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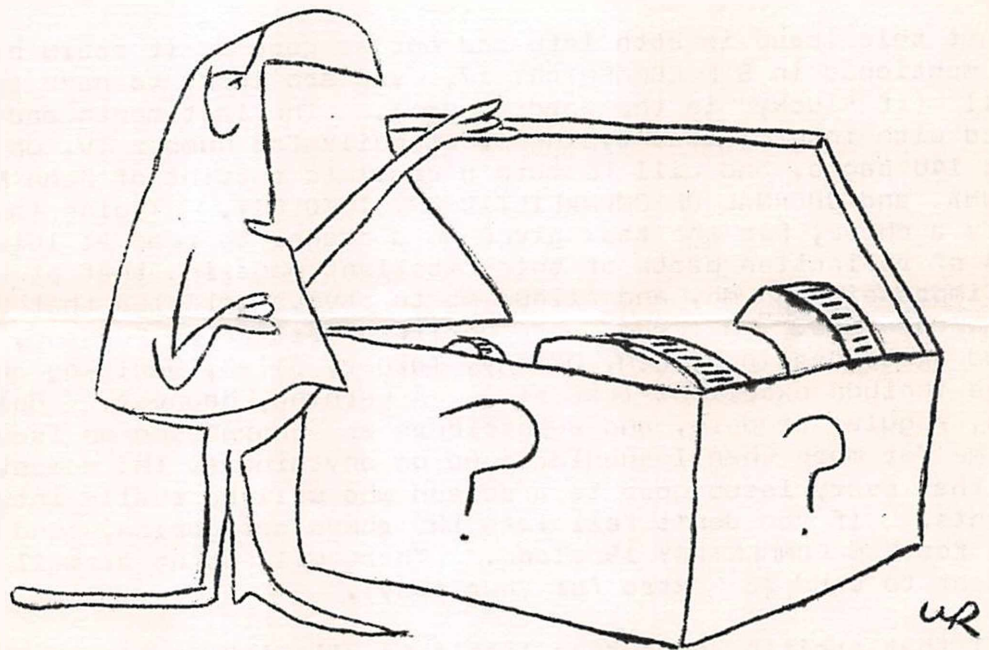
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Date

S F COMMENTARY 18



DECEMBER 1970

FEATURING

BROSNAN
GILLAM
GILLESPIE

1

MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

* That this issue is both late and not as good as it could be, goes without saying. As I mentioned in S F COMMENTARY 17, you are lucky to have an issue in December at all (if "lucky" is the word to use). The last month and a half has been filled with interminable typing of stencils for Number 19, which now should run about 140 pages, and will feature a complete reprint of John Foyster's EXPLODING MADONNA and JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY. Typing the next issue is hardly a chore, for the task gives me a chance to read at leisure and after several years of reflection parts of this excellent magazine that previously had not made much impression on me, and allows me to savour articles that everybody should have read before now. 5 issues were entirely written by Foyster, and other writers include Rottensteiner, Lem, Delany, Turner, Blish, Dahlskog and others. Many issues include excellent letters. A warning, however. Only regular correspondents, regular traders, and subscribers are guaranteed an issue. This issue will cost me far more than I should spend on anything at the moment, and I want to make sure that every issue goes to a person who will be really interested in the contents. If you don't fall into the above categories, send a normal subscription, or \$1 for S F COMMENTARY 19 alone. There will be no airmail copies sent (unless you want to send \$3 extra for your copy).

* All that exciting news does little to alleviate some other problems of editing the magazine - for instance, that I have enough material on hand to fill two 50 page issues of S F COMMENTARY, and much of it should have been printed months ago. You'll read it all eventually, but meanwhile some correspondents may feel a bit cheated. I have some excellent letters on hand, a large number of long reviews as well as the shorter reviews included this issue, transcripts from the Speculation Conference, which Pete Weston had no room for in SPECULATION, and much much more. But all contributions are welcomed, especially as I will try to edit a few special issues early in the New Year.

* In this issue you will find an article of mine called THIRTY YEARS OF MISDIRECTION, which has no saving virtue except for the fact that I wrote it. The conclusions are muddled, the strands of the argument contradictory, and much else is wrong with it. But as you will see from its format, it was written (and typed) in 1969, was sent to Pete Weston in this form, who sent it back after several months, and the whole process took about 11 months. More importantly, it is a dry run for an article I've written for AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK, an article in which you can actually work out my arguments. Michael Cameron and other should note that PROWLER is one of only two Ellison stories I've ever liked.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

DECEMBER 1970

MONTHLY

\$3 FOR 18

S F COMMENTARY 18

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and costs \$3 for 18 if you live in Australia; or \$3 for 18 surface mail (takes 2 months) or \$7 for 18 airmail (takes 4 days) to USA; or 30/- for 18 surface mail or 70/- air mail to Great Britain. I need the money but I will also trade for similar magazines, reviews, articles, graphics, review copies or any other show of friendship.

AGENTS: Charlie Brown (and/or Dena Benatan) of 2078 Anthony Avenue, Bronx, New York 10457, for U S A. Vic Hallett is unfortunately unavailable as English agent (because of his misfortune, not mine), and at the moment I am fairly certain that my English agent will be Malcolm Edwards, 236 Kings College, Cambridge, England.

I am AGENT for: LOCUS, the biweekly newsmagazine, which contains most of the news you need to know about International fandom and the professional scene alike. If you are really interested in our Worldcon bid, then you need to know what the rest of the world is doing. \$3 for 10. Editor is Charlie Brown (and/or Dena Benatan). Far more Australians should sub to SPECULATION than do now. SPECULATION is not only the best English-language magazine of critical comments and reviews of s f, but it is also the centre of British fandom. Editor is Peter Weston, and rates are \$2 for 5 or \$4 for 10. Each issue runs well over 40 pages.

Cover layout by Peter Innocent (also designer of SO) and cover drawing by Dimitrii Razuvaev.

No "production assistance by Stephen Campbell" this time - he's buzzed off to Nelson, Victoria, after stacking thousands of sheets of paper, drawing covers and generally helping out. Merv and Noel probably wish he'd moved in the other direction, however.

Other Australian agencies: Peter Darling is agent for one of two or three other major newsmagazines LUNA MONTHLY (\$5.25 per annum; air mail) edited by Ann Dietz. Michael Cameron is agent for the fastest improved fanzine in the world, OUTWORLDS edited by Bill and Joan Bowers (\$2 per quarter). John Foyster represents SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, double Hugo winner (50 cents per copy) and almost anything else you want to name (incl. LACON). Michael O'Brien is agent for WSFA JOURNAL, a bulky, regular fanzine of comment and reviews (10 for \$3.60). Addresses on the back cover. 10TH AUSTRALIAN S F CONVENTION, c/o John Foyster, 12 Glengariff Drive, Mulgrave, Victoria 3170.

AUSTRALIA IN 75! and Best wishes to all my friends for Christmas and New Year.

(I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

* The 1971 Australian Science Fiction Convention approaches (and perhaps will take place before this issue appears) with promises from John Foyster, Lee Harding and Leigh Edmonds that this will be something unusual in Australian Conventions. The program is tight without being restrictive, with Round Table discussions, interviews with fans and authors, and Robin Johnson's Fan Guest of Honour speech on the first day, January 1, and more discussions (with special emphasis on Australia-in-75), a panel on films, the auction, the Ditmar awards, and the Paul Stevens Show on the second day (January 2). On the evening of January 1 we have the Nova Mob Party, where we expect most people to turn up in masquerade costume. Current joining rate: \$2.50 ; \$3 at the door. The "door" by the way is at the Melbourne University, and I suggest you write to John Foyster for further directions. I would probably take the rest of the stencil giving you instructions, otherwise.

* Perhaps of more interest to our overseas readers are the nominations for the Australian Science Fiction Achievement Awards ("Ditmars"). The fracas at the last Convention over these awards seems to have done its job, as many more people put in nominations than people put in votes at Easter. The nominations for BEST AUSTRALIAN FICTION are SQUAT (David Rome); AFTER RAGNAROK (Robert Bowdon); and THE BITTER PILL (A Bertram Chandler). SQUAT has just appeared from the local Scripts Publications, and Merv Binns or I could get you a copy if you send \$1. Robert Bowdon's first published short story AFTER RAGNAROK appeared in VISION OF TOMORROW No 5, and one of Bert Chandler's most unusual stories, THE BITTER PILL, appeared in VISION OF TOMORROW No 9. As in the other categories, voters may favour "No Award", if they wish. :: BEST INTERNATIONAL FICTION in each of the three years the Ditmar Award has been given, has been the most interesting category. Last year's award was surprising enough to cause a lot of comment; for evidently enough people have now caught the word that Italo Calvino is a Good Writer for TIME AND THE HUNTER (the English title of T ZERO) to be nominated this year. The other two nominations are THE REGION BETWEEN (Harlan Ellison) and TOWER OF GLASS (Robert Silverberg). I challenge the ingenuity of any SFC reader who can tell me what is award-worthy in either of the last two. :: BEST AUSTRALIAN FANZINE is an even tussle between S F COMMENTARY (edited by Bruce Gillespie), SOMERSET GAZETTE (Noel Kerr), and NEW FORERUNNER (Gary Mason). Naturally I hope we can do better than last time, but both Noel and Gary are tough competitors. :: Apologies to some: I have a horrible feeling that BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD did not make the Best International Fiction section because I sent off my nomination form one day too late. But I suppose we should be grateful for people like Leigh Edmonds who run the competition efficiently. Only members of the Convention can vote, but I suggest that as many SFC readers as possible do so. Send your form to John Foyster (address on Page 3).

* Some of you will receive with this copy of SFC an advertising folder for SO, (by "Adam Pilgrim") which is actually the first novel by Owen Webster, local broadcaster, journalist, etc. He has now turned to publishing, starting with his own novel, and it was for this reason that I first became interested in the project. Both inside and outside science fiction there are scary stories about "desk drawer novels", very good books that do not fit into the categories and sales charts of publishers. James Blish was even forced to publish his own DR MIRABILIS in mimeo in USA to preserve the copyright. Now Owen Webster is trying to do something about the publisher bottleneck. Fortunately, SO is one of the best Australian novels for a number of years, and I will be reviewing it as soon as possible.

* No room for the mail, except for a few notes. Several people have noticed the very bad mistake last issue, where Peter Kuczka's Hungarian fanzine was supposed to come from Roumania. Marcel Thaon of Nice, France, is doing a Ph D on the works of Philip K Dick, and Sandra Miesel and Tony Lewis, among others are very interested in information on Cordwainer Smith.:: Have a good Christmas.

With examples from ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE

Bruce R Gillespie

[illegible]

Edited by RAYMOND J HEALY
and J FRANCIS McCOMAS

DANGEROUS VISIONS

Edited by HARLAN ELLISON

Doubleday :: 1967

520 pages :: \$US 6.95

I In their introduction to the first hardback anthology of magazine science fiction, ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE, Raymond J Healy and J Francis McComas say that: "The writer of science-fiction knows, literally, no limits." They then detail the strict limitations which science-fiction had already imposed upon itself in 1946: time travel, exploration of the other planets, Superman theme, and the predictable rest.

In the same introduction, the editors write towards the closing stages of World War II: "The war demonstrated that God is no longer on the side of the heaviest battalions, but on that of the heaviest thinkers". Elsewhere in the Introduction: "War is a

basic theme of all stories dealing with this man of the future, for the science-fiction writer knows how mankind hates anything alien and strange". So much for the results of that heavy thinking.

However, these passages do not present the most striking evidence of intellectual wool-gathering that one may find within the s f medium in 1945. The first two paragraphs of this huge book contain enough puzzlers to set even the Kingsley Amises and John Campbells of the field fretting:

Science-fiction concerns itself with the world of the future, a world whose political, social and economic life has been shaped by the expansion of scientific knowledge. In depicting this world, science-fiction very nearly falls between two stools. Is it literature? Or is it prophecy?

We contend that it is both. Literature should certainly reflect the conditions of its time. Our time is both conditioned and challenged by the quiet men in the laboratories.... For once in his history, the most average of men is concerned with more than his own immediate future. The world of tomorrow is the problem of today, and writing that reflectsthis factor of our life reflects a most fascinating and complex condition of our time.

While there may be many tests for literary quality, there is only one sure method of proving the validity of prophecy. Has it "come true"?

....However, more important to us than either of these aspects of science-fiction in offering this collection isour conviction that this field offers readers an entirely original and enjoyable adventure in reading. Here are new concepts of what is adventurous fanciful or mysterious. The writer of science-fiction knows, literally, no limits. What may be a cautious, tentative theory of the speculative sientist is presumed by the author to be concrete achievement. In the hands of a good writer when probability is accepted as fact, high romance is the result. The future is previewed in a fine story!

One of my favorite whining sentences with which I tried to lure long-suffering friends to science fiction was: "We have fiction that looks at the past, encompasses present-day problems - isn't it illogical not to have fiction that tells of the future?" To this sort of argument, Healy and McComas add the reddest of herrings: that s f should and can prophesy. Not surprisingly, the editors are not quite sure where Literature fits into all this, for they do not give much idea of what they consider "Literature", unless "high romance" is supposed to cover that one.

The give-away line is the first in the book. Read it again: "Science-fiction concerns itself with the world of the future, a world whose political, social and economic life has been shaped by the expansion of scientific knowledge". In other words, some very imposing prison bars have snapped shut around the field described before the editors have even displayed their wares. The limitation is not one of approach or style, but a limitation of objective. The stories may be about the future, and any knick-knack that the future may bring to mankind. However, they must also be worlds that have "been shaped by the expansion of scientific knowledge". Surely it

is inconsistent to say that s f has an open season on the future, but to presume at the same time that scientific knowledge will continue to expand in every one of all possible futures, or that scientific knowledge can and always will be the most important factor in all possible future environments.

However, you might also take one sentence from the first page out of context ("The writer of science-fiction knows, literally, no limits") and take it at face value. Here again there are problems in the way the editors express this optimism. For them, there are no limits on the subject matter of this fiction: again they have not talked about the literary problems of speculative fiction. This sort of stricture never precluded Ballard's meanderings and Stapledon's metaphysics, but nothing of what Healy and McComas say could recommend the extension of the science fiction writer's gaze beyond the limits of technological hardware and the fashions of the year 2525.

Within the terms of the discussion, you could expect of science-fiction (a) the type of thing that Healy and McComas tend to laud: mere catalogues of wonders to come; (b) stories that deal with the total organisation of worlds of the future; (c) stories that deal with science and its structure; (d) and almost any kind of story that could be attached to one of the editor's self-contradictory statements.

But still no word about the literary values of science fiction that examines any one of these objectives. Even the editors' talk of "high romance" refers to their belief in the possibility of the infinite extension of scientific knowledge and technological power after the dropping of the first atomic bombs. (But/why the reason Hiroshima and Nagasaki should have inspired hope in the editors, but despair in the minds of its manufacturers, remains unclear).

"Experience is infinitely plastic", as somebody once said, and all experience is plasticine for the artist. The internal structure of words, the personal psychology and philosophy of the artist, and the immediacy of social concerns of the era combine to direct the path of any Literature. Of these things, Healy and McComas mention nothing. In 1945, there was still the opportunity for science-fiction to spread out from its narrow base and see the future as it really might be. But Healy and McComas, archetypal of their times, gave no hints of how this could be accomplished. Had the s f of the forties already misdirected the path of the field so that it could never achieve maturity as an art form?

II The Introduction to ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE leaves the matter open; the Introduction to DANGEROUS VISIONS confirms the worst fears of anybody who, in 1945, thought about the matters I have just raised. Isaac Asimov's piece of unsubtle irony is repellantly defensive, for a start:

(Thirty years ago) Science fiction was escape literature. We were escaping. We were turning from such practical problems as stickball and homework and fist fights in order to enter a never-never land of population explosions, rocket ships, lunar exploration, atomic bombs, radiation sickness and polluted atmosphere.

Wasn't that great? Isn't it delightful the way we young escapers received our just reward? All the great, mind-cracking, hopeless problems of today, we worried about twenty full years before anyone else did. How's that for escaping?

Which all goes to show to what extent the "Golden Agers" were escaping. On the one hand you could make the observation that the Golden Age did not predict population explosions or polluted atmosphere, and did not foresee the most remarkable aspects of the first moon-walk when it came: the thousands of men required to put one ship on the moon and the live telecast which showed man's first steps as they were performed.

But immediately I start talking this way, I fall straight into the trap which the 'forties writers set and which Asimov, among many others, perpetuates. It does not matter a scrap whether any s f prediction ever came true, or ever does come true - at least it does not affect the central question of whether science fiction is worthwhile reading, or ever will become such. Asimov still presumes that because the subject matter of s f is "population explosions, rocket ships, lunar exploration, atomic bombs, radiation sickness and polluted atmosphere", that this subject matter decides the quality of the fiction which treats of it. As Philip Jose Farmer has pointed out, it does tell us a lot about s f that it has never tackled the really important problems of the seventies - but it does not show us the central weaknesses of the genre.

But Asimov says some other puzzling things that I will note in passing. Because the subject matter of science fiction is different from that of most other fiction, and this somehow sets s f apart as a form of literature. "We were the dreamers; we saw what no-one else saw". You've heard it all before? But neither Healy McComas nor Asimov usefully discuss the literary mode adopted for what seems on the surface a thoroughly admirable task. Isaac Asimov says things like: "Because today's real life so resembles day-before-yesterday's fantasy, the old-time fans are restless", and, if you will believe this, in view of the so-called prophetic aim of s f: "Reality encroached too closely upon science fiction." What kind of literature can we expect from a field which, in 1945, wants to grasp the reality of the future, and in 1967, complains because it has been able to? Or were s f writers accidental prophets after all?

III ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE

As the first major hardback collection of science-fiction short stories, ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE could draw on the resources of the whole magazine field from Gernsback's AMAZING STORIES onwards. However, most of the stories appeared during the decade 1936-1946, and all but a few came from John W Campbell's ASTOUNDING STORIES. On the other hand, DANGEROUS VISIONS is a collection of original stories, although most of them come from authors who gained their reputations in the decade 1957-1967. ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE marks the beginning of most people's idea of the "Golden Age" of science fiction, and DANGEROUS VISIONS comes from the remotest end of it, and appeared in a year when all traces of it noticeably disappeared. I leave out an anthology

that represents the halcyon days of s f - the present procedure should only sharpen comparisons that are made here. I will look at two stories from each collection to illustrate my points. There have been too many reviews of both books already.

NERVES (Lester del Rey) Original publication: ASTOUNDING STORIES

NERVES is both the best story in this collection, and the story which most puts down the open-minded enquirer with a jolt. Imagine a browser who leafs through ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE when it first appears in 1946. He notices the general classification: "science-fiction". This fictitious browser may have been working on the Manhattan Project during the War; he may be a Science graduate excited by the vast spate of innovation that accompanied the War; he may be a junior tutor in Science at a college and was suddenly conscripted for the Armed Forces technology establishment. He lives in a society that suddenly sees Science as an important and urgent problem - one problem that changes its life while it observes the process. Our browser may also regard Science and its practitioners as men mysteriously devoted to logic and a near-mystical search for the truth. Stereotype images all; but neither the time nor the place easily allowed for subtleties.

So this hypothetical browser (and there must have been hundreds of thousands of him to read the products of the temporary s f boom in the late forties and early fifties) might reasonably hope for in a science fiction anthology, stories about (a) the new wonderland of technology to which he was introduced during the War and/or (b) an unemotional, clinical attitude and some attempt to sublimate the vast emotional forces let loose during the war. And if this browser was an Arts graduate seeking some solutions for the problems which the War had brought, he would probably look for some suggestions about the way in which civilized man could face the post-Atomic era.

Now, if our science-fascinated inquirer read NERVES as his first introduction to science fiction, he would get his money's worth in (a), and would either be disgusted by the absence of (b) and throw aside the book, or accept the emotional and literary crudities as of no real importance in judging a science fiction story. In either case, the reader's view of the whole field has been put badly askew. At this early stage, science fiction lost its chance to incorporate scientific procedure and aesthetics into itself, and permanently showed one of its main boasts to be false.

NERVES fits Healy and McComas' criteria, certainly (and John Campbell's) but shows all the weaknesses of working from those criteria. The story is an admirable working-out of the possibilities of atomic technology known or guessed at in the early 1940s. An atomic reactor plant controlled crudely, reaches critical level and threatens to explode like a bomb. An inadequate staff attempt to dampen the reaction at its source, the doctor on duty and his assistants must attempt to cope with casualties and find some quick method of de-activating the reactor. Of course, the answer is found, and, of course, the doctor-hero stands before the mast, handles umpteen "impossible" tasks at once, and still manages to comment on all that happens. But it is certainly a tightly-stretched web of well-trained nerves, and the story is unput-down-able. NERVES is a complex structure of interlocking technological and human factors, all admirably dove-tailed into the tense weave at the centre of the story.

But what happens when you go beyond the technology, the predictions and the vision of a possible future? How does NERVES stand as a work of Literature: of language made human?

The first few pages of the story give an impression of language that is fitted together and not shaped, and people who perform actions, but may or may not be human. Both the man described and his conversation are solidly bourgeois and uninteresting:

As always, the little room was heavy with the odor of stale smoke and littered with scraps of this and that. His assistant was already there, rummaging busily through the desk with the brass nerve that was typical of him; Ferrel had no objections to it, though, since Blake's rock-steady hands and unruffled brain were always dependable in a pinch of any sort.

Blake looked up and grinned confidently. "Hi, Doc. Where the deuce do you keep your cigarettes, anyway? Never mind, got 'em...Ah, that's better! Good thing there's one room in this darned building where the "No Smoking" signs don't count. You and the wife coming out this evening?"

Certainly, there is nothing greatly wrong or offensive in this passage. But it does not delight the ear or eye; it does not surprise the mind. It's all preparation for a process in which all the other steps are individually as dull, but lead to a situation of considerable tension and interest. But it is the situation that the reader must find interesting before he finds the story interesting - he is not beguiled and flattered into subjection to the story in the way in which Wells used the magician's wand of beautiful words. Triviality converted into convincing prediction and story-telling does not shed any of its initial triviality: del Rey just allows us to ignore it.

Compare the passage quoted above with just one of the precisely impressionistic passages that describe the technicians' attempts to dampen the atomic reaction. Here the uninteresting characters are ignored, and the atomic station itself assumes its rightful role as a mysterious and intricate hero:

Doc noted the confused mixture of tanks and machines of all descriptions clustered around the walls - or what was left of them - of the converter housing, and saw them yanking out everything along one side, leaving an opening where the main housing gate had stood, now ripped out to expose a crane boom rooting out the worst obstructions. Obviously they'd been busy at some kind of attempt at quenching the action, but his knowledge of atomics was too little even to guess at what it was. The equipment set up was being pushed aside by tanks without dismantling, and men were running up into the roped-in section, some already armored, others dragging on part of their armor as they went. With the help of one of the atomjacks, he climbed into a suit himself, wondering what he could do in such a casing if anything needed doing.

This is skilful and imaginative writing, but the viewpoint and reactions of the human protagonist is not at stake. Instead the outer shell of the reactor suffers a schizophrenia which might tear it apart.

It's remarkable writing, remarkably well sustained. It fits Healy and McComas' specifications like the proverbial silk glove. But does it have that kind of intense awareness that we called "Literature" for a better name. Doesn't it still leave out more than it includes? The old saying was: "The aim of science fiction was not to predict the family car, but the traffic jam". But this was never true, either: the aim of science fiction should be to make us feel with the man trapped in the traffic jam.

NERVES was written ten years after Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD and within a few years of 1984. The ideas are nowhere near as sophisticated as the notions of the latter two books, the language contains the hysterical and trivial as well as the precise, and del Rey has not extended the implications of the story beyond the four walls of the reactor and the territory of the people who might be killed when it explodes. The best story in this book - but it is still not good enough.

WHO GOES THERE? by Don A Stuart (John W Campbell) - from ASTOUNDING

It does not take too many examples to give a general impression of this book. ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE is the most consistently enjoyable collection of science fiction that I have read, except perhaps for the FOURTH GALAXY READER (which mainly contains more sophisticated examples of the story-types in ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE). The stories share the literary qualities of effective, though garish imagery, finely-built structures of technological ideas, and... not really much else. Certainly there are no witty lines to quote at parties.

Read all the stories, and it is not too hard to find some preliminary answers to the questions asked in Part I of this article. If we take Healy and McComas' views as representative of a whole generation (or several generations?) of s f writers, then we have views that sound like the nonconformist preachers who told their followers what they must do to be truly saved, but failed to mention what they must do to be truly human.

In failing to call for humanism in science fiction, and in failing to observe humanity with perception, the s f writers of the forties left themselves open to a post that has spoiled science fiction from that decade onwards.

Take the archetypal example of Don A Stuart's WHO GOES THERE? It is one tribute to the story that I have read innumerable variations on this situation even during the last few years (John Brunner's ENIGMA FROM TANTALUS springs immediately to mind) but that I find the progenitor of them all compulsive reading. (However, it is no tribute to the field that the theme remains so popular).

The story is the original one about the aliens-among-us: the polymorphous alien, which, if it escaped from the circle who discover its presence, could take over the bodies of every living thing in the whole world. In WHO GOES THERE? the discoverers of the alien menace are isolated in an Antarctic station when they discover the "thing". (Presumably all those THING FROM OUTER SPACE movies are based on this idea as well).

We all know the story now, but we can only wonder what that

still reading browser might think of this story and others like it. Where could there be clinical detachment in a story where paranoia is built into the story? There is not even much technology here - just The Horror That Might Invade Us. This reader might become increasingly disturbed (even though he might have been "shootin' th' Nips" for the previous three years) by the morbidity of WHO GOES THERE?, for what is the story but an account of the systematic destruction by the members of the Antarctic team of each other as they discover themselves infected by the alien? The unrelenting bloodshed finishes in the destruction of the last man-monster:

Like a blue-rubber ball, a Thing bounced up. One of its four tentaclelike arms looped out like a striking snake. In a seven-tentacled hand a six-inch pencil of winking, shining metal glinted and swung upward to face them. Its line-thin lips twitched back from snake-fangs in a grin of hate, red eyes blazing.

Norris' revolver thundered in the confined space. The hate-washed face twitched in agony, the looping tentacle snatched back. The silvery thing in its hand a smashed ruin of metal, the seven-tentacled hand became a mass of mangled flesh oozing greenish-yellow ichor. The revolver thundered three times more. Dark holes drilled each of the three eyes before Norris hurled the empty weapon against its face.

In short, WHO GOES THERE? is the ultimate paranoid nightmare - not an IF ALL MEN WERE BROTHERS... fantasy, but IF ALL MEN WERE ENEMIES, or, if you like, "Better dead than Red" or "Extremism in defence of liberty is no crime". Throughout the story there is no suggestion of scientific examination of the creature, trying to find out what it wants, why it invades life, how it may help humanity. The story is covered with a cloak of panic-stricken, automatic reactions. The author draws his net so tightly that only "I" am human; only "I" deserve to live. "He" or "you" may be the enemy, and the minute he puts a foot wrong, don't think for a second, but shoot him to make sure.

It's horror fiction, and it's a kind of horror fiction that should have had nothing to do with anything that calls itself science fiction, and it is precisely anti-artistic. But Healy and McComas could allow this story (and with justice, for its influence has become ubiquitous) because they wielded their Occam's Razor too widely this time. Some of their statements preclude too much - but in the case of WHO GOES THERE?, they allowed in too much. If they had defined science fiction thus: "Science fiction concerns itself with the human condition within the world of the future", they might have warned against the influx of anti-human or anti-humanist sentiment which has soured s f from its beginnings. Science fiction has been allowed to become a sop for prejudices, not the adventurous exposé of traditional attitudes that it has always called itself. Scepticism about the value of organized human life so quickly broke down into "I am the only one who could possibly be right". And WHO GOES THERE? is the vividdest, nastiest snarl of them all.

IV DANGEROUS VISIONS

Where then did science fiction go? The portents were not good

in 1945. Did the voices of hate, unreason and Crankshaftery win over the more imaginative elements within the field? Was the old definition and boundaries widened by the practitioners themselves? No single anthology, story or novel can give us more than a few clues, but DANGEROUS VISIONS is one of the books that has come closest to being a guide.

DANGEROUS VISIONS' editor, Harlan Ellison, organizes this book like an unconventional school inspector who tells the class suddenly to stop what they are doing, and show publicly latest progress in the project upon which they are working. In DANGEROUS VISIONS many of the current important writers stand up and are counted, not only with stories that may or may not be their current best, but also with a presentation of themselves upon the altar of Harlan Ellison's character descriptions. (Not that I can think of any contributor who isn't wildly overpraised - if you like being overpraised).

Harlan Ellison has a different story: "(DANGEROUS VISIONS) was intended to shake things up" he says in the first paragraph of his introduction to the volume. "It was conceived out of a need for new horizons, new forms, new styles, new challenges in the literature of our times". Again, this statement can only be compared with the first few paragraphs of Healy and McComas' description of the task of the science fiction writer: "The world of tomorrow is the problem of today - the world of the future, a world whose political, social and economic life has been shaped by the expansion of scientific knowledge." And again, there is the nagging question in the reader's mind: how could the notions of science fiction ever have become anything else? It looks as if Healy and McComas' objects of discussion (limited as they were) proved inadequate in the long run. As Harlan Ellison tells it, not only did science fiction need humanity and literary worth by the late 1960s, but it needed new subject matter as well. Harlan Ellison wants to insist that DANGEROUS VISIONS breaks taboos. Why should it need to? How could a field that boasts of mapping the shape of things to come, even have got to the stage where "this editor won't allow discussions of politics in his pages, and that one shies away from stories exploring sex in the future"? Didn't the s f editors talk about all aspects of the future during the forties? Did they think scientific development had nothing to do with sex or politics or how people lived when they were not solving scientific problems? Another legacy of thirty years' misdirection?

The revelation of bankruptcy tends to surprise even those people closest to the leakage of assets. But what does DANGEROUS VISIONS do about it?

THE PROWLER IN THE CITY AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD (Harlan Ellison)

DANGEROUS VISIONS does not support any one person's views on these questions. It purports to present some of the best stories of the 32 authors in the volume, but most of these authors have written better stories in the last three years. You could take a few of my favorites from the collection and compare them with any combination of other people's favorites, and come to contradictory conclusions. The best I can do is pick one of my favorites stories, PROWLER IN THE CITY AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD, and a story that stands for the middle rank of the collection, and make a few tentative comparisons with ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE.

PROWLER IN THE CITY AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD is "about" the possible capture of Jack the Ripper by a group of bored voyeurs from a "perfect" city far in the future. Violence entertains these manipulators, but they have never met the full force of violence that may tear apart even their impregnable environment.

If this story had appeared in ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE, that story summary might have been enough. The story would have been a guided tour around Perfection-as-seen-from-the-forties, with some sort of dazzling punch-line at the end which would probably compare the manly virtues of Jack with the decadent people from the future. (You may be reminded of Asimov's NIGHTFALL, with its brooding climax that throws a shadow backwards on a plot that is mainly a Cook's-Tour-of-the-future).

But the story cannot be described in such a way. Ellison does not show us the sewer pipes of his perfect city; he does not make long-winded explanations of how the future civilization Got That Way:

It was a city shining in permanence, eternal in concept, flinging itself up in a formed and molded statement of exaltation; most modern of all modern structures, conceived as the pluperfect residence for the perfect people...

Never night.

Never shadowed.

...a shadow. A blot moving against the aluminium cleanliness.

The "shape" is the most incongruous of figures in a city such as this: Jack the Ripper. But Ellison dips below this surface contention - he compares Jack's motives and procedures with the motives and procedures of the City that are later shown to us:

He had worked efficiently, but swiftly, and had laid her out almost exactly in the same fashion as Kate Eddowes: the throat slashed completely from ear-to-ear, the torso laid open down between the breasts to the vagina, the intestines pulled out and draped over the right shoulder, a piece of the intestines being detached and placed between the left arm and the body. The liver had been punctured with the point of the knife, with the vertical cut slitting the left lobe of the liver. (He had been surprised to find the liver showed none of the signs of cirrhosis so prevalent in these Spitalfields tarts, who drank incessantly to rid themselves of the burden of living the dreary lives they moved through, grotesquely. In fact, this one seemed totally unlike the others, even if she had been more brazen in her sexual overtures. And that knife under her pillow...) He had severed the vena cava leading to the heart. Then he had gone to work on the face.

Two effects may be seen in this passage. The language is clinical and detached and there is no hysteria. It is the mind of a killer working in a systematic way. At the same time it is still a horror story, but it is not the kind of horror of WHO GOES THERE? Campbell was horrified by "the Thing", but Ellison coolly demonstrates the horror of the watcher, the killer himself. At the same time we have a few hints of the motive Ellison ascribes to the 18th century

butcher: he calls himself a reformer, working in God's name to direct the eye of the authorities towards the plight of London prostitutes by killing those same prostitutes.

The City of the future, however, can mend whatever Jack destroys - it encourages him to kill at will among their numbers because his actions destroy nothing but provide endless entertainment for the watchers. In WHO GOES THERE?, the author and the readers were the voyeurs. In PROWLER IN THE CITY, Ellison presents a "humanity" even more inhumane than the Ripper's:

He found the first woman as he materialized beside a small waterfall that flowed out of empty air and dropped its shimmering, tinkling moisture into an azure cube of nameless material. He found her and drove the living blade into the back of the neck. Then he sliced out the eye-balls and put them into her open hands.

He found the second woman in one of the towers, making love to a very old man who gasped and wheezed and clutched his heart as the young woman forced him to passion. She was killing him as Jack killed her.

....And it went on and on, for a time that had no measure. He was showing them what evil could produce. He was showing them their immorality was silly beside his own.

....Then he found Van Cleef, and leaped from hiding in the darkness to bring her down. He raised the living blade to drive it into her breast, but she

van ished

He got to his feet and looked around. Van Cleef reappeared ten feet from him. He lunged for her and again she was gone. To reappear ten feet away. Finally, when he had struck at her half a dozen times and she had escaped him each time, he stood panting, arms at sides, looking at her.

And she looked back at him with disinterest.

"You no longer amuse us," she said, moving her lips.

Amuse? His mind whirled down into a place far darker than any he had known before, and through the murk of his blood-lust he began to realize. It had all been for their amusement. They had let him do it. They had given him the run of the City and he had capered and gibbered for them.

It resembles the classic horror stories, but the horror is consistently double-edged. Is there much humanity in this story? It certainly seems to show the pleasure to be gained from a killing binge. It shows how a distorted mind may suddenly unstrand when faced with distortion or alienation greater than its own. And far more importantly, it is the central conflict outlined above that dominates the story. Somehow the Son of Crankshaft has been replaced by the a very scraggy son of humanity. Ellison has written one of the stories in DANGEROUS VISION that you cannot imagine within the pages of ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE.

But is this Literature, at last? Has the field of science fiction suddenly glimpsed that the future may reveal possibilities of thought and action that extend far beyond the applications of science to society?

THE DOLL-HOUSE (James Cross)

And has there been a general change of attitude since Henry Hasse set out on his never-ending shrinking binge, and Lewis Padgett's scientist and his robot measured their respective geniuses by the number of bottles of booze they drank? What really has happened to the unwieldy train of science fiction since it set out on what I've come to think of as an unfortunate branch line? Have s f writers, editors and readers yet realized that an extrapolation of the future and the man of the future is an enterprise of the utmost complexity, and not one for the crudest simplicities? For science fiction to do what it claimed to do, it has always needed the literary equivalent of differential calculus; instead, the Golden Agers tried to subsist on long multiplication. Is this still the case?

A useful example of the more "typical" stories of DANGEROUS VISIONS is James Cross' THE DOLL-HOUSE. It is the story of a seedy and heavily-mortgaged executive (who should still be around in whichever future you look at, compared with van Vogt's odious supermen, whom nobody would want to meet in any future). The executive thinks that he could make that urgently needed couple of thousand if only he could tell the future. He is given his own Delphic oracle in her own little "dolls-house", to help him along his way.

(This is a dangerous vision?)

Jim Eliot does not believe in his Oracle until several of its predictions, phrased in elegant Greek, come true. But Jim likes a straight answer, and not complicated jokes:

He was not in a position where simply avoiding loss was enough. What he needed was a favorable answer, something he could act upon. The bills continued to pour in and the bank account was again down to about a hundred dollars. He was getting sick of obscure answers from the Oracle and answers in foreign languages. He wrote a note demanding clear messages in English. The next morning he got his reply: "Vox dei multas linguas habet (The voice of the god has many tongues)."

Very funny, Eliot thought; and that night he deliberately neglected the daily feeding. The bowl was put in its place, but he left it empty of milk and honey. He repeated his demand. He burned bay leaves. In the morning there was still no answer. It went on like that for a week. Occasionally, when he put his ear close to the dolls-house, he could hear a scurrying around inside, and once, he thought, a small voice crying out. But there was not answer and he realized that something that could live two thousand years could fast for a long time.

Jim Eliot acts towards his unbelievable possession with the same amount of kindness and humanity with which he has not treated everybody else in his life, and, predictably, the Oracle answers with an equivalent amount of equally meted sadism. There is little sting in the tail, but the uncoiling of the tale remains interesting throughout.

But is there one thing in the story that rises beyond the simplistic cliches of myth that greet us every month from the pages of F&SF? We are not likely to meet any Delphic oracles, but, more importantly, we are not likely to be interested if we did find them. Again, the writer is posing simple answers to simple situations, instead of

delighting the reader with complex problems without "answers" at all. Eliot behaves in a predictable way, and is therefore made less believable as a living character in a living story.

VI Has science fiction been entirely misdirected by its pioneers? Stories like Ellison's, Delany's ..AYE AND GOMORRAH (reviewed in S F COMMENTARY 4, and elsewhere), Ballard's THE RECOGNITION, and perhaps the most self-revelatory story Philip Dick has written, FAITH OF OUR FATHERS, must persuade me that some authors have leapt clear of a train still bound for sterility. ..AYE AND GOMORRAH towers over the heads of all the other stories, even if it still only rates fair-to-average beside the works of the century's better short story writers. The problem is that you don't even bother to compare the other stories against the higher standards.

DANGEROUS VISIONS is bound together by the obsession that led Healy & McComas astray - this can be seen in Ellison's obsession with new objects of discussion for science fiction. The need should never have arisen: the habit of speculation should always have acted as freely as Ellison now wants it to. It still does not. Many of these stories are still bound and gagged by their simplistic abstractions. There is little more complex thought here than when the men of the forties still had some reason for optimism in the results of science. Pieces like Brunner's JUDAS and Eisenberg's WHAT HAPPENED TO AUGUSTE CLAROT? read like glib jokes and little else. Ellison's editorial material reeks of unjustified self-congratulation on the part of himself and most of his other authors. You don't throw out second-rate stories you praise yourself for writing.

But the weaknesses were there from science fiction's "great" days. Many of the inbuilt cracks have widened; many authors have tried to fill the cracks. There is little sign in DANGEROUS VISIONS of attempts to build entirely new structures.

- Bruce R Gillespie 1969

BARRY GILLAM

NEW YORK FILM REVIEW No 1

(Barry Gillam studies English at the City College of New York on those rare occasions when he is not seeing movies or reading science fiction. And he watches movies in the city with the greatest range in the world - as I found out upon looking at CUE magazine, which lists all the films showing in Greater New York at one time. This list usually includes all the major films made in the last ten years and quite a few older than that. Barry doesn't watch them all, but he certainly has a much better perch from which to watch the film scene than does anybody in Australia.

We hope to make this column a regular feature in S F COMMENTARY - it all depends on the response).

THE MIND OF MR SOAMES

DIRECTED by Alan Cooke; WRITTEN by John Hale and Edward Simpson, after a novel by Charles Eric Maine; PHOTOGRAPHY by Billy Williams; MUSIC by Michael Dress; PRODUCED by Max J Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky; released by Columbia Pictures.

WITH Terence Stamp, Robert Vaughn, Nigel Davenport, Christian Roberts, Donal Donnelly.

95 minutes.

takes place. Things go well, with a television crew recording all of Soames' first steps, until he inevitably rebels against the constant indoctrination. He is wooed back into the program, but becomes more wary and in the obligatory running-away sequence, he bashes a male nurse over the head with a chair. The final section of the film follows.

THE MIND OF MR SOAMES is an example of what I would call the "minimal movie". Everyone does a creditable job, nothing in it is really bad, but, all the same, the whole is ominently forgettable.

John Soames (Terence Stamp), now thirty, has been in a coma since birth. Dr Bergon (Robert Vaughn) operates and brings him to consciousness. Soames' education is taken in hand by Dr Maitland (Nigel Davenport) who is director of the Institute in which all this

Perhaps the blame for the failure of this film should be laid on the writers - I have not read the novel by Charles Eric Maine - for the script is incurably banal and superficial. The basic conflict between Bergen and Maitland is presented after the operation: Maitland: "It's a great moment for the Institute." Bergen: "Let's hope it's a great moment for the patient." The jokes are so feeble that the film employs the TV crew as a Greek chorus. They are all young and stand behind a window that one must imagine is a one-way mirror. Cooke cuts to them so that the viewer may be assured he is grinning in the right place. (There is one nice scene, though, when Soames throws his food at his nurses - and gets away with it because Bergen is there).

One inevitably compares THE MIND OF MR SOAMES with L'ENFANT SAUVAGE (THE WILD CHILD), Truffaut's recent film. Even when one puts aside Truffaut's masterful direction, his screenplay is far superior in its evocation of characters and issues. The characters in THE MIND OF MR SOAMES are paper and the issues are plastic. In fact, while I take this movie to task, let me recommend that you go see THE WILD CHILD. Its speculations about man are much more relevant to s f (and everything else) and its education is experienced rather than merely suggested.

If Alan Cooke, the director, has not worked in television, he certainly aspires to it. And the film is obviously designed for an ultimate TV sale, right down to the bland accents. Andrew Sarris, writing about director Buzz Kulik: "SERGEANT RYKER has created considerable ill will by charging first-run movie prices for an attraction so obviously designed for television that the audience can almost see the test patterns." All the earmarks of the television sized screen are here. The film consists mainly of closeups and medium shots. There are also the overhead shots and the mobile camera that many TV directors affect. And we are given a montage sequence in which we watch Soames "learning". But through some narrowness of vision the various short segments do not move through successive learning stages. Different activities are cut back and forth as if Soames were simultaneously in different corners of his room, finger painting and putting geometric shapes in their respective holes.

Maitland wants Soames to perform on schedule. Vaughn plays Dr Spock and is permissive with the virtual prisoner. At one point, directly after receiving a toy as a reward for walking, Maitland tells two nurses to take it from Soames, who naturally enough, fights for his prize. The understanding Dr Bergen has them stop and asks Soames for the ball. Needless to say, Soames gives the ball up to Bergen. So much for child psychology.

The film also "treats" the question of Soames' standing in relation to the rest of the human race. Bergen sarcastically welcomes him to just that when Soames first opens his eyes. But the most interesting question occurs in a short scene in London, after Soames has run away. He sees boys playing ball in a schoolyard and runs to join in. As soon as he gets the ball, though, they all stop and stand off. Their teacher sends Soames away. In this brief drama is presented the problem that the rest of the film seems to have overlooked. For Soames may be learning very rapidly, but, in his relationships with others, he is still a six-year-old in a thirty-year-old body.

All of this, of course, is aside from the question of how Soames could awake after thirty years in a coma. After total sensory deprivation and never having moved a muscle? This is dismissed in a vague statement about intravenous feeding and daily muscle massages. As with other faults, this isn't fatal: we often accept one "given" in s f. But it is just one more failure here.

A rather contrived scene ends the film. The bairn is hiding in the barn, the police outside. Maitland orders him out but Soames only comes when Bergen tells
(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 23)

JOHN BROSNAN

MRS B'S WANDERING BOY

PART TWO

3 LONDON: JULY 27, 1970

I started work as a civil servant today. Yes, I've gone Establishment. Lousy work, miserable pay (£16/10/- before tax... after tax it's not worth mentioning) yet I had to sign the Official Secrets Act before I could start work. It's the Kensington District Tax Department and they're afraid their employees may try to supplement their incomes with a bit of blackmail.

Ron Clarke manifested himself last Friday with an invitation to a meeting at Welwyn Garden City of the Herts Fan Group. I naturally accompanied him and we left by train on Saturday morning, arriving at Garden City later the same morning as it is only about 16 miles from London. We, for some reason, thought it was further and were surprised when we got there in just under half an hour. Perhaps it was the high price of the ticket that misled us. The British Railways are not cheap. The fan meeting was being held in the weekend home of two of the fans, Keith and Jill Brijs, a jolly couple. Unofficial guest of honour was Ed Ree, an American fan of whom I hadn't heard before. It was quite an enjoyable affair and lasted from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon. Ron was horrified when he discovered no one intended going to sleep. Also present was Mary Reed (no relation to the Ed above) who produces a magazine called CRABAPPLE. I hadn't heard of it before but you may have. Mary is an attractive young femmefan who unfortunately marries a young fan genius by the name of Churl Legg next month. The Herts group even have a clever replica of Lee Harding by the name of Arthur something or other. Arthur is a zany nut with bright red hair and beard who keeps up a constant supply of atrocious puns. He intends travelling to Heicon on a tandem bike.

I doubt if I will be able to attend the Con now. My financial position has become dangerous. Ron is not sure at the moment whether he will or not. I've heard from Pete Weston and hope to visit him and Peter Roberts one weekend. At the moment even Bristol is a long way money-wise.

As for the bus - I've since found out that it managed to get all the way from Greece to Italy. It was repaired after I left and got as far as Florence before expiring for a second and final time. On this occasion the engine actually blew up. I'm truly sorry I missed seeing it happen. It was later sold for scrap, fetching about 160 dollars.

All I've been doing so far isn't looking around London, spending money and going to the movies, but in the latter department I've run up quite a score - there are so many movies showing in London that I want to see that I'm having a hard time. For instance:

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES

If you were a fan of STAR TREK you'll love this movie. The plot is that bad.

Now I don't think PLANET OF THE APES was a great movie. The storyline was skimpy and had to be padded out with action (too much action), the satire was heavy-handed, it couldn't make up its mind what kind of a movie it was, and it was full of glaring flaws (such as the language fiasco). But it was mildly entertaining and I certainly didn't think it was bad enough to deserve a sequel. And certainly not a sequel as bad as BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES, which follows the scene where Charlton Heston has a trauma after seeing a crudely super-imposed Statue of Liberty.

Now, as far as I'm concerned PLANET OF THE APES was self-contained as a movie. There is no logical reason for any continuation. Its "aim", weak as it was, the parody of humans by the apes, was fulfilled. The writers of BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES also seem to realise this and they don't dwell too deeply on this theme in the later movie. There is a painful episode where the ape army is confronted by a group of peace demonstrators, placards and all (God, what symbolism!) but it is mercifully short. No, this time the writers have had to find another theme to exploit and what do you think they come up with? Nothing less than the bomb itself.

So we find ourselves confronted with a race of underground super-beings who worship the bomb with all the satirical subtlety that we saw in PLANET OF THE APES. ("Glory be to the Holy Fall-out"...etc). But this isn't enough. For the sake of some action in the movie, the apes suddenly discover the existence of these super-beings and move in with an army (why it took them so long isn't mentioned, of course). The climax is like something out of THE WILD BUNCH with everyone dying gorily and without reason (we have to keep up with the times).

In other words the plot is horribly contorted and utterly illogical with even more flaws than its predecessor. It is annoying when yet another character is introduced, especially as Charlton Heston remains at both the beginning and ending of the film. Perhaps the introduction of a new main character is a device to assist the viewer who did not see the original, as the new character, played by James Franciscus (of MR NOVAK fame) arrives on the planet in the same manner as Heston. Whatever the reason, coincidence is stretched out of line.

The special effects vary in quality. On the whole they're not too good. The best sequence is where the ape army is faced with a series of illusions transmitted by the underground people.

You'll go and see the damn movie, of course, but just don't forget that I warned you.

THE DUNWICH HORROR

Can you imagine a movie where Gidget is raped by one of H P Lovecraft's OLD ONES. No? Well, believe it or not, such a movie has been made. It's called THE

DUNWICH HORROR, and not to be confused with the story of the same name. When I first heard about this movie I was under the impression that this was the first Lovecraft story to be filmed but I've since discovered that there was another one called THE SHUTTERED ROOM. If it was as bad as this, thank God Lovecraft is dead.

It could have been good, of course. But it isn't for several reasons. One is the clod in charge of casting who should be shot. Another is the horror movie director who failed to learn from people like Roman Polanski and his ROSEMARY'S BABY. Subtlety, that's the key word. Gone are the days when all the old hoary props proved effective, such as the weird lighting and the grotesque looking characters. TV shows like THE MUNSTERS and THE ADDAMS FAMILY have ended all that. By dragging all the old horror film props out into the open and making fun of them, worse, by turning them into the props of a TV family situation show (the ultimate horror) they destroyed whatever scary properties they still possessed.

But the maker of THE DUNWICH HORROR don't realise this, or else he still thinks there are enough people around who will fall for the old methods.

I presume that Sandra Dee, the heroine, and Dean Stockwell, who plays the part of Wilbur, were chosen for their "teenage appeal". It certainly couldn't have been for their acting ability. Dee is bad, but as her role is a passive one she isn't too offensive, whereas Stockwell deals the movie such a crippling blow that it has no hope of succeeding. For one thing he looks like something out of THE ADDAMS FAMILY (the make-up department must share some of the blame here), he talks funny, and keeps bulging his eyes. In a spoof of a horror movie he'd be great but in something that attempts to be a horror movie he's a disaster.

In the climax where the virginal Sandra is laid out on an altar waiting for THE OLD ONE to possess her (and thinking to herself, beach movies were never like this!), Stockwell ruins the build-up of tension with some incredibly bad acting. In fact he sends the audience into outright laughter. Of course the audience knows the whole thing is a joke but it doesn't want the fact made obvious. It's the mark of a good actor if he can prevent us, momentarily, from seeing the joke in a movie like this. Stockwell hasn't a chance.

The movie isn't a total loss. There is some clever camera work in places, particularly in an orgy which takes place in daylight on a hill by the sea, and Wilbur's monstrous brother is presented effectively (despite the over-use of filters) and with subtlety, believe it or not. We don't see him clearly anywhere in the movie, but this is right and proper, for to have one of Lovecraft's "nameless, indescribable, unspeakable, horrors" portrayed on the screen would be the last straw.

5 LONDON: AUGUST 26, 1970

Well, the Heicon is all over now. I don't know yet how it went. Robin Johnson should have arrived in England yesterday but I haven't heard anything from him yet. I spent the weekend at the NotHeiCon, an affair held by a small group of fans who couldn't attend the Con itself. It was held in Shiplake (near Oxford) at the home of U S fan Sam Long who is currently stationed in England with the U S Air Force. With the help of a large amount of alcoholic beverages we managed to soothe the pain of not being at the HeiCon.

I met quite a few pros and fans during the last few weeks, including Mike Moorcock, Larry Niven, Ken and Pam Bulmer, Peter Weston, John Brunner and (as they say in Hollywood) a host of others. This/mainly through attendance at the Globe, the pub where the London sf world meets. NEW WORLDS, I learned, lives, but in a vastly

different form. It will be brought out by some American mob who will publish it every three months in an anthology disguise. Moorcock will still be the editor. Sorry I can't give you any more definite information than that^{as} I was sort of fuzzy at the time of hearing it.

At the pre-Con party held at the London home of Billy Pettit a couple of Sundays ago I had an interesting conversation with Pam Bulmer. Our talk covered a wide range of subjects, from her reviews for VISION (I didn't know she was Kathryn Buckley - but I still want to know who Donald Malcolm is), her opinion of the magazine, male masturbation, the futility of existence and the sword and sorcery magazine her husband was editing. On that count, we had just heard the news that night about Ron Graham's heart attack (I still haven't received any further details) and it seemed to signify the end of the project for sure. Which is a great shame - Ken Bulmer had put a lot of work into it, and the first issue was actually being printed the last I heard.

A Brosnan special for S F COMMENTARY? The mind boggles. I suppose it would be my way of wreaking my revenge on fandom....

(NEXT ISSUE - (hopefully, for I have nothing by John to hand at the moment) John wreaks his revenge on fandom in earnest, with more fan and film news. Keep hoping).

(NEW YORK FILM REVIEW - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19)

him to make up his own mind. In Bergen's mind this decision making will mark his manhood. But what happens is that after Soames comes out into the rain, a spotlight from the TV crew (a ubiquitous team) blinds him and everyone starts yelling at once. Soames, confused, throws a stick he had limped on. It hits Bergen and thus, by hurting his champion, who had never hurt him (as some of the nurses inadvertently had) he achieves guilt and responsibility - and this is what signifies his entry into human society.

In the end THE MIND OF MR SOAMES recalls its betters, or at least slightly better films like CHARLIE. The Neurophysiological Institute may be a more plausible name but I more fondly remember the Neoteric Institute in THE AVENGERS' episode: NEVER, NEVER SAY DIE. And the image of a grown man playing with toys finds its analogue in SOMETHING NASTY IN THE NURSERY, also from THE AVENGERS. When Soames' picture is printed on the first page of the tabloids and the headlines ask if he is a killer, I remember Keaton's splendid short, THE GOAT, in which he is unknowingly photographed in place of a dangerous criminal. The final scene here reminds me of nothing so much as the climax of Whale's THE INVISIBLE MAN with the police waiting for morning, snow on the ground, frost in the air, for the Invisible Man to venture out of the barn in which he has taken refuge.

THE MIND OF MR SOAMES is a well meaning but undistinguished film. Go and see THE WILD CHILD.

- Barry Gillam 1970

(MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE - S F COMMENTARY 18 CHECKLIST)

isaac asimov : Introduction to DANGEROUS VISIONS (Pages 7 to 8) * BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (21) * charlie brown: LOCUS (3) * alan cooke (dir.): THE MIND OF MR SOAMES (18-19, 23) * james cross: THE DOLL HOUSE (16-17) * lester del rey: NERVES (9-11) * DITMAR AWARDS - NOMINATIONS (3) * THE DUNWICH HORROR (21-22) * harlan ellison (ed.): DANGEROUS VISIONS (7-9, 12-17) * harlan ellison: Introduction to DANGEROUS VISIONS (12-13) * harlan ellison: THE PROWLER IN THE CITY AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD (13-15) * john foyster: EXPLODING MADONNA/JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY (2) * john foyster, lee harding and leigh edmonds (organizers): TENTH AUSTRALIAN S F CONVENTION (2, 3) * raymond j healy & j francis mccomas (eds.): ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE (5-17) * HERTS SF FAN GROUP (20) * adam pilgrim/owen webster: SO (3) * don a stuart (john w campbell): WHO GOES THERE? (11-12) * pcter r weston (ed.): SPECULATION (3) *

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People you should write to (a quick selection): for the Convention, SFR and most other things: John Foyster, 12 Glengariff Drive, Mulgrave, Victoria 3170; for LUNA MONTHLY: Peter Darling, P O Box A215, Sydney South, N S W 2001; for OUTWORLDS, Michael Cameron, 59 Carroll Street, Bardon, Queensland 4065; for WSFA JOURNAL, Michael O'Brien, 158 Liverpool Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000. For all those books reviewed in SFC and other fanzines, write to Mervyn Binns, c/o McGills Bookshop, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000; and John Bangsund, Paragon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne 3001, plans to publish more Great Things than I can put on this page. If you want more addresses, write to John or me.

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