

# Speculation

October 1971 No.29



49 first-place  
Hugo votes  
is pretty good!



# Speculation

ISSUE 29 (VOLUME 3 NUMBER 5)

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## REMINISCENCES

James Blish barked across the room at his wife. The immediate mental picture that provokes of a fierce, domineering Jim Blish is completely false, however; he really did bark! It stopped conversation completely for a moment at the October meeting of the new Birmingham Science Fiction Group, but had the desired effect of setting Judy Blish rummaging in her handbag for her husband's cigarettes. "You never really know what these authors are like until you meet them, do you?" said someone.

This was towards the end of the sixth and most successful meeting to date of the new SF society in the Midlands, which had invited Jim Blish to deliver his talk on 'Science in SF'. After two previous moderately-disastrous meetings everything seemed to work out perfectly for this evening and Jim's talk was the very best - by a long way - that I have ever heard him deliver.

I really ought to try and dispell some misapprehensions about the state of things in Birmingham. For instance, whenever Vernon Brown and I visit the 'Globe' and start collecting money (as one of us invariably does) for some new project or other, we always hear the same comments. People say vaguely "Well of course you do have the Birmingham Group to run all these things for you".

But until recently - the end of June - there hasn't been a Group in the city in the sense that is usually meant. It is confusing so I think I'll reminisce a little. You see, excluding the student Group at the University of Aston, the old Birmingham Science Fiction Group ran into the ground in 1966 when all the members except myself seem to have rather rapidly lost interest.

(Continued on Page 4)

## REMEMBRANCES OF EASTERCON

I came away from Worcester with a lot of photographs (including some of my own which actually came out!) and the resolve to publish a set of photopages as my last, expiring act. Previous issues of SPECULATION have carried photopages of other conventions which have been entirely put together by my German agent Waldemar Kunning, Gary Kluepfel and other Munich fans; this time I decided to produce the whole thing myself - and had a great deal of fun in doing so.

Each of the following pages took about one evening to finish, a sort of giant jigsaw with pieces of constantly shifting sizes! My object was to try and show as many people and scenes as possible from Worcester - and I don't think I missing using anyone's photograph which was in my possession. There are exceptions though - for instance not a single photographic record seems to exist of James Blish, and several others who were at the convention.

Pictures here were taken by Michael Meara, Peter Roberts, Colin Moore (our 'official' con. photographer from the BSA studio.), Mr C. Duggan (our 'official' man supplied by the hotel, and who made prints available at the convention within just a few hours of taking them) and myself.

Picture 1: (top to bottom, left to right) James White, Brian Aldiss, Mark Adlard, Anne McCaffrey, Sadie Shaw, David Gerrold, John D. Berry (seated & booted.), Jean Finney, Bob Shaw, unknown, Fred Hemmings, Philip Strick, and unknown lady. (The two 'unknowns' have resisted all attempts at identification!)

Picture 2: Crisis in the BSFA Welcome Room! Treasurer Jill Adams guards cashbox against flabbergasted Rosemary Pardoe, Anne Girling, John Coombe, Darroll Pardoe and Wolverhampton fan Ken Eadie.

Picture 3: At coffee in the lounge (which had a superb view of the Cathedral). In foreground is Lizanne Strick with Margaret Aldiss and respective children. In the background is Joan Newman with other assorted infants.

Picture 4: Molly Auler, Jean Muggoch, Michel Feron, Gian Paulo Cossato. At bottom of picture - Florence Margeit and Seigrid Poesse.

Picture 5: "All right Parkinson, what's happened to Vector?" Guilty expression on the face of Bob Parkinson (second from right) prompts this question at a BSFA meeting between Roger Peyton (left), Michael Rosenblum, Bob, and Doreen /Parker.

### SECOND PAGE:

Picture 6: Myself - Peter Weston - and Rog Peyton auctioning-off several hundred-weight of valuable items, which included a number of rare fannish treasures such as THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR. Total receipts were £78.61.

Picture 7: Scene from the Publishers' (and Editors') panel - Anne McCaffrey, Diane Lloyd, Ken Bulmer, David Gerrold, Lionel Trippet (Arrow Books).

Picture 8: A composite of several views of the audience. Foreground is George Hay (with glasses), Bette Woodhead, Vic Hallet, John Brunner, Joan Newman, Georgeanne McCaffrey, Mrs Michael Meara & Mike Meara (with camera), Phil Muldowney and Lisa Conesa. Now things get complicated:-

To left of George Hay is unknown fan, above him is John Newman, and at top left corner is Dave Kyle. Then unknown, Sam Lundwall, Tom Schluck (both with glasses). Below Tom is Charles Legg, then Paula & David Berry. The rest of the audience is largely unknown but others visible do include Jack Marsh, Bryn Fortey Roy Kettle & Graham Charnock. Tony 'Buck' Rogers is standing up on right, tearing at his sweater; Carol Simpson, Ray Bradbury and Jenny Chandler are immediately behind Lisa Conesa.

Continued on Page 3









SECOND PAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHS (continued)

Picture 9: In the basement book-room, with Horst Evermann, Dave Garnett & Bram Stokes on left. Then unknown, Pam Bulmer, Ken Bulmer & Ron Bennet. Pam is evidently saying 'Of course I don't read all this stuff myself'! At the bottom right of picture; bearded unknown, Graham Boak about to demonstrate latest issue of fanzine. (CYNIC? TRANSPLANT? INTERIM?)

Picture 10: Marvelous expressions on faces of Peter & Diane Barrow, as if to say 'My god listen to all that rubbish!' (I'm sure they weren't thinking that, by the way. Left to right: Peter Barrow, Doreen Parker (back to camera), Rog Peyton (hidden), Betty Rosenblum, Michael Rosenblum, Bob Parkinson, Elsie & Donald Wollheim, Tony Sudbery (standing), Diane Barrow, Jan Geldart, Chris Priest, Dick Ellingsworth, Don Geldart. Superimposed at bottom: Roje Gilbert, Mervyn Barrett, Marjorie Edwards (wife of CHESSMANCON in 1972 chairman Tony Edwards).

THIRD PAGE - FANCY DRESS PARTY

Picture 11 (whole page): Horribly-painted Peter Weston as 'Gully Foyle' and also as M/c, with Dave Kyle as 'Ted Carnell - Spirit of First Fandom'. Then Alan Denham as 'Overlord' (from CHILDHOOD'S END), Alan Donnelly as a 'Yellow Martian', Robert Hepworth as 'The Fly', Gigi McCaffrey as 'Lisa' (from DRAGONRIDER), Eileen Weston as 'Olivia' (from TIGER TIGER), and 'The Reptile'. We never did recognise The Reptile at the Convention - his beautiful prize-winning costume effectively prevented that! - but I believe he was in fact David Riley.

Second row - Rambling Jakeas 'pirate of Ersatz', Fred Hemmings as 'Space Viking', first-prize costume from the late H.Beam Piper's novel, Ken Cheslin (perhaps as Ethelred the Unready or similar period?), two junior fans, and Brian Burgess offering a little Worcester Sauce with the pies this year!

Third row shows Jan Geldart, 'The Charioteer' (who unfortunately remains unknown in spite of every effort - his page, immediately above, carried his shield), Doreen Parker in C'Mell costume, and Ray Bradbury as an Officer of the Imperium from Keith Laumer's novel. (I had thought Ray's costume was hired, it looked so good - in fact it was entirely home-made; the helmet came originally from Wimpey before being dressed up with **crost** and decorations).

Fourth row down - Pauline Dungate as 'Kali', from LORD OF LIGHT, Brian Hampton as 'BNF of Iz' (my title, not his), Diane Ellingsworth from 'Star Trek', Phil Rogers, Graham Howard and John Newman. One of the hotel girls thought Phil had pretty good legs - look carefully at the way Graham Howard is about to take off Phil's hand with his sword.

Bottom row - Eileen Weston, Anne Keylock, Gerry Webb (who hired the morning suit because he had a friend's wedding to attend the following morning as Best Man - in London. Gerry rushed off and came back to Worcester for the Sunday night revels. What a fan!) Then Marten and Jon Bing from Norway, Jim White with a real live 'Mesklinite' from MISSION OF GRAVITY, Anne McCaffrey and Judy Blish. In the bottom right corner is Dr Jack Cohen, who came with assorted creatures such as a fox cub and the above-mentioned Mesklinite, actually a tropical giant centipede.

FOURTH PAGE - Banquet, Boat and St Fanthony.

Picture 12: At the Sunday-night Banquet, - Eileen and Peter Weston, Anne McCaffrey Keith Freeman, Phil Rogers, John Brunner. Second row: The smiling Vernon Brown (note that, Graham Boak!), Pauline Dungate, Ethel Lindsay, Bette Woodhead, Michael Rosenblum, Alan Denham, Alan Donnelly, Dave Kyle and Fred Hemmings, all prize-winners with bottles apiece. (Continued Page 4)

## EASTERCON PHOTOPAGES, concluded.

Picture 13: Jannick Storm (from Denmark), Tania Vandenberg, and Andrew Stephenson (seated). Unfortunately for Andrew, Tania did not really have her hand on his shoulder! In front of Andrew is Chris Bursey (moustache), and David Riley among the audience for the St Fanthony ceremony.

On stage - Ron Bennett, Waldemar Kumming, Ken Cheslin, Ina Shorrocks, Keith Freeman, Norman Weedall ('Executioner'), Eddie Jones, Phil Rogers, Dave Kyle, John Ramsey Campbell, Michael Rosenblum, Ethel Lindsay, and new recruit Jim White.

Picture 14: Monday morning river trip, and some views taken as approximately 200 people attempted to board a 150-seat steamer. On left, Peter Weston and Robert Hepworth are standing with cameras. (I took the photograph of Peter Roberts, below, who had just taken the photograph of me shooting him!). Boarding boat - Fred Vanner, Bob Rickard, Pauline Dungate, smiling Graham Boak.

Bottom left - Mervyn Barrett, Bette Woodhead, Pamela Bulmer. John Berry watches several unknowns and a bow-legged Peter Roberts. Rambling Jake looks set for a naval life with duffel bag. Then Arline and Roger Peyton, two unknowns, Chris Bursey and some others. Bottom right - Jim Marshall and Norman Weedall.

You may have seen these photographs elsewhere, because to distribute the costs of printing we negotiated a multi-national agreement whereby these pages have been supplied to two German fanzines (MRU and another), to Lars-Olov Strandberg (Sweden), Michel Peron (Belgium), Gian Paolo Cossato (Italy), to Graham Boak and to SPECULATION itself. And due to a printer's error, I still have about 600 copies remaining.

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## REMINISCENCES (Continued from Page 1)

I had joined the old Group at the beginning of 1963, but after this foundered in 1966 I became something of a lone wolf until gradually I met an entirely new set of people who became interested in SF fandom. Bob Rickard was the first, and it was he who saved SPECULATION by forming the Aston Group in the Autumn of 1967 and thus providing me with a willing source of labour at a time when I had taken over three months to collate SPECULATION-15 and could see absolutely no prospect of ever getting around to further issues.

The success of this innovation can be judged from the fact that every subsequent number up to and including this current Issue 29 has been put together with the help of this Group, and none of them would otherwise have been possible for me to produce alone.

After Bob came Vernon Brown, who came in through the University circle and (as we discovered much later) had at one time been within a hair's breadth of contacting the old BSFG. There were others; half-a-dozen more from the University plunged in at the deep end by going to the Galactic Fair at Oxford in 1969. David Pringle was another local enthusiast who had picked up ZENITH-4 at a bookstand in 1964, subscribed a few years later, and in 1969 showed the magazine to Dr Jack Cohen of the Zoology Department of the University of Birmingham while David was taking a Summer-Holiday job at Edgbaston.

That brought in Jack Cohen who has since contributed a whole lot of colour to the local area and to functions from Sci-Con onwards. Oddly enough not only did Jack already know Vernon through mutual professional interests, but he evidently spent a large part of 1962 in the U.S.A., investigating the structure of DNA with Isaac Asimov and arguing with John Campbell.

In 1970 the organising bug bit me very badly, an infection which has yet to work its way completely out of my system, and I started to take on various new projects. First there was the SPECULATION Conference in Birmingham, for June 1970, and then at Easter I became chairman of the EASTERCON-22 Committee which eventually ran the 1971 British National Convention at Worcester.

You'll see, I think, in what direction all this was leading. Gradually the lights were coming on in the Midlands, people were taking an interest in these different activities, each of which paved the way for the next one. The Aston Group helped to swell the audience for SPECULATION-I; the attendance from the Conference increased the membership of EASTERCON. In other words we had what I call the 'bandwagon effect' in operation.

By the time that EASTERCON finally happened - and more on that below - the second SPECULATION Conference had already been arranged, this time at the Birmingham & Midland Institute. Vernon Brown had also been fired with enthusiasm after some day-dreaming together at a collating session, and was proceeding to turn those dreams into reality by organising NOVACON, a second annual Convention in Britain. And returning from the past, Roger Peyton was setting up his own speciality SF book business in the city.

Only a comparatively small push was needed to bring all these loose ends together; and in June the three of us formed a 'Management Committee' and announced the first meeting of the revived, resurrected, Birmingham SF Group.

Sitting in the comfortable upstairs bar at the Imperial Hotel last week, pinching spring onions from Jim Blish's ham salad, I was feeling pretty pleased with our progress. His talk had attracted an audience of fifty-five; we had over sixty registered and paid-up members on the subscription books, and a further 30-odd people in the area had been to one or other of previous meetings without yet registering.

And so to finish this section I'd like to return to a theory I first expounded in a supplement to SPECULATION in January 1968, where I said that what science fiction clubs need is Organisation. This was just after my return from a hectic and enjoyable sojourn with the Young Conservatives, whose methods had impressed me as worth copying.

Most fan-groups in England are just that - a small number of fans who have popped-up in the usual random way, in sufficiently high local concentration to have occasional social meetings. That was previously the case in Birmingham, where we never went beyond tea and cakes for eight and a game of 'Risk' in a front room. The 'Globe' in London is somewhat more fortunate and more successful because of the relatively high numbers of writers, fans and visitors who are found in the area. And even the Globe has taken twenty years to reach its present position.

Despite the good work of the past few years Birmingham has no home-grown professional writers of its own, and only a few real fans. Before we can have a fan group there must be fans; and to create fans is the real motive behind all our trappings of Organisation. This is perhaps the same sort of thinking that led to the formation of the BSFA in 1958; to provide the same hot-house conditions that exist all too briefly at Conventions and to lure in newcomers with the bait of science fiction discussion.

And so in accordance with my theory the new Group is Organised, with a set programme of events, a committee and a newsletter. Meetings are held in a private room at the Imperial Centre Hotel, in the centre of the city, and



some sort of organised programme event is arranged for the Third Friday of each month. After an hour of programme the meeting adjourns to the adjacent bar - a very convenient location - where the social part of the evening takes place. So far the idea seems to be working pretty well; we have applied for a financial grant to the West Midlands Arts Association, and are we the only SF Group with a colour television available at meetings?

\* \* \* \* \*

SPECULATION, as I have conspicuously refrained from mentioning before, is Very Late, and I apologise to both contributors and subscribers. But I think the preceding account will at least in part explain some of the reasons for the non-appearance of this issue before now.

Although I can't in all honesty say that it is other commitments alone which have kept me silent. Rather, as some of those who met me this Summer will know, I think I must have felt a bit disenchanted with the whole business after EASTERCON. I gather this sort of reaction is fairly common among Convention organisers after the event, and I remember feeling particularly unhappy during the week immediately after the Convention.

I seemed to have spent the entire time rushing around without sitting down to actually listen to anything, meet anybody or otherwise enjoy myself. Not that this is a complaint; as Bob Rickard said quite recently, "Pete, you are only happy when you're organising people". Even so, after completing an exacting four days I felt that I wanted to relax at the convention - and suddenly discovered that there wouldn't be another convention for six months!

It didn't help to have to rush off to Germany the following week for my company, BSA, to organise our stand at the Hanover Fair; and the week after that to have to sit a two-day examination for Part I of the Diploma of Marketing, the climax of my night-school classes during the preceding year. (I passed, remarkably enough, in all four subjects).

Whatever the reason the depression lasted until after the SPECULATION-II Conference, which I didn't enjoy at all, although it seemed to go off reasonably successfully. (Of the four talks, by the way, I shall be publishing Philip Strick's discussion of Heinlein in the next issue, while the others for one reason or another will not be appearing for the immediate future.)

In July I began to brighten up considerably; not only was the new Group proving an interesting challenge, but there seemed at least a sporting chance that my wife Eileen and I would be able to attend the 1971 World Convention in Boston, through the TransAtlantic Fan Fund. There were four candidates for an expenses-paid TAFF trip, and I was hoping I would get it...

That would have really restored my energies, and I'm slightly embarrassed to say that I wanted to win that trip more than anything else I've wanted in a long time. There were so many people in Boston I wanted to meet, and I'm sure from what I've since read that it must have been a very fine convention.

It would have been both foolish and arrogant to have expected to win, and Eileen and I had kept telling ourselves all year that we probably wouldn't manage it; even so I think we were very disappointed in the end, as of course must have been the other two losers, Terry Jeeves and Per Insulander.

In the event I placed second, as you know (84 votes) to the German candidate Mario Bosnyak (138 votes) who was tremendously popular after Heicon judging by the fact that he received over 100 votes from Europe alone.

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The first speaker at EASTERCON was supposed to be James Blish; we decided upon a serious, science fiction-based talk to set the tone of the proceedings. It didn't work out that way. The audience failed to appear on time due to British Rail's go-slow, while Jim Blish arrived late due to bad navigation between Henley and Worcester. Jack Cohen eventually opened with his excellent "The Possibility of Life on Other Planets", followed in the end by Jim with this study of Damon Knight...

## ALL IN A KNIGHT'S WORK

By James Blish

\*\*\*\*\*

My title today is a little misleading; actually it reflects a period during the postal strike when both your Chairman and I thought Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm might be present at this convention, and we thought it would be a good idea to call some attention to Damon's achievements, which as far as I am able to tell are less known in these islands than they are in the States. After we heard that the Knights couldn't make it here after all, it still seemed like a good idea, but with some shift in emphasis. Since I don't have Damon out there to embarrass by talking about him for a solid hour, I'm going to talk instead about the consequences of some of the things he has done; and I shall also allow myself to run out of steam early enough to permit some questions, of which I hope there will be a good many. \*

Now, it would be possible and indeed easy to give an hour-long lecture on Knight's career to date, and a pretty densely-packed hour it would be, too. There is that much to be said about his fiction alone, which I feel has been unduly neglected, both here and in the States. He is, for example, almost the very model of a constructor of tight plots; his work is so well-made, so all of a piece, that you cannot remove a single strand of the usual Knight story without destroying the whole thing. His first novel, which was published in the U.S. under the abominable title of HELL'S PAVEMENT, is untypically loosely put together; but I defy anyone to find a better piece of major construction in our field than his later THE EARTH QUARTER, or one with more emotional impact, either.

As a fiction writer, he's also one of the very few among us who is often funny — genuinely funny. I shall define 'genuinely funny' first by negation. He does not fill his stories full of wise-cracking dialogue which, one suspects, wouldn't have amused anybody beyond the mental age of nine; nor does he cram them with more formal jokes which don't advance the tale a bit, and then compound the insult by having another character go ho-ho-ho in case the reader has missed the point. He constructs inherently funny situations and then lets them go logically to pieces with an absolutely straight face, in the tradition of Lewis

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\* For one heady week it looked as if we would have Blish, Knight, and Pohl — surely three of the World's leading writers, editors and critics — all under the one roof at Worcester!

Carroll — and without leaning openly on Carroll, either, as did Damon's only peer in this field, Henry Kuttner.

However, much of his fiction is still in print here, from Gollancz, so now I shall simply point to this body of work and say 'Go thou and buy'. His work as an editor and anthologist is mostly available from Gollancz also, but there are a few holes in the English record which I shall try to fill in quickly here.

Knight was active as an editor of science fiction from an early age, first of all as a reader for a literary agency which still handles a very high proportion of the active writers in our field, and later on the staff of Popular Publications when Super Science Stories was being revived just after World War II. In the latter job, which I believe to have been uncredited on any masthead, he taught the editor of a present major string of American SF magazines virtually everything that editor yet knows about science fiction, and tried to teach him some more than apparently didn't take.

And shortly thereafter he was the editor of Worlds Beyond, an excellent magazine killed off after three issues by a publisher who didn't have the common sense, let alone the patience, to allow it to develop its market. Today, Knight is known as the editor of the ORBIT series of original, hardcover story collections, of which there are eight up to now, which have been unique in fostering science fiction and fantasy well enough written to be readable without embarrassment by an educated adult, without falling afoul of the stylistic tricks-for-their-own-sake which made the average issue of New Worlds such a chore to get through.

One young American writer has complained of the middle-of-the-road tone of the typical ORBIT volume as being 'insufficiently risk-taking, but I take quite the opposite view. As one of the most radical critics and most experimental poets in the whole of English literature has observed, "It is easy to run to extremes; it is hard to stand firm in the middle." (This meliorist doctrine, I might add, he got from Confucius.)

I could go on at considerable length, too, about Knight as the founder of close criticism of science fiction; but although his summarised performance in this field, the revised IN SEARCH OF WONDER, has not yet been published in England, I think it is sufficiently well-known to this audience; and the first edition won Knight the only Hugo ever awarded anybody for this kind of performance. On the strength of this, he was for a while the book reviewer for F&SF, and it is typical of his uncompromising temper — though I think we were all the losers by it, at least over the short term — that he quit the job when the then editor would not publish a review exactly as he had written it, and that he has published almost no criticism since.

I hope that, as the first keeper of our literary conscience, he will get back to criticism; in the meantime, his book is absolutely indispensable reading for anyone who cares about the product. Again, I won't go on about this, in part because to do so I would simply have to repeat half-a-dozen pages which I have published elsewhere; but in larger part because I want to devote most of my remaining time to two even more public-spirited Knight performances; the Milford Science Fiction Writers Conference, and the Science Fiction Writers of America.

Both these phenomena — they deserve no smaller term — seem to be better known to science fiction fans in rumour than in fact, and Knight's importance to them both is not well appreciated outside their immediate circles, where it is well appreciated indeed. For example, I have nowhere seen it mentioned in



public that both organisations had precursors, that both precursors had equally good -- indeed, almost identical -- conditions from which to start; and that the only reason why the present models are successes where the precursors were not is to be found in the energy, persistence, common sense and apparently universal trustworthiness of Damon Knight.

Here, without pretending to absolute accuracy -- though I have many of the documents of this history, my memory is notoriously fallible -- I do plan to go into some detail. Somebody should be offering a record of how all this happened, before the opportunity goes down the drain; two early participants and a number of lesser ones are dead already, others are silvering noticeably, and that I'm not dead myself is only the result of an outright appalling chain of luck which I can't continue to count on!

I don't propose to rake over a whole lot of long-gray ashes, but only to tell you of a few seminal events which as far as I know have never been told before in any consistent fashion; and to do this simply to record my view that in several different and important kinds of endeavour, the presence or absence of the organising energy of Damon Knight has made all the difference. While I'm at it, I may, if prodded, tell you something about how the Milford Science Fiction Writers Conference is run -- without, I hope, anything like the envious sensationalism which marred the only other public account of this group that I have read.

Almost immediately after World War II, say circa 1946, there was a very high concentration of working science fiction writers in the New York City area, and these gradually divided into two semi-formal social groups. Both were professional in interests to begin with. One was a monthly gathering, attended solely by writers and editors and their ladies (or gentlemen), which was held at the apartment of the late Fletcher Pratt. (This is, you will see at once, a pretty remote area of the past, despite its date.) In many respects these meetings were quite like glorified convention room-parties, including the passing of the plate to pay for the beer consumed, but the proportion of shop-talk was considerably higher.

The second group, which came a little later, was more formal to begin with -- it even had a name, The Hydra Club -- and was meant to include only full-fledged professionals; however, it gradually developed that what the organisers meant by a "professional" was anybody they didn't have a feud on with at the moment, so that the Club shortly became instead a glamourised fan group existing only to give parties. Its highest achievement was a colossal New Year's Eve blast in a public hall which was bigger than some earlier conventions I have seen. Thereafter the Hydra Club -- which still exists -- dwindled to a local fan club pure and simple, and at this point goes just as smoothly out of my story; but anyone who wants to capture the flavour of that New Year's Eve blast can find it in a Damon Knight story, which also marked Damon's last moment of real interest in the group. (You're 'Another?).

In Fletcher Pratt's apartment, on the other hand, the meetings had become more and more interested in writing and business problems, and since who was invited to these gatherings depended solely on Fletcher -- who was much more concerned with science fiction than with partying -- there were never any fans there, so we never had anybody to pose before or who gave a damn about our autographs. It was in fact a sort of primordial Milford Conference, but with one crucial exception; Damon Knight, who by that time lived way the hell out in Canadensis, Pennsylvania, never attended.

Similarly, I call your attention to The Hydra Club as a sort of primordial SFWA --- which lost Damon's interest when it became an annual New Year's eve blast instead.

And then, at one of the Pratt evenings, somebody --- I cannot remember who --- suggested that we form a union.

There was instant enthusiasm for the idea, but the disagreement about the details arose almost to incandescence. Fletcher, who was very Republican (U.S. style) in his political sympathies, wanted nothing to do with a working union. Alfie Bester, who had had hard experience with real unions and guilds, insisted that unless we made up a real union --- embracing every practitioner, and prepared to strike if necessary --- we might as well just continue as a social club. Lester del Rey wanted a real union but with stiff standards of admission --- no marginal practitioners --- which provoked Hans Stefan Santesson into an impassioned defense of his own right to belong as someone who might be considered a marginal practitioner. I suggested that we at least ought to exclude agents and other-known thieves; luckily everybody knew whom I meant and I wasn't taken seriously.

And, just to remind you that this is relatively ancient history: Judy Merrill suggested that in order to protect ourselves against the minions of Senator Joe McCarthy, our constitution ought to contain a clause barring known Communists. She was howled down in the only show of unanimity we achieved during the entire evening. Ruthven Todd, who had written a charming children's book called SPACE CAT, wanted to know if he would be included, and he was warmly supported by del Rey, who had also written for children, and by most of the rest of us, who simply liked Todd's book. When we broke up, we had achieved a sort of vague agreement to form something called the Fantasy Writer's Guild --- and we had lost Alfie Bester, who had said that if it wasn't going to be a union, he wasn't interested.

You've doubtless never heard of the Fantasy Writer's Guild, but had you watched the next year of its history, you would find it hard to believe in its disappearance. It grew enormously, and within a few months we were meeting at Fletcher's club, the Lotus Club, which was and is quite like an English club, at his expense. The late Willy Ley became highly interested and headed up one of our committees. We had committees like sows have litters, devoted to every problem or sub-problem you could imagine. At one point, somebody saw that we were going to need some kind of a figurehead, so I was named President pro-tem.

Out of some previous familiarity with the natural history of such organizations, I protested that the FWG seemed well on its way toward dying of pathological parliamentarianism, and was bluntly told to get back up to the head of the ship and stop trying to steer. Finally, at a Lotus Club dinner meeting attended by more than a hundred people --- every one of them some sort of professional --- a dozen more committees were formed and a writer far better known than I was elected the real President.

They chose well; as a figurehead he couldn't have been bettered. The trouble was that they had also put the ship in his hands, and he turned out to be interested only in the title. He never called another meeting --- and nobody else was empowered to do so. Exit the Fantasy Writers Guild, every man a captain, nobody in the crew.

History has now shown, as plainly as History can show anything, that had Damon Knight been aboard at the time, the outcome would have been entirely different. The Guild as it wound up reminds me of nothing so much as a joke told about the American Ship of State in the Hoover days, in which the Captain, having been told that the ship is leaking, can think of nothing better to do than order the engineer's nose to be rubbed in it.

You will remember that I called the meetings at the Pratt apartment a prototype of the Milford Conference. In fact, however, what Damon was incubating while the Fantasy Writer's Guild was organising itself out of existence, was something a great deal more useful and viable than either a social club or a loose guild, though it would come to serve both functions. The Conference was incubated between Damon and Judy Merril, as a gathering of professionals to take place in Milford as a vacation event immediately after the 13th Convention, in New York in 1956 -- the convention where *IN SEARCH OF WONDER* won its Hugo.

I was asked to be a co-sponsor because I also lived in Milford then, but I had almost nothing to do with its planning, which Damon had done so thoroughly that the Conference has been conducted by Damon alone along the same lines ever since, and with rather quickly diminishing help from both Miss Merril and me. The writers who attended that first Conference -- I think there were nearly fifty, doing the two-hour journey from New York to Milford in cars as packed as a college telephone kiosk -- found no vacation in rural Milford; instead, they were confronted with the most stimulating experience of their lives as writers. I know, they told me so. This is how it worked then, and works now:

The Conference covers almost a full week, -- of afternoons and evenings, since nobody in his right mind expects a writer to get up in the morning. \* Each evening session, which may also be attended by wives or husbands, is devoted to a round-table discussion of a previously-agreed-upon topic, such as how to break a writing block, problems of censorship, background vs. character, hard vs. soft, writing for the cinema and television, and so on. (I might add that during the session on breaking writer's blocks, when we all spoke in turn, Bob Silverberg made himself enemies almost for life when it came to his turn by saying, "I think I had a writing block, once, ... for about twenty minutes on a Tuesday.")

Wives and husbands are allowed to attend these sessions, but not to open their yaps; and they do attend, despite this restriction, their ears flapping. The evening sessions seem to be marvelous lessons for spouses in the multiplicity of problems that face every writer, and hence make the working members of each family seem a little bit less peculiar. (I have also heard it said, frequently, by auditors who have attended other kinds of professional artists' conferences, that the degree of equanimity and helpfulness among Milford conferees is unique. I certainly have never encountered anything like it anywhere else.)

Afternoons at Milford are devoted to what are called Workshops. To enter these, you must bring a story, to be read by the other working members. In a typical Workshop round, Damon as chairman will ask, "Who would like to start on 'XX' by YY?" Once he gets a volunteer, the comments then proceed strictly around the circle until they return to the chair. The author is then allowed time to respond to the comments; and then, there is a faster turn around the circle -- one minute per person -- in which the critics defend themselves against the author. No further comment on either side is allowed; now it is the turn of the next story.

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\* Having asked John Brunner to give substantial talks not once but twice at the time of 10.00 a.m. (EASTERCON 22 & SPECULATION II), I suppose I must be counted in the not-in-right-mind faction! John did very well though, each time. Which, of course, is why I asked him.

Nobody who has not offered a manuscript to be so criticised is allowed in the Workshop sessions at all, which means that spouses, parents, well-wishers and any other kind of audience are also rigidly excluded; these sessions are for practitioners only. And they are remarkably fruitful. Here the writer has a jury of his peers, and only of his peers — no editors, no agents, no fans, nobody who has not himself put in a story to be subjected to this kind of criticism.

This works. It has been working every year since 1956 and gives every sign of going on working indefinitely. Some of the debates are sharp, for the criticism is merciless as well as friendly, but I know of few Milford conferees who have not come back for more, even some who at first were deeply offended, or at least taken aback, by the frankness which prevails at these conferences. And though a few feuds have been started by them, I can think of none which have not since been resolved at further conferences. In part, of course, this is a tribute to the attendees themselves; but it is also a result of the mechanics, and a testimony to the fairness with which they are tempered, both of which are the creation and work of Damon Knight. I have myself attended quite a few literary and scientific congresses, as well as science-fiction meetings over the past thirty years, and I have never seen a single one which works so well as this one does.

The Milford Conferences are social occasions, too; in keeping with tradition they end with a vast Saturday-night party, at which Harlan Ellison tells the story about Herr Doktor Frankenstein and the Cherman Babies, and those of us who drink — Harlan doesn't — put earlier-generated animosities into solution. Ed Emsh shows films; writers who don't like the Milford Conference as a whole come down because they can't stay away from so many confreres, editors pretend that they only happened to drop by, and the atmosphere becomes that of one of the biggest room parties you ever saw in your life, complete with wives and children and dogs. But anybody can construct a huge room party. Nobody but Damon could have constructed the Milford conference. Should you think I am putting too rosy a colour on all this, ask Anne McCaffrey, your Guest of Honour; she probably knows Milford Conferences better than I do now.

The first Milford Conference of them all was so stimulating an event to all concerned, particularly in the amount of hair that was let down by normally close-mouthed and close-fisted people, that there was a strong subsequent pressure to keep it going all year round by the publication of a magazine. This was called Science Fiction Forum — and it is no accident that one of the two magazines now published by SFWA also is called the Forum.

This journal was edited jointly by Damon Knight and Lester del Rey, which sounds like an almost ideal combination, but it did not work out in practice for one simple reason — simple now in hindsight, though we none of us saw the danger at the time. Production was assigned to del Rey, who was fiercely busy on other projects and yet was also passionately committed to this one. He produced an absolute monster of a first issue, much bigger than any of us had expected and half of it written by himself, and followed this up with a second issue which may hold the all-time fatness record for any mimeographed magazine. Given these two points on the curve, it seemed that the third issue could have no fewer than several thousand pages — but there never was a third issue; Lester's other commitments had caught up with him.

It was only a little later that a number of professionals in the New York area, who were nursing a variegated set of dissatisfactions with then-recent Hugo Awards, conceived the notion of setting up a professional society which would

give its own awards. I was made the secretary for this endeavour, which may be as good a reason as any why it never got off the ground.

I think, now, you can see what's coming. Here were all these old groups, and old projects, lying about dead or exhausted, with the single exception of the Milford Conference, which was a flourishing concern. And at this point Damon came riding out of the West with a proposal which put most of them together, in such a fashion that they could be made to work for each other; the present Science Fiction Writers of America, which despite its title includes writers from other countries now (the only nationalistic restriction is that members must be published in the United States; they don't have to live there, or be U.S. citizens).

The Milford Conference had already created a working core of professionals which, although it changed some in composition from year to year, had a strong sense of solidarity. The possibility of avoiding the mistakes the Fantasy Writers Guild had made was in the forefront of Damon's mind; he early asked me for, and got, my FWG files and I think he also got similar files from other Guild people. The disease of committeeism he avoided in the most direct possible way; for the first few years of SFWA, there were no committees at all (and I view their present proliferation, I might add, with some misgivings!). For those first few years, Damon was clearly in charge, as Fletcher had been of the older monthly gatherings, and he maintained this dictatorship by the simple but difficult route of being at all times clear-headed and firm about where the group was going.

The SFWA Bulletin was confined strictly to business matters; it was only some years later that a second publication, the Forum, was added for the publication of members' letters. The Forum at one point very nearly got out of hand -- particularly, the level of vituperation in it began to rise alarmingly -- but this was stemmed at a SFWA meeting of the Milford Conference, when it was decided that nobody but members should be allowed to receive it, let alone contribute to it, and that it should carry a notice saying that all rights of quotation from it are expressly refused. This last was my idea, and I'm happy to observe that it has had a noticeable effect; deprived of an outside audience to perform for, our touchier members have either moderated their tones, or left in a huff, muttering "censorship".

Finally -- or perhaps I should say, most recently -- Damon and his associates revived the idea of the professional counterpart to the Hugo award, the Nebula, and this time, too, made it work. The Nebula turned out to be almost as vulnerable to tides of fashion as the Hugo has always been\* but that does not seem to have hurt its prestige; and the series of anthologies based upon the awards, a happy notion which I think was that of Lloyd Biggle, SFWA's first secretary-treasurer, has proved to be both prestigious and profitable for all concerned.

Damon is no longer in control, of, or even an officer of, SFWA, but his precise, level-headed voice continues to be heard there to considerable effect; it is not at all the usual voice of a bewhiskered founder or a President-Emeritus. And in our microcosm, both the social and literary effects of his work in this and other areas continue to be more widespread than many younger writers and fans properly appreciate. Consider:

Through his criticism, he substantially raised not only the standard of science fiction criticism, but of science fiction practice.

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\* tides of fashion - see following page.

He put together the only writers' conference I have ever encountered in which the writers talk to each other, instead of lecturing a paying audience of cooing old ladies, or milking money out of people who will never learn to write.

He created and built up the very first practical, working organisation of science fiction writers in the history of the medium.

He got a series of professional awards going, and made it stick, and,

Through continuing editorial acumen backed up by publication, he contributed as much as anyone has toward preventing the opposed schools of science fiction — exemplified I would say by Mike Moorcock and John J Pierce — from tearing each other to shreds to no benefit.

That's quite a lot, isn't it?

James Blish, 1971

#### Regarding 'tides of fashion' in the Nebula Awards....

(James Blish's introductory remarks to the Speculation II Conference, June 1971)

In general, most of the Nebulae have gone to self-consciously literary or eccentric works, the awards to writers like Alexei Panshin and Richard Wilson being conspicuous exceptions. The most recent two sets, however, seem to show a trend away from the previous preference.

The award to Larry Niven's RINGWORLD in particular looks to one observer to be perhaps a product of the recent upsurge of conservatism, if not of outright nostalgia for the dear old days of Kimball Kinnison and Arcot/Morey/Fuller. The book can hardly be called a well-made novel in any literary sense; its structure is ramshackle, its logic is full of holes, and it's not very well written, either. But it is, or seems to be, a deliberate exercise in the old-fashioned tale of the supercolossal, including dirigible planets, an artificial world with three million times the area of the Earth, and even an exploding galaxy ... and it seems to have been greeted with shouts of reminiscent joy on many sides. If it doesn't also win a Hugo, I'll be very surprised.

Is this trend real? If so, what's the cause? And has it any future? There's a bone that ought to provoke a good deal of gnawing by a science fiction audience.

James Blish, 1971

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#### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

We continue with transcriptions of various talks delivered in Birmingham during 1971. Already on stencil are John Brunner's exposition on 'Writing Science Fiction in Theory and Practice', from EASTERCON, and Philip Strick's talk 'Heinlein - A Perspective' from the SPECULATION-II Conference in June.

So far as the latter is concerned by the way, I realise that SPECULATION could almost be sub-titled 'The Magazine of Heinlein Studies', but Philip's piece is an interesting personal analysis throwing fresh light on Heinlein.

Still awaiting transcription are Anne McCaffrey's Guest-of-Honour Speech from Worcester, and two panel discussions (the Publisher's Panel and Jim Blish's team on 'The Boundaries of SF'). Pamela Bulmer's discussion of the Theory of SF criticism will shortly appear in Quicksilver, to avoid further delay.

(Quicksilver is available from Malcolm Edwards, 28 Kinch Grove, Mx)

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## PHILIP STRICK AT TRIESTE

An exclusive report from the Science Fiction Film Festival

By Philip Strick.

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At Trieste in July the Science Fiction Film Festival was in its ninth year and most of the teething troubles I remember from previous years seemed to be over. The films, as usual, were a mixed bag without, I felt, anything really memorable among them, with the possible exception of 'Gas-s-s!' (about which I would be biased anyway), but the examples of current production were well punctuated with retrospective screenings of such vintage works as 'Un Chien Andalou' and other Bunuel items, together with samples of surrealist cinema ranging from 'Juliet of the Spirits' and 'The Trip' to an extraordinary recent Hungarian film called 'Journey Inside My Brain'.

Dealing with the nightmares and imaginings of a man about to undergo a brain operation, this film included some gruesome documentary shots of surgery but is otherwise a quite amusing comedy built around the notion of representing the inside of the man's skull as a sort of giant warehouse crammed with all the people and experiences he ever encountered. The effect of the trepanning operation itself is likened to the warehouse being strafed by light aircraft, administering understandable mayhem and destruction among the inhabitants. Coming as it did in the early stages of the Festival, 'Journey Inside My Brain' seemed fortuitously to set the scene for the whole event; brain transplants, interrupted mental processes, and peculiar lapses in memory, were constant themes.

It was nevertheless a little surprising, I thought, that Trieste's prize for the best film (the Golden Asteroid) went to an American television production of Curt Siodmak's novel 'Hauser's Memory' in which David McCallum plays the scientist who gets injected with the memory of another man and has to lead a sort of mental double-life from then on. As you can imagine, this gives rise to all sorts of flash-shots and superimpositions on the screen, in particular when the sufferer sees two wives instead of one, but the story leads rather disappointingly into a yarn of petty revenge against an ex-Nazi who, it seems, at one time dealt the hapless Hauser a couple of below-the-belt swipes with a razor during an interrogation session.

The memory transplant idea seemed to me worthy of better things, but the Festival Jury termed 'Hauser's Memory' "a fast-moving and well-made film, in the best tradition of science fiction because, according to many experts, this type of transfer may one day be possible." Honourable enough, but as American television goes I preferred the other examples, 'Night Slaves', a very decent shot at Jerry Sohl's well-worn novel about the members of a small town who spend their nights unconsciously working for a visiting alien, and 'Los Angeles 2017', a 'Name of the Game' episode in which Gene Barry finds himself among the underground survivors of worldwide environmental pollution.

There were transplants all over the place in the Czech film 'You Are A Widow, Sir', which is a comedy of ponderous proportions set in a time when the loss of a limb (through such misjudgements as an ill-aimed salute with a sword) occasions



no more than a quick visit to the out-patient's department for a replacement. The central character, a magazine editor who can predict the future with great accuracy, finds himself the victim of a brain transplant into the body of a woman who in turn is to be the means of assassinating the present King. As can be inferred from this plot outline, 'You Are A Widow, Sir', sets no great store by plausibility; its main purpose seems to be to provide a vehicle for the lively actress Iva Janzurova, who, called upon to impersonate a man encumbered with feminine equipment, has a tremendous time smoking a pipe and taking manly strides. Trieste awarded her a Silver Asteroid, prize for the best actress.

Surrealism was carried to extremes in the Spanish choice, 'The Strange Case of Dr Faustus' which posed considerable problems of comprehension little alleviated by the synopsis thoughtfully provided for the Press:

'Dr Fausto dedicates himself to strange experiments. In an unidentified part of the Universe there is someone who would prevent Fausto from discovering the key to the understanding of the world. Fausto, however, does not get discouraged and is not allured by the calling of a girl sent on purpose.

'Fausto, in the past, had a son from Helena of Troy, Euforion, and he never forgot Helena. Mephisto has the mission of making Fausto fall in love with young Margaret and the plot is successful. Fausto asks Mephisto to be restored to youth but he is transformed into an insect and dies.

'Mephisto is tempted by Margaret's beauty and before departing he plays with her a raving ping-pong game. Mephisto is seduced, forgets his past, and begins a life as a normal human being marrying Margaret who will give him three children.'

Not surprisingly the film caused a certain amount of argument; whatever one made of it, there was plenty to watch. I recall a particularly vivid sequence in which a rather waterlogged young lady in a polythene bag is attacked by a gigantic figure in an asbestos suit and impenetrable face-mask, who eventually breaks through the polythene and strangles her. It didn't seem to fit with what I remember of Marlowe and Goethe, but it was surreal all right.

Films apart, Trieste was well stocked with additional attractions this year. There was an exhibition of paintings by Robert Rauschenberg, being shown for the first time in Europe, all dealing with aspects of the Apollo programme - the launching platform; the space walks, the moon surface - and giving a general impression of urgency and concern in the splashy surface style from which precise, photographically accurate motifs can be seen to emerge from a distance. Fifty-eight other contemporary painters and sculptors contributed to an exhibition called 'Art and Science Fiction', which took Rauschenberg's preoccupations further afield; many of these were conventional-enough abstracts, some were well up to SF book-cover standard, and a number were excitingly visionary - Guarino, Lucatello, Orlando, and Moretti in particular.

The Festival also organised a visit to an exhibition of the works of Tiepolo at the Friulian palace of the last Doge of the Venetian Republic - a setting to delight the hearts of the sword-and-sorcery fans; on the way, the trip took in a visit to the Radio Astronomy centre of the province of Trieste.

The unique open-air arena at the castle where the Festival's films are shown was this year the location for one of the event's most intriguing exhibitions - a display of the designs by Raymond Loewy (architect of, among other things, automobiles, locomotives, ocean-going liners, airplanes and ball-point pens) for



the Skylab project. Skylab, America's first space platform, is due to be launched in 1973, and Loewy has for the past four years been studying its habitability, the need for recreational space, hygiene facilities, special styles of furnishing and decor, and so on. NASA's first post-Apollo programme, which will culminate in the establishment of 'orbiting villages' with crews numbering over a hundred, has several primary objectives; to establish the level of tolerance of astronauts during extended space missions, to clarify their psychological and physical reactions, and to observe how the human organism is affected by extended periods of zero gravity. Loewy's detailed visualisations of the Skylab living conditions make extraordinary viewing - a combination of '2001', Analog, and Good Housekeeping. More than anything else at Trieste they confirmed that man's progress into space is unstoppable.

The President of the Jury at Trieste this year was Arthur C. Clarke, an energetic pacesetter who occasionally had his fellow jurors (who included Donald Wollheim) watching films at midnight in order to ensure that they looked at everything. Arthur's celebrity status made him the focal point of a couple of press conferences and any number of interviews; the following is an amalgamation of his comments at various points during the week.

Q: "Is this the first time you have served as a juror at a festival in any capacity?"

A: "Yes, it's only my second visit to the Trieste Festival, in fact, and I hoped I'd get out of all obligations and just enjoy myself. But they very cannily put me down on the jury and then I was elected President, so here I am. Actually it's a thoroughly enjoyable responsibility because the standard of films has been remarkably high and I've enjoyed seeing almost all of them - even the bad ones have been interesting."

Q: "Do you usually get to see this many science fiction films in a year?"

A: "Well, I try to see every science fiction film that's worth seeing. I do a lot of film-watching when I'm exiled from Ceylon, and try to see all the good films, all the important films, and all the worthwhile SF titles - of which there have been quite a number lately. The number does seem to be increasing steadily. I was disappointed with 'The Andromeda Strain': I decided it was too long and oddly enough (this is a strange criticism for an author) I thought it adhered too closely to the book. Now although the book is quite exciting, I felt that the end was a cop-out, it fell to pieces at the end, and the film just followed this. It also introduced extraneous items such as phony suspense as to whether the atom bomb would go off - which is such nonsense because you know it isn't going to go off."

I have no absolute favourite SF film, and I suppose I am eliminated from discussing '2001', but among the titles I've very much enjoyed in the past have been 'Things to Come', 'Destination Moon', 'The Day The Earth Stood Still', 'Forbidden Planet', and 'The Thing'. More recently, I was quite impressed, to my great surprise, with 'Escape from the Planet of the Apes'; I had found the first film in the series quite interesting, although the gimmicky ending with the Statue of Liberty is an old science fiction idea (in fact I'd seen that very same image in some early SF illustrations). The second one I thought was quite bad, but I found the third one quite moving, and so did the audience. I've seldom seen such strong audience identification and participation - the baby ape at the end, and the behaviour of the two apes and the way you identified with them against the nasty humans, it was a remarkable feat."

Q: "The Planet of the Apes series are rather heavily-loaded 'message' films. Do you think that science fiction movies should have a message?"

A: "I want to make it clear that I do not regard science fiction in its pure form as anything other than a form of art, of entertainment. I am always conscious of a famous remark of Samuel Goldwyn's: "If you've got a message, use Western Union". At the same time, of course, works of art can convey messages, morals, lessons; and this can be a good thing as long as it doesn't distort the work of art, as long as it doesn't become propagandistic, as has happened often in SF. So having made that point I will go on to say that science fiction can be very useful, socially, because it can make clear some of those dangers in a dramatic way that gets them across to the emotions in a way that nothing else could do. Therefore it's important that it does deal with these issues."

Q: "Do you respond to surrealism in science fiction?"

A: "Yes; to a certain extent. I haven't seen many surrealist films, really (although Cocteau's 'Beauty and the Beast' stuck in my memory), but I like fantasy almost as much as I like science fiction, and I guess fantasy is a form of surrealism. My definition for the distinction between the two is: if it could happen, if there are no fundamental reasons why it couldn't happen, if it doesn't disobey any laws of nature, then it's science fiction. If we're darn sure it couldn't happen in the Universe as we know it, then it's fantasy. But of course the borderline is always moving. As our knowledge increases, things which one seemed fantasy become science fiction; and it can move the other way, too - things which perhaps once might have appeared possible we know in fact are fantasy. The Edgar Rice Burroughs stories are strictly speaking fantasy, because we know Mars isn't like that, and Bradbury's stories are now strictly speaking fantasy, although it would be very pedantic to rule them out of the science fiction category.

"Most of my works have been strictly science fiction. One of my few excursions into fantasy has been the short story 'The Nine Billion Names of God'. One might say that the parapsychical or supernatural elements in CHILDHOOD'S END and to some extent the ending of '2001' may be regarded as fantasy, but I don't think so. I don't intend that to be fantasy, I intend it to be realistic. I think that '2001' is a very straightforward, linear story - it's a mystery and the resolution of a mystery, or an attempt to resolve it. And the fact that the mystery does remain rather mysterious, well, this is like the real / Universe."

Q: "Your opinion of 'new wave' SF is rather uncomplimentary?"

A: "Well, I'm old-fashioned. I've always been conservative. I didn't think we'd reach the Moon until 1978. I like a good old-fashioned story which has a beginning, a middle and an end, although not necessarily in that order. My comment on most of the so-called 'new wave' stories I've read is that I can't remember any of them. I don't like stories that are just disjointed stream-of-consciousness. But I don't for a moment suggest that people shouldn't try any experiment that occurs to them, even Bill Burroughs' idea of cutting up his manuscript in four bits and pasting them together at random. I think it's rather silly, but it may occasionally be amusing, like computer-generated poetry. But some people have gone overboard and said 'This is what it should be', whereas I don't believe in categorisation or the laying-down of any laws. All I will predict is that there will never be any lessening of interest in the traditional form of narration, the tradition that goes back to Homer."

Q: "In your own writing, do you take the technical idea or theme that you want to convey, and then add the entertainment values?"

A: "No, I work the other way round. A story should be primarily a work of art if possible, and therefore it should arouse emotions and feelings of identification; if it has any message, that's fine but it's a secondary thing. I've just completed a story called 'Transit of Earth' - it appeared in Playboy, which publishes all my stories now - which is about something that will really happen, in the year 1984, believe it or not (I think in May, I forget the exact date). The Earth crosses the face of the Sun as seen from Mars, which is a fairly rare phenomenon, won't happen again for another hundred years. The story is written in the words of the only survivor of the first expedition to Mars, who has only a few hours to live (his oxygen will then be gone), and he's observing through the telescope, taking the recordings of the little black spot of the Earth followed by the Moon, moving across the face of the Sun. Now I've linked this with Scott's attempt to reach the South Pole and many other things, and it's a very emotional piece, ending up with Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. It's going to be turned into a Planetarium demonstration in Salt Lake City. Now here, you see, I have a definite story and a great emotional content, I think, and a feeling of identification."

Q: "What are your plans? You are associated with Asimov, who hasn't been writing for a while..."

A: Asimov not writing? Oh, not writing science fiction. He does a book every two months. In case you haven't heard, the title of his latest is 'The Sensuous Dirty Old Man'. I've a volume of short stories coming out which I've been working on for ten years - in fact it was sold at least five years ago, and then '2001' came along and I had no chance to write. But during my last visit to Ceylon I did settle down to the typewriter and I've just done a 17,000 word story which will round off the volume, and with enormous relief I can now regard it as complete. It has about twenty stories, some of which go very far afield, but on the whole they are about the fairly near future and the solar system. Also coming out are three revisions of old books of mine, and a book about the making of '2001', and I'm about to start work on a non-fiction book with the space artist Czeslaw Bonestall - it's about the Grand Tour, the projected launching of space probes to Jupiter, Saturn and beyond in the mid-70s. It will probably be called BEYOND JUPITER: THE WORLDS OF THE GRAND TOUR. Bonestall, who is 83 years old, has finished the paintings and I will now do the text.

"In the States, I'm making a 90-minute television documentary called 'The Promise of Space', which is about the applications of space technology to the solution of problems here on Earth. I've been working on it for more than three years, and filming all over the place for about one year, speaking all the narration and appearing on screen for much of the time; topics covered include communications, meteorology, Earth's resources, and satellites. I've discouraged any attempts to get me to do more screenplays; I'm a novelist and short story writer, and a screenplay is a very specialised thing, it's not a work of art at all, it's merely the necessary step towards the final production. I'm only interested in helping other people to develop screenplays from my work. I think CHILDHOOD'S END is going to be filmed some day (they have been working on this for years), and there's been a screenplay done of FALL OF MOONDUST. By the way, we've got around the problem of there being no dust on the surface of the Moon by suggesting that there may be some seas of dust just under the surface, and that these will start oozing out once we start blasting a few holes in the place!"

Q: "Can you expand a little on your quoted remark 'The future isn't what it used to be'?"

A: "Well, it was meant as a joke, but it does contain a certain serious aspect. This is the first time that we have been very interested in the future and have taken it seriously; in the context of organisations specially formed to study the future methodically, our concept of the future is certainly not what it used to be. Alvin Toffler in FUTURE SHOCK has coined another slogan that I like: 'After the future, what?'.

I think that the space programme has been largely responsible for this surge of interest - those wonderful photographs of the planet Earth had a tremendous psychological impact. It's no coincidence that we became aware of the ecological crisis at the precise moment when we saw our beautiful green planet hanging over the lifeless Moon. What we need now is not less science or less technology, but more of both - but they must be sensibly planned.

The concept of Spaceship Earth is now quite common; we have to develop the closed-cycle ecology (or economy) where all waste products are used over and over again, recycled. There is no such thing as waste, there is no such thing as garbage; there is only raw material which we are too stupid to be able to use.

The simple fact that we have reached the Moon has helped many people to accept at last that we are capable, as my friend Buckminster Fuller has said for so long, of achieving anything that we collectively put our minds and energies to. But it's still in many ways a difficult reality to face. I remember when I was entertaining the crew of Apollo 12 in Ceylon, we went for a drive, and Pete Conrad (who will probably be the commander of Skylab) was very tired and sleeping in the front seat while I was talking to Mrs Conrad in the back. I was talking about the fact that there are still many people who refuse to believe that men have actually been on the Moon, and think that it was all faked. Conrad overheard me, woke up and said "I don't believe it either," and went back to sleep again."

Philip Strick, 1972

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## SCENES FROM SCIENCE FICTION

I have a note here from Philip Strick which announces two programmes of SF films which he is presenting on September 21st and October 5th, respectively, at the National Film Theatre, South Bank, London.

The first programme contains items from a series being made by writer-critic James Gunn at the University of Kansas. In 'Plot in Science Fiction' Poul Anderson discusses with James Gunn the three basic stories defined by Robert Heinlein and illustrates how these have been adapted to his own work. In another film Forrest Ackerman discusses the history and development of the SF film, with numerous illustrations. There will also be some titles specially imported from the Trieste Festival. (21 September, 6.30 & 8.45).

The second programme contains 'New Directions in Science Fiction', in which Harlan Ellison conducts a seminar on the more striking possibilities and styles being used in SF today. In another title, George Pal, director of 'Destination Moon', 'War of the Worlds' etc, talks about his interest in the uses of SF. There will also be additional items from the Trieste Festival. (5 October, 6.30, 8.45).

Since SPECULATION will appear far too late for readers to see these two programmes, this note is purely of historical interest. More usefully might be to explain that the British Film Institute will be distributing the complete series of films from the University of Kansas, and that it is hoped to present a similar programme at the SPECULATION-III conference in Birmingham in 1972.

Of all writers currently producing science fiction, I think I must find Larry Niven the most appealing and most entertaining. At the same time there seems to be some insidious attraction in the ramifications of his stories, one which others obviously feel too. The article below is revised by Larry Niven from a talk he gave at the PresiCon at Los Angeles, earlier in the year. I have added a few more comments of my own afterwards...

## "MY WORLD AND WELCOME TO IT"

By Larry Niven

As of this writing, the known space series is virtually complete. I plan to write one more novel within the history: PROTECTOR, starting in 2121 AD. But the series would be complete without PROTECTOR.

Why would anyone want to end a successful series? All that rich background, all the interlocking assumptions, the developing alien species, the complex web of politics, the strange worlds!

Why? See Isaac Asimov's article, YA GOTTA HAVE A GOOD FOUNDATION, in which he explains why he dropped his. My answers are about the same. That rich background is based on a growing set of assumptions, and the assumptions are growing restrictive.

Just so we'll know what we're talking about, I append a short list of the stories in the series. I think this list is complete. Those of you who haven't read any of them will find the rest of this article incomprehensible.

Including PROTECTOR, the known space series will include about 470,000 words when finished.

Now, most of the assumptions in the series were made for the sake of some specific story.

For instance: magic. NOT LONG BEFORE THE END fits the rest of the series, because it assumes that any world's magic gets used up by the inhabitants. Thus, the dragons died because their metabolism was based on magic. The gods were more powerful, needed magic more, and died earlier. These days there is no magic at all.

But to be really consistent I should assume that magic works on all uninhabited worlds, from the Moon outward. I haven't used that premise, and I won't.

Again, there was a mediocre short story, THE COLDEST PLACE. It was based on Mercury, on the frigid back. Two months before it was published, and two months after I cashed the check, some Russian scientists showed that Mercury has a thin hydrogen atmosphere derived from the solar wind. Later it developed that the planet rotates. My background was ruined.

But I re-used the main characters in BECALMED IN HELL, which I want in the Known Space series. Therefore two of the assumptions basic to the Known Space series are that Mercury has no atmosphere and does not rotate.

# THE KNOWN SPACE SERIES

1)	NOT LONG BEFORE THE END	11,000 BC
2)	THE DEADLIER WEAPON	1970 AD
3)	THE COLDEST PLACE	1978 " (obsolete)
4)	BECALMED IN HELL	1982 "
5)	EYE OF AN OCTOPUS	1984 "
6)	WAIT IT OUT	1989 "
7)	HOW THE HEROES DIE	1999 "
7½)	CLOAK OF ANARCHY	2020 "
8)	WORLD OF PTAVVS	1.5 x 10 <sup>9</sup> BC to 2106 AD
9)	AT THE BOTTOM OF A HOLE	2112 AD
10)	DEATH BY ECSTASY	2120 "
11)	PROTECTOR* (includes THE ADULTS)	2121 " - onward - (NOT YET WRITTEN)
12)	INTENT TO DECEIVE	2122 "
13)	THE WARRIORS	2440 "
14)	A GIFT FROM EARTH	2450 "
15)	THE ETHICS OF MADNESS	2543 "
16)	NEUTRON STAR	2603 "
17)	A RELIC OF EMPIRE	2603 "
18)	AT THE CORE	2605 "
19)	THE SOFT WEAPON	2607 "
20)	FLATLANDER	2608 "
21)	THE HANDICAPPED	2611 "
22)	GRENDIEL	2612 "
23)	THERE IS A TIDE	2789 "
24)	RINGWORLD	2809 "

Now move forward a bit and consider the General Products hull. I needed a spacecraft hull that was by definition indestructible and impenetrable, to formulate the thought-problem in NEUTRON STAR. To continue to write stories in that particular piece of future, I had to keep the GP hull. I got good use out of it in FLATLANDER, but didn't really need it. It was a definite handicap in RINGWORLD, making it very difficult to arrange a crash landing. In some of the other stories in that series I just went ahead and used ships without GP hulls. I'd had the forethought to make the GP hull very expensive.

Then there's the Grog problem, which I touched on in HANDICAP and never touched again. A friend of mine, Dan Alderson, did a masterful analysis of the Grog problem, four pages single-spaced, using all of the assumptions in the

known space series including Brennan, the human-stage protector in THE ADULTS. The problem with Brennan is that he would solve the Grog problem by exterminating the Grogs, immediately, totally; he would not even consider a less drastic solution. Dan's optimum solution was to fly a bandersnatch from Jinx to Down and leave it as a kind of guardian. Bandersnatchi were shown to be immune to the Slaver power in WORLD OF PTAVVS, and the Grogs are Slaver-descended. If a Grog got out of line with a bandersnatch, she would be run over. She could not even dodge.

I've been thinking of THE ADULTS as outside the known space series. Brennan or any other protector would declare instant war on any of the alien intelligences of known space. A protector could do no less.

Mind you, the buildup of restrictive assumptions hasn't been all bad. The universe of discourse gets bigger, richer, more complex with each story; which is why anyone writes a future history, from Heinlein on. I used many individual ideas over and over.

The kzinti were left over from an early story called THE WARRIORS. I like the way they developed as they went along.

Originally I built up the extinct Slaver Empire of WORLD OF PTAVVS in order to define the characters of Kzanol the thrint and Larry Greenberg the temporary thrint. But I liked some of the products of tnucltip biological engineering so much that I kept them.

For example, A RELIC OF EMPIRE started with a vivid mental picture: a gang of evildoers unwittingly using stage tree logs to make a bonfire. Stage trees are organically grown solid fuel rockets. That story was the first link between the WORLD OF PTAVVS universe and the Beowulf Shaeffer universe.

For years I wanted to use a field of mutated tnucltip sunflowers. They would behave in concert like an enormous solar mirror, and would be very dangerous; dangerous enough to take over any terrestrial world. I tried to use them in one unsuccessful story, then got double use of them in RINGWORLD. They were a clue to the nature of Teela Brown's luck, and they helped to show the size of the Ringworld structure. Granted that they will eventually take over the entire structure; but on a structure that size, eventually can mean hundreds of millions of years!

I needed the bandersnatchi as an example of a sentient being who can't make or use tools, for HANDICAP.

There were things I was going to re-use, but never did.

Why do Outsiders follow starseeds? Nobody knows, though I heard some brilliantly unlikely answers during a MITSFS dinner in Boston. There was a recognised psi power called Plateau Eyes, held by some of the descendants of Matt Keller of A GIFT FROM EARTH. Never used. There's a lost slowboat full of lost colonists in frozen sleep, a ship falling well beyond Sirius at well below lightspeed. I never got them rescued. There are the tnucltipun; It's hard to believe that anything that vicious could have been wiped out by anything as stupid as the Slavers.

The problem of the puppeteer world almost joined that group. I figured out where the puppeteer world was and is (two different answers), years ago. I couldn't work up a story around it; which was unfair, because I had raised the problem. Luckily I was able to use it in RINGWORLD.

Which brings us back to the restrictions.

Second place for the most restrictive assumption in the series, goes to the Slaver stasis field in WORLD OF PTAVVS. The stasis field is a closed region, bounded by a conducting surface, in which time passes very slowly or not at all. Simple, right?

And useful! Tom Digby has suggested that a research station can be set up on the airless antimatter planet Swoosh, starting with a metal floor enclosed by a stasis field, and building on that. If a wire can carry a stasis field, then an arbitrarily thin wire can be infinitely rigid.

From a writer's viewpoint, the stasis field is too useful. For every story to be set subsequent to the year 2106, I must consider whether the basic problem can be solved by using a Slaver stasis field. If it can, I don't have a story. Most of my stories have a problem-solution framework.

Even here, it's possible to use the restriction. A spherical stasis field would look just like a small sphere of neutronium to most instruments. But if a ship pulls alongside a ten foot sphere of Neutronium to pick it up, that ship will be flattened into a thin film. See THERE IS A TIDE....

Now, look where we are by 2809 AD, at the start of RINGWORLD.

We have two kinds of unreasonably strong, unreasonably durable engineering materials: metals protected by a stasis field, and the General Products hulls. My characters have to waste time considering both possibilities as being used for the framework of the Ringworld. But asteroid punctures will form part of the plot, so I must introduce a third unreasonably strong material.

We have an assumed origin of humanity. Life started on Earth because the oceans were seeded with edible yeast by the Slavers. (World of Ptavvs). But humanity evolved from the breeder stage of the Pak species, which originated in the galactic core, as shown in THE ADULTS. So where did the Ringworld humans come from?

They could have evolved separately, but it seems unlikely.

Probably they evolved the same way we did, from another group of stranded Pak. But I certainly don't want to open that can of worms, especially since Louis Wu doesn't have access to the information that would tell him all this.

So I've got to dream up another origin for the Ringworld humans, and not mention the Pak at all. Under the known space assumptions, Louis Wu's perfectly reasonable assumption (Earth was settled from the Ringworld) is wrong, and I've got to leave it that way.

The Core explosion -- the fact that the galactic core has exploded in a kind of chain reaction of supernovae -- is important, because it explains how the puppeteers got out there near the Ringworld in the first place. I didn't need it to motivate Louis Wu into going, but I might as well use it for that, because I'm trapped into explaining it anyway. But, damn it! how many times can I describe the Core explosion before it gets boring? One more time would do it, I think.

The puppeteer planet. Now, I had been planning for years to reveal the secret of the puppeteer planet somewhere. A flying fleet of worlds seemed perfect to build up the reader's imagination, so that he would have less trouble grasping the sheer imensity of the Ringworld structure. But, who



knows? I might have found a better way, if the problem of the puppeteer world hadn't been sitting there looking at me for two years.

All of that accumulated previous to RINGWORLD. Where would I be if I tried to write a sequel to RINGWORLD?

I'd have all of the previous assumptions, plus the fleet of puppeteer worlds, plus the existence of the Ringworld two hundred light years outside human space (enough to give any civilization an inferiority complex), plus the probably concealed fact that puppeteers have been breeding men and kzinti for their own purposes, with mixed success, plus hand-carried tasps raising havoc with human society, plus -- and this is the kicker -- plus the Teela Brown gene.

It's just too much clock winding. I've got to deal with all of that, in any story I write, even if it's only in my own head. More likely I'll have to explain it all, somewhere in the story, without losing the reader's attention. I'd never be able to write something as short as THERE IS A TIDE or AT THE CORE. Traditionally, stories in a series tend to get long and longer, without limit.

But first prize for the most restrictive assumption goes to the Teela Brown gene. The following is quoted from THE ELEPHANT No.5, Cory Panshin's fanzine in APA:NESFA, 11/22/1970.

"I can't help wondering if there is still time for it to be stopped. There are several thousand other humans with Teela's luck. If humanity as a whole does not continue to breed for luck, these several thousand might still mate together and produce a separate race of gods. These will almost certainly become immortal, through a drug obtained from the Ringworlders. In time they will learn how to use their powers, if they have not already done so. Teela's luck controlled her; She did not control it. It was tied to her unconscious needs and so was merely destructive. If she could have tied it to her conscious desires, it would have been devastating.

The question that keeps intruding itself is one of exactly what luck is. Loosely, it means having good things happen to you rather than bad. But who decides what is good? In Ringworld, luck seems to work toward the fundamental human needs: survival, reproduction, development of the individual personality. It might be possible to think of other imperatives, but these three are sufficient to give rise to a multitude of possibilities.

Survival, for example. Does the lucky man inevitably grow so rich and powerful that nothing can ever hurt him? Or would he, secure from birth, be equally content to travel through life as a beggar, knowing there will always be sufficient food and a warm place to sleep? Or development of the personality. To function most efficiently and avoid being hurt, the lucky man must be as free of neurosis as a scientologist's dream and as serene as a Buddha. Freed from desires, would he become the supremely effective man, or simply withdraw into philosophical contemplation? And reproduction. Would the compulsions of luck goad him to spread his seed as widely as possible, or to interbreed so as to intensify the luck in the next generation? And will the universe of these beings go all Phil-Dick - schizo - mind destroying, or will it become personal, benign, compassionate?"

Now I thought of all those possibilities, honest I did. And they are all valid! Dear friends and perfect strangers have offered other suggestions too. Don Cochrane suggests that with her luck, Teela doesn't need character

development, or even human intelligence, and thus doesn't need the Ringworld. Someone in the audience (this article is derived from a speech made at the Presicon) suggested that lucky competition would be unlucky for Teela Brown. This suggests both that Teela will never meet another lucky one, and that she will not have lucky children; either the gene is recessive, or she's sterile.

The problem is that I've got to think like a philosopher and a novelist. To a novelist, the Teela mutation is no good.

Who would I write about, in a universe of Teela Browns? The teelas themselves? But everything is coming up roses for the teelas; there is no tension; the only question is how everything will come out for the best. A Georgette Heyer universe! Cory is a Georgette Heyer fan; I am not. I can't write unless I am permitted an unhappy ending. Furthermore, the teelas are not particularly human. Like the puppeteer world, their environment contains no sharp edges. They are hard to identify with.

There is only one way to write about Teela Brown. Show her in action, let the reader wonder what's going on, then show him what she is. Then drop her.

I could write of the non-teelas, the ones who don't have the gene. But the luck of the teelas would affect them too. Else they would be angry people, rebellious, envious. Perhaps they would rise in their wrath to destroy the lucky ones --- and fail, or succeed only to find that they have killed a lot of non-teelas, while the luck of the teelas has failed to operate.

I could, but I won't. There's too much author control. The question that keeps intruding itself is one of exactly what luck is...But who decides what is good? I do! Am I not the author? And there's just no way to hide it. The luck that protects Teela Brown boils down to Larry Niven. When the reader knows what she is, I'm finished with Teela Brown. Suspense and Teela Brown are incompatible.

To write stories subsequent to RINGWORLD, I would have to fall back on environments the teelas had not yet reached. Under the circumstances, that would be a copout. The Teela mutation is the biggest thing to hit mankind since a plains ape picked up a broken antelope's thighbone.

What about writing stories into the middle of the known space series? Now that would work, and I plan to do it once. It should be the last novel in the history of known space, and it starts around 2121 AD.

THE ADULTS began with Phssthpok, a Pak, a member of a race ancestral to Man, and superior in many ways. That story ended with Brennan, a human analogue of the protector-stage Pak, vastly changed from the original Belter Jack Brennan.

I plan to rewrite that story, making it the first half of the novel PROTECTOR. The rest of it would be the story of the protector-stage Brennan-monster. Thus far my notes deal only with Kobold, Brennan's refuge beyond Pluto, where he has been using artificial gravity as an art form.

Now look where my restrictions fall.

1) Brennan must die or leave human space, previous to 2440 AD.. Otherwise he would do his damndest to exterminate the kzinti. Under the circumstance he would probably be successful --- and we know he wasn't.

2) If Brennan leaves human space, I must force him to avoid certain

regions. If he found out about Grogs or bandersnatchi or damn near everything intelligent and nonhuman, he would try to exterminate them. This instinctive; Brennan has no control over it.

3) Brennan may have the wit not to interfere with humanity, human society, human aspirations. This is lucky for me, the author. But there are things he could not leave alone. He would move immediately to eliminate the organ bank problem, which for Brennan means going into the prosthetics business.

4) Brennan would never leave human space without seeing to it that there is a Protector in case of need. So where was he during the kzinti invasion? And how the hell am I going to get around that?

--- See the problem?

Larry Niven, 1971.

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.....The problem really represents the unfortunate results of following every assumption made for the purposes of a specific story right through to its ultimate conclusions. You're too conscientious and too thorough, Larry!

But it would be a shame to abandon 'known space' just now it's becoming so interesting. There is something about the chronology above which is oddly intriguing, so that while stencilling the article here I've been worrying away at the problems myself. This is how most 'Future History' series appeal. and they naturally provoke questions of their own. among the faithful few!

For instance, Larry implies he is going to write about the kzinti invasion, or wars, which would be a story to really look forward to reading. But see how restricted are the dates still 'available'; In RINGWORLD (2809) it is stated that there had been no kzinti war for 250 years, putting the last engagement at 2559 A.D. Looking from the other direction, the kzinti were discovered in the story 'The Warriors', in 2440. That allows Larry only 119 years for at least three wars (see 'Grendel').

Then there is this business of switching over from a fusion drive, slower-than-light Universe to the hyperdrive of later stories. 'Neutron Star' is the first story to use hyperspace, in 2603. The immediately-preceding title is 'Ethics of Madness' in 2543 which uses a passenger ramscoop system. Hyperspace must have been first applied in those 60 years, but the last kzin war happened in 2559. Therefore Larry has a maximum of fifteen years at best in which to set a story of the kzinti 'invasion' using hyperdrive ships. My conclusion is that the battles took place at slower-than-light speeds. (Now I want the stories!)

Still with us? I find this sort of thing fascinating, but it's easy to see the corner in which Larry has written himself. Another problem is that these stories were written one at a time, and some of the earlier ones were published before Larry had standardised all the details of his mythos - with the result that some early items don't quite fit. 'The Warriors', for instance, could almost use some rewriting, since it was written before the author conceived of the organ-bank theme, while the drive of the spaceship in the story is altogether different from the fusion-reaction ships which appeared later.

Serious students will remember that the Outsiders took the secret of hyperspace to We Made It, at the end of A GIFT FROM EARTH in A.D. 2450. Obviously their ship took something over 93 years to arrive (after 2543) - but how and when did the kzinti get the secret? All interesting questions; the penalty for being original I suppose!

ONE OF the more original programme events of EASTERCON 22 was the Saturday afternoon session titled 'The Case for and against Philip K Dick' in which we set up Tony Sudbery to argue with Philip Strick. Actually this idea grew from the fact that both speakers, when I approached them, wanted to talk on the same subject, although they appeared to approach it from completely opposite viewpoints. My own sympathies are remarkably in tune with Tony Sudbery, who said:

"I'm not too keen, really, on seeing this as a sort of trial or debate to decide whether Philip K Dick is to be allowed to pass into the hallowed halls of SF fame. I see it more as an enquiry into a strange mystery, which I shall propound and which Philip Strick will attempt to explain. This is, of course; -

WHAT DO THEY SEE IN PHILIP K. DICK ?

( By Tony Sudbery )

It baffles me. It doesn't even seem to be a case of mere fashion, of people becoming devotees of Philip K. Dick by infection from other devotees, because I've encountered cases of Dick-mania which have certainly developed in complete isolation from the main epidemic. This makes me feel uneasy; if so many people enjoy Dick's books and discover them independently, there must be something there to enjoy. I want to know what it is.

Well, what do they say? I've been working from three articles, one by Michael Moorcock in Vector, from 1966, one by Bob Parkinson in Speculation (1969), and particularly a very useful and specific article by John Brunner in New Worlds (1966). From these I've pieced together some sort of picture of the writer who has attracted so much praise. It's an image of a deeply serious, brilliantly inventive and absorbingly entertaining writer, who never lapses from the consistently high standards that he sets himself. John Brunner says he is "the most consistently brilliant SF writer in the world".

This writer they describe has certain characteristic preoccupations, rather abstract and philosophical ones. In fact he seems to be mainly concerned with "the nature of reality". But he can carry on profound discussions on these themes without detracting from the superficial story he's telling; and this is always meticulously well constructed, and really tremendously gripping. Indeed, some of his admirers grumble at him for being too enjoyable. He's not a sensational writer, the man in this picture; his style and characterisation are modest, but they're clear and direct - well, he's a superb craftsman in every way. Ultimately, though, everything is at the service of his fundamental themes.

Well, this description is of a writer whom I ought to enjoy very much indeed. I don't like sensationalism, prefer my SF to be low-key and thoughtful, and I'm a sucker anyway for a good gripping plot. So give or take a couple of phrases such as "the nature of reality" it sounds great - everything I look for in SF, all in one writer. But to turn from criticism about him to books by him is a terrible let-down!

I had a look at the books he'd actually written. And I looked, and I looked, and I looked... but I found not a trace of the writer all those articles had been describing. In fact, I didn't find anything much.

There's one good Dick novel - just one: THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. It won him a Hugo, and it deserved to, (though not for the reasons that the Dick-maniacs probably think). Otherwise his books are utterly undistinguished; they're occasionally moderately enjoyable - TIME OUT OF JOINT, for example, gave me a comfortable evening's reading - but they're completely ordinary and, apart from a rather hectic feel in the more hastily written ones, quite flavour-

Well, not quite flavourless. After exposing myself to Dick books constantly for about a week, I find that they have had some effect on my emotional taste-buds; they've produced a dull, grey, numb feeling, a sort of generalised ache. It feels just like the onset of 'flu'.

Now this feeling doesn't correspond to anything in Dick's characters, situations or themes. If it did it might be a basis for praise rather than criticism. But I think it arises from a curious numbness and dullness in his writing - you might think it was a zombie writing. Listen to this paragraph from TIME OUT OF JOINT (and remember, this is one I enjoyed). The character has just arrived in his office to find a note which makes him decide he must leave again at once:

I can't believe it, Black thought to himself. He stuck the note in his pocket, got up from his desk and went to the closet for his coat, closed the window, left his office and walked down the corridor and past the receptionist's desk, outside on to the path and then across the parking lot to his car. A moment later he had backed out on to the street and was driving downtown.

You know, it's hard work being a character in a Dick novel. But to John Brunner this is "an almost hallucinatory sharpness of detail in whatever non-real world he cares to create".

Dick's clumsiness with language shows in many other ways (a tiny example: in NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, which is about prosthetic surgery, he keeps referring to 'artiforgs'. I spent half the novel trying to work out what a forg might be), but I don't think there's any point in being pedantic about this. Though it's worth pointing this clumsiness out, for Dick does have some claim to being a stylist - that is, in the restricted sense of being a pasticheur. For example, in THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH he writes a very clumsy, jargon-laden prose, ungainly and stiff - which is just like the prose that the NASA officials use, and which is very appropriate to the sort of world he is describing here. \*

And again, in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, Dick distinguishes the various nationalities by slight differences in style. This is one of the things that don't quite come off in the novel - the various national styles aren't quite right. Nevertheless, this style-juggling must be put on the credit side of the ledger.

The other technical aspects of Dick's writing - tension, mood, point of view and so on - show the same picture as his style; normally mediocre, but at least competent, they can occasionally rise to an interesting effect but are much more likely to lurch into disaster. The outstanding exception is his characterisation, which is good - in some places his characters actually develop, and convincingly at that. But since the characters are never the central concern of Dick's novels, this doesn't help him much. (Except, again, for THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE; there the characters do matter and they do come off.)

\* Since I once cited the ugliness of THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH in a general criticism of Dick, perhaps it's worth emphasising that this is not representative of his usual style. (AS)

Usually any interest in the characters in a Dick novel is swamped by the plot they're caught up in, or the science fictional idea they're illustrating.

And what plots! And what ideas! The plots snaggle along in tighter and tighter knots of confusion and complexity, while the narration gets vaguer and vaguer, more and more careless, until ultimately they don't so much unravel themselves as just sort of fray at the ends. The ideas are badly thought out and inconsistent, when they're not trivial variants of traditional ideas.

Let me anticipate an objection. "But none of this matters. This is fiddling, carping, technical criticism. You ought to be looking at the underlying theme of the Dick novels." Well, I don't know what a "theme" is, if it can be so easily divorced from technical matters, particularly if it can be divorced from plot, idea, and concrete imagination. But let's see where something like this might take us.

One phrase crops up again and again in Michael Moorcock's writings on Philip K. Dick: "the nature of reality" (actually, it crops up again and again in Michael Moorcock's writings on everything). In THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, as everyone knows, one of the characters receives from the I CHING, which is used as an oracle, the information that his world is not the real world at all; in reality Japan and Germany lost the war. After this ending, Moorcock tells us, "the question we are left asking is 'What is reality?'".

But I don't think it is. I think the question we are left asking is "What does Philip K. Dick mean by reality?" - which is a much less interesting question. And if we do ask this question, then we do so as the first step on the positivist road to the conclusion that Dick's ending, though amusing, is ultimately a meaningless piece of frivolity.

The true interest in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE for me lies in its treatment of conquest and government - a serious theme (unlike "the nature of reality"), and one which Dick develops here to a far greater extent than anything in any of his other novels. Everywhere else his serious themes, if any, suffer the fate of his superficial plots - they just fade away.

For a striking example, take THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH. There is one point in this novel where Dick seems to be stating his theme quite explicitly, and saying "What I'm talking about is this: Religion is the opium of the people." For perhaps half the length of the novel, it did indeed seem to be about that. Fine. Unfortunately, when he's got halfway through, he just leaves this theme hanging in the air while he tries to spin a complicated plot involving multiply-connected hallucinations, with some characters dreaming other characters and at the same time being dreamt by them. He tries to get back to his original theme at the end, but for me he fails when he apparently can't even keep track of his own labyrinths - and when the plot falls apart, so does the theme with it.

Well, there you are. There's my picture of Philip K Dick. I have an uncomfortable feeling, though, that at least in the immediate future it will remain a minority report. I wish I knew why.

- Tony Sudbery.

\* At Worcester Philip Strick followed with his own reasons for liking Dick, and I have an hour-and-a-half of tape to prove it. By coincidence however I already had received a long review of two Dick novels from Philip Strick which covered much of the same ground; so for the other side of this debate I'd refer you to Page 35 in this current issue. I'm afraid I became very worked-up over the Strick reviews because I just couldn't accept the conclusions. I'd like to return to more discussion of Philip K. Dick in the next Speculation. (PRW)

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## THE CRITICAL FRONT

### Book Reviews at Length

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INDOCTRINAIRE by Christopher Priest (Faber 28s)

Reviewed by Tony Sudbery

To my taste the most satisfying form for a science fiction novel is the mystery story. By working firmly inside a realistic convention while unfolding his tale of strange events, the writer of such a novel builds up a great urgency to the question "What the hell is going on?" The answer, when it comes - not necessarily at the end of the novel - must do justice to the strange events that prompted the question by being just as strange and interesting itself, while at the same time providing a satisfactory explanation of them. (Come to think of it, that's not a bad definition of science itself.)

Yet there are times when the mysterious events constitute such fascinating images that they transcend the need for an explanation. In this case the reader is quite happy to accept the narrative as a pure product of the writer's imagination; he relaxes his requirements of realism and relates the imaginary tale to the real world in a more indirect way. So that if the writer, adhering to the realistic framework that the reader has dropped, offers a conventional explanation and resolution of his story, it comes as an irrelevance, an obtuse interruption to the true life of the story.

I don't know why a writer should do this sort of thing; it may be that he has got it into his head that he is a science fiction writer and has to give a science-fictional explanation for everything he imagines, or it may be that his original conception was of a science fiction story, the explanation being conceived first and the imaginative development of the images coming afterwards. Either way, this phenomenon is a mark of a writer who doesn't fit quite happily inside traditional science fiction, and yet insists on lying down there.

Something like this has happened in Christopher Priest's impressive first novel Indoctrinaire. The first section of this quickly gets its hero Elias Wentik immured in a large empty jail, isolated in the centre of a large perfectly circular plain of stubble hidden in the Mato Grosso. He is subjected to arbitrary, pointless interrogations by Astourde, who brought him to the jail on shaky authority and whose behaviour throughout has been erratic and incomprehensible; his privations and privileges are removed and restored apparently at random.

At first we seem to be on familiar ground: the territory of Darkness at Noon and One and The Round-Up, examining the plight of a man at the mercy of an absolute and inscrutable authority. But suddenly this changes when Wentik turns the tables on Astourde and becomes the dominant party in the relationship.

Now we're in a world of shifting, ill-defined relationships - more like Pinter in The Servant or Accident, or perhaps still closer to William Butler's A Danish Gambit. But what's the point of comparisons? Chris Priest has got something unique going here. The sudden shifts in the relationship between Wentik and Astourde and the glimpses of Astourde's irrational behaviour (Astourde standing on a soap-box, frenetically trying to drill his undisciplined staff as if they were soldiers; his henchman Musgrove revving up a helicopter whose vanes have been removed) - for a time these come thickly and seem to be on the point of developing their own internal logic. But before that can happen the novel changes to a different mode, and eventually it is an external logic that is imposed on the events of this section when it transpires that Astourde and Musgrove are, in a sense, mad, and the nature of their madness is revealed.

The whole of this part of the novel has an uneasy, shifting character which is utterly fascinating. Chris Priest has a great gift for manipulating the reader's reaction to his images and so altering their significance through the course of the novel. For instance: Wentik first encounters Astourde in the Advanced Technique Concentration, where he is working as a biochemist. Astourde's odd behaviour - his habits of bursting abruptly into private rooms, roughly interrupting technical discussions, and walking away at random points in the middle of conversations - is presented without any comment, and in the realistic context of the Concentration this is rather hard to take.

But in the next chapter Wentik, writing to his wife, gives the plain man's reaction by referring to Astourde's "rather disconcerting habit of walking away in the middle of conversation, as if he is striving for some kind of effect". This deftly transfers the reader's irritation from the author to his character; yet by first presenting Astourde's behaviour as if we are to take it seriously, and juxtaposing it with the scientific milieu of the Concentration, Chris Priest has prepared us both for the atmosphere of the jail in the Planalto (the circular plain) - in which altogether weirder context Astourde becomes not irritating but fascinating - and for the eventual explanation of his behaviour.

Or take the lawn at the back of the jail. When we first see this it is just "a tiny lawn surrounded by trees" - nothing at all out of place. At its second appearance it is the scene of Wentik's first interrogation; now it is "a small lawn surrounded by tall beech trees", and it seems a fresh, green place, in striking contrast to the arid plain. This is achieved by the telling detail of the beech trees in the second description, and there is no need for Chris to refer, as he does in the next sentence, to "the incongruity of its presence at the jail."

There are lots of other good things in this section. There is a really beautiful maze, simple enough to be clearly described in a couple of sentences yet having almost inexhaustibly complex possibilities. Some of Chris Priest's images are secondhand - the jail itself, with its bleak surrounding plain, clearly comes straight from The Round-Up; but the atmosphere is defined with tremendous vividness and economy:-

'The day following this he was taken outside the jail again, but this time to a plot of bare soil some distance from the shack. Here he was given a long metal pole and a face-shield, and told to explode five land-mines that had been buried in the soil.'



This quotation is a good illustration of Chris's admirable style. He writes a clear, plain, matter-of-fact prose like a literary analogue of Magritte's bland gouache or Jansco's inscrutably staring cameras. The only false note occurs on the first page, which begins "Violent, like the furious breath of an ice-dragon, the gale howled across the frozen plateau", and continues by tracing the history of the gale before it reaches the Antarctic plateau and the Advanced Technique Concentration. This strikes me as too strident, too attention-calling, and not in keeping with the tone of the rest of the novel; but after this moment of stage fright Chris avoids figures of speech and concentrates on writing with the utmost clarity. The result is that one always knows precisely how things are situated and what is going on. Yet unlike some other writers who practise this style, his writing is never stiff; it always keeps a springy rhythm and moves naturally. (This should be no surprise to SPECULATION readers, who already know from the easy, natural style of "View of Suburbia" that Chris has a very fine ear; it is just as evident in the more formal style he adopts for the novel.)

I've spent a lot of space on the first half of Indoctrinaire, because it seems to me that its characteristic virtues are strongest there. The novel changes in type when Wentik leaves the jail and moves to the Brazilian capital of two hundred years in the future (it's already been well established that the Planalto District is an area of the future transferred to the present). It becomes more of a conventional science fiction story; the events of the first half are taken literally rather than metaphorically, and most of the second section is concerned with uncovering explanations of them. Some of these are pretty perfunctory - Chris Priest seems less confident at inventing scientific theories than at creating visual images and personal situations (the main idea of the novel is backed by an account of Pavlov's work in "a life devoted to the science of indoctrination" which is, to say the least, dubious); but everything is worked out with painstaking craftsmanship and is perfectly consistent.

Nevertheless, I think the whole conception of this development is wrong. Apart from being curiously askew to what they explain, these explanations seem unnecessary. Moreover, by insisting that his writing be taken as realistic, Chris draws attention to some weakness and implausibility in his plot that might not otherwise have mattered.

In particular, there is the extraordinary meekness with which Wentik allows Astourde to take him away from his work, though he has no evidence that Astourde has any real authority over him. If Chris hadn't been so insistent that his action was taking place in the real world, I would have been prepared to accept this as a sort of stylisation; but when he revealed Astourde's actual status and offered some sort of rational explanation for his actions, this returned to my mind and struck me as more than ever unconvincing.

Now it may be that Chris Priest is perfectly well aware of this. After all, he has already warned the reader not to treat the novel as a mystery story when, as Wentik is taken to the Planalto district at the beginning of the novel, he announces "Together they stepped out of the jungle, and walked across the plain two hundred years into the future".

And perhaps there's a further clue in a reflective passage which occurs in the middle of the second section. It begins;--

"It is a part of human thought to reationalize, being the one attribute of man that sets him apart from the other primates. In any given set of circumstances a man can use the information he has available to form an hypothesis which he can then or later set out to establish as workable or unworkable."

and continues in this vein for half a page. My first reaction to this passage was "Oof!" Such ponderous banality comes as a nasty surprise to the unwary reader.

But note the curious use of "rationalize" in the first sentence. This is one of Chris's favourite words; he uses it constantly throughout the novel, and always with its primary sense of "ratiocinate" or "reason".

Possibly -- even probably -- I'm creating subtleties where none were intended; yet to my ear "rationalize", used intransitively as in the above quotation, most immediately suggests the psychoanalytic sense of "substitute conscious reasoning for unconscious motivation in explaining".

Maybe this is Chris's point; maybe his insistence on objective rationality is only ironic, and the irony extends to his carefully elaborated explanations. This would mesh with the pallid and unreal effect of these explanations as compared to the vivid impact of the irrational scenes preceding them.

On the face of it Chris is insisting on the necessity of irrationality, but what he actually makes us feel is the dominance of irrationality. "Look", he seems to be saying, "man has to try to make things rational, he has to find explanations for everying; but really, you know, the world is irrational". Or more exactly, "the world may be rational, but its irrationality can be more important, more interesting and in a sense more real".

Intended or not, what I've just described is the actual effect of the novel, and I'd rather put this down to irony, however involved, than incompetence, however slight. Because if Chris really means what he says about rationalisation, then he has come rather a cropper in demonstrating it. Best, perhaps, to see the second section as a transition to the last part of the novel, which concerns Wentik's attempts to return to his own time and change the course of a nuclear war whose worst effects may have been his own doing. But Chris Priest will have none of your time-travel paradoxes, thank God, and the novel leaves Wentik sitting beneath a tree in southern England, waiting for the hydrogen bomb that he knows must fall in the next few hours.

This section makes quite a break with the preoccupations of the earlier parts of the novel, but it is no mere tidying up; it develops a fair degree of intensity of its own. The ending is particularly powerful, and it has been well prepared by Wentik's increasing unease at living two hundred years out of his time.

In this review I may not have given enough idea of the enjoyment I got out of Indoctrinaire; this is something it's easy to leave out of account when you're trying to be analytically critical. Although I'm not sure that they're satisfactorily organised into a novel, the components of Indoctrinaire are all high quality -- better, oddly enough, than anything I've found in Chris Priest's short stories. For Chris's sake, I'm glad that his first novel, despite its faults, is so impressive, and I hope it gets the acclaim it deserves; for my own sake I'm grateful for the appearance of a fresh and substantial talent which promises me much pleasure in the future.

-- Tony Sudbery, 1970.

THREE FOR TOMORROW by Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny, James Blish,  
Editor Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz 28s)

Reviewed by Robert Conquest

The theme, or gimmick, anthology, is an old S.F. tradition, and there is a lot to be said for it as an excuse for collecting or sponsoring a set of stories. And, of course, Silverberg, Zelazny and Blish are all writers arousing the highest hopes.

The danger of this particular project seems to have lain in the possibility that the three authors might have taken Arthur Clarke's instructions too solemnly; 'with increasing technology goes increasing vulnerability; the more Man "conquers" (sic) Nature, the more prone he becomes to artificial catastrophe..... How is the society of the future going to protect itself from an increasing spectrum of ever more horrendous disasters, particularly those made possible by new devices (high-powered lasers? drugs??) in the hands of the madmen?.....

I would like to see more of those possibilities explored - if only in the hope that, by so doing, we can avoid them'. There was a risk here, surely, of the self-conscious sermonizing which has long beset some types of S.F. Clarke has at least excluded atomic war: it was always most curious that such stuff as Dr. Strangelove and Fail Safe, even apart from their being wrong in all technical details and most other ways, could have served as warnings. Who to? Is there any literate - or semi-literate - person who does not realize that a fusion bomb war would be the ultimate disaster? One never meets anyone who himself needs these warnings: it is always other people who do. Perhaps there are people who are incapable of absorbing known facts unless these are dramatized, but it is hard to believe it. One gets the idea that the Dutch used to rush to their dykes at high tide without having to be worked up to it by a miracle play all about the Flood

Moreover it is those addressed, i.e. S.F. readers, who are precisely those aware already of most of the technological dangers looming up. They are perhaps less aware of the political component so often present - certainly almost all the H-bomb stories have been at strip-cartoon level when it comes to international politics, an area in which, a few, but only a few, S.F. writers have any but the simplest and crudest knowledge. The made scientist has given way to the myopic politician or the aggressive general. Now, of course, a scientist may be a bit mad, a politician may be a bit myopic and a general a bit aggressive. But they are seldom so to quite the idiotic degree implied in smug and shallow commentary.

But, of course, the introductory matter need be regarded no more than an initial impulse. As Philip Larkin has pointed out (of poetry, but the same surely applies to fiction), an imaginative writer's bent cannot in any case just be harnessed to his overt opinions, and may even run against these. Contributors to this collection had the option of standing back and letting their true fictional imagination work without too much regard to the programme, and that, fortunately, is what they have largely done.

Silverberg's story, about the introduction of amnesiac drugs into the water system of San Francisco is thought-provoking, beautifully realized and a splendid

example in general of how to turn a very bright idea into a real story. The probability or otherwise, of the danger is not essentially relevant. This is fiction and it is enough that he achieves consistency and credibility.

Zelazny has a taut and well-turned, but fairly routine piece of future underground-agent work - in this case the hero stops an attempt to sabotage the creation of an artificial submarine volcano, only to find that the saboteurs may have been right.

Blish is the only one of the three to take us into one of the major dangers of which we must all be fairly aware already. He treats of an irreversible ruin of the ecology, mainly by the increase in the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere and the resulting melting of the icecaps, but also, perhaps too minor a flourish in the context, of earthquakes due to dumping of increasingly fast overflow of waste products into deep-sunk shafts. Though perhaps excusable in the interest of drama, there is a certain lack of plausibility due to speeding up the action so that all this happens in a few years and to underestimating the probable popular reaction. It seems a bit unlikely that a rise in the water level of 21 feet would not result in some movement of public and political opinion. All the same, it is readable enough - in spite, too, of a pretty ghastly crowd of those coy and twee New York intellectuals, girls, cats etc. so common in the literature.

On the whole, Silverberg's disaster, though it may be a whimper compared with the other's bangs, is the most sinister and the most interesting, but all three writers are, in their different ways, widely recognized to be subtle and sophisticated. All the more credit to them then, that all these stories largely avoid the po-faced exhibitionistic attitude which some contributors to Speculation have called 'artistry'. In a recent issue, someone talked about Henry James. In our age, when so many flat stones have been lifted, there are worse things around than Henry James. All the same, to appeal to that self-righteous, self-indulgent old bore is, especially in the S.F. context, a notable act of treason. In the controversies between him and H.G. Wells, Wells affected the role of the blunt, no-nonsense Philistine. But this should not be allowed to conceal the fact that Wells' writing, and in particular much of his S.F., was far more subtle and far more evocative than all the involutions and over-definitions of James.

James is at least comprehensible: that is, if you work hard enough and keep your wits continually about you, you can find out a good deal of what you probably don't want to know. More recent (though not much more recent) writings elevated not mere difficulty, but actual impossibility of comprehension, to a criterion of artistry. A muddy mere an inch deep can pretend to any depth it pleases, compared with the limitations set on transparency. But science fiction is a literature for children and adults, and submits to these adolescent criteria at its peril.

One never knows how much of this obfuscation is lazy, or even accidental. A.E. Housman once complained of one of his brother's poems that its excessive obscurity was due to the fact that 'You do not put yourself in the reader's place and consider how, and at what stage, that man of sorrows is to find out what it is all about. You are behind the scenes and know all the data; but he knows only what you tell him. You had in your head some meaning of which you did not suffer to escape one drop into what you wrote; you treat us as Nebuchadnezzar did the Chaldeans, and expect us to find out the dream as well as the interpretation'.

But Speculation readers have had this point (and similar points) put to them adequately. All that needs to be said here is that this book consists neither of tattered imitations of the dear old mainstream experimentalists of 40-50 years ago - nor yet, (in spite of the temptations), of parochial idealizings of the momentary hysterias of the present day. In fact, it is science-fiction.

- Robert Conquest, 1971.

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\* Elsewhere in this issue should be Tony Sudbery's brief exposition from EASTERCON which attempts to explain just why he does not like the novels of Philip K Dick. A dislike, I might add, which only Fred Hemmings and myself appear to share with Tony. The double-review below by Philip Strick presents the case from the other side, and in fact repeats most of Philip's arguments from his part of the Easter session. The review dates from the start of this year however; it is another of those dusty manuscripts which I've taken so long to publish...

UBIK by Philip K. Dick (Rapp & Whiting, £1.40)  
MAZE OF DEATH by Philip K Dick (Doubleday \$4.95)

Reviewed by Philip Strick

Novels come tumbling out of Philip K Dick with such enviable speed that one would have to believe he is actually a team of writers were it not that the faults and merits in each Dick story are so consistently the same, and reflect so consistently an identical personality. UBIK couldn't, certainly, be by anybody else.

A flood of bizarre names pours through the first chapter, linked with an equally bewildering cascade of archetypal SF notions that are not so much unusual in isolation as startling in proximity; on the one hand, Glen Runciter, Joe Chip, S. Dole Melipone, and the resounding Herbert Schoenheit von Vogelsang; on the other, artiforgs (artificial organs, commonplace for people over ninety), telepathic espionage, a style in everyday clothing that is joltingly hard to visualise, and communication with the dead by mechanical means so long as the physical degenerative processes are delayed.

As usual, it's not until chapter six and some 20 characters later that the narrative starts making sense. This, I should say immediately, is a Dick characteristic that has ceased to trouble me except, inevitably, at first reading when prodigious feats of memory seem to be expected or assumed by the writer and I have to wonder apologetically if I am losing my powers of concentration.

The settings for Dick's narratives make no allowances for the inattentive reader, or indeed for the hesitant one, and this seems to me both a realistic and a complimentary attitude on his part - realistic because everything falls into place on second reading anyway, and complimentary because he has assumed that someone who buys a book called DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? or whatever, will be equal to anything the writer cares to throw without a tedious preparatory alphabet of explanations getting in the way.

Dick's scene-setting is in fact quite a logical process in that the action never properly begins until the reader has had the chance to absorb the atmosphere in which it will take place and to get used to the crowd of admittedly rather anonymous characters who will be involved. With UBIK they take some getting used to, partly because they wear things like "his customary natty birch-bark pantaloons, hemp-rope belt, peekaboo see-through top and train-engineer's tall hat" or "ersatz vicuna trousers and a grey sweatshirt on which had been painted a now faded full-face portrait of Bertrand Lord Russell", and partly because one of them

has the ability to reach back into time and make alterations that affect the present. This slows things down a bit, while at the same time putting the reader into the disoriented frame of mind that is the habitual state of Dick's rather ineffective little heroes.

The story of UBIK takes place when Runciter, the head of a big business organisation, is killed by a bomb planted by his rival; his employees rush him back to the mortuary (nicely called, in this society, the moratorium) where it will be possible to receive his continuing instructions during his 'half-life' period. They find, however, that the normal method that ensures dialogue with the thought-processes of the departed is unsuccessful in Runciter's case. Instead, messages from their leader start to reach them by a variety of other means - by telephone, television, skywriting, and random graffiti all the more perplexing for being fully relevant to the action at the moment they appear.

If this all begins to sound like 'What the Dead Men Say', a short story by Dick from 1964 and reprinted in that splendid collection THE PRESERVING MACHINE (which should be grabbed without hesitation by anyone who wants to study the ways in which Dick has improved over 16 years of writing), don't make it a reason to by-pass UBIK. The powerful central notion of an omnipresent voice of instruction filling all the wavelengths is certainly the same, but Dick is ringing another change out of it, just as he has done less directly in, for example, the far earlier SOLAR LOTTERY or the more recent OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8.

Voices are always echoing down from the outer reaches in Dick's work, signals of unearthly powers with more than a hint of divine resonance to them; and although they normally turn out to be human in origin, the implications of supernatural hierarchy remain. Messages from beyond, whether delivered through the I Ching or in the form of notes in bottles (as with GALACTIC POT-HEALER) are what compound Dick's narratives with discreet theology in a manner unique to science fiction.

The Runciter phenomenon in UBIK (the title derives, of course, from 'ubique' - everywhere - as well as a sidelong reference to 'ubiquity') ultimately has one of Dick's most sinister twists to it, quite different from the banal and melodramatic explanation in the original short story. The gradual decay of the world the leader has left behind him, coupled with the slow reverting of that world's architecture and artifacts to earlier models, is one of the most unnerving illustrations of Dick's time-reversal obsession, his apparent fear that the present is insubstantial, with less meaning and certainly less charm than the past it has defaced and obscured like a superfluous later addition to an oil painting.

As with COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD, Dick's response to the degeneration/regeneration process is ambiguous; the figments of the past that supplant UBIK's present have a comfortable amiability that is far more congenial to the hero than the army of recalcitrant appliances that normally surround him (such as the front door that demands payment before it will open and threatens to sue when a screwdriver is produced) - but on the other hand the breakdown of the present is finally revealed to be the deliberate accomplishment of a malignant force, while the episode in which the hero himself starts to disintegrate is genuinely nightmarish.

UBIK concludes most satisfyingly with Good (administered in spray-cans) and Evil (more conventionally exercised through thought-control) slogging it out after all else has become clear and the impartial Dick average-man has committed himself to the right side of the contest. And there is a splendid kick at the end of chapter seventeen that brings the book full circle for the sheer geometrical pleasure of it. No, I have no complaints at all.

(Cont/d)...



Hard on the heels of UBIK comes MAZE OF DEATH, which Doubleday published in the U.S. in July 1970. It's a funnier book than UBIK but in many respects, especially the pay-off chapter, the two are remarkably similar. Once again Dick has expanded ideas from a short story, in this case 'Pay the Printer' which he wrote in 1956; once again the action concerns a group of ill-assorted people with such names as Dunkelwelt, Babble, and Ignatz Thugg, milling around without a leader and being exterminated whenever they wander off on their own.

Again, the guidance from exterior forces is multilayered; the group is assigned to a planet to form a colony the purpose of which is to be communicated to them by satellite (which breaks down at the vital moment), they are studied by anonymous authorities apparently based at an impregnable and elusive building, and there are occasional visits from one of Dick's most blatant representatives of divinity, the Walker-on-Earth.

MAZE OF DEATH romps along with a gaiety that I find irresistible. Its collection of spurious chapter-headings listed on the contents page sets the tone for Dick's casually idiotic brand of humour for a good two-thirds of the book. The central character (a struggling nobody, as usual) picks out a tiny one-trip-only spacecraft by the name of The Morbid Chicken (in UBIK the spaceship was Pratfall III), and promptly starts to load it with marmalade for the flight. Warned by the Walker-on-Earth that he'll never make it in the Chicken, he accepts help in transferring his property to an alternative vehicle, learning meanwhile why his serene visitor thinks so much of him. "Once years ago you had a tomcat whom you loved. He was greedy and mendacious and yet you loved him. One day he died from bone fragments lodged in his stomach, the result of filching the remains of a dead Martian root-buzzard from a garbage pail. You were sad, but you still loved him.."

It is characteristic of Dick's writing that such an encounter is treated without grandeur or solemnity; instead, the lunacy of the situation carries a kind of tenderness with it. The pathetic confusion in which the colonists of Delmak-O meet the challenges of the planet (tiny mechanical buildings with built-in cannons; a rampant but inept nymphomaniac, an artificial fly that sings 'Granada') is matched by the simplicity of the struggle of which they are unconsciously a part - the struggle that in GALACTIC POT-HEALER was against the Black Cathedral, and that here is against the Form Destroyer.

The contest draws them in and with what seems to me an unusual brutality for Dick, stabs, crushes, and shoots a number of them to death, only to find them quite literally reborn and ready to start again (once more, the novel comes full circle at its close). There is a sense, however, that the recurring fight is gradually being lost through sheer human frailty, that eventually the destruction will be too quick and too comprehensive to be reconstructed by conveniently handy mechanical means.

What Dick describes in his foreword (as something of a warning that the jokes need careful analysis) as "an abstract, logical system of religious thought, based on the arbitrary postulate that God exists", is seemingly unable to avoid the fatalistic gloom of all predestinative philosophies. Were it not that we can safely expect Dick to resume the fray undaunted with his next ten novels, MAZE OF DEATH for all its slapstick, would look far more ominous. Disintegration is still a long way off, and with a spray can of instant optimism we might even be able to avoid it indefinitely...

Philip Strick, 1971

\* I don't know, Philip, persuasive as you are I still don't see it (in Tony Sudbery's own words)! From the synopses above these two novels appear unbelievably bad; I'm no stranger to Dick's work of course, but as an experiment I

\* borrowed both titles from a friends and attempted to read them, comparing my own reactions with your own. I agree with most of the comments in your first paragraph.

That is, there certainly are a multiplicity of bizarre names (only I prefer to call them 'silly'). The narrative of UBIK indeed does not make sense. The characters are completely anonymous, and as you say the reader is put into 'a completely disoriented frame of mind'.

These were your observations, but I disagree with your conclusions. I think these comments illustrate the work of a poor writer in a bad book. That 'disorientation' I would rather call 'utter boredom', the plots I would call trivial and pointless, and since Philip K Dick does not appear to take himself or his readers very seriously, I fail to see why I should pay any serious attention to him.

Sorry, I sometimes get carried away! I played the tape from EASTERCON, Philip, until I came to the end of your talk on Dick where you said "To sum up, I regard Philip K Dick's merits as being, very simply, his sense of humour, his range of invention, and the fact that he is unashamedly prepared to present his obsessions time and again in every one of his novels, and yet still make them palatable each time." That's two or three of us who disagree with you, Philip - does anyone else have an opinion? PRW

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OPINION 38: "Emphasis on literary performance?" (Greg Benford)

"...I sometimes think the emphasis on literary performance among our SF writers is beginning to do them some harm. Surely not to their product - the average level of the novel and even the short story is rising rapidly - but to their selves. Stress upon the virtues of characterisation, style and the simple craftsmanship with words is never out of place, true; but SF's prime virtue, I think, is the vision it gives of the world, the distance from the turbulence of the present. In this it has some claim to an original source of energy and power. This is really the only reason it is important, the reason SF is now taught in university. (Does anyone imagine SF is taught for its literary mastery?).

The difficulty arises when well-meaning authors begin to compare themselves with the best writers in the world, and come away depressed. Recently one of our most promising new talents (Alex Panshin) and a resurrected oldie (Robert Silverberg) seem to have run aground on this shoal, with a resultant diminution of their output to near zero. I am sure they would both say that there are only a few good writers in SF - and in the list include, say, Tom Disch and Joanna Russ and maybe Lafferty - the rest are mere commercial wordsmiths. Many other writers would doubtless agree with this or some slightly modified statement. This is simply a sign of how ingrown SF is, though, for Russ and Disch are writer's writers, with little real selling power. Perhaps in 10 years they will rank with Heinlein, etc, but I doubt it. Bester, the paragon of the '50s, never made it as a big seller and consequently I believe he has little influence among most people who regularly buy and read SF. \* Understand, I do not mean these people are not our best writers - personally I think they are - but rather that the great host of citizens who read SF do not read it for what Russ, Disch, Lafferty, etc, provide. It is a pity but it is a fact. I still believe the remembered SF of this decade will be fairly classical, perhaps even moderately "hard science" work. Though I am willing to be proven wrong. " (July, 1971)

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## THE MELTING POT

### Letters from Readers

Reviving an interesting lettercolumn after a publishing hiatus of some eight months is not an easy thing to do, especially since just about everyone will have forgotten the contents of that long-ago January issue. I've tried to make things a little easier by adding remarks inside asterisks, \*like so\* where a subject is not expressly mentioned. These were good letters when I received them and I hope you will still find them interesting to read - and that you'll care to comment yourself in future. I promise to do better next time!

XX

Graham Charnock (1 Eden Close, Alperton, Wembley, Mx.)

Dear Pete, "Fred Pohl is a peculiar chap. I suspect he's a right-winger (and I'm not talking about football). Almost every statement he makes is arguable and yet is set forth with an absolute minimum of argument. This is how it is, chaps, take the word of someone older and wiser than thou..

In the first paragraph of his column in SPECULATION--28, Pohl implies that back in the good old days of the pulps, writers had it so good that it was 'only an economic temptation' (my underlining) that motivated them to pad short stories out to novel length. Nowadays, he says, because there are so few healthy magazines, it's 'sheer survival'. Now I seriously doubt that even in the pulp days, depression and all, it was possible to earn a living writing SF short stories (Pohl's implication) but in any case what is 'sheer survival' in any capitalist-orientated society if not the need to make money, and then make some more - economic temptation. It's the same difference. A hack by any other name..

This, I admit, is nit-picking. To the core of the article. Passing over Pohl's mindblasting assertion that GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is SF (we must allow that Pohl was born and brought up in a society that put a high price on the ability to pigeon-hole and categorise) we come immediately to another of his arguable statements, that GULLIVER'S TRAVELS has 'survived' in a way that CANDIDE has not. Again, what Pohl means by 'survived' is by no means made clear. Has GULLIVER'S TRAVELS survived in any true sense merely because Hollywood made it into a cartoon, because Christmas after Christmas we assimilate it in pantomime form, because it has been simplified and re-written so that what we have now is frequently something with as much (or as little) literary merit as a nursery rhyme? There is of course always the additional point that (by Pohl's later admission) CANDIDE and GULLIVER'S TRAVELS are two widely different books and any comparison, on any level, must be more than usually odious.

Continuing, Pohl refutes the idea of an SF ghetto, then goes on to make a statement characteristic of a man blinded by living within just such a ghetto: "A fair test of what survives and what does not might properly be made

by comparing the individual works of a few successful writers. On these counts SF shows up well in the cases of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, even Edgar Rice Burroughs." He goes on to make some slighting comments about these writers' 'non-SF' output. This is Pohl at his most woolly-minded. Jules Verne? The pigeon-holing categorisers of Verne's own day called everything he wrote a 'romance'. Today some of his romances are more widely-read than others. It's as simple as that. Wells? If Pohl stepped outside the ghetto he says doesn't exist he'd see that MR POLLY, KIPPS, TONO-BUNGAY, ANNE VERONICA and many others are as alive as they've ever been, and that there is more go-back-and-read-it-again substance in THE NEW MACHIAVELLI than in a hundred TIME MACHINES. I must pass over Edgar Rice Burroughs. This particular compulsive reader has managed to get by very well to date without ever having read a single thing by him. Barsroom lives on, indeed...

Finally, one can only feel sorry for a man so spiritually and intellectually impoverished that he finds more of value in MOBY DICK as history than as literature. I could probably be accused of reading a lot into Pohl's article that Pohl didn't put there. The trouble is that Pohl has put nothing there, nothing up front that you feel he truly means or believes in. A fault, I might say, of much of SPECULATION's content these days. If I want proficient journalism I can get it from the Daily Mirror. Too often SPECULATION's journalism isn't even proficient. Anyway, as for me the poison's out now. I'll willingly go back to touching my forelock and nodding in agreement. Ken Bulmer's right of course. In the end, you can only laugh. "

\* The annoying thing for me is to wonder whether SPECULATION may have somehow gone past its peak without ever actually reaching its peak. I don't know whether to let Ian Williams complain about the next issue now, or to let Malcolm Edwards continue snarling at Fred Pohl. I think Malcolm has it because he also has a go at Chris Priest. And that will let me use an excellent letter from Douglas Barbour. Not proficient journalism, indeed! \*

Malcolm Edwards, (28 Kinch Grove, Wembley, Mx.)

Dear Pete, "I wish Fred Pohl would get back to doing an SF review column. His first piece was fine; since then it's been downhill. The latest episode springs from a false premise; that GULLIVER'S TRAVELS survived and CANDIDE didn't. There are two major editions of GULLIVER in this country; Everyman and Penguin. The major editions of CANDIDE are... Everyman and Penguin. An argument springing from the statement that one has survived while the other hasn't is therefore - it seems to me - off to a poor start.

Perhaps GULLIVER is more widely read. I'm prepared to believe it. But not, I think, because it's an SF novel. Of course this is a question of definition, a particularly unrewarding ground for argument. GULLIVER is remembered chiefly because of an image - that of a giant in a land of midgets. In fact, when people think of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS what they usually mean is his travels in Lilliput, and to a lesser extent in Brobdingnag. The reason why the Lilliput adventure is the better known of the two is, I would guess, that while the image is the same in both cases (only reversed), one is basically amusing while the other is frightening. It's fun to be Gulliver but not such fun for the Lilliputians. In any case it seems to me that the endurance of this image has rather more to do with psychology than with SF.

Pohl then goes on to suggest an argument about the survival of literature. What he's getting at is that literature which survives does so either through antiquarian interest or because it's SF. I think this is utterly specious;

the distinction between antiquarian quality and general merit is simplistic and false. It is inarguable that MOBY DICK would be less interesting had Ishmael been a clerk in a New Bedford store; it would have been inarguable to just the same degree when the book was first published. Pohl seems to be saying that fiction on a mundane, boring subject isn't going to be remembered for long, in which case he may find someone like Jane Austen rather hard to fit in. Her books survive on merits which have nothing to do with antiquarian quality. And of course there are many others.

Allowing for such examples, we can then reduce his argument to the illuminating statement that books would be pretty boring if it weren't for the interesting bits. That I'll concede; after all, even GULLIVER might have lost something of its interest if Gulliver had stayed at home and trained as a chartered accountant.

Chris Priest on TIGER! TIGER! once again has a go at embracing every possible shade of opinion; "...first of all admirable, and secondly execrable". His thesis on What Makes Gully Foyle A Great Character is an engaging one; and it certainly saved him the bother of finishing the book. However logical it appears, though, it isn't really convincing: I can't see such a large legend developing from those few words. \*Chris said that we remember Gully Foyle as an irresistible hero because of his reaction to the hope of rescue when stranded in space aboard the wreck of Nomad \*

The next page surely provides an equally valid clue ---

"The acid of fury ran through him, eating away the brute patience and sluggishness that had made a cipher of Gully Foyle, precipitating a chain of reactions that would make an infernal machine of Gully Foyle. He was dedicated.

"Vorga, I kill you deadly!"

Told, admittedly, rather than shown, but there it is. The cipher has been patterned; the mould has been filled. Gully Foyle has acquired Purpose. As a sidelight, by the way, I looked at the magazine version and to my surprise that last sentence appears as 'Vorga, I kill you filthy!' I wonder what effect that single changed word had --- 'deadly' has all sorts of connotations that 'filthy' lacks completely, which make the phrase memorable.

\*Here I must interrupt to explain that over a year ago Alex Eisenstein wrote me a very long letter to point out some of the many other changes made in the book TIGER! TIGER! as compared with the magazine serial 'The Stars My Destination'. Alex's thesis as I remember was that here were almost two different books, and he promised to prepare an article to prove it. I wonder what happened to that idea?\*

THE BLACK CORRIDOR a better book than TIGER! TIGER! ? Here Chris is tacitly assuming that political content is the most important content. It may matter, but no more (and perhaps less) than other parts of a book. A black mark to Bester for political blankness... but doesn't TIGER! TIGER! get a slight edge over Moorcock's book through being better written and more interesting?

For the rest, I'm in agreement, although the argument is rather sketchy. \*Chris thought that SF is unconsciously full of assumptions - propaganda - about the superiority and permanence of our own Western culture\* Sure, SF is politically naive --- but surely only so far as the readership shares that naivete. Of course it is ridiculous that a medium which should be liberating is tied down by the conservatism of its writers. But here we come down to the

question of why people read SF. Me, I think that it's mostly for reassurance -- reassurance that, though things may not look so good now, it'll be OK in the end, and, come what may, International Communism will meet its proper desserts and American free enterprise will go on for ever (and ever and ever: cf Poul Anderson op cit.)

To be fair, it isn't only western SF which is like that; reverse the two elements in that last sentence and you get a description of most Soviet SF. But this is perhaps because Soviet SF is of necessity Utopian, which is another argument altogether. Anyway... I happen to believe this conservative attitude outdated even now -- it is the projected idealism of 10, 20, even 50 years ago (vide Poul Anderson, ibid). But it seems as popular as ever, so who are we to moan? I just wish now and then that a few writers would take a look at some other societies around the world and have a look at some of the different ways of organising society."

\* Have you read Greg Benford's DEEPER THAN THE DARKNESS, particularly the first section, which is I think one of the best recent examples of an SF writer trying to do just what you ask? As for the question why we read SF, that's one I have on occasion asked Franz Rottensteiner in Austria upon reading his more devastating criticism. More on that below.\*

Douglas Barbour, (10973--76th Ave., Edmonton 62, Alberta.)

Dear Peter, "Thank you for sending SPECULATION-28 so promptly, and isn't it an interesting little mag. As a non-fan fan of SF, this represents one of my first ventures into reading fan mags, and it's certainly an experience, especially in the letter columns. Yet, I find my own blood rising, and a definite need as well as desire to respond to & correspond with some of those who are represented there. But that later, if I have time. At any rate I do think you have very good reviews, in that they are long enough to say something (which is very necessary, especially when attacking a book, as, say, in the Stableford review of Ellison, or the superb comments by Panshin on the later Heinlein).

But I was really aroused to a fever pitch by the comments of Christopher Priest on Gully Foyle and TIGER! TIGER! It seems to me that Priest is on to something very valid when he discusses the idea of the inescapable politics (in the very broadest sense) of an author. But when he attacks Bester for having none and suggests that TIGER! TIGER! fails because Gully "didn't have any", he only succeeds in showing what an ignorant thing it is for a critic to comment on a book when he hasn't gotten round to looking at more than the first 40 pages". Had Mr Priest read to the end he would have found Gully acting in what can only be called a 'political' manner in giving the invaluable and highly dangerous Pyre to the very people he rose from, the dregs, the people who understand only the "gutter tongue".

Foyle lives out a Romantic political dream, but at the point he does so, he is acting as a result of all that has happened to him since he first became a 'tiger', first was shocked out of the 'normal' lethargy that marked him as so deadnigly average at the beginning of the novel. Indeed, this novel is most surely concerned, on one level at least, with the 'political' education of Gully Foyle, and its plot, with all the marvellous violence that Bester is so highly proficient at providing, is essentially the outline of that education.

And, if you look at THE DEMOLISHED MAN or many of the short stories, including his bleakly hilarious 'Disappearing Act', which is about the War for the American Dream, and which was written in 1953 or so but is so perfectly at home in 1971, you will not be able to continue thinking of Bester as a non-



political writer, in any sense of the word. And you can disagree with his politics, but they influence his work and are a part of what makes it exciting and good. In fact, rereading Bester this past winter, I suddenly realised how good he was (I had forgotten, except to recall that I always read TIGER! TIGER! straight through without stopping).

I think, again contra Mr Priest, that Bester's vaunted technique is in the service of a highly personal vision, and does not blind us to defects in the stories, but helps to make those stories more the artworks they are than would otherwise be the case. Give me a Bester over a Heinlein any time, for example. And Bester's influence has not been bad, when you look at the writings of such brilliant younger authors as Joanna Russ, Zelazny (I think), Samuel R. Delany (for sure, if one can take the hint from the very intriguing article "Critical Methods: Speculative Fiction" in Quark 1), and I think, a host of others. Partly they have learned about the aesthetic handling of violence from him, partly how much technique can count for.

Well, I wanted to say a few things about some of the letters in your last issue, but I have run on at length on Bester, so... I think I'm definitely on the side of John J. Pierce and Jerry Lapidus vs. Franz Rottensteiner in the Case of Roger Zelazny. I enjoy Zelazny without feeling he has the depths of, say, Delany, Russ, or LeGuin, but isn't what he has to offer, the great technique, the wild stories, enough?

Besides which, Rottensteiner is too bloody serious in his complaint about Harlan Ellison's comments on the back of DAMNATION ALLEY. I think Ellison can be just a little too much in many of his "introductions", but such an obvious joke is to be enjoyed for its good wit, not attacked for its immorality. \*In the last issue Franz noted that Ellison called Zelazny the reincarnation of Chaucer\*

Undoubtedly, intelligent criticism of SF is needed, albeit James Blish (& Knight in his book of essays), Judith Merrill in her F&SF column and a few others have been very helpful and have done some of the necessary ground-clearing, but surely such intelligent criticism will come through a loving eye, because the best kind of criticism must be delivered with love.

I wish I'd seen Pam Bulmer's review of THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS because the letters on it suggest it must have been interesting. But, from what I can glean I think she must have been off the track. Malcolm Edwards is on it. It's the emotional facts of the novel which lie at its heart, and yet those particular emotional facts could not, I suggest, have been dealt with in quite so interesting a fashion in a 'straight' novel. LeGuin is able to tell us so much about ourselves because she realises in her novel a truly 'alien' vision. That, in itself, is a notable achievement; that she can also fill in a huge historical & mythic/legendary background and tell a masterful love story too, makes of her novel a very fine work indeed. "

Bruce Gillespie, (GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)

Dear Peter, "I liked Chris Priest's column better than anything else in the last issue, and I cannot understand why SF writers haven't woken up to the truth of his statements before now. Franz Rottensteiner expressed the same point in his essay about Heinlein, 'Chewing Gum For the Vulgar': "When an author makes a trivial error such as writing of Mars with breathable air, almost all SF critics will jump at him (for that is something any schoolboy knows is wrong), but blunders in more complex fields such as history, psychology, morals or politics will most likely remain unpunished." SF writers seem to display little knowledge of the structure of the humanities. (Cont/d)

For instance, David Redd in SPECULATION-28 looks at stories by Poul Anderson and notes that Anderson is always plugging for 'liberty'. Unless I've taken Redd wrongly, he appears to take Anderson's future history quite seriously: -- "while his politico-economic structures are pretty questionable in real terms, within his stories they provide a workable and coherent system".

It seems to me that something is wrong here. Does that mean that Anderson's stories have no relationship with real politics, or that the practice of fiction magically excuses a writer's lack of knowledge? Even in context, Anderson's view of 'liberty' reads more like a bleat of protest than an authoritative statement about politics. In real politics the word 'liberty' has meant all things to all men; it is a word with which politicians describe their own systems to themselves. It is a slogan, not a system. If Anderson wanted to show us that he was writing about possible political structures in his future universe he would use a political vocabulary: words like 'power structures', 'wealth distribution', and 'class structures' should appear there somewhere. Almost certainly the theorists of some future world will have changed the language of politics anyway. They won't use the same words political scientists use now, and they certainly won't use 19th Century liberal words like 'liberty' (now that's a tautology!) to describe their systems.

As Stanislaw Lem is fond of saying, the one certain thing about the future is that things won't devolve, change backwards. Perhaps unconsciously Poul Anderson writes SF stories in which political structures devolve. And that's one example, chosen from your own review section. The real tests of Chris Priest's point are novels which show real political expertise; 1984 is the best example. Proust's REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST shows an extraordinary awareness of the way people justify themselves when they emphasise among themselves the intricate differences between layers in the social strata. As Franz points out, political and social structures are subtle and complex; only a writer who is also subtle and complex can hope to write well about politics. But few SF writers approach the minimum standards of complexity. "

\* In the next issue Mark Adlard makes similar complaints at the lack of realistic treatment of the business world in SF. It seems to me that the only thing many SF writers really know much about is writing itself. That's not meant as a put-down; they do pretty well to penetrate other fields as thoroughly as they do. I prefer Tom Disch's own complaint about SF, however, made in a recent talk to Cambridge University SF society. He discusses how SF deals with four basic emotions, -- pain, anger, joy and fear, and finds SF's treatment extremely lacking. SF falls far short of the highest peaks of literature, where guilt and pain are explored. He believes SF does not appear to believe in guilt, and has a supremely simple ethical viewpoint. I'll express agreement by saying that I wish someone would write a novel about the events in MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS -- from the other, unrepresented, side. You know, the much-abused 'Federated Nations'. \*

Sandra Miesel (8744 N. Pennsylvania Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46240)

Dear Pete, 'David Redd's review of BEYOND THE BEYOND raises some valid points and I'd like to amplify if I may. In discussing Anderson's concept of freedom -- which truly is crucial to his work -- one must carefully note that he sees freedom as 'opportunity to...', not as 'release from...'. Further specifying, freedom is the opportunity to meet challenge, and responding to challenge is the purpose of human life. Anderson stresses responsibility just as much as freedom, those who are willing to pay this price are his heroes. (For example the hero of 'Starfog' cited by Redd as an absolutely free man in this single adventure bears responsibility for the future of an entire planet and for ending a hopeless love

affair.) Thus emerges the figure of King or Guardian that appears in so many stories from Holger Carlson (THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS) to Charles Reymont in TAU ZERO. What guards these guardians is their suffering.

What is the nature of the enemy? It is not only the imperfection and imperfectibility of human nature, it is the universe herself and in particular the Law of Entropy. "No matter how well you build a thing, it will go bad and die", says Reymont. As James Blish indicated in the special Anderson issue of F&SF, this is the final doom all of his characters face. And still they fight to the last. It would seem safe to hail this attitude a reflection of the northern heroic spirit. But after Ragnarok comes regeneration.

If, as Alexei Panshin has demonstrated, Heinlein worries about the survival of the Heinlein Individual, Anderson worries about the survival of the whole human species (and also animal species for he is an active conservationist). Many stories like AFTER DOOMSDAY reduce the race to a handful of survivors. TAU ZERO carries the remnant beyond the dissolution of this universe and devises a technique of absolute racial immortality.

Redd observes that the old-fashioned villains are no longer encountered in Anderson stories. True. In the early Flandry stories (from the '50s) the Merseians are Basic Alien Baddies. In the novels of the last five years they are rounded out in much more detail. (Some readers confess to cheering for them to outwit Flandry). The damning fault of the Merseians is of course their species chauvinism. Not all the myriad Merseian ethnic groups shown in Poul's stories want to repress other peoples, but the dominant one does.

Yes, Van Rijn's group (in 'Supernova') is supposed to be the remote cause of the rise of the Merseian menace. The Polesotechnic League drowns in its own greed (the clouds are gathering in SATAN'S WORLD). The Time of Troubles apparently commences with Van Rijn's death. Flandry lives about a thousand years later, which is at best two centuries prior to the final fall of the Terran Empire. There are a whole clutch of post-Empire stories, like 'The Sharing of the Flesh!', but this "Technic Civilisation" series is not his only future history. The earlier one ran from the near future of the UN-Men to the far future of the Co-ordinators (i.e. STARWAYS, VIRGIN PLANET, and all those stories in which characters bear inverted names and swear by the Cosmos!) It was never finished because, in the author's words, "World War III didn't happen on schedule."

As you can see, I adhere to the John Foyster school of criticism -- that one should become an expert on one author at a time! "

\* If I wanted to argue about Poul Anderson's ideas for the future, Sandra, I think it would have to be along the lines that, firstly, unlimited freedom for the individual could cause a lot of harm (we would, I think, tend to get replays of the Conquistadores rather than the benevolent idealism of 'Starfog'); and second, as Bruce Gillespie says political systems don't appear to devolve and a lot of interesting things remain to be written on the conflict between laissez-faire and regimentation (if you like, on the limits of State controls) once the horizons have opened upon the entire Universe.\*

John J Pierce ( 275 McMane Avenue, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey 07922)

Dear Mr Weston, "I appreciated David Redd on Anderson, but as for Mark Adlard on John Boyd... well, he seems so overwhelmed by the mere presence of sexual symbolism and action in THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN that he overlooks everything else in the book - especially Boyd's weird notion's of evolution. I will say I enjoyed the novel most of the way through. The only trouble was, I couldn't take

seriously the idea of Freda giving birth to a tulip bulb, or whatever it was at the end. Boyd seems to have a habit of writing a novel as if it were serious science fiction for 90 percent of the way, then ending it with a queer joke. The same thing happened in THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH. (In THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN, however, he decided to make the whole novel a joke from start to finish). Incidentally, I was glad to see David Redd noticed 'Starfog' was the best story in Anderson's BEYOND THE BEYOND - and even more glad to see he noticed why. Redd's really done the most thoughtful analysis of Anderson's virtues - and faults - that I have yet seen in a fanzine.

I think I can agree with the general idea Fred Pohl presented in his column, but I rather doubt that GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is the best illustration of it. The intent of Swift's book was, after all, as satiric as that of CANDIDE and I doubt it really had to do with extrapolation from, or speculation about, any scientific premise - the basis of true science fiction.

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is read today, but more in the spirit of the Arabian Nights marvel tales than that of science fiction (as in the case of Wells, Verne, etc). And Burroughs work is really science fantasy adventure - it is read by people with no great interest in science fiction. I would say the essence of SF is the idea of man in evolution; the science is there because science is our means of evolution. "

Malcolm Edwards

"... Mark Adlard's piece is a fine demonstration of how easy it is to go astray when you want to rave over a book. Factually, he's incorrect to say that Boyd popped up from nowhere. His standards of excellence derive from the mainstream to the precise extent of his mainstream novel THE SLAVE STEALER, (just out in paperback under his real name - Boyd Upchurch), a book of considerable length and (I've no doubt) immense interest.

The numerous quotes in Mark's review do nothing to strengthen his case. I don't really object to Boyd making bad puns about screws; but I do protest when a reviewer begins to parade them as virtues. If second-rate jokes and third-hand descriptions are the best evidence he can bring forward to adduce to the book's merits who is going to bother with it?"

\* The above being two paragraphs of Malcolm's earlier letter which seemed to belong in this particular position. Just to embarrass young Edwards by proximity a brief comment from Mark's recent correspondence will now follow...\*

Mark Adlard, (113 Kennerleigh Road, Cardiff CF3 9BH)

Dear Peter, "Have you ever thought that SF is basically a literature of alienation? I suppose it was Colin Wilson who helped to make "alienation" a catchword in the '50s, when he drew upon the work of Barbusse, Sartre, Camus, Hesse, and other writers of whom Amis professed never to have heard, to construct the argument of THE OUTSIDER. Ten years later the "outsider" with his alienation symptoms, was a recognisable figure in New Wave SF.

But I sometimes think that SF appeals in a much more general way to our sense of alienation. It might not be coincidence that America, with its large influx of 'aliens' should have originated SF as we know it. To put the point more specifically, Gernsback (Luxembourg), Asimov (Russian), Ley (German), and Budrys (Lithuanian) were all first-generation Americans. Without forgetting Vonnegut's declaration that both his grandfathers lived in Indianapolis, it seems

to me that European names (Heinlein, VanVogt, de Camp, Schmitz, Kornbluth, Pohl, Poul Anderson, Disch, Leiber, Simak, Zelazny) are more dominant in SF than in the American mainstream.

There might be a rather odd analogy with the best of the Anglo-Welsh poets, most of whom were the children of Welsh-speaking parents and learned English in later years. It is almost as if the overcoming of a sense of alienation gave a sharper edge to their perception."

\* And what sort of a name is 'Adlard'? Apart from that we move on to the last letter, which in addition to bringing in some new points returns full circle to Frederik Pohl's and Chris Priest's columns last time. They did attract some /attention.\*

Paul A Gilster (1008 High Street, Grinnell, Iowa 50112)

Dear Peter, "I believe that the danger implicit in considering SF as a somewhat specialised art form that remains distant from literature at large is that critics will find purposes for it which do not reflect its basic concerns. When Frederik Pohl seriously maintains that SF is qualitatively superior to any other literature, I see in his remarks a kind of provincialism that isolates and depreciates the entire field. Why are the readers and writers of science fiction willing to divorce themselves from literary standards? I will not accept the argument that they do so because SF cannot measure up to established critical judgements.

Granted, the SF field has produced relatively little in the way of serious and well-crafted writing, but need we claim special status for a work as brilliantly executed as STAND ON ZANZIBAR? To do so is only to assert our lack of faith in the merits of that which we read, and I think that it could cause stagnation among those writers and readers who fear any sort of academic criticism because it takes their literature seriously.

Similarly, when Christopher Priest maintains "anything that conducts a dialogue with possibilities or futures is essentially political", I believe that he limits the field to a single one of its ancillary concerns. The argument is a familiar one these days, and it stretches the definition of 'political' almost beyond any valid meaning. To consider science fiction in this way is to limit it until what is left is a didactic art, a consideration of alternatives based upon the author's reactions to and divergencies from his society.

Theodore Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN represents what is, to me, the danger to be avoided in the political consideration of man through SF. I find the book enormously and strangely flawed; the genuine beauty of much of the first section is lost in the second and third sections, especially in the totally inappropriate grinding of the Sturgeon axe in the last few pages. In the first part much of the beauty is to be found in the experience of loneliness, and the emotion is painted with depth and sincerity. I would suggest that, apart from the technical incompetence of the last two parts, the book fails because the entire fictional content is transformed into a didactic agent in the conclusion. Characters speak totally out of their proper form, there is a long monologue of tepid ethical questioning, and the concluding assumptions are advanced flatly and without full consideration. As a result the work becomes monotonous and not a little bit foolish. It begins rooted in the deepest human experience, and ends dancing around the ephemeral fires of speculation without reference to the characters themselves!"

WE ALSO HEARD FROM DEPT. :- Letters also received from Anthony Lewis, Bob Shaw, Mike Moorcock, T.H. Burke, Ian Williams, Pat McGuire, Martin Ricketts, Henry Bitman, Richard Gordon, Paul Anderson, Graham Boak, David Garnett, Cy Chauvin.

## SPECULATION BOOK GUIDE - OCTOBER 1971

An incredible number of science fiction titles appear to have been published since SPECULATION last appeared. In order to catch up at least partly with what I feel are my obligations, brief personal comments are given below on all books received.

### FROM GOLLANCZ.

DAY MILLION by Frederik Pohl, £1.40. A collection of ten stories which on the whole were a little disappointing apart from the superb title-item.

PROSTHO PLUS by Piers Anthony, £1.60. Someone said that in these stories Piers Anthony had truly found his metier. Not altogether true, but these lightweight stories are for me one of the most enjoyable things he has written.

TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson, £1.60. Chris Priest has spent a good deal of time explaining why he thinks this is not a successful book, in SPECULATION-26 and at the SPECULATION-II conference in June. Unfortunately he's wrong; I have finally re-read the novel at leisure and it must be rated one of the very best of recent years, and probably more deserving than RINGWORLD of the highest honours.

DUNE MESIAH by Frank Herbert, £1.60. If you like this sort of thing, then here is a continuation of the DUNE novels. Personally I find them impenetrable and far below Frank Herbert's high-water mark of DRAGON IN THE SEA.

THE PRESERVING MACHINE AND OTHER STORIES by Philip K Dick, £1.80. This represents Dick at his middle period - when he had ceased to tell entertaining stories but before his present admirers had discovered his work. A very poor collection when compared to A HANDFUL OF DARKNESS, an ancient volume from Rich & Cowan in the UK.

CITY OF ILLUSIONS by Ursula LeGuin, £1.60. One of the novels Mrs LeGuin wrote before she gained her reputation with THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. This one is well worth reading, and much better for me than A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, for instance.

1 MILLION TOMORROWS by Bob Shaw, £1.50. For some time now Bob Shaw has been in the enviable position of being able to sell anything he has written. I do hope this will not tempt him to write too much, for neither this nor the recent paper back edition of SHADOW OF HEAVEN have anything like the impact of his earlier novels for me. (NIGHTWALK possible being my all-time Shaw favourite to date).

CANDY MAN by Vincent King, £1.80. Vividly written, the same faults and same type of virtues as the author's previous title, LIGHT A LAST CANDLE.

GOLD THE MAN by Joseph Green, £1.80. I usually like Joe Green's stories but though I stuck this novel to the end, it can only be described as turgid. Sorry.

THE SHORES OF ANOTHER SEA by Chad Oliver, £1.60. An excellent novel.

THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN by John Boyd, £1.40. This is billed as a 'brilliantly comic novel', but unfortunately I don't think this type of story is very successful in SF. Not taking anything very seriously means one doesn't care very much what happens.... Not John Boyd's best.

THE SUN GROWS COLD by Howard Berk, £1.60. Another post-Bomb World, but this is remarkably well visualised and told with some sensitivity.

GALACTIC POT-HEALER by Philip K Dick, £1.60. Remarkably amusing.

WORLD'S BEST SF -1971, ed. Donald Wollheim & Terry Carr, £2.20. Perhaps I am getting old and senile but this new collection, as with the 1970 volume, fails to excite me at all. Surely these are not really the best that the year has had to offer? I liked 'Slow Sculpture' by Theodore Sturgeon, which is now a double Hugo-Nebula Award winner, and also the Isaac Asimov story 'Waterclap'. But the other 13 stories in this 320-page book seemed stale, gimmicky, or just trivial. It's probably me rather than the stories - but I was very disappointed.

THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME, edited by Robert Silverberg, £2.25. This is the basic 'bible', the collection of all-time great stories as chosen by the SFWA. 26 stories, 550 pages, and the one book that you must have in a collection.



FROM DOUBLEDAY:

HOLDING WONDER, by Zenna Henderson, \$5.95 Twenty stories by the author. I have never been able to enjoy reading Miss Henderson's fiction, however.

THE TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon R Dickson, \$4.95. The Analog serial from earlier in the year. One of the earliest 'Dorsai' stories - reasonably exciting.

THE WITCHCRAFT READER, ed. Peter Haining, \$4.95. A collection of excellent stories emphasising the fantasy in science fiction.

GADGET MAN by Ron Goulart, \$4.95. A novel.

X FUN WITH YOUR NEW HEAD by Thomas M Disch, \$4.95. Excellent collection by Disch. ANALOG 8 ed. John W Campbell, \$5.95. Stale, I'm afraid, not the best of this series and not what Analog used to be, either.

X GARDENS ONE TO FIVE by Peter Tate, \$4.95. Original novel.

THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS by Brian W Aldiss, \$4.95. More than anything else this is a gloriously-expanded diary of a few weeks in the life of BWA. I hope that I shall be able to publish a review in our next issue. Fascinating.

ABYSS - by Kate Wilhelm, \$4.95. Two novellas.

STRANGE SEAS AND SHORES by Avram Davidson, \$4.95. Seventeen stories by the author. I have never been able to enjoy Mr Davidson's work, either.

THE ALIEN by L.P. Davies, \$4.95. A novel.

AND ALL THE STARS A STAGE by James Blish, \$4.95. This is so bad that I found it difficult to believe. I'm told it is a very early book, certainly it would have been better published under a 'juvenile' imprint, or a pen-name, or something.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?, ed. Isaac Asimov, \$6.95. Seventeen stories of varying quality, but on balance a pretty good collection.

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES, by Isaac Asimov, \$6.95. This represents seventeen of Asimov's F&SF science columns, and is far more entertaining than most fiction.

OPERATION CHAOS by Poul Anderson, \$4.95. Poul has collected his 'scientific magic' stories from F&SF to form what must be one of his very best books. Recommended.

✓ THE FALL OF ROME as told by R.A. Lafferty, \$6.95 One of the greatest stories in the world, told in a way which incredibly enough seems boring.

ONCE THERE WAS A GIANT, by Keith Laumer, \$5.95 Eight good stories, four of which appear to be original to this volume. A good collection.

THE COMMITTED MEN by M. John Harrison, \$4.95 I suspect this is intended as a very intense sort of novel, but without making any comment I will arrange for a review in the next issue. M. John, you will recall, used to write for SPECULATION a few issues back.

CHAPAYECA by G.C. Edmondson, \$4.95. A wild and odd novel, Recommended.

THE WORLD INSIDE by Robert Silverberg, \$4.95. The world of the Urban Monads, where 75 billion people live enclosed in giant towers. I liked this novel because it offered an unusual view of a totally strange world, a new treatment of the theme behind CAVES OF STEEL.

THE NOWHERE PLACE by John Lymington, \$4.95. A new novel.

THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH, & OTHER STORIES by Roger Zelazny, \$4.95. 15 stories, some masterpieces interspaced with makeweights.

✓ THE BEST FROM F&SF 19th SERIES, ed. Edward L Ferman, \$5.95. Very good collection.

NO ONE GOES THERE NOW, by William H Walling, \$5.95. A new novel.

RETIEF OF THE CDT, by Keith Laumer, \$4.95 Five stories from If.

OTHER WORLDS, OTHER GODS, ed. Mayo Mohs, \$5.95. Twelve religious SF stories - most of which have appeared many times before. A good 'theme' anthology.

THE HUGO WINNERS, Vol.2. ed Isaac Asimov, \$9.95. Award-winning stories from 1963-1970, 650 pages and 14 stories, with an extremely useful list of all Hugo winners from 1962 to date. Accompanies earlier volume published in 1962.

THE DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT by James Blish, \$4.95. To be reviewed in next issue. 49

FROM WALKER:

JACK OF SHADOWS by Roger Zelazny, \$5.95. All I can say is that the entire book seems to be about nothing at all. It is not recommended!  
PARTNERS IN WONDER, ed Harlan Ellison, \$8.95. This is supposedly a volume of collaborations between Harlan and various other authors. In fact it is another big disappointment - see our review next issue.  
THE TRANSVECTION MACHINE, by Edward D Hoch, \$5.95. An original novel.  
THE MORTAL IMMORTALS by 'Cristabel', \$5.95. A fantasy.

FROM FABER:

GARDENS ONE TO FIVE by Peter Tate, £1.60 A new novel.  
THE DUELLING MACHINE by Ben Bova, £1.25.  
THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE by Brian W Aldiss, £1.50. 14 stories from the last three years - to be reviewed with other Aldiss works in the next issue. A most interesting collection, almost a Progress Report on Brian Aldiss' Work to Date.  
THE BEST SF STORIES OF BRIAN W ALDISS, revised edition, £1.75. A reprinting of the 1965 collection, with eight new stories and six deletions. This is more of a showcase of Aldiss Past and Aldiss Present, with some overlap with the title above.  
SOLARIS by Stanislaw Lem, £2.00. Despite so many recommendations from Franz Rottensteiner and the SF Commentary crowd I'm finding this book hard going so far; it is translated from the Polish and supposedly a 'classic' in the making.  
THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT'S REVENGE, by Harry Harrison, £1.75. Not quite such an intellectual book as the above - but tremendously entertaining and enjoyable.  
ANYWHEN by James Blish, £1.75. Eight stories - to be reviewed with AFTER JUDGEMENT  
DAMNATION ALLEY by Roger Zelazny, £1.75. Expanded from the Galaxy novella, this is a fast-moving SF adventure.  
THE YEAR 2000, ed Harry Harrison, £2.00. Thirteen original stories, mostly a little disappointing. Daniel Galouye's in particular does not belong in this company.

FROM DOBSON:

DOMINO by Richard Cowper, £1.25 A new novel.  
THE PLANTOS AFFAIR by John Rankine, £1.25 Third in Rankine's series.  
TIMEPIT by Brian Ball, £1.25, second of a projected series of five novels.  
NEW WRITINGS IN SF 18, ed. John Carnell, £1.25 (White, Spencer, Malcolm, Harding, Wells, Leman, Kyle).  
NEW WRITINGS IN SF 19, ed John Carnell, £1.25 (Rackham, Priest, Coney, Bulmer, Green, King, Coles)  
THE BEST FROM NEW WRITINGS IN SF - FIRST SELECTION, ed John Carnell, £1.50.  
Eleven of the best stories from the first four volumes of the series.

SIDGWICK & JACKSON:

VAN VOGT OMNIBUS 2, £2.25. Containing three novels - SLAN, THE MIND CAGE, and THE WINGED MEN (with E. Mayne Hull). 520 pages.  
THE TIME TUNNEL by Murray Leinster, £1.50. first published in the USA in 1964.  
NOW COMES TOMORROW by Robert Moore Williams, £1.50. A novel.  
DOUBLE, DOUBLE. by John Brunner, £1.50. A novel.  
POLLUTION OMNIBUS, £2.25. Rather a misnomer - the contents are MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! by Harry Harrison, CITY by Clifford Simak, and SHARK SHIP by C.M. Kornbluth, the last of which isn't even a novel. Still, 510 pages in total.  
THE MIRROR OF INFINITY, ed. Robert Silverberg, £2.50. Better than usual anthology, with the theme that 13 critics should each select a story and provide an introduction. The stories are a mixed bag, generally above average but in many cases often published before.

SIDGWICK & JACKSON (Continued)

SF-SPECIAL 3, £1.50 (THE TIME-HOPPERS, Silverberg, OVERMIND, Phyllis Mario Wadsworth, CAVIAR by Theodore Sturgeon).  
SF-SPECIAL 4, £1.50 (THE MAN IN THE MAZE, Silverberg, THE ROSE, Harness, THE WINGED MAN by VanVogt & E. Mayne Hull).  
ISLANDS IN THE SKY by Arthur C Clarke, £1.25 (re-issue)  
QUEST FOR THE FUTURE by A.E. Van Vogt, £1.50 new novel.  
THE PRIEST-KINGS OF GOR by John Norman, £1.75 (volume 3 of this series)  
BRIAN ALDISS OMNIBUS-2 (NON-STOP, THE MALE RESPONSE, SPACE, TIME & NATHANIAL) £1.95

OTHER PUBLISHERS:

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE, by Norman Spinrad, £1.75 from MacDonald, A poor collection of eighteen stories by the author.  
SCIENCE AGAINST MAN, ed. Anthony Cheetham, £1.50. A collection of eleven original and in many cases excellent stories, notably Spinrad's 'Lost Continent'. (MacDon.)  
LOST WORLDS, by Clark Ashton Smith, £1.75. OUT OF SPACE AND TIME, by Clark Ashton Smith. Both from Neville Spearman, horror/fantasy collections produced in uniform and attractive editions in Britain for the first time.

PAPERBACKS:

FROM BALLANTINE: DARK STARS, ed Robert Silverberg, 95c; HALF-PAST HUMAN by T.J. Bass (original), 95c; CANDY MAN by Vincent King (original) 95c; THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY by G.K. Chesterton (adult fantasy) 95c; SATELLITE 54-ZERO by Douglas R. Mason, 95c; HORIZON ALPHA by Douglas R Mason, 95c; DILATION EFFECT by Douglas R Mason, 95c; VOYAGES FOR A SHIP CALLED EARTH, ed. Bob Sauer (environmental concern plus good stories of SF) 95c; MAJOR OPERATION by James White, 95c; TOMORROW IS TOO FAR by James White, 95c; THE BROKEN SWORD by Poul Anderson, 95c; DRAGONRIDER/DRAGONQUEST by Anne McCaffrey, two volumes at 95c each; ANOTHER END by Vincent King, 95c; UNDERSEA CITY/ UNDERSEA FLEET/ UNDERSEA QUEST by Pohl & Williamson, 75c each. STAR LIGHT by Hal Clement, 95c; SON OF MAN by Robert Silverberg, \$1.25; MOONFERNES AND STARSONGS by Robert Silverberg, 95c; STARDREAMER by Cordwainer Smith, 95c. SACKED LOCOMOTIVE FLIES by Richard Lupoff, 95c.  
THE CHILDREN OF LLYR by Evangeline Walton (Adult Fantasy) 95c; THE CREAM OF THE JEST by James Branch Cabell, (Adult Fantasy) \$1.25; NEW WORLDS FOR OLD (Adult Fantasy) Fourteen stories ed. Lin Carter, \$1.25.

ALL THE MYRIAD WAYS by Larry Niven, 95c. Twelve items in this collection which is singled out as possibly the best value of the year in paperbacks. Specially recommended are 'Inconstant Moon', a Hugo-nominee for 1972, and Larry's 'Man of Steel - Woman of Kleenex', a serious consideration of the Superman theme!

THE FLYING SORCERERS by David Gerrold and Larry Niven, 95c. I'm not sure who wrote what in this novel, but although it is fairly 'light' it has been one of the most enjoyable SF books I have read for some time. I thereby disagree with Locus.

FROM ACE: THE TRAVELLER IN BLACK by John Brunner, 75c. RED PLANET by Robert Heinlein, 95c; THE DAYS OF GLORY by Brian M Stableford, 60c; THE STONE GOD AWAKES by Philip Jose Farmer, 75c; ELIDOR by Alan Garner, 60c; CHRONOCULES by D.G. Compton, 75c; FURTHEST by Suzette Haden Elgin, 75c; HAVE SPACESUIT, WILL TRAVEL by Robert Heinlein, 95c; BETWEEN PLANETS by Robert Heinlein, 95c; THE ROLLING STONES by Robert Heinlein, 95c; THE WIND WHALES OF ISHMAEL by Philip Jose Farmer, 75c; THE ECLIPSE OF DAWN by Gordon Eklund, 75c; FAREWELL EARTH'S BLISS by D.G. Compton, 75c; THE BLACK MOUNTAINS by Fred Saberhagen, 60c; THE BATTLE OF FOREVER by A.E. VanVogt, 95c; POSTMARKED THE STARS by Andre Norton, 75c; SARGASSO OF SPACE by Andre Norton, 75c; CATSEYE by Andre Norton, 75c; (Cont/d)

FROM ACE (continued)

ON OUR WAY TO THE FUTURE (10 stories) ed. Terry Carr, 75c; NEW WORLDS OF FANTASY No.3, ed. Terry Carr (13 original fantasy stories); THE WORLDS OF FRANK HERBERT (9 stories), 75c; HUMANITY PRIME, by Bruce McAllister, 95c; STAR BORN by Andre Norton, 75c; PEOPLE MACHINES, by Jack Williamson (9 stories) 75c; THE FOREST OF FOREVER by Thomas Burnett Swann, 60c; ACE SCIENCE FICTION READER - THE TROUBLE WITH TYCHO (Simak); EMPIRE STAR (Delany): THE LAST CASTLE(Vance) 95c DARK OF THE WOODS/SOFT COME THE DRAGONS by Dean Koontz, 75c; THE ELECTRIC SWORD-SWALLOWERS by Ken Bulmer/BEYOND CAPELLA by John Rackham, 75c; CLOCKWORK'S PIRATES (Goulart)/ GHOST BREAKER (Goulart) 75c; ALICE'S WORLD/ NO TIME FOR HEROES by Sam Lundwall, 75c; PROJECT JOVE by John Glasby/THE HUNTERS OF JUNDAGAI by Ken Bulmer, 75c; GATHER IN THE HALL OF THE PLANETS/IN THE POCKET AND OTHER STORIES by K.M. O'Donnell, 75c; SCIENCE FICTION - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT by Sam Lundwall (non-fiction) 95c.

FROM LANCER: THE SHORES OF TOMORROW by David Mason, 95c;TRANSIT by Edmund Cooper, 95c; TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson, 95c; THE MASTERS OF THE PIT by Michael Moorcock, 95c; SPACE FOR HIRE by William F Nolan, 75c; THE TIME SHIFTERS by Sam Merwin, 75c;

OTHER PUBLISHERS: NUNQUAM by Lawrence Durrell, \$1.25 (Pocket Books); INDOCTRINAIRE by Christopher Priest, 95c,(Pocket Books); THE SHIP THAT SAILED THE TIME STREAM by G.C. Edmondson, 25p (Arrow);

FROM AVON: THE SHORES BENEATH ('Four contemporary classics') - Delany, Zelazny, Sladek, Disch, 75c; CAMP CONCENTRATION by Thomas M Disch, 75c; THE DEVIL IS DEAD by R.A. Lafferty, 75c; SALTFLOWER by Sydney Van Scyoc, 75c; UNIVERSE DAY by K.M. O'Donnell, 75c; TRANSMIGRATION by J.T. McIntosh, 75c; SCIENCE AGAINST MAN, ed. Anthony Cheetham, 75c; MODERAN by David R. Bunch, 75c;

EDITORIAL (Continued from Page 4b)

Looking back, it's obvious that the TAFF result was predictable because of the tremendous strength and solidarity of German fandom, and because there were two British contenders, thus dividing the home vote. It happened in 1966 when Tom Schluck won over Eric Jones, with myself running prematurely as second British candidate. A similar thing happened in 1968 when Eddie Jones won at least partly because of German support.

And so the lesson for the future is that only one British candidate can stand against a strong European contender and have any chance of winning. But then we start getting into the mechanics of vote-calculating - which is not what TAFF was meant to be about.

I've left little space for anything else, for a report on other events of the last eight months. But I'll try to mention one or two more things. First of course must be the Hugo Awards - as mentioned on my cover this time - where I realised there was no chance of winning, but feel comforted by the fact that the old firm was nominated for the fifth time (and no-one from Britain returned a nomination form!) and that there were 49 first-place votes for SPECULATION, which I think is pretty good!

Secondly, other projects. There will be a SPECULATION-III Conference on June 24 next year, at Birmingham University, possibly followed by an evening Extra-Mural University course in Science Fiction.(But no WorldCon from me!)

And the best at the last; Eileen and I are expecting a new arrival in the New Year. After which, as they say, things will never be the same again!

- Peter Weston, 20/10/71



