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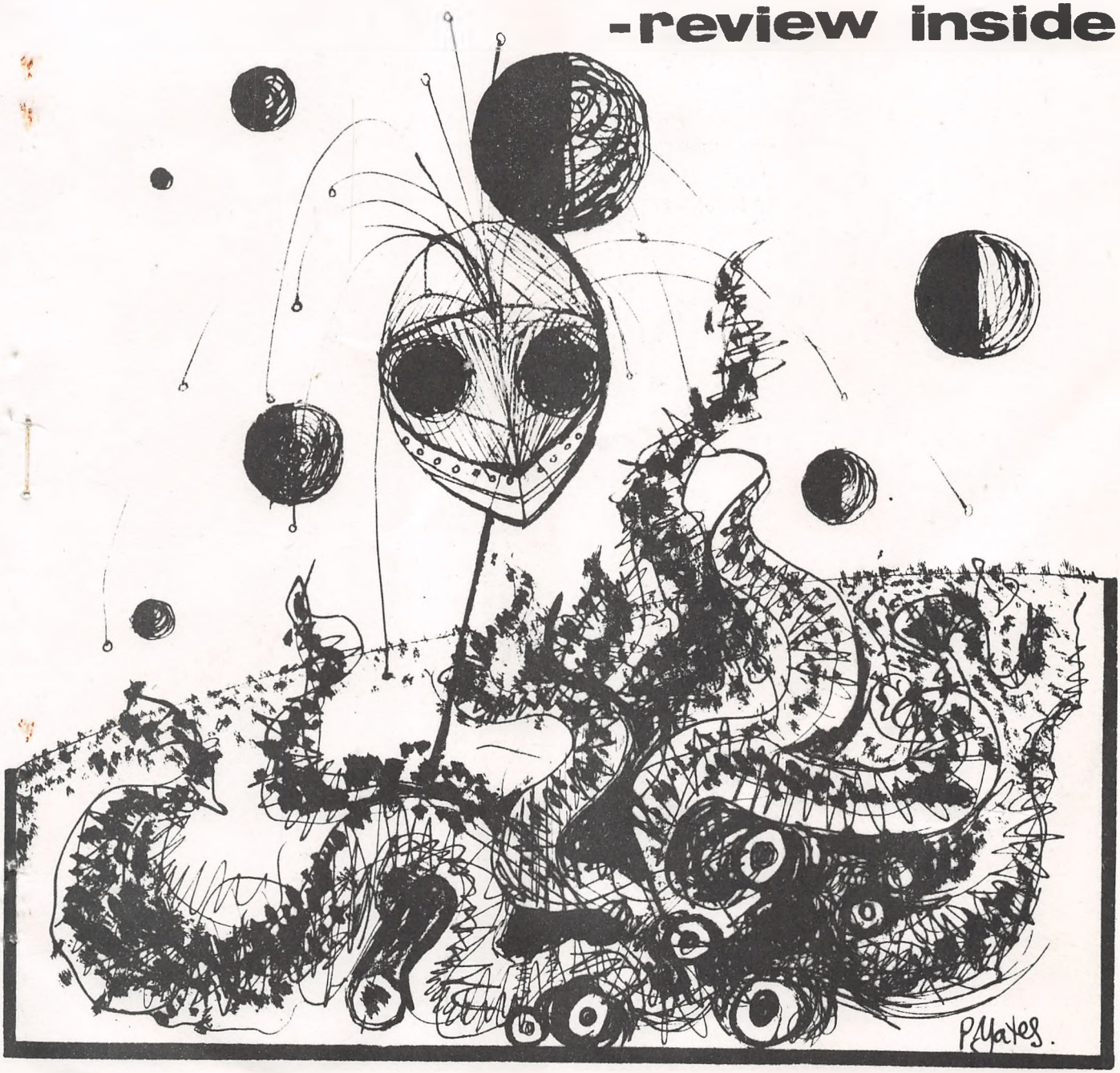
STAND ON ZANZIBAR
-review inside



DISCUSSION PANEL:- THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS 'NEW WAVE'!

Speculation

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**********COVER BY PAMELA YATES, ARTWORK FOR 'MELTING POT' by Pamela Yates*******

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THE SPECULATOR
FINGER ON THE PULSE

ONE OF the things I didn't intend to do with SPECULATION was to revive the John Russell Fearn business, and the debate in this present issue both depresses and annoys me. It is depressing because it has no obvious end, and annoying because it is largely an irrelevant side-issue to the new magazine, Vision of Tomorrow.

Mainly due to the persistence of Phil Harbottle, John Russell Fearn is back in the science fiction news, and there are proposals - of one sort or another - for the publishing project, of which Phil is editor, to reprint some of his work. In his column in this issue Chris Priest looks into some of the implications of all this, and Phil Harbottle has some space to make an immediate reply.

But I believe the Fearn business is only a side-issue, and a rather dangerous one so far as the future of our new British magazine is concerned. Nobody doubts that we badly need a new magazine, and yet a lot of people doubt, perhaps rightly, that we need any more from John Russell Fearn! Phil is in any case going to have a hard fight to make the magazine viable; he cannot afford the possibility of losing prospective readers who do not share his enthusiasm for Fearn's work.

I must admit that I see almost no literary values in the work of Fearn, and like it or not, literary values have become important in science fiction today. I agree with Chris Priest, this time, and with what Dan Morgan said in Issue 21, although I suppose my support could be a little embarrassing for both. But as editor of SPECULATION I feel I should speak my mind here, if anywhere, although not without admitting that I have only read one complete Fearn novel!

To go back some years, I remember that I first encountered Fearn in his guise as Vargo Statten in the British Space Fiction Magazine and elsewhere. This was when I was thirteen, and beginning to look for old issues of Astounding and Galaxy in the Birmingham 'rag' market! I didn't have any preconceived ideas, nor had been 'warned off' Fearn, but I quickly began to avoid his stories because even at that age I had found they were not worth reading. Some time later I read 1000-YEAR VOYAGE, a dreadful book, and the only Fearn novel I have ever completed, although I have looked through a good number of others out of curiosity. (Cont/d)

The final factor, oddly enough, which confirmed my judgement of Fearn (although I don't suppose this was the intention) was Phil Harbottle's own bibliography, 'The Multi Man', a work of immense diligence. But unfortunately, and I know Phil will not agree with me, my conclusion is that John Russell Fearn's main talent was for quantity production - and that, despite Charles Platt, whatever the quality of some of his work, it has been far surpassed by any number of other writers in the SF field, with greater literary gifts and more imagination.

That, I think, will have to be very nearly the last word on the subject, although I wish every success to Vision of Tomorrow magazine itself. The first issue has been published, and we shall be reviewing it in SPECULATION as soon as its editor has settled down and produced one or two further issues. (It is available from Phil Harbottle, 27 Cheshire Gardens, Wallsend, Northumbs, at 5/- copy).

NEW WAVES AND PERMANENT WAVES ?

"I would like to attend a convention," writes Jim Diviney, our subscriber in the Army, "but do I require degrees in Philosophy and English Language to understand what is going on? Does everyone stand around in Dress Suits, drinking champagne and talking about new waves, old waves and permanent waves? Would I be able to speak to the Gods, Aldiss, White, Bulmer, etc? Could I take books of theirs and ask them to autograph them, or is that frowned upon? My wife wishes to go with me (she reads knitting patterns and thinks Heinlein is a German beer). Would she be left completely out ? "

My answers to the above are No, you don't; certainly not!; yes you will be able to talk to the professionals and yes, they will probably be tickled pink to find someone who wants their autographs! Your wife should probably enjoy the convention - certainly my wife Eileen has enjoyed the last two, and she is by no means a science fiction fan. I'd also like to offer the two pages of photographs bound into this issue in answer. Conventions always look more fun in pictures than they actually are (these are the highlights of over 72 hours at Oxford, remember) - but almost anybody can enjoy themselves providing they make the effort themselves to get involved. To Jim Diviney, wife, and others, I'd like to say: Give it a try, and if it will help I will be glad to introduce you around to some of the other 'regulars' present!

At the Oxford convention this year were quite a number of Germans, most of them unknown to me, I'm afraid. Waldemar Kumming, our loyal agent for many years and editor of Munich Round-Up took these photographs (opposite) and edited them into final shape. I will try to describe these; for instance, Waldemar is in the dark jacket, fourth row down, second picture across, talking to Archie Mercer (with beard).

Second row down, the three ladies are, left to right, Daphne Sewell (probably hidden in the margin), Ann Keylock (with dog), and Jean Muggoch. The author puffing a cigarette at the bar is John Brunner, and the two in sweaters facing left are, in order, Donald Wollheim and James White. Immediately below the latter is John Carnell (in glasses) beside James, again, and Bob Shaw. Also shown is Ella Parker. Continuing left is Keith Freeman (with glass), Ken Bulmer (looking rather tipsy) and a gentleman I ought to know but don't, I'm afraid.

Ted Tubb can be seen in the vertical photograph to the right of Archie Mercer, pouring ale with some distaste. Right, again, is Ken Bulmer, Graham Hall in 'flower-power' outfit, and Dave Kyle (standing). Bottom right is John Brunner, left, Mary Reed, Bob Shaw, and part of the art display, and then Peter Mabey. Boxed beneath Waldemar Kumming is John Roles, in striped blazer.


Brunnerstraße

This page would appear to contain all the action, due to skilful editing of photographs. Across the top of the page, on various panels during the weekend, are shown, (left to right), John Carnell, Beryl Mercer, John Brunner, Walter Gillings(?), James White, Donald Wollheim, Ken Bulmer, Ethel Lindsay and Tom Schluck. Standing is another speaker, unrecognisable to me, and then Michael Rosenblum, and Bob Shaw. Standing again is Walter Gillings and Phil Rogers, and then I finish the row, next to Ina Shorrock I think it is.

In the row beneath (left) are Ken and Pamela Bulmer, shown again in the audience for those with sharp eyes. Those in the know may also be able to distinguish Marjorie Brunner, Phil Harbottle, Rog and Arlene Peyton, John Ramsey Campbell, and several others. In the far right picture, still 2nd row, are Dave Kyle (surely not asleep?), TAFF-winner Eddie Jones, Tom Schluck and Norman Shorrock.

In the row beneath, again, there are excerpts from the Costume party and Grand Joust. Filmed by Swedish TV (left) is a melee from whom the only figure I can distinguish is that of Bram Stokes, in loincloth and not much else. Beneath yet again is Ina Shorrock entrusting a knight to fight for her favour, alongside a bandaged casualty from another bout! Don't ask me what this has to do with science fiction, but it's certainly a spectacle and fun! In the bottom two rows appear scenes from the Sunday evening banquet, an innovation for a UK Convention.

Once again I cannot be too helpful in the identifications, except to point out Guest-of-Honour Judith Merril standing at the microphone (between Brunner and Carnell). Immediately in front of her are Tony and Simone Welsh. The righthand corner pictures show Daphne Sewell and Ann Keylock (blonde), and, bottom centre, Gerry Webb arguing with Ted Tubb. James White closes the SPECULATION photo-section with a toast in best bitter! My thanks to Waldemar Kumming, once again.

NEXT YEAR'S CONVENTION, called the 'Sci-con 70' is being organised for the BSFA by George Hay, and it will almost certainly be held in the Royal Hotel, Southampton Row, London. Taking place over Easter weekend, March 27-30, it will be, in the words of the chairman, an 'all-out' convention, with guests and speakers from other realms beside that of science fiction. Kit Pedler, who scripts 'Doctor Who' and other adult TV SF-series, has agreed to speak, possibly with a panel and either a film or some sort of visual demonstration.

George Hay is considering booking the London Planetarium for a session, depending on response. Keith Critchow, doyen of the progressive section of the Architectural Association, has been asked to speak on 'spaceship Earth'. In addition, a prominent author has been approached to be Guest-of-Honour, and among other events, SPECULATION hopes to provide a panel discussion-feature.

Further details of the convention may be obtained from its chairman, George Hay, at 411 West Green Road, London N.15. The preliminary registration fee is likely to be around 10/-, but this should be checked with George. British fans are also reminded that the World Science Fiction Convention will take place in 1970, at Heidelberg, Germany. Details will be given in SPECULATION of any joint-party arrangements made to visit this convention during August next year.

THE KEN McINTYRE MEMORIAL AWAARD

At the Easter 1969 Convention a fund was started for an award in memory of the late Ken McIntyre, to be presented annually for artwork at each convention. The trustees of the fund are Keith Freeman, Jim Marshall and Rog Peyton. Donations to the fund are invited and should be sent to: Roger Peyton, 131 Gillhurst Road, Harborne, Birmingham 17. Cheques, postal orders, etc, should be made payable to "Roger G. Peyton (Ken McIntyre Memorial Fund)".

SINCE THE last issue I have heard from J.G.Ballard, and below I am reproducing his letter, out of interest, along with a restrained little reply which I would like to make. The remainder of my editorial is on Page 44.

"Dear Mr Weston. Please do not send me any more copies of your magazine.

J.G. Ballard. "

"Dear Mr Ballard,

I regret that you do not want to receive any further issues of my magazine, since I had hoped you would find SPECULATION of some interest. Because this is not the case, I feel inclined to try and explain to you just why I produce SPECULATION, and something of what it means to me.

I suppose it can only be called a labour of love, for it involves a great deal of work and considerable expense for a return which you might not consider worthwhile. Because I do not get paid for doing this, just as you do not get paid, for inserting your advertisements. In a way, we are both inflicting something of ourselves on to others, and this is how it should be.

I produce SPECULATION because I enjoy doing so, and because to me, science fiction is an important part of my life and this is my small way of contributing to it. I hope the magazine has some value and interest to others, perhaps serving as a channel of communication, a forum of expression, call it what you will.

Because I am not a professional writer, nor even a particularly skilled or interesting writer, it has been hard to try and make SPECULATION into an intelligent and a serious magazine. I am immensely grateful to the many authors and publishers, both famous and little-known, who have been so kind and so helpful during the past years.

As an aside, Mr Ballard, I ought to explain that three years ago, or more, I considered you something of a menace to science fiction, not so much for what your fiction said as for your opinions. Now I have grown up, a little, and I no longer think that things are that simple, fortunately, and I know that no one writer can harm an entire field of literature. As a matter of fact, I consider your work may well do science fiction quite a deal of good, by broadening our horizons; and I have enjoyed some of your 'conventional' stories very much indeed.

But, Mr Ballard, I think you have long been arrogant in the way you have dismissed other writers and their very real achievements. Further, I consider you were both intolerant and rude in the way you insulted fandom, of which I am a member, and other writers and editors in the interview in SPECULATION-21.

You were consulted before we published that interview, Mr Ballard, and you have received the following number containing the replies from readers (on the whole surprisingly intelligent, literate and polite). I do not consider that we have affronted or insulted you in any way. I am unrepentant; we do our best, and that is all anybody <u>can</u> do.

Your letter is a remarkably poor return on my investment of time, Mr Ballard, but you have asked not to receive any more (free) issues of SPECULATION and this of course is your privilege. I thought you might be interested in my work, as many others have been, and now, frankly, I am a little hurt that you are not.

I shall not be sending any more issues of SPECULATION to you, including this one. If you should change your mind at some time in the future you will be welcome to take out a subscription. The usual rates will apply.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Weston

So far as organised programme activities were concerned, I think one of the highlights of the recent Oxford SF convention had to be the discussion panel chaired by E.J. 'Ted' Carnell on the 'new wave' movement. Listening to the views of the various speakers it occurred to me that possibly the most important point was not raised at all: does the 'new wave' actually exist ?

Michael Moorcock was the first to adopt the label from the fanzines, for New Worlds in its paperback disguise, and Judith Merril picked it up to mean a whole lot of other things. Classed as 'new wave' at one time or other since then have been authors such as John Sladek and Thomas M Disch, Norman Spinrad and Brian Aldiss (in some of his more recent incarnations) and J.G. Ballard. While New Worlds is solidly 'new wave', F&SF seems to be, occasionally. Harlan Ellison is 'new' but not 'new wave', and that also applies to his DANGEROUS VISIONS collection. Revolutionary newcomers like Roger Zelazny and Samuel 'Chip' Delany have completely escaped the label, for some reason, and what about Alfred Bester, Avram Davidson, and with STAND ON ZANZIBAR, John Brunner ?

Ted White was probably correct when he described the 'new wave' as a packaging phenomenon. The examples of Theodore Sturgeon and Kurt Vonnegut, both writing unconventional SF throughout the last ten years or so surely shows that as a movement, even as a specific period of time or of fiction produced in that period, there ain't no such thing as the 'new wave' !

There ain't no such thing as the 'new wave'!

Chairman: E.J. Carnell, with Charles Platt, Edward Lucie-Smith, John Brunner, Dan Morgan, and George Hay.

CARNELL: "I was telephoned last week by a friend who said 'don't you think you should have 'new wave' SF defined before you get off the ground with your discussions or arguments?' I thought this was a good idea, but I realise that the definition must lie with each individual, although it would be useful, I think, to have each of our panellists define their interpretations first. I would therefore like to ask John Brunner if he would give his definition of the current 'new wave' literarure."

BRUNNER: "Well, for me the 'new wave' is largely an optical illusion. I've written just about everything that one can write in the SF field, from free-swinging space-opera to what I intended to be seriously-intentioned novels with not only some speculative content but also the best I could manage in literary form. But my feeling is that if one is to attempt to isolate so-called 'new wave' science fiction writing, one can only approach it from the standpoint of the treatment of the material, rather than the material itself. The material remains the same - human beings in extraordinary situations, but these may stem from something which conventional, traditional SF did not explore - mental derangement, for example, or the pressure of urban life projected into the future.

One of the things which has annoyed me for the 17 or so years that I have been writing science fiction is the incredible conservatism of literary taste among the typical science fiction audience, which for a group of people who are theoretically using the entire Universe for their playground, strikes me as being a little bit sad. I will not attempt to define my view of the 'new wave' any more closely than this, but I will say that I feel the arrival of people with different approaches, different styles and different areas of interest is not cause for quarrelling, a cause for faction-forming, I think it is a cause for satisfaction that our field is being enriched and extended."

LUCIE-SMITH "With the faltering of traditional literary genres I find that a great deal of literary inventiveness, of creative energy, is going into the SF field. Suddenly, in the last 5-6 years, asked to name leading English novelists I find myself thinking that the sort of names one ought to give are Aldiss Ballard, Brunner and so on, that this is the most interesting creative field of narrative fiction. I think the great quarrel in the SF field about the 'new wave' has been partly about the growing pains of literary responsibility, if I can put it that way. SF suddenly finds itself not a minor genre, but a very, very important part of new literature which is being created."

CARNELL "Charles Platt is representing New Worlds, which is virtually the springboard of the 'new wave' we are discussing, and I think he can probably give at least a reasonable definition of what the magazine is looking for, and the type of material they are publishing."

PLATT "I think you can either look from a negative point of view, saying what 'new wave' isn't, and get at it that way, or with a more positive viewpoint. But it makes sense to look at the 'new wave' negatively, because for many writers it started with them being disenchanted with things as they were, wanting to get away from a lot of conventions and strictures in existence, and to do something a bit more relevant to life outside the pages of a book. A friend of mine once said that a lot of SF could have been written by hermits living deep underground, with no contact with the outside world.

It is rather strange that whereas freedom of thought and ideas and imagination has been encouraged in science fiction, to a large extent editors have always expected a certain style of writing. They wanted one type of presentation and never questioned the fact that magazine-stories were largely written to a formula style lacking the imagination or experimental outlook of their ideas. This is all rather vague, I'm afraid, because it is always difficult to describe something which is largely intuition anyway, and New Worlds is very largely intuition - when something comes in, Mike and I know whether we like it or not without really talking much about it."

MORGAN "I have for some time been preoccupied with the novel rather than short stories, and feel that is there is a new form, a 'new wave', we must look for its major works in its novels. For this purpose I've taken three novels which could be considered 'new wave', each either serialised or extracted in New Worlds. They are Thomas Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION, Spinrad's BUG JACK BARRON and John Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR:

Now CAMP CONCENTRATION first: It is written in a diary form, there is nothing new about this; it is enormously erudire, in a sub-Colin Wilson manner, with shades of the Aldous Huxley intellectual exhibitionism. Plotwise, not particularly original, although that is not necessarily a bad thing. The ending is a "rich uncle from Australia" ending (the writers in the audience will know about this!). As a novel in the storytelling sense it doesn't compare with Disch's own THE GENOCIDES, which had a coherence, an organic form, far greater than CAMP

CONCENTRATION. But then, THE GENOCIDES is in every way a conventional SF novel. BUG JACK BARRON is similarly a straightforward sociological science fiction novel, well-plotted, powerfully-written, except that it has been deliberately larded throughout with obscenities, used in such great quantities that they create a negative response, in this reader at least, which ruins the effect of the whole novel.

Unfortunately I haven't as yet read the whole of John Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR, but on the evidence of the extract in New Worlds I would say that this is a major work of science fiction which dwarfs the other two in every way. I don't think John could claim that there is anything new in the form, although here again I'm only talking about the extract, but even from this the reader is involved, totally, in this dreadful future world. Its existence is possible, even probable in the not-too-distant future of our planet. Depressing, yes, but it stirs our awareness, makes us consider the probabilities involved, which is surely one of the major functions of science fiction. Now I claim STAND ON ZANZIBAR for the 'old wave' - you'd better try to talk me out of that !"

CARNELL "Before we swing to my left, where I'm sure there are some rapid answers being prepared to Dan's bomb-blast, I think really we should hear from George Hay, who has for a long time been SF reader, fan, and mixed-up in many other things. At the Brighton conference last year, one of the most interesting and explosive sessions blew up on the second day when George took over the floor and argued back with the panel of speakers."

HAY. "I think this whole subject tends to be examined in a vacuum. I think the main problem is that we don't understand just what is actually happening. With the fall-out from current technology we have the most fantastic decisions to meet, both as individuals and as members of a group, within a very very, short space of time. Now the relevance of this to the Old and New Waves is that the human race, as ever when confronted with decisions of this kind, tends to waver on the brink of its tremendous responsibilities. One of the negative reactions is to retreat into inner space.

Old-line science fiction deals with outer space, with the problems faced by a protagonist going out and meeting monsters on strange planets or whatever. This was very old-fashioned, very crude, simple idea that you put a hero in this difficult position and how did he get out of it? It was objective, not subjective. A rocket was a real rocket, the monster was a real monster, and if the hero didn't win he would get torn into small pieces. Now one of the advantages of inner space is that it is private, completely under your own control, and you can make up the rules as you like. What I am saying is this; far from the Old Wave being replaced by some 'new wave', what is actually happening is that we are in a short interregnum, a short period of indecision, during which some people waver and retreat before these formidably frightening problems. And they go back into this inner world, this inner space. But it is a retreat, even though creatively it has some very beneficial aspects, from which all science fiction and all literature is benefiting now.

Sociologically speaking, it is bad because the individual retreats. And it is fascinating to watch how this happens, because in his uncertainty he falls back on the group. As Marshall McLuhan says, we are now going back for a brief time into some sort of tribal culture. The individual tends to give away responsibility, he says ,"well, I don't know, I'll make up this book or film or whatever it is, and you can interpret it the way you want to, friends, it's all yours you know - do it yourself." And this is fun, but the point it, it becomes awfully hard to find an individual who can create a viewpoint of his own!

My chief complaint against what I consider the 'new wave' is that it just throws the responsibility back along the groove, it becomes emotive, it depends on shapes, sounds, colours, and so on, all of which are very pretty, but in fact this fiction doesn't give a lead, no-one is prepared to stand up for a viewpoint."

CARNELL "The first round has clearly show . that we have no common definition of the 'new wave' and the definition must be in each individual's own mind. I think, John, you have a few quick notes on Dan Morgan's comments?"

BRUNNER "I can't say that I think Dan's assessments of the other two books are quite as accurate as the assessment of mine! But this is not really a literary criticism panel, it is concerned primarily, I think, with the function of the artistic endeavour in SF, which is obviously something that will vary according to temperament from person to person, and this goes for readers as well as writers. But I would like to draw your attention to two minor points which came up during the first round of the discussion. George Hay said that a group does not stand still, it goes backwards or forwards but must change. In fact I think this is not a very valid argument in the context, and after all, ants, bees and termites have been doing pretty well over million-year spans without changing in any significant respect. I would hate to think, however, that any aspect of human endeavour could become fossilised in that fashion, and for a writer the only inexhaustible supply of raw material, the one thing which stops the individual from fossilising in his mind and just ploughing the same furrow over and over, is, I think, friction and contact with the real world and real people around him. The raw material is man, and I go along with Charles Platt's point that much SF could have been written by people whose knowledge of the world was strictly an 'ivory tower' type of knowledge.

One notices this particularly in the characterisations of women in many 30's, 40's and 50's magazine SF stories. One gets the impression that writers knew more about machinery than they did about people. Hal Clement is perhaps an extreme example of this, where his aliens were much more believable than his human characters. On the other hand, of course, let us not operate too far in the opposite direction. Just as the entire world is not like LAST EXIT TO BROOKLYN (although that is part of our real world), the extreme subjective experience interpreted into fiction may literally be meaningless for some people whom the world has treated kindly. I think it is incumbent upon an author to realise that his audience is a very wide and varied one, and there is absolutely no way of predicting who your hypothetical reader is going to be. Science fiction writers are slightly more fortunate than most in that they come into contact with a large slice of their audience every now and again, as at conventions like this one, But the feedback process continues nonetheless, with or without direct contact, and as Charles has said, the tendency in contemporary SF does seem to be more and more to concentrate on the subjective, the personal, the psychological aspects of the experience being discussed. For me this is a very good thing indeed, and I would like to see an eventual state of affairs where one could combine the depth of insight and depths of subjective understanding displayed by the very best of the writers who are still experimenting, with the smoothness, the polish, the precision of the best writers of what is - regrettably - now being termed the 'old wave'."

LUCIE-SMITH "I think that the determination to try and cope with the subjective is one of the hopeful signs of science fiction. One could criticse the old SF by saying that its heroes, to whom George Hay referred, were devoid of inner life, that they were people whose actions had entirely rational, exterior motivations. I think that the desire to cope with the irrationality of human beings and the dangerous world we live in is a good thing, and I think it does

show a sense of responsibility on the part of the 'new wave' writers towards their society which perhaps George Hay is unwilling to grant them. The one thing I would like to point out as a kind of parallel is that if you look back over the past 25 years you'll find that some of the most deeply impressive science fiction novels were not written by SF writers but by people like Golding (who is sometimes claimed for science fiction, I know, but who has somehow contrived to escape that category). I think that the willingness of science fiction now to tackle human complexity head-on, leaving labels aside, is something very much to be welcomed."

BRUNNER "On the way past, I recall James White once pleading in Slant that he wished Kimball Kinnison would once in a while catch a cold!"

PLATT "A lot of people have complained in different terms about the so-called obscene language in BUG JACK BARRON. This, of course, is only obscene if you regard it as not being true to life. Obscene is a word which means different things at different times."

TED TUBB (audience) "No sir, there is one legal definition only. You see, the trouble with new wave authors is that they make up meanings to fit the words but the meanings are not the same for two days running ! "

PLATT "The fact remains that at different times in the past, and in different countries, the word 'obscene', what is permissible and what isn't, has not been a constant, immoveable, easily-defined quality. In Spinrad's serial, all he was doing was absorbing the language of the society in which he lived (which in fact is very similar to what he wrote in BJB) and put it down on paper. I really feel that people who object to it do so because they aren't familiar with that particular environment.

As regards CAMP CONCENTRATION, I rather think that the criticisms levelled at it ignore the fact that the novel has a basic theme of salvation. And seen in this sense the ending is entirely logical and in fact there could be no other ending for it; it isn't just a sort of turnabout. The character is preoccupied with religion throughout, and I think people have found the novel to go quite deep enough, while at the same time remaining an excellent book that can still be enjoyed just on the 'surface'. For me it is one of the most successful pieces of 'new wave' fiction that has yet been written."

LUCIE-SMITH "I'd like to ask both the panel and the audience whether the question of obscenity isn't really a general problem in fiction. I think if you categorise the 'new wave' simply on the grounds of obscenity and pornography it would limit the discussion enormously, because this is a problem which is happening to all writing, it isn't by any means characteristic of science fiction. I was a witness in the LAST EXIT TO BROOKLYN case, and I think it is quite clear that we are deeply split in our society as to what is permissible in print."

MORGAN "I would just like to say a few words about a failed writer for literary magazines who came to science fiction and tried to make it something that it isn't, nor ever was. This man is capable of writing competent, even brilliant SF short stories. But he has the effrontery to insult our intelligence - you and me, the average science fiction reader, for whom he has publicly voiced his contempt in the SPECULATION interview, with such drivel as the 'Generations of America' and 'Dr. Christopher Evans Lands on the Moon'. (applause) The dreadful irony about this is the way in which this cynical view has been slavishly followed by one pseudo-Ballard after another, in the so-called stories published in New Worlds.

TED TUBB (audience) "The unfairness expressed in Charles Platt's statements is this, I think: "we know what we like, so we print it. You're only the clots who buy the stuff!" Surely the old idea of an editor was to publish what he thought his readers wanted to read ?"

HAY "One of the just criticisms made by the 'new wave' was that the old hard-line science fiction story did tend to get very, very cliched. It's true, it did, and there should be a reaction against this. You'd pick up some old-wave SF stories and put them down after two paragraphs because you knew the rest of the story. But what we are short of is the individual line, which is so important because a writer is not replaying an old tape, he is doing something new, and it is important to the reader, because in it he can see something of himself reflected. The hero in science fiction - what is his relationship to the reader ? A common attack on SF was, and I suppose still is: "well, this is nothing to do with me, I work all day filling in invoices and go home to the wife - what's all the outer space business ?"

But everyone has some sort of struggle every day, whether it's with the boss, the wife, or whatever, and the writer is putting into a certain formal shape, i.e. a science fiction story, a parallel in which the reader can see himself reflected. And that is why most of the stories that sell in this country, any country, are stories with happy endings. People want to read something in which somebody has a struggle and wins !"

MORGAN "Can I quote an old definition of fiction, Hemingway's, I think,which was: 'fiction is life made meaningful', and this is just what the 'new wave' doesn't do, for me."

ETHEL LINDSAY "Someone on the panel mentioned that the 'new wave' was using new ways of writing, of telling a story. Would you say this is really true or are they just revising old ways such as 'stream of consciousness?"

PLATT "That's a very fair implication. A lot of so-called 'new wave' isn't new in terms of the general world of literature, it's only new in terms of science fiction. I don't think there's any pretence that totally new ground is being broken in terms of style. Perhaps in terms of the exact mixture of style and form and content, it is new."

LUCIE-SMITH "I think one of the most interesting things about the so-called 'new wave is the way in which it has been picking up techniques from things like the French 'new' novel - Aldiss REPORT ON PROBABILITY A was an excellent example of that, certainly new to science fiction, although not as a technical experiment."

BRUNNER "But then of course there's nothing really new about this because we live in a very, very deep cultural continuum. In terms of sheer human inventiveness and the number of individual fresh advances - not only in the arts - which have taken place within that area of time that we 'bind', we are probably the culturally richest people in the whole of history. To set ourselves problems artificially which have already been solved by other people would be the height of stupidity, especially when we have this enormous treasure to draw from."

ROBERT TOOMEY (audience) "There was a time not too long ago, what they called the Golden Age, those who didn't read anything during that time, when there were 30 or 40 SF magazines on the market, all with stories written to specific formulas, developed from the earliest magazines. But now real human beings are being put in front of machinery, and suddenly machinery is receding into the background. The reactions of the characters has become important, instead of the plot pushing them alomg. No longer is this fantasy - SF is looking at real people, and is frightening, because realism isn't what readers want!"

BRUNNER "I'm inclined to agree, particularly in view of the fact that for so long during the 'Golden Age' of magazine SF, one had the strong impression that the background material the writers were drawing upon for character and so on was other writer's stories! There was a sense of no immediate contact with real life, and the real world. Joseph Winter M.D. contributed some extraordinarily bad stories to Astounding, I think, back in the '50's, and one concerned an expedition to a planet where the last visitors had been horribly mangled and torn into little pieces by some unknown monstrosity. And of course, everybody on board ship, all the way, was cracking jokes, grinning at each other, clapping one another on the shoulders and generally behaving like a party of schoolkids on their way to watch a football match!

This is one of the really important points; that the pulp fiction field has virtually disappeared except for its descendant, science fiction. I find it fascinating that SF should still be around!

PLATT "I'm always wary of deriding what the 'new wave' has supposed to have sprung from, because I enjoy it. The outlook should much rather be, I think: "here's something new, let's enjoy it in a new, perhaps a slightly more demanding way, a more interesting way in some senses, although perhaps not such an entertaining way". I still get great satisfaction and enjoyment from SF of pre-1953, although I think that conventional SF after that date largely lost its impetus and became repetitive. The further you go back, granted the more it lacks in some terms, but it has a certain spirit and vitality and outrageousness which I think is marvelous and great fun."

CARNELL "And there, I am afraid, we shall have to close this discussion. Nobody won, and I think it must come back to the old saying that every editor only pleases half his readers half the time, which is probably about the most he can ever expect !

VIEW OF SUBURBIA

THE CHRIS PRIEST COLUMN

Before plunging straight into Chris Priest's column this issue I had better explain that it isn't really intended for the Greater Glorification of Peter Weston! Some people will say that I already get far too much ego-boo anyway, and the simple fact is that Chris wrote his piece to express a viewpoint in which I just happened to get involved, for better or worse. So far as the second portion of the column is concerned, it was written in accordance with the facts of the situation at the time although Phil Harbottle should have further comments in the letter-column of this issue. This has been our attempt to embroil you in the Great Literary matters of our time!

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* * * THE TEMPTATION in writing a column like this is to seek out new needs in the science fiction world and thump the desk like a Colonel Blimp demanding service in a restaurant. It's nice to reflect, therefore, that one long-felt need has been filled unexpectedly; that is, for science fiction reviewing in High Places to be at the mercy of one from the inside. A lot of SF-reviewing is unreliable, for various reasons I shall enlarge upon in a moment, and there is a good case to be made out for SF-reviewing to be done by a person who has no professional interest in the medium, yet who is articulate and opinionated, and is amiably disposed towards science fiction as a whole. Such a person is Peter Weston, who as they say, needs no introduction, and who, in the June issue is reviewing science fiction in Books and Bookmen.

Science fiction book-reviews hardly make for controversial copy in a column of this sort, but I have long felt a desire to express my views on the topic. The situation regarding any kind of reviewing is hardly satisfactory, and one can argue that at the very least SF gets a wide coverage, from The Times Lit. Supp. down. Perhaps SF even gets more column-inches per year than other kinds of fiction in proportion to its output - I wouldn't know. I'm more concerned with what is said, where, and by whom.

The definition of what an SF book-review should or should not be can be as complex as a definition of science fiction itself. It is safer by far to think about what it should not be.

It shouldn't contain a complete synopsis of the plot. Neither should it go to the other extreme and relate in impressionistic terms the reviewer's reaction to it. And, in defiance of what you probably think I'm going to say next, nor should it be a compromised bastard of the two. It shouldn't grapple exclusively with the unconscious intentions of the author, nor quibble with superficial detail. It shouldn't strive for objectivity at all costs, for the reader who doesn't react in some way to a book doesn't get past the first page.

Qualification of the reviewer is another point to be considered, and there are equally valid reasons to say that the reviewer of a book should either be someone who has insight into the author's background and who has an informed and enlightened approach to the subject matter, or should be someone who can view

the book afresh without the prejudice of advantageous knowledge. The SF-reviewer must, above all, be sympathetic in principle with the science fiction field.

The aim of the review should not be to sell the book; nor to reduce its sales; nor to recommend it for reading; nor to communicate in any way with the reader of the review in the sense of using the review as a means of evaluating the worth of the book without reference to same. Rather, an ideal review should be able to be read either independently from or in conjunction with the book itself, so that it becomes an entirely viable piece of work, readable in its own right, yet complementary to the work in question.

My rule-of-thumb method for judging a review is to see whether or not it can be read after the book with equal or increased interest.

This, then is the idealised view of SF reviewing, but in practice a reviewer often has his own motives for writing reviews. And this is why I say that too much of what is published is unreliable.

There was one reviewer in Books and Bookmen, well before the advent of Peter Weston, whose reviews I distrusted inherently. I can give no logical explanation for this beyond the fact that every review contained at least one glowing sentence, no matter what the gist of the remainder was. My native cynicism eventually attributed this to a desire on the part of the reviewer to see his quote and name on the back cover of the inevitable paperback...

It is fairly normal for the professional reviewer to be also a writer or editor, and this in a way can prejudice the validity of a review.

One SF writer reviewing the novel of another must not only write his review to express himself, but must consider several other factors. He must conform stylistically to the general pattern of the journal to which he contributes; he may or may not wish to annoy or hurt the reviewed author; equally, he may or may not wish to please him; the publisher of the book may be his own, or one to whom he is hoping to sell; he may be concerned with his own professional image, and not wish to pan an otherwise well-received book, or acclaim one which has a purely personal appeal to him.

Perhaps these factors are largely irrelevant for much of the time, but there can be few writers who have not been aware of them at least once when contemplating a review.

And it goes almost without saying that reviews by someone from outside the field (albeit a sympathetic outsider) have, except in rare instances, little more then curiosity value. Is it the Observer that continually calls Harry Harrison 'Henry'? And remember that memorable review of THE JEWS OF APTOR ?

* * * J.G.BALLARD AND JOHN RUSSELL FEARN must make two of the strangest bedfellows, yet there they are, linked with not so much as a blink of an eyelid in Charles Platt's incredible letter in the last SPECULATION.

The only way to describe John Russell Fearn is as a 'hack' writer. The word itself is a derivation from the hack horse, an inferior beast of burden hired out for rock-bottom prices to do the heaviest and dirtiest work. In literary context it means a writer who produces low-quality work in large quantities for low-paying markets, and who thus derives a living.

Most of a hack's sales have little or no royalty income; copyright is sold outright on most work produced. Because of this, a hack has to go on hacking for most of his productive life, and the only way he can reap income from old work is either to expand stories into novels, convert SF into westerns, or

vice-versa, or revamp an old story in its entirety and change only proper names. Here and now I am not levelling this charge against Fearn. (Although it is of interest to point out that the first of his novels I ever read - the Scion edition of NEBULA-X - was a rewritten and expanded version of THE MULTIMILLIONTH CHANCE. Or at least, so I was informed by Philip Harbottle at the time). Nor am I particularly interested in the pros and cons of hack writing as a way of making a living.

What I am concerned with is the continuing public image of science fiction and how it may fare if Fearn's novels are reprinted in any quantity.

Charles Platt's remarks that Fearn wrote "professional fantasies" that were "full of imagination and drama" is as wild and irresponsible as he claims Fearn's techniques, ideas and plots to be.

One can accept that there is a part of the market for the reprinting of old novels, and to re-read an old classic from the advantage of thirty years' hindsight can be an instructive and valuable process. (See Brian Aldiss's JUDGMENT AT JONBAR in SF Horizons No.1.) There are many writers, such as Clifford Simak, Theodore Sturgeon, and Isaac Asimov, who started writing for the pulps and who went on to become leading writers, as they progressed at a parallel rate to SF - and there is a certain curiosity in reading their first stories and novels now.

But John Russell Fearn started in the pulps and went on writing for them for the whole of his life.

His novels, at best, were written quickly and for money. His methods of plotting from films are widely known and represent an awful disregard for the processes of creativity. His attitude toward scientific veracity was depressingly irresponsible. His characters were often based on the screen images of film-stars. And his pseudoscientific concepts - which were often the sole justification for the stories in pulp magazines - lacked the integrity and panache needed to carry them off.

It is pertinent to consider these things at the moment, for Fearn is soon to be placed once again before the public eye. That otherwise-enterprising Vision of Tomorrow project of Ron Graham and Phil Harbottle intends to reprint the best of Fearn as a complement to their new novels, anthologies and magazines, according to their statement in Vector-52.

Will Fearn's work stand up to contemporary scrutiny? The markets that made him, the prewar American pulps and the post-war British paperbacks - no longer exist, and the type of reader who read them is now revelling in sub-Bond paperback escapism. Science fiction is today a sober thing, published under established and respected imprints. Fearn's work might therefore seem anachronistic, nearly ten years after his death.

I understand that the Vision publishing enterprise got off the ground through the mutual admiration of Messrs Graham and Harbottle for Fearn's work. As far as this goes, we should accordingly be duly respectful to Fearn's memory. But is it fair, even to Fearn himself, that his work should re-appear in these harsh and cynical days ? Would his name and work not be better commemorated by an annual award or trophy, or something of this sort ? It would be sad and ironic if the image of the Vision list were to suffer by the very thing that created it.

Christopher Priest, May 1969

** See the View of Suburbia Annexe, overpage!

THE STIGMA of being a hack writer has often been applied to Fearn, usually with a storm of condemnation. The fact is that whilst Fearn certainly did produce a certain amount of hackwork, it does not comprise the totality of his work. I can think of very few writers whom economic necessity or market conditions have not compelled to produce hackwork at one time or another. Henry Kuttner and Cyril Kornbluth, two famous SF names, were also two of the biggest hacks in the field. One young writer, prominent in SPECULATION, is a professional hack, writing rubbish under pseudonyms to make a living. Does he take pains and hope for a big sale to Analog? Does he hell! The moral seems to be that whilst it is okay for everybody else to produce hackwork, it is Fearn alone who cops the condemnation.

In my biography of Fearn, THE MULTI-MAN (1968) I went to exhaustive lengths to analyse Fearn's works, separating the wheat (good) from the chaff (hack). What Chris Priest claims to be "widely-known" facets of Fearn's methods were actually quite unknown until my book came out. The important thing for people to realise is that Fearn's poorest writing is well known to me as such; I do not wear blinkers. A misconception that seems to be prevalent is that as editor I shall authorise wholesale reprinting of Fearn's work, presumably including hackwork that will damage the image of science fiction.

What utter rubbish! I did not spend nine years carefully collecting and evaluating Fearn's entire output in order to publish his worst stories. Priest himself recognises this when he says that our project "intends to reprint the best of Fearn." And so we shall.

The crux of this matter is to be found in Priest's remark that 'John R Russell Fearn started in the pulps and went on writing for them for the whole of his life." This is a gross error of fact, and a deliberate distortion by someone who should know better, having allegedly read my bibliography of Fearn. Fearn did NOT start in the pulps; he began his writing career as a film journalist with the Film Weekly. He did write for the pulps quite intensively over the period 1933-43, during which time he appeared elsewhere and indeed actively sought to appear in other markets. The main reason he appeared in pulps was simply because no other market for short SF existed at that time, and Fearn was dedicated to producing science fiction because of his liking for the medium.

In 1943 Fearn published his first hardcover book which was to be the first of no less than 30. In 1944 he sold his first novel to the Toronto Star Weekly, which was and is a general-circulation slick magazine, with the largest weekly sale of any comparable Canadian journal. The Star Weekly enjoys a circulation far in excess of any SF magazine past or present, and pays contributors at a rate similarly in excess of any SF magazine, except Galaxy and Analog, which are comparable. The Star Weekly is not a pulp magazine: it is a prestige market that carries original material by Ellery Queen, Erle Stanley Gardner, Arthur C. Clarke and others. Fearn sold them no less than 34 novels, two of which appeared posthumously. When he died the Star Weekly commissioned many leading SF writers to try and continue a character series he had created for them - and all of them had their work rejected by the exacting editor of the paper, because it was not good enough.

Let me conclude with a few facts and forecasts. Fearn will not be reprinted in Vision of Tomorrow, which will carry new stories exclusively, and is partly designed to encourage new and young writers like Chris Priest himself, whose work I have already purchased and am in fact actively soliciting at this

(Continued on Page 26)

The Critical Front

BOOK REVIEWS AT LENGTH

FOLLOWING some sort of noticeable trend among SPECULATION contributors of late, Brian Stableford has become a professional, recently completing his second novel for Ace Books and signing contracts for both (CRADLE OF THE SUN and THE BLIND WORM) to be published over here in reverse order by Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd. Just having sat final examinations for his B.A. in Biology with the prospect of a further 3 years' study leading to a D.Phil., Brian seemed eminently qualified to review Piers Anthony's latest novel, OMNIVORE. PRW

OMNIVORE by Piers Anthony (Faber & Faber, 25s; Ballantine 75c)

Reviewed by Brian M Stableford.

Piers Anthony is the author of two very fine novels (CHTHON and SOS THE ROPE) and co-author of a third, (THE RING). In these he has demonstrated that he has a great deal of talent. All three are exceptionally well-plotted and are based on good ideas.

In view of the careful way these novels are put together it seems strange that Anthony could neglect both plotting and writing in his fourth book, OMNIVORE The plot here is little more than a patchwork of ideas which do not seem to have been worked out too well. They are strung together in a simple sequence of chunks of heavily-padded narrative, interspersed with three flashbacks. There is no trace of the order and unity of CHTHON or the concise style of SOS THE ROPE

The central character of the book is Subble, a depersonalised, almost dehumanised superman. He is a detective, but is kept ignorant about the case on which he works in order to free his judgement from bias. (It also helps a good deal in concealing from the reader exactly what is going on, which is convenient) We follow this intrepid composite of Sherlock Holmes, James Bond and the rebuilt Sos through an investigation during which he interviews three people. These were a team on a planet called Nacre, which is by all accounts a pretty mouldy place !

All three are remarkably slow getting to the point, and while they ramble we are given the opportunity of finding out what a clever and magnificent character Subble is. He is also a little bit dull. Eventually, however, each of these three interviewees gives their fractions of flashback to their horrible experiences on Nacre.

It is, it seems, a world of fungi with only three higher types of life, one herbivore, one omnivore, and one carnivore. The ecology of the system as proposed by Piers Anthony is neat, if over-simple. The three members of the expedition team are made to represent a similar trinity.

The omnivore of Nacre is incredibly big, considerably nasty and very hostile. The carnivore, on the other hand, is a cyclopean manta who is quite a nice fellow and rarely shows his teeth. The herbivores, like all herbivores, just hang around.

Personally I rather liked the world of Nacre. My biological training could no doubt raise several objections to it, but when I read books I'm eager to forget all that and see what the author does with his ideas. (I can assure those who do care about the science in their science fiction that Piers Anthony has done a better job than most in constructing an alien ecology. He knows quite a bit about fungi in a factual sort of way, but his attitudes towards them are a little odd from a biological point of view.) I would have liked to spend more time on Nacre and less with Subble the cerebral Hercules. The world is intriguing, even though the herbivore/omnivore/carnivore trinity of which so much is made turns out to be so much froth on yet another alien menace story. It largely serves as a focus for woffle, although I have a suspicion that the author built not only the ecology of Nacre but also the entire plot around the basic idea of the trinity. If so, then the faults of the book are probably all attributable to the attempt to support and put across what is fundamentally not a very good idea.

Like the curate's egg, the story has some good elements. The mantas of Nacre are interesting creatures, but when the reader is eventually allowed a close look at them, it is only to the accompaniment of a boring stream of conjecture by Subble while he is fighting one. The fight is fun, but the commentary as Subble tries to guess who, how, why and what the hell becomes tedious, The scenes where the expedition struggle for their lives on Nacre are fascinating and hold the interest for most of the book. It is a disappointment to find the end ofthe story on Earth rather than Nacre.

In OMNIVORE, for some reason, Anthony's thoughts seem to follow much narrower lines than in his other novels. There is little depth to his conceptions and too much gimmickry to support his double trinity at the expense of the story. It is always easy to over-criticise a book one does not much like, especially when it is the work of an author one admires, but I honestly cannot find much in this book worthy of praise. It is a disappointing minor work by a writer who will undoubtedly become one of the greatest in the field. Go out of your way to read Anthony's other works, but forget this one. There is none of his talent on display here.

Brian M Stableford, 1969

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* So far I am aware of 7 fan-reviews of John Brunner's monumental novel STAND ON
* ZANZIBAR, of which I have written one and Pamela Bulmer two. Strangely enough
* each one is different, as the two reviews here, by Pam and by Bob Parkinson
* will show. My own take-off point was Brunner's use of imaginary countries
* for his setting, countries which do not and cannot really exist, and therefore
* which seem to me to destroy any prophetic quality, as MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!
* might be called 'extrapolation of a possible future reality. To me this point
* turned ZANZIBAR into just another SF fairy-story, but obviously nobody else
* has either noticed or objected! PRW

STAND ON ZANZIBAR by John Brunner (MacDonald, 42s. Doubleday)

Reviewed by Bob Parkinson (1) and Pamela Bulmer (2)

Like very much social science fiction, John Brunner's magnum opus deals more with the present than with the future. Ostensibly the book concerns the world of 2010, with the world population up around the ten thousand million mark. In practice its force come from just those points at which it is speaking about the world we live in now.

It is, it should be, a terrifying book.

Which is to say, those books of John Dos Passos to which this novel will be seen as a successor - USA and MIDCENTURY - dealt with history; with how (some of us, at least), got where we are. STAND ON ZANZIBAR deals with the continuing process, with what we are becoming. The incredible, knowing computer "Shalmaneser" is already with us, in discussion even if the technology lags behind the facts by a few years. "Moonbase Zero" exists in the Apollo Project brochures. And as for the New York under the Fuller Dome in which a fair part of the novel takes place, a century and a half have passed since Shelley wrote: "Hell is a city much like London, a populous and a smokey city."

A century and a half!

Not that STAND ON ZANZIBAR is simply a book about the population explosion (",.. an event which happened yesterday but which everyone swears won't happen until tomorrow", as Brunner puts it), with a few characters put in to maintain interest. Mainly it is about Man - man as an animal, as the ethologists see him. If you have been reading Konrad Lorentz, Robert Ardrey or Desmond Morris recently, some of this territory will seem familiar. But STAND ON ZANZIBAR is not simply a description. It can go further than that, it is an argument, carefully reasoned, in the way only possible with science fiction.

And in the end it is not about man but about superman.

It would be nice to review the book by discussing its content rather than its technique. In particular I am caught by its version of a perennial argument about whether genetic heridity or environment is the main controlling factor in making what we are. (In human beings at least, those aren't the only alternatives). But if you did the job properly it seems probable that there would be something very much like another 500-page volume to set next to this one.

In many ways it would be easier to handle a book like Morris' NAKED APE, because that at least claims to deal simply in facts and thus can be refuted, (in parts, only in parts) by the application of evidence. Brunner's book dependss not on simple facts but on a gestalt.

So - content not possible.

So far as technique is concerned, you might at first suppose this style to be an importation into science fiction. The 'pure' Dos Passos style (what Brunner calls, from McLuhan, the "Innis Mode"; but be not deceived, Dos Passos was there first) would perhaps be. DosPassos uses material as an archeologist uses documents and shards, pasting together a patchwork scrapbook of the age, from newspaper headlines and fragments of speech and theinstant biographies of the Great who made - or at least channeled the awareness - of this society. And in among this come the stories of the people living within the society, taken almost at random, intersecting only within the novel itself to show how the society as a whole works.

Dos Passos' books are intricate diagrams of social interaction.

Brunner, on the other hand, has been brought up in a more conventional school of writing. In the end all of his fragments must serve not only to portray the society that he is concerned with, but the plot as well. The plot, because for all the different strands it takes, there is one story to be told here.

Yet to say it is conventional is not to detract from it.

In one way this factor serves to make the story more accessible, better propaganda for something that is important. But it is important in other ways. There are no particular heroes in this book, but in the end it is optimistic. It suggests that the future can be changed, and one of the perils of our age is to suppose that an accurate description of how things are, or how they are coming

If this is a typical example of McLuhan, it can hardly be said to be bubbling over with lucidity. From the statement that a point of view can be a dangerous luxury when substituted for insight and understanding, he infers (and note the emotive use of 'mere') that insight and point of view are autonyms. A point of view when based upon perception and understanding becomes insight. If McLuhan is saying that a wider, deeper insight can be obtained if we abandon a single dogmatic point of view, then I would agree. However, it could be argued that no author ever presents a single point of view becausehe presents the objective projection of the artist and elements of himself behind the artist of which he is not in complete control. The number of points of view which the artist presents is enlarged by the number of characters he uses. It could therefore be argued that the wider his canvass the more points of view he presents, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. It is arguable whether any knowledge could be presented, or work of art made, without a point of view since the very act of selection and rejection is subjective and dependant upon the degree of perception of the author.

How far then does John Brunner succeed in presenting a 'galaxy for insight'? Undoubtedly there are areas of acute perception and the picture is a global one (the word 'galaxy' is used imprecisely). His canvass is broad and in many areas deep, the style elegant and the context rich and dense.

The structure of STAND ON ZANZIBAR is complex and unusual, if not unique within the science fiction field, although employed outside it by Dos Passos over 30 years ago. If this technique does give so much more opportunity for 'insight' it is curious that it has not been taken up and absorbed, in the way that 'stream of consciousness' has been. Perhaps such a technique has only a limited usefulness, or it may be that it was so far in advance of its time, that is, before television became a mass-media, that its advantages can only now be recognised.

The central story line, indexed under 'Continuity', concerns two room mates, Donald Hogan and African-American (Afram) Norman House, living in an overcrowded, domed-over New York where cars have become extinct (although what replaces them?) and the homeless sleep on the streets. In the developed countries the population is controlled to a socially desirable two prodgies per couple, and further still by eugenic legislation against things like congenital idiocy, haemophilia, diabetes, and colour blindness. It is a population addicted to escapism through various drugs and subtly titivated and manipulated by means of a device which enables them to each identify with Mr. & Mrs Everywhere, a television feature.

In the developing country of Yatakang, Dr Sugaiguntung is rumoured to have made a breakthrough in genetic engineering which could have disasterous consequences to the rest of the world, and synthesist/spy Donald Hogan is sent to investigate. Meanwhile Beninia, a poor, overcrowded, underdeveloped country faces catastrophe because its benevolent leader Zadkiel Obomi is dying. It is a ripe plum for exploitation under the guise of economic aid, by General Technics whose team is headed by Norman House, aided by their computer Shalmaneser. The absence of aggression and violence in Beninia is a key factor in the plot, and one which proves a challenging puzzle.

The background is interspersed with the chapters of 'Continuity',under the headings of 'Context' (chiefly essays from books both real and by the drop-out sociologist in the book, Chad Mulligan, who drops drop-out in time to save the Beninia project), 'Tracking with Closeups' (short stories which have only the

to be, is a description of how things must necessarily be. At some point simple description must have taken something away from the message of Brunner's dystopia. So that if what comes in the end is a little deus ex machina, it remains that Brunner is saying "even if this is not the way forward, there is a way forward."

I remember a wayside pulpit, "the way to a better world is better people".

Or, as Brunner's Sugaiguntung never actually asks explicity: "What sort of supermen do you want?" He gives two possibilities as I see it, the Shinka and - for all the remarks characters in the book make about abdicating our responsibilities to machines, - 'Shalmaneser'. But these are only suggestions, it seems to me. The plea seems to be that we should understand what we are before what we are makes that impossible. It means research into life as a crash priority.

There are men out around the Moon now. Ask why, and in part the answer is science fiction. Isn't SF the dream in the first place, the paper crusade. Whisper that what has been done once might be - again?

Or as Gully Foyle taunted,"Millions for defence, not one cent for survival?

Bob Parkinson, 1969

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* If John Brunner could write a little more in the vein of 'Chad Mulligan'
* it seems to me that he would have his own best-seller after the lines of
* THE NAKED APE. The asides from Mulligan were immensely entertaining - how
* about it John, why not really write YOU'RE AN IGNORANT IDIOT ? PRW

Reviewed by Pamela Bulmer

This book has been compared to a television script, but I think this is something of a backhanded compliment. A play or script is intended to have the added dimension of presentation, and this implies that STAND ON ZANZIBAR lacks this dimension. For one medium to attempt to do the job of another also seems a rather pointless exercise. I would rather read a novel which is meant to be a novel than a novel which can't make up its mind whether or not to be a T.V. script. If this tendency continues the day is not far off when we shall go to a concert and be handed a score because the music is original, and is meant to be read, not listened to.

But I think the understanding of Context (O) of STAND ON ZANZIBAR throws a good deal of light on the reasons for the structure of the book.

"Context (O) THE INNIS MODE

'There is nothing wilful or arbitrary about the Innis mode of expression. Were it to be translated into perspective prose it would not only require huge space but the insight into the modes of interplay among forms of organisation would also be lost. Innis sacrificed point of view and prestige to his sense of the urgent need for insight. A point of view can be a dangerous luxury when substituted for insight and understanding. As Innis got more insight he abandoned any mere point of view in his presentation of knowledge. When he interrelates the development of the steam press with the 'consolidation of the vernaculars' and the rise of nationalism and revolution he is not reporting anybody's point of view, least of all his own. He is setting up a mosiac configuration or galaxy for insight... Innis makes no effort to 'spell out' the interrelationships between the components in his galaxy. He offers no consumer packages in his later work but only do-it-yourself kits....'

-Marshall McLuhan:The Gutenberg Galaxy "

faintest connections with 'Continuity') and 'The Happening World', (a miscellany of bits and pieces of headlines, book excerpts, newspaper and TV stories, commercials, gossip, etc.)

In view of the fact that it conveys a world in a state of flux, with widely varying moral codes (as is the case in our world) it is incredibly coherent. Also, there are inconsistencies and sometimes bits of information which do not seem to belong, such as Donald Hogan finishing his formal education at 14. We have no way of knowing whether this is because he is a genius (in which case why is he expendable?) or whether this is the accepted pattern of development (in which case one would expect it to have more far-reaching social effects).

It has also been said that 'Continuity' could stand with a little editing on its own. In a sense this is to say that this particular technique has failed, but I think STAND ON ZANZIBAR would make a rather unsatisfying novel without it. The short stories add an enormous amount of colour and richness to 'Continuity', whose plot structure, though tight, has a number of weaknesses. Chief among these is the necessity for a Godlike figure (Chad Mulligan) to rescue the incredibly stupid computer technicians at Shalmaneser who don't know how to make him accept fresh basic data. There are a lot of coincidences, too, but then there are even more in real life.

The two central characters seem to exist in a vacuum from their environment for much of the time. We know what that environment is, but neither Donald nor Norman seem to feel it the way we do. If riots and muckers are part of everyday life, we would adjust to them and would be no longer so surprised by them. Also, these two characters seem to enjoy an incredibly high standard of spacial living - each has a bedroom to share with a shiggy, and a private room, plus a shared living room, and, in a society which accepts lesbianism, homosexuality and other permutations, it surely seems incredible that large numbers of women should be content with nomadic life on the 'shiggy circuit'. Further, if this form of legalised prostitution is socially acceptable, why over-value it by paying for it with such an important thing as accomodation ?

The fact that two of the countries depicted in the book are imaginary ones is not a weakness to credibility, as could be argued, since it does give the author much more flexibility, and who is to say that in fifty years time such countries will not exist ? (Where was Biafra ten years ago?) It also enables the author to distance himself from his subject matter, and avoids a dogmatic 'point of view'. I did not myself find the solution to man's aggression to be very convincing, but who would seriously suggest that it's likely that homo sapiens will just evolve itself out of its mess and wake up one morning to find someone has discovered the key to perfect peace? There is obviously no simple answer to be found. The eptification (remoulding of an individual's abilities) of Donald Hogan shows us clearly that genetic optimisation will present as many new problems as it will solve.

The attitudes towards sex and contraception in the world of 2010 are (sadly) convincing and show an acute perception towards the male attitude. The world today is full of Eric Ellerman's who think pregnancy is all thewomen's fault, (he considers divorce..excessive fertility is grounds..) Men don't accept their share of responsibility for contraception, even though oral contraceptives and a reversible sterility operation are available. I suspect there will still be a conspiracy of silence on the subject as there is today. Hogan's reaction to his enforced temporary sterility is marginally more mature than it would be today, but I feel that this area of John Brunner's insight will fall on stony ground, since men are far too emotional about the subject and where one is so emotional, one only sees what one wants to see.

Perhaps these are the weaknesses of presenting a mosaic configuration. How far can the average reader put all the bits together himself to give an approximation of what the author is saying? John Brunner is, I think, subjective enough for the reader to do this, and he presents enough clear points of view to stop the reader losing his way. However, there is a danger that for the majority of readers the book will be interpreted as reinforcing their own preconceived ideas; although for the more perceptive reader it is full of challenging and provocative ideas.

STAND ON ZANZIBAR is an immensely stimulating book, gripping and enjoyable and full of cryptic wit. Much of it is well worth re-reading; in particular the poems 'Citizen Bacillus' and 'Mr & Mrs Everywhere', and 'The Old Lady Under The Juggernaut'. These demonstrate admirably just how much one can convey in how little space. In fact I'll stick my neck out and say if John Brunner had disciplined himself to do what seems impossible and cut the wordage he would have had a better book than it undeniably already is. Scenes like Guinevere Steel's party, pack an incredibly vivid amount of detail in a short space (I almost felt, like Mrs Everywhere, that I'd been to a party - sort of cheated!) and there are other episodes which are dense and rich; memorable characters like Poppy Sheldon, living in a dream world with a real dream inside her, Gerry Lindt draftee, Jeff Young, eptified aboteur, and many more in a well-populated book which isn't about over-population but about violence and aggression and many other things.

There are places which overlap, but the subject of length is really a minor quibble; this is more like three books rolled into one, a good solid satisfying read, the length of which is very much more justified than that of DANGEROUS VISIONS.

One thing is quite certain, this is a big book in more ways than size, and John Brunner displays considerable technical virtuosity, a fertile creativity and undoubted talent. I think he's overdue for serious critical attention within the science fiction field.

Pamela Bulmer, 1969

* See also P.33 (MELTING POT)

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* The first thing I intend to publish once the special Heinlein issue is out of *
* the way is an article by Albert J Lewis on Philip Jose Farmer. This has been *
* gathering dust for some time, growing more and more out of date, and now Mr. *
* Farmer has written two new novels (with more planned) that can be said to *
* have completely overcome all past inhibitions. Charles Platt's review(below) *
* was intended at first to accompany Al Lewis' exposition, but I am running it *
* now for topicality and to stir up, I hope, a little discussion of Philip Jose *
* Farmer's work. -PRW *

NON-CATEGORY FICTION

Review by Charles Platt (IMAGE OF THE BEAST, A FEAST UNKNOWN, Essex Ho,£1.95.)

A critic should be aware of his own tastes.

That is, he should distinguish between finding a book unenjoyable because the author has done a poor job, and finding it unenjoyable because he, the critic is unreceptive to a particular kind of fiction. A critic aware of his own blind spots will see a book's objective worth, even if it doesn't appeal to him personally. A critic lacking such self-awareness will subjectively condemn anything he doesn't enjoy.

Cont/d....

Ted White, the prolific fanzine enthusiast is certainly at the forefront of the latter group of critics, epitomising all that is parochial and narrow-minded in science fiction fans. (One day, I will see him analysing flaws in Edgar Rice Burroughs' sentence structures, or perhaps proving conclusively that James Joyce couldn't handle a plot as well as Heinlein. White is certainly master of mis-placed criticism. Seeing fiction in no-one's terms but his own, the extent of his arrogant narrow-mindedness is only surpassed by the depth of his insensitivity, of which he is totally unaware. In a fanzine contributor this is amusing, in an editor it is amazing, but he does represent a large segment of the SF-reading public.)

I mention White because among the American fanzine reviews of Philip Jose Farmer's new book, THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST, White's review was not only the most laboriously damning, but also the most inappropriate. He and others complained at length about the slowness of the book, the flaws in its writing, and its inadequacies as a 'private eye' novel. What they barely touched-on was the essence of the book, the imaginative content which is its justification and pur-/pose.

The mechanics of the plot are unremarkable. A Los Angeles private eye has lost his partner to sex criminals, who, having immobilised the man and drugged him into euphoric stupour, have used a woman with steel false teeth to bite half-through his penis, and a jocular character in vampire fancy-dress to administer the final bite to rob the victim of his genitals. A film of this ghastly murder has been sent anonymously to police headquarters.

After this dramatic opening, things move slowly. Thick smog (gothic storm-clouds?) smothers LA. The hero struggles through it, visits his wife for an unhappy, unfulfilled tryst, contacts a Forrest Ackerman-style figure and there gets a lead on the sex criminals' location.

This action is all slow, taking about half of the novel as if in an attempt to ground the story in reality and make it more than just a fantasy. The result is dull at times (the ludicrously funny Ackerman scenes are much-needed comic relief), but does create a solid foundation of credibility.

From the painstakingly mundane background, the focus shifts to the labyrinths and passages of a traditionally gothic mansion, where the hero becomes involved with a series of exquisitely visualised half-creatures. The imagery here is vivid and grotesque, at the same time never taking itself too seriously. The vampire is a likable, cultured man, au fait with rennaissance painting. The witch's smog-dispersal potion makes her belch frighteningly. The mansion's resident ghost is literally fucked into solidity. The hermaphrodite is unique, possessing a man-headed snake which uncoils from her womb when she masturbates. The fat woman is exuberantly, frighteningly randy, and administers an anal pessary to make the hero ejaculate every couple of minutes - inconvenient when he is trying to escape, but useful when an attacking werewolf slips up on one of the many gobs of semen.

With characteristic thoroughness, Farmer has founded these half-creatures firmly in mythology. I am not familiar enough with Greek, gothic and folk-lore myths to tell how the creatures have been integrated with traditional figures, but there is an atmosphere os painstaking authenticity about both supernatural and biological aspects of the creatures that reinforces the impact of the imagery.

There is, of course, a great deal of sex in the book; the sweat, sperm, aphrodisiacs and lubricating fluids flow as freely as the blood. But, as Richard Geis has observed in his carefully-worded and cautious critique in Science Fiction Review, the sex is not pornographically exciting, and is not written to

excite. Nor are the scenes of bizarre death and mutilation morbid or sickening, as, for instance, is the average book on Nazi concentration camps. Farmer's writing is cool and clinical, as objective as a documentary, and the scenes described are fascinating in an abstract, rather than a physical, sense; in the same way that a film like Disney's 'The Living Desert' is fascinating. Strange creatures, and strange landscapes.

Because there are none of the fashionable, lascivious, vicarious sexual delights offered to readers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST, it can hardly be called pornography - protestations of Ted White to the contrary, The book's unemotional, imaginative appeal (as opposed to a sensual, sexual appeal) is probably thr reason for the reviewers' dislike of it. Anything which is different from what people are used to, or which doesn't fit the categories, tends to be maligned and misunderstood, simply because people can't key into what it is really all about. Bored and frustrated, they critidse the inessentials and side-issues.

Thus THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST has been treated as a failed detective novel, when it is quite obviously an unusually successful gothic-fantasy novel, projected on to a present-day background. In terms of most horror and fantasy fiction, it is amazingly vivid and subtle, and the standard of writing and characterisation is no worse than average for that field of fiction.

In any case, it makes little sense to talk of characterisation when the book is a study of creatures and myths. Even the Ackerman figure, though based quite closely on real-life, is an archetype.

It seems Ted White and his followers would not recognise an archetype if they saw one.

On the subject of reviews and criticism, the use of inappropriate criteria when judging an author's work is not just limited to writers like Farmer and fans like Ted White. Recently in SPECULATION we have seen Dan Morgan scorning the work of John Russell Fearn (another writer whose ideas were more important than the words he chose to express them) because of Fearn's lack of literacy. Yet the difference between the quality of Fearn's prose and that of most other SF writers is infinitessimal compared to the difference between SF prose and good writing of the so-called mainstream. SF prose is all part of one great story-telling tradition, and it is almost all at the same level; mechanical, clumsy, and dull.

But in a field whose raison d'etre is (or should be) the communication of ideas and images, it is really rather irrelevant to bicker about prose (especially when by 'good prose' SF writers usually mean pretentious, sickly stuff with the subtlety of a pseudo-art nouveau pop star poster). The merits of a piece of SF are fundamentally to do with its effect on the mind of the reader. The writing is merely the vehicle; the idea content, imagery, and vitality are of primary importance, as they are in any field of conventional, 'linear' story-telling. To hell with split infinitives and 'flaws' in the prose. A good critic should be able to see through to the substance of the writing and judge its real strength and appeal. In these terms, John Russell Fearn, Marvel Comics, William Burroughs and Philip Jose Farmer all score highly - although of course they vary greatly in the subtlety of their ideas - and people like Dan Morgan, D.C. Comics and John Brunner score rock-bottom for their tired lack of vitality and original thinking.

Farmer's follow-up to THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST fits well with what I am talking about. Titled A FEAST UNKNOWN, it uses two basically shallow 'pulp myth' figures, Tarzan and Doc Savage, and not only gives them outrageous sex lives and destinies which affect world politics, but in addition tells a powerful, imaginative story that has far more ideas and a much better pace than Edgar Rice Burroughs ever achieved.

I suspect that, with the curious snobbery that dim people direct at anything they feel is safe to denigrate, the fans will class A FEAST UNKNOWN as a trivial book, an adequate adventure story with added, 'unnecessary' sex. In actual fact it is better than practically all the science fiction now being written, and is more accurately described as a sex story with added adventure.

The plot involves an immortality drug which lengthens one's lifespan to 30,000 years (a convenient way of explaining pulp heroes' habit of never getting any older). Tarzan, under a different name, is cast as the hero; he has been given the drug by the Nine, omnipotent power figures who operate from an African hideaway just beyond the Valley of Gold. Every year, the drug dose has to be renewed, necessitating a pilgrimage to the Nine's headquarters. On this pilgrimage the hero encounters Doc Savage, who, under a different name, is cast as the villain. The conflict between the two men sustains the rest of the novel, in which it is revealed that the Nine's influence extends throughout contemporary society and back through history.

This is a familiar but evocative SF idea; the secret organisation, its initiates living unsuspected in every walk of life, the tendrils of power running through everyday society. Farmer describes it unusually well, making it at least as convincing as the CIA, (itself something of a contemporary myth). Meanwhile, the constant fighting, bloodshed, sex and strength of the two giant principle characters injects a necessary vitality to keep the story moving as the plot unfolds.

The sex tends to become a little boring. The hero, supposedly because of the longevity drug, finds himself having an orgasm with every act of violence -- as if Farmer is explaining, repeatedly, that the two are equivalent, that sex is behind every piece of adventure fiction violence. And there certainly is a lot of violence, much of it parodying the source material. Yet besides being more bizarre and ridiculous, it is more believable -- the same realism as a Vietnam war photograph. The hero's prediliction for tearing out and eating his enemies' livers when he has killed them seems only natural, under the circumstances, as does his reverential supping of the semen of a lion he has killed barehanded, in a very convincing and powerful fight.

Those who find the preoccupation with sexual, anal and generally revolting aspects of the hero 'unnecessary' must admit that, given such a totally physical character as Tarzan, in a rough jungle environment necessitating survival techniques of the most basic kind, a strong sexual description is not out of place.

But there is also a softer side to the strong sex, as in this description of the hero's childhood, being reared by apes: "When I became able to ejaculate, I still played sexually with the male and female young, buggered and was buggered, sucked and was sucked... we spent at least half an hour exciting each other sexually. We did much of this in full view of the elders and with their permission."

This is like a Liberal's view of utopia, with no taboos, neuroses, guilt or inhibitions. It is unrealistic, applied to human beings with ideas about ethics, property, money, security, jealousy and love, ideas that can never be reconciled with pure primitivism.

The hero's sexual utopianism makes one wonder, in fact, about Farmer's real motivation for writing this kind of book. It is more than an amusing exercise to redress the balance in favour of adventure fiction, putting the sex in it for fun. It is as if the Liberal's self-conscious drive to get to grips with the unnerving aspects of sex necessitates going into it deeply and exhaustively, so as to be able to log all the possibilities, put names on all the frightening unknowns, a and explain away the mysteries, thus robbing the subject of its frightening qual-

/ities.

In these terms, the author is indulging in a kind of therapeutic exorcism of sexual demons, using the mechanism of fiction writing to get a kind of cathartic relief. This is probably being over-Freudian. I am not suggesting it is Farmer's sole motivation: it is just a hypothesis, as valid as any other.

It is probably over-analysing the writing, also. Over-analysing fiction is dangerous because one can reach the point of studying it without reading it with a view to enjoying it. And passages such as this are certainly enjoyably entertaining: "I awoke with a piss-hard on. A fly landed on my sensitive glans and precipitated another ejaculation. It was caught in the first spurt and died.. it may be the only one in the history of flies to have died in this manner."

Yes, it's all good, clean fun. Other episodes involve an immortality rite which entails daintily dividing a victim's testicles into portions, ;like a birthday cake, which are then reverentially eaten; a final confrontation, where the villain and hero castrate and mutilate one another with bare hands; and a surreal scene where the hero cuts around a man's anus, grabs it and hurls the man forty feet away, uncoiling from the flying body a stream of intestines. Rather like a party-guest throwing a paper streamer, but in a grander style.

I have listed the book's high points. Its weaknesses are few; they are easy to detail. The writing style is a little too reminiscent of Edgar Rice Burroughs and tends to be a little laborious and clumsy. It is certainly adequate, however, for an adventure-ideas book. The fight scenes are a little more irritating; they are very much in the tradition of the hero's invulnerability. Obviously the miraculous escapes are deliberately hammed-up, but they become a bit frustrating; "Something burning hit my neck. It was, I think, a deflected bullet that just touched the skin with its hot metal and then dropped on to my shoulder." Really ?

A FEAST UNKNOWN is a more successful book, as a whole, than THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST. The ideas and imagery are not quite as vivid, and the biological studies are lacking, but on the other hand, within its self-imposed adventure-fiction framework it is perfectly paced, well-plotted, and creates from a pulp myth a story which is real and vital and relevant to the present day. In these terms, it is a tremendous success; outrageous, amusing, authentic, and, as always, imaginative.

It is as much a piece of non-category fiction as is THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST, and it only remains to be seen what the fan-audience will make of it.

Charles Platt, 1969

VIEW OF SUBURBIA ANNEXE (Continued from Page 15)

..very moment. Other writers whom we shall give a chance to include Richard Gordon Brian Stableford, Douglas Fulthorpe, and Robert Wells, as well as their Australian counterparts. Well-established writers such as Bounds, Bulmer, Temple and Tubb will also be featured, and from Australia Chandler, Harding, Rome and Wodhams. Brian Aldiss, widely recognised as Britain's No.1 writer is omitted from the list simply because we have not yet been favoured with any MSS. His work would be welcomed, and Michael Moorcock's also. Chris Priest's idea of a Fearn trophy is a good one, but Ron Graham and I both feel that the best commemoration is to reprint his best - and only his best - work in an attractive new magazine, separate from Vision. This will also give scope for current writers to have an additional market And the only work that might suffer by comparison will be that of current writers!

Phil Harbottle, 1969.

I THINK it is always dangerous, if not downright suicidal, for an editor to admit that he doesn't completely understand something he is printing. Damon Knight confessed to that effect with Richard McKenna's story 'The Bramble Bush' in the ORBIT-3 collection, much to my disgust, and now here I am doing the same thing with Michael Moorcock's column, 'The Dodgem Arrangement'. This is an altogether different proposition from the first action-packed installment about New Worlds, 'Now It Can Be Told', and was in fact originally written not for SPEC. but for a student magazine promoted by Graham Hall in Brighton.

But in order to give some sort of proper introduction to this piece, I asked David Pringle, himself shortly to begin a University English course, to attempt to explain the unexplainable. After this double-barrelled beginning, Mike Moorcock and Jerry Cornelius let fly !

THE MICHAEL MOORCOCK COLUMN

FOR MANY readers of SPECULATION this will be a first introduction to Jerry Cornelius, who is a kind of manic, unrepressed segment of Michael Moorcock's personality. He seems to represent many things; he is an all-suffering Christ figure, an archetype of 1960's Man, a strip-cartoon character, a point of awareness from which to explore the great fictional world of Now (Ballard-fashion), an artist, an androgyne, an embodiment of the pop zeitgeist. He is also, in this case, a mouthpiece for Moorcock's opinions.

Peter Weston has asked me to suggest an explanation of what Moorcock is trying to say in this piece. Considering the nature of 'The Dodgem Arrangement', this is a rather ironic assignment. Moorcock has written a piece of didactic fiction whose thesis seems to be that good fiction is not didactic and should not be interpreted in such a way. Now I am supposed to make that thesis even clearer: I am to explain the 'message' of the story, like any of the mediocre critics whom Moorcock berates.

The message is that we must forget messages. Fiction, being art, is pure statement and pure feeling; it is not philosophy, dialectics or argument. A novel should contain no more than a symphony or a painting, so far as a 'message' is concerned. Having read Nabokov's LOLITA recently, I sympathise with Moorcock's irritation with the critics. Bernard Levin and Kenneth Allsop described the book as a 'moral' and a 'disquietingly sombre exposure of a pervert's mind'. In fact it is no such thing. It is a funny and very moving story about love, no more. Like all good fiction it dramatises a particular, it crystallises an experience, and offers it to the reader for what itis worth.

Perhaps Moorcock was attracted to science fiction in the first place because it was a vigourous and unself-conscious branch of literature that dealt in the mythose of today (he describes that mythos in paragraph 14, below). Some would argue that Moorcock himself has done more than anyone to cause SF to become

self-conscious and pretentious, I think it would be kinder to say that Moorcock has encouraged the growth of intelligence in science fiction writers. Also, he has been very important as a liberator of potential. Without him, Ballard might have been choked-off, Aldiss may not have turned out as well as he has done, and Disch might have left the SF field soon after he entred it. Fiction can be intelligent without being didactic, in fact it must be. LOLITA is a supremely intelligent novel. The most intelligent and sensitive SF of today is being written by J.G.Ballard, very few of whose stories can be said to contain a 'message'...

Well, here I am giving a sermon that only partly coincides with what Moorcock has to say. He says much more, so let him do it in his own words, in his own unusual fashion.

David Pringle, 1969.

THE DODGEM ARRANGEMENT (a critical fiction)

By Michael Moorcock.

1.

IT WAS NOT their accomplishments that Jerry disliked so much as their attitudes. It had been such a mark of English literature, certainly since Chesterton. It was traceable in all the donnish 'novels' and detective stories, the fantasies of people like Tolkien, Williams and Lewis, the work of self-styled 'poets' like Conquest and Mitchell, the music of Vaughan Williams and Eric Coates, reaching its final depths in the ill-constructed, soft-minded concoctions of John Braine, Kingsley Amis and the rest.

An attitude of mind.

Just as the harmonium corrupted Indian classical music, so had the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan subtly corroded the quality of English thinking. Attitudes that aimed at reinforcing opinions rather than analysing them, at preserving conventions rather than expanding them.

"Musrum". Pints of beer in the good old English pub. Jolly jokes in the senior common room. The most that a novel can hope to be is an amusing pastiche or a work of sociology. Even a light comic narrative became a 'protest', a piece of melodramatic wish-fulfilment became 'an indictment of society', and a bit of conventional stream-of-consciousness became 'experimental'.

2.

DRIVING THE PHANTOM VI along the front at Brighton, Jerry looked out to sea. It was inescapable, he thought. It was large. It could not be comfortably dealt with. It was a fact. An old woman staggered out into the road in front of his car. Another fact. He didn't stop, hardly noticing the bump.

3.

HE REFLECTED ON the desperate search for a label, on the way in which the word Surrealism had been resurrected to stand for anything that was not a 'realistic' narrative. Most of the stuff the publishers presented under this label bore as much similarity to surrealistic texts as Ardizzone bore to Ernst. But then what was 'the new fiction' but a label? He glanced at the copy of New Worlds on the seat beside him. The slogan for that month read: 'What do you need?'

4.

HE HAD REACHED Hove with its bland white blocks facing not towards the sea but onto neat green squares where old women, all wool and chocolates, trailed their decrepit domestic pets and a faint smell of rotting underlinen. This, of course, was where the shopkeepers came to die, to complain that the sea didn't have

enough sugar in it, to be bullied by beer-reddened newsagents and overcharged by decaying waitresses. On the whole they took it passively, as if their past lives could be redeemed by the punishments and indignities inflicted by this suburb by the sea. And yet at the same time they appeared to seek reassurance that their lives had not been useless, selfish, narrow and full of spite. Perhaps this was why they clung on to existence, (hoping that if they could live another year or two they would receive somessign) obsessively comforting their ruined bodies. To cater to this unvocalised hope, there were the Health Food Shops and the Daily Express. But the Daily Express saw itself in a humbler light, directing the pilgrims on to the revelations of James Bond, John Braine and the latest Kingsley Amis.

5.

MUSIC CRITICS WHO had praised the virtues of the Beatles had given authority to the opinions of the tone-deaf who now praised anything from the Electric String Band to The Doors. A similar process, where the virtues of Kipling and Chesterton were praised, had made it possible for all those critics whose bad taste encompassed anything from Ian Fleming to Kingsley Amis to praise the books and get away with it. Such critics recognised similar attitudes in the writers they admired and so assumed them to have the talent and craftsmanship of their predecessors.

It's the rambling English drunkard who made the rambling English narrative, thought Jerry, completing the U-turn and driving back towards the West Pier. And it was left to Leavis to confuse intellectual rigour with moral rigour, to mistake, in the final analysis, fiction for sociology. What's it about, then? Symbolism was a stale joke. There was no substitute for imagination. He passed the ambulance where they were carefully carrying an old lady on a stretcher. Things had come to a pretty pass when the work of Firbank was ignored in favour of his imitator Waugh whose prose, diffuse in comparison with that of his master, was thought to represent the best of English style; where critics sought to mine a social thesis from No Laughing Matter and missed the fact that, in terms of its structure and control, its range and the depth of its observation, it was one of the finest true novels in the English language, and perhaps the only one of any stature published since Thomas Mann.

If only Connolly had heeded his own warnings; if only he had convinced contemporaries like Karl Miller and Kenneth Tynan. The muse had become a fat old lady in a bathing machine, a stern Presbyterian Scottish aunt. The schools produced nothing but anachronisms. Their revolutions were not intellectual but vaguely political and therefore boring. There was nothing more old-fashioned than the speeches of the last members of the Old Guard, the student revolutionaries. The 20th Century Confusion.

6.

FEELING THAT HE was familiar enough with the attitudes of the Brighton authorities, he parked the Rolls Royce on a double yellow line and got out. He crossed to the promenade and looked down on the beach.

A column of constables, headed by a local magistrate with the honest, stupid face of an unsuccessful used-car salesman, carefully searched the litter baskets for offensive reading matter. Each was armed with a stick of rock shaped like a walking stick, and with these they poked among the soiled copies of the Daily Mail and the Sunday Telegraph, the chip bags, the old sandwiches and the lolly wrappers. Jerry lowered his sack to the ground and opened it, throwing out copies of THE CRYING GAME, I WANT IT NOW, and MUSRUM. The constables were too immersed in their search to notice the fluttering things that hit the beach like dying crows.

7.

THE SUN SET and Jerry stayed on the dodgems as he had for the past four hours. He was badly bruised on his right knee and had grazed his hand, but the dodgems on the East Pier were among the best in the country and he wanted to make the most of them. For an hour he had been pursued by a middle-aged man in an orange car. He recognised his old friend from Burma, Captain Maxwell. He had lost weight. Jerry turned his dodgem and rammed the orange car head-on. Jarred, Captain Maxwell scowled, but did not look at Jerry. He had little sense of humour, Jerry remembered.

8.

DRIVING SLOWLY ALONG the front under the lights, Jerry wondered why there should be a need for a new fiction. Were there really new ideas circulating? New subject matter? Probably. But even if there were not, it was always better to try to extend the range of fiction. Stylistic revolution always preceded the contextual revolution and that was in progress already. Though few admitted it, the revolution was as good as accomplished. This place, he thought, heading into a sidestreet, it's like some Margate of the mind.

Most of the books published in England were already dead before birth. It was disgusting, really. One would have expected a certain amount of development in the field of preventive medicine. Captain Mackenzie had suggested a contraceptive on the fountain pen as a suitable remedy. That way they could scribble all day and do no harm to anyone.

Perhaps someone had suggested it first to Mackenzie?

Dead languages were taught in the universities - the languages were formal, often very beautiful, and certainly quite complex. Learning them imposed a certain necessary discipline, perhaps. But the language was no longer relevant to the present day. One might just as well attempt to produce a narrative in classical Greek in the manner of Homer. Not a bad exercise, of course, like a lot of pastiches, but hardly vital.

All the experiments in style of the first half of the century had been attempts to freshen the approach to the old concerns. Many writers of the period had abandoned them, eventually, because they had discovered that the old techniques were better suited to the old concerns. But now elements of those styles were being used as they had never been used before. He turned the car towards Lewes.

9.

AS HE CHECKED the fuses, Jerry glanced up, afraid that the moonlight had caught his silver swastika cufflinks. He had chosen them with special care. It was best to know all the implications of an action.

He backed away from the building, making his way to his parked car. As soon as he was in the Phantom VI he touched a stud on the dashboard.

Behind him there was a roar as the books went up. He stuck an arm out of the window and waved at the crowd; then he drove back to Brighton.

10.

PLEASED WITH HIS naivete, Jerry wondered what else he could do before he left. He was so tired of debate. The facts remained. It was boring to be so explicit. It pleased nobody. He fingered the gold Star of David at his throat. How evolved everything was. It was time to be moving on.

11.

OLD MEN IN Harris Tweed sportsjackets with leather patches on the elbows wandered along the asphalt talking about jazz and science fiction, about politics and even religion.

They considered their tastes and opinions to be radical, vital. It was such a shame.

Jerry Cornelius leaned against the one remaining wall of the library. Why did the establishment of any generation always consider themselves progressive? By the time they achieved power their battles were old, whether they had been won, lost or forgotten. If the policemen were getting younger, the BBC producers were getting older.

12.

THE GESTURES OF fear. The words of self-comfort. The talk of craftsmanship by those not skilled enough to construct a simple traditional narrative. The provincial philistinism that, as an act of pseudo-rebellion, was so much easier to cultivate than an informed attitude. At least, thought Jerry, Chesterton could construct a decent enough essay. He though of Writing in England Today with its sad substitutes for the essay - of The James Bond Dossier of which the most damning thing that could be said about it was that it was not willfully bad (the only joke was Amis's reference to it as 'belles-lettres'), his particular contribution to that body of work which included a Latin translation of Winnie the Pooh. Cardigans, cardigans, cardigans. With their woolies and their brandy, the academics were not better or worse than the poor old ratbags dying in Hove and Worthing and Bognor Regis. Who were they fighting? Why were they running away? The bawling of opinions (Amis's review of LOLITA was as wearying as Nabokov's opinions of everything) had become the substitute for reasoned argument It was accepted everywhere in England as a good enough substitute. Why was Alvarez the only good English critic ?

13.

LONDON DREW CLOSER and Jerry kegan to relax. He switched on the radio. The persistent confusion of art with politics was saddening. English critics chiefly argued with the moral attitudes they believed they discovered in works of fiction and seemed unable to discuss the qualities of the fiction. They approved of books whose moral attitude, as they saw it, they shared, disapproved of those with which they couldn't agree. Faced with books that refused to be interpreted, they dismissed them. Later academics would do worse. They would provide 'keys'.

14.

IN HIS HOUSE overlooking Holland Park, Jerry watched the autumn light as it faded. If a 'new fiction' existed, its concerns were with new ways in which a narrative could be constructed and presented, as well as with thorough familiarity with subject matter still regarded with suspicion by the older members of the establishment and by its younger members as something startling and shiny with which to pep up the old forms. Only the most recent generation of writers, - chiefly American and English - were able to deal with it in a completely relaxed way, taking it for granted as they took the H-Bomb for granted, for they had grown up with it. Computers and spaceships, among other things, had been the subject matter of their childhood reading. Some contemporary fiction was now actually dealing with contemporary situations, images, events, ideas, attitudes, characters. And a little of that dealt with the subject matter in a manner that suited it. If people found the form unfamiliar, impossible to appreciate, it was perhaps because they thought the same about the stuff that the form was attempting to deal with. Most books, magazines, journals, were incapable of knowing what the modern public wished to read, and they blamed their falling sales on everything but their own judgement.

15.

THE DOCUMENTARY FICTION of the fifties, that still appeared in establishment magazines like Evergreen and so on, had been, quite evidently, the precursor of the new fiction. The documentary stuff had dealt with the subject matter but at best it was semi-fiction, dramatised reportage, excellent journalism. It had been left to a new generation to take it and apply imagination, to create a synthesis, a true form of fiction. Perhaps it would take still another generation to produce the masterpieces. But the use of the word 'generation' was too loose, Jerry thought as he opened the window to smell the smoky autumn, for a good many years separated Via, Geddes, Ballard, Mathews and the rest, and their differences of approach, of course, were quite as marked as their similarities.

16.

JERRY SWITCHED ON his new light machine and tuned it to the stereo, sat down at his IBM 2000 and began to compose a book. He had planned it for 4000 words, but now it seemed it would emerge as 4,250. He hoped that the extra length would not bore the reader. He selected a 10/11pt. imitation Times for the main text and would probably not bother to justify the right hand margin. He would run off 2,000 copies at first and see how it went. If it went well he might transfer it to a strip of 35,, for a household projector or he might put it on disc. He would have to ask his distributor.

It was strange, he thought, how even a few months ago a writer could not control every stage of his work's production, that it would involve editors, publishers, agents, contracts, compositors, printers, binders, and the rest. He could remember how he had once been prepared to operate in that system. It was hard to believe how it had been possible. Now his only concern was with the efficiency of his distributor.

Hey, how does this thing work!?

17.

HISTORICAL ANALOGIES were always suspicious, Jerry thought; yet it did seem that the reportage disguised as fiction and the fiction disguised as reportage preceded the emergence of a true fiction form. But the whole subject was beginning to tire him. There were stories to write. One only produced essays when one was not actually doing the work. That was why interviews with novelists and filmmakers were always misleading. Usually they only had time to give the interviews, or write the articles, between their creative patches. So they usually appeared jaundiced, tired, cynical. "It's all a con." Their work remained and it meant a great deal more than any amount of analysis by the person himself or his critics The work was the fact. It needed no rationale. To have a positive attitude was to have at best a limited one. Live and let live, thought Jerry. But there was a time when the bastards wouldn't give me a chance.

18.

HE WATCHED THE television before he went to bed. Its red gun was misfiring and this gave the pictures of Vietnam, Biafra, Czechoslovakia, the spaceflight and the latest heart-transplant, a distinct green caste, as if everything took place under the shade of gigantic tropical trees. He switched off.

You had to think fast, read fast, write fast these days, but never hastily. It was the only way.

Maybe it was time to leave the hothouse.

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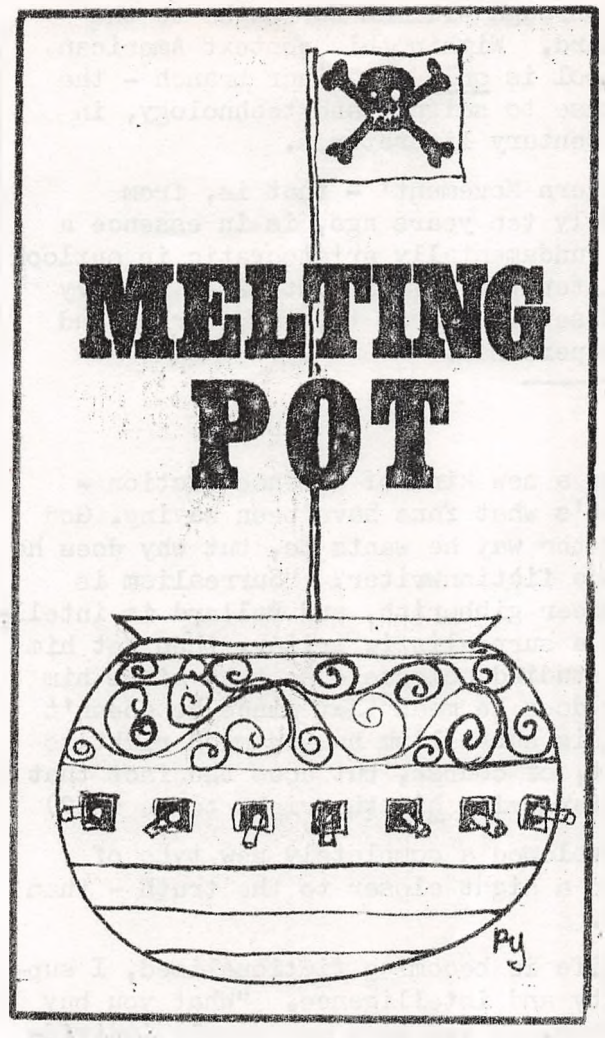
Michael Moorcock, 1968.



Charles Platt, London

Dear Pete, "...I felt that though STAND ON ZANZIBAR was impressively thorough it was also impressively dull. I always find it hard to enjoy a book whose author shows no sensitivity toward human beings and human character, and in ZANZIBAR I felt Brunner had compiled a social document which covered everything except the real emotions and thoughts of the people who would have to live in the world he represented.

I'm not saying he didn't try to do this: I suppose in his terms there is a certain amount of characterisation present. To me, though, it is all very shallow, very much like Hollywood characterisations, using figures and straightforward personality-types rather than vivid people from personal experience.

Without truly real people, I don't see h w a book like that can have any kind of validity. Also I dislike the form which was used — the various sections — and think it would have been far more effective at a quarter of the length, written in a conventional form. You can give a much more vivid impression of a society by describing people than by describing, in exhaustive detail, the society itself. Brunner has chosen the obvious, brute force method; a report that it is really a fictionalised kind of documentary. To me this shows very little imagination, very little true perception of life, very little originality and absolutely no relevance to the here /and now.

So there you are! Incidentally, I thought MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! failed in exactly the same way; all written within the conventions and style of stereotyped formula fiction, however authentic the background. As regards STAND ON ZANZIBAR, I don't like John Brunner's style, either, but this is more of a personal, subjective thing."

* One of the things which worried me - as it did Pam Bulmer elsewhere in this issue - is that the people in ZANZIBAR seemed to exist in something of a vacuum from their world. On the other hand, there are people around today who don't seem to know what exactly is happening to them! *

Riccardo Valla, Italy.

Dear Pete, "I was deeply interested by the article-interview with J.G. Ballard. In the past I have been translating two stories of his, ('You:Coma: Marilyn Monroe' and 'You & Me & the continuum') and the most impressive thing I discovered was that they make sense! At present I'm deeply engrossed by his concepts of 'reality'; he seems to be devoted to showing that the 'facts', the 'data', the 'evidence', are un-rational and that rationalisations are labels that we paste to them. From this point of view I see that there is a continuous thread between his stories, leading from 'Prima Belladonna' through THE DROWNED WORLD, 'The Terminal Beach', to his latest experimental stories.

Cont/d...

In the past I asked Mr Ballard for his opinions of science fiction, and what SF is, and he said: "A lot depends on how you regard SF. For me, it is the main literary tradition of the 20th Century, running through Wells, Aldous Huxley, Orwell, modern American SF and on through William Burroughs to the present so-called 'new wave', i.e. J.G.Ballard. Within this context American SF of the Asimov, Bester, Pohl & Clarke school is only one minor branch - the continuing element is the inquisitive response to science and technology, in which aspect SF is unique among other 20th Century literatures.

One can assume that the so-called 'modern Movement' - that is, from Baudelaire to Camus, which ended approximately ten years ago, is in essence a late 19th and early 20th Century movement, fundamentally aristocratic in outlook and certainly personal, whereas the vital literature of the late 20th Century will be non-aristocratic, certainly much closer in spirit to, say, Warhol and the media landscape - not personal but interpersonal." "

Robert Coulson, Indiana, USA

Dear Pete, "J.G. Ballard says he is writing a new kind of science fiction - without the science. Well, that's what fans have been saying. God knows I have no objection to anyone writing the way he wants to, but why does he insist on calling himself any sort of science fictionwriter? "Surrealism is also a scientific art", he says. That is sheer gibberish, and Ballard is intelligent enough to know it. If he wants to be a surrealistic writer, then let him damned well call himself one. He says he's studied science - so that gives him the right to call himself an SF writer? Or does he mean that since he doesn't consider anything else scientific fiction, his surrealism has as much right to the term as anything else ? (He has a point, of course, but does the fact that other alleged science fiction writers are liars give him the right to be one?)

I should think that stating he had developed a completely new type of writing would be more prestigious - and also a sight closer to the truth - than saying that he is improving science fiction.

As to whether or not one's personal life is becoming fictionalised, I suppose that depends on the amount of conformity and intelligence. "What you buy is the image of a particular airline.." Pete, do you know any single individual who believes that airlines have images, or that any one airline is better than another? I don't. I know a few who think that one brand of cigarettes tastes differently from others, or that George Wallace is a patriot, or that one brand of automobile is 'better' (but by better they mean looks flashier, goes faster, etc), but most of the people I know don't even hear a majority of advertisements. They have developed a selective cutout switch for them; when ads are on they turn themselves off.

(I've developed one myself; when Ballard is on, I turn myself off, since he has nothing more to say to me than a cigarette ad. has).

Is fantasy what we really want, Bob Parkinson? Damned right it is. I live real life, and I don't need some half-assed author to tell me how to do it or what it's like. Let him get off the soapbox and make something of his own private life. When I relax, I want something different. Reading books about the "struggle between Art and Reality" is like spending your vacation in the office. If you like it, fine, but don't try to tell me that I should!

M.John Harrison tells us that escapism is innately dishonest. I knew we were regressing to the 1920's in our attitudes but I hadn't realised we had reached the Puritan era yet. Nose to the grindstone, M.John. Don't let anyone relax; there is work to be done and people to be educated. Fun is subversive, life is real, life is earnest. Bite the bullet, and all that !

John Foyster, Australia.

Dear Pete, "Ballard has been so quiet when it comes to writing about his work and/or himself that it's a pleasure to be able to squeeze a few facts out of the interview in SPECULATION. Right at the end, Ballard explains the odd sort of gap which appeared in his production (to which I've been giving some thought) and this is also a bonus. Again, I've never been able to get a clear description of this 'inner space' thing out of anything I've read. Generally speaking it seems to be a vague amorphous thing people might say when they really don't know what they're talking about, but want to impress. Now Ballard himself has come to the party I feel a little more confident and see it as a vague amorphous thing Ballard said when he didn't really know what he was talking about but wanted to impress.

Nevertheless, Gaston Bachelard's THE POETICS OF SPACE (Orion Press 1964, originally 1958), a book I've been pressing upon Australian fans for some years, with a distinct lack of success, manages to describe intelligibly and intelligently what Ballard seems to be fumbling towards (particularly in the chapter 'The Dialectics of Outside and Inside') though only as part of a greater whole. Furthermore, Robbe-Grillet in his TOWARDS A NEW NOVEL (Calder, 1965) particularly in the essays 'A Path For the Future Novel' and 'Humanism and Tragedy' says carefully what Ballard only stumbles towards. In another essay (from 'Realism to Reality') Robbe-Grillet writes:

"In this new realism, therefore, there is no longer the slightest question of verisimilitude. The little detail which 'makes you think it's true' is no longer of any interest to the novelist, either on the stage of the world or in literature. The thing that strikes him - and which reappears, after several reincarnations, in what he writes - is more likely, on the contrary, to be the little detail that strikes a false note." (P. 157).

This doesn't apply to commercial fiction (such as SF) but it's worth noting that it is at this point that Ballard stumbles: he grasps the importance of the step but fails to understand its significance. As Robbe-Grillet goes to say, it is not that the detail itself is false, but that it is unexpected and momentarily inexplicable.

On the other hand, some of Ballard's suggestions are ludicrous when considered in conjunction with the fiction he has published. In particular, for example, the paragraph in which Ballard discusses his 'hostility to science' is just plain confusing. As I make it out - oh hell, I can't make this bit out, "the raw material of science is a fiction invented by the scientists. You know, they work out why people chew gum or something of this kind.. so the psychological and social sciences are spewing out an enormous amount of fiction." Assuming Ballard knows what fiction is, he seems to be saying that not only do scientists in the social sciences work from fictitious assumptions, but they also produce fictitious results - a description of typical work in the social sciences I'd go along with if 'by fictitious methods' were added !

But this is more confusing than ever; indeed on the one hand Ballard seems to be an advocate of the hard sciences (in describing inner space as a meeting ground between the inner world of the mind and the outer world of reality he is surely thinking of man's way of describing his environment) but in his fiction he defends the soft sciences - as many have shown, he tends to make an utter balls-up of hard science! OK, so we're confused. But now on the next page (P6) Ballard says some very sensible things about the nature of science (and holds up Nature as an example). So, we now have Ballard holding up Nature (a journal which publishes relatively few papers on psychology or social sciences as a class) as an example of real science; and this of course is the exact opposite of the sort of science Ballard embraces in his fiction.

I think I'm making progress in understanding Ballard, so perhaps you'll go with me a little further. Ballard now goes on to say that the trouble with the school represented by Heinlein-Asimov, etc, is that it is synthetic and therefore a part of the arts (despite the fact that Heinlein prefers Sears-Roebuck and Asimov doesn't claim, I think, to be more than a modest storyteller) and is also immature.

On the other hand Ballard, who writes about the soft sciences is a science fiction writer in a surrealist sense and also because Freud said so. At this point, thank heavens, Ballard went off on another tack just as I became completely rattled. I agree that what Heinlein and Asimov wrote wasn't completely scientific, but it doesn't seem to me to follow that what Ballard writes is scientific. Except in Ballard's sense of the word (and words), and a man speaking his own private language has a damned small audience.

As I said, however, I have gotten something out of the interview - I needn't worry too much about Ballard's advertisements, since he's of the opinion that people have to think about them; my own view is that the words are anti-pathetic. I'm pleased to learn that he's uninfluenced by Burroughs, as I pointed out in ASFR 8* (March 1967 - suggesting that only a cretin could have that opinion; Mike Moorcock then produced a cretin (Kingsley Amis) in ASFR 9). Science fiction is filled with people who can't read and/or discriminate, and the New Wave has more than its share!"

* I think that where you go wrong, John, both in your letter and in your own magazine Exploding Madonna where you attack Budrys (I had better comment on this since you have threatened me with physical violence if I don't!) is that you try and read a person's words to get one consistent point of view out of them. I submit that it is impossible to do this when dealing with two pieces of work written more than five minutes apart in time, and that in fact most people change their attitudes in the process of writing, so that they often end with a different viewpoint than when they began. I know this happens with my own work, and in fact I use writing as a means of shaping and refining my thoughts into a coherent statement that expresses my views as closely as I can at the time. Obviously I then rewrite my introduction to a piece - but I suspect many others don't. Add to that the fact that Ballard and some other 'new wave' writers tend to deliberately confuse matters with fine-sounding phrases, and no wonder you are confused! And now I've changed my viewpoint! *

Pamela Bulmer, Kent

Dear Pete, "I must add a few words about the Ballard interview. Bob Parkinson's letter in SPECULATION-22 was most interesting and threw some light on what Ballard was saying, but the remarks I really want to comment on are about fans: '...(fans) are a great handicap to science fiction and always have been'.

May I remind Mr Ballard that if it were not for this great handicap there would have been no New Worlds for him to be published in? These same fans he is so contemptuous of were amongst the dedicated few who got up off their backsides, put their hands in their pockets and saved New Worlds in, I think, 1947. And in those days there was no Arts Council, and they were certainly not members of an affluent society. I know, my brother was one of them.

At the same time I can well understand his reaction to the 1957 Convention If Mr Ballard has any knowledge of the workings of 'groups' it might help him to understand the situation. 1957 was not typical of conventions, and I am surprised that a man of his calibre should jump to such wild generalities on such a brief acquaintance. The 1957 Con was a traumatic experience for a number of

people, due to several factors. Many of the generation active in fandom at that time were deprived educationally in a way which has not happened to the same extent since, and in a way in which Mr Ballard was not himself. I am not suggesting that Mr Ballard did not suffer himself, the point is that before the war those at Grammar school came mostly from a more middle-class background. That generation was the first to have so many from working-class backgrounds. Muddle and ignorance stopped many of them from going on to University. Today, things are better organised and the level of education is generally higher. Today's fans are not necessarily more intelligent, they are more articulate, self-confident and aware.

Those at the time in 1957 had received a pretty good education (the first to benefit from the 1944 Act) and were then dropped. The older generation were just too damned relieved to find themselves alive and the War over! After school these youngsters got no career-guidance and were virtually ignored. (The word 'teenager' as used now did not exist, you were either a schoolchild or adult).

The result was that through sheer lack of information many well-educated youngsters found themselves completely disorientated when they left school. There was simply no means of developing their awakening intellect, if they came from a working-class background, until they chanced upon science fiction. Since Mr Ballard went to University he will find this hard to comprehend, but meeting science fiction readers was to many of us a very poor second-best to university - how poor we only found out in retrospect. By 1957 disillusion had set in, and if he wonders why there seemed so little interest in SF it was precisely because we had found it disappointing and not worth discussing.

Another factor which existed then and does not today was the feeling of belonging to a 'different' group. The fact that one read SF could lead to considerable ridicule among one's family, friends, and business colleagues. The reaction against this was to make fans over-defensive tending to esoteric in-groups, and most serious of all, inhibiting any serious criticism of the interest which held them together. That object which fed their interest was felt to be so precariously balanced that it seemed almost treasonable to criticise it. The availability of other people who were on the same 'wavelength' was and still is a vital factor in the formation of fan-groups.

What complicated things in 1957 was that the group was in the process of breaking-up, due to personal circumstances which were interacting back onto the group. I think it is fair to say that the group as a whole was 'neurotic' and subsequent events proved virtually traumatic to a number of people. Ken and I dropped right out of fandom as a result and had to re-orient ourselves before taking up contact again. I am not defending the 1957 convention - I think in many ways it was a disaster - but without going into much detail I am trying to explain it. As a writer I should have thought Mr Ballard could exercise a little more compassion in his assessment of a situation he could have scarcely /understood.

The existence of SPECULATION, and other serious-type fanzines is a very healthy sign. I am sure that in time it will influence the quality of professional reviewing, and - dare I say it - may lead to a more objective evaluation of the work of people like Ballard himself, who tend to be worshipped/condemned simply because their work is new, or is thought to be."

* You shed new light on British fandom, Pam, facts I have not previously heard mentioned and which may still relate to today's situation. I can certainly appreciate what you mean by 'disorientation' upon school-leaving, because this is still a problem today, to a degree. I know because looking back, I think I suffered from a similar problem and so did several others I know.*

Larry Niven, California.

Dear Mr Weston, "Rick Norwood's review of NEUTRON STAR in SPECULATION-19 cries out for comment. 1) His compliments are most flattering, because they are exactly what I wanted to hear. 2) He missed the point of 'Grendel'. It's that kind of a point - if he'd seen it, he'd have mentioned it, to prove he didn't miss it. 'Grendel' is a rewrite of the Beowulf legend, slightly altered. This explains the role of coincidence in the story. I had to stretch probability to the breaking point to get things to fit. If that harmed the story, I alone am to blame. Nobody forced me to rewrite the Beowulf legend, I did it because I thought it was funny.

It may amuse you to trace the parallels. Notice a) Lloobee's description b) the death of Bellamy's spacecraft (not of Bellamy), c) the Freudian symbolism of the death of Grendel's Mother, matched against Shaeffer's treatment of Margo Tellefsen. To date, not one professional critic has mentioned the parallel. I thought everyone had read BEOWULF. Maybe 'Grendel' is a failure.

3) I conceived Beowulf Shaeffer as a kind of perpetual tourist. The first 15 pages in 'Flatlander' were written before I had more than the haziest of plots, then were rewritten after the plot firmed-up. In those first fifteen pages Shaeffer was playing his proper role, showing you around 'known space'. I did it for fun; mine, the reader's, and Shaeffer's. He had to get his kicks in. I can't live with a permanently unhappy first-person character. And did anyone notice Fatman's arch-enemy The Joker, making his cameo appearance ?

4) "Niven seems embarrassed at the idea that his characters should be outstandingly moral or heroic, but he appears too squeamish to make them really immoral or cowardly." What can I say? I plead guilty. My characters are extensions of myself; and Rick has described me, Larry Niven. My villainous impulses are in firm control. The opportunity to be heroic has not yet come to me, and I do not intend to go looking for it. While others storm the barricades, I write. I do not intend to get shot, nor yet hit with a nightstick. (Incidentally, anyone stupid enough to throw human excretement at an armed man deserves anything he gets. So does the guy next to him, if his judgement is bad enough to put him there.)

So I'm no villain and no hero. That doesn't stop other authors from writing of heroes and villains, why me? Because I lack empathy. A Delany I'm not. Perhaps empathy can be developed; I seem to have more of it than I used to. Or I could fake it - but that usually seems to produce cardboard cut-outs.

I love problem-solving and I love puzzle-stories, and I love ingenuity. These are what make me write. What emotion enters my stories generally comes after I have the plot. Therefore the emotion in my stories will usually be restricted to the story itself. Watch this space, however. I like to think I'm /versatile!

The writer who intended to use me as a bad example of how to write a story was Alexei Panshin. More specifically, he intended to take my novel WORLD OF PTAVVS apart to demonstrate how not to write a science fiction story. My opinion of Panshin's critical talent may be coloured by this, or by his review of WORLD OF PTAVVS, which did appear in a fanzine. That opinion follows, as it relates to Tiedman's review of HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION (SPECULATION-19).

Panshin has the damnedest talent for missing the point. Worse yet, he comes so close! Criticising the characterisation in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, he says something like 'The computer, Mike, was more the central character than Manny, the first-person character'. But Mike was the main character. Panshin also analyses 'All You Zombies' for its deep psychological significance, but never sees that the story was meant to be funny! (Cont/d)...

Panshin's book is like that all the way through, excellent research leading to incredible conclusions. Panshin did his homework, but got all the wrong answers. A case in point. Panshin can't tell characters apart. In most reviews he says so. 'Bad characterisation. I couldn't tell the characters apart.' But it bothers him that he can't tell Heinlein's characters apart. Heinlein is a good writer, or so Panshin has been told. So he works out a theory to explain it. It seems, that all of Heinlein's characters are the same person, seen at different ages....."

* Leading to the conclusion that Heinlein is not a good writer so far as characterisation is concerned ? Better watch yourself, Larry, I have just ended a 1500-word review of NEUTRON STAR in which I compare your own writing to that of Heinlein. To paraphrase, you both have similar styles, a comparable respect for science, imagination, and both produced several novels and a flood of stories within a 'Future History' during your first 3 years writing. Oh, it's a good review; right now I'm looking forward to your new novel RINGWORLD, and I see you have a final comment; "I'm planning to drop the 'known space' series after RINGWORLD and write some stories in a history based on the assumption that faster-than-light travel is impossible." *

Piers Anthony, Florida.

Dear Pete, "I am always interested to read someone else's comments on a book I have reviewed myself, as with DANGEROUS VISIONS. Opinions on individual stories vary with the reader, of course. I found the Bulmer's thoughts sensible. Like them, I wonder which stories and novels will survive the test of time, and of course I am frustrated that my own lesser efforts tend to be rated above my serious ones, contemporarily. Sometimes I look into old (1940's) issues of ASF to see where stories now considered 'classic' rated with the readers of the time - and it seems that classics are not immediately recognised. So will DANGEROUS VISIONS stand the test of time? Not by its content, I suspect; but as an effort to break the taboos, even if it didn't really succeed, it will be remembered. And of course it isn't finished; there is to be a companion volume and I know that it has at least one shocker.

I anticipate one other problem, looking back from a ten-year vantage. There will be so many excellent books that no one or two or three will stand out. It is my impression, that right now, 1968-9-70, better SF novels are being published than ever before. Whoever heard of Ursula LeGuin, for example, - but who can read THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS and not recognise a master (or mistress) of the genre? And there are a number of others in its class, these days."Curious that Chris Priest can say that the standard of creativity in the field is getting lower and that a new kind of writer is needed. I doubt that he would recognise either if he saw them, for both are present particularly today. Obscured by much garbage, granted, but present."

Greg Benford, California.

Dear Peter, "A few brief comments; THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula LeGuin is a classic. It paints one of the most detailed and original backgrounds ever seen in science fiction, populates it with memorable characters, and follows them through a quite believable plot. The prose is occasionally (and originally) Shakespearean. I doubt whether any writer will ever be able to deal with a planet such as Winter and find new material to use; with this novel Ursula K LeGuin becomes a major SF novellist. She is surely one of our best and most balanced writers. It is becoming apparent that much of the best writing of this current Golden Age is being published by Ace Books. Their normal run is

(Cont/d)...

improving, and the Ace Specials seem to be gaining momentum. Zelazny's ISLE OF THE DEAD is probably the best he's done since THIS IMMORTAL. One wonders just when he is going to run out of variations on mythologies and godhood, but apparently the ideas have much force for him still."

* Having just finished THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS I'm a little at a loss to judge it; I enjoyed the book and think it is an important one - and yet it didn't really grip me. I think I would like to see a few critiques about it, which will help me to form my own opinion. I have asked Brian Stableford to review it for SPEC - his biology training should be helpful. Similar comments apply to NOVA, although I am more certain that I enjoyed it, and Pamela Bulmer should be writing about this next time. I have not received ISLE OF THE DEAD for some reason, but am hoping that Terry Carr will send it through. *

Phil Harbottle, Northumbs.

Dear Pete, "Years ago I resolved to try not to get involved in fannish feuds of one sort or another - and especially if they were deliberately engendered by a fanzine editor for the sake of a lively lettercolumn. Usually, somehow or other, Charles Platt is involved in this - which is something I find hard to understand. On the occasions when I've met and talked to, or corresponded with Charles, I've found him friendly, affable, and quite reasonable. Maybe he has a split personality. I've wondered about it, and I'd like to know. In the present instance you, as editor, claim Charles Platt wrote his April letter at your invitation. You also say that he is something between a hypocrite, a liar, or having a joke. But is he? Did he not write that letter off his own bat because he really believes Fearn to have been an unfairly maligned author. And did you not stick on your silly and sarcastic footnote afterwards? I'd like to see the truth printed in SPECULATION, in answer to this question; Did Platt write the letter of his own accord in all sincerity, or did he write a hypocritical letter at your especial invitation to stir up controversy? Which was it Pete? Dare you tell us?"

* Look again Phil, I did not quite say that I invited Charles to write his note last time, only that I had invited him back from retirement, which is indeed partly true. That Charles is usually involved in feuds I have no answer for, save to very seriously wonder about your 'split personality' conjecture. As far as Charles Platt's comments on Fearn were concerned (sorry to bore the rest of you, people, but I consider it important to establish my position on all this) they were spontaneous and unprompted. I added my footnote - call it flippant if you like, but hardly silly and sarcastic- because I found, and find, Charles' attitude to be incredible! Whether he is hypocrite/liar/joker I do not know and can only wonder. I cannot take his comments on Fearn very seriously, I am afraid, as I have written to tell him several times! Incidentally, Phil, you might like to know that I always attempt to 'tell the truth' in SPECULATION, no matter what it may cost me. There is no question of 'daring' to do anything! On to the next letter.... *

David Pringle,, Sutton Coldfield.

Dear Pete, "I too knew about the mention of SPECULATION in YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS. I kept forgetting to mention it to you. If I remember correctly Armytage classed it with SF Horizons as the only serious magazine of SF criticism in Britain. I think he also referred to the individual articles you've published, by Richard Gordon and others, and in discussing Ballard he uses your wretched quote from Budrys! About Ballard - Michael Kenward says that he can't write when he tries anything outside SF. As a stauch Ballard supporter I acknowledge

this to be true!! Ballard does his own thing, and that happens to be fiction which arises from science. It is either about science, or about what science has done to man and man's environment. As we from from the interview, his fiction sometimes has some claim to being a scientific activity in itself, insofar as it 'explores' and 'analyses'. His stories are full of connections, parallels, composite images and collage-effects; he is constantly trying to make a synthesis out of factors in the modern world. He tries to link subjects as disparate as the geometry of architecture, the events in Vietnam and the quasars on the distant horizons of space (and they call him limited!) If the interview proved anything it showed that Ballard is very interested in science as a subject. I would contend that his fiction is always concerned with science; he is a science fiction writer through and through, and any contentions that he is trying to 'drop' SF are just so much rubbish.

He may be trying to drop cheap SF associations (the fact that he is still written about in magazines where he is mentioned in the same breath as Vargo Statten)! I think that people like Aldiss and Disch, who are, on the whole, 'finer' writers, are much more likely to drift out of the SF field than Ballard.

About New Worlds - Dan Morgan writes that he finds most of the magazine "either completely opaque and chaotic or so obvious and puerile that it defies belief"! I am puzzled by the fact that he reads NW regularly yet is incapable of recognising the good stuff they have published. In the past two years or so they have serialised two outstanding novels, 'Camp Concentration' and 'Bug Jack Barron', and published a number of excellent short stories by Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, Sladek and Langdon Jones. There has also been the occasional first-class story from new or strange authors - Pamela Zoline, Brian Vickers, Thomas Pynchon. I would concede that there has been much that has been opaque and chaotic, and maybe even puerile (Harlan Ellison's effort in the April issue deserves that last epithet!) But still - surely rhe list of successes is sufficiently long to justify the magazine?

Also, I disagree that it has all been done by 'dadaists, futurists, surrealists and others, several decades ago, and done better'. Ballard's stories about the 'fictional' environment of the 1960's, Sladek's stories about computers and computer people, Aldiss' stories about the effects of psychedelic drugs, Disch's and Spinrad's science-fiction versions of old myths and dreams, could not conceivably have been written in the 1920's. Maybe some of the lesser material smacks of old-fashioned avant-garde, but then the lesser material in New Worlds is of no importance.

By the way, do you know the derivation of the title of Fritz Leiber's novel? The first sentence of the Communist Manifesto - "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism". I wonder if Leiber does believe in the bad, bad, Upper Classes and the exploited workers ? "

* About the way in which science - or rather, technology - has changed man's environment; Today I visited the Birmingham 'Bull Ring' indoor shopping centre, for the first time in years. I was fascinated by the futuristic air all around, a combination of old style open-air market/restaurant/pleasure garden, all indoors under one roof, piped music and plate glass, streams of traffic rushing underneath the walkways, escalators and neon signs, parrots and animals on display, all very cosmopolitan. I think back to the old city I remember and the change is simply fantastic - and yet many of the people are the same who used to climb the cobbles of the former Bull Ring! As far as New Worlds is concerned, I gather I have been censured in Vector for saying last time that I thought it had ceased publication. My apologies - but I have the same story to report this time, if my information can be trusted. *

Bruce Gillespie, Australia

Dear Pete, "Ballard's claims for his own work (cf "the Heinlein-Asimov-Clarke type of attitude" - page 4, SPECULATION-21) are difficult to support. No doubt he did do all those things, and I'll have to accept some of his attitudes unless I do some of the same research myself. Unfortunately Ballard does not face (because of Storm's questioning does not have to face) the cold fact that most of his symbolic stuff is badly written. The sentences in THE DROUGHT lie like stranded flathead panting on those dry sands. Each sentence has the same gently wafting rhythm, and after a book of those, one is either gently wafting as well or sound asleep! I don't like to be nasty (since Ballard won't be reading this, it doesn't matter anyway) but one could call his 'modern realities' Macluhanesque cliches. At any rate Ballard does not extract much light from his landscapes. One presumes that Liz and Marilyn are made of reinforced concrete, and Ballard really likes green grass. In other words, he does a lot of long-distance motoring around his art exhibits but he does precious little analysis or real thinking about his own creations. There is little sign of the active mind of the artist-conjuror in most of the latest work.

Ballard's contribution to SF as a field (and how much more we could say this for a half-dozen other writers) is to clear the field of old forms. The formal 'story' can be very restricting, the knick-knacks of uncomprehended technology did become very boring. But if you clear away the knick-knacks what do you do with the remaining unfamiliar pattern? Surely not erect new, rigid cliches One can only be glad that Moorcock interested Aldiss in the New Thing - at least we have the Simon Charteris stories to persuade us that it was all worthwhile."

* I didn't intend to fill MELTING POT with letters about Ballard, but the interview in SPEC-21 seems to have had a delayed-action response and I don't want to delay it any longer. I liked your letter, Bruce, especially the bits I had to cut out for lack of space. Glad to hear from you, and I hope you will be contributing something to SPEC any day now!? Not that I need any more competition, but I might mention that Bruce is editing a new Australian magazine titled SF COMMENTARY, the first issue of which is pretty good. Readers may like to ask for a copy: try and send cash or stamps; try 5/- for a few issues. The address is: P.O. Box 30, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Australia 3340. *

* Although there are many letters I wanted to use, I had better end MELTING POT on this page. Working through the letters I intended to publish first, (and which I will try to feature next time) I heard from Patrick McGuire, Jim Linwood (both on Orwell, oddly enough), Bob Parkinson (to George Hay), Creath Thorne (who produces a fine personal-magazine, 'Ennui'); Jerry Kaufman (on Franz Rottensteiner's attack on Gordon R Dickson); Joe Patrizio (on Ballard - and then a second letter on other things); Brian Cox of London who made some very intelligent criticisms of SPECULATION; Bill Linden (on Franz Rottensteiner); Dave Ward (on John Russell Fearn); and another fine letter from David Pringle. That's enough for another ten pages in itself!

* In the also-heard-froms I must mention the following;- Dan Morgan, Al Snider (who promised to send an article on the 'Second Foundation' in the USA but hasn't as yet sent it); Brian Stableford, David C Piper, Leo P. Kelley, Vaughn Bode; Tony Wilson; M.B.Caines: David Redd; Bryan Bird: Joanne Burger; Rick Sneary (I will be answering you shortly, I hope, Rick); Robert A.W. Lowndes; Keith Laumer; Jack Marsh; Dav Garnett; Robert Silverberg; Leroy Kettle: Frank Wyers; Gabe Eisenstein; R. Barycz; Patrick Strang; Daniel F. Galouye; Ramon Wahlin; Ian Williams; Andrew Phillips: John Foyster (again); Waldemar Kumming; George Hay; Donald Wollheim; David M Massaro; Burt Randolph (fine letter Burt, I will answer it!); Brian Aldiss; J. Diviney; Piers Anthony: Roger Waddington; Geraldo Sobral (Brazil) and one or two others. Do keep on writing. *

SPECULATION BOOK GUIDE

THE PAST quarter has seen so many books published that it is not possible to do more than list new titles in this issue of the Guide. Most of these titles can be obtained from their publishers, whose addresses are given below. A suitable sum should normally be enclosed for return postage (1/- per hard-cover,for instance).

GOLLANCZ

AN AFFAIR WITH GENIUS, by Joseph Green (25s); 100 YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Damon Knight, (30s):
THE TWO-TIMERS, Bob Shaw (25s):

RAPP & WHITING

2ND IF READER OF SF. ed Pohl (25s):
DRAGONFLIGHT, by Anne McCaffrey (30s):
SCIENCE FICTION ODDITIES, ed Groff Conklin, (21s):

DOBSON

THE WITCHCRAFT READER, edited by Peter Haining (25s):
ANALOG 6, edited by John W Campbell (30s):
NEW WRITINGS IN SF-15, ed. John Carnell
THE WEATHERMAKERS,Ben Bova (25s): (18s)

MACDONALD

THE RING, by Piers Anthony & Robert E. Margroff, (25s):
THE FLESHPOTS OF SANSATO by William F. Temple (21s):
FAREWELL, FANTASTIC VENUS ed. Aldiss & Harrison (30s):
BINARY DIVINE, by Jon Hartridge, (21s):
WORLD OF PTAVVS, by Larry Niven (21s):
TOO MANY MAGICIANS, Randall Garrett (25s)
THUNDER OF STARS by Dan Morgan and John Kippax (21s):

FABER

BLAST-OFF, ed Harry Harrison (21s):
TERMUSH by Sven Holm (21s)

SIDGWICK & JACKSON

ESCAPE INTO SPACE, E.C.Tubb (24s)
TARNSMAN OF GOR, by John Norman (21s):
THE LISTENERS, by Murray Leinster (21s):

BALLANTINE (PB)

DESTINY AND THE DOLPHINS, by Roy Meyers (75c): STARMIND by Dave Van Arnam (75c): DECISION AT DOONA by Anne McCaffrey (75c): DEADLY IMAGE by Edmund Cooper (75c): THE SKY IS FILLED WITH SHIPS by Richard Meredith (75c): DIMENSION 13, Silverberg. THE MEZENTIAN GATE, E.R. Eddison (95c): THE KING OF ELFLANDS DAUGHTER,Lord Dunsany

ACE

SCIENCE, NUMBERS AND I by Isaac Asimov (75c): THE PRISONER by Thomas M Disch (60c) THE BRASS DRAGON by Marion Zimmer Bradley/IPOMOEA by John Rackham (60c): THE ZERO STONE by Andre Norton (60c): WORLDS BEST SF 1969, ed Carr & Wollheim (95c): THE PRESERVING MACHINE, by Philip K Dick (95c): TOYMAN,Tubb/FEAR THAT MAN, Koontz(60c)

Gollancz- 14 Henrietta St, London WC2. Rapp & Whiting, 76 New Oxford St,London WC1.
Dobson - 80 Kensington Church St, London W.8. MacDonald, 49/50 Poland St, W1.
Faber - 24 Russell Square, London WC1. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1 Tavistock Chambers, Bloomsbury Way, London WC1. Ballantine, 101 5th Ave, N.Y. N.Y, 10003, USA.
Ace - 1120 Avenue of the Americas, N.Y., N.Y.10036, USA.

AS I WANTED to say, before being crowded out of my usual editorial space, in the last three months it has become more and more difficult to try to keep my finger on the pulse of science fiction, which is one of my main aims. For one thing this has probably been the most exciting period of my life so far.

From the TV-coverage of the moon-landing (and as I write I have just seen the sensational colour pictures in The Times), to the news from Mars, I am seeing all my dreams of space-travel come true. Back on Earth, I have finally moved into my new house, with all the effort and work this involves, and have at the same time been struggling to keep abreast of correspondence, new books and fanzines, and to produce this new SPECULATION. On top of all this, those of you who have already read Chris Priest's column will see that I have started to write reviews for Books and Bookmen.

A word about the last; On the morning I got married I received, out of the blue, a parcel of 6 books and an invitation to submit 1000 words within 10 days. Normally I might have attempted it - but one of those books was STAND ON ZANZIBAR at 500 pages, and I was going on honeymoon for a week! I wrote back and said, "impossible" - and then did it in 15 days. Afterwards there was a long silence from the magazine, until my piece appeared, almost uncut, in June. Since then I have written an article for them on Robert Heinlein's 30th anniversary of first publication, which at least has not been rejected as yet, and you can join with me in waiting to see whether it will actually appear in B&B at some time !

I feel that the time has never been better for SPECULATION to really go somewhere, to gain support from altogether new quarters besides science fiction's own fandom. For instance, I recently had an encouraging letter from the Midlands Association for the Arts, after approaching them previously for some sort of a grant. Their secretary said, "..in the opinion of my committee members SPECULATION is a serious and scholarly publication,...and the committee are of the opinion that the magazine is of considerable value to those interested in science fiction. It was also pointed out that your approach to books criticised was extremely sensible and constructive." Needless to say, this sort of comment is very welcome !

With the new house (and please note the changed address) came the usual problems of decorating, household work, and the inevitable mortgage. However we are fortunate in having found a secluded spot within the city, alongside the main Birmingham-Worcester canal, with the novelty of frequent waterway traffic. I must admit, too, that it is very pleasant to have one's own roof overhead, and this may have solved the worst of my production problems with SPECULATION. I am currently haunting the local auction sales for a desk and a duplicator; meantime, having persuaded the Quinton Young Conservatives that they needed a Gestetner, I have been using the machine at home to produce this issue with the assistance of the American fan John D. Berry who is with us for a day or two.

My biggest regret is that I have not had time to answer so many of the kind people who have written to me, and with whom, under other circumstances, I would like to strike up a correspondence. I hope you will all understand the problems I face!

At the back of an issue, it seems odd to say this, but I hope you will enjoy SPECULATION, and I look forward to hearing from you. I desperately need cover artwork, next issue will see the special Heinlein feature, unfortunately late, but which I think you'll find interesting.....

Peter Weston, 9th August 1969.