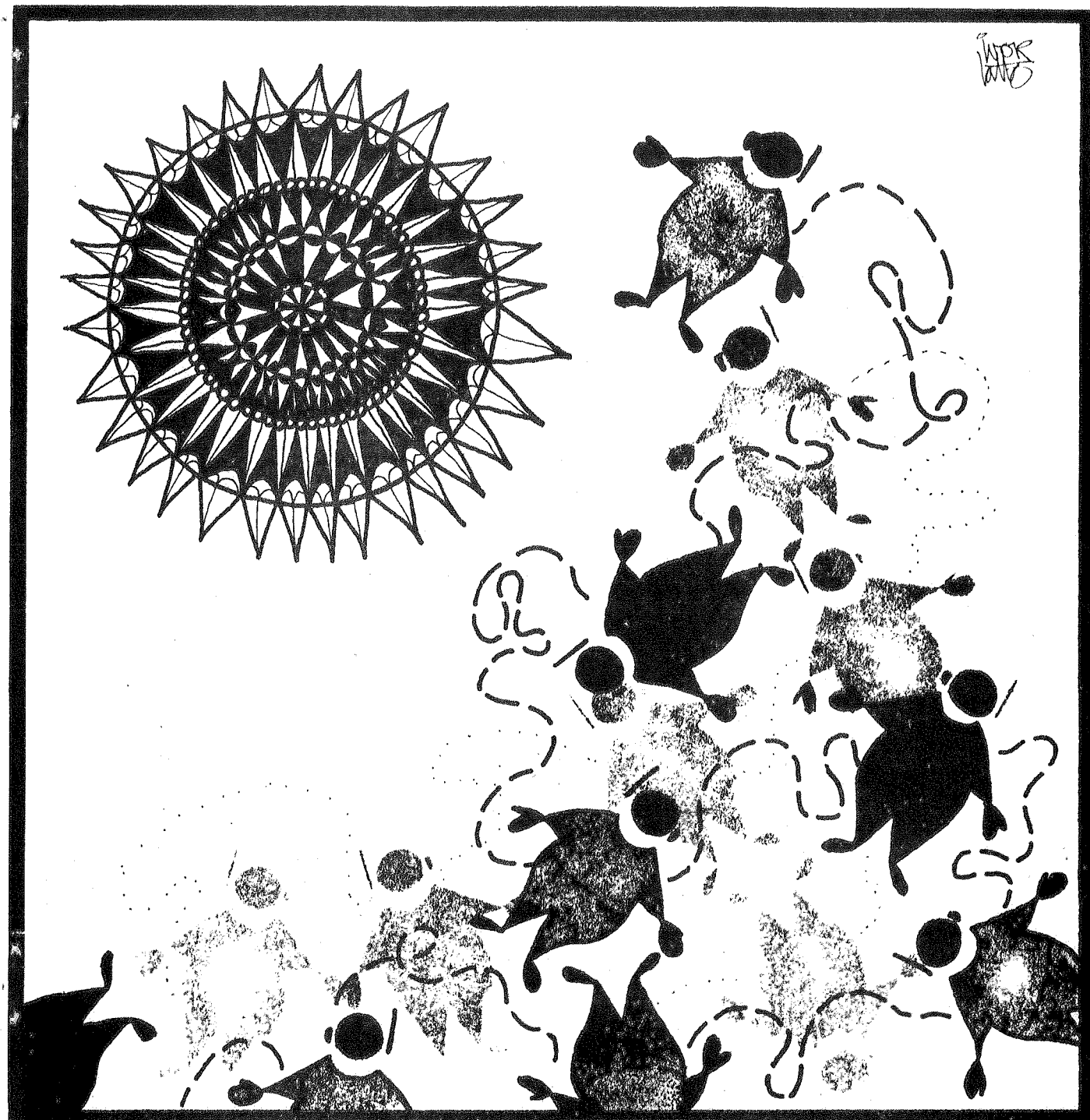


# Speculation

NUMBER 28

JANUARY 1971



SPECIAL HIGH-POWER REVIEW ISSUE  
PLUS OFFUTT, BENFORD, POHL, ETC



# Speculation

ISSUE 28 (VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4)

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1971

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Front cover by Ivor Latto illustrating "Reviews - Set 'em up & knock 'em down".

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Collating and other slave labour this issue by Vernon Brown, Pauline Dungate, Jeff Hacker and other lost souls of the University of Aston SF Group. **APR 18 1971**

PUTTING Speculation together is a complicated-enough business without trying to run a major convention at the same time. I know I had to abandon stencil-cutting in October (and in fact most of this issue has been typed by a charmingly helpful young lady in my office) to give more time for writing begging letters and Progress Reports, but things have gone too far when Convention Committee meetings start cutting into good collating time!

Because both Vernon Brown and I are both studying on interminable night-school courses (Vernon on Tuesday and Thursday; mine on Mondays and Wednesdays) this issue has been put together on two consecutive Saturday mornings, although by the usual little team on the frogs-bloodstained benches of the Aston University biology lab. Vernon, in case I haven't introduced him before, is Custodian of the lab, veteran organiser of the University Group and chairman of the NOVACON Committee, which is mentioned later in the issue. He may normally be seen at the Globe in London on meeting nights, although this month he went on a fruitless journey, thanks to the inefficiency of British Rail. The usual  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -hour journey took 5 hours, going via Worcester and Reading and arriving at Euston just in time for Vernon to cross the platform and catch the last train back to Birmingham. For the benefit of U.S. readers I should explain that this is roughly similar to travelling between Boston and New York via Pittsburg and Baltimore!

Speaking of Worcester, however, I really ought to say how pleased we are that the 'bandwagon effect' has the 1971 Convention moving along nicely, with just under 300 registered members to date (298, actually). That is one-third greater than ever before, and would you believe that we received over 70 hotel bookings by return of post after sending out our official booking form? Incidentally, I was amused to hear that police recently raided the Giffard at Worcester on a tip-off that train-robber Ronald Biggs was in residence! Naturally, he wasn't.

(Cont/d)

## MODESTY BECOMES YOU..

(In which your editor conducts a discourse with his alter-ego, Malcolm Edwards).

- PRW: Sorry to drag you away from Vector, Malcolm..
- ME: Don't worry, pal, they lost track of me years ago. Forgetting the name of their own pseudonymous columnist, indeed!
- PRW: Well, that's the BSFA.
- ME: Sure is, pal.
- PRW: I don't think all this 'sure' and 'pal' act is very successful. Can't you speak English? We don't want to be confused with someone else.
- ME: Sorry, I forgot this was a respectable middle-class fnz. Although (sniff) still duplicated I see. When I was with Roger Peyton..
- PRW: Later! Look, Malcolm, I think you might be needed once again.
- ME: Sort of like King Arthur, returning in times of danger? Is that English enough for you?
- PRW: Too much. Fire-breathing maybe, but hardly a Pen-Dragon!
- ME: Ouch! You're enjoying this, aren't you Weston?
- PRW: It beats writing editorials. But I really wanted to talk about Science Fiction Review
- ME: Yes, not a bad little fanzine, is it? Quite promising, really.
- PRW: Don't be patronising. I think SFR is magnificent, although I still prefer..
- ME: Warhoon? Or Viridiana, maybe?
- PRW: Shut up! No more nonsense, I want you to look at these advertisements for SFR from its editor, Dick Geis.
- ME: Mmm, cheeky aren't they. What's your point?
- PRW: Well now, this one from NOREASCON's Progress Report-3: "Is SFR Good Enough to Win 3 Hugos in a row? Subscribe ... and then Vote"
- ME: Seems fair enough. But what's he going to do with three? Play cricket?

(Cont/d Page 3)

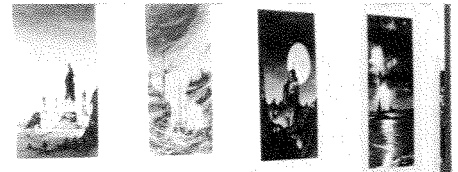
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HEICON PICTURE PAGES: The next 6 pages are from Heidelberg WorldCon, production by Waldemar Kunning & other German fans. Facing: top left, Gert Hoff, Norman Shorrock, Rambling Jake, Richard Huwig. Next, Doreen Parker's daughter, Anne & Jerry Webb, with Ted Tubb (back to camera). Immediately below that is Ted again. Others are German & European fans I don't know, save for Gary Klupfel (with book) and Eddie Jones (with beard) in bottom right-hand corner. Overpage: Top left shows the auction session, Ted Tubb presiding. Phil Rogers leans on microphones, Bruce Pelz fiddles with papers, Mario Bosnyak holds painting. Looking on with St Fanthony badge is Franz Ettl. Picture below obviously shows Display Room, although I only recognise Poul Anderson, in bottom left corner (with glasses). Picture below that shows more German fans in huckster room. Bottom photograph shows Walter Ernsting, 2nd from left in white shirt, and John W Campbell with check tie. Immediately to left of Campbell (with beard) is one of the Aston Univ. Alans - I never remember which! Top right on this page shows Eddie Jones with his paintings; to left of Eddie is a heavily-laden Brian Burgess with Alpine hat! In the circular picture, black-bearded gentleman is Bruce Pelz; white-haired man on left is Ben Stark.

Sheet 2: Eddie Jones (?) in regalia; Our man in Munich Waldemar Kunning sits at a table, top right (in dark coat) Others are German fans. Below, Molly Auler is 2nd left, with glasses. Mario Bosnyak appears again, with medallion. Small picture below on left shows Waldemar again, with Dieter Sachse(?) next to him, right. Jenny Chandler wears fishnet blouse; In circle are John Brunner, John Campbell (bottom), Astrid Anderson, Elliot Shorter and unknown who maybe could be Terry Carr (?). Next photo on right shows Ethel Lindsay, Larry Niven, Astrid Anderson in veils. Bottom picture shows Norman Shorrock, Ted Carnell, Ted Tubb, unknown, Don Wollheim, Bill Burns, Eddie, Tubb, Ethel, Phil Rogers, Dave Kyle, Ina Shorrock, Frank Dietz.



















PRW: And then there's this advertisement in Dallascon Bulletin-6: "...of course there are the best book reviews currently being published..."

ME: I bet that annoyed you!

PRW: It did. Because the very best book reviews in fanzines are being written by people like Pam Bulmer, Tony Sudbery, Fred Pohl, Chris Priest..

ME: In Speculation?

PRW: Exactly! And...

ME: Just a minute, don't you think it would be better to let someone else say it?

PRW: How do you mean?

ME: Well, only politicians tell other people how good they are. Don't you think that if a fanzine - or anything else - is good, the editor shouldn't need to have to shout about it?

PRW: That's what I wanted you to say. Now about the Hugo Award this year..

ME: Is SFR really good enough to win another?

PRW: Probably.

ME: Then Geis doesn't have to be so blatant, Anyway, what about Speculation?

PRW: No chance. British fanzines can't win Hugos. Impossible to compete.

ME: Then could I ask why a HUGO NOMINATION BALLOT is so craftily included with this issue?

PRW: You may not!

ME: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em is what I say.

PRW: Maybe. Say, this has been fun, hasn't it?

ME: But are your readers going to like this stuff? They're a pretty serious bunch.

PRW: Well, let's hope they do. They'll soon tell me if they don't !

(For the benefit of those completely baffled by the above I should explain that "Malcolm Edwards" was a pen-name I used for a column that ran in the BSFA Vector under the title 'Behind the Scenes' for a half-dozen rather insipid installments in 1966-67. Roger Peyton and I concocted the name one Sunday afternoon in a deliberate attempt at misdirection; not only was "Malcolm Edwards" a completely improbable name but we hoped that all those frantic sleuths would interpret it as a pen-name for Donald Malcolm and Ed Mackin, two Scottish authors active at the time (Cont/d)..

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HEICON PICTURE PARADE CONTINUED. We should now be referring to the 4th page of photographs, where to my shame I can only identify Wendayne & Forest J Ackerman in bottom right corner. Mario Bosnyak and Waldemar Kumping are also easily visible. The fifth page of photographs is another clever collage. Top left, beginning with mini-skirted Ann Webb, are Phil Rogers, Roy Mortimer, Doreen Parker, and a number of German fans. Down a little, and beginning from left again is Donald Wollheim (above gent. in striped blazer) and Ethel Lindsay. Below the blazer is Larry Niven, with beard and glasses. Bottom row shows Doreen Parker and daughter (wish I could remember her name) and I think Jack Williamson, immediately to right of Doreen at bottom. Bottom right is a very poor likeness of Phil Harbottle looking like Christopher Lee (bad photograph), with Phil Rogers above Phil Harbottle.

Final picture shows Franz Ettl (bottom left corner) with Robin Johnson from Australia in flower-power shirt. Above Franz is Gerry Webb, with Forest J Ackerman just a little below and to the right of Gerry. Above Forry, in dark coat, could just possibly be Waldemar Kumping again, without glasses. I don't know friend Scheerman. Crossing the gangplank are several German fans, although bearded fan with coat in hand could be our own Vic Hallet. Mario Bosnyak and Molly Auler stand next to 'Scheerman', and I wish you luck in identifying anyone else in the picture!

This selection from Heicon has also appeared in Waldemar Kumping's MRU and perhaps in at least one other European fanzine. We have a rather ingenious arrangement to share photographic and printing costs! Next time: EASTERCON-22 !



In the event, no-one seemed to care who really wrote the column, and it died an unlamented death, my identity forgotten, amidst the upheavals shaking the BSFA at the time.

The little interlude of the last few pages fits together rather well, I think. Notice, for instance, that "Malcolm's" initials are ME, which is a nice little touch and something I've never previously noticed. An already confused situation is complicated still further however in that there now really is a genuine Malcolm Edwards, a real fan of that name who studies at Cambridge. He has just published the first issue of his fanzine, Quicksilver, full of people like Aldiss, Priest, Charnock, that crowd, and dedicated to the general proposition that "science fiction is pretty good; let's talk about it seriously".

Somehow, somewhere, there must be a guiding principle with a sense of humour. The first real competition Speculation has had for many years in this country comes from someone with my own pen-name! It's enough to make me turn religious!

One of the reasons for writing all this is to finally lay claim to any egoboo still extant from the Vector columns; I don't see why the other Malcolm Edwards should get the credit, even if he has pinched my pseudonym! )

\* \* \* \* \*

LAST ISSUE, if you remember that far back, was a rather sprawling, formless thing in which I managed to place all sorts of little anecdotes in-between the important business of talking about science fiction. At the time I sat there in a fine good humour, typing away and chuckling at my own jokes, but unfortunately it didn't seem to go down very well at all. In fact I seem to have upset more people in more different ways than I've ever done before.

Consequently in this, the latest Speculation, I've let the material stand neat, without any burlblings about what the author said to me last year, and without my usual rather inane comments in the letter-column. Actually it worked out this way quite naturally - as I said, one of our office girls typed the issue and I didn't get the chance to ad. lib. as the stencils came out. Probably just as well.

In the last quarter I've been more active than ever before. Beside the Eastercon, night-school, and decorating (we now have fully papered lounge, bathroom, and - most important of all - study) I have built a garden shed and been to Paris. On first sight that seems an odd juxtaposition; only I'm probably more pleased with the former than with a business trip in which I took £60 and came back with 5 Franc. As sheds go, mine is quite small but it's amazing how attached one can become to something you've built yourself. Visitors to 31 Pinewall Ave. are welcome to take a short tour of inspection!

Going to Paris was an altogether different experience. Unfortunately, of the 4 days there I had to spend  $3\frac{1}{2}$  walking around car factories, but at least I managed to ascend the Eiffel Tower, and in the evenings to visit the Crazy Horse and Paris Lido night-clubs. The one was something of a disappointment, but the Lido must have the World's most spectacular floor-show - and I've never seen so many bare ladies together on stage in my life!

Coming back to England was the usual anticlimax; because of fog our plane could not land at Heathrow and instead was diverted to Gatwick (though we were warned that it could have been Prestwick - which is 400 miles away in Scotland!) From Gatwick there was a miserable cold train to a Victoria Station in wartime blackout conditions - this was at the time of the power-workers dispute - and of course at 9.45 the main restaurant at Euston Station couldn't possibly serve a meal for travellers trying to get home. I finally got to bed at 1.30 p.m. after  $8\frac{1}{2}$  hours on the move, only 50 minutes of which were actually spent in the air.

(Continued on Page 53)

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SPECIAL REVIEW

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL.

By Robert A. Heinlein, Putnam \$6.95

Reviewed by Alexei Panshin.

XX

In 1968, I published HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, the first book-length study of a modern science fiction writer. It was in part an accident. I am not a Heinlein specialist, nor even more of a Heinlein expert than I needed to become in order to write the book. I wrote criticism in 1965, when Advent asked me to do the book, as I write it now - as a complement to my fiction. Criticism is a way of finding out how fiction works and I continue to learn from doing it.

I wrote my book because I was asked and because a book of that sort obviously deserved to be done. In his introduction to HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, Jim Blish says that Heinlein is 'plainly the best all-around science fiction writer of the modern (post 1926) era.' I believe that myself. If Heinlein's best work has been occasionally bettered, there is still no one to match him in variety, volume consistency and influence. I can think of no other science fiction writer I would have even considered writing a book about. Heinlein's strong natural narrative gift kept me entertained as a reader for years. Any writer with an interest in learning how to integrate significant detail into a science fiction story without losing momentum could do no better than to use twenty years of Heinlein for a textbook, though it is now thirty years since Heinlein invented the techniques practically single-handedly. And even Heinlein's glitches-the ego, sex and death - have been of more interest than most writer's because they are good deep solid basic ones. All of this, I think, is reason enough to have done a book on Heinlein. As the popularity of science fiction continues to grow, along with the new academic interest in the subject which has resulted just this past month in the formal foundation of a Science Fiction Research Association, I confidently expect there will be other books on Heinlein. Again with good reason.

And yet, when HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION was published, the comment in New Worlds and then again, if my memory is straight on the matter, by Mike Moorcock in Speculation, was along the lines of Heinlein? A book on Heinlein? Who'd be interested in a book on Heinlein? As a reader, as a critic for readers, and as the author of the book in question, I was, of course, wigged out of my gourd by the reaction. I ran down to my corner paperback store and began putting all the Moorcock books at the back of the racks until I became exhausted and had to stop.

However, as a writer and a critic for writers, I'd have to agree with the comment. Heinlein is largely irrelevant for other writers today. His period as an innovator was thirty years ago and his techniques were long ago assimilated into the standard repertoire of the field. Moreover, speculative fantasy is now in a period of transition. We have spent some forty years in building a vocabulary to deal with the new metaphorical universes of time and space. Now we must decide what to do with our vocabularies. SF is not exhausted. SF is just ready to be discovered. When it is, the vocabulary builders, the Heinleins and Asimovs, are

increasingly going to seem writers of another period. Finally, for the last twelve years, Heinlein has written with less skill and care than he once did, so that there has been less and less in his work for other writers to respect and emulate. For all these reasons, this is likely to be my last review of a Heinlein book. I am writing it because I promised Peter Weston long ago that I would. I take no pleasure in writing ill of Heinlein's work or anyone else's, and in these transitional times it is very hard not to. In this last year, I have been writing SF theory, which is both more relevant and more fun.

The sad thing about I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, Robert Heinlein's first novel since THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS more than four years ago, is that it is likely to be as much of a drag for the ordinary reader as it is for Mike Moorcock. It is a wretched book.

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL is about a dying 95-year-old billionaire named Johann Sebastian Bach Smith who has his brain transplanted into the body of his 28-year-old female secretary. Her mind remains behind - somehow - and the two spend the rest of the book agreeing with each other interminably. Smith screws around for a year after first getting himself pregnant by a sperm bank deposit he put away in better days, then marries his 72-year-old lawyer and lover. The lawyer dies of a stroke and his mind joins the other two. (Never mind how - it isn't explained.) But he fits right in: he doesn't disagree, he's a jolly good banterer, and they mentally skip along hand-in-hand like a happy trio of eleven-year-old girls. Three-way Smith then emigrates to the Moon. Earth is a sinkhole, a deathtrap for the non-elite, and they all want to give the child the best possible start in life. As they give birth, the body dies of rejection syndrome. It's all okay, however, because Smith's mind apparently pops through to the safe place the other two are operating from: "(Here, Boss! Grab on! There! We've got you.)"

Heinlein has always had a certain attractive tough-mindedness. Since his characters are superior - and they always are - and since they are survivors - and they always do - he hasn't been afraid to be patently unfair to them. The tough-mindedness, however, has tended to disappear when Heinlein has approached the subject of death. In story after story, from METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN to STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, the natural ability of Heinlein's ego-characters to survive has included an ability to survive death. Even if other characters die. Even if the world ends. It is obviously a Heinlein weak point. There have been times when he has turned it to good advantage, as in 'All you Zombies---'. More often, as in the determination of the hero of HAVE SPACE SUIT---WILL TRAVEL to create a star and then come back and hunt the bastards down if Earth is rotated out of normal space, it has done his stories no harm. However, when it has been explicit, as in the heavenly scenes in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, it has been remarkably silly. And in one story, 'The Man Who Travelled in Elephants', in which a travelling salesman dies in a bus crash and finds himself in a 1925 Middle America dream of Heaven in which he gets to lead the parade, it has even been embarrassing.

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL is anything but tough-minded. The world portrayed is thoroughly unpleasant. It is our own world grown thirty years more desperate - over-populated, disintegrating, dying. This is sketched in conversation and in the same sort of montage that Heinlein used at the beginning of chapters in STRANGER - in fact, much of it could be interchanged with the STRANGER montage with no-one the wiser. But, as in Heinlein's last two novels, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD and THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, his competent characters have abdicated their competence. They have no interest in their world and they do nothing for it. Jake, the lawyer, complains about the state of the world: "We've reached an impasse; we can't go on the way



we're headed - and we can't go back - and we're dying in our own poisons. That's why that little Lunar colony has got to survive. Because we can't. It isn't the threat of war, or crime in the streets, or corruption in high places, or pesticides or smog, or 'education' that doesn't teach: those things are just symptoms of the underlying cancer. It's too many people." But this same character is the father of three legitimate children and four, possibly five, bastards and seems quietly proud of himself.

In the same way, Johann Sebastian Bach Smith has accumulated a billion dollars or two along the way and the only thing he is prepared to do with it is survive- first through a brain transplant and then through emigration to the Moon. He says that forty years before - which is to say, in our recent past - he ran for office and lost: "They clobbered me, Jake! - and I've never been tempted to save the world since. Maybe someone can save this addled planet but I don't know how and now I know that I don't know." Heinlein does all he can for his ego-characters. He saves them from death. But he has patently given up the world. He seems to have written this book for himself, as self-therapy. It is no accident, I think, that Johann Sebastian Bach Smith, like Lazarus Long (Woodrow Wilson Smith) of METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN who intends to live forever, is a man born about the same date as Heinlein. The result - pure free-floating wish-fulfillment - is almost as embarrassing as 'The Man Who Travelled in Elephants'. The title sums the book; yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I, Robert Heinlein, will fear no evil. I'm determined.

Sex, too, has never been one of Heinlein's strong points. His most effective writing has been in his juveniles where he could ignore or avoid the subject. In his early adult novels when sex was an issue, he tended to talk his way around it or, as in 'If This Goes On--', give his characters a happy honeymoon holding hands on a fire escape. In his later books, all the adult novels from STRANGER on, he has had sex as an active factor but consistently kept his eyes closed. Sex, like death, is one of the explicit subjects of I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, and Heinlein has made it no more appealing, no more real, and no better realized than in any of his other stories. The sex in I WILL FEAR NO EVIL is even more like masturbation than the sex in 'All You Zombies--' and, as is usual with Heinlein, it is talked about endlessly but never really described.

But then, that is not really surprising. In recent years, as the length of Heinlein's books has increased, he has written with increasing carelessness. Six hundred and fifty manuscript pages of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND were written in forty-six days. FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD was ripped off in three weeks. And there has been no-one that Heinlein would listen to who would or could tell him of the cost to his work. His plots, never his strongest suit, have grown more and more perfunctory, as in GLORY ROAD, PODKAYNE and here. His books have grown longer, as in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS and STRANGER. I WILL FEAR NO EVIL falls between them as the second longest of Heinlein's books. And from STRANGER on, his books have been swallowed in talk. In I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, hardly more than twenty pages in four hundred are narrative. The rest is talk, at the cost of all the familiar Heinlein vigor. If sex is not described, neither is anything else.

Heinlein has been better served by those publishers who had the courage to reject this book than by the two who have accepted it. Courage it took, too, with the obvious profit to be made from the Heinlein name and reputation. Galaxy which serialized I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, had the nerve to call it a masterpiece. And Putnam will be the last people to say anything good of it.

And please, Peter, should there be another Heinlein novel, don't ask me to review it. I'm not at all sure at this moment that I have the strength or the interest to read another 400 pages of dialogue, let alone report on it.

- Alexei Panshin,

XX

## THE GHETTO EXPANDED

By Frederik Pohl

XX

I have before me some thirty volumes of recent science fiction, and a depressing spectacle it is. I suppose it is all the fault of the decline of magazine SF publishing. When the primary outlet of SF writers was the pulps, it was only an economic temptation that made them pad their short-short story ideas into novelette or novel length. Now that there are so few magazines, and so enormous and uncritical a market for novels, it is sheer survival.

At least half the books before me make bad novels but would have made pretty good short stories. (Half the remainder would not have been good in any form, ever). I like to think that if the authors had had anything resembling freedom of choice of form, they would have had the conscience to write them at their proper length, and we would all have been better off.

But to go on saying this about book after book would make a pretty dull column, and so for this once I propose to talk primarily not about specific books but about SF in general. Perhaps what I am talking about is ideal SF. But I think that fair, because ideal SF is what we are probably all after, even the time-servers and the hacks. And I would like to say why I think it is worth trying to attain.

You will note that this theme is at cross-purposes to most of the current critical consensus, which emphasizes an attempt to blur the distinction between the so-called "SF ghetto" and the mainstream. I don't want to blur that distinction a bit. Or if I do, it is only that I want mainstream literature to become more like SF, rather than the other way around; and I think I can best show what I mean by talking about a couple of long-dead writers, both of whom produced some SF.

Two of the most luminous stars of the Age of Reason were Jonathan Swift and Marie Francois Arouet, otherwise known as Voltaire. Both lived long and wrote profusely. Politics, in the modern sense, was a new invention of the time; it was just getting born, and both of them labored endlessly and effectively at the delivery, by means of pamphlets, satires and proposals.

The other thing they hold in common is that each is read today, when they are read at all, for a single work which in both cases is a political satire.

Swift was almost sixty years old in 1726 when GULLIVER'S TRAVELS was published. He did not sign his work. He probably feared the consequences. The peppery Dublin dean was used to scandalizing princes and statesmen, but

in GULLIVER his target was the whole human race. His shafts struck home. Today we might miss the contemporary targets he aimed at for many of them - does it really matter to us that "Lilliput" was meant as England and "Blefuscu" as France? But even in today's world, a world he never saw and did not well imagine, we can find specific identities for many of his figures of fun. When we read what he said about Laputa, we wonder how he could have anticipated the Hudson Institute. And we nod when we read of the stately Houyhnhms scorning their human beasts of burden, the Yahoos, for their filth, because we see the filth all around us - although Swift wrote long before the flush toilet and the automobile turned the whole planet into a sort of dilute cesspool.

GULLIVER was an instant success. Its vogue has lasted until today, almost unabated, although what Swift intended for the wry edification of adults is often now offered for the careless amusement of children. It has been parodied, specialised, dramatized, imitated and embodied into the basic structure of the literature and the language. T.H. White transplanted it whole into MISTRESS MASHAM'S REPOSE. The Russian animated film-makers modernized it for an anti-capitalist blast. Words like "Lilliputian", "Brobdingnagian", "Yahoo" and others are instantly recognizable almost anywhere on the globe today.

We know that Voltaire read GULLIVER. He was in his early thirties when it appeared, and already famous as a wit, a critic of the social order, a playwright and an ex-convict. (Like many a modern demonstrator he had witnessed his faith in jail, spending nearly a year in the Bastille for defaming the Duc d'Orleans.) I do not know when he first conceived the idea for CANDIDE but rather suspect it may have been while GULLIVER was still in his hands. At any rate, he did not publish his own exercise into fantastic allegory as a form of social protest until 1759. By then Swift was long gone mad and dead, and Voltaire himself was 65; so it too is a work of mature years.

CANDIDE was as quick success as GULLIVER and as great a scandal. What it did not do, in anything like the same measure as GULLIVER, was survive. Its last major appearance in the English-speaking world was a handsome illustrated coffee-table edition distributed by the Literary Guild in America, nearly half a century ago. Even in its own homeland, one may browse the bookstalls on the Left Bank for hours, passing over a dozen or more copies of the various editions and translations of GULLIVER, before finding a single CANDIDE. It is not forgotten. But it is not alive, as GULLIVER, is alive and well all over the world today.

Structurally, thematically, and stylistically, there are close resemblances between the two masterworks. Both flail at the identical avarices and idiocies: the empty pomp and brutal callousness of power, the mindless bestiality of the common man. Both roam the uncharted corners of the Earth, inventing great marvels: a flying magnetic island, apes courting human women. Both are purely fantastic, in the sense that they depict symbols rather than literal realities. But there is a difference.

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is a science-fiction novel. Perhaps it is the first real science-fiction novel in our canon.

To defend that, I must now try to tell you what I mean by the term, a task I approach with loathing. (How much time we've all wasted defining SF in a thousand undefendable ways !) Let me say that I call it a science-fiction novel



for two reasons. The first, and less important, is that, as R.E.W. Maddison tells us, Swift based GULLIVER on an essay by the Sceptical Chymist himself, Robert Boyle, called UPON EATING OYSTERS. The second, and to me the persuasive reason is that it describes a society not our own and not, so far as we know, actually in existence anywhere at any time in the universe; but which could exist as it is described if our current (then current) knowledge of scientific facts and laws were correct. I do not mean these criteria as definitions. I only mean that for me consciously, and for a great many people behavioristically, they are diagnostic for SF

CANDIDE is of course on the far side of that cut. Its setting and incidents are fantastic and imaginative, but they are not scientific, and it is not SF.

Let me draw a little closer to the loathsome task. If some tyrant compelled me to produce a definition of SF or die, I would try to do it in terms of something like a Venn diagram, that is in terms of inclusions and exclusions. I think I would draw one large circle and label it, inclusively :

Science fiction is that kind of fiction which treats of events, places and persons, human or other, local or other, which conform to the best state-of-the-art knowledge of all relevant factors, or to reasonable extrapolations from there.

And I would then draw in a little circle of exclusion within the bigger one, stipulating :

However, stories containing only events, places and persons pertaining to our real world are excluded.

A science-fiction story, I would say, is a story that can be true. If the universe is infinite in space and time, somewhere and somewhen it likely is true, provided our basic knowledge of the rules of the universe is complete enough to describe it.

(There is an interesting consequence to this definition, and that is that contemporary literature is really a subclass of science fiction, instead of the other way around).

The reason that science fiction is as rewarding as it is, in spite of endless dreary books hacked out by drudges, in spite of foolish fads and shoddy excursions, lies in its universality. It can treat of anything. Science-fiction is the literature of the general.

One may well balk at this sort of claim. One might object, "If SF is so all-fired great, how come so much mainstream stuff survives from all previous ages and so little SF?" -- for, to be sure, survival is one test of greatness. To answer that fully would take a far longer essay than this, and far more documentation. But perhaps I ought at least to suggest the line I would take in preparing such an answer.

To begin with, what of the literature that has survived? How much has stayed alive because of its general merit, and how much because of its antiquarian quality? MOBY DICK and WAR AND PEACE to choose two outstanding examples that I happen to have dipped into lately, are undoubtedly masterpieces,

but when I read them I find more of value in them as history than as literature. To see what I mean, only think if they would be read at all today if one subtracts the war reportage from Tolstoi, or if "Ishmael" had been a clerk in a New Bedford store rather than an unwilling crewman on a whaler.

A fair test of what survives and what does not might properly be made by comparing the individual works of a few successful writers. On these counts, SF shows up well in the cases of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, even Edgar Rice Burroughs. Who today bothers with INTO THE NIGER BEND, MR. BRITLING SEES IT THROUGH or THE OUTLAW OF TORN? While Captain Nemo and the Time Traveler and Barsoom live on. . . .

Well, that's the line I would take, and perhaps will at another time; but let's get back to Swift and Voltaire.

Is science fiction a ghetto? Not a bit of it! If there is a barrier to success for some writers, it is the paucity of their own talents that imposes it, not the field itself. GULLIVER has outlasted CANDIDE not in spite of being science fiction, but because it is science fiction.

When we read CANDIDE, we can only taste the acid of Voltaire's satire if we have been sensitised by study of the history of the time; his targets are the one he aimed at two centuries ago and no one else. It is rather like reading Harold Robbins or Jackie Susanne in 2170, if one can imagine it. If you can't substitute real names for the fictions, you lose the point. If you no longer care about the real names, you lose the urgency and the passion.

But GULLIVER still moves us today, and though every person he vilified is dead and every society he lampooned is changed beyond recognition we still see in his wit much that is pertinent to a world he never knew: because he set his story in the form of science fiction, and so turned from the special to the universal, from the idiosyncratic to the absolute.

To be sure, Swift never called himself a science-fiction writer. He never heard the term. He would undoubtedly have despised it if he had. We are not blessed with an elegant name for what we do. But the thing we do, as against the name we call it by, is elegant and universal. I do not say that it is the central field of literature, for now and for always; I only say that if it were, literature would be better off.

--- FREDERIK POHL

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The OPINION column: Some views on current science fiction.

OPINION 37: "The biggest lie of all?" (Ian Williams).

"...I'll make a rather bland statement: R.A. Lafferty is one of the finest writers in modern science fiction. However, the problem of justifying this is somewhat difficult simply because I don't really understand what he's getting at. I could say that his style is unique, combining subtle wit with black comedy, and that he has original plots. PAST MASTER and FOURTH MANSIONS are two outstanding novels. The point of the former is, presumably, that there can be no such thing as Utopia because Man needs to progress and that Utopia, by definition, is static. Fair enough, but can anyone explain the ending? The point of FOURTH MANSIONS I can't seem to grasp despite it being an easier book to read. Lafferty seems to turn everything upside-down. If Lafferty is being profound, he is also being obscure. On the other hand, perhaps he's saying nothing at all and this is, to quote Alexei Panshin, his biggest lie."

THE FRENCH WAY

By Gregory Benford

I've been reading W. Somerset Maugham's A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK off and on for a year, and in my usual manner got around to reading the preface last. In it Maugham compares French and English writers and their attitudes toward their work. It struck me that similar arguments apply to SF writers, when compared with people who publish most of their work in the 'mainstream.'

Maugham describes an American critic who came to England to interview a number of distinguished writers on the state of English literature. The critic gave up his project when he discovered that a very eminent novelist, the first one he saw, had never read a single book of Kipling's. He just didn't care to read other writer's work. That was an extreme case, though, because English writers do judge each other. So-and-so, they'll say, is pretty fair, whereas another doesn't add up to much. But their zeal for the former never reaches fever-heat, and the latter isn't attacked so much as he is ignored. They don't particularly envy another's success, and even if that success is unearned they tend to laugh rather than rage.

Things in France, Maugham says, are quite different. There the literary world is one long, continual night of the long knives. Cliques fall with glee upon other cliques. Literary journals echo with the thud of brickbats. You must protect yourself even from your friends, for they may not remain so. The life of an author is one of bitter dispute, treachery and malice.

Why? What should cause such strife, when across the Channel things are so serene? Well, I don't for a moment buy completely Maugham's picture of either country's literary life. Things are not that clearly drawn. There is back-biting in England and honorable behavior in Paris. But from an admittedly limited acquaintance with the literary traditions of each country I must admit that there is a grain of truth in what Maugham says. One possible explanation is economic. Britain has a larger population than France; that means a larger market for any writer. (I have read that the English buy more books, magazines and newspapers percapita than any other country. It's quite believable. Several families I know in England get two and three newspapers a day).

Add to that advantage the enormous American market and the colonies. This represents a huge audience for a writer who speaks English. True, it is also a bigger pond and on the average a writer will find himself playing the role of a small frog -- smaller than he would have played in France. But writers seldom change languages and anyhow, I don't truthfully believe most writers consider money very strongly when they choose to take up their craft. If they did, they wouldn't get into the game of putting words on paper. (I did think it over; that's why I'm not a full time writer and never will be).



Such a difference in the sizes of the market means an English-speaking writer can carve out a niche for himself, gather about him an adoring clique of admirers and forget the rest of the field. He always has a place. The many newspapers will at least carry his name every now and then in their reviewing columns, simply because there is space to do that in England. (The English seem to read much more about books than Americans. I don't for the life of me know why.) He doesn't need to knife the next writer -- or, better, have a friend do the job -- to get his next book contract. For there is a critical mass in the publishing industry: once a certain population level is reached, the overhead costs are not crucial and the business is insured of a relatively constant demand for its product. In France the critical population level seems to be just barely reached. Only so many novels can be published and editors are not loath to take chances. They watch reviews closely.

The English writer has some security, then, and security breeds a live-and-let-live attitude. But this can't be the total explanation, I think. The French seem to take a different attitude toward literature, and there lies the rub.

Books matter in France. People take them seriously. They are prepared to argue over general principles of literature with the avidity of a college sophomore. I'm afraid both the English and Americans tend to think such involvement a little ridiculous. To be sure, there are counter examples, but in the main I don't think we get quite so excited about literature. We think of artists as men out of work.

There is much to recommend the French view. It is never a fault to believe your work is important, perhaps even vital. Books can change history; even better, they can change consciousness. If you believe that, then attacking bad or misleading books (or even those you find ideologically unsound) is virtuous; so is the defense of good ones.

Precisely because writing is viewed as a higher calling in France, it promotes the habit of looking over each others' shoulders. Frenchmen may go into writing for the same reasons Americans become doctors: they have no great passions, so they might as well do something respectable. Such men are more willing to learn from each other. They read others' manuscripts, criticise them and consider their work anew. They entered writing without any marked creative power, but with diligent application of reasonable intelligence, industry and attention to detail they can produce sound and perhaps even brilliant work. The great geysers, the passionate scribblers like Balzac do not fit this mold; but I think the rest do, by and large.

What has all this got to do with science fiction writers? A lot, I think. SF writers are poor, like the French. The boom that began with the early 60s has made the SF writer's lot much better, but most of them still earn less than semi-skilled workers and a goodly percentage hover around the poverty line. They write for a small fixed audience. Reviews have always mattered quite a bit; there is evidence that in the 1950s some publishing houses were forced to follow a book's response in prozine and fanzine reviews because their own sales figures were so slow in arriving. Certainly, like the French they band together to give each other criticism - the Milford weeks have been going nearly two decades.

These minor similarities are, perhaps, debatable, but the big one isn't: SF writers live in an eternal snake pit. Rumors fly continually. Schemes, plots stab in the back -- anyone who has glanced into an issue of the SFWA Forum will nod in agreement. In the last few years Harry Harrison, Ted White, Piers Anthony, Brian Aldiss and a few dozen others have been at each others' throats, usually in full view of the fans. John Pierce, who isn't a pro at all, is leading a crusade. No wonder Sam Moskowitz titled his history of 1930's fandom THE IMMORTAL STORM.

But just a minute: what about westerns, say, or mysteries? Don't writers in those fields have the same circumstances? Yet they don't seem to wrangle so much. Why?

I think it is because SF authors are really arguing about much more than novel contracts and who's-the-best-wordsmith. SF is unique because it is about the future; mysteries, westerns, and modern novels of greed and adultery aren't.

The future is a funny thing. Americans, probably more than any other nationality, live in the future. We came to America to find a place, found a utopia, make a new world. Americans are pointed toward next year, what we can become. And most SF writers are Americans.

I believe there is nothing that so defines an American today as his view of our future. There is the classic feeling that man is perfectable, his course subject to his conscious control; against it is arrayed the traditional old world view of man as the mixed beast, capable of some change but constrained by an eternal inner nature. Americans clearly assume the former. That is what the revolt against the Establishment is really about: where we are going and how we'll get there.

It is fashionable among kids now to sometimes say they don't think they even have a future. To some Americans, this borders on the ultimate in despair. We live by our expectations, and love by them, too. When our vision of the future is negated, we feel threatened in a very fundamental way. SF writers deal in the literary expression of such sentiments. Their lives are wrapped up in the potential of man. When a science fiction author's vision is denied the wound goes deep. They react strongly and as like as not resort to personal attack, because in a very real way an apparently purely literary criticism already is a personal matter. Optimists vs. pessimists, new wave vs. old -- there is more at stake here than the rather arbitrary arrangement of words or plot elements. Combine such passions with the lack of professional tradition and the niceties such training engenders, and it is no wonder that some of our finest writers are constantly at each others' throats.

Science fiction writers are talking about -- at their highest level are talking about, states of consciousness and the direct apprehension of reality, of hopes, of dreams. They are bottled up in a small community and live in each others' hip pockets. Perhaps we should not be scornful if, in pursuit of their muse, they often appear in fanzines and in person to be utter knaves.

Gregory Benford - September 15, 1970.

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## THIS FUNNY HOBBY

by andrew j offutt

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In my last letter\*to Speculation I commented on a C. Priest column about, as I recall, the rewards and penalties, the virtues and vicissitudes of writing. Since then the man over there whose work I respect so highly has printed a little article in SFR here. John Brunner called it 'This Funny Job' (SFR No. 38). He referred to writing, and he discussed the problems of some holders of that funny job. One man had advised him that he set a target of two single-spaced pages daily, "yet frequently fails to achieve more than a third of that and almost never exceeds it." (He creates SINGLE-spacely?) Another told him that creating 1700 words had left him physically weary ... and so on. In the course of the article (as well as in a letter in the same issue) Mister Brunner said what I suspected: that his problem is quite the reverse.

That made me reach for feltpen and clipboard at once, and I drafted a long letter to SFR. But it's really an article, and it occurred to me that since Brunner's was sent over here, I'd send mine over there. (In hopes contributions will get me on your expensive first class list and off the 2-month slowboat mail. Hence: THIS FUNNY HOBBY.)

I have defined a writer as the happiest man alive, because he gets paid for doing his thing, his hobby. Now and again I get some funny looks when I say that, and I read and hear about how this or that writer has a terribly hard time, or is or was blocked, or has to fight himself back to the machine. This has always astonished me. Writing's a hobby. Also a compulsion. It must be done; I must. I wrote a novel when I was nine (cowboys, what else), and stories right along, and a novel when I was 13 or so (ERB, what else). I wrote three novels in college (pretending to be taking notes during dull lectures Two still read pretty well, strangely.).

A couple of years ago, I was managing three insurance agencies in three cities, ripping up and down the highway and holding meetings here and there; a member in good standing of the crisis-of-the-day club. I was exhausting myself. Too, I knew what my twice-daily Alka-Seltzering was in all likelihood leading to. Yet with the exhaustion came extreme mental stimulation. On week-ends I was in sore need of relaxation.

I relaxed in front of the Selectric. (I like the best machinery too: the Mercedes and the IBM Selectric are, although the Underwood P-48 is Bad News). In six months of such heavyweight management, capped by Saturday-Sunday-only creating, I wrote three short stories and 5½ novels. They started selling. I closed the out-of-Morehead agencies. Four months later I made certain other arrangements, and took a back seat in andrew offutt associates (unltd). Just over a month later, a couple of months ago, I left the insurance business altogether.

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\* which I haven't printed ! (PRW)

I had been in it seven years. In the final 20 months I managed, selling nothing because I did not try to. In that same period I sold sixteen 50,000 word novels; settings, times, styles, subject matter and 'type' were various.

Since August 1967 I've sold a million and a half words. In 1969 I sold 10 novels, over a half-million words. In the first six months of 1970 I'd sold eight novels. Two are SF, under my own name; Fall '70. (In the past two years I've sold four short stories. In the past two years I've written NO short stories. They're harder to write than novels, and they make less money).

All the foregoing has nothing to do with self-aggrandizement. It's just telling you why I'm a writer, and a little of how. I suppose I worked my tail off; to me it was all relaxation. Hobby.

All my creating is done on weekends, on the IBM. I start at one or 1:30, sometimes a little earlier, on Saturdays. I write until dinner call (between 6:30 and 7:30). Interruptions are (1) frequent calls for more coffee, (2) bathroom, (3) lunch : cheese and a little wine. Sunday's schedule is the same, without the lunchbreak. I write at a secretary's metal typing table, at the top of the steps in the hallway. (It's a huge old house). Meanwhile the four offuttspring and my coonhound are doing their things, and since I sit facing a backyard window I am occasionally forced to, ah, arbitrate, uh, disagreements --or pause to watch birds. In the living room downstairs the telly's usually going, and in the kitchen my Jodie has the AM radio tuned to her godawful Bluegrass/country-Western station: noise. In the bedroom behind me the FM radio plays music-- hopefully loud enough to drown the telly and the other radio.

I don't know if I could write in proper auctorial solitude and silence or not. I'm afraid to try !

During the week there are other things to do; research, editing first-drafts and proofreading submission-drafts (I don't type those; why should a creator do copy work, any more than an attorney or business executive?). Sunday nights I read aloud that weekend's production, usually about 20,000 words. With cons and Reds ball games and the like, that averages about a novel a month.

I recently experienced my first block. Stupid; the (very sercon SF) novel was 2/3 outlined, with the ending decided (although it changed), and the previous weekend had seen completion of a chapter, a section, and the outline. Simultaneously. That's a bad place to stop. Stupid. I handed myself a block. It's a book I feel deeply about, too; it came a little less easily than some.\* It's the immediate future (30 years or so), as I see it, and Regional (I live in Appalachia), drawing strongly, aside from observations and thinking, from three books: (THE) TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE, NAKED APE, and ENVIRONMENTAL HANDBOOK

Anyhow I blocked. I fought. My brain fought back. I bathroomed three times, washed a pair of corfam boots, separated original and carbon of the novel just finished for submission, got up and down, fixed more coffee. It was awful. I sweated. (I do not perspire. I sweat. I always have, and no, you 're wrong; I weigh just under 160 at 6'1".) I fought. I kept sitting down and trying to type. I snarled, cursed, cussed, obscenitized. Kept on

\* called THE CASTLE KEEPS, the book is about 'my home, my town, my region, my children, and ..... me,' says Andy Offutt (PRW).



fingering keys. (I use three fingers, one of which is on my left hand). I kept on. I PREVAILED! It had been awful. It had lasted 45 minutes, and now I know what a block is. I'd lieber forget.

I can't see that one ever need be longer, assuming one has any control over himself at all.

Now I would rather talk (and drink, they go together) than anything I can think of. Next I'd rather talk on paper; write. And I'd rather write erotica than anything else. I think most people know I write pseudonymous erotica (say porn, but I reject the word as I reject the concept). I am a fan of erotica (some of it IS porn.....). We read quite a bit of it. (In general I prefer my own).

"Jodie," I told my wife, "this thing's a bitch and I feel drained. Also it's so bloody bloody, and there's no sex in it. Once I relieve myself of this I'm going to do some high-level offen-ge-goofing." I was referring to the SF novel on which I had experienced my first block. 70,000 words; about fifty hours' creation time, on first draft.

"What're you going to DO?" she asked, with visions of sugarplums, Nassau, Heidelberg and probably poverty dancing in her head.

"Write something sexy as hell," I told her. "Got this idea for a vampire sexy. Brother and sister. But they don't suck the blood out of necks ....."

That's just what I did. The SF was finished the weekend before Midwestcon in Cinati. Realizing it had taken four weekends to write and that MWcon lasted all weekend, I got the outline and ten or so thousand words of the wompyr thing done during the week.

Finally I come back to Brunner's article, which spurred this one. He talks about some writers having so much trouble, and also about the musicians who sweat out all the duller stuff (harder? More socially acceptable?)--then relax by blowing their brains out: jazz. Relaxing.

Maybe the writers who sweat so hard should take breaks. What did they always WANT to write? What would they rather write than anything? A Western? A corny adventure or a mystery or s&s? A sexy? DO it. It's relaxation. As long as there is some discipline involved. Mine is simple. 1 or 1:30 every Saturday and Sunday, creation only, letters or articles not fair, they're for during the week. And a new SF novel every time my agent sells one. Meanwhile... I relax and support us all by doing my hobby. God grant that SF continues to sell--and the erotica too. It would be HELL to have to write it--and I do--and not be able to SELL it!

Andrew J Offutt, 1970

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...PSSST! Any fanzines for sale? So says Richard Bergeron in the latest issue of Warhoon, itself one of the best fnz around. Dick is interested in whole collections and individual issues of the more important fanzines published in yesteryear, and would like to hear from anyone having accumulations for sale, particularly in the UK. Old fanzines are valuable these days - if you want more details write to Dick at 11 E.68th St, N.Y. 10021. PS - Wrhn costs 60c.

SPECULATION

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## THE CRITICAL FRONT

Book reviews at length

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THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN by John Boyd (Gollancz 25s)

Reviewed by Mark Adlard

"What one really wants to see, of course," Amis said in NEW MAPS OF HELL (1961), "is not merely a process of self-reform on the part of existing science-fiction authors, but an irruption into the field of a new sort of talent."

Since that time Disch consistently, Zelazny, Delany and some others more spasmodically, have shown that they can write supremely well by standards of excellence derived from the mainstream. THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH showed that John Boyd had joined that select band with his first novel.

John Boyd was unknown when THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH first appeared. He had not crossed over from the mainstream, as some capable writers have done in recent times. He had not established a prior reputation by writing shorts for the magazines, as is so often the case. Apparently he had not even risen from the serried ranks of fandom, in accordance with the almost universal law. He simply wrote a first-class SF novel. And now he has written another one.

In other words he is, in Amis' phrase, "a new sort of talent." He is one of the new breed of writers with a general culture who have deliberately chosen to write within the genre, not because they were conditioned from childhood with repeated doses of Astounding, but because SF techniques enable them to say what they want.

One of the many impressive things about Boyd's second novel, THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN, is that it lives up to his first and yet is quite different from it. The novel has been favourably reviewed by Cox (SFR), Miller (Analog), Kenward (New Scientist), and probably by several others.

It is a rewarding book for a number of reasons.

First, the characters. Even the supporting characters have a three-dimensional solidity. For example the ironically named Hal Polino, "the last Renaissance man" in an Alfred Bester mould, comes over very well. I like his aperçus: "The trees are probing. Far back in their racial memories are recollections of a biped who swung from their limbs, ate their berries and nuts, pulled up their tender shoots ..." And I like his wry humour: "Having a wonderful wish," he tells Freda in a telegram, "Time you were here."

Second, the style. The novel is written with a richness, aptness and wit, which are satisfying in themselves. There are occasional literary derivations, however, which lay a dead hand on the text. I do not, for example, like to come across chunks of Shakespeare done into prose without acknowledgment, or even with acknowledgment (although it could be argued that Polino's wider culture has influenced Freda's thought-processes). And a conscious echo of the Wedding Service from the Prayer Book detracts from the brilliantly contrived episode which follows Polino's death. If a writer really believes that the Elizabethans, whether Shakespeare or the writers of the Book of Common

Prayer, have already said what he wants to say in the best conceivable way, then he should say it again in the second best conceivable way rather than repeat it.

But these are trivia. The book is splendidly written.

I wonder how many people find the novel fascinating, and read it compulsively, because of the pull of the basic theme. Despite the startling originality of the story, the basic theme is very old. Beneath the exotic treatment lies one of the most potent formulae ever invented for a best-seller, and it was hit upon at the very outset by Samuel Richardson, who is normally regarded as the first English novelist. It is the story of virginity pursued, or what a critic once called "the principle of procrastinated rape."

In the eighteenth century Richardson's audience waded through the interminable correspondence in his first novels, PAMELA and CLARISSA, because they were agog to know whether or when Mr B and Lovelace would finally have their evil way with the eponymous virgins.

In THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN the self-admitted virgin is the brilliant, beautiful Doctor Freda Caron, a "cystologist" in the Bureau of Exotic Plants. The reader does not have to traverse over a million words, as Clarissa's pre-Freudian and innocently sadistic well-wishers had to do, but they do have to read almost to the end before "it" happens:

"Then it touched.

As her buttocks tensed, her torso relaxed and her spine arched back as if from a sudden blow, while a shudder in her loins foretold an ecstasy unbearable.."

There are other assonances with conventional erotica. The theme of the frigid or inexperienced girl, who is submitted to a variety of initiatory acts, and so ultimately wins through to maturity/joyful acceptance/degradation/utter ruin (depending on the author's point of view) is the *donnée* of the erotic tale from John Cleland, through the Pearl and Victorian underground literature, to the present day.

Freda Caron is frigid, and we are given a little case-history to explain why. Moreover, her boy-friend Paul Theaston is an undemonstrative intellectual. Freda's pet name for him is "The Prince of Pragmatism." (I wonder whether Boyd was recalling Byron's "pet name" for his cold intellectual wife, Annabella Millbank - the "Princess of Parallelograms.")

Freda, like Fanny Hill and the heroines of that other genre, experiences her first ecstasy through lesbianism - in this case, of course, with a female orchid. Like those other heroines Freda goes on to experience the ultimate joy with her Prince Charming - a tall, red orchid.

The plot-device is an ingenious one because it permits Boyd to write lush, physiological descriptions, which mutatis mutandis are quite in the manner of John Cleland et al., and he can do it without fear of disapprobation. Perhaps even Bowdler himself would not have objected to the details of the orchids:

"Delicate traceries of red on the corolla petals and the lip gave it the appearance of a *Cymbidium alexanderi*, save for the fact that there was a single stamen with no stigma. Its stamen was almost six inches long.

From below, Paul remarked, 'The stamen's compacted with the rostellum. In the female, there's a single stigma at the oviduct, almost vestigial, although it's sensitive!'

"Nearing its journey's end, the blossom slowed, and she saw the petals of its labellum opening to encompass its desire."

SPECULATION

"... it seemed to quiver with eagerness when she laid her cheek against its petals and tweaked its pollen-engorged stamen."

But then again, perhaps Bowdler would.

During an attempt at rehabilitation Doctor Campbell tells Freda that she is suffering from "Nymphomaniac omniphilia," and that she is "similar to a left-handed screw in a machine using only right-handed screws." A few paragraphs later, when one has almost lost the reference, Freda reflects that she is "an unusual screw."

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN uses ideas very close to those in Ballard's first published story. ('Prima Belladonna' in Science Fantasy, 1956). There are other correspondences between the thinking of the two writers. Ballard, in a recent Penthouse interview (June) foresees a future in which men and women become mutually redundant, and thinks that a man who relies upon conventional sexual pleasures will be considered as eccentric as a person who chooses to obtain his nutritional sustenance entirely from tapioca. In the same interview, however, he says that the greatest sexual pleasures will be cerebral.

Hans Clayborg tells Freda that "For the intellectual ... the primary erogenic zone is the brain."

It seems to me that THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN may act as a catalyst, and release a flood of sf/fantasy novels on similar and derived themes. The techniques of sf have enormous potential for the exploration of such bizarre behaviour. Despite Farmer, Stine, Geis et al., however, "future sex" is conspicuous by its absence in SF, due to the tenacious utilitarian ethics of Gernsbackian-Campbellian editorial policy.

If there is such a flood, we shall be extremely lucky if there are many novels which handle their material with the discretion, tact and taste, displayed in John Boyd's second book.

Mark Adlard, 1970

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BEYOND THE BEYOND, by Poul Anderson (Gollancz, 30/-)

Reviewed by David Redd

It's Anderson time at SPECULATION again. Of the five stories in this collection, three are from the middle fifties and the others from a decade later. Most of them are space-opera yarns in the old Planet Stories tradition, and you can take it for granted that they're fun to read.

Well now, if you read the Heinlein symposium last year, you may recall Anderson's contribution: he spotlighted Heinlein's "devotion to liberty." He called Heinlein "one of the most eloquent advocates of freedom that we have had since Jefferson... Robert Heinlein is more than a good influence on science fiction, he is a good influence on the world." Now the theme of liberty runs right through BEYOND THE BEYOND, and it seems that Anderson himself would like to be "a good influence on the world."

'Memory', the first story, proposes that men are free-range animals, not cogs of a machine. A scout from a totalitarian society is dropped into a free primitive community, and naturally he prefers the life of a noble savage. Typically the situation is so biased that discussion of the problem is repressed in favour of the author's commentary. Apparently the primitive life



"is a biologically sound one. It suits man's deepest instincts, as ours does not. Therefore, five years of it made a deeper impression on (the hero) than the twenty-odd years of slogans and exercises before that." The heart of the story is contained in one short paragraph:

"Man evolved as a creature of forests and open air and--intimacy, shall we say? A family animal. Our civilisation forbids all this, locks us indoors with machines, selects our mates for us, whom we seldom see, and takes our children away to raise in creches. Naturally our instincts revolt." Promising stuff. But the expansion of it presents the heroes as fishing, ploughing and protecting children, with the villains raping, pillaging and destroying. It's a good action yarn, but nothing more. (Original title: 'A World Called Maanerek').

The next two stories are 'Brake' and 'The Sensitive Man' both of them standard thriller plots skilfully adapted to sf. One paragraph from 'The Sensitive Man' is especially interesting:-

"The lines today are drawn not by nations or politics, but by--philosophies, if you wish. Two views of man's destiny cutting across all national, political, racial and religious lines.....call them libertarian and totalitarian."

This is it, the theme of all Anderson's future history. Not democracy, not profit, but liberty. The freedom of the individual. The backgrounds in which his characters operate--from the Un-men to van Rijn to Flandry and beyond--are set in a space where the most important event is the gain or loss of liberty. And the people who constrict liberty, who bring on Flandry's Long Night or grudge van Rijn his "tiny bit of profit", are to be opposed, held back or destroyed by any means whatever. They are the enemy---"the old and protean enemy who had been fought down as Fascist, Nazi, Shintoist, Communist, Atomist, Americanist and God knew what else..." So all those who seek to limit or channel human activity, those grouped as totalitarians in 'The Sensitive Man', are simply The Enemy. "My greatest wish is to shoot my own dear shipmates," says the hero of 'Memory' when he abandons their totalitarian life. Poul Anderson, in the propaganda basic to his stories, is continually shooting down The Enemy. Is this what he calls "a good influence on the world"?

A couple of issues back, Fred Pohl examined the nature of The Enemy in Anderson's work. He claimed free enterprise was widely acceptable--although he weakened his case by citing Wilson's government, which was socialist in nothing but name and ineptitude--and in short said that people who objected to profit simply didn't exist.

It's not that simple. Few people object to profit and power for themselves. It's profit and power for other people that's so unpopular. Anderson knows the difference between personal and interpersonal behaviour. The fact that these early stories have villains so ludicrously villainous as to destroy the effect of his propaganda is unimportant; his intention is what matters. In these action adventures he's throwing out his beliefs to evoke responses in his readers. In 'Memory' it was deliberate, in 'Brake' it was apparently automatic.

And in the later stories, the propaganda, instead of being slipped in, becomes an integral part of each story framework. The heroes have switched from battling super-criminals and power cliques to attacking the forces of history. Their civilisations are undergoing either dynamic growth or a collapse into decadence; which process is occurring in any one story is not always obvious. But at least the characters are taking an active and aware part in changing society.

'The Moonrakers' shows piracy among the asteroids as part of a revolutionary war. The solution? Fake a threat of alien invaders, then the ensuing defence-based economy will make piracy unnecessary. (Minor note: the structure of this story, action and politics in a compressed cliché format, recalls other Galaxy group stories of the period such as Mack Reynolds' 'Spying Season'. The loss of narrative flow is disconcerting after the smoothness of the first three stories.)

Quite suddenly, the villains are gone. The enemy is a historical process. Maybe that explains the relative failure of SATAN'S WORLD --- Anderson can't believe in old-fashioned villains anymore. Switching from 'The Sensitive Man' to 'The Moonrakers' the loss is noticeable. No villains. The characters are on different sides, that's all. True, there is the slight matter of piracy, but that's not really wrong --- just something forced on the asterites by circumstances. The story problems are the growing pains of a society in transition --- actually, half the wordage is spent deciding what the real story-situation is. You notice that the desirability of freedom is carefully woven in at individual, group and planetary levels.

The same shift of emphasis is obvious in 'Starfog'. This one can almost be called archetypal modern Anderson. (It is of course the best story in the book.) The hero travels alone in his pseudointelligent computer-ship. He runs up against an astrophysical peculiarity which must be attended to for both personal and economic reasons. As a special investigator ("Ranger of the Commonalty") he has absolute freedom of action on a mission, within the limits of his own ethical system. He explains,

"We give a person freedom, within a loose framework of common-sense prohibitions. And then we protect his social aspect by frowning on greed, selfishness, callousness."

"Civilisation's got too big out there for anything but freedom to work. The Commonalty isn't a government. How would you govern ten million planets? It's a private, voluntary, mutual-benefit society, open to anyone anywhere who meets the modest standards." (If you can't meet those standards, you're left out).

"We can't have a planned interstellar economy. Planning breaks down under the sheer mass of detail when it's attempted for a single continent. (Or, by implication, for a single world.) History is full of cases. So we rely on the market, which operates as automatically as gravitation. Also as efficiently, as impersonally, and sometimes as ruthlessly --- but we didn't make this universe. We only live in it."

That is as clear a statement as you will find of what Fred Pohl called "Anderson's mythology." His future history describes the growth, repression and rebirth of liberty; presumably the Commonalty postdates the Ragnarok which engulfed Flandry's Empire. While his politico-economic structures are pretty questionable in real terms, within his stories they provide a workable and coherent system. Now that's a really solid achievement. As a personal comment, what interests me, and what I should like to see from Anderson if he has not already written it, is the story of the decline from the Polesotechnic League to the decadent Empire. What went wrong in the years between van Rijn and Dom Flandry? One story showed the Trader Team botching up the start of a new Merseian Culture, so it's just possible that van Rijn began the breakdown. Interesting thought.

We've heard enough about the virtues of Anderson's chosen system; he should be examining the defects of his mythology and maybe suggesting a few little safeguards to put in the system. If he can do that, and jolt some of his readers into thinking for themselves on these matters, then he will indeed be a "good influence on the world". And the best of luck to him.

David Redd, 1970

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NEW WRITINGS IN SF-16, Ed. John Carnell (Dobson 21s).

Reviewed by Bruce Gillespie

John Carnell's NEW WRITINGS series has survived the rigours of English publishing and 16 issues, and one is entitled to ask whether it was all worthwhile. With Aldiss barefooting through his head and bank balance and, recently, Harbottle and Gillings recalling and refurbishing past eras in English SF, this reader at least wonders what is the place in the pattern for Carnell's collections of new fiction. Has it an acceptable place at all, except to make money?

The question would still haunt you after reading the first story in this volume, and the second story would resolve none of your doubts. Colin Kapp's novella 'Getaway From Getawehi' leads off the collection, with The Unorthodox Engineers, (who at least do not have the cheek to call themselves scientists) facing up to their latest heart-stabbing gut-wrenching problem:

'Each step the ship took was preceded by the curious hop-skip motion with which it had precluded its new mode of transport. Its continuing drunken dance through the fern banks soon carried it out on to the edge of the steppe. There it abruptly disappeared from view except for an unmoving stain... Said Von Noon morosely: "An inebriated rocket I could learn to live with, but I know from bitter experience that the abrupt removal of half a billion credits of Government money invariably needs a good explanation!"'

Actually it is quite an interesting problem as science fiction problems go. It is outlined clearly, early in the story, and it only remains for Kapp to spin a good yarn.

He then does his best to opt out of such a simple task. Firstly he gums up his engineering problem with 50 pages or so of fatuous non-dialogue \* Perhaps Pete Weston should run a competition to find out if there is anything more boring than a spaceship-full of engineers lecturing each other at length about a simple problem. Kapp finally throws away the story by explaining it all in the last few pages after solving the final piece of the puzzle off-stage.

Much the same happens in Chris Priest's 'The Perihelion Man', a story which is worse than Kapp's, if possible, and insignificant beside Priest's stories in Vision of Tomorrow and elsewhere. The story has some promise, if you bear in mind (Cont/d)

\* For me the mood of self-congratulation and goshwow of the whole story comes through clearest in these bits of idiotic dialogue. John Foyster is slowly persuading me that "realistic" dialogue doesn't exist - there is trivial dialogue and meaningful dialogue. Very few of the words in Kapp's story have much meaning; often they don't even help the story along. On the other hand, take Shakespeare's dialogue, much of which was colloquial at the time, but all of which is significant within its context, and as an expression of things more important. This seems to me the major count against most SF writers, except for some English authors like Aldiss, Ballard, Compton and the rest. It's a subject for an article, I know.

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- Bruce Gillespie, (from correspondence) 23

from the first page that the whole thing comes strictly from the thirties. Jason Farrell (that name's a good start) loses his job as a space pilot, is hired by a Mysterious Government Organisation and flies off to Venus' orbit to pick up some missing atomic bombs. The reader begins to yawn at about this point.

As with all the other stories in this book, there are pages of trivial gossip before the fun starts, and by then we suspect that there won't be any. What fun there is comes straight out of early Buck Rogers, and is embarrassing rather than amusing:

'He jabbed at the controls and changed direction. At once, a second explosion shattered the approximate part of space he would have been in. In front of him he saw the cross-shaped ship rear up and away from the cloud of nuclear bombs and come directly towards him. Its movements were sudden and quick as it bore down towards him.'

That paragraph alone qualifies this story for some kind of "Worst SF Story Ever Told" award. I hope Chris Priest laughed as much when he wrote it as I did when I read it. Biggles looks like Einstein beside the hero of this story, and as I said before, the "climax" of the story is deleted as summarily as Colin Kapp's, and tedious explanation replaces it.

There are better stories in the book, but not much. Only Douglas R. Mason's 'All Done By Mirrors' interested me at all, not so much for its unoriginal ideas and papier mâché scenery, as for its chilling last paragraph. But one paragraph is not much in 190 pages, and I am still left wondering what sort of a niche fits NEW WRITINGS. Why is the 16th volume no better, or even worse, than the first? Who buys stuff like this?

Possibly even the editor could not answer such questions. My guess is that school libraries and public libraries still buy them - no sex here, although a few characters dare to swear. There's not much violence, either - not even the crude stuff that Phil Harbottle published in the first few issues of his magazine. The book is, in short, a sum of its negative virtues. It doesn't excite people; it does not sexually stimulate them, and it certainly does not make them think. When Carnell publishes good stories, as in Number 15, his sales probably drop. It is television with words; a book for long afternoons, unnecessary train trips, and plane flights. At least Number 17 can only better it.

Bruce Gillespie, 1970

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NEW WRITINGS IN SF-17, ed. John Carnell (Dobson 21s)

Reviewed by Tony Sudbery

To a large part of the science fiction-reading public, including myself, the only primary source of short stories is John Carnell's NEW WRITINGS IN SF. The contents of all other collections appearing in libraries and bookshops, and on many bookstalls, have been through fandom's sieve and have already survived the exposure of at least one publication in the majority of cases. This is precisely the selling point of NEW WRITINGS; the familiar rubric, "NEW WRITINGS IN SF lives up to its name and does not present old material already published many times" is still there on the blurb of No.17, unchanged from the first issue. Evidently John Carnell persuaded Dobson and Corgi, back in 1963, that there was a large market for SF magazines that the magazines weren't in fact reaching; and evidently he was right, for Corgi have just reissued NEW WRITINGS 1-3.

(Cont/d)...

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The following sentence of that original blurb, running "The Editor also encourages new methods and techniques of storytelling", has been dropped. Which is rare honesty, but it leads one to reflect that the first sentence I quoted is in fact only superficially true: in spite of the occasional appearance of an Aldiss, a Disch, or a Keith Roberts, most of the stories in NEW WRITINGS are minor variations by unoriginal writers on formulae which have already been published hundreds of times. But let's not be as harsh as that - not yet, anyway; presumably this series doesn't pretend to offer anything more than entertainment. We'll get into contradictions if we stick to this formula for too long, but let's see how far we can get before we reach that stage.

From the outside NEW WRITINGS has always looked like a cliquish affair; the same names turn up again and again (though they never seem to turn up anywhere else). Comparing No.17 with the first few numbers, however, shows that the clique - and with it, presumably, the editor's taste - has in fact changed. Now the names are R.W. Mackelworth, Lee Harding, H.A. Hargreaves,...; then they were Colin Kapp, Edward Mackin, John Rankine, Dennis Etchison,... The only name from the early period to be found in No.17 is Joseph Green, who is anyway a better writer. Maybe this is a good sign; if we're going to be spared the desperate unfunniness of Kapp (although he had a story as lately as Volume 16) and Mackin, and the sheer awfulness of John Rankine, maybe John Carnell's taste really has improved?

Well, if his taste has, his style hasn't. After dedicating this volume to Neil Armstrong, Col. Edwin Aldrin, Col. Michael Collins and the Apollo 11 Moon landing, and enthusing about colour television (Mr Carnell has learnt more about British and European history in six months of watching colour television than in half a lifetime of reading), he tells us how good the stories are in words like these: "Ernest Hill's vignette, 'The Hero', deals with Youth's inhumanity to Old Age, a bitingly acidic exposé" (it isn't; it's a silly, sentimental-nasty story of a gang of hoodlums beating up an old space-hero, now a beggar); "while the equality depicted in Michael Coney's 'The True Worth of Ruth Villiers' is frightening in its potential nearness" (Mr Carnell must be one of those persons of nervous disposition the BBC used to be so considerate to. I should add, though, that my wife, whose professional opinion I respect, found this story very well written).

So to the lead novelette - like the asinine blurbs to the individual stories, another constant feature in the format. H.A. Hargreaves's 'More Things in Heaven and Earth' is one of the things in this collection that are good because they are based on good models. This one, a story of a gestalt mind developing in a troupe of television actors who produce illustrated lectures on Shakespeare to a mass student audience, is strongly reminiscent of Fritz Leiber. To Mr Carnell it "accurately portrays the immense advantages the coming generations will reap from this new method of teaching"; to me it confirms my mistrust of educational technology. But the argument's not a walkover; this is a good tale, deftly handled and thoughtfully presented.

In the glow produced by this competent beginning let me also put R.W. Mackelworth's 'Two Rivers', a controlled-environment story which belongs with dozens of others in the line from NON-STOP and 'Universe' - derivative but just on the pleasant side of boredom - and Joseph Green's 'Death and the Sensperience Poet', which posits a psychedelic poet, a psychedelic flycatcher, and how the one is better than soldiers at beating t'other.

Now we come to something really outstanding. It's a long time since I read anything quite so bad as L.Davison's 'Aspect of Environment'. Buried in this piece, and taking up about two of its twenty pages, is a nice little idea of a hollow planet which, somehow, is a naturally-built computer, plotting its own course (Cont)

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corrections on its orbit. But the author doesn't seem to take much interest in this; he's too anxious to prattle about the two men (one of them mad) and the woman (beautiful and detached) on his spaceship, which he does with such crudity, such a fund of cliché and general ineptitude that I found it difficult to read past the second page.

Lee Harding's 'Soul Survivor' is about a ghost in a memory machine.

In seven stories, then, judging fairly leniently, we have two (the Hill and the Davison) that just won't do, and one (the Mackelworth) that is - well, tolerable. The others, though not all to my taste, do have something to commend them - some degree of originality, some evidence of imagination at work, and at least a minimum degree of competence in the writing. These proportions aren't disgracefully bad; you can find anthologies that do no better. So why do I feel so dissatisfied? Partly I think, it's a general air of staleness, a sense of dull, dead professionalism; these stories generate no excitement, there is no zest or flair in the writing, and though they do offer some originality, it doesn't really go beyond a sort of mechanical inventiveness.

It's difficult to justify general, negative judgements like this; I can't avoid the suspicion that this staleness and tiredness are in me, not in the stories I was reading. However, I do have some more specific criticism to offer. The root of the weakness in these stories lies in their human characters. This is most obvious in 'Aspect of Environment', but I think it applies to all the others to some extent, and in the same general way. There's a curious blankness about these writers when they're dealing with human beings. This needn't matter too much if they'd concentrate on telling their stories, which is all anyone expects them to do anyway; but they seem to be aware of this weakness, and bothered by it, and in worrying away at it they produce the patches of cliché, the laboured sentimentality and the general air of strain that make for such stale reading. At least I think this is the explanation - it's very difficult to pin down exactly.

This obsessive - and fruitless - concern with "human interest" gives John Carnell's editing a rather dated feel. That in itself is no ground for criticism - after all, until recently the SF scene in Britain looked like a display of geological strata, with everyone from John Russell Fearn to Michael Butterworth aluve and moving simultaneously. Real writers like Brian Aldiss and John Brunner can follow their noses with relative ease; lesser writers like L.P. Davies and John Blackburn can produce fresh, relaxed, unpretentious entertainment; there's even room for a writer like D.G. Compton to have got practically lost in there. In the middle of all this confident activity, it hardly seems to matter that John Carnell is stuck in his awkward posture of trying to "humanise" SF (or whatever it is he thinks he's doing).

Except that there's a part of the middle ground of SF quite close to John Carnell's allotment, which doesn't seem to be getting the cultivation it would take. I mean the area of serious, unspectacular, literate SF represented by D.G. Compton and by SF Impulse in the last few issues. I don't suppose this has got anything to do with John Carnell, really - if he's got his audience and they're happy, then good luck to him - but I wish Keith Roberts was still writing and editing science fiction...

Tony Sudbery, 1970.

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ORBIT 4, Ed. Damon Knight, (Berkley Medallion, 75c)

Reviewed by Bruce Gillespie

Readers of my review of ORBIT 3 (SF Commentary-7) may remember that I thought the third volume "plumbed the depths of 1968". At the time I did not know whether to blame the diver or the quality of the pearls. After all, 1968 was not exactly a peak year for science fiction.

Now the pearls have picked up, but I still wonder just what the diver, Damon Knight, looks for when he compiles these volumes. As with Infinity, Nova, Warp, Dangerous Visions, New Writings and the like, the editor's influence is perhaps even greater than in the magazines. Knight offers (presumably) very good rates, automatic Nebula consideration and instant fame to any author he publishes. He must receive good manuscripts by the barrowload.

Then why are first-class, completely satisfactory stories so rare in ORBIT collections? Why are there so many near-misses, when often the same authors have published great stories in F&SF or Amazing Stories? The only explanation I can offer is that Knight, (like Robert Hoskins) has a talent for sniffing out predictability. Harlan Ellison, Jacob Transue, and R.A. Lafferty are three authors in this collections that promise a sniff of something rare, than - voila! - offer pork and beans every time.

In 'Shattered Like A Glass Goblin', Harlan Ellison takes us into his version of a hippie hang-out:

'It was a self-contained little universe, bordered on the north by acid and mescaline, on the south by pot and peyote, on the east by speed and redballs, on the west by downers and amphetamines. There were eleven people living in The Hill. Eleven, and Rudy.'

This is already the cliché of the sixties. Rudy, a drop-out from the Army, invades The Hill to fetch back his girl, finds that she doesn't want to be fetched back, finds that he doesn't want to go back. Soon he goes as high as them all, although Ellison's description of the process of conversion is more than vague. But - and here is where you sit up and groan loudly - Rudy hears some odd noises in the house, like rats being torn to bits, and when he goes to investigate... I won't tell you. If I told you the end you would have no reason at all for reading the story. (Ever heard of that neurotic drop-out, H.P. Lovecraft? Harlan Ellison has just discovered him).

Jacob Transue's 'This Corruptible' features that very original idea (100 years old and no younger) of body-changing. This time it is a Nasty Guy who forces an experimenter to transfer his brain into the body of a Nice Guy. But the Bad Guy gets it in the end. You wouldn't expect anything else in ORBIT 4, would you? And the last of the "typical" stories, 'One At A Time' (R.A. Lafferty) gives us its Big Idea in the first two pages of the story, and then explains it carefully again in the last paragraph. As in Harlan Ellison's story, if I told you the end you would have no need to read the rest of the story.

The only quality, then, that we may expect in this collection must come from authors capable of making art out of tired ideas, even if they cannot dispense with these gimmicks altogether. Charles Harness is certainly one of the few SF writers who has faced up to, and beaten, the hoariest SF clichés. In 'Probable Cause' he tackles, or rather, he shows his dominance over the problems of psychic powers, and the horrible stories usually written about them:

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Harness manages to write a very good story here, because he does not make his SF gimmick the centre of that story. The author's observations of the personal relationships within one of the most important American institutions, the Supreme Court, interest us from the first page. Happily, this is not the usual cardboard "Supreme Court" that we find in science fiction stories. Justice Benjamin Edmonds is guardian of the evidence in a case involving psi, a case which tests all the most important principles of the court. 'Probable Cause' tells of the multiple testing of one man, of all the individuals in the Court, and the Court itself as an institution.

We see none of the absurd melodramatics of stories like ADVISE AND CONSENT. Harness' Justices are perhaps a bit too nice to be true -- but they are "nice" in the way most of us are, civilised enough to allow us to grind our personal axes without toppling our whole society. A man is accused of assassinating a President; the convicting evidence against the accused was provided by a clairvoyant; the same clairvoyant hands over mysterious evidence which may free the accused. Every principle of evidence creaks under the strain, not with screams but in quiet, tense scenes: 'It was Friday Conference again.

"We have been discussing Tyson now for over two hours. Agreement seems impossible." The voice of the Chief Justice was measured, controlled. But Edmonds thought he detected a note of grim amusement. His other colleagues, in contrast, seemed morose, almost sullen, as though only now they realised certain impossible aspects of their task.'

Harness runs away from none of these "certain impossible tasks", but he solves them without the insufferable breeziness of a Heinlein.

'Probable Cause' is not the editor's only lucky strike in the volume. Kate Wilhelm's stories have become fixtures in the ORBIT volumes; fortunately she manages to collect awards and write very good stories like 'Windsong'. But even so, Damon Knight still cannot escape the accusation of predictability. The stereotype of the middle-aged-man-with-lost-dreams is surely as old as storytelling. The idea found its most effective science fictional exposure in David Ely's book and John Frankenheimer's film of Seconds.

Perhaps there are no new ideas. But every author in every new story may have entirely new ways of seeing the same world that we all look at. In this volume, Harness, Wilhelm, and Carol Emshwiller (in 'Animal') tackle the job with honesty and ability. The others write like schoolboys who've just discovered trigonometry and call it advanced calculus. Bad writing has its place, but I would ask Damon Knight not to call it original or good, and to reject it wherever possible.

Bruce Gillespie, 1970

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THE BEAST THAT SHOUTED "LOVE!" By Harlan Ellison (Avon)

Reviewed by Brian M. Stableford.

This book is bad. I wish it weren't, because I have a very high regard for Harlan Ellison's writing ability. In fact, I find it slightly annoying that recently I have been presented with any number of books by a great number of authors, none of which -- by virtue of their provenance -- have any right to be bad. But they all are, for the simple reason that it is all too easy these days to surrender all pretense to quality in favour of fast production. (Harlan Ellison is the guy who once said "I would rather write it good than write it by Tuesday", but he didn't really mean it.)

(Cont/d)..

There was a time, some thirteen or so years ago, when Harlan Ellison was an uninspiring member of Ziff-Davis' school of production-line writers, along with another of today's major influences, Robert Silverberg. (Even then he had a nasty mind, but it was a rather ordinary nasty mind). A collection of his minor works known miscellaneously as ELLISON WONDERLAND or EARTHMAN GO HOME was around in the early sixties, and Ace published a double coupling an expanded version of THE SOUND OF THE SCYTHE with some of his short stories. So it could not be said that prior to his "discovery" in 1966 Ellison was in the least unfamiliar. And thus - perhaps unfortunately - there was a vast supply of material readily available for exploitation in the rush which followed the Hugo and Nebula awards to "Repent Harlequin!" Said The TickTockman'.

One collection (PAINGOD) had already been released by Pyramid, and in the introduction to that volume Ellison claimed that another collection which he was trying to sell could attract no interest. 'Repent Harlequin's success apparently provided the necessary inspiration, because I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM duly appeared in 1967. These two collections contained the best of Ellison's work taken from the whole of his career. They showed Ellison as a brilliant craftsman, and the second collection contains several stories that rank with the best in the field. DANGEROUS VISIONS followed, and Harlan Ellison was firmly ensconced in the front rank of SF writing. His name on a story was worth money to the magazines and his name on a book was worth money to the publishers. It is obvious from the extent of Ellison's complaints (there is no other author who devotes quite so much time and effort to bitching as Ellison does) that Fred Pohl, at least, was less than delirious over brand-new Harlan specials, but the name was more important than the story, and both Galaxy and If carried lots of Ellison.

The consequences of all this are twofold - one; that certain publishers who toyed with the idea of throwing together an Ellison collection went ahead, and two; that the backlog of Ellison hackwork plus Ellison's new-found ability to sell any old thing which he wrote (or had written years before) ensured that there was ample material to fill such collections.

There are, to my knowledge, three such collections available and one to come (The three are; FROM THE LAND OF FEAR, SCIENCE FICTION GREATS No.13 and the present collection which I'm supposed to be reviewing, although I haven't actually got around to discussing yet. The one to come is the collection of collaborative stories between Ellison and all-and-sundry.) Not one of these collections can be said to represent Ellison's talent in the way that I HAVE NO MOUTH was. All the best was already in print. Belmont, Sol Cohen and Avon had only the bones to pick. Quantitatively, there was Ellison aplenty, but qualitatively...

The whole point of the matter is that Harlan Ellison is a man who can, and has, written great stories - but not very often. He is not a skilled writer, a practised tradesman. He is an intuitive, experimental, creative writer. Most of his stories begin as images in his mind, not as plots or characters. All of his best stories are built around these single visionary motifs. Often, it has taken him several years to bring a short story from conception to completion. If he translates his ideas quickly into words, then he fails far, far more frequently than he succeeds. He persistently remarks upon the editorial interference to which his contemporary work is subject, but in many cases this amendment of his work is very understandable. He has said, in characteristically Ellisonian fashion: "For some time now I have been agonisingly aware that I am a talent of considerable dimensions encased in a man of very limited possibilities." (FROM THE LAND OF FEAR). But he persists in forcing his talent when it will not flow. That is why there is so much less-than-satisfactory Ellison about, and that is why this collection is full of it. (Cont/d)

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Ellison says of BEAST, in the introduction: "I come to this book with clean hands, knowing I have done my work well." But this is exactly what he has not done. He has wedged his ideas into vehicles which are inadequate to carry them.

A closer look at BEAST now (at last).....

There are fifteen stories here, three from the Backlog of the fifties, twelve from the glut of the sixties. The prefaces which usually introduce Ellison stories individually are missing. Perhaps this is not surprising. Apart from the fact that his verbal diarrhoea was bound to start boring even him, most of these stories do not deserve their separate identities and relationships with the author. They are products of a different mode of thinking.

The title-story makes no attempt to be a story, in conventional terms. It is simply a word-presentation of its image. It is effective, in its way, but for those who are not wholly in sympathy with its image - for those who do not feel as deeply, or in the same way as Ellison - then it is totally meaningless. It might as well not exist. Its non-linearity cannot take an unsympathetic mind in hand and lead it to understanding, or even ask it to understand. It is simply a statement, a picture. Ellison won't sympathise with you if you don't see the point, or if you don't see the point of making the point. But I will, because I believe that if an author wants to make a point then he should be prepared to exert himself to put it across, instead of just writing it down and then sneering at its detractors.

'Along the Scenic Route' (alias 'Dogfight of 101') is the old Ellison peeping through. Its gimmick is old; cars as suits of armour, highways as duelling pitches. Its story is even older; the little guy who comes up against the big, tough pro and wins by using one that isn't in the textbook. Why bother?

'Phoenix' and 'The Ptil Pawob Division' were written at the Clarion College Workshop, when Ellison was asking a story a day from his students. They are examples of the trivial trash which you get for demanding a story a day from anybody. Their ideas are devoid of inspiration or imagination, their construction is cursory and uninvolved. 'Asleep: With Still Hands' is better. It is a neat concept in a neat story. It is average, middle-of-the-road. It is the sort of story which one might expect a Harlan Ellison to write in order to keep the engine ticking over. It is competent, if unexceptional, and should be in here filling in the interstices between stronger stuff. It looks lonely in the wilderness.

'Santa Claus vs. S.P.I.D.E.R.' is fast, quasi-funny, message-loaded farce. A pot-pourri of politics and puerility. I like to think that if Ellison had bothered to think, then this story would have been stillborn.

'Try a Dull Knife' and 'The Place With No Name' are real, solid Ellison. They, along with 'A Boy And His Dog' right at the tail end, personify the Ellison mood, the Ellison style and the Ellison message. For my money the best this book has to offer is 'The Place With No Name'. It is a mystical story which takes its reader, and its protagonist, clear out of this world. It does what so many of Ellison's failures do not - it leads the reader to what it has to say. It lives, instead of merely existing. 'Try A Dull Knife' is more human, and that much more convincing.

'White on White' is a vignette about the abominable snowman. If you've read one vignette about snowmen, you've read 'em all. The three backlog stories are 'Run For The Stars' (SFA 1957), 'Are You Listening?' (Amz 1958), and 'S.R.O.' (Amz 1957). The first is a rough, tough and ridiculous story about enemy aliens. The second is about the people you never notice. S.R.O. is also about aliens. It is not rough or tough, but it sure is ridiculous.

'Worlds To Kill' might well be mistaken for part of the backlog. It's old-style Ellison about world-smashers that would have looked good in SF Adventures. But it would have been mercilessly cut. The Ellison of today is more verbose, more concerned with his message. I don't think the message sits well in this matrix - at least, not in the way Ellison imbeds it.

(Cont/d)...

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'Shattered Like A Glass Goblin' is a sick horror story. So is 'A Boy And His Dog', the last story in the book. 'Goblin' recounts the adventures of a youth returning from the army to search for his loved one. He finds here in a den of drug-laden vice, and drifts slowly into her new kind of world, which distorts into an elegant surrealist hell. Ellison reports that the drug crowd hates this story. But it is no more anti-drugs than anti-sex. It is only anti-human.

'A Boy And His Dog' is a different kind of horror story - an epic of a post-war future where boys and dogs run wild in the cruel, hard world up top, and all the nice people live underground. It has a vicious, disgusting sweetness. It reminds me slightly of the ironic CLOCKWORK ORANGE which Anthony Burgess wrote some years ago. Ellison loves this story, and so do I. It is a magnificent sick shaggy dog story. People tell me that no-one could be sicker than I, but while I like to think that is true, Harlan Ellison is an undoubted competitor.

And yet even 'A Boy And His Dog' has a surfeit of words. Shaggy dogs must necessarily be long in the hair, and sick ones more than simple groaners. But their length should be concerned with studied irrelevancy and shadowed preparation for the big crunch. The build-up here has too much of the climax already in it. It is Harlan Ellison's message again, oozing from his fingers into whatever he writes.

What is this message? If I had to describe it, then I would have to be very careful. One is always in danger of confusing other people's motives. But I don't have to. Ellison, talkative, bombastic, arrogant fellow that he is, has written his message down in simple, unequivocal terms, again and again.

"I have drawn my parallels, have sighted down the gun, have sounded the clarion call. To what end?

"Perhaps finally to codify for myself what my stories have been saying for the last few years; that man is building for himself a darkness of world that is turning him mad; that the pressures are too great, the machines too often break down, and the alien alone cannot make it. We must think new thoughts; we must love as we have never suspected we can love; and if there is honour to violence, we must get it on at once, have done with it, try to live with our guilt for having so done, and move on." (BEAST).

He describes the hypothetical unifying scheme of PAINGOD: "we are all inescapably responsible not only for our own actions, but for our lack of action, the morality and ethic of our silences and our avoidances, the shared guilt of hypocrisy, voyeurism, and cowardice; what might be called 'the spectator-sport social conscience'".

And, with reference to 'Prowler in the City at the Edge of Time': "That is the message of the story. You are the monsters." (DANGEROUS VISIONS)

That's what Ellison has to tell us. It's garbled, even in those brief statements, because Ellison is a compulsive garbler. He writes that way - he must think that way. But he is, truly and honestly, a man with a great talent. He has powerful visions, and when he writes them right, they are great stories: 'Eyes of Dust'; 'Repent Harlequin'; 'All the Sounds of Fear'; 'Delusion for a Dragonslayer'; 'Pretty Maggy Moneyeyes' and 'Prowler in the City'.

I hope you will enjoy at least part of this collection. I hope you will be patient with Ellison, even if you do not, even though he would never be patient with you.

Brian M. Stableford.

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FOURTEEN PAGES of reviews, plus Alexei Panshin... that's surely enough even for a "special high-power review issue". Unfortunately I daren't try to make room for the other excellent reviews in my possession - Pam Bulmer on SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS (Aldiss); Tony Sudbery on INDOCTRINAIRE (Priest); Robert Conquest on THREE FOR TOMORROW; Bob Rickard on ANYWHEN (Blish); Bruce Gillespie on AND CHAOS DIED (Russ); and Philip Strick on UBIK (Dick). James Blish will also review SOLARIS, by Stanislaw Lem. All this, I hope, in the next issue. PRW

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## VIEW OF SUBURBIA

By Christopher Priest

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I had originally intended to pick up a loose end conveniently supplied by Tony Sudbery in the last SPECULATION, and revisit Gully Foyle and his dreadful, vengeful mission. But what with practical difficulties--not the least of which was re-reading the book--and the thought that the result might be altogether too worthy and dull, I never got around to looking at more than the first forty pages.

One point which Tony did raise which appealed to me, was that granted that a film was to be made of TIGER! TIGER!, which actor could play the leading role? A study of the first few pages supplies a fascinating character-scenario: "Education: none...skills: none...merits: none...recommendations: none." Foyle is said to be: "A man of physical strength and intellectual potential stunted by a lack of imagination." To my mind, he has Anthony Quinn stamped all over him, and only the prospect of seeing that inevitable Zorba-dance in a spacesuit prevents me from pushing the notion further.

But one thing I did find from these first pages was a clue to the reason why Foyle has somehow become science fiction's all-time Great Character. This in itself is a strange thing, since Alfred Bester goes to some pains from the outset to make an ideograph of his protagonist. His slate is deliberately blank, and any attributes of "character" are put there by the reader. So I suppose that in one sense at least, the book works.

The clue, though. Why do readers latch on so faithfully to this thick and unattractive thug?

It's all there on page 18 of my copy...a display of sheer journalistic brilliance; catching the reader's eye, tugging at his heart-strings, orienting his interest unbreakably around Foyle. A piece of simple sentimentality with dazzling effect. Read on.

For a hundred and seventy days, Foyle has been surviving in the wrecked spaceship Nomad. Then appears the sister-ship Vorga, and he seems to be on the point of rescue. He fires off a distress signal, then: "Foyle darted back to his locker and replenished his spacesuit again. He began to weep. He started to gather his possessions...a faceless clock which he kept wound just to listen to the ticking, a lug wrench with a hand-shaped handle which he would hold in lonely moments, an egg-slicer upon whose wires he would pluck primitive tunes..."

Isn't that irresistible? Who could fail to respond to such a hero? There's enough unstated emotion in those few lines to fuel the fire of even the most unimaginative buff, and keep it burning for the rest of the 80,000 words. Nothing else matters; whatever the author may say about Foyle's IQ and ability, the reader has worked out for himself that under that unlovable exterior there beats the heart of a sensitive and lonely man.

And that, I think, is what TIGER! TIGER! is all about. Its technique stuns the reader into easy acceptance of the most crude and roughshod emotional

situations, while confusing the eye and mind with a positive orgy of plot and typography.

But journalistically, viewing the book as an exercise in evoking response in the reader, seeing it conceptually as a gross fabrication of literary device and technique, it seems to me to be first of all admirable, and secondly execrable.

But then, but then.... TIGER! TIGER! is just one book in a whole field of writing. Used as a model--as indeed it has been, sometimes by writers who ought really to have known better--it can only produce watered-down versions of the above faults.

I found myself, on this attempt at a second reading, trying to work out the political affiliation of Foyle and came to the conclusion that he didn't have any. I think that a writer's protagonists should be political, using the word in its widest sense. This, in a nutshell, is why Mike Moorcock's THE BLACK CORRIDOR--for all its faults and its tacit obeisance to Bester--is a better book than TIGER! TIGER!

But raising the topic of politics in the context of science fiction is as hazardous an exercise, in fan circles, as trying to talk seriously about sexual content.

If you've read the earlier instalments of this column, you'll have realized by now that I am feeling generally disillusioned about science fiction. The rationale of at least three contributions has been what's-gone-wrong-with-SF?, and there are as many answers to that as there are books being published.

Politically, though, there may be something here. Think for a moment of those examples of Russian SF you might have tried to read. (I have...unsuccessfully.) Overriding any other objections you might have had about the writing or construction, wasn't there a continual alienation caused by the inherent political assumptions?

Flooded as we are with the mass-media of the West, maybe we overlook a similar alienation by politics in our own science fiction stories. In other words, that there is a political content, but that it is one of assumption (and thus, it follows, of a propaganda type) rather than of deliberate insertion.

I remember a novel by John Beynon Harris (the title escapes me) where the characters go in a spaceship to Mars. The first thing the spacemen do on landing is to erect a Union Jack and claim the territory in the name of the British Commonwealth and Empire. This is a crude example, and I think it's fair to say that few writers would do such a big-booted thing today. Even the Apollo astronauts, with their ludicrous, wire-reinforced flag, managed to dissociate national interests from the gesture--or at least, they said they did. But we still find, in one novel after another, that the galaxy is visualized as some massive barbarian real-estate, fit for the colonizing thereof. How many Western SF writers could believably dream of it as a kind of mega-collective farm?

By its very nature science fiction is a political art-form. By this, I don't mean political of the Right or Left as some would have us believe, but one which deals with the essence of politics: with people, with controls, with revolution from those controls, with planning, with mistakes, with personal initiative and public folly...anything that conducts a dialogue with possibilities or futures is essentially political.

It is propaganda, though, that estranges a thinking public. (SF readers... do we think?) It is Enoch Powell's propaganda that alienates, not his policies. It was the propaganda inherent in the film 'Easy Rider' (albeit of a wholly different kind) that estranged me from a point of view I would have otherwise gladly

embraced. Lord Haw-Haw, Tokyo Rose and Hanoi Hannah sowed (and sow) the occasional seed of doubt, but were (are) largely derided. Do you wholly believe and trust the attitude of the Western press towards the Soviet presence in Czechoslovakia? Do you---equally---subscribe to the Kremlin view that British troops have invaded Northern Ireland? It's all a question of point of view.

My point, if it isn't already stated in clear enough terms, is that science fiction begs the political question, and relies instead on assumptions.

But not all art, of course, is political in nature. There is at least one kind of art---music---which can only be made to have political content or meaning with the greatest of difficulty. (I'm excluding song-lyrics from this massive generalization.) Though there are them as try....

The other day we went to an illustrated lecture on Beethoven at the Purcell Room. It was only as we went in that we noticed that the lecturer had been flown over from a university in East Berlin, and that the lecture had been sponsored by the British Communist Party. After a long piece of introductory preamble (in which it was claimed that Beethoven was one of the first heroes of the proletariat, and spent his life planning to overthrow the nobility) the pre-recorded musical illustrations began. It was just after a section of the Pastoral Symphony---where we heard clearly the ploughshares of the peasants being beaten into swords---that we walked out. Alienated.

George Orwell, who can be cited as one of the best writers of fiction this century, once said: "My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.'" I write it because there is some lie I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing."

While being ready to agree with anyone who might counter with the remark that what was good for Orwell isn't necessarily good for everyone else, I think there's a lot in this.

While I would argue, as I already have, that a composer like Beethoven would not have partisan motivation, I think a political (or at the very least, a moral) stand is a prerequisite for a writer. Political coherence adds as much verisimilitude to writing as does historical, scientific, geographical, astronomical or psychological coherence. It is more subtle and more difficult to achieve---and it is easiest with which to dispense---but I think on balance that it is the lack of this, or partially of this, which is losing us readers.

Some may not agree with me that SF is losing its audience. I don't have figures to hand, but in a growing population SF sales remain curiously static. People are always saying to me that SF is better now than it has ever been...but I don't agree. To me, most current science fiction is vapid and stale. It lacks purpose and vitality. I think this is because of its political naivete. Do you agree? Do you care?

I don't want or expect science fiction to be about committees or governments or union-meetings; that's not at all what I mean. But we will agree, I think, that any SF writer who proposed that the vacuum of space was breathable or that the Moon was bigger than the Earth would lack scientific credibility, and quickly lose the reader's mandate. In another sense, political incompetence is just as unbeguil-

ing. My first entry in this column deplored the lack of a really good proletarian science fiction writer. That lack is still apparent, and I maintain that there's a nice wad of bourgeois royalty-statements waiting for the first incumbent.

-- Christopher Priest, 1970





good, but when I saw the glass coming I realised that Jeni, sitting next to me was in a miniskirt and more than somewhat vulnerable to flying shards of broken glass. I hoped to catch the thing on my foot, ideally on the sole of my shoe. Unfortunately I was so taken aback I was slow to react, and I'd barely got my foot off the floor before the glass arrived - so it cut my shin open. (At least it broke down on the main floor, not on the dais where we were.)

This was, if you want it documented in full, the 'parting shot' in some sort of diatribe concerning Tom Disch - a good friend with whom Marjorie and I stayed last time we were in New York and in whom the thrower of glasse seemed to feel he had some personal stake. I'd just read a stochastic sonnet he and I had put together and been well pleased with. However, during not only my reading but Ted Lucie-Smith's and Jeni's as well, Mike Moorcock and his cronies had been sitting in a circle about two-thirds of the way along the hall, talking, laughing and passing a bottle of whiskey, and in general making such a row that people in the audience who had come in especially to hear the visiting poets - people of some distinction in their field, as readers of Spec will probably realise - were shushing and scowling at them. There were a great many other places open to people who wanted to laugh, chat and drink; however, these so-and-so's preferred to do it where they could turn the action into an insult (not to me, because I can take care of myself, but to a couple of distinguished visitors donating their services to the Con without payment, when they could certainly have been elsewhere and better treated).

At the point where I judged the audience, as well as the readers, had had enough of this disgusting behaviour, I said that if it would not interfere too much with the conversation of Mike Moorcock and his pals, I would call on the next reader... and it took off from there. I've seen Mike Dempsey since, and when he's sober he turns out to be, as you might expect, a perfectly pleasant guy. I would far rather have let the whole episode drop into the past, scar or no scar (I have others - lots of others!)...

But alas! I do not get the chance. I find here in Spec the following from Michael Moorcock: "I also made three separate attempts to make the peace with John Brunner, but his paranoia has gone too far, it seems."

So here is why I took a highly subjective lead-in to my subject. At the time in question, my right shoe was squelching with blood. I probably wasn't in a particularly peaceable mood. To have this diagnosed as 'paranoia' is symptomatic of precisely and exactly the problem which is currently depressing me.

I went around for years on end, saying that I'm working in a wonderful field - SF - because in general the people in it are tolerant, friendly, easy to get on with, likable, and what-have-you. As recently as March '69 when I was in Rio for the SF Symposium there, I talked with one of the girls who had helped with the arrangements for both the Symposium itself and the film festival which it was run in conjunction with. And she said, without prompting, that it had been very refreshing to read the letters from the people invited for the Symposium after reading those from the movie stars and producers and directors because whereas in the latter case there was liable to be back-biting, and slander and "I hope so-and-so isn't coming because if he is I can't!", in the former case the tenor of the letter was more likely to be: "Thanks for the invitation, I'd love to come, and have you thought of asking X, Y and Z as well because I'm sure they'd enjoy it?"

There are a handful of people around the SF field nowadays who seem determined to destroy the atmosphere of goodwill which I over so many years enjoyed so much. They appear to have fallen into the ancient trap of believing that you can't get to the top without treading on other people en route. I happen to believe that there's a lot of room at the top, for everyone; if anybody is interested in documentary references, you'll find them in - for instance -

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The Author, the journal of the Society of Authors, where I've now and then done what I can to give other people a leg up, dropping practical hints, sharing what I can of my personal experience as a working writer trying to make a comfortable living (And various fanzines, and the old New Worlds, and other odd places, come to think of it.) Out there, there's an audience numbered in scores of millions; you don't expect them all to think, "This author is God and all the rest are cheap second-raters!" At least I don't. Now and then I have the impression that some of my colleagues have been infected with this aspiration. It makes me very sad.

Maybe it's a hangover from this notion that there's a tightly-confined science-fiction field and someone can be King of the Castle. How far do you have to look for proof that this isn't so? Surely, with Brian's Hand-Reared Boy a best-seller, Mike's Behold the Man bought for filming, Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five an international success, and all the rest of the breaches in the dyke, we can grow out of this adolescent - indeed puerile - misconception! We are out there in the Big World, like it or not, and anyone who can't recognise the Big World as big enough must be suffering from incipient megalomania."

John J. Pierce, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Weston: "I was glad to see Tony Sudbery's analysis of Bob Shaw's THE PALACE OF ETERNITY. I had written a shorter review for Renaissance blasting the novel because it started out with a realistic situation and then suddenly turned into a spiritualistic mish-mosh. Shaw was very upset at me for this - how, he asked in Science Fiction Review, could I possibly believe that his "egons" were spirits of the dead, or any other sort of mystical concept? I had, he insisted, misread the book completely. Well, unless Sudbery is telepathic and read my mind, he has "read into" the novel the same "misinterpretation" that I did. Or, more likely, what both he and I saw was in the book to begin with, and really was a stupid idea. Don't get me wrong - I still think Shaw is one of the most talented writers in the field. But I do hope he will stick to what he's best at - developing the logical and emotional consequences of S.F. situations - instead of aiming for spurious profundity with these jack-in-the-box endings.

Then we have Franz Rottensteiner on Roger Zelazny, and he is a horse of a different colour. What's Rottensteiner's complaint, really? The main one seems to be that Zelazny isn't a social realist, and that therefore he can't be an artist (an argument buttressed by the old cliché that an artist must reflect his time. I guess Shakespeare was a hack too - he didn't write about the London slums of 1600, or about the corruption of the Elizabethan establishment). Of course, I could point out that not everyone agrees that social realism and artistry are synonymous, or point out that science fiction is about times other than his own. But I don't think this would impress Herr Rottensteiner - he knows what Art is, by God; he read about it in a textbook someplace, without a doubt. (I wrote Zelazny two years ago that the New Wave critics would turn on him after a while - perhaps I am a minor prophet).

Fred Pohl's reply to James Blish was refreshingly sane. I wonder just how many times critics have used the ad hominem argument - "If you don't appreciate Novel X, that just shows what a lazy, illiterate slob you are!" Blish should know better - anyone can use that same argument. In fact, Ayn Rand's former lieutenant Nathaniel Branden once argued that anyone who couldn't see that her style was poetic and her speeches not repetitive was a fuzzy thinker and a bastard - sounded just like Blish on Brian Aldiss!

Curiouser and curiouser. I mean about New Worlds. Here Michael Moorcock says the New Wave was all a big conspiracy. And I hadn't even said that myself - I had thought it was merely a gathering of self-deluded "trendy" writers blindly trying to ape the intellectual establishment. Then there's John Foyster with his

revelations about the PR surrounding J.G. Ballard and the rest of the New Worlds group. And your report on the New Wavicles' behaviour at the Eastercon. Does Richard Geis subscribe to Speculation any more? How about his friend and mentor Harlan Ellison? They might want to read No. 26 before they spout off again about my "paranoia".

Ian Williams, Sunderland

Dear Pete, "The letter by Michael Moorcock interested me. I can't make up my mind whether he is a sincere, sensitive person with genuine doubts about his own talent, or just somebody who wallows in maudlin self pity and virtually stands up and begs to be crucified. Perhaps there's more of him in Karl Glogauer than most people might have thought. If I take seriously what he said about his own work it is rather boosting to my own ego as recently I wrote a review of BEHOLD THE MAN, in which I discussed it and a number of his other writings, and came to the same conclusions about his failings as a writer that he himself admits to. But getting back to Moorcock, half of me felt sorry for him, the other was highly sceptical. He certainly does present an enigmatic face to the world; do you know whether it's genuine or not?

I was tempted to write a refutation of Brian M. Stableford's review of CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS, but as I've only read half the book in IF I'll wait until my copy of the Faber edition arrives, read it, think about it, and then tear him to pieces! So there....

Whilst Tony Sudbery did make some good points about QUICKSAND, for me the book's appeal lay in its bleak austerity, the drab grimness that suffused everything. It was a melancholy grey novel and this cheerlessness was its strong point. Tony Sudbery is right that it is a skeletal novel but what he fails to see is that that was Brunner's intention, to build up the depressing atmosphere, in a near-Kafkaesque manner and plod remorselessly to its logical conclusion of death. I confess that the latter part of Sudbery's review irritated me - ghod, what, more analogies between SF and music. I was fed up with Kingsley Amis harping on the theme, Peter Roberts (in CYNIC) annoyed me even more, and now to see it chuntered on about in Spec.....

I did think about trying to review YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN for you, but I neither liked it enough to garner much enthusiasm, or disliked it enough to do a hatchet job. It isn't a bad book and it isn't a good one: there are flaws - like the stupidity of keeping the nature of Chaney, the protagonist, a secret (and dam Piers Anthony for spoiling it for me in any case), as, if it had been stated in the beginning Tucker could have done a far more interesting job of building up the characterisation and thus adding far more depth - the book is very slow moving to begin with and tends to be a little boring. On the other hand, his style is pleasing, the last seventy pages are superb, and the plot is a very good one. The book is like a seesaw tilting oneway and then the next.

The printed version of James Blish's talk shows how inconsistent, or should I say self-contradictory, his views are. Whilst most of it was generally interesting and which I agreed with, there were a couple of items with which I vehemently disagree. (I'm afraid I phrased that last sentence very badly). To be specific: Blish states in answer to a question..... 'the ideas don't matter anyway, it's the way they're handled that matters.' Yet he seems to strongly object to the borrowing of techniques whether the result is satisfactory or otherwise; he objected to Brunner's use of Des Passos despite the fact that Brunner used the technique better than Dos Passos ever did. Similarly, he seems to think that RIDERS OF THE PURPLE WAGE won a Hugo purely on its slight borrowing from Joyce. Such an opinion I find contemptible.

RIDERS OF THE PURPLE WAGE won a Hugo because it is the finest novella ever written in the field and I'll say why I think it is. As a science fiction story, it extrapolates a society adapted to live in an advanced technology (the technology itself being well worked out) and its relationships with its environment. It is a story about people, mostly young people, a number of whom (particularly the protagonist) care deeply, whether it is about life or art or another person; and such it also has a relevance for today. The writing is very distinct, certainly unique in SF, taking the form of a comic, punning style that has depth and enables the writer to toss off complex ideas in a very short space. And, finally, it has a message: that an individual should keep his integrity, for if he loses that he has nothing.

On Willis McNelly: Yes, thank heavens there's still somebody left who knows exactly what he is talking about. His speech I regarded as the best of the four. SF is going places and mainstream is getting short of originality so it isn't surprising that major novellists are dabbling in it. I've only read about a third of Nabokov's ADA but I got the distinct impression that it was fine literature and fine SF -- whereas GILES GOAT-BOY is just a tedious bore that fails as either. I wish there were more clear thinkers like McNelly who can talk sense in a straight-forward intelligent manner."

James Blish, Oxon.

Dear Pete, "A few comments on Issue 27, deriving entirely from Mike Moorcock's remarks. As your footnotes show, Mike is a very poor reporter, regardless of what other merits he may have. His discussion of his argument with Lester del Rey at the 1967 Worldcon in New York is a case in point; I was present as was my wife, and we both recall that Mike seemed to be trying to 'snow' Lester, an undertaking likely to end badly for the snowier (which was doubtless what Terry Carr was trying to signal to Mike). Mike goes on: "Del Rey was in an odd, belligerent mood, presumably very drunk..." Les loves to argue on any side of any question at any time; there was nothing at all odd about this, and if he was slightly more belligerent than usual, Mike's attempt to assume a superior literary attitude invited it.

As for "presumably very drunk" I will say nothing about Mike's own state of slothitude at the time beyond the fact that it quite deterred me from trying to introduce myself to him and ask him a question or two: but everyone who knows Les (as I have since 1946) also knows that he sometimes has a little wine with dinner, and at parties carries about one half-empty glass of beer the entire night, and that's all.

I saw one of Mike's attempts to "make the peace with John Brunner" at the SciCon: it took place at a table Judy and I were sharing with the Brunners, yourself, and several other people just after the infamous poetry session. John, you will recall, was slightly in shock, as was entirely understandable, and Mike despite Marjorie's level-headed attempts at intermediation never spoke to him at all. Did Mike think his mere willingness to obtrude himself constituted an attempt to make peace? If so, I think that very odd indeed, and beg leave to doubt that any other such attempts I did not see could have been much more sensitive.

Finally -- and on quite another subject -- I quite agree with Mike that BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD is an important work, and shall be saying so again in a review in F&SF and in the final chapter of MORE ISSUES AT HAND. (To be published by Advent in the near future. PRW) Since I have made a point of reading every word of Aldiss' since his early appearance in the States in Fred Pohl's STAR books; was directly responsible for the Signet publication of his first novel over there; have had one of his novels (AN AGE) dedicated to me; and have

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in hand a long letter of comment on my Speculation review of BAREFOOT -- almost a major literary essay in itself -- from Brian which begins by granting my parallels with FINNEGANS WAKE, I think I can be excluded from the company of those who show "a lack of familiarity with Aldiss' work." As for "...if not with Joyce's" if Mike means this addendum to apply to me (and John Brunner is the only other person he mentions by name on this subject), it shows at the very least a lack of familiarity with my non-sf work, and further, of Joyce criticism as a whole."

Michael Moorcock, London

Dear Pete, "Thanks for SPECULATION. With the exception of my own piece the tone seems to have risen in this issue. I hope we'll hear no more of the glass-throwing incident. Neither John Brunner nor Mike Dempsey are men to bear malice and, I understand, made up their differences at the Phun City fiasco. This might be worth mentioning in your next issue. I doubt if relations between myself and John will ever be the same, but at least we nod politely to each other now and that's better than nothing. Dempsey, by the way, is not 'SF editor' at Hutchinson. NEW SF was commissioned before he joined and he took it over as part of the job. Dempsey's objection at the time was to the quality of the poetry being read. All over now.

I'm off to re-read TIGER! TIGER! and THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. Interesting follow up to Brian's discussion of Wells to be found in NEW WORLDS 202 (published April 71 as first of the quarterlies).

A footnote to my last piece in SPEC. I feel I was unfairly including Blish among those criticising BAREFOOT/Aldiss on a superficial level -- particularly since I've seen his piece in the December F. & S.F., and take it back."

Ken Bulmer, London

Dear Pete, "Your remarks about conventions are cogent in the context of the current scene undoubtedly conventions will continue for some time to exert an attraction on the new people you say are primed to come flocking into fandom. But it will pass. I think that a world convention once a decade over here is just about all that the normal British fan could stand. Personally, apart from Cleveland, which was different, I find world cons. not as enjoyable as normal Cons. There are too many people. I know one is forced into meeting and talking with a few, but this is followed by the 'clique' catcalls, which personally distress me as I always try to talk and chat up as many people as possible at cons.

So if you want to handle a world con for 1975 you have my utmost blessing. Judging by your work on the Birmingham conference and by what is promised for Worcester I'd judge that in you British Fandom has found one of the most efficient of convention organisers since John Newman. There have been lots of con organisers and good people they were too but.... Oxford, of course, is going to be very hard to top; but then we had Ted Tubb in the seat of power and a raging hurricane would be mild beside that spectacle. So despite the chances of making myself very unpopular with you I'd like to suggest that you set about getting a gang, i.e. a committee, together and setting up the preliminary moves to put in a bid for the 1975 worldcon. There are numbers of people scattered over the country who will be willing to help, and a session should be held at Worcester to discuss this. Not a BSFA session but a general fandom session.

Your remarks that I take SF -- and by implication, life -- in a funny fashion aroused in me the thought of writing a long & bitter letter condemning all the

stuff-shirted nitwits who go around pontificating about SF today (they sneered at it yesterday); all the writing-course trained PB writers who are turning out balderdash, and the writers who are conning the public in hardcovers, and all the silly little would-be-critics and sycophants who lavishly praise rubbish, as well as the clunk-headed editors and publishers who don't know the simile is well worn; but then, I saw, that if I did that I wouldn't really be taking it all as it deserves. That is, I'd be taking it seriously. The only way to stay sane in this current insanity is to make a jest out of life. You have to do it and believe all the 'right' things, of course; but you must have a giggle at the same time.

If I wanted to be serious I could ask why THE ULCER CULTURE, which is arguably my most serious book, was very well-reviewed indeed in the national press and treated with seriousness of a serious novel by non-SF people, and yet the BSFA in Vector did not mention it once, and you tossed it aside with some remark that you couldn't believe in all those wicked bosses. If I wanted to be serious I'd say the S.F. fans don't know a good book when they see one. (You can say that again). Oh, they'll enjoy a good space opera romp and a frolic like that. So - why be serious? You can't expect a reasonable man to be serious when he reads the foolishness being published today and being taken seriously by all the little fishes with wide open mouths. I agree with Pamela, we need some criticism in this field that isn't sycophantic and imbecile (and that thinks my books are great!) ((There's the funny bit coming in again.))."

Malcolm Edwards, Cambridge

Dear Peter, "It looks as if kicking Zelazny is to be the Trend of the Year in SF criticism. Perhaps this is inevitable, but it annoys me considerably. SF opinion - at least, as articulated in the critical stuff - seems incredibly pliable. At the slightest hint of a change in wind-direction everyone scrambles at top speed in the new direction. Now that he's writing more minor stuff, Zelazny is suffering from what Sturgeon mentioned in his introduction to A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES: that he is being judged by a higher standard than most other writers, even when he plainly isn't aiming at that standard.

Tony Sudbery brings up the SF/jazz analogy; I'd like to adapt that a little to include SF/rock comparisons - reasonable enough, considering the parallel development of the last few years - and point out a similarity in the careers of Zelazny and Ten Years After. In each case, considerable technical ability led to a swift critical acclaim and a meteoric rise to fame and fortune. Now, although each may be more popular than ever with the general audience, they are disowned by critics, who have discovered that those glittering facades were just that - Zelazny's stories having, on the whole, little more depth than Alvin Lee's solos - and are apparently unable to make the adjustment and accept them for what they are. How's that for facile reasoning?

It seems to me that Pam Bulmer's review of LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS misses the point. This is something which worries me about the sort of technical criticism she does in general. She seems to be trying to fit the book into her system of how a novel should be structured, and it doesn't come off too well (either the book or the review) because it just isn't written that way. You echo her criticism with your comment that A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA doesn't have the right plot-framework for the background setting; much of Pam's review boils down to this.

Of course, reaction to a book - particularly emotional reaction - is personal. I happen to believe that Ursula LeGuin writes classical English prose better than any other SF writer except perhaps Disch when he's writing like that.

SPECULATION

That is neither here nor there. What is relevant is that I have found with all three of her novels that I've read (PLANET OF EXILE being the third) that the emotional impact has been cumulative in effect - each book begins slowly, and I read with detachment, but as it goes on I am gradually drawn in more and more until the involvement at the end has been total. The climax of LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is the only piece of SF I've ever read that left me near to tears; the other two were almost as powerful.

I know it may not affect you in the same way, but given that when the books work this is the way they work, Pam's talk about 'broken country where fresh and unexpected delights can be seen from every hilltop' is so much rubbish. To use her own analogy, it is not so much a 'walk along pleasant and flat country' but more a gradual hill-climb, imperceptible at first, and not apparently steep, but eventually bringing you to the top and revealing a breathtaking view of the countryside.

Further, I fail to see what relevance it has to the book that the journey across the ice could just as easily have been a polar journey on this planet. Of course, Miss LeGuin could have thrown in some giant alien polar bears or something, but it wouldn't have had a lot to do with the purpose of the journey, which was to throw Genly Ai and Terem Harth into close personal contact without possibility of outside interference. In any case, there was an important difference between that journey and a similar one on Earth, viz that the Gethenian was not the same as a homo sapiens. Which is, after all, what the bloody book was about.

Without rereading the book (something which I will do, but not while I'm here and it's at home) I couldn't answer the more technical objections, but I would tend to give Miss LeGuin more credit than Pam does for having thought out her background.

Finally, having accepted the book as being 'more than an ephemeral light-entertainment novel' it seems to me bloody condescending to dismiss it as 'a charming book with some delightful passages'."

Tony Sudbery, Glasgow

Dear Peter, "I'm going to be very, very careful what I say in this letter. I got a nasty shock when I opened SPEC-27 and found that you'd printed all sorts of things that I hadn't intended for publication. Well, I suppose it was my own fault for not paying any attention to your warning on the contents page. But when I told you that I didn't understand AND CHAOS DIED I didn't really intend to expose my incompetence to the public gaze. I don't much mind about that; it was much more of a shock to see that I'd publicly slandered Robert Silverberg, Samuel R. Delany and Fritz Leiber (too late, I suppose, to say that I wasn't serious in those sneers), followed in the next paragraph but one by snide insinuations concerning Brian Aldiss, Tom Disch and Michael Moorcock. (The first two paragraphs on TIGER! TIGER! were supposed to be chat and weren't intended for publication either.) Oh well, it all adds to the interest of life. On the other hand, it was a very pleasant surprise to see my remarks on D.G. Compton in an OPINION slot - I had no thought of them being printed, but I'm very glad to see them in the light of day. Incidentally, since I wrote that last letter I've read THE QUALITY OF MERCY, which reinforces my high opinion of Compton. Once again he takes a familiar theme and makes it the basis of a remarkable piece of writing.

Enclosed is the NEW WRITINGS IN SF review. I'm sick and tired of that book:  
L I think I told you when I sent the first draft that it had given me more trouble than any other review I've done, and I'm still not satisfied with this revision of it. It's obvious that the book isn't much good, but I just cannot discover exactly why. Whatever I think of to say about it turns out on reflection not to be true. It seems it's easy to think of interesting things to say, but true things - ah, that's another matter.

One reason my conscience is so tender at the moment is that Rodie has been laying down the law about reviewing ethics. Her third novel, which came out this autumn, got a featured review in The Times, which, in a mild way, was something of a rave; and now she's suffering from exaggerated reaction because her other reviewers haven't followed suit. So she's been stalking around muttering about reviewers who get hooked on a general theory and then misrepresent the books under review to fit in with the theory. Which, as she hasn't been slow to point out, is exactly my procedure. And now a letter to Bob Shaw :-

Dear Bob, Your letter to SPECULATION (on THE PALACE OF ETERNITY) has put me in a contrite frame of mind. In reviewing books there's an awful temptation (especially for an uncreative writer like myself) to go on an ego-trip and forget that at the other end of one's pen there's a suffering writer who has put far more effort into planning and writing the book than the critic puts into reading and reviewing it. (Usually, anyway.) So if it's any consolation to you, your letter has ensured your fellow writers even more rigorous standards of fairness in my reviews.

Nevertheless, I want to defend myself. I believe I set myself pretty high standards already, and it's chastening to find you so bitter that you say "When he is going to give a book a bad notice and, if his ambition is realised, depress its sales - does he read it more carefully than a book he is not going to review?" Well, for a start I don't know what sort of notice I'm going to give a book until I've finished reading it; but in any case the answer is yes, Bob, a good deal more carefully. I actually read THE PALACE OF ETERNITY twice right through before reviewing it, and referred to it constantly while writing the review. If you think that means I'm not qualified to write reviews, you may be right, but that's a matter you must take up with Pete Weston; I assure you I do my best. As for having an ambition to depress the book's sales - well, let's forget it.

I'm afraid you haven't convinced me that egons are essentially different from souls. In the absence of any detailed and plausible description of their electromagnetic constitution, they seem to me merely to be a materialistic gloss on the old supernatural concept, and I reject them for the same reasons as I reject the existence of souls. They're not restricted enough. You say they are physical objects; but apart from the single fact of their mortality (which I don't find so important as you seem to), they seem to have no physical restrictions, and they seem to fulfil exactly the same functions as an old-fashioned soul would have done. I can't find them as interesting as a real person tied to a defined physical structure (like a body), with all the complex but delimited interactions with the physical world that that implies. If your electromagnetic structures are to meet these requirements, they need much more precise description than you've given them. In short, as I said in my review, I find egons implausible and not very interesting.

As for Tavernor's death-wish, I remain impenitent about that too. You complain that I missed all the instances of his suicidal guilt until just before his death, but in fact the next sentence in the review, after the sentence you SPECULATION

quote, reads: "Earlier references get lost in ... his vague awareness of panspermism!" \* In other words, I saw them, but I didn't think they were effective. This is part of my general criticism that Tavernor's character needs to be very complex, both life-oriented and death-oriented at once, and you don't give yourself enough room to develop this complex character. It's remarkable that you manage to get as far as you do towards defining him. But in fact the emphasis that I took from Tavernor's suicidal guilt was on the guilt, which I thought he was defeating; and it came as something of a shock to me that you should refer to his "general death-oriented character". I found him a generally life - oriented character - an impression I got from such things as his tenderness with the leatherwings. A concrete thing like this is worth several chapters of self-analysis. What more, you ask, can a writer do to get his message across? Well, Bob, if I knew that I'd be writing novels, not reviewing them; but I'm sure it's something to do with using concrete dramatic incident rather than abstract psychological exposition. If you look again at your list of references to Tavernor's death-wish, you'll see that only one is an actual incident: Tavernor's aberration while piloting the power boat (p. 16), which is so slight that the reader could almost - not quite, I agree - take it as a moment of absent-mindedness.

I didn't intend my criticism of the novel's form - what you call the 'venturi principle' - to be a blanket condemnation. I've nothing against the form itself - in fact I think it could be very interesting - but I don't think it worked in this case because what came in the 'expulsion' sequence wasn't absorbing enough to pull the reader away from the preoccupations of the first half. This goes back to my not being interested in your egos; if I'd been satisfied with them I'd have no criticism of the form. As it is you haven't offered me enough inducement to forget the action of the first half. I don't object to your killing off the hero - after all, you don't really - but I do object to your dropping Shelby and the others and their resistance movement. I kept wanting to know what had happened to them.

Finally, your query as to Koestler and "Mnemosyne": Well, I was thinking of Koestler's theory that artistic and scientific inspiration is a matter of relapsing into a primeval, pre-verbal way of thinking and then surfacing to the conscious level. Thinking of this as a sort of Jungian collective unconscious, or racial memory, and identifying it with your mother-mass.... oh well, it was rather far-fetched, I suppose. Not very coherent, either.

I still haven't read NIGHT WALK, but I'm looking forward to doing so - and I fully intend to buy it, even though NEL books tend to be so overpriced.

\* Why do I attribute the coinage of "panspermism" to you? Sheer bloody ignorance, I'm afraid. Mea culpa. "

Pamela Bulmer, Kent

Dear Pete, "I'd like to see Conventions going along the lines of your SPECULATION Conference. I'd also like to see more emphasis on criticism, not for personal reasons, but because I believe what the field lacks is accepted criteria of evaluation. The reviews you publish are moving towards this but the whole subject of criticism needs exploring and ventilating. At the 1971 Convention I think it would be quite valuable to take a certain book, and discuss it specifically (or a number of books). If you announced that books a, b, c & d will be discussed, it's not unreasonable to expect that a good part of the audience will have read the texts, and I think the result could be quite fascinating.

I think with the interest various Universities are showing in the field it might be possible to get some academic studies of SF (by which I mean objective, analytical, constructive studies) published. George Hay thinks the SF Foundation might help here, but the ground needs preparing. The trouble is that SF addicts are such sheep. James Blish is a good critic but he's human and he has a specific approach: he admits his criticism is narrow in focus. The question I wish I had asked at your June Conference is: "How can we get better criticism in SF and start building a body of critical literature about SF?".

How can you establish a body of critical literature if there is none being published, and on the rare occasions when it is the opportunity goes straight to Blish, Brunner or Aldiss? This may sound like sour grapes, but if Blish really does find it profoundly dissatisfying that half of the informed criticism is by himself, I suggest it might help if he were to be more constructive about the critics you are working in this country, and do something. I agree broadly with most of his remarks but I'd like to add this comment on the Spingarnian type of criticism. I quote from FREEDOM AND NECESSITY by Joan Robinson "Every human being has ideological, moral and political views. To pretend to have none and to be purely objective must necessarily be either self-deception or a device to deceive others. A candid writer will make his preconceptions clear and allow the reader to discount them if he does not accept them."

This is the kind of objective evaluation I'm trying for - trying to recognise my own preconceptions, allow for them and try to evaluate from valid literary criteria (not necessarily accepted). I think there is far too ready acceptance of techniques of craftsmanship; e.g. Tony Sudbery quotes an elementary rule; "Don't tell the reader, show him"; I can think of dozens of works of art where the writer tells (admittedly he shows too, there's the subtle difference). Author intrusion is another thing that's supposed to be bad, and then there's this business of point of view. Craft is important but it should not dominate the author; the author should dominate the craft.

I enjoyed Tony Sudbery's review of QUICKSAND, I agree with the David Daiches remark, and "interestingness" is something I try to evaluate myself, it is particularly applicable to SF insofar as philosophical ideas - or their interpretation and presentation - and sociological concepts are concerned.

Really there's so much worthy of comment this time I hardly know where to stop. One thing I must get in though, and that is Bob Shaw's letter. I discussed his book PALACE OF ETERNITY with him at Birmingham so he must be referring to me. He has obviously misunderstood me. I did not say I would pan the book because I thought it was about souls and I don't believe in souls, therefore it's a bad book. I try very hard to avoid the fried eggs analogy. I try to admit personal taste as just that, so that the reader knows that's all it is. My point about PALACE OF ETERNITY (which review appeared in the now defunct VISION) was that he destroyed my willing suspension of disbelief because his philosophy was muddled - I found myself abruptly carrying on an interior monologue with him as author along the lines "Ye Gods - you 're not serious, you don't really expect me to swallow this."

Now I'm sure this isn't the reaction Bob wanted. I don't read books lazily, especially when I'm reviewing them. I put one hell of a lot of work into them. I read primarily for enjoyment and am prepared to accept that enjoyment on the level the author is aiming, i.e. entertainment, intellectual stimulation or an emotional experience. Why must it always be the reader's fault if the author doesn't produce the reaction he wanted? Authors are fallible,



sometimes they fail and they can learn as much from their failures as they can from their successes if they will only realise that no worthwhile reviewer wants to depress sales or attack an author. The function of a review is not to raise sales either. A criticism aims to evaluate a book and I believe a critic must be honest. I will not, as so many others do, praise a book because I like the author or vice versa. This causes me more headaches than I can count.

Bob's point about the 'venturi' is interesting but irrelevant. So that's the shape of the plot, it is technically interesting, but I can't see it added anything to the book's meaning. I don't object to being shocked, strained, even having my mind hurt if there's justification. When I discussed this book with Bob he asked whether I didn't think there was still room for the straight adventure yarn. I said yes, but you can't have it both ways as an author. You can't say it's just good clean fun, then start going philosophical on the reader and defending an adventure yarn in the terms of the letter to SPEC. And the fact that big names give a book good reviews does not make it a good book for me. A critic's views should be respected according to the criteria he applies. I find myself quite distressed that Bob should be so hurt at the reactions to his book. Any publicity is good publicity - he should try having his work studiously ignored or dismissed by hacks as mere hack, accused of pinching ideas when he knows he got there first....."

Franz Rottensteiner, Austria

Dear Pete, "Now suddenly people are knocking Hugo Gernsback, the man long acclaimed as the father of science fiction. But I think James Blish misses the most important part, the sociological consequences of the existence of specialized SF magazines. Perhaps he is right that unredeemably dreadful work almost never got past the editor's desks, pre-1926. I do know, however, a number of dreadful German SF novels, written before that time. That they were dreadful is not so important; important is that they were isolated examples, and as such quickly forgotten. Another writer also writing SF or fantasy could learn of their existence only by chance or by extensive research. But as soon as there existed specialized magazines, a field began to develop, and the arising of a fandom became inevitable. And with a field there are all the bad effects: the perpetuation of stereo-types. Individually, the stories in periodical publications may be forgotten quickly; but their general features, the dim myths embodied in them, are remembered and passed on from story to story and from generation to generation, leading to the sorry state of SF that we all know now.

And so the ironical thing, of which Blish is unaware, that there is some justification for Moskowitz's "criticism of infinite regress", at least when it is applied to magazine SF and the contemporary paperback and hardcover field. For SF authors are as a rule "interested in their craft", they read what other writers have written, and this inevitably leads to tides of fashion in SF (such as the tendency now to rob the myths of the past and adopt them for the entertainment of a mass audience) and to the perpetuation of the same features in story after story. That somebody can say: "That reminds me of a similar story back there", is in itself already a very damning statement, denoting a lack of originality, especially since we can bet that both stories will attain the same level of banality. There must indeed be authors industriously studying the paperbacks and magazines in order to find out what has been sold before and what they can hope to sell again in the future. Those incestuous relationships, together with mutual adulation by fans and authors likewise, and the massive rejection of outsiders (witness the majority reaction to Kingsley Amis or the gleeful joy with which most SF reviewers tore into "The Andromeda Strain"), ensures

that there won't be great changes. Especially since there is very little self-awareness and self-criticism.

An especially horrid example for this can be found on the back-cover of the Berkley edition DAMNATION ALLEY, where Harlan Ellison of Zelazny writes: "His stories are sunk to the knees in maturity and wisdom" (an amusing phrase which I prefer to translate as meaning that his standards are only knee-high).... "Thus leading us to the conclusion that Roger Zelazny is the reincarnation of Geoffrey Chaucer." A writer with a little more self-respect and critical attitude would tell Ellison to shut up, for he would feel that such ridiculous praise can only be damaging to him. Examples could be multiplied, especially from the fanzines, where in almost any issue one can find a fan claiming for some mediocre author the rank of 'genius'.

Blish's remarks are quite intelligent in some details: but his general attitude to the writing of fiction reminds me of a cobbler repairing shoes; and that's indeed what a 'craftsman' is in German: a cobbler or someone like that. The tragic thing about Mr. Blish is that he is well-educated, perhaps even a man with an almost encyclopedic knowledge, and a good analytic mind, but his gift of synthesis, of integrating this knowledge in fiction or a philosophic system is rather poor. E.g. his opinion that "the science in a science fiction story is not its content, it's the setting". That explains why Stanislaw Lem (that "hoary old mid-European" author whom I happen to think a great SF writer and certainly the best critic of SF - and perhaps a lot of people will be in for a big surprise when they read his SOLARIS coming from Walker, Faber & Faber and Berkley Books) finds that Blish's EARTHMAN COME HOME has got nothing to do with science, because its structure has got nothing to do with the structure of science or the cosmos, but perceives of the cosmos as only a racing place for good and bad cities. Therefore Lem thinks it is unintentionally funny, Blish being aware of only one level of language."

Jerry Lapidus, New York.

Dear Peter, "Most of the time I'm lost to know what Franz Rottensteiner wants and/or expects from science fiction. He has castigated the field many times for what it is not, or what it never attempts to do -- as have many critics, both within and without the field. Yet I don't think I recall a single instance of his discussing a novel totally logically, totally unemotionally. And finally - the only writer he seems to really praise has been Stanislaw Lem; unfortunately we've all been cut off up to now from this possible 'great' by the language barrier. To use the current cliché, I really can't determine where Mr Rottensteiner "is at", what his position or positions are. And then he talks about things I don't understand at all. "It has been suggested that LORD OF LIGHT describes the fate of a spaceship crew who decided to build a civilisation after the pattern of Indian mythology", he says. Did he and I read the same novel? Is it not obvious from the novel that this is the case?

Did you find Shimbo of Darktree, Shrugged of Thunders, funny? I certainly didn't, especially in the context of the novel, ISLE OF THE DEAD. I don't read a Zelazny novel for the plot; I don't know anyone who does, it being admitted by all that Zelazny has difficult plotting. But for Rottensteiner, the plot seems to be all that's there. I don't know. I think we're going at this thing from different angles, different levels. Or something.

The one thing I find difficult to understand (in SPECULATION-27) is the sheer hatred shown by two reviewers for the two most recent Zelazny novels. Now I realise that I happen to like Roger's writing more than most people, and am thus somewhat prejudiced in his behalf. But it's clear that CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS is SPECULATION

nothing more than obvious self-parody, and self-admitted at that. Zelazny wrote a novel using the Greek mythos; he followed it with a more intricate one based on the Hindu and Buddhist religions, ISLE OF THE DEAD saw him create his own religion and in CREATURES he simply had fun with the same sort of gimmicks he's used for the other three novels, making no attempts to conceal this at all and playing games with styles, etc. Obviously Mr Stableford is sincere in his hatred of the book, but even from his review I really can't see why.

I have even more difficulty following R.G. Meadley's short pan of ISLE OF THE DEAD. Certainly our tastes may differ drastically but his total abhorrence of the book, and my strong feeling for it seem strange opposites. Did you really find it that bad? Did everyone else over there? Frankly I think it's a deceptively simple book, just as Delany's NOVA is deceptive. Both read so quickly first time through that one tends to miss the fact that there's more to both than is immediately obvious. Strange.

Basic subject otherwise this time seems to be the prospective 1975 bid for a British WorldCon. Frankly, though my sympathies side with you, I fear that this might well be a mistake. You must remember that no matter how much we over here mouth the International Fandom slogans, it's still generally chauvinistic American fandom which must vote the world convention overseas when it goes. Under the present plan, foreign bids will be allowed any time, but to win must defeat all comers, including possible local bids. With the current situation we have the dual problems of finances and split voting. If fandom is given the choice (U.S. fandom, that is) between Australia and either Britain or Sweden, I'll wager they will choose the cheaper of the two, i.e., the one it will cost least to attend. This in itself is a rather bad situation. The basic problem, however, is more serious. I fear that if both England and Australia (or England and Sweden) go for a convention in the same year, the support on this side for overseas fandom will be split badly and should a viable bid arise over here, that local American bid will most likely win. Certainly there's no harm in presenting the possibility of an English bid, and finding out other's opinions. But even though there's no current American bid for 1975, there's nothing to say that one may not arise between now and then; this assumes, of course, that both Australian and British bids remain viable until then!

\* I used to wonder why anyone should want to organise a convention. All I ever wanted to do was to go along and enjoy someone else's efforts. The trouble is, that way we end up with no-one making an effort. And if British fandom really wants to see another WorldCon before the 1980's, then 1975 is about the only year in which a bid can be made. Unfortunate as that may be. From our point of view, of course, England is the cheapest and most accessible site to America.

WAHF DEPT. We also heard from, at greater or shorter length Dave Garnett; Alan Donnelly; David Piper; Paul Anderson; Bob Parkinson; Michael Bickenstaff; Thomas R. Oliver; Andrew Prior; Hal Davis; Hartley Patterson; Rick Sneary; Paul A Gilster Bryan Bird; David I Masson; Dave Hulvey; Mark Adlard "I think Bob Rickard should be congratulated on his cover. This is further proof (if any were needed) that the camera cannot compete with the artist when it comes to presenting character. Just look at the North Oxford tilt of Aldiss' head as he scents his audience at Cannon Hill" (from a very blurred photograph, too, that was taken, Mark). Joe Patrizio - "Bob Parkinson said in SPEC-27 'Zelazny is not talking about.. good and evil. He's talking about something more basic'. Oh yes?" and Sandra Miesel "If it's any comfort to Ken Bulmer, that debate between Alexei Panshin & Larry Niven at St Louiscon never actually took place. The previous programme item ran too long and they were left straining at their leashes (or did they conduct it later, in private?)".

## SPECULATION BOOK GUIDE

Every science fiction title received since the previous issue is at least mentioned in this Guide; longer reviews will be found in our Department "Critical Front". The brief comments appended to the titles listed below represent purely personal and often rather irrational reactions to these books on my part.

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### FROM GOLLANCZ.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES-5, ed. James Blish, 36s. Although James Blish revealed the tremendous amount of work which goes into a 'Nebula' anthology, the result still carries a deceptive air of simplicity. The contents I think are excellent. Harlan Ellison's 'A Boy and his Dog' has the Nebula-winning novella, followed by Samuel Delany's story of equal length 'Time Considered As A Helix of Semi-Precious Stones' as best novelette. (As another has said, despite the 'precious' title the story is really nothing of the sort!). Bob Silverberg's 'Passengers' deserves its Nebula for best short story, and we are then left with three of the follow-ups. These are 'Nine Lives', by Ursula LeGuin, surely good but I suspect riding on the coat-tails of LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. Theodore Sturgeon's 'The Man Who Learned Loving' is a good Theodore Sturgeon story, and Larry Niven's 'Not Long Before The End' is really delightful and a joy to read. There is a good-humoured and informative essay on the Nebula contenders for 'best novel', and Alexei Panshin's verdict on short SF for the year. Thirty-six shillings is a lot of money, but this one you must have.

WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 1970, ed. Donald Wollheim & Terry Carr, 42s. In contrast, this collection is entertaining but by no means as rewarding. Two of the stories are common to the Nebula volume, Ellison's 'Boy And His Dog' and 'Nine Lives' by Ursula LeGuin. Three other stories stand out, these being Larry Niven's 'Death By Ecstasy' (but then, I'm a Niven fan), Panshin's 'One Sunday in Neptune' and a quite remarkable little piece by someone called Suzette Haden Elgin titled 'For the Sake of Grace'. For some reason of private taste I found the other stories unexciting even though these include Leiber's Award-winner 'Ship of Shadows'.

SATAN'S WORLD by Poul Anderson, 28s. A novel featuring Anderson's 'Trader-team', which was discussed by Frederik Pohl several issues back.

### FROM DOBSON.

THE WAR OF TWO WORLDS by Poul Anderson, 18s. A 1959 Ace novel, 108 pages.

THE PLAYERS OF NULL-A by A.E. VanVogt, 25s. Dreadful cover to this sequel to Dobson's WORLD OF NULL-A, both of which in my opinion could have been left mercifully out of print. 192 pages.

DOUBLE ILLUSION by Philip E High, 21s. Not a bad little story about a future world where a corrupt society is governed by a giant computer. Of course there is one seemingly ordinary but in reality unusual man who can put things right..

### FROM FABER.

CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS by Roger Zelazny, 30s. See elsewhere in SPECULATION IN OUR HANDS, THE STARS. by Harry Harrison, 30s. One of the best Analog serials for a long time. A story of the future no further away than tomorrow, should the invention described actually be invented. Harry is very pessimistic, in sharp contrast to the imbecilic optimism of early SF. Do we really want any more scientific progress, I wonder? A very entertaining novel, and very thoughtful. BEST SF SEVEN ed. Edmund Crispin, 28s. The earlier six volumes fulfilled a very real need - they were probably Britain's first original and 'respectable' anthologies of science fiction. Now this book seems more or less unnecessary, especially since almost every story has appeared elsewhere in permanent form. For all that, however, a good collection. 12 stories, 212 pages.

SPECULATION

FROM SIDGWICK & JACKSON:

THE ALLEY GOD by Philip Jose Farmer, 27s. Three of Farmer's better stories - 'The Alley Man', a tale of the last Neanderthal; 'The Captain's Daughter'; and 'The God Business' (from the old Beyond), that rare thing a funny SF story. Recommended.

THE PROFIT OF DOOM by Hugh Dirac, 27s. An original novel dealing with transplant operations and the 'Overlords' of the human race. Pretty stale reading.

SCIENCE FICTION SPECIAL-2, 30s. Three complete novels, THE LISTENERS by Murray Leinster; BRIGHT NEW UNIVERSE by Jack Williamson; ESCAPE INTO SPACE by E.C. Tubb.

FROM DOUBLEDAY:

BINARY DIVINE by Jon Hartridge, \$4.95. A new novel.

GENESIS TWO by L.P. Davies, \$4.95. Nine people are transported to a strange new environment of steaming jungle.

THE YEAR OF THE CLOUD by Ted Thomas and Kate Wilhelm, \$4.95. "The Earth passed through a massive and inexplicable cloud formation and the result had been a rampage of Nature. Water had suddenly become a strange gell-like substance unfit for consumption and contaminating all forms of life". An exciting new novel.

DANCE THE EAGLE TO SLEEP, by Marge Piercy, \$5.95. "the open rebellion of America's youth against their channelled, unrewarding lives". Future fiction without a drop of fantasy - could it really happen? To be reviewed next issue if possible.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES-5, ed. James Blish. Reviewed earlier, on Page 49.

VECTOR FOR SEVEN by Josephine Saxton, \$4.95. Hardly SF at all, more of a psychological novel.

ICE by Anna Kavan, \$4.50. The World enters a new Ice Age. Brian Aldiss voted this the best science fiction novel of the year, even though it was not originally published under the SF label in this country. To be reviewed in future issues.

ALCHEMY & ACADEME by Anne McCaffrey, \$4.95. An original collection of twenty items, including some verse, based on the theme of transmutations, mental and elemental, alchemical and academic. This said, some of the stories must be judged as slight indeed. Authors represented are Keith Laumer, Robert Silverberg, Joanna Russ, James Blish, Norman Spinrad, R.A. Lafferty, Samuel Delany and many others.

FIVE FATES, \$4.95. Five original stories beginning from a 1½-page opening scene by someone anonymous but presumably Doubleday's editor. Not an easy theme to develop, either, in that it describes the death of the protagonist. However, Poul Anderson takes off from that point to develop an excellently-rounded tale which on balance is probably the best in the book. He finds a very good reason for keeping his lead character alive in this logical and well-told story. Frank Herbert then takes over with some gobbledygook or other which doesn't do anything or get anywhere but fills 20 pages. Gordon Dickson takes the beginning and by an incredibly complicated and quite incomprehensible piece of juggling, manages to use it as an excuse to tell a pretty good story about something else altogether. Harlan Ellison then proceeds to let our hero's soul be captured by a galactic Succubus, having half-a-dozen pointless adventures before ending with a spectacular but essentially nonsensical conclusion. There is something to be said for setting some limits to the freedom of action allowed in a story; without this it becomes, as does Harlan's, just words. Finally, Keith Laumer writes the best story in the book, as a story. It flows faster, more excitingly than does Poul Anderson's, but the rationale is less sound. But Laumer introduces a novel future world which will easily take expansion into greater length. In all, an unusual and rewarding book.

FROM WALKER & COMPANY:

THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT'S REVENGE by Harry Harrison, \$4.95. Better, really, than the first book (which started well but expired at mid-point), this is a fast, light and supremely entertaining Galactic chase which leaves a loophole for a further sequel to come. Great fun!

WALKER & CO. (Continued)

A FOR ANYTHING by Damon Knight, \$4.95. Originally published in 1959 as THE PEOPLE MAKER, this is one of Damon Knight's rare novels. It is badly flawed in that the action wanders over far too wide a field; nevertheless there are some new, stimulating ideas and a colourful narrative style. Recommended.

SPECIAL ITEM: FROM CHELSEA HOUSE

THE PULPS - 50 Years of American Pop Culture, edited by Tony Goodstone, \$15.00. This tremendous book arrived on my doorstep with a thud! Measuring 8½" x 11" it is a 240-page collection of material from the U.S. pulp magazines in every field of subject matter, from SF to mystery and Westerns. There are 100 full-colour covers including some from the early Amazing, Weird Tales, etc. There are over 50 complete stories, poems, features, articles and - most amusing of all - advertisements, reproduced in their original format.

As a book this is a magnificent idea. My knowledge of the pulps (after all, they vanished before I knew what the word meant) is not extensive enough to say whether this is a good selection, but there should be enough of curiosity value to interest almost anyone. Nostalgia in older souls will give them an added filip. And, of course, a volume of this sort has the makings of a coffee-table 'pop' culture curiosity; the stories are so bad that they're almost good in their own odd way! Tony Goodstone is a New York actor, producer and writer who has assembled a noted collection of American memorabilia.

PAPERBACK PREVIEW:

From Ballantine

RINGWORLD by Larry Niven, 95¢ Biggest disappointment for the quarter for me, I'm afraid that Larry Niven's new novel (340 pp) just did not live up to expectations. The reasons for this are harder to find, but from the top of my head I'd guess that Niven's technique of the 'permanent tourist' does not come off at this length - that is, more continuity is needed instead of jumping from locale to locale; and more vital, the promise of the Ringworld concept is not fulfilled. Larry Niven tells 'engineering SF' better than anyone else, but halfway through this novel he somehow gets involved in a rather disappointing 'quest' story. What I wanted to know, for instance, were things involving the construction of the Ringworld, and all the other engineering details of how it held together. Still - get it for the original concepts, the pace, and you'll certainly enjoy it at least in part!

ALL JUDGEMENT FLED by James White, 95¢. A novel from If in 1967, this is a little under-rated (or do I mean unnoticed) since it is one of Jim's very best books.

ALPFA-1 ed Robert Silverberg, 95¢. Bob Silverberg is taking over Harry Harrison's mantle of anthologist-extraordinary. This collection is, frankly, much what I had planned for the SPECULATION anthology if it had ever come to pass. 14 stories, put together for no especial reason except that they are mostly excellent.

GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF SF ed. Robert Silverberg, 95¢. Here he is again! This time six excellent short novels; 'Telek'; 'Two Dooms'; 'Giant Killer'; 'Second Game'; 'Beyond Bedlam'; 'The Graveyard Heart'. I speculate that Bob's taste is very similar

NIGHTMARE AGE, ed Frederik Pohl, 95¢. It was bound to happen - to my own.

an 'environment' anthology from Ballantine. Cleverly put together, too, from the older, non-trendy SF stories from the magazines. Mostly above average in content.

NERVES by Lester Del Rey, 75¢; Copyright 1956, this novel is a little dated now.

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT, Lester Del Rey, 95¢. I found this novel oddly fascinating though I don't think Del Rey carries through his extrapolation of a 16-billion

population for Earth. However it was written before the 'pollution scare' hit us.

ADULT FANTASY SERIES, ed Lin Carter; BEYOND THE GOLDEN STAIR by Hannes Bok, 95¢;

THE WELL AT THE WORLD'S END, by William Morris, 95¢; GOLDEN CITIES, FAR. 11 tales of strange cities and strange lands, by a variety of authors.



#### FROM ACE BOOKS:

WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN, by Clifford D Simak, 75c - reissue. TUNNEL IN THE SKY/ THE STAR BEAST - 2 of the juvenile series by Robert A Heinlein, 95c each. NEW WORLDS OF FANTASY, ed Terry Carr, 75c. Maybe I just don't like fantasy. But as with the first of these volumes, few of the stories lived up to their promise. THE BIG BALL OF WAX by Shepherd Mead, 75c; An old-timer from around 1953 - a sort of variant on THE SPACE MERCHANTS theme. THE FIRE-EATER by Ron Goulart, 75c. - a lighthearted romp. CHILDREN OF TOMORROW by A.E. VanVogt, 95c. A long (254 pp) novel that doesn't seem to be about anything in particular. But then I definitely don't like VanVogt stories! NOAH II by Roger Dixon, 75c. "Soon to be a major motion picture" And Heaven help us! UNCHARTED STARS by Andre Norton, 75c; WHERE IS THE BIRD OF FIRE by Thomas Burnett Swann, 60c (from Science Fantasy). THE SHIP THAT SAILED THE TIME-STREAM by G.C. Edmondson, 75c. Pretty entertaining time adventure. THE COMMUNIPATHS by Suzette Haden Elgin/ THE NOBLEST EXPERIMENT IN THE GALAXY by Louis Trimble, 75c; THE STAR VIRUS by Barrington J Bayley/MASK OF CHAOS by John Jakes, 75c; THE MAD GOBLIN/LORD OF THE TREES by Philip Jose Farmer - take-off of the Tarzan and 'Doc' Savage myths. This time no sex.

#### FROM AVON BOOKS:

CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS by Roger Zelazny, 75c. Contrary to Brian Stableford's report last issue, I found this mildly amusing, although definitely minor Zelazny. THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE by Norman Spinrad, 75c. There is a very nasty review in - I think - SFR which is exactly correct for this book. Very poor. ALIENS-4 by Theodore Sturgeon, 75c. 'Killdozer', 'Cactus Dance', 'The Comedian's Children'; 'The (Widget), The (Wadget), and Boff'. ALWAYS THE BLACK KNIGHT by Lee Hoffman, 60c.

#### FROM LANCER:

SATAN'S WORLD by Poul Anderson, 75c. Epic Analog novel of a year or so back. BARRIER WORLD by Louis Charbonneau, 75c. World of the Future, an original novel. THE LEAVES OF TIME by Neal Barrett Jr., 75c. Pretty good alternative-Worlds story by a new writer to watch. BEASTCHILD by Dean R Koontz, 75c. Another good space-adventure novel. LORD OF BLOOD, by Dave Van Arnam, 75c. Sequel to STAR BARBARIAN. THE MAGIC OF ATLANTIS ed. Lin Carter, 75c. Seven fantastic journeys into legend. THE MIGHTY SWORDSMEN, ed. Hans Stefan Santesson, 75c. Six stories of epic fantasy by Carter, Moorcock, Zelazny, Brunner, and two new Conan tales.

#### OTHER PAPERBACKS:

NIGHTFALL AND OTHER STORIES by Isaac Asimov, Fawcett Crest, 95c. 20 stories. I ROBOT by Isaac Asimov, Fawcett Crest, 75c. The nine original robot stories. NEBULA AWARD STORIES-3, ed Roger Zelazny, Panther 6s. MIND IN CHAINS, ed Dr Christopher Evans, Panther 6s. 14 horror stories. THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE, by Clifford D Simak, Pan Books, 5s. THE SWORDS OF LANKHMAR, by Fritz Leiber, Mayflower 6s. 'Gray Mouser' in a novel. SF THE BEST OF THE BEST PART II, ed Judith Merrill, Mayflower 6s. How many times can the same stories be anthologised over and over again? 16 stories.

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NOVACON: The first British November Convention, Saturday 13 - Sunday 14 November 1971.

The Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Guest of Honour: James White.

Register now for membership and all literature. 10/- to Vernon Brown, Chairman, Room 623 Pharmacy Dept, University of Aston, Birmingham. Cheques to "Novacon".

EDITORIAL (Continued from Page 4)

Before continuing I notice that on Page 4 I said "1.30 p.m." where of course I meant 1.30 in the morning. Odd how these things are noticed just too late!

Concluding my account of the Paris trip, I meant to comment that the trip was made in BEA Tridents both ways -- and this is by far the best plane I've travelled in during my limited aero-experiences. I don't particularly like flying, you see -- the whole idea of being so far above the ground strikes me as being fundamentally unlikely. Nonetheless, one of my ambitions for a long time now has been to attend a big American convention, and for that alone I'm prepared to face a 7-hour journey across the Atlantic!

Consequently I was delighted to accept Greg Benford's suggestion that I should stand for TAFF this year, although it looks as if there will be very strong competition from Terry Jeeves and from possibly two other candidates. I think there is still a sporting chance that I might get the opportunity to attend the Boston NOREASCON in September, however, and if I win my wife Eileen would go along as well, of course, on what would surely be the trip of a lifetime!

As one of the interested parties I don't think it right to say very much more about TAFF, let alone try to solicit support. I would like to thank my nominators for their kindness, however, Greg Benford, Charlie Brown, Ken Bulmer, Chris Priest and Waldemar Kumming, and everyone else who's wished me well. The important thing about the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund is that as many people as possible should vote, no matter who they actually vote for. Official forms will be available from the Administrator, Eddie Jones (72 Antonio St., Bootle 20, Lancs) from about the middle of February onwards. Forms are also usually circulated as widely as possible through the fanzines, etc.

There are a few rapid announcements to make before closing this issue. First, I'm delighted to report that the SPECULATION Conference will be held once again this year, in Birmingham on Saturday June 12th. As before we hope to attract an audience of from 100-200 people to hear leading authors and critics talking about SF. SPECULATION-II will take place at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, in the centre of Birmingham (not at the Cannon Hill Arts Centre), and speakers taking part will include James Blish and John Brunner, among others.

Those of you who attended the first of these events, last year, will know the type of programme to expect, and I think at least the majority found the conference very enjoyable. This time it will be a little more like a regular convention -- a full lunch will be served on the premises to all delegates, giving an opportunity to mix and talk that was rather lacking last year. Since it will be held on a Saturday (10.00-6.00) this also will give the opportunity to travel to Birmingham on the day, rather than having to stay at various hotels. Tickets for the event, including lunch, will cost 25/-, and will be available a little later in the year. Full details will be announced in Speculation and elsewhere.

An added attraction in June will be an exhibition of science fiction books from all over the world, which has been put together by the National Book League. This exhibition will initially be on show at NBL Headquarters in London, and will afterwards tour the country. The show will open in London in early May.

Guiding light behind the exhibition is of course George Hay, who has also pioneered the formation of the Science Fiction Foundation in London, intended to be the very first academic centre in this country for the study of science fiction.

The Foundation is sponsoring the NBL exhibition, and is currently planning a number of other activities. It will eventually be very important from the point of view of recording and accumulating bibliographical information, among other functions. Further information: George Hay, 78 Downhills Way, London N.17.

Incidentally, I don't know how he does all these things but I understand that George has somehow also managed to infiltrate Radio London, since he now runs a regular half-hour spot on Saturday mornings, once a month. I've been invited to take part, to which I replied "not on your life!"

One more date to watch; an entirely new science fiction convention makes its debut in Birmingham this year. Not a conference, NOVACON will be a genuine full-scale convention, with a full programme of events and Guest of Honour James White. Organised by the Aston University SF Group at the Imperial Hotel, Birmingham, the convention takes place on Saturday & Sunday, 13-14 November 1971, although we expect a lot of people to arrive during the Friday evening.

I say "we" somewhat unwisely, since I am involved only in a technical capacity as an adviser - the committee is chaired by Vernon Brown and my only real contribution has been to talk about a November convention for so long that the Group finally took the bait! Full details from Vernon; and you can register now for 10/-. (Vernon Brown, Room 623 Pharmacy Dept, University of Aston, B'ham)

To conclude on the Convention theme; I do hope to see a great many English readers at the Worcester Eastercon, and of course Speculation will be reporting on the proceedings sometime later in the year. A few reminders, however:- If you have not yet registered, it is not too late to send your 10/- fee to me immediately. If you have not yet booked your hotel room - well, I wish you luck but something may still be salvaged if you send me your booking form even more rapidly! Lastly, if you have booked advertising space in the Programme Booklet, don't forget that we must have camera-ready copy by February 28th, latest, cash with copy.

The British World Convention bid in 1975? I have had such a disappointing response to this idea that I really have no idea of the interest my suggestions last time aroused. A special programme item will be arranged at Worcester to talk over the possibilities so that a decision can be made on whether or not to enter a firm bid.

I wonder if people out there might like to help with a couple of other little things? Since I began to give lectures on science fiction last year I've felt the need for a set of slides to illustrate a general talk. Do you have any ideas of what might be interesting to show in slide form? I'll be delighted to hear of any suggestions of material, and if you have an idea I'd appreciate the loan of your original book, magazine or illustration which could be made up as a slide.

I'm also interested in how people live on the other side of the world, and because I deal professionally with the Press I like to look at newspapers from other countries. Would anyone care to send me a few issues of their local daily papers, I wonder? (English language, please!) They often prove fascinating reading, especially some of those rather gory U.S. tabloids!

It looks as if a Post Office Strike is about to engulf Britain; in which case this issue of Speculation may be even further delayed.

Peter Weston, 16 January.

NOREASCON — 29th World Science Fiction Convention, 3-6 September 1971

Box 547, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, U.S.A.

#### ANNUAL SCIENCE FICTION ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

##### Rules of Eligibility:

NOMINATIONS AND VOTING: Nominating is limited to members of either Heicon or Noreascon. Only one item may be nominated in each category. Either Heicon or Noreascon membership number must appear on each ballot. A person must be a member of Noreascon to vote on the final ballot.

BEST NOVEL: A science fiction or fantasy story of 40,000 words or more, which has appeared for the first time in 1970. Appearance in a year prior to 1970 disqualifies a story — a story may thus be eligible only once. Publication date or cover date in the case of a dated magazine, takes precedence over a copyright date. The date of the last installment of a magazine serial determines its year of eligibility. Individual stories appearing as a series are eligible only as individual stories, and are not eligible taken together under the title of the series. The convention committee may move a story into a more appropriate category if it feels it necessary, providing the story is within 5000 words of the category limits.

BEST NOVELLA: Same rules as novel, with length between 17,500 and 40,000 words.

BEST SHORT STORY: Same rules as novel, with length under 17,500 words.

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: Any production, directly related to science fiction or fantasy, in the fields of radio, television, stage or screen, which has been publicly presented for the first time in its present form during 1970. Series are not eligible but individual episodes in the series are eligible and must be identified by title.

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: A professional artist whose work was presented in some form in the science fiction or fantasy field in 1970.

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE: Any magazine devoted primarily to science fiction or fantasy which has published four or more issues, at least one of which appeared in 1970.

BEST AMATEUR MAGAZINE: Any generally-available non-professional magazine devoted to science fiction, fantasy, or related subjects, which has published four or more issues, at least one of which appeared in 1970.

BEST FAN WRITER: A writer whose works appeared in fanzines in 1970.

BEST FAN ARTIST: An artist or cartoonist whose works appeared in fanzines in 1970.

ALL AWARDS will be the standardised rocket ship, designated Science Fiction Achievement Awards or HUGOS, and will be presented at the Awards Banquet, at Noreascon.

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TO BRITISH READERS: This 'Hugo' nomination form is distributed with SPECULATION magazine. To nominate for Awards, you must be a member of Noreascon or Heicon, as stated above. This form can however be completed and returned to the committee enclosing \$4.00 (£1.13.0) in cheque, money order or cash, which entitles you to membership in Noreascon, and all literature. See over page.

HUGO NOMINATION BALLOT

BEST NOVEL: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST NOVELLA: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST SHORT STORY: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST AMATEUR MAGAZINE: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST FAN WRITER: \_\_\_\_\_

BEST FAN ARTIST: \_\_\_\_\_

For definitions of the categories see the Noreascon Hugo rules on the reverse side of this ballot.

Only members of the 28th World Science Fiction Convention (HEICON) or the 29th World Science Fiction Convention (NOREASCON) may nominate. If you do not feel qualified to nominate in any particular category for any reason, please do nominate in the other categories available.

HEICON membership number \_\_\_\_\_ NOREASCON Membership number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enroll me as a member of NOREASCON. I am enclosing \_\_\_\_\_ \$6 Attending fee  
or \_\_\_\_\_ \$4 Supporting fee

Membership in NOREASCON is \$4 for supporting and \$6 for attending until 10 August 1971. If you wish to join NOREASCON in order to nominate and vote on the final ballot, but are not sure you can attend, you can pay \$4 now and another \$2 to convert to Attending membership on or before 10 August 1971. Membership fee at the convention itself will be \$10; it will cost \$6 at the convention to convert a supporting membership to an attending membership there. Make all cheques payable to NOREASCON.

When completed, mail this ballot to: NOREASCON, P.O. Box 547, Cambridge,  
Massachusetts 02139, U.S.A.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF BALLOTS IS 1ST APRIL 1971

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Fanzine editors are encouraged to reprint and distribute this ballot to their readers but we must insist that both sides' text must be reproduced verbatim.)