

M A Y

1960.

SCANSION

Third series. No. 1.

Contributors: -

- o LEX BANNING.
- o MIKE BALDWIN.
- o H. FORD.
- o ROYCE WILLIAMS.
- o BARBARA BURKE.

MONTHLY.

Perhaps it is the Autumn with its bright crisp days, astringent air, atmosphere of mellowness and oddly nostalgic aura. Perhaps not. It may be something entirely different. Yet, whatever it is, it seems that around this time of the year there is a certain amount of stirring, a rise of vague interest and a general nostalgia on the part of the devotees of Science-Fiction and Fantasy that, almost invariably, leads to talk of the "good old days", even to brief outbursts of publication - vide Scansion last April/May - and even to talk - usually futile - of trying to revive things again.

Whatever the reason, another Autumn has come and, with it, another Scansion. A new Scansion; a modified Scansion. A Scansion with a new aim and new outlook. An aim and outlook directed towards engendering and developing discussion - particularly critical discussion - among the readers of Science-Fiction and imaginative literature generally. Discussions of the literary values and merits, worthiness of ideas, authors approaches etc.

Above all, discussion free of the apparently inevitable "Fan" jargon, that odd example of esoterica that is so irritating and so damnably puerile, even infantile. Science-Fiction is read largely by people who speak (and read) ordinary everyday English - not some odd, half incomprehensible jargon - and who tend to be more than somewhat put-off by even the mildly incomprehensible. Be it understood though, that I am speaking of the ordinary average reader as distinct from the devotee or Fan. The average reader almost certainly does not imagine himself a Fan -- that odd mystical state that depends apparently not on what you know or do, but upon who you know, who knows you and just how tremendous your ego is.

Fan Jargon may be all very well in its place -- anything tending to colour or enrich the language is not to be decried lightly, but, for the time being, Scansion wishes to be as free as possible of all jargon.

Anything resembling a critical approach to Science Fiction as a literature is sadly lacking in Sydney at the moment and for the most part it is only the exceptionally outstanding fantasy and science fiction novels that receive any notice at all in the usual literary reviews. Thus a large number of readers of this genre are denied almost any critical appraisal -- other than personal -- pertinent to their reading matter, particularly the shorter stories of which S.F. largely consists. If possible, Scansion is going to try and remedy this lack.

The new Scansion is interested in things other than science fiction and fantasy too -- though these remain the major interest -- things such as literature generally, drama, ballet, revue, poetry, films, radio, television, art, science, etc. It is also interested in obtaining material. Objectively written material; not embarassingly subjective, ego-boosting material, but good objective, critical, interesting stuff. If you have anything worthwhile, send it along.

Sincere thanks to the contributors who provided material for this issue -- particularly to Lex Banning for permission to reprint his poem, "Cry Havoc" -- many of them on short notice and with no little inconvenience to themselves. Particular thanks to Barbara Burke for lettering, typing stencils and a whole lot of the donkey work.

Editor.

SYDNEYSIDE.....

News, views & comments.

The next meeting of the TUESDAY NIGHT GROUP will be on 7th June, 1960.

The comic strip, "BARNADY", had a large and devoted following, most of whom were quite sad when this strip was discontinued. News from the United States is that the strip is to be revived in the next few months.

Old time S.F., identities currently attending the Universities:- Royce Williams, Grahame Stone, (Sydney), and Lorelei Glick (N.S.W.)

Ian Driscoll, who returned to Sydney some time back has now decided to stay here and not return to New Zealand as he originally intended. Ian and wife, Shirley, are momentarily expecting the foundation stone of the Driscoll dynasty.

Doug Nicholson, recently on one of the Bob Dyer shows, was unlucky to miss out on winning a car. Consolation prize was a T.V. set -- which appears to work.

The SUN SI GAI is a name well remembered by the old time S.F. group. Some of the older generation may be interested to hear that the SUN SI GAI is now back in business - Avoca Street, Randwick - under the old management. The food is very good. The prices very reasonable.

(Cont. p.7)

CRY HAVOC.....

The timeless shadow of the infinite
breaks in upon our tactile world.
Contending forces writhe and rend,
encouraged by the pygmy-willed.
From angle, facet, curve, and plane
the chromium-plated highlights gleam;
the frantic soul no more can find
a corner filled with friendly gloom.
Through all this shining spaciousness
aseptic chaos whirls and sings
sweet vampire-notes which soon may form
the screaming valkyrs' deadly song.
Now from the thoughtless hollow sounds
the growl of overtoppling walls,
and the dry ring of pebbles falling
down the throats of useless wells.
Piled pyramid and polygon
testify the craftsman's skill,
but in the mind they seem to form
the phantom outline of a skull.
The line of shadow broadens out,
infinity comes creeping in,
the future's boding question mark
obscures the tale from this point on.

Lex Banning.

The four seasons come with fair regularity, but upsurges in fan activity do not. The fact that they come at all, is, never the less cause for wonder and amazement, and, for you to wonder over here is another issue of that old, unliked, distrusted, benighted, independent rag, "Scansion", resurrecting itself for the umpteenth time.

----, ONLY WORSE. Having just employed the latest movie type idea of having the title half-way through the proceedings and not in the beginning I am about to justify the presence of this article with some more brilliant, witty and penetrating comments and views by Baldwin.

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE - THE DAM HAS BUST and suddenly a flood of American pocket-books appears with the ending of import restrictions. Fifteen years after the end of the war the government has decided we've won, and now can buy almost anything - even "Mad". Aren't we lucky?

The effect of this deluge of American pocket-books has been to make people overlook the significance of what has been happening in the magazine field. "Nebula" has died, and in consequence Nova Publications remain the only source of indigenous British Science Fiction. The loss of "Nebula" will not be particularly felt, for the standard of "New Worlds" has for so long been far above any of its' British rivals and, at times, even supersedes the various bum issues of "Astounding" and "GALAXY". "New Worlds" present serial, "Where will the little green man be?" is far different from most run of the mill stories - S.F. - but in one way is very reminiscent of some of the old time stories in so far as it sets people talking. In answer to the perennial question, "read any good SF lately?", one can then give an almost intelligent answer instead of the series of grunts and groans which have been the norm for some time.

Since "Galaxy" went giant size, a considerable improvement in story quality has been noted. The stories are still very Galaxish, but still better than what they used to be, though such a state of affairs is not hard to come by.

Is this a sign of a renaissance in the Genre? No, I don't think so, especially when "Astounding" and some of the lesser American Magazines start changing their label from 'Science Fiction' to 'Fact and Science Fiction'! Obviously this gimmick is to capitalize on the pretentious idiots extant in the general public who feel, that as the two largest nations on earth have at last managed to shoot a few hundred pounds of transistorised nonsense around the Solar System, it is now de riguer to become knowledgeable about the latest "discoveries of science". Inborn interests don't count.

Onward Brave new 1984 type worlds, we're already here and don't know it, only worse.

Mike Baldwin.
53, Shadforth street, MOSMAN.

LITERATURE IS BUNK

All this hoo-haa continues about whether science fiction is literature. The subject was worked over in Gernsbackian days, and treated in letter columns and fanzines from then to the onset of respectability and the wooing of the snob market that took place in '49 - '50.

It is doubtful as to whether there was ever a sillier argument, although most others about artistic values are in the same class -- see John Baxter's assertion that "modern jazz" is a "legitimate art-form" in QUANTUM No.6. Just possibly it would reward people taking part in this particular perennial exchange of intellectual noise to take a look at "literature".

Literature is Shakespeare and "Lord Jim"; that much is safe -- these are seldom disinterred for reading. Literature is the "belles lettres" of bygone years? What a ghastly thought! -- although the verbal jungles of Lovecraft and Hazlitt have brambles in common. Or perhaps literature is the popular form of expression of the day -- except that this is the one classification that all "authorities" debar from the canon. One last try, then: literature is what those who are trained to know, who ought to know, say literature is. It is then the work of those who never outgrow an undergraduate preoccupation with innovation; of the modern poets who provide each other's only audience, satisfied by mutual admiration within their cliques, so removed from the world; it is the writing approved by those who deal in "influences", and "literature" inspired by preceding "literature", never by life.

Science-fiction cannot be included readily under any of these headings. Those-who-should-know, mentioned above, say the "literature of ideas" was a blind alley of artistic endeavour, a now-exploded fallacy of artistic irrelevance. Science-fiction is part of the literature of ideas, predominantly realistic and quite unrelated to fantasy, therefore by any of the standards mentioned science-fiction is not literature. But literature is bunk.

H. Ford.

SOME ASPECTS OF AYTHOPOEIC THOUGHT IN S.F.

In which no examples are shown, no fingers pointed. Almost.

When Seduri pities Gilgamesh in the Sumero-Semitic Epic, saying:

"Gilgamesh, whither are you wandering:
Life, which you look for, you will never find.
For when the Gods created man they let
death be his share, and life
withheld in their own hands"

he emphasises the primitive mythopoeic belief in the concreteness of life. Life, to the Babylonians, was. It was not only when it was contradicted by death. The modern Christian/Mohammedan etc., symbolic immortality was unknowable to primitive man; the Gods may have withheld life, but if that substance could be found then (for the life substance was apparently stronger than the death substance) death would be circumvented. Both Gilgamesh and Adapa are given a chance to seize the God-symbol by eating the life-substance. This was the green weed from the Sea of Death, or the leaven of Heaven; it could equally well have been vibro-viscatic nucleonised particles.

The Egyptians believed the Creator to have emerged from chaos and stood on a high dry hill. Now this hill had a definite locality; but the most sacred part of each temple partook of the qualities of the primeval mound. About three and a half millennia after creation the temple at Philae was described as being erected "when nothing at all had yet come into being and the Earth was still lying in darkness and obscurity". The temples at Thebes, Memphis and Hermonthis were also the "Divine emerging primeval island". Logically - and of course the logic is mythopoeic - each temple was the original because it possessed qualities of the original, especially of sacredness. As well, each sanctuary equated also with architectural approximation of the primeval hump, which might be stylised  and compared with the Egyptian immortality coffers

 or



Here again the idea of similarity, the possessing of like qualities is marked. The Pharaohs were buried in tombs that approximated some qualities of the primeval mound, which, they apparently supposed, conferred upon them some of the life-substance of the earliest essential life-force.

But the discerning reader will surely realize I have passed the point I was going to make. No? Well -

When one temple possesses ten-point similarity to another temple, then one is each-on-each

or

No wonder van Vogt found it so easy to get Gosseyn to Venus.

Royce Williams.

357a, Gardeners Road,

MASCOT.

This is, to my mind, the best science fiction film so far produced. The sense of human interest is strong and combined with the terrific atmosphere the plot becomes eerily real; the sense of vast loneliness conjures up forebodings of winds blowing forever across the empty planet. There is a feeling of credibility so rare in most other S.F. films.

There is no attempt to show scenes of violence or destruction. The hopeless, resigned queue of people lined up to collect their suicide pills; the Salvation Army banner flapping in the wind; the broken sign at the oil refinery; the deserted streets of Melbourne and San Francisco, are far more convincing than any shot of desolation.

Perhaps the atmosphere is a little too hopeless, the message plugged a little too much, but the strong warning does come through with an impact which is almost frightening. This is all in spite of some rather weak acting and, to some degree, lack of characterization. I would recommend those of you that have not yet seen the film to do so, not just from the point of view of science fiction, nor of entertainment, but for food for very, very serious thought.

Barbara Burke,
5 Daintrey Crescent,
RANDWICK.

from p.2

What price some of the idealistic Utopias of the S.F. writers now, in view of recent events in South Africa?

The Daily Mirror evidently came something of a thud over its attempt to denigrate "Honi Soit" - and possibly stir up anti-student feelings - by publishing, largely out of context, quotes from a very well reasoned Honi article dealing with Anzac Day. Most of the letters the Mirror received either agreed with the article or, at least, upheld the rights of the students to publish their views.

Should the Manly Amateur Rocket Society (MARS) be Banned? Or is Bureaucracy just acting in the usual, stupid, bumbling way.

Are you in the latest SPRY fashion? Have you had your telephone tapped lately?

N.I.D.A.	<u>"GREEN PASTURES"</u>	N.I.D.A.
New Theatre, University of N.S.W., KENSINGTON.		12th, 13th, 14th May.
Independent.	<u>"CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE"</u>	Independent