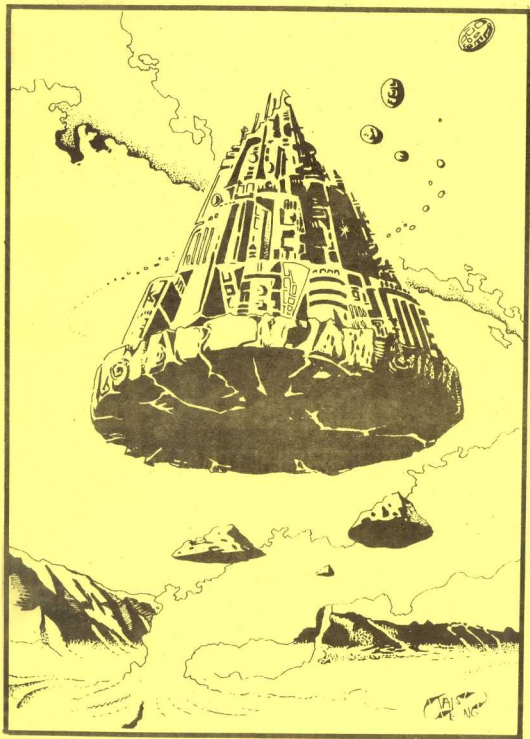


VECTOR

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The Critical Journal Of The BSFA

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VALEDICTION

Paul Kincaid

Looking back, I was astounded to discover that it was with Vector 102, in June 1981 that I became Features Editor. Has it really been so long! Two years, 13 issues of the magazine - the experience has aged me. There have been good times. I was delighted to be able to pry two articles out of Josephine Sexton, the interview with Keith Roberts gave me great satisfaction, and there were a number of other features over the years that have pleased me. There have been disappointments also. Endless lists of people who never responded to my letters, hours spent working on an article, going over it time and again, only to realise at the end that it was still not good enough to use. I started off with great intentions of drawing into the fold new writers, of really lifting Vector to the heights I believe it should occupy, one of the leading critical and concerned journals in science fiction. It never happened.

One or two new names might be tempted onto the contents list, but the overwhelming response I met was apathy. One of the first things I did as Features Editor was to write to all the Vector reviewers who had impressed me, as well as to all the fannish writers I knew to be capable of turning in an intelligent piece of work. Only one person replied with a very good and interesting article. Most of the others did not even acknowledge my letter.

There have been, in the pages of Vector, regular appeals by the editor for you, the members, to write an article and send it to us. The response, to say the least, has not been encouraging. Oh, there has been the occasional and totally unexpected treasure dropping through my letter box. But they have been rare. I worked hard on many of the articles received in order to turn them into something we could use, but at least the writer had tried, and did get into print. Many I had to reject, though a few did try again with something new, I'm happy to say. In the main, though, you don't show much persistence. In a number of cases I sent an article back to its author not because I was rejecting it, but because I felt it needed just a little more work - a clearer statement of the main argument, perhaps, or cutting out something that wasn't really relevant, or answering a counter argument that had been raised but not dealt with. In no case did I ever receive a revised article, though I always made it clear that if these small revisions had been made I would have been only too pleased to include the article in Vector.

Twice before I have used the opportunity of a Guest Editorial in Vector to decry the current state of science fiction. To judge from the response, many of you share my feeling that there is something wrong in the world of SF these days. In those Guest Editorials I have directed my attack against the publishers, the current vogue for SF in the movies, the buyers for W.H. Smith and Bookwise, the authors, in other words virtually the whole of the SF establishment (and I don't exclude the critics). And they all do share part of the blame. However, it is now time to name the major culprits responsible for the sorry state of SF.

You!

If you read, indiscriminately, any junk in an SF sleeve that is shoved in front of your nose, then the writers will write it, the publishers will publish it, the shops will sell it. If you are not prepared to turn your back on the trash, then you will keep getting trash. If you are not prepared to take a stand, to announce what is good in science fiction and should be encouraged, to decry publicly what is bad and should be discouraged, then the bad will always win out.

Vector is your chance to make your voice heard. It is your soapbox, your

Speaker's Corner. With the backing of the BSFA, it could and should be a major influence in the world of science fiction. But it won't be unless you are prepared to use it. Vector is your voice, let it sing out loud and clear, let the world know what we have to say. Use Vector, write for it, let the authors and the publishers and the booksellers know what it is you want to read, let them know what it is you are no longer prepared to tolerate. Perhaps it won't have an overwhelming influence, but it is better than no influence at all. Remember, you get the SF you deserve. If you want better, you have to work for it.

EDITORIAL

Paul Kincaid.....3

As I'm sure all of you are aware this is the last issue that Paul is officially Features Editor of Vector. He has been in post for the last two years and has had to put up with quite a few changes in Editorial policy! I believe that I can speak for all the Vector Editors he has worked with and say that his help, advice and inspiration have been invaluable, and he will be missed. Not that he is going that far as I hope he will continue to write for the magazine and, of course, Paul and I are still editing the BSFA Bibliographies (more about them in a minute).

Paul's successor will be announced next issue, so for the time being Paul will pass on all correspondence to me.

Now the BSFA Bibliographies. What, Bibliographies you ask? I will have to admit that they have not come out with the frequency that we would wish. Since the first one there has been a rather loud silence...But now for the good news, the Keith Roberts bibliography is currently at the BSFA printing press and will be available for purchase next issue. Following that the Mike Moorcock Bibliography, should be

ready by Christmas. I can but apologise for the delay, but promise you that the wait will have been worthwhile...

WE ARE JUST STATISTICS

Nik Morton.....7

I find it intriguing, knowing that Nik works for the Royal Navy, that the first Vector article he does is about rigidly controlled societies as depicted in five science fiction books. The books used as a base for this article are WE by Zamyatin, Anthem by Rand, Level 7 by Roshwald, The Prisoner by Disch and THX1138 by Bova. Nik is editor of Auguries, a fiction magazine available from him (235 West St, Fareham, Hants) for £0.92. By the way, the artwork with this article is also by Nik.

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Letters of comment; Williams Bains on theology; Speculative Fiction and David Barrett; Nik Morton agreeing with Sue; Andy Sawyer, Terry Broome, Philip Collins, Mark Perry and Dorothy Davies.

Next issue I will be publishing a short article, by Ann Morris, which is an extension of David Pringle's in Vector 114. For this reason I have kept back a number of letters which concerned themselves in the main with his article. I will, however, be publishing them in issue 116.

"WITH ONE BOUND, JACK WAS FREE"

Andy Sawyer.....21

This is the first article of Andy's that I've published, although it is not his first for Vector. It concerns two books that have been awaited by the readership with a mixture of fascination and dread; those books being Foundation's Edge by Asimov and 2010 by Clarke. The article not only looks at the two books in question but also makes some comments on the pitfalls of writing sequels many years after the original.



With the willing co-operation of The Book Marketing Council, Vector is pleased to announce a competition which links the SF promotion and Vector; The Critical Journal of the BSFA.

To enter the competition you must submit a short article (1000-3000 words) on one or more of the books featured in the BMC SF promotion. The judges will be evaluating all the factors that make an excellent article but they will place particular emphasis on originality. The articles will be judged by the Chairman of the BSFA and the Vector Editorial Team and the best three will be published in Vector. The prizes are as following;

- 1st Prize EIGHT books from the SF promotion and a copy of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction edited by Peter Nicholls.
- 2nd Prize SEVEN books from the SF promotion and a copy of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction edited by Peter Nicholls.
- 3rd Prize FIVE books from the SF promotion and a copy of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction edited by Peter Nicholls.

RULES 1) The article should discuss an aspect/aspects of one or more of the books featured in the BMC SF promotion. Reference, however, may be made to books outside the promotion. 2) The competition is open to all BSFA members. 3) Council and Committee members of the BSFA are not eligible to enter. 4) There is no limit to the number of articles which may be submitted 5) The article can either be typed, or written legibly on lined paper. 6) The deadline for the competition is December 1st 1983. 7) All entries should be sent to VECTOR Magazine, SF Competition, 6 Rutland Gardens, Birchington, Kent. CT17 9SN. 8) The judges' decision will be final.

N.B. If you would like your article returned and/or would like acknowledgment that it arrived safely, please enclose SAE(s).

The books featured in the BMC SF promotion are as follows; HELICONIA SPRING - Brian Aldiss/THE ISAAC ASIMOV FOUNDATION TRILOGY - Isaac Asimov/THE DROWNED WORLD - JG Ballard/ TIMESCAPE - Gregory Benford/ NO ENEMY BUT TIME - Michael Bishop/DOWNBELOW STATION - CJ Cherryh/ 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY & 2010; ODYSSEY TWO - Arthur C Clarke/ WHITE GOLD WIELDER - Stephen Donaldson/ THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT FOR PRESIDENT - Harry Harrison/ DUNE - F. Herbert/ BRAVE NEW WORLD - Aldous Huxley/ THE CRYSTAL SINGER - Anne McCaffrey/ THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME - Michael Moorcock/ THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE - Niven & Pournelle/ NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR - Orwell/ MAJIPOOR CHRONICLES - Silverberg/ THE WAR OF THE WORLDS - HG Wells/ THE CITADEL OF THE AUTARCH - G Wolfe/ THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS - John Wyndham.

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I've always wanted to know what it was like to write for television. In his article Steve opens the lid and lets us look at his experiences writing for Doctor Who.

Cy Chauvin, Brian Stableford, Mary Gentle, Nik Morton, and Judith Hanna on books by Panshin, Wright, Le Guin, Tevis and Slusser, Rabkin & Scholes, Manlove and Apter.



We Are Just Statistics

By

Nik Morton

"WE ARE JUST STATISTICS, BORN TO CONSUME RESOURCES." - HORACE

A theme that recurs frequently in science fiction is a rigidly controlled society in which the people are reduced to numbers. In this article I want to look at five books that use this theme, and to consider the similarities between them, particularly when they deal with trust and betrayal, reality and dream, freedom, love and ego. The five books are:

WE by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1920) - Penguin
ANTHEM by Ayn Rand (1937, revised 1949) - Signet
LEVEL 7 by Mordecai Roshwald (1959) - Allison & Busby
THE PRISONER by Thomas M Disch (1969) - NEL
THX1138 by Ben Bova (1971) - Granada

WE is the richest in prose and poetic imagery, though Disch comes close with elegant metaphors and style and surreal images. Zamyatin was influenced by H.G. Wells, notably *The Sleeper Awakes*, which Wells claimed to be based on "the idea of the growth of the towns and the degradation of labour through the higher organisation of industrial production." Later, Wells discounted this nightmare ever happening: "Much evil may be in store for mankind, but to this immense, grim organisation of servitude, our race will never come." (Though a microcosm of the idea might be observed in the Asian micro-chip factories...) *Level 7* is a damning indictment against nuclear weapons, posing questions that are now being vociferously taken up in the mushrooming nuclear debate; *Anthem* is a powerful criticism against collectivism, the pursuit of social levelling. Both the *Prisoner* and *THX1138* are based upon other mediums: *The Prisoner* by Thomas Disch transcends its origin; while *THX1138*, a well received film, as a novelisation does not stand comparison.

In the majority of people there abides a deep-seated resentment against being referred to as a number.. despite the proliferation of personal identifiers each individual carries today: NHS, NI, Telephone, Bank Account, Social Security, Licences, Registrations, even BSFA numbers. Yet these numbers are only required for administrative purposes. Within all the societies in the books under discussion, the denizens own numbers. They are all regimented societies. Why the regimentation? Because it makes bureaucracy run smoother, thus alleviating the Administration's load - a kind of selflessness, oneness, pervades, for the greater goal, the One State.

One man's utopia is another man's dystopia. "The trouble with utopias is that they are too orderly," Aldiss points out in *Billion Year Spree*: "They rule out the irrational in man..." Of course, drugs and other means could be employed to eliminate or subdue irrational behaviour traits. Let us first examine the various societies before going on to view Man's irrational response to the variety of restrictive regimes.

Almost all actions of the numbers (people) in Zamyatin's *One State* fall in accord with the Tables of Hourly Commandments; there are exceptions, between 1600-

1700 and 2100-2200, the Personal Hours, blinds may be lowered in the glass buildings. Everywhere is glass: "we have nothing to conceal from one another." The Right of Blinds is given in exchange for a pink coupon only on Sexual Days (calculated in biorhythm fashion to avoid unsuitable/unwanted conception). Love is organised, mathematized in accordance with the Lex Sexualis. Beyond the city's Green Wall - the "scary, impenetrable forests." The One State is built upon the infallibility of mathematics: there is no room for emotion, nor for beauty as we understand it: "Only that is beautiful which is rational and utilitarian." The central character is a mathematician, D-503 - (consonants denote males; 0-90 and E-330 are the women in his life). Compassion no longer exists: during the Integral spaceship tests, ten men were killed by blast on the pad. "Ten numbers represented hardly 1/1,000,000th of our One State; for the purpose of practical calculation this is an infinitesimal of the third order. Pity based upon arithmetical illiteracy was something that was known only to the ancients: we find it mirth-making." Today's talk about the number of survivors in a nuclear conflict sounds uncomfortably similar.

Ayn Rand's State, conceived some 17 years later, is not so codified. However, every number knows his or her place, determined by the Council of Vocations. Here, the collective society triumphed and the first person singular pronoun has been abolished. (In Silverberg's introduction to his *A Time of Changes*, he wrote, "Rand's character (in *Anthem*) and mine struggle towards liberation of self, moving through grammatical thickets, hers speaking of himself as 'we' and mine speaking of himself as 'one', and there is a similar rigid courtliness to the style." Both books begin in a like manner, "Rand's narrator alone in a tunnel, mine in a desert shack, each beginning his tale by speaking of transgressions against a rigid society"; however, this unthinking coincidence apart, they are not alike. Interestingly, Silverberg's narrator finds it difficult to conceive of the reader for whom he is writing - as does D-503). Rand's main character, Equality 7-2521, must intone,

"We are one in all and all in one
There are no men but only the great WE,
One, indivisible and forever."

Already, tremors from Zamyatin can be felt. Throughout these five books, echoes occur, as though the extremely formal structure of the imagined society imposed its own formula template on each story. As we go on, similarities and reverberations will be detected.

In *Anthem* people no longer work for self but for the greater goal. They exist only to serve the State, being conceived in Controlled Palaces of Mating and dying in the House of the Useless; from cradle to grave, the crowd was one - a great WE. And beyond the city? Inevitably, the forest... Idly, I speculated on what the characters would do if there were no handy forest to escape to - and found one grim answer in *Level 7*.

4,400ft down, another artificial society has life breathed into it, with scientifically regulated light and temperature, safely sealed off from the surface and the other six shelter levels. Level 7 is a military establishment: all orders are conveyed by tannoy. The narrator, X-127 adapted to his number quickly enough - prefixes denote employment (X - Push Button X, N - Nurse, and so on). Apparently, old names would have nostalgic associations with life on the surface and so would make it harder for them to get adjusted to their new existence. Personnel are "the defenders of truth and justice.. to make ourselves safe from surprise attack and capable of retaliation, it is imperative that we protect our protectors, that we secure for our Security Forces the best possible shelter.. Your fingers will annihilate the enemy and make victory ours." Till that victorious time - already, to X-127, this "victory" sounds rather hollow - they will remain in Level 7. They must lose their freedom to avoid the risk of spies or terrorists' activities. In conception, Level 7 is reminiscent of a generation starship - it will be generations hence which step onto a changed planet; though

the motive power is fear and threat, and they're not going anywhere.

Propagandists also touch upon the beginnings of a new mythology with which to indoctrinate the as yet unborn children: virtually a reversal of existing doctrine: good is Below, evil is Above.

Follow a great cause and your liberty is pawned: X-127 is allowed to meet other non-X personnel in the lounge at specified half-hour periods; the rest of the day must conform to schedule. The relatively confined space imposed limitations: marriages took place in the laundry room: then rooms were set aside for the allotted hours of wedded privacy - "Don't be shy," said the loudspeaker. "Choose your mate and push the nearest red button."

Somewhere in the British Isles, there is a village. "He gave the streets of the Village the same serious attention one must give to a sore tooth. In the park quincunxes of clipped trees alternated with beds of late dropping tulips and fresh poppies. The residences that look across to this allegory of dullness tried to compensate for its civic stolidity with a kind of metronomic whimsy, as though in each of these die-stamped witch's cottages there lived a banker in a party hat. Chance and individual enterprise could not, unassisted, have created an atmosphere so uniformly oppressive; this village was the conception, surely, of a single, and slightly monstrous, mind, some sinister Disney set loose upon the world of daily life." Thus Disch neatly sums up the milieu of The Prisoner.

"I am Number 2. For administrative purposes, numbers are much more convenient than names, and more reasonable as well. In this Village there might be any number of people with the same first name as you, or, in your case, even the same surname. But there can only be one Number 6, Number 6." Numbers are seen to be meaningful, even significant - no pun intended.

The Village is surrealistic, and menacing, where trust and freedom are not what they seem. "He would leave whenever he determined to leave, but meanwhile each new increment of fact made him hungrier for the synthesis that would make of the scattered pieces a coherent picture. He had every reason to expect to dislike that picture, but he did want to see it." Number 6, human as he is, was gripped by curiosity; the grip of morbidity, of the voyeur.

The ultimate in voyeurism is displayed in the underground society of the character THX1138: all sexes wear standard white pyjamas in their regulated environment, are sedated and watched randomly on viewers. Predictably, some voice-over impinges: "Blessings of the State. Blessings of the masses. Thou art a subject of the divine. Created in the image of man, by the masses, for the masses. Let us be thankful we have an occupation to fill. Work hard; increase production; prevent accidents; and be happy." An inferior sense of déjà vu occurs when reading this: an Anthem-like obedience to State, for mankind, not self; the people are motivated to work and be content with their lot, as envisioned by Wells.

Unregulated sex seems to be the greatest danger in THX1138. Understandably, where space and resources are finite. Years ago, overpopulation and pollution destroyed millions, drove the disciplined ones below ground to "build a strong, stable society." Where children are produced only after sperm and ovum have been carefully matched. There are strong echoes of Brave New World, Anthem and WE in THX1138 - indeed, there is little substance, merely echo! (The film, however, is regarded as a minor masterpiece, capturing the desolation of the society).

All these societies are administered by faceless ones, messages communicated by go-betweens or the ubiquitous tannoy: Number One in the Village, the Benefactor in WE, the Council in Anthem, Control in THX1138 and anonymous administrators in Level 7. The mass of people are plastic, malleable following the trauma of their past. Inevitably, as in any severe conformist society, individuals crop up who rebel. As we shall see, their conceptual breakthrough is often moving, sometimes painful, and invariably causes a degree of chaos.

D-503 began to be affected by the attitude and presence of E-330. She had "the same unpleasant effect upon me as an irrational component which strays into an equation and cannot be analysed." Zamyatin used in-character thought-processes, employing maths-saturated metaphor. D-503 was helpless, he even dreamed: "I am unwell.. I have never had dreams before... We know that having dreams is a serious

psychic disturbance." Indeed, his life became irrational, troubling, and his work suffered. Eventually, he saw E-330 clandestinely, in non-Personal Hours, acquiring a slip to certify illness. O, the guilt! "I was stealing my work time from The One State." Soon there followed the poetic lovemaking, so removed from that of THX1138: "The ripening was completed. And inevitably, as with iron and magnet, with delectable submission to an infallible, immutable law, I infused myself in her. There was no pink coupon.." It was as though some shadow was "...inalterably present... bound to me by an invisible umbilical cord. Is she, is E-330, this umbilical cord, perhaps?" Finally, he became besotted by E-330's mysteriousness, turning savage, lustful. "I was done for. I was in no condition to fulfil my obligation to The One State. I - "

That first person pronoun left hanging is important, is symbolic, and is shown to be such in all but THX1138. Thus, "I was conscious of myself," D-503 confided. "But then, consciousness of self, awareness of individuality, pertains only to an eye with a speck of something in it, to an infected finger, to an aching tooth; when an eye, a finger, a tooth is sound each seems non-existent, as it were. Is it not clear that consciousness of self is only a disease? I'm ailing, afflicted with a soul." Another, albeit odd, coincidence, for Disch referred to a sore tooth in his appraisal of the Village. Self-doubts, engendered by guilt made manifest by State conditioning, are similarly pondered upon by X-127 in Level 7: "Feeling, feeling an acute pain, tells you that you are. It makes you aware of yourself as nothing else does. There is nothing universal about the feeling of pain; it is the most private of experiences." It is rather ironic that the purveyors of Oneness of the State might adopt torture - the inflicting of pain - to enforce oneness, when in fact by so doing they are confirming the consciousness and uniqueness of self rather than denying it!

The One State announced the Grand Operation to combat rebellion, ostensibly to excise the disease called fantasy: lobotomy. But D-503 no longer wanted to be saved. He rescued D-90 from the operation, sent her into the forest, for she was to have his child: he experienced, unusually, an emotional reaction: "something of that sort among the ancients in their attitude towards their private children. (THX1138 had akin feelings regarding LUH3417's threatened foetus. He broke into the Reproclinic and replaced the computer file with a favourable set of data). Irrational love confused D-503 to the point where he began to perceive the corrupt unfeeling mentality of The One State...

Equality 7-2521, meanwhile, already discerned that something was amiss, but believed that he was born with a curse: he seemed always driven to thoughts which were forbidden. It was a great sin to be born with a quicker brain than his contemporaries. It was not good to be different, and evil to be superior. Then he discovered a hole which led to a disused tunnel. Here, at night, he read stolen manuscripts for two years: he alone was doing work which had no purpose save that he wished to do it... He felt no shame or regret, only the first peace he had known in his life. During daylight he secretly communicated with a girl, Liberty 5-3000 (they sound like old American phone numbers, perhaps intentionally.) And he began to recognise the presence of fear in his associates. Finally, when he was denied access to more knowledge, he escaped with Liberty to the forest where they learned to doubt their indoctrination. Being together, free; experiencing sensations, sharing impressions - could this be evil? A moving moment was shared when love was declared; yet it did not seem right: an elusive word, groped for in vain.

Love below-ground was elusive, too. THX1138 was passive until his room-mate LUH3417 began to withhold his boosters and tranquillisers: she was a natural-born, a product of the illegal sexact, not a battery-babe like him. As Control remarked, "LUH is an atavism, a dangerous anomaly, a living time bomb ticking away in our society. Sooner or later her genetic heritage will make itself felt and she will seduce some otherwise decent citizen into committing the same crime that spawned her." Sure enough, as inhibitions slough off, THX1138 made love to LUH - and (surprise!) they were happy. Why such an obviously unfeeling society should persist in retaining "time bombs" in their midst is not adequately explained. LUH suggested that they should leave, live in the superstructure. THX felt shocked:



"But nobody lives up there...It's all radioactive. The air's poisonous." But LUH disbelieved: "It's a lie."

Again, a woman is the catalyst for rebellion. Love, it seems, if not actually invincible, is certainly dangerous. And The Prisoner does not significantly depart from this track, either, though the exposition is more elegant. The doctor, Number 14, who was meant to brainwash Number 6 with sensory deprivation techniques, helped him to pretend submission, for she had fallen in love with him. Finally, Number 6 "wondered if, after all, there was no other explanation for the Village than that; because it was here. Possibly at one time it had possessed a purpose, but over the years that purpose had been forgotten, or lost." I suspect that the same could be said of the societies depicted in WE, Anthem and THX1138, too.

For Level 7, realisation came too late. A push-button war that lasted 2hrs 58mins. Created by psychologists? Monkeys were capable of pressing buttons, X-127 reasoned, in disillusionment: "They studied monkeys to learn about men, and then turned men into monkeys.." Afterwards, as radiation sickness broke out in the upper levels, one couple elected to leave Level 3, to report on the desolation, and to happily die under the sky. Their description over radio is haunting; soon, after they have died, all but X-127 forgot about them. But they were alive for him. "They have pushed a hidden button in my soul. The lost, forgotten, decayed button.. Why is it so difficult to push that button of humanity, and so easy to push the ones which launch deadly rockets?" It is far easier to destroy than to build, to tear down rather than to create... When hopelessness swamped them, following an ironic twist of fate, X-127 wrote, "We and our former enemy wanted to be the masters of mankind: now we're a few hundred cave-dwellers." Roshwald re-dedicated his book to Leonid and Ronald - Brezhnev and Reagan. Even after a generation, it still has a lot to say about the insanity of nuclear weapons; it comes down

against all killing, in fact 300 million, it's still wrong! And, as X-127 lay dying: "Dark. I see oh friends people mother sun I I" He had missed the sky and the sun. It is poignant, how friends are called upon in vain, then anyone (people, not numbers!), then in desperation or a plea for a return to the womb, his mother; but in the end there is only the sun, and self. Although downbeat, the ending, with "I", seems apt, echoing the insistence on the existence of ego also found in Anthem and WE. Whilst Rand states that Man's ego is the fountainhead of human progress, Zamyatin and Roshwald underline that that same ego can be suborned to follow an immoral, unethical national ego. There is no room for self where people are numbers.

Whilst ego survives, thoughts on self-determination, free-will and freedom do, too. As the newspaper in WE announced, The Integral spaceship is constructed for "the subjugation of unknown creatures to the beneficent yoke of reason." However, some numbers - as any mathematician should know - are irrational: E-330 and her followers are intent on stealing the Integral, to flee to another world where freedom can flourish. D-503 joined them; but they were caught. He was lobotomised and betrayed her. He watched her execution without any qualms for he was now rid of "my former malady, the soul sickness." (This depressing conclusion is echoed most powerfully in 1984. Orwell probably read the French translation of WE in 1928). Non-conformity in a rigid State system receives severe punishment. Betrayal of trust is commonplace. The State demanded absolute trust, enforced by fear. To quote the Council of Anthem: "How dare you think that your mind held greater wisdom than the minds of your brothers? What is not done collectively cannot be good." Trust in numbers...

And a girl from the Prisoner's past declared, "You know, if you can't trust me, you'll never be able to trust anyone.." He did wonder, afterwards. "The Village, this splendid room, the mirror in its frame of ormolu, and even the image in the mirror were not to be trusted. What, then, was? His body, the body beneath these wrinkled clothes, that could be trusted. And his mind. Because these things could not be tampered with. He could trust (as finally, we all must) himself."

Courtesy of military obedience, trust is second-nature for the personnel ordered about by the faceless administrators in Level 7. And, should an aberration occur, then psychotherapy would ameliorate... Yet X-127 came to trust only his diary: "I am sure I cannot take many more downs. There must be a limit to mental suffering, just as there is a limit to the distance humans can dig into the earth. Seven levels down is the physical limit. How many can the spirit endure?" THX1138 learned to trust SRT5555 during their escape. SRT helped him get to the computer files. Why? "I was hungry and you gave me some of your food." The New Testament did it better!

A thin dividing-line separates trust and betrayal. A loved one's lapse can quickly be construed as a failing of trust; trust betrayed. The same thin line separates reality and dream. Betrayal can be imagined, as can trust. D-503's all-consuming attachment to E-330 edged out the mathematically precise reality to reveal alternate probabilities. Dreams still troubled him: "... through my own experience I know that the most excruciating thing is to implant in an individual a doubt as to his or her reality." A harbinger, this: for this is what is so riveting and disconcerting about Dick's work. Newspeak and Doublethink may have been coined by Orwell, but they were flourishing in WE some 28 years earlier than the birth of 1984, for the manumitted ones are those who seek lobotomies to be free from fantasy and dreams! Ultimately, for D-503, reality - the irrational, feeling, soul-filled reality - is in retreat. The One State will win, "for rationality must conquer." Whether it will or not is dependent on the rebellious faction; if they cleave to the words of Thomas Jefferson,

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."

then freedom may be earned, at a cost.

Rationality: perverted to unthinking adherence to formulae, to the procedures of the System. All the societies depicted survive by virtue of the enforcement of their own rationale. There is no room for free thought, nor for self-assertiveness. Each is part of the whole. Again, Zamyatin sums (sic) it all up, as D-503 had wrestled with the disconcerting influence of E-330: "The multiplication table is wiser, more absolute than the God of the ancients: it never errs... There is but one truth, and but one true path; and that truth is: 2×2 ; and that true path is: 4. And would it not be an absurdity if these happily, ideally multiplied twos were to get notions about some sort of freedom - about what is, clearly, an error?"

Zamyatin's concern is about man's enslavement to the demands of a society whose rationale is that of technology. Ideology plus terror are the main threat; this is also true of the other societies mentioned.

Repeatedly, freedom is the victim. Without freedom, life holds few attractions; the victim of rape suffers a similar perspective on life, too. Freedom plundered, raped. And the symbol of rape is the spaceship Integral, which is destined to subjugate "creatures inhabiting other planets perhaps still in the savage state of freedom. Should they fail to understand that we are bringing them a mathematically infallible happiness, it will be our duty to compel them to be happy." This proposed depredation of freedom is tantamount to a crusade; the parallels with the early, over-zealous, slightly misguided Christian missionaries are close, too. Duty to compel, indeed!

Free thought is perhaps the only real freedom. Yet, if voiced, it can herald disaster or create a lingering, possibly iconoclastic impression... An acquaintance of D-503 witnessed the execution of a poet friend who had suddenly declared, "I am a genius, and a genius is above the law." And in Anthem, Equality 7-2521 watched a malcontent die because he had used The Forbidden Word. Throughout history, the public execution of malefactors has had more than merely salutary effects: the morality of public execution is called into question, and by implication the ethics of the State; often, subtle, creeping, nagging doubts insinuate, and won't go away. Mentally, the onlookers hold their breath, on the point of understanding that the miscreant is not only the enemy of the State or System, the outsider, the other, but is them, a part of themselves which they must judge.

Surprisingly, a philosopher in Level 7 believed they were freer: "cut off from enemy and ally, from spies and from over-inquisitive friends, from strangers and from the ignorant masses. Everybody can enjoy the individuality which his personal number symbolises. Nobody has contact with the spiritually inferior, though materially superior, outer world - indeed, it is because we are materially cut off from the world that we are able to develop the spiritual side of our natures to this extent. This is true freedom, a freedom which only Level 7 can give." But X-127 distrusted this; he did not feel free. He was learning to feel; until recently he had been psychologically self-indulgent, self-sufficient. Sadly, X-127's only escape was to write in his diary. It is all the more moving for that fact.

Magnanimously, the Benefactor provided his reasoning on freedom and the pursuit of happiness: "...what have men, from their swaddling-clothes days, been praying for, dreaming about, tormenting themselves for? Why, to have someone tell them, once and for all, just what happiness is - and then weld them to this happiness with chains. Well, what else are we doing now if not that?" He would find a like mind in Number 2: "You are a prisoner, Number 6. It is as simple as that." "I doubt that even in this Village anything is as simple as that. I am not Number 6. I am not a prisoner. I am a free man." "Horace said: 'Who, then, is free? The wise man who can govern himself'... Where, in this vastly overpopulated world, is there even room to be free? No, Number 6, though you may clang your bells for freedom, the best you can escape to is some more camouflaged form of imprisonment that we provide."

Our perception of freedom is an illusion, perhaps. Freedom can be all things to all men. Yet, in the final analysis, freedom comes from within. Real freedom is spiritual, not temporal.

Notwithstanding the cinematic-chase escape of THX1138 - which leaves the reader uncaringly wondering if THX would survive on the irradiated surface - only Ayn Rand's character truly escaped. Even the Prisoner must, in the end, deliberate on the possibility that his mind has been tampered with, that some of his memories may not be real. So Equality 7-2521 fled with the girl into the Forest. What would Freud make of SF writers' penchant for citizens escaping from cities to the forest? A yearning in emulation of Proust for the green surroundings of primitive ancestors - pastoral ambience; or a retreat back through the lush foliage, deep into the womb? In dream-symbolism, trees equate with Mother, and the unconscious... A retreat from, rather than a confrontation with, reality?

Once through the forest, Equality and Liberty - little realising they are the rather ponderous physical embodiments of the American State's Declaration of Independence - discovered a dust-shrouded house, deserted save for memories trapped within books. And they found the tomes peppered with the Forbidden Word! Comprehension finally dawned. The Word was "I". Self. Ego.

"I am not a tool," Equality realised. "I do not surrender my treasures, nor do I share them. The fortune of my spirit is not to be blown into coins of brass and flung to the winds as alms for the poor of the spirit. I guard my treasures: my thought, my will, my freedom. And the greatest of these is freedom. I owe nothing to my brothers, nor do I gather debts from them. I ask none to live for me, nor do I live for any others. I covet no man's soul, nor is my soul theirs to covet.. For in the temple of his spirit, each man is alone.. 'We' - it is the word by which the depraved steal the virtue of the good, by which the weak steal the might of the strong, by which the fools steal the wisdom of the sages... I understood that centuries of chains and lashes will not kill the spirit of man nor the sense of truth within him.. Through all the darkness, through all the shame of which men are capable, the spirit of man will remain alive on this earth. It may sleep, but it will awaken. It may wear chains, but it will break through. And man will go on. Man, not men."

Hope lives on, the future is not a boot stamping on the human face forever..

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Dangerous Divisions

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A couple of comments on recent Vectors, as I return slowly to fannish life after moving to the USA. I will attempt to be brief, and slightly to the point.

Naturally, I liked Vectors 112 and 113. But I seem to be missing Vector 111 with Gregory Benford's article on Aliens in SF in it. I can comment on it,

though! Merely not having read a piece never stopped a dedicated Loccer from commenting on it. Or rather, Jim England's letter on it. When a full-time, professional scientist says 'scientists', he means full-time, professional research scientists. Lapsed scientists who have descended into writing or running biotechnology companies almost invariably mean the same, with the caveat that they are also included. Merely having a science degree is not enough. There are, after all, possessors of science degrees who slavishly follow their horoscopes, keep little UFO-contact kits on their persons at all times and otherwise behave like no hard determinist would dream of behaving. In this sense (and it is the sense that the media use the word too, when they make any sense, and much of the 'general public') Benford is a scientist who writes SF, as is Hoyle, while Asimov is at best a borderline case, and Clarke, for all his having thought up geosynchronous communications satellites, Niven and the rest of the scientifically literate crowd are not scientists. (Asimov was a full-time researcher for a while, you will recall). In fact, calling someone a scientist if they have a science degree is quite an uncommon idea. Where did Jim get it from?

And I dispute that Radio Astronomy has altered our worldview more than theology. It has added on new sets of zeros to our turn-of-the-century worldview, has filled space with gas and dust (but the Jeans theory of planetary formation said that it must be there in the nineteenth century), discovered pulsars, quasars and other things that most people have never heard of, but in no way has it really revolutionised our way of looking at the universe. The great alteration in our worldview since the middle ages has owed as much to theology as to science, and more to the invention of the printing press than to either. Ponder that, you apologists for the book.

Crouching In Cheadle in Vector 112 was really superb. At first I thought 'Here we go. Another diatribe from the CND nuts. Throw down your nukes and the age of peace and enlightenment will follow. But I should have known better - Chris Priest presented the horrible facts about nuclear weapons and our possession of a nuclear arsenal without resorting to any facile answers to sooth the fears he rightly arouses. I found it humbling that I have pushed this to the back of the mind for so long, thinking the while that I knew all about it.

Your Sladek double feature did me a grave disservice. I was trying to rock our two-week old baby to sleep when I read it, and with each heave of stomach as I tried to suppress outright laughter she woke up again. It happened a lot! But I wonder about the ethics of deliberately writing pseudo-science or pseudo-

mysticism when you do know better, as Sladek obviously does. Is there not enough of this mind-putrifying garbage going round already? (((I doubt if ethics even comes into it. To make a living as I writer, I expect he is forced to write what sells. In a way, of course, they are science fiction.)))

It's getting to the stage where it's almost not worth while looking through the SF section in my local library for books that are; a, new and b, good. And it's almost as bad in p/b's in WHS. The sorry state of the Reviews in Vector 113, and the fact that you didn't/couldn't award a 'Vector's Choice,' seems to bear this out. In fact, I'm finding that the quality (and quantity) of SF published (which is not necessarily the same as that being written) has deteriorated to an unprecedented extent. ('Oh for the Platinum Age of the mid-sixties, when the bookshelves over-flowed with new and wondrous works..') It's sometimes better looking for 'oddities' which don't bear the SF label: William Kotzwinkle's books, Richard Adams' Girl in a Swing, D.M. Thomas, and a fair number of the large format p/b's. Or three of Samuel R. Delany's books: The Tides of Lust is generally classified as 'literary pornography,' Heavenly Breakfast is autobiography, and Dhalgren is labelled science fiction. But is there really any genre difference between these works? They are all intense studies of the problems of individual and group identity in small, heavily sexually-orientated societies. So, 'Never mind the label, feel the quality' - which could get us into the whole question of redefining SF; I now prefer the term 'Speculative Fiction' to 'Science Fiction' - it widens the field considerably. As the Publishers might say, - 'if it ain't got spaceships, it ain't SF.' (((You might save yourself a lot of problems in the future if you stop redefining SF and just accept that writers outside the SF genre can tackle the same themes as SF writers in a different way with a great deal of success. Otherwise, I can see in a couple of years you will be telling me that Sons and Lovers, under your new definition is Speculative Fiction or whatever!)))

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I'd like to add three titles to those mixed-genre novels put forward by Andy Sawyer: John Boyd, author of some very good and often very amusing SF (including The Rakehells of Heaven and The Pollinators of Eden) wrote a genuine SF western, Andromeda Gun, about an alien stuck in the brain of a 19th Century Mid-Western outlaw, with six-shooters, school-marms an' all - great Stuff. And Robert Nathan, writer of thousands of unmemorable Romances, wrote the beautiful and utterly outstanding A Portrait of Jenny, which qualifies as Speculative Fiction in my book because Jenny, a young girl at the start of the novel, asks the artist to wait for her, promising to grow up as quickly as she can; each time she reappears over the next few months, she is several years older, until she becomes a lovely young woman in time for the inevitably tragic ending. (Does anyone remember the BBC's Play for Today version of it some years ago, with Anna Calder-Marshall as Jenny? I'd pay a fortune for a video of that...) The only comparable book in recent years is Richard Adams' Girl in a Swing; whatever your opinion of talking rabbits and plague dogs, this book is a must, and is as arguably SF as its unfortunately better-known predecessors. Romantic Fiction, yes; Speculative Fiction, definitely (I still hear Karin's voice in my dreams).

I'd like to take Neil Allan's argument a step further. Watching a film is a passive experience. Reading a book should be an active experience. The reader is able to interpret the printed words, to apply them to himself, to go beyond what is on the page. My visual perception of, say, Arrakis, will be different from yours, or Neil's, or Frank Herbert's, or anyone else's. Each reader unconsciously blends the word picture with his own experiences to complete the creative act. A novel is not a finished creative product; the author and the reader must be partners in creativity. An accomplished author will leave sufficient clues for the reader to take off from, but he will not do all the

work. In a film, of course, the viewer takes what he is given and that's it. (((If that is correct, why were there so many different opinions on the meaning of the film 2001? Did not Kubrick leave the 'interpretation' of the film totally up to the audience?)))

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It's just too much! Too much to comment on in Vector 113...

Sue Thomason is right. SF in non-written media should be judged against other work in that same media. Of course the book and the film are incompatible; if we look inside each others' heads, we'd see different

constructs of a single book. To extend Cy Chauvin's comment, we are products of our environment, of what we experience, and the more catholic the taste in reading/filmgoing/experience, the more critical we are likely to be. And rightly so. But, as Sue says, let's not get confused. Whatever the subjective viewpoint, the preference, an apple isn't better than an orange; the label of inferiority should not be imposed upon the least-preferred, though. Now, if a book has as its theme a message, and the film-of-the-book does not convey that message, I believe the filmgoer may rightly feel cheated: but the expectations were his. The only films faithful to the books (with creditable exceptions like The Spy Who Came in from the Cold) are those which engender novelisations, which brings me to Andy Sawyer's letter. I agree up to a point that there is no reason why novelisations can't be good, it's just that invariably they're bad. Disch did extremely well with The Prisoner; granted, he had good material to work from, but he can write with style. Of course, it can work the other way round; Stalker (Roadside Picnic) was atmospheric, watching it, I was becoming sucked into the grey, strange "area" - but it was too long, and an hour into it, aware of how much more there was to run, the grip was too weak, so I retired, defeated leaving my memories of the book intact.

I liked Jeremy Crampton's summary of Wolfe's Book of the New Sun. Reviewing The Citadel of the Autarch in British Fantasy Newsletter Vol 10, No 4, Mike Wathen commented, "watch for the maps, the calendars, the readers' guides, the re-evaluation and the critical backswing." Will Wolfe resist the tempting Sirens, I wonder? Should he? It also ties in with your comment on authors being "in fashion", interestingly enough. (((I suppose it depends on whether Wolfe has anything more to say, which will either add to or enhance the original novels. While the books have been a critical success, I do wonder if they have been a commercial success, say on the same scale as Julian May's books? Maybe someone can tell me?)))

Barrington Bayley's article on copyright was aptly juxtapositioned against the PLR piece in Focus. He's right, of course. But, with the exceptions of the best sellers, few novelists get adequate reward for the labours expended on their books; they become (the books, that is) investments which realise dividends over a period of time. Change the payments system, then do away with copyright. Yes, fine. What a diminution in lawsuits there would be!

If I may hark back to earlier reviews in Vector on Julian May's books... (((If you must))) I recently tripped over the following in the defunct Fantasy Media (Vol 2, No 3): May is the wife of SF editor TE Dikty and she published some SF in the early 50s. Houghton Mifflin hyped: The Exiles "is upbeat, written in a multilevel manner; adventure, hard science, sex, humour (low, black and just funny), Jungian symbolism, extension of Teilhard de Chardin's philosophy... there is so much in it that it can be read and re-read and something new found in it every time... It's a marvellous combination: a stately legend, grotesque folktale and shrewd SF". There are likely to be four (or more) books in the series... Now you know! (((I recognise it immediately from the precise description!))) Another snippet from the same source: Moorcock's Byzantium Endures is the first of four volumes - a fact which has convinced me not to buy it. As if we didn't know, series sell! Now, under which

pile of dust did I hide my adventures in mythical Floreskand...?

Video in libraries: how many library authorities I wonder, have introduced video not because it is the "medium of the future" but because they can charge for it. (Under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act book provision has to be free but other services may be charged for.) Sue's questions about whether a library might want to avoid "duplication" of the same work of art in different media can be answered, I think, by widening the question to ask whether the 1964 Act as it stands is an adequate framework for the Public Library system, in that audio-visual material has become much more important and accessible than it was dreamed of by the legislators twenty years ago. This raises, obviously, even more questions about what would be "an adequate framework", which perhaps would be out of place discussed at length in Vector, although I certainly would be interested in people's ideas. To me it's self-evident that, say "The Sentinel", 2001 (the film) and 2001 (the book) are linked in such a way that you can't have one without the other. They are, moreover, examples of an art-form which so far as I'm aware hasn't a name and is rarely identified because of superficial similarities to, say Blade Runner and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?: that is, the novel/film written and conceived of as an entity, rather than as an 'adaptation' or 'novelisation'. The two "manifestations" complement rather than compete on a more basic level than the usual film-text link. There are other examples: the novels of Barry Hines and their filmic interpretations, for example. I think, we're heading for a quantum jump in art which will affect both libraries and purchasing, the cinema and the book trade, not to mention TV (which has already seen a drastic fall in audiences due to the video upsurge).

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And this leads neatly into Barry Bayley's piece because if copyright is becoming hard to handle right now in ten years time it's going to be murder. I've always supported the principle of PLR but how do you protect someone's 'creative property' if someone else can borrow, say, the cassette of computer software from a library and copy it at home? And anyway, does the guy who first thought of 'Space Invaders' actually get royalties from every slight variation on his original idea? I doubt it. Pirated videos are an immense problem to the 'legitimate' trade - just about everyone I knew with a video machine had seen 'EI' before the film was officially released - and according to various articles in the Bookseller it's virtually impossible to sell certain kinds of books in West Africa and Asia because local printers run off thousands of 'pirate' copies and undercut the official versions. So Barry Bayley's scenario is happening. Perhaps we'd better junk the copyright law altogether? On the other hand, you read about certain well-respected authors making a total of £1,500 a year out of their books and wonder if that person oughtn't to get some of the money that's slopping around.

I read Benedict Cullum's letter and wondered what this anti-Norman vocal segment of the BSFA membership was - skimmed through a couple of Vectors and discovered it was me, inspired by one of your editorials. I will not go on at length unless I'm asked to - but I've read over half the series from early to late and the range is sub-Edgar-Rice Burroughs to sub-Marquis de Sade. Forget the covers, for heavens sake; look at what's inside them. Benedict's analysis of how the series developed is correct, but even at the start the stories were pale imitations of the John Carter series.

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Mary Gentle said in her letter that 'nuclear suicide' would be better than 'nuclear war'; but when one thinks of 'suicide' one thinks of individual suicides - and almost always applies

it to someone else. So: No, the term 'suicide' isn't strong enough - 'Genocide'

is. Chris Priest's article is justified in that it isn't the facts which were important, it was the emotion he put over in it: War, when you are in its midst, has nothing to do with facts - it is confusion, death, horror, and sorrow: That is what has got to sink into everyone's thick skulls. Figures on official paper, or in newspapers are divorced from reality: if you read it in the national press, or see it on television, or if it's government data it has nothing to do with you - nothing to do with washing the dishes, dusting the silverware, reading letters in magazines and catching the bus for work. If world war is declared we'd carry on, smile, and know the forces will save us this time, as they have all the other times.

I haven't become blasé with the subject: I hadn't written a reply for I'd thought Priest had summed it all up and at that time could not further or add to the argument or discussion.

I am not a supporter of CND, but they are at least trying something (even if they only succeed in stalling the build-up of weapons in Britain, it is SOMETHING!): Unilateral disarmament is a noble (if naive) aim in that perhaps the thought behind it is that the less weapons there are, the less weapons will be available for use. Even governments fool themselves that their leaders and closest minions will survive in shelters; though God knows what they will be left to govern afterwards (that's megalomania exposed to the raw!) - even assuming that they will survive in a post-holocaust world of this nature.

I don't fool myself - sure we'd cop it if there's a nuclear war, sure it's hopeless to even hope the present governments will disarm (in fact, any government): But this doesn't mean it is hopeless fullstop. A worldwide rebellion might do it, but the chances of it happening at exactly the same time worldwide, and rightly, are hard to believe - we are all a dishonest lot and everyone would try to take advantage of everyone else: And there is something unpleasantly ironic in wars for peace (ah! Religion! Religion!) - belief in it can prove very dangerous (and I'm not talking about defensive action, but offensive): So, no a rebellion wouldn't work - but there must be an alternative (for God help us if there isn't!): All it needs (to put it lightly) is a Van Vogtian superman to come up with it! (You'll wait until doomsday, I hear you say, and I may very well do so.)

Thank you for another spiffing issue of Vector. Just one small question, is David Barrett attempting to totally take over Vector? I mean, two lengthy articles plus I also noticed his name in the WAHF column. Where does this man get all the time and the money for the Ink to write all this stuff?

PHILIP COLLINS,
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Seriously though it was good to see the two lengthy pieces on the little known, by me at least, author Christopher Hodder-Williams. The only novel of his I've personally read is 98.4, but I definitely feel that it is important for the BSFA to promote those authors who are not as widely known as they perhaps deserve to be.

I think the film Christopher Hodder-Williams referred to but couldn't remember the title of was Invisible Boy (1957). The Peter Nicholls' Encyclopedia of SF says it has "...The implicit moral that machines shaped like men are basically more trustworthy than machines shaped like machines."

Since we're on the subject of movies let's go on to David Pringles' article "The Top Thirty Anglo-American Science Fiction Movies of the 1950s to the 1970s". I was surprised to see the rarely screened "Fail Safe" scoring so high, ten out of a possible twelve. I saw it a couple of years ago and thought it O.K., but nothing particularly outstanding. Mind you the sight of a young Larry "JR" Hagman with a ridiculously short crew-cut was worth a giggle.

One of the problems with using critics' assessments to judge films is what about those films that are so awful they're brilliant. On every level they might be terrible, but personally I consider "Teenagers from Outer Space" and "Robot

Monsters" to be two of the funniest most enjoyable movies I have every seen. Apparently Channel 4 is soon to be showing a series of these 'Golden Turkeys' and I am looking forward particularly to seeing "They Saved Hitler's Brain".

One other point, I don't really understand what David Pringle means when he talks about "our" films, whilst admitting the films are made for a mass audience. Surely all good Books and films are written/made for a mass audience. Only the real no-hope hacks aim consciously solely at a particular audience by recycling that genres' cliches. To try to claim that any specific book or film is "ours" smacks of elitism and snobbery. (((One fact of our little SF association is that we do tend to think of science fiction as belonging to us. This is not due to elitism or snobbery but really out of fondness for the genre. It's strange though, because it more that the genre owns us, than we own it!)))

Wow, Mary Gentle's letter certainly had me pegged down, right in the middle of category two; "Yes we know, but there's sod all we can do about it." You made an interesting juxtaposition of letters there Geoff, me criticising Mary for her review of Danse Macabre, and Mary criticising me, (unknowingly) for my views on the bomb.

MARK PERRY,
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At last, having been a member for almost a year, I am compelled to put pen to paper, and join the continuing saga that grace your letter column.

I was first interested in "SCI FI" by watching Thunderbirds, having had a highly active imagination I found a media which suited it. When I started reading SF, about ten years ago, I began with Perry Rhodan, then went to Asimov, Smith and Clarke and I'm now on Ellison, Silverberg, Harrison, Haldeman, Martin, Holdstock, Watson etc... If people want to read Julian May or John Norman fine, let them, they might view a larger spectrum of literature later, but, if they don't, then that is what they find entertaining, and who are we to criticise that. We cannot inflict our views on others. What is needed, however, is balance. It is the publishers we should aim our wrath at, not the readers. It is they who think that ALL SF readers want May and Norman only. To each his own, is a motto the publishers should take to heart.

Let us please stop ripping to shreds Clarke, Asimov, Heinlein et al. Like Michael King, I recently enjoyed a Clarke story, "Against the Fall of Night" to be precise, and though wooden in it's execution it is deep in its conception. Again it comes to balance, and to each his own. This idea of 'in' and 'out' writers is pathetic.

Finally, I would like to praise Chris Priest for Crouching In Cheadle, a very realistic article to show the folly of nuclear war. If the Government want to disappear down a foxhole, let them! They'll have nothing left to govern when they come out, and I hope more SF writers will now try to put this point across more and more.

I was disturbed to see from David Barrett's interview/article on Christopher Hodder-Williams that The Chromosome Game isn't yet published. I had the pleasure of reading this book for Virgin and reporting on it. I sent back a two A4 page report, carefully considered, recommending publication. I hadn't heard of Mr. Hodder-Williams before, so I came to his book (and him) fresh and open minded.

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The reason I'm disturbed is - if a book as good as that can't find a publisher, what chance do the rest of us have?

(((In the WAHF column this time are Mary Gentle, Fay & David Symes, M Greener, Roy Gray and Tom Jones. See Contents to find out why you have been relegated!)))

"With One Bound, Jack Was Free"

By

Andy Sawyer

In novels dealing with powerful enough concepts to represent new stages in evolution - physical, mental or social - the only possible ending to any particular story is an open one, for the story, in real terms, cannot end. This leaves the way open, of course for further instalments... and recently we have had further instalments of two of the best known works of SF; the Foundation series by Isaac Asimov and 2001: A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke. My brief is to talk about the new Asimov, Foundation's Edge, but what I have to say on that leads me inevitably to consider 2010: Odyssey Two on which, as a novel, I come to different conclusions, but which raises similar questions.

Isaac Asimov writes (Opus - Deutsch, pp 255/6) that;

' in designing each new Foundation story, I found I had to work within an increasingly constricted area, with progressively fewer and fewer degrees of freedom. I was forced to seize whatever way I could without worrying about how difficult I might make the next story. Then, when I came to the next story, those difficulties arose and beat me over the head..So I quit permanently'

This process is exemplified on page 89 of the Panther edition of Second Foundation:

"The solution is the Seldon Plan. Conditions have been so arranged and so maintained that in a millennium from its beginnings - six hundred years from now, a second Galactic Empire will have been established in which Mankind will be ready for the leadership of Mental Science. In that same interval, the Second Foundation in its development, will have brought forth a group of Psychologists ready to assume leadership. Or, as I have myself often thought, the First Foundation supplies the physical framework of a single political unit, and the Second Foundation supplies the mental framework of a ready-made ruling class."

So the logic path Asimov set out for himself in the Foundation series seemed to leave the Second Foundation in position as a potential benevolent dictatorship. Armed with both a superior understanding of historical forces, and superior mental-manipulative powers, it is apparently set, after defeating the Mule and deceiving the First Foundation, to spend the next six hundred years secretly organising the shape and form of the Second Empire. It's a position which not a few admirers of Asimov have been unhappy with: although it marks, I feel a logical and dramatically satisfying point at which to end the series, it also smacks of the totalitarian, and, even more damaging to Asimov's credibility, presents a picture of a writer trying desperately to struggle out of the traps he set for himself at the conclusion of the last story and finally giving up when his 'heroes' are revealed as morally indefensible.

The first few Foundation stories are marked by the fact that very little actually happens. True, named individuals rush about and agonize over the events around them, but when it comes to the point, it is the inexorable march of History which brings stories to a conclusion. The actual work of the individuals is relegated to the background, presented as explanations after the fact. See the conclusion to "The Encyclopedists", for example, when Salvor Hardin explains how he foiled the Anacreon invasion of Terminus by reminding each of the three other neighbouring states of the concept of the 'balance of power'. Part one of Foundation and Empire, "The General", suggests even more strongly that History's dialectic outweighs the actions of individuals. Duce Barr and Lathan Devers' plan to blacken the reputation of Bel Riose, the Empire's last strong general, ends, after much preparation and conspiracy, in failure, yet Riose is recalled because in the turbulent decadence of the Empire a strong general cannot co-exist with a strong Emperor without paying the price for the suspicions his successes breed;

"Why, look, there is not a conceivable combination of events that does not result in the Foundation winning. It was inevitable; whatever Riose did, whatever we did." (p. 63)

This vast view of history is Asimov's strength in the series. If E.E. Smith gave SF a sense of galaxy-wide power and adventure, Asimov jettisoned the brash exuberance to explore a sense of time and pattern, a realisation that societies have their own evolutionary development.

Unfortunately, there were prices to pay. Smith's inadequacies as a writer need no chronicling here, and Asimov himself has never had the power to do justice to his theme. Asimov's forte is the whodunnit kind of story - he shares, in fact, with Agatha Christie the ability to produce entertaining puzzles which offer little to those who seek entertainment in terms of character or narrative flow. It is no surprise that his most successful novels - The Caves of Steel, Pebble in the Sky and The End of Eternity - share with his robot stories a construction around a relatively simple conflict. It's no surprise also that The Caves of Steel is to all intents and purposed a conventional detective tale, or that Asimov's single most notable characters are the robot detective Daneel Olivaw from that book and Susan Calvin from the robot stories who as near as dammit is a robot herself. Asimov as a writer is at his happiest within the simple morality structures of the mystery or thriller tale, where complex shades of character need not be delineated and the focus is constantly on the plot, or the dramatised scientific/logical problems exemplified by his robot tales. When he attempts a wider canvass he is often constricted by the nature of his sources: the Fall of Rome in Foundation; even the influence of Roman-occupied Judea on Pebble in the Sky or racialism in the USA (The Caves of Steel), although offering colour and background to his stories and demonstrating an admirable liberalism tend to be too visible in themselves and conflict rather than integrate with the plot. The wider reaches of the Foundation series demanded an organic construction and a perspective which Asimov at the time of writing was unable or unwilling to give. (Joseph E. Patrouch, in The Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov - Dobson) quotes him as saying that he "wrote each story with no thought at all for the morrow." (p.62) Consequently, Asimov never solved the problem set by his matching a crudely determinist view of historical forces with a pulp-based individualism and a story-telling technique based on setting up problems to be solved and then solving them against a background lifted from too-recognisable historical events.

Broadly, the Foundation stories are most interesting when they are following Seldon's dialectic; they come to life only after the introduction of the Mule, whose mutant abilities prove to be the unforeseen 'joker in the pack' and who is perhaps the series' most memorable character. It is the testing of the Plan by a force not allowed for in the psychohistorical equations which becomes the motive force of the series, and this enables Asimov to refocus his

attention on individuals. More problems arise from this, however. It demands a new perspective on the Sheldon Plan, and a greater emphasis on the establishment of a secret cadre of social manipulators (the Second Foundation) which guides an 'outer party' of doers. The nature of the stories changes and the balance firmly plumps towards drama of manipulation rather than personification of social forces. By giving the actions of individuals greater importance in the story (albeit a spurious importance due to the fact that others, unknown to them, call the shots) Asimov places greater demands on his abilities to portray individuals than they can bear, with the result that, for example, the introductory pages of "Search by the Foundation" contain some of his most embarrassingly twee writing. The series, now melodrama, ends with the Second Foundation seen as a latent ruling class having (temporarily?) removed the threat from the First Foundation and re-established its course of secret control in preparation for the Second Empire.

And that was it for thirty years. With the publication of Foundation's Edge, the debate is re-opened. Obviously, we expect the position of the Foundations with respect to the coming Second Empire will be clarified; do we expect, though, any deeper historical or political perspectives, any significant change in the predictable pattern of story-development, even any sign that life uncounted millennia in the future might be different from that in Smaltown, USA? Have the political and social changes in the world and the USA over the past 30 years had any impact on the way Asimov now sees the Foundation series?

Well, there's no sign that History might evolve according to the Marxist model, for a start; or that American Capitalism might be only one of many forms of social organisation. One major change in thought is used as the new synthesis in Foundation's Edge, but I do not think that it, as here presented, is a genuine moral alternative rather than a re-hash of ideas found in Olaf Stapledon, Arthur C. Clarke, and the dottier eco-mystics. And the story-telling technique hasn't changed....

Golan Trevize, a Councilman of the First Foundation believes that the Second Foundation still exists. In conflict with Mayor Branno of Terminus, he is sent on a mission to find and if necessary destroy the Second Foundation, under cover of aiding a scholar, Janov Pelorat, search for Earth, the legendary planet of humanity's origin. Meanwhile on Trantor, Stor Gendibal of the Second Foundation contends that the Seldon Plan is meaningless. The very fact that it is operating flawlessly after the Mule-dominated 'Century of Deviations' means that there has been outside interference. Gendibal is aware of Trevize's suspicions, and believes him to be an agent of, or influenced by a group of 'anti-Mules' which plans a Seldon-based Second Empire of its own.

Both men discover evidence which would seem to support their theories. Trevize decides that Earth is the 'Star's End' where Seldon established the Second Foundation. There is, however, no planet named 'Earth' in the records, although Pelorat has discovered references to a planet called Gaia, which is Earth in another language. (How he knows this, when we are lead to assume that Greek, along with all languages except one standard tongue, has died out, isn't explained.) Gendibal, on his part, is accosted by a nature Trantorian and only saved from a beating or worse by the intervention of a woman, Sura Novi. He believes that there has been mental influence from an unknown source at work, and later discovers that all references to Earth have been removed from the University library. Finding Earth, it is inferred, may be equally important for the Second Foundation, and Gendibal and Sura Novi are sent to find this mysterious 'Third Force'.

Foundation's Edge progresses from this point in a manner familiar to readers of previous Asimov novels; standard detective-story fare, as well as a parody of the 'scientific method'. The main characters reach conclusions on the evidence they are given, which turns out to be insufficient; so one false 'solution' follows another. Will Mayor Branno outguess the Second Foundation? What is the nature of the force which is manipulating the Second Foundation as it in turn manipulates others? What are the real origins of Gaia and its people?

Eventually we discover that Trevize is, due to certain intuitive qualities which make him a kind of 'natural Second Founder' the one man in the galaxy who can handle a crisis involving all contending forces. Unfortunately, by this point we are only 46 pages from the end of the book, and by the time all is explained and dealt with a sense of anticlimax pervades everything. Foundation's Edge ends in a mishmash of loose ends (with the most important clue of all being revealed as a red herring to set us up for the sequel) as Asimov tries, not very successfully, to link the Foundation series with his robot stories by means of a possible unnecessary and certainly perfunctory twisting of perhaps his best single novel The End of Eternity.

Asimov is attempting to recapture past glories. It's always a dangerous thing to do, and I really cannot imagine anyone who read the Foundation stories at fourteen (as I did) getting the same buzz out of a sequel which, so many years later, is written on the same emotional level. I've talked at some length about the mechanical plot devices - other aspects of Asimov's storytelling technique reveal a grasping at the convenient stock image and expression. Janov Pelorat is too much the typical Asimovian 'scholar', obsessive in his chosen field, oblivious to everything else. "white-haired and his face, in repose, looked rather empty... He seemed considerably older than his fifty-two years." (p.31) Anyone's picture of a reclusive academic, in fact. Trevize and Gendibal are so alike in qualities as to be interchangeable: brash youth against Machiavellian age of Mayor Branno or Delora Delarmi, Gendibal's enemy in the Second Foundation. (Both females, incidentally!) Trevize's disgust at discovering that the Gaian contact is "just a girl" - "they might have sent a military officer, for instance, and given us a sense of some value, so to speak." (p.263) sums up one of the two things I found disquieting about the book. If it is meant 'straight' - as a reaction of a character normal in terms of the story but not pointing out anything significant it should be consigned to history's dustbin of offensive clichés where it belongs. If it is meant ironically (Trevize is under some stress at the time) then it is still too hackneyed to be effective. Trevize is not a deep enough character nor are his society's mores strongly enough implied for that kind of pointed comment to have any real meaning. It is, I think, a key expression in ascertaining just how Asimov as a storyteller is reacting to a significant shift in values between the days of the original series and now, but the meaning of the expression in its context is so vague that the reader's reaction is one of numb disbelief that is used at all.

The other main flaw, to my mind, overshadows all such lapses of taste, and it is, unfortunately, the motive force of the plot itself.

Asimov has woven so much mental manipulation into the Foundation series, from the Mule stories onwards, that it seems that all he has to do to break out of a dramatic impasse is to show that the situation wasn't in fact what we believed it to be. Now, this may work with, say, the Illuminatus! books, which are fast-moving comic entertainments about conspiracy, manipulation, and paranoia; it may work with The End of Eternity which resolves into Andrew Harlan's anguished cry "As long as I acted on my own, for reasons of my own, I'll take all the consequences, material and spiritual. But to be fooled into it, to be tricked into it, by people handling and manipulating my emotions as though I were a Computaplex..." (Panther Edition, p.177), but it doesn't work in a series which, we were originally lead to understand, was based precisely on the premise that the machinations of small groups of conspirators were useless against the wider flow of history. So the hints originally given in Second Foundation about the Mule's origin are, it seems, wrong. So there are still forces of which we know nothing operating, and the whole process of events in Foundation's Edge may be capable of other interpretations. Certainly the book is packed full of cryptic suggestions which may be clues for the future by which, as we are given them, hang very loosely. It's all very well, but the kind of sequel which only works by rewriting the event of its predecessors has always struck me as dramatically dishonest. Asimov, having given us his reasons for not

continuing with the Foundation series, has not produced a novel which really convinces us that it was worth going back on that decision. The "Astounding" readers who devoured the original stories are long-gone; I find it hard to believe that the equivalent audience today would find the publication of this sequel relevant.

Similar points can be made concerning 2010: A Space Odyssey. In fact, I would suggest that the necessity for this sequel is less than that for Asimov's. The ending of 2001 blatantly rewrites the previous book as much as does Foundation Edge. It interweaves the story of an expedition to reclaim the DISCOVERY and find out exactly what happened among the moons of Jupiter (Clarke uses the film's plotline to start from, rather than that of his previous novel, which had Bowman meet his fate near Saturn) with an explanation of what happens after the transfigured Bowman returns to Earth. We are, in fact, given an entirely new scenario, based not so much on the film rather than the novel, but filling in areas where the film offered ambiguity. In the novel 2001, we are told that the world's political situation is dire:

'food was short in every country; even the United States had meatless days, and widespread famine was predicted within fifteen years..along symbolic lines visible only to politicians, the thirty-eight nuclear powers watched each other with belligerent anxiety.. Every time Floyd took off from Earth he wondered if it would be still there when the time came to return' (Arrow edition p41/42)

The conclusion quite clearly has Bowman/the Star Child putting an end to the nuclear apocalypse and preparing himself for some kind of mastery over humanity:

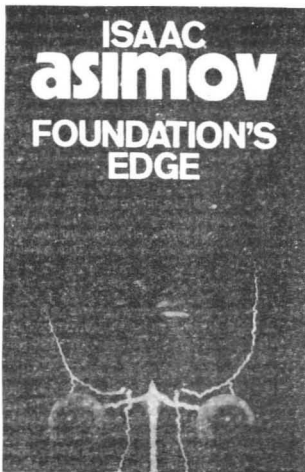
'He had return in time. Down there on that crowded globe, the alarms would be flashing across the radar screens, the great tracking telescopes would be searching the skies - and history as men knew it would be drawing to a close.

A thousand miles below, he became aware that a slumbering cargo of death had awoken.. He put forth his will, and the circling megatons flowered in a silent detonation that brought a brief, false dawn to half the sleeping globe.

Then he waited, marshalling his thoughts and brooding over his still untested powers. For though he was master of the world, he was not quite sure what to do next.

But he would think of something.' (p.223/224)

When he retells this part in 2010, Clarke replaces the sentence I have emphasized above with "They knew we was coming" which changes the whole meaning



of the passage, and Bowman's return to Earth is far less apocalyptic than we have been led to believe: in fact, this is the weakest part of the book and the chapter in which Bowman appears on the TV screen of a former lover is soap-opera rather than apotheosis. The problems facing mankind seem to have receded into the background; certainly enough for the USA and the USSR to be co-operating in the mission to salvage Discovery. (We are told, for instance, that Sakharov has been rehabilitated and loaded with honours.) If the focus in 2001 was on an evolutionary process lasting millions of years, in 2010 it is split between a more or less conventional high-quality space adventure story of the kind Clarke did in books like The Sands of Mars and a curiously hazy picture of 'Bowman' scurrying about the Solar System on a mission which ends up with Jupiter becoming a micro-star sparking a hurried evolution on its moon Europa of a race which, it is hinted, will become Mankind's rival.

Both 2010 and Foundation's Edge attack the problem of being sequels to work which do not really 'need' sequels in similar ways. Yet 2010 is an altogether better book to read. Perhaps it's because, set in a time not so far distance from ours, with descriptions firmly extrapolated from current knowledge (such as the results of the Voyager fly-pasts) it has fascination which sketchily-traced images of star-systems thousands of millennia in the future don't have. More likely it's the difference in the writing. Whereas like Asimov, Clarke seems to eschew anything like a 'stylistic' approach, sticking to simple descriptions and dialogue rather than verbal pyrotechnics, it is exactly because of this that it is possible to overlook the effectiveness of his balanced, slightly rhetorical prose. It is the prose of a first-class historian - that, perhaps, is his power; that he is able to carry off the device of representing himself as describing actual past events (one which Asimov used in the 'Encyclopedia Galactica' passages of the original Foundation stories). The parallel weakness - that his love for verisimilitude in scientific background leads him to incorporate large amounts of 'useful knowledge' in his tales - is minimized by the fact that Clarke is not writing adventure stories to sugar the pill of information but tales which spring from a direct response, a poetic response to science and its concepts. You can learn a lot from Clarke, which isn't necessarily a bad thing: essentially, though, he attempts to depict the same response to space exploration, say, as, for example, a medieval cathedral. I dislike the expression 'spiritual' in this context, but it's the only one which seems to fit.

Although Clarke shares with Asimov the same inability or unwillingness to sacrifice story or idea for character, this is partly camouflaged by a fairly definite and consistent authorial persona and dialogue which is far less stiff and mannered than Asimov's. Occasionally the poise slips, and silly, rather donish jokes (such as the one about Floyd "rising to the occasion" with an attractive female companion during a dangerous manoeuvre in space) slip though (p. 62) but such moments are rare. Above all, Clarke's focus is on the potential of the natural universe rather than petty melodrama. This potential underlies the passions of his characters, and is perhaps the reason why criticizing Clarke for not producing 'memorable characters' is totally to misread him. Like his Master Olaf Stapledon, Arthur C. Clarke's main character is Mankind.

Unfortunately, is the fact that one of these books is better than the other really relevant? Some would say no, that they are both redundant as works of art, existing purely because publishers pay large amounts of money for more of a proven formula and the public always wants to know 'what happened next'. That's perhaps a cynical conclusion, certainly an artificial one (so what's wrong with that? you may cry) but it's one I must learn to, if only because I feel...hell, have as many sequels as you like, but they surely must grow out of an organic sequence. Both these books remind me of the kind of serial in which we discover that the hero wasn't really killed by the giant tarantula at the end of the last episode because unbeknown to us on his last visit to the dentist he had come across an article on 'How to hypnotise spiders' in a magazine in the waiting room. In fact, while the 'retrospective rewriting' in Foundation's Edge

is less necessary and appears out of what seems to be a fundamental weakness of plot conception and a vain desire to link all the author's past works to form an 'oeuvre', in 2010 it is done because it's the only way to get out of an impossible situation: if you can't describe the unknowable, you pretend it wasn't so very much unknowable after all. Unfortunately, by doing this, the mystery, the air of the numinous which was the *raison d'être* of the original story dissipates. In both these books, you are left admiring the skill with which the author gets out of the trap he's set himself, but wondering if it was all worthwhile.

(C) 1983 Andy Sawyer

ADDENDUM

(The following is a short letter sent by Andy Andruschak which is an interesting addition to Andy Sawyer's article. Besides which, I cannot resist the temptation of showing that Arthur C. Clarke made a technical error! It also shows how fast our knowledge of Space is growing if a book can become scientifically out of date before it is published.)

Dear Geoff, I do not know if you publish letters, but I do feel that I ought to write to somebody about Clarke's latest novel, 2010.

Oddly enough, I read the book because the Jet Propulsion Library had it. It may very well be the only book of fiction in the library, which otherwise runs to aeronautics and astronautics and hard science. I assume the book was sent to JPL as way of thanks, since much of the book's background is set in the Jupiter systems revealed by our two Voyager spacecraft.

That is the problem with the book for me. I know the Jupiter system well. So there are two problems that smack me in the eye when I read the book.

The first is that he has the spacecraft DISCOVERY at the Jupiter-10 L-1 point. He referred to it as a stable point, but the plot purposes has it drifting off for an unknown reason. In truth, the L-1 point is not stable, not in any system. L-4 and L-5, yes. The Trojan Asteroids are proof of that. But not L-1, L-2, or L-3. With three moons tugging at it, the spacecraft would drift away from L-1 in less than two orbits, and once away it could not get back.

Even worse was to have human beings inside the Jupiter Magnetosphere. The radiation would fry you fast, as it damn well almost did our spacecraft. How well I remember when Pioneer 10 was closing in on Jupiter, and we read the data coming back with worry. We almost lost that spacecraft, and did a lot of re-working on the VOYAGERS.

This point was brought up at the 1979 LOSCON, held in November here in Los Angeles. One of the panels had Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Poul Anderson talking about the impact of the VOYAGER discoveries on science fiction. All agreed that present technology cannot do much about the hazard.

I myself proposed that the best idea would be to have a space station at the Sun-Jupiter L-1 point. True, it would not be all that stable, but if we moved an asteroid out from the belt with a mass driver, it could be moved into place, and kept on station, at little cost except the rocks thrown away by the mass driver. At L-1 it would be outside the Magnetosphere, yet would have the full face of Jupiter available for science work. Unmanned probes could be sent into the system as needed.

Clarke would have been better off to have continued the story in the Saturn system, where the radiation is probably endurable.

Dust In The Archives, A Tear In The Eye

Steve Gallagher

What follows is a piece written for the BSFA back in the days when Channel Four was an unrealised plan, Tom Baker was still playing Doctor Who, and beer was threepence a pint. It's about the eye-opening and rather chastening experience of scripting a four-parter for the aforesaid TV series. It never saw print because I hurriedly had to withdraw it - I'd thought that the BBC had rejected my next outline and it turned out they wanted to buy it, which made it a bad time to 'tell all'.

Not that there was very much to tell; I'd turned out to be a not-so-good TV writer in the sense that my conceptual approach differed widely from that of the production team, and it took a lot of hacking by hands other than mine to make it fit. The second four-parter - Terminus, transmitted in the last season - went through a milder version of the same process. At least I could recognise most of Terminus, even if so much of the dialogue did seem to have made a detour through the stilt-factory.

But the article represented my feelings after that first experience, a story called Warriors' Gate. Working on the next story after a few changes in the production lineup was a less traumatic ride, but I think it's fair to say that my broad conclusions about the TV business didn't undergo any dramatic shakeup because of this. Now that my third outline's been rejected in rather emphatic terms, there doesn't seem to be any reason why I shouldn't let those conclusions out into the light.

There's a paradox here, but don't expect me to be able to explain it. Disenchantment with the TV medium didn't stop me going back for more, and probably wouldn't stop me again if I thought I'd have a chance of doing something out of the ordinary. It isn't the money, because the money can be quite easily had if you've got basic writing skills and the right attitude of mind - what Stephen King has called "a smidgen of talent, a lot of gall, and the soul of a drone...a low Alpha-wave pattern and a perception of writing as the mental equivalent of bucking crates of soda up onto a coca-cola truck" (Danse Macabre, Chapter Vlll). True to say, the British form of this attitude is less extreme and less bizarre than the US model on which King is commenting, but the basic link is there. Anybody who watches credits will know that there are some names which crop up with fair regularity in a wide variety of series; they're television's journeymen and women, and their function - although they'd probably resent the comparison - is roughly comparable to that of many of the old pulp writers.

But I'd better be careful. It's starting to look as if I'm engineering a situation in which I can wear my eventual failure as badge of honour. Bear this

in mind as you read. Just let me blow the dust off, and we'll be ready to start.

These days I go around calling myself a small-name writer. Sometimes I overdo the modesty bit, putting myself down when I ought to be giving the listener a big hype, but I suppose it's a kind of nervous defence mechanism I've developed for those situations where somebody asks you what you do, so you tell them, and they've never heard of you. I've heard it described elsewhere as the 'what name do you write under?' syndrome.* When I had a steady job it was easy to side-step the issue altogether, but that avenue closed up when I went freelance; so now I've got something I can use to dispel the embarrassing blankness, I can tell them that I once wrote for Doctor Who.

Note that 'once'. Not that I've got anything against the programme or the people who made it, it's just that I regard the whole exercise as a side-trip from the career that I'm trying to put together. Small-name writer I may be, television writer I ain't. Listen, and I'll tell you why.

I worked for a TV company for five years before I got enough money together to make the break, so I should have known the score. One of the things involved in my job was to run into a tight passageway behind the control room with a roll of sticky tape whenever we needed to make an on-air apology for a burst of interference or a lost programme; the tape was to do running repairs on the flip-over apology captions that were loaded into an ancient studio scanner. The machine was so decrepit that the carriages were bent and the card would fall out as they turned around; the tape would hold them in for a while, but then the lights would soften the adhesive and the cards would drop again. It was like something set up in a laboratory to demonstrate the principles of entropy.

One day we got a fault on transmissions, and our continuity announcer departed from the usual non-specific smoothing over of the glitch and explained that we'd lost the synchronisation on our telecine machine, and the boys in the backroom were re-threading the film to get the sound back in line with the picture. Next day he got carpeted for it; Mister Thick of Blackburn, he was told, doesn't know what synchronisation is, doesn't know what a telecine machine is, and doesn't give a damn about either of them. Apologies to everyone in Blackburn, but I'm only reporting. Mister Thick, meanwhile, only wanted Mannix back.

The crappy machinery was a demonstration of one of the first things I learned about the industry, the neglect of anything that isn't up-front and conspicuous. The reverse of this is the excess lavishness on anything that does show, like a foyer that gets redecorated two or three times a year whilst the inner corridors stay gloomy and scruffy. When Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood came over to Walk through 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof' a special dressing room was built and then rebuilt to suit them, whilst the staff canteen was being remodelled with motorway service area castoffs. The same principle extends into programming in that prestige productions are allowed to run way over budget whilst bread-and-butter programming has to operate within very tight restraints.. The special consideration given to the slow-witted soul in Blackburn showed me something else about the basic, reliable crowd-pullers of the TV schedule; they're about conforming to expectations, not about raising them.

The more I saw of the business, the less I wanted to write for TV. No way did I want to toss my cherished little gems into that piranha pool of crossed politics and competing egos. I had longish meetings with the heads of script departments both in commercial companies and at the BBC, meetings from which I should have come away hot with a desire to start pounding out scenarios and raking in the mountains of cash that were available in this script-hungry medium, but...

I suppose apathy best describes it. There may be a better word, but I can't be bothered to think of it. I could get excited about prose or about

*In deference to the originator of the syndrome, the answer to this question should always be 'Bob Shaw'.

radio, where I could put something on paper and know that what I'd written would reach its audience in more or less undiluted form, but television... a television script is raw material for other people's talents, to be cut and adapted and rewritten - that is, unless you're a Name of such towering proportions that it's enough to kick off a whole article in the Radio Times.

I knew all this. So why did I have to write for Doctor Who to learn it all over again?

Well, it simply goes to show that watching it is no substitute for having it happen to you. When I got a telephone call from the show's script editor, beliefs were elbowed out by hopes. Doctor Who had a new producer as well as a new editor, and they're been passed a copy of one of my Radio 4 plays. They reckoned the approach was literate without being obscure, and that it would fall in with the new upmarket style that they were hoping to bring to the show. Now, how would you react to an overture like that? Especially when, as I believed then and still believe now, it was made with complete sincerity?

The Doctor Who office has no problem attracting would-be writers. The problem lies in coping with the influx of junk that makes Sturgeon's Law look like a serious underestimate. One of the reasons for this is that the show has been around so long. Another is that it's sf and, as everybody knows, it's easy to write sf. You don't have to know much, you just have to have read other peoples' sf. So regardless of the fact that all of the unsolicited submissions get attention, most of the final commissioned material comes from 'regulars' like Terrance Dicks or from writers that the production team have gone out of their way to encourage. Like me, whose outline they liked and on whom they decided to take a gamble.

In fact, it was a qualified gamble at first. If they like your outline then they'll commission an expanded scene breakdown for a couple of hundred pounds; four episodes, all the characters and sets laid out, the action of each scene described in brief with no dialogue. At this stage I was given extra obligations and restrictions; the new Ardric character had to be built in, K9 had to go, Romana had to go, the TARDIS had to get out of E-space. Privately I disagreed with the idea of Ardric altogether; I could see the logic in wanting a figure with whom children could identify, but it was adult-logic. When I was a child I always identified with grown-up heroes and found child protagonists a pain.

I passed Go, collected the two hundred pounds, and got the commission. The contract stipulated that half the money was payable on signature and the other half on final acceptance of the script - standard stuff, with an icing that I wasn't aware of at the time in that Doctor Who has such well-established overseas markets that it can reliably be expected to return 500% over and above that original fee in residuals, spread over a five-year period. But I wasn't aware of it, and it would have made no difference if I had been; I was in on a renaissance, this was the season when Doctor Who would drop the pseudoscience and the jargon and those hoary old plots where the Doctor joins forces with oppressed peasants to win their planet back from alien overlords....

The standard Writers' Guild agreement entitles the BBC to a first draft and then a rewrite subject to discussion, after which the writer's legal obligation is ended. Which is not to say that the second draft is inviolate - raw material, remember. Most writers I know would gladly do a further draft without even thinking of the money... well, maybe thinking about it, but not letting the lack of it persuade them to turn their creation over to someone else to be given its final form. I completed the first draft in five weeks, and the script editor came up to Manchester to go through it with me. We booked into one of the spare offices in New Broadcasting House and went through each of the episodes; usually I'd go to London for this kind of thing, but he'd been working flat out for months on the first half of the season and was grabbing the chance to get out of the city if only for a day. He was a likeable type, an actor turned radio writer turned TV writer, a self-taught computer freak who edited the scripts on a word processor that he was reviewing for a computer magazine.

Maybe in the minds of the appointing board this technological leaning plus a scriptwriting background added up to a science-fictional qualification, but the equation didn't really hold true as was shown when, for example, I had to explain why 'Gateway', though a good, punchy title, couldn't really be used on my story.

When I finished the second draft three weeks later, I thought it was pretty hot stuff; I still do, but that second draft isn't what made it to the screen. There was more changes and modifications being requested and now the director, a writer himself, was on the scene with a whole set of notes. Also the date of the first read-through was close enough to be an added pressure, by which I mean only a couple of weeks away. I took the train down to the TV centre, absorbed as much of the new thinking as I could, and drafted some revisions in the buffet car on the return journey which I dictated down a phone line at eleven o'clock that night, doing the same with episodes three and four the next day. It was then that I started to realise that my highly personalised project was nothing of the kind - and couldn't be, given the team nature of the medium I'd written it for.

Team was right. I was asked if I could move down to London for a week to join in a three-way effort on a final draft. As it happened, I couldn't - I was working out the last few days of my regular job and couldn't take leave, trade days or even feign sickness. Even though I'd probably have been there if I could, I'm glad I wasn't - everything I'd wanted to say was there in draft two, and all else after that had been a matter of accommodation. Since there was nothing I wanted to add, I'd only have been a spectator while others added their own ideas and my own were either modified or removed.

I saw this last effort just a few days before the read-through. The general lines of my script were there but there had been changes in the depths and the surface was almost unrecognisable. It was like a broad adaptation of an original work that I'd written for some other medium. I'd tried to work on three levels, with monsters for the littlies, poetic imagery for the adolescents, and a more intriguing ideas-structure for the adult viewers; the three levels were now one narrative line, and the process of reduction had somehow managed to make it simple and obscure at the same time. And there was the jargon about Lime Striations that I'd argued to avoid, and those random-syllabled names - my Calibans had become Tharils, my Shogun Warriors were now Gundans - no cultural echoes, just sounds.

I could have shouted, I could have raved. But I smiled and complimented them on a sound, workmanlike final product, and any raving I did in private and to friends. It's not just that I don't have Harlan Ellison's energy and aggression - let alone his status - but I'd come to realise that I'd been serving the medium whilst I'd believed that the medium was serving me. A lesson in hubris, maybe... but for all the inevitability of it, I still think it's wrong. The format shouldn't dictate to the content; maybe an exact length of 75,000 words and fifteen or so even-length chapters would be a book production manager's dream, but there isn't much chance of getting it introduced as an industry standard; even less of creating acceptable limitations on phrasing and scene construction. And yet for routine television, the reliable breadwinners and crowd-pullers, such rules are in part written and generally understood. How essential they are can be judged by the way they go out of the window for a prestige effort... anybody notice the slot lengths on Hitch-hiker's? Or Fawlty Towers? How the news gets moved for the expensive movies?

BBC 2 is the nearest we ever got to breaking away. ITV 2 isn't even going to try. It took an existing cult to get Hitch-hiker's the treatment that it needed, and it'll take some similar extraordinary pressure before we see decent TV sf again. In the meantime we'll still get screen sf, and it'll continue to be mediocre.

But as for Mister Thick of Blackburn...he'll probably think it's okay.

BOOK REVIEWS



PUBLISHING ELEPHANTS MAKE STRABISMIC FORECASTS

CY CHAUVIN



(TRANSMUTATIONS: A BOOK OF PERSONAL ALCHEMY by ALEXEI PANSHIN. Elephant Books,)
(Box 999, Dublin, PA 18917. \$20 hardcover, \$8 paper, 214pp.)

There are two reasons to be excited by this book, and both are related to the potential it offers, rather than the book itself. The first (and easiest to explain) is that Alexei Panshin, writer, has become Alexei Panshin, publisher: Elephant Books is his own imprint.

As a publishing house, Elephant Books is actively seeking fiction, art and criticism that transcend ordinary convention and extend the boundaries of sf. We are looking for vision, style, passion, originality and commitment. Above all else, we are looking for the sense of wonder.

We are a joint-risk venture, a collaboration between artist and publisher. We have no advances to offer. However, for any work that touches our sense of wonder, we can offer the possibility of swift publication in attractive and well made hardbound and quality paperback editions. Elephant Books makes no claim on any publishing rights other than those it uses itself. All other rights remain the property of the artist.

Elephant Books is intended to serve as an extension of conventional publishing practice - and also as an alternative to it. Our intention is to provide a place of publication where the nature and potential of sf are honoured more highly than mere safe and easy repetition and obvious profit. Our faith lies in quality, creativity and a sense of human purpose - not in more-of-the-same. We ask others who share our values to join us.

This declaration is as exciting as the announcement of Interzone, the co-operatively published British sf magazine. This also suggests the second reason why Transmutations is exciting: Panshin's artistic position and commitment to sf.

I first became interested in Alexei Panshin's critical work many years ago after reading a review he wrote of Doris Lessing's Briefing for a Descent into Hell and two collections of material on the Sufis. Later, as I read the column that Alexei & Cory wrote for Fantastic, and the Lessing novel, I was taken in by their vision. These writers were obsessed, in a way that seemed very positive. The Panshins's columns were often repetitious (as they groped for a way to express their vision more clearly), but their search for transcendence in sf seemed sincere and important. (It still does.) I say this to indicate that I have only the deepest sympathy and interest in their efforts; but good intentions alone do not make for a good book.

Transmutations is quite a ragbag collection: short stories, verse, essays, letters, bits from Alexei's novels, most of which has been previously published in magazines. Alexei's rationale behind his selection concerns how the work was written - these pieces were the ones that came easily, in blinding flashes of inspiration, the ones he stayed up all night to finish. These are the ones that he may feel are closest to his inner vision, because they have been filtered less through his conscious mind.

But what does this actually mean, in terms of words-on-paper? Perhaps the

most obviously outrageous are the poems or verse. Several consist of single lines on a page (such as "Do places dream of people until they return") or single lines in a sequence ("I think of yourself as a ..." on four pages in a row, each offering a different alternative; the last is "as a thought"). Another offers variations on what the abbreviation "sf" might stand for ("suave farts" and "strabismic forecasts" being the best). This verse makes me feel uneasy. I suspect that what Panshin is attempting has little to do with modern poetry, and it would be a lie to say it didn't affect me - but because there is so much nonsense parading in modern art, his work suffers by association. This verse seems to be an outgrowth of his interest in the Sufis, but I am suspicious of any art that requires the reader (or viewer or listener) to put more into it than the artist offers in return. This, however, seems to be one of the major tenants in the new role Panshin feels an improved sf should offer its readers. (More on this later.)

The fiction is better (or at least more traditional): I don't have the uneasy feeling perhaps I'm being cheated as with these single lines on a page, or other clever stunts. But I was disappointed by stories that impressed me on my first reading. "'Found in Space' by R Monroe Weems" is a clever Heinlein parody (or so it seemed in Amusing in 1974). "Sky Blue" (1972) is a story of maturation, but it is primarily Panshin's style that gives the story its charm. It is almost a fairy tale with sf trappings. Like most of the other fiction in Transmutations, it is about learning. It is also the longest story in the book (at 15 pages), many of the others are short, slim fables (in the manner of the Sufis, perhaps).

The heart of the book is Panshin's essays and letters. Some of his ideas I have heard so often that they seem tiresome ("science fiction will have the most fruitful days it has yet seen"), and I feel uneasy at the constant references to the 1960's as a special decade - do we have to look backward to find the future? But much of this material is fascinating, particularly "The Case of A E Van Vogt" and the letters written to Ian Watson (the first written in response to a copy of Vector sent mysteriously to Panshin with an article by Watson and his address on the outside!). The first letter explains the Panshins's interest in Sufism (which Watson seems to share).

What is Sufism?

Sufism is the secret tradition behind all religious and philosophical systems... This belief includes conscious evolution, whereby through an effort of will man can originate new faculties...

- The Sufis by Idries Shah

The Panshin hope is that Sufism's catalytic power might be merged with sf in order to form an evolutionary mental tool - and sf as an evolutionary tool was the theme of Watson's article in Vector "W(h)ither Science Fiction?". Obviously, this is not a literary goal but a social and psychological one. It is also an easy thing to say, but how could sf be written in a catalytic way? What does this mean? Panshin gives a possible example when he quotes A E Van Vogt writing about himself in "The Case of A E Van Vogt":

Each paragraph - sometimes each sentence - of my brand of science fiction has a gap in it, an unreality condition. In order to make it real, the reader must add the missing parts. He cannot do this out of his past associations. There are no past associations. So he must fill in the gaps from the creative part of his brain. This is what is required of the science fiction reader: that he takes the hints, the incomplete pictures, the half-suggested ideas and philosophies, and give them a full body. He must do so at the speed of reading - which is faster than the speed of writing. When he does his part of the job well - and the author has done his share - then the reader thinks he has read a good story.

Is this true? Is this actually how Van Vogt's novels and short stories work? Panshin quotes secondary evidence (other writer's reactions to Van Vogt's work), but he doesn't make an in-depth or even cursory examination of Van Vogt's actual writing. (The one long article that Panshin & Cory wrote about Van Vogt, in Fantastic, Feb. 1972, doesn't answer - or even ask - this question either.)

Everything Panshin writes about A E Van Vogt suggests that his writing method

is largely an unconscious process, and Panshin includes a section ("How To Write Science Fiction: A Collection of Testimony") of quotes from various sf writers indicating that much of their material seems to come from unconscious sources, dreams and sleep, and not from the scientific journals we are often told are the source. Possibly, Panshin doesn't understand Van Vogt's methods, either, or how sf might be written in a catalytic way - after all, Panshin's ideas are still in the development stage.

My gravest reservation regarding Van Vogt's supposed methods concerns his stories' re-readability. If the reader participates in the creation of the story, what will he or she find on the second or third reading? The reward of re-reading seems to depend upon detail and subtlety not noticed on the first reading, or relationships not revealed until the story's end; how much of this will the reader invent? And on the second time, will he or she invent anew, or notice these "gaps"... the "unreality condition"? Even Van Vogt says "the reader thinks he has read a good story" (my emphasis). But has he?

Actually, what Panshin finds in Van Vogt (and Sufism, and Watson and Lessing) seems closely linked with R D Laing's and Theodore Roszak's idea that present day society is suffering from the deprivation of the mystical and transcendent experience. Laing suggests that there is great pressure upon writers and artists to evoke these experiences, for they are among the few who can do it in a "safe" way, one that can be easily dismissed ("this is only fiction"). The true visionary experience in our society is, after all, linked with madness (take note of Lessing's Briefing for a Descent into Hell). The very nature of artistic creation and experience requires a distancing of oneself from the outside (shared) world. Other things take on a lesser reality; the artistic experience becomes the focus, a compression of time and place. This distancing may make an artist or writer seem somewhat out of step with other people's perceptions - note the common jokes about a writer's eccentricities, or more sadly, Philip K Dick's own life.

But now I am going beyond the confines of a review - this is what Panshin's book suggests, not what it delivers. Probably it is Panshin's intention, like Van Vogt, to make the reader participate in the explication of his ideas, to suggest more than entertain. I am glad to see him at work again.

COLLECTOR'S ITEM

BRIAN STABLEFORD

(THE WORLD BELOW: THE ISLAND OF CAPTAIN SPARROW: DELUGE by SYDNEY FOWLER WRIGHT)
(G. Dalton, Dublin 1980. 252pp, 190pp, 239pp., £2.50 each. Order from the
(British distributor: Fowler Wright Books Ltd., Leominster, Herefordshire.)

These three paperback reprints of classic scientific romances were never properly distributed or advertised when they appeared, and their existence thus remains generally unknown. The first and second titles have been available recently in expensive library reprints in the USA but the present editions are not only better value but actually authorised by the Fowler Wright estate.

Deluge was the first novel Wright wrote, although it was preceded into print by the first part of The World Below. He eventually published it himself after it had been universally rejected, to a chorus of adulatory reviews. It was quickly reprinted in a commercial edition, and its reputation preceded it to the USA, where it became a best-seller. (Cosmopolitan, the publishers, later claimed to have sold 70,000 copies on the day of publication.) It is one of the classic disaster novels, in which earthquakes are followed by the inundation of most of Britain. Survivors of the catastrophe struggle to get things going again on a chain of islands that were once the tips of the Malvern Hills. It was a

violent and disturbing novel by the standards of its day, and still reads well; it stands at the head of the tradition which led down to the novels of John Wyndham.

The World Below tells the story of a time-traveller's nightmarish odyssey in a far future world where man is extinct. Two humanoid races - the gentle Amphibians and the horrific Dwellers - have come into possession of the Earth and the arrival of the time traveller upsets the relationship between them. The plotline is thin, and evaporates altogether by the end of the second part, but there are few things in imaginative fiction which can compare to the horrific invention of the story, which contains much imagery derived from Dante's Inferno (Wright finished the translation of the Inferno begun by Sir Walter Scott).

The Island of Captain Sparrow concerns the adventures of a castaway on an island where the descendants of a pirate crew have all but driven to extinction a race of satyrs and the last remnant of the highly sophisticated but non-aggressive culture of sunken Atlantis. This is an eventful adventure story enlivened by some bizarre incidents and by the other Fowler Wright heroine: a beautiful wild girl, rather akin to a female Tarzan.

Anyone interested in the history of science fiction should be familiar with all three of these books. They are unlikely to become available again as mass market paperbacks, so these quality paperback editions represent the ordinary book-buyer's best option. Collectively, they offer an insight into one of the most original minds ever active in the field.

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NORTH BY NORTH-WEST

MARY GENTLE

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(THE COMPASS ROSE by URSULA LE GUIN. GOLLANCZ 1983, 273pp., £7.95)

Most of her readers are going to be comfortable with Le Guin. Stories in The Compass Rose put forward the secular liberal humanist position; we are, or would like to think we are, supporters of secular, liberal, humanist ideals. Extremes in politics or religion or emotion (I mean those extremes that border on obsession) make us uncomfortable. Reality should be patterned, orderly.

So here, for example, the hysterical tone with which H P Lovecraft used to accompany the raising of R'yleh from the sea-bed is transmuted into a translucent, weary end-of-the-world in "The New Atlantis". And another Lovecraftian voyage into Mountains of Madness territory, the southern polar regions, becomes a comfortable feminist fable in "Sur". (But more of that story later.)

The stories fit well enough into the divisions of the compass rose, north and south and east and west, into the centre and away from it; and they are good stories, but that is to be expected. The question is, what kind of good stories? And who is likely to be navigating by the compass rose?

Navigation will be easier if the reader is not only literate but educated in literature. References lie around to be picked up. "The First Report of the Shipwrecked Foreigner to the Kadanh of Derb", for example, has this: 'If I were an aging German pederast with a death wish, I should feel a terrible fool in Venice. Right out of my depth.' A different Venice to Mann's, perhaps - considering the shipwreck - one close to that left by Marco Polo. Cities are mutable. But then, to choose to describe to an alien a brief visit to Venice instead of, say, governmental systems or the climate of the Earth may be accurate; the only way to encompass an entire world. Or it may be just sophistry. Certainly it echoes that educated, academic tone.

It's a tone with something mocking in it, but nothing sharp enough to be called an edge. It serves to tame, and not disturb. Or does it?

"Intracom" is funny, and not just because it takes the piss out of a cer-

tain well-known TV series; but it leaves a vaguely uncomfortable taste behind it. The same flavour lingers in "Gwilan's Harp", which is not a comedy. I think it is the assumption that maturity means, not just compromise, but a failure of all ideals, obsessions, and excessive actions. Is that a real or a fake maturity: a measure cut to fit the cloth, or an erosion of energy, and a giving up?

Which brings me back to "Sur": the story of the all-woman trip to the South Pole in 1909/10, the year before Scott and Amundsen. A lost account: lost in attics, memories, never told. And is it a feminist story? Le Guin implies parallels: "Sur" is a moral exploration, not an exploitation; it leaves untouched the pole which later expeditions must mark with cairns and flags. To say the female expedition is different simply because it's female (and not because undertaken by these particular nine people, who are women), is just to promote the idea of a natural male/female dichotomy. This is comfortable feminism, unlike the radical variety which sees no difference between male/female but many differences between individuals and classes; comfortable because it fits inside the male world. Likewise "Sur" fits into male history: women cannot rob men of their pride by proclaiming first achievement. It has a cosy men-will-be-boys feel to it. Granted it's a literary device to gain credibility; still, to hide success in an attic is to fail.

Not all the stories in The Compass Rose are major, but even the minor ones are interesting. Fragments: poetic, humorous, academic - "The Author of the Acacia Seeds" taking linguistics to its extreme; "SQ" and its relationship to IQ; sad feminism with, as it were, its hands tied behind its back in "The White Donkey". Some are simple reversals like "The Wife Story"; some psychological exploration, "Malheur County" and "The Water is Wide". It isn't possible to do justice to all the stories in a short space; only to pick out some themes.

There is, for example, character; the liberal humanist writer tends to portray what one might call immediately identifiable people. We might meet them. We might, under different circumstances, be them; fallible, sometimes rational, always moral. There are no portrayals of what used, I think, to be called "abnormal psychology" (in the days when we knew what normality was); it's less reassuring to identify with a psychopath.

It's inevitable that the narrator of "The Diary of the Rose" will make some kind of stand against tyranny. She may hide from herself the knowledge of what, in her hospital work, the techniques of psychology are used for; but once she undergoes that self-discovery, all else follows. No Le Guin character here would, in the face of totalitarianism, support the regime or enjoy her work. "The Diary of the Rose" promotes the easy answer: that once people realise they are doing 'wrong', they will stop doing it and fight for the 'right'; or at least cease to do what they do. Under tyranny or liberty, is it that simple? Likewise "The New Atlantis" shows a belief that art and music can resist a totalitarian state, and not fuel it; but there was Wagner, and who's to say that Goebbels's use of the language wasn't art?

Which is not to say that The Compass Rose is unaware of that. The plea in "Schrodinger's Cat" is for "Certainty. All I want is certainty. To know for sure that God does play dice with the world"; and it gets a very dusty answer. We are not even sure of our uncertainties.

Like that thought-experiment, the book's stance is basically that of the observer. To act without observation, thought, rationality; is to open the way to atrocity. The map is not the territory, nevertheless maps are made - continually, obsessively. With so much unknown, we make compass roses and attempt navigation. There is a secular liberal humanist in all of us - perhaps, as in "Intracom", acting as ship's captain; but we also have an insane Second Mate, and tend to receive from Cosmic Sources. What can you do but laugh?

I fully intended (I promise) to tell you how penetratingly insightful and humely humorous a writer Le Guin is. But you know that. Technically, The Compass Rose is not to be faulted: it says what it means, and it works: there are few books of which that can be said. I have only a suspicion that it tames the irrational at the expense of something valuable.

Maybe the paradigm is "The Pathways of Desire", in which an alien world that is literally the product of fantasy has an all-encompassing explanation. Irrational rather than rational, religious rather than secular; but nevertheless, nothing is incomprehensible. Ultimately, all is explicable. And in The Compass Rose, which is also an artifact and the product of fantasy, this is also true. But is it true of my world, or theirs, or yours?



PROFESSOR PRESUMPTUOUS

NIK MORTON



(FAR FROM HOME by WALTER TEVIS. Gollancz 1983, 181pp., £6.95)

The thirteen stories in this collection are split into two sections; though they are not arranged in date order, I determined to tackle them that way. And I'm glad I did, for my initial disappointment was transformed: within these covers we can see Tevis mastering his art - which is perhaps presumptuous of me, considering that he is a professor of English... Four out of the first section I consider as being "pre-novel", dating from 1957-1961; the second section is further differentiated in that three of them do not have any printing history.

Part One, then, comprises six previously published pieces, some included for completeness rather than merit. Two of them feature a creator of any inventions, Farnsworth, a typical character and plot device for the 1950's period: the inventions, or accidental discoveries, are a ball whose bounce increases exponentially and a five-dimensional cube... "The Big Bounce" is lightweight fare, not particularly well written, its purpose for existence merely being to point yet again to the dangers of inventing things without considering the consequences: a standard "what if" situation with no plot, no surprises. "The 15th of Oofth" has a neat twist and some humour which make it more bearable, but the writing is still poor by any standards outside SF 50s magazines...

Very definitely tongue-in-cheek, "The Goldbrick" pokes fun at the military machine and at scientists whose major concern for proof of theories eschews the finer considerations such as life on earth. It could be viewed as an allegory; they were aware of the dangers of the atomic and H-bombs, too, but it didn't deter them.

The idea behind "The Other End of the Line" is ingenious enough. Another "what if" in which George receives a phone call from himself in the future and follows the instructions he is given. George is not a likeable character; there is little reader-identification, so when the denouement occurs, eerie though it is, we feel no concern, only a slight frisson of pleasure at an intriguing - and appropriate - end.

This collection takes its title from a story which displays the glimmerings of style and concern for humanity that surface in his later work. It is fantasy; I confess to not knowing what the tale means, if anything, yet some descriptive passages, about an old janitor, and an old cetacean, are memorable: the fantastic occurrence it pictures is imprinted on my mind's-eye indefinitely, so that every time I see a swimming pool I shall see that image. Perhaps it's about senses atrophying, about memories - some unshaped, and about harmless wish-fulfilment.

"The Scholar's Disciple" (which is copyright by The National Council of Teachers of English, no less) is a definite improvement. Though there is nothing new in the plot, it is handled with verve. Webley calls upon a demon to ghost-write for him a dissertation and some publishable scholarly articles. In return, he will be damned. Apparently, damnation isn't all that bad...

"Webley had with him a razor blade to open a vein for signing the contract; he was mildly piqued when the demon brought out a ball point pen, even

though the ink was bright red. It dried brown, however." Touches like that raise a smile. And,

"The dissertation, upon acceptance and publication by the University press, created a stir among a great many academic people, few of whom read it." Yes, with its pokes at academia, the best so far, with an agreeable, amusing payoff. It would be unfair to say more. Part Two's stories can be considered in two chunks: I will deal with those previously published first. "Out of Luck" is probably the most puzzling and least accessible. Harold was a reformed alcoholic who had left his wife to live with Janet and to paint. However, he begins to see duplicates of one individual all over town - and, Like *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, they quickly outnumber the others. Is he hallucinating, has the drink affected his grasp of reality, or was he being haunted? The end might cast light on his paranoia, in effect that recognising the problem is the start of the cure. I'm not sure. The build up of paranoia and menace was gripping, and the apparent revelations in Janet's kitchen promised a baleful mystery, but did not quite deliver. In the event, I finished it in a mood of ambivalence. At least Tevis creates a mood: many others don't. (Interestingly, Harold's wife was called Gwen; in "A Visit from Mother" the central character, Barney, had an ex-wife called Gwen... Other reverberations include JC Penny dresses; divorce; "Isabel was a director of the American Museum of Folk Art" ("A Visit from Mother") and "Janet was a very successful folk art dealer" ("Out of Luck"). A more careful writer, such as Priest, would probably have edited these fixations.)

"Rent Control" is quite fascinating. A couple discover that when they are in bed together they can literally make time stop. A slant on the romantic cliché, no doubt. The blurb hints at this whereas in the story we only learn by gradual stages; thus in one fell swoop, the blurb-writer ruins much of Tevis's carefully crafted unfolding story... The couple become the ultimate lotus-eaters. (Just think what you could do in a similar situation, though! Read all those books in your collection; study and learn masses of knowledge; write stories, novels; write articles or book-reviews for *Vector* and know they will meet the deadline!)

Another character, who fails to grab reader-sympathy and receives his come-uppance, is Edward in "The Apotheosis of Myra". On the planet Belsin, which is noted for its medicinal plantlife, his wife Myra - a lifelong sufferer of pain - learns that she is getting better. And all Edward wanted was to be rid of her, to inherit her fortune... Meanwhile, the grass is singing (with apologies to Doris Lessing & T S Eliot!)... The transformation of Myra is calculated to chill, and it does...

"Echo" is one of the best in the book. In the far future, Arthur awoke to "a world askew and furred". His mind had been taped by parapsychists and now inhabited an artificial body. A time of immortality, where the escape from boredom was immolation. (Echoed in *Mockingbird*). Here, Arthur met another reawakened person suffering from amnesia: Annabel. There is a sexual attraction between them, with longeurs of puzzlement and mystery. They need to get used to their new bodies, perhaps. The title gives away too much, but it is a satisfying story, and poses an interesting psychological dilemma.

The remaining three tales are linked by death and a kind of haunting after-life. The characters in "A Visit from Mother" and "Daddy" are the same. Although the emotions in these stories are the strongest in the book, and deeply felt, they are not, regrettably, commercial in the magazine world. Which is a pity: they say a great deal about guilt, love, hidden desires and fears. They are at once sad and moving. But most of all, they possess characters of depth. Barney's dead parents visit him in his NY apartment, as ghosts. Past petulances and foibles are dredged up; and even past "morphoses" can be ushered in. Barney had a sexual hangup which psychoanalysis attributed to memories of his mother undressing in front of him when he'd been a toddler. "Don't peek, Barney," she would say... And now, he asked her ghost to make herself young again; sadly, he could not remember her young face, only the old: the young body was the only image he had of his mother in her youth - no face... We tend to forget our parents were young,

like us, probably as unsure in adolescence, as gauche, and beautiful... Seduction, forbidden, yet all the more compulsive, by a ghost hovers: Oedipus taunting. And mother-fixation had its counterpart in her: she had only loved her father... "Daddy" continues this narrative of a strange, temporary menage a trois. For now his father talks, more than he ever uttered to him whilst alive. And it was a life of frustration, of dominance, in which he saw Barney as a real rival for his wife's affections... We are privy to a conscience-disturbing reappraisal of their lives; it is almost a catharsis, and seems so necessary, before the psychological healing can begin. Finally, "Sitting in Limbo" is about Billy, dead in a kind of limbo, who discovers that he can alter the little embarrassments of his past; nothing earth-shattering, but he could withdraw the harsh words, the insults hurled, in his life: thus creating a better impression, perhaps in preparation for his soul's onward, upward voyage or even for reincarnation... His past could well be Barney's, though; the echoes are so pronounced, the imagery almost identical. In the end, we feel sorry for him, as he tried to thrust away an image that had haunted his psyche all his life, whilst deeply, truly, he couldn't, it was part of him...

A few reverberating themes seem to be subliminal in some of Walter Tevis's work. Newton in The Man Who Fell To Earth is different, sexually, being an Anthean (alien); Spofforth, the sad wise robot in Mockingbird, is sexless though his crotch resembles a woman's more than a man's - and he is black; in "Echo" the two characters experience an unusual sexual affinity, one where hermaphroditism might prove adequate as description, and, harbinger of Spofforth, Arthur's artificial body was black; in "Rent Control" the characters sink into a state where they more resemble sexless automata than human beings; and in "Sitting in Limbo" the male narrator was drawn to reincarnation as a girl. The strongest thread is one of bisexuality, identification with the opposite sex, an inner cleavage and conflict between the masculine and feminine potentials within the personality. This conflict is only hinted at, but such hermaphroditic excursions may be healing, giving acceptance of the latent masculinity or femininity in all of us.

An interesting and sometimes thought-provoking collection, well worth tackling, providing as it does an insight into the maturing process of a writer.

XX

LOOKING CRITICALLY AT CRITICISM

JUDITH HANNA

XX

(BRIDGES TO FANTASY edited by GEORGE SLUSSER, ERIC S. RABKIN & ROBERT SCHOLES.)
 (Southern Illinois University Press, 1982, 231pp, no price cited.)
 (THE IMPULSE OF FANTASY LITERATURE by C.N. MANLOVE. MacMillan 1982, 174pp., £20)
 (FANTASY LITERATURE by T.E. APTER. MacMillan 1982, 161pp., £20.00)

I'd guess that most readers of Vector, whether or not they consider themselves readers of fantasy, know what they mean by 'fantasy' literature, even if there are a clutch of works that sit along the borderline and by their precarious balance show us just about where that borderline lies. Letters to Vector (and Paperback Inferno) suggest that we're less sure about what criticism, which Vector as its subtitle says is a journal of, ought to be - however strongly individual members may hold their own views, no overall consensus has emerged. This is probably because readers of Vector are less interested in criticism than in fantasy.

There's nothing like familiarity to breed rule-of-thumb snap judgements that defy all attempts at definition: for this reason there's little point attempting to define fantasy here. Criticism ought to be, by its nature, self-defining, explaining not only the subject it is examining (here, fantasy) but also justifying the procedure it uses for that examination. For this reason, it should be

unnecessary to define criticism before getting down to examination of these three critical works. Still, there's nothing like reading three books of serious academic criticism, not just for the fun of it (yes, Virginia, reading criticism can be fun) but weighed down by the knowledge that you're going to have to commit a considered judgement of them to paper afterwards, to make you think about what we are entitled to demand from criticism. Just what should good criticism do?

Slusser, Rabkin & Scholes in their introduction to Bridges to Fantasy, a collection of papers presented at the Second Eaton Conference of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, answer the question in these terms: "The central problem in the study of fantasy, then, is not merely to define another genre, but to circumscribe the tools and methods needed to approach works of art from a new perspective." Er, I thought, "circumscribe" = "write around". And that's just what criticism too often does, scatters elaborate wordage all around a topic, apparently in order to avoid having to actually get down to grips with the nitty-gritty. And that, sadly, is exactly the case with all too many of the essays in this volume. Roger Sale's "The Audience in Children's Literature" and Larry McCaffrey's "Form, Formula and Fantasy: Generative Structures in Contemporary Fiction" stood out on first reading as exceptions; Sale's because his is the only paper written in plain English; McCaffrey's because he never allows specialist terminology (jargon) to overwhelm the sense of what he's saying. Upon re-reading, Marta E Sanchez's "A View from Inside the Fishbowl: Julio Cortazar's 'Axolotl'", and John Gerlach's "The Logic of Wings: Garcia Marquez, Todorov, and the Endless Resources of Fantasy" also impressed me. Both studies of South American short fantastic stories, both examine how the author plays on elements of style to create ambiguity: the ambiguity in 'Axolotl' is whether it is the human or the axolotl inside its fishbowl speaking; in 'The Logic of Wings', it is whether the villagers are more normal and rational than the old man with enormous wings who has fallen in their midst. Both these essays left me not only impressed by the cleverness their writers uncovered in the works they analysed, but also with the feeling that I would really enjoy reading those stories.

But the other ten essays which make up the volume are plodding, weighed down with academic ponderousness which obfuscates more than it illuminates.

I'm inclined to think Harold Bloom's "Clinamen: Towards a Theory of Fantasy" the worst essay in the book. The title is misleading - the paper does not develop a theory of fantasy. Rather, Bloom discusses David Lindsay's Voyage to Arcturus in terms of clinamen, a term he defines for us as "ironic swerve"; irony is a quality I found completely absent in my reading of Lindsay. Perhaps the fact that I find Lindsay's often-acclaimed 'classic' pretentiously flatulent has something to do with why Bloom's paper arouses exactly the same reaction in me. But I dunno, what do you make of passages like: "I turn at last to David Lindsay's A Voyage to Arcturus, recalling as I turn that the Sublime originally meant a style of "loftiness", of verbal power conceived agonistically, against all rivals. But in the Enlightenment, this literary idea was psychologized negatively, into a vision of terror in both art and nature, an oxymoronic terror uneasily allied with pleasurable sensations of augmented strength and indeed of narcissistic freedom" (p.6).

Narcissist freedom indeed characterized both Bloom and Lindsay. Bloom, who calls himself a "Gnostic" critic, concludes with quoting from Lindsay "Why was all this necessary?" I'm left wondering the same.

The other essays don't achieve quite such depths of silliness. The closing essay, Gary Kern's "The Search for Fantasy: From Primitive Man to Pornography" is a superficial survey, so superficial that it's entirely useless, passing from a ludicrous imaginary cave-scene (which makes it quite clear he's never bothered to read a word of the extensive anthropological literature on 'primitive' storytelling) through Babylonian/Addadian/Sumerian myth, to the Greek Lucian's True Story, to 19th century Russia, to condemn the "stasis" of the present where stereotypes all called fantasy proliferate showing "no advance in form or in thought on their original creators", to a vague analogy between fantasy and pornography. Had he spent more time developing his polemic on the present rather than dragging

us along hackneyed historic paths, he might have come up with something worth reading, but as it is, no.

Most of the papers are trying to say something, even if it is just, like David Clayton's closely reasoned "On Realistic and Fantastic Discourse" trying to explain as if it were a new insight rather than simply a special application of the basic Saussurean tenet on which the burgeoning creeds of structuralism, semiotics and semiology base themselves, that 'fantasy' contrasts not with yer actual "real" but with what we think of as 'real' (i.e. not with referent but with signified). A similar ponderousness pervades the discussions of Rabkin's definition of fantasy, so inclusive as to be, as most point out, entirely useless, which concludes that "all art, all mental wholes, are, to some extent at least, fantastic" or Todorov's definition of fantasy as involving a "hesitation" between the "uncanny" (explained rationally) and the "marvellous" (no natural explanation). Todorov, on the basis of his definition, concludes that no works of real "fantasy" have been written this century. It is intuitively obvious that Todorov's definition, useful though it might be in defining what he wants to talk about, doesn't match the sense in which "fantasy" is usually applied to literature - he's talking about a different, though related, word. Unless, as Gerlach does, one is discussing what Todorov meant by his "fantasy" there's little point in thrashing about at it. Most of the essays in this volume do, and achieve singularly little result from their shadow-fighting.

The basic problem seems to be that trendy academicism, particularly prevalent in America and embodied in this book, ties itself up in knots trying to sound profound rather than concentrating on communicating sense.

What of the other two books then - are they any better?

C N Manlove, like Roger Sale, writes plain and comprehensible English, so it was with a lively sense of relief that I started in on his The Impulse of Fantasy Literature. But relief soon turned to indignation; I'd escaped the Scylla of 'circumgabble' only to fall to the Charybdis of simplification-to-the-point-of-trivialisation. Manlove's stated aim is to demonstrate that "a central and recurrent theme" in fantasy, particularly in modern fantasy, is "its insistence on and celebration of the separate identities of created things" or, further along, "the sense of individuality which comes from making things strange and luminous with independent life in a fantastic setting". If the tendency of 'circumgabble' is to unnecessarily overdefine terms, Manlove pays insufficient attention to explaining just what he means by this central concept of "identity". Not only that, but in the chapters that follow, each a descriptive case-study of some works by an individual author, Manlove makes no effort to show how, for instance, the "union of opposites" in E Nesbit's fantasy, the "circularity" of George MacDonald's Phantastes and Lilith (which is, he admits, more spiral than circular), the "mind" in Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy, the "loss" in T H White's Arthurian, the "parise" in Charles Williams; how any of these relate to this central issue of "identity". Moreover, in his discussion of "conservatism" in LeGuin (annoyingly referred to throughout as "Mrs LeGuin", an old-fashioned courtesy not extended to E Nesbit or any of the Messrs), I was even more amazed that he could point out her concern for balance and equilibrium without a single mention of "conservation" in the sense of concern for ecology, a concern LeGuin makes explicit in her "The Word for World is Forest" (which is also not mentioned). This omission signals not only ignorance of her work but more significantly that Manlove is rather out of touch with important issues in the real, contemporary world from which LeGuin has drawn her ideas and in which we all live. Is Manlove (lecturer in English, Edinburgh University) so muffled in ivy-clad, ivory-tower academicism that he's lost touch with reality? Academicism, as much as SF or fantasy, can be escapist.

Manlove's chapters on various details of various works of fantasy by his selected authors are better essays than the average undergrad might be expected to turn out, but exhibit no more grasp of literary theory, no more rigorous discipline of thought nor command of abstract ideas. They're not criticism but reviews, plot summary raised to a fine art. They exhibit the tolerance of waffle

based simply on intuitive response to what one's read (a reasonable enough basis for an article in Vector) which makes so many university English Departments mere intellectual masturbatorio.

Psychoanalysis at least purports to provide a theoretical framework for lit. crit., even if most of the criticism committed in its name reveals more about the hangups of the critic than it does about the work or author under analysis. On the whole, I don't either like or agree with psychoanalytic approaches. Since the front flap of T E Apter's Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality and her chapter headings clearly signal that Apter is heavily into this Freudian lark, and since a casual flip through showed lots of big words loading down the pages, it was with a sort of grim determination to give it a fair go that I got stuck into this book. And I have to report that, contrary to all my preconceptions and prejudices, this is an ace work.

Apter not only shows she knows what her big words mean, she uses them so that we learn exactly what she means by them in that context - she doesn't stop the discussion to paddle around in definition, but forwards the discussion precisely by clarifying the implications of the terms in which it is stated.

What is her argument? If the book's thesis could be summed up in a single platitude, most of its 151 small print pages would not be necessary; if it could not be summed up at all, I'd be reeling in confusion, condemning it heartily as ponderous waffle. Like "fantasy" and "criticism", Apter's subject-matter is clear enough, but also complex enough to defy simple definition. She examines, all at the same time, fantasy, literary criticism, and psychoanalytic theory, exploring the implications and complications of their inter-relationships. Apter does, unlike Manlove or the Slusser, Rabkin & Scholes volume, live up to her stated aim:

"In this book I suggest that fantasy can explore and test reality in much the same manner as psychoanalysis, and, moreover, that the least misleading approach to psychoanalysis is as to an example of fantasy literature, without ignoring the fascinating implications of psychoanalysis to individual works of fantasy. Freud's works, in particular, then becomes a magically rich text, rather than a body of theoretical knowledge. However, any purely literary challenge to psychoanalytic theory must proceed with caution, well aware of its limitations."
(page 7)

Apter never loses sight of the wood for the trees, as Manlove does. Even after finishing reading his book, I had to remind myself by checking on the front flap that "identity" was his thesis; but exactly what that "identity" entailed and how it was embodied in fantasy, he never made plain. A chance phrase of Apter's, thrown off at a tangent to her main argument, "the inability to escape insignificance" (p.76), threw more light on the quest for "identity" in fantasy than all Manlove's 156 pages (large print) of chit-chat.

By what standard to I declare Apter "good", Manlove "indifferent", and most of the Slusser, Rabkin & Scholes volume "awful"? No abstruse, high-flown didacticism is involved (rather, browbeating us with just that didacticism is part of what makes Bridges to Fantasy bad). My judgements boil down to whether or not what these critics write appeals to what I know by common sense, as a reader and a normal, thinking person. Whether I agree with the viewpoint expressed is of secondary importance; it's whether the case is argued so that I acknowledge it as reasonable - a well-put case may not make you change your mind, but it will force you to rethink your taken-for-granted likes and dislikes. But although necessary, common sense is not sufficient - the trouble with Manlove is precisely that though he establishes a tone of commonsense reasonableness, his analyses dig no deeper. He makes explicit a reading we immediately recognise as "obvious", once he has stated it. His discussions do shed light on the text he's examining, but illuminate no further. It is because Apter not only appeals equally to the commonsense of "what we all know" but because she also goes beyond that obvious level to point entirely novel and original connections, conclusions and complications that her criticism is "better".

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