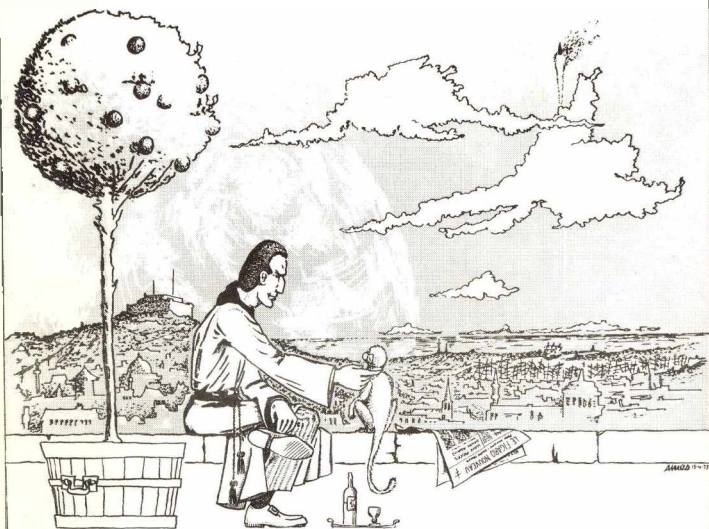


VECTOR 65

May - June
1973



AN INTERVIEW WITH GENE WOLFE

30p

VECTOR 65

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Copy deadline for VECTOR 66 is July 1st. This is a final deadline — please try to get the stuff to me earlier, folks.

LEAD-IN

Having largely been typed beforehand, this issue is being completed in opposition to an insidious but strong feeling of post-convention lethargy. It is less than two days since we left Bristol, as I type this, and I'm not sure that it would be wise to attempt any sort of full convention report so soon after the event; at the moment the events of the three days are still jumbled and unsorted in my memory.

But it was, yes, a good Con. Up until late Saturday afternoon I was not at all sure it would be: everything seemed disjointed; the convention had not settled into any kind of pattern or rhythm (for me, at least). In my admittedly limited experience every convention has its own very distinct personality, but in each case the moment you really begin to enjoy yourself, though hard to pin down, comes when you stop feeling like a visitor and start feeling at home. If OMFacon had a major fault it was in the way it began on Friday. The programme began too early, presumably in response to the increasing number of people who arrive on the Thursday evening. I think this was a bad misjudgment, and I hope future conventions should learn from it (are you listening, Ian?). I would think a 3 p.m. opening would be quite early enough (perhaps 4 p.m. when, as will happen next year, many attendees will be faced with very long journeys). We arrived at luncheon, having come down on a train which didn't involve getting up too early and rushing; although we were there at what I expected to be the start, everything was apparently under way already. Another mistake was in not having any proper opening item. The programme drifted from some films straight into the opening panel. The net result of all this was a feeling of dislocation which persisted through much of the next day.

Oh well. That's enough of complaints. Once settled in I had a great time, which unfortunately seemed to flash by at about two hours per minute. I'd been looking forward to this convention for a long time, it being the first we'd been able to get to since the 1971 Kevason, and eventually I enjoyed it as much as I had anticipated doing, so that come Monday morning I was just ready for another week or so of convention. And I think Christine enjoyed it much more than she was really expecting to. The first vaguely familiar face I encountered was Newcastle fan Thom Penman, who seemed to have grown up since I last saw him two years previously — but this initial impression soon proved wrong. Thom, who had surely set some kind of record by issuing a long report on the 1972 Eastercon in the week before this one, had brought his water-pistol with him in order to give himself something to write about next year. Worse, he was not alone, having been accompanied by the well-known, sensitive, pre-adolescent poet Ritchie Smith. Anyway, I'm not going to go into that side of the convention very much, although it provided intermittent entertainment (i.e. when it was aimed at someone other than us); in any case, I preferred Penman's (I think it was his) other strange device — a small pink object which did a marvellous cackling impersonation of John Piggitt, right down to the battery you had to insert before it worked. No, I'll devote most of this to the more formal, or at least normal aspects of the weekend, because I wouldn't want to give any of you who may never have visited a convention the impression that it's somewhere where silly things happen. Gosh, no.

In the important area of making the Edwards family more famous, the Con was a reasonable success — in fact, a

striking one. He was sitting in the lounge on Saturday morning when I was approached by a reporter and photographer from the Bristol Evening Post. As it turned out, they didn't want to interview me on the Significance of Science Fiction in the Modern World and maybe put a photo on the front page — they were more interested in Christine, but instead of going through any of this modern nonsense about equality of the sexes they wanted to ask me if they could borrow her to take some photos in the Art Room. Once they had received my assent, they dragged her off without further ado. Apparently they were rather nonplussed when they asked her a few questions and discovered she didn't read science fiction. What was she doing there then? Christine explained about me, and Venture, and the B.S.F.A. Later that day we picked up a copy of the paper, which carried one of the photos, plus two articles — one done from an interview with Brian Aldiss, and one of the usual ho-ho of convention things ... "Time warps, interplanetary travel, monsters and invasions are likely to be among the casual chat at the Grand Hotel, Bristol, over the next few days." Part of the general article referred to "Mrs Christine Edwards, a publisher's wife from Harrow". Well, I always believe what I read in the newspapers, so henceforth don't try referring to me as a librarian, or a fanzine editor, or any of that stuff. I'm a publisher now — it's official.

For my own part, I was approached by Gerald Bishop on the Friday, asking if I'd mind being interviewed by Radio Bristol. About what?, I asked. Oh, just the B.S.F.A., you know, said he. I agreed, but nothing seemed to come of it as I'd put it out of my mind by mid-morning Saturday, and was just settling down with some extortionate (17p each) hotel coffee, when Gerald came and dragged me into another room (the plush lounge, where us science fiction layabouts weren't allowed) and left me with a friendly lady from Radio Bristol. We sat down, we all ready to give a few pithy comments about the B.S.F.A., and she turned on the tape-recorder. What exactly is a science fiction fan?, she asked. Zotzi, Gerbliah. Zotzi. Worse still, after I'd stumbled through Everyman's Guide to Fandom in Three Easy

Sentences, and staggered back to the lounge, my coffee was cold.

The formal programme was only intermittently interesting; there seemed to be too many panel discussions which were there solely because, what the hell, you gotta have panel discussions. The best of those I attended was that on time-travel on Saturday afternoon, with lightning attendees Philip Strick in the chair and James Blish, Ken Bulmer and Bob Shaw on the panel. Even so, this was far from being a total success: too much of the hour was spent talking around different aspects of the subject without finding a really profitable area for discussion. This is a fault inevitable in panel discussions unless they are both well-underated (which this one was) and either rehearsed to some degree or very clearly defined and directed (which it wasn't). Nevertheless, many of the things which were said were very interesting, and I wished it had gone on longer.

Later on Saturday, Guest of Honour Chip Delany spoke, largely about the academic acceptance of sf. He spoke well, although not saying anything really new. One rather disturbing item came up in the ensuing discussion: there has been a lot of talk lately about holding more 'fannish' conventions, and this had given the impression, to James Blish at least, that pros were not welcome at these gatherings. Not so, not so. All that's meant, I think, is more emphasis on talk and less on the formal programming at the Novascope — much like many American regional conventions, I believe. I suppose I should mention the Fancy Dress Parade in the evening. Normally I dislike these events more than I can tell you, though some masochistic urge always drags me away from the bar to watch. However, on this occasion, proceedings were disrupted by a remarkable and entertaining robots' protest march, masterminded by Tony Walsh and the Liverpool group.

Sunday morning saw the B.S.F.A. A.G.M. (I have skated over the later part of Saturday evening, because although in the that time I learned perhaps more than ever before about the real inside story of science fiction. I can hardly reprint any of that here!) Christine assured me that this was the

sing's most entertaining item on the programme (although strictly speaking she shouldn't have been there). The minutes of the meeting should be going out with this Vector, so you'll see from them what was resolved, and who was elected to the Council. I'd only been to one previous B.S.F.A. meeting, which was pretty chaotic; this time, however, with John Brunner in the chair and actually chairing the meeting, things were rather different. Still, one had to sympathise with poor Keith Freeman who couldn't finish a single sentence without being interrupted from a particularly vocal part of the audience which continually demanded elucidation on various points while denying Keith the chance to give it. One of the end results was that I was one of the three new members elected to the Council. Power! As I understand it, since the B.S.F.A. is a limited company, the Council counts as a Board of Directors of sorts. Which gave Keith the chance to deliver one of the best lines of the convention when he told me later that our Company Secretary, Graham Poole, wanted to see me because, as a new Council member, I had to list my other directorships.

Well, I never did see you Graham, so if you've got pencil and paper ready: I.C.I., Unilever, British Leyland ...

After the A.G.M. I had to appear on Pete Weston's fan panel, along with Ian Williams, Peter Roberts, Jim Goddard, and of course the man himself. I forget what we were discussing, though I'm not sure we knew even then. "Be a bit extreme," Pete hissed to everyone before we began, no doubt realising that the five of us would probably be in substantial agreement on most things, despite his attempt to split us, both physically and philosophically, into two camps: the fannish fans (Ian and Peter Rabbit) and the gimlet-eyed sercon fans (Jim and me). To anyone who's listening I'd like to make another complaint about the set-up of panels at conventions (like the Philip Strick panel above, this one I think had the virtue of being well-run and the defect of directionlessness): there are never enough microphones. Admittedly there ought to have been two between the five of us, but one was not working; nevertheless I think a convention ought to be able to get at least four together, so that people on these panels can speak when they have something

to say rather than (as always happens at present) when the mike happens to perambulate in their direction. In this particular instance, I found that whenever the microphone was with Peter Roberts at the far end of the table I had something almost relevant to say, but by the time it had made its way across to me, comments made by the three between us had moved the discussion to an area where I felt I had very little to contribute. Was the same thing happening to the other panellists? Is it general in this kind of situation? If so, is it any wonder that however interesting they look on paper, panel discussions rarely generate anything really worthwhile. I know that if there were more microphones there would be the danger of everybody talking at once, but this might be preferable to the state of affairs when you can't talk when you want to.

Oddly enough, I suffered little or no fear before going on that panel, although the thought of having to appear in public always fills me with dread. Probably it was because I had been enjoying the B.S.F.A. meeting, which had overrun, with the result that I went more-or-less straight out of the meeting, into the Con hall, and onto the platform. It was different in the afternoon.

I suspect that the idea of a fun quiz show was Fred Hemmings' evil way of subjecting 16 innocent people to terrible public humiliation. There were four teams of four, representing different fan groups: one from Newcastle, one from Liverpool, one from Birmingham, and one from London. This last team, representing the Globe and the mythical entity known as Ratfandom, consisted of Bob Holdstock, Greg Pickering, Leroy Richard Arthur Teeth Kettle, and me. It would have been O.K. if it had been a simple quiz; but it wasn't — it was a 'Twenty Questions' sort of affair in which we had to guess the identity of obscure objects from sf and fandom, one team competing against another and the two winners playing in the final. Fifteen minutes before we went on, there was a small, pathetic group clustered round one of the tables in the bar, united by sheer naked fear. Only John Brozman, who was originally in the team but had dropped out, was happy. We had hoped that we'd be one of the

second pair, so we could get some idea by watching them in action. But no such luck: the first match was between Birmingham and us. It was terrible. We had no idea. God alone knows what the audience were thinking as the questioning went round and round without ever getting near the answer. But believe me, there's nothing more likely to make you feel really stupid than sitting in front of 100-150 people asking daft questions to try and find some answer they all know already (it having been written on a blackboard out of our sight). As it happens, we won both our games, more by luck than judgment, and became the first, and hopefully only recipients of the H.C. Wells' Moustache trophy. This was presented with due pomp and shroud at the banquet on Sunday evening. I was sent to collect it, the others thinking it to be a box of chocolates. In fact, it turned out to be a bottle, but sadly, though I made my exit on the other side of the room, Kettle caught me.

I didn't go to the banquet, of course: one can buy bad food at a quarter of the cost in a Wimpy bar, or reasonable food at about half the cost in any number of places, and furthermore it's served to you while it's still hot. The only disadvantage of missing the banquet is that not enough other people do it, leaving only a small dedicated bunch outside, waiting for the interminable affair to end so that they can go in and mock the speeches and the awards. A fair number of awards were made which I'll try to remember, though undoubtedly I'll miss some. The Doc Weir Award went to Ethel Lindsay. The Ken McIntyre Award for artwork went to a fantasy artist again — Dave Fletcher I think — despite competition from our very own Andrew Stephenson. The British Fantasy Society made a number of August Derleth Awards: some Robert E. Howard resurrection won one as best novel, and I forget the others (though I remember that another novel won the award for short fiction and a Conan comic won something). Ramsey Campbell won the special Falling Over Award, for doing it best. There was no British SF Award, since insufficient votes were received. This is a sad state of affairs, but hopefully a proposal to

reorganise the Award will be put to you all shortly. I'm not sure of the mechanics of this, but I believe it involves a final ballot listing maybe half a dozen novels, which will be distributed early enough to give people a chance to read them. You'll be getting details from another quarter, but just let me say, for God's sake support it — try to read the novels and vote next year!

Of course, a convention is no good unless you come away weighed down by a certain amount of printed matter which you didn't take with you. This year I managed not to buy a single book either in the auctions or in the Bookroom, but I nevertheless arrived home with a number of bits of paper, some of which deserve a mention here. One surprise was the eventual appearance of Foundation 3 (see the advert on p.30 of Vector 64 and shortly). It's a good issue though, with its 84 pages representing much better value for money than the previous two. The contents are better, as well. I have complained before that it was a (supposedly) academic journal which consisted mostly of fanzine material. This is no longer true. There are still a couple of fanzine pieces (by Van Vogt and James Tiptree, Jr.) but these show up so weakly in comparison with the other contents that I'm sure Peter Nicholls won't be letting this kind of stuff in much longer. With these exceptions the contents are interesting, varied, and go a long way towards achieving the journal's stated aim of providing good, serious, scholarly, but lively discussion of sf. Recommended. (You'll find the address in the news section.)

Another item of interest was Checkpoint 36, with the results of its 1972 Fan Poll. Peter Roberts' Egg was voted best fanzine, as last year. Vector came in 10th, which I suppose is an improvement on the 19th of last year but is nevertheless disappointing. I'm not arrogant enough to think of suggesting that it's the best British fanzine; but nevertheless I'm damn sure it's one of the best five. Matter of fact. Anyway, Checkpoint, costing only 40p for 10 issues, is recommended. (Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol, BS4 5BZ — he'll send you a free sample.)

GENE WOLFE

An Interview

Could you first of all tell us something about your background, how you came into writing, and why af?

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. This came home to me, to me who had always called myself a Texan and thought of myself as a Texan, when I read that Thomas Wolfe "warmed up" for writing by walking the night streets of Brooklyn. He was from the hill country of north west North Carolina and so was my great, great grandfather — making us, at least presumptively, distant cousins. Hemingway sharpened twenty pencils and Willa Cather read a passage from her Bible, but Thomas Wolfe, bless him, swung his big body down Brooklyn streets and may have been thrashing out some weighty problem in Of Time and The River during the early hours of Thursday the 7th of May, 1931. I hope so. I like to think of him out there on the sidewalk worrying about Gene Cant and playing NYU.

At any rate I was born in that city at the south western tip of Long Island. My parents lived in New Jersey at the time, but they moved and moved. To Paoria, where I played with Rosemary Distach who lived next door, and her brothers Robert and Richard. To Massachusetts, where little Ruth McCann caught her hand in our car door. To Logan, Ohio, my father's home, where Boyd Wright and I got stung by the bumble bees that had nested in our woodshed. To Des Moines, where a redheaded boy taught me chess while we were both in the second grade. Then to Dallas for a year, and at last to Houston, which

became my home town, the place I was "from".

I went to Edgar Allan Poe elementary school, where we read "The Masque of the Red Death" in fifth grade and learned "The Raven" in the sixth. We lived in a small house with two very large bedrooms; the front room was my parents', the back one, with mist growing profusely beneath its windows, mine. I had no brothers or sisters, but I had a black and white spaniel named Boots, and I built models (mostly World War I planes, which still fascinate me) there and collected comics and Big-Little Books.

The thing I recall most vividly about Houston in the late thirties and early forties is the heat. Houston has almost precisely the climate of Calcutta, and until I was ready for High School there was no air conditioning except in theaters and the Sears Department Store. You went to the movies in the hottest part of the day to miss it; and when you came out the heat and sunlight were appalling. I remember my father wrapping his hand in his handkerchief so that he could open the car door.

Our house stood midway between two mad scientists. Miller Porter, who lived in the big house behind us (his father was a brewing company executive), was my own age but much tougher and cleverer, and he built Tesla coils and similar electric marvels. Across the street a chemist for Humble Oil maintained a private laboratory in a room over his garage. If this were not

enough there was, only five sweltering blocks away, the Richmond Pharmacy, where a boy willing to crouch immobile behind the candy case could cram Planet Stories, or Thrilling Wonder Stories, or (my own favorite) Famous Fantastic Mysteries, while the druggist compounded prescriptions. Almost unnoticed the big, slow moving ceiling fans vanished from the Richmond Pharmacy and the barber shop. World War II was over and there was a room air conditioner in one of my bedroom windows and another in the dining room; Houston began to lose its mixed Spanish American and Southern character and I was in high school, where I showed no aptitude for athletics or most other things. I joined the R.O.T.C. to get out of compulsory softball. (I was one of the very few cadet who was not made an officer for the year before graduation.) And a year later the "pappy shooters" of the Texas National Guard because you got paid (I think \$2.50) for attending drills.

To my surprise the National Guard was fun. We fired on the rifle range and played soldier, with pay, for two weeks during school vacations. When the Korean War broke out we thought our outfit, G Company of the 143rd Infantry, would be gone in a week. It never went, and though I would gladly have waited around the armory for the order I found myself committed to attending Texas A&M instead.

A&M, which offered the cheapest possible college education to Texas boys, was at the time I attended it an all-male land-grant institution specializing (the A&M stands for Agricultural and Mechanical) in animal husbandry and engineering. For some reason I have forgotten — I suspect because someone told my father or me that it was a good thing to take until you made up your mind what to switch to — I majored in Mechanical Engineering. Only Dickens could do justice to Texas A&M as I knew it, and he would not be believed. It was, I suppose, modeled on West Point; but it lacked both the aristocratic tradition and the sense of purpose. I dropped out in the middle of my junior year, thus losing my student deferment and was drafted for (remember that?) the Korean War. So G Company never went, but I did. I was lucky and got my combat infantry badge during the closing months without even getting nicked.

The G.I. Bill allowed me to finish my education to B.S.M.E. at the University of Houston. Rosemary Dietrich, whose mother had kept in touch with mine, came to Texas for a visit, and we were married five months after I got a job in engineering development. We have Roy II (after my father, whose real name, however, is Emerson Leroy Wolfe; mother is Mary Olivia Ains Wolfe) Madeleine, Thomas, and Matthew, and a three bedroom house.

How did I come into writing?
Quietly. And late.

The lights were dimmed and most of the seat were filled. He edged down the aisle, dribbling popcorn and tripping over fat ladies. Eased into a seat and found that he was the picture.

Q: Why so? Okay, I'll level with you: it is the biggest market for short stories. In fact, of and mysteries are almost the only short story markets in America today, and the of market is several times the size of the mystery market. I have written a number of mainstream short stories and I have never sold (for money) one. I have written a number of mystery shorts and sold two — for 1¢ a word. Let me add in passing that I don't believe in these rusty little fancies: fiction is fiction and there are no fundamental differences between the supposed types. It would be perfectly possible to write a mainstream of western about a murder with a strong sex element; if it sold it would probably sell as of — because the of audience is the least audience that can stand the psychic strain imposed by the short story form.

I have been squatting here trying to remember what books I liked as a child. The Oz books, which you do not, perhaps, read in Britain, and the best of which were written within a few miles of here (i.e. Harrington, Illinois). Allice. A series of books about a goat named Billy Whiskers who was always on the bus. When I was in school twelve years later, the head of the department, an old Swede who had been an officer in the American army in both world wars, asked our class who had read the HN books; and then who had read Miss Winerva And William Green Billy; and I was the only one who had heard of either. A very early Disney book: Bucky Bug — because it was full of wonderful machinery the bugs had made

from junk, tanks that were pill boxes on roller skates and the like. The oldest Disney was rich with this kind of mechanism, which made its last stand in Snow White.

The dedication of Fifth Head of Cerberus implies a considerable debt to Damon Knight, and in fact you are one of a group of writers closely associated with Knight, Milford and Orbit. What effect do you think these associations have had on your development as a writer?

I implied a considerable debt to Damon Knight in the dedication to Cerberus because I owe him a considerable debt; in fact, more than I will ever be able to repay. He was the first editor to buy my work regularly, and the first to pay me good rates. He has given me invaluable advice and been my steadiest friend when he owed me nothing.

You ask about Milford. Read A Pocketful of Stars if you have not already. I knew no other writers and no readers before I went to Milford for the first time. In England where (so I am told) things are better, you cannot well conceive the climate of anti-intellectualism that exists in this country outside of a few places like New York and San Francisco. And though I was born in the former I left it in infancy and have lived all my life in Texas and the middle west.

But is the kind of criticism and advice you get at a place like Milford any better than what you get elsewhere?

Yes, but sometimes it can be very bad. In 1969 almost everyone said (for example) that Richard Hill's "To Sport With Anarchy" was bad — they were like people biting into cotton candy when they expected roast beef. But you can't eat roast beef on the Ferris wheel.

Your first novel, Operation ARCS, was published in 1970, although differences from most of your other work suggest that it is one of your earliest stories. It's a very

leisurely book for the first 150 pages or so, but thereafter becomes increasingly rushed and telegraphic. Was it out for publication?

ARCS was written in 1967, and the original manuscript ran over 100,000 words. It was cut to about 80,000, the earlier chapters by me and the later ones by Don Benson, then editor at Berkley. At the time I began it I supposed it to be possible to tell the story of a war in a single novel of not unreasonable length. I still believe this, but it would take some handling.

Are you satisfied with the published version?

No, but I will never revise it, and that for two reasons — first, because with an equal amount of work I could write a new book; and second, because I regard that sort of thing as a species of crime.

Crime against whom, or what?

Against Truth, for one thing; you will say (or if you don't someone else will — I shall use you because you're handy) that a given book or story will carry all sorts of disclaimers to the effect that the author wrote at twenty-five and revised at forty but in point of fact it won't. The publishers won't bother with them — not for long on a book and not at all on a short story. Secondly against Art. Assuming that the writer has progressed (and if he hasn't, of what use is the revision) he will be using the techniques he has developed by years of practice on his own youthful ideas, much as though a parent were to forge the child's homework.

I was fascinated by The Fifth Head of Cerberus, but trying to put myself in the author's place, I was unable to see quite how you could come to write the book in this way. How did it come about?

How the book came about is uncomplicated. I wrote "The Fifth Head of Cerberus"

(the first novella) for the 1970 Milford SF Writers Conference, the last to be held in Milford. As is customary I mailed in the manuscript several weeks before I left for the conference myself -- this gives Damon and Kate and any early arrivals (and people sometimes come as much as a week in advance) a chance to read some manuscripts before the pressure gets too high, and gives Damon the information he needs to work out a schedule for the first few days. Damon wrote back in a day or so that he would like to buy the story for Orbit, and I accepted; so it was actually sold before I got to Milford.

Norbert Slepman, who was then Scribner's sf editor, attended the conference, and Virginia Kidd (who has since become my agent) and Damon sicked him onto the manuscript. He said he thought Scribner's would publish it in book form if I would write additional material.

It was artistically impossible to continue the story of Number Five, but when you have imagined an unreal world it is possible to lay any number of stories in it. I considered Aunt Jeannine and David as possible protagonists -- I still regret, slightly, that I could not go with Dr. Marsch and Jeannine both -- and the rest you know.

Was the idea of the Annese incorporated in the first novella with no intention that it should be developed, then?

At the time I put them in "Cerberus" I had no plan to develop the Annese further, but I was conscious that they could be developed, as I've tried to say. Almost everything can be developed further. The fact that the development occurs in a later story, or in the same story, or does not occur, makes no fundamental difference. Stevenson could have written the childhood of Long John Silver -- it was there. I could begin the later adventures of Maryjell tonight.

Cerberus is published as "three novellas". Yet the three stories are strongly, if unobtrusively, linked; they illuminate one another and finally add up to a unified book. It seems to me at least as much a novel as -- to take a recent

sf example -- The Gods Themselves. Why didn't you call it one?

You seem to be asking why I published my three novellas as three novellas when I probably could have called them a novel and not been sued or sent to prison. Why should I? Would they have been better received under that label?

All this suggests the problem of the theme anthology -- you know, "Great Science Fiction About Bees". It is perfectly true (at least in most cases) that all the stories have something to do with bees; it is equally true that they have nothing to do with each other -- they are linked by an external. Now I think the stories in my book are in the opposite situation: the internal linkage is there, but the external links are entirely omitted: the first story is told in the first person, the second in the third person; the third in a mixture of both; a minor character in the first story is the author of the second and a major character in the third; and so on. Now if the public is willing (as it clearly is) to accept "Great Science Fiction About Bees" as a true expression of its theme, what would it think of my book if it claimed the unity of a novel?

I should add that I rather enjoy theme anthologies because they force their editors to uncover good but seldom reprinted material.

Would it have been better received as a novel? Hard to say; but I think it might have been better enjoyed. As you say, the internal linkages are there, but by labelling it as it is, surely you encourage readers to overlook them? Put it this way: if someone were to read the third part first, then the first, then the second, would they get as much out of it as someone who read it consecutively?

I think I see what the trouble is in this novel-novella argument: you feel that if shorter pieces are in any way connected they should be called a novel. I don't agree, but granting your definition then Cerberus is, as you say, a novel. I did, of course, intend the

"No I don't. But let it pass. (MJE)

stories to be read in the order in which they were published; and it would, of course, be possible for some thick or eccentric reader to decide that "VHF" was the most attractive title (I might almost agree with him there) and read that first.

Are there any writers who have particularly influenced you? Which writers do you especially admire?

Damon Knight once asked me what books had influenced me most, and I told him The Lord of the Rings (which I found out later he loathes), The Napoleons of Notting Hill (which he loves), and Mark's Mechanical Engineer's Handbook. I still feel this is a pretty good answer, but would add The Man Who Was Thursday, Darkness at Noon, The Trial, The Castle, The Remembrance of Things Past, the Gormenghast trilogy (magnificent no matter how flawed, and it is terribly flawed), and Look Homeward Angel, which I feel is that "great American novel" people sometimes still talk about; very few people in this generation trouble themselves to read it.

I have read Bradbury, Ellison, Disch, Lafferty, Buse and a few others with great respect, but I don't feel I have been influenced by them — their things are good things but not my thing.

I have read most of Maupassant and feel Mme. Tellier's Excursion to be his story. I have read a good deal of Dunbar, Oliver Onions, and Maachen. And Lovecraft and Gunter Grass. If you haven't read them yet I recommend A Voyage to Aroturna (though I despise its philosophy). The Teachings of Don Juan and its sequels, and The Universal Baseball Association, Inc. J. Henry Waugh, Prop.

I'd be interested to hear you enlarge on the flaws in the Gormenghast trilogy.

I don't want to do that. There is always something sneaking about trying to pick holes in a masterpiece, and this is doubly so when the writer is among the dead of our time.

So I'm going to try instead to talk

about the three books a little, the good and the bad, but always with the reservation — which I think you already are willing to concede me — that they are great literature in precisely the sense that Hamlet (for example) is great literature. We may complain justly about the gravediggers' jokes or the absurd welter of blood at the end of the last act, but we are throwing stones at the moon and we know it.

A disclaimer first — it's been three years since I read the books. I'm sure it will be possible for you to catch me out on some of the things I say. I can claim, though, that I have performed the fundamental duty of a critic and read my author; I remember very well how eagerly I looked forward to my daily hour with Peake.

You asked if I read the Langdon Jones reconstruction of Titus Alone, saying that you understood it to be more faithful to the author's intentions.

No, and I confess to being very wary of "reconstructions". In any event, I think the second volume — Gormenghast — and not Titus Alone is the weakest of the three, and that by a considerable margin. The school (granted that it is great fun at times) is the worst thing in any of the books. After we have enjoyed the scene in which the Professors come to Irma Prousequallor's ball — in fact while we are in the very midst of it — we realize with terrible disappointment that we have left the castle and have been stranded instead in the middle of just such a nineteenth century English village as Pickwick might have visited. It is very jolly, and never jollier than when one of the teachers mistakes Irma's face, as she peeps around a corner, for an apparition of Death; but it is not the world of Steerpike (that magnificent creation) and Fuchella and Barquentine. It is not even the world in which Craggair the Aorobot crosses his apartment on his hands toeing a pig in a green nightdress to-and-fro with his feet. It is not Gormenghast at all.

A few other points from the first two books: At one time we are told that there are rattlesnakes outside the castle. If you cannot understand why there cannot be, I cannot explain it. Those are adders. Flay (his fight with

Swelter is the best thing in the first book save perhaps for Swelter's corpse floating in the trapped water on the roof with the sword a cross sticking out of it and eventually cascading over the eaves like the body of a dinosaur going over a waterfall) has knees that click when he walks, which is good. When he comes to kill Swelter (I believe it is) he binds strips of blanket about toes to muffle the noise, which is very good indeed. But later, when it is no longer convenient for the author that Fly's knees click, we are told that they have stopped, which is just ghastly — I wanted to take Peake by the throat and shake him when I read it. The wild girl comes to nothing, when she promised so much.

The death of the twins is wonderful, unique. As is the very end of Titus Alone, when Titus hears the signal gun and turns away. Muzzleblotch, in the last book, is a fine character, as is Crabcoalf, who is surely a self-parody of the author. But nothing can console us for the death of Stearpike...except the knowledge (like Titus's) that Gormenghast is still there. I think that it is more or less the custom, when writing about a great book, to quote the opening paragraph, or at least a few sentences of it, at the end. I am not going to do that — they are quite undistinguished. Instead I would like to quote the sentence from Titus Alone that I copied out on the flyleaf when I first read the book: Behind him, wherever he stood, or slept, were the legions of Gormenghast — tier upon cloudy tier, with the owls calling through the rain, and the ringing of the rust-red bells.

I came on it a few minutes ago while I was paging through the books in preparation to writing this letter, and the demon who stands behind my chair is still screaming (as he did when I first saw it) why not you? Why not you!

Most of your stories appear in the various original anthologies — Orbit, Universe, and so on — which now seem to be proliferating beyond all reason: for example I read recently that one editor had signed contracts with 19 different publishers for 42 anthologies! Do you think this will lead, fairly soon, to a collapse in the market? If so, what affect do you

think it will have?

I too read that one editor (Roger Elwood) has signed contracts for 42 anthologies, and it is hard to believe. But Roger has been buying an awful lot of material (I hear); and certainly he has been buying quite a bit from me, viz: "An Article About Hunting"; "Beautyland"; and "Going To The Beach". All of them paid for and none yet published. May he prosper.

This question of collapse you raise is an interesting one; it is tied, I think, to the replacement of sf magazines by sf paperbacks, and this in turn is tied to the general lack of understanding of the sf field by the upper management of publishing. To oversimplify, I would say that the proliferation of original anthologies will lead to collapse when and if the publishers decide that the public is so eager for this type of book that the books can be edited by their junior tradebook editors. When that happens (and I hope it never does) we will see entire books filled with really bad material — and the great mass of the sf reading public (which is much larger, as I feel certain you realise, than fan-does) simply does not know enough to understand that a volume edited by (say) Harry Harrison is likely to contain quite a bit of good material while one edited by Norman Hudja is probably a bad investment, particularly if his contents page is populated exclusively by unrecognisables. There are a lot of reasons for this, and they all pull together; it is unlikely Norman knows or cares much for science fiction, and he will not be given much of a budget for his book. On the other hand, it is highly probable that he will feel confident that he knows what the public wants; he has (after all) seen two episodes of Star Trek, he has watched the sci-fi flicks on late TV, he has seen the covers of Ace doubles. Very little that is good will be sent to him, and most of that will be rejected.

In time his book ("Tales From The Void") will appear. How many bad books will his non-fan reader buy (at \$1.25 each, I should say) before he stops buying anything? I suspect two to three.

I also suspect I am not answering the

question you want to ask, which is, I think, Are things are now, is collage imminent? No.

To answer a question you have not asked, I am much more optimistic about the future of print as a medium than I was five or ten years ago. Motion pictures, the great enemy of print in my heywood, the popcorn monster that seemed so completely invulnerable when there was no television, and only the theaters were air-conditioned, and an adult paid 35¢ or 40¢ and a child 10¢ or 15¢, today is more than half dead. Television itself is noticeably weaker every year, and every year more inclined to occupy itself with completely non-literary material (i.e. sports). The loss of cigarette advertising has been a terrible blow to television, and it seems certain to be followed by others — soon, I think, there will be no more broadcast ads for tobacco in any form (natural-wrappers cigarettes, which are legally cigars, are being advertised here now), no ads for wine or beer, either. Recently I attended a symposium sponsored by the American Business Press in which the effect of TV censorship was discussed. The publishers who hadn't tried them were (for the most part) enthused. Those who had, were grim.

How much contact have you had with sf fans, fandom, fansines? Have you been to any conventions? D.G.Compton said once that he was grateful to discover the existence of sf fans because it proved that there were people who read his books but had reservations because such activity tended to encourage the continuance of sf as a genre, while we should be tearing down compartments rather than building them. Would you agree?

I went to St. Louiscon, two Marcons, Pecon last year and Midwestcon this year; in a few days I hope to be at Chababcon. I have a feeling I'm leaving out something, but that's all I can think of now. I hope to go to Torcon; and while I was in Cincinnati I was a member of the local fan club, called, I believe, the Cincinnati Fantasy Group. I got Loose, Yandre, SOTM, Gag, SF Commentary, Richard E. Geis, Mots, BC, Starling, and a lot of other excellent magazines whose titles escape me now.

I certainly cannot agree with the Compton quote you give. It's one thing to take sf out of the ghetto; it would be another to deprive it of its individuality. Space travel and alien intelligences tend to encourage the continuance of sf as a genre too; but the way to break down those compartments is to have a great many very good books.

Would you describe your method of writing?

You want to know (I should say, seem to want to know) about my schedule; I suspect you're going to find this so dull you're going to have to cut the whole thing. On a work day I get up sometime between six thirty and seven, shave if I can beat the children to the bathroom, go down into the basement and write until Rosemary calls me up for breakfast, go back down, if there's time left, until eight. Besides writing I will have reviewed the cartoons of any letters I wrote the night before, and decided whether to send them or revise them.

At eight I go upstairs, dress, drive to the post office, mail my letters and pick up the mail. At eight-thirty I am at my desk at work. At five I am back home (all this assumes I am not traveling, of course) go downstairs and try to deal with the mail between then and supper, which will be between five thirty and six. After supper I will shop if I have shopping to do, or write more letters, or fix something around the house. From seven to eight I watch TV about three days a week; after eight (if it is a TV day, after seven if it is not) I try to write until nine. From nine to ten I read. At ten (unless what I am reading is very good indeed) I watch the news and TV and the first half hour or hour of the Tonight show, then to bed. I usually get in about four hours of writing on Saturday and Sunday.

It takes me about an hour/page of finished copy — a half hour for first draft, another half for two or three revisions. As I said, I write in the basement, but I try not to yell at my children when they come down and want to talk to me. At least not the first time. I find that when I start a story

I had better know the ending. Sometimes I change it when I get there, but if I start without that I'm usually in trouble. I must have the characters and the end.

No, I don't voice my own opinions through my characters, because one of them is that each character should be true to himself or herself at all times; and if one of them isn't it hurts like a boil until I fix it. Obviously I may agree, from time to time, with something a character says, but that is purely coincidental and I seldom think about it.

It is very hard to say how much of my output I sell, because I continue marketing things for a long time — I once sold a story (I won't tell you the title, so don't ask) on the 38th submission. I have written three novels I am no longer marketing, so that is a considerable body of work which will remain unpublished. One is very bad, one fair, one, I think, good but badly dated as to content. Of my present output I would say that I sell 80%. Yes, I would like to write full time, and will do it when I feel I can support myself and my family that way.

You think I'm fussy and Damon Knight and Virginia Kidd tell me I'm sloppy, and that gets me off onto a tangent that might be interesting to any Vector readers who have followed this thing this long. In 1969 I took part in a sensitivity group program in which each participant was required to write a capsule description of all the others as the last exercise. I saved the ones I received (I have a stack of binders I call my journal — letters, jottings, etc. dating to March 1960; it now fills two shelves of a sizeable bookcase), have not looked at them since I received them, and think it might be interesting to copy them out for you — to my knowledge no one has published this kind of parlor analysis of a writer, but I should add that none of the participants knew I wrote. The descriptions are not signed (unfortunately) but I will indicate when the hand changes. You have to trust my honesty, obviously, but I promise to spare nothings.

Gene's humor is a key to his psychology. It is clever, cutting, deep, full of double meaning & can be readily sharpened to a keen edge.

(1) He is ego-centric to the point of excluding other peoples' ideas and closing his mind to opposing discussion.

When given leadership position he asserts himself in a "let's get lined up and don't dare challenge my position" ((This has been crossed out, but is still legible — the kind of thing we do with slashes.))

He is a firm leader and tends to carry his authoritarian attitude as a leader into the discussion. He cuts off conflict as sharply as he can.

(3) Gene works just as hard as necessary to get the job done. step on toes, lower — ((can't read)) — good guy facade

Ray, impatient, withdrawal, instructive, hardhitting, self-possessed doesn't search

In the face of conflict, he presents his position once, and then withdraws; typically "Here's the way it is boys, if you can't see this position now no further contribution by me will help understanding." If understanding is not reached, he is willing to compromise. His major contributions to the team are invaluable and instructive insights such as analogies ((sic)), case histories, and psychoanalysis. He does not search for alternate opinions and listens to them through unfiltered ears. ((I think he means or instead of and, but he wrote and — or maybe nor.))

He exerts informal direction throughout meetings & as a leader exercises excellent control. His humor is generous hardhitting, and sells his position. When withdrawing from meetings he exhibits disgust and pouting.

DK ((not Damon Knight)): He tends to be domineering and responds to conflict by defending, resisting, and counter-arguments. He does not hesitate to step on toes to get his point across. His humor is hardhitting and aimed at convincing his opponents. Although he is very task-oriented, he has a strong desire to be liked and this basic personality conflict tends to cause him to withdraw when he believes that the job is not getting accomplished. He is a good leader because his intelligence commands respect. Only in the light of

very strong factual evidence against his position does he change his position without withdrawing from the team effort. He desires to obtain team results by traditional approaches such as timed agendas etc. and hence forces compromises to which he is not committed.

W ((?)): His skill in coping with conflict situations stems from in-depth probing and critique.

His humor is a candid and hard-hitting style that fits the situation. High performance is coupled with deep commitment, deep enough to cause a closeminded attitude in evaluating divergent points of view. He drives himself and others in an effort to produce quality results and meet stated deadlines.

O: The "sage". He is highly competitive, anxious for conflict, as he feels that he can sway the opinions of others. His humor is barbed and directed to winning his point. He is a forceful leader, an orator, and yet he hides behind a "good guy" facade. His contributions to team achievement, though many, are influenced by how they agree with his convictions to self.

Wayne: Conflict is openly faced but generally managed by taking a position of superiority. He has a high level of commitment to goals he considers worthwhile but will withdraw completely when situations deteriorate. ((Next sentence crossed out but legible.)) He is a very opinionated person which results in taking and expressing strong stands on issues with little room for compromise. Situations are examined in depth yielding deep insights such as that the "Big Picture" approach is used in problem solving. Leadership abilities are excellent but he is more of a loner than a team man. Humor is hard-hitting used to make a point and shows deep insights of human behavior.

Finally, could you tell us something about work you have forthcoming or in progress?

I won't mention the stories sold to Roger Elwood, since I just did. Tom Disch has a 10,000 word novelette, "Hour of Trust". Unfortunately his book -- Bad Moon Rising -- seems to have been delayed ((I believe it has now

appeared. RJE)), and I haven't heard from him for a time.

Terry Carr has "The Death of Doctor Island", which I understand has made the lead story in Universe 3. This is "The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories" inverted -- perhaps I should say reversed. Your image in a mirror (as I am sure you realize) does not look in the least like you; in fact it would be completely correct to say that there is probably no one in the world who looks less like you than that image does. It is the reverse of you. Kate Wilhelm says that every story has a certain size and shape (and she might have said a color or colors too); what I tried to do here was in create the mirrored story as a new entity. About 19,000 words.

Orbit 12 will carry "Continuing Westward", the story of two aviators blown into the future while fighting the Turks in WWI.

"How I Lost the Second World War and Helped Turn Back the German Invasion" tells of Adolf Hitler's ill-fated attempt to market Volkswagens in Britain. Six thousand words, to be in Analog one of these days.

"Feather Tigers" recounts the difficulties of aliens whose speculations about the interdependence of that extinct animal Men with the other creatures of his planet embroils one of them in a little adventure. A very light treatment of a subject that interests me deeply -- totemism. To be in Edge Supplement, a little magazine.

I've hopes of having what is called a young adult novel -- a term I dislike -- published this year. The Devil In A Forest.

There are two novels half or less complete which have been in that state for years -- Frieda From the Fire and In Greyhame Prison. Someday.

And I've 150 pages of Peace, the big thing I'm trying to do. I still don't know what it's about.

Just before beginning this I finished the second draft of "Forlesen", a largely autobiographical novella; and as soon as I have finished I'll begin "The Dark of the June", the first story of a four-part cycle Roger Elwood has asked that I do for Continuum. And that's it.

Gollancz



**THE
FIFTH
HEAD OF
CERBERUS**

Science fiction by

**GENE
WOLFE**

**"A complex, highly original
and moving novel"**

JAMES BLISH

Just published

PAMELA SARGENT

LOST PEOPLES

a review of *The Fifth Head Of Cerberus*

Orlando and Claudio Villme Bone are two brothers who have spent the past thirty years trying to help the indigenous Indian tribes of Brasil. In attempting to minimize the effects of so-called civilisation upon these people, they have been responsible for saving many of the tribes. They sought out those threatened by the burgeoning Brazilian society and introduced them gradually to modern ways. But now the brothers are giving up. They see their cause as hopeless; the Indians have not been improved or helped by contact with outsiders, but corrupted. Their women become prostitutes, bought and sold by miners and engineers; they succumb to diseases to which they have no resistance and habits over which they have little control. At times, they are murdered.

It is an old story, perhaps as old as human beings are. We have learned little in the meantime. Indians in the United States and Canada still protest to anthropologists who ravage their burial grounds and mining companies who covet their holy places; they are still being robbed systematically by the government of their lands and waterways. One wonders how long the Tassaday people of the Philippines, only recently discovered, will be able to preserve their peaceful ways. The Tassadays, who gather food with primitive implements, have already been given knives by one member of the party which found them. The knives make their food-gathering process more efficient, but an ecological problem

is in the making; the plants which feed them are now dwindling in numbers as a result. Perhaps in a few generations, if not sooner, these people will face starvation. It seems to make little difference in the end whether our motives are malevolent or benevolent as far as these people are concerned; eventually their cultures are mutilated by friend and enemy alike. As we have consistently acted thus toward our own species, there is little reason to believe we will act any differently when we travel to other worlds.

Gene Wolfe's three novellas in *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* deal with two sister planets, Sainte Anne and Sainte Croix, which have been settled by Earthmen. The aboriginal people of Sainte Anne have been wiped out by the settlers, and little about them is known as the book opens.

"The Fifth Head of Cerberus", the first novella, takes place on St. Croix. We see the cruel society of this planet through the eyes of a man looking back at his childhood experiences. He has grown up in a brothel owned by his father, a distant and seemingly heartless figure; he and his brother David are looked after by Mr. Millien, their robotic tutor.

The subject of the aborigines is raised by Mr. Millien during a lesson; he asks the two boys to debate about the "humanity" of these people. It is hypothesized that the abos might have been descendants of an early Earth

colony, one perhaps sent out by an ancient Earth civilization of which we have no records. David, during the debate, makes an interesting point:

"The abos are human because they're all dead."

"Explain."

"If they were alive it would be dangerous to let them be human because they'd ask for things, but with them dead it makes them more interesting if they were, and the settlers killed them all." (p.13)

The culture of St. Croix is evocatively presented by Wolfe in this novella. It is a society which deals in slaves, in which young women must make a good marriage or sell themselves into slavery or prostitution, in which children must be guarded against kidnappers who would sell them. Yet St. Croix has its own peculiar beauty in spite of this, reminding one of old French cities, or New Orleans. A curious character enters this setting; he is Dr. John V. Marsch, an anthropologist from Earth. Marsch is seeking information about the abos of St. Anne and comes to the brothel, looking for Dr. Aubrey Veil.

Dr. Veil is the originator of an hypothesis about the abos; the theory states that the abos had the ability to mimic mankind perfectly. When the first Earth ships arrived, the abos supposedly killed all the settlers and took their places. This would of course make the human characters only abos who had forgotten their origins, and Wolfe suggests that the theory is only an explanation for the cruelty Dr. Veil has witnessed.

The appearance of Dr. Marsch, and the growing suspicions of the protagonist and his father regarding the anthropologist, play a minor role in this first novella, which concentrates on the story of the nameless character's growth and its bizarre circumstances. But Marsch is the thread that weaves the three novellas into a unified whole in their depiction of the present, and possible past, of the worlds of St. Anne and St. Croix.

The second novella, "A Story", by John V. Marsch, depicts the alien society of the St. Anne aborigines. This is perhaps the most difficult of the three novellas, as the reader views an entirely alien culture through the eyes of Sandwalker, an aborigine. The abo-

rigines share their world with the mysterious Shadow Children, who might be the descendants of an ancient Earth expedition. Sandwalker is told by the Shadow Children that the abos once had many different shapes, but adopted human ones after the Shadow Children arrived. The novella, consistent with Veil's hypothesis, is a reconstruction by Marsch of what the aboriginal culture might have been like. It is haunting; the lost abos are made real for the reader and are no longer only a long-dead, decorated culture. Wolfe makes one care about these people as people rather than simply as representatives of a murdered race.

The third novella, "V.R.T.", deals with the imprisonment of Marsch on St. Croix. We learn of his journey into the unsettled wilderness of St. Anne in search of a remnant of the abo culture in the company of two unusual individuals: Trembard, a man who claims to be an aborigine, and his son, a strange boy whose mother has disappeared. The story of Marsch's journey is told in pieces, interspersed with accounts of Marsch's arrest and torment in prison. Trembard is quite obviously an old faker and no aborigine; his son, however, quite possibly is one. Marsch finds hints of the continued existence of the abos on his journey and remembers burying the boy, who died in an accident. Yet he is arrested upon his return by the authorities, who doubt that he is in fact Marsch. And as the novella progresses, we find that Marsch himself is unsure of his identity. Has the mysterious boy taken his place, so expertly imitating him that he is sure, at times, that he is Marsch? Is it Marsch who died in the wilderness? Or has Marsch so fallen under the spell of the culture he seeks that his mind has become unbinged? One cannot be absolutely sure.

Wolfe's book, with its ambiguities and its beauty, haunts one long after reading it. Underlining it is a plea for understanding those whose cultures are unlike our own, yet it is far from being a tract. The world it creates is rich in characters and details and the book stands as a major work in science fiction, whatever its message. It is a spell-binder, drawing expertly on science-fictional concepts and using some of the best writing I have seen in recent years.

Perhaps, with luck and determination, the cruel colonies Wolfe writes about will never come to pass. He might work for that, and might also consider the possible ways in which a threatened

alien race could seek our destruction.

— Patricia Bergent

The Fifth Head of Cerberus, by Gene Wolfe. Gollancz, 1973. 244p. £1.90

The Gollancz/Sunday Times £1000 Science Fiction Competition

Two prizes are offered, each of £500, for (1) the best unpublished science fiction novel and (2) the best volume of unpublished science fiction short stories. The conditions are as follows:

1. The competition is limited to authors who have not previously had science fiction published in volume form. Established authors who have not written in the genre before may therefore enter, and so may writers who have had science fiction stories published singly in magazines or as part of an anthology. Entrants must, however, be free of any publishing commitment that would preclude either publication by the *Sunday Times* or a contract with Victor Gollancz Ltd.
2. Victor Gollancz Ltd shall have first offer of publication of any of the entries submitted, and in the event of a contract being entered into between any writer and Gollancz both the advance and royalties offered shall be additional to the prize money. The *Sunday Times* shall be free to publish any story from the winning volume without further payment, or from any runner-up at their usual rates.
3. Pseudonyms are acceptable, but real names must be given when submitting entries, and will be treated in confidence.
4. Entries should be addressed to
Science Fiction Competition,
Victor Gollancz Ltd,
14 Henrietta Street,
London WC2E 8QJ

and should arrive not earlier than 1st October 1973 and not later than 31st January 1974. Scripts should be typed (preferably in double spacing) and postage enclosed for their return. They should not be less than 50,000 words or more than 100,000 words in length.

5. The competition will be judged by Brian Aldiss, Kingsley Amis, Arthur C. Clarke and John Bush (Chairman of Victor Gollancz Ltd). The judges' decisions shall be final and no correspondence will be entered into with regard to them.
6. The names of the prize-winners will be announced in the *Sunday Times* on 30th March 1974.

Peter Roberts the fannish inquisition

Any devotee of fannines knows too well the frustration and gnawing worries caused by their prolonged absence — has fandom disappeared? Was the whole thing a dream, a temporary delusion? Am I the victim of some vast and evil hoax? Are the Secret Masters of Fandom displeased with me? Only the arrival of a fannine can quell such fears (and damn me if the Post Office doesn't bring them all at once, like a downpour after a drought); at times like these even a messy and noxious mudslide is welcomed.

There are, however, ways to avoid fannine-starvation, to ensure that the sight of a distant postman is something better than a mirage. I bring you The Frequent Fannine (thus spoke Zarathustra), the regular fortnightly or monthly products which will guarantee you a steady supply!

Robin Johnson's Mortstrillian News is one such, the Australian equivalent of Britain's Checkpoint and America's Locus (reviewed a few issues ago). It's a monthly newsmag, just four or so pages per issue, which covers most of the fan and of world Down Under as well as the more important items of international news. The latest issue gives details of forthcoming Aussie conven-

tions (the Melbourne Eastercon and the Adelaide National Con), plus a variety of personal news (for example, Aussie-fan Ron Smith has been raided by the Victorian Vice Squad — an appropriately named force, it would seem), and sundry other items (Les Harding reviewing the film Solaris, the annual News Mob awards, and so on). With the Australia in '75 worldcon bid, the creation of the Down Under Fan Fund, and the general growth and vigour of Australian fandom, Mortstrillian News brings you information from a centre of fan activity and not some curious colonial backwater; it's useful, entertaining, and recommended.

More entertaining still, but of no known use, is Amosbold Source from Seth McEvoy and Jay Cornell, Jr. Produced fortnightly by a collective entity known as 'abner', Source contains a modicum of fannish news and a great deal of spontaneous idiosyncrasy. The eleventh issue gives details, amongst other things, of new films (Bambi Meets Godzilla) and authoritative fannish definitions ('A pealot is the opposite to a kiwi. Always glad to answer questions.'). There's also a flier from Aljo Svoboda, one of the best of the new fannish writers, and this is apparently to be a regular feature. I enjoy Amosbold Source immensely, but would hardly recommend it to the serious of reader. Holy Moly, Roscoe! You're not one of them though, are you? Goddammit, it's free, anyway.

In the last Vector I reviewed Bill

* There may still be bone for you, Peter. This realisation is the first step on the road to recovery. Now you will forget you read this. You will forget...

Beverly's Outworld, an impressive publication and a 1971 Hugo nominee. Bill has recently started a smaller monthly fanzine as well; it's called Inworlds and is largely dedicated to fanzines, which it reviews and brings news of. The third issue arrived recently with plenty of current reviews, details of forthcoming fanzines, and even a letter column. The reviews are too short to be ideal, but, as I've found myself, that's the only practical way to handle them when you're trying to be regular and all-inclusive. Interesting and recommended.

Moving right away from these small, frequent fanzines, we come to something like Andy Porter's Algal, a large and rather stunning magazine which appears twice a year. The latest issue is the nineteenth and describes itself as 'a magazine about science fiction', this subtitle indicating its move into the semi-professional world of news-stand sales (though I doubt whether your local newsagent stocks it, unless you have the good luck or misfortune to live in New York). Algal is printed throughout with good use made of artwork, from a wrap-around, coloured DiPate cover, to full page interior illustrations from Eddie Jones, Barry Frolish, Joe Staten, and Terry Austin, plus a variety of 'fillers'. Photos are also used, including a two page survey of contributors past and present — it surprises me that more American fanzines don't include similar photos, especially since they're quite frequent in British, continental, and Australian fanzines. Most of the material within comes from professional authors and, with the exception of Bob Silverberg's "Traveling Giant" account of a visit to the Guianas, is concerned with science fiction in one form or another.

Marion Zimmer Bradley starts off with "Experiment Perilous", a long look at the state of using the Old Wave/New Wave concepts; it's heavily related to and illustrated by her own work, with which I must admit I'm unfamiliar, but it's interesting and puts forward a fairly middle-of-the-road approach to science fiction which must be common to most writers and many fans; basically it's the 'no extremes' stance: "Like sex and character, style is all very well when integral to the story; when used and cultivated as an end in itself

it becomes a gimmicky game for the benefit of the writer's ego." Marion Bradley's ideal would seem to be a good story with strong (but not overly so) characterization. Ah well. It isn't my ideal, anyway; it sounds like the sinister ideal of classic mainstream fanlies with its emphasis on character rather than form and authorial absence rather than authorial control or presence — and a sprinkling of it doesn't absolve this kind of theory from its drabness. Ray Bradbury, no less, follows this with a very short piece with a blunt, but well-wild message: don't burn books. Fred Pohl then looks at "Science Fiction as Social Comment", emphasizing its useful predictive role. That's fair enough, but any attempt to write a novel with a committed social intention usually ends in tedium — certainly some of the stuff he cites is wretched enough (Ballantyne's Looking Backward, for instance). George Turner follows with a survey of which, as he admits, is rather too general (it was originally written for a non-fan audience), though it's interesting enough. Finally, Dick Lupoff reviews books, Ted White has a column wherein he suggests the SFPA should publish books, and there's a good letter column.

Altogether, then, Algal is an excellent magazine for the serious of fans; it's attractive, interesting (even to a non-addict like myself), and doesn't waste much time examining totally worthless back-writing (a grave fault of Riverside Quarterly and sundry other 'serious' fanzines). Highly recommended.

James Goddard's Cypher, the only British fanzine reviewed this time, has, I'm afraid, the very fault I just ascribed to HQ: it too frequently devotes its pages to rubbish; delving into the midden of the pulp magazines and coming up with a survey of some atrocious scribbler. Cypher 9 is the latest issue and bears a fine cover by Kevin Cullen which, together with a mass of interior drawings, illustrates the fiction of Harry Harrison. There's a reason for this, namely that the lead article is an interview with that author, taped by Jim Goddard and including various comments from Brian Aldiss and Leon Stover. It's fairly interesting and also amusing, though the trans-

script might have been edited somewhat more strongly — it's pretty incoherent at times. I should quickly note that I wouldn't include material like this in my initial condemnation of Cypher, though the book reviews in this issue give more space than is necessary to various book writers. Following the interview there's a cartoon strip by B. West and John Constantine, a regular feature and not a good one (either in terms of art or humour). Jeff Clark then examines the three short stories of James Tiptree Jr., apparently with the idea of uncovering a new sf writer. The only thing is, I can't help feeling it's a put-on, a rather clever hoax; the criticisms and extracts from the supposed stories are nicely, but plausibly clichéd, and I found the whole piece wryly amusing. If James Tiptree, Jr. actually exists, however...

The rest of Cypher consists of a reprint of a humorous Brian Aldiss piece from the Grauniad, some adequate film and book reviews (though Mark Adlard's review of Chris Priest's Fugue for a Darkening Island is particularly good), and a fairly good letter column (including a marvellously inept letter from Phil Harbottle, the arch-exponent of grubbing around in the pulps). Cypher is not, I'm afraid, a fanzine that I find particularly interesting. It appears regularly, however, and draws strong support from many of its readers, so it may possibly interest you.

The final fanzine in the pile is one of my personal favourites: Egoboo, the sixteenth issue in fact, from John D. Berry and Ted White. It's a fanzine of some long standing (this is the fourth amish) and seems to have outlasted the recent spate of similar fanzines — Ratz, Pottlatch, and so on.

Heavily disguised as an issue of Egoboo, with an Atom cover and the lighthouse emblem on the back, Egoboo contains long, rambling editorials and two very fine personal columns: Calvin Dammann's "Whole Hog" and Bill Roteler's "Stuff", the former representing probably the best fanzish writing currently being produced. The letter column is excellent and the whole thing is duplicated on high-quality Fannishly Sensitive paper, impregnated with SMOF (forgeries can be detected by holding copies to the light and looking for the initials 'SF' — should any be found, chuck it). Egoboo is an intelligent Fannish Fanzine and one that I highly recommend. The dollar price-tag is designed to discourage subscribers, by the way — they'd rather receive a letter (and that's true of all similar publications).

— Peter Roberts

Alcol — Andy Porter, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10017, USA. (UK Agent: Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Ave., Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 6QL). 4/£3 or £1.25

Amoeboid Science — Seth McVey & Jay Cornell, Jr, 105 E. Wilson, MSH, E. Lansing, MI 48823, USA. Free.

Cypher — James Coddard, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants. 20p per issue.

Egoboo — John D. Berry and Ted White, 35 Dusenberry Rd, Bronxville, NY 10708, USA. \$1 per issue.

Inverlyde — Bill Bowers, PO Box 148, Wadsworth, Oh. 44281, USA. (UK Agent: Terry Jeeves, 230 Rannardale Rd, Sheffield, S11 9PE). 5/£1 or 40p (3/40p airmail).

Mozartilian News — Robin Johnson, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia. (UK Agent: Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol. BS4 5DZ). 12/£2 or 6/50p (airmail).

BRIAN W. ALDISS THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES

There have been many books written about Herbert George Wells, but only one really good one, and that he wrote himself: Experiment in Autobiography.¹

Here is the passage, from Chapter 6, in which Wells describes the London he knew, and the housing constructed early in the nineteenth century:

"Private enterprise opened a vast quantity of extremely unsuitable building all over the London area, and for four or five generations made an uncomfortable incurable stress of the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

"It is only now, after a century, that the weathered and decaying lava of this mercenary eruption is being slowly replaced — by new feats of private enterprise almost as greedy and unforeseeing. To most Londoners of my generation, these rows of jerry-built unalterable houses seemed to be as much in the nature of things as rain in September and it is only in retrospect that I see the complete irrational scrambling planlessness of which all of us who had to live in London were the victims. The multiplying multitude poured into these moulds with no chance of escape. It is only because the thing was spread over a hundred years and not concentrated into a few weeks that history fails to realise what sustained disaster, how much massacre, degeneration and disablement of lives, was due to the housing of London in the nineteenth century."

How much of Wells, his negative and positive sides, reveals itself in this passage! His hatred of middle, his hope for something beyond the profit motive, his sense of melodrama, his irascibility, his dramatic feeling for the organic flow of history — all are here, as well as whispers of that didacticism which rose up and choked off his great creative ability.

The passage tells us much about Wells' background. Life for him was a battle for health and success. Whereas most writers of the England of his time lived in large comfortable country houses, Wells was a poor man's son and made his way without any assets other than his genius.

He was born in his parents' little china shop in the High Street of Bromley, Kent, in 1866, a year after the birth of D.H. Lawrence, another of the dynamic but tubercular poor.

Wells' mother had been in service when she met and married H.G.'s father, then working as a gardener. The shop was their first hopeful matrimonial venture together; it failed by degrees, year after year. Wells wrote with love and exasperation of his mother, "Almost as unquestioning as her belief in Our Father was her belief in drapery." After some elementary schooling, his first job was in a draper's shop in Windsor. He was no good at it, and they told him he was not refined enough to be a draper. He got the sack.

This was the man of whom the fastidi-

cue Henry James was later to cry — in the nearest the Master ever got to a fan letter — "Bravo, bravo, my dear Wells!" in response to two of Wells' books, admitting "They have left me prostrate with admiration!"²

Wells became a teacher, educating himself as he went along, and so moved into journalism and authorship. His first books appeared in 1895, when he was almost thirty. Around him, a new London was emerging, consciously becoming the Heart of Empire — an expanding capital trapped in the contracting houses Wells described with such hatred. The central figures of many of his early novels are chirpy Cockney "little men" with whom he was entirely familiar — their accents came to him through the flimsy bedroom partitions of his various digs. Wells exhibits them for inspection rather than admiration.³

In this submerged metropolitan world, taking lessons from Thomas Bailey, thinking great thoughts and struggling with great illnesses, Wells lived and survived. In 1895, he got one hundred pounds from M.E.Henley for his short novel The Time Machine. Its sceptical view of the present, and its pessimistic view of the future of mankind — and of life on Earth — challenged most of the cosy ideas of progress and the new imperialism then current.

Except for a collection of essays, The Time Machine was the first of Wells' one hundred and twenty odd books, and it is very nearly his most perfect. It was an immediate success.⁴

As Bernard Bergonzi has stressed in his excellent study of Wells' science fiction, The Time Machine is very much such a *fin de siècle* book. One glimpse in it some of the despair of Hardy's vision; while the Eloi, those pale, decadent, artistic people that the time-traveller discovers, derive a flavour from the aesthete of the eighteen-seventies, and are echoed in those pale lost lilies of people who haunt Beardsley's and Walter Crane's drawings and Ernest Dowson's poems.

The Eloi live above ground, in idyllic surroundings. Below ground live the dark and predatory Morlocks, appearing at night to snatch the helpless Eloi. The innocence and laughter of the Eloi

are only an appearance; below the surface lies corruption. The theme is a familiar Victorian one; it had vivid meaning for urban generations striving to install efficient modern sewers under their towns. One finds it, for instance, in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, published in 1891, where the sinner stays young and fair; only his portrait, looked away from prying eyes, ages and grows dissipated and obscene.

But the Eloi and Morlocks have historically deeper roots. They are a vivid science fictional dramatisation of Disraeli's two nations. Wells tells us as much in a later book, The Soul of a Bishop:

"There's an insurable misunderstanding between the modern employer and the modern employed," the chief labour spokesman said, speaking in a broad accent that completely hid from him and the bishop and every one the fact that he was by far the best-read man of the party. "Disraeli called them the Two Nations, but that was long ago. Now it's a case of two species. Machinery has made them into different species ... We'll get a little more education and then we'll do without you. We're pressing for all we can get, and when we've got that we'll take breath and press for more. We're the Morlocks. Coming up."

This "submerged-nation" theme, coupled always with the idea of retribution, is essentially a British obsession, occurring in writers as diverse as Lewis Carroll, S.Powder Wright, and John Wyndham. The essential American obsession is with the Alien — also coupled with the idea of retribution.

Wells in his thirties was prodigious. Most of his best books were published before his fortieth birthday: The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Invisible Man, The War of the Worlds, When the Sleeper Wakes (later revised as The Sleeper Awakes), Tales of Space and Time, The Food of the Gods, and the two novels before which the Master was prostrate, A Modern Utopia and Kipps, as well as such non-of works as Love and Mr. Lewisham and Anticipations.

Still to come after that first decade of writing were many good things, among

them Mr. Polly, The New Machiavelli, The War in the Air, Ann Veronica, and a number of lesser and later books which would have looked well in the lists of a lesser writer, as well as his excursions into popular education. Wells is also remembered for a number of remarkable short stories; indeed, he was one of the forgers of this genre of England, following the example of De Vigne, Adam, De Maupassant, and others in France. Among his short stories are some that won immense popularity in their time. Most of them belong to Wells' early creative phase.

In many of these stories, Wells proved himself the great originator of science-fictional ideas. They were new with him, and have been reworked endlessly since. He seems to have been the first fiction writer to use the perspectives of evolution to look backwards as well as forwards. His "The Grizzly Folk" (1896) is a tale of human-kind struggling against the Neanderthals at the glaciers retreated. "Great Paladins arose in that forgotten world, men who stood forth and smote the grey man-beast face to face and slew him."

Tales of prehistory have always remained a sort of sub-genre of science fantasy. Wells also wrote "A Story of the Stone Age" (1897), and Jack London dealt with the confrontation of human with pre-human, but it is not until William Golding's The Inheritors that this theme yields anything like a masterpiece. Wells' mind is the first to venture so far into past as well as future.

Among science fiction writers past and present, Wells, with Stapledon, is one indisputable giant. His debt to Hawthorne, Poe, and Swift, which he acknowledged, is apparent; he mentions also the novels of Holmes and Stevenson in this context. It is true that Wells lacks the inwardness we perceive in Mary Shelley; but he has an abundance of imagination as well as inventiveness -- the two are by no means identical. Wells has his weaknesses, among which his inability to create any psychological depth of characterisation must be conceded. But it seems to this critic that the virtues which lift Wells above his successors (and above Verne) are threefold. Firstly, he inherited something of the enquiring spirit of Swift -- and science is, when all's said, a

matter of enquiry; and from this spring the other two virtues, Wells' ability to see clearly his own world in which he lived (for without such an ability it is impossible to visualise any other world very clearly), and his lifelong avoidance of drawing lead characters with which readers will uncritically identify and thus be lulled to accept whatever is offered.

To see how these virtues work in practice, we may examine two of the early novels, The War of the Worlds and The Island of Dr. Moreau.

The War of the Worlds was published in serial form in 1897 and in book form a year later. It describes what happens when Martian invaders land on Earth. The story is told by an English observer, who sees the invaders move in on London against all the army can do to hold them off. London is evacuated before the invaders die, killed by common microbes.

Even this brief outline shows that The War of the Worlds is part of the literary lineage which includes Chaucer's The Battle of Dorking. But Wells makes a twofold progression. This time the invader is from another planet. This time, the invader is effortlessly more powerful than the invaded.

These two steps forward are not merely a development of wandering fancy; they form a development of the moral imagination. For Wells is saying, in effect, to his fellow English, "Look, this is how it feels to be a primitive tribe, and to have a Western nation arriving to civilise you with Maxim guns!"

This element of fable or oblique social criticism in Wells' early work is marked, from the novels to such short stories as "The Country of the Blind" and "The Moor in the Wall". Yet it remains always subservient to the strong flow of his invention; only when invention flagged did moralising intrude and the tone become shrill.

In The Invisible Man, one is not intended to identify with Griffin in his strange plight. The moral beneath the fable is that scientific knowledge should be shared and not used for selfish gain (as Moreau uses his knowledge for personal satisfaction and so is

damned just like Dr. Jekyll); but this moral is so profoundly part of the fabric of the story that many reviewers and readers missed the point, and complained that Griffin was "unsympathetic". Similar obtuseness confronts a science fiction writer today. His audience is accustomed to powerful heroes with whom they can unthinkingly identify. A mass audience expects to be pandered to. Wells never pandered.

Of course, Wells provides plenty of sensationalism in War of the Worlds. There is the carefully detailed destruction of the London of his day, followed by the horrible appearance of the Martians. Cummingly, Wells refrains from describing his invaders — we have seen them only in their machines — until over halfway through the book. They are then as ghastly as you please.

After a description of their external appearance comes an account of their internal anatomy when dissected. Wells' manner is cool and detached. From description, he turns to a discussion of the way in which the Martian physiology functions in matter-of-fact detail, going on to consider Martian evolution. The telling stroke, when it comes, lifts the whole remarkable passage to a higher level. "To me it is quite credible that the Martians may be descended from beings not unlike ourselves, by a gradual development of brains and hands ... at the expense of the rest of the body." It is this linking of the Martians with humanity, rather than separating them it, which shows Wells' superior creative powers. At the same time, he prepares us for the surprise and logic of his final denouement.

C.S. Lewis was later to attack Wells for peopling our minds with modern hobgoblins. But it was Wells' successors in the pulp magazines, the horror merchants with no intent but to lower the reader's body temperature as fast as possible, who managed that. Wells' non-humans, his Martians, Morlocks, Selenites, and Beast-People, are creatures not of horror but terror; they spring from a sophisticated acknowledgement that they are all part of us, of our flesh. It was the later horror merchants who made their creatures alien from us, and so externalised evil. Wells' position is (malgré lui) the orthodox Christian one, that evil is within us.

His non-humans are not without Grace but are fallen from Grace.

In War of the Worlds we can distinguish Wells using three principles to produce this masterly piece of science fiction. Firstly, he begins by drawing a recognisable picture of his own times, 'the present day'. While we acknowledge the truth of this picture we are being trained to accept the veracity of what follows. Secondly, he uses the newer scientific principles of his times, evolutionary theory and the contagious and infectious theories of micro-organisms, as a hinge for the story. Thirdly, he allows a criticism of his society, and possibly of mankind in general, to emerge from his narrative.

To these principles must be added Wells' ability to write effectively. There are few openings in science fiction more promising, more chilling, than that first page of War of the Worlds, including as it does the passage, "Across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us." How beautifully underplayed is that adjective "unsympathetic"!

Yet Wells' early readers were puzzled over the question of his originality. How original was he? This question of originality is bandied about with regard to today's writers, all of whom stand in Wells' portly shadow. Wells himself has an amused word to say on the subject in his autobiography.

"In the course of two or three years I was welcomed as a second Dickens, a second Bulwer Lytton and a second Jules Verne. But also I was a second Barrie, though J.A.B. was hardly more than my contemporary, and, when I turned to short stories, I became a second Rudyard Kipling. I certainly, on occasion, imitated both these excellent masters. Later on I figured also as a second Diderot, a second Carlyle and a second Rousseau ... These second-hand tickets were very convenient as admission tickets. It was however unwise to sit down in the vacant chairs, because if one did so, one rarely got up again."⁹

The War of the Worlds enjoyed an imme-

diately favourable reception from readers and critics. Yet many of its aspects were ignored or misunderstood. It was felt in some quarters that the novel was not very nice. The reviewer in the Daily News declared that some episodes were so brutal that "they cause insufferable distress to the feelings." The Island of Dr. Moreau had had the same effect two years earlier.

Despite its merits, The War of the Worlds contains at least two aspects of Wells' writing which tell against it increasingly as time goes by. They turn out to be aspects of the same thing. Wells as a delineator of "the little man". I mean his penchant for humour, particularly Cockney humour, and the general scrubbiness of his characters.

An old man is rescuing his orchids as the Martian invasion force draws near. "I was explainin' these is vallyble," he says. Wells' London is populated by shop assistants, cabmen, artillerymen, and gardeners. There is a curate, too, but he, like most of the clergy in Wells' works (and in his disciple, Orwell's), is used as a comic butt and talks nonsense. "How can God's ministers be killed?" he asks. There are no characters in The War of the Worlds, only mouths.

In Wells' best book this fault does not obtrude.

The Island of Dr. Moreau, published in 1896, contains for all practical purposes only three human beings: Moreau, the scientist ahead of his time; Montgomery, his assistant, a drunken doctor in disgrace; and Prendick, the common man, the narrator. Prendick has none of Bert Snellways' or Mr. Polly's or Kipps' cocky chirpiness, while the Beast-People hardly crack a joke between them. If the characters are in part cliché, this is in part because they serve symbolic roles, and there is a symbolic quality about the whole that gives it a flavour of Poe or the French writers.

Moreau begins in a businesslike way, in the manner of Gulliver's Travels, with a sea voyage and a shipwreck. Prendick survives the wreck and arrives at an unnamed island, owned by Moreau. A mystery surrounds the place, there are strange shrouded creatures, cries in the night. If this is Prospero's island, it is peopled by Calibans. In

the way Prendick's mind leaps to terrible nameless conclusions, we come to that nervous playing on unvoiced things which is the essence of science fiction.

Incident flows smoothly on incident, each preparing us for the next: Prendick's unwelcome arrival; the mystery of the natives; Prendick's suspicion that Moreau experiments on human beings to bestialise them, and then the revelation that Moreau is in fact creating something like humanity from animals by the extreme application of vivisection techniques; then we meet the grotesque population of the island, the fruits of Moreau's surgery, the Hyena-Swine, the Leopard Man, the Satyr, the Wolf Bear, the Swine Woman, the faithful Dog Man. Then we have the death of the Leopard Man; the escape of the female puma on which Moreau is operating; the death of Moreau himself in the ensuing hunt through the forest; Prendick's shaky assumption of control; Montgomery's drunken carousal with the Beast-Men, in which he is killed; the destruction of the stronghold; and the whole awful decline, as Prendick is left alone with the Beast-People while they slowly forget what language they have learned, and lapse back into feral savagery.

Nobody has quite decided what Moreau is, apart from being a splendid and terrifying story. But it is clear that Wells has something more in mind, something larger, than a thrilling adventure.*

In the main, Wells' first critics and reviewers expressed shocked horror at the whole thing, and would look no further; in short, he was condemned rather than praised for its artistry — a reception which was to have its due effect on Wells' future writings. Yet it is not difficult to see what he intended.

For some time, we are kept in suspense with Prendick about the nature of the island's population. Is it animal or human? This is not merely a plot device; as with the scientific hinge on which War of the Worlds turns, Moreau's experiment links with the entire philosophical scheme of the novel. And even after we learn the true meaning of the

* Just as one of this novel's descendants, Golding's Lord of the Flies, is more than a thrilling adventure.

Beast-People, Wells carefully maintains a poignant balance between animal and human in them. At their most human, they reveal the animal; at their most animal, the human.

The point may be observed at the moment when Prendick, now in the role of hunter, catches up with the Leopard Man in the forest:

"I heard the twigs snap and the boughs swish aside before the heavy tread of the Horse-Rhinoceros upon my right. Then, suddenly, through a polygon of green, in the half darkness under the luxuriant growth, I saw the creature we were hunting. I halted. He was crouched together into the smallest possible compass, his luminous green eyes turned over his shoulder regarding me.

"It may seem a strange contradiction in me — I cannot explain the fact — but now, seeing the creature there in a perfectly animal attitude, with the light gleaming in its eyes, and the imperfectly human face distorted in terror, I realised again the fact of its humanity. In another moment others of its pursuers would see it, and it would be overpowered and captured, to experience once more the horrible tortures of the enclosure. Abruptly I slipped out my revolver, aimed between his terror-struck eyes and fired."

It is clear that Moreau, at least in one sense, speaks against transplant surgery, the consequences of which are revealed in the ghastly Law which the Beasts chant (a Law which some critics have seen as a parody of the Law of the Jungle in Kipling's *Jungle Book*, though the dry, sublimated humour of Swift is also present):

"Not to suck up Drink: that is the Law. Are we not Men?"

"Not to eat Fish or Flesh: that is the Law. Are we no Men? etc."

"His is the Hand that Wounds. His is the Hand that Heals."

We are put in mind — not accidentally — of liturgical chant. "For His Mercy Is on Them That Fear Him: Throughout All Generations." We recall that Wells labelled the novel "an exercise in youthful blarney". Moreau is intended to stand for God. Moreau is a nineteenth-century God — Mary Shelley's

protagonist in his maturity — Frankenstein Unbound.

Furthermore, Moreau's science is only vaguely touched on; the whole business of brain surgery, on which the novel hinges, has none of Wells' usual clarity. We can infer that he wanted to leave this area sketchy, so that we no more know what goes on in Moreau's laboratory than in God's. This vagueness, by increasing our horror and uncertainty, is a strength rather than otherwise.

When God is dead, the island population reverts to savagery, though he hovers invisibly above the island. Prendick tells the Beasts: "For a time you will not see him. He is there — pointing upward — where he can watch you. You cannot see him. But he can see you."

Blame for the wretched state of the Beasts is set firmly on Moreau. "Before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand."

At this moment, Wells is trying to create a synthesis between evolutionary and religious theory. Not to put too fine a gloss on it, he does not think highly of the Creator. Nor does he of the created. Moreau says it for Wells, declaring that he can "see into their very souls, and see there nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish — anger, and the lusts to live and gratify themselves." There is that Biblical phrase which echoes in the opening of *War of the Worlds*: "beasts that perish". As for the two real human beings, Prendick and Montgomery, they also are poor things. Prendick is certainly not there for us to identify with, any more than the Invisible Man is. His shallowness, his lack of understanding for Montgomery, his lack of sympathy for the Beasts, is perhaps a mark against the book — the darkness of any painting can be enhanced by a highlight here and there. Or perhaps it is just that Prendick is a commonplace little man, as Gulliver was a commonplace little man and Alice a commonplace little girl.

Moréau stands in an honourable line of books in which man is characterized as an animal. Gulliver's Travels is one of the best-known examples of the genre, and the one to which Wells paid homage, but such stories stretch back to the Middle Ages and beyond. Wells, however, revived the old tradition, gaining additional power because he and his audience were aware of evolutionary theory. They are the first generation to understand that it was no mere fancy as hitherto to regard man as animal; it was the simple, betraying truth, and formalised religion began to decay more rapidly from that time onwards.

Prentiss eventually returns to "civilisation", rescued from the island by a boat with dead men in it. His fears pursue him back to England. "I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another, still passably human, Beast People, animals half-wrought into the image of human souls; and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that." The Leopard Man, c'est moi.

This is the final triumph of Moréau; that we are transplanted from the little island, only seven or eight square miles in extent — say about the size of Holy Island — to the great world outside, only to find it but a larger version of Moréau's territory. The stubborn beast flesh, the beast mentality, is everywhere manifest.

The ending has a sombre strength. "As with the climax of War of the Worlds, it comes not just as a surprise but as a logical culmination. Wells has subtly prepared us for it, so that it is revelation rather than punch line, for instance in his Harlequin remark that "A blind fate, a vast pitiless mechanism, seemed to cut out and shape the fabric of existence."

In this early novel, Wells amply fulfilled his conscious intentions. The exercise in youthful blasphemy worked. It is apparent that he also exorcised some-

thing that obsessed him during that period. Although Moréau is the darkest of his novels, it is not strikingly different in attitude for its companions. We find a horror of animality, an almost prurient curiosity about flesh, and the cultural shock of evolution stamped across all Wells' early science fiction. As the Beast-People are our brethren, so the Martians could be us at another stage of our development; while the Morlocks, that submerged nation in The Time Machine whose vile flesh of Eloi — they are descended from us, our flesh could grow into such nocturnal things. "I grieved to think how brief the dream of human intellect has been," says the time-traveller.

The cannibalism practised by the Morlocks is paralleled by the flesh-eating of the Beast-People. Although the Invisible Man divests himself of flesh, he does not lose a vicious competitive streak. The Selenites of The First Men in the Moon are one long nightmare of distorted flesh; like the Morlocks they live underground. They are forced into arbitrary shapes by social usage almost as cruelly as if they came under Moréau's scalpel. In The Food of the Gods, flesh runs amok — like Moréau, this novel, too, is in part an allegory of man's upward struggle.

With a frankness remarkable for its time, Wells has told us much about his early sexual frustrations. He was a sensuous man and, with success and wealth, found the world of women open to him. It may be that this gradually assuages his old obsessions; though he never achieved peace of mind, his later books do not recapture that darkly beautiful quality of imagination, or that instinctive-seeming unity of construction, which lives in his early novels, and in his science fiction particularly.

The rest of Wells' career must be looked at briefly, bearing in mind the question of why the hundred books that followed did not share the brilliance of the early handful.

As soon as Wells' public became accustomed to one Wells, you would pop another. There was A Modern Utopia, the last of the great utopias and the first to realise that from now on, with im-

* Not least, one would imagine, for George Orwell, who may have found in the passage last quoted inspiration for what was later to become Animal Farm.

proved communications, no island or continent was big enough to hold a perfect state — it must be the whole world or nothing. Later, he developed the idea of a World State. This was H.G. flexing his Fabian and political muscles. Tono-Bungay, a social novel full of autobiographical material, and Ann Veronica, which roused a great storm because the heroine practised free love, saw publication in 1909. There were two gorgeous and sensible books for children before the Great War broke out, Floor Games and Little Wars.

In 1914, just before the outbreak of hostilities, The World Set Free was published. It contains some of the most amazing of Wells' predictions, in particular of atomic warfare, but also — more accurately and horribly — of trench warfare. His speculations on tank warfare had already appeared in a short story, "The Land Ironclads". We have seen how Wells' warfare books were written very much in the Battle of Dorking tradition — yet he was remarkable successful in predicting what actually happened than his rivals, perhaps because he was no reactionary (as were most of his rivals), and therefore tended less to view the future in terms of the past; and also because he actually hated war (though with the ambivalent feelings many people experience), unlike such men as Le Queux, who pretty clearly longed for it.

The World Set Free is full of shrewd precepts, exciting home truths writ large, and radical diagnoses of human ills, all of which made the book (now it hardly is) exciting and immediate at the time.

Here's Karenin in the future, when London is being cleared up after extensive bombing. He is looking back and talking about a 1914 which bears resemblance to the 1970s.

"It was an unwholesome world," reflected Karenin. 'I seem to remember everybody about my childhood as if they were ill. They were ill. They were sick with confusion. Everybody was anxious about money and everybody was doing uncongenial things. They ate a queer mixture of foods, either too much or too little, and at odd hours. One sees how ill they were by their advertisements ... Everybody must have been taking pills ... The

pill-carrying age followed the venison-carrying age..." (Chapter 5, 4)

The World Set Free is successful in every way but the ways in which the early Wells books were successful. It is full of lively ingredients; it has no organic life. Wells the One-Man Think-Tank has burst into view. His books are no longer novels but gospels.

After World War I, this more solemn Wells developed further into the Wells who produced solid and effective works of scientific popularisation and started the vogue for one-volume encyclopaedias. Wells was on the way to becoming the most popular sage of his day.* And he was still producing novels every year.

During the thirties, Wells the Novelist faded out before Wells the World Figure. He was a famous man, busily planning a better world, chatting with Lenin ((In the thirties? Must have been a one-sided conversation! MJS)), arguing with George Bernard Shaw, flying to the White House to talk to Roosevelt, or to the Kremlin to talk to Stalin. Remembering the middle of the London of his youth, he hated muddle, and saw a World State as the tidiest possible way of governing man for its own happiness.

Unlike Verne, he was never in danger of being blessed by the Pope.

Wells proved himself one of the few men capable of spanning the great gulf between the mid-Victorian period when he was born and our modern age. He had grasped the principle of change. He was a visionary and not a legislator, yet he worked for the League of Nations during World War I and, during the Second, helped draw up a Declaration of the Rights of Man which paved the way for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN after Wells' death. He died in 1946, having witnessed the dropping of an atomic bomb he had predicted many years earlier.

To the Establishment, the idea of change is always anathema. It never took Wells to its lordly bosom, just as it has never taken science fiction,

* An edition of The World Set Free published by Collins in the twenties heralded Wells, on the cover, as "The most widely read author in the world".

possibly for the same reason. It disliked him for the things he did best, and thought him a cad. So did the literati, perhaps with more reason, for Wells' ill-timed attack on his old friend Henry James in Moon (1915) was a poor thing, and most orthodox writers sided with James.

The literati still do not accept Wells to the sacred canon. In a volume such as Cyril Connolly's The Modern Movement (1965), which claims to list books "with the spark of rebellion", there is room for Norman Douglas and Ivy Compton-Burnett but none for Wells, except in an aside. However, some real writers, like Vladimir Nabokov, appreciate his true worth as an innovator and creative spirit.

The current received idea of Wells seems to be that he began modestly and well as an artist (The Time Machine and all that) and then threw it all up for journalism and propaganda purposes.¹⁰ There is a grain of truth in the charge. Many of his books were hastily written or scamped; he says himself, "It scarcely needs criticism to bring home to me that much of my work has been slovenly, haggard and irritated, most of it hurried and inadequately revised, and some of it as white and pasty in texture as a starched nun."¹¹ What humility and honesty! Lesser writers today would not dare admit anything of the sort.

For all that, the facts do not entirely bear out either the received idea or Wells' own declaration (what writers say of themselves always should be greeted with scepticism). Wells began as a teacher and continued as one. He had a strong didactic example from his teacher, Thomas Huxley, one of the great controversialists of the century. For a while, in those earlier novels, Wells followed the doctrine of art for art's sake (then in favour with those writers and artists who were, like Wells, against the "done thing"); in that period he took care to incorporate his central point into the imaginative whole. When he did so, when his point was so well integrated as not to be obvious, his audience misunderstood him or failed to get the point, as was the case with Morant, Invisible Man, and War of the Worlds.

Wells hated muddle and misunderstanding. He took to making the message

clearer and clearer. His characters became mouthpieces, the fiction became lost in didacticism. The amplifiers were turned up. Wells gained volume and lost quality, but he was always a man with an amplifier, not content to whisper in corners. Indeed, the controversial nature of science fictional themes is such that only careful control -- the control Wells found and lost -- deflects the fantasy from the sermon.

Moreover, despite his focularity and his joy in producing a different-coloured rabbit from his hat with each performance, Wells was consistent in his career. As early as 1912, he turned down an invitation to join the Academic Committee of the Royal Society of Literature. However much we may regret it, he wanted to deal with life, not aesthetics. Perhaps he failed to recognise that he was a creator, not an administrator. He could exhort but not execute. Eventually, the exhortations took over from the imagination.

Wells did not change the world as he would have liked to do. He did alter the way millions of people looked at it. He was the first of his age to convey clearly that our globe is one, the people on it one -- and the people beyond this globe, if they exist. He helped us understand that present history is but a passing moment, linked to distant past and distant future. It was Wells who said, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." As the human race struggles and sinks beneath its own weight of numbers, we see how his words remain contemporary.

Perhaps a writer who views history as a race between anything and catastrophe is doomed to write hastily and carelessly, as Wells often did. Yet Wells was loved by men and women far beyond his personal acquaintance, far beyond the normal readership a novelist gathers if he merely has staying power. He was witty and honest, he spoke for his generation -- and for more than one generation. George Orwell conveyed something of what a symbol H.G. Wells became:

"Back in the 1930s it was a wonderful thing to discover H.G. Wells. There you were, in a world of ped-

sants, clergymen, and golfers, with your future employers exhorting you to 'get on or get out', your parents systematically warning you 'sex life, and your dull-witted schoolmasters sniggering over their Latin tags; and here was this wonderful man who could tell you all about the inhabitants of the planets and the bottom of the sea, and who knew that the future was not going to be what respectable people imagined."

Orwell was speaking of the beginning of the century. Thirty years later, as this writer can vouch, the same state of affairs held true. Wells was still at it, stirring everyone up. He saw that the one constant thing was change, and the dynamic for change that he found in the world about him was echoed in his own being; this accounts for his turning from one role to another, and from one woman to another.

He spread his energies widely. To regret that he did so is hardly profitable, for it was in his nature to do so.

Much of his activity has been dissipated. His novels remain. The science fiction is read more than ever.

Wells was born in the year dynamite was invented; he lived to witness the birth of the nuclear age. Inaccurately, Orwell characterized Charles Dickens' novels as "rotten architecture but wonderful gargoyles"; it is Wells' gargoyles, his Martians, the Salamites, the Morlocks, the Beast-People we most relish today, when Kippa and Polly grow faint. We may no longer accept Wells' faith in the improving potentialities of education, but we long ago conceded his point that we show "first this bestial mark and then that".

It is undeniable that if we compare Wells' novels with Dickens' most Wells-like novel, Great Expectations (assuming Great Expectations to be about Pip's escape from a menial life at the forge into the wider world of London), then we are confronted with Wells' shortcomings as a novelist. But such a comparison would be unfair to almost any writer. Within his own wide domain, Wells was mi genensis. Within the domain of scientific romance, he managed three unique achievements. He elevated the freak event -- a visit to the Moon, an invasion from another planet -- into an artistic whole. In consequence, he greatly extended the scope and power of

such imaginings. And he brought to the genre a popularity and a distinctness from other genres which it has never lost since, despite the blunders of many following in his wake.

Wells is the Prospero of all the brave new worlds of the mind, and the Shakespeare of science fiction.

--- Brian Aldie

Notes

1. H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, 2 vols., 1934.
2. James to Wells, letter dated Eye, Nov. 19, 1905. The two books to which James refers are A Modern Utopia and Kipps. The letter, brimming with rare enthusiasms, is quoted in a biography by Vincent Broome, H.G. Wells, 1952.
3. A fair example is Bert Smalley, here of The War in the Air.
4. For a thoroughgoing account of the reception of Wells' books as they were published, see Ingvald Bakken, H.G. Wells and his Critics, Oslo, 1962.
5. Bernard Bergson, The Early H.G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances, Manchester, 1961.
6. Experiment in Autobiography, Ch. 6.
7. Mention should be made also of the good psychological timing of War of the Worlds. The new journalism was bringing word of the solar system to Wells' public, while Mars in particular was in the general consciousness. It had been in close opposition in 1877, 79 and 81, and Percival Lowell's first book on Mars, containing speculations about the "canals" and possibilities of life there, had been published in 1895.
8. Wells does not mention himself as a second Camilla Flammarion, the parallels between whose novel Le Fin du Monde and Wells' "The Stars" are striking.
9. Experiment in Autobiography, Ch. 8.
10. This assumption lies behind the otherwise sympathetic biography by Lovat Dickson.
11. Experiment in Autobiography, Ch. 1.
12. George Orwell, "Wells, Hitler and the World State", Critical Essays, 1946.

The Infinity Box

book reviews

Dying Inside

by Robert Silverberg
Scribner's; \$6.95; 245p.

Reviewed by George Zebrowski

Someone once said that it is hard to write intelligently about good books, and even harder about the very best. One may say, "This is a great book", and naturally anything you say is not up to the work itself — and can't be. The literary essay can be great literature in itself, but then it becomes a showpiece for the critic-as-author, taking away from the work which is up for examination. We then say, "That was a fine essay on the work of so-and-so." The problem is obvious. In any case, I'd going to try to ask the hardest questions about the best books which I will write about in these pages, as well as try to find constructive things to say about less than perfect works.

Now what is the prime interest of Dying Inside? It seems that it is not the psi power of the protagonist. And this raises the question, why is the psi there at all? Do we need it to help us round out the portraits of the other characters? Or to understand the motivations of the people around the hero? So-called mainstream writers have managed to get inside any character without recourse to psi. They've done this with the conventions of fiction — point-of-view changes, direct thoughts, etc. Silverberg, it seems, has made psi stand for these conventions. It is the means of contemporary fiction made reality. The protagonist is something like the

omniscient author of fiction.

Come to think of it, that is all pretty inventive and clever. But eventually we see more. We see the limitations which are peculiar to a one-way-receiving telepath as he gradually loses his powers (much in the same way sexual prowess or talent may decline with age). Eventually the hero becomes like the rest of us, shut up in himself. He is the extreme case gradually approaching the norm; and it is a unique realization to identify with his loss and know that one is exactly what the hero is becoming.

Silverberg so cleverly walks the line between being of two minds about the materials of his story — i.e. the biography of a New York Jewish intellectual growing old (almost a cliché in the mainstream) and the powerful theme — a tragedy really — of a superman losing his abilities in a world of closed-up mortals, that I am tempted to call this ambivalence a form of complex genius. Things such as this are so much more clear-cut in science fiction. In fact I'm tempted to say that Silverberg is deliberately mining ambivalence as a key element in his recent work. Those of us who are writers might learn something from this, transforming this attentiveness to ambivalence through our own concerns and themes. It makes for richer fiction.

The end page of Dying Inside leaves the main character merely human, ready to explore a new set of limits when and if he recovers from the silence he has arrived at. He has become another kind

of man, dying away from his previous self. I don't think he matured as a telepath, and now he has to grow up as a normal, and die again when his normal physical abilities decline toward death.

Come to think of it, writers and artists are telepaths. We use point of view in fiction as if we were telepaths, receiving. We invade the minds of people who lived in historical times, the present, and in the shadows of the times to come.

Silverberg has taken a science fictional idea, a mainstream literary convention, and made the result real and concrete in a true science fictional sense. As a result he has revitalized mainstream fictional materials in a manner which will startle those unfamiliar with sf. Dying Inside is Robert Silverberg continuing his science fictional preoccupation with people, to paraphrase Brian Stableford ("The Compleat Silverberg", Speculation 31), and with the human characteristics of beings not specifically human.

Dying Inside is Silverberg doing better than Woth, in a book which will be reread with new eyes years hence, long after The Breast is buried and empty of all nourishment.

++ No, I'm not about to adopt Pete Weston's practice of including postscripts to reviews in which he contradicts everything his poor critic has just said. But there are a couple of things I'd like to add to George's review.

Firstly, if you have read this novel as serialised in Galaxy, I urge you to get hold of the book and read it again, whatever you thought of the serial. Having read both versions, I was amazed at the cumulative effect of a mass of small alterations. Many of these are intended to 'tone down' the novel for family consumption, and include a very amusing shift in the hierarchy of curses. I don't recall it exactly, but roughly: 'shit' in the book becomes 'crap' in the magazine; 'crap' becomes 'damn'; 'damn' becomes 'oh, bother' or 'some-such'. But more important is the apparently random excision of at least one sentence from practically every paragraph of five sentences or more.

It means you're reading the sketch for a novel rather than the novel itself. And then there's the matter of all the switches in the order of the chapters...

Aside from this, I think that Silverberg's two 1972 novels, Dying Inside and The Book of Shells, mark an important new high point in his career. Over the last few years, Silverberg has continually been experimenting with different methods of constructing fiction — using different tenses, different persons, either separately or mixed. All of these have been interesting although not all have been equally successful. Now, in these two novels, he seems to have entirely assimilated these techniques, with exciting implications for his future work. It's therefore a little saddening to realise that, certainly for the first time since I've been in fandom, there's no new Silverberg novel in the offing. ++

Heart Clock

by Dick Norland
Faber; £2.35; 213p.

Reviewed by Christopher Priest

There is a kind of science fiction which English writers seem to do very well, and that is the sort where something very daft happens to the population as a whole. The best example of this I can think of is Brian Aldiss's The Primal Urge, in which the national aberration was a metal disk implanted in the forehead which glowed rose-pink whenever the owner became sexually aroused. Dick Norland has adopted a similar motif in his first science fiction novel Heart Clock, but unlike Aldiss he doesn't play his book for laughs. His bizarre development is the implantation of an alarm-clock into the heart. The time when the alarm goes off is set by the government; reach a certain age, determined in the light of whatever economic crisis is going on at the time, and you are turned off. No exceptions ... and no appeal.

This pleasant little gadget has, as might be expected, brought several dir-

ect and indirect changes to English life. It is in describing these sociological changes that Morland's book works brilliantly, because in the manner of all the best of of this sort the world he draws is at once very like our own and horribly different. The London that Matt Matlock, the protagonist, moves about in is recognisable, so long as one doesn't take too much notice of the Birthday Unions, the Scottish Embassy and the prowling ourfew-wagons.

This is the science fiction content, and the author describes it as to the manner born. The book is filled with tantalizing details, the more tantalizing for being woven expertly into the background with the implications and ramifications left for the reader to fill in for himself.

Where the book goes slightly astray is in the matter of its plot, and I think it's worth going into this in some detail. Dick Morland, in one of his other manifestations, has written several thrillers, and he has brought the action, structure and plotting of the thriller to science fiction. In the first few chapters he sets up his scene and, as I say, he does it brilliantly. Unobtrusively, the background is filled in as the story proceeds. But then, quite abruptly, the emphasis shifts.

The protagonist, a 69 year old ex-cabinet minister, becomes involved in all manner of standard devices: capture, escape, shootings, betrayals, blackmail. He is a pawn in three hands: the government of the day, which wants him to return to the fold and stop attacking the heart-clock system which he himself was instrumental in introducing; a religious sect known as The Week, who are against the system anyway and need him for their own purposes; the rising clams beyond Hadrian's Wall (now a sixty feet high metal-plastic structure), who want him to lead an armed insurrection. At first cojoned and persuaded, later threatened and blackmailed, finally kidnapped, Matt Matlock reaches a point, about two-thirds of the way through the book, when he doesn't know where he is. And neither does the reader. Lost in a maze of motives and counter-motives (wheels within wheels I think this is called) all that can be done is to en-

trust ourselves to the author who, we can only hope, will get us through the complexities to the end. In fact he does, but I believe that this is a tactical error on the writer's behalf. By reducing his hero to the role of a manipulated dummy, he takes away the action from the central character and places it in unknown and unseen hands. Matt Matlock totes his handgun in self-defence, murdering some and knocking others unconscious because he has to in order to survive; how much better would it be if the slayings were carried in pursuit of his own destiny? Perhaps less moral, but more of a satire on political ambition? Like the last act of Julius Caesar, one can hardly move for corpses at the end of this book ... and like Julius Caesar, it has all been in the pursuit of political power.

But all this said, I greet Mr Morland with some pleasure. His is a fresh vision, and a deftly-written vision. A few less "thrills" next time though, please.

Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMBY

by Robert C. O'Brien
Collins; £1.40; 191p.

Reviewed by Malcolm Edwards

Mrs Frisby, a widowed fieldmouse, is in a difficult predicament. Spring is almost here, and it is time she and her family moved from their winter home in the Fitzgibbon's field before it is ploughed up. But her son, Timothy, is too ill to be moved down to the damp river bank. There seems no solution until a crow she has befriended takes her to see the wise old owl who lives in the middle of the wood. He tells her to go to the rats who live under the rosebush by Mr Fitzgibbon's barn. Like all the animals, Mrs Frisby is wary of rats, and these are a very unusual bunch — almost a match for Dragon, the farm cat. She has seen them, about in broad daylight, unafraid:

"There were a dozen of them, and at first she could not see what they were up to. Then she saw something moving, between them and

behind them. It looked like a thick piece of rope, a long piece, maybe twenty feet. No. It was stiffer than rope. It was electric cable, the heavy, black kind used for outdoor wiring and strung on telephone poles. The rats were hauling it laboriously through the grass, inching it along in the direction of ... the rosebush."

Perhaps this all sounds unpromising: a suitable book for quite young children but no more. To an extent this is true; the first third of the book, delicately and observantly written though it is, does not present us with anything very special. But now Mrs Frisby goes to visit the rats, and we enter a different world, one which works with the same kind of magic as illuminated such dissimilar stories as Gulliver's Travels (and T.E.White's delightful 'sequel' to it, Mistress Masham's Repose), James Blish's "Surface Tension", and the various stories of the Borrowers — the miniature equivalent of our own world:

"Ahead of her stretched a long, well-lit hallway. Its ceiling and walls were a smoothly curved arch, its floor hard and flat, with a soft layer of carpet down the middle. The light came from the walls, where every foot or so on both sides a tiny light bulb had been recessed and the hole in which it stood, like a small window, had been covered with a square of coloured glass ... The effect was that of stained-glass windows in sunlight.

"Justin was watching her and smiling. 'Do you like it?' ...

"It's beautiful," Mrs Frisby said. 'But how?'

"We've had electricity for four years now."

"Five," said Mr Ages."

The rats are fugitives from a laboratory where they were the subjects of experiments into artificially-induced intelligence. The experiments were far more successful than the scientists of MINK had realised — the rats became so intelligent that they were able to conceal the extent of their intelligence from the scientists and thus to contrive a means of escape. Now, hidden beneath

the rosebush, they are working on a master plan — to move lock, stock and barrel to a small, hidden valley nearby, where they will set up their own, self-sufficient rat civilisation, freeing themselves from the need to scavenge on mankind.

Mrs Frisby's problem is solved, but the rats face a much greater one of their own. A dissident group which left the rosebush managed to kill themselves in an accident sufficiently suspicious looking to bring the men from MINK, who are now scouring the area for them, flushing out any ratholes they find with cyanide. And the farmer is well aware that there are rats in his rosebush...

Mrs Frisby and the Rats of MINK is a triumph of children's writing; a worthy winner of the Newbery medal. And, like all the best children's writing, it reaches far beyond the confines of any specific age-group. It will appeal to any reader willing to approach it without condescension. It is distinguished throughout by the luminous simplicity of the writing, and while it's obviously an exercise in anthropomorphism it subtly recognises the differences between the various types of animal. The novel ends with a victory for the rats mixed with a tragedy of uncertain extent. It's complete in itself, but there is obvious scope for a sequel. Sadly, the author died recently, so it seems there will not be one — all the more reason to treasure the fine book he has left us.

Books received:

From Gollancz: The Early Asimov, by Arthur Stebbings, £2.75 (Kassie — 540p. — collection of pre-1950 Asimov stories. The introductions are generally better than the fiction, and sometimes are nearly as long. Required reading for Asimov fans.); A Science Fiction Argosy, edited by Damon Knight, £2.90 (Together with the Asimov, this could be used to make a decent set of barbeds. 628p., including two complete novels — The Damned Man and More Than Human, plus 26 other stories which aren't all too well known, although keen readers will probably have come across most of them); The Farthest Shore, by Ursula

Le Guin, £1.60 (I've promised myself that I can read this after I finish the 5,000 word essay I have to hand in on May 21st. Possibly to be reviewed next issue; the one after, if not. Final volume of the Earthsea trilogy. Need I say more?); Imagined Moon, by Larry Niven, £2.20 (collection culled from the two American collections, The Shape of Space and All The Myriad Ways. I was disappointed that the funny "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleener" — about Superman's sexual problems — was omitted; otherwise it's an impeccably well-chosen selection); Tomorrow Lies in Ambush, by Bob Shaw, £2.00 (Bob's first collection, and very entertaining too. To be reviewed.)

From Sidgwick & Jackson: The Probability Man, by Brian W. Hall, £1.60; New Writings in SF 22, edited by Kenneth Bulmer (impressive contents list. Brief equibs from Brian Aldiss and Arthur Clarke plus, among others, Harrison, White, Tubb and a long Chris Priest story. So far I've only read Laurence James' story, which is amazingly bad. Impenetrable introduction. To be reviewed by Tony Sudbery. £1.75, by the way.); The Best of John W. Campbell, £2.25 (Five long stories, thankfully omitting the dreadful "Twilight"; intro. by James Blish. May be reviewed next time, if God gives me strength.); Earthlight, by Arthur C. Clarke, £1.75; The World Shuffler, by Keith Laumer, £1.75 (Misadventures of Lafayette O'Leary, star of much other Laumer epics as The Time Bender and The Shape Changer. Extremely silly but quite fun. I read this a couple of years ago and can't recall a single damned thing about it. Features a pushy wench called Swinebald. It's that kind of book.); A Choice of Gods, Clifford D. Simak, £1.75 (A Hugo finalist, and supposedly Simak's best book for some years. As an old Simak fan I very much hope it is; but thus far — about 30p. — I find it rather asporadic. Stand by for further reports.); The Far Out Worlds of A.E. Van Vogt, £1.95.

From Panther: All The Sounds of Fear, by Harlan Ellison, 30p. (The first 8 stories from Alone Against Tomorrow, now out in paperback, and containing

three times as much for twice the price. You have been warned. The first story is "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" — probably Ellison's most effective story, and a certain inclusion in my projected theme anthology, Great Science Fiction About Pus. Nice Christopher Foss spaceship on the cover.); At The Mountains of Madness, by H.P. Lovecraft, 40p (Reprint of the Collanor collection with the two decent stories removed. I.e., Shub-Niggurath, Cthulhu fhtagn, Ploid Gyaru, Aiii, Yag-Sothoth, Scapen fack, and the rest.).

From Mayflower: Count Brass, by Michael Moorcock, 30p. (Yes folks, he's changed the names and sold his sword-and-sorcery trilogy again!)

From Arrow: Solaris, by Stanislaw Lem, 35p. (Sorry, Mike Coney — nearly elipped there!); Isle of the Dead, by Roger Zelazny, 35p.

From Sphere: Beyond Bedlam, by Wyman Guin, 35p. (Originally titled Living Way Out); Captive Universe, by Barry Harriess, 30p.

From Coronet: Transit, by Edmund Cooper, 30p.; Sleepers of Mars and Wanderers of Time, by John Wyndham, 30p each (Two collections of early stories.)

From Pan: Gold The Man, by Joseph Green, 30p. ("A Broddingnagian Beta plus for audacity" says the Birmingham Evening Mail); Tales From The Galaxies, edited by Rachel Williams-Ellis and Michael Pearson, 25p. (A Piccola book, aimed at the kiddies. A comic strip, a rotten story by Mine W-S, and abridged versions of Wyndham's "The Bad Stuff", Sheekley's "The Odour of Thought" and Leinster's "Exploration Team". 126p. of very large print.)

From Penguin: Cat's Cradle, by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., 30p. (New edition of this brilliant book — one which I assume you've all read anyway. If you haven't ... what are you doing wasting your time reading this? Go. Buy.)

From Texas A&M University: A Dream of Other Worlds, by Professor Thomas D. Clareson, no price given. (Offprint of a lecture. Short — 15 double-spaced typescript pages — but interesting.)

BOB SHAW AD ASTRA?

At the age of 14 I decided to become an astronomer.

As a first step in achieving this ambition, I read every book on the subject in the public library at the rate of one or two a week. This second-hand stargazing was satisfying enough for some months, but, as time wore on, it became apparent that a telescope of one's own was de rigueur for up-and-coming astronomers.

The concentrated reading course had taught me quite a bit about astronomical instruments and I was able to decide at once that the best one for my purpose would be a five-inch telescope, which, in non-technical language, is a telescope which measures five inches across the fat end. Unfortunately, although the library books had dealt very thoroughly with matters like focal lengths, chromatic aberration and alt-azimuth mountings, they had been completely mute on the subject of prices. There was, as I was later to learn, a very good reason for this omission. A first-class five-inch telescope with accessories can easily cost several hundred pounds, and as the theme of most of the authors was, "How foolish it is to waste money going to the cinema when you can survey the limitless splendours of the Universe for nothing!" they were understandably reluctant to descend to the vulgar financial details. However, I was unaware of all this at the time, and in the absence of guidance estimated a price by myself. The calculation was quite simple

-- I had once owned a telescope measuring about one inch across which had cost me three shillings; the one I wanted to buy was five times thicker and therefore should cost three shillings multiplied by five, equals fifteen shillings. Allowing a bit extra for inflation I reckoned that if I raised eighteen shillings I would be in a position to put up a serious challenge to Armagh Observatory.

Some weeks later -- slightly weakened by total abstinence from regular items of diet such as Muttys Nibs and Jap Bessert, but filled with an unbearably delicious sense of anticipation -- I cycled downtown on a brisk Saturday morning to purchase a telescope, with almost a pound safely buttoned in my hip pocket. Saving the money had been hard work so I decided not actually to go into the first instrument maker's shop I came to in case he hadn't got a five-inch telescope in stock and talked me into buying a less powerful four-inch, or even a miserable little three-inch. Accordingly, I went round all the instrument makers and after hours of studying their window displays and peering in through their doors began to feel slightly disappointed. None of them seemed to have any decent-sized telescopes, and I could hear in my imagination the familiar phrase, "Oh, we'd have to send away to England for that."

Finally dusk began to fall and, as it was bitterly cold and lunchtime was several hours past, I decided to com-

promise. One of the shops had a skimpy little thing of not more than two inches diameter in the window and although it was a pale imitation of what I wanted it would at least get me cracking on the limitless splendours of the universe that very evening. The money left over after buying it, I consoled myself, would be a good start towards the price of a proper telescope.

The thin, meticulously neat, severe-looking man behind the counter did not seem particularly pleased to see me. He jerked his head inquiringly and went on polishing a row of expensive cameras.

"I'm interested in the telescope you have in the window."

He stopped polishing and fixed a cold gaze on my cycle clips. I withstood the scrutiny confidently, knowing the cycle clips were as good as money could buy. I decided to let him know that here was a fellow expert on precision instruments.

"It's got an object glass of about two inches," I said, realising it might be a good idea to chat about technical details for a while, and only after he had seen that I knew something about telescopes bring up the subject of price.

"It's thirty two pounds ten," he said with a complete lack of finesse or preamble, and went right back to polishing the cameras.

The blow did not hit me right away. I sneered at the back of his head a couple of times, then dashed out of the shop with two objectives in mind — to buy a telescope before closing time and to spread word around the trade that one of its members was trying to sell six-shilling telescopes for thirty two pounds ten. Half an hour later I was slowly cycling homewards, sickened by the discovery that they were all in it together. It seemed I was shut off from the stars as effectively as if huge steel shutters had sprung up from behind the Castlereagh Hills on one side and the Black Mountain on the other and had clanged together overhead.

The despair lasted several days, then, with a resurgence of hope, I realised what had to be done. It was all so simple. If the people who sold brand new telescopes had formed a price

ring the thing was to pick up a second-hand instrument from some friendly old junk dealer who had no idea of its current market value. Within a week I had developed a deep and implacable hatred for friendly old junk dealers — obviously somebody had told them what the telescope makers were up to and the unscrupulous rogues had pushed their own prices up to within shillings of the brand-new prices. The stars would have to wait, but this time the situation didn't seem quite so hopeless. I couldn't believe that junk dealers would be as well organised as instrument makers and there was always the chance that one day one of them would make a mistake.

Then began a phase of my life which lasted several years and gave me an unrivalled knowledge of Belfast's second-hand shops, even those in distant quarters of the city. On Saturdays and lunch times and holidays I spent my time checking the dingy little shops, going in hopefully each time a new telescope appeared, coming out in renewed despair on hearing the price. Not once during those years did a friendly old junk dealer make a mistake. They maintained the price barrier which separated me from the distant untrodden reaches of the universe as though it was all part of a gigantic plot.

Fruitless though the search was, it produced an occasional memorable experience. One Saturday afternoon I was prowling through the darker corners of Smithfield Market when I displayed a tiny brass object which I immediately recognised as being the eye-piece of a fairly large telescope. It was completely useless to me, but out of sheer force of habit, I asked the price from the old woman in charge. After sizing me up cheerfully she announced that it was seven and sixpence. Her business sense must have been remarkably good for I had about eight shillings in my pocket at that moment, and immediately said I would buy. There was absolutely nothing I could do with the eye-piece of course, but it was the first thing in the telescope line that had come into my price range, and I had to have it. I had come a long way from that first morning when I set out to buy a five-inch telescope.

The old lady knew the object was

only an eye-piece from an instrument perhaps six-foot long but she had no way of knowing that I too fully understood this, and, when she saw my obvious delight at the price, seemed to feel a pang of unprofessional remorse. She stood for a while as greed battled with guilt, then slowly handed the tube over and took my money. As I was going out through the door she emitted a faint strangling sound which made me look back, and I realized she was going to speak.

"You know," she finally ground out, "there's a piece missing."

I nodded. Having gone that far she had made peace with her conscience and we parted in a glow of mutual satisfaction. Surprisingly enough, my money was not altogether wasted because I began to pick up other vaguely telescopic items in the form of magnifying glasses and spectacle lenses, and discovered that it was possible to make telescopes — after a fashion, that is. My first one was constructed from a piece of lead piping, made stars look like little balls of illuminated candy floss, and was so heavy that when I let it fall from the bedroom window one night it woke half the street and threw one of my father's dogs into some kind of fit.

That was the first occasion on which I became aware of a rather strange fact. Astronomy was presumably the quietest and most respectable pursuit any teenager could be expected to take up, but every time I got into my stride people and small animals kicked up hell. There was the time I built a telescope with a wooden tube and made the marvelous discovery that some of the tiles on our roof could be slid out of the way, leaving a hole big enough to poke the telescope through from the attic. I began work on a suitable telescope mounting right away but during the first half hour our front door was almost pounded down by panic-stricken passers-by coming to warn us that our roof was collapsing. So great was the consternation caused by my private observatory that one of the first people to call was an old lady who hadn't spoken to any of us for years, not since the day my younger brother, with the ruthless ease of a Japanese sniper, had annihilated her row of prize tulips

with his air rifle. (From her back garden she had seen the flowers fold over, one by one, apparently without reason, and had given such a heart-rending scream that my brother vowed never again to shoot anything but birds and cats.) Anyway, I was forced to abandon the eyrie.

In between tours of junk shops I persevered with telescope-building and in the process learned a lot about the science of optics. I learned to calculate the magnification obtained by even the most complicated lens systems, but preferred the simpler method of direct measurement. To find out how strong a telescope is, one looks through it at a brick wall and keeps the other eye open, with the result that large bricks and small bricks are seen superimposed on each other. A count of the number of small bricks that fit into a big brick gives the instrument's magnification.

The snag with this method was that every now and again the brick would be blotted out by a sudden flurry of movement and I would find myself staring at the vastly magnified and outraged face of a fat middle-aged woman. Sometimes the fat, middle-aged woman gathered an excited knot of other fat, middle-aged women who stood around, arms crossed protectively over their bosoms, muttering among themselves and staring in disquiet at my bedroom window. I always cringed back, appalled, wondering what I could say to my parents if the police or a deputation from the Church arrived at the door.

Finally, after about five years, I acquired a reasonable telescope. Not the five-inch job I had set out to buy on that fateful Saturday morning — that was still beyond my pocket — but a reasonable telescope, nevertheless.

Anybody who has even a superficial understanding of the workings of the human brain inside the human bones will guess what happened next. I was disappointed. During those five years the anticipated pleasures of owning an astronomical telescope had multiplied themselves in my mind to a point which could not have been satisfied by all the resources of a modern observatory. Prolonged re-reading of the poetic astronomy books of people like Garzetti

P. Service (remember his early science fiction?) had convinced me that putting my eye to a telescope would transport me to another plane of existence in which the grey realities of mundane life would be replaced by a wonderland of celestial jewels, vari-coloured and mind-drinking; clusters like fire-flies tangled in silver braids; glowing nebulae among whose filaments the imagination could wander for ever and ever.

Of course, all I saw were quivering and meaningless specks of light, and I got rid of the telescope within a few weeks.

And yet, the years-long search was not wasted. Now, twenty years further on, I still occasionally dream that I have found a friendly old junk dealer who doesn't know the price of telescopes. I smell the dust in his shop, I see the uncomprehending china dogs, I experience the limits of intellectual delight as I carry the solid, heavy instrument out into the street -- moving towards a beautiful future which can never exist.

You couldn't buy dreams like that.

— Bob Shaw

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

George Zebrowski lives in New York, and is a full-time writer. He has had stories in many magazines and original anthologies, including New Worlds Quarterly. His story "Heathen God" was a runner-up in the 1971 Nebula Awards. He is the author of two sf novels: The Omega Point (Ace) and Eacrolife, a reportedly massive book forthcoming from Scribner's. He has lectured on science fiction at University level. He is editor of the Bulletin of the Science Fiction Writers of America. All in all, he is quite a busy man, apart from writing reviews for Riverside Quarterly and Vector. And he is still quite young!

Patricia Sargent is another New Yorker about whom I know very little, save that she writes a very good review. She has had stories published in MMQ, RESF, Universe, etc., and has a novel called Cloned Lives to be published in 1974.

Peter Roberts is the name given to a substance which fills a colourful set of clothes. May be observed at conventions looking somewhat above it all, except when taking embarrassing photos. Has a reputation as a fannish fan, but is a Secret Intellectual. Has been letting his mask slip a little of late. Professes an unhealthy interest in

earwarks, possibly due to a slight resemblance.

Brian Aldiss, Chris Priest, Bob Shaw, and Hoger Zelazny are all famous. Malcolm Edwards is a well-known publisher from Harrow.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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There's room here for an advert, a few words of wisdom, or a funny fannish interlineation. Unfortunately I can't think of any of them. Not that there's any room left if I could.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

roger zelazny

I like all of them for different reasons, because I wrote all of them for different reasons. Unlike is equally unanimous, for all the things they did not achieve. I never, save in the most general, conversational terms, say what I was attempting to do in a particular piece, because I have really said all that I was able or dared to say about it in the piece itself. If it requires explanation then it is not effective, and for this reason not worth wasting time over. If it is effective then the act of explanation becomes an exercise in redundancy.

So much for the ideas and intended effects.

This leaves then the purely subjective impulses themselves which stirred my thinking and feeling equipment into motion along the lines that led to the books. I am not at all desirous of sharing more than a few of the outer circles of my spirit with my readers, and with this proviso in mind I will tell you some of the things that helped to poke various book-shaped holes in my consciousness in times gone by. I will mention three items per book:

This Immortal/...and Call Me Conrad.

1) My first book. At the time of its inception, anything over 25,000 words in length seemed next to infinite.

Question: What could I do to be assured an ample supply of material? Answer: Have lots of characters representing different attitudes, so that the narrator would always have someone to talk

to or talk about. Question: Who does this very well? Answer: Aldous Huxley. Decision: Bear him in mind in constructing the cast of characters, including a monomaniac scientist as a note of thanks for the assist, but take nothing else. Do not lean too heavily on anyone. 2) The particular Mediterranean affluence I wanted came very close to my feelings as aroused by Lawrence Durrell's Prospero's Cell and Reflections on a Marine Venue. I felt this in the opening sequence and tried to avoid it in the later ones, as I was aware of my susceptibility at that time. 3) I reread Cavafy and Seferis as I wrote, to balance the influences and to keep things in Greece while I was about it.

Dream Master/He Who Shapes. 1) I wanted a triangle situation, two women and one man, as I had never written one before. 2) I wanted a character loosely based on a figure in a classical tragedy -- exceptional, and bearing a flaw that would smash him. 3) I have never been overfond of German shepherds, as there were two which used to harass my dog when I was a boy. —I prefer the shorter version of this story, by the way, over the novelization.

Lord of Light. 1) I initially intended to destroy Yama partway through the book, but was subsequently taken by a feeling that he and Sam were two aspects of one personality. In my own mind, and I suppose there only, Sam and Yama stand in a relationship similar to that of Goethe's Faust and Mephisto-

pheles. 2) I wanted a triangle situation of sorts here also, only this time involving two men and one woman. Sam, Yama and Kali served. 3) It was in writing this book that I came to realize the value of a strong female figure or presence in a novel, to balance and add another level of tension, apart — or rather, abstracted — from the purely sexual.

Isle Of The Dead. 1) The situation of the main character in my novelette "This Moment of the Storm" served as the point of departure here, with the pervasive sense of loss involved in living past or outliving what could have been monumentally significant, along with the uncertainty as to the present moment's worth. 2) A beginning consideration of the fact that the psychological effects of actions performed are often more significant than the motives for those actions. 3) A desire to relax after the narrative line in Lord of Light.

Creatures of Light and Darkness.

1) A further desire to relax. This book was not really written for publication so much as my own amusement. It achieved this end. 2) The Steel General came first, as a character in a vacuum, born of an early morning viewing of the film "To Die in Madrid". 3) I wanted to write a piece in which my feelings for my characters were as close to zero as I could manage.

Damnation Alley. 1) I wanted to do a straight, style-be-damned action story with the pieces fall wherever. Movement and menace. Splash and color is all. 2) A continuing, small thought as to how important it really is whether a good man does something for noble reasons or a man less ethically endowed does a good thing for the wrong reasons. 3) Had the No play buried near the end of the book-length version been written first I would probably not have written the book.

Nine Princes In Amber. I will refrain from saying anything about this one, as the entire story is not yet finished.

Jack of Shadows. 1) Macbeth and the morality plays were on my mind here, as were 2) 17th cent. metaphysical poetry, in the soul & body dialogues and 3)

Jack Vance.

There you have three impulse-items per book, with no assignment of rank intended. Three seemed as good a figure as any. I like ...And Call Me Conrad because I was satisfied with my central character. I dislike it because of the contrived nature of several of the conflict scenes, which I juggled about so that there would be highpoints of action in each portion whether it was serialized in two parts or three. I like He Who Shapes for the background rather than the foreground. I thought it an effective setting for the Rougemont-Wagner death-wish business. I dislike it because Bender turned out too stuffy for the figure I was trying to portray and Jill was far too flat a character. I like Lord of Light for the color and smoke and folk tale effects I wanted to achieve. I dislike it because I unintentionally let my style shift. The first chapter and the final chapter, which succeeds it temporally, are farther apart in terms of tone than now strikes me as appropriate. Everything that came between caused me to drift from an initial formalism. If I had to do it again, I would rewrite the first chapter though, rather than the rest of the book. I like Isle Of The Dead because I like Sandow, I like his world and I was pleased with the course of the action in it. I dislike it because I was so pleased with the way it was moving that I fear I slicked it over-much in maintaining the pace and trying to make everything fit neatly. I like Creatures of Light and Darkness for the sense of power the verfremdungseffekt granted me in dealing with everything and everybody in the piece. I dislike it because I employed it only for that purpose. I like Damnation Alley for the overall subjection of everything in it to a Stanislavsky-Boleslavsky action verb key, "to get to Boston". I dislike it for the same reason. I like Jack of Shadows for Jack, Rosalie, Morningstar and the world in which they act. I dislike it because I now think I should have telescoped the action somewhat in the first third of the book and expanded it more in the final third, producing a stronger overall effect.

Basically, coldly, I cannot single

out one of these books as preferred above the others, now. I like and dislike all of them, for very different reasons. These reasons have tended to alter as the world grows older and doubtless will continue to do so. I write to learn how to write. Therefore,

the dislikes are more important to me than the likes, while the impulses involved are either totally frivolous or an angle-shot of the way my mind works, or both.

— Roger Zelazny

continued from p.6

During Philip Strick's brief visit he was handing out masses of leaflets concerning the Russian film Solaris. This opens at the Curzon Cinema, Curzon Street, London W.1. for an extended run from May 3rd. (Probably it will be on by the time you get this issue.) Whether or not you've read the novel on which it is based, this is clearly a film you're going to have to try to get to see. Don't try waiting a few years for it to appear at a Convention — their film facilities aren't generally too good on Cinemascope. The film, which is directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, won the Special Jury Prize at the 1972 Cannes Film Festival. I'll quote just a short section from the leaflet:

"The film is epic in length as well as appearance — it is 2½ hours in its Western version, edited by Tarkovsky himself. Its pace is calm, methodical, and hallucinatory. Few people will be able to forget its vivid, beautiful and disturbing images, or its unique story of a planet where nightmares come true..."

Because Philip's company is handling the U.K. release of Solaris he is unlikely to be reviewing it in his column (missing this issue, but hopefully back next time). If I can get along to it I'll try to say something about it next time.

I notice that in all the preceding stuff about OMPhoon, I somehow managed to omit any reference to next year's Eastercon. It's Newcastle in '74. The bidding session on Saturday morning ended triumphantly for the Gannet mob, with the alternative London bid, headed by Bram Stokes, foundering and being effectively conceded (and certainly lost) in a very

bitter-sounding speech from Bram, in which he accused us all of not really being interested in an sf convention, because we didn't want the kind of convention he wanted. The majority in favour of the Newcastle bid was overwhelming. And good luck to them. Advance registration is 50p, and I presume should go to the Treasurer, Bob Jackson, 21 Lynchhurst Road, Benton, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE12 9PT.

Although they're a little nervous about it all, the Gannets should be able to put on a good convention. I hope we'll be able to afford to go.

The first lot of awards for 1972 have been announced, and just for once it isn't the Nebulae. With few apologies to Cy Chauvin, who doesn't think I should put this kind of thing in an editorial column, these are the results of the first John W. Campbell Award for the best science fiction novel of the year, sponsored by the Illinois Institute of Technology and decided upon by a committee consisting of Brian Aldiss, Professor Tom Claessen, Harry Harrison, Professor Willis McNelly and Professor Leon E. Stover:

First Prize: Beyond Apollo, by Barry Malzberg (Random House)
Second Prize: The Liebesner, by James Gunn (Scribner's)
Third Prize: Fugue for a Darkening Island, by Christopher Priest (Paber)

Special Awards: Dying Inside, by Robert Silverberg (Scribner's)

As you might predict, being a jury award, this differs pretty radically from the lists in the other awards (only Dying Inside made the finals of the Hugo and Nebula). But it's an interesting list for all that, not least because it actually includes not

just a British author but also a British publisher.

This is the special King-Size issue of Vector, containing about half as much again as any of the others I've done. This is not to be a regular thing, however. It happens this time because we have found another printer whose quote for a 56-page Vector is about the same as that of our previous printer for a 40-page issue. Assuming that this one turns out O.K. we have now switched from the old printer.

I'm not quite stupid enough to want to do six 56-page issues as a result; but it will result in a greater operational flexibility. Until now, the 40-page format has been both the sinistus (from the point-of-view of a reasonable range of contents) and the maximus (from the point-of-view of cost). It will remain the standard size. But now, if the range of material won't fit into the 40 pages, instead of having to leave out the reviews or the letters or something I'll be able to increase the size a little. I don't know quite why this issue has grown in the way it has — partly it's because Brian Aldiss offered at quite short notice to let me print another section of Billion Year Spree, and with the American edition looming (although the British one is now set for November 1st) it couldn't very well wait. Apart from this, I'm afraid that with the unaccustomed opportunity to expand, this Vector just grooved.

It's time to say a few things about this issue. The interview with Gene Wolfe is constructed, as you probably guessed anyway, from a series of letters. I've done my best to give the whole thing, rather ramshackle when I started, a reasonable flow and continuity. I think it's O.K., but if it isn't it's my fault. Another thing: I soon found that the possibility and ease with which one can be misunderstood when asking questions over 3-4000 miles meant that questions were spelled out in rather more detail than was really desirable in the finished article. I've therefore pared the questions down and omitted parts of them which are obvious by implication from the answers. If, on occasion, Gene Wolfe seems to be referring to some-

thing I'm supposed to have said when I don't appear to have said it, this is the reason.

"The Man Who Could Work Miracles" is taken from the chapter of the same name in Billion Year Spree. Thanks to Brian Aldiss I've now had the opportunity to read the bulk of the book in galley proofs, and can say without any hesitation whatever that it is a book which every B.S.F.A. member is going to want and need in their collection when it appears.

Bob Shaw's piece this time is reprinted from an Irish fanzine, George Charters' The Scarr. In answer to one or two enquirers, yes, Bob's humorous writings are to be a regular feature of Vector in future, as long as our common tendency to do things at the last possible moment doesn't interfere. They won't all be reprints; Bob promises some new material as we go along. But I believe these articles will be new to the vast majority of B.S.F.A. members — they're certainly new to me — and are well worth reprinting.

Next issue, something I'm unable even to contemplate at this precise moment of time, should be out in the first half of July — probably a little more than two months after this one; but then, this one is, of all outlandish things, a little early. No.66, in addition to all the regular stuff, will have an interview with E.C. Compton, plus an assessment of his work by Mark Adlard. If I can persuade Harry Harrison to send that article on Make Room! Make Room! he's been promising for nearly a year now, that may be in there too. Otherwise, who knows? Whatever I say will probably turn out to be untrue, so I won't say it.

Maybe there will be a supplement on home decorating: after several months touring round hovels of various kinds we have finally found a flat which seems O.K. So unless something goes wrong (which of course it may, but we keep our fingers crossed) the next Vector may come from a new address. It's not ideal by any means, but is rather less extortionate than other places we've seen; and we can just about afford it. See you next time. Please write!

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Mike Coney
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CANADA

Dear Malcolm: Many thanks for the plug
on page 5 of Vector 63.

I'm glad you enjoyed Mirror Image; I had my doubts about it as I knew I had crammed too many plots into too short a novel, and so all the time had to economise on words instead of being able to take the thing leisurely. When I re-read it, I got the impression that most of the book was devoted to hurried disposal of points arising before they threatened to take up too much space. I am sure I am my own severest critic; but I did like the way the action moved along and was genuinely interested in some of the characters. Les Flood tells me Gallanes have now bought it — so at last I will be represented on the U.K. bookstands. It has been frustrating recently, DAW having bought three novels from me and Ballantine's one, but not a sale in the U.K. And I have heard mutterings of complaint in the U.S.A. because my stuff is too British, they say...

And so to No.63 which was without question the most interesting issue of Vector that I have ever read. Brian Aldiss is a man whose stories I always seek out, rather than happen on by accident. Not only is he good, but he is recognised to be good — so much so that critics will take the trouble to defend his failures rather than ignore them entirely. I mean, I thought Earthworks and An Age were poorly characterised and plotted, and lacking in any kind of interesting SF content. But the critics will go to lengths to say what they con-

sider wrong with these books — they don't dismiss them in a word. And neither would I, because I read them both twice, which proves something... But it's easy to say that a writer is good and then to point out where his faults lie, so I will leave that angle. Here are my positive feelings about Aldiss' books.

Nonstop I picked from a shelf in Digit form ('Haunted by peril, he Found Himself') having never heard of Aldiss, so that was a long time ago. I have since read the thing about six times. I have thrust it on friends and told them to try it, and the hell with Digit's cover. Even if they have never read SF before, they have enjoyed it to a man, or woman. Not only have they enjoyed it, but they have been amazed by it; the old sense-of-wonder thing. In all my reading of SF there are three books that I would class above all others, and Nonstop is one. (The others are Payane and The Chrysalids, but I have a suspicion you will not agree with me there.) ++ Well, no. For one thing, I couldn't possibly pick just three books (though if I did they'd probably all be by Philip K. Dick). But I wouldn't argue with you. It's a good trio.++

Naturally I was hooked on Aldiss from then on and have read everything since with varying degrees of delight and disgust, but always with interest. Novels or short stories, the man is always worth reading. The last time I was in England I bought The Hand-Reared Boy, took it back to Antigua, and it was the sensation of the island, and made me, socially. The plots and the

characters of all his books stick in my memory even now, years after I read some of them. (Even Earthworks and An Age...) There are vivid images still there; the Trappersnapper in Hotbouse; Poyly and Gren; Soames and the defloration ceremony; the Utods and their excrement; the pig that had its insides dissolved and sucked out...

And many others. Aldiss has a knack with these scenes. But above all, he compels me to read on... Which is the mark of a writer and distinguishes him from the overpublicised bores which surround us from every shelf, like Bailey, and Metalious... and Lem... (Some time ago I made a pact with myself that I would never mention his name in writing, because he received quite enough undeserved mention without me adding to it — but it's no good, I've got to speak out. There the name is again in Vector 63; just like it was in 62, and 61, and we don't use his Christian name any more; we just call him Lem. Everyone has heard of Lem. He's as well known as Ballard, and Aldiss, and Delany, and Simak. Except that the last four made their names by virtue of a string of excellent novels which gave enjoyment to a hell of a lot of people, whereas Lem's fame is based on stuff nobody's read, apparently. But never mind, we are soon to be inundated. And human nature being what it is, the critics will join in sheeplike blasts of praise. And being what I am, I will refuse to read this works, and steadfastly condemn them as crap. Prejudice is the most honest and satisfying of emotions.)

The excerpt from Aldiss' book was fascinating. How a man can be a good critic and a good writer at the same time I can't understand, but Aldiss manages it. The other articles were all interesting although I would liked see more; several novels were hardly mentioned while Barefoot and Probability A received more than their share of space, I felt. This is not a valid criticism of the issue, however; what I am really saying is that Vector 63 ought to have been twice the size.

++ I really think you ought to try and have a go at Solaris — you never know, you might like it (it has certain affinities with Mirror Image). Frans Rottensteiner tells me, "The trouble with you English and American fans is really that so few of you

have any idea of what is going on in the literatures of other peoples and other countries." It's a criticism I feel open to, which may be why I'm prepared to give a respectful ear to many of the things Franz and others have said about Stanislaw Lem. It seems unjustifiably xenophobic to dismiss the man as an unknown nobody just because his work hasn't appeared in English to any great extent. And I hate to tell you this, Mike, but had it not been for your letter the dreaded name would not have been mentioned anywhere in this issue! (Heb heb.) /// God forbid that Vector 63 should have been twice the size. I've started counting my grey hairs as it is. But I'm glad you enjoyed it. Speaking of which... ++

Brian Aldiss
Heath House
Southmoor
Abingdon
Berks.

Dear Melocls, There wasn't a real chance at the recent festivities in the US Embassy to tell you how much I enjoyed the special surprise packet of Vector 63. Great to see a creative editor working on Vector, as in Archie Mercer's day! Have I really been twenty years in business? I'll give you the same answer I gave Moorcock and Ballard when I had to phone them on my last birthday and they both asked me why I sounded so cheerful about having another birthday: "I'm just thinking of what I've got away with all that time!"

Thanks too, and a tear in the eye and all that, to the friends who lied so staunchly for me throughout the issue, especially Andrew Stephenson, Jim Blish, the incredible Philip Strick, who must produce his own book on sf as soon as possible, and of course my old mate Harry Harrison, who gives as good as he takes when it comes to friendship. (Excuse — difficult letter to write — quick blow of nose...) Actually, I feel awful about 63, recalling the words of Max Beerbohm, another man with a small talent, who begged, "Do not by dithyrambs hasten the reaction against me!"

All the same, may I say how much I admired Dave Rowe's and Andrew's efforts

on your behalf? Any has mentioned something of the story behind his powerful interpretation of my Frankenstein novel. He worked tremendously hard, and that stunning illustration encapsulates many of the themes of the novel. All the same, his other illic strikes even deeper. By God, it's Marston Street, viewed from the kitchen door! Margaret did and Harry and Jim will experience the same pang I have. Marston Street it is. And the ocean streaming above the old church is a fine imaginative effect. There Greybeard and Saliva Tree and many other terrible things were written, there the Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group was born -- the beer stains are still on the carpet. It makes you feel like a living fossil, doesn't it?

You're a bit inaccurate about 80 Minute Hour. It was written over a long period, and includes covert references to both Denmark and Mexico, which happened to be flashing by at the time. It was a slow write. Then came Frankenstein, a quick write, and clearly a by-blow of my labours on Billion Year Spree.

P.S. Both 80 Minute Hour and Frankenstein Unbound will be published by Jonathan Cape. As you probably know, Billion Year Spree is coming from Weidenfeld and Nicolson. I have been weaned at last from the bosom of Faber, after seventeen years and twenty books.

++ I had hoped to be able to hang on to the originals of Andrew's two illustrations. But unfortunately he prised them out of me. /// This is the first Vector is quite a while to carry a letter column, so this one is going to be something of a grab-bag. The next few letters all hark back to Vector 62, which some of you may still remember dimly. ++

Mark Adlard
22 Ham Lane
Lenham
Nr Maidstone
Kent

Dear Malcolm, Joanna Russ wasn't much more than a name to me, tenuously associated with the small but increasing number of American writers who are disenchanting with the pulp trad-

ition. Her article, however ("The Wearing Out of Genre Materials") is a specific and valuable contribution to current argument.

I don't think Joanna Russ actually says a single thing which stands on its own as something new. But she has assembled a number of ideas which float around in general debate, and placed them in a useful frame of reference. Discussion about whether, for example, Miven has injected fresh blood into the main stream of sf, or whether he is merely a late flower on stock already dead, is given greater clarity if one has Joanna Russ' analysis in mind.

It is worth reminding people (or, to be less kind, telling them for the first time) that "third-stage" sf was being produced in some volume by English writers outside the genre, at precisely that time when "second-stage" sf was enjoying its heyday in the American magazines. I think of Stapledon (Last and First Men '31, Odd John '35, Star Maker '37, Sirius '44); Huxley (Brave New World '32, After Many A Summer '39, Ape and Essence '48); Lewis (Out of the Silent Planet '38, Voyage to Venus '43, That Hideous Strength '45). Of the three it seems that only Lewis was aware of the American magazines.

In many ways Stapledon provides the most instructive contrast with the "second-stage" writers in the pulp tradition. In Star Maker, for example, he constantly tells the reader that he is not going to describe such-and-such a thing:

"I must not tell in detail of the heroic struggle by which..."

"It would be wearisome to describe the insane warfare which ensued..."

On the other hand he constantly warns the reader that he is going to describe certain things in detail:

"Leaving all else unnoticed, I must try to describe this crisis..."

"This change that had come over us deserves to be carefully described

And so on, again and again. The interesting point arising out of this stylistic device is that the things he says he won't describe are those things by which the contemporary pulp writers were earning their living -- galactic

warfare and imaginary technologies. The things he insisted on describing were those things which the pulp writers left out — the nature of good and evil, of pain, of man's relation to the cosmos and to God.

It seems important to me that we should re-direct our attention to this other tradition of non-pulp sf. In the course of time genre sf may seem no more than a temporary excrescence upon a mainstream of tradition which had no relationship with the American magazines. A few of the best writers who started in the pulp magazines have made the transition. Blish is one of the most eminent examples.

Unfortunately the effects of the pulp tradition on discrimination are still very strong, and help to account for the lack of interest in what I have called the "other tradition". This can be the only explanation why the sf shelves in the bookshops are currently overflowing with reprints from those two pioneers of the pulp tradition, E.R. Burroughs and H.G. Smith, whilst Stapledon can be obtained only through specialist or second-hand sources.

++ This letter, of course, was written before Penguin brought out their mass Stapledon reprint, making available all his sf except Odd John — it's incredible to think that Star Maker has taken over 35 years to reach paperback in this country. But I don't think it's fair to blame this neglect on the growth of genre sf. In the long run I suspect it will be fairer to thank the genre for cultivating a readership to give Stapledon the recognition he deserves. I think there are obvious parallels between his case and that of Morvern Peake, another genuinely original talent whose books remained in almost complete obscurity until the public caught up with him. Maybe the time is ripe for somebody to launch the kind of rehabilitation of Stapledon's work as Mike Moorcock, Anthony Burgess, and a few others, managed for Peake in the late sixties. And it could just be that Billion Year Spree will provide the necessary

first shove. Then, who knows? Last and First Men in Penguin Modern Classics? Could be... Now back to Mark again, and another letter. ++

I cannot resist following my earlier letter with a couple of specific references:

Asimov (speaking on film recently shown at the American Embassy):

"The sf written in the 40s became fact in the 60s. When Armstrong stepped onto the moon it was justification of the work done by the writers in Campbell's stable."

C.S. Lewis (essay "On Stories" republished in Of Other Worlds):

"If some fatal progress of applied science ever enables us in fact to reach the Moon, that real journey will not at all satisfy the impulses which we now seek to gratify by writing such stories."

It seems to me that this paraphrase and quotation illustrate very succinctly the differences between second- and third-stage sf, and also between the American pulp tradition and the British non-pulp tradition.

James Blish
Tree Tops
Woodlands Road
Harpsden (Henley)
Oxon.

Dear Malcolm, Philip Strick is far too kind to Silent Running. Why put plants that need Earth-intensity sunlight in orbit around Saturn, a minimum of 740 million miles further out, with all the attendant extra energy to get them there, let alone maintain them and their crew after they arrive? How could Dorn's ship survive plunging through the rings of Saturn, which the film shows as no worse than running head-on in a heavy gale? The rings are at least a mile thick and consist chiefly of what appear to be chunks of ammonia ice, and not in convenient cube sizes, either. How does it happen that when three of the domes are blown up in space, the observers in the fourth

hear the explosions? In fact, I can't recall a single scene in the film, right down to the smallest, that doesn't require some explanation which is never forthcoming. Even the score — not counting the songs of Joan Baez, which seem to be there only to further reinforce the Lesson — shows that however good Peter Schickels may be at burlesquing Mannheim-school composers it's unsafe to turn him loose on his own. ... Tony Sudbery ignores my careful limitation of my introduction to More Issues At Hand to the technical critic (I took two long paragraphs to mention some of the many other kinds, and rule them out of my discussion), who like it or not does address himself primarily to the writer and editor. Reviews are aimed primarily at the reader, and anybody who wants to bother comparing the Athe-ling books with H&SF book columns will see the difference at once.

++ Couldn't agree with you more about Silent Running, which compounded all its scientific idiocies by committing the cardinal sin of boring me. If I'd paid to see it I'd have felt really cheated... Sorry, Jim, but you have committed a cardinal sin yourself — that of offending our man in Austria. ++

Frans Rottensteiner
Felsenstrasse 20
2762 Ortman
AUSTRIA

Dear Malcolm, I really don't understand

James Bligh: is his memory failing him, is he fishing for compliments in a very curious way, or has his dislike for me reached such heights that his reasoning powers have suffered? (++) Ruzzled readers are referred to Vector 62, p.34 ++) I could answer him that he underrates me: he has no idea of what expressions of contempt I am capable when he thinks I have treated him with the utmost contempt "up to now". But such flippancy probably isn't necessary. Besides, what he says simply isn't true; for one thing, James Bligh hardly is in a position to pass any judgement on all I have written about him, for the simple reason that there undoubtedly is much that he has never seen; and while most of it is unfavour-

able, not everything is unfavourable. As to the specific case of Solaris, I have quite explicitly commented (in a letter to him) on several points of his H&SF review that I thought especially perceptive; so why should Bligh now be "stunned" to find his name included in an enumeration of people who liked Solaris; or indeed, why should he think such a mere listing has any special significance either for him or me? And that makes me the devil who would quote Scriptures?

I must also deny that my favourite word "for the rest of us" is "dishonesty": my favourite word probably is "heck". I may have used "dishonesty" one or two times, and if Bligh wants to assert that I used it more often than that, or more often than heck, he is invited to count it. It seems to me that Bligh may be allergic to this word since he himself likes to apply it to such journals as Time Magazine or Partisan Review; but I certainly once accused him of literary cheating.

What I'd like to know of Mr Bligh now is whether he includes the fact that I translated his "Cathedrals in Space" in my German language fanzine, or that we made him a German offer for A Case Of Conscience among the alleged "expressions of utmost contempt"? It's of course Mr Bligh's privilege as an author to prefer bad translations to good, a paperback deal to a combined hardcover/paperback sale, and the publisher of Lewis B. Patten, Dorothy Eden and Poul Anderson to the publisher of T.S. Eliot, Hermann Bessé and James Joyce; but the fact that we made him an offer is hardly evidence for his claims, and I should also think that offering somebody a contrast is of somewhat greater significance than a few remarks in the most ephemeral of publications, the sf fanzines.

— Gee, do they really have Dorothy Eden in Germany too? (Totally irrelevant editorial comment.) ++

Ursula Le Guin
3321 NW Thurman
Portland
Oregon 97210
U.S.A.

Dear Malcolm, I was glad to see your

discussion of the last Hugo awards, disseminating the information locus gave us. I have felt extremely unhappy about the whole thing, ever since I read that locus. It is almost impossible to say anything about it, though, and I don't know who to say it to. I do immensely appreciate the honor — it is a real honor -- of being nominated and voted for by all those people, all those strangers who have "met" one only in one's book — it gives a pleasure that no nomination or award from a selected jury could give. But this "Australian ballot" (my conviction is that it's called that because it turns everything upside down) spoils it all. My novel, which clearly placed a poor third, comes in second; Anne McCaffrey's, which as clearly placed first, comes in third! Well, all that juggling and recounting is supposed, I suppose, to insure justice. But it doesn't. First place is first place, and when people vote for it that's what they want — and that's the only place the business and of science fiction, the editors and publishers, are going to pay any attention to at all. They couldn't care less who makes second, third, and fourth; all they care about is The Prize. I think the book that received the most votes for The Prize should get the prize. And, if justice or consolation is what the Hugo committee are after, then perhaps they could designate all the second-third-fourth-fifth people, the runners-up, as "Hugo Honor Books" or something, as the Newbery Awards committee has recently taken to doing.

As it is, I haven't been able to bring myself to vote on the Hugo nominations at all yet this year, because I have this feeling that however I vote they will add it up to come out to just the opposite of what I meant!

Your reply to Christopher Evans' letter in No.62 is absolutely right — for England! -- but alas, not for America. There are a few excellent reviews (Horn Book for instance) and reviewers, but in general writing for children puts one in a ghetto just as writing sf does; and people say to me with hearty camaraderie, "I know you write for children, do you write real books too?" In fact, to put it rather crudely but I think accurately, literature for children here is considered woman's work — in every sense of the word.

* I think the only answer with the Hugos is just to vote for first place and leave the rest blank. That's what I eventually decided to do last year, after concluding that it was hard enough to pick winners in each category without having to rank the also-rans as well. Of course, by the time I'd reached this conclusion the deadline for ballots had passed... **

This is where we start to go in to the brief mentions and We Also Heard Froms. There are a couple of long letters, from Barry Gillam and Cy Chauvin, which I'd like to use — but since they mostly refer right back to No.59, I'm afraid they're too obsolete. But a quote each on Pamela Bulmer's article therein. First Barry: "One point in Mrs Bulmer's argument that bothered me was her statement that the first ingredient of style is honesty. Honesty is a moral judgement and should have no place in criticism. The first question about style is: does it suit the contents? Does Mrs Bulmer call Farner and Silverberg dishonest because they change their styles from work to work?" And now Cy: "There is one point on which I part ways with Pam (and also James Elish); you may recall the line in the introduction to More Issues at Hand where Elish says something to the effect that 'a critic has a duty to be positively harsh towards a bad book'. Now, I'm not sure just exactly what Elish meant when he said 'harsh'; certainly a critic must be honest, and call a bad book a bad book, but some critics adopt a very arrogant tone, and like to 'insult' books (and, indirectly, their authors). I do not think this is a good practice at all. Now, I realize that Pam never openly endorses this, but I'm afraid her review of The Flowers of February is arrogant and full of insults. (For example, 'whoever chooses this book must have read it with his eyes closed', and 'to begin with the plot — if that's the word for it —'.) I can't see how the insults directed at the book make Pam's review any more insightful or clear — All they are is Cute Little Jokes. And I think that any critic who adopts this tone is really working against himself. After all, one of the primary objectives in writing a critical article or review is to be as persuasive and convincing as possible; to

make people accept your viewpoint on a book as the most logical and correct one. If someone adopts the above attitude, however, he can only alienate the writer and reader; I've yet to see anyone convinced by an insult."

Having done something to remedy those omissions, we get back to the vicinity of 1973, and Vector 63. Rev. L.S. Rivett comments on Philip Strick's article therein: "Perhaps it was too obvious to have mentioned, but the painting (i.e. Holman Hunt's 'The Hireling Shepherd' **) was obviously inspired by John 10, 12 & 13, 'He that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep' (A.V. which Holman Hunt would have used). I always took it that the point of the painting was that the Church was becoming too much involved in other things to care properly for the sheep. Compare Hunt's painting with Rraugel the Elder's in which the wolf is devouring one sheep and the shepherd is running away. I may be wrong and I can't check as I have not been able to put my hands on a copy of Hunt's work, but I always believed that a wolf was shown hiding in the far corner of the picture, watching the sheep. This is part of the 'chill in the afternoon' and five minutes later not only would the hireling shepherd "have" the girl, but the wolf would "have" the sheep..." Archie Mercer thought it seemed hardly right for the author of Report on Probability to condemn anything, even Clark Ashton Smith, as unreadable, though he added that Brian Aldiss was one of the few authors around whom a special issue could profitably be based. Gene Wolfe thought "To Baroom and Beyond" was "wonderful... truth and twaddle, but always delightful. I'm going to get Aldiss's book." Ah well, that's another one sold!

On to Vector 64, and first of all a word from the star of the piece, Philip K. Dick: "Above all, I would like to express to you my amazement at the illustration on page seven — it's by Hunter, is it? The android and the human locked in battle. When I saw it, I realized that the artist had caught

in his drawing so much of what I had tried to convey in the speech that I could not believe my eyes. Although over many years I have had many, many of my stories illustrated, I don't recall ever being so astonished and delighted." The illustration was indeed by Alan Hunter — in one of my characteristic moments of stupidity I once again forgot to credit the artwork. The cover was by Asen, whose style you'll probably recognise by now anyway. Incidentally, Philip Dick is particularly interested in getting reactions to "The Android and the Human", so if you were thinking of commenting and then didn't, please think again. Among those who did comment were Richard Cotton and L.O. Evans, neither of whom was in agreement with the actions advocated in the article. I don't think Philip Dick would advocate them, either, in a normal situation — I think the point is that in an extreme situation you have to make what counteraction you can, even if it is entirely negative. Tony Sudbery, not noted as a Dick fan, thought I should have cut the article to make room for the letter column, whose omission, he said, Ought Not To Be Done. He didn't help it, though, by writing at brief and non-quotable length. E.R. James, one of the more regular correspondents, never fails to cheer me up with his kind comments. He seemed to enjoy everything, although the other items paled a little beside the Dick article. He also wonders how I find the time and application... Well, there's not much else to do in the asylum, I'm afraid... And finally, there was Andrew Weiner, who writes rock criticism for Creem and has the odd distinction of having his only short story published in Again, Dangerous Visions. He's another raving Dick fan, liked the reviews and layout, but spoiled his record by not finding Bob Shaw's piece funny. He's doing some ef-oriented articles for Creem, by the way — but more of this later.

And that's all for this time. Do write. I look forward to hearing from you.

BSFA news

edited by ARCHIE MENCEN

GRAND REOPENING OF LIBRARY Our Book Library, containing a reasonably vast amount of sf and fantasy in both hard and soft covers, is alive and well at the N.E. London Polytechnic. The address is:

Peter Nicholls
Science Fiction Foundation
North East London Polytechnic
Barking Precinct
Longbridge Road
Dagenham, Essex
RM8 2AS

Borrowing fees are 2p per paperback and 3p per hardback, plus postage both ways. Members may borrow up to three books at a time, no more than two of which may be hardbacks. A recent addenda/deletions list is available from the library address. Previous catalogues are still available from the BSFA Treasurer, though a reshuffle of such holdings is in the air. Good reading!

...AND A SF FANZINES The Association's Fanzine Foundation (Keith A. Walker, 3 Cromer Grove, Burnley, Lancs) also claims to be back in business, and catalogues are promised for the near future, if not before. Watch This Space for further news from this Department.

WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT it might as well be mentioned that the magazine section of the Association's Library remains in the far-flung custody of Joe Bowman, Balnake, Ardgay, Ross-shire, Scotland, IV24 3DW.

DR. NORMAN COCKBURN Members will be sorry to learn that the Rev. Dr. Norman Cockburn has felt impelled to resign from the Association owing to ill-health. He has recently undergone several operations on his eyes, and we can only hope and trust that they will prove successful.

CONFERENCES WANTED Jnr. G. Linwood (32): 125 Brick-
enham Rd, Isleworth, Middx. "Other" interests: Cinema, Military Modelling, Wargaming. Geographical preference:

anywhere.

David C. Bonlelow (36): 27 George St.,
Consett, Co. Durham, DH8 5LN. Ice-
skating, motorcycling.

Monica M. O'Hara (37): 8 Shirley Drive,
off Knutsford Rd, Grappenhall, via
Warrington, Ches. ESP, Sociology.
Reading. USA, Commonwealth.

Allan J. Owens (21): 5 Brabyns Rd,
Hyde, Ches. Postal Diplomacy, Climbing. UK, USA.

John W. Jarrold (20): 11 Dukes Way,
West Wickham, Kent. Anglo-Saxon
Lang. & Lit., Reading, Writing,
History, Fantasy. UK, USA.

David F. Tillston (27): Flat 1, 96,
Burning Rd, Liverpool, L7 5NH.
Electronics, All Art Forms, Peace &
Unity, DIY legs. Russia, USA, etc.

Alan E. Woodroffe (29): 19 Twentywell
Rd, Sheffield, S17 4PU. Music, Wine
& Beer Making, Photography. UK, USA.

Christine Ogien (Miss) (17): 35 Keewick
Drive, Cullercoats, North Shields,
Northumberland. Astronomy, Drama,
Classical Guitar, Ancient History.
UK, USA.

John Caldwell (43): 4 Copperhill Rd,
Congleton, Ches., CN12 3JG. Music,
Photography, Fell Walking, Swimming.

Jennifer Elson (29): 16 Stafford Drive,
Wigton, Lancaster, LA8 2YA. Ancient
Greek History, Writing, Travel. USA.

SF ART A word of sheets concerning THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FANTASY ART EXHIBITION has drifted on to your News Editor's desk. They concern, amongst other things, the exhibiting of artwork at this year's World S.F. Convention, in Toronto over the August/September week-end. For full particulars, contact the ISF&E Art Show Directors: John & Bjo Trimble, P.O. Box 74866, Los Angeles, CA 90004, USA.

S.F. FOUNDATION REPORT The S.F. Foundation (which is looking after our back-library for us) has issued a Report on its activities. Dated January 1973, the Report is in fact a well-written and interesting resume of the Foundation's aims, organisation and activities. Peter Nicholls (address above under "Grand Reopening of Library") may possibly have some to spare for those who are interested. This Department recommends it as well worth reading.

FREE SMALL ADS

SFDR Britain's only magazine of speculative fiction is now in print! Copies of the latest issue are available for 15p each, or 40p for 3 issues, from:

Kevin Smith, Oriol Coll, Oxford
Stories and artwork would also be gratefully received by the editor:
Allan Scott, New College, Oxford

GRANFALLOON The U.S. Hugo nominee fansine now has a British agent! Copies available for 30p each, 3/85p, from:

Philip Payne, Longmead, 15 Wilmer-
hatch Lane, EPSOM, Surrey

NEW AND REJOINED MEMBERS

- 1296 Bamford, Robert: 1 Glasalyn Rd.,
Crouch End, London, N8 8RJ
1294 Bendelow, David C.: 27 George St.,
Consett, Co. Durham, DH8 5LN
1282 Caldwell, John: 4 Copperhill Rd.,
Congleton, Ches, CW12 3JG
1279 Elson, Jennifer: 16 Stafford
Drive, Wigston, Leicester, LE19 2YA
612 Heathcote, Brian: 17 Penbrooke
Cres, High Green, Sheffield,
S30 4PB
1280 Hemmings, Fred: 20 Beech Rd,
Slough, Bucks, SL3 7LQ
1286 Hill, Roy T.: 139 Westwood Park,
Forest Hill, London, SE23 3QL
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West Wickham, Kent.
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Rd, Broad Green, Liverpool, L14 3LP
1292 Labdon, Stanley: 25 Horsham Rd,
Pease Pottage, Sussex, RH11 9AW
1295 Linwood, Jas G.: 125 Trickenham Rd,
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1281 Haine, Charles Eric: 14 Chipstead
Rd, London SW6
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Barn, Durham, DH1 3PZ
1288 Ogden, Christine (Miss): 35 Keavick
Drive, Cullercoate, North Shields,
Northumberland
1289 O'Hara, Monica M.: 8 Shirley Drive,
off Knutsford Rd, Grappenhall, via
Harrington, Ches.

- 1290 Owens, Allan J.: 5 Brabyns Rd,
Hyde, Ches.
1285 Tillston, David P.: Flat 1, 96
Durning Rd, Liverpool, L7 5NE
1284 Watkins, David: Gaycroft, Lale-
ston, Bridgend, Glam, CF32 0LD.
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omy Dept, Imperial College, 10
Princes Gdns, London SW7
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Rd, Sheffield, S17 4PU

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- 1114 Field, M.C.: now 14 Barre Rd,
Taplow, near Maidenhead, Berks.
389 Henkey, H.S.F.: now 389 Fairview,
Tal-y-fan, Glen Conway, N. Wales.

POSTCODE would you believe:

3 Heroer, Archie: please add TEL 3 BLE

CORRECTION(S) In the "Correspondents
Wanted" section last issue,
Belgian fan Simon Joukes was credited
with an interest in the fictitious sci-
ence of 'phiology'. It should have been
philology, of course. He adds: "More in
particular, I like 'artificial' languages,
like Tolkien produced in LotR.

And we got his address wrong too
(powers-that-be please note): it's not
Haantjeslei; it's Haantjeslei.

