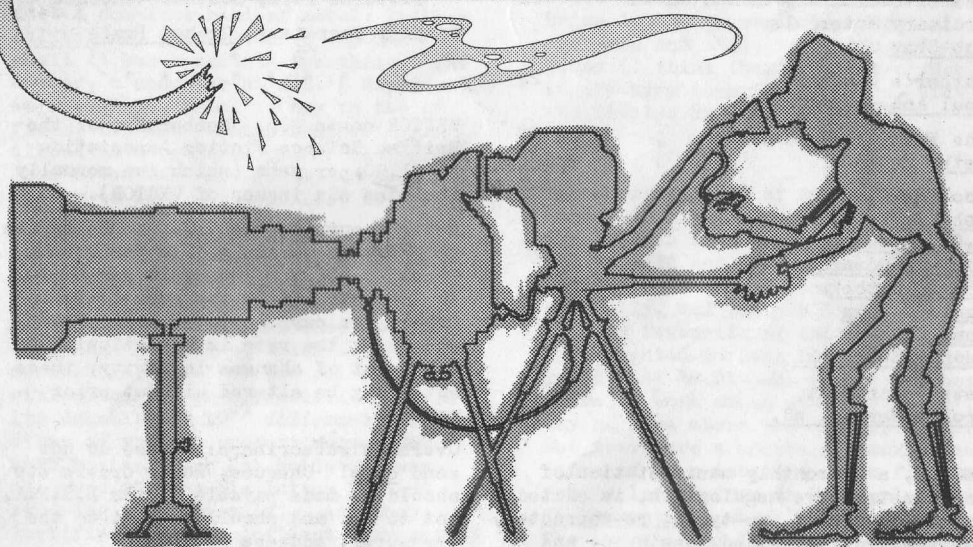


VECTOR ~ 64

philip k dick's

THE ANDROID & THE HUMAN



AMMO 5-2-73

Journal of the British Science Fiction Association

30p

march ~ april 1973

VECTOR 64 :: March-April 1973

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VECTOR costs 30p. Membership of the British Science Fiction Association is £1.50 per year (which sum normally includes six issues of VECTOR).

Readers outside the U.K. can subscribe to VECTOR separately. In the U.S.A. it costs 60¢ per issue; 10 for \$6.00. In Australia it is the same (only in Australian currency). In all other countries the rate is equivalent. In the event of changes in parity, these rates may be altered without prior warning.

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Copy deadline for VECTOR 65 is April 1st.
Contributors: please don't be late!
Next issue will be out sooner, if not later, than you think.
These are the last two lines to be typed in the entire issue.

"The screech of the turbos fractured the hill. A great cry rose from 1000 throats. Princess Wilson cursed as the plane braked. The note pad was opened. 'Didn't I warn you?' Arthur C. Clarke panted. Then decreed Torin III the android despot: 'Let there hence be enmity within this city.'"

This piece of deathless prose is not, as you may have thought, part of the latest Larry Niven opus, but is in fact a complete mini-sf novel: Endless Culture, by Blade Starr. You must admit it has a certain something. The author, a computer at G.E.'s Supercentre in Cleveland, Ohio, is new to the sf field, but has already been widely tipped as a possible winner of the new John W. Campbell Award, as the best new writer to emerge in the last two years.

The computer made a guest appearance, courtesy of Honeywell Information Systems and Intelsat 3, at the SF Seminar at the American Embassy last month. Despite the presence of this challenging machine, which spewed out novels like this for two solid days without making an appreciable dent in its capacity of 10⁶ different plots, other sf writers present seemed unworried (although Rob Holdstock was observed chewing his bottom lip and studying them intently). Are they justified in such confident disregard of the machine's challenge? Only time will tell.

At the seminar itself a good time was had by all, despite a certain inevitable retreading of old ground. Brian Aldiss, on the Saturday, was in particularly ebullient form, despite the harrowing experience the evening before of listening to Philip Strick's London University class dissecting Report on Probability A. A panel discussion on film, with Strick, Kingsley Amis and Richard Roud,

yielded an interesting discussion on "Night of the Living Dead", which had just been shown, and even came up with one or two new points concerning "2001" when it was dragged, rather unwillingly, into retreading that old ground. The other highlight was a quasi-animated film called "The Heat of a Thousand Suns", which has apparently been shown at conventions, but not when I was around. Samuel R. Delany turned up somewhat unexpectedly, and was promptly roped into a panel discussion. And Brian Aldiss pointed out a man in the audience and said, in rather awe-struck tones (I think they were awe-struck, but it may have been the Teachers) that he was Charles Eric Maine.

* * * * *

Computer-produced sf novels are in many ways a logical lead-in to the main article in this VECTOR: Philip K. Dick's The Android and the Human. Except to say that you should read it and read it carefully, and that as Dick has long been my favourite sf writer I am obviously delighted to have the opportunity to print what Mr Dick himself describes as "a major work among what I've done", I'll say no more about the article itself. But there are a couple of background items of some interest. The first comes from a letter from Mr Dick printed in SF Commentary, which is also publishing The Android and the Human. The letter is very long and very interesting, but to read it all you'll have to get hold of SFC (I'm agent, remember: 9 for £1.50). In the course of it, Mr Dick says of this article: "I worked four months on it, trying to sum up an entire lifetime of developing thought. At the time my personal difficulties were so great (in November 1971 my house was torn apart and looted, evidently by political extremists) that I felt I wouldn't live much longer; I sensed, incorrectly I'll glad to say, that the speech would be

the last thing I wrote. Therefore I poured into it all the remaining ideas in my head, in particular my germinal notions for future books."

Since writing The Android and the Human as a speech to be delivered at the Vancouver SF Convention Mr Dick has led a rather troubled life, as detailed in the remainder of the letter. Happily, he is now back in California and is writing once again, as he says in a recent letter:

"You may be interested to know that since writing this speech I have written the first half of a new novel called The Dark-Haired Girl, which is based on the speech. The first half of the novel deals with the authentic human as described in the speech, and the second half will deal with the reflex machine, also as described in the speech: i.e. the human and the android, although in the new novel I call it the "mantis" rather than the android, since it is not an sf novel. How I am handling this theme outside of science fiction may be seen from this passage which opens the second half of the novel, depicting the mantis:

"...No reduction of the human into a mere thing, short of removing actual sections of the brain, can be found outside of the dismal transformation brought on by heroin addiction. When a heroin addict confronts you, two insect eyes, two lightless slots of dim glass, without warmth or true life, calculate to the exact decimal point how many tangible commodities you can be cashed in for. He, being already dead, views you as if you were already dead, or never lived. Biological life goes on, but the soul has been extinguished. He is always our enemy, or rather I should say it is pitted against us, simply because we are still alive, we affront its insect intelligence..." I note, too, in this new novel, how much the mantis resembles my description of Palmer Eldritch in The Three Stigmata: the slotted, empty eyes out of which looks pure evil. The dark-haired girl is its opposite, and looks at you with love. I've written 126 pages about her, and with full joy. Writing about the mantis will give me little joy, but it must be done, the better to make clear the girl's deep worth."

Once again, as you will see, space has forced me to leave out "The Mail Response". I hate to do this, because I know that letters generate letters, and come what may it will be back next time. Even if I have to write the letters myself. But I hope that will not be necessary. Someone, somewhere wants a letter from you; and that someone is probably me. My thanks to the people who have written since V63 came out: Brian Aldiss, John Godrich, Roy Gray, Harry Harrison, E.R. James and Tony Sudbery. Oh yes, and Andy Porter.

* * * * *

No, it wasn't intended that the two Ames illustrations in V.63 should be loose: it was the result of an almighty cock-up by the printer (not our usual one) who cleverly omitted to remove the protective sheets covering the two pieces, so that pages 17 and 35 were not, as you might have thought, left blank, but had the plain white protective sheet impeccably printed on them, with the pencilled instructions neatly touched out. You would not have thought this possible, since the sheets were thin white paper and you could see through them: that there was an illustration underneath? No, neither would I. Anyway, I suppose there were certain compensations, in that it saved us some money, and when they printed the two illustrations for insertion they naturally printed a few too many, so that I have about 40 of each left over. Therefore if anyone would like a spare copy of either or both, to stick upon the wall, they need but send me a stamped addressed envelope of suitable size and rigidity and they can have them.

* * * * *

Fred Hemmings would like me to add a footnote to the item on OMPAcon which appeared in V.62 and quoted a hotel price of £7 per person per night: "Prospective and actual members of OMPAcon '73 might care to note that the hotel room prices are actually below £4 per night for B&B, the one in excess of £7 being for Full Board. There are even some hopes that these might be reduced slightly." If you haven't registered and are thinking of going, you'll find Fred's address in the News Section.

* * * * *

PHILIP K. DICK

the android and the human

It is the tendency of the so-called primitive mind to animate its environment. Modern depth psychology has requested us for years to withdraw these anthropomorphic projections from what is actually inanimate reality, to introject -- that is, bring back into our own heads -- the living quality which we, in ignorance, cast out onto the inert things surrounding us. Such introjection is said to be the mark of civilization in contrast to mere social culture, such as one finds in a tribe. A native of Africa is said to view his surroundings as pulsing with a purpose, a life, which is actually within himself; once these childish projections are withdrawn, he sees that the world is dead, and that life resides solely within himself. When he reaches this sophisticated point he is said to be either mature or sane. Or scientific. But one wonders: has he not also, in this process, reified -- that is, made into a thing -- other people? Stones and rocks and trees may now be inanimate for him, but what about his friends? Has he not now made them into stones, too?

This is, really, a psychological problem. And its solution, I think, is of less importance in any case than one might think, because, within the last decade, we have seen a trend not anticipated by our earnest psychologists -- or by anyone else -- which dwarfs that issue: our environment, and I mean our man-made world of machines, artificial constructs, computers, electronic systems, interlinking homeostatic components -- all this is in fact beginning more and more to possess what the earnest psychologists fear the primitive sees in his environment: animation. In a very real sense our environment is becoming alive, or at least quasi-alive, and in ways specifically and fundament-

ally analogous to ourselves. Cybernetics, a valuable recent scientific discipline, articulated by the late Norbert Wiener, saw valid comparisons between the behaviour of machines and humans -- with the view that a study of machines would yield valuable insights into the nature of our own behaviour. By studying what goes wrong with a machine -- for example when two mutually exclusive tropisms function simultaneously in one of Grey Walter's synthetic turtles, producing fascinatingly intricate behaviour in the befuddled turtles -- one learns, perhaps, a new, more fruitful insight into what in humans was previously called "neurotic" behaviour. But suppose the use of this analogy is turned the other way? Suppose -- and I don't believe Wiener anticipated this -- suppose a study of ourselves, our own nature, enables us to gain insight into the now extraordinarily complex functioning and malfunctioning of mechanical and electronic constructs. In other words -- and this is what I wish to stress in what I am saying here -- it is now possible that we can learn about the artificial external environment around us, how it behaves, why, what it is up to, by analogizing from what we know about ourselves.

Machines are becoming more human, so to speak -- at least in the sense that, as Wiener indicated, some meaningful comparison exists between human and mechanical behaviour. But is it ourselves that we know first and foremost? Rather than learning about ourselves by studying our constructs, perhaps we should make the attempt to comprehend what our constructs are up to by looking into what we ourselves are up to.

Perhaps, really, what we are seeing is a gradual merging of the general

nature of human activity and function into the activity and function of what we humans have built and surround ourselves with. A hundred years ago such a thought would have been absurd, rather than merely anthropomorphic. What could a man living in 1750 have learned about himself by observing the behaviour of a donkey steam engine? Could he have watched it huffing and puffing and then extrapolated from its labour an insight into why he himself continually fell in love with one certain type of pretty young girl? This would not have been primitive thinking on his part; it would have been pathological. But now we find ourselves immersed in a world of our own making so intricate, so mysterious, that as Stanislaw Lem, the eminent Polish science fiction writer theorizes, the time may come when for example a man may have to be restrained from attempting to rape a sewing machine. Let us hope, if that time comes, that it is a female sewing machine he fastens his attentions on. And one over the age of seventeen — hopefully a very old treadle-operated Singer, although possibly regrettably past menopause.

I have, in some of my stories and novels, written about androids or robots or simulacra — the name doesn't matter; what is meant is artificial constructs masquerading as humans. Usually with a sinister purpose in mind. I suppose I took it for granted that if such a construct, a robot for example, had a benign or anyhow decent purpose in mind, it would not need to so disguise itself. Now, to me, that theme seems obsolete. The constructs do not mimic humans; they are, in many deep ways, actually human already. They are not trying to fool us, for a purpose of any sort; they merely follow lines we follow, in order that they, too, may overcome such common problems as the breakdown of vital parts, loss of power-source, attack by such foes as storms, short circuits — and I'm sure any one of us can testify that a short circuit, especially in our power supply, can ruin our entire day and make us utterly unable to get to our daily job, or, once at the office, useless as far as doing the work set forth on our desk is concerned.

What would occur to me now as a recasting of the robot-appearing-as-human theme would be a gleaming robot with a telescan-lens and a helium battery power-pack, who, when jostled, bleeds. Under-

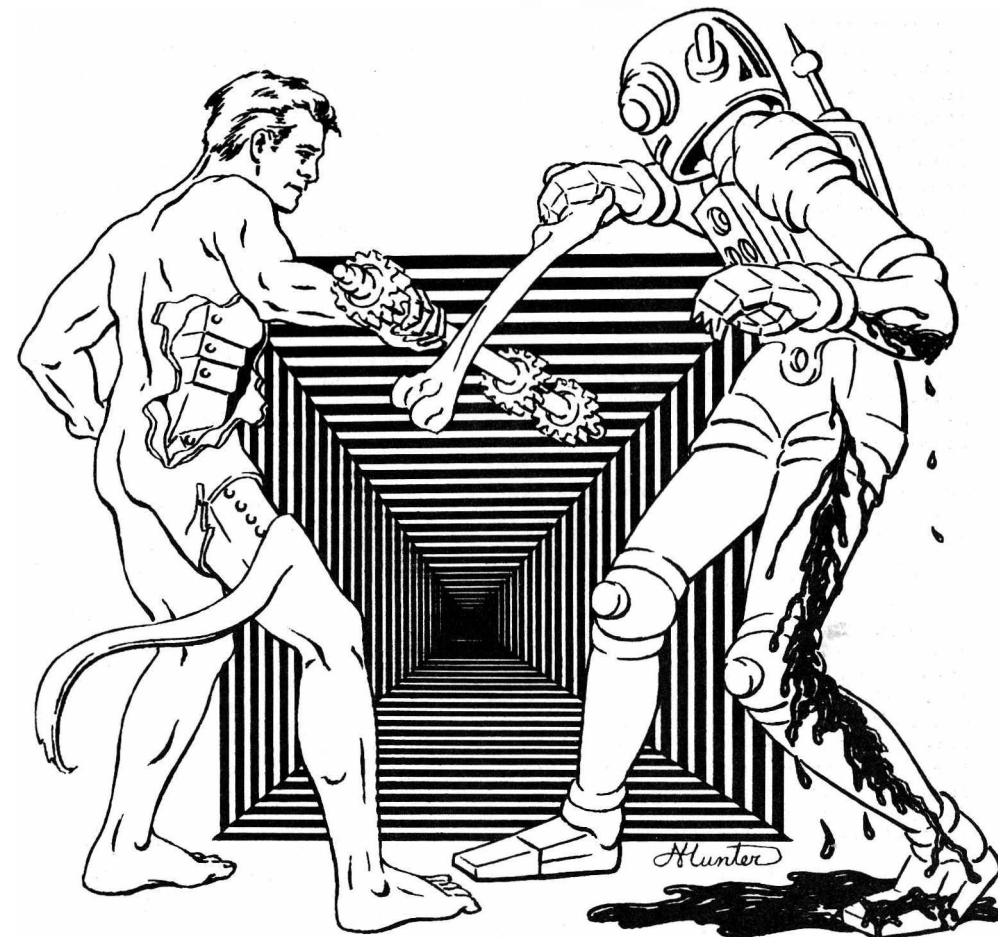
neath the metal hull is a heart, such as we ourselves have. Perhaps I will write that. Or, as in stories already in print, a computer, when asked some ultimate question such as, "Why is there water?", prints out I Corinthians. One story I wrote, which I'm afraid I failed to take seriously enough, dealt with a computer which, when able to answer a question put to it, ate the questioner. Presumably — I failed to go into this — had the computer been unable to answer a question, the human questioner would have eaten it. Anyhow, I inadvertently blended the human and the construct, and didn't notice that such a blend might, in time, actually begin to become part of our reality. Like Lem, I think this will be so, more and more. But to project past Lem's idea: a time may come when, if a man tries to rape a sewing machine, the sewing machine will have him arrested and testify perhaps even a little hysterically against him in court. This leads to all sorts of spinoff ideas; false testimony by suborned sewing machines who accuse innocent men unfairly; paternity tests, and, of course, abortions for sewing machines which have become pregnant against their will. And would there be birth control pills for sewing machines? Probably, like one of my previous wives, certain sewing machines would complain that the pills made them overweight — or rather, in their case, that they made them sew irregular stitches. And there would be unreliable sewing machines that would forget to take their birth control pills. And, last but not least, there would have to be Planned Parenthood Clinics at which sewing machines just off the assembly lines would be counselled as to the dangers of promiscuity, with severe warnings of venereal diseases visited on such immoral machines by an outraged God — Himself, no doubt, able to sew buttonholes and fancy needlework at a rate that would dazzle the credulous, merely metal and plastic sewing machines always ready, like ourselves, to kow-tow before divine miracles.

I am being facetious about this, I suppose, but — the point is not merely a humorous one. Our electronic constructs are becoming so complex that to comprehend them we must now reverse the analogizing of cybernetics and try to reason from our mentation and behaviour to theirs — although I suppose to assign motive or purpose to them would be to

enter the realm of paranoia; what machines do may resemble what we do, but certainly they do not have intent in the sense that we have; they have tropisms, they have purpose in the sense that we build them to accomplish certain ends and to react to certain stimuli. A pistol, for example, is built with the purpose of firing a metal slug that will damage, incapacitate or kill someone, but this does not mean the pistol wants to do this. And yet here we are entering the philosophical realm of Spinoza when he saw, and I think with great profundity, that if a falling stone could reason, it would think, "I want to fall at the rate of 32 feet per second per second". Free will for us — that is, when we feel desire, when we are conscious of wanting to do what we do — may be even for us an illusion; and depth psychology seems to substantiate

this: many of our drives in life originate from an unconscious that is beyond our control. We are as driven as are insects, although the term "instinct" is perhaps not applicable for us. Whatever the term, much of our behaviour that we feel is the result of our will, may control us to the extent that for all practical purposes we are falling stones, doomed to drop at a rate prescribed by nature, as rigid and predictable as the force that creates a crystal. Each of us may feel himself unique, with an intrinsic destiny never before seen in the universe...and yet to God we may be millions of crystals, identical in the eyes of the Cosmic Scientist.

And — here is a thought not too pleasing — as the external world becomes more animate, we may find that we — the so-called humans — are becoming, and may to a great extent always



have been, inanimate in the sense that we are led, directed by in-built tropisms, rather than leading. So we and our elaborately evolving computers may meet each other half way. Someday a human being may shoot a robot which has come out of a General Electric factory, and to his surprise see it weep and bleed. And the dying robot may shoot back and, to its surprise, see a wisp of gray smoke arise from the electric pump that it supposed was the human's beating heart. It would be rather a great moment of truth for both of them.

I would like then to ask this: what is it, in our behaviour, that we can call specifically human? That is special to us as a living species? And what is it that, at least up to now, we can consign as merely machine behaviour, or, by extension, insect-behaviour, or reflex-behaviour? And I would include, in this, the kind of pseudo-human behaviour exhibited by what were once living men — creatures who have, in ways I wish to discuss next, become instruments, means, rather than ends, and hence to me analogues of machines in the bad sense, in the sense that although biological life continues, metabolism goes on, the soul — for lack of a better term — is no longer there or at least no longer active. And such does exist in our world — it always did, but the production of such inauthentic human activity has become a science of government and such-like agencies, now. The reduction of humans to mere use — men made into machines, serving a purpose which although "good" in an abstract sense has, for its accomplishment, employed what I regard as the greatest evil imaginable: the placing on what was a free man who laughed and cried and made mistakes and wandered off into foolishness and play a restriction that limits him, despite what he may imagine or think, to the fulfillment of an aim outside of his own personal — however puny — destiny. As if, so to speak, history has made him into its instrument. History, and men skilled in — and trained in — the use of manipulative techniques, equipped with devices, ideologically oriented, themselves, in such a way that the use of these devices strikes them as a necessary or at least desirable method of bringing about some ultimately desired goal.

I think, at this point, of Tom Paine's comment about one or another party of the Europe of his time: "They admired the

feathers and forgot the dying bird". And it is the "dying bird" that I am concerned with. The dying — and yet, I think, beginning once again to revive in the hearts of the new generation of kids coming into maturity — the dying bird of authentic humanness.

This is what I wish to say to you here. I wish to disclose my hope, my faith, in the kids who are emerging now. Their world, their values. And, simultaneously, their imperviousness to the false values, the false idols, the false hates, of the previous generations. The fact that they, these fine, good kids, cannot be reached or moved or even touched by the "gravity" — to refer back to my previous metaphor — that has made us older persons fall, against our knowledge or will, at 32 feet per second throughout our lives...while believing that we desired it.

It is as if these kids, or at least many of them, some of them, are falling at a different rate, or, really, not falling at all. Walt Whitman's "Marching to the sound of different drummers" might be rephrased this way: falling, not in response to unexamined, unchallenged alleged "verities", but in response to a new and inner — and genuinely authentic — human desire.

Youth, of course, has always tended toward this; in fact this is really a definition of youth. But right now it is so urgent, if, as I think, we are merging by degrees into homogeneity with our mechanical constructs, step by step, month by month, until a time will perhaps come when a writer, for example, will not stop writing because someone unplugged his electric typewriter but because someone unplugged him. But there are kids now who cannot be unplugged because no electric cord links them to any external power-source. Their hearts beat with an interior, private meaning. Their energy doesn't come from a pacemaker; it comes from a stubborn, almost absurdly perverse, refusal to be "shucked", that is, to be taken in by the slogans, the ideology — in fact by any and all ideology itself, of whatever sort — that would reduce them to instruments of abstract causes, however "good". In California I have been living with such kids, participating, to the extent I can, in their emerging world. I would like to tell you about their world because — if we are lucky — something of that world, those values,

that way of life, will shape the future of our total society, our utopia or anti-utopia of the future. As a science fiction writer, I must of course look continually ahead, always at the future. It is my hope — and I'd like to communicate it to you in the tremendous spirit of optimism that I feel so urgently and strongly — that our collective tomorrow exists in embryonic form in the heads, or rather in the hearts, of these kids who right now, at their young ages, are politically and sociologically powerless, unable even, by our California laws, to buy a bottle of beer or a cigarette, to vote, to in any way shape, be consulted about, or bring into existence, the official laws that govern their and our society. I think, really, I am saying this: if you are interested in the world of tomorrow you may learn something about it, or at least read about possibilities that may emerge to fashion it, in the pages of Analog and F&SF and Amazing, but actually, to find it in its authentic form, you will discover it as you observe a 16 or 17 year-old kid as he goes about his natural peregrinations, his normal day. Or, as we say in the San Francisco Bay Area, as you observe him "cruising around town to check out the action". This is what I have found. These kids, that I have known, lived with, still know, in California, are my science fiction stories of tomorrow, my summation, at this point in my life as a person and a writer; they are what I look ahead to — and so keenly desire to see prevail. What, more than anything else I have encountered, I believe in. And would give my life for. My full measure of devotion, in this war we are fighting, to maintain, and augment, what is human about us, what is the core of ourselves, and the source of our destiny. Our flight must be not only to the stars but into the nature of our own beings. Because it is not merely where we go, to Alpha Centauri or Betelgeuse, but what we are as we make our pilgrimage there. Our natures will be going there, too. "Ad astra" — but "per hominum". And we must never lose sight of that.

It would, after all, be rather dismaying, if the first two-legged entity to emerge on the surface of Mars from a Terran spacecraft were to declare, "Thanks be to God for letting me, letting me, click, letting, click, click...this is a recording." And then catch fire and explode as a couple of wires got

crossed somewhere within its plastic chest. And, probably even more dismaying to this construct, would be the discovery when it returned to Earth, that its "children" had been recycled along with the aluminum beer cans and Coca-Cola bottles as fragments of the urban pollution problem. And, finally, when this astronaut made of plastic and wiring and relays went down to the City Hall officials to complain, it would discover that its three-year guarantee had run out, and, since parts were no longer available to keep it functioning, its birth certificate had been cancelled.

Of course, literally, we should not take this seriously. But as a metaphor — in some broad sense maybe we should scrutinize more closely the two-legged entities we plan to send up, for example, to man the orbiting space station. We do not want to learn three years from now that the allegedly human crew had all married portions of the space station and had settled down to whirr happily ever after in connubial bliss. As in Ray Bradbury's superb story in which a fear-haunted citizen of Los Angeles discovers that the police car trailing him has no driver, that it is tailing him on its own; in Mr Bradbury's story the real horror, at least to me, is not that the police car has its own tropism as it hounds the protagonist but that, within the car, there is a vacuum. A place unfilled. The absence of something vital — that is the horrific part, the apocalyptic vision of a nightmare future. But, I, myself, foresee something more optimistic: had I written that story I would have had a teenage behind the wheel of the police car — he has stolen it while the police officer is in a coffee shop on his lunch break, and the kid is going to resell it by tearing it down into parts. This may sound a little cynical on my part, but wouldn't this be preferable? As we say in California where I live, when the police come to investigate a burglary of your house, they find, when they are leaving, that someone has stripped the tyres and motor and transmission from their car, and the officers must hitchhike back to headquarters. This thought may strike fear into the hearts of establishment people, but frankly it makes me feel cheerful. Even the most base schemes of human beings are preferable to the most exalted tropisms of machines. I think this, right here, is one of the valid insights possessed by some of the new youth: cars, even police cars, are expendable, can be replaced. They are

really all alike. It is the person inside who, when gone, cannot be duplicated, at any price. Even if we do not like him we cannot do without him. And once gone, he will never come back.

And then, too, if he is made into an android, he will never come back, never be again human. Or anyhow most likely will not.

As the children of our world fight to develop their new individuality, their almost surly disrespect for the verities we worship, they become for us — and by "us" I mean the establishment — a source of trouble. I do not necessarily mean politically active youth, those who organize into distinct societies with banners and slogans — to me, that is a reduction into the past, however revolutionary those slogans may be. I refer to the intrinsic entities, the kids each of whom is on his own, doing what we call "his thing". He may, for example, not break the law by seating himself on the tracks before troop trains; his flouting of the law may consist of taking his car to a drive-in movie with four kids hidden in the trunk to avoid having to pay. Still, a law is being broken. The first transgression has political, theoretical overtones; the second, a mere lack of agreement that one must always do what one is ordered to do — especially when the order comes from a posted, printed sign. In both cases there is disobedience. We might applaud the first as Meaningful. The second merely irresponsible. And yet it is in the second that I see a happier future. After all, there have always been in history movements of people organized in opposition to the governing powers. This is merely one group using force against another, the outs versus the ins. It has failed to produce a utopia so far. And I think always will.

Becoming what I call, for lack of a better term, an android, means as I said, to allow oneself to become a means, or to be pounded down, manipulated, made into a means without one's knowledge or consent — the results are the same. But you cannot turn a human into an android if that human is going to break laws every chance he gets. Androidization requires obedience. And, most of all, predictability. It is precisely when a given person's response to any given situation can be predicted with scientific accuracy that the gates are open for the wholesale

production of the android life form. What good is a flashlight if the bulb lights up only now and then when you press the button? Any machine must always work, be reliable. The android, like any other machine, must perform on cue. But our youth cannot be counted on to do this; it is unreliable. Either through laziness, short attention-span, perversity, criminal tendencies — whatever label you wish to pin on the kid to explain his unreliability is fine. Each merely means: we can tell him and tell him what to do, but when the time comes for him to perform, all the subliminal instruction, all the ideological briefing, all the tranquilizing drugs, all the psychotherapy, are a waste. He just plain will not jump when the whip is cracked. And so he is of no use to us, the calcified, entrenched powers. He will not see to it that he acts as an instrument by which we both keep and augment those powers and the rewards — for ourselves — that go with them.

What has happened is that there has been too much persuasion. The television set, the newspapers — all the so-called mass media, have overdone it. Words have ceased to mean much to these kids; they have had to listen to too many. They cannot be taught, because there has been too great an eagerness, too conspicuous a motive, to make them learn. The anti-utopia science fiction writers of fifteen years ago, and I was one of them, foresaw the mass communications propaganda machinery grinding everyone down into mediocrity and uniformity. But it is not coming out this way. While the car radio dins out the official view on the war in Viet Nam, the young boy is disconnecting the speaker so he can replace it with a tweeter and a woofer; in the middle of the barangue the speaker is unattached. And, as he expertly hooks up better audio components in his car, the boy fails even to notice that the voice on the radio is trying to tell him something. This skilled craftsman of a kid listens only to see whether there is distortion, interference, or a frequency curve that isn't fully compensated. His head is turned toward immediate realities, the speaker itself, not the flatuas voci dinning from it.

The totalitarian society envisioned by George Orwell in 1984 should have

arrived by now. The electronic gadgets are here. The government is here, ready to do what Orwell anticipated. So the power exists, the motive, and the electronic hardware. But these mean nothing, because, progressively more and more so, no one is listening. The new youth that I see is too stupid to read, too restless and bored to watch, too preoccupied to remember. The collective voice of the authorities is wasted on him; he rebels. But rebels not out of theoretical, ideological considerations, only out of what might be called pure selfishness. Plus a careless lack of regard for the dread consequences the authorities promise him if he fails to obey. He cannot be bribed because what he wants he can build, steal, or in some curious, intricate way acquire for himself. He cannot be intimidated because on the streets and in his home he has seen and participated in so much violence that it fails to cow him. He merely gets out of its way when it threatens, or, if he can't escape, he fights back. When the locked police van comes to carry him off to the concentration camp the guards will discover that while loading the van they have failed to note that another equally hopeless juvenile has slashed the tyres. The van is out of commission. And while the tyres are being replaced, some other youth syphons out all the gas from the gas tank for his souped-up Chevrolet Impala and has sped off long ago.

The absolutely horrible technological society — that was our dream, our vision of the future. We could foresee nothing equipped with enough power, guile or whatever to impede the coming of that dreadful, nightmare society. It never occurred to us that the delinquent kids might abort it out of the sheer perverse malice of their little individual souls, God bless them. Here, as a case in point, are two excerpts from the media; the first, quoted in that epitome of the nauseating, Time, is — so help me — what Time calls "the ultimate dream in telephone service once described by Harold S. Osborne, former chief engineer of A.T.&T.":

"Whenever a baby is born anywhere in the world, he is given at birth a telephone number for life. As soon as he can talk, he is given a watch-like device with ten little buttons on one side and a screen on the other. When he wishes to

talk with anyone in the world, he will pull out the device and punch on the keys the number. Then, turning the device over, he will hear the voice of his friend and see his face on the screen, in color and in three dimensions. If he does not see him and hear him, he will know that his friend is dead."

I don't know; I really don't find this funny. It is really sad. It is heart-breaking. Anyhow, it is not going to happen. The kids have already seen to that. "Phone freaks", they are called, these particular kids. This is what the L.A. Times says, in an article dated earlier this year:

"They (the phone freaks) all arrived carrying customized MF'ers — multi-frequency tone signals — the phone freak term for a blue box. The home-made MF'ers varied in size and design. One was a sophisticated pocket transistor built by a PhD in engineering, another the size of a cigar box with an acoustical coupler attaching to the phone receiver. So far, these phone freaks had devised 22 ways to make a free call without using credit cards. In case of a slipup, the phone freaks also know how to detect "supervision", phone company jargon for a nearly inaudible tone which comes on the line before anyone answers to register calling charges. As soon as phone freaks detect the dreaded "supervision", they hang up fast.

"Captain Crunch was still in the phone booth pulling the red switches on his fancy computerized box. He got his name from the whistle found in the Cap'n Crunch breakfast cereal box. Crunch discovered that the whistle has a frequency of 2600 cycles per second, the exact frequency the telephone company uses to indicate that a line is idle, and of course, the first frequency phone freaks learn how to whistle to get "disconnect", which allows them to pass from one circuit to another. Crunch, intent, hunched over his box to read a list of country code numbers. He impersonated a phone man, gave precise technical information to the overseas operator, and called Italy. In less than a minute he reached a professor of classical Greek writings at the University of Florence."

This is how the future has actually come out. None of us science fiction

writers foresaw phone freaks. Fortunately, neither did the phone company, which otherwise would have taken over by now. But this is the difference between dire myth and warm, merry reality. And it is the kids, unique, wonderful, unhampered by scruples in any traditional sense, that have made the difference.

Speaking in science fiction terms, I now foresee an anarchistic totalitarian state ahead. Ten years from now a TV street reporter will ask some kid who is President of the United States, and the kid will admit he doesn't know. "But the President can have you executed," the reporter will say. "Or beaten or thrown into prison or all your rights taken away, all your property — everything." And the boy will reply, "Yeah, so could my father, up to last month when he had his fatal coronary. He used to say the same thing." End of interview. And when the reporter goes to gather up his equipment he will find that one of his colour 3-D microphone-vidlens systems is missing; the kid has swiped it from him while the reporter was blabbing on.

If, as it seems, we are in the process of becoming a totalitarian society in which the state apparatus is all-powerful, the ethics most important for the survival of the true, free, human individual would be: cheat, lie, evade, fake it, be elsewhere, forge documents, build improved electronic gadgets in your garage that'll outwit the gadgets used by the authorities. If the television screen is going to watch you, rewire it late at night when you're permitted to turn it off — rewire it in such a way that the police flunky monitoring the transmission from your living room mirrors back his living room at his house. When you sign a confession under duress, forge the name of one of the political spies who's infiltrated your model airplane club. Pay your fines in counterfeit money or rubber checks or stolen credit cards. Give a false address. Arrive at the courthouse in a stolen car. Tell the judge that if he sentences you, you will substitute aspirin tablets for his daughter's birth control pills. Or put His Honour on a mailing list for pornographic magazines. Or, if all else fails, threaten him with your using his credit card number to make unnecessary long distance calls to cities on other planets. It will not be necessary to blow up the courthouse any more. Simply

find some way to defame the judge — you saw him driving home one night on the wrong side of the road with his headlights off and a fifth of bourbon propped up against his steering wheel. And his bumper sticker that night read: GRANT FULL RIGHTS TO US HOMOSEXUALS. He has of course torn it off by now, but both you and ten of your friends witnessed it. And they are all at pay phones right now, ready to phone the news to the local papers. And, if he is so foolish as to sentence you, at least ask him to give back the little tape recorder you inadvertently left in his bedroom. Since the off-switch on it is broken, it has probably recorded its entire ten day reel of tape by now. Results should be interesting. And if he tries to destroy the tape, you will have him arrested for vandalism, which, in the totalitarian state of tomorrow, will be the supreme crime. What is your life worth in his eyes compared with a three dollar reel of milar tape? The tape is probably government property, like everything else, so to destroy it would be a crime against the state. The first step in a calculated, sinister insurrection.

I wonder if you recall the so-called "brain mapping" developed by Penfield recently; he was able to locate the exact centres in the brain from which each sensation, emotion, response came. By stimulating one minute area with an electrode, a laboratory rat was transfigured into a state of perpetual bliss. "They'll be doing that to all of us, too, soon," a pessimistic friend said to me, regarding that. "Once the electrodes have been implanted, They can get us to feel, think, do anything They want. Well, to do this, the government would have to let out a contract for the manufacture of a billion sets of electrodes, and, in their customary way, they would award the contract to the lowest bidder, who would build standard electrodes out of secondhand parts...the technicians implanting the electrodes in the brains of millions upon millions of people would become bored and careless, and, when the switch would be pressed for the total population to feel profound grief at the death of some government official — probably the Minister of the Interior, in charge of the slave labour rehabilitation camps — it would all get fouled up, and the population, like that laboratory rat, would go into collective seizures of merriment. Or the substandard wiring connecting the brains of the population with the Wash-

ington D.C. Thought Control Centre would overload, and a surge of electricity would roll backward over the lines and set fire to the White House.

Or is this just wishful thinking on my part? A little fantasy about a future society we should really feel apprehensive toward?

The continued elaboration of state tyranny such as we in science fiction circles anticipate in the world of tomorrow — our whole pre-occupation with what we call the "anti-utopian" society — this growth of state invasion into the privacy of the individual, its knowing too much about him, and then, when it knows, or thinks it knows, something it frowns on, its power and capacity to squash the individual — as we thoroughly comprehend, this evil process uses technology as its instrument. The inventions of applied science, such as the almost miraculously sophisticated sensor devices right now travelling back from war use in Viet Nam for adaptation to civilian use here — these passive infra red scanners, sniperscopes, these chrome boxes with dials and gauges that can penetrate brick and stone, can tell the user what is being said and done a mile away within a tightly-sealed building, be it concrete bunker or apartment building, can, like the weapons before them, fall into what the authorities would call "the wrong hands" — that is, into the hands of the very people being monitored. Like all machines, these universal transmitters, recording devices, heat-pattern discriminators, don't in themselves care who they're used by or against. The predatory law-and-order vehicle speeding to the scene of a street fracas where, for example, some juvenile has dropped a water-filled balloon into the sportscar of a wealthy taxpayer — this vehicle, however fast, however well-armed and animated by the spirit of righteous vengeance, can be spotted by the same lens by which its superiors became aware of the disturbance in the first place...and notification of its impending arrival on the scene can be flashed by the same walkie-talkie Army surplus gadget by which crowd control is maintained when blacks gather to protest for their just rights. Before the absolute power of the absolute state of tomorrow can achieve its victory it may find such things as this: when the police show up at your door to

arrest you for thinking unapproved thoughts, a scanning sensor which you've bought and built into your door discriminates the intruders from customary friends, and alerts you to your peril.

Let me give you an example. At the enormous civic centre building in my county, a fantastic Buck Rogers type of plastic and chrome backdrop to a bad science fiction film, each visitor must pass through an electronic field that sets off an alarm if he has on him too much metal, be it keys, a watch, pair of scissors, bomb, .308 Winchester rifle. When the hoop pings — and it always pings for me — a uniformed policeman immediately fully searches the visitor. A sign warns that if any weapon is found on a visitor, it's all over for him — and the sign also warns that if any illegal drugs are found on a visitor, during this weapons search, he's done for, too. Now, you may be aware of the reason for this methodical weapons search of each visitor to the Marin County Civic Center — it has to do with the tragic shootout a year or so ago. But, and they have officially posted notice of this, the visitor will be inspected for narcotics possession, too, and this has nothing to do with either the shootout or with any danger to the building itself or the persons within it. An electronic checkpoint, legitimately set up to abort a situation in which explosives or weapons are brought into the Civic Center, has been assigned an added police function connected with the authentic issue only by the common thread of penal-code violation. To visit the county library, which is in that building, you are subject to search — must in fact yield absolutely and unconditionally — for possession without the juridical protection, built into the very basis of our American civil rights system, that some clear and evident indication exist that you may be carrying narcotics before a search can be carried out against you. During this search I've even had the uniformed officer at the entrance examine the books and papers I was carrying, to see if they were acceptable.

The next step, in the months to come, would be to have such mandatory checkpoints at busy intersections and at all public buildings — including banks and so forth. Once it has been established that the authorities can search you for illegal drugs because you're returning a book to the library, I think you can

see just how far the tyranny of the state can go — once it has provided itself with an electronic hoop that registers the presence of something we all carry on us: keys, a pair of finger-nail clippers, coins. The blip, rather a quaint little sound, which you set off, opens a door leading not to the county library but to possible imprisonment. It is that blip that ushers in all the rest. And how many other blips are we setting off, or will our children be setting off, in contexts that we know nothing about yet? But my optimistic point: the kids of today, having been born into this all-pervasive society, are fully aware of and take for granted the activity of such devices. One afternoon when I was parking my car on the lot before a grocery store, I started, as usual, to lock all the doors to keep the parcels in the back seat from being stolen. "Oh, you don't have to lock up the car," the girl with me said. "This parking lot is under constant closed-circuit TV scan. Every car here and everyone is being watched all the time; nothing can happen." So we went inside the store leaving the car unlocked. And of course she was right; born into this society, she has learned to know such things. And — I now have a passive infra red scanning system in my own home in Santa Venetia, connected with what is called a "digital transmitting box" which, when triggered off by the scanner, transmits a coded signal by direct line to the nearest law enforcement agency, notifying them that intruders have entered my house. This totally self-operated electronic detection system functions whether I am at home or not. It is able to discriminate between the presence of a human being and an animal. It has its own power supply. If the line leading from it is cut, grounded or even tampered with, the signal is immediately released, or if any other part of the system is worked on. And Westinghouse will re-install it wherever I live; I own the components for life. Eventually, Westinghouse Security hopes, all homes and businesses will be protected this way. The company has built and maintains a communications centre near each community in this country. If there is no police agency willing or able to accept the signal, then their own communications centre responds and guarantees to dispatch law enforcement personnel within four minutes — that is, the good guys with the good guns will be at your

door within that time. It does not matter if the intruder enters with a pass-key or blows in the whole side of the house or, as they tell me it's being done now, bores down through the roof — however he got in, for whatever reason, the mechanism responds and transmits its signal. Only I can turn the system off. And if I forget to, then — I suppose, anyhow — it's all over for me.

Someone suggested, by the way, that perhaps this passive infra red scanner sweeping out the interior of my house constantly "might be watching me and reporting back to the authorities whatever I do right there in my own living room". Well, what I am doing is sitting at my desk with pen and paper trying to figure out how to pay Westinghouse the \$840 I owe them for the system. As I've got it worked out now, I think if I sell everything I own, including my house, I can — oh well. One other thing. If I enter the house — my house — and the system finds I'm carrying illegal narcotics on my person, it doesn't blip; it causes both me and the house and everything in it to self-destruct.

Street drugs, by the way, are a major problem in the area I live — that is, the illegal drugs you buy on the street are often adulterated, out, or just plain not what you're told they are. You wind up poisoned, dead, or just plain "burned", which means "you don't get off", which means you paid ten dollars for a gram of milk sugar. So a number of free labs have been set up for the specific purpose of analyzing street drugs; you mail them a portion of the drug you've bought and they tell you what's in it, the idea being, of course, that if it has strychnine or film developer or flash powder in it, you should know before you take it. Well, the police saw through into the quote "real" purpose of these labs at one glance. They act as quality control stations for the drug manufacturers. Let's say you're making methedrine in your bathtub at home — a complicated process, but feasible — and so every time a new batch comes out, you mail a sample to one of these labs for analysis...and they write back, "No, you haven't got it quite right yet, but if you cook it perhaps five minutes longer..." This is what the police fear. This is how the police mentality works. And, interestingly, so does the drug-pusher mentality; the pushers are already doing precisely that. I don't know...to me it seems a

sort of nice idea, the drug pushers being interested in what they're selling. Back in the old days they cared only that you lived long enough to pay for what you purchased. After that, you were on your own.

Yes, as every responsible parent knows, street drugs are a problem, a menace to their kids. I completely, emphatically agree. At one time — you may have read this in the biographical material accompanying my stories and novels — I was interested in experimenting with psychedelic drugs. That is over, for me. I have seen too many ruined lives in our drug culture in California. Too many suicides, psychoses, organic — irreversible — damage to both heart and brain. But there are other drugs, not illegal, not street drugs, not cut with flash powder or milk sugar, and not mislabelled, that worry me even more. These are reputable, establishment drugs, prescribed by reputable doctors or given in reputable hospitals, especially psychiatric hospitals. These are pacification drugs. I mention this in order to return to my preoccupation, here: the human versus the android, and how the former can become — can in fact be made to become — the latter. The calculated, widespread, and thoroughly sanctioned use of specific tranquilizing drugs such as the phenothiazines may not, like certain illegal street drugs, produce permanent brain damage, but they can — and god forbid, they do — produce what I am afraid I must call "soul" damage. Let me amplify.

It has been discovered recently that what we call mental illness or mental disturbance — such syndromes as the schizophrenias and the cyclothemic phenomena of manic-depression — may have to do with faulty brain metabolism, the failure of certain brain catalysts such as serotonin and noradrenalin to act properly. One theory holds that, under stress, too much amine oxidase production causes hallucinations, disorientation, and general mental breakdown. Sudden shock, especially at random, and grief-producing, such as loss of someone or something dear, or the loss of something vital and taken for granted — this starts an overproduction of noradrenalin flowing down generally unused neural pathways, overloading brain circuits, and producing behaviour

which we call psychotic. Mental illness, then, is a biochemical phenomenon. If certain drugs, such as the phenothiazines, are introduced, brain metabolism regains normal balance; the catalyst serotonin is utilized properly, and the patient recovers. Or if a MAOI drug is introduced — a mono amine oxidase inhibitor — response to stress becomes viable and the person is able to function normally. Or — and this right now is the Prince Charming hope of the medical profession — lithium carbonate, if taken by the disturbed patient, will limit an otherwise overabundant production or release of the hormone noradrenalin, which, most of all, acts to cause irrational thoughts and behaviour of a socially unacceptable sort. The entire amplitude of feelings, wild grief, anger, fear, any and all intense feelings, will be reduced to proper measure by the presence of lithium carbonate in the brain tissue. The person will become stable, predictable, not a menace to others. He will feel the same and think the same pretty much all day long, day after day. The authorities will not be greeted by any more sudden surprises emanating from him.

In the field of abnormal psychology, the schizoid personality structure is well-defined; in it there is a continual paucity of feeling. The person thinks rather than feels his way through life. And as the great Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung showed, this cannot be successfully maintained; one must meet most of crucial reality with a feeling response. Anyhow, there is a certain parallel between what I call the "android" personality and the schizoid. Both have a mechanical, reflex quality.

I once heard a schizoid person express himself — in all seriousness — this way: "I receive signals from others. But I can't generate any of my own until I get recharged. By an injection." I am, I swear, quoting exactly. Imagine viewing oneself and others this way. Signals. As if from another star. The person has reified himself entirely, along with everyone around him. How awful. Here, clearly, the soul is dead or never lived.

Another quality of the android mind is an inability to make exceptions. Perhaps this is the essence of it; the failure to drop a response when it fails to accomplish results, but rather to repeat it over and over again. Lower life

forms are skilful in offering the same response continually, as are flashlights. An attempt was made once to use a pigeon as a quality control technician on an assembly line. Part after part, endless thousands of them, passed by the pigeon hour after hour, and the keen eye of the pigeon viewed them for deviations from the acceptable tolerance. The pigeon could discern a deviation smaller than that which a human, doing the same quality control, could. When the pigeon saw a part that was mis-made, it pecked a button, which rejected the part, and at the same time dropped a grain of corn to the pigeon as a reward. The pigeon could go eighteen hours without fatigue, and loved its work. Even when the grain of corn failed — due to the supply running out, I guess — the pigeon continued eagerly to reject substandard parts. It had to be forcibly removed from its perch, finally.

Now, if I had been that pigeon, I would have cheated. When I felt hungry, I would have pecked the button and rejected a part, just to get my grain of corn. That would have occurred to me after a long period passed in which I discerned no faulty parts. Because what would happen to the pigeon if, god forbid, no parts were ever faulty? The pigeon would starve. Integrity, under such circumstances, would be suicidal. Really, the pigeon had a life or death interest in finding faulty parts. What would you do, were you the pigeon, and, after say four days, you'd discerned no faulty parts and were becoming only feathers and bone? Would ethics win out? Or the need to survive? To me, the life of the pigeon would be worth more than the quality control. If I were the pigeon. But the android mind: "I may be dying of hunger," the android would say, "but I'll be damned if I'll reject a perfectly good part." Anyhow, to me, the authentically human mind would get bored and reject a part now and then at random, just to break the monotony. And no amount of circuit-testing could re-establish its reliability.

Let me now express another element that strikes me as an essential key revealing the authentically human. It is not only an intrinsic property of the organism, but of the situation in which it finds itself. That which happens to it, that which it is confronted by, pierced by and must deal with — certain agonizing situations create, on the spot,

a human where a moment before there was only, as the Bible says, clay. Such a situation can be read off the face of many of the Medieval pietas: the dead Christ held in the arms of his mother. Two faces, actually: that of a man, that of a woman. Oddly, in many of these pietas, the face of Christ seems much older than that of his mother. It is as if an ancient man is held by a young woman; she has survived him, and yet she came before him. He has aged through his entire life cycle; she looks now perhaps as she always did, not timeless, in the classical sense, but able to transcend what has happened. He has not survived it; this shows on his face. She has. In some way they have experienced it together, but they have come out of it differently. It was too much for him; it destroyed him. Perhaps the information to be gained here is the realization how much greater capacity a woman has for suffering; that is, not that she suffers more than a man but that she can endure where he can't. Survival of the species lies in her ability to do this, not his. Christ may die on the cross, and the human race continues, but if Mary dies, it's all over.

I have seen young women — say eighteen or nineteen years old — suffer and survive things that would have been too much for me, and I think really for almost any man. Their humanness, as they passed through these ordeals, developed as an equation between them and their situation. I don't mean to offer the mushy doctrine that suffering somehow ennobles, that it's somehow a good thing — one hears this now and then about geniuses, "They wouldn't have been geniuses if they hadn't suffered," etc. I merely mean that possibly the difference between what I call the "android" mentality and the human is that the latter passed through something the former did not, or at least passed through it and responded differently — changed, altered, what it did and hence what it was; it became. I sense the android repeating over and over again some limited reflex gesture, like an insect raising its wings threateningly over and over again, or emitting a bad smell. Its one defence or response works, or it doesn't. But, caught in sudden trouble, the organism that is made more human, that becomes precisely at that moment human, wrestles deep within itself and out of itself to find one response after another as each fails. On the face of the dead Christ

there is an exhaustion, almost a dehydration, as if he tried out every possibility in an effort not to die. He never gave up. And even though he did die, did fail, he died a human. That is what shows on his face.

"The endeavour to persist in its own being," Spinoza said, "is the essence of the individual thing." The chthonic deities, the Earth Mother, was the original source of religious consolation — before the solarcentric masculine deities that arrived later in history — as well as the origin of man; man came from Her and returns to Her. The entire ancient world believed that just as each man came forth into individual life from a woman he would eventually return — and find peace at last. At the end of life the old man in one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* "goes about both morning and late and knocks against the ground with his stick saying, 'Mother, mother, let me in —' just as at the end of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, the middle-aged man, regressing into childhood at the end of his life as he dies of perisitis, says to his mother, "Mother, give me the sun." As Spinoza pointed out so clearly, each finite thing, each individual man, eventually perishes...and his only true consolation, as he perishes, as each society in fact perishes, is this return to the mother, the woman, the Earth.

But if woman is the consolation for man, what is the consolation for woman? For her?

I once watched a young woman undergo agonies — she was eighteen years old — that, just witnessing her, were too much for me. She survived, I think, better than I did. I wanted to console her, help her, but there was nothing I could do. Except be with her. When the Earth Mother is suffering, there is damn little that individual finite man can do. This young girl's boyfriend wouldn't marry her because she was pregnant by another boy; he wouldn't live with her or find her a place to stay until she got an abortion — about which he would do nothing; he wouldn't even speak to her until it was over — and then, or so he promised, he would marry her. Well, she got the abortion, and we brought her to my home to rest and recover, and of course the son-of-a-bitch never had anything to do with her again. I was with her during the days following her abortion, and she really had a dreadful time, alone in a

poor, large ward in a hospital in another city, never visited except by me and a couple of my friends, never phoned by her boyfriend or her own family, and then at my home, afterward, when she realized her boyfriend was never going to get the apartment for them she had planned on, been promised, and her friends — his friends, too — had lost interest in her and looked down on her — I saw her day by day decline and wilt and despair, and become wild with fear; where would she go? What would become of her? She had no friends, no job, no family, not even any clothes to speak of — nothing. And she couldn't stay with me after she healed up. She used to lie in bed, suffering, holding the puppy she and I got at the pound; the puppy was all she had. And one day she left, and I never found out where she went. She never contacted me again; she wanted to forget me and the hospital and the days of healing and bleeding and learning the truth about her situation. And she left the puppy behind. I have it now.

What I remember in particular was that in the two weeks she was with me after her abortion her breasts swelled with milk; her body, at least portions of it, didn't know that the child was dead, that there was no child. It was, she said, "in a bottle". I saw her, all at once, as a sudden woman, even though she had, herself, declined, destroyed, her motherhood; baby or not, she was a woman, although her mind did not tell her that; she still wore the cotton nightgown she had worn, I guess, while living at home while she went to high school — perhaps the same easy-to-wash cotton nightgown she had worn since five or six years old. She still liked to go to the market and buy chocolate milk and comic books. Under California law it's illegal for her to buy or smoke cigarettes. There are certain movies, many in fact, that our law prevents her from seeing. Movies, supposedly, about life. On the trip to San Francisco to see the doctor about getting the abortion — she was five and a half months pregnant, nearing what California considers the limit of safety — she bought a purple stuffed toy animal for 89¢. I paid for it; she had only 25¢. She took it with her when she left my home. She was the bravest, brightest, funniest, sweetest person I ever knew. The tragedy of her life bent her and virtually broke her, despite all I could do. But — I think, I believe — the force that is her, so to speak the swelling

into maturity of her breasts, the looking forward into the future of her physical body, even at the moment that mentally and spiritually she was virtually destroyed — I hope, anyhow, that that force will prevail. If it does not, then there is nothing left, as far as I am concerned. The future as I conceive it will not exist. Because I can only imagine it as populated by modest, unnoticed persons like her. I myself will not be a part of it, or even shape it; all I can do is depict it as I see the ingredients now, the gentle little unhappy brave lonely loving creatures who are going on somewhere else, unknown to me now, not recalling me but, I pray, living on, picking up life, forgetting — "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it", we are told, but perhaps it is better — perhaps it is the only viable way — to be able to forget. I hope she, in her head, has forgotten what happened to her, just as her body either forgot the lack of a baby, the dead baby, or never knew. It is a kind of blindness, maybe, a refusal, or inability, to face reality.

But I have never had too high a regard for what is generally called "reality". Reality, to me, is not so much something that you perceive, but something you make. You create it more rapidly than it creates you. Man is the reality God created out of dust; God is the reality man creates continually out of his own passions, his own determination. "Good," for example — that is not a quality or even a force in the world or above the world, but what you do with the bits and pieces of meaningless, puzzling, disappointing, even cruel and crushing fragments all around us that seem to be pieces left over, discarded, from another world entirely that did, maybe, make sense.

The world of the future, to me, is not a place, but an event. A construct, not by one author in the form of words written to make up a novel or a story that other persons sit in front of, outside of, and read — but a construct in which there is no author and no readers but a great many characters in search of a plot. Well, there is no plot. There is only themselves and what they do and say to each other, what they build to sustain themselves individually and collectively, like a huge umbrella that lets in light and shuts out the darkness at the same instant. When the characters die, the novel ends. And the book falls

back into dust. Out of which it came. Or back, like the dead Christ, into the arms of his warm, tender, grieving, comprehending, loving mother. And a new cycle begins; from her he is reborn, and the story, or another story, perhaps different, even better, starts up. A story told by the characters to one another. "A tale of sound of fury" — signifying very much. The best we have. Our yesterday, our tomorrow, the child who came before us and the woman who will live after us and outlast, by her very existing, what we have thought and done.

In my novel, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, which a study of absolute evil, the protagonist, after his encounter with Eldritch, returns to Earth and dictates a memo. This little section appears ahead of the text of the novel. It is the novel, actually, this paragraph; the rest is a sort of post mortem, or rather, a flashback in which all that came to produce the one-paragraph book is presented. Seventy-five thousand words, which I laboured over many months, merely explains, is merely there to provide background, to the one small statement in the book that matters. (It is, by the way, missing from the German edition.) This statement is for me my credo — not so much in God, either a good god or a bad god or both — but in ourselves. It goes as follows, and this is all I actually have to say or want ever to say:

"I mean, after all; you have to consider we're only made out of dust. That's admittedly not much to go on and we shouldn't forget that. But even considering, I mean it's a sort of bad beginning, we're not doing too bad. So I personally have faith that even in this lousy situation we're faced with we can make it. You get me?"

This tosses a bizarre thought up into my mind: perhaps someday a giant automated machine will roar and clank out, "From rust we are come." And another machine, sick and dying, cradled in the arms of its woman, may sigh back, "And to rust we are returned." And peace will fall over the barren, anxiety-stricken landscape.

Our field, science fiction, deals with that portion of the life-cycle of our species which extends ahead of us. But if it is a true cycle, that future portion of it has in a sense already happened. Or, at least, we can on a basis al-

most mathematically precise map out the next, missing integers in the sequence of which we are the past. The first integer: the Earth Mother culture. Next, the masculine solar deities, with its stern authoritarian societies, from Sparta to Rome to Fascist Italy and Japan and Germany and the USSR. And now, perhaps, what the Medieval pietas looked forward to: in the arms of the Earth Mother, who still lives, the dead solar deity, her son, lies in a once again silent return to the womb from which he came. I think we are entering this third and perhaps final sequence of our history, and this is a society that our field sees ahead of us which will be quite different from either of the two previous world-civilizations familiar in the past. It is not a two-part cycle; we have not reached the conclusion of the masculine solar deity period merely to return to the primordial Earth Mother cult, however full of milk her breasts may be; what lies ahead is new. And possibly, beyond that, lies something more, unique and obscured to our gaze as of this moment. I, myself, can't envision that far; the realization, the fulfillment, of the Medieval pieta, as a living reality, our total environment, a living external environment as animate as ourselves — that is what I see and no further. Not yet, anyhow. I would, myself, be content with that; I would be happy to lie slumbering and yet alive — "invisible but dim," as Vaughn put it — in her arms.

If a pieta of a thousand years ago, shaped by a Medieval artisan, anticipated in his — shall we say — psionic? hands, our future world, what, today, might be the analogue of that inspired, precognitive artifact? What do we have with us now, as homely and familiar to us in our 20th century world, as were those everyday pietas to the citizens of 13th century Christendom, that might be a microcosm of the far-distant future? Let us first start by imagining a pious peasant of 13th century France gazing up at a rustic pieta and foreseeing in it the 21st century society about which we science fiction writers speculate. Then, as in a Bergman film, we segue to — what now? One of us gazing at — what?

Cycle — and recycle. The pieta of our modern world: ugly, commonplace, ubiquitous. Not the dead Christ in the arms of his grieving, eternal, mother,

but a heap of aluminum Budweiser beer cans, eighty feet high, thousands of them, being scooped up noisily, rattling and spilling and crashing and raining down as a giant automated, computer-controlled, homeostatic Budweiser beer factory — an autotac, as I called it once in a story — hugs the discarded empties back into herself to recycle them over again into new life, with new, living contents. Exactly as before...or, if the chemists in the Budweiser lab are fulfilling God's divine plan for eternal progress, with better beer than before.

"We see as through a glass darkly," Paul says in I Corinthians — will this someday be rewritten as: "We see as into a passive infra red scanner darkly?" A scanner which, as in Orwell's 1984, is watching us all the time? Our TV tube watching back at us as we watch it, as amused, or bored, or anyhow somewhat as entertained by what we do as we are by what we see on its implacable face?

This, for me, is too pessimistic, too paranoid. I believe I Corinthians will will be rewritten this way: "The passive infra red scanner sees into us darkly," that is, not well enough to really figure us out. Not that we ourselves can really figure each other out, or even our own selves. Which, perhaps, too, is good; it means we are still in for sudden surprises, and, unlike the authorities, who don't like that sort of thing, we may find these chance happenings acting on our behalf, to our favour.

Sudden surprises, by the way — and this thought may be in itself a sudden surprise to you — are a sort of antidote to paranoia...or, to be accurate about it, to live in such a way as to encounter sudden surprises quite often or even now and then is an indication that you are not paranoid, because to the paranoid, nothing is a surprise; everything happens exactly as he expected, and sometimes even more so. It all fits into his system. For us, though, there can be no system; maybe all systems — that is, any theoretical, verbal, symbolic, semantic etc. formulation that attempts to act as an all-encompassing, all-explaining hypothesis of what the universe is about — are manifestations of paranoia. We should be content with the mysterious, the meaningless, the contradictory, the hostile, and most of all the unexplainably warm and giving — the total so-called environment, in other

words, behaving very like a person, like the behaviour of one intricate, subtle, half-veiled, deep, perplexing, and much to be loved human being to another. To be feared a little, too, sometimes. And perpetually misunderstood. About which we can neither know nor be sure; we must only trust and make guesses toward. Not being what you thought, not doing right by you, not being just, but then sustaining you as by momentary caprice, but then abandoning you, or at least seeming to. What it is actually up to we may never know. But at least this is better, is it not, than to possess the self-defeating, life-defeating spurious certitude of the paranoid — expressed, by a friend of mine, humorously, I guess, like this: "Doctor, someone is putting something in my food to make me paranoid". The doctor should have asked, was that person putting it in his food free, or charging him for it?

To refer back a final time to an early science fiction work with which we are all familiar, the Bible: a number of stories in our field have been written in which computers print out portions of that august book. I now herewith suggest this idea for a future story; that a computer print out a man.

Or, if it can't get that together, then, as a second choice, a very poor one in comparison, a condensed version of the Bible: "In the beginning was the end." Or should it go the other way? "In the end was the beginning." Which-ever. Randomness, in time, will sort out which it is to be. Fortunately, I myself am not required to make the choice. Perhaps, when a computer is ready to churn forth one of these two statements, an android, operating the computer, will make the decision — although, if I am correct about the android mentality, it will be unable to decide and will print out both at once, creating a self-cancelling nothing, which will not even serve as a primordial chaos. An android might, however, be able to handle this; capable of some sort of decision-making power it might conceivably pick out one statement or the other as quote "correct". But no android — and you will recall

and realize that by this term I am summing up that which is not human — no android would think to do what a girl I know did, something a little bizarre, certainly ethically questionable in several ways, at least in any traditional sense, but to me truly human: in that it shows, to me, a spirit of merry defiance, of spirited, although not spiritual, bravery and uniqueness!

One day while driving along in her car she found herself following a truck carrying cases of Coca Cola bottles, case after case, stacks of them. And when the truck parked, she parked behind it and loaded the back of her own car with cases, as many cases of bottles of Coca Cola as she could get in. So, for weeks afterward, she and all her friends had all the Coca Cola they could drink, free — and then, when the bottles were empty, she carried them to the store and turned them in for the deposit refund.

To that, I say this: God bless her. May she live forever. And the Coca Cola Company and the phone company and all the rest of it, with their passive infra red scanners and sniperscopes and suchlike — may they be gone long ago. Metal and stone and wire and thread did never live. But she and her friends — they, our human future, are our little song. "Who knows if the spirit of men travels up, and the breath of beasts travels down under the Earth?" the Bible asks. Someday it, in a later revision, may wonder, "Who knows if the spirit if men travels up, and the breath of androids travels down?" Where do the souls of androids go after their death? But — if they do not live, then they cannot die. And if they cannot die, then they will always be with us. Do they have souls at all? Or, for that matter, do we?

I think, as the Bible says, we all go to a common place. But it is not the grave; it is into life beyond. The world of the future.

— Philip K. Dick

BOB SHAW

the extraordinary behaviour of ordinary materials

(I had intended calling the following article "How To Make a Lie Detector Out Of a Ford Car", but decided that was too flippant and sensational a title for a serious addition to scientific literature.)

There is, most people will agree, a great need for a lie detector in the average home, but the conventional polygraph has three major drawbacks — it is too expensive, it can be put to only one use, and it is pretty difficult to conceal or disguise.

Suppose, for instance, that a man suspects his wife of buying an inferior brand of yoghurt and diverting the extra money into her weekly hair-do. He might put a stop to it by hooking her up to the polygraph and getting the truth out of her, but this procedure has a distressing lack of subtlety which is sure to embarrass and anger the wife, and eventually rebound on the husband.

Just consider how much more pleasant it would be, how much more good yoghurt one could get, how much more healthy the intestinal flora would become if it were possible to apply an efficient lie test without the subject being aware of what was happening.

This problem of producing a cheap, unobtrusive lie detector bothered scientists for years, but the answer came quite suddenly the other morning when I was sitting in the office lavatory not reading a newspaper. (This lavatory has ten cubicles which are occupied from 8.30 to 10.00 every morning by people reading newspapers, but my work as Press Officer obliges me to read a large number of morning papers in the office, so to get a break I sneak off to the toilet and sit around for a

while ignoring newspapers. Other men who see me going in without a Daily Express hidden in my jacket suspect me of not having a proper lavatory at home.) I had been perplexed for some time by observations of the strange behaviour of perfectly ordinary objects and materials, and then — in the proverbial flash — saw in them the answer to the whole lie detector question.

The first step was to divide the observed phenomena into two categories — the obviously unproductive, and the potentially useful.

Into the former go such things as the vagaries of ordinary household paints. Sometimes when decorating at home I clean an object thoroughly, remove all traces of dust, moisture and grease as the instructions recommend, roughen the surface to provide a key, then apply an approved undercoat before putting on the gloss. A week later I discover that the new paint has jumped right off the object and is lying beside it like the discarded skin of a snake.

Once I tried to capitalise on this curious phenomenon by saving preparation time when I was painting a ceiling. My wife got worried when she saw me getting to work without covering a television set and a writing desk which were in the room, but I explained that when paint which has been worked into carefully prepared surfaces falls off almost immediately, little specks falling lightly on highly waxed wood could be flicked

away like dust. Hah! That was ten years ago and those specks are still on that TV and desk. Every now and then I try to prise one off, but bits of wood come away with it!

Grass is another thing in the same category. When preparing the ground for my lawn I dug it, sieved it, enriched it, planted it, watered it, rolled it — and yet there are patches where the grass doesn't grow. This would be annoying under normal circumstances, but it is enraging when right beside the lawn there is a concrete drive which I sometimes spray with weed-killer and which has beautiful, hardy grass growing in microscopic cracks. Occasionally I transplant some of this supergrass to the bare patches on the lawn — where it promptly dies!

There is, however, no point in dwelling too long on the unproductive aberrations of ordinary materials. Bearing in mind that we are out to produce an unobtrusive lie detector, next consider the behaviour of liquid soap in those wall-mounted dispensers they have in public lavatories. This is a simple chemical compound in a rudimentary container, yet it is able to sense when your hand is underneath waiting for a drop to fall, and furthermore is able to defy the law of gravity by suspending itself until your hand has been removed — at which point a great dollop of it splatters all over the sink.

The only way to conquer it is to relax, lean casually against the sink, preferably humming a few bars from a Stephen Foster song, and make the soap think you will be happy to wait there all day. This will, if sufficiently well done, persuade it to plop into your hand.

Then there is the question of tobacco smoke. I'm a pipe smoker, and tend to use up largish quantities of Old Gowie when writing. Over the years I have found that blowing smoke rings is a powerful aid to concentration, and have persevered with the art in spite of the fact that my wife refuses to accept that it is precisely when I appear to be doing nothing that my brain is working at its hardest.

One day it occurred to me that one would probably reach a new pitch of concentrated mental activity by emitting a large, slow-moving smoke ring then sending a small fast-moving one right through

the centre of it. Each of these types is easy to blow by itself, but I soon discovered that combining the two in the way I wanted was extremely difficult. This is because big slow smoke rings break up in just a few seconds, unlike the little fast ones which — bustling through a chaotic environment with tightly organised energy — can last quite a long time. The sense of urgency created is enough to upset the delicate coordination of the smoke ring muscles in the throat, and the second ring comes out as an ordinary cloud of smoke. It says a lot for my dedication to literature that I eventually succeeded in making perfect penetrations. (Sit down, Sigmund.)

Finally, we come to the wayward behaviour of my Ford Corsair on cold mornings. I must admit that for a while scientific objectivity deserted me in this case, because it seemed that the car was doing its wilful best to get me killed. It would motor along quite happily for the first mile on frosty mornings, picking up well from standstill at lights — except at the two intersections where it was necessary to get through high-speed lanes of cross-traffic. Here, and here only, it would advance a few yards then cut out, leaving me stuck in a dangerous position. It took some time to appreciate that the tuning of the engine was such that when it was cold it could cope with a gradually increased flow of petrol, but — and this is where our old friend, the sense of stress, comes in again — it drowned out when the fuel flow increased abruptly. Even knowing what was happening I found it virtually impossible to control that anxious stab of the right foot, but my sense of wonder was stirred by the fact that a coarse instrument like a Ford engine could so accurately divine a sense of tension in the human mind.

Do you see now where this discourse is taking us?

The original problem was to apply a lie detection test to someone without the subject being aware of anything unusual happening. All you have to do is get a Ford car and unobtrusively install a washbasin complete with liquid soap dispenser on the instrument panel. If you think your wife is fiddling the domestic expenses, put her behind the steering wheel on a cold morning and ask her to drive you somewhere. While

approaching the first dangerous intersection light a cigarette for her and one for yourself, then casually ask how much she is paying for yoghurt these days. While she is answering, you blow out a large smoke ring and shout:

"Put one through the middle of that. Your hands are filthy woman — wash them immediately. And watch out for that ten-ton truck!"

If she chokes on a cloud of smoke, splashes soap all over the front seat,

and stalls the engine — it's a safe bet she was lying. These subtle indications of mental stress will give the game away every time.

And the beauty of the system is that she won't even suspect anything out of the ordinary has been happening.

— Bob Shaw

(This article was first published in Energumen.)

Continued from p.4

Tom Disch fans might like to note that a firm called The Basilisk Press in the U.S.A. has brought out a collection of 50 Disch poems, entitled The Right Way To Figure Plumbing. It's in an edition of 600 copies, the first 200 of which are numbered and signed by the author. It costs \$1.95 plus 15¢ postage from

The Basilisk Press
P.O.Box 71
Fredonia, NY 14063
U.S.A.

* * * * *

Tying up loose ends time. This is the point at which I try to think of all the things I should have put in but have forgotten. As usual, I'm completely blank. Generally, they all start to flood back just as I've finished pasting the whole thing together. NEXT ISSUE should appear towards the beginning of April, but I'm making no certain prom-

ises. We're likely to be looking for somewhere else to live in the next couple of months, and this will undoubtedly occupy much of my spare time. Scheduled to appear in V.65 are: an interview with American writer Gene Wolfe, whose book The Fifth Head of Cerberus (to be published in this country by Gollancz in March) is a strong contender for this year's Hugo and Nebula Awards; Roger Zelazny discussing his novels; columns — I hope! — from Peter Roberts, Bob Shaw and Philip Strick; plus reviews and letters, and the usual news features. I still have on hand a lot of taped material which is becoming an increasing embarrassment as it is growing steadily older, and since I don't have a tape recorder there seems little immediate hope of transcribing it. The stuff includes Brian Aldiss's speech at Chester; Edmund Cooper's at the Speculation Conference; and two or three items from the recent American Embassy seminar. Any offers of help in transcribing this would be most gratefully received.

POUL ANDERSON

author's choice

The late Anthony Boucher always said that the person least fit to judge any book is its author. As a good Catholic, perhaps he made an exception for the Holy Bible. Regardless, there is certainly a lot of truth in the statement. Even more certainly, a writer who brags about a work of his will only make an ass of himself. I have been requested to discuss a personal favorite among my own. Please understand, if I like this or that feature of it (maybe only because it was fun to do), this is no reason why you necessarily should. If you don't, I shan't be offended.

The undertaking is difficult, less in itself than in choosing a subject. Almost every fiction of mine consists simply of a group of ideas whose consequences, scientific, social, human, philosophical, are presented in the form of a narrative. I really can't say much more about it than that. Tau Zero does involve a bit extra, experiments with literary technique and such, but these have already been described elsewhere and anyhow are nothing very radical. Finally I decided on a novel which is representative of a large part of my work, and which I'm rather fond of, and which, in addition, has a slightly complex genesis: The People of the Wind*. It does have the drawback of being so recent (not yet published as of this writing) that I can't report on its reception. But no doubt that will be the same as for the rest, a spectrum ranging from enthusiasm to loathing.

It does illustrate how a variety of elements can fuse to make a book.

A couple of years ago, traveling through Alsace, my wife and I came upon the city of Belfort. The Guide Michelin led us to the lion monument which over-

looks it and celebrates the valor of its defenders during the Franco-Prussian War. To be honest, I'd not heard about this episode before, and was greatly impressed. The city withstood as fierce an attack and siege as the Germans could mount. It kept on withstanding until two weeks after Paris had fallen, and then yielded only on direct orders — or pleas — of its own government. Bismarck, who was nobody's fool, realized what an indigestible bite this would be. When he annexed Alsace-Lorraine, Belfort remained French. As a result, it attracted many immigrants from the ceded territory. They tended to be the most intelligent and individualistic as well as the most patriotic people. So it boomed industrially between the wars, and supplied France with a remarkably high proportion of her generals and admirals.

And yet, ethnically the Alsacians are more German than French. They even speak a German dialect!

Now I'd long wanted to write a really detailed account of a mixed human-non-human society. While the interaction of intelligent species is a common motif, actual blending had never, as far as I knew, been treated. (Stories like Stranger in a Strange Land concern individuals, not whole civilizations.) But however fascinating, the theme had lacked the spark of a story, and thus I'd not been stimulated to work on it. Suddenly in Belfort I saw the tale. Let there be a joint colony, under the rule of one race; then let the government of the other try to take it over.

Naturally, one of the races would be human. But what about its partners? They must be biochemically similar to man, or they wouldn't care to settle on

the same world. But they ought to be as different from us as could be made reasonable.

Shortly after returning from Europe I had occasion to visit New York, and took the opportunity to have lunch with John Campbell. He was in considerable pain, but only told me this, matter-of-factly, because it forced him to ask for help with his coat. The rest of the time he gave off intellectual fireworks as always. In the course of talk I brought up the idea of a post-mammalian animal, which I'd been thinking of in connection with an entirely different project. What might nature do to improve on the mammalian body? At once Campbell suggested an aeration system which, rather than taking in oxygen passively as our lungs do, forces it in analogously to the way gills work for fish. Such a beast would have fantastic cursive ability.

He was assuming a land animal. I saw that it could apply to flyers as well. I'd already considered winged sophonts for my fellow colonists; they ought to be alien enough. The problem was, as de Camp pointed out decades ago, under Earthlike conditions flying intelligences aren't very plausible. Metabolism can't supply the energy to get more than about thirty pounds of body off the ground, and so big an avian is a slow glider and soarer. Even it has scant mass to spare for brains. To be sure, perhaps you could have a strange metabolism or cellular structure or whatever. But then food requirements will presumably be so unlike ours as to preclude using the same real estate.

Given a "biological supercharger", though —

Excited, I went home and started planning. What would these beings do for hands? To postulate an extra pair of limbs smacked of cheating. Well, how about modified talons? (They'd surely be carnivores, to supply themselves with the concentrated energy they needed.) Then what would they stand and move about on when grounded? How could they evolve in the first place? In the course of days, I tried to find answers to questions like these — for instance, not only drawing pictures of the whole being, but of its skeleton. Many details proved wrong and had to be done over, until at last the creature looked anatomically believable.

The Ythrian, as I called him, shouldn't be merely a man in feathers. He should differ in basic psychological ways. As an obvious beginning for that, consider the need of a large area to support one or a few voracious individuals; thus an extreme territoriality, the absence of herd or mob instincts, a history devoid of the state. (How then would communal affairs be regulated?) At the same time, the mobility of wings would make for reader contacts across wider ranges than was the case on primitive Earth.... Yet Ythri must be an entire world, its past as long and intricate as ours, begetting countless distinct cultures.... The predator's aggressiveness; fierce, narrow loyalties; breeding seasons instead of year-round sexuality; variations between persons.... What forms might immorality and psychopathology take, what would constitute altruism, heroism, or piety?...

Ythri and the colony planet Avalon had to be described in detail: types of sun, orbit, mass, gravity, everything that mathematics can get out of assumptions which, while astronomically acceptable, are not copies of the Terrestrial equivalents or of each other. Climates, geography, botany, wildlife, immigrant animals and plants from both Earth and Ythri, needed similar imagining. What would this area or that look like, smell like, feel like? How would it affect those who had settled there rather than someplace else? What institutions would the hybrid civilization develop?

Why had it ever been started?

That last question suggested its own answer. Over the years I have laid various stories — not all, by any means, but a fair number of them — in one or other "future history". I think this gives them an extra dimension, though of course each item is supposed to be comprehensible by itself. For some while I'd been wanting to fill in the time-gap between Nicholas van Rijn and Dominic Zlandry. Here was a chance to begin.

Avalon was colonized by humans leaving the ambience of a Polesotechnic League whose decadence and imminent breakdown in chaos were becoming much too obvious. They put themselves under the protection of Ythri, by then a united planet with a small but fairly well-run sphere of interstellar influence. Ythrians grew interested in settling too, albeit humans always outnumber-

ed them. Together these pioneers rode out the bad era and went on to build a flourishing society.

Meanwhile, in Earth's neighborhood, the Time of Troubles found the usual human solution, Caesarism. A Terran Empire not yet rotten, as in Mlandry's day, but young and vigorous, expanded. It began to encounter Ythrian enterprize on one of its frontiers. (At this point, something should have been said about how an empire on that scale worked. However, too much else had to be gotten into the limited wordage available. It was even looking desirable to mark off certain solid blocks of exposition with asterisks. I could only drop a few hints about political machinery, saving the details for later books.) Conflicts of interest led to conflicts of arms. An ambitious Terran proconsul persuaded his government to authorize a war for the rectification of the border. I didn't want him to be a stock Imperialist, though, rather a man who sincerely felt that this was the sole way to prevent a truly catastrophic clash later on. At present Ythri couldn't possibly win. Avalon was among the planets he meant to incorporate in the Empire when the peace treaty was written. Naturally, he assumed, even while the war continued, the human majority there would welcome those who came from the mother world.

The human majority did nothing of the sort. What happened was to be my story.

At about this stage of plotting, I chanced to mention the idea of the mixed colony and its ornithoids — not true birds, though with numerous similarities — in a letter to Clifford Simak. He remarked in his reply on the curious psychosexual element in the dedicated birdwatcher, no matter how alien birds are to us — or maybe because of that very alienness. I saw that here was still another theme which must be included. Physical sex relations between the species were impossible, or at least impractical, and attractive to no one. Yet in a subtler way, many interracial relationships would not be simple friendships, even when the friends themselves were unaware of it. For better or for worse, depending on the particular case, individual personalities would be profoundly affected.

To show this in action was quite a challenge. My success or failure in

meeting it is for the reader to decide. Let him not blame Mr Simak for my shortcomings!

It was interesting, in a grim fashion, to work out the military details. I also tried to raise a few philosophical and moral questions, such as, "To what extent is it right to use violence on an opponent who is not really evil? Is anything ever gained?" One of my characters proposes some answers. You may disagree with him.

I can only hope you like the tale.

In conclusion, a personal footnote: People of the Wind went to the New American Library (Signet Books), with whom I had a contract. I felt guilty about using John Campbell's idea without offering him a chance to serialize it; the reason was that he was too overstocked on novels to buy any, and my deadline wouldn't wait. (Theoretically I could have shelved the whole project till a better time, meanwhile doing something else. In practice, writing doesn't work that way, at any rate not for me.) I also put Ythrians in a couple of short stories for others. Finally, out of a sheer sense of obligation, I devised a brief "prequel" to the lot, entitled "Wings of Victory", and am happy to say that Campbell lived to buy if not publish it. He gave the illustrating job to a new artist, Laurence MacCaskill, who took the unusual step of checking with me, both by mail and by a transcontinental telephone call, as to whether he had visualized the Ythrian to my satisfaction. He certainly had. There is more behind-the-scenes conscientiousness in science fiction than the average fan will admit.

Soon after, Ben Bova succeeded to the editorship. Somehow — I don't know how these things happen — he saw a manuscript copy of the novel. The inventory situation having changed, Analog got it after all.

--- Foul Anderson

PETER ROBERTS the fannish inquisition

The dungeons of the Fannish Inquisition have been silent recently; the pleasant screams of tortured faneds are echoes of the past. It's not my fault, however; I've been sitting patiently, thumbscrews at the ready, just waiting for suitable candidates. But the damned fanzine publishers have been cheating and simply haven't produced anything worth dissecting over the winter.

Fortunately the first hint of spring is here ((you could have fooled me — Ed)) and the postman's curse has heralded a new year of fan activity. A flood of North East fanzines has swamped British fandom and chief amongst these is Maya, the fifth issue of which shows its editor's determination that English fanzines should and can look as good as the better American productions. Carefully duplicated and laid out with plenty of space and full page illustrations, Maya 5 is neat and attractive without being sterile or antiseptic — thanks largely to the fine cartooning of Harry Bell. Ian Maule, the editor, has thus avoided the fannish criticism of art-conscious fanzines, namely that you feel obliged to handle them with white gloves on.

Having recovered from the shock of finding a not unsightly British fanzine in your hands, you may turn to the contents and be further surprised to discover that they're all quite readable. I don't think Ian has sacrificed much, therefore, in making Maya look presentable. The letter column is particularly good and is also well-edited; its importance to the magazine is underlined by its coming first, before the articles and various columns, and the letters themselves cover most of the topics presently under discussion in British

fandom. It's a lively fannish forum and one that isn't clogged up with odd conversations between editor and letter writer which are of no interest to anyone else. After this there are three pieces of medium interest; Andrew Stephenson (Ames) on the sad plight of the fan artist, hunted to extinction by egoboo-maddened faneds; Darrell Schweitzer's column, part of which includes a survey of his past fannish career; and Lisa Conesa with a short whimsical story. Probably better than these is "Goblin Towers", a column by Ian Williams, wherein Ian recounts the saga of his entry into fandom — a common topic for writers of personal columns, but one that's usually entertaining and one that Ian handles very well. Finally there are some fanzine reviews, quite good ones, also by Ian Williams, and a few notes from Ian Maule, whose general lack of editorial presence is one of the few criticisms of Maya that I can reasonably make.

Maya, then, is a fanzine I'd recommend to anyone interested in British fandom. It's still in a formative stage at the moment, though Ian has some fairly clear ideas for the future (it's to be fannish, for example, rather than sercon or general); furthermore it comes from the North East, the home of Gannet fandom and a current hive of activity, so the future looks assured and Maya may add regularity to attractiveness, a combination long unheard of in Britain.

When Maya 5 arrived my first reaction was that Ian Maule had, for some unknown reason, sent me a copy of Outworlds — the styles were similar and I suspect Ian of having been influenced by the American zine. Shortly afterwards, however, a real Outworlds appeared, the 14th

issue. Bill and Joan Bowers started editing Outworlds at much the same time as Mike and Susan Glicksahn started Energumen and the two became friendly rivals, both of them also spearheading the new trend to art-conscious fanzines. Outworlds was a Hugo nominee in 1971, missing out last year largely as a result of a reduction in size and circulation (though Bill now promises a return to the "original posture as an elaborate & semi-pretentious collection of things Bowers can con out of the talented people he knows in and around fandom").

Outworlds has always been noted for its splendid graphics and though much of the experimentation which characterized early issues has disappeared the artwork and layout is still unusual. The covers, illustrations for The Left Hand of Darkness by Connie Faddis, are printed, and there's also a secondary 'cover' by Mike Gilbert, a cartoon entitled "A Man Called Nixon", also printed; you thus go through four pages of artwork before the contents page (and the title of the fanzine) is revealed. The written pieces in Outworlds are always, it seems to me, rather non-descript; this is partly the result of a comparison with the artwork, partly the editor's fault. Most of the contributors to Outworlds are well-known, often professionals, and too frequently their articles look like offcuts — marginalia from the busy writer. Robert Lowndes attacks, pointedly without prudishness and altogether reasonably, the use of swear-words in stories (in response to Ted White's defence of the same); all I can do is nod — no further reaction is called for. Piers Anthony has a massive article which may well be very good; I confess I'm tired of massive articles by Piers Anthony and, yes, this one discusses his own work again, though there's also a review of Again, Dangerous Visions somewhere within. Leon Taylor talks about Silverberg, an sf writer who is being discussed a lot recently — again more than sufficiently for me, I fear. Finally there's a 'dirty story' by Rick Stoker of no great humour or merit and a brief letter column.

After that it seems a little contradictory to recommend Outworlds; but although the fourteenth issue may have been of little interest to me, the articles are all well-written and will probably appeal to many others. I still look forward to the arrival of an Outworlds, anyway, and that's usually a

good sign.

Back to Britain again with a clutch of fanzines from the Manchester group, another of English fandom's active areas but one that's sadly without the talent of the Gannet mob in the North East; recent arrivals are Madcap 2 from Pete Presford and Pete Colley, Hell 7 from Brian Robinson and Paul Skelton, and Zimri 4 from Lisa Conesa. I won't dwell long on these, though I'll try to give you some general idea of their virtues and drawbacks.

Madcap 2, though a considerably improvement on the first issue, is still a messy thing with little sense of layout or of a fanzine as any kind of a whole — it's a collection of oddments jumbled together. Ian Williams continues a fannish fantasy of an esoteric and rather boring nature, Pete Colley talks on art in schools, David Britton indulges himself (supposedly on Brian McCabe) to the perplexity of his readers, and there are record reviews, 'poetry', and a few letters — including, I should note, one from Tim Davey, the boy in prison in Turkey for drug offences. Pete Presford's editorial complains about "snotty noses" taking "a bash at MAD Group zines" and doubtless I'm included; but sadly the same editorial reveals the reason for the general criticism: Pete Presford, together with most of the MAD Group, is a poor writer, given to a jerky and juvenile style of humour — "Brrring brrring goes the phone, so innocent me picks the telling bone up, expecting some cranky person like Chuck Partington blowing kisses. But no, although it is some-one nearly as bad, Bri Robinson; "Hello", says he..." and so on. Ian Maule, editor of Maya, is not, on his own admission, a particularly good writer; but he's managed to edit a very fine fanzine. Pete Presford and Pete Colley are not, as yet, either good writers or good editors. Hopefully Madcap will improve; after all, it's only the second issue. But the editors won't get very far if they continue to reject criticism as mere prejudice on the part of some hypothetical establishment in fandom.

Hell 7, though better than Madcap, contains less hope for the future; it's just possible, though rather unlikely, that it will improve itself. After seven issues it has settled down and has its own readership and followers; the

incentive to change a pattern is thus minimal. I must admit, however, that the tedious OMPA mailing comments have at last disappeared and that the layout is much better than it was, though the letter column is still a rather uninteresting mess. Contents for the seventh issue include Pete Presford on a fannish incident, John Piggott on his problems with a tree, Mike Meara continuing the story of the jazz guitar, and various columns by the editors and assistants. Nothing here is particularly bad, but conversely little of it is particularly interesting.

Zimri is the biggest and the best of the three and outside interest is evident in the large and fairly lively letter column; this is the only current MADzine that shows promise for the future and the only one that I found entertaining. The fourth issue has a fine printed cover from Harry Turner and includes an interview with Harry, old-time fan from way-back-when, which is amusing and informative, though nicely tongue-in-cheek; otherwise there's a story from Rob Holdstock, some fannish definitions, book and fanzine reviews, poetry and other oddments. Zimri is still slightly cramped in lay-out and the editing, in general and specifically in the letter column, leaves something to be desired. However, I enjoyed it and I have some confidence in its becoming one of the best British fanzines — just give it a couple more issues.

Saving the best till last, I'll finally turn to John Bangsund's Australian fanzine, Scythrop, which, despite the Hugo results, I'd consider as the finest fanzine currently being produced. Perhaps John Bangsund's being the finest writer in fandom has something to do with it? (Though once again the Hugo results won't back me up.) Anyway, the 27th Scythrop recently arrived, smaller than usual and entirely written by the editor. There are some 'Notes for a Poem', various musings, and mailing comments for ANZAPA; it does not, I realise, sound very enticing and I can't really make it any more so without quoting large chunks. Perhaps it'll help if I mention that previous issues have contained articles by Ursula Le Guin, D.G. Compton, Bertram Chandler, and other well-known names; but the essence of Scythrop is still John Bangsund's own writing: witty, natural,

amusing, and always a pleasure to read. Even the mailing comments are enjoyable to an outsider — a rare virtue, shared by a very few others (Bruce Gillespie and Richard Bergeron, perhaps). Ever-persistent, I'll nominate John for Best Writer and Scythrop for Best Fanzine in this year's Hugo race; but once again I expect to be disappointed — the circulation is too small and Scythrop isn't very regular. But perhaps if every Vector reader bought a copy and voted...? Ah well: highly recommended, as you gather.

Scythrop — John Bangsund, PO Box 357, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia. (UK agent: Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Ave, Surbiton, Surrey. 6 issues for 90p.)

Maya — Ian Maule, 13 Weardale Ave, Forest Hall, Newcastle on Tyne, NE12 0HX. 20p per issue.)

Outworlds — Bill & Joan Bowers, PO Box 354, Wadsworth, Ohio 44281, USA. (UK agent: Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Rd, Sheffield, S11 9FE. 20p per issue.)

Zimri — Lisa Conesa, 54 Manley Rd, Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 8HP. 20p per issue.

Hell — Brian Robinson and Paul Skelton, 9 Linwood Grove, Manchester, M12 4QH. 3p + letter of comment.

Madcap — Pete Presford and Pete Colley, 10 Dalkeith Rd, Sth. Reddish, Stockport. 20p per issue.

(All are also available for trade, contribution, or letter of comment — one issue may well come free if you're lucky or good at flattery.)

--- Peter Roberts

Room here to mention that Peter Roberts publishes a fine fortnightly news-and-reviews zine, Checkpoint, which will keep you well up to date on what's happening in the sf and fan world, both in Britain and overseas. Recommended. Sub. is 10 for 40p, though Peter will send you a sample issue *free of charge*. His address: 87 West Town Lane, Bristol, BS4 5DZ.

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BOOKS

The Book of Skulls

by Robert Silverberg
Scribners; 222pp.; \$5.95

Reviewed by George Zebrowski

Before I develop the point of my dissatisfaction with this novel, let me say that its faults are the faults of a very good book, a book which will be admired, and one which I admire in many ways. My problem with the book may even be irrelevant to the writer's concerns. Still, I have come to believe that certain ideas make demands on the writer who approaches them. It may seem a simple thing to say, but the basic question about immortality is what can one make of the notion? How can one think about it? Inevitably, I have come to the conclusion that immortality, like many another idea, needs a thoroughgoing, unfamiliar approach, to yield the kind of satisfying work it so regularly promises with its vague allure, and so rarely delivers.

It seems to me that Silverberg has avoided the whole thing. Writers have depicted immortals as ancient cult figures and as scientific supermen, the one under religious guises and the other under scientism of the gross variety. There is also the approach of the aesthetic-old-age-extended, filled with world-weariness, purgative sadness, and endless contrasts between the immortal's state of mind and that of short-lived beings. All of these approaches can be refined into some kind of believability, given a sophisticated approach; and all of them, including the cult-health food approach, have been at the centre of some very good novels.

Silverberg's cult atmosphere and in-

trospective method to achieve life-eternal are plausible, as is the beauty of the monastic life structure with its hard-textured surfaces. But I found his immortals to be incredible, because I could not believably see what they did with their lives. This is not really a completely serious objection to this novel, I know. A group of misguided immortals living a life of rhythmic hypnosis is conceivable, but I think they would do more in eternity than this. Silverberg only suggests slightly that they do anything else.

Briefly, four college students discover a manuscript — The Book of Skulls — which leads them to an ancient monastery in Arizona, where they are initiated into the immortal life. Seemingly, Silverberg's novel is really about them and their attitudes to the possibility of it all being for real. The point of view is split between the four characters, Eli, Oliver, Ned and Timothy. The details of their lives, interests and sorrows are painfully real, presented with technical perfection and sympathy, and with the kind of oratorical poetry and power which I cannot help but admire. It's a strong spell.

There is some humour in the early chapters. Silverberg is known for his humour as a speaker, but it is rarely seen in his fiction. Ultimately, The Book of Skulls reaches an ambiguity of faith — which we have seen in the same author's The Masks of Time ((Vornan-19 in its UK publication — ME)). But I am left with the irritating feeling that there was another novel which Silverberg might have written which would have needed no more than an honestly real immortal and a viable concept of immortality.

Personally, I don't think it's enough

to make immortals timeless old cultists and tie the whole thing up in mystery and faith. Silverberg led me on with tantalizing possibilities, and if it had not been that his novel had another story to tell in addition to the lure, I would have felt much more dissatisfaction than I do now.

The Book of Skulls is really not about what I thought it would be. What it is about is worth the reading and savouring for its own sake. But I can't help feeling that the author was of two minds when he approached the subject, and failed to see that in this approach he would not be able to confront the nature of the immortals' life and psychology and what they were like inside. What I wanted was a look inside the Fraters which would show me as much as I was shown of Oliver, Eli, Ned and Timothy.

Someone may make a movie out of this book, and it might even have as much appeal as *Lost Horizon*. But there is in all such approaches a wrong-headedness, an attitude from the past which backs away from Shangri-La and immortality — because it feels that it is wrong.

Fiddlesticks — and maybe bosh too! To all interested I recommend two books, Man Into Superman by Ettinger, and The Immortalist by Harrington, both of which tell us that death is an intolerable imposition, that we don't have to be cranks or cultists to be immortal, even if Asimov tells us that we are traitors to the race because we refuse to lie down and die so that the evolutionary superman can be born of bungling nature.

The beauties of The Book of Skulls are archaic, perhaps even crypto-Catholic. I don't have to be a crass materialist, positivist, or even a religious advocate, to make such a criticism. Immortality can be more creative — mystically, religiously, scientifically, whatever-your-bent-is — than it is painted to be in The Book of Skulls, because human lives are creative ventures more powerful and resourceful than the enigmas wrapped in silly mysteries which Silverberg calls the Fraters.

I have a dream. It is that Eli and Ned will bust that Skullhouse wide open, and become the world-involved non-nonsense immortals that Eli dreams of being at the beginning of his pilgrimage. This, Frater Silverberg, is what

I have to confess: optimism and pride. As Camus once said, the sight of human pride is unequalled — no disparagement is of any use.

The Time Masters

by Wilson Tucker
Gollancz; 186pp.; £1.80

Reviewed by John Bowles

This is a very welcome revised new edition of one of Wilson Tucker's first sf novels, serialised in New Worlds sometime back in the antediluvian past, but never before published in book form in this country. In it, one can see certain similarities (in the use of a mythological underpinning to the story) to Tucker's most recent novel, the excellent Year of the Quiet Sun.

I have always considered Tucker to be one of the most under-rated sf novelists. His work is not widely known, although he has produced five good novels (The Long Loud Silence, Wild Talent, The Lincoln Hunters and Quiet Sun, in addition to this book). The Time Masters is not his best book, but it's well worthwhile, and may hopefully induce a few readers to go out in search of these other books.

The novel centres around a secret government project intended to produce a space vehicle capable of reaching the stars. Secret service agents are anxiously investigating a man named Gilbert Nash, who has set up as a private investigator in the town. Nash seems to have no past: he simply appeared in 1940, aged about 30; and now, over thirty years later, he seems to be roughly the same age.

Nash is in the vicinity of the project for a reason; and when one of the scientists comes to him to ask him to find his wife (who has deserted him) and then confides that he believes his wife to be some kind of telepath, Nash knows he is on the right track. In fact Nash, like the man's wife, is an alien — they are both survivors of a spaceship crash in the vicinity of Earth many years ago. Just how long ago only begins to emerge when the ancient Epic of

Gilgamesh starts to intrude mysteriously upon the story.

It's hard to summarize this book without giving the entire plot away; but the above outline tells you little more about the book than does the jacket copy. This is basically an sf thriller, and as such is readable and exciting, although the style is often a little too pulpy for comfort. There is the added factor of the gradual unravelling of Nash's past. And there is what seemed to me a master stroke in which Nash suddenly emerges as a tragic figure for a reason which jolts the reader right out of the normal human frame of reference, forcing us to see things in a new, and somewhat unsettling perspective.

In addition, The Time Masters is an impassioned and effective attack on the security mania of modern society. It builds a fascinating story on an admittedly straightforward base, using a fresh view of an old sf idea, employing an imaginative use of myth and incorporating a lot of interesting archaeological material, as well as adopting an intelligent, sometimes angry, always humane outlook. Read it: and then go and search out some of Tucker's other novels, particularly The Long Loud Silence which, although it is now a little outdated (despite an attempt recently to revise it), is unexcelled among post-Bomb novels.

The Book of Strangers

by Ian Dallas
Gollancz; 151pp.; £1.75

Reviewed by David Compton

Presumably this book is being reviewed on these pages because it is set in some unspecified future, its first short section taking place in the computerised Archives department of a Middle Eastern university. Of course, I'm all for sf's boundaries being extended in all directions, and in this review I have neither the space nor the courage to attempt a definition of what sf is, what it might become, what it ought to become... All the same, I

think aficionados must be warned that by most standards the sf elements in this book are entirely superficial — if anything a mild irritant in what is entirely a story of one man's search for and eventual attainment of the higher mysteries of the Islamic faith.

The publisher's biographical note tells us that the Scottish author 'embraced Islam seven years ago', and gives us a picture of a splendidly turbaned and swarthy gentleman, so presumably Mr Dallas knows what he's talking about. I don't. Even after reading his book, I still don't. Feeling rather guilty about not being mystically inclined, I studied his words with respectful attention, in the genuine hope of enlightenment on some level, no matter how simplistic. I didn't get any. I tried. I swear I did. But the hero's journey across various deserts, up and down assorted mountains, from holy community to holy community, meeting Wise One after Wise One — all a parable for some inner Odyssey, no doubt — seems utterly shapeless, and also suspiciously easy. Furthermore, as higher planes of consciousness are attained, the author claims he isn't allowed to describe them, and anyway adequate language doesn't exist. This may be so, but it's singularly unhelpful.

Not a book, therefore, to convert or even inform the unbeliever. No firm information about Islam is given. The concept of *Jihad* — holy war — which is almost the only aspect of Islam I've heard of, is not even mentioned. The long history of blood and oppression is brushed aside as unimportant. Perhaps it is. But I'd like to be told why.

Neither does the book work as a character study, or even as a will-he-or-won't-he-achieve-his-heart's-desire-in-time sort of story. Since the hero's former state is never accurately described, his final bliss makes no visible difference to anyone at all — least of all the reader.

A book, then, that lacks recognisable people, recognisable conflict, recognisable mythology, recognisable thought processes. A tract to confirm the converted. For most other people, a bore. A worthy, well-written bore. But a bore all the same.

The Missionaries

by D.G.Compton
Ace Books; 75c; 222pp.

Reviewed by Tony Sudbery

One of the commonest observations about science fiction, especially by commentators from outside the field, is that the characterisation tends to be minimal. Most critics seem to be prepared to accept this, on the grounds that there is so much else going on in an sf story that there is no space left for characters to be properly developed. Since the "so much else" usually consists largely of mindless chasing and clobbering, I find this an unconvincing argument. So, apparently, do sf writers themselves. For the most part, they have not been at all eager to take advantage of the indulgence that the critics are willing to extend to them, and ever since the forties the field has seen an increasing concern with characterisation. On the whole, it hasn't been a very successful concern; there has been a widespread tendency to regard characterisation as an extra ingredient which can be dropped into the stew in solid chunks rather late in the cooking, without taking too much trouble to make sure that the chunks dissolve. The result is that when the stew is served up to the reader it still contains these solid lumps floating around; you come across them when the pilot of the scout craft, just before making a crash landing, pauses to reflect on his marital problems, or when the brilliant scientist's progress is interrupted by irrelevant flashbacks to his traumatic childhood.

For evidence that this attitude still operates at a fairly high level in current sf, you need only flick through Roger Zelazny's output. Above this level, of course, there are a handful of writers who are more relaxed in their approach to characterisation, and one of the most interesting of these is D.G.Compton. More than any other sf writer's, Compton's books are about people; he gives the impression that he is concentrating on his characters not because he thinks he ought to, but because they are what he wanted to write about in the first place. And his gift for creating real, particularised characters is such that he has good reason

for writing about them, and we have good reason for reading about them.

As a natural consequence of this emphasis on the people involved, the specifically science-fictional aspects of Compton's novels get less development than they would at the hands of a writer whose characters were not so important to him (though no less than at the hands of the many writers who would regard an sf situation as an excuse for an adventure story). This is not to say that the sf interest is only incidental, and could be cut out without essentially altering the novel; Compton's best novels are seamless, and his characters would not be defined and could not develop outside of the specific situation that Compton creates. Indeed, the character and the situation often seem to have been created together. Thus in the short story "It's Smart to Have an English Address", although it is the pianist Paul Cassavetes who makes the story so memorable, it is his attitude to artificial organs that brings him alive for us; and in The Quality of Mercy the monstrous side of the pilot Donald Morrison's character would never have become apparent, either to his wife and friends or to us, if he had not been detailed for the particular monstrous missions that he flies in the novel.

The Missionaries, Compton's latest novel, is one of his best. The people in it are Gordon Wordsworth, a retired brigadier who at the start of the novel is dying of emphysema, his rebellious son Dacre and his foolish wife Sylvia. Their story is that of the alien missionaries of the title and their campaign to convert Earth to their religion of "ustiliath". Dacre is one of the aliens' first human contacts, and their first missionary act is to cure the brigadier's emphysema. His wife is immediately converted to ustiliath, but it is the brigadier, despite his initial scepticism, who becomes the most involved in the new religion. He departs for London to organise the missionary campaign. Left behind in Devon nursing her resentment at being rejected, Sylvia's enthusiasm turns to neurotic hostility and she is eventually responsible for the collapse of the campaign.

Compton's treatment makes the alien mission a part of the Wordsworths' lives, whereas the more usual approach would be to make their involvement a part

of the story of the mission. At the crucial moments — such as Gordon's decision not to reveal the missionaries' presence to an investigating Army officer, or the final riot against the missionaries — the forces behind the action derive from the relationship between the three main characters, rather than from the nature of the aliens' mission. There are hints that the mission and the missionaries are not all that they seem, but this aspect of the situation is not explored to any great extent. The descriptions of the wider public effects of the mission are on the perfunctory side, and a little unconvincing in comparison with the private world of the Wordsworths. I don't think this detracts much from the novel; it is primarily the Wordsworths' story.

Like all Compton's writing, The Missionaries is quite unpretentious; first and last, he is concerned simply to tell a story about these three people. It is a good story, and he tells it outstandingly well.

The Iron Dream

by Norman Spinrad
Avon; 255pp.; 95c.

Reviewed by Malcolm Edwards

The term tour de force is often over-used these days, not least in sf criticism. But I am forced to use it to describe Norman Spinrad's remarkable new book which may indeed be, as the cover proclaims, "the most fantastic science fiction novel of our age".

Let me describe the book. Turning past the title page, the copyright and printing details, and the dedication, we arrive at a second blurb, describing a Hugo-winning novel, Lord of the Swastika, by Adolf Hitler. On the next page is a list of other science fiction novels by Adolf Hitler (The Master Race ... The Thousand Year Rule ... Tomorrow the World ...), after which comes a biographical sketch of the author:

"After the war, he dabbled briefly in radical politics in Munich before finally emigrating to New York in 1919 ... After several years ... he

began to pick up odd jobs as a magazine and comic illustrator. He did his first interior illustration for the science-fiction magazine Amazing in 1930 ... by 1935, he had enough confidence in his English to make his debut as a science-fiction writer. He devoted the rest of his life to the science-fiction genre as a writer, illustrator and fanzine editor..."

Basically, then, this is an amusing if trivial notion: what if the beer hall putsch had failed, National Socialism had failed, and Hitler had emigrated to America to become an sf writer? But Spinrad makes it more than just a notion: he has gone ahead to write one of Hitler's science fiction novels, the award-winning Lord of the Swastika, which occupies the book from page 13 to page 243. And he has done it superbly well. You can't finish this book without believing that if Hitler had been an sf writer, this is just the novel he would have written.

Set in the far future, Lord of the Swastika depicts a world in which the ravages of nuclear war have reduced most of humanity to a hideously-mutated rabble. The fair land of Heldon is the only citadel of genetic purity; but it is threatened by the power of the evil Dominators, who control the vast and malevolent land of Zind in the East. Ferio Jaggar rises from obscurity to take control of weakening Heldon and mould its people into a fighting machine of irresistible might, to crush the evil of Zind forever.

It is all quite revolting to read, and one's main criticism of the book must be that Spinrad has done his work too well. The novel is an accurate reflection of psychosis of a particularly repellent and anti-human type. The obsession with genetic purity; the fanatical hatred for Jews and communists (amalgamated in the novel into the single menace of Zind); the fetishistic militarism; the wallowing in violence — all these are present to the point of nausea. However much you admire Spinrad's skill, it's a hard book to finish. He must have had a strong stomach to write it.

But this is not all it is. Simply to reproduce the kind of novel Hitler

might have written (and then to tear it to shreds in a marvellous fake-scholarly afterword by one 'Homer Whipple' of New York University) would be fun, but ultimately rather wearing. So Spinrad has done more. The novel is no random fantasy adventure; it is also a kind of idealised pocket history of the rise of Nazism, told from Hitler's point of view. The events are roughly paralleled, through the putsches, the street warfare against the Communists and the militaristic displays of ever-increasing size, to the takeover, the night of the long knives, the concentration camps, and the development of blitzkrieg. The main characters are also there: the 'Sons of the Swastika' have their Goering, their Goebbels, their Himmler, their Hess, their Roehm, and others. Here the novel is most disturbingly on target, for one can imagine only too clearly that if the Third Reich had won, and did endure a thousand years, then the history of its origins would be written in terms very similar to these.

There are still other aspects to The Iron Dream. The Afterword, while having great fun at Hitler's expense, also establishes something of the context of this parallel world, in which Japan and America alone resist the power of the Soviet Union. It also points out, implicitly, that in a world which had not experienced him, the idea of someone like Hitler coming to power would seem inconceivable; and further, without his defeat, the kind of fanatic prejudice he exhibited would not have been driven underground to the extent it has. You can also take it as a commentary on much science fiction and heroic fantasy, because despite the excesses of violence and prejudice in Hitler's novel it differs only in degree — and in some cases not in any very great degree — from the kind of thing you can find in a number of published books which I shall not mention by name.

Spinrad has taken his simple notion and developed it into a clever and complex novel. It is pretty repellent, but I recommend you to it.

The World Inside

by Robert Silverberg
Signet; 174pp.; 95¢

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

This is the most recent Silverberg book to be published as a US paperback. The World Inside has previously appeared as a series of short pieces in various magazines and anthologies and was nominated, along with A Time of Changes, for last year's Hugo and Nebula, but was withdrawn by Silverberg himself. The cover art on this edition is good, but is unsigned and uncredited.

The World Inside is not a novel. It consists of seven loosely connected stories of life within a tower city (an Urban Monad or Urbmon), which houses over 800,000 people on 1,000 floors. This is not just a residential block, but a self-contained unit, in which the residents live, work and play from birth till death, never going outside (hence the title). And the people are very happy with this existence — all except for the occasional "flippo" who rebels and is tossed summarily down a disposal chute. Thus rebellious elements are eradicated from the population and future generations are more likely to be happy with their lot.

In fact, there are many good arguments for preferring to live in an enclosed, centrally heated (they make use of accumulated body heat) environment, even without the proper conditioning. But this is the year 2381, and our planet has a population of 75 billion to support, so the only solution is to build upwards, leaving the maximum room for food production.

Living conditions have changed and, as you might expect, so have social and sexual mores. The greatest virtue is fertility. (Contraception, whether in word or deed, is an obscenity.) There is marriage; there is family life. There is also complete sexual availability of all adults to all adults (the term "adult" meaning "over the age of puberty"). Any man can walk into the room of another married couple, introduce himself to the wife and leap on top of her — and she can't refuse. There is full equality, though. A woman can proposition a man, or a man can proposition a man, and still there can be no

refusal. As you might expect, Silverberg describes all this promiscuous coupling with great enthusiasm.

The urbmon society hangs together; it is convincing. Silverberg has thought out his background carefully and followed all the implications to their logical conclusions. It is this thoroughness which must have earned the book its Hugo and Nebula nominations. The stories themselves are used to illustrate various aspects of the urbmons and their inhabitants: fertility, power politics, social customs, entertainment, the hiving-off process when the population of an urbmon grows too large and some must move to a new building, and a glimpse of the world outside. This last — the description of a farming community with an entirely different way of life — is the sketchiest and least convincing part of the book. The contrasts drawn between the two societies are too huge and too shallowly expressed. The whole book is, of course, an old idea; only Silverberg's forceful writing, inventiveness and attention to detail make it seem fresh. In the episode outside this is not so, and only the old idea remains.

A final point: the entire book is written in the present tense. While this suited Silverberg's previous work Son of Man, with its enigmatic, dream-like quality and essential timelessness, the technique does not really suit The World Inside. I put its use down to yet another experiment in style. Silverberg is a progressive writer who is constantly seeking new themes and new treatments. We must applaud his endeavour while hoping that his future books will still be readable.

Worlds Apart — An Anthology of Interplanetary Fiction

George Locke (ed.)
Cornmarket Reprints; 180pp.; £2.50

Reviewed by Rob Holdstock

Every once in a while it's a good thing (so they say) to remember one's humble beginnings. But the beginnings of sf as we know it were by no means humble — they were ambitious, and unashamedly

so. George Locke's collection of nine pre-World-War-I stories illustrates the truth of that statement. Outrageous, hilariously naive, and yet still able to talk to 1970s man through the pseudo-scientific gimmickry that clutters up the action.

We have, for example, "The Great Sacrifice" by George C. Wallis, in which an astronomer discovers the Solar System acting peculiarly ("Good Heavens, Milford, what next?") and Martians intervene to save the day (and the Earth). And how about the honeymooning couple who tour the Solar System in their anti-gravity ship (with much tea and stiff British upper lip) fighting Martians and monsters a la Burroughs. And how can you fail to conquer all with a name like Rollo Lenox Smeaton Aubrey, or Andrew Murgatroyd. And there's Alan Moraine, who is kidnapped from his high flying plane by aliens, but not before becoming a 'popular hero' by scoring a double century against the best Australian bowling at Lords.

The stories are culled from five magazines: Cassell's Family Magazine, Pearson's, the London, the English Illustrated, and the Grand Magazine, which was an all-fiction companion to the Strand Magazine. The stories are all presented in facsimile and the original illustrations are a treat in themselves, especially Paul Hardy's twenty pictures for W.S. Lach-Szyrma's "Letters From the Planets". They rival ANY speculative artist on the contemporary scene, and no doubt have been plagiarised over and over for the pulp zines that followed four decades later.

In fact, as George Locke points out in his too-brief introduction to the volume, many classics of sf were developed out of themes used by these lesser practitioners of the art: First Men In the Moon followed other stories dealing with antigravity, notable among which was "In The Deep Of Time" by George Parsons Lathrop (which is included in this volume). In the same story the theme of The Sleeper Awakes appears. The hero is "vivified" and his body preserved by injecting it full of "mortibacterium" (Death to Bacteria! What a splendid name).

Having no pretensions to literary mastery, this volume represents the popular science fiction of our grandfathers' youth, when space and a better future were no less attractive as escape valves than they are today.

A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!

by Harry Harrison
Faber; 192pp.; £1.90

Reviewed by John Bowles

There are few things in science fiction quite so much fun as a parallel worlds story in the right hands. There are few (if any) more reliable providers of fun in science fiction than Harry Harrison. The combination of the two, therefore, should be irresistible: and so it is. For sheer entertainment value, A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah! would be hard to beat.

The advantage of the parallel worlds story is that it allows the author complete omnipotence in rearranging human history. Given some sort of rationalisation, he can shuffle the nations of the world about and produce pretty well whatever combinations, in whatever stages of development he chooses. The skill lies in the choice, and Harrison has chosen well, to produce a world in the Muslims defeated the Christians in the battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212, and the Greater Caliphate still controls the Iberian peninsula; in which the rebel George Washington was sensibly shot, and Britain still controls America. It is a world of twentieth century advanced technology combined with Victorian opulence and manners; a world in which a gentleman caught out in crime still retires into the back room to do the decent thing with a loaded revolver.

The story is, as the title suggests, about the construction of a transatlantic tunnel. It is engineered chiefly by one Augustine Washington, a descendant of the infamous George. Will Washington manage to clear the family name of the stigma still attached to it? Will he defeat the plot to destroy the tunnel? Will he overcome the objections of Sir Isambard Brassey-Brunel and win the hand of his beautiful daughter Iris?

Well, of course he will. In this gentlemanly world no other outcome is possible. But predictability is irrelevant. The details of the tunnel's construction are fascinating, and the plot carries you along far too quickly too really worry about any logical flaws there might be in the set up (for example: there's a good political reason why a channel tunnel cannot be built to try out the techniques -- but why not

one to connect Great Britain and Ireland, which would allow the actual transatlantic section to begin much further west?). It's all highly satisfying. Three cheers for Harry Harrison!

Mirror Image

by Michael G.Coney
DAW Books; 176pp.; 95¢

Reviewed by Malcolm Edwards

Mirror Image is based on what seems like an old idea -- although oddly, I can't think of a single previous serious attempt at it. It's set on a colony planet on which a race of aliens -- the amorphs -- are discovered, which can assume any shape as a defence mechanism. But the choice of shape is not random: they can pick from an assailant's mind the image of the creature it would be least likely to harm, and that is the form they take. Thus, attacked by a male lizard, an amorph takes the form of a female lizard; approached by an egotistical Earthman, an amorph becomes a perfect facsimile of the man. And it is not merely surface resemblance; they adopt whatever characteristics the assailant knows concerning the creature. Thus if an amorph takes the form of a man's lover it is that lover in every respect that the man knows; and when it becomes the mirror image of an egotistical man, it knows everything the man knows, without exception. Effectively, there is no difference between the man and the amorph.

The novel deals with the amorphs' adoption into the colony and the inevitable problems that arise. It is extremely well-plotted and well thought out. Everything follows logically from the premise; there is no question of taking easy routes such as making the amorphs hostile. Overall this is a very impressive debut. Mr Coney seems to be breaking into the novel scene in a big way: another novel has just been published and two more are to appear during the year. I'm looking forward to them.

BSFA news

edited by Archie Mercer

A NEW SCIENTIFIC LAW (?) This Column has just formulated a brand-new (to it) scientific law: the Law of Critical Minimum Elapsed Time. It can be expressed by the following formula: if the deadline for one VECTOR news column follows too closely on the publication of the previous VECTOR, then there is no news to speak of, as is the case right now!

CONVENTION EASTER 1973 Of course, this Column has a continuing duty to plug forthcoming Conventions in the sf field. So it will bear repeating that this year's main British sf convention, called by the code-name OMPACON 73, is being held over Easter at the Grand Hotel, Broad St., Bristol. Fred Hemmings, of 20 Beech Rd., Slough, Bucks, SL3 7DQ, is the Treasurer to whom one's 50p registration fee should be sent.

...AND WHEN YOU'VE DECIDED that you are going to Bristol, spare a thought for the BSFA desk there. Volunteers are needed to help man this over the weekend. If you're willing, please contact Jill Adams (address on contents page).

"DOC" WEIR AWARD A natural follow-up to the above items is that, as last year, BSFA members are entitled to vote by post for this annual Award, whether they attend the Convention or not. Those who attend the Convention are entitled to vote on the spot. (Though no person is allowed more than one vote.) The Award, which is presented at the Convention, is for the person that the electorate would most like to see win the "Doc" Weir Award -- very simple in principle, with an unfettered choice among an all-embracing field of candidates: that is, one can vote for one's own choice, not just pick one from some "approved" list.

The Award is named for the late Dr Arthur Weir, an elderly and fascinatingly learned fan of sf and fantasy literature, who died some dozen years ago. Ballot papers will be distributed to BSFA members before the Convention.

FANZINE FOUNDATION FOUND (Well, some of it, anyway!) Keith Walker announces that he

has taken over what he terms "the remnants" of the BSFA Fanzine Foundation. He writes: "If the Fanzine Foundation is to be something more than a name it urgently needs fanzines. I myself am intending to try to fill in some of the gaps from my own collection but it urgently needs donations of fanzines past and present. Faneds can help the collection/library by sending copies of their zines as published. Those who receive zines in trade or for review might like to pass on those surplus to their own requirements to the Fanzine Foundation. I think you may be assured that the collection will be safe in my hands." Thus Keith A. Walker, to whom thanks, of 3 Cromer Grove, Burnley, Lancs.

SMALL AD

Wanted: "Weird Tales", "Strange Tales", "Strange Stories", "Famous Fantastic Mysteries", "Fantastic Novels", "Magazine of Horror 1,2,4,19", "Startling Mystery Stories" 4,5,7,8, "Fantastic" Nov 1959, "Beyond Fantasy Fiction", March 1954. C.L.Moore: Northwest of Earth; Shambleau and Others. And weird/fantasy/macabre books too numerous to detail. (W.J.Godrich, 12 Rockland Cres., Waun Wen, Swansea, SA1 6FL)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED Stephen Pitt (21), 15 Silkmore Lane, Stafford. "Other" interests: Scouting and many associated sports. No geographical preferences. William J.Godrich (46), 12 Rockland Cres., Waun Wen, Swansea, SA1 6FL. Weird fantasy, old-time sf. Anywhere. Simon Joukes (33), Haantjaslei 14, B-2000, Antwerpen, Belgium. It Says Here: Sex, photography, philology -- I wouldn't know if the last-named interest is Simon's spelling or Jill Adams's! (Or is there such a sport?)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS Nil. However, we have a postcode to report: 758 Bowman, Joe; add IV24 3DN which, of course, also applies to the Association's Magazine Library.

NEW MEMBERS

- 1276 Freeman, Keith M.: 39 Oxendon Wood, Orpington, Kent (NOT TO BE CONFUSED with our Vice Chairman, Keith H. Freeman of Reading!)
- 1275 Godrich, Wm.J.: 12 Rockland Cres., Waun Wen, Swansea, SA1 6FL
- 1274 Pitt, Stephen: 15 Silkmore Lane, Stafford
- 1277 Joukes, Simon: Haantjaslei 14, B-2000, Antwerpen, Belgium

