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RAY BRADBURY

A SHORT CRITIQUE

by Bob Parkinson

Author's note: Someday, someone is going to write a full-length critical work on Ray Bradbury. It will not be me; I have neither the time nor the knowledge of American Literature. All that I can do is to offer some notes on the subject of Bradbury and science fiction in general, each one of which could be a fit starting point for an essay in itself, in the hope that the reader will complete the thought for himself, and that someone with more talent and time than myself will be persuaded to write that definitive work.

It is possible that we may have to give up the idea of Ray Bradbury as a writer of science fiction altogether. That, or give up the idea that science fiction was something special, invented by Hugo Gernsback in 1911. For while it is true that Ray Bradbury 'grew up' as a writer within the science fiction tradition (which is to say that he wrote for SF magazines), the roots of his work grow further back than that. The fantasy and childhood landscapes have their forebears in the fantasy of Edgar Allan Poe and the Mississippi world of Mark Twain. The interest which has been shown in Ray Bradbury outside the 'SF' field, coupled with the misunderstanding which has occurred within it, suggest that being known as an 'SF' writer has hindered, rather than encouraged, the appreciation of this man's art. That he can be reviewed under the 'general fiction' columns of the Sunday newspapers can only be considered as a good thing.

Besides, a writer - especially a writer of short stories - needs outlets for his work; and for short stories the only real outlets are magazines. So what more natural than that a young writer, seeking print, should choose to write for the 'pulp' science fiction magazines spreading through the country? He was not the only one to do it.

So if we discover that the Mars of THE SILVER LOCUSTS (THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES) is in reality Illinois, U. S. A., we ought not to chide the author for his lack of astronomical verisimilitude, but rather to admit to the expediences of the age.

Later, when Green Town, Illinois became in fact Green Town, Illinois - in DANDELION WINE, and later in SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES - the criticism would come that he had gone back into the nostalgia of childhood for material; as though any writer should be expected to write of a world he had not known. Green Town is the proper epicentre for Bradbury's work, just as the Salinas Valley is for Steinbeck and Yoknapatapha County for Faulkner; and while each of these writers should stray away from this home, none the less it is home - the fictional equivalent of a real world they had known.

Because there is a private 'Green Town' for each of us, Bradbury is drawing on a myth of our common heritage on which to build both fantasy and strict reality.

But DANDELION WINE is not a children's book (any more than HUCKLEBERRY FINN is); nor is it a book loaded with escapist nostalgia for a lost childhood. For Bradbury, the childhood of Douglas Spaulding is only an entry to an adult world. The lesson that his hero eventually learns amid all the fantasy and incidental detail - that everything changes, that we cannot even keep ourselves for ever, that there is no easy answer - strikes me as being very adult indeed. The reality that he comes to terms with may not be the reality that we know - but then it is the job of the novelist to tell us new things, not the old things in thin disguise.

I have mentioned Steinbeck and Faulkner in connection with Bradbury quite deliberately, for I believe that there is a common denominator amongst all of these three writers. It may be true that they are merely seeking roots in an essentially rootless land, as Steinbeck suggests*, but in addition they are heirs to an American literary tradition. In Europe we have always been aware of the frontiers that can be crossed; that a few dozen miles away there is the France of Racine and Voltaire, Balzac and Proust, and that beyond that is Italy or Spain; and that while these frontiers can be crossed, they are always of 'the Englishman abroad'. While in America these frontiers have disappeared, so that they can only be recaptured by the expatriate returning to Europe - as with Pound, and as with Hemingway; and even here we may find that, though these are English-speaking and -writing, the frontier is between us, not around us. But Faulkner, Steinbeck and Bradbury are essentially homebodies, developing each in their own place; and while they may eventually go abroad in their stories, the background is still Salinas, or Green Town, or Yoknapatapha County.

Thus, when Faulkner begins, in THE SOUND AND THE FURY, to break language down into its component atoms in an attempt to tell his story, that language still remains American-English; while for the European - Joyce in ULYSSES - under similar conditions all the other languages of the continent begin to creep into the interstices.

* Steinbeck, J. TRAVELS WITH CHARLEY. (Pan Books, London, 1965) pg 90.

All of which may be true for many American writers. But the important point is that Bradbury, in writing of the small town of Green Town, is merely following a well-established precedent in American Literature - to return to that realm of which he knows best for material. And if we should catch a glimpse of the young Bradbury himself behind the eyes of Douglas Spaulding, this should not be more surprising to us than to find the child Steinbeck himself appearing briefly in the latter pages of EAST OF EDEN.

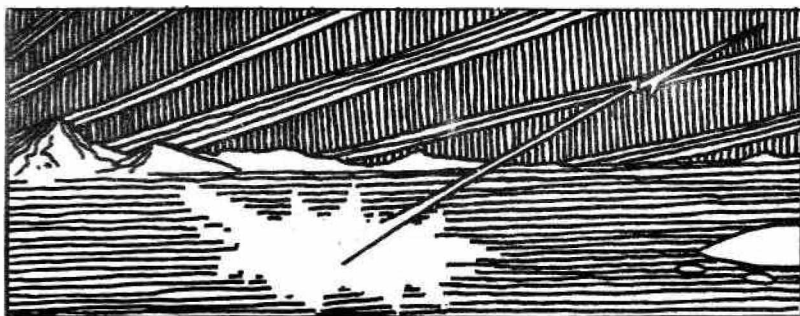
The point is that it is more important that Bradbury is in the mainstream of American fiction than that he should write science fiction. The subject matter does not count.

But what of the other elements in Bradbury's fiction besides Green Town, Illinois? What of the fantasy? The fantasy is not the fantasy of an escapist dream, it is something to come to terms with, to understand. For Bradbury, it has been obvious ever since FAHRENHEIT 451, is a moralistic writer - which is to say that far from seeking to escape from reality he is trying to achieve it.

Indeed, it is possible that here lies an essential difference between 'good' literature and mere 'entertainment'; that one seeks to bring the reader into closer contact with reality, while the other provides only an avenue of escape. Such a definition would provide the clue as to why we should consider much advertising, Ian Fleming (for instance), and most political speeches as 'not-good' (not 'bad', which is quite a different thing); and it also provides the essential difference between Bradbury and - for instance - Lovecraft.

Consider, as an example, the novel SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES in which Green Town is visited by a carnival that has a machine - a carousel - which is able to age or rejuvenate the rider as it turns. Here, if ever there was one, is an escapist device, offering youth to the old and maturity to the young, offering immortality; and yet:-

"The great machine softly tilted in the tides of night.
Just three times around, ahead, thought Will. Hey.
Just four times around, ahead, thought Jim. Boy.
Just ten times around, back thought Charles Halloway. Lord.



.... Each read the thoughts in the others' eyes.
How easy, thought Will.
Just this once, thought Jim.
But then, thought Charles Halloway, once you start, you'd always
come back. One more ride and one more ride. And, after awhile,
you'd offer ride to friends, and more friends, until finally,.....
The thought hit them all in the same quiet moment.
..... finally you wind up owner of the carousel, keeper of the
freaks,..... proprietor for some small part eternity of the travelling
dark carnival shows,.....
Maybe, said their eyes, 'they're already here.'

It is difficult to write moralistic fiction - which you will remember is fiction dealing with the real world - in this fringe world of fantasy without going into the black-and-white world of moral allegory; but, by and large, I think that Bradbury seeks to avoid this sharp-edged landscape. The other extreme, and the one which I think Bradbury does sometimes fall into, is to retreat into fantasy-for-fantasy's sake. In the above passage he is well aware of this pitfall; but I find it difficult, for instance, to come to terms with the Charles Addams Family of Cecy and Uncle Einar and the rest that appear in THE OCTOBER COUNTRY as anything other than a retreat to whimsy, though it may (possibly) make very good sense in the landscape of Illinois. But even in THE OCTOBER COUNTRY, Bradbury is aware of the seductions of fantasy; aware and concerned, so that in "The Wonderful Death of Dudley Stone" he could inquire whether perhaps writing itself was an escape, a retreat from reality.

"The Wonderful Death of Dudley Stone" deserves a chapter on its own. It is the writer's examination of his chosen art; in some ways the literary equivalent of a self-portrait in the sense of self-examination, and there are few serious writers who have not passed this way at least once in their careers. Significantly, here, the orthodox fantasy vanishes; instead we have the writer's own fantasy - 'wouldn't it be nice to give up this make-believe world and do something for a change'. But, fortunately for us, writing is addictive, and "The Wonderful Death" for Bradbury was not the end but only a milestone along the road.

But fantasy is seductive - an offer to escape into the deep symbols of the mind for the writer who chooses to reside here. Close to it though, and often difficult to distinguish, is the positive aspect which we sometimes call 'a sense of wonder'; which is healthy, a joy with the things of reality - and I think that it is this that Bradbury in his best moments achieves. Here are those MACHINERIES OF JOY which drive Bradbury towards that same vision and wonder at the stars which must have inspired Dante when he chose to end each book of THE DIVINE COMEDY with that word.

Like Faulkner, like Steinbeck, Bradbury has a strong command of language; so that it is not only what he has to say that is important but the way in which he says it. Yet, unlike European writers, Bradbury does not use this language as a source of mainly intellectual wit - though he is not beyond the casual, deep pun occasionally:-

"Heck," said Jim.

"No such place as Heck. But Hell's right here under 'A' for Alighieri."

"Allegory's beyond me," said Jim. *

But Bradbury's purpose is other than this, and it does not disturb his narrative. Indeed, it is important that it does not disturb his narrative. For, if a novel is really going to encourage its readers to come to terms with reality, then it must encourage its readers to read. Bradbury is involved with that curiously American device, the 'soft sell'; his language, at its best, is compelling, insistent - just as are Faulkner and Steinbeck (though in the former case it must be admitted that a somewhat slower reading is needed to savour the language properly.) Bradbury is essentially a poet, and a poet must not only inform but he must also make the reader feel what it is to be in his writing. Perhaps that is why one of his best stories - "Icarus Montgolfier Wright" - is also one of his shortest, or why his novels are so often episodic in nature. Why, in fact, the novels of all our three principals considered here are episodic - because this is the nature of a poem and not of a novel.

This method of writing is not without its dangers, though; for if the writing becomes too subtle and easy to read, the reader may fail to notice the depths and motives of the story altogether, reading in instead his own fantasies and childhood nostalgia. We have become used to the idea that 'good' literature should be 'difficult' in some way, and tend to reject anything we pick up as casual reading as 'mere entertainment'. Occasionally, this does happen with Bradbury, but it is a fault more of our reading habits than of the author. We have read so long for 'diversion' or 'improvement' that we no longer associate the two.

However, I am pleased to see that relationships remain. I am pleased to see that the Dublin stories in *THE MACHINERIES OF JOY* tell of a world visibly the descendant of the one through which walked Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *ULYSSES*; that O'Connell Bridge is still there, and the River Liffey which is *ANNA LIVIA*. All of which persuades me that there must have been a place very much like Green Town, although there may not quite have been a Happiness Machine, or Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show, or any of the other fantasies of our minds which we must eventually come to terms with.

Bob Parkinson,

BOOKS BY RAY BRADBURY

THE AUTUMN PEOPLE	DANDELION WINE	THE DAY IT RAINED FOREVER
FAHRENHEIT 451	THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN	THE ILLUSTRATED MAN
THE MACHINERIES OF JOY	THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (aka THE SILVER LOCUSTS)	
MEDICINE FOR MELANCHOLY	THE OCTOBER COUNTRY	R IS FOR ROCKET
THE SMALL ASSASSIN	SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES	
SWITCH ON THE NIGHT (for children).		

* Bradbury, R. *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES* - ch.2.

The Real Ideas of Philip K Dick — Michael Moorcock

The demands of the science fiction field have been, until comparatively recently at any rate, somewhat detrimental to an author wishing to develop his work in any 'serious' or 'artistic' way. Primarily, this detrimental influence is due to the fact that any individual author is never expected to repeat his ideas. He must write a story speculating in biological and social developments one month and a story about the problems relating to an experimental space-drive the next. He is praised for this butterfly-ability in much the same way as a magician who never repeats a trick is praised and he is as often as not attacked if he uses the same theme, or 'trick', twice. He can use the same backgrounds, however, time after time and never come in for strong criticism - he can even use the same basic plot formula repeatedly without being attacked very much.

A typical formula is the one involving an Exploration Team landing on a new planet, discovering some mystery regarding the behaviour of the inhabitants, becoming involved in some action stemming from their attempts to unravel the mystery and finally solving the problem and blasting off again. Another involves the space war (usually between Earth and Aliens from another system or group of systems) in which a decisive point has been reached (usually, Earth is up against it) and a device has been invented which can, once certain problems have been solved, swing the balance in Earth's favour. You can probably think of several more basic formulae involving psi-powers, time paradoxes, collapsed civilisations and so on.

The formula, the usually cardboard characters and the familiar backgrounds are acceptable in most SF circles so long as the 'idea' is different - the social set-up on the New Planet or the device which will win the war for Earth. These are what many people in science fiction mean when they talk about 'ideas', but this is not really what the term means in mainstream fiction and there is sometimes confusion aroused when it is discovered that what some SF readers would call an 'idea' is not the same thing as what others would call an 'idea'.

To the reader of good mainstream literature the 'idea' of the average SF story is nothing much more than a 'notion' or 'story gimmick' for ringing the changes on an old theme - in much the same way as a mystery writer rings the changes on the locked room murder mystery by coming up with yet another ingenious explanation of how the corpse came to be alone in the room locked on the inside. This notion can be inventive, startling, highly entertaining or merely dull depending on the skill and invention of the particular author, but it remains merely an ingenious gimmick.

An 'idea' in literature is usually considered to mean something different and much more general. Briefly, it is taken to mean the essential outlook and obsession which dominates a particular work. Albert Camus's stories and plays, for instance, are stories and plays of ideas. In the early play CALIGULA, the idea, or primary theme, involves an analysis of the nature of power (inspired, in this case, by the sudden rise of the Dictators in Europe at the time Camus was writing). In the novel THE PLAGUE, he investigates the nature of fear. In THE OUTSIDER, it is the nature of reality which interests him. Camus's work tends to be allegorical (as is most fiction and drama concerned not so much with social observation as with the fundamental issues of human behaviour throughout history) but the allegory is only made specific where it does not intrude on the 'reality' of the particular drama, background and characters he has built up - where it doesn't hamper the 'suspension of disbelief' in the particular work of fiction (whether prose or play) in question. Thus, in CALIGULA, the mad emperor behaves and speaks in the terms and manner of his own age; only at the end of the play, just before the curtain falls, when his assassins ring him, stabbing him to death, does he throw up his hands and laugh: "I still live!", meaning that what he represents still lives and making the link quite plain between himself, as seen by the playwright, and the European dictators like Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.

The reason I've spent so much space describing this play is in order to show that to be a successful piece of fiction, the allegory must never dominate the story and, even if this results in a puzzling end to the superficial storyline, the rule must be observed. If the end of the story is puzzling, this, as often as not, gives the reader (or playgoer) an incentive to go over the story and find its underlying theme or 'idea'. There's even a case to be made out for deliberately making a story apparently obscure if this end is reached - the 'suspension of disbelief' in the superficial narrative is retained right up to the last possible moment so that the reader has become completely involved in it until it cuts off quite suddenly leaving him bewildered. Only when he goes back over the story (which has become 'real' to him by this time) does he realise the underlying theme is there and, having come to believe completely in the characters, etc., in the book or play, is able to do what the author has meant him to do - relate the theme to his own life and the life he sees around him. This is a technique used by William Golding in all his novels which are also novels of ideas. One can read at least three of them entirely on the superficial level only to get to the last page, turn over, find nothing there and go back over them to realise what his underlying themes were.

Whether this technique is successful or not depends, of course, on the talent of the writer. And there are writers of limited talent, too, who will use this technique quite unsuccessfully for a number of reasons - i. e. lack of ability to suspend disbelief in the first place, lack of intellectual grasp of their subject matter, even lack of understanding about what this particular kind of technique is meant to do!

Authors who have used this technique in science fiction with varying degrees of success include Brian Aldiss, Kurt Vonnegut, J.G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick. All but the last have found respect for their work outside the science fiction field, and deservedly so; yet it is Dick who has in many ways been most successful in that he has used the conventional SF plot to tell an entertaining superficial story which at the same time relates in every way to his underlying theme. He is lucky in that his great obsession and the way he looks at things blend easily with conventional SF backgrounds and plots whereas Aldiss, Vonnegut and Ballard need to create much more personal backgrounds and plots before they can get to work - Ballard in particular.

When I say that Dick has been more successful than the other writers, I am in no way making a comparison of the quality of their work - I am simply stating that Dick has successfully managed to entertain the average reader without, on the whole, puzzling him. To a large extent this ability has cut him off from the success enjoyed by the other writers outside the limited world of science fiction because his work has, until recently at least, not been obviously allegorical and people who have seen his work have accepted him as a good SF craftsman rather than a 'serious' writer working in the medium of SF. Also, by not puzzling the average reader (at least, not very much), by producing a well-rounded superficial plot, he has failed to some extent to show the reader the way through to his underlying themes.



Earlier I explained how the demands of the science fiction market have hitherto hampered writers from developing their work in the accepted literary ways by forcing them to flit from theme to theme, from 'idea' to 'idea', without ever developing whatever literary obsessions they may have.

With a writer like Graham Greene, for instance, it is perfectly acceptable for him to develop one dominant theme through all his novels, from his first to his last, returning time after time to a single obsession or group of obsessions to probe, re-investigate, look at from a fresh angle and so on. Such a writer is respected for doing this rather than denigrated and he is judged not by

whether his 'idea' is new for him, but by how successful he is at creating a fictitious 'reality' - whether his backgrounds come 'alive', whether his characters convince and 'live', and so on.

Even a non-intellectual writer like Dickens could return to a theme (the persecution of the innocent, for instance) time and time again and escape criticism of repetition because he was able to give reality to his situations and vary the circumstances of his characters sufficiently to give the theme fresh power and insight.

Where a science fiction writer refuses to give in to the narrow demands of the field, he tends to come under attack. J. G. Ballard, for instance, is subjected to a great deal of intolerant and unintelligent criticism of his 'repetitiveness' of theme and background - and characters, for that matter - primarily by people who demand sensation alone from literature and are either incapable of understanding the essential themes of his work or too impatient to bother to look for them. Yet outside the science fiction field, as I have shown, it is expected of an author that he returns to the same themes over and over again, so long as he looks at these themes from a fresh angle, as Ballard does in his three books DROWNED, BURNING and CRYSTAL WORLD. Part of Ballard's obsession involves questioning the nature of reality and wondering if the yardsticks by which we judge 'reality' are necessarily the best ones.

This is the dominant theme in the work of Philip K. Dick who deals with the theme much more specifically and without the highly individualistic vision of Ballard - substituting for it, however, almost as remarkable an ability to manipulate standard SF trappings to produce wholly fresh, superficially entertaining stories with abstract, intellectual underlying themes. Dick, perhaps because he is working with more conventional backgrounds, has on the whole escaped the kind of criticism levelled at Ballard.

Like Ballard, Dick works without pretension. He is not out to impress; there is no virtuoso display in Dick's work, none of the literary posturing which so mars the work of Vonnegut, who manages to state the obvious so brilliantly that one is very often fazed by it for a while. What is so admirable and agreeable about books like THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, THE GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN or DR. BLOODMONEY is the solid, skilful craftsmanship with which they are written. His characterisation is never brilliant, he does not create great, bizarre characters that live in the mind long after the books are finished (Bunny Jingadangelow in GREYBEARD, Strangman in THE DROWNED WORLD or Gully Foyle in THE STARS MY DESTINATION), but his characters are exceptionally easy to identify with and they are convincing. They are almost always 'ordinary' people, even if they possess psi-powers as many of them do, and while their personalities do not impress us, they are exactly the right kind of characters needed to convince us of the 'reality' of their existence. Their problems are ordinary problems to do with sex, money and prestige and it is these problems that tend to lead them into the bigger issues involving the fate of many.

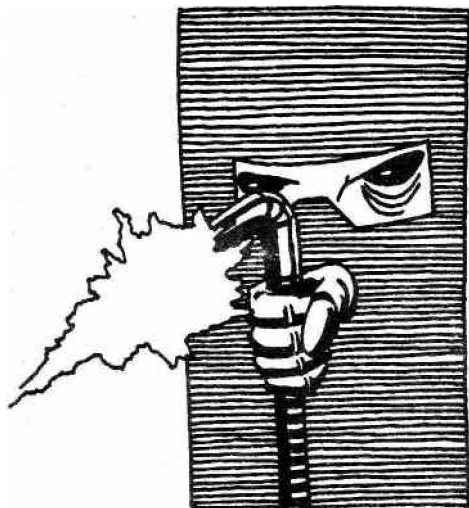
In virtually all his novels Dick is interested primarily in the workings of the human mind and how these relate to the world in general. In an early novel, EYE IN THE SKY, he takes a group of 'ordinary' people and gives them the ability to create their ideal worlds. These worlds are then shown up in all their many defects - they are the worlds of various sorts of American Dream and one by one Dick picks them to pieces and reveals them for what they are.

The element of satire in Dick runs through almost all his work, often in the form of little cameos as in DR. BLOODMONEY where, in the early part of the book and with quiet amusement, he shows us various representatives of the world about to be blown up - the American Liberal boasting of his liberalism is one of many such cameos.

In some ways Dick seems an innocent, looking calmly and seriously at the world and saying "But that just isn't true," or "Are you sure that's necessarily the case?" Dick's clarity of vision and his accuracy of observation can be seen at their most impressive in the Hugo-winning THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. Here is an America occupied in the North-East by the Nazis and in the South-West by the Japanese. The plot does not hinge,

as one might expect from standard science fiction, on an underground resistance organisation out to overthrow the conquerors, but on the subtle differences in national character between the conquered Americans, the occupying Japanese and the Nazis. Dick's Japanese and Germans are not so much 'real' Japanese and Germans as the popular idea of what Japanese and Germans are, except that Dick's admiration for the Japanese tends to make them much more sympathetic than the Germans, perhaps fairly so. This doesn't matter, for it emerges that the world Dick has built up so successfully and with such excellent detail is probably not the real world at all - a world where the Japanese and Germans were beaten is probably the real one, though even that is not the same as ours! This information comes from the I CHING, the Chinese Book of Changes which many, including Dick, I understand, believe capable of prophecy and communicating advice to those who consult it.

What is 'reality'? is the question we are left asking in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. In THE GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN the question is asked again as well as such questions as "Is the hallucination of the schizophrenic as real as, less real or more real than, the 'normal' world?"; "Can 'reality' be created, and if created, can it be controlled?". In this book Dick's interest in games theory forms an important part of the novel's development.



This interest was seen earlier in SOLAR LOTTERY (or WORLD OF CHANCE). To what extent are events random and to what extent are they controlled? At its most obvious, and perhaps most neurotic, this theme takes the form, in science fiction, of the story where it is discovered that humanity is being manipulated by alien powers (THE PUPPET MASTERS, Heinlein; "Come and Go Mad", Brown; "You're All Alone", Leiber and perhaps the most successful of all, if not the best written - FEAR by Hubbard). Some of Dick's books do use this theme, and they are his least successful. They are at their best where they leave the question open.

It would be impossible to deal with all the books Dick has written - there are nearly twenty of them - and I'd like to concentrate now on his latest, THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH (Doubleday in US, due from Cape here this year).

It is in this novel that Dick makes use of his technique I described of leaving the reader apparently in the air on the last page. Here it is not for specific purposes of allegory so much as to make the reader wonder just what the nature of reality is.

Palmer Eldritch himself is one of Dick's few bizarre characters. The stigmata referred to are his artificial eyes, artificial hand and steel teeth. These blemishes seem to have some sort of symbolic significance to do with sin and redemption, but I must admit to not being able to relate this element to the rest of the book.

A very brief resume of the plot:

Leo Bulero is a 21st century tycoon catering to the drafted colonists of the near-uninhabitable worlds of the solar system. They lead utterly miserable lives and their only escape is into a fantasy world of the Perky Pat layouts - a doll called Pat with a boyfriend called Walt, a doll's house full of the latest luxuries, cars, even a doll psychiatrist - in fact, all the material comforts of the modern world. By chewing an outlawed drug, which Bulero also markets, Can-D, the colonists can transfer completely into these worlds and for a short time live the pleasant, idle lives of Perky Pat and Walt - the men transfer to Walt and the women to Pat. Many believe that Perky Pat's world is 'real' and that they 'go' there when they chew Can-D. Thus, by this escape, they manage to survive the hardships of their existence.

Down on Earth, Bulero discovers that a new company is starting up in competition and his chief 'pre-cog', Barney Mayerson, gives him information that makes him believe that Palmer Eldritch, recently returned from Proxima Centauri, is behind the new organisation which, it eventually emerges, has UN sanction for marketing a rival drug called Chew-Z.

Bulero also gets information that he is destined to kill Eldritch. Finally he gets to meet Eldritch on the moon and is administered a dose of Chew-Z.

From this point on the plot becomes quite deliberately confused - with no lack of enjoyment, I might add - because Bulero finds himself in a world that seems to him as real as the world he left. But as Eldritch explains, when he makes an appearance in this world, this is the world Eldritch has created. Bulero is at that moment in a drugged sleep - which only lasts a matter of seconds, but in one of these fantasy worlds centuries can pass in a split second of 'real' time. The taker of Chew-Z can create any world he chooses and live in it virtually as long as he likes.

Eventually, Bulero is allowed to leave Eldritch's world - or is he? From now on we can't be sure if the rest of the action takes place in Eldritch's world, a world Bulero has created, a world created by his pre-cog Barney Mayerson, a world that is the fantasy of a native of Proxima Centauri, or any one of a near infinite series of possibilities.

There are three separate descriptions of Eldritch's final encounter with Bulero, some travelling in time which could be into the 'real' future or into an 'unreal' one, a suggestion that Eldritch is actually God, another one that he is actually the Devil, another that he is both. Eldritch might not even exist, we might not exist, the book might not exist. Dick is doing his best to help us go insane - or, at any rate, experience the same sort of schizoid hallucinations that can be achieved with drugs like LSD 25 or even autohypnotism. And if one concentrated on the book, became completely absorbed in it, doubtless a partial experience of this kind could be obtained.

The plot is never resolved in the formal sense and the reality of the events which have taken place is left in question, but nonetheless the novel is complete once it becomes clear that it is Dick's intention to leave you guessing.

It may sound easy to write a book like this, once the initial idea has been worked out, but it says a great deal for Dick's craftsmanship that the story, even at its most confusing, never loses its pace and never loses its ability to keep disbelief suspended until the last possible moment. The reader expects some kind of ingenious denouement - as in a van Vogt novel, for instance - but it never comes. The only explanation is implicit in the novel itself.

There is also a certain interest in religion running through THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH and most of the central characters are seeking to redeem themselves in some way or another, though the particular nature of the guilt they feel is not clearly specified. Also one wonders if the fact that the temperature of the Earth (as in THE DROWNED WORLD) is rising, has any symbolic meaning - Hell, for instance. Perhaps Dick is hinting at some sort of moral implication concerning the use and selling of the drugs, but I think not.

Dick's work is not profound in comparison with established philosophical literature like Goethe's FAUST and so on, neither does it have the sense of depth found in contemporaries like Borges. It lacks the intensity of vision and powerful symbolism of Ballard and the elegance and ability to create mood of Aldiss. What it does have is a seriousness of purpose, an unfaltering intention to get at the truth as Dick sees it, the power to create everyday environments which gradually shift in perspective until every aspect of the particular environment is held in question; the same is done with character - a man may begin by feeling that he knows himself, but gradually Dick will whittle away at that belief, leaving the man totally unsure even that he exists. Dick uses all the skill of an excellent science fiction craftsman to produce books which are more than just craftsmanly pieces of escapism. He is not toying with half-baked, half-understood notions like so many contemporaries who have managed to impress so many readers with their oversimplified social and 'philosophical' gimmickry and who are so dull, so far away from making any sort of true observation about anything that one is bewildered by their lack of even the simplest insights.

Dick is quietly producing serious fiction in a popular form and there can be no greater praise. It's time he got the critical attention he deserves.

Michael Moorcock,

BOOKS BY PHILIP K. DICK

CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON
THE COSMIC PUPPETS
DR. BLOODMONEY
DR. FUTURITY
EYE IN THE SKY
THE GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN
A HANDFUL OF DARKNESS
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE
THE MAN WHO JAPED
MARTIAN TIME-SLIP

THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH
THE SIMULACRA
SOLAR LOTTERY
(aka WORLD OF CHANCE)
THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER
ELDRITCH
TIME OUT OF JOINT
THE VARIABLE MAN
VULCAN'S HAMMER
THE WORLD JONES MADE

ROGER PHILLIPS GRAHAM 1909 - 1966

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Roger Phillips Graham on March 2nd, 1966. Shortly after entering the University of California Hospital, he passed into a coma from which he never recovered. Presbyterian funeral services were held on March 5th at Berkeley Hills Chapel. The attendees included his wife, Honey, and his mother plus the Poul Andersons, the Tony Bouchers, the Reginald Bretnors, the Joe Gibsons and the Alva Rogerses.

His first published story was "Let Freedom Ring" in the December 1945 AMAZING STORIES and his most recent was "... But Who Knows Huer or Huen?" in the November 1961 FANTASTIC. Both these stories were written under the pseudonym 'Rog Phillips' under which he wrote his most famous short story "The Yellow Pill".

GENERAL CHUNTERING

KEN
SLATER

There are things which puzzle me. Occasionally I can resolve this bewilderment by the application of my own tiny, semi-detached mind; on other occasions I have to take 'other opinions'. Sometimes this means I refer to a dictionary, encyclopaedia or an expert. Other times it means I take a sort of 'popularity poll' and get a variety of views to aid me in reaching a decision. I'm about to do that.

Can anyone offer any reasonable explanation why, after I have been listing a book in my catalogue for approximately twelve months, three or four people should suddenly decide to order that book? Not, you understand, a new book but some elderly item, possibly a crummy 'reading copy' or alternatively a 'fine edition' - something that is only borderline fantasy, quite probably, which I have obtained specially for a client who then decides he doesn't want it. The current puzzle concerns Rudyard Kipling's REWARDS AND FAIRIES which has sat on the shelf since at least February 1965 - and was ordered by no less than three people from F(M)L's February 1966 listing!

Sometimes I can see a reason; if a book which has been out-of-print happens to get mentioned favourably by someone in the course of a review of a new title, then it is quite likely that several folk will want to buy the out-of-print title. Similarly, cheap used copies of an in-print title may be saleable to folk who have had a casual interest invoked in this way. For example, when James White's new novel from Whiting & Wheaton gets reviewed, it is quite possible that the reviewer may draw some parallel between THE WATCH BELOW and, say, Clarke's A FALL OF MOONDUST or THE DEEP RANGE, Ken Bulmer's CITY UNDER THE SEA, John Wyndham's THE KRAKEN WAKES or James Gunn & Jack Williamson's 'undersea' novels. Or any one of a multitude of books I'm not intending to imply that James White's novel bears any resemblance to any of these - I've only read the 'blurb' so far - but conceivably they could be used as 'points of reference' in a review of it. If a reviewer did, then I'd expect a few folk who had not read Ken Bulmer's CITY UNDER THE SEA might order copies if I listed it.

But why three people for REWARDS AND FAIRIES? And why, after I've listed some elderly cheap editions of H.G. Wells's titles for longer than I can recall, should one particular not-very-important title suddenly be demanded by six people?

Now, if you can explain this to me I may end up rich. I'll be able to buy up cheap, stock pile until the moment-of-demand, sell high and clear the stockpile, instead of selling the one odd copy and using the profit to pay for the 'sorry, already sold' cards.

I now know how paranoiacs must feel - those suffering from a persecution complex. I don't intend to inflict the story on all of you, but anyone interested in the tale of how I didn't get any Ace Books titles, how I didn't get a house after telling both my solicitor and the house agent that I wanted it and was willing to pay the asking price, how I didn't get Star Books deliveries for either January or February, and how I generally came close to doing my nut can watch out for the article in a famine. Probably that new one that Roje Gilbert and Brenda Piper have just inflicted on usNEMESIS..... they say they need some support.

For the benefit of all and sundry, I gather that the American title for A WRINKLE IN THE SKIN is THE RAGGED EDGE. I've not seen a copy of the latter and I could be wrong - I'm only guessing from some comments made by a correspondent who said 'same old Robinson Crusoe theme with a Boy Friday'. I must admit that there is some truth in this, but I still enjoyed the book even though the scenery was a bit familiar.

Victor Gollancz will publish DUNE over here, so all folks who were panicked by the refusal of the American publisher to export to the UK may now relax....rumour reaches me of an American magazine titled THE MAN FROM U, N, C, L, E. MAGAZINE....oh, well.... Jane Gaskell continues the adventures of her Atlantean heroine Cija in a book titled THE CITY, due from Hodder & Stoughton in July, price 18/-....from Faber there will be (probably out by now) Edmund Crispin's anthology BEST SF SIX, containing fourteen yarns by Aldiss, Ballard, Blish, two Browns, Bradbury, Budrys, Christopher, Kuttner, Hutchins, Pohl, Porges and Russell....this is, of course, a book you must buy (not borrow, beg or steal).... Help Our President Week starts now!

There are a multitude of less thinly disguised good and worth-reading SF titles upcoming this year, it would seem....we are in for another minor boom, I guess.

Mike Moorcock, editor of NEW WORLDS, drew my attention to a set of fine fantasies which I'd thought out-of-print for some time; you'll find these books reviewed by J. G. Ballard in NEW WORLDS 160. They are Wyndham Lewis's THE CHILDREMASS, MONSTRE GAI and MALIGN FIESTA, all published now by Jupiter Books at 10/6 for the first, and 6/6 each for the second and third in the trilogy. For entirely different reasons I am in agreement with Mr. Ballard's opinion that the first volume of the set is the best; the second and third show progressive weakness and loss of the theme. Notwithstanding, if you have any interest in fantasy, particularly supernatural fantasy, these are part of the essential reading....but, please, not light reading. Most of the satirical elements will be lost in time, I fear - the first volume is over thirty years old now - and hence have little point; you'll need to be quite widely read to see much beyond the obvious.

I hear that Allen & Unwin have the manuscript for THE SILMARILLION again - the book which tells of the making of the Rings. I don't yet know the truth of this, but it is possible that Professor Tolkien has completed the work to his own satisfaction...and we can hope, can't we?

See you at Yarmouth or at Bristol?

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Behind the Scenes

a fan column by Malcolm Edwards

Hugo Gernsback, so I am told, created the Universe and began magazine science fiction in an off-moment when his mind wasn't really on the job at hand. In any event, it is at his door that the blame can probably be laid for the birth of an attendant science fiction fandom. For Uncle Hugo was convinced of the value of reader-participation in his enterprises, and his early pulp magazines used to feature long pages of readers' letters. When these correspondents began to short the circuit by writing to each other direct rather than through the pages of the professional magazines, fandom had come into being.

Subsequent years saw the proud boast that a viable SF fandom no longer needed the professional magazines (for it is quite true that 'fandom' is something more than just a fan-group in the normal sense of the term). But every sword has two edges and this statement backfired when the pro-mags discovered that they didn't need the fans. Over a period of roughly five years, economy-or-prestige-conscious pro-mags ended the symbiosis. GALAXY never had a letter-column, ASTOUNDING had long since turned "Brass Tacks" into a technical discussion feature and when finally Sergeant Saturn could vibrate the ether by not so much as a ripple, it was, with very few exceptions, the end of an era. It only remained for the remaining concessions to the minority - the few fan-review columns - to be dropped and the regular channels of recruitment into fandom would have been closed.

There were sporadic attempts to halt the tide as some of the magazines fell into the hands of editors who, if not themselves fans, were at least sympathetic to the cause. Readers often never realise that those names so glamorous in the credits of a prozine are in their own right keen fans, often enthusiasts from way back in the beginning. Old-time fan Larry Shaw began INFINITY, a magazine that was well-received from the very first issue and which throughout its life carried letters and fan-features. Hans Stefan Santesson attempted to do much the same with FANTASTIC UNIVERSE and just before it folded, as late as 1960, it carried no less than three fan-departments. And of course British magazines were a year or two behind their US counterparts in feeling the draught - both NEBULA and AUTHENTIC were noted for a strong fannish content, and even NEW WORLDS sometimes lapsed into the mood which had

made John Carnell one of the foremost of British fans in the pre-war days.

After six years wandering in the wilderness, fandom may now be getting a new outlet in print. The wheel has come full circle - in the April 1966 issue of IF (Worlds of) SF there is the introduction of a fan-feature, "Our Man in Fandom" by Lin Carter, a name of bygone days. This feature, along with IF's growing and improving letter-column, is enough to bring tears of joy into the eyes of an old reactionary, and perhaps reflects somewhat on Editor Fred Pohl's own background as a 'Big Name Fan' of circa 1934. History doesn't repeat, of course, and I doubt if every other magazine remaining in the depleted field will make haste to emulate IF, but this development is very cheering for one who finds fandom itself to be more entertaining than the parent science fiction.

If past experience is anything to go by, IF's column will attract newcomers into fandom like a jampot attracts flies. I am waiting with ghoulish glee for this influx of new blood, due to be pumped into fandom Any Day Now. Of course, there will only be a very limited number of places open in the New Fandom that will rise like the phoenix upon the ashes of the old. I'd advise all newcomers to get in on the ground floor now by buying all the magazines I recommend in VECTOR.

I've often heard it said that a newcomer to fandom is a very delicate seedling, one whose growth can be stunted or permanently impaired by his reading the wrong type of fanzine at the wrong stage of his development. I prefer to assume that any of my readers who are the least bit interested in this fascinating hobby will have the guts and the intelligence to take minor setbacks in their stride. However, I'll admit that some fanzines are easier to begin with than are others, though when faced with this problem I'm never really sure what will prove most suitable for a newcomer's appetite.

Last time around I recommended LIGHTHOUSE and to a lesser extent DOUBLE BILL. Now I'll go into much the same act and will recommend YANDRO.

This fanzine is remarkable in that it has kept to an approximately monthly schedule for as long as anyone can remember, the current issue being numbered 155. I refuse to speculate on the kind of monomania that can keep such a routine that it becomes to its editors, as YANDRO has become, A Way of Life.

The magazine won a Hugo last year - a well-deserved award for a generally good 'all-round' magazine. It is the sort of perpetual grab-bag of surprises that makes it so pleasant to be on the mailing list of a regular fanzine. Let us make a quick tour through the contents of this latest issue.



We begin with the standard features of the Coulson editorials; Buck's iconoclastic comments and Juanita's fannish chatter about everything and nothing are more entertaining than I could describe here. Then into the issue proper we find a debunking article on the 'Scientology Man', L. Ron Hubbard, who was a prolific contributor to ASTOUNDING before his Revelation. This piece is well-written and is not the sort of critical writing that is a chore to wade through. It is followed by a very similar piece about Kurt Vonnegut - also worth reading - and by Buck's own caustic comments on some books he's read recently. Other material is scattered through this big issue, including some mildly humorous pieces and a rather interesting letter column. The only thing poor about YANDRO is its art, which doesn't really matter anyway.

Get it at 1/9 per copy, 4 for 6/-, from the British agent Alan Dodd, 77 Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon, Herts.

Above all things I try to keep this column in balance between serious and lightweight material, and I was looking around rather frantically for something of the former class to mention this time. Fortunately, RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY (issue 5) appeared in my mail-box the day before deadline, and the perfect balance of this feature was preserved for another issue.

I'm rather worried at the attitude editor Leland Sapiro takes towards his magazine and towards the rest of fandom. His idea of fandom would appear to be that of an intellectual group dedicated to the discussion and criticism of science fiction which, of course, fandom is not most of the time. RQ is thusly a rather extremist magazine that publishes the most formal and the most serious material of any fan-magazine. Some of this content is indeed rather heavy going at times, though other items can only be termed brilliantly interesting.

If only Sapiro would learn tolerance and not lean so heavily toward the pedantic, I'm sure that RQ would be universally hailed throughout fandom. As it is, the magazine is printed in litho throughout and the current issue contains 72 pages of attractively laid-out material. The usual roll-call had better be taken else you'll feel I'm trying to sell you a pig in a poke.

Arthur Jean Cox, an American author of some note, spends too much space attempting to write a science fiction story before our very eyes. The best things about this feature are the really excellent illustrations by Charles Schneeman and the fact that it is followed by the second part of an entire book about Robert Heinlein. In this section, the author, Alexei Panshin, treats some of Heinlein's more recent work to analysis, and the whole is immensely thought-provoking. Now past half-way into the magazine, we find a critique of T.H. White's THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING, a long criticism of the 15th anniversary issue of GALAXY, plus sundry other items. A long letter-discussion column ends the issue.

I'd recommend you try at least one issue at 2/6, 4 for 10/-, from the UK agent Graham Hall, 57 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Glos.

I have some other items here that are probably worth mentioning but I'm getting urgent waves from the omnipotent editor in the wings that my time is running low. Next time I will attempt to mention some of the other recent arrivals and will perhaps introduce a new thing into this column - a review of a fanzine that I didn't like and don't recommend. In the meantime may I suggest that your thirst for things fannish be quenched by borrowing from the BSFA Fanzine Library? I've been toying with the idea of mentioning for your use some of the better items contained in the Library: if anyone writes to me c/o the Editor, I'll probably put these thoughts on to paper.

Malcolm Edwards

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES REVIEWED BY CHRIS PRIEST

MAGAZINES REVIEWED:

IMPULSE	1
(March, 1966)	
NEW WORLDS	160
(March, 1966)	

Slightly fatter, much glossier, and with a shilling added to the price, the British SF magazines start a new phase. We lost SCIENCE FANTASY in the process, and gained IMPULSE in lieu, lurking, in the words of editor Kyril Bonfiglioli, "in false moustache and dark glasses." It's still being called a 'monthly collection for the connoisseur', so that at least has not changed. Does this mean the editorial credo is unaltered? Looking at this first issue, one trend that was so marked in SCIENCE FANTASY - that of widely differing levels of quality would now appear to be missing.

In short, this particular issue is probably one of the best single editions of any magazine published anywhere. Being naturally pessimistic I can only suspect that it was a fluke... editorial manic-depressiveness can be difficult to throw off. Perhaps subsequent issues will maintain this high standard. (But then, we all have our dreams....)

Bonfiglioli has adopted the theme of 'sacrifice' for this first edition. Perhaps a less appropriate theme could have been chosen in view of the rather abrupt change of name, but it's an interesting idea nevertheless. Brian Aldiss, J. C. Ballard, Poul Anderson, James Blish and Harry Harrison have all contributed stories within this framework, and it is intriguing to note how different minds approach the same subject. Brian Aldiss's "The Circulation of the Blood", for instance, takes a typically perverse twist to the theme, wherein the sacrifice is death for immortality. This is an excellent story, with studied characterisation, an unusual locale, and convincing scientific detail. The stories of Poul Anderson and James Blish, on the other hand, take a more standardised approach and find very little to add to the theme. However, both stories were written with a high degree of professionalism - Anderson's in particular should appeal to his many fans, being a return to some of the stylistic freedom which made his earlier work so popular. Ballard's "You and Me and the Continuum" is the story which stands out most in my memory. Totally unlike anything he has yet published, this is a capsuled collection of fragments; a glimpse at the images that would be absorbed by the second coming (abortive) of the Messiah. Don't try to read it as a formal short story, but more as an exercise in imagination. The last story of the five 'sacrifices' is also the most disappointing. This is Harry Harrison's "The Gods Themselves Throw Incense" - one of those stories where there are three survivors from

a spaceship disaster, and there is only sufficient oxygen for two. There was a surprise ending which redeemed it slightly ... but not much. Harrison's usual verve and skill is ever-present, but I think he must have been short on ideas with this one.

The rest of the issue is made up with stories of a more random selection of themes. "Deserter" by Richard Wilson is a good SF satire, (about men fighting women) spoiled only by a fantasy ending. Jack Vance's "The Secret" is a social allegory, in which inhabitants of an island sail across unknown waters to an equally unknown destination. And Keith Roberts' "Pavane", sub-titled "The Signaller", is the first in a new cycle of stories set in an England never relinquished by the Romans. Some of Roberts's writing is superlative, summing up in a leisured and explicit narrative a series of events and settings as realistic as any found in SF.

If the adoption of a theme is the reason for this sudden upsurge in quality, then it is an experiment I will welcome if repeated.

NEW WORLDS, however, seems to be suffering from that old physical phenomenon where objects cool after expansion. Of late, I have had nothing but praise for Moorcock's policies, but this issue is erratic and unbalanced. Whereas Bonfiglioli often swoops insanely from the puerile to the excellent, Moorcock has maintained a steady level. Occasionally, though, his grip loosens and stories only descriptably as slight are allowed to slip in.

NW 160 is adorned with one of the worst covers I have ever seen on a science fiction magazine. It illustrates John Brunner's newest novel "The Evil That Men Do", which appears, from the first instalment, to be not going anywhere particular in any immediate hurry. A hypnotist gives a demonstration at a party, which has a marked impact on a pretty girl in a black dress. Before very long the hypnotist is more deeply involved with the girl, who suffers from continual hallucinations remarkably akin to those experienced by another person serving a term in prison. And that, more or less, is the sum content of the first instalment. Perhaps something will happen in part two.

The best story is Langdon Jones's "The Great Clock". This is an allegory about a man whose life is spent servicing and maintaining a huge clock. (Which, incidentally, is also his home). The time (sorry) inevitably arrives when our hero rebels against his lot, and starts breaking things up in a rather splendid manner. Recommended.

Not recommended is Bill Butler's poem "From ONE". This can be read in about five seconds flat, which is four too long. I wonder whether anybody can take this sort of stuff seriously? NEW WORLDS regular, David I. Masson is represented by "Psychosmosis"... not an easy story to read, but worth taking the trouble. "Disaster Story" by Charles Platt is similar to Ballard's story in IMPULSE... not in its style, which is straightforward, but in its brief glimpsing of images and notions. Peter Tate's "The Post-Mortem People" is slightly ghoulish, but is a well-written story about a band of person in the future who makes a freelance living from claiming newly-dead bodies, and selling them. "For a Breath I Tarry", by Roger Zelazny, is over-long, and suffers from familiarity. It concerns one or two automatic machines roaming the face of the Earth after mankind has gone, and their endeavours to re-create Man. After nearly forty pages there is a happy ending ... so don't say I didn't warn you. The issue finishes off with another story in Mike Moorcock's 'Jerry Cornelius' series. Perhaps I'm just not tuned-in, or something, but I nearly caught mental cramp from this one. As far as I'm concerned, the whole series is summed up in the last page, where the word "ha" is repeated 558 times (yes, I counted them). As usual, the reader of NEW WORLDS is rewarded with editorial features. There is a long review of Wyndham Lewis's books by J. G. Ballard; more reviews from James Colvin and Lang Jones; and a long and intelligent editorial.

I see there's a new Ballard story in next month's issue.

Chris Priest.

BOOKS

Reviews & Future Releases

NOVA EXPRESS by William S. Burroughs
Jonathan Cape, 25/-. 187 pages

Reviewed by
Bob Parkinson.

There is a lot of foofaraw talked about Burroughs being a 'difficult' writer, as though you needed to be a professor or something to read him. Well, this book may not be third-form kindergarten stuff, true; but they teach Ginny Woolf for GCE Eng. Lit. nowadays, so the fact that the sentences are not always quite grammatical and the writing sometimes fragmentary should not be sufficient to put us off. Certainly, I judge NOVA EXPRESS as being considerably easier to read than those two classics of the twentieth century - ULYSSES and THE WASTELAND.

That having being said, what's it about? Miss Laski, reviewing SF in THE OBSERVER the other week, said that the archetypal American SF story was the 'benevolent-alien-saves-Earth-story', while its British counterpart is the 'boy-scouting-during-total-catastrophe-story'. NOVA EXPRESS is a bit of both, with the expected tendency towards the American side (naturally). Burroughs sees Earth as a sort of total disaster area, with the intergalactic criminals of the Nova Mob moving in for the spoils and the Nova Police - aided by local 'partisans' - seek to keep or restore order. At stake is the total destruction of Earth, the 'Nova'; but the battle is being fought for the souls of men - you and me.

At that, most of the ideas he uses are not unfamiliar to SF. The dangers of hallucinogens, dream-drugs, subliminal advertising, mass communication have already been well documented by such writers as Pohl and Kornbluth; and the 'virus weapon' that serves as a central point in NOVA EXPRESS must surely have originated in Hal Clement's NEEDLE. But the ideas have intelligence behind them, and there are new twists: most will find something new in these pages.

But is it any good? Well, it is most certainly moral. Burroughs comes out on the right side against mass control, deterioration (or erosion) of standards, retreat into fantasy worlds and so forth, and for the individual, sanity, reality, etc. What is more, he is trying to do something about it; viz:-

"How do you make someone feel stupid? You present to him all the times he talked and acted and felt stupid again and again any number of times fed into the combo of the soft calculating machine geared to find more and more punch cards and feed in

more and more images of stupidity disgust propitiation grief apathy death - The recordings leave electromagnetic patterns - That is any situation that causes rage will magnetise rage patterns and draw around the rage word and image recordings..... The counter move is very simple - This is machine strategy and the machine can be redirected - Record for ten minutes on a tape recorder - Now run the tape back without playing and cut in other words at random - Where you have cut in and re-recorded words are wiped off the tape and new words in their place - You have turned time back ten minutes and wiped electromagnetic word patterns off the tape and substituted other patterns - You can do the same with mind tape after working with the tape recorder - (This takes some experimentation) - "

and so it goes on. Here you are listening to the actual working of the mind thinking about the much publicised 'cut-up' or 'fold-in' method; but don't be put off. You may not get everything at once, after all you may want to read the book again, but you will get enough.

Besides, at the point where the smoke of the total catastrophe clears, the writing achieves a terrifying clarity. I use 'terrifying' deliberately, for the landscape revealed is the landscape of Hell. The talent behind the writing at this point is obvious; behind the rest it can be deduced.

The reader should be warned, this is no simple 'goodies' versus 'baddies' story. When the Nova Police get settled in, they act like police anywhere. But perhaps most drastic of all is that you are quite justified in assuming that the whole story represents the workings of a single mind. After all, the battle is the battle for individual minds, and it might all be hallucination.

As to whether it should properly be reviewed as SF, there remains this. If the author had been, for instance, Sturgeon or Ballard, there would be no doubt about the matter. To anybody who is interested in what is happening to literature outside the very limited microcosm of strict SF, this book is a must.

THE DARK LIGHT YEARS by Brian W. Aldiss
Four Square 1437, 3/6. 160 pages.

Reviewed by
Chris Priest.

Brian Aldiss once said, in a review of his own novel NON-STOP, that THE DARK LIGHT YEARS was his best-written book. Hesitating, as always, to argue with one who has the advantage of subjective insight, let me compromise and say that it is possibly one of his most entertaining. This is Aldiss in his PRIMAL URGE and MALE RESPONSE mood; Aldiss when he seems to be laughing at mankind, yet really sorrows for it.

There are neither heroes nor villains in this book. For the majority of the time the sympathies of the reader lie with the aliens. These are the utods, a peaceful and slow-moving race who love to wallow in their own excreta. This harmless-enough habit is firstly misunderstood by humanity, then despised. Aldiss draws humanity as the villain, unwittingly causing the trouble through its own inbuilt prejudice and ignorance. The characters and

protagonists are unimportant in this book, and the book pans from one to another like a hand-held movie camera picking out faces in a crowd. The book opens and closes with one Aylmer Ainson, who, it turns out, was once ejected from his father's household because of his personal habits. Neatly enough, in a contrived sort of way, it is Ainson who, of all humans, comes nearest to understanding the utods.

The book is frustrating because what it is saying is so true. On a different level it is vastly amusing and entertaining. Personally, I prefer Aldiss in his more serious guises, but I have no objection to his holidaying in this way. Probably one of the best paperbacks of the year.

THE ROSE by Charles L. Harness
Compact F295, 3/6. 185 pages

Reviewed by
W. T. Webb

This paperback contains a short novel, "The Rose", a novelette, "The New Reality" and a short story, "The Chessplayers". There is also a brief introduction by Michael Moorcock.

Of late, the term 'science fantasy' has come into some disrepute. It has even been maintained that the words are mutually contradictory, and there ain't no such animal, but it seems to me that much of Harness's work can only be described as science fantasy of the very best kind.

In the SF field as a whole, definitions are difficult, and I have no intention here of attempting a complete definition or of trying to distinguish between science fiction and science fantasy. But the latter, when it is at all worth reading, usually has a framework of mythology or legend, and the science content is presented within a well-balanced work of literary art.

This is the case with "The Rose". It illustrates the conflict between art and science, or rather the conflict between art-allied-with-science and science-allied-with-military-security. For Anna van Tuyl, on the one side, is both composer and psychiatrist, while her rival, the anti-artist Martha Jaques, is a mathematical genius and practitioner of Sciomnia who is guarded day and night by Colonel Grade and his murderous security men.

Most of the story is set in the Via Rosa, a futuristic artists' quarter, a 'sort of plutocratic Rive Gauche', where, behind the colour, gaiety, music, excitement and orgiastic festivities always going on, one is conscious of the presence of the sinister Security Bureau.

As in the best science fantasy tradition, the work is beautifully written, with many learned references to science and the arts. Despite their bizarrerie, the characters come to life. At times they seem to be creatures of free will while at others they assume pre-ordained roles in the legend of the Nightingale and the Rose.

The novel is exciting, full of brilliant and audacious ideas, full of involved symbolism, full of impact. It has a dreamlike, surrealist atmosphere in which details, as in paintings by Dali or Bosch, stand out more real than in reality. The life depicted is as far removed from naturalism as the story of Harlequin and Columbine; yet, such is the artistry of the author, it seems as universal and important as nuclear physics.

Mr. Moorcock, in his introduction, tells how "The Rose" after publication in AUTHENTIC SF in 1953, was not published in book form for over twelve years - and this despite the fact that in the meantime it had become a favourite with many readers, and its author had received enthusiastic recognition both from professional experts and from readers.

"The Chessplayers" is in complete contrast to "The Rose". A short story which concerns a most unusual chess game. Not all chess players are lunatics, of course, but if the narrator of this story is anything to go by, they are inclined to be somewhat eccentric. A very good short story.

"The New Reality" demonstrates how an old theme with a predictable ending can be given new life by a master of science fiction and made into a first-class novelette.

Once again we have characters who assume roles in a legend; we have an evil professor conducting forbidden experiments with a Nicol Prism and a geniometer in a secluded house guarded by jungle cats. There are numerous well-documented arguments about the nature of reality. Many questions of cosmic import are posed, and some of them are answered. Despite the familiarity of the basic plot, the reader is kept scanning the page with anxious eyeballs until the end.

This book is wonderful value and highly recommended.

TANGENT

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

TANGENT is the B.S.F.A.'s fiction magazine containing stories and articles by established authors and also amateurs.

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A SMALL ARMAGEDDON by Mordecai Roshwald
Four Square 1418, 3/6. 159 pages

Reviewed by
Ian McAulay

In the past few years there have appeared a number of books dealing with the possibility of psychopaths, mad scientists, war crazy militarists, or just plain nuts getting control of nuclear weapons either accidentally or deliberately and 'pressing the button'. DR. STRANGELOVE, FAIL SAFE and RED ALERT are good examples of this sub-class of literature and they have been valuable in that they have promoted some public concern about the dangers involved in our civilisation's plans for nuclear strategy.

Most SF fans would, I think, consider the books mentioned above to be borderline SF at best. Nonetheless, they are absorbing reading, particularly if you worry about the possibility of a nuclear war irrespective of whether it occurs by accident or design.

A SMALL ARMAGEDDON is a recent addition to this growing list of books about nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands (don't ask me whose are the right hands) and, while not in the same class as DR. STRANGELOVE, it is moderately enjoyable in a grim sort of way.

An American submarine, armed with nuclear rockets and manned by as motley a crew of defective personalities as could be imagined, falls under the command of its executive officer after he has murdered the Captain. As acting captain, the executive officer declares the submarine to be an independent state and secedes from the Union, thereafter using the threat of nuclear bombardment to blackmail the USA and various other countries into supplying him and his crew with everything they want, which consists of money, drink and girls. Following their initial successes, the demands of the rebel submarine become more and more outrageous until it is wiped out in a somewhat implausible and contrived climax to the book.

The book is too short to deal in much detail with the characters involved and instead concentrates in a mildly satirical way on the reactions of the United States Government and its military leaders. The story, according to the publisher's blurb, purports to be primarily 'a comic adventure'; a description which I feel overrates the book, though I must admit that the humour of nuclear warfare, blackmail and murder has so far eluded me.

Worth reading but not one for your permanent shelf.

ANTHEM by Ayn Rand
Signet P2809, 5/- 119 pages

Reviewed by
Roy Kay

This is a slim 19,000-worder, written in 1937. The story is written in the first-person plural by 'Equality 7-2521', a member of an ultra-communist future society where any kind of individual identity or individual thinking is forbidden. From birth, each citizen is made to think of his identity only as it relates to his 'brothers'. They are taught "We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, one, indivisible and forever". They pray "We are nothing. Mankind is all. We exist through, by and for our brothers who are the state. Amen".

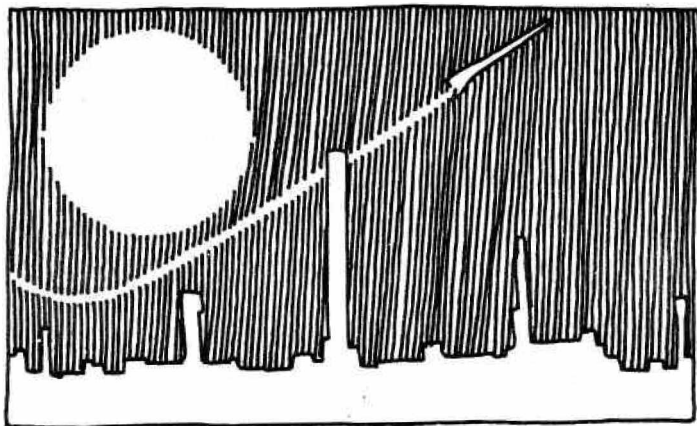
Of course, this is not so much a story but a cautionary tale and we've heard it all before. The 'rebel in society' theme must be one of the most oft-used clichés in science fiction. Our hero finds an underground hideaway, actually the remains of part of a subway and here writes and experiments with part of the debris. He 'discovers' electricity in a world which now knows only the candle. There is also a girl, a rebel mate who admires him for his unconventional manliness amongst his down-trodden brothers. Eventually the crisis comes and they escape the city and stumble across a house from before the times of the 'Great Rebirth'. Here Equality 7-2521 discovers the lost word 'I'. If you're looking for suspense, this isn't it.

Miss Rand has used the story to spell out her own moral which should be an unforgivable sin for any writer. You get the feeling that the whole book is a justification for Chapter Eleven in which our hero is made to mouth Ayn Rand's never-never land philosophy of intellectual selfishness.

The writing is sometimes naive but often vividly moving. There is a magic to some of the passages and the sometimes repetitive phrasing has, strangely, something of the flavour of the Hiawatha poem.

ANTHEM has something although it is neither believable nor original. Maybe the obvious sincerity of Miss Rand's writing is a point in its favour. Maybe it's that, in spite of its faults, it's not a story you can put down and forget about.

In three words - erratic but worthwhile.



BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL by Brian W. Aldiss (Four Square 1496, 3/6)

VIRGIN PLANET by Poul Anderson (Mayflower 9336, 3/6)

THE SYMMETRIANS by Kenneth Harker (Compact 3/6) May

THE DEEP FIX by James Colvin (Compact 3/6) June

A PLANET CALLED KRISHNA by L Sprague de Camp (Compact 3/6) July

THE TWILIGHT MAN by Michael Moorcock (Compact 3/6) August

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION No 11 edited by Robert P Mills

(Panther 3/6) May 9th

THE MAIL RESPONSE

There is no "Mail Response" this issue as it is only a few days since VECTOR 38 was mailed out. Any letters of comment on VECTOR 38 will be published in VECTOR 40. As from now, all letters should be addressed to the new editor, Steve Oakey at Rectory Lane, Somersham, Hunts.