dick, but in the meantime will be publishing further material on Dick. Now all I have to do is drag out those French dictionaries, and translate Marcel's article, which has arrived. I hope his thesis is published after it is written.

\* From Indianapolis comes one of those people very interested in the works of Philip Dick... and Cordwainer Smith, and Samuel Delany, and Poul Anderson, and lots of other people. It sounds as if she plans monographs galore, but there are problems in doing single author critiques, as John Foyster<sup>and I</sup> discussed at the New Years Convention. To tell you all about it, here's:

\* SANDRA MIESEL (8744 North Pennsylvania St, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240, USA)

Fellow admirers of Cordwainer Smith may be interested to know that Tony Lewis, chairman of Noreascon, is preparing a complete concordance to The Master's works. He kindly lent me a copy which runs more than 50 single-spaced pages! When all possible meanings have been wrung out of Smith's terminology he plans to publish it. J J Pierce has learned that several unpublished Smith manuscripts do remain in Mrs Linebarger's hands and efforts have been made to get them into print. Also, American fan artist Mike Gilbert is very fond of Smith. Many of his drawings are intended as illos of events in a private, partly Smith-like universe (e.g. GRANFALLOON No 7, OUTWORLDS No 2). And of course you must have noticed the Smith pastiches by Neil Shapiro, better attempts I think than Zelazny's try THE FURIES.

Tony Lewis even wants to start a Smith subfandom - The Honorable Order of Scanners or something. I suggest that it's time for all Smith fans to get together and work on some kind of memorial volume with biography, bibliography, critiques, and try to sell it to an academic publisher. (Can't you just see MR FOREST OF INCANDESCENT BLISS: THE LIFE AND WORK OF CORDWAINER SMITH?) American academic presses are becoming more favorable to us, partly because of professors' involvement. Are you familiar with EXTRAPOLATION (Prof. Thomas Claeson, Box 2515, College of Wooster, Wooster Ohio 44691)? It's going to become a formal literary journal and Tom is involved with the still-embryonic Science Fiction Research Association (Fred Lerner, 7 Amsterdam Avenue, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666) which will try to remedy the isolated situation of researchers, and publish monographs. Nor is Advent the sole fan publishing house. There's also Mirage (5111 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21207). Their books are much more handsome than Advent's and their list is longer. And somehow all the stories have to be collected in a uniform series and into hardback, with appropriate editorial apparatus, so they can get into libraries and live. (Tony keeps entreating Walker Books.)

Trying to do careful s f research is a discouraging business. I've asked to see the Coulsons' file of SFC, but they couldn't locate it. We're going to visit them soon and will try again. Actually, I have mixed feelings about reading your Dick papers at this stage. We want to be very sure of our own ideas before absorbing yours. It seems to us that Dick is going to be discovered one day, probably after he's dead. Then you might find some fan interest in your efforts. For myself, I keep muttering, "But who would wanta whole book on Poul?"

The season prompts us to imagine the Platys' Christmas: a meticulously authentic Dickens-type holiday with roast goose, flaming plum pudding, all the rest. They are in their tall hats and woolly mufflers coaching across the blazing hot Outback. (They absorb only the secular aspects of Christmas, of course.) They manage to endure the heat by fortifying themselves with liquor. We were also thinking of a mixture of Cordwainer Smith and our mythos when millenia from now surviving platys emerge from their last redoubt under Ayer's Rock (where they had kept company with the dread Fenris Platypus, whose coming at the end of the world is another story. Try and picture him athwart Sydney harbour. Not even the Japanese monster-movies...) They discover that the Instrumentality has recreated a sort of platy to use as living litmus paper, testing for dangers on new planets. The true platys are beside themselves with horror and fight successfully for their quasi-cobblers' freedom. Our sources for platy lore include the children's book SHY THE PLATYPUS, by Leslie Rees, an inadvertantly funny scientific monograph THE PLATYPUS, and several recent natural histories. All selectively distorted. (Like we realise they don't live in the desert). (November 4 1970

November 30 1970)

\*

\* Some correspondents concentrated on other aspects of SFC 17:

\* JAMES BLISH ('Treetops', Woodlands Road, Harpsden, (Henley), Oxonford, UK)

After a characteristic remark about the "ignorance about all things literary" of "the American reviewers", Franz Rottentsteiner attributes to C S Lewis the view that "the readers of fantasy are those people who cannot appreciate poetry". Everything CSL says in the pertinent essay collection (OF OTHER WORLDS) implies the opposite, as you would expect of a man who was a poet himself, all of whose novels are either fantasy, fairy tales, or science fiction, and who was a regular reader of, and sometime contributor to, F&SF.

Turner has a minor matter a little askew: "the extracts selected by Ace Books for their blurbs". The Ace Specials are mostly new and unreviewed books; the comments are solicited and the solicitees get page proofs. In effect, they have been asked for advertising copy, so it's not too surprising that that's mostly what they deliver.

Vonnegut's "Campbell" is not a traitor; in MOTHER NIGHT, not included among the Vonnegut novels Turner notes, he is revealed to be a double agent. This is of no use to the reader coming upon SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE cold, of course; but Vonnegut lately seems to be involved in an attempt to make all of his novels sequels to each other. The choice of name is certainly unfortunate, and I agree with Turner's implication ("a mite vicious") that it was probably intentional.

I am puzzled by Turner's imputation of a laughable single use of the Grail. Which of the many legends has he been reading? In many it appears as a sort of cornucopia, serving each of its knights the food and drink he most desires; in the 13th Century German version adapted by Wagner it also confers eternal youth and freedom from disease; in this and many other versions it must be asked a crucial question in order to heal the Fisher King, and, sometimes, to restore the Waste Land; and in some, the cup of the Mass partakes of its nature because it was itself the cup of the First Mass. In still others, including the most famous (Malory), it imparts miraculous mystical knowledge. Unless one is the braying-ass type of militant atheist, there would appear to be nothing funny in any of these uses, which taken literally would make the Grail seem desirable indeed, and figuratively an excellent symbol for a search for an unattainable ideal. Hardly surprising, considering the number of authors of considerably greater stature than Delany who have so used it!

Bob Tucker appeared at least once in 1969 in a one-shot in which he and Hoy Ping Pong replied good-humoredly to an attack by Piers Anthony; since Anthony was also on the ballot, I suspect that Tucker's Hugo was in large part a slap at him. And I think the voting shows that, contrary to the fears rampant at St Louis, moving the WorldCon outside the English-speaking world doesn't diminish the decisive influence of US fandom on the awards.

The S F Foundations seems to be going along well thus far, with a group of enthusiastic academics on one side of the table, and George Hay, John Brunner, Ken Bulmer, Pete Weston, and me on the other, and the Director of the North East London Polytechnic (already the largest school of its kind in Europe) looming benignly in the background. There's a lot of academic politics to be gotten through, but thus far, nothing insuperable.

(December 7 1970)

\*

\* Meanwhile our new Prime Minister has just lowered the status of the arts in the Cabinet from near-top to (I think) 14th. Even those beautiful ballet-dancers who draw in the American crowds will find finance hard to obtain this year. Not much hope for government grants for science fiction enterprises, or s f courses in schools and universities. There may be a science fiction seminar at Monash University later this year, but they won't be much money around. S F Foundations in Australia? Most voters have never even heard of Patrick White, let alone Lee Harding, Bert Chandler, Jack Wodhams, etc.

\*

\* JOHN FOYSTER (12 Glengariff Drive, Mulgrave, Victoria 3170)

Re. the Ditmars: "first edition freely available in Australia" might be more sensible if it were well-defined. The trouble is in part that "freely available in Australia" means different things to different people. For example, most people will agree that US hardcovers are not FAIA. But US paperbacks? Well, some are and some aren't, but I would not care to specify which: paperbacks which are available at McGills are not necessarily available at other shops. I know of no US paperback line which really gets around, except perhaps Lancer, with Ace a reasonable second. At this stage you are asking the voter to check around Australia to see whether that particular line of books is FAIA: maybe he has the time, and maybe he'll be in a privileged position (such as being handy to the Melbourne SF Club) so that he thinks a book is FAIA when it isn't at all. The only simple way out of that is to restrict the

nominations to UK publication or local publication. Even then there are difficulties: many good books don't have a UK edition and others have them long after original publication, not all UK books are distributed FIA, and finally, the times of release in Australia vary from state to state, so that a book freely available in Melbourne in November may not be freely available in Sydney until December (i.e. across the deadline).

But these are only the simple problems raised by the proposal you make. You and I are good Cordwainer Smith fans, are we not? Pretty soon Berkley will release *YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME*, previously issued (but not freely available in Australia) by Regent books. I suspect that in there are some stories which have not yet been FAIA. One - are such stories eligible? and two - of course I will have to check every anthology previously freely available in Australia to make sure that the story I have in mind wasn't earlier printed somewhere just as accessible. And of course any committee would have to vet each entrant - most of the old ones would be wiped out by more modern competition, and the committee isn't in a position to complain, anyway.

Your idea sounds good, until one looks at the application of it: it is unworkable, both in theory as in practice. By contrast, the first publication requirement is simple to operate and precise.

Committee ineligibility may be "ridiculous", but it is a practice followed overseas by some conventions, and we see no point in deviating from that practice. If the output of Australian writers and fans is so poor that the disqualification of those contenders renders the awards meaningless then Australian fandom and prodrom is in a poor way. Frankly, I don't believe it makes much difference.

Both Peter Weston's points are good ones. The first explains why you and I read so little science fiction (try *TIME AND THE HUNTER...*). The second explains my irritation with *SPECULATION* (or part of it). I certainly think that the reviewers for *SPECULATION* do, on the average, attempt to back up their suggestions with meaningful arguments and useful quotations, whereas reviewers for other fanzines generally don't. The difficulty which arises is the ineptitude of the arguments, and that is something which no one can correct. If one merely sprays out an opinion then it may be soundly based (or it may not): if one discloses the supports, they may turn out to be cardboard.

I think Shayol may have actually been Cordwainer Smith's favourite world (re. page 13) :: In *NOBODY BOTHERS GUS* (page 15) the protagonist is a superman, not an alien. (November 1 1970) \*

\* Let's change "freely available in Australia" to "freely available from Merv Binns"? That has difficulties as well, but so has any "first publication" requirement. Example: Delany's *NOVA*, which some people voted for in the 1970 Ditmar award. If it had gained enough votes to win, then the organizer (me) would have found himself in even more difficulties than he was in. *NOVA* was first published in USA in 1968. Since Merv did not import copies of the Doubleday edition, the first available editions were the Gollancz UK edition and the Bantam US edition. Ineligible for the Ditmar in the year it was read. *TIME AND THE HUNTER* (*T ZERO*) is a good example: first publication was the Italian edition - 1967. It made the Ditmar form. But we couldn't read it in the original Italian? But what if Kurt Lasswitz's books were translated in bulk. Could we count the first English publication?



I can see the holes in my arguments, but the "original publication date" criterion leaks like a sieve as well. The Ditmar Awards have been issued for this year, so this discussion looks futile. It's not, because the European S F Convention organizers face problems that make our complaints look trivial. They've allowed voting for any novel released during the five years previous to the year of award - that might not be a bad idea for Australia. They allow plenty of leeway in the timing of the other awards as well. But I'm not sure how they will jump over the language problem.

Normally, committee ineligibility does not matter, as Con committees are usually composed of hardworking fans, not pros. But New Years Convention, one pro in particular rendered himself and his story THE CUSTODIAN ineligible, by helping to organize the Con. Quite a few people missed the opportunity to vote for the best Australian s f story yet written.

"...Why you and I read so little science fiction". Speak for yourself; I still have a masochistic habit of reading science fiction short stories, even if I miss most of the novels. But I'm reading more and more of other things, which helps me to survive.

\* And what better cue for the presentation of the:

\*\*\*\*\*

S F COMMENTARY AWARD      October 1969 - September 1970

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Only one vote cast here - mine. But if any previous winners ever turn up on the doorstep, I'll buy them an inscribed trophy, or shout them a \$5 meal (or should I say, £2.50, as only Poms have won this award so far). For this result, I sloshed through publications like VISION OF TOMORROW, NEW WORLDS, ANALOG, IF, GALAXY, WORDS OF FANTASY, AMAZING, FANTASTIC, FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, ORBIT, NOVA, INFINITY, and NEW WRITINGS.

- 1 THE TIME MACHINE, by Langdon Jones (ORBIT 5 - December 1969).
- 2 THE ASIAN SHORE, by Thomas M Disch (ORBIT 6 - June 1970).
- 3 JEAN DUPRES, by Gordon R Dickson (NOVA 1 - 1970).
- 4 THE SNOW WOMEN, by Fritz Leiber (FANTASTIC - April 1970).
- 5 THE CUSTODIAN, by Lee Harding (VISION OF TOMORROW - May 1970).
- 6 THE ELECTRIC ANT, by Philip K Dick (F&SF - October 1969).
- 7 THE BIG FLASH, by Norman Spinrad (ORBIT 5 - December 1969).
- 8 RISE AND FALL, by Marek Obtulowicz (NEW WORLDS - December 1969).
- 9 ANCIENT MY ENEMY, by Gordon R Dickson (IF - December 1969).
- 10 THE DAY AFTER JUDGMENT, by James Blish (GALAXY - August-September 1970).

\*\*\*\*\*

I shall talk about THE TIME MACHINE in the next issue of S F COMMENTARY. I discuss THE ASIAN SHORE in an article for John Bangsund, and I may look at it from a different angle in the next issue of SFC. JEAN DUPRES -/that article discussed in for John Bangsund. THE SNOW WOMEN was far better than Leiber's Nebula winner, but he was the one who chose to withdraw THE SNOW WOMEN in favour of LANKHMAR. I choose the October to September year, because the December magazines usually don't arrive in Australia until at least the middle of March.

My list of Favourite Novels read during 1970 is far more interesting, and may give you a more accurate idea of my current tastes:

1. MAGISTER LUDI (DER GLASPERLENSPIEL), by Herman Hesse (first published in 1945; my edition was Ungar Books No 2117; 502 pages; \$3.95).
2. VOSS, by

Patrick White (1957; Penguin Modern Classics 1438; 458 pages; 75c).  
 3. NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, by George Orwell (1949; Penguin 972; 251 pages; 55 c). 4. THE GUERMANTES WAY (LE COTE DE GUERMANTES), by Marcel Proust (Part 3 of REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST) (1920-1921; Chatto & Windus CWP 15, CWP 16; 823 pages; \$3.80). 5. WITHIN A BUDDING GROVE (A L'OMBRE DES JEUNES FILLES EN FLEURS), by Marcel Proust (Part 2 of ROTP) (1918; Chatto & Windus CWP 7, CWP 8; 752 pages; \$3.80). 6. COSMICOMICS (LE COSMICOMICHE), by Italo Calvino (1965; Jonathan Cape; 153 pages; \$3.25). 7. SOLARIS, by Stanislaw Lem (1961; Walker; 204 pages; \$4.95). 8. SO, by Adam Pilgrim (1970; Owen Webster; 287 pages; \$3.95). 9. GREYBEARD, by Brian W Aldiss (1964; Faber & Faber; 237 pages; \$2.30). 10. THE BLACK CORRIDOR, by Michael Moorcock (1969; Ace SF Special 06530; 187 pages; 90 c).

I made the list at the end of December; I might swap numbers 8 and 9, but otherwise it stands. Why COSMICOMICS and not TIME AND THE HUNTER (especially as the latter is the better book, and I enjoyed it even more than Proust)? I made out a case to myself that the bits of COSMICOMICS could perhaps fall into a continuous narrative description of the Earth's evolution, if one shifted the pieces. My categories fell down badly last year. By far the best short story I read last year was Calvino's PRISCILLA, and at least three Calvino stories are much better than THE TIME MACHINE. COSMICOMICS doesn't fit any category except "Collection", but I wanted to recognise it. Yes, Franz, Calvino is a much better writer than Lem - or at least Calvino translated is much better than Lem's sole translation so far. No final judgments yet - I would like to hear more comments about the European writers.

The best story of 1970-1971 will probably be Joanna Russ' THE VIEW FROM THIS WINDOW - but how can anyone call it science fiction or fantasy? Unless it's a piece from a forthcoming s f novel, of course. Any answer, Mr Delany? (Most other fanzines are asking the same question).

\* One and a half pages left of this issue, and I haven't <sup>mentioned</sup> many of the items I should have. Jack Williamson, with his wife and some other people from New Mexico University, are coming to Australia. They arrive in Sydney on July 17, stay at the Hotel Hampton Court, and leave for New Zealand on Tuesday morning. There is also a possibility that Thomas Disch may visit Australia this year, and Perry Chapdelaine mentions in letters that he would like to visit as soon as possible. It's not all that far away from America, people. And for most Americans it would be like coming home again. (You can take that remark as you like; our Prime Minister often does a fair imitation of Richard Nixon).  
 :: In NORSTRILIAN NEWS recently, I've conducted a not particularly subtle campaign to get Gary Mason to publish something, or tell us why he doesn't.. In the mail this week came SURPRISE No 1, 2 mimeoed pages in which Gary announces (surprise!) his engagement, and forthcoming marriage. Lynn Hamilton is the happy damsel, and she and Gary plan to marry in June. But there's a catch. Gary and Peter Darling were going to Noreascon in August this year, but now Gary won't be going. He just doesn't have the money to marry, and travel overseas. At the moment, it seems as if Peter will be going by himself, but if any other person with a handy \$1000 should get in touch with him soon, he could probably go to Noreason. Peter's address: GPO Box 4593, Sydney, NSW 2001. Gary also uses that box now. :: I forget whether I mentioned that Robin Johnson moved from Sydney, and Leigh Edmonds quit swingin' St Kilda without too many tears. They now share a half-house in Edna Everage territory, Flat 2, 28 Ardmillan Road, Mounzee Ponds, Victoria 3039. Their place has a very large living room, which takes George Harrison at 60 decibels very well indeed. Michael Cameron, down from Brisbane, is also staying there at the moment.

\* As for yours truly: usually I write sordid details re. me in my other magazine THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW. I prepare it for ANZAPA, and for forty other people, who should write back. It looks as if nobody was inspired by the last issue, so I may publish very few extra copies of METREV. I've just put myself on the waiting list for APA-45 (for people born since 1945), and I will place some contributions there before I make it to the top of the waiting list. In the last METAPHYSICAL REVIEW I talked about my choices for Best Novel at greater length, and also made lists of Best Films, Best Pop Music (there were two on that list), and Best Science Fiction. No lists of classical music, although I still buy a fair amount. Leigh Edmonds recently lent me some rock music of varying quality: ALL THINGS MUST PASS was the best of the bunch, as well as LED ZEPPELIN Albums 1 and 2, Jimi Hendrix and BAND OF GIPSIES, Big Brother and the Holding Company's CHEAP THRILLS, THE WHO LIVE AT LEEDS, LIVE CREAM, etc, etc. While I was in Ararat I was forced to drop the film-going habit (one cinema in town and not many good films) and I haven't picked it up again. INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION is the best film I've seen this year, but because of laziness I've already missed SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL and Bunuel's THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL, which had a three week season on the other side of Melbourne.

But even if I don't see many films, I enjoy the convenience of being back in Melbourne (population 2 million). Melbourne has pleasant, cheap places to eat like Degraives Tavern, the Pancake Palace, and several thousand more. It has the best theatre and music in Australia, if only I wasn't too lazy to attend. And Melbourne has bookshops... I'd better not start on that topic. That's an article in itself. Melbourne has trams (or "street-cars", as some of you like to say) and tram-riding adventures could also fill out an article. I've bought a new record player and a new typewriter. I've met most of my old friends again since arriving back in Melbourne. Fans visit - yea, verily, even Lee Harding on one memorable day! Leigh Edmonds discovered my box of pop singles, collected over about 12 years, and we played those all one Sunday afternoon. Nostalgia.

I'm still not completely contented - but then, I never am. I've done practically no writing since the middle of January. It's over a year since I wrote the first part of the Aldiss critique. I will finish it, Brian, never fear. I have two stacks of books read, but not yet reviewed. Lots of short story ideas play around in my mind. Perhaps there's even an idea for a novel there (Chris Priest has given me lots of valuable suggestions about this matter). Fanzines to be typed; letters to be written. But who would be without the worries of a fan?

\* I'm not the only one with this sort of worry. Here's WILLIAM F TEMPLE, of "Heathwood", 11 Cherry Garden Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, England, to finish proceedings:

I've a full-time (and then some) job under constant high pressure with a firm of publishers-cum-booksellers and get home often late and always tired these nights. I've also a large house, a large garden, and a family to cope with - and seven cats. Also many visitors, as we live by the sea. We had Forry and Wendy Ackerman here in the summer, and the entire David Kyle family, and we've had Syd Bounds, Ted Carnell and his wife, Les Flood, the Harold Chibbetts, Pat Kearney, his wife, his Mum, his Dad, Margaret Lowe, Ray and Jane Denton... etc... in the s f world. And whole gaggles of non s f types and relatives. My pro writing has been pushed into the background. (January 16 1971) \*

\* Hard life, isn't it? Thanks for your company. Back again in a fortnight, I think.



S F COMMENTARY 2: CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)  
FROM PAGE 2)

Robert Silverberg: NEIGHBOUR (14) \*  
Robert Silverberg: PASSENGERS (14, 22) \*  
Robert Silverberg (ed.): SCIENCE FICTION  
HALL OF FAME (11) \* Robert Silverberg:  
THE SHADOWS OF HIS WINGS (14) \* Robert  
Silverberg: SIXTH PALACE (14) \* Robert  
Silverberg: SUNDANCE (14) \* Robert  
Silverberg: TO LIVE AGAIN (15) \* Robert  
Silverberg: TO THE DARK STAR (14) \*  
Robert Silverberg: TRANSLATION ERROR (14)  
\* Cordwainer Smith (45) \* Cordwainer  
Smith: DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN (25-26) \*  
Cordwainer Smith: YOU WILL NEVER BE THE  
SAME (48) \* Norman Spinrad: THE LAST  
HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE (16-17) \*  
Paul Stevens, David Grigg, Merv Binns &  
Peter House (organizers): MINI MELCON  
(7-8) \* William F Temple (51) \*  
Theodore Sturgeon: THE MAN WHO LEARNED  
LOVING (23) \* Dennis Stocks, etc (or-  
ganizers): Q-CON 71 (9) \* Peter Tate:  
MARS PASTORALE (18) \* Bob Tucker (47) \*  
George Turner (43) \* Kurt Vonnegut (22,  
46) \* Peter Weston (ed.): SPECULATION  
(3, 48) \* Jack Williamson (50) \*  
Roger Zelazny: THIS IMMORTAL (28-29) \*  
Roger Zelazny & Dannie Plachta: THE LAST  
INN ON THE ROAD (19) \*

Last stencil typed: May 1, 1971.

LATE NOTICE

THE WSFA JOURNAL, edited by Don Miller,  
12315 Judson Road, Wheaton, Maryland,  
USA 20906, has reprinted the articles by  
Stanislaw Lem which first appeared in  
S F COMMENTARY 9 (reviewed by P Schuyler  
Miller, among others). The articles  
were POLAND: SCIENCE FICTION IN THE  
LINGUISTIC TRAP, and INTRODUCTION TO A  
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF SCIENCE FICTION.  
Also a small review of SOLARIS. The  
first two articles amount to a reprint of  
half SFC 9. If I can persuade anybody  
to reprint the rest of SFC 9, then I  
won't have to do it myself. Those who  
have asked for this SFC should write  
directly to Don, or subscribe (10 for  
\$3.50) through Aust. agent, Michael  
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