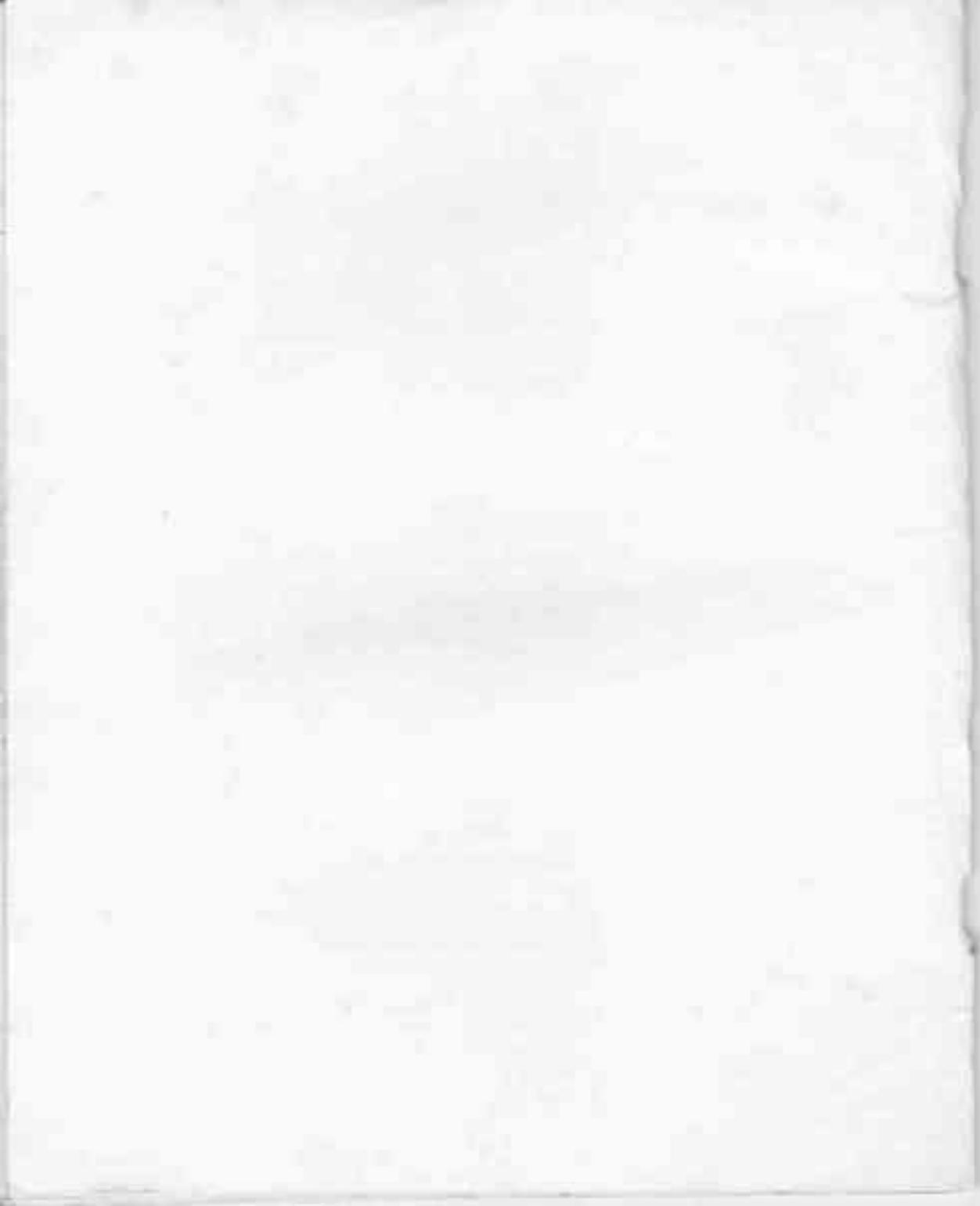




VECTOR



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Cover by Eddie Jones

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Editorial

At the AGM of the Association it was recommended that I should produce my first two VECTORS with the two basic types of cover, art and stylised, and ask the membership to vote on which type of cover they preferred. I've decided to extend this survey to asking you to vote on whether you'd like to see the particular cover (representing the type of cover) you voted for as a permanent cover.

The main reason for this extension is that one of the biggest difficulties for an editor is finding suitable artwork for the covers. I'd like to be rid of this headache, and then introduce more interior art. This latter is nothing like as big a problem as covers, since there is a theme to guide the artist with interior art. Anyway, I'm willing to be guided by you. The voting forms will go out with the next issue of VECTORS, V41.

This leads on to another point. There are approximately 350 paid-up members in the BSFA, and yet only some 30 or 40 are heard from during the year, with a further 50 or 60 putting in an appearance at Convention time. The trouble with this is that approximately 10% of the membership decide what the other 90% want. Not only that, but writers of articles are working in a veritable vacuum.

Have you ever tried telling a joke to yourself to see how funny it is? It doesn't work very well, does it? Even a postcard saying "Terrible" or "Marvellous" gives the author something to work on, but constructive criticism is even better. It seems that people are quite willing to offer verbal criticism, but very few are willing to go to the trouble to sit down and write out those same criticisms.

The main function of the letter column is not to provide patting on the back; this is required by the authors rather than the letter column. The letter column is to enable people to express agreement or disagreement with views expressed in articles, etc. If someone publically makes an incorrect statement, this should be pointed out; if someone holds what seems to you to be an absurd viewpoint, you should give people a chance to hear your views. The best way to do this latter is to write an opposing article, but a letter should always be written; if an article is to follow, then make this point in the letter.

I hope that this pep-talk will have some results by way of hundred of letters. I doubt it though.

The Reign of Ballardry

Waldemar Kummig

Like many other SF fans I tend to go a little overboard in the matter of buying SF books. One of last year's acquisitions for which I actually found reading time was Jack Williamson's *THE REIGN OF WIZARDRY*. Perhaps having met the author during his trip through Europe prompted me to pick up this particular book instead of possibly worthier tomes still waiting hopefully on my shelf. Still, *THE REIGN OF WIZARDRY* did not turn out to be a bad choice for light and entertaining reading. It made no pretensions to literary greatness, and it would be quite foolish to criticise it for not being a masterpiece. It would be even more foolish to criticise it for not being SF, as the jacket blurb makes the fantasy nature of the story abundantly clear to any reader caring for and capable of understanding the difference.

Admittedly it is not always so easy to define the line marking off science fiction from its nearest neighbour fantasy or even from the extensive realms of 'mainstream' literature, using that rather ambiguous word in its broadest possible sense. On closer inspection the demarcation line appears to be more like a broad borderland in which the different regions shade into each other imperceptively. Even so, an enquiry put before a gathering of ten fans asking them to define the approximate location of this borderland is apt to produce a dozen different opinions. If you want to make the discussion even more lively, you only have to drop in the names of Cordwainer Smith or J.G. Ballard.

Even the opposition usually concedes that both are good writers in a purely literary sense. There can also be no doubt that Cordwainer Smith intends his stories to fit within the framework of SF; as with the work of other SF authors, they are all tied together by his underlying conception of a future universe, wildly improbable as this universe may appear to the reader. With some justification he has been accused of writing a sort of future fairy-tale - a quality which some readers count as a virtue - and of not caring even a deleted expletive for the plausibility of his scientific gimmicks. There is, for instance, the rather strange computer built from gemstones near the beginning of "The Dead Lady of Clown

Town" (GALAXY, August 64). This certainly enables the author to concoct a very poetic passage, but it hardly sounds like any computer ever likely to be built.

Even more highly touted by some critics are the works of J.G. Ballard. This, we are told in no uncertain terms, is *The New Wave*. This is SF finally coming of age. This is the Discovery of Inner Space as opposed to old fashioned and reactionary outer; and if you admit to not liking the stuff overmuch, then it's obvious that your small mind is still trapped in the bogs of stone age SF.

How come, then, that so many fans seem to prefer remaining trapped in the scientific-fictional stone age bogs?

Perhaps the reason is quite simple. No matter how hazy the border region of SF (or any other category you care to name) might be, proceeding a great enough distance through it will certainly let one emerge somewhere outside. Perhaps the fan, having plunked down his money for a book loudly promising SF on the gaudy cover, feels let down and cheated when the contents turn out to be some different and strange fare, no matter how competently done.

This suspicion can best be verified or disproved by examining a sample of Ballard's work for SF content. The particular book used for this purpose will be *TERMINAL BEACH*, because a story collection is more apt to show up various facets of an author's work than a novel of the same length. (I hasten to add that I am talking about the American pb issue (BERKLEY P 928), since I gather from critical comments on this book that the British collection of the same title seems to contain mostly different stories.)

The book opens with "End Game". A man has been sentenced to death for some unnamed crime against the party. Now he is awaiting his execution, meanwhile living in comfort at some house in the countryside. He has not been told the date set for his death, and he can only guess that his guard will also be his executioner. The setting seems to be in an England that has undergone some sort of (communist?) revolution or take-over, but this is just a vague impression and the locale of the story could be nearly anywhere, and any-when in this century, with the past decades by no means ruled out. The theme of this story is the changing relationship between the condemned man and his guard. This is good material for a psychological tale, but there is not even a trace of anything resembling SF.

"The Subliminal Man" depicts the future world of planned obsolescence in full gear.

People are working almost round the clock in order to pay for all the unnecessary products that an all-pervasive system of subliminal advertising has hypnotized them into buying. As in many Ballard stories there is no actual plot, but rather a static description of the situation. This is, of course, quite acceptable where it fits the theme as in this instance, and provided it is not drawn out too long.

In "The Last Work of Mr Goddard" the hero keeps a totally accurate model of his home town in his safe, complete even with miniature people which can be observed going about their various concerns. And whatever happens to the miniature town also happens to the real one - or is the miniature 'real' and the big town the 'model'? Is it a case of sympathetic magic, or is the reader to infer that, by some unexplained (nightmarish) four-dimensional hocus-pocus both towns are in fact one and the same? The reader is left to his doubts. If he has perused Ballard before, he will, however, have no doubts that something terrible is about to happen. Nor are his expectations disappointed, for the box containing the town slips from the shaking fingers of old Mr Goddard, spilling out its miniature people on the floor where the cat speedily disposes of them.

"The Time Tombs" definitely qualifies as the second actual SF story in the collection - and perhaps also as the best. In the martian deserts smugglers and policemen are fighting bitterly over priceless magnetic tapes. These tapes are the last remnants of the long-gone Martians who have recorded their personalities on them in order to achieve a kind of immortality.

"Now Wakes the Sea" - and the unfortunate Mr Mason drowns in it. This sea is a million years in the past, but Mason dreams of it every night till it finally swallows him. For an explanation, please refer to "The Last Word of Mr Goddard". (This idea of deliberate non-explanation opens up all sorts of exciting possibilities for writers, in that as an extension of the principle the reader could be made to come up with the rest of the plot and finally with the whole story. Indeed, something like this seems to happen in some very avant-garde mainstream novels.)

"The Venus Hunters" is a story about flying saucers - or rather the reaction of people to reports about them, for the UFO's could just as well be pink elephants or the Loch Ness monster without actually changing the story. A witness to landings in the desert near Mount Vernon observatory is disbelieved by everybody. Finally he manages to inveigle an astronomer into co-observing another landing. But when the astronomer tries to tell the truth he is also ridiculed and forced to leave the observatory.

"Minus One" is the deviation of the head count in an insane asylum. One of the patients has disappeared without any trace. After a long and fruitless search the director manages to convince first himself and then the other staff members that the patient never actually existed but was carried on the list as result of a clerical error. Just as the director has succeeded with this task the wife of the missing patient arrives.

This is an excellent satire on the administrative way of solving problems. The SF content - if an unexplained disappearance can properly be called such - is of course even more incidental than in the previous story.

"The Sudden Afternoon" is a somewhat confused story about exchanging minds (or souls). As usual, the mere sordid details are beneath the dignity of the author. At the end, the characters seem to be more or less back to where they started, without more than a lingering half-memory of what happened.

Finally there is the title story, "Terminal Beach". In a way it rounds out the book quite nicely, in that like the first story it is a purely psychological tale without any SF element in evidence - unless one wants to accept as SF the location on an island destroyed by atomic bomb tests, which is after all a strange but strictly contemporary setting. The story concerns itself with the fantasies of a crazy bomber pilot who has returned to the island, reading strange and terrible symbols into the ruined landscape.

Taking stock, we have two actual SF stories and another two very doubtful pieces, while the rest (including the title story, which is also the longest in the collection) can hardly be called SF by any conceivable definition of this admittedly elastic term. One is almost tempted to say that the heaviest concentration of SF is to be found on the jacket, which sports a cover by Powers.

For an allegedly SF work by an allegedly leading writer of the genre this is a somewhat disappointing score. He certainly seems to be leading in a new direction: but it is a direction that speedily leaves the SF field entirely for plotless and gloomy wasteland. In all of Ballard's stories something terrible either has already happened or is happening (sometimes with no more rhyme and reason than in the 'happenings' that are the pop art answer to the theatre) - or things are going from bad to worse and heading for a frightful crash. The passing of the 'sense of wonder' has been much lamented by nostalgic readers, though it has been suggested that this is simply associated with encountering the ideas of SF for the first time, and that it still operates for many new readers. Ballard

gives the impression of trying to replace it by a sense of impending doom. In his novels, he has alternately flooded the world (THE DROWNED WORLD), dried it up again (THE BURNING WORLD), and had it gone with the wind (THE WIND FROM NOWHERE).

Involving one's fictional characters in some catastrophe in order to expose the deepest and rawest layers of their beings is one of the oldest stocks in trade of the writer. If the author wants to avoid retelling (however skilfully) a tale already retold a hundred times, he must add something to it. Merely making the disaster worldwide will no longer do the trick. An excellent example of a possible way was furnished by Fritz Leiber with his Hugo-winning WANDERER, where he not only made us understand and even applaud the motives of alien beings who at first appeared to be incarnations of the devil, but also gave us a Stapledonian glimpse of an overcrowded universe, at once beautiful and terrible.

Science fiction has often been accused of peopling its tales with mere cardboard figures, of caring only about things, instead of about real human (or other) beings, and of being content with a mediocre or even low level of writing. It cannot be denied that there was an uncomfortable amount of truth in these charges. SF is necessarily one of the most difficult forms of literature for the writer; he is required to combine in his person talents usually found on opposite borders of a wide cultural gulf. The preoccupation with technical and scientific values, the gadget-happy approach, was perhaps a necessary stage in the growth of SF. In the work of the best writers this aspect has reached a high level of competence. But the other aspects have by no means been neglected, even if much still needs to be accomplished in that direction.

Ballard's way of doing this, however, gives rise to considerable misgivings. Adding new instruments to his tool chest with the right hand, he is throwing away other valuable tools with the left. In a way, many of his stories could be classified not so much as fantasy but rather as a sort of anti-SF. Many of the usual trappings of SF are used, but they are used only as casual props and treated with carelessness and contempt. I for one hope that he will not be followed on his way through 'inner space' by too many other writers, or the outlook for SF may be darker than you think.

Ger Fandom

An International Contacts
Department Report

Thomas Schlück

There has not been any comprehensive report on the German SF scene in a British magazine, as far as I can recall and, although foreign contacts have grown in the past few years, one still comes across the most exaggerated ideas as to Gerfandom's size and nature from foreign fans. I will try to give a short survey, not attempting an objective history and evaluation, but perhaps correcting some of the misconceptions.

The term Gerfandom covers fan-activities in Germany itself, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland. These three countries have, fan-wise, more or less formed one community, although various national and local groups have been formed at times. Concentrated fan activity began about 11 years ago, when people first began to think of founding a club that covered all Germany, and of holding conventions. The still extant SFCD (Science Fiction Club Deutschland) was founded on August 4th, 1955, its official club organ ANDROMEDA being published by Walter Ernsting. Membership grew, many joining because of the book buying facilities supplied by Walter, who was then the editor of several SF series. The ensuing feuds, split-ups, reunifications, and conventions can only be called normal; the more SF-orientated beginning faded into greater socializing; the pendulum swung back and forth, and large numbers of non-SF fan magazines appeared and disappeared with great rapidity. Like the BSFA, the SFCD gave each member a number without reissuing them as members dropped out, thus accounting for the figure of 2000 which is sometimes given. This may have been excellent for advertising, but hardly gives a true picture. There are not more than about 150 active fans (all degrees of activity, mind you!), with an additional 200 rather passive fans.

The situation today is that of a fandom widely interested in international matters and foreign fandoms. There are a number of fans active outside the SFCD; there is an Amateur Publishing Association, much less constitutional than any APA known to you; there are several local groups, of which those of Munich, Vienna and Berlin are the most active; there are many fairly interesting fanzines. From my knowledge of both 'sides' I would say that German fans are no more SF-orientated than Anglo-American fans; it is just that they

have never had anyone with the talent of a Walt Willis or a John Berry. It is not surprising that when some of the latter's more generally understandable fan-stories were translated they proved an enormous success.

The SFCD is an officially registered club, and has about 350 members at the present time. Its membership fee, per year, is about £1 for students, and £1.10.0d for others. Its services include delivery of two magazines. One is ANDROMEDA, which for years consisted of reports delivered by the various local groups reporting on their activities of the past months. It now comprises a loose mixture of information, articles, letters, and humour appearing about six times a year. The other magazine, and this one worthy of the name, is 'Pioneer', specialising in fiction alone. The Germans have always had a love for fiction in their fanzines. 'Pioneer' has been a substitute for a German SF magazine for years, not only featuring well written fiction by fans, but also professional stories imported from all countries. It is published about three times a year, mimeoed excellently, with professionally done electro-stencils; unlike the BSFA we won't be able to change to litho with a membership of 350! This would be far too expensive. Additional services for members are the library, being rearranged at the moment, which contains many English originals, and the Phonothek - a collection of tapes (about 100 different ones) lent out for the cost of the postage only; the newest tapes include all the speeches of the Worldcon, the panels and introductions and the St Fantasy ceremony. Most of Germany's conventions can be 'reheard' on tape; so can radio plays, scientific talks and other such items. There are also several smaller departments, the most important being the contacts service and the news department.

The German science fiction market has been dominated by a special method of pulp publishing, which is still playing a major role. There is nothing like our 'Heft' in foreign SF publishing. They are sixty page brochures stapled through the back; novels and short story collections were brutally cut down to fit this edition for years, until the first books began to appear. It is only in recent years that paperbacks have appeared; there are now three regular SF pb series publishing everything from 'City' to 'The Illustrated Man', three 'Heft' series (weekly) and, alas, only one book series monthly, but about to dwindle. This is the skeleton of our market. German SF writers did emerge from fandom at a fairly regular rate, some of them still being linked to it. For some unknown reason, they have never become known outside Germany, not even with their better works.

They have accomplished something unique in the SF field, in that they started a series of space-opera stories about five years ago. The series is now up to number 230 and has a circulation of 90,000 weekly, a big success in German publishing, second only to the most popular crime series. It is now being translated into French, and will probably appear in other languages later on.

The subject of an SF magazine has been a sore point with Gerfans for years. We had two; an original German one, with stories from everywhere, but mostly from Anglo-American sources, and also Galaxy, in its original cover, with a selection of good stories from various American issues. This folded after about 15 issues. The time was too early. After a magazineless few years we now have Galaxy again, this time included in a series of paperbacks. Basically, our SF market is no different from any other, though it is a long way from the British position. And, basically, our fandom is no different either. Fans mostly communicate by mail. And however much I appreciate personal contacts at conventions, however much I enjoyed the Castlescon and the Worldcon at London, I think more overall international contacts will primarily come from efforts in fan magazines. I am welcoming the efforts of the BSFA, and I hope to be able to do my part.

behind the scenes

malcolm edwards

I do hope that I'm not regarded as any Great Authority on things fannish, although I will admit when pushed that there are few others around still willing to put opinion to paper. For despite the monumental conceit with which I sort wheat from chaff and present only the kernels judged most fit for consumption to BSFA members, I have yet to be more than mildly stung by the enthusiastic fires of publishing my own fan-magazine. Somehow I feel I can be so much more objective from this comfortable position, and the occasional letter of comment and this interminable column satisfy my creative urge quite admirably.

Your editor told me some lies about my column being "well written", and then spoilt my euphoria with that horrible qualifier "but". "But," he said, "can't you be a bit different ? Can't you do anything besides review fanzines ?"

Stung even through my thick skin, I told Steve (who I'm glad to say is as amenable to reason as the Late Great Rog Peyton) that there was precious little activity among British fandom other than fan-publishing, and would he rather I made up interesting but imaginary little anecdotes about the Social Side Of Things ?

But I'd probably admit if pressed that Steve does have a point. I do attempt so vary this monologue as much as I can, even though the writer-to-reader relationship in this case is about as crystally-lucid as are our London fogs. Do complain if I get more than usually tedious - do tell me (via Steve) if you want me to write about any particular subject. I'll do my best to give satisfaction, unpaid as I am.

Meantime, the spring flood of fan-magazines did materialise, despite my predictions to that effect. My mailbox has recently been swamped with as many as three different fanzines in one day (and I hope the BSFA will contribute to the tips I've had to give my postman, as well as to the high cost of subscriptions to all of these things). As well as fanzines, a couple of other interesting items need attention, which they will promptly be given.

First, I've seen a copy of the "Fanzine Index", recently reprinted by

Harold Palmer Fiser. Now this is a monumental work, over 150 typed pages bound in attractively printed loose-leaf covers, complete with black-&-gold alphabetical index tags and all sorts of other refinements. I'm not exactly sure what use this index can be to anyone, but experience indicates that this problem solves itself. When you have available an index to every fanzine ever published, up to 1952, you can't help but find it valuable. Certainly I want a copy of this volume for my own small library, and I've sent 17/6d off to the British agent, Mike Ashley, at 2 Shurlands Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent. There should be enough copies left for everyone... even though the Index has been (and will be again) out of print for many years. Join the queue....?

Secondly, a less inspiring report from the BSFA (who've chosen me as the bearer of their bad news). Despite all the work that has been put into it, the Fanzine Foundation is still disorganised and seems as far away as ever from issuing a catalogue of items available to members on loan. The Foundation in its present incarceration has gained some 5000 items, but that's another story ... So, until the Association gets a curator and librarian other than overworked Treasurer Charles Winstone, little progress can be made. Any volunteers ...?

How to the meat of the month, even though my space has been sadly depleted through no-one's fault but my own. Did I ever mention that you could, if sufficiently interested, divide fan-writings and fan-magazines into three distinct categories? I rather suspect that this profound observation has been dredged from the limbo to which my unwritten writings are consigned. In any case, the fact is easily demonstrable - any accumulation of fanzines can be broken down into (serious) magazines about S.F.; (serious) magazines about almost anything, including S.F.; & humourous magazines. I personally regard the last class, when done well, as the finest specimen of the fanish art. There's only one really able performer of this breed that keeps on coming, and that is Walt Willis' immortal "HIPMAN". One of these years, when an issue of this monthly comes out, I'll review it glowingly. Until then I'll be damned if I'll give the Willis any more praise than my usual hero-worship.

But a good contender in years gone by was the American VOID, published for 28 issues by half of U.S. fandom under the dynamic leadership of Ted White. (VOID never officially threw in the towel, though the last issue published came out around 1961 - you may yet see a resurrection.) For the present, we must be content

with "QUIP", a comparative newcomer, published by comparative newcomers and deliberately and openly modelled after all that was best in VOID. I have issues 1 & 2 of QUIP to hand, and if you ever read this I shall have at least a 3rd. And the prognosis is favourable - these issues are big and they're good. They're humorous and interesting in a fairly adult and witty way. Damn it, they made me laugh!

Some of my pleasure comes, I'm sure, from being on writing terms with many of the people mentioned within the covers, and from knowing of their little idiosyncracies that are played upon in the magazine. But I've had as little opportunity as you to meet New York fandom, and if I can pick it up and enjoy it, I'm sure you can. So try a few issues of QUIP, at 2/- per copy from Arnie Katz, US Apts 479B, Allenhurst Rd, N.Y. 14226, USA. The old, old dollar problem remains - solve it however you can (and see my last sparkling advice column).

Working back through my list, there is the 'general' fanzine, in which you may find fairly serious discussion on almost any topic. There are a lot in this particular rowboat, such as DOUBLE:BILL & YANDRO (which I previously reviewed) and another big regular offering, NIEKAS. (That means "nothing", incidentally, it's Lithuanian!)

NIEKAS is so big and so regular that it depresses me to have to think of witty letters to write to the editors. (That's another virulent trend - notice how many fanzines are team-efforts these days?) I think that NIEKAS will get a deserved Hugo Award this year, for best amateur magazine - and then its editors will be able to die weary, penniless, but happy!

Current issue is No 15. It is over 60 pages long, costs 2/6d, and I won't even attempt to review it. Sneaky, eh? There's a piece on early Christianity that fascinated me, and otherwise all sorts of this and that. Give it a try by sending your money to British agent Graham Hall, 57 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucs.

Last but not least is a lone British fanzine, SCOTTISCHE from Ethel Lindsey. Now I must watch my step here, for Ethel lives just down - or up - the road from me, altogether too close for comfort when I say that I just don't appreciate SCOT. Considering that it usually has a Willis column, and all sorts of odd items, not the

worst being Ethel's own writings, the zine has everything to make it one of the top zines, and is so considered elsewhere.

But it still doesn't quite click into my mental pattern for some reason. I just can't get a letter written to SCOT that gave anything about all the fascinating things being discussed. Perhaps I'm wrong to ascribe what must be my own failing to the magazine, but I can't give SCOT full marks on this column's scoreboard. You may quite likely have exactly the opposite opinion, and I'd advise you to try SCOT, at 4 issues for 7/6d from Ethel at Courage House, 6 Langley Ave, Surbiton, Surrey.

And that is almost that for another grand finale. I didn't get around to covering my last category, did I? - but I consider that my previous reviews of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY & ZENITH SPECULATION cover the field here quite fully. Perhaps I'll review a new issue of these next time; I notice that Editor Weston has turned out two new issues of ZS and has made all sorts of happy announcements about his October issue.

And finally, I'll tantalize you with the names of DYNATRON, FUSION, and AMBA, names of goodies that I've received and solemnly promise to write about some other time.

FOR *YOUR* INFORMATION

ROG PEYTON

Some of these questions have been hanging around for some time now as the last FYI column appeared way back in VECTOR 37. However, I'm sure information provided will be of use to someone even if the people who asked these questions have lost interest!

From D A Ward of Ipswich: "(1) Has a checklist of AUTHENTIC SF been issued? (2) Is Charles Grey a pseudonym of E C Tubb; what other pseudonyms has Tubb used; is a checklist of his writings available? (3) Can you give any information on Jon J Deegan and, if possible, a story listing?"

A checklist to AUTHENTIC will be issued through the BSFA within the next few months, although there was a very limited edition of one published by Brian Burgess of Bournemouth a couple of years ago.

Charles Grey is one of Tubb's two-dozen-plus pseudonyms. Others include Volsted Gridban, King Lang, Carl Maddox, Brian Shaw, and Roy Sheldon. A listing of Tubb's novels was published in March 1964 by Phil Harbottle in a booklet entitled E C Tubb - AN EVALUATION. Price 1/6 (post free) from Phil Harbottle, 27 Cheshire Gardens, Wallsend-on-Tyne, Northumberland.

Jon J Deegan is a British writer whose work appeared in AUTHENTIC SF and the early Panther paperbacks. The 'Old Growler' series is the work for which he is remembered. The series contained the following stories:

Reconnoitre Krellig II	AUTHENTIC No 2
Old Growler (Space Ship No 2213)	" " 4
Old Growler and Orbis	" " 9
Planet of Power	" " 14

The Singing Spheres	AUTHENTIC No 23
UNDERWORLD OF ZELLO	PANTHER BOOKS
ANTHO THE LIFE GIVER	" "
THE GREAT ONES	" "
AMATEURS IN ALCHEMY	" "

Other work not in the 'Old Growler' series:

Beyond the Barriers	AUTHENTIC No 37
The Lights of Anker-Mo	" " 85
BEYOND THE FOURTH DOOR	PANTHER BOOKS
CORRIDORS OF TIME	" "
EXILES OF TIME	" "

Second set of queries comes from Mike Turner of Birmingham: "(1) Is the Eric Frank Russell title SIX WORLDS YONDER, published by Ace, a retitling? (2) Is Russell's THE STAR WATCHERS, mentioned inside the Dobson edition of MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES, a retitling? (3) Has van Vogt's MASTERS OF TIME been printed by any other company than Fantasy Press? (4) Was Blish's SO CLOSE TO HOME ever serialised?"

SIX WORLDS YONDER hasn't been published under any other title. It is a collection of six short stories, the stories being "Diabologic"; "Into Your Tent I'll Creep"; "Nothing New"; "Timeline"; "Top Secret" and "The Waitabits". THE STAR WATCHERS is a retitling of SENTINELS OF SPACE.

As far as I know, no-one else has published MASTERS OF TIME except Fantasy Press. The Blish title SO CLOSE TO HOME is a collection of short stories and therefore won't have been serialised. Ballantine were the publishers in the States - for some reason, no British publisher has taken it.

From Archie Potts of Newcastle-on-Tyne comes two queries: "(1) Can you please tell me the issue of ASTOUNDING in which the Asimov spoof article on Thiotimoline appeared? (2) Can you supply a listing of the Gray Mouser stories?"

Actually, there were two spoof articles on Thiotimoline by Asimov. The first was "The Endochronic Properties of Resublimated Thiotimoline" (ASF Mar 48) and the sequel was "Micro-psychiatric Applications of Thiotimoline" (ASF Dec 53).

The Gray Mouser stories by Fritz Leiber are:

"Two Sought Adventure" *	UNKNOWN Aug 39
"The Bleak Shore" *	" Nov 40

"The Howling Terror" *	UNKNOWN	Jun	41
"The Sunken Land" *	UNKNOWN WORLDS	Feb	42
"Thieves' House" *	" "	Feb	43
"Adept's Gambit"	NIGHTS BLACK AGENTS, Arkham House		1947
	reprinted in FANTASTIC	May	64
"Dark Vengeance" *	SUSPENSE	Fall	51
"The Seven Black Priests" *	OTHER WORLDS	May	53
"Lean Times in Lankmar"	FANTASTIC	Nov	59
"When the Sea King's Away"	"	May	60
"Scylla's Daughter"	"	May	61
"The Unholy Grail"	"	Nov	62
"The Cloud of Hate"	"	May	63
"Bazaar of the Bizarre"	"	Aug	63
"The Lords of Quarmall" (2-part serial)	"	Jan/Feb	64
"Stardock"	"	Sep	65

Those stories marked with an asterisk appeared in the Gnome Press collection of Gray Mouser stories, titled TWO SOUGHT ADVENTURE.

Lastly, I'd like to bring to your attention the BSFA Checklist Foundation which I'll be running from now on. Through this new department I hope to engage the services of other members interested in compiling checklists. By pooling our efforts it should be possible to produce some new checklists for the BSFA which are useful, interesting and, most of all, accurate.

As mentioned previously, an Index to AUTHENTIC SF is being prepared, and work has been started on an Index to Royal Publications (INFINITY SF and SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES).

Anyone interested in helping compile checklists should contact me at 77 Grayswood Park Road, Quinton, Birmingham 32, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

GENERAL CHUNTERING

KEN SLATER

In several recent columns I have enlarged on various facets of the book trade, and this has occasionally given rise to comments from various folk on divergent subjects. One such comment was on my disclosure and explanation of the high percentage of profit made on 'antiquarian books' - the laddo who commented was most irate at the 'enormous' profit ... I thought I had made it clear that (a) my own levels were very far from the 500-600% level I quoted, and (b) that in the general trade this is the profit per item sold, which has to cover all the rubbish that the man takes in to get the few things he wants, or expects to sell, or actually does sell. To enlarge - you buy 500 feet of books, all shapes and sizes. You give 'em a look over, and you see some half-dozen titles which you feel reasonably certain will fetch a fiver each. Another dozen or so you think will go for about 30/- each. The rest of the stuff is a bunch of very dark horses, several of which are probably headed in the wrong direction. So you do a rapid mental calculation and you offer thirty quid for the lot. The seller looks shocked, and says he thought they'd fetch at least one hundred pounds. You look disgusted and pick up your hat; and he climbs down to 'Seventy?', and you say you could manage forty. Probably you settle for fifty. You pack the stuff up, and cart it out to your van, car, or whatever. You then drive two-hundred fifty miles home (someone calculate mileage cost for me, uh?) and then take the stuff into your highly-rated-and rented shop, store or other business premises. You and your staff then start to sort the stuff out, and promptly discard half of it to go at 6d or 1/- or dust-bin. The remainder you classify, catalogue, or offer to selected clients. You beat your head against the wall because what you thought would be a very fine copy of the *Economicon* turns out to have the fly leaf missing, and some jammy-finger-prints all over the text. You do manage to get rid of the prime articles in about three months, and get back your investment plus a few extra quid. You price the other stuff as high as you can and sit back in hopes ... but on the average you sell about one out of ten at over the 'average' price of 500 feet of books at £50, and the others either go at less than they cost or nothing at all.

In other words, that high-percentage profit is not an over-all profit, but the one

that has to be made on the 'sellable' items to compensate for the unsellable items. Those of you who are my customers know that my own system is totally different - specialising, I can work on 25% basis (or I could - overheads keep creeping up, and this new payroll tax will add to that burden in the book-trade). On my trade-in system, I allow one-third of the cover price, and sell again at something around half-cover price on the average. But as I specialise and only buy or take in trade selectively, I can manage. No fortunes, tho.

However, the trade is still busily engaged in cutting its own throat, in some respects. For example, a certain very popular American mag which is imported into UK to sell at 5/-, the American cover price being 50¢, has just changed its distributor. Previously, this has been available at a discount of one-third, plus carriage. We have 'made' a gross profit of 1/6 a copy sold, new. The new rate will be only 25%, which means that we shall make only 1/3 per copy sold (and I am not yet certain of that, we may still have to pay carriage); so in effect we are now contributing 3d more to the distributor someone's answer to the pay-roll tax? Another amusing (if you are masochistic) side-light is that the wholesale price in the UK is now 3d higher than the retail price in the USA! Then again, another wholesale distributor has commenced this month (June) a charge of 7/6 for 'handling and carriage' on all orders under £10. Note, he says orders but in application I've already discovered this means 'invoices', for we ordered well over £15 worth of assorted material: a fair proportion was out of stock at the time, and so it came on two invoices and we've been billed 7/6 on each of 'em! But obviously, no-one is going to order from that wholesaler any small quantities any longer - ten paperbacks at 2/6 are going to cost exactly what they can be sold for; twenty will allow the profit margin previously available on ten, and so forth. Which pushes more and more of the smaller booksellers and stations and so forth into the hands of the 'sale or return' people - and they work on basis of giving the retailer what they think he can sell, rather than what he knows he wants.

So don't be surprised if it gets more and more difficult to obtain items 'to order' at your local bookshop; that is just the way things are going.

Personally, I have other difficulties. Currently, I am growing more and more disheartened with modern transport. It is taking an average of 14 days for material to be moved from R & V and other folk in London, to me at Wisbech. This is a little over 80 miles as the car runs. I do not know just what route is used by British Snail Services, but I should think even going round by North Wales this speed could be bettered by ox-carts. On the direct London-Wisbech road or rail routes it works out at about 6 miles per day! And we mutter in our dreams about F-T-L travel! Gimme the dog-cart any day Any Ancient Britons around who would care to re-open the Icknham Way for me?

In other spheres of influence people are moving around quicker, tho. You may have heard that Harry Harrison is taking the editorial seat of IMPULSE - this has been equipped with over-drive and various other devices so that Harry can collect his mail at his temporary accommodation addresses alternate days - one of the addresses is care of John Carnell in London, and the other care of Robert P. Milles in New York. And if you were listening, Brian Aldiss could have been heard broadcasting to the world on the overseas service of the B.B.C. on June 29th at three different times and on no less than nine different wavebands! There is coverage for you and he was so talking about science fiction!

Penguin will be publishing J.G. Ballard's THE WIND FROM NOWHERE, and his THE CRYSTAL WORLD will appear from Panther. Jack Vance's THE STAR KING is now out from Dobson, but I've not yet heard of a new title in the series coming out in the US. Keith Laumer's A TRACE OF MEMORY will come from Mayflower, and Fritz Leiber's THE WANDERER from Penguin, which makes two much sought but hard to get American titles available to British fans soon. Penguin will do the P & K novels SEARCH THE SKY and WOLFBANE, but Pan will print GLADIATOR-AT-LAW. Gollancz will publish A POHL OMNIBUS with 21 stories from 'Turn Left At Thursday', 'Tomorrow Times Seven' and 'The Man Who Ate The World' (all those were Ballantine). William F. Temple has SCOOT AT THE MOON to be published in UK by Ronald Whiting & Weaton, and in USA by Simon Schuster. Ted Tubb's MOON BASE (previously published by Jenkins in UK, and Ace in the US of A) will come from Mayflower. James White is on the list with HOSPITAL STATION, STAR SURGEON and THE WATCH BELOW all to come from Corgi, and with SECOND ENDING to be published as a juvenile by E.J. Arnold. The first two were Ballantines, the third was (and still is) a very successful title from Ronald Whiting & Wheaton's first s-f list, and the last was an Ace pb. There are multitudinous other goodies for the s-f fan in the offing, and some of them will undoubtedly appear before many of those I have mentioned.

One to come very soon is Compact's printing of A PLANET CALLED KRISHNA by L. Sprague de Camp, which is the story serialised in Astounding Oct '50 to Jan '51. At the moment I'm not certain which version - the serial was broken into two halves, and somewhat enlarged, for publication as two books by Avalon under the titles 'The Search for Zei' and 'The Hand of Zei', and later the two were published in one jacket as an ACE double. However, publication date is July 13th, so it is not long to wait. Also, from Sprague and his wife Catherine, SPIRITS STARS AND SPELLS, the latest of the Canaversal Press titles, at \$5.95, 348 pages which will tell you how to conjure up a demon and also explain why you won't be successful! More to the point it discusses much of interest - like Mesmer and his search for a non-existent supernatural force which gave rise to the discovery of the useful tool of hypnotism.

From recent correspondence I gather that ALIEN WORLDS, under the joint editorship and/or management of Charles Partington and Barry Nadler, is to be published professionally.. .. I'm not too certain about this; possibly they may be giving the professional magazine a new name; however, a new professional magazine will be welcomed, I'm sure, and as soon as the end of July comes we will all know, for that is when the first issue should appear. On the other hand I gather that the American Magazine of Horror is extra late putting out No 12 issue - I'm told that in fact each issue is held back until sales of the previous issues warrant its release, or something equally complicated, but as this information is indirect and results from statements made by several different folk it may not be very accurate however, for a poorly distributed mag it does seem one way of keeping the books balanced, and having tried to get things out of American distribution channels I can imagine the difficulties involved in trying to get things into them must be even more insurmountable. Still idly kicking information around, let me add a little word on the subject of the British Convention as many of you will now know, at the last A.G.M. of the B.S.F.A., the B.S.F.A. joyfully voted away the right to have any part whatsoever in the British S-F Convention. At present I am, with the aid of various folk, trying to sort out some policy which will be acceptable to all parties (main parties, anyway - there appear to be up to ten minor factions and splinter groups); as the older and larger section of the Convention supporters are the pre-B.S.F.A. and (in many cases) non-B.S.F.A. (even anti-B.S.F.A.) folk, they are being consulted first. Broadly, having drawn up this policy we shall send it round to as many conventioners from the last few years as we can trace (ignoring the one-time attendees who are not otherwise known to us), and having reached some general agreement with them, we shall then try to get the B.S.F.A. to agree to the same policy. Hopeshal, ain't we ...?

Then, of course, there is the British Fantasy Award. Pending the deliberations, and general presentation of a policy, on this by Dave Kyle, I am in some nebulous way responsible for arranging the award to be made in 1967 for the year 1966. A full announcement on this will be made elsewhere, but for the moment let me make it clear that I am pulling the range of the award back to that made in my original suggestion all those years ago at Gloucester; the award will go to a book first published in Britain during the year 1966, and nominations for the award must be limited to this. Later it may be possible to consider extra categories for extra awards, but at present it is not financially possible to make more than one award, and it is hardly fair on any judge to ask him to choose between a film, a poem, a novel, and a lump of worked stone, or a mobile! To clarify one point, for this 'first published' let it be understood that this means the item nominated may have been published elsewhere (Patagonia or Iceland, Australia or the USA) at an earlier date, but it is in this year and for the first time published in Britain. The book (including the p-b)

is still the major vehicle for the dissemination of s-f and fantasy, and hence the major one when we come to considering awards.

You may now start to argue

The N3F Story Contest, run by the Writers' Exchange of the N3F, is now open to entries. Here are the rules:

1. The contest is open to all amateur writers in this field. We define an amateur as one who has sold no more than two stories to the professional science-fiction and fantasy magazines.
2. Stories must be the original unpublished work of the entrant, must be less than 5,000 words in length, and must come within the field of science-fiction and/or fantasy in the opinion of the final judge.
3. Stories should be typed on 8½ x 11 white paper, double spaced, with the title on every page but the name of the author omitted. We provide each entry with an identifying number, and withhold the names of authors from judges as an added assurance of impartiality.
4. Contestants may enter any number of stories. Each should be accompanied by a stamped addressed return envelope.
5. Contestants are expected to retain one or more copies of each story entered. The NFFF undertakes to use all possible care, but cannot, of course, guarantee against accidental loss in the mail.
6. Final judging begins November 1, 1966; stories must be in by then.
7. The final judge of this contest is Frederik Pohl, Editor of GALAXY, IF, and WORLDS OF TOMORROW.
8. Prizes are: First Prize \$10.00, Second Prize \$8.00, Third Prize is \$6.00. Certificates of Honorable Mention may be awarded if in the opinion of the final judge any other stories merit them.
9. Results of this contest are to be announced to the winners as soon as the judging is completed, and announced to the membership in the first issue of TNFF to appear in 1967.

Entry is free to all members of the BSFA provided that they send their entries to the BSFA Publications Officer; please mark all such envelopes "N3F Story Contest". All other entrants (other than members of the N3F) pay an entrance fee of \$1 per entry. They may also send their entries to the BSFA P.O. (enclosing 7/6d per entry); however, non-BSFA members may find it easier to send the entries direct to Mrs Alma Hill, 463 Park Drive, Boston 02215, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

N.B. Closing date for entries passing through the P.O. is 11th October, 1966.

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES

Reviewed by
CHRIS PRIEST

and
GRAHAM HALL

IMPULSE No 2

Keith Roberts, a writer at whom I would once have levelled the charge of pastiche, is developing his "Pavane" cycle of stories into something that is original, well-written and thoroughly entertaining. Somewhere in the past, in our history, a turning-point occurred. History not being a strong point of mine I fear I cannot at present see exactly when it was (on the strength of the first story, "The Signaller", I guessed it was something to do with the Romans, but I now withdraw that theory until further notice). "The Lady Anne", the present story, is set in England in 1965. The story is simple: young Jesse Strange, whose father has just died, takes his newly-acquired steam lorry (The Lady Anne) on a haulage trip across the English countryside. His adventures and encounters on the way constitute the major part of the action. And that's it.

But in fifteen thousand words Roberts has created a whole new England, one that is so similar to ours, yet so strange. I have become very blasé about alternate-possibility stories because, in the main, they have no proper depth. Roberts, with his throwaway morsels of history (like the casually-mentioned assassination of Queen Elizabeth the First), has made an exception to this and is building up a fascinating series of stories. More, please.

I fear that the rest of IMPULSE-2 looks pallid after this rich and wonderful start. John Rackham's "A Light Faint", for instance. Apart from the double- and triple-punning in the title (for which I give such greatly-begrudged kudos) there is very little of interest in the story. It is all rather frothy and improbable, but good fun all the same.

I didn't honestly care for John Brunner's "Break the Door of Hell". This is what I call heavy fantasy, much in the idiom of James Branch Cabell. I gave up after a dozen or so pages and, looking at the end of the story, I'm not sure whether I missed anything. I suspect that this story is excellent of its kind, but I have no way of telling because I do not like the kind. Apologies to all concerned.

Judith Merrill's "Homecalling" commences in this issue: a reprint from the old ORIGINAL SF STORIES magazine. Very feminine-slanted.

NEW WORLDS No 161

NEW WORLDS took on a nasty wobble in the last two months. All of a sudden, after a period of steady improvement, it became erratic. No 159 had one excellent story and about four bad ones. No 160 was pretty terrible all round, and I was beginning to wonder whether it was my taste changing, or what. But, I'm happy to report, Mike Moorcock has regained a lot of his former level and No 161 is a good, balanced magazine.

The cover features J.G. Ballard's "The Assassination Weapon". For some reason this is a particularly effective cover illustration and in some measure manages to call up some of the imagery that Ballard evokes with his writing. J.G. Ballard has the distinction, shared with one or two other authors like Heinlein and van Vogt, of being one of the most discussed writers in science fiction. Unfortunately, much of the discussion has been extremist in nature (although I can recommend Brian Aldiss' balanced analysis in SF-HORIZONS No 2 and this sort of thing can tend to put people off reading his work. He started off in the early days showing a slight tendency towards the gimmick (stories like "Build-Up" and "Mobile" are good instances) and only later developed the more mature phase for which he is at present best-known—that period which produced "The Voices of Time", "The Watch-Towers" and "The Garden of Time", amongst many many others. Lately, he has entered his third phase. And "The Assassination Weapon" is of this period.

In NEW WORLDS SF No 148, in March 1965, editor Mike Moorcock said: "We need more writers who reflect the pragmatic mood of today, who use images apt for today, who employ symbols gathered from the world of today, who use sophisticated writing

techniques that can match the other techniques to today." This sentence is summarised, more or less, in "The Assassination Weapon". This story (and "Continuum" in last month's IMPULSE, which should really be read with this as a complete piece) is a joining of some of the best of Ballard's earlier personal imagery and his newer ideas on contemporary life. The central theme is the weapon that killed Malcolm X, John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald. (The weapon being the world, not necessarily the actual manifestation of it in the form of a rifle or a pistol). The particular story is not easy to read if a superficial plot is being looked for. (It has, in fact, no formal 'plot' as such). Seeming to have no connection, the short passages cut from place to place only apparently touching on ideas. Nothing I can say can add to the story, although I can exhort you to read it. Don't be misled by the cries of "Obscurity!" which are sure to be roused by this work. Read, and re-read it if you need to. (There's an interpretation in the Editorial, if you are in any doubt). But this story is a vital piece of contemporary science fiction which will do as much to invigorate as all of Ballard's previous work has done to date.

The rest of the stories in this issue range from two "solid-fuel" space stories ("Skirmish" by John Barter and "No Guarantee" by Gordon Walters both excellent of their kind); through what I am beginning to think of as typical NEW WORLDS stories: "House of Dust" (Norman Brown), "Cog" (Kenneth Barker) and "Eyeball" (Sam Wolf) all fairly original in an unexciting sort of way; to James Colvin's "The Ruins", which is full of ruins and, probably, symbolism and meaning, but left me as cold as stone (sic), and Mike Moorcock's own "Consuming Passion". I liked this last-mentioned story: it's all about what could be called a piramniac. (And if you don't know what that means, you'd better read the story.) It's got a predictable ending (and how), but suffers not.

John Brunner's novel concludes in this issue. I said last month that very little seemed to happen in "The Evil That Men Do". Things certainly get moving in this issue, and become quite gripping at times. Overall, the story is slight, but entertaining none the less. I'm afraid the ending is a happy one (how I wish that someone would write a strong sf novel with a downbeat ending look what it did for "Earth Abides"), and the hero gets the girl. Give it a sustained try, anyway. .

Eight short stories, a big hunk of novel, and there is still room for three long book-reviews. Particularly recommended is Lang Jones' review of Arthur C. Clarke's new book (a nicer piece of amusing and cynical reviewing I have yet to see), and George Collyn's look at the new Vonnegut book.

IMPULSE No. 1

Despite early misgivings, the changeover to the name IMPULSE does seem to be improving the quality of the content. Only five short stories in this issue, but a wide variety of styles, if not themes.

The lead story - illustrated with a fine cover-picture - is John Rankine's "Seventh Moon". The plot is run-of-the-mill: deskbound space-pilot investigates the disappearance of a Terran ship, and discovers that mysterious aliens are connected. The whole thing is somewhat old hat and drags at times. An inconsequential love-affair, included for no good reason, does not relieve the strain. This author has done better work than this.

Alistair Bevan's "The Pace That Kills" is a good social-extrapolation story. The editor's note says that Bevan was prodded into writing the story by the introduction of the 70mph speed-limit. By exaggeration of this trend in attitudes (and others) toward the road-user, the author has perhaps gone a little too far and weakened his message.

By an unfortunate choice of positioning, Alistair Bevan's story is placed next to Christ Priest's "The Run" a story not dissimilar in theme. This one is fairly ambiguous by nature, and thus open to interpretation. One conclusion could be that it is a personalisation of the emotions behind the arms race - bringing the fear and power down to an individualistic level. Some of the atmosphere comes over well, but the ending is a bit corny.

Peter L. Cave's "Cry Martian" (a good title) is a two-page vignette. It takes a typical of one-shot idea, stands it on its head, then gives it a running kick in the pants. There have been worse vignette than this, and even on this brief appearance it seems that this author is capable of much better work. Read this story once, then forget it. It won't be hard.

And Keith Roberts continues his "Pavane" cycle of stories. By far the best series of science fiction stories running at present, it puts practically all other sf into a dense hole of black shadow. This month's story is called "Brother John" the life of

a monk, similar in one or two respects to that of Martin Luther. But prepare for the usual delight of reading about this England that might have been. Only three words describe this story and they're all "Brilliant".

NEW WORLDS No 162

Somehow, Mike Moorcock seems to squeeze a large number of stories into each issue, and continue to run his other features which are so deservedly popular. Ten short stories, a long article from John Brunner, nine pages of book reviews, and several letters all this means that there must be something to please everyone, however specialised their tastes.

Because of the quantity of stories, comments must be kept by necessity to a minimum. "Pilot Plant" by Bob Shaw is a good alien-control story, something in the idiom of A.E. van Vogt. A trifle dated in its approach, but well-written and worth your while reading it. "The Ultimate Artist" by Richard A. Gordon is also written well, but says very little more than did Lang Jones' excellent story "The Music Makers" a few issues back. "Rumpelstiltskin" by Daphne Castell is a space-filler, whose plot is given away by the title. "Unification Day" by George Collyn is perhaps the best story to come from this author to date. Alternate possibility again (the French won the Battle of Waterloo), and also set in a contemporary England. The story is reminiscent of Brian Aldiss at his best, and that, as we all know (or should), can be excellent. E.C. Tubb's "Secret Weapon" is an interesting look at a new kind of re-orientation centre for wayward (?) citizens. David Newton's "Fountaineer" is a beautifully written, if somewhat incomprehensible, vignette. Spacefilling again, though. "Fifth Person Singular" (Peter Tate) is an odd little gem, which holds up well, even if it is another one about Shakespeare. The writing, although occasionally weak, shows incredible promise. "A Man Like Prometheus" by Bob Parkinson is a development of the human element in sf. What the glossies might have called a sensitive study of a successful man. "Girl" by Michael Butterworth will possibly not appeal to a lot of people. One of the present reviewers summed it up in two (derogatory) words, but the other is cautiously enthusiastic about it. No explanations offered: read it for yourselves. And "Clean Slate" by Ralph Nicholas (remember the name) is a neo-shaggy god story. Mr Moorcock had evidently just endured a lean period when he accepted this one.

John Brunner's article "A Different Kick", a transcription of his London World-Convention address, is a long and provoking comparison of sf with historical fiction. This article is a brilliant example of the result achieved if a serious and perceptive writer takes the trouble to analyse science fiction in a new way. If you missed the speech, don't miss this.

Overall, an issue above average.

REVIEWS

TIME TRANSFER by Arthur Sellings
Compact SF, 3/6. 190 pages

Reviewed by
W.T. Webb

There is a special quality about a collection of short stories by one gifted writer - something which is not shared by the novel, the magazine, or the anthology. The quality is composed of variety and similarity. Having read and enjoyed the first story, recognising that its author is a writer of promise, we look forward to each story with eager anticipation. Is he going to do it again, we ask? Is the man going to delight us with yet another well-written tale, without repeating himself, and without losing his own personal magic?

And in this book, Arthur Sellings achieves just that. Each of these stories has a sense of wonder, each one belongs with its fellows in the volume, making an ideal collection; and each is different and new.

At a period where science fiction seems to have degenerated into a state where little is published that is not perplexing, pornographic, and pessimistic, it is a special treat to read these little masterpieces which, like the works of any truly great writer, can be read and enjoyed by any literate person.

As may be expected of an author whose interests include antiquarian books, Arthur Sellings is a scholarly writer. His stories are imbued with poetry and scholarly thought. But this does not render them dry or pedantic. On the contrary, his works abound with humour. And the humour springs naturally from the situations; not from slick, comic-strip dialogue or schoolboy smut. "Categorical Imperative", "The Wordless Ones" and "Control Room" are among the funniest SF I have read for some time.

But this volume is not all humour. The title story, which concerns a heartless solution of the problem of what to do with old people, is decidedly grim. "The Age of Kindness" records the agonies of a hunchback in a world of perfect manhood. And "The Proxies" is a robot story in which the machines are far more humane than some of their makers.

In all these stories our interest is directed upon the people involved as much as upon the novel situations in which they find themselves. The characters, their feelings

and impressions are all-important. This applies specially to "From Up There", which portrays a man who claims to be an alien but is unable to tell anybody where he came from or why he is here.

"The Pigment" and "The Jukebox" feature old themes, which are given a new and brilliant life. "A Start in Life" is another poignant robot story. And "Escape Mechanism", concerning a hen-pecked husband, a bullying psychiatrist, and a nagging wife, is the last word in escapist escape stories.

TIME TRAFER, within its glossy paper covers, contains eleven stories of various lengths. They will be read and re-read many times.

THE RICHEST CORPSE IN SHOW BUSINESS by Dan Morgan
Compact Books, 3/6

Reviewed by
Chris Priest

The corpse of the title is, believe it or not, television. The theme of this book is the death-agonies of the blue-eyed monster in the corner of everyone's sitting room.

The book opens with the death of the star of the only programme left on television that can unfailingly command top ratings week after week. This is the cloyingly-titled JUST FOLKS series, where the participants are real live normal human beings living out their daily lives. But, Carmody Truelove (real name: Albert Stevens) around whom the whole show revolved, sorry revolved, takes it upon himself to die at a time only describable as inappropriate. What, the book's hero Harry Trevey is asked, can be used as a replacement?

To G.O. Durrell (Chief Production Executive of the television company) the end never seems near. It is this man's drive that constantly keeps the faltering body of television from finally dying. And it is Harry Trevey whose job it is to provide the ideas that fuel the drive. As is often the way, the idea he comes up with on this particular occasion backfires in splendid fashion.

Although the book ends with a situation similar to the one with which it starts, the implication is that television is a self-destroying thing. Even in our own comparatively-sane times television often shows traces of rigor mortis. In this book, a century or so in the future, it has become an animated corpse a fat, greasy and rich corpse, staggering on endlessly like an undead zombie.

Don't be misled by the cover-blurb promise of amoral sex there's no sex, and any morality must certainly have been lost on me. But, if you are like me, and watch

television for the sheer kick of repetition and duplication, then you will not fail to thrill to the ghostly death-rattle emitted by the richest corpse in show business as it turns in its open grave.

A consistently amusing, often funny and always well-written book.

ALL FLESH IS GRASS by Clifford D. Simak
Gollance, 18/-

Reviewed by
R.L. Laskett

Here is a typical Simak setting - small drowsy American town, with the characters lovingly portrayed. Each has his faults and Simak seems to love them because of their faults, rather than in spite of them.

This backwater suddenly becomes the focus of world interest when an invisible barrier appears round it. Gradually the main character, Brad Carter, finds himself taking a more and more important part. This is very fortunate for him and for his self-respect, as he has just failed at yet another enterprise.

The origin of the barrier turns out to be Simak's other favourite theme - the friendly aliens. In this case they are flowers, inhabiting a whole series of alternate earths, and anxious to expand into this one to form a partnership with man. Unfortunately, as the story develops and the flowers abilities are revealed, the credibility declines, and the last chapter finishes on a note of optimism which I found inspiring when I was thirteen. This is not one of Simak's best, but it is still Simak and therefore expertly done.

ALTERNATING CURRENTS by Frederik Pohl
Penguin No.2452. 3/6. 190 pages

Reviewed by
Vic Hallett

A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS by Edgar Pangborn
Penguin No.2454. 3/6. 206 pages

GUNNER CADE by Cyril Judd
Penguin No.2460. 3/6. 199 pages

I am reviewing these three books together for no other reason than that they are all Penguins; apart from that they could hardly be more dissimilar.

Alternating Currents is a good collection of typical Pohl stories covering advertising, time paradox, straight SF and straight fantasy. My favourites are What To Do Until The Analyst Comes about the disastrous effects of a non-habit-forming alternative to cigarettes; The Tunnel Under The World which is a superb example of a plot which doesn't stop twisting until the last sentence; Target One which tells of the changes incurred

when two time travellers kill Einstein and The Ghost-Maker a fantasy about just that, a man who can make ghosts. The Mapmakers about a space ship which gets lost in hyperspace is the weakest story in the book, it just isn't Pohl material but the general level is very competent and the book as a whole is well worth buying.

A Mirror For Observers is by far the best of the three. When it was first published it won the International Fantasy Award and very deservedly. It tells of a Martian Observer who, disguised as a human, is trying to protect a human genius from the clutches of another disguised Martian who has abdicated from the Observers. A short synopsis can do nothing to convey the beautiful language of the writing however. It is a very quiet novel, simply told with, as the blurb says, 'a passionate respect for the human race', and some of the best prose about music I have ever read. A book to buy, keep and re-read at frequent intervals.

Gunner Cade is a good, fast moving military novel written by G.M. Korblyth and Judith Merrill. Cade is a soldier, student of the Klin Philosophy, and loyal subject of the Emperor who knows that his is the best possible life in the best possible world. Needless to say it is not long before he learns differently and he finds himself confusedly taking part in a revolt and finally escaping to Mars. Cade himself is a sympathetic character, never really on top of the situation and the world in which he lives is very well drawn making this an easy and exciting read.

THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH by Philip K. Dick
Jonathan Cape, 21/-

Reviewed by
Chris Priest

Philip K. Dick is one of the few contemporary American writers who uses science fiction as it should be used: as a vehicle for the examination of a new idea from a new angle. In "Three Stigmata" he is questioning reality; both subjective and otherwise. He is also looking at religion from a new standpoint, and in running these two ideas together has come up with a complex science fiction novel that is unusually good.

Palmer Eldritch returns after ten years in the Proxima Centaurus system, bringing with him a derived narcotic called Chew-Z (pronounce it 'choosey'), which has the power of inducing such vivid hallucinations that they are indistinguishable from reality. Fairly early on in the book, Leo Bulero (who runs a firm already doing pretty well out of another drug called Can-D, which has a slightly less potent effect) falls foul of Eldritch and is injected with Chew-Z. From here on out, it is probable that all succeeding incidents are imaginary. Although Bulero is roused by Eldritch from his hallucinations and returns, apparently, to what he knows as reality, he can never be certain. Later on in the book, when another character called Barney Mayerson (previously Bulero's top precog consultant, but now in

discrepant) voluntarily submits to the drug, he experiences recurring "realities" that turn out, one after the other, to be hallucinatory. Things become further complicated when he takes an overdose of the drug (although at the time he has no way of telling whether or not he is really taking the overdose) and finds himself doomed to living forever in hallucination.

In fact, Dick is not strictly interested in the physical nature of the world he has created in this book. He is exploring subjective reality, sounding it out to see if there is any true difference between the thread of reality that runs through this book and the solipsist hallucinatory worlds that his characters create. It is to his eternal credit that the quasi-religious announcement (as hinted at in the book's title) is played down to an extent that it becomes the only logical rationale. A less subtle writer could have spoiled the entire book by stressing the point.

Certainly, the book is not faultless. Its atmosphere is akin to some of A.E. van Vogt's novels, and in places the dialogue is so much like van Vogt's that it makes one wonder whether Dick has realized the similarities and is taking a polite swipe at his predecessor. The passage immediately following Buler's first (and only?) experience of Chew-Z is a case in point.

Despite a few such superficial (and unimportant) faults, this book could well be a major step forward in science fiction. Dick's ideas are original and stimulating, and are presented in a way that gives them maximum demonstration. His implication is that by their very nature neither reality nor religion can exist should the other be 'real'.

In review, this novel might seem confusing or obscure. It is an extremely difficult book to describe with justice, but Dick's plotting is tight and his description has a simplicity and clarity that adequately carries any ambiguity there might be. It is, then, an extremely rewarding book.

A CHECKLIST OF S.F. PAPERBACKS IN PRINT IN JAN 1966
Compiled by K.F. Slater Price 7/6.

This is a very useful reference catalogue. Every SF P/b in print in January is listed (as the title suggests!), and the price includes the complete list of deletions and additions up to July. Definitely worth buying for the S.F. enthusiast.

