

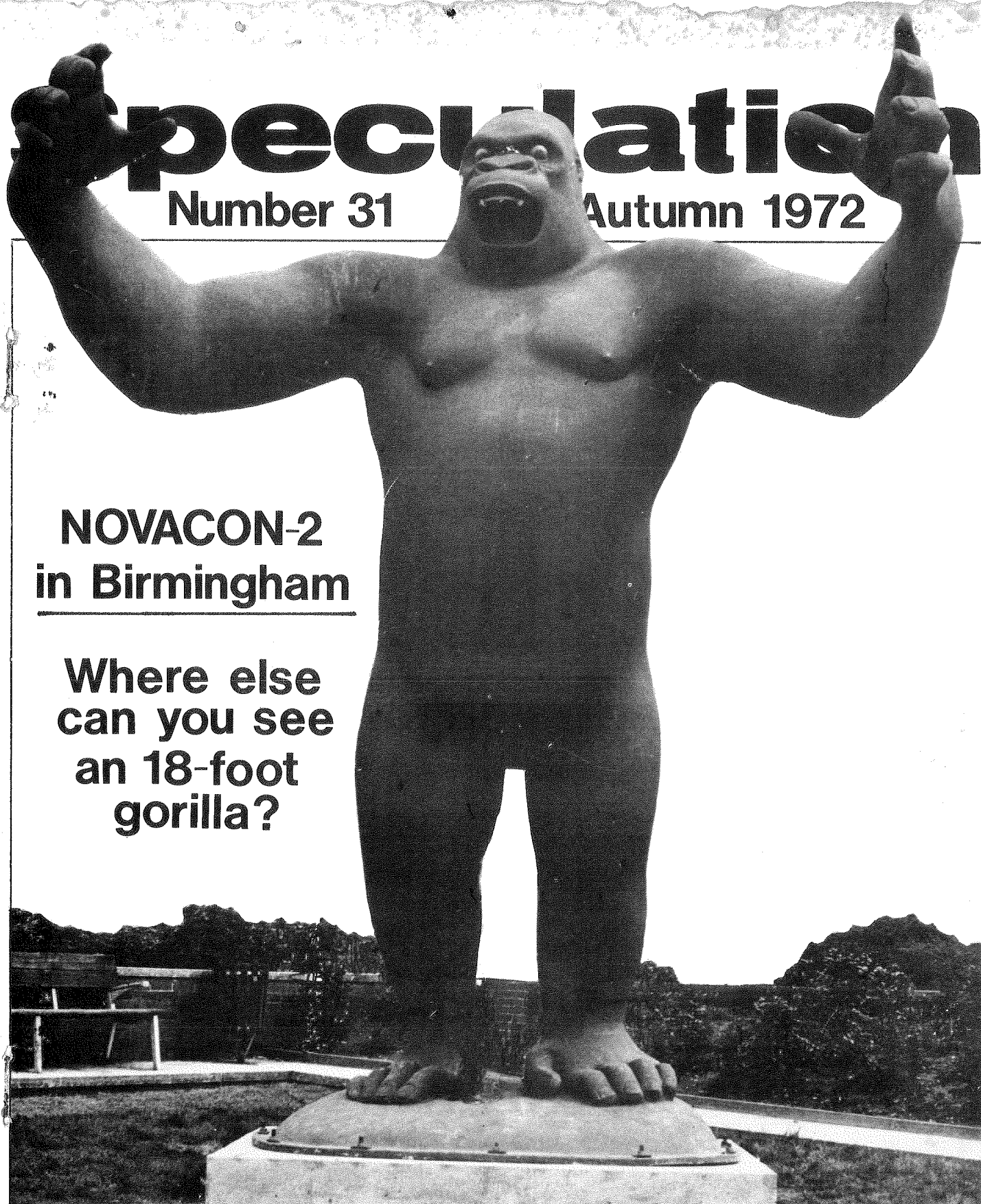
speculation

Number 31

Autumn 1972

NOVACON-2 in Birmingham

**Where else
can you see
an 18-foot
gorilla?**



Aldiss - Hounded to the grave?

Brian M. Stableford: The Compleat Silverberg

Speculation

"The reviewer is the reader's shop steward" - Sudbery.

Issue 31 (Volume 3. Number 7.)

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Cover: "King Kong(crete)" - see below.

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SO WHERE ELSE CAN YOU SEE A GIANT APE?

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During the SPECULATION-III Conference this year in Birmingham I had an interesting little conversation with Dave Kyle and Forrest J. Ackerman, en route for the Eurocon in Trieste later in the month. I blush to think of the surroundings in which our conversation took place, a cramped and airless basement in one of the monolithic new buildings of Birmingham University (the real one) at the Edgbaston campus; I blush too when I think of poor Forry having to queue for the meal of the day - soggy pork and carrots - at the rather grotty refectory.

But while down there in the dungeons Forry asked me why there was a statue of King Kong standing in Birmingham's famous "Bull Ring", which he had passed on his way out to the Conference. It seemed a reasonable enough sort of question. I explained that an unlikely body called the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation had been commissioned by the Arts Council to bring art and culture to provincial British cities, and said Foundation had arranged for various artists to produce a piece of work of an appropriate nature for each city.

MAR. 3 1973

"But why King Kong?" persisted Forry. "Ah... well, a lot of people asked that when he first arrived", I said. "I don't know whether the artist had some ulterior motive, but he said that Birmingham, with all its expressways and concrete towers, reminded him of New York, and so..."

"KING KONCRETE !!" chorused Forry and Dave Kyle together.

But those were the days of Kong's glory, when he had stood proudly in the central position reserved for the "work of art". During the stipulated six-month period he collected various endorsements such as "Up the Villa" across his apelike posterior, but the City Council never did warm to him, and refused their option to purchase this monument to the Second City's cultural tastes.

Kong must go, and all seemed black until a commercial interest stepped in at the eleventh hour and purchased the brute. Kong fetched £1700, and now stands not five minutes from my suburban office in the forecourt of the King Kong (used) Kar Co. I was pleased to see that the new owners had a sense of occasion, too; in the last few weeks KK has sprouted white whiskers and now wears a giant red cap and fur-trimmed red costume. He carries a huge Santa Claus sack over one shoulder, but would you buy a used car from this ape?

(In passing; for all his size, Kong was cast in fibre-glass and weighs only a couple of hundredweights. He is dark grey in colour, with glaring red eyes and mouth, and really is quite a sight!)

THE POLITICS OF CONVENTIONEERING

The cover of this issue was really intended to look a little more lively than it actually does; around the base of the statue I had planned to arrange a series of head-&-shoulder photographs of people who attended the Birmingham NOVACON this year. As usual where photography for SPECULATION is concerned, something went wrong at the last minute so that I didn't get the pictures I'd expected.

I haven't seen any visual results from NOVACON II, although I can bear witness that some of the very best people were there. Although this isn't the place for a proper Con report, I will say in passing that success this time was a crucial test for the whole idea of a 'second convention' in Britain. Would you have been interested in coming back in 1973 if the recent weekend had been a bit of a flop?

Two successful years should make the November convention into a permanent fixture, however, and to make doubly sure of continuity a mechanism was introduced this year that ties NOVACON to the new Birmingham SF Group. Judging by the polite applause this move generated, British fandom is, as ever, quite happy to let someone else look after the details.

People forget that the first NOVACON was Vernon Brown's 'one-off' affair, that could have been picked up (or more probably ignored) by anyone and everyone. Frantic scurrying around secured a repeat event at the same hotel, and earlier this year the BSFG officially annexed the convention by writing it into the Group's Constitution. The announcement was ratified at the second NOVACON.

That sounds a bit turgid; what it actually means is that there is someone - the Group management committee - who will make sure that the convention actually happens every year, and that there will be someone suitable who is available to run the next one. The Group also bears any losses that may be incurred, although hopefully that will never happen.

While Group members no doubt appreciate having a convenient local convention the arrangement does not specify that NOVACON must be held at the same place every year, nor even in Birmingham. If someone outside the area were sufficiently determined they could almost certainly run NOVACON. I thought you'd like to know that.

Actually this is an arrangement that is a lot more sound than is the Easter convention, which every year invites disaster by allowing itself to be bid for by all and sundry. The fact that there may be no bid is not the problem; that has happened before. The real danger is a successful bid from someone who, to be kind, is simply incompetent to organise an event of the magnitude this has attained. There have been some narrow squeaks in the past, and though I shouldn't say this, I'm a bit worried about the intention to hold a giant SF/fantasy/comics "mixed" convention in 1974. But one day Brian Burgess will get Eastercon, and then where will we be?

A GREAT BOOK IF YOU CAN AFFORD IT

About a year and a half ago I received an invitation to contribute to a book which was being prepared on 'Contemporary Novelists'. An editorial committee had selected some 600 novelists within the English language, and various people were being asked to contribute essays on each of these authors.

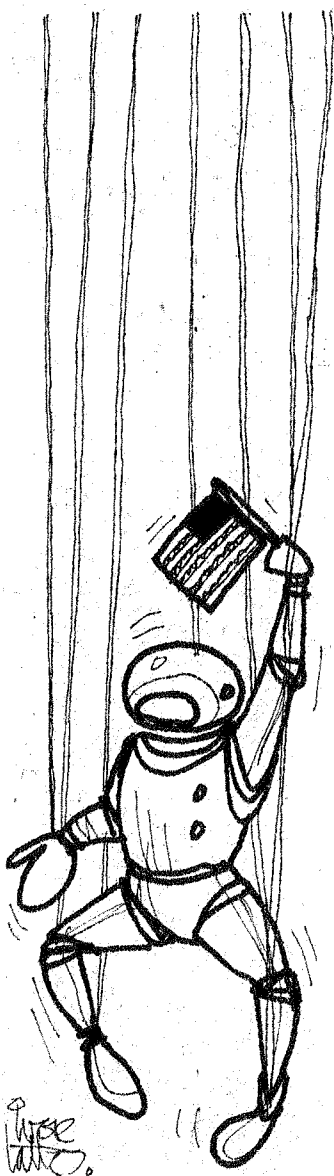
Of the grand total, nine science fiction writers had been selected, these being Aldiss, Asimov, Ballard, Bradbury, Clarke, Heinlein, Hoyle, Pohl, & Vonnegut. There were also related people such as Derleth & Tolkien, and many who have written some SF - such as Golding, Burgess, William Burroughs, etc.

As things developed it was arranged that I should prepare 1000-word essays on Isaac Asimov and Robert A. Heinlein. A very impressive bibliography of each author arrived, and, as is my way, I put off writing the essays until the deadline came around.

In the end I finished the two pieces, which didn't really take very long, and sent them off. A long silence then ensued, and I was beginning to come to the conclusion that the whole thing had been a Charles Platt hoax. Then, a month or so ago, a big heavy parcel arrived, which proved to contain one of the biggest and heaviest books I have ever seen.

CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS is an awe-inspiring work. It contains information on each of those 600 writers, this information comprising a biography, a bibliography, a critique, and in many cases an extended commentary by the writers themselves. The essays are in fact only a part of the whole, most impressive being the bibliographies, which have apparently been compiled by the editor, James Vinson.

For someone like myself who reads too much SF, a book like this is invaluable. Every library should have a copy if you can possibly afford to pay £9.00 for the book. (St. James Press, 1a Montagu Mews North, London W.1.)



The months that have passed since the previous issue have otherwise been a difficult and rather depressing time for me. Why this should be so is largely bound up with my job, which at this time last year was with one of the BSA companies, and which I felt compelled to leave at the beginning of 1972 in the wake of the financial collapse of the parent Group.

Then followed an extremely strenuous nine months elsewhere, working for a company selling central heating systems. While the company was extremely sound, I gradually realised I was bored stiff and that there was only a limited future there for me. So I entered a short but tense period during which I studied form, looking at advertisements in the Daily Telegraph. I came that close to getting an excellent job with Raleigh at Nottingham, but then the unexpected happened; I was asked to go back to BSA in a new and better position.

Without going into any more detail, I hope you can appreciate the rather unsettling effect of all this. While the new job at BSA (marketing manager) is good experience, it was a difficult decision to make in view of the still-uncertain future of this particular Group of companies. It's possible - though not so probable as it was, I think - that the whole thing could still go *bang*. There's a merry Christmas thought for you!

Looking around Nottingham (which I thought a horrible place) in the hope of going to Raleigh has also set our minds on the thought of moving house. So far we have been looking for about two months, and have just missed an excellent property in the plush Sutton Coldfield area. This one was slightly run-down, but could have been tidied up in no time into a first-class house. But do you realise, to buy a detached, centrally-heated house with a decent-sized garden is going to cost me in the neighbourhood of £12,000? No wonder I'm depressed.

DOWN IN THE ENGINE ROOM DEPT.

This issue has caused me more difficulty than any other since the 'Special Diasaster Issue', back in 1968. Last things first, the printer has just telephoned to say that the offset plate for the front cover has been lost; and a thick fog is making it virtually certain that tonight's collating party will have to be called off. But in addition to that, I bought 25 reams of paper from my old friends H.J. Chapman of Malvern, and none of it has fed through my Gestetner as it should have done. All through the print-run the paper has gone through the machine two-at-a-time, or the registration has slipped by as much as $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. So I must apologise if any pages in this, your copy, are not as clear as they should be. The whole job has taken me three solid days - twice as long as it should have done.

At least I hope it is the paper that is to blame; heaven forbid that my trusty Gestetner should fail me. Although the counter-device went adrift halfway through the print run; you can imagine how that helped matters!

You'll notice a return of artwork to SPECULATION, something I intend to continue with in future. I'm now inviting artwork again if you would care to submit sketches; before I forget, the interior work this issue is by:- Ivor Latto (3, 38) Dave Rowe (13) and Jack Gaughan (45). Ivor Latto is surely one of the very best fan artists, don't you think? More of his work next issue. Also next issue, 'Alternatives to Worlds' by Larry Niven, illustrated by Andrew Stephenson; articles by Tony Sudbery, John Brosnan, Mark Adlard, and others. Hope it won't be too long coming!

I am agent for LOCUS, the Hugo-winning fortnightly news magazine. Sent airmail from California, 10 issues for £1.50. Send cheques, etc, to me for immediate subscription.

Frederik Pohl

The most controversial speech at Chessmancon

* Not really so very controversial but sufficiently so to stir up a lively response from the audience, during which Fred Pohl revealed a lot about his own tastes and dislikes. Session was recorded by Gerald Bishop & Dave Rowe, and speech transcribed (painfully) by Tom Shippey. Questions were transcribed (even more painfully) by yrs. truly and because it was a very faint tape-recording by the time it reached us, only selected (audible) questions are reproduced here. *

THE TITLE of my talk is "The shape of science fiction to come", and I would like to talk about what I think science fiction can be and should be. In doing so I will have to spend some time in telling you what I think science fiction is - and indeed, what I think a story is. I seldom speak in such analytical terms but I propose to do so this afternoon, and I think I should tell you why.

A couple of years ago a local college asked me to teach a course in short-story writing, and I rejected this as an indecent proposal because I don't believe that writing can or should be taught. I made that clear and made it stick - for all of a day I made it stick. Then they called me up and said that if I wouldn't teach the course they'd give it to someone else who would teach it, and I couldn't permit that!

I agreed to do it. That required me to think in terms of the analysis of a story, terms I don't usually like to think in. It seems to me that the more writers get conscious of the process of what they're doing, the less likely they are to do anything worthwhile. But in order to teach the course I had to think in these terms, and so I evolved my own pedantic vocabulary.

SPECULATION

It seems to me that most kinds of writing, including science fiction, comes apart into four main parts. First of all there is what I call the 'Letter to the Editor' - that is, the theme, the thesis, whatever it is you want to accomplish, what it is you want to convey. The second part is the cast of characters, the people in the story - and in SF not necessarily human people, and not necessarily even organic. The third part is the setting, the background, the milieu, what I call the 'Travelogue'.

Finally there is that shape of word-use, coinage, idiosyncratic inflexion, or whatever else decorates the surface of the work and that concerns so many writers so much - the style, what I call the 'Package'. This is a Madison Avenue advertising term but it one that I think appropriate.

Now it would be possible to re-label all these elements with more high-flown terms, but it seems to me that the danger here is that the attempt to make the work of the analyst more respectable - by giving criticism the status of a profession with its own mumbo-jumbo - is successful only at the cost of minimising the respectability and in fact degrading the worth of the writing itself. So let me use these coarse and colloquial terms to separate out the parts of science fiction stories, and let us look at each of them to see where SF can go from here.

Let's take them one at a time and in reverse order. There is a reason for this, and the reason is that it appears to me that the SF story at present is being approached in this reverse order by many of its writers. The last, and I think least important element I mentioned was the 'package', and I think the dominant aspect of the last 'New Wave' was that most of what creative abilities its practitioners had went into the style, the format - the emphasis was on surface features. There has been more attention paid to the 'package' than to the content of the story.

Now, what I told my students - and of what I do not think I have yet succeeded in convincing any practicing professional writer - is that style is the last thing any serious writer should worry about. I borrow a maxim from architecture and from biology to say "Form follows function". Or to quote an authority whose name I unfortunately do not remember, "style is the problem solved". Once you have decided what you want to say and who it concerns and where it is all happening and when, then that style which most economically and completely conveys all these things is the right style for your story.

I think that in science fiction the great stories that have made SF worth reading in the first place were pretty nearly styleless. We have a tendency to think that because SF has become more fashionable and reputable and more popular, at the same time that it has become more literary, there must be some cause-and-effect relationship there.

I don't think this is so. I think that the importance of science fiction rests largely on the stories of people like Doc Smith, Stanley Weinbaum, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert A Heinlein, all of whom are essentially style-free. It is what they say that is important, and not at all the way in which they say it. So that it seems to me that for a writer to think first in terms of style is to cramp his story in a way which will strangle it.

Please understand that I am not saying writers should not develop styles of their own. I am only saying that the style is the least part of the story. Science fiction enjoys the sort of literary and social acceptance now that we only dreamed about, twenty or thirty years ago, but in fact the stories that have won esteem

for SF are the ones that were written twenty and thirty and even forty years ago, by and large. They still sell as well as or better than the newest work. 'Doc' Smith and Heinlein are taught in the schools side by side with Chip Delany and Jim Ballard. They are equally enshrined in bibliography and entombed in monographs. And yet no-one would pretend that there was any appreciable literary style in those stories of the 1930s and 1940s that made SF worth taking seriously in the first place.

I do think that science fiction will see the development of new packages - new styles, new modalities - and I think they will be deeply involved with the new techniques for communication that are available; TV, tape cassettes, design, illustration, and so on. But what will be important about them, I think, is not that they will exist but that new kinds of story will make them necessary.

The second part of the science fiction story is the 'cast of characters', and here SF faces a particularly difficult and almost insoluble problem. When Tolstoy and de Maupassant, Hemingway or Dickens developed their casts of characters, they had a good many in-built advantages. If Dickens wanted to write about the boyhood of David Copperfield, all he really had to do was to look inside his own head, remember what he could of his own boyhood, modify it with whatever other boyhoods he had observed and what other settings he had seen, and set it down on paper. There he had created a real young man who impressed us with his reality.

But Brian and Harry and Bob Shaw and all of us have a more complicated task, since the people we write about often enough have not had a childhood like ours, or even a childhood at all. They may look like sea snakes or bats. They may be like Asimov's positronic robots, or Ross Rocklynne's intelligent stars. To say something meaningful about people like these is a near-impossibility, and can only be done by compromise and inference.

And because it's hard, a good many of us don't trouble to do it. We limit ourselves to human beings, and if possible human beings as much like ourselves as we can. It seems to me that while this is an easy way to write a story it is not necessarily a good way, and further, that it is a way which fails to exploit the potential of SF for making real to us creatures that we have never encountered. Both critical and financial success has come to writers who have taken this easy way out, but it remains an evasion and worse, a failure to exploit the characteristics of SF that make it worthwhile; that 'view from a distant star' which lets us see our own world from outside.

Those distant stars of course are part of the third aspect of SF writing, which I call the 'travelogue'. It seems to me, sadly, that more and more science fiction stories have a tendency to consist of two or three or more people sitting in a living room or parlour, very much like all the other living rooms and parlours in New York and London and everywhere else, discussing sex, and world ecology, and sociology, and behaviour, and sex, and other matters of great importance to them but in a static and rather dull environment.

I had occasion to chide A.J. Budrys once, when he turned in a smart, what he considered to be a marvelous half of a novel, in which nothing happened for two hundred pages except that people talked to each other. I said, "A.J., I don't mind your having people settle all the great problems of humanity in your stories, but can't they do it while they're dodging fire-lizards on Venus?". And I think this is one thing SF can do - not only settle metaphysical and abstract problems, but it can do these things in environments which are themselves intrinsically interesting.

SPECULATION

The final part of science fiction is the 'letter to the editor', the subject matter, the content, the thing that a story is all about. There's always been a great temptation to use science fiction for propaganda purposes, because it's very good for that sort of thing. Jonathan Swift for example, used SF techniques to express his hatred of the English nobility and aristocracy in the 18th Century. I used it, should I say before someone else says it for me, to bite the hand that was feeding me when I was working for advertising agencies, by writing THE SPACE MERCHANTS with Cyril Kornbluth, denouncing them for practices that were in fact paying my salary!

I do not think this is a wrong thing to do - obviously. But I do not think either that it is the fullest exploration of what SF can do. Propaganda implies a sort of contempt for and manipulation of the reader; you take as a starting point that he is hoodwinked by the world's cant and false standards, and you spend your best efforts instead to hoodwink him with your own.

Science fiction can do far more than that. It can show not only what we are like, or what we will be at some future date, but what we may be if we choose it so. It can show us what effect follows from what causal agents we see around us now, and thus give us a chance to decide what we want to happen, of all the countless possibilities.

The best part of a science fiction story is not what you read, but what happens in one's own mind when you have finished reading. It is in this direction - in providing inputs of new kinds of possible worlds, new considerations to affect today's actions, new exercises in what Herman Kahn calls 'conceiving the inconceivable' - that I think the shape of science fiction stories to come will achieve their greatest value... to us as readers and perhaps even to the world.

- Frederik Pohl, 1972

A transcript of the discussion which followed Fred Pohl's speech.

HARRY
HARRISON: "Are you going to stand by your statement that Swift used science fictional techniques in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS?"

POHL: "It is an SF technique to invent a planet (or island) called Lilliput, in which people do the things that you dislike in your present society. But in the story they go so far that clearly the things they are doing are maniacal and obsessed, whereas in real society things only seem that they might be going that way. This is one of the techniques of SF. I don't claim that SF invented it, but I do claim that it is special to SF, and when Swift was using it he was writing an SF story."

BRIAN
ALDISS: "What Harry was trying to say, I think, was that perhaps there is a certain inaccuracy in referring to that SF technique, in that science fiction hadn't been invented at the time. In other words, that the techniques Swift used were later appropriated by SF when it came along."

POHL: "I'm willing to concede that maybe SF didn't exist at the time, in any organised form. But this reductio ad absurdum, this literary satire, is basically an SF technique, it has been used widely by many, yourself included. And if it prefigured the existence of SF itself, well the Caesarian delivery also preceded modern obstetrical practice, but is nonetheless part of modern obstetrical practice. It simply came a little ahead of its time."

PETER
NICHOLLS: "I can quite accept that SF maybe has invented ideas, but not really any techniques of its own. Surely all that SF writers have done is to take techniques from literature - and thus took Swift's techniques."

POHL: "I would accept your argument. As far as I know the SF techniques of the sixties have been copied wholehandedly from William Burroughs, John dos Passos and everyone else who was writing in the '20s and '30s. I know of no SF technique which wasn't lifted bodily."

JAMES
BLISH: "Fred, I grant your point that a lot of the new stylists are essentially catching up with what was called the 'mainstream' novel, but nevertheless I think there have been a few inventions, and it seems to me that the kind of thing J.G. Ballard is doing is wholly new; I can think of no antecedent for it whatsoever. My question is, can you?"

POHL: "Jim, we have argued this in private and I'm willing to argue it with you in public. I don't see anything of the sort you describe in Ballard's work. (BLISH - "I'm talking about the short stories, not the novels."). I must say this, though perhaps I'm explaining my own ignorance. You have described to me, Jim, subtleties in the works of JGB, so that I have gone back to look for them, and I have not found them.

What I don't know is whether they exist in the works themselves or in the head of Jim Blish. If Ballard were here I'd like to find out from him if this were so. Perhaps this is really not relevant, because it's true that some of the best things that happen from reading an SF story do not come while reading it but take place afterwards in your own head. It may be that Ballard has caused you to invent something that was intrinsic to the story but which I just missed. I don't know. But I can't really quarrel on an objective basis because we differ in perception."

UNKNOWN: "Is it fair to talk about people like Heinlein and Weinbaum and Edgar Rice Burroughs and call them styleless? I'd have thought that their plainness of style was a very positive attribute."

POHL: "I should have said that they don't have a mannered style. It's really a quite lucid, clear, plain sort of style - so was Hemmingway's for that matter. What I find almost universal to the great SF writers is that they do not have very many literary mannerisms, with a few exceptions like Stapledon. My reason for preferring the lucid style is that it does not obscure what the writer is trying to tell me about, whereas a mannered style does.

Is John Brunner here? I don't want to slander him behind his back! I must say, John, that while I respect your work in particular as one example of this sort of thing, I am much more likely to go back and reread your earlier adventure stories than I am to go back and reread STAND ON ZANZIBAR, impressive though the work is."

JOHN
BRUNNER: "Since you've taken my name in vain, may I compliment you on the ingenuity with which you've managed to turn back the entire discussion put by Harry! But talking about derivative approaches to writing of any kind is really futile. Why worry about who got what from where; surely what matters is who has put it to good use!"

WESTON: "How would you classify new writers like Delany?"

POHL: "Delany is very hard to classify. He may be the only authentic genius amongst us. He is writing at such an advanced level that everything he says, in its best parts, trembles on the very verge of being totally incomprehensible. (Laughter) This is a very narrow tightrope to walk, but he's walked it very well until now.

GEORGE HAY: "I think that one of the functions of SF is to get across new and exciting concepts. Do you think that SF authors since 1960 (or so) to date are putting over such concepts better, or worse than before?"

POHL: "My whole thesis is that the stress of most SF being written today is not in the direction of propounding concepts. It's in the direction of experimenting with style, and this I deplore. I do think that there are many new and interesting concepts which have been developed in modern SF, but there has been so much attention given to other things that I don't think there are nearly enough."

CHRIS PRIEST: "I can't see the difference between that form of writing which has a form imposed on it, of beginning, middle and end, and that of somebody who doesn't structure his work in that way."

POHL: "I see this difference, Chris. Let me take the example of someone who is not present (and really I shouldn't since he's not here to defend himself); let's talk about Bob Silverberg. He was a very lucid and transparent writer, almost a styleless writer, for a long time an unmannered writer. But he began shifting around in the direction of more and more mannerisms, so it became harder and harder to see what he would be saying if he could only get the marbles out of his mouth and say it. I don't know what's happening in most of Silverberg's stories of late; I can't quite follow whatever he means me to perceive as being reality - if indeed he is talking about any sort of reality at all."

PRIEST: "Could it be that he doesn't want you to know?"

POHL: "If so why the heck is he wasting my time writing stories?"

DAVE KYLE: "We must bear in mind that the SF of a few decades ago was primarily designed for the magazine market. It needed the straightforward approach. Nowadays the accent is on stories being published in a book, and therefore I think authors have tended to take advantage of the fact that they were speaking alone within one cover."

POHL: "That's an interesting theoretical point which is not borne out by the facts. What has happened is that writers have been writing increasingly for the mystification of each other and less and less for the edification of their audiences."

JOHN BRUNNER: "When one gets into the question of lucidity of narrative, one is surely overlooking the fact that we live in the television age. I had, for example, a TV commercials producer arguing with me on the subject of 'what happens to narrative flow in the cinema?', and he said that because television commercials have come along, people have become accustomed to flicking instantly from one scene to another, even though there may be centuries between them. Exposed to this sort of environment, surely it is hardly surprising that an author will want to try and montage communication? In the hands of somebody who really understands what he's doing, it does make possible effects which would otherwise not be feasible without incredible depths of layering of explanation."

POHL: "I'm not prepared to denounce that theory at the present time, but I do think it rests on pretty thin basis - I think Elizabethan drama was quite as capable of jumping from point to point and time to time as TV is today, and if indeed television has had that effect on prose writers today, then drama should have done 300 years ago."

BRIAN ALDISS: "I don't want to ask any questions, but I'm just terrified that this convention is seeming to get very reactionary, and we're bogged down on this thing of the old versus the new. (Cont'd)"

ALDISS (cont/d) "I don't think you can draw a waterline, - a Plimsoll Line - in any way, or that you can regard science fiction as some horrible mad thing of which we all have ownership. It is something written by a number of writers, each of whom have their own approach, and they shouldn't be blackmailed by the prevailing atmosphere in this hall, or in any other hall. In many cases writers have been prevailed upon very heavily, by editors, to do the particular thing the editor wanted for his magazine. This has slackened off recently so that authors have more freedom, and maybe you will think some of those authors have done very peculiar things. But it's the freedom we must rejoice in.

I find it very sad to hear statements to the contrary, however beautifully expressed, I feel there's a slight bite in the air and I don't like it, I'm afraid."

LARRY: "I can quite see Mr Brunner's point. He said that our audience has been NIVEN educated by television to think in certain ways, to shift scenes very rapidly. The problem is that the ideas that a TV commercial is trying to put across are very simple, whereas the ideas I'm trying to put across take an awful lot of effort. Anything that gets in the way of the reader's comprehension is an added hindrance. I had a terrible time explaining the Ringworld, for instance, without any pictures!"

POHL: "Just the point; if you're talking about something complex you need to tell it simply. If your imagination is so deficient that you can only talk about simple things, you're entitled to discuss them complexly." (Laughter)

HARRISON: "God, up there in a dirty moustache!" *

POHL: "If I have failed to make it clear, I am in favour of diversity. I am (in reply only saying that there is less diversity than I would like to see in to unclear SF of late, because it has become quite modish to write in a mannered question) style. I see a great many MS - have seen for years - coming in from writers who have had no encounter with fans or writers' groups or with the world of publishing at all, and they take their cue from what they see in print. More and more their work is like the latest from Bob Silverberg, or Delany, or Brian Aldiss' more recent work. It seems to me that the diversity I look for is therefore diminishing, not increasing."

BRIAN "Can I say that there might be reasons of society why this is so, that ALDISS: the old belief in technology, turning the world into a gaint spaceship, no longer has universal appeal? There's now room for - whatever you call it - the softer approach. The ecological approach, that if I had my time on the platform I would propound.** I really think you will have to develop a tolerance for the fact that we now have a wider audience, and one of the reasons for this is that there are people not just carving bloody great spaceships out of asteroids, but people doing something that brings focus to our own lives.

They are not content with the all-powerful hero who rides to the stars, but they can depict the poor little shag trying to make do in an overcrowded slum. Without saying that one is good and the other bad, which I think you are mistaking for literary terms, the arena has been widened, and this is part of the diversity of the science fiction field."

JAMES "I think this problem, this question, is much older than anyone has so BLISH: far imagined. I have been all my life, for the most part, a conventional writer of narratives. I spent some time imitating E.E. Smith

* In-group science fiction joke!

** Brian's excellent 'Environment' speech will be published in the BSFA Vector.

- as a matter of fact, some 250,000 words of it - and in general I have been a writer with a good deal of consciousness of the kind of thing you are speaking for. And yet I have found, and found years ago with pieces like 'Testament of Andros', that with few exceptions the stuff I have done over the last thirty years has gone down the drain. It is the few experiments that have survived and have been anthologised over and over again. For instance, every BLACK EASTER it rains money!

It seems to me that we vastly underestimate the capacity of the present audience for assimilating this kind of thing. We may have underestimated the capacity of past audiences, too, although they didn't get this material, primarily through magazine editorial reasons."

POHL: "I think you are citing BLACK EASTER as an argument in favour of your predilection for experimentation. To me BLACK EASTER seems to be a classic science fiction story, written with utmost lucidity but quite baroque and strange in its content. I have not ever suggested one should not experiment with content; but there was nothing overly 'stylistic' in my sense about the novel. And while you may not have written it for a science fiction magazine, in case you've forgotten I published it in one." (Laughter & applause). - End of session.

SOME COMMENTS

Odd that Jim Blish should fail to consider such stories as 'Surface Tension', which must have survived better than most despite being written along conventional lines. (In fact JB confessed, or so I seem to remember, that he didn't think very much of the story at the time). Odd, too, that Blish should cite the fact (in his letter, further in this issue) that all of his books are still in print, every single one he has ever written. I think this tends to weaken JB's assertion above, and to expose his own modesty; few SF writers can have 'survived', in any sense, better than James Blish.

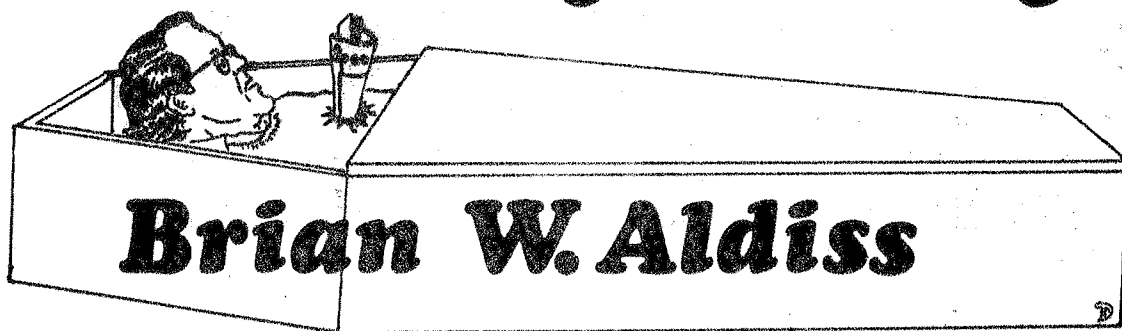
There are some odd things in Fred Pohl's comments too. On page 10 Fred cites Bob Silverberg as a bad example, to my utter astonishment. Bob Silverberg? "don't know what's happening in his stories of late"? I don't claim to have read all of S's recent work (who can?) but with the exception of SON OF MAN there is little I can regard as overly stylistic. I wish I had thought at the time to ask Fred Pohl to be specific; which Silverberg stories, pray? (Brian Stableford takes his own look at S's fiction in an article later in this issue).

Finally, while Fred Pohl mildly criticises Silverberg and John Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR, it's surely odd that he should not wish to make the same sort of objections to Samuel Delany's current output. Most odd was to see Fred explaining Delany's plan to issue a multi-media novel (with gramophone record), and to admit Delany trembles on the edge of the incomprehensible (Page 9). It all goes to prove that even editors are human and have their own likes & dislikes which tend to get in the way of any reasoned argument. Incidentally, the recording was so unclear in one place that I had to omit all reference to the Delany LP/book package.

WILL THE REAL BRIAN ALDISS PLEASE STAND UP?

This was Pam Bulmer's original title to her review last time of SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS, and which could have been applied to whole issue with its many references to Brian Aldiss. That issue provoked the following article (facing) which is a really odd item for SPEC. It was written as 'a jeu d'esprit' (in Brian's words) while he was in holiday mood just before departing for Lower Bavaria. It is witty, polished, and is too good to miss - but it should be read with your copy of SPEC-30 propped open so that you can follow the more esoteric references.

**I'm only a
yellowing skull
without any
yellowing ears
and yet I can hear
every word you say
as clearly as if
it were yesterday**



TWO PEOPLE confronting each other in a study, tension in their attitudes. A willowy, upright woman in a dark dress, a youth in dark glasses, interrogating her. Beyond the window, a fitful spring day. A watery ray of sun shines in on the book-choked shelves, picking out the novels of Joseph Conrad, the poems of Dryden, the Collected Speeches of Larry Niven.

The interviewer was a tall, sallow young man with his hair braided down to his waist. He cleared his throat and leant forward with the air of one about to get down to what an earlier age would have called 'the nitty-gritty'.

"Now, Mrs Aldiss, if we could get down to the old koestler-worstler, let me ask you confidentially what your feelings are about the rumour that your husband's death was, in fact, suicide. I mean, don't you feel, don't you slightly feel, don't we all slightly feel, that he was, in effect, a man with his back to the wall?"

SPECULATION

The black-clad figure made a small gesture of dismissal. In a clear voice, she said, "You use the word 'confidentially'. How can you, as a journalist, possibly expect that there could be anything confidential between us?" She moved delicately about the cluttered room.

"Come, come Mrs Aldiss, that ploy is more worthy of your late husband than you. It is an evasion, isn't it?"

"My husband cared dearly for words. I'm sure he would have perceived the hypocrisy in pretending there could be confidences between us. All you want is some scandal for your paper, isn't it?"

"Are you implying that he cared more for words than for people?"

"...More for words than for some people, Mr Worsthorpe."

He looked about the shoddy book-lined room in which the writer had passed his last hours. "Let's try again. The general feeling is that your husband was far too ambitious a man and, in fact, attempted more than he could ever fulfil, particularly in regard to his last mammoth novel in verse -"

"My husband believed, Mr Worsthorpe, that any writer worth his salt should try with each book to get a little further, should develop -"

"Yes, yes, no doubt, but wouldn't you say, wouldn't we all say, wouldn't we be forced to admit, that that great lumbering verse-novel, MY STRONTIUM 90 CAN LICK YOUR STRONTIUM 90, was just a gigantic failure which served in effect as his creative tombstone?"

She looked hard at him.

"I notice that your ferretty little eyes do not meet mine, Mr Worsthorpe. What are you, anyway? -- Just a little reporter, with pretensions at being a critic! Who are you to say anything concerning my husband's work? Of course STRONTIUM 90 is difficult; it is a complete history of the mental life of man, from earliest times to far into the future, all encapsulated into one single unpunctuated sentence some three million words long. You don't expect it to be easy! But my husband had courage; he believed that it would slowly win acceptance from an enlightened public. No, it wasn't the hostility of the general reader which tipped his mental balance."

"Perhaps you could tell me what it was, then?" Furtively, he adjusted the volume on his finger-ring recorder.

"I first noticed the danger signs after he had completed his history of science fiction, BILLION YEAR SPREE. That was back in ... 1972, it was. It was then that -- oh, little things I noticed ... graffiti appearing in the downstairs lavatory ... things like that ..."

Worsthorpe leant forward eagerly.

"What graffiti? Can you remember any?"

"He called them philosophical graffiti... He had a theory about graffiti... My husband had a theory about most things... I remember one graffito was 'No man is an island but women are an ocean'. And 'Life is the longest four-letter word in the language'. Things like that...."

"Any more?" He thought how much like the late queen she looked.

"We were talking about BILLION YEAR SPREE."

"You were saying that the book caused his insanity."

"Not at all. I was saying that, after he had finished it, the first symptoms appeared. I did not mean to imply that SPREE caused the mental deterioration."

"Oh, but surely, I mean, one could deduce, the indication was plainly there, that the history had terribly deleterious effects on him. I mean, he had to read the entire output of Poul Anderson and Edgar Rice Burroughs, not to mention

SPECULATION

J.G. Ballard, Olaf Stapledon, H.G. Wells, and Otis Adelbert Klein. I had it on good authority from Peter Weston - now, alas, no longer with us - that at the end of that gluttonous reading, your husband was expressing the warmest admiration for STARSHIP TROOPERS and the works of John Russell Fearn." *

"Don't mention that man to me!"

"Fearn?"

"Weston."

She rose, a tall and elegant figure, and touched lightly the marble bust of her husband, which stood on the mantelpiece beside the busts of Shakespeare and Mark Adlard. She noted with only minor anguish that the message 'Jesus Shaves' had been pencilled onto Adlard's beard, presumably by her husband in one of his 'dizzy spells', as they had been known in the family.

"My husband had great enthusiasm, Mr Worsthorpe. It is true that he went on record as saying that SECOND STAGE LENSMAN ranked with CRIME AND PUNISHMENT and the Collected Works of Edward C. Tubb, but that was no more than a momentary lapse of perspective."

"But my point, Mrs Aldiss, is that one senses in that lapse, one reads into that failure, one perceives in that dereliction, precisely the incipient signs of the madness that was about to engulf him."

She crossed herself, looking up at the dayglo portrait of Moorcock with the ever-rolling eyes. The television interview with Sir Robert Conquest and Christopher Priest had not been too bad; she had been slightly squiffy, and the interviewer, Charles Platt, had leant over backwards to be kind, foolish though he looked in that position. But Worsthorpe, the second reporter today, was too much.

"If you have already made up your mind what you wish to say about my late husband, Mr Worsthorpe, may I suggest you leave now and write your story? I do not believe that compiling BILLION YEAR SPREE drove him mad."

"If you have an alternate theory, I should be interested to hear it." He got up under the pretense of being annoyed, to ruffle through a few oddments on a side-table, the bric-a-brac of a writing life spent outside any camp, sniped at alike by the Establishment and Fandom. What a stubborn misguided old fool the man had been, never to come in from the cold! There were a Toledo paperknife, a postcard from John Brunner postmarked Bermuda, a cat's skull, a paperback entitled OH FOR A CLOSER E.V.A. WITH THREE, an obscene statuette, a photograph of George Hay, a stuffed plankton, and a clock without hands signed by Phillip K. Dick. Pocketing the latter with a dexterity in which he took quiet pride, Worsthorpe said, "You don't suppose it was living with you that drove him round the twist?"

"Round the twist! Round the twist! What kind of an expression is that to use of a man the TLS referred to as the Harlan Ellison of literature?"

"Are you being evasive again, Mrs Aldiss?"

"I may appear difficult to you, but that is because I dislike prying as much as my husband did. He believed with Thomas Hardy that to touch the hearts of others one must bare one's own; but of course that left him in a vulnerable position. People took advantage of him. They felt at liberty to deny that he was England's - the world's - greatest science fiction writer - after Perry Rhodan, of course - without offering any proof for their statement. That, as much as anything, led to his decline."

"How is all this connected with BILLION YEAR SPREE?"

* In SPEC-30, Page 62, "We can now even agree about Heinlein, for example," (but I didn't actually more than hint at our mutual admiration for J.F.R. !) - PRW
SPECULATION

"Only chronologically. Shortly after finishing that great work - of which Kingsley Amis said, comparing it with NEW MAPS OF HELL, that it was twice as long if not twice as good - and when he was still in an enfeebled condition as a result of that labour, he received a fanzine called Speculation-30. And it was that which dealt him the final - "

"I'm afraid I shall have to visit your toilet. Back in a moment," said Worsthorpe. He had suddenly remembered her words about the graffiti and wanted to see for himself.

They were rather disappointing, the last utterances of the old master. 'Lemmings have the Answer'. 'I'd give my right eye to have binocular vision'. 'Sex is life set to music'. 'Continuous creation is an anagram of permanent erection'. 'Skin is the only deep beauty'. 'Cancer Banishes Bad Breath'. 'Character is the spin-off of Necessity'. Nothing that one might not read in a second-rate urinal in Crewe.

Triggering the disintegrator, he returned to the study. Mrs Aldiss was toying with the slender volume of John Foyster's verse, THE GRASSHOPPER LIES; he recognised it, having bought it himself when it was remaindered.

"I must be going, Mrs Aldiss. Thanks for the cooking sherry."

At that, she mysteriously started to laugh, as if the phrase had awoken a pleasant memory. Then she said, "I was telling you about Speculation-30."

"Of course. I was very interested. Didn't they do 'Darkly, Whirr, and Golem-Eyed'?"

"This is a fanzine, not a pap-group! The fanzine struck just when my husband's energies were at their lowest ebb. The sight of one more - two more - articles about Heinlein and Dick brought him to the brink of collapse. And there were photos of all the famous names of fandom - Ethel Lindsay, Jack Cohen, Lisa Conesa... and more photos of Pete Weston than anyone else. * From that moment, my husband and the whisky bottle were not to be parted."

Worsthorpe laughed.

"Surely you aren't suggesting, I mean, one wouldn't imply, I mean, nobody would be foolish enough - a fanzine..."

"My husband took Speculation very seriously, Mr Worsthorpe, very seriously indeed. He had each copy bound up in full crushed morocco, together with the editorials of Ted White. But what particularly un-nerved him about that particular issue ... Well, he broke down that night, weeping bitterly, saying that only Pam Bulmer understood him and only James Blish loved him, and how he wished it were vice versa - and he admitted how terrified he was by the announcement that Philip Strick would be reviewing BILLION YEAR SPREE...."

"Was that all?"

"Not quite. He was cut up because Bob Rickard seemed to fail to understand a vital critical point. Well, it wouldn't interest you because it is not sensational enough. But my husband lived by such things." She walked quietly about the room as she spoke. "Rickard admitted Blish was a master of the SF field - my husband also thought well of Blish, ranking him next to such authors as Dickens, Kuttner, Kornbluth, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. But then Rickard said that a large percentage of SF readers found Blish of 'little entertainment value'. My husband maintained that Rickard should have held this to be the readers' loss, not Blish's, and that it was because of this sort of reaction that he himself had deliberately flouted popularity to write more difficult books; that complex subjects should not be debased by simplification. It was for that reason he felt Shippey's comments on MOMENT OF ECLIPSE were quite inappropriate, and - "

"And that drove him to go off and write MY STRONTIUM 90 CAN LICK YOUR STRONTIUM 90, all three million words? That seems, superficially, on the surface, I mean, at face value, somewhat de trop?"

"There was something else. And, as you reach for your mammetter, Mr Worsthorpe, let me say that I'm glad, and nothing but glad, that you're going. Even the silence is better than your company. The something else, what really flipped my poor dear husband, was Pete Weston's jocular condescension towards Mark Adlard - far too familiar! - and his dual assumption that my husband had made a fortune out of science fiction and despised it. My husband maintained that he made less money writing science fiction than other fiction, and that it was callous to speak of anyone with a lifetime's addiction as either loving or despising the drug involved."

"Ah, now we're getting down to the old koestler-worstler!"

"Why don't you listen? And please put that death-mask of Anna Kavan down! He just felt that Weston was far too glib in his diagnoses and wielded far too much power in his rotten little magazine - well, I say rotten, but of course you know that a copy of 'Zenith Speculation' Number 1 fetched two thousand four hundred pounds at Sotheby's yesterday - and it was that which drove him straight out of the SF field - "

" - And up the wall?!"

"And on the downward path." She clenched her hands together, managing to look beautiful even in her grief. "You journalists and critics, Mr Worsthorpe, how little you know of the soul of the true artist, how sensitive it is!"

"Your husband was pretty hard-boiled, Mrs Aldiss," Worsthorpe said, fidgeting towards the door. "Any man who could write BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD and survive has to be tough!"

"But Weston had the infernal cheek to pretend -" her voice rose to a shriek, "that he and my husband were mad about Heinlein's work!"

"You know what happened to Weston. Let's not speak ill of the dead!" He adjusted his mammetter. On his way to the door, he snatched one last souvenir, the yellowing skull of Harry Harrison, and hurried from the building.

- Brian Aldiss, July 1972

THAT MAN WESTON AGAIN:

Brian's article is an excellent demonstration of that famous Aldiss evasiveness, or more fairly as Brian says, "why labour these pint-sized points in print? Better to point out the dangers of losing our perspectives in humorous manner, as I tried to do". It also seems to tie in with the preceding piece by Fred Pohl. And a letter from Doug Barbour states the point succinctly: "The reasons I like SF are that the ideas, when expressed in a style that's up to them, are serious, worthy of consideration, and exciting. I'm not that fond of artistic narcissism, the kind of story that is only style, without substance, but I believe you only get real, and valid, and good substance when you have a style capable of rendering it. So I like the writers I like (Delany, LeGuin, Russ) because they have already demonstrated a stylistic control far superior to that found in most older writers of SF. I see Bester especially, Pangborn, sometimes Vance, and Judith Merrill's occasional work as forerunners to the best today."

Maybe that is what Fred Pohl was really trying to say?

THE FIRST EUROPEAN CONVENTION

Only one member of ~~the~~ local circle was sufficiently determined to travel to the first Eurocon in Trieste this summer, but from reports brought back by Vernon Brown and through correspondence with my German Agent Waldemar Kumming, among others, I've been able to build up a mental picture of the convention. It seems to have been modelled a trifle too closely upon a professional conference rather than a fan-event; nonetheless it was extremely successful and did me the honour of presenting Spec with the Europa Award for Best European Fanzine of the Year. Under these circumstances, the least I can do is to present a set of photopages of Eurocon, this time assembled and printed by Waldemar Kumming.

PAGE 1: From the Eurocon banner on the outside of the building via a space warp to the registration desk underneath. Standing on left (also on speakers' table below, left) is Gianluigi Missiaja. Seated behind the glass is Gian Paolo Cossato, registering Molly Auler. To the right of the Eurocon banner, top row: Henry-Luc Planchat, Patrice Duvic, Daniel Walther, and Jean Leclerc de Lacherrerie. Right, with white shirt and cigarette, Simon Joukes. Lower row, centre, with spectacles is Dieter Steinseifer.

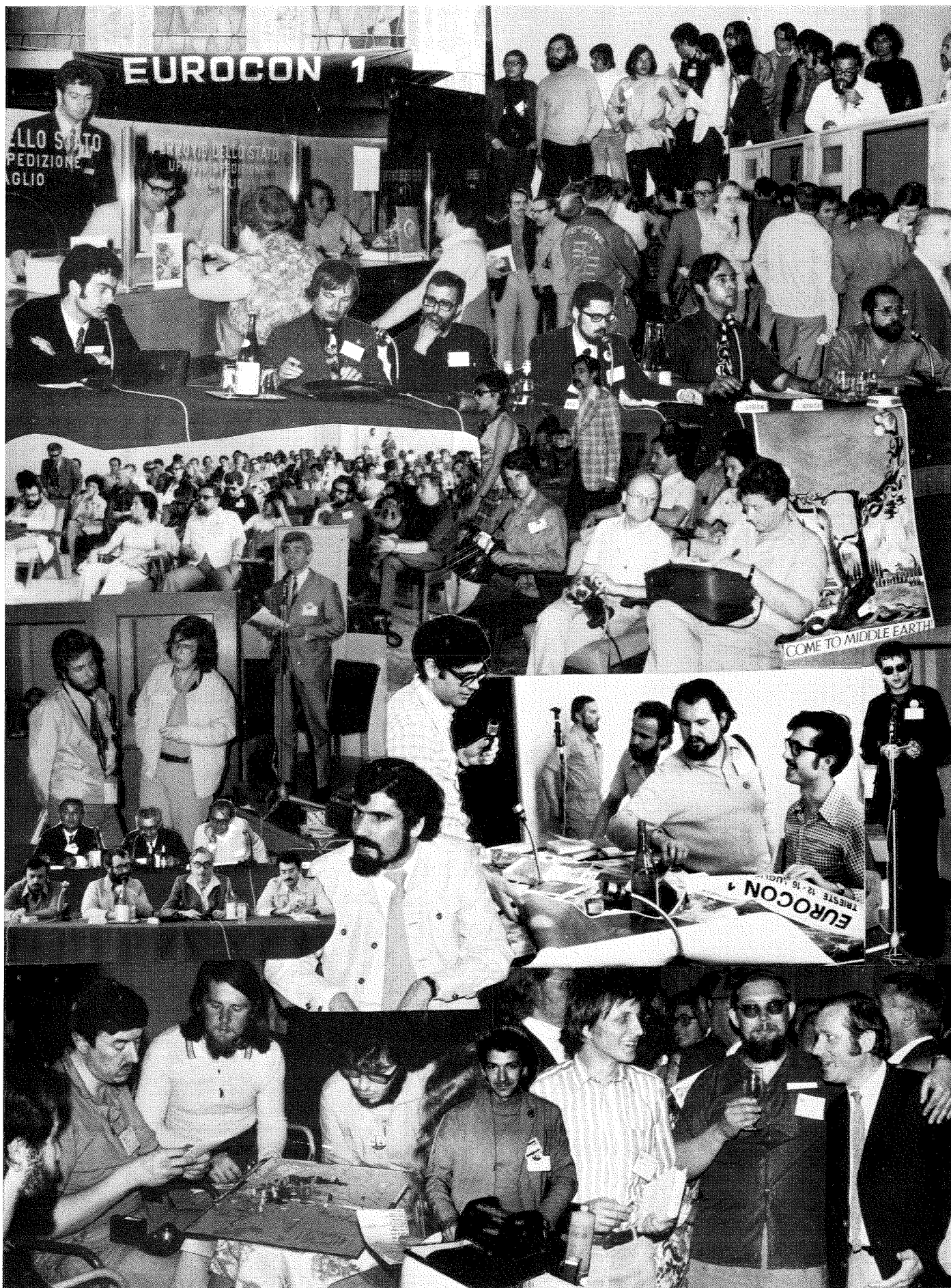
On the speakers' table, second left is John Brunner, then Toastmaster Gustavo Gasparini, Gianfranco Battisti, unknown, Ian Finder. Below speakers' table is an audience scene: in front row are Monique Mynard and Jean-Paul Cronimus, then unknown and someone who looks like Vic Hallett (?). To right of this scene, unknown girl, then Bo Erikson, Thomas R.P. Mielke (standing), Lars-Olov Strandberg, Kjell Borgstrom.

Below again, in front of translators' cabins, is Sezar Erkin Ergin, the only fan from Turkey, talking to Gerd Hallenberger. Right is Lajos Matos (standing) then Gian Paolo Cossato with microphone. Two unknowns then Michel Feron (beard). Below Cossato is Peter Nicholls (beard). Two rows of speakers - all unknown. Bottom row, the UK delegation, playing 'Diplomacy'. Left is Fred Hemmings, then Nigel Waslock and Howard Rosenblum. Middle with duplicator, Claude Dumont (?). Then Daniel Walther, Jean-Paul Cronimus, Wolfgang Thadewald.

PAGE 2: Upper left, Karel Thole in front of one of the walls completely covered with his paintings. At his lower left an object in transparent plastic from the art show. To his right, another 'object' and more paintings, and in front of them is Axel Melhardt. In front of the display of space stamps is Brian Aldiss (a rare picture - practically nobody saw him at Trieste). To his right, Bernt Kling. Row below, left: Forry Ackerman, another 'object' (not a pair of trousers!), John-Henri Holmberg, and Charlotte Franke-Winheller. To the right a press conference with Erich von Daniken: Francesco Biamonti (left), a Belgian journalist, and the author explaining something.

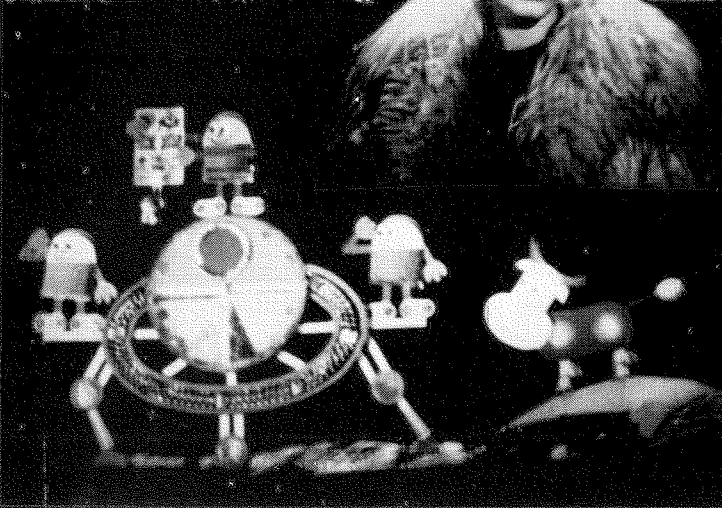
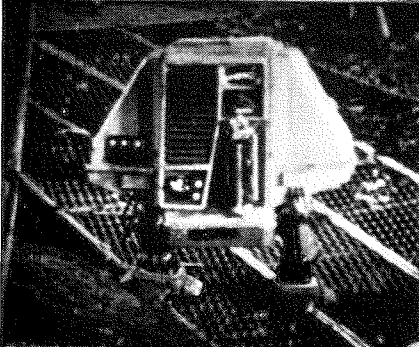
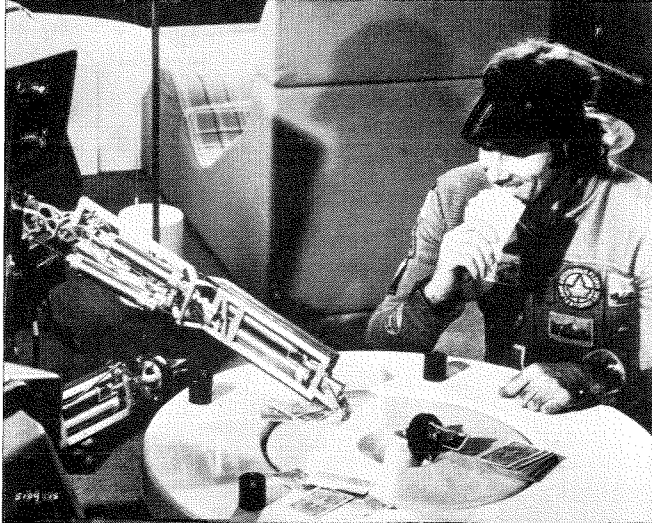
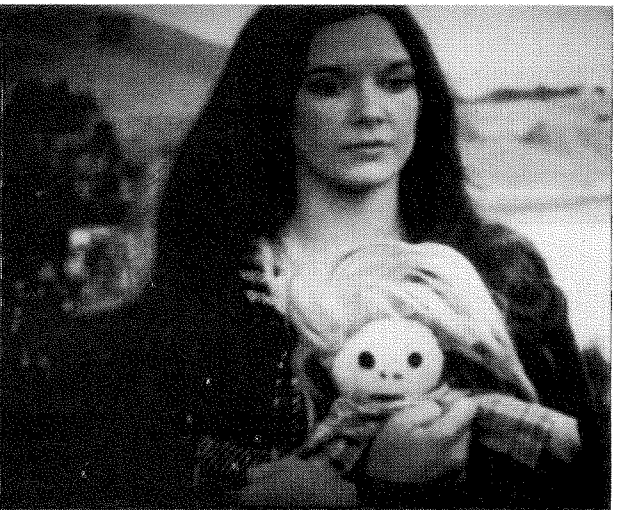
Row below: John & Marjorie Brunner at the cellar party. Centre, in front of an abstract painting, Peter Nicholls (left), Charlotte, Waldemar, and Franz Rottensteiner (U.S. fans take note!!). To the right, a scene from the other party, at the local museum. Bottom row, left, dance scene of unknowns. Back at the cellar party, Werner Hold (white tie, centre), Klaus Ottinger, and Holger Muller. Far right is a street scene with Hans D. Furrer and unknow girl.

I must admit that I don't personally recognise a great many of the people depicted here, but regard this as Spec's contribution to the solidarity of the World SF ~~Consp~~ Movement. After all, the Europeans have put up with enough photopages of British conventions. I was especially pleased to finally see Rottensteiner.









PHOTOPAGES

PAGE 3: This is entirely devoted to the Banquet and Award Presentations. Top left - the Hungarian delegation with the Awards they won. Picture at upper right shows (on left side of table) Ake Jonsson, Hartley Patterson, Michael Lesnard; on right side of table, Simon Joukes, his wife, and Ian Finder (extreme right).

Below - the interminable Award-giving ceremony. Hiding them out is Gasparini and standing at his left is Bruno Orlando. Girl in centre of table is unknown. First recipient: Sergiu Farcasan, following is Leslie Flood, John-Henri Holmberg, Annemarie Kindt, unknown, Leo Kindt, Luis Vigil (?), Kristina Hallind. Centre of the row is the 'SF Special' Award, and to left of this (with outstretched arm) is Gianluigi Missiaja. To right of the award, Bruno Orlando.

Below, two tables of unknowns, then at left of award's bottom corner is Annemarie Kindt and Ion Hobana. Row below, left, more unknowns with Jean Muggoch at second left. Centre, Daniel Walther looks two ways at once, below Hobana and also at the table. Girl in foreground of this picture is unknown, to her left (with the back of his head missing) is Pierre Strinati.

Bottom row: In the Con Hall, the ceremony for one of the Italian Awards, given to Sandro Sandrelli (?). Centre: the EUROPA Award itself, which now sits in my study as I type this. Colour is rich brown with gilt trimming, on wooden base with brass plate. The whole thing is ceramic, and highly fragile. On the right of the Award, the ceremony for presentation of the film festival awards, the 'Silver Asteroid'. Presentation by Ado Kyrrou (3rd left) and by the mayor of Trieste (2nd on left) to Dominique Erlanger.

PAGE 4: Stills from films shown at Trieste. Left-hand side of page is SF, right-hand side is fantasy. Top left, Bruce Dern repairs a drone in SILENT RUNNING; below, he plays cards with the drones (robots); below again is a view of one of the drones. Centre picture of this row shows a scene from the underground laboratory of HET LAATSTE OORDEL (whatever that means). Bottom picture shows a scene from L'AMBASCIATOR DELLE STELLE, which probably means what you think it means.

On the right, top picture from NEC-RO-MAN-CY, below from the Russian SHAG S KRYSHI (the young hero has just arrived in the Middle Ages); below that is a devil illustration from THE BROTHERHOOD OF SATAN. Bottom right from IL MURO. Overlapping into the laboratory scene, in fur coat, is Dominique Erlanger in LE SEUIL DU VIDE.

Photo credits: Page 1-3, Waldemar Kumming, Jean-Paul Cronimus, Dieter Steinseifer. Photographs of the Awards provided by Gian Paolo Cossato. Page 4, from press releases and Jean-Paul Cronimus. Assembly & printing by Waldemar Kumming. Technical note: many of the scenes on Page 3 were taken from under-exposed colour transparencies, since no other pictures were available. This would have been impossible without the aid of Winfried Petrie.

SF BIBLIOGRAPHIES, by Robert E Briney & Edward Wood, Advent \$1.95.

Back in SPECULATION-13 Harry Warner suggested the compilation of a comprehensive Bibliography of bibliographies of science fiction. Whether or not that influenced the authors above I don't know; but at last we have an index to indices. This slim booklet lists all important reference works on SF & Fantasy, including some I have never heard of. A pity that so many items are simply not available to collectors since they are long out-of-print. Nevertheless this is a valuable work for all serious students, and it shows the magnitude of the work done in this field. Divided into four parts; magazine indexes, author indexes, general checklists, etc, and foreign language bibliographies. (Advent Publishers, P.O.B. 9228, Chicago, Ill.)

THE COMPLEAT SILVERBERG

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

Many science fiction writers choose not to concern themselves with human beings. The majority - including most of the major writers in the field, are interested primarily in miracles and illusions (Zelazny, Dick), in scientific extrapolation (Anderson, Niven), or in the application of their prose to unreal situations (Delany, Lafferty). It is rare to find a significant work within the genre whose principal subject matter is people.

That this is so does not reflect upon the ability of any SF writer, nor upon the limitations of the discipline, nor do I intend any criticism of the above-mentioned writers. It is simply a fact that most SF writers do not use their characters as human beings, but as pawns in their more grandiose schemes.

The work of Robert Silverberg, however, shows a persistent preoccupation with human beings, and with human traits in beings specifically non-human. That this preoccupation has been a major thread in the development of his work is made obvious by one of his most recent novels, SON OF MAN.

The remarkable thing about SON OF MAN is not that it presents a strange view of humanity, but that it should present this view in the manner which it does. The form and framework of SON OF MAN at first glance might seem at odds with Silverberg's normal methods. It might even seem as though he has dispensed with some of the strongest points in his writing. One thing outstanding in Silverberg's later work has been the neatness and complexity of his plotting, yet the novel abandons all pretence of a plot and employs a format allied to that of David Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS or George MacDonald's LILITH. It is a series of encounters, an exploration of a theme in logical consequence. It has no hero - its protagonist, Clay, is simply a man, and remains personally uncharacterised.

There have been many SF stories which have made statements about the nature of humanity as the core of their being. The manifold answers offered to the question "What is a man?" have, without exception, been laughably naive.

SPECULATION

Silverberg has never attempted to invent glib answers to such ridiculous questions. He has made statements as such, making them in the context of his stories. SON OF MAN is the first novel he has written which has no other content except for the statement which it contains. The argument I intend to put forward here is that SON OF MAN is a step in a sequence which can be identified in Silverberg's work, from its beginning to the present. This sequence is seen in the author's concern for matters directly pertaining to humanity and humanitarian philosophy.

I allude throughout to Silverberg's statements, never to his messages. It is presumptuous of me in any case to try and fit trends into another man's work, and I have no wish to adopt the arrogance of guessing his reasons.* My concern is with what Silverberg writes down, in black and white, and the necessary connotations of what he says. I cannot claim any knowledge of why he chooses to say what he does, and it would be quite wrong for me to assume that Silverberg is preaching the morals of his stories, or even that he believes what he says.

At no time will I criticise the validity or otherwise of what the author says; I am interested only in identifying logical developments in the type of statements which he makes and the way in which he makes them.

Silverberg's career contains a very distinct split between his "early work" and his "later work". The first trace of his name which I can locate is in 1954, but the fruits of his initial burst of productivity saw publication principally in 1957 and 1958. This period covers the appearance of a vast number of short stories under his own name, as well as Calvin M. Knox, Ralph Burke, Robert Randall (with Randall Garrett), S.M. Tenneshaw and Ivar Jorgenson. (The last two names are not exclusively his, and were used by other authors). He may well have appeared under other pseudonyms as well.

In addition, this period of two years saw the publication of no less than twelve novels: MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH; REVOLT ON ALPHA C; STARMAN'S QUEST; THE SHROUDED PLANET; THE DAWNING LIGHT (these two with Garrett); STARHAVEN; LEST WE FORGET THREE EARTH; RECALLED TO LIFE; THE 13TH IMMORTAL; STEPSONS OF TERRA (alias 'Shadow on the Stars'); INVADERS FROM EARTH (alias 'We, the Marauders') and THE PLOT AGAINST EARTH.

Between 1959 and 1966 only four original SF novels were published; ONE OF OUR ASTEROIDS IS MISSING; TIME OF THE GREAT FREEZE; and REGAN'S PLANET. Other novels appearing during this time were based on work originally published in 1957/58: SEED OF EARTH ('Winds of Siros'); THE SILENT INVADERS, THE PLANET KILLERS ('This World Must Die') and CONQUERORS FROM THE DARKNESS ('Spawn of the Deadly Sea').

1967 began another period of high productivity (though nowhere near as prolific as 57/58). Silverberg has averaged three science fiction novels a year since then.

It is hardly surprising that the writing of the second phase bears little resemblance to that of the first. An eight-year gap is a considerable absence in terms of a writer's development. In addition, a young writer who produces twelve novels and over a hundred shorter works in two years can hardly be exploiting his literary ability to the full. It is no coincidence that the most careful and mature works which he produced in this period are the collaborations with Randall Garrett (THE SHROUDED PLANET & THE DAWNING LIGHT). **

* Shame. It's fun to try and guess the motives of authors. Maybe someone else will?

** Not too careful. I refer you to the account of the "science fiction factory"

which the industrious can look up in SPECULATION 21, Page 3.

(PRW)

However, the novels which are most significant in terms of Silverberg's own later works are MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, RECALLED TO LIFE, and INVADERS FROM EARTH.

MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH is an early exploration of the overpopulation theme. The kingpin of the Bureau of Population Equalisation is posed with a complicated series of problems both personal and political. The major problems - an immortality serum and aliens who "own" Earth's new promised land in the stars are made to cancel each other out, as the hero barter the immortality serum for the new planet. The most interesting point in the novel is that Silverberg is emphatic in his claim that the alien Dirnans have every right to deny Earth the use of the Earth-type planet in their system, even though it is no use to them.

It is also slightly unusual in a 1957 novel to see an immortality drug portrayed as a rank disaster. A similar theme is explored in RECALLED TO LIFE, wherein Earth is remarkably reluctant to accept or trust a technique for resuscitating the recently dead. In order to put it across, the protagonist has to resort to a really hard sell - in the end he has to submit to being killed and resurrected himself in order to save the technique and its inventors from all kinds of hideous fates.

Despite the somewhat mechanical framework of the plots of these two books, and the slightly incompetent construction of the characters, these books clearly illustrate the human-oriented basis of Silverberg's thinking. When other authors have unquestionably represented immortality and resurrection as great boons to humanity, it is really their admiration for technology and scientific advance that necessitates this view. The human point of view is necessarily equivocal. To represent immortality as a curse is not necessarily any more honest than to hail it as a triumph. Neither attitude can be said to be true in any meaningful sense. But to suspect and deny such gifts is essentially a human point of view, whereas to adopt them simply because they are miraculous is Utopian.

INVADERS FROM EARTH begins the development of a theme which Silverberg has used as lately as 1971 (in DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH); the vileness of the human attitude to aliens. (We have never yet encountered any real aliens. But when we do, we know what our attitudes will be. They are already formed. After all, there may be reason to believe that dolphins are sentient and intelligent. And look at the way we treat dolphins. Can you doubt that Silverberg is writing about something real when he writes about the human attitude to the non-human?)

The hero of INVADERS FROM EARTH, an advertising copywriter, is hired to mastermind a fraud which will sell to the people of Earth the genocide of the natives of Ganymede. He invents a colony, plans its births, marriages, and deaths, writes its story of triumph and human munificence, and then plots its extermination by the evil, treacherous natives. The expected result is that all Earth will praise the genocide of the Ganymedians. The eventual realisation that he will be committing a hideous crime persuades him to change his mind, and then he has to try and stop the immensely powerful machine which he has helped to set in motion.

The hero's volte face is not precipitated until he actually meets the aliens and he finds that they are intelligent humanoids not very different from primitive people. Suppose, however, that they had not been in the least like human beings - in form, at least? In INVADERS FROM EARTH, Silverberg makes the statement that other-worldly beings might be human in almost every sense of the word. In later works this theme is developed until we reach the statement that no matter how alien the other-worldly beings might be, they are still human in every way that matters.

Silverberg has not yet considered the other corollary to INVADERS FROM EARTH: Suppose the Ganymedians really had wiped out a colony on Ganymede - would the attendant genocide be any the less vicious an action? In view of Silverberg's changing attitude to aliens, as expounded in MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, in COLLISION COURSE, and in THE MAN IN THE MAZE, it might be interesting to see his exploration of this theme.

The attitudes which I have tried to identify in these works are those which are interesting in terms of later work. It should, perhaps, be pointed out that they are not really representative of the author's early work, wherein they were often confused with lines of thought which are sometimes brutal and unusually uncompromising. The protagonist of MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, for instance, calmly orders the execution of his brother, despite the fact that it is contrary to his nature to do so. Apparently, Silverberg felt the punishment of the 'bad' brother to be more important than the consistency of the 'good' one. In the same work, the principle that "the end justifies the means" is stated with unnecessary vehemence with respect to minor incidents which have no real bearing on the totality of the plot.

THIS WORLD MUST DIE concerns the annihilation of a planet for political reasons, and is strongly reminiscent of Harlan Ellison (Ellison lived in the same building as Silverberg, around the time the story was written), but when the novelette was expanded into THE PLANET KILLERS, Silverberg changed the ending considerably.

The time which elapsed between COLLISION COURSE (1959) and TO OPEN THE SKY (1965-66) was virtually dead as far as Silverberg's creativity within the SF field was concerned, but REGAN'S PLANET (64) is interesting insofar as it is a virtual restatement of INVADERS FROM EARTH, in less melodramatic terms, and possibly reflects the fact that Silverberg's outlook was gaining in subtlety over this period. This time, it is commercial exploitation of the aliens as exhibits at a World's Fair that is the bone of contention, and Regan merely reforms, without having to fight the world in order to undo his work.

Although the book provides a connecting link in the sequence we are considering, it is oddly out of place in terms of quality. It makes a very poor presentation of its chosen theme, and if it were not for the sheer boredom inherent in the chicanery revolving around Regan and his artificial atellite, the book might have been a send-up of the ultra-determination of INVADERS FROM EARTH. Together with the poor juvenile, TIME OF THE GREAT FREEZE which appeared at about the same time, it represents an inexplicable low point in Silverberg's SF writing.

1967, the year of his "rebirth" into the field, produced two minor novels which might have gone down equally well in 57/58 except for the fact that melodrama and fast action are conspicuous by their absence. They reflect the same concerns which occupied Silverberg in his early phase, and represent them on more or less the same literary and intellectual level. But they are much slower books - so lacking in conflict as to be uninspiring. THOSE WHO WATCH is about humanoid aliens (Dirnans!) on Earth, and THE TIME HOPPERS is about overpopulation again.

The major difference between MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH and TIME HOPPERS is that the former was written from on top, with a king's-eye view, the latter is written from inside, where it really feels crowded. It is this feel of crowding - something which no other author has achieved - which continues in the much more intense and careful Urbmon stories. But while these stories are concerned with living with overpopulation, THE TIME HOPPERS is preoccupied with escape from it, and therefore never really faces its theme.

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The real essence of the idea of overpopulation only becomes apparent in the ordinary people of the Urbmons - especially in the brilliant short story, 'In the Beginning'.

The theme of escape is more closely scrutinised in the 1968 novel HAWKS-BILL STATION (the novelette version, incidentally, is only half the story and is woefully incomplete.) The bulk of the action takes place in a Cambrian prison-camp, and explores both the reactions to temporal isolation of the people who live there, and the personal history of the lead character. The handling of people in HAWKS-BILL STATION is considerably more realistic and authoritative than in the novel which immediately preceded it, THORNS, but THORNS is not essentially a realistic novel, having allegorical implications and a very formal construction.

THORNS, in fact, is Silverberg's first work in which the plot is arranged to suit the statement, rather than vice versa. The book is prefaced by the quote from THE KING IN YELLOW which Robert Chambers invented to preface his own story, THE MASK.

There are only three people in the plot of THORNS. Duncan Chalk is an emotional vampire who also has the power to set up situations which supply his colossal appetite for the 'negative' emotions. He sets up an affair between Lona Kelvin, a young girl whose womb was stripped of ova, to supply an experiment, and Minner Burris, a star traveller subjected to surgery by aliens who had made him into an alien in body. Chalk feeds well on the black comedy which he has organised, but in the end his victims bring the 'positive' part of their relationship to full flower and poison him.

The moral of the story might be read simply as "Love Can Conquer", but that pays no attention to the way Silverberg has set up his character play. He has deliberately reduced the effective humanity of his three leading players. Duncan Chalk is implicitly a monster, Minner Burris is unhumanised by the aliens, Lona Kelvin is dehumanised by the children which have been taken from her and made whole without her. But the essential humanity of the victims has remained untouched, while Chalk has renounced his. THORNS, therefore, is not so much a morality play as a humanity play.

A strangely similar theme may be found in the short story 'To The Dark Star'. Of three people on a spaceship, one must die. The two humans hate each other virulently, and yet combine forces to condemn the third, wholly inoffensive member of the crew to death. This is at odds with so much of Silverberg's work, where humanity is measured not by common ancestry but by a capacity for understanding. One might argue that 'To The Dark Star' is far more realistic than THORNS, and perhaps more realistic than DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH, merely because it is nastier. The simple truth, however, is merely that 'To The Dark Star' is a statement of a different case.

Minner Burris of THORNS reappears as Richard Muller, THE MAN IN THE MAZE (1969). This time, the alterations made by aliens are not anatomical - they have simply turned him into a broadcasting empath. Other people find it difficult to tolerate his presence for more than a few minutes. He exiles himself to a maze on an alien world where he is completely isolated. A problem arises when Earth encounters new aliens - who can only communicate with a broadcasting empath.

As in THORNS, the problem is largely a moral one. Can the Earthmen, if they can get through the maze, persuade Muller that he should do a big favour for people who cannot stand his presence?

The framework of *THE MAN IN THE MAZE* differs from that of *THORNS* only in degree. The book is considerably more realistic, in character-realism terms, and yet the situation is still formalised in the various manifestations of Muller's isolation. However, as the plot becomes more realistic, the statement becomes more difficult to put into it. Its simplicity is clouded by the active and mechanical necessities of the background which is vital to the realism of the situation and of the characters.

This is even more obvious in *NIGHTWINGS* (1969). The lushness of the background here is very impressive, and although the notion of the rather futile Watchers seems a little quaint and unconvincing, the world provides a very adequate set for the miracles which the author has to perform. The Watcher who is the central character spends most of the novel as an old man, but is eventually born into a different human morph, in which form he is able to meet the heroine of the novel on equal terms. Any statement involved with the process of rebirth or the significance of the different human morphs is completely lost in the effusive folds of the backcloth. I feel sure that there is more in the novel than an unusual romance, but the sheer beauty and elegance of the story hide it completely.

In the same year as *NIGHTWINGS* and *MAN IN THE MAZE*, Silverberg produced *TO LIVE AGAIN* and *UP THE LINE*. These are completely unformalised, and are sustained purely in their extremely complicated plots. These novels might be regarded as minor in that they show none of the heavier concern which is central to much of the work under discussion, but a great deal of care has been taken to make a full exploration of their plots. In *UP THE LINE*, Silverberg deliberately introduces characters to show up the possibilities of his theme, and the implications of his inventions. The ramifications of the plot of *TO LIVE AGAIN*, which could not be traced therein are, to a certain extent, reconsidered in a later novel, *THE SECOND TRIP*.

One might compare these two novels to some of the pure action novels of the author's early days: *STEPSONS OF TERRA*, for instance, deals with time manipulation and self-multiplication as does *UP THE LINE*. But the setting of the themes and their development within the themes is totally different, and in the newer novel much more effective. Silverberg's development is not taking place along a single axis - all the elements of his work are subject to change, - plot and style as well as concern. It is perhaps this multifold development which has caused him to experiment continuously with different combinations and new formats.

DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH (1970) once more saw the complete subservience of plot to statement. In a way, it is the last of Silverberg's novels in which the two can be identified separately. In the later *TOWER OF GLASS* and *A TIME OF CHANGES*, the statement is made purely in terms of plot, and in *SON OF MAN* there is only the statement. Oddly enough, although *DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH* is technically a half-measure, as was *MAN IN THE MAZE*, it is a more successful exploration of its theme than any of the later novels. For my money, *DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH* is Silverberg's best novel to date.

It is the first in which he deals directly with a genuinely alien race. The aliens of *MAN IN THE MAZE* make only walk-on appearances, and the Ganymedians of *INVADERS FROM EARTH* are really only primitives in disguise. The nildoror of this later book are a matter of direct concern. They are the whole of the reason why Gundersen has returned to Belzagar; having once abused the nildoror as animals, wilfully ignoring evidence to the contrary, he now wishes to confront them as an intelligent, social species.

An understanding has to be reached, a relationship has to be established. That relationship, when it finally becomes complete, is closer than friendship or equality; it is identity, humanity. It is the logical conclusion that could never emerge from INVADERS FROM EARTH simply because the Ganymedians were represented as implicitly primitive and thus 'unequal'. It is the statement which is badly mangled in 'To The Dark Star' and only hinted at in THORNS.

TOWER OF GLASS is also about the humanity of those not born of man and woman. This time it is the androids whose true nature is ignored by the narrow-minded men who built and use them. The androids look for guidance to their god and creator, Simeon Krug, but he is not aware that he is their god. His attention is directed outwards, to the stars. To this end he is constructing a gigantic tower in order to communicate with the inhabitants of other worlds. Though called a tower of glass, so far as Krug is concerned it is very much an ivory tower. But the fall of the tower serves only to free the androids from their god, not from their human masters.

Perhaps TOWER OF GLASS would seem a lot stronger if we did not know (or at least feel fairly sure) that in the end the tower must fall. But the novel seems to demonstrate once more that plot is not an adequate vehicle for the type of concern which Silverberg has been representing in his recent novels. This is even more clear in A TIME OF CHANGES, which is a much-expanded and more elaborate statement of Ayn Rand's ANTHEM. The complex plot of the Silverberg novel, constipated by a gaudy background which remains inadequate throughout, serves only to open all kinds of doubts which remain unanswered, and the advice which the protagonist offers to his readers in the final sentences of his manuscript rings very hollow.

And thus the plotless SON OF MAN, which has the time and space to explore its territory in a careful sequence. The description is full and evocative, and the statement is constructed in perfectly adequate detail. As an exercise in literary achievement, SON OF MAN is a modest success. In view of the proven indifference of most SF readers to such minor considerations as humanity, however, I imagine that the book might find itself somewhat short of friends amid the general public.

I think it unlikely that Silverberg will readily repeat the formula which he used in SON OF MAN - which is not to say that his experimentation has taken him as far as it can. The Urbmon stories are representative of an almost documentary style, and the novel based on these stories - THE WORLD INSIDE - might well achieve the synthesis of style and concern manifest in SON OF MAN while retaining the threads of a detailed plot. It is however unwise of me to comment on the book having seen only the short stories, and a postscript to this essay might well be in order when I have seen the full work. **

In the meantime though, this examination of one developmental thread in a writer's canon of works is complete as far as it goes. I must reiterate in closing that I have only tried to find a pattern in what Silverberg has written and this essay is in no way an attempt to analyse why he has written it.

- Brian M Stableford, 1972

** Having since read THE WORLD INSIDE I think it could indeed be Silverberg's most successful to date. I'm hoping there will be a postscript on this and on DYING INSIDE and THE BOOK OF SKULLS, two further novels which I have not yet been able to obtain. Trouble with S. is that he writes so much ! PRW

on the CRITICAL FRONT book reviews

"The book reviews were superb" - Melvin Merzon, 2/10/1972

TAKE A LOOK at the 'Book Guide' at the back of this issue and you'll see that I have absolutely no chance of reviewing more than a small proportion of the new SF now being published, even if more than a small percentage was necessarily worth reviewing. Although Sam Moskowitz said that I didn't give sufficient attention to the really important books (and I don't recall which in particular he said we'd missed), that is really the intention here - to run a front-line column of reviews at a reasonable length, of books which have each in their own way contributed something to the SF field. Even if that contribution has to be marked a failure. Tom Shippey leads off with a compendium of four reviews...

DENVER IS MISSING by D.F. Jones, Doubleday \$4.95 (In UK "Don't Pick The Flowers")
Reviewed by Tom Shippey

This story pleased me in two ways. One was that I had just spoken to the Birmingham SF Group about disaster novels, and in the course of this had tried to set up a sub-class of these: in my view there were about a dozen stories which shared several characteristics;- 1) an interest in the results of catastrophe rather than in how this was brought about, often indeed using very far-fetched initial catastrophes, like the cyclone winds of THE WIND FROM NOWHERE, or the strange radiation of ALL FOOLS DAY; 2) a generally low valuation of humanity, assuming that instead of reacting inefficiently but stoically (as they do, say, in THE KRAKEN WAKES, or ON THE BEACH), people as a whole would be nasty, brutal and quick; 3) a certain sexiness, founded quite often on scenes of rape. The name I stuck on this invented class was 'the veneer of civilisation story', because the writers seem to assume, at least for purposes of narration, that civilisation is only a veneer and that beneath every Jekyll there's a Hyde.

DENVER IS MISSING was a genuine delight to me because it did absolutely everything I had said it would. The catastrophe (a good far-fetched one) is the release of a vast amount of nitrogen from a pocket under the sea-bed, which creates tidal waves by its discharge and also forms a cloud to cut off oxygen from cities at high level. The human reactions to this are furthermore horrific: Bette, one of the four main characters, describes the chaos in high-level Denver, the stealing of oxygen from helpless babies in tents, etc. She has moreover been raped in the past, and though this doesn't happen to her again in the course of the book, her boyfriend Mitch is saved at the end from looters, by soldiers who proceed to rape the surviving woman bandit. Their sergeant (good family man that he is) smiles

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benevolently and then adds "Mind you.. I don't allow any funny stuff with bayonets afterwards". (They shoot her instead). Mitch is humiliated, besides, not by the killing, but by his wish to join in the rape. On page 95, to wrap it all up for my category, Bette said 'Humans! Under the thin veneer, we're no better than animals, except that insults animals!' (I awarded myself an academic putty medal immediately)

All this is not meant in dispraise. Regardless of its apparently compulsive plot, DENVER IS MISSING is one of the best disaster novels I have read, mainly I think because of its strong Robinson Crusoe quality. Bette, Mitch and Karen spend a good deal of the book getting away from California in an ocean-going yacht belonging to an Englishman, Bill. The sailing details are done well (Jones was an R.N. Commander) and the interactions of the four characters are good, too. One might detect in the whole idea a certain nostalgia for a simpler world with less science in it (which was there in Jones's computer-story COLOSSUS as well), and this may put some hardened SF readers off. But on the whole I would expect this to appeal very widely. What I wonder about is: What force is it that makes so many writers work to a formula, without (as far as I can see) any direct contact between them at all? Is this what we call a mythology?

OPERATION CHAOS by Poul Anderson (Doubleday \$4.95; Lancer 95c)

Reviewed by Tom Shippéy

This book is also in a special sub-class, that of 'the world where magic works', pioneered I suppose by 'Magic, Incorporated', but familiar also from Blish, DeCamp, Randall Garrett, Simak, and others. In his note to BLACK EASTER, Blish indeed observed that all the novels about magic he had read fell into one of two groups, 'either romantic or playful', and there is no doubt that for much of the time this one is definitely 'playful'. In the first half of the book (originally three short stories in F&SF, 1956-59), Anderson is mainly exploiting the possibilities of a scientific attitude to fantastic legend, playing on the limitations of his theriomorphic or werewolf hero, Steve Matuchek, explaining how you'd play football with spells and skinturners, setting up a sort of World War II background where the two sides look like 'The Arabian Nights' vs. 'The Brothers Grimm', etc.

I do not think that Anderson at this stage was too worried about consistency. The turning point in the parallel universe, he says somewhere, was learning how to 'degauss' the anti-magical effects of cold iron; but how that would lead to the survival of dragons and unicorns (ridden by virgins as a cavalry corps) one neither knows nor cares. In the second half, though, Anderson is a lot more serious, and has clearly tried to project the interests of this part (published in F&SF in 1969, ten years after the rest) back over the earlier material. I found this second half, both here and as the serial 'Operation Changeling', particularly impressive, and with a certain serious purpose.

The basic story of it is that the child of Matuchek and his witch-wife Virginia is stolen away to Hell, and that they, along with her familiar Svartalf the cat and two deceased mathematicians, go to rescue it. This might well stem from the final Hell-sequence in 'Magic, Inc.' The original part, though, is Anderson's portrait of the 'Johannine' church, opposed here to the various Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox 'Petrine' churches, all familiar in our world as well. Although the Johannine Church does not exist in our world at the moment, Anderson has related it cunningly to a genuine and factual background of heresy and popular belief which seems to have been in existence since Roman times, and which has gained strength at some curious moments, notably in England and Scotland in the seventeenth century

(e.g. among the Ranters, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Muggletonians, etc — and some of the early Quakers were a bit funny, too). The marks of its heresy seem to be 1) a preoccupation with power rather than love; 2) an exclusive and Gnostic tinge; 3) an ascetic and Manichaeian tinge, all leading to a refusal to compromise with the affairs of this world (which might be laudable) but also to a violent extremism which is truly diabolical.

Anderson has I think read deeply in the theological history of this world to be able to build up such a picture; if I had to guess at his major sources I would say Norman Cohn's two books on THE PURSUIT OF THE MILLENNIUM and WARRANT FOR GENOCIDE, which latter explains the appearance of Hitler in the Johannine sector of Hell. But he has also established a silent parallel.

In our universe the corresponding factor to the Johannine Church is the growth of dissent and demonstration, like the Johannines overtly idealistic and very hard to argue down, but dangerous essentially because of its conviction that the systems of this world are so wrong that even violent and evil means of destroying them are justifiable. Anderson means this parallel to be drawn. And though the demoniac background of course can't be transferred, his point that many in this world have a new and theological conviction of their own virtue and rights to violence is a neat one; the parallels between student demonstration and millennialist crusade could be drawn out too.

All round, in spite of its fantastic background (to be enjoyed for its own sake), this seemed to me one of the few books with anything very radical to say about what has been going sour in contemporary America. The dialogue can be weak and the humour coy, but Anderson makes his knowledge work. I wonder how James Blish would classify it. He did review it somewhere.

* As you might expect though, Tom, that particular parallel won't cause Poul Anderson to be very popular in certain places. I mentioned last issue that Dave Hulvey (for one) considered OPERATION CHAOS a 'ridiculous overreaction... to the Peace Movement', and I have encountered at least one other review which has challenged Anderson on the sentiments in this book. Unfortunately I can't find that particular reference (can anyone help?) but the line of argument was something to the effect that while Anderson disapproved of the baddies' claim that the end justified the means, his own protagonists followed the same philosophy, implicitly, through the way in which they sneaked into the Johannine Cathedral among other things. Wish I could find that reference. *

THE GODS THEMSELVES by Isaac Asimov, (Doubleday \$5.95; Gollancz £1.80)

Reviewed by Tom Shippey

The starting-point of this story, according to the author, was a careless reference by Robert Silverberg to 'Plutonium-186'; to show him what was what, Asimov decided to write a story about Plutonium-186. Its basic situation is this: the inhabitants of an alternate universe succeed in exchanging Plutonium-186 (which exists in their Universe) with our Tungsten-186. In this world the impossible material releases positrons and energy until 20 protons have become neutrons and the material has stabilised as Tungsten-186 again. In the other world with its more efficient nuclear interaction, the opposite happens. Both sides gain energy. But what about the side-effects? In particular there is a danger that the stronger nuclear interactions seeping into this Universe may affect the rate of hydrogen fusion in the Sun...

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There's the material here for a fairly normal story, starting with the discovery of the plutonium and going through to an awareness of the danger, the hero being of course the scientist-discoverer. Asimov has done rather the opposite. He starts with the Electron Pump being an established fact and presents the discoverer, Hallam, as a lucky mediocrity trying to conceal the truth. The story then breaks into three sections: 1) the attempts of an inquisitive junior, Lamont, to find out both historical and scientific truth, only to be cut down at all points; 2) the situation in the para-Universe, whose more advanced inhabitants are also ignorant of themselves and their actions, and 3) a return to this Universe, to the Moon, where in different circumstances the danger is averted and Hallam is checked.

The second and third parts get a certain variety by setting up the background of their worlds, though the lunar one is fairly familiar (Clarke and Heinlein), and the para-Universe, apart from its reproductive problems, is a little tame. The true theme, though, announced in the titles of the sections, is 'the structure of scientific revolutions'. In opposition to orthodox teaching Asimov insists that established thought, scientific or otherwise, has an immense and personal inertia, only to be affected by the accidents of individuals' drives. Hallam is driven by chance and inferiority; Lamont by frustration; Neville (on the Moon) by agoraphobia. There is some comedy in the way this works out, though possibly Asimov did the iconoclast-hero better in stories like 'Profession', fifteen years ago.

What struck me, though, was the rather un-Asimovian concentration on the wayward and individual, on how forgotten and tiny incidents affect history. FOUNDATION and its sequels put very much the opposite point - that in spite of all these incidents, things tended to cancel out so that 'sociohistory' could come into play. This change goes along with Asimov's mild experiments in narrative technique, like the continued flashbacks of section 1, or the triple narrator of section 2. They tend to make events seem uncontrolled and unpredictable. A change of heart? The influence of Vonnegut, Brunner, Panshin, etc? Whatever the reason, this book remains the 'hardest' (scientifically) and also the soberest of the three reviewed here.

THE SPACE MERCHANTS by Frederik Pohl & C.M. Kornbluth, (Walker \$4.50; Gollancz £1.75)
Reviewed by Tom Shippey

There is no point in writing a review of this, as it has been out for nineteen years and is as close to being a classic as any SF novel is going to be for a long time. I can only make a few remarks about why it has worn so well.

Probably the greatest quality of Pohl and Kornbluth as a team was their ability to set up a completely coherent picture in no time at all and without the characters in the story ever having to stop what they were doing and explain things. In this book's first nine pages, for instance, you are told the following things in passing:-

In this age rich men wash in salt water, and they blame 'Consie' saboteurs; space, wood, meat, petrol are all near-unobtainable, and no-one appears to have noticed; schools are saturated with advertising; children smoke Kiddiebutts; the Government uses spy-mikes routinely; and companies have become religions.

And from this you get a picture, which is never stated and which the narrator you feel would indignantly deny, of an unbelievably crowded world headed for destruction and impelled by the forces (virtuous ones, of course) of loyalty and ambition. The irony between this picture and the one that the narrator presents to you overtly is as violent and consistent as Swift or Gibbon, and it produces an evident and manipulable satiric 'gap' between Mitch Courtenay and the present-day reader — he says what he knows to be true and we know it isn't true.

Much of the story, after that, is about what can hope to break Mitch Courtenay's view of the world; love and reason and experience all fail, and in the end, it's only the murder of his father-substitute Fowler Shocken, that can make him see the light. No other authors, I think, have been as good at presenting delusion from the inside and making you see it's not the man's own fault, nor at creating a coherent social picture almost from asides.

The strength, and even truth, of what they have to say is proved by the way the book has survived massive changes in public interest. Back in the '50s (as I remember from a Feiffer cartoon) the 'passwords' for evil were 'hidden persuaders' and 'motivational research', and fear of the ad-men came up in quite a few stories like Shepherd Mead's *THE BIG BALL OF WAX* (1955) or Pohl's own stories in the collection 'The Man Who Ate The World', all in Galaxy between 1956-59. For some reason or other — maybe the effects of Ralph Nader and other national heroes — this is no longer a live issue. Now the passwords are 'ecology' and 'population explosion' and so on.

But though I don't think Pohl and Kornbluth were aiming at just that market, and no-one's given them any credit for creating it, they did see a tie-up between sales and waste. If you don't keep up the consumption you can't sell the goods. There is an irony in the name of the freighter that takes the shanghaied Courtenay to Costa Rica and slavery — it's the Thomas R. Malthus, the man whose argument about food/population has been comprehensively violated by the sales ethic, but who cannot forever be denied! Malthus himself is no more popular now than he was then, but a present-day audience would I think be more sensitive to this aspect of Courtenay's world, compensating for the decreased interest in advertising. Classics should be able to change their perspectives; and this one does.

— Tom Shippey, 1972

VERMILION SANDS by J.G. Ballard (Berkeley Books, 75c)

Reviewed by David Pringle.

This new collection shows us Ballard in his lightest vein. There are more than a few touches of humour, and on the whole the stories lack the sombreness of so much of his work. Nevertheless, the Vermilion Sands stories are central to Ballard's oeuvre — they contain the characteristic dune-filled landscapes, the glimpses of decaying technologies, and the characters who obey every obscure psychological impulse. Ballard's last book, *THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION*, was a fragmentary exploration of the world we all know — the actual landscapes of London and Birmingham, with their motorways, airports and advertising hoardings. *VERMILION SANDS* can be viewed as a complementary work, concerned not with these outer urban landscapes but with their inner antithesis. The location is somewhere in what Aldous Huxley once called 'the antipodes of the mind'.

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If we try to fix Vermilion Sands in space and time, we can hazard a guess as to its being somewhere in the deserts of the south-west United States, around the year 1980. But Ballard never actually makes this explicit, and we are left with the impression of a place that vaguely resembles Benidorm, Miami, and Las Vegas, all fused into one and set down amidst a waterless landscape.

Ballard has said in a radio interview that his novel THE DROUGHT was concerned with a psychological image of the future, whereas THE DROWNED WORLD was concerned with an image of the past. In Ballard's symbolism, the past is associated with water - partly because of the amniotic fluid in which we are all steeped before birth, and partly because of the sea in which all life originated. Water is the life-bringer, the seed-bearer, and it is not coincidental that Ballard's most water-filled novel should also be the one that gives us the greatest sense of living things - all those luxuriant water-plants, iguanas, insects and alligators that most readers of the novel recall so vividly.

Hence the theme of devolution, of travelling back down the spinal cord to the lowest animal origins of man. Hence, also, the remarkable ending, where the hero is explicitly compared to Adam searching for 'forgotten paradises'. *

The essential theme of THE DROWNED WORLD is a journey into the past. On the other hand, the logical image of the future is one of aridity, absence of water and life, and this is exactly what we find in THE DROUGHT. Ballard sees man's future as an ever-greater removal from the natural, from our biological nature. In an essay in New Worlds (1969) he has remarked on modern man's growing capacity for abstraction and the consequent 'death of affect' which manifests itself in our apparently growing taste for perversions of every kind - from televised war-atrocities to automobile 'accidents'. Man's mental activity alienates him more and more from the animal, the moist, the instinctive, and consequently Ballard's science-fictional objective correlative of the future we all fear is a landscape of drought and fire (remember, the American title of THE DROUGHT was THE BURNING WORLD, which suggests the ancient symbolism of the Christian Hell).

Apart from his 'past' and his 'future', Ballard has given us two versions of his 'present'. One of these is crystal and the other is concrete. THE CRYSTAL WORLD is the most hopeful of Ballard's books, because it embodies the vision of all life eternalised in an ecstatic now. Here, opposites merge, past and future, light and dark, animal and man, in the universal symbol of the crystal which is neither living nor dead. In this almost mystical novel, Ballard gives us a glimpse of the cosmic whole, similar to that afforded the heroes of the early short stories, 'The Waiting Grounds' and 'The Voices Of Time'. If THE DROWNED WORLD gave us Ballard's Eden and THE DROUGHT his hell, then THE CRYSTAL WORLD represents his new Jerusalem or City of God.

The other version of his 'present', which I have termed the concrete, is of course that laid out in THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION, and prefigured in the short story 'The Terminal Beach'. To revert to the Christian parallel, this is the Fallen World - the world of the daily toil and suffering, seen in terms of the 1960's and 1970's. If readers are disconcerted at my use of Biblical terminology, I could add that Ballard's symbolism can also be explicated in the terms of William Blake's philosophy - his concepts of Beulah, Ulro, Generation and Eden. But I am not trying to assert that Ballard is either a Christian or a Blakean - merely that his work lends itself to analysis in terms of the fourfold symbolism that underlies so much literature.

* In a broadcast interview in the summer of 1970 Ballard admitted that, at the time of writing, he did not know why Kerans goes south into the rain.

In the context of the above exposition of Ballard's symbolism, we can see that VERMILION SANDS takes its place alongside THE DROUGHT as one of Ballard's explorations of aridity. It outlines what we may term a moral future, rather than the naive literal future that much science fiction attempts to give us. Ballard once remarked that Marxism is a philosophy for the poor, and "what we need now is a philosophy for the rich". It is this future world of 'the rich', a playground that is an extension of all present-day pleasure resorts, that Ballard gives us in VERMILION SANDS - but, alas, without a philosophy.

Technology has provided the inhabitants of this desert with toys to satisfy every aesthetic whim - musical flowers, psycho-tropic houses, self-activating pigments for painting, singing statues, poetry machines, bio-fabrics and so on. Amid all these glittering amusements, the characters are immensely lethargic and lazy - basically lifeless, just as the sand-basins around them are waterless - but they are occasionally galvanised into manic action.

When the action comes, it is always in the form of psychodrama, the acting out of neuroses. Leisure and neurosis are the keynotes of Vermilion Sands. As I remarked earlier, this is in some ways the world of THE DROUGHT, but the stories are lighter in tone. Vermilion Sands may repel in many ways, but it also attracts and amuses. There are landscape descriptions of great beauty to be found in the book. Ballard's painter's eye has rarely been more sharp - particularly in the last story, 'The Screen Game'.

As in THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION, Ballard has used the curious device of giving us essentially the same hero in each story, but each time he appears he bears a different name. In fact, the eight stories included here were written over a period of some fourteen years, from 1956 to 1970. The two earliest, 'Prima Belladonna' and 'Studio 5, the Stars', will already be familiar to many English readers, since they appeared in Ballard's first collection, THE FOUR-DIMENSIONAL NIGHTMARE. But there is little discontinuity in tone, a testament to the impressive consistency of all Ballard's writing, and only one story falls conspicuously below standard - 'Venus Smiles' (If, 1967). This is certainly no hotch-potch collection like THE OVERLOADED MAN, but a thoroughly cohesive book and an essential addition to the whole of Ballard's work.

- David Pringle, 1972

* It was perhaps not entirely fair to David to include the footnote on Page 30, but I have recently been reading a long essay upon THE DROWNED WORLD, from which that comment was lifted. The essay appears in the first issue of Popular Arts Review, a magazine published on an amateur basis despite its title and impressive appearance, and the brainchild of several members of the University of Strathclyde. One of them at least, Nick Perry, being an SF enthusiast. In the essay Ballard is quoted as saying on a broadcast interview about DROWNED WORLD: "I feel I understand the book now, possibly because people have forced me into finding some sort of meaning in it, although I am still not certain... But a lot of the overtones of the book... I still don't fully understand - which is a good thing". The magazine is available for 30p, from the Editor, 8 Limeside Avenue, Rutherglen, Glasgow. // Of course, how seriously is one expected to take Ballard's comments about his own books? A little light may be thrown this way in an interview with Brian Aldiss in Cypher, recently. "Ballard is an extremist" said Brian. "A lot of the critical things he says are critically damaging to his reputation." (Cypher is available from Jim Goddard, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants.)

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Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

First of all, despite its horrendous price, this is an important book, just like its father. Indeed, in its best work it marks a big step forward from DANGEROUS VISIONS, a step further into the dimly perceived but increasingly exciting future of speculative fiction: sf, as opposed to mere science fiction. (I have undeniably revealed my prejudices here, so you can take the rest of this review with them fully in mind).

Its worst work, of which there is a fair amount, merely reiterates a long-known fact: that Harlan Ellison easily lets his enthusiasm get out of hand, which is not a bad thing in an age when too many people, especially editors and writers, continually play it safe. Even the worst mistakes of A,DV (as Ellison abbreviates it) are, if nothing else, interesting; they are errors of generosity of spirit, and enthusiasm for the whole project, an enthusiasm that must have been huge to carry Ellison through close to five years of editing (in the fullest sense). So, to put it right on the line, like DANGEROUS VISIONS, A,DV (and the final volume of the trilogy, whenever it appears, THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS) is an indispensable book, one you'll return to for years to come.

There are 46 stories in A,DV, by 42 authors, and very interesting illustrations by Emsh. So it's a big book. Moreover, some of the authors are big, too: Ray Bradbury, James Blish, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Bernard Wolfe, Ursula K. LeGuin, Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm, Tom Disch, K.M. O'Donnel, Chad Oliver, and many others not so well known but deserving to be. Thus Ellison has gained one of his major goals - put together a book which will be bought partly for the big names, but in which a number of lesser-known writers will gain an audience because they will be read in that company and seen to stand up. That, at any rate, is his purpose as stated in his Introduction.

Ah, yes, the Introductions. Well, you might as well be warned right off that A,DV goes way beyond DANGEROUS VISIONS in the introduction department, and if you don't like Ellison's introductions then these won't change your mind. Personally I wouldn't miss them for the galaxy. Harlan Ellison is an opinionated man, but he's also an interesting one (nobody should miss what he has to say about women's lib. in SF in his Introduction to Joanna Russ's story, for example: it's that important). Anyway, he's all over the place being ironic, interesting, antagonistic, and full of spleen and good humour, because that's how he operates. More power to him. I fully believe the story told me by a fannish friend who said that at the end of Harlan's speech at Boscon (I think), there wasn't a person in the room who wasn't on his feet ready to do battle with him, and all for different reasons. I think that's marvellous.

It would be impossible to review every story in this volume in less space than two issues of SPECULATION, so I'll confine myself, reluctantly, to a few of the most important writers and their work. The mistakes first.

Harlan Ellison writes good prose, and can, when he's really clearheaded, recognise it, as the best stories in these books show (I cite Delany's and Farmer's award-winning entries from DV as proof); but he doesn't, on the record, know much about poetry and he has made one of his truly grand mistakes by accepting Ray Bradbury's "Christ, Old Student in a New School" for A,DV. My advice is to just avoid it unless you're in a peculiarly masochistic mood. It's not that Bradbury has bad ideas (although a strong argument could be made about that), it's rather that his ideas of poetry are not merely out of date, but banal. His prose was always 'poetic' I recall, but in a soft, sentimental fashion; carry that tendency into real verse (& add his didactic tendencies) and it's totally destructive. Too bad.

The other mistakes, which I won't go into in detail, have to do with the professed nature of the book, which is written clear in the title; these are supposed to be Dangerous Visions, and when they're not, really, we begin to wonder. I will confess that I think that truly good writing by itself is still a dangerous vision in the context of much SF, and when it happens, as so often it does in A,DV, the book is fulfilling its purpose. But, to take a single example, David Gerrold's 'With a Finger in My Eye' is not really that interesting and certainly didn't frighten me, as a vision that is. So why is it there?

Because Ellison wants to help the younger writers (& got ripped off by Gerrold who, if Ellison's remarks are true, has broken at least the idea of the contracts for A,DV, by publishing his story in another place so quickly - in his own book by that title from Ballantine, 1972 - very mean, I think), digs far out humour (see also Andrew J. Offutt's 'For Value Received', Gahan Wilson's '-', Ken McCullough's 'Chuck Berry Won't You Please Come Home', and especially James Blish's 'Getting Along' which is delightful, witty, intelligent, but not, again not, dangerous, as well as a few others), and gets carried away by his enthusiasm for his project. Or: there's another explanation, he really thinks these are good, and truly dangerous stories - but he's wrong.

As a different kind of example, Ellison has a truly fine and in many ways truly dangerous story by one of the better new writers, James Tiptree Jr., 'The Milk of Paradise', which Ellison thinks will be the Delany story of this collection (i.e. win the awards), but in the March 1972 issue of F&SF Tiptree had a story 'And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side' which is far more dangerous and even better (in fact it's utterly superb). I'm not sure what this proves but it may be that DV had even more effect than Ellison has yet realised, despite the appearance of a really dangerous vision of his own, 'Basilisk', in the August 1972 issue of the same magazine. However, to be fair there is enough visionary danger and enough absolutely first-rate writing in A,DV to make me truly thankful.

There are a number of stylistic experiments, the most outrageous of which is Richard Lupoff's 'With the Bentfin Boys on Little Old New Alabama', which Ellison says goes even further than Farmer's 'Riders of the Purple Wage' from DV. Sorry, Harlan, not so. For the difference, and it's a big one, is that Farmer's story had a lot of depth, while underneath the truly flashy surface of Lupoff's story (which is certainly a good one, don't mistake me here, I'm merely saying that it isn't as good as Ellison says) lies a pretty ordinary tale of space war based on some interesting but not overly unusual extrapolations from our present political times, some of which are quite similar to those of John Brunner's THE JAGGED ORBIT.

Before I turn to the real beauties of this collection I want to say a few words about the near misses. Chad Oliver's 'King of the Hill' is a bitter vision of man destroying his world through sheer refusal to clean up. It's full of valid warning, and it touches a real sore spot in all our consciences, but (honesty compels me to say this) it is not that good a story, partly because its didactic intent is so nakedly displayed. Still it definitely belongs in the collection.

The same can be said, I suppose, of Piers Anthony's 'In the Barn' which contains a pretty dangerous vision all right, but it sure is hard to care when you are fighting through Anthony's style (or more specifically, lack of style). I've read quite a bit of Anthony and the only thing I look back on with real interest is MACROSCOPE, because somehow in that one he had enough ideas (and the means of rendering them) to keep me going over the long stretch despite his many stylistic gaffes. Possibly the stylistic faults of 'In the Barn' (essentially an emotional flatness revealed in stodgy style) are partly due to the fact that psychologically

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the material a blistering attack on certain images of 'manhood') is truly dangerous and Anthony was going as far as he could just to write about it let alone do so with style. Perhaps. Anyway, it is unsettling, which is at least part of the purpose of the book.

Kurt Vonnegut's 'The Big Space Fuck' is a disappointment because it's just ordinary Vonnegut, and it isn't even the first story in SF with the word 'fuck' in the title, as Ellison thinks: J.G. Ballard has that honour. Of course, I've begun to wonder if Vonnegut hasn't been overpraised - is he really as good as they say?

There are a number of fair to middling stories I won't even mention. Then there are some good stories; they're by John Heidenry, Gene Wolfe, Edward Bryant, T.L. Sherred, Greg Benford, Josephine Saxton, David Kerr, John Harrison, Andrew Weiner, and Terry Carr. Then there are the really important reasons why you cannot afford to miss this book.

'Time Travel for Pedestrians', which opens with the line "Masturbation fantasy is the last frontier" is a near winner. Ray Nelson is being dangerous here, especially in the religious area, although he is a bit adolescently eager to shock us for shock's sake alone. The story hits, and has some really weird ideas in it, but, finally, it peters out rather than reaching the kind of intense climax that, after a beginning like that, you expect and deserve to get. A failure then, but a very interesting one, and one that should be read.

Kate Wilhelm's 'The Funeral' is first-rate Wilhelm, which means it's first rate, period. Also it is dangerous, mainly because it isn't, like the Oliver, obvious. Reading it you participate in a truly painful experience and in that participation you realise how successful a vision it is. Bernard Wolfe's first story, 'The Bisquit Position' is a savage attack on war (especially that one in Vietnam), but it might only speak to the converted though I think it is a better story than that, and it does get you solidly in the gut at the end. James Sallis's two quickies are dangerous, and good, but not as good as some of the stuff in his first book, A FEW LAST WORDS. But he is an important new writer, like Tiptree, and I place him very high on my list of writers to be read.

There's one other brand-new writer, A. Parras, whose story 'Tottembuch', reveals a talent we shall be hearing from again. It's a Borges-like 'fiction' of real power, and not to be missed. K.M. O'Donnell's story is also a 'fiction', about one of the Apollo astronauts, the man who must stay with the mother ship circling the moon. It's like a kick in the head. He's good, all right.

Finally, to turn the tables on the editor, I will suggest the two stories I think should take the awards, first for short novel (almost long novel) and second for short story or novelette: Ursula K. LeGuin's superb 'The Word for World is Forest' and Joanna Russ's equally superb 'When It Changed'. I don't think it's any accident that these two women should have provided two of the finest stories in A.DV, for they are two of the best writers we are privileged to have in SF at present.

Mrs LeGuin's novel is rich in implications, fully-realised characters (at least one of whom is a very real, sympathetic, alien) and vision of the most profoundly dangerous kind because it isn't narrow at all, but sees fully the possibilities of many situations and their contexts. I haven't room to describe the story but it alone would make the collection worthwhile. Her ideas about dreaming, REM sleep, and the possibility of a culture which is in a very real sense static yet fully alive and rich in human values (and capable of change when survival depends upon it) are of major importance.

But what makes 'The Word for World is Forest' so good is precisely the fact that it is a fine story by one of our best storytellers. What more could we ask for? The same kind of praise could be showered upon Joanna Russ's story, for next to Delany she is perhaps the best stylist in SF today. Indeed I have yet to read anything by here which didn't make me jump up and shout for sheer joy in the delight I take in her sense of style. Like Delany she is a prose-poet, and her every word counts in everything she writes. 'When It Changed' is dangerous because it looks at a world of women only from the inside and without ever forcing its point makes the reader accept everything it implies about the present sick situation. Read it for that. It is full of psychological truths marvelously rendered. Read it for that. It's a great, beautifully written, SF story. Read it for that too.*

So there you have it. A.D.V. is there, and it's important, and it's a very good thing to have, with all its faults, for the successes far outweigh the failures. I have great hope for the future of SF, and much of that hope is due to the presence in the field of a number of the Dangerous Vision writers. I'm glad Harlan Ellison is around to get these books out, helping to get these authors known and read. The important ones would surface eventually anyway, of course, but he has done the job and for that we can't be grateful enough. Get this book. You'll be glad, finally, that you did.

- Douglas Barbour, 1972

* Read her two novels if you can, for they are among the best and most important in the field in the last few years. PICNIC ON PARADISE & AND CHAOS DIED, both issued by Ace, 1968, 1970. (PICNIC ON PARADISE - MacDonald, 1969, £1.05). DB.

YET MORE BOOKS.. For review in the next issue are THE RUINS OF EARTH, ed. Tom Disch (review by Cy Chauvin); THE MISSIONARIES by D.G. Compton (review by Mark Adlard); and other titles such as OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES by Bob Shaw; THE WIND FROM THE SUN by Arthur C. Clarke; THE GODS THEMSELVES by Isaac Asimov; MIDSUMMER CENTURY & ALL THE STARS A STAGE, both by James Blish; VOLTEFACE by Mark Adlard; perhaps new titles by Norman Spinrad & Philip K. Dick, and one or two of the more interesting other books recently published (avoiding that overworked phrase 'more important'). See the SPECULATION BOOK GUIDE for capsule notes on other titles published this year.

THE OPINION COLUMN (In much-truncated form)

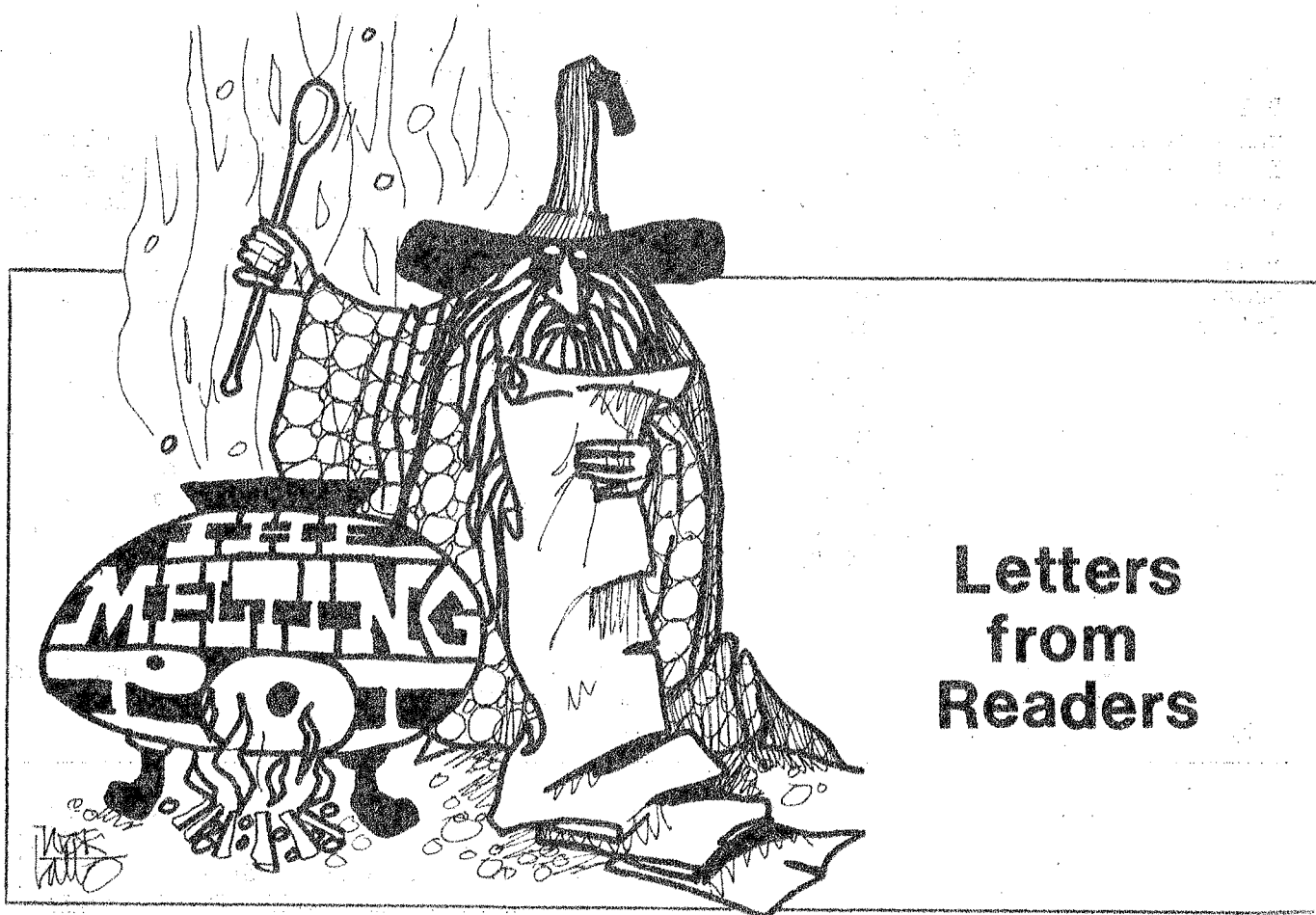
(It's been so long that you may have forgotten the rules; brief to-the-point Opinions on matters science fictional, solicited from all comers.)

OPINION 39: "Necessarily inferior?" (Cy Chauvin)

"...Michael Moorcock writes in New Worlds-2 that 'SF, as such, can never by its nature offer the richer, more profound pleasures of the best novels.' The irritating thing is that he never explains why this is so. It certainly is true that the pleasure one gets from SF is different from that of present-day reality fiction, but does that mean it is necessarily inferior?"

OPINION 40: "Always a shallow writer" (Ian Williams)

"...There is little point in reviewing NINE PRINCES IN AMBER, it's on a level with Farmer's Tiers series - shallow, entertaining adventure with nothing else to recommend it. Zelazny always has been a shallow writer, although highly sophisticated. In NINE PRINCES IN AMBER even the sophistication is missing. JACK OF SHADOWS, however, shows that Zelazny is getting back on the right lines and I'm rather surprised at the blanket dismissal this novel seems to have been given."



Letters from Readers

Mark Adlard, 22 Ham Lane, Lenham, Nr Maidstone, Kent.

Dear Peter, "In your last issue you draw my attention to Fred Pohl's speech at Chester, as if this might shed some additional light on the matters under discussion. In fact Pohl's speech will always remain in my memory as a classic statement of what good science fiction is emphatically not about.

Pohl said, in essence, that a writer had to have what he called "ideas". If a writer had ideas than "style" wasn't important, or at any rate could be learned. "Style" was a negative something that shouldn't get between the writer's "ideas" and the reader. On the other hand a writer without "ideas" was in a helpless plight.

To my mind Pohl's statements were meaningless, but they were of great interest nevertheless because of the insights they provided into some kinds of SF. The argument turns on what Pohl means by "idea".

What he means is an imaginary invention which can be added to the list of "astounding" innovations. Invent a new kind of mousetrap and Pohl will beat a path to your door. (Goshwow! he could see in the infra-red, etc). This kind of "idea" was admirably suited to the magazine short story, frequently of the twist-in-the-tail variety, which was an SF contribution to the form developed in the mainstream by O. Henry.

This kind of "idea" story was the mainstay of the pulp magazines, and Groff Conklin was the typical anthologiser of this type of SF. (Introduction to 13 GREAT STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION: "There are, of course, many hundreds of 'inventions' in the science fiction gold mine, and we can only scratch the surface of the lode in a book as brief as this. For those who want more of the same, many of the over one hundred anthologies of science fantasy that have appeared during the past twelve years are as full of 24-karat invention as a good home-made raisin bread is of raisins.")

But the idea behind a piece of fiction, and above all the idea behind a novel, means something more comprehensive and less mechanistic than this. Van Vogt's THE WORLD OF NULL-A, for example, comes to pieces in your hands because all the Pohl-like "ideas" (the Distorter, the second brain, lie detectors, etc) are not held together by any idea in the proper meaning of the word. Matters are not helped by VanVogt's workaday style which continually throws me with its odd paradoxes. ("Left to his own resources, Gosseyn ordered food sent up to his room.")

On the other hand, when we penetrate the apparently even more absurd world of Jack Vance's THE DRAGON MASTERS, we come across a minstrel-maiden in "a tight-fitting sheath of dragon intestine", and we submit to the persuasive power of the basic idea. A better example, perhaps, is Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS, which stands up as a novel because the bits of invention (details of the troopers' armour, etc) are subject to the general idea (a philosophy of militarism).

The fictional idea, in the real meaning of the term, is the organising principle which gathers all the bits and pieces of invention together into an integrated whole.

Peter Nicholls tried to explain to Pohl that the distinction between content and style (which in the SF world stems from Campbell) had been exploded. Pohl responded by saying that he must have been too far away to hear the explosion. Exactly. Or else he was deafened by the noise of advanced technology mousetraps being sprung, or of hatches being dogged. (Why do so many people in SF spend their time dogging hatches? Something to do with dogging a fled horse, I suppose.)"

* VanVogt shouldn't be used as an example of anything other than the utter lack of discrimination shown by SF readers. So far as ideas are concerned, I'll shamelessly quote from Fritz Leiber in SPECULATION-24: "...This hard material is produced by 5 percent of SF writers (a generous estimate) and is used by the other 95 percent. Without a steady supply of it, science fiction would become wan and anemic within five years. It is an absolutely essential raw material, even for New Wave writers such as Sam Delany, William Burroughs, and Ballard."*

Ian Williams, 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Road, Sunderland, Co. Durham.

Dear Pete, "Shippey's review of THE UNIVERSE MAKERS was of a standard I hadn't expected to find in SPEC. - shallow and trivial. Shippey makes the most out of a couple of comparatively trivial points, completing avoiding any serious discussion of the most important parts of Wollheim's book - primarily his rather dubious philosophy of SF. This philosophy should have been dealt with in detail as it is a philosophy that has led Wollheim to go into detail about A. Bert-ram Chandler and some of the more trivial works of Philip Jose Farmer, whilst totally ignoring the works of Disch and Zelazny. These omissions are incredible when one views contemporary SF, yet Shippey appears not to have noticed this, or if he has then he has avoided discussing the implications of why this is so.

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I'm not very happy with your put-down of Aldiss because of his ego-tripping over BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD. Fair enough, his advert in the con booklet at Chester was a massive piece of bad taste, conceit and misplaced judgement. But that is no excuse for the petulant attitude of the fans who voted a totally inferior work as the British entry for the Europa Award. BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD is an excellent novel and the spiteful attitude shown by the fans in reaction to Aldiss is demeaning and unworthy. Personalities should not enter into something like this.

I think you grossly overreact to THE TURNING WORM, nor do I think it's the zine you are expecting it to be. Your snobbery in that section also shows through rather blatantly. Quote: "Like Dr. Chris Evans, John Piggott didn't meet anyone despite being surrounded by the most fascinating people for three or four days." But who the hell made you the arbiter of who is and who isn't fascinating? Just because someone doesn't spend the entire con being sycophantic towards every pro and sercon pseudo-intellectual in sight, you consider his company cramped and, by implication, uninteresting. If Johahadn't enjoyed the company he was in he would have sought other."

* Ah, but would he? My comment was only that it seemed a shame to spend three days with the same few people, no matter who they were, when there were so many others who could have been met. John's CHESSMANCON report, which I mentioned last time, obviously reflects that he didn't circulate much. That's all. // Re. the Europa Award business, personalities do enter into any Award system despite the best intentions. Perhaps Brian's blunder was that he made it impossible for personalities not to be considered. // As for Tom Shippey's review of UNIVERSE MAKERS, my invitation remains open for you (or anyone else) to submit an addition, or refutation of the review.. *

Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.

Dear Peter, "I remember that I read THE UNIVERSE MAKERS last year, enjoyed some chapters, and have forgotten the rest of it. So obviously it didn't grab me in quite the same way it did you. I feel that you mix up "science fiction" and "fandom" a bit in your editorial, but then so does Don Wollheim. As far as I'm concerned, "science fiction" is the stuff I buy at the Space Age Book Shop in the heart of downtown Melbourne. I read quite a lot of it. If I don't like an SF book I say "phooey!" as if I'd bitten into a mildewed banana, and throw the book out from my mind. If I enjoy the book I keep thinking about it for a few days, and occasionally an SF book moves me sufficiently to make me sit down at a table and write a review of it.

But fandom! "It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan", and I'm the most stiff-necked and loneliest of them all. But so are all the other fans. Fans are Real People: science fiction writers are names on books. If an SF writer contributes something to a fanzine, he becomes a Real Person. What I'm trying to say is that I apply totally different standards to the two fields. I treat science fiction in the same way that I treat any of the other mind-fields into which I step - i.e. 90% of it is crud. In fields as different as rock and roll, classical music, and films, I search for the best things and try to avoid everything else. In fandom I try to meet as many people as possible.

But I haven't stated my premise that I regard every fanzine, every letter of comment, and every other Act of Fannishness as a personal commitment by the person involved. When I receive a fanzine I read it with great interest because a Real Person has taken the trouble to talk to me. A privilege has been bestowed upon me. I'd say a similar thing about every person who sends me an article, a review, a letter of comment, or simply a letter to cheer me up. (The last item is often needed and very much appreciated.)

But I don't say the same about people whose names appear as bylines for SF books. With any luck, those figures have got their money for their books, and they are hard at work on their next efforts. When I buy their books, they are in debt to me, and I choose to exercise whatever small powers of judgment I possess. Since I've been in fandom for nearly five years, quite often I know a lot about the authors. But this gives me no excuse to judge the authors on any other basis than the words in front of me on the page.

I'll try to give an example; from reading fanzines I have every reason to suspect that Robert Silverberg is one of the finest people in the science fiction world. When and if I get to the USA he's one of the people I most want to meet. I have vast respect for his industry and the way he has carved out a place for himself as the king of American SF. I think Silverberg is the finest anthologist working in America. But I don't like any of his recent novels.

Try as I might, I cannot see what anybody sees in them - to me they are tasteless, word-wasteful, and megalomaniac. They seem to have nothing to do with the person who I know wrote them. So I'm involved in a conflict whenever I talk about Silverberg's novels. So far I've resolved the conflict by saying very little about them. But when it comes to the crunch, you can guess that I will not be kind about the novels in any way. But I'd still like to meet the author. That's that.

But that brings us back to Don Wollheim. I could say a similar thing about him. I know bits and pieces about his enormous contribution to fandom. I respect him as an editor, even though I rarely agree with his taste. (Perhaps Don Wollheim will be remembered as the man who let Terry Carr edit the Ace Specials). But I won't allow him to mix up "science fiction" and "science fiction fandom". Actually, as I remember he doesn't do that very often, and you've exaggerated this aspect of THE UNIVERSE MAKERS. I'd agree with Don in every way, in that piece you quote. SF has shaped my whole life - I've been reading it since I could read. I'm marked by science fiction in every possible way. I would very much like to make it my profession, although I haven't managed that yet (as Australia is a primitive country that does not oublish indigenous SF writers). It takes, as I said, all my spare time so it's quite a hobby. If, despite all gloomy portents to the contrary, I find a wife, she will probably come from fandom. Nearly all my friends are fans.

But what the hell has that got to do with whether Philip K Dick is a better writer than Robert Heinlein, or whether Brian Aldiss's later novels are better than his first novels, or vice-versa? Absolutely nothing. Literary judgements come from those who are committed to literary values - "high disinterestedness", as Leavis called them. A critic, said Henry James, should be "damned critical". To read is to take part in an act of discrimination, in the employment of the very best of oneself. The fact of whether you fought a FAPA feud with author X in 1939, or had a drink with him the night before, has nothing to do with it.

I've talked elsewhere about the more subtle point you raise about Wollheim's book. Any SF critic, as John Foyster pointed out in SFC 10, faces an impossible paradox; to be really effective he must have a thorough knowledge of the entire SF field, from its 1926 beginnings until now; but he must also have enough taste not to like most of that 1926-1972 garbage. He should have read very widely and deeply in "real" literature, but somehow he must retain a great interest in science fiction. The only people I know who approach this ideal are John Foyster, Franz Rottensteiner, Stanislaw Lem (although his background in American SF may not be as sharp as the others), and George Turner. And they all write for SFC.

I'm knocked out on the first criterion, and John Foyster would hardly consider me well-qualified on the second. I can't speak for the others, but I've never loved science fiction as a big lump; I do love and respect the work of a number of SF writers - Dick, Aldiss, Disch, Cordwainer Smith, Fritz Leiber, Ursula LeGuin, the short stories of R.A. Lafferty, most of what Gordon Eklund has published so far, and, based on one novel, Stanislaw Lem. But I don't for one moment expect that anyone else in the world will necessarily like those authors. I speak only for myself, and I expect other people to speak for themselves - provided, of course, that they put into their oratory the kind of work I put into mine.

Much of the time I disagree with Foyster, Lem, Rottensteiner and Turner, but at least we agree about the ways in which to agree or disagree. Most of the time I think Franz talks straight common sense (as in that quote about STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, "...a megalomaniac fascist fantasy"). Quite often I read one of Franz's pieces and say to myself, "Now that's what I should have said." But I never do; I'm always several leaps behind that fine mind. Lem is dazzling; I'm light-years behind him. Foyster is sharp but evasive, plain-speaking but ambiguous. Once the reader realises he means just what he says, his pieces become easier to take.

I know that I've ignored the two Most Favoured SF Critics: Knight and Blish. But enough has been said about them. Knight stopped writing this kind of thing long ago, and Wm. Atheling Jr. hasn't been around recently. For me, most of Blish's recent critical work does not have that WA Jr. quality that makes THE ISSUE AT HAND one of the most valuable objects in my library."

* Since you mentioned Bob Silverberg, I'll take the excuse to quote a comment he made in SFC-23 and which interested me at the time. Perhaps I should have brought it to the attention of Brian Stableford:- "I've halted all writing for an indefinite period while I rethink some of my basic premises about the art of fiction. I finished a novel called THE BOOK OF SKULLS in late winter and haven't written anything since, the longest layoff since I began writing full-time."

I'm pleased we agree on the value of fandom, but I wonder how you will react when eventually you bump into a 'wrecker', someone who gets their fun from fandom in annoying and trying to hurt as many people as possible. An Act of Fandom, as you term it, would be a joke rather than a privilege to someone like Charles Platt for instance. (I mention this particular twit because I hear that he's at large once again and People should be Warned).

Strange that your ideal critics all write for SFC. Oddly enough I feel that some of the very best fan-critics are people like Tony Sudbery, Pam Bulmer, Tom Shippey and Philip Strick, and maybe Mark Adlard, Malcolm Edwards, Brian Stableford and David Redd - and they all write for SPECULATION. (Although not exclusively, of course). I think that one of Rottensteiner's better essays was his demolition of Gordon Dickson's SOLDIER ASK NOT in SPEC some issues back; most of Dickson's stories are pretty poor wish-fulfilment fantasies, it seems to me. As for the mysterious SFC: for the uninitiated this is Bruce's own fanzine, Science Fiction Commentary, available from him at the address shown for \$3.00 for 9 issues, or from Malcolm Edwards, 75A Harrow View, Harrow, Mx, at £1.50 for 9 issues. It's possibly the second-best SF discussion fanzine in the World! *

Franz Rottensteiner, A-2762 Ortmann, Felsenstrasse 20, Austria.

Dear Pete, "Before I start calling you names, my congratulations for winning the Eurocon Award for best fanzine; that really is a well-deserved honour even though I see signs of slipping lately. For instance, what a curious little review of SOLARIS you print. Scorn for science and scientists indeed!

I wonder then why the Soviet Academy of Sciences, whose members should know a little more of science than your defender of scientific rigour, Mr Sudbery, keeps inviting Lem to scientific symposia, such as the one in Biurakan last year where he was asked to attend as the only non-scientist, along with people like Shannon, Dyson, and Feynman. And although I normally don't subscribe to many of Mr Blish's views I must quote him (from memory) that SOLARIS contains "not a word of double-talk" and that Lem "has an intimate knowledge of the sciences".

I understand also that Poland's two leading theoretical physicists have different opinions on the possibility of the neutrino structures described in SOLARIS, on which Mr Sudbery is an expert. While the one thinks they are impossible, the other concedes that something like this might be feasible. And if Mr Sudbery could decide the question he would probably become very famous. Much the same could be said for his other points.

You surprised me by confessing that you subscribe to the belief that in order to judge the quality of eggs, you must be able to lay eggs yourself. If it gives you any satisfaction I don't believe that I could write SF any better than all the oafs that let off hot air at both ends, and the difference between them and me is only that I am aware of my limitations, that I don't feel the slightest desire to write any fiction, and that I am social enough not to force what dreadful stories I might be able to produce on others. Of course, anyone can demand of me: "Put up or shut up", but what do I care for such nonsense?

As for selling, that would be no problem at all; as an editor for Insel Verlag in Germany and an anthologist and SF consultant with McGraw-Hill in the USA, I could buy my own stories. So what? And be assured that I have friends enough who would buy from me, just because it is from me.

Besides Lem I like the Strugatskys, Dick, Cordwainer Smith, Aldiss, plus some stories by others. But Lem simply is the most important; and since I believe that he deserves also to become the best-known SF author in the world, I made up my mind to make him the best-known SF writer. Since I was lucky it seems that I am succeeding. What could be more simple than that?"

* As it happens, Franz, my "expert Mr Sudbery" really is something of an expert on radiation physics, with a Cambridge Ph.D which gives him at least some right to pass opinions. However, I personally feel that it is basically irrelevant to try and pick holes in Lem's, or anyone else's science in such 'frontier' areas where no-one really knows just what is possible or not. Providing that an author has done his homework on science as it is now, and makes reasonably logical and plausible statements, then there's little reason to cavil. What I'd like to think Tony Sudbery was doing in his review of SOLARIS was to pick up various points which in his opinion showed a more fundamental disregard for the scientific attitude. // I had a letter from Mr Lem which more-or-less echoed Franz's points above, and so I have not printed it here. Mr Lem says that the point about the albedo vs. planetary density was a translation error in the English edition.

Tony Sudbery, 5 Heslington Croft, Fulford, York.

Dear Pete, "I'd like to comment on your editorial views on amateur critics. I completely disagree that an author has a valid right to demand "put up or shut up", and that a writer's criticism is more valuable than an amateur's. Someone, Shaw or Plato or one of them, pointed out that you don't have to be a carpenter to know when there's something wrong with a table. In fact, you may be better able to say what's wrong with it if you're not a carpenter.

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The carpenter will tell you that the joints weren't done according to the book, but the point is that the damn thing wobbles as soon as you touch it.

I think this is just what's wrong with the Atheling school of criticism; it misses the point. You say "What can an amateur writer really know about creating a story..?". Nothing at all perhaps, but the reader of a review doesn't want to know about creating a story, he wants to hear about reading it. A critic is just an intelligent reader; but good writers can be bad readers.

Then you quote Dan Morgan to the effect that it is much harder to create the shoddiest novel than to tear it apart afterwards. The effort involved is quite irrelevant; a shoddy novel needs to be torn apart. The reviewer is the readers' shop steward, protecting them against bad writers.

I don't want to say that professional criticism is valueless. A carpenter can certainly have interesting things to say about a table, but architects, painters, and geometers may have far more interesting things to say. Since this metaphor seems to be leading me into arrogance, I'll drop it and admit that writers can be among the best critics. But it doesn't automatically follow. (That quotation was from Samuel Johnson, actually: "You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables." It was a good buy, that Penguin Dictionary of Quotations.)

You do have one valid point, though; there's something suspect about a critic who doesn't like anything. If his only reaction to everything he reads is scorn, it's bound to make you think that he doesn't know, or has forgotten, what the point of reading is in the first place. If this is so, he's just not qualified to be a critic - the necessary qualification being the ability to like and properly appreciate something of the same type as what he is criticising. Perhaps every critic ought to display his qualifications and at the same time calibrate his critical scale, by making all his judgements be not "this is bad", but "It isn't as good as ---". After all, criticism must be fundamentally a matter of comparisons.

In SF criticism it's possible to do this and still not like anything, by filling in the blank with something from mainstream literature. This is more or less what Franz Rottensteiner does. Actually, I think he's quite right to do so, and I hope he goes on doing it for some time. So many people are intent on applying the highest conventional literary standards to SF, and overpraising SF writers by comparing them to the best mainstream writers, that it's refreshing to have Rottensteiner around to remind us that this is a load of codswallop. I'm not sure what joy he gets out of it.

If you think SF is just a minor variety of general literature, performing the same function rather incompletely, the idea of a magazine like SPEC., solely devoted to SF criticism must seem rather pointless. (Since I think something like that is largely true, I wonder why I go on writing for you?). On the other hand..... I'm getting bored with this. Something about it being easier to condemn than praise, and you're as guilty as anyone else because you enjoy reading hatchet jobs. Part of the reason Rottensteiner's got this fixation on Lem might be that he knows he's got to establish his credentials by liking something....

SPECULATION was otherwise so good it depressed me, but that doesn't mean I'm going to meekly accept Peter Roberts' outraged puffing and snorting in defence of Philip K. Dick. I'm sorry Peter is annoyed by my use of other critical articles to give me something to argue against, but I really don't see how this can be called "setting up a false target"; and I must admit it's news to me that John Brunner is "a fanatic with little or no outside reading".

If it's any comfort to Peter, I in my turn find his mode of argument very annoying. He seems to be trying to psycho-analyse me telepathically. "His spurious criticisms", he says of me, "are not the cause of his dislike but just a collection of oddments uncovered when hunting around for a justification of a personal antipathy with the author". How the hell does he think he knows that? If he'd read what I wrote he'd have seen that what I was hunting for was the good qualities claimed by other people for Dick, and I didn't find them.

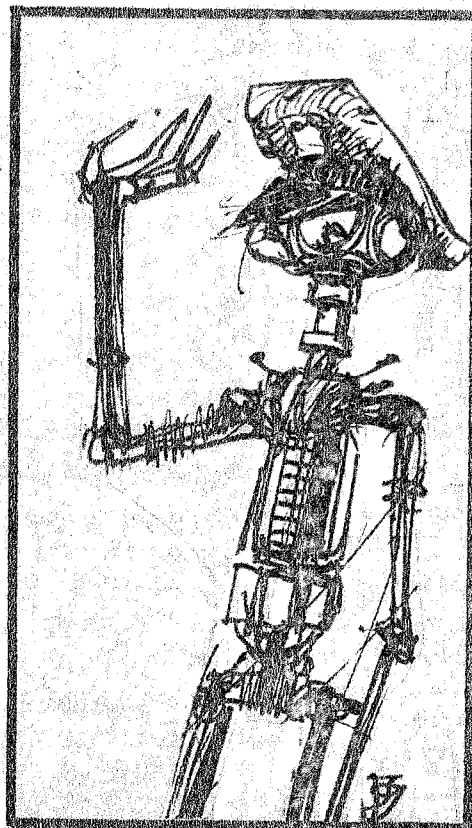
Then, faced with this personal antipathy, if that's what it is, I had to either find justification for it or see why it was wrong. In the case of *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* the latter happened; I disliked it on first reading but I now think it an extremely good novel (though to reach this conclusion I had to ignore all the rubbish that other people have written about it). On reading some of his other books I thought and still think, that my dislike is justified.

I wouldn't object so much if Peter made any attempt to justify his intuitive judgments. Instead, however, having announced that my criticisms are spurious, he proceeds to admit the justice of them -- and then he expects me to agree that Dick is competent and worthy but I just happen not to enjoy his work.

I do know what he means -- I would describe Samuel Delany in those terms, but I don't think Dick is in that class. The only thing Peter puts forward in favour of Dick is the old 'nature of reality' business. I don't know if it's worth going into this; perhaps it is, since I did it rather cryptically in my talk at the Worcester Convention.

First of all, as you pointed out, Pete, Peter Roberts completely misrepresents what I said. Secondly, I don't regard it as sufficient grounds for praise of an author that he tackles grandiose themes; but a lot of Dick's fans seem to be bowled over by the mere fact that he is concerned with the nature of reality. Personally I don't think this theme is nearly as important as the moral, social, and psychological themes that are the usual stuff of novels; but given that it is a serious theme, we have to consider what sort of theme it is. It's a philosophical one, of a rather abstract type.

So any insight given by a novelist on the question has to be compared with what the philosophers can offer -- and on this topic, philosophers will usually start with a fantasy like one of Dick's, and then proceed to analyse it. In other areas the novelist's imagination is worth much more than the philosopher's theorising; but because the problem of reality is such an abstract one (actually -- to be
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"Clankenstein's Monster"?
(See SPEC. 21)

provocative - because it's a pseudo-problem) you can't do without the analysis, and writers like Dick never offer us any. Does Peter Roberts really claim that Philip K. Dick tells (or asks) him as much about the nature of reality as, say, Russell or Wittgenstein?

Damned if I can see what the I CHING has to do with reality anyway. If this silly little bit of byplay is all Peter can get out of MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE then I'm sorry for him; there are so much better things in the book. But it was nice to see Mike Moorcock aligned with me, though I miss the old controversial Moorcock who would have me reaching for my pen in a gibbering frenzy of disagreement. But he's said it all, hasn't he? With writers like Aldiss and Disch around, why bother with Philip K Dick?

Finally, I emphatically disagree with Bob Rickard's comment that nobody really enjoys Blish. Back in the unsophisticated mid-fifties, when I got all my SF from Edmund Crispin's and Bleiler & Dikty's BEST SF series, I was in no doubt who was the best SF writer. Asimov and Clarke were quite good, yes, and Heinlein dimly registered, but the king of them all for real science fiction, without a shadow of doubt, was James Blish."

Mark Mumper, 1227 Laurel Street, Santa Cruz, California 95060.

Dear Peter, "Bob Rickard's article on Blish was quite a good representation of an outlook on the man that is seldom expressed at length - namely the uneasy feeling one gets from his damnably cold prose and rationalistic, unemotional style. As Rickard put it succinctly, his fiction, at least a good deal of that which I've read, has an almost total lack of flow.

I'm only beginning to realise that the critic is himself prone to the failings he points out in others. Awareness of one's own stylistic dryness and other shortcomings may be outside the critic's scope of objectivity, and perhaps Blish is unable to "cure" his problems in this area, even should he want to. This does not invalidate Blish's critical writings or his ability to dissect the prose of others, but it certainly makes his own fiction at times an unpleasant task to get through. A case in point is his recent MIDSUMMER CENTURY, a particularly annoying (to me) "internal dialogue" narrative that also finds itself waist-deep in inconsistencies and logical absurdities. That may seem strange, coming from such a nit-picker as Blish, but either his control has slipped badly in this book or he hasn't deigned to fully clarify the story for the reader's benefit. MIDSUMMER CENTURY is an "adventure" novel, yet its adventure is singularly devoid of excitement, poetry or interest. I'm eager to see its upcoming review in SPEC., to compare my thoughts with others'."

* Agree entirely with your views on MIDSUMMER CENTURY, Mark. I found it a great disappointment although I see that Charlie Brown (in Locus) gives it a quite good review. The book is with Tony Sudbery - I've no idea what reaction he has had. I hope to publish the other parts of your letter in the next issue, by the way.*

Jeff Clark, 223 Lenox Road, Apt E.11., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11226.

"Bob Rickard's analysis of AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE is the kind of thing Blish's work deserves more of, and it is quite good. Not because I agree with it - actually I don't, in large measure (at least in Rickard's occasional conclusions about the work), but I couldn't pretend to have a point-for-point opposite view or to begin to explicate that view. Almost needless to say, Rickard and I view the books differently, and he has pointed out a few areas I was not angled to see. (As well, he has obviously read more Blish than I have.)

Because of this, Rickard's analysis disturbs me - a thing which I value as highly as the piece which preens one's own ego by revealing that its writer appreciates one's own impeccable perceptions. So, the following thorn-engendered comments:

I find all four novels very impressive, without even understanding them thoroughly on first reading. I'm taking a limited view, largely in terms of form and effect. I simply cannot see how Blish is making things "difficult" for his readers - the man is simply attempting to write literature. It is a perfectly respectable preoccupation, even if it isn't going to please the more severe SF-ghetto mentalities (and I don't mean that phrase to be as nasty as it may sound).

These works are perfectly entertaining to me (in the way that good art is), without need of identification-inducing characters. In *EASTER* and *JUDGEMENT* I think a unity of effect is aided by this lack, and, apart from this, my view on "identifiable" characters is rapidly dwindling, as concerns a precise and substantial critical standard, to the point of impatience and contempt. I simply cannot see it; there are few literary tenets I consciously feel like upholding - only ones I'd like to see knocked down. Briefly, I don't think character-orientation is a viable enough basis for the gauging of good writing and literature, at least any more. I personally don't know what quality is, but it does partake of something more abstract, and I feel that *EASTER* & *JUDGEMENT* in particular possess /it.

But back to Blish's characterisation for a moment. I find his work as exemplified through the characters quite fascinating because of the rational mental "lives" being exhibited. This constructional trend works toward an intent and overall effect that is something greater and less defined than characterisation. It's not terribly realistic - perhaps even as concerns the way in which people reason - but so what? The purpose is not to be realistic. (It must be admitted in the final analysis that, when applying the most precise discriminatory criticism, stream-of-consciousness is not particularly true to the association and randomisation of thought and feeling. Quite often it simply achieves its effect through a blanketing, scattershot technique.)

I think the problem with many SF readers not liking Blish is that the rational and speculative qualities of mind which SF embodies appeals to them - especially when found in an author whose twists and turns of thought are dressed up in a story where characters occasionally voice explanation for each step in the process, while the problem-purpose of said characters and author remains almost exactly on the same level - but these readers get squirmy when actually confronted with the necessity of following the concerned and rigorous thinking of a character engaged in something of greater significance than a crossword puzzle. It is partly the sloppy habit of expecting everything to be handed to you, and entertainingly; Blish may be wrong or failing in his results, but you have to do some work to arrive at that conclusion - as is usual in good literature.

It's strange but I hadn't realised that *EASTER* and *JUDGEMENT* were so controversially received. To me they seem to be the most impressive achievements in a special sense. I find they create effects which I have not encountered elsewhere; in fact I don't think it's too much to say that they're possessed of a certain genius. They are surely Blish's most unusual accomplishments stylistically they are not actually realistic - they are, more importantly, real in the quality of their writing. Even if Blish himself said *JUDGEMENT* was written rather "hastily" this has little bearing upon what he really achieved. Anyway, what does that really mean? To him it could have considerably different connotation than to Bob Silverberg. Joanna Russ thought *JUDGEMENT* very good, and that this may be due to Blish's being able to spend more time on his writing now! "

James Blish, 'Treetops', Woodlands Road, Harpsden, Henley, Oxon.

Dear Pete, "There certainly is a lot of space devoted to me in SPECULATION 30, for which I'm duly grateful. Let me first of all try to correct the impression you have left by your footnote on Page 38. You complained to me about not being mentioned in MORE ISSUES AT HAND, and had every right to do so. You fail to mention, though, that I not only apologised but promised to correct this in the next printing of the book. I did just this; you are mentioned not only in the second cloth printing (July 1971) but also in the paperback (April 1972). See page 7 of either of these.

There are a number of points in Foyster's review itself with which I might take issue, but I'll confine myself to a typical one. He says, "Blish takes the view that to be useful ('to have any value as social criticism') SF must be believable." I did say something like that, but the fragmentary quotation makes me look like a simpleton. What I said was, "If science fiction is to have any value as social criticism, or as moral paradigm, or as real examination and prediction of human behaviour, or any of the other special virtues it has claimed for itself..." (p. 105). The operative word is value not use, and I didn't confine it to social criticism.

As a man who has obviously read the whole book, I think Foyster should have at least guessed that social criticism got into the list because I had previously devoted three pages (28-30) to a book of essays on SF as social criticism. As a fiction writer I am not myself a propagandist, and as a critic I don't insist that others should be; on the contrary, on the very same page from which Foyster quotes his fragment of a sentence, the following appears, and in bold-face type too; "I want to repeat here, **AT THE TOP OF MY VOICE**, that I am not attempting to dictate any other writer's attitudes or choice of subject".

I was gratified, too, by Bob Rickard's long and thoughtful analysis of my trilogy, but there are a few things in it that puzzle me. One occurs early on: "there is a large percentage of SF readers who get very little entertainment value from much of his work (at least the four serious novels above), and who, on the whole, find him difficult to read and understand..." The trilogy admittedly makes more demands on the reader than, say, the Star Trek books; so far, so good. But while I would be the last person to argue that current popularity is any measure at all of the worth of a book — all too often utterly lousy work achieves enormous popularity, for a while — I do think it has a pretty direct relationship to entertainment value; so I find it worth reporting that every single book I have ever published (to the number of 35 now) is still in print.

Some cautious but quite wide-spread enquiries into other author's royalty situations, pursued before I took the plunge of going free-lance, revealed that there are very few other writers in any field, not just SF, in that position. And let's look specifically at A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, which is one of the four novels to which Rickard parenthetically narrows down his stricture. This first appeared in book form in 1958, and won a Hugo — a pure popularity contest if ever I saw one. It has now been in print for 14 years; and has seen U.S. (2), British (3), French, Italian, Dutch, Danish and Japanese editions, and there's a German one coming up. That a novel could make a record like this without being entertaining, whether it has any other merits or not, I find hard to believe.

For the other three books I have less evidence on which to base such an argument, since they're all younger. Nevertheless: DOCTOR MIRABILIS stayed in print in Britain (where it first appeared) for seven years, went out of print for a year, and has now been published in the States. BLACK EASTER drew more reviews

than any other book of mine -- 70, which means, of course, mostly in the general press -- and almost all of them were favourable. And in its British edition, THE DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT went into a second printing two months after publication.

Rickard also says, "...when the heralded sequel DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT arrived the reaction was extreme to the point of hostility." That's the first I've heard of it. The book is very recent and thus far I've seen just an even dozen reviews up to Rickard's, and of these ten are favourable and the other two simply express bewilderment. To my astonishment, even Ted White liked it, though he outright loathed BLACK EASTER. Hostility? Where? Is somebody being too tactful?

...On p.70 you remark of JUDGEMENT that "J.B. himself admits it was written rather hastily". I admit no such thing. John Delaney, my editor for the project at Doubleday, could (but wouldn't because he's too polite) tell you some horror stories about the task he had prying that novel out of my hands. I polished every word -- maybe not to very good effect, but meticulously all the same.

These are minor matters, I agree. I continue gratified that you and Rickard thought the trilogy worth all that space and attention; and by the fact that Rickard has both understood and admirably exposed much of what I was trying to do. What will follow it? Well, I can't say for sure, but I doubt that I'm going any further in that direction. "

* Sorry. I was sure I'd heard you say something about JUDGEMENT being rushed. I think it was at that Birmingham Group meeting when I helped to eat your salad. Bob Rickard worked extremely hard on his analysis. Originally it began life as a review of the collection ANYWHEN, almost two years ago. I kept rejecting Bob's drafts and demanding that he read more Blish books, until the simple review had turned into an in-depth essay. Bob's final inspiration came from talking to you, Jim, at CHESSMANCON. He came back and spent most of the following night on the final version of the article. Tom Shippey helped to some extent; and he also was good enough to help me out of trouble by actually stencilling it for me, too. *

Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211.

Dear Pete, "I approve your comments re. Aldiss and others who look down on SF and fandom as faintly disreputable and low class after having "graduated" from the field. I'll never feel that way about pornography if I ever get established in SF permanently, or even into another genre or overrated tributary of the literary field.

The one thing I have found to be true in writing, on a personal level, is to be true to yourself -- write where your intense interests take you, and don't be afraid to let it come out. My science fiction, I find, is becoming a blend of SF with elements of sex and violence in the human areas.. and I had qualms about giving in to what my subconscious was urging me -- impelling me -- to put on paper. "Tone it down", my cringing self said, but I didn't. I enjoy writing that particular mixture and I'll continue whether it sells or not, until I change in some way.

To inhibit myself, or try to write a Gothic Romance, for instance, would set up all kinds of resistance in me. At the same time I do discipline myself to structure my stories and novels so as to involve and entertain the reader. I've been a reader too long to cheat and insult other readers. There are ways to be self-indulgent as a writer and yet be entirely professional and reader-oriented."

* I didn't say exactly that about Brian Aldiss, Dick. If it encourages you, I very much liked your SF sex & violence story in REG No.3. Adventurous and yet imaginative, I thought. Of course there were a few rough spots here and there... *

Dan Morgan, 1 Chapel Lane, Spalding, Lincs.

Dear Pete, "Your mysterious reference in the covering letter "...see if you can find the mention of your name inside..." naturally sent me scurrying through the pages to find out what kind of trouble I'd got myself into this time. I take it that you're referring to your editorial note of my L.O.C. to Vector on the subject of Pam Bulmer's crit of Ken Harker's novel THE FLOWERS OF JANUARY (or was it FEBRUARY ?).

No doubt there will be some comments on the letter in Vector - I may even be called a howling cad for attacking a lady - but what I was really concerned with was the possibly destructive effect of this kind of criticism in general, something which you and I have discussed in the past. Your reference to a 'cudgelling by Blish' is extremely apposite in this context, because it was thanks to the intervention of Ken Bulmer at a Con a couple of years ago that I personally was able to escape the harmful effects of such a cudgelling by throwing my copy of F&SF into the waste basket with his (I understand) vitriolic review of my first two MIND books unread.

I talked to Blish myself later at the same Con and of course found him to be a mild-mannered and reasonable person. From this conversation I gathered that his main criticism of the books was that they covered ground which had been gone over pretty thoroughly in the past. Well, this is fair enough, and he is entitled to his opinion - just as I am entitled to mine, which is that while I am fully prepared to acknowledge that it was works like his own JACK OF EAGLES and Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN which probably kindled my interest in Psi in the first instance, I wanted to cover the ground in my way.

Ironically this conversation may be partially responsible for the fact that my last four books (three sold so far) have been outside the MIND series, each on completely different themes. I probably owe Jim Blish a vote of thanks for his verbal criticism which may have jogged me out of a too-comfortable rut, but on the other hand I still feel that had I read the F&SF blast I would probably have been rendered creatively impotent for some time afterwards. "

* Not being a writer myself I wouldn't know for sure, Dan, but no matter how it hurt I don't think my curiosity (if nothing else) would have let me refrain from reading a review of my own work. If the verbal criticism was useful, maybe the written version would have been even more so, in the end result? *

DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT TIME DEPT.

Letters from Chris Priest and Malcolm Edwards, mainly getting annoyed in their own ways with Alex Eisenstein last time; L-o-n-g letter from Doug Barbour about all sorts of things, including his liking for newer writers Russ/Delany/LeGuin. Good letter from Philip Michael Cohen commenting on Shippey's reviews last time. Houston Craighead continues the Philip K Dick discussion at length; Good letter from Cy Chauvin; then somewhat briefer letters from lots of people:- Brian Cox, Josephine Saxton (who reads her post in bed - SPEC kept her there until after noon!), Melvin Merzon, Harry Warner Jr., Dave Colton, John Bangsund, Geoff Doherty, Philip Payne, Richard E. Cotton, Alex Eisenstein, Margo Skinner, Michael Meara, Keith Walker, Marion Linwood, and Angus Taylor. Thank you all for writing. This time at least your comments won't be wasted because the next SPEC will have a lettercolumn that begins where this one has had to finish.. your letters will be used there.

I know you don't believe me!

SPECULATION book guide

TO MY CONSIDERABLE surprise somebody at NOVACON said that not only did they read this Book Guide, but that they actually enjoyed it! Why do I produce these thumb-nail reactions to books? - Partly to meet what I consider are my obligations, and also because after all this time regular readers must have learned something about my tastes, and this Guide may help you to choose your own reading.

NEW BOOKS FROM GOLLANCZ:-

THE WIND FROM THE SUN by Arthur C. Clarke. A new collection of Clarke's most recent short stories. Needless to say I enjoyed this book more than any other I have encountered in a long time. To be reviewed in the next issue.

THE GODS THEMSELVES by Isaac Asimov. Although his first novel in a very long time this one disappointed me. Review next issue.

THE BYWORLDER by Poul Anderson, £1.75. New novel with some thoughts on the 'counter culture'. Good characterisation, setting, imagination - but Anderson's people do have that tendency to lecture each other. Recommended. (From Fantastic)

CLONE by Richard Cowper, £1.90. A light-hearted novel.

PSTALEMATE by Lester Del Rey, £1.80. A new psi-novel. To be reviewed.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES No.7, edited by Lloyd Biggle Jr., £2.50. This is a big book of 320 pages this year, containing eleven stories and three essays, plus comprehensive introductions to each story. The award-winners themselves are 'Queen of Air and Darkness' by Poul Anderson; 'Good News from the Vatican' by Robert Silverberg, 'The Missing Man' by Katherine MacLean. Some of the eight runners-up are more to my liking than others; particularly noted are the stories by Edgar Pangborn and Joanna Russ. Generally a better volume than the previous year's collection.

WORLD'S BEST SF - 1972, edited by Donald A Wollheim, £2.25. A rather odd situation has arisen with the breakup of the Wollheim-Carr team and Wollheim's departure from Ace. Each of the parties mentioned above had some part in presenting the annual collection of SF 'bests', and each party has attempted to continue with the series. Thus we have a Wollheim 'best' collection, a Carr selection (from Ballantine), and Ace's own volume edited by Frederik Pohl, who replaced Wollheim for a time. Not an ideal situation, even more so because they are offering, between them, no less than 35 'best' stories from 1971. These plus the Nebula selections are really mining any year too thoroughly.

The first story in Wollheim's book is Larry Niven's 'The Fourth Profession', which occupies 48 pages and was a big disappointment to me. Not one of Larry's best, I thought, and not really any sort of year's best. More worthy, I think, is Stephen Tall's retelling of Clarke's 'Rescue Party' from the other viewpoint - a nice little piece of standard SF fare. There is one story from the Clarke collection, above, plus good items from Michael Coney, Poul Anderson & Theodore Sturgeon.

ANDROID AT ARMS by Andre Norton, £1.40. Apparently a new juvenile novel.

OF TIME AND STARS by Arthur C Clarke, £1.30. Special collection of old favourites assembled especially for SF beginners & juveniles. Attractively presented, with a 'prestige' introduction by J.B. Priestley. Excellent value. Recommended.

SPECULATION

FROM FABER:--

AND ALL THE STARS A STAGE by James Blish, £1.90. Novel, to be reviewed next issue.
A TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL, HURRAH! by Harry Harrison, £1.90. The novel from recent Analogs. Started well but became too whimsical, was my opinion. To be reviewed.
Rx FOR TOMORROW by Alan E. Nourse, £1.70. Unusual collection of eleven stories written around medicine in the future. Some will be familiar to long-time magazine readers, two stories are original to the book. Recommended.
ONE STEP FROM EARTH by Harry Harrison, £1.75. The redoubtable Harrison's latest idea was a series of stories on matter transmitters. Some stories did initial mileage in Analog (and elsewhere?) but the nine appear here in chronological order into the distant future. It's a good concept and my only quibble is that Harry seems to have skirted around the theme, has written often-inconsequential if not downright trivial tales like 'Wife to the Lord'. Where is the bite, the real impact that 'transmatters' would make on life? It's been done before, and better, in stories like ROGUE MOON, to name one. Entertaining, even so.

FROM SIDGWICK & JACKSON:--

VOLTEFACE by Mark Adlard, £1.60. You'll remember that last time I praised Mark's first novel; I'm pleased to say that the sequel is even better. The narrative seems more confident, the cultural-loading not so blatant, and there is more humour. It will be interesting to see the full review in our next issue.
THE NIGHT OF THE ROBOTS by Brian Ball, £1.75. Space-adventure novel.
BUG-EYED MONSTERS ed. Anthony Cheetham, £2.50. Ten stories about aliens, almost all of which are extremely well-known and available elsewhere.

FROM DOBSON:--

THE YELLOW FRACTION by Rex Gordon, £1.50. Interesting new novel of the political factions on a planet where death is at age 40. To change the planet, change men, or to go somewhere else? But harder done than said.
ROGUE STAR by Frederik Pohl & Jack Williamson, £1.75. From If. Poor stuff.
ASSIGNMENT IN NOWHERE by Keith Laumer, £1.40. Third in the series of the Worlds of the Imperium. Exciting, fast-moving, but not great science fiction.
IPOMOEIA by John Rackham, £1.40. Very good space adventure yarn. Imaginative.
UN-MAN by Poul Anderson, £1.50. Novelette from Astounding, set in the first of Poul's future histories. Plus two other stories, 'Margin of Profit' (van Rijn), and 'The Live Coward' (Wing Alak). Good reading.
THE GLASS CAGE by Kenneth W Hassler, £1.75. Terrible business about computer society, future war, Good Guys win in the end. I couldn't face it.
STAR WATCHMAN by Ben Bova, £2.10. Not a bad space adventure story but really one for juveniles, and I suspect this was originally written for this market.
ENVOY TO NEW WORLDS, by Keith Laumer, £1.75. Six early Reteif stories. Fun.
A SKULL AND TWO CRYSTALS, by George Dick-Lauder, £1.75. Space opera.

FROM OTHER PUBLISHERS:--

SECOND STAGE LENSMAN; CHILDREN OF THE LENS; MASTERS OF THE VORTEX, by E.E. 'Doc' Smith, W.H. Allen Ltd, £1.80 each. Attractively presented, second threesome of books issued in the Lensman series. Although of course VORTEX is not of that series, something the publishers apparently didn't realise. Attractive books, stories with which everyone is familiar (aren't you?). Old-time SF.
GENIUS LOCI; THE ABOMINATIONS OF YONDO, by Clarke Ashton Smith, Neville Spearman, £1.75 per volume. Two collections of stories in the fantasy/horror tradition. Both volumes beautifully presented, these are a must for readers of this type of fantasy. Previously released in the series were LOST WORLDS and OUT OF SPACE AND TIME.

SPECULATION

PAPERBACK PREVIEW:

NEW FROM ACE BOOKS:--

BEST SCIENCE FICTION FOR 1972, ed. Frederik Pohl, \$1.25. This continues the Ace 'World's Best' series, under new management. Rather a disappointing collection even though it contains 'Inconstant Moon', 'Gold at the Starbows End', and imaginative stories by James Tiptree Jr., John Brunner and others.

THE BIG TIME by Fritz Leiber, 75c. Reissue. Short but dramatic Hugo-winning novel.

THE BLACK STAR PASSES by John W. Campbell, 75c. Really a bit unfair to publish any piece of 1930 science fiction. Still, this is supposed to be a classic....

THE BEST FROM F&SF 18TH SERIES, ed. Edward L. Ferman, 75c. Fourteen stories.

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD by Brian W Aldiss, 95c. See Jim Blish's review in SPEC-25.

THE OMEGA POINT by George Zebrowski, 75c. Original novel, for further review.

THIS SIDE OF INFINITY, ed Terry Carr, 75c. Miscellaneous collection of eight stories.

THE JEWELS OF APTOR by Samuel R. Delany, 75c. Reissue of Delany's first novel.

THE BIG SHOW by Keith Laumer, 75c. Six stories, mostly from Analog, all recent.

ARMAGEDDON 2419 by Philip Francis Nowlan, 75c. The original Buck Rogers (1928).

ROLLER COASTER WORLD by Ken Bulmer, 75c. A new novel.

PELLUCIDAR/AT THE EARTH'S CORE/THE MONSTER MEN, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, 75c each.

DR FUTURITY/THE UNTELEPORTED MAN by Philip K Dick, double novel, reissued, 95c

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES, by Isaac Asimov, \$1.25. Non-fiction essays from F&SF.

PERRY RHODAN Nos. 16,17,18. 75c each. Who on Earth would read this stuff?

FROM BALLANTINE:--

THE BEST SF OF THE YEAR, ed. Terry Carr, \$1.25. Eleven stories. Some duplication with the Wollheim collection, probably the best of the three 'best' volumes this year. Excellent stories by Clarke, Farmer, & Ursula LeGuin.

THE GOLD AT THE STARBOWS END, by Frederik Pohl, \$1.25. New volume of stories by Fred Pohl, one of the sharpest writers of this sort of fiction. I particularly liked 'The Merchants of Venus' & 'Shaffery Among the Immortals'.

SPACE SKIMMER by David Gerrold, 95c. Original novel// WITH A FINGER IN MY EYE, by David Gerrold, 95c. ten stories // WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE, by David Gerrold, \$1.25. original novel. These three books to be reviewed.

ALPHA-3, ed. Robert Silverberg, \$1.25. Robert Silverberg continues to use stories which I had selected, years ago, for possible anthologisation. He previously used my choices, 'Telek', 'Two Dooms', etc, and now uses 'Gift of Gab', 'Aristotle and the Gun'. Eight other good stories complete this volume. Recommended.

STARFLIGHT 3000 by R.W. Mackelworth, \$1.25. Original novel; I didn't like it.

LIFEBOAT by James White, \$1.25. Novel from Galaxy; one of the author's best.

Ballantine Adult Fantasy:-- (each \$1.25)

THE NIGHT LAND, by William Hope Hodgson, Volumes I & II; THE THREE IMPOSTORS, by Arthur Machen; THE SONG OF RHIANNON by Evangeline Walton; GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF ADULT FANTASY, edited by Lin Carter. (four novellas by DeCamp & Pratt, etc).

FROM LANCER:--

Recent releases from Lancer seem to be of steadily increasing quality. Presentation is extremely attractive, too. Some of the covers (NEEDLE, KULL) are very good.

NEEDLE by Hal Clement, 95c. Long out-of-print. One of Clement's best novels.

THE DYING EARTH by Jack Vance, 95c. This was the first Lancer book I ever bought when first issued. Possibly my favourite Vance novel. A must-get book.

ENSIGN FLANDRY by Poul Anderson, 95c. The first of the series. Excellent romp.

WARLOCK by Dean R. Koontz, 95c. A new novel of a future world after disaster.

THE HUMANIDS by Jack Williamson, 95c. The classic novel from Astounding.

SPECULATION

FROM LANCER (Cont/d)

KING KULL by Lin Carter & Robert E Howard, 95c. Twelve stories of the Atlantean. THE DREAMING CITY/THE SLEEPING SORCERESS by Michael Moorcock, each 95c. Two new novels in the Elric saga - Mike having killed him off in a previous incarnation. KAVIN'S WORLD/THE RETURN OF KAVIN by David Mason, each 95c. More heroic fantasy. OF TIME & SPACE AND OTHER THINGS/ BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE UNIVERSE by Isaac Asimov, each \$1.25. Non-fiction, first book from F&SF columns, second is a textbook.

FROM DAW BOOKS:- (all 95c)

Since Donald Wollheim left Ace to form his own company he has produced a torrent of books, from many of the old 'Ace' regulars. Here are the latest in the series:- THE 1972 ANNUAL, WORLD'S BEST SF, ed. Don Wollheim, 95c. Reviewed under Gollancz section. THE DAY STAR by Mark Geston. Moody, image-full new novel. TO CHALLENGE CHAOS by Brian M Stableford, new novel faintly reminiscent of Cordwainer Smith. THE MINDBLOCKED MAN by Jeff Sutton, competent new novel. TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon R Dickson, I am not too keen on Dickson's work, but this is better than most. AT THE SEVENTH LEVEL by Suzette Haden Elgin, a novelisation around that remarkable story 'For the Sake of Grace'. THE DAY BEFORE TOMORROW by Gerard Klein, absolutely dreadful as a novel; could be condensed to a bad short-story. A DARKNESS IN MY SOUL by Dean R Koontz, much like Lancer's STARBLOOD. THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES ed. Richard Davis, fourteen from rather off-trail sources. WE CAN BUOLD YOU by Philip K Dick, retitled of A.LINCOLN - SIMULACRUM. THE WORLD MENDERS by Lloyd Biggle Jr., A boring novel. GENIUS UNLIMITED by John Phillifent, this author is often underrated. BLUE FACE by G.C. Edmondson, retitled from CHAPAYECA, flawed but fun novel. CENTURY OF THE MANIKIN by E.C. Tubb, new novel of the future. THE REGIMENTS OF NIGHT by Brian Ball, retitled from NIGHT OF THE ROBOTS. OLD DOC METHUSELAH by L. Ron Hubbard, dated but fun. Pity Hubbard stopped writing SF. DINOSAUR BEACH by Keith Laumer, action-packed. THE RETURN OF THE TIME-MACHINE by Egon Friedell, a supposed sequel to the Wells classic. But old H.G. was better. THE STARDROPPERS by John Brunner, expansion of Analog story 'Listen the Stars'. THE CITY MACHINE by Louis Trimble, trouble in a colonial tyranny.

FROM OTHER PUBLISHERS:-

THE IRON DREAM by Norman Spinrad, Avon 95c. Supposedly Hitler's greatest SF novel, but with same faults of MEN IN THE JUNGLE. For review. HOLDING WONDER by Zenna Henderson, Avon 95c. THE LOST WORLDS OF 2001 by Arthur C. Clarke, S&J PB and simultaneous HC publication. Story of the making of the film & book. TALES FROM THE WHITE HART by Clarke, S&J PB/HC, brilliantly funny collection. (40p & 30p) NEBULA AWARD STORIES 6, ed Clifford D Simak, Pocket Books 95c. KISS KISS by Roald Dahl, Pocket Books 95c. THE PURSUIT OF INTOXICATION (drugs), Pocket Books \$1.25. HEX by Arthur Lewis, Pocket Books 95c. THE DICE MAN by Luke Rhinehart, Pocket Books \$1.25. THE VIEW FROM CHIVO, by H. Allen Smith, 95c. THE RUINS OF EARTH, ed Tom Disch, Berkeley 95c. Review next issue. NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY ed. Michael Moorcock, Berkeley 95c. CREATURES OF LIGHT & DARKNESS by Roger Zelazny, Arrow 35p; A CASE OF CONSCIENCE by James Blish, Arrow 30p; THE SEEDLING STARS by James Blish, Arrow 35p; GREY LENS MAN by E.E. 'Doc' Smith, Panther 35p; THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK by H.P. Lovecraft, Panther 35p; SPACE-TIME JOURNAL, edited by Judith Merril, selected from ENGLAND SWINGS SF, Panther 30p. GALACTIC POT-HEALER by Philip K Dick, Pan 25p; THE PRESERVING MACHINE & OTHERS, by Dick, Pan 35p; THE WITCHCRAFT READER, ed Peter Haining, Pan 30p. BEST SF ed. Edmund Crispin, Faber paper editions, 60p (reissue). // ALSO FROM ACE: OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES by Bob Shaw, 95c; EXILES OF THE STARS by Andre Norton, 95c; INTERPLANETARY HUNTER by Arthur K. Barnes, 95c; BLACKMAN'S BURDEN/BORDER, BREED NOR BIRTH by Mack Reynolds, 95c; THE CHARIOTS OF RA, Bulmer/ EARTHSTRINGS by John Rackham, 95c.

New Faber SF

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"Hair-raising sequel to Mr Blish's *Black Easter* . . . Armageddon appears to have arrived, God to have died and Hell to have pushed through to the Earth's surface in Death Valley, California. Can demons be destroyed by material weapons of ultimate sophistication? . . . The Strategic Air Command, introduced with some satire, has no inhibitions, but the climax is very exciting."—*Edwin Morgan, The Listener*. £1.60

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Corwin, a fast man with a gun and tough by any standards, is not of this earth; he is a Prince of Amber in exile. Then an automobile accident begins to restore his memory of Amber, the perfect world of which everything else is only a shadow. As its existence is ultimate, so Corwin must fight a total war to regain his inheritance. £1.75

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"*Fugue* is set in England. It could actually be Ulster. The violence, the retrenching, the total lostness of the people. And *Fugue* – if enough people read it could cause more soul-searching and disquiet than any bulk of news material . . . It is highly recommended."—*Peter Burton, Time Out*. £1.75

Var the Stick

Piers Anthony

"Primitive survivors of some distant holocaust continue the feudal militarism of Piers Anthony's *Sos the Rope* . . . Exciting reading."—*Michael Kenward, New Scientist*. £1.95

One Step From Earth

Harry Harrison

Nine stories about the possibilities of matter transmission – where any three-dimensional object or living thing can be broken down and transmitted through space to a receiver where it is restored in much the same way as television restores images. £1.75

FABER & FABER