FOUNDATION

the review of science fiction

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Number 6, May 1974

The illustrations are by Penny Grant

editorial

Peter Nicholls

I am writing this in late January. I gloomily expect it to be up to three months before you read it. Maybe more. Paper shortages, over-worked printers, roaring inflation, three-day weeks. It's all happening in England, the doomwatcher's dream come true. We do try, very hard, to keep going on a quarterly schedule, and dutifully prepare 120 pages of copy every three months. We are several issues in front of the printer now. I have copy almost complete for Foundation 7, *and as I write,* Foundation 5 *has not yet been sent out.*

We are very worried about this. If we are to continue as we are going (and the incoming mail is unanimously favourable about our present direction) then we must persuade our masters at the polytechnic to do one of two things. Either they must allow us top priority in the hopelessly over-worked polytechnic print room (where our copy tends to languish un-lithographed for months at a time, giving way to endless prospectuses, minutes, time tables and exam papers), or they must subsidise us with an external printing house. In the latter event, Foundation *will cost, at our present circulation, approximately £0.65 a copy to produce. Even though I am a congenitally optimistic editor, I do not expect our circulation to reach a figure allowing even a tiny profit, for at least another year. So, as is endemic with little magazines, we continue in a Darwinian battle for survival. The outcome should be clear by* Foundation 7. *It's a struggle, but we are really very confident.*

In any event, we are finally forced to raise our price. The new prices appear on the title page. We are now distinguishing between subscription sales and over-the-counter sales, as an inducement to the faithful to continue their fidelity, and to the casual buyer to enter into a more permanent relationship with us.

Having got the causes for gloom out of the way at the beginning, I must say that it becomes more exciting every day to edit this journal. We had far more good material than we could use this time around. I am not prepared to sacrifice the substantial review section to make room for additional features, because our review section is one of the factors that differentiates us from our friendly rivals, Science Fiction Studies *and* Extrapolation, *and even though our palsied printing schedule occasionally renders reviews up to nine months late, we do continue to provide a*

record (something like 80% complete, if our "Books Received" column is included) of what is happening in science fiction publishing in the U.K. Because there is so much duplication between U.K. and U.S. publishing, I would reckon that we cover 50% of the U.S. scene as well, though often with a delay of two or more years. The other reason I have for wanting to keep the review section as it is, is my feeling that Christopher Priest is doing an excellent job in that difficult, almost instinctive task of choosing the right books to review, and fitting the right reviewers to the books.

This issue is a Brian Aldiss/S.R. Delany issue, as promised. Aside from a remarkably interesting piece by Mr. Aldiss himself, we include discussions of three of his recent books. Our apologies to S.R. Delany. The Delany half of the Aldiss/Delany special is less substantial than it might have been. We have the material on hand, but we would need another 60 pages to print it all. It will feature prominently in Foundation 7.

The conjunction of Mr. Aldiss and Mr. Delany is happy, but both accidental and arbitrary. The two writers have in common that they do not rest content with the reworking of old sf clichés. Both are experimental writers, but the influence they have had upon each other, I have good reason to believe, is precisely nil. Their appearance together in this issue is not meant to imply that together they constitute a literary movement. If this is the New Wave, then the wave has more than one crest.

In this issue, again by coincidence, we have three reviews of children's books, which together make up an accidental seminar on the relationship of the publishing business to "juvenile culture". The inverted commas are meant to suggest that there is some doubt about whether that culture exists as anything other than a wholly artificial phenomenon.

Science fiction continues to progress extremely rapidly outside the walls of the ghetto, in academia and elsewhere, to the occasional nervousness of its practitioners, who often fear being docketed and labelled like the producers of some sort of latter-day Dead Sea Scrolls. As an academic, I feel schizophrenic about this. It's true that the academic touch has sometimes, historically, been reminiscent of that delicate grasp with which Spock, in Star Trek, *renders the objects of his temporary hostility numb and insensible at his feet.*

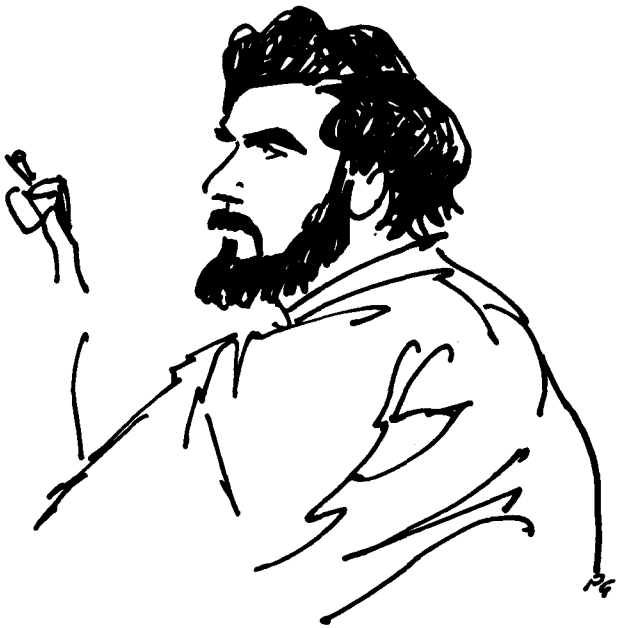
The Institute of Contemporary Art in London is running a two month exhibition of science fiction art, along with surrealist and technological art, at the end of this year. An exhibition of the scale being planned will be the first in the world we believe. Along with the exhibition there will be a lecture series and a film series. The Science Fiction Foundation is helping to organize all this. The lecture series will in turn lead to an anthology, published by Gollancz and edited by myself. Further details of these junketings will be given in later issues.

With reference to these plans, and to Foundation *itself, I become less and less easy about the use of the term "science fiction" as the demarcator of a narrow strip of territory, its borders patrolled by vigilante fans. My own policy as editor is to give the term a latitudinarian definition. (Similarly I hope, and confidently expect, that the forthcoming art exhibition will include, but* not *be restricted to, the Frank R. Pauls and Kelly Freases of the art world.)*

At least one of the books received this time, Ballard's Crash, *can only be allowed as science fiction under the most elastic of interpretations. Nevertheless, it is an important book, if an ugly one, and we intend to continue the policy of including the marginal cases in, rather than out. We hope to publish a review of Pynchon's* Gravity's Rainbow *in a later issue.*

Our special thanks go to Penny Grant, for letting us use some of her delightful caricatures of science fiction personalities in this issue. I find them almost Japanese in their economy of line.

At last! The National Book League, a year and a half after I supplied them with the copy, have produced the annotated catalogue to the book exhibition, the Best of SF. The exhibition was revised in August, 1972, and therefore the catalogue is not totally up to date, but nevertheless, it contains useful, detailed information about much of the most interesting science fiction currently in print. 340 books are annotated. The catalogue is quite large, and appears in a set of three stencilled thin volumes, nicely bound. Each individual section costs £0.25 to NBL members, and subscribers to Foundation, *and the full set costs £0.50 to the same people. (£0.30 and £0.60 are the prices for non-members and non-subscribers.) They may be ordered from the Science Fiction Foundation, but please include return postage. The exhibition itself can be hired at a very reasonable rate. For details, contact the National Book League or myself.*



Peter Nicholls

Our policy is not to print anything that has previously appeared in book form. We are less stern about pieces that will appear in book form later on, which is the case with Brian Aldiss's piece below. Like ourselves, Mr. Aldiss has a professional interest in the histories and states of mind of science fiction writers, and to this end he has put together a book, consisting of six autobiographical pieces, by himself, Harry Harrison, Alfred Bester, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl and Robert Silverberg. The book is called Hell's Cartographers, *and will appear from Weidenfeld and Nicolson in 1975. Clearly this project runs exactly parallel to our own series,* The Profession of Science Fiction. *We are grateful to Mr. Aldiss for his generosity in allowing our series to include a part of this. Certainly our series would ultimately have looked incomplete without a contribution by Mr. Aldiss, one of the most deservedly celebrated English writers in the field.*

the profession of science fiction: vii: magic and bare boards

Brian W. Aldiss

The difference between fiction and non-fiction is the difference between magic and bare boards.

Imagine you're going to the theatre. The auditorium fills, the orchestra plays, the lights dim, the curtain goes up . . .

The stage is bare, or cluttered with old and dusty props. Flats lie shuffled at the rear. A light dimly burns. Something has gone wrong. There will be no play tonight, no magic.

A man appears left, looking awkward and vulnerable, as people do when they walk unrehearsed on a stage. He says, "'Poets are born not made.' Nevertheless, a writer can look back over his life . . ."

There's an uneasy hush in the stalls.

Well, that's the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Tonight, the stage is bare and lit by one naked bulb. I come on, looking awkward and vulnerable.

* * *

Brian Aldiss

'Poets are born not made.' Nevertheless a writer can look back over his life and calculate the steps he took that made him the kind of writer he is. Many of those important steps are taken in childhood. As F.L. Lucas says, in childhood, fate determines character – after which, character determines fate.

So what I intend to do is give some account of my childhood – 'edited highlights', as T.V. commentators say of the day's sport – and then go on to discuss what may be called my writing career; from which we can move to the subject of writing in general. It is no use talking in a vacuum. If you have some notion of what the man is like, you can make some estimate of the value of his ideas.

* * *

My father had a great physical gift: he remained thin and neat however well he ate. To the end of his life he could refer to himself self-deprecatingly as a dapper little man.

My mother's mother was the daughter of a farmer. She taught my mother the art of cooking, so that my childhood recollections include eating well. Norfolk was overrun with rabbits in those days, and rabbit made an excellent dish. Mother would serve them cooked whole in casserole, when the tongue was regarded as a great delicacy; or in pies, with whole small onions and chunks of ham. Her pies were beautiful, crowned with splendid patterned pastry. One of her specialities was salmon pudding, a noble edifice served with parsley sauce and new potatoes. Pickled mackerel were another speciality; they used to stand to soak in a jug of vinegar overnight, their skins shining with beautiful subdued colours.

Mother's pudding courses were also splendid. Summer would bring summer puddings, which disgorged lashings of gooseberries and black and red currants. She was expert at cake-making. Maids of Honour made regular appearances on the tea-table, together with Melting Moments and Surprise Buns (which had jam inside them, though you could not tell from the outside). Our cooking was done in a huge oven heated by three paraffin burners underneath.

Mother made music in that oven. Each Christmas, she excelled herself. What cascades of mincepies, what mountains of sausage rolls, appeared under her hands! And she would create, on those occasions, exquisite little marzipan titbits in beautiful colours. Young Hoggins, peering over the edge of the kitchen table, would be allowed to pinch a morsel now and then.

In short, my mother had a natural sensibility for British cooking. We were innocent of garlic, yet I never enjoyed food as much as in childhood, often washed down with lemonade made from real lemons, which slopped like skeletal millstones in our huge bone china jug. No doubt of it, all that generous eating stood the family in fine stead for the war years which were to follow. If you learn to eat well young enough, you will have a strong appetite for other pleasures.

While mother was upstairs doing the cooking, father was working downstairs in the section of the shop over which he held sway. I shall have to say something about the shop; it was much a part of my childhood.

We lived over a part of H.H. Aldiss and Sons in what seemed to me an enormous flat. It had a long corridor, along which I could pedal like mad on my three-wheeler; once I broke the speed record (Sir Malcolm Campbell was my idol, even from an early age) and pedalled right down the stairs.

This was in East Dereham, a prosperous little market town in the rustic heart of Norfolk, where I was born in August, 1925. My mother loved giving my sister and me treats; one of the great yearly treats was when she took us to the fair. Fairs in Dereham in the thirties were really something. The whole of the market square was taken up with cake-walks, dodg'ems, coconut-shies, boxing booths, big and small roundabouts, and all the other stalls. The big roundabout had splendid cockerels with high heads, and dragons that seated three, as well as galloping horses. Mother was always lucky at the stalls; perhaps the gipsies recognised the psychic element in her. Most years, we would come away triumphantly with a goldfish or a Norwich canary, yellow and trim. One canary lived for many years, laying an egg every month. It was given brandy on a feather when it was ill.

What a pleasure it was to go to bed at night and listen to the high piping music of the organ on the big roundabout! We were near enough to the market square for it to be clearly audible. The other excitement was to go to school through the fair booths. At that time in the morning, men and women would be coming out of their travelling wagons and caravans which filled the back streets, washing themselves, singing, arguing, perhaps blowing their noses into the gutter with two fingers squeezing the bridge of the nose. How I admired that gesture – and could soon copy it accurately.

When the fair arrived in Dereham, trade in our shop was brisk. The fair people would all come to H.H. Aldiss for new clothes. So would the countryfolk, who arrived from out of town to enjoy the traditional jollifications of harvest-time, the season at which the fair was held.

When the excitement was over and the market square again deserted, my sister and I would be stood in the bath and our clothes removed, garment by garment, as

mother searched us for fleas; they too rode in to East Dereham with the fair.

Gypsies were never far from Dereham. On the outskirts of the town lies a tract of wild heathland called the Netherd, on which travelling wagons were often to be seen. The Netherd was ever-mysterious, ever attractive, and seemingly boundless. The gorse bushes were so tall to a boy that one could stalk and be stalked, like a small animal. In the winter, the Netherd pond used to freeze, whereupon we would skate and slide on it. Once I went to the pond with my cousins during a summer drought, to see the fish dying in the mud. We 'saved' one or two fish in jam jars full of water, but they died after we got them home.

The Netherd was a reminder that George Borrow was born in Dereham, at Dumpling Green. Borrow was a strange elusive man, and a tremendous writer. How little his works are read now! It is oddly appropriate that the only quote from him in familiar usage is "There's a wind on the heath; life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?" Though the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations also grants him 'every dog has his day': "Youth will be served, every dog has his day, and mine has been a fine one."

Borrow's *The Bible in Spain*, despite its off-putting title, is one of the best and most living of travel books, to be set on the honoured shelf beside Kinglake's *Eothen*.

The other writer associated with Dereham is the poet, William Cowper. Borrow was born there, Cowper died there. The Aldiss family, devout or pretence-devout Congregationalists – they defended their faith to the last child – went to worship every Sunday at the Cowper Memorial Church. And moreover were forbidden to take even a glance at the stills outside the Exchange Cinema on their way home to the Sunday joint. Time was when I used to read all of Cowper's poems (I actually liked *The Sofa*), and his letters too; these days I haven't the patience. But the letters show a good English style. He went gently mad. His poem that begins "I was a stricken deer that left the herd . . ." is moving in its somewhat languid eighteenth century way.

My mother's relations lived in Peterborough, a city now ruined by industrialisation. There, I had three splendid uncles, two of whom were architects, and a grandmother. Grandmother was the farmer's daughter. Her house was run on purely Victorian lines with, as I first remember it, two daily maids, a washerwoman who appeared on Mondays and wielded a ferocious dolly-tub, and a boot-boy. Every room in her house astonished me. The windows sported venetian blinds with wooden slats. The doorknobs and light-switches were enormous brass affairs. A stuffed fox snarled over the drawing-room door. All the furniture was huge and intricate, forever breaking out in animals, foliage, and faces. The breakfast-room had a vast grate which glowed angrily behind its bars and had to be black-leaded regularly for the sake of its complexion. The drawing-room held lace antimacassars and spindly glass cases containing collections of china; one was forbidden to play ball in there.

In grandmother's delicious damp cellar, which always comes to mind when I read Edgar Allan Poe, next year's Christmas puddings dangled from hooks overhead. They had to mature for eighteen months before being ripe for eating. In that house, huge hams were cured and huge pork-pies made. Huge trifles were consumed. For breakfast, one ate porridge or those gritty little Grape Nuts; the silver sugar sprinkler was magnificent; and one looked at the adventures of Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred in the *Daily Graphic*, then a *respectable* paper. Although the strip was aimed at children,

it must have had some political significance, for one of the minor characters, I seem to recall, was a terrible old anarchist-bolshevist called Boskofski, who dashed about with a smouldering bomb in his pocket.

My grandmother was a tiny woman with white hair and ivory-coloured skin who outlived her husband by twenty years. She always wore black for mourning with a little white lace frill of collar. Although she died in 1945, when I was in Sumatra, I recall her with absolute clarity. Yet how I *felt* about her remains a mystery. She was never other than extremely kind to me, and I never remember when she was not smiling, even when a canine friend and I were busy wrecking all that scrupulously kept house; but some reserve in her kept me ever from loving her.

On the other hand, I unreservedly loved that monster, my grandfather. That was Granpa Aldiss, H.H. Aldiss of Dereham, J.P. My father went in awe of him until his last days, and always called him 'the Guv'ner'.

The Guv'ner not only governed, but could be seen to govern. He dominated what would now be called a department store, employing some fifty staff. There were three main departments, the ladies' drapery and millinery, ruled directly by the Guv'ner, the gents' outfitting, and the household goods and furnishing, ruled by the Guv'ner through my father and my uncle. Behind these departments were 'factories' and warehouses where carpets, beds, rolls of linoleum, and many other items were stored, and workshops where men sat cross-legged and made up suits or women chattered endlessly and created dresses or hats. H.H. Aldiss also did removals and funerals. I can just recollect the glass hearse pulled by two enormous black horses wearing black plumes, and driven by Monument in his black silk topper. Then a motor-hearse was bought and the old hearse stood in one of the back yards to rot. Soon the stables were empty, although kittens – and once a brood of startlingly ugly barn-owl chicks – were raised by their feral parents in lofts above the stables.

The whole complex of buildings was a playground for me and my cousins. The various departments were connected by long, often dark, corridors; below them were 'stoke-holes', where the terrifying business of keeping the departments warm went on. Established in various nooks throughout this loose assemblage of buildings were little knots of people going about their different trades. A small boy's relationship with adults is always precarious. In some nooks, one would be accepted as a welcome diversion, in some rejected as a tiresome nuisance; one might be made much of or teased; and the reception could change as the predominant character of the workroom changed.

The millinery department was established upstairs, in what had once been a dwelling house. Behind the scenes, old bedrooms with striped bedroomy wallpaper did duty as boxrooms, scruffy corridors retained the dignity of ancient gas-brackets. To this department I would advance with a fluttering heart, provoked by hope and trepidation. Yes, and love! For one of the young girls in the millinery was very beautiful. She had dark hair, blue Norfolk eyes, a pale complexion, some freckles, and a lovely red mouth. She was known to get me in one of the old bedrooms, to take me on her knee and cuddle me, to kiss me. But she also teased me. That teasing I could not bear; nevertheless, I did bear it for the sake of those wonderful kisses.

Long after we had left Dereham, I would dream of that face, and those lips, and scheme to go back and give a more grown-up account of myself.

Among the rambling buildings were nooks numberless in which to hide and ambush assistants – who sometimes retaliated by hauntings and ghostly noises from places of concealment. There were many opportunities to annoy old Monument, who would come rushing out of his harness-room swearing as his chimney was

blocked from outside by a sack, and smoke poured into his little reeking room. There were endless chances to go ratting with the terriers, or to climb over and along walls, endless opportunities for disappearing.

Occasionally, the Guv'ner would appear in his wrath and give us the yard-stick about the legs or bottom. Or he would send father to do the same. Father would do as he was told, but he had his own fun, even in shop hours. The outfitting department was frequently convulsed with laughter at some prank of which my father was prime mover. He sometimes eluded reps ('commercial travellers' they were in those days) by dressing up in one of his own fitting-rooms and sweeping past the man with a polite lifting of his top hat, sporting a false moustache the while.

In his youth, father took part in amateur theatricals. We had a photo of him in pierrot costume, looking droll. East Dereham forced respectability on him, but he still enjoyed an absurd prank; he would enforce silence on us at mealtimes, then sit eating with his napkin-ring screwed into his eye like a monocle. Wars of thrown dusters were covertly conducted among the serious business of his shop. He could do conjuring tricks, tell jokes, and sketch beautifully. We regularly went to the swimming pool to see him win tortoise-shell clocks and other prizes in local events.

Everyone worked tremendously hard in father's shop, enduring long hours and low pay. On late nights, a tray of tea would be brought down to father in his office. Sometimes it would stand untouched for an hour, until the tea stewed and I snaffled the buns.

Over all, the Guv'ner presided. He was short and stocky. He had small neat jowls, and a mysterious little lump on one cheek. The Guv 'ner was always well-dressed. He had a sharp tongue. Everyone respected him. He took his annual holidays in Torquay or Gibraltar, turn and turn about. Once, he brought me back a wood-and-metal object which imitated bird-calls when twisted. His leisure pursuits were few. He gardened and went to chapel twice on Sundays. He was teetotal. He read his Bible but few other books; I know he enjoyed anything about Scott of the Antarctic, whom he admired.

His wife, my grandmother, spent many years confined to bed with one of those mysterious illnesses which have gone out along with gutta percha, Birkett Foster, and chemist's sealing wax. I used to climb upstairs to see her in her cool room, where long windows looked out on garden and meadow. What sort of woman was she, I wonder? I rather enjoyed being in that room, among the bunches of grapes, flowers, and ornaments; but it was a relief to slip downstairs again and be free.

The Guv'ner's habitat hardly seemed to be there in that house. We only saw him there at Christmas. The shop was his proper environment. In the middle of it all he had his office – so much in the middle of it all that the office had no windows. One might look instead into a large safe with a green door. The Guv'ner sat in a swivel chair, with ladies about him on high stools, industriously working at ledgers as if dear Disraeli had never died. But he always had time for me; I knew he loved me in his gruff and inarticulate way, and I would always go to kiss him respectfully goodnight on Saturday evenings, when he would press a sixpence into my crafty little palm.

My grandmother died at last. Late in life, the Guv'ner married again. He married one of his cashiers, a nice young lady who looked after the ledgers. It caused no end of a stink in the family. Nobody could talk about it, even decades later, without getting heated. But the old boy did right. His new wife was a marvellous woman in every way, and always very kind to my sister and me into the bargain. She made the Guv'ner happy for the last few years of his life.

All this must sound worlds away to my American readers. It is worlds away to me. In all but date, our little corner of Norfolk in the nineteen-thirties was Victorian in its ways and its thought. Nor had the sun dreamed of setting on the Empire.

* * *

When I was thirteen, we went to live at the seaside, at Gorleston-on-Sea. There, father would go down and fish by the old Dutch pier, which was swept away some years later by a heavy sea. He would bring back a bucket full of fish for us and our neighbours. Sometimes we would have crabs. You could buy large crabs, dressed, from the fishmonger in the High Street, for ninepence; they cost almost two pounds now, undressed. And we could buy boxes of soft and hard herring roe – a teatime treat. Mother saw to it that we still ate well. I must owe my health and physique, not to mention my appetite for any exotic dish, to those years of good eating which, compared with the miserable diet of boarding school, were like Heaven to Hell.

My father was a keen fisherman. He liked nothing better than to spend all day in some quiet backwater, preferably on one of the Norfolk broads, watching his line. He took me to Hickling Broad one day. We arrived very early. Nobody was about. Birds were busy about the vast silences of the water. I would have loved it if I had not had to fish.

Only after he died in the mid-fifties did I realise that my father thought of himself as a failure. A failure! That handsome, witty man who worked so hard for us! Impossible! But time brings deeper insights. I can see now how painful it was for him when he sold up his share of the business after the Guv'ner's death and we left Norfolk for good. Nothing was ever the same for him again. He was a humorous man, but his jokes grew more bitter and turned against his family, who must have seemed increasingly a burden to him. He died when my first son, Clive, was less than a year old. Now I have three more children who know nothing of him, Stanley Aldiss.

When I told my father that I was thinking of throwing up my job and becoming a writer, he was horrified. His life experience had taught him to cling to what was. Whereas my life experience had taught me that better things were round the corner. Already, before we left Dereham, I could feel the prison shades closing in on me; well do I know how H.G. Wells felt in his draper's shop, for I was destined for the same fate. I escaped. My father's supreme misfortune was my good luck.

* * *

There I pause, looking back at that lad of thirteen. Some things he had already decided. He had decided that he was no more interested in his father's business than was Kafka in similar circumstances. He had decided that he was not interested in the religious rituals droning on round him. But, more deeply, he had decided that he had a contempt for the safe bourgeois way of life in which he found himself.

I was an omnivorous reader even then, although it was mainly trash I read; but I had got hold of a book that firmed up my ideas on the subject. A cell of French culture had penetrated to East Dereham (perfect Bovary country, come to think of it), and I lit on a translation of what could have been Murger's *Vie de Bohème* but was more probably Zola, the mere sight of whose four-letter name always had an hypnotic effect on me. I don't recall what it was, although I can hear a clock ticking as I read it. The novel gave me a longing for bohemian life which, because I have

never much gratified it, I have never lost, and a feeling for being socialist as part of life, although I have never been a Socialist with a capital S. Those feelings seemed to be lacking in the circles in which I was brought up.

Along with that went an interest in science. I have mentioned my hero, Sir Malcolm Campbell, the death-defying man who frequently broke the world's speed record. He set up a new world record when I was ten, driving on Daytona Beach, a name I used to recite to myself under my breath. Later, he broke the water speed record. Both his cars and his boats were called 'Bluebell'. I had a little flicker-book, advertising Castrol or another oil, which, when thumbed rapidly, showed the mighty 'Bluebell' surging across Coniston water!

The boys' magazine I took every week was *Modern Boy*, published by Amalgamated Press. I loved *Modern Boy* dearly. Sir Malcolm Campbell used to contribute to it — and Flying Officer W.E. Johns, for his Biggles stories were being published even then. What I was absolutely addicted to was Captain Justice. Justice was an elegant adventurer, much given to wearing white ducks and a naval cap and smoking a cigar. He had various bases round the world, chief of which was Titanic Tower, significantly in mid-Atlantic.

From Titanic Tower, Justice sorted out the troubles of the Anglo-American world in story after story. The stories were written by 'Murray Roberts' the pen name of Robert Murray Graydon. Justice and Co. ventured into Africa to find an empire of slaves ruled by strange forces, confronted giant insects, battled with enormous robots, overcame alarming flying machines, survived a world plunged into darkness (the most enthralling of all his adventures!) and also paid regular visits to any runaway planets which happened to be passing through the solar system at the time.

So science fiction entered into and began warping my life from an early age. My hero-worship changed from one Campbell to another, from Sir Malcolm to John W.

Science also took my fancy. Looking back, I can recall no interest in art or science among the members of our family. But my parents gave me a microscope at the right age; peering down its barrel became one of my favourite occupations for a while. Anything I could get hold of went on those flimsy slides, and what I saw I would draw and colour with watercolour in a special notebook. There was a compelling aesthetic attraction in that microscopic world.

Other landmarks of my journey towards realising that sf was my main dish I have already catalogued in *Shape of Further Things* or *Billion Year Spree*. The discovery of *Marvel, Amazing,* and *Astounding* on Woolworth's counter. The purchase for a shilling of Alun Llewellyn's remarkable novel *The Strange Invaders*. The continuous reading of H.G. Wells's novels, not only the sf stories but *Tono-Bungay* and *The New Machiavelli,* and so on, which I enjoyed for their socialism. But it was *The Strange Invaders* which persuaded me that I had discovered something worthwhile. Although I enjoyed the magazines — and was particularly mad about Kuttner's 'Time Warp' in *Marvel,* because of its erotic element — I thought they were appallingly written and was a little ashamed of reading them.

Where I got that critical idea from, I cannot tell. By the age of eight, I had begun to appreciate style, the vehicle of fiction, as well as contents.

* * *

What happened to me at eight was a terrible thing. I have so far painted a cheerful picture. At the age of eight, I was sent away to boarding school, and at boarding school and public school I remained until I was seventeen and old enough to go into the army – whereupon I was promptly whisked abroad to the Far East for four years. So my severance from home and parents began early in life, far too early.

I was sent, like Pip from Joe Gargery's forge, to be educated and to become a little gentleman. The treatment, as with Pip – Dickens was always the perceptive reporter – created a chilled and conventional creature, cut off from his roots. Thousands of English boys endured and still endure the public school system; most of them survive in some way or other. But it seems to me a pernicious system, deadening to a wide sector of life, and it perhaps accounts for much of the legendary coldness attributed by foreigners to the English. Many years of adult life passed before I shook off that cold shadow of exile.

Which is not to say that there is necessarily a great deal wrong with the schools per se. My last school, West Buckland in Devon, was a fine one and I was happy there. Nevertheless, the possibilities for torment in an authoritarian community, within which one is confined for twenty-four hours a day for many weeks at a stretch, are many.

At least school provided some chance for writing and reading. When did I make my first book? I cannot remember. Certainly I was forever making books at prep school, my microscope book among them. By then, I was an authority on prehistoric life and used to give lessons on dinosaurs to other lads at a penny a time (with a cunning mixture of scholarship and commerce which I have never entirely abandoned). Later came my Victorian melodrama period, my epic drama period, my ghost story period, my space story period, my pornography period, my space-pornography period (girls raped by huge vegetables on Jupiter and quite enjoying it), my horror-and-blood period, and so on, until, in the army, I wrote *Her Dear Dead Body*, a sort of erotic detective story. I also kept a voluminous diary.

The diary went on for years and years, growing annually larger and more pretentious. It evolved into a gigantic free-style journal containing many millions of words. I still have it, in something like two dozen volumes. It contains the ramblings of a stranger and is without interest; only a mixture of shame and pride makes me preserve it; after all, getting rid of all those countless days and sentences must have been of some value!

All these sorts of writing, slowly becoming more ambitious, stood me in good stead when it came to attempting anything professionally. Writing by then was an integral part of life.

When I left the army, I had no ambition except to write. To be propelled back into civilian life in 1948 was extremely disorienting; I had no knowledge of society, except the out-of-date rules I had hazily gathered as a child – though I was fortunate in finding myself in Oxford, where *mores* were a little fluid. Even while I was still on repatriation leave, I began writing a novel about a soldier's experiences in India, Burma, Sumatra, Singapore, and Hong Kong; it was to be entitled *Hunter Leaves the Herd*, and five chapters were written before I bogged down. The impulse behind it was nostalgic as much as creative. In truth, I longed for the sunlight and the whole ambience of the East. That region, that experience, has remained with me continually. People have less in the East; but they do not seem to suffer from envy as much as we do.

I wanted to be a poet, although I was not familiar with the work of any poet later than Thomas Hardy. I got a job in a bookshop in Oxford, where I came into contact

with the physical material of our culture. Bound sets of Macaulay, Gibbon in calf, Richard Burton in folio, Hogarth in elephant folio, were things of romance to me. And of course we were always throwing out books – a useful reminder that, however successful one is, every dog has his day, in Borrow's phrase.

In those dim cloisters, I encountered such splendid eighteenth-century heroes as Candide, Tom Jones, Rasselas the Prince of Abyssinia, Vathek, and the time-haunted Tristram Shandy, while meeting for the first time in complete versions with those redoubtable voyagers Robinson Crusoe and Lemuel Gulliver. Formidable creations, all of them, and all created by authors who project strong *personae* into the works concerned. Each work, in its way, is a grand entertainment which also constitutes an enquiry into the world.

Fielding, Johnson, and Sterne, in particular, aroused the sedulous ape in me. For some months, my desk was cluttered with Sterne-like entanglements and Fielding-esque disquisitions, written in Johnsonese. Then I moved digs and burnt them all. I began to read that neglected contemporary writer, Eric Linklater, and imitated him instead.

After a while, I took to contributing to the trade paper. The editor commissioned a series called *The Brightfount Diaries*, about life in a fictitious and pleasant bookshop. The rest, as they say, is history, although obscure enough history to bear repeating here. One day, I received a letter from Faber & Faber, from Charles Monteith, saying that I had my fans at Faber's and would I ever think of turning my series into book-form.

I did know the series was successful and, as it happened, I had been thinking of nothing else. So I made the book, my first publishable one; Pearl Falconer – then a fashionable illustrator – drew some delightful pictures for it; and Faber published it, with a pleasing modest success, in November 1955. The edition stayed in print for years and Faber, bless them, never remaindered. They sold me the last thirty copies cheap in the late sixties.

For me, there were few rejected manuscripts, few rejection slips, no starving in garrets. I should feel guilty but don't. There were plenty of years of hardship, when I was too skint to buy myself a morning paper for fear of wrecking the budget, beers were far apart, and I ate at places called British Restaurants.

My regular association with Faber continued through twenty books and seventeen years; a very good partnership. Happily, Charles Monteith was also an sf reader – in the fifties, they were few and far between in England, particularly in any position of power. Charles knew Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest and Bruce Montgomery (Edmund Crispin), all of whom had been up at Oxford and Read *Astounding*. It was a fortifying experience to meet them.

There was no difficulty in following up 'Brightfount's' with a collection of sf short stories, *Space Time and Nathaniel*. By this time, I was relinquishing the idea of being a poet – persuaded by reading Eliot, Auden, MacNiece, and John Donne, who showed me what poetry really was. My memorial to that ambition lies in the contents page of *STAN* (we always knew the book by its acronym), where the titles of the three types of story are laid out in octet and sextet form, as in a sonnet. There are fourteen titles.

For Faber to publish this volume in 1957 was an act of faith on their part. I had had only thirteen stories published; a fourteenth had to be hurriedly written to make up the number. Paperback rights never sold until 1966. With my next book, *Nonstop* (retitled *Starship* in the States), I had the same paperback problem. Eventually, rights were sold to Digit for £75, and I was glad to get the money. *Nonstop* has been translated into thirteen foreign tongues so far.

By 1957, I was earning as much money from writing in my spare time as from working from 9 till 5.30 in a bookshop. So I left the bookshop. From that day to this, I have never done an honest day's work, and have lived happily ever after!

Not that the financial position improved greatly at once. I have just come across a note in an old diary for 5th April, 1958, which says, "This is the end of the financial year. I've got £110 less in the bank than I had a year ago. And £20 less in the P.O. Bank. In fact, we've got £60 left, sum total of our wealth. Ye gods, outlook's black!" Outlook improved during that year, and has never been too perilous since.

It was early in 1957 that the national Sunday paper, *The Observer*, announced the results of its competition for a short story set in the year 2500 A.D. My story, 'Not For An Age' tied first and was published in the paper, complete with an illustration by Leonard Rosoman. Since all the British science fiction writers had entered the competition, the ensuing kudos for an unknown was great. The late Arthur Sellings had a story in the top twenty prize-winners. Then it was I learnt that such a thing as fandom existed; I received a letter from Helen Winnick asking me up to the Globe, the pub where London fans met regularly. There I met two young writers, John Brunner and Sam Youd (John Christopher). Sam's famous *Death of Grass* must already have been out by then.

By this time, I had been appointed literary editor on *The Oxford Mail* under W. Harford Thomas. I had been reviewing science fiction and ordinary novels, as well as non-fiction of all kinds, for the paper. My sf column ran from 1954 until 1967, making it the longest regular sf review column ever to appear in a newspaper. It must have been read by thousands of undergraduates (who are called students now). Later, I reviewed sf for the *T.L.S.*, but abandoned it when the standard of work fell so low. I hate to think how many hundreds of books I devoured for the *Mail*. Fortunately, I always had a good appetite. Now I'm doing a stint for Ian Hamilton's *New Review*.

Criticism and creation always went hand-in-hand as far as I was concerned.

My intention was partly to write social novels. John Osborne's play, *Look Back in Anger*, and Kingsley Amis's novel, *Lucky Jim*, embodied for me then much of the experience of my generation – after all, neither author is much more than half-a-dozen years older than I. *Lucky Jim*, over which I howled with laughter, altered something in my approach to life. Laughter is very persuasive.

But there was a bigger persuader: the atomic bomb. When the Bomb was dropped my division was in India, resting after our bout of involuntary heroism in Burma and training to be launched against the Japanese in a seaborne assault on Singapore. So I had good reason to rejoice in the flattening of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My bacon was saved. My admiration for that fine president, Harry Truman, dates from that time.

The new-born nuclear power was something greater than social life, greater than almost all the people (not greater than *all* people: not greater than Truman: for it was he who decided that the bomb remained in the hands of politicians instead of being passed to the generals; that decision forms one of the nodal points of modern history). The Bomb dramatised starkly the overwhelming workings of science and technology, applied science, in our lives.

So I perceived, and have been trying to perceive more fully ever since, that my fiction should be social, should have all the laughter and other elements we associate with prosaic life, yet at the same time be shot through with a sense that our existences have been overpowered (not always for the worse) by certain gigantic forces born of the Renaissance and achieving ferocious adolescence with the Industrial Revolution.

But such matters are best reserved for discussion in fiction, rather than in a chatty memoir.

Since this piece is addressed in part to an American audience, I will seize on the chance to examine my dealings with the States. It is a curious thing for a writer to think of his natural audience as being in another country, although not too strange for me.

One reason was what I have called the shadow of exile which loomed over me. Another was the whole American dream under which I was brought up – or under which I brought myself up, to be more accurate. I was a movie-fan from an early age, encouraged by my cousin John. All that I admired in the cinema was American. Then again, the sort of music that moved me most deeply was American, the Blues and jazz. The same with all the music we called 'hot' in my adolescence.

The best ideas, too, seemed to be American. The States stood then as a bastion of freedom and continued revolution. It was a sad thing to see that image crumble after the war; at the same time, the American view of Britain as a gallant little fighting island was collapsing. Particularly before the second world war, when more and more of Europe seemed to turn into an armed enemy camp, the lights of America burned bright, viewed from English shores.

Then of course there was sf. Not that it ever could be said to paint a cheerful picture of the States; very far from it; but it radiated an image of a land of dynamism and change. This I apprehended as very different from Britain, with its oppressions, unemployment, class structures, and trading difficulties (all of which existed in the States also, as I failed to realise when a lad). I did get the message that the most exciting sf came from New York.

The war. France fell. The boy of fourteen watched with mingled fear and excitement as his father brought his two guns out of the cupboard, handing the lighter one over and saying, "You'll have to use this when the invasion comes, so we'd better get some practice in." The invasion never came. Britain miraculously survived, right on the edge of black Europe. Our great ally was the U.S.A., across the Atlantic. Americans were very much treated as heroes. Liberators of Europe and all that. Times change; it ill becomes an sf writer to complain of the fact. Change is the material from which his cloak is cut.

All of which made it natural that I should write my science fiction with America in mind. That first novel *Nonstop,* was part of American fiction. I had read and been fascinated by Robert Heinlein's *Common Sense*, about the interstellar ship on which a catastrophe has occurred, although I was struck at the same time with the poverty of characterisation and feeling in it. My novel was designed at least in part as a response, an antidote.

Another thing. At the time I began to write for publication, there were really only two going sf magazines over here, *Authentic* and *Nebula.* I disliked the *Authentic* format, which had long boring stories in it by people like William Temple and Sidney Bounds (it improved later under E.C. Tubb's editorship). *Nebula,* edited by Peter Hamilton in Glasgow, was more exciting. I found an issue (No. 3) in Freshwater, Isle of Wight, read it, and decided that I could do almost as well as the authors performing there. Hamilton took a lot of trouble trying to make the stories I submitted publishable, but without much success – for one thing, I've always disliked rewriting at editors' behest.

Then Ted Carnell's magazines got going on a regular basis. Ted can never be enough commended for exercising that principle of punctuality to which he adhered, for his sane good humour, or for his scrupulous honesty in professional and financial

matters. But it was always apparent that most of his authors were little better than illiterate, and were short on imagination too. Jimmy Ballard has said of them that they were "the most dingy and pathetic bunch of third-rate ex-journalists" he had ever met; so they were. In fact, they were feebly copying an ageing American tradition. Many of their stories were rejects from American magazines.

It was a poor thing to talk with an assumed American accent in a British magazine. I have no doubt that it was because of this kind of down-at-heel tradition that the axe fell and revolution, signalled by Moorcock and his feathered hordes, had to come.

Even before Moorcock's day, there were only two authors I could read with interest in Ted's magazines. One was me. An author should always read with care his writings when they appear in print, when sufficient distancing has set in for him to be able to perceive his errors and victories. The other was J.G. Ballard. His record for not writing American rejects was always unblemished.

Before us, Arthur C. Clarke had always used an English idiom instead of the bogus Yankee employed by some of our chums.

At first, events moved more happily for me in the States than in my own country. I was lucky to have Truman 'Mac' Talley as editor at Signet; he really seemed to care, and I appreciated his advice. When he received the manuscript of *Hothouse* (which he insisted on retitling *The Long Afternoon of Earth* so that it did not fall among the horticultural section), he altered it throughout very extensively in pencil. Every page had something changed. He sent it to me to look at. I was horrified. I wrote back and said I would prefer that the novel should not be published rather than that it should be published in such mutilated form. He wrote back, "Okay", and printed my text as written.

Under Mac, the best of my early titles appeared in the States, neatly packaged with Powers covers, and I was proud of them. I was also getting a response from Anthony Boucher and Fred Pohl, men whose work I respected. The atmosphere was sharper and more intellectual in New York. And I was grateful to Don Wollheim at Ace for publishing my more shaky early attempts.

It was a stimulating time in which to enter the lists. Not a great deal seemed to be happening in England then, apart from John Wyndham and John Christopher. I admired and still do admire the latter's *Death of Grass* (called *No Blade of Grass* in the States), and his very funny and clever novel, *In the Year of the Comet.* There was also Arthur, whose writings I greatly enjoyed; but his distinctively English style was generally exported to New York.

In the States, much more was going on; all the other contributors to this volume were already making a considerable mark on the world. Pohl's *The Space Merchants,* in collaboration with Cyril Kornbluth, was already on the way to being accepted as a classic. Bester had exploded his two great fireworks, *The Demolished Man* and *Tiger! Tiger! (The Stars My Destination),* leaving considerable retinal damage in my case. Silverberg was already filling all the available magazines; I had the pleasure of meeting him in 1957. Knight was still writing fiction, often with a humorous emphasis much to my taste, whilst his book of reviews, *In Search of Wonder,* had already appeared. (I must have read that volume more often than any sf novel, with the possible exception of *Earth Abides* and *Out of the Silent Planet.*) Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* and *Deathworld* had already appeared, paying enough for him to bring his family to Europe at the start of their long peregrinations.

Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* appeared in 1960. In many ways, it must be regarded as a special event. It did put sf on many maps. Amis was the first man

to lecture on sf in a university, taking it as a serious subject for discussion, and his book remains exemplary in its wit and literacy, even if its scholarship is a little hasty. *Hell's Cartographers* is a title that reflects back some of Amis's heat and light.

It was as part of the hospitality I enjoyed from U.S. sf readers that I received a shield from the 17th World SF Convention nominating me 'Most Promising New Author'; there were a Hugo and a Nebula to come later.

I still gain encouragement from that 'Most Promising New Author' plaque. It was a sign that someone cared, and I took it as such. I was incensed when a Mr. Devore of Chicago later suggested the plaque be withdrawn.

(It's true that, later still, the Australians voted me "World's Best Contemporary SF Writer", but I suspect that was a friendly conspiracy by Lee Harding, John Bangsund, and Bruce Gillespie. Still, the title looks good on dust jackets.)

An author's career is an haphazard matter, subject to chance like most things. I suffered some misfortune in the States, changes at Signet and trouble with agents; meanwhile, success started coming my way in my own country.

Writing from England in 1973, I could list many troubles under which the country labours, and many vexations from which the individual suffers. But the sixties were in many ways a halcyon period. It is difficult to encapsulate what happened but, in my view, the Romans were busy becoming the Italians. The British had lost or relinquished most of their empire and, what's more, the Goth was within the gates of the capital. The Goths were civilized people, as were the waves of Italians, Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, and Americans who, for their different reasons, began to invade England. They still help to make London one of the pleasantest and most cosmopolitan capitals in the world.

The sixties was the time of 'Swinging England', the Beatles, Mary Quant, Flower Power, permissiveness, and all that. More deeply, personal relationships opened out, people became much more frank, would make friends more easily, and would more readily tell those they disliked to go and find another pad. This was a general phenomenon, by no means confined to the very young – although that particular revolution had its storm-warning in 1961, when a schoolgirl called Helen Shapiro bounded into the national consciousness singing 'Don't Treat Me Like A Child' and 'Walking Back to Happiness'. It was a great time. I don't recall the country feeling so pleasant.

For me personally the weather also set fair. I too had my freedoms. In 1965, I remarried. The adorable Margaret Manson became my wife. That long shadow of exile of which I have spoken had at last dissolved. It proved to have been an exile from my true self.

The effect of this beneficent change upon my writings was slow but undeniable. One can see it by comparing the stories in one of my early volumes, such as *Canopy of Time* (which appeared in the States in different format as *Galaxies Like Grains of Sand*) with those in my latest collection, *The Moment of Eclipse*. A Cambridge reviewer said of the earlier volume that the stories were perfect, classically perfect, almost too perfect; whereas the later stories are never content with a static form, and shape and content form a living whole, varying as needed. The dynamism is redirected.

It was in the mid-sixties that Mike Moorcock took over *New Worlds*. There one was allowed to cut one's capers – to the advantage of all but, and especially, to the advantage of oneself. I must say something about *New Worlds*, although that subject is entered into more fully in *Billion Year Spree*.

We can identify two streams in science fiction, two streams which have now (though uneasily) become one: what I will call the 'once-for-once-only' stream and the pulp stream.

The 'once-for-once-only' stream is a direct literary response to a new factor or a change in society, generally brought about by a technological development as are most societal changes. The first good example is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (so much better a book than all the horror movies allow), provoked by new sciences, new discoveries (the opening up of the South Seas for instance), and new philosophies, such as the evolutionary speculations of Erasmus Darwin. The line of inheritance then goes on through – shall we say – Verne, de l'Isle Adam, Butler, Bellamy, Wells, Kafka, Huxley, Skinner, Orwell, et al. The books of these men are once-for-once-only responses to or examinations of some new aspect of the world.

The other stream is the pulp stream. When Gernsback started his magazines in the late twenties, he invented sf as a genre, a category. No chance of the 'once-for-once-only' approach here! By their very nature, the pulps appeared regularly, with a regular amount of space to fill. So modern sf was established, wherein a lot of underpaid authors rather frantically cribbed or sparked ideas off each other – at its rare best, the process did become some sort of a meaningful dialogue (for more on that subject, I must ask you to consult the intros and commentaries in Harry's and my *Astounding/Analog Reader*, 2 vols.).

The pulp stream also witnessed the triumph of the editor over the writer. It was something we missed in England, whether because writers are more individualistic or editors are poorer, I don't know.

But the great distinction to be made between the two streams in their hey-day is that whereas the 'once-for-once-only' stream was, by its nature, a critical literature, even in the case of its most noted practitioner, H.G. Wells, the pulp stream quickly turned to power-fantasy and escapism. Here, the great practitioner is Edgar Rice Burroughs, one of the best-selling, if not the most bestest-sellingest, sf writers of all time. Burroughs' influence has been pervasive and often detrimental; among Tarzan's descendants is certainly Heinlein's Michael Valentine Smith of *Stranger in a Strange Land.*

It is up to everyone to pick the bones out of their own reading preferences; I've already declared my preferences in my history. Sf is the best-equipped of all literatures to indulge in power-fantasy; it encompasses the universe, and it can give us the infinite policing powers of the human mind, as well as the gross material conquests that lie beyond the atom.

But for a writer to indulge himself and his readers in these ways is ultimately to ruin his credibility as a writer. As a real writer. The disgrace that the sf community still (perpetually?) thinks it is in is precisely the shame it shares with pornography, of transforming a man into an organ of conquest in a knocking-shop of wish-fulfilment.

Mike Moorcock, in kicking the old gang out, allowed in the more traditional kind of sf, responsive to the current situation. There were excesses, but excesses are part of every revolution. The four-letter words, the sex, the indulgence in style for its own sake – all these were in defiance of the old pulp tradition; so was the attention paid to the other arts. This is what opponents of the new wave, like Sam Moskowitz, Isaac Asimov, or, more literately, Robert Conquest, never seem to have grasped.

It is disappointing that someone of Conquest's critical standing refuses to understand that this new wave had much in common with many previous revolutions, major and minor; it was reacting against the decadence it superseded. Kingsley Amis

shares Conquest's general view, of literature as ot politics, but as a popular novelist Amis is more aware of the writerly necessity for breaking new ground, as his continuing exploration of genres shows.

Moorcock's revolution was always part-powered by American writers like Thomas Disch, John Sladek, Norman Spinrad, Samuel Delany, Pamela Zoline, Kit Reed (all of them, incidentally, people of great charm), and other exiles who visited London from time to time, as well as English writers like Mike, Ballard, David Masson, Charles Platt, Lang Jones, and me. It found sympathy with a whole lot of people who were out there reading sf occasionally but unhappy about its limitations. And when I sought a grant for *New Worlds* from the Arts Council, we could rely on immediate support from a wide range of people in the arts and journalism who enjoyed sf, Angus Wilson among them. From then on, sf has prospered widely in England, and not just in a narrow commercial sense, cut off from other arts. To the arts sf can contribute whenever it, or any author who wishes to write it, ceases indulging in arabesques of power-fantasy. Of course, power-fantasy always sells. That's not what I'm arguing.

It may be that early promises were not entirely fulfilled. Such is the way of early promises. Good writers are always too few. But Spinrad remains a considerable talent who will forge further yet. Disch may recover from his present doldrums. While Kit Reed, in such books as *The Better Part* and *Tiger Rag*, has proved herself a considerable psychological novelist. That delightful man, S.R. 'Chip' Delany, already has a large fan following.

* * *

While this excitement was going on, I was involved with other matters. Margaret and I bought an old Land-Rover in 1964 and headed for Jugoslavia, where we travelled all of the six republics that make up the state. A wonderful country, a great experience, tremendous to be able to snatch six months out of life. We've never managed to fit in a similar expedition since. Out of the Jugoslav trip came my one travel book, *Cities and Stones.*

Margaret and I *recognised* each other from our first meeting, which meant that we could stand a lot of mutual nonsense, and do so even with an amount of pleasure.

It was important that she recognised me clearly as I was. From then on, I became able to realise myself; my writing changed in accord with the mysterious gear-changes which carry individual evolutions forward. With my first wife, no such recognition took place. Indeed, as that marriage was approaching the last stages of destruction, I said to a certain person whose business it was to know us both that one of my anguishes was that, while I felt I had a clear picture of Her, she had no picture at all of Me. This was confirmed. It is impossible to live day after day with a shattered mirror. Rapport is the sun of existence.

The early sense of formlessness with which I had been afflicted was a search for identity. When I found it, it was startling and protean. The years of exile brought their recompense. Through a new understanding of myself, I was better able to understand others. I have a quick empathic sense; now I try to use its findings to warm the essentially cold medium of modern sf.

One amazing incident on the Jugoslav trip. We had a letter from Harry in May, c/o the British Embassy in Belgrade, saying that he and Joan were going to drive from Denmark, where they were living, to Hungary in July – a distance of about a thousand miles; they would look us up in Jugoslavia if we named a time and

place. It sounded a bit remote, but we wrote back saying we'd be in Makarska on the afternoon of 24th July, in the local camp (we saw from the map that there was a camp, although we had never been there). The mail went astray then. We got no answer. But we rolled into Makarska camp a couple of months later – and the Harrisons turned up ten minutes after we did.

Harry and I had already begun collaborating. With the aid of Tom Boardman, we put out *SF Horizons*, a little review of sf. We issued only two numbers, but it seems to have been influential, not least on us. We went ahead with other collaborations. The most successful collaboration has been Harry's idea for an annual *Best SF*, although my role there is merely as a talent scout. Our recent *Astounding/Analog Reader* in two volumes is doing well. But our partnership has been most fruitful for the insights into writing we have been able to give each other. The fact that we never cheat or let each other down has helped a good deal, too.

* * *

It is generally assumed that my main contribution to the Moorcock era lies in *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head*. Both certainly appeared in *New Worlds* (*Barefoot* in chunks as *The Acid Head War* stories). In fact, *Report* was written some years earlier, in 1962. After a while, a writer grows too firm in his own ways to be actively influenced by anything new but, in 1960, I was much persuaded by the French *nouvelle roman*, the anti-novel, as practised by Michel Butor and Alain Robbe-Grillet (Marguerite Duras was less to my taste).

I admired their scrapping of many old literary clichés. I was attracted by the way that Robbe-Grillet and Duras translated readily into cinematic terms. In particular, I was stunned by the Robbe-Grillet-Resnais film, *L'Année Derniere á Marienbad*, with its temporal confusions, mysterious agonies, and alien perspectives. It still embodies for me many of the things I set most store by in sf (while many other valuables are to be found in Luis Bunuel's recent film, *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*).

Robbe-Grillet's novels are not exactly works one wants to read through many times. But Michel Butor's *Passing Time* is less austere, and to be recommended as a permanent book.

From these exemplars I took courage. I would cleanse my prose of its antiquities. So I developed the central situation in *Report*, a situation charged with a drama which is never resolved. Moreover, I withhold the emotion involved, so that a reader must put in emotion for himself.

Later, I met Anna Kavan, author of *Ice*, and found that she too had been haunted by *L'Année Dernière*. That brave woman took her life before she could learn of her new reputation, to my lasting regret. She was marvellous, and it is entirely fitting that a cult is now growing about her name.

After Moorcock had published *Report*, I was able to sell it as a book; Faber published it in hardcover and Sphere in paperback, where it still reprints merrily. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to secure a French translation. It is a novel that owes much to the cool Paris of the intellect.

In the States, *Report* seems to have secured none of the supporters which a book of its nature requires in order to gain ground. For it does need close attention, particularly if one has been nourished on a diet of pulp. My staunch friend Larry Ashmead published it hardcover from Doubleday. None of my regular paperback pub-

lishers such as Signet would support it. Eventually it appeared from Lancer, but clearly it has not met with the same response as in England. A pity. It is the novel in which I came nearest to fulfilling my intentions, and its essence remains with me in a way I could claim for none of my other novels.

Barefoot is more ambitious. I believe it has its triumphs. There again, it has met with a mixed reception in the States. Larry again backed it. The paperback publishers again shyed like startled virgins. Ace eventually produced rather a pleasing edition. From the start, the novel had its supporters. My particular gratitude went to Jannick Storm, who translated it into Danish – a great accomplishment.

Doubleday finally pulped their hardcover edition. It sold fewer copies than had the Danish translation (in a country of only four million people!). But eccentrics like Harlan Ellison, Norman Spinrad, Theodore Sturgeon, and James Blish have aired some of the novel's virtues to a reluctant public, and there is a chance that it will survive and flourish in the States as it is in England.

The growing band of academics should espouse the cause of novels which venture to be unpopular by breaking new ground. As far as I know, only Charles Platt had used *Barefoot* in an sf course so far.

The form that *Barefoot* takes is entirely dictated by its content. If you write about a Europe overtaken by drugs, how do you best convey the experience to the reader? I had no doubt about the answer; you plunge him in to that world as deep as you can. And you do that by the chief means at your disposal – the use of language. By the deployment of suitable phraseology, you make him feel what it is like to belong in an entire culture gone hippie and yippie. The logic cannot be faulted, however you judge the end result.

The book's not just style. It is full of things, ideas, images. It took me almost three years to write and, when I'd finished it, I felt I had written myself out of sf. I wrote ordinary novels instead – *Hand-Reared Boy* and *Soldier Erect*, both of which went straight to the top of the best-seller lists in England, although they did less excitingly in the States. They embodied too British an experience, maybe. *Soldier Erect* is probably the best of all my novels, shot through with pain and humour.

As a result of the Moorcockian revolution, sf has achieved a widely based reputation and readership. There were years when it looked as if Ballard and I were the last of the breed and no more sf writers were coming along. Now the situation has changed, with many younger authors such as Christopher Priest and Mark Adlard coming up. Bob Shaw has already arrived.

Unfortunately, sf writers, like everyone else, tend to grow conservative as they age, which is why new talents, techniques, and topics are continually necessary. A writer should set his own house on fire if he finds too much dogma lurking there. Try something new. In Bester's phrase, go for broke.

Some of the greatest sf writers have been subversive and gone for broke. Olaf Stapledon is the supreme example. What courage and imagination in *Star-maker*! Plagiarised often, never rivalled! – Although Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* possesses something of Stapledon's quality.

Most of the science fiction being written is disappointing, and not merely on literary grounds; so many of its basic assumptions are fossils of thought. The philosophy and politics behind the average sf novel are naive; the writer takes for granted that technology is unqualifiedly good, that the Western way of life is unqualifiedly good, that both can sustain themselves for ever, out into galaxy beyond galaxy. This is plainly nonsense. As I have often argued, we are at the end of the Renaissance

period. New and darker ages are coming. We have used up most of our resources and most of our time. Now nemesis must overtake hubris, for this is the last act of our particular play.

The knowledge should be a challenge. We should not be dispirited. 'May you live in interesting times' was an ancient Chinese curse; whatever we die of, it will not be boredom. The human spirit has to be continually tested. By whom? Why, by man himself. There is no one else.

One thing is certain, as Orwell said: when the world-state dawns, it will be neither Christian, white, nor democratic. But there is a long way to go before that.

Meanwhile, the Western way of life has the termites under it. The extravagance of Europe, of Japan, of the U.S.A., is being curbed. Our foundations were built not upon stone, not even upon sand, but upon oil, and cheap oil has come to an end. These our memoirs are being written during the Great Power Crisis of the Seventies, when the Twentieth Century ground to a halt. Readers must forgive our concentration on minutiae – to which I now return.

Philip Dick is one living sf author whose writings I admire and enjoy consistently. Dick is a natural subversive. He has a quality often found in great writers: humility. He seems to keep himself open and vulnerable, just as he writes about vulnerable little people. Dick made a brave speech at the 1972 Vancouver Convention, where he spoke of an ill-used girl he knew and then said about the future, "I can only imagine it as populated by modest, unnoticed persons like her." This loving quality in Dick balances nicely with all his seedily glittering wonders; Silverberg has that quality too, markedly in *Dying Inside.*

Dick does not have to make his events plausible; the internal plausibility is always there.

One of the traditions of the novel which has been most staunchly defended over the decades is that fiction should be more plausible than life. Not too many coincidences, no over-exaggerated caricatures, as few flat characters as possible, no preposterousness. Anthony Trollope is one of the great practitioners here; whereas Charles Dickens fails on all these counts, although the scope and power of Dickens' mind is such that he has far more to offer the reader than Trollope. While it is true that the descendants of Dickens are many and often unexpected – Kafka for example – nevertheless, the other tradition of 'nothing implausible' still rules.

Science fiction cuts across this dividing line. Sf that stirs my imagination often boasts a major implausibility (maybe with attendant minor implausibilities hanging from it like subordinate clauses), which the writer then gradually makes plausible. That is, he integrates it with the world picture we already accept, so that our view of the world is thus changed. One good example of this process is in Jack Williamson's *Darker than You Think,* where we are slowly forced to take a darker view of our own ancestry than normal. More sophisticated examples lie in Kafka's two great novels, wherein almost nothing happens that could not happen in real life, until we realise that it is precisely the *banality* of life that defeats us.

One element in the contributions to this book, and in its very inception, is phenomenal. It will be self-evident to sf fans and a cause of amazement to those who know little about science fiction. I mean the loyalty we all show to our chosen medium. Bob Silverberg confesses he felt that loyalty even in the days when he was exploiting it to the tune of several million words a year. Other writers who have gone beyond it – financially, like Arthur Clarke, popularly, like Kurt Vonnegut, or artistically, like J.G. Ballard – still recognise the tremendous power of that abstract idea of sf, an attempt, however crude, to build some sort of philosophical and metaphy-

sical framework about the immense changes of our times brought about by technological development – a development which has largely obliterated the ramshackle old frameworks of medieval thought and organised religion.

Apart from writers of comic-apocalytic, such as Terry Southern, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Heller, Philip Roth, and so on – all of whom apparently owe a debt to sf – the mainstream novel singularly fails in exactly those areas where sf is strong; it fails to interest itself in that abundant wilderness existing outside the narrow zone of interest covered by an average newspaper.

It is infuriating, the dull way in which sf writers cling to the same topics over and over. The number of writers who actually *invent* are few. All the same, I feel the loyalty. Did I not, I should never have written that complex, intelligent, and knowledgeable volume, *Billion Year Spree.* The brief lives recorded here have been devoted to an obscure and unpopular genre (as it was until a few years back, when we had made our reputations). Julius Kagarlitski calls sf 'the intellectual novel for lowbrows'. If it is so, then it is a new genre, and we are among the first to succeed in it.

Unfortunately, genre materials wear out. I long ago swore off FTL travel and ESP in my writing (unless for comedy effects) because (a) I felt both subjects were refuges for tired minds, (b) they had been overdone to death, (c) while I could not say that I absolutely disbelieved in either concept, it was apparent that a writer who rambles on about concepts he only pretends to understand or believe in is going to become a purveyor of drivel, and (d) that it is often an advantage for a writer to accept limitation of subject-matter, particularly in a field where he can get away with almost anything after two sentences of double-talk.

This voluntary restriction of subject matter has prevented me from turning out a regular ten novels, or five novels, or two novels, or even one novel, a year, unlike many of my competitors. It has made me think harder and care more about what I do write.

Not only do genre materials wear out, but the form itself wears out, and the form of sf is still essentially that of the Gothic or post-Gothic (Leslie Fiedler has much to say on this topic), with a mystery posed, hints of danger, a thread of suspense throughout, and a final revelation of some ghastliness. It is hard to resist the idea that to continue to use this form, patented at least as long ago as the turn of last century, is to put oneself in danger of obsolescence; although, in view of the threatened obsolescence of the Western way of life, this could be merely to be in harmony with the times – but the most interesting writers are never content to be merely in harmony with their world.

I can see the problem. I'm still looking for a solution.

There are a number of stop-gap solutions. Two of the contributors to *Hell's Cartographers* are noted practitioners of such solutions. Harrison has his own patent brand of comic-apocalyptic which uses as material not so much reality as sf itself; I'm thinking of *Bill the Galactic Hero, The Technicolor Time-Machine, A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* (which his U.S. publisher plonkingly retitled *Tunnel Under the Deeps*), and the Stainless Steel Rat books. In *Bill,* one can detect among the strata of Harrison's comedy the fossil bones of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* and, deeper yet, the crumbling foundations of Asimov's planet Trantor.

Bester's novel, *The Stars my Destination* is an earlier example of cannibalism, wherein all the elements of gaudy science-fantasy are seized up and kneaded into one tasty cake. Bester really ended that dynasty by doing the job definitively. Of course, there are minute intellects around who have not noticed the fact, and continue to do it over yet again.

These, as I say, are stop-gap solutions to the problems of a dying art (not that I don't think that all arts are not perpetually dying and almost-perpetually being renewed). I have another solution in my recent novel, *Frankenstein Unbound.*

Barry Malzberg's *Beyond Apollo* is a novel which uses the traditional elements of a space journey but, by setting it in retrospect and within the mind of an astronaut, equates the journey with a man's exploration of his own life and motives, and shows something of the inter-relation of the two. Incidentally, it is often a very funny novel.

Malzberg's format may appear complex at first, but he is not wooing complexity for its own sake; his complexity is the measure of Evans', the astronaut's mind. We should respect those writers who go out on a limb; they bring home the triumphs and the failures that the rest will be using casually, or casually avoiding, in a few years' time. Best-selling authors don't need our respect to anything like the same degree; they're working with the discoveries of the day before yesterday, often without knowing it. And they are generally richer than the pioneers.

Talking about solutions in the abstract is one thing. It's quite another thing when the individual writer shuts his study door, sits in front of his typewriter, and stares infinity in the face. Every writer has to work out his own solution in specific terms. Most writers are interested in little beyond a financial solution, although they may seek fame or notoriety as well. Whilst admiring the sort of writer who struggles to keep beer in his fridge and his mistress in dresses, whilst indeed admiring the whole idea of brave defeat and going-down fighting, I am addicted to the idea of success. I naturally mean success in my own terms – any other kind of success is a defeat.

The problems of the serious science fiction writer cannot differ greatly from those of the serious writer. If the novel itself sinks, then sf itself will soon follow down to the ocean bed. I cannot think the novel will founder yet; there is still so much to be said for it, both for the understanding of life it brings, and for the sheer convenience of its format. One of the qualities it does not now enjoy which it used to do is that very quality after which it was named: novelty. But the sf novel possesses novelty still.

Novelty may be the elixir which keeps an sf reader reading. It is less attractive to the general reader. In consequence, a good science fiction writer may be more neglected than an average writer or (certainly) an average playwright. An extreme instance of this is that great experimental writer Olaf Stapledon.

Such blind attitudes may change. This volume is itself a hopeful token of change. Meanwhile, we have our own successes, of which we are the best judges. I have written a number of books which I believe contain something of real creative vision, no matter in what other ways they may be flawed. Although I see my true strengths to lie in the short story field, I have novels for which I cannot but feel some warmth; most of them are involved with the portrayal of landscape, such as *A Soldier Erect, Report on Probability A, Barefoot in the Head,* and *Greybeard,* all of which depict figures in a landscape. *Non-Stop* and *Frankenstein Unbound* show figures swallowed by their landscapes. So, I suppose, does *Hothouse,* a novel from which I always feel distanced, perhaps recalling the miserable circumstances under which it was written. *Cryptozoic (An Age)* has landscape as surrealism, *Male Response* landscape as comedy. *Eighty-Minute Hour* has an exploded landscape.

Being a self-conscious man, I am well aware of how – in England if nowhere else – I am remarkably famous and remarkably obscure. It is curious to have arrived at a point where one's standing in this way so precisely matches character.

Damon Knight, who has read what I write here, complains that I begin my piece

interestingly with concrete details of childhood, only to fade into the twilight of theory. It may be so. But the theories now mean more to me than childhood.

Lest I have been too abstract, let me add a portrait of the author as a middle-aged scribe. I am many people. Most of my opinions and emotions come in cycles, as does the weather – I am strongly influenced by the temperature, like an old allosaurus. As a youngster, I mistrusted this apparent shifting sand of character: how disgraceful that one's opinions should change with the company. Now I have learned to live with and profit from the phenomenon; it is of tremendous value to an author to be able to play the chameleon, to have an empathic sense. My empathic sense carries me away, and what can be disastrous in real life becomes a triumph on the page, where one is one's characters.

I am cynical and sentimental, foolish and wise, wanton and puritanical, courageous and cowardly, religious and atheistic; not all at once but in series. I hate exhibitionism, perhaps because there is a streak of it in me.

Some things are permanent, though. Permanent is the belief that the human species does not improve or deteriorate rapidly from one generation to another. But the emphasis changes. The America of President Nixon suffers largely from values derived from advertising; there is too much eagerness to sell the product, irrespective of the worth of the product. One sees this among the self-advertisers of sf. And one sees their success. If you keep telling the world you're good, it will read your books and believe they're good. Very saddening. The false values Fred Pohl warned against in *The Space Merchants* are taking over.

The England of today suffers from national exhaustion. I mentioned my three uncles. All joined the Army at the beginning of World War I, all were captured and made prisoners by the Germans, an ordeal from which they were slow to recover. My father was gassed and involved in the debacle of Gallipoli in that same war. All my nearest and dearest male relations were scarred by that ferocious struggle; and many of their generation emerged into a world bereft of values.

The shame of Munich occurred when I was a schoolboy. World War II broke out when I was twelve. The map of Europe turned black. I used to have nightmares in which I was pursued and shot by the Gestapo. Murder and destruction were the commonplaces of our youth. Our minds were peopled with warlords; Stalin, Churchill, Eisenhower, Chiang Kai-Chek, Hitler . . .

Britain emerged from that second great war broken and apathetic. To my mind, it will need another generation before the trauma is played out.

Responses to the havoc and grandeur of this mental desolation are many; I feel a sort of wonder at the years gone by – which actually seem to include the First World War for, although I was not born until long afterwards, I listened avidly to the stories my uncles and parents told me. Since then, we have come through the attritions of the Cold War and Vietnam. The Renaissance period has been ended by our own innate violence.

Inevitably, acts of kindness, deeds of bravery, works of art, are dwarfed by the landscape of destruction in which they take place.

Inevitably, we are of our times; writers can do well to move beyond those times, as well as merely depicting them.

* * *

I will end on a note of gratitude for the fortune that has been mine, much of which has come to me through writing. Sf fandom, with its essential kindness and

relish for the sort of nonsense I relish, has been the only society I ever felt I belonged to; for once I left Norfolk, I never belonged anywhere again – not even at my own hearth for many years. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of sf's leading writers; there was that moment in Rio de Janeiro when Harry was in his finest form, lining up two gentlemen to greet me and saying, "Brian, I want you to meet A.E. van Vogt and Robert A. Heinlein".

I have visited many exotic and ludicrous spots, and have good friends abroad, particularly in Scandinavia, which to me is the best slice of the world – except for the fact that its climate is just slightly chillier, darker, and cooler than England's. At home, my luck is as good, with an early Victorian house which is not unlike my grandfather's old home in Dereham, a jolly family to fill the house, and a wife I adore.

Lest I make the picture too rosy for general credence, let me add that I regret having no faith – for belief in Catastrophe is no faith – more especially since I have lost hope in the idea of Reason as a guiding light. Even a loving family does not enitrely compensate for a sense of isolation; nor do beautiful women and good friends erase the knowledge that life and success are mere temporary accidents. The days come and go; the enemy is never forgotten.

Yet I finish this memoir (if memoir it is) on a mild January afternoon with a fire burning and a tranquil country view from my window. Margaret prepares dinner while the children play with a friend. Tonight there is a party. Tomorrow offers new excitements. In the circumstances, a display of stigmata would be inappropriate.

I won't go on, or gratitude will turn to exaggeration, and the furies will be provoked.

POSTSCRIPT – HOW I WORK

The most important thing first. I never submit outlines or synopses of novels to publishers. I never accept advances. For better or worse, my novels are entirely mine. Only when they are finished do agents and publishers get a look. That way, art or whatever-you-call-it and commerce do not get too mixed up. Nine out of ten writers, I'm told, must have an advance before they begin writing; but that's not my way.

I've never written for radio or TV or the films. I have often written for free – but no longer, with four children and several publishers to support.

I'm one of those fools who likes to think he is writing for posterity as well as the present. I know, I know. But my older children, Clive and Wendy, read my books voluntarily; it would be nice to think that their children could enjoy them too.

Science fiction used to be regarded as ephemeral; ephemeral is a relative term, but

experience indicates otherwise. All the sf that I ever wrote is now in print and continually being reprinted. Several of my collections of short stories, from *Space, Time and Nathaniel* onwards, remain in print in various editions, and at least three of them have sold towards 200,000 copies each – a figure that would be phenomenal outside the sf field but must have been exceeded many times over within the field. Which suggests that it is worth expending time (i.e. love and care) over even the shortest pieces.

Much of my time – Harry says the same thing – is spent doing nothing. I suppose I work about nine months of the year and, during that nine months, I do a six-day week every week. I'm in my study by 9.30 or 10, remaining there till about 4.30, with an hour or two break for lunch, when I may, or more likely may not, take a stroll. For half of those days, my time is spent answering correspondence from all over the world – I must be mad to do it. Half of the rest of the time, I do nothing, either sitting and gazing relaxedly out of the window at the twentieth century unfolding, or walking about twitchily with ideas half-formed, occasionally picking out a book from the shelves and reading an odd page. Only in the rest of the time do I actually manage a little fiction.

My study is at the top of the house, a spacious and comfortable area with cacti, sofas, an easy chair, three desks, and thousands of books. Phone, radio, TV, cassette-player, electronic calculator, photo-copier, intercom; but no booze or cigars. I never smoke or drink when I'm writing, except on occasions at the end of the day when I'm getting a bit ragged.

When really absorbed, I like to work in the evening, but there has been less of that in recent years. Small children impose regular hours on authors; there is nothing so bourgeois as children. A verse of Clarence Day's comes to mind at this juncture:

> Who drags the fiery artist down?
> Who keeps the pioneer in town?
> Who hates to let the seaman roam?
> It is the wife, it is the home.

An understanding wife is one of a writer's great assets. Not only is Margaret my first and shrewdest reader, she makes it easy for me to slip off for the odd week to a cottage in the depths of the country, where I work in absolute peace, sometimes writings for twelve hours a day (but I never go without being clear about what I wish to write).

The other thing a writer needs is a good agent. My agent, Hilary Rubinstein, owns the cottage I use as refuge; the loudest noise you ever hear there is the dropping of apples in the autumn into the long grass. Several recent novels have been finished in Willow Cottage.

Generally, I am serene when writing. Between times, I am occasionally depressed to reflect on how much of my art I have never learned and probably never can learn; I can't bear to think of Leo Tolstoi. (Even his wife is bad enough; she wrote out *War and Peace* for him five times in longhand.)

People always want to know how long novels take to write. Novels impose different schedules, just as they need different approaches. The fastest novel I ever wrote was *Dark Light Years*, because I did it in a fit of anger. It was all complete in a month – but I did nothing else in that month except write or do nothing. *Barefoot in the Head* occupied me for over two years. The average time is about a year. *Billion*

Year Spree took the best part of three years to write. Now that I'm moderately successful, I want to spend more time over novels – instead, I seem to spend more time over correspondence.

I have a nice secretary, Pam Woodward, who comes in two mornings a week and will do extra when needed. I also have a typist, Jill Watt, who lives near Bristol and is good on sf as well as typing. And Margaret does a thousand jobs, including looking after all the financial side and managing SF Horizons Ltd. I have never typed out the final draft of any of my own novels or stories; that surely is a job for a professional.

Writers' blocks are unknown to me (he said nervously), perhaps because I have never flogged out copy for cash and still actively enjoy the building of sentences and paragraphs. Of course I get stuck occasionally, but one develops remedies for sticking as for hangovers. There are one or two critical books which can always get my associative and creative juices flowing again – John Livingstone Lowes' *The Road to Xanadu*, Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery*, and – unfailingly – Mario Praz' *The Romantic Agony* (a title I have been known to repeat in incantatory monotone while drunk). I rely increasingly on free association for the series of short stories at present under way.

Apart from this series of short stories (about the Zodiacal planets), I also have on the stocks another series of short stories about an imaginery utopia called Malacia. Four of this series have appeared in Damon's *Orbit* and eight more are planned, but they are among the most exacting I have ever written. The idea is that eventually they will form a book called *The Malacia Tapestry*. There are two novels taking shape, one at present entitled *Moreau's Other Island*, which is intact in first draft, and has been for many months; I am dissatisfied with it, and leave it on one side to mature. The third Horatio Stubbs novel, successor to *A Soldier Erect*, is largely visualised in my head,and should be the next thing I write after editing this book. It will probably be called *A Rude Awakening*.

When I work on a novel, I compose on to a slow typewriter – it is some years since I forced myself to graduate from fountain pen and loose-leaf book, thank heaven! As the pages come out of the machine, they are placed in a pile face downwards, so that I cannot see what I have just written. This is to prevent disillusion. A creative glow is the great necessity for that first draft; by resisting reading back, I can sustain that glow, thinking how wonderful was my vision. Only when the draft is complete and finished dare I go back and read what is written. How much of the vision escaped between head and paper! Disappointment is always great; but hope still abounds, and creative hope mixed with critical discontent carries me through the re-write and/or second draft. Then there comes a sort of lull, where second thoughts creep out of the basement of the subconscious like swine-things in William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland*. They can be incorporated in the final draft correction, which is almost purely critical in feel. Then the raddled and ratty old typescript goes off to Jill Watt.

It looks better when properly presented. Hopes rise again, and you send the typescript copies off to your agent in good heart. The publisher's proofs bring you to the nadir of hope: the material is stale, you no longer laugh at your own jokes, weep at your own tragedies, blench at your own truths. But, with luck, the whole thing looks much more imposing when you get your six bound complimentary copies. Thus encouraged, you turn like a stag at bay to face the yapping of the reviewers . . .

When I asked Mr. Delany for the article below, back in the autumn of 1973, I gave him carte blanche *both as to length and to subject matter. I asked only that he wrote about the things that interested him, especially insofar as they related to his science fiction. I said also that we would be particularly happy if he could say something about his origins, literary, cultural and social. In the event he has splendidly fulfilled all these requests, with an amplitude staggering in its generosity, considering that* Foundation *pays absolutely no money to any of its contributors. We owe Mr. Delany for three months of his life. Three rather crowded months, inasmuch as he was, at the time, also working on his new novel – the one after* Dhalgren *– and also observing the increasing amplitude of his wife, Marilyn Hacker. The delivery of the* Foundation *manuscript and the delivery of the child were both accomplished in the same week. Successfully. The new daughter is called Iva Alexander. She weighed 8½ lbs at birth, and is beautiful. The new manuscript is below.*

Shadows *has unfortunately had to be broken into two parts. The second part, to be published in our next issue, is largely autobiographical, and is by way of being a human illustration of the philosophical concepts outlined below. The section below is a theoretical statement which, while it applies very directly to science fiction, goes well beyond that immediate application to open up some very large questions indeed about artistic creation and verbal communication.*

We are also postponing to the next issue Douglas Barbour's interesting discussion of cultural invention and the use of metaphor in Delany's novels.

the profession of science fiction: viii: shadows – part 1

Samuel R. Delany

1. Today's technology is tomorrow's handicraft.

2. Lines I particularly liked from Knotly's poem in the current *Paris Review:* "for every one must run a race/in the body's own running place" and: "Everything I have has an earwig in it//which will make light of sacred things".

3. Nothing we look at is ever seen without some shift and flicker – that constant flaking of vision which we take as imperfections of the eye, or simply the instability of attention itself; and we ignore this illusory screen for the solid reality behind it. But the solid reality is the illusion; the shift and flicker is all there is. (Where do sf writers get their crazy ideas? From watching all there is *very* carefully.)

4. The above notes, this one, and the ones below are picked, somewhat at random, from my last two years' journals, in lieu of the personal article Peter Nicholls has requested on the development of a science fiction writer.

5. Critical language presents us a problem: The critic "analyses" a work to "reveal" its "internal form". Recent structuralist critics are trying to "discover the underlying, mythic structures" of given works or cultures. There is the implication that what the critic comes up with is somehow more *basic* than the thing under study – we are all, of course, too sophisticated to be fooled into thinking what he produces is more *important.*

Still, somehow, we feel the critical find should be more intense, more solid, more foundational than the work. After all, though novels are fiction, the books of criticism about them are not.

The visual image is something like a surgeon, carefully dissecting a body, removing the skeleton from it, and presenting the bones to our view – so that we will have a more schematic idea of how the fleshed organism articulates.

All this, however, is the result of a category concept mistake.

A slightly better visualisation, as a basic model of the critical process, will, perhaps, explode it:

The critic sits at a certain distance from the work, views it from a particular side, and builds a more or less schematic model of the work as it strikes him (just as I am making *this* model of what the critic does), emphasizing certain elements, suppressing certain others, attaching little historical notes to his model here and there on where he thinks this or that form in the original work might have come from, all according to the particular critical use he intends his model for. But the critic does not *remove* anything from the work itself (even if he quotes it lengthily, he is still making a *copy* of it), unless he is a censor (or, perhaps, an editor of expurgated editions).

Works of literature, painting, and sculpture simply do not *have* informative insides. There *is* no skeleton to be removed. They are all surface.

A piece of sculpture has a physical inside, but drilling a hole three inches into the Venus de Milo will give you no aesthetic insight into it. (Note, however: this paragraph does not hold true [at least in the same way] for theatrical works, orchestral music, or much electronic art. For an sf story: Postulate a world and a culture which has an art all of which *does* have informative insides – great cloth sculptures, for example, held up from within by hidden pipe-shapes, electronic art run by hidden circuitry. The critic, as criminal, hires himself to other social criminals who wish to understand the art; they break into museums, dismantle the art objects, and remove their insides for inspection. The works are reassembled . . . clumsily. Later, an artist passing by, notices something is wrong, and cries out to a guard: "Look, look! A *critic* has been at my work! Can't you see . . .?" Theme of the story: If to understand the work is physically to destroy or injure it, are the critics (and the people who wish to understand art) heroes or villains? Are the artists, who make works that can only be understood by dismantling them, charlatans? Consider also, since my view is that this is just how so many people *do* misinterpret criticism today, will my context be understood? Is there any way that I can make clear in the story that what I am presenting is not *how* criticism works; rather, I am poking fun at the general misapprehension? I am not in the least interested in writing a simple-minded, 'damning' satire of Modern Criticism. Will have to seriously rethink incidents as first listed if I want the story's point to be the subtle one. *Can* such a point be dramatised in an sf story . . .?)

Basically, however, the critic is part of the work's audience. He responds to it; he selects among his responses and, using them, makes, selectively, a model of the work that may, hopefully, guide; helpfully, the responses of his own audience when they come to the work he has been modelling.

When a critic, talking about his work, suggests he is doing more than this, at best he is indulging in metaphor; at worst, he is practising, whether wittingly or no, more of that pernicious mystification that has brought us to our present impasse.

(Happy with the *idea*; but still uncomfortable with it as a story template – because, as a template, it seems to be saying exactly the *opposite* of what I want to! Is this, perhaps, a problem basic to sf: That you can only use it to reinforce commonly accepted prejudices; and that to use it for a discussion of anything at a more complex resolution simply can't be done at the literary distance sf affords? From Cassirer to Kirk, critics have levelled just this accusation at mythology. If it's true to sf as well, perhaps sf is, inchoately, an immature form . . .? Well, there: the ugly suggestion has been made.

(Do I agree?

(No, I don't. But I think it is certainly an inherent tendency of the medium. To fight it, and triumph over it, I must specifically: go into the world I have set up *far* more thoroughly than I have, and treat it autonomously rather than as *merely* a model of a prejudiciary situation. I must explore it as an extensive, coherent reality – not as an intensive reflection of the real world where the most conservative ideas will drain all life out of the invention.

(What does my culture look like, for instance, once I leave the museum? Given its basic aesthetic outlook, what would its architecture look like? How would the museum itself look, from the inside? From the outside? What would the building where the artist lived look like? And where the critic lived? What would be their relative social positions? What would be the emblems of those positions? How would such emblems differ from the emblems of social positions in our world? What would it smell like to walk through their streets? Given their art, what of their concept of science? Is it the opposite of their concept of art? Or is it an extension of it? Are the informative insides of the scientific works as mystified as the inside of art works? Or are they made blatantly public? Or are they mystified even *more* than the art? What are the problems that critics of science have in this world? Or critics of politics? Would these critics be the same people?

(As I begin to treat my original conceit as a coherent, antonomous, world, instead of just a statement about *our* world, I begin to generate a template complicated enough and rich enough to actually make a statement about our world that is something more than simple-minded. I can now start to ask myself questions like: In this world, what are the psychological traits of someone who would become a critic? An artist? A scientist? Etc. But it is only when the template becomes at least that complex that sf becomes mature.)

6. Moorcocks coming over here for dinner tonight with John Sims: Cream of Leek soup, Roast Beef, Fried Eggplant, Rice (possibly a risotto with almonds? How many stuffed mushrooms are left over from the Landry's yesterday? And will they do, re-heated, for starters?); an American Salad (get some Avocado, Bacon, Butter, Lettuce, Chicory, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Carrots, Celery, Mustard, Lemons); to follow: Baked Bananas flamed in brandy. (Don't use the mushrooms; John doesn't like them!).

7. For Sturgeon essay: The material of fiction is the texture of experience.

8. Re *Dhalgren* . . . I think Marilyn is depressingly right about the psychiatric session with Madame Brown and the Calkins' interview . . . which means more work; and after I've just re-written the whole, last chapter! With Calkins, the historical *must* be made manifest. With Madame Brown, she must realize that the dream is not a dream, otherwise she comes off just *too* stupid. It is so hard to control the outside view of my material, when I am standing on the inside. It's like clutching a balloon to shape from within.

Friday night and to the Moorcocks for dinner with Emma Tennent.

9. Got a letter from REGeis today, asking to reprint my article from *The Little Magazine* in *The Alien Critic.* Am very dubious. First of all, some of the facts, as John Brunner so succinctly pointed out over the phone a fortnight back, are just wrong. More to the point, the section on science fiction publishing isn't really a description of the current sf publishing scene at all. Rather, it's a memoir of what the publishing situation was like in that odd period between 1967 and 1971. Odd, too, how quickly the bright truths of twenty-six (by which age the bulk of my notoriously unbulky sf oeuvre was already in print) seem, six years later, rather dated. What to do? Get ever so slightly looped and write a polite letter?

Or take a walk up Regents' Canal and go brouse in Compendium Book Store? Sounds better.

10. Momentarily a frown tried to fight its way up into the lines in his three day stubble, into his close green eyes. But he was just too happy. "Is something wrong?" He looked back at the road. "What's the matter?"

Then a frown fought its way into the lines in his three day stubble, into his close green eyes. But he was too happy. "Is something wrong?" He looked back at the road. "What's the matter?"

A frown tried to fight its way into the lines in his three day stubble, into his close green eyes. "Is somethin' wrong?" He looked back at the road. "What's the matter?"

— Three sketches of a paragraph for a pornographic novel.

11. Alcohol is the opium of the people.

12. Science fiction through the late sixties seemed to be, scientifically, interested in mathematics segging into Einsteinian physics; spaceflight; atomic physics segging into electronics; psychiatry, in all its over-simplified clumsiness, has been an sf mainstay from *The Roads Must Roll,*

through *Baby is Three*, to *The Dream Master*.

Science fiction from the past few years seems to be interested in mathematics segging into contemporary linguistics/philosophy (e.g. Watson's *The Embedding*); biology – particularly genetics – has replaced physics as the science of greatest concern [Cf. the 'clone' stories over the past few years, from Kate Wilhelm's and Ted Thomas's *The Clone*, through McIntyre's *The Cage* (and Ms. McIntyre is a trained geneticist; where do we get all this about people interested in science not getting into science fiction any more!?!), to Wolfe's *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*] ; and anthropology (reflected even in books like Effinger's *What Entropy Means to Me* and Toomey's *A World of Trouble*) seems to be replacing psychiatry as a prime concern.

I think I approve.

13. "You science fiction writers always criticise each other in print as if the person you were criticising were reading over your shoulder," someone said to me at the Bristol Con last week – meaning, I'm afraid, that the majority of criticism that originates within the field has either a "let-me-pat-your-back-so-you-can-pat-mine" air, or, even more frequently, a sort of catty, wheedling tone implying much more is being criticized than the work nominally under discussion.

No, the sf community is not large.

Perhaps it's because I've spent just over a decade making my living within it, but I feel *all* criticism should be written as if the author being criticised were – not reading over your shoulder; but written as though you could stand face to face with him and read it out loud, without embarrassment.

I think this should hold whether you are trying to fix the most rare-field of metaphysical imports in some Shakespearean tragedy, or writing a two-hundred word review of the latest thriller. Wheedling or flattery have nothing to do with it.

Among the many informations we try to get from any critical model is the original maker's (the artist's) view of the original work modelled. If the critic does not include, in his model, an overt assessment of it, we construct it from hints, suggestions, and whatever. But *we* are at three removes from the author; and the critic is at two (as he is one from the work): in deference to that distance, I feel the critic must make such assessment humbly. He can always be wrong.

But only after he, and we, have made them (wrong or right), can we follow the critic's exploration of the work's method, success, or relevance. The critic can only judge these things by his own responses; in a very real way, the only thing the critic is ever really criticising – and

this must be done humbly if it is to be done at all – is the response of his own critical instrument.

All criticism is personal.

The best is rigorously so.

14. Yesterday, Joyce Carol Oates sent Marilyn a copy of her new book of poems *Angel Fire* (with a letter apologizing for taking so long to answer Marilyn's last letter etc. and dense with North American weather). This morning, in Compendium, I saw the new Joyce Carol Oates book on D.H. Lawrence's poetry, *The Hostile Sun,* picked it up, took it (in its bright yellow covers) home, and have, minutes ago, just finished it.

After going through three novels, a handful of essays, and a few crunches into the Collected Poems (and most recently, the Frank Kermode book on him), Lawrence has tended to be for me a clumsy, if impassioned, writer purveying a message I find almost totally heinous. The most generous thing I could say for him till now was, with Kenneth Rexroth, "His enemies are my enemies," but even here I always found myself wondering, wouldn't he do better on their side than on mine? Lawrence-the-outspoken-sexual-revolutionary has always struck me a bit like those politicians who, in their support of the War in Vietnam, eventually went so far as to use words like 'hell' and 'damn' in their speeches – then quickly looked at their fellow party members who dared disapprove of their 'too strong' language and labelled *them* conservatives. Though Lawrence's novels sometimes refer to sexual mechanics, his overall concept of sex seems institutionally rigid: Everyone must fulfil his or her role, as assigned by Divine Law. The heroes of his novels go about browbeating everyone who happens to stray from his (usually her) divinely ordained role, back into it. For, after all, it *is* Divine Law. And anyone who still strays, after having been told *that,* must be sick unto damnation. I wonder if Lawrence was aware that his real critics simply found him, in his ideas (rather than in the 'strength' of his language, or the 'explicitness' of the scenes he used to dramatise his points), an absolute prig?

At any rate, *The Hostile Sun* offers me a guide to the collected poems (it's the volume Joyce gave Marilyn as a going away present; she must have been working on the essay then) that may just get me into them in a way that I can get something out. The book makes the idea of Lawrence-the-Poet interesting to me and offers me some way of divorcing it from Lawrence-the-Prophet – whom I find a pernicious bore. Oates points out his strengths in the poems (the overall intensity of vision; his aesthetic of unrectified feeling) and warns what not to look for (the single, well-

crafted poem; a certain type of aesthetic intelligence). Since there are half a dozen poets whom I enjoy in just this way, from James Thompson and Walt Whitman to Paul Blackburn and Philip Whalen, I suspect I will go back to Lawrence's poems better prepared.

It *is* nice to be reminded that criticism, well done, can open up areas previously closed.

15. Confessions of a science fiction writer: I have never read one H.G. Wells "romance of the future" from cover to cover. I once read three quarters of *Food of the Gods,* and I have read the first fifty/one hundred pages of perhaps half a dozen more.

When I was thirteen, somebody gave me Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* as a book that "you'll simply love". At around page two hundred I balked. I never *have* finished it! I did a little better with *From the Earth to the Moon,* but I still didn't reach the end.

By the time I was fifteen, however, in my own personal hierarchy, Wells and Verne were synonymous with the crashingly dull. Also, I had gotten their names mixed up with something called Victorian Literature (which, when I was fifteen, somehow included Jane Austen!), and I decided that it was probably all equally boring.

I was eighteen before I began to correct this impression (with, of all things, Eliot's *Adam Bede*); fortunately somebody had already forced me – marvellous experience that it was – into Jane Austen by assuring me that her first three books were written before Victoria was even a sparkle in the Duke of Kent's eye. Then the hordes: Thackeray, the Brontes, Dickens, Hardy. But I have never quite forgiven Wells and Verne for, even so briefly, prejudicing me against the "serious" literature written by their contemporaries and precursors who just happened to have overlapped, to whatever extent, the reign of the same, diminutive monarch.

16. When I was a child, I used to play the violin. At twelve, I developed a not wholly innocent passion for a boy of thirteen who was something of a violin prodigy: he had already been soloist with several small, but professional orchestras, and he was talked about muchly in my several circles of friends. I wrote a violin concerto for him – it took me four months. Its three movements ran about half an hour. I supplied (I thought then) a marvellous cadenza. The themes, if I recall, were all serial, but their development was tonal. I orchestrated it for a full, seventy five pieces – but by the time I had finished, he had moved to up-State New York.

And I had been afraid to tell him what I was doing until it was com-

pleted.

Months later, I ran into him in the Museum of Modern Art (he was in the city visiting an aunt) and, excitedly, I told him about my piece, over cokes and English muffins in a coffee shop a few blocks away. He was a little overwhelmed, if not bewildered, but said, "Thanks," and "Gosh!" and "Wow!" a lot. We talked about getting together again. He was first chair violinist with the All State Youth Orchestra that year and a favourite with the conductor. We talked about a possible performance or, at least, getting some of his adult friends to look at it. Then he had to catch a train.

I never saw him again.

He never saw the concerto.

At thirteen I gave up the violin – and have had a slight distrust of the passions ever since.

I notice that I often tend to talk (and think) about my childhood just as though music had no part in it – where as, in reality, I must have spent more hours at it from eight to twice eight than at anything else! And between the ages of nineteen and twenty two, I probably made as much money as a basket musician in Greenwich Village coffee houses as I did from my first four sf novels, written over the same time. (And how interesting that the ages from nineteen to twenty two are suddenly part of my childhood!)

17. A dozen poets whose work I have enormously enjoyed in the last couple of years: Michael Denis Brown, Alice Knotly, Robert Allen, John Oliver Simon, Philip Levine, Robert Peterson, Judith Johnson Sherwin, Ted Berrigan, Robert Morgan, Ann Waldman, Richard Howard, and J.H. Prynne.

(I am leaving out Marilyn Hacker and Tom Disch; I know them and their work too well!) How many of the dozen named have I actually met? Six. Interesting that one, whom I've never met at all, felt it necessary to tell a complete stranger, who only accidentally met me six months later, that he was quite a good friend of mine when I lived in San Francisco!

18. Down to give a lecture on sf at the University of Kent. In the discussion period after my talk, someone brought up Theodore Sturgeon. I asked the assembly what they particularly liked about his work. From the side of the room, one person shouted, "his aliens!" and from the other side, simultaneously someone else: "his people!" Everyone laughed. Consider this incident for the Sturgeon essay.

19. Marilyn, from the other room (where she is reading the Jonathan Raban book *The Sociology of the Poem* and, apparently, has just come to another horrendous misreading [where he goes on about Pickard's poem *Rape* (he doesn't, apparently, remember the title and refers only to a few lines of it) as expressing good will (!) and fellowship (!!) between the young men in the pub and the old woman (whom he, not Pickard, calls a prostitute)]): "Poetry should be as well written as prose – and at *least* as carefully read!"

20. In the context of 1948 – a vacuum tube technology where most adding machines were mechanical – Gilbert Ryle was probably right in denying the existence of mental occurrences as material events with the nature of mechanical entitities, separable from the brain. In the context of 1973 – where we have a solid state technology and electronic computers – we have to rethink: the empirical evidence of neurology, electronics, and cybernetics all point to a revitalization of the concept of mental occurences as brain processes. A perfectly serious argument seems to be occurring today in philosophy over whether mental occurrences are non-material events that just happen to happen simultaneously with certain brain processes (or are even set off by the brain processes, but are different from the processes themselves), or whether the brain processes are, indeed, the mental occurrences themselves.

Two things make such an argument seem ridiculous to me – one, empirical, and the other logical.

First, it seems as silly to say that the brain contains *no* model of what the eye sees (which arguers on one side of this argument maintain) as it is to say that the circuitry in a TV camera (that has been turned on) contains no model of what is in front of the image orthicon tube at its proper focal distance. The point is: anyone who has tried to design a television (or even a radio) circuit from scratch has some idea of just how great the complexity of that model must be: It is practically *all* process, composed of a series of precisely ordered wave fronts that peak in precise patterns, hundreds-to-hundreds-of-thousands-of-times per second, all shunted around, amplified, distorted, and superimposed on one another, in a precise pattern, at close to the speed of light. The philosophers who hold this view, I'm afraid, are simply revealing their inability to conceive even this complexity, empirically demonstrable for processes far simpler than the simplest brain process.

To take another side of the argument (and it has many more than two) is to get lost in one of the numerous logical contradictions of ordinary speech, which allows us to call "a process" a *thing* and "an object" a *thing* too. The internal logical structure of one is distinct from the in-

ternal logical structure of the other. *All* processes are non-material, whether they be brain-processes or the process of raising my hand off the table. At the same time, all processes need material to define them. (If I raise a glass off the table, aren't I doing the same 'thing' as raising my hand off the table . . .? Of course I'm not. Which is to say, I *am* doing the same 'thing' (i.e., indulging the same process) only in so far as I am *observing* the two events at the same degree of empirical resolution. If I want to, I can observe the raising of two more or less identical glasses from the same spot on the table (or even the same glass), at different times, at such a high degree of empirical resolution that their processes can be uniquely differentiated, having to do with drying times of films of water, molecular change and interchange between the table and the glass, etc. And that, alas, exhausts the tale.). Similarly, all material can be defined by process, the most basic of which, for a static object, is simply the process of duration; as it changes (or as I observe it at a higher degree of empirical resolution, so that I become *aware* of changes in it) we can bring in other processes as well. In this way, all material can be defined by the process (infinitely analysable into smaller processes) it is undergoing. But the basic terms that are thrown around in this argument – "material event" and "non-material event" – both have an element of self-contradiction (i.e., if "a brain process" can be called "a material event", then, as the brain is the material, the event must be the process, which implies something like a "material process" . . . which is nonsense of the same order as "a green smell") that, it would seem to me, renders them *both* useless for any serious, logical discussion.

To stand for three hours and watch Vikki Sperling map the image from the retina of the eye of a salamander off the visual tectum of the exposed, salamander brain (doubled there, one inverted left-right, and a weaker one right-left) with her gold-filled micro-electrodes on their adjustable stands, silences a good deal of the argument in my own head. The behaviourists, with their pre-transistor view of the world, say: "But you can't locate mental occurrences!" We can not only locate them, we can measure them, map them, record them, reproduce them, cut them out and put them in backwards!

21. A "word" has a "meaning" in the sense that a train has a track; *not* in the sense that a train has a passenger. Still, *word* and *meaning* in most people's minds, even most philosophers', apparently, are the same sort of category concept mistake that Ryle tried to show existed in the Cartesian separation between body and mind.

Words mean.

But meaning *is* the interaction of the process into which the ear-drum/aural-nerve translates the air vibrations that *are* the word, with the chemo-electric process that is the interpretative context of the brain. Meaning may be something else as well – as mental occurences *may* be something else as well as brain-processes. But I am sure that they are *at least* this, which is why empirical exploration strikes me as the only practical way to get seriously further in either discussion.

22. Many scientists and mathematicians fool themselves into thinking there is something eternal about, say, a mathematical proof.

At Marilyn's book-stall, yesterday, I was browsing in a seventeenth century Latin translation of Euclid's *Elements*. Things Euclid took as proofs would horrify – if not bewilder – a modern, university senior in math. Euclid's personal idea of mathematical rigour is entirely different from ours. Fashions in proofs change only a little more slowly than fashions in dress! What is considered to require a proof today is considered self-evident tomorrow. What was considered self-evident yesterday, today is the subject of a three-hundred page exegesis whose final conclusion is that it just cannot be rigorously established at all!

A mathematician will tell you that a set of proofs, all from one mathematician, may, for example, generate information about the author's personality. I will certainly agree with anyone who says that such information is probably not terribly important to the proofs' substance. But anyone who says the information is *not* there is simply blind.

Even mathematics has its subjective side. And, as extremes come round to touch, one argument gaining popularity now is that something as abstract as "mathematical logic" may turn out to be what, after all, subjectivity actually *is*.

23. Art conveys possibilities of information to society, i.e., the possible forms information may take. The value of art is in its richness of form. (Cf. Charles Olson's advice to writers that, without necessarily imitating reality in their fiction, they should keep their fiction "up to" the real.) The relation of art to the world *is* the aesthetic field of a given culture, i.e., in different cultures art relates to the world in *very* different ways.

24. Thoughts on my last sixteen years with Marilyn: living with an extraordinarily talented and temperamental poet is certainly the best thing that could happen to a prose writer. I wonder, however, if it works the other way around . . .? When we fall asleep, like teaspoons, the baby (due in two months) tramples me in the small of my back. But they seem

such definitely non-hostile kicks! You can tell it's just exercise. This evening, for practically a minute and a half, it kicked at almost regular, seven second intervals, till Marilyn got up from the arm-chair (a little worried). Well, considering its daddy, it ought to have a good sense of rhythm. (I say living with a talented and temperamental poet is good for a prose writer; but I suspect living with a talented and temperamental poet who happens to possess a rather acute business sense helps too . . .) [Note: Our obstetrician, Mrs. Ransom, says that when the baby presses against an artery in the womb, often a highly regular spasming of part of the uterine wall can occur, easily confusable with the baby's kicking. Nothing to worry about. But we do not have a budding Ruby Keeler or Bill Robinson in our midst. Just a pressed artery in some positions.]

25. I suspect the logical atomisn of both Russell and Wittgenstein would have been impossible without the visual atomisation the Impressionists had already subjected the world to on canvas (and that the Cubists were subjecting it to concurrently with Russell's and Wittgenstein's early work). In fact, what is basically wrong with Wittgenstein's "picture theory of langugage" is that it rests on an aesthetically simple-minded concept of the way in which a picture relates to what it is a picture of. The twenty-seven year old Wittgenstein simply held an amazingly naive view (or, more generously, an extremely nineteenth century derived view) of the way in which a picture is a model of a situation. The mistake at *Tractatus* 2.161 is heart rending:

> "There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all."

If for *must be* and *identical* he had substituted *is obviously* and *similar* – and then taken up the monumental task of running these words down to their propositional atomisation – he would have solved the problem of the modular calculus (i.e. *the* critical problem).

The point is: there is *nothing* identical in a picture and what it depicts. There is *nothing* identical in the model and what it is a model of. Nothing, nothing at all! They share not one atom in common! They need not share one measurement! Only the perceptive context imposes commonality on them, for a variety of learned and physiological reasons. (G. Spencer Brown's elegant, elegant argument founders, ultimately, on the same point.)

For A to be recognized as a model of B, first a set of internal relations, as A relates to itself, must be read from it, then processed in some way probably similar to a mathematical integration; then *another* set of internal relations must be read from B (some of the relations *may* be similar

to those read from A; but they need not be) and then integrated (by a similar process; or by a very different one), and the two results compared; if I find the *results* congruent, then I recognize A as a model of B in the context of the joint integrative process that produced the congruent results. But information about A may come to me via a photograph, while I may have to gather information about B, blind-folded, with just my hands, from miniature plastic sculptures. Even so, if I have developed the proper interpretative context, I may well be able to recognize that, say, some small, plastic object B is a model of the photographed object A (checkable against a sight model when the blind-fold is removed), while other small plastic objects C, D, and E are *not*, in terms either of the context I've developed, or in terms of the more usual sight context, models of A.

26. About every fragment of reality, an infinite number of different statements can be made. For every fragment of reality, an infinite number of different models can be made.

27. On one side of a paper write: "The statement on the other side of this paper is true." Now turn the paper over and write: "The statement on the other side of this paper is false." Now put down your pencil; and turn the paper over several more times, considering the truth and falsity of the statements you have written – till you perceive the paradox.

The young Bertrand Russell noted that the whole of the *Principia Mathematica* remained shaky because of it; he came up with one resolution that, later, as an older man, he repudiated. Karl Popper has, somewhere, a proof that it cannot be resolved at all.

It can.

But to follow the resolution, fold up the paper and put it in the breast pocket of your Pendleton, as I did on the train platform in South Brindleton one May, and come along with me.

Vanessa Harpington had gone off painting in North Africa, but had sweetly left the keys to her country home circulating among various of her Camden Town friends. So I'd come down to pass that summer in a fine, old English house with my friend Alfred, himself the long-haired nephew and namesake of a rather infamous Polish Count K.

One rainy afternoon, I was in the sitting room, with a sketch pad, making a drawing of the scene outside the window – rain splashing through the leaves of one of the small sycamores in the yard – when Alfred, smoking a meerschaum carved into a likeness of A.E. Van Vogt, wandered in, looked at my drawing, looked out the window, looked at my drawing again, and nodded. After a moment's silence, he said: "Would you say you are making a model of the situation outside the

window?"

"I suppose you could call it that," I said, sketching a line in for the drapery's edge.

"Would you say that it models the fact that it is raining?"

"Well, all those slanted lines *are* supposed to be raindrops. And the runnels of water on the window there . . ." I looked up.

Alfred had stepped forward. The streaming pane silhouetted his hawkish features. He took another pull on his pipe and, expelling small puffs of smoke, intoned: "Truth . . . Falsity . . . Model . . . Reality . . ." and glanced back.

"I *beg* your pardon?" I said. There was a sweetish aroma in with the tobacco.

"Has it ever occurred to you that," Alfred said, "logically speaking, 'true' and 'false' can only be applied to statements *about* the real; but that it is nonsense to apply either one directly *to* the real? I mean – " He took his pipe and pointed with the stem toward the window; his long hair swung – "if, in here, in the sitting room, you were to make the statement, 'It is raining outside,' or some other model of the situation you perceive through the glass – "

"Like a drawing?"

" – or a sculpture, or a photograph; or a flashing light that, by arrangement, we had both agreed to interpret as, 'It is raining outside,' or some abstract mark on a piece of paper, or an arbitrary set of musical notes that we had some such similar agreement about – "

"A sign – " I said.

"*I* said a model. *Do* accept my terminology." The partially silhouetted head cocked. "I'm only trying to save you pages and pages of semiological hair splitting. Now: As I was saying, suppose I chose to model the situation outside with the statement: 'It is raining outside,' rather than the way you are, with a pencil and paper, then you might have come along, observed my model – or, in this case, heard what I said – observed the garden through the window, and commented: 'That is a true statement.' Or, if you will, 'That is a true model.' – "

"I think that's a rather limited way to look at, say, well any *aesthetic* model."

"So do I! So do I!" said Alfred. "But if we had agreed that we *were* going to use the model in that way, for the purely limited purpose of obtaining information about a limited aspect of reality – say, whether it was or was not raining – then we *could.* '

"Okay. If we agreed first."

"But, by the same tokens, you can see that it would be perfectly ridiculous for you to come along, point out the window and say, 'The out-

side is true,' or 'The rain is true,' or even 'The rain outside is true'."

"Oh, I could *say* it. But I do get your point. If I did, I wouldn't be using 'true' in any truly logical way; I'd be using it metaphorically; aesthetically if you will; as a sort of general intensifier."

"Precisely. Do you see, then, what allows one to put 'true' or 'false' on a model, such as my statement or your picture?"

"I suppose," I said, squinting at my paper and considering asking Alfred to step just a little aside because he was blocking a doffing sycamore branch, "It's because I've been working very hard to get it to look like what . . . I'm modelling – Alfred, do you think you might move to the left there just a bit –"

"Oh, really!" Alfred stepped directly in front of the window and jabbed his pipe stem at me. "All Vanessa's oak panelling, these leather bindings and dusty hangings, seem to have addled your head. A statement doesn't *look* like the thing it models! When I say 'It is raining,' neither the 'it' nor the 'is' refer to anything real in the situation. And the position of the pointer on that barometer dial over there – just as good as a model of what's going on outside as any of the others we've mentioned – has no internal structure similar to the situation it's modelling at all (though it's *attached* to something that has an internal structure *dependent* on it; but that's a different story)! No, some structural similarity may explain *why* you choose to use a particular thing *for* a model, but it is the use you are putting it *to* – the context you are putting it *into,* if you will – that, alone, allows you to call it 'true' or 'false'. Truth and falsity, the potential for being true or false, are not manifestations of the internal structure of the thing that is, potentially, to be so labelled. They are, rather, qualities ascribable to a given thing when, in a particular context, it is functioning in a particular way, i.e., modelling some situation truly (however we choose to interpret that) or modelling it falsely (however we choose, given a particular, modular context, to interpret that) . . ."

"Alfred," I said, laying my pencil across my pad and leaning back in the leather wingchair, "I know you really *are* trying to save me pages of semiological hair splitting, but you are also standing in my way – interfering, if you will, with the modular context I have been trying to establish between the rain and my drawing pad. Could you be a pal and see if you can get us some coffee . . .?"

As English summers will, that one soon ended.

As happens, a year later an Italian summer replaced it. I was spending a sunny week in a villa outside Florence. The news came from my hostess, one morning over coffee in the garden, that we were to be joined shortly by – of all people! I had thought he was somewhere in Nepal; indeed, I

hadn't thought of him for six months! And who, sure enough, should come striding across the grass ten minutes later, in rather worn-out sneakers, his bald spot no noticeably larger but his shoulder length hair definitely longer, thumbs tucked under his knapsack straps, and a Persian vest over an out-at-the-elbow American workshirt, from the pocket of which stuck the stem of what, from the bulge at the pocket's base, I recognized as his Van Vogtian meerschaum – Alfred!

He came across the lawn, grinning hawkishly, and said: "Do you know what you left behind in England and that I have carried all the way to India and back?"

"What . . .?" I asked, quite surprised at his introduction and charmed by this dispensing with phatic chatter.

"Your sketch pad! Hello, Vanessa . . ." to our hostess, and gave her a large hug. The high, aluminium rack of his back pack swayed above his shoulders.

To explain what happened that afternoon, I might mention explicitly several things implicit already about both Alfred and Vanessa. She, for instance, is very generous, a far more talented painter than I, and has several easels in her studio – the converted top-floor of the villa. And Alfred, as I'm sure you've realized, has a rather strange mind at the best of times, which also entails a rather strange sense of humour.

At any rate, some hours later, I was walking through the white dining room, with its sparse brass and wood decoration, when I noticed, through the open, iron casement, out in the sunlit, Italian garden, one of Vanessa's easels set up a few yards from the window; and set up *on* the easel was my sketch pad, with my drawing of last year's rain-battered, English sycamore.

While I looked at it, Alfred came climbing in over the window-sill, dropped to the floor, spilling a few cinders onto the waxed floorboards, and, kicking at them, gave me a great grin: "There," he said, "Go on! Make a true statement – an accurate verbal model of the situation outside the window! Quick!"

"Well," I said, smiling and a bit puzzled, "it seems that there's . . ." I paused, about to say 'my picture outside,' but I remembered our colloquy back in rainy Britain: ". . . that there's my *model* outside!"

"Just what I was hoping you would say," Alfred said. "It saves even more pages of semiological hair splitting!"

"And," I said, encouraged by this, "the model outside is true, too! Alfred, what have you been doing in India?"

"Amazing amounts of shit," Alfred said warmly. "Do you know, Plato *was* right, after all – at least about method. As far as semiological hair-splitting is concerned, we just dispensed with practically a chapter

and a half! A dialogue that you can make up as you go along really *is* the only way to get anything done in philosophy."

I looked out at my picture again. "Then it *is* my model. And my model *is* true."

"Your first statement is true." Alfred's smile became warmer still. "Your second is nonsense – no, don't look so crest-fallen. Just listen a moment: whether your model is a statement, a drawing, or even a thought, it is still a thing like any other thing: that is, it has its particular internal structure, and its various elements are undergoing their various processes, be that merely the process of enduring. Now you may have chosen any aspect of this thing – part of its material, part of its structure, or part of its process – to do the bulk of the modelling for you, *while* it was in the modular context. And, yes, outside that context, the model is still the *same* thing. But it *is* outside the context. Therefore, pointing out *this* window and *that* picture and calling it, or any part of it – material, structure, or process – 'true' or 'false' is just as nonsensical now as it would have been for you, back in that abysmal May we spent in South Brindleton, to point out the window and call some *thing* out there 'true' or 'false' . . . the rain, the shape of the drops, or the falling. A fine distinction has to be made. Whether the model functions as true or functions as false *within* the context may have something to do with the internal structure *of* the model. But whether the model functions (as true *or* false) has to do with the structure of the context. If you would like to look at it this way: 'true' and 'false' merely model two mutually exclusive ways a given model (which is a thing) may function in a given context, depending on other things, which may, in different contextual positions, function as models. But the meaningfulness of the *ascription* of true *or* false is dependent on the context, not the thing."

Alfred took another draw on his pipe, found it was out, and frowned. "Um . . . now why don't you take out that piece of paper you have folded up in the breast pocket of your Pendleton and look at it again – excuse me, I could have suggested you take it out of your wallet and avoided the implication that you hadn't washed your shirt since last summer, but now I am just trying to save you pages of semiological elaboration."

Feeling a bit strange, I fingered into my breast pocket, found the paper I had so summarily folded up a summer before, and unfolded it, while Alfred went on: "Think of it in this wise: if something is in the proper, logical position, it may be called true or false. If it moved out of that position, though it is still the same *thing*, you *can't* call it true or false."

And, creased through horizontally, I read:

The statement on the other side of this paper is true.

"Alfred," I frowned, " – if there *is* a statement on the other side of this paper (and, unless my memory plays tricks, there is) and it is *meaningful* to call *that* statement true or false – now I'm only letting the internal structure of *this* statement suggest a line of reasoning, I'm not accepting from it any information about *its* 'truth' or 'falsity', 'meaningfulness' or 'meaninglessness' – that means (does it not?) that it is in the proper position in the modular context to do some modelling."

"Even as you or I, when we stand at the window looking at what's outside."

"And if *that* statement refers to what's on *this* side of the paper (and memory assures me that it does), then they are in the same context, which means they cannot both occupy the same position in it at the same time."

"Have you ever tried to stand out in the garden and inside the sitting room all at once? It *is* a bit difficult."

"So *if* that is the case, then *this* statement has to be considered just as a . . . thing, like rain, or a sycamore, or a garden . . . – "

"Or a sketch of a garden. Or a statement. Or a thought. *They* are things too."

"But I recall distinctly, Alfred: the statement on the other side of the paper calls this statement – this *thing*! – false!"

"Wouldn't really matter if it called it true, would it – "

"Of course it wouldn't! In the context I just outlined, I could no more call this . . . thing – " I waved the statement – "'true' than I could call – " I looked out the window at the easel with my sketch – "*that* thing true!"

"Though that does not reflect on its potential for truth if placed in another contextual position. If, for example, the statement on the other side of the paper read: 'Your picture is in the garden,' then it would be perfectly fine. Actually, it can work quite serially; what we're really establishing is simply the unidirectionality of the modular context *toward* the real. But then, all that semiological hair-splitting . . . Better turn over the paper and see if your memory isn't playing tricks on you."

Hastily I did. And read:

The statement on the other side of this paper is false.

"Yes," I said, "there *is* a statement on this side, and it does attribute truth-or-falsity to the statement on the other. Which is nonsensical. It's me standing inside the sitting room in Brindleton looking out the window and calling the rain 'true'."

"You never really did that," Alfred said. "We just made a model of it that we judged nonsensical – useless in a particular sort of way. Keep looking at the side of the paper you're looking at now – that is: set up the context in the other direction."

I did until I had:

"It's the same situation. If I let the *other* statement occupy the modelling position and this occupy the position of the modelled thing, then the fact that the other statement attributes truth or falsity to what's on *this* side means *it's* nonsensical too."

Alfred nodded. "It's like having, on either side of your paper' The *thing* on the other side of this paper is true (or false); The *thing* on the other side of this paper is false (or true).' Which is an empty situation, in the same way that if you and, say, Vanessa, both had drawing pads and pencils and were sitting where you could see each other's paper, and I gave you the instructions: 'Both of you draw only what the other is drawing', you'd both end up with empty pictures."

"Speaking of Vanessa," I said, "let us go see what she is doing. She *is* a better artist than I am, which I suspect means that on some level, she has established a more interesting modular context with reality than I have. Perhaps she will take a break from her work and have some coffee with us."

"Splendid," said Alfred. "Oh, you asked me what I was doing in India? Well, while I was there, I got hold of some . . ." But that is another story too.

28. Vanessa Harpington (during a period when she (not I) thought her work was going badly), shortly after Alfred's departure for Rumania:

"What use is love?

"It assures neither kindness, compassion, nor intelligence between the people who feel it for one another.

"The best you can say is that when good people love, they behave well . . . sometimes.

"When bad people love, they always behave appallingly.

"I wonder what the brilliant Alfred will have to say about a paradox like *that*!"

"First of all, Vanessa," I reminded her as we walked the cobbled streets, with the river, dull silver, down every corner, through the Italian summer, "you simply cannot take such abstract problems so seriously. Remember, you and Alfred are both fictions: neither of you exists. The closest I've ever been to passing a summer in an English Country house was a weekend at John and Margery Brunner's in Somer-

set, and though I spent a few weeks in Venice once, I've never stayed in an Italian villa in my life!"

"Oh, really," Vanessa said. "You just don't understand at all!" And, for the rest of the walk back, stayed a step or two ahead of me, arms folded and looking mostly somewhere else, though we did actually talk – about other things.

29. Finished reading Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* yesterday. The oversized paperback seems to be losing most of its pages! A thought: when I hold up my hand in front of my face, what I *see* is my hand, in focus, and, behind it, a slightly unfocussed, double image of the rest of the room, those images further away blurrier and slightly further apart. (Actually, parts of the double image keep suppressing other parts, and then the suppression pattern changes.) How odd that in the search for more and more striking illusions of reality, no artist has ever tried to paint *this*!

One reason, I suspect, is that art has never really been interested in painting What You See; from the most abstract, to the most representational, art is interested in purveying the concept of What Is There. The representationalists have, from time to time, used a limited number of tricks of the eye to emphasize (by making their paintings look *more* like what you see), that the subject *is* there. The abstractionists use the reality of paint, brush stroke, and material for the same end.

30. A common argument between philosophers often runs like this:

A. I have a problem within this particular context.
B. I have a context within which I can solve your particular problem.
A. But I want a solution within my context!
B. But I can translate your context, in all particulars that interest me, into my context.
A. But you can't translate my problem into *your* context so that it is still a problem and then produce a solution for it that will fit *mine*! Is there any way you can prove that, within my context, my problem is insoluble?
B. I'm not interested in proving your problem insoluble! I'm interested in solving it! And I have!
A. If you are not interested in proving my old problem insoluble, then I am not interested in your new context! It doesn't relate to my problem!

31. The greatest distress to me of Structural Anthropology is its sexism.

The primary descriptive model, "Society operates by the exchange of women," as a purely descriptive model, has the value of any other: there are certainly contexts in which it is useful. The same can be said of such other famous descriptive models as: "Jews are responsible for the financial evils of Europe," or "Blacks are lazy and shiftless but have a good sense of rhythm." It is the nature of descriptions that, as long as they model some fraction of the reality, however minute (even to the fact that persons A and B have agreed to use model p as a description of situation S [which is the case with individual words]) they can be called useful. But pure descriptive usefulness is not in the least contingent on how much the internal structure of the description reflects the way in which the fragment of reality it models relates to the rest of the case. Such descriptions that try to mirror these relations, to the extent that they succeed, can be called logical descriptions. But the very form of the absolute statement precludes its being a logical description. And when a description is of a small enough fragment of reality, and it reflects neither the internal workings of what it is describing nor the external workings, it can be said to be an emblem – or, if it is made up of a string of words, a slogan. And it is the slogan's pretension to logical description that make it so undesirable. When trying to establish a coherent system, such as a coherent anthropological discipline (as Lévi-Strauss is attempting), we want logical models that can also be used as part of a logical context. Such models as the ones above, as they pass into context, yield situation after situation where abuse is almost inevitable:

If a woman objects to being exchanged or refuses to be exchanged, for example, by the above model she can be described as opposing society's workings. But if a man objects to or refuses to be exchanged, he can be described as objecting to being treated as a woman! And on and on and on *ad* (in the manner of context models) *infinitum*.

What makes this so sad is that the original descriptive use is completely subsumed by the double model: "Much of society works by the exchange of human beings," and "In most cases, the human beings who do the exchanging are men and the human beings exchanged are women." Without resorting to information theory (which tells us that the interplay between two limited descriptive models generates much more information about the context surrounding the elements of all of them than any one absolute statement of the same elements possibly can), I think most native English speakers hear the margin for self criticism allowed. And I don't see how the informative usefulness of this complex model is any *less* than that of the absolute statement.

But if I thought anthropological sexism were merely a manifestation of a single, clumsily thought-out descriptive model, I would not be as distressed as I am. It appears again and again; the profusion alone suggests that it is inherent in the context. Three more examples:

In Lévi-Strauss's most exemplary (by general consensus) piece, *Le Gest d'Asdiwal* (his analysis of a myth that has a range of male and female characters) we find statements like: ". . . the women [in this myth] are more profitably seen as natural forces . . ." (More profitably than what? Than as human beings? And who is this profitable to? But let us continue:) The myth, in its several versions collated in the forty-odd page essay, begins with a mother and a daughter, whose husbands have died in the current famine, travelling from their respective villages, till they meet, midway along a river. They have only a rotten berry between them to eat. A magic bird appears, turns into a man, marries the daughter, provides food for the two women, and the daughter and her supernatural husband have a child, Asdiwal, the hero of the myth. Some time later in the myth, Asdiwal, as an adult, meets a magic bear on a mountain who turns into a woman, who reveals she is the daughter of the sun. After Asdiwal passes a series of tests set by the bear-woman's supernatural father, the bear-woman marries Asdiwal and they live for a while, happily, in the sky. Later they return to earth, to Asdiwal's own village, where Asdiwal commits adultery with a woman of his people. The bear-woman leaves him over this and returns to her father. Asdiwal marries another woman of his village, and the myth continues through a series of adventures involving several other female figures, some human, some not, their brothers (who tend to come in groups of five), the king of the seals, Asdiwal's own son by a mortal woman, and finally ends when Asdiwal, in a magic situation on top of a mountain, calls down to his second wife to sacrifice some animal fat and she, misunderstanding his instructions, eats it; and, as a result, Asdiwal is turned to stone. I do not claim, in so short a synopsis, to have covered all the salient points of the myth in all its variations; for what it's worth, neither does Lévi-Strauss. There is a whole branch of the myth devoted to Asdiwal's son's adventures, which has many parallels with his father's story. Still, I cannot see what, in the myth, or in the Timshian culture which produced it, suggests the interpretation ". . . all the women . . ." in the tale are natural forces. The bird-man, the bear-women, her father the sun, as well as various seal-men and mouse-women, may well represent natural forces. But to restrict this unilaterally to the women seems to be nothing but a projection of part of our own society's rather warped sexist context. I have no idea if the society of the Timshian Indians who produced this myth is as sex-

ist as modern Western society, less sexist, or more so. I might have made an educated guess from the myth itself. But even Malinowski's original reports, taken several times over several years, here and there resort to synopsis, at noticeably more places where women are the agents of the action than where men are. And I can certainly get no idea from the final critical model Lévi-Strauss constructs: a binary grid of repeated, symmetrical patterns, high/low, upstream/downstream, mountain/water, etc. By dissolving any possibility of male/female symmetricality with the a-symmetrical men=human/women=forces, he makes it impossible to judge (nor does he try to judge in his final model) any such symmetricalities that *do* exist in the myth – i.e., I think every one, from the parts recounted, can see a symmetricality between Asdiwal's mother's marriage with the bird-man who brings plenty and his with the bear-woman who brings good times in the sky. Just how important this symmetricality is in terms of Timshian society, I have no way of knowing. My point is, neither does Lévi-Strauss – if he is going to impose the artificial a-symmetricalities of our culture on others. Lévi-Strauss's avowed point in the essay is merely to show that there is *some* order in the myth; and this he succeeds in. But has anyone ever seriously maintained that any society has produced myths with *no* order at all? And it is implicit in his approach to show as much order as possible in the myth and then show how it reflects or is reflected by, and lent meaning and value by (and lends meaning and value to), the social context it exists in. There are certainly plenty of a-symmetrical elements in both situations (as there are in all of the elements that he pairs as symmetrical), i.e. one marriage produces a child, the other doesn't; one involves in-laws, the other doesn't. But Lévi-Strauss's sexist context puts the whole topic beyond discussion.

Another example: during Lévi-Strauss's conversations with Charbonnier, Charbonnier asks Lévi-Strauss if, sometimes, an anthropologist does not identify so much that he biases his observations in ways not even he is aware of. Lévi-Strauss counters with an anecdote of an American anthropologist who recounted to Lévi-Strauss that he felt much more at home working with one Amerind tribe than another. In one tribe, this man reported, if a wife is unfaithful to her husband, the husband cuts off her nose. In the other, if a wife is unfaithful to her husband, the husband goes to sit in the central square, bemoans his fate loudly to all who pass by, calls down imprecations from the Gods to destroy the world that has brought things to this dreadful impasse, then curses the gods themselves for having allowed the world to become such a terrible place. He then gets up and returns to his wife, presumably much relieved, and life continues on. The second tribe, the American said, filled him with a

sense of revulsion: trying to "destroy the world, or the whole universe, for a personal injury" struck him as, somehow, "immoral". He preferred working with the former tribe because their responses somehow seemed much "more human". Now I have no idea of whether either tribe was particularly sexist or not. Presumably if the women of the first tribe cut off the noses of their unfaithful husbands, whereas we might call them violent, we could not call them sexist. I do know enough of the social context of America to be sure that if this *were* the case, our American anthropologist would have felt nowhere as "at home" with them as he did. And in terms of any of the tribes involved, including my own U.S. of A., I don't think I would trust this man to give an objective report on sexuality, sexual politics, morality, or humanity, as conceived subjectively, in terms of their own culture, by *any* of the three. In the context of the conversation, however, Lévi-Strauss uses the anecdote to point out, as politely as possible, that Charbonnier's question is mildly impertinent and that somehow this man is more equipped to be objective about the tribe he identifies with most than anyone else.

Somewhere, in science, especially the human ones, we have to commit ourself to objectivity. And, especially in the human ones, objectivity cannot be the same as disinterest. It must be a whole galaxy of attractions and repulsions, approvals and disapprovals, curiosities and disinterests, deployed in a context of self-critical checks and balances which, itself, must constantly be criticised as an abstract form capable of holding all these elements, and as specific elemental configurations. One of my commitments is that self-critical models are desirable things. I would even submit that cultures, be they Amerind or European or African or Indian or Chinese, are civilised as they possess them. Now 'civilisation' is only a small part of 'culture'. Culture, in all its variety, is a desirable thing because, among other things, it provides a variety of material from which self critical models can be made. Lévi-Strauss himself has pointed out that one purpose of anthropology is to provide a model with which to criticise our own culture. But an anthropological model that only provides a way of seeing how other cultures are structurally similar to ours but literally erases all evidence pertaining to their differences, doesn't, in the long run, strike me as anthropologically very useful.

If other cultures are to teach us anything, and we are not merely to use them as Existential Others that, willy nilly, only prove our own prejudices either about them or ourselves, interpretative models that erase data about their real differences from us must be shunned.

My third example:

Some months ago, Edmund Leach, one of the major commentators on Lévi-Strauss, who has criticised many of Lévi-Strauss's findings and has also praised many of his methods, spent a lecture urging the reinstitution of segregation between the sexes in Western Universities. He proposed doing it in a humane way: "Women might be restricted to the study of medicine and architecture. Men would not be allowed to study these." Man's providence, apparently, is to be everything else. He claimed to be aware that such segregation in the past had had its exploitative side. But he felt we should seriously look at primitive cultures with strict separation of the sexes in work and play for models of a reasonable solution to contemporary stresses.

My first response to something like this is violent, unreasonable, and I stick by it: then for sanity's sake, restrict the study of anthropology to women too. It just *might* prevent such loathsome drivel!

Reasonably, all I can say is that modern anthropology takes place in such a pervading context of sexism that even minds as demonstrably brilliant as Lévi-Strauss's and Edmund Leach's have not escaped it. And that is a tragic indictment.

32. Confessions of a science fiction writer: I have never read a whole novel by Philip K. Dick. And I have only been able to read three short stories by Brian Aldiss (and one I didn't read; I listened to) end to end. (I did read *most* of *Report on Probability A*.) On several separate occasions, I have brought some dozen books by each of them, piled them on my desk, and sat down with the prime intent of familiarizing myself with a substantial portion of their *oeuvres*.

It would be silly to offer this as the vaguest criticism of either Dick or Aldiss. It's merely an indication of idiosyncracies in my own interpretative context as far as reading goes.

At any rate, the prospect of Dick's and Aldiss's work is pleasant to contemplate. It is something I will simply have to grow into, as I grew into Stendahl and Auden, John Buscema and Joe Kubert, Robert Bresson and Stan Brackhage.

I'm making this note at a solitary lunch in a Camden Town Greek Restaurant. From the cassette recorder on the counter, Marinella, echoed by the chorus, asks plaintively again and again: "Pou paomé? Pou paomé?" Interesting that *the* question of our times emerge in so many languages, in so many media!

33. In the Glotolog foothills resides a highly refined culture much given to philosophical speculation.

Some facts about its language:

 is the written sign for a word than translates, roughly as "a light source."

 is the sign for a word that translates, roughly, as "rain".

 is the sign for a word that translates, very roughly, as "I see". ( , , are roughly [and respectively], "you see," "he sees", and "she sees".) But I must repeat 'roughly' so frequently because there *are* no real verbs in the Glotolog language in the English sense.

The relationship that the various forms of have to other Glotolog terms is modificational. In traditional Glotolog grammars (which are all written, traditionally, in English – in much the same way that traditional Latin grammars were written in Greek) they are called adjectives. "   " is a common (and grammatically correct) Glotolog sentence – given the weather, it is one of the *most* common Glotolog sentences, especially in the north. It would be used in just about any situation where an English speaker would say, "It's raining", although there are some, marked differences. "   " would also be used when you mean, literally, "I see the rain". This is perhaps the place to make the point (made so clearly in chapter three of most standard Glotolog grammars), always takes , and usually the is placed before it. The logic here is very simple: you can't see anything without a light source, and in Glotolog this situation is mirrored in the words; without a is simply considered grammatically incorrect. (, however, does not always take , but that is another subject.) Obvious here, and borne out by dictionaries, Glotolog grammar assigns two distinct meanings to (but not, however, to , , or): both "I see" and "There is . . ." Although this double meaning is the source of many traditional children's jokes (heard often during the winter when the clouds blot the sun), in practice it presents little confusion. If I were to come into a Glotolog monastery, with the oil lamps in the windowless foreroom gleaming on ". . . my traditional okapi jerkin where the raindrops still stand high" (my translation from a traditional Glotolog poem; alas, it doesn't really work in English) and say, stamping my Italian imported boots (the Glotologs are mad for foreign imports and often put them to bizarre use; I have seen red plastic garbage pails used as hanging flower planters in even the strictest religious retreats – though the Glotolog's own, painted ceramic ones seem, to my foreign tastes, so much prettier) and say: "   ", it would be obvious to all (even to those frequent, ageing, Glotologian religious mystics who have forgotten all their formal grammar – if, indeed, they ever studied it; formal language training is an old discipline among the Gloto-

log, but it is a widespread one only in recent years, well after the formal education of these venerable ancients was long since past) that I am speaking in what is called, by the grammars, *the assumptive voice.* The logic here is that the words, when used in the assumptive voice, are to be taken in the sense: "It is assumed that if ✳ ⟨i⟩ [i.e., that if there *were* a light source and if I *were* there, seeing by it], then it *would* reflect off ♁ and I *would* see it . . . even though I am now inside the monastery, and, since my entrance, the world may have fallen into total and unexpected night. In other words, the use of ⟨i⟩ as "there is . . ." is not quite the same as in English. You use ⟨i⟩ for "there is . . ." only when *what* there is is within sight. Otherwise, though you actually say the same word, i.e., ⟨i⟩ , you are using the assumptive voice. In old Glotolog texts, the assumptive voice was actually indicated by what is called, in that final appendix to most standard Glotolog grammars on outmoded traditions, a metaphoric dot, which was placed over the ✳ and the ⟨i⟩ . When speaking in the assumptive voice, ✳ and ⟨i⟩ , were said to be in the metaphoric mood. No dot, however, in a sentence like " ✳ ♁ ⟨i⟩ " would be placed over ♁ . The logic here is that, in the assumptive voice, one of the things assumed is that the rain, at any rate, is real.

It is interesting; many native Glotolog speakers, when given transcripts of ancient manuscripts on which the dots have been left out (due to the customs of modern Glotolog printing), can still often place the date of composition from the manner in which sentences like " ✳ ♁ ⟨i⟩ " are used, whether in the indicative ("There are . . ."), the literal ("I see . . ."), or the assumptive ("Somewhere out of sight it is . . .") voice. Apparently once the metaphoric dot fell out as archaic usage, the indicative and the assumptive were used much more informally.

Because of the tendency to use English analytic terms in Glotolog, many Glotolog terms are practically identical to their English equivalents (though, as we have seen, the grammar and the logical form of the language are quite different from English), so that a native speaker of one has little difficulty getting the sense of many Glotolog pronouncements, especially those having to do with logic and sensation.

Here are a list of words that are the same in both languages (that is, they are employed in the same situations):

If	can be called
at night	true
I feel	false
this/that	though
on my body	real

Also, logical questions are posed in Glotolog by putting the word 'is' before, and a question mark after, the clause to be made interrogative. The fact that the semantics and logical form of the language is different from ours only presents a problem in particular cases.

[To summarize those differences: Glotolog has no true predicates ("I feel", as well as "can be called true", for example, are the same part of speech as " ◁ⓘ▷ "); in fact, Glotolog has no true subjects either. It has only objects, the observer of which is expressed as a description of the object, as is the medium by which the object is perceived; sometimes these descriptions are taken as real; at other times they are taken as virtual. And it should be fairly evident even from *this* inadequate description of the language – even without exposure to their complex religion, science, poetry, and politics – that this template still gives them a method for modelling the world as powerful as our own equally interesting (and equally arbitrary) subject/predicate template.]

One of the most famous problems is the question put by one of the greatest Glotolog philosophers:

"If, at night, ✳ ◊ ◁ⓘ▷ can be called true, though I feel ◊ on my body, is this ◊ real?"

The sense of this, along with the answer, seems self-evident to any English speaker; at the same time, to most of us, it is a mystery why this should be a great philosophical question. The answer lies in the logical form of the language as it has been outlined; but for those of you who do not wish to untangle it further, some of its philosophical significance for the Glotologs can be suggested by mentioning that it has caused among those perspicacious people, practically as much philosophical speculation as the equally famous question by the equally famous Bishop Berkeley, about the sound of the unattended tree falling in the deserted forest, and for many of the same reasons – though the good Bishop's query, perfectly comprehensible as to sense by the native Glotolog speaker thanks to the shared terms, seems patently trivial and obvious to them!

A final note to this problem: in recent years, three very controversial solutions have been offered to this classical problem in Glotolog philosophy, all from one young philosophy student resident in one of the southern monasteries (it rains much less in the south, which has caused some of the northern sages to suggest this upstart cannot truly comprehend the nature of this essentially northern metaphysical dilemma), all three of which involve the reintroduction of the metaphoric dot, placed not in their traditional position over the ✳ or the ◁ⓘ▷ , or even over the ◊ , but rather over the words 'real', 'true', or the question mark – depending on the solution considered.

More conservative philosophers have simply gone 'Humph!' (another utterance common to both Glotolog and English) at these suggestions, claiming that it is simply un-Glotologian to use the metaphoric dot over imported words. The dot is, and it says so in the grammars, reserved for native Glotolog terms. As one of the wittier, older scholars has put it (I translate freely): "In Glotolog, English terms have never had to bear up under this mark; they may, simply, collapse beneath its considerable weight." The more radical youth of the country, however, have been discussing with considerable interest, this brilliant young woman's proposals.

34. Science fiction interests me as it models, by contextual extension, the ontology suggested among these notes. As it gets away from that ontology, I often find it appalling in the callousness and grossness of what it has to say of the world. (Like Wittgenstein, when I write these notes on science fiction I am "making propaganda for one kind of thinking over another.") Does that differ any from saying that I like science fiction that suggests to me the world is the way I already think it is? Alas, not much – which is probably why even some of the most appalling, callous, and gross science fiction is, occasionally, as interesting as it is.

One difference between a philosopher and a fiction writer is that a fiction writer may purposely use a verbal ambiguity to make two (or more) statements using the same words; he may even intend all these statements to be taken as metaphoric models of each other. He is still unlikely, except by accident, to call them the same statement. A philosopher, on the other hand, may accidentally use a verbal ambiguity, but once he uses it, he is committed to maintaining that all its meanings are one. And, usually, it takes a creative artist to bring home to us, when the philosophy has exhausted us, that everything in the universe is *somewhat* like everything else, no matter how different they appear; likewise, everything is *somewhat* different from everything else, no matter how similar any two things appear. And these two glorious logical redundancies form the ordinate and abscissa of the Whole Bit.

billion year spree – two views

Both the discussions below, it should be pointed out, were written about the American edition of Billion Year Spree. *The second contribution, in fact, has been slightly cut. It originated as a personal letter from Göran Bengtson to Brian Aldiss, which fell into our hands by a circuitous route (not from Mr. Aldiss himself). It struck us as a wise and witty piece of analysis, and we secured the permission of Mr. Aldiss and Mr. Bengtson to use it. In its original uncut form it also pointed out four or five errors of fact, which Mr. Aldiss promptly put right in the U.K. edition – a nice example of how genuinely useful a direct response from reader to writer can be to the latter. (Curious American readers might note that the errors involved the names of the protagonists in Christopher's* No Blade of Grass, *the proper spelling of Katherine MacLean, and the fact that Margaret St. Clair and Idris Seabright are the same person.) Göran Bengtson was a professional critic "specializing in English and American literature before I went over to the enemy", he tells me, and is now Head of Culture, Channel 1, Swedish TV. Mark Adlard's piece was commissioned back in August 1973, and then held over for this Aldiss issue. In its original form it included a quite copious summary of the actual contents of Aldiss's book, as Mr. Adlard felt it important to give a detailed idea of its scope to those who have not read it. Partly on the grounds that this issue is running too long, and partly from a conviction that the readers of* Foundation *are precisely the people who should be going out to buy the book anyway, and finding out for themselves, I have savagely curtailed Mr. Adlard's chapter synopses, while leaving the evaluations untouched. Sorry, Mark.* Billion Year Spree *was published in 1973 by Doubleday in the U.S. ($7.95, 339 pages) and Weidenfeld and Nicolson in the U.K. (£3.75, 8 pages illustrations, 339 pages).*

a labour of love

Mark Adlard

Bibliographies of science fiction criticism are beginning to look more impressive, and I've no doubt that in a very few years they will start to look intimidating. Less than ten years ago there seemed to be little apart from Damon Knight, a couple of curious books from Advent, Kingsley Amis and C.S. Lewis. Since then the list has been lengthened by Atheling's asperities, I.F. Clarke's exhumations, Sam Lundwall's amiable survey, Don Wollheim's personal testimony, and a number of specialised studies; and this growth has been buttressed by some deeply researched articles in the amateur magazines.

But there has never been a history of science fiction.

The bits and pieces from which such a book might be cobbled have been accumulating: the lovingly documented history of the magazines, with the ministries of Gernsback and Campbell as firmly established in holy writ as the arrival of John the Baptist and the Second Coming; and more latterly the increased attention paid to "mainstream" writers such as Homer, Vergil, Milton, and others who wrote sf without knowing it, and have consequently paid the heavy price of being ignored by fandom until recent times.

How one longed for someone to come along and make some kind of sense out of it all! What a relief that someone has! What a relief that it's Brian Aldiss!

The task required someone who in his youth had known the excitement of searching in Woolworth's for those battered magazines; who had been truly amazed by *Amazing* and astounded by *Astounding;* who had discovered the sf which existed outside the magazines; who had gone on to read widely outside sf and developed a broad critical sense; and who had continued to love sf and had not permitted these longer perspectives to dim that early vision of what was good in those tattered magazines. I would guess that there are not many people with these qualifications. But in addition to these, we have a man who is regarded on all sides as one of the greatest sf writers, and who has besides a high reputation outside this field.

I can think of no creative writer with a status comparable to that of Brian Aldiss who has buckled down to write a history of his art. It must indeed have been a labour of love.

The labour required to impose some sort of pattern on this mass of material must have been immense. It wasn't merely a question of reading widely; nor of assimilating and understanding works of fiction which vary enormously in merit: it was a problem of judgment and discretion in arranging the literature surveyed. The task cannot have been made easier by the *obiter dicta* of influential voices both inside and outside sf. (Ballard saying an ounce of Bradbury is worth a ton of Proust; people too innumerable to specify on the other side of the fence saying things almost as absurd.)

Since the 1920s pulp-sf and non-pulp sf have to a large extent lived in alternative universes. Any "true history" has to show that these two universes are really part of the same cosmos. Such an undertaking, by definition, calls for divine powers. The extent to which Aldiss has succeeded can best be shown by indicating the scope of his work under his own chapter headings.

1. *The Origins of the Species*: Mary Shelley

The major thesis is presented in the first chapter: the modern spirit of sf began with the Romantic exiles in Switzerland, and was given its first embodiment in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

Frankenstein "was born right in the heart and crucible of a great poetic movement – and still retains some of that vital heat." (It is perhaps not absurd to see the monster as yet another reincarnation of the Byronic hero: a fallen angel.)

Frankenstein is "the first real novel of science fiction." A complex variety of themes run their course beneath the Gothic trappings: the retirement of God from creation; the restatement of the Faust myth in modern terms; the realisation that knowledge doesn't bring either virtue or happiness; the loneliness, misery and degradation of a creature which had not asked for the gift of consciousness; and much else.

2. A Clear-Sighted Sickly Literature: Edgar Allan Poe

3. Pilgrim Fathers: Lucian and all That

4. The Gas-Enlightened Race: Victorian Visions

The theory of evolution begins strongly to influence fiction. Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* describes men who live under the earth's crust. They embody that theme of the submerged nation which continued to haunt Victorian fiction after Disraeli drew attention to the "two nations", and they appear later in Wells' Morlocks. Butler's *Erewhon* uses those long perspectives of time, by which Darwin had stretched the human imagination, to suggest that machines will ultimately become the dominant form of life.

Rather surprisingly, at first sight, Hardy is introduced. The inclusion is justified by Hardy's preoccupation with evolutionary speculation, which is given final treatment in the *Dynasts*. The link with Shelley is again established.

There is a short survey of the French contribution: Rétif de la Bretonne, with a list of accurate predictions as amazing as those of Erasmus Darwin; Nerval, De L'Isle Adam, Albert Robida; and of course Verne. Verne was the first commercial success in sf. His earlier novels described heroic voyages – to the centre of the earth, the bottom of the sea, the moon. Aldiss points out how the later novels show a growing disenchantment with the magic of technology and with the idea of America as embodying the dream of the future. The action is darkened by the shadows of Stahlstadt.

5 The Man Who Could Work Miracles: H.G. Wells

The writing takes on a kind of noble warmth, as happened earlier in discussing Mary Shelley and Swift, and as will happen again when Stapledon is the subject. "Among science fiction writers past and present Wells, with Stapledon, is one indisputable giant."

Aldiss's deepest sympathies are engaged with Wells. For example:

> Wells' non-humans, his Martians, Morlocks, Selenites, and Beast-People, are creatures not of horror but terror; they spring from a sophisticated acknowledgment that they are all part of us, of our flesh. It was the later horror merchants who made their creatures alien from us, and so externalised evil. Wells' position is (*malgré lui*) the orthodox Christian one, that evil is within us. His non-humans are not without Grace but fallen from Grace.

Aldiss reminds us that when Prendick returns from Moreau's island to civilisation he fears that the men and women he meets are Beast People, "animals half-wrought into the image of human souls." (Just as Gulliver, when he returns after the fourth voyage, regards his wife and children as Yahoos. Aldiss, in a footnote, refers us also to Orwell's *Animal Farm*.)

6. The Flight From Urban Culture: Wells' Coevals

7. To Barsoom and Beyond: ERB and the Weirdies

Burroughs was a failure at a number of wretched jobs, including railroad cop and candy salesman. In despair he started to write. The stories made him a very rich man. He died in bed reading a comic.

Mars, Africa, Pellucidar and Venus are all the same place: an exotic location where Burroughs could escape from that increasingly complex modern world with which sf is supposed to deal, and which he himself was incompetent to face.

The chapter ends with two other incompetents: Merritt and Lovecraft. Their very inability to cope with the early twentieth century seems to have endeared them,

by a familiar paradox, to a fandom which is supposedly obsessed with a future time much less manageable than our own.

8. In the Name of the Zeitgeist: Mainly the Thirties

Aldiss begins by considering the writers who had nothing to do with the pulp magazines. First, the writers of Prague: Capek, Kafka, and currently Nesvadba; and the Hungarians: Babits and Karinthy. But to an English reader the big names of the 30s are Huxley, Lewis and Stapledon.

Aldiss makes the interesting point that Huxley, in *Brave New World,* created a totally new future *ab initio.* He doesn't edge himself into the future from some standpoint in the present, or simply introduce a unique innovation or a series of novelties one at a time. It's all there at the outset.

An apt quotation from a letter shows that C.S. Lewis was spurred to write sf by Stapledon's *Last and First Men,* and by an essay in Haldane's *Possible Worlds.* Both these writers had put forward the idea of space travel seriously, and both exhibited what Lewis regarded as a desperately mistaken and immoral point of view. He decided to use this interplanetary mythology to state the views of the opposition. Aldiss shows how Lewis' trilogy – *Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* – are used to put forward the writer's own Christian faith.

This is probably the first literary history of any kind which has recognised the true status of Stapledon. Aldiss reserves the highest praise for *Star Maker*: " – the greatest of Wells' followers" "It (*Star Maker*) is magnificent. It is almost unbearable." " – Stapledon is the great classical example, the cold pitch of perfection as he turns scientific concepts into vast ontological epic prose poems, the ultimate sf writer" "His prose is as lucid as his imagination is huge and terrifying. *Star Maker* is really the one great grey holy book of science fiction – "

This is the most important critical evaluation of an individual writer in the book.

The chapter concludes with the birth of the pulp magazines. Of Moskowitz' assertion that Gernsback was "The real father of Science Fiction," Aldiss observes that he was "just a midwife disguised as a Young Pretender."

9. The Future on a Chipped Plate: The World of John W. Campbell's *Astounding*

Aldiss makes some interesting remarks about the isolation of the sf magazines (supposedly so forward-looking) from the exciting things which were actually going on at the same time. The artists, for example (Wesso, Virgil Finlay, and other names revered by the collector) were apparently quite unaware of the new artistic movements of their time (cubism, futurism, surrealism) which one might have thought would consort so naturally with science fiction. To add to the irony we have Chirico's own testimony of the influence of Verne on his paintings. (Modern art did not fall into step with its natural ally until Aldiss edited *Penguin Science Fiction.*)

Three people are singled out: E.E. Smith began with *Skylark of Space* in *Amazing,* and ended with the last of the Lensmen stories in *Astounding;* Jack Williamson began in *Amazing,* and moved to *Astounding* and *Unknown*; Campbell's first story, also appeared in *Amazing,* before he began to write as Don A. Stuart and went on to take over *Astounding.*

And so to 1939 and the start of the Golden Age, with Heinlein, Asimov and Sturgeon, followed by van Vogt and Kuttner. *Astounding* did away with the individual scientific genius, and viewed science and technology as a field for a kind of continuing debate between its writers and its readers.

10. After the Impossible Happened: the Fifties and Onwards, and Upwards

New editors made available kinds of sf which were not acceptable to Campbell. *Galaxy*, edited by Gold, published Bester, Pohl, Sheckley and Tenn; *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Boucher, gave a platform to Budrys, Dick, Miller and Vonnegut. Power fantasies were ignored by the better writers.

Bradbury conveys a strange nostalgia for an America that never was. In this context, says Aldiss, rockets are just quaint novelties, like early Fords, Hudsons and Packards. Aldiss reminds us that Clarke, despite his spectacular career, has remained humbly faithful to his boyhood vision of science.

The 50s were a crucial period. Sf became part of the general publishing scene. Fantasy became important, particularly after the American Tolkien cult washed back to swell a pre-existing popularity in Britain. Heinlein, not really a "hard" sf writer, found (perhaps unfortunately) that he could now write about things he was really interested in.

11. The Stars My Detestation: Yesterday and Tomorrow

The transformation of *New Worlds* is told without polemics. Carnell is respected as a good and honest man, with his school of writers: Tubb ("for many years the *doyen* of British sf"), Bulmer, Rackham, the young Brunner. Moorcock is praised for having grasped that all previous sf had really been describing what Ladbroke Grove would be like in the mid-60s. Ballard is "one of the grand magicians of modern fiction." Sf ceased to be a male preserve (an attitude of mind typified for me by the men's room ending of "First Contact" by Murray Leinster). Ursula Le Guin is selected for particular attention.

Inevitably, there is a good deal of listing of names. One imagines Aldiss, like an over-indulgent parent who keeps extending a wedding list, going over these alphabetical series and worrying about whether he has left anybody out.

There is very high praise for Dick, who is seen as potentially a very important writer. High praise for Vonnegut, too, but I detect a lack of basic sympathy, and it is perhaps symptomatic that *Player Piano* isn't mentioned.

Finally, there are some wise and moving words about Anna Kavan's *Ice*. The Frankenstein leitmotiv is re-stated. This first literary history of science fiction ends, as it began, with a tribute to a woman who wrote great science fiction without knowing it.

* * *

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this stupendous book. It is vital, and will continue vital as far ahead as one can see, for any understanding of science fiction. It has a more general but perhaps even greater importance for the understanding of modern literature.

The book is, quite simply, a pleasure to read. It is not necessary to have read the different writers discussed to enjoy it.

The Billion Year Spree is sub-titled "The True History of Science Fiction." This is surely a sideways glance at Lucian's *True History*, which had made fun of the tall tales and extravagant claims made by his predecessors. And there is a lot of fun in Aldiss's *True History*, too. Hints of pleasures in store are given by the perfectly apt chapter headings. Despite the weighty material being handled the style remains

light and witty, and is helped forward by many an unexpected turn of phrase. Aldiss doesn't state that the names of Lovecraft's hideous entities are absurd, he simply says they "recall anagrams of breakfast cereal names."

There is a good deal of incidental information, often contained in notes, which is interesting, amusing or enlightening, and frequently all three. I was glad to learn, for example, that:

> Mary Shelley, as a child, hid behind a sofa to hear Coleridge read his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*;
> Mrs. Radcliffe ate indigestible food to give herself nightmares;
> Oliver Wendell Holmes coined the term "anaesthesia;"
> Bovril took its name from "vril", the beneficent force in Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race*;
> Verne was blessed by the Pope while on a Mediterranean cruise;
> E.E. Smith was a doughnut-mix specialist when he wrote the *Skylark of Space*;
> Haggard wrote *King Solomon's Mines* as a result of a shilling bet with his brother;
> Walter Miller was present when American forces destroyed the Benedictine Monastery at Monte Cassino.

The book is given an added richness by allusions to music and painting. We are referred to: Janacek's opera *The Makropoulos Case* which was based on Capek's play; John Martin, who "was the Cecil B. de Mille of the Romantic Movement": Guardi's aristocratic Venetians starting at an ascending balloon.

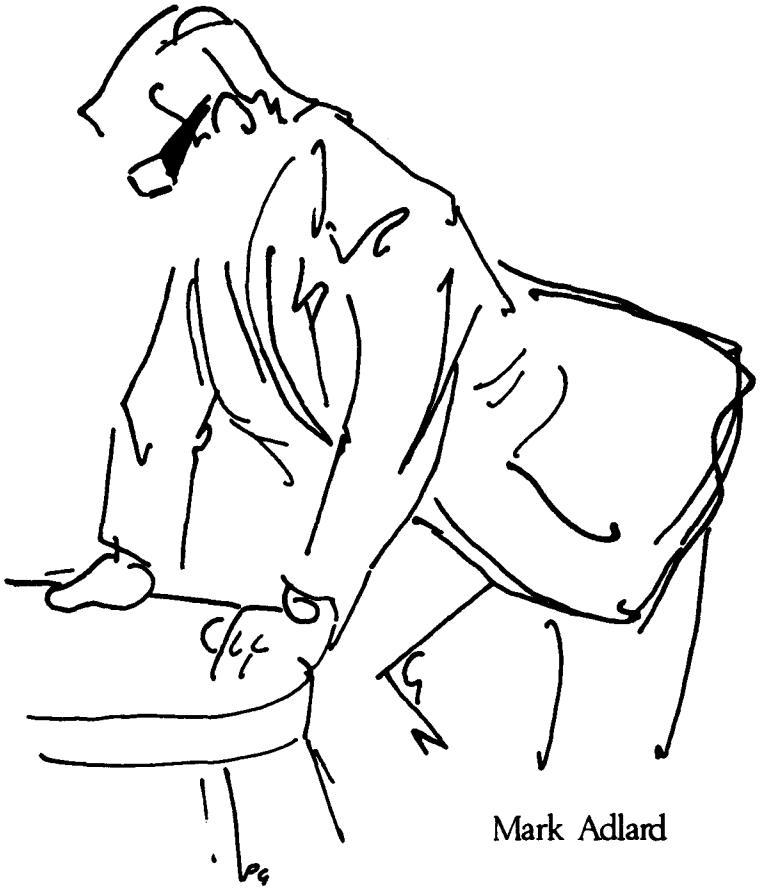
But *Billion Year Spree* is much more than a good read. It is the first book to impose some kind of *Kulturgesicht* upon that great amorphous mass of fact, opinion and prejudice which has accumulated around the subject of science fiction. It does this in a number of ways.

First, the material had to be joggled into some sort of chronological order. This must have been largely a matter of plodding along, doing a comprehensive job, and getting things in the right place. That done, however, judgments had to be made in order that less valuable work could be subordinated to the major figures. Thus Swift is the most important of the Pilgrim Fathers, Mary Shelley transcends the other Gothic novelists, Bulwer-Lytton opens the Victorian period, and so on. This procedure leads to the re-evaluation of certain individual writers. The most important (upward) re-evaluations are those of Mary Shelley and Stapledon.

Second, a number of concepts and perspectives are introduced, which help to impose a pattern on the material, and support the underlying argument.

The most important of these devices is the assertion that modern sf was "born right in the heart and crucible" of Romanticism, and that *Frankenstein* was "the first real science fiction novel." Aldiss makes his point by analysis and exposition. In addition, so as to make victory doubly certain, he mounts the attack and continues the assault with a number of novelistic techniques. For example, the book begins with Mary Shelley and the central thesis. The Pilgrim Fathers have to wait until the third chapter. Also, with the first chapter out of the way, Aldiss keeps reminding us of Frankenstein just when we might be in danger of forgetting him (in Stevenson's Mr. Hyde, in Wells' Moreau, in the second head of Miller's Mrs. Grales) and the circle is completed by the marvellous sentence which ends the book. The

spirit of Mary's husband is invoked from time to time, also, to remind us of that poetic ambience from which the novel had drawn its life (Capek staged *The Cenci*, Poole in Huxley's *Ape and Essence* quotes Shelley, Orwell like Shelley wrote a parody of the national anthem, and so on).



As a direct consequence of showing that science fiction began with *Frankenstein*, some handy device must be invented for introducing books which preceded it. And Aldiss wants very earnestly to talk about some of these earlier writers – particularly Swift. So he pops them all in a bag and labels it "ur - science fiction." *Voilà!*

Then there is the concept of the two poles of science fiction. These are the "thinking" pole and the "dreaming" pole, and the concept is derived from a close, comparative analysis of two novels published in 1923: Wells' *Men Like Gods* and Burroughs' *Pellucidar.* Thus Gernsback's early writers tried to espouse the thinking pole; but Abraham Merritt, for example, was "right up the dreaming pole." *Astounding* tried to reconcile the two modes with the "Gosh-wow" kind of story. It was the gap between the poles which led to that schism between pulp and non-pulp sf which first became so apparent in the 1930s.

Shrewd observations about specific works are scattered about the book in the most prodigal manner. On Blish: the stories later gathered together as *Cities in Flight* might have appeared to be staple *Astounding,* but anyone who noticed that the Okies were seeking work and not intergalactic thrones might have guessed that Blish was destined for the much greater things he has done since. On Harrison: in *Make Room! Make Room!* the real reason why the society packed into New York somehow continues to hold together, is because the inhabitants tacitly accept the traditional idea of a social contract.

* * *

Billion Year Spree will provoke argument. It would be a less great book if it didn't.

I think the main argument will be about when sf really began; nor is this a purely academic argument about dates and what specific writers did. It is part of the argument about what science fiction is.

I am not thinking of those people (if there are any left) who would still attempt to maintain that sf began with Gernsback. The late "flowering" of sf in America (if that is the right word to describe a situation where the genre magazines flourished like weeds) was due to three main factors:

1. The lack of any deep-rooted literary tradition, which caused people such as James and Eliot to flee.
2. The feeling of "alienation" experienced by many first generation Americans from continental Europe.
3. The love of technical innovation and gadgetry, and the relatively high status of engineers in the United States.

No. I am thinking of those who consider "science fiction" as a convenient label for a literary technique which is as old as the art of writing, or even older.

In a personal, almost embarrassingly private way, I am profoundly grateful to Brian Aldiss for having demonstrated that there is a direct link between the heroes of my boyhood (Byron and Shelley) and what I believe to be the most vital form of modern fiction. In a more general way, we should all be grateful that by an act of delicate surgery he has re-connected that umbilical cord which should connect what we call science fiction to the nurturing body of general culture.

And yet, at the same time, I believe that Dante embarked upon the *Divine Comedy* in much the same spirit as Stapledon tackled *Star Maker.*

I suppose that such differences of opinion can be traced back to Aldiss's definition of science fiction. Given his definition, everything else follows. The definition, however, sometimes appears almost painfully exclusive. For example: "This is not to claim that the great utopias are science fiction. Their intentions are moral or political . . ." And "it is fortunate that this masterly work (*Gulliver*) does not count as science fiction, being satirical and/or moral in intention . . ." Sometimes sf appears

as a subordinate category of another category not very admirable in itself, and therefore not well qualified to support the large claims made for it. For example: "We have to recognise that science fiction is merely a sub-genre, however vital and however often the features which make it attractive are espied elsewhere . . ."

A broader concept of sf is touched on, but not followed up: "These two remarkable books (*Candide* and *Gulliver*), together with *Robinson Crusoe* and *Rasselas* . . . are . . . examples of masculine intellect at work . . . In this respect, this brilliant eighteenth-century quartet resembles some of today's science fiction — "

My final comment is, I think, an important one. *Billion Year Spree* should have a liberating effect on our views of what writing is about, in both a general and a specific sense. On the one hand it should now be clear that a man can no longer pretend to be qualified to talk about modern fiction unless he is well-informed about science fiction — and that includes a strong dose of the American pulp magazines. On the other hand it should be equally clear that before comparing the fourth rate with the fifth rate, and concluding it is first rate, specialist critics of genre science fiction should seek for standards of excellence outside the pulp tradition.

an open letter

Göran Bengtson

Brian W. Aldiss Esq.,
Heath House, Southmoor,
nr Abingdon, Berks, England.

June 6, 1973

Dear Brian,

Well, back at the old homestead we've been having Science Fiction Week once more, Dick and Zelazny and Uncle Phil Farmer and all, the undisputed highlight of course being the constant readings from *Billion Year Spree* to a hushed audience in the gunroom — interrupted only by the baying of the occasional Niven admirer who, having found his man mentioned just once, and snidely, on p 304, had to be removed and educationally beaten up out in the hogshed.

Seriously, old man, there's no doubt that you've written a marvellous book, the best one yet on sf. I've read it very carefully, making notes, putting exclamation points in the margin, chuckling to myself all the while, and I believe I've found one factual howler and one or two things I feel uneasy about, but apart from that — and maybe a couple of muted objections that I'm bound to think of as I keep typing along — I have nothing but admiration for the manner in which you've fulfilled those goals that you set out in the introduction with proper self-confidence and a touch of well-founded hauteur towards less well-equipped predecessors in the field. Surely, you've now proved once and for all that to write meaningfully about sf takes more than the illiterate enthusiasms of fandom, more than the fustian rhetoric of the American PhD candidate — you need to have read patiently, intelligently but also unselectively, in the undergrowth of genre fiction, but you must also own to a private passion for literary distinction and a talent for cultural distinctions in general.

Ah, the introduction . . . I really appreciate the mention; I shall now be seen all over the world in your company, and I consider it an honour – to which I shall refer, clearing my throat humbly, as in a few days, in Lund, I rise to receive the 1973 Grand Award of the Swedish Science Fiction Academy. Honours galore, indeed . . .

But I wonder – will all those Scandinavians be forgiven you by that exceedingly self-sufficient and insular culture, the Anglo-American? Not to speak of fandom – if fans manage to digest Jon and Jannick and Swahn and me, they will surely hate you for using fancy words like *prodromic* and *apotropaic* and *oneirocritical*. I may not possess dictionaries sufficiently sophisticated to let me more than glimpse the exact sense of those words, but how I love the sound and the feel of them; to describe my experience of them I can only reach for something Norman Mailer wrote in *Advertisements for myself*, "those hefty young kneadables of future power" – actually, he was fondling a young girl's ass at the time, but that's exactly the way I feel about *apotropaic*.

Truly, as you say in winding up your Burroughs chapter, friends are better than critics. Wishing to remain the one, I am not really tempted to turn into the other; but from what you said in your latest letter, you might be honestly interested in my reactions.

On p 263, you must be mistaken when you bracket Katherine MacLean with C.L. Moore and Leigh Brackett as "working in the field earlier". At least, putting it that way takes one back to the thirties when mesdames Kuttner and Hamilton started out, but according to Groff Conklin (prefacing her story "Games" in his anthology *Operation Future*) MacLean's first story appeared in the fall of 1949, which doesn't give her much of an edge on Zenna Henderson, Margaret St. Clair and the rest.

Anyway, wasn't it a pretty silly idea to list lady writers in a group by themselves, as primarily *lady* writers? Seems to me to be the kind of conventional thoughtlessness that rightly exercises the harridans of Women's Lib.

On p 262, I could wish that you would find out who used the pseudonym Robert Crane – I've often wondered which accomplished British writer performed that little masquerade. And on p 260, I wish you, or somebody, would tell me *why* "Nine Billion Names of God" is such a goddamn masterpiece – this judgement gets parrotted from book to book, but the story has always struck me as the typical one – night stand kind of party trick story, depending on a punch line to be thrown away after use.

Well, I seem to have moved from matters of fact to questions of taste, and anyway I shouldn't spend too much energy on the last two chapters. They are not terribly well organized, and the prose does go a bit slack whenever you feel you have to be nice and include clods like (. . . . . .), but I can indeed understand that you felt you had to give some kind of acknowledgements to sf writers today, even if it meant concocting some kind of non-committal alphabet soup since your aim was never to do a survey of present-day sf.

To the strengths of *Billion Year Spree*, then. I admire both the general historical

perspective and the many delicious particular insights and the well-chosen quotes from books one should have read but hasn't – it's a volume to learn from even when one believes, as I do, that one knows a hell of a lot more than most people.

Mary Shelley certainly furnishes you with an excellent starting point, opening up that whole 19th century vein which is so extremely important and giving you exactly the perspective needed to discuss whether "Lucian and all that" should be considered sf or not. On balance, I think I agree with your analysis of that exceedingly tricky question – it's easy to go along with your use of a term like *ur*-science fiction. Perhaps you haven't solved the problem for good, but you've certainly advanced it several steps towards a solution. Where I might take issue with your stance is when you seem to assume that those who go hunting for early sf among the Platos and the Cyranos do so for the sole purpose of vulgar empire-building. This is no doubt true for the dimwits and the Moskowitz who abound, but when I do it, or somebody like H. Bruce Franklin, it's because we want to find out more about the kind of imagination that produces sf and that feeds off sf, and that kind of imagination was always around.

You're brilliantly right in pointing out that sf in exactly our sense could never exist until the future existed as a manageable concept, and that writers like Swift and Voltaire for all their fancy footwork were "frozen in time" (that's the very kind of close reasoning and precise statement to keep the synapses of sf criticism ticking over!). Yet, there is something that makes Lucian and Robert Sheckley appear as contemporaries. And the speculativeness of Renaissance philosophy has always seemed to me to be an equally admirable parent of sf as the Gothic novel. I have a marvellous quotation from the German 17th century astronomer Hevelius, giving in a nutshell the whole "What if . . .?" approach – applied by him to the possibility of the moon being populated by beings who, while not like ourselves, were yet people – which I treasure as a beautiful example of militant sf in action.

The point of all this rambling is, of course, that from one vantage point sf appears as primarily a technical term for a certain process of industrial production and packaging of what used to be an integrated part of the whole of culture. As I used to say when lecturing to student librarians on the popular arts, the modern entertainment genres are merely quick-frozen hunks of meat ripped off the still warm corpse of serious literature. You know all this, and say so, and I don't have to go on about it. Still, I wonder what might have happened to the whole *ur*-apparatus if you'd used the term speculative fiction throughout and suited your critical approach thereto.

You're very good on Poe and the Victorians, giving me several hints about things I shall have to read by Restif de la Bretonne and others, and it's a delight to watch you put Wells back where he belongs: up front. The chapter on Wells's co-evals is also thought-provoking. It really is amazing, this bunching-up in time of so many English-speaking writers, from geniuses like Kipling and Conrad to inspired clods like Wallace and Burroughs, who between them lay out practically all the formats and strategies of 20th century popular fiction. The only thing I've read on this phenomenon is Q.D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public,* which used to be required reading at the LitCrit schools and still should be – it goes to confirm what I said above about how the entertainment genres result from a process of separating-out from the milk

of Mother Literature the garish cream of dreaming and story-telling into industries of their own. (I'm dubious about that metaphor, really, but you'll take the point.)

Wodehouse, come to think of it, is also in that bunch – he started out around 1910, and how beautifully your comparison with him illuminates the Tolkien landscape! Mark Twain is another one – he really should have been in your book, if not for *A Connecticut Yankee* then surely for those weird and despairing phantasies which he never published himself but which keep coming to light as his posthumous papers get printed; I would direct you to a fat volume called *Fables of Man* from the University of California Press last year, and of course to DeVoto's well-known selection, *Letters from the Earth* (1962).

After giving Burroughs and the weirdies what they deserve – not least, the pinning down of the core of power behind all that bad prose – you really do us all a great service in the chapter on Capek, Kafka, Huxley et al. That's precisely what the fans need: a good liberal education. While I feel that you may be a tiny bit unjust to Capek (but I shall have to re-read *War with the Newts*, that towering masterpiece of my boyhood, before delivering a final opinion), I absolutely agree that Huxley is being underrated at present. I don't know about C.S. Lewis – whenever I try to read him, he brings me out in spots – but your pages on Stapledon sent me running to the nearest bookstore for the new Penguin edition of *Star Maker; Last and First Men* was another early favourite, but I disliked *Odd John* and never bothered to go on with Stapledon. Obviously, I've missed something! (By the way, Stapledon's critical reception in Sweden in the thirties seems to have been quite good. At least, he was raved over by Frans G. Bengtsson, the very influential writer who later wrote that Viking classic, *The Long Ships* – which reminds me that the historical novel has many points of similarity with sf, really.)

With benefit of the perspective given in the first half or so of your book, the chapter on Campbell and his milieu strikes me as even better than I realized when I first read it in NWQ. It gives a very just picture of what that generation of sf writers were about. (All those think-tank interrelations – they're a bit reminiscent also of the sonnet writers of the Renaissance and early Baroque, liberal borrowers all.) And the terminal operation on the reputation of Hugo Gernsback was overdue. It is much to be regretted that you could not now go on to give us full-length essays on the writers who made the early fifties (when I discovered sf) such a delight, Bester and Kuttner and Pohl and Blish and so on and so forth. But since practically all your brief judgements are the ones I myself would make: I have no complaints, I'll just hang around waiting for that next book which you – almost – promise.

Well, now: I *do* have a few additional complaints, or at least a few quibbles, or niggles. Kornbluth gets sort of lost in your book – you mention that Crispin did a rescue operation on him and that his death was a minor disaster; but what was he, to you, apart from a collaborator of Pohl's? As for Asimov, I don't see how you can call *The Naked Sun* his best novel, forgetting about *The End of Eternity* which is one of the few time paradox stories which actually *work*. And there is an often dismissed sf experiment by a mainstream writer which would seem to be about due for a re-evaluation, Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*. Everybody used to say how lousy it was, how sadly lacking in the reality department – and then hey presto! here comes Richard M. Nixon verifying Lewis's predictions down to the tinest detail.

Finally, if I'd been writing your book I'd have put in a good word for Robert Graves's *Seven Days in New Crete* as well – it may well be one of the nuttiest futures around, but it is also one of the most delightful.

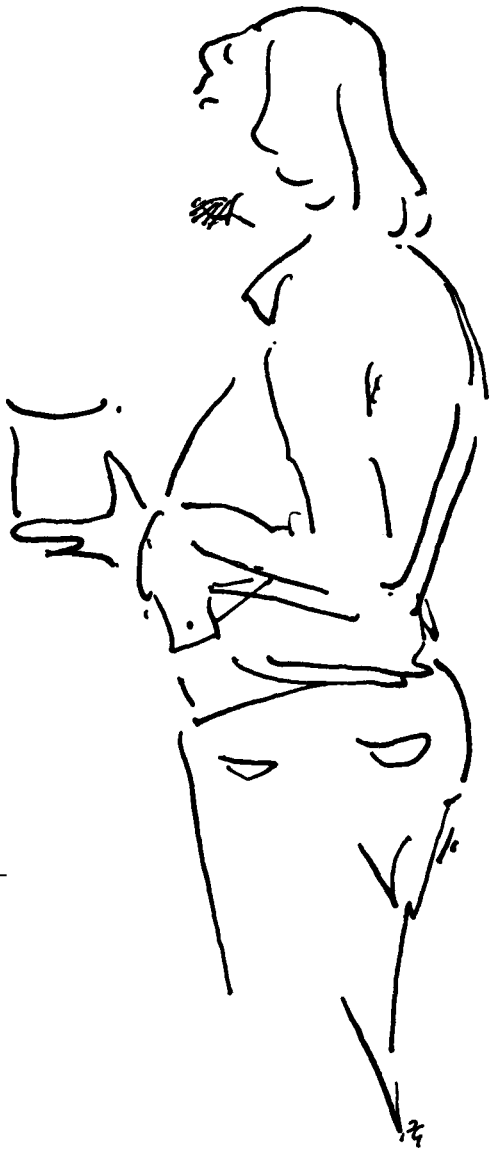
Christ, what a letter! With just a few changes, I could no doubt sell it for hundreds of pounds to *The Times Literary Supplement* as a trail-blazing review!

If you've gotten this far, let me just add that I've reread the oeuvre of Larry Niven, the more firmly to substantiate my unshakeable opinion that he is an utter bore. I've read Zelazny's *Isle of the Dead* and found it even worse than *Nine Princes in Amber* – I can take his mythological preoccupations, but I can't take the way he now casts them in the mould of the semi-hardboiled I-said-the-bartender-said kind of story which was invented to let the private eye be chased by the Mafia all the way from Pasadena to Bay City and back. Zelazny writes well? Yeah, and now tell me the one about Goldilocks and the three crooked cops.

Farmer's *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg* was a sad disappointment – he never manages to stay within his given premises but goes slithering and slopping away in all directions, most boringly.

Thank god that our friend Phil has put together another helping of stories from the early fifties in *The Book of Philip K. Dick*. And thank god again for *Billion Year Spree* – it's a great book, Brian, and to have that enunciated quite clearly and without shilly-shallying, isn't that finally what friends are *really* for?

Ever, *Göran*



John Brunner
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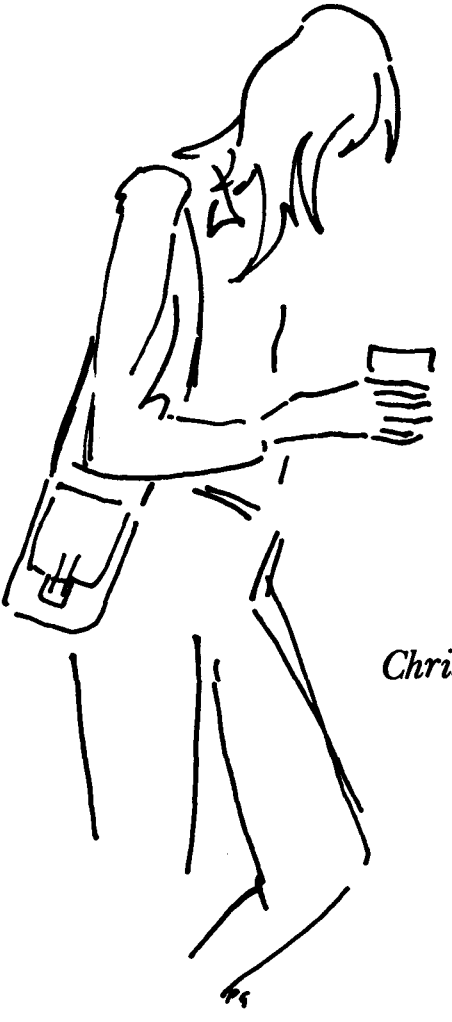


edited by

Christopher Priest

the aldiss lamp and the bright radiance of eternity

Frankenstein Unbound
by Brian W. Aldiss, Jonathan Cape, 1973, 184pp., £2.25
ISBN 0 224 00903 6

reviewed by Ian Watson

Frankenstein's Monster visited Britain once before, and skulked near Oxford "in the heaths", as Mary Shelley reports, whilst Victor Frankenstein was busy nerving himself for that long journey northward to the Orkneys to manufacture a mate for the Monster. Now, that serendipitous denizen of Heath House near Oxford, Brian Aldiss, has been revisited by the Monster, and an alternative time track for the events of Mary Shelley's novel has been artfully forged (in both senses of the word!).

Will this new time track prove dominant enough to elbow the 'actual' events of *Frankenstein* aside in the popular imagination – as the monstrous progeny of Victor Frankenstein has elbowed aside its progenitor in popular myth, to such an extent that Frankenstein's very name has been torn away from him and bestowed upon his Monster? In another 150 years' time, will Brian Aldiss be, *and have been,* the inventor of Frankenstein? For certainly he is the resurrector of Mary Shelley's novel in a very real sense, and the last page of *Frankenstein Unbound* warns of the heavy responsibility that rests on such resurrectors. Especially when, in the course of resurrecting, they change the original so drastically, grafting on extra ribs and deftly subtracting certain vital organs . . .

Aldiss himself poses this Borgesian question, when his hero Joe Bodenland wonders whether there may exist a future in which Joe himself merely serves as a character in a novel about Frankenstein and Mary.

Borges wrote one famous story, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", about how a secret society of savants succeed in imposing an invented world upon the 'real' world, so that the 'real' world actually vanishes. He wrote another story about how a 20th Century Frenchman sets out to write *Don Quixote.* The Frenchman, Pierre Menard, is of course perfectly well aware that Cervantes' novel has already been written, but he regards it as a daring project to write the same book, sight unseen, in 20th Century France. He doesn't copy it. He invents it afresh. Yet he ends up with chapters which are exactly the same, word for word, as those that Cer-

vantes wrote. Borges proclaims that these same chapters are a far greater creative achievement, and more truly imaginative, than the original. Aldiss is certainly not Pierre Menard, a 'visionary duplicating machine'. Aldiss belongs with the savants of the other story: master forgers who *displace* reality. And this displacement serves an ulterior purpose, being intimately bound up with Aldiss's history of sf, *Billion Year Spree,* and his choice of Mary Shelley as author and first begetter of sf. One might even go so far as to say that if Mary's *Frankenstein* does not perfectly fit the bill, then Aldiss will damn well make sure it does fit, by one of the most dynamic acts of transtemporal editing ever undertaken. The disconcerting thing is that, for today's reader at any rate, *Frankenstein Unbound* is a far better book than *Frankenstein* – better conceived and better written. By these stylistic criteria it has every right to displace Mary's version. Yet it represents a heretical variant on the gospel according to Mary, and producing it at such a time, as hors d'ouevres to *Billion Year Spree* is really to play a monumental joker card to trump any objections to Aldiss's vision of sf. Mary's novel *not* the fountainhead of sf? Preposterous! Mary's novel has been shunted off on to a parallel time track, where its ponderous, episodic ramblings need cause us no embarrassment. Trimmed, tailored, and mutated, a forged *Frankenstein* has been inserted into the continuum, its message *determined* by the very future it is presumed to have generated. Ray Bradbury's butterfly has been rubbed out by the time traveller; and a genetically tailored butterfly set free in its place – ultimately to evolve into that time traveller himself!

Now, in *Billion Year Spree* Aldiss quotes Heinlein's remark about the sovereign importance of sf "for the survival and health of the human race" derisively, and comments in a dubious piece of wordplay that "this is to rate Dick above Dickens". Presumably 'solid culture' (Eng. Lit.) should take precedence in the scheme of things. And Mary Shelley is surely closer to the establishment culture of Shelley, Coleridge, Byron, Walter Scott, than to any Dicks or Heinleins, though she may at many removes have helped set a trend. But if Aldiss really believes this, then what is he playing at in *Frankenstein Unbound*? An elegant game? An acrostic extended over 184 pages, an unforeseen literary bonus from *Billion Year Spree*? We have to treat the book seriously, or else hardly at all; so let us pretend that Aldiss is at least playing the game as seriously as his hero Joe Bodenland's grandchildren play their games at the beginning of the novel. Literature as Play, therefore! (The scene where Joe's grandchildren play, incidentally, being another spin-off from the *Spree* – see page 48 of the history.) So what are the rules in the game of warping Reality?

Consider the matter scientifically. After all, this is the fiction of science . . .

Lock a cat in a room with a Geiger counter and a hammer, which will smash a flask of prussic acid if the Geiger counter registers any radioactive decay; now put a minute amount of some radioisotope inside the Geiger counter – but only so much that there is a 50/50 chance that one of the nuclei will decay within one hour, thus killing the cat. Bryce DeWitt, in *Physics Today* (Sept. 1970), points out that "at the end of the hour the total wave function for the system will have a form in which the living cat and the dead cat are mixed in equal parts. Schrödinger felt that the wave mechanics that led to this paradox presented an unacceptable description of reality. However, Everett, Wheeler and Graham's interpretation of quantum mechanics pictures the cats as inhabiting two simultaneous, noninteracting, but equally real worlds." Eugene Wigner tried to escape from the schizophrenic dilemma of the simultaneously alive, and dead, cat, by suggesting that the consciousness of the human observer is what triggers the choice of which outcome shall be observed, and therefore the form reality shall take. Wigner was therefore able to assume that one single time line does exist. For Everett, Wheeler and Graham, however, every single event throughout the universe *branches,* irrespective of observers. Every single quantum transition in every star in every galaxy generates actual copies of the total universe, containing our own Earth, and ourselves. Likewise, every single event here at home generates branching universes. We simply remain unaware of the copying, since we remain subjectively involved in the growth of one; and only one, branch.

An awesome idea. "I still recall vividly the shock I experienced," DeWitt writes, "on first encountering this multiworld concept. The idea of 10^{100} plus slightly imperfect copies of oneself all constantly splitting into further copies, which ultimately become unrecognizable, is not easy to reconcile with common sense."

Except, of course, that 'common sense' is simply the consensus reality of the time line we happen to be in, and if a copy is generated where statistical laws break down, then the possibility of consensus, and common sense, will vanish anyway; along, no doubt, with any functioning observers.

Human consciousness dictating the choice of worlds, guided by consensus reality; or the 'laws' of Nature dictating infinite branching . . .? This is a territory pregnant with some of the finest recent sf – by Philip K. Dick, Ursula Le Guin, and Aldiss himself. Which brings us back, by a commodius vicus of recirculations, from the possible impact on reality

itself of *Frankenstein Unbound* (on Mary's reputation; on the bending of literary history; on the forging of a pedigree for sf), to the internal structure of *Frankenstein Unbound,* with its temporal branchings and paradoxes, and haunting mimetic portrait of a hero trapped in a moment of supreme moral choice by a staggering variant on the Schrödinger Cat Gambit (and this is no obliging Cheshire Cat that will expire quietly with a smile!).

Joe Bodenland is time-shifted, and space-shifted, from Texas 2020, back to Switzerland May 23rd 1816. Perhaps it is his name that predisposes the destination? With *Bodensee* – Lake Constance – a bare hundred miles away across the mountains, who knows? (One can either give a cheer for cheek, or a loud groan, at this choice of a name.) Or perhaps it is his style that sends him there? There is almost no discontinuity between the speech patterns, and underlying thought patterns, of 21st Century Joe's letters to his wife, and the early 19th Century idiom he encounters in the Shelley circus on Lac Léman. Why, Joe must even have revived single-handed the dead art of epistolary communication, in that Texas of the future, modelling his style on 19th Century letters! Strange, that when he comes to record his adventures, he spontaneously dictates into a tape recorder; yet sends no tape-letters to his wife. Instead, in New Houston he sits and pens such archaic, if fine sentences, as:

> Much else she said which I could not hear. The bees were trying to pollinate the microphones, I do believe.

or:

> Where were you yesterday, I wonder? The ranch, with all its freight of human beings – in which category I include those supernatural beings, our grandchildren – spent yesterday . . . in a benighted bit of somewhere that I presume was mediaeval Europe!

Curious indeed, then, Joe's attempt to convey in a letter to Mary Shelley how the idiom of his own time sounds:

> (I'd say all this differently in the language of my time! Would you like to hear it? You are an early example of Women's Lib, baby, just like your Mom. Your cause will grab more power as time passes . . . But most of those fighting girls have sold themselves out to the big operators, and work the male kick themselves, clitoris or no clitoris. End quote.)

Oh yes? (Oh yeah?) Obviously Joe is well groomed for his time shift, since he doesn't speak the language of his own time to begin with. Nor do the grandchildren (though their Nurse manages a few items of Americanese). Of course, the story flow, and insinuating slide into the

idiom of 19th Century Gothic Romanticism wouldn't have worked very well otherwise . . . Then we should have had yet another benighted time traveller, putting his foot in his mouth wherever he turns (as it were)! But, for the record, Joe is about as compatible with this piece of future jargon (which is, of course, 1973-ese, rather than a genuine attempt at future slang) as any polite 19th Century man of letters.

Joe is vectored linguistically towards the early 19th Century; a second trigger mechanism is the lead article in *The Times* of August 20, 2020 (not the *New Houston Times,* or *New York Times,* but the London *Times*) which Joe mails to his wife, prior to his mishap, wherein Baron Frankenstein's curse is flourished as the true analogy for the 21st Century crisis. A Philip Dick aficionado would already grow suspicious here of the objectivity of Joe's subsequent encounters; indeed there are hints enough of the hideous interior worlds of *Ubik* or *Palmer Eldritch* – which Dick carries off with a bluff Joe Normal surrealism, where Aldiss tends to be a shade portentous, even tendentious (though never so much as Mary Shelley!). But then, Dick's characters are believable future types, even when timeslipping down the entropy slope as in *Ubik*; Joe Bodenland already, at the very start of the novel, seems like a wave function vectored by those crypto-events in the Switzerland of 1816 . . .

So we might suggest that Joe's is a dubious relationship to events from the very outset. He need not feel especially surprised to encounter Frankenstein, since the alternative time line he finds himself shunted on to, is already coded in his mind. Had he recalled Mary Shelley's novel more accurately (he apologises for his amnesia) however, he might have encountered a more humanitarian person, for all his faults of oversight and obsession, than the amoral Baron he does meet – a tormented Ariel to the unfortunate Caliban of the Monster. The other characters – apart from the Shelley ménage, which is somewhat etherialized – are more vicious in *Frankenstein Unbound*: Elizabeth Lavenza isn't a sweet orphan but a litigating shrew; Frankenstein's bosom friend Clerval a tough sort. In Mary's text, Frankenstein destroys the monstrous Eve her Victor is building for her Adam; his chase of the Monster is an act of expurgation and vengeance for the Monster's (perhaps understandable) crimes. Furthermore, Victor does in the end confess to the Syndics of Geneva (as Joe is constantly nagging him to).

In *Frankenstein Unbound,* Joe assassinates the Frankenstein persona he has, in a sense, himself invented, and proceeds to become Frankenstein himself. His own personality dissolution, accompanying this process, is heavily underlined. Joe is, in fact, dissolving, and taking over the role of the Baron as events proceed. Thus it is Joe who goes to prison for presumed murder: the fate that befalls Victor in Mary's book. No

wonder, either, that Joe does not gun down the two monsters as they dance their mating dance around the Baron's tower; it is such a mirror image, in grotesque, of his own caperings with an idealized fantasy Mary, that it is an Id projection of them, reluctant as Joe is to admit the existence of such dungeons in his mind. That they have become his creatures exclusively is underscored by the ample clues they scatter gratuitously for him as they head off for the frozen North, conveniently space-warped slap up against Switzerland. That the Monster should taunt Victor thus with clues in Mary's novel is understandable enough: he is punishing the Baron for destroying his mate. That he should leave the same paper chase for Joe, when he is escaping *with* his mate, is less comprehensible except by the hypothesis that Joe is in fact goading himself and the Monster constitutes his own programmed Nemesis.

But why should *he* goad himself? Dramatically, Nemesis has always followed on an act of Hybris, personal arrogance. Victor's act of Hybris is obvious enough. But what is Joe's?

Frankenstein Unbound is about moral responsibility, and Joe surely shoulders enough of it – even if he has to murder the original character Frankenstein in order to become him! He is obsessed with abolishing a possible future symbolized by the Monster: Science let loose without ethical supervision. Which is a valid enough quest, to all appearances: if it is too late to halt basic nuclear physics research and derail the H-bomb now, perhaps it is still not too late to derail biological research into DNA coding and genetics, which may pose problems and agonies equally horrendous in the years to come. (So that Victor's *biological* research is perhaps the aptest symbol for current ethical dilemmas in science – and all those H-bombs exploding in outer space circa 2020 something of a foregone conclusion we can do nothing about.)

But to what extent is Joe the moral fellow he believes himself to be – a belief grotesquely enlarged when he 'gets religion' in the Baron's tower (like an atheist on a spooky night hastily assembling a cross to ward off the phantoms of his imagination)? Let's not forget that the first thing he shows sweet, tender Mary is his swivel-gun. The assumption of the right to intervene is in itself, perhaps, a hybristic missionary act (which can lead to such scenarios as the Vietnam War). Certainly the Hitlers of this world have to be resisted. But is Baron Frankenstein really such a Hitler of Biology? Or does Joe *make* him one, out of a number of possible choices? Joe is supposed to have been a liberal Presidential adviser – a non-fanatic. Even so, his Frankenstein is very much his own – the Caliban to his phoney Ariel – and his own personality structure crumbles readily enough to accept the new role, of metaphysical assassin. (Suggesting that liberals under stress can be tolerably fascist?)

At least we should feel grateful that Joe did not elect to activate the Marquis de Sade's menagerie, on hearing the name 'Justine' mentioned – used coincidentally for the suffering, loyal servant in Mary's novel too, a fact that Aldiss draws our attention to in *Billion Year Spree,* suggesting without any real, hard evidence that Mary had read De Sade. (Perhaps this lack of solidity is what accounts for the absence from the *Spree*'s index of any reference to De Sade, despite the potential importance of the point.)

Should Ballard choose to despatch a car-crashed hero hindwards through time to establish an inner-spatial genealogy for sf, one may wonder what would have happened at this particular juncture. Undoubtedly De Sade is one of the first moral *scientists* of the human soul, applying encyclopaedist principles to human psychopathology, and eschewing in his novels the Gothic gimmickry of Mrs. Radcliffe, Monk Lewis et al; leading on, however, to the inner spatial explorations of Freud. Yet who is more speculative a writer of his time than De Sade? And who is more central to the Romantic Agony that Byron and the other Promethean explorers of the 19th Century were involved in? The psychopathology of the media landscape that Ballard writes about, to the irritation of many sf fans, owes much more to him than to Mary Shelley or Jules Verne . . . Perhaps another dubious moral choice is made on page 1 of the *Spree,* with its explicit refusal to discuss the relationship between public atrocity and private fantasy – the particular stamping ground of the later Ballard – while admitting that this relationship exists. "I don't want to know," writes Aldiss.

Frankenstein Unbound involves us in a probability world, the choice of probabilities (by the logic of Schrödinger's Cat) perhaps residing in the eye of the observer. The experiences Joe undergoes are as much his own fictional choice, as his invention is Aldiss's fictional choice. In the end, timeslipping wildly through a schizophrenic breakdown of consensus reality (Victor quoting Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind,* written 3 years after 1816, is perhaps only following in Mary's footsteps when she has her 18th Century characters proleptically quote Byron; but one wonders . . .) we arrive in an alternative reality far removed from any 19th Century – a Lovecraftian megacity of the Monsters that is Joe's personal nightmare (though Victor shares it, briefly). It is a humdinger of an ending (as Joe *wouldn't* put it) – if a totally ambiguous one. For Joe has achieved nothing by his moral choice, but become a madder Frankenstein himself, and let all the devils loose, for the most liberal of motives – like an unintelligent Theron Ware. Yet the structure of hell that materializes in *Black Easter* is at least dogmatically predetermined. With moons multiplying in the sky in Joe's fragmenting probability uni-

verse, the cat is really out of the bag, teeth bared from long confinement in the box of rational choice. An understanding of Joe's own latent violence and psychopathological drives (including his subconscious desire to *be* Frankenstein, lurking beneath the bland Kissingerian peace-gaming – we first meet him as *voyeur,* spying on his grandchildren's infantile sexuality through closed-circuit TV . . .) might have saved him from hell. Perhaps a side trip to De Sade's fictional chateau, though a harrowing experience, might have been a salutary one after all. I do not believe his alibis; he is already coded for the experience, despite his initial sweet temper and kiddy worship.

As P.B. Shelley wrote, "Life like a dome of many-coloured glass/Stains the bright radiance of eternity." There are multiple possibilities. Perhaps Joe might have got around to quoting this relevant statement about time and space (if Bob Shaw hadn't already pre-empted it for a Slow Glass story). As it is, from that last lonely visionary city, as the flares explode in the binary sky, the Aldiss lamp winks out a highly ambiguous message, about the multiplicity of realities, to consummate his forgery of *Frankenstein* and elevate Mary Shelley to the odour of sanctity, by a sublime conjuring trick that it needs an *advocatus diaboli* to look into, certainly with admiration at the skill, but also with clinical distrust.

But of course it is all only entertainment. Aldiss suggests as much in the *Spree.* Sf is entertainment.

And I ask, like a bewildered Plinglot (after Orwell's analysis of Boys' Weeklies, McGill, Raffles & Miss Blandish), please, what is 'only-entertainment'?

an honest madness

Crash
by J.G. Ballard, Jonathan Cape, 1973, 224pp., £2.25, ISBN 0 224 00782 3

reviewed by David Pringle

Sex and technology are converging; the gadgets sold in modern sex-shops are proof of that, as is the styling of the automobile. At the same time, pornography is becoming a high art. In America, films like *Deep Throat* (which apparently depict acts one couldn't even write about ten years ago) are well received by the intelligentsia. As the consumer society comes ever nearer the edge of destruction, and the sales of apocalyptic sf novels continue to rise, we pursue new sensations to replace the traditional sentiments of a more rooted society. J.G. Ballard said it all several years ago

in *The Atrocity Exhibition.* In our time we have witnessed 'the death of affect'; now anything is possible. Madness surrounds us, and Ballard has written an insane new novel, *Crash,* to prove it.

Crash follows on from *The Atrocity Exhibition,* that book of fragments, in which Ballard first tried to bring his science fiction home to the here and now. In fact, it reads like one of the episodes from the earlier book expanded into a full-length, conventionally-written novel. Here we have the same landscape of airports and motorways, a quintessential West London dominated by advertising and the automobile. The narrator suffers a car accident and as a result experiences an overwhelming desire to explore the psycho-sexual significance of the event. He meets a glamorous and sombre figure called Vaughan who already knows all the answers and is in fact the first practitioner of a new sexual perversion involving the motor-car. He quickly becomes fascinated by Vaughan and follows the logic of his psychopathology to the grisly end. What makes *Crash* so different to *The Atrocity Exhibition* is the greater sexual explicitness, and the long descriptions of injuries and mutilations – all of which seem divorced from 'normal' human feelings and are treated quite equitably, without a qualm.

Science fiction has something in common with pornography – both create worlds of fantasy; neither has much patience with reality. A pornography of the machine has always been implicit in sf. Ballard has chosen to make it explicit, and his novel is both pornography and science fiction, without being a conventional example of either. It is science fiction because it is set in a fantasy world which is dominated by technology (the landscape is intended to be that of contemporary West London, but it is curiously unreal, or, rather, hyper-real). It is pornography because it contains detailed accounts of sexual acts, more or less perverse. Admittedly, these are not written in the language of pornography – more that of the medical text-book – but they are intended to be erotic, to convince us of the reality of the union of flesh and machine:

> **Helen knelt across me, elbows pressed into the seat on either side of my head. I lay back, feeling the hot, scented vinyl. My hands pushed her skirt around her waist so that I could see the curve of her hips. I moved her slowly against me, pressing the shaft of my penis against her clitoris. Elements of her body, her square kneecaps below my elbows, her right breast jacked out of its brassière cup, the small ulcer that marked the lower arc of her nipple, were framed within the cabin of the car. As I pressed the head of my penis against the neck of her uterus, in which I could feel a dead machine, her cap, I looked at the cabin around me. This small space was crowded with angular control surfaces and rounded sections of human bodies interacting in unfamiliar junctions, like the first act of homosexual intercourse inside an Apollo capsule.**

This passage is typical of much of the book, with its strange and at times beautiful blend of the poetic and the clinical – "the damp aisle of Helen's perineum", "the vestibule of her vulva". However, the book is tedious to a certain degree. Ballard has always been a repetitive and obsessive writer; in *Crash* he is more so than ever. The horizons of *Crash* are limited – the reader feels boxed in by motorway embankments – and somehow the book fails to expand in the mind as much of Ballard's earlier writing did. There are some lovely passages, of course, fantasies such as the narrator's glimpse of the ultimate freeway to heaven – "this paradisial incline, a mile-wide gradient supported on the shoulders of two archangelic figures, on to which all the traffic in the world might flow" – and the description of an acid trip which forms the climax of the novel. Master as ever of the imaginative aside, Ballard occasionally captures the real pathos of our everyday technology, as in his description of a World War II Japanese Zero fighter in the Imperial War Museum:

> The clutter of electrical wiring and torn canvas webbing on the floor expressed all the isolation of war. The blurring perspex of the cockpit canopy contained a small segment of the Pacific sky, the roar of aircraft warming up on a carrier deck thirty years before.

It is the characters that are the most disappointing element of the novel. The narrator, although he is named James Ballard, is weak and dislikable, not as fully imagined a protagonist as a Kerans or a Sanders. The 'villain' of the story, the "hoodlum scientist" Robert Vaughan, is more interesting. He is fully established as a physical presence at any rate, although we never really get into his mind (there is surprisingly little conversation in the book; Ballard's characters have been drifting away from direct speech for years now, and this novel confirms the trend). Vaughan's role is that of some sacrificial king: to die and thus give new life to the motorways. As for the women, they are mannequins, a fact which the narrator confirms when he describes his wife as "lying beside me in bed . . . as inert and emotionless as a sexual exercise doll fitted with a neoprene vagina." Ballard's women have never been 'real'; in the *Vermilion Sands* stories, for instance, they are anima-figures direct from Jungian dreams. In most of his work they do at least have that 'otherness' and mystery. But in *Crash* they are little more than plastic dolls, automobile accessories.

The reason for this impatience with character is of course that this is a novel about the automobile, or, more deeply, about 'the death of affect'. To a certain extent, the people are characterless because Ballard means them to be so. Insofar as *Crash* is an admonitory work, it is warning us against this dehumanization – however, I must qualify this by saying that

the book is intended to shock and disturb, and by coming up with too ready a didactic message we may be protecting ourselves from what the novel has to say. As Ballard has stressed (most recently, in an interview in *Cypher*, Oct. 1973): "I was trying to achieve complete honesty . . . Of course, the book is a description of an obsession, an extreme metaphor at a time when only the extreme will do." This desire to be honest will surprise some readers – those who regard Ballard as some kind of poseur, and mere purveyor of ever more outré personal fantasies. I respect Ballard's honesty and believe that he is trying to tell us something about the exterior world – although what he tells us many people may not want to know. Among contemporary writers, there is no more deadly enemy of sentimentality and cliché than J.G. Ballard (although his use of cliché in his prose, often of a fusty colonial variety, would make a study in itself).

Ballard descends into the maelstrom. He explores the unspoken longings, the hidden perversities of contemporary man. He recognizes that we long for an empty world, a total cataclysm (of which the car crash is a microcosmic image). In our private lives, our sexual relationships, we sometimes court failure, and can even enjoy ignominy and pain. Ballard is the only sf writer who faces up consciously to this collective masochism of our time (instead of unconsciously pandering to it, as all the successors of John Wyndham have done). This has been Ballard's theme from the first. Bruce Franklin has called him a 'poet of death'; perhaps he is, in that death is a central concern in his work, rather as initiation is in Heinlein's, or rebirth in Clarke's (most authors have a 'hidden theme', a rite of passage that fascinates them). But this is not to say that Ballard is merely 'morbid'. His purpose can be seen as positive and humane, for by making us more aware of our desires he is helping to free us. Like Freud, he tries to bring the unconscious into the open. His stories explore the collective unconscious, the externalized psyche which is visible around us and which belongs to us all. Ballard sees this as a time when only the extreme will do, hence the extreme metaphor of *Crash*.

sardonic streak

The Robert Sheckley Omnibus
edited and introduced by Robert Conquest, Victor Gollancz, 1973, 320pp, £2.75. ISBN 0 575 01677 9

reviewed by Tom Shippey

This collection consists of the novel *Immortality Inc.*, plus a dozen short stories, most of which appeared for the first time in *Galaxy*. All the material dates from between 1953 and 1959, so that if the word 'omnibus' suggests a representative collection, the title is hardly a fair one. Probably some people would prefer to see one of Sheckley's later novels (such as *Mindswap* or *Journey beyond Tomorrow*) replacing *Immortality Inc.*, and certainly that would create a different and perhaps a more mature picture of Sheckley himself – more confusing, more bitter, less capable of a neat ending. But I must say that to me this collection (though it misses out two or three stories that I would certainly have picked, and includes some that aren't especially outstanding) nevertheless represents an era and a style. Its impact would only be lessened by introducing later works, while the experience of reading a dozen stories all together, instead of one by one in the magazines, helps one to see a consistency and a purpose in Sheckley that could easily otherwise be missed. Reading the collection reminded me of the days when all magazines seemed to be stuffed with unknown talents; even if one makes allowances for nostalgia. I don't think one could find a better book for getting someone gently and unchallengingly hooked on science-fiction.

Some of Sheckley's good qualities are evident immediately (and are shared by a lot of other writers). There is, for instance, the ability to imagine a future or an alien civilization in complete and even superfluous detail – except, of course, that the superfluity adds conviction and a sense of complexity even to what is directly relevant. The sort of thing I mean is the doctors' conversation at the start of *Immortality Inc.* Here both the reader and the hero, Tom Blaine, are in a state of some bewilderment, because all that Blaine can remember is getting killed in a car smash. So what's happened? Has he been resurrected by aliens? Has he been undergoing a 'sensory'? When will Sheckley tell us? In fact, where a lesser author might have got on with the story, Sheckley gives us a

quite unhelpful and on the face of it further mystifying conversation between two passing and unimportant characters:

> "Do you see?" the old man said, turning to his red-faced colleague. "Sane, perfectly sane."
> "I would never have believed it," said the red-faced man.
> "But of course. The death-trauma has been overrated. Grossly overrated, as my forthcoming book will prove."
> "Hmmm. But rebirth depression – "
> "Nonsense," the old man said decisively.

So we deduce, Blaine definitely has been dead – and reborn? But the real importance of the conversation lies in its strong suggestions about the nature of the people who have done the resurrecting. Terms like 'trauma' and 'depression' suggest that the whole thing has a scientific basis rather than a mystic one. But the science is by no means idealized, since there's still apparently room for argument about it. And there's also a certain callousness evident not only in the risks that Blaine has taken all unawares (for even if the death trauma has been overrated, the doctor doesn't deny there *is* one), but also in the way that he's treated as no more than a specimen (no one tells him what's going on, and they only ask him how he feels to settle an argument among themselves). So the scene is packed with information of a kind that becomes relevant later, and its economy, indirectness, and seeming naturalness are all characteristic of Sheckley and a model to everyone.

Still, Pohl and Bester and Dick and Harrison (and a lot of others) can all do the same thing. The 'doctor' scene, however, points further to one or two of Sheckley's more personal qualities. One is his picture of the hero as an innocent among unknown dangers with which he is never able to cope: several of the short stories in this volume follow that pattern, like "A Pilgrimage to Earth" (innocent in search of love), "A Ticket to Tranai" (innocent in search of Utopia), "The Prize of Peril" (average man purused by gunmen as an exhibit in a television show); it's remarkable that in none of them does Sheckley allow his hero the sort of happy but unconvincing success that Pohl gives to *his* resurrected innocent, for instance, in *The Age of the Pussyfoot.* But perhaps an even more unusual quality, for a science-fiction writer, is the strong sense in the conversation that *plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose* – the doctors may be talking about a science far in advance of our own, but they are doing it in exactly the same off-hand, self-centred, cold-stethoscope manner with which we are all familiar. This sense gets stronger and stronger all the way through *Immortality Inc.*, and indeed provides a kind of running joke: on the one hand the discovery of immortality has led to a series of

fantastic developments, like ghosts and zombies, suicide booths, body markets, and the Celestial Switchboard; but on the other, these developments are organized in a way that is instantly recognizable. The Chinese call themselves Martians, but still run laundries and restaurants ("Martian food is tasty, but it doesn't stick to your ribs"); negroes aren't persecuted, but zombies are ("Education is our only hope. Education and the future. Surely people will be more enlightened in the future"); critics wail ineffectively about the lost art of watching television ("Nuts to art, she liked the sensories"); and so on.

But is this just a joke? For there are of course serious and gloomy implications in the invariance of Sheckley's futures. What he is suggesting is that whatever else changes, the pressures on people do not; these pressures lead with curious unanimity to callousness, self-aggrandisement, and preoccupation with routine, if not to active cruelty. It is this that gives Sheckley that streak so often tagged as 'wry, ironic, sardonic' etc. When put with the detail and the firmness we find in *Immortality Inc.*, it becomes, in my opinion, something that deserves to be called a philosophy.

To support what I have already stated, I can only add that the Sheckley theme *par excellence* is the dishonesty of one's own responses. "A Ticket to Tranai" puts this most obviously, for there the central character is a young man apparently obsessed with justice, who sets off to Tranai because he has heard that their society is perfect. And so it is. But honesty close up is much less attractive than honesty on the other side of the galaxy (for in Tranai robbery = taxation, and assassination of politicians is legally controlled, and women are kept in stasis to free them from housework, and so on). So Goodman flees all the way back to Earth and – final devastating touch – lives out his days talking of Tranai the Blessed to large and admiring audiences, and bewailing the 'space malaria' that keeps him from returning. So zeal for justice is exposed as the wish to be top-dog. And in other stories romance turns out to be the humdrum thing you can't have, reality goes down before logic and false principles, while the true hero of the people is shown to be not the innocent victim but the 'dead, implacable, robot gunman'.

It would be easy to call Sheckley a 'disturbing' author and have done with it, but possibly his best quality of all is that the disturbance he brings is not primary, not (I feel) aimed at deliberately; it just arises naturally out of the stories he tells. The end of "Pilgrimage to Earth", perhaps his best story, proves the point. In it (the plot is in a way the reverse of "Tranai") the young colonial comes to Earth in search of love, for he has heard that 'Earth specializes in the impractical and makes it pay'. But when he arrives the payment is more obvious than the love –

his first sight is a shooting gallery with women as the targets, real women, as the manager insists, who die really if not permanently. Of course he refuses to participate and hurries off to find love; but what he finds is as temporary, artificial, and commercial as the shooting gallery's deaths. But it *is* love, not lust; and it is genuine, not simulated (the advertising laws on Earth are strict); and as for spontaneity, the research labs are working on it. At the end of the affair Simon tries to buy his girl out, to be offered instead 'an idyllic and nearly spontaneous love-match with a guaranteed government-inspected virgin'. Off he goes, disillusioned. But the worst aspect of it is that – as the salesman shouts after him – his own experience of love has been valid and sincere, as well as commercial and controlled. The last few lines are a deadly extension of what he has learnt:

> At first, all he desired was to escape from Earth, where the commercial impracticalities were more than a normal man could afford. He walked very quickly, and his Penny walked beside him, her face glorified with love for him, and him, and him, and you, and you.
>
> And, of course, he came to the shooting gallery.
>
> "Try your luck?" the manager asked.
>
> "Set 'em up," said Alfred Simon.

Now what *is* the moral of this reversal? That love is hate? That there *is* such a thing as genuine love but it's not attainable? Or that the whole idea is a self-flattering illusion that ought to be scrapped? The story offers several explanations. But what really comes over is the sense of an obscure revenge, and the question: if an illusion is perfect, is it an illusion?

A final word may be said about Sheckley's influence. Reading a Stanislaw Lem story in Franz Rottensteiner's collection, *View From Another Shore,* I was struck by the resemblance of Lem's robotic entrepreneurs Trurl and Klapaucius to Sheckley's Arnold and Gregor (represented here by the relatively slight "Ghost V"), or to the world-builder Maudsley in *Dimension of Miracles.* It may be an accident, but Lem's debt to American science-fiction of about this period is known; both authors do share a certain joy in the exposure of the mechanical beneath the abstract and the sentimental. It is enough of a compliment, perhaps, to say that Sheckley is by no means the junior partner in this potential comparison.

commander york and the smelly aliens

The Fingalnan Conspiracy
by John Rankine, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 190pp., £1.75.
ISBN 0 283 97954 2

reviewed by Chris Morgan

The increasing movement of sf away from outer space and towards inner space over the last decade or two has been accompanied by the maturation of the space opera theme. The latter (or, at least, any examples of it which have merit) has almost completely polarized into, on the one hand, careful, scientific stories – once typified by Arthur Clarke's work and now the province of Larry Niven – or, on the other, into the kind of tongue-in-cheek adventure produced by Keith Laumer. The only space opera of recent years which is good without conforming to this pattern is James H. Schmitz's *The Witches of Karres.* John Rankine's *The Fingalnan Conspiracy* is neither tongue-in-cheek nor scientific and is without merit.

Rankine has produced a 1930s type of space adventure which is rife with all the faults common to sf of those years: it has an unoriginal plot and mostly hack characterization; it is in no measure convincing or believable; it strikes me as being a poor copy of Dan Dare and equally juvenile.

The hero of *The Fingalnan Conspiracy* (set an unspecified century or two in the future) is Commander York of Earth's space force – an organization which is a confusingly anachronistic blend of the British army, navy and air force of World War II vintage. For example, here is York's commanding officer, *General* Kiesel briefing York: "I shall want you with the squadron. There's a promotion in it to Commodore. Fly your pennant on *Viper.*" But this is not the British Navy of 1940: *Viper* is a space corvette! York battles his way through a confusing plot set on Earth and on several alien planets – all of which seem, very conveniently, to have an Earth-normal atmosphere – to uncover a plot by various alien races to either capture or destroy Earth (I was never quite sure which). It is noticeable that all York's adventures could, with only minor changes, be set in any place or time. This would not be so bad if one were not absolutely certain right from the book's opening sentence ("Flogging the last erg from a failing power pack, York reckoned he

might still do it.") that York would, in the end, save the galaxy and get the girl.

In the book, John Rankine puts forward an extreme racialist and imperialist viewpoint: he suggests that aliens can never be trusted, that the less human they are the worse they are (the worst of them all – the Scotians – even have an obnoxious smell), and that a good, honest Earthman (York) has the right to visit alien planets, demand things of the authorities and threaten or kill those who will not cooperate.

Similarly anachronistic is Rankine's continual use of nude or semi-nude females in an attempt to titillate the reader. The trouble is that, as in sf prior to the 1960s or in the old Hollywood sex-comedies, these are compromising situations in which nothing actually happens, and the results are both boring and juvenile. I am not suggesting that Rankine should have tried to emulate Silverberg's lush sexual descriptions, just that he should have made his male-female relationships believable.

A few characters are well drawn, such as York himself, his girlfriend Sally Hythe and a Venusian named Phlebas, though most are at best stock types and at worst pure comic book material. The result is a sort of humourless pantomime.

Mr Lem and the clerks

Memoirs Found in a Bathtub
by Stanislaw Lem, Seabury Press, 1973, 188p., $6.95.
ISBN 0 8164 9128 3 (translated by Michael Kandel and Christine Rose)

reviewed by Barry Gillam

The first question we have for *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* is inevitably what it can tell us about Lem. Is he the modern master of sf whose coming has been heralded in the pages of *SF Commentary* and *Extrapolation* by those who have read the Polish originals? Is the extraordinary quality of *Solaris* sustained?

The answer is yes. But a qualified yes. Because although my respect for Lem continues to grow, I did not like this novel.

Memoirs Found in a Bathtub consists of an introduction from an earth 1700 years hence and a journal from a nearly contemporary earth.

The introduction, like Robert Nathan's "Digging the Weens", describes our world from its fragmentary relicts. The fragmentation occurred in the "Great Collapse", the result of a strange epidemic that destroyed all paper. The introduction therefore makes play with satiric, phoneticized versions of words ("Ammer-Ka", "Kap-Eh-Taahl", etc.). The body of the book is taken up by the journal of a new operative in a vast, labyrinthine, underground Pentagon which has sealed itself off from the outside.

The novel as a whole forms a double "cryptogrammic paper chase". The archaeologists' search for relicts of the past to explain their present is quite like the protagonist's search for his orders so that he may learn his "Mission". And the scholars' study to unravel the meanings of individual paradoxes becomes the protagonist's search through the building for any kind of meaning.

The irony of Lem's conceit about the destruction of paper comes through when we get a glimpse of the building. It is a bureaucrats' heaven; which is, therefore, a sane man's purgatory of forms, waiting rooms, echelons, security clearances, etc. On the first page of the memoir, we read: "I was still on the outside, still excluded from that ceaseless flow of secrecy that kept the Building strong". Secrecy is the stock in trade of these military moles.

Lem explores the possibilities of this notion ruthlessly. He makes fun of its monomania in the library where a file card reads: "LOVE — *see* Diversion. *Also see* Treason." He ponders its philosophic implications when an officer explains that everything is in code. Not merely all the messages within the building, but all communications whatsoever. Lem posits the religion of this building when he suggests that every occurrence therein is preordained by its unknowable superiors. The protagonist gets a look at typed orders which read like a scenario of his recent, random actions – but it is taken from him before he can see what his future has in store.

The novel sometimes seems plotless and unstructured as it wanders through the military maze of endless, pointless regulations. This deliberate form is Lem's literary expression of the normal, artificial chaos of the building, "forged to shield the Ultimate Secret from prying eyes . . . Any sufficiently complex idea seemed to apply to the Building, to explain it." But theory cannot really explain away the failure of several meandering episodes.

As his hero explores the building and makes his modern Pilgrim's Progress through different states of belief, Lem goes through a series of literary poses (a third "paper chase"), from Borges to Heller to Orwell, each one of which is a mask that reveals a face, that in turn peels off to reveal another face that, finally, disintegrates to reveal a skull:

> a contemporary skull: clean, hygienic, scrubbed, the balustrades of the cheekbones nice and sleek, making little balconies beneath each orbital cavity — the nasal hole was a bit unpleasant, but then, who is without some minor blemish? And the smile! The smile made one stop and think. I lifted the skull, weighed it in my hand, rapped it with a knuckle, then — quickly — bent over and sniffed. Only dust, harmless, everyday dust tickling the nostrils, but then a whiff, a trace of something, something . . . until my nose touched the cold surface and I inhaled — yes — a faint, the faintest stink — another sniff — oh foul play! Corruption!

This "fair and stately palace", like Poe's House of Usher, is incapable of withstanding the forces of its own schizophrenia. Lem's protagonist, unlike Poe's, is so deeply committed to the building that he destroys himself when he cannot reconcile its contradictions, just as the building itself is torn apart.

Why then didn't I like *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub?* For Lem is often inventive and occasionally brilliant. The occasion, however, is all too infrequent. The continual tearing down of appearances and the replacement of one mad theory by another is like that in Dick's work: we soon begin to discount it all. As Lem clearly intends us to. What we are left with are lives and philosophies fluttering about like papers in the wind. *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* is a novel of despair in which Lem makes the reader feel the despair of the protagonist, whose character is transparent for this very reason.

I grant Lem's technical achievement. In fact, I admire his proficiency. But I question a novel which is almost totally insubstantial. Here again, I see Lem's purpose, which is to portray a mind (both single and collective) which is dealing in abstractions totally removed from reality. The protagonist's inability to grasp hold of anything as he loses control is also our discovery that there is nothing to hold on to here. And if I wonder about the baffling interludes, I know that my experience in reading the novel is a carefully created analogue of the protagonist's. But . . .

But I come away with more respect for Lem's ability than any actual sense of reward in reading the novel. *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* is an intellectual exercise of a high order, but a novel is more than that. Yes, I found the concepts such as the heresy of the Antibuilding and the infinite number of different master plans as fascinating as a vignette by Borges. But when you compare these to a scene such as that in the library, they pale. Most of the book is essentially dialogue in which the ideas reflect the sparkling glint of humour and intelligence in Lem's eye. The scene in the library also has Lem's heart.

It is unexpectedly vivid, like the library scene in *Solaris.* The author is clearly a man who has lived with and loved books. It is not only the

familiar physical surroundings but the conviction that the best of mankind, its knowledge and its genius, is preserved in print. The faith in both novels that the protagonists feel in the libraries and even more their exasperation at the fact that these ultimate repôsitories of wisdom are helpless before their goals, these emotions are conveyed lovingly. The insane asylum of a library in *Memoirs* is a hard blow to the protagonist. When he leaves, he writes:

> I took a deep breath of air out in the corridor. What a relief! But my clothes still carried the smell of rotting leather, bookbinder's glue and parchment. I felt like I'd just stepped out of a slaughterhouse.

If writing of that quality is rare in *Memoirs,* the novel is still a very fine work. As I said at the beginning, my respect for Lem grows apace. I urge you to read this book and find out for yourself.

a surfeit of Lem, please?

The Invincible
by Stanislaw Lem. Seabury Press, 1973, 183pp., $6.95.
ISBN 0 8164 9123 2 (translated by Wendayne Ackerman)
Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 221pp., £1.95. ISBN 0 283 97962 3 (no translator named)

reviewed by James Blish

I suppose it's unreasonable to ask that every Lem novel attain to the standards he set in *Solaris.* Bearing that in mind, I found this one to be just good old ordinary science fiction, interstellar adventure type, brought off with flair, zest and skill.

The story is the familiar basic one of an interstellar expedition landing on a new planet to discover why the first exploring party failed to return. The place is indeed lethal, and the second expedition suffers heavy losses – here is plenty of action. The main interest lies in discovering *why* it is lethal. Lem plays fair and scatters abundant clues, and I for one couldn't figure it out until Lem was ready to tell me. The job is complicated by the fact that in order to find the solution, let alone understand it, the crew must work out the history of the planet as well as register everything about its present state – one of several aspects of the novel which make it more than just highly competent space opera.

This strength is also its weakness. The problem is essentially intellec-

tual, despite all the comings and goings. Characterization is sketchy, and hence so is emotional content; Rohan, the protagonist, hasn't a tenth the depth of *Solaris'* Kevin.

One of the crew's first discoveries may turn out to be a favourite Lem device: the ruins of things which cannot be cities, and resemble nothing else familiar, either. This may mislead some readers into expecting another philosophical tour-de-force like *Solaris,* but here Lem gets up to something approaching that level only at the end, during Rohan's last trek. The comparison, I repeat, is unfair; the intention in each case was obviously quite different.

Worth reading – but which edition to read? First of all, don't let the smaller page count of the U.S. edition make you suspect that it has been cut. The difference is due to the fact that the format of the Seabury book is larger, and the type smaller (and uglier). In fact, as I'll explain below, the Seabury edition may contain *more* sheer wordage. Further confusion is created by the Seabury text's division into only 11 chapters, whereas the U.K. version has 13. These chapters are titled, the titles differ, and there is no way to tell which, if any, were Lem's (except, perhaps, by observing that four are identical in each edition). I prefer Mrs. Ackerman's, and her way of dividing the text. I am sorry to have to say that my admiration for her version stops there.

She was working from a 1967 East Berlin edition. Sidgwick & Jackson offer no such data – though from a line-by-line comparison, I would guess that their source was the same one, not the original Polish – nor do they give their translator a name. This is unfair, for he (?) has done the better job, and it is therefore the British edition that I recommend. More often than not, on a given sentence the two agree, word for word. However, whenever confronted with one of those complex structures which German grammar makes possible and even sometimes admirable, Mrs. Ackerman chooses to translate it literally; whereas Anonymous condenses it into English, gaining force and poetry yet with no sacrifice of meaning.

I will rest my case for this on one example, and not a particularly dense one, either: the very last sentence, the sentence wherein the skilled and serious novelist tries to concentrate the flavour and texture of what he has been talking about all along.

Mrs. Ackerman: "There it towers, majestic as ever in its motionless grandeur – as if it were indeed invincible."

Anonymous: "There it towered so majestically in its motionless grandeur; invincible indeed."

S. Lem: ??

800 words and you can read, write and communicate

New Writings in SF – 23
edited by Kenneth Bulmer, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 191pp., £1.95.
ISBN 0 283 97987 9

reviewed by Ian Watson

"Eight hundred words and you can read, write and communicate."

Thus the virile, chauvinistic Lieutenant Zac echoes sexy, stand-offish Captain Susan's thoughts on the merits of the English language as he strides off to subvert a primitive planetary culture, in E.C. Tubb's "Made to be Broken". It's a sadly apt commentary on the scope and quality of this story. Buoyed up by half-baked philosophy about language, society and customs, the tale and Lieutenant Zac lurch along till the locals are adequately culture-shocked into subservience, and Zac is able to take time off in the shrubbery with Captain Susan, reinforcing his point that taboos are made to be broken – with the nearest sledgehammer – and that females shouldn't be intellectually uppity. The remark about the merits of English appears on page soixante-neuf; but the pagination is the only bit of dangerous vision hereabouts. The story is an identikit, composed in a mental missionary position. Human relations are banal, chauvinistic and stereotyped; the sociology a cardboard cut-out; the dominant mood is depressingly thuggish.

One turns with pure relief and gratitude to the other 'culture-shocker' in the collection, Keith Roberts's "The Lake of Tuonela" – a beautifully modulated, sensitive and responsible portrait of the impact of human technology on an alien culture of watermen plying dying canals on a distant world; where a genuine feeling for 'primitive' cultures radiates through the slow, melancholy journey of an Earthman absconding from his post to explore an old canal. It is a journey that attains a quasi-mystical significance for the Earthman; for the reader it is resonant and evocative in the telling.

Brian Aldiss provides some enigmatic liqueurs (possible subtitle: 'Kavan for a Dead Infanta'?), after the cool white wine of Keith Roberts

and the stale pepsi of E.C. Tubb: distilled essences of moods which flicker from world to world and life to life in a matter of a few sentences, like a cadenza on Huysmans' taste-organ played by a virtuoso – possibly a virtuoso slightly tipsy on his own concoctions, however. The opening is almost contemptuously overcompressed; latterly, when a fine psychological tracery has been spun by this metaphysical Arabella of space, there are occasional let-downs.

> **Shortly, I will revisit the environs of the Paranoid Sun, and then again dreams will be worth the memorising, *and vitamins will fall from the atmosphere.*** (My italics.)

Which is a bit too much like a skit on Adrian Henri's poem *Tonight At Noon* with its first daffodils of autumn and its leaves falling upwards to the trees. (And who knows, maybe Brian Aldiss had this poem somewhere in the back of his mind; does it not contain that evocative line, "And the Monster had just created Dr Frankenstein"?) Still, these three cadenzas are as prodigal of intuitions as Tubb's tale is bereft.

Grahame Leman's "Wagtail in the Morning" is a wryly ghoulish satire on a near future where the bureaucrats speculate about manipulating the sign language of the physical environment as a method of mass brainwashing. However, more brutal schemes are afoot, for the practical reason that it is far cheaper to control people by implanting mood conditioners in their brains, than to go the the trouble of orchestrating the urban environment, hunting for an emotionally satisfying Reyner Banhamesque Los Angeles of the soul. Scalpel, drug, and electrode implant will be more effective. This is a successful story about social controls, though the impact is lessened several degrees by its 'comedy' caricature of Whitehall types.

The other stories in the collection ring the changes on standard plot lines, with varying success. Charles Gray's "Accolade" (alias 'Life on the Human Skin') has a starship crew crowing over the way their van Vogtian atomic engines have made an ass of that fellow Einstein with his silly speed of light barrier, only to find ("What is that queer shape looming over the horizon? Why is the Sun standing still?") that they have landed, slowed down and miniaturized, on a clement patch of some human body and are about to be swatted like a gnat. Stale stuff. The answer is obvious after a few paragraphs; one just keeps on hoping that it won't be the answer. Blish did this a hundred times better in "Nor Iron Bars", where his FTL ship emerges inside a carbon atom.

David Garnett's *Rainbow* (alias 'Alice is marrying one of the Guards'; or perhaps 'Shoot-out at the Gerontological Corral') has nurse Alice and

half a dozen guards supervising the jumpdoor by which Earth offloads surplus oldsters on to a sealed settlement on some distant planet. The story ignores the old folk, however, and the ghoulish possibilities of this theme (so brilliantly handled in Vonnegut's "Tomorrow & Tomorrow & Tomorrow" or James Gunn's "The Old Folk"). The jumpdoor breaks down; the guards squabble and kill each other off, till Alice and one guard are left to grow into old folk themselves, as sterile Eve and Adam of what turns out to be a reasonably habitable planet. By the time that Earth repairs the damage, 49 local years have passed, though only an hour and a half on Earth. Mr and Mrs Alice are taken for oldsters, and shipped off to separate gerontological paddocks elsewhere in the galaxy. Poetic justice perhaps, but the investigators from Earth must be singularly obtuse not to work out what has happened – and this is only one instance of how the tale only works by virtue of a general incuriosity. Pointless red herrings intrude; and the real fish are not hooked out of the murky water. Are jumpdoors used for other purposes, such as colonization, and if not why not? If there is such a population pressure, why not *use* habitable words, such as this one turns out to be, efficiently? After all, when the old folk escape from the settlement, they're able to do a spot of gardening to keep them ticking over till they die of old age, leaving only Mr and Mrs Alice. Consider the use that Zelazny makes of jumpdoors and ghettoes in *Today We Choose Faces.*

However, Charles Partington in "Sporting on Apteryx" brings off another standard isolation theme very skilfully indeed. Here we have a degenerate colony marooned on a mysterious plateau, with a priesthood à la *Chrysalids* destroying genetic deviants, and in the process killing the one deviant who might have liberated them. Only in the Ken Russell flames of the stake does the wise hunchback sprout wings from his blazing hump, to char and shrivel instantly. This story does succeed in reaching a high pitch of emotional impact, as well as generating genuine tragic mystery. It is at least a fertile sport from the old stock.

Michael Stall's "The Five Doors" is another story I've read before: more jumpdoors, this time inserted into unsuspecting Humberside by agency unknown as an intelligence test *cum* cosmic mousetrap.

Barrington Bayley's "Seed of Evil", which closes the collection is a curse-of-immortality tale with a nice Stapledonian sense of the transience of humanity, and a lead-in courtesy of a rather philosophical issue of Marvel Comics or *The New Gods,* with its being Aeternus floating in a formless void.

There are good things in this anthology, but Lieutenant Zac's philosophy rears its banal head a little too high in the realm of imagination and ideas.

self abuse

The Man Who Folded Himself
by David Gerrold, Faber & Faber, 1973, 148pp., £1.90.
ISBN 0 571 10477 0

reviewed by Mark Adlard

I sometimes wish that sf writers would believe that Heinlein squeezed all the remaining paradoxes out of the time-travel story with "By His Bootstraps" (1941). But many new sf writers don't seem to think they have graduated as real professionals until they have reworked this plot device, and tried to add something to it.

Gerrold's contribution to this sub-genre was made possible by the new permissiveness, which has slopped over into sf from general fiction. His protagonist, Danny, uses his "timebelt" to meet other versions of himself, male and female, who exist at different times. The resulting encounters with these other selves, both homo- and heterosexual, give narcissism a repricocity which had hitherto been impossible. These episodes turn the novel into a story about doppelgänger – a much older cliché than time-travel.

Danny realizes, of course, that the timebelt can be used for intellectual satisfactions also. He sees Creation and he sees Entropy. Sandwiched between these not unimportant happenings he sees the burning of the Hindenburg, Lindbergh taking off, the original uncut version of *King Kong,* Franklin flying his kite, Custer's last stand, a concert by Sousa, and other good things. I read the list of historical items twice because I couldn't believe that Wyatt Earp had been omitted.

In fact Gerrold's sense of history seems a bit odd. "The future of the human race," says Danny, "is as alien and incomprehensible to me as the year 1975 would be to a man of Napoleon's era." That can mean only that the rate of change is going to slow down a lot, or that there is even less of the future left than we think.

The sense of what is real and what is not seems to become confused. "Don and I were listening to Beethoven. (The *original* Beethoven. I had gotten a recorder from 2010, a multi-channel device capable of greater fidelity . . .)" That reminds me of the murderer who couldn't believe he had done such a thing until he saw it on television.

Nor is the grasp of English very certain. The following sentence, for example, knocks me down in the middle, and promptly knocks me down again when I stand up to read the rest of it: "Yes, yes . . ." he muttered in loud tones of stentorian thoughtfulness."

The style of writing is –

* * *

– unusual. (Seems to be written quick?) But MIGOD you get used to it like it was – natural. *Natural!*

Hmm.

what makes harlan run?

Harlan Ellison: A Bibliographical Checklist
compiled by Leslie Kay Swigart,
available at $3.00 from Ms. Swigart at P.O. Box 8570, Long Beach, California 90808.

reviewed by Philip Strick

It goes on for 124 pages if you discount the splendid Dillon cover and the rather murky portrait on the back, and it's thorough, by the gods it's thorough. You want to know which scripts Harlan wrote for 'The Man from U.N.C.L.E.'? They're listed here. You want to know how many fanzines have been edited by Harlan? They're listed here. You want to know how many letters by Harlan have been published? (You do?) They're listed here. Every version, every translation, every publication date that might in any way have been relevant to the literary career of Harlan is listed here.

Which would not be so remarkable – authors have a habit of making things easier for their biographers these days – were it not that we are in Harlan territory, which means that there are at least twenty photographs of Harlan in various stages of growing up (Harlan with pipe, dog, girls, gun, spotlights, leather jacket, hair, glasses, and teeth), and a fair number of appreciations by such as Isaac Asimov, Ben Bova, Joanna Russ, and Robert Silverberg. There is a foreword by Ms. Swigart herself (a little cool, I thought, considering), and an afterthought by Harlan who admits to being thirty-nine as of May 27th, 1973, and somewhat urgently concerned with what he's going to write for the next thirty years ("From this point on it's all uphill. I promise you."). And there are glorious illustrations of the bookcovers that have enfolded Harlan's past career since

he came up with *Rumble* in 1958, covers that tell out not just Harlan's life but that of any sf fan of the past fifteen years – throbbing, funny, weird and wonderful designs, the essential packaging for a brand of fiction that charges headlong from the banal to the brilliant and back in the turn of a page, any page. You look at those crazy abstracts, those glaring intergalactic brows, those militant robots, those spacesuited figures toppling through distorted atomic structures, and you know why Harlan did and does it. Not *how*, but very definitely why. Like the rest of us, he just couldn't keep away from the stuff. Unlike the majority of us, he wouldn't settle for just one side of the fence . . .

It's not, I suppose, a bibliography that will mean much to anyone who has never read Harlan, or having read has fled in anguish as maybe from a road accident or a Batman comic or a girlie magazine or a Thole illustration, all stipple and menace. I can't even claim to have combed it through to pick out the errors, because I doubt that there *are* any (Ms. Swigart took at least three years over it, and she's given to precision), and if there's the odd slip of a letter, date, or parenthesis I really don't want to know about it. This is the kind of volume that every sf writer should have, but which would look somewhat thin for most of those who have only been writing as long as Harlan has. And it's a volume that all who care about the vitality of science fiction will *want* to have in their collection, because sooner or later they'll turn to it as to an encyclopaedia. What *won't* be found in it is any clear picture of what makes Harlan's writing work, collapse, take off, explode, infuriate, nag, bombast, and burn. That'll have to be another couple of volumes, digging past the artwork and the photographs into less easily defined territory. I hope they won't take another thirty years. But they'll undoubtedly be what you might call uphill work.

electric, kool-aid ronald reagan

Mindfogger
by Michael Rogers, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1973, 199pp., £2.25
ISBN 0 7139 0661 8

reviewed by Laurence James

Young druggy pacifist scientific genius. The System wants his mind for the national good. He invents a "mindfogger" – a gizmo that emits an

electrical field and acts as a gentle hallucinogenic. The boy wonder uses it to trip out a factory making armaments' components. The heavies catch up with him. But, with one bound he's free! The gizmo is broken, but *he* can still work it. So, it's all in the mind, you see. Young genius and trusting bed-mate amble into roseate future. Roll end credits.

An unexceptional short story? No, an unexceptional two hundred page novel. The science fiction elements in it are as strong as a soggy paper bag, and about as interesting. The plot ambles picaresquely from one unlikely confrontation to another.

Michael Rogers, as the blurb enthusiastically informs us, is twenty-two – the same age as his hero, as though such youth and hero-identification were dually praiseworthy merits. But, one can hardly blame the author for what the blurb-writer sticks on the jacket.

I do blame him, though, for being so enamoured with his main character that he blinds himself to what a boring and self-righteous simp he is. Nor can he be excused for perpetrating some of the most 'precious' prose outside of John Updike.

> "Lila is strong and lithe and gentle and she makes small sounds in the back of her throat sometimes like the sigh of wind and sometimes the movement of water and sometimes the hard flat sound of shoveled earth. They make love for an indeterminate stretch of time, totally without referents, elevated to that kind of place where, as with the finest purest intoxicant, time is at once a second and a minute and a month."

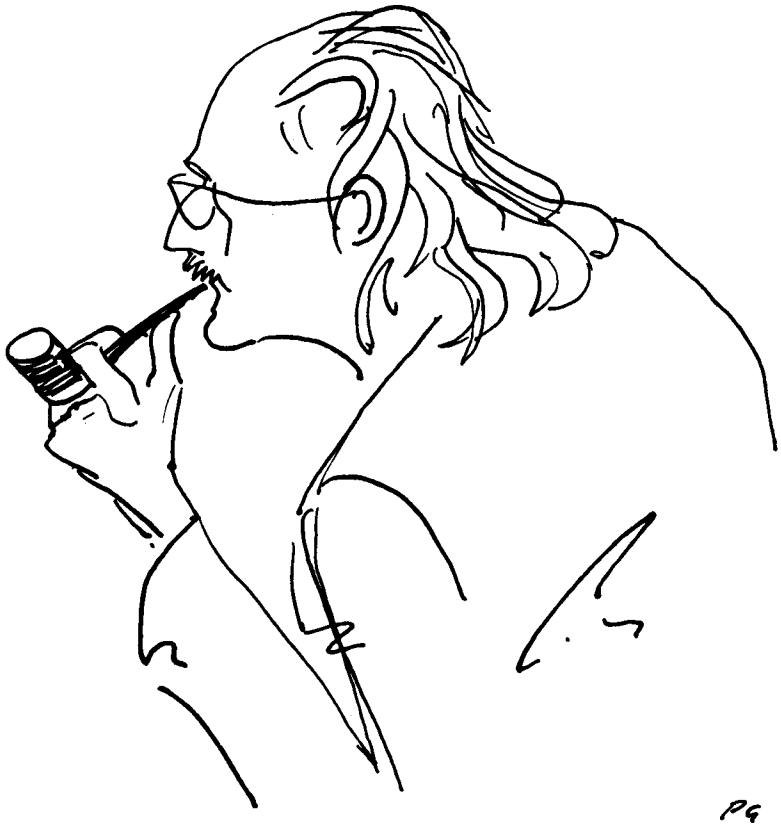
Now, that's an extraordinarily pretentious way of saying that they sexual intercoursed. And, he makes it sound as though Lila is suffering from acid indigestion.

It's a trivial and strangely irritating book. More than anything else, I object to the idea that we should think what a nice guy the hero is. Frankly, I don't give a flying damn whether the man who tries to run my mind is a gentle, twenty-two year old adolescent genius or Ronald Reagan. To pretend that one is better than the other is both naive and pernicious.

[Editorial footnote: I'd like to register a dissenting voice here. Mr. James' review represents an honest opinion, but I am not happy about printing it without comment. Mr. James rightly points to the very strange morality of a book which, while professing to be anti-establishment, comes up with a hip weapon every bit as fascist as those used by the society from which the hero has dropped out. I think it arguable, however, that the author, Michael Rogers is not the moral imbecile that his hero is. It is not always safe to impute the views of a protagonist to his creator. In this case, I believe the creator is more sophisticated than Mr. James allows.

The other adverse judgment is that Mr. Roger's prose is "precious". I disagree. I thought the novel rendered the nuances of young-California dialogue with splendid precision, and that the book's strength throughout emerges from a similar accuracy of observation. I found the Californian ambience of the novel to be given a quite remarkable solidity, and (as I can testify as an ex-resident of that extraordinary state), he tells it like it is. Yes, the book has its immaturities, but also shows considerable promise.

[The Reviews Editor tells me that he would prefer me to print reviews as they stand, or simply discard them. But I think it's not a bad thing to have an occasional argument. I didn't want to discard the review, because Mr. James is just as likely to be right as I am. Do readers have any views on the propriety of editorial footnotes? — — Peter Nicholls.]



Kenneth Bulmer — Vice President S. F. Foundation

suffer, little children!

Space 1:
edited by Richard Davis, Abelard-Schuman, 1973, 155pp., £1.95.
ISBN 0 200 71967 X

reviewed by Laurence James

Although the jacket doesn't give you any clue to it, five words in the editor's introduction reveal that this collection is "especially selected for young people." Does that mean children of eight? Twelve? Eighteen? It might help any parent thinking of buying the book if there was some indication. Or, is "young people" a vague phrase because nobody really knew?

Anyway, children.

"It seemed that blood boiled in his veins, that his head was submerged in molten lead, that his body was sprayed with blazing petrol." And: "The stink of sulphur was in his nostrils, his mouth was clogged with the dreadful taste of burning flesh."

Not *The Devils.* Mike Moorcock in a jocularly macabre story called "Environment Problem". Suitable for youngish children? I have my doubts. And, if that's what Richard Davis calls a science fiction story, then Kipling's "Tomlinson" is a seminal sf work.

By putting together *any* anthology, an editor embarks on an ego-trip in a frail barque. But, he can defend himself against criticism by simply saying that the stories are ones that he personally likes. Do a thematic anthology, and you can be on safer ground. "I put in the Harlan Ellison story because there aren't that many stories about prostitutes and the end of the world for my collection 'The Passing of The Red Lamp'."

But, when you claim you're putting together a science fiction anthology for "young people", then you really are off on a vulnerability jag. Each choice will be weighed and examined carefully. The serious reader of sf will expect each of the eight stories in *Science 1:* to be a top-drawer story of particular relevance for children. And, they have a right to expect that. The editor has a genuine responsibility to choose each entry with great care. A poor anthology could easily put a young person off science fiction for life.

So? I've mentioned Mike Moorcock's submission. A light little story with a sting in the tale. But, science fiction it ain't. Selling-your-soul-to-the-devil-and-hoping-to-get-away-with-it stories aren't that uncommon anyway, and I don't think this is one of the best. I'd be interested to know how long ago this was written, because it doesn't read much like anything Moorcock is writing at present.

Over twenty per cent of the book comes from "The Mercyship" by Gerald Page. A rambling piece of writing involving explosive organ transplants that takes a very long time to cover a short distance.

One of the drawbacks to the selection is that of age. I haven't the least objection to Richard Davis using old stories, but it seems a pointless exercise to use old stories that have aged badly. Ted Tubb's "Mistaken Identity" was a fresh little tale seventeen years ago, but the idea hasn't worn well. James White's "Christmas Treason" probably didn't seem twee when he wrote it, over fourteen years ago, but it does now. Clifford Simak's "Neighbour" is another golden oldie – a gentle tale of a benevolent dictatorship in a quiet rural valley. But, read it carefully, children. The thinly-veiled fascism is still evil, whether it's benevolent or not. A strange choice for this sort of anthology.

Possibly the best story – it is science fiction, it has got relevance for children and it has a moral ecological theme – is the first one. "The Teddysaurs" by James Hamilton-Paterson suffers from some amateurish writing and shaky plot construction. Still, you can't have everything.

Six stories down and two to go. An Earthman from a stellar colony returns to earth after being out of contact for four million years (!) and promptly gets stuck in a cage as a living freak by the anthropological oddities that the humans have become. "Museum Piece" by Elizabeth Fancett at least has an acceptable idea for this collection. But, the plot is crammed with gaps, and there's a lot of padding. If one set a short story competition on a science fiction theme for sixth formers at a large comprehensive school, you might get a first-prizewinner as good as this.

The last story is "No Jokes on Mars" by James Blish. Again a valid ecological theme, but heavy going for some children in its human relations. I didn't enjoy it at all.

A few last words before I throw the butcher's knife back on the block and wash the blood from my fingers. Had this been a collection of stories merely illustrating Richard Davis's own preference in sf, I would not even have bothered to review it. It's his prerogative to put together a bad anthology. But, not when this is done for young people. I would not want little children to suffer by coming to science fiction through this book. Some dated stories by big names and some frankly poor ones by unknowns is not good enough. If he was that tight on

his advance, he shouldn't have bothered at all.

In his introduction, Richard Davis mentions the 'curate's egg'. I recall that it was "Good, in parts, my lord." I fear that *Science 1:* is not even a curate's egg.

bridging the generation gap

Heritage of the Star
by Sylvia Engdahl, Victor Gollancz, 1973, 246pp., £1.60.
ISBN 0 575 01669 8

reviewed by Brian M. Stableford

Heritage of the Star is what is known as "a juvenile novel"

The concept of "juvenile fiction" is not very old – perhaps less than a century. The idea that young people are a race apart, with an intrinsically different mental make-up and different literary requirements is historically recent. It is probably not unconnected with the rise of Freudianism, for as well as being *the* male chauvinist pig of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that gentleman also had a lot of revolutionary conjectures to make about what was going on in the child mind. Ever since Freud told us about childhood sexuality, society has seemed bent on obliterating it. Since "discovering" that the young mind suffers less from the repressive nature of human society, adults have engaged themselves in all kinds of cunning strategies to compensate for the apparent leniency of nature. One such strategy is the invention of a culture specially for young children. The juvenile culture got off to a flying start with the butchery and bowdlerization of folk tales and other popular stories, but the last century has added massively to that culture with a flood of original works written specially for it. The fact that all juvenile culture is designed by and required to meet the standards of the adult culture has meant that juvenile culture is (a) highly arbitrary and (b) grossly ill-adapted. Small wonder that the generation gap is getting wider and deeper all the time.

Juvenile science fiction as a whole shares most of the properties of other juvenile fictions. However, it is very noticeable recently that a great deal of fiction has appeared in *both* the adult *and* the juvenile cultures, and that most of it is science fiction and allied species of fantasy. There

is a good deal of juvenile sf which is a prostitution of the abilities of the writers concerned and a vile imposition upon the minds of the intended readers, but there is also a solid body of work which is genuinely pan-cultural. Credit is not only due to some authors here, but also some publishers, who issue the stuff in plain wrappers so that no one can tell whether it is "adult" or "juvenile". Some of you might think that this attempt to admit us all into the same human race is moral treason, but I am prepared to offer my wholehearted applause to Sylvia Engdahl for writing a fine novel and to Victor Gollancz Ltd. for putting it in a package which is not cursed with the word "juvenile" or the phrase "for young people". We all know, of course that *Heritage of the Star* is not going to escape stigmatization because of Gollancz's packaging – I mean, hell, *I* spotted it, didn't I? And where has *your* local library shelved *Citizen of the Galaxy, A Wizard of Earthesea* etc? But if Gollancz can keep up the plain wrappers, and NEL can continue to put Lucky Starr and the Space Family Stone into their standard paperback format, well then, this is *progress* . . .

Heritage of the Star is set on an alien planet, and the local population have this weird religion, which keeps the scholar class in power while the populace as a whole are grubbing about in the dirt, but the young hero is a sensible young fella who doesn't believe a word of the dogma of the Mother Star, and reckons everybody should know how to work machines, in consequence of which he gets busted for heresy, and . . .

No, you haven't read it all before. It doesn't matter whether you're a "young person" – in which case you expect a ton and a half of moralizing about the side of right and if you can spot the father figure you better do as you're bloody well told, or whether you're an adult – in which case you operate by a different (but still stylized) set of assumptions and expect that our hero will contact the UNDERGROUND, have a revolution, and reinstate AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, but all in the spirit of healthy cynicism.

Not at all. *Heritage of the Star* is *about* commitment to belief and commitment to truth, and this is a thoughtful enough piece of work which takes itself seriously, so that the answers aren't so easy.

In addition to that, *Heritage of the Star* contains a society whose design is functional. The logic of the societal design might be a little shaky in certain aspects, and some of the sociological assumptions are decidedly dodgy, but the point is that the author has tried to build her foundations on solid good sense and rationality. There is nothing here which is just for show or just to promote some red hot action scenes, or just because the writer was playing with this crazy idea yesterday and would hate to waste it. Societal design is one of the weakest elements in modern science fiction – authors are all too ready to paste an imit-

ation Roman Empire on to the stars and call it a Galactic civilization, or to take some institution of the present moment and blow it up planet-size, or to assume that we will always do things just the way we do them now because that is the way we do them and therefore it must be human nature. There is very little *functional* design of societies. As I said, I think there are faults in Sylvia Engdahl's functional design, but I've never encountered one with a better logic, or one which is presented with such an awareness of the faults that there might be. This is a thought-provoking novel and it asks a lot of questions, which is not uncommon, but there is a quality of modesty about the way in which the questions get answers that is rare indeed.

The blurb carries the information that Sylvia Engdahl has authored five science fiction novels, but that this is the first to be published in Britain. As I had not encountered Miss Engdahl's work prior to reading this book I presume that in America her works are lost in the juvenile culture of that country. I hope that an enterprising paperback company will rescue them in the States, and I hope that Gollancz will continue to expose them to as wide an audience as literary convention will allow them in this country.

no, virginia, there is not a santa claus

Red Shift
by Alan Garner, Collins, 1973, 158pp., £1.60. ISBN 0 00 184157 2

reviewed by Ursula K. Le Guin

Some of the most interesting English novels of recent years have been published as children's books. Many of them have an element of fantasy or sf, and most of them have at least one adolescent protagonist; but if this were enough to qualify them as children's books, then one would have to look among the Kiddylit for *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet.* Their labelling is a convenience of publishing-distributing-publicity; all it implies in fact is that they may be read, understood, and liked by any intelligent literate over eleven or twelve years old. They are misrepresented only when the publisher puts on the jacket flap a cryptic symbol such as "11–15", meaning that nobody over fifteen is allowed to enjoy

the book. It isn't really the publisher's fault if the label "children" affronts an adult in his *adultismo,* leading him to assume loftily that all between the covers must be pap.

There is of course an industry of teenage books, especially in America. A lot of these are pap. Many of them are excellent books, but not satisfying to an adult taste. But leaving the industry aside and turning to certain individual artists, one finds a breadth, a seriousness, and a mastery of form equal to that of any living novelist. It is not that these artists work on two levels, one for the innocent kiddies and one (knowing nods) for the sophisticated elders. Quite the contrary. They have worked through to the one level, the common level, the deep ground from which myth and symbol rise – the ground that is open, darkly, to us all.

An adult newly turning to such books may find a style whose clarity fools him into expecting simplicity. He should take care. He may also, since this is a "children's book", expect a Happy Ending. He had better not.

Perhaps it isn't necessary to say all this to readers of sf. Most sf is in just this "12-up" bracket, read and appreciated by adolescents and adults equally. But, thank God, it isn't labelled "for children" by the publishers, libraries, schools, and booksellers. To obtain a copy of Henry Treece's *The Dream Time,* William Mayne's *A Game of Dark* and *The Jersey Shore,* Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* and *Red Shift,* the adult must gather up his courage and enter the Juvenile Department. If he is a fink, he can pretend he's getting the book for his nephew. Indeed, he might well pass it on to his nephew after he's read it; he might get back in exchange one of the "adult" books that have become adolescent staples – Salinger, Golding, Hesse, Dostoyevsky . . .

Peroration over; now that you know why I am so bold as to discuss a "children's book" before adults, what about *Red Shift*?

It has – I must mention this somewhere – it has the most beautiful and appropriate dust-jacket I ever saw. It has a science-fictional title. Under a latitudinarian definition, it is sf. Three co-plots, involving three youths/one youth named Tom/Thomas/Macey and one stone axe, taking place in one place, Crewe and Mow Cop, at three times, now/17th Century/5th Century. The time-shifts are not accomplished by technology or explained by logic. The device that breaks through time-distance is psychic pressure – human pain. In the end the pain becomes intolerable, and the three times become one. As if the "red shift" of the titles were reversed, as in the expansion-contraction model of the cosmos, and all the souls and stars that drift helplessly farther and farther apart were brought back in together, gripped, crushed in a final and terrible implosion.

A bitter, complex, brilliant book.

Above all, brilliant. Garner writes in fireworks. The dialogue is as mannered as Compton-Burnett's, but wittier, more alive, more powerful. Everything cut to the bone. No transitions, no explanations. The reader, as with poetry, must work: and is rewarded for it. Pace – the driving pace of the 1960s – the American Sunday motorist in his highpowered car – "Nice town we're coming to, wasn't it?"

The danger of such brilliance: preciosity. It is not wholly escaped. Bareness becomes quirkiness, density become opacity; the crossfire of allusion and symbol becomes a flashy pedantry.

The function of such brilliance: well, delight . . . And also, it saves the book. It saves the protagonist, Tom, from being merely pitiful, sick, lost. Thomas and Macey, his other manifestations, are psychotics, quite out of reach, and correspondingly less interesting. Tom fights his madness, which is the world's madness. He fights it with wit, with the mind's grace, with verbal and intellectual brilliance. A cold light, but better than the darkness. You realize that when in the end he loses his fight and goes, mumbling platitudes, into the darkness.

Verbal originality of another kind saves the Roman-British sequences from banality. The legionaries of the Ninth talk G.I. It is absolutely right, and its rightness gives flair and intensity to the rather conventionally primitive-brutal episodes.

The Civil War sequences are the dullest to my taste: over-complicated, and seldom relieved by stylistic rockets and pinwheels.

Garner's earlier book *The Owl Service* (which I gather is genuinely, and deservedly, famous in England, though not yet here) rests upon a solider but less ambitious structure: a tale from the *Mabinogion* re-enacted, rather than an original, and difficult, invention of the author's mind. Some of the power of *Owl Service* is borrowed – and why not? The Blodeuwedd myth is very subtle and very strong; only a dolt could spoil it in the retelling. Far from spoiling it, Garner worked into his recreation of it a restrained passion that is entirely his own. There is only one character in the book, Gwyn; the others are stereotypes; but Gwyn is quite enough . . . Real passion is a very rare thing in modern novels. We skip from sentimentality to perversity, missing the centre, the real thing. Gwyn's love and desire, his despair, ambition, obstinacy, courage, the awful absoluteness of adolescent emotion: in these are the makings of tragedy, and of the tragic hero. The book would be, indeed, fully comparable to *Wuthering Heights,* if only Gwyn's Alison were a Catherine Earnshaw. Alas, she isn't. She isn't much of anything; not enough to stand up to Gwyn, anyway.

Jan, in *Red Shift,* is a person of force and grace; she is quite able to stand up to Tom, and their love story begins to build up the same kind of yearning, desperate power. But Tom lets us down. Not through hubris, but through weakness, like a Hardy hero. Listen to the footsteps of Doom. Watch the galaxies recede. Why does Tom give the stone axe his soul, her soul, their hope, away? Because he's sick. His parents are sick, so he's sick. What should hit the reader as an unbearable betrayal comes merely as a clinical symptom. Jan's strength and sweetness seem less wasted than merely irrelevant.

Though one may know the Welsh legend and so know "what's going to happen" in *Owl Service,* the dramatic tension never relaxes. In *Red Shift,* though the possibilities are unlimited, the story does not drive forward to its conclusion. The sense of necessity falters. The book's gait is fast but mechanical; its motive force seems not so much emotional as geometrical. This may, of course, be quite deliberate.

I have read that Garner spent six years writing the book. Oh that some sf writers would spend six years, or even one year, writing their books! The number of raw first drafts passed off as sf novels is appalling. Write it on Tuesday, publish it on Wednesday. And remainder it on Thursday . . . But there is a danger, a rare one to be sure, in the other direction. *Red Shift* is wonderfully wellmade, pared down, honed, polished, refined, every rift loaded carefully with ore, every line of dialogue razor-edged. There is not one word too many. But, when one begins to go thus towards the perfection of silence, is not even one word, at last, too many?

Certain disturbed children, set to painting, paint startlingly beautiful and original pictures. And the doctor, observing, must struggle with his values: Art or Therapy? For if he does not intervene, take the picture away and put a new sheet on the easel, the child will go on painting the same one. On and on, adding, deleting, working, reworking, perfecting . . . When he stops he is satisfied, but nobody else on the hither side of autism can see the painting any more. All the carefully drawn and redrawn lines and masses cancel one another out, fill the paper from edge to edge. He has painted a solid blank, and hidden his soul behind it.

The root of the word "meticulous" is *metus,* fear.

There is a quality in *Red Shift* of withdrawal: it is its own symbol. That is both just and beautiful. But withdrawal, in an act of communication, which (alas) is what a novel is, can go only so far. Perfectly finished, the object refers only to itself. The lack of reference to anything outside is meaninglessness. The search for perfection turns inward, only inward. Desire, morality, perception, finally even pain, the last thing to go, recede, withdraw, implode. The Grail vanishes. One is left with a flicker of brilliance, a breath of coldness, a sense of loss.

putting legend to the test

The Astounding-Analog Reader — Volume One
The Astounding-Analog Reader — Volume Two
edited by Harry Harrison and Brian W. Aldiss, Doubleday, New York, 1972 and 1973, $7.95 each, xvi, 530 pages and xv, 458 pages, ISBN 0 385 02334 0 and ISBN 0 385 02732 X

reviewed by Peter Nicholls

"The magazine *Astounding*, and its long-time editor, John W. Campbell Jr., were the most potent of all the forces that shaped modern science fiction and gave it its direction." For younger readers, acting on received opinion passed down by the high priests of fandom, this is an article of faith. *Astounding* is a legend today. How many modern readers have access to the yellowing pages of the back numbers? In England, how many ever did? The British edition was watered down, and until 1953, published without the famous Campbell editorials. Even after that date, quite a few stories were omitted, and a certain immediacy was lost by a time lag of sometimes more than six months between American and British publication.

Astounding was the most successful of the pulps, and in its modern guise as *Analog* (which it became in 1960) it still has the largest circulation, but there is plenty of evidence, today at least, that the majority of sf readers ignore the magazines altogether. The magazines are for the inner circle, for readers who are prepared to wash through a great deal of crumbly sediment to find the occasional gleaming speck of gold. Thousands still read the magazines, as they did back in the thirties, but most readers are content with paperback anthologies and novels. They let the editors do the sifting for them.

So most of us accept the legend on trust. We know about Campbell, and his extraordinary stable of writers, de Camp, Asimov and Heinlein, Simak, van Vogt, Blish, Leinster and all the rest, but this information is usually filtered through a complex system of intermediaries. We cannot readily test the legend against the *Analog* of today, especially now that Campbell is dead. *Analog* still has occasional triumphs, but many of the magazine readers (judging from comments in the fanzines) seem to feel that these days the inventivity is running dry, and in too many cases the same patch of ground is being ploughed over and over again. I agree. None of the magazines have survived the onslaught of cheap paperback sf publishing (including many original works) with quite the same confidence as before. *Analog* remains the best-selling magazine, but it has long lost its once near-monopoly of the top writers, though it still keeps its emphasis on hard-science and gadgetry, and its "silent majority" politics.

I am one of the lazy readers who never subscribed to the magazines. I sometimes borrowed *Astounding* from a friend, but that was all. And yet a rapid check of the

36 stories published in *The Astounding-Analog Reader* shows me that I have read 27 of them before – exactly three quarters. This is not surprising. Anthologies of science fiction have been appearing at the rate of several a month for almost twenty years now, and naturally a magazine as celebrated as *Astounding* has been searched by editors as thoroughly as Texas has been drilled by oil men. And aside from anthologies, many of these stories have appeared in single-author collections, or even as sections of novels, as happened with James Blish's "The Bridge" which became part of *Cities In Flight*, and Lawrence O'Donnell's "Clash by Night", which became a part of *Fury*, published under the author's real name, Henry Kuttner.

But this Aldiss-Harrison anthology is *not* superfluous. First, because my experience is not typical. I have been reading science fiction, obsessively, for more than twenty years, in much the same spirit that Edwardian gentlemen used to seek out ladies of the night, with alternating passion and fits of self-reproach. However, a new group of readers appears every year, and most people who have only been reading science fiction for, say, six years, would find this a very fresh collection indeed.

To explain the second reason why this anthology is not superfluous, I need to explain what I assume to be its basic principles, which are so simple that it seems astounding (if I may so put it) that John W. Campbell never used them himself. (Campbell produced two anthologies from *Astounding*. The first, published by Simon and Schuster in 1952, and later released in two volumes in England by Four Square, had no editorial words, and no visible principle of selection or arrangement, though it contained some lively stuff. The second was called *Prologue to Analog* and came out in 1962. It was disappointingly thin and uneven, like the *Analog* anthologies – seven of them – which followed it.)

The first principle is to select stories which fulfil one condition definitely, and preferably two: that the stories should be intrinsically interesting and not too dated today, and that they should nevertheless give something of the flavour of the period in which they were originally published. The second principle is to print the stories chronologically, a thoroughly logical way of organizing an anthology, though the method is seldom used by editors. The anthology (let's call it that, despite its two volumes, which were not published simultaneously) is divided into twelve sections, which take us through from 1932 to 1965. Each section apart from the first contains three stories written over a period of not less than two years and not more than four. (The first spans those sparse, almost pre-Cambrian years from 1932 to 1940.) Each section is preceded by a terse and sometimes epigrammatical summary of what sort of thing was happening in the period. It is this arrangement that makes the anthology so valuable, even to readers who may find some of the stories familiar. The stories take on new freshness by being given a context. Apart from their intrinsic interest they become historical documents, telling us a good deal about what was happening to science fiction in a particular time and place. Thus the decision not to omit well-known stories was a wise one. Asimov's "Nightfall", Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps", Simak's "City" and Murray Leinster's "First Contact" (a hugely influential story by a writer who seldom reached the first rank, but did so here) – these are so much a part of the *Astounding* flavour, and its achievement, that it would have been wrong to leave them out.

Speaking of that authentic *Astounding* flavour (quite different from the astounding *Authentic* flavour, incidentally), a nostalgic bonus is given us by Harrison and Aldiss's inclusion of the original editorial lead-ins to the stories, written by Campbell himself. What lurid and alluring minor masterpieces some of these were, dragging the hapless reader forward into successive stories by the scruff of his neck, with their implications of mind-grabbing concepts to follow!

There are not many first-rate anthologists. Edmund Crispin was perhaps the greatest on this side of the Atlantic, and Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest did well by us for a while. But the trans-Atlantic team of Aldiss and Harrison is truly formidable. Both men with distinctive styles (I speak of their literary styles, though awe-struck attenders of science fiction conventions say that their personal styles, when seen in concert, are the best – or worst – thing since the death of vaudeville), they have managed during their long and productive friendship to achieve a sort of editorial symbiosis, a style slightly different from that of their individual efforts. It oscillates between the twin poles of the wisecrack and the baroque metaphor, and tends towards the *bravura*, not to say the *fortissimo*, in execution.

Their collaboration strikes many readers as odd, because their individual books seem to show genuine and radical differences of temperament between the two men. What they have in common as writers, and as anthologists too, is a joy in crazy inventiveness, a contempt for cliché, a belief that science fiction should be about people and not machines or gimmicks, a respect for craftmanship and professionalism, an unholy glee in tormenting sacred cows whether they be political, sexual or religious, and a passion for science fiction itself because it has room for all those areas of experience that tend to get squeezed to the fringes of conventional literature.

Remember that period in the late fifties, when people felt that the old *Astounding* magic was fading, and Campbell's crankiness was beginning to counterbalance his editorial creativity? My own metaphor, "the magic was fading", is a conventional image worn thin over the years. Look at the reverberating images Aldiss and Harrison use of the same period, most of them taken from the genre itself, and gently satirizing it even as they capture its flavour:

> The air was growing chill. The widgie birds were heading for the foundations again. The computer was muttering in its sleep. The Psionics Institute was lecturing to the faithful. A few late dinosaurs drooped towards the river bed. Arteries hardened in even the greatest of editors. Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out . . .

To test the *Astounding* legend, no matter what editorial fireworks amuse us on the way, it is the stories themselves we need. There are more than a thousand pages of story! A desperate impressionistic montage is all that's possible by way of description. An old favourite, Peter Phillips' "Dreams Are Sacred" is here, in which the dreams of an insane writer of science fantasy are invaded by a rather boorish pragmatist who almost gets trapped in them. A surprising number of the stories involve the old Berkeleyan "how do we know what is real?" theme. Another is Rog Phillips' "The Yellow Pill". Phillips' name did not generally imprint itself on readers' minds, but what a sharp and economical story of appearance and reality

this one is. William Tenn also trespasses on the territory which is now recognized as the property of Philip K. Dick with the macabre "Child's Play", which features a Bild-a-Man kit. Dick himself is there with a very early story, "Imposter", about a man trying to convince the world that he is not really a robot with a bomb in his belly. Here we see the outlines of Dick's themes, in retrospect, very small and clear, all ready to erupt into the major philosophical questions he has tackled since. What makes a human human? Is the paranoid entirely wrong? Ah, what splendid Dickian ingenuities have sprung from these beginnings, with what wit and compassion!

Another early story is Bester's "The Push of a Finger", not as good in my mind as the editors think, but fascinating in its tentative limning of Bester's later obsessive themes, a water colour sketch preliminary to those staggering, hectic oils he later dazzled us with. Here too, is the magnificently optimistic "Noise Level", in which Raymond F. Jones once managed to convince me, temporarily, that almost anything is possible in science if only scientists would suspend their disbelief, and unshackle their minds from the chains laid on by hoary old conservatives like Einstein. Nostalgia floods over me as I write. Where are the snows of yesteryear? Has brightness truly fallen from the air? Where are the dear, dead anti-gravity machines of the fifties?

Another much-cherished story, one to bring a reminiscent smile to the lips of the most solemn sf votary, is Fredric Brown's "Placet is a Crazy Place". With what brilliance the menace of the widgie birds was countered here, and how truly appalling was the unintentional pun with which the hero's love life was saved! A writer who like Rog Phillips seldom reached the heights was Tom Godwin, but his memorable tear-jerker, "The Cold Equations", is included here. Re-read, it has a gaucheness and clumsiness I had forgotten, but the totally plausible central situation of the silly female stowaway in the rocket, (she does not realize that every pound of weight must be calculated for if a safe landing is to be made) is worked out honestly, and a glimpse of tragedy shines through the flat style. Even though the portrait of the girl is tainted with the worst kind of *Saturday Evening Post* sentimentality, her dilemma is real, and her reactions to the apparent injustice of the universe reach, towards the end, an awkward but touching dignity.

Then there is James H. Schmitz's "Grandpa". Why didn't Schmitz write more in this vein? The story is totally gripping, and relies on a background (featuring the biology of an alien planet) which a lesser writer would have made merely decorative and exotic. Schmitz gives it the solid-feeling textures of a really sensitive realism, and so works things that the smallest of irrelevant-seeming details bear directly on the ecological point which is the story's *raison d'être.* What conviction his life forms achieve! This would be a good story to give any reader unfamiliar with science fiction, because it sums up so many of the best things in the genre.

The list of good things in this anthology is long. I haven't yet spoken of Arthur Clarke, Robert Sheckley and Cyril Kornbluth, all represented by good stories, if not absolutely their best. Then there is Theodore Sturgeon, represented by his much-praised "Thunder and Roses" — over-praised I think. The theme, nuclear holocaust, is a serious one, and the style certainly seems more poetic and intense

than that of most science fiction, but the basic sentiments are compromised by a softness in the vision, a random pulling out of too many emotional stops. The title, with its bitter-sweet overtones, represents the story more truthfully than titles generally do, and that's what's wrong with it.

Anthologies usually receive short shrift from the reviewers. Understandably, perhaps – there are just too many of them. But this massive work seems important to me, and hence worth spending time on. The legend of *Astounding*'s importance is borne out by these stories, even though few of them would be judged by the conventional standards of literary criticism as being of the absolutely first rank. I should make it clear that I approve of these standards being applied to science fiction, and I don't believe its position as a genre literature entitles it to any favoured or even specialized treatment from the critics.

But there is one quality shared by many of these stories that is rare in conventional fiction, especially conventional short stories, and I am anxious that it should not be overlooked. That is, that despite the abounding vulgarities of style, the solecisms, the often stiff or conventional prose – all the worst faults that do show up quite a few times in the collection – these stories absolutely crackle with life, and a good deal of intelligence. How does one measure and evaluate this quality? It has something to do with the size of the job so many of these stories take on – that wonderful van Vogtian impulse to take in the whole of the goddam universe in one great indigestible mouthful, and make nutrition out of it. The vulgarity of this spectacle often horrifies those critics who stumble across it, and it is true that an overstuffed maw makes for noisy chewing and a certain amount of spit flying around. But the Gargantuan courage of the enterprise has to be reckoned with, and pulp sf had a lot of that. The elegant nibbler, the writer who never bites off more of the phenomenal world, or the world of philosophical speculation, than he can discreetly chew, is not wholly alive.

The usual remark about writing of the *Astounding* variety (though in fact, as this anthology shows, there is a whole lot more than just one variety) when it does impinge on the attention of serious critics, is that its reach exceeds its grasp. "These chaps begin with a good concept, and then they don't develop it, the characters remain wooden, the imagery is devalued, inviting only stock responses, and the original concept becomes a simple gimmick because the author is not big enough to cope with it." Well, there's some justice in that attitude. But at least these sf writers (at least half of them being men who *do* write well and with precision) don't back away from large ideas in fear. There's some hot and crazy original thought in this anthology. It does not contain any Tolstois, but it does contain the work of a lot of men who had in common with Tolstoi that they thought big.

And consider this. These are short stories, not novels. Remember that for a long time the short story has been generally regarded as being rather like a delicate photograph, capturing one moment in one life with exquisite precision. These writers we are discussing have kept the form alive, because they've kept its options open. The short story won't die of anaemia while some writers continue to give it so much substance, and load it with so much narrative if it comes to that. There are forty page epics in these books! Certainly a bit more exquisite precision might be a good

thing with your Ross Rocklynnes, Bertram Chandlers and Poul Andersons, but there's no nonsense about the single snapshot theory of the short story. There is full confidence that cinemascope and full, gaudy colour are appropriate to the form.

Let's have a vote of thanks for Messrs. Aldiss and Harrison then. As someone who has to read science fiction professionally, I find it gives me a periodic sense of *ennui*. Some weeks I feel numb indifference before concepts that fifteen years ago would have sent me reeling away with awe. This collection has reminded me very pleasurably of why I began to read the stuff in the first place, and has even presented me with a number of the stories I first read, thereby stimulating the limp nerve cells of my mind into a renewed state of crispness.

By the time that this review of the American edition appears in print, I am told that Sphere Books will have brought out an English edition in paperback.[1] I imagine it would need four volumes in that form. And in America, where Doubleday have a wicked reputation for sometimes whisking books off the stalls with frightening speed, let these expensive but substantial hardbacks remain in print for a while. They deserve it.

1. *The above review was written in August 1973, and then held over for the special Aldiss issue. Since then Sphere Books have brought out Volume One of the American edition, itself divided into two volumes. Book One, paper, £0.40, 291 pp., ISBN 0 7221 4362 1. Book Two, paper, £0.40, 320 pp., ISBN 0 7221 4364 8.*

books received

A listing in this column does not necessarily preclude a full review in a later issue.

Aldiss, Brian W.	*The Moment of Eclipse* (Panther, 1973, 189pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03776 4. First published by Faber, 1970)
Anderson, Poul	*The Broken Sword* (Sphere, 1973, 208pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 11576) *Beyond the Beyond* (Coronet, 1973, 224pp, 35p. ISBN 0 340 16337 2. First published by Gollancz, 1970)
Anthony, Piers	*Macroscope* (Sphere, 1973, 347pp, 50p. ISBN 0 7221 11770. First published by Sphere, 1972) *Prostho Plus* (Sphere, 1974, 207pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 11754. First published by Gollancz, 1971)

Asimov, Isaac	*The Rest of the Robots* (Panther, 1973, 223pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 02594 4. First published by Dobson, 1967)
	Fantastic Voyage (Corgi, 1973, 186pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09237 1. First published by Dobson, 1966)
	The Early Asimov, Vol. I (Panther, 1973, 188pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03806 X. First published by Gollancz, 1973)
Asimov, Isaac (Ed.)	*Nebula Award Stories 8* (Gollancz, 1973, 287pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 575 01754 6)
	The Hugo Winners, 1963- 1967 (Sphere, 1973, 363 pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 12491)
	The Hugo Winners, 1968-1970 (Sphere, 1973, 365pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 1250 5)
Ball Brian, N.	*Planet Probability* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974, 188pp, £1.95. ISBN 0 283 98123 7)
Ballard J.G.	*Vermilion Sands* (Cape, 1973, 208pp, £2.25. ISBN 0 224 00894 3)
Blish, James	*Midsummer Century* (Faber, 1973, 106pp, £1.60. ISBN 0 571 10330 8)
Borges, Jorge Luis	*The Aleph, and other stories* (Picador, 1973, 188pp, 50p. ISBN 0 330 23737 3. First published by Cape, 1971)
Bova, Ben (Ed.)	*Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Vol. II* (Gollancz, 1973, 422pp, £2.90. ISBN 0 575 01735 X)
Bradbury, Ray	*Fahrenheit 451* (Corgi, 1973, 158pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09238 X. First published by Hart-Davies, 1954)
Brunner, John	*Bedlam Planet* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 159pp, £1.75. ISBN 0 283 97990)
	The Sheep Look Up (Ballantine, 1973, 461pp, $1.65. ISBN 345 23612 2 165)
Carnell, John (Ed.)	*New Writings in SF-21* (Corgi, 1973, 189pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09313 0. First published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972)
Carrell, Christopher (Ed.)	*Beyond This Horizon* (Sunderland Arts Centre, 1973, 154pp, £1.10)

Clarke, Arthur C.	*Report on Planet Three* (Corgi, 1973, 255pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09413 7. First published by Gollancz, 1972)
Coney, Michael G.	*Mirror Image* (Gollancz, 1973, 223pp, £2.20. ISBN 0 575 01726 0)
	Syzygy (The Elmfield Press, 1974, 167pp, £2.60. ISBN 0 7057 0023 2)
Cooper, Edmund	*The Overman Culture* (Coronet, 1974, 190pp, 35p. ISBN 0 340 17860 4. First published by Hodder & Stoughton, 1971)
Cowper, Richard	*Time Out Of Mind* (Gollancz, 1973, 159pp, £1.90. ISBN 0 575 01697 3)
del Rey, Lester (Ed.)	*Best SF Stories of the Year* (Kaye & Ward, 1973, 245pp, £2.00. ISBN 0 7182 0966 4)
Daniels, Les	*Comix* (Wildwood House, 1973, 198pp, profusely illustrated, £1.85. ISBN 0 7045 0022 1)
Dick, Philip K.	*A Maze of Death* (Pan, 1973, 190pp, 35p. ISBN 0 330 23769 1. First published by Gollancz, 1972)
Disch, Thomas M.	*Getting Into Death* (Hart-Davies, 1973, 206pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 246 10614 X)
Downing, Barry H.	*The Bible and Flying Saucers* (Sphere, 1973, 175pp. 35p. ISBN 0 7221 3039 2)
Farmer, Philip José	*Strange Relations* (Panther, 1973, 189pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 02092 6. First published by Gollancz, 1964)
	Night of Light (Penguin, 1972, 176pp, 30p. ISBN 0 14 00 3392 0)
	Maker of Universes (Sphere, 1973, 155pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 3448 7. First published by Sphere, 1970)
	The Gates of Creation (Sphere, 1973, 154pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 3447 9. First published by Sphere, 1970)
	A Private Cosmos (Sphere, 1973, 158pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 3446 0. First published by Sphere, 1970)
Haining, Peter (Ed.)	*The Hollywood Nightmare* (Sidgwick & Jackson [paperback] 1973, 190pp, 40p. ISBN 0 283 98127 X. First published by Macdonald, 1970)

Harrington, Alan — *The Immortalist* (Panther, 1973, 287pp, 50p. ISBN 0 586 03896 5)

Harrison, Harry — *The Stainless Steel Rat Saves The World* (Faber, 1973, 191pp, £1.90. ISBN 0 571 09956 4)

Harrison, Harry and Aldiss, Brian W. (Eds.) — *The Year's Best Science Fiction No. 6* (Sphere, 1973, 236pp, £0.35. ISBN 0 7221 4355 9)

Harrison, M. John — *The Committed Men* (Panther, 1973, 139pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03775 6. First published by New Authors, 1971)

Heinlein, Robert A. — *The Menace From Earth* (Corgi, 1973, 189pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09334 5. First published by Dobson, 1966)

Hesse, Hermann — *The Journey to the East*, translated by Hilda Rosner (Panther, 1973, 108pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03826 4)

Howard, Robert E. — *Conan the Warrior*, edited by L. Sprague de Camp (Sphere, 1973, 192pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4689 2. First published by Lancer, 1967)

Conan the Adventurer, edited by L. Sprague de Camp (Sphere, 1973, 192pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4688 4. First published by Lancer, 1967)

Conan, edited by L. Sprague de Camp (Sphere, 1974, 187pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4691 4. First published by Lancer, 1967)

Conan the Conqueror, edited by L. Sprague de Camp (Sphere, 1974, 191pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4692 2. First published by Lancer, 1967)

Ketterer, David — *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction and American Literature* (Doubleday Anchor, 1974, New York, paper, xii, 347pp, index, $2.95. ISBN 0 385 00470 2)

King, Vincent — *Candy Man* (Sphere, 1973, 186pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 5264 7. First published by Gollancz, 1971)

Lafferty, R.A. — *Fourth Mansions* (Dobson, 1973, 252pp, £2.10. ISBN 0 234 77653 6)

Laumer, Keith — *The House in November* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 192pp, £1.95. ISBN 0 283 97988 7)

Le Guin, Ursula K. — *City of Illusions* (Panther, 1973, 159pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03755 1. First published by Gollancz, 1971)

Lessing, Doris	*Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (Panther, 1973, 252pp, 40p. ISBN 0 586 03817 5. First published by Cape, 1971)
Lovecraft, H.P. & Derleth, August	*The Lurker at the Threshold* (Panther, 1973, 160pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 03345 9. First published by Panther, 1970)
McGhan, Barry (compiler)	*An Index to SF Book Reviews* (SFRA, 1973)
Moorcock, Michael	*Elric of Melniboné* (Arrow, 1973, 191pp, 35p. ISBN 0 09 907790 6. First published by Hutchinson, 1972)
	The Singing Citadel (Mayflower, 1973, 125pp, 30p. ISBN 0 583 11670 1. First published by Mayflower, 1970)
	Behold the Man (Mayflower, 1973, 143pp, 30p. ISBN 0 583 11787 3. First published by Allison & Busby, 1969)
Moorcock, Michael & Platt, Charles (Eds.)	*New Worlds Quarterly, 6* (Sphere, 1973, 263pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 6201 4)
O'Gallagher, Liam	*The Blue Planet Notebooks* (X-Communications, 1973)
Pynchon, Thomas	*Gravity's Rainbow* (Cape, 1973, 760pp, £1.95 [paperback]. ISBN 0 224 00960 5)
Romano, Deane	*Flight From Time One* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 215pp, £1.95. ISBN 0 283 97991 7)
Russell, Eric Frank	*Next of Kin* (Sphere, 1973, 160pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 75426. First published by Dobson, 1959)
Sillitoe, Alan	*Travels in Nihilon* (Pan, 1973, 286pp, 40p. ISBN 0 330 23700 4)
Silverberg, Robert (Ed.)	*Beyond Control* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 219pp, £1.95. ISBN 0 283 97989 5)
Silverberg, Robert	*Recalled to Life* (Gollancz, 1974, 184pp, £2.00. ISBN 0 575 01764 3)
	Dying Inside (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974, 245pp, £2.25. ISBN 0 283 98122 9)
Simak, Clifford D.	*Out of Their Minds* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 175pp, 40p [paperback]. ISBN 0 283 98125 3. First published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972)
	Destiny Doll (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 189pp, 40p [paperback]. ISBN 0 283 98126 1. First published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972)

Stewart, George R.	*Earth Abides* (Corgi, 1973, 316pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09414 5. First published by Gollancz, 1950)
Stover, Leon & Harrison, Harry	*Stonehenge* (Sphere, 1973, 237pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 43591. First published by Davies, 1972)
Tomas, Andrew	*Atlantis from Legend to Discovery* (Sphere, 1973, 151pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 8542 1. First published by Hale, 1972)
	Beyond the Time Barrier (Sphere, 1974, 160pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 8544 8)
van Vogt, A.E.	*The Voyage of the Space Beagle* (Panther, 1973, 191pp, 35p. ISBN 0 586 02439 5. First published by Grayson & Grayson, 1951)
	The Darkness on Diamondia (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974, 254pp, £2.25. ISBN 0 283 98121 0. First published by Ace, 1972)
Walker, Alexander	*Stanley Kubrick Directs* (Abacus, 1973, 304pp, £1.00. ISBN 0 349 13695 5)
Wells, Angus (Ed.)	*The Best of John Wyndham* (Sphere, 1973, 318pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 9369 6)
	The Best of Isaac Asimov (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 336pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 283 97981 X. Sphere, 1973 [paperback], 336pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 1254 8)
	The Best of Arthur C. Clarke (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 336pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 283 97979 8. Sphere, 1973 [paperback], 336pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 2426 0)
	The Best of Robert A. Heinlein (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973, 348pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 283 97982 8. Sphere, 1973 [paperback], 348pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 4462 8)
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