The truth about Australian SF
Fiction from: Lee Harding
Cherry Wilder  Stanley G Weinbaum
SF art from: Chris Foss  Michael Payne
Philip Lee  Gary Chalk and Kristine Nason
SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY... goes ding! This is the SFM AussieCon Special which, for those unfamiliar with the term, celebrates the World sf Convention being held in Australia this year. It should be quite an event, especially as it's the first time that the Australian fans have acted as hosts. They are obviously attempting to make their Welcome so it seems quite suitable to devote an issue of SFM to an investigation of Australian sf.

As an introduction to their fiction we've included two original short stories by Australian authors. Lee Harding has contributed Night of Passage which serves as an interesting example of the sort of sf being written by the more established authors over here. His short stories appeared regularly in England between 1960 and 1970 in the sf magazines, Science Fantasy, New Worlds and Vision of Tomorrow. The second piece comes from Cherry Wilder who is one of the newer writers on the scene. Her story was custom-built for SFM and she has pandered to her English audience by incorporating all the clichés of the Australian outback that we expect to see.

The fiction gives us an idea of what's happening now, but to find out what went before we'll need some reference to John Brosnan's Guide to the Australian Science Fiction Scene. He discusses all the prominent sf authors, including Lee Harding — which links up quite well with his story. All this information about Australian sf might inspire you to read more, in which case the reviews of a couple of anthologies, and details of where to get them, should be in handy. So much for the contents of this issue. Now for a little something about AussieCon for those of us who can't get there.

The Convention takes place at the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, from 14 to 17 August. The Guest of Honour will be Ursula LeGuin, who will also be running a workshop for new writers for a few days before the Con begins. The Australian GoH will be Donald H. Tuck who is best known for his Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy (Vol 1 of which was reviewed in 'FPM Vol 2 No 1). Other sf notables expected to attend include Ben Bova, Kelly Freas, Larry Niven, Robert Silverberg, Jack Williamson, Roger Zelazny and Leigh Brackett.

The events organised for AussieCon follow the traditional pattern for most sf Conventions. There will be a film season, which has been arranged in collaboration with the National Film Theatre of Australia, and an Art Show with a special category for illustrations of episodes from the works of Ursula LeGuin. The paintings will be assessed by a panel of judges and New English Library will be awarding a special cash prize. There will be the usual fancy-dress parade, auctions of old sf pulps, and other functions, and a banquet. The whole Convention will be given exclusive coverage by one of the Melbourne TV stations and a new sf play for radio will be given its premier. But of major importance to the sf world will be the election of the annual Hugo Award winners.

Incidentally. stories come from Australia, too. It was painted by Michael Payne and is the cover from a new sf anthology edited by Lee Harding called 'Beyond Tomorrow: An Anthology of Modern Science Fiction'.

Next Month: Read 'Shatterday' an original story by Harlan Ellison never before published in England.  

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NIGHT OF PASSAGE
I carried an image of one of the old maps deep in my mind. I was convinced that what Dominus told me was true—that the streets ran as straight and true as furrows in a field, and that if I had followed the road he had indicated then I would make the best possible time. With luck I would reach the heart of the city before midnight. And then . . .

When we came in sight of the city, I left the rest of the party behind and continued on alone. The Elders settled down to await my return. They drank wine and smoked the ceremonial pipe of Passage and chanted the old songs. This also was part of the ritual, and they would keep it up without pause until I returned.

I made good time across the open ground. I lowered a little and leaned forward so that my body merged with the sunburned grass. I moved with confidence, for this landscape was as natural holon. Later on it would not be so easy.

The afternoon was well advanced and I planned to reach the outskirts of the city by dusk. I had no desire to enter this unfamiliar territory until the daylight had waned, so I would ride my bike and move in at twilight, when the approaching darkness would afford protection.

The afternoon was cloudy and I had hoped to reach the outskirts of the city by dusk. But I had no desire to enter this unfamiliar territory until the daylight had waned, so I would ride my bike and move in at twilight, when the approaching darkness would afford protection.

The afternoon was well advanced and I planned to reach the outskirts of the city by dusk. I had no desire to enter this unfamiliar territory until the daylight had waned, so I would ride my bike and move in at twilight, when the approaching darkness would afford protection.

But I made such as these crude buildings repelled me. I pressed close against them as I moved into the city. I had need of their protection, for I was not safe until I was inside the city. I rode the bike as I moved into the unholy, the city. I pressed close against them as I moved into the city. I had need of their protection, for I was not safe until I was inside the city.

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By Lee Harding

Passage was a trying time for the young men and women who participated, and you could not deny the damning evidence that the city had failed to return a number of fine youths from their Night of Passage.

Much of what we knew about the city was hearsay and legend, from which few useful facts could be extracted. It seemed likely that wild animals would have infiltrated the deserted streets, and that these predators might be more dangerous than their kin who roamed the open country. But this was just a scare tactic. Except for times of Passage, people avoided the city. Some maintained that not even wild animals approached the city, except as much as any man. I was not prepared to take any chances. I determined to survive this dark night alive—and emerge as a man.

I hurried down the wide footpath, dodging many strange obstacles and taking the slightest sound, anything that would betray the presence of some wild animal skulking through this no-man's-land between the city and the open country. My eyes probed deep into the twilight, searching. My mind tingled with apprehension as it struggled to sort through the familiar sensations of the tingling presence near the edge of my mind and far, far away. I thought it might be a wild dog, but it was too far away for me to be sure. When only a lone beast baying at the newly risen moon, I gritted my teeth and hurried on.

The city stank. I had expected it would, but I was not prepared for the way the odour clung to the night air like a shroud. Too many people had perished here. The air was weighed down with the burden of their memories, and another hundred years the tireless winds and rain would wash away this rank memory of humanity, but for the moment it was trapped in these steel and concrete canyons, and I moved nervously through it like a moth through woodsmoke.

The moon rose higher and slowly transformed the wide road into a bright ribbon of light threaded through the darkness. This made it easier for me to pick my way, yet it also lightened the protective shadows. Everything around me was covered with a deep layer of dust. I stopped to clean the tires made breathing unpleasant. My feet stirred it up as I hunched along. Suddenly my breath was almost sneezed, but I managed to hold it back. Such an explosion of sound would echo like a cannon shot through the desolate night air. I decided I would wish to advertise my presence.

I was so advanced, but the city the baying sound grew closer. The feeling of something cruel and dangerous became more pronounced in my mind. It seemed there was one but many animal voices joined together in a discordant howl, a dirge, howling back and forth to each other across the darkened city. I felt the frightening sensation of a hungry pack closing in on me, their teeth bared and their eyes glowing in the moonlight. The doleful dirge made me shudder and press deeper into the darkness, for the first time since I had begun my Passage I felt afraid. I unfastened my knife and fingered the smooth round stone in my pouch. Bed luck for me if I ran into a pack of wild dogs.

By now the buildings had begun to alter in appearance. They no longer looked like dwellings but reminded me of the huge stone silos in our valley, but whereas they were tall,
The street sloped upward, flanked by rows of uniform brick houses, and the road was alive with the sound of children's voices. The sun was still high in the sky, casting long shadows across the pavement. The air was hot and humid, but there was a slight breeze that carried the scent of flowers from the nearby gardens.

As I turned a corner, I saw a group of children playing football. They were having a great time, running around and shouting commands to each other. I smiled at the sight, remembering my own childhood days spent playing with friends in the streets. It was a simple pleasure, but one that I had grown to cherish.

I continued on my way, my mind wandering over the thoughts and memories that filled my head. I was lost in my own world, unaware of the world around me. It was only when I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder that I realized I had strayed too far.

I turned to see the concerned face of my wife. "Are you alright? We've been waiting for you for a while," she said, her voice filled with concern.

I smiled and nodded, trying to reassure her. "I'm fine, love. I was just lost in my thoughts," I said, feeling a little embarrassed.

We continued our walk, holding hands and chatting about our plans for the day. I was grateful for her understanding and companionship. It was moments like these that made me appreciate the beauty of the simple things in life.
1974 Nebula Awards

Best Novel
1 The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin
2 Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said by Michael Bishop
3 334 by Thomas M Disch
4 The Godblood by TJ Bass

Best Novella
1 Born with the Dead by Robert Silverberg
2 Song for Lya by George RR Martin
3 On the Street of the Serpents by Michael Bishop

Best Novelette
1 If the Stars are Gods by Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund
2 The Rest is Silence by CL Grant
3 Twilla by Tom Reamy

Best Short Story
1 The Day Before the Revolution by Ursula Le Guin
2 The Engine at Heartspring's Centre by Gordon Eklund
3 After King Kong Fell by Philip José Farmer

Best Dramatic Presentation
1 Sleeper
2 Fantastic Planet
3 The Three Stagedoor Men

Grand Master Award
Robert A Heinlein

Winners of the Nebula Award are chosen by the members of Science Fiction Writers of America and the Nebula trophies are presented at the annual nebula banquet.

UFO Research

British government consorts on the British UFO Research Association's National Investigations and Research Conference which was held on 10 and 11 May 1976 in Stoke-on-Trent.

UFOlogy, as followers of the Unidentified Flying Object call their occupation, is laced with a rich variety of cranks, nut-cases and pure eccentrics. Not uncommonly, the press and public have latch on to this enticing side of the subject and the UFO, in this country at least, is a stock topic for ridicule. However, the British UFO Research Association, which describes itself as a 'seriously concerned body of opinion', wants to change this. As its first step it held its first ever scientific conference at the beginning of May in Stoke-on-Trent, attracting a sizeable crowd inclusive of the press, television and radio personnel.

What BUFORA means by serious and scientific is a matter of interpretation, by the conference started well with a lecture by Professor John Taylor of U. of Leicester who talked up on a defence of Geller-type work on the Geller effect. Illustrating his talk with samples of the now-familiar bent spoons and 'scrunchied' paper clips, Taylor argued in favour of his electric force theory to explain Geller-type powers.

The only piece of new evidence came at the end of the lecture, when Taylor revealed that sounds heard by people he used in experiments were also heard by people who sighted UFOs. Because of this, he said, he would try and explain Geller and UFOs by the same theory, and he rejected the idea that UFOs were alien spacecraft. Nevertheless, although the ufologists themselves don't necessarily subscribe to the alien theory, at least half the conference was given up to trying to establish proof of alien spaceships.

The principal characteristic of an UFO is its tremendous acceleration and totally silent movement. So, the first question asked was, what kind of noiseless, zero drag, over speed, hypersonic, space craft, one of the biggest stumbling blocks in a true scientific explanation of spaceships, and the conference hoped for some original arguments. However, conclusions came down on the side of the familiar flying saucer craft, old hat to scientists and in science fiction, where the gravity drive has been a common form of propulsion for half a century.

Lately, a lack of new thought attended a lecture given by a member of the Extra-Terrestrial Society. He concluded that the most likely form of drive for an interstellar ship would be nuclear, something which would emit a sizeable amount of radiation. Unfortunately, although members of the Society have spent five years in the search, they haven't yet been able to find traces of this radiation.

The most interesting statement of the meeting came from a Mr CAE O'Brien, a noted lecturer on UFOs. Attacking the problem mathematically he said that if you managed to see a UFO at all (a 160-million-to-one chance), and if it was alien, the chances were that it came from Venus! There were a few surpised expressions at that conclusion.

However, the most convincing demonstration of the existence of UFOs came during the showing of a one-minute-long film. It was shot by an ATV camera crew while they were filming on a hillside near Banbury, near Oxford, in October 1971. During the filming of a TV programme the crew noticed an object moving in the sky, a camera the filmed the object as it bobbed and weaved in the lens view, before it changed colour from orange to white and accelerated away, leaving a vapour trail behind it.

The Ministry of Defence claimed it to be an aerial from a nearby airfield dumping fuel. The airfield itself denied this and the cameraman, experienced in film, flew up in the aircraft so that he had seen before. BUFORA, sufficiently convinced, have produced a detailed report on the UFO which they are sending to over thirty research establishments around the world for evaluation.

Although the official American UFO operation has now ended, serious research still takes place into the 50,000 sightings recorded to date. Recently, the government also set up an UFO research centre in Britain, however, ufology is still a subject only for amateurs. BUFORA hopes that, through similar conferences, it will add a greater number of serious scientists to its 600 membership. And then the study of UFOs will be put on the same level as the studies being undertaken in America and France.

Hugo Nominations 1974

One of the main events at a World Con is the presentation of the annual Hugo Awards. All the nominating ballots have now been received by the AussieCon committee and the list of nominated books is as follows:

Best Novel (81 nominated)
- The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin
- Time Fire by Poul Anderson
- Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said by Philip K Dick
- Inverted World by Christopher Priest
- The Mote in God's Eye by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

Best Novella (32 nominated)
- Assault on a City by Jack Vance
- Born with the Dead by Robert Silverberg
- Riddling Torch by Norman Spinrad
- A Song for Lya by George RR Martin
- Stranger by Gardner Dozois

Best Novelette (107 nominated)
- Adrift Just Off the Ilelets of Langharka... by Harlan Ellison
- After the Doomsday by Richard A. Knaak
- A Brother to Jerusalem by James Blish
- Catspaw by Kate Wilhelm
- Extreme Prejudice by Jerry Pournelle
- Midnight by the Morphy Watch by Fritz Leiber
- Nix Olympia by William Wollny
- That Thou Art Mindful of Him by Alan Dean Foster

Best Short Story (139 nominated)
- The Alien Odyssey by Michael Bishop
- The Day Before the Revolution by Ursula Le Guin
- The Three Stagedoor Men by Alfred Bester
- The Hole Man by Larry Niven
- Schwartz Between the Galaxies by Robert Silverberg

Best Professional Editor (34 nominated)
- Jim Bain, Ben Bova, Terry Carr, Ed Ferman, Robert Silverberg, Ted White

Best Fan Award (69 nominated)
- The Alien Critic (Dick Geis)
- Alalg (Andrew Porter)
- Locust (Charles and Dena Brown)
- Outworlds (Bill and Joan Bowers)
- SF Commentary (Bruce Glikas)
- Starling (Harlan Ellison)

Best Professional Artist (54 nominated)
- Steve Fabian, Kelly Freas, Tim Kirk, John Schoenherr, Rick Sternbach

Best Dramatic Presentation
- Flash Gordon: Phantom of the Paradise
- The Questor Tapes
- Young Frankenstein
- Zardoz

Best Fan Writer (103 nominated)
- John Bangsund, Dick Geis, Sandra Miesel, Don C Thompson, Susan Wood

Best Fan Artist (69 nominated)
- George Bar, Grant Canfield, Bill Botrel, James Shull
- John W. Campbell Award for New Writers (Not a Hugo; 58 nominations)
- Alan Brennert, Suzi Meyer, Charnoa Felix Gotschalt, Brenda Pearce, PJ Plauger, John Varley
- Gandalf Award (Not a Hugo; 75 nominations)
- Poul Anderson, G. Spreage de Camp, Fritz Leiber, Ursula Le Guin, CS Lewis

This is only a list of those authors, editors, and artists nominated for the award. In the final ballot, released at the meeting, by 20 with supporting membership fees will be entitled to vote. A complete list of the Hugo Award winners will be published in a subsequent issue of SFM.

RECORDS

Reviewed by Maxim Jakubowski

Flash Fearless Versus the Zorg Women Parts 5 & 6
(Chrysalis CLR 1081)

Science fiction rock strikes again!

Flash Fearless Versus the Zorg Women Parts 5 & 6 is an odd kettle of fish, more like Galactic haddock à la sauce porc. Allegedly uninfluenced by the recent American Flash Gordon cinematic parody, Flash Fearless purports to be an operetta for rock buffs. It is banned in Bolivia because of the real lòng of the story, which is about as serious as a 500-yard dash. The audience is made up of a motley crew of bona fide rock stars to bring it all into the mainstream. The result is highly disappointing. The music is eminently forgettable and the presence of so many musicians from different backgrounds happily jarring together, with John Entwistle of the Who on bass as a substitute member, never allows the mood to settle into one uniform stylistic groove. But how could you expect musical unity of any sort when singers as diverse as Alice Cooper, Maddy Prior of Steeleye Span, Hammer of the Robin Hood, and even Jimmy Dandy of Black Oak Arkansas enrolled on the same platter? None of these feel or sound particularly at ease tapping what is really a lacklustre and unimaginative score. In fact, the singing on the record is never more than just competent, despite the always excellent taste of the various backing musicians like John Weider previously of Family, Mick Grabham of Procum Har, Robert Johnson of Ox, Eddie Jobson of Roxy Music, etc.

What about the science fiction? Well, it's present, you can't deny that. A collection of even all-colour, pseudo-1940s style, space graphics, the Flash Gordon parody of a story accompanies the record. He's supposed to help the baffled listener to follow the convoluted plot acting as backdrop to the music, where Flash Fearless zooms through space in the good space craft Artgo and battles against the Amazon-like orgasmic women of planet Zorg. But if sf rock can be justified by such intellectual lyrics as:

Out of the blue came this mind-blowing zoo
A collection of mutated zoo
Death on their hips, their eyes on their lips and behind them a shadow of blood
They were space pirates

then I respectfully pass. If only the music was good, but sure ain't 'the heavy metal album you've been heard' as the record's promo puts it and I've been around since Buddy Holly days!

Painting Competition Mk II

Back in SFM Vol 2 No 4 we set the second SFM painting competition and promised to publish the winning entries by the end of this month. Well, we've failed miserably and the result won't be announced until next month: and it won't be until at least SFM Vol 2 No 10 or 11 that we shall be able to publish any of the winning paintings. However, all the submissions are of a very high standard and they're well worth waiting for.

SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY 9
Frankly, I don't think things will be this bad in Australia in the future. More background could have been given about the rise of the League of Youth, and what exactly happened to make life so awful.

But if Chandler isn't wholly convincing in his crystal-ball-gazing, his novel is undoubtedly an important step in Australian SF's development, because it is about Australia and not a planet in another galaxy, and because it's the kind of book which will provoke argument, especially among Australians. You might not agree with what is said in The Bitter Pill, but you will certainly respond to it. This book can be obtained through the specialist booksellers, or direct from the publishers: Waverly Publishing, 53 Longstan Street, Melbourne, Australia.

Tell me now, you folks down under. Do you have a sense of wonder? Not so long ago the answer to Robert Bloch's question would have been a resounding 'No'. Whether or not there was an audience for it, very little good Australian science fiction was being published. And, as John Baxter says, 'There was no strong national character in what was produced. It might as well have been written by people from another planet as about them.' Now the situation has changed. The first Pacific Books of Australian Science Fiction has been published, and, as Baxter says, 'There's no other national character that I've ever found than the one put into the Pacific Books of Australian Science Fiction'.

The First and Second Pacific Books of Australian Science Fiction
Edited by John Baxter

A spinning originality grips every page
The Listener

Inverted World
Christopher Priest

Nominated for a HUGO AWARD
'Best British Writer of Science Fiction 1974'
Elected at the Science Fiction convention 'Scacon'
for his novel 'INVERTED WORLD'

50p

'I had reached the age of six hundred and fifty miles.' So begins the story of Helward Mann who lives in a city constantly on the move in a strange shaped world, shrouded from a mysterious sun...

'The first volume presents a fair cross-section of the range of themes and styles of Australian writers were tackling in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of them (like Frank Roberts) It Could Be You, a fierce satire on modern TV) show obvious American influences, but are none the worse for that.'
AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

By John Brosnan

This year's WorldCon in Australia has diverted the spotlight away from American and English sf and revealed the fact that very few people know what's happening to Australian science fiction. To fill this gap JOHN BROS NAN, himself an expatriate, has provided us with a potted history of Aussie fandom and an introduction to all the prominent authors working there at the moment.

AUSTRALIA has a long history of science fiction, with early works such as those by Edward Bulwer-Lytton and H.G. Wells. However, it was not until the 1960s that Australian science fiction started to gain international recognition. One of the key figures during this time was the Australian science fiction magazine, *Science Fiction in Australia*, which was published from 1960 to 1970. The magazine was the brainchild of John Warrington and provided a platform for Australian science fiction writers to showcase their work.

One of the most notable authors from this period was John Warrington himself. His works, such as *Quanto* and *Sunjog*, were well-received both in Australia and internationally. An early exponent of Australian science fiction, Warrington helped to establish the genre and paved the way for future writers.

In the 1970s, Australian science fiction continued to grow in popularity. One of the most significant works from this period was *The God Killers* by Brian W. Aldiss. The novel was well-received and helped to boost the popularity of Australian science fiction.

John Brosnan, a prominent figure in Australian science fiction, has written extensively on the topic. His book *Science Fiction in Australia* provides a comprehensive overview of the genre in Australia, including interviews with key figures and an analysis of the development of the field.

Brosnan's work not only highlights the achievements of Australian science fiction writers but also sheds light on the challenges they faced. Despite these challenges, Australian science fiction has continued to evolve and thrive, with new authors emerging and contributing to the genre's rich tapestry.

In conclusion, Australian science fiction has a unique and storied history. From the early works of Bulwer-Lytton and Wells to the contemporary works of John Warrington and John Brosnan, the genre has grown and changed, reflecting the diverse and dynamic nature of Australian culture. As Brosnan notes in *Science Fiction in Australia*, the genre continues to evolve, providing a platform for new voices and ideas to be heard.

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**Notes:**


UNE name in the Australian sf of Hall of Fame that not even many Australian fans have heard of is that of Eric Cox. He was probably the first sf writer and was born in Victoria in 1873, the son of an Irish immigrant. He produced a sizable number of short stories, mainly for Such & Such a Magazine, and was known as "The Slayer of Fawkes," a sobriquet off The Social Code, which was about a love affair between an Australian astronomer and a Martian woman. But he is remembered now only by his fellow SF writers through Out of the Silence. Set in Australia, it was about the discovery of a gigantic buried sphere containing the accumulated knowledge of a long-dead Martian woman in a state of suspended animation. The hero, Alan Dundas, succeeds in penetrating the sphere and awakening the assembled Martian knowledge. Cox began writing Out of the Silence in 1913 but it wasn't published until 1919 when it appeared as a weekly serial. It was eventually collected in book form and finally appeared in 1925 in both Australia and Britain and three years later it was published in the USA. It was moderately popular in Australia, but Cox did not achieve any kind of lasting fame. It was really more of an exotic romance than science fiction and was obviously inspired by the work of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne. A slightly later Australian story of similar ilk was Burroughs. Cox spent most of his career as a book and film reviewer for various newspapers and was a prolific writer of fanzines, such as The Cake and The Silks. His second book The Musket, published in 1939, was a prophetic book about the fall of Sydney to the Japanese in 1942, as seen from the north. His third novel, published in 1947, was about the lines of the work of Thorne Smith with a farcical plot about a Melbourne business tycoon who lost his soul to the devil for the fun and excitement in his life. Cox died in 1950 and, unfortunately, all his books are now out of print.

Another sf writer associated with Australia is Jack Wool- thams, though, like A.B. Bertram Chandler, he was born in England and came to Australia in a hurry after World War I. He began writing sf with the advent of the 1920s and after a variety of jobs decided to try and break into writing. Living frugally in a remote part of Queensland, he knew nothing of other sf writers and was still of a young age when he first attempted to sell. However, in the early 1930s the Melbourne Group of fans was officially formed, due mainly to the persistence of Veneys fans. It had been called The Pluto Club after Melbourne's Cafe Valet at the Cafe Club. Only five members attended that night but by the following November thirty people were regularly turning up. The membership in those days included McLennan, Race Mathews, Bob McCubbin, Dick Jensen, Lee Harding and Mervyn Binns. The latter was instrumental in organizing sci-fi conventions, including the first one, and was involved in inserting advertising material about the MSF into the sf magazines and books at the bookshop, McGills, where he then worked.

*I went there and watched these freaky old guys panic. I was almost beginning to think I was enough to turn me off fandom for some time to come*

Shortly after its formation the MSF rented a room in the YMCA to house its fans. The MSF later decided to form a collection of sf and it remained in existence ever since (then though along the way it became the Melbourne sf Club), and in 1963, it settled in a loft behind McGills' bookshop at 19 Somerset Place, which was large enough to seat up to a hundred people. The MSF Society (created by Verryn Barnett and now run by Paul Stevens) showed films there. It was this latter activity that the MSF held in 1970 when it decided to ask the club to move elsewhere, which it was obliged to do. For a time it was back to rented rooms but now the MSF have moved into a permanent home in Richmond. However, reliable Mervyn Binns who finally McGills in 1971 to go into business for himself.

Correspondence of the club has been John Foyter who became involved with it in the late 1940s. He was caught up in sf in a moment of weakness," said Foyter recently, 'I was flat on my back in a hospital in 1956, and faced two months or more of the same, and I Chetan used to have two stories published in Ken Balmer's New Writing in SF.

ROGNSIFIED sf fandom in Australia goes back a very long time, with the country being known as "The Laboratory of the USA." The first known gathering of fans in Australia took place in Sydney in 1935 and consisted of some of the leading members of the Australian International Science Fiction League. They formed a Sydney chapter of the League but it only lasted until the end of 1936. The next fans to gather was the Melbourne group of fans, which covered that they had a common interest in and began publishing a small hand-written fanzine called Spacecraft which ran for ten weekly issues. One of these students, William Veney, was later instrumental, in 1939, in contacting sf fans all over Australia, including JK. Moxon in Queensland, Donald Tuck (who was later to become well known for his sf of bibliographies) in Tasmania, Marshall MacLennan in Victoria and John Dever in South Australia. It was Dever who was selected to be the Australian representative at the second World Science Fiction Convention in Copenhagen in 1939, it was decided to produce a fan magazine to be called Australian SF Review. When Science Fiction Review was published in its price was 2/6. The run was somewhat higher—two hundred copies. That year another sf club was formed in Sydney, the Junior Science Club, which consisted of a group of young students headed by Vol Moselworth. For a brief period the two clubs were rivals, bitterly competing over supremacy, but both survived, and, meanwhile, had been corresponding with prominent American fans such as Fred Pohl and Donald Wollheim. Wollheim was then head of the Futurian Society of New York ("Futurian" was defined as being someone interested in the future) and when Veney wrote to him he mentioned the Australian fan scene and asked him to call the Sydney Futurian Society, which he did. But Sydney's Futurian Society, when it was formed, consisted of nothing more than a handful of interested young people who remembered that the two factions spent a lot of time arguing with each other. Of course, at first, the Society was just a group of interested people who somehow had been a pettite squabbling, but the feuding continued right up until the Society came to an end in the 1960s.

Fandom may have original's for Sydney, but it was in Melbourne that Australian fans proved to be most productive, and it's appropriate that Australia's first World Science Fiction Convention was held there in 1964. One of the earliest Melbourne sf fans was Marshall McLennan who became interested in sf in 1928 after buying copy of Amazing Stories. He was not the only one, for in 1935 that led him into contact with fans in America and Britain. He began corresponding with such luminaries as John W. Campbell, Jr., E.E. Smith, Robert A. Heinlein and Walter Gillings in Britain. McLennan also came into contact with other Melbourne fans, as well as Tasmanian fans, and together they formed the Melbourne Society for Fantasy and Science Fiction, in 1964, a year after the first Australian sf fans had met. The society's first meeting was held at the historic Melbourne Town Hall I decided to go and take a look. So I went there and watched these freaky old guys swapping dirty old sf magazines, and I'm almost beginning to think I was enough to turn me off fandom for quite some time. But in 1959 I began to occasionally attend MSFC meetings and at the end of that year I was subsumed into some of the other local sf groups which were a long way from Erthine in quality. In 1960 I came into contact with John Baxter and started writing for his

fanzine, and the following year published my own fanzine, Erthine.
ECHOES OF ARMAGEDDON
by Lee Harding
Modern Masters of Science Fiction

He brought new life to science fiction . . . but the flame of his genius was soon to be extinguished

By Walter Gillings
13: STANLEY G WEINBAUM

In a recent issue of science fiction classics spanning a whole century of writing, the collected short stories of Stanley G Weinbaum represent the most modern examples of his innovative science fiction. The fact that his stories should have been conferred on a writer whose contributions were comparatively few, and which are mostly unknown to today’s readers, is due to no mean extent to the unfortunate fact that Weinbaum’s was a rare talent which, if it did not amount to genius, was enough to exert a refreshing influence at a time when it was most needed.

In the early years of the genre, the greatest exponents of science fiction were those who, without realizing it, were in many respects Weinbaum’s. Rimbaud’s visionary flights must have been echoed in the writings of A.J. Valois, for instance, or in the poetry of Gernsback’s magazine was struggling to keep its masthead above water, A Martian Odyssey made an outstanding impression, in due course managing a novel (though this brought it no more praise from readers than any other story in Wonder’s five-year career.

At the time, to offset the competition of the reboast Astounding Stories, the German novelist, more steeped in technical knowledge, adopted a policy which insisted on novelty of conception as the main ingredient of its fiction. Weinbaum’s tale of an expedition’s encounter with the peculiar forms of life that inhabit some far-off planet is a perfect example of this. He was not only highly original but written in a gentle, humorous style that made it altogether different from the usual run. And Tweel, who contrasted delightfully with the hard, cold-shouldered hero of the genre, had been published not only by the time of his debut in Wonder.

For this beginning, science fiction is partly indebted to the veteran author of the Martian stories, for Weinbaum’s preface, with appreciation of this, in the

The book was written by Robert Bloch and shared Weinbaum’s interest in the work of James Branch Cabell and was one of the earliest looking, soft-spoken Southerner, a native of Kentucky. Another member was Lessing J. Rosenwald, a leading publisher—which is not the case. Weinbaum is on record as saying, furnished with his plots for his own tales, they had not been found in outlandish settings.

The story of how they have proved so popular, editor Horning soon required a sequel which Weinbaum had no difficulty in supplying; it followed four months later, before the year was out. Valley of Dreams was, in fact, little more than an earlier version of A Martian Odyssey which the author revised and extended to produce the second story. But if it was the mixture as before, it was quite agreeable to Wonder’s readers; the touch of novelty was still there. It was the last story he wrote before his death. On Titan, which introduced some more original life-forms inhabiting Saturn’s moon; though this was not ‘new enough for Horning, who rejected the story—which duly appeared in Astounding.

Indeed, by now his work was winning the monetary rewards which had eluded him in the past; but he did not desist Wonder altogether, in spite of its paltry payments. Though they hardly compared with his interplanetary stories, a series of three tales about Professor van Manderpootz, beginning with The Worlds of If, contained some fascinating speculations and amusing incidents that made good reading material. The pulp pulps required still more to please any editor. A second, much longer version retitled The Black Flame, in which the science-fiction element was combined with adventurous action on the surface of the moon, was considered acceptable. Despite Horning’s reservations, Weinbaum was obliged to resort to the current magazine formula which he had varied enough to bring him success.

With his stories appearing monthly in one magazine or the other in the last half of 1935, his future still seemed assured—to all outward appearances. It even became necessary—and advisable, since he was determined to break free of his material concerns—to give his many-paned name, and possibly even his wayward thought-patterns, to some leisurely, but happy, young man who would borrow from his grandfather, John Jessel. As it turned out, it appeared in print only once, in Astounding, The Adaptive Ultimate concerns a missionary who has been sent to the moon to lead me where he would,” she recollected in a glowing tribute. Yet, though the extent of his influence has never been disputed, the question whether he actually contributed to the popular fame of the book, or whether praise he received has been argued and again since he died.

If he had lived, he would undoubtedly have surpassed even Jules Verne and HG Wells,’’ wrote Farley in his obituary. ‘‘If he had lived’, echoed Otto Binder, ‘‘he would eventually have earned a place alongside such masters as O’Reilly, Wells, Merritt and Burroughs.’’ Others, wiser after the events which led to the explosion of science fiction, have concluded that if his exceptional talent had remained in check a little longer, it would not have been any more imposing than that of Heinlein, Sturgeon, Asimov and the rest. There is always an if—‘‘a word which in Weinbaum’s book seemed to have a special significance. His inspiration for The Worlds of If came from the poem quoted by van Manderpootz:

* Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these:

* It might have been.

THE STORIES OF STANLEY G WEINBAUM

These are listed in chronological order as published in the USA. Dates in brackets indicate UK publication dates. The stories (and some short story collections) are included where there was no previous hardcover edition.

Novels:


1934: The Black Flame (with Dawn of Flame).

1950: The Dark Other.

Short story collections:

1936: Dawn of Flame and Other Stories (Memorial Volume).

1944: A Martian Odyssey and Others.


1974: A Martian Odyssey and Other Science Fiction Tales.
I STOPPED ON THE WAY TO STATEN AIRPORT and that was a mistake. Since I had a chance of making it otherwise. But the office was affable.

"We'll hold the ship five minutes for you, 'thec clerk said. 'That's the best we can do.' So I rushed back to my taxi and we spun off to the third level and sped across the Staten Bridge like a comet treading a steel rainbow.

I'd had to be in Moscow by evening for the opening of bids on the Ural Tunnel. The Government required the personal presence of an agent of each bidder; but the firm should have known better than to send me, even though the NJ Wells Corporation is, so to speak, my father. I have an undeserved reputation for being late for everything, something always comes up to prevent me from getting anywhere on time. It's never my fault.

This time it was a chance encounter with my old physics professor, old Haskel van Manderepoet. I couldn't very well just say 'hello' and 'goodbye' to him. I'd been a favourite of his back in the college days of 2014. And I missed the airliner, of course. I was still on the Staten Bridge when I heard the roar of the catapult and the Soviet rocket Beike hummed over us like a tracer bullet with a long tail of flame.

We got the contract anyway. The firm wired our man in Beirut and he flew up to Moscow. But it didn't help my reputation. However, I felt a great deal better when I saw the evening papers. The Beike, flying at the north edge of the eastbound lane to avoid a storm, had locked wings with a Britishfightship and all but a hundred of her five hundred passengers were lost. I had almost become 'the late Dixon Wells' in a grimmer sense.

I'd made an engagement for the following week with old Manderepoet at the New York University as head of the department of Newer Physics—that is, of Relativity. He deserved it; the old chap was a genius if ever there was one. Even now, eight years out of college, I remember more from his course than from half a dozen other hazards on the path to an engineer's education. So on Tuesday night I dropped in—an hour or so late, to tell the truth, since I was forgotten about the engagement until mid-evening. He was reading, in a room as disorderly as ever.

Humph! he grunted. 'Time changes everything but habit. I see. You were a good student, Dick, but I seem to recall that you always arrived in class towards the middle of the lecture.'

I had a course in East Hall just before, I explained. 'I couldn't seem to make it in time."

Well, it's time you learned to be on time,' he growled. Then his eyes twinkled. 'Time!' he ejaculated. 'The most fascinating word in the language. Here we've used it five times (there goes the sixth time—and the seventh!) in the first minute of conversation. Each of us understands the other, yet science is just beginning to learn its meaning. Science? I mean that I am beginning to learn.'

I sat down. 'You and science are synonymous,' I grinned. 'Aren't you one of the world's outstanding physcians?"

'One of them?' he snorted. 'One of them, eh! And who are the others?'

Oh, Corrville and Hastings and Shrimski."

'Bah! Would you mention them in the same breath with the name of van Manderepoet? A pack of jackals, eating the crumbs of ideas that drop from your feast of thoughts! Had you gone back into the last century, now—had you mentioned Einstein and de Sitter—there, perhaps, are names worthy to rank with (or just below) van Manderepoet!'

I grinned again in amusement. 'Einstein is considered pretty good, isn't he? I remarked. 'After all, he was the first to tie time and space to the laboratory. Before him they were just philosophical concepts.'

'He didn't!' rasped the Professor. 'Perhaps in a dim, primitive fashion he showed the way. But van Manderepoet—van Manderepoet was the first to seize time, drag it into my laboratory and perform an experiment on it.'

'Indeed! And what sort of experiment?'

'What experiment other than simple measurement is it possible to perform?' he snapped.

'Why... I don't know. To travel in it?'

'Exactly.

'Is one of these machines that are so popular in the magazines?

'Is one of these? I'manderpoet?

'Bah! Many bahs! The future or the past—phil! It needs no van Manderepoet to see the fallacy of that. Einstein showed us that much.'

'How? It's conceivable, isn't it?'

'Conceivable? And you, Dixon Wells, studied under van Manderepoet? You grew red with indignation, then, as you always do. You know you how time varies with the speed of a system—Einstein's relativitv?'

'Very well. Now suppose that the great engineer Dixon Wells invents a machine capable of travelling very fast, enormously fast, nearly as fast as the light, in fact. Good. You then find that it is a miracle ship for a little jaunt of a half-million miles which, since mass (and with it inertia) increases according to the Einstein formula with increasing speed, takes a certain time, you know. You use atomic energy. Then, since at nine-tenths light-speed your ship weighs about as much as the Sun you disintegrate North America and create sufficient electromagnetic power. You start off at the hundred and sixty-eight thousand miles per second, and you travel for two hundred and four thousand miles. The acceleration has now cruelly set you to death. You have penetrated the future. He paused, glimmering sardonically. 'Haven't you?'

'Yes. And how far?'

'I hesitated. 'Use your Einstein formula!' he roared. 'How far? I'll tell you. One second! He grinned triumphantly. 'That's how possible it is to travel into the future. And as for the past—in the first place, you'd have to exceed light-speed which have to exceed light-speed which immediately entails the use of more than an infinite number of horse-powers. We'll assume that the great engineer Dixon Wells solves that little problem too, even though the energy output of the whole universe is insufficient to supply an infinite number of horse-powers. Then he applies this more than infinite power to travel at two hundred and four thousand miles per second for ten seconds. He has then penetrated the past. How far?'

Again I hesitated.

'I'll tell you. One second!' He glared at me. Now all you have to do is to design such a machine, and then van Manderepoet will tell you the possibility of travelling into the future for a limited number of seconds. As for the past, I have just explained that all the energy in the universe is insufficient to supply a tetradecimal impossibility in the one case and an absolute one in the other."

'How do you travel in time?'

'Don van Manderepoet can perform the impossible,' said the Professor, now faintly jovial. 'He tapped a thick pad of typewriter paper on the table beside him. 'See, Dick, this is the world, the universe. He swept a finger across it. 'It is long in time and '—swiping his hand across—'it is broad in space, but—now jabbing his finger against its centre—it's very thin in the fourth dimension. Van Manderepoet takes always the shortest, most logical course. I do not travel along time, into past or future. No Me, I travel across time, sideways."

'Is there, Sideways into time. What's there?'

'What would naturally be there?' he snorted. 'Ahead is the future; behind is the past. Those are real, the worlds of past and future. What worlds are neither past nor future—beyond time, and yet temporal—existing, as it were, in time parallel to our time?'

I shook my head.

'Impossible!' he snapped. 'The conditional worlds, of course! The world's of if'. Ahead are the worlds to be behind are the worlds that were; to either side are the worlds that might have been—the worlds of if!'

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"Yes. The device will show ten hours of what would have happened if... condense, of course, as in a movie, half an hour's actual time."

"Say, that sounds interesting!"

"You'd like to see it? Is there anything you'd like to find out... any choice you'd have...?"

"I'll say... a thousand of 'em! I'd like to know what would have happened if I sold out my stocks in 2008 instead of 10%. I might be a millionaire in my own right then, but I was a little... well, a little in liquidating.

"As usual," remarked van Manderpootz. "Let's go over to the laboratory then."

THE PROFESSOR'S LABORATORY was a block from the campus. It was built to the second story of the Physics Building and thence into his own research quarters, much like the one I had visited during my first visit under the guise of a student. The building was very obvious from the outside, as if it were built in the university. But inside, it was a different story. The instrument was the heart of the heart.

Van Manderpootz pointed to the headpiece. "Put it on," he said. I followed his directions with only a slight hesitation. Nor did I flinch when I felt the clamp grip my head.

I suppose everyone is familiar with the Horsten psychomant; it was used as a matter a few years ago as the outboard a century back. Yet it is not just a toy. Sometimes, as much as the outboard, it's a real aid to memory. A maze of vague and coloured shades is guided to drift slowly across the screen, and one watches them, meanwhile visualising what comes up on the screen as one tries to remember. He turns a knob which alters the arrangement of lights and shadows, and when by chance the design corresponds to his mental picture— presto! There is his scene re-created under his eyes.

Of course, his own mind adds the details. All the screen actually shows are those tinted blobs of light and shadow, but the thing can be built in many forms. The occasional night in the laboratory, when my psychomant showed pictures almost as sharp and detailed as reality itself; the illusion is sometimes as startling as that.

"In the present case," Professor said, "we play of shadows began. 'Now recall the circumstances of, say, a half-year ago, the market crash. Turn the knob until the picture clears, then stop. At that point the light is projecting the Subjunctivus upon the screen, and you have nothing more to do than watch.

I did as he directed. Momentary pictures formed and vanished. The scene on the screen moved farther and farther away, to the distance of a distant planet. I could see nothing without the added suggestion of the picture they meant nothing. My own face washed and dissolved and then, finally, I had it. There was a click, and I was sitting in an ill-defined room; that was all. I released the knob and gazed at it.

I'll say I did! I've been training her all through the booming years of '07 to '10, trying to marry her, while old N J raved and ranted and threatened to give in to his friend, the President of the Gobi Desert. I think those threats were what kept her from accepting me, but after I took my own money and ran it up to a couple of million in that crazy market of '08 and '09, she softened.

Temporarily, that is. When the crash of the spring of '10 came and bunched me back on my father and into the firm of NJ Wells, her father stepped right in there and took the vast majority of my profits to himself. In February we were engaged, in April we were hardly speaking. In May they sold me out. I'd been late again.

You don't want to see the psychomant screen, obviously pluming out, and not nearly as pretty as memory had pictured her. She was staring at me with an expression of enmity, and I was glaring back at her with a due sense of justice.

"You nit-wit!" she snapped. "You can't bury me out here. I want to go back to New York where there's a little life. I'm bored with you and your..."

"And I'm bored with you and your whole dizzy crowd."

"At least they're alive. You're a walking corpse. Just because you went broke enough to gamble yourself into the money, you think you're a tin god."

"Well, I don't think you're Cleopatra! Those friends of yours... that was all after you because you gave parties and spent money—my money."

"Better than spending it to knock a white walnut along a mountainside—"

"Indeed! You ought to try it, Marie. (That was her real name.) It might help your figure—though I doubt if anything could.

"Well, then, you lardball. I won't give all the details, but I was glad when the screen dissolved into meaningless colour clouds."

"Whoa!" I said, staring at van Manderpootz, who had been reading.

"You liked it?"

"Liked it? I guess I was lucky to be cleaned out. I won't regret it from that on.

"That," said the Professor grandly, "is van Manderpootz's great contribution to human happiness. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been."

IT WAS VERY LATE when I returned home, and as a result very late when I rose, and equally late when I arrived at the office. My father was unnecessarily worked up about it, but he apologized when I said I'd been working overtime on time. He forgets the occasions when he's awakened me and drags me out of bed to take me to dinner. No, but I have the habit, that is, and was speeded across the giant span toward the airport. I waved a signal to van Manderpootz, the thing clicked, and the Subjunctivus was..."

The grassless clay of the field appeared. It is a curious thing about the psychomant that you see not only through your own eyes but also...
through the eyes of your image on the screen. It lends a strange reality to the working of the toy; I suppose a sort of self-hypnosis is possible and the toy assumes on one’s mind a certain reality—standing, swirling, silver-winged projectile that was the Bakkal. A glowering officer waved me on, and I dashed up the slant of the gangplank and into the hold. The hold was lit by gas-burners and I had a good view of what was going on. ‘Whew!’

‘Sit down!’ barked the officer: gesturing towards an unoccupied seat. I fell into it; the ship quivered under the thrust of the catapult, diving straight up into the air. I was thrown about in the hold. The blasts roared instantly, then settled to a more muffled throbbing, and I watched Staten Island drop down and slide back beneath me. The stunt rocked the way.

‘Whew!’ I breathed again. ‘Made it!’

I caught an amused glance from my right. I was in an aisle seat; there was no one so lovely as she looked to me; after all, I was seeing her through the half-visionary screen of my imagination. I was in love with her since that she couldn’t have been as pretty as she seemed, that it was due to my own imagination filling in the details. I don’t know; I remember only that I stared at curiously and then turned to call it a date. Her brown became a amused mouth and an impudent nose. I kept staring until she flushed.

‘I’m sorry,’ I said quickly. ‘I . . . was startled.’

THERE’S A FRIENDLY ET. The passengers are forced into a crowded intimacy for anywhere from seven to twelve hours, an eternity when you are not on a train. Generally one strikes up an acquaintance with his neighbours; introductions aren’t all necessary, and you customarily spend five minutes at any rate like an all-day and a few-odd hours on the railroad trains of the last century, I suppose. You make friends for the duration of the journey and then, nine times out of ten, you never see any more of each other.

The girl smiled. ‘Are you the individual responsible for the delay in setting off?’

I admitted it. ‘I seem to be chronically late. Even watches lose time as soon as I wear them.

She thought me irresponsible; the responsibilities can’t be very heavy.

Well, they weren’t, of course; though it’s surprising how many clubs, caddies and chorus girls have depended on me at various times for appointments of millions of dollars for their fortunes. But somehow I didn’t feel like mentioning those things to the silvery-eyed girl.

We talked. Her name, it developed, was Joanna Caldwell, and she was traveling as far as Paris. She was a writer, or hoped to be one day, and of course there is no place in the world that can supply both training and inspiration like Paris. So it was there she was bound for a year’s study, at least, with the hope of developing her miraculous lips and laughing eyes, I could see that the business was of vast importance to her; and I discovered that I had worked hard for the year in Paris, had scrapped and fought and killed for those fastidious, giddy, young-women;有些人 meets at social affairs. She was just Joanna, cool and humorous yet sympathetic and serious, and as pretty as a majestia Squash.

We could scarcely realise it when the steward passed along to take orders for luncheon. Four hours out! It seemed like forty minutes, and we were feeling so well that I was able to order a plate of both of us liked lobster salad and delectable oysters. It was another bond.

I told her whimsically that it was an omen, nor did she object to consider.

Afterwards we walked along the narrow aisle to the glassed-in observation room up forward. It was almost too crowded for entry, but I could see that she could care less. ‘This is a beautiful risk,’ she said.

We stayed long after both of us had begun to notice the stuffiness of the cabin.

It was just after we had returned to our seats that the catastrophe occurred. There was no warning save a sudden lurch, the result, I suppose, of the ship being sweated out of steam suddenly and then grinding a crash and a terrible sensation of spinning. And after that a chorus of shrieks that were like the sounds of battle.

The ship began to list to starboard, and all the things on the floor, were trampling each other, millling around, being cast helplessly down as the great rocket-plane, its left wing but a broken stub. Two bodies, two bodies, the Athlone and the Atlantic.

The shouts of officers sounded and a loudspeaker blared. ‘Be calm,’ it kept repeating, and then, ‘There has been a collision. We have been struck by a mine ship. Three thousand dead.

A great danger.

I struggled up from the debris of scattered seats. Joanna was gone. Just in time. I could hear her voices, the ship was Battleship water with a jar that set everything cracking again. The speaker blared, ‘Put on the cork belts under the seats. The lifebelts are under the seats.

I grabbed a belt loose and snatched it around Joanna, then donned myself one. The crowd was surging forward now, and the tail end of the ship began to rise. I was one of the last to find us, alone, save in the darkness as the lights went out. An officer came sliding by, stopped, and fastened a belt about an unconscious woman ahead of us. ‘You all right?’ he yelled, and passed on without a word about an unconscious woman ahead of us. ‘You all right?’ he yelled, and passed on without a word.

The speaker must have been cut on to a battery circuit. ‘And get as far away as possible,’ it ordered suddenly, ‘Jump from the forward pontoon and get as far away as possible—something is standing by. You can’t be picked up. Jump from the . . . ‘ It went dead again.

I got Joanna untangled from the wreckage. She was pale; her silvery eyes were closed. I started dragging her slowly and painfully towards the forward port, and the slant of the floor increased until it was like the slide of a ski-jump. The officer passed again. ‘Can you understand me?’

I was getting there. The crowd around the port looked smaller, was it simply huddling closer? Then suddenly a wall of fear and despair came up, and there stood a room full of living people with the brown walls had given. I saw the green surge of waves and a billow-

The wave rushed in. Joana was safe.

That was all. I raised shocked and frightened eyes from the Sub-

that classic to face van Manderpootz, who was scribbling on the edge of the table.

I shuddered. ‘Horrible!’ I murmured. ‘We . . . I guess we wouldn’t have been among the survivors.’

‘We? Yes?’ We? I thought.

I did not enlighten him. I thanked him, bade him good-night, and went dolorously home.

EVEN MY FATHER noticed something queer about me. The day was over, and I had been so often, and had fallen in love with a girl two weeks after she was dead.

The thought drove me nearly crazy. Joanna! Joanna with her silvery eyes, her silvery eyes. She was a great beauty. I had been around half dazed, scarcely speaking. One night I actually lacked the energy to go home and sat smoking in my father’s big, overstuffed chair in his music room. I suddenly looked up: didn’t I was early at the office. He was just very late going home.

As I felt I could stand it. I had to do something—anything at all. I thought finally of the Subjunctive. I could see—yes, I could see what would have transpired if the ship hadn’t been wrecked! I could face out the problem and if there was an ‘if’ in the worlds of ‘if’. I could, perhaps, wren a sombre, vicarious joy from the things that might have been. I decided to face Joanna once more! I turned the late afternoon pages, took a lunch of fresh crab sandwiches in the Physics Building.

‘sick,’ she exclaimed. ‘Are you sick?’

‘Sick? No, not physically, Professor. I’ve got to use your Subjunctive again.’

‘Oh—’

‘T’’m sorry. You’re too late, Dick. I’ve dismantled it. I have a better use for the space.

I gave a miserable groan and was tempted to damn the auto-

magazine, though I knew she would accomplish nothing for someone who should be in the hospital. I was appalled in his eyes, and he took my arm, dragging me into the little office adjoining his laboratory.

‘You, I could tell that was the world,’ he complimented.

I did. I guess I made the tragedy plain enough, for his heavy brow folded in arown of pity.

‘And then both of us can’t bring the back dead,’ he murmured. ‘I’m sorry, Dick. Take your mind from the affair. Even with my Subjunctive available, I wouldn’t permit you to use it. That would put it too close to your mind.

I would have given it to the Royal Society if they had been a little more receptive, if they . . . if . . . !

This last in a shout.

‘If!’ cried van Manderpootz.

‘What you saw in the subjunctive was what would have happened if you had caught the ship!’

‘But something quite different might have really happened! Don’t you see? She . . . she . . . Where are those old newspapers?’

He was pawing through piles of them. He finished one finally.

Here! Here are the survivors!

Letters of flame Joanna Caldwell’s name leaped out at me. There was even a little biograph about it, as I saw once my reeling brain permitted me to read;

At least a score of survivors saw their lives to the bravery of twenty-eight-year-old Navigator Observers, who published back in the early days of the Great War and carrying away the port. He remained in the shipping line until the last. Finally another in the University, where he had worked for some years, he went to New York—and if she’s gone over to Paris I’ll find out and follow her!’

Well, it’s a queer ending. She was in New York, but—you see Dixon Wells had, so she told, known Joanna Caldwell by means of the Subjunctive. But Joanna had never known of Dixon Wells. What the ending might have been if—

But it wasn’t. She had married Orris Hope, the young officer who had rescued me. I was away—
Conducted by THOMAS SHERIDAN

READERS' QUESTIONS on any aspect of science fiction are dealt with in this regular feature by THOMAS SHERIDAN, who is internationally known as one of the foremost experts on the medium. Address your questions to THE QUERY BOX, Science Fiction Monthly, New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London ECIN 2JR. They will be answered as quickly as possible.

JUVENILE GENUS

When I first mentioned to our friend Louis L’Amour that he should write any stories about dinosaurs, he was interested, but I suppose he would like to get hold of some of them.

Tony Brascoe, Coinadale, London

LUIS Philip Sarenaz was responsible for the bulk of the progeny of the story that appeared in Science Fiction Monthly in November 1977, which was popular in America towards the end of the early 20th century and worked his way to the science fiction pulp. Writing as "Nomen", he penned stories about Frank Radek, the boy inventor who used his steam and electric trains to move his armoured vehicles, submersible boats, aerial craft, and robots. Son of an earlier teenage genius who built a Steam Man of the Precious in 1866, Frank employed his own machines to explore in strange lands and the deep ocean, borne by his way through the Locom and even from one outer space to another.

The Frank Radek Library, which featured such titles as White Cruiser of the Clouds... is a rare and precious collector's item. So are specimens of the Steampunk Invention, Travel and Adventure Library, which presented Frank's exploits in this country. Crudely written, they are interesting today mostly for their illustrations.

Marc A Ortlib (Naracorote, Australia)

I would like to call your attention to an error in SFM Vol 2 No 9, the News page stated that Leonard Nimoy would not be in the new Star Trek film. I checked immediately with the President of the Star Trek Action Group, members of Leonard Nimoy Association of Fans and William Shatner Enterprises. They all agreed that Leonard would be in the film and that there had never been any talk of him not being in it.

J H Hibbert (Matlock, Derbyshire)

Must have been a nasty rumour. Sorry.

In a recent letter I SFM Vol 2 No 9, Tor Johnson, a then-unacknowledged author, offered an explanation of how the 'threads' menaces in her novel "The Lady of Grey Port" were able to cross interplanetary space. In fact an explanation is given, albeit cryptically, in her original of the dragon riders, Dragonflight.

In this novel the words "Arthenius? Eureka! Mycorrhiza" are found engraved on a metal plate. "Mycorrhiza" describes how the "threads" are able to survive and propagate. "Arthenius" was a Swedish chemist who proposed that micro-organisms could be transferred from one planet to another by the pressure of sunlight, thus if suitably being set up by a number of the "threads".

Andrew Hull (Crawley, Sussex)

EUREKA!

I remember that one day, a few years ago I was given a copy of the book "New Worlds" and read a story that said: "Stand the wall. We are the only voice in creation. We are the only voice in reading. Could you name the author and any books he has written since?"

Robert A. E. Crowther, Auckland, Co. Durham

This is the sort of query that puts us on our mettle. You have confused New Worlds with New States, a science fiction paper published by Michael Corgi (Corgi) 1967 number of which featured the title "The World of the World". The title refers to an ancient fortification whose guardians use the salutation "Stand the Wall!". The author is Vincent King, who revived the journal under the same title in 1967 and the cover story was "Candle (Rapp & Whiting 1970)", also set in a future in which the only voice in the universe is to motivate the Aliens who have ended the rest of humanity.

THINGS IN STORE

Could you tell me the title of a book by Brian Aldiss which dealt with mass sterilisation among humans; also of one about the consumer society of the future, by Frederic Pohl or Paul Anderson?

AM Hodgson, Spind Tongue, Newcastle upon Tyne

The Aldiss title is Greybeard, despite the book being set in a world made sterile by atomic testing—until a Second Generation of men and women are born. The book was published in 1966, it was reprinted by Panther in 1967.

The other book is The Space Merchants, published in 1964. It was written by C. M. Kornbluth, the classic satire which tells of an overcrowded world, which is solved by the privatisation of advertising agencies and advertising agencies fighting over international markets, and of a scheme to colonise Venus. First published here by Heinemann in 1965, it was reprinted by Panther in 1967. It was reprinted by Galaxy in 1969 under the title, Graven Planet.

SMITH'S CRIPSET

Are there any books by "EE Doc" Smith in the UK or abroad, or about the Skylark and Lensman series?

Roz S Summer, Orpington, Kent

The series starring Lee Majors was based on the novel Cyborg, by Martin Caidin, which is now available as a Maxicard paperback. The other questions you raise are better asked of the writer. He reconstructed with the aid of biotronic, could perform such heretofore feats of strength, are best answered by the author, who is also not a hobby writer. One of his earlier novels, Marooned (Hodder 1964), was reprinted in the USA.

STRONG MAN

Tell me more about "Strong Man", who thought up the idea for the TV series The Six Million Dollar Man.

James Reeves, Petworth, West Sussex

The series starring Lee Majors was based on the novel Cyborg, by Martin Caidin, which is now available as a Maxicard paperback. The other questions you raise are better asked of the writer. He constructed with the aid of biotronic, could perform such heretofore feats of strength, are best answered by the author, who is also not a hobby writer. One of his earlier novels, Marooned (Hodder 1964), was reprinted in the USA.
He stood up slowly and stepped backwards through the doorway of the pub. Action stations! He crouched at the window with the binoculars and for an instant he saw it. Small, round, hard, but with blurred edges, no solid outline. Skittering around like a land-crab among the stubbed bushes on the roadside. Two or three fine jointed arms... antennae would you call them?'

"Deploy your sensors. Transmit on the ascending arc and on the descending arc. What are your colour readings, dear creature?"

"Blue. Through the ascending arc blue, through the ascending arc brown. Red-brown blemished by a black line."

"Reverse yourself, you fool! You're upside down."

"Upside down?"

"Upside down in relation to which points, dear Maker?"

"Upside down in relation to the planet's surface."

"You mean the planet is red-brown."

"In this particular region, yes. Are your sensors deployed?"

"Now reversed and re-deployed. A vast expanse of red-brown blemished by a black line."

"A shadow in the upper right quadrant."

"Stay alert. Be prepared to reduce size. Remain parallel to the black line and approach the shadow while I take readings."

"Maker, there is a loose mass of cellulose shed. Shall I reduce size?"

"No, it's probably a plant. Circumvent."

"But it's alive?"

"Not especially sentient, my dear Loy. Dog's be afraid. Place it between you and the shadow."

"The shadow has developed lines of rigidity. There's a distinct thermal aura rising from the black line, which now appears to be of considerable width. About twenty tens wide and distinguished, as I reported, by these tell-tale waves."

"Describe the shadow as its detail emerges."

"A cluster of containers. Based on square and rectangular forms but deviating. Roughly triangular patterns in the superstructures."

"Come Loy... you know what it is?"

"No, truly. It looks like a piece of abstract art... a large piece for a display. The colours are particularly interesting. There's a metallic pinnac in the foreground of blinding yellow, a colour I must attempt to copy. The containers have silicon plates let into them... randomly distributed. The shadows throughout the cluster are black as space. There are black holes cut in the container walls and the shadows reach in and out."

"Now do you think we should have tried the other site?"

"Maker, Maker... have we found it? Oh it's beautiful! Wheres are the specimens?"

"Believe, dear Loy. Hold your position and extend your sensors."

"Something is coming. Moving fast along the black line."

"I know what this is, Maker. I wonder if you can guess? It gives off strong mixed odours, moves on rubber wheels, is at least three tens long and has a metallic forward hatch."

"A transport... very good, Loy."

"Transports something with a strange odour than most of our specimens. It's coming very close..."

"Hold your ground. It won't deviate from the black line."

"It's going fast. Oh, Maker..."

"What is it, Loy?"

"Something else. Coming out of a container. Oh, it's indescribable."

"Try to report. Hold your position."

"Less than one ten in height. Four articulate projections from a roughly rectangular central area. A nodule on the upper edge between two of the projections. Can this be what we want? It's like nothing I've ever seen... or perhaps it's just a little like the interpreter. The motion has been to see to be believed. A sort of league, mesmer movement in contact with the surface. Throwing up little dust clouds, in feet. Is this what we're after?"

"Yes, Loy. I'm proud of you. That is undoubtedly Homo Suspect."
"It has no sensory reaction to my presence, Maker."

"Report on the specimen, Loy."

"It came out of one container, moved to another, hardened itself and settled on a low shelf outside one of the dark holes on hatchways."

"Are there any obvious inscriptions on the containers? I'll have the Interpreter work on them."

"There is one close to me on this side of the black line. Black symbols on a strip of non-metallic substance... wood. A wooden crosspiece on a pillar of the same substance. The symbols are as follows:"

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"I have that recorded. The Interpreter insists that it is somehow reversed."

"It's not my fault this time, Maker. I swear. Here..."

"I'll reverse my sensor."

"He can make it out now. The two larger groups of symbols are apparently the name of this container cluster."

"Does the name have any meaning?"

"The Interpreter believes the group BLUFF has reference to a hill or rocky outcrop."

"There is nothing of that sort in the vicinity, Maker."

"He's very astute. I'm afraid. As far as the rest of the inscription it's a conditional statement. Fifteen..."

"I understand the number, Maker."

"Of course you do. Loy. Fifteen of the species inhabit the cluster according to the presence or absence of a type of beverage. Any further inscriptions?"

"A metallic plate on the central container where the specimen is at present located. I'll transmit: BILLY TIEA."

"It's unclear."

"I have problems with haling."

"The Interpreter claims that the first group is a personal name."

"The second group has to do with another type of beverage."

"They drink a lot."

"The region is very arid, Maker. There is an artesian water course behind the cluster. We might call this an oasis. Are we making a move?"

"I'd like to ascertain their numbers... fifteen. Maker, fifteen; didn't you say fifteen?"

"Ah, but that is conditional, Loy. How are we to determine it?"

"Beer or wine?"

"By counting the inhabitants, surely."

"I'm afraid your thinking is too circular. We will begin an aggressive interment."

"Wait, Maker. The specimen has moved to the largest of the three containers. It has an inscription repeated on its silicon inserts: BARBARO BAR or simply BAR?"

"Unclear, Maker."

"Never mind, the Interpreter has grasped it. The group has any number of possible meanings but the relevant one is surely "a place where drinks are served." Do you think the specimen has joined fourteen others? Are they preparing to intermingle?"

"Impossible to tell, Maker. The situation is becoming critical with conditions. Will I start an enticement? The lights and shadows..."

"The fountain..."

"Loy, you're too impatient. I will try to get some hints from this brute of an Interpreter and we will evolve a program..."

Old Man Ryan wandered over to the pub to have a squiz at the tourists. He walked in shadow all the way to the veranda. Probably wasn't a gooner. More like a roll of barbed wire. Sometimes making a little rainbow light on the side of the salt bush. Wasn't bloody water, that's for sure. Drop of oil? Stare long enough in this heat and you start seeing things plunged into the cool depths of the bar then swam back and peeled across the road. Not a flicker.

The big room was roughly built but all its edgel had been rubbed smooth. There was a smell of beer deep in the wood, a tang of fly spray and a waft of the disinfectant Bet was using on her cloth as she wiped down the long, long bar. She had the fan going for the visitors: there they sat, the pair of them, with their hair hanging down.

"Morning all..." rumbled the old man. "But... could you let me have that pair of binoculars Em keeps on top of the cupboard?"

"What love?" asked Bet. "The field glasses? Em hasn't used them since she flew down to see the Cup."

She reached down the leather case and the old man stepped back on to the veranda. As he focussed the glasses he heard the girl laugh, wheezy possum, and say to Bet, "Reckon you'll get them back!"

Then the girl chimed in. "Is that bloke a swagie, you know, a real sundowner?"

"Laughed, 'Don't let the old clothes fool you' Mick, she said. "That's Old Man Ryan."

"He owns the store... the boy was surprised."

"And this pub," said Bet, "and everything else around here." This is Barney's Bluff and he's Barney."

All this time Old Man Ryan was trying to draw a bead on the saltbush and having no luck. A strange Landrover went droving towards the west and raised a dust cloud from the shoulders of the road. He gave it away and went inside to have a beer.

"Thought I was on to a goonie," he said.

"Want me to open up the store, Barney?" asked Bet. "Em took the order over to the Johnson's."

"No need," said the old man. "They'll honk if they want anything."

"He called to the boy at the far end of the bar. "Get your bike fixed, son."

"Part gets here tomorrow," he said cheerfully. "Coming in the next truck."

The old man sipped his beer and observed the visitors discharging their baggage. Boys, girls and lots of mirror decoration, the girl's blouse and the young fellow's vest. Both in faded dungarees with fly fronts. Still he'd rather watch them than a mob of drunken sheevers. All things bright and beautiful—her hair was gold and his was brown. She didn't have a stitch on under that cotton blue dress. Tsk! if someone dropped in and the word got around the people would come for miles to see a couple of tourists like this. Might have twenty people in that night but it didn't matter—there was a delivery tomorrow.

The girl was restless; she moved around the empty room touching the stacked chairs and looking into the photos on the wall. Then she stood at the door, hanging outside on the veranda."

"Something over the road I" she said. "Thought I saw a goonia," said the old man. "No, I said the girl. 'It's yellow. Glowing yellow.' "Yellow beer can, Jen," teased the boy. "Not one of them yellow-bellied snakes,' the old man winked at Bet and the boy.

"No truly... it's marvellous!" the girl turned to Bet. "Like a flower..."

"Maker! I have two! I Prepare to enfold..."

"I am prepared, Loy. Withdraw from contact zone."

The boy, Mick, uttered a hoarse scream and sprang to the door. "What the...?"

Barney Ryan came up behind him and they stared out into the harsh light. The sun was very good but these days he was always testing his senses in case he missed something. What the hell was it? Hadn't heard a car, a scream; all he could see was the pain and fear on the kid's face. There was nothing across the road. No sign of Bet or the girl. Only the enormous open flat stretches and sections of the town. Nothing. The same pointless scatter of objects on the roadside—old drum, salibash, nothing there, couple of boards further east in line with the signpost. Where were the girls then? Nothing coming or going, the sky empty, nothing within cover. Mick gave a loud cry. "Jenny! Jenny!"

He ran across the road, flinging up his arms as he plunged out into the hot light of day. The scraps of mirror glass worked on to his vest glittered in the sunlight.

Jenny...

"The boy ran directly to some particular spot in the emptiness and stood rigid, staring upwards. Then Old Man Ryan saw what he had seen.

Mick was standing on a disc of light. The old man looked up, knowing there was nothing up there except the sun. But then his attention had skipped and spread; there was something else up there so bright that it blinded you like the sun. The disc where the boy stood was a funnel, a tube of light, whirling in its innards like a willy-willy. For a few heartbeats he saw the boy whirl up, a moving darkness inside the tube, then it was over. Old Man Ryan was alone, weak-kneed, on the veranda of his pub, with black patches dancing in front of eyes staring towards the sun.

Three, Maker. Another one in view."

"All enfolded in good condition, Loy."

"The fourth is hesitating. Maker. Enticement may not be necessary. Curiosity is a bane in certain species."

"Got the bloody let!" said Old Man Ryan.

He squatted down on the veranda, still looking at the place where the boy disappeared. His balance on the tips of his fingers and tried to get a look without turning his head. There! Little bastard of a barbed-wire hub—cap—been out there all the time keeping an eye on them. Dream or not he'd give it a run for its money. He stood up slowly and stepped backwards through the doorway of the pump station. He coughed at the window with the binoculars and for an instant he saw it. Small, round, hard, but with blurred edges, something was moving in the land scrab among the stunted bushes on the roadside. Two or three fine jointed arms—tentacle would you call them?

He lowered and Barney lost it. Took its colouring from the ground, he reckoned, like a chameleon. He kept on watching only the globules of yellow moving below, the small, flat glasses, remembering Bet and the girl. The glow of yellow assumed a more definite shape—it was like a flower—growing and gliding in the very spot where the boy had been taken. That was the trick, Barney realised: you walked out to have a look and it jogged you. Wait for the swell to go out. It could glow like a flaming Wurster and he wouldn't go out. Or maybe he could try something a bit different.

"Maker, Maker, a fourth on the way."

"Prepare to enfold. Like shouting and looking from contact zone."

"About! About! Maker."

"A foolish thing? What went wrong? The enfolding was wasted! Do you think we clogging our filters with detritus from the surface of this planet?"

"Maker, it approaches the edge of the zone..."

"And then?"

"I swear an object at my enticement light and moved out of range."

"What object? A missile? Did you intercept it?"

"Of course, Maker. I'll secure the container with an intact of fibrous material covered with an inscription. Shall I transmit?"

"Where is the specimen, Loy?"

"It moved into the central container, Maker. I have a feeling of being watched...

"Your sensors are not as reliable as I had hoped. Replace the container in the contact zone and I shall waste another enfolding on this artefact."

Barney stood inside the store, panting from his exertions and watching like a hawk. The bloody thing had caught the bottle on the fly and skipped out of the way before the tube of light could rotate. Now it was back flying close to the ground, a line of fire but no, he'd wait until they got the message. Now— it was impossible to range and the goonie was gone, taking up the bloody bottle this time. Get a move on. He went for the 303.22, rooted for the cartridge behind the baked beans and was back in the window in less than a minute, looking for the little bugger and loading his gun.

"Loy..."
Barney raced onto the roadway and lit the fuse. The smoke came up in a swirling, sulphurous cloud; he heaved up the signboard and ran sideways across the road behind his shield.

"I'm under attack! Retreat me!"

"Report Loy! Report you foolish creature!

"Clouds of dense smoke on the black line. A hitherto unknown compound, that is all I can tell you about it."

"Go west. Reduce size. If you locate the specimen you have my permission to fire tranquillising darts."

"I'm back."

"No damage, Maker! Those missiles cannot penetrate my armour but they jolt a little."

"Loy, that primitive creature shouldn't even be able to see you."

"I've erected some sort of faint halo around the west of the contact zone. A screen of wood and metal.

"Loy, tranquillise that specimen! That's an imperative!"

Old Man Ryan heard a faint thunk on the signboard in front of him, then a spattering, thump, thump. He opened one eye cautiously and saw the usual thick black smoke drifting thickly in the thick, tough, dark smoke and felt it in his nostrils. Then he noticed it was fine, dust-like. A whole Emperor-class electric death-ray! In back of the store the fuselage had burned out and old Bing was bellowing Don't Fance Me In! Bannay wondered if the sound he could hear just over him was Bing, and if Bing left it, then Bing had taken it off his old felt hat, put it on a bit of stick and leant it against the edge of the shield. Thunk, thunk, in ten seconds the hat was full of the bloody things: like little silver glasses. Bing knows what effect they'd have on a block.

The hat began to shine eerily at the edges of the signboard. Bannay fired a shot in the air and nicked up the cover of the old oil drum ten feet to his right. Then he saw the thing again and he knew he had it cornered, if only he could muster the strength. The scout had grown a big boulder and now it was a dull silver, which even with its halo was its normal colour. It skipped up towards the signboard and he could tell that the poor, stupid thing was far too fierce. Bing had been so convinced that it was inside the hat. Bannay lined it up and gently filled the peppered holes of the oil drum with the fast- burning powder. He gripped the upper edge and pulled it towards him, feeling the contents move. Still one quarter full, and to think he'd been on to Erin to move it out of sight. Of course he could do it.

"Loy, Maker! ... the specimen is tranquillised."

"Loy! Take care!"

"Blinmpump!"

"Loy! Loy!"

Bannay collapsed on the underside of the oil drum with his heart pounding. Tar oozed stickily from the edges of the drum, planted firmly in the red soil. He brought his ear close to the side of the drum but he could hear nothing inside. Lifting the drum, Bannay hurled it out over the old Gronian wagon and he turned away towards the countryside and switched off the recorder.

"Loy? Dear creature, can you communicate?"

"Loy's signal is very faint. Deploy your sensors."

"Sensors obscured."

"Loy? What has this creature done to you?"

"Bannay. Bannay."

"Bannay, dear creature!"

"Loy? Where does the boy have the bottle, the bottle, in his hand? Bet was clattering a small box black box around the street. The box was out to it, like sleepwalkers. He was on the watch for tricks but finally he took the bottle and drew out his own note, on a piece of fired paste from Bet's order book with a fast message on the back. Your terms accepted. Place locator box close. Impulse generator."

"I must take the necessary steps before your mechanism is entirely ruined."

Old Man Ryan stood waiting in the heat, missing his hat a little. Presently the disc glowed and the tube appeared with whirring sounds. Memphis Bannay was there and called out: Bet Miller in her print dress and the two visitors. No one had thought of placing them in the wrong area. Bannay was quite sure that the disc faded and for the first time Barney heard a faint twanging sound in the air, far overhead.

"Evasive action. Fast left and right, and back. I saw that the boy had the bottle, the bottle, in his hand: Bet was clattering a small black box around the street. The box was out to it, like sleepwalkers. He was on the watch for tricks but finally he took the bottle and drew out his own note, on a piece of fired paste from Bet's order book with a fast message on the back. Your terms accepted. Place locator box close. Impulse generator."

"I must take the necessary steps before your mechanism is entirely ruined."
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