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FOUNDATION

34

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

IN THIS SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUE:

Sam J. Lundwall lambasts the Anglo-American philistines
Peter Kuczka interviews the Strugatsky Brothers
Pascal Thomas on French SF and Philip K. Dick
Erik Simon, Fabio Calabrese and Ye Yonglie on recent science fiction in East Germany, Italy and China

Jeff Wagner tells us Philip K. Dick's life story

Reviews by Kaveney, Langford, Nicholls and Stableford

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FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

Editor: David Pringle
Features Editor: Ian Watson
Reviews Editor: John Clute

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Number 34, Autumn 1985

Editorial

This is the last of three special issues of *Foundation,* each of which has been largely given over to a particular area of science-fiction criticism. The previous such issues were number 30, devoted to "British sf as seen from abroad," and number 32, devoted to "sf and socialism." The present issue concentrates on foreign-language sf as described by various overseas critics. The picture which it gives of science fiction around the world is far from complete, focusing as it does on Russian, French, East German, Italian and Chinese writing, but nevertheless it serves to demonstrate the spread—and the amazing richness—of sf production in all those nations which do not have English as their first language. Science fiction has become a truly world-wide phenomenon, attracting millions of new readers with each passing decade. It never was desirable to talk of sf as an exclusively Anglo-American preserve; it is now no longer even possible to do so (unless one closes one's eyes).

For the sake of variety of tone, we have also included in this issue a long biographical essay on Philip K. Dick. It is not directly relevant to foreign-language sf, though as Pascal Thomas points out in his essay on the French scene Dick is one American writer who has had a particularly strong influence overseas. Unfortunately, the length of Jeff Wagner's piece on Dick has necessitated that we curtail the number of reviews in this issue: we hope to make up for that next time.

I should like to thank Charles Neale of North East London Polytechnic for his kind help in proof-reading parts of the present issue.

Our next issue, number 35, will contain a wide-ranging selection of articles on all aspects of science fiction (no more special issues are planned for the near future). Already in hand is a short "Profession" piece by Bruce Sterling, plus articles on history and sf by Edward James; on sf and "transcendence" by Richard A. Slaughter; on J.G. Ballard by Gregory Stephenson; and treatments of various other topics by Brian Stableford, K.V. Bailey, Brian Burden and others.

Alas, one item which we do not have yet is a critical essay on the work of Theodore Sturgeon. I do hope that one or more of our critics will rise to the occasion. Sturgeon died in May 1985, at the age of 67. He was one of American sf's greatest writers, even though he had produced very little new work in his last 20 years. He is well remembered for his novels *More Than Human* (1953) and *Venus Plus X* (1960), although one should look to his wealth of short stories and novellas (produced between 1939 and about 1970) in order to find much of his finest writing. The continuing prejudice against shorter forms has led to a general under-appreciation of Sturgeon's achievement. Perhaps *Foundation* can help right the balance in its coming issues.

In our last issue, number 33, we ran a controversial essay on "Scientism in Science Fiction" by Gavin Browning. In passing, Mr Browning attacked the work of Brian Aldiss. Due to lack of space there is no letter column in the present issue, but we are happy to give the right of reply to Mr Aldiss by printing here an open letter which he has sent to Gavin Browning:

Dear Mr Browning: June 1985

This is a note regarding your article on scientism in the recent issue of *Foundation,* and in particular your remarks concerning *Helliconia Spring.*

Perhaps you are not familar with my other writings. I have been accused of many things, but never of a slavish adherence to science; rather the opposite. You have placed a basic misconstruction on the novel. It contains within it a condemnation of a rigid adherence to science against human values, which is embodied in the role and function of the Avernus. Nor is the Avernus symbol new in my work; it may be regarded as a more powerful avatar of the encompassing starship in my first novel, *Non-Stop.*

Why do you call *Spring* "rather rushed"? To my mind, it is your judgement which is rushed. Had you waited until you had read all three volumes of Helliconia, you could hardly have made such a glaring error.

Since you also saw fit to comment on my Acknowledgements, let me take up a point there where you are in error. The people I name did me a favour. For love rather than money. It was absolutely proper that that help should be acknowledged publicly. Your prejudice shows in such phrases as "One senses that the list is there to impress . . .", "we are being asked to see the citation of experts", which are purely subjective, even if impersonally cast. It is an important principle in life to be grateful where gratitude is due. I was and am grateful for the help I had. You are trying to force something different on me to fit your thesis. Me and McIntosh, ye gods!

You go on to theorize about Desmond Morris's role. Here again you are completely mistaken. We had no discussion of the social relationships in the novels. On the basis of this silly assumption, you go on to claim that Helliconia "incorporates only one side of a conflict of class values", without substantiating the claim. My intention was always to speak for the underdog, and I'm sure that shines through clearly in the three volumes (though I admit I may not be the best judge of how intention matches achievement—but possibly you aren't either, if you can get my intentions so wrong). Indeed, wouldn't it be fair to say that the history of Earth, as revealed through Helliconia, shows the triumph of the underdog?

And isn't fairness a good idea to stick to, in criticism as elsewhere?

Brian Aldiss *Oxford*

Sweden's Sam Lundwall is currently President of World SF. He is a vigorous, satiric novelist (see AD 2018: or, The King Kong Blues *and* Alice's World*), as well as author of one of the earliest guides to sf to appear in English (*Science Fiction: What It's All About*). He is also an editor, translator, and publisher—and who else has had an sf radio play broadcast at the age of 11? Surely this is the true meaning of* "enfant terrible"!

The following polemical essay appeared a few years ago in shorter form as part of a huge, glossy coffee-table-style volume by Sam Lundwall entitled SF: An Illustrated History, *which was perhaps the most international work on sf ever published in English. Grosset & Dunlap did a US hardcover edition, which was quickly shipped to the slaughterhouse. Radical journal* Science-Fiction Studies *loathed the book for being anti-American; and there was apoplexy at prospective US paperback houses. Thus it is unlikely that many* Foundation *readers will have seen the following, and certainly not in its full form. Though slightly outdated by subsequent events, such as the decline of the original anthology, yet the main thrust of Sam Lundwall's argument about American sf and sf in the rest of the world seems to remain perennially relevant.*

Adventures in the Pulp Jungle

SAM J. LUNDWALL

The modern history of science-fiction magazines really began in April, 1926, in New York when a Luxembourg-born immigrant launched an sf magazine filled with short stories by French, German and British writers and visually dominated by the artwork of an Austrian-born artist. The magazine was *Amazing Stories,* the publisher was Hugo Gernsback and the artist was Frank R. Paul.

Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967) emigrated from his native Luxembourg in 1904 for the greener pastures of the USA, and soon proved himself to be an excellent businessman, totally devoted to the idea of science and technology as the saviours of mankind. Originally working with radio, he launched his first popular science magazine, *Modern Electrics,* in 1908, a magazine that did a more lasting service to radio amateurs in the US than his sf magazines would do to science fiction. *Modern Electrics* was later changed into *Electrical Experimenter,* which livened up the strictly scientific contents with occasional science-fiction stories, and then into *Science and Invention,* which regularly published sf—just as many other popular science magazines in Europe and the US did at this time. By the end of the twenties he owned a veritable magazine empire with magazines like *Radio News, Your Body* (which in typical Utopian tradition offered Science as a means to cure mankind of all its physical, sexual and psychological problems), and *Tidbits,* the last-named offering, according to an advertisement in the September 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories,* "Pages of spicy illustrations all drawn by French artists." It was inevitable that he sooner or later would try his hand at a science-fiction magazine; this was the time of the specialized pulp magazines, and Hugo Gernsback must have heard about the success of the sf issue of the British *Pears Annual* in 1919 and the *Phantastik der Technik* issue of the

German *Der Orchideengarten* in 1920. So, in 1923, Gernsback emulated these precursors with a science-fiction issue of *Science and Invention,* and the following year tried to launch an sf magazine called *Scientifiction.* The title was, of course, an abbreviation of the term "science fiction," originally coined by the British essayist William Wilson 72 years earlier. *Scientifiction* never materialized, but Gernsback persisted and started *Amazing Stories* in 1926.

Amazing Stories was by no means the first science-fiction magazine, and far from the best published up until then. European sf magazines like *Stella, Hugin* and *Der Orchideengarten* had been catering for science-fiction readers since the 1880s, and a number of magazines like the British *Pearson's Magazine,* the French *La Science et la Vie, Journal des Voyages* and *Travers le Monde,* and the Russian *Priroda i liudi,* were sometimes indistinguishable from sf magazines. Even the USA had a few magazines catering for sf readers, notably *Argosy* and *Weird Tales.* Britain had a long tradition of horror and fantasy magazines offering a strange mixture of *Märchen* and Gothic horrors with lots of illustrations, from the germinal *Marvellous Magazine* (1802-03) and the flood of horror magazines from the 1820's and on with titles like *The Ghost, Tales of Terror, Terrific Register* and *The Magazine of Curiosity and Wonder.* These were the real precursors to *Amazing Stories,* offering cheap thrills for a mass market, utilizing the symbols of their time. Some of these magazines did occasionally present sf stories, but they mostly kept to the traditional horrors. The time was not yet ripe for moving the monsters from the crypt to the stars. I am sure that many unsuccessful tries were made during this period to launch sf magazines, and future science-fiction scholars will no doubt find them by the dozen in all parts of the world. The earliest truly modern sf magazine I know about myself is one published in my native country, the magazine *Stella,* published from April, 1886 through August, 1888. Supposedly a monthly magazine and a sort of supplement to a popular Swedish weekly, *Svenska Familj-Journalen Svea,* it only managed four issues before it folded, however, so it would appear it was way before its time. It published most of the leading European sf authors of the time, however, including Kurd Lasswitz, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Claes Lundin, Achim von Arnim and Jules Verne. Evidently it never became very popular, though, and thus remains an interesting footnote in the history of sf magazines.

More interesting, perhaps, are the science-fiction magazines immediately preceding *Amazing Stories.* Gernsback was preceded in North Europe by two men with personalities even stranger than his, who launched modern sf magazines before he did, and did it better, but who for various reasons could not or would not persist and ultimately succeed like Gernsback did. The Swedish engineer, author, and publisher Otto Witt (1875-1923) was in many respects a Gernsback before Gernsback, a furiously chauvinistic man, a believer in science and technology as the saviours of mankind, a Utopian at heart who for many years tried—unsuccessfully—to reform the world through science fiction. The author of numerous novels and non-fiction books, he launched the sf magazine *Hugin* in 1916 and filled the 86 issues of this strange publication with his own writings—articles, short stories, reviews, even novels—glorifying the science of the future and quite a number of unusual inventions of his own creation. Illness forced him to cease publication of the magazine early in 1920. Had Otto Witt been less a preacher of the wonders of the future and more of a businessman, things might have turned out differently—he was in 1921 planning a science-fiction magazine to be published in Germany, which would have

ensured him an international readership; as it was, *Hugin* sank without a trace.

The Austrian writer Karl Hans Strobl (1877-1946) was an even stranger man, even more violently chauvinistic than Witt, one of the most important of the writers of the fantasy renaissance taking place in Germany from about 1900 until 1930. He edited the Austrian-German magazine *Der Orchideengarten* during its three years of existence, 1919-21, making it into a leading sf and fantasy magazine that published practically all the leading European writers in the genre. A total of 54 issues were published before it folded. Strobl then became an avid Nazi, and during World War II was the local Viennese head of the infamous "Reichsschrifttumskammer." During its brief life, *Der Orchideengarten* was an extremely good and intelligent sf magazine, far removed from the low-brow *Amazing Stories,* but this one, too, sank without much trace. *Hugin* and *Der Orchideengarten* failed, died and were forgotten. *Amazing Stories* lived on.

There were many reasons for this, one of course being that Hugo Gernsback appeared with the right product at the right time, offering a simplified version of the future to an audience ignorant about science, politics and sociology, and thus worried about the rapidly changing world in which it was caught. Using the pulp magazine formula of cops and robbers in a slightly new overcoat, and reprinting those European works which best fit into this formula, he presented US readers with the sort of science fiction that Jules Verne had written fifty years, and H.G. Wells thirty years, earlier. It was old hat in Europe, but US magazine readers had never seen anything like it before. Gernsback then started moulding local authors into the sort of writers he wanted—Murray Leinster, Ray Cummings, Otis Adelbert Kline, Francis Flagg and others, who soon learned to write exactly the pulp-magazine fairy tales extolling the wonders of science that Gernsback felt the public needed and secretly wanted. "By 'scientifiction,' " Gernsback wrote in the first editorial for *Amazing Stories,* "I mean the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision."

Nothing wrong with that, it would seem, excepting the fact that Gernsback never realized that what particularly Wells and to some degree Poe wrote about, and Verne in his later years, was not fairy tales of science and prophetic vision, but stories about politics and psychology, of sociology and the human soul. Also, the man destined to carry out Gernsback's wishes was Dr T O'Connor Sloane, a scholar seventy-five years of age who was an inventor, science writer and Thomas Alva Edison's son-in-law. Excellent grades as far as Gernsback was concerned, but a downright disaster for any publication with any sort of literary, intellectual or sociological ambitions. Luckily (for Gernsback), *Amazing* had no such ambitions. It was an out-and-out pulp magazine of the sort which was very popular in the USA at this time, a Kapitän Mors science-fiction adventure magazine in a slightly modified version, minus the political overtones. Gernsback's magazine filled an empty niche in US publishing, and it was a success.

What Hugo Gernsback did—and this was his great accomplishment, the one that could have made science fiction into an important literary tool long before it actually happened—was to create the specialized sf magazine in a culture and at a time which was eminently receptive to it. His predecessors had failed miserably, despite the fact that science fiction ever since the 1880's had proved to be the most popular parts of British, French and US popular magazines. Europe, torn apart by wars and depression, was not convinced that science and technology would create Utopia. The USA in 1926 was a

booming country, confident in itself and its future, a leading industrial nation, and Hugo Gernsback's vision of the future, together with the lure of the future war story, the abducted heroine, the intrepid hero and the loathsome villain, proved irresistible. By concentrating on the adventure and the popular-science side of sf, ignoring all those qualities that had made sf respected in Europe, he created a new type of pulp magazine with obvious mass appeal. He made science fiction popular, which certainly was good, but the sort of sf he made popular was one that had been popular in Europe fifty years earlier. All over Europe, truly modern sf was being published in magazines and book form, but Gernsback and his seventy-five year old editor never noticed it. What Europe saw emerging in the USA was sf of a sort that fitted only too well into the popular European idea of the USA as vulgar, ostentatious, uncouth, perhaps with some endearing naïvité but totally devoid of culture, the sort of Buck Rogers type science fiction which no one in Europe wanted to be associated with. No one in Europe cared much for it, and thus Europe also failed to observe the appearance of a number of highly interesting US writers of sf. In fact, no one in Europe took much serious interest in US sf until Ray Bradbury appeared and amazed everyone with his short stories which, as Brian Aldiss so aptly put it in his excellent *Billion Year Spree* (1973), "read like translations of Ukranian folk tales."

Amazing Stories and the dozens of other sf magazines that soon appeared to cash in on this virginal US market—*Astounding Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Air Wonder Stories* and so on and so forth (these titles, not to mention their crude cover illustrations, were enough to make any European sf reader retreat shiveringly back to the more respectable European publications)—reached those who could not afford to buy books or who just never ventured into book stores or libraries; the garish four-color covers promised unusual thrills, and the contents were not more complicated than most people could understand. This in contrast to science fiction in book form, particularly in Europe, which was becoming more and more highbrow as it were, demanding more of its readers than they apparently were willing or able to give. All that Gernsback demanded of his readers, was a dime or two. This was frowned upon by intellectuals, of course, and with their unwitting help Gernsback proceeded to turn mass-market sf into a self-contained universe, blew up all bridges connecting it with the outer world and created the sf ghetto.

This led to one good thing, though, even if that was an unexpected bonus and one that he never had planned on. In the June 1926 issue of *Amazing Stories,* Gernsback commented in his editorial on a surprising phenomenon of science fiction:

> One of the great surprises since we started publishing *Amazing Stories* is the tremendous amount of mail we receive from—shall we call them "Scientifiction Fans?"—who seem to be pretty well oriented in this sort of literature. From the suggestions for reprints that are coming in these "fans" seem to have a hobby of their own of hunting up scientifiction stories, not only in English, but in many other languages.

What Gernsback had stumbled upon, was the fact that readers of science fiction generally not only are interested enough to hunt up their favourite literature, but also care enough for it to write and comment upon it. Gernsback was not the first one to notice this, but he was the first to treat his readers decently. He started a readers' department, called "Discussions", which proved to be of immense value for the development of US sf when other US science-fiction magazines caught on and introduced their own readers' departments. From these pages of letters, arguments and discussions emerged sf clubs and ultimately what is now known as a sort of semi-organized movement of sf fans,

"fandom," a phenomenon virtually unknown in Europe at that time. Fans even started to publish their own little mimeographed or printed magazines, fan magazines or "fanzines." From this fandom and these fanzines, in their turn, came a generation of science-fiction fans who ultimately took over the field in USA, as editors, authors, illustrators, and publishers of sf. This was Hugo Gernsback's main contribution to the field of sf, the successful feedback system as it were, creating in time science fiction of high quality when former fans like Donald A Wollheim, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Frederik Pohl, Forrest J. Ackerman and John W. Campbell put the stamp of their own personalities on the genre. Gernsback was for many years the grand-daddy of US science fiction, even picking a young sf fan, Charles Hornig, to edit a new Gernsback magazine, *Wonder Stories,* in 1933. Gernsback also founded the first national sf fan organization in the USA, The Science Fiction League, in 1934. Two years later the New York branch of a science-fiction slanted organization called International Scientific Association (ISA) started planning for a national gathering of sf fans. This convention, instigated by Donald A. Wollheim, took place in Philadelphia in October, 1936. Three years later, a local science-fiction club in New York, called New Fandom, held what was jokingly referred to as the First World Science Fiction Convention by the handful of attendees, and this particular in-joke is still going on with new "World" conventions every year. (In the US, everything is the "World" this or that or the other, but it does not really mean anything.) So far no true "World" science-fiction convention has ever been held anywhere, even though the big 1970 convention in Heidelberg, Germany, is considered to have been a fairly international one. (The Third European Science Fiction Convention in Poznań, Poland, in 1976, had official delegates from twenty-three countries, which did not make it a "World" one either).

Hugo Gernsback was obviously an important and pivotal person within the US science-fiction field, and his pulp sf formula worked extremely well in the USA of the late twenties and the early thirties. There were limits to his genius, however, as attested when he attempted a come-back in the sf magazine field with *Science Fiction Plus* in 1953. A slick, expensively produced magazine, it showed all too well that Gernsback still lived in the twenties and that he was trying to publish the old *Amazing Stories* once again in a world and a time that had changed enormously since 1926. Frank R. Paul did illustrations for his new magazine, a protegé of Gernsback, Sam Moskowitz, edited it, and the magazine looked like a remnant from an earlier age. *Science Fiction Plus* lasted for seven issues and died ingloriously, mourned by no one except by Gernsback and his friends.

Hugo Gernsback has been hailed, by Sam Moskowitz, as "the father of science fiction." He was obviously not. He was the father of US pulp-magazine science fiction, with all that implies for good and bad, and the father of science-fiction fandom. This is surely good enough and justifies his fame in North America as a modern pioneer. But his contribution to the genre was and is not one of content but of packaging. He danced to the tune of the turn-of-the-century dime novels and popular magazines, with the added beat of modern marketing practices. Today the popularity of space-opera TV series like *Space: 1999* and *Star Trek* and films like *Star Wars* sing his praise and prove beyond doubt that his influence is not dead, that it is merely the decorations of the package that have changed somewhat, that, growing sophistication of books and magazines notwithstanding, there is still room in other media for those young at heart.

Returning to the thirties, which saw the Gernsback science-fiction empire crash and other talents picking up the pieces, we find that the specialized sf magazines and sf fandom were still strictly a US affair, even though fan groups and fanzines now started to appear in Britain. The first British science-fiction magazine built upon the pulp magazine formula, *Scoops,* appeared in 1933 but folded the following year after twenty issues. The first British science-fiction convention, in Leeds, 1937, attracted a handful of enthusiastic attendees among whom were Walter Gillings who later that year would edit a new British sf magazine, *Tales of Wonder,* and Ted Carnell, who for the next thirty-five years was to be the guiding spirit of British science fiction. A drastic change came with World War II, which, as one of its lesser results, brought about the US predominance in science fiction which Europe only during the last decade or so has managed to get away from. Millions of Europeans died on the battlefields and in the burning cities of Europe, while from the USA came hundreds of thousands of GI's carrying with them chewing gum, Coca Cola and science-fiction magazines. France got its first modern sf magazine, *Conquetes,* in 1939, followed in rapid succession by two countries who were not directly involved in the war, Argentina and Sweden. The Argentine *Narraciones Terrorificas* was started in 1939, the Swedish *Jules Verne-Magasinet* in 1940, both importing US pulp sf wholesale to their respective countries. US pulp magazines were exported everywhere as ballast on ships to countries where, for obvious reasons, no science fiction was written or published during these years. US writers and publishers did produce enormous amounts of sf, and when science-fiction magazines began to appear in Europe after the war—the Belgian *Anticipations* in 1945, the British *New Worlds* in 1946, the Dutch *Fantasie en Wetenschap* in 1948, et cetera—the US science-fiction industry held a veritable stranglehold on European sf. When what we might call the "second wave" of European sf magazines appeared in the early fifties, the Italian *Scienza Fantastica* and *Urania* in 1952, the Norwegian *Tempo-Magasinet* in 1953, the Swedish *Häpna* in 1954, the German *Utopia-Magazin* in 1955 and so on, they were forced by circumstances and the availability of US science fiction to devote themselves almost exclusively to material written in USA. This was also the case with sf magazines in other parts of the world—the Australian *Thrills Incorporated* started in 1950, the Argentine *Mas Alla* started in 1953, the Mexican *Enigmas* and the Japanese *Seiun* started in 1955, all of them presenting mostly US material.

This does not imply that everyone thought that US science fiction was the best in the world. There simply was nothing else available just then. An entire generation had been killed in Europe, while the US science-fiction industry (for an industry it was, and is) could go on producing for all it was worth. German sf, for many years leading in the world, was shot to pieces; French sf turned away in disgust from US pulp sf to 'pataphysic science fiction of its own creation. Soviet sf, once so promising, first had Stalin to cope with, then the war, and then Stalin again. And so on. All these countries had a science-fiction tradition quite different from that of USA, mostly one of novels, and there were of course no authors or editors brought up within a local sf fandom or with local sf magazines. US magazine publishers sold their wares aggressively throughout the world, thereby forcibly bringing sf in other countries into the world of magazine science fiction. Eastern Europe resisted, naturally, with the result that it was saved from crude US pulp science fiction, but also from the excellent sf now being exported particularly through foreign editions of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Galaxy,* and other US

magazines. The USA revived European science fiction, for good and bad, but Eastern Europe refused to be revived, with the result that it is only now making its voice heard in the rest of the world—much thanks to the aggressive help of the Soviet Copyright Bureau, VAAP. Romania had no science-fiction magazine until the excellent bi-weekly *Colectia Povestiri Stiintifico-Fantastice,* edited by Adrian Rogoz, appeared in the late fifties; the first Yugoslavian sf magazine, *Kosmoplov,* appeared as late as in 1969, and the Hungarian magazine *Galaktika,* edited by the eminent sf scholar Péter Kuczka and one of the two or three best science-fiction magazines in the world today, came in 1972. No sf magazines at all exists in the Soviet Union as I write this; in their place are two excellent anthology series, *Fantastika,* and *Almanach Nautshnoy Fantastiki,* that perhaps best can be compared to anthology series like the US *Clarion,* the Yugoslavian *Andromeda* or the German *Polaris.* The closest thing to a Soviet sf magazine is *Iskatel* (Explorer) which sometimes is filled to more than 50% with science fiction. It is oriented towards teenagers, however, is mostly on the level of *Flash Gordon* and *Star Trek,* and is not very good. Pre-revolutionary Russia had more than its share of pulp adventure magazines, just as bad or worse than their British and US counterparts, very much like the US *Argosy* etc. The prominent Petersburg publisher P.P. Soikin published enormous amounts of science fiction, including an 88-volume edition of Jules Verne's novels and a very popular adventure magazine, *Mir prikliuchenii,* which presented science fiction by H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, Max Pemberton etc, plus Russian sf authors—who to a large degree took English-sounding pen names because obviously only the British could write science fiction.

That, however, was during the pre-revolutionary, *laissez-faire* age of Russia. One can argue that Soviet sf fans do not really need specialized science-fiction magazines, since sf is regularly published in big weeklies like *Junost* (with a circulation of more than three million copies), *Sveta, Znanije-Sila, Teknika-molodezi, Nautika i Zjisn, Aurora* and others. With a hardcover book costing less in the Soviet Union than a science-fiction magazine in the West, sf fans there do not appear to envy their Western counterparts. They keep up with what is happening outside their own country, too. A recent issue of the Soviet literary magazine *Literaturnoje Obozrenije* (October, 1977) devotes seven large-sized pages in fine print to reviews of current British science fiction.

The world of sf magazines is very much a reflection of the science-fiction ghetto, and in Eastern Europe sf never felt the need to lock itself into a ghetto. Moreover, it had no Gernsback to turn the key. The genre is respected, all national writer's associations have very active science-fiction departments (the one in Hungary is publishing *Galaktika* and now has plans of launching yet another sf magazine). Small sf magazines, mimeographed fanzines, do exist, but do not play the important part of such publications in the West although organized sf fandom can be found in most East European countries. Particularly the *Klub Prognostica i fantastika* in Sofia, Bulgaria, has done an excellent job lately in the way of fanzines.

Today, magazines appear to have played out most of their role in science fiction, even in the USA. Outside that country, magazines have never been as important. In 1953, the peak year for science-fiction magazines, thirty-three sf and fantasy magazines were published in the USA; In Britain eight; in Italy four; in France three; in Argentina two; in Australia, Mexico, Holland and Norway one each. That was all. Today—if I may be

allowed some more statistics—the trend is more than ever away from magazines and towards books. in 1976, the last year for which I have reliable statistics, nine science-fiction and fantasy magazines were published in USA, with a total of 71 issues. During that same year 954 books, including reprints, were published, or 13.4 for each magazine issue. Comparing this with my native Sweden, (whose population is about 4% of that of the USA), we find a total of one sf magazine published, with four issues, while 83 books were published, or almost 21 books per magazine issue (this can be compared with 1944, the golden year of Swedish sf magazines, with 52 magazine issues and 22 books).

Behind the sf magazines of today stand quite a number of amateur and semi-professional publications catering for a wide variety of interests within the science-fiction field. There are fanzines almost indistinguishable in presentation and quality from professional magazines (the German *Science Fiction Times* and the Turkish *Antares* are outstanding examples of this), there are fanzines filled with nothing but letters, or reviews of current books, or editorial monologues. And there are fanzines devoted to giving news and information about the science-fiction field. I found the figures about book and magazine publishing in the USA of 1976 in one of the best of these news fanzines, *Locus,* which for a number of years has provided people within the sf field with all sorts of useful news and information. One of the most ambitious undertakings in recent years within this field has indeed taken the form of a sort of fanzine, the splendidly produced series *Ides et autres,* published in Belgium under the general editorship of Bernard Goorden. So far some 25 volumes have been published, presenting short stories from and essays about the science-fiction scene of Latin America, Spain, China, the Soviet Union, Italy, Germany, etc, plus scholarly essays on themes in science fiction. The Hungarian fanzine *SF Tájékoztató* (SF Bulletin) is in many respects better than many professional science-fiction magazines; and many fanzines, like the Turkish *X-Bilinmeyen* and the French *Spirale,* have become professional magazines of very high quality. There are also, as I have mentioned earlier, professional publications, like the US edition of *Perry Rhodan,* that really are fanzines, catering for none but the enthusiastic fans.

These specialized sf publications have probably done their share in bringing down the number of magazines to the point where only the best survive. The best US magazine, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* is one of the three best in the world (the other two being the Argentine *El Péndulo,* undoubtedly the best science-fiction magazine in contents, presentation and layout ever published anywhere, and the Hungarian *Galaktika*). The recipient of a number of well-earned US science-fiction awards for excellence in the field, *F&SF* has remained since 1949 a leading magazine with high literary standards which I am sure will survive where others will succumb to the rising tide of annual anthology series.

The trend away from magazines in the science-fiction field is one that can be seen everywhere. The excellent British magazine *New Worlds,* whose genial and competent editor John Carnell brought up a generation of outstanding sf authors including Brian W. Aldiss and Michael Moorcock, fell upon bad times in 1964 and now appears as a sort of paperback anthology, its place as a forum for new short stories in Britain being taken over by the *New Writings in SF* anthology series launched by John Carnell and after his death in 1972 edited by Kenneth Bulmer. The British publisher New English Library tried a new approach to sf magazines in 1974 with *Science Fiction Monthly,* featuring some text and lots of large posters suitable for decorating the science-fiction fan's den, and had a spec-

tacular success—for a while. Publication was discontinued in 1976, and although several British sf magazines have been launched since then, none appears to be viable. In the USA, the last of the strong-willed magazine greats, *Astounding/Analog* magazine's editor John W. Campbell, is dead, and other shapers of modern US science fiction are concentrating on anthologies. Donald A. Wollheim, for many years a leading magazine editor and the editor of the first paperback anthology of science-fiction short stories in USA, *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction* (1943), is now owner and editor of the only US publishing company entirely devoted to sf paperbacks, DAW Books. In Europe, the powerful voices of science fiction, those who find the new writers, help them find their style and who publishes them, are not magazine editors but editors of book series—Gérard Klein and Jacques Sadoul in France, Danny De Laet in Belgium, Jacques van Herp in Holland, Ion Hobana in Romania, Péter Kuczka in Hungary, Czeslaw Chruszczewsky in Poland, Herbert Franke and Franz Rottensteiner in Germany, Jon Bing and Tor Åge Bringsvaerd in Norway, Zoran Zivković in Yugoslavia, Bella Klujeva in the Soviet Union, Ivo Zelezny in Czechoslovakia, Sebastian Martinéz in Spain, Gianni Montanari and Giorgio Monicelli in Italy, Selma Mine in Turkey—these and many more are shaping European science fiction today, and they are doing it, not through the sf magazines, but through book series.

I am not trying to belittle the importance of the authors, but between the author and his audience always stands the editor who decides what is fit to print and who finds and encourages the new talents. This can lead to situations like the one in the late twenties, when Hugo Gernsback and other US magazine editors and owners laid down their version of the "theory of limits" for their authors, who either had to go along with it or starve. In the Soviet Union, Stalin and his Commissars did the same for Soviet sf writers. Both did science fiction in their respective countries great damage; but in the USA there soon appeared quite a number of editors, each preaching his or her own theory of limits, which at least enabled the writer to find the editor most receptive to his works. That did not happen in the Soviet Union until the middle fifties, when the Stalin Cult had disappeared, and then only to a certain degree.

When Hugo Gernsback launched *Amazing Stories* in 1926, he brought out science fiction from the book stores and the libraries, into the streets, to the sellers of popular magazines. Since he was not an experimenter, he also brought down the quality of the genre to the lowest common denominator of other magazines. The quality of science fiction has gone up since then, and away from the magazine racks, and I find without much surprise that sf is now back where it started, in the book stores and the libraries, in the literary magazines, even in the narrow world of traditional culture, cleansed and purified, perhaps even ennobled, by its time among the slave-gangs of pulp fiction.

As a European, I find myself having a peculiar love-hate relationship with the US science-fiction scene, particularly the side of it represented by its magazines. I was born in 1941, and like many other Europeans of my generation I found sf first through the writings of Jules Verne and Hans Dominik, and then through US sf magazines. It took me many years to realize that there actually was a European heritage of this literature, that the genre actually had originated in Europe—and, in a sense, I felt that the USA had stolen this heritage, transforming it, vulgarizing it and changing it beyond recognition. A generation of European science fiction scholars and readers are now rediscovering their

own background, and it is a quite painful process. We find hundreds of eminent science-fiction works hidden beyond insurmountable language barriers, hidden beyond all those British and US works which during the years have been all too easily available, to such a degree that everything else has disappeared from view. What is worse, we find that we are now so used to the particular US way of writing science fiction that some of our own heritage seems strange and even alien to us. Like a child revolting against its parents, this is bound to result in unjustified down-playing of the merits of US sf—I am probably guilty of that myself—while some European works might find themselves unjustly praised, solely because they are European. This, I think, is the case with the Polish author Stanislaw Lem, who has mastered the technique of the US sf factories so well that many critics automatically assume he must be better than his mentors.

European sf readers have too many times seen books purporting to tell the true history of science fiction, ending up telling nothing but the true history of English-language science fiction. This, if you will, is the inevitable backlash from a disgruntled European. There is a world outside Britain and the USA, ladies and gentlemen; it cannot be ignored any longer. As a European, I am tired of seeing references to "World science fiction conventions" that never were and never will be anything but local US ones. I am tired of reading about the US magazine *Amazing Stories* as "the first science-fiction magazine in the world" and its obscure founder as "the father of science fiction" when I know this is simply not true. I am tired of seeing, year after year, the "Award for the best sf novel in the world" being restricted to novels published in the USA, when I know that the majority of new sf novels are published not in the USA, but in Europe. I am tired of checking lists of books in science-fiction series in Argentina, or Japan, or Germany, or Denmark, and finding the same tired old US authors popping up again and again. I am tired of seeing self-proclaimed US and British scholars of science fiction revealing their complete ignorance about everything outside their own countries, confidently acting as if there did not exist a world outside their own. I am tired of Europeans, Asians and Latin Americans actually believing this. I am sick and tired of seeing European countries importing US science-fiction junk, when our own junk is bad enough.

I know that many of the best science-fiction authors are British and US ones. But they are not the only good ones, however unlikely that might seem to readers brought up on a fare consisting of science fiction in magazine form. The magazines are only one part of the genre, the adolescent stage, if you will, and that one is now over. With the magazines now playing a less important part in sf, I am confident that we will see a more mature literature emerge, one that combines the best of US, European, Asian, Latin American et cetera into a new and exciting whole. British and US sf magazines have done the genre much good; without them, I am not sure we would have had much science fiction anywhere. Still, I am happy to see them go.

For—and this is an ominous development which still can hurt science fiction as a whole to a much larger degree than most sf readers understand, or want to understand—the creation of the science-fiction ghetto, together with the strange parochialism particularly of the USA, has forced English-language sf into a self-contained universe with almost no contacts whatsoever with the outer world. I really think that much of the blame for this should be put on Hugo Gernsback, whom Brian Aldiss rightly has called "one of the worst disasters ever to hit the science-fiction field," but others are continuing the process he started, that of narrowing, vulgarizing and simplifying this marvellous literary genre, as

well as isolating it from all impulses from the outside. While international science fiction at last is thriving in Europe, receiving new strength from Japan, from Latin America, from the Soviet Union and indeed from its own all-but-forgotten heritage in the 'pataphysic and other early sf traditions, British and US science fiction stays behind its own borders, self-complacently acting as if nothing existed outside their own back yard. An occasional sf work from the world outside might by accident find its way into the English-language sf ghetto, a novel by Komatsu, Lem or the Strugatskys, but apart from Donald A. Wollheim of DAW Books, Damon Knight and Seabury Press, and perhaps one or two others, no US or British science-fiction editor or publisher knows, or cares to know, anything about the outer world. It is a sorry fact, that when an outside sf work manages to make some impact on the English-language part of the sf world, it is inevitably junk like the German *Perry Rhodan,* which adheres closely to the local US space-opera tradition, having all the faults of US science fiction and none of its merits. I am quite convinced that the main reason for the popularity of *Perry Rhodan* in the US is, that US readers can read it without feeling they are reading anything "foreign." English-language science fiction, friends, lives in a self-contained universe, and this can only lead to atrophy and, in the end, a meaningless repetition of old clichés. The USA and Britain are now repeating the mistake of the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe, which voluntarily cut themselves off from the invigorating forces of developing and changing science fiction outside their borders (although it might be argued that Eastern Europe got some help from Stalin, just as the US got help from Gernsback). Eastern Europe is now appearing on the sf scene again, translating foreign works in astounding numbers and thus reinvigorating its own science fiction. Britain and the USA are retreating into isolationism and provincialism, today even trying to institutionalize their sf ghetto by producing a number of "encyclopaedias" of science fiction which purport to cover the whole world but steadfastedly refuse to acknowledge any sort of world outside their own.

Science fiction originally appeared in Europe. Since then, Britain and the USA have taken a leading part in the development of the genre. Today, their influence is waning rapidly, and other countries are taking the lead. This is as it should be—but I would be very sorry to see English-language science fiction, which has meant so much for the modern development of the field, wither and die in self-imposed isolation. Still, this is what is happening right now, and not even "World" science-fiction conventions restricted to the English-speaking part of the world, awards for the "World's best science fiction" restricted to US works, "World's Best SF" anthologies restricted to US science fiction, or so-called encyclopaedias of "World SF" restricted to the small English-language part of the world, can turn this tide. The gates of the US/British ghetto have been closed all too long and it depends upon those inside if they ever will open again.

I am, first and foremost, a European, with everything this implies, for good and bad. But I have also been a science-fiction fan, which is something more international, for more than twenty-five years, ever since the early fifties when most science fiction seemed to come from the US. Today I am a professional writer and publisher of science fiction, and I am not quite the naïve boy of twenty-five or thirty years ago. I was one of those sf fans brought up on US pulp magazines. I still love that particular smell of old, cheap pulp paper slowly disintegrating into dust. I love the lurid Paul, Bergey, Schomburg and Wesso covers, depicting every stupid hackish situation you ever could think of. I have yards of these magazines lining the walls of my study, and the all-pervading smell (my wife says

stench) of these goodies makes me greet each new working day with renewed enthusiasm. They were a part of my youth, my formative years, the things that fired my imagination once and prepared me for more subtle science fiction. But this is all emotions. I know they are mostly bad, that the writings are crude and the famous artists of the US "golden" era are less than acceptable by any standards than those dictated by nostalgia. Today, I get more sense of wonder out of a single Piranesi etching or Jarry story than from a hundred pulp magazines. Let's face it: they were no good. They did much bad for science fiction, and much good, but their time is over. Science fiction remains, warts and all, and our place is not in the thirties or the forties or the fifties, but here and now. Science fiction is changing, as it should do, and the heroes of yesterday are the villains of today. Science-fiction magazines brought us part of the way, and they did their job reasonably well. Now is the time for other ways.

Poet and editor (and much else) Peter Kuczka last appeared in Foundation *30 with a witty and illuminating essay on British sf as viewed from his native Hungary. Here he returns, to our International issue, with an interview with the Strugatsky Brothers, which has only so far appeared in a Hungarian magazine. It was conducted in June 1980.*

Fifty Questions: An Interview with the Strugatsky Brothers

PETER KUCZKA

An editor is always curious to meet his authors. Particularly so when the editor likes their writings. In the Hungarian sf magazine *Galaktika* and in the paperback series *Kozmosz* a good number of writings appeared by the Strugatsky brothers, so, when I visited the Soviet Union some years ago, I wanted to meet Arkady and Boris. At that time, however, a meeting could not take place.

Later, on the invitation of VAAP, the Soviet State Copyright Agency, I was honoured to spend some time in the Soviet Union and when I was asked about my wishes concerning my programme, I immediately told them I wanted to see *Stalker,* a recent film by Tarkovsky, and I wished to meet the Strugatsky brothers, those excellent and world-famous representatives of science fiction in Eastern Europe.

I did see *Stalker*, but I could meet only one of the co-authors: Boris in Leningrad . . . Unfortunately Arkady was ill at that time, and in Moscow. I spent a couple of hours talking with Boris, a sympathetic man at first sight, highly educated and well-informed in the science-fiction field. And I realized again what I had experienced several times: sf authors at once make friends anywhere on Earth, in any language. Boris Strugatsky also

proved that science-fiction writers, either by the attraction or the necessities of their work, are always well-versed in theoretical problems; they have their own thoughts on the nature, aesthetics, tasks and history of science fiction.

Ending the pleasant conversation, we made an agreement. Boris consented to giving me an interview, that is he would answer my questions sent to him in written form. Some days later, after arriving home, I gathered my questions . . . Is there a relationship between science fiction and utopia? . . . Can we talk about optimism and pessimism in science fiction? . . . What is his opinion about the critical role of science fiction? . . . How does he see the "warning" task of sf . . . How do they co-operate in the process of writing? . . . Who comes up with the ideas among them? . . . Which author had influenced them most? . . . What is their relation to critics, fellow authors and readers? . . .

Questions followed questions. I stopped at the forty-ninth question; I was horrified and I laughed to myself. I had not asked so many questions in my life. But, to add one more, I did put the fiftieth question as well: "Don't you see my questions as too many and too troublesome? . . ."

I mailed the letter and I received an answer very soon. The reply contained two photos as well. The Strugatsky brothers did not answer my questions one by one, they grouped them. They selected the main subjects and commented on them. Their answers were as follows . . .

I Biographical data, bibliography

Arkady Strugatsky was born in 1925 in the town of Batumi. He received his degree from the Foreign Language Academy in Moscow. He worked as a translator from English and Japanese languages at the Institute of Information; for some years he was an editor of *D'etskaya Lityeratura*. A number of translations from Japanese are associated with his name; he translated works by Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Natsume Soseki, among others. He translated sf authors as well (John Wyndham, Kobo Abé, Harry Harrison, Clifford Simak, etc.). He is a member of the committee for science fiction and stories of adventure, a section of the Writers' Union of the Russian Federation. He is married, with children and grandchildren.

Boris Strugatsky was born in 1933 in Leningrad. He received his diploma as an astronomer from Leningrad University. For some years he worked for the Pulkovo Observatory and published a number of scientific papers. His main field of interest is the dynamics of star systems. He is a member of the board of directors of the committee for science fiction and stories of adventure in the Leningrad section of the Writers' Union; since 1974 he has been conducting a seminar for young sf authors. He is married, with a son.

Our first common work appeared in 1957. The title of the story was "From Outside," later on we made a novella out of it with the same title. By 1980 we had published about two dozen stories and novellas. These are: *The Country of the Purple Clouds* 1959, *From Outside* 1960, *Destination: Almathea* 1960, *Noontime, 22nd Century* 1960, *A Recruit in Space* 1962, *Attempt to Escape* 1962, *Far Rainbow* 1963, *Hard To Be a God* 1964, *Monday Begins on Saturday* 1965, *Predatory Things the Century* 1965, *Snail On The Slope* 1966, *A Tale of the Troika* 1968, *The Second Invasion of the Martians* 1968, *Inhabited Island* 1970, *Hotel to the Dead Alpinist* 1970, *Roadside Picnic* 1972, *The Lad* 1973, *Young Man From Hell* 1975, *One Billion Years Before Doomsday* 1977, *Maybeetle*

in the Anthill 1979.

These short novels have appeared in more than one hundred editions in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, in the GDR, Yugoslavia, in West Berlin, in Spain, France, Italy, Japan, in the Argentine, in Bulgaria, in West Germany, in the USA, in England, Sweden, Finland . . . Our novel, *The Country of the Purple Clouds,* won in 1959 the third prize of the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture; our *Roadside Picnic* won a Campbell Memorial Award in 1977 and in 1979 it was honoured by the Jules Verne Award in Sweden.

We have written several film scripts as well. Films have been produced from two of them: *Stalker*, from the leitmotifs of our short novel *Roadside Picnic,* directed by Tarkovsky in the Mosfilm Studio, and another film, *Hotel to the Dead Alpinist*, directed by G. Kromanov in the Tallinfilm Studio.

II Science fiction

We regard science fiction as a part of the whole literary process. That is why we use all the distinctions which are traditional in literature, though with restrictions concerning only this genre. For instance, the basic rule of a realist, "Write only about things you know well!", will be modified in the case of an sf author as follows: "Write about things you know well or about things no one knows!" The sf novel, in this respect, resembles very much the historical novel. Yury Tinyanov, the excellent author and literary historian, said this when writing a historical novel: "I start it at a point where documents end . . ." The sf author does exactly the same thing, only for him the historical data are replaced by the scientific-technological knowledge of his times.

Modern science-fiction literature can be divided into two basic tendencies. The one treats the subjects of the relationship between Man and Nature, Man and the Universe—this is the thing that is usually known as science fiction. The other tendency deals with the problems concerning Man versus Society, Man versus Community. This is what we tend to call a "realistic fantastic literature," however paradoxical this definition might seem.

Science fiction is a young genre. Its progenitor is traditionally regarded as Jules Verne. Science fiction is the child of the scientific and technological revolution; it has grown along with the latter. Essentially this is a literature of the 19-20th century scientific-technological revolution; it was created and nurtured by it.

The "realistic fantastic literature" can be traced back to the origin of myth. It was born in a time when adolescent Mankind could not separate philosophy, religion, literature, arts, morality and science; when these multifaceted categories of spiritual life were welded into one amazing structure, which we now call myth. Myth was the reflection of reality in the consciousness of Antique Man, who could not distinguish miracle from reality. A stroke of lightning was a miracle and a reality at the same time, a celestial fire devouring forests and the dogheaded people who were running before the hunter behind the curtain of the pouring rain; the monotonous rising and setting of the sun, the spirits dwelling in these hunger-created hallucinations. Generally speaking, literature has been created and crystallized from myth, including "realistic fantasy." For a long time they went along hand in hand and hardly differed from each other. In the totality of literature there are the elements that we call now fantasy and science fiction. Distinctions have been made clear only in the last couple of centuries, but even now this "realistic fantasy" differs from realistic literature only in its methods, but their basic subject, the object of their

reflection—Man in society—has remained common.

We call *fantasy* every literary work in which the unusual, the—for the time being—impossible or generally unimaginable plays an important role. By such an approach we can imagine the whole literature of fantasy and science fiction to be on a wide colour scale, with tales, legends and myths at one end, and at the other end works that almost popularize science—like a novel by Tsiolkovsky, *Dreams About the Earth and the Sky.* Fantasy is *Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka; *The Andromeda Nebula* and Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita;* Gogol's *Viy* and Simak's *The Goblin Reservation* . . . We know of course that the modern tale, the anticipation, the mennipea and utopia, and "pure" science fiction are all separate genres or sub-genres. Still it is of primary importance that all these are linked in their chosen method: they feed into the narrative extraordinary and unbelievable elements.

Why is this method necessary at all? Why is it not enough if an author simply describes life as it is, in realistic situations in really-existing people's lives? Why is it necessary to transplant all this into the future, to create conflicts between one's heroes and travellers from alien worlds, or to pester mankind, very realistically portrayed, with an utterly incredible scientific discovery, or to let loose big troops of witches and devils in the streets of one's native town?

The answer to such questions does not trouble us. "What the deuce, how interesting this is, what will become of us, people? What will be here after us? . . ."—wrote the poet, Nikolay Aseyev. Well, this kind of curiosity creates novels about the future. Such novels, however, seem to be impossible to write while remaining within the boundaries of realistic literature. It is necessary to have a peculiar literary method, which is the transposition of the narrative into the future, with all the consequences deriving from this.

How will the history of mankind reflect the first encounter with an intelligent alien world? What surprise awaits us from the monstrous miracles of genetic engineering? What possible consequences ensue from the birth of artificial intelligence, or the breaking of the ecological balance, or distant journeys in space, or the electronically manipulated human soul, etc. etc? These are questions not conceivable by the measures of everyday experience, the vast complexity of problems and insoluble tasks:—all these form a sort of intellectual field that permeates the spiritual world of modern man, and this means the necessity that it be unavoidably the subject of literature—but of which literature?

Realistic literature, which seems to be qualified to reflect and describe the spiritual world of modern man, is usually unable to grasp that sort of problem. It is impotent at least, if it wishes to use only the classical methods of the reflection of existence within possible life forms. And here come to help us science fiction and fantasy, for which genres the challenge of the unusual and unimaginable reality is the essential task.

It is much more difficult to explain the need for an sf method in works like *The Master and Margarita* by Bulgakov or in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five.* Intuitively it is clear that such types of works might have lost much of their value if fantastic elements had been missing from them. Evidently the fact is that the addition of fantastic elements leads the author unavoidably to a sharpened sense of the situation, and these elements act like spices to give flavour to any tasteless food. Perhaps that is why that H.G. Wells, who devoted a number of his realistic works to exposing and denouncing the English petit bourgeoisie, nowhere attains such a revealing force as in works of fantasy on similar subjects, as in *The Invisible Man* or in "The Apple" or in "The Man Who Worked

Miracles." And maybe that is why the most pungent and most decided works we read do always contain fantastic elements.

The ability to raise the most important and pressing problems of the present, and the facility to bring the conflict to the utter limits and catalyze the mysterious effect of the book on the readers' understanding—these are the two most significant qualities of science fiction which make this genre so attractive both for authors and readers.

Naturally there are lots of definitions of science-fiction literature. "Science fiction is the literature of dreams"; "Science fiction is the literature of the age of the scientific-technological revolution"; "Science fiction is the literature of young people which educates by entertainment," and so on. Science fiction is a complex phenomenon and any definition can cover but parts of its terrain. We find these definitions narrow and that is why they are also harmful. They cut off sf from the whole process of literature and they impoverish and narrow down its possibilities.

Our definition, on the contrary, has often been condemned for its exaggerated openness. To be frank we can understand people who consider it funny to see on the same bookshelf Bradbury, Kafka and the Grimm brothers. Every literary work has the task, however: to reflect reality truthfully, i.e. to set the problems of life in such a way that they become the readers' own problems, to force readers to live through these problems actively, to make these problems permeate the readers' hearts and minds and become, as it were, parts of their personal lives. Reality is a very complicated notion; it includes not only everyday life with its conflicts and chaos but the social, scientific, utopian and moral principles as well.

The wider definitions of science fiction and fantasy try to reflect a wider reality, and this special feature of the genre—the addition of fantasy to the elements of the work—will certainly help achieve the ultimate sharpening of the problem concerned, and will also help to create the most favourable conditions to form the readers' emphatic understanding. That is why a real sf Author has no right to refuse any of the innumerable methods used in the tale, utopia or science fiction. Each method can be good to attain the aim of sharpening the conflicts and to increase the reaction between a book and its reader.

III About our work

Both of us have been fond of science fiction and fantasy since childhood. Works by Jules Verne, Alexandr Belyayev, Conan Doyle, later by Wells, Aleksei Tolstoy, Capek, Yefremov—we can say without exaggeration, have been of great value to the formation of our imaginations.

The necessity of writing became clear to us as a reaction to the lack of properly qualified science fiction in the post-war period. We started working more seriously, however, only after the mid-fifties. Now it would be very difficult to retrace the causes which made us write a long novel; maybe it was a bet which started us. Anyhow, we had elaborated the sketch of the novel in a very detailed form and in 1955 we started working. In the first 5-6 years, it seems, we tried out all the possible methods of collaboration, and about twenty years ago we established the most effective form of co-authorship.

We meet in Leningrad, Moscow, or in one of the rest-houses for writers. One of us sits before the typewriter, the other one will sit beside it. The plan is always ready, it is a very detailed sketch with scenes, heroes and the most important moments of the plot. One of us starts to say the first sentence. We think it over, correct it, make it ready and put it

down on paper at last. Again, one of us says the second sentence . . . and so the work goes on, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, page by page, until the first draft is ready. We leave it for a couple of months, then we start revising it before sending it to the publisher. Usually one draft is enough but there have been exceptions. Generally we work 4-5 hours in the morning and 1-2 hours in the evening. After the work we discuss the next day's programme, we outline the subject of the next short novel. In this method there are debates as well, and they are sometimes very cruel. In a way all our works could be seen as the results of constant discussions or contests over the best variety of a sentence or a scene, or a dialogue. We like the objective sort of criticism, on one condition: if you criticize a solution, suggest a better one instead . . . If we cannot make a compromise, we resort to tossing heads or tails.

We do not like to make statements about our future plans and about our works not yet finished. Experience has taught us that it is enough to tell somebody the idea of our novel, and we shall not finish it ever . . . It is very curious, but it is so.

It seems that the most popular novels we have written are *Hard To Be a God* and *Roadside Picnic.* This is witnessed by sociological studies made in the sixties and seventies, and these novels have been published abroad most often. We, however, prefer our writings *Snail on the Slope, The Second Invasion of the Martians,* and *One Billion Years Before Doomsday.*

Our readers write us letters very often: we receive usually two or three hundred letters from them annually. These letters are very rarely of any use; they usually contain requests to send them our novels or to help them get hold of one of them; or to express our opinion on science fiction, on science, etc. But we receive exceptionally good letters as well. Recently we have received letters and opinions concerning our film *Stalker.* The novel of ours *Roadside Picnic,* that served as the basis of the film by Andrei Tarkovsky, created a lively discussion among the public, and not by chance. Tarkovsky has a very peculiar, brilliant talent as a film director; he is a very intelligent artist who keenly perceives the problems of our times. *Stalker* is an amazing, curious work of art. It might have come, as it were, from the 21st century to us, as if somebody might have witnessed Man's life on Earth for a long time and then created his film image, a condensed mechanism of our everyday existence.

The work on the script of the film was both extremely difficult and awfully interesting. We had decided to serve every wish of the film director, as we were aware of the fact that a servile rendering of the novel could not make a good film on its own. It was necessary to translate the most general thoughts of the novel to the language of film as an art, and we could not do it without great alterations. In the end we had nine (!) different versions of the script . . . We did and re-did it until the director commanded us to stop, saying: This is what I want! . . . Science fiction and fantasy have not had the final word yet in film, but films like Kramer's *On the Beach* and Tarkovsky's *Stalker* are certainly the germs of a very important initiative.

Translated from Russian to Hungarian by Iván Földeák; from Hungarian to English by Peter Szentmihályi Szabó

Born in 1958, Pascal J. Thomas took degrees in Mathematics and is currently working towards a PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles. Long interest in sf led him into fandom in 1977, resulting in book reviews and sf-related journalism in a host of amateur publications as well as in Locus *and in* Fiction *(the French* F & SF*). In 1981 in collaboration with Pierre K. Rey he produced a small-press survey of about 70 American sf authors of the post-1965 generation entitled* La Nouvelle Science-Fiction Américaine *(A & A Editions). Right now he is compiling a collection of interviews with French sf writers to appear from Borgo Press under the title* French SF Voices.

French SF and the Legacy of Philip K. Dick

PASCAL J. THOMAS

A few years ago, Pierre K. Rey and myself decided we could not stand any longer the fairly outdated views of our countrymen about American science fiction, and put together a small book arrogantly called *La Nouvelle Science-Fiction Américaine.*[1] Today I am working in the other direction, but I will not attempt anything of that scope here, not even a thorough survey of contemporary French sf.

It strikes me, though, that the nature of the French tastes in American sf has now given rise to a pretty specific brand of French sf. As with another popular American genre, the comic strip, the French have absorbed the influence, selected what they liked best, and come up with a more intellectualized, sometimes more politicized version of the thing.

The seventies have seen a large body of French sf published, and I hope to show some of the directions in which it has developed. In the course of that, I will have to mention a few unfamiliar names; please bear with me, I will fill in the necessary background. Philip Dick's name will come up, too, as he was central among the foreign influences on this new crop of writers, in fact more influential than, say, Barjavel, Merle or Sternberg, And any course of study on French sf revolving around Barjavel, Merle and Sternberg, interesting though they may be, would miss much of what has been unfolding in the last twenty years . . .

First, a bit of history.

The mid-60s were a time of slump and transition for science fiction in France. Only two book series survived after the 1964 demise of "Le Rayon Fantastique": Fleuve Noir's "Anticipation" series and their mass-produced pulp adventure sf, and Denoël's series "Présence du Futur," which published very few French writers. Opta was still publishing *Fiction,* the French edition of *F & SF,* with a fair amount of original material: but the mood was not favourable to encouraging local talent; witness the small notes which appeared now and then to request that no unsolicited manuscripts be sent to the magazine.

However, Opta went into book publishing in 1965, starting with 1940s-50s US "classics," then introducing newer writers such as Philip José Farmer or Philip Dick: in

1968 they published *Solar Lottery, Now Wait for Last Year* and *Counter-Clock World.* 1968, of course, is when the mid-sixties turn into the late sixties, and around that time, things started to change in French sf: as the old guard fades away, new names appear in the pages of *Fiction*, "angry young men" such as Daniel Walther (first story in December 1965), or Jean-Pierre Andrevon (first story in May 1968).

In 1969, Andrevon's first novel appeared from "Présence du Futur", to be followed by many more books; Gérard Klein started editing the "Ailleurs et Demain" ("Elsewhere and Tomorrow") series for Robert Laffont; in 1970, J'ai Lu, a mass-market paperback house, slipped sf into its releases (under the editorship of longtime fan Jacques Sadoul, formerly of Opta), soon meeting with commercial success. By 1974, most major publishing groups had a foot in sf, and for a few years there was a science-fiction publishing boom (around 1978, somebody counted up to thirty book series, although I'd wager half of those were abortive).

At the same time, established series stepped up their output, "Présence du Futur", for instance, going from six titles in 1968 to fourteen in 1974. Two of those fourteen were by French writers, whereas none had been represented in the 1968 production. The enlarged market attracted new French writers, and I will talk about them below, as well as the return to the sf fold of a few older hands. For the most part, as always, this brought about more translated sf. It seems to sell better than the domestic product; and those translations were the background against which worked the younger writers, largely oblivious to the prewar tradition of "anticipation scientifique."

A.E. van Vogt was the most popular name in sf for the French reader, and he still is to a large extent. He was followed by Asimov, Clarke, Bradbury, Sturgeon, etc. In the early seventies came news of that stuff called New Wave, allegedly revolutionizing sf overseas. Attention focused on people like J.G. Ballard, and a number of writers featured in *Galaxy* (which then had a French edition), like Ellison, Spinrad, Disch, Silverberg . . . And Philip Dick who had been around for a while without losing his "street credibility."

His books did not turn into big sellers until much later (around 1982), but he was revered by the French sf community (writers and critics), who hailed him as a sort of heir to van Vogt. A 1968 advertisement for *Le Dieu venu du Centaure (The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch)* dubs him "le nouveau van Vogt." The two can be likened in their use of such motifs as psi powers or beleaguered mutants, and above all by their paranoid outlook on things. Of course, Dick is much more pessimistic, does not feature supermen armed with mental disciplines, and distrusts the prevailing political systems, thus being more in keeping with the spirit of the times. Two of his early novels had been translated into French as early as 1959, thanks to Gérard Klein *(Eye in the Sky* as *Les Mondes Divergents,* and *Vulcan's Hammer* as *Les Marteaux de Vulcain).* Ten years later, Klein was in a position to publish him again, and he was not alone: there was a regular flow of books, notably *The Three Stigmata . . .* (1969), *Ubik* (1970), *Our Friends from Frolix-8* (1972), *Clans of the Alphane Moon . . .* To this day, there have been 36 books of his published in French, including a few collections. I estimate that about twenty are still in print. Conversely, Philip Dick acknowledges a mental kinship with the French in his introduction to *The Golden Man.*

The 1968 student revolt-cum-general strike set many imaginations afire along with the barricades, and led many writers of that generation to a political protest vein. Philip Dick's policemen were always a threat, and his futures mostly bleak; such hallmarks were

soon represented in the fiction of some French writers, despite the scarceness of markets for such efforts. The pages of *Fiction* were open to many experiments, however, and for a long time, only two names stand out: Daniel Walther and Jean-Pierre Andrevon.

Both published extensively in the magazine, Walther taking an earlier start with stories whose preoccupation with style and wariness towards women seemed to echo editor Alain Dorémieux's own oeuvre. Walther has a liking for the uncanny and for heroic fantasy, but he let political themes seep through his works, and caused the first uproar among the old guard of *Fiction* readers with his anti-militarist story "Flinguez-moi tout ça" ("Shoot them all down") in November 1968: the story of a planetwide genocide is seen in graphic detail through the eyes of one of the paratroopers who have been forced to do the job. In a subsequent story, "La Terre à refaire" ("To make the Earth over")[2], the proud Terrans fall prey to alien guerrillas on their own home planet.

Jean-Pierre Andrevon wrote a lot of everything for *Fiction* in the early 70s, on top of his books for "Présence du Futur." Those included a novel, *Les hommes-machines contre Gandahar* (1969), vaguely environmentalist, and some stories more clearly so in two original collections, *Aujourd'hui, demain, et après* ("Today, tomorrow, and later", 1970) and *Cela se produira bientôt* ("This will soon happen", 1971). There are some angry political stories, and some instances of explicit sex: a lesson from the New Wave the French writers were quick to learn (if they ever needed to). Andrevon caused a lot of controversy and letters to the editor with another story in *Fiction*, "Le Temps du Grand Sommeil" ("The time of the Big Sleep")[3], which depicts the encroachment of a quiet right-wing dictatorship in France, which does away with all the leading left-wing intellectuals.

Although the pioneering work of Andrevon and Walther should be credited, the breakwater event probably has to be the 1973 publication of *Le Temps Incertain* ("Uncertain Time" . . . or "weather"), by Michel Jeury, in "Ailleurs et Demain," by then a prestigious series where Klein had showcased Dick, Herbert, Brunner, Farmer and Le Guin. Jeury was not the first French writer to be published in the series (there had been Léourier and Klein himself), but by Klein's own account, he was the first big discovery. The name was new to everybody, although Jeury had published two sf novels earlier, in 1960, under the Albert Higon alias. The second one, *Le machine du pouvoir* ("The machine of power"), was strangely reminiscent of *The World of Null-A*, revolving as it did around a giant computer whose task it was to select the ruler of the society where the novel is set. But Jeury claims never to have read van Vogt's book prior to writing his. In the sixties, he went back to the miscellaneous jobs he had to do for a living until relatively recently, and presumably slowly matured what was to become the most influential single French sf work of the decade.[4]

Shortly thereafter, Philippe Curval came back from the literary mainstream to publish two novels in "Ailleurs et Demain," *L'homme à rebours* ("Backwards man", 1974) and the much-acclaimed *Cette chère Humanité* ("Dear Mankind", 1975).[5] André Ruellan gave up his Steiner alias to publish *Tunnel*.[6] The younger Pierre Pelot waited until 1977 to burst onto the sf scene under his own name.

At the same time, new writers like Philip Goy, Jean-Pierre Hubert or Dominique Douay appeared in book form. By now, we have reached 1975, a banner year for French sf. It saw the first volume of *Retour à la Terre*, an original anthology series edited by Jean-Pierre Andrevon and published within "Présence du Futur," with French writers only (in

this first volume, in addition to Andrevon himself, one finds Walther, Curval, Pierre Marlson, and Francis Carsac, the only representative of the older school of sf). *Retour à la Terre* openly stressed environmentalist themes.

Univers 01 marks the start of another series, a quarterly magazine in paperback format edited by Yves Frémion and published by J'ai Lu, an otherwise conservative house. Frémion is in many ways an interesting figure; he travelled to the Heidelberg World Science Fiction Convention and was among those French fans who protested against American involvement in Vietnam; by 1975 he had become a well-known fan and a comics critic, and flaunted his left-wing viewpoints. *Univers* would publish about two French stories per issue and some articles, among new-wave stories in the majority from American original anthologies.

Two more anthologies should be mentioned: First, *Utopies 75,* published by "Ailleurs et Demain," edited by Michel Jeury (uncredited), which presents four views of a utopian future . . . supposedly. There was already a concern about presenting too much dystopia to the book buying public. Second, *Les Soleils Noirs d'Arcadie* ("The Black Suns of Arcadia"), with which Daniel Walther tried to emulate Ellison's *Dangerous Visions. Les Soleils Noirs* . . . was included in Opta's newly-launched "Nebula" book series, which had a policy of publishing new-wave or commercially difficult works, such as *The Book of Skulls* (Silverberg) or some of Malzberg's novels. Remarkably enough, French books were in the majority in "Nebula."

The year before, 1974, was when the French sf community became strong enough, or numerous enough, to gather in a congress, in Clermont-Ferrand. There were numerous discussions and round tables; a fairly complete account of it was given in the fifth issue of Bernard Blanc's fanzine, *Le Citron Hallucinogène* ("The hallucinogenic Lemon"). During the next few years, Bernard Blanc was to become a focal character in French sf, if only for the hostility he generated.

With Frémion, Bernard Blanc was at the forefront of those who articulated a school which came to be known as "Nouvelle Science Fiction Française", NSFF[7] for short. The terms "politique fiction" or "science fiction politique" were also used (although "politique fiction" is more often understood to denote a short-term extrapolation thriller).

In addition to his fanzine, Blanc, who would cite "militant politique" as his main occupation, was writing in *Fiction*'s departments in the mid-seventies. He was clamouring for an sf which would be "freed from technology, from dream and colonialism" and "freed from the Anglo-Saxon movement"; both quotes from his manifesto-cum-anthology *Pourquoi j'ai Tué Jules Verne* (later published by Stock in 1978, although it is mostly made up of letters and meeting transcriptions from 1975-76).

Blanc's idea was to allow French writers to publish, thus his refusal of English-language practitioners, who are also held guilty of generally right-wing positions (a common view of the Americans in France). In fact, even "progressive," forward-looking American writers usually are not interested in the kind of struggles Bernard Blanc was interested in. For instance, it is a very funny thing to watch Frémion and Blanc try to fit Norman Spinrad into their own political categories in the course of an interview held at one of the later Metz festivals, and published in *Alerte!*. Despite the fact that Spinrad is somebody they approve of (on the strength of *Bug Jack Barron*), their questions are always missing the point of what the writer was saying. All this in spite of the fact that

Frémion, in contrast to Blanc, can read English and is reasonably well-versed in American sf.

Bernard Blanc's theorizing found its practical application in 1977 when the maverick Swiss publisher Rolf Kesselring asked him to edit an sf series. Blanc went on to publish French-language writers only, and a large number of original anthologies, as well as a book-format magazine (the distinction is tenuous). In opposition to "Ailleurs et Demain," his series was christened "Ici et Maintenant" ("Here & Now").

In 1977, there were three anthologies (called "collectifs," a term rife with left-wing connotations), and one issue of the book-format magazine *Alerte!*; six more several-author books came out in the subsequent two years. There also was a programme of novels and story collections, which totalled twelve books, six of them in 1980, the year Kesselring went out of business. This was not the first time for Rolf Kesselring, who had had several encounters with censorship and bankruptcy. His were not the cheapest or the best-distributed of books, and as the ones Bernard Blanc selected belonged to an unappealing subgenre, the series was a commercial failure. Ironically, the workers would rather buy the books from Fleuve Noir, the vast majority of which Blanc despises. He makes exceptions for some of "progressive" writers (after all, even Andrevon wrote for Fleuve Noir, under the Alphonse Brutsche alias), but he stood against the old guard (Gabriel Jan, Maurice Limat, Jimmy Guieu . . .) with whom he had had an angry confrontation at a convention in 1975.

Brash, young (born 1951) and upwardly mobile, Blanc made enemies, of course. He also had some staunch supporters, most notably Yves Frémion (a collection of his stories was the first non-"collectif" book in "Ici et Maintenant"), René Durand, Maxime Benôit-Jeannin, as well as some friends who kept their distances from his stands: Michel Jeury, Pierre Pelot, Dominique Douay.

With the passage of time, it becomes harder to pinpoint the kind of sf Blanc was lobbying for. He did not exactly endorse didactic sf, although it seemed to turn out that way in practice; his precise political positions are hard to define, and the orthodox Marxists or the Trotskyists lambasted him for that. In the blurb to *Pourquoi J'ai Tué Jules Verne,* he is described as "gauchisant", which may mean leftist, or rather imply that he is very far to the left. The more to the left you were, the more fashionable it was, in the France of the early seventies. But by 1975 Maoism had definitely gone out of fashion—and I am not the only one to talk. Michel Jeury himself puts it this way, without giving the word "fashion" a derogatory charge: "New French political Science Fiction was a fashion, (not necessarily a bad one), but it should have appeared in 1970-72 (as an aftershock of May 68). It was late, out of synch."

Bernard Blanc's stance ws definitely anti-establishment, anti-paternalistic, but for a precise cause he latched onto the anti-nuclear movement, i.e. the opposition to the Giscardian programme of nuclear electrical power, then the most extensive in the West. (And even now that the Socialists are in power . . .) As it happens, the "green" faction has always been weaker in France than in Northern Europe (Germany, the Netherlands), and it would have needed help.

Anti-militarism had always been another strong trend in French sf (recall Andrevon and Walther), and indeed both issues are often linked in a rejection of "le nucléaire" ("nukes"). The opposition to the military crystallized around the proposed extension of the Larzac military training base in the Southern Massif Central, not too far from

Roquefort. For a few years, the barren plateau was the stage for tragicomic battles between the Army and a handful of environmentalists turned farmers, on a background of legal wrangles (everything ended in 1981 with the new Socialist government's decision to give up on the extension of the base). Strangely enough, this became a minor motif of French sf; an anthology was commissioned by a small publisher, Ponte Mirone (*Planète Larzac,* 1979).

Worse than political fuzziness, among the defects of Bernard Blanc pointed out by his adversaries were his relations with writers; there were Kesselring's unorthodox business practices, and the alleged tendency of Blanc to impose a specific style for his projects. He was not much preoccupied with literary aesthetic values, and favoured short-term extrapolation (the title "Here and Now" says it well). At the same time, he may (just) have been resented for the publicity he generated for himself and the style he was pushing. He did not invent political science fiction, nor did he publish many of its major works. He just called it new, made it explicit, irritating, being a catalyst much in the way that Andrevon had been on a smaller scale a few years before. People were foreced to define themselves with respect to him, which may have been good or bad, but is of help to anyone who attempts a classification of what went on in those turbulent years.

The story of Blanc as an editor gets more interesting in its last chapter: in 1979, in the same way as Jeury four years earlier with *Utopies 75,* he had perceived the need for a more palatable form of political sf, which would not endlessly dwell on the bleakness of the here-and-now, or the worse things to come (like military coups d'états or nuclear wars). He edited another book series for a newer publisher, Encre, that might have made it in 1979. The series was called "L'Utopie Tout de Suite" ("Utopia, Right now!"). Again, only French writers, but this time they were specifically asked to picture societies they thought desirable. There were five books in the series, including three novels. At least one work is excellent, Pierre Marlson's *Les Compagnons de la Marciliague.*

Michel Jeury's book in that series, *L'Univers Ombre,* marks in a way a turning point, as many of his later works will come back to the same theme of a libertarian Utopia (already featured in the novella "La fête du changement," in *Utopies 75*). The younger writer Lionel Evrard went so far as to dub the concept "Néo-Utopie," to set it apart from the traditional Utopia whose nature is usually totalitarian. All three novels in the series (the above mentioned by Jeury and Marlson, and one by Boireau) see anarchy as the desirable mode of political organization; a system resting primarily on small communities, close to their roots, where decisions can be taken in common, with confederal-type ties between them. Tellingly, no very large cities are featured in those books.

The publishing history of NSFF came to an end with the interruption of *Univers* and *Retour à la Terre* by their respective publishers in 1979, and the bankruptcy of both Kesselring and Encre in 1980. NSFF is still a household name, and most of the writers involved are still around (some books found a home with Opta, some with J'ai Lu). It certainly has left traces, even on those people who have got a "post-NSFF" label (e.g. Brussolo, Mondoloni). Needless to say, no militant goal has been achieved, and the French anti-nuke movement is as weak as it ever was!

Vocal though they may have been, Bernard Blanc and Yves Frémion cannot be, I think, seen as representative of French sf of the seventies, even if Frémion has shown more

culture and staying power than his younger colleague. Nor can we dismiss the political elements in the works of the period, wherever they were published: even when they profess not to be primarily about political themes, there is a characteristic political outlook to them. Of course, it is far from straightforward or monolithic, and a quick run-through of some significant works is in order before making any conclusions.

As we have seen, Jean-Pierre Andrevon for a time epitomized politically engaged sf. Very soon, he made it clear that the nature of his engagement was for a clean ecology before it was for a socialist society. The two, it must be said, go hand in hand in his mind—pollution being the byproduct of capitalist exploitation . . . Likewise, his fear of the military, and nuclear weapons, is accompanied by distrust of nuclear energy. In his later story "Les Retombées" ("Fallout"),[10] no one knows whether the explosion was caused by war or an accident, the only thing that is clear is that the military are taking over in the aftermath. Andrevon, as many, takes a stand against "le nucléaire". Still, it is surprising to see him go so far as to praise René Barjavel, usually associated with the other end of the political spectrum; but Andrevon approves of the older man's anti-technology views.

One cannot depict Andrevon as a "collectivist," or even socialist—although he uses the latter term. I see him as a bard of loneliness, of a dreadful and absolute isolation of the protagonist in most of his stories. Quite often, it is against a backdrop of a disappearance of the human race, while Mother Nature reasserts her control. Several stories harp on the return of wild animals, even dinosaurs ("Ils sont reve . . .", in *Univers*), to the streets of deserted cities. Published in *Utopies 75,* one of his best-known and most respected texts, "Le Monde Enfin!" ("At last, the world!") simply depicts the last few days of an old man on his last ride to the sea in a world where humans have considerably thinned out—kids just don't get born any longer. He dies before reaching the coast, and the last few pages are just spent watching all sorts of animals going about their business. Free at last. While the remaining humans live a rural, low-tech life, lions roam the brush-encroached Lyon-Marseille freeway.

This was supposed to be utopian . . . A typical Andrevon story is quite downbeat: the lone protagonist tries to meet other people, fails, dies. As early as in the "political" story "Le Temps du Grand Sommeil," the protagonist fails to link arms with others and take up the struggle, and in fact ends up selling out, under pressure. More tellingly even, look at "Le Dernier Dinosaure," written for a Kesselring anthology titled *Planète socialiste,* where writers were supposed to portray the triumph of socialism. The successful socialist, ecological, autogestionary France is only seen through the eyes of the last fascist, who is hiding away inside a hole dug in a slag-heap.

Compared with others, Andrevon does not make a heavy use of Dick-type motifs. Still, he has read, appreciated and commented on Philip Dick's work, and there are shades of *The Penultimate Truth* in "Durer, c'est s'économiser" ("Spare yourself if you want to last"), in which a noncom locks himself into a nuclear shelter with the wives and mistresses of a dozen officers, and makes each one believe that only the two of them are left alone after a nuclear disaster . . . and must sire a new human race, of course. This one was included in Andrevon's latest collection, titled *Il faudra bien se résoudre à mourir seul* ("You'll have to reconcile yourself to dying alone"). That's it in a nutshell!

In a more serious novel, his most noted novel, *Le désert du monde,* deals with fake universes: one day, the protagonist wakes up, without any memories, in post-apocalyptic

surroundings . . . which will turn out not be what they seem. Amnesia, another minor recurrent motif in modern French sf, is another way of cutting the characters off from human society, as memories are a guide to our relations with others, and a link to them through the images they imprint in our brain. Amnesia is also a way to de-humanize the characters, to "whiten" them, to use Nouveau Roman terminology.

If Andrevon is a staunch adversary of nuclear power, Philippe Curval was for much of the seventies the editor of the house magazine for EDF, the French power company. When his 1979 novel, *Le Dormeur s'Eveillera-t-il?* ("Will the sleeper awake?") appeared, it seemed a provocation: in an alternate France, solar power had prevailed as a solution to the energy problem. Meaning that huge satellites had been set up, beaming down to equally huge ground stations. However, the consequences on the environment were disastrous; a terrorist environmentalist organization knocked out the power plants and started a civil war which disorganized the whole country, in fact the larger whole of the European Community which is the backdrop to the novel. In his travels through all this, the protagonist discovers a new, promising energy source, which could eschew the drawbacks of solar power: you've guessed . . . nuclear fission. Small power stations could be built everywhere and provide current locally.

This did not endear Curval to the Bernard Blanc faction, even though the title for one of the early Kesselring collectifs *Ciel lourd, béton froid* ("Overcast sky, cold concrete") had been excerpted from his contribution to it. His point was altogether more subtle than support for nuclear power: solar or nuclear, it does not really matter; what is technically and politically bad is the concentration of power sources—electrical power, or the power over people—which can lead to larger-scale breakdowns, and the necessity to get the police to protect key facilities. France has a long history of political and economical centralization, and the struggle against central authority is a problem to be posed in different terms there than here; an uphill fight, but no less relevant for it. We are not so far from Yves Frémion's personal philosophy, roughly speaking "small is beautiful," although the two men are separated by many differences in style and opinion.

There are more epistemological themes to this novel than the satirical use of a parallel universe. The "sleeper" of the title is the mysterious figure of a huge baby who has been sleeping for years without waking, and may just be dreaming this world in its entirety (remember *The Man in the High Castle).* Many of Curval's works will go for stylistic fireworks, or surrealist devices; hre, however, I want to stick with his more idea-oriented books where, in keeping with his doctrines about not cluttering up books, Curval uses a sparser writing style.

Curval had made a big impression earlier, in 1975, with another topical book, *Cette Chère Humanité.* Like *Le Dormeur . . .*, it is one of the very few sf books set in a future Common Market, here abbreviated to Marcom (*Mar*ché *Com*mun). The two striking features of the Marcom are its isolation from the outside world by a huge force-field in the form of a wall (cf. the similar situation of the USA in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*), and laws forbidding people to put themselves at any kind of personal risk, to avoid costs to the Sécurité Sociale, the national health insurance system. The Sécurité Sociale of present-day France is resented as a bureaucratic and financial monster, although no one proposes to do away with it. Naturally, the walls of Europe have real-world equivalents, and are no surprise in their literalized form (see also Philip Coy's *Faire le Mur* or Dominique Douay's *Le principe de l'Oeuf*).

This wall is here as a result of the Marcom people's disgust and fear at the "payvoide" (= pays en voie de dévelopement), the developing countries they want to be isolated from. This obsession for safety and this self-involvement are despised by Curval, who describes the Marcom as a "bourgeois Utopia." His protagonists are rebels who will take those risks they should not, and an intelligence agent come from the developing countries.

In the stunning conclusion to *Brave Old World,* an experiment with temporal fields causes the whole Marcom to become enclosed within one bathroom, without any of its inhabitants noticing it. The Marcom has disappeared from the outside world, leaving an expanse of sea. A nice exercise in altered perceptions . . .[11]

Le Dormeur . . . and *Cette Chère Humanité* are to become volumes 1 and 3 respectively in a loose tetralogy titled "L'Europe après la pluie" ("Europe after the rain"). Volume 2 has been published in 1983, and is called *En Souvenir du Futur* ("In memory of the Future").[12] It revolves around another independent-minded protagonist, Georges Quillan. Now most sf protagonists have some independence of mind, but this guy, in a way, creates his own world: he is one of the few who possess the psychological ability to travel through time. He does so for a research centre whose objective is to facilitate the advent of the Marcom, still some time in the future. Quillan finally goes his own way, feeling little kin either for the "bourgeois Utopia" or its adversaries, the super powers. Remarkable is the way he travels time: he has to establish a temporal anchor in every epoch he visits, by having an affair with a woman. This fits perfectly Curval's own sensual approach to writing, and makes all those trips to the future sound rather nostalgic; the times to come feel like the past.

Many a reviewer noted the similarity between *En souvenir du Futur* and the seminal work of Michel Jeury, *Le Temps Incertain (Chronolysis).* Again, it is a complex book. This time, Jeury openly acknowledges his influences, opening the novel with a quotation from Philip Dick. The action starts in Garichankar, a hospital specialized in temporal research: the injection of a specific drug allows the subject to go back from the year 2060 by occupying the minds of persons who live in his past. In *Le Temps Incertain,* Robert Holzach goes back to the 1960s to take a back seat in the mind of Daniel Diersant, who works as an engineer for a corporation connected with HKH, the fascist industrial concern. HKH—for Harry Krupp Hitler—was dismantled long ago (1998) in Garichankar's universe, but it rises again along the divergent timelines of the chronolytic universe, the universe of all the possible and imaginary time-lines created by human minds. Daniel Diersant and his "rider" will fight within the chronolytic world to keep the common reality on its reasonably liberal tracks, and avoid the advent of HKH. But HKH's henchmen do act in the chronolytic universe, and the more powerful they get there, the closer they get to the surface of actual existence . . . Farthest from that surface is the utopian mental beach of "La perte en Ruaba", a chronolytic "place" not connected to any time. You may call it the deep end, and the temptation is strong to get out of the game that way, and never come back to the world of reality and Garichankar hospital. But is is also seen as a refuge, a utopia.

In a 1974 sequel, *Les singes du Temps* ("Time Apes")[13], Jeury develops with different characters and grimmer implications his theories about the chronolytic universe. As in the movie *Je t'aime, Je t'aime,* the book features many repetitions with only minor variations of one scene, a nuclear attack. It is probably what got the protagonist into the chronolytic universe in the first place (he is not quite sure, and the main interrogation of the book is

"Am I dead?"). Chronolysis through pain, often to death by fire, sends people into a subjective eternity at the instant of death, on a mental plane where various times can communicate: one meets there, for instance, victims of the Inquisition.

Jeury's politics are probably less ambiguous than those of Curval: once—briefly—a Communist Party member, despite his deep rooting in a rural background, he is a representative of the classical left in many respects. *Le Temps Incertain* is a fierce fight against corporate fascism; Jeury also seems to hold a traditional view of progress, not very tender on religion, often casting priests as frauds in other works. Jeury may not have taken part in Jules Verne's killing, but he certainly treats the old man in a cavalier way. See his more recent "Colmateurs" series, where a host of parallel universes are classified according to their Vernian or Dickian properties (the former inflexible, deterministic, the latter with a high incidence of psi powers).

Still, the main slogan launched by *Le Temps Incertain* was "Nous nous battrons avec nos rêves"—"We will fight with our dreams"—, a nicely ambiguous sentence: are dreams really a weapon, as it seems to imply, or simply the place where the battle has to be fought? Retrospectively, it provides a fitting epitaph for the militant aspirations of NSFF.

Jeury himself has now made a turn to intensive adventure sf writing, and while it still allows him to come up with some excellent books (the "Colmateurs" series, *L'Orbe et la Roue*), his career is taking a Philip José Farmer-ish slant. This orientation also leads him to depict happier societies, which in some cases can qualify as utopian visions (recall *L'Univers Ombre*). If Jeury's utopias do not turn sour, they do not seem very stable either: they are based on freedom, perpetually adapting to new situations. They share a rural, low-profile technology feel. Contrary to Andrevon, Jeury is actually a man from the countryside, and seems to enjoy it. At the same time, he does not romanticize it, and now seems to extol the liberating power of technology. A technology which should remain subservient to the needs of human life. Jeury is hard to pigeonhole: he is too prolfic, goes off in too many directions.

Dominique Douay has made varied use of Dickian motifs. His versatility, however, is tempered by a certain lack of originality. Although he is a brilliant writer, he sometimes seemed to fit all too neatly the shapes left by forerunners (say for instance J.G. Ballard for *La vie comme une course de chars à voile,* "Life as a sail-buggy race"). In some respects, the man is more interesting than the writer: in 1981, he became a top aide to the Socialist minister of Communication, Georges Fillioud, thus getting personally involved with the machinery of power. He had been a long-time party militant in Fillioud's precinct.

As a writer, his first claim to fame was "Thomas," a story set entirely within a man's mind, battling what first appears as a classical schizophrenic tendency, but turns out, in true sf fashion, to be an alien menace. Douay's presumed compromise with realpolitik did not prevent him from writing angry political stories too, such as "Venceremos",[14] featuring a Chilean political prisoner tortured by his jailers. (He is watched from a future from which the Pinochets of this world have been banished for good.)

Douay's novels tend to be less explicit, although they still deal with the fascination of power: *Strates* ("Strata")[15] shows a man going back into his own past, and is very similar to *Le Temps Incertain*. More interesting is *Cinq Solutions pur en finir* ("Five solutions to get it over with"),[15] a collection of stories with bridging material, which incorporates "Thomas." Locales are usually uncertain, bounded in size, closed-off; again the protagonists are prisoners within the walls of their own minds. This loneliness becomes

paroxystic in *L'Impasse-Temps* (a pun title: "Dead End Time" or "A Passtime".)[16] Freer from Ballardian or Jeuryian influences, it sounds like a reworking of the Faust myth: the protagonist discovers an alien artifact which allows him to stop time. His first impulse is to accumulate pranks, petty thefts and rapes, in the tableaux vivants that the streets of Paris have become for him; the price he has to pay is the transformation of his metabolism. He will have to spend more and more time outside of time, and to eat human flesh to sustain himself. Sooner or later, he will have to devour the whole of mankind.

Politics are present in all the works I have mentioned, "politics" in the sense that the political status quo is usually sharply criticized (as we know, those works which actually reinforce the status quo have a much easier time passing themselves off as non-political). However, while the general feeling in French sf seems to support some sort of left-wing anarchism, it is difficult to see the works as militant. Certainly, they do not offer solutions, and seldom engage in detailed analysis of what is wrong with our society.

It is of course difficult for a work of fiction to do that; the literary as well as commercial failure of most of the production of the NSFF school is there to attest to it. But even without a Bernard Blanc or a Jean-Pierre Andrevon to make them rudely explicit, there would have been a lot of political thought or attitudes in the French sf of the seventies.

If we then think for a minute about the attitudes of most of the writers, Curval appears much closer to the centre of the field than his contrast with trend-setters Fremion and Blanc makes him out to be: both Curval and Andrevon, for instance, write a science fiction which is first and foremost a literature of the individual. A wonderful quotation from Andrevon: "Tout ce qu'il veut, le camarade, c'est qu'on lui fiche la paix" (in "Le dernier dinosaure"): "All your 'comrade' wants is to be left alone."

Of course, this stress on the individual may be a constant of any intellectual's approach to the world. And those works, being sf, seldom lose sight of the world into which they plunge their individual. The unifying feature that emerges from an epistemological or political point of view is the isolation and claustrophobia of the protagonist; very often he is locked in imaginary universes, or universes whose relation to our own is badly defined. See Patrice Duvic's introduction to *Le Livre d'Or de la Science-Fiction: Jean-Pierre Andrevon*, a selection of Andrevon's short fiction:[17] "We (the French) are haunted by the idea of fake universes, by trickery and manipulation of reality, by the exploration of this intangible border between dream and reality which may well be the border between life and death." There must be something in our national culture which pushes us towards those themes.

Now in those fake universes, all incoming information from the senses is subject to doubt, and there really is no one else in the whole (micro) universe who can empathize with the protagonist: what can I name this but paranoia? From a purely clinical point of view it may be an exaggeration, but it provides an easy thread to connect Philip Dick, A.E. van Vogt, and the French national character.

The relationship between Philip K. Dick and paranoia seems to have been well mapped out; his constant uncertainty about truth, the truth of people's statements, or the truth of the universe itself, need not be documented. His characters are perpetually trying to escape the powers that be, which seem to be intent on mercilessly crushing the individual. For instance, the various police forces at work in Dick's books are always seen as

oppressive, quite at variance with what happens in the work of Robert A. Heinlein, say. Philip Dick went so far as to make the protagonist (hero?) of *Clans of the Alphane Moon* an explicit paranoiac, and one that seems quite sensible as soon as we get into the book. Come to think of it, he even gets his way in the end.[18]

A.E. van Vogt, too, wrote a novel, *Quest for the Future,* whose hero, Peter Caxton, a definite bastard in some respects, is also branded a paranoiac. Well, this does not deter him, he takes on the Masters of the Universe . . . and wins. There again van Vogt's heroes are in general fairly isolated figures, which no one can understand. Unless they meet their equals, who then turn out to be none other than their doubles (see *The World of Null-A*). This was not a new thing; even Heinlein did it in his story "They" (*Unknown,* 1941), but I get the feeling it was just a game, published as fantasy, far away from the main body of his work.

Putting the hero above the fray may be a constant of all power fantasies; the van Vogtian hero, though, does not feel like his Heinleinian counterpart: the latter is grateful to his training and his masters, gets married, fights for his buddies, etc. In short, the Heinlein individual would seem to thrive in an environment of a supporting cast, a sort of nuclear family where father-figures play a privileged role. I like to use Robert Heinlein in my comparisons, because in some ways I see him as the most American figure in American sf. Significantly enough, Heinlein was never much appreciated by French sf critics, and is only doing moderately well with the book-buying public.

When we come to why Philip K. Dick clicked with the French, we do have to take into account the fact that his constant search for truth among illusions may have made him more attractive to the more intellectually-inclined French sf critics (Gérard Klein being a prime example). But I also think that French culture has a more paranoid bent which made it more vulnerable to the kind of visions presented by Philip Dick or by van Vogt.

Substantiating that claim properly would take me into the dangerous waters of sociology, but it is my impression, having lived in both countries, that more defiant attitudes prevail, for instance in the relation between the French and their government. It would be unthinkable to ask people to perform their tax calculations themselves, because taxpayers are supposed to fight the taxman. Such things as exams or public transportation are—justifiably—organized with the prevention of cheating in mind, another sign of mistrust. I could go on with remarks on such things as the absence of name tags in banks or large administrative offices, or even the layout of public toilets.

Transportation makes me think a lot, as I have travelled more than my share. While America has a reputation for unfettered individualism, expressed in the automobile, a motor car makes good economic sense only for groups of two to four persons, while a train, even though it carries many more people, will often be cheaper for an isolated individual. A crowd, come to think of it, is the perfect place to get lost in, and this is what the characters of Philip Dick or of French sf writers will do, in sharp contrast to the Heinlein individual, who seems to express the American brand of individualism.

Lost in a crowd, the character displays few or no memorable outward characteristics; the protagonist will be a point of view more than a character.The inability to create memorable characters has been a reproach made to modern French sf. In many texts, the isolation and inwardness I mentioned are just transferred to the universe of the story. A paroxystic example is Dominique Douay's award-winning short story "Thomas," set inside the protagonist's mind, represented as a white featureless plain, with a low

overhanging sky.

Politically, this fits in well with the French anarchist tradition, built around the rejection of State, Army, and Church: it usually implies a very defiant attitude towards the family as an institution. By contrast, the American libertarians seem to be heirs to the Frontier mentality; settling the country involved settling *down* after a while, and raising a family.

Interestingly, religion is where the biggest rift occurred between Philip Dick and the French. During Dick's 1977 Guest of Honour speech at the Metz Festival, more than half the audience walked out of the room. It was surprising, since Dick was the main attraction of the Festival, much more so than the other main guest, Harlan Ellison. Granted, the speech was tediously delivered, Dick was not at his best, every sentence had to be read twice, first by him, then by a translator. But mainly, the French could not stomach Dick's references to religion, to us a sure sign of his mental decay. The key here is probably the identification in France of Christianity with the Catholic Church, traditionally associated with authority.[19] The French knew Dick as a left-winger, "un homme de gauche," and being religious did not square with that.

But I think that the concern with the isolated individual is more relevant to French sf than a specific left-wing ideology of any kind. Dominique Douay is probably the only one among the major French writers to have a long-standing fidelity to a political party (and even though the Parti Socialiste is on the left, it is the least ideological of them all). Curval and Frémion both describe their views as anarchistic; Andrevon is left-wing ecologist, and more and more of a maverick; Jeury seems content to write his books and stay in his home in the country.

This concentration on the isolated individual explains the consistent failure of NSFF to depict utopias, or at least happy and desirable societies: if one wants to allow for a certain amount of reader identification, the reader will have to side with the maverick viewpoint protagonist, who is not going to fit into any society; even open-ended anarchistic utopias will not help much. It is much easier to cast him as a rebel, and thus as a rebel against a dystopia; unless one opts for a definitely amoral point of view, but then the odds on an uplifting work are rather low.

This was not for lack of trying: a very enlightening detail slips by in a call for stories by Michel Jeury and Philippe Curval for a ten-years-after follow-up to *Utopies 75,* to be titled *Utopies 85:* they specifically ask the writers "not to subvert the theme." Not to turn their apparent Utopia into a dystopia, in other words. Recall that when Jeury put together *Planète Socialiste* for Bernard Blanc, Andrevon produced a story where the viewpoint protagonist is a fascist; and most of the other stories took a less than utopian view of socialism. Similarly, *Utopies 75* was a mixed bag.

Subsequently, the commercial potential of French political sf is limited, since the book-buying public clearly favours optimistic books, and the political outlook of that kind of sf will always have to be critical of something. By contrast, René Barjavel, who shares with Andrevon a basic disgust of technology, is very supportive of paternalistic values, and sells well; one has of course to take into account the fact that he has been around for longer, and is not marked as a genre sf writer. But *he* claims the sf label.

I do not regret this situation—I have come to think that utopias are dangerous, and dystopias more enlightening, so I guess that, personally, I will remain part of the core of people who read and support French sf—even try to bring it to the heathen!

Let me finally give a glimpse of the current swing of things in French sf. Significant changes are to be expected in the coming years, as the mass-production sf adventure series, Fleuve Noir "Anticipation," has considerably upgraded the level of its books, while at the same time a few writers like Bruno Lecigne or Serge Brussolo claim a concern for form and images more than for political content. Their filiation with the previous decade is still apparent; will it fade as a presumed new school emerges?

NOTES

1 Editions A&A Infos, 1981.
2 *Fiction,* January 1969.
3 *Fiction,* August 1971.
4 Translated as *Chronolysis,* MacMillan.
5 Translated as *Brave Old World,* Allison & Busby.
6 Robert Laffont, "Ailleurs et Demain," 1973.
7 The acronym was coined by Francis Valéry, briefly an enthusiastic supporter of the movement, later a chief detractor.
8 Including the fifth volume of *Retour à la Terre,* rejected by Denoël (Présence du Futur). It was renamed *Avenirs en Dérive:* "Futures Adrift."
9 *Sphère* n° 9, November 1983.
10 in *Dans les Décors Truqués* ("Among false backdrops"), Denoël, "Présence du Futur", 1979.
11 The theme of transformation of reality was gone into much deeper in Curval's 1980 *La face cachée du désir* ("The dark side of desire"), Calman-Lévy.
12 Robert Laffont, "Ailleurs et Demain."
13 ibid.
14 in *Univers,* 1975.
15 Both from Denoël, "Présence du Futur," 1978.
16 Denoël, "Présence du Futur," 1981.
17 Presses-Pocket, 1984.
18 A recent article gives a Marxist view of Dick's paranoid slant: Carl Freedman, "Toward a Theory of Paranoia: the Science Fiction of Philip K. Dick", in *Science Fiction Studies* no 32, March 1984.
19 Church and State only got separated in 1905.

Born in Dresden in 1950, Erik Simon studied electrical engineering and physics at the university there, then worked in a concrete factory. Since 1974 he has been a reader for the New Berlin Publishing Company, specializing in foreign sf, particularly from socialist countries. He himself has published many short stories, often playing humorous games with genre conventions and parodying them. As an editor he has been responsible for several anthologies, of Bulgarian, Polish, Soviet, and Czech sf, also of sf from Britain and America.

New Wine in Old Bottles: SF in the German Democratic Republic

ERIK SIMON

The metaphor I use in this title may be neither the most correct nor the freshest one, but since I have risked it, I shall see what I can do with it. Anyway, nobody would expect an essay on wine in this journal; but I fear my theme might be quite as unexpected: I'm going to write about science fiction literature in the German Democratic Republic—a few words about its development, some more about its present situation, and, most of all, about two authors, Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller. They are the other prominent married couple in GDR sf, maybe not yet as famous as the first one . . . You have never heard of that first couple? So I must start from the beginning. It won't be long tale, though I call it:

The Long Beginning of GDR Science Fiction

The beginning of sf in the GDR was a long one, for it was rather slow. After 1945 there was next to nothing to start with in the field of sf, as the technocratic and nationalist sf by writers like Hans Dominik, favoured by the Nazis, was clearly not the right foundation on which to build the literature of a new society, while the works of the few progressive, humanistic German pre-war sf masters (Kurd Lasswitz et al) had either been neglected or even suppressed during the Third Reich, and were unknown to most readers. So the very first sf novel published in 1949, Ludwig Turek's *The Golden Sphere (Die goldene Kugel),* had nearly no connection with any existing sf tradition at all. It was a rather naïve story of how aliens helped to defeat capitalism in the U.S.A.

Throughout the fifties only a few sf novels by GDR writers were published, most of them formally of the Dominik type (some invention or a technical project; the struggle for its possession or about its use in industry; adventure, detective or espionage plot) with the nationalist orientation replaced by an anti-fascist democratic or socialist one. In this decade, the first foreign sf, both classics and contemporaries, appeared on our book market, especially Jules Verne and some Soviet authors, followed by Polish (Lem) and Czech ones in the sixties.

Due to this literary influence and to the first practical successes of astronautics, in the sixties the number of GDR sf books increased, and space flight became the dominant theme initially in quite the same old technological-adventurous manner—with extensive descriptions of rockets, the heroes saving each other perpetually from the dangers of space including meteorite attacks, and occasionally some spies hiding aboard "our" space ships. In general, GDR sf repeated the plots that had been in vogue in Soviet sf ten to fifteen years before, and known in English and American sf even earlier. Also in the sixties, aliens began to appear in our sf in greater numbers; all of them were very much like men and usually had some social conflict on their home planet; but with some help from the brave Earthmen the oppressed and progressive classes used to win victories so easily one could only wonder why they had not solved their problems long ago, alone. (Note the inversion of rôles in comparison with Turek's novel.)

Some of those books have remained readable as entertainment, but only in the second half of the sixties were the first few sf novels by GDR writers published which had any literary significance at all. It is notable (and the first justification for the title of this essay) that, unlike in other countries, the rise of artistic quality in our sf was not connected with the discovery of new themes, new dimensions, but with the more convincing presentation of human characters and conflicts in the well-known standard situations. For example, in Herbert Ziergiebel's novel *The Other World (Die andere Welt,* 1966) the theme of people's struggle for survival in a wrecked space ship en route in the Solar system, and their final rescue, was treated not as an adventure story but as a psychological drama. In his fourth (and, until now, last) novel *Nabou* (1968) Günther Krupkat used the old motif of a camouflaged alien observer, but the alien undercover—in this case, a robot installed by benevolent aliens who visited the Earth several millenia ago—is watched, and finally unmasked, by a man in love who mistakes him for his rival; thus the basic plot, though set in an sf surrounding, is the same as it might be in a contemporary novel. (*Nabou* also contains some more sf-like considerations of cybernetics, androids etc., but these are presented mainly in an abstract way, not as literary images.) Something completely new to our readers at that time, was humorous and satirical sf by GDR writers such as Gerhard Branstner.

The Seventies, and the Present State of the SF Short Story in the GDR

The breakthrough came at the beginning of the seventies when in the GDR the number of new sf books published annually doubled, a lot of new writers entered the field (some of them, such as Rank or the Brauns, coming from other areas of literature), and the publishing houses finally started to present foreign and classic sf on a somewhat larger scale, and systematically. The short story, which always has played an important rôle in sf elsewhere but which (due to the old German tradition and to the early GDR misinterpretation of sf as a sort of prophecy) had been almost absent in our sf, began to flourish, and for some time most of the new achievements of GDR sf were reached in this area. (There is no specialized sf magazine in the GDR; short stories are published mainly in anthologies and collections, some also in non-specialized magazines or separately in thin booklets.) In a few novels like Heiner Rank's *The Impotence of the Almighty Ones (Die Ohnmacht der Allmächtigen,* 1973, a sort of socialist, and more optimistic counterpart to Huxley's *Brave New World),* but mainly in short stories, GDR writers explored, employed, and appropriated the canon of themes and motifs formerly known only from foreign

examples. In this process some thematical lines were almost completely neglected, e.g., there are no Space Operas, Star Wars, Galactic Empires, no alien invaders, intelligent parasites and so on in our sf, while the space-flight theme in general and encounters with extraterrestrial life forms, intelligent or not, are most popular; the topos of fantastic inventions changing the hero's, or the World's, fate appears quite often, but Mad Scientists are very rare, as are enslaved or revolting robots, mutant monsters, post-doomsday stories or some subspecies of the time travel theme (thus the whole Time Patrol complex appeared only in the form of a parody).

This absence of some motifs and the prevalence of others has at least three reasons. First, though in the GDR sf is not considered a strict prophecy of the future any more, still some concepts don't fit into our picture of what should, or even just might, be possible at all in whatever future may come, i.e. they are ruled out not only by the communist ideology to which most of the authors and all of the publishing houses hold, but also by the general humanistic considerations that war, violence, racism, etc., should not be glorified.

These concepts usually fail to be at least logically reasonable, they have no epistemologically useful connection with reality, and they do best in stories designed for pure, and cheap, entertainment, i.e. their quantitative prevalence elsewhere is usually dictated by the market. But GDR sf writers—and this is the second reason—are quite free from such demands of the market, for there is not much economic competition among them. Sf is one of the most popular genres in the GDR, the first edition of every sf book, usually 20,000 to 50,000 copies, is sold out within a few days, reprints are quite frequent, and often even hardcovers reach a total print-run of about 100,000 copies within a few years, most of which are sold inside the GDR with its population of 17 million. The number of copies printed is limited less by the capacity of the market than by the (alas, also usual) paper shortage in GDR. Thus the market does not too distinctly favour easy reading stuff, nor has the average author to write much and fast to make a living.* There is, of course, some bad and a lot of mediocre sf in the GDR, but writers are limited rather by their own intentions and artistic ability than by economic needs.

And third, joining the game late has some advantages, too. The GDR writers who entered the field in the seventies could choose from the rich funds of international sf the themes, motifs, and gadgets most suitable for their artistic purpose, for the problems interesting them, and for their intended message. They have added no great discoveries of new themes, and few inventions of new styles and modes, but rather adapted to their goals what they found. (Nevertheless, one can find in GDR sf new variations of old themes as well as some rather original ideas and images in detail.) More than in sophisticated ideas, speculations and plots *per se,* many of our best sf writers are interested in the moral, psychological and philosophical consequences of those ideas. Very often sf motifs are used to create extreme situations or poetic metaphors to analyze human characters, their moral principles and their social relations (usually exemplified in small, more or less

* One new book every several years may be enough. At present, there are about thirty authors writing sf regularly, and about a dozen new sf books by GDR writers are published annually (plus another dozen foreign and pre-war books, plus numerous reprints. The GDR is a small country, and to return to this comparison once again—our sf seems to me quite like our wine that grows in Saxony and Thuringia: we are consuming more than we can produce, but despite its small quantity, our own product is, though not very famous, not bad at all, and of a rather peculiar taste.

isolated groups), or to explore and discuss aspects of Man's relation to Nature. These I consider the two main directions in which the interests and ambitions of our sf writers go (especially in the area of short stories), and hence follows the preference for space-flight themes (which are rich in extreme situations) and the motifs of encounters with alien beings of all kinds (which may be metaphors for Man himself, or for biological, psychical, social and moral principles contrasting with Man's, or for the forces of nature).

Among the short-story writers of this type I count Bernd Ulbrich, whose two story-collections show a special tendency to discuss moral questions and the position of the individual in society; Alfred Leman who also wrote two story collections (the first in collaboration with Hans Taubert), both of the presenting really interesting, complex and convincing images of extraterrestrial life forms, but also of the conflicts among scientists confronted with the Unknown (the author graduated as a biologist); eventually myself who most shamelessly exploits hackneyed standard situations and other people's ideas to give them an unexpected turn, or to discover and to show some new meaning in them, or simply to ironize; Klaus Möckel, another moralist with a tendency to (not very sharp and bitter) satires; and the Steinmüllers. But before I can say more about the Steinmüllers, I must mention that other married couple in our sf, Johanna and Günter Braun, and explain in a short note:

Why This Essay is Not About the Brauns.

Again, I can name three reasons. There is a general consensus among critics that the Brauns are the most important and most interesting sf writers of the GDR. They are the only ones who have attracted the attention of critics outside the German language area, and there is an essay by Darko Suvin about them ("Playful Cognizing or 'Technical Errors' in Harmonyville: The SF of Johanna and Günter Braun", *SF Studies,* 1981) which gives a good impression of their work and to which I might add only some remarks of minor importance.

Besides numerous non-sf books, the Brauns have published one fantastic novel, two sf novels, and two collections of sf short prose (most recently, *Der Utofant,* 1981), plus some more sf books in Federal German publishing houses. They present their often satirical messages in a technique of allegorical images derived from the German fantastic romantic literature of the 19th century, and they have developed an individual, unique style of slight but complex irony and playfulness which—as Darko Suvin states—makes their voice recognizable among all other authors, an achievement seldom found in sf. For them, the title of my essay does not fit; they don't use "old bottles" made by others. But (my second reason) beginning with their short novel *Conviva ludibundus* (1978), I experience a slowly growing discomfort in reading the works of the Brauns without being able to locate its source exactly. I feel this playfulness directed against all sorts of schematism, against external and psychically internalized barriers, is itself becoming a scheme and a barrier. Besides, there is a growing tendency of the Brauns to make their heroes act irrationally or even foolishly just to show what original and unschematic characters they are; the style, the artistic method become more important than the contents of the text. Simply, in some stories I cannot find out any more what in fact the authors are trying to say about reality (while it is very clear in some others). This may be my fault, but then I am not qualified to write about the Brauns in more detail. And, to speak of taste, I like to hear a highly individual voice, but I don't like to hear it repeat similar tunes all the time.

Third, I have the impression that the Brauns are aleady leaving the field of sf proper, and thus, the matter of this essay. They still employ typical sf gadgets, but in their most recent works they are right on their way into the field of pure grotesque, or maybe back to the allegoric fantastic literature through which they entered sf and which they have never completely abandoned. If this is true, the Brauns were the most important GDR sf writers in the seventies. In the eighties the Steinmüllers might eventually pretend to this position.

The Short Stories of Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller

Angela Steinmüller, born 1941 in Schmalkalden (Thuringia), is a mathematician; her husband Karlheinz, born 1950 in Klingenthal (in the South-West corner of Upper Saxony), is a physicist and a graduate philosopher. Both are living now as freelance writers in Berlin, and, unlike the Brauns, they started their career as authors in the field of sf, having published no other fiction. (Karlheinz, though, has published several scientific works concerning physics, philosophical aspects of science, and ecology, as well as some essays on sf and its relation to science; together they have written a popular biography of Charles Darwin forthcoming in 1985.) While the style of the Brauns is hard to define, the sf by the Steinmüllers is clearly of the classic type. They have always adopted the traditional forms of narration and presentation; the plot is usually—even in tales without much external action—the backbone of their texts, and centered around a main hero or a small group of protagonists; their short stories often are built towards a last-line point, though the point of the plot is not necessarily the same as that of the problem involved. The themes are derived from the traditional thematic complexes, but it is obvious that the Steinmüllers don't follow the actual local fashions (possibly because they can read several foreign languages and are better aware than most other GDR sf writers of the rich thematic possibilities the universe of sf offers); aliens and extraterrestrial life forms, so much in vogue in GDR until now, very seldom appear in their stories, and never in their best ones, while the authors very often employ some fantastic invention or technology to analyze its effects in our world. More than the rest of the sf writers in the GDR, they have contributed really fascinating sf ideas and images.

By now they have published two story collections, *The Last Day on Venus (Der letzte Tag auf der Venus,* 1979) written by Karlheinz alone, and, in collaboration, *Skew Lines (Windschiefe Geraden,* 1984), plus two radio plays and a few more short stories published in anthologies, in a booklet series, and in a magazine. Among those separate short stories there is one written by Angela alone (some more of hers will follow). A comparison of the pieces written by one author alone, with the more frequent collaborations, indicates that Karlheinz seems to be the more productive generator of ideas, plots and images, while Angela's influence can be detected in a growing density of the emotional atmosphere of the stories, in a more subtle and convincing presentation of characters, and maybe sometimes in a more disciplined construction of the plot. (Her story "Time Cure"—"Zeit-Kur", 1983—tells of a contemporary woman transported through time by some error of strange, unemotional and incomprehensible future scientists and sent back without understanding what's happening to her, but cured from a seemingly uncurable disease. In its contemporary, realistic parts it contains one of the best-described characters in GDR sf, but the sf component is rather weak and makes the whole story lose some of its charm.)

The Last Day on Venus by Karlheinz Steinmüller, containing nine stories, is still quite

heterogeneous in quality, style, and the kind of problems treated. Though one cannot find any really bad pieces in it, some of the stories don't offer much significance and relevance behind the plot and the sf ideas themselves, and some are incomplete in the construction of plot and in the narration, so some strong effects and images are thrown away. On the other hand, this volume contains, with "The Audience" ("Die Audienz"), one really good and well-told joke (though it is not really an sf story: to get to a royal audience, the hero has to pass a Kafkaesque maze of passports, checks, counterchecks, certificates, etc.; in the end, the identity of that victim of bureaucracy is revealed); a successful example of the idea-as-hero type story called "Duel of the Tigers" ("Duell der Tiger"—about a computer specialist knowing all the tricks to gain and keep power in a world of computocracy who finally is defeated by a mock software personality he himself created long ago); "Disduplication" ("Zerdopplung") to which we shall return later; and "The Dream of the Big Red Spot" ("Der Traum von Grossen Roten Fleck") which is one of the most successful stories in GDR sf and often anthologized abroad. Franz Rottensteiner calls "The Dream . . ." "an original and terrible dystopia; in the world described, all human relations have died off, and love has become a mechanical and exactly regulated affair. By a woman revolutionary approaching him under the cover of mechanical love, the hero is awakened to a new, more beautiful life."* But maybe this experience, too, was arranged for him by the almost omnipotent cybernetical system that so perfectly takes care of the well-being of its inhabitants to whom it is simply the World . . .

All these stories, the best as well as the less perfect ones, show the author's acquaintance with international sf, especially Anglo-American and Soviet (though in the case of the story last mentioned, the whole atmosphere reminds one rather of the works of the Austrian writer Herbert W. Franke who lives in the Federal Republic of Germany).

The collection *Skew Lines,* written by Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller together, shows further improvements in artistic skill. The volume (by the way, a small hardcover edition with precious illustrations by Wolfgang Spuler) contains ten stories, and at least six of them are true masterpieces. We shall concentrate on these six, though the rest, too, are very readable, entertaining and often built on interesting, though minor, ideas.

Two pieces in this collection, the title story "Skew Lines" and "Under a Black Sun," are similar to most of Karlheinz's earlier works in using a whole ensemble of traditional sf gadgets and constellations, and being centered around a situation rather than around a problem or a character. In the title story, a spaceship from Earth flying through deep space locates—for the first time—an alien ship without getting an answer from the aliens or being able to reach their ship (for the trajectories are askew); in "Under a Black Sun" a Terran research station on a far planet is visited by aliens. In both stories a surprising turn soon follows, and more than one. What seemed a standard situation at first, proves to be a very different kind of conflict with no aliens involved at all: a conflict between the human beings and their android partners aboard the Terran ship, slightly but fatally different in psyche in the title story, and in the other example, between men of different epochs (for what seemed to be extraterrestrials turn out to be people from a distant future who nevertheless are very alien in mind as are the androids in the first story). The authors make the best of the emotional potential of both situations. In the first case they evoke an atmosphere of psychic stress among the people on their long, eventless journey through

* *Quarber Merkur* 54, 1980, p.75.

the void, an atmosphere that makes the reader feel the hidden tension between men and androids. In "Under a Black Sun" they show the terror of people who have to end their lives in a time and a world alien and repelling to them, revealing only in the end which of the two groups has involuntarily travelled through time. In both stories, the contradictory positions have their own and relatively equal justifications; in both the tones are soft and leave one to guess more than is said *expressis verbis*.

Three masterpieces in the 1984 collection are all of one type which the Steinmüllers have not invented but introduced to GDR sf, and which shows them at their best. An earlier example of the same kind was already mentioned above: "Disduplication"* from the 1979 volume. Though it is not as perfectly written as the three more recent texts, it shows the structure of the whole category very clearly. A transport system (first described by Norbert Wiener, I think) "beaming" a person (or anything else) in the shape of pure energy and information to a receiver/re-integrator station, is used, or rather misused, by the hero to duplicate himself. He thinks this a good idea to win time for his many interests, but soon one of the identical doubles finds himself confronted with the problems which usually occur in such stories: there is only one girl-friend for the two, etc. So he hunts his counterpart to solve the problem one way or another. More than the solution of the conflict, this hunt is important in the story, for it leads the hero through a world which has been changed by this very sf technology of "beaming" instead of conventional travelling. In a sequence of scenes, or rather spotlights, different aspects of this world and this technology are demonstrated: the possibility to eliminate cybernetically, in the process of re-integration, diseases or defects of the body, to slow the process of aging by the same method, to store one's personality in a data bank and wait for better, or more interesting, times; the local disintegration of towns, and a hermit living right in the middle of a populated area but at a place without a transmitter station; the "jumpers", hordes of (really or artificially) young people beaming themselves from place to place at random without ever choosing their destiny, knowing no more sense in life than permanent motion and change of local impressions . . .

The same method of showing the world (or a part of it) transformed by a single innovation, and of analyzing the psychological, moral, and social implications of that innovation (usually a fantastic technology), is adopted by Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller in their stories "Reservation," "The Black Box" and "The Eye that Never Sheds a Tear"; but while in "Disduplication" the plot and the hero's dilemma do not always fit with the kaleidoscope of alterations in the world, in the three new stories all components form one inseparable and artistically homogeneous complex of images and meanings, and the hero's individual problem is not only just another aspect of, but a metaphor and a leitmotif for the situation of the society and the world presented.

"The Reservation" ("Das Reservat") is an island on which people are immortal and forever young but not exactly people any more. When dying or even growing old, their personality is transferred into a new body, but as there are no "empty" human bodies available, they live their second, third and all following lives in the bodies of apes or even baboons. The transmission from one body to the next is carried out automatically and at a distance by a centre to which the "apes" have no access. The protagonist (in a chimpanzee

* The German title "Zerdopplung" is a neologism mixing the word "Verdopplung" (duplication) with the prefix "zer-" that most often indicates destruction, damage or disintegration.

body) is waiting and searching for his beloved woman who once rejected eternal youth and preferred to grow old in her human body off the island, but whom he still hopes to arrive some day or at least to make contact with across the sea. In this isolated world which in fact (though the authors don't discuss this at length) is an sf incorporation of metempsychosis, the principle of karma works the other way: after a few avatars the spiritual and moral shape of most inhabitants of the reservation tends to equal their physical appearance, a change not only caused by direct influence from the body but, above all, by the loss of any goal to live for and towards. Most needs and pleasures are reduced to the purely animalistic level, useless destruction and scuffles are considered usual, killing each other is a sport of no moral significance at all (immediate rebirth being granted), the sense of time gets lost, and all thoughts are present-oriented (a psychic regresson also demonstrated, e.g. in *The Snail on the Slope* by the Strugatskys). There are many more thematical and moral aspects of this idea than the Steinmüllers have explored, but those present in the story are fitted well into the plot, e.g. one aspect—the loss of the sense of time—is employed at the point in the story when the protagonist suddenly realizes that he left the world of human beings and the woman he has been waiting for all the time 124 years ago.

In "The Black Box" ("Der Schwarze Kasten") the fantastic element is the "shunt," a very small computer connected to a person's brain to make him (or her) act in the most efficient and perfect way. There are different shunts for all kinds of work, action and situation from getting up in the morning to making love in the night, and at the time the action of the story takes place, the whole society is so much "shunted" that without a shunt on his head everybody feels helpless and unhappy, unable to think clearly. But with the right shunt, everybody can do everything, so in this world professions are perpetually changed in a sort of lottery, and we find the hero of the story in the rôle of a detective who has to hunt the "Black Shunt," a "criminal" shunt reproducing itself. Finally, he finds the Black Shunt, or thinks so, but there is one explanation (what kind of shunt the Black Shunt might be) suggested by the point of the plot and another, more sophisticated one hidden in the story itself; more than this, a third meaning is created by the possibility of seeing the Black Shunt as a metaphor for the whole system which, for the sake of perfection, makes people just an appendix of their shunts.

In another story, the somewhat more complex fantastic innovation is called "nuclear peace" and "plutoniocracy" (sic), meaning an extremely high concentration of nuclear technology and, consequently, of radioactive pollution in an imaginary Latin American country where a relatively high living standard is paid for by an incredibly high rate of disease; this whole complex finds its most pointed literary expression and incorporation in a device that gives the story its focus and its title: "The Eye that Never Sheds a Tear" ("Das Auge, das niemals weint")—a detector for alpha, beta and gamma rays implanted in the forehead and connected with the brain's visual centre of most people in that country (to help them avoid the most polluted areas and radioactive things). Different aspects of that country including its social order and institutions are shown in the story, but the author's attention is concentrated on the fate of the woman protagonist who derives, from the visual impressions of her hypersensible Third Eye, strong emotions and a feeling of beauty in the midst of an ugly world eaten, literally and symbolically, by cancer. To her, radioactivity has quite the same effect as a strong narcotic (e.g. LSD) including the fatal consequences to health and psychic integrity. Her individual conflict and the state of

her country are related (though only by reflection of the authors and their hero) to a third level of meaning: to motifs from the ancient *Popol Vuh* of the Mayas.

The last story from the recent collection by Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller which I want to mention here is "Clouds More Subtle than a Breath" ("Wolken, zarter als ein Hauch"). While in the three stories above, individual fates were demonstrated both in their own right and to exemplify a change in the world, "Clouds . . ." is all focused on the internal, spiritual conflict of the hero, an inventor who feels responsible for the possible misuse of his invention. This invention is shown in action, too; it is a "skyer," a device to ski upon the clouds; it does not alter the world, but it is fatal for the inventor and for those who risk their lives in the ecstasy of gliding through the sky.

It might be a coincidence, but the five stories last mentioned (one from the earlier and four from the recent collection) that have so much in common in style and method, all contain—some in the very centre of the narration, some on the edge—the motif of mania and addiction: in "Disduplication", the "jumpers" who find no other sense in life but permanent change of place and situation at random; in "Clouds . . .," the dangerous ecstasy of movement and of being high above the world of everyday trouble, blended with a strong feeling of freedom; in "Reservation," the pure animalistic pleasure of youth, health, and strength eclipsing all other human needs and goals; the strong desire to see the beautiful, bright universe of nuclear radiation in "The Eye that Never Sheds a Tear"; and even the shunting in "The Black Box" where the mania for perfection and easy solutions has become the social norm and where people without a shunt experience just the same emotions as an addict without his drugs. I don't know if the authors themselves were aware of how frequently this motif appears in their stories; only in "The Eye that Never Sheds a Tear" does it lie on the very surface of the narration. Neither do I think this a case for psychoanalysis (in which I don't believe much). But it cannot be by chance alone that the motif appears exactly in that peculiar type of story; it seems to be a favoured, though not necessary, means to put the hero's conflict in relation to the world of the story, and the "mania" appears as a person's or a society's effort to escape from the real, ordinary world of ugliness, poverty, routine, inefficiency, and death. As one might expect, this way always leads to a dead end.

Andymon: a New Start for Utopia in GDR SF

In 1982, between the two story collections, the Steinmüllers published their first sf novel, *Andymon*. It is based on one fundamental and, in this case, strictly technical idea, but this one branches into a galaxy of subsequent ideas, motifs, and images. While in the GDR such a density of original details and variants is sometimes found in short stories by the Steinmüllers, Alfred Leman and eventually a few other authors, it is exceptional in our sf novels. As in their best stories, the Steinmüllers here demonstrated their ability not only to create ideas but also to follow them up in different directions and to explore their moral consequences and philosophical implications without letting the whole network of branches slip out of sight. It is true that in their first novel this talent of the authors shows to less consequence than in their best stories. The novel contains some unevenness of style and some all too visible sutures between the thematic as well as the narrative sequences, and it is also true—as F. Dael has stated*—that sometimes "the traces of an abstract

* in F. Rottensteiner's *Quarbar Merkur* 57, 1982. I am citing from Roelof Goudriaan's English translation of this review published in his fanzine *Shards of Babel*—13, Oct. 1984, Lelystad (the Netherlands). Thanks for all permissions given.—E.S.

design shine through the action (. . .)—intentions are becoming too clear when opinions, views and ways of life are exemplified in whole groups (. . .) instead of in separate characters, and the rational construction becomes rationalistic." But nevertheless the complexity of *Andymon* is far above the average standard of sf in the GDR, and though it is still a long way from the level reached by authors like Lem or Le Guin, it can stand any comparison with the majority of better-known English and American sf novels.

To tell the contents of *Andymon,* I shall cite the review by F. Dael which gives a good picture and fits my own point of view; then add some more of my own observations afterwards:

"The technical idea is akin to a generation starship, but is more elegant and also more feasible: the giant ship is making its long journey unmanned, its crew not brought to life until a couple of years before arrival—when they arise from deep frozen human ova, born out of machines, suckled by robot nurses, reared and formed by robot teachers.

"The first of the three parts of the novel, 'The Ship,' describes this process in initially fragmentary but later more coherent remembrances of the first-person narrator and principal character Beth. He is the second-born of the first, eldest group of the target generation. From his point of view, the short and (despite the rationalist fundamental) expressive and emphatic episodes tell how the children discover their world the ship through and through, under the supervision and guidance of a robot teacher who's linked to the central brain of the ship; how they learn to understand the ship and finally to control it, but also how they form their mutual relationships—and how they grow aware of their position as pioneers of man's expansion in space, and how they probe their origin and destination, that is to say their whole existence, and which concepts they discover on this quest.

"From records (. . .) they learn of Earth, but all this information ends at the year 2000, and they can only guess at the period thereafter, at who has built the ship and for what purposes—guesswork resurfacing again at several places in the novel, leading to truly fascinating speculations, for instance the hypothesis that the ship might have been built on another planet by settlers who've in their turn arrived there with another ship, and so on ad infinitum, making the original homeworld Earth a myth, a poetic ideal, with the reality being just an endless series of ships.

"In describing the interactions between the heroes, the authors concentrate on the eight members of the first and oldest group. Though new groups of younger Brothers, each consisting of four pairs, continuously make their appearance, those groups most of the time act as collectives. In the first part of the novel this isn't too conspicuous, as the younger groups aren't so numerous then, and also too young to really influence the story in any substantial way; but the way in which the authors work with collective characters becomes very clear in the novel's second part, 'Andymon', in which the Brothers reach the planet Andymon, make it inhabitable for mankind with the help of terra-forming techniques and finally establish a first settlement on the not quite "ready" planet. Even before the brothers have obtained a footing on Andymon one group, the fourth, steps out of line; they settle on the moon Gedon and live there literally as a collective individual—the eight members have linked their brains together and, giving up their separate identities, have fused into one single supermind, no longer interested in opening up Andymon but only concentrating on yet more perfected ways of conquering space and time.

"It's also in the second part that Delth, whose character and talents had made him the predestined leader of the first group and—indirectly—of all the Brothers, perishes. His place is taken by the "unspecialized reserve" Beth, the narrator. Even more clearly than in the first two parts, he takes a position of protagonist above that of narrator in the third part of the novel, 'And more than Andymon.' In contrast with the younger groups who've settled in a second community, 'Oasis', and whose ways of life aims at a quick and comparatively 'natural' colonization of the planet, Beth represents the firmly technically-oriented view on life, as leader of the two oldest groups which have remained behind alone in the original settlement, still entirely committed to the traditions of the ship.

"It is he who suggests the project to build a new ship at this early stage and send it on its way. With this, he meets resistance from Resth, the leader of the groups in Oasis who is using what are in principle legitimate demagogic tricks and intrigues to become a kind of dictator so that he can carry through what *he* sees as the true interests of the Brothers. He's able to achieve this last aim only through the inexperience of his companions, but his own not overly refined methods lead to his exposure by Beth and his downfall.

"The unity of the Brothers has been restored, and the construction of a new ship commenced. But the centrifugal powers in the developing utopia remain active: though the fourth group returns to the settlement on Andymon after proving to be unstable as the 'monster of Gedon' and falling apart into individual members again, at the same time a number of Brothers found a new settlement to practice the (for them) appropriate way of life there. In the final analysis it isn't this (like every other) constructed but (as opposite to most) dynamic, colliding, developing, always branching form of utopia which makes this novel so interesting. For the book is based on the well-known but only seldom utilized insight that a utopia is only truly utopian at its outset, as 'completed' utopias are always fatally close to dystopias.

"(. . .) The novel ends with a vision of Beth, lending a cosmic framework to the just-begun colonization of Andymon: 'Everywhere between the stars they hew their way, following their own evolution. Perhaps just a dozen, perhaps millions of ships, weaving the tapestry of human civilization in the galaxy. It is all just a beginning.' "

Andymon, too, was just a beginning, not only as the first collaboration of the Steinmüllers but also as a strong revival of the sf novel in the GDR, and especially of its utopian aspects. Though in the GDR the term "utopian novel" is very popular, it has not the same meaning in German as in English, being simply a traditional synonym for science fiction. Most of the "utopian novels" in the GDR are sf novels containing no or only marginal Utopian elements. There were some attempts in our sf to create complex and positive images of a future society, but as utopias these works were much too flat and simple, and as novels they lacked any real conflicts. In the seventies such attempts became even rarer and less relevant, and the only novels of this decade showing a somewhat complex and original picture of a society were Heiner Rank's soft dystopia *The Impotence of the Almighty Ones*, and *Weird Shapes on Omega XI (Unheimliche Erscheinungsformen auf Omega XI)* by the Brauns presenting a satirical "comic inferno." (Both novels had a happy ending created in Rank's work by a typical sf-turn of the plot, and being in fact pure allegory in "Omega XI.") At the same time, some other works handled only very specified aspects of the social theme.

Andymon, too, is an sf novel rather than a utopia in the strict sense, but nevertheless its

full title *Andymon: A Space Utopia* is correct, for it contains strong utopian components two of which were noted by F. Dael, namely the utopian community established on the planet Andymon and the just as technically as philosophically utopian concept of space travel, of an endless development of Mankind in the Universe. But more than this, the novel—especially its first part—is based on the pedagogic component in Utopia, i.e. on the belief that anybody (or almost anybody) brought up and educated by the right method and programme and taught the right things can become a true Utopian, even if the education is done by machines—in fact, this circumstance and the absence of elder people only enforce and underline the utopian character of the project, keeping all impurities and possible disturbances off the programme. Of course, though the Ship has no direct contact with Mankind who sent it on its way, not even with the most recent human history (which to us, however, is still the future), the children in it, the Brothers, are still a part of Mankind, brought up according to principles programmed by Mankind, and the idea that there might be people not only able to launch such a ship but also, and above all, to give its inhabitants such ethical and social principles, so much knowledge and talent, such a rich life across an ocean of space and time, is the most fundamental and optimistic utopia in this novel.

Till now, *Andymon* is unique in GDR sf, but there are signs that it might become the first of more, and maybe even more perfect, strong sf novels by the Steinmüllers themselves as well as by other authors. It seems that utopian thought is returning to our writers, that they will try again to create models of whole societies—not complete models, of course, for this is impossible in one work of fiction, but nevertheless complex ones instead of flat, idyllic pictures of a future without deep social and other conflicts.

In 1984 the first sf novel by a newcomer to sf, Gottfried Meinhold, was published under the title *Mounting of a World: A Five-Days Journey (Weltbesteigung: Eine Fünftagefahrt).* It is another true though somewhat ambiguous utopia, a model of a world where people in some kind of adaptation to, or rather interaction with, foremost techniques and technologies live extremely intense and creative lives. To many readers this rather complicated and ambitious novel might prove less entertaining and more ponderous than the sf of the Steinmüllers with their strong and colourful images, or less witty and funny than the works of the Brauns, but I am sure it deserves full attention for the thoughts it contains and for its intense, though grave and uneasy, style. So there is hope for science fiction in the GDR that this is all just a beginning; and maybe for Utopia, too.

Appendix: The science fiction by A. and K. Steinmüller—A bibliography

A By Karlheinz Steinmüller

"Alle Flüche der Welt" ("All Curses of the World"). Short story; in the magazine *Neues Leben* Nr 3, 1977.

"Kontakttest" ("Contact Test"). Short story; in the magazine *Neues Leben* Nr 5, 1978.

Der letzte Tag auf der Venus (The Last Day on Venus). Story collection. Berlin: Neues Leben publishers 1979. Contents: "Der letzte Tag auf der Venus"/"Manche mögen's heiß"/"Spätes Talent"/"Ritus der Vergänglichkeit"/"Die Audienz"/"Der Traum vom Großen Roten Fleck"/ "Motten an Bord"/"Duell der Tiger"/"Zerdopplung"

"Kreig im All" ("War in Space") Short story; in the anthology *Lichtjahr 1.* Berlin: Das Neue Berlin publ. 1980.

B By Angela Steinmüller

"Zeit-Kur" ("Time Cure"). Short story; in the anthology *Wege zur Unmöglichkeit.* Berlin: Das Neue Berlin 1983.

"Das Wunderelixier" ("The Panacea"). Short story; in the anthology *Lichtjahr.* Berlin: Das Neue Berlin 1985.

C By Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller

Andymon: Eine Weltraum-Utopie (Andymon: A Space Utopia). Novel. Berlin: Neues Leben publ. 1982.

"Bertram C." ("Bertram C.") Short story; in the almanac *Geschich-tenkalender 1985.* Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag 1984.

"Korallen des Alls ("Corals of Space"). Novellette; published separately in a booklet series. Berlin: Neues Leben publ. 1984.

Windschiefe Geraden (Skew Lines). Story collection. Berlin: Das Neue Berlin 1984.

Contents: "Windschiefe Geraden"/"Reservat"/"Die Lieder vom Mond"/"Organspende"/"Der Schwarze Kasten"/"Sturz nach Atlantis"/"Wolken, zarter als ein Hauch"/"Unter schwarzer Sonne"/"Das Auge, das niemals weint"/"Der Trödelmond beim Toliman"

"Der Held in Gläsernen Berg" ("The Hero in the Glass Mountain"). Short story; in the anthology *Lichtjahr 4,* Berlin: Das Neue Berlin 1985.

"Carlo, das Tier" ("Carlo the Animal"). Short story; in the anthology *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ameise,* ed, by M. Szameit. Berlin: Neues Leben publ. 1985.

"Die Herren des Planeten" ("The Masters of the Planet"). Short story; in the anthology *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Ameise,* ed. by M. Szameit. Berlin: Neues Leben publ., 1985.

Editorial Note:

In *Foundation* 30 I published a review of Anthony Burgess's *Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English Since 1939,* to which I somewhat self-indulgently appended my own tentative list of the 99 best English-language *science-fiction* novels to have appeared since World War II. The list was meant to be playful and provocative, and it elicited a certain amount of comment (both positive and negative) from readers.

That original list, now considerably revised, has grown into a book. It is called *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels,* and it carries the sub-title "An English-Language Selection, 1949-1984." It is published by Xanadu Publications (5 Uplands Road, London N8 9NN) on 17th October 1985 as a 224-page volume selling at £9.95 (hardcover) and £3.95 (paperback). It consists of a hundred short essays and an introduction by me, with a foreword by Michael Moorcock.

Also of likely interest to *Foundation's* readers is a new book by Brian Stableford which nicely complements my own (although it is a more substantial critical work). It is *Scientific Romance in Britain, 1890-1950,* a 372-page volume published by Fourth Estate Ltd. (100 Westbourne Grove, London W2 5RU) at £19.50 (hardcover). This draws upon Brian Stableford's past essays on M.P. Shiel, S. Fowler Wright, John Gloag and many others, and provides a complete and very authoritative account of the scientific romance from Wells to Orwell.

David Pringle

In issue 31 we published a call for papers on foreign-language sf, a call which was reinforced by Sam Lundwall as President of World SF in the newsletter of that organization. The following interesting survey of Italian sf by Fabio Calabrese, received on the initiative of Patrizia Thiella who heads the Italian chapter of World SF, represents the only actual spontaneous *response to our call (the other essays in this issue being solicited directly).*

This is a somewhat disappointing result in view of our own commitment to publish good studies of foreign sf, and also the frequent—and justifiable—complaints of foreign sf people that non-English language work is generally overlooked in the Anglo-Saxon sf hegemony.

To tell the truth, it has been rather an uphill struggle to assemble the present International issue. Also, several Europeans who were solicited directly and who promised essays, did not deliver the goods.

One doesn't wish to sound schoolmasterly, delivering a black mark to the class. We simply wish to reiterate that WE WANT TO PUBLISH GOOD STUDIES OF FOREIGN SF AND WE ARE NOT RECEIVING THEM.

Meanwhile, onward to Italy, courtesy of Fabio Calabrese . . .

Italian Science Fiction: Trends and Authors

FABIO CALABRESE

In order to speak about Italian science fiction, I think it necessary first to say something about the context of which Italian sf is a part. Unfortunately, we must remember that, when it comes to speaking about science fiction *in Italy,* this means speaking about sf produced by Italian writers only as a secondary stream in this kind of literature. This is a situation we share with the other countries of Western Europe, whose national production in this field covers a considerably smaller market area in comparison with English-speaking countries, and particularly America's production. In Italy, however, national science fiction lives in a definitely more precarious situation than in France, Spain or Western Germany.

From my point of view, the responsibility for this situation has to be ascribed to the fact that, while specialized editors—who are therefore keener about tendencies in fandom—have carried on a valuable promotional activity, at least to some authors' advantage, the big publishing houses have up to now almost completely ignored Italian writers.

Some commendable exceptions can surely be found, but Mondadori's series of novels, Urania, is a science-fiction series which contains almost one thousand novel-titles. With its very wide circulation at a controlled price, it exerts a heavy influence when it comes to building up readers' tastes and therefore to fixing market potentialities. Yet it has never offered even the smallest possibility to any Italian writer.

If this situation is really negative from one point of view, from another it has helped to create some of the peculiar aspects of the Italian situation. For example, if in other countries fanzines are regarded as a sort of gymnasium for young writers who have yet to reach a professional level (of course, critical fanzines are to be considered a category apart), in Italy one can easily find in Italian fanzines names of writers like Pestriniero, Gasparini or Zuddas, who are extremely professional and renowned authors.

Within a certain limit, this is a positive factor, since these authors have therefore written very few of their works under the spur of predetermined canons and of definite contractual terms, and have had a thematic and stylistic freedom perhaps not available to overseas authors. But it has its drawbacks as well, since it makes Italian sf an often limited and submerged phenomenon, composed of unrealized possibilities, of promises yet to be fulfilled.

It is evident that we should keep this in mind while examining the field of Italian sf, but it is also clear that a link is anyhow in existence between science fiction's market state and the evolution of the public's whims and tastes on one side, and science-fiction works and publications on the other.

The year 1980 was a critical moment for Italian sf. In the years 1972 to 1980 the science-fiction market had been expanding after a period of stagnation, a sort of 'hole' which lasted many years. Many publishing houses were born in those years while other publishers suddenly "discovered" science fiction, and this phenomenon slowly caused market inflation. In the years 1979-80 four magazines stopped publication one after the other: *Robot, Toward the Stars, Aliens, Star* and the glorious collection *Galaxy,* of Piacenza, plus sixteen fanzines which were born in the previous years, while many professionals, critics and editors of collections and many representatives of active fandom (Vittorio Curtoni, Gianni Montanari, Gianfranco de Turris, Riccardo Valla, Giuseppe Lippi, just to mention some of them) disappeared from the stage or reduced their activity.

During the years in which science fiction was expanding, however, the works of Italian writers did not know a rapid ascent; or rather, many young and very promising writers made their debuts in fanzines, but often they got to a professional position only in an episodical and hazardous way, even if the anthology *The Universe and its Outskirts* can be considered the best testimony of those years' work.

In recent years, however, we have not seen again that almost absolute emptiness which preceded the period of the sf boom, the "black hole" of the years from 1968 to 1972.

Apart from the reconfirmation of some authors who had already made a name for themselves, like Renato Pestriniero, Adalberto Cersosimo, Anna Rinonapoli, Gustavo Gasparini, Inisero Cremaschi, Lino Aldani, there have been also some young authors, like Giuseppe Pederiali, Gianluigi Zuddas, Luigi Menghini, Daniela Piegai and Angelo de Ceglia, who have made themselves known and have acquired a dimension and a definite professional status.

Among the most recent works of Pestriniero we must mention two novels, *The Towers of Eden* and *The Enchanted Village,* based on the homonymous novel by A.E. van Vogt, and many short stories, particularly "Alienity," with which Pestriniero won the World SF literary contest for the year 1983.

Within the field of Italian science fiction it is possible to notice a rather schematic contraposition between so called "hard" science fiction, represented by already renowned

authors like Aldani, Cremaschi and Pestriniero, and fantasy, associated with the names of younger writers like Pederiali, Zuddas or Pizzorno. Such a contraposition, however, is often arbitrary and deceiving, and this appears clearly from the works of an author like Pestriniero.

Pestriniero's "hard core" (if we want to name it so) belongs to an absolutely peculiar species, since he is not interested either in the prodigious aspect of science and technics or in the adventurous nature of man's hypothetical expansion in the universe. What he is interested in is the way human relations are changed by science, technics and by the social structures they help to create. The main character of Pestriniero's novels is almost always a common man whom the reader has no difficulty in identifying himself with, a common man who has to face uncommon situations. What the author wants to stress is exactly the "human nature" of this character, who has limits and faults and who can sometimes win his fight but more often comes out of it defeated.

It would be impossible not to mention a wonderful novel written by Pestriniero in the year 1979, *Knots,* a combination of science fiction, fantasy and mainstream in which the author is able to show us, beyond the limits of any mannered description, all the subtle charm of his town, Venice.

And we could rightly suspect Venice to be a disquieting, magic town subtly linked to another dimension of time and space beyond any folkloristic image created for the tourists' own use, just from considering the quantity and quality of sf writers who were born there—Pestriniero, Gasparini, Sandro Sandrelli (who has however been working for many years almost only as translator and as scientific journalist), and also, among younger writers, Gian Paolo Cossato and Paolo Lanzotti.

Gustavo Gasparini has written a novel, *The Immortal Woman,* published in the year 1974, but he is mostly active, in a really volcanic way, in the field of short stories: his works are frequently published in magazines and fanzines, and on a few occasions he has published them at his own expense, as happened with two anthologies, *Time's Sails* in the year 1963 and, more recently, *Psychedelic Tales* in 1983.

Gasparini is a student of esoteric doctrines and a lover of initiatory disciplines, of yoga and of oriental philosophies; it is from these rich sources of thought that he has often drawn his inspiration in order to write his works, which have thus acquired an extremely peculiar aspect. Gasparini's stories have a nature of their own, which I will try to describe here: the impression you get while reading his tales is that you can't even rely on the apparent solidity of the most banal objects, that everything seems to happen in a dimension suspended half-way between our universe and the spirit world.

Gasparini's narrative nevertheless evolves itself within this dimension with a dryness devoid of mysticism so that in my opinion it could well be defined as "pranic". This "pranic" universe is controlled by definite laws, which are not exactly the same as can be found in our universe, and which admit, for example, the retrospective effect of the future on the past. It is from here that come the themes of the circularity of time and of predestination that frequently can be found in Gasparini's narratives.

Some of the oldest and most renowned writers of Italian sf have sensibly slowed their activity in the last few years, or at least have slowed their activity as science-fiction writers, but they are still important figures in the field of Italian sf.

Lino Aldani, considered by many people as the leading figure of Italian science fiction, published his last novel, a short novel entitled *Eclipse 2000,* in the year 1979. The story is

based on an interesting idea which blends together in a new way the theme of stellar starships and the one of after-the-bomb. The action takes place inside what seems to be a starship equipped to contain many successive generations and which is searching the universe in order to find a new world for the colonists it shelters; but the main character will in the end discover the shattering and bitter truth concealed behind this pretense of being within a starship. The truth is that the characters of the story are all enclosed in an underground refuge which shelters the last human survivors on a dying Earth, poisoned by the radiations of a nuclear war: the pretense of a space flight is only a collective self-deception conceived in order to escape despair. Aldani has recently published some short stories, two of which, "The Ice Cross," published in a fanzine, and "Quo Vadis, Francisco", winner of the World SF literary contest for 1982, are linked between themselves and presumably are episodes of a novel Aldani is currently writing. The theme developed by these stories is one Philip José Farmer is fond of, that of a missionary who tries to divulge the Gospel on an alien planet, but Father Francisco, the character created by Aldani, differs deeply from Father Carmody and dramatically enacts the conflict between his faith and his unresolved existential problems. Father Francisco is similar to certain religious characters created by Graham Greene, but in any case, Aldani proves to be a really good writer.

The couple Inisero Cremaschi and Gilda Musa have not been extremely active of late. In the year 1978 they published an anthology *The Universe and Its Outskirts, Future* (a selection from the homonymous review by Lino Aldani) and a novel the couple wrote together, *Extraterrestrial Dossier,* which is something between science fiction and ufology. Apart from these works, Cremaschi has supervised the magazine of the Nord Publishing House *The Hill,* but he has made no other contribution to Italian writing.

His wife, Gilda Musa, has written a novel, *Experimental Woman,* published in 1979, and two "juveniles", *Marinella Super* and *The Invisible Weapon. Experimental Woman* tells about the attempt to "humanize" a young alien woman by means of an operation; as a consequence of this, the young woman acquires the worst qualities of human nature, first of all the tendency to be violent, as a result of the violence done to her own nature.

Roberto Vacca, whom the reading public knows as a futurologist thanks to his works *The Coming Dark Age* and *Handbook for an Unlikely Salvation,* has also written some science-fiction novels, among which we can remember such titles as *The Robot and the Minotaur, Megalopoli's Death, Perengana,* and *The Supreme Pokazuka,* published in the year 1980, which is a sort of fantastic and satiric transposition of the bureaucratic-totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe.

Among the young writers of Italian sf, Giuseppe Pederiali can probably be considered the one who has acquired the more defined status and physiognomy of professional writer. Three of his novels have been published by such an important publisher as Rusconi, and probably we must not consider it a coincidence if Pederiali is mostly a writer of Heroic Fantasy, a stream of narrative which actually meets with the favour of Italian sf fans. It isn't a coincidence, either, that authors who can handle this kind of science fiction, imported into Italy only in the recent years—it was brought into Italy by the Nord Publishing House in the year 1973 with its series of novels "Arcano" and "Fantacollana" —are mostly young writers like Pederiali or Zuddas.

The kind of Heroic Fantasy you can find in the novels of Pederiali, *The Deluge City, The Silkworm's Treasure, The Company of the Beautiful Forest,* greatly differs from

Robert E. Howard's or Moorcock's fantasy. Pederiali's tales always develop themselves on the background of a mythical "Padania," which is nothing else but Northern Italy as it was during the Langobard dominion in the Middle Ages, seen by Pederiali in a fantastic way. Pederiali is an extremely versatile writer, who can join really convincing plots with a very mature and sometimes even refined narrative style.

His Heroic Fantasy, which is very personal and plainly "national," tries to free itself from the usual Anglo-Saxon pattern, but if we would really try to compare it with the work of foreign writers, we should put Pederiali's narrative on the same level as Tolkien's works because both of them draw together the mythical element and everyday life—and with Leiber's Cycle of Lankhmar because of a certain irony which sometimes emerges from his tales.

Gianluigi Zuddas has written some novels and many short stories, published both in professional and amateur magazines and which pivot around the "Amazons' Cycle." Moreover, he has been asked by two Italian publishers, Fanucci and Nord, to complete the Italian edition of two unfinished works of Robert E Howard, *Solomon Kane* and *Almuric;* the fact that the choice has twice fallen on him for such a work has to be considered as a unanimous opinion that Zuddas is the Italian author whose style is nearest to Howard's.

If you love to read in order to enjoy yourself, if you are fond of stories with an exciting plot, full of action and adventure, pervaded with mystery and sprinkled with a touch of kind but unrestrained eroticism, in that case you should read the novels which compose the "Amazons' Cycle" (*Amazon, Amazons from the South, The Warrior Women of the Abysses, Gondwana's Star).*

The writing with which Zuddas has "completed" *Solomon Kane* and *Almuric,* offer us a beautiful opportunity to make an interesting comparison between the American master of Heroic Fantasy and his Italian follower. On the level of the narrative's trend, Zuddas is extremely similar to Howard, with a pressing rhythm and a thick, "physical" prose, even if his style lacks that bloody and dark charm typical of Conan's creator.

From other points of view, however, it is possible to notice sharp differences between the two writers. Zuddas seems not to share Howard's dark and bloody conception of life and shows instead a deep faith in human rationality and simple good sense, whereas Howard's heroes can only appeal to their own primeval and irrational ferociousness in order to make a stand against impending fate.

In the case of Zuddas' writings, as well as of many other authors, we can't draw a rigid boundary line between science fiction and fantasy because such a line would appear restrictive and sometimes even artificial. In the short story "The Plumed Snake's Isle" (which is a juvenile prelude to Solomon Kane adventures entirely written by Zuddas) the mythical monster appears to the reader's eyes as nothing else but an alien starship, even if Kane does not understand its nature, since he is only a 16th-Century ship-boy who can know nothing at all about such things, and we must not forget that Howard himself liked to indulge in such mixtures. Zuddas wrote in the year 1979 a short story which was purely fantascientific and which was published in *Robot* and was entitled "The Soft Baby"; it is a poetic tale about the friendship between an alien woman and a child from Earth, and in it Zuddas shows how he can deal just as well with a narrative based on feelings, leaving aside for this once the usual plots based on action and adventure.

In the year 1980, Zuddas also had a shot at the crime short story with the short story

"Come With Me", published in *Star,* and gained a certain success. We may well say that Zuddas is a versatile author who always writes delightful stories.

Benedetto Pizzorno is a less renowned writer than Pederiali and Zuddas, even if he has already written a couple of novels (*The Legend of the Three Towers* and *Odla, the Ballad-Singer,* both published by Fanucci in the series of novels "The Fantasy Books") and some short stories.

It may perhaps depend on the fact that Pizzorno made his debut only recently, in the year 1980, with a short story published by the magazine *Star,* entitled "The Goddess from the Sea." That story is a real small jewel because of the suggestive strength and musicality of its prose. These qualities have been kept constant also in the following and wider works of Pizzorno, who seems to possess a spontaneous tendency towards poetry and an enormous facility in writing.

In the field of pure science-fiction novels, the most renowned young writer is almost certainly Luigi Menghini, who has published four novels since 1978 (*Chain Reaction, The Cloud's Kingdom, The Siege* and *The Caltens' Message*). What Menghini likes best is space opera, but his space opera is not mannered; on the contrary it is disenchanted and devoid of any easy escapism, differing from most American space opera in one fundamental aspect; unlike the American writers, Menghini does not try to find always and everywhere a justification for the worst aspects of human nature, concealing them behind the excuse of the adventure. The main character of the first three novels is "the blue tablet," a small alien creature who has telepathic powers and is the only survivor of his people, slaughtered by the humans; this small alien wants to avenge himself on humanity and to this end he deftly uses both his powers and men's selfishness and stupidity. *The Caltens' Message* describes the unlucky revolt of an alien race against the Earthmen who rule it, a story which openly imitates the liberation warfare of the Third World's colonized countries against European domination.

In my opinion, this can be considered a synthesis of Menghini's thought: if the human race has always proved itself incapable of treating its own members in a rational and sympathetic way, how can we rightfully suppose that our race would be able to behave itself more wisely if it should happen to contact some alien race?

It is my opinion that Roberto Bonadimani should be included among the young writers of Italian science fiction, since he is not only a skilful draftsman but is also the author of the texts of his own stories. His graphic style, characterized by queerly anatomically-structured aliens, by baroque, non-functional starships, by alien panoramas with luxuriant floral vegetation, doesn't need any introduction mainly because Bonadimani's plates have appeared almost in all Italian sf magazines.

I would also like to point out, however, that Roberto Bonadimani is not only an excellent writer, as his comics show, but he is also able to write stories that have an oneiric, surreal and baroque quality which fits itself perfectly and almost blends itself with the images that are its graphic transposition. Bonadimani has up to now written four plated books, all of them with the Nord Publishing House, which are *Space Citizens, Star Rose, Anyha the Amazon,* and *The Lords of Dreams.*

Daniela Piegai is probably not only the most renowned young woman writer of Italian science fiction, but is also one of the most interesting personalities of the fanscientific milieu. Some critics have called her "the Italian Ursula Le Guin," and the comparison is really fitting, even if comparisons of such a kind are always deceitful. It seems to me

Daniela Piegai can be said to be above all skilful at introducing her stories to the reader, which she does with tact and good grace, almost with discretion, before disclosing before her readers' eyes alien views almost water-coloured and suffused with light. Daniela Piegai likes to blend the imaginative prose typical of fantasy novels with a rationality which belongs to pure science fiction, even if she shows what I deem to be an excessive tendency to use the cliché, or perhaps the myth, of an idyllic and stainless nature which is the background of many of her novels—versus technology's abuses.

Daniela Piegai is perhaps the emerging point of feminine science fiction's iceberg, since in Italy is beginning to appear a whole interesting generation of woman-writers, such as Mariangela Cerrino, Gloria Tartari, Grazia Lipos, Miriam Poloniato, just to mention a few.

Daniela Piegai has written two novels published by Nord, *Ballad for Lima* and *Alien's Word of Honour,* a fantasy novel published by Pulp, *To the King's Spring,* and many short stories published in magazines and fanzines.

Menghini, Bonadimani and Daniela Piegai have all been discovered, even if in different measure, by Nord Publishing House; Bonadimani and Piegai were discovered after they had already made their debuts in fanzines (even if Daniela Piegai had already acquired a solid professional experience in the mainstream field writing for women's periodicals and as a comics scenario-writer) while the novel *Chain Reaction* is absolutely the first work by Luigi Menghini. It would be difficult to overestimate the rôle played during recent years by Gianfranco Viviani, the owner of Nord Publishing House, as talent scout and as promoter of Italian science fiction.

Among the novels written by Italian authors and published by Nord we must also mention *The Kryans' Ambush* by Virginio Marafante, *The Last Border* by Riccardo Scagnoli, *Id's Foundation* by Gilda Musa and *The Proposal* by Nino Filastò.

Reading these pages, however, one may get the impression that the more mature writers of Italian science fiction haven't given up using sf writing as a way to point out our world's most problematic aspects and human behaviour's worst sides, both from the individual and social points of view, thus transforming their science fiction into a literature of ideas and problems, while younger authors—perhaps as a sort of generational reaction—prefer space opera and fantasy, which means the way of dream and escapism. This is surely true within certain limits, but we cannot draw any general conclusion.

There are also some authors who are brave enough to bring up sore points, who don't want "to imagine the future" as a sort of escapist flight which frees them from the problems of the present, but want to try to examine the consequences we will have to face because of our mental indolence, writers for whom the word "dream" does not mean only a sort of pleasantly idealized "elsewhere" but means also a project or a wish for our future. Vittorio Catani is a writer who follows the best traditions of Italian science fiction, the tradition of a humanism rediscovered through dystopia which denounces the ills of our present.

After his work *Eternity and the Monsters,* was published by Galassia in 1972, Catani's activity had a period of stasis which lasted till the year 1978, when a long story by him, "Entropy's Planet," was published by the magazine *Robot*; "Entropy's Planet" is a nice story which blends harmoniously space adventure, existential problems, and political and social thematics. Still in the year 1978, Catani wrote "Before the Glass Palace," published

in the anthology *The Universe and Its Outskirts.* "Before the Glass Palace" is undoubtedly one of the best, saddest and most heart-felt stories in all Italian science fiction.

In 1982, the group from Bari called "Drincon 2" prepared *Voices from Tomorrow* a sound anthology recorded on tapes which includes, among other tales, "That Day in Manhattan", a new version of Catani's tale, rewritten in a "radiophonic" style which increases its terseness and imaginative impact. I think I'm not exaggerating when I say that "Before the Glass Palace"/"That Day in Manhattan" represent one of the highest expressions of Italian science fiction. The climate which the tale evokes is perhaps full of anguish, but it is only from such an anguish and from the courage of speaking with clear words about true problems that hope can be born, as it is only at such levels that science fiction can be called literature.

I would like to mention some more recent tales by Vittorio Catani, such as "Oh, Leviathan," a short story which was entered for the World SF literary contest for 1983, and which tells of the degradation of the megalopolis of the future and about a wretched, packed and constantly drugged humanity with a style of writing which recalls Orwell, Jack Kerouac and Henry Miller, and, more recently, *Love Games.*

Nino Filastò, who is the latest discovery made by Nord Publishing House, is another author with a fondness for sociological science fiction, as his novel *The Proposal,* makes clear. *The Proposal* is obviously a reinterpretation, made in a futuristic way, of Swift's "A Modest Proposal". Filastò has written a novel which blends skilfully social satire and negative utopianism within a whirl of ferocious gags.

In conclusion, I think it is really difficult to speak about a "tendency" in present Italian science fiction. The reality is that there are many different tendencies, each one connected with the individual personality of the different authors. We can perhaps say that nowadays it is the fantasy stream that mostly meets the sympathy of the Italian public, but we have also seen that both hard and sociological science fiction are equally well represented. What we can point out with the highest degree of evidence is simply the fact that, in spite of an uneasy editorial market, Italian science fiction is nevertheless able to offer a high liveliness of men and ideas, a liveliness that makes us hope for an even better future.

Polite note to our potential American contributors:

So far this year we have received half a dozen submissions from American campuses, with U.S. postage stamps or postal meter labels in U.S. postage on the reply envelopes. Could we discreetly point out that U.S. postage is not accepted by the British Post Office (Britain being a different country). The best way to submit to *Foundation* is to send a disposable xerox, plus two international reply coupons for a letter of acceptance (or regretful rejection) by air-mail.

Ian Watson

Ye Yonglie was born in 1940, son of a senior hospital doctor who had gone into commerce and who was a devotee of classical Chinese literature, with which he enthused his son. Ye Yonglie first appeared in print at the age of eleven with a poem in a local journal, and had intended to study Chinese Literature at the University of Beijing but was persuaded by his sister and brother-in-law, both of whom had studied Chemistry, to do likewise. Graduating in 1963, he has since produced enough popular science books and articles to make him seem the Chinese Isaac Asimov—as well as a large output of fiction. (He has used a dozen pseudonyms.) Marked down for 3 years re-education during the Cultural Revolution, he bounced back and carried on educating the public in science—and also in science fiction. His 1979 volume Lun gexue wenyi (On Science Fiction) *was the first book in Chinese devoted to a theory of the sf novel. Ye Yonglie has directed more than twenty science films, too.*

His translator, Wu Dingbo, graduated from the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute in 1964, and has published sf articles and translations both in English and Chinese. In Shanghai he teaches the only university course in science fiction in all of China.

The Development of SF in China

YE YONGLIE

Chinese science fiction was discussed by me in the chapter "Chinese SF" in *Anatomy of Wonder* edited by Neil Barron (Bowker, 1981). This article will introduce mainly new developments in science fiction in China since the publication of "Chinese SF," as well as some historical aspects which have not been mentioned before.

In "Chinese SF", I said: "The history of Chinese science fiction begins with Gu Junzheng's collection of stories *Hepin De Meng* (Dream of Peace), published in 1940 by the Shanghai Cultural Publishing House." Recently, I have looked up many time-worn magazines in Chinese and unearthed some earlier sf works written by Chinese authors. Therefore, I find it necessary to revise his statement and to supplement it here.

The earliest Chinese sf story discovered so far is *Yueqiu Zhimindi Xiaoshuo* (Tales of Moon Colonization). In 1904 it was serialized in *Xiuxiang Xiaoshuo* (Portrait Fiction), a celebrated literary magazine during the Qing Dynasty. The author signed his name as Huangjiang Diaosou (Aged-Angler-of-Desolate-Lake). His real name remains unknown. About 130,000 words in Chinese, *Yueqiu Zhimindi Xiaoshuo* was an amazing work. Hence, the history of Chinese science fiction should be estimated as beginning in 1904. In comparison with other countries in the world, China was not very late in taking the first steps in sf writing.

Xu Nianci was another important author in the early period of Chinese sf. Aside from some translations of foreign science-fiction stories, he published his own story entitled "Xin Faluo Xiansheng Tan ("New Tales of Mr Triton") in 1905, under the pen name

Donghai Juewo. This story tells of Mr Triton who is swept up from Earth by a typhoon and travels to the Moon, Mercury and Venus. When he later falls into the Mediterranean Sea, he is rescued by a warship and returns to Shanghai, China.

Xu Nianci was born in Zhaowen County, Jiangsu Province in 1874. He once organized a mathematics society and was also one of the founders of *Xiaoshuolin* (Fiction Forest), an outstanding literary journal during the reign of the last of the Qing emperors. It is a great pity that he died at the age of 34 on June 13 1908 when a gastric disease became acute and he took the wrong medicine. This premature death ended his short meteoric career.

Among China's earliest science fiction, special importance must be given to *Maochengji* (The Country of the Cats), which was first serialized in the magazine *Xiandai* (Modern) from 1932-33. Later, the Modern Book Company published it in book form. *Maochengji* describes an earthman who travels from Earth to Mars in a plane. On Mars there is a country where the natives all have catlike heads, hence their name, the cat-people. In that country the earthman sees with his own eyes the corrupt political affairs, the bitter life of the people and the conquest of the nation by the dwarf soldiers. As a matter of fact, the country of the cats symbolizes Old China and the dwarf soldiers the Japanese imperialists who invaded China at that time. *Maochengji* is about 110,000 words in Chinese, and has been translated into English and Japanese.

The author of "Tieyu De Sai" was Xu Dishan (1893 – 1941), and the story is one of the representative works of his later years. Xu Dishan studied abroad, in the United States the Chinese language." After liberation in 1949 he served for a time as Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association. He enjoys high prestige in the Chinese literary field. In the preface to the book Lao She said *Maochengji* is a nightmare.

Another important sf story—"Tieyu De Sai" ("Ironfish Gills") was published in 1941. It depicts a Mr Huang who invents a kind of ironfish gills. With such gills attached, people can breathe freely under water and submarines can move about under the sea continuously for several days. However, in the disaster-ridden Old China, Mr Huang is badly impoverished. When Japan invades China, he has to flee from his home. He puts his invention—ironfish gills—in a small wooden box. Unfortunately the box falls into the sea. Mr Huang sighs in despair, "It seems that the ironfish gills should not have been invented so early. That's why they have plunged into the sea." This story mirrors the inventors' misfortune in Old China.

The author of "Tieyu De Sai" war Xu Dishan (1893 – 1941), and the story is one of the representative works of his later years. Xu Disnan studied abroad, in the United States and Britain. Upon his return he worked as professor in Beijing University. Together with the famous Chinese writer Mao Dun and others, he sponsored and formed the "Literature Research Society." In 1958 the People's Literature Publishing House published *Selected Works of Xu Dishan.*

The above-mentioned historical data concerning early Chinese science fiction are important omissions in the chapter "Chinese SF" in *Anatomy of Wonder.* Therefore, it is imperative to mention them here.

The development of science fiction from the founding of New China in 1949 to 1979 has been introduced in "Chinese SF," so it would be superfluous to dwell on the matter any more here. The later development of Chinese sf from 1980 up to the present is therefore

stressed below. The years since 1980 have witnessed rapid growth. China produced over 300 sf titles in 1981 alone. This is an unprecedented record in the history of Chinese sf.

Many new sf magazines have come out one after another in these years. They provide a new setting for science-fiction writing. In addition to *Kexue Wenyi* (Scientific Literature and Art) launched in Chengdu, Sichuan in May, 1979, the new sf magazines are as follows:

Kehuan Haiyang (SF Ocean), published by the Ocean Publishing House in Beijing, is a massive sf magazine with 300,000 words in each issue. It carries both Chinese and foreign sf stories and criticism. The late chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association, Mao Dun, autographed the title of the magazine.

Kehuan Shijie (SF World), published by the Popular Science Publishing House in Beijing, is a magazine similar to *Reader's Digest* in the United States, reprinting well-received sf stories and criticism from other publications.

Kexue Xiaoshuo Yecong (SF Translation Series), published by Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, is a large magazine for translations of foreign sf works. There are about 300,000 words in each issue.

Kexue Wenyi Yecong (Scientific Literature and Art Translation Series), published by Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House, is a big magazine carrying foreign works of scientific literature and art, but mainly science fiction.

Kehuan Xiaoshuo Bao (SF Newspaper), under the auspices of the Science & Technology Association in Harbin, was a nonperiodic newspaper with about 50,000 words in Chinese per issue. It folded after ten issues. But Harbin will launch *Kehuan Xiaoshuo* (SF), a new magazine, in 1983.

Zhihuishu (The Tree of Knowledge), published by the New Budding Publishing House in Tianjin, is a bimonthly magazine, mainly publishing science fiction for children.

Kexue Shidai (Science Era), under the auspices of the Popular Science Creation Association in Heilongjiang, is a bimonthly journal which allocates a certain amount of space for sf.

Sf works also appear in the following magazines:

Shaonian Kexue (Juvenile Science), published by Shanghai Juvenile Publishing House, a monthly magazine carrying sf stories for children in almost every issue.

Women Ai Kexue (We Love Science), published by the Chinese Juvenile Publishing House in Beijing, is a juvenile monthly magazine featuring sf stories quite prominently. This magazine has an Uygur edition in Xinjiang.

Kexue Huabao (Science Pictorial), published by Shanghai Science & Technology Publishing House, is a popular science magazine of high reputation with a circulation of over one million copies. It often carries science fiction.

Not a few sf stories see their first appearances in influential literary journals such as *Renmin Wenxue* (People's Literature), *Beijing Wenxue* (Beijing Literature), *Jiefangjun Wenxue* (People's Liberation Army Literature), *Dangdai* (Contemporary) in Beijing; *Shanghai Wenxue* (Shanghai Literature), *Xiaoshuojie* (Fiction Circles) in Shanghai; *Chunfeng* (Spring Breeze) in Shenyang; *Huacheng* (Flower City) in Guangzhou; *Qingchun* (Youth) in Nanjing; *Sichuan Wenxue* (Sichuan Literature) in Sichuan.

Many popular-science magazines have published sf stories. These magazines include, for instance, *Xiandaihua* (Update) in Beijing; *Kexue Yu Shenghuo* (Science & Life) in Tianjin; *Kexue Shenghuo* (Science Life) in Shanghai; *Kexue Zhichun* (Springtime of

Science) in Guangdong; *Kexue Yu Ren* (Science & Man) in Hubei; *Kexue Tiandi* (World of Science) in Hunan; *Kexue Zhichuang* (Window of Science) in Yunnan; *Kexue Ershisi Xiaoshi* (24 Hours of Science) in Zhejiang; *Kexue Yu Wenhua* (Science & Culture) in Fujian; *Keyuan* (Garden of Science) in Anhui; *Dazhong Kexue* (Popular Science) in Guizhou; *Shenghuo* (Life) in Liaoning; *Zongheng* (Length & Breadth) in Jilin.

Among the juvenile magazines which have carried sf stories are *Ertong Wenxue* (Juvenile Literature) and *Dongfang Shaonian* (Oriental Children) in Beijing; *Shaonian Wenyi* (Juvenile Literature and Art), *Ertong Shidai* (Childhood), *Hao Ertong* (Good Children), and *Xiao Pengyou* (Little Friends) in Shanghai; *Xiao Xiliu* (Rivulet) in Hunan; *Weilai* (Future) and *Shaonian Wenyi* (Juvenile Literature and Art) in Jiangsu.

It is well worth mentioning that some influential newspapers of over one million circulation have also serialized sf stories in recent years—such as *Gongren Ribao* (Workers' Daily) and *Beijing Wanbao* (Beijing Evening Paper) in Beijing; *Wenhuibao* in Shanghai and *Yangcheng Wanbao* (Goat City Evening Paper) in Guangzhou.

The publishing houses which have produced large numbers of SF books are:
The Mass Publishing House, the Popular Science Publishing House, the Geology Publishing House and the Chinese Juvenile Publishing House in Beijing; Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House in Nanjing; Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House in Guangzou; and Heilongjiang Science & Technology Publishing House in Harbin.

In recent years the contingent of Chinese sf authors has grown rapidly. According to incomplete statistics, there are over 150 sf authors in China. Most of these authors live in four cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Harbin. Most of them study natural sciences. A small number of them have crossed the line from the mainstream of literature. The overwhelming majority of them are in their 30s and 40s, but the youngest is only 17. Among them there are only two females.

What merits attention is the fact that three more sf authors have been admitted into the Chinese Writers' Association. The lineup of major Chinese sf authors is as follows (in order of birth):

Ye Zhishan (1919–) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association, Deputy Director of the Chinese Juvenile Publishing House. Born in Jiangsu, he is the son of the dinstinguished Chinese writer Ye Shengtao. In the 1950s Ye Zhishan published "Shizong De Gege" ("The Missing Elder Brother") and other sf stories under the pen name Yu Zhi. He has not produced any new sf works in recent years.

Chi Shuchang (1922–) Born in Harbin, he published some sf works in the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1975 he has lived in Japan.

Zheng Wenguang (1929–) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association and of World SF. Born in Guangdong, he began his sf writing in the 1950s. Recently he has turned out many new stories. He also does research work on the history of astronomy in Beijing.

Xiao Jianheng (1931–) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association and of World SF. Born in Suzhou, Jiangsu, he began publishing sf stories in the 1960s. He is a professional writer and now lives in Suzhou.

Liu Xinshi (1931–) Member of the Sichuan Branch of the Chinese Writers' Association and of World SF. Born in Deyang, Sichuan, he began publishing sf stories in the 1960s. He has produced many new works recently. He also teaches geology in Chengdu, Sichuan.

Tong Enzheng (1935 –) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association and of World SF. Born in Ningxia, Hunan, he began publishing sf stories in the 1960s. He teaches archaeology in Chengdu, Sichuan.
Wang Xiaoda (1939 –) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association. Born in Suzhou, Jiangsu, he began publishing sf stories in recent years. He also teaches metallurgy in Chengdu, Sichuan.
Jin Tao (1940 –) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association. Born in Yixian, Anhui, he is one of the newly-emerged sf authors. He is a journalist in Beijing.
Ye Yonglie (1940 –) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association and Trustee of World SF. Born in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, he is a professional writer who lives in Shanghai.
Yan Jiaqi (1942 –) Young philosopher in Beijing. His philosophical fantasy *Kuayue Shidai De Feixing* (Flight Spanning the Ages), published in 1979, evoked strong responses among Chinese reading public.
You Yi (1942 –) Member of the Chinese Writers' Association. Born in Binxian, Heilongjiang, he has written many sf stories. He teaches physics in Jilin.
Song Yichang (1942 –) Popular science editor in Beijing, he serialized his sf novella *V De Bianzhi* ("The Devaluation of V") in the Hongkong newspaper *Wenhuibao* in 1978.
Wei Yahua (1945 –) He is one of the sf authors who have emerged in recent years. He works in a university in Xi'an.
Ji Wei (1954 –) Journalist in Shanghai, she is also one of the new sf authors and publishes her works under the pen name Miu Shi.

In recent years a contingent of sf translators has also been formed. Among those who are engaged in English translation are Wang Fengzhen (member of World SF) and Wu Boze in Beijing; Wu Dingbo (member of World SF) and Chen Yuan in Shanghai; Liu Bansheng of Guangdong does French and English translation; Meng Qingshu of Jilin does Russian and Japanese translation; Li Dechun of Beijing and Li Youkuan of Shanghai do Japanese translation.

A group of sf critics has also appeared in China recently. The major sf critics are Huang Yi of Beijing, Rao Zhonghua of Shanghai, Peng Zhongmin and Peng Xinmin of Guizhou, and Du Jian of Hongkong.

Further, a contingent of sf editors has also been formed in China recently. They are enthusiastic organizers of sf publications.

The concept of the novel is rather hazy in China. In the past, it was thought to be a fictitious prose narrative of over 200,000 words. However, in the recent evaluation of the best Chinese novels for awards it is stipulated that the standard is over 130,000 words in Chinese. China's literary circles now accept this stipulation. This article also applies this standard to determine sf novels—that is sf stories of over 130,000 words are classified as novels.

According to this definition, China produced only one sf novel in the early period, namely, *Yueqiu Zhimindi Xiaoshuo* (Tales of Moon Colonization) in 1904. Even this one was only serialized in a magazine and stopped halfway without a conclusion. It has never been published in book form. From then on, for almost 70 years, China did not publish any sf novels until 1981.

China has produced five sf novels in recent years. This figure shows the growth of Chinese sf.

Fangwen Shizongzhe (Call on the Missing People) Vol. I by Meng Weizai, serialized in *Zhihuishu* (The Tree of Knowledge) beginning from its first issue in 1981. Meng Weizai (1933 –) is a famous contemporary Chinese writer. He has published long poems and novels. Most of his works depict the military experiences of the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea. *Fangwen Shizongzhe* is his only sf story. It is a utopian novel, but it mirrors the reality of Chinese society by way of science fiction. The "Tiananmen Square Incident" which took place in the capital of China in 1976 reflected the sharp political conflicts of the time. The "Gang of Four" suppressed the revolutionary people who were mourning over the late Premier Zhou Enlai. *Fangwen Shizongzhe* describes nine people who are missing following the "Tiananmen Square Incident." It so happens that aboard an alien flying saucer they get to a far-off planet—Songlu. They find that Songlu is an Edenic homeland of the natives who enjoy happiness all their lives. They sing and dance to extol the good time they enjoy. Precisely because of this, the novel is tinged with strong utopian colour.

Xiyou Xinji (New Story of Pilgrimage to the West) by Tong Enzheng, serialized in Zhihuishu beginning from Issue #3, 1982. *Xiyouji* (Pilgrimage to the West) is a Chinese classic novel. Its characters such as the monk Xuan Zhuang of the Tang Dynasty, Monkey King Sunwukong, Pigsy and Sandy are known to every household in China. It depicts Xuan Zhuang's pilgrimage to the West with his three disciples. The Sequel, *Xiyou Xinji,* describes Xuan Zhuang's tour of the United States with his three disciples . . . It affords the greatest delight and humour. It is written in the form of a traditional Chinese novel, each chapter headed by a couplet summarizing the contents.

Huoxia Dakai Zhihou (After Pandora Opens the Box) by Song Yichang, published by Gansu People's Publishing House in May, 1982. This sf novel is about a war between earthmen and aliens. Such a theme is rather new and strange in China though it is quite commonplace in the West. Rich in imaginative thought and full of exciting scenes, this story has a strong appeal to readers.

Meinushe Qian (The Strange Case of the Serpent Beauty) by Yang Beixing and Sun Chuansong, published by Henan People's Publishing House in March, 1982. This book deals with the struggle between espionage and counter espionage. Literally, the "serpent beauty" means the serpent assuming the guise of a beautiful girl. In the book it refers to a beautiful woman spy.

Mimi Zhongdui (The Secret Column) by Ye Yonglie, published by the Mass Publishing House in December, 1981. This is the second volume of Ye Yonglie's detective sf series featuring the investigation director Jin Ming who solves difficult and complicated cases by applying his knowledge of modern science and technology. The first volume is entitled *Qiaozhuang Daban* (Disguised), with altogether six novellas and short stories, published by the Mass Publishing House in 1980. The third volume is entitled *Buyi Erfei* (Disappearance without Trace) with altogether four novellas and short stories, published by the Mass Publishing House in May, 1982. The fourth volume will be entitled *Rumeng Chuxing* (As if just Awakening from a Dream), including the novel *Duangencao* (The Grass with Its Root Cut Off), a novella and a short story. Another novella with Jin Ming as hero is entitled *Heiying* (The Black Shadow), published by the Geology Publishing House in April, 1981. It belongs to the series too. The whole series will amount to one million words or more in Chinese. The author is still engaged in writing this series.

Opinions about the concept of the novella vary in China, too. The commonly used standard is over 20,000 and under 130,000 words in Chinese. This article follows this definition in determining sf novellas, which have flourished in China recently.

Among the influential works "V De Bianzhi" ("The Devaluation of V") merits additional remarks. Song Yichang serialized this story in Hongkong's newspaper *Wenhuibao* in 1978. "V" stands for Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty. The author hypothesizes that all women could become as beautiful as Venus if they took a certain medicine and that the result would be the devaluation of Venus because in the balance of love there would be only one weight-money. This story had a great impact in Hongkong.

Jin Tao's "Yueguangdao" ("The Moonlight Island") drew people's attention when it was serialized in the first and second issues of *Kexue Shidai* (Science Era) in 1980. It was later reprinted in China's influential journal *Xinhua Wenzhe* (Xinhua Digest). The author once said, "This is a tragedy of real life. Didn't we see and hear enough about such tragedy during the ten years' turmoil of the 'Cultural Revolution'? . . . It is my sincere hope that this blood-and-tears story will press us to wake up to the truth, to ponder it over deeply and to regenerate . . ."

Zheng Wenguang has produced a lot of novellas in recent years. Among them are "Dayang Shengchu" ("Ocean Depths") and "Mingyun Yezonghui" ("Destiny Nightclub"). The former was published by the People's Literature Publishing House in 1981 and the latter was carried in *Xiaoshuojia* (Fiction Circles) Issue #2, 1981. They are representative works of Zheng Wenguang. The gist of "Dayang Shengchu" can be found in the bibliography. The story of "Mingyun Yrzonghui" takes place in Port H (referring to Hongkong). In Port H there is a nightclub called "Destiny". People who go there often become lunatics afterwards. Investigation shows that a Mr Xu Guoshen is the cause of all the trouble. Xu who was a rebel during the "Cultural Revolution" in China flees to Port H later. He uses a special supersonic apparatus to drive people mad. However, affected by the very machine he himself becomes a neuropath, too. The author once said that it was his wish to carry more realistic elements in his new works. These two novellas are successful experiments. They mirror Chinese society to a certain extent.

Tong Enzheng's novella "Zuizong Konglong De Ren" ("The Man Who Chases the Dinosaurs") appeared in 1980. It describes how Chen Xiang and his girl friend Qin Xiaowen discover the "Lord of Dragon," a living dinosaur, in a forest. The story itself is not very fascinating, but the author portrays clear-cut characters. This is highly commendable because few sf authors in China really pay much attention to the portrayal of their characters.

Among other sf novellas produced in recent years are: "Huilaiba, Luolan" ("Come back, Luolan") by Zhang Xiaotian from the mainstream of literature; "Haiyan" ("Sea Eyes") by Liu Xinshi; "Shengmi De Xinhaodan" ("The Mysterious Signal Flare") by You Yi; and "Bingdilian" ("Twin Lotus") by Ye Yonglie.

Short stories are stories of under 20,000 words in Chinese. The sf short story is the most lively form in recent years. They have appeared in large numbers.

Wei Yahua's "Wenrouzhixiang De Meng" ("Conjugal Happiness in the Arms of Morpheus") is a story of great impact. It was first carried in *Beijing Wenxue* (Beijing Literature) Issue #1, 1981, and was later reprinted in China's influential journals such as

Xiaoshuo Yuebao (Fiction Monthly), *Xiaoshuo Xuankan* (Fiction Selection Series) and *Xinhua Wenzhai* (Xinhua Digest). It depicts a scientist who marries a robot for a wife. The robot wife is so gentle and beautiful that the young scientist becomes intoxicated with love. This causes an accident in his work. He is handed over to a special court for investigation and determination of his responsibility for the case. The scientist finally awakens and comes to realize how hateful excessive love is. He makes up his mind to divorce his robot wife. The sequel to this story was carried in *Yanhe* (Yanhe River, magazine) Issue #3-4, 1982.

The publication of this story evoked a heated discussion. *Guangming Ribao* (Guangming Daily), *Kepu Chuangzuo* (Popular Science Creation), *Yanhe* and other journals carried all kinds of criticism and comments. Some people hold that it is an excellent story with an ingeniously conceived plot. Some criticize it as a distortion of Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics. Some hold that since the relationship between the scientist and the robot is one between the ruler and the ruled the story is repudiating our present Chinese society and insinuating that the present system is unworthy of love.

One of China's most influential literary journals, *Renmin Wenxue* (People's Literature) published three sf short stories in 1980, 1981 and 1982 respectively. They are Xiao Jianheng's "Shaluomu Jiaoshou De Miwu" ("Professor Shaluomu's Error"), Ye Yonglie's "Fushi" ("Corruption") and Xiao Jianheng's "Qiaoer Huanbing Ji" ("Qiaoer's Illness"). "Shaluomu Jiaoshuo De Miwu" describes the differences between man and robot; man has his distinctive temperament, complex psychology and even prejudices which are beyond simulation by any machines. "Fushi" takes the moral issue for its theme, showing the correct attitudes of scientists toward fame and gain; while "Qiaoer Ruanbing Ji" satirizes people who have a mania for meetings.

Shanghai Wenxue (Shanghai Literature) published Zheng Wenguang's "Diqiu Jingxianh ("Mirror Image of Earth") and Ye Yonglie's "Tonghang" ("People of the Same Trade"). The former mirrors China's "Cultural Revolution", and the latter shows that people of the same trade are not enemies but in-laws.

The young Chinese writer Wang Yaping published his "Shenmi De Shijian" ("A Mysterious Event") in the literary journal *Chunfeng* (Spring Breeze) Issue #1, 1981. It is about two friends who exchange their bodies with each other. As a result, they get to know different perceptions of life.

Tong Enzheng published "Yaoyuan De Ai" ("The Far-off Love") in *Sichuan Wenxue* (Sichuan Literature). It describes the faithful love between an alien and an earthman in a lyrical tone. Although stories of such kind are numerous abroad, they are rarely seen in China.

Science fiction has been extending its influence increasingly in China. It has appeared in every medium of artistic creation such as films, television programs, radio broadcasts, and also in comic books:

Films: *Shanhudao Shang De Siguang* (Death Ray on a Coral Island), 1980. *Qianying* (Hidden Shadows), 1982. (It was adapted from the story "Wangfu Guaiying" (Mysterious Shadows in the Palace), but it was criticized as "spurious" while on show.)

Television: *Zuihou Yige Aizheng Sizhe* (The Last Man Who Dies of Cancer), 1980, adapted from the story of the same title written by Zhou Yongnian, Zhang Fengjiang and Jia Wanchao. *Yinxingren* (The Invisible Man), 1980, adapted from Wu Boze's

story of the same title. *Xiongmao Jihua* (Panda Project), 1983, adapted from Ye Yonglie's "X-3 Case".

Radio: *Andou* (Veiled Strife), broadcast daily as a serial by the Central People's Broadcasting Station. The author is Ye Yonglie. *Mimi Zhongdui* (The Secret Column), broadcast daily as a serial by Hunan People's Broadcasting Station and Sichuan People's Broadcasting Station.

Comic Books: *Ye Yonglie's Detective SF Series* (12 booklets), adapted and published by the Popular Science Publishing House and its Guangzhou Branch, total printing of eight million copies. Jin Tao's *Juvenile SF* (10 booklets), published by the Ocean Publishing House.

Critical reviews, guides and collections of the best sf works are also being published in China:

Lun Kexue Huanxiang Xiaoshuo (On Science Fiction), edited by Huang Yi, was published by the Popular Science Publishing House in 1981. This is a collection of criticism and comments on science fiction. The Ocean Publishing House published *Kexue Shenghua* (Science Mythology) Vol. II and Vol. III, and *Zhongguo Kehuan Xiaoshuo Daquan* (Compendium of Chinese SF). They all serve as comprehensive guides to Chinese sf. Liaoning People's Publishing House published *Zhongguo Kexue Huanxiang Xiaoshuo Xuan* (Selections of Chinese Science Fiction). This includes the best sf stories produced since the founding of New China in 1949. Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House published *Zhongguo Jingxian Kexue Huanxiang Xiaoshuo Xuan* (Selections of Chinese Detective Science Fiction) edited by Ye Yonglie. Included in this book are the representative works of detective sf.

Science fiction has also entered the classroom. Beginning in 1979, with the help of Dr Philip Smith of the Pittsburgh University, the English Department of the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute has offered an optional course in sf for the third and fourth year students. The lecturer is Wu Dingbo. It is a one-term course about twenty weeks. The objective of the course is to provide an introduction to the history, writers, and themes of science fiction.

The growth of Chinese sf is accompanied by heated debates. Aside from the above-mentioned controversy concerning "Wenrouzhixiang De Meng" ("Conjugal Happiness in the Arms of Morpheus"), Ye Yonglie's "Zishi Qiguo" ("Eat His own Bitter Fruit") also gives rise to much controversy. It was first published in *Kexue Huanxiang Xiaoshuo Bao* (SF Newspaper) in November, 1981. When debates began, it was reprinted in full in *Zuopin Yu Zhengming* (Works & Contention) Issue #9, 1982. *Zuopin Yu Zhengming* under the auspices of the Contemporary Chinese Literature Research Association is a journal devoted entirely to reprinting works in dispute.

"Zishi Qiguo" can be regarded as a sequel to *In His Image-the Cloning of a Man* by the American writer D.M. Rovik. It depicts Millionaire Max's cloned son who has grown up. He plays a dirty game and murders his father Max to seize his legacy. Hence Max eats his own bitter fruit.

After the publication of "Zishi Qiguo", *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (Chinese Youth Daily), *Kepu Chuangzuo* (Popular Science Creation) and *Wenxuebao* (Literature Newspaper) carried seven articles debating the merits of the atory. And *Wenhuibao* and *Wenzhaibao* (Digest Newspaper) reported the debate in brief. Some hold that Ye

Yonglie's story propagates the "heredity of selfishness" and so deviates from Marxism. Some hold that Ye's story exposes egoism in capitalist society and so conforms with Marxism.

There are also debates concerning various theories of sf writing. Three points in dispute have already been mentioned in "Chinese SF" in *Anatomy of Wonder.* New points in dispute have appeared in recent years.

For instance, so far as an estimation of the current status of Chinese sf is concerned, opinions vary. Some hold that Chinese science fiction is immature, that there is a long way to go before it can measure up to international standards, that it is still in a growing period. Others hold that Chinese sf has already entered a period of prosperity.

As regards detective sf, some think it a harmful trend while others hold it to be a new type of writing which deserves encouragement since it attracts readers in great numbers.

In China science fiction translation has recently experienced its period of fastest growth. More and more foreign sf works have been translated and published. Below is a brief introduction to the newer sf translations:

1 Full-length composite translated works:

A Comprehensive Guide to World SF Literature (Takashi Ishikawa and Norio Itoh of Japan), Jilin People's Publishing House, 1982. It is over 400,000 words in Chinese translation, providing synopses of 270 foreign sf works and biographical notes on about 200 authors. It remains an excellent reference book on sf works and authors of all countries in the world.

Modern Foreign Science Fiction (in two volumes), Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, 1982. These volumes contain over 800,000 words in Chinese translation and are a full-length anthology of famous foreign sf works. Volume One is devoted to American works with 15 titles by 11 authors. Biographical notes on the authors are also included in the book. Volume Two will include 10 titles by 10 authors from 7 nations: Britain, Canada, France, The Soviet Union, Spain, West Germany and Austria. Biographical notes on the authors will also appear.

Selections of Foreign SF for Youngsters, Beijing Publishing House, 1982. This includes 12 titles of foreign juvenile science fiction.

2 American sf:

Anthology of American Science Fiction, Fujian People's Publishing House, 1982. This includes 22 American sf stories.

I, Robot (Isaac Asimov), Popular Science Publishing House, 1981.

Fantastic Voyage (Isaac Asimov), Popular Science Publishing House, 1981.

C-Shaped Runway (Isaac Asimov), Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1981.

Asimov's Mysteries (Isaac Asimov), The Geology Publishing House, 1981.

Undersea City (Jack Williamson), The Ocean Publishing House, 1981.

Question and Answer (Poul Anderson), The Ocean Publishing House, 1981.

Corpsicle—the Frozen Man (Penn Alcoff?), The Ocean Publishing House, 1981.

The Man from Atlantis (Richard Woodley), The Ocean Publishing House, 1980.

Way Station (Clifford D. Simak) Guizhou People's Publishing House, 1981.

Selections of Clifford D. Simak, Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.

The Boys from Brazil (Ira Levin), Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981. Zhejiang Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981 (two translations at the

same time).
The Andromeda Strain (Michael Crichton), Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.
Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg), Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.
Star Wars (George Lucas), Hunan People's Publishing House, 1980.
The Empire Strikes Back (D.F. Glut), Hunan People's Publishing House, 1980.
Star Trek (Gene Roddenberry), Beijing Xinhua Publishing House, 1981.
Raise the Titanic (Clive Cussler), The Ocean Publishing House, 1981. Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1981 (two translations at the same time).
3 British sf:
Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (Mary Shelley), Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House, 1982.
Selected Works of H.G. Wells (in two volumes about 750,000 words), Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House, 1980.
2001:A Space Odyssey (Arthur C. Clarke), Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981. Hunan Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981 (two translations at the same time).
Rendezvous with Rama (Arthur C. Clarke) Guangdong People's Publishing House, 1981.
Anthology of British Science Fiction (four titles about 230,000 words), Heilongjiang Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.
The Glitterball (Howard Thompson), The New Budding Publishing House, 1981.
The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Robert Louis Stevenson), Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1981. The Geology Publishing House, 1981 (two translations at the same time).
4 French sf:
Endless Night (René Barjavel), Guangdong Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.
The Chase of the Golden Meteor (Jules Verne), 1981.
Kick Sands, the Boy Captain (Jules Verne), 1981.
Mathias Sandorf (Jules Verne), 1981.
Captain Antifer (Jules Verne), 1981. The Chinese Youth Publishing House. Of all the foreign sf published in China, the French writer Jules Verne's works come first in number. The Chinese Youth Publishing House has already produced over a dozen of Jules Verne's stories. The above mentioned four titles are new publications to follow the line.
5 Soviet sf:
Selections of Alexander Belyaev (in two volumes about 700,000 words), Jiangsu Science & Technology Publishing House, 1982.
Selections of Alexander Belyaev (about 200,000 words including the story "The Last Atlongjida"), Heilongjiang Science & Technology Publishing House, 1981.
The Amphibian (A. Belyaev), The Chinese Youth Publishing House, 1981.
The Man Who Finds His Face (A. Belyaev)
Alialy, the Winged Man (A. Belyaev)
Master of the World (A. Belyaev)
Glittering Man (A. Belyaev)

Ship-Wreck Island (A. Belyaev), The Geology Publishing House, 1981.
Selections of Famous Soviet SF (about 320,000 words with 19 stories), The Ocean Publishing House, 1980. Soviet sf has been translated and published in great quantity in China recently, but most of the stories are selected from works written in the early period of the Soviet Union.
6 Japanese sf:
Japan Sinks (Sakyo Komatsu), translated into Chinese as "reference material" in 1975. China has not produced any selections of Japanese sf recently. Nonetheless, the Japanese sf writer Shin'ichi Hoshi is drawing the attention of Chinese readers who have taken a fancy to his short-short stories. Dozens of Chinese magazines have carried translations of his stories in recent years. *Selections of Shin'ichi Hoshi's Short Short Stories* edited by Ye Yonglie will be published by Heilongjiang Science & Technology Publishing House in the coming year.

In recent years Chinese sf circles have established close contact with their counterparts abroad, and international interest in Chinese sf has developed.

Zheng Wenguang, Tong Enzheng, Xiao Jianheng, Liu Xinshi, Wu Dingbo, Wang Fengzhen and Ye Yonglie have all joined World SF, and Ye Yonglie is one of the trustees of World SF.

Among the foreign sf personages who have been to China are: Brian Aldiss of Great Britain in 1979, Philip E. Smith of the United States in 1979 – 1980, Shin'ichi Hoshi of Japan in 1981, Elizabeth Anne Hull of the United States in 1981, and Robert Heinlein of the United States in 1982.

At the suggestion of Mr Fukami Dan, Japan set up the Chinese SF Research Association with 17 members in 1980. It has two members in China at present. There are also three special members: Fukami Dan (Japanese specialist in Soviet sf, translator), Takumi Shibano (editor of the fanzine *Uchujin*-Cosmic Dust, translator) and Chi Shuochang (Chinese sf writer who resides in Japan).

In recent years *Locus* and *World SF Newsletter* have carried several reports about sf writing in China, acquainting sf enthusiasts of other nations with the current status of Chinese sf.

Chinese sf people have been pleased to make contact with the Chinese-American Dr William F. Wu who has published some sf stories in the United States.

West Germany will publish *Selections of Chinese SF* compiled and translated by the Sinologist Dr Charlotte Dunsing of West Germany in collaboration with Ye Yonglie. Sf people of Great Britain, Holland, Australia, France and Austria have all established direct contact with Chinese sf people too.

In 1981 Mr Neil Barron said in his editor's note to "Chinese SF," "If the development of science fiction in China is as rapid as Ye suggests, perhaps a thousand flowers will bloom in the coming years." Many thanks to him for his warm-hearted wishes. The flowers of Chinese science fiction will certainly be in full bloom in the Chinese literary field.

Editorial Note: The above article was written in 1983.

Jeff Wagner is a Briton who migrated to California in 1982 to study Journalism. One of the reasons for this move was the existence in California of Philip Dick—who unfortunately died shortly before Jeff Wagner arrived. The following fascinating biographical account of Dick is thus a labour of love; and at the same time it represents Jeff Wagner's successful master's project for the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley. Dick's literary executor Paul Williams, who accepted this piece for the Journalism School's thesis board, commented, "You're the first one who's really pulled this data together."

In the World He Was Writing About: The Life of Philip K. Dick

JEFF WAGNER

"The greatest need (or drive) a person has," Philip K. Dick asserted in a 1977 letter, "is the instinct to seek out *meaning*. Meaning is for man what food and water are for an animal, literally. Take away meaning from a human and you take his life. What he has done, what he believes, his goals and values, everything noble and everything base in him, what's good and bad about him, weaknesses and strengths—all gone, all down the tubes . . ."

In March 1982, a few months before the release of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* (the first filmed adaptation of the author's work), Dick died of complications following a stroke. He was 53, and, by all accounts, a man still driven by a search for meaning—a man like Garson Poole in "The Electric Ant," who seeks unto death "ultimate and absolute reality, for one microsecond. After that it doesn't matter, because all will be known; nothing will be left to understand or see."

> "Why not?" Poole said. "Here I have the opportunity to experience everything. Simultaneously. To know the universe in its entirety, to be momentarily in contact with all reality. Something that no human can do. A symphonic score entering my brain outside of time, all notes, all instruments sounding at once. And all symphonies. Do you see?"
> "It'll burn you out," both technicians said, together.

Philip Dick probed the phenomenal world, looking for what might be hidden behind. His fiction—at least 38 novels and 112 stories written between 1951 and 1981—is drama permeated by metaphysics. The literal and the metaphorical merge in often nightmarish tableaux, dreamworlds controlled by immense forces. Power is based on the ambiguity and indeterminacy of reality. To survive, the weak but resourceful humans must lose their faith in surface appearances; as each layer of reality is peeled off, they come a little closer to discovering Truth, the actual basis of their condition. The nature of the deception may vary: sometimes the forces responsible lie purely in the political sphere; sometimes they reach into the transcendent, and doubt and faith are imbued with religious meaning.

Consistently, however, in order to succeed the humans are forced to uphold their essential humanness, the key quality of which is a propensity towards kindness and empathy.

> "One more thing," Hamilton said. "Then we can forget it."
> "What's that?"
> "Thanks for pulling me up those stairs."
> Fleetingly, Laws smiled. "That's okay. You sure looked little and sad, crouched down there. I think I would have gone down, even if I couldn't have got back out. There wasn't enough of you, there on that step. Not with what I saw on the bottom."
> (*Eye In The Sky*)

One thing that is certain among all the realities in a Dickian universe is that reality itself is ultimately subjective. As several critics have noted, the contradictions and loose ends that mark Dick's plots are in a sense extensions of the subject matter, of the inconsistency which characterizes the many different levels of perception. It is this inconsistency which conveys a truth to life absent from more conventional science fiction.

"He tells it as he *sees* it," writes Thomas M. Disch in an introduction to Dick's *Solar Lottery,* "and it is the quality and clarity of his vision that makes him great. He takes in the world with the cleansed, uncanny sight of another Blake walking about London and being dumbfounded by the whole awful unalterable human mess in all its raddled glory . . . The truths of science fiction (in its platonic form) and of Philip K. Dick are prophetic truths in the Old Testament sense, home truths about here, now, and forever."

> "One of these days," Joe said wrathfully, "people like me will rise up and overthrow you, and the end of tyranny by the homeostatic machine will have arrived. The day of human values and compassion and simple warmth will return, and when that happens someone like myself who has gone through an ordeal and who genuinely needs hot coffee to pick him up and keep him functioning when he has to function will get the hot coffee whether he happens to have a poscred* readily available or not."
> (*Ubik*)

A quirky, almost wistful humour underlies the dark surrealism; there is something absurd about technological society and the lengths honest human beings must go to get a hold on it. "The world gone mad," Stanislaw Lem writes in "A Visionary Among The Charlatans," "with a spasmodic flow of time and a network of causes and effects which wriggle as if nauseated, the world of frenzied physics, is unquestionably his invention, being an inversion of our familiar standard according to which only we, but never our environment, may fall victim to psychosis."

With the world going mad, there is little place for such sf conventions as plausible futures or scientific veracity. As Barry N. Malzberg notes in a recent overview, most of the field's readership were so accustomed to taking these ideas for granted that it took almost twenty years for Dick's work to be appreciated in America as surrealistic rather than simply speculative.

Dick has always been more popular in Britain, France and Germany, where his oblique view of America is treated with the same reverence as Hollywood B-grade movies: he has a cult following for being anti-American establishment in an utterly American field. In France, he can outsell Robert Heinlein, which is certainly not the case in the United States. Here, his popularity seems to have grown mainly in terms of recognition by publishers, fellow authors and critics; his sales figures have increased steadily over the last eight years or so, but they remain low compared to those of such bestselling sf authors as

* a futuristic item of money

Robert Silverberg or Marion Zimmer Bradley.* A number of critics claim that, for an American audience intent on escapism, Dick's implicit critique of contemporary society strikes too close to home.

To counter the financial insecurity of working in a pulp market, Dick developed a speedwriting habit which not only spawned a number of weaker novels but eventually led to a dependence on amphetamines. Yet he was rarely disheartened by this aspect of his life: he loved the field and he loved being a writer. As Malzberg puts it, Dick *was* his work; his condition and his end were bound to his fiction. "What matters to me," Dick once said, "is the writing, the act of manufacturing the novel because while I am doing it, at that particular moment, I am in the world I'm writing about. It is real to me, completely and utterly."

The writing dramatized his inner world and expressed profound insights on the world around him; the juncture of the two realms supplied, at least for him, a window on the nature of the universe. "This is the *idios kosmos,* the private dream," he wrote in *The Dark-Haired Girl***, "contrasted to the shared dream of us all, the *koinos kosmos.* What is new in our time is that we are beginning to see the plastic, trembling quality of the *koinos kosmos*—which scares us, its unsubstantiality—and the more-than-mere-vapor quality of the hallucination. Like sf, a third reality is formed halfway between."

The human vulnerability in his work was his own—a sometimes artificially heightened sensitivity coloured by deep feelings of empathy for the weak and the downtrodden. He increasingly found himself exposed to what he considered were truths hidden from the rest of society, and he was forced, as his fictional characters are, into serious crises of fear and doubt. He sought refuge in close friendships, mostly with women; he was married five times. As he explained in a 1977 letter, he became engaged in an active search for his "isomorphic" counterpart: "that is to say, not the cosmic parent-helper but the human helper, the other part of me, my missing half, who, by joining me at last, would make both of us a single whole being."

As the layers of reality were peeled off before his very eyes, Dick began to discover the burden he would have to bear.

> First eight hours of graphic information is fired at you from sources unknown, taking the form of lurid phosphene activity in eighty colors arranged like modern abstract paintings; then you dream about three-eyed people in glass bubbles and electronic gear; then your apartment fills up with St. Elmo's Fire plasmatic energy which appears to be alive and to think; your animals die; you are overcome by a different personality who thinks in Greek; you dream about Russians; and finally you get a couple of Soviet letters within a three-day period—which you were told were coming. But the total impression isn't bad because some of the information saves your son's life. Oh yes; one more thing: Fat found himself seeing ancient Rome superimposed over California 1974. Well, I'll say this: Fat's encounter may not have been with God, but it certainly was with something.
> (*VALIS*)

* Dick's agent, Russell Galen, was unable to supply figures, but he did say that the author's high popularity in Europe was "well-known, and a fact". Dick's best selling novel in the U.S. to date is *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* reissued to tie in with *Bladerunner;* paperback sales: 325,000. *VALIS* (1981) has sold as much as the award-winning *The Man In The High Castle* (1962): 140,000 (source: the Dick estate). To compare, Silverberg's *Majipoor Chronicles* has sold 225,000 copies in just over a year (source: *Locus* magazine). The highest advance Dick ever got was $22,500 for a book he didn't live to complete; Arthur C. Clarke reputedly gets $1m.

** a collection of personal letters and dreams, in the possession of the Dick estate and as yet unpublished.

> The changing information which we experience as world is an unfolding narrative. It tells about the death of a woman. This woman, who died long ago, was one of the primordial twins. She was half of the divine syzygy. The purpose of the narrative is a recollection of her and her death.
> (*VALIS*)

Philip Kindred Dick and his twin sister Jane were born two months premature at home in Chicago, on December 16, 1928. Jane died 41 days later. The loss sowed the seeds of prolonged discord between Phil and his mother Dorothy (maiden name Kindred) who, according to Phil's second wife Kleo, "made him feel always that the wrong one had died."

Unlike many other aspects of his private life, his relationship with Dorothy was not something Dick would later discuss at length in public. Any reference to her tends to be vague, such as in his 1968 "Self Portrait" (in which there is no mention of Jane): "My mother . . . wrote with the hope of having a literary success. She failed. But she taught me to admire writing . . . whereas my father viewed football games as transcending everything else."

Kleo described Dorothy (who died in 1978) as a very driven woman, "a Grant Wood character brought up to date," pretty but excrutiatingly thin—who never let others forget what a difficult life she had led.

A year after Phil was born, the Dick family moved to Berkeley. When he was five, the parents split up; father Edgar moved to Reno. Phil stayed in Berkeley, sharing a house with mother, aunt and grandparents. In the winter of 1934, he and Dorothy moved to Washington D.C., where Dorothy found a job with the Department of Labor. As Dick recalled the five years they spent there, they had no permanent home for a long time; they stayed mostly with friends. Phil entered a boarding school run by Quakers.

On their return to Berkeley, Dorothy married the husband of her recently deceased sister; Phil's aunt had had twins too, and they were both alive and healthy. "Phil was always part of this unfinished family," said Kleo. "It was a very bad situation for him psychologically while he was growing up."

Dick later claimed (privately, on audiotape) that Dorothy tried to poison him when he was a child. While at Berkeley High School in the early forties, it appears that he suffered serious mental problems; he also once referred to a "nervous breakdown" he experienced at 19. By the time he met Kleo in 1949, he had developed symptoms of what she described as "agoraphobia"—"scared of being with a lot of people," "trouble going on the bus."

He was also burdened by permanent tachycardia (excessively rapid heartbeat) which, according to his third wife Anne, had taken the form of severe asthma when he was a child. He became reliant on prescribed drugs. "His mother was very hypocondriacal," said Anne, "and really involved with drugs and in illness as a way of life. And I think Phil was too. He had this great big pharmacopoeia, like a drugstore practically."

The writing, as Dick liked to relate its development, began in boarding school in Washington D.C. with strange poems about suffering—a cat eats a bird, for instance, or an ant drags away the remains of a dead bumble bee. Then Phil taught himself to type, and completed his first novel, *Return To Lilliput,* at the age of 13. He had originally wanted to be a paleontologist, but one day he had picked up a copy of *Stirring Science Stories* instead of *Popular Science,* his usual fare.

At around the time he graduated from high school, in 1945, he was writing "little literary bits (he) hoped to sell to *The New Yorker*" and reading Proust, Joyce, Kafka,

Pound and Dos Passos, and the French realists. He lived in a rooming house on McKinley Street in Berkeley with avant-garde poets Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer and George Haimsohn.

Writing was still just a passtime; he continued to work at the TV sales and repair store and the record and radio store where he had been employed since early high school. His goal at this point in his life was to manage and eventually own his own record store. Music, particularly classical music, was (and would remain) his great love. "At fourteen," he claimed in "Self Portrait," "I could recognize virtually any symphony or opera, identify any classical tune hummed or whistled at me."

It is rare not to find music somewhere in any one of his novels. Along with the ubiquitous presence of cats, an animal for which Dick had deep affection and respect, it remains one of the small but essential elements of the Dickian landscape. As late as 1978, Dick could still write, "music is the single thread making my life into a coherency."

> Music is the most perishable of things, fragile and delicate, easily destroyed.
> Labyrinth worried about this, because he loved music, because he hated the idea that some day there would be no more Brahms and Mozart, no more gentle chamber music that he could dreamily associate with powdered wigs and resined bows, with long, slender candles, melting away in the gloom. What a dry and unfortunate world it would be, without music! How dusty and unbearable.
> This is how he came to think of the Preserving Machine . . .
> ('The Preserving Machine')

Dick's early working environment, with its simple laws, its routine and its unpretentious human relations, shaped to a large extent the kind of everyday reality Dick later inserted in his science fiction. "I've always been primarily interested in the human being as artificer," he said in a 1980 interview. "Producing some kind of product. In high school I worked at a radio repair shop and my friends were radio repairmen and I was fascinated by this mentality . . ."

The most obvious use the author made of this environment was as a setting in *Dr Bloodmoney* (1965), to represent the innocent, unknowing world on the brink of destruction.

> . . . Stuart McConchie swept the sidewalk before Modern TV Sales & Service, hearing the cars along Shattuck Avenue and the secretaries hurrying on high heels to their offices, all the stirrings and fine smells of a new week, a new time in which a good salesman could accomplish things.

Up to the early seventies, this was the world—the mundane world of the small businessman and the skilled artisan—that Dick would cling to in the midst of what he perceived as depersonalized and ultimately entropic "progress." It expressed a quality of human being based on the "old"values of loyalty and dedication.

> Frankly he preferred it. Preferred the closeness. To him there was something horrible about the detached and highly reified bureaucratic interpersonal activity in the halls of the mighty, within the *geheimlich* powerful corporations. The fact that Maury was a smalltime operator actually appealed to him. It was a bit of the old world, the twentieth century still extant.
> (*The Simulacra*, 1964)

In 1948, Dick enrolled at UC Berkeley; he studied German and delved into Metaphysics. Although he was forced to drop out after a few months, because of his refusal to take compulsory ROTC, the questions he had begun to ask himself at university would preoccupy him for the rest of his life. "I began to get an idea of a mysterious quality in the universe which could be dealt with in science fiction," he recalled in a 1979 interview. "I realize now that what I was sensing was a kind of metaphysical world, an

invisible realm of things half-seen, essentially what medieval people sensed as the transcendent world, the next world."

Also in 1948, Dick married and then divorced a girl named Jeanette Marlin, to whom he would later refer as a mere number—"the first" (ex-wife)—if at all. In June 1950, he married Kleo Apostolides, a student at UC Berkeley. "I was reading a lot of philosophy at that time," he related in an interview. "There was no encouragement to write science fiction and no encouragement to sell anything."

Then he met Anthony Boucher, the editor of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* magazine and an avid music lover and critic. "I discovered," wrote Dick in 'Self Portrait', "that a person could be not only mature, but mature and educated, and still enjoy sf."

Boucher became Dick's mentor. Dick attended writing workshops at the editor's home, and in the fall of 1951, sold him a first fantasy story—"Roog," about a dog's fear of garbage men. It expressed, rather whimsically, one of the earliest concepts in the developing Dickian worldview—"Jung's idea of projection—what we experience as external to us may really be projected from our unconscious."

Dick began to write fantasy and sf at breakneck speed. He continued to produce straight fiction, which contained the same Jungian ideas, but it was the science fiction that was selling, and selling easily.

His initial successes coincided with problems at the record store, where he had become a manager. Both stores where he had worked as a youth were owned by Herb Hollis, a small entrepreneur who by all accounts treated his employees as an extended family. According to Kleo, Dick was seen talking in the store to an ex-employee of Hollis' who had been sacked some time before for swearing at a customer; apparently, Dick was then in turn promptly fired.

> As he parked his car Jim Fergesson, the owner of Modern TV, saw his salesman Stuart McConchie leaning on his broom before the shop, not sweeping but merely daydreaming or whatever it was he did. Following McConchie's gaze he saw that the salesman was enjoying not the sight of some girl passing by or some unusual car—Stu liked girls and cars, and that was normal—but was instead looking in the direction of patients entering the office of the doctor across the street. That wasn't normal . . .
> (*Dr. Bloodmoney*)

He got a similar job at a fancier Berkeley record store, but quit in the spring of 1952. "He didn't have the job for very long," said Kleo. "He just couldn't do it. He had agoraphobia. It became impossible for him to work, and he was writing more and more too."

He became a full-time writer, working till four every morning, motivated partly by enthusiasm for his new profession, partly by poverty. The average rate for a short fantasy was around $350*. Dick later claimed that selecting science fiction as a career "was an act of self-destruction," and almost boastfully described how he and Kleo sometimes had to live on pet food.

"We were poor," Kleo confirmed, "but we didn't want very much either. We had this big house, wonderful yard, cats. It was great. He had a marvellous record collection, he had a lot of books. He was actually being able to do what he wanted to do, and I was working part-time. He was annoyed that I worked, that it was necessary."

By the end of 1954, Dick had had 62 stories published (in only three years of work), and had completed a first sf novel, *Solar Lottery*. "At the 1954 Science Fiction World

* source: Russell Galen, of the Scott Meredith Literary Agency.

Convention," he wrote bashfully in "Self Portrait," "I was very readily recognized and singled out . . . I recall someone taking a photograph of A.E. van Vogt and me and someone saying 'The old and the new'."

At this point, and over the following four years, Dick's work was mainly Cold War dystopianism, a little to the left of the social science fiction Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury were writing. His concern with the transcendent had emerged, but at this time it was focused on human consciousness rather than on an independently changing environment; the anguish in his work was still more existential than metaphysical. Before writing *Solar Lottery,* he had completed a 650-page straight novel, *Voices From The Street,* influenced by the work of Flaubert and Stendhal, and he produced several other such novels (all unsold) during the early period.

"Solar Lottery," writes Tom Disch in his introduction, "along with most of its successors, may be read as self-consistent social allegories of a more-or-less Marxist bent. As such they are unique in the annals of American science fiction, whose brightest lights have either been outspokenly right-wing, like Heinlein, or blandly liberal in the manner of Asimov or Bradbury, or else they've back-pedaled after a fire-eating youth."

Dick would not have agreed with the term "Marxist"; he was a vehement opponent of Communism from the late forties. He decried it however for the same reason as he criticized modern capitalism—for what he saw as the denial of freedom, and he was allegedly approached by the FBI in the early fifties due to the "subversive" nature of his stories. "I have a bad attitude," he wrote in 1978, recalling the beginning of his career. "In a nutshell, I fear authority but at the same time I resent it—the authority *and* my own fear—so I rebel . . . I used to get mad at the FBI agents who dropped by to visit me week after week (Mr George Smith and Mr George Scruggs of the Red Squad), and I got mad at friends of mine who were members of the Communist Party."

> Perhaps at some other time, when there was no war, men might not act this way, hurrying an individual to his death because they were afraid. Everyone was frightened, everyone was willing to sacrifice the individual because of the group fear.
> ('Imposter', 1953)

The tyranny that affected Dick, however, was more complex and even more personal, because it included the psychological constraints of agoraphobia. According to Kleo, he was forced to lead quite a solitary life. "One of the functions of this agoraphobic thing," she said, "was that it was not really very possible for him to plan out even things like having people over for dinner."

In his 1957 novel *Eye In The Sky,* eight people are trapped in a kind of dream state after being exposed to a wild magnetic beam; four of the victims in turn take control of the common dream experience, and submit the rest to their personal fantasies. Evil resides not in the blatantly political sphere, but in the psychological sphere of interpersonal relations.

> I want to watch you. All of you are very interesting. I've been watching you a long time, but not the way I want. I want to watch you close up. I want to watch you every minute. I want to see everything you do. I want to be around you, right inside you, where I can get at you when I need to. I want to be able to touch you. I want to be able to make you do things.

Another reason for Dick's rather lonely existence was his gruelling writing schedule. All of his early novels, except for *Time Out Of Joint,* were sold to one of the few houses publishing sf at the time—Ace Books, which paid around $1000 a novel, and he remained

stuck on what Tom Disch describes as "a treadmill of speedwriting to meet deadline after deadline, world without end."

He would later in his life resort to hard stimulants to get him through; Kleo said that when she knew him, the only drugs he took, aside from his prescription for tachycardia, was an aspirin every night. He was relatively at peace with his environment, in spite of the agoraphobia and his so-called bad attitudes. "In many ways," he recalled, "those were the happiest goddam days of my life, especially in the early fifties when my writing career began."

Photographs and recollections yield the image of a healthy man in his twenties, lean and well-proportioned at 5ft 9, fair with sharp brown eyes and a full lower lip not yet guarded by a beard, a little scruffy, a little self-conscious, and very funny. For Kleo, it is hard to imagine Philip Dick as he became only a few years after they split up—a man torn by paranoia, driven to excess. Perhaps Dick expressed the transformation best when he recalled the fifties in an afterword to a collection of his stories. "My life was simpler and made sense," he said. "I could tell the difference between the real world and the world I wrote about."

> He could talk anybody into anything. That man could turn black into white. He had charm that you could not believe, and it was totally unconscious. You really can't say he was a manipulator; he was a fiction writer, and he believed so totally what he said. He had such a power about him; he changed reality around him. People saw it the way he saw it. Good thing he wasn't a politician, he would have ruled the whole world.
> (Anne Dick)

Philip Dick and his wife Kleo moved up to Point Reyes Station, a small community in Marin County, in September 1958. Dick was proofreading his sixth sf novel, *Time Out Of Joint,* which he had sold to Lippincott, a hardback publisher, for $750—$250 less than the amount he had got for his first book.

The sf market was depressed; even given the small advances Dick commanded, royalties were unlikely. Before moving to Marin, he had averaged around two sf and two straight novels a year; once in Point Reyes, however, he concentrated all his efforts on writing straight fiction, even though he had not yet been able to sell anything that wasn't science fiction or fantasy.

An important factor in his decision was a woman named Anne Rubinstein, whom he had met and fallen in love with during the month of October. She was a 30 year-old widow who had been married to a poet, and who had connections at several literary magazines. She had three children, lived in a large house in Point Reyes, kept animals, read Freud and Jung.

"The minute I met him," Anne recalled, "I knew this was a very special person, very magnetic, and I think he was totally unconscious of this at that time. He thought of himself as this poor little fellow who couldn't make a living, who was sort of grubby, sort of nutty, weird."

Divorce proceedings between Phil and Kleo were completed; in April, he and Anne were married in Mexico. On their honeymoon, Phil wrote *Confessions Of A Crap Artist* (published in 1975), the story of an apparently happily married man, Nat Anteil, who moves to Point Reyes and has an affair with Fay Hume, a vivacious, manipulative woman who lives in a large house very similar to Anne's.

Fay's husband commits suicide, and Nat goes through unpleasant divorce proceedings

before finally deciding to marry Fay.

> There is certainly no hope left of getting away. And it isn't even terrible; it's possibly funny, if even that. It's embarrassing, that's all. A little embarrassing to realize that I no longer control my life, that the major decisions have already been made, long before I was conscious that any change was occurring.

"It's an odd book," said Anne. "It's sort of biographical, and then it's sort of not. It's hard to draw the line where it isn't and where it is. But here it was written during our honeymoon, and nobody could have been a more marvellous lover, or husband, father to my little children, mop the floor, go write all these books for me, just absolutely a love, a marvellous companion, wonderful listener, wonderful talker, and here he writes this book!"

During the first three years of marriage, claimed Anne, Dick "functioned" very well; his agoraphobia was no longer a problem. "I never knew he even had it," she said. "He went out, he took part in the community, he went to parties, we entertained. He was living a full life."

To "fit in with family life", moreover, he put himself on a 9-to-5 writing schedule, although his general method, as described in a 1960 letter to a publisher, remained the same: "My work tends to force a pace on me; I'll do forty to sixty pages a day for days on end, until I'm exhausted, and then not uncover the machine for several months. But 'inspiration' is not involved; it's more that I'm unwilling to engage in wasteful work. I wait until I am sure of what I want to put down, and then away I go."

The four straight novels he completed, however, were not saleable. "I believe my weakness is that I am too much in the hands of my material," he commented at the time. "It is too real for me. Too convincing. Not 'fictitious' enough."

Discouraged, he stopped writing for a period in 1960, and helped Anne set up a jewellery business; but feelings of insufficiency quickly surfaced. "I was miserable," he recalled in "Self Portrait." "I could not fulfil myself because her own creative drive was so strong."

As therapy, he shut himself in the garden shed and wrote *The Man In The High Castle,* allegedly the fruit of seven years' intermittent research. The novel is set in an America that was defeatd in World War Two; Japan has assumed control of the Western portion of the country, Nazi Germany the Eastern portion, with a collection of buffer states in between. "The writing was a catharsis for me," said Dick in a 1976 interview. "It was the research that was so tough. I thought I hated those guys (the Nazis) before I did the research, but after I did the research, then I had created for myself an enemy that I would hate for the rest of my life . . . Fascism, wherever it appears, is the enemy."

In *The Man In The High Castle,* a man named Hawthorne Abendsen has written a novel that has been banned: it depicts another world, a world in which America was *not* defeated in the war. A woman, Juliana Frink, is guided by the *I Ching*—the Confucian oracle written before 1000 BC and now in wide use in the Pacific States—to a revelation that Abendsen's book is true.

> ". . . Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn't. One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it?" He nudged her. "You can't. You can't tell which is which . . ."

Dick later claimed that he, like Abendsen, used the *I Ching* to write his novel. There is an ambiguous message behind the plot's symmetry, something beyond the strong socio-

political content of the book. For the first time in Dick's science fiction, humans do not have ultimate control of reality; the nature of the forces that they must understand stretches into the metaphysical.

Dick followed this book with *Martian Time-Slip*. "With *High Castle* and *Martian Time-Slip,*" he said in a 1974 interview, "I thought I had bridged the gap between the experimental mainstream novel and science fiction. Suddenly I'd found a way to do everything I wanted to do as a writer. I had in mind a whole series of books, a vision of a new kind of science fiction progressing from those two novels."

Like *The Man In The High Castle, Martian Time-Slip* is sf grounded in sociology. Manfred Steiner is an autistic child on Mars who is lost permanently in the realm of the archetypes; everything is reduced to its decaying, entropic core. Manfred's withdrawal is so powerful that it affects the phenomenal reality of those in contact with him.

> He saw the psychiatrist under the aspect of absolute reality; a thing composed of cold wires and switches, not a human at all, not made of flesh. The fleshy trappings melted and became transparent, and Jack Bohlen saw the mechanical device beyond.

Although Dick's view is close to R.D. Laing's—that withdrawal may be wise in an oppressive society—he perceives the underlying reality as a "tomb world." The only way out is for society itself to change.

Martian Time-Slip was rejected by every hardcover publisher who read it. By the time it was published, in magazine form at the end of 1963, Dick had reverted to a more sensationalistic science fiction. Nevertheless, novels such as *Dr. Bloodmoney, The Penultimate Truth,* and the terrifying *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* underline what is generally considered to be Philip K. Dick's most consistently brilliant period as a writer.

The allegorical, mainly Cold War landscapes of his fifties novels were now permeated by a metaphysical ambiguity which made the variety of political and psychological threats even more disturbing. "Not only did illusion come to dominate reality almost totally," writes Brian Stableford in a review for *Foundation,* "but the essential goal was lost. Reality no longer provides the framework for the bewildering and confusing experiences the characters undergo, but becomes instead an elusive state."

Dick produced at least nine books—all sf—in the two years following *Martian Time-Slip.* He wrote fast and furiously, motivated again by a concern for financial stability; with the birth of a daughter Laura in 1960, money had become a problem, one that would eventually consume the marriage.

"I was being paid so little per book," Dick said in a 1979 interview, "that I had to turn out a very large number of books. I had an extremely expensive wife and children . . . she would see a new car that she liked the looks of and just go off and buy it . . . I just wrote like mad . . . I did sixty finished pages a day, and the only way I could write that much was to take amphetamines, which were prescribed for me."

The drugs, however, were producing side-effects in Dick—depressions of increasing duration, and a paranoia complete with intimations of evil. Around the end of 1962, Anne related, the marriage began to break up. The discussions and arguments were fiercer, Dick's changing moods unsettling. "It seemed to be involved with us," said Anne. "But looking back, I would say that there was an inner disturbance that really was not as connected with me as I thought."

As Dick would see it a few years later, something was happening to him very much like what happens to Manfred in *Martian Time-Slip,* in fact what happens to countless

Dickian characters: the personal view of reality breaking down, the invasion of the private mind by the substance of the universe against which there is no longer any defense. In Dick's case, this culminated in a mystical experience, which allegedly occurred in 1963.

"I was walking along one day," he recalled in a 1979 interview with Charles Platt. "I looked up in the sky and there was this face staring down at me, a giant face with slotted eyes . . . It was an evil, horrible-looking thing. I didn't clearly see it, but it was there."

This experience lasted almost a month. There was no question in his mind that he was seeing proof of the universe's fundamental evil. "I actually sought refuge in Christianity from what I saw in the sky," he said. "Seeing it as an evil deity I wanted the reassurance that there was a benign deity more powerful."

He and Anne joined the local Episcopal church—something the Phil Dick of Berkeley in the fifties would never have done—and Dick's vision became the basis of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* a novel of hallucinatory images so intense that some readers were persuaded (wrongly) that Dick had taken LSD before writing it. Palmer Eldritch is a drug dealer with slotted eyes, metal teeth, and an artificial hand.

> In our midst. But not asked for. Not intentionally summoned. And—we have no meditating sacraments through which to protect ourselves; we can't compel it, by our careful, time-honored, clever, painstaking rituals, to confine itself to specific elements such as bread and water or bread and wine. It is out in the open, ranging in every direction. It looks into our eyes; and it looks *out* of our eyes.

Anne hoped the church would save their marriage, but Phil needed it for a reason far beyond conjugal peace; he had become worried about his sanity. "We must have our *idios kosmos* to stay sane," he explained in a 1969 letter. "Reality has to filter through, carefully controlled by the mechanisms by which our brains operate. We can't handle it directly, and I think that this was what was occurring when I saw Palmer Eldritch lingering, day after day, over the horizon. Something should have stood between me and it—and the Anglo-Catholic Church wasn't enough (neither was psychiatry, needless to say)."

He knew, according to his friend Ray Nelson, that the amphetamines were "messing up his head," but he continued to depend on them nevertheless, not consciously associating them with his paranoia. The increasingly elusive quality of reality in his novels reflected the growing confusion in his life.

He fled to Berkeley for a time, to escape Anne, who, he claimed, had tried to run him down with her car and had chased him with a gun. (Anne has always denied this.) Then, when he finally left Anne in 1964, after much coming and going, and moved into a house in East Oakland, he bought a gun himself.

Nelson, a member of the circle of intellectuals that surrounded the author at the time, recalled how scared Dick really was: "He phoned Anne and said he wanted to get together with her again. She drove down, but by the time she got there (with Laura), he'd changed his mind and refused to let her in. So she tried the door and found it unlocked, and there was Phil training a gun on her and telling her to go away, to leave him alone."

The gun was loaded, according to Nelson. "It's just unbelievable to me to this day that he did that," said Anne. "And I never went over there again to try to get him to come back, and later on he said, 'Why don't you come to see me in Oakland?'."

His insecurity was heightened by an awareness of his own emotional needs. "He was very loving," his friend Miriam Lloyd recalled. "He couldn't protect himself at all. He

was open and upfront; that's one of the reasons he did drugs and one of the reasons he was reclusive. He couldn't differentiate himself from the people he cared for."

> Always, in his middle level of the human, a man risked the sinking. And yet the possibility of ascent lay before him; any aspect or sequence of reality *could become either,* at any instant. Hell and heaven, not after death but now! Depression, all mental illness, was the sinking. And the other . . . how was it achieved?
> Through empathy. Grasping another, not from outside but from the inner.
> (*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*)

Dick's sensitivity towards his environment had always been actute. In this case however, he was aggravating his natural vulnerability by amphetamine addiction; he had also begun to drink very heavily—mostly Scotch, a habit which, together with the amphetamines, was resulting in severe depressions.

At the same time, he sought to render the evil implausible by mocking it. For days, Ray Nelson related, Dick would claim that his cat's litter box was bugged; or according to Miriam Lloyd, he would pretend he was seeing Nazis all over the place. For a time, he was persuaded that the FBI were going to shoot somebody in Tahoe.

"Phil's way of talking about himself," said Nelson, "was such that you could never tell when he was telling something that had really happened or something that he had imagined had happened. He probably could have been a first-rate stand-up comedian."

There was, however, a good amount of intuitive wisdom beneath Palmer Eldritch and Dick's general paranoia. As Tom Disch notes in an afterword to *The Penultimate Truth,* the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the assassination of President Kennedy the following year had plunged the country into a state of angst; Dick, in his behaviour and in his work, was taking this angst one step further.

> Your lives are incomplete, in the sense that Rousseau had meant when he talked of man having been born in one condition, born brought into the light free, and everywhere was now in chains . . . for a purpose you don't know. For each of us here above to augment our retinues with, our entourages which wait on us, follow us, dig for us, build, scrape and bow . . . you've made us barons in baronial castles, and you are the Nibelungen, the dwarves, in the mines; you labor for us.
> (*The Penultimate Truth,* 1964)

When the galleys of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* came back from Doubleday, Dick couldn't handle the proofreading, the experience was still so real to him. For a short time, he also had writer's block.

This was not the best of times to have tried LSD, but some of his friends had been taking it regularly and returning with tales steeped in mysticism. For Dick, it was a revelation continued. "My first LSD experience (he took acid twice, and the second dose was weak) . . . confirmed my vision of Palmer Eldritch," he wrote in a 1969 letter. "I found myself in the hell-world, and it took almost two thousand (subjective) years for me to crawl up out of it."

Ray Nelson, co-author with Dick of *The Ganymede Takeover* (1967), was allegedly Dick's "babysitter" during the experience. "He had a very very good trip to begin with," he recalled, "and then it went sour. He described it during and after. The thing that was really bad was that he was in a Roman arena and he got stabbed and apparently died. He was spouting Latin part of the time; he had a reading knowledge of Latin already, but that was the first time he'd spoken it. In the beginning, it was all about finding some center of peace within himself and his interconnectedness with all of his friends and acquaintances. He visualized himself as part of a vast web of people, and he liked that."

"All the horrible things I had written seemed to have come true under acid," Dick said in a 1979 interview. "The landscape froze over, there were huge boulders, there was a deep thumping, it was the day of wrath and God was judging me as a sinner."

The trip reinforced a strong aspect of Dick's writing. Parts of the experience are described in detail in *A Maze of Death* (1970), but it also recurs in essence in the hallucinatory tone of much of his work of the mid- to late sixties.

> All at once he and everyone else in the big villa were each a twisted slug, and over the fallen slug carcasses the creature savored, lingered, but all the time coming directly toward him—or was that an illusion? If this is a hallucination, Chien thought, it is the worst I have ever had; if it is not then it is evil reality; it's an evil thing that kills and injures. He saw the trail of stepped-on, mashed men and women remnants behind it; he saw them trying to reassemble, to operate their crippled bodies; he heard them attempting speech.
> ('Faith Of Our Fathers', 1967)

> I have now . . . a great yearning to write all my anxiety entirely out of me, write it into the depths of the paper just as it comes out of the depths of me, or write it down in such a way that I could draw what I had written into me completely.
> (Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, Dec. 8, 1911)

Towards the end of 1964, Philip Dick, 35, met Nancy Hackett, a fragile young woman who was recovering from a nervous breakdown. She was, at 21, the complete antithesis to Anne. She offered no apparent stability or security; Phil was in the position of protector. As Miriam Lloyd noted, what he loved best was rescuing. "Phil really understood what I was going through," Nancy recalled. "He had gone through similar things himself. That was one of the main things that drew us together."

Nancy moved in, and began pulling Dick out of his tight circle of Zen buddhists and *I Ching* adherents. As she saw it, he needed her as much as she depended on him.

After moving to San Rafael to facilitate Nancy's frequent trips to the psychiatric clinic there, they were married, in July 1966. A daughter Isa was born in the spring of 1967, and a few months later, they moved to a big house outside San Rafael, on the Santa Venetia flats. It was family life all over again for Dick, only this time he was unavoidably the breadwinner, and he wrote with urgency. Fortunately, his advances had doubled since winning the Hugo Award in 1963.

He was still addicted to amphetamines. He needed them as much as ever, as his schedule again forced him into the small hours. According to Nancy, his paranoia attacks had subsided once he left Oakland, but he continued to have serious depressions. "He could go three or four days without saying a word," she said. "It seemed like he had this terrible fear of being crazy. So he'd go to the psychiatrist. All the psychiatrists would always tell him he was okay. He needed to hear that."

"Here I am," Dick wrote in 1968, "thirty-nine years old, rather moth-eaten and shaggy, taking snuff, listening to Schubert songs on the phonograph. 'Although bearded, elderly and portly,' someone said about me, 'he is still a confirmed girl-watcher.' This is true."

Years of anxiety and excess had transformed the young man of the fifties into a bear-like bearded figure who looked much older than his age; his weight varied according to whether he was speeding or drinking. His sudden shifts in mood were notorious, but generally his portliness gave him a kind of Falstaffian quality, which suited his comic performances, as well as his so-called girl-watching. He was still plagued by his intimation of evil, but, just as his most serious novels crackle with humor, he would desperately try to

see the funny side of his situation, entertaining friends with new theories and new fantasies. "It was part of his creative process," said Nancy. "He had to keep making up new ways of looking at things. It was a game, but more than a game; a need, partly for attention."

His fears nevertheless contributed to a series of pessimistic works. He is the protagonist in "Faith Of Our Fathers," who discovers that the images of power projected to him by the media are results of hallucination. When he ventures behind the hallucination and encounters the holder of power as he—or it—really is, he meets the evil deity that *is* the universe. The evil is not simply political, it is Satanic.

In this case, whom can we trust? Only the true human, on whom Dick pinned all his hopes. "The redeemer exists," he wrote at the time. "He lives; he can be found—usually—in the novel somewhere, at the center of the stage or at the very edge. In some of the novels, he merely lurks. He is implicit. But I believe in him completely. He is a friend who ultimately comes . . . and in time."

Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep? refines this belief in the human. Rick Deckard is a bounty-hunter who must terminate several escaped android slaves. Can he do so without becoming an android himself? As Dick later posited the human quality, "it's not what you look like, or what planet you were born on. It's how kind you are. The quality of kindness, to me, distinguishes us from rocks and sticks and metal, and will forever, whatever shape we take, wherever we go, whatever we become."

In *Androids,* the victory of the redeemer is *not* assured. As Wilbur Mercer, the false but empathetic religious figure, tells Deckard:

> You will be required to do wrong no matter where you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity. At some time, every creature that lives must do so. It is the ultimate shadow, the defeat of creation; this is the curse at work, the curse that feeds on all life. Everywhere in the universe.

Dick did believe in the redeemer, but at this time, his sense of a powerful, evil, entropic force was overwhelming. "I personally conceive the form destroyer (entropy) as personified," he stated in a 1969 letter, "as an active evil—*the* evil—force. I also conceive of it winning, at least in the short run, although perhaps not ultimately . . . I am with Luther in his belief of an active Satan who is at work all the time."

In *Ubik* (1969), for instance, we are first given the impression that the unalterably regressing world exists only for half-lifers on the road to death and rebirth. Dick destroys our assumptions in his final paragraph: the world we thought stable—*our* world—also begins to regress. There is no escape.

There was no escape for Phil Dick either. Locked in the world of his novels, waiting for the redeemer but not yet writing him into the script, he lived in a nightmare of his own making. "For me," he wrote in 1970, "in each successive novel, the doubt—or rather lack of trust or faith—grows deeper. The split widens, that yawning gap in the earth, into which everything that matters can fall."

> He had a peculiar defeated quality hanging over him, and yet, underneath, he did not seem to have given up. A vague and ragged hint of vitality lurked behind the resignation; it seemed to Runciter that Joe most nearly could be accused of feigning spiritual downfall.
> (*Ubik*)

When Dick met him in 1965, James A. Pike was Bishop of the Diocese of California and a controversial modernist who openly criticized the institutions of the Episcopal

Church for being historically conditioned and outdated. He had begun his own research into the origins of Christianity.

Nancy's stepmother Maren Bergrud had asked Dick to write to Bishop Pike regarding a Marin County ACLU function she was organizing, and Pike had accepted the offer to speak. Dick became Pike's friend and Maren his mistress.

Pike and Dick were friends more out of mutual respect than camaraderie. As Nancy recalled, Jim Pike "didn't let himself get too close to people"; but he was a strong influence on the increasingly theological direction Dick's fiction was taking at the time. Dick was impressed by Pike's intellectual treatment of religion; it fitted in exactly with his own needs.

Pike did not share Dick's Lutheran view, though. In *A Maze Of Death,* a novel Dick stated was influenced by "a wealth of theological material" furnished by Pike, the author concedes that, intellectually at least, a case can be made that God is good. After submitting his characters to an environment of utmost evil, Dick reveals in the penultimate chapter that this world was in fact artificially induced; he then allows his principal character Seth Morley to be "saved" by a Christ-like figure named the Intercessor, who had earlier been for all concerned part of the artificial world and not much help at all. Dick constructed the tortuous plot around "an abstract, logical system of religious thought, based on the arbitrary postulate that God exists."

Bishop Pike's life exploded in the meantime—just like something out of a Dick novel. In 1966, his son Jim committed suicide, shooting himself in the head after experimenting with LSD. Pike and Maren were immediately approached by a medium who claimed she had contacted the dead man. From this moment, they became obsessed with the possibility of renewing the contact. Pike resigned the bishopric and moved to Santa Barbara with Maren. In June 1967, Maren, apparently torn with guilt over Jim's death, took 99 sleeping pills and died.

All through this traumatic period Dick's contact with Pike was slight. In 1969, Pike came up to see Phil and Nancy with his young new wife Diane who, according to Nancy, looked very much like Maren. That was the last time the Dicks saw Pike. In September that year, the Pikes went searching for Christ in the Judean desert, in a rented Ford Cortina, equipped with one Avis map and two bottles of Coca-Cola. Diane survived, but Pike was found dead. He was 56.

This friendship and its sorry end led to Dick's final novel, *The Transmigration Of Timothy Archer.* Rather than aim for a faithful portrayal of his friends, Dick stressed the larger questions their deaths had raised.

> I think I know why we are on this Earth; it's to find out that what you love the most will be taken away from you, probably due to an error in high places rather than by design.

The same year that Pike died, however, Dick almost died himself. He ran out of amphetamines and bought some off the street in desperation. Presently he was in Marin General hospital with pancreatitis and his kidneys were failing. Nancy had another nervous breakdown. "I was so afraid that he was going to die," she said. "I could hardly stand up."

Dick survived, but would never regain his full health. He stopped taking amphetamines for a while, but this led to writer's block and extended black depressions. Nancy finally left with Isa, in 1970, and as Dick put it later, "I hit bottom . . . I just fell into the gutter, I crashed into the streets in shock when this happened."

He filled his lonely four-bedroom, two-bathroom house in Santa Venetia with street people, as he later called them—mostly teenage drug addicts who wanted a place to hang out. Many of the kids eventually died or became irreversibly ill. During this 18-month period in the street, he allegedly took eleven of his friends to the local mental hospital. "I saw things that if I hadn't seen them with my own eyes I simply wouldn't have believed them," Dick said in a 1977 interview. "I saw people who were reduced to a point where they couldn't complete a sentence . . . And this was permanent; this was for the rest of their lives. Young people . . . It was like a vision of Hell."

A lot of the nightmare atmosphere of Dick's fiction had again intruded upon his life. Here were kids tripping before his very eyes, here were the defenceless little humans plunging themselves into other worlds and not coming out of them. Dick joined in, not working, still consuming large amounts of speed. He fell in love with a dark-haired girl named Kathy Demuelle. He shared in the kids' indulgences and in their suffering. "We really all were very happy for a while," he wrote later, "sitting around not toiling but just bullshitting and playing, but it was for such a terribly brief time, and then the punishment was beyond belief: even when we could see it, we could not believe it."

The clearest expression of this experience is Dick's detailed and almost realist sf novel, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), which he took a good part of three years to write. It is the story of an undercover narcotics agent who loses the power to be in two worlds at once. In an afterword, Dick dedicates the book to his friends who have died or been paralyzed by illness. He is on the list too, next to "permanent pancreatic damage."

Generally, it was a cut-throat world that Dick had let himself into. There were knife fights, drug dealers, narcs, all sorts of trouble. But it offered him a means of escape from his solitary existence, and a kind of anonymity. "The one good thing about my being on the street," he wrote with cynicism in 1978, "was that the people didn't know I was a well-known sf writer, or if they did they didn't care. They just wanted to know what I had that they could rip off and sell."

He got a little more than he had bargained for. There was, besides the gradual destruction of human life, another kind of terror enveloping him—political intimidation. On November 17, 1971, he came home to find his asbestos-and-steel file cabinet blown apart by high explosives. His stereo was gone, the gun he'd bought in premonition of trouble had disappeared, the whole house had been searched in "a military-like operation." But valuables like his amethyst jewellery had been missed. Every single cancelled cheque had been seized, along with all open cans and packages of food and all perishable items. Dick also claimed his car was tampered with.

This bizarre break-in received prominence in a 1975 *Rolling Stone* article, where Dick is quoted as saying: "You know what my feeling was? 'Thank God!' Because . . . I had been saying to the police and to my friends and to myself: 'I know I have enemies. I know they are going to hit this house. I know they are going to blow it apart.' I'd bought a gun for that reason, to protect myself, and my friends said, 'He's bought the gun to kill himself; he's crazy'."

His paranoia was instinctive, however. He had no definite culprit in mind. It could have been the Black Panthers who lived in the house behind his; it could have been the Neo-Nazis; or the FBI looking for an experimental drug they had planted and then forgotten about. Tyranny operates in mysterious ways. The only thing the *Rolling Stone* article was clear about was that the burglary was apparently never solved. According to

Dick, he was informally told to pack his bags: "The police . . . said, 'We don't want a crusader here in Marin County. You better move away or you'll get a bullet in your back some night. Or worse'." He received threatening phone calls, and was told that he wouldn't live to give his speech at a February 1972 sf convention in Vancouver.

There were many crusaders in Marin at the time; in any case, Dick would always claim that he had no idea why either the police or anybody should have wanted him out of the way. "The cops know more about you than you know yourself," he said in a 1978 interview. "It's very frightening when the head of a police department tells you that you better leave the county because you have enemies, and you don't know who these enemies are or why you've incurred their wrath."

This idea, that the United States could be a secret police state, had fixed itself in Dick's mind long before this experience. In such works as *The Penultimate Truth, The Simulacra* and "Faith Of Our Fathers," he had expressed fears of a massive deception by the country's authorities. He restated his views in the very realistic *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said,* a novel begun in 1970 then completed with fresh commitment two years later. It describes a USA set in the not-so-distant future, where Richard Nixon is a saint, and every statistic about every citizen is in the security police's computer. A well-known television talk-show host, Jason Taverner, wakes up one day to find that nobody knows who he is anymore; he is not even on the police computer.

The book, which won the John W. Campbell Jr. Award for best sf novel in 1975, revealed a change in Dick's choice of characters. A young girl, Kathy, forges ID papers; she is sad, determined, untrustworthy, independent yet tied down by the system. She is the prototype for all the characters in *A Scanner Darkly*. "Prior to that," Dick explained in a 1982 interview, "I tended to view people in terms of the artisan, 'the TV repairman', 'the salesman', and so forth . . . As a result of my street experience, I tended to view people as essentially rogues. I don't mean *lovable* rogues, I mean unscrupulous rogues out to hustle you at any moment for any reason."

This rogue was Dick's new hero. The quality of the oppressed human had become more focused, and more politicized. "He identifies strongly with the protests and angers of the younger generations versus the older establishment," he wrote about himself in 1973. "Most of all he tries to express in his novels the fight against oppression of the free human spirit . . . The ordinary citizen, without political or economic power, . . . is his hero, . . . his hope for the future."

Dick had found the redeemer and he was building his work around him. After ten years of consistent gloom, he had begun to develop new faith, a faith based on his own experience, not merely on an abstract concept. This was evident in the speech he did live to deliver in Vancouver—"The Android And The Human." He passionately endorsed the young generation; for him, they were the authentic humans—with faults and feelings—fighting the pressures created by a mechanical android-like society. "These kids are my science fiction stories of tomorrow," he said; the world is poised on the threshold of a new, more human cycle of existence.

> The world of the future, to me, is not a place, but an event, . . . a construct in which there is no author and no readers but a great many characters in search of a plot. Well, there is no plot. There is only themselves and what they do and say to each other, what they build to sustain all of them individually and collectively, like a huge umbrella that lets in light and shuts out darkness at the same instant. When the characters die, the novel ends. And the book falls back into dust. Out of which it came. Or back, like the dead Christ, into the arms of his

warm, tender, grieving, comprehending, living mother. And a new cycle begins; from her he is reborn, and the story, or another story, perhaps different, even better, starts up. A story told by the characters to one another.

My universe is lying within my fingers, he realized. If I can just figure out how the damn thing works.
('The Electric Ant')

Philip Dick had fled to Canada without his girlfriend Kathy. At the last moment she had torn up her ticket. He had banked on her being there in Vancouver when he delivered his speech; at the end, the point when he describes the girl who used to steal crates of Coca-Cola and turn in the empties for the deposits, he had planned to go to Kathy in the audience and kiss her. (Kathy later became one of the main characters in *The Dark-Haired Girl.*)

There was nothing to go back for, so Dick settled in Vancouver. He made friends within the sf crowd there, met a woman named Jamis, and began to recover from the traumatic events of the past few months. Then, all of a sudden, Jamis decided to leave Vancouver and his life fell apart again. He tried to kill himself by swallowing 700 milligrams of potassium bromide; but he also wrote down the number of a local suicide centre on a piece of cardboard, just in case he should change his mind. "Fortunately," he later recalled, "the last number was a one and I could just barely dial it."

He was advised to enter a residence therapy organization, where he could be with people constantly. The place he ended up in was "X-Kalay," a Vancouver heroin rehabilitation centre. He gradually pulled out of his depression and did some PR work for the organisation. "I found that rehabilitating former heroin addicts was the most rewarding, soul-reinforcing pursuit I'd ever encountered," he said later. His sense of fulfillment was recylced into *A Scanner Darkly:*

At the game one night, when they gave credit in turn to each person for what he had brought to New-Path, such as Concepts, they credited him with bringing humor there. He had brought with him an ability to see things as funny no matter now bad he felt. Everybody in the circle clapped, and, glancing up, startled, he saw the ring of smiles, everybody's eyes warm with approval, and the noise of their applause remained with him for quite a period, inside his heart.

By this time, Dick's attitude to drugs had gone full circle. "I used to think drugs put you in touch with something," he said in a 1978 interview. "Now I know that the only thing they put you in touch with is the rubber room of a psychiatric hospital."

He left X-Kalay after a month—still a little shaky—to fly to Southern California: Dr Willis McNelly, English professor at Cal State Fullerton in Orange County, had invited Dick to supervise the archiving of his manuscripts in the university's library. "So many of my possessions had been destroyed or stolen in Marin County," Dick explained in a 1972 letter, "that I wanted to turn over what remained to professional safekeeping."

Dick found Fullerton's slow pace relaxing and therapeutic, and decided to stay. There was a large sf community there and crowds of students. He started writing again, apparently without amphetamines; also, by his own account, he began to fall in love again—almost immediately: first, in April, with a student named Linda, then a few months later, with a petite brunette named Tessa Busby.

"She's eighteen," he wrote at the time, "has lovely black hair and green eyes, looks English, is small and lithe, knows Kung Fu karate, has an acute interest in and knowledge of the hard sciences, and is the warmest, kindest, most gentle little person I've ever

known. Also, under stress, she is incredibly cool . . . We have a happy active life, writing and reading and shopping and planning the future for ourselves . . . and seeing a lot of people involved in sf. Tessa has systematically thrown all my ex-girlfriends such as Linda out of the apartment one by one, but I guess this is okay; Linda babbled on too much anyhow, and now we have more time for writing."

They were married in April 1973, and a son Christopher was born the same year. Dick was often unwell; his blood pressure was high, he was depressed by new financial pressures. Then, in March 1974, while working on *A Scanner Darkly*, he had another powerful mystical experience, one that would obsess him for the rest of his life.

Thematically—he called it an encounter with God—it followed the trend set by the Palmer Eldritch vision and the 1964 LSD trip. This experience was a reversal, however; it was a vision of the universe as inherently good, and it followed in mood the rebirth of faith Dick had expressed in Vancouver.

He was not on amphetamines when the experience occurred; the only drugs he used were the tranquillizers that he had always taken for his tachycardia. Nevertheless, he later admitted that, at the time, he had been "experimenting with bringing on (his) right hemisphere, mainly by the ortho molecular formula vitamins, plus a good deal of concentrated meditation." He would also connect the experience to a shot of sodium pentathol he had been given a month previous while having an impacted wisdom tooth removed.

> He had, a few years ago, been experimenting with disinhibiting substances affecting neural tissue, and one night, having administered to himself an IV injection considered safe and mildly euphoric, had experienced a disastrous drop in the GABA fluid of his brain. Subjectively he had then witnessed lurid phosphene activity projected on the far wall of his bedroom, a frantically progressing montage of what, at the time, he imagined to be modern-day abstract paintings.
> (*A Scanner Darkly*)

He generally characterized the encounter as an invasion of the mind. "It invaded my mind and assumed control of my motor centers and did my acting and thinking for me," he claimed in the 1979 interview with Charles Platt. "I was a spectator to it. It set about healing me physically and my . . . boy, who had an undiagnosed life-threatening birth defect that no-one had been aware of."

"This rational mind was not human. It was more like artificial intelligence. On Thursdays and Saturdays I would think it was God, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays I would think it was extraterrestrial, sometimes I would think it was the Soviet Union Academy of Sciences trying out their psychotronic microwave telepathic transmitter . . . This mind . . . was equipped with tremendous technical knowledge . . . It had memories dating back over two thousand years, it spoke Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, there wasn't anything it didn't seem to know."

Dick began intensive study of the religious and metaphysical concepts that this mind threw at him, continued to throw at him for years, evidently, in dreams just before waking. He recorded these messages and his own conclusions in an "Exegesis," which, at his death, contained around two million words of typed and handwritten notes. (It is currently in the possession of the Dick estate.)

A distillation of part of the Exegesis forms the appendix to *VALIS*, the most concrete expression of Dick's alleged experience, a semi-autobiographical meandering into uncharted sf territory. The author clinically analyzes his own mind, dividing himself into

two characters—the writer/narrator who is the sympathetic and sane observer, and Horselover Fat, who has an encounter with God, and who is not particularly sane (in Dick's eyes). The first half of the book is by and large true; the second half is a fictional search for the Saviour who has returned.

It wasn't an easy book to write. According to his agent Russell Galen, Dick battled with the material for five years before completing the novel with a burst of confidence in seven days. "One perhaps *cannot* express these things in words," Dick wrote in a 1976 letter. "I feel as if I have an aphasia, actually, a speech block. I know what I saw, but I can't name it. It's as if the gods were sitting around and having nothing better to do they said, 'let's see old Phil get *this* down on paper.' And then revealed all the mysteries of the universe to me and sat back laughing."

Dick was forced to interpret something which he felt to be undoubtedly the breakthrough to the answers he had been seeking for over 25 years. During the five years he took to write a book out of his experience, he used letters, interviews and especially two speeches he wrote, along with the Exegesis, to test various theories regarding the nature of the universe.

His explanations varied from a derivative of Jung's collective unconscious proposition to an updated version of Gnosticism. There was, however, a consistent belief running through these interpretations: something was hidden from the human race for its own good, by an immanent deity (either the immanent Mind made up of the collective right brains of human beings, or a God who plays a kind of chess with various possible actualities). Philip Dick had been chosen for one reason or another as a recipient of this gnosis—the knowledge that absolute reality lies behind a veil, and that the veil is in the process of being lifted for good.

Jay Kinney, author of "The Mysterious Gnosis Of Philip K. Dick" (*Critique*, spring/summer 1983), recently made "preliminary forays" into the Exegesis. "The recurring theme of Dick's work," he writes in his report, "that of a false world overlaying the 'real' one, can be both a metaphysical proposition *and* a paranoid fear. The ambiguity of 2-3/74 (i.e.: the mystical experience) is that the *VALIS* events are a dramatic fulfillment of both. In exploring this fact, the Exegesis is equal parts mystical theology and paranoid ravings. It contains profound discussions of the Indian philosopher Sankara, Plato, and Meister Eckhart, side by side with long-winded (and rather crazed) attempts to derive cosmic generalities from dream fragments, hypnogogic phrases, and coincidental occurrences."

The paranoia was obvious in Dick's intermittent references to the Soviet Union, a regime he truly abhorred; in *VALIS* and elsewhere, he mentions a mysterious letter he received at around the time of his mystical experience—"the Xerox letter," he calls it—which apparently contained a photocopy of various materials he considered were of Soviet origin. Tessa recently confirmed that the letter was "significant" and "did represent a very real threat to Phil's well-being." Paranoia had also a lot to do with his much-repeated assertion that the forcing-out of office of President Nixon in 1974 was an act of God.

The theory that finally ended up in *VALIS* should probably be taken symbolically rather than literally; it does contain however a main tenet that Dick often asserted with confidence:

> . . . Linear time is somehow not real; which is to say, the changes in it (time as a reality is

> debatable, but as the encyclopedia of philosophy says, 'change is real') are somehow not real. I am not back in Biblical times, but somehow John and Daniel found ourselves in the same reality or time frame, an eternal unchanging world above and beyond time. It is real, and the changing world within time is not. Without accepting this it is impossible to explain my experience and theirs.
> (Exegesis, circa 8/76)

Real time, so *VALIS* contends, ceased with the destruction by Romans of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The plasmate, a form of energy or living information which embodied gnosis, was buried from this time in the library of Gnostic codices at Nag Hammadi. Until the codices were unearthed in 1945, the world was enslaved by the Empire, an evil force fashioned by a Mind deranged (denied its healthy counterpart). This intervening period, the time of the Black Iron Prison, is the period of concealment. Since 1945, the plasmate has once again been crossbonding with humans to create homoplasmates. The pink light that assails Horselover Fat in March 1974 and blinds him carries the plasmate: Fat, for a short amount of time, is imparted with gnosis. He is told of the impending return of the Saviour, which would also be the return of sanity as the primordial quality of the universe. The real date is around 100 AD, which may account for Fat's presence in a Roman circus during his LSD trip in 1964.

> . . . Fat woke up and saw ancient Rome superimposed on California 1974 and thought in *koine* Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Near East part of the Roman world, which was the part he saw. He did not know that the *koine* was their *lingu franca*; he supposed that Latin was.

Dick's imagination was at work again trying to make sense of an apparent intrusion from the "real" world. "We used to talk about it all the time," Russell Galen recalled. "Even after *VALIS* was written, he would talk about what he thought were additional manifestations. He took it utterly seriously, this is something that people should understand. It was not science fiction. I'm convinced that he believed without question that this was real. He believed that he had concrete evidence for it. And yet, he was entirely rational in talking. He would say: 'something happened and I can only interpret it as that I talked with God'."

"Man, Android And Machine," a speech for the 1975 ICA sf conference in London, communicated Dick's new optimism—that, as he put it, "the vast winter of our species" was coming to an end. Although he did not explicitly admit to his encounter with God, he referred to a layer in the atmosphere connected to our right brains (we have two brains, not a brain divided in two) which is the immanent Mind; it is that Mind who contacts us in our sleep and shows us what lies behind the veil. Dick also claimed that several of his books are true because they are based on dreams.

Dick was unable to attend the conference due to illness (he was always finding excuses to miss conventions), but organizer Peter Nicholls published the speech in full. "Sceptics, please suspend your disbelief," he warned in his introduction.

When Dick delivered his next (and last) speech at the 1977 science fiction convention in Metz, France, and stated blatantly that he had seen God ("It had colours. It moved fast, collecting and dispersing."), the staunchly agnostic crowd yelped. "The speech was disastrous and embarrassing," Nicholls wrote in *Foundation*, "delivered in a strange metallic voice accompanied with a glassy stare. He couldn't stop talking, and went on for over two hours, by which time most of the audience including myself had panicked through embarrassment and sneaked out of the theatre. It honestly seemed as if Phil had lost his marbles."

The speech, entitled "If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some Of The Others," worked pointedly on the "real time" theory, except that, in this version, Dick contended that there are a multitude of different presents lying parallel in "real" time to ours, and God decides what time track should exist phenomenally. Towards 1945, God changed a variable in the past of a present worse than ours and created a past that would lead unalterably to our present—a world in which a President is removed from office. In March 1974, Dick related, he was allowed to see the worse present, an actuality during which he fought anti-Christian forces and died doing so. In February 1975, he again saw another present superimposed on his, only this time, it was the best one of all: paradise.

> Does anyone of us remember in any dim fashion a worse Earth circa 1977 than this? Have our young men seen visions and our old men dreamed dreams? Nightmare dreams specifically, about the world of enslavement and evil, of prisons and jailers and ubiquitous police? I have. I wrote out those dreams in novel after novel, story after story . . . My own supposed imaginative work, *The Man In The High Castle,* is not fiction—or rather is fiction only now, thank god. But there was an alternate world, a previous present, in which that particular time track actualized . . . and then was abolished due to intervention at some prior date. I am sure as you hear me say this, you do not really believe me, or even believe that I believe myself. But nevertheless it is true. I retain memories of that other world. That is why you will find it again described in . . . *Flow My Tears.*

> The way his mind worked is that something would come into it, and at that moment, that would be the most important thing in the world. And he would just simply play with the implications all the way to the end. Then, a few days later, he might decide that that was all wrong, and give you a completely different set of implications.
> (Russell Galen)

However much Dick may have been cured of his pessimism, he remained an unhealthy man during the years following his mystical experience. He was consumed by the questions he posed for himself: his blood pressure remained dangerously high; he also apparently renewed his drug and drink habits, though he was less indulgent than he had been during the sixties. He suffered periodic depressions. He was still very aware of his own vulnerability. If anything, his encounter only increased his fears: it is pretty frightening to be singled out like that. "He was so anxious, so driven by his experience," said Joan Simpson, who had a liaison with Dick in 1977.

"Phil had, certainly, moods of inward-staring depression," his friend Tim Powers recalled, "sometimes so profound as to really require a stronger word than 'depression'; but anyone who knew him at all knows that the depression was massively outweighed by Phil's irresistible sense of humor, his pretense-puncturing sense of perspective."

Meanwhile, instead of writing novels, he was ruminating in his Exegesis on the meaning of his and human existence. "He was obsessed with what happened to him," said Paul Williams, literary executor of Dick's estate. "He held his self-importance in check, but nevertheless implicit in that material is an enormous sense of being at the centre of destiny."

According to Russell Galen however, ultimately Dick was not interested in his own position. "The single thing that was most extraordinary about him as an individual," said Galen, "was a lack of concern with his sense of self-esteem."

> We are here to choose the true from the counterfeit, and we will be given much time, perhaps thousands of years, and when and if we choose correctly at last, we will then be shown what we have chosen: shown what reality is like . . . We live as children and choose as children, but once we choose correctly we become true adults. Only then does the real purpose of life become evident; before that it was a dream and a guess and a search among mists.
> (Exegesis)

Dick was undoubtedly interpreting the universe for our benefit, and behind the complex theology was an old message: Fascism is still the enemy, the counterfeit still exists. New faith is really the setting of a new goal, the attainment of which is in the hands of none other than the human himself, the human with human qualities who must continue to stand against deception.

Dick's new optimism was still grounded in the world around him, and permeated by a deep concern for the suffering of others. "He was the single finest human being I've ever known," said Russell Galen. "All the things you would supposedly look for—compassion, kindness, honesty—every one of those virtues that nobody really has, he really had them all—total sincerity, lack of pretension . . ."

Joan Simpson recalled however how demanding a close relationship with Dick was: "He had to be taken care of a lot. If you were going to be with him, that had to be part of the deal. One had to give up a tremendous part of oneself to sustain the relationship. He had tremendously difficult living habits."

His writing habits were especially trying. "The reason all my marriages break up," Dick admitted in a 1982 interview, "is I'm so autocratic when I'm writing. I become like Beethoven: completely bellicose and defensive in terms of guarding my privacy."

His struggle with *VALIS* finally forced Tessa and Christopher out in February 1976. In a letter to Joan Simpson 15 months later, Dick described his confusion at losing his family: "I was a casualty in the war, although on the winning side. I had won my fight, done my part, but had lost everything . . . If I had won, (we had won), if I done my part, then did it not logically follow that I should have been rewarded, granted a full, happy life, rather than losing everything I loved; i.e. my family? . . . I mean to say, If this is what you get when you win, what the hell do you get when you lose?"

His immediate reaction was another suicide attempt. According to Tim Powers, Dick describes it in *VALIS* "with near total accuracy." He slit his wrist, took 49 tablets of high-grade digitalis (prescribed for his heart problem), and sat in his car in a closed garage with the car's engine running. He had also swallowed 30 Librium; when the engine of the car stalled due to a faulty choke, he stumbled back indoors, and in his delirium phoned his pharmacist for a Librium refill. He then lay down to die. The pharmacist suspected the worst and called the paramedics. Dick claimed in an interview that he had also consumed a huge chocolate cake prior to the pills; this must have buffered the drug overdose.

He was admitted to the Intensive Cardiac Unit at the county hospital. His heart stopped beating for a moment, he contends in *VALIS*. In letters and articles of the period, he described the whole incident as a heart attack. In a May 1976 article in *Scintillation* magazine, he also mentioned that when he returned to his empty house in Fullerton after eleven days in the hospital, he "had forty cents, no more. Some food at home in the freezer."

"My total income for that month was nine dollars," he wrote. "March was no better, and by mid-April they were going to shut off the utilities. Every phone call was someone wanting money . . . What have twenty-five years of work done to make me financially secure?"

Although his sales were steadily increasing, and many of his books were still in print, Dick was no longer writing in the same high-speed fashion. He had taken three years over *A Scanner Darkly;* he had added a final chapter to *Deus Irae* after collaborating on the novel for twelve years with Roger Zelazny. He was getting nowhere on his next book; he

wasn't even writing stories. Fortunately, in the summer of 1976, Bantam bought *VALIS* on a rough draft (entitled *Valisystem A,* and very different to the finished product) which Dick had completed in twelve days, and they paid him $12,000 for it, which was four times the advance he had got for *A Scanner Darkly*. A main factor in this windfall was that Mark Hurst, arguably the all-time Dick fan and collector, was assistant editor at Bantam at the time.

That summer, Dick moved down to Santa Ana, and lived in a modern apartment with Doris Sauter, who was 22 and had cancer. In *VALIS,* Dick explains his or Fat's love for Doris as "a locking-in onto death."

> Helping people was one of the two basic things Fat had been told long ago to give up; helping people and taking dope. He had stopped taking dope, but all his energy and enthusiasm were now totally channeled into saving people. Better he had kept on with the dope.

Doris moved out in the fall, but they remained close friends (her cancer is currently in remission, after years of treatment). On October 19, Dick checked himself into a mental health therapy facility at St. Joseph's Hospital in Orange. "He told me he'd flipped out in Trader Joe's while buying kitty litter," said Tim Powers (who is David in *VALIS*). "But I think to some extent Phil used to buy therapy just to cheer himself up."

Dick was having to reconcile his belief in a good God with all the suffering that continued around him. "Death makes me mad," he wrote at the time. "Human and animal suffering make me mad; whenever one of my cats dies I curse God and I mean it; I feel fury at him. I'd like to get him here where I could interrogate him, tell him that I think the world is screwed up, that man didn't sin and fall but was pushed—which is bad enough—but was then sold the lie that he is basically sinful, which I know he is not."

In May 1977, Joan Simpson, who had read all of Dick's work, travelled down from Sonoma to meet the man in person. By August, they had leased a house together in Sonoma, but Dick ultimately found Northern California loaded with too many bad memories and decided to stay in Santa Ana. While in the area, however, he did go to see both his mother and Anne Dick. According to Simpson, Phil came out feeling both relieved and sad. "He had to give up those horrible images," she said. "That's very strong, that world of bitchy ladies."*

Simpson went with Dick to Metz in September, and to her embarrassment, found herself included in the whole mythology of his experience.

> For several years I have had the feeling, a growing feeling, that one day a woman, who would be a complete stranger to me, would contact me, tell me that she had some information to impart to me, would then appear at my door, just as Juliana appeared at Abendsen's door (*The Man In The High Castle*), and would forthwith in the gravest possible way tell me exactly what Juliana told Abendsen—that my book, like his, was in a certain real, literal and physical sense not fiction but the truth. Precisely that has recently happened to me.

In spite of the obvious displeasure expressed by the sf community regarding his speech, Dick had a happy, memorable time in Metz. It was the first time he had travelled so far from home, and he was received like a king; the French lauded him at every turn. "It was the best week of my life," he wrote a year later. "I think there at Metz I was really happy for the first time—not because I was famous but because there was so much excitement in those people."

He was particularly enchanted by a young French fan, Marie-Laure, who apparently looked a lot like singer Linda Ronstadt. For years, Dick had admired Ronstadt, and undoubtedly based his character Linda Fox in *The Divine Invasion* (1981) on the well-

* Critic Darko Suvin identifies the "castrating bitch" as a basic Dickian female type.

known performer. Marie-Laure came to see Phil for a time in 1978, and, according to Tim Powers, when Phil received "a politely-brushing-off letter" from her in March 1979, he was "very depressed." He continued to search for his "missing half"—for, as Tessa put it, "a 'good' woman, a woman very much like his conception of what his twin sister would have been like"—but it was a search destined for failure.

The summer of 1978 was the last time Dick saw his daughter Isa, who had been visiting him regularly. It had become too painful to see her leave. As Isa recalled the times she spent there, each summer would bring a further decline in her father; he was increasingly unable to participate in physical activities, and each year he was more afraid of going with her to crowded places. He became too afraid to pick her up at the airport.

"He was most comfortable when he could be in his house, with his cats," Isa said. "He'd always take his snuff and he'd alway tell me things, and he'd say, 'you probably don't understand this now, but when you get older, you'll understand.' He told me about one time when he went outside to get Christopher, and he saw angels. He was crying when he was telling me this. 'I don't usually cry like this,' he said. 'I really saw it; I'm not kidding, you know'."

The writing of *VALIS* in the spring of 1979 was a great relief. It paved the way for a return to a more productive schedule; he sold stories to major publications, like *Omni* and *Playboy,* for the first time, and completed *The Divine Invasion* for publication in 1981. The new material, though strongly influenced by the author's theological stance, was light and assured compared to *VALIS.*

Among this material was an article Dick wrote for *Niekas* magazine, entitled "Another Passion," in which he revealed, a little flippantly, that Fat had had another vision, the one he had been waiting for. In this vision, a Christ-like figure named Tagore is dying. "Tagore has taken upon himself mankind's sins against the ecosphere," wrote Dick. "Most of all it is the dumping of toxic wastes into the oceans of the world that shows up on Tagore's body as serious burns." The article was an indication of how much Dick had come to terms with his experience by this time; his beliefs as he expressed them in public were now directly political.

In the meantime, high advances, increasing sales and a first movie deal had made the perennially poor author who had become comfortably middle-class, actually rich by 1980. Even before he had started to make a lot of money, he had been giving to such charities as the American Friends Service Committee, and Covenant House, a drug-rehabilitation centre. According to Paul Williams, Dick also gave money to his local parish priest in Santa Ana to help the poor, and a friend, Gregg Rickman, recently revealed that the author sponsored the education and livelihood of two children, one from Mexico, the other from Appalachia. Dick also made frequent loans to friends in need which often became gifts.

When offered the chance to write a novel to tie in with *Bladerunner,* Dick was adamant that the original book be reissued. He later claimed that he might have eventually earnt around $400,000 more from the novelization of the film. "When it's finally offered to me," he said in an interview, "I'm more or less apathetic to the megabucks. I live a rather ascetic life."

He concentrated his efforts on the uncommercial *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* a grim book which, according to his friends, greatly exhausted the author. Then the movie began presenting problems. When Dick saw the first version of the screenplay,

he was horrified, and, in his typical way, overreacted. "I started drinking a whole lot of Scotch," he said in one of his last interviews. "I went from a thimbleful to a jigger glass and finally to two wine glasses of Scotch every night . . . I started bleeding, gastrointestinal bleeding. And it was because of drinking Scotch and taking aspirin constantly and worrying about this whole goddamned thing."

By the end of 1981, he had lost 50 pounds. The big bear was thin and gray, his face was pale, his eyes sullen. "He wrote me a letter," said Mark Hurst, "the last letter I ever got from him, that said, 'Mark, I'm tired and exhausted; I don't know how much longer I can go on. I'd rather be a live dog than a dead famous writer.' That was the first note I had that there was something seriously wrong."

For a time, it seemed that Dick had recovered his strength, but on February 18, 1982, he suffered a stroke, and he died in hospital two weeks later.

Gregg Rickman interviewed him the day before his stroke. Dick was still awaiting the return of the Saviour; he was particularly excited by an announcement from Britain that "Maitraya the Christ" was on Earth and would make Himself known by June. Rickman asked Dick what he would do if nothing happened. "Then I will *personally* overthrow the American and Russian governments," he replied. "I will do my damnedest with or without the Maitraya. Because the ideals that the Maitraya expresses are my ideals and if there is no Maitraya, that doesn't change the fact that they are my ideals and goals. I will pursue my goals of feeding the hungry anyway . . . I will simply go on doing it . . . I know who the enemy is."

> I mean, after all; you have to consider we're only made out of dust. That's admittedly not much to go on and we shouldn't forget that. But even considering, I mean it's a sort of a bad beginning, we're not doing too bad. So I personally have faith that even in this lousy situation we're faced with we can make it. You get me?
> (*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*)

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4 Kirsten Nelson—friend—October 1983.
5 Nancy Hackett—fourth wife—November 1983.
6 Isa Dick—second daughter—November 1983.
7 Paul Williams—friend, literary executor of Dick Estate—October 1983.
8 Sachiko Williams—friend—October 1983.
9 Mark Hurst—friend—January 1984.
10 Russell Galen—literary agent—January 1984.
11 Miriam Lloyd—friend—June 1984.
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Reviews

Omni's Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies; the Future According to Science Fiction Cinema
edited by Danny Peary (*Doubleday/Dolphin, 1984, 310 pp, $17.95, paperback*)

The Aurum Film Encyclopedia Volume 2 Science Fiction
edited by Phil Hardy (*Aurum Press, 1984, 400 pp, £17.95*)

Nightmare Movies; Wide Screen Horror Since 1968
by Kim Newman (*Proteus Books, publication date given as 1984 but actually April 1985, 160 pp, £11.95 paperback*)

reviewed by Peter Nicholls

Back in 1977 when I was researching *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* I could only locate around fifteen books dealing with sf movies (sometimes peripherally), and of these perhaps three were useful. Although there are now around 80 available books, the basic situation (most of them no good) remained unchanged until quite recently. It is therefore a pleasure to report that two of the three books under review are desirable acquisitions, and the third (Peary's *Omni's Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies*) is intermittently readable.

I should declare an interest here. My own book *Fantastic Cinema,* Ebury Press (American title *The World of Fantastic Films,* Dodd Mead), was published at around the same time as the three books under review, and is directly competing with them in the marketplace, covering as it does both sf and horror films. On the one hand this is an irrepressible incitement to malicious criticism, but on the other it gives me a good insight into exactly how huge (and how little understood) are the problems of writing critical and historical studies in this area, and this of course leads to feelings of brotherhood.

For one thing, there are few challenging or even reliable sources in book form for the scholar of fantastic films (a large genre which includes sf as a subset). I mainly used the following, and would advise others to follow my example: Walt Lee: *Reference Guide to Fantastic Films,* 3 vols, Chelsea-Lee Books, 1972-4; Donald C. Willis: *Horror and Science Fiction Films; a Checklist,* 2 vols, Scarecrow, 1972 and 1982; Pohl, Frederik and Pohl, Frederik IV: *Science Fiction Studies in Film,* Ace, 1981; Strick, Philip: *Science Fiction Movies,* Octopus, 1976; Warren, Bill: *Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties Volume 1 1950-57,* McFarland, 1982. The first two of these are reference books; none of them are error free, with the possible exception of the Warren. I should in justice (but grudgingly) add to this list John Brosnan's stimulating but uneven *Future Tense: The Cinema of Science Fiction,* Macdonald and Jane's, 1978. The irritation is because *Future Tense* in about one third of its material duplicates, without permission and often word for word, the material Brosnan wrote for my own *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction.*

Danny Peary is the man behind *Omni's Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies* (absurdly cumbrous title!), and he has a good track record as the author of two pleasant books, *Cult Movies,* 1981, and *Cult Movies 2,* 1983. These mainly consist of a loving search for the small golden nuggets to be found by the indefatigable prospector who sifts through the trash piles of the B flicks.

Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies —let's just call it *SF/SF*—is a real grab bag, with lots of text (around 150,000 words at a guess) in its 42 essays by various hands. It also contains a rather incomplete checklist of futuristic films, which gives dates, titles and directors, but little else. This is a book to browse in. There seems to have been little editorial attempt to impose much in the way of tone or structure on the whole thing, and the result is that reading it is slightly dizzying—almost nauseating—much as when one goes straight from soup to fudge sundae before starting on the fish. Thus by the time this book's red meat arrives, one may well have lost one's appetite.

The vertiginous mood of kaleidoscopic change is set at the beginning by Harlan Ellison's chatty, intelligent, wisecracking introduction. The trouble with this is that his remorselessly finger-snapping, *vox populi* style makes it difficult, so to speak, for the reader to get a word in edgewise. One sometimes rather wishes that Harlan would recall the Wordsworthian formula of "emotion recollected in tranquillity," rather than forging his material in what seems to be a white heat so continuous as to refute the second law of thermodynamics.

The book does indeed contain red meat, though perversely I found the solemnity of some of the more academic pieces stultifying, perhaps because of their ponderous refusal to admit that most sf cinema is very small beer indeed. In fact, this gets to the heart of my problem with much sf movie criticism. As an iconographic pattern reflecting the social obsessions and aspirations of history's ever-changing "now," sf cinema remains fascinating in its overall shape. But it can have escaped the notice of few intelligent observers that the proportion of masterpieces in all this production-line activity is minuscule, especially today, when fantastic cinema generally (more than half of it sf) accounts for 50% of all movie box-office money. Two decades ago the figure was 4%. The boom in sf movie-making has brought with it a boom in sf movie criticism, which suffers not just from the flimsiness of much of its subject matter, but also from the slightly spurious, bandwagon-riding enthusiasm of many of its practitioners.

Most of the criticism in *SF/SF* is competent but hardly striking. The reams of sf movie criticism produced over the past five years have brought with them a rather drab consensus as to which are the most important films, and which the sociologically central themes. Though I love sf movies, my heart sinks when I am confronted with yet another sociopolitical analysis of *Fahrenheit 451*, or yet another account (by England's David Thomson this time around) of sf cinema's alleged distrust of the intellect, using the same old films as examples. Much of this material was striking when the first generation of sf movie critics started making these discoveries fifteen or so years back, but somehow, rather than leading to an ongoing debate, many interestingly questionable assumptions have become quickly hallowed by time, and have settled into staleness and stereotype.

Another area of cinematic discussion that is rapidly becoming tiresome concerns special-effects wizardry (three essays here, by Frederik Pohl IV, Robert Bloch and Tom Onosko). Perhaps my impatience here would not be shared by most readers. When researching *Fantastic Cinema* I spent many hours reading back copies of specialist film magazines. Three in particular (*Starlog, Cinefantastique* and *Cinefex*) concentrated heavily on special effects articles, and it may be that I overdosed. My impatience stemmed from their seeming lack of journalists able to go beyond the mechanical creation of the effects to the analysis of their results in filmic terms; they write about engineering rather than aesthetics. It is as if special effects are an end in themselves, and the question of their

creative force or resonance in context is left largely unexplored. Unsurprisingly, this sort of naïvety (the gosh-wow school of criticism) has created a backlash in mainstream critics. I have become very aware of this while broadcasting on the subject of sf and horror movies for BBC Radio 4's *Kaleidoscope* programme, where typically the presenter will ask me something like: "Don't you feel that all this energy being expended on special effects is detrimental to the film's human dimension?" Of course this is sometimes true, but in their own way such critics are being as naïve as the maddened effects *aficionados.* Special effects are aesthetically neutral, though by broadening the range of filmic possibility they will surely, and in the long run, prove to be no bad thing. The anti-effects snobbery of the mainstream critic is as mindless as the fan delightedly clapping his little hands like a toddler whose mother tells him "Look at all the pretty colours!"

I am not convinced that the consensus as to which movies constitute sf cinema's milestones—see, for example, not only *SF/SF* but also the book by Frederik Pohl, father and son, cited above—has much to recommend it. While researching *Fantastic Cinema* I was forcefully struck by how often the inventiveness and energy in the fantasy genre came not from the sf films, but from a surrealist creativity often manifest in B-grade horror flicks. It is exemplified at its most abstractly cheapo by the dark, moist nightmares of David Lynch in *Eraserhead,* a film which could be co-opted as sf (mutating babies), and indeed has been by Phil Hardy in his *The Aurum Film Encyclopedia: Science Fiction,* of which more below.

It may be that this line of development has been largely ignored by sf movie critics because most of them have a background in literary sf, and by literary standards films like *Night of the Living Dead* are fringe sf at best. But it is a very great mistake to approach sf cinema with the expectations of the sf reader, as Robert Silverberg points out in *SF/SF.* His excellent essay "The Way the Future Looks" remarks that "if *Blade Runner* and *THX 1138* were novels, they would be undistinguished ones," and goes on to demonstrate clearly how notably distinguised they are as movies. The other side of this debate—the relationship between book and film—constitutes an interesting section of *SF/SF,* which contains lively horror stories by Harry Harrison and Robert Sheckley about how novels they had written were massacred in their film versions.)

The dark, surrealist craziness of the cheap horror film has, in fact, fed back regularly into sf cinema, as almost all critics recognize in its first great manifestation: the monster movie boom of the 1950s (no essay on this subject in *SF/SF* though). What many of these same critics seem to miss is that surrealist juxtapositions and moebius strips of logic continue to be important to filmed sf in both its up-market and down-market incarnations. (*SF/SF* is irritatingly middle-market and middle-of-the-road in its choice of films to discuss.) Up-market surrealism, for example, has the strongest possible relevance to sf in Resnais's *Je t'aime, je t'aime,* absent from *SF/SF's* checklist as well as from the main text.

At the down-market end of the spectrum, notable absentees from the checklist are the films of Larry Cohen, including *It's Alive, Demon* (aka *God Told Me To*) and *Q—The Winged Serpent.* The latter gets one mention in the text, and that from the SF Foundation's very own Philip Strick, one of the few British authors represented in this very American view of the vices and virtues of the sf cinema. This omission is surely astonishing. *Demon* has many faults, but it must still stand as the world's wierdest sf movie in its tale of a flying-saucer mediated Second Coming of a hippy Christ (with a vagina) who hypnotizes Middle Americans into acts of unreasoning mass murder.

Equally disgraceful is the fact that only one film by David Cronenberg (*Videodrome*)

makes it to the checklist, and to the briefest of textual references. Yet there is a case for arguing that Cronenberg's *oeuvre*—also including *Shivers* and *Scanners*—represents the most significant development in sf movies of the last decade. *Scanners* especially should appeal to all the readers who complain that sf in the cinema seldom recaptures the feeling of sf on the printed page, for it is certainly the closest thing to the magnificently loony early pulp novels of A.E. van Vogt ever to appear on the screen. *Videodrome,* on the other hand, is the sf cinema's best attempt yet to probe the nightmarish possibilities of the communications revolution and the tawdry psychological tumours whose toadstool growth disfigures the media society.

More surprising because less predictable is *SF/SF*'s failure to cope with this subversive surreal tradition when it feeds back into middle-market, big-budget sf cinema. Neither John Carpenter's *The Thing* nor the 1951 version to which it pays wry homage appear in the checklist. It is true that neither film is self-evidently "futuristic" (futurism is the book's avowed emphasis), but if alien invasion is not regarded as a reputable future possibility (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* doesn't make it to the checklist either) then the book's relationship to the central themes of science fiction's futures and quasi-presents is tangential at best.

Carpenter's *The Thing* does, however, get passingly discussed in Harlan Ellison's Introduction, but there is something dismayingly *conservative* (has Harlan gone straight recently, or was he always a closet grey flannel suit type?) in the terms he applies to it. "As nasty a bit of filmic folly as has come our way of late" sneers Harlan, who then goes on, quite inaccurately, to describe it as untrue to John W. Campbell's source story "Who Goes There?" (to which it cleaves quite closely) and merely "a cheap ripoff of the original Hawks-Nyby version with all humanity removed." It is strange that the writer of the source novella for that under-rated sf movie *A Boy and His Dog,* a film that stringently analyzes the potential ambiguities and monstrosities of post-holocaust humanity, should so signally fail to pick up the subtle vibes of Carpenter's theme of "which is man and which is monster." Joining the ranks of the mainstream critics admonished above, Harlan characterizes it as "a deranged beast of a film in which special effects were not only encouraged to run amuck, but provide the *only* raison d'être."

In sum, then, *SF/SF* is not the breakthrough book in which the platitudes of sf movie criticism are re-examined and where necessary abandoned, despite the 40-odd members of its critical panel. Kim Newman's *Nightmare Movies,* a descent into the fertile organic sleaze of the horror film (see below) comes much closer to being that, as, I hope, does my own *Fantastic Cinema.* Sf film criticism is currently looking, en masse, rather tired, and the sooner it is revivified, the better. It is strange that Danny Peary (whose own *Cult Movies* books show a sharp awareness of auteurs like Cohen and Cronenberg) should have been content to let his old-guard heavyweight contributors make the sf movie sound as conservative as, say, Cartland's romantic fictions. The points at which *SF/SF* comes to life tend, curiously, to be at the gossippy, anecdotal, lightweight end of the spectrum: Paul Bartel and John Sayles are two directors who produce lively notes from their respectively tacky undergrounds (*Death Race 2000* and *Battle Beyond the Stars*), and there are sprightly interviews with Sigourney (*Alien*) Weaver, Ridley (*Alien* and *Blade Runner*) Scott and George (*Mad Max*) Miller.

Phil Hardy first came to public notice with Volume One of the *Aurum Film*

Encyclopedia series, *The Western*. This was a good book, and deservedly won the first British Film Institute Book Award. Volume Two, *Science Fiction,* is also very useful, if not quite as solid as its predecessor. (Volume Three, *Horror,* is in preparation.) At £17.95 the book is very reasonably priced for its size and elegance (over 450 stills are reproduced, mostly in black and white, but sharp and crisp on the shiny paper).

Although I intend to concentrate on the book's shortcomings, please accept as a "given" that it is a serious and responsible piece of work. It is also admirably wide-ranging, including an impressive selection of non English-language films, the best I have seen, although the Introduction confesses some incompleteness in this area, especially in films from the Far East.

The implicit definition of science fiction (spelt out fairly clearly in the Introduction, though ultimately more clear still in the nature of the selection) is comprehensive and unsnobbish, including all sorts of marginal entries, from the cartoon *Wizards* to the film noir *Kiss Me Deadly*. Sf movies notoriously overlap with the horror genre to a marked extent (which will produce problems with the next volume), but this volume is satisfyingly broadminded and includes most horror movies, from *Frankenstein* to Italian zombie nasties, if any sort of scientific rationale for the horrors is given, even if it is intellectually tissue-paper thin. The only area that should in my view have been included and was not is the lost-world movie. One of the greatest and best-lasting of all sf movies, *King Kong,* is sadly absent, as is all its sub genre.

Why then should the book not be welcomed unreservedly? I find it difficult to pin down a niggling dissatisfaction, so I have to criticize intuitively here. The book has five named authors: in addition to the editor, Hardy, there are Denis Gifford, Anthony Masters, Paul Taylor and Paul Willemen. Significantly, of these five only Gifford has any sort of previous critical presence in the field, and in some circles he is famous for his lack of interest in just about everything in the genre produced since 1950, though on his home ground, the thirties and forties, he is secure enough. My sense of the book (difficult to prove, since all entries are sadly unsigned) is that of the five authors only a couple are really emotionally attuned to the genre. There is plenty of intelligence in the critical and historical placings, but not a lot of feeling; loads of workmanlike and efficient research, but not a great deal in the way of critical epiphany, of any blazing forth of insight.

The book is structured chronologically, year by year from 1895 to 1983, and only alphabetical within each year sub-chapter. (There are eight chapters, each with introductions, beginning with "The Early Years", and then devoting a separate chapter to each decade from the twenties on; the introductions are crisp and sensible overviews of the periods.) My impression is that most of the original research has taken place in the first chapter, which told me a great deal more about sf in the silent period than I had previously known, and sf movies are my field.

For whatever reason (some authors being better than others is the likeliest) the book is not wholly reliable in its critical judgments, and not devoid of factual error either. (Nor is mine; I know that the elimination of error in film research is next to impossible.) The length of individual entries (all entries are by film titles; there are no entries for directors, screen writers, effects men, themes etc.) does not always represent the historical importance of a given film, but this perhaps is a quibble. More serious is the sense that the standard tool of researchers, the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin,* has been too heavily relied on. As I discovered myself, *MFB* is not error free. But if you do not know that a given "fact"

in *MFB* is wrong, then you will naturally perpetuate it, especially if, as is often the case, alternative research materials are not readily available. Less serious but more avoidable is the cannibalizing of *MFB*'s critical judgments, which is evident in a number of entries: the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* for example, is discussed in very similar terms. I am *not* suggesting plagiarism, just a slight critical laziness prepared to pre-empt (in different words) formulations with which you anyway agree. I have done this myself, but my impression is that Hardy's book contains just a little too much of it.

I can best define my unease about the book's unevenness by homing in on two individual entries, although this is a little unfair, since at least 80% of the time its entries are wholly acceptable. The entry for *Battletruck,* a New Zealand made exploitation pic cloned from *Mad Max* and *Mad Max 2,* and directed by Harley Cokliss (irritatingly misspelled Cockliss here) is, to begin with, listed as a New Worlds production, but the film credits nowhere mention New Worlds. Secondly, the film is quite amazingly over-praised; the shoddy script, which has nothing of the comic-book clarity of its pulp post-holocaust origins is here congratulated on its sharp wit. The dire second-handedness of the whole shoddy enterprise is ignored, as are the wooden performances. It is easy to make the odd bad judgment, but the result is to make the reader distrust the book's accounts of those films which he has not yet seen.

Zombi 2 (1979) is here referred to as *Zombie 2.* No question, it is not a very good film, but it has an unpleasant fascination. Nowhere in this book's account of it is one told that it relies almost exclusively on lurid images of visceral horror, bloodily over the top. On the contrary, we are told that it "wastes too much time on (implausibly) explaining the whys and wherefores of its zombies to be ever truly scaring," which gets the emphasis so startlingly wrong as to make one suppose the author of this entry cannot possibly have seen the film. (Also, unlike *Battletruck,* there *is* wit here. The post-*Jaws* scene in which a shark menaces an apparent person only to be eaten by it is as nifty a role reversal as I have seen in years.)

A similarly offbeat judgement, this time in terms of genre, is made of the 1978 film *Phantasm,* which is described as "in the mould of John Carpenter's *Halloween.*" It is true that both films contain bogeymen, but in every other respect they could hardly be more generically different. Coscarelli's off-the-wall, lurid surrealism in *Phantasm* is miles away from Carpenter's careful choreography. Both are fascinating films, but one describes an irruption of horror into an orderly universe, and the other pictures a world (perhaps inside a small boy's head) in which chaos and metamorphosis is the norm.

It would be boring, of course, to produce a book that never thrust its critical neck out, and perhaps occasional wrongheadedness is not too high a price to pay for the genuine attempts at critical placing in many of the more substantial entries. In my view *Return of the Jedi* is by a long way the weakest of the *Star Wars* trilogy, and it seems thoroughly perverse to pick it out as the best and to describe it as "masterful," but at least the case is argued, even if unconvincingly. The book over-praises more often than it damns (an amiable fault), but I have to report that John Carpenter's *The Thing* is once again misunderstood and dismissed, this time as his "most unsatisfying film."

As so often in reference books, cross references are the hardest things to keep straight and consistent—especially where more than one author is concerned. The entry for *Fukkatsu No Hi* (1980, aka *Virus*) makes little of the film, which is indeed both drab and silly in its tale of experimental plague germs wiping out nearly everybody, but Hardy's Introduction sees it as an "impressive" big-budget milestone whose box-office failure was

significant. The entry for *Strange Invaders* refers to director Laughlin's previous film *Strange Behavior* (mis-spelt as Behaviour), but the earlier film is surprisingly one of the book's very few omissions. (It is a good film, released on videotape in the UK as *Dead Kids,* and is pure sf.)

Overall, the book with all its faults remains an excellent buy, with over 1200 entries. (I could only squeeze 700 into *Fantastic Cinema,* and only half of those were sf.) Each entry is full of information, though perhaps not quite as *much* information as one might expect of a book that is bound to become the standard reference. Lists of credits do not include art directors, production designers, composers and, very often, special effects and make-up men.

Nightmare Movies is a book by a young British critic, Kim Newman (male not female), who began it quite a few years back; he is only in his middle twenties now. The book was delayed (but the increased lead time was exploited by Newman, who managed to include films released almost up to the end of 1984) by mysterious production difficulties, distribution has been poor, the cover price is absurdly high, and the publishing company (Proteus) is apparently considering jettisoning its film line. The book's design is confusingly trendy (Steadman-style chapter heads, text sometimes reversed out white on black so that it looks like captions). The illustrations are well chosen, and many are unusual, but as against that their positioning in the book seems to bear no relation to the discussions in the text. The filmography is not quite as minimalist as that in *SF/SF,* but—to put it mildly—is not deeply informative.

If you assumed from all this that it is rather a tacky production, seemingly designed for coffee-table use in a sado-masochistic bordello of the type that doesn't accept credit cards, you would not be far wrong. Such an impression might well be confirmed by some of the more visceral visual material. The full-colour still from *Cannibal Ferox* of a girl suspended by meathooks through her breasts would have struck De Sade as tasteless and lacking in style. Newman's writing, by contrast, *is* quite stylish, but often the style is streetwise urchin. Mandarin prose it isn't. And to round off this stirring indictment, the book has obviously been proofread by a dyslexic (my favourite being the remark that "Baghdad Boogie" in *Big Meat Eater* is "a completely irrelevant pong").

All of this is to preface my final judgement, which is that the book, despite myriad flaws, is one of the two or three best on its subject. For some years now Newman has been one of the most reliable resident critics at *Monthly Film Bulletin,* and while his work there is perhaps better than in *Nightmare Movies* (where in his necessarily short and snappy discussions of individual films he seldom has leisure to analyze in detail) he remains even here among the most incisive in the field.

Newman's other virtue, perhaps because he is young, and belongs to the punk generation which somehow missed out on cultural respectability conditioning, is a charming unsnobbishness. The horror film is not a field that can be profitably explored by the nice-minded (who will probably restrict themselves to "classics" like *Frankenstein,* which are safely archaic, and big-budget glossies like *The Omen* which get discussed in *Newsweek*). Newman knows that much of the real action is in the sewers, the derelict hotels, the rotting slums of the genre. He is not the man to overlook Larry Cohen and David Cronenberg. Down these mean streets he strides quite jauntily, grubbing up both pearls and swine with a commendable even-handedness, and casting them both at the hapless reader. His chapter on Psycho Movies (really slash movies featuring, as a general

rule, the mutilation of women) is quite remarkable for its succinctness, for the number of morally and aesthetically execrable films he has demonstrably sat through and for the fact that (unlike sleaze magazines like *Fangoria*) he has not allowed this voyeurism to rot his critical faculties. He makes entirely accurate critical judgements while standing knee deep in the swamp, and is not too blinded by revulsion to see that some (a very few) of these movies are in their way works of art, and not to be wholly repudiated. There are very few critics around who can pull off this sort of conjuring trick.

Despite the occasional vulgarity (or perhaps because of it) he writes precise prose too, which is just as well, since this is not a long book and he has a great many films to discuss. Overall he does not quite get away with it. The book is structured in thirteen chapters, each on a different theme, with the themes more or less treated chronologically according to the moment of their first historical importance. This works out less logical than it sounds, and it means that we are constantly jumping backwards and forward through the past two decades; it also means, for example, that he never gives himself the chance to discuss splatter movies (movies with lots of blood and guts) as such, because the key splatter movies fall into at least five different chapters: the exorcism movie, the countryman's-revenge-on-the-townie movie, the zombie movie, the psycho movie and so on. (This sort of problem is endemic in all critical books that take "theme" as their fundamental structural principle.) The key date, incidentally, is (as it must be) 1968. Earlier films are mentioned only by contrast, and those who believe, wrongly, that the great age of the horror movie was the 1930s will find nothing here for them. On the other hand, people interested in so-called "video nasties" and the film and TV censorship debate will find a great deal here, including a placidly friendly analysis of the much maligned *Driller Killer*.

Every now and then the book is too hurried for properly measured judgement, and one feels that films are too often discussed just in terms of plot, which makes them sound curiously like books. But Newman does have an educated sense of what is filmic and what is not, and though he regrettably does not spell this out often enough in visual terms, one accepts his shorthand because one learns (most of the time) to trust his instincts. (He is absurdly unfair to John Carpenter's *The Thing*, however, and has confessed in conversation that the film grows on you—rather like its villain—on viewing a second time.)

Many of the films discussed are science fiction, especially in the chapter *Paranoia Paradise* which should give sf fans food for though, but because Newman is approaching from the horror end of things he does not get too caught up in the confused generic knots that typically entangle critics of sf movies, who are almost never prepared to admit that in the cinema sf and horror overlap to such an extent that disentangling them is a wholly fruitless exercise. (The jury is still out on whether or not the same thing can be said of sf as literature.) Not that Newman is immune to generic confusion himself. I take his point (presumably about mini-apocalypse) when he says that "most disaster movies are bloated caricatures of *Night of the Living Dead,*" but the remark is demonstrably wronger than it is right. *Raise The Titanic*, a film to which he refers, bears no generic relation to Romero's excellent zombie movie at all, and *The Swarm* is at best a distant cousin.

Nightmare Movies will probably not become any sort of standard text on the subject, and probably does not deserve to. But it is loaded with energy, ideas, insights and life; for all its occasional glibness, hurry and crudity, it can be seen as notes toward a classic reading of the horror genre in the cinema. Buy it, if you can find it.

Skeleton Crew
by Stephen King (*Putnam, 1985, $18.95, 512 pp; Macdonald, 1985, £9.95, 512 pp*)

reviewed by Roz Kaveney

Any discussion of the fiction of Stephen King, perhaps especially any discussion of his shorter fiction, must at this point in his career start concentrating on the intimate connection between his weaknesses and his strengths. For a long time it was necessary primarily to point to the existence of those considerable strengths—his emotional honesty, his capacity for embodying traditional smalltown decencies and an agnostic radicalism in a language that owed as much and no more to Robert Frost and Sylvia Plath as it did to his acknowledged creditors, EC comic books and old horror movies. But no longer; when an author reaches the level of worldly success which King has, it becomes necessary for criticism to mention faults, not merely in order to carp and backstab, but so that judgement stays balanced and to minimize into accuracy the inevitable turning of the tide. King's last acknowledged and non-collaborative novel, *Pet Sematary,* combined passages of such excellent social observation—the row at the funeral—and such exemplary turning of the screws of terror—the wife's memories of her sister's death, the hero's blundering in the local graveyard—as to render almost inexcusable the novel's ultimate artistic failure. King has a streak of vulgarity which is productive, but he has another which tends to the merely crowd-pleasing; the book contains a brilliant zombie cat, but the eventual resurrection of yet another of King's loveable small children descends to Romeroesque grand guignol, to no especially strong effect, since the passages mentioned above have upped the book's emotional ante to a level where the child's nibbling at his mother's corpse is both superrogatory and rather tedious.

Undoubtedly a part of King's trouble is that he has an audience which always wants new terrors, and with a very few exceptions the poorest stories in this collection tend to be those whose previous publication details indicate they were written for the horror market as a favour to the editors of anthologies. None of these are less than workmanlike, of course, but the mental world they inhabit is that of the 1950s (or earlier) pulps; King at his less interesting is writing stories which are only superior examples of what he liked to read as a child. There is another of his clubland stories—"The Man who Would Not Shake Hands"—for example, which is a rather extended variation, full of pukka sahibs, hands of cards and jejune moralizing, on a Frederic Brown vignette. The two stories which venture clearly into the territory or at least onto the terrain of sf—"The Jaunt" and "Beachworld"—combine rather cartoony settings with rather predictable horrid revelations, though the latter is more or less redeemed by one more of King's eloquent portrayals of a drift into madness, this time characterized by an obsessional and antiquarian repetition by a stranded spaceman of old Beach Boys lyrics. What characterizes these weaker stories is the obstinate refusal of their characters to come properly alive before being chomped by their fates, and the refusal of those fates ever to interest us at much more than a decorative level. We find ourselves turning the page to see what happens—King never falls below the standard demanded for that—but there is never that feeling which characterizes his best stories, the feeling that it is oneself to whom these awfulnesses are happening.

Part of what makes us identify with King's characters in this way is that quality of sheer

observed physical detail which characterizes the novels. Whether his setting is a Bad Place—as in *The Shining*'s hotel—or just a place where bad things happen—the broken-down car in *Cujo* or in the present volume, the supermarket in "The Mist" or "The Raft"—he makes it so present as to create verisimilitude. Lack of this is one of the thinnesses that afflicts the weaker stories in this collection; King does not seem capable of feeling imaginatively the presence of the smoking room of a gentleman's club, or the waiting room of an interplanetary teleport facility. Once he has that sense of place, though, he is especially good on the practical consequences that follow from its layout; what saves "The Raft" from being a mere silliness about an unexplained blob that *gets* four swimmers is the way King (clearly) presents it, making real, and therefore frightening, the scene in which one of the four is pulled slowly through one of the spaces between slats and the subsequent efforts of the two remaining to stay awake and off the cracks. The fine long novella "The Mist" could be made to sound ludicrous in summary—and King acknowledges this by giving it moments that skirt the comic—and is kept within the bounds of the moving by the supermarket in which a group of country folk and summer people are beseiged by fog and Lovecraftian monsters—one of the most thoroughly stocked shops in fantasy. The momentary triumphs by which creatures are fought off with bags of fertilizer, mops and fly sprays are effectively pathetic simply because they are so tiny beside the enormity of the shoppers' predicament. King draws attention to the sheer horror of their fate by the way he not only refuses his usual neat ending, but actually has his hero discourse on the endings of stories and the unsatisfactoriness of cliffhangers, as if the ultimate bleakness were the striking of the set.

Significantly King almost ruins that ending with a piece of overly clever sentiment; his protagonist whispers two words into his son's ear—"The one is Hartford. The other is hope." Cloying as this is, it is something of an improvement on the earlier version of the story, published in Kirby MacCaulay's *Dark Forces* anthology, where what was whispered was "Two words that sound a bit alike. One of them is hope." One assumes that the other was "cope" but the general effect of the overcleverness is to leave one wondering rather than being moved. King's language is usually at its best when it is at its simplest. Several of the novels have running verbal motifs—"Nope nothing wrong here" in *Cujo*, for example; in shorter pieces he relies on single telling phrases that haunt and reverberate from quite early in the story. In "The Mist", for example, there is the moment of dialogue, all the more effective for being a standard movie peasant line, "These are different atoms, son," and the narrator's remark before anything but a storm has happened: "I haven't seen my wife since." In "Survivor Type," King aspires to the production of the most physically revolting tale of terror ever written and brings it off, more or less, by the simplicity of language that he applies for sufficient of its length to keep the whole thing clinical. A surgeon—"How much shock trauma can the patient stand"—is shipwrecked on an uninhabited island with nothing but his kit and the large bag of heroin he was smuggling. It was for its street value, not its usefulness as anaesthetic and appetite suppressant, but needs must. To survive he dismembers and devours himself, a piece at a time, saying of the first foot to go—"I was very careful. I washed it before I ate it." There are things which can only be described in the most banal of words, and the story almost falls apart in its later stages when King tries for a crescendo by having the narrator drift into another, not especially interesting state of delirium: but even here he redeems his story by the judicious and daring application of cliché to understate the

horror of the final amputation (possible): "Left hand washes the right don't let the left hand know what the right is doing." It is probable that only King could have wanted to write a story like that; it is certain that only someone with his occasional real understanding of the resources of simple language could possibly have managed to make it work.

The one productive exception to this rule of simplicity are the two stories in which simplicity is carried back to its roots in traditional American speech, and King becomes even more overtly, and artily, an American regional writer than he usually is. The use of dialect in "Mrs Todd's Shortcut" and of a language stripped of modernism and colloquialism in "The Reach" is what just about saves them from the Bradburyesque mawkishness on the edge of which both continually teeter. Mrs Todd's relentless pursuit of shortcuts to Bangor, Maine, takes her through more and more obscure paths and ultimately into sometimes dangerous other dimensions where she drops many of her years; ultimately she comes back in love for the old peasant who has told her story. What preserves it from sentimentality or whimsy is the tale's undercurrent of frankly expressed eroticism—"It was the kind of hair that would make a man wonder what it would look like spread over a pillow"—and Homer's practical attitude to the wonders he half-witnesses—"I wouldn't be the one to try and yonk it offa there because I had cuts on my hands—hay cuts—and I thought it would kill me dead as a stone aprker if some of that poison seeped into the cuts." "The Reach" is one of the few stories here to have the sort of refrain he uses in the novels—"The reach was wider in those days"—and its stripped language is somehow precisely right for its old woman leaving the island where she has lived all her life to walk to the mainland across the ice and think about her ghosts. It is the toughness and simplicity of the diction that prevents it being an indulgence and gives the story a genuinely valedictory note, making the old woman stand for the passing of more than herself.

In his introduction and afterword, King uses a number of passing metaphors for the way inspiration strikes him, notably and oddly that of the Muse covering him with it, like guano. One of the finest stories in this collection is the one about writing and its horrors as a career—"The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet." It starts off with the rather transparent and unsatisfactory framework of a literary dinner party, almost as if King feels it necessary to reassure himself that his narrator at least survives, but gradually develops power and force. A drunken editor tries to help a deranged paranoid author and their delusions feed off each other to the point where the editor drives into a river and the author goes on another of the shooting rampages of which King's fiction—like, it must be admitted, contemporary America—is rather too full. And their shared delusions are partly about electricity, but mainly about inspiration, or to be more precise the little men that live in your typewriter and do much of your work for you. Normally King's depictions of madness are effective but stagy—"The bells, the bells"; here madness is whimsy gone sour and to be judged by its results, as much as by its content. Because the awful thing with which the editor is left is the possibility that some of the delusions he shared with Reg were true—because both he and Reg's wife saw physical signs of the Fornits that live in typewriters at a stage when they think they were still sane.

What distinguishes King from other horror writers is that in his best fiction he is always serious. He can take the stuff of a thousand whimsical *Unknown* stories—little men in typewriters—and make of it the stuff of damnation; he can make a piece of B-movie

nonsense like "The Mist" into something claustrophobic, regretful and sad. But this is at his best; and even at his best, he has a streak of sheer vulgarity which leads him to try for effect and to make our flesh creep more than his stories need. He has in him the stuff of real purity of style and real terror of moral vision, but the comic-books have eaten too deeply into his soul for that, and there are too many fans and editors howling for more blood. He is ultimately content, for good and ill, to remain just Stephen King.

Interzone: The 1st Anthology
edited by John Clute, Colin Greenland and David Pringle (*Dent, 1985, 206 pp, £3.95*)

reviewed by Brian Stableford

Here (we are told before we begin) are thirteen stories about the way things are going. The information, from John Clute's introduction, carries within its modest understatement the implication that in too many other books we will *not* find stories about the way things are going. He elaborates: most modern fiction of any worth has become neurotically introspective; it "focuses darkly inwards upon human consciousness floating in the dream of words" and "seems to have abandoned the task of envisioning this century, whose end, all the same, most of us hope to witness and to comprehend." What it needs is an inoculation of science fiction. Of course, science fiction has its limitations too, having been for so long an unutterably naïve species fit only for children, but as it has grown out of its confidence in a world saved by technological magic it has preserved a larger perspective than mundane fiction and through its own "angle of vision" brightly maintains "a sense that the world itself is a legitimate subject-matter." *Interzone*, then has set up its tent in the marches where worthy fiction and science fiction overlap, maybe in the only place from which we can see how things are going, and this first anthology will prove it to us.

This is not an anthology which minces words; it lays things on the line. Where we are going, it says, is wrong.

Here are transfigurations of the world, which informs us in metaphor where we are really at as we sit (falsely complacent) in the homely world of perceived mundanity. Norton and Carver, in Malcolm Edwards' "After-Images," are living in the moment of nuclear holocaust, where time has been conveniently slowed down (Owl Creek Bridge come to West London) in order to allow them a languorous appreciation of their situation. The unnamed protagonist of David Redd's "On the Deck of the Flying Bomb" is a stowaway explorer in a great doomed war-machine from which there is no escape; yes, Virginia, there *are* Berserkers, and we are their fellow travellers. Cindy, in John Shirley's "What Cindy Saw," is humoured by the doctor who feeds her major tranquillizers, who concedes that the phenomenal world of ordinary appearance might indeed cloak a noumenal nightmare of churning guts and half-faced humanoids and electronic spy-eyes, in which (when one can really get down to it) one can get properly to grips with what Schopenhauer meant by the world as will and idea.

Here are transfigurations, too, of the human predicament *circa* 1985. Here are our new Christians and Candys, our Everymen (it is a Dent book) and our Joe Ks (sometimes funny ones). The boy-hero of Scott Bradfield's "The *Flash!* Kid" has unsuspected genetic potentials awakened within him by a quasi-Clarkeian cosmic trigger, and becomes a

bloated, uncaring slob of a fruiting body, mainly as a result of trying to be macho like his dad. Canwen, in Keith Roberts' "Kitemaster" spends his tours of duty crucified upon a giant kite, babbling in visionary delirium while battered by storms, supposedly guarding his realm against the encroachments of possibly-imaginary demons. And then, of course, there has to be Dr Richard Greville in J.G. Ballard's "The Object of the Attack," whose eternal role it has always been to stand coolly by while the innocent epileptic assassin Matthew Young follows a strange trajectory through Ames Room space, borne by a replica Lilienthal glider and inspired by a fake Samuel Palmer painting, to his fateful meeting with the messianic astronaut Thomas Stanford, born-again muscular Christian of the nuclear Church Militant.

Naturally, there is light relief. Wherever the world is going, life has its little distractions. This particular desolation row hasn't much in the way of TV, but it acknowledges the power of dreams. Hence, we have a psychoanalytic biography of Edgar Allan Poe by Angela Carter, in which is explained (if not endorsed) that worthy fantasist's fascination with the grotesque, the arabesque, and the *vagina dentata* (yes, Virginia, there *is*, . . .) Actually, though, dreaming isn't much of a distraction here, and is certainly no respite. What psychoanalysis has taught us, after all, is that nothing is *really* irrational, and that the interpenetration of the real and imaginary cannot *really* provide us with a holiday from the nausea of existence. Rachel Pollack's "Angel Baby," whose heroine finds intercourse with an angel to be less inspiring, after all, than Tamar Grobe found it, tells us so directly. Cherry Wilder's "Something Coming Through," though it seems to be telling us the opposite, is frightening enough even though it chooses to focus on a happy consequence of confusion.

Maybe, then, the light relief is not so very light. But it *is* witty. There is a great deal of irony in the stories in this book, much of it lusciously savoured. One may call this satire or gallows humour as one pleases. The presence of this black comedy is both inevitable and appropriate, not because of the old adage that "you have to laugh or else you'd cry," which is as daft as most proverbial wisdom, but because one cannot do justice to the awfulness of desolation by straightforward description. Macabre wit is a Brechtian alienating device, and no sincere account of the way things are going could possibly do without it. Here, then, we find a clutch of stories by new writers, three of which deal with US Presidents. One president is vivisected so that his organs can serve mankind better than he did; one president is fucking Marilyn Monroe while haplessly serving as an instrument of mass murder; and one president *is* Marilyn Monroe, trying gallantly to fuck her way to world peace. It is only natural that we should find these US Presidents at decent intervals throughout this anthology; they provide the most obvious symbols of the world's desolation. Where we are going is where they are taking us, and there is hardly anyone else worth making up jokes about.

"O Happy Day!" might well serve, at this point, as an interjected comment, but it is actually the thirteenth story (which comes first of all in the book). It is not a reprint, and represents a kind of low editorial cunning in making sure that *Interzone* subscribers cannot ignore the book on the grounds that they have seen it all before. "O Happy Day!" is by Geoff Ryman, already hailed as *Interzone's* first great discovery, who is well on the way to being a fine writer. He is the ideal literary trench-fighter, never afraid to go over the top. "O Happy Day!" is set in an extermination camp staffed by self-hating homosexuals perpetually under observation by camera-eyes manned (if that's the word) by feminists alert

for any sign of that violence which is the sovereign preserve of the rogue male. Things are bleak until a black man of dubious erotic orientation opens up a dialogue with the cameras, which gets him raped but ultimately provokes the act of sentimental generosity that releases his fellow exterminators from their appalling captivity. There is a lesson in this for us all; we can't all work in an extermination camp, we can't all be black, we can't all be raped, and we can't all indulge in gay repartee with feminist cameras, but we *can* all hate ourselves.

Here (and now it is me who is saying it) are thirteen stories about the way things are going. This is the direction of contemporary fiction, not in the cloudy heights of Booker-prizeland where the literary elite polish their trophies and contemplate their navels, but at a subterranean (visceral, in Cindy's view) level, which a deep distaste for wordplay dissuades me from describing as a world of street Ballards and Ryman slang. Intellectualist science fiction has clearly come a long way since the days when its champions were C.S. Lewis (the thinking man's Marie Corelli) and Kingsley Amis (a mapper-up of unconsidered truffles). This is the kind of sf that the late Lucien Goldmann might have liked, believing as he did that in this period of crisis capitalism all clear-sighted writers (and who can possibly be clear-sighted save the Swiftian sf writers, with one eye fixed firmly on the firmament and the other on the ground?) must embody in their fiction the story of the disintegration of the human soul. People who think it difficult to embody a disintegration do not have the talent for paradox which is necessary to think in a modern way.

Interzone: The 1st Anthology is all sinewy prose; cut up for analysis it bleeds sincerity; sized up for aesthetic appreciation it radiates cynicism. (If anyone is in doubt, this last comment is a compliment.) It would be a sadly unappreciative *Foundation* reader who could not count among his blessings the fact that two of the presiding genii of *Interzone* also have their hands upon the tiller of our own beloved journal. We can be proud of them.

The Ball and the Cross
by G.K. Chesterton (*The Boydell Press, 1984, 403 pp, £3.95*)

reviewed by Dave Langford

Though so often dismissed (eg. by Orwell in a particularly bilious mood), G.K. Chesterton keeps making comebacks—sustained by the ever-popular *The Man Who Was Thursday* and the 49 "Father Brown" stories. As I write, his first novel *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* is back in print; likewise the minor but amusing collection *The Club of Queer Trades;* a vast omnibus of lesser-known detective stories is in the pipeline from Unwin; such hints of an increasing revival may or may not be connected with the passing of his works into the public domain come 1987. . .

Of Chesterton's six novels, none is exactly realistic; two are definitely fantasies (*Man Who Was Thursday,* 1908; *Ball and the Cross,* 1910), and three can be described as sociological sf (*Napoleon of Notting Hill,* 1904; *The Flying Inn,* 1914; *Return of Don Quixote,* 1927). Critics of sf and fantasy, however, have failed to annex Chesterton with their customary territorial verve. Why not? I can imagine the vox-pop comments: "G.K. who?" "Er, I dunno, I thought his writing was all allegorical, not real sf." "You must realize, old chap, Chesterton's *politically outdated.*" "All that sociological stuff

extrapolating things like the decay of the monarchy, the rise of terrorism, the temperance fad . . . no *proper* sf themes like mile-long spaceships or black holes." "Wasn't he a Catholic? I don't like that religious stuff: I mean, look at L. Ron Hubbard . . ." Etcetera.

Now 75 years old, *The Ball and the Cross* is an underrated, little-reprinted fantasy and allegory with its roots in both religious and political conflict. (Exit all the above voices, pursued by a bear.)

Actually, the opening chapter gives the illusion of a sprightly sf period-piece, with its debate between a mad scientist and "an exceedingly holy man, almost entirely covered with white hair" aboard a flying machine whose implausibly is sketched with vast unconcern. Allegory begins to loom, these characters' names being Professor Lucifer and Michael, but something rather different from the dour didacticism of, say, C.S. Lewis's *The Last Battle* is promised by Chesterton's style:

> A monk of immense learning and acute intellect, he had made himself happy in a little stone hut and a little stony garden in the Balkans, chiefly by writing the most crushing refutations and exposures of certain heresies, the last professors of which had been burnt (generally by each other) precisely 1,119 years previously. They were really very plausible and thoughtful heresies, and it was really a creditable or even glorious circumstance that the old monk had been intellectual enough to detect their fallacy; the only misfortune was that nobody in the modern world was intellectual enough even to understand their argument.

Having swapped epigrams about rationalism and faith (the "ball" of the world and the "cross", taking unexpectedly solid form when the aircraft nearly bumps into the dome of St Paul's), Lucifer and Michael fade out to be replaced by the more solidly named and depicted MacIan and Turnbull, whose bizarre adventures fill the book. MacIan is a Catholic and a Jacobite, with a sneaking regard for the divine right of kings; Turnbull a red-hot socialist who publishes a paper called *The Atheist* and longs for revolution. Both are sympathetically presented. They collide, violently:

> Here, after twenty lone years of useless toil, (Turnbull) had his reward. Someone was angry with the paper. He bounded to his feet like a boy; he saw a new youth opening before him. And as not unfrequently happens to middle-aged gentlemen when they see a new youth opening before them, he found himself in the presence of the police.

Neither the vaguely kindly police nor the woolly-liberal magistrate can follow the logic by which two complementary fanatics want to spill blood over a mere difference of opinion. Pursued across England in scenes of grim farce, MacIan and Turnbull ask only a quiet spot for their sword-duel to the death. Even while running, they argue in the compulsive Chestertonian mode of alliteration, echolalia, puns, paradox and bizarre analogy. Some people hinder them, usually the endemic police. Others help for the wrong reasons, as with the pagan gentleman who wants them to cross swords in his back garden for the greater glory of human sacrifice: they decline to do so. Amazing dawns and sunsets glow over the English countryside. Elaborate plans to be seen fighting for a socially acceptable reason (over a woman rather than over the universe) are laid, and fail. The safely remote desert island selected for the climactic encounter proves, in a highly characteristic reversal, to be Thanet.

Their final haven is a vast asylum which is a true science-fictional nightmare—the kind Chesterton thought he saw in the too clean and sterile utopias of Wells. The earlier political apathy (nobody but MacIan was offended by *The Atheist;* nobody but Turnbull bothered to publish its views) is now enforced by regulations foreshadowing present-day psychiatric practice in certain countries. Turnbull and MacIan are locked up as an insane disturbance, victims respectively of religious mania and "Eleutheromania." Everyone

who helped them is locked up as having possibly been contaminated by their madness with the disease of thinking for one's self. Everyone who hindered them, or even was chased or tied up by them—ditto.

> ". . . He is a victim of the disease called Vinculomania—the impression that one has been bound or tied up. We have also a case of Fugacity (Mr Whimpey), who imagines that he was chased by two men."

The asylum grows exponentially. In charge is Lucifer, who by this time has dropped the title "Professor"; in the deepest dungeon is Michael, now a sort of apolitical personification of faith. The knockabout chase has clearly modulated into allegory. MacIan and Turnbull, in dreams, are taken to high places via that flying machine and offered their own utopias . . .

Their debate hasn't been one-sided. Each has softened towards the other, and despite Chesterton's bias Turnbull gets some splendid lines—as in the early vow to fight that duel, no matter what. MacIan spends a whole paragraph swearing this by everything in and under heaven. "The atheist drew up his head. 'And I,' he said, 'give my word.'" Now MacIan is offered a theocratic fascism, dripping with heraldry and spectacle, in which it happens that the lower orders are brutalized as a matter of course. Turnbull sees the glorious revolution, with special provision for unemployables and others who don't fit into the totalitarian dream: "Underneath whole squares and city districts were in flames, like prairies or forests on fire."

Rejection of these joys leads our heroes to soul-killing "humane" cells whose furnishings were later ripped off by C.S. Lewis for the N.I.C.E. Objective Room: inhuman shape, inexplicable angles, and "Above all he had a hatred, deep as the hell he did not believe in, for the objectless iron peg on the wall." Also prefiguring *That Hideous Strength,* the book ends in cleansing fire . . . but I find Chesterton's physical conflagration more, as it were, "ideologically sound" than Lewis's fire from heaven. A minor and eminently respectable character is driven too far by Lucifer's asylum rules: despite being the most conventional person in the book he knows a broken social contract when he sees one, and reaches for the petrol cans. Perhaps Chesterton has too much faith in the innate decency of the Common Man, but I'd place more trust in him than in all-potent eldils . . .

As this might indicate, despite being a Chesterton fan I don't agree in the least with his religion. Even from this viewpoint, the loading of *The Ball and the Cross* seems not unreasonable—no worse than fantasy novels which seduce one into accepting the god-given but vaguely fascist authority of a "High King." You may reject him as a theological devil, but Lucifer is also the authoritarian state: a political devil. As with the Father Brown tales, the book's most powerful polemic is against hypocrisy and humbug. (This alliteration is catching.)

A fine, uneven, annoying work, packed with poetry and farce, with many of its dialogues reading like polemical essays . . . though remarkably good ones. All credit to Boydell for photo-reproducing the original 1910 (the publishers say 1909, but 1910 is the better date for this bibliographically-complex item) typography with its leisurely space between the lines: a black mark, though, for the cover, which reproduces a famous Beerbohm caricature but curtails the punchline "Well, you haven't met Belloc." Other credits go to Paul Jennings, whose sympathetic introduction features the useful coinage "spiritual picaresque," and our very own George Hay, opener of strange doors, who inspired this reprint in the first place.

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