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THE BIG SQUOOSH

*When Ethel Lindsay asked why I did not print a fanzine review column, and Lee Harding asked why I did not print letters in every issue, and Alex Robb just asked why, then I saw the problems this smaller format might present. The reply to everybody usually is: "There is not enough room".

But now a new, and far more interesting explanation, presents itself. There is simply too much going on. The Melbourne Easter Convention may have had a few faults as a public event (and maybe it didn't, for I realize now that I was in a rather lowly state of mind during the whole of Easter) but it certainly prompted more fan activity in the last few months than we have seen in Australia for years.

*Most important to everybody is John Foyster's and Leigh Edmond's news magazine NORSTRILIAN NEWS, which actually appears regularly every fortnight. Send news to John Foyster, 12 Glengariff Drive, Mulgrave, Victoria 3170; and send your money (one 5c stamp per issue) to Leigh Edmonds, P O Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183. It's not until we have the real thing, that we realize how desperately we have needed a very regular newszine for years. (Already my choice for next year's Ditmar).

*New issues have also appeared of THE NEW FORERUNNER (Gary Mason, Warili Road, French's Forest, N S W 2086) and RATAPLAN (Leigh Edmonds; address above) with one issue of each. As NN now carries all the day-to-day details of Australian fan news, Gary has chosen to present a more personal viewpoint of all the main

events. As a result, the last NEW FORERUNNER that I received is probably the best yet.

* Since the Convention, the Melbourne University S F Association has swung into action, despite all the usual difficulties of University Clubs (i.e. no money, no time). Monash S F Association also seems to be more active this year than in the last few years. Melbourne's spokesman and odd jobs man, David Grigg, kindly invited me to represent Melbourne fandom (which figures, since I live 130 miles away from Melbourne) at a meeting on May 11. The group were kind enough to let me advertise our Worldcon bid, and my magazine, but the discussion centred on fanzines in general, and the oddities of American fanzines in general. I suggest anybody else who can make it to either of the two Universities (gulp - three Universities - but Latrobe has no club yet) in Melbourne, or to the groups in Sydney, should do so.

* Meanwhile, the greatest activity concerns the World Convention Bidding Committee, who invited Bob Smith and me to join them. Having recovered from that minor blow, John Foyster in particular, and everybody else in some way or another, has been preparing advertisements to make clear our position on the present World Convention rules. We still hope to change the rules at Heicon, so that the rules read much as they did before St Louiscon in 1969: a real World Convention (Hugos and all) held outside USA every five years, with no competing American National Convention in the same year. Under the new rules, World Conventions may be held outside USA in nearly any year (three years out of four, if I remember correctly) but a NASFiC (National Convention) will be held in the same year in USA. Which Americans are going to bother to attend the Worldcon, in that case? (See advertisement in this issue of SFC).

* Which brings me to a very important point of non-activity - Australian membership of overseas Conventions. So far as I know (although the latest attendance rolls we've seen are those of two months ago) only Gary Mason and I have joined either Heicon '70 (Heidelberg World Convention: send 14DM international money order, or about \$3 of Aussie cash, to Mario Bosnyak, 6272 Niedernhausen, Feldbergstr. 26A, W. Germany); or Noreascon '71 (send \$4 supporting membership to NOREASCON, Box 547, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139, U S A) which will be the next American World Convention. I don't really expect Americans to be interested in our bid unless we are interested in their Conventions. I certainly received my \$4 worth from St Louiscon last year, and I should think that supporting memberships of both Heicon and Noreascon would be similarly valuable.

* Meanwhile plans are carefull marked "DNQ" at the moment on the New Years Convention to be run by John Foyster and Lee Harding in the first two or three days of 1971. All I know is that things are being done.

In the meantime, Leigh Edmonds has been appointed to run the Ditmar Awards for next year. Excuse my sadistic laugh, Leigh - have fun. My first reaction to the news was that this relieves me of the task of promoting the Ditmars, but very wisely (and with threats from various quarters) I've decided to keep going with the difficult task of informing people about what is being published and what is not.

DAVID GRIGG (1556 Main Rd, Research, Victoria 3095) sums up the situation very well:

The average science fiction reader is just that... Certainly he is not what what I would call a science fiction fan. My Penguin Dictionary defines: "fan: n. (coll.) ardent admirer, enthusiastic devotee." And the majority

of s f readers are not even ardent enough to attend Conventions, never mind enthusiastic enough to vote on the best book or magazine they have read.

Let us look at the way a fan gets to read a book published in 1969. Firstly he can read books from his library, but due to the nature of general libraries he will find few s f books, and probably none newer than 1968.

Secondly, he may buy books at a bookstore. Even if this fan is rich enough to be able to buy hardcover books on a regular basis, how likely is it that he will find a book in a shop which was published within the last year? Have a look at the stall in McGills sometime, probably the largest s f seller in Melbourne. How many books do you see that were published within the last year and a half? The hardcover edition of NOVA only hit the stands last year, towards Christmas, and that was published in 1968.

Most fans can afford paperbacks. I have just bought CAMP CONCENTRATION, last year's Ditmar winner. It wasn't there before New Year. The only other way a fan can get hold of recent books is to be a hard-core member of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club.... Availability is everything. This is borne out by the fact that the Australian Fiction and International Prozone categories were fairly clearly settled.

Apart from magazine fiction, the average fan does not see very much fiction published in a recent year. He usually only subscribes to one magazine. I have not seen THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS for sale, nor have I seen a cheap (therefore buyable) copy of STAND ON ZANZIBAR, and I am a fairly frequent surveyor of the bookstores around the city. They probably exist: but how am I to know? I am your average fan: so how do I get to see something worth voting on at the convention? I have bought two 1969 novels: THE GOBLIN RESERVATION and DIMENSION OF MIRACLES. One at the Eastercon, and one a hardcover. Neither was what I would call a really award-winning book.

So what do you do about the awards? One suggestion would be to vote later in the year, when the books have appeared on our stands. Say voting in November 1970 for the 1969 award. What you must take into account is that you are trying to get votes from Joe Blow, not from Bruce Gillespie or Dick Jenssen or John Bangsund or John Foyster, no matter how well qualified those people are to vote. Because, you see, you are conducting a popular poll.

And that is what is wrong with Dick's actions over the awards. No matter what the voters do or don't do, the thing to do is let them be the judge. If they want to vote for NODDY let them do it, for NODDY must have been of interest to those people. If no clear winner arises, then NO AWARD it should be, because no book/magazine has been generally available and of sufficient quality to impress a number of people. The customer is always right. (25th April, 1970)

That about sums up my own present feeling as well. John Bangsund gave some very good suggestions for making the poll more precise (in CROG! 6), and I have already suggested that the International S F category be dropped, with perhaps the reinstatement of the Best S F Writer award, and a Committee Award for Best International S F, decided by a panel of people who actually read a lot of s f. Perhaps all further suggestions on the Ditmars should go directly to Leigh Edmonds.

* Meanwhile, here are some suggestions for the Best International S F category: Brian Aldiss' magnum opus: BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD (Faber & Faber; 281 pages; A.\$3.55, with probably a Sphere edition later in the year). I hope to fully discuss this book as soon as possible in my series on Aldiss' works. In the meantime, may I say that I consider this book stylistically and conceptually far ahead of anything ever done within the field, with the proviso that I made in

discussion at the Eastercon, that basically it has a solid story, characters, and good humour. * My loyalties are split for this year's Australian S F winner. The only possible winner should be John Baxter, with his magnificent SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA (A S Barnes - New York; A Zwemmer - London; 240 pages; umpteen pictures and filmography; about \$2 Australian). Merv Binns now has copies, and there will be another popular American edition out later this year. * On the other hand, Lee Harding has a very fine novelette THE CUSTODIAN in VISION OF TOMORROW 8. It's a post-disaster Australia which brilliantly (and more subtly than most Australian fiction) captures the whole tempo of Australian living. It's set in the Dandenongs, and so has a very personal ring to it. Also illustrated by Lee Harding photos. * I haven't started reading the magazines for the year October 1969 - September 1970 yet. The only book that I can thoroughly recommend at the moment is Robert Silverberg's collection DARK STARS (Ballantine 01796; 309 pages; 95c) which is the most consistently enjoyable collection I have read for many years. Includes Ballard's CAGE OF SAND, Knight's MASKS, Aldiss' HERESIES OF A HUGE GOD, Brunner's THE TOTALLY RICH, and other good stuff. I have reviewed it for SFR.

As you can see, FICTION MACHINES sort of disappeared early in the piece, so I shall try to keep you up-to-date with magazine stories worth reading, in the way I have just done. Anybody else's suggestions are welcomed, both with me and with Leigh Edmonds.

* The only subject I do not seem to have discussed so far is this magazine. Considering that S F COMMENTARY 9 was the sort of magazine that I thought would interest very few readers, and was mainly done for my own satisfaction, I have been very pleased with the response so far. Not much so far on SFC 10, so I suspect that some letters have been sent to John Foyster, despite the arrangement we made. Please send comments to me, and they will be published as soon as possible.

* Some early reactions to Stanislaw Lem include:

HEDLEY S FINGER (31 Somers Avenue, Malvern, Vic. 3144)

It is a fundamental law of nature that nothing good, that is, nothing literate or intelligent, is capable of being printed by the Mighty Gestetner. Certainly, any magazine that is duplicated must be highly suspect. Your magazine has shattered that belief. No longer will I be able to believe in Virginia, let alone Santa Claus. What destroyed the simple truths learned at mother's knee, hand, bathroom, etc. was the article by Stanislaw Lem in S F COMMENTARY Issue 9. It has been a source of constant irritation to me that, while book reviewers are prepared to recognize the genres of westerns, crime, spy, historical romance, etc, nary a line does s f get. And so it's a pleasant surprise to receive a literate magazine (even if it is d*pl*c*t*d), of world class and cosmopolitan, devoted entirely to s f.

I wonder how Stanislaw Lem would feel if he knew that he had earned me a subscription.

And from STUART LESLIE (59 Mary St., Longueville, N S W 2065):

To think that the first intelligent and deep consideration of the genre, considering s f from general literary principles and more or less disinterestedly, should come from a bloody foreigner, and a damn commie at that! Lem makes all the s f critics in the English-speaking world hitherto look rather trivial

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 25)

GILLAM	on	WILHELM
PENMAN	on	LEISER
FOYSTER	on	ANDERSON
GILLESPIE	on	WOLLHEIM & CARR
GIBSON	on	PANGBORN

Reviewed by Barry Gillam

However, having stated this for the record, I must assure you that this does not diminish the interest of this collection. In the three out-

One might sum up this ethic in a phrase from FINNEGAN'S WAKE: "When the answerer is a leman!" Which is to say, one's emotions, attachments and detachments, colour one's opinions, one's world: e.g. (as in a very simple example) one cannot expect unbiased criticism of, say, a piece of writing from one's mother or wife. When Wilhelm stays close to her characters she most often succeeds. But when she stands back and constructs a plot through which the characters follow chalked lines as if on a movie set, she usually fails. To really come off, the characters must follow their natures and concern for any loss of logic must be pushed aside. Wilhelm is quite a competent

writer but the fate of her stories lies in the balance between the mazes of feeling and the mechanics of plot.

One piece of machinery that Wilhelm has an unfortunate tendency towards, is a rather brusque American morality. A good example of what it can do to a story is found in COUNTDOWN. This relates one day in the life of a minor official at Cape Kennedy. Coincident with the day are the last fourteen hours of countdown to launch time. A very high anxiety level is maintained throughout the holds, phone calls home to his wife, and card games to pass the time. He worries about the children and what the family will do next weekend. The punchline is that he has helped put "The Bomb" into orbit.

The story has two main counts against it. Number one: it just is not chilling anymore. The idea is still frightening but after a few Bomb-scare stories you don't react. Secondly, the story is flawed in its presentation. An excellent buildup yields a mild punch. And the story needs the end to give it strength. Contrast COUNTDOWN with something like Ballard's CHRONOPOLIS, which would be a superlative story without its "surprise" ending. COUNTDOWN might have been a better story (more successful, at least on its own terms) if the tension had been simply laid to the necessity of handling the hardware of space like a baby. Look at Cape Kennedy today: these are very high tension jobs (especially when the payload is a trio of astronauts) which often wreck the home-life of NASA employees. There is an excellent story there and Kate Wilhelm had half of it, but her reliance on this "idea" rather than the anxiety and the people has left her with only half of it.

COUNTDOWN raises another point - none of Wilhelm's plots, gimmicks or characters are new. One can accept this because she has a fine sensibility for emotions, or, I should say, one can accept this when she uses her sensibility. When she does the result is something like BABY, YOU WERE GREAT, the best story in the book. This, like several of the stories here, is about an emptiness, a loss of purpose. The hardware here transmits the emotions of an actor directly to the viewer. Problem (a) is finding people who genuinely react, and problem (b) is supplying situations that produce new reactions. The results is that the star is being threatened mortally for the sake of the show. It is a superb display for Wilhelm's talents and she carries it off in just that manner. In THE DOWNSTAIRS ROOM she examines the emptiness again, but shifts to the bourgeois. A middle class housewife loses her reference points and we view the disintegration of a personality. (The point is that her personality is not strong enough to sustain her). The heroine of THE FEEL OF DESPERATION is another PTA mother-of-two and she, to her ultimate and profound despair, comes to self knowledge when she is taken out of her safe environment as the hostage of a bank robber. This last is perhaps Wilhelm's deepest and most poignant exploration of the middle class that so absorbs her.

As indicated above, COUNTDOWN is not the only story that has its potential good qualities subordinated to moralizing. Others here are A TIME TO KEEP (sins of omission - read apathy - will get you as surely as sins of commission), THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD (something about skin deep...), and WINDSONG (man destroys what he loves).

As for the rest: UNBIRTHDAY PARTY has a good title; WHEN THE MOON WAS RED exploits the reader's foreknown emotions; SIRLOIN AND WHITE

WINE is a sunset on paper, but the colours seem stale to me; PERCHANCE TO DREAM is a Twilight Zone fable; THE FEEL OF DESPERATION translated into poverty results in HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON?; THE PLAUSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE is too cute; and THE PLANNERS is a cautionary tale that can't make up its mind just what it is warning you about. One of Wilhelm's problems is that so many of her stories have been done so well before by other authors, or at least done so many times before, that they lack any sting.

If you've read BABY YOU WERE GREAT (in Damon Knight's ORBIT 2), you are advised to pass this collection by and read Kate Wilhelm's latest novel, LET THE FIRE FALL. Most of my comments here apply to that though she tossed the salad there a bit better than in most of these stories.

A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS

by FRITZ LEIBER

Victor Gollancz :: 1969
stg.30/-

Reviewed by David Penman

Texas has not changed much since the far-off days of its mighty President: Lyndon B Johnson the Great. It is still, of course, the biggest state in America, as all other spurious claims were settled when Texas annexed the rest of the continent during the chaos that followed World War III (except, of course, in Texas).

Nor have the Texans themselves changed overmuch, besides growing about two feet taller than they used to be. Great lovers of freedom from way back, they have by now discovered its true secret. To feel really free, you have to have someone to boss around. All of which allows their four-foot "Mex" servants the glorious freedom of doing what they are told.

Then, into this idyllic world comes Christopher Crockett La Cruz, an egocentric actor from a satellite circling the moon. In his advanced and enlightened home they have learned how to dispense with unsightly blubber and muscle on the human body, which in turn allows our hero to walk around looking like a highly aesthetic walking skeleton. And so the fun continues.

Amusing satire and, especially in the first half of the book, done with a sure and imaginative touch. Beside the satire the plot is feeble, predictable (to a certain extent), and largely unimportant. La Cruz, the "Spectre", makes a number of rather improbably theatrical appearances in order to spark off a revolt among the Mexes, and meanwhile becomes involved in the inevitable romantic tangle.

The book is best where it takes a look at an amusing, yet almost believable society. It is bad where it bores us with a childish and sketchy plot that is only there because it is necessary to have a plot in a novel. It may be said that the lightness of the plot varies with the humour of the background. Perhaps so - but the humour is well done while the plot is not.

Nor can it be said that Fritz Leiber does not know how to write a decent plot. He at least knew how in 1964 when his book THE WANDERER won him his second Hugo. One idea alone guides A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS, but such a long novel cannot afford this.

What could have been done about the novel's faults? you might say. Firstly, Leiber could have spread his energy a little more evenly throughout the whole book, or perhaps spent more time on the whole. Secondly, as a thought, he could have dispensed with a plot altogether. This would be hard to do without making the whole thing dull, but maybe someone should try it one day.

Altogether, in spite of everything, a good book, worth reading. It seems just a bit of a pity that it had be marred by shoddy workmanship in the second half.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES 4

edited by POUL ANDERSON

VICTOR GOLLANCZ :: 1969

288 pages

Reviewed by John Foyster

What an odd combination this book is! And the fiction is only the half of it. For example, the book leads off with a thoroughly down-to-earth introduction by Poul Anderson: the only complaint one could have about it is that its presence is indicative of Anderson's editorship, and immediate consequence of which, I guess, is the exclusion of Anderson's own Nebula runner-up, KYRIE, which is a much

better piece of work than any of the stories printed.

Then there is the set of obituaries written by friends of the deceased, an innovation which, whether it is Anderson's idea or not, should be continued when, sadly, necessary.

But to balance these good things is an essay (THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL IN 1968) by (Professor) Willis E McNelly, and that is no laughing matter. Well, I suppose you could equally say that it was a laughing matter: I'm sure some readers of this review will get laughs from things like:

....DUNE has stylistic lapses.

One writer's forte may be dialogue, another's style, a third's character or action,

For example, she may learn more about techniques of plotting, or learn not to depend on too much willing suspension of disbelief by her readers...

to choose only sections appearing on pages 24 and 25. Professor McNelly's problem is that he is too grade-school, his methods of analysis and description inadequate and out of date. But that's science fiction all over.

Anyway, I was pleased to notice that "There was no booing of Clarke's novel ((2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY)), however." On the other hand, my rather adverse review in ASFR 19 produced no rebuttals at all, to my knowledge. Oh, I can't resist it - here are some more laughs from page 23 (discussing 2001):

the tens of thousands of readers attracted to the novel by the film were threatened to serious probing of some profound questions: what is the nature of man in space? What are some of the implications of genuine interstellar contact? What is the mutation beyond man?

Arthur C Clarke and Gomer Pyle - a team.

But enough of the frills. The stories don't range very far down from the very good. MOTHER TO THE WORLD, by Richard Wilson, as I have remarked elsewhere, is not really science fiction. I should think it easily the best of the stories in this volume.

Torry Carr's THE DANCE OF THE CHANGER AND THE THREE is a story with problems. It is well done but, I feel, not enough homework was done beforehand. A slightly less ambitious thememight have suited this style of writing (and this author) rather better.

Kate Wilhelm's THE PLANNERS isn't too bad, on second reading, but it isn't too good, either. It might make some people feel runny inside, but not me. SWORD GAME, by H H Hollis reads like an old F&SF story (except that it isn't quite as well done as it would have been in F&SF) - the only clear dud in the anthology, though THE LISTENERS by James E Gunn walks in the shadow. While it is good to have Gunn writing once again, I hope he can manage better than this. J G Ballard has handled this theme and this particular subject so much better in shorter stories that one wonders whether Gunn has read Ballard.

DRAGONRIDER, by Anne McCaffrey, long enough to be a serial in ANALOG, won the award as best novella. But it is hard to describe this as a good piece of science fiction: a fair fairy tale, yes, but to go further than that requires an investigation of some depth, and I'm not sure it is worth it. Largely, I would say, the problem is that the author of this kind of story is able to make it up on the run, inventing new situations as they are needed. It isn't the most encouraging environment for a reader.

But this book as a whole is certainly worth reading: Australian hardback price may be a bit of a bar, though.

WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 1969

edited by DONALD A WOLLHEIM and TERRY CARR

Acc 91352 :: 1969

380 pages :: \$A 1.20

Victor Gollancz :: 1969

352 pages :: stg.25/-

Reviewed by Bruce R Gillespie

In S F COMMENTARY 7 I expressed some misgivings about THE WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 1968, which featured a poor lot of fiction from 1967.

Perhaps 1967 was just a bad year after all. The best fiction from 1968 makes me a bit more hopeful that there is some life left left in the s f field as a whole.

In their Introduction to the latest volume, Wollheim and Carr say:

...We often disagree between ourselves as to the exact list of stories to be used, with the result that each year the final contents page is something of a compromise between the tastes of two very serious (i.e. opinionated) editors.

This admission helps to clear up some of the questions I asked in my review of the previous year's volume. In a poor year like 1967, each editor probably picked a small field of good stories, half of which were probably questioned by

the other editor. Probably little was left but a large group of stories that neither editor liked much.

In the same way, in 1969 Wollheim and Carr not only had a much larger group of stories which were worth the title of WORLD'S BEST, but the middle rank of stories has improved greatly. This acceptable group of second fiddles includes STREET OF DREAMS, FEET OF CLAY, BACKTRACKED, KYRIE, HEMEAC, THE CLOUD-BUILDERS, STARSONG, DANCE OF THE CHANGER AND THE THREE, and FEAR HOUND. They all read well, because they could have all appeared in GALAXY or F&SF or ANALOG in the early or middle fifties. The authors represented in this selection do not massacre the English language or the more elementary aspects of Science in the way that most of the 1967 stories did.

To take a few examples to illustrate a point:

HEMEAC (E G Von Wald) is a dead-pan comedy about a poor little robot who cannot learn properly. While all the other robots strive to maintain "society" after the final war against the non-robot "savages" which prowl around the university, little HEMEAC runs into problem after problem:

The Monitor hummed and buzzed. "HEMEAC, you may account for your unauthorized presence in the dormitory."

"Her?" squeaked HEMEAC, his voice a full octave too high in his surprise.

"Very high order tonal," commented the Monitor. "Unexplained presence in the Dormitory. Two simultaneous offenses are beyond my capacity to analyse. Decision: Report to the Dean's office for a Special Examination."

The "clicks" and whirrs of the main characters putter on; the Dean suddenly forgets the offence that brought HEMEAC to her. It takes little imagination to work out what will happen to a group of robots unattended by human technicians for many years. Add to this obvious aspect of the story (all mechanical communication shuts down) a 180° twist at the end, and you have a neat comedy. It is all too neat - there are only two main devices in the plot - and so it remains an unsurprising and second-class story.

KYRIE (Poul Anderson) must be regarded as a close failure despite all of the claims that have been made for it, and some of the more goudache claims it makes for itself. The space explorers hurtle around the universe in fine style, discover "Lucifer" the energy being, the product of a rather mysterious process:

In Epsilon Aurigae, magnetohydrodynamics had done what chemistry did on Earth. Stable plasma vortices had appeared, had grown, had added complexity, until after millions of years they became something you must needs call an organism.

Yes, it's Poul the gosh-wow teacher straight from ANALOG, where he does this sort of thing all the time. Unusually, this lecture has some point to it, but it does not annoy us any less because the story starts to move several paragraphs later.

Lucifer survives Poul Anderson's explanations, at any rate. It communicates telepathically with one of the passengers on the ship, Eloise:

"I guess you don't know about fear," she said.

-Can you show me?... No, do not. I sense it is hurtful. You must not be hurt.

"I can't be afraid anyway, when your mind is holding mine."

(Warmth filled her. Merriment was there, playing like little flames over the surface of Father-leading-her-by-the-hand-when-she-was-just-a-child-and-they-went-out-one-summer's-day-to-pick-wildflowers; over strength and gentleness and God.)

Well, ain't that purty. Zenna Henderson rides again!

It's not all as bad as that, but a lot of it wallows in this sort of sentimentality; words that contain no real emotion at all. The situation that develops from this unusual relationship reaches a breathtaking conclusion with (almost inevitably, these days) pseudo-religious implications. But Anderson has lost the ability he once had to involve us completely - his words come too glibly these days, the pollution of ANALOG-prose seeps through nearly everything else he writes. A pity.

Something like the same complaint may be levelled against THE DANCE OF THE CHANGER AND THE THREE by Terry Carr. Don Wollheim, trying to hide his co-editor's blushes, calls this "one of the most exceptional presentations of a totally alien culture he has ever read". But, as Colin Kapp pointed out in a hammy way in AMBASSADOR TO VERDAMMT (WORLD'S BEST 1968) a truly alien culture remains alien to the extent to which you don't understand it.

This is part of Terry Carr's premise as well. At the end of the story, the human observer retreats confused: where he thought he fully understood, he finds that he has missed the whole point of the culture he looks at. The fluttering benign aliens "explain" their "murder" of the miner's companions with one word: "Because".

Carr errs then, in his attempt to "explain" this culture in the first place. Ultimately it is a fruitless exercise:

The wave-dances wouldn't mean much to you if you saw them, nor I suppose would the story itself if I were to tell it just as it happened. So consider this a translation, and don't bother yourself that when I say "water" I don't mean our hydrogen-oxygen compound, or that there's no "sky" as such on Loarr, or for that matter that the Loarra weren't - aren't - creatures that "think" or "feel" in quite the way we understand.

That piece of confusion occurs at the beginning of the story. Imagine what we feel like by the end of it. Carr gives himself an excuse, in other words, for not describing anything precisely. The impression the story leaves in our minds is fuzzy, because Carr's language is corny and fuzzy:

And there I was, a Standard Year later (five Standard Years ago), sitting inside a mountain of artificial Earth.... I'm a public-relations man; and there was just no reason for me to have been assigned to such a hellish, impossible, god-forsaken, inconceivable, and plain damned unlivable planet as Loarr.

Once a fanzine writer, always a fanzine writer? It's as distant from artistry as it is possible to go.

Three examples - probably not the best of the middle rank. However, these three stories show the strengths and the weaknesses of most science fiction written today. There is still novelty and that legendary Sense of Wonder in all but a few of these stories. But they have little bearing on our intellectual or emotional existence because they lack the sophistication and complexity which might persuade us that they have any relationship to "reality". In KYRIE, for instance, one aspect of the Christ legend is dramatized magnificently for several paragraphs. But nothing in the rest of the story dramatizes any part of religious experience effectively - most of the Women's Weekly prose which I showed above leaches the story of the richness it might have held.

Strong-minded but simple-minded: how does this generalization affect my account of the stories that did impress me in this collection?

It probably still holds true. For instance, I noticed a division between two types of story. MASKS tells a complex story with very simple restrained language; while THE WORM THAT FLIES and TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES tell simple stories with very ornate language. Very rarely in science fiction do we read really complex stories enunciated in a sophisticated form.

Until this idealtype of writing bursts among us (if it ever does) I would settle for the alternative form represented by MASKS (Damon Knight). MASKS is an archetypal story from the mid-fifties GALAXY era, my Golden Age. It introduces its main concern with the easy grace of precise detail:

Sinescu raised his eyebrows. "You program his dreams?"

"Not program," said Babcock impatiently. "A routine suggestion to dream the sort of thing we tell him to. Somatic stuff, sex, exercise, sport".

"And whose idea was that?"

"Psych section. He was doing fine neurologically, every other way, but he was withdrawing. Psych decided he needed that somatic input in some form, we had to keep him in touch. He's alive, he's functioning, everything works. But don't forget, he spent forty-three years in a normal human body."

The story becomes a three-dimensional jigsaw. Jim is a man with "everything cut off", his whole body prosthetic. His caretakers are entirely devoted to his well-being, even though they can find little practical use for this multi-million dollar White Elephant. They make one basic mistake, the consequences of which we can see in every line when re-reading the story.

The story proceeds like a film scenario in which dialogue has been nearly left out. It includes one passage which not only tells us what Jim's "apartment" looks like but reveals how it might appear to his man who has been made effectively psychotic:

The room was large, part living room, part library, part workshop. Here was a cluster of Swedish-modern chairs, a sofa, coffee table; here a workbench with a metal lathe, electric crucible, drill press, parts bins, tools on wallboards; here a drafting table; here a free-standing wall of book-shelves that Sinescu fingered curiously as they passed.... Behind the bookshelves, set

into a little alcove, was a glass door through which they glimpsed another living room, differently furnished: upholstered chairs, a tall philodendron in a ceramic pot.

The total impersonality of the exercise prepares us for the violent surprise ending but is so understated that the end does come as a surprise. The tragedy is not personal; Damon Knight is not so great a writer, and neither is anyone at present writing science fiction. The tragedy is one of a whole civilization, and because of that, it does have some universal significance.

THE WORM THAT FLIES (Brian W Aldiss) also contains this general significance, although Aldiss' point perhaps hits further away from home than does MASKS. Aldiss takes the podium as a conductor of words, commands acres of strings and bassoons and kettledrums of language, and still writes a less complex story than MASKS.

But MASKS is gritty and dry; THE WORM THAT FLIES overwhelms us with a flood of sonorous prose:

The road along which (the traveller) walked had been falling into a great valley, and was increasingly hemmed in by walls of mountain. On several occasions it had seemed that a way out of these huge accumulations of earth matter could not be found, that the geological puzzle was insoluble, the chthonian arrangement of discord irresolvable: And then vale and drumlin created between them a new direction, a surprise, an escape, and the way took fresh heart and plunged recklessly still deeper into the encompassing upheaval.

Imagine yourself as Paul Schofield and say that quietly under your breath. The slow rhythm of the prose rolls on, propelled by long consonants and "d"s and "v"s and careful use of punctuation. Perhaps I should not praise too highly - surely this attention to language should be the normal thing in writing, not the possession of one or two rare writers. Only if we start at this point can we proceed to take a story's full meaning seriously.

Aldiss takes quite a while to reveal this full meaning; perhaps the orator in Aldiss gains the upper hand. He takes us on a slow journey through an ecology where nature is frozen into near-sleep, and all natural forms have nearly become part of each other:

Again the silence, until the senior drew his branches together and whispered from a bower of twiggy fingers, "We have proved that tomorrow is no surprise. It is as unaltered as today or yesterday, merely another yard of the path of time. But we comprehend that things change, don't we? You comprehend that, don't you?"

"Of course. You yourselves are changing, are you not?"

"It is as you say, although we no longer recall what we were before, for that thing is become too small back in time. So: if time is all of the same quality, then it has no change, and thus cannot force change. So: there is another unknown element in the world that forces change!"

Thus in their fragmentary whispers they reintroduced sin into the world.

Note the melodramatic gesture at the end of this exchange. Aldiss tries to have it both ways: he wants to write a metaphysical mystery story, but he also wants to make sure that the Average Reader does not miss out on the point of the exercise. Fortunately, Aldiss leaves his explanations as dramatic gestures, and merely prepares us for the end, and does not give the game away. The story resounds like an organ sonata played in a cathedral, but the plaintive air of the main character reaches our mind's ear above it all:

"What happened? Why?"

"Nothing happened! Life is life is life - only except that change crept in."

TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES (Samuel R Delany) appears like a footnote to the discussion above. On the surface, TIME CONSIDERED... is one of the most infuriatingly complex stories ever written - it took me three readings to find out what it was about, for example. And yet when the reader clears away the debris of words, he will probably find that, as in WORM THAT FLIES, the main point and direction of the story is fairly simple.

This is the story of Harold Clancy Everet (or Hank Culafroy Eckles; or Harvey Cadwalitor Erickson) a nice lad with an unfortunate gift for making money illegally. This he does for most of the story, worries Special Services Department (who watch people who make too much money too quickly), runs into them and escapes from them, and.... Well, you tell me. You would need a helix of semi-precious stones yourself to remember all the bits of the story.

The "bits" coalesce around one main perception. Our hero's friend, Hawk, dies to save him during the last raid of the Special Services. When HCE learns about it at the end of the story, his only reaction is:

I wasn't there when it happened. It wasn't my affair.

And it isn't. The main character has always been able to save himself - it is merely annoying that his friend should die to aid his escape, when he was quite capable of looking after himself. He is totally amoral; he rollicks into manhood without any conception of possibilities beyond those of easy adventure and money-making.

Now that is Delany's point. But it is not the way he writes the story. He writes the story from his main character's viewpoint, for a start. This not-very-introspective gentleman speaks like this:

I glanced up at the lozenges of moonlight in the leaves.

and, irrelevantly, like this:

I started to lift my briefcase, but Alex's hand came down from his ear (it had gone by belt to hair to collar already) to halt me. Nouveau riche.

Is this really the dialect of a master criminal, even a lovable teenago one?

No, it is Delany's voice. But how do we identify with Delany's voice with its gosh-wow vagueness of passages like this?:

Singers are people who look at things, then go and tell people what they've seen. What makes them Singers is their ability to make people listen.

The story is fairly simple, yet has no unity of voice; precisely written, yet nowhere very convincing; a high point in s f, but isn't that s f all over?

Most importantly, it is one of the three or four best stories in this volume. I enjoyed most of the stories here, but it is interesting to note how much better even the best of them could be.

But that's not the problem of Carr and Wollheim. They ranged much further afield than in 1968, reprinting two stories from the new NEW WORLDS (admittedly, both by American writers) and three stories from Joseph Elder's collection THE FARTHEST REACHES, an unpublicized volume that has only just reached Australia. MASKS first appeared in PLAYBOY. English and British Commonwealth readers of the Gollancz edition may feel particularly well-served by this group of fair to good American stories. With the appearance of VISION OF TOMORROW in England, numerous new original-fiction collections, and changes of editorship in some of the American magazines, the range could be even better next year. It's up to you now, Terry Carr and Don Wollheim.

DAVY

by EDGAR PANGBORN

Penguin :: 1964

:: 80c

Reviewed by John Gibson

There's a gentleman's agreement among the bulk of s f writers and fans that all the wondermen and superwomen of the future will be strictly neuter gender. Lo! friends, the end of the world - y h doomsday - must be at hand: an s f writer actually talks about sex. More (and worse - for some), he has hidden behind, for years, a staid old name like

"Edger", though some might easily have deduced his secret treachery in his surname "Pangborn" (which may refer to - horrors! - birth pains.)

Pang - uh - born, like most s f fans, discovered la difference rather late in life (he was born in 1909, gave birth to DAVY in 1964). We must neither damn nor praise him for this, for some s f editors are still struggling - valiantly - to keep la difference a secret, which is perhaps why they publish so many stories which feature women as aliens from outer space. Good grief, if only they knew how friendly these aliens are... Well, good old Ed Pangborn has disillusioned them, and no-one has suggested giving him a Hugo for it.

Back to Davy: born, via a prostitute's mistake, into a world that is ruled by the state-sponsored Holy Murcan Church, where the popular pastimes are heretic burnings, bear-baiting and muc (mutant) killings - not to mention delightful little wars fought with bows, arrows and spears. Davy grows to manhood with doubts about religion but no doubts about sex. As the saying goes: "You gotta believe in something".

The "democrats" of the small feudal states of Davy's time (300 years after World War III) are like the democrats of anywhere, anywhen: they don't know anything but the magic word - democracy. As if to prove it, they keep slaves and bondservants.

Pangborn details the features of Davy's narrow environment, bloodied by violence, superstition, plague and mutated wild animals, with fenced-round villages fearful of their neighbours and the night. Pangborn's characters, especially Davy, Vilet, Jed, Sam and Pa Rumley, almost - but not quite - equal the fascination of the backdrop. We can at least say this about them: here we have people, neither heroes nor anti-heroes, who live trying, as most of us do, to avoid heroics. It is not that most of us do not like heroes, it's just that unlike certain American sf editors, we know that real heroes can never stand up under close observation. So we prefer people - and this, to his considerable credit, is what Pangborn gives us in DAVY.

DAVY and A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ are parallel works in the sense that they both superbly evoke church-dominated societies. But there is a vital difference: Pangborn uses DAVY as a satirical whip with which to beat the church; Miller uses LEIBOWITZ to justify religion. As a definitely-not-religious person I rather liked Pangborn's approach, as Miller's sermonising has always repelled me (though the man can write).

So can Pangborn. He writes in a language that is partly his own invention, partly raw and bawdy (amusingly so), partly poetic ("the sails took hold of the sky").

The book is not without its faults. The beginning is slow, moody, true-to-environment, well worked out. The last sixty pages race away as though Pangborn says to himself, "Looks as if I'm out of ideas" or "I won't ever finish at this rate". The only book I ever read that could support a dramatic change of pace at the end was EARTH ABIDES. This is my only criticism of the book: I still think DAVY deserved the Hugo in its year. No, I'm not sure about the Hugo - some real prize sometime.

INTRODUCTION

Stanislaw Lem's novel SOLARIS, due to appear from Faber & Faber, is currently being filmed in Moscow by Mosfilm. Film Polski is planning to film several of Mr Lem's books, but the author has not as yet made up his mind whether he will give permission.

Many of Lem's stories have been turned into successful TV plays, including one based on the story ARE YOU THERE MR JONES? (VISION OF TOMORROW No 1). Some time ago, this play was shown in Germany. Another of Lem's plays, THE JOURNEY OF PROFESSOR TARANTOGA has been performed since March in the theatre at Krasnajoksk, USSR. It is hard to tell how many of Lem's plays have been performed in the USSR, since the USSR is not a member of the Convention of Bern, and Lem himself learns of such performances only through the courtesy of the producer, director or some fan of his who happens to see the play.

Y O U M U S T P A Y F O R A N Y P R O G R E S S
A N I N T E R V I E W W I T H T H E P O L I S H S F W R I T E R S T A N I S L A W L E M

INTERVIEWER: Polish journalist Bozena Janicka

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION: SOVIETSKAYA KULTURA November 30, 1968

TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN: Franz Rottensteiner

REPORTER Only one of your many books, ASTRONAUTS (ASTRONAUTI), has been filmed. The film THE SILENT PLANET produced after the novel of the same name, was released about eight years ago.

LEM I have also written, in collaboration with J Szczepanski, a script based

on my novel RETURN FROM THE STARS. However, production of that film hasn't begun as yet.

REPORTER One of the reasons that make the production of s f films so difficult is obviously the high costs.

LEM Of course. If I write, for instance, in a script: "The hero saw through the window the panorama of a city in the year 2000", the production of that scene in a form that would satisfy me would cost at least one million zloty.

REPORTER But often it is the case that the films with high production costs make much more money than cheap ones. Therefore their production does repay the investment. Especially so since there is much interest in s f films in many countries.

LEM That may be the case when the film is one which aims at dazzling the public with a meaningless but spectacular performance. However, my books don't admit something like this. Several years ago, the West German film director Wolfgang Staudte intended to make a movie based on my book SOLARIS. But it proved impossible for him, for every one of the producers approached demanded that the film must contain a love story - sex and other goodies. The only countries where such things are not demanded from an author are the Socialist countries. But save for Soviet productions, none of our film companies has the material means to produce a science fiction film. For such an undertaking it would be necessary to organize co-operation between, say, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic. The question is, of course, whether a cosmic-philosophic drama is worth that effort.

REPORTER What few s f films you have seen have perhaps only helped to fill you with distaste for the genre?

LEM That's true. I didn't like even one s f film. Most of all I fear that those things are lost by a transposition onto the screen which for me are the most important things about my work. For instance, in SOLARIS I describe a Solaris library with a collection of books which comprise the total sum of the history of science on that planet. I quote from a variety of sciences of different eras, and, by this method, I create an imaginary science. But how could I reproduce this within the means the film media has to offer?

REPORTER And TV? Currently you are working on six TV scripts based on your stories.

LEM TV is like a starved man who'll eat anything he can get. I'll try to do something for TV, but it's difficult to say what the results will be.

REPORTER On TV, it is possible to avoid a number of difficulties that undoubtedly would arise if the same script were filmed for the cinema. One shouldn't attribute so much weight to the kind of production.

LEM The matter isn't quite so simple. When a visitor to the cinema or a viewer sitting in front of his TV set is content with a symbolism through which, for instance, a huge fire is supposed to turn the stage into the hall of a castle, this is the case because the viewer knows what a castle looks like in reality, and what function fires have in castles. The case is quite different when we are dealing with cities of the future, or rocketships. Therefore the commonly used method of showing only a segment of something to give an impression of the whole, is quite useless when it comes to the production of s f films.

REPORTER The viewer will think that he hasn't been sufficiently informed?

LEM Even worse, he will get the impression that the simplicity of the means is not the result of artistic necessity or the author's intention, but simply the result of lack of money, masquerading as an artistic conception. And with this, the whole effect is lost, and the performance deteriorates into something grotesque, even if unintended.

REPORTER Do you see any way out of this dilemma?

LEM To accept the symbolism of the grotesque, to offer the public a kind of play of the future. Really, the only fantastic film that I ever liked was Karel Zeman's
THE INVENTION OF DOOM.

REPORTER People often laugh about the clothes the characters wear in s f films; an effect not intended by the author.

LEM An excellent example of the difficulties the producer of films about the future has to face. In a contemporary or historical film, costumes are a mere technical problem. When we want, for example to make the costumes of the hero of Boleslaw Prus' THE PUPPET, we will not necessarily ask the author for his advice, for in this case there exist also other sources. But when the problem is the fashion of the year 2000, the author of the book or the script is the only competent man. The author, however, cannot be a specialist in the questions concerned. I for one feel incompetent when the topic is raised of ladies' wear in the year 2000.

REPORTER But the characters must wear some sort of costume?

LEM And quite dreadful ones, I fear. I remember the film version of Wells' THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME. The public began to laugh as soon as they saw the characters walking around in sheets, as they preferred to call them. The characters of the s f films of today wear bright garments, and their extreme functionalism is equally ridiculous.

REPORTER But a contemporary dress can also produce an effect of the comical. The youth of today appear peculiar to stiff men in formal dress.

LEM Of course, because a fashion becomes accepted only with the consent of a majority. Any era has its own notion of what constitutes civilization. The comic effect of the costumes in which we clothe the people of the year 2000 is a result of what the audience can or cannot accept. If one wants to avoid comic effects, one must not resort to extravagant solutions.

REPORTER In a film, the dress serves as an additional means to characterize a given time. If we are shown action that took place in the 18th century, it will be more convincing if the protagonists wear powdered wigs. In s f films, clothes play perhaps a similar role.

LEM I for one wouldn't want the audience to take too much interest in superficial originality; it would only serve to distract them from the content I wish to impart to them. Furthermore, an original costume is insufficient to make the audience believe that the protagonist lives in the 21st century. It will not do at all to show a human being with an antenna on his or her head; it has to be justified by a function, or else the public will believe him or here a lunatic.

REPORTER It is possible to avoid all these misunderstandings by choosing, for instance, the already existing suits of the Cosmonauts of today, which are a part of the present, but which nevertheless are firmly associated in our minds with the imagination of the future.

LEM When I was negotiating in Moscow about plans to film one of my books (for very unimportant reasons, the project wasn't realized) I was told that the company could get hold of space-suits as they were used by the Cosmonauts during their orbital flights. We, however, don't have this opportunity; we would have to design and put together something on our own. And not just the suits.

REPORTER The production of s f films raises a lot of technical problems. Hardly less important are the ideological and artistic problems for which the script writer must provide an answer. Those films often are a reflection of our fear of the future. This was true even of your film THE SILENT PLANET.

LEM This film depicts the destruction of all life on Venus, but was at the same time an allegory of the possibility of atomic holocaust. Today, such warnings are only a very well-known truth.

REPORTER That's your only book, I believe, where such a catastrophe occurs. It seems to me that you are the only s f author who isn't afraid of the future. Instead of frightening and warning your readers with a vision of a world ruled by feeling-less automatons, you try to make him familiar with what conceivably sometimes may happen. Do you think that all those horrible spectres of doom and destruction are believable?

LEM I wouldn't say that I agree beforehand with everything

that's bound to happen: that's a question that is heatedly discussed. But I do not intend to warn, because this appears uninteresting to me and improper. After all, we cannot know what the future may have in store for us, and we must be prepared for quite a few surprises. Therefore I'm trying to show several models of behaviour, and not nightmares.

REPORTER Have you ever felt a wish to create a hypothetical social order that would come very close to an ideal?

LEM It's wholly impossible to solve the problems of mankind in such a way that all ideals which have been thought up by man in historical times are realized; it is also quite impossible to turn some point of time in the future into an earthly paradise. You must pay for any progress. As medicine is being perfected, the death-rate is falling, but at the same time a demographic explosion occurs. Our world is an extremely complex mechanism and any action can have its consequences in the future. Mankind has the choice of action: and according to what it chooses, history will develop. When I draw a picture of the future, I use this method: I create different alternative models.

REPORTER Isn't possible to foresee already today how mankind will be able to cope with those particular problems?

LEM They won't be able to cope with those problems, but get used to them. It would be very naive to think that the future will develop cures for the diseases of civilisation. Those s f authors who are victims of this illusion, invent caps of invisibility, which will make it possible that a million couples can enjoy Niagara Falls at the same time without stepping on each other's toes. I never play around with caps of invisibility, do not tell fairy tales of a time that has nothing in common with this Earth. I look realistically into the future; that is, I construct only such futures that are believable or at least possible. The reason for this may be that I, aside from my literary work, also do research into scientific problems. I write papers on cybernetic, philosophical and scientific topics.

REPORTER It appears to me that the readers of s f also seek a satisfaction in a kind of literature that isn't rational. They want to find, on some far planet inhabited by things unknown to us, a "happy island".

LEM The dream of an idyllic life is not so much an ancient dream of mankind as an ancient illusion. If there were no challenges, no opposing forces, man would cease to be man. Mankind as a biological species had to fight for its existence during millions of years. We have developed in such a way that the mastering of obstacles has become a necessity for us. We couldn't live in any other way.

REPORTER But economists, sociologists and futurologists nevertheless predict the likelihood of a situation where only the most talented members of society will work, whereas the rest will live on public welfare, watching television around the clock and pursuing their hobbies.

LEM It may very well be possible that one of the problems of the future will be find work for all human beings, and genuine work, not just some artificial, thought-out pretext. If we fail in this, mankind will face an enormous danger, for man hasn't been constructed for fictitious work. But I'm convinced that our descendants will master this problem. Luckily, the nature of the universe is such that its difficulties and riddles are quite sufficient for all. First of all it is necessary to bring some order into human affairs on earth; afterwards we can go out to the planets to settle there.

REPORTER Even though the future has many unknown dangers in store for us, wouldn't it also be possible to find a new, unknown happiness in it?

LEM Not so much happiness as satisfaction and joy. But perhaps even happiness. Man is an historical being, and what appears pleasant, attractive and worth striving after to us, may be repugnant to the representatives of another civilization.

REPORTER Nevertheless we are convinced that we live in a time of great changes, at a crossroad of different eras.

LEM Yes and no. Our generation has really lived through several historical revolutions. We have seen the transition from a pre-atomic to an atomic era, the rise of the possibility of wiping out man as a biological species, and the emergence of machines that may become competitors of man in the future. All these are principal changes, and compared with the lives of the previous generation who was born in the era of the railway and died in the era of the railway, almost mind-shattering. In a certain sense we live indeed in a time which separates history into distinct eras. But at the same time I'm convinced that those changes are merely a preparation for the - equally important - changes yet to come, which we cannot foresee at present. When man learned to make fire, he obviously believed he had made a revolutionary discovery. And he was right. But this doesn't mean that mankind will remain at this point. That point of time was only the beginning. And it is the same today.

trivial or infantile. Hope that some of his stuff sees circulation in the U S of A. Some of the petty parochialism and reactionary conservatism so obvious there may be broken down (those factors so well summed up in the final three paragraphs of the article). Lem confirms my belief that general literature and s f, while distinct enough at a distance from the centre, are impossible to define where they merge; and this holds good when s f becomes fantasy and on into myth.... Take the premise that the brain of a man may be linked with a computer. Think of the possibilities there! Endless potentials: perception confusions, identity mixups and crises, the boundaries of humanity, the loss thereof, etc. But what did one recent author in ANALOG make of it? A short and badly told detective story with no vestige of three dimensional characters, enacted by puppets as human as the machine which was featured. The trouble is, as Lem has pointed out, is that the ANALOG hacks (** careful, Stuart. J*** W***** writes for that mob.**) in the main, have nothing to say... If they are saying anything, it is usually that technological man¹⁸ akin to the gods and the masses are mindless and moronic, to be led by Campbellania.

And on the other half of S F COMMENTARY 9, DAVID GRIGG again:

I am not sure that I quite agree with Dick in his theory: for example, I am sure that both the idios kosmos and the koinos kosmos of say, a dog, are radically different from those of man. Surely our koinos kosmos is conditioned by the idios kosmos through the medium of perception. Dick argues that the universe is an absolute, freed from our impression of it. I do not accept this: I think we condition reality - an 'observer' effect if you like.

Accept the view, then. Perception here, seems to me to be the crucial point. I do not think that perception is an attribute of either the idios kosmos or the koinos kosmos: it is the bridge between the two. The difference between insanity and the drug experience is surely that in insanity, the idios really breaks down, and under drugs, the perception does. From the books and reviews I have read, it would seem that Dick shows us also the koinos kosmos breaking down, and what he sees as entropy/evil creeping in.

Turner's letter, although casting a different light, is a basically similar idea: the search for identity is Dick's questioning of his own theory of an absolute universe and a subjective reality. Is my idios identical with the koinos? But I think Turner is correct when he postulates that the question of identity may have no meaning. It depends, surely, on how you define 'individual'. If we say Joe Blow is the man who was born of these parents, had this education, married this girl at this place at this time, then we are defining him in terms of his memory. Joe Blow is the man who remembers a specific set of events. Someone who is not this individual, has a different set of memories. It is somewhat like quantum theory: if you have two electrons with exactly the same characteristics, they are the same electron. So it is with individuals and memory. The time traveller who "meets himself" does not do so; he meets a separate individual who has his own memories, plus an extra set which make the other a different individual, since they have different durations. The problem thus resolves into a tautology: I am me because of what I have been, thus I am because I am. There is no point in asking why I am myself.

A vast number of letters remain, but since I hope to produce S F COMMENTARY 13 fairly soon, these must wait. Although Lee Harding wants the magazine to be more fannish, and Alex Robb was shocked that I betrayed my principles in SFC 11, everybody in the middle seems to find something of interest. Keep writing.

MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE (S F COMMENTARY 12 - CHECKLIST) :

brian w aldiss: BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD (pages 5 and 6) * brian w aldiss: THE WORM THAT FLIES (15 - 16) * poul anderson: KYRIE (10, 12-13) * poul anderson (ed.): NEBULA AWARD STORIES 4 (10-11) * john baxter: SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA (6) * terry carr: THE DANCE OF THE CHANGER AND THE THREE (11, 13-14) * samuel r delany: TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES (16-17) * philip k dick (general) (SFC 9) (26) * THE DITMAR AWARDS (4-5) * john oyster: NORSTRILIAN NEWS (3) * james e gunn: THE LISTENERS (11) * lee harding: THE CUSTODIAN (6) * HEICON 70 (1970 WWORLD S F CONVENTION) (4) * h h hollis: SWORD GAME (11) * damon knight: MASKS (14-15) * fritz leiber: A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING TEXAS (9) * stanislaw lem: (general) (SFC 9) (6, 26) * stanislaw lem: Films (19-24) * stanislaw lem: THE SILENT PLANET (19, 22) * stanislaw lem: SOLARIS (20) * anne mcaffrey: DRAGONRIDER (11) * prof willis mcnelly: THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL IN 1968 (10) * gary mason (ed.): THE NEW FORERUNNER (3-4) * MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY S F ASSOCIATION (4) * 1975 WORLD S F CONVENTION BIDDING COMMITTEE (4) * NOREASCON (1971 WORLD S F CONVENTION) (4) * edgar pangborn: DAVY (17-18) * robert silverberg (ed.): THE DARK STARS (6) * kate wilhelm: BABY YOU WERE GREAT (8) * kate wilhelm: COUNTDOWN (8) * kate wilhelm: THE DOWNSTAIRS ROOM (8) * kate wilhelm: THE DOWNSTAIRS ROOM AND OTHER SPECULATIVE FICTION (8-10) * kate wilhelm: THE FEEL OF DESPERATION (8-9) * kate wilhelm: LET THE FIRE FALL (9) * kate wilhelm: THE PLANNERS (11) * richard wilson: MOTHER TO THE WORLD (11) * e g von wald: HEMEAC (12) * donald a wollheim & terry carr: WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION 1969 (11-17) *

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