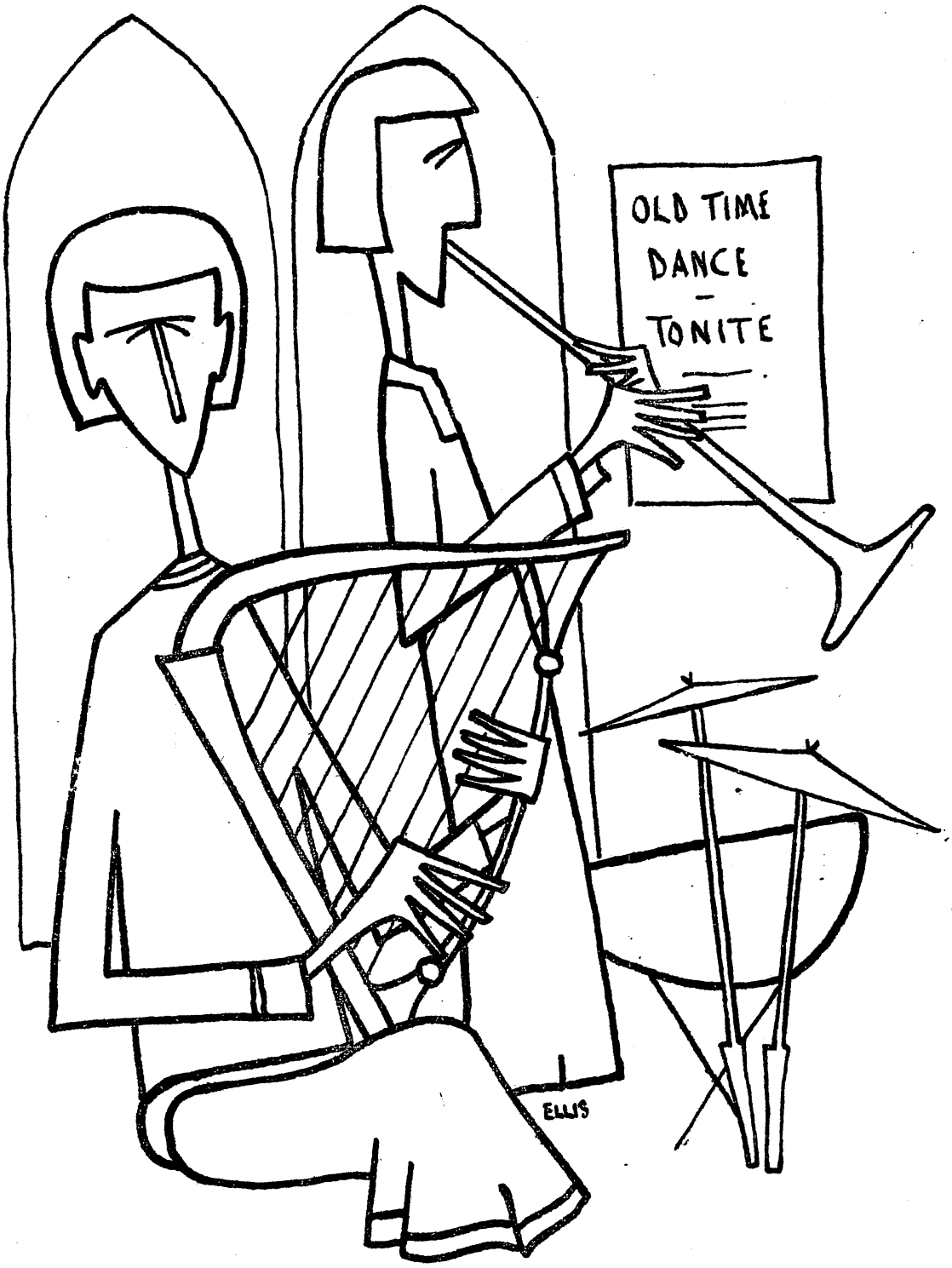
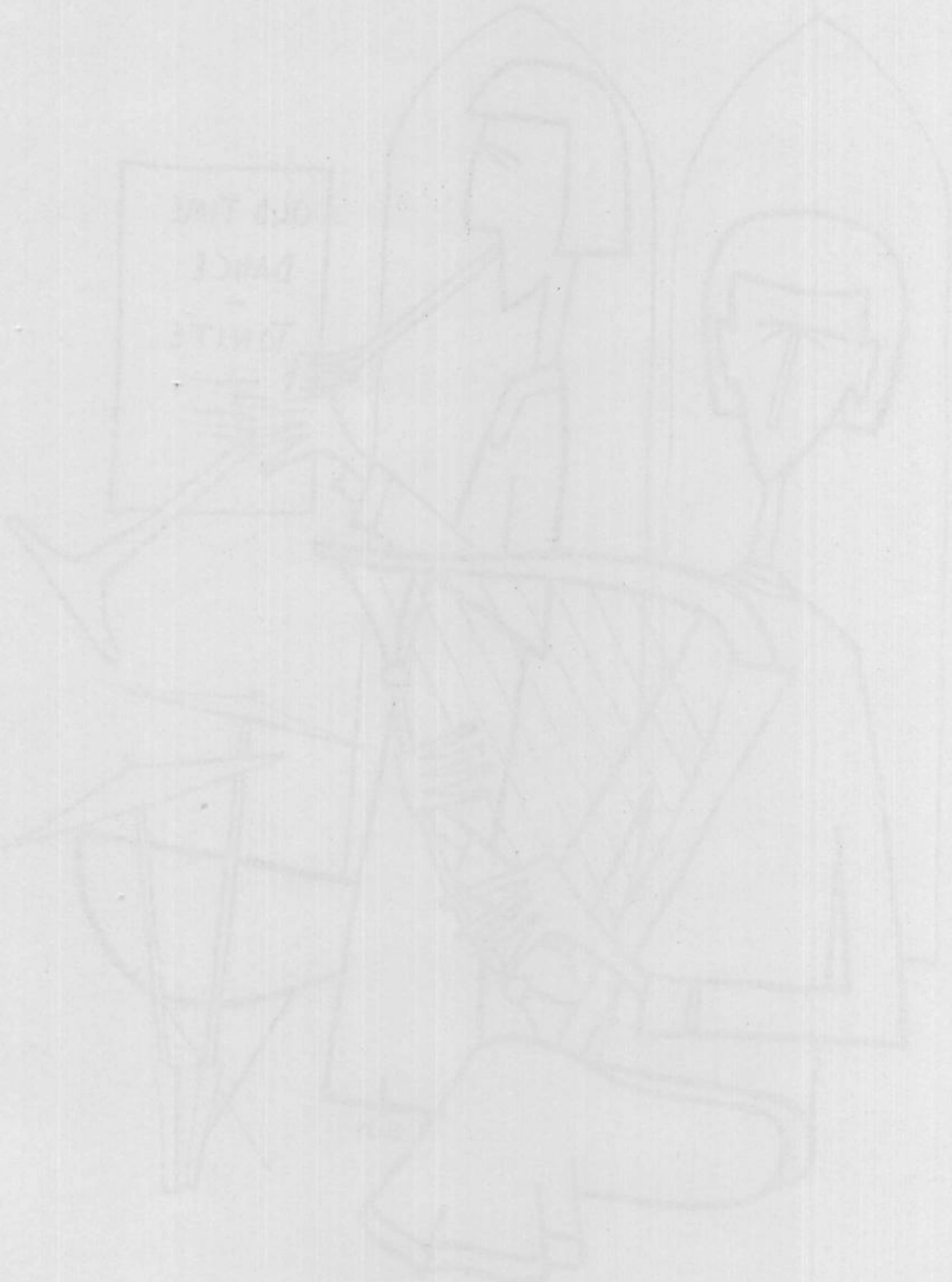
Australian Science Fiction Review





AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW Editor: JOHN BANGSUND

March 1967 Number 8 Shadow: Lee Harding

Reviewed in this issue:

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AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is published (and, since Victorian law will soon require it, printed) by John Bangsund at 19 Gladstone Avenue, Northcote N.16, Melbourne, Australia. :::: COVER ILLUSTRATION by James W. Ellis. :: :: SUBSCRIPTION RATES in Australia, USA, and Canada $3.60 per 12 issues - in UK and New Zealand £1.7.6 - other countries, equivalent preferably in US dollars or sterling. :::: UK SUBSCRIBERS deal direct with our agent: GRAHAM M. HALL, 57 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Glos. :::: TRADES & LETTERS welcomed. :::: Back issues currently available: 2 3 4 6 and 7 - 30 cents each. :::: QUOTE OF THE MONTH: "I have written and sold twenty-three novels, and all are terrible except one. But I am not sure which one." (Philip K. Dick, in Terry Carr's LIGHTHOUSE 14.) :::: :: ::::

"THE CAPTAIN OF THE 'MARY' WAS A GENIUS,
AND AN AUSTRALIAN GENIUS AT THAT..."

Thus Joshua Slocum in his great book. He was not talking about Captain A. Bertram Chandler, F.B.I.S., simply because these two eminent mariners missed each other by half a century. Other things are said about our man. "Captain Chandler is a different person, but a good shipmaster," a new officer was informed on joining his command. "I wish they had said and, rather than but," said Bert, around his pipe.

We observed the science fiction paperbacks scattered around the cabin, their covers looking more lurid than ever in these august surroundings, and saw what 'they' meant. A science fiction person is an object of suspicion at the best of times - but on the bridge of a ship...? Who knows when he might attempt to fly to Mars in it?

Not Bert Chandler. He is a man with a strongly individualistic view of life, but he is by no means a crank. He lives in an alternate world of his own making, but misses nothing that happens around him; dwelling simultaneously in two time-tracks, he cuts an impressive figure in both.

He is a friendly man. Before and after dinner, and later (much later) in his cabin on the KARAMU, we asked him outrageous questions and made comments that hovered between insulting and inane, without ruffling him. Lee, at one stage, contrasted his work with John Wyndham's. "Cut off, in his country house, from the big world," Lee said, "Wyndham must find it hard to write, since he's basically a social writer. But you can sit in your cabin, completely isolated from people, and turn out your stuff quite happily, because you are an un-social writer: your kind of story doesn't rely on people." "Mmm," agreed Bert, withdrawing the pipe for a moment, "Very un-social, yes."

But not unsociable. A little too contentedly abstracted to be the life of the party, maybe, but we found him very pleasant company indeed, and anticipate with pleasure his future visits to Melbourne.

The night before Captain Chandler telephoned to say he was in town, Diane and I visited Alan France at Wodonga. What a meeting of minds was this! - the publishers of the two current Victorian fanzines: a commercial traveller and a schoolboy. Alan is a very intelligent young man, with a vast knowledge of science fiction and very definite opinions about it - as you may discover from any issue of FENATTIC. However, your chances of seeing a copy of FENATTIC are slim. Good as this little magazine is, its circulation is limited to the number of copies Alan can produce with his typewriter and three carbons.

If you should happen to have a flatbed duplicator and no use for it, and would care to donate it to a very worthy cause, would you get in touch with me, please? (Alan doesn't know about this appeal - but I'm sure his benefactor would be set for a free subscription to FENATTIC...)

The chap at my bank who handles overseas remittances is convinced that ASFR is in the running for an Export Action Award. I doubt it. True, though, we are gaining quite a following overseas, with readers in Sweden, Germany, Spain, Italy, Argentina - even Czechoslovakia - as well as most of the English-speaking countries. Last month we appointed our first overseas agent. We are pleased to announce that Mr. GRAHAM M. HALL now represents our interests in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Already agent for two outstanding fanzines, RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY and NIEKAS, Graham obviously has no time to publish one of his own. Somehow, though, he manages to find time to write, and his story, THE TENNYSON EFFECT, in NEW WORLDS 168 indicates that he has considerable talent in this direction. Graham is the correspondent in ASFR 7 who expressed an inclination to migrate to Australia. We'd love to have him - but not just yet. Agents of his calibre are not easily come by.

Our man in Uppsala, Sten Dahlskog, gave me an editorial headache this month. In our last issue I reviewed Tom Disch's MANKIND UNDER THE LEASH and the two books by Ursula K. LeGuin. While his copy of this issue was being jostled in the hold of some vessel off the coast of Portugal, Sten was busily reviewing precisely those three books for us. And doing such a superior job of it, I hadn't the heart not to publish it. Where I claim, Sten documents and proves. Where I rush to judgement, he presents a case. An exemplary piece of criticism, I feel, and here it is in this issue, setting a precedent.

Your editor has been the propounder of rash statements on many past occasions (and no doubt will continue to be such often enough in the future). Two of my more serious recent bloopers have concerned Tom Disch - and I hereby recant and heap ashes on my head.

In ASFR5 I said that Tom has a sick mind, and in ASFR7 that he will not achieve his true stature as a writer until he changes his views. Both of these statements are palpably untrue. In the first instance, I was judging the man on the basis of one (untypical) story - and a misconstruction of Lee Harding's opinions in his review of THE GENOCIDES in ASFR3. I wouldn't say that Tom hasn't a 'sick' approach to some things, in the sense that DOCTOR STRANGELOVE (for example) is 'sick' - but those quotation marks make a lot of difference.

For setting me straight in the second instance, I have to thank James Blish. He pointed out to me, ever so gently, the basic absurdity of judging a man's writing by his philosophy. (Buck Coulson made the same point in his letter a few days later; by then I'd got the message.) The two things may, of course, sometimes interact: a man may have such a bee in his bonnet that he can't write straight. But this is clearly not the case with Tom Disch - nor most of the writers we discuss in this magazine. Whatever feelings I may have about a book written from what I

consider an anti-human point of view, to such a book I may take personal, philosophical, objection - but its literary worth must be separately judged.

Since last issue I have caught up with THE GENOCIDES (which I deem by no means as bad a book as Lee led me to believe) and a few other things by this writer. Terry Carr has in his fanzine, LIGHTHOUSE, a most entertaining, and revealing, selection of letters written by Tom on his recent travels. Perhaps even more revealing is his story, THE SQUIRREL CAGE, in NEW WORLDS 167. Here we find superbly depicted the classical dilemma of youthful nihilism. In some ways it is a better picture, even, than its close cousin, Camus's MYTH OF SISYPHUS, since Tom shows how a man with a sense of humour fares in this philosophical impasse. I have a profound respect for Camus - he had a decisive influence on my own thinking - but I have never laughed with him.

I am putting off reading ECHO ROUND HIS BONES until the second part arrives (in NEW WORLDS 170). I hope to see 102 H-BOMBS shortly. Until I have read these, caution tells me, I should beware of pronouncing further on Thomas M. Disch. But to hell with caution: I say here is a writer with a great future.

A word about future issues of ASFR - with the customary caution that, as usual, the unexpected may be expected:

In no.9 John Foyster - who, you will have noticed, has not gone abroad (he is undertaking advanced studies at Monash) - will contribute Part Two of his NOTE ON J.G. BALLARD. In the same issue will be found, reprinted (with additions) from VECTOR, an article by John Brunner on THE ECONOMICS OF SF.

April and May will be busy months for me, with two fortnights interstate. I hope to produce a May issue, but don't be too surprised if no.10 doesn't eventuate until June. However, with fingers crossed, and dread Nemesis leering at me, I announce that either in May or July you will be seeing our oft-promised and long-awaited Cordwainer Smith Memorial issue.

June marks our first anniversary. In our June issue we will have something really special - something memorable, we promise you, for which plans have been most carefully laid. A note of warning, though. This issue will be more expensive to produce than usual: only subscribers and our most highly esteemed freeloaders will be receiving it. (Though copies will be on sale, at the normal price, at McGill's, F&SF New York, and a few other places.) If you are not a subscriber, if your subscription has lapsed, or if you are uncertain about how highly we esteem you, act now and, as they say, avoid disappointment: subscribe. (If your copy lacks a subscription form, a note will suffice...)

John Bangsund

A NOTE ON J. G. BALLARD

Some Recent Short Stories

JOHN FOYSTER

Writing about the avant-garde of any form of art is dangerous for all but the enthusiast, the disciple. Such privileged persons can always claim youth and inexperience as an excuse should their idol turn out to be as clay-footed as the rest of the world suspected. But let one such idol turn out to be as great as his early friends made him out to be and all the critics in the world fall down on their faces, and forever are faced with Their Mistake.

In the branch of literature known as science fiction there has not been much of an avant-garde at any time. The tendency has been more towards bloodless revolution: the 'thought-variants', the rise of Campbell's stable of authors, the advent of the GALAXY-type story. Until now, the only writing which might at all be described as 'advanced' have been the efforts of Ray Palmer to introduce fairy stories to sf and the minor sexual revolution of Farmer and Sturgeon in 1952 and 1953.

But now J.G. Ballard is being acclaimed as a new Messiah, both in England and in America, by a strange mixture of persons. At the same time a stylistic renascence is supposed to be forthcoming in the U.S.A., led by that well-known writer for IMAGINATION SCIENCE FICTION, Harlan Ellison. Ellison's story, REPENT HARLEQUIN SAID THE TICK-TOCK MAN, has won quite a few awards on the grounds (apparently) of its stylistic greatness.

There's a considerable difference, however, between the changes in the U.S.A. and those of Ballard and his supporters. And, specifically, recent short stories by Ballard in NEW WORLDS are having much claimed for them.

In reviewing IMPULSE #1 in ASFR #1, Lee Harding said of the first of these stories - YOU AND ME AND THE CONTINUUM - 'the work is so obviously fragments of a broader canvas.' Without knowing exactly how carefully Mr. Harding has read NEW WORLDS #167, one cannot say just what his reaction would have been to Ballard's words: 'In fact, I regard each of them as a complete novel.' Perhaps he was, at least, surprised.

In this issue of NEW WORLDS Ballard has about four pages of notes in which he tries to indicate what he is trying to do in his recent fiction. He says that he has found that lately his fiction has tended to be image-centred rather than narrative-centred. Consequently, the story-line has almost vanished. He believes that this is partly because he is writing about something unknown and this makes only the images bright: causal relationships no longer exist. Ballard feels that he is alone, almost, and can name only two writers working the same (or a similar) vein. He reveals

a considerable interest in the work of Salvador Dali, both in this article and in these recent stories, and he works, partly, in the same way as Dali - relying to some extent on unfamiliar juxtaposition.

But Ballard says quite a few things which are not easily acceptable. For example: 'One trouble with Dali is that no one has ever really looked at his paintings.' There are many things in that sentence which trouble me. While it may seem only minor, it is hardly necessary to point out that the trouble is not with Dali at all, but with those who look at his paintings. This is quibbling, for Ballard means 'One trouble with the appreciation of Dali' or 'One barrier which prevents the general acceptance of Dali's painting.' Okay, that's simple enough: but if this is how confused Ballard can become in expressing a simple idea, how much more confused must be his quantified fiction?

And then Ballard appropriates Godhood to himself (Only I know the worth and meaning of Dali) in terms which are vague ('among the most important paintings of the 20th century') and contemptuous. This is arrant rubbish. But it is the kind of generalization commonly used in propaganda for a new faith of which the pillars are somewhat shaky. One might think of Eli Siegel's AESTHETIC REALISM here, or of Hubbard's SCIENTOLOGY, both of which gather under their roofs the thoughts of others. And this kind of statement is found in the writings of Ballard's supporters.

Sometimes, too, one is uncertain about what Ballard means. For example, he asks: 'at what point does the plane of intersection of two cones become sexually more stimulating that Elizabeth Taylor's cleavage?' The immediate problem is, of course, that there is no plane of intersection of two cones (which makes it easy to answer the question, of course, but which somehow seems to avoid Ballard's point), but the one evolving from this is more complex: it presupposes that this point is common to all men - it reduces men to common denominators. Which they are not. This 'point' doesn't exist, either. This would have excited the dadaists, this discussion of the relationship between two nonexistent things, but it doesn't seem likely that there'd be much in it for Joe Fan.

It would obviously be only fair to state, as of 1966, that Ballard is uncertain of his goals.

Michael Moorcock thinks so, too. Or, more accurately, he doesn't know whether Ballard realizes his destiny as yet. In his editorial for NEW WORLDS #167, he writes about Ballard's contribution to the culture of the 20th century. Moorcock suggests that Ballard is the leader of a movement 'destined to consolidate the literary ideas - surrealism, stream of consciousness, symbolism, science fiction, etc. etc. - of the 20th century.' And do something with them: just what, he does not make clear. I suppose one must point out that 'science fiction' is a scientific rather than a literary idea (20th century?); that 'symbolism' is hardly a literary idea of the 20th century; that 'stream of consciousness' is surely a psychological rather than a literary idea; and that 'surrealism' is hardly a literary idea, either. And what, indeed, can be said for 'etc. etc.'? Korzybski would surely have frowned upon such redundancy.

Moorcock's view is that Ballard is single-handedly creating a new

means of communication, one in which the past exists without influence. He thinks that this instrument is still to be perfected, but that it nevertheless already wields great influence. These remarks of Moorcock's are somewhat suppositious, and say very little about what Ballard is doing: they may be true. But not everyone who makes something new makes it successfully. It is this very question which must be asked, and answered, and it is the question which Moorcock seems to ignore. He claims that this new form is 'genuinely speculative and introspective in its objectives', but this avoids the question of whether there is a place for such a form, and, assuming that there is, whether Ballard achieves it.

Probably the basic difficulty that critics have with Moorcock is his vagueness, both in his analysis of Ballard and in his defence of him. Generalizing, he says that critics have failed to understand Ballard because they try to involve him with the past, to seek his antecedents. And much of what Moorcock writes is based upon his knowledge of Ballard, not of Ballard's writing, which makes his remarks unassailable and next to useless. Specifically, for instance, Moorcock states that one should not associate too closely William Burroughs with Ballard, somehow implying that this is common practice. In fact, the difference between Ballard and Burroughs is considerable, but nevertheless easily expressed: Burroughs relies upon juxtaposition and Ballard upon fragmentation. But Moorcock refuses to make any critical statement beyond the vaguest generalities. When he moves on to write of Ballard's connection with the work of Joyce and of Burroughs he is again vague, and rather pointless: contrasting Joyce and Ballard, he says Joyce was trying to produce something new - whereas Ballard has only invented a new tool for writing. Even accepting the two statements, which is not an easy task, one hardly feels that this distinction is so great as Moorcock tries to make out. In fact, Ballard's changes, were they successful, would have to be regarded as far more revolutionary than anything of Joyce's.

Moorcock further suggests that scientists, as opposed to 'literary critics', appreciate and sympathize with Ballard's work. This comes from a paragraph which refers to scientists peripherally, and with little cause at that. We cannot know that 'many scientists' appreciate Ballard's work, since we have only the word of a man who has stated absolutely nothing about what Ballard is doing. In a like manner it hardly seems likely that <u>any</u> literary critic has ever interpreted Ballard (so the question of failure (?) or otherwise doesn't enter the matter). How can anyone <u>fail</u> in an interpretation of a writer whose most ardent fans cannot discuss logically or adequately? It is not a question of failure, but one of opinion. Does one fail by saying that Ballard cannot write, or by comparing him with Burroughs, or by suggesting that he does not understand something about alligators, or by saying he writes 'perfect novels'? This last was achieved by a Melbourne journalist: is he a failure or an outstanding exception? He is simply, as it happens, given to superlatives, and anyone, literary critic or 'scientist', can have that affliction. The difference between Campbell's use of 'scientist' and that of Moorcock lies in their emotions, not in their precision.

Towards the end of his editorial, Moorcock attempts to be more specific: the aim of these followers of Ballard is to 'tell (stories) in a form that is <u>not necessarily</u> conventional in construction or language.' Whose convention?

Is that all? Is this what Ballard is trying to do - just write stories that are 'not necessarily conventional'? What a comedown for the writer who only two pages back was mentioned in the same breath as Henry James and James Joyce! If this is the case, then there are many precedents - though not so many in sf. Moorcock and Ballard between them only produce some considerable confusion: to get a clear, or at least less foggy, view of Ballard, it is necessary to examine his recent efforts.

YOU AND ME AND THE CONTINUUM	(IMPULSE #1)	(YMC)
THE ASSASSINATION WEAPON	(NEW WORLDS #161)	(AW)
YOU: COMA: MARILYN MONROE	(NEW WORLDS #163)	(YCMM)
THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION	(NEW WORLDS #166)	(AE)

In addition, the story THE TERMINAL BEACH (TB) can be considered to be a part of Ballard's recent development. Two other stories, THE VOICES OF TIME and THE CAGE OF SAND, which may have some relevance to this series, will be discussed in a later article.

Some Character Comparisons:

In all stories the unknown man, who stands for Christ, appears. Other characters appear as follows. There is no significance in the order, but equivalent characters appear in the same horizontal line.

YMC	AW	YCMM	AE	TB
Karen Novotny	Karen Novotny	Karen Novotny		(young woman?)
Dr. Nathan	Dr. Lancaster	Dr. Nathan	Dr. Nathan	(Dr. Osborne?)
Elizabeth Austin (Dr.)	(Nurse Nagamatzu?)		Catherine Austen (Dr.)	
Capt. Kirby	Capt. Webster		Capt. Webster and Ransom	
	Coma	Coma		
	Margaret Traven		Margaret Travis	
		Tallis	Travis	Traven

Unfortunately, it isn't quite as straightforward as the table makes it seem. Firstly, although it can be seen that I have equated grossly similar characters both in the table above and in the discussion below, there are enough connections to believe that only two characters have any overall meaning. Secondly, the small sample available, and the vague way in which it is presented, tends to hinder rather than help anyone seeking to unravel the mystery. I wish to return to this point later.

There are fair grounds for believing that Karen Novotny and the character Austin/Nagamatzu/Austen are the same, even though they appear in the same stories. These are, briefly, that the characters have similar experiences and in one or two places their lives are described using the

same sentences. They are also probably linked with Margaret Traven/Travis in a wife/lover oneness.

Travis/Tallis/Traven are fairly obviously the same person, and equally obviously are also involved too closely with the unknown man, whom I shall call Christ for want of a better name, for this to be coincidental. Furthermore, both Christ and Dr. Nathan build a sculpture of mirrors, and Nathan represents the rationalizing side of Travis (etc). Webster and this multi-character find themselves in similar positions with Karen Novotny. ('listening to the last bars of the scherzo as his hand hesitated on the zip' - Ambivalent, YMC. 'Webster's hand hesitated on Karen Novotny's zip. He listened to the last bars...' - In a technical sense, AW.) Most of the other characters can be ignored and assimilated. Possibly Coma, Kline and Xero elude this grouping.

Now Ballard claims that these four stories are separate novels, but to make any attempt at understanding what is going on it is necessary to examine the set. In his introduction to the first story, Ballard describes it as a 'botched Second Coming.' I have accepted this view.

I propose to trace the actions and activities of the major characters who, as I have indicated above, really become just two.

Narrative:

KAREN NOVOTNY plays a major role whether as herself or not. She is present at the opening of the story and has just met the Christ, apparently at a lecture which is discussed later. Christ then tells her of a dream he has, of dying dolls. Then, near some reservoirs, she farewells him. In the next segment she is again with Christ, who is now trying to build a trap. When she asks him what it is for, he replies that it is for her womb - that she has a star in it. This fairly clearly can be assumed to refer to the First Coming. Then she drives with Christ to the radio telescopes, and she is looking for something for him. She is not certain what it is. In the last reference in the second segment she hears of the finding of the bomber pilot from Webster. The bomber pilot's name is Traven. In the third segment she has met Tallis at a beach planetarium and dresses. Tallis has been sitting by her in bed. As she dresses, Tallis realizes that her body is like that of Marilyn Monroe. Novotny realizes, on her part, that Tallis is her dreams come true (in the correct sense of the phrase) and again her body is linked to that of Marilyn Monroe and to that of the universe. Now she sleeps, and Tallis again refers to her body in this rather pantheistic way. The eqivalence of Novotny's body with the room in which she sleeps becomes intense, and she dies in a way which is not at all clear, but which is revealed in the discussion of the next character.

ELIZABETH AUSTIN/NURSE NAGAMATZU/CATHERINE AUSTEN is a character who is always in the background, having little to do with the action, but who explains things. In the first segment she tells Dr. Nathan that the unknown man is asleep in her apartment. Now it might be assumed that the action attributed above to Karen Novotny, with the unknown in her room is erroneous, as no names are used. However, I think the quote concerning the zip is sufficient evidence to establish the equality of the 'she' in

Ambivalent with the Karen Novotny in In a technical sense. Further, this now forges a link between Novotny and Austin. Next Austin is talking with Nathan (or rather listening - as remarked above, she is a passive rather than an active character). In the next segment, as Nurse Nagamatzu, she is abused by Dr. Lancaster (Dr. Nathan) while discussing one of the many lists which appear in the stories. Her face now appears on the walls of the cube in which Christ is resting. Finally she is shot by someone in a white Pontiac (one of those annoying symbols of Ballard's which appear throughout the stories) while at the radio-telescope. I take this to explain the death of Novotny, though this particular character dies again later. One speaks easily here of dying again, for it must be pointed out that one of the obsessions of Christ is the 'false death.' She does not appear in the third segment, the one in which Novotny dies, but appears as Catherine Austen (a character in another story of Ballard's) in the fourth segment. She is first discovered wandering through the Atrocity Exhibition by Dr. Nathan. Then Travis thinks of his affair with her, and the names of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe are linked. When Travis next meets her the process of identification of female body with rooms and buildings begins again, or perhaps continues. Now Travis leaves her with the bomber pilot (- notice that Traven both is and is not the bomber pilot), She talks briefly with Webster and is then simply left dead with Webster and Nathan. The death of Nagamatzu will account for this.

MARGARET TRAVEN/TRAVIS appears only in the second and fourth segments. She first appears in a paragraph headed The bride stripped bare by her bachelors. In it Margaret Traven asks Captain Webster how she can help her husband. The answer is never given directly, except in a paragraph entitled Einstein (which is still rather indirect) and just as indirectly by the title of the paragraph in which the question appears. The answer will appear here at an appropriate time. Later in this second seg ment she is walking through the reservoirs and sees her husband. He vanishes. She reappears, as Margaret Travis, in the fourth segment, where she is talking to Dr. Nathan. He talks to her about 'Marey's Chronograms' in which time and space are linked. She then asks Nathan just what her husband is doing. His answer is presumably that of Ballard. When she next appears we discover what it is that she has been asked to do: to explain and describe to Webster everything about her relationship with her husband. Knowing of his relationship with Austen, she is angry. Photographs of her body are being taken and blown up for giant hoardings to be distributed across the country, 'ostensibly to save her from Travis.' This musing takes place outside a cinema which is showing Jean Cocteau's ORPHEUS. Now she is running from Webster, towards the bunkers: he catches her, swears, points to the surrounding hoardings. He explains that she will not find her husband. The segment flashes to Nathan, who is trying to understand just what part she will play in the coming drama: he realizes too late. There is an explosion, and the ascending parts of Margaret Travis's body take the form and the substance of the hoardings and madonnas. This is essentially a Dalinian image.

DOCTOR NATHAN has the largest part, aside from Christ. His role is to study the unknown man, and in the first segment this is brought forward immediately: he asks for a blood sample. He also comments on the progress of the Return: 'Mannerism bores me. Whatever happens we must keep him off Dali and Ernst.' They don't. Now he shows slides of women's faces to the

unknown: one, which shows this sort of confusion of space and time, strikes a familiar chord. Nathan then appears in the first scene involving the odd lists. There are seven photographs of apparently unrelated objects: Nathan claims that these make up one picture - later he will make different claims for different sets. This episode reveals Nathan as understanding the problem, but the next shows him to understand little. He is trying to piece together the origin of the unknown from the 'as yet irreconcilable data.' He feels that some kind of distortion is acting, but he cannot explain it. His last appearance in the first segment is the occasion for a somewhat irreverent pun. In the second segment he appears as Dr. Lancaster. He has been left with three objects (again unrelated) - apparently the unknown man has vanished. Then he seems to have solved a large number of problems, for he is able to say that Traven's problem is that he sees connections, a oneness, between all objects in the universe; that these form patterns which are obvious to him but to which human beings are oblivious. Looking up, he sees the vindication of his belief, for Traven in repeating a meaningless set of movements. Now shown another list (six objects) he asserts that these 'constitute an assassination weapon.' He explains that he means this only in the context of Traven's understanding of the universe, that these can bring about John Kennedy's 'false death.' Near the radio-telescope, as Nagamatzu dies, he builds a sculpture of mirrors, linking himself with the unknown, who does the same thing in another place at another time (?). Looking at the sculpture (which is a trap), he sees the fragments of Christ's body. Lastly, Dr. Lancaster explains to Webster that for Traven 'science is... pornography' and, by implication, that pornography is science. It is for this that the photographs of Margaret Traven are needed - as a scientific defence against Traven and all that his existence implies. In his brief appearance in the third segment, as Nathan, he appears to hark back to an earlier time. He lands from the Sikorski helicopter (one of Ballard's standard images) and tries to talk with Tallis: he cannot speak. This seems to imply that Tallis's world has become the natural one and that of Nathan a non-causal one. At the end of the segment, after the death of Karen Novotny, Tallis wonders whether perhaps Nathan has 'given up.' In the fourth segment he meets Catherine Austen at the Atrocity Exhibition. However in this segment there is a slight departure in that the list of objects is studied by Travis rather than Nathan. In the section Marey's Chronograms, he explains the purpose of these lists: from them Travis can extract 'the element of time.' As a result of this he sees the world through this distorting lens which is confusing him. He goes on to explain that Travis is obsessed with World War III, and that for him this is a very different thing from that which is anticipated by ordinary humans. He is unable to explain to Margaret Travis why the photographs of her body are required (as a defence against Travis's imagination) and leaves it to Webster's rather clumsier methods. Further on, he writes of Travis as being unconsciously unwilling to accept his own existence, and for this reason he (Travis) sees his own body as the battleground for World War III. Despite his understanding of the way in which the world can be defended against Travis, he seems surprised when the hoardings carrying photographs of parts of Margaret Travis's body appear around the hospital. Finally he realizes that these photographs are what Travis will use for World War III. As he understands this, that Travis will equate the dispersal of signs with the dispersal of his wife's body, the explosion occurs which kills him and the others.

This simple retelling of a plot or series of plots is not in the tradition of ASFR reviewing, but because of the involved nature of the happenings, and because few readers of the stories will clearly recall events in them, it has been felt to be necessary. Furthermore, there are undoubtedly more people who talk about Ballard's recent stories than people who have read them. The point I make now, and the one I intend to make again later, is that readers can have little motivation to read these stories carefully, and less reason.

Now all the characters and their actions as described above are relatively simple: they can be understood as human beings. But Traven/ Travis/ Tallis/Christ is not so easily understood. He is, if you like, the outsider who is being studied by alien beings. His thoughts, his ideas, and his actions are seen but rarely understood by the humans around him.

Initially in this series of stories, the unknown Christ predominates - Traven is not mentioned in the first segment. As the series progresses more and more mention is made of Traven and less of the unknown: there are few references to the unknown in the fourth segment.

Who tried to force the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier? Some aspects of Christ's role are listed in an Author's Note: as an Air Force Pilot, in a TV thriller, as a pop singer (The Him). But these are only side-glances and the truth emerges only in the stories.

T. first appears in Karen Novotny's apartment. He has returned there from a lecture on Space Medicine. She sees him as someone trying to understand himself. Suddenly T. is in a car near a radio-telescope: he takes a piece of quartz from his pocket and listens to the music of the spheres. This is a fairly obvious link with an earlier Ballard story, THE VOICES OF TIME. Apparently T. now begins to react to the world around, and starts collecting the mirrors which are to play so important a part in his plans. He begins to see what he must do, the significance of some atrocity photographs, but he is still adjusting, still waiting for some more of the universe to swim into focus. One of the faces shown him by Dr. Nathan arouses his interest, and it seems that it is the planes of her face that interest him. Back, then, with Quinton (the man who was with him at the radio-telescope) T. watches the Sikorski hovering above them. He states his needs: 'Mirrors, sand, a time shelter.' The mirrors he actually obtains during the course of the story, the time shelter he constructs from the objects which seem random to humans, and the sand is freely available from his surroundings. In Karen Novotny's apartment he cuts out toy dolls and relates the dream of the rotting legs of the dolls. He identifies the image with the object. One of the objects in the first set of photographs is The Man - an Air Force pilot. The story of this pilot's appearance is then related. But his origin is impossible: his past a conglomeration of unlikely fragments. Even the language he uses is barely intelligible. The Christ-image emerges rather strongly in the section in which T. examines himself. Biological and cosmological constructs are confused. Then there is a return to the opening in which the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is violated. This time it is seen by T. and as a result is phrased in terms which, to him, are associative. Two fragments follow: a report of the disappearance of a

pilot while on an attempt at the land-speed record, and a report on the first appearance of The Him. T.'s body becomes identified with the wires of the radio-telescopes and then, from the reservoirs, he takes his leave of Karen Novotny, telling her to read of his return in the sand. Kirby watches as he walks into the water, pieces of his body flaking off and drifting past. Finally his identity ceases to have meaning, and he rests.

When he wakes he has reached an island - probably the island of THE TERMINAL BEACH. Here he talks with a young woman (possibly Karen Novotny) and begins to recall some of the past. He knows the Kline, Coma and Xero trinity from this past. The girl offers him a lift: he is in the Air Force guise. At the same time Nathan (as Lancaster) is examining the objects he left behind. The face on the Madonnas has become that of Jackie Kennedy, and T. obtains a job destroying the remainder of the signs. T. drives out to the radio-telescopes, reflecting on his knowledge of Kline, Coma and Xero. They seem to have different degrees of strangeness to him, but to us they are completely unfamiliar. From here he moves to Karen Novotny's apartment: he has started to collect the mirrors - 'for a trap' he says. At the same time that he is describing his purpose to Novotny, his mind is on the trinity. Surrounded by mirrors, he sees Nagamatzu and Lancaster. He returns again to the island of TERMINAL BEACH. His immediate purpose there is only to discover what exists on the beach: the items are random but understandable from the human point-of-view. Apparently he becomes ill (from the heat) but the trinity arrive to attend to him. Next he is driven out to the radio-telescopes by Novotny where, in the distance, he recognizes Xero - the one he cannot understand. He rushes towards him. Reaching the telescope, he finds the dead face of Jackie Kennedy. Kline and Coma are there, and so is Lancaster. Elsewhere, Lancaster explains the way in which Traven sees the world. T. walks past a cafe: the trinity watch. (Note that I have used the word 'trinity' independently of Ballard's use in this paragraph: it just seemed to be the most appropriate word. Ballard uses it overtly here.) Webster explains that Traven is trying to 'build bridges between things', 'in a way that makes sense.' Sense to him, that is. He vanishes from the sight of his wife near the reservoirs, reappears near the terminal beach, where he had left some documents, and notices that the trinity is fading away. At the same time his three current obsessions (Jackie Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald and Malcolm X) disappear. He lies on the terminal beach. In the words of Ballard, nothing happens.

In the third segment T. is watching Novotny dress. At the same time he becomes aware both of the oneness of the planes of her body with the planes of the universe, and of an 'increasing fragmentation' of the observable universe. He reflects upon his meeting with Novotny, at a planetarium. Even when he first sees her he is struck by the angles of her face. And as time has passed her planes, angles, movements have become closely identified with his world. Novotny, on her part, seeks to become a part of T. T. goes back to the cafe, now deserted. It is near the planetarium, and soon the Sikorski arrives, carrying Dr. Nathan. Tallis greets him, but finds that Nathan can no longer communicate with him. Back in the cafe Coma has appeared. She has been watching him. T. realizes now how like the faces of Monroe and Novotny hers is. Opposite Novotny's apartment lives a young woman who dresses in white - perhaps she is neither Novotny nor Coma. Looking around him, T. finds that the sand

dunes remind him strongly of Novotny, so strongly that the reality of her separate existence is lessened. T. remembers his purpose: to prevent Monroe's suicide. But he fails, and so Novotny dies. The reason, in Ballard's words, is that 'her presence' had become 'an unbearable intrusion into the time-geometry of the room.' T. wonders whether Nathan has given up.

T. stands for Travis in the last of the four segments. He examines the 'terminal documents' and, having finished, turns to the window where he sees 'as usual' the white Pontiac: it has two occupants. Inside the room, Travis examines the unknown man. The man sought Travis originally and has remained at the hospital since. Driving his car to the bunkers, Travis recognizes, as he arrives, that the towers and bunkers remind him of Elizabeth Taylor. He hears the helicopter and runs to the edge of the airfield. The helicopter dives towards him. Travis falls, but the helicopter swerves aside at the last moment. He sees a young woman in white coming towards him, but he slumps back on the car, vomiting. Now he sits in the Pontiac with two companions - the bomber pilot and a young woman with radiation burns. As he sits he realizes that the world in which he lives has become more and more fragmented. His companions just sit. They seem to be products of his own mind. He joins an organization which requires him to feign death, to produce a 'false death.' His two companions are with him. Next he goes through the same actions with Catherine Austen as he went through with Karen Novotny in the previous segment. Austen starts to take the form of an abandoned weapons range. He leaves her and the bomber pilot (it seems possible that she is the young woman in white with radiation burns) and goes to watch an old woman die of cancer: she persistently exposes herself to him, until she dies. Picking up his two companions, he returns to the weapons range. There the pilot and the young woman prepare to leave in a crashed plane. Travis draws a target. At the weapons range until his wife, as Elizabeth Taylor, arrives. In the explosion which follows, her body, which stands for his understandable universe, takes the form of the image in his brain - the exploding madonna. He wanders around the bunkers, the universe having become quiet for him. The pilot leaves in the helicopter, the young woman in the white Pontiac. The bodies of Nathan, Webster and Austen are left. He lies on the concrete and -

> '...he assumed the postures of the fragmented body of the film actress, mimetizing his past dreams and anxieties in the dune-like fragments of her body. The pale sun shone down on this eucharist of the madonna of the hoardings.'

When and where:

One cannot read Ballard without observing his increasing interest in the image and in hallucination. Even so early a story as THE VOICES OF TIME, which has already been mentioned in connection with this series, is full of the sort of imagery which runs rampant through the later work. The last sentence has quite the impact of that other great practitioner of the art, Eric Frank Russell:

> 'Half-asleep, periodically he leaned up and adjusted the flow of light through the shutter, thinking to himself, as he would do through the coming months, of Powers and his strange mandala, and of the seven and their journey to the white gardens of the moon, and the blue people who had come

> from Orion and spoken in poetry to them of ancient beautiful worlds beneath golden suns in the island galaxies, vanished for ever now in the myriad deaths of the cosmos.'

It is important to see that Ballard is not just a tinkerer, just as, in a way, DUBLINERS establishes Joyce's credentials for his later work. By reading DUBLINERS, one may so much more readily approach and accept ULYSSES and FINNEGAN'S WAKE. But it is here that the difference comes in: one can read those works with pleasure. I have not found this to be so in the case of this series of Ballard's. But Ballard can write: one can assume fairly safely that there is something in what he has done.

Now all that boring discussion above will have achieved its purpose if only it acquaints you with the sort of thing Ballard is trying to write. There is no substitute for reading the originals, but I consider that few fans will bother to read as carefully as is required. The above outline of the action may serve to clear up confusions in our minds, though it would frankly appear only to have created chaos out of confusion. But this is where the peculiar Burroughsian idea appears. It is at this stage that there is some slight justification of the comparisons, for Ballard juxtaposes these actions, as detailed above, so that there is not necessarily any logical connection between one paragraph and the next. Sometimes there is, of course, and because of its rarity is more confusing. Because of this, the actions of any one character becomes fragmented, and we see only reflections, sometimes through a distorting mirror, so that one character appears as another, so that one action appears like another, perhaps over and over again.

All of this makes rather unusual reading, even for the interested sf fan. As I have indicated above more than once, I don't think that there is much to be achieved by an analysis such as this, for the ordinary reader: the mystery has only deepened, in a way, and no more is understood than the original cursory glance revealed. To read the original stories might perhaps be likened to watching a poor movie on TV and dozing off throughout it. All I have done is to try to establish what happened while you were asleep. This is not what Ballard wants, I think. The essence of his message is perhaps that these stories should be read just once, and left: that the images, the fragments of brightness, should float occasionally to the surface of one's consciousness. He has deliberately confused what he has written, so that the unravelling process utterly destroys what was written.

Whether this writing justifies all the noise created both in NEW WORLDS and at the beginning of this article is entirely another matter. The images which Ballard continues to present in the series are his own, and at no stage does one become sympathetic: one never even knows whether he realizes that Eatherly was a fake. Though it is quite permissible to write a story about an illogical situation, with illogical characters, moving in a way which seems to us illogical, it is hardly a fair game to write the story illogically. I would conclude that Ballard has not quite achieved his aim, and that his stories have failed because he is not sufficiently strong a writer for his greatness to emerge.

You see, the stories could have been written by a very bad writer.

TWO AUTHORS AND THE PULP TRADITION

STEN DAHLSKOG

SHE WENT ALONE AND NO ONE CALLED AFTER HER.

This is how the girl, Rolery, is introduced in the third sentence of Ursula K. LeGuin's second novel, PLANET OF EXILE, and it not only gives a nicely understated description of the girl - it sets a level of writing which is sustained the book through. Here is one author who knows from the start that the way to build a character is to describe the character's interactions with other persons and let the reader draw the conclusions. It is so very much easier to spell out to us directly in so many words (and they usually do become many) that Rolery is a misadjusted person with unsatisfying personal contacts. But in reality, you and I are not told that our neighbour is misadjusted: we notice things about her, and get a feeling about her, and when we have noticed some things more we put our strengthened feeling into words: 'Rolery is a little misadjusted, don't you think?' We have the feeling before we arrive at the concept, and this is exactly how LeGuin allows her characters to come into our view, and that is one reason why they become alive: they are people we have learned to know.

And wonderful people they are, too, even when they are aliens. Heroes, no. Brigands, no. There are no Dick Seatons or Blackie DuQuesnes in LeGuin's worlds. There are people. There is Wold, who was a chieftain once, and now has to see his world change and his folk driven from their homes by an overwhelming enemy. Maybe Sturgeon or Budrys have described age better; if so, I have not read their work as completely as I believe I have done. A pulp author would have made the old chieftain pull himself out of his dotage and make a last desperate stand in a final gory fight, either to win a glorious victory or to die a hero's death. That story was old before there was pulp to print it on, and even J.R.R. Tolkien is not ashamed to use it when he tells us of the end of Theoden, King of the Rohirrim - but LeGuin knows more biology. Oh, the final gory fight is there (although somewhat less gory and considerably uglier than usual), but Wold's only part in it is to be carried out of it like any sack of goods from the hole in which he barricaded himself. A lesser author would at least have him pine away in the refuge, longing for his unattainable home and his unnttainable youth, but not LeGuin: Wold is old, and he does not really care about the defeat as long as he can still get some warmth from the sun or the fire. And yet LeGuin can show us why this ruin of a man still has power over his people, and why he is important to them - not for what he is, but for the memory of what he was - and even more, she can make us feel it (in exactly the same way we feel Rolery's aloneness and deep need for contact, any contact at all).

This, I say, is characterization of a level which is all too rare - in or out of science fiction.

But Wold is one of the minor characters, and so, after all, is Rolery. She is (and so very true, she has to be) too actively engaged in passively making herself fit into the totally alien people to which her unsatisfied need for contact has driven her in despair. She is not a heroine. She is a mirror to show first her own doomed society, then the probably doomed society to which she has fled. There the leader is Jakob Agat, but he is no hero. Too many generations of Landin-born ancestors have made him not quite Terran, but they have not made him a superman. His attempts to build an alliance between the once-Terran stranded colony and Wold's people are thwarted by common, meaningless misunderstandings. If there is a protagonist in this novel, it is not even Agat's city of Landin - it is Landin's destiny.

And when the book ends, the story which LeGuin has chosen to tell us is certainly over, but nothing has really ended and no one has triumphed. There has been a grave defeat, and there is a probably brief glimmer of hope. Some have endured and will have to endure again. We are not told how things turn out, just as we are never told in life, and we are left with a feeling that a window has closed on another real and very varied world - a world of which there was so very much more to see had the window been broader.

That feeling is part of the sense of wonder, and the author who can communicate it is rare. It takes considerable ability to make the reader feel the wind over the steppes, the tremors in the earth under the migrating forests, the march of the seasons in an utterly alien world. LeGuin is not the first author to describe a planet with generation-long seasons (Tom Godwin, for one, did in THE SURVIVORS), but she is the first I have read who has even tried to describe them. She describes her planet in exactly the same way she describes its people: she does not say that a generation-long winter is cold and dismal - no, she gives a really gooey description of the snow-melt. Authors with LeGuin's ability to build a convincing ecology are too often unable to resist the temptation to show off by describing every little detail. The result is like Frank Herbert's DUNE - a book bursting with disintegrated second-thoughts, each and all of them wonderful taken singly, but nearly all a drag on the story. But LeGuin knows that a novel should be built like a window and not try to show everything; and those of us who want novels, rather than encyclopaedias of possible worlds, should be very grateful for the windows she opens.

* * *

ROCANNON'S WORLD, Mrs. LeGuin's first novel, is not quite as good as its successor. It tries to achieve too many things at once, and is a less well rounded whole. The narrative is less sure: here LeGuin even resorts to the old phony trick of inserting excerpts from an imaginary encyclopaedia to explain background. That trick does present as much as possible as fast as possible - but there is no better way to destroy continuity. Well, some of the most famous authors use this device time and again, and this is, after all, LeGuin's first story. Compared to almost anything else it is very good indeed. For a debut it is sensational.

Oh, it is derivative: what author's first book is not? We have met some of the local flora and fauna before on other planets, and we have met some of the local primitives, too, but they were rarely as well portrayed. The ecology is not quite as convincing in LeGuin's first book as in her second: I am a little dubious that even an oxygen-rich atmosphere and a somewhat lower gravity than Earth's would allow animals as big as horses to fly - and in high mountains, too. But if you allow these animals, then LeGuin's sense of ecology shows in the way she has made them carnivores.

ROCANNON'S WORLD opens with a 24-page prologue, which may have seen separate publication. Except for that unfortunate encyclopaedia excerpt, this prologue is a legend, an Icelandic saga told the way H.C. Andersen would have told it, and it is a masterpiece. There are two stories of the time-dilation of close-to-lightspeed space travel which I will never forget: this one and L. Ron Hubbard's RETURN TO TOMORROW (- and Hubbard needed a novel to say less about pride, revenge, and ignorance than LeGuin does here in 24 pages.) LeGuin's sense of economy is very evident here, and also in the way she introduces Rocannon. He is glimpsed in the prologue, but he does not come into focus until the moment when he witnesses the bombing of his ship and finds himself with no help but the primitives of Fomalhaut II to stop his unknown enemies from making the planet a war base. Other authors would have spent pages describing the ship's mission; LeGuin does not waste words on it, since the story can not start before the loss of the ship and the failure of the mission.

And the story, of course, is the story of the faithful companions' perilous Quest through unknown lands of magic. It is the oldest story in literature, but what does that matter when it is well told? It may seem an easy story to tell, but generally it proves to have more traps, pitfalls and dead ends for its author than for its hero. LeGuin (and Rocannon) succeeds in avoiding them. There is enough scenery to make us feel the distances, but not so much as to make the Quest a travelogue; there are perils aplenty, but not so many as to make the Quest a trip through a Horror Chamber at an amusement park; things keep happening, but not so fast as to make us forget the weariness in our feet or the blissful rests at a rare safe fireplace; there is well imagined (and, for once, well varied) fauna and flora, but not so detailed as to make the Quest a guided tour of a zoo or botanical garden. There is just one thing wrong, and the fault is more the publisher's than the author's: the Quest is a story which needs space to unfold, and there simply is not space enough for this in half of an Ace Double. (Which is another way of saying that I liked the story very much and wanted more of it.)

But the important thing about the Quest is never what our companions do on their way - it is what the Quest does to them. When they start out, Rocannon tries to imprint his ethics on his friends: 'There will be no tabus broken or wars fought on my account. There is no point to it. In times like this, Mogien, one man's fate is not important.' 'If it is not,' said Mogien, raising his dark face, 'what is?' Rocannon is saved from answering this awkward question by a timely interruption, and the Quest is nearly over when he finally learns the answer, too late to be able to tell it to Mogien. LeGuin deliberately refrains from spelling out the answer. Few authors can resist that temptation, and when they bring out

the pointer the air usually goes out of their story with a loud hiss - but LeGuin has no sermon to preach, and gives us a chance to take it or leave it.

The end of ROCANNON'S WORLD is very much like the end of PLANET OF EXILE. It is definite, the story is over, no more needs to be said. It is both tragic and happy (not an easy thing to achieve). It is completely satisfying, and it makes one want more. You have lived for a couple of hours in a world so probable that you want it to exist, and when LeGuin has closed the window she has opened for you, then you close the book with a sense of loss. If I could have imagined any higher words of praise, I would have used them.

ROCANNON'S WORLD suffers from one of the silliest jacket blurbs ever concocted even by the experts at Ace: 'Wherever he went, his super-science made him a legendary figure.' The one reason for Rocannon's quest is the loss of practically all his super-scientific resources: he is marooned on a primitive world, and it is the conflict between his civilized past and his barbarian present which makes him something more than an invincible superhero, and gives the book its meaning. I have known for a long time now that publishers seldom bother to read their wares, but I think we should protest when blurbs make a book out to be its own antithesis.

* * *

A second case of this idiocy is the blurb on the back half (some might say the front half) of the second LeGuin Ace Double. Back to back with PLANET OF EXILE is Thomas M. Disch's MANKIND UNDER THE LEASH. 'Was he the only man to challenge the star masters?' asks the blurb anxiously - when the author immediately makes clear (insofar as Disch makes anything clear) that the very unwilling hero was certainly not the first to challenge the mysterious energy creatures who have made pets of the once proud human race.

I began reading MANKIND UNDER THE LEASH with great expectations, because Disch's first novel, THE GENOCIDES, was extravagantly praised by Judith Merril (F&SF, June 1966). American paperback distribution being what it is (or isn't) here, I have been unable to procure this first book, but if the second is any indication of its merit then I am unable to understand what Judith Merril was raving about. MANKIND UNDER THE LEASH is a novel I dislike.

I have nothing against another revolution novel: the revolution generally makes a good story, though this one is probably the goofiest revolution you ever read about. I do not object to the deflation of Proud Ideals, in fact I approve; every little bit helps, and although Disch is certainly not the first to point out that the human animal is a rather ludicrous one, that Brave Freedom Fighters do not have to be (and in fact probably seldom are) nice people, and that some people <u>like</u> being slaves - still, someone may listen to Disch who never read John W. Campbell. I dislike Disch's novel because it is everything LeGuin's PLANET OF EXILE is not. There is seldom such an opportunity to compare two so totally different novels. LeGuin's is entertaining and logical, it has

three-dimensional characters in a four-dimensional world, it believes in man's (and aliens') dignity, and tells you something of the need for and value of struggle, even in a probably hopeless situation. Disch's novel is and does nothing of this.

MANKIND UNDER THE LEASH is based on a novelette from IF (April 1965) which you probably do not remember, called WHITE FANG GOES DINGO. It is told as autobiography, the lazy author's way out. The eleventh sentence is: 'But already I have made a botch of it!' - and on the third page the 'author' says: 'Let me make a narrative of this.' There is a lot more of this inconsequential padding: 'Forgive me, dear reader, these little wanderings from the true path of narrative.' But then the autobiography is supposed to be written by an egotistical, foppish young snob with an allegedly profound education in the humanities and not the foggiest notion of science.

The hero writes his autobiography when the revolution is safely over, and the never-explained, never-visualized energy masters are driven away. He is looking back on his years as a pampered pet under the leash of the masters, and on page 48 he exclaims: '...and when I remember you - as I do now - too clearly, too dearly, all the force of my will melts away and I long only to be returned to you... It was paradise - and it is quite, quite gone.' (Yes, he writes like that, and there are 140 pages of it.) This is our brave revolutionary, and the inspiration for the blurb-writer. Well, it is a switch on the usual theme - and perhaps all those pulps weren't so awful, after all.

The masters (who are 'described' as identical with the spin of the neutrino!) took over Earth in 1970. Under the masters Earth has been depopulated. Most humans live as pets in the homes of the masters among the asteroids. There, our hero tells us, civilization (read: the humanities) is flourishing as never before. Now and then, masters and pets visit Earth to enjoy delightful, pittoresque primitivity. On such a vacation our hero's master turns him loose and fails to appear to collar him at the determined time. When desperately searching for his master, our hero happens to contact some members of the underground revolutionary movement. His frantic attempts to escape from them back to his master only result, after one perhaps-comical misunderstanding after another (if you consider pie-throwing very funny, then Disch is very funny), in his being dragged before the leader of the revolutionaries. This leader turns out to be no other but - you guess - our hero's presumably long-dead father. Daddy was once a pampered pet himself, but escaped when he Saw the Light, and decided to undermine the alien masters by - guess again - writing his autobiography. (I am not making this up: Mr. Disch did.) Having met Daddy and read his autobiography, our hero decides overnight to join the revolutionaries, who unfortunately are suffering from a bad collective case of brain paralysis. Daddy is mournfully facing the fact that it is not enough to write one's autobiography to make the masses revolt - one has also to make them read it, and this he is unable to do. To further the revolution Daddy has concocted some kind of quasi-scientific mumbo-jumbo religion, which is not sillier than anything else in the story, and does not take any part in the plot at all. Having done this, Daddy does not know quite what to do next. Fortunately, the alien master of our

hero returns and is about to put the leash on him. By a happy chance our hero is at that moment being nauseated by the sight of a snake eating a frog, and the alien master fades away. Now Daddy, this inspired leader of the underground, understands that the hyperaesthetic alien was so revolted at our hero's revulsion that it had to depart before it became violently ill (or whatever these creatures become). So Daddy immediately arranges a broadcast of our hero's revolting brain-waves; the masters are energy creatures, remember, whatever that means, and highly susceptible to broadcasts. During the taping of the broadcast, our hero has to watch the most awful sights he and his father can arrange - such as a live hillbilly orchestra, boxing matches, and pictures of people with elephantiasis. Of course the poor chap faints several times, but that does not matter as his lapses can be edited out of the broadcast. Next evening they take the air, and all the alien masters immediately leave Earth (and, one supposes, the solar system) in a glorious display of Aurora Borealis. The Aesthetic Revolution and Mr. Disch's novel are over.

There are ways to review the plot of any book, even a book by a master like Melville, Laxness, Thackeray or anyone you care to mention, and make it seem silly - but this is a relatively honest plot synopsis. There are also plots which no reviewer can make seem anything but silly, and this is one of them.

Now, obviously, no author would write a revolution story like this one if he wanted to write about a revolution. Mr. Disch's real subject is something else, and I can't understand what that something else is. Is he discussing the merits of slavery versus freedom, of security versus individualism? Probably not: you don't have to be serious about serious things, but if you want someone to take you seriously, then you are not likely to take pains to make a farce out of them. Is Mr. Disch trying to show us some possible ignoble motivations for Noble Movements? No, because his hero has just one motivation - to get someone else to make his resolves for him: a master or a father, it doesn't matter much which. And since the novel is the purported autobiography of one of the most self-centred autobiographers since Robinson Crusoe, we are never shown enough of the motivations of the other characters to be able to judge them. No ignoble motivations, then. Can Mr. Disch intend to show that an overemphasis on the arts may lead to the kind of mentality he portrays in his hero and make mankind fit for no better fate than that of a pampered pet? No, because the man who in spite of himself makes the revolution a success - the hero's father - is described as having been a champion aesthete in an asteroid pet kennel before his revolt. Is Mr. Disch telling us that mankind is behaving so damn foolishly that we ought to have masters to take care of us? Well, you might read the book that way if you wish to, but then at least some human in the novel would approach the level of intelligence and sanity peculiar to the moronic fringe of our politicians - and none of Disch's persons make that much use of their brains. Can Mr. Disch intend to say that education is just part of the grooming of pets, that we should not try to cultivate ourselves since after all our Baser Selves are part of us and therefore Human, that a-cultural activities are really just as worthwhile as a familiarity with Proust and Beethoven since after all these a-cultural activities are what liberated us from the star masters, aren't they? Then Mr. Disch would be one of those all-too-frequent

Radical Thinkers who believe that the way to give culture to the Masses is to declare that they are cultured already. Perhaps he is. His novel at least makes some kind of sense if read that way. This conclusion might seem to be strengthened when our hero declares that he really likes a couple of particularly revolting and sadistic revolutionaries because they are 'so vital.' However, I refuse to believe that Disch is as silly as his hero; he is certainly not using his hero as his mouthpiece. And if Disch by mistake has allowed his hero to make what Disch considers to be a point here, then he ought to have taken trouble to make the masterstroke of the revolution - the horror broadcast - believable. But it is not. It is just business-as-usual, just an anthology of any year's most atrocious television programmes. If the star masters found it so unendurable, just how did they manage to take over Earth in 1970? If they were able to tolerate being exposed to our present TV shows, then this horror broadcast is certainly far too mild to make them take off in a screaming hurry.

If there is any logic in the story of this revolution I am unable to find it. If Mr. Disch had any aim in writing this novel except putting words on paper I am unable to understand it. And if he intended to write just for entertainment, he might have succeeded in entertaining himself, but my considered opinion is that as a story of a revolution this novel is about the silliest and most boring I have yet read. If the novel is supposed to be a joke on our present civilization, then it fails because the culture, the aliens, and the humans in the story have not a reference point (except perhaps Proust) in common with the world we know. There is not a character in the novel who does not act as his own worst caricature. The aliens are never portrayed, there is practically no scenery, there is definitely no science, and whatever there is of a plot depends on everyone behaving as an idiot: if something really happens, it is either by a misunderstanding or by a coincidence, and generally by both.

I'll go one step further. This is the most senseless 'sf' story I have yet read - and I have read fifteen metres of them. At their very worst, the pulps at least tried to tell a story. Sometimes they failed dismally. But I realize now that we should appreciate their efforts. Out of the pulps grew a tradition of science fiction writing, a tradition which developed to the point where it outgrew the pulps. We have had sf authors for a long time now who have worked with the premise a disciplined imagination, a logical plot, believable characters, and a well told story, are the necessary ingre dients in a good sf novel. Mr. Disch has rejected all these ingredients and written a novel without any of them. This is probably enough to win him quite a few favourable reviews and perhaps even a Hugo nomination. Nowadays it seems that the less use made of established traditions in any art form, the better. The main thing for any number of people is to be different, not good.

Mr. Disch has severed all ties with the pulps in which sf grew up, and has given us something radically new. Mrs. LeGuin has extended the pulp tradition by doing everything the pulps tried to do, and doing it better. To me, there is no doubt: if we are to get any good sf in the future, then it will come from the authors who have been nurtured in, and extend, the pulp tradition.

HEARD BUT NOT SEEN

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

On reading Lee Harding's I WAS A VICTIM OF THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN BRAIN BLUDGE (ASFR6) my reaction, especially since my name seems to have been mentioned in the preliminary dickerings, was Better Lee than me. So far I've contrived to live a comparatively sheltered life, and my only appearance on the wrong side (but is there ever a right side?) of the fluorescent screen was many years ago, and briefly, on BBC TV.

The ship of which I was then Chief Officer was loading an unusually large consignment of livestock in London for Australian ports and, in addition to the usual Herefords, Aberdeen Anguses, Devons and whatever, there was a fine assortment of smaller animals - some being shipped out to breeders, some the pets of emigrating families.

Anyhow, those watching the BBC TV Newsreel shortly thereafter were treated to the spectacle of myself being towed along the boat deck by a large, beautiful, heavily furred Samoyed. I was told later that practically everyone who knew me had remarked nastily, 'What a nice dog.' They were all wrong, of course. She wasn't a dog.

Even though I have been able to steer clear of TV, quite frequently of late I have been interviewed by press and radio in New Zealand, where things and people regarded as newsworthy would hardly cause the lifting of the most unsophisticated eyebrow this side of the Tasman. However, the one really amusing radio experience had nothing at all to do with interviews. And in connection with it the long arm of coincidence was stretched to an extent that would not be tolerated (by editors, that is) in a work of fiction.

It was about a year ago, and I was in Auckland over the weekend. On the Sunday I was invited to spend the day at the home of an old friend and shipmate with whom I have a great deal in common, he being yet another master mariner with literary ambitions.

That evening, after dinner, he switched on the radio to a programme that he thought I should find interesting - but which induced in me a somewhat hostile mood. I don't know whether or not the BBC radio series, SCIENCE FACT OR SCIENCE FICTION, was rebroadcast in Australia by either the ABC or any of the commercial stations; it was run, however, by the NZBC. In these talks scientists discussed various ideas used in sf from the viewpoint of their own particular special ties. This Sunday night's offering was COMMUNICATION WITH ALIEN CULTURES.

Almost with the first word from the speaker I started barracking.

'The clot should read some real science fiction. The trouble with these eggheads is that they think Flash Gordon is typical of the field...' And so on, and so on.

And then, barely audible above my heckling, came the words, 'The problem is tackled in a very ingenious manner by A. Bertram Chandler in his story, THE CAGE....'

Even I had to join in the laughter.

The following Sunday I arrived back home in Sydney - and there, among the mail awaiting me, was the umpteenth publication of that same story, this time in Russian. It gets around more than I do, these days - but, like myself, it has managed to stay off television.

S M I T H ' S B U R S T

B O B S M I T H

If you had happened to be anywhere near the kiosk in the foyer of Central Railway Station, Tokyo, on a winter afternoon in 1953 (which is not as unlikely as you might think: uniformed fans were fairly thick around the Japanese islands in those days), you might have had to step smartly out of the way of a ball of greased lightning got up as a Sergeant in the Australian Army. Regular haunters of the station would smirk and nudge their buddies. 'Must be that nut Smith after the latest issue of IMAGINATION, one of those crazy space fiction mags,' they would scoff, in the manner of unbelievers, and they were probably right.

I could usually be relied upon to react violently whenever someone let it be known they'd seen the latest number of such-and-such an sf magazine, and after checking on location I'd be off like a rocket. This quite often involved a hair-raising jeep burn up through the Tokyo traffic (my Japanese driver always got as worked up as myself about tracking these magazines down), because 'MADGE' was, for some strange reason, always hard to find in Tokyo - and there's nothing worse than seeing a grown sergeant break down and blubber because he'd arrived too late, and those few copies gone...

If anyone lounging in the foyer on this particular afternoon had wondered what the excitement was about (hardly likely, I imagine) and had bothered to ask me, I might have calmed down long enough to tell them that the expected issue of MADGE was to have a photo and article on Robert Heinlein in its 'Introducing The Author' department, and goshwow! get outa my way! Why there was even a short story of Bob's thrown in, too!

If all that gives the impression that Sgt. Bob Smith was in those days a dedicated, dyed-in-the-wool, unswervingly loyal Heinlein fan... you're right, I was. I was a good little sf fan, and by Ghu, Heinlein was my ideal of what the perfect sf writer should be. (This was 1953: who did you enjoy most in those days?) Considering the enormous number of sf magazines available then, there was a surprising lack of Heinlein material, and to me at any rate original Heinlein items were events.

My only regret is that my earlier enthusiasm for this writer deteriorated as the next few years rolled by, because I could have almost gorged myself on Heinlein stories, serials and books. But my sf reading is a little more select and mature now, and my ideas of what sf should be have broadened somewhat. This is inevitable, but one's early idols tend to suffer: their writing just doesn't seem to mature as quickly as their reader's mind does...

My point (which I'm taking a hell of a time getting around to) is that Heinlein's large output over the past years has brought forth a great deal of critical writing on the man - most of it reasonably accurate I'm sure - but when reading this criticism one should remember the earlier enthusiasm, delight, and sense of wonder Heinlein's yarns produced in the fan. It's so easy for the serious-minded young fan these days to strip writers like Heinlein down to size, and to point out that we were numbskulls to like him in the first place - but then... they probably haven't the memory to go with their criticism, have they?

I'm not agin criticism, but over the past few years everyone seems to have had it in for Heinlein - and I'm just a trifle browned off.

S H O O T A T T H E P I G E O N - H O L E

W I L L I A M F. T E M P L E

Olaf Stapledon's PSALMS are most interesting. Like Thomas Hardy, and also Albert Camus, Stapledon at that period seemed vexed with God for refusing to exist - at least in the form of a benevolent deity. I know the mood: it engendered an early story of mine called FORGET-ME-NOT.

I also know the mood in which Hardy gave up writing novels, infuriated by unfair and obtuse critics grinding their own axes. Lee Harding's review of SHOOT AT THE MOON (ASFR7) put me in it!

Ted White (hiya, Ted... I think we last met during the Italian campaign, in that village Christ stopped at: Eboli?) in ASFR6 has already pointed out Lee's weaknesses as a critic: inaccuracies, prejudices, value judgements.

I've always refused to review my fellow authors' work, because I believe sf writers tend to make poor critics. (Damon Knight is a rare exception.) Simply because their minds are geared to creating fiction, as Lee's is, and they think subjectively rather than objectively. Their critical sense is fogged by their own fantasies.

> (QUOTE: Lee Harding on FANTASTIC VOYAGE: 'Its virtues are not in script, direction or technological gimmickry, They are in yourself - you supply them.')

Lord, Lee even supplied his own title for my novel. Sticking the wrong label on seems to be his specialty. Too many critics think their job is to classify rather than study the thing in itself. They have a file of routine stickers in their nut, and merely look for coding marks so that they can prove they're as fast on the draw as any computer. Journey to the Moon...Jules Verne...WHAM! - sf label. Backyard-spaceship-and-beautiful-daughter-type...WHAM! - another wrong label.

> (QUOTE: Alan Reynard in ASFR5: 'Are there two sets of customers in the book-buying community, who buy or reject a novel depending on whether or not it is labelled sf?' Yes, Alan, there are.)

Books labelled 'sf' slide down the slot into the hands of purely sf critics, for whom they may not have been written, and so lose their true audience. Such has been the fate of MOON, though I tried to prevent it. (I also tried, vainly, to prevent that pop-art jacket. The most unkindest cut of Lee's was to say it matched the contents. I'm aware that the Tate Gallery thought Lichtenstein's superficially similar WHAAM! worth acquiring for £7000. But that at least had a modicum of draughtsmanship to recommend it. Whereas MOON's jacket could have been painted by any 3-year-old child. I modestly submit that the contents couldn't have been written by any 3-year-old child - not <u>any</u> 3-year-old child.)

As a mere story-teller, sailing havenless these days between the Scylla and Charybdis of modern sf (i.e. Technical Tales for Technicians and Neo-Surrealism) I aimed MOON at Mr. General Reader. Just as a story about people, with sf an incidental background. For that matter FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE was similarly conceived. Johns Wyndham and Christopher similarly try to dodge the sf sticker. Such novels stand or fall by their narrative interest and by no other criteria.

Alas, sf critics are so blinkered that they can see only their own criteria, use the wrong yardstick and condemn a lily for not being a rose.

> (QUOTE: Peter Warlock: 'Excellence is absolute, and cannot be compared to its disadvantage with another example of excellence in a different category.')

Actually, MOON is difficult to categorize. From different angles it is a whodunit, an adventure story, a psychological study, or maybe a love story. It even carries a Message - for those who like Messages. Whatever it is, it isn't plain sf. And I object to folk trying to cram it into that pigeon-hole and complaining that it's the wrong shape.

At this point I pause to tear up a 4-page draft showing how Lee's selection of quotes is slanted to give a false impression. Detailing the manifold flagrant inaccuracies he managed to compress into so small a space (one must admire his professional economy). Instructing him in the principles of criticism. Patiently explaining why the ship's crew were (though all highly qualified and experienced people) deliberately not NASA-type, computer-chosen for their emotional stability. (E.g. the late Lt.-Col. Grissom 'never spoke two words when one would do, and never one unless necessary.' It hardly makes for lively dialogue.)

> (QUOTE: C.H. Whitely in THE PERMISSIVE MORALITY: 'Great achievement is often associated with unbalance and lopsidedness of the personality, with a persistent restlessness and turbulence of soul. The safest way of avoiding conflict is not to let anything move you very strongly. We may envy the best-integrated personalities, but the people we most admire are more likely to show considerable signs of strain.')

Without conflict, there's no drama. Some critics would condemn HAMLET because 'Elsinore is not a bit like life at Buckingham Palace as we know it to be.

I've torn it up. It was a waste of my time and I don't want it to be of yours. I doubt whether Lee could be made to see, anyhow: I suspect those blinkers are welded on.

But, if it pleases him, I saw FANTASTIC VOYAGE, too, in company with my wife and Ted Carnell and his wife, and we all enjoyed it in much the sense-of-wonder way he did. We'd all dined and wined well first and were relaxed and indulgent, prepared just to sit back and enjoy what the film offered, without demanding that it be something other than it was.

I recommended it to John Christopher. But all he could see was the stereotyped characters, false motivation, flat dialogue, scientific boobs.

The mood of approach is everything.

* * *

TO WHICH THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE - MR. HARDING HIMSELF - MAKES REPLY ...

In ASFR6 Ted White took me to task for what he thought an ill-considered and generally incompetent review of his novel, PHOENIX PRIME. Okay, it was a bad review of a bad book. Such books need the scathing arrogance of a William Atheling to do their faults justice, and I haven't the enthusiasm for such unrewarding work. But Bill Temple's book is something different. His accusations fall into pretty much the same territory, but on this occasion I think that Bill, and our readers, deserve some sort of clarification.

SHOOT AT THE MOON is probably not a bad book at all. Compared to the

pulp motivation of PHOENIX PRIME, I suppose it could be regarded as somewhat avant-garde. My operative word was 'awful' and that was a bad choice of adjective. It certainly described my reaction to the book, and if this was rather violent it was because, as I indicated in that review, I have been for many years something of a worshipper at the humble shrine of Bill Temple. And I see no reason to alter my consideration of the work. I maintain that there were a number of miscalculations on Bill's part that spoiled much of my enjoyment, and some irritating mishandling of the narrative which placed it completely out of my court of enjoyment. I feel now as I did when I finished the book, that Bill had compromised himself too much to suit Mr. General Reader, that he had bent too far backwards or aimed his sights with a shaky hand - for I can find nothing like this to complain of in the novels of Wyndham or Christopher. Or FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE, for that matter. And it's no good pleading special purposes. How can narrative quality survive the plot absurdities Bill serves up in this book? (Bill, I didn't even mention your marvellous space-ship: the doughnut design with the cone stuffed up the centre. What were we supposed to do with that one - smile in an arty manner, or guffaw at some sly Freudian connotation, or take it seriously?)

Ted White would call such complaints the result of prejudice. Well what's wrong with a few light-hearted prejudices? Ted parades his as well as any writer I know, and they have not always been light. There are a number of opinionated people in both the fan and professional press - or does everyone regard Algis Budrys's reviews as Holy Writ?

We read the reviews - and the criticism, for they are not one and the same thing, are they? - but, lordy! we don't necessarily follow their advice blindly. We like to shop around, take a concensus. I've never yet found myself 100% in agreement with any review, and I'd be rather surprised to find I ever did.

Both Ted and Bill feel that they have been wronged by my unfavourable reviews, and if I were them I would probably feel the same - or would I? I know they take their work seriously, but perhaps the wry cynicism of this column's title has eluded them? I know that Ted had not seen any copies of ASFR prior to the one that contained that review, but I thought that Bill would be used to my personal brand of sacreligious nonsense by the time he got to no.5. After all, I was only chiding him in a more incensed manner than I did James White in no.3 for not writing the book he could have written. Can you get more personal or prejudiced than that?

Surely by now our readers have realized that I am in no way connected with the idealistic nonsense of Dr. Widdershins, because such a cold, rational approach to fiction is quite beyond me? I am an opinionated so-and-so but any 'criticism' I make is as a friend and a junior member of that fourth estate. I would say the same to you in the hospitality of your house, and I would expect you to hotly dispute my feelings - only we happen to be several thousand miles apart at the moment and the 'conversation' must be carried on in this clumsy, one-sided manner.

Bill, I wonder if you find more preferable that stingy little four-line review Judith Merril gave your book in F&SF? It may mean a few more

sales - I don't know - but perhaps my 'bad' review has given us both some return - and perhaps the readers of ASFR as well. Your dismissal of my review as incompetent, and my inability to retract, might make some people more curious about SHOOT AT THE MOON. They might even read it and discover which category suits them out of the ones you have listed. The same might be said of PHOENIX PRIME.

Who among us takes criticism seriously, particularly that prejudice-infested variety called 'reviews'? I couldn't for a minute. And I cannot really accept your idea, Bill, that no writer is equipped to criticize another. Oh, I know we're subjectively oriented and all that (our Editor keeps on quoting Wilde's dictum that one can only be objective when one doesn't care). It's enormously difficult to be objective about one's own work - as Brian Aldiss made quite clear in ASFR3 - let alone the work of writers we respect and admire. But I would rather see a work of mine 'reviewed' by a fellow writer than by some jaded newspaper hack. Perhaps I am peculiar, but I know that writing is <u>not</u> a solitary craft, and that there is a strange artistic feedback that moves like some communal sub-conscious among all men of letters. I find it fascinating and much more rewarding than the great and respected field of literary criticism, to which I can never subscribe. I like the contact with another writer's feelings. I don't like trampling on them like some fool in oversize boots but, if I do, is it asking too much of him to imagine it happened at the Globe on a busy Friday night, and that he either punched me up the conk or we spent the rest of the evening boozing together?

Don't look for William Atheling when you read me. I haven't the gall to go with it, the books to point to, or the ego to keep constantly at work cutting...cutting...cutting. I have neither the presumption nor the experience to mount the siege perilous on behalf of Australian prodom. I peddle enthusiasm and disgruntlement to my readers. I am as anxious to hear from wronged writers as they are to communicate, for communication for us can now take other forms than the customary ones. Look what's happening here, now, in the pages of an obscure roneoed fanzine emanating from of all places Melbourne, Australia, for crissakes.

We - my clumsy companions in the fan press and my equally clumsy self - are fandom's answer to the perennial gossip columnist. We serve no useful purpose, we preach no immutable doctrine, we are responsible for no new advance in style, and are answerable only to our own prejudices. We exist because there are people (ourselves included) who like reading <u>about</u> sf. There's nothing more world-shaking involved. And we are all of us to a certain extent motivated by vanity and egotism, but where some seek to bring giants to their knees, others seek only to entertain, and often in the process become more controversial than beloved. Such is life.

This apologia sets no precedents. Future wronged writers may squeal as loud as they like but will not be treated to another statement of my attitudes and aspirations. I'll keep looking for skill and craftsmanship, and complain when I don't find them. I will read SORCERESS OF QUOR, but I won't promise to review it in these pages, and I will sure as hell keep an eye on this troublesome guy Temple because his next novel is bound to be g-r-e-a-t.

REVIEWS

STEPHEN COOK JOHN FOYSTER DIANA MARTIN
PAUL STEVENS BRIAN RICHARDS ALAN REYNARD

GORE VIDAL: MESSIAH (Four Square: $0.80) Stephen Cook

In the beginning was John Cave. From humble origins he came forth into the world with his message of death, and the world fell at his feet.

Of course, he had help. The original five followers - Ivan Stokharin, Paul Himmell, Edward Hastings, Clarissa Lessing and Iris Mortimer - gathered around him early in his mission, protecting him through the difficult times, when the churches still existed to oppose him, and he was persecuted in prison. Through his hundred and eight telecasts and his many written works, his message - Cavesword - finally won the Western world. A few people still reject Cavesword; they are known as lutherites by analogy with Martin Luther. Their number is statistically calculable, and lobotomy converts the few who cannot be cured by modern methods of indoctrination. The East has thrown up firm barriers against the Caveite West, but they will soon come to accept the Caveite social system, and above all the assurance that death is quiet, peaceful, and final. It is good to die. Cave himself died to prove it.

This is the truth. It is in the history books. It is in John Cave's Testament. The whole world believes it, and half the world lives by it. And when a story is so widely believed, it <u>becomes</u> the truth. John Cave spoke the truth, and the history books recorded it.

In a small town in Egypt, shielded from the Caveite world, an old man is hiding. He uses a pseudonym, but his real name is Eugene Luther. He is a humble man. Unlike the Caveites, who know the truth, Luther carries simply the memory of what really happened. In a sense, he no longer exists. The anonymous men who have rewritten history have wiped his name from the records, replacing it with that of Hastings. Soon he will die. In the meantime he writes what he remembers...

In the beginning was Clarissa Lessing. She said she was over two thousand years old, and nobody cared to question her too closely. In her age, she amused herself by playing games with people and history. It was Clarissa who recognized Cave's power to fill a vacuum in the modern soul, and saw how exciting it would be to bring a few people together here, give a little push there, and set a new messiah on his way.

Himmell was the advertising expert; his job was to plan the campaign for the greatest impact, publicitywise. Luther provided academic respectability, which is to say, tone. Iris Mortimer was able to give personal

support to Cave, and to organize the ground level discussion groups and committees. Stokharin, the psychiatrist, was brought in later.

And the campaign was under way. Cavesword was being taken to the people.

John Cave never wrote a line. His message was simply that death was good; his power, and it was great, was little more than charisma. When he looked somebody in the eye, contact was made between soul and soul, and the message slipped from one to the other almost unnoticed. But the larger his following became, the more organization was needed. People began to demand moral and social guidance. Since Cave did not provide it, men like Luther wrote it in his name... and Cavesword began to grow.

The rest of the story followed almost inevitably. With hindsight, it can be seen that only the details were in doubt. The leaders began to drift apart, each according to his interpretation of Cavesword. The movement, spreading wider and wider at the base, cracked apart at the top. Clarissa, seeing her game getting out of hand, dropped out and disappeared. The disagreements flared up into naked power play. Cave died. Factions formed, sharing the ugly secret of his death, fighting not just for their points of view but for their lives.

And all the time the movement grew. The public's faith was undisturbed. There was only one truth, and that was the truth that everybody believed. The struggle was resolved, the forms of religion and society were decided on the arbitrary cut and balance of a razor blade, but the masses saw only what they were shown and went only where they were led. Did John Cave praise death itself, or the fuller life that could be led when the fear of death was removed? The issue was religious; its solution was political. A man called Luther fled America in defeat and was erased from history; and the people set their minds reverentially upon the beauty of death, unaware even that they had been deprived of an alternative.

You can read the full story in Gore Vidal's MESSIAH. It is a book with such quiet strength that it is easy to overlook its few weaknesses. Some of the sentences in the opening chapters seem too long and complex, but Vidal and the reader soon go halfway to meet each other. Stokharin is an annoyingly crude stereotype of the single-minded psychiatrist, but he would not be so noticeable if it were not for such a sensitive characterization as that of Luther.

The hardest part to write must have been that of Cave. How do you convey the presence of a man who has an almost hypnotic power to impress - a power which he retains even over his closest associates? Hollywood would probably bluster its way through with Richard Burton's eloquence or Peter O'Toole's blue eyes; a wise director might avoid showing Cave on the screen at all. Vidal knows better than to build Cave up as a spiritual superman, but he is equally aware of the danger of making him too much like a run-of-the-mill nut. His solution is to give Cave what comes very close to being a non-character and a non-message.

Luther spends pages describing the stunning impact of the first time he heard Cave speak. The meeting is over, and as he says goodbye to Iris, he suddenly thinks to ask her: 'What did he say, Iris? What did he say tonight?'

Before an audience, Cave is inspired. A born actor, he welds separate individuals into an unthinking whole, and absorbs them. When he relaxes, he is intelligent but mundane, interested in little more than places he might visit, rarely mentioning his message. It is left to his followers to do the work.

There is one immense gulf between Cave and his predecessors. Other prophets have been told to go into the world and spread their message - driven, in one way or another, by something great er than themselves, by a god, an absolute, an ultimate being. John Cave is on his own - and his followers know it. There is no pretence that the Caveite doctrines are being produced under some form of divine guidance. Every word, every idea, every act, begins and ends with man.

And this is the book's strength. Behind the faith of the true believers, behind the confident simplicities of the history books, there lies the story of what really happened. An idea may be divine, but men and women are never more or less than people. It is known that Cave was persecuted and imprisoned by his enemies, and died for all mankind. Eugene Luther says otherwise, but Eugene Luther is dying, and besides, there is no such person.

Caveites, take sides! Do you accept or reject the new theory that Iris Mortimer was the spiritual Mother of Cave?

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER: EDGE OF NIGHT (IF - Sep/Oct 66) John Foyster

This latest short novel of Bert Chandler's shows just how much he can do with a relatively small battery of ideas. The average sf writer, trying to squeeze every drop of value from a single idea, often gives the impression that his mind has been completely worked out, leaving only dust and rubble. In the October issue of IF, Larry Niven's story, NEUTRON STAR, would be a modest example of this kind of writing. The story has been promoted as 'heavy science,' which it might just be, but it is nevertheless mighty skinny on plot.

Now Chandler's story is not exactly swarming with new ideas, at that. In fact, there are no new sf ideas in the story itself: the ideas are simply presented against their most suitable background - an adventure yarn by a good storyteller.

Chandler has this sort of success because he introduces minor novelties to the reader in a series of stories and against a background which is quite familiar. It is familiar to the reader because he can hardly have avoided reading Rim stories before, and it is familiar to Chandler because it is the kind of world in which he lives. These two factors

also add a touch of verisimilitude to all the stories in the series, so that the rare reader who is not familiar with Chandler's previous stories will feel that he ought to be, and will half-remember a story he thinks he has read. In this respect Chandler is rather like Cordwainer Smith.

In fact, in this story Chandler uses an idea which has appeared in Smith: the pinlighters in THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON have become the canine amplifiers of EDGE OF NIGHT. The handling of these assistants by the two writers tells us a great deal about the difference between them, for the pathos is implicit in Smith, explicit in Chandler.

Nevertheless, with the simple ingredients of parallel timetracks and rat-mutations, Bert Chandler manages to turn out another story of the Rim Worlds which is more than just attractive.

In this case it is just a matter of professionalism: Chandler is essentially a story-teller, and because all of his stories have been of this same kind, the simply-constructed adventure, his writing has become more proficient, more smooth, than that of any other writer of sf. Of all writers of sf, Chandler alone seems to be capable of telling a story for its own merit: in other words, of writing an adventure story set in the future - a true, science fiction story.

DAMON KNIGHT: THE OTHER FOOT (Whiting & Wheaton: $2.30)
J.T. McINTOSH: TIME FOR A CHANGE (Michael Joseph: $2.65)

DIANA MARTIN

By an apparently slight miscarriage of a scientific experiment involving time travel, some extraordinary exchanges take place between people and matter. The most significant in Knight's novel involves Fritz, a bipedal alien from Brecht's Planet and one Martin Naumchik, a young Berlin reporter. At the time of the transformation Fritz has just been installed in a cage at the Berlin Zoo and Martin has been quietly looking in at him. In an instant of time, their mental positions are reversed and Martin is beating at the glass walls of the cage while Fritz, now in his human body, gazes bemusedly down at his pink fingers and hairy hands. From then on the helpless Martin, who now has all the outward appearance of a Brechtian Biped, no matter how human his psyche has remained, fights a losing battle to assert his proper 'identity' and, ultimately, is cruelly deceived by the Zoo's Director. Fritz meanwhile manages to adapt in a faltering way to his human existence. Both are eventually reconciled to their strange destinies, partly by receiving consolation from the opposite sex, and partly through time, the Great Healer.

Knight's manner of examining each character's reaction to this strange 'transformation' and the mechanism of their adjustment is very well done and comes over quite credibly - which is no small achievement considering the wildly improbable plot he has used - but unfortunately his style is not really easy to accept: the chopping and changing from one minor character to another is annoying, as are the abrupt shifts from one situation to the next. Too many extraneous characters are introduced

and given an unnecessary amount of word-space without adding much to the story. (Perhaps this technique was intended to portray the bewilderment of the two protagonists. Instead, it simply bewilders the reader.) I would rather have seen more space given to describing the final acceptance of their positions by Fritz and Martin, instead of the detailed attention to their two modes oflife. These were interesting, but seemed rather vaguely presented.

As a novel the book is interesting enough, but left me with the feeling of being cheated, of having missed out on something Knight was trying to tell me. GALAXY published a shorter version of the story some time ago, called THE VISITOR AT THE ZOO. The expansion hasn't added much in the way of clearing up the few disappointing things I have indicated. Worth reading, but I know that Damon Knight can do better.

TIME FOR A CHANGE is nowhere near so precious a work. McIntosh delivers a simple, straightforward narrative in extremely readable prose. A fascinating story is unfolded, culminating in a tremendous description of a fire, which is so clearly portrayed that the reader almost feels the heat and smells the smoke.

The people in this novel are much more real than those in Knight's book, and they hold the attention. There are really two 'types' of people here: Val Matthews, the Fire Insurance man, typifies the first group - Miranda, Greg, and their group of friends from the future, the second.

McIntosh knows his craft. On the first page we find Val choking over his lunch at the sight of an apparently nude girl. Subsequent developments kept my attention firmly fastened to the printed page. Everything about the plot is so well set out and motivated that I almost felt part of the action myself. And what action! The 'other' people and Miranda (Snow White and the Giants, as Val describes them) are something like a class of schoolchildren on tour with their teacher from some time in the future. They have taken a trip into the past to alter the course of some - unspecified - events, to bring about some favourable effect on their own 'present.' Only Miranda knows the real purpose of their visit, which is to save Jota, Val's rather formidable cousin. By accident she learns that Val himself is really the one they need, for he is unaffected by certain powers possessed by Jota and some future people. The great fire at the climax is essential to the success of her plans, but can also affect Val adversely - so he bargains with the people from the future and wins his point.

The only weak link in the story is in the ending, for having accepted Miranda's quite reasonable explanations of how time can be 'changed,' it is difficult to see how Val's final actions could have the dire results he imagines. But this is one of the in-built weaknesses of all time-travel stories.

McIntosh's style is refreshing, his characterization rather more realistic than others'. His plotting, even in complicated situations, is crystal clear. TIME FOR A CHANGE makes fascinating and exciting reading.

JOHN JAMES: VOTAN (Cassell: $2.85) Brian Richards

'Well, if you really want to know how it was I came to be chained to an oak tree, half-way up in the middle of nowhere, with wolves trying to eat me out of it, I'll tell you...'

I have a mild aversion to book reviews which are merely plot summaries, but VOTAN is surprisingly difficult to treat in any other manner. I am always most suspicious of historical settings, having painful memories of something I once picked up called ARENA - in which I found seventeen major historical errors in the first ten pages. I confess that I approached John James's book with some trepidation. But for the fantasy reader VOTAN is a special prize.

The action of the story purports to take place in the second century A.D. The anti-hero, Votan of the title, starts off as Photinus. (Though I think Priapus would've been more appropriate.) He is a Greek city-slicker exiled to the upper-Danube marches of the Roman Empire, for political reasons. A very social type, he flits from bed to bed quite blithely, and when this conduct becomes the subject of disapprobation he is obliged to do a swift nip over the palisade. Thence to the Amber Trail and two thousand years of mischief.

Basing himself at Asgard (where the German amber lords have a trading post which would have sent the governors of the Worshipful Company of Hudson's Bay green with envy), Photinus finds room at the top via the marriage bed of lusty Freda. But he has his little troubles with homosexual Balder, slithy Loki, and ponderous Tyr.

Among other dubious moral adventures, he is nearly eaten by woad-painted Ancient Britons, and escapes in a manner which could only be approved by the late E.R. Burroughs. Half blinded, and with his name at last corrupted to Votan, he returns to Valhall for a magnificent Götterdämmerung.

Science fiction? No - though a far-better-than-average sf writer might have been tempted to drag in a time machine or something and pass it off to the paperback publishers as science fantasy. But it's not that. It's a brilliant historical fantasy. Do yourself a favour and buy it.

HARRY HARRISON: THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT (Four Square: $0.60)
Paul Stevens

Crime is on the increase - so the sociologists tell us. Someone robs a bank or bashes some poor shopkeeper for a few dollars and when we read about it over the morning coffee we shake our heads in disgust and wonder what the devil the police are doing about it. The reader of sf may wonder what problems the police will have in the future if they find it so difficult to cope now. Harry Harrison provides one answer.

In his interstellar empire, when the police are up against a criminal

uncatchable by ordinary methods, they call in the Special Corps - an organization founded on the principle of 'if you can't reform them, recruit them.' One of these thieves set to catch thieves is James Bolivar di Griz - Slippery Jim to the trade - a master criminal, nabbed on the point of completing the sweetest little armoured-car robbery in sf history by the Corps. He is somewhat staggered when he finds that the head of the Corps is his boyhood hero, the legendary Inskipp the Uncatchable.

Jim's first big assignment as a Special Corps agent is to track down an illicit battleship, and this job takes him on a galaxy-wide hunt for a murderous wench named Angelina.

Harrison is in top form here, and there's plenty of everything for everyone in this highly entertaining story. A different Harrison from the author of MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! (reviewed in ASFR7), I would imagine, but then this is a story which started off in ASTOUNDING back in 1957, and has been around in book form since 1961. All credit to Four Square for re-issuing it: its new audience will not be disappointed.

CLIFFORD SIMAK: WAY STATION (Pan: $0.60) Alan Reynard

WAY STATION was a Hugo winner in 1963: not a very good year for sf, so it is hardly surprising that the fans were impressed by the warm, rustic humanity of the book, qualities significantly absent from contemporary sf. Simak is one of those writers who have cultivated a personal style well ahead of their time. There are indications that this is something being more and more encouraged, but Simak has a few decades' start on just about everyone apart from Sturgeon. It is surprising, in fact, to realize just how long he has been writing, and how consistent his philosophy has been. Time was when his name appeared with astonishing regularity in the sf magazines. He specialized in the long novelette: one particularly memorable major serial was TIME QUARRY, in the very first issues of GALAXY, better known now as TIME AND AGAIN. A few years ago a very tired novel now known as TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING appeared in ANALOG - tired because it highlighted yet another Campbellian superman and seemed to grind the plot details of psi powers right into the dust. This story seemed to bring to an end Simak's long term of magazine writing. He apparently stopped trying to please the magazine editors and began writing more to please himself. His gain in stature has been considerable.

Simak has written about one novel per year since leaving the short fiction field. WAY STATION was picked up by Fred Pohl and run in GALAXY, where its very genuine craftsmanship and distinctively emotional writing were an immediate success. None of his more recent novels has been serialized anywhere. (I hope to review the others as they become available, for Simak is a writer to watch, and to admire.)

WAY STATION is a 'personal' novel. It re-establishes and broadens a philosophy that can be traced back two decades to the CITY stories and to novels like TIME AND AGAIN and RING AROUND THE SUN. In Simak's universe, all men - and aliens - are brothers. If we must stop war, if we

are really serious about it, we must deprive man of all his machines. We must return to the wheel and the plough and the land that gave us birth, to oil lanterns and firelight, to the rivers and singing winds. Kingsley Amis (k.amiS, as Dr. Jenssen has irrelevantly pointed out) calls Simak 'the poet laureate of pastoral sf.' He is a man with a very genuine love of life and nature; he never tires of repeating his message of brotherly love and compassion, and always it is couched in a well-written narrative rich with the traditions of sf.

But even Simak has never before indulged himself as much as he does here. Several times the story line is held up while the author speaks of flowers and birds and other non-human things. Such detours may prove tiresome to some readers, but to those who appreciate entering a writer's mind, they will prove remarkably illuminating. Simak has become a writer first and editors' lackey second, and while he sometimes allows his love of nature to take precedence over 'story values' he never for a moment relaxes his grip upon your mind. There is not even much of a 'plot' - not, at least, of the kind we have come to expect of novel-length sf. Enoch Wallace has signed an agreement with the alien races of the galaxy that allows them to use his house as a way station for travellers being 'transmitted' between the stars. In return he receives a kind of immortality, which, as the story opens, has brought him from the mid-19th century to the present and seems likely to take him another few thousand years before he begins to age perceptibly. Most of the 'action' is taken up by Enoch's thoughts and reflections while he is alone on his unusual estate, and with the efforts of the FBI to investigate his rather remarkable existence.

Simak's aliens are admirable and hard to forget. It's been some time since I could believe in alien life forms as readily as I did when I first encountered them years ago, but Simak has made it possible again. All of the characters in this book are resoundingly real - even the imaginary people conjured up by Enoch's lonely mind. Throughout the book there flows a warm fellowship, a bond of love between man and man, man and alien - and only real persons, in life or fiction, experience this.

Simak is no longer a young man. In some ways his more recent work appears to be sections of a large canvas of his personal philosophy. In the long run this work may constitute a statement about life as significant as the more outre (but equally simple) creations of Cordwainer Smith.

WAY STATION is a very well written novel. Each word follows smoothly upon the last to form sentences which advance the narrative with a gentle fluency not often achieved by Simak's contemporaries. This is more than professionalism, more than the result of having been chained to the typewriter for several decades. For all his early pulp work and writing for newspapers, Simak has never forgotten how to think, and has gone on thinking when other writers have turned into literary treadmills. He feels strongly about the people he creates, and communicates his feeling. Whether you like this very personal approach to sf writing, is another matter. Some readers find his simple, home-spun philosophy repugnant: I don't. WAY STATION belongs in the basic science fiction library.

M O R L O C K S

JAMES BLISH ROBERT COULSON
DONALD H. TUCK P.A.M. TERRY

JAMES BLISH Alexandria Virginia USA:

The two issues of ASFR containing my letter and the review of Harry Harrison's novel arrived here while Harry was visiting us, producing a long pause in the conversation. Harry wishes Mr. Harding to know that there was no 'gradual elevation' to ASTOUNDING/ANALOG, because in fact his first published story appeared there. Otherwise he seemed to enjoy himself while reading, and small wonder. :::: I have a complaint to make of you, sir. You reproach Tom Disch for his 'negative outlook' and suggest that he must throw it off. You're not the first person to suggest this, but I think it shows a regrettable, TIME-Magazine-like propensity for reproaching an author for his views instead of his execution. (TIME, for instance, is forever running down Golding because he takes a dark view of human nature, and demanding that he come around to believing in goodness and God.) I submit that the author's views are his own business and he has every right to espouse them whether you agree with them or not; and that the quality of a book in no way depends upon whether or not you agree with it. :::: I did enjoy that eldritch moment when you turned an Ursula LeGuin page and found yourself reading Avram Davidson upside down. Avram lives in that kind of a world. :::: Paul Stevens' TV reviews remind me of a party given in London in 1965 by a publisher, which was staged at the Planetarium. One of the attendees was a Dalek which rolled about the floor addressing everybody by name in a squeaky voice. When it approached Harrison, however, he went into a defensive crouch and demanded: 'Where's its groin?' A few bottles later, Harrison himself was crammed into the machine, which thereafter was less polite. :::: I offer a sequel to Walt Willis' bumper sticker: God is not dead - he just doesn't want to get involved. :::: Phil Muldowney's comment that 'one of the main attractions of sf... is that the field is so wide' makes a pleasantly sane sound. There is plenty of room both for Moorcock's quasi-belligerence about his New Wave writers (probably somewhat calculated - after all, he is trying to sell a magazine) and Ted White's interminable lita nies to story-telling (always underlined but never defined). As far as the stories themselves are concerned, a little seepage of the surrealism of the 1930s into the field is not going to hurt it; not even Judy Merril's excited conclusion that this hoof is the whole camel can do any real harm. It does us good to be shaken up occasionally; even sf can become stodgy and conventional, and a diet of nothing but Murray Leinster - which seems to be the prescription Ted White is talking himself into - would lead to pellagra pretty quickly. Whether one likes Ballard's work or not (I for one think it's marvelous stuff, though I have no intention of writing anything even vaguely like it) he has shaken a lot of our preconceptions, which is valuable in itself. He will of course be extensively imitated by young writers who don't know what he's doing or why he's doing it, and

the imitations will be vile, but any strong personality produces this effect - probably most of us can remember with a shudder the days when Charles E. Fritch was trying to imitate Bradbury - and it is quite ephemeral; what is strong in the new work is absorbed, and the slack-jawed imitations go down the drain. This is how any genre grows, and indeed the process is inevitable and cannot be halted by any amount of hectoring from outraged conservatives. :::: ...I note that January and February were Nostalgia Months in Melbourne. While we are sniffling over old AMAZINGs, does anybody remember a writer who appeared there twice, named Jack Winks? He was nothing very remarkable, but at least the torch has been passed on; Donald Winks, who has an article in the current HARPER'S and has written an excellent mainstream novel, A QUESTION OF INNOCENCE, is his son. (It's a slightly quenched torch, though; after writing one absolutely awful sf story, Don has decided not to repeat the experience.)

In ASFR5 Prof. Widdershins says of my THE HOUR BEFORE EARTHRISE, 'It is certainly a juvenile novel... It is equally obviously slanted (now) to IF's audience...' Yes, it's a juvenile, but some 'obviously' are more equal than others. Barring the effect of Prof. Widdershin's '(now)', the intent of which escapes me, the novel wasn't slanted at IF. It was written as a hardcover juvenile for G.P. Putnam's Sons; Fred Pohl bought it for IF from the carbon copy some eight months after I turned in the original to Putnam's. I did not revise it for Fred - and I didn't have ANALOG in mind either. Nobody but Putnam's, who had okayed and paid for the idea (from an outline) in the first place, some three years ago now. :::: I once worked for an editor who said 'I'm dead certain about this' only when he knew in his heart he was wrong. Maybe Prof. Widdershin's 'obviously' is a similar forewarning. :::: ...You sent me an extra copy of issue 1. In default of a better idea, I passed it along to Lin Carter, not because of his IF column, but because he is reviving SPECTRUM, a very good critical journal during its brief past existence, and I thought he ought to be aware of ASFR. :::: ...See the people thumping Jim Ballard again! Poor Jim Ballard! He thought sf was an experimental field for receptive minds. Poor Jim Ballard, now he will have to write comic books.

DR. WIDDERSHINS writes: Mr. Blish is in error in supposing that I suggested that his story THE HOUR BEFORE EARTHRISE has been slanted towards a particular editor or his requirements. I specifically stated that the story 'read like' a Campbell story. And I wrote that it was 'obviously slanted (now) to IF's audience.' I do refer to the audience, not to the magazine. This is a statement about Pohl's recent attitude with IF - the tendency towards the publishing of juveniles - not, I submit with respect, a comment upon James Blish's writing. I saved that for other portions of the review.

THE EDITOR says: Let's not start Buck's letter here. Have a quote or two: From Robert Graves's POETIC CRAFT AND PRINCIPLE: '...cosmically speaking, to demand an after-life is to count on occupying two places at once in the time-space continuum - which is as greedy as plural voting.' :::: 'Poetry is the profession of private truth, supported by craftsmanship in the use of words.' :::: 'An important rule of craftsmanship is that a poet should never tell his readers how romantic, pathetic, awe-inspiring, tragic, mystic or wondrous a scene has been.':::: And now, over to Hartford, Indiana:

BUCK COULSON Route 3 Hartford City Indiana 47348 USA:

Widdershins' remark (ASFR5) that 'the reader of every work of fiction is searching for some affirmation' is one of those statements that seem terribly profound at first glance and pure balderdash at the second. The average reader is doing the precise opposite of trying to 'find some reflection of his view of life;' he is trying to find a dream world that is totally different from his view of real life. Reading erotic novels has nothing at all to do with a justification of one's sex habits; readers of erotic novels are precisely those people who are dissatisfied with their own sex habits. Read any reputable psychologist on the subject; the man who reads pornography is the man least likely to indulge in 'immoral acts' in real life. Read sales statistics; novels of Everyman are terribly popular with the literary set who consider themselves anything but common men, but the real common men prefer superheroes like James Bond, Tarzan, Mike Hammer, or Superman. :::: As for the difficulty in understanding the motivation of characters who want to make their collective the best in the USSR and maybe meet the Party Secretary, what's the difficulty? It's exactly the same motivation of the grey flannel junior executive who wants to bring in the most contracts and get a key to the Executive's Washroom. Does Widdershins know what motivation is? God knows there are plenty of novels in which the motivations of the characters are obscure to the present-day American citizen, but his example certainly wasn't one of them. :::: For an author who has stated that he is writing in order to earn a living and without any grandiose notions of enriching the literary field, Ted White (ASFR6) gets awfully worked up about critical reviews. Generally, however, Ted makes a lot of sense, as he usually does when writing about sf. :::: Have you ever thought that just possibly man <u>is</u> an ugly, smelly, small-minded brute? I don't say that he is; but I do say that Disch has as much right to his opinion as you do to yours, and that 'his true stature as a writer' (ASFR7) is not going to be affected by it. His true stature as a writer depends on how well he presents his ideas, not necessarily on the ideas themselves. :::: Suggestion: put the name of your reviewer directly after the names of the books reviewed. Then I won't have to be turning pages to see who I'm reading. And it makes a difference, particularly when you have Foyster talking about the good old days of STARTLING immediately followed by Diana Martin's comment on 'dreary technical stories.' :::: STAR TREK continues. It faltered in the ratings, the producer appealed to the SF Writers of America, they appealed to fandom, and a massive letter-writing campaign seems to have succeeded. All to the good. The show is not great sf, but it is by far the best regular sf series ever presented on US TV.

DON TUCK 139 East Risdon Road Lindisfarne Tasmania:

We had our moments with the fires: Hobart seemed to be thronged with them. One wireless station had its power supply cut off, but the other (commercial) station ran news items and personal requests for several days. On Tuesday (Feb 7) I went home at three to help with a scrub fire at the top of the hill behind our home; when I arrived this was under control, but it could have been far worse. Lindisfarne was lucky, but Rokeby, Kingston, Taroona, Fern Tree, etc. were all hit. The fires were almost impossible to stop. Cascade Brewery employees were prepared for it, but this important place

(to many) went under. By late Tuesday, Audrey and I had indefinite news about Southport. On Thursday we learned that it had been completely obliterated. On Saturday we drove down to see for ourselves. The trip down was a continual recognition of places where homes had gone. Fern Tree was obliterated, and all the places this side of Huonville. Then our beach: of about fifty shacks, half of them at our end were completely gone except for dangling chimneys. Nothing salvageable - kettles melted, glass and china fused - it must have been an inferno while it lasted. Everywhere the 70mph wind ran the fire like a huge flood. We were insured, but it will be a long time before we have another home away from home. :::: Thus Black Tuesday affected us, but there were many far worse - and I guess you've seen your papers. None of the others was directly affected, though I know Eric Rayner has a homeless family of four with him. Haven't seen Mike O'Brien for a while. Frank Kasler lives at Risdon Vale, and he was okay. :::: I think many of us will be involved in relief work at times, and I have some ahead - cleaning up debris prior to rebuilding, etc. Nevertheless I'm back on the Handbook when I can. :::: Thanks for your wishes. Tell any who enquire that our suburb was a lucky one and that we are okay.

JB: I've had a note from Michael O'Brien and he's okay, too. I planned to go to Hobart on business on February 12th: if you read in your papers that Perth has been flooded by a tidal wave just after Easter, you'll know who's responsible. Somebody up there hates me. :::: Pat Terry might hate me after this issue, too, because I'm sure he didn't intend the following letter for publication.

PATRICK A.M. TERRY 4/13 Wyong Road Mosman Sydney NSW:

I was practically kidnapped, one day early in January, when four old friends I had not seen for over three years walked in, insisted on my getting dressed, pack a change of clothes, razor and toothbrush, but strictly no writing instruments. Leaving only a hurried note for my housekeeper, who was out shopping, to tell he I'd be away at least four days - and after a hurried visit to doctor, to replenish my supply of medicines and drugs - I was whisked off for a very enjoyable four days among boats and fishermen. :::: Alas, I came home to trouble. During my absence, my housekeeper (quite rightly) had taken the opportunity to visit her daughter and grandchildren - and the flat was visited by burglars. I lost my cashbox, which in the flurry of getting away I had forgotten to return to the bank: most of my personal papers - birth certificate, records of Service, will, etc. (without a doubt now destroyed) and about $550, most of my life savings, were in it. But worse still, they took my file of ASFRs, thirty-seven treasured books and, inexplicably, a pile of letters I had left out to answer. Police say they have small hope of catching the culprits, but they will watch for any of the books being sold to secondhand shops. As a number of letters had arrived during my absence, and these were taken, I don't know what I may have missed there. However, I could have been much worse off, so I refuse to worry any longer, and I am (I hope) getting back to as near normal as I have been. :::: Lin Carter, to whom I wrote in reference to a profile he wrote about Andre Norton, writes, among other things in a long letter: 'I hope you pass along to the sf fans in Australia my 'hello' from the States, and my best wishes to them all. We who are

actively interested in sf belong, in a sense, to a world-wide brotherhood of friends, even though we cannot all know each other personally.' I have sent him my spare copies of ASFR4 and 5, and a copy of Alan France's FENATTIC, so I expect some comment on them soon. :::: There is a bit of a hassle going on over the value of my books, but my solicitor tells me that it's quite usual, and not to worry. That's okay from his point of view, but all the money in creation won't replace those books, all of them personal gifts, and most of them autographed by now-dead authors. Still, I said I'd give up worrying, so I'll shut up about it and be thankful I'm still around and able to read and write, if not quite as usual. I'm going to have some fun shortly when I shall be crossing, not swords, but pens with Mr. Reynard, who has again held out his neck - and Dr. Widdershins.

JB: Pat, I know how you feel about your books, but that 'worse still... my file of ASFRs' makes me suspect your sense of values. Seriously, it's the nicest compliment I ever expect to get. I think someone should be hearing from Lin Carter: everyone is sending him ASFR - he'll think there's some kind of conspiracy going on. I appreciate very much all the quotes you supplied, Pat, from overseas letters praising ASFR - but goodness knows I'm immodest enough about the thing already. Besides, are you sure Theodore Sturgeon really said that? (Joke, Joke, dear reader! If Mr. Sturgeon wrote to us, his letter would be on the front cover.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

MAURICIO KITAIGORODZKI, Aguirre 688-3°B, Buenos Aires, Argentina, would like to correspond with Australian fans.
SVEN EKLUND, Tvisegatan 6, Borlänge 1, Sweden, makes a similar request. Apart from sf he is interested in films, jazz, literature, philosophy.
PAUL STEVENS, Flat 1, 4 Irwell Street, St. Kilda S.2, Melbourne, Australia, would like to hear from American fans.
Miss HELEN FLANAGAN, 28 Grange Park, Brough, Yorkshire, England, wants a correspondent in Russia. (So does the editor of ASFR, Miss Flanagan.)

WHO, Bob Smith asks, IS JOHN BROSNAN? And continues: 'YANDRO 165 has 3½ lines devoted to something called BABBLE ON emanating from Mr. Brosnan, who, Buck Coulson says, is an Australian. I have this weird sensation, accompanied by singing in the ears, that there is another misty 'fandom' out there someplace, like an alternative time line. I mean, it's reasonable when Buck asks me who Pat Terry is, but if I've got to turn round and ask Buck who this Australian is... Well... (as a well known comedian used to say).'

ASSORTED QUOTES - SOCIOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND LITERARY:

'Just imagine what would happen in the U.S. if a President were to invite the poor in this country, with special emphasis on the blacks in the urban ghettos, to win the war on poverty for themselves, promising them the protection of the army against reprisals! Can anyone doubt that the Chinese Cultural Revolution would look like a tea party by comparison?' (Huberman & Sweezy, MONTHLY REVIEW) :::: 'A nation cannot permit itself the luxury of being exclusively a consumer in the field of culture.' (Canadian Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh) :::: 'No one is equipped to cope with life in the 20th Century, let alone modern sf, without reading THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE FIRST MAN IN THE MOON and THE TIME MACHINE.' (G.Stone, ASFA JOURNAL)

THE AUSTRALIAN SF TAKEOVER PLOT THICKENS :::: Terror of the Caboolture (Queensland) Council, JACK WODHAMS recently sold his fourth story to ANALOG, and has a story in NEW WRITINGS 11. :::: Also in NW11, bearded lurd from The Basin, ASFR shadow editor, the one and only (count them) LEE HARDING. :::: JOHN BAXTER and RON SMITH continue their ANALOG Interstellar Library Service series with THE CASE OF THE PERJURED PLANET. :::: Seagoing sf skipper A. BERTRAM CHANDLER (the Brine Aldiss or Van Bogt of Australian sf) has a novel coming in IF, called THE ROAD TO THE RIM. The same novel will come later from Ace Books; also another, which Bert calls TO RIDE THE NIGHTMARE. (Either or both are likely to appear re-titled WIZARD OF BUMF or THE UPOTIPOTPON TERROR.) :::: ASFR collater/1st class LEIGH EDMONDS has had a story accepted by Wodonga fireball, Alan France, for future inclusion in FENATTIC. :::: Rave notice for ASFR from leading Australian literary magazine, OVERLAND! I quote in full: 'Worthy of notice: AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, $3.60 for 12 issues from John Bangsund, 19 Gladstone Ave., Melbourne N.16.' :::: WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION 1967: to be held in New York, with LESTER DEL REY Guest of Honour and BOB TUCKER Fan Guest of Honour. Australians invited to take part: non-attending memberships $1.00 from ANDY PORTER, PO Box 367, Gracie Square Station, New York, 10028, USA. Progress reports and program book well worth your dollar - be in it. :::: BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION - Bristol, Easter 1967. Guest of Honour JOHN BRUNNER. ASFR will be represented by Graham Hall, Australian fandom by Mervyn Barrett. :::: FELINE APPRECIATION DEPT.: With Bert Chandler tripping over her, and Diane reading selected passages aloud to her from Edmund Crispin's LONG DIVORCE, it's little wonder Grushenka has taken to hunting for Martians. (Oh, yes, we found a Protestant vet.) :::: Alan Reynard's BOOK FINDS OF THE MONTH: AWARD SCIENCE FICTION READER (Universal: $0.70) - off-beat anthology enhanced by a Moskowitz biography of its editor, Alden H. Norton - editor of SUPER SCIENCE STORIES, from which two stories are taken: Anderson's STAR BEAST and Clarke's EXILE OF THE EONS. Also included: Van Vogt's fabulous SHIP OF DARKNESS and stories by Sturgeon, Simak, Brackett and Campbell. THE THING FROM OUTER SPACE (Tandem: $0.60) - a collection of Campbell's 'Don A. Stuart' stories, including some of the most wonderful sf tales ever written. A highwater mark in sf - and a volume that belongs in every sf library.

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MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB FANTASY FILM GROUP

THE CLUB meets every Wednesday night, about 8.00, at 19 Somerset Place, Melbourne C.1 (off Little Bourke Street, behind McGill's). Informal session. Fabulous library open for your inspection. Visitors welcome.

THE FILM GROUP recently enjoyed ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS (February 4) and last-minute arrival INTOLERANCE (February 17): which only shows you should come every time - you never know what you might be missing. Forthcoming programmes: THURSDAY, MARCH 23: THE CRACK IN THE WORLD (in colour).
FRIDAY, APRIL 21: SEVEN DAYS IN MAY.

For further information, contact Mervyn Binns or Paul Stevens at 19 Somerset Place - or visit or 'phone Mervyn at McGill's.

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