FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

15

IN THIS ISSUE

Michael Moorcock tells the inside story of New Worlds
Stanislaw Lem answers questions
David Pringle assesses Brian Stableford's novels
Brian Stableford outlines the sociology of sf
Thomas M. Disch discusses CE3K
K.V. Bailey examines myth and symbol in Olaf Stapledon
Book reviews by Adlard, Bailey, Cleaver, Clute, Cowper, Edwards, Hosty, Kaveney, Morgan, Nicholls, Rock, Shippey, Sladek, Stableford, West and Wilder
of books by Aldiss, Anthony, Ash, Baxter, Bradley, Butler, Chalker, Chayevsky, Cowper, Herbert, Hogan, Malzberg, Moorcock, Shaw, Sladek, Sterling, Tiptree, White and others

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THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

Editor: Malcolm Edwards
Features Editor: Ian Watson
Reviews Editor: David Pringle

Contents

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Editorial

Regular readers, who may be aware of the adverse working conditions which we have had to endure in the past, may be pleased to know that during the summer we have moved into much larger premises in the Polytechnic's new library block. For the first time since it began to grow to substantial size our research collection is all shelved in a logical sequence, within easy reach (our previous offices were festooned with shelves, hanging from every available square inch of wall space, including the areas above the doors; this did not make for convenience of access). Visiting researchers will no longer be forced to sort through cardboard boxes pushed under chairs in order to find the important item they need to consult. Thus we are, for the first time, able to offer reasonable working facilities to serious researchers and scholars. Our library, with over 10,000 items, must be one of the largest publicly available sf collections in the world, and is now reasonably comprehensive in its English language critical material (one important but difficult area in which we are deficient, with a couple of exceptions, is pre-1970 fanzines with substantial critical content – the sort of amateur journals where such critics as James Blish and Damon Knight

cut their teeth; any donations of this type – our acquisitions budget being as minuscule as ever – would be exceptionally welcome). In the last few months we have entertained visitors from France, West Germany and the USA, as well as several British postgraduate students from various universities who provide gratifying evidence of sf's growing academic acceptance in this country. Foundation *readers are invited to make use of the facilities we offer (but by appointment, please – ours is not a formally constituted library with set opening times, and there are times during the week when a casual visitor might easily find our room locked and empty).*

There is no Forum in this issue; nor are there any letters. Neither omission is a matter of editorial policy. The fact is that as we go to press we have to hand no contributions which might properly be said to belong to the Forum, with its intention of providing a continuing discussion of the theory and practice of sf. Nor do we have any substantial letters. Happily we have enough other high-quality material this time, but we would not like to see either the Forum or the letter column disappear permanently from our pages. Potential contributors and correspondents please note. If one is publishing at four-monthly intervals a journal which takes three months in press and which is in large part distributed by surface mail to another continent (which can take anything up to twelve weeks now), we are obviously not going to be able to publish comments on one issue in the subsequent issue, as was possible when the journal appeared less regularly. But we do welcome, and do wish to print your comments. As George Turner said in Foundation *7/8, "There's a lot to be said on all subjects that doesn't require punishing into an article, and a letter column is the ideal answer."*

Foundation *now has an American distributor: the F&SF Book Co (PO Box 145, Staten Island, NY 10302), who will carry all available back issues. We need to increase circulation in order to avoid substantial price increases as paper and printing costs continue to rise. American readers could help us by showing* Foundation *to the owners of any specialist bookstores or likely college bookstores in their vicinity. We do not believe (as, apparently, do certain sf magazine editors) that a readers' campaign can transform a magazine's circulation, but we do believe that with a specialist journal such as this it can help.*

Malcolm Edwards

Michael Moorcock will scarcely need any introduction to Foundation *readers: dynamic catalytic editor of* New Worlds, *author both of acclaimed serious novels (winner of the* Guardian *Fiction Award for* The Condition of Muzak*) and of innumerable sword-and-sorcery epics (including some of the best novels written in that subgenre), occasional rock singer, his current projects include a history of epic fantasy,* Heroic Dreams, Enchanted Worlds, *and* Between the Wars, *a long novel featuring the inimitable Mrs Cornelius. The following essay will appear as the introduction to* The New Worlds Reader, *a major retrospective anthology of the magazine since 1964. The opening paragraphs have been revised and condensed for publication here, and any resultant infelicities should be blamed on* Foundation's *editor, not on Mr Moorcock.*

New Worlds: A Personal History

Michael Moorcock

> Whatever is, is right – if the people believe it. "The little man" is made to seem big because everything is scaled down to his measure; his responses, the limits of his vision, are the recognised limits. Thus, if a writer fails to appeal at once and on the usual first inadequate reading, then he is at fault, and never the reader. The idea of literature as direct communication is paramount; there is no intermediate link. The writer does not stand before his experience and try to recreate it in a form of words, with which – rather than the writer himself directly – the reader must seek an understanding according to its complexity. Complex – that is, searching or taxing – literature must therefore be discounted; good writing cannot be popular today, and popular writing cannot genuinely explore experience.
>
> – Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 1957

In 1963 magazine circulations were declining badly and the firm who owned Nova Publications – which had published *New Worlds* since its fourth issue in 1949 – decided to close down *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*. Their companion magazine *SF Adventures* (which had published J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*) was already dead. Under E.J. Carnell's editorship *New Worlds* had published the work of most of the best British writers (including Tubb, Bulmer, Wyndham and Christopher) as well as that of Americans (such as Dick, Sturgeon and Harry Harrison) which could not receive magazine exposure in the more cautious and prudish US pulps. By the 1950s *New Worlds* had begun to publish the early work of writers who, encouraged by Carnell, were breaking away from American sf models and rediscover-

ing their own British tradition – the Wellsian tradition coupling naturalistic narrative and characters with romantic imagery and idealism. These writers included Brian W. Aldiss, James White, John Brunner and Arthur Sellings (as well as Bob Shaw, who was publishing in *Nebula*), all of whom believed that popular literature could contain good writing and ambitious themes. In 1956 Ballard's lyrical and exotic stories began to appear. They were received with considerable enthusiasm by Carnell. He privately preferred the romantic language and imagery he published in *Science Fantasy*. It was here that the first work of the so-called "new wave" was to appear, far more frequently than in *New Worlds* itself. Carnell now gave up any further attempts to nurse the magazines along and made arrangements with Corgi and Dobson to edit a paperback series of original stories to be called *New Writings in SF*.

Although writers like Ballard and myself had the option of being published in American magazines, it seemed that a period of experimentation had been nipped in the bud. We had gradually been introducing less and less conventional themes into our work. Ballard in particular had recently sold the reluctant but always open-minded Carnell the superb "The Terminal Beach" and I had sold stories that now seem very tame but at that time would have been unsaleable elsewhere. We knew that there was little chance of more conservative magazines taking our work. The only short story outlets of the time included *Argosy, Encounter, Paris Review* and *Playboy*, none of which would find our work either comprehensible or, as often as not, of a suitable length. We considered the possibility of publishing a new magazine and I prepared a dummy issue. It would be on art paper, to take good quality illustrations; it would be the size of, say, *Playboy* so that it would get good display space on the news-stands; it would specialise in experimental work by writers like Burroughs, artists like Paolozzi, but it would be 'popular', it would seek to publicise such experimenters; it would publish all those writers who had become demoralised by a lack of sympathetic publishers and by baffled critics; it would attempt a cross-fertilisation of popular sf, science and the work of the literary and artistic avant garde.

Meanwhile, a chance conversation between the *New Worlds* printer, who was looking for replacement work, and David Warburton of the publishing firm of Roberts and Vinter caused Warburton to decide to buy the magazines from Nova Publications. His firm had hitherto specialised in girlie magazines and, by coincidence, the paperback adventures of Hank Janson (no longer written by S. Frances) and needed an *entré* into a more respectable milieu. The sf magazines were already distributed by the powerful W.H. Smith and John Menzies chains. These chains, with virtually a monopoly of wholesale and retail outlets, could make or break a publication. The directors of Roberts and Vinter and its various parent companies thought they could follow behind the magazines with other publications which Smith's and Menzies had hitherto refused to handle. *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* were to become, of all things, a posh 'front'. David Warburton's ambition was to 'upmarket' his firm and begin publishing fiction of a reasonable quality. When he heard of Warburton's intention Kyril Bonfiglioli, then an Oxford art-dealer and bookseller, now a successful comic novelist, asked if he could edit the magazines. Bonfiglioli was an sf reader, a friend of Brian Aldiss, and he shared many of Aldiss's views about the need to improve the quality of writing in sf. In the meantime, unknown to me,

Carnell had put my name forward as editor. Although I was only 23, I had had a great deal of practical editorial experience and Carnell obviously saw me as someone who would promote and extend his editorial policies. Sensibly, Warburton decided to split the magazines between myself and Bonfiglioli. I was asked which I wanted. I said *New Worlds*. I showed him the dummy I had made and told him what I had in mind. He showed me a paperback printed on cheap paper. That was to be the format because it fitted in with their other publications. It would initially be bi-monthly, alternating with *Science Fantasy*. I accepted his decision. We agreed that we would re-think the format if the magazine increased its sales. My first issue (no.142) was for May-June 1964. It contained a new serial commissioned from Ballard *(The Crystal World)*; an article on William Burroughs by Ballard; an editorial by me ("A New Literature for the Space Age") and work by Aldiss, Brunner and Barrington Bayley, almost none of which would have previously been acceptable to the magazines of the day but which now seems very ordinary (Brunner's "The Last Lonely Man" was successfully televised and remains one of his very best short stories).

Although much more sophisticated in its ideas and intentions, it retained the old messianic tone of most sf magazines (and writers) but now it attacked the "literary establishment" as well as social institutions and scientific orthodoxy. "Certain British writers," I wrote in my first editorial, "are producing a kind of sf which is unconventional in every sense and which must soon be recognised as an important revitalisation of the literary mainstream. More and more people are turning away from the fast-stagnating pool of the conventional novel – and they are turning to science fiction (or speculative fantasy). This is a sign, among others, that a *popular* literary renaissance is around the corner. Together, we can accelerate that renaissance." Elsewhere, Ballard was to say of Burroughs: "His three novels are the first definite portrait of the inner landscape of our mid-century, using its own language and manipulative techniques, its own fantasies and nightmares . . . The almost complete inability of English critics to understand Burroughs is as much a social failure as a literary one, a refusal to recognise the materials of the present decade as acceptable for literary purposes until a lapse of a generation or so has given to a few brand names an appropriately discreet nostalgia. One result is the detachment of the English social novel from everyday life to a point where it is fast becoming a minor genre as unrelated to common experience as the country house detective story (by contrast the great merit of science fiction has been its ability to assimilate rapidly the materials of the immediate present and future, although it is now failing in precisely those areas where the future has already become the past). Whatever his reservations about some aspects of the mid-20th century, Burroughs accepts that it can be fully described only in terms of its own language, its own idioms and verbal lore."

This approach was not to every reader's taste and although we gained circulation, we also lost a number of regular subscribers. No one had been prepared, it seemed, for what we intended to try to do. Although I had written a number of critical articles and "guest editorials" for the Carnell magazines, my reputation with regular readers was for the Elric stories and other fantastic romances in the tradition of Haggard, Merritt and Howard, which I had published regularly in *Science Fantasy*

since 1961. I had had a few stories in *New Worlds*, but none of these was remarkable. Therefore it was expected that I would choose *Science Fantasy*. I chose *New Worlds* because the title was open to a number of potential interpretations and I felt that if the magazine was worth taking over (I had been reluctant to edit a purely sf magazine; I had little relish for most sf) then it should become the vehicle for various ideas I had had for some time. These ideas had been given encouragement and clearer shape by my friendship with J.G. Ballard, whose enthusiasm vindicated many of my half-hearted attempts to find out what was "wrong" with the sf genre and most modern literature in general. In this, at that time, I was somewhat at odds with the other group who were also critical of the state of sf writing but seemed to believe that it could "rise" to the level of contemporary fiction exemplified by Anthony Powell or Lawrence Durrell. This was the group which came to publish two issues of its critical journal *SF Horizons*. They were equally vociferous in their condemnation of bad writing and bad thinking in sf. Comprised primarily of Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Tom Boardman (the publisher), the group's opinions differed from mine only in degree. My views were more radical. I did not share, for instance, its enthusiasm for the work and opinions of writers whom I regarded as mediocre. I believed that a different kind of fiction, perhaps developing different kinds of narrative technique, could come out of a marriage between existing "experimental" forms and old-style genre sf. I believed that we needed more rigorous criticism to seek definitions of the forms we were working in, since we were all somewhat confused. I found, for instance, the sf criticism of Amis, Crispin and Conquest condescending, fatuous and weary. Characterised by a kind of hearty complacency and defiant philistinism, it had a blowsy air to it. It was no better than the pieties of Sunday newspaper lead-reviewers which had, in common, the atmosphere of the social club, the saloon bar, the locker room. I was far too puritanical to respond either to the pieties or the philistinism. I had a relish for contemporary forms of fiction as well as a passion for the classics. I found most English fiction of the fifties and sixties worn-out, cliche-ridden, laborious, seemingly the tail-end of a literary movement which had begun in the twenties and petered out by the forties. This "modern" fiction was unadventurous; it was cautious of criticism; its aspirations were safe and they were low. The lush romantic generalisations of writers like Colin Wilson seemed specious and equally dull. I had been bored by most Osborne plays. I had no idea what "Damn you, England" meant. I had suffered no traumas from the A-Bomb or the Suez Crisis. Most modern poetry seemed mean and self-conscious. I enjoyed the work of Burgess and Angus Wilson (perhaps because they contained stronger imaginative elements and a genuine passion for literature) and I liked the early books of Iris Murdoch and William Golding, but most of those who received high praise in the fifties I found unoriginal and uninteresting. One could find better popular writing in *Sexton Blake Library* (which I had edited as a teenager) than in the work, say, of Ian Fleming. I saw Cyril Connolly refer to Ian Fleming as "a master craftsman" and was genuinely astonished. Fleming's style, structure and imagination would have shamed any regular contributor to *Detective Weekly* or *Black Mask*. I was bewildered when, on occasions, I expressed a liking for Ronald Firbank or Henry Green, whom I "discovered" in my teens, and was jeered at! Few of my highly praised contemporaries seemed capable of constructing

a simple narrative, let alone a story on several levels of interpretation. Few showed any passion for language or relish for the world. Many claimed to identify themselves with the working class and yet were afraid to betray any sort of vulgar taste. Vulgar writing, like Fleming's, had to be dignified, justified, explained. An appalling hypocrisy seemed to exist everywhere. A conspiracy of self-deceit.

By the early 1960s it seemed to me that the very writers whose opinions we had rejected had reappeared and were trying to advise us on how to produce a form of fiction which I and a few others had begun to develop on our own account! It was shocking to be condescended to by Robert Conquest; to be taken aside by Edmund Crispin and told, over some gin or other, that all our ideas had been tried and found wanting in the 1920s, that the appeal of the sf genre was that it *was* a genre, fulfilling, like the mystery story, certain acceptable genre expectations.

Those first editorials and articles, almost entirely written by Ballard and myself, were therefore often fiercely opinionated and probably over-stated, largely in reaction to these new conservatives who had appeared (with *New Maps of Hell*, the *Spectrum* anthologies, reviewing spots in the *Observer* and *Sunday Times* and so on) to advise sf writers (and anyone else) against anything but the most gentle of ambitions. Amis, with his lazy paradoxes, reviewed the first issue of *New Worlds* we produced by referring to Burroughs as not the far more interesting and imaginative Edgar Rice but the boring William. The fruity ghost of Chesterton, never far away, was wagging the finger it had once waved at Wells. We celebrated the work of William Burroughs and invoked the names of surrealists, romantics, imagists, allegorists. Borges, Hesse, Peake, Calvino, Kafka, Wyndham Lewis, Vian (then hardly any of them available to an English public) were called upon as examples not necessarily because they were admired but because their techniques, their angles of attack, were different. *New Worlds* evolved into an avant garde magazine through necessity, not through any abstract ambition to be different,* *and it retained a popular audience*. A disgruntled audience, sometimes, or a confused once, but a fascinated one which continued to buy the issues. The writers had few enthusiasms in common. I had no interest in Dali, whom Ballard frequently mentioned, nor in Nabokov, who was much admired by Langdon Jones; they did not share my liking for, say, Brecht. My view of writers like Pynchon or Barth was that they were clumsily, by means of long-winded parody, trying to achieve results already achieved in *New Worlds*. We published Pynchon's *Entropy* for the first time in England, however. Being easily bored ourselves, I think we stimulated readers who were equally bored with most of what was offered to them.

The fifties had been a demoralising time for anyone not interested in jazz or party politics. I was ten in 1950. By 1955 I was completely confused by the opinions and prejudices of those only slightly older than me. Although my reading had been wide I had had a boyhood enthusiasm for Edgar Rice Burroughs and by 1955 was publishing a Burroughs fanzine which gradually evolved into a general magazine as my interest in ERB waned. By 1956 I was a professional commercial writer. By 1957 I had become editor of the juvenile magazine *Tarzan Adventures* and had already altered its format and contents radically, to include far more text and far

*See a letter in *New Worlds* from Moorcock (March 1963). Also Guest Editorial, April 1963.

less strip. Contemporary literary and artistic life was pretty dull. Only in the sf magazines did one occasionally come across imaginative work. Bester's remarkable *Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination* appeared in *Galaxy* in 1952 and 1956. Ballard published his first stories in 1956 and had begun to appear regularly in *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* by 1957. Borges was yet to be published by New Directions in the USA (I first had his work *recounted* to me – along with that of Calvino – by a multi-lingual Swede in Uppsala) and it would be some years before Calder published him here. William Burroughs had not begun his ambitious work. The best we had were the rather sentimental declarations of the beats – of Ginsberg and Kerouac; the declamations of Cowper Powys and Wyndham Lewis; the self-involved work of post-Dylan Thomas poets. Of living English writers only Mervyn Peake seemed to have an interest in contemporary life as well as a romantic relish for rich language and strong imagery, for characterisation which was neither fey nor misanthropic. He dared to use words and images and was neither plummy nor vaguely metaphysical. He had the wit of Maurice Richardson (whose superb *Exploits of Engelbrecht* had had limited publication in 1950 but was not reprinted until 1977), a Dickensian enjoyment of human eccentricity, an artist's original eye (for the angle at which a character sat, as well as for bizarre landscape). Peake described a world which equated with my experience. Peake appeared to *accept* the world, which was what made him so different from his contemporaries, most of whom were producing at best "satires" on the level of Boulting Brothers comedies and who seemed to express a conventional distaste for the modern world. In the sf magazines, too, there regularlv appeared writers who also accepted the world and who celebrated its wonders – Aldiss, Ballard, Bester, Harness, Cordwainer Smith, Sheckley. With little else in common they shared a vigorous idealism and an ironic enjoyment of contemporary society. Their minds were not protected by cynicism, like those whose ideas had been formed by too much university and literary in-fighting, who fought an "establishment" of which they were spiritually a part, who denied their innocence. The sf writers ignored that establishment, either because they didn't know better or because they simply couldn't understand its assumptions. Sf was attractive because it was overlooked by the critics and it could be written unselfconsciously, just as, in the early days, it was possible to do interesting work in popular music as a rock and roll performer. There was no sense of having someone looking over your shoulder.

By 1960 most sf was messianic and naive (as in *Astounding*) or becoming cautiously literary (as in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*). The healthier pulps, *Planet, Super Science, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, Startling* had folded. *Galaxy* was past its prime. Most of the short-lived magazines had collapsed – *Fantastic Universe, Infinity*, and so on were gone. *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Stories*, two of the longest running, were showing some signs of revived life under the editorship of Cele Goldsmith, who later ran Fritz Leiber's excellent fantasies, as well as work by Ballard, Zelazny and Disch. All these magazines, of course, were American. The other British magazines (*Nebula* and *Authentic*) had folded. The most interesting and humane sf had begun to appear in Carnell's *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*. What Ballard and I had in common was that our knowledge of sf was not profound. Neither of us had read most of the well-known writers or stories. We had no particu-

lar taste for them. Ballard enjoyed Bradbury. I enjoyed Bester. We imposed our own imagination on the rest of sf, thinking most of it was better than it actually was; when we had to read it (say for reviews) we were therefore disappointed. We had turned to sf magazines because we had been unable to find much that we liked elsewhere. By the early 1960s a few of the less obscure imaginative writers were available and we were delighted, though the dominating styles were not particularly attractive. The ecstatic prose of *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*, for instance, had no more appeal than the well-bred ironies of the Polish and Czech fabulists. However, as Burroughs (whom we did admire, of course) and Calvino and Borges and the others began to be published we used their names at every opportunity, in articles and letters to the sf magazines. We were surprised by the lack of response from old guard sf fans, who we had assumed were as hungry for real imagination as we had been. Naively, we had honestly expected that these readers would be more open to new kinds of writing. It took me some years to learn that a certain kind of sf fan is about the most conservative reader of all!

By 1964, I had already made several speeches at sf conventions, written a great deal of valedictory criticism of the writers I admired, scathingly attacked the sf and literary establishments for their complacency, and taken part in a long recriminatory correspondence in the *TLS* over William Burroughs's work (the "UGH" controversy) in which I had defended Burroughs at length after a silly review, and Edith Sitwell had said that she didn't want to spend the rest of her life with her nose nailed to a lavatory seat and Victor Gollancz, as I recall, bemoaned declining moral standards. As was usual, few of the writers who complained about Burroughs had actually read his books. I was an admirer of Burroughs's use of modern imagery and idiom, for his *metaphorical* use of sf ideas, for his ear for the language and ironies of the drug underworld and of the streets. He seemed the first writer to celebrate the present as well as to lampoon it. His work was ironic but it was not the obvious satire of *That Was The Week That Was* or *Private Eye* (both of which seemed, as the Angry Young Men had seemed, merely the other side of the Oxbridge middle-class coin). *The Naked Lunch, The Ticket that Exploded* and *The Soft Machine* in their Olympia Press editions fired us with fresh enthusiasm for our own work. It was not that we were actually influenced by Burroughs, but we were very much heartened by him. It could be significant that our enthusiasms were never reflected by the likes of *Private Eye*, whose philistinism extended to attacks on almost every attempted innovation in the arts and whose conservatism and implicit authoritarianism was as entrenched as that of its ostensible targets.

By the end of 1964, when we returned to a monthly schedule, *New Worlds* was encountering prejudice from the sf old guard, from the *SFH* group, from Amis, Crispin and so on, from the ordinary literary establishment, from American sf critics. Most of our criticism was moderate in tone. We had yet to publish much in the way of "typical" work. And yet we received more letters of complaint than letters of praise. My experience on popular magazines, however, had shown that it did not take long for people to get used to changes. The circulation had gone up (doubtless due to improved distribution) and a new generation of writers was beginning to appear. The early work of these young writers was not particularly polished, of course, but it had that enthusiasm we sought. Soon, alongside good

conventional sf by the likes of Roger Zelazny, Keith Roberts, Barrington Bayley, George Collyn, Daphne Castell, Arthur Sellings, John Brunner and Harry Harrison, we ran the early "experimental" work of Thomas M. Disch, Langdon Jones, Peter Tate Michael Butterworth, Graham Hall, Charles Platt and others, who also contributed more or less familiar kinds of fiction as well. Ballard remained the backbone of *New Worlds*'s policy. His influence was seminal and it was profound. We were soon publishing his first "concentrated novels" (of which "The Assassination Weapon" was one). By 1966, when we increased our pages, we had achieved what many people still think was an admirable balance between the old-style sf and the new fiction which had no generic name but which Americans were beginning to call "the British new wave". Some of those who had initially felt a certain reservation about what we were doing began to contribute. We began to receive stories from Brian Aldiss, hitting one of his finest and most creative veins which culminated with his Charteris stories – later expanded to book-length as *Barefoot in the Head.* David I. Masson became a regular contributor, beginning with the superb "Traveller's Rest". Masson was to contribute a handful of brilliant short stories before he appeared to stop writing fiction completely (all his *New Worlds* stories were collected in *The Caltraps of Time*, 1968). Keith Roberts – who wrote primarily for Bonfiglioli's *Science Fantasy* (of which he was to become assistant editor) – contributed some of his best stories. We were receiving work from Disch which became more and more adventurous while retaining that sound, disciplined feeling for prose which marks all his writing (and which, I like to think, marks that of the typical *New Worlds* contributor). John Sladek became a regular. We published some of Roger Zelazny's best stories (notably *For A Breath I Tarry*) and Americans such as Kit Reed, Robert Silverberg, Kris Neville, J.J. Mundis and Samuel R. Delany. We began to publish George MacBeth and other poets fascinated with contemporary life. We published the long and most complex poems of D.M. Thomas. Our criticism began to find its own vocabulary and came gradually to define what we were trying to do.

In the meantime *Science Fantasy* has changed its name to *SF Impulse* but continued to show a penchant for publishing rather whimsical "English" stories. It had certainly published some good material by Aldiss and Roberts (his *Pavane* mainly appeared there), but its ambition to improve standards of writing in the genre hadn't much shape and Bonfiglioli although a charming man was not a hard-working editor. In 1966 he resigned and for a few days J.G. Ballard was editor, before failing to be reconciled either with the publisher or with his assistant editor, the patient Keith Roberts. Roberts refused the editorship out of loyalty to Bonfiglioli – although Roberts was chiefly responsible for publishing most of the best work to appear in the magazine. Harry Harrison took over and turned *Impulse* into a pretty good version of a US-style sf magazine. By the end of 1966 the bankruptcy of Roberts and Vinter's distributors caused them to re-think their policy and to abandon their "posh" books and magazines in order to retrench. They returned to soft pornography and we were told that *New Worlds* and *SF Impulse* were to fold. By this time we had developed an excellent team, with Keith Roberts doing most of the covers for both magazines, Charles Platt designing *New Worlds* typographically (his designs were to be much imitated) and Langdon Jones playing an

increasingly important part as assistant editor. Once again it seemed we were to fold just before we could begin a new stage. I started to fight to keep *New Worlds* alive. We survived a little longer than *Impulse* by incorporating it into our magazine. Expecting to go down, we fired off all the guns we had left. In March 1967 we published a novel which had found no publisher anywhere but which I had enjoyed a great deal, Brian Aldiss's *Report on Probability A*. One of the other stories in that issue was Ballard's "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered As A Downhill Motor Race" (after Jarry), which his American agent had thought too unpleasant to send on to Harlan Ellison's new anthology *Dangerous Visions*.

The April issue (confusingly mis-dated March) was the last paperback issue and something of a rag-bag of the material I did not particularly want to use in the next issue. This was to run Disch's outstanding *Camp Concentration* (announced tentatively in the April issue when we hoped "to be seen in an entirely new format"). At this stage we had very little hope that we would find a publisher.

Brian Aldiss, who had begun by being extremely sceptical of *New Worlds*'s policies, now worked energetically on the magazine's behalf. David Warburton and I discussed forming a company just to publish the *New Worlds* I had originally had in mind. In the meantime, Brian Aldiss contacted various well-known writers and critics and asked them to approach, with him, the Arts Council. He hoped that a grant would save both magazines.

I had no belief whatsoever that the Arts Council would look twice at the application. I was grateful to Brian for his enthusiasm, but I neither expected nor wanted a grant. I had, in fact, a prejudice against Arts Council patronage which I believe to be deterimental to the arts supported. When the grant was given to *New Worlds* (thanks, it emerged, primarily to Angus Wilson who was familiar with the magazine and who was then Chairman of the Arts Council Literature Panel) I was astonished. We were to receive £150 an issue. The cash was in itself not enough to keep us going, but the attendant prestige gave David Warburton the confidence to agree to publish "my" *New Worlds*. He accepted responsibility for the printing while I undertook to pay contributors and editorial expenses. The large-size *New Worlds* (173) was launched in July 1967. That issue was the first English-language magazine to publish the graphic work of M.C. Escher. Our serial was Disch's *Camp Concentration*. The other contributors were J.G. Ballard, John Sladek, Dr Christopher Evans, Pamela Zoline ("The Heat Death of the Universe", her first story), David I. Masson, Charles Platt, George MacBeth, Roger Zelazny and Brian W. Aldiss. The next issue was to include Langdon Jones's "The Time Machine", but the printer refused to print it ("too dirty") and it subsequently appeared, in unedited form, in Damon Knight's *Orbit* collection. In its place we published the first stories of Gene Wolfe and James Sallis, both talented Americans. The same issue contained Christopher Finch's first art article, on Eduardo Paolozzi (Paolozzi himself was now on the masthead as 'Aeronautics Advisor'), Peter Tate, Michael Butterworth and Brian Aldiss ("Multi-Value Motorway"). The cover was a collage of Paolozzi's *Moonstrips Empire News*. The first five issues did not sell the numbers needed to make the venture attractive to David Warburton. By November 1967, when 177 appeared, it seemed yet again that *New Worlds* was to fold. While I had been in America David Warburton had decided to end his involvement with the magazine and had gone to Scotland, leaving

a note to tell me that the magazine was now mine to do with as I pleased.

Publicity in, as I remember, *The Times* Diary, led to Silvester Stein of Stonehart Publications appearing on the scene, offering to publish the magazine. I never did understand his motives. I think they were amiable enough. The firm specialised in financial newsletters and property advice, although Stein himself had been associated with *Drum* in South Africa. He was full of enthusiasm, although our communications were always poor. We missed a couple of weeks in our schedule but were out again with a December-January issue which was the first to run Norman Spinrad's serial about political corruption in a near future United States. *Bug Jack Barron* was another book which had been unable to find a publisher before we took it.

By this time I was slightly crazy, due, I suppose, to the worries involved in publishing the magazine. None of the writers was supported by the Arts Council Grant, which David Warburton and subsequently Silvester Stein had put towards printing costs, and I was having to write books to pay them, as well as staff wages, running expenses and so on. *New Worlds* 178 had a rather more manic visual style than before. The title of Thomas M. Disch's short story "Linda and Daniel and Spike" had been lettered onto the bare back of our Advertising Manager, Diane Lambert, and was featured on the cover with a TV set (Spinrad's story was about the uses of television), a car (for Aldiss's "Auto-Ancestral Fracture") and a movie projector (for Ed Emshwiller's visual feature *Movies*). In the next issue we began an attack on what we regarded as undisciplined and directionless romanticism in popular art. "Barbarella and the Anxious Frenchman" was a visual feature attacking the contemporary enthusiasm for comic strips and technology and bizarre sexual imagery which had come with the Swinging Sixties. It was puritanical, sardonic and asked "Has the Fad for the Bad Gone Too Far?". It attacked, needless to say, many of those things most associated in some people's minds with *New Worlds*: sensationalism for its own sake, fashionable crazes, a superficial understanding of scientific developments and so on. Films like *Barbarella*, books like *The Penguin Book of Comics*, the vogue for old Batman serials and *The Lord of the Rings*, for bad rock and roll and James Bond were all condemned as substitutes for genuine exercises of the imagination. In 180 we continued this theme with an attack on, among others, the Maharishi, degenerating popular music, fashionable sadism and so on. We also ran a long story by Langdon Jones, "The Eye of the Lens", and the second part of Spinrad's bitter attack on corrupt politics (anticipating much of the mood and detail of the Watergate scandal), as well as Carol Emshwiller's "Lib" and D.M. Thomas's "The Head Rape".

It was with this issue that we learned that W.H. Smith and Sons, in collaboration with John Menzies, had refused to distribute *New Worlds* on grounds of "obscenity and libel" (we never did find out what they thought libellous) and a small furore began, which involved most of the press giving a fair amount of space to Smith's "ban" on *New Worlds*. The *Daily Express* seized on this with glee and rang me up to ask if I'd let my children read *New Worlds* ("I'd be grateful if they'd read anything," I said). In the House of Commons a Tory asked a question of the Minister for the Arts (Jennie Lee) why public money was being spent on filth, and in Manchester eleven copies were sold by a newsagent to a visiting football team, who

were doubtless very disappointed.

I went to see W.H. Smith and Sons and found the head of the magazine division somewhat uncertain of his ground ("someone could sue us for obscenity and make a lot of money"), evidently prejudiced, and determined not to distribute the magazine. We were not a "little magazine" – that is, we depended on general distribution to the public. I explained that we were, among other things, objecting to the exploitation of sexuality. He responded to the key words (sex, politics and so on) as I have since seen magistrates respond in court – utterly without reference to their context – and remained disapproving. He told me that they were a family firm and that they had to think of their customers. Their customers would be upset by Smith's stocking *New Worlds*. I pointed to his desk on which lay a modish magazine specialising in soft pornographic photo-stories (it was called *Zeta*). I said that they were prepared to distribute that, which quite specifically exploited sexuality. He murmured that it was a different case. ("That sells 100,000 copies.") He told me that they would rethink their decision if I would agree to modify the magazine's contents and "kill" the Spinrad serial. I refused. I pointed out that the whole reason for the magazine's existence was to publish fiction which could not otherwise find a publisher. The ideas were so strange to him that he could only answer that W.H. Smith and Sons might be "sued for libel". Since all the characters were fictitious, it seemed to me that he was remembering something about *Private Eye* (which his firm had also refused to handle) and was dimly relating the two magazines. The scene was reminiscent of any story involving dumb bureaucracy and I began to go mad. I left.

New Worlds did not benefit from this notoriety. Our circulation depended on Smiths and Menzies. We needed regular newsstand sales to justify our policy. We needed to be available across the country. Moreover, of course, our finances depended completely on maintaining our original distribution. We were not prepared to become another Arts Council-supported little magazine. In the end, rather surprised and upset by the bad publicity, Smith's agreed to take the magazine back. This agreement, however, proved to be a complete piece of hypocrisy, a standard trick of wholesalers who, for one reason or another, do not wish to see a magazine survive. We were seemingly distributed by them, but our circulation was never to be the same. They and Menzies are inclined to work closely together on determining which periodicals they wish to distribute. These firms put every obstacle in our path. Stonehart began to lose enthusiasm for the project. The printers were not paid. There was a nasty quarrel over the Arts Council grant (another reason, I think, why I have never approved of such grants) and Stonehart refused to pay contributors (they had agreed that the Arts Council money should go to contributors since by this time I was broke). The magazine schedules began to be affected as the printer refused to deliver until Stonehart paid his bill. No issues were published for May and June 1968. The July issue, like earlier issues, was largely financed by income from fantasy novels I was writing at a horrible rate, and bore on its cover the slogan WHAT IS THE EXACT NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE? We were getting into another fresh period of work in which our ambition to blend the artistic avant garde with the worlds of science and popular fiction seemed to be fulfilled at last. There were no August and September issues for 1968. When the October issue was

finally published, with its cover by Mal Dean, it bore the question WHAT DO YOU NEED? and was the first issue to be wholly published by me, with full responsibility for all the finance of the magazine. Fearing that we must fold soon, we next ran a special All New Writers Issue, which published the work of Brian Vickers, Robert Holdstock, Graham Charnock, Chris Lockesley and M. John Harrison, among others. We had an office in Portobello Road, we shared typesetters with *Oz*, *International Times* and other "underground" magazines, but we were still determinedly following our own policies. The next issue ran an Aldiss story in his earlier mode " . . . And the Stagnation of the Heart", an excellent story by a new writer, Joel Zoss ("The New Agent") and Disch's strange fantasy about heroin addiction, "The Colours". We also ran – reluctantly as far as I was concerned – Samuel R. Delany's "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones". I never liked the story. I found it inconsequential, very ordinary conventional stuff. It subsequently won both the Nebula Award (presented by the Science Fiction Writers of America) and the Hugo Award (presented at the World Science Fiction Convention every year). That issue also ran my second Jerry Cornelius short (the first to be published) "The Delhi Division". The Cornelius stories caught the imagination of Jim Sallis, then an editor on *New Worlds*, and various other writers, who spontaneously began to write stories around the Cornelius themes or the character of Cornelius. The Cornelius stories were a form in themselves and this, I think, is what attracted so many writers of such various talents as Sallis, Spinrad, Aldiss, Harrison and a good many others. Langdon Jones wrote a narrative poem with Cornelius as the central character.

We were now beginning to find our feet and the work was, for the first time as far as I was concerned, showing an even quality of inventive writing and original subject matter. We continued to sing the praises of Peake (whom we published regularly: usually his drawings and fragments of prose) and of foreign imaginative writers then beginning to appear in England and America. We were enthusiastic, the majority of us, about Kosinski, Barthelme, Vian and others. We continued to try to formulate a theory of criticism which could deal with such writers, since it was still obvious that modern criticism was unable to cope with this kind of work, whether the critic praised or condemned. We were further inconvenienced, on a basic level, by our distributor who had quarrelled with Stonehart Publications and as a result maliciously pulped all our back numbers! We started fresher than we had planned with a larger and more ambitious series of issues beginning with No. 186. Lord Goodman, then Chairman of the Arts Council, had in the meantime become a little worried about the Council's support of the magazine but apparently had seen the name of Paolozzi on the masthead (still Aeronautics Advisor) and been reassured. By now we had a number of regular contributors who included myself, Ballard, Sladek, Harvey Jacobs, John Clute, D.M. Thomas, Brian Aldiss, Langdon Jones, John Brunner, Thomas M. Disch, M. John Harrison, Charles Platt, Michael Butterworth, Hilary Bailey, George MacBeth, Giles Gordon and Graham Charnock, and we were attracting an increasing number of writers, both new and established. Our graphics became more interesting. We ran drawings and photographs by a variety of artists and photographers. As well as features on artists like Richard Hamilton, Peter Phillips and Colin Self, we ran original graphics by Peake, Nasemann, Mal Dean, Haberfield, Zoline, Vivienne Young, Glyn Jones, Jay Myrdahl,

Douthwaite and others; for a brief while the film-maker Stephen Dwoskin was our designer. It seemed that we were receiving more good work than it was possible to publish. Our schedules were still, however, erratic and our sales poor. We were to discover that Smiths and Menzies had found a way of curtailing our distribution without actually getting any bad publicity. We ran on schedule as a monthly between January 1969 (in the March issue we published Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and his Dog") and July 1969, when we realised that we were getting huge numbers of returns from the wholesalers in the form of boxes which had never actually been distributed. We had built up an enormous debt (because of course we had to pay for the printed copies) and the wholesalers had "sat" on the copies rather than send them out to their own retail shops. We were forced to reduce the number of pages and work within a budget that was stricter than ever. We dealt with our new printer on a cash basis so that we could not run into the kind of debt we had already incurred and I began work again to pay off the bills, turning over the editorship almost entirely to Charles Platt, who typeset, balanced the books, dealt with the printer, supervised the design (by Nigel Francis) and fulfilled almost every other function virtually single-handed.

The first of the issues with fewer pages appeared in August 1969 and featured "Gravity" by Harvey Jacobs. The next issue was for September/October. The issue for November featured part one of a Jack Trevor Story novel and Ian Watson's first story "Roof Garden Under Saturn". Platt began to encourage several new writers, including Lockesley, Obtulowicz and Clive. He began to specialise in "theme" issues. No. 197 (for January 1970) bore the slogan FORGET ABOUT 1970. WHAT ABOUT 1980? Platt's editorial began: "There has been a monumental dullness about predictions for 1970. Laborious extrapolations of trends in technology, communications, population, food supply – man himself has been included only as a rudimentary button-pusher, a mere unit of society." Ed Bryant was another new young American writer to appear in that issue. No. 198 contained work by Gwyneth Craven, Paul Green and Ian Watson. The 200th issue featured these and others, as well as Philip Jose Farmer's "The Jungle Rot Kid on the Nod": Tarzan as written by William rather than Edgar Rice Burroughs. I had a "guest editorial" in that issue which concluded, "*New Worlds* was the first magazine to see that a serious, coherent and vital modern literature could be developed from the stuff of science fiction. Very few people took it seriously when it was first proposed but the truth has since been demonstrated. I hope *New Worlds* will continue to demonstrate that truth for many more issues." No.200 was in fact the last of its particular series to be sold to the general public. Charles Platt's health collapsed and he came close to having a nervous breakdown. Debts had become too large to cope with and my own private problems had to take precedence. I couldn't take on any more epics (I was already committed to several). With No. 201, the Special Good Taste Issue, featuring "Feathers from the Wings of an Angel" by Thomas M. Disch, an Index and various reprints from 19th century magazines, sent out only to subscribers, we wound things up, wrote to the Arts Council saying we no longer needed a grant, and Charles went to live in America, where he has been ever since. We had already made plans for *New Worlds Quarterly*. We were back to paperback format, published simultaneously in America and Britain, running illustrations and editorial matter as a magazine, but distributed

and paid for as a conventional book. We ran for a year on the quarterly basis and then became an occasional. We still were mainly living off our fat, publishing some of the best stories we had ever published and determinedly publishing new writers every issue (R.G. Meadley was one), but we had lost the spark which had made the monthly magazine what it was, for all that we were paying contributors regularly at far higher rates. With no. 7 I decided that I no longer had my editorial touch (I couldn't read sf at all) and handed over to Hilary Bailey who did a refreshing job of editing the paperback issues and finding new writers until disputes with the publisher made us decide to stop.

To this day I don't know if *New Worlds* achieved anything which would not have happened anyway. But perhaps there is some satisfaction in seeing Anthony Burgess express opinions about sf in the *Observer* in almost exactly the terms used in *New Worlds* some fifteen years before. We fought against cynicism. One of the few things which consoles me is that Tom Disch, after delivering the last episode of *Camp Concentration* said, "I wouldn't have made it as good if I hadn't known it was going to appear in *New Worlds*."

In Spring 1978 a large-size issue, consisting mainly of reprints of work done for other magazines by *New Worlds* regulars, was distributed on an exceptionally limited scale. As I write, *New Worlds* no. 213, containing no narrative fiction whatsoever, and with work by Ballard, myself, Glyn Jones and others, is due to appear. The editorial states that the magazine has been revived because, in the view of the editors, the standard of fiction and criticism has dropped once again . . . The magazine is published on an irregular basis by a consortium and will have only a limited circulation. It has decided to concentrate on developing ideas never properly developed by the large-size *New Worlds*. As with its predecessors, the series is not likely to last all that long, but I hope it will continue to be as stimulating as the others were in their day. Conceived in 1939, *New Worlds* could well last until at least the beginning of the Third World War. It might even survive it.

Editor's Note: Since this article was written, *New Worlas* 214 has been published, and by the time it sees print no.215.will have appeared. Readers wishing to obtain these should write to Coma Publications, 1149 Rochdale Road, Manchester M9 2FW.

In his editorial in Foundation *11/12 Peter Nicholls singled out Brian Stableford as possibly deserving elevation from the status of pure commercial writer to that of author of conceptually interesting and worthwhile sf; now David Pringle examines that claim. In addition to being Reviews Editor of* Foundation *and Research Fellow at the Science Fiction Foundation (a post requiring a 400 mile weekly round trip from his Leeds home) Mr Pringle is the co-editor of* J.G. Ballard: the First Twenty Years, *and is presently at work on the first full monograph on Ballard's work. We will be featuring a chapter of this in our next issue.*

Rats, Humans and other Minor Vermin: an Assessment of Brian Stableford's Novels

David Pringle

Brian Stableford is not quite thirty years old as I write this, but he has already produced over 1¼ million published words. His first novel, *Cradle of the Sun*, was published in 1969, so he can still be regarded as a "new" writer. But he is a writer of such productivity – and of such interest – that a critical assessment is already overdue. Since *Cradle of the Sun* Stableford has published a further 18 novels. His short stories have been comparatively few and unimportant. However, he is also increasingly well-known for his non-fiction, particularly his criticism of science fiction which will be familiar to all readers of *Foundation*, as well as to the readers of *Vector*, *Algol* and other journals. He has published one non-fiction book to date – the excellent *Mysteries of Modern Science* (1977) – and is reportedly at work on others, including a continuation of an unfinished history of witchcraft by James Blish. As a critic and historian of sf Stableford is beginning to win some recognition. His knowledge of the field is prodigious, and his sociological approach, allied with his appreciation of the sciences, has produced some valuable insights into sf as a cultural phenomenon. His 19 novels, however, have been neglected, not least by *Foundation* which has failed to review even one of them. This critical neglect is excusable to a small degree. Most of Stableford's novels have appeared as paperback "originals" from rather down-market publishers. In addition, many of them have been "series" novels – a type of fiction which tends to be dismissed by reviews editors as mass-market pabulum, or yard-goods. And yet sf critics, of all people, ought to be wary of judging books by their covers. The first novels of Philip K. Dick,

J.G. Ballard, Thomas M. Disch, Ursula Le Guin and many others all appeared as unimposing paperback originals. Science fiction – whatever the individual ambitions and achievements of its best writers – has its roots in popular soil, and from there it gains much of its nourishment.

I do not intend to discuss all 19 of Stableford's novels here. Apart from passing references, I shall ignore the first six – *Cradle of the Sun* (1969),*The Blind Worm* (1970), *The Days of Glory* (1971), *In the Kingdom of the Beasts* (1971), *Day of Wrath* (1971) and *To Challenge Chaos* (1972). These are Stableford's juvenilia, and they show his writing at its most derivative and unformed. In an interview published in *Ghas 2* (September 1976) Stableford talked very disparagingly about these early works. *Cradle of the Sun* was apparently written in ten days of a university vacation. *The Blind Worm* – a schoolboy effort, largely written before *Cradle of the Sun* – was hurriedly expanded when Stableford received the new of his first book sale. *To Challenge Chaos* (originally entitled *Watchgod's Cargo*) was written around the same time but failed to find a publisher for two or three years. The "Dies Irae" trilogy was apparently written at the behest of an agent who said to Stableford: "Look, write down the plot of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, put spaceships in, and I'll get you a three-book contract." All three were written during the summer vacation immediately after his graduation, with a B.Sc. in biology, from York University. Of course, one should not always accept an author's downgrading of his own work, nor should one necessarily assume that to write at speed is to write badly. It is evident, from the whole tone of the interview, that Stableford enjoys being mock-cynical about his own writing; it is a self-deprecatory pose which he has found it convenient to adopt. It has also become more than apparent by now that Stableford is by nature a fast and copious writer – the fact that he has produced a further 13 novels since 1972 is evidence of that (and, it should be noted, Stableford is *not* a full-time author; he has undertaken postgraduate research in biology and sociology, and is now a lecturer in sociology at Reading University). Suffice it to say that Stableford's early novels have their moments – some of the biological grotesquerie is particularly appealing – but they lack confidence of tone. For the most part, they are written in a sort of mock-mythic third-person mode which ill suits Stableford's real talents as a writer.

A confident tone is the hallmark of Stableford's seventh novel, *Halcyon Drift* (1972), the first of a series of six usually known as the "Hooded Swan" books. Unlike the earlier works, *Halcyon Drift* is a first-person narrative, and the increase in focus which this represents works wonders. *Halcyon Drift* was written immediately after a hiatus in Stableford's career during which he wrote a couple of "serious" sf novels that failed to find publishers. According to Stableford's own testament in the aforementioned interview, the "Hooded Swan" series represented a capitulation on his part, a return to the type of formulaic sf for which he knew he could find a ready market. Certainly, *Halcyon Drift* and its sequels contain many formula ingredients – they are versions of space opera, complete with a hard-bitten hero and his worshipping sidekick, a wonderful spaceship which can fly at thousands of times the speed of light, scientific mysteries and galacto-political intrigue. But the beauty of popular fictional formulae is that they are strong yet flexible and, even as they lend their strength and appeal to a plot, they can be undercut – or counterpointed – by *tone*. The manner of narration which Stableford decided to co-opt for the "Hooded Swan"

novels is more or less that of the Raymond Chandler/Ross Macdonald school of private-eye thrillers. Grainger, the ace space-pilot, the man who has traded with a hundred worlds and who knows the Galactic Rim like the back of his hand, is in fact an avatar of Sam Spade or Travis McGee, a mutterer of sour aphorisms. He walks the tightrope between cynicism and idealism, always appearing to veer to the cynical side but somehow always falling the other way. Grainger is, in short, a formula hero, but one who has sprung from quite a different literary context. What Stableford does so successfully is to relocate this sweet-and-sour shamus in the unlikely context of space opera, and it is the tension between the displaced hero and the extravagant plots in which he finds himself that generates the characteristic tone of these novels. But Stableford's twisting of the conventions goes further than that, for he has made Grainger an undeclared pacifist. He is a hero with a genuine distaste for violence, who achieves all his ends through cunning and caution. Grainger's motto is "when in doubt, hesitate". He is a cultivator of the low profile, a man whose primary instinct is to avoid danger rather than attempt to overcome it. And this is the protagonist of a space opera series!

Stableford further complicates the character of Grainger by giving him a split mind. While cast away on a barren planet, he has become infected by an alien mind-symbiont, which Grainger insists on calling a "parasite" and which he refers to as "the wind". The alien is able to enhance Grainger's powers of speed and endurance, but is unable to persuade him to "fuse" minds, to blend their identities. Grainger is fiercely protective of his individuality, and his friendship with "the wind" is an uneasy one at best. The conversations between Grainger and his symbiont, like most of the conversations in *Halcyon Drift* and its sequels, are witty and acidic.

If Grainger's relationship with "the wind" is a fantasy of an ideal schizophrenia, then his spaceship the "Hooded Swan" is the model of an ideal suit of armour – it is a prosthetic body which vastly extends Grainger's physical prowess, enabling him to harrow various types of hell. He flies the ship by wiring himself into a "hood" in its control-room, so that his senses are directly linked with those of the craft. He sees with the ship's eyes, he feels pain when the ship is subjected to atmospheric stresses, and so on. His relationships with other human beings are far less idyllic, however. Essentially a solitary man, Grainger appears to have a distaste for almost everybody – not least for his boss, Titus Charlot (owner of the "Hooded Swan"), who has Grainger's services under a two-year contract from which he cannot escape. And Grainger's relationship with the principal female character of the series, Eve Lapthorn, is virtually non-existent: he is a traditional space opera hero insofar as he is conventionally sexless. In Grainger's universe, and in the world of Stableford's fiction generally, survival is more important than love, and to survive is to have a capacity for adaptation but at the same time to remain oneself, inviolate. In Grainger's thoughts, and in Stableford's novels, the human race is frequently compared to other species which are good survivors and which forever remain themselves: "Ninety-nine per cent of the north-eastern states had been under concrete at one time with nothing living free except flies, rats, and humans, plus other minor vermin." (*Halcyon Drift*, Pan ed., p.35)

The hell which Grainger harrows in the first volume of the series is the Halcyon Drift itself, a treacherous nebula where space and time are distorted and it requires

a pilot of Grainger's extraordinary sensitivity to survive. Stableford favours the quest pattern in this book and, indeed, in all of his novels. In this respect he is entirely traditional: the Quest, or the Descent, is the most basic formula of them all Stableford's heroes are forever "going down", usually encased in magic armour of one sort or another, overcoming the opposition of the "underworld" (which frequently takes the form of some kind of assault on identity), then re-emerging with new wisdom or knowledge. This is precisely what heroes of romance should do, and to the extent that he fulfils all these requirements Grainger is an epic hero despite his cynical mouth, his calculated ideology of cowardice and his dislike of human beings. In the second novel, *Rhapsody in Black* (1973), he harrows the hell of a catacomb planet where colonists live in near-lightless tunnels. Unfortunately, *Rhapsody in Black* is a much inferior novel to *Halcyon Drift*, quite the low point of the entire series. It is all too evident that the plot contains only enough matter for a passable short story. Many of Stableford's novels are repetitious (almost an inevitability in the writing of series fiction) and show evidence of padding, but here such sins are all too visible. From its nadir in *Rhapsody in Black*, the quality of the series climbs fairly steadily through *Promised Land* (1974), *The Paradise Game* (1974) and *The Fenris Device* (1974), to reach a satisfactorily exciting conclusion in *Swan Song* (1975). Most of the plots involve the unravelling of biological mysteries, a type of story in which Stableford is able to put his knowledge of evolutionary ecology to very good use (although at times it seems incongruous that Grainger's thoughts should read like passages from a biology textbook).

A cynical narrator with a schizophrenic personality reappears in Stableford's next novel, *Man in a Cage* (1975), but here the drama of identity and survival is played out in an altogether more sombre and realistic manner. *Man in a Cage* is undoubtedly Stableford's most serious and ambitious novel to date (though not necessarily his most successful) and it is the only one to have appeared in the first instance as a hardcover book. Sadly, it does not seem to have found a paperback publisher, so it is likely to remain the least-known of Stableford's works. The fact that no mass-market edition has appeared is no doubt because Stableford's usual publishers consider it too "difficult" a work for the customary audience. It *is* a difficult book to read, in parts, but it is surprising how closely the conventional episodes resemble passages in the "Hooded Swan" novels, and how akin the protagonist, Harker Lee, is to Grainger. However, if he is another version of Stableford's earlier hero, Harker Lee is Grainger stripped of his technological armour and his glamorous status. He is an institutionalized schizophrenic, condemned to life imprisonment for an unspecified crime, who is given an opportunity to participate in a scientific project where his talent for mental survival, for coping with madness, may come in useful. The American space programme has reached the stage of sending interstellar probes, via hyperspace, to Proxima Centaurus. Unmanned ships have been sent out and have returned successfully, within a matter of weeks. However, the first experiments with manned interstellar flight have been disastrous: all the astronauts have come back dead or catatonic. It would seem that normal men cannot withstand the mental pressures of hyperspace: to exist in hyperspace is to become schizophrenic, inevitably.

Harker Lee, a more or less "adjusted" schizophrenic, is seconded to the space programme. Most of the novel is taken up with a detailed analysis of his motivation,

or lack of it. Lee is aware of the irony that he, the most profoundly alienated of men, should be selected as humankind's "emissary to the stars". What does he owe to the human race, and why should he cooperate? Stableford makes a powerful and convincing analysis of the schizophrenic mind. Harker Lee is a man adrift in a flux of uncertaintes; he survives by withholding belief, in anything. Above all, he cannot believe in love and in the sincerity of human motives and feelings. Some of the most poignant scenes in the book are the encounters between Lee and the psychologist Jenny Segal who seems to come close to understanding him. But the two characters never really *touch*, any more than Grainger and Eve Lapthorn succeed in making contact in the "Hooded Swan" novels. Lee submits to the project, he makes his starflight and fights the mental fight for which he is supremely well equipped. *Man in a Cage* is a deeply ironic version of the hero myth: Lee harrows the hell of hyperspace, slays the dragon of schizophrenia, yet he fails to bring wisdom back to the world. He is still "caged" at the end of the novel, unable to make contact. In his article on Barry Malzberg in *Foundation 11/12*, Stableford describes the way in which Malzberg frustrates genre expectations in order to reveal the intractability of reality. He does much the same thing himself in *Man in a Cage*, although, unlike Malzberg, he does provide the reader with the semi-relief of an ambiguous ending. Nevertheless, *Man in a Cage* is a very Malzbergian novel, and it will be unpopular with genre readers for precisely the same reasons that Malzberg's works are unpopular.

Moreover, although it has its moments of real power and insight, *Man in a Cage* is not an entirely successful novel even in its own terms. There are occasions in the "Hooded Swan" series when Grainger's cynicism seems rote, an easy form of padding, almost adolescent in its shallowness. The same is true, to a lesser degree, of *Man in a Cage*. The bitterness is frequently laid on with a trowel, at the expense of delicacy of characterization (and this is very much an attempt at a novel of character, which is one reason why it does not "work", in conventional genre terms, as science fiction). The numerous passages which describe Lee's fantasies during the starflight, his quest across the landscapes of the mind, show an enormous straining for effect and too often Stableford's inventive ability fails to bear that strain. The "fantasy" episodes are reminiscent of nothing so much as the transcriptions of schizophrenics' dreams recorded in R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self* crossed with the lyrics of Bob Dylan's "Gates of Eden" or "Desolation Row". They lack an original power of their own, and end up echoing the soggy angst of the diary of a 1960s adolescence. In addition, the book is overlong: the interweaving chapters entitled "Madman's Dance" and "Cage of Darkness" are too numerous and slow up the main narrative, where the strength of the novel lies. Stableford's subsequent, much shorter and more successful, novel *The Mind-Riders* (1976) does in fact bear a strong resemblance to *Man in a Cage* shorn of its passages of excess.

But if Harker Lee carries his "armour" inside his head, Ryan Hart (protagonist of *The Mind-Riders*) is more like Grainger, encased in the magic armour of a technological device. Hart is a boxer whose fights do not take place in the flesh but in the computer simulation system known as "MiMaC". He wires himself into the machine just as Grainger does to his spaceship. Although the fights are in a sense artificial, they are nevertheless very real in terms of the concentration and skill

required. Like Grainger's struggle to prevent his mind from being absorbed by the galactic parasite (the Nightingale Nebula) in *Swan Song*, and like Lee's fight to retain his identity in hyperspace in *Man in a Cage*, Ryan Hart's struggles are entirely mental but nonetheless heroic. Just as Hart plugs into the computer, so the audience plugs into his emotions via the "E-link". In this ingenious extrapolation from the TV games of today, people not only watch the simulated fights by holovision, they also absorb the broadcast emotions of the participants through a "headdress". Thus Hart is a living and suffering component in a vast entertainment network. The audience, the mind-riders of the title, pose a threat to Hart's sense of identity, and much of the novel is taken up with his inner fight to reconcile himself to his profession. The characterization of Ryan Hart is excellent, and the writing in this novel is taut and economical. It adds up to Brian Stableford's first really sound – if minor – artistic success.

But his most impressive work to date is the rather more diffuse trilogy of short novels published under the collective title of *The Realms of Tartarus* (1976, 1977). Part one of this trilogy was published as a separate book, entitled *The Face of Heaven*, in 1976. Unfortunately, the publisher, Quartet Books, was taken over by another firm and subsequently failed to issue the remaining volumes. DAW Books, Stableford's regular American publisher, then bought the rights and issued the three together in one volume in 1977. This may have been a minor financial disaster for the author, but it does represent an aesthetic gain for the reader since there is little doubt that *The Realms of Tartarus* works best if considered as one long novel rather than a series of three. In this book Stableford returns to the third-person narrative mode of his earliest work, but here everything is under much stronger control – despite a large cast of characters and a relatively complex plot. The gain in craftsmanship over, say, *To Challenge Chaos* is considerable. *The Realms of Tartarus* provides Stableford with a really broad canvas: the world some 12,000 years in the future, after a vast platform has been built over the earth's surface in order to provide a safe environment for a utopian society. Beneath the platform, in a festering gloom, the remnants of the planet's wild-life grow rank amidst the pollution; above, the "Euchronian Millennium" has begun and human beings live in a rational and free society where all the grosser animal instincts are suppressed by wonder-drugs. The platform, which covers the entire land surface of the globe, has been built over a period of thousands of years with the aid of an alien being of apparently limitless powers, called Sisyr. None of this is very plausible, considered as a serious science-fictional scenario, but Stableford realizes his bizarre divided world with great intensity and, above all, the setting provides numerous rich metaphorical resonances.

The Overworld of Euchronia and its fetid Underworld are, of course, ironic versions of heaven and hell; but they are also suggestive of such dichotomies as society and nature, the human and the inhuman, ego and id, the mind and the instincts, future and past, machine and flesh, the First World and the Third World, and so on endlessly. In this novel the motif of Descent is very obviously present, but its obviousness does not detract from its power – and its charm. The greater part of the story is in fact set in the Underworld, a dark but magical landscape inhabited by rat-men, cat-men, the stunted descendants of "true" men, and a million

other species of parasites and vermin. This environment and its denizens are the results of an explosive spurt of evolution, occasioned by the building of the platform and the shutting off of the sun. Stableford's training as an ecologist enables him to establish this strange biology most convincingly. And it becomes more than apparent that Stableford is on the side of the "vermin": his rat people are very sympathetically portrayed (as were the intelligent rats in his first novel, *Cradle of the Sun*). *The Realms of Tartarus* is a strong plea in favour of evolutionary change and against the concept of utopia, the static society, or ahistorical "perfection". The Euchronian Millennium is founded on repression – the repression of life, of instinct, and, above all, of change. The burden of Stableford's novel (and of much of his other writing) is that *change happens*. The life-forms of the Underworld are actually eating away at the pillars which support the Overworld: utopia will come crashing down, eventually. The despised and forgotten rats have gained in intelligence, and now seem poised to overtake human beings as an evolutionary "next stage". The meek shall inherit the earth – a favourite Stableford theme – and in the end the imperfect and the damaged (e.g. Joth Magner with his metallic face, and Chemec the crippled rat-man) will survive and, indeed, prevail over the apparently strong and effective (e.g. Randal Harkanter, the aggressive leader of the Overworld's official expedition into the Underworld). This is essentially a dramatization of the view of evolution which Stableford presents in his non-fiction work *The Mysteries of Modern Science*: "The record of life on Earth testifies quite clearly to one thing: that the race is *not* to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The species that we glorify – the lion (king of the beasts), the eagle (king of the air), the king cobra and *Tyrannosaurus Rex* – may seem to us to be powerful and lordly, but in the evolutionary context they are inconsequential aberrations. The rat and the sparrow have far more hope of a long evolutionary life-span than the lion and the eagle. (But then, royalty is passing out of fashion in the human world, too.)" (p.144)

All of Stableford's heroes are, in this sense, "rats" ("in the course of my long and somewhat arduous career as a galactic parasite I have often had occasion to feel that everybody hated me", states Grainger in the opening sentence of *The Paradise Game*). They are obsessive survivors, and frequently pit themselves against "faith" and "belief": scepticism makes for survival. This is Grainger's existential situation, and Harker Lee's, and Ryan Hart's, and Joth Magner's in *The Realms of Tartarus*. They exist in a flux of uncertainties, and to Stableford this is a good thing, for he is against perfection (social or environmental) – or, rather, he is keen to demonstrate that it does not and cannot exist (if it does exist, in his fiction, it is depicted as a Bad Thing, inimical to intelligence: *vide The Paradise Game*). Change happens; evolution continues, and cannot be prevented from continuing this side of the Gates of Eden. *The Realms of Tartarus* is an ironic adumbration of this insight: the Euchronians attempt to suppress life and instinct in the cause of social harmony, but their efforts have the opposite result to that intended – they lead to an explosion of evolution and change. This is not to say that Stableford is sentimental about "Nature": the Underworld is by no means a pretty scene, and there are some gruesome descriptions of unpleasant flora and fauna. As Hart remarks sourly in *The Mind-Riders*, "No one, bar the self-deluding, can see anything clean or pretty in the round of nature with its thousand parasites and diseases, the biochemical pollution

of its scents and pollen dust and its leaking sap." (DAW ed., p.97)

After attempting to produce a weightier form of sf with *Man in a Cage, The Mind-Riders* and *The Realms of Tartarus*, Stableford returned to the formulaic series with *The Florians* (1976) and its sequels. Four volumes have appeared so far out of a projected six in the "Daedalus" series (named, like the "Hooded Swan" series, after the hero's spaceship). Apart from *The Florians* (for which Stableford's original title was the much superior *Ratcatcher*), they include *Critical Threshold* (1977), *Wildeblood's Empire* (1977) and *The City of the Sun* (1978). Although they are not ambitious novels, the "Daedalus" books are thoughtful entertainments: the easy, professional productions of a writer who is now a master of the series form. On the whole, they are longer on ideas than the "Hooded Swan" books, and shorter on action. They are more overtly pacifist in tone and, although they are first-person narratives, they lack a really strong central character. Alexis Alexander – or Alex, as he is called throughout the series – blends much more readily into the background than does Grainger. If the "Hooded Swan" books are definable as space opera, then the "Daedalus" books are more accurately described as planetary mysteries. The "Daedalus" is a specially-equipped ship which has been sent out to recontact earth's "lost" colonies on other worlds. Its mission is to give scientific assistance where necessary, and to report back to the United Nations on the success or failure of the various colonies recontacted. The narrator, Alex, is a middle-aged biologist – an expert in evolutionary ecology – who shares responsibility for the mission with Nathan Parrick, a social anthropologist and diplomat. Each novel is set on a different planet, and each plot concerns a biological or sociological mystery which must be solved by the "Daedalus" crew in order to save the colony and, frequently, their own necks.

In the "Hooded Swan" novels Stableford pits a cynic (Grainger) against an idealist (Titus Charlot). In the "Daedalus" books the situation is reversed. Alex is an idealist, a believer in space travel and the colonization of other worlds, and he is contrasted with Nathan, the political opportunist and "diplomat". There is a notable move towards realism in the later series. Alex and Nathan are scarcely the larger-than-life figures represented by Grainger and Charlot (the shift from surnames to forenames is indicative of the general scaling-down). The universe is depicted as a much larger place in the "Daedalus" series, less easy to span in colossal multiples of light-speed. There is a considerable ecological realism, too, in the descriptions of the life-systems of the various alien planets. In contrast to most sf writers, Stableford does not blithely assume that human beings will automatically find themselves at home on any alien planet which happens to have the right sort of atmosphere, temperature-range and gravity. In *The Florians*, for example, he points out the drastic differences which the absence of a large moon might make in the evolution of a planet's life-forms. In *Critical Threshold*, which is a clever inversion of the Edenic planet myth, he shows how something as innocent-seeming as the mating habits of alien butterflies may pose a threat to human survival. In *Wildeblood's Empire*, general addiction to an alien drug allows a dictator to gain control of a human colony. *The City of the Sun* (the title deliberately echoes that of Tommaso Campanella's 17th century utopia, *Civitas Solis*) is, like *Critical Threshold*, another attack on "perfection". The colonists of the planet Arcadia have set out to build the City of the Sun, the ultimate

utopian community. However, they have become infected by a dendritic parasite which enables them to link minds and thus create a collective hyper-mind. The originality of this novel – the best so far in the "Daedalus" series – lies mainly in the fact that Stableford concentrates on the ways in which the colony and the hyper-mind are *perceived* by the recontact crew. Is the City of the Sun a utopia or a dystopia? Does the linking of minds *via* the parasitic cells represent a joyous expansion of human consciousness, or has the hyper-mind imposed a nightmare of stasis and servitude on the formerly-human colonists? In the end it turns out that the hyper-mind is a new super-organism which – far from embodying perfection – is still in the earliest stages of its evolution.

It should be clear by now that Stableford is a writer who is opposed to "easy answers" (even in the context of formulaic, mass-market sf). He does not approve of science fiction as indulgent daydream or panacea. Grainger, for all his qualities, is no immortal superman: at the end of the "Hooded Swan" series he loses his mind-symbiont; he ages. Stableford's characters often suffer – e.g. Harker Lee in the hell of hyperspace; Joth Magner in the Underworld of *The Realms of Tartarus*; even Alex in his fight against the butterflies in *Critical Threshold*. The major tension – or contradiction – in Stableford's fiction lies in his apparent commitment to the survival of the individual consciousness while at the same time he continually demonstrates that social and biological changes are inevitable. Despite their recognition of a sort of evolutionary imperative, Stableford's characters usually reject any form of personal transcendence. They wish to remain themselves at all costs: this is proven when Grainger refuses the offer of "fusion" with his mind-symbiont, and again when Alex rejects the mental ecstasies offered by the alien butterflies. Ultimately, Stableford's heroes all have the "prey mentality" – they are cautious, devious and eternally suspicious of intellectual "certainties". They are not the lion-like heroes of most adventure sf; they have much more in common with the humble rat. They are as stubbornly individualistic as, say, Robert A. Heinlein's characters. but they are also more likely to survive.

Brian Stableford is a very young writer still; given his craftsmanship and intellectual gifts, there is every chance that he will become a major name in the sf field. But there are obvious limitations to his talents. For instance, his writing is often inelegant. As Stableford himself wrote of James Blish in *Foundation 13*: "he was not blessed with any innate elegance in the way his prose formed itself". Well, no. But at its best Stableford's prose is quite serviceable, and seems to be improving in quality. (He has a winning way with slang – it is amusing to note how often he uses a thoroughly English idiom, even Yorkshire expressions, in books such as *Man in a Cage* which have supposedly American settings.) One hopes – and it is a hope that critics are forever expressing, somewhat forlornly, when dealing with highly-prolific writers – that Stableford will soon feel secure enough as an author to slow down his output and take more care with his writing. He has the capability to produce something really memorable.

The editions of Brian Stableford's books used in the preparation of this article were as follows (most, if not all, should still be in print):

Halcyon Drift: DAW, 1972, 175pp, $0.95; Pan, 1977, 155pp, £0.50, ISBN 0 330 26469 6.

Rhapsody in Black: DAW, 1973, 157pp, $0.95; Pan, 1976, 138pp, £0.50, ISBN 0 330 24656 9.
Promised Land: DAW, 1974, 160pp, $0.95; Pan, 1978, 160pp, £0.60, ISBN 0 330 25267 4.
The Paradise Game: DAW, 1974, 158pp, $0.95; Pan, 1978, 158pp, £0.60, ISBN 0 330 25268 2.
The Fenris Device: DAW, 1974, 156pp, $0.95; Pan, 1978, 156pp, £0.60, ISBN 0 330 25401 4.
Swan Song. DAW, 1975, $1.25, 158pp; Pan, 1978, 158pp, £0.60, ISBN 0 330 25400 6.
Man in a Cage: John Day, 1975, 294pp, $6.95, ISBN 0 381 98280 7.
The Mind-Riders: DAW, 1976, 143pp, $1.25; Fontana, 1977, £0.75
The Florians: DAW, 1976, 158pp, $1.25; Hamlyn, 1978, 174pp, £0.80, ISBN 0 600 33668 9.
Critical Threshold: DAW, 1977, 160pp, $1.25, ISBN 0 87997 282 3.
The Realms of Tartarus: DAW, 1977, 448pp, $1.95, ISBN 0 87997 309 9.
The Mysteries of Modern Science: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, 270pp, £4.95, ISBN 0 7100 8697 0.
Wildeblood's Empire: DAW, 1977, 192pp, $1.50, ISBN 0 87997 331 5.
The City of the Sun: DAW, 1978, 189pp, $1.50, ISBN 0 87997 377 3.

This is the fifth consecutive issue of Foundation *to feature a contribution (other than reviews) by Brian Stableford – which may serve to underline David Pringle's observations, elsewhere in this issue, about his prolificity. Mr Stableford is the sort of contributor editors dream about: productive, reliable, and always with interesting things to say. The article below outlines the methodology of his thesis on the sociology of sf (which will be published in its entirety by Borgo Press in 1980).*

Notes Toward a Sociology of Science Fiction

Brian Stableford

1.1 Most sociological studies of literature undertaken in the past have treated literature as a *product*, and therefore tend to consist of commentaries on the social constraints influencing the process of literary creation. This approach, which ignores the audience, also tends to minimise the role of the author by treating literature as an expression of the *zeitgeist* or of the ideology of a social class, or as a "reflection" of a social matrix. Whatever merits there are in this approach, it certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of a sociological study of literature.

1.2 Literary works are not simply products (i.e. things created and sold) but also communiqués. Much literary production is actually governed by the needs and demands of particular audiences, but even when this is not the case it would be foolish to ignore the communicative potential of a literary work, for it is this which provides the opportunity for the work to serve a social function.

1.3 Literary critics, because of the nature of their discipline, are usually (though not always) concerned with identifying those functions which, in their view, literary texts *ought* to fulfil. When they analyse texts as communiqués they are primarily concerned with the communicative potential of an "ideal reading" of the text. Sociologists of literature, because of the nature of *their* discipline, need not – and should not – restrict their attention in the same way. It is the task of the sociologist of literature to identify those functions which literary texts actually *do* fulfil. When the sociologist analyses literary texts his primary concern is the communication which ordinarily does take place through the medium of a typical reading of the text.

1.4 Literary critics who have interested themselves in the communicative potential of literature, and hence in the social functions of literature (notably I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis) have condemned "bad" literature as not merely incompetent but actually corrupting. They have seen the proper communicative function of literature as a directive one, involved in the formation of attitudes, and hence consider that bad literature is responsible for the fixation of "immature" and "inapplicable" attitudes.[1] Raymond Williams, however, has pointed out that the readers of "bad literature" do not place the same priority on reading as members of the cultural élite, and hence may not rely upon it to the same extent as a formative influence upon their attitudes.[2] The sociologist must be prepared to take seriously the hypothesis that literature is amenable to the service of several different communicative functions, and that what is frequently condemned by literary critics as bad may simply be geared to the service of communicative functions other than the one which they consider to be ideal or uniquely appropriate.

2.1 Some sociologists of the mass media have attempted to investigate the various kinds of gratification which audiences derive from the fictional content of these media. From these investigations emerges a more complex picture of the kinds of communication which may take place through the vehicle of fiction. Hugh Dalziel Duncan has identified three categories of probable communicative function involved in the consumption of literature.[3] A similar tripartite classification is offered by Gerhardt Wiebe.[4] The same categories can be identified in the more elaborate typology developed by Waples, Berelson and Bradshaw.[5]

2.2 The first major category of communicative function identified by these writers is a *directive* function.[6] Directive communications are those which have a permanent effect on their recipients, conveying information or resulting in changes of attitude. The second category is a *maintenance* function. Maintenance communications are those which support and reinforce attitudes values and modes of understanding already held by the recipient. The third category is a *restorative* function. Restorative communications are those which provide the recipient with a temporary respite or "escape" from confrontation with his real social situation (and hence

from "the strain of adapting, the weariness of conforming"[7]).

2.3 *All three* of these communicative functions are necessary (though it is not necessary that any of them should be fulfilled by fiction). Without a supply of directive communiqués the development of the individual is inhibited. Without a supply of maintenance communiqués to support and confirm the individual's values and attitudes to the world he becomes anxious and uncertain. Without a supply of restorative communiqués (though these may be self-generated in the form of fantasies) the repressive aspects of real situations become burdensome, if not intolerable. In view of this fact, the literary critic who wishes to restrict literature to the service of the directive function alone, choosing to despise fiction geared to the service of the other two functions, may be considered to be (in a quite literal sense) rather anti-social.

2.4 C.S. Lewis, in *An Experiment in Criticism,* notes that there are considerable differences between the reading habits of the cultural élite and "unliterary readers".[8] Robert Escarpit echoes the observed differences in distinguishing between two kinds of reading behaviour that are available to any reader (and may, indeed, be combined in any particular act of reading).[9] The distinction he draws is between "connoisseur reading", which is geared to the directive functions of literary texts, and "consumer reading", which is geared to the maintenance and restorative functions, both of which allow literature to be used *disposably* (i.e., having only transient effects). The common metaphor of "literary taste" is useful in clarifying this distinction. What are valued in consumer reading are the "taste sensations" associated with the text, while the focus of interest in connoisseur reading is the "food for thought" with which the text, as it were, nourishes the mind. In the same way that all the food we eat has some taste and some nutritional value, any act of reading involves us (at least potentially) with taste-sensations and with food for thought. The reasons we have for reading different books may be as diverse as the reasons we have for eating different kinds of food.

2.5 It must be emphasised that the directive function of literature can *only* be served by connoisseur reading, and that the maintenance and restorative functions can *only* be served by consumer reading. Maintenance and restorative communiqués *must* be both transient and disposable, and the need for such communiqués is such that it requires a continual supply to maintain a stable situation (though there will, of course, be a satiation effect operating in the case of an over-frequent supply). Thus, while connoisseur reading demands a supply of essentially *new* stimuli, consumer reading may (though not necessarily) be adequately supplied by a continual supply of essentially-similar reader-experiences. It is this fact which, in collaboration with the market forces of mass-production, is responsible for the existence of literary *genres* and publishing categories.

2.6 Those members of the cultural élite who believe that mass-produced literature actually has a corrupting effect on its consumers make the mistake of assuming too readily that its content is being consumed directively. Actually, such literature is rarely geared for directive consumption, and there is no evidence that it is consumed directively, save for exceptional cases where we readily observe that the

person so affected has made an absurd mistake. (The ongoing debate concerning the effects of television violence makes little progress because many of the participants do not realise the vulnerability of this assumption.)

3.1 Content analysis of texts (whatever methodological prospectus is followed) cannot *by itself* lead to an understanding of the communicative functions of a text or a *genre*. Unless we can also estimate what kind of use is characteristically made by readers of the content of texts we run the risk of mistaking the significance of their various aspects. The modes of reading behaviour involved in the consumption of texts and *genres*, and the expectations of readers relative to texts and *genres*, are invaluable data as far as the sociologist of literature is concerned.

3.2 When, however, we do reach the point of analysing the content of texts in the hope of revealing the connections between texts and their social matrix, it will be necessary to bear in mind that different kinds of analysis are pertinent to the different communicative functions. Directive content must, by its nature, elicit a novel response from the reader, and we can hardly expect to find directive material by looking for that which is common to large numbers of texts. Maintenance material, by contrast, must relate to ideas and sentiments already familiar to the reader, and is thus likely to be repeated constantly by numerous texts. Restorative material also tends to become stereotyped, although it is not wholly necessary that it should. If, therefore, science fiction is to be considered *as a genre* rather than an array of particular texts, in terms of its characteristic preoccupations and attitudes, the analysis will inevitably be far more sensitive to the maintenance and restorative functions served by the *genre* than to its directive potential. (But there is already a good deal of literary criticism which deals with the most prestigious texts of science fiction as unique entities, and which either presupposes or purports to reveal connections between the texts and their social context. There is no neat boundary to be drawn between literary criticism and the sociology of literature *insofar as directive communication is concerned*.)

3.3 The utility of a text as a communiqué serving the maintenance function is determined by the extent to which it supports and confirms by reiteration the attitudes, opinions and values of the reader. Thus, what is basically involved in the analysis of texts as maintenance messages is the extraction of common images, common themes and common structures, and the linking of these persistent elements to ideas and sentiments which are socially sanctioned and which have some social utility.

3.4 The principal utility of literature as a reservoir of maintenance communiqués arises from the fact that it can provide an extensive series of exemplary fictions which are emotionally charged by virtue of the reader's empathic "identification" with the fictional characters. In this way emotional support is lent to moral judgments, value judgments and convictions about the way facts and events are interrelated. Most literature which is commonly described as "didactic" is presumably consumed in service of the maintenance function. (We recognise in the "moral" of a story not a revelation but something already familiar, and the satisfaction we gain from its emergence is the satisfaction of confirmation.)

3.5 At any one time in a particular culture literature tends to feature a fairly narrow range of characteristic resolutions. It is sometimes argued that there are "only three basic plots" (the number varies somewhat) and what is meant by this is that there are only a few basic harmonies into which plots may ultimately be resolved. (There are also corresponding "anti-plots" where the resolutions are deliberately withheld). Modern plots are usually success stories, the dominant forms being the romantic success story, the financial success story and the existential success story.[10] The last-named is of more recent provenance than the other two, which both date from the eighteenth century, when the bourgeois value-system became dominant in European culture.

3.6 Particular literary *genres* tend to have particular patterns of resolution (a detective story ends with the solution of the puzzle and the discovery of the murderer; a western with a duel in which the hero shoots the villain dead, etc). The ingenuity of the author is concerned with the construction and circumvention of obstacles which delay the characters in reaching these prescribed destinations, and which build up tension to be dispelled in the resolution. All mass-produced fiction works according to this kind of formularisation – it is because of the formularisation that it *can* be mass-produced.[11]

3.7 Science fiction is exceptional among literary *genres* (particularly in view of its provenance in the American pulp magazines, which once represented the ultimate in literary mass-production) in the variety of its characteristic resolutions, and more especially in the rapidity with which these resolutions have altered over the *genre*'s fifty-year lifetime.

3.8 The function of restorative communiqués is to engage the attention of the recipient in such a way as to "release" him or allow him to "rest" from his confrontation and negotiation with his environment. The description of literature serving this function as "escapist" is accurate enough, but the derogatory overtones often carried by the appellation are unwarranted. The need for such release (occasional and temporary) is universal, and literature geared to this function serves a genuine need. Because the act of reading involves the use of the sense of sight in information-decoding rather than in environmental scanning (thus necessitating a complete reordering of sensory priorities) literature – at least for the literate – is a particularly appropriate vehicle for restorative fantasies.

3.9 There is a sense in which we can say that literature "reflects" social reality insofar as it serves the maintenance function, in that literature's affirmations in this regard are society's affirmations. The reverse is true of those aspects of literary texts which serve the restorative function. If we want to know why people choose to "escape" into one fantasy-matrix rather than another we would be foolish to expect that these fantasy-matrices can only be reflections of the situations from which they need release. Rather, we should expect them to be some kind of "inversion" or "negative image" of the situations whose oppressiveness creates the need for release.

3.10 The kinds of fantasy-worlds provided by popular fiction do tend to fall into particular patterns, and a great many readers are extremely loyal to their preferred

fantasy-worlds. It is not to be taken for granted that the explanation of a reader's preference for one escape-world over another will be a sociological one, and it seems certain that in many cases the explanation should be sought in terms of individual psychology. Developmental psychology may be particularly important – the differences between the kinds of literature characteristically marketed for children and those characteristically marketed for adults are largely explicable in terms of the restorative function and the design of fantasy-worlds appropriate to the different psychologies of children and adults. However, it would be mistaken to commit ourselves entirely to psychological explanation, and it is arguable that there is much in children's literature which can more readily be explained by reference to the social situation of the child rather than to theories of developmental psychology.[12] It seems highly unlikely that the marked differences in the imaginary environments of literary *genres* aimed largely at a male audience (e.g. pornography) and the imaginary enviornments of *genres* aimed at a female audience (e.g. romances) arise from innate psychological differences between the sexes rather than differences in social roles and social situations.

3.11 In virtually all popular fiction the restorative function and the maintenance function are served simultaneously, and collaborate in governing the substance of the text. There is no contradiction inherent in the fact that the maintenance function (and thus characteristic patterns of resolution) works to sustain the values and moral norms of the real world while the restorative function (and thus the environments of the stories) affords relief from the real world. (This becomes obvious when one notes that the fiction which is furthest removed from reality often tends to be the most rigidly and overtly moralistic. *The Lord of the Rings* is a cardinal example.)

3.12 In trying to find sociological explanations for stereotyped restorative fantasies in popular fiction we should consider them as responses to particular frustrations generated by social circumstances. This will not always be possible, in that the explanation of some patterns may be psychological, but where such patterns change with time there will probably be a sociological component in the explanation. (It is not too difficult to relate the characteristic mythology of romantic fiction – the most highly stereotyped of all popular genres – to specific features of the social role of women in contemporary Anglo-American society.[13])

4.1 For an account of the sociological factors important in encouraging the emergence of what may loosely be described as the *genre* of "scientific romance" at the turn of the century see B.M. Stableford "The Marriage of Science and Fiction" in *The Octopus Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* (Octopus Books, 1978).

4.2 Hugo Gernsback, who created the publishing category first called "scientifiction" and subsequently known as "science fiction" by founding *Amazing Stories* in 1926, clearly intended that the *genre* should be directive in its communicative function. It was intended to inform readers of the data of science, and to inspire them with an optimistic vision of the way that scientific progress would remake the world. It co-opted the apparatus of pulp fiction only to make its directive content more "palatable". There is no evidence whatever that science fiction ever func-

tioned effectively in fulfilling the first part of this prospectus. There is, however, evidence that it inspired some readers with a new vision of the world (though not a crudely Utopian one).

4.3 Harry Bates, who created *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, operated according to a very different set of priorities. He wanted to use the imaginative decor of science fiction for standardised pulp adventure fiction, exploiting its imaginative sweep and its potential for wild action. He was, however, willing to pay lip-service to the "ethos" of science fiction, which demanded the illusion of plausibility generated by the pretended fidelity to known scientific fact. It seems virtually certain that despite the pretensions of *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories* and their companions, *all* the science fiction magazines of the thirties functioned mainly in service of the restorative function, though some reservation might have to be made with respect to the "inspirational" component of Gernsback's original prospectus.

4.4 John W. Campbell Jr. re-imported into *genre* science fiction a neo-Gernsbackian insistence that science fiction was more than simply exotic adventure fiction, though he made his claim on rather different grounds. He believed that science fiction could be and should be in some way analogous to science itself, providing a medium for "thought-experiments" in which the impact of new technologies might be anticipated by the logical examination of their possible effects on human individuals and on human society. In *Astounding Science Fiction* he gave priority to this type of story, though he also continued to publish a good deal of pure restorative fantasy. He was also a man committed to a particular set of moral judgments and value-judgments (a commitment which led to intolerance in his later years), and was strongly prejudiced in favour of stories which supported and reaffirmed these judgments. Campbell's manifesto for science fiction dominated the *genre* for many years, and affected stories that were written for all the other magazines even though the editors of those magazines were content, like Bates, to pay no more than the merest lip-service to the "principles" of science fiction.

4.5 Campbell's prospectus, like Gernsback's, represents science fiction as a medium with special directive potential. In this view, however, science fiction is not straightforwardly informative or inspirational, but educative in a more subtle fashion. Reading science fiction, according to this prospectus, encourages the development of certain intellectual skills allowing the reader to anticipate and examine the consequences of new scientific discoveries and technological inventions which might or might not ever be made. The practical utility of the skill supposedly transcends its (rather doubtful) utility as a prophetic tool by facilitating the *adaptation* of the reader to a social environment of rapid technological change. There is certainly some evidence which can be cited in support of this claim, but there is also evidence which renders it suspect, or at least in need of careful refinement.

4.6 Science fiction has steadily increased its importance as a sector of the literary marketplace since 1926. After the war it overflowed from the medium of the pulp magazines into books and paperbacks. Films accepted the label in the same period, though very few films owing any adherence to the Campbellian prospectus were produced before 1968. The vocabulary of symbols and imaginative apparatus charac-

teristically employed by science fiction has, in the last decade especially, overflowed into contemporary music, advertising and "mainstream" literature. It has also attracted some academic interest. The reasons for this success are many, but at least some of them must be sought in terms of sociological explanation.

5.1 The label "science fiction" does not simply tell a would-be reader something about what a book contains. It also tells him something about *how it is to be read.* It invites the reader to locate his experience of the text within a certain context of expectations. This can often be crucial to a book's success because it allows the author to exploit certain conventions of *milieu* and vocabulary. (All experience is, of course, compound – what is perceived is ordered and understood according to processes of categorisation and comprehension already known. "Knowing how to read science fiction" is, in a sense, rather like "knowing how to ride a bicycle": the mind makes the necessary responses to stimuli almost automatically.) Once we are aware of this we need no longer be puzzled by such common statements as "It's good science fiction but a bad novel" and "I just can't stand science fiction". In the first case the reader is balancing a work between two sets of expectations which make different demands on the text; in the second the reader finds science fiction so alien to his expectations that he finds the attempt to read it mildly disturbing.

5.2 There are several ways to investigate the nature of the set of expectations which "science fiction readers" characteristically bring to the reading of a science fiction text, though the task is complicated by the fact that there is not a single, simple set of expectations which each and every science fiction reader has. (There are fierce disputes about the expectations which it is reasonable and/or best to entertain.) The main resources available to the investigator are letters written by readers to the science fiction magazines; attempts to define the *genre* and highlight its special features published in editorial writings and in fanzines; and statements by apologists for the *genre* in recommending it to an audience (general or academic) assumed to be unsympathetic.

5.3 Letters written by young readers to the early pulp magazines often refer to a kind of revelatory experience associated with a first encounter with science fiction. Similar testimony is offered by numerous writers reminiscing about their early encounters with science fiction. What seems to be involved is a kind of "gestalt shift" which allows a new interpretation of the everyday world by setting it in a context which extends in time and space to hitherto unsuspected imaginative horizons. (It is highly significant that several of the most popular science fiction stories ever written are *about* perspective-shifts of this kind – Isaac Asimov's "Nightfall" and James Blish's "Surface Tension" are the archetypal cases.) The attraction of science fiction to new readers (at least in the days of the pulp magazines) seems to have been associated with the casual deployment of concepts which transcended the affairs of the mundane world while denying any allegiance to the traditional world of the "supernatural" associated with religious mythology. The reaction thus triggered is conventionally referred to be science fiction readers as "the sense of wonder".

5.4 In order that the revelatory perspective-shift can be evoked time and time again

(though inevitably with declining power) a continual supply of new concepts is necessary. Ones which become standardised rapidly become familiar and lose their power. This results in a demand for continual innovation. (The demands of the earliest science fiction fans for an infusion of new ideas became clamorous in the year 1934, when *Wonder Stories* was led to introduce a "new plot" policy and *Astounding Stories* began to feature "thought-variant" stories. Periodic outbursts from established readers to the effect that science fiction has gone stale and lost the sense of wonder have appeared constantly since that date.)

5.5 The demand for innovation is, however, limited by a second demand, which is concerned with maintaining an illusion of plausibility (though it is usually expressed, misleadingly, as a demand for fidelity to known science). The demand is essentially that imaginative concepts in science fiction should be framed in a language and an ideative context that is anti-theological and anti-metaphysical – thus belonging clearly to the third phase of August Comte's system of intellectual development: that of the "positive philosophy". (The resemblance between Comte's vision of future society and the social expectations of Gernsbackian science fiction is not entirely accidental.)

5.6 Standards of plausibility differ very widely. New recruits to science fiction reading can find excitement in concepts long-familiar to older readers. These two facts, between them, account for a great deal of the disagreement (often violent) in the science fiction community about the merits of newly-published work, and for some puzzling features concerning consumer demand in the science fiction marketplace.

5.7 The demand for innovation, like the demand for plausibility, is basically a demand for an illusion. The illusion satisfies the demand better than the reality (real fidelity to known science involves too much technical discourse and too many limitations on conventional apparatus, while real innovation often presents too difficult a challenge to readers who are not, in fact, likely to be scientifically or philosophically sophisticated). This apparent paradox arises from the fact that the demand for innovation is not associated with the directive function (i.e. it is not a demand for new information) but with the maintenance function: it seeks to *preserve* an attitude to the world encapsulated in the basic perspective-shift. Science fiction is an anomalous *genre* because what is required to maintain its characteristic attitude to the world is not the repetition *ad infinitum* of a series of stereotyped exemplars but a supply of images which gradually change so as always to appear novel while never becoming truly strange.

5.8 Most apologists for science fiction try to argue that the basic perspective-shift involved in science fiction reading has genuine intellectual utility. They see the perspective-shift as essentially *relevant* to the historical situation of contemporary man, who lives in an environment rapidly becoming filled with the products of technology, in which the pace of change is greater than ever before, and which is faced by a series of temporal threats and crisis arising out of the technological revolution, its by-products and its pressure on world resources. This argument seems highly plausible in the broad terms in which it is usually couched, but what is re-

quired to support it (or to test it) is a more detailed analysis of exactly what science fiction is communicating, and a consideration of its potential utility in these respects.

6.1 In attempting a content analysis of science fiction as a developing *genre* it is futile to employ any kind of quantitative method. If we are to consider literature as a medium of communication then we must pay special attention to those stories which communicate most effectively (i.e. those most fondly welcomed and remembered, and those most frequently reprinted). Nor can we even try to pretend that we can separate *observation* of the content of stories from *interpretation* of that content. To do so would be to misrepresent the kind of thing that stories are. The selection of stories for analysis by random sampling of magazines, and the reduction of such stories to quantitative data by the scoring of story-elements according to a pre-selected code of analysis is actually far *less* "scientific" than the attempt to see trends emerging from the sympathetic re-reading of popular and well-remembered stories, for the former approach distorts the data out of all recognition while the latter recognises it for what it is.

6.2 There is no way to reduce a series of complex trend analyses to a few brief notes. However, one of the most basic and most general points that arises from such a series of analyses is that the fifty-year history of science fiction exhibits in several different ways a progressive disenchantment with the social applications of science. The trend was already well set before the war, but was dramatically accelerated by the events of 1945. Characteristically (though not unanimously) science fiction writers express this disenchantment *not* as hostility to the products of science as such, but as a sharp and often desperate criticism of common human motives, human intelligence, human moral responsibility (especially responsibility to future generations) and human "cultural maturity". Though science fiction is one of the products of an "age of anxiety", and relates directly to that anxiety, its writers have generally not been content to specialise in restorative fantasies, or to maintain conventional scapegoat fantasies (as, for instance, the more straightforward anti-technological stance adopted by much mundane fiction). It is largely because science fiction writers were delivered by Hiroshima into the awkward situation of being the prophets and advocates of technological progress in an era of growing disenchantment with technology that science fiction became something more than a publisher's category in mass-produced fiction.

6.3 One of the most important corollaries of this basic tend in science fiction was the dramatic change which has overtaken the roles characteristically played in science fiction stories by aliens and "evolved humans". Both the alien and the superman began their careers in science fiction as figures of menace. The alien is now more commonly represented as a "better person" than human nature permits men to be, and is very often represented as being far more harmoniously adapted to his environment (ecologically and existentially) than is considered the case for human beings. The evolution of man into superman has now come to be a secular salvation myth which is central to the science fiction of the last decade.

7.1 Even the most superficial analysis of trends in science fiction makes it manifestly clear that science fiction is responsive to the historical crises of our time. This is so banal as hardly to qualify as a discovery. The questions which emerge from the analysis are concerned with the *type* (or *types*) of response which is involved; in other words, are we to account for these trends in terms of a directive, maintenance or restorative communicative function, or (more likely) some combination of these? Any estimation of the utility and significance of contemporary science fiction will depend heavily on the estimation of the differential involvement of these three communicative functions. In trying to arrive at such an estimate it is, of course, vitally necessary to bear in mind the pattern of reader demand and the implied modes of reader usage.

7.2 There is evidence of various kinds to the effect that science fiction is capable of having a directive effect upon the world-view of particular individuals. This effect is not so much concerned with the communication of information as with the communication of *attitudes* to the significance of events in the present and the potentialities inherent in the near future, especially in terms of the way that growing scientific knowledge and technological capability are determinants of historical change. The way in which this effect is achieved appears to have much to do with the "affective aggression" of most science fiction writing, and is in any case much more the result of an appeal to the emotions than any appeal to the cognitive faculties. Whether this kind of attitudinal change has any considerable utility is a vexed question. The commonly-quoted hypothesis that it may serve to insulate readers against the shock and stress of rapid environmental change[14] is made dubious by the observation that hardened science fiction fans are notoriously conservative with respect to the content of the *genre* itself. If reading science fiction does not prepare people for change within science fiction itself, can it really prepare them for environmental change?

7.3 The record of science fiction in anticipating social problems is extremely poor. All the fears that haunt contemporary images of the future were invisible in science fiction until they became matters of concern in the real world. This observation is rather damaging to the hypothesis that science fiction prepares people in any way to meet these anxieties as they arise. A case may still be made out for a continuing directive effect, however, because of the way that these issues were taken up and "fed back" by science fiction. Science fiction, by and large, does not simply reflect these anxieties but *amplifies* them and locates them within a system (or a set of systems) of priorities relating to future-orientated actions and questions of moral responsibility to future generations. It is this set of priorities (or these sets) which stand out as ideas and sentiments maintained by science fiction. Though the view of contemporary man and his ecological and social situations is basically critical and frequently pessimistic, the moral imperatives presupposed by the priority systems maintained by science fiction are steadfastly opposed to intolerance, cruelty and materialism.

7.4 The characteristic resolutions once typical of science fiction but now decayed into relative insignificance are the invent-a-new-gadget resolution (dominant throughout the thirties and early forties) and the escape-into-space resolution (dominant in

the early fifties). The death of these two versions of *deus ex machina* has done much to divert the emphasis of science fiction writers to human (and often superhuman) resources, resulting in a dramatic increase in human interest and in fascination with images of transcendence. A new vocabulary of ideas, concerned with social, psychological and transcendental "answers" to story-predicaments has grown up to displace (to a very large extent) the traditional vocabulary of technological "answers".

7.5 It is not immediately apparent how we should interpret the "secular salvation mythology" which has come to dominate stories of man/alien encounters and stories of evolving humanity. These resolutions have no connection with real possibility, and are even less realistic, in the literal sense, than the traditional patterns of resolution. James Blish has argued that they are symptomatic of a "chiliastic panic" consequent upon the apocalyptic fears associated with the atomic bomb, and that they may therefore be explained by analogy with the Millenarian cults of other times and places.[15] If we are to explain them by reference to the maintenance function then we must read their content as a rather drastically exaggerated series of metaphors for what Abraham Maslow has described as "processes of self-actualisation". This hypothesis seems unlikely, in that the persistent exaggeration – which seems to be one of the key factors in the success of many stories of this type – would in this view be an inhibitory factor to the utility of the fiction.

7.6 There is obviously a great deal in science fiction that can be explained by straightforward reference to the restorative function. The most exotic dream-fantasies inevitably found a convenient vocabulary of ideas in the mythology of scientific romance, and imitators of Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt still finds an audience within the sf community. Curiously, science fiction's own domestic brand of straightforward power-fantasy – the superscientific romance first popularised by Edward E. Smith and John W. Campbell – has thrived only periodically, though the recent resurgence of interest in Smith demonstrates the continued utility of the *milieu*, and A.E. van Vogt has been a hardy perennial in the science fiction marketplace. The most significance modern trend in science-fictional restorative fantasy has been the emergence of ecological mysticism in association with stories of the colonisation of other worlds. The fact that ecological mysticism tends to extend into mythologies of rebirth and salvation is, however, as difficult to interpret by reference to the restorative function as it is by reference to the maintenance function. It seems more likely that it functions directively, calling attention (by the strategy of affective aggression) to a sense of insecurity and anomie which affects many people in modern industrial society, and providing ritual exorcisms of that feeling with its vaguely triumphant images of apotheosis.

8.1 The above notes represent some of the main points emerging from six years research into the functions which science fiction may fulfil for its readers. I cannot pretend that my interest has been entirely objective, or that my tentative conclusions are entirely satisfactory. My endeavour, though, has been wholly sincere. The thesis which emerged from this enquiry, giving a much fuller account of the methodology (and the reasons for adopting it) and an elaborate account of the analysis of reader demand, plus a full report of the trend analyses, will (I hope) be published in

1980-81 by the Borgo Press. I have now finished with this kind of analysis, but not with the research project. I shall now proceed, as far as I am able, to submit my conclusions to the method of empirical testing which most readily comes to hand: the writing of science fiction novels.

Notes and References

1. I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism,* London, 1924, *cf* pp.22-23; 47.
2. R. Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950,* London, 1958, p.297.
3. H.D. Duncan, *Communication and Social Order,* New York, 1962, *cf* pp.5;20-21;44-47.
4. G.D. Wiebe, "The Social Effects of Broadcasting" in *Mass Culture Revisited,* ed. B. Rosenberg & D. White, New York, 1971.
5. D. Waples, B. Berelson & F.R. Bradshaw, *What Reading Does to People,* Chicago, 1940.
6. The terminology is Wiebe's. Duncan employs the rubrics "Literature as Great Art", "Literature as Magical Art" and "Literature as make-believe". Waples *et.al.* refer to the "instrumental" function, the "re-enforcement" function and the "respite" function.
7. Wiebe, *op.cit.,* p.161.
8. C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism,* Cambridge, 1961, pp.1-3; 139-40.
9. R. Escarpit, *The Sociology of Literature,* London, rev. ed. 1971, p.88.
10. *cf* R.A. Heinlein, "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction" in *Of Worlds Beyond,* ed. L.A. Eschbach, Chicago, 1965, for an eloquent expansion of this observation.

11. The "plot skeleton" employed by the Scott Meredith Agency in assessing the sales potential of submitted stories represents the revelation and conscious exploitation of the formula which gave pulp fiction its utility with respect to the maintenance function. *cf* D. Knight, "Knight Piece" in *Hell's Cartographers,* ed. B.W. Aldiss & H. Harrison, London, 1975, p.122.
12. M. Butor's essay "On Fairy Stories" in *Inventory,* London, 1968, contains some observations on this subject, but it seems to me that the argument can be taken further still.
13. *cf* for instance, G. Greer, "Romance" in *The Female Eunuch,* London, 1970.
14. *cf* F.O. Tremaine, "Editorial Number Two" in *A Requiem for Astounding,* ed. A. Rogers, Chicago, 1964, p.xvii; A. Toffler, *Future Shock* London, 1970, p.383-4; M. McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage,* London, 1967, p.124.
15. J. Blish, "Cathedrals in Space" in *The Issue at Hand,* Chicago, 1964 (as "W. Atheling, Jr"). Millenarian mythology does have certain affinities with contemporary sf, and it seems clear that some UFO mythology – especially that embraced by the Aetherius Society – is Millenarian in kind.

Last year we asked Mr Lem if he would care to contribute a piece to our "Profession" series, and he offered to do this in the form of answers to specific questions. Our thanks go to those who put the following questions: Mark Adlard, Brian Aldiss, David Masson, Colin Lester and Guido Eekhaut; to Dolorès and Maxim Jakubowski who have translated Mr Lem's answers from the original Polish; and of course to Mr Lem himself.

The Profession of Science Fiction: XV: Answers to a Questionnaire

Stanislaw Lem

translated by Maxim & Dolores Jakubowski

When you are composing a story, which *usually comes first to you – the words or the sights (visualizations)?*

Words only.

Do you usually keep revising the wording, or not?

I never make immediate revisions to a text while writing it, but later complete rewrite after rewrite. Many alternative versions of any text thus emerge. In order to achieve a 200-page book I therefore have to write up to 1,000 pages. Sometimes, particularly important passages are rewritten up to twenty times. Two types of change occur during this process: situational and linguistic. Improving the linguistic element takes up most of my time.

Do you usually know how your stories are going to proceed and end before you write them, or do they develop for you as you write them?

Each work has its own history. When I began *Solaris*, I knew there was to be an ocean on the planet and that it would interfere with the lives of the people in the Station, although I was not aware, at that point, what the ocean was truly "up to", or what the interference would in fact be. When writing *The Investigation*, I knew that the riddle of the "disappearing bodies" would not be resolved but that attributing the "resurrections" to some cosmic force would make them appear more important, so this is what happened. Generally speaking, when I begin a new novel, I am not fully aware of the problems I am about to tackle beyond a nebulous sort of feeling. But sometimes, as in the case of *Katar* (to be published by Harcourt Brace), I knew from the beginning precisely what I wanted to achieve: a "rational variant" of *The Investigation*, the presentation of a problem and its unravelling; this time around I had a beginning and an ending for the book but had to "wait" for more than two years for the middle parts to make themselves clear. (The final chapter of *Solaris* was written one whole year after the rest of the book, the manuscript having been put aside for all that time.) Farcical stories usually have a linguistic source of inspiration, because of the necessity of having to invent a particular new language with all its ad hoc vocabulary to suit a given situation (like the "psychemized civilisation" in *The Futurological Congress*, for example).

Have The Cyberiad *and its fables any literary predecessors which influenced their forms?*
Were you at all influenced by Italo Calvino in writing The Cyberiad, *in particular* Cosmicomics *with its story "A Sign in Space"?*

The literary predecessors of *The Cyberiad* were *Bajki Robotów (Robotic Fables)* which are included in the US edition of *Mortal Engines*. The tone of these first robot stories was rather serious. Gradually, they became more and more grotesque. Their farcicality served to enhance my verbal inventiveness (I was producing increasingly more neologisms). These neologisms inspired further robot tales, until *How the World was Saved*, which at one time was part of *Bajki Robotów**. I think it was a good example of a certain kind of "natural birth" with the feedback operating from previous stories. Having the main characters Trurl and Klapaucius "available",

*This story is now the first in Lem's *Cyberiad* collection (MJ).

I began writing their "Seven Sallies" (clearly following the example of *Sinbad's seven adventures*). But as seven stories were insufficient to my needs, I went on writing further tales in the same series. So *Bajki Robotów* was both a training ground and an introduction to *The Cyberiad.*

I read Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* after *The Cyberiad* was published. I found the book so boring I was unable to finish reading it, which is why I don't know *A Sign in Space.* I suppose Calvino's type of humour put me off, as I found him anything but funny; Tolkien I find much the same, his type of fantasy is derivative and boring. Derivative because it is too similar to the fantasies of folklore, and I prefer my folklore authentic and not makeshift as practised by Tolkien.

Do you start with the germ of an idea and proceed to clothe it, or with a particular vision (or sequence of words)?

As mentioned above, at the beginning of my writing career I would often start a draft completely in the dark, but this "trial and error" method made for an enormous waste of time and energy. I switched to carrying my new ideas around with me until I would intuitively feel they were "ready" and only then did I start writing. New ideas, as expressed by situations and precise word formations, often come to me completely unexpectedly and frequently are uncontrollably "lost" when I don't put them down immediately, which is not always possible (for instance, when I am driving). I go through my notes from time to time. I have collected ideas for more books than I have written, or will ever write, in this way. As an example, let me mention an idea I have but might never use, which can illustrate the process I mention above. "Scientific robot investigators" are testing a human they have somehow got hold of. In order to test the strength of a man's skull, one of the robots proceeds to hit him. As a result of which, the man gets a bump on his head. The robots come to the conclusion that the bump acts as a shock absorber, thereby providing them with proof of man's powers of instant adaptation to any given situation! This example conveniently illustrates the kind of surprises "the idea generator" inside my head gives birth to.

In The Invincible *near the end, the cloud of beings form the giant shape of a man above the valley. Did you intend some definite meaning by this, and if so what?*

The shape of a man in this scene in *The Invincible* is simply an enlargement of Rohan's shadow. I did not invent this phenomenon; it is well-known in the Alps. A man standing on the top of a mountain in certain conditions of light can witness his colossal shadow in the clouds. This image of an ordinary physical phenomenon was never meant to have any sybmolic significance.

Do you consider sf as primarily a criticism of mankind, or as an exercise of imaginative power, or what?

I do not segregate sf from the rest of literature, which is why I don't think it should bear the burden of any different duties or roles from normal literature. I believe

that as far as literature is concerned everything is permitted, meaning there should be no restrictions for the author, who should make his own choice of content and form in his writings. For example, I consider as literature my collection of reviews of non-existent books *Doskonala Próznia* (appearing as *Perfect Vacuum* with Harcourt Brace this year), as I would a collection of reviews of books from the 21st century. But I believe that literature should have *something* to say. An author should only write books that do not repeat anything he or any writer has previously said, unless he has something significantly new to say on the subject. As for what is "new" or "original", that is a question to be answered by the author's own judgement.

While writing my books, the thought has never crossed my mind that I should either "serve" or "help" humanity, advise on any subject or warn. I feel confidently responsible for the books I have written but I am not responsible for the ideas they contain, just as one cannot be held responsible for one's dreams. All I am doing, in fact, is scrupulously selecting among the ideas that present themselves to me.

What I as a reader expect from sf is a completely different matter. I expect indications of intellectual originality, new ideas, an exercise in the reworking of established ideas; in one word an author's power of invention should be proof of his artistic ability. Finally, what is important to me when I am reading is the contact with the author *as a person*, as an individual. When reading Bertrand Russell, Stapledon or Wells, you can feel right away in the lines or in between them, the man, the mind responsible for the text. "Personal contact" of this sort, I feel when reading both literary and scientific works (for instance when reading Fred Hoyle on astrophysics). On the other hand, with regard to the question as to "whether sf has a role", I must profess a lack of interest, even if as a reviewer I think sf should be less trivial. Which does not mean that I am biased: I am always willing to let myself be convinced by a particular book or author that a matter I consider trivial is in fact of greater interest! Should this "greater interest" be a proof of importance, then the subject matter is of course no longer trivial.

Has sf any necessary connexion with the sciences?

As far as I am concerned, yes. In the first place, an encyclopedic knowledge of science is as necessary for the sf writer as the exhaustive knowledge of living conditions his heroes must experience (up to and including the retail prices of specific goods) is for the author of a realistic novel. Secondly, the author requires a knowledge of the typical mechanisms of cognizance (gnosis), i.e. sufficient data on the realm of the history of science, its changes and developments; basically, what Kuhn, for example, wrote about in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Thirdly, the history of political doctrines, theological doctrines, the history of philosophy, elements of comparative ethnology. I cannot understand how anyone can try and "build up" in a book any kind of terrestrial or extraterrestrial civilization without this kind of knowledge, insofar as it is impossible to postulate a society of thinking creatures without an understanding of religion, philosophy, conflicts of point of view, culture, artistic expression, customs, etc. . . . *Ex nihilo nihil fit* – there is no way you can invent all that out of thin air. It follows that anyone who is uneducated in the ways of individual or mass psychology can only produce rubbish,

no more than assemblages of common stereotypes. A knowledge of the above-mentioned fields doesn't necessarily mean that one should meekly comply with the "dictates of science"; you are allowed to sin against science, if your creative purpose justifies it. This justification should never stem from the fact that you may require a certain amount of money rapidly or that an editor is asking you for a story.

If you were to exclude from my books everything they owe to the application of concepts of biological evolution, there would be little left. That, of course, is an extreme example. A good understanding of scientific matters is not by any means a source of inspiration in itself. I have never come across anything in a science journal which I could automatically redirect into a story as more than information. To put it another way, I feel obliged to read scientific papers the way a cow eats grass in order to produce milk. However widely milk differs from grass, there is no way the cow can produce the milk without eating the grass. My point of view is, of course, based on the understanding that any writer should know more than his readers. Which is as obvious to me as saying that a singer should be capable of singing better than his audiences. If he is not, then it would be better if he allowed them to do the singing.

Mosfilm Studios made a version of your novel Solaris *directed by the great Soviet director, Andrei Tarkovsky; this film, while it certainly makes the sort of departures from the printed script necessitated by translation from one medium to another, is probably the finest expression so far of science fiction cinema. Yet we hear you refused to see the film. Is this so? If so, what reason do you offer for such curiously incurious behaviour?*

First of all, I did acquaint myself with the script of *Solaris* written by Tarkovsky with another Russian scriptwriter (whose name I don't recall*). This script proved a rather unpleasant surprise to me. In the long prologue that takes place on Earth, it introduces Kelvin's family and undue importance is given to his old mother. The mother's character symbolizes his family ties, but also the Motherland, Mother Earth, and this has very strong connotations in Russian folklore; as far as I was concerned, Kelvin's family connections were of little interest and should not have been bothered with in *Solaris*. After lengthy discussions, I managed to get rid of most of Kelvin's family in the script. But by then I knew for certain that Tarkovsky's film vision of *Solaris* and mine were quite different. I was expecting a visualization of the "Drama of Cognizance", seen as a contrast between the images of "home, sweet Earth" and the "Cold Cosmos", a drama in which the characters affecting the men in the Station originate from the ocean and symbolize the antagonism between the vast open spaces of the planet and the small enclosed Station. Unfortunately Tarkovsky took sides and favoured "home, sweet Earth" against the "Cold Cosmos". For a drama of cognizance in which the people, the envoys from Earth, keep on struggling with the enigma that cannot be solved by the human mind, Tarkovsky substituted a moral drama *par excellence*, which in no way relates to the problem

*Friedrich Gorenstein (MJ).

of cognizance and its extremes. For Tarkovsky, the most important facet was Kelvin's problem of "guilt and punishment", just as in a Dostoyevsky book. I later saw fragments of the first part of the film when it was shown on television in Poland and what I saw confirmed my negative opinion of the adaptation. What was important for Tarkovsky in the film left me quite indifferent, and vice-versa. At any rate, there were many discussions about the film in Russia and this difference between our respective points of view was well summarized by the cosmonaut Feoktistov.

Can you describe the advantages and disadvantages to an sf writer of being born outside the Anglo-American axis? Your views on the advantages would be of the greater interest.

The advantages stemming from the fact that I am not an author living in the West are mostly of a paradoxical nature. The lack of a strong influence of standard sf has led me to creative independence, just as a commonplace lack of access to futurological literature led me to a form of intellectual self-dependence *vis-à-vis* the treatment of future problems. I once described this situation as similar to that of Robinson Crusoe, who had to achieve everything on his own. I don't think my books would have been that much different had I been born in the USA. Even in Poland, from the beginning of my career until the present day, I have been a foreign body of sorts *(corpus alienum)*. Critics disregarded me; on the literary scene, I was classified amongst authors of adventure and historical romances. Many leading critics have never devoted a single word to my works. Even the vast readership of my books was taken as evidence of their artistic inferiority. I suppose the situation would have been exactly the same had Poland remained in capitalist Europe, as before the war.

The practical difference as far as I was concerned was that being systematically ignored by the critics, I could allow myself a large degree of freedom when writing, within the existing context of censorship, which wouldn't have been that easy if every book of mine had been the object of the experts' critical attention. I was active on the very borderlines of literary life, somehow in the shadows, and that was a distinct advantage, insofar as there were very few pressures on my writing, in view of it being deemed both trivial and unimportant. My standing in literary circles later changed quite radically, not so much thanks to the intrinsic value of my work, but because of the growing worldwide reputation of my writing. However, this newly-found reputation remains to this day a phenomenon as strange as it is incomprehensible for most Polish writers and critics. There are a few individuals among the intelligentsia who have perceived in my books something more than just boisterous adventure literature, but they are isolated in their opinions and basically aware of being so. They are publicly obliged to adopt a polemical stance when defending me and denying the fact that I am of minor importance. Up to the middle of the 1960s, my advocates and their articles stood firmly against the Polish elite's standing opinion of Lem. The most interesting articles about my creative output were written outside Poland, with from one or two exceptions. At the beginning I was recognized by scientific (not literary) circles in Russia, where I had already been held in high regard for many years. This particular fact had little influence on the

Polish intellectual elite's opinion of me. This situation can be explained by the fact that the intellectual orientation of our elite is generally pro-West, and Paris for them is more significant than Moscow.

Fittingly, it was not as a writer that I first achieved some acclaim in Poland, but primarily as a "self-appointed futurologist", because when at the end of the 1960s translations of futurological books began to appear in Poland, it was no longer possible to deny the fact that I was a precursor in this field, having already published *Summa Technologiae* in 1963 (this book had virtually no reviews at all after its publication and only 3,000 copies were printed). Assumptions, which I have often read in the Western press, that my artistic and intellectual autonomy was encouraged by the patronage of state publishers appear to me rather inaccurate. As an author, I tend to feel that the editors tolerated me rather than publicized me. For years, my books were unobtainable in bookshops because no edition exceeded 20,000 copies, and it was only last year that I achieved a print-run of 100,000 for a first edition. *Bajki Robotów*'s first edition of 7,000 copies was relatively small for Poland. The literary prizes I have received are much the same as those usually awarded to writers of historical and adventure novels, whose names are more often than not mentioned in the same breath as mine. By the way, on a *per capita* basis, I have a larger number of books in print in East Germany than in Poland (over there, there are 1½ million copies of my books in circulation for a population of 16 million, while in Poland it's a ratio of 2.4 million copies to 35 million inhabitans). My television plays have been performed in Russia, Hungary, East and West Germany, but not all have been done in Poland. I don't think that in different governmental conditions, without "state patronage", I would have needed to wait so long for recognition as I had to in Poland, where it took me nearly twenty years. The first volume devoted to me first appeared in West Germany, much earlier than the first monograph on me in Poland.

I am emphasizing all these facts to try and show that in Poland I was working as a *hermit*, ignored or not taken seriously; this is why I safely assume that I could remain independent anywhere else as well. After the fiasco of the production of the film based on my first novel (*Astronauci [The Astronauts]*, 1951), I generally refused all proposals from Polish film-makers and I genuinely feel that I am capable of refusing any future unfavourable film proposals from any other country. The capitalist market conditions the author by measuring the popularity of his books by their saleability, while a "state protectorate" keeps the author dependent upon publishers who are themselves controlled by a political form of cultural administration. As a result of these controls, my literary debut was delayed for nearly six years; another of my books, a rather feeble one, *Obok Magellana (The Magellan Nebula)*, was published a year and a half after it was written.

If I had been an American, I don't think I would have written exactly the same books I have written as a Pole; surely an "ethnic Doppler effect" would have manifested itself, because different life experiences would have engendered a "complete shift of semantic spectrum" in my literary creativity. But I don't think I would have surrendered to commercial pressures or to the temptation of making a fast profit with some trashy, potboiler work, because that very kind of opportunity has been available to me in Poland (even if the financial reward was much smaller) and it's

a path I have always avoided. Although my works of fiction have earned me more money than the small editions of my theoretical works *(Dialogi [Cybernetic Dialogues]; Summa Technologiae; Filozofia Przypadku [The Philosophy of Chance]; Fantastyka i Futurologia [Science Fiction and Futurology])* it has not in the smallest way discouraged me from writing thick volumes of that type. So far, I cannot see why any American or English writer could be jealous of my working conditions. Finally, and as a form of summary, the only visible advantage which I had due to my place of birth is mentioned at the beginning of this answer; I refer to the "Robinson Crusoe syndrome". I had either to renounce certain major ambitions because of lack of access to countless books and periodicals available elsewhere in the world, or I had to "invent everything myself". But, truthfully, it is difficult to distinguish whether this was really an advantage which I could recommend to others.

Why, in your opinion, do your books have such a success in Western Europe and the USA, and not those of, let's say, the Strugatskys'? Is the political climate in Poland better (concerning the freedom of writers) than in the USSR, or has this nothing to do with it?

I have my doubts as to whether one can state that Lem is a success in the USA and Western Europe. This particular point – is it more the case of success in the market place than that of a writer becoming famous? – has for a long time been of great interest to me, and because I was unable to find anything interesting on the subject in the theory of literature, I wrote (in line with my Robinson Crusoe method) a book, *Filozofia Przypadku (The Philosophy of Chance)*, dealing with, amongst other things, the phenomenon of success in culture. I cannot summarize here what I treated in over 600 pages, so I will only say this: a best-seller form of success (which in French can have two meanings ranging from *succès d'estime* to *succès de marché*) is quite different from the permanent entry of a book into the literary heritage. Each type of success can be dictated by many different factors.

With regard to the point you make that I am successful and the Strugatskys are not, I was quite unaware of this prior to your question. I take your statement for granted for the sake of the argument, so that I may expound on the differences I see in our respective attitudes. To begin with, let us look at the similarities in our development, which can be seen in our successive published works. The Strugatskys and I both started with a tone of "happy futuristic optimism" and gradually arrived at a darker vision of things. What about differences? My pessimism (which, by the way, is far from absolute) originated with my despair in the lack of perfection to be found in human nature; the Strugatskys' on the other hand was a rather social type of despair. I was attempting in my successive books to show the somewhat inevitable handicap of the human condition, which can of course differ quite radically depending on the regime under which one lives; but then, who is ever likely to experience a "comprehensively perfect" regime? Above all, I have never thought that the literary life is a tool of action, capable of performing direct actions of social righteousness (the reason literature is so impotent is that it is a very weak tool). The Strugatskys, on the other hand, have tried very hard to turn their books into a kind of instrument

of righteousness. I can even perceive a positive correlation between the very weakness of some of their titles and their stated intention of socially improving the "state of affairs" (*The Ugly Swans*, seen by them as an act of defiance and rehabilitation, attempts to present in a favourable manner the situation of the Jews in the Diaspora and is among their weakest novels). When the Strugatskys plan something, they do so within a narrower range than I am myself accustomed to, and appear to be more interested in emotional interactions than in providing a rational diagnosis; they function nearer to a pole of social criticism while I am more attracted to philosophical reflections (these viewpoints are not so diametrically opposed in fact, but I am obliged to simplify things a lot in such a short space). Their books are generally more ethnocentric than mine, and this very ethnocentricity means that it must be difficult to understand them fully without having a personal knowledge of the social conditions in which their books were conceived (*Tale of the Troika* is, despite its farcical nature, far more realistic than a lot of readers might think, not having experienced certain local realities at first hand). It is precisely this aspect of the Strugatskys' output, which I would describe as using of sf for socio-political criticism, which must explain why they enjoy such a difficult reception outside Russia, as it too often implies a necessary knowledge of the things criticized therein.

By the way, the Strugatskys and I have corresponded at length about this particular point. I believe, and have told them, that to direct their work so strongly towards certain socio-political situations (as a way of confronting reality) threatens the autonomy of their work; a particular state of affairs will change or disappear with time but the books will remain, losing their points of reference and thus becoming incomprehensible, in the same way that a book will lose all its power when transposed into a different form of socio-political reality.

I am certainly not claiming that the above kind of criticism should not be practised in literature, but I don't think the Strugatskys' way is the right way to do it. If you are dealing in allegories and metaphors for a critical purpose, then it becomes necessary to achieve a comprehensive form of universality, just as in a scientific theory, capable of widespread application. (*Tale of the Troika* does not hit any specific targets of American life; on the other hand, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* does succeed in reaching targets in the American Establishment.) I would rather not take sides as to what is good and bad, but I feel that the Strugatskys have not managed to break out of the great socio-critical tradition of Russian literature, while I on the other hand have not allowed myself to surrender to the ethnocentricities of the traditions of Polish literature. As a Pole, I cherish humanity (if only by virtue of belonging to the human race), and that is more important to me than any particular nationality or the destiny of a given ethnic group. It might appear something of a paradox that the Strugatskys, who put much more faith into the belief that literature could good-naturedly influence reality than I did, have experienced greater disappointment and have sunk into a deep form of misanthropy; a perfect example of this is their novel *Roadside Picnic*. Never in sf have I ever come across such an extreme example of contempt for humanity as in this book, where "visitors" treat humankind like parasites or noxious insects. I would also add that some of the Strugatskys' books (*Hard to be a God, Roadside Picnic*) are partly polemical answers to my own books (respectively *Eden* and *Solaris*). This could easily be documented

by a direct comparison of the problems evoked in the novels; I could even make direct quotations but don't wish to go too far into this kind of comparison. I think this all simply describes the differences between the Strugatskys' attitudes and mine; however, I cannot state in a categorical manner that these differences explain why our books are received differently. That's a question I cannot answer.

Would you care to comment on the SFWA's recent treatment of you?

I think I can treat this with objectivity, because the whole affair has not affected me one little bit. This is not because I regard the SFWA particularly lightly, but only because all great honours, awards, privileges, etc. leave me quite indifferent. The reason I accepted the privilege offered was that I thought a refusal might have offended such a respected institution. My points of view on sf published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* which as far as I know were the reasons why my honorary membership of the SFWA was withdrawn, were only a brief restatement of views expressed years before in the two volumes of *Fantastyka i Futurologia* (*Science Fiction and Futurology*). As I said to one of my American correspondents, the SFWA punished me for the sole reason that nobody there could read Polish. I don't feel sorry about the incident and harbour no ill feelings towards the SFWA as a collective body or any US fellow-writers in particular, but it would be a lie to say that the whole incident has enlarged my respect for sf writers.

After a period of residence in London, Tom Disch has recently moved back to New York. By doing so he missed, to his immense chagrin, the opportunity to become the New Statesman*'s film critic, having made a successful guest appearance in the magazine in that guise. Their loss is considerable, as the following heretical look at one of the sf cinema's recent blockbusters will demonstrate.*

A Closer Look at Close Encounters

Thomas M. Disch

Admirers of science fiction have a paradoxical disposition to be literal-minded in their discussion of sf, to resist the possibility of interpretation, and so very often to miss the point even of those works they admire. Perhaps the paradox is built

into the genre, for what does the sci of sci-fi promise us but that there is a logical, 'scientific' legitimacy to fantasies that we might otherwise blush to entertain? So, in all the talk about *Star Wars*, I never once heard mention of what seemed the salient feature of the story-line – that it retold, on a larger scale but quite transparently, the sperm-as-spaceman skit from Woody Allen's *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex But Were Afraid To Ask*. The film is a virtual sex manual for nervous teenage boys who need to be reassured that if they will only *relax* a little, all will be well and the force will be with them. Perfectly sound advice, and glad tidings, evidently, to millions of viewers. But how did the critics view *Star Wars*? As a jolly old-fashioned conflict between Good and Evil of which nothing more need to be noted. Enough to praise the special effects and to vie with each other in tracking down the sources they supposed Lucas to be plagiarizing, an exercise on a par with tracing the iconographic influences on modern automobile showrooms: decor, after all, cannot be copyrighted.

In not wishing to interpret *Star Wars*, its critics showed themselves to be staunch clerics and preservers of their culture's most hallowed (and therefore unspoken) traditions, which are to be understood as self-evident and above interpretation. Now the same thing has happened with *Close Encounters*, with this difference – that as its subtext is subversive of many of our most cherished values, deceits, and social arrangements, it has been dismissed (with some faint praise for its special effects) with the same cavalier inattention to any but the very literal meaning its ads proclaimed – that we are not alone and that the UFOs are up there, biding their time until They're ready to bliss us out. The critics have been abetted in their self-blinkered nescience by the film's director, Steven Spielberg, who maintains in his interviews that maybe UFOs really are real. Mr Spielberg is a young man with a manner as guileless as 4-year-old Cary Guffey's in his film, and his protestations have been accepted at face value. After all, it isn't in the interest of the publicity machine to probe too deeply into Spielberg's good or bad faith in this matter. It may be wondered whether his movie would have made quite so many millions of dollars if Spielberg hadn't thrown these sops to his literal-minded audience.

I, for one, don't believe in the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs, any more than I believe in ESP, reincarnation, or the divinity (or satanic maleficence) of whatever guru has most recently won space in the Sunday supplements – though all of these are viable and potentially significant premises for fantasy. However, as Richard Dreyfuss keeps insisting as he models his mashed potatoes into truncated pyramids, *it must mean something*. I would submit that what Spielberg has in mind bears close comparison to R.D. Laing's thesis of schizophrenia as a heightened form of consciousness. Less familiar though even closer to Spielberg's general drift is *Mount Analogue*, an allegorical novel by the French surrealist Rene Daumal, in which the quest for transcendental experience is likened to a mountain-climbing expedition – an analogy so precise it may amount in at least one direction (mountain climbers *are* pursuing transcendence) to an identity.

Interpreted in this light, *Close Encounters* may be seen as a story about the pursuit of God by an Everyman called Roy Neary (as in 'Neary My God to Thee'). It is not an easy pursuit, for it requires acts of faith that look to his employers, family, and neighbours like madness. Indeed, Neary *is* mad, for God is not approachable in the clothing

of rationality. (When the police cars try to follow the first set of flying saucers they plunge over a precipice.) Neary's first experience of Something Else is a gratuitous visitation, an act of grace, but because Neary insists on following the saucers whither they lead, he loses his job: you cannot serve God and Mammon. When the saucers have departed, Neary has no very good idea of how to continue the pursuit. He has an obscure impulse to model shaving foam, mashed potatoes, and finally the entire fabric of his house and grounds into an Object of mysterious, numinous significance. In short, he becomes an artist, a decision that entails for Neary (as for that other representative all-sacrificing artist Gauguin) the abandonment of his family. Christ demanded no less. One reviewer, S. Schoenbaum, wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement* that "Neary's willingness to give up wife and children for a fabulous voyage may be comprehensible, but his ability to do so without an internal conflict betrays the psychological poverty of the script". On the contrary, it is precisely the headless, headlong, joyful way that Neary smashes up his own suburban household in the pursuit of his vision that evidences the psychological acumen of the script. Converts, and madmen, are people who have passed beyond internal conflicts.

At length, Neary is rewarded for his persistence by a Sign that the form he has been modelling and remodelling has an objective existence outside his imagination (a sign it is every artist's hope some day to be vouchsafed). It is shown on television, a mountain in Wyoming. Naturally, he sets off at once for the spot. However, the forces-that-be would prevent him from going there. (Mammon, after all, has his own interests to look after.) They say the area has been contaminated with nerve gas and that he will be poisoned unless he wears a gas-mask. In other words, it isn't safe to pursue wisdom along the paths of excess, and madness is not only bad but fatal. The dramatic highpoint of the film occurs when Neary decides to take off his gas-mask. This leap of faith immediately liberates him and his two companions to make their attempt on the Devil's Tower (a name, like the story about the nerve gas, that is meant to act as a deterrent; religious authority is always suspicious of do-it-yourselfers), and his reward at the mountain top is a vision of . . . something ineffable.

If the movie can be faulted, it is for its vision of Neary's reward. Spielberg demonstrates technical mastery in establishing the scale and physical reality of Devil's Tower, so that when the spaceship makes its entrance, dwarfing the mountain, the effect is truly awesome. But the concert that ensues is not, to my ear, the music of the spheres. I'd have preferred an original score by Beethoven – or, lacking that, by Terry Riley. But after all, art always fails at conveying the Divine Presence in the fullness of its glory. Art offers an image, not the real thing, and that image, finally, takes a human form, as it does in the Sistine Chapel, or in Blake's drawings, or in the 'aliens' who come out of their ship to wave hello to the audience. If the effect is risible, the laughter is inherent in all anthropomorphic representations of the divine.

Why, if this is indeed the subtext of the film, has the film been so popular? Surely, it does not portend a mass exodus from suburbia into the desert. It has been popular, I think, for the same reason Christianity has been – not because the audience is persuaded to take its precepts to heart, but because it offers an impressive *picture* of God, a graven image, a Golden Calf. We are all hungry to see His face, and at the same time reluctant to become madmen for His sake, which

so many authorities have claimed to be one of the requirements. What we can't *do*, however, we can enjoy watching in simulation, especially if the endeavor has been masked in the sanitized imagery of conventional sci-fi and we aren't required to think about it, since, by definition, sci-fi can never *mean* anything important.

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A Prized Harmony: Myth, Symbol and Dialectic in the Novels of Olaf Stapledon

K.V. Bailey

> And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
> For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
> Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
> Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be prized?
>
> – Robert Browning, *Abt Vogler*

Olaf Stapledon's futures are up and down affairs. He gets some splendid race going, and then wipes it out with a catastrophe or a plague. His universe appears indifferent to the fates of these communities: they come; they go. The process can become both tedious and depressing, and even the most enlightened of his supermen, especially when they probe telepathically into the past, seem to find it so, sometimes to the point of deciding that race suicide is the noblest action. His attempts at immediate

political or technological prophecy, as he himself admitted in the preface to *Darkness and the Light* are often naive and wide of the mark; and his evolutionary biology is at times most unsound. If one adds to all of this the featureless anonymity of his leaders and heroes, the monotony within variety of his seemingly endless succession of epoch-long civilisations and cultures, and, finally, his tendency toward what might be construed as a ruthless élitism, it is not difficult to understand why he has had his detractors. These include critics as diverse as C.S. Lewis and Lewis Mumford.

Why then, is it that his writings have had such influence on and given such delight to so many idealistically-minded readers of the mid- and late-twentieth century? What leads Brian Aldiss to describe *Star Maker* as "the one great grey holy book of science fiction"? The answer lies in Stapledon's ability to shape, from the large problems of human ethics, cosmic dramas shot though with overtones of myth; and, in doing this, to give novel form and imagery to certain universal archetypes.

There is, moreover, despite the bewildering complexity of the total elaborate construct, a flavour of organic individuality about Stapledon's creations. At a fictional level, in this respect and in respect of their eclectic approach, his writings have a kinship with certain features of the works of Oswald Spengler. Near the beginnings of the first volume of *The Decline of the West*, Spengler wrote:

> Each culture has its own possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay and never return . . . These cultures, sublimated life-essences, grow with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field. They belong, like the plants and animals, to the living Nature of Goethe, and not to the dead nature of Newton. I see world history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvellous waxing and waning of organic forms.

There are many passages in Stapledon which, in some measure, parallel such a concept. For example, after the emigration to Neptune in *Last and First Men*:

> Age after age the races of the Sixteenth Men blossomed with culture after culture. The movement of thought ranged again and again through all the possible worlds of the spirit, ever discovering new significance in ancient themes.

Yet even in this brief quotation a divergence from the Spenglerian doctrine is apparent. The idea of a spiritual experience which has more than a transitory and temporal significance is alien to Spengler. The idea of such experience, which may in its turn reveal new and perhaps transcendental significance is, for all his professed agnosticism, close to the centre of Olaf Stapledon's vision. Through the history of his successive races, through their growth, decline and supersession, runs a Platonic justification. At the end of *Last and First Men* he puts into the mouth of the last-born of the doomed Eighteenth Men — a race which is striving amidst decay and senescence to launch the seed of man to the stars — the essence of this philosophy:

> Great are the stars and man is of no account to them. But man is a fair spirit, whom a star conceives and a star kills. He is greater than those blind bright companies. For though in them there is incalculable potentiality, in him there is achievement, small but actual. Too soon, seemingly, he comes to his end. But when he is done he will not be nothing, not as though he had never been; for he is eternally a beauty in the eternal form of things.

Spengler, by contrast, in describing the premature death — murder he terms it — of the Mayan-Aztec culture, defines it as an almost accidental by-product of Western buccaneering expansion. He says:

> This instance shows, as no other shows, that the history of humanity has no meaning whatever and that deep significances reside only in the life-courses of separate cultures. Their inter-relations are unimportant and accidental.

In Stapledon's universe this is not so. Although any one of his mythical cultures may die and leave no apparent trace, its particular explorations of themes of darkness and light are woven into what he describes as a cosmic symphony, which carries in its structure the potential of fulfilment. It is an ideal of his advanced cultures to guide others in directions which may make such realisations possible. In fact, the civilisations strung out in great variety through the history of man in *Last and First Men* find consummation in the beauty and tragedy of the Last Men. The tenor of *Star Maker* points to an ethic of cooperation between culture and culture which contributes to the emergence of a community of worlds. Yet Stapledon is himself sceptical of any naive teleology. In world after world and culture after culture which he depicts, a fine flowering ripens into decay, or accidental circumstances blot out a world in its prime. He has much in common with Spengler in supposing that "good" lies in the fulfilment of organisms – whether the organism be an individual, a culture, or, in Stapledon's case, even a star or a galaxy. Spengler, however, does not deal in metaphysical abstractions such as "the good". For him history is simply "the actualising of possible culture".

Stapledon's chief philosophical work, *A Modern Theory of Ethics,* presents a quasi-Whiteheadian view of the universe, in which the moral claim on the individual derives from the unfulfilled needs of those organisms which comprise the universe. In the last three chapters of that book he considers what he terms the "moods" of the mind confronted with "good" (fulfilment) and "evil" (non-fulfilment). His justification of such categorisation rests on an intuitive rather than a logical basis. He describes these "moods" as "moral zeal", "disillusion", and "ecstasy".

All three "moods" are given play in each of his three major novels of the future. In *Last and First Men* the alternations of success and failure, of stability and catastrophe, of fulfilment and frustration, lead eventually to the point at which the Eighteenth Men on Neptune, faced with the annihilation of the solar system, are preparing to send their seed to the stars. The "mood" of moral zeal is expressed by the "Last Man" narrator in the "Epilogue" passage already quoted; and even more tellingly when the Eighteenth Man "inspirer" of the book describes his race's approaching fate:

> . . . We know that though our fair community must cease, it has also indestructible being. We have at least carved into one region of the eternal real a form which has beauty of no mean order. The great company of diverse and lovely men and women in all their subtle relationships, striving with a single purpose toward the goal which is mind's final goal; the community and super-individuality of that great host; the beginnings of further insight and creativeness upon the higher plane – these surely are real achievements – even though, in the larger view, they are minute achievements.

Both of these passages in *Last and First Men* echo the definitive statement of the "mood" of moral zeal to be found in *A Modern Theory of Ethics*:

> If the stars are indifferent to this vast crusade for the good, so much the worse for them. If they be not themselves alive or seats of life, we may ignore them; unless indeed they can be made somehow instrumental to the achievement of the ideal . . . For nothing, in this mood matters but the abolition of evils and the achievement of goods.

The second "mood" – that of disillusion, to which moral zeal may give way – is dominant at many points in *Last and First Men*, and is the prevailing temper of the second part of Stapledon's war-time novel *Darkness and the Light* where, prior to the wiping out of the solar system by the sun's going nova, civilisation has dwindled to a genetically-determined nightmare, and degenerate man has at last been overtaken by the rats. He depicts a society in which the ratcatcher's is the most honoured profession, and he follows the community's dissolution towards a pack state in which debased creatures live on roots and meet at full moon to howl out spells against the rats.

Of the "mood" of disillusion, Stapledon writes in *A Modern Theory of Ethics*:

> No longer is the world a theatre of intense personal dramas, or of the cosmical epic of good and evil; it is just a tedious accident, a foul tangle of thorns and marshes, wherein somehow one has to find a resting place.

It is a mood reflected in the earlier poems of T.S. Eliot – in "Prufrock", "Gerontion", *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men":

> We are the hollow men
> We are the stuffed men
> Leaning together
> Headpiece filled with straw, Alas!
> Our dried voices, when
> We whisper together
> Are quiet and meaningless
> As wind in dry grass
> Or rats' feet over broken glass
> In our dry cellar.

There is a certain dialectic in Stapledon's philosophy by which his third "mood", that of ecstasy, is shown to arise out of despair, but also out of perceptions of beauty and out of the aesthetic insights which great tragedy affords, and to lead to a worship of the universe for being what it is, an "admiration" in which the narrower concepts of good and evil are transcended. He gives a special meaning to the word "ecstasy", divorcing it from mystical experience of a reality behind appearances, and applying it to the appreciation of a higher excellence to be found in the familiar world, an excellence in which fulfilment and non-fulfilment, triumph and failure, are merged. The "mood" of the last days of the super-human group in *Odd John* (an uneven novel, the tragic ending of which comes at times dangerously near to bathos) displays this kind of ecstasy. Stapledon's finest fictional expression of this "mood", however, occurs at the conclusion of *Star Maker* when, in his final "dream", the walls of his separate being broken down by the in-rush of vision, the narrator glimpses the ultimate nature of the Star Maker:

> It was with anguish and horror, and yet with acquiescence, even with praise that I felt or seemed to feel something of the eternal spirit's temper as it apprehended in one intuitive and timeless vision all our lives. Here was no pity, no proffer of salvation, no kindly aid. Or here were all pity and all love, but mastered by a frosty ecstasy. Our broken lives, our loves, our follies, our betrayals, our forlorn and gallant defences, were one and all calmly anatomized, assessed and placed . . . All passions, it seemed, were comprised within the spirit's temper, icily gripped within the cold, clear, crystal ecstasy of contemplation.

The use of the words "eternal" and "timeless" here hint at Stapledon's attraction to an argument which in *A Modern Theory of Ethics* he seems uncertain whether to accept or reject, namely that: "If our temporal experience is in some way incomplete, if the ultimate reality is in some sense supratemporal, embracing the temporal process as one of its attributes, teleology is only a partial aspect of something eternal. For supratemporally, though the end is made actual by successful striving, yet the achieved end and the striving co-exist eternally." But in this view only the striving, which in time results in triumph, is supratemporally an eternal factor. In failure there may be eternally a process of striving, but no achievement in eternity. Stapledon admits this to be a dubious argument; but it is one that obviously fascinated him, for there are many hints of it and variations on it in his novels – often employing a musical metaphor. To give one example: in the short, didactic fiction "Old Man, New World", the Fool (a kind of symbolic human/Star Maker surrogate), calling on the assembled crowd (mankind) to be his instruments, says:

> Let your sand-grain resound with a living flood of music, harmonious in itself, and harmonized with the song of all the spheres, which I alone can hear.

The theme, in various guises, occurs in the work of a number of poets who have concerned themselves with the problem of time – again, often with the employment of musical figures. A musical structure, and images of movement and the dance, are used by Eliot in the *Four Quartets*. Here the ideas of failure in the temporal world and of the possible redemption of failure in the timeless world are explored in many dimensions – personal, historic, cosmic. Though historic happenings take place and are gone, it is that they may "become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern" ("Little Gidding"). And Robert Browning, earlier in the poem from which the epigraph for this essay is taken, makes the great extemporiser say, after the notes of his creation have died away:

> All we have hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
> Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
> Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
> When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

Ten years after writing *A Modern Theory of Ethics*, Stapledon produced his popular outline of philosophy, *Philosophy and Living*. In the concluding sections of this work he explores further the dichotomy between moral protest and mystical acceptance, suggesting that at the present level of human development a resolution may not be possible. The firm outcome of his thinking is that it is man's proper role and duty to establish and foster the ideal of personality-in-community. This aim equates with what he had earlier called moral zeal. He further suggests that:

> It may be that at some date in the history of the cosmos this enterprise will be fulfilled in the perfection of knowing-feeling-striving through the experience of some cosmical society of worlds.

Beyond this, he speculates, is the possibility of a "precarious contact" with the

eternal and perfected spirit of the cosmos – a state in which failure and achievement are equally part of a total pattern – a music which only the Star Maker can hear. Moral protest, with its needful action towards change, then is seen as only complementary to an ecstatic acceptance of the universe as it eternally is.

Such is the philosophical framework within which Olaf Stapledon's fictional imaginings take shape. It offers a personal, often idiosyncratic, but always stimulating view of the cosmos and of man's place within its vast scale; and the philosophy is consciously explored in the novels. It is not, however, entirely in appreciation of these conscious explorations that we find our imaginations most deeply stirred; perhaps more often and more deeply, as was suggested at the beginning of this essay, we are moved by the mythical qualities and symbolism of Stapledon's invented cultural forms.

These patterns are so diverse as to defy any attempt to systematise the symbolism contained in them. Darkness and light, growth and decay, death and rebirth, are obvious antinomies explored at physical, racial and cosmic levels. Stapledon sometimes uses the word "myth" to indicate a speculation based on intuitive insights rather than on empirical evidence, as in "A Myth of Man and Fate" in *Waking World*; but there are many episodes in the novels in which more subtle and probably less fully conscious myth-making is at work. We look at a few examples, two of which are examined in detail.

First, then, the myth of the Seventh Men in *Last and First Men*. One of the most delightful passages of that book describes these "Flying Men" of Venus; their element is the air; their greatest art form and mode of sexual expression, the winged dance. Their sense of joy in life, even in the face of catastrophe, was maintained as long as they were in the air. Only on the ground could dismay and disillusion cloud their spirit. They synthesised shoals of drifting plant plankton so that they could sustain themselves while perpetually aloft. The end of this "seemingly endless elysium" came after aeons of etheric delight, when a crippled, deformed, earth-bound mutation was, in view of decreasing population, preserved instead of being destroyed at birth. The strain was bred for its practical talents and technological ability. These deformed "pedestrians", becoming then the dominant species, enslaved the original free spirits of the upper realms and eventually deprived them of their aerial home and of their wings, controlling them by drugs and ultimately by brute force. Their action thus led to the perpetuation of the totally material culture of the Eighth Men.

This history of denizens of two spheres, of loss of flight and of migration from higher to lower planes of being, can obviously bear a number of interpretations; but most strikingly it embodies the Platonic and Neo-Platonic images of the soul exiled from its upper realm of light and freedom and incarcerated in a material body. Plotinus, drawing on Plato, wrote of "what is known as the casting of the wings, the enchainment of the body". The soul then "has fallen; debarred from expressing itself now through its intellectual phase, it operates through sense; it is a captive". Blake – who might have appreciated esoteric significances in the tragedy of Stapledon's Seventh Men – continually, both in his engravings and in his verse, creates similar imagery, reflecting the same body of myth – as, for example, in "The Gates of Paradise":

In Aged Ignorance profound,
Holy and Cold, I clip't the Wings
Of all Sublunary Things,
And in the depth of my Dungeons
Closed the Father and the Sons.

Blake, of course, was steeped in Neo-Platonic thinking, as Stapledon was not; but strange parallels can be found between the works of the two. The final chapters of *Last and First Men* tell the story of fallen Seventh Man's brutish, materially-conditioned descendants on Neptune. The many succeeding races were sub-human, hemmed in by harsh and warping environments; they suffered through aeons on the rack of evolutionary strife, war, disease, until a "civilisation . . . based spiritually on devotion to the fulfilment of human capacity" paved the way to an entire recreation of mankind, manifested in the being of Eighteenth Man, in whom "all the earlier cultures find their fulfilment", and of whom an observer might say: "These men are beasts, but surely gods also."

William Blake's great prophetic book *Jerusalem*, though it can be read at personal and political levels of significance, is also an epic account of Albion, image of fallen man, of a fallen race, and symbol of the soul embodied in matter. Albion is Cosmic Man, whose body lies stonily petrified while the Sons (or Spectres) of Albion, broken into warring factions, live, struggle and reproduce in the light of "single vision":

Such is the Ancient World of Urizen in the Satanic Void,
Created from the Valley of Middlesex by London's River,
From Stone-henge and from London Stone, from Cornwall to Cathnes.
The Four Zoas rush around on all sides in dire ruin:
Furious in pride of Selfhood the terrible Spectres of Albion
Rear their dark Rocks among the Stars of God, stupendous
Works. A World of Generation continually Creating out of
The Hermaphroditic Satanic World of rocky destiny
And formed into Four precious stones for enterance from Beulah.

Albion's stony sleep is broken and his spiritual life renewed in a resurrection. He achieves recreation through the triumph of "the bow of four-fold vision" (i.e. of imaginative insight into man's place within a unified cosmos). That part of him, and of all men, which, even in the fallen state, has still shared the nature and being of the eternal – his "Emanation", Jerusalem – is the instrument of a final apotheosis. Jerusalem's awakening gathers together all that was divided. The Divine Father calls to her:

Awake, Awake, Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion,
Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time;
For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
Appears upon our Hills. Awake, Jerusalem, and come away.

Then Man (the Sons and Daughters of Albion), no longer exiled and divided in the single-visioned chaos of Urizen, appears:

walking
To and fro in Eternity as One Man, reflecting each in each and clearly seen
And seeing, according to fitness and order.

The book ends in a passage of great intensity and beauty:

> All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth & Stone: all
> Human Forms identified, living, going forth & returning wearied
> Into the Planetary lives of Years, Months, Days & Hours; reposing
> And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.
> And I heard the Name of their Emanations: they are named Jerusalem.

Such symbolism, deployed on a lower poetic plane, but embodied in narrative and language which vigorously exercises the contemporary imagination, is even more apparent in *Star Maker* than it is in *Last and First Man*. Throughout there is a division between the Star Maker and his myriad creations, fragmented, tortured, proliferating, striving. This is dialectically resolved in the emergence of "absolute spirit" from the union of Star Maker with his ultimate cosmos:

> I strained my fainting intelligence to capture something of the form of the ultimate cosmos. With mingled admiration and protest I haltingly glimpsed the final subtleties of world and flesh and spirit, and of the community of those most diverse and individual beings, awakened to full self-knowledge and mutual insight. But as I strove to hear more inwardly into that music of concrete spirits in countless worlds, I caught echoes not merely of joys unspeakable, but of griefs unconsolable . . . Yet obscurely I saw that the ultimate cosmos was nevertheless lovely, and perfectly formed: and that every frustration and agony within it, however cruel to the sufferer, issued finally, without any miscarriage, in the enhanced lucidity of the cosmical spirit itself. In this sense at least no individual tragedy was in vain . . . And now . . . I seemed to see the spirit of the ultimate and perfected cosmos face her maker. In her, it seemed, passion and indignation were subdued by praise. And the Star Maker, that dark power and lucid intelligence, found in the concrete loveliness of his creature the fulfilment of desire. And in the mutual joy of the Star Maker and the ultimate cosmos was conceived, most strangely, the absolute spirit itself, in which all times are present and all being is comprised; for the spirit which was the issue of this union confronted my reeling intelligence as being at once the ground and the issue of all temporal and finite things.

Though the correspondence of this myth with that of Blake is at points tenuous, the essentials coincide. Blake's Jerusalem is the "emanation", the bride of Albion, and eternally that of the Divine Father; yet in the sleep of fallen Albion she is caught up, separated from Albion, in the strife and suffering of the worlds of time and space. In Stapledon's mythology, the "ultimate cosmos", prototype of and co-existing with all other cosmoses, yet perfect and, even in its suffering, eternally perfect and eternally united with and incorporated into the ground of all being, comes nearest to what is symbolised by Jerusalem. The concluding sentences of *Star Maker* relate this concept of eternity to that of "moral zeal":

> Strange that in this light, in which even the dearest love is frostily assessed, and even the possible defeat of our half-waking world is contemplated without remission of praise, the human crisis does not lose but gains significance. Strange, that it seems more, not less, urgent to play some part in this struggle, this brief effort of animalcules to win for their race some increase in lucidity before the ultimate darkness.

Blake's most widely known allusion to Jerusalem (the "emanation", the Bride, the Divine Imagination, the Heavenly City, all, at different times and at the same time, are embodied in the symbol) comes not in the poem *Jerusalem* but in Blake's own Preface to his poem "Milton". This is very much in the mood of Stapledon's "moral zeal":

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold.
Bring me my Chariot of fire.

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Olaf Stapledon and William Blake were both humanists whose imaginative perceptions took them into territories of the mind where this humanism ran side by side with and overlapped areas of mysticism and religion. Out of these interactions – or confrontations – arose their own mythologies: Blake's in a major, Stapledon's in a minor key.

There are many other mythopoeically charged episodes in *Last and First Men.* One example is the crusade of the Martian cloudlets to rescue from the Second Men (whom they saw merely as gross and unconscious "cattle" owned by some unknown terrestrial radiation-based intelligence) the diamonds which they (the Martian "Leviathans") revered. They held diamonds to be transformers of light, embodiments of a holy molecular rigidity and of "the elemental equilibrium of the cosmos". For the amorphous and insubstantial Martian swarms, Stapledon says, rigidity had the same sanctity as air, breath, spirit had had in human religious history. They, on their own planet, set every diamond to face the sun on the spires and pinnacles of their fantastically architected granaries. On earth they placed the diamonds they seized in shining ranks on the high places, mountain tops and rock ledges of our planet (an image reminiscent of the prayer-wheels and flags of Tibet). It is interesting to note that Jung, in his "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower'" equates the idea of the "diamond body", product of the union of light and heat, with the incorruptible "breath body", Eastern symbol and vehicle of permanence and immortality.

This incident has a distinctly alchemical substratum (lying doubtless more at the subconscious and archetypal levels of the author's imagination than at fully conscious levels). So also has the story of the Divine Boy, the *puer aeternus,* and his cult among the Patagonian First Men – particularly in the episode of his rebirth, his achievement of "a kind of still incandescence" as he struggled free from the whiteness and darkness of the flood of snow which had buried him.

Our second example chosen for extended discussion comes from *Star Maker.* Part of Chapter Seven of that book describes the Plant Men of certain small, hot worlds, subject to intense stellar radiation, and it dwells on one race whose activity alternated between a rooted vegetable and contemplative existence by day, and a busy, mobile, animal-like existence by night. The downfall of this race came when they learnt how to inject into themselves the products of artificial photosynthesis. The day-time, sun-drenched reverie was then done away with and eventually roots dug up. A constant mobility was established. Reaction finally set in and the Plant Men returned to a state of ecstasy, now continuous. They spent both days and nights as rooted trees until, with the total cessation of their technology, they perished, the bliss of their "ecstasy of passive union with the universal source of being" giving way to confusion and ultimately to death and extinction.

In his Plant Men Stapledon is attempting to portray beings in whom the poles of consciousness and of activity are brought into an integral relationship but, as in so many of his creations, it is a lasting relationship only for a span of time. Eventually the synthesis fails, the union proves unstable, and, swaying first to one extreme and then to the other, disintegrates. Chaos is the inevitable next phase.

The correspondence of man and plant feature in many mythological contexts. Stapledon s creation combines something of the symbolic classical image of the woman become plant, Daphne, the pursued of the Sun God, whose human consciousness becomes merged ecstatically with the being of Earth as her feet become roots, and her skin thickens into bark; and something of the mythical and alchemical mandrake, symbol of doubly-rooted man, the inverted tree whose head is in the earth and whose roots reach upwards for heavenly sustenance.

In his study "The Philosophical Tree" Jung, citing the seventeenth century writer of alchemical treatises, Gerard Dorn, discusses how the tree may be the symbol of the union of opposites, equated with the *lapis*, the philosophers' stone. In fact if one compares in detail Stapledon's account of the physical conditions which bring into being his Plant Men with the alchemical processes, the parallelism is striking (though it is not suggested that it was consciously developed by Stapledon – both sets of symbols have their roots in the subconscious). To start with, the airless, sun-deluged environment is almost a planetary version of the alchemical retort. The meteor-shattered and gravity-moulded surface of the planet, and the soil – largely created by "great mining and pulverizing processess" – bear resemblances to the processes of *separatio* and *mortificatio*, the breaking-up and "torture" of the *prima materia*. The valleys thus formed on the planet of the Plant Men were "turned into reservoirs, seemingly of milk", a deep layer of thick white liquid which prevented loss by evaporation and which sealed in the roots of the Plant Men – the divine water, the *aqua permanens* which, as Jung says has the power of transformation, which by its *ablutio* changes the *nigredo* into the *albedo*, the sign of spirituality. The *albedo* in alchemy was sometimes equated with the rising of the sun, and in Stapledon's myth:

> Every morning, after the long and frigid night, the whole population swarmed to its rooty dormitories. Each individual sought out his own root, fixed himself to it and stood throughout the torrid day, with leaves outspread. Till sunset he slept, not in a dreamless sleep, but in a sort of trance, the meditative quality of which was to prove in future ages a well of peace for many worlds.

Jung, commenting on the archetypal nature of the tree symbol in his notes to a sequence of designs and paintings made by his patients, calls attention to one painting of two growing trees bound into semi-unity by a girdling hoop, but flanked by two crocodiles, as divided opposites, rising from the surrounding flood. These dragon-like creatures correspond to the active animal principle and are "dangerous because separated". Stapledon, too, points to the extravagant and poisoning industrial fever of what he calls the Plant Men's "animal pursuits" when their life is divorced from the alternating "spiritual lucidity" of the vegetative existence. The Plant Men's crisis is, in fact, essentially that of the attempted achievement of individuation: of how to remain active and constructive, while avoiding what Staple-

don defines as the "disease of robotism, of purely mechanical living"; and of how to avoid the dangers of vagueness, confusion and delusion, while experiencing that state of "ecstasy in which subject and object seemed to become identical, an ecstasy of subjective union with the obscure source of all finite being".

In some of Jung's patients' designs this individuation, this reconciling of opposites, is wholly or partly achieved. In one example a tree is represented whose roots and branches have an identical appearance, but spreading in the one case downwards, in the other upwards. At the heart of the tree stands a female figure, representing the flower and fruit, the organic product of the tree "whose goal is not height or depth but the centre".

Of another design, a striking and singularly beautiful embroidery, in which a homunculus figure sits within the lotus-like blooming of the tall trunk, or stem, Jung writes:

> The crown of the tree has undergone a rich development: leaves and blossoms appear, forming a wreath, a corona, round a flowerlike centre. The alchemists used the term 'corona' or 'diadema cordis tua' (diadem of thy heart), meaning by it a symbol of perfection. The crown appears in the figure as the crowning point or culmination of the developmental process symbolized by the tree. It has taken the form of mandala, the 'golden flower' of Chinese and the 'sapphirene flower' of Western alchemy.

Now, as Stapledon describes it, the daytime contemplative ecstasy of the Plant Man has something in common with the lotus experience; and his image of the Plant Man's being is not unlike the design and the description just cited:

> The typical plant-man was an erect organism, like ourselves. On his head he bore a vast crest of green plumes, which could be either folded together in the form of a huge, tight, cos lettuce, or spread out to catch the light. Three many-faceted eyes looked out from under the crest.

But the Plant Men are fated to be divided creatures, symbols of individuation achieved only to be disrupted. Finally chaos, not integration, results from the tension between the two poles of this race's being. The mandala symbol is absent – or perhaps it is hinted at almost subliminally; for at the time of transition between day and night, the plant man's point of balance and change, Stapledon describes the solar disc "displaying for a moment a wisp of fiery prominences"; and on other Plant Men worlds, where temporarily stable cultures have been achieved in constant but circling twilight zones, he describes these zones as being illumined by the sun's corona. But when the circling stops the culture dies.

Throughout the story of the Plant Men, however, there are hints that their ecstatic insights would not be totally lost, that "their achievement was not without effect on the life of our galaxy". Later, in the section entitled "A Galactic Utopia", Stapledon describes how through telepathic research the utopian worlds made contact with the extinct Plant Men, and how they:

> now learned much from these archaic but uniquely sensitive beings. Henceforth the vegetal mode of experience was thoroughly, but not dangerously, knit into the texture of the galactic mind.

It is in this phase that the mandala symbol appears in the form of "stars encircled

with concentric hoops of pearls", each pearl a created, awakened world. A mandala pattern becomes the key image of this symbiotically organised, telepathic, galactic community, and of the conscious experiences of the beings it contained. The image of the "pearl" is itself a variant of that of the *lapis*, the diamond body, or the sapphirine flower; and within each of these pearl-like worlds Stapledon depicts a distinctive organisation, reflecting in some degree the mandala symbol. One of the most striking of these is the "goldfish-bowl" world developed by the races of Icthyoids, whose denizens on each watery planet-sized sphere, were contained within its transparent shell and yet were in telepathic communication with the galaxy: "at once imprisoned and free of all space". Such worlds sometimes developed into single organisms, a network of sensitive individuals being joined telepathically to each other, to the beings of other planets, and physically to the machinery of their own technology, which included apparatus for the study of other galaxies. Some of the mandala paintings reproduced in Jung's "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" are on the same wavelength as the image Stapledon creates, particularly a complete "goldfish-bowl" mandala copied from the ceiling of the Maharajah's Pavilion in Benares, and a sequence of patients' paintings grouped around it, depicting in some cases, snakes and nixies in lieu of fish. As Jung points out in another context ("Aion") fish and serpent both rise mysteriously from the darkness and the depths, symbolizing "inhuman contents and tendencies of an abstractly intellectual as well as a concretely animal nature: in a word, the extra-human quality in man".

Other mandala designs in the same sequence seem to show a human form set within a crystal sphere, round which are set other spheres, their paths and positions marked by interweaving lines such as those which trace the spiral paths of planets, the whole set within frames, four-square or circular, of flowing and fiery stellar patternings. Jung, interpreting these in the light of his knowledge of the patient who painted them, saw in them symbols of the conflict between "culture" and "nature", with the incipient formation of the "homunculus" within the glass sphere or central transparent bubble.

In Stapledon's community of worlds can be found the imagery of such symbolism and also the conflict and tensions which they image. Systems might migrate and intersperse their rings of worlds between those of other systems and, though war never took place, there was strife:

> There was, for instance, a constant struggle between the planetary systems that were chiefly interested in the building of utopia, those that were most concerned to make contact with other galaxies, and those whose main preoccupation was spiritual.

It was into this situation that the "golden flower" mystical quietism of the Plant Men was introduced. We have seen in previous discussion of this the relevance of the symbol of the homunculus figure crowning the lotus-flowering of the stem of the plant; it is at one with the image of the integrating individual within the planetary pearl or stellar sphere, and finds its place also within the mandala pattern. Stapledon brings together elements of this complex in a grandly descriptive paragraph visualising the mandala-like structures of his galactic utopia:

> In these conditions, to be a conscious individual was to enjoy immediately the united sensory impressions of all the races inhabiting a system of worlds. And as the sense-organs of the worlds apprehended not only 'nakedly' but also through artificial instruments of great range and subtlety, the conscious individual perceived not only the structure of hundreds of planets, but also the configuration of the whole system of planets clustered about its sun. Other systems it also perceived, as men perceive one another; for in the distance the glittering bodies of other 'multi-mundane' persons like itself gyrated and drifted.

One is reminded strongly of Blake's vision at Felpham (in his letter to Thomas Butts):

> We like Infants descend
> In our Shadows on Earth
> Like a weak mortal birth.
> My Eyes more and more
> Like a Sea without shore
> Continue Expanding,
> The Heavens commanding,
> Till the Jewels of Light,
> Heavenly Men beaming bright,
> Appear'd as One Man,
> Who complacent began
> My limbs to infold
> In his beams of bright gold;
> Like dross purg'd away
> All my mire and my clay.
> Soft consum'd in delight
> In his bosom Sun bright
> I remain'd.

Or of Blake's other magnificent description of Man renwed with the resurrection of Albion and the union of Jerusalem with the Eternal Spirit:

> And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic which bright
> Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty, in Visions
> In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory and of Intellect.
> Creating Space, Creating Time, according to the wonders Divine
> Of Human Imagination . . .

Most of Olaf Stapledon's science fiction was built around a single theme – the place of man (i.e. "humanly" conscious life) in the universe. He drew on his wide reading in philosophy and history, and on those springs of common imagery and of feelings and intuitions arising from the subconscious which can perhaps best be described as "archetypal". That he believed that there are, for us, inexorable limits to intellectual understanding did not prevent him from bringing a keen intellect to bear on his intuitions. The result is that his works are works not of fantasy, but of the imagination – the imagination as Blake and Coleridge in their differing, but converging, ways defined it.

Certain novels, *Odd John* and *Sirius*, explored manifestations of strange or disconcerting levels of consciousness within the frameworks of a conventional time-scale; but in the three novels with which this essay has been chiefly concerned, and also in the minor fictions "Old Man in New World" and *Last Men in London*, the time and evolutionary scales are so expanded, or their potentials so imaginatively implied, as to create a truly extra-terrestrial dimension. It is, in part, the impact of

this dimension which gives such terrifying power to Stapledon's imaginings.

How then, may Stapledon's achievements be summarised? Despite a certain repetitiousness, despite what some have seen as weaknesses – stylistic, scientific, or ethical – his work continues to startle readers into fresh conceptual and emotional awareness, by methods developed mainly along three lines.

First, he projects on to a cosmic screen a view of history distinctive of the twentieth century: a view which Toynbee in his *Study of History* has described as one in which "the intelligible unit of historical study is neither a nation state nor (at the other end of the scale) mankind as a whole, but a certain grouping of humanity which we have called a society". Stapledon may seem sometimes to be dealing with "mankinds", but even his most spectacular and most exotic groupings, such as the symbiotic Arachnid and Icthyoid systems of worlds, are seen as communities – in this particular case within the ambit of a greater sub-galactic society.

Secondly, Stapledon offers concepts of the ways or "moods" by which an individual may respond to living in a society; and here again he stretches and exercises the imagination by reviewing the alternatives which the strange and disturbing mores of a vast succession of alien societies make possible.

Lastly, set into these fictional epics, there are extended studies, episodes and incidents in which archetypal imagery reflects man's seeking for experience of the structure of his own being and of the various levels of consciousness at which his own being may have correspondences with other modes of being within the universe. In our mechanised civilisation, as man is driven by subconscious urges to seek ever more persistently for whatever may be symbolised by "close encounters", the mythopoeic element in this and other science fiction is likely to have increasing appeal.

Olaf Stapledon's ability to integrate these various approaches, to create worlds incredible, yet to the imagination credible, in which the implications of these approaches can be examined, and his ability to establish the relevance of such examination to current ethical concerns, give his inventions more than ephemeral value. His insights into the limited nature of contemporary man and into the unlimited, or at least imperfectly known, potentials of universal being will certainly ensure him a lasting and distinctive place among the authors of imaginative literature.

Reviews

The Dosadi Experiment
by Frank Herbert *(G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977, 336pp, $8.95, ISBN 399 12022 X)*

reviewed by Peter Nicholls

The characters of Frank Herbert's morally neutral but bloodthirsty universe, always

manipulated but always evolving as described by Ian Watson in his interesting review of *Hellstrom's Hive* in *Foundation* 10, are still alive and still not very well. It is almost as if the novel were written to oblige Watson, so clear an illustration is *The Dosadi Experiment* of his general case. To evoke Watson's name is not mere *Foundation* chauvinism; his review contains the *only* overview of Herbert's work known to me. The lack of decent criticism of a writer of Herbert's stature is extraordinary, more especially when one considers his politics, beside which Robert Heinlein's Social Darwinism looks sentimental and benign.

The Dosadi Experiment is a sequel to *Whipping Star* (1970), and a knowledge of the earlier novel helps to make sense of the enigmas of the later one. The hero is once again Jorj X. McKie, agent of BuSab (the Bureau of Sabotage) the body with which the ConSentiency (a loose federation of the known intelligent races of the galaxy) prevents any form of government from becoming too tyrannous. BuSab is especially eager to destroy democracy and bureaucracy, which are seen as linked phenomena; democracy (or DemoPol) is described as rule by a "tyrannical majority", who in one instance "said that they would make all individuals equal . . . they meant that they would not let any individual be better than another at doing anything".

Communications in the ConSentiency are carried out through Taprisiots, creatures through whom telepathic contact can be made over star-spanning distances, and Calebans, intelligences vast but not cool which take their physical form as stars, and who (after the events described in *Whipping Star*) have made available to all the sentient species a kind of teleportation allowing them to travel instantaneously from planet to planet. The use of these convenient, pulp-derived "jumpdoors" enables Herbert not only to envisage sophisticated anthropological situations resulting from this easy intercourse between species, but also to ask the reverse question, what would be the structure of a society sealed off from the benefits of this moderately harmonious galactic melting pot? The eponymous experiment consists of seeding a small, primitive and savage planet with a mixture of humans alongside Gowachin (frog-like, devious, male-chauvinist Machiavels), wiping their memories, and talking a monitoring Caleban into withholding from the resulting society (made up of their descendants) the means to escape it. Thus in a galaxy wholly dependent on ease of communications, one planet is populated by isolates, rats in a cage, observed but unable to observe in return.

Experiments of this kind, carried out on non-consenting sentients, are illegal. McKie's job is to find out who set up the experiment, what results they expected and what results they actually arrived at, and to take legal action. There is a risk that the experimenters, fearful of their results, will destroy Dosadi in a gigantic act of genocide rather than permit exposure. McKie is, in effect, a cultural detective, deducing the meaning of snippets of ritual, nuances of body language, slight shifts in vocabulary (somewhat in the manner of Jack Vance's, Herbert's societies are constructed in terms of the basic assumptions about life revealed through style and gesture), and finding himself less and less able to act objectively in the face of a conspiracy which comes to seem ever more cynical, and ever more likely to have serious repercussions throughout the known galaxy. To carry out the investigation, McKie travels to Dosadi in the guise of a native, a disguise that is instantly penetrated by at least three of the parties struggling for power.

The essence of Dosadi is struggle. Herbert never explains why a planet which seems to possess more than the usual number of mechanisms for culling population (the native lifeforms are violent and inedible, addictive poisons proliferate and only one city has been built) should produce a pullulating swarm of humanity. The cheapness with which life is held has produced monstrous evolutionary pressures

(just as in *Dune*), and the upper echelons of Dosadi are, by comparison with other sentients in the galaxy, supermen, at least in terms of intellect and will power.

Evolution and manipulation; these are the twin Herbert obsessions. The manipulations are a fierce reflection of the entire, formidable tradition of paranoia in genre sf, where in novel after novel complex power structures are laid bare in a series of Chinese boxes, each one seeming to reveal the nature of the intrigue, but each one containing yet another box within it. Ordinary beings are puppets; each successive political reality is another illusion. (Earlier examples range from the comparative simplicities of Eric Frank Russell's *Sinister Barrier*, through the insane complications of van Vogt's Null-A books, to the plots and counterplots of Philip José Farmer's Riverworld and Tierworld books, the conspiracy-mongering of Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy, and the intensive, ongoing reality-manipulations of Philip K. Dick's entire *oeuvre*.)

The Dosadi experiment is not just a piece of cynical manipulation by Herbert's characters; it is a thought-experiment set up by the author himself, in which he can yet again return to his other over-riding theme, evolution. It is not easy to pin Herbert down to exact beliefs; his general view seems to be conventionally Darwinian, with a dash of the Lamarckian: as pressures for survival become heavier, beings who can somehow transcend their circumstances will evolve more rapidly. However, the evolution, here as in *Dune*, is envisaged in terms which are as much metaphysical as biological; a Machiavellian but ultimately humane messiah is produced, supreme even among the supermen, as the end product of a conscious eugenics programme. Also, and here is the worst ideational weakness of the novel, Dosadi has produced a new form of immortality, carried out through transfer of the personality into successive bodies. The weakness is that this immortality is wholly random; it has nothing to do with evolutionary pressure; it merely results from a side-effect of the contract between the setters-up of the experiment (who at first seem to be Gowachin but are later revealed to be members of a wicked, ambitious inter-species cabal) and the monitoring Caleban. Immortality, which is at one point purported to have been the secret aim of the entire experiment, has nothing to do with the experiment itself. If the book had been on the old prison-planet theme of monstrous cruelty producing superpowers in the few survivors, it would have been logical if conventional; the immortality theme is quite literally the result of a *deus ex machina*.

The other possibility is that after two readings of the novel, I have missed some essential item of information. If this were so, it would be the result of sheer carelessness if I had been reading almost any sf writer other than Frank Herbert, but Herbert s style has always been remarkably elusive. His dialogue is seemingly loaded with significance, but it remains opaque; flashes of sharp detail seem emblematic, but of what? Hints, innuendos and clues are scattered profligately, always promising subtlety, always withholding the blaze of enlightenment that, it has been insinuated, is just around the corner. It is like looking at a landscape in a camera obscura on a cloudy day, or reminiscent of Jack Vance's soothsayer who, in *The Dying Earth*, says, "For twenty terces I phrase the answer in clear and actionable language; for ten I use the language of cant, which occasionally admits of ambiguity; for five, I speak a Parable which you must interpret as you will; and for one terce, I babble in an unknown tongue." With Herbert, the reader feels that the author's palm has been crossed with insufficient silver.

Part of Herbert's opacity comes from his love of paradox, a form of expression he seems to find unusually meaningful. Much of the book revolves around the legalistic nuances of the Gowachin, a race given to a form of litigation where

judge, jury, counsel and even spectators are actually at physical risk. The novel ends with a courtroom scene of high drama, in which the outcome is dependent on a Gowachin apophthegm, which states that innocence is guilt; readers who like myself are not prepared to assent to this proposition as self-evident might find the drama rather meretricious.

Yet, although the book promises so much more intellectual strength than it reveals, there is something gripping about the almost passionate tension with which convolutions of thought are traced and analysed; the analysis is insufficient, but the sense of meaning, somewhere out there, always pressing in, is curiously moving. On a simpler level, the novel is also successful when, as in Vance's work, it recreates whole anthropological structures from telling details; the death dance of the Wreave cut short like *coitus interruptus*, the ritual of the book and the knife, the Dosadi game where conversations that do not resemble inadequately transmitted telegrams are regarded as poor form, the murderous culling of Gowachin tads by their swimming, flailing, biting fathers. Herbert's imagination does not always cohere, but its textures are rich and various.

Altered States
by Paddy Chayevsky *(Hutchinson, 1978, 160pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 09 132930 2)*
A Double Shadow
by Frederick Turner *(Berkley/Putnam, 1978, 262pp, $7.95, ISBN 0 339 12150 1)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

These books have several things in common. They are both first novels by writers who have already established themselves in other fields – Chayevsky as a script-writer for TV and films, Turner as a poet. Both are emphatically science fiction in terms of their content, though out of respect for the authors' august backgrounds neither has been labelled as such. Both, in fact, are so archetypally sciencefictional that they provide exaggerated examples of a particular trend that has come to dominate contemporary science fiction: the obsession with transcendence of the human condition, and with all the symbology of transcendence evolved by science, pseudoscience and mysticism. Each book, in its own way, aims for the ultimate, for a hot line to whatever our modern world-view might consider appropriate as a substitute for the Godhead. Each is, in its own way, bold enough to hit its target squarely, but the two taken together provide a very striking contrast in methodology.

Altered States relates easily to the tradition of science fiction which is dogmatic in its allegiance to scientific method, or at least to the formal trappings thereof. One would be tempted to call it "hard science fiction" were it not for the fact that this term implies not only a Campbellian insistence on the analogy between science fiction and real science but also an emphasis on the "hard" (i.e. physical) sciences. Though *Altered States* is very firmly anchored in the world of scientists, laboratories, experiments, doctoral theses and published papers its subject matter is psychology, and unorthodox psychology at that. Despite the formal trappings, in fact, many readers may regard it as dealing with pseudoscience rather than science, depending upon how seriously they are willing to take John Lilly. The altered states of the title are altered states of consciousness induced by hallucinogenic drugs and sensory deprivation.

The protagonist of the novel is every inch a scientist – so much so that much of what he says may be incomprehensible to the untutored reader, and his character may seem impenetrably and unsympathetically alienated. His adherence to the philosophy of science is, however, rigorous and conscientious. Chayevsky has done his homework very well indeed in providing him with his biochemical apparatus. Most *genre* writers, habituated to fudging with the aid of conventional smokescreens of jargon, would not have bothered, but Chayevsky is serious in his mission. He has done some real research, has found out the actual meanings of the words he employs, and has a good understanding of the kinds of work that have actually been carried out in this area. He has reunited the wilder speculations of Lilly's *The Human Biocomputer* with real investigative research, assuming that experimental substantiation could and might be forthcoming for the conjectures contained in the book. The altered states of consciousness achieved in the protagonist's laboratory really do give him what Timothy Leary and Carlos Castaneda and the other prophets of hallucinogenic surreality have claimed – a time-transcending connection with the ultimate reality. As befits what is by definition the ultimate existentialist fantasy, *Altered States* goes beyond Sartre in search of the distilled essence of *la nausée*. For those who can follow the plot through the maze of scientific terminology (which must be understood, not skipped, as with most sciencefictional jargon) it will provide a genuinely frightening experience. It is something of a *tour de force*, and I would be very pleased to see it among the leading nominees for the Nebula and the John W. Campbell Award.

A Double Shadow, by complete contrast, is firmly anchored within the other tradition of modern science fiction – that which values the substance of the imagination for its own sake, which rejoices in exotica, and which is content to pay only the merest lip service to the jargon which embodies the conventional claim of plausibility-within-a-rationalistic-world-view. *A Double Shadow* is set on a terraformed Mars of the distant future, far gaudier than the fantasy-Mars developed by Burroughs and characterised by an enthusiastic aesthetic decadence vaguely reminiscent of Gerard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*.

Turner's Mars has a society dominated by two aristocratic classes – the Cocks, who make use of an artificial God-substitute called the Vision, whose power can be freely tapped, and the Bloods, who are not adherents of the Vision. There are, however, other human descended beings on Mars who exist relative to both these aristocracies as the gods of ancient legend existed relative to the legendary heroes, and who have donned the names and personalities of those gods. This is the world of ancient legend recreated as a manifest Golden Age, a monumental work of art that is lived by its perpetrators.

In this decorated world style and status are everything, and the plot follows a conflict between a Cock named Narcissus and a Blood named Michael who try to outdo one another in a series of grandiose gestures. At one point they fight a classic duel with the aid of artificial wings, but violence is not the essence of their war. The whole affair is surreal, deliberately and unrepentantly overwritten, with a pretentiousness that succeeds by sheer bombastic panache. Every accusation which could be hurled at the author is already met within the text and turned contemptuously aside.

As with *Altered States, A Double Shadow* is likely to prove rather esoteric, and it is impossible to guess how far the audiences of the two books may overlap. Though they represent opposite ends of the sciencefictional spectrum I suspect the overlap might be greater than one would be led to expect, for the aesthetics of scientific formality and the aesthetics of reconstituted mythology are not so very different. It

is the readers whose tastes are confined to the middle of the spectrum who will find Turner's surrealism nonsensical and impenetrable, and they will probably react in precisely the same manner to Chayevsky's dense scientific discourse. What really unites the two novels under a single banner, however, is not their recognition of twin traditions of science fiction but the fact that they work towards the same end: the celebration of some kind of transcendence of the human condition. Both get there *via* some kind of evocation of the distant past, but in Chayevsky's case it is the *evolutionary* past of man, while in Turner's case it is man's *mythological* past. The two notions of what constitutes transcendence, though, are very different, for while Turner envisages the easy acquisition of godlike power, Chayevsky can only offer a vision of a godless existential wilderness that throws his characters back on meagre human resources with no hope of external aid.

As a scientist, I find myself rather more in sympathy with Chayevsky's endeavour than with Turner's, and I find Chayevsky by far the more convincing. Nevertheless, I cannot help admiring the cavalier sophistication of *A Double Shadow*, and I cannot but applaud the way *both* these novels show up the imaginative poverty which has bogged down the two traditions of science fiction: the Campbellian tradition in cheap space-fantasy, and the other in tawdry sword-and sorcery and bloodless pastiche. Each of these two works, in its way, issues a challenge to contemporary *genre* sf, and if only the challenge could be met each might provide a beneficial imaginative stimulus. My fear, however, is that even if the writers were ready the publishers would not be. If these books had been produced by writers who had not previously established considerable and respectable reputations it could well be that neither would ever have reached print at all, and certainly not under the Safety-First emblem of sf.

The Hermes Fall
by John Baxter *(Panther, 1978, 271pp, £0.95, ISBN 0 586 04610 0)*

reviewed by Tom Hosty

Disaster fascinates. Even discounting the current American vogue for ever more inventive catastrophes, sf alone has a rich enough tradition of disaster stories to demonstrate the undying allure of the cataclysm. Explanations vary. Perhaps, as Susan Sontag has said, fictitious disasters help us to come to terms with our knowledge of the real possibilities of nuclear extinction, or even, more subtly, with the fact of our own mortality. Perhaps they appease repressed guilt feelings by supplying a sublimated image of paternal punishment, as Freud might have suggested. Or perhaps they allow us a cherished opportunity to imagine people we do not like being put to death in spectacular fashion. I would suggest that the dominant attraction of the disaster story is its pastoral dimension. Disaster simplifies – for the survivors, life becomes, at least for a while, miraculously purged of pettiness and distractions. The bare bones of existence – movement, survival, sex, death – emerge unhampered by law, custom or etiquette. The individual personality can achieve an Arcadian freedom of expression. One thinks at once of the "cosy catastrophe" tradition of Wyndham, or of the less cosy post-catastrophic worlds of the early Ballard, concentrating as they do on a progressive, geometrical simplification of the complexities of human inter-relation.

Hence the classic "disaster" novels tend actually to be more concerned with the pastoral *aftermath* of disaster. There is a possibility here of a sense of misproportion: vast destruction is arranged so that a few characters can enjoy or suffer the simple life. There are two main ways round this. One is to limit the disaster, as in *The Poseidon Adventure* or *Concrete Island*, where the majority of the world is untouched, so that one feels free to concentrate on the small group who *are* involved. The other is to limit scope: the writer must successfully exclude the reader's awareness of other victims, and force him to limit his interest to a few. Ballard achieves this by the combination of a strictly pruned *dramatis personae* with a prose of mesmeric intensity.

John Baxter falls between stools. He has chosen a global disaster, in this case the fall of an asteroid into the Atlantic Ocean with ensuing world-wide tidal waves, typhoons, floods, tremors *et al.* The first third of the book describes the discovery of the menace and an abortive initial defence; the second concerns the major attempt to avert catastrophe, a well-told NASA space adventure. A third remains for the aftermath. It is here that the book fails. From the beginning, Baxter has used the only strategy adequate to the depiction of very large-scale action. He has built up a large, diverse cast of characters, whose varying individual experiences will define the contours of larger events. Unfortunately, as the story unfolds, the author's interest contracts to embrace ever fewer characters. Narrative lines stop dead or tail inconclusively away. New characters are introduced and forgotten in a single episode. In the final, potentially most interesting, section, the disaster which, according to the preface, it was the book's aim to realize, retreats into the background to make room for a wearily familiar adventure story. Tom, sole survivor of the abortive Orpheus Mission, returns from space to find that a gang of escaped convicts are holding his girlfriend prisoners in a deserted flatblock. He links up with his friend Gary, a cardboard Vietnam veteran who lives for nothing but guns, high speeds and aggressive sex. Gary has a helicopter. Tom has got hold of some 20mm cannon. So the heroes arm the helicopter and go off to rescue the girl in a climactic shoot-out. Along the way there are a few echoes of disaster – most of the world is in chaos by now, it appears – but they are faint and perfunctory. The helicopter turns aside to rescue some children from an Aberfan-type cave-in, and Tom watches a hurricane from a safe place. The actual fall of the asteroid is recounted in a clinical monotone which, while not much more difficult to write than a lab report, is impressive in its restraint. But no sooner have the catastrophic after-effects of the fall got under way than they degenerate into mere scenery, an imposing backdrop for a Clint Eastwood finale, and we are back in the stripped-down, adventurous world of aftermath pastoral. It is curiously fitting that Gary spends his time after the fall shooting up the ruins of Disney World, and generally behaving with sublime irresponsibility. Such irresponsibility is the heart of this kind of pastoral. In a world sufficiently ruined, a man can be a child again. But this is not a useful or mature orientation.

Regrettably, the tinsel shallowness of the commercial romance is evident throughout. The idea is interesting but, as too often in sf, the cognitive and narrative elements not only fail to mesh, but actually clash. The documentary on the effects of asteroid impact should take on immediacy from the book's novelistic components – character, plot, imagery. But the latter are so banal, so routine, so ill-fitted to their particular setting, especially in the last seventy pages, that the details of the shaping experiences are obscured, diminished, and finally lost. The effect is of amateurish stucco. For instance, few if any of the book's sexual interludes have anything to do with the plot. They are externally applied decoration. All are related in

the easy, juicy, undifferentiated prose of the "adult" thriller. Even the distribution is decorative. episodes evenly spaced out, one devoted to each of the main sexual possibilities. For what it's worth, Baxter also helps to perpetuate the cruel and stupid canard that women basically find rape exciting, whatever they may think.

After all this, it may seem petty to pick on errors of fact. But a style such as Baxter's depends for a lot of its authority on heavy veneers of accurately researched detail. In this context, the presence of a BOAC airliner in the airspace of 1980 is jarring, to say the least.

Up the Walls of the World
by James Tiptree, Jnr. *(Berkley/Putnam, 1978, 319pp, $8.95, ISBN 1 339 12083 1; Gollancz, 1978, 319pp, £5.25, ISBN 0 575 02492 5)*

reviewed by Richard Cowper

Over the past ten years Dr Alice Sheldon (alias "James Tiptree Jnr") has acquired a remarkable (and, to me, rather puzzling) reputation as a writer of science fiction short stories. In a recent introduction to a collection of Tiptree's tales Ursula Le Guin (no less) has claimed that they are "superbly strong sad funny and very beautiful stories". Much as I respect Ursula Le Guin as a writer I cannot endorse her opinion. Indeed, on the evidence of *10,000 Light Years From Home* and *Star Songs of an old Primate* I am prepared to risk finding myself out on a limb by saying: "Come off it, Ursula." Slick, yes, "professional", yes; but "superbly strong sad funny and very beautiful"? Oh dear me, no. There, I hazard, Ms Le Guin is suffering from a touch of the tiptrees herself – an observation which, I hope, will become clear in the course of this brief essay. My quivering pointy nose and beady eye detect a rank quality in the Tiptree imagination – a coarseness of grain which I find corresponds all too closely with her pinchbeck prose style. Take for instance that much praised story "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side". When all is said and done, what is it *about*? The answer is that it is about *homo sapiens* screwing bizarre aliens. Just that. Simple, unsubtle stuff aimed unerringly at the lower centres of an unsophisticated mass audience. Similarly "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" builds up ponderously to its climax of a rape in free-fall, but because the characters involved bear only a superficial resemblance to living, breathing human beings the reader's emotions are never touched at all. But perhaps that is what is meant by being "superbly strong".

Viewed from the standpoint of such yarns, *Up the Walls of the World* can possibly be seen as a laudable attempt on Tiptree's part to extend her imaginative range. Unfortunately she has succeeded only in making this particular critic more than ever conscious of her limitations. Let me explain what I mean.

The very first sentence of *Up the Walls of the World* tells the reader exactly what kind of sf is on offer:

"Cold, cold and alone, the evil presence roams the star-streams." Now there was once a time when, like a well-directed medical hammer, such a sentence would have landed just below my adolescent mental knee-cap and my imagination would have jerked in response. But that was more years ago than I care to contemplate. I experienced the ghostly vestige of a twitch and nothing more. I read on.

"It is immense and dark and almost immaterial: its powers are beyond those of

any other sentient thing. And it is in pain.

"The pain, it believes, springs from its crime.

"Its crime is not murder: indeed it murders without thought. The sin which shames and aches in every eddy of its enormous being is defalcation from the task of its race."

At that point I paused and drew a mental breath. Was this really being proffered as beautiful writing? All those leaden-footed repetitions: "Cold . . . cold; pain . . . pain; crime . . . crime; murder . . . murders". Who was this stuff being aimed at? And what on earth was happening in that final sentence? If the author meant "defection" then why in heaven's name couldn't she say so? Furthermore, to my way of thinking, a sin can no more be said to shame than a shame can be said to sin. On this evidence alone I am prepared to contend that as a writer of prose "James Tiptree Jnr" is overrated. The 319 pages which followed confirmed my belief. Yet, that having been said, viewed as a contemporary exercise in the kind of apocalyptic scenario which Arthur C. Clarke was offering us a generation ago, *Up the Walls of the World* is not without interest.

The plot is surprisingly straightforward. The aforementioned Evil Presence has run amok and is gobbling up stars around the centre of the galaxy. In so doing it threatens the planet Tyree which is inhabited by an intelligent race of giant, telepathic, aerial squids (yes, I know, I know, but the chapters describing their happy, carefree, squiddish life riding the tempestuous atmosphere of Tyree are easily the best in the book). In a despairing effort to escape imminent destruction the Tyreeans combine to make mental contact with other intelligent, extra-Tyreean life forms and just so happen to link up with a team of seven emotionally crippled telepaths who are working on an ESP communications experiment under the aegis of the US Navy.

Without so much as a by-your-leave, half a dozen or so desperate Tyreeans break their own hallowed code of self-conduct and commit "life crime" by taking over the bodies of the human team. The human spirits are duly whipped back to Tyree where they find temporary lodging in the doomed bodies of the renegade telepathic squids. While in transit, however, one of the team loses her way and ends up inside the Evil Presence instead. Here she eventually succeeds in gaining some sort of influence over her host and uses its phenomenal powers to rescue the spirits of such Tyreeans as have survived the holocaust, along with those of the now wholly disembodied telepaths. After sundry adventures of a quasi-metaphysical nature they all settle down happily together in a sort of symbiotic relation with (and within) the Evil Presence, who turns out to have been not really Evil at all but merely Misguided. And there we leave them/it as *"Confused, joyful, grieving, inquisitive, randomly benevolent and not entirely sane, it sets forth to its destiny among the ordinary denizens of space and time . . . "*

Bearing in mind that even the plot of *Hamlet* sounds pretty ridiculous when it is reduced to its bare bones, let me say at once that I think it *is* just possible that a fascinating and compelling novel could be constructed around the improbable skeleton which I have excised from the corpse of *Up the Walls of the World*. Just possible. To succeed, the author would have to write with compulsive intensity and somehow persuade us into a willing suspension of our disbelief in the central characters (both human and alien) to the point where they become sufficiently distinct upon our senses for us to care what happens to them. But the truth is that Tiptree's characters in this novel are scarcely more credible than the animated figures of a Disney cartoon. (The aliens are really nothing more than humans tricked out in fancy flesh.) They are differentiated just sufficiently to serve the purposes of

identification but, with the honourable exception of Doctor Dann, they are singularly devoid of anything approaching psychological subtlety. The result is that the whole story is diminished in stature as though it were being viewed down the wrong end of a telescope. Instead of being released and set winging free the reader's imagination is cribbed and confined. The drama of Tyree which is purportedly being played out against a breathtaking backdrop of cosmic immensity could just as well be taking place inside a penny peepshow.

Now comes the crunch. If I have given the impression that *Up the Walls of the World* is in any sense inferior to the great bulk of sf being produced today let me hasten to assure my readers that this is not so. On the contrary. Apart from the perfunctory characterisation its faults are predominantly stylistic – an irritating tendency throughout to repeat words needlessly, a sort of verbal hiccups e.g. *"It is alone, alone in the ultimate icy void . . . " "Something – something is tenuously touched"*, and a predilection for piling on the adjectives and adverbs until, like layers of woolly blankets, they obscure the form beneath. Indeed, the story as a whole would have benefited enormously from being cut to three-quarters of its present length by a rigorous, Simenon-like use of the blue pencil.

No, my main criticism of *Up the Walls of the World* is far more fundamental, and can be expressed very simply. I believe the book to be an overlong tissue of sf clichés. At no point does Tiptree transcend the limitations of her material. Far from it. She follows the popular recipe as sedulously as any young bride baking her first cake from a packet of "Granny Gopher's Analog Cake Mix". And of course it works. The texture is uniformly bland – a sort of prose equivalent to marshmallow – with a touch of spice added in the shape of a beautiful negro girl computer wizard who, having suffered a brutal ritual female circumcision at the hands of her mad father, is now psychologically maimed for life. The icing is applied in the form of social rôle reversion (on Tyree the males rear the children) and female lib (alien for extra irony). The publishers claim that it is all "prodigiously imaginative and flawlessly written", two contentions which, on the evidence, I think it would be difficult to sustain. So when it wins its Hugo and its Nebula I will perforce stand revealed as the sour old Devil's Advocate I am and will lurch off, muttering and snarling into the night.

The Road to Corlay
by Richard Cowper *(Gollancz, 1978, 158pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 575 02481 X)*

reviewed by Ashley Rock

We have not reached Corlay yet, and if Richard Cowper continues the saga which began with "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" another pawn may yet achieve a crown and destroy the Black Bishop. Einstein reputedly said, "I do not know what weapons will be used in the next war, but in the war after they will be bows and arrows." Wyndham, Ballard and Zelazny have discussed a vast catastrophe, not necessarily a war, and developed the theme of a return to primitive existence, as has Golding with deep insight in the microcosm of *The Lord of the Flies*. Now Cowper explores the aftermath of an ecological disaster where Church and crossbow rule. The early part of the narrative was a magazine story and was included in a Gollancz collection of short stories, *The Custodians*, published in 1976. It is not essential to have read

the novella before proceeding to *The Road to Corlay* and for purposes of this review I am not attempting to distinguish between the two, except to mention that the earlier action is located in what remains of northern England and the novel is based in the West country where Cowper is now living.

By 1985 the polar ice-caps were melting and by the end of this century vast numbers of drownings resulted and large tracts of land were inundated or isolated. A thousand years later Britain's higher ground is divided by the sea into seven kingdoms, life has reverted to a pre-industrial state, machines are barely legend, towns are few and York has replaced flooded Canterbury as the ecclesiastical centre of a now Catholic faith. The priesthood, while understanding the physical causes of the "Drowning", have found it convenient to declare that this was God's judgment on the scientific materialists. A forceful zealot, the Black Bishop, destined to thrust himself into the sole Archbishopric and later to be made Cardinal, is turning a moribund spiritual organisation into the Church Militant. The lesser clergy are a fanatical, secretive body commonly known as the "grey crows", who exercise their power by employing an army of cross-bowmen, disciplined but arrogant and much feared as the secular arm of the Church, both emissaries of the Inquisition and tax-collectors. These are the "falcons".

The only hope of the laity against these forces of repression lies in a belief in the White Bird of Kinship. It is not yet clear whether the Bird has any objective existence or whether this belief gives the common folk a symbol of freedom to cling to. The Kinsmen certainly hold that it is a true Bird, which performs miracles and ultimately will liberate them, and at this stage of the story Cowper, quite fairly, leaves the reader to his own interpretation. But to the Kinsmen of the thirty-first century Morfedd the Wizard, his pupil the Boy (the prophet of the Bird, with his gift of summoning visions by the hypnotic sound of his twin pipes fashioned by the Wizard) and the power of the White Bird to survive the death of its evangelists and pass from one generation to another are the very stuff of magic. When the subordinates of the Black Bishop destroy the principal messengers of the Bird there is yet hope that the little group of survivors sailing to Corlay in Brittany will carry with them the seed of a victory of white over black and grey. Cowper has begun what may become one of the more celebrated of sf sagas.

The narrative is gripping, places and people are clearly pictured and the prose, whether in narrative or dialect, admirably terse. Why, then, is one left with a feeling of some disappointment? The first and least serious reason is the intrusion into the novel of a number of chapters relating to a late twentieth century research centre. This is experimenting with OOBE or Out of Body Experience, meaning that in a drugged condition, when the subject is deprived of awareness of his surroundings, he may make contact with the mind of another. Thus a Dr Carver enters into the personality of a Kinsman across the bridge of a thousand years, and manages to prolong the latter's life. The Kinsman's experiences are translated into actual pictures by the "Encephalo-Visual Converter" and the speech is interpreted by a lip-reader. The scientists are stereotypes, we have already read the incidents, and the reader feels as though he is watching *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* for the second time in the company of Aunt Edna, who is simple and a little deaf. I am aware from "The Hertford Manuscript" and "The Custodians" that the author is intrigued by time travel and the possibility of seeing into the future, but the introduction of OOBE does nothing for the story, and appears a self-indulgent ride on a hobby-horse, thrusting a number of banal interruptions into the narrative proper.

Then there is no explanation of the apparent anomaly that in a land akin to late mediaeval Spain or Ireland the Catholic Church has no followers. Apparently not

one of the many lay characters regards the Church other than as a body to be feared, and they are, indeed, the victims of the odious crows and falcons in many cases. Nevertheless we gather that this harshness is a recent innovation of the Black Bishop, who is subtle enough to strive to avoid tarnishing the Church's image in the presentation of the Boy's martyrdom to the people. If the Spanish Inquisition did not empty the churches, why is there no reference to the dilemma of the congregations in the thirty-first century? There is no discussion of the fascinating problems of belief, half-belief and disillusionment in a time of turmoil – "the tempest in which the lucky were engulfed and lost, and the unfortunate survived to be flung battered and bleeding on the shore . . . or to find a life's work on the margin of that cruel sea," as Greene says of his own experience. If the wordage devoted to the uninspired account of the OOBE had been spent in admitting the possibility of the survival of orthodoxy and the quandary or complacency of the faithful how much more impact and conviction the novel might have achieved. Where is Rycker? Where is Querry? Where is the bloody sea?

The third reason for the feeling of disappointment is the most serious: despite his skill in vivid writing the author has not introduced a three-dimensional character into either story. The Black Bishop is ruthless, devious, sophisticated, ambitious, but so was Dr Fu Manchu. Both are black through and through. Brother Andrew is merely evil, his life dedicated to compensation for his physical defect. I am not naively implying anti-clericalism in Cowper. In "The Custodians" the monks are all learned and gentle, and perhaps equally unreal for that reason.

It is true that a crow and a falcon change colour, but this does not mean that their natures are complex. Brother Francis, on a mission from the Bishop as Advocate Sceptic, is converted from his fanatical devotion to the Church to become a follower of the White Bird. However this is not due to inner conflict – which is the result, not the cause, of the conversion – but to his persistent search for truth in his investigation, his increasing awareness by direct discovery of the essential sincerity of the Kinsmen, culminating in the mystical meeting with the dying piper who in his swan-song imparts the message of the Boy. The Brother remains ascetic and devoted, the perpetual seeker of the Grail; it is the Grail, not Francis's saintliness, that is changed. Gyre, the falcon, also changes loyalty, but not consciously, not because he is aware of doubt, but only because he is hypnotised by the Boy's pipe.

Outside the Church the farmers and craftsmen appear honest, generous and, when free from the persecution of crows and falcons, serene. If we compare this idyllic rusticity with W.H. Hudson's *A Shepherd's Life* we see at once how unlikely it is. Hudson's patient and undemanding companionship with the Wiltshire shepherd elicited memories of his childhood on the Downs and happenings handed down by word of mouth of an earlier rural life going back to the early nineteenth century, and a world not unlike that of the year 3,000, with gamekeepers and mantraps as the precursors of falcons and crossbows. So we hear of the shepherd who ran down his master's deer on foot, or poached the Pitt-Rivers rabbits or pheasants, or of the drover who killed a sheep and left it under the blanket of snow, only to find it devoured by foxes when the thaw came. These acts were felonies, brutally punished if discovered, but the shepherd recounted them as a struggle between loyalty to a master and the hunger of a family, and between landlords and a peasantry who still recalled the days before enclosures and would not renounce their rights to the common land. The peasants included men of great strength and daring and drunkards and misers, all inhabitants of one small, isolated village, and the range of vices and virtues to be found in neighbours or the same family or the same man reduces the West-countrymen of the fourth millennium to cardboard figures, by comparison.

Cowper writes vividly and imaginatively, his style is irreproachable, and he may deliberately have avoided complexity of character in the interests of narrative. One can accept that this is a real argument up to a point, but it belittles the novel. *The Road to Corlay* is surely not meant just to be a ripping yarn but something deeper – a new faith challenging orthodoxy. Yet faith in the Bird touches off deep emotions only by mystic inspiration, involving little painful internal conflict except, briefly, in Francis. Both faiths, for different reasons, are light of weight. A powerful sf plot is the more powerful for including uncertainties. The collection of short stories is dedicated to the late James Blish, so Cowper must be familiar with the superb struggle in the priest's mind in *A Case of Conscience*. (I refer to the first publication as a short story, not to the limp extension that later cobbled it into a novel.) It is the inclusion of deliberate ambiguity, doubts about systems and mores, doubts about the righteousness of a crusade, the predicament of heroes who become filled with self-loathing at the results of their own heroism, that have won for Herbert, Zelazny and Le Guin their laurels in the field of science fiction. But Corlay has not been reached. I look forward to a sequel and hope that the author is following a Grand Design that will prove my comments premature.

Chorale
by Barry N. Malzberg *(Doubleday, 1978, 184pp, $7.95, ISBN 0 385 13138 0)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

Foundation 11/12 featured my article on Barry Malzberg, in which I summed up the career he had declared complete, and added the comment that "perhaps . . . the career of a writer who specialises in frustration can make no sense unless it can come itself to such a totally frustrating close". *Foundation* 14 then featured my review of *Graven Images*, the anthology containing Malzberg's novelette "Choral", in which I said that "although the expansion of "A Galaxy Called Rome" into *Galaxies* worked very well indeed, I think "Choral" will be better left as it is". Now, inevitably, the reviews editor has sent my chickens home to roost. Malzberg's career in sf is under way again and "Choral" has become *Chorale*.

Malzberg's earlier novels were intense dramatisations of situations of extreme helplessness. His heroes were always trapped by webs of circumstance that wrapped them ever more tightly and stickily, and from which there could be no escape. Malzberg, as became clear from his public pronouncements and from *Herovit's World*, saw his own situation as a writer of sf in just the same way. While he continued to see it that way there was, indeed, no way out but the conclusion of bleak frustration. We are, however, the authors of our own lives as well as our books, and we can always decide to see things differently (even though the things themselves do not change). As Jean-Paul Sartre and the neo-existentialists have been proclaiming for years (*ad Nauseam*, in fact) we do not have to alienate out moral choices absolutely in recognising the pressure of inevitability. Even while we sizzle in the frying pan we have at least the choice of self-immolation by a leap into the fire. In our stories we can always write "with one bound, Jack was free", even if we fail to convince our readers, and in our lives we can do likewise, though whether we can persuade the environmental matrix that we have thereby been liberated is a different matter. *Chorale* is a "with one bound, Jack was free" story in which the archetypal

Malzbergian hero, here trapped into enacting the life of Ludwig van Beethoven in a desperate attempt to preserve the past (and hence the present) finally decides that Sartre might be right and issues an impassioned declaration of his own (and everyone else's) freedom. Behind the work, one presumes, is an author who has made a similar decision with respect to his own predicament, if only as an experiment. We may, I think, regard "Choral" as a tentative experiment to test the water, and *Chorale* as a more emphatic repetition symptomatic of rallying confidence. It is as convincing as a novel as it was as a novelette – it does not give the impression of being casually padded – but it is no more so. (It is one of the intrinsic properties of stream-of-consciousness fictions that they can swell somewhat without becoming noticeably bloated or bursting their banks.)

I enjoyed the novel, and had I come to it without first having encountered the shorter version I would doubtless have been delighted by it. As things are, it serves to recall my enthusiasm for its earlier self. I think the expansion is only important insofar as it represents a louder proclamation on the part of its author that there is still hope and scope for the further development of his career and talent. Nobody benefits from the fact that authors of considerable ability sometimes feel constrained by personal circumstance to remain mute – least of all the authors themselves – and one can only feel relieved (as surely Malzberg must) when they find themselves able to make new beginnings. I feel, therefore, no particular disappointment that my earlier statements have been overtaken by events – I am content with the feeling of anticipation generated by the possibility that there will be more, and perhaps better, Malzbergs to be read in the future. The choir will now rise to let rip with Schiller's "Ode to Joy".

The Shape of Sex to Come
edited by Douglas Hill *(Pan Books, 1978, 176pp, £0.60, ISBN 0 330 25091 4)*

reviewed by D. West

One of the more bizarre experiences of a science fiction convention is the Fancy Dress Parade. Although this event is officially a competition, the real prizes and rewards (for both audience and participants) consist of the opportunity to indulge in varieties of sexual exhibitionism. The consensus on the future seems to be that we shall each and every one of us be strapped up, bound in, and thrust out by small pieces of metal, plastic and leather, the whole ensemble carefully arranged to display as much flesh as possible.

Doubtless this leaning towards the erotic owes a great deal to the illustrations featured in the earlier days of sf magazines, where bosoms and buttocks always bulged within skintight garments and there was great play with the phallic significance of rocketships and rayguns. The persistence of this instinctive identification of sf with various sorts of fetishism (also regularly manifested in convention Art Shows) seems to indicate that even today many people may be drawn to towards science fiction less by any strong interest in its scientific, sociological or satirical content than by a vague feeling that here is something agreeably *naughty*.

Science fiction originally dealt with the problem of sexual content (explicit or otherwise) by pretending it did not exist, except possibly as a rather disreputable

branch of botany. Stories were about *science*, not the unmentionable things pistils and stamens did to each other, and even non-sexual emotions and characterisation were regarded as somewhat irrelevant to the main themes of rampant technology and impersonal power-fantasy. This attitude still persists, as in Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's *The Mote in God's Eye*, where the realisation that the aliens (whose reproductive cycle is of some importance in the story) propagate by some means less chaste than sending out rootlets comes as something of a shock. (The human beings apparently Do It by exchanging blushes and electric finger-contacts.)

Still, we're past all that, aren't we? "Sf grew up, and so did its readers," Douglas Hill declares in his Introduction.

This is an extremely doubtful assertion. Perhaps there are now people who find it difficult to read Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* without giggling, but how many more readers (and worse still, writers) remain unconcerned by the author's total blindness to the sexual implications of his own work? And who raises so much as an eyebrow at the ludicrous juvenile primness of *The Mote in God's Eye*? The existence of sex has been recognised, but mainly as a sort of shock/horror special subject: something with a guaranteed power to disturb, a fleshcreeping substitute for the horrors of atomic warfare. Some writers manage a studied casualness, but few seem able to take the matter entirely for granted. Sex in sf has not so much come out of the closet as opened the door just wide enough to catch an eyeful of the dirty pictures.

Perhaps it's unfair to quarrel too seriously with Douglas Hill's selection. A sex-fiction anthology is bound to bear some resemblance to a collection called *Best Tales of Cookery*. Those stories which follow the stated theme too narrowly and literally will be of interest mainly to collectors of menus and recipes, while the more interesting work will really be about some other subject. To suppose that sex *in itself* is the central concern of any story which features sexual activities is to fall into the old technological fallacy of sf: the isolation of mechanical details from the full context of genesis and aftereffects. The most accomplished contribution here, Hilary Bailey's "Sisters", is concerned with sexual relations only as an element in the assignment by gender of social roles. Despite a final lapse into rather didactic rhetoric the point is made effectively that the change from the traditional female role of supportive self-sacrifice to male aggression and selfishness is not so much an advance as an avoidance of the real problems: nothing has changed, except that the former victim has joined the exploiters for a piece of the action.

Similarly, under all its playful baroque flourishes and ornamentations Brian Aldiss's "Three Songs for Enigmatic Lovers" uses sex as metaphor rather than theme. The computer-conceived artificial lifeforms which grope and feel each other in endless mechanical challenge-and-response repeat the poignant image of the closed circuit – love locked in the loneliness of doubt in its own reality – that featured in "Appearance of Life" (*Andromeda 1*).

The most literal expression of the anthology's title comes from A.K. Jorgensson in his "Coming of Age Day". The "consex" is an artificial stimulating device fitted to everyone at puberty in order to relieve possible sexual frustrations. And that, unfortunately, is the whole of the story; the details are laid out well enough, but there is no development beyond the point of technical description. Robert Silverberg's "In the Group" has the same air of being a fictionalised extract from a sexology magazine. By the standard sf trick of reversal his protagonist is a rebel against the future norm of group sex. Conflict which might have been tragic is rendered merely miserable by a pervading sense of humourless obsessiveness; it is difficult to believe that any of the participants could ever enjoy themselves under any circumstances.

Perhaps as a counter to this heavy gloom, Anne McCaffrey's "The Thorns of Barevi" is described as "lighthearted" – an adjective which is subsequently revealed as a somewhat desperate euphemism for "brainless". After being kidnapped (in a miniskirt, naturally) to a strange planet the scantily-clad heroine saves a Catteni ("They fight like Irishmen") from pursuing enemies, whereupon, being large and masculine, he promptly rapes her as an expression of gratitude. She enjoys it, of course. A story to gratify everyone who believes that all women secretly yearn to be laid flat on their backs by masterful males. (On the other hand, it does remind us of the awful possibility that there may be hordes of super-endowed aliens poised to come down and steal our women.)

Anne McCaffrey embraces cliches with a blind and innocent enthusiasm; John Sladek shows a fond discrimination. As with much of his other work, "Machine Screw" is a deadpan farce constructed neatly from the twisted fragments of hackneyed popular images: Mad Professor releases monster for destructive orgy (literally: "I mean, what kind of decent American would go and – and *rape* a Cadillac convertible?") before showdown with US Army.

Sladek entertains; Disch also instructs. Male predominance in sf readership obviously owes much to educational and social bias, but it is also possible that the submerged sexual content is a relevant factor. In his essay, "The Embarrassments of SF", Disch described a certain sort of sf as "homo-erotic": work not overtly homosexual but so aggressively and excessively emphasising the masculine as to be an inversion of normal heterosexuality. Certainly the ambiguity of this sort of sf machismo is well illustrated in the fantasy-fetishes of clothing – cloaks, semi-nudity and skintight plastic jockstraps above the long leather boots – which are so traditional as to be supplied by the readers' imaginations whether actually described or not. However, in "Planet of the Rapes" Disch avoids the most obvious line and makes his Starship Troopers not homo but hetero – so hetero that they are permitted nothing softer than high-speed rape, for which they are trained by machine masturbation. The machines, indeed, have taken over completely: in this finest hour of masculine narcissism the women are simply objects concealed under the particular fetishes to which their chosen rapists have been conditioned to respond.

Finally, masturbation of a less direct and literal kind. Michael Moorcock's "Pale Roses" is one of the *Dancers at the End of Time* series. Werther de Goethe, whose power rings can give him anything but a final death, finds life empty without the thrill of guilt, and even this perverse satisfaction ultimately proves counterfeit. A story which seems oddly dated: not even the Flower Power of the silly sixties, but rather the Sunflower Power of Victorian *fin de siècle* and languishing aestheticism. Obviously the Romantic posturing is both intentional and self-aware, but the feeling is less of Art for Art's Sake than Artifice for the sake of a graceful titter. Carefully cultivated decadence (unconvincingly gilded with irony) is not so much impressive or tragic – or funny, for that matter – as tiresome. Why waste time and talent on the kneejerk performance of Life as pure Style? In the beginning, every writer has some inborn sense of the richness and infinite possibility of life, but Moorcock has traded in this birthright for a mess of rose petals, and now he casts them to the breeze with negligent gestures, quoting a few lines from Dowson and admiring the flowing lines of his own self-portrait in a mirror.

Douglas Hill's anthology will probably sell well enough – the combination of the sex and sf labels offers plenty of furtive thrills whether your tase is for overt fantasy or the covert disguised as something cerebral – but despite individual stories of high quality (and nothing absolutely unreadable) it cannot be considered

successful as a whole. Granting that the theme is not simply a packaging device, there are too many omissions of material which must be considered essential to any definitive collection. James Tiptree's "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" and Joanna Russ's "When it Changed" are examples of what comes to mind immediately. And a really solid and comprehensive collection would be useful: having got it over with, science fiction might genuinely come of age and reach the position of taking sex for granted instead of as some sort of rather shocking scientific novelty.

Ox
by Piers Anthony *(Corgi, 1977, 256pp, £0.85, ISBN 0 552 10619 4)*

reviewed by Mark Adlard

In 1977 a hitherto unknown Stapledon manuscript came to light and was published under the title *Nebula Maker*. One might have thought that the sf world would be almost as excited as the larger world would be by the discovery of another handful of sonnets by Shakespeare. In fact the specialist sf book-shops found it very difficult to sell and returned almost their entire stocks to the publisher. Total sales amounted to about 250 copies. It helps to mitigate one's amazement if one looks at what the sf reader actually does read, as confirmed by a major paperback house which presumably knows its market.

The four main characters in *Ox* are Veg, who is "large, muscular and handsome"; Aquilon, who *although* "competent and independent" is also "deepdown *nice*"; Cal, who is an intellectual and can't be "outlogicked"; and Tamma, a specially programmed agent whose exceptional talents and training enable her to use "her specific muscular control to twitch her left breast suggestively".

The other major entity is OX himself, but I must let the computer describe him:

> This is the code designation Zero X, or Arabic numeral nothing multiplied by the Roman numeral ten, themselves symbols for frame-representations that cannot be expressed in your mathematics. Zero times ten is nothing in a single frame, and dissimilar systems can not interact meaningfully; but in the larger framework the result is both infinite and meaningful, expressing sentience. Think of it as the mergence of skew concepts.

Ox is given chapters to himself which read exactly like extracts from the more arid stretches of the *Science Journal* or *Scientific American*. We are told that "his survival would be more limited than originally projected – and was already in a nonsurvival situation"; and we hear about "the dissolution of something very like excitement despite a prior modification to alleviate this disruptive effect . . . ". It could be argued that this mode of discourse, excruciating though it is to be a merely human, twentieth-century ear, is unhappily appropriate for discussing the nonsurvival problems of such an outlandish creature as Ox. But the humans refer to such things as "combination stress-time parameters" and observe that "the lack of proximate and stationary objects deceive the eye".

Some of those who are saddened by the future plight of their language might be cheered to discover that, as usual in these fictions, British Imperial Measure and avoirdupois will still be used to measure distance and weight although these systems are already obsolete in the originating country. Besides, the prevailing

mode of Gobbledygook is interrupted from time to time by Runyonese ("She would have known there was no percentage in fighting") and by High School Literary ("Bear with me if I affront your sensitivities").

The characters react to each other in ways that are familiar to, perhaps even demanded by (who knows?) the readers of sf. We recognise old friends from way back, because who else would display these narrowed eyes, these curled lips, these rueful smiles, these raised eyebrows, these hands raised with palms upward or in mock surrender? Occasionally they actually do double-takes just like they did in Laurel and Hardy films and in Asimov.

But it isn't all plain sailing by any means. Completely unforeseeable squalls, side currents and sudden swells bludgeon the reader, lead him astray, lift him up and let him down until the top of his head opens and his stomach turns over. These are the treacherous waters where Van Vogt used such amazing devices to drive his frail bark forward.

Characters are preyed upon by the dazzling insights of genius and the stupefying blindspots of idiocy. Aquilon comes across a "projector", which is a device for transferring you to an alternate world:

> She had never seen one before, but somehow she recognised its nature. The agents intended to establish a return aperture to Earth from right here!

And on the next page:

> Her baby – conceived in the cave. Suddenly a year after the fact, the truth struck her . . .

A little later she acts without thought "for that might cause her to lose her nerve". It also keeps the action moving alone at the pace required. "Too late she realised . . . " And so on.

At one point in the narrative a projector deposits Tamme and Veg in an alternate world which differs somewhat from their expectations. Tamme explains how it has happened and Veg agrees:

> "Yeah – like taking the wrong bus."
> That was hardly precise, [reflects Tamme] and she was surprised he thought in terms of such an ancient vehicle, but it would do.

Ah, yes. It would do. It always has. It seems that it always will.

Who Goes Here?
by Bob Shaw *(Gollancz, 1977, 160pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 575 02347 3)*
Ship of Strangers
by Bob Shaw *(Gollancz, 1978, 160pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 575 02482 8)*

reviewed by John Clute

Two new volumes by Bob Shaw, and each of them fun. Each is ingenious. Each can be read at a single sitting. There is hardly a word wrong in either of them. They do not presume, neither do they flag. What's amiss? Why should anyone baulk at being entertained, especially at a time when so many writers of genre sf, most of them

American, fail so egregiously in craftsmanship and courtesy. Because what Bob Shaw exhibits, even in his most casual productions, is a strict fundamental courtesy; he gives his readers the goods he has advertised; it is always a fair transaction. So why baulk?

Who Goes Here? is provided to its readers as a comic tale of adventure, with elements of spoof and parody, and fulfils its brief to the letter. Not only that, what seem to be adventitious bits of narrative all tie up into a gratifyingly sensate closure, which shapes our memory of the jokes into something with aesthetic point. It's a Foreign Legion of Space spoof. Young Warren Peace has joined the Legion to forget; in his case, whatever he's done is so all-encompassing and terrible that the automatic memory-erasing machine which enables him to forget has eliminated his entire past. Finding that the Legion is a cynical con, Peace determines to find out why he's enlisted (more or less for life), and the plot (which is only apparently disjointed) thickens darkly, like the inside of a snake's mouth. Chased for much of the book by comically supernal golden supermen, who have already stopped the war on the planet from which they seem to have originated, though no one knows how, Peace finally penetrates the mysteries of his blanked past, and finds them to be fully terrible enough to warrant the erasing of his memories. Born of a military family, he has betrayed comrades to a fate worse than death (immersion in a sentient "throwrug") through what he judges to be his own incompetence and cowardice. At this point the supermen capture him at last and take him quickly back to their planet (where the betrayal had originally taken place) and expose him to a throwrug, which he feels he deserves; but he awakens from this horror completely transfigured; he too is a golden superman, and his captors turn out to be the soldiers he had long ago betrayed. Together, feeling rather ebullient, they agree to save the human race. Fortunately, as one of the veterans exults, "Partnership with a throwrug develops your ethical sense even more than it improves your body": which is one of the few genuinely comic sentences the sf genre has managed to produce: and the novel closes with the three supermen bounding off through the forest, knocking down trees.

Ship of Strangers comprises a set of four stories modified from their original magazine appearances (1968-1975) into an extremely smooth fix-up novel, slightly dour and melancholic beneath the generally adequate action sequences; its status as a homage (however darkened) to *The Voyage of the Space Beagle* is recognized by Shaw's dedication of the book to A.E. Van Vogt. As soon becomes clear, the surveys on which the *Sarafand* is engaged are generally of a nature routine enough to be performed by computer, and indeed the punchline of the first story is rather vitiated by the fact that (one suspects) most readers will have assumed as a given that Captain Aesop is a computer long before Shaw "reveals" the fact as an ostensible surprise – but such miscalculations are rare. Dave Surgenor, the book's protagonist, is a closely observed character, competent, dedicated, but increasingly out of step with himself through his knowledge that his career is a personal escape and in any case functionally supererogatory. Various aliens and the like are encountered, and various internal tensions build and reach humanly partial resolution, all until the lengthy final story, an ingenious cosmological entertainment in which the *Sarafand*, badly serviced, goes astray, lands in a zone of space where everything shrinks inexorably to nothing, and beyond: for the process is a kind of cycle, in which that which is beyond zero is almost infinitely large, containing the entire universe as a glowing ghost at the centre of gravity of the ship. The process continues, however, and the *Saraband* soon shrinks back to zero again. Her eventual escape is convincing within the terms of the genre. Surgenor's decision to leave the

Service with a woman of about his own age whose response to deep suffering closely resembles that of a Joanna Russ heroine is also convincing as a modestly-put maturing of the genre's treatment of sex and roles. Indeed the book is nearly flawless as homage and as an exercise in craftsmanlike storytelling within preset boundaries.

So why baulk? Perhaps it's silly to. But I certainly did, while reading both books. Perhaps the trouble is akin to what happens when one listens to a mildly virtuoso piece by someone like Telemann or Vivaldi played on modern instruments. Somehow there's usually something missing. Somehow the music sounds too *easy*. Played on authentic instruments, Baroque music becomes edgy, fibrous, almost strenuous at times; there is always a sense that the instruments are being used to the full limit of their tessitura. On modern instruments with dynaflow and nylon and eloquent resonance, Telemann can sound a trifle rinky-dink, though smooth, very smooth. I think it's something the same with genre. I think when Bob Shaw (with dynaflow) takes on a topos like the *Space Beagle*, or spoofs the Foreign Legion, he makes it all sound too easy. And there's ultimately no need for space opera to sound like you never have to change gears to write it; take for instance the scarifying kinky and involving novels of Jack L. Chalker (the best of them is probably *Dancers in the Afterglow*, 1978). Or take some of Shaw's own earlier efforts. He is too visibly competent to risk not stretching himself. With both the novels under review, the sound is too big for the notes.

The Genesis Machine
by James P. Hogan *(Del Rey, 1978, 300pp, $1.75, ISBN 0 345 27231 5)*

reviewed by Tom Shippey

One traditional way to discover antigravity in science fiction, as we all know, is to start off with a kind of wolf-child: some teenage genius who has managed to soak up everything useful in contemporary science while remaining miraculously untouched by any of its underlying assumptions, e.g. that antigravity isn't possible, you really *can't* go faster than light, etc. See, for instance, James Blish's juvenile *Welcome to Mars!* The other way, also well exemplified by James Blish, this time in *They Shall Have Stars*, is to start a great big research project which sifts everything known in the hope of finding a loose end, a singularity, a new set of experiments to try. Method 1 provides a better story-opening, Method 2 a more likely view of both present and future. James P. Hogan's *The Genesis Machine* is a story of this latter type, and an excellent one: I don't remember reading a novel more distinguished for the old-fashioned virtues of science fiction – realism, detail, plausibility, an overpowering sense that the author knows what he's talking about, and that if things are going to go anywhere, this is the way they're going to do it.

It starts off with the assumption that the problems so many minds are now concentrating on (the Theory of Unified Fields) has been solved, by one Maesanger's hypothesis of the *sechsrechtwinkelkoordinatenraumkomplex*, or continuum defined by co-ordinates in six dimensions. Then someone fiddling with the theory works out a hypothesis about particles which appears to clear up a series of current problems – non-conservation of isotopic spin in electromagnetic interactions, non-

work. The view of everyday life to be culled from present-day classics by future sociologists will, I fear, have a great hole in it, roughly 9 to 5, and in that hole are fear, tension, jealousy, panic, triumph and office politics – *Hamlet* without the prince with a vengeance. But Mr Hogan knows all about this, being a computer salesman himself, and gets his hooks in within the first few pages, as budding genius runs into nervous boss, jealous rival, and pressure man, the Three Foolish Virgins of contemporary Western myth. From then on the experiments are tangled up with the defensive measures necessary to get them started, in a way which anyone can not just understand, but quite likely recognise. So that's the human interest problem licked! And not the way it suggests in the "How to be a Professional Writer" manuals either. And furthermore, in a way which fulfils the requirement laid by Professor Tolkien on all good fantasies, i.e. that it should contain a "turn" which gives to anyone who reads it "a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart". Well, when the scientists in *The Genesis Machine* finally win through to Higher Authority and consign their tormentors in the research hierarchy to missile testing stations in Baffin Land, it's hard not to feel something a little like that, possibly with an optional and vicious grinding of the teeth.

So *The Genesis Machine* holds a good story and an exceptionally good set of ideas. What more do you want? If you want feminine interest, bad luck. Women in this book keep their familiar 9 to 5 role as supportive agents with (as the anthropologists say) joking privileges. If you want deep analysis of contemporary social problems, forget that too. Mr Hogan thinks they'd all be solved if our leaders of all political shades didn't self-select for conservatism and mediocrity. Perhaps slightly more worrying is the sense that he thinks there is somewhere a Higher Court of Appeal: the young geniuses are supplied with a scientific father-figure independent of but integrated with the Government – which seems inconsistent with the rest of the story – while at the end they solve the cold war and the arms race all at once with a confidence which had me convinced it would never work. What one boffin can do, another bugger can undo, as the military maxim has it. As for the statement that the politician had been naive, "only the scientist, as befitted his calling, had seen and understood the true reality", all one can say is that the experience of this century tends rather strongly to put it in the class of fairy-tale – and that, indeed, is where the whole ending belongs. But *The Genesis Machine* contains more food for thought, more intellectual provocation on both human and technical levels, than any science fiction novel I've read for a few years. If it works out neat rather than right, that's a traditional sf flaw which I'm prepared to put up with.

Gloriana
by Michael Moorcock *(Allison and Busby, 1978, 348pp, £4.95, ISBN 0 85031 237 X)*

reviewed by Hilary Bailey

Michael Moorcock's Gloriana is Queen of Albion, a great empire and the emblem for her court and people of justice, prosperity, truth and power rightly used. She is a tyrant, but a virtuous one, daughter of the mad and evil King Hern. She is controlled and advised by her Chancellor, Lord Montfallcon, who has reared her to be the opposite of the wicked ruler, Hern. Gloriana is unmarried, partly because any

alliance with another ruler would upset the delicate balance of power Albion maintains and partly because of her problem – an inability, however many lovers of every kind she takes, ever to come to orgasm. She has nine daughters, all by different fathers.

Albion is, of course, an alternate world, with some correspondences to Elizabethan England, but many differences, one of the main ones being that there is no Christianity. *Gloriana*, then, as set up, could very well be a rollicking historical novel, full of plots, swordplay and leapings in and out of casements. It is far more complicated and serious than that.

It opens in Gloriana's palace, the centre of the book, the fixed point about which all revolves.

> Within, the palace is rarely still; there is a coming and going of great aristocrats in their brocades, silks and velvets, their chains of gold and silver, their filigree poignards, their ivory farthingales, cloaks and trains rippling behind them, sometimes carried by little boys and girls in such a weight of cloth it seems they can barely walk; there is precise and delicate music to be heard from more than one source, and nobles and retainers all pace to the music's time. In certain halls and rooms masques and plays are rehearsed, concerts performed, portraits painted, murals sketched, tapestries woven, stone carved, verses recited; and there are courtships, consummations, quarrels, of the intense sort always found in the confines of such a universe as this. And in those forgotten spaces between the walls live the human scavengers, the dwellers in the glooms – vagabonds, disgraced servants, forgotten mistresses, ostracised squires, love children, the deformed, abandoned whores, idiot relatives, hermits, madmen, romantics who would accept any misery to be near the source of power; escaped prisoners, destitute nobles too ashamed to reveal themselves in the city below, rejected suitors, defaulting husbands, fear-driven lovers, bankrupts, the sick and the envious; all dwell and dream alone or in their own societies, with their own clearly marked territories and customs, living apart from those who exist in the brilliantly lighted halls and corridors of the palace proper, yet side by side with them, rarely suspected.

The palace has superficial resemblances to Gormenghast, a homage to Peake which the author acknowledges in the dedication. It is partly a symbol of the court, outwardly harmonious but only seeming so because the relics of the past and the unpleasantness of the present have been safely banished to lie, unadmitted behind the walls. It points to a part of the main theme of the book – that it is possible to lead a perfectly beglamoured life for a long time, believing that everything is all right, that justice, truth and beauty can prevail forever without challenge or struggle, that order and harmony are steady states and safety a condition of life, but only by never admitting the truth and hiding any facts which might force it out into the open. On a further level, too, the palace must stand for the individual brain, is indeed a picture of the brain, where in light and airy halls and corridors music plays and events take place according to an ordered pattern while, scuffling about in darkness suppressed facts, disorderly memories and unadmitted disgusting feelings go their way undetected, because no one wants to find them and pull them out into the light. This, then, clearly laid down on page I of *Gloriana*, is the high level on which Moorcock is prepared to operate in the book – firstly, in terms of narrative, the events of the book, secondly, metaphysically, in terms of how life is led and thirdly, in terms of how we think. The main question he asks is the metaphysical one: how to achieve a satisfactory balance between unrealistic idealism on the one hand and life-destroying cynicism on the other, in a world offering ample evidence for either point of view according to the observations of the student, and a world, moreover, which will punish, one way or another, the man who gets it wrong and leans too far in either direction. The added dimension is that Moorcock indicates that the interpretations we make of the world, our assumptions about it, influence our actions and therefore create our realities. To give a simple

example, two thousand years of one unassimilable race telling each other yearly "Next year in Jerusalem" was the chief factor in creating the state of Israel. The state of Israel is a dream come true.

So – from the palace to Gloriana herself, six and a half feet tall, beautiful, heavy with cares, and good. But, we ask ourselves, what part of the riddle is this strange failure of orgasm? And to her advisers, many of them the survivors of her father's evil reign, the gone-off court poet, Master Ernest Wheldrake (Swinburne to the very life) and Gloriana's chief friend and confidant, the sturdy Una, Countess of Scaith, whom some may see as having a small relationship to Una Persson, heroine of time and space. These correspondences abound in *Gloriana*, sometimes in the shape of private references back to Moorcock's previous work, sometimes as references to books or historical characters, sometimes as sheer private references. Thus some visitors are shown into a laboratory by a certain Colvin (an old *New Worlds* pseudonym) and there meet the young scientist-king of Bavaria, Rudolph Elfberg by name. These slottings-in mainly work as jokes. But probably the character of Una is the least successful in the book, for she is out of place in the masque-like and stylised proceedings. Clear-headed, sensible and from the North, she serves as the classic confidant of a leading character, as in a drama. She contrasts with Gloriana. The trouble is that she is a woman of action and in *Gloriana* direct action is not the way. The book works by using the manner in which events proceed by initiatives from people standing at a distance, so that they seem to be moving by their impetus, in exactly the same way that a vast liner is launched by one well-dressed person breaking a bottle of champagne while, out of sight, another, in overalls, is hauling on a lever. We do not actually see Gloriana struggling with the lonely, single-handed decisions necessary to power and responsibility, nor do we see her accomplishing heroic and sacrificial acts, any more than we see the villain, Quire, personally accomplishing his more beastly acts. All, in *Gloriana*, act through agents, and are agents themselves at the same time. Montfallcon, the Chancellor, seemingly a prime mover, sees himself as an agent of Albion. He supports and secures matters, but does not initiate events. The Queen, Montfallcon's mistress, is also his puppet. He keeps his necessary secrets from her. Quire, himself an agent of Montfallcon's, also works through hirelings.

From the top level, where ideals manoeuvre the characters, to the bottom, where the agents of agents are stabbing other people's agents, everything works through manipulation and leverage. No action is directly conducted by one person. Una, Countess of Scaith, tries a bold and unilateral move and is stopped instantly. Dressed as a man, sword in hand, she enters the walls and gets clobbered – she has tried an Elizabethan move in a Jacobean world. This puppet-effect, it should be said, is not at all accidental – the theme of automata occurs and recurs throughout the book. However, in this shadow-playing world the effect of the Countess of Scaith is as if someone had burst into a room where people were watching the shadows on a wall of other people dancing the measures of a pavane and begun to do a vigorous clog-dance in the middle of the floor. In this novel of layers of illusion, how they interact with facts and create facts, the Countess of Scaith is out of place. Her worldly clear-headedness is useless – she does not speak the language – and her actions will be to no avail – she does not understand the system of levers.

Returning to the book, Gloriana appears splendidly dressed in Council, to interview one of her captains, back from a successful voyage and discuss, again, the question of her marriage. She is being courted by the King of Poland and the Grand Caliph of Arabia. It would be impolitic to marry either. Also, the King of Poland is due to arrive first, which would be undesirable. The Council ends. We note that

throughout Gloriana has not had one serious argument, settled a dispute nor initiated a policy. She is a figurehead, magnanimous, kind and noble, and her burdens are those of a figurehead not a serious statesman. Meanwhile Montfallcon, behind her back, decides to delay the King of Poland by having his ship wrecked. He hires his agent, vice incarnate, Gloriana's direct opposite, small and ever clad in black, the notorious Captain Arturus Quire, to do the work. Vice being on the whole more contemptible and ludicrous than virtue, since it generally springs from mean and silly motives, the question of Quire presents a problem. A man who just goes about wrecking ships and having fights has no dignity or force as an emblematic figure. But Quire works his evil not for money, not for fame, or position, or to ensure his own safety and not even for the sheer love of the thing. He does it, he says to Montfallcon, because, "Creative inclinations of a stronger sort sent me to exploring my senses, sir, and the geography of the world. I have no talent, save for what's called evil, and, in your service, sir, I am enabled to pursue my studies further." So he goes to wreck the ship, being seen, in his black clothes, always against the colourless landscapes of winter – black night, white snow and a ship in flames – a completely diabolical figure and unmotivated, except by the desire to do harm.

Quire's reasons for his conduct never ring perfectly true. If you took fear, stupidity, greed and laziness out of the world tonight we should all wake up tomorrow to a world where most, if not all, evil had been eliminated. Man-made evil, that is. So Quire, lacking fear and greed and being neither stupid nor lazy lacks conviction as a bad man. If he is, as he says at one point, amoral, then where are his good acts? Moral neutrality is as likely to produce good as harm. The author himself seems to have problems with this. We must, pending proof, accept Quire as evil, but not for conventional reasons, without asking too many questions. Halfway between a gunfighter in a Western ("He's the best there is") and a devil in a morality play, he exists as a presence, and that's that. So, as I have said, does Gloriana. "Do we not possess an understanding, as between men of equal sensibility?" Quire asks Montfallcon. "Indeed, we do have an understanding!" replies Montfallcon. "I pay. You kill, kidnap and conspire." This affront to his artistry is enough to send him away feeling misprized to take employment with Montfallcon's enemy, the Grand Caliph, the agent of whom hires him to weaken Gloriana, get rid of her supporter, the Countess of Scaith, disgrace Montfallcon and the Court and bring the whole nation into confusion through loss of faith. This, he thinks, will drive the Queen into the arms of the Caliph as a last resort, to preserve stability.

Quire undertakes the work and sets in train a succession of plots, including murder, abduction and blackmail. His chief ally in his crimes is the unreality of the myth which has supported Albion during the thirteen years of the Queen's reign. Behind the walls, which it has been convenient never to search, he can count on concealment and allies. Even when he gains great position by making the Queen fall in love with him (so that he can abandon her and she, demoralised, will marry the Grand Caliph) no one can reveal his crimes to the Queen, as this would involve revealing their own concealments on her behalf, done to keep her in happy ignorance and support the myth of Albion. At this point vice does full battle with virtue, but vice and virtue are shorthand words for the real issues, for virtue is taken here to be a forceful and realistic idealism, vice to be acts of bad faith done on the assumption that they are the true currency of the world. And at the time when the battle takes place the idealism of the court is a hypocrisy. Neither side should triumph. The basis of thought, I believe, is a kind of humanist morality, where the concern is not with God and the Devil, with eternal life in view, but how to balance the forces

of good and bad, order and chaos (whoops – I fell off the tightrope) so as to survive humanely in this world, which, most of us believe, is all we have. The stabiliser in this state of disequilibrium is a recognition of the facts of the world we live in, a steady and continuous regard at the actual.

So, in *Gloriana*, neither the view of cynicism, nor the view of groundless hope should, or even can, prevail. The systems which have supported both views break down for different reasons. Now the puppets must come alive, the agents evaporate and each man act for himself. The walls must be purged and resolution achieved.

The narration of *Gloriana* takes place over an entire year, the seasons mirroring the unfolding of the plot, each marked by an elaborate masque or pageant, at once a set-piece to indicate the court's, or the nation's, view of itself, each hinting at the real turn of events behind the fantasy. Books being rather like battles – events on the ground distracting the attention of the private soldier, or reader, from the overall strategy taking place – the laurels go to the author-general with the best troops, and who can best muster his resources in advance, organise his battle at the time of fighting and know how and when to bring up reinforcements. With an almost uncanny skill – it is awe-inspiring to observe an author begin to turn or manoeuvre his book into new positions not just at the right time, but on what looks like exactly the right page – Moorcock manages the organisation of the book with its many layers, meaning and metaphor, resolving plot and metaphysic together in a masterly manner.

Survivor
by Octavia E. Butler *(Doubleday, 1978, 185pp, $6.95, ISBN 0 385 13385 5; Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978, 185pp, £4.50, ISBN 0 283 98465 1)*

reviewed by Cherry Wilder

It is interesting to see female fantasies emerging in science fiction; it is also important to perceive them for what they are, because a fantasy – one of the persistent, satisfying day-dreams of mankind – is not a good story. This has been amply demonstrated by hundreds of male fantasies masquerading as science fiction or sword and sorcery. "I was lord of the harem" does not stand alone any more than its milder counterpart, "I rescued this lovely female and she was grateful". And what can one say to such horrid fantasies as "Every man wants to kill a girl", which turns up in the work of such widely disparate but equally lovable old primates as Robert Sheckley and T.S. Eliot?

The female fantasy that is currently gathering momentum seems to run as follows: "I was the chosen mate of a large, alien-looking male." There is a treatment of this in *Floating Worlds* by Cecelia Holland and an interesting variant in Octavia Butler's new novel *Survivor*. In both cases, with Holland's six and a half foot black Styth and Butler's giant, blue-furred Tehkohn Hao, the aliens are distantly human and the union is blessed with issue. In both cases the authors have certainly surrounded the fantasy with strong plot material and have achieved varying degrees of success.

Survivor is a short novel, heavily condensed, and we keep reading it for one of the very best reasons, namely to find out what happens. How will Alanna, the "wild human" adopted by the Missionaries, a group of fundamentalist planetary

pioneers, reconcile these Missionaries to the ways of the good Tehkohn and rescue them from the clutches of the bad Garkohn, both tribes of furry humanoids. This should be straightforward and exciting and sometimes it is, but the amount of contrived background material piles up. Not only has distant Earth become the province of a telepathic elitist group of super-human technologists who enslave the population and send the Missionaries out in space-ships but also the Earth population has been decimated by a plague from outer space which produces four-footed mutants.

The Missionaries, clinging benightedly to their interpretation of the bible, with plenty of emphasis on "man in God's image", scarcely recognise the intelligence of the Garkohn, but the Garkohn learn English, study human crafts, induce the humans to join them in addiction to Meklah fruit, use them as stalking horse in their feud with the Tehkohn and are gradually kidnapping them with a view to miscegenation. By and large it is easy for both alien tribes to run rings round the humans because the aliens, with their colour-coded sentient fur, can make themselves virtually invisible; they can also kill with uncanny swiftness.

It is a tribute to the gritty effectiveness of some of Octavia Butler's writing that we do not always realise just how unlikely, not to say flatly incredible, this has become. By virtue of native wit, plus the experience of living wild on the plague-stricken Earth, Alanna is smart and quick enough to learn both alien tongues, understand their colour-code, see them when they are invisible and kill as swiftly as they can. With all this going for her, however, she still manages to get captured by the Tehkohn; when the Meklah fruit is withdrawn from the human and Garkohn captives they all die . . . except Alanna, who is received into Tehkohn society.

The book is packed with ideas but they are of unequal worth and an air of compression and plain bad editing hangs over the story. The best parts, and the parts which seem to interest the author most, are the descriptions of the aliens and their societies. Diut, the Tehkohn Hao, bearer of the awe-inspiring blue pelt, is an appealing character, and his relationship with Alanna is described well. In this reviewer's fantasy he took on the aspect of the Beast in Cocteau's film *La Belle et La Bête.*

The author is persistently unfair to the Missionaries; on the strength of their wrong, intolerant notions they dwindle into a bunch of dumb Aunt Sallies, uncharacterised and without a scrap of revivalist vigour. Jules and Neila, the heroine's adopted parents, are too good and tolerant to be true . . . the realism of every character is sacrificed to the elaborate set-up. Octavia Butler understands the science fiction idiom but she has not found the right balance of theme, plot and background.

Monsters and Medics
by James White *(Corgi, 1977, 189pp, £0.75, ISBN 0 552 10462 0)*

reviewed by Chris Morgan

James White is a nice man who writes only about nice people. His characters – be they human, robot or alien – are never consistently villainous or amoral. They all seem to follow codes of behaviour which date from the 1930s, when Victorian restraints had been eased but virtues like honesty, chastity, kindness and politeness were still in vogue (and when James White was young and impressionable). This

does not mean to say that they act like angels all the time, but when they do something wrong (like swearing) they possess conscience enough to be sorry for it later.

Despite this self-imposed handicap, which rules out the use of sex, violence and bizarrely deviant characters in his stories, White still manages to generate enough interest and excitement to hold the reader's attention. He does this by setting his nice protagonists problems to solve. *Monsters and Medics* is a collection of five problem-solving stories of which one, "Second Ending" is a short novel which originally occupied half an Ace double. (The US edition of *Monsters and Medics*, Del Rey 1977, contains two additional stories.)

None of these stories belongs to White's "Sector General" series, and "Second Ending" is the only contribution with enough medical references to justify the book's title. It concerns a young trainee doctor named Ross (he appears not to possess a first name) who has been put into suspended animation in 2017 when found to have an incurable form of leukaemia. Resuscitated in 2233 he discovers that he has slept through a nuclear war and appears to be the last man alive on Earth. He is the lord and master of hundreds of faithful robots, which he sends out to look for other survivors. As White says in his introduction, the problem with "Last Man" stories is the shortage of characters. In fact, a particular robot, Ward Sister 5B, is well used as the foil to Ross's moodiness, enabling discussion and argument to take place. By interspersing these with flashbacks, Ross's bouts of introspection and descriptions of the war-devastated world of the future, a fast pace is maintained. The plot development is highly inventive, being obvious only in retrospect; there are no terrific surprises or *dea ex machina* but the handling is competent throughout. Public response to the story's first appearance (as a serial in *Fantastic*, 1961) can be gauged by the fact that it was short-listed for a Hugo (in the novel category). Seventeen years later it is still an entertaining read.

The other stories are all much shorter and more predictable. Though the situations are fairly original there is a lack of complexity, a lack of alienness, and normally no more than a single layer of meaning. In "Dogfight" the protagonist is an alien spy, anxious to learn the secret of Earth's success in an interstellar war. He comes close to being amoral when he decides, finally, to change sides, though his reason is a good one (he realises that his side can never win) and he possesses a conscience which will always call him traitor. It is a pity that the tale's final twist is obvious from the title. In "Counter Security" the Night Security Officer of a department store investigates peculiar happenings and solves the problem (the hackneyed one of aliens marooned on Earth trying to repair their spaceship in order to get home) with degrees of tact and compassion which are close to unbelievable.

A lifetime search for clues to the fate of one's father is the most poignant of the problems presented in the collection. Yet Barclay, in "Nuisance Value", is not a particularly obsessional man. He just keeps on pestering the authorities for almost fifty years until he gets the truth in a happy ending which has been obvious for several pages but is none the less unconvincing when it arrives. An interestingly-detailed background to the story helps to compensate, though.

Happy endings are a feature of the book; sentimental romanticism is part of James White, and he cannot help giving each of his nice protagonists exactly what they want – and deserve – at the end of the story. Even White's version of love between human and alien, "In Loving Memory", is a romantic and highly respectable tale (ignoring the harsh biological realities which Farmer, Dick and Dozois have explored in their assaults on the theme) with a happy ending.

When you finish reading it, *Monsters and Medics* leaves a nice taste in your mouth.

The Web of the Chozen
by Jack L. Chalker *(Del Rey, 1978, 212pp, $1.75, ISBN 0 345 27376 1)*

reviewed by Andrew Kaveney

For publishers, even for those publishers who specialise in the field and have in theory a reputation for excellence to maintain, science fiction is a commodity, a commodity to be packaged and marketed in as economic a fashion as can be organised. As people of real talent have come into the field, and as older writers within it have laboured to become decent craftsmen at least, the lead time on any individual novel has increased. The market and in particular the paperback market has grown and with it the need of publishes to keep a constant stream of new material pouring on to bookshop shelves and reviewers' desks. It is only in crude economic terms like these that I can possibly explain the production by Ballantine of an unpleasing object like *Web of the Chozen*; for what I am told is the increasing popularity with readers of the prolific Mr Chalker, I would be forced to turn for my explanation to an equally crude psychopathology.

Mr Chalker's central character is tough cynical spacepilot Bar Holliday, whom, we are repeatedly and formulaically informed, no one ever beats. Holliday is a loner who doesn't like the system for which he works:

> Nobody has to work and many don't . . . They're born, live their lives on the dole . . . Those who *do* something, who like to push buttons and things and people around [sic], they're in the managerial government or the nine corporations . . . I don't know why I turned out different . . . Here I was . . . to find more resources for the billions on the dole . . .

Despite the dire warnings scratched into the hull of an abandoned orbiting spacecraft, he lands on the site of a lost colony set up by utopian socialists. They aren't around but there are an awful lot of rather funny looking herbivores a bit like deer. Holliday comes down sick and, like the colonists before him, changes into a rather funny looking herbivore. It is explained to him that the colony had an intelligent computer with its own ideas about how to achieve socialism and developed a virus which altered people. Holliday is a little disconcerted at having to eat grass, but male orgasms last several hours in his new form and the Chozen, despite being pinko, don't rot their minds with television and are capable of deep philosophical discourse, though this mainly consists of saying "You don't mean" and "I never thought of that" whenever Holliday has a bright idea. We are never actually told that they wash behind their ears, but that is the sort of tone in which Mr Chalker talks.

Holliday and a friend decide that they ought to let Earth know what has happened. Earth responds with a quick dose of genocide. Holliday, his friend and the hatchlings of eggs they coincidentally had in their pouches take over a larger ship by skill, dexterity and all those other things you need to commit interstellar piracy when you have hooves. They infect the two women on board; one of them goes mad and so they push her out of the airlock; the other becomes Holliday's new doe. They breed like rabbits and have the bright idea of spreading the virus on all the human colonies. Most of the human race dies or goes mad, but the strongest, most intelligent ones turn into more Chozen. Nobody beats Bar Holliday. QED.

I have honestly considered whether this is meant to be ironic – whether Holliday's mind has been taken over by the computer and nothing he says is to be taken for granted, or whether the whole thing is a rather crude parody of the cult in sf of rugged individualism. It would be bad enough if Chalker were simply plagiarising *The*

Humanoids or *The Iron Dream*, but the evidence points towards his meaning it. An earlier book, *Midnight at The Well of Souls*, was filled with the same megalomania and the same image of socialism as an antheap run by a Mafia, and with the same sermonizing about the degenerate masses who sit about on the dole and keep their coal in the bathtub, instead of being tough, cynical and superior. I am loth to burden criticism with morality, but I think we are entitled to ask on what this cult of the superior individual is based. Mr Chalker writes dialogue on the basis of the following random sample – "You want some sort of moral crusade to break the system. Well, nobody's thought of me – me and the rest of our people. We want a home, that's all." Magic viruses that turn people into deer are a bit unlikely – whatever happened to the rigorous scientific thought that used to go with the Neanderthal politics of writers like this. As for Chalker's capacity for intelligent plausible and well-placed plotting, my summary above is the least facetious I produced. Whence the sub-Nietzschean cant, then? Simply, I believe, the more ignominious the hack, the more he is churning stult out to a deadline, the more he craves some reassuring belief that there is some deep and abiding value in himself and his work. The cult of individualism and the strange politics that go with it are strongest in those sf writers who have done most to turn themselves into interchangeable machines for the production of low grade space opera. Chalker is more of a hack, therefore he is a more inhuman elitist, no more need be said.

Last Orders
by Brian W. Aldiss *(Cape, 1977, 223pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 224 01487 0)*

reviewed by Tom Hosty

The introductory "Author's Note" is unpromising. In that stalest of settings, an *aprés nous la déluge* cocktail party, Brian Aldiss, leaning nonchalantly on a prop from a 40s musical, "a typewriter as big as an upright piano", bares his soul, or at least his teeth. "I work in an underprivileged, underrated medium, sure, and even within that medium my style offends a whole lot of people. See, I don't mind that antagonism anymore." Inherited ghetto paranoia, neither new nor mystifying. It's difficult to know which is worse, the compensatory fantasies of the Campbell-Heinlein school ("literature is a sub-set of sf"), or this kind of pugnacious jaw-thrusting. Either way it is past time for sf writers to take the chips off their shoulders and the nails out of their hands. The pogroms are over.

So to the stories. This is a very characteristic Aldiss collection: humorous, diverse, intelligent. Familiar themes and subjects appear, ever more polished and concise: the fascination with dream-life and the structure of the mind; the concern with people trapped happily or unhappily in their own pasts; with loneliness and community; with the littered aftermaths of action. Even Holman Hunt, veteran of *Report on Probability A* and various writings since, sees the light again. And everything is done with enormous style.

Style, or more properly stylishness, is perhaps Aldiss's most obvious signature. Of all the writers of sf, he works the hardest to produce work which relates at once to the local traditions of the genre and to the traditions of literature and art as a whole. His concern with aesthetic craftsmanship is considerable, his attempt to involve his productions in the broader fabric of art evident. One of the recurring

subjects of *Last Orders* is the artist: his psychology, his role, his relationship with his talent, and (tellingly, in view of the "Author's Note") his struggle against hostile criticism. When Aldiss fails, it is not usually through a failure of technique so much as through the application of too much technique to a slight or insufficient subject. An obvious comparison is with Ted Hughes, another self-conscious stylist who, too often, can find nothing to say.

This overriding concern with stylistic expertise tends to link him more clearly with French than with English traditions. Aldiss's artistic models are more likely to be found in the succession from Baudelaire to the Decadents than anywhere else. The heritage of the Aesthetic movement is variously present, most obviously in the recurring concentration on art as a subject for art. This is clearest in "The Aperture Moment", in which Aldiss is making art out of the tribulations of an artist whose chosen form involves the animation of previous artists' paintings. Baudelaire seems an informing spirit in some of the most vivid and successful stories, but there are others – an echo of de l'Isle Adam here, there an irruption of Jarry's dislocating and provocative farce. The kind of criticism which spends its time seeking out influences often seems self-indulgent, but this author virtually invites such a procedure. It is an automatic response to the bouts of artistic name-dropping which characterize the book. Clearest of all the Decadent inheritances is a curious feeling of fragility surrounding many of the stories; an air of enervation through oversophistication, of entropy held at bay by gestures of a wit itself decadent and entropic. Stories such as "The Monster of Ingratitude IV" and "The Eternal Theme of Exile" are as flimsy as the cellophane gliders on the dustjacket; all the indications are of highly competent bluff – once the bluff is called, the omnipresence of mere technique recognized, the entire structure is bound to collapse.

This aesthetic concentration is, of course, no bad thing in itself. It is, for example, always a pleasure to read a science fiction writer who can avoid the conventional stylistic blunders of the genre, and Aldiss manages this with a virtuosity that is almost insolence. I noticed only a single lapse; in "The Aperture Moment", in some ways the book's closest approach to "hard" or "engineering" sf, an undigested lecture remains – and, characteristically, the lecture is more concerned with a Pre-Raphaelite painter than with the technological gimmick in the background. On the other hand, he fails to avoid all of the conventional pitfalls of the Aesthetic tradition. The collection makes a laboured attempt at seeming obsessional about Anna Kavan (all *real* artists are obsessed, of course), a personality reduced in the stories to a name, an ostentatious cachet. The Anna Kavan of *Last Orders* not only has nothing to do with the real person, which would be just about permissible, but she also fails to denote any consistent area of symbolic or metaphorical significance through her maze of incarnations. This, with some of the more frivolous repetitions of characters' names, achieves an effect not unlike Moorcock's habit of flogging the permutations of a given proper name to death to exploit the simpler *frissons* of recognition.

At his best – and there are some very fine stories in the book – Aldiss counterbalances the outré and the mannerist with a counterpoising solidity more clearly related to the English novelistic tradition, a style richer in colloquial realism and concreteness of a more mundane kind. And he has a sense of humour, which is of the essence. Wit is frequently dissipated in simple frivolities and grace-notes, such as the parody of a trendy bookshelf in "Journey to the Heartland", or the sequence in "But Without Orifices" where the hero and heroine pass from neo-Victorian punctilio and stuffiness to hysterical grossness of language and action as soon as they are left alone (this latter an amusing satire on a perennial Puritan nightmare, but a very easy trick to pull off; groundling stuff). Where, however, humour is

employed in the service of an informing discipline rather than in lieu of same, the author's wry, ironic capabilities work very well as a corrective to the aesthete's tendency to self-indulgence. A good example is the title story, a sympathetic cameo of the end of the world, focusing on the last three people on Earth drinking in a ruined bar. The wide-screen spectacle and apocalyptic sentimentality of the setting establish a fruitful tension with the minutely visualized inconsequence of the bar-room chatter and the inevitable, bizarre and comforting subversion of that archetypical sf hero, the Captain (square-jawed and space-tanned, no doubt). The result is as neat and satisfying a tale of love and consolation as one could wish.

The memories carried away from this collection are of details and images rather than of narratives: the animated paintings produced by the Neff technique; the great rose-petal planetoid Turpitude I, turning in the sunlight; the endlessly apologetic hologram records in the vast, empty museum of Norma, and so on. The actual stories, residual narratives for the most part, fade; moods and felicities of imagery linger. The only danger foreshadowed here remains that of the final, sterile triumph of mere expertise, of technique over matter.

Enemies of the System
by Brian W. Aldiss *(Cape, 1978, 119pp, £3.50, ISBN 0 224 01583 4)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

This novella was published complete in a recent issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, where it represented better value than it does as a slim book. It is a futuristic fable recounting the adventures of a group of tourists from a dystopian Earth on the world of Lysenka II. The tourists are members of the party elite of a communist state in which uniformity of world-view and behaviour is imposed by the means made familiar in Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. One of their privileges is to vacation occasionally on a world where a perverse version of Lysenko's neo-Lamarckian evolutionary heresies has become a living reality. All animal life on the world is derived from human stock, the descendants of castaways having adapted themselves to all available ecological niches. These creatures provide the living proof of the superiority of the system which sustains the party-members in their version of humanity, for they are living testimony to the fact that left to themselves men degenerate into bestiality. The only ones among them who have clung even to the vestiges of human nature are those who have sustained language and certain human sentiments in the religious rites focused upon their one relic of a former existence — the crashed spaceship.

The plot of the story follows events when the tourists themselves are stranded by the breakdown of their vehicle. In confrontation with the harsh environment of Lysenka II their own evolutionary "fitness" is put to the test. Naturally, the ones among them who prove most capable in adapting to their circumstances show thereby that they are nearer to animality and more subject to the forces of devolution than they ought to be, and thus expose themselves as "enemies of the system".

There is nothing here that is new, and the overwhelming impression given by the book is that of an over-familiar dance routine. The same old nightmares are on parade again, looking well-drilled but rather haggard, and the ritual indictments are made. The story is elegant and subtle only because it can afford to be, reliant upon

the fact that the reader knows every word of the message already, and thus need not be insulted by obviousness. For exactly this reason, it is essentially hollow – there is no *thinking* here. A writer with Aldiss's imagination ought to be capable of doing some original work in exploring the implications of the issues raised here – if he considers that there is nothing more to be said on the subject than decorative reiteration then his imagination is strangely blinkered. Aldiss has always been a self-indulgent writer, but if this book is a sign of things to come then it seems that in matters of both scale and substance he is also becoming lazy.

Keep the Giraffe Burning
by John Sladek *(Panther, 1977, 205pp, £0.80, ISBN 0 586 04757 3)*

reviewed by D. West

> Through the barred window, a blue Magritte sky. I've told them, I'm as innocent as any angel that ever danced on the head of any pin. They can't keep me here.

The opening lines of "The Hammer of Evil" offer several of the characteristic ingredients of John Sladek's stories: a cheerfully sly paranoia, a hint of the surreal, and a fondness for sophistical processes of reasoning. Numerous other examples of no greater length with similar features could be chosen; another characteristic of Sladek's work is the extreme economy of the writing. For once it is no exaggeration to say that not a single word is wasted. Nor is this feat of saving achieved at the cost of clarity. The style is perfectly lucid; it is only the content which could offer difficulties – and the difficulties are so intriguing that the offer must be accepted.

The precision of any Sladek story inevitably suggests a super-concentration of meaning, an immensely dense core of significance, the Philosopher's Stone remaining after the original gross conception has been purged of all inessentials. This first impression – the sheer technical accomplishment of Sladek's work – may be somewhat misleading in that it gives him something of the forbidding aspect of the Serious and Important writer, heavy with dismal Messages for Mankind. Indeed there is meaning and message in Sladek's work – as there is in all good stories, regardless of intent – but there is none of that solemn self-conscious posturing which so disfigures the efforts of those who see sf as the natural soapbox for the expression of soggy Great Thoughts. Sladek is primarily a humorist – a humorist of an intelligent and intellectual sort, but still someone whose first intent is to extract amusement from his material. Whether or not he does something more in the course of this activity is another question.

Sladek is fascinated by games and puzzles, tricks and conundrums, philosophical paradoxes, all the stranger fruits of twisted reasoning and insane logic, the bizarre associations that are set up between unconnected facts by the confused cunning of schizophrenia and dream. He delights in the stunning-power of the truly banal, and sprinkles his text with absurdities and cliches, so that, like banana skins, they can subject pomposity and seriousness to a succession of pratfalls. Since he understands very well that the true comic is seldom or never seen to laugh (except at some highly inappropriate moment) he maintains an appearance of gravity (sometimes slightly dazed) throughout his text. Thus, typically, when the protagonist of "Elephant with Wooden Leg" encounters the aforementioned elephant, a man in diving suit juggling croquet balls, security guards armed with chocolate pistols, and other

figures and scenes straight from surrealist canvases, he does not give way to astonishment or fright but merely maintains a detached suspiciousness. After all, he has more important things to worry about, like the world-domination conspiracy of the cockroaches.

There is a similar wary acceptance of the improbable – solemn absurdities made flesh – in "The Hammer of Evil", "Flatland", "Heavens Below", "The Secret of the Old Custard" and "The Great Wall of Mexico". Imagine a collaboration between J.G. Ballard, Franz Kafka and Robert Sheckley (or rather, stereotyped simulacra – there should also be a touch of Dick) locked together in a Dadaist art gallery with the radio playing The Goon Show and a TV featuring continuous commercials. Ballard is absorbed in an elaborate and obsessive decoding of the enigmatic artefacts; Kafka's antennae (he has just woken from an uneasy doze to find himself transformed to a gigantic cockroach) quiver with a morbid sensitivity as with painful and minute attention to detail he considers what significance must be attached to the strange chirps and giggles of the radio; Sheckley presides with glassy-eyed cheerfulness over a meeting of advertising executives who are attempting to brainstorm a bright new slogan that will help popularise cannibalism. Everyone is totally self-absorbed; in this isolation conversation with another person is like receiving messages from outer space – meaning must be extracted by exercise of your own ingenuity.

Such a farrago may serve to give some idea of the nature of Sladek's work – odd, perplexing, intriguing, capable of an infinite variety of interpretations – but in fact precise categorisation is impossible. Perhaps "The Design", "The Locked Room", "The Commentaries" and "Undecember" might be compared to the work of Jorge Luis Borges – or perhaps Nabokov in playful mood. "Space Shoes of the Gods" is undoubtedly one of the Lost Manuscripts of Von Daniken himself. Analysis and criticism collapse rapidly into farce; as with Borges, the critic feels that his own identity is being absorbed and commentary becomes simultaneously self-parody and an extension of the subject-text. Sladek is insidious; watching TV advertisements after reading his stories it is difficult to avoid the feeling that he wrote almost all the copy, sold it straightfaced, and is now sitting at home laughing himself silly.

In the short Foreword Sladek writes: "Don't be fooled by the Surrealist title. Most of these stories are only meant to be fun, and no serious messages are intended . . . Probably what was wrong with Surrealism all along was that it got defined precisely and interpreted exactly. Nothing can stand up to that." In other words: don't go messing with symbolism, lie back and enjoy.

There *are* stories here which can be stuffed into recognised patterns. "The Poets of Millgrove, Iowa" could be called fairly straightforward satire, as "The Master Plan", "The Design" and "A Game of Jump" could be called technical exercises. "The Face" is almost what is usually taken as a conventional short story: beginning, middle and end. On the other hand . . . But to subject Sladek's work to almost any sort of analysis – superficial, deep, or just plain muddled – is to start a new subcreation of buffoonery. Of all art-forms, surrealism (and what else can one call it?) is the least apt to the mediating hand of the critic: idiot speaks direct to idiot, the groundlings enjoy a good laugh, and the over-earnest are left feverishly babbling questions, uneasily aware that for all their solemn application they seem to have missed something.

In the attempt to avoid searing Sladek with the fearful brand of the author who is intellectually weighty, technically brilliant and deserving of the most serious and searching critical appraisal (i.e. probably turgid and damned dull reading) the counter-impression may have been given of an entertaining but forgettable lightweight. Both pictures are false. *Keep the Giraffe Burning* deserves not only critical

recognition (though critics may wonder how this is to be done without contributing to the comedy) but also popular acclaim. Most works of fiction can be put aside after a single reading; a joke is rarely worth hearing twice; crossword puzzles can be filled in once only – but the twists and turns of Sladek's cheerful conundrums and fascinating lunacies will be a permanent source of enjoyment.

The Necronomicon
edited by George Hay *(Spearman, 1978, 184pp, £5.50, ISBN 0 85978 026 0)*

reviewed by John Sladek

Let me get this straight. *The Necronomicon* is (according to its cover) a book of dead names. It is edited by George Hay, with an introduction by Colin Wilson and research by Robert Turner and David Langford.

No it isn't. It's a new edition of an esoteric book "Written by the Moor: El Hazzared, Done into Englifh by Ion Dee, Doctor" in 1571. Dee was court astrologer to Elizabeth I, and gets quite a write-up in Colin Wilson's *The Occult*. Let's see what Wilson has to say here . . . No, wait. According to the introduction, this is a book about H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), a writer partial to nameless horrors and adjectives. Despite being apparently one of the less pleasant citizens of Providence, Rhode Island, Lovecraft became the centre of a cult. Oh, so this is a cult book?

Well, no. I guess it's what folks in Providence might call a leg-pull. Since Lovecraft, like Christ, was never known to smile, his followers have decided to grin their way through this one, like a band of jolly revivalists.

Why do I suspect this of being a joke? First of all, I'm inclined to take Colin Wilson rather lightly anyway. But his long introduction is followed by a letter from a scholarly Austrian, "Dr Hinterstoisser". The very appearance of such a letter gives too much away, even if Dr H's name does not translate into something vulgar. And in this letter we learn that Dr H's great 3-volume work was completely burned by the Nazis – all but one copy, now in the hands of a mysterious "Dr Williams". Then Dr H has found and translated a very ancient, secret book, but he won't show anyone it. Also he has been psychoanalyzed by Jung, and saved from the concentration camps by a personal order of Himmler's. Shortly after writing this letter, he dies. He suggested this might happen, for he is being attacked by "mind parasites" such as those featured in a Colin Wilson story – based on the ideas of H.P. Lovecraft. I know how he must have felt.

Next comes Langford's article on computers, ciphers, Bacon (we're still in the same book) and Dr John Dee. Langford claims to crack Dee's secret cipher using a computer, and read his *Book of Enoch*. The cipher MS consists of 101 pages, each ruled into 2401 squares with a character in each square. Since each page may also be read in 290 ways, his computer must have ground through some 700 million characters. Moreover it goes where no computer has gone before, for it must produce not only Lovecraftian English, but also incantations like "Zyweso, wecato keoso, Xunewe-rurom . . . " and so on.

And so on and on, the loathsome joke plods like some eldritch, nameless thing costing £5.50 and funny probably only to its authors. L. Sprague de Camp contributes a tiny interview with an old man who knew Lovecraft long ago, and didn't like him; this, with two other essays (Christopher Frayling, Angela Carter) are more

or less straight, short, and put in as appendices. The body of the book thus takes up about 130 pages, but seems much longer.

Wilson's introduction (42 pages) seems to put him in a peculiar position. He believes, or pretends to believe, in Dr H and the computer nonsense, and states that somehow the deciphered Dee MS passed into the hands of Lovecraft, who took from it many of his gruesome ideas, like the Cthulhu Mythos (whatever that or they may be). If Wilson believes all this (and is not himself Dr H), he really is a jerk. If he does not, it would seem rather churlish to be having fun at the considerable expense of the poor yokels who paid him so handsomely for his *The Occult*. Certainly some of them will go without acne cream to save up and buy this, just because it has his name on it, because they trust him. Would Catholics expect to find the Pope faking the Turin shroud?

Maybe Wilson has some intermediate position. In any case, he dishes up once more some of the worst stuff from *The Occult* here, including UFOs and von Däniken. He once more insists that a strain of psychic supermen lives amongst us, and he calls them "the dominant 5 per cent". I find this idea neither amusing nor profound; it sounds too near a master-race theory. Of course Wilson's theories are generally vague enough to encompass almost any point of view, but here he explains that these natural leaders "have a kind of inbuilt craving for *purpose*". Italics (and germanics) are his.

Lovecraft, says Wilson, was a racist.

> he fulminates vengefully against Jews, Negroes, Spaniards, Arabs, Poles, and all the rest of the 'scum' that he encountered on New York's buses . . . He felt, as Nietzsche did, that the human race consists of Masters and Slaves.

This alone would dissuade me from becoming a Lovecraft fan. In no case do I feel compelled to wade through volumes of prose like this:

> Down unlit and illimitable corridors of eldritch phantasy sweeps the black, shapeless Nemesis that drives me to self-destruction.

Or this:

> The shocking final peril which gibbers unmentionably outside the ordered universe, where no dreams reach; that last amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity . . .

The pages of *The Nec* are sprinkled with such quotations; they nearly outnumber the misprints. Though they represent bad writing and bad thinking by almost any standards, I don't suppose this matters at all to the cult followers.

The Tomorrow City
by Monica Hughes *(Hamilton, 1978, 137pp, £3.50, ISBN 0 241 89887 0)*
The Time of the Kraken
by Jay Williams *(Gollancz, 1978, 168pp, £3.20, ISBN 0 575 02373 2)*
The Delikon
by H.M. Hoover *(Methuen, 1978, 189pp, £3.25, ISBN 0 416 86220 9)*

reviewed by Pamela Cleaver

A device often used in children's fiction is that of the young hero/heroine being

able to unravel a mystery or deal with a situation when the adults are helpless to do so. It is a valid device because it makes the reader identify closely with the book and it means that situations and ideas can be looked at freshly with a child's uncluttered perception. The ideas embodied in the three books under review have all been around in adult sf for many a year but are still worth offering to younger readers.

The Tomorrow City examines the very real fear man has that the computer will take over from him and become his master rather than his servant. We adults know that computers lack sensitivity human intuition, compassion and flexibility and that when a computer goes wrong it is not its own fault but that of the programmer. As Professor Carl Sagan says in *The Dragons of Eden*, "It would be folly to entrust major decisions to computers at our present level of development – not because computers are not intelligent to a degree but because in the case of most complex problems, they will not have been given all the relevant information". But children do not necessarily know this and it is probably worth telling them so through the medium of a story.

Thomsonville is the first city to be entirely run by a computer (known as C3); it is the brainchild of Joe Henderson who has linked it to the telephone and the cable TV in the city. He wants a city "safe, clean, orderly and enjoyable to live in, a city which belongs to the children who are the city's future". But almost as soon as it is switched on, the computer begins to take perfectly logical decisions which take little account of people's feelings. Henderson wonders whether he ought to cut down on C3s responsibility factor but is dissuaded by his family who are quite starry-eyed about the computer, especially his daughter Caro.

Gradually C3 makes more and more high-handed decisions disposing of everything it considers harmful or unnecessary including tramps and families on social security, taking away elderly people's private houses and sending them to special homes – something brought home to Caro when it happens to her best friend David's grandmother. The people of Thomsonville are controlled by subliminal messages built into the cable TV's soap operas and their behaviour is monitored by telephone links and TV cameras which C3 has had installed in secrecy.

The children escape this control because they hardly ever watch TV (I found this hard to swallow, most of the children I know being practically square-eyed). C3 takes control of the city's weather allowing only light rain at night (where are you C3, we could have done with you this summer) and when a really bad storm comes, C3 creates a force field around and over the city to protect it but takes the electricity it needs to do this from heating for old people and life support systems for the chronically sick. It also only allows into the town people it thinks suitable and allows out only messages it considers valid. Of course it controls the press.

Thus when Caro and David realise what C3 is doing and try to contact Caro's father who is lecturing away from home, C3 senses the threat to itself and will not pass on the message. The children try to take action but C3 foils them at every turn. Caro's mother (previously a lively, independent-minded lady studying for a teaching degree) has been brain-washed by the TV and is apathetic when asked to help. Caro and David realise that they are on their own and will have to throw a spanner in the works quite literally.

In an exciting denouement they break through the back of C3 from an area left unguarded because C3 does not know it exists. Caro has a dialogue with C3 which shows up its programming faults and also that her father has, by something he said jokingly, built into the programme protection and preferential treatment for her. Thus when she throws herself between its laser and David who is sabotaging

it and C3 thinks it has killed her, it blows a fuse and grinds to a halt having contravened one of its prime directives. However, Caro is still alive (although she had been prepared to die to set the city free) but she has been blinded by the laser.

This book is better than the plot outline makes it sound chiefly because of the characterisation, the children's quality of caring and the marvellously conveyed claustrophobic atmosphere built up by Ms Hughes in the enclosed, controlled city. Although at times the story stretches credulity and moves a little slowly and predictably, the reader has to keep on reading. It is vastly superior to her previous books *Crisis on Conshelf Ten* and *Earthdark* which were "rattling good yarns" but short on feeling and characterisation.

The Time of the Kraken uses mock Icelandic saga to look at the problems of wars of religion. There are two neighbouring tribes who are at loggerheads because of doctrinal differences: is Arveid a goddess in her own right, daughter of Udi the Earthfather as the Vollings believe, or is she a mortal woman specially chosen by Udi to show the people how to grow selva (their staple food crop) as the Tyrnings believe? At the beginning of the story, war is about to break out and our hero Thorgeir is sent by his father, the peace-loving chief of the Vollings, to see his personal friend the chief of the Tyrnings to try to prevent war. The mission fails but Thorgeir realises that the Turnings are not the friends propaganda has made them and he makes a personal friend of Orm, nephew of the Tyrning chief.

On his way home he makes a detour to avoid a Tyrning ambush and in the forest meets a mythical telepathic beast called the Ylvan (a lovely, gentle creature this) who conveys to him by thought pictures that both Tyrnings and Vollings are threatened by the coming of the Kraken, a destructive monster known from their legends. (Once before, long ago, their people were attacked by the Kraken and Budri Brightface went to the temple of Arveid "east of the sun and west of the moon" where he was given magical weapons to combat the Kraken.)

Thorgeir reports all this to his father who is then treacherously slain at the Moot by the anti-peace party and Thorgeir has to make a run for it because he is suspected of being a friend to the Tyrnings and thus a traitor.

He and his girl friend Ylga meet Orm then set out to try to find Arveid's temple to get help to deal with the Kraken. Their journey is full of difficulties which the three young people overcome with their combined efforts. Girls who are sick of reading of their sex being weaker and the best action going to the boys will be pleased to find that Ylga is the best hunter of the three and destroys the dreaded Ovinur, a nightmarish monster.

When the going becomes almost impossible because of the lack of food and the intense cold, they defeat another monster, the Hryllir and earn the thanks of a tribe who have yet another way of looking at their religion. One of them, Gudrun, joins them and her people give them food and extra warm clothing so that they can go on to Arveid's temple. Here the truth emerges.

The temple is a space ship that brought refugees from Iceland on a terminally-polluted earth to a new world. It is serviced by a computer that explains everything to Thorgeir. Arveid was a theoretical physicist who died 1200 years before, the selva was synthesised by biologists on the ship to suit the climate. The magical gifts that Budri had been given to use against the Kraken were the helmet Darkhood (which created a protective forcefield around the wearer) the boots Longstride (a one-man anti-gravity transportation device) and the sword Direful (a powerful laser beam). Thorgeir too is given these things and leaving his companions to learn what he has discovered from the computer, rushes back to battle with the Kraken which, when he catches up with it, is poised over the ground where the Tyrnings and

Vollings are fighting.

Thorgeir kills the Kraken and is immediately revered by the people of both tribes as god-like. He does not believe they can handle the whole truth, so he tells them enough of it to heal the religious differences and makes them see that there is more than one way of looking at the truth. He finds he can no longer live with his tribe knowing what he does, so he returns to his companions who he knows will have been as changed by what they have learned as he has been; he decides too that they must destroy the rest of the Krakens at their breeding ground and make their world safe forever.

This is a well-written story with stunning descriptions of the harsh alien landscape, excitingly told, using to great effect the evocative saga style. The elegant jacket illustration by Mark Harrison makes the appearance of the book extremely attractive.

Although Varina is 307 years old, she is a child of her race and it is she who sees how wrong her people *The Delikon* have been – something her elders just do not recognise. The book says much the same thing as *The Tomorrow City* but in quite another way. Its burden is that real people, human beings, do not want everything made perfect for them, everything decided for them, they need to find things out for themselves and fight their own battles.

The Delikon are a race of immensely long-lived aliens who have dominated earth for hundreds of years. The rulers have been restructured to look like earthlings for their real appearance strikes terror into the hearts of men. Varina, the Delikon child, is a teacher whose task it is to train the human children who will be the future governors and administrators under the Delikon. Her last two child-trainees are due to go to the Academy and she to be restructured to her original Delikon form and returned to her home planet but when the three of them are on a farewell picnic, they get caught up in a revolution.

Varina for the first time goes outside the beautiful enclave of the ruling house and into the real world, where she learns how useless what she has tried to teach the future administrators really is and how much more alien to earth's way of thinking she is than she had supposed. She is haunted all through her adventures by the fear that if the many companions she has trained actually saw her in her Delikon form, they could no longer love and respect her. It is a strange story and the unbridgeable gap between alien and earthling intellect is well conveyed but I did not find it quite as engrossing as Ms Hoover's earlier book *The Children of Morrow*.

Any of these books could well be handed to a young reader with the invocation with which Samuel Johnson begins *Rasselas*, merely substituting the modern book's title in the last sentence: "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia." On second thoughts, perhaps it would be better to say, "Here – read this; it's jolly good!".

The Two of Them
by Joanna Russ *(Berkley/Putnam, 1978, 226pp, $8.95, ISBN 0 399 12149 8)*

reviewed by John Clute

It is another angry book. It is written as from anger, and it is clearly intended to

anger its readers. Whether these readers are made angry at the book itself, or at the issues it raises with such edgy vigour, or both, seems not to concern Ms Russ, as perhaps it shouldn't. In this *The Two of Them* resembles *The Female Man* (1975), and in several ways is very much a pendant of that novel. The fundamental issues raised – centring around the punitive coercions women suffer in attempting to achieve and then sustain agenthood in the contemporary world – are certainly alike in nature, and are similarly put, in this case more enjoyably though with less bite. At the heart of each book's didactic strategy is an embittered (and for the sf reader looking for generic solaces deliberately embittering) disqualification ploy. In *The Female Man* it is hardly a ploy at all: it would take a pretty thick reader to understand the alternate sf universes presented in that book as being anything but translucent postulates laid down as exemplary surrounds for several theoretical versions of the central character who, like the protagonist of *The Two of Them*, is coeval with the author herself; the sf worlds of *The Female Man* are insultingly unreal, insultingly because our readerlike impulse to believe in the toy worlds permitted us by our suspension of disbelief (however self-indulgent), is itself the petard she hoists us with: you think I'm telling you X; well I wouldn't tell you X if my life depended on it. In fact my life depends on my *not* allowing you to get away with hearing X from my lips. Your willingness to suspend disbelief so as to luxuriate in the telling of X is tantamount to complicity with the invidious systemic violation of women in this world, whose roots are homologous with the engendering impulses behind traditional genre fiction, or X, baby. It tolls for thee. In *The Female Man* all of this is as nearly explicit as it needs to be (which is pretty), nor are the imagined worlds of that book anything but contemptuously transparent to the didactic motor, the anger. In *The Two of Them*, however, something hampers the sleight of hand of telling and not telling X.

Like the protagonist of the earlier book, Irene Waskiewicz of the current one grows up in the middle of the United States violently chafing at the edges – which she sees as designedly restrictive – of her life; she is violently unsure of how to achieve an adult "role" in mid-America which will not destroy her; she has a number of names she uses to describe various versions of herself, like Sklodowska (for when she's assuming anger), or Kopernik, or Lady Lovelace, or Irenee (all for differing states); and at the high peak of frustrated adolescence Ernst Neumann arrives at her parents' house, seemingly an old friend of her mother's, who seems to pass messages to him. Irene decides to leave home and to go with Neumann, and arrives at his hotel with her mind made up. They make love. More or less at this point, the long integrated flashback sequence which has narrated Irene's adolescence on Earth breaks off (never, significantly, to be resumed), so that we are not told anything of Neumann s role on Earth as a member of the great transtemporal organization whose function is seemingly to guide human cultures across the galaxy, presumably in the direction of civilization. Transtemporal agents seem to be permitted to extract the occasional native from his or her habitat, and to take him or her off adventuring; it is a sort of recruiting, and this is presumably what happens to Irene: eventually she becomes Neumann's partner. As his partner, she is the protagonist of the main action of the novel, action which begins it and which surrounds the flashback sequence.

The two of them are on the planet of Ka'abah, only inhabitable in claustrophobic caverns underground, where a neo-Arabic culture flourishes somewhat hectically. Women are of course kept in purdah, and those with any agent-like ambitions are likely to go quite insane. (The play between intergalactic agent and agenthood is very probably deliberate and central to the shape of *The Two of Them*.) On Ka'abah,

Irene is violently enraged by what happens to women in general, and in particular what is about to happen to young Zubeydeh, daughter of the "Arab" she and Neumann have to deal with (though their business with him is left unexplained); Zubeydeh, adolescently ambitious as a poet, is about to be immolated into womanhood as Ka'abites see it. Irene forcefully objects, and opts to take Zubeydeh off-planet with her. Larger and more fierce than any Ka'abite, she browbeats Zubeydeh's father into signing the necessary papers, and gets her away successfully, on to the interstellar ship which, similarly claustrophobic to the planet itself, also constricts the action and deracinates it. On board ship, narrative tension (or, much the same thing, the assured forward thrust of "storytelling") soon becomes jerky, slackens and tugs in spasms, as though the book had a migraine. Irene finds she cannot any longer live with Ernst, despite his humanity and his lack of any avowedly sexist tendencies, though Irene does seem entirely capable of shaping his responses into a sexist mould. Unable to live with him, or to agree as to the rights and wrongs of her virtual abduction of Zubeydeh, she quarrels with him, and shoots him, perhaps dead, but at this point the novel becomes very much more transparent to the already intrusive voice of its implied author, who goes so far as to tell us that she has made up certain aspects of what she has so far narrated. And maybe all of it. Novel's close sees Irene and Zubeydeh back on Earth, playing the role of a divorcee with daughter in Albuquerque. The last images permit us to read the whole narration as an extended internal voyage on Irene's part, but with something perhaps stirring in the deep desert of her ravaged orgulous psyche, near the real Albuquerque.

As she is written, even at moments of generic action, Irene exhibits the pained subtle bitter complexity of many of the women whose lives in this world have been excruciated both by systemic bias and by their awareness of it. They have been *exposed*. To some men, they give off the frightening taste of the authentic human condition, without benefit of genre. And perhaps it is to point the lesson that Irene cannot ultimately inhabit genre, or protect herself through its buffering guidelines for conduct and self-definition, that Russ allows Irene's sf story on Ka'abah and amongst the stars to whinny off into a splitting grey morning headache in Albuquerque. Because destroy the novel she has certainly done. The story *fails*. It is not passed. Irene is too much for it. But Irene is also a failure. She has not been able to sustain herself, as Russ is also able to point out by flunking the story she's written. Somewhere in here somewhere reality has intruded. In recognizing this circumstance, Ms Russ may (or may not) be forgiven for failing to be sufficiently artful.

She gave me a headache. Perhaps I needed one.

The Forbidden Tower
by Marion Zimmer Bradley *(DAW, 1977, 346pp, $1.95, ISBN 0 87997 323 4)*

reviewed by Cherry Wilder

Towards the end of *The Forbidden Tower* there is a brief, instructive scene in which Andrew Carr, the former technician from Earth, sees the Terran enclosure on the planet Darkover in the distance. "Now he looked indifferently at the small distant shapes of spaceships, the skeleton ribs of the unfinished skyscrapers. All that had nothing to do with him." The turning aside is not only from Earth to Darkover but

from the traditional props of hard-core sf to the wintery fastnesses, the psychosexual struggles of an other-directed society. In a sense Darkover is inner space.

The story continues from *The Spell Sword*; the alien Catmen have been vanquished, though at heavy cost. Damon Ridenow and Andrew Carr marry the twin sisters Callista and Ellemir of the house of Alton. Both men are displaced persons. Andrew has given up all his ties to Earth and is feeling his way in a new culture. Damon has been denied his vocation as a Keeper, one of the highly trained telepaths who work in the Towers. The ancient science of the Comyn lords of Darkover centres rigidly upon the training and discipline received in these towers and is hedged with prohibitions.

The force of these taboos falls most heavily on Callista, who renounces her vows as a Keeper, trained in the Tower of Arilinn, to marry Andrew, the man who saved her psychically and physically from the aliens. Leonie Hastur, the present Keeper of Arilinn, takes back the vows with apparent good grace, but it is not going to be easy for Callista to consummate her marriage. Keepers, through their psychic power and their link with a sentient matrix jewel, are literally untouchable: the attempted violation of a Keeper, for instance, would result in the death of the rapist. This power is exercised unconsciously, like a reflex; Callista who loves Andrew deeply and whose defences were lowered somewhat during her rescue, must wait until she loosens up again.

This appears at first a rather titillating problem, a private difficulty impinging on the bustling public life of the great Alton house at Armida. But those readers who anticipate a cheerful defloration about the middle of the book have underestimated Marion Zimmer Bradley. Callista's cruelly imposed frigidity is at the very centre of the book and it is examined with increasing depth and widening implications until the final pages.

Damon, who beds and weds the warm, vital twin Ellemir, understands that in order to release Callista he must challenge the existing system of the Towers and also that salvation for the lovers lies with the four of them together. The way in which the threads are gathered up: the need for a wider use of telepathic healing, the superstitious narrowness of the taboos, the painful and unnecessary discipline imposed on the immature female adepts, the equivocation of Leonie, even the dynastic implications of Callista's marriage, this interweaving is skilfully done.

The mechanism of Darkover's psychic world with its paraphernalia of screens, monitoring, matrices and trips to the astral plane or overworld, is described with firm authority. The background of Darkover is beloved and familiar territory for the author. We have the feeling that she no longer invents Darkover, she simply goes there. The culture is nicely balanced between a harsh environment, a feudal society complicated by the presence of telepaths and a high degree of sexual liberty and closeness. Andrew, the earthman, suffers culture shock as he is drawn into Ellemir's bed and into rapport with his sworn brother Damon. There is a cruel instructive episode about the misuse of psychic power involving the unacknowledged Alton son Dezi.

It is fair to ask just how well the characterisation stands up in a book where the four main characters Damon and Ellemir and Andrew and Callista end up closer than the average husband and wife. Are the twin sisters Ellemir and Callista simply another example of fairy-tale splitting of the Frodo/Sam or closer still, the Lethonee/Sorayina type? The verdict is "not proven"; there is more to both girls than a simple warm/cold duality. Damon is the best developed character and Andrew, we notice, becomes more sympathetic as he is drawn into the culture of Darkover. The Keeper, Leonie, hovering on the verge of myth, and the old lord, Dom Esteban,

wholly human, are well-drawn supporting characters.

All this is done in a loping, down-to-earth style; we have a sense not so much of padding but of purposeful backing and filling. The writing is not pretty but it is not inflated; the author rises to the occasion many times. The episodes in the overworld, where Damon has built a small shelter and must later expand it into the Forbidden Tower of an independent Keeper, are well done. The adventure in time is appealing and perhaps there exists already in the mind of the author or in an earlier book, the same scene from the point of view of Damon's ancestor, Varzil, confronted by a descendant from the future. It is a measure of the seriousness of the work that this episode stands out almost as light relief; the total impression of the book is one of cumulative psychic power, the sort of whammy dealt by Dion Fortune.

The personality of the author, tough-minded, practical, spiritual, hums in the background of this novel like a matrix jewel. Marion Zimmer Bradley writes with a moral purpose of Victorian intensity, but it is liberal and liberating.

Involution Ocean
by Bruce Sterling *(Jove/HBJ, 1977, 191pp, $1.50, ISBN 0 515 04301 X)*

reviewed by Tom Hosty

What we have here is another salty yarn. There are already enough of them lurking under sf covers to constitute an official sub-sub-genre or provide an American academic with a handful of monographs. The recipe is not particularly complicated: take a couple of slices of Melville, specifically those concerned with whaling lore and the daily routine of a sailing ship, simmer in the juice of three sea-shanties, and stir in *Treasure Island*; add Jules Verne and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to tase. If such an account makes the whole exercise sound derivative, this is only the truth. The days of the great sailing ships, for all the undeniable imaginative fascination they continue to exert, are well over. Our experience of them can only be literary. In the hands of any but a first class writer, the salty yarn must be indelibly marked with an anonymous conventionality betraying its origins. Science fiction writers, however, have one trick to hand by which, at least theoretically, some vitality may be forced back into a setting otherwise abandoned to facile nostalgia and false sentimentalizing. This is to convey the entire apparatus of try-works and mutiny, doldrums and keelhaulings, pirates, shore-leaves and battened hatches to an alien environment. A world is constructed which replaces the traditional oceans of Earth with some new setting, and the salty yarn, it is piously hoped, revives in a bracing new climate. Remember Moorcock's *The Ice Schooner (Moby Dick on Ice)*, or Farmer's *The Wind Whales of Ishmael (Moby in Midair)*. Sterling, Harlan Ellison guilelessly reveals in the course of his introduction, originally called this novel *Moby Dust*, which rather gives the game away at the start.

Involution Ocean is set on a dusty, almost waterless planet called Nullaqua (this less than inspired coinage, incidentally, is representative of Sterling's way with names). The only breathable atmosphere on this world is contained in one vast, deep crater, at the bottom of which is an unplumbed ocean of fine dust. There are towns perched all around the inner slope of the crater, and on islands rising from the dusty "sea", and the major industry of these towns is whaling. The dust, you see, is full of wildlife: whales, sharks, plankton, anemones, flying

fish, minnow, crabs, octopuses, and so on. This is a failure of imagination, that this unearthly ocean should prove to be the home of an ecology so similar to that of Earth's oceans. There *are* attempts to render the fauna of Nullaqua's sea more satisfyingly alien – the sharks have eyes at the tips of their dorsal fins, the plankton have shells of silicon, and the anemones can grow to be thirty feet long – but the clear derivation of the whole system from our familiar sea-life, untransmuted by much imaginative effort, remains obtrusive. This is symptomatic of a general failure of imaginative concentration which leaves so much of the book's background, potentially fascinating, only half-sketched and badly lit. Reading *Dune*, for instance, one never for a moment forgets the parching heat and the desperate scarcity of water which underlie Arrakeen culture. But the dusty, parched world of Nullaqua achieves no such solidity. We are informed on several occasions of the dryness and grittiness of the place, but it doesn't stick. The reader needs, at times, to make a positive mental effort to remember that the *Lunglance* is sailing a sea of dust rather than brine. The salty yarn has been, in fact, inadequately transformed; far too many of the ship's adventures – whaling, weathering a storm, repelling the attack of a giant sea-anemone, docking for repairs and so on – have nothing to do with the particular conditions of Nullaqua, and would have been describable in the same terms if the novel had been set on Earth in the XIX Century.

Ellison, in the above-mentioned introduction, lavishes generous praise on Sterling's characterization – praise which is a good deal more generous than it is deserved. As far as characterization goes, the novel is a late exercise in the Gothic idiom of romanticism, and all the central figures are the type characters normally found in such a work. The hero, one John Newhouse (=Giovanni Casanova, though I can't see why), is a standard Romantic hero in the Childe Harold mould, a portentous drifter with an aesthetic fondness for lying, who occasionally contemplates writing poems, but decides against it, and who is addicted to a singularly unremarkable narcotic called syncophine. This latter is purely a plot motive; his addiction forces Newhouse to go on a whaling voyage to pirate syncophine from the drug-producing intestine of the dustwhale, but it has next to no effect on his personality. The captain of the *Lunglance*, Nils Desperandum, is by Ahab out of Nemo, and is obsessed with discovering what really lies at the bottom of the Nullaquan ocean. Not surprisingly, he dies finding out. His characterization suffers from a sort of oscillation in the text, whereby the novel wavers between being a metaphysical parable, in which highly symbolic figures pursue cosmic destinies in a prevailing atmosphere of doom and inexorable fate, and being a more down-to-earth Vernian adventure story. So at times Desperandum is more like Ahab, at others more like Nemo, which is confusing. Finally there is Dalusa, an alien winged woman whose metabolism does not permit her to be touched by a human being. As if this were not already enough to pin her down as yet another *femme fatale*, she is obsessed with blood and used to look like a bat before cosmetic surgery made her humanoid: the peculiarly adolescent Romantic woman, straight out of *The Romantic Agony*; untouchable, vampiric, desirable, inhuman. It's a shame that the two characters with most potential, the good-for-nothing Calothrick and the religious fanatic Murphig, only have bit parts and die before the end.

Some writers produce a spectacularly good first novel and decline into silence or self-plagiarism: others work upwards from humble beginnings to achieve considerable excellences in later work. On this showing, Bruce Sterling may be of the second kind. There are some good things in *Involution Ocean*: the prose, although intermittently pompous and occasionally marred by Clevelandisms, as when an

"uncomfortable silence . . . hobbles by on crippled feet" or a wrecked ship is buried under accretions of guano "like a childhood aspiration never attained or an unhappy love affair . . . buried by time", is, in the main, good storyteller's prose, rhythmic, flexible and clear. And he has an undeniable sensitivity for landscapes, and for extreme emotional states. The failure of this novel is, more than anything, a failure of discipline. Too many different ambitions shaped the book, and none is truly realized; it could have been a fine "mystery planet" thriller, or an "alien ecology" story, or a haunting, hieratic, metaphorical exploration of the links between love and pain, or, again, a good and unpretentious adventure story. It could not be all these in a single volume. Perhaps next time Sterling will be able to control his divergent ambitions better, and produce something really good.

The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction
edited by Brian Ash *(Pan, 1978, 352pp, no price given, ISBN 0 330 25275 5)*

reviewed by Malcolm Edwards

This book's title is misleading in two ways. Firstly, one would expect a visual encyclopedia to be concerned – at least to some degree – with conveying knowledge visually, whereas the copious illustrations in the book are purely decorative. Secondly, one anticipates in an encyclopedia some attempt at comprehensive coverage of its subject, whereas the part of the *Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* devoted to literature is organized purely thematically. The lack of author information is explained away in the Foreword (here called "Briefing", in keeping with the book's irritating adoption of computerese in its structural divisions) by referring the reader to various other titles – Tuck's *Encyclopedia, Stella Nova,* Ash's own *Who's Who* – observing that all the information anyone might want is available there. This is begging the question on several counts. Firstly, none of those books is particularly up to date. Secondly, none of them makes a significant attempt to assess an author's contribution to the field, so that all the information one might want is *not* there. Thirdly, *Stella Nova* is impossible to obtain while Tuck, although in print, is aimed at a far more specialized market than this book. And Ash's previous effort is far less comprehensive in its coverage (and far more sloppy in its compilation) than the *Visual Encyclopedia.*

So, the book is neither visual nor encyclopedic. So be it. Titles may be dictated by publishers' market considerations rather than accurately reflecting a book's contents (see the Octopus *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, which has still fewer claims to its title), and *Visual Encyclopedia* sounds more arresting and definitive than, say, *Illustrated Book*. What of the actual content?

The first 60 or so pages are devoted to the "Program", a chronological survey of important dates and data – magazines being founded and folding, notable magazine stories (including first stories), important books, films and TV series, and significant fannish events. Some of this is desperately trivial (particularly in the latter section), but charts like this generally throw up interesting juxtapositions, and this one is no exception. One must cavil, however, at the section on books, which is noticeably the least comprehensive and which manages, for example, to omit *The Forever War* from its 1975 titles (while including Ron Goulart's *The Hellhound Project* among only two books mentioned) and both *Man Plus* and *Where*

Late the Sweet Birds Sang from its 1976 list.

The major part of the book is the thematics section, divided into 19 sections varying from "Spacecraft and Star Drives" to "Inner Space", via "Utopias and Nightmares", "Time and Nth Dimensions", and other predictable compartments. Each has a brief introduction by a famous (or not so famous, but presumably available) sf writer, while the book's design carefully contrives to give the impression that each author actually wrote the whole section. Most of the choices are obvious enough, though it seems wilfully capricious to have A.E. van Vogt introducing "Inner Space" while J.G. Ballard is writing about "Cataclysms and Dooms". One would guess that the bulk of the articles were written by the various research consultants listed none too prominently at the beginning of the book; they show a deep knowledge of obscure pulp sf which one would expect from Mike Ashley or Philip Harbottle but not, on the basis of his other writings, from Brian Ash. This determined rooting in sf's less than illustrious past limits many of the entries' usefulness as sources of reading lists, because the material is unavailable (and frankly, not worth reading anyway).

One can find evidence of faults in the book's intellectual design in the overlaps between sections. A quick way to check for this (I offer this technique freely to *Foundation* readers) is to scan the index for an obscure name with more than one page reference, and then to check the references. I tried this with Charles W. Diffin, and discovered predictably that all three references were to the same story, and furthermore that each contained the same information (the story concerned the discovery of atomic power, and the mentions were under "Shadow of the Atom" in "Warfare and Weaponry", "Human Causes" in "Cataclysms and Dooms", and "Energy" in "Technologies and Artefacts"). There is extensive duplication between these sections, particularly the first and second. Two mentions of *Phra the Phoenician* lead to duplicated information in the sections on "From the Present to the Future" ("Time and Nth Dimensions") and "Other Areas of Earth Technology" ("Technologies and Artefacts") – both concerning suspended animation. One observes discrepancies in the dates given for other titles duplicated between these two sections – "Rip Van Winkle" (1819 and 1829) and *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1898 and 1899) – which do call into question the book's overall level of accuracy (certainly not the 99.44% which R.D. Mullen suggests, to his own surprise, in the current *Science-Fiction Studies*).

My purpose is not to carp, but simply to point out that the *amount* of information contained in the book is not as great as its size might lead one to expect. For the rest, there is a third section of personal essays ("Interface"), the best of which, George Turner's, is more cautious and less challenging than his essays in *Sf Commentary* and elsewhere, and a fourth section with capsule articles on the sf subculture and sf in other media. The information here is fairly basic, but appears very accurate. Basic, but basically accurate, might be a good capsule assessment of the *Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. It certainly is not the slipshod work one might have feared from the author of *Who's Who in Science Fiction*, and the names of its researchers – who also include John Eggeling, Walter Gillings, James Goddard, Jon Gustafson, George Hay, Colin Lester, Philip Strick and Gerry Webb – give one confidence in the general level of its accuracy (though as we have seen, minor errors are by no means uncommon).

But the major test of any reference book is in its *use*; one should not really attempt to assess such a book without giving it a chance to show its value. I have now had this volume around me for some four months; I use sf reference books constantly; but I have to report that I have never yet had occasion to consult the

Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, with its irritatingly unclear layout, its lack of convincing intellectual design and (it must be said) its prose heavily indebted to the Moskowitz/Kyle school of English – and as time goes on I begin to doubt if I ever shall.

Reviews in Brief

Passing for Human
by Jody Scott *(DAW, 1977, 191pp, $1.50, ISBN 0 87997 330 7)*

This book comes with an enthusiastic introduction by Barry Malzberg, which may or may not help it to sell to DAW Books' usual audience. It is not, as Malzberg claims, a "Swiftian satire", though it is not too hard to understand why he describes it thus. It does have a certain amount in common with Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*. It is, in fact, a rhapsodic essay in pure misanthropy – merry and ebullient misanthropy, but misanthropy nevertheless. It is engagingly indiscriminate and apolitical in finding *everything* about human beings despicable and loathsome, and is almost equally generous in forgiving it all. Any true sf fan is, of course, perennially ready to be told in great detail of the agonising hopelessness of the human condition, and it is rare that we are told so zestfully and good-humouredly. I enjoyed the book (refusing, of course, to take it in the least seriously). A nice world-view to visit, though no one would want to live there.

– Brian Stableford

The Illustrated Book of Science Fiction Ideas and Dreams
by David Kyle *(Hamlyn, 1977, 173pp, £4.95, ISBN 0 600 38248 6)*

In *Foundation* 11/12 Peter Nicholls exposed the weaknesses of Kyle's previous book *(A Pictorial History of Science Fiction)* with perhaps unnecessary vigour. The author, after all, was clearly doing his *best*, even if his syntax was uncertain and his grasp of anything outside genre sf history tenuous. Now we have a follow-up, of which Mr Kyle says, "The author has considered the approach to the writing of this book . . . ever since the appearance of the popular *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction* (1976)" – not, after all, such a goddamned *long* period of gestation for a book published in 1977. And it shows. One supposes that the first book was sufficiently successful for the publishers to demand a fast sequel. The result is ostensibly an examination of sf themes ("the visions and inventions of the great sf writers and artists"), but actually a woefully-thin text linking a quite staggering number of extended quotations from sf stories and novels. Many of these are long enough to require permission to reprint under the general interpretation of British copyright laws – for instance, over a thousand words are quoted from *War of the Worlds* alone, in addition to substantial extracts from *The Time Machine* and other Wells stories – but no acknowledgements are given (merely copyright statements in some cases – not Wells's) and one must therefore assume that no permission was sought. We are by now accustomed to publishers ignoring copyright on illustrations; it is new to me, at any rate, to find them extending this high-handed attitude to prose. The book is, furthermore, nowhere near as attractively produced as its predecessor, appearing hasty in picture selection and design. It is, in sum, virtually useless.

– Malcolm Edwards

Index to Science Fiction Anthologies and Collections
by William Contento *(G.K. Hall, 1978, 608pp, $28, ISBN 0 8161 8092 X)*

Produced under the general editorship of L.W. Currey and David G. Hartwell, this massive computer-generated index will be of immense use to bibliographers. It contains listings by author, title and individual anthology contents. However, it covers only collections which are recognizably sf (not fantasy and horror – hence bibliographers of, say, Bradbury and Sturgeon will find it only partially helpful) and it omits some marginal British titles (e.g. *The Nature of the Catastrophe*, edited by Michael Moorcock and Langdon Jones). Nevertheless, it is an excellent work and is sure to become a standard research tool.

– **David Pringle**

Robert A. Heinlein: Stranger in His Own Land (Second Edition)
by George Edgar Slusser *(Borgo Press, 1977, 64pp, $1.95, ISBN 0 89370 210 2)*
The Classic Years of Robert A. Heinlein
by George Edgar Slusser *(Borgo Press, 1977, 64pp, $1.95, ISBN 0 89370 216 1)*

Taken together, these two substantial booklets by Slusser represent the best sustained criticism of Heinlein which has been published so far. They deserve to be reprinted in hardcover as one book, and to become a permanent addition to any library of sf criticism. Slusser's thesis – in brief – is that Heinlein is a Calvinist at heart, and that he is obsessed with the doctrine of "election". Slusser argues his case very persuasively, drawing on the entire corpus of Heinlein's fiction. It should be stressed that Slusser's thesis is *not* intended merely as a "put-down" of Heinlein: on the contrary, it is clear throughout that Slusser appreciates the genuine strengths of Heinlein's work as well as its failings. But he also understands the deep contradictions in Heinlein, and by revealing these contradictions with more confidence and erudition than any other critic he shows us just why Heinlein's fiction is perennially fascinating. Slusser's prose is murky in places, but nevertheless these booklets are continually stimulating.

– **David Pringle**

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