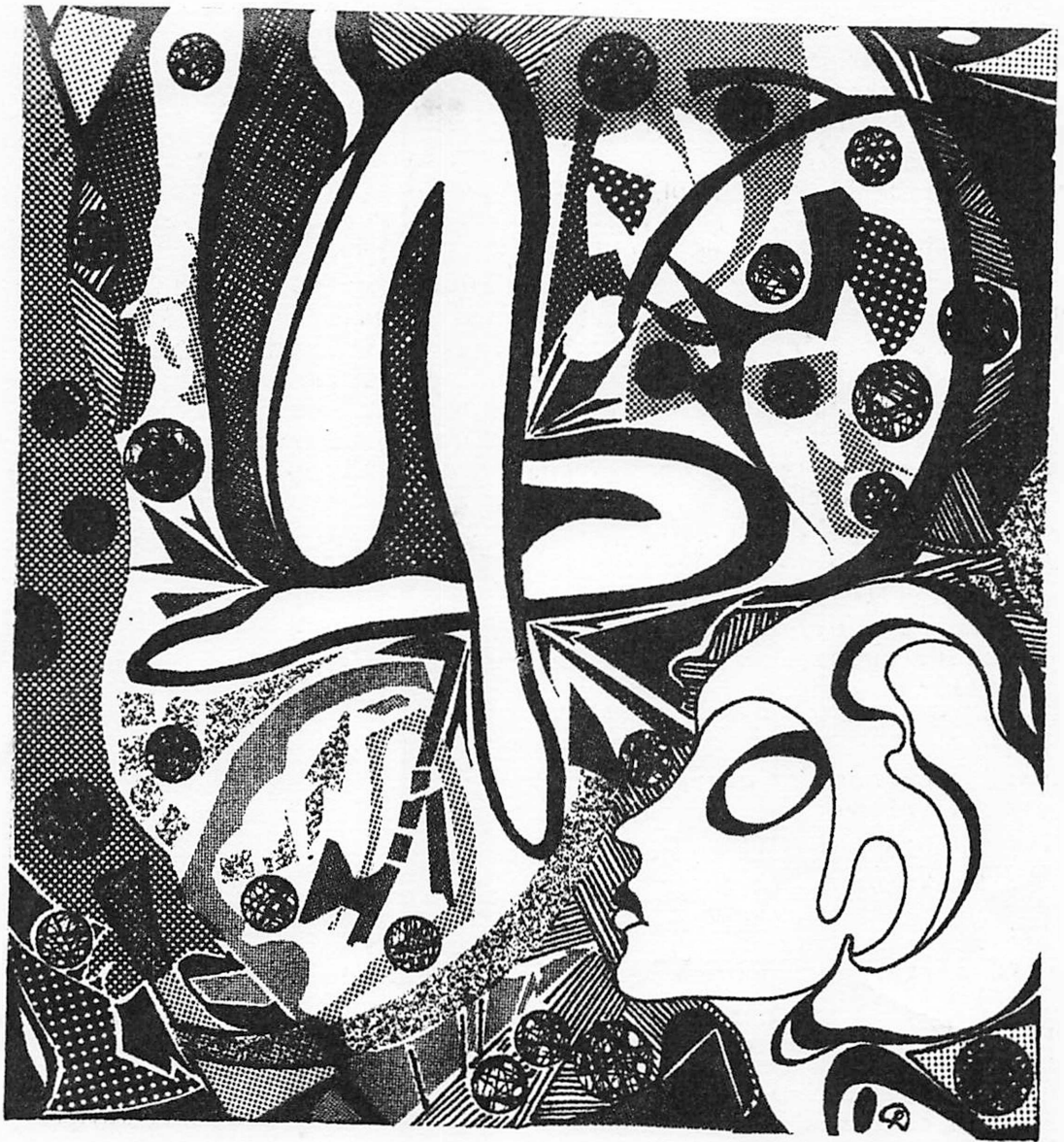




S F COMMENTARY 19
JOHN FOYSTER SPECIAL



EXPLODING
MADONNA

"If you are going to waste time discussing science fiction, then you should at least discuss it seriously." K U F Widdershins, Melbourne S F Conference, April 1968.

EXPLODING MADONNA .. April 1968

JOHN FOYSTER

NO, THIS IS NOT..

a fanzine to be devoted to discussion of images in the works of J G Ballard. In fact, you are reading this precisely because you will have recognised (my fingers are crossed at this point) that Dali's "exploding madonnas" mean a great deal, and J G Ballard's are, to a considerable extent, only borrowings, and misunderstood borrowings at that.

However, as an aside, I might remark that you are also receiving this fanzine because, unwittingly and perhaps unwillingly, you have given me the impression, to quote Widdershins, that you discuss science fiction seriously. I may be wrong, of course, and please don't hesitate to tell me so if this is the case. There is very little you can do about an impression you have created, but you may, with the greatest of ease, dissuade me from annoying you with little pieces of coloured paper. I can take a hint at least as well as the next person, and if I receive no response from you, or only a piece of white paper with a black spot in the centre, why, I won't trouble you further.

Going even further, I might look with favour upon such a response. In purely financial terms each copy of this will cost me about ten cents. If no one wants to read this, I save a couple of dollars: if the number of readers drops, then I save at least some money. I am not in receipt of income ("out of a job") at the moment, and this is being financed by the sale of SF magazines at the recent Melbourne Conference: when that money runs out - finis.

But if a couple of you are interested, let us stagger into the darkness together. You are, by the way, Mr Brian Aldiss, Mr James Blish, Mr Red Boggs, Mr Algis Budrys, Mr Sten Dahlskog, Mr Samuel Delany, Mr Damon Knight, Mr Franz Rottensteiner and Mr Harry Warner. I print this because I don't want requests for future copies of this fanzine (ah! the eternal optimist), nor would the sort of fanzine I have in mind benefit from any publicity. So, to use the revered phrases, Do Not Quote, Print, Mention or Refer to this fanzine. For the reasons, see over the page.

ALTHOUGH I DO NOT HOPE TO TURN AGAIN..

to that previous page, I must admit that I have re-read it once. I find it most unpleasant to read anything I've written; so much so that writing a first draft is something with which I have had no experience. I comfort myself with the thought that this must produce in the reader the same kind of feeling that I have on reading my own "drafts".

Anyway, looking back at that previous page, I found myself wondering whether

anyone would bother to turn the page. I can't quite remember now whether it was meant to be a sort of ultimate soft-sell or to just be discouraging. I seem to have explained fairly carefully that I don't really want to publish this thing, and that isn't really accurate, so now I must give

SOME NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT REASONS

It is extremely easy to be dissatisfied with the kind of criticism or review handed out to sf books or magazines. But it is by no means easy to do anything about it. My impression is that Milford has done something about it, yet the few snippets I have heard have indicated that a fair bit of back-slapping also goes on. This has its place, but I do not agree with Mr Aldiss entirely when he writes: "A writer is a delicate organism; equally automatically, a reader may be as neurotic as a writer; his criticisms, though mere personal fads, may harm the delicate mechanism." (HORIZONS 113, page 2204). John Brunner has a comment underneath that one which is almost the opposite, but I shall return to him later.

Writers are not really delicate organisms, in general. Jack Wodhams (apparently now grinding the Campbell axe) has been very firm with me on this point: he claims that he has never learned a thing from a reader's praise. This may not be universally true, but, faced with adverse criticism, a writer can really do two things: he can ignore the criticism, as being a "mere personal fad", or he can try to learn something from it. I don't think he could really get hung up on the choice.

A recent sf writer of note is a delicate organism, and another cause of my ire is that it was the comment of a neurotic reader (or a series of comments) that has given him a hell of a time. I refer to J G Ballard, and the villain of the piece is Moorcock, or perhaps the school of thought which Moorcock represents. Moorcock did not damn, but over-praised. Certainly Ballard has talent - considerable talent in the field of science fiction. But he did not have the talent Moorcock claimed for him (in particular, the ideas that Moorcock claimed in his editorial in NEW WORLDS 167): he (Ballard) seems to have come to believe Moorcock's propaganda. The result, from where I sit, seems to have been disastrous. Ballard has turned completely away from sf itself (which is disappointing) to another field, that of the small magazine. To my mind this is out of his league. I must admit that I haven't seen ambit (Customs regs., you know), but Ballard's weaknesses are of some fair size.

Disturbed at the thought that Ballard, who has obviously been teetering on the brink of neuroticism ever since he started writing SF (long before Moorcock got at him, too), might take all that Moorcock said seriously, instead of recognising it as editorial puff by a chap who was trying to save his magazine (and I would be the last to claim that Moorcock was a bad editor), I tried to demolish some of these false notions of Ballard's abilities in two articles in ASFR in 1967. Regrettably I have not been able to complete the third article, dealing with Ballard's claims to greatness in science fiction. If you recall that Ballard has published about 75 short stories, then you may realise why this is so. I have notes on half a dozen of them, running to about 4000 words. One day I may complete this project, but it will be quite some time in the future and, more importantly, too late. The whole project was ill-conceived: who will believe that he is Gabriel when he has already been assured by a close friend that he is Ghod?

Whether or not I am wrong in my assessment of Ballard, I am certain that there

is a need to find some way to offset irresponsible criticism of science fiction, both favourable and otherwise. Since there is little severe criticism of sf today (thanks to the abdication (?) of Messrs Blish and Knight) the most serious problem is that of irresponsible praise. Of course, there will be all sorts of other troubles into which stf can fall, and maybe some brave knights can get to work on those too, but right now I worry more about Moorcock and Ellison getting Hugos or Nebulas or whatever, than about Campbell's idiosyncrasies.

Let's be specific: there is a young and talented sf writer in the field who could very easily be influenced by Unsuitable Friends - quis custodiet?

There are undoubtedly many readers of stf who have the impression that Keith Laumer is the greatest stylist to come down the pole since ... aw, hell ... Bradbury?

What can be done about it?

BUT WHY SO SECRET?

Some of what I have already said, it must be admitted, is best kept private. Clearly ASFR is an unsuitable platform. But as a matter of fact this can get nastier. If I had to write about John Baxter and his critical articles, then I must be able to say that Baxter's entire knowledge of poetry results from reading Babette Deutsch's li'l intro. Good luck to him if he fools others - but let's play the cards fairly. Recently I was asked to write an article on a Certain Author. Reading his work convinced me that he must make a combination of Walter Breen and Humbert Humbert look like St Francis of Assisi. I don't have any desire to name names, or even to discuss the matter, but there must obviously be factors somewhere in the middle which can be discussed, but not in public.

So what do I want? OK, let's have some

AIMS

- 1 SF can be discussed seriously. It isn't. Can EXPLODING MADONNA be such a place?
- 2 Can sf be discussed seriously without some jerk butting in? No. But it should be possible to screen out some jerks, some of the time. It is quite unpleasant to have to stop in mid-stride to explain just why Van Vogt is actually not as good a writer as Tolstoy.
- 3 Can sf be discussed seriously without that jerk Foyster butting in? Certainly. I read very little sf: checking through issues of ASFR should tell you exactly what I have read in recent years. Count also my pseudonyms (Widdershins (!Aldiss and Blish!), Maxwell and Escot, amongst others).
- 4 I get censored. My review of Joseph's THE WHOLE IN THE ZERO was not printed because Bangsund liked the book. I thought it an unbelievable botch - I know at least BWA disagrees. Furthermore, and I have something in common with Mr Knight here, a review I once wrote of Merrill's THE TOMORROW PEOPLE was also tossed aside by another fan-ed. I didn't like it, either.

WELL Have I bugged it again? Certainly I'm not going to have much room to talk about Brunner ("it took me five months to write STAND ON ZANZIBAR"). Took Dos Passos rather more than twelve times as long to write USA. If I haven't bugged it, and if you are interested in writing seriously about sf, send me something. If not, up yours (politely, of course). I hope to publish another issue in July, in which I may explain why science fiction actually started with AMAZING STORIES, April 1926.

An angel has no memory.

"When I hear the word 'Heinlein' I reach for my gun."

Black power corrupts.

Girls should be obscene but not absurd.

EXPLODING MADONNA No 2 .. July 1968

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RECIPIENTS

As before - Aldiss, Blish, Boggs, Budrys, Dahlskog, Delany, Knight, Rottensteiner, Warner. Added: H Bruce Franklin, G Legman. Please note: no publicity wanted; leaks will result in Gotterdammerung. Suggestions as to interested readers welcomed but preferably ignored. I hope visitors enjoy relevant sections.

JOHN FOYSTER

IN A FEW WORDS

The brief note I have is so brief that I have even misunderstood it in typing the contents above. In the brief space of about a page and a half I thought to try to explain all about problems of war, race and capital punishment. Sorry if you are reading this because of the SEX up there.

I favour the retention of capital punishment as protection for the community as a whole. As matters now stand, say in a country like Australia, the blood-lust of politicians may be vented occasionally on those citizens who have, to a greater or lesser degree of certainty, indulged their own uncontrollable hates. If capital punishment were abolished, would not those who have political power become frustrated, and lash out even more madly and erratically than is now the case, killing and injuring those who have done nothing to deserve it, except put up with their leaders. If government ever reaches that stage at which power no longer corrupts, then it might be possible to dispense with capital punishment. Of course, this wouldn't be any worry at all if my other solution were adopted: the ritual execution of political leaders at the end of each calendar year, with possible remissions in the event of popular acclaim. (Vivify De Gaulle?)

If it is true that politicians are as mad as this, then is it not also reasonable that wars should be conducted? How else can politicians exert their loathsome influence on masses of the public? However, Mr Anthony Burgess had the solution to this problem in his novel, THE WANTING SEED. He suggests that armies of the same government should exterminate each other, the results being canned and given to the poor and hungry of the world. My only variation would be to restrict army service to volunteers. Thus two purposes would be served: the desires for power and killing in politicians would be satisfied at minimum cost to the community as a whole, and the hungry of the world would be helped. What is more, many potential politicians would be eliminated...

It all sounds rather wonderful, but if Dean Swift couldn't pull it off, how can I?

As for the other matter, my observations in Australia suggest that most, if not all, of the problems of the race are xenophobic, an outgrowth of that hesitance with strangers with which children are instilled (usually for very good reasons). Foyster's patent solution: since psychologists and psychiatrists have been with us for about a century, and have achieved nothing positive, surely this is a project worthy of study. How can xenophobia be cured? Solves a few other problems on the way, of course. It seems certain to me that somehow the human race must learn to conquer this (admittedly fairly rational) fear of others and otherness. That, Mr Aldiss, is what science fiction writers must try to do.

WRITERS OF THE PURPLE PAGE

Montaigne warns us, in his essay on The Art of Conversation, never to describe too exactly what it is we like about a particular author. It may simply show, he says, the flaws in our own thought-processes, apart from any flaws in the quoted work. I agree whole-heartedly, but maintain that nothing gets as quickly to the crux of the matter as this kind of technique. Consequently, in discussing Cordwainer Smith last year I said, in effect, that because Cordwainer Smith wrote a particular sentence in THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN, he was a great writer: shoot me if you will.

On the other hand, Montaigne also recommends as a technique in arguing with someone who deprecates all of his work, as soon as it is mentioned, that we should reply by asking: well, if all of this is so bad, can you show me something which is really you, which you think represents what you really think? This, too, can be a good thing, though I would hesitate to nail any of you on this one (and I hope you would hesitate to reply).

What I'm getting around to, incredibly slowly, is that someone else has gone out on a limb, and the author in question is the late, great John Russell Fearn. Phil Harbottle has put out a beautiful little booklet, which I happen to know is selling like the Edsel, in which he gives opinions of John Russell Fearn (THE MULTI-MAN) which are somewhat different from my own. It's a labour of love, and largely unrewarded, apparently. Of course, it is just possible that there are writers more deserving of this kind of attention, so that maybe Phil's knuckles should be rapped for choosing so, ah, unskilled a writer.

This is where the story really starts. On Page 30, Phil says that Fearn (as "John Slate", on this occasion), produced such great writing as:

"I mean, lady, is he on the level, tho up and come? I wanta know what you think about him. Don't you get it?" Pulp implored. "Or don't newspapers

mean nothin' to you? You must know that a guy named Pollitt has been bumped off, that a Vincent Grey and a Tom Clayton is mixed up in it. I'm engaged on the American end of the case. See?"

in a novel titled THY ARM ALONE. I submit that the word "engaged" is entirely out of place, apart from any other weaknesses the piece may have.

As it happens, I've tried the same form of criticism on Heinlein and Sturgeon, with similar results, but then no one would claim THE ROADS MUST ROLL or THUNDER AND ROSES as great pieces of sfnal writing, would they? Next time I decide to write a ten-line filler, I won't!

SHORT SUBJECTS

Although some of the following probably merit lengthier discussion, I'll try to boil the next three subjects down to one page.

THE NEBULA AWARDS, 1967: Some aspects of the results announced recently disturb me. Since I haven't read much of last year's output, I guess I should just shut up, but some people never learn. I don't have much objection to the Novel: AN AGE was better, I thought, but THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION pretty good. Moorcock's BEHOLD THE MAN is (a) unbelievably bad and (b) in the past (?). It was published in 1966, just about one year before the runner-up, Anne McCaffrey's WEYR SEARCH. But WEYR SEARCH is much worse, so perhaps 1967 was a bad year for novellae. But a couple of the IF serials (Farmer, Blish) were better, surely. I dunno about the rest, but generally felt that the whole result was a let-down after seeing the choice of CALL HIM LORD the previous year.

FAHRENHEIT 451: I recently saw this movie, in the 16 mm version. What struck me was the fire-engine. I've not seen any mention of the fire-engine anywhere before, yet the fire-engine was the most important thing in the film. It is extremely easy to say, as so many do, that burning books is bad and awful... ad nauseum. But, dammit, if I could ride on that fire-engine I'd burn any book you named and enjoy it. It was so shiny, so red, so beautiful, humming through the countryside, bell clanging, that I just couldn't resist it. I'm told that in addition the firemen sing a song, which was cut from the 16mm version. This is just as well, because had it been included when I saw FAHRENHEIT 451 (in the clubrooms of the Melbourne SF Club), I'd have turned around and set fire to the club library.

1984: Though I could write with pleasure about Orwell's novel, about which I've recently been hit with a largish chunk of insight, I'm actually going to babble about a survey conducted by NEW SCIENTIST in 1964, in which assorted persons were asked to describe aspects of the world in 1984. You may have seen this either in the magazine or in the Pelican paperbacks. I direct your attention to the words of Sir Herbert Read, who wrote about the future of the arts:

Already in 1964 few people read books for pleasure; they "use" them, or even "view" them (books will have more and more pictures and less and less text). Poetry, already an arcane activity, will have totally disappeared. Fiction, even now a dwindling form of entertainment, will fade out and the only writers will be script-writers for television. ...Composers like Beethoven, Wagner and Stravinsky will be forgotten."

Comments?

ANOTHER REASON?

On Page 10 of THE AUSTRALIAN (a national newspaper which is set up in Canberra but printed in each of the States) for May 4 an article titled "SF In The Classroom" appeared. Those of you who read ASFR may recall an article titled SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CLASSROOM which appeared in ASFR 13. I wrote the second of these items, but not the first.

My article described the reactions of school children to novels by Hoyle, Wells and Wyndham (HWW was my original title, by the by) and thus tried to say something about science fiction in general. Mungo MacCallum's article in THE AUSTRALIAN described the reactions of children to novels by Wells and Wyndham (different novels!).

I interspersed the children's comments with my own. So does Mr MacCallum. I introduced the piece with my own feelings about the novels. So does Mr MacCallum.

In the ASFR article, children were asked to make general comments about science fiction. This was also the case in the article in THE AUSTRALIAN. And so on.

One more point: Mungo MacCallum receives each and every issue of ASFR.

I would be the first to concede that Mr MacCallum's article may be infinitely better written than my own (and that he was paid infinitely more). But my enthusiasm for writing for ASFR is dampened somewhat. At least if someone pinches something I put in here I will have chosen the thief!

PUNCH UP

An incident similar to the above once led to a postal punch-up between Damien Broderick and myself. We are now normally on the same side, but a recent visit to the Melbourne SF Club almost led to a break.

Poor Damien had read my review of FAUST ALEPH-NULL, and found himself to be in complete agreement. Imagine his chagrin at the discovery, via Mr Blish's letter in ASFR, that FAUST ALEPH-NULL was not cut to ribbons.

He claimed that had I not written my review there would have been no occasion for Mr Blish to shatter his illusion. Well, we put our heads together and agreed that even if Mr Blish had not written it, we were entitled to the belief that FAUST ALEPH-NULL was the bones of a great sf novel. Then we got around to the names. Damien claimed that "Baines" need not have anything to do with LBJ, as Mr Blish claimed in his letter. I asked Damien how he would feel about a book in which a character named "Damien" appeared as an evil, sadistic murderer, say. How would he feel about the author's defence that he didn't mean Damien Broderick at all, if Damien was well-known to the author, and the author had included the names of other people he knew in the same novel? He conceded the point.

And tackled me about Harlan Ellison and DANGEROUS VISIONS. I had made some snide remark about having seen the collection, I think, and perhaps I had suggested that it had a cheapish look about it. The gist of his argument was that my feelings about what I had read of Ellison would obscure my vision to the extent that I would not be able to see the virtues in an Ellison story. I was inclined to agree, but doubted the existence of the supposed virtues. Who, I

asked, apart from Ellison, has claimed that Ellison was any good? Dorothy Parker, in her dotage, and Theodore Sturgeon... Hmm. I thought that perhaps any violence and sadism in Ellison's work would appeal to Sturgeon, and that this was not my cup of tea. We scratched around for others who thought Ellison might be better than Sydney J Bounds, but could find none.

Anyway, Damien said, I think Ellison's nothing too, but I thought that your opinions might obscure your vision. Up yours, I said, and we parted cordially.

J G BALLARD VS THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING PUBLICATION

Ballard seems to be pretty much lost to science fiction. The only stuff appearing now, and even then I am referring to the past, is old pieces of reasonably orthodox prose. Ballard must be restricted to collecting reprint shekels now.

If this is the case, I am amazed that noone has taken the opportunity to collect Ballard's best pieces - the Vermilion Sands stories. By my count there are 10 stories (one a re-write of another, admittedly), quite enough for a decent collection, and they do exhibit, in my opinion, all that was best in Ballard, even though other stories may have been better when considered individually. Some readers of this have influence, and have expressed admiration, etc etc, for Ballard. Could they possibly get their fingers out on this matter? A title like VERMILION SANDS lends itself to a "selling" cover, does it not?

FURTHER SERIOUS PLEA

Another series which should be collected is Sheckley's AAACE Decontamination Service. After collection, they should be pulped. Any other nominations for worst series of all time? Scratch Shaver, Palmer series as being in another league.

** **

WHEN TO SESSIONS OF SWEET SILENCE...

I had intended, with this issue, to make some start on that proof that it All Started With Hugo. However, I have here an even better method of approach, for I have recently read Prof H Bruce Franklin's FUTURE PERFECT (OUP, 1966). This volume apparently caused Mr Knight some discomfort (see PROJECT BOSKONE: ASFR or LIGHTHOUSE or?). I cannot, at the moment, see why this should have been so.

My remarks on FUTURE PERFECT fall fairly neatly into two sections: comments on Prof Franklin's general approach, and on the particular selections he has made.

It seems to me that in making the present selection of stories, Prof Franklin must have had one of two things in mind: either that the stories are so self-evidently stf that he could select them more or less at random from a large store, or that he should choose stories which would convince those who held the view I mention in the first paragraph of the article. If the first assumption was his, then he could again have had two possible approaches: to present the best stories, whether from the point of view of non-stf-literature, or as stf-as-she-is-today or perhaps some other criterion, or to present typical stf stories of the period.

I ask you to keep these possibilities in mind, for I shall return to them after

discussing the particular selections which appear in FUTURE PERFECT.

The dust-jacket, of course, makes some sort of answer but it is more than vague ("for their intrinsic interest and...the values they represent"!!). The dust jacket also informs us that in the book is "an original, theoretical definition of science fiction". My first two readings failed to turn this up, but maybe this time through will do it: I trust you by now realise that this is all composed on the stick.

DEFINITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION

In several places Prof Franklin makes mouth-noises about science fiction: so far as I can see, none of these constitutes a definition.

(a) on page ix, there is a general discussion of science and fiction: I propose to discuss this under a separate heading.

(b) on page 3, Prof Franklin improves upon CJC by one, and divides all fiction into four parts, realistic, historical, stf, fantasy. For stf he claims the following: "stf seeks to describe present reality in terms of a credible hypothetical invention - past, present, or, most usually, future - extrapolated from that reality", "stf views what is by projecting what not inconceivably could be", "stf tries to imitate possibilities." These are all presented with accompanying definitions (?) of the other musketeers. Now we all know how to show that definitions are incorrect, don't we? In this particular case we should look around for a story which is stf, and is not covered by the above definitions and/or a story which is included in the above and which is not science fiction.

In vain! We have been thwarted by the all-wise academic who states: "In practice, every piece of fiction is a combination of all four theoretical modes" (Page 4). That doesn't make the definition very useful. Why does Franklin claim that this book contains "American SF of the 19th century" if every book of the period was stf? Does he mean that two lumps of stfnal sugar-coating makes the cup of tea a stfnal one rather than an historical one? He does. But he talks about "the proportions and arrangements of its elements"! I submit that Franklin's "definition" here is one which defines nothing: that it is a definition which may have some theoretical use (though I doubt this) but no practical use whatsoever.

In addition, I don't think Franklin's division of fiction is a useful, or correct, or adequate one. But that is not the point at issue. What is at issue is that I claim Franklin to have made meaningless noises. Well, useless noises -- my daughter cannot talk, but she can make herself understood: the definition above cannot claim even this.

(c) On Page 99 we enter the lists once more. Here is another attempt.

STF is "a form of physical... utopian, moral, psychological or religious speculation."

"a fiction which seeks to formulate ideas that could not be formulated in any other way."

"a fiction concerned not with actual physical details but with hypothetical possibilities which may have physical existence or which may only be represented metaphorically as physical things."

"the fiction which merges indistinguishably into the new scientific hypothesis."

I should say that all this is in regard to Poe. Let me deal with these in turn. In the first, Franklin says that stf (as aided by Poe) is only a part of these various speculations. On page x he classifies utopian fiction as stf, and does this on other pages. Thus he is inconsistent and not very helpful, for I could claim the same virtue for works which are not science fiction. The second is meaningless twaddle, rather akin to Moorcock on Ballard as it happens. I could claim the same for detective fiction, surfing fiction, hairdressing fiction, insect fiction or leather fiction. The third is a bit tricky: I am not sure that I follow the meaning, as I would think of Anais Nin or Paul Ableman's I HEAR VOICES. I need help here. I gather that the last suggests that the fiction is not inconsistent with science at some future time. But if Franklin's claim that science is ephemeral (page ix) is true, then at some stage this stf must lose this claimed property. Boiled down, Franklin claims that stf predicts the future. Humph to that as a definition.

There we are. I didn't even have to present counter-examples really, insofar as the "definitions" were so wide-ranging as to include other forms (rather than specific instances) of fiction. Otherwise the definitions were vacuous.

This is upsetting. How can we approach the book if we don't know what stf is? I suspect Franklin would ultimately define stf by what he has included in FUTURE PERFECT! We should remember this in examining each offering.

ACADEMIC SIDETRACK: FOOTNOTES

Some footnotes are given. From one on page 93 we learn where the first Spanish recognition of Poe can be found. On page 144 we have a dissertation on the meaning of "utopia", commonly found in many other books.

But on page 392 a quotation is identified by translator and publisher, but not by title! OK, so I should know my Dostoevski. On page xii we have a mention of "Specialised magazines of fantasy and science fiction (which appeared) late in the (19th) century". I guess we'd all like to know just what was meant here. I gather from a later reference that the Frank Reade Library and company were meant.

But more damaging still is the absence of a footnote on page 96. Would you like to know Maxim Gorki's views on science fiction?; the agenda and details of the "1940 Soviet conference on science fiction"? I would. I've read several Russian articles on stf, but none have mentioned these matters. Franklin does not indicate where they are to be found.

Perhaps I'm trifling here, but I personally felt that the wrong items were annotated. I'd really like to know about that conference!

BACK TO SERIOUS BUSINESS: THE GENERAL TREND OF FRANKLIN'S THOUGHT

Interspersed with his introductions to the stories, Prof Franklin presents occasional comments on science fiction in general, which would not fit under any of the previous headings.

On page ix, and in the second paragraph, Prof Franklin categorises science and fiction in the following, interesting way:

"Science, a cumulative process which exists to be superseded, and fiction, a series of individual attempts to create matter which cannot be superseded,

have vastly differing relations to time."

I would not claim that there is not a sense in which this statement is true. But I feel that more commonly this statement is precisely wrong. Certainly I can say, without claiming any great orthodoxy, that science is permanent, and fiction impermanent. It is not really fair for Prof Franklin to make one claim on behalf of individual attempts, and the other on a collective basis. But what does Prof Franklin do with this rather dubious suggestion? He uses it simply to show that "any story... which has withstood time... has managed to bridge the chasm... between fiction and science." Does that mean that those branches of science which have not changed since, say, 1800 have also bridged the chasm? The whole argument seems ludicrous.

Now on page x Prof Franklin goes on to discuss American writers of the 19th century. He claims that there were few major writers "who did not write some science fiction, or at least one utopian romance". Please recall the distinction here made by Franklin. He lists some of the works he has in mind, assigning small descriptions. Of the eighteen specific descriptions, some actually pertain to science fiction, but we also have:

"ventriloquism, hallucinations, extraordinary plagues, somnambulism, utopian, lost continent, mesmerism, utopian, robot, utopian, telepathy, clairvoyance, teleportation, ghostly, Frankenstein."

Note that "utopian" appears three times, even though Franklin has in this same paragraph distinguished utopian and science fiction. I'm not sure that all of those fit into reasonable definitions of science fiction - mine or Franklin's. "Robot" slipped in accidentally, I will admit. But "ghostly" and "somnambulism" seem rather outside the range, don't you think? Mind you, I do not concede that Franklin's descriptions of these unprinted pieces is correct: in fact, I have every reason to doubt his descriptions, based on his selections in FUTURE PERFECT (plus internal information, e.g. "Washington Irving's most famous story is a time-travel story").

Prof Franklin concludes his introduction with some advice to those who find science fiction "sub-literary" (sic). These are Sturgeon's Law, the suggestion that stf is unpopular because it is based on presently unpopular literary assumptions, and that stf is different, and requires different standards. The first is certainly the case: it does not explain why the best stf is still a sorry sight. I simply do not believe that stf is based on the assumption that "the creative artist should imitate ideal forms rather than actualities." In fact, this is tantamount to saying that pulp fiction, churned out carelessly at top speed is unpopular simply because the author writes of "ideal forms". As for stf requiring other standards: well, I guess that takes it outside my compass here.

Two other points of interest arise. On page 141, and generally elsewhere, Prof Franklin claims Mrs Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN as science fiction. I am inclined to doubt this. As is the case throughout the book, Prof Franklin does not attempt to justify his assertion, which, as I have indicated above, fits quite sensibly with certain assumptions he made in writing the book. But it is not convincing. I would be inclined to consider FRANKENSTEIN as a Faustian work, or perhaps even alchemical (this latter is a point I intend to take up again). If FRANKENSTEIN is science fiction, then how does one exclude the various Greek (and other) myths concerning the origin of man? As I have said, I am not convinced.

Then, on pages 249 and 250, Franklin claims Henry James' ghost stories as "science fiction". With restrictions, I admit. But then I don't regard the doings of the Society for Psychical Research as "science". This seems somewhat typical of Franklin's method. He wants us to grant him some small matter, and bases a somewhat lumpier subject on our acceptance (for another example, take his distinction between science and fiction, discussed above). If we accept the gnat (with reservations, in my case), then the camel is forced down our throats. This is beastly unfair.

O yes, one more matter has just occurred to me. In introducing each story, Prof Franklin calls our attention to other stories of a similar theme, describing them in terms which makes us quite certain they could have appeared in ASTOUNDING in 1948. But these gems are never printed. His descriptions of the stories he does print are very similar: could it be that Prof Franklin is relying on this build-up to attempt to persuade us to see things which are not in fact present? I always found a great discrepancy between printed story (as lovingly described by HBF) and printed story (as enthusiastically, then disappointedly, read by JMF).

BRING ME YOUR POOR, YOUR TIRED, YOUR WEARY MESSES (?)

The first three stories printed are by Hawthorne. Basics of plot of each:

- (a) Guy tries to remove wife's birthmark with chemicals: kills her.
- (b) Guy makes mechanical butterfly.
- (c) Guy feeds daughter poison: she lives and breathes poison: lover tries to provide antidote: kills her.

Now I don't think that any of these stories qualifies as science fiction. In the context of Franklin's division of fiction on page 3, surely they must be classed as "fantasy". I suspect that they might just fit the third definition on page 99, but so, as I remarked on page six, would a great deal of fiction which is clearly not stf. The stories certainly don't meet my own requirement..

But there is something to be salvaged. I should never be so foolish as to claim that this kind of story is not a forerunner of science fiction. But that does not make it science fiction, any more than the fact that I number the kings of England from George III back amongst my ancestors make me the king of England (nor even, as yet, as insane as he was). However, it should be noted that the first two stories fit a class I should call "alchemical fiction": perhaps all three do. The first two, at any rate, do list alchemists at some stage during the story, and both include St Albert the Great, for example. Now I must admit that "alchemical fiction" is published in science fiction magazines today (how would it sound - ANALOG ALCHEMICAL FICTION ALCHEMICAL FACT?) but then stf magazines have published material which is by no stretch of the imagination science fiction - for example, DESPOILERS OF THE GOLDEN EMPIRE.

Next on our list we have Edogawa Rampo. As far as A TALE OF THE RAGGED MOUNTAINS and THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M VALDEMAR are concerned, my argument is as above. MELLONTA TAUTA might seem to be a good example of early stf, but it seems to me that Poe was only seeking some vehicle from within which to criticize his own times and the philosophies then extant. By choosing the future he is able to add the taunts of a more sophisticated world, without actually doing much arguing. I prefer Artemus Ward. And MELLENTA TAUTA is science fiction only if GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is - and I doubt that many of my readers would make that claim.

In his introduction to the section on Automata, Prof Franklin again cites a

large number of stories which are, from his description, clearly science fiction. But I have already remarked that I am inclined to distrust his judgment. Consider now how he describes Melville's THE BELL TOWER on page 145 and 146: clearly stf, ain't it? Then try reading the story: it has all the qualities of science fiction of that whirlingig at the top of the front of the Munich Town Hall. Dammit, fiction about machines is not science fiction per se. It can be science fiction, but not necessarily.

DR MATERIALISMUS is close, but no cigar. I suspect that the postscript explains quite adequately why I should reject it as stf, taken together with my arguments above.

THE ATOMS OF CHLADNI is a tough nut to crack, but notice that on the very first page (p 189) alchemy again rears its (ugly) head. This story is also alchemical fiction rather than science fiction. For although the new machine appears to be a prophecy of the future - sound recording - please notice the following on page 190. Mohler, the mad inventor, is describing the machine about which we are to read:

"It was a means," he said, "to discover falsehood and treachery." The spirit of Chladni communicated that to him - Chladni, the Frenchman who discovered the dancing of the atoms. "It is the same," he said, "in the atoms of the brain; they vibrate in geometrical forms, which the soul reads."

Here, and elsewhere, the writer is concerned with the machine as one of fantasy, rather than as one of science fiction. I suspect that my position is rather weak as expressed here, and that I have not discussed the story at sufficient length. But I must keep this piece down to a reasonable length.

WAS HE DEAD? almost had me fooled: I was so sure it wasn't even going to be fantasy. But, at the last moment, the flame of fantasy flickers to life, along with the murderer of Mrs Gray. I dunno - is a story written today about a heart-transplant science fiction? No - I'd go for fantasy in the case mentioned, or else straight reportage.

The next section, INTO THE PSYCHE, is an odd combination. THE MONARCH OF DREAMS is claimed as science fiction, but in contrast with the previous examples, there's little real attempt to substantiate this. And it is not stf. . . Bierce's A PSYCHOLOGICAL SHIPWRECK fails utterly to be science fiction, by my definitions or Franklin's. And Bellamy's piece is utopian, already noted as possibly stf, possibly not by Franklin. In this case, the argument that it is science fiction would be based upon the fact that Bellamy's islanders are telepathic. However, it seems to me that Bellamy has introduced this telepathy solely in order to comment upon the people of his own time.

I would extend the same argument, doubtless amid uproar, to Bellamy's THE BLIND MAN'S WORLD. An innovation for the purpose of satire or social comment alone (for which I have used GULLIVER'S TRAVELS as an archetype here) does not make a story science fiction.

The inclusion of Fitz-James O'Brien's THE DIAMOND LENS under the heading Space Travel is rather curious, especially when the next heading is Dimensional Speculation (though still under the Space Travel main heading). But it is not much more than fantasy at best, since even at that time poor ephemeral science knew that such a set of events could not occur. Again the mad Faustian

scientist is in action, and for just those reasons I cannot see this as science fiction.

Ambrose Bierce's MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES is certainly not science fiction, though at least one science fiction story (HE WALKED AROUND THE HORSES) has used the theme. And surely Stanley Waterloo's CHRISTMAS 200,000 BC is either historical fiction or fantasy. Note to the unbeliever: Theodore L Thomas' story in ORBIT 2 only just qualifies as science fiction, by me!

Mark Twain's correspondence piece hardly qualifies as "Time Travel" - not even for those who might consider A CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT or RIP VAN WINKLE to be time travel yarns. But Twain's piece doesn't seem even to be science fiction, to me. I don't see that the invention was necessary to the plot, except perhaps to make it a little more dramatic. Nor was the invention of a kind to make the story science fiction. By this I mean that the invention is rather of the order of a Concorde jet today...

The last piece in the book is again a case of the future being used for social comment on the present. I disqualify this as stf.

So here I am, with a book which is certainly entertaining and enjoyable to read, which contains no science fiction, and which argues rather ineptly that (a) it does contain science fiction and that (b) science fiction has the following properties... (none of which are very useful).

I'm disappointed. Maybe there exist examples of science fiction (rather than forerunners of the same) from this time. Perhaps Prof Franklin really has a clear and precise idea as to just what constitutes science fiction. But those examples do not appear in the pages of FUTURE PERFECT. Nor does Professor Franklin tell us much about science fiction.

I have stressed Franklin's writing about science fiction rather than his choice in this anthology. Because his ideas seemed to me to be so unclear and vague, there didn't seem to be much point in pursuing every little vagary of the fiction. Will I repair the damage later?

** **

RE-CONDEMNED READING: THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION No 1 (Sphere Books)

To be honest I don't intend to say much about the contents of this volume. But the contributions of Messrs. Aldiss and Blish - and Harrison - are rather more readable than many other pieces of a similar nature. Furthermore, I feel that one of the functions of EXPLODING MADONNA should be to provide instant reviews for those authors who are amongst its readers. I'd rather not have to write the reviews myself, but right now I'm all I've got.

Mr Blish's contribution, CREDO, is, I suspect, attempting to justify the existence of yet another Year's Best. Quite correctly, too, for the present efforts are, as Aldiss points out again, less than satisfactory. I know of Merril's weaknesses first-hand. The faults of the Ace series I have no experience of. But I think Mr Blish's barbs are mainly aimed at Merril.

But I must not allow myself to say here what is obvious to all about Miss Merril's opinions of science fiction, literature in general, et cetera.

Harry Harrison seems content to echo Blish: this is a poor show. Harry should have said more than: "Yup, yup!" Interestingly enough, the "Shackleton story" does not appear, which screws Harry's "All of the stories in this anthology are the ones I wanted, and it contains every story I wanted." (Underline courtesy HH)

Mr Aldiss, on the other hand, has quite a lot to say. Some of it even makes sense. Some of it, alas, does not.

The germ of Mr Aldiss' argument is on pages 202 and 203 of the Sphere edition: "National approval for the space race, and the monstrous expenditures involved, owed almost as much to the romantic image created for it by the rocket-story-boys as did fear-envy of Soviet Russia."

Let us assume that Mr Aldiss is talking about popular approval (i.e., by the rank-and-file citizen). The USA has approximately 200 million citizens. At best the audience for the sf magazines and paperbacks would be around one tenth of one per cent of that number. May I rest my case? OK, so maybe he meant films (which he doesn't mention, and to which the remainder of his argument is not directed). OK, increase that by a factor of ten. But Aldiss is not talking about movie-makers, so I'll hang fire on that one.

Who does decide US policy on space exploration? The USSR does. Anyone who attempts to follow the budget appropriations for NASA must know this. The last year or so has been very difficult for NASA, simply because the Russians have not had any major successes. The FOBS success may bring money to the military, but not much to NASA. This has been the pattern ever since 1958. Science fiction writers have nothing to do with what the US has done, or will do in space.

Anyway, Mr Aldiss goes on to say that maybe stf writers should now urge against the exploration of space, and that the money saved be spent on the poor people of the world.

Fine, says I. But Mr Aldiss knows as well as I do that the amount of money presently being spent on space research is a drop in the bucket compared with the amount being spent on eliminating little yella men in Asia, and on other preparations for war. In fact, the only way to help the poorer countries is to disarm: there is no point in providing civilian aid to a country just so that you can bomb it.

I might mention in passing that I have been misrepresented in ASFR on the subject of the war in Vietnam. I object to the suggestion that I am opposed to the war in Vietnam because I am, as you might have gathered, opposed to all wars. Oh yes, Mr Aldiss gets off the track again, when he suspects that science fiction went overboard for space fiction subsequently to 1958 (it is not possible to read pages 202 and 203 in any other light) which is equally incorrect.

There's another thing which is interesting to me - Aldiss's suggestions as to careful craftsmen, stf-wise. I was pleased to see Gordon R Dickson listed. But John Brunner and Robert Silverberg? And as for Algis Budrys and Paul Anderson - well, someone is not being a careful craftsman!

Of the stories which appeared in this collection, I'd read only a couple. THE LAST COMMAND was touted to me, indirectly from the SFWA, as a Great Yarn, Full of Emotion and stuff. As a re-write of Walter Miller's I MADE YOU it wasn't bad... but after that????

I'm very glad that I didn't read much of last year's output, if this lot is representative. Better luck next year, Harry!

CENSORSHIP NOTES

"I love a good murder," says a newly appointed member of the Australian Censorship Board (whoops! Literature), referring, of course, to her favourite reading matter. But she says she doesn't know much about books. Just as well. In government circles, it is widely believed that being well-informed can be a hindrance in the performance of one's tasks.

FINAL SCRAMBLE

I have approximately 8 topics I wanted to discuss this time for which there is no room. Thirteen pages is enough. And I'd really rather write not more than half that. The black squiggles on the first issue were due to my unseemly haste in producing the magazine. I have to do^{it} while no one is watching, you know. The WHOLE IN THE ZERO was a Freudian slip. Cost of last issue: \$1.16.

"If you are going to waste your time discussing science fiction seriously, you should at least make sure that somebody is listening." Sten Dahlskog.

EXPLODING MADONNA No 3 .. October 1968

This magazine is published quarterly by John Foyster, on the least suitable typewriter possible. Response to this issue is mildly desired.

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STATE OF THE READERS

Firm - Blish, Dahlskog, Delany, Rottensteiner.
Wavering - Aldiss, Boggs, Budrys, Knight, Warner.
Dropped - Franklin, Legman (no longer relevant).
New - Per Insulander, RAW Lowndes (check later pages please), John Bangsund.

JOHN FOYSTER

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

The roaring trickle of letters of comment has finally come to a halt. All four are printed, to a greater or lesser extent, on pages 7-14, which I regard as a good showing (44%). But I would like it higher. Please observe your status above, then turn to the last page, unless you want to avoid me.

READING?

I'm not certain as to whether this should be called "Recommended Reading" or something else. I shall stick with the above title until I solve the problem.

THE POWER WITHIN US, by Haniel Long. I have not either read or seen this book: it may no longer be in print. But I did read a series of comments on it in TRANSFORMATION 4 (Schimanski and Treece). Here's a quote: "This narrative first of all bears witness to a certain power within a highly sophisticated and cultured Spaniard, which came to life when all - absolutely all - the trappings and structure of his civilisation were torn away from him..." Clearly this is of importance to the sf writer - I hope - who strands his hero in some place far from home. The book consists of material by the sufferer (Nunez Cabeze Do Vaca) and comments by Haniel Long. I'd like to read it, so if anyone knows...?

THE POETICS OF SPACE by Gaston Bachelard. (Orion Press, 1964). This one deals about as seriously as is possible with the relationship between ourselves and the thin shell of otherness around us. If you are not able to stomach phenomenology it would be worth avoiding it, but again I suspect that the stf author or fan could get a good deal from it.

THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND EYES by Joseph Campbell. (latest, Meridian 1967). I know that Delany does not like this. Nevertheless a great deal of modern science fiction fits in with Campbell's mythic structure, in particular, say, THE STARMEN OF LLYRIDIS by Leigh Brackett. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to check through this and see just how much of stf is represented.

THE MYTH OF THE ETERNAL RETURN: COSMOS AND HISTORY by Mircea Eliade. There was a Harper edition in 1959... Quote (last paragraph of the book):

In this respect, Christianity incontestably proves to be the religion of "fallen man": and this to the extent to which modern man is irremediably identified with history and progress, and to which history and progress are a fall, both implying the final abandonment of the paradise of archetypes and repetition.

Eliade's contention is that religions generally consider the universe and existence as cosmic cycles, whereas most particularly Christianity sees the universe as linear, with beginning and ending, at very least. Once again this is of possible interest to authors and readers of sf.

And if anyone does know the whereabouts of the Long book, please inform!

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RE-CONDEMNED READING: ALGIS BUDRYS IN THE GUN...

CERBERUS (F&SF, December 1967).

I couldn't see this as having a place in F&SF, just like the blurb-writer, except that he made up a fancy story to excuse its inclusion. Unless CERBERUS is a pun of some kind I really couldn't make that out either. Cerberus' job was not to stop people getting into hell, nor can I see the role of Cerberus re-enacted anywhere in the story in any way! The way in which the second pun is slurred ("What with the ditch, and then having to hoist the beer case up through a trap door in the ceiling, it made sense it would take a leap and heaving to take Anheuser home."), together with the apparently strictly US-based phrase upon which it is based rather ballsed-up the pun for me. There seemed a strong contrast between the considerable warmth of the writing and the harshness which seemed to be almost revealed in the last couple of hundred words.

BOOK REVIEWS (GALAXY, February, April 1968).

The recent Nebula Awards, upon which I have already commented, will almost certainly not receive your acclaim, I should think. You also review THE IRON THORN in GSF2. I think I wrote a review of the same for ASFR, but it wasn't published. The gist of the review, as I recall it, was that you handled the whole thing pretty well up until the time when the hero met the spaceman. This seems to me to be a problem which has not been solved yet. Several stf writers

have managed to create genuine and believable aliens, but then comes the problem of relating them to ourselves, and this is one no one has managed yet.

Apart from the embarrassment of Gold, the Budrys column is the only piece I have read in the April GALAXY. But it was fiction, wasn't it? The dramatic opening seemed to me entirely unsuccessful. The thought of being on the receiving end of a "warm tender touch" from Howard Rodman, Larry Niven, Joe L Hensley, Larry Eisenberg, Henry Slesar, John T Sladek, R A Lafferty, Keith Laumer and Norman Spinrad is, to me, a far more dangerous vision than anything that could possibly appear in Ellison's book. And add Ellison himself to that list. Howard Rodman? "All of these moral and ethical considerations, however, occur in the producers of ROUTE 66, a very fine television series for whom I have just contracted to do three segments. In fact, the story editor, Howard Rodman (a man of vast talent, incidentally)..." (H.E., ELLISON WONDERLAND, page 142). Your review was consequently infuriating to me, because it seemed in so many ways to negate the hard-line thinking which has been behind your previous work. Ellison is certainly full of sound and fury, but I would rather have had some assurance that his authors managed a little more than that. In places it showed, but that hammy opening cast a pall over the entire ceremony.

** **

I LIED WITH FIGURES FOR MY COUNTRY... AND FOUND????

Quite often I try to convince myself that science fiction is going to the dogs. Most of the time it is so obvious that I need no convincing, but occasionally I have doubts. I've used several methods, but the latest seems to me to leave the rest for dead.

I took 13 anthologies - 12 general and one "theme", published at intervals between 1946 and 1965 (the titles appear as a footnote), and compared the dates of original publication of the contents with the dates of their anthologisation (anyone got a better word?). Well, here's some raw data. I list the years of origin of the 171 stories included.

1934	1	1944	22	1954	15
1935	0	1945	4	1955	7
1936	1	1946	3	1956	9
1937	3	1947	4	1957	7
1938	3	1948	6	1958	5
1939	4	1949	4	1959	5
1940	5	1950	3	1960	4
1941	6	1951	11	1961	1
1942	10	1952	18	1962	2
1943	5	1953	16	1963	0

Before I start interpreting and lying about those figures, let's write down the dates of publication of the anthologies from which my figures were taken.

A - 1946, B - 1952, C - 1954, D - 1956, E - 1958, F - 1960, G - 1961,
H - 1962, J - 1963, K - 1963, L - 1964, M - 1964, N - 1965.

With that before us, let's see what can be concluded - before getting on to the really convincing material.

Many of the stories dated prior to 1946 naturally appeared in A. There is a peak year (1942). But although the bulk of my selected anthologies are from the sixties, there is no significant peak until back in the early fifties. Well, you might say, this simply reflects the fact that the number of magazines has declined, and so has the number of stories. There are two counter arguments. One - there were less magazines published in 1942 than in 1939, but no such phenomenon was then observed. And two - of the 110 stories published after 1950, only 11 appeared in magazines now defunct - that's less than one per year.

The figures I've given tell part of the story, but not all. I want to examine yet another figure. For each anthology, I computed the average date of original publication of the contents. The difference between original and anthology publication I have termed the lag.

ANTHOLOGY	DATE	AVERAGE DATE OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATION	LAG
A	1946	1941	5.4
B	1952	1947	5.0
C	1954	1951	3.0
D	1956	1952	4.0
E	1958	1952	6.0
F	1960	1955	5.5
G	1961	1953	7.6
H	1962	1953	9.4
I	1963	1956	7.4
K	1963	1955	8.3
L	1964	1956	8.3
M	1964	1954	10.0
N	1965	1954	11.0

Let me now add three more that I didn't consider in the above for various reasons to be discussed below:

P	1965	1951	14.0
Q	1966	1955	11.0
R	1966	1954	12.0

N, Q and R were "theme" anthologies, and I am not entirely sure that it is fair to include them. The theme anthologist will normally not mind about re-anthologising material, whereas the general anthologist will make some attempt to avoid this. However, the sad fact remains (despite Merril, F&SF, September 1966) that general anthologies are out of fashion, except for compilations from particular magazines (viz. Belmont-Columbia). To get any recent figures at all, I have included N and Q and R in a slighter way.

The conclusion from that little lot is fairly obvious. Anthologists seem to have stabilised at around 1954 or 1955 as the mean year for their selections: I interpret this as meaning that sf is going to hell in a bucket.

Objections: Anthologists may be deliberately selective, reaching back to this period because it is "their own time". Reply: Tough - show me the anthologies edited by Laumer or Saberhagen or Lafferty...

But you may have deliberately selected these anthologies? Reply: I selected all the anthologies in my collection. I checked the review pages to see if any

major anthologies were missing: there were none - see below.

I still think that it's all due to the decreased number of magazines. Reply: I have already answered this (page 4) but you may think it if you wish. Perhaps you might like to consider the number of magazines published in 1947 and the number in 1961 - and see what happened in the anthologies of five years later!

So much for that kind of stuff. I can pull all sorts of extra figures out of my hat, if anyone wants them, but I suspect I've at least established a case worth examining. Maybe you all agree with me anyway - well, here are some figures to back you up, next time you become embroiled.

ANTHOLOGIES

A - ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE (Healy & McComas)	B - BEYOND HUMAN KEN
C - BEST SF 1 (Crispin)	D - BEST SF 2 (Crispin) (pb)
E - BEST SF 3 (Crispin)	F - BEST SF 4 (Crispin)
G - PENGUIN SF (Aldiss)	H - SPECTRUM 2 (Amis and Conquest)
J - SPECTRUM 3 (Amis and Conquest)	K - MORE PENGUIN SF (Aldiss)
L - YET MORE PENGUIN SF (Aldiss)	M - CONNOISSEUR'S SF (Boardman)
N - THE PSEUDO PEOPLE (Nolan)	P - GIANTS UNLEASHED (Conklin)
Q - NEW DREAMS THIS MORNING (Blish)	R - CITIES OF WONDER (Knight)

Oh, one more note: I didn't include, in my calculations, any stories published in the anthology for the first time. Nor did I include, in calculating the "Lag" for CITIES OF WONDER, the rather venerable stories of Forster and Benet, since I was interested in the anthologisation from sf magazines.

** **

CLEVER PLASTIC DISGUISE RENT ASUNDER!

It is not generally known that the early fiction of Mr Brian W Aldiss appeared under the pseudonym "Sydney J Bounds". However, the evidence I suggest makes this quite obvious. Firstly we note that Bounds rapidly disappeared from the magazines after 1955, when Aldiss began to appear. That in itself is only a remarkable coincidence, but there is additional undeniable evidence, photographs of the "two" men taken in 1955. Although the photographer has carefully chosen two different angles, the fact that the two are in fact one is quite obvious. Wear a false moustache, next time, Mr Aldiss!

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COMMENT : LETTERS ARRANGED ACCORDING TO SUBJECT MATTER

1 THE AIMS OF EXPLODING MADONNA

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

I found your project very interesting, but wonder what will come of it. To me it sounds pretty Utopian. It is not at all clear to me how you hope to offset irresponsible criticism by means of a fanzine without readers.

JF: There's always someone who is practical about these things. I am afraid I cannot claim to be able to answer this in a word or two. Fortunately the next letter is along the same lines.

STEN DAHLSKOG

I do think that you would perform more for sf by writing one article a year for ASFR than by publishing four issues of EXPLODING MADONNA. Of course, you may find time to do both. But why limit your readership? After all, Aldiss, Blish, Budrys, Delany and Knight do not have to care about whatever you write in EXPLODING MADONNA. They have proven their ability to sell what they write, and I am author enough (no, not sf but popular science) to know that criticism takes second place in an author's considerations every time he gets a pay check. And with EXPLODING MADONNA you have no chance at all of influencing their readership. In ASFR you would have a chance.

JF: Hold it right there. I strongly suspect that this is a fallacy with which many a lonely fan has comforted himself: the thought that at least he can write to a fanzine, or to a prozine letter-column and know that something will result. I very much doubt that even INSIDE, which had a circulation vastly greater than that of ASFR ever affected the sale of one single story. I do not believe that "fans" have more than a token influence. So that doesn't matter. If professional writers take interest in the writings of amateurs, whether this be in ASFR or EXPLODING MADONNA or any other fanzine you choose to name, then this is a kindness on their part, and not ever the result of a campaign of terror. The gentlemen you name do not have to care about what I write anywhere (at the moment, he added modestly). So that would partly answer your query, I think.

But on the other hand I am rather loathe to wave the big stick of caustic criticism on the off chance it might injure some bloke's income - unlikely, but afterwards too late. Another major consideration is that turning on the big guns tends to alienate not the pros but the fans. Pros have thick shells and bank-notes to match. Fans don't like to be told that Ballard is crap. I found this out rather painfully at the recent Australian Convention: read the report of the Writer's Panel when it appears. *

I wish that sending a fanzine to Sten Dahlskog, of all people, would be an excellent way of influencing the future development of sf, but the sad, honest reality is that it is just a waste of paper and stamps. You got my gratitude, certainly, but that is probably a commodity you can do without.

Certainly criticism in sf is desperately needed, because if there is any competent criticism anywhere it is by Budrys in GALAXY and by some few irregulars in some occasional fanzines, and even if anybody reads these fanzines I doubt that anybody cares very much. ANALOG has a good review column by P Schuyler Miller, which does not pretend to anything else. F&SF pretends to have a critic in Judith Merrill, and in my opinion she does a lot of harm - she is too enthusiastic, gives too little documentation, and too seldom tries to consider a book from a point of view other than that which first strikes her mind. What is needed even more than criticism is discussion and reading of criticism. Can a very limited fanzine like the one you seem to have in mind really have any effect, can it be anything more than a critical magazine for critics, and wouldn't that be an ivory tower discussion?

JF: I have indicated above, and you seem to agree in the third sentence above, that all fanzine criticism is probably "ivory-tower" work. I am hoping to keep EXPLODING MADONNA small (and succeeding beyond my expectations at the moment) so that too much work will not be involved, so that there will be a certain sense of participation for each reader, and so that that criticism which does appear can be a little freer in tone, though there doesn't seem to be anything in this issue which couldn't appear in any fanzine at all (apart from some of the reviews, as yet largely unwritten, perhaps). I am quite prepared to open EXPLODING MADONNA to general circulation, but my original feeling was that some of the parties to whom this is addressed might have been put off by appearing (and being jabbed) in a general fanzine: it appears that some don't wish to appear at all. However, if the response to this issue indicates that such a thing is desirable, then I will circulate the next (fourth) issue to all and sundry.

A friend of mine buys F&SF just to laugh at Miss Merrill's reviews: I can get my laughs more cheaply.

"Gross ignorance" is 144 sf fans.

*

2 J G BALLARD

JAMES BLISH

Ballard may have been overpraised in some quarters, but this is not the major impression we get in the States, where he is roundly damned by a vocal, if not also large, segment of fandom which seems unable to make anything of his work and jumps on him for what seem to me to be all the wrong reasons.

However the fact that he has been run down as well as praised returns the problem to his own lap; it then becomes a matter of whom he chooses to believe. Very much the same considerations apply to Ellison; he does not lack for detractors, but it is in his nature to simultaneously be deeply wounded by them and to charge ahead regardless. I myself think he has earned his laurels - but I may be over-reacting: when he first erupted onto the scene I thought he was utterly without talent, in which I was dead wrong, so I may now be seeing more than is there.

STEN DAHLSKOG

I certainly agree in full with your views on the canonization of J G Ballard. A man who can write "Beneath the contour jewelry her breasts lay like eager snakes" (THE CLOUD-SCULPTORS OF CORAL D, F&SF, December 1967) has something left to learn about writing and about women.

JF: The language which Ballard employs is no more reprehensible than that used by Zelazny. Certainly Ballard's striving for verbal effect often goes too far - but that is what he needs to learn. On the other hand, I don't think very many writers would choose the carping criticism over the adulation.

Although I have written a couple of reviews of Ellison's books I've always thrown them away because I couldn't find a single good thing to say for his stories - and I know how strongly Ellison does identify with them.

Consider Ellison's latest (as I write) outrage at Fred Pohl's "censoring" of one of his stories. I would have removed Harlan's suggestion (attempted) that the character had a large serve of meat and two veg. on the grounds of scientific inaccuracy. I am quite puzzled as to Ellison's merits - honesty, guttiness? Interesting traits, perhaps, but nothing to do with good writing. *

3 THE WRITER AND HIS CRITICS

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

I wholly agree that writers are not delicate organisms, and writers of commercial fiction can hardly afford to be such. Much as I admire Anglo-American criticism, which has an air of impartiality about it, I must say that I enjoy literary feuds, and the more violent the better. German literary history is full of them, and German criticism in general has tended to be vitriolic: I doubt that the authors suffered much from it. Karl Kraus, in his famous periodical DIE FACKEL, attacked a good many of the leading writers of his time, including Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Werfel, and we have no indication that their writing abilities were impaired by it. And surely those authors were more delicate organisms than sf writers. And I for one doubt that writers profit much from criticism. Or surely James Blish and Damon Knight, who are very good critics, would also be much better writers than they actually are.

JF: I don't think that either of these two gentlemen have ever really received the same kind of help as they regularly dole out to others: but the point is nevertheless a valid one. *

STEN DAHLSKOG

I do not think that insistence on literary quality in mainstream terms is the one or even the best way to raise the standard of sf.

At the moment I am in the middle of a hot debate on this subject in SF FORUM, and these are my points:

- 1 SF is not the same as mainstream fiction and must be criticized in its own way, not exclusively by mainstream rules. If this is not so, why separate sf as a distinct genre? Can New Orleans jazz be meaningfully criticized by the criteria applied to classical music and by no other?
- 2 All mainstream requirements with respect to good characterization, good grammar and so on are equally valid in sf. They are valid whatever you write. But they are not equally important everywhere. There may be other criteria which are more important in other art forms and less important in mainstream.
- 3 SF is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change in a technological society. Our society is technological, and there is absolutely no sane way out of the mess except making it even more technological. The science due to make the heaviest impact on our way of life in the next twenty years is neither astronautics nor cybernetics but ecology. Mainstream literature seems almost completely unaware of the scientific basis for the society it tries to depict.

4 All literature should first and foremost be criticized according to the manner in which it does the job it tries to do. In particular, does an sf story show some awareness of the scientific method and scientific logic? If not, and if it is as completely and as deliberately unscientific as Ballard's, then it might be a good fantasy (in my view Ballard is not a good writer of anything), but it is bad sf.

5 The really dismal thing about present sf is not that it is so bad in grammar and characterization but that it is so awfully bad in science.

The above may be a trifle exaggerated.

Now I do not want sf to become popular science. If I want to learn something I go directly to the scientific journals; I do not want it second-hand. But I do want sf to show some awareness of science, I want it to show how people and societies react to existent or future science, and sf cannot do this if it uses bad scientific reasoning or none at all. I want sf to do this because mainstream is (practically by definition) unable to speculate about future changes, and we need to speculate about the mess we are making of things: we have to get out of the rut of just letting disasters slowly creep upon us.

If we throw the science out of sf, as Ballard and some New Wave writers have done to the loud applause of Judith Merrill and others, are we left with anything but gothic fantasy in a new disguise, a little updated by pseudo-deep psychology and experimental stylistics? And what possibilities would this offer to describe us, our culture and our world?

What I am afraid of is that sf will lose its idea content in the process of acquiring a beautiful literary polish. An sf story without speculative content and without scientific logic should be damned, whatever its mainstream merits.

If grammar and characterization, psychology and stylistics are so all-important, why don't we all give up and start writing little mood pieces for the little magazines?

Is it really too much to hope for a literately well-written sf about science?

JF: Yes, I am afraid it is. In accordance with the third of the aims of stated in EM 1 I shall limit my comments. I am in basic agreement with your five-point plan, except that I have rather more faith in "mainstream" and its techniques.

I was recently asked to write an article on the "great job" Asimov is doing with his articles in F&SF. Since I can see very little use for them I declined. My requirement in sf is that any "science" present should not clash inordinately with what is known to be true: a weaker demand than yours, but still not often satisfied. I think that the Blish-Knight A TORRENT OF FACES will meet your demands, but it would take me rather a long time to make sure: and that is the trouble. Genuine science is so vast that I can't see how anyone can combine a working knowledge of it with a writing career...!

*

4 BEING FRANK ON FRANKLIN

STEN DAHLSKOG

I have read some of the contents of Franklin's FUTURE PERFECT, but not Franklin's

comments, and now I probably won't bother. Thanks for warning me and saving me some time. But if RAPPACINI'S DAUGHTER is not sf, why should Ballard's "Vermilion Sands" stories be, as you seem to imply?

JF: But I carefully didn't say that the "Vermilion Sands" stories were sf, and that's my way out. *

CHIP DELANY

The second issue is a vast improvement over the first, but do you really expect Aldiss, Knight and company to actually respond to another essay trying to define the difference between fantasy and sf? First of all these are people who answered your questions for themselves around the time you and I were being born. I, even very I, could not possibly be less interested in whether some antique in a Moskowitz collection is fantasy or sf.

Look, take a book, preferably written in the past five years and talk about it seriously. And don't snidely suggest - well, this was done before in 1937 by... You are talking to people who probably know all that a great deal better than you, if only because they were there in 1937.

JF: Certainly Aldiss, Knight and company have not responded, so perhaps you are right. On the other hand, I was really more concerned with the fact that Damon Knight could be taken in by so transparent a snow-job, and that it seemed to me that he regarded the word "Professor" (and Associate should have been tagged on) as the stamp of authenticity. That in itself suggested that Knight didn't know some of the things which we would take for granted. (If those people did in fact answer the questions back in the early forties isn't it possible that they are now slightly out of date?

This seems to me the same sort of fallacy which trapped Knight - an oracle has spoken, so it is for us to obey. Knight and Blish may know a great deal about science fiction writing, but this does not ensure that they (or any other science fiction writers) are universal geniuses.

5 WHAT IS NEEDED

CHIP DELANY

What we all need is somebody who can pick out what is being done that is new - new ways to solve old problems, new problems that haven't been solved yet. You're talking to people currently engaged in writing and editing, who are concerned with where things are going; and they all have a pretty thorough knowledge of where things have been.

Anybody who has been exposed to the past can recognise what he's seen before. But we all need help in having the new pointed out to us. Take a book like Dean R Koontz's STAR QUEST, just released this month. If you are reviewing this book for writers (as opposed to readers) it is absolutely absurd to talk about the 150 odd cliches that fill the pages. You can dismiss them in a sentence and still let everyone know you know they're there. Discuss instead the five (I found five) rather new ideas - and there are at least three fairly old elements that he brings remarkable freshness to. Point these out: analyse how he does it: what it seems to indicate. Then, if you want, you can show how the hundred and fifty cliches get in the way of the valid things

he had to say. But that is a serious discussion of sf: that's the kind that's needed.

Critics like this are the ones who start renaissances. If you can do that, you'll be amazed at the feedback that begins, and begins fast. If you want to talk about older works, relate them to the valid things that are going on now. This has nothing to do with kind or unkind reviews: it is concerned with relevance or irrelevance.

This type of criticism is so very rare - Edmund Wilson's AXEL'S CASTLE established an entire literary epoch in the US by doing just that. But as it is, there is nothing in either issue (except the stated aims) that has anything to do with what I am interested in as a writer.

JF: Thank heavens I decided not to print my two page reply to you here. And I note that the above is abridged from the original (blame the errors on me). I hope to indulge in the sort of thing suggested above but I don't see it as a task I can manage by myself - which is why I want some skilled words from everyone who reads EXPLODING MADONNA. It would be good to provide a service of this kind, but I cannot do it alone. On the other hand, I don't think that much of EXPLODING MADONNA has been oriented towards the past. Even the piece on anthologies in this issue is primarily concerned with the meaning this has for present sf. And my page two book comments will, I hope, be useful - I intend to continue the feature.

But all of this depends on getting a meaningful response, and so far this has been excellent - but limited.

There are many approaches to the criticism of sf. At the lowest level (I inflict my prejudices) is the criticism of sf qua sf, without any reference to any other subject matter - it has no good practitioners, only Moskowitz.

From then on increasingly more of the demands of good writing are incorporated in the critic's armoury, until we reach the all-stops-out stage, at which point sf has become a rather insignificant blob, with any virtues completely outweighed by the immense faults. Edmund Wilson's comments on Lovecraft might be thought by some to get close to this. Now Knight and Blish come in partway up the ladder - I'm inclined to think that perhaps it is now possible to get tougher.

Yet this is contradicted by the fact that the "New Wave" seems to me to be as unsuited to high-power examination on the literary side of the ledger as it is on the scientific one. Apart from Ballard no one in the "New Wave" is even as competent as, say, Isaac Asimov, when it comes to basic techniques of writing (disputation invited).

Your suggestion seems to require the investigation of sf within its own framework - which is fair enough - but one can still apply the knuckles occasionally - for the writer's own benefit. I note that an article by George Turner will soon appear in ASFR which should make interesting reading (I am told that it is somewhat longer than this fanzine). George's views on writing about sf are rather like my own, so I look forward to seeing what he has to say (he doesn't like Cordwainer Smith, though; but anyone can have one fault).

*

6 I*D*E*A

JAMES BLISH

As I look back I see I haven't said anything serious about sf, so let me throw out a proposition to be kicked around: To think highly of one's own work is an absolute prerequisite for serious writing of any kind.

JF: I'll restrain my enthusiasm for this discussion and remark that the opposite is not true. Not exactly the opposite, perhaps, but near enough. Namely that thinking highly of one's own work does not guarantee that it will be either serious or good. And I leave the remainder to the readers (except that I'll be having a go at the proposition in the next issue, when others do). *

7 A KNUCKLE FOR BRIAN ALDISS

STEN DAHLSSKOG

As to Mr Aldiss' views on space research and world poverty: he makes a wonderful speech and will get a lot of votes, but not mine. Just one single side-effect of space research will provide more real relief to the undeveloped countries than they would ever have received if all the space research grants had been redirected by Mr Aldiss. I am thinking of the improved meteorological prognoses possible from a lunar base: we have to get out of the soup we live in in order to really see it. This will increase productivity, not merely shift it around. Space research will pay for itself many times over if we get no other benefits (but we will) from it than better weather forecasts: we have to have better forecasts if we are to have any hope of organizing agriculture in the desperate years ahead before the microbiologists are ready to take over from the farmers. The problem is not whether to spend money on space research or on relief programs: the problem is that we have to do both.

JF: The hawks in Washington and Moscow have a simple solution to that problem.

I like a seven page lettercolumn: so let's have another one next time. One final problem - why hasn't anyone ever written a story which depicts anthropologically convincing aliens?

An ed. of sf was Fred Pohl
Who kept his head in a hole.
Competitions he ran
Were an insult to Man,
And suggested that Fred had no soul. *

** **

RE-CONDEMNED READING (CONTINUED) - BUDRYS AGAIN!

BOOK REVIEWS (GALAXY, June, July 1968)

I hadn't noticed that you missed reviewing many of Miss Merrill's anthologies - you didn't, in fact. Your comment on John Brunner is very much to the point:

I'm often inclined to think of Brunner as a misguided soft-thinking right-winger rather than the opposite impression which is usually created. I also think of him as a slightly more successful Harlan Ellison, which shows that silly thoughts often occur to me. Your review of Knight's SCIENCE FICTION INVENTIONS degenerates into meaningless twaddle at the bottom of page 126, but I suspect this is a work of the printer. I struggled on after: "Let me let you in on the test I personally use for this sort of thing. Also in this book is John R Pierce's....", but only made out what I assume you meant with difficulty. If it wasn't the printer's fault I suggest you examine this passage carefully yourself to see just how much you'd enjoy reading it.

The July issue didn't reveal anything startling, other than that Panshin's book on Heinlein must be much better than the excerpts I've seen.

DELANY: CAGE OF BRASS (IF, June 1968)

I think that this relied just a little too much on style: a dollop more plot would have helped make this much better. The Delany short story is not yet a tried and true product (nor is the Delany novel, of course), but this one continues the upward trend.

BLISH: SKYSIGN (ANALOG, May 1968)

Somewhere along the line I must have missed the point. While this story was certainly based upon an interesting idea, it seemed rather short on motivation. There seems to be little purpose in the actions of the aliens, though perhaps they are on stage so rarely that this is not important. There are some swings at those who would correct the world's troubles their way (instead of letting the experts - i.e. the Pentagon - handle it) but this could surely have been done in far fewer words and with greater effect. The aliens are fortuitously clumsy, and the spaceship proves extremely easy to not only capture but also manoeuvre after capture. Although the major part of the story seems intended to reveal character, this seemed to me almost the fatal flaw.

Is this an idiot plot, then? I think not, but it does seem rather less than I have come to expect from Mr Blish, and it comes as a distinct shock following my enjoyment of A TORRENT OF FACES. As I said earlier, I must have missed the point.

ALDISS: TOTAL ENVIRONMENT (GALAXY, February 1968)

This was a remarkably successful and absorbing story, at least insofar as entertainment is concerned. It is marked by the grossest clumsiness in editing I have ever seen. On Page 116 we have (lines 2, 3):

Shamin's oldest daughter, Malti...

and on lines 28 and 29 (on the right hand column, as was the previous notation:

Malti was her second oldest daughter...

At first this seemed to me to be some plot complication, but I now have to reject this. But the error is not just a small one. We have on the one hand a straight complication, but on the other there is a wholly unnecessary repetition. This must ultimately be blamed on the editor, though the author must have done something unusual at this stage.

The story itself is well thought-out, well-written, though mildly incredible.

ALDISS: DREAMER, SCHEMER (GALAXY, July 1968)

This seemed very slight, but was easily outshone in unimportance by Brunner's FACTSHEET SIX. I hope to present a fair coverage of Aldiss in NEW WORLDS for the next issue: Aldiss is rather like the rabbits out here at the moment.

KNIGHT: THE WORLD AND THORINN (GALAXY, April 1968)
THE GARDEN OF EASE (GALAXY, June 1968)

"It was light and hollow and seeds rattled inside it." (June, page 110). And this seems to sum up the first two stories in this series. These are both examples of the very simplest kind of science fiction to write: that in which the protagonist doesn't know what is happening to such an extent that the author doesn't seem to know either. And this reader certainly doesn't.

Although it seems outwardly that this is all taking place on a starship, good old Fred Pohl declares it to be taking place in the far future. When I try to draw threads together, I get only confusion. For example, there's a weight-loss of ten percent when Snorri rumbles (Knight seems to think that weight is measured in pounds), which is exactly the reverse of what might be expected. Similarly the whole business of weight and falling is so incredibly contradictory that it just is not possible to make sense of it. For example, at one stage Thorinn falls a man's height, but has time for some fancy gymnastics on the way down. Later in falling about twice as far (five or six ells plus "not a great distance") it is necessary for him to break his fall against the walls, all of which suggests a high gravity, in complete contrast with Knight's repetitive "floating".

Thorinn can see his sword glittering beneath the water from the shore, yet a few ells from the shore his light-box will not penetrate the gloom - what does he need the light-box for, if the sword is so efficient?

THE GARDEN OF EASE does not have this sort of fault, but only because the action is sufficiently vague. Even more than in THE WORLD AND THORINN, the protagonist is simply forced through a number of situations in which "things" happen, with no more apparent purpose than page-filling.

It is almost as though Mr Knight is trying to set up a straw-man for his own criticism: I should be pleased to read Knight's criticism of this series, momentarily supposing it to have been written by another author.

** **

EDITORIAL (CONTINUED)

On Page 1 I will either remark or repeat that I am prepared to distribute EXPLODING MADONNA other than to a closed circle, depending on which you read first, that page or this. Sten Dahlskog is right - if one cannot get someone to listen in a given audience, the best move is to find a new audience, at least temporarily. Although the response I have received is very encouraging, it isn't quite enough to keep the ball rolling. So would you let me know in some way or another whether you favour such a move - and don't worry. You ignore me, I ignore you - a perfectly fair arrangement.

WALTER BREEN

As a correspondent has pointed out, the wording of part of EXPLODING MADONNA One was more than unfortunate. In trying to make a point about how impressions are created I was guilty of gross clumsiness and said something about Walter Breen which not only suggests something I do not believe to be true, but also goes directly against my stand, on that subject, at that time. Ah, composing on stencil is not all a lark.

UNTIL NEXT TIME

The next issue will reach you some time in January, I hope. The ORIGIN OF SF piece has found its way into ASFR, so do not look here. May this house be safe from hawks.

PER INSULANDER and R A W LOWNDES - EXPLODING MADONNA gets no publicity, no mentions, please, until vote (see above) is in. Sorry, no earlier issues available. Forgive this intrusion on your time.

"...a sort of plea for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation on other than infantile lines.." (minor American novelist, 1908)

EXPLODING MADONNA No 4 .. January 1969

JOHN FOYSTER

THE BUDRYS CASE

This short piece was first planned some time ago: it is necessary to state this because there has recently been some discussion of Mr Budrys' work in various fanzines (notably PSYCHOTIC and SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES) in which the authors seem to have had the creation of mayhem rather than a careful discussion of anything Budrys may have written as their aim.

Admittedly, to claim that mine is the only unimpassioned viewpoint is so obviously a lead-in to biassed writing that I hesitate to say as much. Nevertheless, Mr Budrys has never reviewed a book of mine, nor has he ever not reviewed a book of mine. Being a fan has advantages. No, Mr Budrys has never offended me in any way other than simply by his reviewing, and since the avowed purpose of this fanzine is to improve the standards of criticism of science fiction, I really have no choice but to examine the current products. Mr Miller and Miss Merrill have their niches: I shall attempt to discover where Mr Budrys fits.

ATTITUDE TOWARD REVIEWING

In his first column for GALAXY MAGAZINE (February 1965) Mr Budrys wrote:

I here propose to read books, consider what I imagine their authors to have been doing, and to discuss what I find interesting in some of them.

(Page 153)

But in December 1965 he writes:

I would not dream of telling you what goes on in the mind of any specific writer.

(Page 148)

These two attitudes are opposed: Budrys is giving with one hand and taking with the other. To prevent any confusion in your minds, let me say immediately that in general Budrys does like to speculate about the minds of the authors whose books he reviews: on Page 149 of the December 1965 GALAXY Budrys writes:

From the beginning of his career to date, del Rey has remained his own individual. He has listened respectfully to various editorial dicta, thoughtfully considered the requirements of his market, chosen the editors he will work for and then has sat down to write his story so that it came out a del Rey story, of a piece with del Rey, and with what del Rey feels.

Some of this, to put the best light on it, is suppositious. Mr Budrys still has much the same attitude:

John Brunner doesn't know his heroes are callous, egotistical sociopaths who... (June 1968)

And this from someone who "would not dream of telling you what goes on in the mind of any specific writer".

After Budrys had been reviewing for a year he looked back at his past efforts:

...a review column these days must first of all be a vehicle for a philosophy of literature, and only secondarily a guide to my ideas on how your book money should be spent. (February 1966, page 131)

And this suggests that least some thought had gone into that particular essay. And yet just over a year later Mr Budrys tells us:

It's been two and a half years since I began expatiating on books in terms of money. The idea has been to serve primarily not as a critic, or even a reviewer, but as an investment counsellor. (June 1967, page 188)

I do not think that there is any need for me to contrast these two statements: not even for the benefit of Mr Budrys. It appears that Mr Budrys has completely changed his attitude, not to his current reviewing, but to this past work. That this is a dangerous approach goes without saying: it indicates, in fact, that Mr Budrys does not have a clear picture at all of just what he is doing. For the reader this must be doubly confusing, especially those readers who use Mr Budrys as an "investment counsellor".

As it happens, in that June 1967 issue Mr Budrys announced "some changes". As might be expected from what we have seen above, the exact nature of these "changes" is not revealed. I'd suggest that skeptics read the left-hand column of page 188 in that issue to try to see just where Mr Budrys is heading.

Mr Budrys is well aware of the fact that he occasionally makes mistakes: in the February 1967 GALAXY he admits one particular error and remarks that there have been others. But he is talking about errors of fact: I assume, perhaps erroneously, that errors of fact are mistakes to which we are all prone, and what I am writing about here, right now, is not this kind of trivial error, which we can put up with, but the larger fault of inconsistency. And Mr Budrys is second to none when it comes to that. (I am probably exaggerating here).

Back in the December 1965 GALAXY, from which I have already quoted, Mr Budrys remarked:

The writer who doesn't care ((if he sells)) is the least free of all writers, and often a suffering slave of his own notions of excellence. (Page 147)

This sentiment, and the sentences precoding it, at least partially imply that he who is his own man, who writes for himself, is a bit of a nut. And not very likely to succeed.

This opening paragraph was followed, two pages later, by the paragraph on del Rey which is quoted above. The sentence following the quotation is:

In the last analysis, he writes for himself, and for his readers. (Page 149)

Apart from being rather vacuous (who else could he write for, pray?) this does tell us that del Rey is one of those blokes he was mildly mocking on the earlier page. Now how does del Rey manage to achieve this rather remarkable thing? What he has done is "chosen the editors he will work for..." There is nothing harmful in this: all Budrys is saying is that del Rey looked out for editors who would buy the kind of stuff he wanted to write (though Budrys does not state so obvious a thing in as many words).

But in the February 1967 GALAXY we come across Fritz Leiber, who has suffered much, apparently, not least by:

...never quite falling in exclusively with some one magazine market or some one editor that might create an identifiable Fritz Leiber place in the microcosm, he goes his own way, and to all discernible intents always says what he thinks. (Page 189)

Apart from the internal inconsistency, of never managing to create a "Fritz Leiber place", yet managing the feats of the latter half of the sentence which do indicate a "Leiber-type", there is the larger inconsistency with what has been earlier said of del Rey. Mr Budrys wants to have it both ways: whether one seeks out an editor or not, one can be one's own man. This suggests that editors have nothing to do with it, but there is less milage in that idea.

Mr Budrys is sometimes not merely confused in his ideas, but there are occasions when his prose is almost impenetrable. I have discussed this particular case earlier, but let's look at it again. (Budrys is talking about "landmark sf"):

Let me let you in on the test I personally use for this sort of thing. Also in this book is John R Pierce's neglected, perfect short story about immortality, INVARIANT. From it, I eventually worked my brain around to the point where I was able to write a story called THE END OF SUMMER. On the other hand, when I wrote another story called THE BURNING WORLD, I wasn't going 180 degrees against Frank Herbert's COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE. I was going 90 degrees away from Jack Williamson's earlier THE EQUALIZER. (June 1968, page 126-127)

Budrys' point, if I make him out correctly, is that a "landmark" story is the earliest one on which he has based a story. I think these are shaky grounds, though perhaps they help to explain some of his other oddities. But it is the way that Budrys gets his idea across that troubles me: perhaps I expect explanations which are rather too simple.

As a final note on this sort of thing, let's consider a case in which Mr Budrys manages to be completely contradictory within the space of one review. The review is of WILD AND OUTSIDE (by Allen Kim Lang). Towards the beginning of the review Mr Budrys writes:

Perhaps because he has been writing for such a long time... it ((the novel)) reads more like the thirtieth minor effort of a man who long ago stopped feeling the need to prove he was good. (August 1966, page 192)

And towards the end:

...the book is good but minor and fleeting fun. Not minor league. You can tell there is an old pro at work here - an old pro much too

experienced to feel that a first novel ought to be more ambitious. (Page 193)

It's quite clear that how you feel about the book depends on the time of day, or how many drinks you've had whilst writing the review or... but the point is that I can't tell just what Mr Budrys thinks about the novel. I suppose we must take the latter judgment as more likely to be accurate, but who really knows? Budrys? No, he'd be the last person I'd ask.

MORE GENERAL PRINCIPLES

I will glance briefly at some of Mr Budrys' thoughts which are not directly concerned with his reviewing before proceeding to consider some specific examples of Budrys in full flight.

As you know, the essential conflict is between comfortable ignorance and pitiless intelligence. (June 1965, page 164).

As you know, the problem with life is that nobody understands the situation. (June 1966, page 141)

It is remarkable, is it not, how things can change in one short year? The first of these quotations from Reviewer Budrys indicates the odd sort of world in which he lives. The second is so fatuous that even Mr Budrys scurries away from it as fast as he can:

Where is there an objective basis for determining whether a piece of fiction is "bad" or "good"? (August 1965, page 187)

My suggestion: anywhere but in GALAXY BOOKSHELF?

THE REVIEWS

The above is concerned with Budrys' attitudes, as revealed by his remarks at the head of his column, or less frequently, within the body of particular reviews. It is from these that we must judge Budrys' place and performance. I find him to be inconsistent (the cardinal sin), uncertain and, in places, incoherent.

Looking at individual reviews, however, the picture is somewhat more rosy. Taken separately, Mr Budrys' reviews are almost invariably entertaining, are usually relevant and generally more down-to-earth than those of his closest rival.

But there's a trend I don't like. Away with that - let's examine the glory that was Budrys.

In his first column (February 1965) Mr Budrys managed to set a standard which he rarely, if ever, equalled, and this was in his review of Poul Anderson's short story ESCAPE FROM ORBIT. Apart from some oddities at the bottom of page 155, this review could be taken as a model for writing about a story one really likes.

In April 1966 Mr Budrys stomped Rick Raphael's CODE THREE and made it quite clear just why.

In October 1966 he made a very relevant point when discussing a Moskowitz collection ("What's the point of mentioning an author's best stories and then printing one of the others?").

In June 1967 Mr Budrys warned us of change to come.

In October 1967 Mr Budrys stomped Arthur Clarke (in general) without really going into detail (though it was only a passing remark).

In April 1968 Mr Budrys wrote his most subjective review, I think, the subject being DANGEROUS VISIONS. Is it possible that ^{an} objective review would have been less favourable? Certainly the muddle-headed junk (pages 155-157) which led off the review is uncharacteristic.

In June 1968 Mr Budrys complained about not receiving the Merril anthologies: he had missed one (number 11, number 12 not having been ready, I guess) - not "the few most recent".

In August 1968 Mr Budrys gave a favourable review to a FLASH GORDON reprint. He also gave a favourable review to a couple of action novels by Keith Laumer. He mentioned a book called CRYPTOZOIC by Brian Aldiss. He did not give the name of the publisher, or the cost of the book (though there was room for the address of the publisher of the FLASH GORDON), which is rather discourteous, to say the least. That he shares the inability of his fellow-reviewers to follow the plot of the novel merely indicates that he is no more competent than they. I would have expected more. Even the crude amateurs associated with ASFR have been able to follow it: in fact we have yet to find anyone who agrees even with the outline sketched in GALAXY. However I shall be discussing CRYPTOZOIC at length in ASFR 19 and do not wish to discuss it here. It is not the major point.

What does trouble me is that this review is so irresponsible. Budrys no longer makes any pretence of thinking before writing. I can think of only two explanations: that the inconsistencies and oddities I detailed above are now flowering, or that Fred Pohl wants a controversial feature. Alas - I am inclined to believe the former. It seems as though in addition to Mr Budrys' inability to remember what he has written some five minutes earlier, his frequently-demonstrated shallow-mindedness and his general haphazardness we are to suffer from a bumptious aggressiveness. There are more reasons for not buying GALAXY every day.

** **

LETTERS

Brian Aldiss wrote. Pretended I was Sten Dahlskog (hmmm, that would save on postage). Wrote more stuff about expenditure on space research. Not about criticism (tut, tut). Sounded gloomy. (Cheer up pommy). Thinks I'm doing a hatchet job on F. Pohl. Would I use a limerick on a target that big? Was pleased to see words from Dolany. I suspect Dolany wasn't. John Bangsund wrote. Didn't understand last page of EM3. Reckons that some previously-enthusiastic authors went cold on ASFR after unfavourable reviews. Naughty John Bangsund must have bruised little egos of some. Harry Warner wrote. Long pleasant letter. Reckons EM impractical. (Dead right, Harry). Says I need more figures for the anthology argument (probably correct) and further suggests reason for phenomena cited - new kind of stf. Careful, Harry - go any further and you'll believe, with me, that stf started in April 1926. Says Ellison needs tough editor (a brave man).

WAKE UP YOU LOT!

Here I am with my critical faculties hanging out in the cold and I haven't interested a single soul in talking about the way sf should be approached. Not one. Probably noone cares: it certainly looks that way.

BOOKS

Armstrong's YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS, though riddled with factual errors, is a useful guide.

SOVIET LITERATURE May 1968 was devoted to sf whilst RUMANIAN REVIEW had a large section on sf in its first 1968 issue.

QUOTE

"IRON THORN is the best novel Budrys has written so far, and that is no small compliment." (Tom Boardman, BOOKS AND BOOKMEN, April 1968). It is also quite ridiculous, unless that happens to be the only Budrys novel Boardman has read.

ON THE MATURITY OF SCIENCE FICTION

"IMAGINATION magazine presents this award to radio station WBBM-CBS for their origination of the network radio program, SPACE ADVENTURES OF SUPER NOODLE, which is in the best tradition of science fiction." (April 1953, page 161).

There's also a new sf novel out by Hungarian author, Janos Tin.

Quadruplegics of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose!

EXPLODING MADONNA No 5 ... second January 1969 issue
the relentlessly quarterly fanzine that is
published at weekly intervals.

SAMUEL R DELANY

SPECIAL SAMUEL R DELANY ISSUE

Delany writes:

Rehashing some of the things I said in my first letter to John Bangsund: due to the publishing lag, a year is usually the minimum time between the last page of a manuscript coming from the typewriter and the writer reading a printed reaction.

This means - rave or pan - that the emotional effect on the author, save an initial: "Gosh, they're talking about me!", is quite small. I can see a current project interrupted for a day because of a particularly bad (or good) review. I can't see the quality being changed by a review of a previous work no matter what was said. If I finished a book one day and saw printed reviews of it the next things might be different. But there is that temporal filter operating to vitiate the effects of emotionalism - which allows the important function of criticism to come to the fore.

I think criticism is vitally important for the growth of any art. To the extent that the artist is at all gregarious, an intelligent critical atmosphere is absolutely necessary for his development. Emily Dickinson, the most ivory-tower of artists, thirsted for criticism with a mania in her letters. Her best work comes from the period when she was receiving just the smidgeon completely inadequate to her talent from Turner.

Every epoch that has produced a body of great art has produced a concomitant body of criticism, from the canons of Phidias and Praxitiles through the essays of Pound, Eliot, and Auden.

I always read the introduction before I read the book.

I read a good many introductions to books I have no intention of reading.

And I am sure that there are a number of fine books I have missed for want of an introduction.

Is this strange?

To make even a barely coherent statement in the dialogue of modern literature, one must be familiar with the major works of... Joyce, Mann, Proust, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, to pick the most random five. To have any understanding of the selection from our own language, Joyce, one has to understand the point he

occupies in the development of the English novel which demands reasonable acquaintanceship with the works of Richardson, Fielding, Eliot, Austen, Dickens and Hardy (to pick some few names from a densely-packed chain), and I haven't even mentioned Shakespeare or the Bible. Millions of pages of reading are involved. It is impossible to keep the ideas, the growth in literary techniques and the development of psycho/social worldview in any sort of order without recourse to a good deal of scholarly, informal, external, and comparative criticism.

Who talks of literature and claims himself uninterested in criticism only betrays his ignorance of the subject's breadth.

That's on the grand scale.

More intimately, I enjoy good criticism. As a comparatively cerebral writer who works slowly and re-works often, criticism parallels the process I am going through most of the time I am "creating".

A novel represents a tremendous effort, to me. Deciding what to write is perhaps ten percent of that effort. The other ninety is spent figuring out how to write it as clearly, economically and resonantly as I can - chapter by chapter, scene by scene, sentence by sentence. The part of my mind that occupies itself with that large fraction of the task is exercised by criticism (of my own and others' work), and would be much the weaker without it.

Talking personally, and in my guise as writer, the only regular critic working professionally meaningful to me is Judith Merrill. A critic is useful to a writer insofar as he (or she) provokes thought, points out things the writer would not have seen himself. Now I am a fairly intelligent reader. I trust myself to see the obvious and a fair amount of the subtle. SF requiring the particular intellectual orientation it does, I would assume this is a quality I share with a good number of sf readers.

I think the discomfort/dismay Merrill's reviews/criticisms cause so many people lies in that most people tend to judge a review, after they're read the book, by how closely the critic came to saying what they would have said.

As a writer, it is exactly as a critic predicts my reaction to a book that what he has to say is useless to me. Even more complicated: as the critic says things outside my own reactions that still cause intellectual proliferation within the range of my interests, his criticism is important.

Let me propose: the body of their criticism considered, Knight and Blish have failed as critics. Second proposition: their failure is one of sensibility, not intellect. A good deal of this, of course, is because of the commercial situation that produced most of their criticism: but all of it is directed towards the General Public (of sf), i.e. their critical concern is to express the obvious (usually) and (occasionally) the fairly subtle as simply and as clearly as possible (so that it proliferates as little as possible).

But the General Public is a statistical fiction created by a few exceptional men to make the loneliness of being exceptional a little easier to bear. There are people less intelligent than others, yes. But there is not a doctor, janitor, engineer, student or professor who feels himself thoroughly representative of that General Public. Only politicians feel that way, and they, fortunately, are a very small percentage of the reading populace.

There is a certain tone which a writer uses when he is saying what he feels is obvious to people he feels are incapable of seeing it. This tone is absolutely alienating in direct proportion to the real complexity of the "obviousness" he is explicating.

At best the reader can step out of the way of the irony and appreciate it as wit. But it is exactly the process of stepping aside that damps the proliferation process in the reader's mind (whether he be writer or no). For this reason I think the three Merrill articles on Sturgeon, Ballard and Leiber (the Sturgeon and Ballard articles appeared in F&SF, and the Leiber article as an introduction to a British collection of Leiber's stories - and will be printed, in expanded form, in a forthcoming F&SF) are worth THE ISSUE AT HAND and IN SEARCH OF WONDER together. In all three articles it is obvious that the criticism is written to a reader for whom she has as much respect as she obviously has for Sturgeon, Ballard and Leiber. I go back and re-read them as I go back to favourite poems and stories. For what it's worth, I agree with practically every statement in the Sturgeon and Leiber articles and disagree with as many in the Ballard piece (and yes, I do think Ballard is the most important British speculative writer today); still, I value Merrill's ability to outrage me by what she finds to like in things I can't abide, as well as the flaws she can find in works that strike me as near perfect.

The "failed sensibility" that damps the remaining body of sf criticism, professional and amateur, is the concept of the critic as an arbiter of entertainment with a commercial definition of entertainment that I vehemently maintain is too limited to concern what could possibly entertain anybody.

Re the professional critics: I don't believe they like half of what they say they do. They are so inundated in crap through the exigencies of the job that they aren't exposed to enough of what they might like to spark them into conducting their criticism on a really vital level.

What I want from a critic is a limning of those elements and their relationships that, after close scrutiny, he finds fascinating and intriguing (whether he judges them exemplary or reprehensible), and analysis of those wonderful (or god-awful) things he has never seen before. I'm asking for a sense of wonder in sf criticism! But it's the same thing I want from all writing, fiction, non-fiction or poetry.

Which brings me to the next matter: why I prefer the NEW WAVE!!! to the (old wave). I make the statement in its simplistic blatancy to cut through all the other perfectly true statements I could make as well, such as

- (1) There is no such division.
- (2) It is a waste of time trying to define this non-existent chasm.
- (3) The terms are inadequate critical attempts to fix whole complexes of interrelated literary phenomena that, quite expectedly, wriggle off as soon as the shibboleth is flung.

The preference is purely for one set of sensibilities over another. As sensibilities produce that critical atmosphere necessary for growth, I find the critical atmosphere of the New Wave much more conducive to my own temperament. I have no beef with the intelligence of the Old Wave. Among the forty-odd writers ringing the Anchorage living-room during the last Milford SF Writers' Conference (of which perhaps five - myself amongst them - might admit to being New Wave writers if you defined your terms carefully enough) I doubt there was an IQ under a hundred and fifty present. And intelligence is a part

of writing good sf. By sensibility I mean what a given writer has chosen to turn his talent and intelligence towards.

Sturgeon's Law operates on both sides of the Tide Line. And on both there is that remaining five percent that is enough to justify existence. Because, on the professional level, the critical outlet for the New Wave is limited to NEW WORLDS, the NEW WORLDS critical atmosphere is mostly social (ASFR is the closest thing there is to a New Wave fanzine; how do you like that, John Bangsund?) but this is true of any artistic environment, Old or New.

But the manifestations of these respective critical atmospheres are quite real.

Case in point:

I am notorious for handing in "difficult" manuscripts. You've gotten my letters, John. As you might imagine, a Delany manuscript can be a copy editor's nightmare. ((JF: True, perhaps, but you spoil the point by making this remark on an exceptionally clean page!)) As well, all my re-writing occasionally produces its Flaubertian disasters (you recall Madame Bovary's 53 francs counted out in 2 franc notes, or the platform that had four legs on one page and six on the next?) no matter how careful I try to be.

Ed Ferman, at F&SF, is the most gentlemanly of Old Wave editors. But a story for F&SF for me means a trip into the office to correct the copy-edited manuscript for the errors that the copy-editor invariably makes regardless of sets. Then, another trip to correct the proof-read galleys not only for printer's errors, but for those where the proof-reader has misunderstood. I go to all this trouble because when I haven't - as has occasionally been the case out of necessity with some of my IF stories - the results have been near disastrous. Ed is very kind about letting me come in to make these corrections, but I have to do them when it's convenient for him. He can't send galleys out to authors because he hasn't got the time: and I understand this.

In August I sold a novella to NEW WORLDS. Within days of acceptance I got a three page list of queries from the copy-editor. Every point, dubious or obvious, was raised - a particularly difficult task because the novella is a first person narrative by an erratically self-educated confidence man and thief. This is NEW WORLDS' policy with any story where there is the least problem of the author's stylistic concern. This sort of editorial/critical concern is one of the hallmarks of the New Wave; I, for one, cannot begin to express how much I appreciate it. Alas, this is not just British versus American publishing attitudes. A British publisher of mine, bastion of the Old Wave approach to sf publishing, managed to generate a situation concerning corrections that for me approached the nightmarish.

A young American editor who has openly declared himself in sympathy with the New Wave, when I mentioned the same corrections, immediately went to all sorts of trouble to see that they were included in a subsequent edition of the book.

A matter of sensibility: the Old Wave editor, with a good deal of reason, just doesn't see his job as extending this far. The New Wave editor does. From Hemingway: One relates differently to hand-writing, to typescript and to print. Hemingway advises that a story should go through all three stages and (pre-dating Dr McLuhan) explains, as anybody who has been through the process can testify, each medium highlights a different aspect of the story and a sensitive

writer will take advantage of this and make corrections in all three stages because of the mistakes that the media themselves point up - the word that has to be changed because of an unintentional pun, a phrase that's too colloquial, some bridge put in to ape the rhythm of speech that turns out in print to be just a glaring redundancy. To me, it seems that the Old Wave editors basically feel that a story just doesn't have to be that good.

In a story of mine that recently appeared in IF, set on Mars, something that should have happened in a "Dune" happens in "June". That's a typo. As well there is a gross inaccuracy in the estimation of the temperature differential between the Martian night and the Martian day. I should have liked to correct both of those mistakes in galleys. One would have involved resetting one line of type; the other, about six lines.

Both are in the published version of the story.

I think both are unforgivable - if anything they reinforce one another. I was aware of both mistakes (one was originally mine, one the printer's) well in time to correct them.

As far as the editor was concerned, there was no reason for the story to be that good. And for all the perfectly sound and defensible reasons he would offer I have to go along with him. But because of his particular conception of what the field is, the reader suffers.

In that "pretentious" editorial of mine in NEW WORLDS at which you took so much umbrage, JF, I asked for a criticism that would examine the verbal texture of sf. As Sartre pointed out in his essay on Faulkner, to determine an author's metaphysic you must examine his textures as well as his structures; and metaphysics does have more to do with physics than merely being the next scroll on the library shelf at Alexandria. But you can't have an examination until you have editors who will produce works where the author can take full responsibility for his verbal texture.

Does this verbal texture ever make that much critical difference?

In a 1966 review of my books in NEW WORLDS, in a discussion of THE BALLAD OF BETA-2, J Cawthorne picked out the phrase: "the professor's eyebrows came crashing down" as an example of over-writing, which it is. It is also from a chapter that is almost all interpolation from another writer. In the same article Cawthorne pointed out that the phrase "an invisible copper haze" from THE JEWELS OF APTOR was unvisualizable. Directly because of this article, the changing of this phrase was one of the real revisions I did make between the first and "revised" editions... because I agreed with him. And I do think it is indicative that this acuteness came from J Cawthorne, a reviewer so closely associated with NEW WORLDS.

So, acute, printed criticism can have a demonstrable, practical effect. And the intangible effect it has on the field is none the less real nor the less important.

Criticism on a personal level has always been important to me. John Brunner did practically a word-for-word critique of a middle draft of AYE, AND GOMORRAH which made the final one much easier to write. He did the same for a forthcoming Tom Disch story THE ASIAN SHORE, a tale which in its final version has impressed me incredibly. James Blish, whose work as Atheling Jr I was so

cavalier with a few paragraphs back, offered me several concrete suggestions which will be incorporated into the Sphere Books edition of BABEL-17. (He offered them three years ago - ah, that publishing lag!)

But Point Two is here blending into Point One... these things happen.

Getting back to the focus of Point Two, then.

Another matter of sensibility, concerning the New Wave.

The story is more important than the writer. Practically speaking this means that the author agrees to put himself at the service of the story, no matter what the difficulty involved... re-writing, if it's called for, going to the office to correct galley proofs or copy-editing.

The New Wave has had to bear the general accusation of being more interested in style than content. When directed at myself it is a painful misrepresentation. Say rather that I am so concerned with my content that I will go to all sorts of commercially infeasible lengths to try and work my language to a tension where the content on all its levels will be as luminous as possible.

No one can deny the amount of crap that has washed up on both beaches. But the crap on this terribly small, new one is a lot more interesting if only in the controversy it generates. And, perhaps because it is a lot less populous, the air seems fresher here.

The Third Thing:

It arises from perusing Mr Dahlskog's points. They strike me as purposed answers to terribly pressing questions. But they also, I humbly suggest (aware that they are a condensation of a larger program), imply a distressing limitation of vision.

The general question these answers generate is: what are the particular critical problems sf poses?

The only way I think this can be answered with any real effectiveness is to undertake the monumentally difficult task of going back and daring all those terribly pretentious questions that frighten us away: What is the Domain of Art in the complex generations of human society, and of literature, fictional and non-fictional, as it represents a Domain of Art? And what is the particular literary domain that sf, as it relates to the story-teller's art of fiction and the non-fictional literature of science, defines with unique excellence.

I think, JF, that as you did this formally, you would find formal answers to the questions you asked about why you read, wrote about, and so-forth science fiction.

This is the way to develop a critical vocabulary adequate to deal with the specific problems sf poses which, at the same time, will give us its resonance with the other art forms, and will be able to place it in relation to the rest of the world. Certainly it is strangling oneself critically to talk of New Orleans jazz only in terms of classical music: but to say anything really meaningful about it, one has to be able to relate it to music in general, which means knowing what music produced it, what music affected it that was not specifically jazz - the Negro slaves who were trained as house musicians to

play Handel and Mozart chamber music, for example, as well as the African influence - and how it influenced not only the jazz, but the serious music and today's pop music, that have come after it. Otherwise it degenerates (as it has in the US) into a dead end musical cult if it is only discussed in terms of itself. And sometimes I wonder if sf...

Only of the things about art, any art, is that any given work of art is meaningful as it represents a cross-section of a process. When the process stops the art becomes pointless.

I don't think one can make any meaningful statement about the literary merits of sf without a good deal of thinking about literature in general and modern literature in particular.

Similarly, one has to take a good look at modern science before one can comment on the scientific content of modern sf.

Let me forgo the first and concentrate on the second. I agree with points three and four as far as they go.

((JF: Editorial interpolation: Sten's points 3 and 4 were, in extract:

(3) SF is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change in a technological society. (Sten then suggests that ecology is the Coming Thing).

(4) All literature should first and foremost be criticized according to the manner in which it does the job it tries to do.

;

- I just like to help you out, you know.))

I'd like to point out, however, that ecology as a science breaks down into a dozen sciences, among which cybernetics (if not astronautics) could have an extremely important place - in that cybernetics facilitates dealing with large quantities of information, and to solve our ecological problems vast amounts of information will have to be processed. Astronautics, which Dahlskog hints at, as it increases our knowledge of meteorology and facilitates meteorological control, has its bearing on ecology.

Actually my point is that we are moving into a position where our information is vast enough that a statement like: "The science due to make the heaviest impact on our lives in the next twenty years is not cybernetics or astronautics but ecology" is a product of a scientific Weltanschauung as outmoded as the concept of the planetary electron. It is not the particular choices of sciences, but the semantic form that makes it inapplicable to contemporary scientific thinking.

Equally: "Mainstream literature seems almost completely unaware of the scientific basis for the society it tries to depict."

I might agree with that statement as it relates to literature before 1955. Over the last dozen years, however, this has been a recurrent consideration of "the mainstream", often outdoing the sf efforts. It is implicit in Heller and Pynchon, explicit in the Barth of GILES GOATBOY. It's reflected in the work of a dozen contemporary poets.

Modern science is fragmenting more and more. I think we are due shortly for a scientific revolution the likes of which humanity can't even envision. Somewhere or other I posited the emergence of whole new fields to which I gave the semantic place-holder of "Integrative and Synthotic Sciences."

And if the mainstream was unaware of the "scientific basis" of the society before 1955, just look at sf. Let's look at sf's treatment of the initial development of spaceflight, the pride of the "golden age".

Spaceships were invariably "invented" by one man, or perhaps one private company. When they were developed by a government, the scientist in charge of the project inevitably got to be pilot or part of the crew. If we were lucky there were three or four test flights, and then off we went to Mars, with a full human crew. Usually we discovered mid-trip that one or two children had stowed away, preferably with a dog, parrot or pot chimpanzee.

Compare these stories with modern Governmental space flight programs. The problems are so complicated that the idea of individual initiative in design or development is practically lost. The major designer is an executive administrator who co-ordinates hundreds of other administrators who co-ordinate the thousands of scientists, engineers, technicians (as well as artists, film-makers, interior decorators, janitors and make-up men who all get into the act) involved. He probably couldn't figure out the specific gravity of his telephone without getting a shock. Nor is there any reason why he should be able to. There are thousands of tests involved before one of hundreds of test shots can take place. But to consider stowaways and pot dogs in such a context is to miss the whole point. There's no chance for a miscellaneous mosquito to end up on the first manned flight to Mars. A winning adolescent and his turtle?.... ((JF: How about that, J Blish?)) And this is all perfectly inherent in the "scientific basis" of our society. It was in 1955 as well. But from Zenna Henderson to Robert Heinlein (the Lyle drive, invented and patented by someone named Lyle who just happened to be in the second expedition to Mars is wrong, wrong, wrong with an overall emphasis that dwarfs any dozen inaccurate chemical formulae, incorrect temperature evaluations, or off time/milage ratios), this sort of thing goes on, and I defy you to find an accurate reflection of the ambience* around space research as she exists. Nor will you find it in any of the current issues of ANALOG, F&SF or the magazines of the GALAXY combine.

You will find it in the "condensed novels" of Ballard in NEW WORLDS - YOU, ME AND THE CONTINUUM and THE DEATH MODULE in particular.

The "technological machine" is such that, presently, even if it goes on only at its present rate, it will supply us with an endless stream of new information about our universe. What is desperately needed are new forms in which to arrange this data, new ways to catalogue and cross reference it that will produce more efficient systems for its utilization.

Science fiction that takes its inspiration from the solution of a single, or even a finite number of, discrete technological problem(s) is, practically by definition, scientifically behind the times.

* ((JF: John Bangsund was'nailed over the coals in a national magazine for preferring this spelling to "ambiance". I note that Mr Delany typed "ambiance", but I hold firm to the belief that he meant "ambience". There are similarities in meaning, but in my magazine I decide the bloody spelling!))

That is why all the arts, speculative fiction only one among them, are demanding new forms. If you will, we have a computer to take care of a certain area of our work; now we need creative programmers.

The worst one can do is, when working in old forms, to acknowledge their inadequacy to deal with the information matrix around them. The controlling irony of NOVA is that it is a novel about a time when there were no novels. Its spaceships are purely poetic symbols of movement between worlds we cannot know, which I tried to adorn with as much jewelry as they could bear and still fly in a manner "...that does not clash inordinately without that which is known to be true." The best one can do is to strike out and try to discover those new forms oneself.

But to do less than the worst is not to be even considerable.

The reason modern science fiction "is so awfully bad in the sciences" is that most sf writers (and hard-core sf fans) don't know what's going on in the world, period - either scientifically, artistically or socially.

The most important process that has begun and has already affected all our lives is that the boundaries between scientific, artistic and social action are breaking down. The most serious avant-garde literary magazines regularly take collaborative efforts in poetry today, since Kenneth Koch's LOCUS SOLUS which was devoted to collaborations. Ten years ago two authors signing their names to a lyric poem would have put it beyond any serious artistic consideration. Pop music and film, by many considered our most vital arts today, are collaborative efforts (even when they are headed by one person) in a way that a string quartet never was. As well, they achieve aesthetic excellence on a level that jazz, because of its limiting improvisory quality, denied itself: at their simplest, both involve amazing amounts of technology. Yet the sensibilities necessary for the increasingly important field of abstract mathematics are far closer to those of the solitary poet than they are to the engineer. But the examples just go on...

It is just as "science fiction is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change on a technological society" that it must grow, be willing to cross boundaries, artistic as well as technical, so that it can fulfill these demands.

The scientific vision and the aesthetic vision are practically identical. SF began as an attempt to cross the boundary between these two that a few people realized was meaningless. To treat the boundary between sf and mainstream (detestable word!) the same way is to re-affirm, not to deny.

By insisting on remaining in the strictures of a decade or two in the past, sf only prohibits itself from doing exactly what Dahlskog demands of it, and fore-dooms itself to the extinction of the inefficient; and that will leave Dahlskog's very important job undone.

Change is better than stasis. As a changing field (even if you don't approve of the direction a particular bud is pointing) it admits of more change, and can attract the authors who will want to change it, perhaps in the direction needed to fulfill what Sten Dahlskog (and I think probably the rest of us as well) sees as its potential.

As a static field it will attract only those writers who want a fixed income

from doing exactly what has been done already by rules and regulations that no longer apply because the situation that made them relevant has shifted.

Energetically yours

Chip Dolany.

FOYSTER HERE:

Chip's letter/article requires a far better answer than I shall give here. But I insist on writing direct onto stencil (one benefit of which is that I don't mind putting out two issues in one week), so this will have to do, scrappy as it is. Amongst the many points he made Chip touched on a few things that I'm in slight disagreement about, and he also managed to push one of my buttons.

I cannot see how anyone could be enlightened in any way by some of Miss Merrill's reviews of, to pick one out of a hat, your work. Her Nov. '65 and Dec. '66 F&SF comments are space-fillers at best, for the actual critical content of them is almost zero. Of course, in the second, she is very enthusiastic about your books, but that is only ego-boosting, after all. In general, this seems to me to be Miss Merrill's major failing: a tendency to seize upon some protege and puff and puff and puff - she generally blows the house down, of course, for the poor author isn't nearly as good as she says. Otherwise her failings extend into the realms of "mainstream" when she drags in anything that she feels can be described as fantasy just to show how mature sf is (which is a sign of adolescence, at best). I am occasionally tempted to send a copy of Edmund Wilson's AXEL'S CASTLE to her and wait for the review. (Subtitle of AC is "a study of the imaginative literature of 1870-1930").

The attitude of the New Wave towards manuscripts is commendable, and I am glad that you can now see why I'm not particularly interested in the "verbal texture" of sf writers: even those who may have it suffer as they pass through the grindstone of the printers. But all you are asking for is a careful editor: what would happen if you found an Old Wave one who was just as careful? JWC Jr, I am given to understand, is not too bad.

Again, comparing Old and New, you introduce the Critics, using Jim Cawthorne as an example. But again, what you are really asking for is a good editor, not someone with fancy sensibility. I'm unimpressed with Cawthorne's specific criticisms, by the way, since anything invisible is of necessity "unvisualizable" and I have seen eyebrows of the kind described.

But consider the critical performance of NEW WORLDS this year. Sladek's review of Barthelme failed to get much across to me. Sallis' review of HUMP is an example of the worst kind of one-upmanship (the sort of thing to which NEW WORLDS is much given, in fact). Sallis reviewing (?) poetry (181) is simply laughable, while Shackleton/Aldiss does a fair job on Hillegas. Notice that it is clapped-out, nearly orthodox Aldiss who does most nearly approach a decent job. The rest can be wiped, with no loss at all.

There is so much in both literature and science that it isn't really possible for any one person to get a good hold on the lot. I don't know that I entirely approve of your approach to literature (dig the critics), but in science things are really tough. I suppose that a full-time reader could keep a broad grasp of the situation, but scarcely enough to claim genuine familiarity.

When you write about the invention of a spaceship (as an example) you forget that science fiction is written as wish-fulfillment material for juveniles. This was then and will remain for some time the basic selling-point of science fiction: it is simply unfortunate for older readers that they happen to like it too. Whether they have failed to grow up, or do have Broad Mental Horizons is something on which I'm not prepared to cast judgment. But that's why I find it hard to take seriously the claims of sf as literature - it's basically written as adventure stories, and people like yourself who try to make sf "mature" are voices crying in the wilderness. I also find it hard to forget Mike Moorcock's origins as an editor, for example.

But you really rile me when you talk about collaborative art, as any Australian readers will already know. You refer, I gather, to LOCUS SOLUS 11 (pubbed just on seven years ago) in which such noted recent writers as Sei Shonagon, Shakespeare and John Donne appeared. Collaborative writing is so nearly impossible (as art) that it is hardly worth worrying about. You imply that the standards of art change (critical point of view), but I don't think this is so at all.

Art is essentially a singular product. There are no cases that I know of to which you can point as examples of the collaborative product - the Goncourts, Conrad and Ford, or off to Beaumont and Fletcher? - with pride. In a word, bullshit.

I do not consider film or pop music to be arts, so the vitality or otherwise of them does not interest me. So George Martin can throw a tune together? That doesn't make the Beatles great artists. Nor have I heard any other pop music that impresses me more than the most dismal Dick Clark material. As for films - the auteur theory would hardly have achieved such prominence unless the French critics realised that there had to be one guy responsible. Cocteau's films, because of his complete control, become near-art, but few others have done serious work.

I am so completely confused by what you say about jazz (you seem to contradict yourself partway through in suggesting that original creation ("improvisation") is the thing that prevented jazz from developing. You must have meant something else.)

But I am in general agreement with what you say, and only have these minor quibbles. Maybe I'll remember something else later on.

EXTRACTED LETTERS

(Naturally I only pick out the things which make my correspondents look stupid).

GEORGE TURNER, boy novelist and prize-winner, writes:

(On Budrys) For instance, your first two quotes of opposed attitudes do not demonstrate opposed attitudes - the two statements are about different things and cannot be equated in anyway. Then you quote del Rey as proof, but this

information was possibly given to Budrys by del Rey.

And all through the article I have a feeling that you are confusing "what goes on in the mind of the author" with logical and permissible deductions arising from his work. This kind of deduction is dangerous, and in general should be left to specialists in textual criticism; a bloke of Budrys' standard shouldn't attempt it.

I think the weakness lies in taking snippets of quotation upon which to hang a thesis... The final page - The Reviews - contains what seems to me the real ammunition. Here you make statements of checkable fact, admitting of no anti-interpretation, and these carry your point much more steadily than the barrage of quotes.

Really, John, your remark on YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS is too much of far too little: "...though riddled with factual errors is a useful guide." Guide to what? And it isn't riddled; many errors exist, but they are in general of no detriment to the theme and they do not exist in such numbers as to justify a word with overtones of superfluity and contempt. Herein lies a great weakness of fan criticism - a proneness to seek an effective and explosive word rather than one which represents the situation truthfully.

JF: This explains a great deal about our differing attitudes. I regard the last section of my piece on Budrys as the weakest, precisely because it does not rely upon quotation. You will have to expand upon your first point before you convince me that Budrys was not contradicting himself, especially in the light of the quote on Brunner which followed. I would not amplify a comment that a dictionary was a useful guide, and saw no point to do so for a book as aptly named as YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS. Since you admit that there are a large number of errors in the book I shall not spend a couple of pages giving a short list, but merely refer to a horrendous page (page 140) in which, following a host of errors, Armytage hangs a theory on the fact that Pohl changed the title of his magazine from GALAXY to WORLDS OF IF! I say no more. But the word "riddle" I thought to be singularly appropriate, since these errors do raise what I think of as the Moskowitizian Riddle: if so many mistakes are made in areas in which we have some knowledge, how many are made in the others? Nyaa!

BRUCE GILLESPIE:

Criticism is as much a result of scholarship as of discrimination.

Aldiss will do more to improve sf by publishing BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD.

I don't know precisely what your way of criticising sf amounts to. It seems to me more impressionistic than analytical to me. I'm not saying that your crits aren't good reading - it's just that I never quite find out what your central points are. But insofar as I can work out your approach to sf criticism, I like it. A plea for objectivity? An attempt to find out what is "good" and what is "bad".

This poses several problems. You presume that an author's work lies like a piece of wood in front of the literary eyes, and that one evaluates it much in the way one evaluates a piece of wood by saying "it is hard" and "it is light green". This seems a rational scientific way of looking at literature - precise definitions again.

But this kind of objectivity implies rationality - a piece of literature with bevelled edges. The big problem is that literature, and sf in particular, deals very much with the irrational. A piece of literature does not stand like a wooden statue to be viewed by a fat-headed public - it only has importance to the extent to which it becomes part of those to whom it is communicating.

Therefore, if you are a critic, what are you criticising - the work itself, or the means of communication between the work and its readers? This is very much the critical standpoint taken by the Leavis-Eliot-SCRUTINY blokes - a great deal of talk about the critic's own feelings towards the work. However, this leads to an obvious philosophical problem - if you criticise an author's work even partly in terms of your own reactions, then what results, if it is good criticism within these terms, is itself another work of art. This has been the justification of the University Criticism Industry all along....

So you are probably right... in theory. There must be objective standards of good and bad if you are even going to use the words.

But all this doesn't help us with science fiction. Just how can anybody find objective standards to justify the awe felt in sf circles for things like SLAN and DESTINATION: VOID? How do you argue with some sf fan who thoroughly admires them, and explains his liking by saying that "of course you don't judge them in the same way you judge mainstream literature"? You would reply - "Why not?" To which he would reply truthfully and embarrassingly: "Because if you did hardly a word of sf would be worth reading." And that's where you get double standard problems.

To put it another way - if you enter into the style-content controversy at all, then I would guess that you are most concerned about content. In fact, this would be the element of fiction most amenable to objective appraisal. Accepting that most sf is stylistically juvenile, most SaM-like apologists for the medium would then go on to argue that it is the ideas that count. But, as you pointed out at the Authors' Panel in April, most sf authors' attempts at true scientific ideas are laughable, or dishonest - in short, irrational. The most rational sf could only be called technological fiction. But you and I both like stories like NIGHTFALL for their "ideas", or I, for one, would enjoy the new stuff which transforms old ideas with new vestments. But it is that concept of the sf idea which is at the heart of the matter. I leave it to you. I'm stymied.

JF: Well, folks, I've just lost two readers through hacking their letters to shreds.

Some central points: my review of HOW IT IS (which is not sf) was intended to show that readers will swallow anything. My piece SF IN THE CLASSROOM was intended to demonstrate the intellectual poverty of professional reviewers. My piece on Campbell's editorials was not intended to ridicule Campbell for holding such beliefs (he doesn't).

Objective criticism is impossible, and there are no objective standards of "good" and "bad". (This is an ex cathedra statement, you understand).

One cannot apply the full-scale mechanisms of criticism to sf; as you suggest, but we can do a little better than has been done up to date, or at least we should be able to, if sf is improving....

To separate style and content, and you imply that I would, is to fail completely to understand anything about literature, to render oneself incapable of even separating style and content, for example. I would never dream of doing that.

The sf idea is what distinguishes one story from another (though stories are often published with identical ideas). It's rather like a word-game in which someone comes up with an unusual word - nothing more.

FINIS!

** **

IN THE METAPHORIUM

What it chiefly does is to furnish a key to Mr Forster's peculiar poise, that poise which constitutes the individuality of his novels and from which his characteristic irony springs. Under the spectroscope it is seen to be a balance between a critical and a charming stance. He is gifted with impulses in both directions, and, hovering as he necessarily does between the serious and the playful, this makes him unduly concerned to be whimsical.

- Q D Leavis, in A SELECTION FROM SCRUTINY (Vol. 1, page 134).

(I assure you that I didn't make that up: 'tis genuine, though not believable.)

ANSWERS OUT OF THE PAST

I think that I have wondered here why it is that intelligent people read and discuss sf. Here is one answer:

When they strive only to "understand the high" without "studying the low", how can their understanding of the high be right?

- Chheng Ming-Tao (1032-1085), quoted by Needham in SCIENCE AND CIVILISATION IN CHINA (Vol. 3, page 166).

THE MOST USED PLOT IDEA?

THE HOLES AROUND MARS (Jerome Bixby, GALAXY)
MOON DUEL (Loiber, IF September 1965)
ESCAPE VELOCITY (Fontenay, IF 1954)

Any additions?

Fourteen pages will have to do, as John Bangsund will be running this off on the ASFR duper. No issue before April (You have my guarantee).

EXPLODING MADONNA No 6 April 1969

JOHN FOYSTER

ALL CHANGE!

This is the last issue of EXPLODING MADONNA. Six is enough. This publication will continue, however, with a different title, but the same frequency (or do I mean infrequency?), policy and all that stuff. Just a different label.

There is a little more to it than that. The two issues prior to this one went out to about ten new readers, less than half of whom showed any reaction at all. They've still got this one, but that is the finish. So far as people who've not shown any interest are concerned, at any rate. From now on it is back to the original idea of keeping things small (see Sten Dahlskog's letter later in this issue), though I'll still send copies to anyone on the recommendation of any one of you. And, regrettably, this issue has to go to a couple of former readers because they get a mention. We'll get around that differently, in future, by sending tearshoots only, I think, but I'm just too lazy to think of it that way now.

This issue is itself rather small, but I try to justify this by pointing out that I have been editing ASFR (the fanzine recommended by AC Clarke for its 2001 coverage) number 19 (which won't be). This issue will be more EXPLODING MADONNA-like than Bangsund-ASFR, and I was tempted to subtitle it EM 6. You'll all receive a copy of that issue of ASFR, and rather faster than regular subscribers, I hope.

AUSTRALIAN AWARDS NOMINATIONS

The following nominations were listed on the final ballot for the first Aussie SF Awards:

BEST AUSTRALIAN SF: THE PACIFIC BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SF, edited by John Baxter*
SPARTAN PLANET, by A Bertram Chandler (locally published
by Horwitz)
FINAL FLOWER, by Stephen Cook (short story in PACIFIC BOOK)

BEST OVERSEAS SF: AN AGE, by Brian Aldiss
CAMP CONCENTRATION, by Thomas M Disch
THE RING OF RITORNEL, by Charles L Harness

BEST CURRENT WRITER: Brian Aldiss
Samuel R Delany
R A Lafferty
Roger Zelazny

Q: Why are so many sf authors so
terribly vain?

BEST AUSSIE FANZINE: ASFR
THE MENTOR
RATAPLAN

*costs \$1 Australian: order a copy from me if you are a completist.

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

Mr Budrys and the Active Life

SF criticism gives you a feeling of both amusement and exasperation. SF critics are the damndest jokers. Miss Merrill, for instance, seems to believe that R A Lafferty is a much better writer than Mikhail Bulgakov (THE MASTER AND MARGARITA): I'll admit that Lafferty's work contains a few good jokes, but most of them are of a very dubious nature. I have no objection to finding Thomas More described as being fond of drinking and wenching - but when you read the things Lafferty makes him say, you cannot help wondering why the bloke ever got famous.

A reviewer in NEW WORLDS says words of highly-deserved praise about Boris Vian's THE HEART-SNATCHER - and then shocks you by going on to discuss a Jerry Cornelius thing by Michael Moorcock in the same terms. Surely nobody thinks that MM is as good a writer as Boris Vian?

Examples could be multiplied ad infinitum; what a pity there is no Pope alive to ensure the immortality of people in the sf genre.

Generally, sf criticism seems to suffer from two serious faults: firstly a tendency to use hyperbole, with the result that writers ranging from the abominable to the just acceptable are given the acclaim more customarily reserved for genius, and secondly a corresponding tendency to refuse to acknowledge genuine achievements. The like of Aldiss, Ballard, Cordwainer Smith and Philip K Dick serve as easy targets for worshippers of mediocrity.

Algis Budrys, in his review of CRYPTOZOIC (AN AGE), GALAXY August 1968, has chosen to join the ranks of people parading their lack of insight. John Foyster has suggested that this review seems at variance with Mr Budrys' usual practice: I agree with him to the extent that Mr Budrys has written some perceptive reviews, not only of stuff such as DUNE, but also of more unusual kinds of sf. But it should be noted that the tendencies that became obvious in the review of CRYPTOZOIC were always inherent in his work, both in his fiction and his criticism. To a considerable extent they are not something private to Mr Budrys, but are common to a good deal of American sf, which is a part of the popular American culture.

Mr Budrys and American sf are heirs to Jacksonian democracy. There is a long history of anti-intellectualism in America, and this tradition makes itself felt in sf which is largely a literature written by crude engineers. Mr Heinlein's and Mr Campbell's attacks on the literati show this, as well as all the people bitterly complaining about critics or librarians because they don't recognize the supposed value of sf. Mr Budrys had already earlier used the phrase "the somewhat intellectual mouth-noises" of Ballard's characters, and in a recent GALAXY (October) he finds that "the essential thing that sets Russell Kirk and Robert Nathan apart from Robert Bloch and Arthur C Clarke is that the latter willingly study the former, whereas the former study their educations." (Which still doesn't answer the more important question: which pair has the better insight?)

Mr Budrys' review makes it quite clear that he dislikes inactivity: he chides Mr Aldiss because in his book "there is not one person who enjoys life, makes life better for anyone... or accomplishes a clearcut triumph". A priori I won't quarrel with this attitude, limited as it may be, but what worries me is that Mr Budrys isn't consistent as a critic, apparently because he is unable to recognize passivity except when an author quite consciously portrays it--so that anyone can, as it were, "touch it with his hands".

But before I enter into this, I must insert a few remarks on philosophy and writing. Philosophy, Mr Blish tells us, has nothing to do with the artistic merits of a story. That sounds reasonable when you find it used as an argument against people who believe that there exists a basic connection between high intelligence and optimism, whereas pessimistic or passive people must necessarily be of low intelligence; or against people who think that anyone not sharing their own "philosophy" must be stupid. Nevertheless, Mr Blish is wrong. For the final worth of a story has always to depend upon its philosophy, provided that you do not distinguish between "right" and "wrong" philosophies, but between the shallow and the deep. But let me assure you that I find it perfectly understandable that sf writers, a great many of whom engage in the trivial pleasure of explaining the laws of the universe ("for example, "If you don't eat, you'll starve to death" and similar deep truths) and who don't seem to have progressed beyond the philosophy of the gun, don't care to be judged by their philosophies. In addition, optimism should be easier to recognize than depth.

Another thing that needs to be said is that many sf stories, however immoral their actual content may be, have the structure of primitive moral tales: they show the value of intelligence. In sf, intelligence has taken over the role of virtue in earlier bad fiction. Mr Asimov in particular has repeatedly maintained that sf is distinguished from other kinds of popular entertainment (and is therefore superior to them) in that its heroes dare to be intelligent. The trouble with this view is only that, with very few exceptions, sf authors are totally unable to characterize an intelligent man, so that they have to put the label "genius" on the same old idiots of pulp fiction. That doesn't make you particularly believe in intelligence. The all-time honour for characterization belongs to Mr E E Smith (Ph D). His Lensman heroes are given to uttering the most stupid things and then, just as you have said to yourself that the author is truly great when it comes to describing the speech patterns of an idiot, he'll startle you with the revelation that this same idiot is Kimball Kinnison, and the most intelligent man of all time and all space. "And Kimball Kinnison and Clarissa MacDougall talked brilliantly for half an hour." How tragic it is that technical difficulties prevented Smith from recording all but the most vacuous stupidities!

A further example, demonstrating how sf authors show the value of intelligence, occurs in a recent work, RITE OF PASSAGE by Alexei Panshin, wherein one character tells a fairy-tale which purports to show the triumph of intelligence. Now I am forced to the conclusion that Mr Panshin can't have read many fairy-tales, for in the inverse world of the fairy-tale it is the stupid and the lazy who are rewarded, not the intelligent, and that is as it should be. But never mind, let's consider how Mr Panshin shows the value of intelligence. There are two men in the story, an intelligent one and a charming one, both competing in a quest for something. The one with charm uses sweet words and gets what he desires: so what does the intelligent one do? He hires a big brute to take away the goodies from the man with charm. Now, dear reader, the tale doesn't show that to achieve something you must be brutal and use force, as you might have supposed: on the contrary, Mr Panshin tells you, it shows the triumph of

intelligence! (For a man possessed only with charm presumably wouldn't think of hiring a gunman; to do that you have to be terribly clever.)

Some sf authors like to present "arguments" very much as follows: first the characters yell at each other (= intellectual debate) - then they proceed to draw their six-shooters - "and may the best argument win!" (= victory of intellect). If we follow Mr Panshin's "thinking" (or Heinlein's) we cannot doubt that the twenty-year-old Evariste Galois, a French political radical, but a brilliant mathematician who was shot in a duel (probably by an agent provocateur of the police), must have been killed by a still more brilliant mathematician. (Or he wouldn't have survived, as sf authors like to argue.)

Much of what I have said about intelligence and sf applies also to "passivity". A comment made in a letter to me may serve to state the problem: "STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND had a large sale on university campuses and was very popular with radical students, and especially with the hippies - in short, with those very persons and groups whom the author most dislikes. (What they are responding to, of course, is the profound passivity which underlies his "tough" philosophy.)" (Underlining mine - FR).

And yet I do not recall that anybody has accused Mr Heinlein of passivity in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND: but Mr Aldiss has been accused of it. "Nobody in AN AGE makes life better for anyone." But is it really the purpose of fiction to solve - on patient paper! - the problems of the world? That should be easy. There are so many trashy sf stories which purport to solve anything and everything; conjuring tricks are easy to invent. Things would indeed be better in the real world if people tried to better life, but I doubt that all the "solutions" presented in sf have bettered the world one bit. "CRYPTOZOIC," says Mr Budrys, "is a useless book". Useless: what a strange word to use in connection with a piece of fiction! One may think many books worthless - but useless? Of what use is fiction?

The purpose of fiction is but one: to dissect a character, or situation, or a problem - to show what makes a character human, or a situation/problem humanly meaningful. That's what Mr Aldiss does and does well; and that's what most sf authors, most of the time, fail to do. It surely isn't the purpose of fiction to boost the egos of the kiddies who want to read of invincible, omnipresent heroes, want to see "good" (or what they think constitutes good) triumph, and to see "evil" vanquished. What most sf presents is whipping pieces: and from them we learn nothing about the nature of good and the nature of evil, or the nature of knowledge and the nature of ignorance. It is only that some people (for incomprehensible reasons) are unreflectedly supposed to be "good" and others to be "evil"; or "intelligent" and "stupid": and the bad guys serve no purpose other than to be whipped. That's the nature of the naive fiction produced by writers such as Heinlein, Laumer or Piper. But I don't think that an ability to knock others down makes a man. It needs more than that, and it doesn't make an active life. The hardly surprising thing is that all those "active", "positive" heroes of sf are actually stupid people, quite passive and incompetent when it comes to something useful. A few examples will follow.

In Piper's LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN, for instance, the hero confesses on page 29:

He'd owed a lot of thanks to the North Korean communists for starting that war; without it, he might never have found the courage to free himself from the carcer into which his father had been forcing him. His enlisting in

the Army had probably killed his father; the Rev Alexander Morrison simply couldn't endure not having his own way.

That is a clear indication of what stuff Mr Piper's hero is made; he welcomes a terrible war for no other reason than that it solves his personal problems for him: because our little darling is afraid to talk back at his daddy. But in the course of the novel the hero "proves" his competence by killing a lot of people, and indeed the novel is but a chain of butcheries, showing Mr Piper's message of political infantilism that a ruler just has to take care to have all his opponents executed, and that's all there is to politics. Were we to grant such premises, the writing of a novel would indeed become terribly easy, and the crude people would have some advantage over those writers who think that life is a little more complex.

What Karl Kraus said in DIE DRITTE WALPURGISNACHT, the fiercest attack on Nazism ever written, applies also to a good many of heroes: "Nietzsche wrote: what the apes are to us; a shame and a painful laughter, we shall be to the overmen. But now the overmen are to us, what we should have been for the overmen; a shame and a painful laughter."

To a lesser degree, the same applies to Alexei Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE. The heroine is quite competent when it comes to killing people, to accomplishing escapes from prison or to blowing-up space-ships - all the things which in pulp fiction are supposed to make for competence - but when it comes to the use of words she is quite impotent. True, she does that rare thing, actually discussing a moral problem (for three days, with her father); but since Mr Panshin doesn't print a single line of the discussion, we cannot say whether she talked wisely or foolishly; we only see that she didn't accomplish anything with her words. Instead of presenting the problem on the personal level, Mr Panshin transfers it to the public level with both sides, though reputedly members of a scientific community, use incredibly silly arguments that one would perhaps excuse in a schoolboy, but not in men who are supposedly important scientists and philosophers. And both sides are unable to recognize the stupidity of the arguments of their opposition.

It has been maintained that technical criticism is the most difficult kind of criticism, its disciples being free of bias. To me it seems that they are just unable to recognize the basis of their own bias. The truth is that no critic, no matter in what he believes, can be a good critic without a knowledge of technical matters. But a good many of the best critics (I A Richards, for instance) have contended that moral and aesthetic judgments are inseparable. In any case how could a critic to whom morality matters, but who lack a knowledge of technique, recognize morality with certainty? Superficially considered RITE OF PASSAGE may be a "moral" book, for there is much talk of moral matters in it, but people who think that moral noise constitutes morality could be right to think RITE OF PASSAGE a moral book. But if we consider that there can't exist morality without truth, we must conclude that RITE OF PASSAGE is not a moral book, for it is not a true book: it presents a falsified picture of human beings.

RITE OF PASSAGE is a passive book because the heroine does nothing when she should act; just to drop a tear, as it were, and to damn mass murder in words alone is neither difficult nor very meaningful: it takes much more to be a moral being..

Another case: Piers Anthony's SOS THE ROPE. Once again the hero is quite good

at knocking down people, but when it comes to sex he is quite shy. Not once in 156 pages does he take the initiative in sexual matters. Luckily for him his supermanhood is so obvious that women can't help but throw themselves at him. But if women weren't so eager to sleep with the hero, things would be dim indeed for him: but you can't expect a superman to ask a woman, can you? And you would never catch Mr Sos having a single thought anywhere in the book.

Finally, now, THE IRON THORN, by Mr Algis Budrys. Here our hero lives in a community that is centred around an iron penis, and he belongs to that breed who dare to REVOLT. But again it seems to be a prerequisite of his revolt that he must reject all women who approach him, so that the reason for his revolt seems to be that he wants to run away from women: and only in the last pages does he find a woman meek enough to satisfy him. And yes, he is good at killing, but I have failed to perceive the periods of creativity that he has which Mr Budrys points out (?) in a review of his own book. Of course, he is also very bright, and knows a good deal, but knowledge is easy to come by: it is given to him via an education by computer, without our hero having to work hard or study long. SF heroes don't believe in personal effort: their knowledge is either acquired by computer, inherited from secret and/or ancient communities (Atlantis or Mu), imported from Mars, or given to them by aliens seeking to enlighten mankind. Granted such fairy-tale solutions, mastery of all problems is indeed not very difficult.

I don't recall any character in THE IRON THORN who "makes life better for anyone, or says something worth remembering"; but the "clearcut triumph" is indeed there: via computer. Nor do I recall any character in EARTHBLOOD (which Mr Budrys seems to think is a better book than AN AGE) who says anything worth remembering (except perhaps as an example of how stupid man can get). Aside from that, the most memorable thing in EARTHBLOOD is its Nazi ideology of "Blut & Boden". There are all those wonderful, wonderful Earthmen and their lost empire (sf writers have only to hear the word "empire" and they have an orgasm: I have yet to see one story telling me what's supposed to be so wonderful about an empire; sf writers seem to hypnotize themselves with their own words, never considering what they may mean); nobody knows any more what the Earthmen were, or what they did, or what made them such superbeings: the blood makes it. There are all the geeks and gooks, sort of intelligent, but quite incapable of self-government, because they lack the true BLOOD, and so are fit only to be exterminated. One might enjoy these galactic empires more if they didn't so closely resemble Auschwitz and Lidice. It is only with a magnificent triumph of the will that Mr Laumer can restrain his heroes from crying "Heil Hitler!"

I won't say that EARTHBLOOD is wholly without merit: for one thing, the action is so swift that the reader is likely to be carried along on the stream of blood if he just for a moment forgets that he is an intelligent being; and there are patterns in it that seem to be equally effective in some of the greatest literature ever written and in some of the worst trash ever written. It was Dr Otto Rank who called it "the myth of the birth of the hero": the myth of the hero who has been cast away by his parents or stolen from them; then is usually found drifting on some lake or river, saved by poor people and brought up as their own son; later to fight his way up to the top and finally to learn of his noble origins. And indeed, the hero of EARTHBLOOD is the son of Galactic Admiral, and is therefore the natural conqueror of the Galaxy.

Now it is the right of any man to enjoy crude and naive fiction more than sophisticated fiction, and to dislike passivity and gloom. But as a reviewer,

Mr Budrys should be able to recognize passivity when he sees it: he does not; he condemns the sophisticate who fully knows what he is doing (and is successful at it) and praises the writer of worthless trash, whose work contains all the same patterns of the same passivity, without either author or critic knowing that they are there. "Writers should leave 'uplifting'," said Mr Boucher a long time ago, "to the manufacturers of bras". That was a wise word and, it should be noted, there is nothing about writing an "optimistic" or "uplifting" story here; the writer just has to choose "uplifting" or "optimistic" subject matter. Gloom is something different: to annoy, to shock or to depress is something that anybody can do - any Heinlein and any Ellison - but to annoy, to shock or to depress and be aesthetically pleasing: that is difficult.

Mr Aldiss presents a true human problem: he does it thoughtfully, perceptively and sensitively, he is in full control of his material; in short he is a writer of worthwhile fiction. Keith Laumer, on the other hand, is a writer of naive fascist propaganda who doesn't know the difference between politics and a boxing match, to judge from his prose.

- Franz Rottensteiner

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M PROUST SPILLS THE BEANS

Fundamentally, some... attempt to help the reader to feel the impact of an artist's unique characteristics, to put before him those traits whose similarity with what he is reading at the moment may enable him to realise the essential part they play in the genius of a particular writer, should be the first part of every critic's task. If he has felt these things, and has helped others to feel them, he has come near to fulfilling his function. And if he has not, then he may write as many books as he will about Ruskin: THE MAN, THE PROPHET, THE ARTIST, about the EXTENT OF HIS INFLUENCE AND THE ERRORS OF HIS TEACHING, yet, no matter how majestically he may raise these vast constructions, he will merely have skirted his subject. They may win for him a great reputation, but as aids to the understanding of his author's work, the subtle appreciation of its shades, they will be valueless.

In my view, however, the critic should go further still. He should try to reconstruct the peculiar life of the spirit which belongs to every writer who is obsessed by his own special view of reality, whose inspiration can be measured by the degree to which he has attained to the vision of that reality, whose talent can be estimated by the extent to which he can re-create it in his work, whose morality can be interpreted as the instinct which, by compelling him to see life under the aspect of Eternity (no matter how peculiar to himself that life may seem, to us, to be), forces him to sacrifice to the urgency of visualising it, and the necessity of reproducing it, and, thereby, assuring a vision of it that shall be durable and lucid, every duty, and even existence itself, because existence for him has no justification save as being the sole possible medium through which he can make contact with reality, no value other than that which an essential instrument may have for a doctor engaged on an experiment.

- Marcel Proust, in A MASSACRE OF CHURCHES (translated by Gerard Hopkins)

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LETTERS AND STUFF

JAMES BLISH, still hibernating in frozen New York (better than frozen England?)

I was fascinated by Chip Delany's letter, though unlike you I disagree with most of it. Like you, I was baffled by his reaction to Judith Merrill's pieces, and particularly by his selection of examples from it. Take the Sturgeon piece: it was written (as was mine) for a Sturgeon issue of F&SF, to accompany his being the guest of honour at that year's convention. In such a situation adverse criticism would have been out of place, and neither Judy nor I attempted it. Furthermore, her piece makes it clear that she would have been incapable of it, out of sheer adulation - and in fact, if my recollection is correct, about half of what she had to say was not criticism of any kind, but was about Sturgeon as a person.

Chip is, I think, quite correct in requiring that the critic know the past. This again would seem to me to let Judy out the rear door, for until recently her only reading outside science fiction had been done under the gun of a high-school English course. This, I think, accounts for her explosions of enthusiasm over fifty-year old Dada and Surrealist techniques, stream of consciousness, and so on; she simply does not know that these are not new and original experiments. I have no objections to sf writers trying these things on for size, but I maintain it is ridiculous to greet the attempts with cries of a coming millonium.

Chip, of all people, should know that in the house of criticism there are many mansions. If he doesn't, he should go out right now and buy a copy of THE ARMED VISION by Stanley Edgar Hyman. The kind of critic he seems to be calling for is a Pound type, the man who leads you into his library, points to a book and says "That's wonderful" or "That's awful". This is evaluative criticism and in the pure state it isn't worth a dime, in my opinion. I think C S Lewis demolished it definitively in AN EXPERIMENT IN CRITICISM; if that were all there were to Pound's criticism I wouldn't bother with it. Luckily, there's a hell of a lot more. Of course, if it turns Chip on, it obviously is worth more than a dime - but even if it were invaluable it would not represent more than a fraction of the main body of criticism.

Knight and Atheling were technical critics, whatever their deficiencies. To dismiss them because they did not say "Ooh" and "Ah" (or "Ugh!") in the right places is up to the reader of course, but I can find nothing in either volume that ever promised any oohs or ahs. They were looking at stories as pieces of construction.

I can well understand Chip's feeling that they were telling him things he already knew, but the obvious rejoinder to this was that there was a time when Chip didn't know many of these things and that this is spread out in the public record for all to see. Clearly, he was not alone, and that's the whole reason (and the only one needed) for the existence of a book like IN SEARCH OF WONDER: the monumental incompetence of most of what was not only being published, but attracting oohs and ahs in profusion. I propose that we educated some people who needed educating; and if Chip is not one of them now, then of course we are

no longer for him - but let him search his memory of himself before he declares us functionless.

PS: I agree with him about Ballard, though.

JF: My own feelings about the reviewers of science fiction are constrained largely by the fact that reviews don't interest me greatly - or they certainly didn't when I read any appreciable amount of science fiction. The result was that, although I liked to read Miller in ASTOUNDING, purely for the purposes of information, I never really worried whether what he was saying had much to do with the book under discussion. I rarely connected book and review simply because these so rarely came anywhere near each other in time. Later I found that science fiction fans, at least in a sizable minority, were incapable of reading what has been written, and suspected this of professional reviewers. When ASFR started I found myself forced to read reviews and books fairly close together, just to check on what was going on, and it was at this time that my suspicions about the professional reviewers were confirmed. As for Atheling and Knight, I feel they were less accurate than careful. That in itself is a giant step, and of course they were frequently accurate simply because they were careful. And people like Merril and Budrys are careless, by comparison.

STEN DAHLSTOG, and boy is it cold in his part of the world! (These mad Australian summers.....)

So Brian Aldiss thinks I am you? Let's both be flattered. I am still convinced that space research will help underdeveloped countries better than the same amount of direct aid, though I'll agree that my meteorological forecasts were partly exaggerated.

Your Budrys study was fun and not very kind, but why should it be? I do not buy GALAXY regularly (although I am beginning to think I should switch from ANALOG and F&SF to ANALOG and GALAXY - F&SF seems to get more vapid with every issue. When I want good literature there is better fare than F&SF and when I want speculative fiction there are speculations almost anywhere else). I have not read Budrys' criticism regularly enough to say something. The quotations about Allen Kim Lang do not seem as contradictory to me as to you - my chief remark would be that Budrys uses too many words to make his point, which I got a definite feeling to be that the book is competently written by an uninteresting writer. Maybe a Murray Leinster novel. Anyway, your demand that a critic should be consistent is an extremely hard one, but you are right that it wouldn't hurt them to try a little more.

Since I wrote last, the Big Ballard Controversy has reached critical mass, and in the latest issue of Europe's most fanzine, SF FORUM (240 pages, some in such small print that they were unreadable), some telling points were made, e.g.

(a) I had - in quite another article, a review of Sir Alister Hardy's THE LIVING STREAM (Collins, 1966, 21/-) - read it if you want a really stimulating book - stated explicitly that I did not consider Sir Alister Hardy an expert on telepathy. Therefore I was cited by the editor of FORUM as having said that a marine biologist was an authority on psi. Therefore the editor considered himself an authority on literature, because he (the editor) had written a book, which was published last autumn. Therefore I should keep my big mouth shut and not insist that Ballard is not a good writer of sf. (I wonder what the editor would say if he knew that I have had two books published?)

(b) I am a fil. lic. (equivalent to a bad-to-middle Ph D) in geomorphology. I have never used my academic title in fandom, because it has nothing whatever to do with my opinions about sf, but such things leak. The editor of FORUM believes me to be a meteorologist, but that is the way things leaked. The editor has just started studying literature at the university and has no degree of any kind. Therefore I should keep my big mouth shut, because the editor knows what he is talking about, and I, who am studying natural science, obviously am incapable of knowing anything about literature.

(c) As I had stated that I found Ballard's similes meaningless, the editor replies: "As your taste of literature is what it is, I won't even bother to try to explain to you."

(The editor in question has resigned now: his successor is Per Insulander.)

I understand your motivation for keeping EXPLODING MADONNA almost secret a little better now. And I am still more inclined to share your view that fanzines have no influence to speak of. In fact, considering everything, I almost hope that they have not.

But, still, something could be done - if only fans could cooperate. This every-fan-his-own-fanzine(s)-madness is the best possible way to ensure that the few ambitious-AND-talented fans who really might do something (like you and me, of course - who else?) must gaffiate from exhaustion before having established a tradition. It leaves the field all too free to enthusiastic loudmouths with too much paper and too little wit, full of the ignorance, the exuberance and the intolerance of the very young. No wonder that fandom every few months relapses into a wonderfully funny pie-throwing of abuse and insults. There are exceptions (but even ASFR has failed by printing some completely unmotivated assaults on ANALOG and Campbell - I do not mean that there were no motives, only that they were not stated). But how can the exceptions be noted in all the foofaraw?

The one solution I can see is for you and John Bangsund to combine EM with ASFR and take time out to explain every third month why van Vogt is a much worse writer than - well, I forget whom you compared him with, but it doesn't matter; take almost anybody. And I will have to go on writing now and then in FORUM, but not about Ballard for a while. I might start on Zelazny instead - you are right, he is promising material. What I would like to do now, though, is to take Zenna Henderson apart and see what makes her stories appeal. She wrote ANYTHING BOX, which I recall as being as close to perfection as makes no difference, but then she returned to writing some of the most sentimental slush ever to disgrace even the pages of F&SF, which generally has given a lot of room to emotional stories without any logic in them, without any inner consistency and without any feel for the structure of science.

This "structure of science" is from Isaac Asimov's introduction to Richard Curtis's anthology FUTURE TENSE (Dell 2769, 1968) (a good anthology, by the way). Isaac is speaking about the science fiction writer: "His first duty is to write an entertaining story, which matches the structure of science or, at the very least, does not betray an ignorance of the structure of science."

Had I known of this definition, I would have cited it in my last letter to explain what I meant about scientific accuracy in science fiction. I do not believe that my demands are so much harder than your own, as you seem to think in EM 3. I do not ask that the science in sf should be faultless, and I

consider readers who carp at writers like Sligh and Heinlein for missing some detail rather childish. Nobody can learn so much science that he can avoid making some howlers when writing a science fiction novel: too much insistence on scientific accuracy would cripple the field. But every author can learn enough to know when to check his main points, so that the whole background or the whole plot of a novel are not based on a scientific howler. Some of the basic assumptions in Sligh's and Knight's A TORRENT OF FACES are doubtful in my opinion, but it does not matter: they have the right to make any assumptions they please as long as they do not destroy the whole logic of their work by dragging in some total impossibility or - almost as bad - some unwarranted deus-ex-machina improbability. A TORRENT OF FACES is the kind of sf I want more of. I would want it better written, too, but I can get good writing elsewhere than in sf, and I cannot get speculation anywhere else.

You complain that you have not interested anybody in talking about the way sf should be approached. Well, I thought I did in my last letter, and now I seem to be off again. Anyway, it is rather too large a question. There are many ways, and quite a lot of them are good. But the one I would like most to see used a little more by both writers and critics is speculation.

Speculation: some idea or some possible world (that is where the Tolkien-type fantasy comes in) which gives my brain something to work on. A scientific puzzle is not enough (if it were, I would be a bridge or a crossword addict). A finished story with all the speculative ends neatly gathered in at the end of the book is not enough either (if it were, I would not be bored with mysteries, even by Dorothy Sayers). Thrills have nothing to do with it: I have outgrown Dennis Wheatley (though I keep a feeling of nostalgia for the Duke de Richelieu). Good language or good characterisation is not what I primarily want from science fiction: when I want to read a master of language I have Laxness by my favourite chair, and he can write rings around anything sf has ever attained, and so can several Northmen too, most of whom you have probably never heard of. No, what I want is the "sense of wonder", and in spite of Moskowitz, "wonder" does not stand for miracles; it stands primarily for "reflection" or "thought". There has been no author in or out of sf who could evoke it as much as Olaf Stapledon. He did understand that the way to evoke the sense of wonder is not to use a speculative idea as a background for a cloak-and-dagger story, for a thrilling manhunt which leaves the characters no time to think and the reader nothing to think about.

This is one of the ways science fiction might be approached: thoughtfully. It is one of the few ways we have to speculate, so why throw it away on cowboys and Indians?

And here I would like to put a question to Damon Knight or to the gentleman who has been sf advisor to Berkley Books (I may be doing Mr Knight a gross injustice, but I think he advised Berkley).

Why did you let Keith Laumer and Clifford Simak publish CATASTROPHE PLANET and THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE?

THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE: smoothly written, irritating nobody with any literary innovations, just enough ideas to make the book seem intellectual, a 180°-turn from the ideas at the first moment they would begin to be intellectual, cops-and-robbers-chase, thrills, thrills, thrills, will the hero be found out in the hiding place he is using in this chapter? suspense having absolutely nothing to do with the plot and not advancing the real action by one minute but by 100

pages, and a syrupy sentimental happy end to make the reader really satisfied. Typical later Simak, yes, but science fiction? Ugh.

CATASTROPHE PLANET is even worse - Simak at least throws in some interesting ideas. He throws them away without developing a single one of them, yes, but at least he threw them in first. Laumer does not even mention a single idea. Except one, and that is wrong. On the first pages we learn that the Earth is suffering a geological upheaval of continental proportions: new mountain chains are rising, the shelves are drying out, volcanoes erupt everywhere. This is a setting for a novel either about the collapse of civilisation or about the survival of civilisation; in any case it merits a story about people, but Laumer gives us the oldest, corniest plot possible. Hero saves beautiful girl from crooks, crooks nearly kill the hero and kidnap the beautiful girl, hero chases crooks and saves b.g., crooks nearly kill hero and kidnap b.g., h.c.c.a.s.b.g., c.n.k.h.a.k.b.g., h.c.c.a.s.b.g., c.n.k.h.a.k.b.g., h.c.c. ... and so on to the end of the book. The b.g. is more uninteresting than any girl can get, and what either the crooks or the hero want with her can only be explained by their being idiots, which Laumer has made them out to be. And what role do the geological catastrophes play? None whatever. They are background colour, that is all. They occur at least 10,000,000 times faster than any natural catastrophes ever did, and yet Laumer gives no explanation for them but the statement that they are natural. This is a scientific howler I complain about, because Laumer uses it the whole book through and it would not have taken him more than half-an-hour with an elementary textbook on geology to find out how wrong he is. But I should not complain, perhaps. There is no sense anywhere in the book, so why expect the background for it to make any? But what was the sense of publishing it at all?

Simak can write when he bothers. Laumer probably could if he ever gave himself time. But why should they when they can sell their first bad idea to Berkley Books? And why should they write science fiction, which takes at least some marginal plotting in order to build a coherent picture, when it is so much easier to write a brainless thriller and have it called science fiction by a friendly publisher? Of course it gives science fiction a bad name, but what the hell, why should they or Berkley care?

If Damon Knight was sf advisor to Berkley when these books were bought, where is the consistency of the man who once gave John Wyndham a reprimand for making a manhunt out of THE CHRYSALIDS?

....hailed the whole plot away...into just one more damned chase with a rousing cliché at the end of it... there are no exceptions: this error is fatal. ... Those who want to read stale derring-do don't have to come to science fiction... Crooks chase man and Girl who Knows Too Much; lawman chases badman; over and over and over; why else do you suppose the pulps died? ... a rolling stone gathers no meaning. Most of the frantic physical action in science fiction, of which sophisticated critics rightly complain, is no more than a nervous twitch. (Damon Knight: IN SEARCH OF WONDER, 2nd edition, Chicago 1967, page 253).

But, of course, that was at least ten years ago.

That might be critical inconsistency for you, John.

Delany: he has some good points, but they need more consideration than I can give them just now. However, why is it that when you begin speaking about the

science in science fiction everybody always tries to show how wrong you are by mentioning the worst possible examples? I had expected something better from Delany. It is perfectly true that the development of space flight has generally been pictured in a very childish way, but he might at least have mentioned Arthur C Clarke's PRELUDE TO SPACE which tries to do a job of it. Most other science fiction descriptions of the development of space-flight are not really intended as such: in them it is just a way to get the heroes out to some cops-and-robbers-chases (worst possible example Doc Smith's SKYLARKS), and therefore the spaceship is something which has to be constructed as fast as possible so that it does not obstruct the true story. And why is it that when you begin speaking about your liking for one kind of literature everybody begins to attack you for disliking other kinds of literature? Why is it that when you speak of growth everybody attacks you for wanting stasis? I'll try to figure it out in my next letter.

JF: I am taking up here your comments on the ASFR attitude to ASTOUNDING/ANALOG, just as I will again in ASFR 19. But I think it essential to make the point clear. ASFR is critical of ANALOG, indeed hypercritical, because it matters. Frankly, what Fred Pohl does with the GALAXY pubs or () with the ULTIMATE pubs or the Fermanns at F&SF is not really important from the sf point-of-view. But if Campbell slips, then there's trouble. You will notice that I regard the present ANALOG as better than any other sf magazine ever published. ASFR regards ANALOG as important, yes, but we do not kow-tow to Campbell, which probably isn't exactly what Campbell would want anyway.

I did overlook you when thinking about the way sf should be approached, but, as you admit, it is a large subject, and there is a great deal of work to be done. Your own suggestion is ok by me, so far as it goes, but I also think that sf writers should try to write a little better. But I regard Stapledon as a boring old fake, so I'm probably on the wrong line.

One major failing of science fiction readers is the almost totally unjustified assumption that science fiction editors, publishers and writers are interested in much more than making money. There are exceptions, but they are few. If one suffers this defect of vision then one will naturally be amazed at some of the peculiar things that happen.

I suspect that Delany was writing about what generally happens in sf, so that an exception like Clarke would not come into consideration. But if the spaceship is merely a plot device then surely we have the Bat Durston which you earlier deplored? To suggest that you favour one kind of literature is often very much like suggesting that you like that kind of literature: the listener becomes confused. :: Let's have that next letter.

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER: Sorry, I can't describe the weather in Austria at the moment:

I sure agree with him (Delany) that criticism is of little use for authors and I believe most authors just want to be praised. I have to agree with Mr Turner ... "what I imagine their authors to have been doing"... and "I would not dream of telling you what goes on in the mind of any specific author" are not contradictory. I should think that the second sentence refers to psychological processes, whereas the first can be extracted from the structure of a story.

JF: Aw hell, I didn't convince you. I think the Brunner quote (June 1968)

"John Brunner does not know his heroes are callous, egotistical sociopaths who..." which I quoted at the top of Page 2 indicates that Budrys did turn around and talk about what goes on in Brunner's mind.

Sten Dahlskog raised a question about the Allen Kim Lang quotes, and perhaps here I might have quoted at greater length to indicate the mood. But my intent was to direct your attention to the review as a whole and these quotes in particular.

NOTE: Franz also suggested he might have his translation of his piece on Panshin's book on Heinlein to me RSN. I hope so, and will publish it in the next issue of EM (or whatever it will be called). This may be your only chance to read the piece entire, and before the feathers start to fly. With my luck it will arrive the day I mail out EM 6!

HARRY WARNER JR: probably pretty cold over there, too.

I felt a bit sorry for Algis Budrys by the time you'd finished with him. Ideally, he should be more consistent, but practically, he's writing poorly paid reviews for a low-circulation magazine in spare moments and, under those circumstances, it would take an awfully tough-minded critic to reconsider every statement and to check previous manuscripts for inconsistencies. Besides, I'm not certain that he changes his opinions as much as you intimate. If I understand him correctly, he is placing a pox on both their houses when he cites the conflict between "comfortable ignorance" and "pitiless intelligence". If he feels that one attitude is as incorrect as the other, then he's quite right in claiming "that nobody understands the situation". By chance, I've been reading PENDENNIS, and Thackeray writes in the preface of much the same general matter: "In his constant communication with the reader, the writer is forced into frankness of expression, and to speak out his own mind and feelings as they urge him. Many a slip of the pen and the printer, many a word spoken in haste, he sees and would recall as he looks over his volume. It is a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader, which must often be dull, must often flag. In the course of his volubility, the perpetual speaker must of necessity lay bare his own weaknesses, vanities, peculiarities. As we judge of a man's character, after long frequenting his society, not by one speech, or by one mood or opinion, or by one day's talk, but by the tenor of his general bearing and conversation; so of a writer who delivers himself up to you perforce unreservedly, you say, Is he honest? Does he tell the truth in the main?"

I read the Delany letter with the greatest admiration for the way he follows the tradition of common sense from the typewriters of New Wavers, when they write about a movement which their critics tackle in either incoherent or jingoistic terms, the greater part of the time. I know it has nothing to do with the main body of his arguments, but I can't help leaping on this last reference to how space flight is a government effort, not a one-man achievement. Here is clear proof that the present hasn't been catching up with science fiction nearly as well as is claimed. Overlooked is the fact that hardly any of these stories about the first space flight assumed that it would come about with the use of science and techniques which were common knowledge at the time. Almost in every case, the first trip to the moon or to Mars was achieved because someone had accomplished a breakthrough like anti-gravity or atomic drive, not just by building a bigger skyrocket. Those first space flights usually were capable of much more sophisticated behaviour than we are likely to have until that breakthrough occurs - no dependence on a control centre on earth for survival, for

instance. Let's wait until the breakthrough really does come, and then we'll see if it's accomplished by ten thousand men working together or an individual or tiny group of collaborators. Remembering things like the Salk vaccine, I'd be willing to bet that not more than four or five people will be the ones who break through.

Then you go into the ancient question of whether science fiction can be criticised by mainstream standards. I suspect that it'll be a long while yet before science fiction breaks free from some circumstances that make this impractical. First, the emotional matter: until you become so hardened that reading science fiction becomes a bore, you are apt to read it with a substratum of accompanying excitement over the possibility that this may become real some day. It's as if someone tried to read and criticise Dickens while honestly fearing that the innocent young heroines will be debauched and led into paths of vice; if you believe those girls are real enough to cause you genuine concern, you can hardly stand back and criticise objectively, and most of the science fiction we read today causes us to hope or fear that this kind of world really might exist some day. Then there's the fact that almost all science fiction in the past was written either for youngsters or for the "average man" mentality of the pulps: we suspended our standards of mature fiction with this in mind and enjoyed the stories as best we could, and when traces of these old influences survive today, it's awfully hard to be as harsh on them as we should be.

JF: In answer to your first paragraph, I suggest you are really being rather generous to Budrys: it is only one step from your position to that of suggesting that because both of the statements were written in English they are consistent.

Were Atheling and Knight paid so much more than Budrys, and is the circulation of GALAXY so much less than were the circulations of HYPHEN and SKYHOOK?

A more reasonable explanation of the treatment given to space flight in science fiction is that contained in Sten's letter, and also in your own third paragraph. I don't think we can wait around for the hypothetical "breakthrough": it is much easier to posit yet another fumble in the hands of the sf authors.

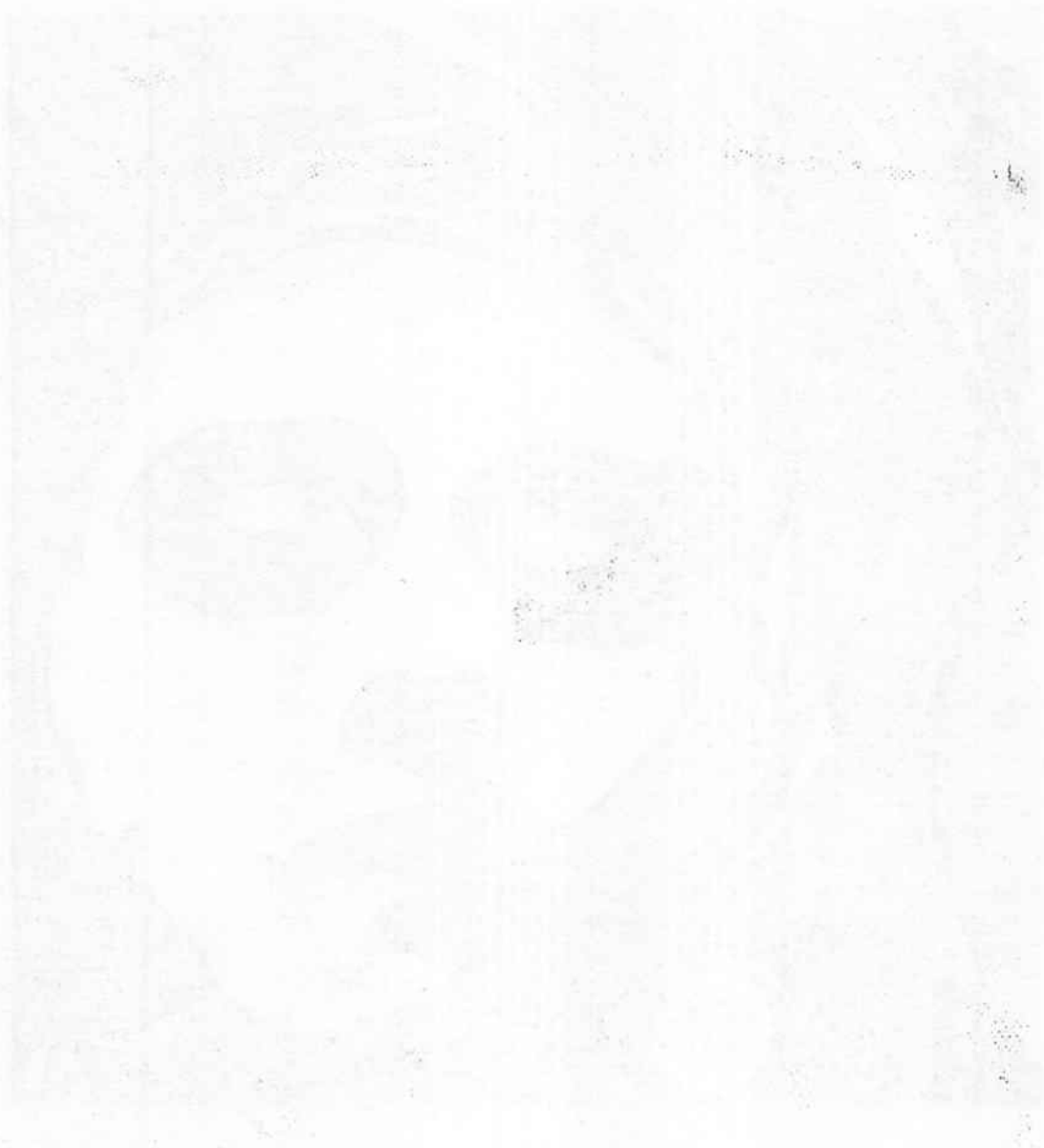
I do not go into the "ancient question of whether science fiction can be criticised by mainstream standards", but into the ancient question "To what extent is it possible to criticise sf by mainstream standards?" - Blish/Atheling, 1952, page 11 of THE ISSUE AT HAND, for example. SF does bore me, in the main, so I am able to overcome your first objection. The second I agree with, but try convincing the average fan/professional/booster. People like Moorcock and Co tell us that sf is great stuff. I prefer Wally Weber's attitude, as expressed in WRR. But there is some sf that is not written for children, though it may be hard to find.

COMING UP: Although there may be enough in here to jolt some of you, I'd also like to celebrate the new edition of A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS by David Lindsay (Ballantine) by publishing some comments on the book. Send them to the usual address.

A: Because, having so little about which to be vain, they think no one will notice so insignificant a trifle.



JOURNAL OF
OMPHALISTIC
EPISTEMOLOGY



TO THE
HONORABLE
MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY No.1 ... July 1969

Articles on subjects in this field are welcome.

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JOHN FOYSTER

THE INCOHERENT FUMBLER

To reprint David Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS was scarcely fair of Macmillan (1963) or, now, Ballantine Books (November 1968, 288 pages, 95¢). As a "classic" of science fiction, virtually unavailable, it managed to retain its reputation. But now Ballantine Books have made it available, with all its ghastly flaws, to the general public.

Ballantine have labelled this volume as "A Ballantine Science Fiction Classic", and this is partly true. But only the trivial part is true: even P Schuyler Miller, who will normally allow almost anything to be considered as science fiction, objected that it was not (ANALOG SCIENCE FACT SCIENCE FICTION, April 1964, page 52). For A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS is unscientific, or even anti-scientific, and as fiction it is scarcely worth of publication: and as science fiction, alas, it fails because it would not pass even the weakest tests that could be devised. Indeed, it is not even speculative, to use the word much bandied about nowadays.

All these things must have been as apparent to Loren Eiseley as they are to me, for his introduction is one of the most defensive I have ever read. In the second paragraph of this introduction Eiseley admits that Lindsay's prose is "rude and awkward", and that his characterisation is poor. He does not favour the "overdramatic" names Lindsay gives to his characters.

But, he claims, we should forgive these sins because... And it is at this point that I find myself unable to follow the argument any longer.

For Loren Eiseley claims that we should regard this book as important because (a) it has been reprinted and (b) some people have collected the book, and, in particular, Frank Lloyd Wright read it. I cannot claim to have read Mr Wright's literary works, so I am not a liberty to discuss the value of his opinion. But this is beside the point. The fact that one, or two, or many people like a book does not make it (as Eiseley seems to be seeking to show) "important". Loren Eiseley knows this too, so he continues:

The book, to hold such attention, must contain some message...

Indeed! It seems that we seek the message because Frank Lloyd Wright kept it on his shelf, and Frank Lloyd Wright, as we all know, cannot be wrong. How else can we explain this liking for an admittedly badly-written, melodramatic and juvenile book?

This message, after which apologists must seek so enthusiastically, is much the same animal as inhabits that more recent tower of Babel, Stanley Kubrick's film 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Kubrick and Lindsay share a fuzzy-mindedness which, when disguised by a few quick passes of the hand, appears to some as evidence of deep thought - nay, as deep thought itself. In Lindsay's case this manifests itself in what Loren Eiseley suggests by: "David Lindsay was perhaps too honest to record one voice alone among the many conflicting voices that represent the living world."

But even if the reader is able to take seriously this "message", this "journey into the self and beyond the self" (Eiseley, page vii) it is still unsatisfactory. For a book which fails on a superficial level cannot claim that its success lies deeper. I know of no book which is rottenly boring and badly-written but which becomes great because of its message. If the writer doesn't have the words or the language at his command we can scarcely trust his judgment on more subtle matters. Perhaps the scribblings of such a person may be interesting to the extent that we may discover something about the person but they are of no importance in themselves.

No, we must face the fact that we cannot rely upon a writer whose knowledge of the way in which the world works was so poor (cf. "jale", "back rays" and Alfred Jarry). Nor can we excuse the author's errors on the grounds of youth (cf. Raymond Radiguet): indeed, had Lindsay been an at all impressive writer Loren Eiseley would have been able to say "how remarkable that such a young man should be so knowledgeable" instead of asking us to excuse his faults.

Readers of science fiction, accustomed as they are to yards of incompetent writing (writing of a standard which would have made even David Lindsay blush), must be expected to over-react to something a little better. But gentlemen, let us not be ridiculous!

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

Chewing Gum for the Vulgar

a study of HEINLEIN 'IN DIMENSION by Alexei Panshin

I have finished this critique and find that its length is out of proportion with the size of its object. Perhaps also the "sharpness" of its tone with the importance of the subject matter. Should I have made an error?

One would demolish this Heinlein on half a page and with indifferent words if it were necessary to remain proportional to his worth. But the man is a factor of power. As truly as his concern is of no intrinsic value, as truly it is of great popular influence. It is the fight against a wren.

You fight less against him than before those people that look at him. This justifies a length that nobody will understand in a few years.

My instinct was right; so let's begin.

Substitute "Sudermann" for "Heinlein" and you have the famous beginning of the great Alfred Kerr's destruction of the JOHANNIS by Sudermann. The beginning is appropriate, I think, for there are certain parallels between Heinlein and Sudermann. Sudermann was then an esteemed writer for the stage, widely popular; Heinlein is equally popular in sf circles: Sudermann had the technical skill and the knowledge to make his plays effective on the stage; Heinlein shows the same technical skill in his chosen field: Sudermann lacked all the essentials required in a great dramatist - his realm was melodrama; Heinlein equally lacks all the virtues that make a great writer.

But according to Blish, in his introduction to Alexei Panshin's HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION (Chicago: Advent Publishers, 1968, 198pp, \$6.00), Heinlein is "so plainly the best all-round science fiction writer of the modern (post-1926) era that taking anything but an adulatory view of his work seems to some people... to be perilously close to lese majeste." In the following pages I intend to commit this lese majeste and perhaps more: but I do think that even people who'll fill my mailbox with purple letters can learn something from it.

On page 164 of his book Panshin writes: "It seems to me that there are three ways in which a character with freedom of action can operate. He can operate within the framework of society, whether or not he is in full accord with it. He can reject society and strike out on his own. Or he can arbitrarily run society to suit himself. Heinlein has written of characters who do each of these things."

What troubles me about this passage is that Panshin discusses the third possibility as if it offered a real and not just an ideal alternative. What can only be conceived is here considered to be possible in the real world. (It is also very doubtful whether the second item is an alternative in reality - even the revolutionaries are as much products of their society as are the men in power.) I would call this recurrent pattern in Heinlein's fiction the "omnipotence of thought", a term commonly used among psychologists. Robert Plank's new book, THE EMOTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGINARY BEINGS (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 1968, \$8.75), contains a passage that is appropriate here: Dr Plank is speaking of the "low tolerance for uncertainty" which he thinks is characteristic of cultists and authoritarians:

(To them) nothing seems impossible. They are apt to consider this as a sign of intellectual prowess and emancipation from timidity and prejudice; and they can persuade themselves that this is so, because they are buoyed up by a very American tradition of swagger (the well-known saw, "The difficult we do at once. The impossible takes a little longer.")

The truth is that this attitude is a residual of the infantile belief in the omnipotence of thought, and thus a sign of immaturity. The refusal to recognize that certain events are impossible plays an enormous role in the belief in imagined beings, but science has made progress when impossibilities are recognized as such, after centuries wasted on the hunt for the perpetuum mobile, the squaring of the circle, the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life. (Page 140)

That's one side of the coin: and the other is a desire for a simple world and an escape from society, either to rise above society (where they can "run it arbitrarily") or away from it. Heinlein's characters are often in conflict with their societies, and they are only at ease in a society which is simple.

While Heinlein shows on the surface an enthusiasm for science and technology (and nobody can deny him an uncommon knowledge of technological processes), he in fact rejects the full implications of science, preferring instead a "healthy and simple life". Escape from civilisation is a trait common to most of his stories.

In WALDO the hero, a brilliant scientist who suffers from myasthenia gravis, flees to a space station where he cultivates his belief that he is independent of society. He has detected and described another universe. Only after a friend has convinced him that he isn't as independent as he had thought and, more important, that human society can be understood just as the universe detected by him has been understood does he return to Earth. In COVENTRY a rugged individualist rebels against society but returns to it after some unpleasant experiences and finds it impossible to accept it after he has been told that there is still a place in society for people as primitive as him. In HAVE SPACESUIT WILL TRAVEL human society becomes acceptable because it is, compared with the complex Galactic Federation, still simple. UNIVERSE is a priori a primitive society, as are some of the societies in CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY. The escapist nature of GLORY ROAD is self-evident. In SIXTH COLUMN a few American heroes are sufficient to defeat an invader.

Of course, Heinlein needs complex gadgets such as space ships in his books, for they will take us to the planets. But once we are there civilisation is left behind and the happy, sane, healthy and simple life of the "American Frontier" can begin again. It is so in TUNNEL IN THE SKY and FARMER IN THE SKY. People don't ^{take} complex machinery with them, but animals, for these reproduce and this is "something that the machines haven't yet learned". And even his heroines think of themselves in terms close to nature: Barbara, in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, feels like a "prize cow" (that's not my ideal: a woman may feel a prize cow in any stable, but not in mine). In TUNNEL IN THE SKY the youths prove their ability for survival not in the big cities, where they might encounter ladies of pleasure and lose not their lives but their innocence, but on unexplored planets, where they are protected from women because they don't recognize a woman when they see one. Big cities are conspicuous by their absence: Jubbulpore is a slave market and nothing else.

STARSHIP TROOPERS portrays an eternal human type, the militarist, who here is falsified into an epitome of responsibility. One might compare this work with Wilhelm von Meyern's 2500-page opus DYA-NA-SORE (1787-1791), a book that presented, long before Nietzsche and the Nazis, a super-militaristic Utopia, where poets and composers are kept solely for the amusement of the soldiers. A work of considerably greater substance than STARSHIP TROOPERS, it anticipated many of the features of the Storm Trooper State. In Heinlein's book women are as excluded as they are in Meyern's: there is the same society of the homo-nix-sapiens: the Army is father and mother, lover and wife, sister and brother (and especially the brother!) for the soldiers, and the ex-soldiers get all the fine positions in society. In short, the Army is an insurance for those blokes who don't like to work and yet want to feel themselves members of an elite.

The simplification of life is even more obvious in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, Heinlein's answer to AE Housman's famous line: "I, a stranger and afraid, in

a world I never made", and it is surprising that no one has yet noticed this connection, for Heinlein explicitly referred to Housman in his essay in THE SF NOVEL. Of course, Heinlein's "stranger" is not afraid, and the world is but a strange land that is only too familiar. Born in the holes of Mars as Hephaistos was in the bowels of the Earth, Valentine Michael Smith exemplifies once more the infantile fantasy of the omnipotence of thought. Since nobody seems to have understood the novel, I think it proper to offer here a quick explanation. As James Blish has already pointed out, Michael means "Who is like God", and the other names carry a similar heavy load of symbolism. Valentine, from the Latin valens, valentis, means "strong, healthy" and it was (or still is) an English custom to choose, on St Valentine's Day, a "Valentine" who is the "beloved of many". There might also be some connection with the philosopher Valentine, a Gnostic and Theosophian who died in the second century AD in Rome. And "Smith" is, of course, the man who works with the big hammer, the big penis. All three names denote a man who is powerful, in particular sexually potent, a man who is both a great lover and one loved by many. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is in fact a sexual wish-fantasy. We note that in all of Heinlein's books there appear powerful men, often with extraordinary talents, and that power is one of the recurrent themes in his fiction. We may assume that all power is in fact sublimated sexual potency; in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND it appears in a more open form.

This Smith founds a new "religion" that requires the members of the cult to sleep around with members of the opposite sex, which is apparently an expression of "universal love". Some people have promptly expressed their admiration for this rare and daring thing: sex in sf. The surprising thing about all this is that homosexuality is excluded; if this form of "grokking" were actually a form of "brotherly love", as Jack Williamson will have it, one would expect the love to be extended to our brothers. Leland Sapiro has tried to explain this by saying that the new religion is specifically Christian and that Christianity doesn't admit homosexuality. I don't think this is a sufficient reason, for while Heinlein, as with all who are unsystematic and unoriginal, has borrowed from a wide variety of sources, including Christianity, the essence of the new religion can hardly be called Christian. There have to be deeper reasons for this avoidance of homosexuality.

Sex in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is just as immature as in all of Heinlein's other books: over sixty years of age, he is still writing around puberty. Rather than "brotherly love" the sex in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND symbolizes the desire to return a powerful lover to the mother, the womb, the cysta mystica and to achieve the unio mystica with the mother. In the womb the baby was cared and provided for, there he was god, and by returning to the womb the new cultists acquire, without any effort of their own, the marvellous super-powers of "grokking" that Smith has and that are quite unnecessary for the founder of a religion, but that would make him an attraction for any circus. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that the founders of the historical religions were such powerful personalities that people attributed miracles to them as a matter of course; and that only a weak personality would actually have to perform miracles. The girls in the book are, of course, all very young and very beautiful: it just never occurs to Heinlein that older women might want to share in the fun. James Blish has noted (apparently with some surprise) that Heinlein's treatment is far from being pornographic, indeed, that it is "confessedly, designedly, specifically reverent" (THE ISSUE AT HAND, page 63). It cannot surprise anyone who thinks that the love in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is the love one has for one's mother, and that men in turn are loved with the unselfish, undemanding, protective love of the mother. In fact, STRANGER

IN A STRANGE LAND is an attempt to eliminate normal heterosexual love from the world; a narcissist's attempt to simplify the world. I have remarked elsewhere that sf heroes are usually narcissists who love only themselves and are quite incapable of loving other human beings. Once we have seen that Heinlein's heroes are these same narcissists, the explanation of the role of sex in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND becomes easy. As Turgenev wrote to a friend: "Love is one of those passions that destroy our ego", or as the Oriental poet Rumi put it: "Where love arises, the ego dies, the fearful tyrant." The narcissist fears that he'll suffer should he actually fall in love with another person; love threatens to destroy the ego, whereas indiscriminate promiscuity does nothing of the sort, and may even be necessary for the propagation of the race. By making "love" omnipresent, it is eliminated. And indeed, after one has robbed women of their power over men by making love a "religious duty", so that sexual intercourse has no more meaning than when we say "Glad to meet you" or some such phrase, it becomes possible to treat sex and women "specifically reverently". James Blish's remark that Smith "never wholly recognizes how much heartbreak can be bound up even on the peripheries of sex" is the sound of a reviewer missing the point: for the whole novel is nothing but an attempt to eliminate just this heartbreak; from what else is Heinlein running away? And can it really surprise us now that Jill Boardman sleeps around with any man but the one she loves? Pornography, one may say, treats women in the proper way: as subjects of love, but men who treat sex "specifically reverently" make you suspect that they are afraid of women: if you treat them "reverently", the women might ask nothing of them.

For the individual, of course, Theodor W Adorno's great word applies: "First and only principle of sexual morals: the accuser is always in the wrong", but I have little sympathy for Boy Scouts who invent new "religions" that make mass orgies a religious duty, just because they are afraid to ask a girl: if you just like it, it's wrong; but if it's a duty it's OK.

The same narcissism is apparent in Hugh Farnham who finds it impossible to love his wife, but can sleep with Barbara who is but a mirror telling him what a wonderful man he is. Mr Panshin thinks that Farnham can sleep with Barbara only after he has rejected his wife: it seems to me to be the other way around; his wife rejected him, and for good reasons. At one place he tells his wife that in all the years of their marriage he has never lied to her (and if she won't believe him, he'll slap her). What woman would want to be married to such a pure and saintly man? Why, it is surprising that he has picked up the word "lie".

To return to STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND: it is otherwise a megalomaniac fascist fantasy. SF, yes - speculative fascism. It is typical of men who proclaim themselves "elitists" and look disdainfully down upon the purportedly stupid masses, who vehemently deny that "all men are created equal" and then proceed to make men equal by grouping them into classes separated by total and absolute differences. The Nazis had their Aryans and their non-Aryans, the one being superman, the others subhuman beings not worthy to live: and Mr Heinlein has his "grokkers" and his "non-grokkers". The first understand fully, absolutely, totally, they are the people who count; the second understand nothing, can do nothing and count for nothing, and may therefore be killed at will and without fear of punishment by the grokkers. When a grokker groks "wrongness" (however "wrongness" may be defined) he kills without compunction. When a Nazi groks a Jew, he kills him. It's as simple as that. Supermanhood requires no effort, costs no pain, doesn't call for long study. As the Czech sf writer Josef Nesvadba puts it in his story THE ABSOLUTE MACHINE:

They want to be acknowledged for their panaceas against infections, they offer infallible means against cancer, prescriptions against aging, the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. It is as if alchemy would never die, just as spiritism never dies and the human impatience to get quicker to the truth than by long and patient thinking and scientific research.

Mr Heinlein and his co-workers at filling the heads of the masses with nonsense, offering the benefit of a mystical "knowledge", something for nothing and the "religion" of the superman, satisfy once more the secret wishes of the rabble who want to become God. They will say "Thou art God" and mean: every bloke his own God (or better: his own demon). If we follow the writers, mankind has thus far developed three great world views: the scientific, the religious, and the animistic. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND forsakes the scientific and the religious and returns to an animistic conception of the world, where every human is his own demon: the knowledge of the subjective and symbolic nature of the mental processes, won hard by long centuries of research, is given up; instead we find a return to an uncritical belief in their literal reality: the final result of the regression apparent in Heinlein's fiction.

This development is not so surprising as it may seem in view of Heinlein's apparent "scientism": we find similar developments in the history of Comte or Swedenborg and indeed, many scientists show a similar strong mystical inclination. Modern scientism is a nominalist philosophy, and nominalism had its origin in the heart of the Middle Ages; its roots are mystical-dialectical. Both nominalism and mysticism claim for reality a directness of experience: the nominalist the outer experience of the senses, the mystic his inner transcendental experience. "Where desire and skepsis meet, mysticism results" Nietzsche noted. In Heinlein's case the desire for a simple world, his inability to accept death as a reality (not surprising in a narcissist), and his doubt about the reality of the outer world all combine to form the view of the mystic who is not able to distinguish between his own wishes and ambitions and the real world, and believes that he can influence the world by thought alone. The long and difficult process of verification is eliminated, the individual retreats into himself and now understands everything "wholly". The stranger is no longer a stranger, nor need he be afraid of the world, for the world is one he created himself. Heinlein's solipsism is however, I think, not the result of an individual who begins with Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" and cannot proceed further; it is rather the result of a regression, a retreat to the ego brought about by the terrible pressure of civilisation, by an inability to cope with the complexities of the modern world.

The escape from civilisation is most apparent in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, where it no longer suffices to explain the world as so simple that it can be wholly understood by the Heinlein hero: grokking is something that nobody can do - so what remains? Only the atomic bomb. It alone can make the world simple once again. That which fills us with dread is gladly embraced by the neurotic Hugh Farnham (although he pretends to fear it). The bomb falls, but Farnham doesn't find himself in the desired paradise: to his intense displeasure he has been thrown into a future where a fairly complex civilisation of man-eating negroes exists. But a characteristically unrealistic device, a time machine invented by command in a society without science, brings him back into his present, just before the bombs fall. And after the nightmare intermezzo that is the novel, the "most glorious time of mankind" (as Heinlein once put it in a speech) begins, where a savage can again be a savage, without responsibility or guilt. And although Farnham has vowed to do his best in order that the

slave-holding society of the future will never come into existence, he retreats into his womb-hole, doing nothing, which is only logical: for if he did anything, it would only complicate his personal life and might some day lead to the same complex society that the bomb has helped him to escape. In some ways this is nevertheless Heinlein's most realistic book: it shows that "competence" comes easiest if you don't expect much from life.

When one considers Heinlein's fiction one must almost admire the man for the number of ways he has found to escape from civilisation.

But to finally say a few words about the book of which this is supposed to be a review... After some short introductory remarks including, amongst others, some about Heinlein's life and career - which tell you, for instance, that Mr Heinlein can be very kind with intelligent and understanding people (such as those who think him a great writer or agree with his opinions) but has no patience with stupid people (those differing in their opinions or thinking him a lousy writer), amongst these remarks Panshin discusses the three main periods of Heinlein's career, which he calls the Period of Influence, the Period of Success and the Period of Alienation. These segments contain plot synopses, including also criticism of individual stories which can frequently save one the reading of the stories themselves. As synopses they are of some worth, although they most often make dull reading. Panshin has a tendency to slight some quite good stories and to be too lenient with others. *GOLDFISH BOWL* and *YEAR OF THE JACKPOT* certainly won't find a place in the history of the human mind, but the ideas developed in them are perhaps the proper realm of sf. They are of the kind which a writer who is quite impotent when it comes to the description of real human beings and their relationships can treat, and can treat well. These stories will not inflame you to enthusiasm, but neither will they annoy you as do those stories in which you see a writer trying to do something for which he lacks the intelligence and moral muscles. The last part of the book, covering Heinlein's non-fiction, is similar to the first three: much synopsis, little analysis. Considering that Mr Panshin is a librarian, if I'm not mistaken, it is surprising to discover that he apparently doesn't know that there is such a thing as the *READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE*, or else doesn't believe in its use: there exists at least one article by Heinlein not covered in Panshin's book: *RAY GUNS AND ROCKET SHIPS*, in *LIBRARY JOURNAL* for July 1953.

The analytical part, consisting of chapters headed *CONSTRUCTION*, *EXECUTION* and *CONTENT*, contains a number of notes, some obvious ones, some sound ones, some superfluous ones, a number of naive ones, but there is little effort evident to tie them together into a whole picture. Most valuable of all of Panshin's observations are his remarks on Heinlein's solipsism, but here, as everywhere else, he begins to develop an idea, and where he should continue, he pulls to a stop and is unable to go further. Now and again he will say something but will not provide a reason for it.

As for Heinlein's solipsism, the remarks most relevant for our writer appear in Mault's *PRE-ANIMISTIC RELIGION (FOLKLORE XI)*, quoted in S Freud's *TOTEM AND TABOO*: "It is almost an axiom with writers on this subject that a sort of Solipsism or Berkleianism (as Professor Sulby terms it as he finds it in the Chila) operates in the savage to make him refuse to recognise death as a fact." Although Mr Panshin appears to have some acquaintance with philosophy, it might have been of use had he also had some knowledge of psychology. Heinlein is but a modern savage, and his solipsism can best be explained by his narcissism, I believe. The ultimate in narcissism is provided by *ALL YOU ZOMBIES*, perhaps

Heinlein's most meaningful short story. A man impregnates himself, the wonderful result of sexual surgery and time-travel. What could be more satisfying for a narcissist than to be able to love himself bodily, and in another sex at that? He's his own father and mother, daughter and son, sister and brother, created by himself. No need to have intercourse with people of inferior genes! And although the tale is basically a homosexual story, overt homosexuality is avoided as it is in STARSHIP TROOPERS and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND - something that would appear to be very important for many narcissists.

Perhaps I should stress here that I'm discussing objective patterns in Heinlein's fiction, not the character or traits of character of the man himself. Heinlein as an individual doesn't interest me at all. I don't wish to draw any conclusions about him as a human being, both because it would be unfair to a writer still living and because this is an extremely tricky business. I don't have the biographical information needed to verify or falsify any conclusions gained from his work. But one fact of his life seems to be important here: that he is (as far as I know) a childless man. The narcissist normally can love himself again in a son, a being very similar to his father: in a son he can achieve his own personal immortality. It is so understandably and humanly so sympathetic that a childless man should express his belief in immortality and even construct heavens for mankind. But again, as we know at least since Freud, our subconscious is totally unable to recognise death as a fact (that is, its own death: for others, it is always thumbs down), but also intellectually it is a sign of immaturity to deny death. And it is this fear of death that makes Heinlein so much concerned with survival, and concerned in such a trivial way. The savage may care for nothing but survival, but the civilised man has also other interests: art, knowledge for its own sake, politics, economics, his fellow humans, religion. The Heinlein individual cares for little else besides survival and power.

Mr Panshin writes about Heinlein's survival philosophy (page 168):

Does Man have the right to breed his way across the universe, filling it to the brim? The answer is that we will find out. If we get slapped down, then we didn't have the right. (And...) the female lead in GLORY ROAD is head of the Twenty Universes just as long as her competence keeps her alive; until then her decisions are right. (Further...) He has a set piece - Man is the most ravenous, intolerant, deadly, and successful of the animals in the explored universe.

It is interesting to think these statements through: something Mr Panshin should have done. From the second sentence it follows that all beings who are alive are also right, and those who are dead, are also wrong. If you want to prove a man wrong, you just have to kill him. From this also follows a moral sophism allowing, indeed asking for, a multiplicity of truth, for there are many men alive, and not all of them use the same methods to keep themselves alive. In view of this I find it somewhat surprising that Mr Panshin should object to Mr Tiedman's saying he called Heinlein "an emotional sophist": he didn't say it, of course, but it ~~is~~ implied in the sentence quoted. It further follows that rightness and wrongness are functions of time, and that young people are longer right than old ones: for they will live longer, even if they do nothing to hasten the deaths of their elders. Finally there will come a time when we will all be wrong, for our very bodies will betray us, kill us and thereby deliver us into the realm of "wrongness", vulgar death. Could it be possible to think up a more trivial moral system? (I shall say nothing of what would happen if we applied Mr Heinlein's principles to literary

criticism - I for one am quite content to throw ink, and not bullets.)

The system is also very convenient in that it leaves the decision about "wrong" and "right" to the future. We will find out, if we have the right... That's a very popular device among authoritarians, for it puts their measures beyond the control of the individual, since nobody can know what the future will bring. Those moral systems that allow us now to assess rightness and wrongness are indeed more inconvenient for some people. With such a belief you have complete freedom of action - time will "prove" you right or wrong.

Quotation number three, apparently an historical belief (or statement of fact, as Heinlein would have us believe) is actually of a quite different nature, as the American critic Edward M Maisel has shown in his book AN ANATOMY OF LITERATURE. Sentences such as, for instance, "The Hottentots are best fitted to rule the other races of the Earth" are not statements of fact (although they appear to be): they mean, translated into analytical language: "Hottentots of the world unite to rule the other races!" Such sentences are hortatory. What Heinlein means is that man should be a ravenous, intolerant, etc. animal. What he wishes his readers to believe is that man should go out among the stars and knock all the others down. In this context it is interesting to note that for Heinlein and others like him it is a favourite sport to knock down the sentence that "all men are created equal", a trivial pleasure since they start by misinterpreting this sentence as a statement of fact, which facilitates their task. But I do not know a serious thinker who would claim that men are created equal as to intelligence, talents, property or even such trivial matters as size. And the egalitarians would be pressed if they had to explain precisely why all men should be treated equally: that's a task that can only be solved approximately, and not in the space of an ANALOG editorial. In history, egalitarians have not so much sought to find reasons why all men should be treated equally as they have opposed the different arbitrary criteria by which a basic difference between men was claimed. And that is, I think, wholly sufficient; just look at the grokkers and you know what makes them tick. The same linguistic naivete that causes them to "demolish" the sentence that annoys them thus leads them to present their own wishes (which we know only too well) as literal truth.

"Does Man have the right to breed his way across the universe, filling it to the brim? ... If we get slapped down, then we didn't have the right." If we want to preserve our "right", we must slap the others down. How can a race or species prove that it is more fit to survive than another? Only by killing off the others. That ends all argument. How can the Nazis prove that they are more fit to survive than the Jews? By killing the Jews. The kind of question you ask determines already the answer: and your view of the world influences the action. We know that Hitler wanted to kill the German people when he died: not because they were murderers, but on the contrary because they were not murderous enough, because they allowed themselves to be defeated by the "inferior" races. Hitler was much the same crude social Darwinist as Heinlein is; the vulgar Darwinism preached by Heinlein was also a vital ingredient of Nazism, "the survival of the fittest" its gospel. I do not wish to suggest by this that Mr Heinlein is a Nazi: that he surely is not, but his thought follows the same patterns and those patterns are fascist ones. Much of what we find in Heinlein's books could have been lifted out of Mussolini's FASCIST MANIFESTO.

Panshin wishes us to believe that Heinlein is not an "authoritarian" but an "elitist". I must confess that I didn't quite find out what he thinks is the

difference between them. On page 167 he says only that "elitists" are something "special", and that Heinlein is no "authoritarian" because "His characters ask no one to follow and obey them except from choice". That is a very poor argument and an insufficient distinction. First, I think that all authoritarians are also elitists: for how else could they justify their hate for and their secret fear of those people they consider their inferiors? That's what the brown scum are always thinking: that they are something special. And when Mr Panshin writes "that even the subordinates in Heinlein's military stories are always volunteers" that is more naivete than should be allowed in a critic. Can we really expect a writer who wishes to make propaganda for military life to write that the soldiers had to be dragged to the front line to be slaughtered there? He naturally will write that the boys were eager, that they knew what was good for them and that they volunteered in masses.

Panshin's criterion for the distinction between elitists and authoritarians is of no use, since it is frequently the case that the authoritarians will claim that their opinions are based not on someone's will, but upon recognition of some higher standard: the will of God, the inevitable forces of history, the "laws of the universe" or reason. But that a man claims rationality for himself doesn't mean that he is really rational. The difference between German Nazis, Russian Stalinists or American cranks, whether or not they edit magazines, is one of degree, not of principle. C S Lewis's understanding of science may be doubted, but he is absolutely right in asserting that, since science has become the leading force of our time, anybody now will have to claim for his opinions "scientificity": today the cranks march "In the Name of Science".

I must strongly take exception to Panshin's remarks on page 101 (on STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND):

If you grant the story's premises, the religion cannot be argued with, just as, if I were to write a story in which Heaven was only open to string savers and mud eaters and actually made things come out that way, my religion would be beyond argument. You can't argue with facts, and Heinlein has made the rightness of his religion a fact.

I'll concede that it would indeed be possible to write a story based on the assumption that, say, the moral worth of a human being is determined by the amount of dirt he carried under his fingernails and that the most dirty reside in Heaven after their deaths, and I do not doubt that if Heinlein were to write such a story he would win yet another Hugo for yet another worthless book, and that some critic would proclaim him a great moral philosopher. If you just want to write a stupid and trivial story, then surely "anything goes" (and where would the bad writers be without such a belief?). I think, however, that a writer who would seriously advance such ideas is badly in need of psychiatric treatment; and were he just to "play with an idea", he would be wasting my time. I don't want to spend my time reading about "ideas" so trivial, or ideas that even belong to the category of "wooden iron" (but if we grant that murder is a good deed, then it is only reasonable to ask that it be rewarded).

When an author makes a trivial error, such as writing of a Mars with a breathable air, almost all of critics will jump at him (for that is something that any schoolboy knows), but blunders in more complex fields such as history, psychology, morals or politics will most likely remain unpunished.

Perhaps because the critics believe the Campbellian nonsense that "not even the psychologists and psychiatrists know what they are talking about". To define my own position: it is not my wish to prescribe to any author what he should believe or what he should have done: my criticism operates purely in the negative, and if I were asked to find a philosophical basis for it, I would think of Karl Popper who was of the opinion that statements cannot be verified but they can be falsified. Obviously we need more knowledge to say what a thing really is than to say what it is not. Nobody has really said satisfactorily what history is, but we do not need to be able to say what history exactly is to see that it is not a piece of stone. That's trivial, of course, but we can also falsify a statement in cases where the answer is not so obvious.

Applied to science fiction, this means that we often cannot be sure that what seems sound in sf is really sound; but we can debunk a good many cases as nonsense. The critic has not only the right, but also the damn duty to examine whether that which is presented by an author as a fact could really possibly be a "fact". Now that facts have become the last irrefutable argument, anybody will claim for his opinion factual existence.

Stalin: "We must accept facts."

The Nazi Secretary Martin Bormann: "The more accurately we observe the laws of nature and life... so much the more do we conform to the will of the Almighty. The more insight we have into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our success."

Robert A Heinlein: (in FARMER IN THE SKY) "We must love facts for their own sake."

There can be no "facts" of the future: that's the difficulty in sf. But as I've said, I think that we can safely exclude certain relations from the realm of possible facts.

But to return to Robert Heinlein. I think it of little profit to examine the explicit statements made in his works, in order to try to find out his actual beliefs by a statistical exercise, as James Blish suggests. A writer who thinks so much in terms of cliches as Heinlein does is likely to exchange one cliché for another from story to story. It is a much surer method to examine the very structure of his works. The work of any writer contains patterns underlying his very thinking, patterns that are beyond his conscious control.

Van Vogt's THE WORLD OF NULL-A, for instance, clearly shows the authoritarian nature of van Vogt and that van Vogt retains that which he so loudly condemns with his mouth as "identifying and classifying thinking" and "Aristotelian" (a straw man: most of the critics of Aristotle are not fit to brush his shoes). We find it everywhere in his work: in his characterisation, in the background, in the plot. Van Vogt is nowhere able to get rid of the cliché he professes to dislike. It is the same with Heinlein.

Formally, Heinlein is a rationalist, one of the breed of shallow American Cartesians. Mr Panshin tells us that there is but one kind of character in Heinlein (rightly, I think), but this one character appears in three stages. All three stages are strong, healthy and "competent" (de Gaulle said "dumb" instead of "competent" when he characterised the Americans). The most advanced stage knows not only how things work, but also why; the second know

the How but not the Why; the third has to learn the two but learn he will because he has the talent. But since they are all of equal competence, their tabula rasa is finally filled, and filled with the same things: what the most advanced Heinlein individuals think, though often after some error. They are being told by them about the ways of the world - and being rational they cannot help but accept those views for they recognize them as "rational": it is quite clear that in Heinlein's view they have no choice but to embrace those opinions, to obey and to follow them. That's the real reason why Heinlein's heroes don't find it necessary to force anyone to accept their views: the "competent" ones will follow of their own free will and the others, by not following, thereby prove their incompetence: they belong to the non-grokkers, the stupid, the villainous, the "Aunt Nellies"; they do not count and they are already marked down for the slaughterhouse. Their only function is to be done away with so that "competence", "intelligence" and "virtue" may triumph: knock-down fiction. Really, why should the "elitists" ask those groups that are already marked as inferior to follow them? They cannot recognize "facts", and who but the incompetent or the insane would do such a thing? In simple matters such as the law of gravity we don't have any choice: here we cannot choose whether to believe or not. But in more complex matters there are often many interpretations possible. The falsification of Heinlein's books lies less in what his characters say (although I think that most of it is of the kind that makes you rub your eyes to make sure that you're not dreaming) but in the lack of adequate opponents and in the way that those opinions are accepted by others - as gospel. Partly this may be due to Heinlein's fascist inclinations; partly it is also a common American tendency. Alexis de Tocqueville has called the American nation the "most Cartesian" of all nations, and indeed one could provide examples enough from sf. The curious notion is rampant that, given equal competence and equal intelligence, people will necessarily have the same goals and will act in the same way, and that therefore all people who don't have the same beliefs as the Americans must be villains or fools or both. That's fatal in writers who so much stress change and yet are so totally unable to understand any set of values different from their own. A German literary critic, who has read a hundred sf novels, remarked that the next-best Mexican is more different from an average American of today than all those sf heroes, some of whom are supposed to live millions of years in the future. He is only too right.

Mr Heinlein's heroes are unable to differ in their opinions from what filters down to them from the superior father-figures. Rebel they do against a lot of things (and being "competent" men - or having the "omnipotence of thought", as I have called it - they never fail), but they never rebel against the father-figures. This makes, aside from all other consequences, for stories which are not very interesting dramatically: the good writer will present different sets of values, represented by different characters, and have it acted out between them: the bad writers will assume that one is in possession of absolute truth, can never fail (in short, the "competent" man), and that all others are bad, stupid and incompetent. Serious antagonists they cannot be, since they are inferior; they are only there to be knocked down, for that is what delights the children who don't want to be informed: they only want to see "good" triumph over "evil". To know what "evil" is might give them headaches. That's the real reason for the popularity of bad writers like Heinlein.

This blind acceptance of authority, passed off as "rational" acceptance of basically voluntaristic contents, is what makes Heinlein an authoritarian.

I like them not, those literary Manicheans who interpret everything in terms of white and black, of Ormuzd versus Ahriman, good versus evil or intelligence versus stupidity. Most of us are in a life-long position between those extremes: life isn't as simple as "les terribles simplificateurs" (Jacob Burckhardt) make it to be. Such simplifications in a writer are a sign either of intellectual inability or intellectual laziness.

His xenophobia, his hysterical anti-communism, the group-thinking in his stories are all further symptoms.

To say something good about Heinlein, his main asset should be noted here: his ability to draw carefully detailed worlds of everyday realism, no mean achievement, something in which he is still unsurpassed in sf. But logically considered we see that that is necessary to ensure the success of his falsification of life. It really takes no effort to see that Mack Reynolds is a bad writer - or, let's be careful, that he doesn't find it necessary to write well in order to sell his stories - for his characters are just as believable as his milieus. Heinlein, however, portrays fairly complex worlds, in order that the explanations given about how these societies function are accepted just as readily as the colourful details. In fact, these are two entirely different things, but most readers don't see it so and accept the opinions Heinlein wishes to sell. When Mr Panshin writes that the Heinlein hero is "the single, solitary real thing in an essentially unreal world" he should have added that that may appear so to Heinlein himself, but the reader has quite a different impression: that the worlds are real but that the blokes moving in them are four times removed from reality: they are shadows of ghosts of corpses that never lived.

If we want to sum Heinlein up we can say that the most marked pattern in him is one of regression, narcissism, solipsism, escapism and a naive enthusiasm for technology.

What Mr Panshin discusses as "competence" I would have discussed under the heading of the "omnipotence of thought": revolutions develop exactly as planned (although no real revolution ever happened that way), indeed they closely resemble putsches: six men fight back an invasion of the U S A; an actor can become the ruler of the Earth, and so on. In addition, the characters often have all sorts of wonderful talents; these are of course the tricks of the bad writer who cannot individualise, but they also further stress the "omnipotence of thought".

"My dear, what this ridiculous reality plans with you, that is forced to do without a producer and a director - this reality in which the fifth act doesn't happen because a brick happens to fall on the head of the hero - this reality doesn't interest me at all. I open the stage when things are beginning to get interesting, and close it again at the moment I'm proven right."

This passage from the speech of a dramatist in Arthur Schnitzler's DER WEG INS FREIE is a good description of Heinlein's method. Rather than competence, Heinlein presents potency, even omnipotence (sublimated potentia sexualis): nothing can happen to his hero, competence "always proves itself", a grokking baby can survive even in the midst of hell: the universe is there only to "prove" the hero right. Accidents, injustice, big connections are excluded, exceptions are confounded with rules, and accidents are turned into essential properties.

One thing should be made clear: it would be stupid to blame any writer for tendencies such as narcissism or the omnipotence of thought. I find the narcissism of a modern aesthete such as Oscar Wilde utterly charming, although the crude narcissism of the engineers repels me: and Arthur Schnitzler, in whose work the omnipotence of thought is marked, is surely one of the greatest modern writers in the German language. No writer can be made responsible for the impulses and tendencies in himself: but he is responsible for the recognition of the consequences of those impulses. The good writer is aware of them and reflects upon them as did Schnitzler in the passage quoted. But whatever Heinlein may know of technology, he has no tendency for introspection and he surely doesn't know himself. If he had been aware of the impulses in himself he would have been a better writer, and intellectually acceptable: but it would have made him without doubt less popular, and he would have won fewer Hugoes. For it is precisely his naivete, the wish-nature of his fantasies that ensures their wide popular success.

But even so, Heinlein could still be a writer of some importance, but how is his relationship with language?

Mr Panshin gives us a few examples:

The poor degenerate starveling descendants of the once-mighty Builders of Mars can hardly be described as intelligent - except in charity. A half-witted dog could cheat them at cards. (page 144)

I want the egg to be just barely dead. If it is cooked solid, I'll nail it to the wall as a warning to others. (page 145)

What banality! What vulgarity! If there existed a Nobel Prize for banality surely Heinlein would be a winner. But I suppose that is what passes for wit among the perpetual adolescents. If that's the best prose Panshin can quote from Heinlein, I fail to see how one can read more than a few pages of it.

Heinlein is a naive author, and Panshin a naive critic: if one were to note all that's naive or false in his book, one would have to write a work nearly as long.

It begins with the new insights science fiction offers. "What if a spaceship full of men with not a woman aboard were to return from the first human trip to the stars and find the Earth destroyed?" Terribly original, isn't it? It tells us as much "about the basic elements of the human spirit" as a story about "Them damn Injuns have murdered our village!"

To say that Heinlein's work contains no comedy is to state the obvious: but why is this so? Can it be surprising that a man for whom mere physical survival is all-important will not show humour? Nevertheless the Schweiks will survive all Troopers, be they Starship or Storm Troopers. And what shall one say to a statement such as: "Heinlein's case for his soldier-citizens would be seriously weakened if he were forced to show them without the benefit of war." (Alexei Panshin, in SPECULATION 20, page 26). What could be easier for any regime than to give the poor soldiers some little exercise? Such as killing yellow devils, black ones, or nasty aliens? A system that is dominated by military thinking will produce its Ludendorffs and Hindenburgs, and it will have war. The poor militarists really need not fear that they'll lose the "benefit of war", that they'll have to work for "lack of anything more constructive" to do. There'll always be a Coventry or a Dresden to bomb, or

a Tokyo or some Vietnamese jungle to burn - and people, of course. Is this not enough room for constructive action?

- Franz Rottensteiner

(translated and revised by the author
from the original publication in
QUARTER MERKUR 17, pages 64-75)

** **

EDITOR'S NOTES

- 1 This journal is not an "elitist" publication: if it were you would not be reading it.
- 2 Since my own admiration for the writing of "Cordwainer Smith" is well-known, I should perhaps note that this admiration does not extend to the authoritarian and perhaps crypto-fascist political and moral philosophy underlying that fiction.

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The Melbourne HERALD, 5 October 1968:

"An exaggerated view of individual rights could very quickly lead to the breakdown of law and order, the Victorian Attorney-General, Mr Reid, said today."

GEORGE TURNER

An Approach to Science Fiction

The question of how to approach sf seems to me irrelevant. But then, I am an unashamed nineteenth century survival who refuses steadfastly to see sf as anything but another sub-branch of literature in general. And the only approach, for me, is the open-minded one wherein you read the book with as few preconceptions as possible, see what is there and then evaluate it by whatever standards are yours. In practice, of course, this is a psychological near-impossibility, but at least one should strive for it. All reactions, even the most intellectual, have an emotional base and bias, and our final comments are apt to be as right in one direction as they are wrong-headed in others. The blind spots are armour-plated and impervious to disagreement. So we have at one end of the scale the Leavis type of criticism wherein the book is dissected and thoroughly understood, the evidence weighed and the decision made as to whether it is good or bad or whatever - and one is left clueless as to whether the man liked it or not in any emotional fashion. At the other end is Schuyler Miller, emoting through the pages of ANALOG and recommending any tripe that takes his fancy purely because it takes his emotional fancy.

Neither of these approaches is ideal - but is any? The only final test is the test of time and none of us can apply that. (Doctor Johnson tried it when he wiped off TRISTRAM SHANDY as ephemeral. Black mark, Sam.)

My feeling is as it always has been, that critical standards are the great sf lack, not among the readers (who aren't interested in anything but immediate satisfaction) but among the writers. Most of the writers are up against the blind wall of their own success in a particular line, and editors want it that way. Both writer and editor have a family to keep and both are out to make sure of not rocking the boat. Only the bloke who is independent of his writing can afford to do as he pleases. And so the vicious circle is perpetuated.

But there is a way out. You put your finger on it in the suggestion that writers should at least try to write a little better. Change that to a "lot" better, because 95% of sf writers haven't a clue about simple English, construction, balance or any relevant factor in the production of a novel. They are better off in the short story, wherein the form forces a certain amount of cohesion.

Question: Do writers want to write any better? Well, a few seem to. Silverberg plainly does, and so, I think, does Panshin - even in STAR WELL, a run-of-the-mill thriller, he shows signs of experimenting with ways and means. Perhaps Delany does, but he is still in the stage of pouring out a haze of words which just must be art because that's the way he feels; a little discipline would do that gent a power of good. But where is he to get it?

He won't get it from the magazine editors, who have a line to toe and a vapid readership to satisfy and the knowledge that the defection of all the thinking fans in the world wouldn't make a dint in their circulation figures. He won't get it from the pb publishers either, because they have to sell anything from 30,000 to 50,000 to break even and aren't interested in taking chances with the thinking minority. He may get it from the hardback publishers, who are by no means the totally committed businessmen of legend. They will take chances on good work, even on work which they know will take a loss, if they feel that there is a promise of good stuff in the writer. But they again must cover their chances by providing half a dozen moderate successes to make up the loss on the flier. And immediate success has to have emotional appeal, not intellectual.

One result of this unsatisfactory state of affairs is that the hardback sf published represents generally the best-written work in the field, though not perhaps the most important in terms of speculation or internal development. But does this indicate, in turn, that the better-written work will reach a wider audience, one which wouldn't consider wasting its money on the magazines? I think it does, but this is yet to be proved.

Even so, only the writer who wants to be a good writer will take the bait. He can knock off a ho-hum novel in ten weeks and get a \$2,000 advance from Ace or Ballantine, whereas the more exacting job of hitting a literary standard for hardback publication will get him only the same advance after twelve months of intensive work. Only the dedicated and the independent take the chance. In mainstream literature the dedicated and independent proliferate; in genre literature the hacks have it all to themselves. This is why genre literature exists. A successful line has been struck and can safely be followed up. Most sf, despite its pretensions, is a parasite on the general body of writing.

which brings me to a proposition I have advanced before: that until sf ceases to be a genre medium it will be a second-rate one, in which originality and emotional impact will be the keynotes, with originality running a poor second.

The world in general agrees with Pope that "The proper study of mankind is man", and this is a study that sf studiously avoids. A few sf writers provide pretentious analogues of the human condition, but their analogues are old stuff to the thinking reader and are cloaked in so much "creative" garbage that the point is lost, even on the odd occasion when it is worth making. The genre reader wants blood and action, disasters and heroes - reality is a dirty word. Realism he will put up with, because it gives him a passing sense of involvement, but the dreadful sense of continuing involvement which comes with the recognition of reality as opposed to realism is too much for him. (You probably would not remember or have heard of the shrieks of outrage and abuse which followed the publication of BRAVE NEW WORLD - sf now accepts its premises as one more thing to escape from by degrading them to the role of background for blood and guts shenanigans.)

I can't help feeling that any discussion of how to approach sf is only a search for a means of escaping its deficiencies. The rationalisation has showed up in other areas, such as the claim that characterisation is out of place in sf, that the idea is here. That's a handy claim, and one which the writers embrace with a sigh of relief because most of them couldn't create a character if they tried; they simply have never learned the basic principles of their trade. How many memorable characters have appeared in sf? Any? (For myself I can think only of Blackie Duquesne, because Smith so plainly loved his villain better than his hero and managed to endow this particular piece of cardboard with a few quite human failings. But that is a special case.)

I suspect that things will continue as they are and we will always have to content ourselves with the occasional flash of genuine excitement amid the heap of dreary rubbish.

- George Turner.

THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY

SUPPLEMENT Number 1 ... August 1969

Supplements to THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY are issued when needed.
2 August, 1969.

TWO ARTICLES BY

STANISLAW LEM

POLAND : SCIENCE FICTION IN THE LINGUISTIC TRAP

(Translated from the German by Franz Rottensteiner, this article first appeared in QUARBER MERKUR Number 20, August 1969: it was not written by Lem in this form, but has been put together from remarks addressed to the translator in several letters.)

A specialisation that would lead to the existence of publishers publishing only science fiction or predominantly science fiction has not taken place in Poland. Here almost nothing has appeared in the field: about half a dozen books by writers from Western countries, including two of the novels of Isaac Asimov, and somewhat more from the Soviet Union - surprisingly enough not the best of Soviet sf, but the mediocre average. When a translator could be found for a selection of American sf novellas, the man also used to write an introduction from which one could gather that he had read about as much sf as he had had to translate. Some years ago, three stories by Gorges were published in a literary periodical, but even then nobody wrote about that extremely interesting man.

As for sf clubs, sf authors and Polish sf: they simply don't exist. Fialkowski is a mathematician who is playing around with the stuff in his spare time to earn some extra money. Neither he nor any other of the people - very young people for the most part - who publish an occasional sf story in one of the technical or juvenile magazines is a member of the Writers' Organization. They don't try to mix in literary circles, and literature doesn't take any notice of them.

And there are no sf critics, because a critic who'll write about me knows nothing of science fiction save H G Wells. Therefore it is hardly surprising that I do not collect reviews, indeed, that I often do not even know of their existence. For they cannot help me and if I get praised, as does happen, I'm already grown up enough that I do not need praise that is nothing but praise. Anyway the only man living who really knows Lem at the moment is Lem himself, although one can hope that this state of affairs will change in course of time. By the way, some people who are especially interested in my work, such as the

poet Grochowiak, have written intelligently enough on my books, but for understandable reasons they considered me to be a "mainstream" writer using the "camouflage" of science fiction. One of my closest friends, Jan Blonski, a leading critic and historian of our literature (he lives in a house just beside mine, at the rim of the city) has been wise enough to write about me only once, in connection with my SOLARIS. Even he saw there only a "normal" love story, clothed in an unusual form. For they all lack comparisons by which to judge me.

I myself have written only three times on sf and all that I wrote is to be found in a little volume entitled WEJSCIE NA ORBITE (GOING INTO ORBIT), in which I discuss Camus, Dostoyevsky, futurology and other subjects. But those essays were written in the fifties and my views on sf have changed since then. But I have just now finished a 500 page book on the sf of the West: there is already much interest in this book, and it will most probably also appear in Russian;

Just as there is little Polish sf now, so it was in the past. One exception is Jerzy Zulawski, who wrote at the turn of the century a trilogy that can be read even today.

I'll discuss it in my book on sf. Now I call the position of writers creating in a space that is "exotic" for the West a "linguistic trap". For, had the work of Zulawski become known in the West about fifty years ago, he would be known today as one of the fathers of sf.

NA SREBRNYM GLOBIE (ON THE SILVER GLOBE) was published in 1903 in Lwow by the Towarzystwo Wydawicza; there were further editions in 1909 and 1912. It describes well the voyage to the moon of a group of people: under much hardship they slowly travel to the other side of the moon where they find air, water, and also "natives". The children of the space-travellers form a colony, and a quasi-religious faith based upon their exodus from Earth develops. The whole thing is told by the last surviving members of the Terran emigrants, the "Old Man".

In ZWYCIEZCA (THE VICTOR), the second volume, a single man to the moon again, after 150 years, where he is welcomed as an "avatar" and "saviour": this is very well thought-out and ingeniously constructed. When he starts for the moon he doesn't know what has happened in these 150 years, but he is quite willing to play the role of a saviour, for the humans on the moon are kept in captivity by lunar monsters - "Scherneni" - who have fur, four eyes, and communicate via phosphorizing flashes generated by their foreheads. And they hate the Earth because she, as they like to believe, has robbed the side of the moon which faces the earth of its atmosphere. The ruins of their temples and cities (which have been found by members of the first expedition) are still standing at the bottom of the lunar seas. The Scherneni have under their wings (for they fly, though only badly) large white hand-like appendages which cause any being (including humans) touched by them to feel a momentary electrical shock - this renders the being quite helpless. Women get pregnant by such a touch, and give birth to a "mongrel". The pregnancy is in fact parthenogenetic (and thus something like this could happen, biologically-speaking). Among the lunar humans there are skeptics who don't believe in the Terrestrial genesis of their species, preferring instead to believe that the humans live in sub-lunar cities in the darkest parts of the moon, and that everything that is said in the holy scriptures about the exodus is a lie. They also believe that they can fly to the other side of the moon with the ship of the "Victor" and they set off. Because of this the "Victor" is forced to

stay on the moon. The war against the Schernen ends without a final victory: the "Victor" intends to make great reforms of a social nature, but is taken prisoner by the ruling elite and dies a martyr's death. Appended are three different chronicles about his life and death, and he becomes a sort of Jesus Christ.

The style is very modern and the whole thing well-constructed, forming a coherent unity: now there is going to be a Russian edition in Moscow, but I believe that they intend to translate only the first volume.

Of course Zulawski has written an ironical and at the same time grotesque allegory on the rise of the belief in Jesus Christ, and yet volume 1 contains a map of the moon drawn by him and the details of the journey to the moon are scientifically impeccable.

STARA ZIEMA (THE OLD EARTH), the third volume, which takes place on Earth, is weaker.

Zulawski had no successors: he was a dramaturgist, critic and essayist, and the trilogy mentioned above was his only transgression into the sf world.

Antoni Slonimski, another pioneer of Polish sf, is still living, now 70 years old. He was one of the leading poets of the older generation. At the age of twenty he wrote a utopian novel, TORPEDA CZASU (1923, TORPEDO OF TIME), and when the thing was reprinted three years ago I wrote an introduction to it. The novel is weak, being very dated in style and construction, but the principle idea is clever: to circumvent all the misery brought on Europe by the Napoleonic wars, a journey into time is being made. Those things that happened in history as we know it don't happen - but there is an avalanche of other wars, and the result is another kind of misery and desolation, but nothing has changed for the better.

As for other forms of fantasy or science fiction, we had an Antoni Lange who wrote about 3 or 4 short sf stories, and Stefan Grabinski, who wrote in the twenties and thirties. His stories were weird and horror fiction rather than sf, and he was, to a point, a good writer in that he "democraticized" the spiritual world. The macabre happenings of his stories take place in railways (that's especially well-done in his stories), among chimney-sweeps, and so on. He also liked to write about those areas in which sex, mysticism and devilry meets: about old monasteries, where the skeletons of small children are found to have been walled in. Unluckily, he wrote in a very mannered fashion, but he has been published in two small collections since the war.

And that was all: it isn't that I want to hide my ancestors, but there were only occasional trickles which couldn't lead to the development of a literary stream - no, there were too few of them for that. In Czechoslovakia something similar has happened, for they have virtually no one besides Capek. Of course Capek himself is a talent of an order very different from our Zulawski or Grabinski: Capek already belongs to world literature, and I know nothing more original than his THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE.

But let's speak about me. Some days ago two Russians visited me (editors of a periodical that is interested in sf) and one of them told me that around 1930 there lived, somewhere in Siberia, a brilliant man named Tschuktsche, in a village that wasn't aware of the rest of the world, and this genius invented writing, as a system of hieroglyphs. That impressive edifice broke down when

an expedition found the village and the man learned that there exists something better in the field of writing. Now I am, as it were, mutatis mutandis, such a Tschuktsche, because I have read almost nothing of sf since 1961 - with a few exceptions, it is true, such as some stories by J G Ballard. I've also read a little French sf, but that's all. Of the criticism of the field I have read nothing but the book by Kingsley Amis. And such a man intends to write a book about the whole of sf? Nonsense, yes, even impudence perhaps, isn't it?

Indeed. But on the other hand, being "the man in the moon", my position somewhat resembles that of an extraterrestrial, and I can look at sf with a fresh eye.

In such an isolated position one must either speak openly without reservations or keep one's silence: and if I break my silence I might as well offer my intimate thoughts.

I have been a writer since 1949, and have published 23 books: among them one contemporary novel, an autobiographical sketch (about a year ago - this one was so well liked by the literateurs that one of our organizations of emigrants in London awarded me a prize. And I assume that those people, old literateurs for the most part, would have been ashamed to give me the prize for an sf story), three non-fiction books (a philosophical essay on cybernetics, a thick volume on the future of mankind and a theory of literature combined with a theory of culture - my last book, 611 pages long) and aside from this nothing but science fiction: THE ASTRONAUTS, THE MAGELLAN NEBULA, EDEN, THE INVINCIBLE, THE INTERROGATION (a pseudo-mystery), RETURN FROM THE STARS, SOLARIS, MEMOIRS FOUND IN A BATH-TUB and THE VOICE OF THE MASTER are the novels, and the books of short stories are BOOK OF ROBOTS, ROBOT FAIRY TALES, SEZAM, INVASION FROM ALDEBARAN, THE STAR DIARIES OF IDON TICHY, MOON NIGHT (which includes also TV plays), CYSERIAD, THE CHASE and TALES OF THE PILOT PIRX.

Given this, and taking account of the 40 or more translations and the total circulation of over 5 million (included there is the big help of the USSR, with almost 2.7 million copies) it seems impossible that there have not appeared interesting reviews of my books in Japan, Italy, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Armonia, Franco, the USSR etc. But to get hold of such reviews would pose a serious problem: I do not know them, I have never seen them, and even if I could get them there would still be the problem of translation - I know five languages (Russian, English, German, French and Polish of course) but in Czech, for instance, I can read only the menu. And then there's the matter of whether the effort would be worthwhile. I don't think so. Of course, at first the situation annoyed me, but now I have accepted it and have tried to make the best of it.

In all of those years I have also had some connection with the sf of the West, and so I know something of people like Knight, Bradbury, Brown, Bester, Pohl, Blish, Kuttner, Russell, Asimov, Clarke, Dick, Campbell, Heinlein and others. I know GALAXY, but haven't read it for eight years. I did read the French edition of it until two years ago. That's about all. In itself that wouldn't be too bad: far worse was that I intended to write a book on futurology and did write it. The first edition appeared in 1963 and a year later there was a revised and expanded version: and I didn't have on hand anything of the specialist literature on futurology. But although the book remained without a review for almost a year (and who would have reviewed it? the literateurs didn't understand anything of the matter, and the scholars wouldn't mix in the affair, for I had written as an sf author) it did at last

become known, somehow, and now it has also appeared in Moscow. Thus, as you can see, it is possible to create and exert an influence even though I am the man in the moon, and the situation even has some positive aspects: just a few days ago, when I read Kahn's symposium on the year 2000, I learned that whole institutions, collectives and teams of specialists had played around with the material, long before they gave birth to it viribus unitis. Had I been aware of the amount of effort they had put into their work I most probably would have despaired: but now I see that I have created, without those institutes and helpers, a wholly original work, and should it come to pass that a translation appears in our lifetimes, the reader can see for himself whether or not my audacious statement is true.

Perhaps the reader recalls what Thomas Mann once said about the honorary Ph D: that it is just a problem of biological endurance. And really, if you just happen to live long enough and create long enough, even if you only do things that nobody understands (in art, I mean), then after some years people will get used to you - you don't annoy them any more, indeed, you'll become a known fragment of the cultural landscape, and finally you can become a rarity, an original exhibition piece. That's what happened with me. For I, who know several Russian cosmonauts, to whom well-known Russian academicians write letters, and who publish pocket books in editions of 100,000 copies (and then again write for Philosophic Studies and Annals with an edition of 1800 copies), I have become an unknown, but an admitted factor.

That has got nothing to do with the reading public. That public learned of the existence of science fiction by reading, 17 years ago, my first naive optimistic novels. When I began experimenting in the field, the circulation of my books began to fluctuate and for a time I thought my readers would desert me. But they have followed me. Therefore I cannot say a single bad word about my Polish readers, although the regime - I see it, I'm a realist - quite inadvertantly has helped me by not publishing any sf here. There was no good sf in Poland, but also no trash, and even those who'd rather read BARBARELLA and comic strips instead of sweating over my texts were forced to read me and this somehow - what do I know? - became a habit with them.

What I have said above can serve, I believe, as a sociological introduction to the background against which my books were created. As an sf "great" I was celebrated in the Soviet Union first, because there the intellectual vacuum was harder than here (for since 1956 we have had Kafka, Ionesco, Butor, Robbo-Grillet, Camus, Sartre, etc; hardly any of that for them) and second, because that country is very big and therefore has a big and developed science: this science has bred a class of young and starved intellectuals. The scientists have always found it easier to get hold of American paperbacks, and by knowing them they already have a standard by which to measure my work. This (in the final analysis) quite simple mechanism of my Russian fame has never been understood in our literary circles (where a mixture of a feeling of inferiority towards the Paris/West and unconscious feelings of contempt towards Russia predominates: this contempt stems from the old stereotype of the 19th century, but such stereotypes have a long life). That's the reason I was both envied for my large editions and not read by my colleagues.

In view of this one would naturally ask where it is that I get the information that I have put into my literary and futurological books, since ex vacuo nihil fit? Why, from scientific sources of course. There the second-hand of scientific popularisation is of no help. I always try to read only the best: in physics, for instance, those who shaped it, not those who only teach it.

The same applies in other fields - for example, information theory from Shannon, cybernetics from Wiener and so on. Twenty years old Niels Abel answered, after he had found his elliptic functions, the question about his sources: "I read only the masters, never their pupils." I have remembered this well. If I do not know something I just sit down and begin to learn. So I started, one and a half years ago, studying structural linguistics since all that talk about structures in humanist disciplines was Chinese to me. Having learned what mathematics, anthropology (Levi-Strauss, for instance) had to say on the subject I felt at ease for I had, as it were, laid the foundations well. And, since I know that the Campbells and the Heinleins are studying Dianetics and Korzybski diligentissime, I know that they are filling their heads with the most stupid stuff. Perhaps the reader will have read Martin Gardner's book on pseudo-science: he shows the intellectual standards of the material with which some science fictioners are concerning themselves when they happen not to write novels. Existence determines the view of the world. If you know well what Feynman has to say in rebus physics, you'll never believe a crank though he might talk as sweetly as an angel.

As for a representative of the new wave: Ballard is writing very well and beautifully epistemological and anthropological nonsense; we can become one with nature only by dying and thus returning katabolically into the womb of nature: there just isn't any other way and this isn't a matter of some voluntarism. He is just badly informed or intends to remain uninformed, for in evolution there exist, for all practical purposes, only irreversible processes, and our species has been created in such a way that we have developed civilisation instead of horns and claws. No change is possible there, either for better or for worse: it just isn't possible, save for the help of chromosome engineers who may turn man into a four-legged animal (and correspondingly dumb). Nevertheless it is possible to write anti-rational and at the same time beautiful, indeed exciting, books: it's just that the reader must not think too much about the implications of the subject matter, for then the antimony of the thing will become apparent to him. But an anti-rational (i.e. an sf opposing scientific results, and directly opposing them) is already a pure contradiction in adiecto, just like atheistic theology, the squaring of the circle in mathematics or the perpetuum mobile in mechanics.

That's bad, because the world gets more and more complex. You can either try to visualize the consequences of this process or negate the existence of such a process, just as if somebody were to say that there were no nights and days, and no flowers. But then he begins to think magically, and magic sf is good only as fable.

At least, that's my credo.

- Stanislaw Lem 1969

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

SOME REMARKS ON "PAINGOD AND OTHER STORIES" BY HARLAN ELLISON

You have, I believe, acted perversely in sending me Ellison's stories, although you have such a low opinion of them. Should you have expected a negative

judgment from me, I must inform you that I did indeed arrive at it. Ellison is an especially marked case of the hysterical personality, with strong feelings of inferiority that have a tendency for overcompensation by the very annoying activity of a basically almost empty intellect. Really, he is, deep inside, a hysteroid for whom one must have pity, although he may, in person, impress the layman in quite the opposite way: as a man with an over-strong confidence in himself. But that's just the result of the compensatory mechanisms. Of course, a quasi-psychological profile of the psyche of an author isn't a literary assessment of the fruits of his soul. But this has helped me to formulate "ten commandments for the beginning reader of sf", which can serve as a guide through the sf jungle, saving one lots of time and effort.

They are:

"You shall stop reading a work of sf further,

- 1 in which gods, angels, demons, devils and other mythical beings appear, the work nevertheless being called "sf";
- 2 in which members of "other civilisations" appear, not as seen through the eyes of human observers, but described "quite directly" - from the godlike position of a master strategist;
- 3 in which the names of the characters (if only some of them) are constructed by a distortion of the paradigm of proper names in the alien language concerned (for instance, "Alexi Andrei" is supposed to serve as the name of a Pole, or "Kohlenschlagg" as the name of a German; such are the signs with which an author betrays his ignorance which masquerades as arrogance) - any serious author takes the names of his heroes from models of the country where the alien tongue is spoken, and he does so by selecting genuine sources: there are no exceptions to this rule;
- 4 which is armed with a foreword by the author in which he declares that he writes in such-and-such a way, whereas Swift, Voltaire or Flaubert, Joyce, etc, wrote in such-and-such a way: in general, the length of the foreword is in inverse proportion to the quality of the text;
- 5 in which it is impossible to determine, after having read the first pages, the time, the place and the objects of the plot;
- 6 in which the names of all the characters are monosyllables;
- 7 in which there is an "escalation of the fantastic" - i.e. the hero is a telepath, but he is not one of the usual telepaths: he is a telepath who can set fire to objects just by willing it: and it's not only that he can light his cigarettes in such a way - he can also turn the sun into a supernova: but not only can he turn the sun into a supernova, normal telepaths cannot read his thoughts: and not only is it impossible to read his thoughts, but etc...
- 8 in which the plot moves, in a very short space, from one point of the earth, or the solar system, or the galaxy, to other points;
- 9 in which the main characteristics of extraterrestrial humanoids are a peculiar number of fingers (4 or 6, say), or a peculiar chemical composition of their bodies;

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10 in which the characters admire qualities amongst themselves (for instance, incisiveness of intellect or humour) which, when presented to the reader, do not so impress him."

- Stanislaw Lem 1969

(CONTINUED FROM S F COMMENTARY PAGE 109)

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irrelevant (page 258)). N-----s? "The negroid population... set up a military caste, which governed the country." Kikes? Not a one: were they the responsibility of the little corporal, perhaps?

THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY No 2 ... October 1969

Articles on subjects in this field are welcome.

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(Gary Mason, Warili Rd, French's Forest, NSW, asked me to mention his NEW FORERUNNER, 15¢ Aust, 20¢ US, 1/6 UK, each. Done.)

JOHN FOYSTER

THE NEGATIVE JUDGMENT - MR ATHELING ERRS

On Page 71 of THE ISSUE AT HAND (Advent, 1964, 1967) Mr Atheling espoused the view that "The negative judgment... is the peak of mentality", and then proceeded to display a less than enviable talent for interpreting this view in the most trivial possible way. Certainly Mr Atheling deals harshly and vigorously with some very short items in the field of science fiction, but one cannot help but think that Henry A Bott or Floyd C Gale might have managed the same task with equal skill. For the items in question could not really be described as outstanding except in the ways which Mr Atheling has demonstrated.

The valuable negative judgment, the one which is a "peak of mentality", is more than this. It is relatively easy to produce examples of this. The Conan series of stories by Robert E Howard is a handy one. I find these stories enjoyable, restful and morish. This is by no means remarkable: I am sure that several readers have the same feeling. I also think them very, very bad pieces of fiction, pulp or otherwise. To say so, and to explain why it is so, seems to me more valuable than merely to disparage a story which one dislikes anyway. A second obvious example would be the scientist who rejects one of his own pet theories, though this is less common than it should be. This is the antithesis of the often-heard view "I may not know much about it, but I know what I like." Let us have more human beings who know what they like, but who are prepared to admit the faults of their own taste, and to analyse those faults.

A NOTE IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE PURSE

I I have been assisted in preparing the Linebarger bibliography, either directly or indirectly, by Professor A L Burns, Mr Ronald E Graham and Donald H Tuck: I wish to thank them here. I do not know the identity of the book described in SPACE LORDS as "selling a million copies, under another man's name" and would appreciate advice on that subject. Did PMAL publish poetry as "Anthony Bearden"? But this could go on for a long time.

2 I have received several letters of comment which I hope to publish in the next issue. However, Mr Richard Geis of Santa Monica, California remarks "study of the navel, eh? You don't think much of science fiction!" This could not be further from the truth. Omphalistic epistemology is a subject of the gravest importance, and were Mr Geis, or perhaps Mr Wm Rotsler, to write an article on this aspect of female movie stars or starlets I should be delighted to publish the same, perhaps even illustrated.

Mr John Bangsund of Ferntree Gully also wrote: "I think the designation of your learned journal as "Joe" is rather irreverent. I suggest as a much more dignified alternative, "Joseph" - which you will readily realize stands for "Jovial circular systematically exposing pretentious hacks." Yrs, etc." While I would like to think that Mr Bangsund's summary was correct, I am forced to admit that as from the present issue one of the choicer targets is no longer eligible. Soon after this issue is published I shall almost certainly be joining the ranks of the professional book reviewers of science fiction (in the new English/Australian magazine, VISION OF TOMORROW). However, the grosser stupidities of one of these practitioners may be discussed herein: only modesty prevents me from mentioning his name.

3 The discerning reader will not have failed to notice that this issue is editorially-written. If I find myself writing the third issue (to be published in December, rather than November, though dated January) then readers can expect to find articles on Frantz Fanon, Oscar Lewis or Gaston Bachelard. However Franz Rottensteiner has suggested that he may have something for me, and I should be delighted to publish anything about THE INHABITED ISLAND by A & B Strugatsky. BUG JACK BARRON, both the best and the worst science fiction novel of 1969, might also be a profitable source of discussion.

4 Australia is doing some rather foolish things in New Guinea at the moment (early August). Believe all you read in the newspapers and add about fifty per cent. What is being done can only cause trouble.

5. Thomas M Disch has a story THE MASTER OF THE MILFORD ALTARPIECE in the 46th issue of THE PARIS REVIEW, having previously placed a tasteful advertisement there (issue 43: "THRILLING SCIENCE FICTION... BY THOMAS M DISCH"). Writing about Messrs Sallis, Delany and Moorcock is interesting, perhaps, but not to me. Fortunately the issue also contained the standard PR story (THE ROAD TO MADRAS by Philip Metcalfe), otherwise I should have had difficulty recognizing it. Ho hum. August 1, 1969

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OKU - NO - HOSOMICHI BY MATSUO BASHO

a note on OKU'S NARROW PATHS

In the introduction to his translation of THE GATELESS GATE (Hohuseido: 1966) R H Blyth lists Basho as ranking second only to Bach in "the order of Zen". Though every anthology of Japanese literature mentions Basho, and every collection of haiku is dominated by his hand, his name is not adequately known in the West: the knowledge of his work is almost non-existent.

These two recent translations (THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH AND OTHER

TRAVEL SKETCHES translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa, Penguin, 1966 and BACK ROADS TO FAR TOWNS translated by Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu, Grossman, 1968) of one of Basho's travologues should make it easy for the Westerner to approach his haiku, for OKU'S NARROW PATHS combines prose and poetry in what seems to me a very natural way. For some insight into the way in which the poetry arises, it is instructive to consider something Robert Frost (who it is fair to describe as a nature poet, I think) said in an interview in PARIS REVIEW some years ago (Number 24, 1960). Frost is speaking of his masques:

One of them turns on the thought that evil shows off to good and good shows off to evil. I made a couplet out of that for them in Kansas City, just the way I often do, off-hand:

"It's from their having stood contrasted
That good and bad so long have lasted."

This is how Basho composed these particular poems, not quite off-hand, perhaps, but as part of a larger whole. Both editions are illustrated by skilled haiga artists, Buson (Penguin) having also been one of the greatest haiku poets, while Hayakawa Ikutada is a contemporary worker. Physically the books are very different. The Penguin edition is crowded and the illustrations are in black and white. The Grossman has coloured illustrations and plenty of much better quality blank paper. The other physical difference is that the Grossman edition contains the original as well as the Englished version, while the Penguin includes several other sketches, though the work under consideration occupies half of the book.

In this essay/diary, Basho records his journey to the north and back (Edo to Okagi) from March 27 to early September 1689 with his friend Sora: Basho was about 45 at the time, and had about five years to live. He is concerned both with the immediacy of his surroundings and with their historical contexts (as all poets must be) and these come to light partly in the prose descriptions and partly in the poet's reaction. As Cid Corman puts it in his introduction, "The poems should help clot passages." (page 11).

In some introductory remarks, Nobuyuki Yuasa says "a... sympathetic friend questioned whether I had the same command of English as Basho did of the language in which he wrote." This problem seems to me to plague both versions: let us compare the two.

The attitudes to translation taken in the two books differ greatly. Nobuyuki Yuasa presents a careful translation into roughly current English: the haiku are translated into four-line stanzas. Cid Corman, as might be expected, uses current American poetese.

I want first to compare some of the prose: the opening sentences are as follows.

Nobuyuki Yuasa

Days and months are travellers of eternity. So are the years that pass by. (page 97)

Cid Corman

Moon and sun are passing figures of countless generations, and years coming or going wanderers too. (page 15)

In a footnote, the use of "moon and sun" is thoroughly justified, and Corman cites D T Suzuki as a part authority.

Somewhat later we have a short semi-historical passage:

Nobuyuki Yuasa

I went to see the shrine of Muro-no-yashima. According to Sora, my companion, this shrine is dedicated to the goddess called the Lady of Flower-bearing Trees, who has another shrine at the foot of Mount Fuji. This goddess is said to have locked herself up in a burning cell to prove the divine nature of her newly-conceived son when her husband doubted it. As a result, her son was named the Lord Born Out of the Fire, and her shrine, Muro-no-yashima, which means a burning call. It was the custom of this place for poets to sing of the rising smoke, and for ordinary people not to eat kinoshiro, a specked fish, which has a vile smell when burnt. (page 99)

Cid Corman

Visited the Muro-no-Yashima. My companion, Sora, said: "The deity here, Konohana Sakuya Hime, is the same as that at Fuji. She went and set fire to the Utsu-muro to prove her innocence and out of this was Prince Hohodemi born and the place called Muro-no-Yashima. And why poetry written about it mentions smoke. (page 23)

(The footnotes cover the apparently-missing information.)

The difference in approach of the two versions is easily seen. The one is concerned with detail and careful straightforward English: the other with impressions. We see that in the second case this leads to the omission of vital information: but should that which is implicit in the original be made explicit in the translation?

Now let us consider a conversation:

As I was plodding through the grass, I noticed a horse grazing by the roadside and a farmer cutting grass with a sickle. I asked him to do me the favour of lending me his horse. The farmer hesitated for a while, but finally, with a touch of sympathy in his face, he said to me, "There are hundreds of crossroads in the grass-moor. A stranger like you can easily go astray. This horse knows the way. You can send him back when he won't go any further." So I mounted the horse and started off, ... (page 102)

Horse pastured there. Asked the way of a fellow mowing nearby who, plain as he was, wasn't without courtesy. "Let me see," he says, "you know this here field cuts off different ways and if you don't know which is which, worse luck, easy to get lost, so better let the horse there take you far as he can and when he stops, just send him back," and he lent us the horse. (page 35)

The language of the second version is immediate, at least for a class of American readers, while the first is to-the-point, precise, and just a little flat to anyone reading it. Neither version is literal, but one at least represents for some people what Basho meant for his original readers. As a final brief glance at the prose used, consider:

I was immediately reminded of the Priest Noin who.... (page 111)

Immediately Noin-Hoshi came to mind. (page 65)

The superiority of the latter is obvious, and it makes clear the advantages of

Corman's approach; we have already seen that there may be some disadvantages.

It is in their translations of the poems that the two translators seem to draw together, but it is here that they are farthest apart: because Basho is becoming "formal", Nobuyuki Yuasa's semi-conversational translations are not too bad. Cid Corman becomes almost literal, but also grabs at the poem's heart.

A good example is the haiku following the borrowing of the farmer's horse. Two small children run after the horse, and Basho records the haiku written by Sora. One of the children is a little girl called Kasane.

Nobuyuki Yuasa

If your name, Kasane,
Means manifold,
How befitting it is also
For a double-flowered pink.
(page 102)

Cid Corman

this Kasane
pretty double pink's
name naturally.
(page 35)

Again we have:

Gathering all the rains
Of May,
The River Mogami rushes down
In one violent stream.
The faint aroma of snow.
(page 124)

May rains
gathering swift
Mogamigawa.
(page 101)

It is difficult to see that these are translations of the same poem. But by putting them together we can begin to see what the poet had in mind. Here is the last haiku.

As firmly cemented clam-shells
Fall apart in autumn,
So I must take to the road again,
Farewell, my friends.
(page 142)

clam
shell and innards parting
departing fall.
(page 151)

Here we have poetry and prose.

In trying to evaluate Basho's haiku it is wise to recall Blyth's strong feelings for Wordsworth: though we do not find Basho in either of the two translations, we can get near to him by reading both.

The only comparable figure in the West is Bach, and perhaps it is remarkable that Basho and Bach were almost contemporaries. Bach was a little boy when Matsuo Basho died on October 12, 1694, 275 years ago.

The octopuses in the jar-trap;
Transient dreams
Under the summer moon.
(translation by R H Blyth)

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PAUL MYRON ANTHONY LINEBARGER (1913-1966)

AN INCOMPLETE CHRONOLOGICAL ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

prepared by JOHN FOYSTER

- 1 1937 POLITICAL DOCTRINES OF SUN YAT SEN: an exposition of the San Min Chu I. Johns Hopkins and Oxford University Press. 300 pages.

NOTE: Reprinted 1957, 1963. Actually completed in 1936.

- 2 1937 OCEAN MAN, AN ALLEGORY OR THE SUN YAT SEN REVOLUTIONS. Privately printed. 67 pages.

NOTE: This is probably the "first science fiction story" referred to in the introduction in SPACE LORDS (item 67) where it is dated 1928. Note also the publication in 1934 of THE OCEAN MAN by Paul Myron Wentworth Linebarger, father of PMAL.

- 3 1938 GOVERNMENT IN REPUBLICAN CHINA. McGraw-Hill.

NOTE: A footnote to page 11 of item 27 reads: "The same author is preparing a re-issue of that book largely re-written in the light of the subsequent experiences and misadventures of the Chinese people in the field of politics and of the author's own opportunities to reconsider some basic aspects of the problem." I do not think this was completed.

- 4 1941 January 25. MAKINGS OF DEMOCRACY IN CHINA (THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, page 2).

- 5 1941 May. STATUS OF THE CHINA INCIDENT (ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: 275, 36-43).

- 6 1941 THE CHINA OF CHIANG KAI-SHEK. World Peace. 449 pages.

NOTE: Published prior to July 1941.

- 7 1946 July. STASM: PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE AND LITERARY CRITICISM (SOUTH ATLANTIC QUARTERLY: 45, 265-285).

NOTE: STASM is "Source, Time, Audience, Subject, Mission".

- 8 1946 A SYLLABUS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE. Washington: War Department General Staff.

NOTE: Presumably a forerunner of item 17.

- 9 1947 March. COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF CHINA (YALE REVIEW: 36, 499-513).

- 10 1947 May. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IN WORLD WAR 2 (INFANTRY JOURNAL: 60, 30-39).

NOTE: Part 1 of 2.

- 11 1947 June. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IN WORLD WAR 2 (INFANTRY JOURNAL: 60, 41-46).
- 12 1947 July. NUCLEAR FISSION: A NEW LIGHT ON POLITICS (SOUTH ATLANTIC QUARTERLY: 46, 344-348)
- 13 1947 November. POSTWAR POLICIES OF CHINA (JOURNAL OF POLITICS: 9, 522-542)
- 14 1947 RIA. Duell, Pierce and Sloane.

NOTE: By "Felix C Forrest". This pen-name derives from "Lin par leh" (Forest of incandescent bliss) the transliteration of L's surname into Chinese. Written in first person as if by a woman.

- 15 1948 February. THE CASE FOR AID TO CHINA (FAR EAST SURVEYS: 17, 37-39).
- 16 1948 CAROLA. Duell, Pierce and Sloane.

NOTE: as for item 14.

- 17 1948 PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE. Combat Forces Press. Circa 300 pages.

NOTE: Subsequent editions as follows - Spanish 1949, Chinese 1953, Japanese 1954, Vietnamese 1956, German 1960, Russian 1962. Second US edition 1955. In the light of items 22 and those following this section makes interesting reading: "Short of turning to the field of futuristic fiction, it is impossible to provide discussion of situations which have not been known in the American Army." (page 229)

- 18 1948 PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE. (a chapter in ROTC SERVICE MANUAL, Military Services Publishing Company)
- 19 1949 September. FAILURE OF SECRET DIPLOMACY IN CHINA (FAR EAST SURVEYS: 18, 212-214)
- 20 1949 ATOMSK. Duell, Pierce and Sloane.

NOTE: By "Carmichael Smith". This may have been "Carmichael G Smith". Spy story.

- 21 1949 GOVERNMENT IN JAPAN. (a chapter in FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS: THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICS ABROAD (edited by Fritz Morstein Marx). page 584-).
- 22 1950 January. SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN (FANTASY BOOK 6: 32-73, 85-88)

NOTE: By "Cordwainer Smith". Hermes stole Apollo's cattle, killed and skinned them. He sold a pair of shoes made from the leather to Apollo in exchange for some of Apollo's wisdom. This is the myth of the cordwainer. Some prefer "Lino" = "Cord", "Baige" =

"Wain". Linbarger's subsequent science fiction was published under this name.

Later editions (item 55) claim to have published revised versions of this story: the only obvious revision is the removal of some upper-case letters and the inversion of two lines originally transposed.

The cover of this magazine, by Jack Gaughan, illustrates L's story.

L appears in the story, as "Martel" and also as "Smith". Page 37 indicates both L's interest in psycho-analysis and that "scanning" and psycho-analysis have a great deal in common.

Vomact, who appears in many later stories by Cordwainer Smith (designated "CS" under), derives his name from the German noun Acht, meaning care or attention. See item 47.

The date of this story is widely given as 1948: there seems to be little justification for it.

- 23 1951 April. HOTFOOT FOR STALIN (NATION'S BUSINESS: 39, 29-31)
- 24 1951 April. COMMUNIST CHINA: SOME OBSERVATIONS (SOUTH ATLANTIC
QUARTERLY: 50, 159-166)
- 25 1951 September. OUTSIDE PRESSURES ON CHINA 1945-1950 (ANNALS OF THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: 277, 177-181)
- 26 1951 November. STRUGGLE FOR THE MIND OF ASIA (ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: 278, 32-37)
- 27 1954 FAR EASTERN GOVERNMENTS AND POLITICS. Van Nostrand. 643 + xii
pages with Djang Chu and Ardath W Burks.

NOTE: Pagination is for the second (1956) edition. The agreement for this book was signed in December 1948 (p. ix) which explains the lack of material in the years following. L also states that he made "five trips on various errands" to the Far East in the period December 1948 - July 1956. The following footnote is of interest: "At the risk of stating the obvious it must be pointed out that this bureaucracy { in China } is not interesting for its sake alone, but for our future as well. In some respects the Americans of the middle Twentieth Century are fortunate to live in a world in which they cannot afford to decay... peace can sometimes be more nightmarish than war, because people are at least willing to do something about a war situation... The problems of the Manchu bureaucracy are not very important in the 1950s; it is dreadfully possible that these problems may recur in the human race of the 2050s." (page 55).

- 28 1955 May. AIR POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST (ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: 299, 109-117)

NOTE: see Item 55.

29 1955 October. THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION:)

30 1957 MARK XI (CS) (SATURN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY:)

NOTE: Later printed (Item 56) as MARK ELF.

31 1957 TAIPEI AND PEKING: THE CONFRONTING REPUBLICS (JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS: 11, 2, 135-142)

32 1958 April. SURVIVAL OF HISTORICAL JAPAN (CURRENT HISTORY: 34, 193-197)

33 1958 July. LEADERSHIP IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: 318, 58-71)

34 1958 October. THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN (IF: WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION:) (CS)

35 1958 December. WESTERN SCIENCE IS SO WONDERFUL (CS) (IF: WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION:)

36 1959 February. NO, NO, NOT ROGOV! (CS) (IF: WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION:)

37 1959 March. THE NANCY ROUTINE (CS) (SATELLITE SCIENCE FICTION:)

38 1959 April. GOLDEN THE SHIP WAS - OH! OH! OH! (CS) (AMAZING STORIES:)

39 1959 April. WHEN THE PEOPLE FELL (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION:)

40 1959 June. THE FIFE OF BODIDHARMA (CS) (FANTASTIC:)

41 1959 December. CHINA'S FAILURE IN JAPAN (CURRENT HISTORY: 37, 350-353)

42 1959 ANGERHELM (CS) (in STAR SCIENCE FICTION 6 edited by F Pohl, published by Ballantine Books)

43 1959 PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE (entry in ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA)

NOTE: This is merely the edition in which the entry has been noted.

44 1960 April. THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 18, 4, 58-81)

NOTE: Three illustrations by Dillon. L hints at comparison with HELOISE AND ABELARD.

45 1961 June. ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD (CS) (THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION: 20, 6, 5-29)

NOTE: Based on PAUL ET VIRGINIE by J H Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a disciple of J J Rousseau (Saintsbury).

- 46 1961 June. MOTHER HITTON'S LITTLE KITTONS (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 19, 5, 98-120)

NOTE: Two illustrations by Virgil Finlay. Source is ALI BADA AND THE FORTY THIEVES (L in item 67).

- 47 1961 October. A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 20, 1, 8-46)

NOTE: Three illustrations by Virgil Finlay. Source is THE DIVINE COMEDY (L, in 67). "Dikkat" is Turkish for care or attention: see 22 and Vomact, vom Acht (30) and Maximilien Macht (45) generally.

- 48 1961 December. NEW JAPAN IN A TROUBLED ASIA (CURRENT HISTORY: 41, 355-359).

- 49 1961 KUOMINTANG (entry in COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA)

NOTE: As for item 43.

- 50 1962 July. FROM GUSTIBLE'S PLANET (CS) (IF: WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION:).

- 51 1962 October. THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 21, 1, 8-28)

NOTE: Two illustrations by Virgil Finlay. Source is THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (L, in 67) - for further notes on this see item 55. The following suggests a source of the "girly-girls". The discussion concerns a translation of THE HISTORY OF THE FORMER HAN DYNASTY. "One of the present authors spent a hilarious afternoon with Dubs at Duke University many years ago trying to decide whether an upper-grade sweetie should be promoted to a Darling JG or to a Yummy, probationary." Author is L. The source is item 27, page 15, and the subject is the ranking of harem girls.

- 52 1963 February. THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 21, 3, 47-76)

NOTE: With reference to this and items 63, 64, 65 the following quotation, regarding THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (from item 27, page 14) is relevant: "the story of three provisional kingdoms, one of which was led by the chivalrous warrior who claimed to be the successor king to the fallen house of Han." The following obvious identifications tie this up with the Middle East.
Casher O'Neill = Kasr en Nil (palace cum barracks cum

railway station in Cairo)
Wedder = Nasser
Kuraf = Farouk
Gibna = Naguib
Mizzer = Misr = Cairo (or Egypt)
Kaheer = el Khahira = Cairo.

More importantly, I am inclined to believe that the entire series of stories under the name Cordwainer Smith is bound together by the ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS. This thought was reinforced by reading the following remark of Lu Hsun on ROT3K. I quote only the relevant section: "Critics think this novel has the following three defects: (1) It is easy to mistake it for actual history. (2) The characters are too black and white. A good character is described with no faults, while a bad man has no good qualities at all."

- 56 1963 YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME (CS) Regency Books. 150 pages.

NOTE: A collection of the following stories: 36 (page 7), 44 (page 25), 22 (page 49), 29 (page 83), 34 (page 97), 38 (page 107), 45 (page 115), 30 (page 143).

- 57 1964 April. THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE & FICTION:).

NOTE: Part 1 of ROD MCBAN. Expanded as 62.

- 58 1964 May. THE STORE OF HEART'S DESIRE (CS) (IF: WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION: 14, 2, 77-127)

NOTE: Part 2 of ROD MCBAN. Expanded as 69. Three illustrations by John Giunta.

- 59 1964 May. THE CRIME AND GLORY OF COMMANDER SUZDAL (CS) (AMAZING STORIES: 38, 5, 18-34)

NOTE: One illustration by George Schelling. Based on sordid happenings in city of Suzdal, Russia, in the time of Vasili the Third. Suzdal is about 160 miles from Moscow. The hero appears in 47.

- 60 1964 August. THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 22, 6, 6-80)

NOTE: Four illustrations by Gray Morrow. Based on Joan of Arc (L, in 67).

- 61 1964 September. TWO CHINAS (CURRENT HISTORY: 47, 162 - 165)

- 62 1964 THE PLANET BUYER (CS) Pyramid Books. 150 pages. October 1964.

NOTE: Expansion, by about 50%, of 57.

- 63 1965 February. ON THE STORM PLANET (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION:
).

64 1965 October. THREE TO A GIVEN STAR (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION:
).

65 1965 December. ON THE SAND PLANET (CS) (AMAZING STORIES:).

66 1966 February. UNDER OLD EARTH (CS) (GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION: 24, 3,
 6-48).

NOTE: Four illustrations by Virgil Finlay, including cover. First in a series unveiling a previously unknown section of Smith's future. Last published original fiction.

- 67 1965 SPACE LORDS Pyramid Books. 198 pages. May 1965.

NOTE: A collection of the following stories: 46 (page 9), 60 (page 35), 54 (page 114), 51 (page 146), 47 (page 167) together with prologue, epilogue and dedication. "Condamine", besides being a river, is the name of a street near ANU where L stayed in Australia (page 10). There is a suggestion on this page that L might have worked on a translation of ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS. The introduction to this work contains both information and misinformation concerning L : change "Cambridge" to "Oxford", "1948" to "1950"; delete the fourth line. Probably change "1928" to "1937". Reprinted November 1968: yes, it is out of order.

- 68 1966 QUEST OF THE THREE WORLDS Ace Books. 170 pages.

NOTE: A collection of the following stories: 55 (page 5), (which see), 63 (page 34), 65 (page 117), 64 (page 150).

- 69 1968 THE UNDERPEOPLE Pyramid Books. 160 pages.

NOTE: Expansion, by about 50%, of 58. Suggests L wrote poetry as "Anthony Bearden".

- 70 1969 SPACE LORDS Sidgwick and Jackson. September 1969.

NOTE: First hardcover book by "Cordwainer Smith". Was originally scheduled for March 1969. Not published at this writing.

* * * *

NOTES ON THE FOREGOING

The above is incomplete, I am sure, and this listing is being published primarily so that the remaining pieces can be added. It is chronological.

except for the accident on page 11, by date of publication for magazines and by year of publication for books. It is annotated to the minimum possible extent. In the near future I hope to publish an extended article on Linebarger's fiction and non-fiction, and that is when the notes will really come into being. Meanwhile, could readers advise of missing items? I also want to see copies of the following numbers: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 32 and 37.

** **

N----- DAGOES AND CHINKS :

or WHAT, NO KIKES ?

a review of CELESTALIA by A L Pullar

CELESTALIA: A FANTASY A D 1975, published in 1933 by THE CANBERRA PRESS, Sydney, NSW, appears to be A L Pullar's only novel. As an example of science fiction it has certain distinguishing features. Unlike many of its contemporaries it demonstrates little interest in technological advances; indeed, it presents a world of 1975 not notably different from that existing in 1932 on more than a purely technical level. Its characters, if they may be dignified with this description, are rather more wooden than those of the novels by the late E E Smith Ph D - the dialogue alone is ... but allow me to quote briefly: "So, arter torking it over arter 'e's gorn, we dercides ter join up wiv 'im; he'd sorter explained that they wos getting up a bit" and so on (page 126).

But its most endearing characteristic, though not, I fear, a unique one, is the obscenely racist nature of its message. Talia is the daughter of an Italian consul and either (a) an Italian wife, which is OK, since neither of them migrated to Australia and helped force the good old Aussies down into Tasmania or (b) a Chinese girl who thought she was the Italian's wife, which is bad, because that makes her a half-breed, than which nothing is worse. The plot consists in the discovery that Talia is (surprise, surprise) a pure-blooded Caucasian.

Pullar's world is a juvenile one, with matters of international dispute being decided by wrestling or fencing contests in Olympiads (though only certain nations may compete). It is not surprising, therefore, that the plot should be a trivial one. It is alarming, however, that the author should have made so serious an attempt to disguise his message. Throughout the book Talia is accepted as Eurasian, and Western men leave her strictly alone (with one exception): this is presumably on the principle that it is better not to risk soiling one's hands.

The remark is made, quite early in the novel, that the girls (of whom only Talia survived) were almost twins: but of course one was an untouchable. Eventually it is shown that Talia is whiter than white, and she immediately gives her hand to one of those staunch, friendly chaps who wouldn't have touched her with a barge-pole up to this point, while the exception (see above) is shut out (no reason, just my policy). The author attempts to delude the reader with fine words ("White, black, brown or brindle wouldn't hinder me" says the "lucky man", shortly after discovering that this rhetoric is

(PLEASE TURN TO S F COMMENTARY PAGE 96)

THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY No 3 ... January 1970

Boss Editor: John Foyster.

Other Editor: Franz Rottensteiner, A-2762 Ortmann, Felsenstr 20, Austria.

Articles on subjects in this field are always welcome.

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Page 8 ... ROBOTS IN SCIENCE FICTION by Stanislaw Lem

JOHN FOYSTER

LINT

A casual glance at the index above will indicate that no shortage of material has forced me to write long and dreary articles about Frantz Fanon, Oscar Lewis, Gaston Bachelard or some other equally worthy subject. There has been, in fact, an abundance of riches, not the least part of this being due to Stanislaw Lem and Franz Rottensteiner. Franz agreed to become either Associate or Assistant Editor a couple of months back, and it is my lack of memory which has forced me to use, temporarily, the device above. I never could work out the difference anyway.

So let me tell you about the long and dreary articles you will be reading in future issues. I had intended to provide a double-decker on Writers and Critics of Science Fiction in the next issue, but that will now appear in an issue of Bruce Gillespie's SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY (or S F COMMENTARY as it is known to cognoscenti and incognoscenti alike). That means that a series on the Major Writers of scientifiction of the 1960s. First will be Cordwainer Smith, followed by J G Ballard and Samuel R Delany. The Ballard will be limited to his short stories and the Delany to his novels. An article on a transition figure, Brian Aldiss, will appear in the above-mentioned issue of S F COMMENTARY. Beginning in 1971 I should like to publish similar pieces on the figures of the 40s and 50s (Asimov, Blish, Heinlein, Kornbluth, Kuttner, Sturgeon and van Vogt). Volunteers for those items are requested. I'd be wanting articles of 6,000 to 10,000 words on each author. And if I have omitted any important writers, please inform me of this and, better still, volunteer to write an article for me.

The journal needs readers. At the moment there are quite a few people who receive it, but show no signs of having read it. Despite the advertisements in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and S F COMMENTARY I have had few if any requests from readers. On the other hand I have always experienced considerable

success with sending copies to people recommended to me by present readers. Thanks to those who have done so - and keep it up. To those who have shown no interest - I shall not be troubling you any longer.

This issue only is being distributed to my long-suffering friends in the SPECTATOR AMATEUR PRESS SOCIETY.

FAMOUS MISQUOTED WORDS: (but corrected here)

"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

ROBERT LIGHTFOOT & DAVID PENDLETON fragments of An Interview with J G BALLARD

IT : 60
July 18 - 31
1969

1** I think that the great strength of science fiction is that there is no past - it's all future in science fiction. It tallies with the way people look on their lives today. I mean look at most people and you find that they have declared a moratorium on the past. They are not interested. One is constantly meeting people who have only the haziest idea of their own parents - who have changed their life styles since their childhood in every possible way. In a genuine way they have transformed themselves. It is rather like Los Angeles where people can assume any role they like and be convincing in that role - I think this is probably true of Europe as a whole - that it is coming here as well. And when it does there is going to be the most stupendous renaissance. I see the year 2000 AD as an incredible one.

A hundred years ago one has the impression that people had made a clear distinction between the outer world of work and of agriculture, commerce, social relationships - which was real and the inner world of their own minds and daydreams and hopes - which was the world of fantasy. Fiction on the one hand, reality on the other. This seems to be ended. And given this fixed reality which surrounded individuals, the writer's role of inventing a fiction that encapsulated various experiences going on in the real world and dramatising them in fictional form, worked. This has been a marvellous role for the writer. Now the whole situation has changed and been reversed. The exterior landscapes of the late 60's and early 70's is almost entirely a fictional one, created by advertising, mass merchandising - politics conducted as advertising.

Science is now the greatest producer of fiction - there are thousands and thousands of scientific journals produced, particularly in the soft sciences, the psychological sciences, the social sciences. But the material they are

2** I'm not hung up on automobiles. It is just that it struck me as a metaphor and a key experience that no one had ever looked at. The attitude to the motor car accident was rather reminiscent of the Victorian attitude to sex in dreams. The people all assumed an attitude to the accident which was altogether different to what they really felt. Take the deaths of

people like Jayne Mansfield, James Dean and so on ... even Kennedy's death which was a kind of modified automobile accident. The role of the car seemed to be a key to the significance of whatever had happened.

It is the most dramatic experience that anyone will go through in their whole lives apart from their own deaths, simply because one is insulated in late twentieth century life from real and direct experience. Even sexual ... experience is muffled by a whole overlay of conceptualisation... fashion, chit chat and everything else. The automobile accident is real. It is a violent experience of a kind that you are not likely to get in any other area. It is a massive collision of the central nervous system.

3** I am beginning to wonder whether the future is going to exist anymore. We think - by that I mean science fiction writers think - that science fiction enshrines the notion of the future and it takes up its stance vis a vis the traditional novel which is more concerned with the past and one thinks of past present and future. But I do think that come the year 2001 if not sooner, the past will disappear and that the future will go next. People will be living only in the present and they will not be at all interested in the future. The possibility of maximising our own pleasures - our own intelligent pleasures - will be so great - given the world wide application of computer systems on a domestic level and the enormous possibilities for travel, the present will be so rich. One will be able to fly by some super-sonics airplane in a matter of only a few hours, completely switch one's life and imagination and so on from level to level. The future will not exist as a possibility. One will be able to lead a completely quantified life. The present will contain its own limitless future, like a child going into an amusement arcade does not think what will I do and where will I play in five minutes? He is merely in the flux of alternatives. Life is like that.

4** The future is probably going to be something like Las Vegas for example - this is already coming to some extent. And therefore one is going to need - the trouble with Marxism is that it is a social philosophy for the poor - what we need now is a social philosophy for the rich. One needs for the year 2000 AD a literary tradition which is capable of making sense of life as we actually experience it. In the visual arts this has already been done. Look at the pop painters, who discovered the beauty and the importance of the iconography of everyday life. From Coca Cola bottles to radiator grilles. Not just the world of these objects but the way in which these objects interact with our own personalities, our own movements through time and space. They have discovered the importance of the present and they have gone completely away from the other figurative traditions. The tendency for example to put guitars and jugs on tables to formalise objects within the traditional narrative space of painting whatever the particular figurative... the pop painters who discovered a completely new vocabulary that was really relevant to people, that made sense of people's lives.

As each gesture and movement becomes more significant, a simple action like crossing one's legs will soon have more meaning than a whole novel.

5** I think he has isolated in a series of metaphors which he has found for describing mid-twentieth century life: the mental institution, the prison and the invisible society of drug addicts - the hinterland of empty hotels and amusement arcades. His image of the city as a kind of institutionalised paranoia. These metaphors that he has chosen and also the organic metaphors he uses... where science fiction and mythology cross over...

the social perversions dressed up in the organic science fiction of the Theodore Sturgeon type, these sort of images that he has picked seem to me to be marvellous in their accuracy. They are perfect devices for making sense of mid-twentieth century life. He has been able to animate and dramatise these situations with his incredible imagination and verbal skill. I do not think that the writer is going to be able to rely so much on the materials of his own imagination. I think that he has got to adapt and take the materials of his fiction from the world around him in the same way as the pop painters have done. The writer's role is more analytic. He is going to be more of a commentator rather than an inventor. The writer cannot compete with the world of the media landscapes inventing enormous fictions at a rate of authority and conviction that no writer can match. One's own state of mind is the only reality one knows. One is moving through a landscape entirely composed of fictions, and our own minds, the postures of our bodies, the world of our own senses, is the only reality. Given this position one's own personality becomes the yardstick by which one constructs measuring rods and constructs the architecture of any kind of possibility within ordinary life or within the novel or sculpture. One's own responses,

** **

GEORGE TURNER Sturgeon's Sadism

Dear John

Your letter asking for amplification of my remark concerning "Sturgeon's sadism" has gone unanswered for three months for the simple reason that I am having trouble answering it at all.

For the sake of any who may eventually read this I will quote sufficient of the original context to make the reason for your request clear. I said, in the course of the Discussion Panel at the 1968 Conference:

When an attitude is repeated time and again throughout the body of a man's work you are justified in attributing to him certain motives... there are certain things that stick out and you can't avoid them. Heinlein's megalomania is one. Sturgeon's sadism is another. A lot of people say it's nice humanistic thinking. It isn't. It's straight sadism, and take a good look at it the next time you read a Sturgeon story...

Let me say at the outset that this was an off-the-cuff statement which could have done with the more careful expression one gives to a prepared presentation. It represented my feeling about Sturgeon after having read the bulk of his output over a period of some twenty-five years, but was perhaps more casual and inclusive than the facts warrant. Nevertheless, there is a n----- in the Sturgeon woodpile of gentle humanitarianism, and now you have pushed me into an attempt to track it down. It's a difficult attempt, because I keep very little sf in my library, and all of this will have to be done from memory. I find I have preserved no Sturgeon at all; he was a young .

enthusiasm that cloyed with over exposure. (If he wrote one yarn worth re-reading, it was the thriller, KILLDOZER; a first-class example of the straight adventure story.)

And so, I remember:

A WAY OF THINKING. In this bit of nastiness a character is presented who believes most literally in an eye for an eye - and then carries the payment a step further. He is presented first in an anecdote wherein a disappointed girl throws an electric fan at him. She misses. In return he throws her at the fan - and doesn't miss. In the process she bashes her head against a door jamb and falls down a flight of stairs. The hero walks off without a word. The rest of the tale concerns his vengeance against another woman, via voodoo with a wax doll subjected to disgusting operations. At the end of the tale Sturgeon, though he is careful not to show sympathy, makes an attempt to justify this human animal by asking some misdirecting philosophic questions. There is no point - unless it be that justice is more horrible than we fear. But what a conception of justice! The over-riding aftertaste is of a powerful writer evoking brutality for its own sake.

WHEN YOU'RE SMILING. This one bears a family resemblance to A WAY OF THINKING. In it a hero with psi powers is sensitive to the personalities of others. When they hurt him enough he takes pal vengeance, even though they did not know they were hurting. Justice is served once more. And we are expected to sympathise with this snarling beast.

THE DREAMING JEWELS. The hero begins as a small boy who eats ants for some unlikely reason connected with his metabolism. So he suffers the tortures of the damned at the hands of other small boys and most of all under the tongue of a stepmother. The first quarter of the book is concerned with his sufferings, described with loving care. What interests is that the story could have been told without them, and might have been clearer without the cruel emotional loading.

MORE THAN HUMAN. Here we have the full gamut of the Sturgeon gallery - filthy and degenerate idiot-genius, sex-starved spinster who meets an undeserved humiliation at the hands of the idiot, paranoid hero and so on. And we have such lovely little vignettes as that wherein the child heroine clears the hero's bowels by teleportation - a feat which even Sturgeon cannot have believed in, and one disposed of forever by Niven's recent article on the practical aspects of tp. In this novel Sturgeon really piles on the horrors (and one has to admit that he does it with an attention-rivetting technique) and meets his Waterloo at the finish, when he has to put up some sort of justification for all this tour through a shambles. The ending of MORE THAN HUMAN must surely stand as the most nauseating slice of emotional tripe ever stewed by a writer to get out of his difficulties. The mind cries "Fake!" and concludes that the only reason for the book was the presentation of as much unpleasantness as possible; it is supposed to be about the nature of the gestalt personality, but it isn't; it hasn't a damned thing to say about it.

Then there are the tales about homosexuals. There are three of them in my memory, though I can't recall the titles. One thing is sure - that Sturgeon knew nothing about the subject and didn't bother to find out as much as he could have gained by reading even one of the innumerable popular texts; he merely exploited it for cheap sensationalism. One example will suffice. It concerned a couple of homos from some far star who are travelling (I forget

why) on a ship whose crew consists of a moronic homosexual crewman in love with his captain, who in turn is another sort of moron whose brain circles around womankind from the belly-button down. Everybody in the story suffers and suffers, with the exception of the captain, who is the only one who really deserves some kind of Dantean comeuppance. One notes that they suffer for what they are, not for what they do. In the end the moronic crewman sets the interstellar pair free in space, and the tale ends with this nit looking dewy-eyed at his captain and murmuring to himself: "So long as it is you, little prince; so long as it is you." For once the quality of the writing could not overcome the blatant exploitation, even on the first reading. Who could believe in such a pair in charge of an interstellar vessel?

SOME OF YOUR BLOOD. In this one Sturgeon at last achieved outright obscenity, not because of his subject (every subject is grist to the literary mill) but because of his handling. The tale is a straight out mystery, in which the question is: What's wrong with the hero? What's wrong with him is a simple but rather rare sexual fixation with enough unpleasantness to turn the queasier stomachs. Having read Havelock Ellis and Kraft-Ebing back in those dear dead days when I had just got over being interested in the contents of my trainer, I was not queased - besides, I beat Sturgeon to the solution by about eighty pages. This book has nothing constructive to say about the sexual aspects of haematophagy, threw no light at all on the mental processes involved or the social and sexual significance of the act, and depended for its effectiveness on the shock revelation. This, I submit, is true pornography - the use of deviation for shock effect without artistic or philosophic significance.

TO MARRY MEDUSA. Here the character who initiates the story is another of the familiar mildly paranoid nits (also a skid row bum and a moron) who sets things going by an act of selfish stupidity. By the end of it all the world is remade and all is sweetness and light, except for the bum who, Sturgeon tries to tell us, is too steeped in his inturnd hate of the world to respond to the utopian influences. He is left muttering: "They's all bastids" or words to that effect. Since his condition, as represented, could have been handled by any competent psychiatrist, one is left wondering who the writer is trying to fool. And why.

Here then we have seven examples of Sturgeon at work, and they cover very nearly the whole time of his sf career. Two themes stand out - the revenge motif and a need to dabble in sexual seaminess (and I'm saving the best of the second group for later). One technical fact stands out - that in so many cases the use of these debased characters was unnecessary and the effects, so far as the story line and the overt themes are concerned, could have been gained by the use of recognisably normal people. No strength of story telling would have been lost, but Sturgeon would have had to produce psychologically explicable characters, and of everyday psychological processes he seemed always to be strangely innocent. All his main characters are extreme types, drawn in with heavy strokes, without subtlety and indeed without any understanding of what makes these types tick. To Sturgeon a paranoid is something about which you can read in a text book; for fictional purposes he merely takes the clinical description and belts it up louder and heavier and twice as big; never will you find any understanding of what such a matter means below the surface level or any use of it beyond simple melodrama. Beautifully dressed melodrama, but still only skin deep in any emotional or penetrative sense.

And this possibly accounts for his reputation as a humanitarian. He gives his characters merry hell after pointing out that they are emotional or physical

cripples; having pointed it out he lays into them with a facility the Grand Guignolais would have envied - and then provides (in most cases) a happy ending. He has his fun with them and then says: "You've suffered enough. Now have a chocolate." I have a secret suspicion that when he gets them on their own, after the performance is over, he doesn't hesitate to remind them that the chocolate wasn't for them to enjoy: it was for the reader. The reader had to be fooled into thinking what a dear, sympathetic, understanding type this man is.

And what facile, second rate stuff these happy endings are. One of his most popular short stories was SAUCER OF LONELINESS, one of the doyens of the anthologies of last decade. Read it some time, if you can dig it up. It's the usual tale of cripples who suffer until their chocolate comes home. Having read it, strip it of the persuasive verbiage and stand appalled at the gooey lump of WOMEN'S WEEKLY weepy you have been served up. ("Shit!" said the husband as he sat down to dinner, and hastily added, "but beautifully cooked, dear.")

Sturgeon's attitude towards sex is interesting in the extreme. I won't pretend to be able to analyse it, but the stories dealing with it are numerous, and the same old obsession crops up monotonously. And Sturgeon has dealt with sex more often, at a guess, than any other sf writer. Yet mere love rarely raises its head as more than the desperation of two unfortunates (SAUCER OF LONELINESS again).

There are three general approaches, which all tend towards the same final thesis:

(a) Refusal to observe a basic difference between the sexes, exemplified in the sex rivalry of A WAY OF THINKING. His major female characters are a formidably unfeminine lot, who meet men unflinchingly on their own ground. "Shoulder to shoulder, and bolder and bolder...". This may be the conventional sf female (her name is legion within the genre, and often she tries to be essentially feminine while she practises her karate or splits a stray atom or battles successfully in the arena, only to melt appealingly under the superhero's dominant look of flame) but I think not. That would be to accuse Sturgeon of unoriginality, which would be manifestly untrue. I feel that she represents some deeper truth of his sexual approach.

(b) The gestalt psychology theme. This, in MORE THAN HUMAN, MAKE ROOM FOR ME and one or two others, always includes at least one woman as part of the gestalt. Again he seems never to have considered the basic psychological differences implicit in sexual divagation, but wants the sexes equally represented in the "whole entity". The confusion of interests within such a mind could be crippling, and the fact would probably represent (as a mutation, which is his usual modus) a biological retrogression. Suggested: that he has never considered these matters because the fusion of sexes represents a Sturgeon wish-fulfilment, and he does not desire to consider any contra proposal. This, by the way, is a psychological commonplace, and does not postulate anything sinister in the psyche of the dreamer. Possibly the reverse.

(c) The absolute fusing of sexes. This, of course, came finally to light in VENUS PLUS X. This began, most fascinatingly, as a tale of a people who were - if I may debase an old coinage - ambisextrous. Male and female were present in the single organism. Now here was a theme indeed! (One

thought briefly of snails and put the thought aside for the duration of the novel.) Here we were to have a thoughtful exposition of the sex war in reverse, a new kind of utopia. And what did we get? Two thirds of the way through the story we learned that these people were not a creation of any evolution, but an artificially created set of surgical miracles. The story collapsed on the spot, and had to have an equally artificial ending tagged on to hold reader interest. It was just another wish-dream, carried to an extreme. If we can't have it by natural means, let's have it by surgery! Did it ever occur to him that he had created a group of cripples? As the story had it they were better than bisexual folk, but who cares how the story has it when nothing is offered to justify the point? The reader must think that one out for himself. What could have been sf was mere fantasy, and a rather jerry-built fantasy at that.

So far I have only offered the evidence as best I can recall it. What does it all amount to? For this I must refer back to my original statement, and point out that the meaning behind the words was that things are not always what they superficially seem. My aim was to poke a hole in the popular conception of Sturgeon's humanitarianism rather than to give it a correct name.

Now I have thought it over for three months, I realise that "sadism" was perhaps taking it a mite too far, but I stand resolutely on my point that his fabled humanitarianism is non-existent - in his writing, at any rate. How much this represents the man behind the writer is beyond mere conjecture and any attempt to pin him down on his writing alone would be grossly unfair.

So I withdraw the word "sadism" and submit two possibilities as the true main-spring of the Sturgeon oeuvre - that he uses violence and degradation (both sadistically and masochistically) simply as hooks for reader interest without any real intent to present understanding of the types concerned (and they are never more than types) - and that much of his sexual sloppiness has its roots in some sort of sexual aspiration and/or confusion which probably has no overt effect on his general life but is projected fully in his fantasy world. Further than this I refuse to go, because the evidence is not available to me. One deadly error in critical summation is to confuse the whole man with the part-man of his fantasies and projections.

I must add one note. Far from being a humanitarian, the fantasy evidence suggests that Sturgeon doesn't like human beings very much. Add hasn't much compassion for them either. He'll either change 'em or hurt 'em. And hurting 'em is easier.

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STANISLAW LEM Robots in Science Fiction

translated by FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER.
preprinted from QUARBER MERKUR

1 In the several times anthologized story COMPASSION CIRCUIT by John Wyndham, a man is so frightened about the body of his wife having been "androidized",

with only her living head remaining on an artificial torso, that he flees from the hospital and breaks his neck on the stairs.. Now it has always been possible to break one's neck, whether or not there are such "head transplantations", but is it possible that someone could feel such terror, in a society in which androids are produced to measure and heads exchanged at will? Would some one of us be frightened and flee a room when it is whispered to him that the old man appearing on the doorstep is alive only because he carries the heart of a young woman in his breast? The unlikely and anti-realistic thing about Wyndham's story is thus that it describes an event that couldn't happen under any circumstances. One might reply that Wyndham intended only to write a funny story. But the facts that serve as a premise even in a funny story must not be absurd: a funny story results when logical conclusions, drawn in a logically correct manner from acceptable premises, lead to something absurd. Wyndham's method is typical of a good part of sf: into the world of contemporary conditions, passed off as a future world, the author puts an occurrence which is derived from possible or impossible techniques of the future, and depicts the reactions of human beings who then are psychologically as well as sociologically false. The impossible takes the place of the possible.

2 Literary "mainstream" criticism treats sf occasionally with a sort of good-natured disregard. Authors and aficionados of the genre often try to prove what a magnificent old tradition sf has, extending several centuries into the past; in Greece there existed worthy myths, and sf is a myth of technological civilization. Therefore you have to esteem it highly; but an abominable criticism will not recognize its virtues. Who, then, is right?

3 I have been asked to write about robots in science fiction, but I can't do it without preparing the ground. The world of the past was stable and without change. What, basically, do all myths say? They are ontological hypotheses about immanent properties of existence. The world of the classical fairy-tale is determined ethically in a positive sense; good always remains victorious in its fight against evil. The world of the fairy-tale is an ideal homeostate: evil destroys the balance, there is a reaction which at least restores the balance or, more often, the final situation is even better than the original one. Therefore the laws of the world of the fairy-tale are determined by ethics. Its physics, as one might put it, is on the side of the positive hero.

The world of the myth is also a homeostate, although one that doesn't care for the well-being of the citizens of the world. But it isn't an ordinary world which one could equate with our world: it is predetermined in such a way that one can act in it as one will, but one can achieve only such purposes as have been determined by the world, over human heads. It is therefore a teleological world, i.e. one directed at certain goals, but it is subject to laws which turn human destiny brutally, in a self-willed fashion and sometimes with an evil intention, into certainly always meaningful, but more often horrifying things. They turn a son into the murderer of his father and into the lover of his own mother, no matter what he may do to escape such a destiny. That is the ontological structure, the frame of destiny in the mythical world, which in its predestination is similar to the ontology of the fairy tale, but attributes to it another axiological sign - a negative one.

4 The extent to which the anonymous authors of myths and fairy tales have intentionally put together the supporting main structures of their works needn't interest us at all. We simply find such facts when we consider fairy

tales and myths. As authors we cannot simply borrow such structures, because they have a specific meaning. They interpret their world in a very concrete, very definite way. We mustn't repeat mechanically and without understanding what the authors of myths and fairy tales have said about the immanent nature of things just because we admire such works aesthetically, for we do not believe any more that the world is a homeostate, directed frontally toward man - that it does, to be brief, at all care - whether by good or evil intent - for man. In the realistic world which is described by literature, there exists no predestination and no meaning so long as there is no man. He can not read the meanings of the stars, the planets, the suns. They contain no hidden meaning. They are just there. They simply exist.

5 The programme of artificial creation of man is blasphemy in our cultural sphere. The act of creation is to be repeated by man; therefore it is a caricature, the attempt of humans to become equal to God. According to the dogma, such audacity cannot succeed; and should it happen it necessarily means that devilish forces were engaged in the work, that hell has helped the creator of the homunculus.

But there exist myths of pre-Christian times which talk about homunculi and do not consider them to be the result of co-operation of humans with the devil. For those myths had arisen in pre-Christian times, as well as far from Judaism, the ancestor of Christianity. For a religion can be quite neutral to the problem of an "artificial production of human beings"; only the Mediterranean culture, modified by Christianity, considers the homunculus to be the result of blasphemy, as I remarked above. It is for this reason that those "archetypal robots", those literary prototypes from earlier centuries, such as the golem, are as a rule evil or at least sinister.

6 Generally, one can note the following facts: the relationship of belief to specific techniques is always determined by consideration of whether or not this particular belief has dealt in its dogmatic part with those techniques at all. Christian belief had dealt with the automation of sewing neither positively nor negatively, and therefore the sewing-machine is an absolutely neutral object - for religious belief. Belief has dealt with flying insofar as it speaks of angels; and because of this there was a time when all attempts to master flight were believed by theologians to be something close to blasphemy. And with the human mind belief has dealt intensively: and so the homunculus has become in our civilisation a technical product which is at least partly "determined by the devil".

7 In science, truth is not a quality of singular scientific statements; it depends upon the whole system. The same applies for all literature. Only for the world "truth" we have to substitute "value". The value of objects which are to be found in a literary work (i.e. which are described in it) is determined by the totality of the work as a system, and indeed a meaningful, a semantic system. Fantastic literature can have several functions: and because of this any objects that can be found in literary texts can have quite different values. Although the devil appears as part of the plot of Thomas Mann's DOCTOR FAUSTUS, this novel is not a work that would belong to demonology or fantastic literature. The devil in that novel has rather the function of a sign in the semantic sense, and truly he is a subordinate part of a system that belongs to the paradigmatic structure of the Faustus myth. But we do not intend to talk about epic and realistic works, not even when they occasionally show "fantastic beings", be they robots, devils or vampires. We shall talk about fantastic literature. How do we recognise it?

8 Fantastic literature

- (a) can preach a fictitious philosophy in the sense of a fictitious ontology, as does happen, for instance, in the works of J L Borges. The worlds of his stories are not "physical objects". They are semantic objects which embody a certain fictitious ontology. A fantastic philosophical system in literature is expounded not discursively, but with quasi-physical objects.
- (b) can be a tale which has its origins in an adaptation of paradigmatic structures. Such structures can be derived in two directly opposed ways:

I The author can hide the "loaned" structure from the reader. He will tell us, for instance, of the decline of a planetary civilisation, but uses as a skeleton for his plot the structure of the mystery novel: the question "Who killed the rich, old civilisation of the planet Cygni?" is answered in a way that is really (i.e. structurally) an answer to the question: "Who killed the rich, old aunt?" Or in the novel there appears a being which acts like a blockhead, a catatonic, but is called a "robot".

II The author can, on the other hand, as does Cordwainer Smith, tell us clearly and unmistakably which paradigm his story tries to imitate. He then doesn't hide anything from us; he writes a new variation of an old theme; but he also doesn't speak about the real world. He is building an autonomous world within the ontological frame of the myth or the fairy-tale and calls it such. The author we have mentioned under I, on the other hand, tries to obliterate the borderline between the unreal world of myths and the real world which is a multiplicity of physical possibilities.

- (c) can also deal with real problems: it then chooses for a stage the same world in which we live, i.e. the same ontology as a variety of universal laws.

We have said that: the sum of all texts of sf consists of two kinds:

- (1) Either sf talks about what can possibly happen in the real continuum (in the future) or could have happened (in the past), and then it tries to become a branch of realistic literature that sets up hypotheses, or
- (2) It is a game, played with autonomous rules which can deviate at will from the rules to which our world is subject. That play can again have two mutually exclusive properties: it is either an "empty" play which has no relationship with the real world - like chess - or it is semantically addressed to the world, in which case we have a parable or an allegory.

9 Several conclusions follow from what we have said so far. If somebody wants to tell us what horrible consequences technological progress may have, even when only the happiness of mankind is intended, and then proceeds to develop his proof by building a world in which all possible kinds of work have become automated, we needn't take the "technological parameters" of the robots which inhabit the paradise too seriously. If, on the other hand, somebody wants to tell us which kinds of robots can be constructed and which technological qualities those robots may have, he (i.e., for his creation) accepts the judgment of scientific facts. Between the world of today and the world of yesterday there is this difference: the universe of facts and the universe of all things that were thinkable yesterday formed two separate spaces, closed hermetically to each other. But today the universe of facts

and this second one, the universe of all things which can be thought, form a complicated system. For part of the second number moves in a direction which will collide with the universe of facts in the future, or, to put it differently, those two universes overlap partly, and this overlapping must be considered a function of time. When we read sf we therefore must distinguish between those works which are located in the universe of the "for all times impossible" and those works which belong to the set of things which can become fact. The main difference between today and yesterday lies in the movement which every year brings several ideas and things corresponding to them from the realm of the fantastic, empty names, into the realm of real things. Such as, for instance, "the old man with the heart of a young woman".

10 But what now, of robots? Their description in sf we can consider

(a) as an attempt at futurological prediction; we are to be taught what these thinking machines will look like, how they will operate and of what feats they'll be capable. And this can, of course, be described as a social, psychological or an anthropological problem. For the "psychology of robots" or the relationship between robot and human is a limited problem; and the question of the "metaphysical world view" of robots is quite a different problem; and the structure, as well as the social codes of a society which produces robots in quantity is again a problem of quite a different order. Or,

(b) as a work intended to say nothing about the "immanence" of robots or their "existential problems"; it can be an allegory, a parable, a fairy tale, a humorous sketch or something grotesque. Were we intending to think precisely and wholly logically, we should have to say that such an sf isn't proper "science fiction", not fiction with a scientific basis.

From the point of view of classification, it must be considered to be in the same class as the works of Kafka, for instance. But some sort of classificatory laziness has had its effect there and caused the contemporary jungle of genological space. For the story of Kafka about the metamorphosis of human being into bug is not a work of sf; it doesn't say anything about the "futureslogical perspectives" of such a transfiguration, and were somebody to claim that Kafka had written a work of "entomological sf" we should have to call such a specialist a lunatic. Equally, Schiller's ROBBERS isn't a mystery play; but were somebody intending to classify all works as to which separate objects and properties are depicted in them, he would be forced to the conclusion that Schiller worked in the same genre as Agatha Christie.

11 Let's similarly divulge the sad secret: all robots in sf are most uninteresting beings, regardless of whether they are presented as "futureslogical prognoses" or as "mythic objects". The relationships between robot and human in sf are modelled with the help of some three or four stereotypes. The objects of imitation are:

- (a) the relationship between man and machine.
- (b) the relationship between master and slave.
- (c) the relationship between man and succubus and incubus.
- (d) the relationship between man and transcendence (God, Holy Spirit, etc.).

I shall say no more than a few words about any of those variations.

From the first stem the three laws of robotics of Isaac Asimov. It isn't very

difficult to prove that they are technically unrealizable. This is a question of logical, not of technological analysis. For to be intelligent means: to be able to change your hitherto existing programme by conscious acts of the will, according to the goal you have set yourself. Therefore a robot can remain for all eternity harmless for men, but then he must also be dumb, as it were. But should he be intelligent, be able to act of his own volition, he must have the potentiality to change his programme at will. In short: what can be thought and what is also physically possible, can be realized. Of course, it would be possible to build into the robot an adequate analogue of the "categorical imperative"; but when man as is only too well known can break this "categorical imperative" without much effort, a robot built on a similar principle would have to be able to do the same. Safe-guards can indeed be built into robot brains, but they will only act as limiters of their deeds in a statistical way. He may perhaps kill only one human being in 1,000,000 cases: but it won't be possible to exclude that chance. In addition - and now we speak about a quite different problem - it is possible to do harm unintentionally, as happens when a child kills an animal inadvertently by putting a poisonous substance into its fodder: here the evil is done without intention. Under the conditions of real life we operate by making decisions without being totally informed about the results of our deeds; and should a constructor build very strong safe-guards into a robot, in order that he not harm anyone the robot would very often appear to be completely paralyzed. Were he, for instance, to witness several people drowning at the same time he most probably wouldn't be able to help any one of them, for he would know that his decision would diminish the chances of all other drowning people to be saved. Such a robot couldn't be considered a very satisfactory construction. I have forgiven Asimov many things, but not his laws of robotics, for they give a wholly false picture of the real possibilities. Asimov has just inverted the old paradigm: where in myths the homunculi were villains, with demoniac features, he has thought out the robot as the "positive hero" of sf, as having been doomed to eternal goodness by engineers. And when Norbert Wiener wanted to speak - in THE HUMAN USE OF HUMAN BEINGS - of the dangers of intellectionics may have in store for us he was unable to find a proper example in the sf field and expounded the problem with a fantasy story: THE MONKEY'S PAW.

I do not know of any sf stories in which the robots become the masters and the humans slaves. Should they exist, they form a very small minority. The subject of the relationship of "master-slave" is used in such a way that it is the humans who become the masters of the robots. In such cases the relationship is modelled after the pattern of third-rate structures. For instance the relationship of the "good white man" and the "good-natured black servant" is used as a paradigm, or it is similar to the relationship between master and dog. What is important about this is that the structure of such relationships is taken not from life, but from one-dimensional fiction which provides handy clichés. Any complex depiction of the psychological (interpersonal) problems cannot be expected from this. Occasionally you'll counter fictitious technological objects - the Nautilus of Verne, for instance - that you'd never mistake for other objects of the same kind from other books. But I do not know even one figure of a robot which would have impressed me as a reader in a similar way. As "machine-like" objects robots therefore are depicted falsely, and as psychological individuals they are depicted dully in sf. When mankind dies off, in the course of a catastrophe, we occasionally find robots as unhappy survivors (as in ORPHANS IN THE VOID by Michael Shaara), for instance. The intellectual poverty that becomes apparent there is depressing.

To talk about the relationship between human being and automaton in the sexual sphere is impossible here. Therefore, with the utmost brevity: since all sf suffers in the space of "cosmic sexual life" from Victorianism and puritanism, which are inborn sicknesses that result in a paralysis of thought and imagination, this condition, which moves us to pity, has its paralysing consequences also in the field of robotics. The situation is made worse by the fact that psychological insight has never been a forte of sf writers. What remains for creation, when the sexual is tabooed and the psychological-erotic is unattainable? Only the simplifying grotesque which is arrived at by translating all possible human relationships in the erotic field into the robotic, as has been done by Fritz Leiber in *THE SILVER EGGHEADS*. There we have mechanical bordellos with prostitute-androids and, as a special exoticism, the sexual life of robots amongst themselves, with their contacts and plugs. All this appears to be quite comic, but soon the reader sees through the mechanical principle of such creation and when continued, only boredom sets in. There is something sinister about the paradigmatic relationship between man and incubus, because there we have most intimate contacts with a creature of hell; that relationship therefore has stood in the light of black transcendence. But all thinkable things that you can do with an android mistress don't go beyond gymnastic acrobatics, unless she is a personality in the psychological sense of the word. Only then is the theme transposed to a new level rich in problems; however you must determine definitely several parameters to be able to solve the problems concerned. For, if there are intelligent androids on sale, which can act as secretaries or house-servants, certain social opinions (or biases, if you will) will crystallize. Either it is believed in general that there is nothing more common than escapades in such a direction, or they would be met with distaste and horror. It could also be that a man who prefers a female android to a real woman would be thought a ridiculous, effeminate weakling. It cannot be predicted just how the norms of public opinion will develop, not even if all the technical parameters of robots were known, for such norms in the realm of moral life tend to evolve into unpredictable mass-statistical processes. Therefore there exists a certain freedom in this field for the writer; but it is remarkable that this theme (of the incubus) hasn't resulted in any serious attempts. So, for instance, *LA FEMME MODELEE* by Luc Vignan, a leading fantasist (as French criticism has it) is neither pornographic, nor psychological-erotic, nor interesting literature, but superficial nonsense, in no way to be compared to *L'EVE FUTURE* by de l'Isle Adam. And yet this latter appeared nearly a century ago! In this realm also science fiction has gone to the dogs.

All themes connected with religion are excluded from the realm of sf, and what few exceptions there are only demonstrate this rule. Therefore nothing really good on the attitude of robots towards metaphysics can be found. Asimov's story, *THE LAST QUESTION*, about the computer who became God after several billion years, is just about the best: but little is to be found on what robots think about God, heaven, earth and human beings. The well-known story by Anthony Boucher, *THE QUEST FOR SAINT AQUIN*, is marred by a logical error. The monk, who has been sent by the Pope to find the corpse of a saint, recognizes the dead one as a robot. The robass who is present tempts the papal legate by trying to persuade him to keep secret the true nature of his discovery. The monk is enraged: you cannot help the victory of truth with lies! But it has been said earlier that the holy robot, during his missionary work, pretended to be a human being, indeed, he dies because he refused to visit a mechanic, since such a cure would have made apparent his mechanical nature. Therefore the holy robot himself has lied to the people to whom he preached the gospel. He kept hidden his true nature and preferred to die

rather than make evident this nature. Therefore he served truth with the pretence of being a human being among human beings, and this was a lie.

It is rather simple to write robot stories. First you have to invent a dramatically interesting situation or conflict, and then you call, within this context, the one or the other human being a "robot", or the author can advance all the characters to the status of a robot, as has been done by Harrison in his collection WAR WITH THE ROBOTS. What do minor clerks, mechanics, executives talk about amongst each other? That the cost of living is very high, that cures for bilious complaints cost a lot, et cetera. And what do Harrison's robots talk about? The replacements parts cost a lot, that a new knee-joint is quite expensive, that the superiors are rascals and exploiters. Very interesting, isn't it? In his volume, Harrison has described a very effective police-robot: but he really is a "mechanized superman" with built-in criminological apparatus. But to return to transcendence. In I, ROBOT Asimov has written about a robot who - at last! - arrived at the idea that he was created by God who selected human beings as his tools. But then the whole problem (of such a consciousness and self-understanding and the existential questions connected with them) dissolves into nothing. The robot works effectively, just as he has been programmed: it is only that he thinks something heterodox. Asimov has skilfully avoided all the depths that begin to open, much as in a slalom race. But literature isn't a slalom, for it brings intricate problems into the light of day, whereas sf escapes them. It will be very interesting to hear what theological thinkers claim for the souls of robots. Can a robot have a soul at all? No? And what if he happens to be smarter, more intelligent than human beings? The future will perhaps see intelligence-amplifiers that will surpass human minds. What about them? Indeed, you can build bionic aggregates, half human and half machine. Should theologians come to the decision that an artificially created automaton hasn't an immortal soul, what then is the case with such halflings which have, say, 36% of a natural and 64% of an artificial brain? Has such a (bionically built) being only 36% of a soul? It would be nonsense to maintain any such thing. But a decision has to be made when we have the construction of robots. But what does sf tell us of those problems which arise from the confrontation of cultural norms and the complex trends of the techno-evolution? It is not malice which makes us ask such questions. One can read about bionic aggregates not only in sf, but also in futurological books - in Herman Kahn for instance. How, therefore, will they be regarded, once they are there? Should it be the case that sf has made any statements about this, not one example is known to me. Regrettably sf is subject to a strong tabooistic pressure, and all the talk about their perfect freedom in the realm of all possible hypotheses (about which, for instance, there was much talk this year at a meeting of the science fictioneers in the USA) simply isn't true. A man who has been hypnotized to believe that he is alone in a room will act as if he didn't notice any of the other beings in the room, but he will nevertheless walk around any of them: and that's just the behaviour of sf towards all difficult (since tabooed) dilemmas. It isn't good when one has been robbed of the freedom of speech, but it is even worse when one declares in such a situation that there is no enslavement. What good things can one say about creators who don't want to fight against censorship because, they try to tell us, it isn't there.

12 It isn't always easy to point clearly and unmistakably to the passages in a literary work that cause its aesthetic inferiority. It is much simpler, on the other hand, to point out the logical, as well as the factual, consequences of a work. Were we intending to describe all the sick passages

of those texts which are composed badly in the latter sense, we should need a whole volume. Therefore we will give only a few extreme examples of the nonsense which dominates the robot field in sf.

In the novelet HOME THERE'S NO RETURNING by H Kuttner and C L Moore, a super-robot is built as a "strategic brain" and goes mad so that humans must fight him: the cause of this mad behaviour is explained thus - it was a "robot neurosis". Under the burden of military decisions the brain of steel has broken down. That is, a robot cannot bear the burden of responsibility which human beings can bear without difficulty. This implied parallel between human brain and mechanical brain is based on an absurd premise, for while one can compare parameters such as the "hardness" of a steel brain and the "softness" of a biological brain, the hardness or softness of a psychical process has nothing to do with the material from which the brain has been built.

To marvel at the fact that a human being can work smoothly where the robot breaks down, though the human consists of "soft albumen" and the robot of "hard steel" is as absurd as if someone wondered that Venus, though mild goddess of love, consists of hard marble, and an armed knight on the other hand is painted on the "soft linen" of a picture. The stability of a process of computing information has nothing in common with the substratum of the informative machine: i.e. there is no physical connection between those parameters.

The falsity of R Merliss's novella THE STUTTERER is located elsewhere. Mighty robots who have done their extraterrestrial work are to be walled inbetween concrete for all eternity. One of them secretly comes to earth, to ask from man pardon for himself and his brothers. After some action good mankind, moved by his courage and his willingness to let himself be sacrificed, gives the sign of mercy. Let us imagine a Biafran who tried to ask this good mankind for mercy for his tortured country: what help would he get? Not the stuttering robot idiot, but good humanity is the false part of this melodramatic story.

In one case therefore the robot, in another his human environment, is depicted falsely, since it is depicted anti-realistically. Not only specific stories but the whole genre claims in regard to this subject that robots are rather dumb creatures which sometimes remind you of catatonics: androids, on the other hand, are psychically quite human. Why is this so? Do the qualities of the emotive processes of any being depend upon its outward human shape? A psychical life of robots exists in sf only apparently: they are but mechanical automatons, similar to enlarged toys. In THE INSTIGATORS by R E Banks the specialists who deal with the programming of robots form a sort of guild, and the programming is done as a calling; when the strip of paper which has been perforated in a certain way is put into the body of the robot, he begins to awaken and does what he has been ordered to. That's pure nonsense, of course. And even though we might disregard this business with programming, the robots of Banks are automatons in the same sense as the well-known Swiss dolls, built a century and a half ago. They cannot adapt to a changed situation.

And when we are, once in a while, told about the spiritual life of such a being, it soon transpires that between the qualities of the consciousness of an artificial and a human being there exist no differences at all, as in the story by Pohl, THE TUNNEL UNDER THE WORLD. The talking hero is a robot, or an android; he is a copy of a dead human, and his behaviour is that of a human being. Now this story is quite good: indeed, one of the best. But as we

see, sf is quite unable to either describe the differentia specifica of technological homunculi, or to suggest it hypothetically as a new psychical quality; the robot is either an iron blockhead, a dumb bloke, or he is turned into quite an ordinary being, as if any third alternative were excluded! There exist several good, or even excellent stories in which robots appear, for instance SHORT IN THE CHEST by Idris Seabright, but the value in such texts is to be found outside the robot theme.

13 Is there no salvation, are there no sources that could be examined, if one wanted to set up the portrait of a being which is humanlike and yet at the same time impresses us as alien? The logical theory of automata tells us that it is necessary to put an "ego-model" into a hierarchically organized automaton; i.e. when the automaton, during the course of his adaption to his environment, models its picture in his interior, he has to, according the law of logical symmetry, set a model of his body against the model of the world, and this is the reason for the condition peculiar to all philosophy, that we have an "ego-centred" consciousness. Now there exists no complete formula for the literary construction of a robot, but the construction has to go through certain stages, all of them in close touch with the accumulated theoretical and empirical material of specialist robot literature. If we disregard this, it is of course possible to write interesting, even excellent, works, which have got nothing to do with the real course of evolution of automatons.

The aficionado may be content with such texts naturally. Sf can also, naturally, tell us all possible unrealistic things about robots. I'm not asking for a normative, here: empirically-based aesthetics in any field of art. But if sf doesn't say even a single word about the real shape of the developments of the future, who then, i.e. what kind of literature, is going to enlighten us?

14 So far as we can see, the main directions of the real intellectronic evolution and its reflection in sf are diverging more and more. Intellectronics goes in the direction of the computer, and sf is mostly based on fictitious robots. The theme of the artificial human being had, as is known and has been noted, its ancestors in myths: the logical computer, on the other hand, has been created in a mythically empty space. But whereas the further possibilities of the development of robots either lead into a civilisatory dead end or are stopped by real technological developments, the evolutionary potential of computers remains unlimited - as far as we can tell today. The production of robots leaves us with a fatal dilemma: should it become possible to build a being which has been created synthetically, but who nevertheless has all the psychical qualities of a human being, then it is no longer possible to use such a being-like machine. It cannot be sent to a lost post: it cannot be ordered to do something which will surely lead to its own destruction, for this would be an infamous act. And should the robot have no way of opposing the order (because it has been so programmed) the construction would appear to be an especially infamous proceeding. A being that is psychically so similar to a human being is, considered ethically, a human being. If we do not murder cripples, degenerates, dimwitted people just because they are human, we also cannot treat artificial beings in so murderous a way. And, what is pragmatically an even more important argument, even should it be possible to build robots as "higher beings" - that is, as beings who surpass humans (as more intelligent, morally better creatures, et cetera) - it would be nonsense to people the world with such "supermen". Only misfortune (for both sides) could be the result of such a course. Now we may

hear that such ethically-based arguments have no power in real life: for even if it were a crime to act as we have suggested, human beings will nevertheless do it when they think it will serve their own interests. But the portrait of a world in which all working places have been taken over automaton equipped with personality is wholly false. The automation of the production process is effected in such a way that those processes are connected in their physical and informative-regulating parts. In an automated factory there are no two-legged robots and they aren't likely to be there some time in the future; not the moral now, but the technological directives point so. The picture of a machine guarded by a machine who perhaps, after work, will exchange a few words with his electronic colleagues and then go home to his electronic wife is pure nonsense; the informative-supervising part of a production machine will not be separated from its productive-working part. It isn't worth the effort and it never will be, economically, to build volitional and intelligent automaton as part of the production process. Even different parts of those processes which belong to the sphere of private life are being automated separately, as happens today; an automatic clerk won't be able to wash the dishes, and a machine washing dishes won't be able to talk with its proprietor.

Although possible in principle, such products of the robot market which are as universal as human beings in the field of functions will always cost a lot: in any case, the totality of automaton for doing housework, lacking all psychical characteristics, will be much cheaper than one single robot with a clever electronic head.

This isn't an idyllic picture of the future. Most likely simulacra of human beings will be constructed, especially as guinea-pigs for scientific studios, and they can be experimented with in ways that would be considered acts of cruelty today. So far as computers are concerned - they have been created, as has been said, in a mythically empty place. Therefore one cannot use legends and myths to obtain ready plot structures for sf. There exist no such sources in the treasure-trove of world literature. You have, as a science fictioneer, to do your own work there. But the history of mankind is full of examples of the efforts to which human beings went in order that they might avoid having to think of their own accord. Because of this computers, despite their futurological perspectives, are much neglected in sf. They appear in it as strategic, counselling and governing machines. As strategists they generally are dumb: the military plans calculated by such electronic monsters resemble in their degree of difficulty simple mathematical school exercises. This is the case, for instance, in Peter George, whose two novels depict the end of the world during an atomic war. As rulers they can be equated with quite ordinary psychological testing automaton; they serve as a sieve to separate the loyal members of society from the deviants. This is the case, for instance, in van Vogt and Sheckley and countless others. They sometimes are originally conceived as counsellors (for instance in Wallace's DELAY IN TRANSIT) where, the size of a pea, they can be carried around in one's ear. But almost always they are personified. They therefore are not computers in the proper sense of the word, but micro-miniaturized robots.

Today we can think of the following roles for computers of the future:

- (a) It can be an intelligence amplifier of enormous dimensions, i.e., an "intellectronic genius", a wise man: and sf sometimes does mention wise computers which then, sadly, (as is the case with Simak, for instance) offer the most trivial banality as an intellectual revelation. They may be shown, but never urged to express themselves, for we can believe in their wisdom only as long as they remain silent.

(b) It can be the theme of satirical texts: then we have an end to all prediction. It nevertheless is very interesting and amusing to read how two strategic computers of inimical sides come to a secret agreement in order to rape this nauseating humanity into peace at last. But when such things are presented as a futurological prediction, we have an aberration. MacGowan and Ordway, two American authors, have written a thick volume, INTELLIGENCE IN THE UNIVERSE, in which they maintain quite earnestly that such computers, used as strategists, will indeed come to an understanding between themselves, force mankind to keep peace, and govern as severe, but just, rulers.

Those Americans also know exactly what will happen later: tired of ruling, such automatons will leave earth in order to find "intellectronic geniuses" of their own kind as "thinking colleagues" in space, and mankind will then put together another automatic ruler; after some time this ruler in turn will grow tired of the business of government and travel away, and so on, until the Day of Judgment. It is very pleasing to learn that not only the American science fictioneers have remained intellectually in the state of childhood.

15 But such twaddle has got nothing to do with our future on earth. As you can see, difficile est satiram non scribere, even when you try to remain serious.

16 A computer can be the basis for psychic-symbiotic processes, that is, of a close co-operation between man and machine. That possibility never has been tried out in literature, because the authors simply don't understand that then there'll be no "tandem" work; the human being then has no partner in the psychological sense, but is informatively plugged into the machine as a whole, just as a good driver becomes one with his car. The robot may be similar to a human being; but to humanize the computer only means to exhibit paralysis of one's imagination and one's knowledge: a computer isn't a human being, but a whole universe of possibilities (according to the theorem of Turing concerning his universal automaton). It could form the basis of an experimental philosophy: for if there are powerful computers, we will be able to simulate all possible things in them.

For instance - sociological processes: it would be possible to model the rise and the decline of a civilisation, or the development of a religious belief, or an economic crisis and the ensuing panic. It would be possible to model autonomous worlds, with properties which the different philosophical systems have attributed to our world, for instance the strictly deterministic world of Laplace or the monadic world of Leibniz with its "pre-stabilised harmony". One could model a being who not only metaphorically but actually would be a "trinity" in the sense of Freud: as ego, superego and id. One could therefore verify hypotheses of an anthropological, futurological or philosophical nature. One could divide the interior of a computer into the "world" and its "inhabitants" in order to do research into the relationship between object and subject. Yes indeed, one can write a book about the things one could do with computers (which I have tried to do). Even if it is occasionally impossible to mathematize linear processes, they nevertheless can be subjected to a modelization. One of the most difficult problems of the future is the dilemma of the autoevolution of human beings. Should genetic engineers consider humans only as machines whose parameters are in need of optimization? So-called cyborgisation points in this direction. Considered purely from a technological point of view, the more a machine becomes independent of its environment the better it is. But there is a dependence of

human beings on their environment (such as erotic, social ties, the ties of friendship and so on) which form autonomous values, i.e. which aren't subordinated to an end. A cyborg who doesn't need to eat, drink, breathe, because he has a built-in atomic source of energy, who can blot out any memory by a simple act of his will, becomes a machine which is, as far as function is concerned, more perfect than a human, because it cannot feel hunger, thirst, lack of air, anything. But in such a way, step by step, everything which is the civilisatory core of all our values of life gets destroyed. Therefore different projects of autoevolution would have to be tested with models, and only then would it be possible to think of the realization of a selected model.

The computer is a universal instrument for the acquisition of knowledge, but it is also a source of danger. The condition in which a society allows itself to be governed by computers as rulers may not arrive by way of a common agreement (by way of a public poll), but can become realized, very slowly, creepingly and continually, so that it will prove impossible to tell at any point of such a course of development whether or not the "electronic government" has already become a fact. To supervise ^{with} single computers/a single computer whose business it is to see that certain parameters are kept in balance is a task which can be solved relatively easily, but the switching of thousands and thousands of computers into the different parts of the social structure can lead to a situation that as a whole is quite incomprehensible. For the problem is this: the computer is only then plugged into the process (as a regulator) when a human being is unable to optimize the process, because it completely escapes the comprehension of any human, i.e. is outside the limits of his utmost capabilities. The programme limits the field of all decisions which can be made by such a computer: but when a very large number of computers co-operate, whether connected directly or informatively by humans, then their effects aren't a factor which could be contained in the programme of any one of them, for those effects form a resulting factor. But who shall, in such a situation, guard the computer-net, i.e. who guards the guardian? This task can be too difficult for a human being: the building of a hierarchy of regulators which were strictly one-way directed, may prove impossible: in any case it is very difficult to prove with a certainty of one hundred per cent that all the relevant parameters of the whole system are under control according to plan. In real life, for instance, a society which computerized itself can grow dumb within a few generations, because the most intelligent people may pose difficulties for the regulative work of the computer-net, and the net will then try to eliminate such people, as a nuisance, from the system.

The most important thing about this is always that computers do not do anything consciously, because we cannot attribute to them psychological reasons that would be understandable by way of intuitive feeling: they do not strive for power, they do not know egotism, for they have no ego and no personality. Therefore they are, whether as single units or all together, considered anthropologically-psychologically, nobody at all: they are but a number of historically new factors, new powers which will co-determine the further course of history: which is a totally new thing in our experience. Something like this hasn't existed in all the civilisations of the past or the present, and therefore the problem posed by this can be solved only in a way which isn't a repetition of something we already know and have already lived through.

We have simplified this problem, one of a large number, rather brutally. We intended only to point out that it isn't possible to construct a reflection of the conditions of the future with cliches. For it isn't the archetypes of Jung, not the structures of the myth, not irrational nightmares which cause the

central problems of the future and determine them. And should the future be full of dangers, those dangers nevertheless cannot be reduced to the known patterns of the past. They have a unique quality, as a variety of factors of a new type; and this is the most important thing for a writer of sf. But sf has meanwhile built itself a jail, and imprisoned itself within its walls, because it doesn't understand that the salvation of the creative imagination cannot be found in mythical, existential or surrealistic writings - as a new information about the conditions of existence. By cutting itself off from the stream of scientific facts and hypotheses, sf itself has helped to erect the walls of the literary ghetto, where it now lives out its piteous life.

- Stanislaw Lem 1969

YOU MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT...

EXPLODING MADONNA No 1 .. original length 4 pages .. yellow quarto .. pica .. two aphorisms printed under EM 2, SFC page 6.

EM 2 .. 16 pages .. yellow quarto .. pica .. second half of IN A FEW WORDS originally on page 16 .. WHEN TO SESSIONS OF SWEET SILENCE, extensively revised, appeared as FUTURE IMPERFECT (S F COMMENTARY No 10, pages 14 to 23).

EM 3 .. 17 pages .. yellow quarto .. pica.

EM 4 .. 6 pages .. yellow quarto .. pica.

EM 5 .. 15 pages .. green quarto .. pica .. SAMUEL DELANY's letter reprinted as SAMUEL R DELANY WRITES (SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, No 31, pages 7 to 14).

EM 6 .. 14 pages .. yellow quarto .. elite.

JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY No 1 .. 18 pages .. yellow quarto .. cubic elite .. second half of THE INCOHERENT FUMBLER originally appeared on page 18 .. CHEWING GUM FOR THE VULGAR reprinted in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW No 35, pages 6 to 14.

JOE SUPPLEMENT No 1 .. 7 pages .. yellow quarto .. cubic elite .. POLAND: SCIENCE FICTION IN THE LINGUISTIC TRAP, first reprinted in S F COMMENTARY, No 9, pages 27 to 33. Later reprinted in WSFA JOURNAL, No 74, pages 14 to 18. .. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS was reprinted as FICTION MACHINES: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR READING THE MAGAZINES (references to Ellison deleted) in S F COMMENTARY No 6, page 26.

JOE No 2 .. 16 pages .. yellow quarto .. cubic elite .. A NOTE IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE PURSE originally appeared on page 16 .

JOE No 3 .. 20 pages .. old gold quarto .. cubic elite .. second half of LINT originally appeared on page 20 .. ROBOTS IN SCIENCE FICTION will appear in EXTRAPOLATION.

** ** *

Last stencil typed April 2, 1971.

This issue consumed 40 reams of Gestetner No 201 Impression Paper and 1 ream Roneo Impression Paper. It was hand-duplicated on a Gestetner 120 duplicator (that's 33,000 turns of the handle) and cost ahelluva lot.

Approximately 240 copies of this issue were printed, of which this is

NUMBER

69

S F COMMENTARY

NUMBER 19

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 1971
130 plus x Pages plus Covers

Edited, published and printed by

BRUCE R GILLESPIE of
GPO BOX 5195AA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3001,
AUSTRALIA.

Available for letters of comment, traded
magazines, articles, reviews or graphics, or \$3
for P. In USA it's \$3 for 9 surface mail or
\$8 airmail from Charles & Dena Brown, 2078
Anthony Ave, Bronx, New York 10457. In England
it's £1.50 for 9 or £4.00 airmail from Malcolm
Edwards, 236 Kings College, Cambridge.

The contents of this issue were first

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY

JOHN FOYSTER

12 GLENGARIFF DRIVE, MULGRAVE, VICTORIA 3170,
AUSTRALIA

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FRANZ RÖTTENSTEINER, FELSENSTRASSE 20, A-2762
ORTMANN, AUSTRIA.

THIS ISSUE REPRINTS:

EXPLODING MADONNA

EXPLODING MADONNA No 1 - April 1968

JOHN FOYSTER

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COVER:

PHOTO & ENLARGEMENT:
Lee Harding.

DESIGN:

John Bangsund.

INTERIOR PANELS:

Dimitrii Razuvaev.

ELECTRONIC STENCILS:

Noel Kerr.

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GPO Box 5195AA
Melbourne
Victoria 3001
Australia.
30th March 1971

I first saw a copy of EXPLODING MADONNA at Lee Harding's some time in late 1968 or early 1969. The third issue had just appeared, but no Australian fan had heard of the magazine. At last I saw some copies of Numbers 1 and 2. They were printed on yellow paper, and John Foyster typed them with one of the worst pica type-faces I've ever seen. He printed about ten copies each of Numbers 1 and 2, and none of these copies went to Australians.

Eventually, John put me on the mailing list, and I watched EXPLODING MADONNA improve with each issue until it became JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY. Then it improved some more. Finally the magazine won a Ditmar Award. Major articles from it appeared in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and S F COMMENTARY. Even the type face became readable.

There was only one problem - very few people received the magazine, and probably fewer people read it. EM/JOE had become a legend because it was scarce, but there were people who might enjoy it who could not obtain it.

And five or six months after I thought of the idea, I have completed the task of reprinting all the copies of EXPLODING MADONNA and JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY. The only way you can justify the time and expence involved in this issue, is to read it. Nothing more, or less. Read it carefully, between the lines, below the surface, or simply for pleasure, which is why I read it.

I advise you to read this issue chronologically, watching the magazine's most important concerns develop through its pages. Fortunately none of these concerns have become dated - you can still write letters of comment about them, and I ask you to do so.

Now that I've finished most of the work on this issue, I still wonder if anyone will find a satisfactory way of talking about science fiction. Professionals, either in magazines or universities, should be able to do the job, but they don't. Nobody ever answered John's questions, and I can't. But you probably can, and I hope you do. And if you write to me, then I haven't wasted my time after all. In John Foyster's words: WAKE UP YOU LOT!

- BRUCE R GILLESPIE

12 Glengariff Drive
Mulgrave
Victoria 3170
Australia.
October 20, 1970

The trouble with writing about science fiction is that one becomes serious about it. This may only be restricted to people who tend to take life seriously, such as me (he added modestly), and to people who are incapable of taking serious things seriously, such as..... (the reader may enter here any name he wishes). One way or another, people get serious about science fiction, the most frivolous form of entertainment yet devised.

So when I felt that John Sangsund, then about the only publisher/editor approaching contemporary science fiction seriously, was being wafted into ethereal realms which had no connection with reality as she are I did something about it: I published a fanzine. Oh hell!

I guess the pages following this one make it fairly clear what this was all about (and still is), and I would be insulting you to tell you what is plainly before your eyes. But I can tell you something about what isn't before your eyes.

1 While many science fiction writers are interested in discussing what is going on in the world of science fiction, there are also quite a few whose epistolatory endeavours are directed solely towards the extraction of ego-boo: in a word, you gotta have a proper respect. I don't, comrades.

2 A big circulation helps. Because I give away all my fanzines, I don't like having big circulations for them. But anyone who wants egoboo alone will not be excited by this attitude. Be prepared.

3 Some science fiction writers are incurable snobs - and this seems to have more to do with income than with talent.

4 The next issue of JOE will appear early in 1972 (or maybe in 1973) - devoted to Cordwainer Smith. Do me a favour - don't write asking for it.

Thank you, Bruce.

JOHN FOYSTER

BITS AND PIECES

....which I hope you read, since I haven't published an issue for awhile.

APOLOGY

My sincere apologies to Peter Innocent and Dimitrii Razuvaev, who were slandered on the cover of S F COMMENTARY 18. As any regular fanzine reader would have realized, the drawing on the cover was by Bill Rotsler, and I did the design in about three minutes. However, I was living in Ararat, and communications broke down with Melbourne, and I had a whole issue run off, and no cover to hand, and... The cover that Peter designed should appear on the cover of S F COMMENTARY 20.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

I've hinted several times in this magazine, and said quite plainly in my other fanzine, METAPHYSICAL REVIEW, that I was not altogether happy teaching at Ararat. I'm no longer teaching, but working for the Publications Branch of the Victorian Education Department, and enjoying it very much. We publish magazines for both Victorian school children and teachers, and when the budget allows, we try to edit good magazines. Best of all, I'm paid a salary for writing. Address all communications to GPO BOX 5195AA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3001, AUSTRALIA.

INFLATION HITS S F COMMENTARY

Charlie Brown has asked me several times to raise the price of S F COMMENTARY. I didn't, because if enough people paid their \$3 for 18, I would still break even. Besides, I wanted more subscriptions.

Now, I don't want more subscriptions, unless people are willing to pay something like a good price for the magazine. Also, I want more letters of comment and contributions, and fewer non-corresponding subscribers. Most importantly, I want to publish some 52 page issues without making myself bankrupt. I have about 150 pages of material on hand - most of it is very good, and the rest is interesting. I need money to print it.

The new rates: exactly twice present rates: \$3 for 9. Airmail rates will be higher for USA and England: \$8 for 9 and £4 for 9 respectively. These rates will only apply to subs received after April 30. People on the present rates will stay on them. I reserve the right to print 26 page issues at 40 cents per copy.

THIS ISSUE IS ALREADY SCARCE

I aimed to print 250 copies of this magazine, and I will probably get 240 from the print run. Already I have a list of 220 names of people who will receive it. If you're not interested in reading it, please send your copy back. Somebody else will enjoy it, if you don't.

ADVERTISEMENTS

No room left. You should subscribe to LOCUS and SPECULATION (LOCUS rates will rise Very Soon Now. Send \$3 soon, or \$2 for 5 SPECS). SFC 20 is under way. Thanks to everybody who helped.

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