

NUMBER TWO 1969

SF

# COMMENTARY

# S F COMMENTARY II

## DISCUSSED IN THIS ISSUE

oo

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION	35 40
RAY BRADBURY (General discussion)	31
PHILIP K DICK (General discussion)	31
The Ganymede Takeover	46
The Penultimate Truth	44
The World Jones Made	46
THOMAS M DISCH Under Compulsion	23
JOHN FOWLES The Magus	20
ROBERT HEINLEIN (General)	16
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE EARTH'S CRUST	35
ARTHUR KOESTLER Act of Creation	8
FRITZ LEIBER The Wanderer	25
RAY NELSON The Ganymede Takeover	46
DAVID ROME (General)	12
P F VERNON Intelligence and Attainment Tests	41
THE WORLD TOMORROW (ABC Radio Programme)	40

### CREDITS

COLLATION Lee Harding  
 PRINTING John Bangsund  
 STENCILS Roneo  
 TYPEWRITER Mr F R Gillespie  
 TRANSCRIPTION Jeanette Gillespie  
 BOOK SUPPLY Mervyn Binns  
 INSPIRATION Subscribers all (to date - Peter  
 Darling, George Turner, Bert Chandler).

If your last copy was late, and this one, yell in the ear of John Bangsund (P O Box 19 Ferntree Gully) or Lee Harding (Olinda Road The Basin). If you liked the thing, yell in my ear (you should know the address by now).

# S F C O M M E N T A R Y

MARCH 1969      N U M B E R      T W O      40c PER COPY

## C O N T E N T S

RAISON D'ETRE	Editor Henry James Andrew Marvell	4
INVISIBLE WHISTLING BUNYARDS	Lee Harding George Turner Bernie Bernhouse David Boutland Gary Woodman Peter Darling	6
CRITICANTO	Bruce Gillespie	19
WHERE HAVE ALL THE SPACESHIPS GONE?	Brian W Aldiss	30
LIGHT FROM INNER EARTH	Prof. John C Jaeger	35
I Q IN S F - AND ELSEWHERE (Part 2)	Bruce Gillespie	41
MAD MAD WORLDS - 7 NOVELS OF PHILIP K DICK (Part 2)	Bruce Gillespie	44

S F COMMENTARY No. 2 is edited by BRUCE R GILLESPIE of P.O. BOX 30 BACCHUS MARSH VICTORIA 3340 AUSTRALIA for love and money (40c per copy; \$3 per annum - 9 issues) and is printed by JOHN BANGSUND and collated by LEE HARDING, to whom all letters of complaint should be sent after March 20, when the last stencil was typed. If you have no money (and already have a bond of sympathy with the Editor), letters printed, are worth one issue of a sub., and articles are worth three copies and the Editor's everlasting praise. NEXT ISSUE(S): Two issues, close together, some time in early May.

ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo  
o R A I S O N D ' E T R E o  
ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Reviews are for enjoyment, and those who doubt need read no further issues of this magazine. They are for the pleasure of both writer and reader. The pleasure comes from the communication of ideas about an author, impressions of the pleasure an author's work gives, combined with the review-writer's own sense of what writing is all about.

Reviewing is an analytic craft, but a good deal of the impulse towards art that drove the original author, lies in his reviewer. Reviews must be works of art in themselves - or at least the best of them are.

Greater men than I might show some of the pleasures of the review:

HENRY JAMES:

I listened with keen interest; it grew keener as he talked. "What then may your 'little point' happen to be?"

"Have I got to tell you, after all these years and labours?" Vereker's happy accent made me appear to myself, and probably to him, a rare dunce. "By my little point I mean - what shall I call it? - the particular thing I've written my books most for. Isn't there for every writer a particular thing of that sort, the thing that most makes him apply himself, the thing without the effort to achieve which he wouldn't write at all, the very passion of his passion, the part of the business in which, for him, the flame of art burns most intensely? Well, it's that!"

"Your description's certainly beautiful, but it doesn't make what you describe very distinct."

"I promise you it would be distinct if it should dawn on you at all.... It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else, comparatively, plays over the surface of it. The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps some day constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it. So it's naturally the thing for the critic to look for. It strikes

me even as the thing for the critic to find."

"You call it a little trick?" "That's only my little modesty. It's really an exquisite scheme."

I had to pause. "Don't you think you ought - just a trifle - to assist the critic?" "Assist him? What else have I done with every stroke of my pen? I've shouted my intention in his great blank face! My whole lucid effort gives him the clue - every page and line and letter. The thing's as concrete there as a bird in a cage, a bait on a hook, a piece of cheese in a mouse-trap. It's stuck into every volume as your foot is stuck into your shoe. It governs every line, it chooses every word, it dots every i, it places every comma." It was something, I guessed, in the primal plan, something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet. He highly approved of this image when I used it, and he used another himself. "It's the very string," he said, "that my pearls are strung on!"

- Henry James THE FIGURE IN THE CARPET

That's the main thrill of reviewing - the thrill of the hunt. The analytic state of mind, the enjoyment of thought in and about literature was best summed up by

ANDREW MARVELL

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,  
Withdraws into its happiness;  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find;  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas;  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,  
Or at some fruit-trees' mossy root,  
Casting the body's vest aside,  
My soul into the boughs does glide;  
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,  
Then whets and combs its silver wings,  
And, till prepared for longer flight,  
Waves in its plumes the various light.

- Andrew Marvell THE GARDEN

Why don't you explore some of the books you now skim over? Why don't you spread your silver wings? Shouldn't you devote at least a fraction as much energy to reading a book as the author puts into writing it? Read reviews in this light, but better still, write them.



magazine interesting and would be glad to discuss it with you some time... after the exams?

BG: Gulp - yes, folks that's how long ago this whole mad scheme was mooted. Dip. Ed. exams must have sent me permanently mad, or maybe the effect is wearing off. At any rate, Lee, you never suspected I would actually have you working on the project, did you?

Nice to hear you've taken the plunge into classical music, I would like to point out that records need not cost the earth; there's hardly a one in my five hundred or so that I've paid more than \$3.00 for - the thing is to know what to buy and where. John Clements' record shop, basement below Peter Fox, is the best place in Australia for obtaining records cheaply. With so much duplication of the standard repertoire most releases only stay in the catalogue for a few months and are then deleted - and offloaded at greatly reduced prices. I know the field, man, and I play it to the hilt.

Liked PLANET OF THE APES very much. Everyone acting to an admirable degree of intensity; beautifully shot and edited, and, banalities a c the script apart, probably the second best s-f film we've seen. Of course there are the expected dissenters among the faaaans. And that

will have to do for now. I hate writing letters - or haven't you guessed.

BG: I had guessed Lee. So do I hate writing letters, when I've about twenty stencils to type and ten essays to correct. Otherwise... it's the only way to get letters. :::: I thought the information on record buying might prove useful to many, especially those commencing a collection of classical records, as I was at the time this letter was written. Clements are good for the cheap records, and Discurio (York House, Little Collins Street) is good for the service, and full stocks on some lines of cheap records. I've bought about 40 classical l-ps now, and paid above \$3 for only three or four of them :: And PLANET OF THE APES was marvellous, as I've said elsewhere.

GEORGE TURNER  
14 Tennyson Street  
St Kilda  
Victoria 3182

:::: Several letters from George, all of them interesting and helpful, and some containing that most valuable of commodities... contributions. Just some of the more interesting points from some of the letters: :::

Your news about a new Little Magazine is interesting, and I will be glad to send you anything that strikes me as worth doing an article about.

I did consider an H G Wells series, but have since seen



Jack Williamson's Ph.D. thesis on the subject; this, while dull and a bit off-putting, is accurate and scholarly and says most of what is worth saying about the old man. So I feel the time is not really ripe for another work which won't add much to what Williamson has done.

In fact, my research time for the next few months will be taken up in unravelling the affairs of some Australian Trade Unions as background for one of the ferocious novels I have agreed to write. As you can imagine, gouging out the truth of some of these activities will leave me little zest for pure literary research. However, I will knock off something which I hope will be of interest, and will have a better idea of what to write when I find out something of your magazine policy.

BG: And that was a long time ago, wasn't it George? Still, those fascinating reviews are finally in print, and I keep hoping that those novels do not have to take up too much of your time. And as for Wells ... there are plenty of other important writers, but none so perennially fascinating. I'm sure not nearly enough has yet been written about Wells' science fiction, or the way it still dominates most of what is written today.

As regards the IQ article, there cannot be a

full article because I don't trust my psychological intuitions and general knowledge sufficiently to do more than speculate in a fragmentary way. These notes arose from an article "commissioned" for ASFR 19, in which Van Vogt's PROXY INTELLIGENCE was a centrepiece for vilification; I started thinking about his silly uses of the term, and the rest arose vaguely from consideration of various lines of attack; these led inevitably to wondering about the nature of genius. Each line led despairingly to the realisation of my own inadequacy in this field, and eventually I sent you the "Notes", suitably tidied up, of course, as a sort of grab bag of ideas which might conceivably arouse fruitful comment in others. (This proliferation of comment on a theme seems to me the major excuse for the existence of the seriously inclined Little SF magazine). You could use this para as a sort of epigraph to the Notes if you feel any purpose would be served.

BG: And as such it is of service. But prolonged discussion on a theme? Judging from others' experience, that might be stretching the boundaries of hope a little too far. But the Fan is a surprising animal, and since I'm backing my all on his reactions, then IQ IN SF - AND ELSEWHERE might prove the most important article of S F C I. With any luck, my own meagre researches into IQ testing may appear in this issue. But this weekend is slipping away fast.

As regards references, aside



from ACTOF CREATION and the introduction to one of Eysench's books of IQ tests, I no longer know where most of the stuff came from; it's all lost somewhere in the accumulation of years of sporadic reading. ... The Koestler thesis is a very interesting one, indicating "genius" as the bisociation of ideas, and very effectively uses the sense of humour as the starting point, central example and overriding metaphor through 600 pretty wonderful pages.

BG: Review anyone? No hard work in reading Koestler, as George points out.

Geniuses in s f? I doubt it. Unbounded speculation and daydreaming seem to me to have little in common with fundamental creation, and could only (I think) come under consideration if it offered something new about the real world, as THE TEMPEST, for instance, creates the world in microcosm in a fashion that allows us to see the morality-myth as a whole instead of from a point of view. THE TEMPEST, in fact, is bloody good philosophic s f. People like Vonnegut and Stapledon represent, to me, the apices of intellectual presentation in the s f field, but the spark which sets the fire is not there; Cordwainer Smith never appealed to me in this fashion -- he ruminated but never cohered.

BG: I ticked off Bob Toomey in the last issue

for unwisely using the term genius. I'm now willing to accept your point, George, perhaps even for Cordwainer Smith (what's the good of being that kind of dreamer if you cannot fully communicate the experience?) and certainly for my other favourites. But there must be a middle echelon of creative talent that would contain people with minds as forever fresh as Dick and Aldiss.

And I don't think there is any truth in the editorial rumour, 'proved' by some very peculiar statistics indeed, that "s f fans are more intelligent than the average of the population". One has only to read their letters.... That they are younger, as you point out, is a genuine statistic, and youth is notoriously hungry -- and notoriously indiscriminating -- where the new and exciting is involving (BG: Still count me in on that one, George). As to there being a wider range of IQ among s f readers than for any other part of the reading public, this is probably true. S f caters for all tastes, often in the one issue of a magazine, and every reader has to wade through a pile of unsympathetic material to discover the item to which he responds; in fact, the whole genre is disintegrating into sub-genres (basic s f is almost a thing of the past and there no longer means anything definite) and one has to pick a path through the wilderness to find what suits the individual taste. It tends to think now in terms of blood and guts (IF), pseudo-technical (ANALOG), speculative fantasy (the Delany-Zelazny school) and wispy pretties (F&SF).

I sometimes sigh for Asimov and the early Heinlein, when at least nobody was pretending to be profound about his thud and blunder tactics. Yes, I'm sure a potential Carter Brown and a potential Hemingway could appear in the one issue of a magazine. The Brown would be immediately recognisable by his concentration on surfaces, and manipulation as a substitute for characterisation; and Hemingway would not be, because the value of an artist can only be discerned after exposure to a fair selection of his work -- one might discern promise but not the limits of his attainment. Read the early Bradbury and you will see what I mean -- not that Bradbury is much great shakes in the final analysis, but he did reveal facets of talent after some appalling beginnings.

I don't know whether or not there is an article in this (the one you are deliberately not commissioning); only the progress of S F COMMENTARY and reader reaction can determine its usefulness. Bangsund and I and some of his other contributors have tried to lift s f comment to this level, but reaction has not been encouraging; it might be an uphill grind. Our approach has perhaps represented too sudden a change -- it is certainly not "straight down the middle" -- and it may be that the climate is not yet right. Again, it may be that time is required for the sympathetic readership to coagulate from

amongst the maze of fan magazine readers, for I am certain that such a readership exists, spread over the disparate fan-scape. Again, what may be needed could turn out to be a livelier style of presenting this type of article, a sugaring the pill for the reader who wants to be amused and entertained rather than stirred into thought.

BG: There was lots more in that letter, but so far I think there is enough for anyone to chew on. Of course, we don't want sugar for the pill, but people who like pills. Fans were not kind to serious fan magazines last year, but maybe something miraculous will happen this year (in the three quarters of it left). A vicious circle has started, I think -- whereas fans for the last ten years have been willing to support The Field, no matter what; the tastelessness and, as George points out, increasing disintegration of the field, must kill interest in the grass roots. Most of the paperback publishers now are mainly doing reprints. With the arrival of Messrs. Harbottle and Bangsund, and Moorcock surviving in some form or other, perhaps there is still hope for us from England. That's where the Yanks have gone for their slivers of hope, anyway. And George and both Johns, and I, and a few others dismally man the Australian cockpits. It's gotta improve, cos it cain't get worse.

More from George. I thought I was thorough in some ways, but this terrifying. All I said was that I was going to complete Asimov's list in HUGO WINNERS, with some information Don Tuck had sent me. Would George like to concentrate on an article summing up trends in the Hugo awards, based on this complete list. George wrote back:

Your idea about doing a Hugo article is tempting, but will involve a deal of information chasing. Still, somewhere something on those lines seems practicable and I will give it a fling.

(BG: I'm not sure whether that promise still holds, and I'm certainly not holding George to it.)

The full list of award winners will, of course, be necessary, but what would help as much or even more would be (if Tucker can provide it) as much information as possible on the runners-up and the works on the short lists for the various years.

The Club library magazines should supply enough material to trace the general trends for each period, but a huge stumbling block will be the discovery of what novels were published in each year outside the magazines.

BG: !!!!! Does this sort of information exist? 66 pages and all, S F C I will be chickenfeed besides the results of this survey.

BERNIE BERNHOUSE  
62 Military Road  
Avondale Heights  
Victoria 3034

(BG: I had asked Bernie for an article about anything, preferably his American experiences)

I'll get right to the point, No! Now, let me explain.

First of all, I don't believe I'm good enough to be printed alongside people like Broderick and Foyster.

Secondly, I don't believe I'd do your 'zine any good. This is according to my preconceived impressions of what ASFR the second will be like.

Third, I believe PJ Stevens (as Lee Harding once claimed) is the best fandom comedy writer to emerge from Australia.

Fourthly - as Leigh Edmonds will confirm, if I can write anything then it's when I'm purely spontaneous. In fact I can't write any other way.

BG: All this of course is the most extraordinary nonsense I've ever heard (except for the bit about Paul Stevens). The only way in which we are going to be a Quality Mag, with all the fastness such a label implies, is in our intentions. Anybody, no matter how shoddy a writer at the moment, must improve if he really wants to improve s f and s f criticism in his turn. Fun magazines are shoddy by direction, although far superior by

other standards, in many cases. All spontaneous efforts accepted, anyway, and nobody (except maybe Leigh) has yet been told the full American story.

As for LA and New York, only twenty days ago (BG: letter received at the end of November) to go, and already the thing which I've been trying to avoid has hit me from all sides: "Try while you're there Bernie; perhaps you could pick up a particular ish of Crud for me and oh, before I forget, I was telling all the folks at home about you, and Mum's sister wants to know if you could get these special high heeled shoes up in Chicago - I mean you're in the States and everything, and Chicago isn't that far away is it?" (BG: And Bernhouse is trying to tell me he can't write. Sometimes your deceit really gets me).

Believe me Bruce, one thing that I appreciate about my s f friends is that not one of them has asked me to get anything at all for them, even though I am willing to, to a reasonable extent.

BG: We soon fixed that, didn't we, Leigh? I wonder whether Bernie did get DANGEROUS VISIONS and DO ANDROIDS DREAM ELECTRIC SHEEP? for me.

DAVID BOUTLAND (alias David Rome)

Flat 1/23 The Esplanade  
St Kilda  
Victoria

(Also asked for an article, long ago).

Seems to me I've seen the name Bruce Gillespie in ASFR once or twice! Thank you very much for your letter regarding fanzines. I must have been full when I told John Bangsund I wanted to produce a Fanzine of my own - what I in fact wanted to do, after a long absence from s-f, was to be involved a little in fan activities - and Fanzines - just to get the old blood stirring again.

Sorry to have to tell you that while Lee is right - and by the way, I haven't met Lee yet - I am back from England, the chronology is way-out. My wife and I got back to Australia five years ago and promptly disappeared into a lakeside cottage during which time I wrote only two science fiction stories - used by Carnell in his NEW WRITINGS. Sorry, make that three. I also did STARMAN IN WARD 7 during that time, after a short spell - working - in a mental hospital. NEW WORLDS used that, and later Judy Merrill in her 11th Annual.

So my knowledge of the English s-f scene would be about as extensive as the first man you see walking past your window up there at Bacchus Marsh. However, I would certainly like to contribute to S F COMMENTARY in some way, under the name of David Rome - tho' I fear our honest opinions might clash at many points.

BG: As I said to David by letter - I can't think what slightest use this magazine would be to anybody, least of all to me, if opinions did not clash violently all over the place. One of the great advantages of not living in America is this freedom to disagree most violently with the state of s f in that country. We're not obliged to pat anybody on the head if they are obviously off the rails. Before too many people cancel projected subscriptions, I would remind them that the whole aim is basically con-structive - we want to show some people where they should get back on the rails.

I'm primarily a fiction writer and wary of my abilities as a critic - don't suppose that matters though. I'd like a crack at reviewing something of Brunner's (BG: catalogue of possibilities already sent, hope you received it) and if you could let me know what's been covered and what hasn't. At present I'm working as a staff writer with Crawfords, on their new police TV show, and kept pretty busy - but I'm planning to do two books a year after Christmas, for the U.S. market. My tastes in s-f are quite wide, ranging from Finney through Simak and Hoyle, Brunner - of late - Aldiss - of old - to a little Ballard taken with a pinch of salt - loved David Bunch's old stories

in Ziff-Davis mags, still go for Bradbury and poor Chuck Beaumont - find David Masson fascinating etc, etc.

I've got no private project except becoming wealthy, so please keep in touch.

BG: "Poor Chuck Beaumont"? Another old-timer gone? I learned two days ago (probably several months too late) that Arthur Sellings died late last year. S f is hardly the Bright Young Literature of the 20th century anymore, with so many of its doyens reaching old age.

Barry Malzberg (K.M. O'Donnell), interim editor at Ultimate publications, is also a Bunch fan - one an issue, presumably until Ted White takes over.

Sorry for all this confusion - indented paragraphs for my blarney is still sending me up the wall. Just shows - I should stop the blah and let the correspondents hold the floor exclusively.

But would somebody (say, Andy Porter) please send me a newszine or three? Away from the centre of civilization (i.e. Bangers) news becomes awful scarce.

David sent a later letter, with a few extra titbits on his current project:

You must think I've dropped right out of sight after our brief correspondence. I've been in Sydney on my annual holidays, have got back to find that we're in some trouble with the script I wrote and that the whole

DIVISION FOUR show is behind schedule. Plus trying to write some s f of my own -- you can imagine.

I'm pleased to say that I've sold a story to the new Ron Graham magazine, whatever its title might be. A six thousand worder called PEOPLE LIKE YOU. Also, while I was in Sydney heard that Ace had bought a pulp thriller of mine called THE CANNIBALS. So, I'm happy.

I don't mind writing an article for you about TV writing here, though I have to be careful, not being free to say what I might like to say -- under the terms of my contract I can't "talk" to the "press" without the permission of the company. Anyway, I think I'd prefer to do something dealing with s f.

BG: Well, they do call this amateur journalism, don't they? DIVISION FOUR is on the road, although I fear to ask anybody about its success or otherwise. Local tv does not thrill me.. but neither does any other Tv. A good way of becoming wealthy, though, as you say. The first local science fiction tv series has not yet been launched (with the exception of the odd serial here and there, such as G.K. Saunders' THE STRANGER) but when it is, you can guess who will be in there scripting. And it won't be Lee Harding, unless I'm wrong again::: Ron

Graham, if you've not heard, is a Sydney gentleman of some means, who has decided to finance the first Aussie-British professional s f magazine. The prospects for its success have increasingly brightened since we incredulously giggled at preliminary plans late last years. Stories (good ones) have been bought, and maybe even paid for, and plans do not seem to have gone awry.

At the top of a column, and I still forget to indent. It's the Boutland influence, or maybe my envy of a gentleman becoming wealthy.

GARY WOODMAN  
31 Bethell Avenue  
Parkdale  
Victoria 3194

BG: Again two letters, of greater or lesser interest. Those who have not experienced a Gary Woodman letter, ... you didn't ask for them, but here they are:

Life is becoming too involved. I returned from a holiday in Sydney last week, and found waiting for me your letter and notification of a supplementary examination I have been awarded for the subject I failed at Monash. As you may well imagine I have been working rather hard, discounting those well-known and perpetual rumours that "supps are easy - they're designed for people to pass". Maybe, but it's not worth betting.....

The only trouble with a



contributor's fanzine is that the editor tends to get crammed into a steadily-decreasing space. This may be what you want, but I thought a fanzine was published for (a) fun and (b) egohoo. Admittedly it's your fanzine. I just think it's strange.

When Bangsund was a struggling faned he'd take anything he could get, read it, and publish what he liked. When ASFR was a BNF, he'd chuck out a lot of stuff unread. The local fan lost interest, and down came ASFR.

BG: John Bangsund is invited to answer to all libel, intended or otherwise. I always had the impression, without having met ASFR's editor, that he did his level best to encourage local writing, but was met by numerous subscriptions but little active interest. But since you seem to have been the editor's right hand man, Gary, I suppose you know best.

Even as scholarly a journal as RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY finally had to publish a dictionary of fan terms. For the justifiably puzzled : "Fanzine" -- fan magazine -- amateur journal; "Egohoo" -- ego booster -- anything you want to make of that; "faned" -- fan magazine editor; "BNF" -- "big neo fanzine"?? -- "neo

fanzine" does not mean "new fanzine" but "bigtime fanzine". These terms have been in existence for a long time, and any relationship between them and the English language, or even the American language, is purely coincidental.

I give up: all editor's comments on the same margins as correspondents', and who cares if the reader confuses the two! Back to Gary:

It just struck me that the reason why there are so few Australian s f authors is that there was/is nowhere for their amateur selves to practise. If there's nothing to write for, they won't write. This may or may not be true, but I think (of course I would) that the thought bears consideration.

Reviews are not interesting per se. A fanzineful of reviews is damn boring. Useful -- yes, but not interesting. Unless one has read the book being reviewed, interest is dictated by the possibility of the reader's buying that book. If someone is reviewing a prozine's Annual Bests (fictionwise) there is little point in writing the review and less in reading it, past saying "eight bucks of THE BEST OF F&SF (to choose an unlikely title) is about equivalent in worth to that much's subscription to said prozine." But then again, that's just what a review is... (sounds of hair-tearing).

BG::: It will be your hair



that will be torn, Woodman. Your point about reviewing is, of course, arrant nonsense. I mean, if you believed that, you would not even have enjoyed ASFR 18! Actually, your points have prompted the as-yet-unwritten editorial which pock-marks the beginning of this issue. Reviewing can be beautiful art - it can be incredibly useful - you could speak knowledgably about s f for years without having read a word of it, after reading a sprinkling of the best fanzines:::

It seems to me that the only difference between SKYTHROP and ASFR is the name - but that's being cynical....

One day I'll hitchhike to Bacchus Marsh (hitchhiking is a wonderful way to get from A to B), but not soon. I have (a) a supp., (b) a fanzine to produce (more later), (c) Aa job and (d) a girlfriend. You're only minor.

BG :::: I didn't need Woodman's Warming Words to realize that. (b) and (c) I am also burdened with. What's more, I actually produce my fanzine, and spend all the rest of my time worrying about my job.

You may have been right on the first point. ASFR lives! we have just been informed, so perhaps SKYTHROP is stillborn. Perhaps it was never really conceived.

Let's get my address problems out of the way.

Because of the Education Department's brilliant attempts to make teaching attractive, I spend most of my time at Ararat, 128 miles West of Melbourne. When I am at home, (about one weekend in three after Easter) the location is 4 Malcolm Street, Bacchus Marsh. MY POSTAL ADDRESS AND THE ADDRESS OF THIS MAGAZINE IS: P.O. Box 30 Bacchus Marsh 3340. You may have already realized this. My father sends on my mail to Ararat (until he gets sick of readressing envelopes) as my address may not be permanent there:::

A section from the second Woodman horror-stretch. Have you ever seen one of his letters? --- I asked Gary for some Heinlein reviews ---

I don't know what you meant by "just"-reprinted STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. Merv Binns says it sold out in the first two days (same with GLORY ROAD; can there be a Secret Melbourne Fandom?). However, after much haggling ("Have you got STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, Merv?" "Nup. Sold out in two days, etc. etc." Binns rambles. "Oh". Next visit: "G'day, Merv." "G'day - here's your STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND." Woodman croggles - esp. \$1.15/paperback).

So: STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND: just read - takes Woodman's Award for Best Anything Anywhen, except Birds.

PODKAYNE OF MARS: lost the prozine that contained the last quarter of POM. Can't remember a thing.

GLORY ROAD: read first third in a prozine (not mine); suitably impressed but not his (His?) best.

FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD: read twice; looking for a paperback edition.

MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS: deserved its Hugo and 6.023 x 10<sup>23</sup> more.

Nope, I haven't done anything. All right, I don't blame you. I think the reason is that while I am working, I am too tired to be fannishly active. See you at the Con.

BG :::: I would hope to see everybody at the Con. If that isn't an object lesson on how not to review, I don't know what is. SSL is utter tripe, Gary, but I'll argue that one out the next time I see you. I haven't the time or patience to actually reread parts of it in order to review it. I'm trying to think which book Lee Harding said was very like STRANGER ON IN A STRANGE LAND - I want desperately to avoid it.

And if everyone shares your attitude, Gary, you won't have anybody else but me in my fanzine. You're the ones who have to read it... all I do is type the stencils. ::::

PETER DARLING  
56 Pembroke Street  
Epping  
N.S.W. 2121

-- A LETTER FROM MY FIRST  
SUBSCRIBER! --

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$3.00 for a year's sub. to S F COMMENTARY. But be warned. If you accept this cheque your magazine is doomed. Anything I subscribe to folds, anything from LIFE AUSTRALIA to NEW WORLDS (well almost) to ASFR (BG: You just may be wrong on the last two, and, let us pray, the first-mentioned) I hope you can break the gloomy run, and I'm sure that if SFC is half as good as I think it will be that you will.

When Gary Mason and myself called at Ferntree Gully on Australia Day weekend about half of SFC had been printed, and I seem to remember that you said in your letter to Gary that it was all printed. You should know, but I think you might be a bit ambitious trying to get 9 issues a year when you are 150 miles from your printers. I guess time will tell.

BG :::: I don't call it Ambition - I'm beginning to call it straight-out Idiocy. I'm beginning to think that ASFR's Odd Schedule will be surpassed truly by SFC's. The January 1 issue coming out in early March for instance. But it has come out (I have heard by very indirect means) and I am expected the first hundred letters of comment directly. One issue of the 9 has already been ~~deleted~~, and this one is timed for March 28. I'll have to print a double-issue, both published simultaneously, to make up subscription promises. Still, with people like you, Peter, willing to Risk All on an

untried product, then I don't see how I can fail;:::

I have not read your article in MENTOR No.14 at length, so I can't really comment except to say that it seems a cut above the usual article Ron has in THE MENTOR. It was, I suppose, originally written for ASFR and would probably have been more at home there as much of it seems to be a rebuttal (or discussion) of John Foyster's article.

BG:::: Thassright folks - Written January 1968 and still going strong, my Cordwainer Smith Appreciation finally turns up in THE MENTOR published by Ron Clarke, 78 Redgrave Road Normanhurst, N.S.W. 2076. (No. 14 - do not send subscription money, because the N.S.W. government doesn't like it). I bet you can't think of a better way of soliciting advertising, Ron. ::::

In an earlier letter to THE MENTOR you mentioned Ron's claim to four s f clubs in Sydney. Perhaps there are in Sydney, but certainly only on paper. You probably already know this, but in case you don't you will be interested to hear the potted history, as I understand it.

The earliest club in Sydney was the Futurian Society, with origins pre-WW II and owing a lot to Sydney author Vol Molesworth (or some such name). This seems to have met and to have survived until about five or six years ago when

it all but foundered from lack of interest and from a clash of personalities between remaining members, in particular between an old Sydney fan Pat Terry and a postal member by the name of Graham Stone. The details I'm not sure, but I do know that at this time the Club was virtually disbanded, rooms in a Sydney building relinquished and the Library spread between several members.

The next stirring of s f interest you probably know about -- the visit of the Hamiltons and the subsequent gathering of interested people to welcome them and to discuss the formation of an s f club, a meeting midwifed by the mythical Betsy Holt and conceived (long distance) by John Bangsund, out of ASFR. This meeting, which I attended after receiving a reply to a letter sent to John, the reply coming that afternoon, was held at the Kings Cross home of John Danza. I was away for the next few months but when I next went to a meeting it was to find that Mr Danza was persona non grata for reasons not satisfactorily revealed and that the SYDNEY SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION (all complaints about the name to Ron Clarke) as it is now constituted had been formed.

Graham Stone, a Canberra resident, had formed the ASFA ...but attempted to revive the Futurian Society. The Futurians and the SSFF are the only two clubs in Sydney now, although there may be a small club (Alex Robb) at Macquarie Uni... ::::Sorry for cutoff, Peter, but you're last by chronology. See you at the Con. Turn over for non-epistolary goodies ::::

C R I T I C A N T O

of

Disch  
UNDER COMPULSION

19

## THE MAGUS

by JOHN FOWLES

First published 1966

PAN books :: 570 pages

A\$1.30

Is THE MAGUS a box of tricks or a tricky box? Does it concern dishonesty or is it dishonest?

One of the reviews quoted on PAN book's back cover calls the book "an intellectual CARPETBAGGERS". Some compliment. But the trappings of intellectualism are there, despite PAN's usually gaudy presentation. Quotations from de Sade, a short explanation of the term "magus" ("magician" in Tarot), and urgent perceptive prose from the novel's first page, keep one's interest alight. The book's claim to importance comes from its claim to be dealing with ideas as characters. In this the book immediately resembles science fiction. To what extent THE MAGUS is at least speculative fiction, takes some time to discover. After all, PAN are not going to kill sales and movie box office by calling it s f.

This blurbed claim to intellectualism is not quite supported by the first chapter. The first sentence:

I was born in 1927  
the only child of  
middle-class parents,  
both English, and

themselves born in the grotesquely elongated shadow, which they never rose sufficiently above history to leave, of that monstrous dwarf Queen Victoria.

comes directly from a John Buchan thriller, not from Anthony Burgess or even Graham Greene. It's a glaring semaphore: "Look at me! Look at me! I'm on for another 570 pages." 'I' is Christopher Urfe, jazzy, sexy, intelligent, mixed-up postgrad, all ready for hell and high water. You've heard that hit tune before? Fowles certainly takes no pains to hide the tattered edges of this familiar construction. Despite the superficial life history, and the concerted efforts to convince us that Urfe is just another warm-hearted cad, this bloke is obviously just a person to whom things happen. Just as in an s f novel.

The problem is (and is there anything about this novel that is not a problem?) that Fowles wants to keep us reading this very long novel, mainly on the strength of our empathy for Urfe. When gorgeous Australian mistress Alison walks off, and news arrives that she has committed suicide, we hope it is all a trick. As Urfe is tormented by Dr. Conchis, Fowles supports us through his endless literary gadgets simply by enlisting our sympathy for Urfe's predicament. Yet we know all the time that Urfe is both much too good and much too lucky to be true, and why would anybody want to set up an elaborately mystifying experiment just for him? Is this puzzle insoluble?

Maurice Conchis, the Magus (Magician), is meant to be mysterious,

and, in this role, he succeeds well. After Urfe just happens to wander into his estate on the Greek island where he is teaching, Conchis conjures one odd happening after another. Figures from Conchis' anecdotal past appear before Urfe, disappearing quickly. Urfe is entranced, then trapped, by his affection for "Lily", forever Edwardian dressed.

The quality of reality is put to the test, subtly and enjoyably. This is not the reduction-to-illusion of *THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH* (to choose an sf counterpart). Our early suspicion that this is just another ghost story, rather like *TURN OF THE SCREW*, gives away to the realization that the pageant is physical reality masquerading as legend. Therefore Urfe has to choose which physical realities to trust. Over what extent of the world does Conchis wave his wand? At one stage Urfe seems to have defeated his spells; at another moment Conchis and his colleagues acquire the status of Palmer Eldritch, observing every sliver of the world with their "cold incuriousness".

*THE MAGUS* is then, itself, a masterpiece of trickery. It is a novel that teases for 600 pages - then leaves us standing bewildered, not sure if the experience was worth the trouble. For most of the novel, Fowles seems to be posing questions - not so much "What moves the world?", but "What do you do about it when you

know?" Fate touches us on the shoulder, in the person of Conchis, but then leaves all the vital decisions to us anyway. The comparisons with Henry James' *TURN OF THE SCREW* are there. But if James refrains from giving any answers at all, Fowles nearly lets us peek inside his Pandora's box. The lid is firmly shut by the end of the novel.

Elusiveness is the keynote of the themes, procedures and plot of this novel. Unfortunately, and unforgivably, the prose is not so elusive. The themes leap from the sinews of mediocre to medium-good prose, that dampens all the novel's best thoughts. Maurice Conchis is beyond John Fowles, and so eludes us all. One blurb-writer praises the novel as part of "what is happening to the English novel". It seems a pity. Any of the better English novelists would take one or more of the novel's themes (if, as I have said, they are the ~~1517~~ themes the author had in mind), refine and examine them, and delight us with them. There is something yearning and undelightful about much of *THE MAGUS*. It is a Romantic novel without prose of Romantic stature. Take one of Urfe's early meetings with the elusive Lily:

She showed a little moue, half mocking herself, half mocking me as I stood knee-deep in the water. I don't know why silence descended on us, why we were locked for a few strange ~~minutes~~ moments in a more serious look. It must have been transparently excited on my side. She looked so young, so timidly naughty. She



gave an embarrassed yet mischievous smile, as if she should not have been there, had risked impropriety.

"Has Neptune cut your tongue off?"

"You look so ravishing. Like a Renoir."

She moved a little further away, and twirled her ombrelle. I slipped into my beach-shoes and, towelling my back, caught her up.

There are the references to Renoir, the word ombrelle, the general impression of Fowles' familiarity with some of the delights of the English language. But there is that phrase "transparently excited", and "so timidly naughty", "You look so ravishing. Like a Renoir".... and so on. They are precisely the improprieties of language that a Thomas Mann or Graham Greene would avoid. It is dishonest language, tapping conventional attitudes and cliché mind-slips to support a claim to originality.

So for most of the novel there is a tiring tension between original (?) thought and unprecedented tricks; and unoriginal; efficient language. Fowles exerts massive energy to accomplish little. He should have pounced on his main points, and really delighted us with them. It could have been a great fantastic novel,

but it is plain that so many s f writers could have written this sort of prose much better. If Fowles had read some Philip Dick before writing this novel, it would have been a third the length and twice as interesting.

This division between prose and reference seems sufficient evidence of the book's trickery. One could add to the evidence. The question that is never answered, and, for me, completely flaws the book's logic, is - why should such a gifted, magical and all-powerful mob as Conchis' bother about the spiritual education of Christopher Urfe? The symbolic reference is obvious, because Fowles explains it all often enough. Each man must learn to stand up to the facts of his own existence, and very few do. But must we not learn this for ourselves, and within ourselves? And I can state the truth in one sentence - it does not need a remote Greek island and a magician to demonstrate its truth. The vagaries of domestic existence seem the best, and often the only, education towards something which cannot, and should not, be artificially conjured from without.

Christopher Urfe is not worth Conchis' trouble, and he is not worth our trouble. I found it hard to interest myself to book's end. THE MAGUS was, for me, a muddy storm in a fragile teacup. Anyone who can clear the mud, is welcome to do so.



## UNDER COMPULSION

by THOMAS M DISCH

1968 :: Rupert Hart Davis

220 pages :: A\$3.60

Reviewed by Bruce Gillespie

How many apple tarts  
can you eat before they  
turn your stomach? How much  
brilliance can you absorb  
before going blind in one  
eye?

Take 17 stories by Thom-  
as Disch, read them over a  
period of five or six years  
and the string of pearls  
looks flawless. Read the  
same 17 stories within days  
of each other, and the  
glitter harshens.

No copyright dates for  
individual stories are  
given in this first coll-  
ection of Disch's. One does  
not have the amiable plea-  
sure of tracing Disch's  
"development". The 17 stor-  
ies form a lump, a single  
achievement that must be  
analyzed under headings  
other than chronology. This  
analysis could also prove  
fruitless. Start at the  
beginning (THE ROACHES) and  
work through to CASABLANCA,  
and one notices graduations  
of quality, but little  
variation of preoccupation.

THE ROACHES tells of  
"Miss Marcia Kenwell" who  
"had a perfect horror of  
cockroaches". That first  
sentence does not quite  
tell all, but the meanly  
horrifying end is only a  
twist and not a real sur-

prise. Disch is far superior  
to a Lovecraft, because his  
horrors have whiskers and in-  
tentions, and his heroine is  
only an exaggeration of any of  
us. The detail might be there  
to serve either one of two  
purposes. Is THE ROACHES, after  
all, a sick joke (so that we  
must laugh at our own discom-  
fort) or just a sick story  
(telling of one horrifying as-  
pect of the universe that so  
far we've successfully avoided.)?  
The tone of the story is  
so neutral and clinical  
that we cannot distinguish  
one from the other.

Is Disch a black magic-  
ian or a prophet of doom?  
Does he attempt to send shiv-  
ers to our spines or fear to  
our hearts? This implication  
of dishonesty, of the most  
serious themes attached to an  
unsympathetic mind, strikes  
one in every story of the  
collection. This implication  
tweaks at the edges of our  
enjoyment of all the stor-  
ies.

Take one of the best  
stories in the collection.  
DESCENDING is as true a  
perception of a sceptic's  
view of the twentieth cent-  
ury as one will find any-  
where. The standard horror  
story ambit (man caught on  
eternally descending elev-  
ator) turns into a parable  
of man's passion for surviv-  
al under unbelievable but  
wholly threatening circum-  
stances. The hero's conser-  
vation of food and energy and  
his sustenance upon a hope  
of spiritual enlightenment  
grip the mind and evoke a  
strong desire for some res-  
olution of the insanity.

But when the traveller

reaches the bottom there is a little sign over the ASCENDING chute - "Out of order". In the end, the truth snuffs out the spirit, and only the tired flesh is left:

Then, he was lying at the foot of the escalator... One after another, in perfect order, the steps of the escalator slipped into these crevices, tread in groove, rasping at his fingertips, occasionally tearing away a sliver of his flesh.

That was the last thing he remembered.

It's a desperate conclusion. It's the kind of conclusion that makes Camus posit suicide as the only genuine philosophical question, and made Kafka write his books. But the parable here is just one of 17! It's just one of the best. Desperation is marketed at 20¢ a story. There's plenty more where that comes from - but how can Disch support that thought alone? Any concern that Disch feels for the "human situation" as a whole is cauterized by his medium.

THE SQUIRREL CAGE, for instance, becomes a dry run for CAMP CONCENTRATION. However, one only needs to look at the difference between that story and its noble successor, to see the failure of this collection of stories. THE SQUIRREL CAGE is self-consciously a box of tricks. The opening sentence of the story demonstrates

the differences between the short story and the later novel:

The terrifying thing - if that's what I mean - I'm not sure that 'terrifying' is the right word - is that I'm free to write down anything I like but that no matter what I do write down it will make no difference - to me, to you, to whomever differences are made.

The advertisement of deception is pasted like a banner over the story from its start. The type-writer is not a confessional (as in CAMP CONCENTRATION) but a doorway to deliberately induced chaos. The destruction of reality is a false exercise, because we are not given enough information to take reality as an issue of importance. When, at last we are told:

The only thing that could terrify me now is if someone were to come in. If they came in and said, "All right, Disch, you can go now." That, truly, would be terrifying.

we are not particularly surprised or concerned. The trickery has been obvious throughout the story, and, as with so many of the stories in this volume, the "surprise ending" promotes only a yawn.

Most of the stories are, therefore, circular arguments. They demonstrate the purposelessness and barrenness of the universe, but say nothing profound about the quality of life itself. Disch's attempts to penetrate life (such as the

teacher who tries to communicate with NADA) only reopen a few much abused scratches on its surface. The metaphysics are good, probably defensible, but not infinitely repeatable.

So read this book over a period of time, and treat the stories as practice for the novels in general, and CAMP CONCENTRATION in particular. They are extraordinary as first exercises. They are far more remarkable as selections from the S F magazines. The prose is lucid and nonemphatic. The cult of the story-teller is always uppermost in Disch's mind.

But it is a craft dealing with subjects that should only be touched with art. And, before the spiritual boredom hits you about a quarter of the way through the book, read CASABLANCA, the last entry. In this story alone does Disch stand up and defy the neutral universe to do its dirtiest. In this story alone does he assert his own version of the dignity of man, and well he does it. May CASABLANCA augur well for the future Disch short story career.

A RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW  
by Bruce Gillespie

THE WANDERER by Fritz Leiber

Dennis Dobson 1967 : 346 pp.

Original US publication 1964

THE WANDERER has been a quiet legend. It won its 'Hugo' award before Australians knew of the book's existence. Reviews were numerous, but oddly incapable of clearly presenting the book's attractions. THE WANDERER is not mentioned frequently... but neither is Leiber. A fresh look at both might not go astray.

The book treads enough old themes to fill an anthology. World disaster occurs when a new planet appears out of hyperspace, to nestle close to the moon on its orbit, and eventually to steal the moon's substance. The gravity of the new planet causes earthquakes, and the tide heights are enormously increased. As one fear-crazed astronomer scribbles just before his observatory is submerged: "Multiply everything by eighty!"

Eighty-fold tide increases have the expected effects. Cities disappear, and those inhabitants who can flee the country. It all could have sounded like EARTH ABIDES out of DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS. Add this main section of the novel to the hanky-panky in space where some of Earth's (un)luckier citizens meet the inhabitants of the new planets. One of them is captured by a flying saucer, no less. The wierd and the wonderful is here, page after page.

But it is well-worn Wierd-'n'-Wonderful, and nobody realizes this more than Leiber.

Leiber is not one to rope in Hugos with cliches, although he may sometimes fail altogether, turning original fancy into cliché (as in SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS). THE WANDERER, in the Dobson edition, is 346 pages long, and even the major s f writers would quail at the thought of entertaining for this length.

Yet this book is one of the most consistently readable science fiction books ever written. The book's weave may look threadbare in summary, but THE WANDERER'S attraction is that of a suspense novel. We cannot outguess Leiber, because his procedures are very different from others who have covered the same territory. What is more, Leiber stops us from wanting to outguess him. The journey is more interesting than the destination, firstly, because the destination is already explored, and secondly, because this traveller's route has barely been touched.

Tellers of world-disaster tales rely on several stock responses, the primary one being primitive terror. One man escapes alive, and his one main claim to survival is a capacity to lap up horrible sights.

Leiber foreswears such an approach in his first lines:

Some stories of  
terror and the super-  
normal start with a  
moonlit face at a

diamond-paned window,  
or an old document in  
spidery handwriting, or  
the baying of a hound  
across lonely moors. But  
this one began with an  
eclipse of the moon and  
with four glisteningly  
new astronomical photo-  
graphs, each showing  
starfields and a plan-  
etary object. Only...  
something had happened  
to the stars. (Page 7)

It is hard to determine the relative significance of the objects shown at the outset. Are the cliches of horror fiction specifically denied, just to be reintroduced later in disguise? How may astronomical photographs be a part of the supernatural? Two incongruous patterns are superimposed upon one another, and we want to know how the picture will turn out.

In this novel there is no "main character" (as the s f genre understands the term) upon whom all the world's pains can safely be deposited. The first chapters of the novel shift from scene to scene, from character to character. Two lovers and their cat set out for a drive; a lone Atlantic sailor settles to nap after proclaiming to the stars: "Sanity is rhythm"; an English gentleman and a drunken Welsh poet discourse on science fiction and the Moon, which still safely sails overhead. These people do not know each other. Their purposes are unconnected. With the other characters of the novel, they form a cross-section of the world as Leiber sees it. It is this world that suffers

and survives under the influence of the Wanderer, and we feel the strains that afflict the whole of it.

Like any novelist with similar pretensions, Leiber may either wave his banner of all-inclusiveness, or actually do the hard work that will convince us of the truth of his world. He cannot afford to lecture or preach, as so many others would. That would place a barrier between the reader's understanding and the author's. The relationship between the Wanderer and the Earth, between our safe refuge and the embodiment of all its possible fates, must be etched from words so that it comes completely to life.

I contend, although many would disagree, that Leiber succeeds in this formidable task. He achieves by means of his verisimilitude - his truth to both life as we know it, and the life of his characters. Leiber's characters do not shriek to their respective gods when faced with the new wonder. At first it hardly affects their lives. The two drivers meet up with a group of flying saucer enthusiasts; the moon-explorer starts to notice a chain of unprecedented moonquakes. The sight of the purple and yellow sphere is taken in stride as far as possible, because that is the only way it can be approached.

The slow resolution of

curiosity through suffering, ending in resilience, takes place over the space of the whole novel. The saucer-watchers' first reaction is just observe their dream-come-true - to draw pictures of the patterns formed on its surface. Dai Davies, Welsh poet, rages against the capturer of his Mona, and in no way considers that the offending object might affect his drunken walk home. A group of ragged drugged New Yorkers bowl along to enjoy the inexplicably empty city. The moon explorer lifts off successfully from moon surface, only to stagger over the moon's horizon, full into the face of the vast object that has taken the Moon in tow. The observations interlace, the web of completely believable but disparate attitudes interlock into a vibrant watchtower of humanity at bay. We're all poised for the unthinkable.

The subject of the novel, then, is not the Wanderer, but the people who watch it, and must deal with its influence. What is the whole of humanity capable of surviving? Not just the superheroes and the nuts, but the lucky and able of us all.

Leiber's survivors are not even all fighters - the saucer-watchers realize that under such circumstances "it seemed all-important to see as much as possible." Tides eighty times normal kill millions, but there is some Earth left for clinging, and for watching. The humorous,

half-horrified, half-amazed attitudes sets the tone of the book.

Rarely have the legendary Sense of Wonder, and Reality, strode cheek by jowl through an s f novel in quite this fashion. The English survivor treads across the hills, haunted by the sight of the Wanderer, but not fully realizing the world's plight until:

He stood up and looked east. The valley through which he'd just trudged was now full of dark silvery mist, fingers of it stretching around the hill on which he was now, pushing up each grassy gully.

The mist had a remarkably flat top, gleaming like gunmetal.

He saw two lights, red and green, moving across it mysteriously, close together.

He realized that they were the lights of a boat and that the mist was solid, still water. The stand of the high tide.

(Page 203)

Dai Davies has no idea that the Wanderer might affect his life in a non-poetical way when:

"Is there aught on the wireless or the telly of the tide?" this apparition called to the host. "Two hours

yet till low, and the Channel's ebbing as I've never seen it, even at the equinoctial springs with an east gale blowing. Come, look for yourselves. At this progress a man'll be able to walk on all the Welsh Grounds by noon and an hour after that the Channel'll be near dry!"

"Good!" Dai cried loudly, letting the host take away the mug and leaning hunch-shouldered on the bar as the others made a tentative move towards the door. "Then I'll walk the five miles back to Wales straight across the Severn sands and be shut of you lily-livered Somerset. By God, I will!"

(Page 118)

The world, and the universe that might spring at it, is a dangerous place. It proves a far more dangerous place because we manage to keep ourselves isolated against its more violent caprices. But it is all the more astonishing when the truth does seep through, and we discover something wholly new about the universe, or the Earth, or ourselves. The protagonists of THE WANDERER make discoveries in all three categories.

However, a blueprinted Answer to the secret of the planet itself must then be a disappointment, just as a face-to-face interview with God would be a letdown after the Missa Solemnis. Many would justifiably object to



the jaunt to centre of the Wanderer, after the much more astonishing trip through the centre of the Moon:

His eyes told Don he was no more than fifteen miles above the moon's surface and hurtling towards it at about a mile a second. There was nowhere near enough time to break fall by swinging ship and main-jetting to cancel the mile-a-second downward velocity.

..There was one hope, based on nothing more than a matching of colours. There had been something violent and yellow glaring with tremendous brilliance behind the moon. Now there was a violet-and-yellow thread gleaming in the blackness of the moon's core. He might be looking through the moon.

The moon, split like a pebble? Planetary cores should flow, not fracture. But any other theory meant death.

..Don fired the G-rich main jet and was pinned by it up against his seat, where he steered by the verniers and the solid-fuel rockets to keep the glitter of the rock walls equal and violet-and-yellow thread splitting the black ribbon into equal halves, he cried out

sharply in the empty cabin: "Hold on for your lives! I am flying straight down the chasm!" (Pages 76 and 77).

This must be one of the most dashing passages in recent s f, coming as it does after an increasingly breathtaking log of wonders.

But the wonders end within the Wanderer itself. Tiger-eshka, spokeswoman for the interstellar rebels that man the object, steps like a piece of cardboard from any one of hundreds of other paperback universes. She snarls like a nasty catlike alien should, and her planet is wunnerful just like any alien planet oughta be. It's about as boring as most heavens.

In a novel as strongly-structured as this, Leiber still does not throw away his climax. In an already ambitious effort, he seeks to comment on the whole way s f sees the universe. He shows how hollow are the climaxes of most s f novels. He knows that we seek, and therefore fail to find, our sense of wonder in the wrong places. We want sustenance from answers, but ask some lousy questions. Leiber asks all the right questions, gets a few tentative answers, but mainly jokes around with the questions' implications. The Wanderer proves just another paper spaceship, a robber chased by a lot of justifiably angry cops. The world wonders, and calls a murderer a god. They seek the Truth for the first time in their lives, but are not regaled with <sup>the</sup> cliche Truth, that would have ended their curiosity. THE WANDERER is about ourselves, and it is quite a discovery.



Which seems an easy way of featuring Big Names, doesn't it? There are few Bigger Names than Brian Aldiss in my book, so the charge is partly true. On the other hand, which article by which other author could better discuss the issues dealt with in S F COMMENTARY No 1? The Best Man from NEW WORLDS gives his credo, and grateful we are for it. Besides I've not seen a better description of Aldiss' own latest works, the Simon Charteris stories. An explanation of BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD before it is even published - that's a pretty neat trick, Brian.

S F ' s      N e w      D i r e c t i o n s

[illegible]

Brian W Aldiss

John Bangsund asked me "Where is science fiction heading?". He must think I have it by the lead. I'm not even sure any more that I know what exactly science fiction is.

However, I'll try and give you my opinion, and I'll also answer one of the other questions that says: "What in your view are the most significant recent events in the field?" I would certainly say that the answer to that is the materialization of space travel from the realms of fiction and sf into fact. I believe that this has been almost a catastrophic event in the history of sf, and that it is from this that the seeds of much of the present diffusion and difficulty of the

field would spring. You may remember if your reading goes back that far that before the time of the first Sputnik the magazines were just loaded with the idea of space travel. Some people were the apostles of space travel. Some people used it mainly for flights of fancy or fantasy and a few writers were already sceptical about whether any good could come from space travel.

Among this last number were two very interesting writers - Ray Bradbury and Philip K Dick. Ray Bradbury got taken up by the highbrows and recognized by a wide public - just the things that the fans had hoped would happen to all s f writers. It turned out that when it happened to Bradbury they were furious at his success and tried to pretend that he was not a real s f writer at all. I believe the truth to be that for a few years Bradbury was a real s f writer, and a poet into the bargain, and that in such volumes as *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN* he wrote as much of value before the Spt-nik went up as he wrote tosh afterwards.

Philip K Dick is rather different. He popped into prominence in the early fifties as a writer of slick short stories, at least one of which, *IMPOSTER*, has the elements of a new myth about it. Since then his thinking has gained in power and beauty and he has become a prolific and gripping novelist. His range is very wide, although his basic preoccupation is always with what is Reality and what is not, what is true, what is false. His characterization is good, his style is tolerable and his ability to design a complex story is second to no man who ever lived. With such novels as *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, *MARTIAN TIME-SLIP* and *THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH*, Philip Dick bids fair to become the first s f novelist of our age. He has digested the whole field of s f and come up with a creative variety distinctly his own.

Kurt Vonnegut is a similar writer in some respects, a much flashier writer and I believe, ultimately, a lot less satisfactory and lasting writer than Dick.

However the point I was making about space travel is that it went over big not only with the public but unfortunately with the s f writers themselves. As a result s f is still in the main lumbered with its space travel image, particularly, I think, in America. For verification of this, you've only to look at the covers of the current magazines. They show the same old hackneyed scenes of rocketships landing on horrible bits of crumpled silver paper as they did a decade and a half ago. Many of the writers continue to flit about the galaxy in their little paper spaceships just as if the harsh reality of space travel were not already upon us, and as if the old simple view of space-time universe had not been complicated and made mysterious beyond belief in these

last ten years or so.

And I'm not just referring to the slummy end of East Books List. There are many better writers who are still larking about in the galaxies, to what seems to me to very little effect. Much science fiction has been left high and dry by the events of the last ten or fifteen or so years. There seems to be a psychological block in the minds of the writers. Why this is hard to say. I think they saw s f performing a useful propaganda role in the fifties, and they want to keep it that way. Some of them, the more ambitious ones, have looked for a new cause on behalf of which they could utter similar propaganda. Thus we've had the strange systems of mental therapy, and the wierd power drives requiring no power.

I think an urge to predict is natural within the s f field. After all, s f receives little critical acclaim from the literary side. You might as well try and fish for it in the scientific side. Some s f personalities have managed the business fairly well. Arthur Clarke designed the Early Bird communication satellite as early as 1944, as we've heard many times, generally from Arthur Clarke himself. And even the great Hugo Gernsback more or less predicted television, so they tell me. Alas, such mechanistic uses for fiction are death to good literature, whatever they may be to the circulation of ANALOG.

And there's another reason why such gambits are out of date. For s f itself has lost part of its former valuable role. The randomly predictive function of s f is now being performed much less randomly elsewhere by an entire new industry. We know s f predicted atomic power and space flight and how its discussions of these subjects have to some extent helped turn theory into fact. This was a necessary function in the neo-electronic words that we lived in from 1945 to 1951. But because the predictive function is so much more necessary today, it's been taken out of the hands of such amateurs as s f writers and is now a hundred billion dollar industry in America, backed by hard-headed industrial firms. There are special corporations like RAND and the Hudson Institute which specialize in such forecasts.

Perhaps this sounds as if s f is out of a job. I believe it is only out of a bad job. A much more exciting one lies ahead and that must be in the field of chance, just as surely as the technology of the seventies is already in blue print form. I'll tell you what I believe our future job could be.

In other words I'm going to answer John Bangsund's original question about "Where on earth is s f going?" I finally got around to it.

Contemporary s f has fallen heir to all the traditions tha

that have converged on it - the Utopian, the fantastic, the Gothic, and all the rest of it. It has plenty of scope; it need never fear to stay on a mere fantasy and space opera level. Once it can forget that it has no role any more in prophesying the hardware of the future, it may recall that whatever else it is, it's fiction. Too many authors today are content merely to write down a striking idea. I'm all for ideas. Ideas are what I love about s f, but I believe that they should appear before us clad in the garb of fiction, which is to say that such qualities as make ordinary life tolerable to us should also be present in at least trace amounts: people, human action, glimpses of surroundings, sounds of laughter, the night breeze, all the mysteries of an ordinary day.

We need life as well as Ideas to make a story. Much s f is so sterile. Perhaps that's why some writers are still content to use as settings the interior of spaceships. That must be the most sterile and hateful environment ever imagined - worse than a Soviet prison.

Then, of course, there's the question of the ideas themselves. We've seen how space travellers become the most orthodox of ideas. Once, it was fresh and sparkling and new. It howled you over with its daring, so that you gasped and trembled. But now even astrophysicists agree that there's some theoretical chance of crossing space.

The idea of discovering alien life was similarly amazing once upon a time. One was passionately consumed with longing to know what the Martians might be like. But it's old hat now. I read an account of an astronomer in the States the other day who was certain that there was at least one civilization almost as highly developed technically as Earth within three hundred light years of Earth. He said we should make every effort to contact it.

And yet, America does not officially recognize Red China and is building an anti-missile defence against it - and wouldn't you say that China was almost as far developed technically as we are?

No, we've grown out of all those paper wonders. They are not wonders any more. I would rather read about travel on earth and the activities of the Red Chinese. The fun there is inexhaustible. When we believed in ideas like alien life, nobody else did. They were subversive ideas. Much of s f was subversive, full of secret revolutions and inventions that overturned governments. You may remember how George Orwell, paying a tribute to H G Wells, spoke of his spirit of revolt being fed by Wells' assurance that the future was going to be different.

Nowadays, s f is too conservative, too prosperous. It needs to develop audacity again, to swing like a pop song, or to be as elusive as the best of the pop songs. It needs a shot of LSD to give it a bit of fresh insight into how astonishing the world still is. That's the second point about the ideas.

Then of course there's the question of style which seems to come up a good deal lately, mainly, I suppose, because the ideas have got so boring. Most of the magazine s f at present shows its old age because it's written in a flat-footed, post-realist prose that is almost a uniform - a worn old uniform. You can hardly tell one writer from another.

In understandable reaction to that, we've recently had a number of writers who have entirely thrown over the old stale pulp ideas of writing. I'd only like to say that many of these new writers seem to be in danger of throwing out the baby with the bath-water. They've certainly shown us some delightful shapes in bathtubs, but own deeply-rooted feeling is that story-telling is an ancient art. Those that can practise it should practise it with reverence, and perhaps only those who cannot tell stories or who cannot characterize should be tempted into writing Non-Linear Fiction, or the various mysteries into which Charles Platt tries to initiate us.

In an ideal world, in a healthy state of science fiction, we would see all types of writing flourishing simultaneously. With any luck it may turn out that way.

oo

EDITOR'S LoC - THAT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IS AN INCIDENTAL  
FUNCTION OF ASTOUNDING STORIES BY  
NEW WORLDS  
OR VICE VERSA ?

The other day I saw one of those featurettes local cinemas drag from ancient vaults when the feature is a bit over two hours long, or a bit under four hours. It purported to demonstrate facets of the arts in London today. Actually, although neither the makers nor the audience realized the fact, it was a science fiction film. The latest sculpture? Huge luminescent glaciers from Jovian mountain tops. The modern Hamlet? Flash Gordon with teeth glinting from some mile-high apartment from the twenty-first century. The whole film was acutely, violently aware of The Future. Every image leapt forward, did not glance backwards.

And that, Brian, as I realize after reading this article again, is s f's "function", continual direction and invaluable contribution to this century. We are the first century to realize the Future may be as important as the Past and Present. Much good may it do us - it's the fault of s f anyway.

L I G H T       F R O M       I N N E R       E A R T H

Professor John C Jaeger

In the early part of January 1969, Professor Jaegar was the Chairman of the International Symposium on the study of the Earth's crust at which 150 overseas and Australian scientists were present in Canberra.

;;; :;;

You may be wondering what the upper mantle is or phase transformation - a term frequently used by earth scientists, and why we should be holding a symposium on them which has attracted some sixty very distinguished scientists from Russia, the U.S.A., England, Japan and other countries, and how this affects Australia. I shall try to answer these questions in order.

Firstly, about this thing oddly named the upper mantle. Seismologists, around the turn of the century, divided the earth into three regions; the core, consisting of liquid nickel-iron and roughly 2000 miles in diameter, then the mantle surrounding this and extending nearly 2000 miles almost to the surface, and finally outside this the crust reaching to the surface.

Of these names, the Crust, on which we live, is an evocative name. It is crusty and hard at the top, getting hotter and softer as we go down, and is around 20 miles thick under the continents and much less under the oceans. I said that "Crust" was an evocative term and you may think of the Earth's Crust and the region below it as part of a gigantic hot meat pie. The pie-crust is hard and cool on the top, gets hotter and gooey as you go down towards the meat and finally changes fairly suddenly to the meat. There may be holes in the pie-crust through which gravy and steam come: in the earth's Crust these would be volcanoes. Clearly, you can't tell from outside whether the inside of your pie is beef or pork or even apple, except perhaps from the gravy coming through the crust, and you can't tell how hot it is unless you bite it.

This is a fair but very incomplete analogy. What Geology sees on the Earth are materials from the interior poured out as lava, and sedimentary rocks which have been formed by debris from these and reconstituted later. But we do not know whether the lavas really represent what is below or whether they are just a partial sample - whether they are the real meat or just gravy. In fact, they are usually gravy, but sometimes they carry up very interesting little bits of meat. All we can see about the Earth is derived from observations on the surface and in mines and drill holes. Further information is obtainable from Seismology, which is the detailed analysis of waves from earthquakes. This, combined with other



measurements tells us a lot about the properties of the material inside the earth; in particular the density and pressure at any depth, and we can guess the temperature more roughly. It tells us that there is a rapid change of properties as we pass from the lower part of the Crust into the lower part of the Mantle, from the bottom of the crust of my pie into the meat, but it does not tell us what the material below the Crust is.

That was the state of the art twenty years ago. There was endless speculation about the nature of the material below the Crust. Was it a completely different form of rock or was it something we know on the surface but modified by pressure and temperature? It is the same sort of speculation that you see every day now about the rocks on the moon. But while it would be nice to know what the rocks on the Moon are, they do not affect our daily life, while the material and processes in the Upper Mantle have a profound effect on it. For example, we can locate the sources or focii from which earthquakes come. Some of them are in the Crust at depths of only a few miles: others are in the Upper Mantle at depths down to two or three hundred miles. Today there is a great deal of talk about predicting earthquakes. Before we can do this, we will have to know the nature and properties of the material in which they occur. We shall do, soon, at the present rate of progress.

The difference in conditions in the Earth as we go downwards is partly due to increase in temperature but mainly due to increase in pressures. Temperatures can be around 1000 degrees centigrade, the sort of thing with which we are familiar in molten metals. But the pressures are quite unfamiliar to us: in the Upper Mantle, they range from perhaps 100,000 to 5 million pounds per square inch which you may compare with 50 pounds pressure in the household water supply or say, 30,000 to crush hard rock. In the last decade, we have succeeded in attaining pressures and temperatures of this order in the laboratory. This means that we can study their effects on surface rocks and minerals. The general effect of these very high pressures is to produce new forms of the minerals called high pressure phases, and the study of these is the subject of phase transformations on which we have just held this conference.

You may say this is very much pure Science, but think of the simple example of diamonds. Natural diamonds, which are the high pressure form of carbon, are produced at depth in the mantle and blown upwards so rapidly that they do not have time to revert to the low pressure form. The conditions of pressure and temperature under which diamonds can be formed was one of the first to be studied and led to the huge commercial industrial diamond industry.

The Upper Mantle is the seat of the processes which cause the effects observed in Geology. Lavas are formed by partial melting, volatile gases are released which cause mineralization, forces in the Upper Mantle drag on continents and move them and cause earthquakes.

I am not trying to give a Geology lecture. I am trying to show that much of this new knowledge has accumulated over the last ten or fifteen years so that this is one of the most rapidly developing fields in Science. Also, much of this work has been done by Professor Ringwood and his colleagues in our laboratories in Canberra, some of it in collaboration with CSIRO. This has brought many of the world's top scientists in this field here to exchange ideas. I must remind you that the best scientific research is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. The inspiration may come anywhere, while shaving, as Housman wrote his poems, or while scribbling on an envelope over a glass of beer with a colleague: once you have the idea, the rest is just hard work. The interchange of ideas at conferences is invaluable, particularly in a remote country such as ours.

One point I want to stress is that, given the men and reasonable facilities, we here can break into a new field and come out amongst the world leaders. We have done it here as we have done it before in radioastronomy and we can do it in other fields; ten or a hundred times this effort would be a drop in the world bucket in the glamourized fields of Space Science or High Energy Physics.

Another one of the interesting things to an older person such as myself is the comparative youth of many of the leaders in this field. Modern Science is a young man's game, and the opportunities are greatest in the newest and most rapidly developing fields.

The Upper Mantle Committee passed many resolutions on scientific work which should be done, and, in addition expressed very strong views on education. The whole of its work, and the whole of the papers at this Conference, have been an inextricable mixture of geological, physical and chemical methods forming a composite whole. To understand it, you have to be reasonably familiar with the lot. A very lengthy monograph has been written using this approach. This cuts completely across the conventional boundaries in university Science, which divide it into units of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geology and so on. It indicates that some major surgery is needed on the university system.

I am speaking about the Geological Sciences, but Biologists would probably feel the same way. Engineers always have done so. The new Science of the study of the solid earth is what is now called an inter-disciplinary Science. That is, it

requires parts of Geology, Physics and Chemistry at high levels, and it does not require other parts at all. The difficulty from the point of view of the developing interdisciplinary Sciences is the traditional nature of the university courses. There have always been departments of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry and these have steadily tended to increase their entrance requirements and to bias themselves towards what they regard as the most exciting developments in their own specialities, and away from the old fashioned general Scientific education in Natural Philosophy. It is in fact the good foundation education that we need, but I am sure that the students think this is dull and square.

On the other hand, Geology and Biology departments have no pre-requisites and therefore have tended to attract students with less background in Physics and Chemistry. This tends to increase their emphasis on observation, as does the prime demand from employers for good field men.

There are many other branches of Science in this position which are absolutely vital for the development of this country and in which, in effect, the country gives us an enormous natural laboratory free. These are Meteorology, Oceanography and Submarine Geology, and Hydrology and the study of underground water. It is something of a national tragedy that relatively little research and training is done in these subjects.

The solution, I believe, for the Geosciences, is that they move towards a situation in which they teach their own Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Geology by persons trained in these fields, but whose main interest is in Earth Science in general. Such people, only, can make the subject really exciting and there are many of them. Professor Birch, who is here with us, and has always been in the forefront of the subject, was trained as a Physicist and found his abiding interest in problems of the Earth. I did so myself. I am not speaking without experience because I have tried to do something of this sort, successfully, I believe, in Engineering Mathematics.

A move of this sort would be more difficult for the older universities. It would be easy for the new ones. If it were successful they would scoop the pool. But such a move must be made with enthusiasm and at a high level, not by instituting a few descriptive first year courses. If Physics is to be taught in a Geoscience department it must be taught to the same standard and with the same enthusiasm as in a Physics department: simply it must be Physics with Geological applications, not Physics with its main emphasis, say, on nuclear reactions. I believe the employers, the mining and exploration companies, could help by indicating that they need this

sort of training and also by stimulating fundamental research in fields closely associated with their own practical interests. There is little future for a subject in which the brightest people cannot see a choice of research activities.

Many people may not agree with the details of what I have said, but I hope that all will agree that the Solid Earth and Atmospheric Sciences are vital for this country, that they are developing at an enormous rate, and that we must do something to stimulate more research and training in them here.

oo

## THE BILLION DOLLAR FANDOM -- The A.B.C. and me .....

The Australian Broadcasting Commission has been always disappointing science fictionally, but some other Minority Interests, such as Science, have had an official head or two nodded in their direction. Indeed, one quakes at the thought of an A.B.C. s f programme - Harding, Foyster, and Turner on Harding, Foys-..... Let's say that it would have about the same air as a Melbourne Convention Authors' Panel. There could of course be some of the Big Names in <sup>them</sup> Australian Literature, but nobody seems to have informed <sup>that</sup> s f is never now respectable since Kingsley Amis waved an idle spectacle stem in our direction.

But narcissism is not my subject, but only humble, rich Science. The A.B.C. have a programme called WORLD TOMORROW which I hear on the odd occasions when I drag myself out of bed at - do you really want this kind of publicity, ABC? - 8.15 am on Saturday morning. As the title of this puff may have hinted, WOT is bright'n'lively, like an intelligent fanzine. This programme even features literate men, such as Dr Earl Hackett, plus one evil genius who methodically debunks every science fiction idea every thought of, week by week. The A.B.C. may have no s f programmes, but it has the world's first anti-s f spot. WOT has improved greatly over the last few months. It was merely a timespot for those general news items that concerned Science, but now produces Specials, and commissions its own news items.

There is a short Science spot, produced by one Peter Pockley, <sup>on Sunday morning</sup> similar to WOT, but less ambitious.

Science is not the only Fandom that engages the A.B.C.'s interest (and if Mr. Murray Gordon, the Federal Talks Supervisor is puzzled, a "fandom" is any activity done for the hell of it and not for money), but it is certainly the one that separates the national system most firmly from the commercial mob. I mean, 3DB even plays Johann Strauss at 11pm on Sunday night, so it can't be all bad.

I Q I N S F - A N D E L S E W H E R E

Some Extra Reasons for Disbelieving Your I Q Score

Bruce R Gillespie

If your are over fifteen fi years old, and you do not feel up to facing your IQ score, then it may not matter anyway.

In 1905 the French psychologist Alfred Binet was commissioned to help discover Parisian school children who were too dull to be educated in normal primary schools. Binet had little desire to find out a definition of "Intelligence", but he thought he could weed out the less educable children by discovering the normal capacities of any age-group of children. The normal 6-year-old, for example was found to capable of giving his age, reproducing a sentence of 16 syllables, counting 13 pennies correctly, copying a diamond shape, and defining "horse", "chair", etc., in terms of use. The retarded child was one who could not achieve these tasks until a later age, if at all. A bright child (and tests for brightness came later) could achieve these tasks earlier, or achieve harder tasks at the same time.

So the famous, or infamous if you will, because it is still the model for today's tests, Binet-Simon tests were simply the result of . . . research into the normal categories of mental ability for school children. There has rarely been a desire on psychologists' part to find out the exact scores of those who did not score about normally. The Intelligence Quotient itself is simply a ratio between the Mental Age (age at which a child can cover a given set of achievements) and the Chronological Age:

$$I.Q. = \frac{M.A.}{C.A.} \times 100$$

Where the two factors are equal, then the child will score 100. By definition, he is normal for his age. Most children are very near normal. The range of distribution of I.Q. scores for children forms a bell-shaped curve on a graph around 100. If you've done any statistics at all, you will know that means that only the "lips" of the

curve will be at all far from the centre.

Later researchers tried to find out what Binet's original test had actually measured. Spearman tried to separate out the different abilities that a single test might measure. He could detect Arithmetical, Verbal and Spatial abilities, but the three or four he found, correlated so well that they gave practically the same score as the original I.Q. tests. Other researchers have decided that I.Q. test items are mainly "convergent": you must get the exact answer to be right. "Divergent" tests (where the candidate does not converge on one answer but diverges out to all possible answers) have been developed to test so-called "creative thinking". As Liam Hudson, in his book CONTRARY IMAGINATIONS, ruefully admits, the Divergent Tests have had no particular relationship to these people who actually create - the artists, writers, scientists, etc, he has been able to test.

And, as George Turner ably pointed out last issue, in the end I.Q. test haveno necessary relationship to anything except themselves. Educational authorities have tried to use these tests for predictive purposes, but there are several important anomalies associated with this function. The most obvious of these is that no test is perfectly reliable, i.e. no test ever taken yields the same results exactly, twice running. The conditions for some physical experiments can be held fairly constant, but even one failure of a given experiment lowers the reliability. Think how much more difficult it is when the subjects of the experiment are children!

Add to normal test unreliability (which I shall look at again in connection with the English 11 plus examinations) some special effects that are purely statistical. The effect that most clearly damn educators' attempts to use batteries of tests to decide childrens' futures, is the regression effect. This can be plotted on a graph, which I cannot be bothered drawing here. In any group above or below the mean, the total effect of all the unreliability between two tests, is that all results will change so that those examples above the mean will regress towards the mean (a drop of about 5% in average scores) and those below will find their scores rising, also by about 5%. For instance, pupils selected for English grammar schools usually have I.Q.s 110 upwards (i.e. the top 20%) and average about 120. Retested a year or two later the average has apparently fallen to 115. No change in the pupils - it's just the scores that are tricky.

Chance comes into it, too. There are always easily cal-



culated chances of pupils slipping through I.Q. tests and not recording correctly representative scores. But chance is just another factor that must accounted for in any attempt to use I.Q. tests for prediction.

The most iniquitous attempt to do this, was, of course, the English Eleven-Plus examination. As the twin systems of Grammar Schools and Secondary Modern Schools grew up in England after the war, the device used to determine who was to go where, was a series of I.Q. and Attainment tests administered to all children about the age of eleven. Here, as in similar grading devices in America, the faults was not in the psychologists', who were fully aware of the tests' drawbacks, but were faults of the educators who blindly believed they had a "foolproof", "scientific" guide to appropriate grading. They tended to forget test unreliability, which proved even more catastrophic than anybody had realized. There was always the assumption that I.Q. tests had something to do with school performance, an assumption that many would rightly doubt. Then there were all the vagaries of chance. They were generally calculable, but pity help the child who became a statistical accident! Ultimately (as was found during tests administered years after the beginning of the eleven-plus examination) the unreliability of the test proved to be 14%. Judging from I.Q. scores alone, at least 14% of English children were placed in the "wrong" schools, if you believed in the first place that there ever should have been two types. The English Government no longer believes this, and so is changing to the Comprehensive School system. They did at least learn from their mistakes.

I.Q., then, has mainly an educative importance. It has little absolute importance. It has little importance to adults. Researchers found early this century that I.Q. tests become very unreliable after the subject has reached the age of 15. Tests could be worked out for the adult population, but as far as I know, they haven't. A fully accurate survey would necessarily take the lifetime of the generation born after the invention of the first tests.

I.Q. is a statistical construction, based on empirical observations. Its precise relationship to the functions of the grey matter within our skulls, is still unknown. Van Vogt's I.Q. of 10,000 is utterly ridiculous. The mean for such an I.Q. could not be less than 5,000. And that would have no relationship to any I.Q. test yet developed on Earth. Besides, the conversation level of the characters in THE PROXY INTELLIGENCE (referred to by George Turner last month) shows them to be below 70 on anybody's scale.

And none of this has anything to do with genius. It did me a good opportunity, though, to look again at my reference: P.E. Vernon, INTELLIGENCE AND ATTAINMENT TESTS, 1960, U.L.P.

In December 1967, when this article was written, THE WORLD JONES MADE and THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER were the latest of Dick's books seen in Australia. THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH had just been reprinted in hardback. Late in 1968 Sidgwick and Jackson reprinted WORLD JONES MADE, thus adding to the still meagre supply of English editions of Dick's work. This article should be read after last issue's installment.

~~~~~  
M A D M A D W O R L D S

7 N O V E L S O F P H I L I P K D I C K

- P A R T T W O

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Bruce R Gillespie

~~~~~

DISCUSSED:

(With Ray Nelson) THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER

Ace Books No. G-637. First published 1967.

THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH

Belmont 92-603. 1964. Hardcover release - Jonathan Cape.

THE WORLD JONES MADE

Ace F-429. Resurrected 1967 from 1956 hardback edition.

New hardcover release -Sidgwick & Jackson.

oo oo oo

These books must be called "The Failures", compared with the books I was talking about in Part One. Dick's best abilities show through... in reverse. We see what happens when one or more of his talents simply disappear.

At the beginning of THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH the reader is dismayed by the woeful prose (mentioned early in Part One). The rest of the novel reveals a striking dearth of those

"ideas" that seem inexhaustible in other Dick books. I suspect it as a hook brought out to make as much money in as little time for the least work. Ideas and events scurry around in disorder and never get anywhere, characters are capriciously introduced and dropped, and the total effect becomes vague and eminently forgettable.

The first part of the novel revolves around the actions and viewpoints of two characters. Joseph Adams is one of the elite that rule the green parks of an Earth left empty of people after the Last War. Nicholas St. James emerges from one of the highly populated underground tanks, expecting to find a world still waging atomic warfare.

However, after the novel's halfway mark, these characters become decreasingly important, and the story drags itself along in a maimed way towards an inconclusive and unsatisfactory ending. On the way are a few forays into suspense, all of which disappear into the general morass which passes as a "plot". There is a nicely described assassination-by-robot attempt, an exciting search through film files to find the sources of forgery in the currently accepted history. All are events well enough sustained on their own, but hardly original, and, as I said before, quite forgettable.

The political construction of this elite/slave culture is as shaky as the politics of any of Dick's other "worlds", but the author unfortunately chooses to centre his novel on a power struggle between the two main businessmen of Earth. One of the novel's characters asks about one of the two businessmen: "How really does an eighty-two-year-old semisenile but still cunning colossal abnormality, weighing god knows how many pounds, manage to keep his power?" How indeed? Dick does not, or cannot, tell us.

The most objectionable feature of this novel is the waste of Dick's potentially best card - David Lantano, the mysterious Cherokee time-traveller, who has powers of such godlike omniscience that he seems set to take over the world. However Lantano represents nothing, ultimately achieves nothing, and we are given no answer to the question that dominates the shape of the novel: "Who is David Lantano?"

Also objectionable is the moralizing that breaks the thread of the latter part of the book. Dick's worlds, including this one, are too tough and too unusual for characters to indulge in the luxury of moralizing. By any current standards, the morality of the whole civilization precludes qualms about the morality of private actions. Little discussion takes place about the crime of keeping most of the world's population locked in tanks below ground. As in PALMER ELDRITCH, or in any of Dick's novels, any modern God (and most ancient ones) is precluded. PENULTIMATE TRUTH (whatever that Truth is) fails



because Dick's originality and his usually perceptive common sense are absent. Whether this is due to rush writing, or bad luck, can only be answered by the author himself.

THE WORLD JONES MADE, first published only one year after his first novel, would seem to hold out few hopes of being one of Dick's better books. Wherefore I was surprised at the very good writing, particularly in the novel's first half. Dick's style seems to have been formulated very early in his career, and much of the writing in the first few chapters is as good as, or better than anything being done in 1967 or 1968. One can only image the powerful effect Dick's early novels must have had on the s f fraternity of the early fifties. SOLAR LOTTERY, his first, reads as well today as it did in 1955.

Dick's most spectacular effect is his evocation of the brooding atmosphere of an America overrun by SS-like hordes led by a psychic dictator, Jones. It is unfortunate that little elaboration is made upon this background. By novel's end, it is lost altogether.

Instead, Dick again attempts to describe the machinations of power politics and fails notably. Far worse, the Jones dictatorship is brought down by the oldest cliché in the book, the "extraterrestrial invader". Not even Dick can revive this hoary old one, and the book splutters to an end in some confusion. Perhaps the novel's main interest is the realization by the reader of how far back stretches Dick's fascination with the Hitler-phenomenon. It reappears in most of the later novels in more sophisticated forms, but this novel gives direct evidence about Dick's original attitudes to an era that, to some extent, still haunts us all.

THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER is perhaps the logical result of a writing schedule demanding the production of "x" number of books per year. It is unforgivable, just the same. Dick seems to have written little or none of the actual prose (I hope not, anyway), but then again, I wouldn't want to blame poor old Ray Nelson, either. He's written far better, also. In a nutshell - the prose is flabby, unevocative, utilitarian, and little else. Dick's images can be grotesque, but never as downright crude as in this novel, not to mention the Laumerlike alien/racial prejudices that Dick has always scrupulously avoided before.

The novel has, however, been plotted and directed by Dick. The fluidity of thought, and the dovetailing of events, characters and ideas, is as sure as ever. Most noticeably, this novel demonstrates how closely one's credibility in Dick's world is tied to the effectiveness of his prose. Actually written by Dick, this book could have been good, but still little more. Written as it is, presumably by Nelson, the imaginatively exciting qualities of the book disappear into the flabby prose. Dick's usual line-up of "characters" is not even interesting.

In less expert hands than Dick's, they are revealed as witless puppets, caught in a process which only at times arouses our interest. (I would have given a lot to have seen the psychedelic battle scene written by Dick at his best - the idea is marvellous, but the execution....!) One can only fervently hope that Dick and Nelson dissolve their partnership as abruptly as they began it, and that two excellent writers return again to their respective styles.

oo oo oo

I hope I need say little in conclusion. Perhaps my main aim in writing has been to ask both readers and critics to look at Dick's novels more carefully. Both his faults and triumphs stem from the same abilities. His diversity is a basis for drama and pungent, incisive writing. It also tends towards dramatic chaos. His hard-headedness when faced with the madness in the world and man, can sometimes degenerate into flippancy or powerless writing.

Dick has persuaded us that his writing is always worth reading. More expert readers are needed, I think - a survey of his short stories and his nearly novels in particular, and, as I said in Part I, a reading from someone with a psychologist's eye. Philip Dick himself? I wish he would slow down, take stock of his best resources and worst faults, and not write pot-boilers. This reader, for one, would like to see many more PALMER ELDITCHES, and no more GANYMEDE TAKE-OVERS. I would like to see the next seven novels confirm my impression of Philip Dick as by far the best s f writer active today.

oo

#### NEXT ISSUE:

- CONTRADICTIONS - what happened in the next three novels, at least - CRACK IN SPACE, COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD, and THE ZAP GUN. Will there ever be another great Dick novel?

oo

The dearth of English editions has become a headache since I started teaching Fifth Form English. Science fiction has quite some pride of place in the affections of some of Victoria's educators. They reserve sf as a special category, one book from which is to be read compulsorily,.... and then suggest BLACK CLOUD, DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS or THE TIME MACHINE. Naturally, one wants replacements, but the only Dick novel I could order freely is Penguin's edition of MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE (not my favourite). The only English editions of the others are hard-backs or ephemeral editions from firms such as Panther or Sphere. Any English paperback publisher who can arrange to "sell" the authorities on Dick, in their editions, could enter the textbook field. And you know what that means.