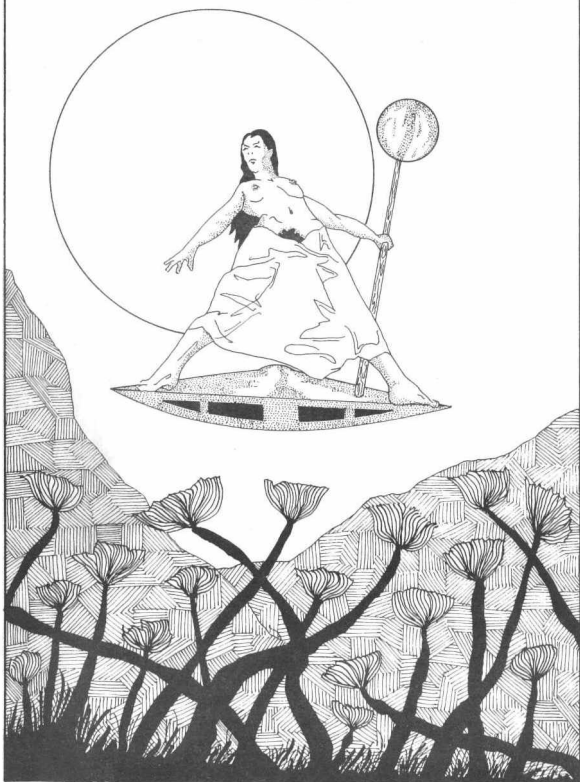


# VECTOR 75

JULY 1976 « ~ » 50p \$1



# VECTOR 75

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## Contents:

Lead-In.....	3
Barjen Ellison Interviewed/ Christopher Fowler .....	5
The Infinity Box: Book Reviews/ James Corley Chris Evans Brian Griffin Chris Morgan Andrew Tidmarsh Ian Watson David Wingrove.....	25

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## This issue is for Jane

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and, of course, Judy

This issue of Vector has been produced  
in far too much of a hurry by Chris  
Fowler, who is old enough to know  
better than Malcolm Edwards, who was  
old enough to know better back in  
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# LEAD IN



Monday, August 3rd - 4.05 pm/Southcote

As I write this, Vector 75 lies all around me in un-proof-read heaps. Tomorrow morning it will be at the printers, and by that time I shall have commenced typing Vector 76, which we are sending out simultaneously with 75. The reason for this is that we have a huge pile-up of reviews and interviews which are fast going out of date. Thus we are pushing out as much of this material in one mailing - which saves something on postage - rather than waiting for a couple of months with Vector 76. This mailing will thus be a bumper one, with two Vectors, plus Matrix (the re-named BSFAN), plus whatever goodies we can slip in in addition.

So to this issue of Vector. The major item this time is an interview which I conducted with Harlan Ellison when he was in London recently. Some of you may have heard him on the (PM) radio, or read about his period spent writing in a bookshop window in Charing Cross Road. He talks about this, and his other plans for publicising himself and his books in Britain, in the interview. I hope that you will enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed conducting it.

The reviews section this issue is also a long one, the result of the long period since the last issue of the journal, 73/4 came out. Reviews have been piling up since April, and the long review section in this issue, and in Vector 76 will effectively clear that pile.

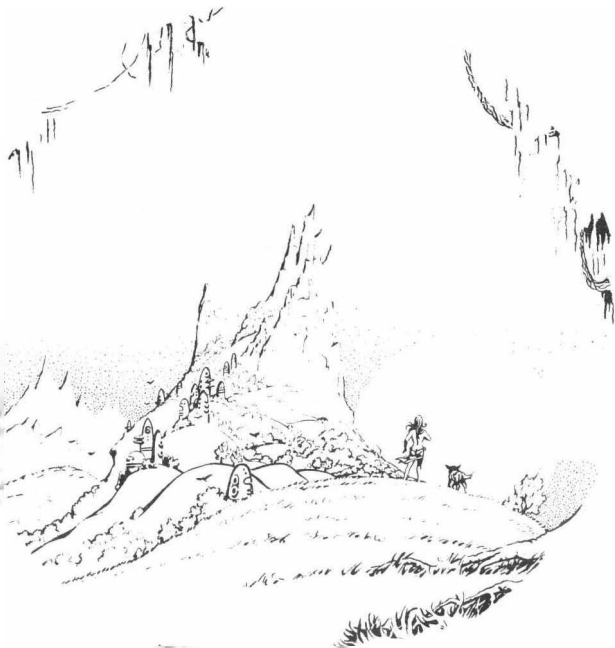
Unfortunately, this clearing of the reviews and running two of the three interviews we have on hand (the Ellison one, plus the Silverberg one which should be in V76) has meant that we've had to hold over three articles by Brian Stableford; one by Ian Watson; one by Rob Jackson; plus a number of interesting items by other people, including Dave Pringle. We hope to be bringing you all these in the next six months, as well as interviews with other sf people.

The Letter-column also got squeezed out of Vector this time around. We should be re-instituting this with the next mailing, and will then endeavour to run the important letters on hand at present.

Until then --- Christopher Fowler, Editor

SPWA FORUM - A STATEMENT

In our last issue, no. 73/4, we referred reader to the SPWA Forum. Since then we have been told that Forum's circulation is restricted to members of the SPWA, and therefore would not be generally available. We also understand that its contents are covered by a very strong "do not quote" request, which means that the reference was doubly unfortunate. SPWA are anxious that this restriction should be observed as a matter of general principle. Naturally we regret any invasion of privacy that may have occurred as a consequence.



# Harlan Ellison

talks to

Chris Fowler

*I've got a whole series of questions here, which we may or may not stray widely from...*

*I have no secrets. I'm unblackmailable.*

*I'd like to go back to the beginnings of your career: the beginnings of your writing career; mainly because, of course, your work is largely unfamiliar to an English audience. It strikes me in reading through your stories, and the things that you've written about those stories and about your earlier life, that you had a pretty tough sort of childhood.*

*That is true. But who doesn't?*

*Exactly how tough a childhood did you have, and what sort of things did you have to put up with; and to what extent do you think that influenced your writing, either at an early stage or, indeed, right through your writing career?*

Well, to answer the second part first: my childhood, my early life, has influenced my writing almost totally. I would not be the kind of writer I am, nor would I have led the kind of life I have, had I not had that kind of childhood. But then that's true of everybody, I suppose. I guess the most operable parts of the childhood that affected the writing are that I was brought up in a very small town in Ohio, which is in the middle of America, and in a fairly conservative, reactionary area. I was a Jewish kid, and there were no other Jews of my age in the town. I'd never really thought of Ohio as being a terribly bigoted place, but it was. It was a hotbed of the Ku Klux Klan and a lot of anti-semitism. I had a lot of actual physical fighting when I was a child. And I was very small. I was a very small, thin kid. At first I was able to keep up, but then as everybody else kept growing and I didn't, I found that I used to have to fight my way back and forth from school every day. Probably the most apocryphal anecdote that I haven't told before - to give you some fresh material: it got so bad, they would wait in gangs and beat me up on the schoolgrounds. This was in the early 1940s: it was fairly soon after the American depression, and my family was not very well off. They were not destitute, but it was hard times. The thing that was most awful about when they beat me up was that they would rip my clothes. I would come home and my mother, who was a lovely lady, was always upset that my clothes were... I mean, that I was beaten up, of course, but also that my clothes were ripped; and she was too proud to send me out in patched clothes. I knew that they would have to do something else, or not buy some food or something, so that she could buy me a new shirt so I could go to school. I got very, very upset about that, and it got really so bad that at one point my mother used to come and pick me up at school in the car which, you know, embarrassed the hell out of me; because I

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Interview conducted Wednesday, July 7th 1976 at the Portobello Hotel, London, by Christopher Fowler. Tapes transcribed by Ian A. Thomann. Copyright (c) 1976 Christopher Fowler.

was a scrapper, and I would fight anybody at any time. I didn't care how many. You know how embarrassing it is to kids to have their mother come and get them. And one day she came to get me, and they had an old Plymouth, an old green Plymouth. By this time - this was when I was in. I guess, I was about in the fifth or sixth grade - there were one or two other Jewish families that had moved into the town: it was called Paynesville...

*Yes - appropriately enough.*

It was named after General Payne. I mean, it was a pain in the ass, but it was also named after General Payne. There were one or two other Jewish families, and one of them was named Rogat. This one day that my mother came to get me, I ran out of the school and into the car, and there was a gang of them waiting with big sticks. They circled the car, banging on the car like ~~paper~~ trying to get photographs, and I got absolutely crazy. I blew my stack - very short temper - and I went after them, and grabbed a stick away from one kid and started beating him and others. One of the kids was Kenny Rogat, who was a Jewish kid. He had joined this gang so that he wouldn't have to get beaten up himself - which is the situation that obtained. Years later, when I was at college - I was at Ohio State University, and my mother had suggested that... my mother's a very nice lady, but very middle-of-the-road kind of thing, and she said: "Well, join a fraternity". I don't know what you have over here - men's clubs, whatever...

*We don't have any direct equivalent.*

It's a stupid group of boys who hand together so that they can get laid, I suspect is what it's all about. She said: "Join a fraternity, because you'll make contacts for the future". My mother was always worried that I was going to wind up in a gutter somewhere. So, I was reluctantly wooed by various fraternities, and because I was working on the Ohio State humor magazine my very first semester there, or my very first quarter there. I had some small status, and so a number of fraternities were interested in taking me in. I went with one called Zeta Beta Tau - Zeta Beta Tau - which was a fraternity of very wealthy Jewish guys. All of them had fire-engine red Cadillac convertibles. I didn't have a pot to piss in, but... One day I came back from class, and it was during the time of - they have what they call home-coming games, where all the alumni come back and they go to the football games. This was with Michigan, and one of the traditions is that your brother fraternities at other schools come to your school, wherever the game is being played, and they stay at your fraternity house. And as I walked in the house, one of the guys said to me: "Hey, there's a guy upstairs from Paynesville who says he knows you and he wants to say hi to you" and I said: "Oh, okay". Now this is maybe ten years later, or eight years later, or whatever the hell it was. I was carrying a big load of schoolbooks and notebooks and all, and I walked up the stairs - the living room was on the second floor, and I walked up. It was an enormously long living room, all drenched with sun from a lot of windows. I started walking across the carpet and a guy at the other end started walking towards me. I don't even remember recognizing him, but the books suddenly went in one direction, and I went in the other, and I jumped on this guy and punched him in the face and I had him down and I was banging his head on the floor. It took four people to drag me off, and they took me upstairs and they had to put me in a bunk with belts - they had to tie me in with belts, because I was crazy. And - it was Kenny Rogat, whom I had totally forgotten, just cleansed it from my memory entirely.

So, that was the kind of situation I had. And I was a smart-mouth. I mean, a lot of the trouble that I had when I was a kid I made for myself, because I was a very, very bright, a very sharp kid and very inquisitive, and very cynical about almost anything that was told to me - I wouldn't accept it at face value, they had to prove it to me. I made a lot of trouble with my teachers. I mean, in the fourth grade, fifth grade, when other kids were reviewing baseball books

## HARLAN ELLISON

or "A Lad, A Dog", I gave a review of Lord Alfred Worsley's *Science and Sanity: the Study of General Semantics*, and I said it was a greater book than the Bible because, you know, if we learned to speak exactly, and say exactly what we meant there would be no misunderstandings, so there would be no war; and therefore it was a greater book than the Bible. They sent me down to the Principal's office for atheism, heresy and general all-round mockery. And, my parents were very nice people, but very plain, and didn't quite know what the hell they had! Because there was nobody particularly artistic in my family - my father had been a dentist and then he was a jeweller; and my mother had been a secretary. And my sister - my older sister - was off at college, and got married very quickly, and that took care of that. So I was kind of a strange creature in their midst. They just didn't know what the hell to do with me. And being all alone - Like, I had not friends at all - I sought recourse in...well, radio at that time was very, very good because it had a lot of drama, and I would listen to that, and the imagination gave full play-room. And movies, comic books and the pulp magazines - the Spider, Doc Savage and the Shadow and that kind of thing. And that was my world. Today, when like *Time Magazine* came and interviewed me and said: "Who were your early literary influences?" of course you can't say to them: "Well, it was Doc Sevege and The Shadow and Plastic Man and the comic books", and I said: "Oh, it was Conrad and Dickens and Mark Twain and Antoine de St Exupery and people of that nature". Which sounds good - but it was really the fantasy writing of my childhood.

And so I became, I guess, to everyone around me a very peculiar child. I ran away from home when I was 13. I ran off, and in those days there was a book very popular in America - I don't know if you had it over here - it was called "Toby Tyler, or Ten Weeks with the Circus". Today it's run off, get yourself a Fender bass and join a rock group. But in those days it was run off and join the circus. So, I ran off and I joined a carnival, which was not quite a circus but a travelling kind of road-show thing. And I was on my own, right from the age of 13. I was earning my own living at that point. By the time I was 15 I was driving a dynamite truck in North Carolina. It's always been like that. I would go home periodically, to do some school. At first my parents sent out Pinkertons to find me, and they located me for the first time in jail in Kansas City. But thereafter, they kind of, I guess, got a perception that I could handle myself, and that nothing really was going to happen to me. Or if it did it was inevitable. So, being alone, and being on the road, I grew to understand experience as a feeding situation for stories, and I began writing when I was, I think, ten years old. I sold my first two pieces - five-part serials - to the *Cleveland News*, to a young people's column that they had, and I just always wrote. But I was also an actor: I was on the stage in Cleveland in the *Cleveland Playhouse*, which was very, very famous; and later I did some time on Broadway. I sang for a living, did stand-up comedy, all of the various things that an attention-seeking ego-maniac does to feed his needy little soul.

So it was early on, discovering the pointlessness and really senseless antagonisms of people for other kinds of people who were different, that informed a lot of my writing. I understood racism very early, I understood bigotry very early. I understood the whole idea of lynch law very early on. Because it was kind of a tough, naturalistic existence on the road, my fiction went the same way. I am totally incapable of writing C.P. Snow kind of books. I hope that answers the question.

That certainly answers the question, and it answers what was my next question, which was: why did you come to writing? Do you think that the reason you came to science fiction was that the kind of everyday existence which you were leading was a very tough one, and that you needed to escape from it to some extent? Is there an element of that at all?

No. Quite the opposite.

*If not, why do you think science fiction rather than any other kind of fiction?*

Well, the reason I got into science fiction . . . well, you see, first of all I must make the clear distinction that only about a third or fourth of what I've written is science fiction. More of it is fantasy, and even more of it is in the mainstream. It's quite the opposite of what you suggest. No, there was no need to escape from my . . . all I had to escape from was Painesville, and once I had done that I was very happy to be in the world. I've always liked the world, and the tougher it is, the more complex it gets, the better I like it because I like solving problems. The reason that I drifted into science fiction was, apart from early influences of Clark Ashton Smith and the fantasy pulps, which I always admired - I always liked that kind of writing because suspense and fantasy always attracted me . . . apart from that was just the simple thing that I had no friends. My father died in 1949, my mother . . . I took care of her, I supported her. We moved to Cleveland and I used to go to a bookstore and steal books because I didn't have any money to buy them, and I was stealing a lot of science fiction books. I had discovered Bradbury and Isaac Asimov and Arthur Clarke; so I was stealing a lot of these books. And one day I saw a sign which said "Cleveland Science Fiction Society is forming, and if you were interested call such-and-such", and one of the two people was Andre Norton, as a matter of fact - Alice Mary Norton. And I joined, and they became my first friends, my first real friends. Because I had a flair I began publishing their fan-magazine, and then when the club had a schism and broke up the magazine became a kind of personal fanzine of mine. I changed the name to *Dimensions* and published it for, oh, four or five years. And through the fanzine I started going to conventions, through the conventions I met the writers, through the writers I got early assistance with my career. Lester del Rey, Algia Budrys, Robert Bloch, who were very, very kind to me and encouraged me. So, I kind of drifted into it because . . . and I met Bob Silverberg, of course, who was my oldest and closest friend . . . and they were writing that, so I began writing that. But the first things I sold, oddly enough, were not science fiction. The first piece I sold was a juvenile delinquency piece, which was non-fiction, and the first short story I sold was science fiction. But during the first year, 1955, of my professional career, ninety percent of what I sold went to the detective story magazines. . . well, they were magazines that were not quite detective stories, they were just kind of crime magazines, like "Guilty", "Trapped", "Manhunt", that kind of thing . . . because that's where the big markets were in those days, they paid a lot more than science fiction markets. It's peculiar to me that I've gained the reputation I have in the field of science fiction, because with very few exceptions I've written nothing that could be even remotely called science fiction. Most of what I write is pure fantasy, or science fantasy at best. When I use that sort of roccoco furniture of science fiction it's always for an end, it's always for a purpose, and I'm very conscious of the fact that I make most science fiction writers of the old line, of the old school, very nervous.

I recall one of the things that was very, very painful to me. That was when I read an article that apparently had been translated by this fellow Frank Kottenstainer, who's, I understand, not a nice man at all, but he translated this piece by Stanislaw Lem, the Polish writer. He had apparently given Lem a copy of one of my early collections that Lem read in English, or had read in a Dutch translation or something, and then had written the review that Kottenstainer had translated from Polish into German, and from German into English. And Lem said that I was a psychopath and that I should be committed, and I should be incarcerated, and I shouldn't be let loose. And I read this, oddly enough, in an English fanzine, I don't remember what it was, but it was years ago. And it just really hurt me.

*Lem does seem to be extremely harsh about almost all American science fiction writers, apart from Philip K. Dick, in fact.*



It's an odd thing. I've a very dichotomous nature as to the feeling about how people react to my work. I mean I write what I want to write, I really do. I don't elate for markets, I don't elate for audiences. I write what I please on the one hand, and it's a very real feeling. I don't give a shit what anybody thinks about my work. If everybody hated it I would still write exactly the way I do. On the other hand, I'm a human being too, and when I read those Godawful vitriolic reviews of my work, as if I were somehow polluting the precious bodily fluids of the sanctified genre of science fiction, I want to go and say: "How lock, you don't understand. This is not what I'm doing. Here's what I'm trying to do".

*This does lead onto another question which I've got down. You come into science fiction as, and I get the impression you've always been, within the science fiction world, something of an enfant terrible - a radical voice always, at the centre of a hurricane of controversy. Yet now, you've got more Hugos than any other science fiction writer alive, you've won Nebulas - you win awards all over the place. I've got a whole sheet of the sort of awards and things you've won recently - Edgar, movie script-writing awards, etc. It seems to me that, certainly amongst some people, your work is very much accepted and you've received a great deal of critical praise. Do you think that you've become increasingly accepted, either by the science fiction field or the general field of writing, or are you still somewhat out on the fringe, do you think?*

Well, it's my hope that I'm never really accepted. I think Thoreau's remark that: "He serves the state best who opposes the state most" is the only way to stay really free and unbought. I don't ever really want to get that secure that I'm safe.

One of the most peculiar designations of writing, certain kinds of writing, I've over heard is the remark: "Well, he only writes that to shock". Well, God, I consider that a noble endeavour, to shock! People spend most of their time very secure. They deify and totamize love, security, money, complacency, don't make waves, and in that direction lies the kind of world that parks a Richard Nixon to exist, that permits you know, South Africa to do what it does. It is my hope that my work will always anger people, and shock people, and get them talking, get them questioning. That was the greatest thing that I learned when I was a child, not to take anything at face value, and I like my fiction to do that. I cannot explain to you why it is I've won all the awards I've won and still... you're going to have trouble interpreting this when you get the tape done, but the other night they took me over to the London Science Fiction Circle, to the One Tun - which everyone pronounces "Wan Tong", and I thought it was a Chinese soup. And I said to them: "No, it's not 'Wan Tong', it's 'One Tun'". And they said, "Yes, 'Wan Tong'". And I went over there and for the most part everybody was very pleasant to me although most people stayed away from me. I caught them staring as if I were about to turn into... you know... a seven-headed dog, or something! And I'm not like that. I really am not. I'm very friendly and when people are polite to me I'm polite right back at them. The only times I get cranky are when people come on with me and are rude to me. I just react very badly to that. There was a young woman there, very pleasant young woman, and she kept, kind of, staring at me as if I'd just fallen off the moon. After a while I took notice of it and I called her over and I said: "Come her, come here", and I sat her down on a stool and there was a bunch of us standing around talking. I asked her who she was, and she had just been married three weeks before, her husband was around there handling out taxines or something to people. We talked for a while, and I was very friendly to her. When she was leaving with her husband, he was a very tall chap, I said to him: "You're a very lucky man. She's a lovely, lovely lady", and he said: "Thank you", and he reached over and he tweaked my nose! I got very annoyed at that, because that's really an invasion of personal space. And I said to him: "Why did you do that?". He said: "Well, now I can go around telling everybody that I tweaked the great Ellison's nose". And I tell you, I wanted to grab the son of a bitch by the throat and

put him up against the wall, and the only thing that restrained me was this young woman who clearly loved her husband. But why do they do that? What makes them think they can do that? So, on the one hand I have all these awards and all of this adulation and popular success, which I want, which I've very calculatedly gone for. And on the other hand I have an enormous number of people who think they're going to make points with themselves, who must lead such stingy little lives that to be able to do this kind of thing must be a great feather in their cap.

Maybe to them you've assumed the status of a sort of western gunfighter: and to have a fight with Billy the Kid adds mites to your own reputation.

The trouble is that if I ever really let go on them, I would reduce them to rubble. Because I really don't feel like stopping. Another apocryphal story... it's never good to tell stories on yourself where you look good, but this one is. I don't remember who was the other party and that, but when I went to Philadelphia for the convention some years ago, they had a huge party in the hotelhouse restaurant of this hotel... I think this was Philadelphia, it may have been St Louis. I think it may have been St Louis, yes, it was St Louis! St Louis in '69. I was there with a young woman and we went upstairs, and the joint was crammed to the walls. I mean there were just hundreds and hundreds of people. When I walked in, all of a sudden a murmur went through the crowd, and it parted. It was just like the Red Sea, and it was like a corridor. We couldn't figure it out, we were just walking through. And what I did not know was that they had prearranged something, that a group of fans had found a young woman who apparently had a vicious tongue, and they wanted to pit her against me. My date and I walked through this group of people, everybody watching and filling in behind like an MGM movie. Suddenly I found myself confronting this young woman, maybe 22, 23, and a couple of guys around her. I stopped and looked at her and she looked at me. And all of a sudden she went: "Blah-blah-blah" and she began insulting me. I mean, like forty-two insults a second! And, I kind of looked at her, and she waited for me to respond and I didn't respond, and she went: "Blah-blah-blah" and she did it again. And I kind of smiled, turned around and I walked through the crowd and walked away. As I was walking away I heard her say to someone "What happened? What happened?" I thought he was supposed to be so fast. Why didn't he say something? And someone else in the crowd said "When you're the fastest gun you don't pull against ploughboys".

And that made me feel good, because I'd restrained myself for once!

This reputation that you have for being a fairly abrasive personality, which, as you say, probably springs from confrontations with people who are anticipating that you're going to be abrasive, and are rude to you in the first place...

It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Yes. To some extent this seems to be reflected in the fiction of yours that I've read, in the violent emotions which one finds within a lot of that fiction. Sort of hatred, violence, bitterness. Even the love in your stories seems almost to be a violent passion. Are you, in your fiction, do you think, working out fairly deep-seated animosities or results of this early childhood when you were having to fight against the world? Do you think that conditioned you to write about fairly violent sorts of emotions?

I think the working out of any adolescent internal conflicts, in fiction, happened quite a lot in the early days, up to, say, 1961. From about 1953 to 1962. After that, I think I had most of the early stuff that was bothering me pretty well under control. As well as under control can be. I mean, one never knows about oneself.

To take a jump and then come back... my current fiction, stories such as "Shatterday"....

"Crontoan"?

"Crontoan", "Crontoan" particularly. "The Deathbird", "Adrift Just off the Islets of Langerhans", and a number of stories that I've written in the last year, which you probably have not seen yet because they're just coming out in America, these are stories that are also workings out of internal questions. But they're on, I hope, a much more sophisticated level. For instance, in "Shatterday", which you may have seen because it was in *Science Fiction Monthly* over here. The story about the guy who calls himself on the phone, calls his own apartment by mistake...

No, I haven't read that yet. "Crontoan" is the most recent one that I've seen.

Well, all right, let me deal with "Crontoan" then. "Crontoan" is the working out... not the working out but an explication in fiction of my feelings about the necessity for everyone being responsible for his own life. And, for being responsible for the lives of those around you if their lives touch yours, if you influence their lives, if you affect them and do things to them, if they are incapable of being responsible themselves. What prompted that story was, I was having an affair with a very beautiful young woman whom I made pregnant. I subsequently found out that she took no birth control measures, which in America is very, very strange, particularly for a young woman of this sort... when I say "of this sort" I mean one who is very worldly wise, very intelligent, very well travelled and just a very self-possessed young woman. Her way of taking precautions was to go and have an abortion. She'd had something like six or seven abortions, and they had not mattered to her because they had been casual liaisons. With me, apparently, there was quite a heavy love situation, on her part, and it affected her very badly. It affected me also very badly, because I was in Los Angeles and she was in New York, it was a kind of transcontinental love affair. She called me and said she was going to have an abortion, which left me no option, there was nothing I could do. She had decided, and she was on her way in to do it within an hour of the time she spoke to me, so I was hammering it was a very difficult situation. It affected me very deeply, and I began thinking about it, and I wrote "Crontoan", which is a story which says we must be responsible. We are, in effect, the sum total of all the decisions we've ever made in our lives. The old American Indian philosophy, that no matter if you're standing on a street corner and an atomic bomb falls on you, you're responsible, because you picked that street to walk down, and you picked all the streets that you walked down that got you to that street, so you are responsible in the strictest sense. And, I went and I had a vasectomy, which I considered a thing which I had to do, because I could no longer permit other people's negligence with their lives to be something that I had to deal with, or that I would be responsible for. So "Crontoan" was the working out, in my mind, of that sense of responsibility. "Shatterday" was me coming to grips with the fact that I really... my mother's 82 years old, she lives in Miami Beach, I support her, she's a lovely, lovely woman, but she's... her memory is gone, she's not well, she's had three major heart attacks in the last four years, and waiting constantly for the phone to ring, for that phone call to come, for that particular phone call, that terrible phone call that I know will come eventually, has become so oppressive to me that, the truth of the matter is, I really want her to die. To some people that would be a terrible thing, that someone would say: "I want my mother to die". I don't mean it either in the mercy killing sense, I don't mean it in the hatred sense because I have no hatred for her at all. I mean it only in the sense that there is an oppressiveness in my life, there is a shadow that constantly, constantly looms over me and there's no way I can get away from it. And I wrote this story, "Shatterday", in which that is referred to, in a way. That... also coming to the realization, which is a strange realization for an adult because many of the people who read this will know it - you may not yet: I don't know anything about your personal life so I don't know - but when you're young your mother and father are your parents and they take care of you. In later

Years, they become the child and you become the parent. It's a strange ambivalence, a strange changing over, and it's very peculiar relationship where I am, in effect, my own father. It's something that I had to first realise and then deal with. And I've done that in this story, "Shatterday".

So, now my stories reflect my search for an understanding of myself, an examination of various elements of my persona, which sounds terribly self-indulgent and is the kind of thing that, I suppose, if Lester del Rey were to hear, Lester would go: "Poo, poo, poo. That isn't what story telling is about". There's the great quote that Poul Anderson made, in fact Jimmy Ballard was just referring to it in the SFPA Newsletter, the current issue. He talked about Poul Anderson being at some English convention one time. He quoted from Bob Heinlein. He said: "What we're doing when we write our stories is that we're vying for some guy's bear money. Rather than buying bear he buys our books". And Jimmy said, quite rightly, that many of us aspire to this somewhat greater nobility for our work. I consider myself a story-teller, and I think that is possibly the noblest craft a person can have, is to be a story-teller. But I like to think that I'm something better than a bear-money writer. So, Lester, who takes a very pragmatic attitude toward it because he's one of the old guard, says: "Ah, you're trying to be an artist! You're trying to be an artist!" Yes, I'm trying to be an artist. I'm finally ready to cop to that. I'm trying to be an artist.

*And succeeding, I would have said, judging by the critical reception.*

Well, I hope I am. And this brings us to...this may be a question that much later you would ask...this brings us to the reason why I'm very steadfastly refusing to the words "science fiction" being put on my books, because there are so many writers, good writers, who, I think, misguidedly think they're nothing better than hacks, who are no better than bear-money writers, have come to be associated with the phrase "science fiction" and that Godawful, wretched neologism "Sci-Fi", which I hate. If you say: "Well, I write science fictions", people immediately think of Giant Bugs that ate Birmingham, or Rock Rogers, and I like to think of myself as a writer, as one with Roald Dahl, John Collier, Kurt Vonnegut and Donald Barthelme, people of that stripe, who also write fantasy, and whose work is not categorised and put into a genre and stuck up next to...you know...the Perry Rhodan books. So, writing art, I can't really write science fiction. I mean, I can write science fiction but I cannot call it that.

*This comes onto something else I was going to ask you about. To what extent in trying to write what you want to write what you feel driven to write as a creative artist, to what extent are you continually frustrated by the limitations of publishers and TV or film producers? I was reading somewhere about how you had a great fight with Doubleday to keep Again, Dangerous Visions in print: although it was selling well they wanted to take it out of print. Before I came over here I was reading through your introduction to The Starlost book about all the problems you had trying to get that off the ground and how it was completely wrecked. Would you like to say something about problems you've had with publishers and TV and film producers; and do you think that now you're getting any better deal than you did over The Starlost?*

That's an incredibly complex question, and I'm going to attempt to answer it very simply. For one reason because no matter how justified the complaints may be, inevitably a writer starts sounding like a cry-baby if he complains too much. No-one who has not worked in film and television can possibly begin to know the amount of brutalisation, dehumanisation, creative control and just downright stupidity and chicken-shit, nickel-and-dime annoyance that a writer has to put up with. To try and give you chapter and verse we could go through this tape and a number of other 120 minute tapes. All I can tell you is that I keep fighting because I don't want to desert that particular medium to leave it to the Huns and the Visigoths. I don't feel like giving it to them free and

clear. They're going to have to fight me for it. But it is a very difficult battle, and it's one that after one has fought a major encounter, as with *The Starlost* or a movie that I've just done, one lays back and rests. It's a difficult thing. That's in the visual medium. In publishing it's a very different thing for me, personally, now. It is not a very different thing for many other writers. Many other writers have to put up with the kinds of restrictions and taboos that editors, such as for instance, Roger Elwood, have. While I have no personal axe to grind against Roger - we've had only minimal difficulties in our professional dealings - I won't write for Roger, because I know where his mind is and I know where his censors lie, and I cannot live with those. This is, by the way, for the record, obviously. For a lot of other writers those are very crippling restrictions, I think. I think an awful lot of very bad writing, an awful lot of freak, crippled, misused writing has come out of that whole Elwood era. Roger will not love me for saying this, but I think he knows that I mean it honestly when I say it.

For me, at this stage of the game, it's very pleasant. Nobody puts restrictions on me. In some ways that's good, some ways it's bad. I may need a little editorial help from time to time. I like editors, like Damon Knight, like Bob Silverberg, like Terry Carr, because they are good editors who know their craft sufficiently, and they are writers themselves, and can say to me if I've done a story for them: "Look, you're eighty percent there. This isn't right, this isn't right. You'll have to do this part over. Why don't you take a look at this". Damon Knight did it to me on a story called "One Life Furnished in Early Poverty", which I think is one of my very best. The suggestions that Damon made for rewrite were absolutely dead on. I refused to do them. I argued and yelled and screamed. Damon was patient with me, and he wrote me a number of letters. And I finally did them, all but for one or two that I absolutely would not change, because I knew that I was right on those. And even if I was wrong... I'll go even further than that. Damon was absolutely right. The two or three additional changes that he wanted made would have made for a better story. I didn't want to make them because they were reasons why I had written that story. Whenever you write a story, you do it, it's like a junkie getting a fix. You write a story because there's something in there you want to get off, and it's something you want to do for yourself. A couple of the things that I did in that story, which had very little to do with the story itself, Damon wanted changed because he thought they were superfluous, were the things that I had done for me. They were the reasons why the story came to be written. If I had taken them out there was no reason to write the story. So, I left those few things that Damon considered flaws in. No-one will ever know what they were, they don't make any difference. But they're very important to me, that they're in there.

In terms of publishing, only once in the last three or four years have I undergone serious editorial tampering. There's an awful lot of ineptitude in publishing when they send out the galleys without me ever seeing them - and I'm a bear about that! I have it in my contracts, they may not do that. I have cover control, cover artist control, cover blurb control, promotional material control. I just won't give those things up any more. Fortunately, I have enough money so I don't have to put up with that. I think it's one of the nice things about getting money, that it gives you the strength to be a secure artist, where you can say to somebody: "You may not tamper with my work! You may not! For right or wrong, I wrote it. It's mine. It may not be the best, but goddam it, that's me! And I'm perfectly willing to stake my reputation on it and stand behind it and go down in flames if it's not good enough!"

Only once in the last four or five years, as I say, has anyone published something of mine and tampered with it. It was an editorial situation where, though I was dead against what they did with the story, I had to let them do it because I had made a commitment. I was late with the material, they were in a bind. I felt

ethically and morally bound to publish the story with them. And that was a story that was in a book called *Weird Heroes: The New American Pulp*, and it was a piece about Cordwainer Bird. They changed the name. I had all the real names of people in there, and all the real names of publishing companies, and all the real names of stores and everything else that I wanted. That story was pure revenge, that's what that story was, pure revenge. And when they took out all those names, they took out the revenge and they took out the reason for me writing the story in the first place. So, an amusing and entertaining as that story may be, to me it's a frippery now, because its guts have been pulled out of it. But I had to let them do it. In all conscience, I must say that the people who did it, did not do it out of any stupidity, or malign feelings. They did it because they were afraid they were going to get sued! And they just didn't want to get sued, so they did it.

*This freedom is something that you've obviously had to fight for, something you've achieved because of your track record, your reputation as a writer. How would you compare your attitude towards the science fiction kind of thing that you're doing with that of, say, Robert Silverberg...*

I knew you were going to say that!

Yes, I'm sorry. The question inevitably has to be asked.

OK.

*...With that of Robert Silverberg, who has opted out of writing full stop. Or with that of Barry Malisberg, who's gone out of science fiction altogether.*

Or Tom Disch who's doing it, or George Alec Efinger who's doing it, or Dean Koontz who has done it. I think that what you're seeing are not isolated cases. You are seeing a movement, a very concerted movement, because a great many of us who aspire to something more than beer-money writing, have found that we simply cannot do it within the limitations of the genre. Not the artistic limitations of the genre; within the marketing, merchandising and promotional limitations of the genre. Science fiction is a marketing term, it's a newsstand term. It's a convenience for booksellers, so they can take all the books and jam them over in one corner next to the gothic, and the other side would be the mystery novels. We simply want to write other kinds of things. I'm a great defender of Bob Silverberg's attitude. I know when Bob says ...see, Bob is a lot more polite than I am. Bob will not be nearly as blunt. I think fans, on the whole, ensemble, are the biggest bunch of schmaucks and literary scavengers the world has ever known. In 1928 through 1952 or 3 or 4, fandom was a very wonderful, enriching thing. It supported the writers, it bought their work. But then, like jealous little groupies who hate to see their idols suddenly loved by everyone else, they began getting terribly vampiric. The hold they have on this field, the hold they have on the kind of things that writers will write, is a tragic thing to behold. It seems to me that writers of the stature of Isaac Asimov, Clifford Simak... Oh, God, I could name... at the moment I can't think of those... but those are the prime two examples. Isaac and Cliff are two writers who have so much more in them that they are capable of... than they are permitted to do. They are writing, it seems to me, very safe and secure fiction. You know I bought a story from Clifford Simak for *The Last Dangerous Visions* that is so avant garde, that is so experimental, so beyond whatever he's done in the last ten years; that it's as if it had been written by a different person. Jack Williamson - Jack Williamson! - a man who was writing in 1928 already, just did a story for *The Last Dangerous Visions*... I mean, he didn't just do it, but it'll be that book... that, I tell you, is as as contrast as the youngest, young Turk I have in the book. This man has a depth of ability that this field has never permitted him to tap. I see writers like Ted Sturgeon and Phil Farmer, who are lauded and admired throughout the field, writing things that are beneath them. Writing things that are just... they're so inconsequential, and even those things turn with a kind of intelligence that should be turned to writing other

things Jim Bligh, in the last years of his life, found amusement and some pleasure in writing the dreary little Star Trek books. Because they were a hobby for him, they were amusing. And he recognized that that was the level that an enormous number of science fiction fans wanted his work to be at. Those people will never read *Dr. Mirabilis*, they will never know the genius that we lost when James Bligh died.

So when Robert Silverberg, who has toiled in the vineyard of science fiction and fantasy for twenty-five years and produced a body of work that, it seems to me, is second to no-one's in this field, or in fact in all of American fiction, suddenly turns around and finds that Perry Rhodan novels are selling in the millions, and his best books are out of print and can't be found. When he goes to conventions and people say to him: "Why do you write such depressing stuff?" It suddenly dawns on Bob Silverberg that he has spent a quarter of a century - doing what? Seeking the approbation of nobody. And it affects him terribly, deeply. And so Robert then does what I do, which is to scream and say: "You bunch of slope-browed, prognathous-jawed, terminal acne cases! You don't deserve the quality of work I'm writing! You don't deserve to have your selves lifted out of the mud by the bootstraps!" Bob opts out. Bob backs away. Now, I think five years from now, seven years from now, Bob will start writing again, because Bob's a writer. It's a thing that will bring him pleasure. But it'll be a different kind of writing, it'll be in a different area, and we'll have lost seven years worth of work. On the other hand, he may just need the rest. I mean, any English that you run for twenty-five years is going to have to have a little rest.

*Yes. I spoke to Robert Silverberg at the Manchester Convention at Haver: I did a short interview with him then, and he said very much what you've said, although he didn't rule out the possibility of coming back to writing. But, as you say, there's a difference in attitude between him and you. I mean, you're fighting it all the time and he, it seems to me, is more, in a way, oppressed by the sort of situation in which he finds himself, and has been forced out of it.*

Well, you see, there are a number of things that are operable in this situation. Bob has been very canny about his money. He's treated it in stocks, and he has a very, very fine portfolio, and he has quite a lot of money, and he is able to not write. Also, Bob is not driven to write any more the same way I am. I have no control over it. I must write, it's what I do. I'm a writer, that's all I really am. There are times when I think that if you took that away from me I would wind up in Borealis somewhere, and was well on the way to it, I suspect, when I began writing. For me this situation is an angering one. It's one that gets me writing more, publishing more and it's a very productive one for me. Anger is a very productive thing for me, which brings you back to where we started about working out your emotions. Anger is a thing that, hatred is a thing that drives me to the typewriter and is a thing that is a release for me; rather than going out and smashing windows, or beating people up. I realized, about six years ago that it was not possible to continue writing as I had been, with my books published by...you know, one book from this publisher, and five from this one and two from this one. I had to get them all together under one umbrella and I had to get them together with a publishing house that would permit me to package them in a way that I knew they would sell. I finally found Pyramid, specifically Norman Goldfried, who was an incredible, brilliant, brilliant man. He's just recently left Pyramid. Now, at this moment, I'm a little nervous because I don't know who I'm dealing with over there any more. Norman permitted me to do what I wanted to do, which was package the books as mainstream books. Nowhere else, even when the books are pure fantasy, do they say: "This is a science fiction book". The little labelling that's on the back spine, you know it'll always say "Corgi fiction" or "Corgi Science Fiction" or "Corgi Western". Mine just say "Pyramid Ellison no. 1, no. 2, no. 3, no. 4, no. 5". I've tried to make myself a genre, which may be arrogance, but goddam it, a writer must do this or vanish! In a world where you're competing for news-stand space with Harold Robbins and Leslie Thomas and Jacqueline Susann and Rod McKuen and James,

you simply cannot allow yourself to be tagged. If you're going to be tagged, say "Oh yes, that's an Ellison book", not "Oh, that's a gothic" or "That's a western" or "That's a science fiction book". And in coming to this realization a little later than I am. When I started to do this, two and a half years ago, everybody universally said: "You're crazy! You're going to fall flat on your face! These books are going to die!". They told Norman Goldfinger he was an idiot for putting out all that money, and turning loose a writer to package his own book. I mean, my God, how ridiculous! That's like trusting an artist to do a cover. But the books have done enormously well. They've been back to press three and four times. I've gotten huge royalties. I've gotten larger royalties off this series of Pyramid books than I got from the totality of all the books I'd published in the fifteen years preceding. And so it's been vindicated, and I think now that other writers are doing the same thing. Bob has just made a deal with Pocket Books to do the very same thing. Michael Moorcock's books have been done in the same way. And, it's a new way to go; so when you see all these writers, kind of Silverberg and Dick and the others, you know, moving away, what they're doing is they're saying "We mean you no harm. We mean you no disrespect. If you want to cling to that phrase, if you think there's security in that - fine, fine. We'd rather be on our own".

You've been identified, rightly or wrongly, for a long time as perhaps the main proponent of the "New Wave" if I may use that expression - I was reading one of your introductions in which you said that you didn't like the expression "New Wave", but...

Well, I don't like the expression because I think it's journalistic shorthand.

Yes. Do you think that the upsurge of activity which, certainly in this country, was centred around New Worlds magazine under Mike Moorcock's editorship, and in the States seemed to centre, at least in some part, around your *Dangerous Visions* anthology; do you think that upsurge of activity has had any ultimate effect on the science fiction genre? Has it helped to expand the field? Has it helped to break down the walls at all?

Absolutely. I think it did it almost instantaneously. Within a year after the publication of *Dangerous Visions* people were saying: "Well, gee, there are a lot of stories here that could be published in *Galaxy*". But a year before *Dangerous Visions* they couldn't have been. *Galaxy* is the prime example. I mean, it just turned around completely. It was clearly no longer possible to maintain this insular, tunnel vision attitude toward the fiction. I don't think a writer as good as Ian Watson could be writing the kind of things Ian Watson writes today had it not been for what Mike Moorcock and Damon Knight and Norman Spinrad and Lang Jones and people like that were doing ten years ago. I think that it's had a very profound effect. I think that the fact that a book like *The Sunshin* Kit is now published in the States as a mainstream book - science fiction isn't on it anywhere. *Deathbird Stories*, my last book: mainstream. Kate Wilhelm's new book mainstream. I don't think these things could have been done the way they have been done had it not been for what Moorcock did two years ago, and what we did ten years ago. I don't mean to take the... I am not Simon Bolivar, I am not John Kenyatta, I'm not trying to say: "Yes, I'm the great banner-bolder". What I am saying is that the situation is very much like the one Charlie Chaplin faced in *Modern Times*, where he goes through the machine, he gets spewed out onto the street, and he comes up through a manhole, and he starts staggering down the street. And what he doesn't know is that there's a Labour Party parade behind him. And all of a sudden he's not just a guy staggering down the street, he's at the head of the parade. And the next thing he knows the Cossacks are beating him over the head, the cops are creaming him! Charlie Chaplin, like Lenny Bruce like myself at that period, never wanted to be standard bearers. It just happened that fate, kismet, destiny, circumstances, put us there, and we did whatever it was we did. Had I been a different kind of



person I wouldn't have done it, and someone else would have done it. It was just my luck that I was the guy in America and Mike Moorcock was the guy over here. I take it as acts of bravery not to back off once you find yourself at the front of the parade. But there's no nobility attached to it. I'm a trouble-maker. I like making trouble. I like stirring things up. And that's why I did it. I did it to please myself. I did it to get off on it, and there'll never be a bust erected for me in any case, so I don't have to worry about it, but I don't want anyone to think that I'm saying that I'm a noble Albert Schweitzer sort who did this, you know, out of the need to help further the field.

but nonetheless you stood up and were counted at a time when somebody needed to stand up and be counted.

Okay, I'll take credit for that.

Do you see the science fiction field developing in any desirable directions at the moment? Or do you think it's retreating into pulp adventure? I'm thinking of the turning out of the *Laser* series, and the new *Roger Elwood Odyssey* magazine, which I've just seen a copy of and which must be the pulpist thing I've seen in years. And the fact that DAW books seem to be publishing even less adventurous stuff than it ever did before.

And Perry Rhodan, and Ballantine doing *The Best of Planet Stories*.

Right. And these endless waves of space operation adventure novels, like Perry Rhodan - Simon Mack and all these others. Do you see any desirable directions in countering these influences?

Well, the desirable direction is what we talked about earlier. Writers like Tom Disch, Norman Spinrad and Michael Moorcock going their own way, and saying: "Okay, if this is what you want, if you want spaceships thundering through the void - dynamite! You go do that and call yourself science fiction, or Sci-Fic, or any other bloody thing you want. We're going to go off and do our own thing".

What you are seeing the very beginnings of right now is a splintering. We talked for many, many years, for 25 years, about the merging of the mainstream with science fiction and what it would look like. And we thought it would look like John Hershey's *The Child Buyer* or Nevil Shute's *On The Beach*, or Kurt Vonnegut. Well, it isn't going to look like that at all. What it's going to look like is our very best writers having their brief fling with the structured identifiable kind of fiction called science fiction, and then drifting away. You're going to see Ian Watson doing things like *The Embedding*, and *The Jonah Kit* and not coming back and writing for *Analog*. You're going to see Tom Disch doing *Fun With Your New Red and Clara Resis* and books like that, and drifting away. You're going to see Spinrad doing *Passing Through The Flame*. My books are less and less identifiable as anything like science fiction. I have a much stronger fantasy element than a lot of writers, and so it's easy to categorise in that way... which is my problem, but I'll fight that one as time goes by. What you're seeing is writers who have greater aspirations leaving the field, saying: "We are a field unto ourselves. Each of us is a field, each of us a genre. Each of us is a category. If you want to cling together over there in frightened timidity, and do the same things that people have been doing since 1626 over and over again, do it. Do it, and God's speed, and go well, no-one should ever drop a safe on your head. That's fine. But leave us alone. Don't pillory us. Don't condemn us, and don't tell us we can't do what we want to do." And so, those who are leaving are concentrating on those things which have always been identified with great fiction. Strong characterisation, inherent philosophy, tone, literary... not literary, wrong word, artistic devices and just a different ambience to the work. It's the kind of writing that people like Lester del Rey and John Jeremy Pierce and that whole crowd, will continue to call "New Wave" because they like the term! They are categorisers, they're Eric Koffer's True Believers, for Christ's sake! They deal in image, they don't deal in the work. They don't

look at the individual story, they deal in jingoism. And that's fine, you know. We may rail against them, we may get up on a platform and say: "You boob! How dare you do it?" No-one ever writes - this is in quotes - "New Wave", which is really a loathsome phrase, no-one who writes in that idiom has ever said to Isaac Asimov: "Hey Isaac, how can you write that?" I mean, *The Gods Themselves* is a dreadful book - I don't care who knows it! It's a dreadful piece of work, it's the worst thing Isaac ever wrote. That it won all those awards is a testament to the love that people feel for Isaac, and for the way that they honour the work that was done 20 years ago that was great work. No-one ever said to Isaac: "Christ, don't write that! You should be writing *The Dubliners*." No-one ever does that to anybody who writes that way. No-one ever says to Lester del Rey "Hey, write what we write!" Damn it, we want everyone to do what they want to do! Total freedom, that's the nature of the artistic experience. Total freedom! And people who set themselves up as the gurus and the Delphic oracles of the field - the Sam Moskowitzs, the Roger Elwoods, the Forrest Ackermans, the Donald Wollheims, these people, I think, do so enormous disservice to the craft. Because they always wanted it to soar, to fly, to sing. And now they're holding it down. This may be the most down, really knife-in-the-gut kind of thing I'm going to say during this entire interview. But it seems to me that one of the enormous tragedies of history and this genre is that the three people for whom science fiction has most been their life...since they were teenagers they built their entire life around it, nothing in their life is not of science fiction. The three people: Lester del Rey, Forrest J. Ackerman and Donald Wollheim - are the three people who are doing the most to crush kill and smother this field. Donald Wollheim, who published the first anthology of science fiction, who has helped enormous numbers of young writers, who has always been a big champion of the field, is the man who is publishing the worst science fiction in the field at the moment. He publishes some very good books, but they are so...so few of them. He publishes all of these dreadful action-adventure, early pulp garbage that takes a comic book audience that far and no farther. Forrest J. Ackerman, Mr Science Fiction, whose love for the field is second to no-one's, who has dedicated his home as a library, a museum of science fiction, who would sooner slash his wrists than do anything to hurt science fiction, is the man who has created the phrase "sci-fi", which is the most demeaning, debasing, debasing of all. It's like, the diminutive of Women's Liberation is "few-lib", and by saying that kind of thing you can dismiss it. "Sci-fi". We think this is a great phrase. He takes enormous pride in it, pleasure in it. This is the man who is publishing Perry Rhodan in America, who is editing it, who has brought the pulpiest, most worthless series of science fiction stories...stuff that would have been rejected in 1935...and is feeding it to these young minds, who just might go on and read more uplifting work. They might not, but they might. He's bringing comic book fiction and offering it, proffering it as the answer, totalising it.

The third person: Lester del Rey. Lester, in his latter years now, has been cocooned in his view of the past, that says the greatest era of science fiction was the forties. That John Campbell was the beginning and the end. That anybody who writes this Joycean, nihilistic, antihero bullshit is a polluter of the precious bodily fluids of the field! Lester del Rey, who has saved an enormous number of people...he is married to one of the most influential editors in the field, he has a hold on the book review column of *Analog*. He's the editor of a line of classic science fiction books from a scholarly house that publishes a great many books, he's in charge of selecting a series of the early works of great science fiction writers, for another house...this is a huge spider-web of influence...and Lester is a man who is looking backward instead of looking forward.

And I look at these three men and say to myself: "My God! Time has passed them by. The waves of the future have just washed over them and left them there on the beach". And I'm sure that what I'm saying will infuriate them, and they will not

perceive the love and affection I have for all three of them. I mean, Don Wollheim published my first few books. He bought me when no-one else would buy me. Lester del Rey sat and took my manuscripts and said: "No, not this - this". And Perry Acherman has been unfailingly kind and generous to me any time I would help. And I'm sure they will see him as the sadder hitting them. And it isn't, it isn't! It is one of their students saying: "You've ceased teaching. You've now become the equivalent of something in a western movie, the sheriff who cleans out the town and rides it off the Hole in the Wall Gang and then himself becomes a moonster, and has got to be gotten rid of himself". And it's a tragic thing to have to say that, but that's the way I see this field today.

Yes. Against that, what you say about people like yourself and Tom Disch moving out of the field, escaping, is really a tremendous...

Excuse me. I don't mean to interrupt you, but one thing occurs to me that I should add as a PS. I'm not saying that what I'm doing is the direction that the field should be going. I'm not saying that I'm the saviour, the anti-Christ who will save you. I do what I do for myself, and I'm very much alone, and I'm willing to stand and fall on what I do. But, I think that, as typified by what those three gentlemen do, they hold back a lot of writers. They make it harder for them. I just wanted to say that.

...What I was saying, although, as you say, there are these retrogressive influences in science fiction field, what you say about people moving out and doing their own kind of fiction without labels, is really a tremendously exciting thing. Do you see any very interesting new writers coming up who are writing the kind of fiction you've been talking about?

Absolutely. Yes, very exciting writers - a number of them here in England. I'm talking, whom I keep referring to constantly. Christopher Priest, I think, is a very exciting writer whose work is getting steadily better. Mike Harrison - M. John Harrison. I love his work, God, I love his work.

Superb!

He really is! I think Mike goes for the same thing I do. So many people are totally bewildered by his writing. I mean, when I read "The Machine in the Ghost Train", you know, I started reading this thing and said: "Oh what a fascinating little idea", and then all of a sudden - bang! It stops, and I said: "Where's the rest of it?" and I had to go back and read it again, and I said: "Wow!" I mean, I dimly began to perceive what he was doing, and I had to read it a couple of times, or three times, to realize that here was someone who was really experimenting, in the Borgesian sense, with the elements of fiction. He was really dealing with it as Fellini deals with film as film. He was taking fiction as fiction and twisting it, turning it. Mike Harrison just is an awesome talent to me.

I think he must be one of the best prose stylists writing in the English language at the moment.

Absolutely.

The prose styling of The Centauri Device is magnificent!

He's really super. And he's very little known in America. But he will be better known, he will be better known. If he came over there for two months, he could stay at my home. We would get him in touch with the right publishers, we would sign up books in advance. He would get a programme going and they would promote him as a new talent. And it would be just what he needs, because he's super! He's just super!

I've exchanged correspondence with him and I've met him a couple of times, and the stuff that he's got in him, the things that he has started writing and then has left. There was a story called "Coming from Behind" in New Worlds, and it

was magnificent! A great start for a series...and he said: "I've got an idea for a second one" - but he doesn't feel like writing it. The stuff that he's got in him is just fantastic.

I think he's a genuine writer with a very big "A". And in America, we have Tom Disch, of course, who is just breathtaking. And Kate Wilhelm. They're more established now. The newer writers who are coming along: George R.R. Martin, Lisa Turtle, a kid named Arthur Byron Covar - I published one of his books in the "Discovery" series, *Autumn Angels*, which, if you ever get a chance to read it, you will find very rewarding. A new kid named Bruce Stirling. Young kid, you haven't seen anything by him. I'll be doing a novel of his called... well, I'm not quite sure what the title is, but the working title is *Immolation Ocean*. And it's an awesome piece of work, just awesome! Nineteen years old. I wish I could write today the way he writes at the age of nineteen. He's just brilliant. James Tiptree Jr., who has shown us all so much in how to do things. Michael Bishop is a big coming talent. George Alec Effinger.

Now, these are all writers who have been working two or three years. There are other writers who are just starting, their work is just starting. Felix Gotschalk, whose work is just now beginning to come out. I bought his first story for *The Lat Dangerous Visions*, and I bought it so many years ago that he's had books published already! That's the problem, the book has taken so long to get out that people whom I bought first have already become very famous. Ed Bryant, Edvard Bryant's work is increasingly more demanding and invigorating. A man named...now, you see, he's not even identified with science fiction...his name is William Cotzwinkle. He's got five or six books. His latest is called *Dr Rat*. And he did *The Swimmer in the Secret Sea*, he did *Elephant Brags Train*, he did...oh, three or four other books. He's a prose stylist, mainstream fantasist who, like Donald Barthelme and Roald Dahl, works in his own idiom. Nobody calls him science fiction, but Cotzwinkle is working in the area where we are working. And I hunger after the same kind of general acceptance that Cotzwinkle has.

There are a few other people. An enormous number of women, some writers. Vonda MacIntyre, Pamela Sargent. I think the women are the new hope for us, because they have enough faithfulness and they have enough self assurance now. It's one of the things I miss about the feminist movement! I just think it was one of the finest things that ever happened to the world, was the feminist movement. Not only for the good things it's going to do for men, and free us of our hang-ups and permit us to be more what we want to be, but because it's given so many women the muscle to go and do what they want to do. And we're being enriched by it. To look at Kate Wilhelm's books is proof enough. That's who some of the writers are.

There seems to be another strand that's affecting the science fiction field at the moment, and that's the question of academe, the academic acceptance of science fiction. Some people see the burgeoning of science fiction courses at Universities and Colleges as the "dead hand of academe" reaching out to science fiction. How do you see it? Do you think it's a desirable influence, or an undesirable one?

Well, the whole thing of the academic interest in science fiction is one that has to be taken in historical context again. For years science fiction was considered such a bastard art form and it was so loathsome; and you know, with good reason. There was some dreadful stuff being written, and it was considered trash. All of the old guard hungered for serious attention. Well, now we're getting it. And it has its mixed blessings clearly. On the one hand, those people who, in the "publish or perish" game, have worked out the lode of Fitzgerald, Virginia Wolfe, Samuel Butler...I mean, there's just nothing left there to do...have found a whole rich new vein. On the one hand the attention is nice, because it makes us available to college students: asterisk, footnote -

we were already available to college students - they're the ones who turned and got their teachers onto us. It's the case of students educating the professors, who come to us very late. On the one hand it's good because it gets us the serious attention that we longed for, but, at the same time, the negative aspects are that it over-examines our work, it over-intellectualizes our work. It tends to credit us with attitudes and philosophies and purposes which, clearly, are not in the work. And that leads to an awful lot of writers taking themselves very seriously. And when they start taking themselves seriously, it is the death of innocence, and the death of innocence is the death of good writing, to me. I think, and I say this again with great love, Ray Bradbury - who's a very good friend of mine - I think Ray has been seriously damaged by the academic acceptance of his work. Ray really thinks of himself as one with the ages, and as a consequence the writing that he writes is very self-conscious, and the really important, good stuff, for which he was justly honoured to begin with, he hasn't written in twenty years. The things he's writing now I find terribly pale, pallid, artay-crafty and end. I would give anything to be able to get Ray Bradbury back to writing as he was writing when he did "Fahrenheit 451", "Small Assassin", "Zero Hour". That was the kind of writing...and I mean in contemporary terms, I mean even in more mature terms...that anyone would want to write rather than artay-gots pastiche. And I think it's directly traceable to the fact that...you know, he had a Christopher Isherwood blurb on his books and he's now in the Vintage Portable Library of Great Authors. I think we must be very, very careful to retain our sense of fun. We've got to keep laughing at ourselves. I mean, I really goof on it. I mean the whole thing of being famous and going and doing television and...I mean, at tonight's big publication party, right? And all the great literary lights will be there, and the *London Daily Mail* and *The Times* will be there...man, I'm gonna goof on it. I mean, it's going to be an enormous goof for me. I hope you will see that tonight.

I guess it was Dame Margot Fontaine, the ballerina, who recently said in her book: "Always take the art very seriously. Never take yourself seriously". And that's what I do. My writing I take very seriously, but myself - Hell, no! I'm an ass-hole, and I'm perfectly ready to cop to being an ass-hole, and I think as long as we in the field continue doing that, we're safe from the dead hand of academe. Once we begin to believe the "Apollonian-Dionysian Conflict" in our work, and "The Crucifixion and Resurrection Symbolism", we're in deep trouble.

To a certain extent, you're part of this boom in science fiction in the colleges, aren't you? You've done a lot of writing courses and things like that. In fact, I've got a note here that in January you put in an appearance at the Mark Hollinger Theatre - I read that in *Locust*. How much of your time does that sort of thing take up, and how much of it is taking away from your writing? Are you still doing as much writing as you want to?

Well, the lectures take up quite a lot of time, but it doesn't take very much time away from my writing because I take my typewriter with me and I write on the road. I write everywhere. In fact, I'm sitting up in the room there writing a brand new story now. I'm going to take the typewriter probably along with me tonight and set it up in a corner and do a little writing there, at the publication party, because I'm working on a story and I don't want to let it get away from me. I won't let anything interfere with the writing.

The lecturing provides an enormous amount of money. I get paid about \$2,000 a lecture. And - that's for one evening - I do maybe 20 lectures a year. So, I make a considerable amount of money which gives me, as I say, the freedom to write what I want. And it also means I don't have to condemn myself too much to television. I only do one or two television or movie things a year. So, I spend, out of twelve months, perhaps a total of four months with the lecturing and the television and the movies, so that I have eight months free to do nothing

but the printed word. And it's like serving time in the House of the Dead to buy your way into heaven. The nice thing about it is that it's all part of the same writing game, because I pick up experience when I'm on the road lecturing. I keep in touch with the people, I keep in touch with current feelings and current ways of life and the way people speak. That's very important to me. I like my fiction to be very in on the times. So, it pays off. It's all grit to the mill.

*Can I ask you something about your UK publishing plans? I'm right in thinking that Millington are eventually going to publish all 21 of the Pyramid series - is that right?*

They're going to be publishing all 21 of the Pyramids and ten others. There's going to be a total of 31 books. And Pan has signed up for the first mix that Millington have, and we're going to be doing them out two and three and four a year. We doubt very much that there'll be more than four a year because more than that would glut the market; but within two or three years, I should think that anyone who was interested in my work would be able to get upwards of eighteen or nineteen titles.

By the way, I must say a few words about Millington because this is a new house. I have had, up till Millington, uniformly horrendous publication problems in this country. *Dangerous Visions* went through three publishers: Leslie Frewin, David Bruce and Watson, and Sphere. Leslie Frewin stole from me, ripped me off, didn't pay me, sold rights to the book he didn't own, never did the book. He pulled it away, and I had to hire a solicitor, which cost me hundreds and hundreds of pounds. Never got anything for it. David Bruce and Watson did the books in a two volume edition that was not according to contract. They didn't do the illustrations, they didn't do anything they said they were going to do. The books were almost remembered before they were published. I mean, you can't find them. And they sold the paperback rights which they had no right to sell. Again, again I had to sue, and again I could not collect. Finally, Sphere did them in what I consider to be three really obnoxious looking editions. Well, they're awful! Those terrible monsters on the front. I mean, that's not what the book's about, it's just the opposite in fact. I was furious! I was absolutely livid! I wanted it done in one volume to begin with, and I wanted it done in some taste. That was one of the reasons why my stuff was never published here. I simply could not get it all together here. I had to come over here myself to do it, in conjunction with my agent Janet Freer of the Michael Bakewell operation, and Diana Tyler, who have both been just super. And, I did not intend originally to go with Millington. The only reason I had anything to do with them at all was that Toby Roxborough, who's my editor there with Tom Tessler, who was an old friend from New York, and I went to lunch with him, and the next thing I knew, he said: "Why don't we buy some of your books?" and I just never thought of it. We weren't even talking business, and the next thing I knew they were doing them all. They made me a lot of promises. They made the same kind of promises that all publishers make when they want to see you. Well, the first two books are out now, and by God they have kept every single promise they promised me! They promised me the books would not look like science fiction, they would not be advertised as science fiction, they would have a uniform cover display, they would promote me as a property, and they made a deal with Pan that has had the entire American publishing industry huzzing. I mean, an enormous amount of money. And I must say that Millington is a house that any science fiction writer who gives a damn about his work should consider.

*They seem to be producing, certainly, some very interesting books at the moment, and the fact that they've tied in your paperback rights with Pan is good because Pan have about the best distribution in this country of any paperback house. Can we go on then to what your plans are for the States? You were talking about The Last Dangerous Visions. Can we go back over that again for the benefit of the tape? Just say a little bit about what The Last Dangerous Visions is going to be like and when you think it will be out.*

*The Last Dangerous Visions* is done, is closed... I'm finishing up writing the introductions now. It goes into Harper and Row - it will not be published by Doubleday. I pulled it away from them two years ago, three years ago. It's being published by Harper and Row. It will be in a two volume, boxed set, and it will sell for approximately \$25. It has over 100 stories, 100 full-page illustrations by Tim Kirk and a fold-out illustration, which is no illustration to the Cordwainer Smith story - a new Cordwainer Smith story. It has two full covers, wrap-around covers by Tim Kirk. It will be a boxed set. And, it is over a million and a quarter words. That is the equivalent of thirteen or fourteen full-length novels. It's longer than *War and Peace*, and it's about three times as long as *Gone With the Wind*. Continue, among other things, two complete novels: one by John Christopher, a brand new novel called *The Journey South*, and a complete novel by Richard Wilson called *At the Sign of the Bear's Head Nebula*. It's got virtually every writer who was not in *Dangerous Visions* or *Again Dangerous Visions*. The only repeat is Ed Bryant, for a funny reason which will become apparent when you read the introduction. But Ed is the only person who has been able to get into two different books. It goes to September 1st. It'll take them about eight months to get it into production and have it ready. It'll be on sale in America in the Spring of 1977. I think after ten, eleven, twelve years of this project, this book will be the final road-marker of a project that is now clearly indicative of where the field has been and is over the past ten years. I'm hoping that it'll have as profound an effect on the field as the first two books did. And I think it's an infinitely better book than either of the first two.

And your own plans for writing at the moment. You seem to have mainly written in the short story form, and that seems to be where you're most successful.

I've had four novels published.

Those were...

One of them was science fiction...

*Doomman?*

Ah no, no, no, no - *Doomman* was a piece of shit!

I realised it was very early...

Well, that was published even without my permission. No, my first novel... no, my second novel was a science fiction novel. It was called *The Sound of the Scythe* and it was published under the name of *The Man with Nine Lives*, and I'm updating that. In fact, that's one of the forthcoming books, a complete revision of that book. But I've also done a mainstream novel, called *Spidekian* which is a rock novel. I did *Memoirs from Purgatory*, which is a full length autobiography. And *Hub of the City*, which was my first novel, a juvenile delinquency novel.

I have four novels under contract, and I will be writing them within the next two years. One of them I plan to be a mainstream best-seller. What I say best-seller, I mean on a level with *Jaws*, *The Exorcist*, that level of seller. And I'll do it, too. I've got two new books of short stories: *Shatterday* and... well, actually, three books. See, I've taken *Over the Edge* and *From the Land of Fear*, which were older books, and I've taken out of them any stories that were already in Pyramid books, and I've added half again as many stories. So, there's one full book there. There's about 80,000 new words of fiction to be added, showing up in the new edition of *From the Land of Fear* and *Over the Edge*. Plus another entirely new book, called *Shatterday*, which is all new stories. One of the things you probably read in *Locust*, about me sitting in a window in a bookstore and writing a story a day, I'm going to be doing that here in London. Yes, I'm going down on Friday, I believe, and we're going to see the people at "Words and Music". They're going to be at the publication

party tonight, and we're going to see them at "Words and Music" - which is right across the street from Foyles, to give Foyles a black eye. Because Foyles had said: "Oh we wouldn't do such a thing! I mean, my goodness, a writer sitting and writing! It's never been done!" Well, it has been done, as it turns out. Simenon, in 1923 I believe, sat in a glass case in the window of Gallimard in Paris and wrote a novel in three days. And, of course, the thing I did in Los Angeles where I wrote almost 300,000 words of fiction in six days, we're going to do it here in London. And, we're going to get the newspapers down, and the television...I'm determined to become as popular, and to have my work as available, to readers in this country, as it is in America.

In 1776 we gave you Benjamin Franklin. In 1976 we give you Harlem Ellison. A bold step backward.

*A bold step forward, perhaps. Well, that's probably a good note to end on, in fact. Is there anything else you want to add about any plans you have to tell the readers about?*

I'm doing a new movie. It'll be released here in Europe as a feature. I don't know what they're going to call it, but I'm doing it as a feature for TV in the States, called "Dark Destroyer"; and it's a fantasy in the style and mode of the 1940 Val Lewton horror films. It's a marvellous piece of fantasy, if they let it get on the air the way I wrote it. I'm in negotiation for two other feature films, for a new television series. I've just cut my first record, which is out in the States, of me reading my own works. They sold something like 700 copies in the first month, and I read "Shatterday" and "Repent Harlequin! Said the Tocktockman" on the album, and it's the first of a number of albums. So, I'm moving into that area. And, well, I'm just...I'm just moving as fast as I can.

*Yes - as ever, I get the impression.*

Well, yes. I mean, I'm 42 years old now, and I figure I've only got a certain number of miles of visceral material available to me, and I've got to use it while I've got it. And I hope to keep smacking and jiving till I'm eighty. At which point I'll worry about slowing down.

*Well, I certainly hope you do keep going, and I'm sure that a lot of VECTOR's readers will hope you do. Harlem Ellison, thank you very much for giving us your time.*

Thank you, Chris.



# WTF BOX



FAIRNE

AGAIN DANGEROUS VISIONS edited by Harlan Ellison;  
(2 Volumes: Signet, New York, 1972; \$1.95  
each; 444/450 pages; ISBN 0-451-35672/3)  
(Millington Books, London, 1976; £6.00; 760 pp;  
ISBN 0-86000-062-1)

Reviewed by David Wingrove

Reading *Dangerous Visions* it occurred to me that you can teach old dogs new tricks. There were all the old "well-establisheds" (with, of course, a few noticeable exceptions) writing damn good and totally contentious stuff. Purchasing a paperback copy of *Again, Dangerous Visions* in Amsterdam I approached this second mammoth volume (17,000 words longer than *DV*) with a degree of scepticism mingled with hope. Surely it couldn't measure up to *DV*? Now, several months of reading and re-reading later, I can honestly say that there is no comparison. *A, DV* cannot be judged against *DV*. *A, DV* is a showcase for the young dogs (wolves), sharp-toothed and salivating. Forty-two writers demonstrate their skills in this collection and with three exceptions they are all worth reading. It is immediately apparent that Ellison has placed greater emphasis upon literacy. There is a greater diversity here, a far more deliberate distancing from the restricting conventions of the magazine field than was evident in *DV*. *A, DV* seems a curious hybrid of several influences, primarily of *DV*, of *Clarion* and the ever-growing writers' schools, but also *sf's* present flirtation with academe.

But all of this is superfluous. There are nineteen stories here which would shine in a lesser anthology (with two award winners and a handful of nominees); nineteen good reasons for having these 900 pages (exclusive of Ellison's introduction) on your shelf. The introduction I'll skip. If you are an Ellison-phile you'll treasure it, if not it's quickly forgotten. You should know what you have "in your hand" or "propped against your belly".

And so to the stories...

"The Counterpoint of View", John Heidenry: Clever but ultimately unimpressive and quickly forgotten. It didn't prompt me to seek out anything else by Heidenry, which is, after all, one of the prime purposes of such an anthology.

This is a comment upon the ambiguity of modern literature in a similar vein to Parra's story later on.

"Ching Witch" by Ross Rocklynne: inconclusive and shallow. Well-trying theme of love as a mask of hate. Interesting character in Captain Ratch Ching.

"The Word for World is Forest" by Ursula Le Guin: it has become rather clichéd to describe Le Guin as excellent/brilliant/stunning/breathtaking, etc (reviewer tick appropriate hyperbole). But once again this is undeniably true. This is a simple story of racial xenophobia and the paranoid solipsism of a military colonist, linked to Le Guin's other "League of Worlds" stories. It is told from the viewpoints of three men: Lyubov, the specialist concerned with ecological balance; Davidson, the unstable, terran soldier; and Selver, a "creechie". The creechies are the indigenous inhabitants of New Tahiti (setting for this tale), smaller than the terrans and furry, but nevertheless men - men who have adapted to the forest. The emotions are etched in black and white, the opinions aired are raw-edged, blatant. I won't spoil anything by giving the outline of the story, but the many themes - progress against tradition, economics against ecological systems, xenophobia against humanitarianism, loss of innocence - are Le Guin's main preoccupations. She takes time to digress and philosophise and this enriches rather than weakens the story. But Le Guin isn't just strong in theme; the story is well-structured and the characterisation, as ever, deep and carefully-considered. Le Guin's creechies are much akin to Tolkien's elves; their reverence for the forest, their singing, the gentility and nobility of their actions. But these aren't the antisepic goody-goodies of Tolkien; they are men, derived from man, and because of that I could experience a much deeper empathy with their plight, with their all-too-human responses.

This is one of the two novella-length stories in this anthology, the worthy winner of the 1972 Hugo in that category. Like Lupoff's later contribution, its warning to all of us is contained in a few words: "It just happened to be the way things were". That negative, close-minded attitude must be the target of good sf, and Le Guin hits the bull continuously throughout the ninety pages of this story.

"For Value Received" by Andrew J. Offutt: the introduction to this was nearly as good as the story, which itself was a marvellous "spanner-in-the-works" tale. Highly literate and readable. We hear all too little from this fellow.

"Mathons from the Time Closet" by Gene Wolfe: three political tales. Wolfe is so elegant that it makes me wonder what the hell he has been doing half his life. Why only now, Gene? These stories are connected only by the superb craftsmanship of this imaginative writer, but each is highly memorable, highly individual (especially "Loco Parentis" - reminiscent of vintage Bradbury).

"Time Travel for Pedestrians" by Ray Nelson: in Nelson's story the time travel is "keyed" by masturbation and/or violent death. Action-packed and with several viewpoints (if only one character) and yet a sense of humour in there too, a perfect foil to the more serious side of the story. I enjoyed this one a great deal, and it is worth reading this twice to realise the depth of Nelson's writing, his ability to change style and perspective as he changes scene.

"Christ, Old Student in a New School" by Ray Bradbury: poetry or preaching? As either it fails. Bradbury is good - one of the best. But this was disappointing anyway the least. A poem(?) on the singularity of mankind, laughter being the key to freedom. Why not a short story? Oh well, press on...

"King of the Hill" by Chad Oliver: well-written "crowded world" story, but rather predictable. Not a particularly dangerous vision even if an apocalyptic one.

"The 10:00 Report is Brought to you by..." by Edward Bryant: a frightening vision of a future where televised violence (factual items) is "produced" rather

than accidental. A motor-cycle gang is hired to rape a small Californian town by a TV network whose ratings are falling. Very memorable. A vivid warning...

"The Funeral" by Kate Wilhelm: a beautifully written story. The old and ugly, jealous of the "straight backs and strong legs and arms" of the young try to reconstruct the world in their own image. It demonstrates the weakness and frustration of the young in the clutches of their malignant elders. I was surprised that this one hadn't won an award.

"Bury the Hare" by James B. Humes: a previously unpublished writer. It is a short, nostalgic piece concerning cartoon characters and their "real" emotions. It has an immediate and lasting impact and makes us want to read more by Humes. This story also challenges the idea of copyrighting and "what does belong to the people?"

"When it Changed" by Joanna Russ (Nebula Award Winner, Short Story, 1972). If you haven't read this already then it's still likely that you've heard of it by reputation (which is quite justified). Whether you agree or disagree with Ms Russ's views, this "obsessive" piece of masculine/feminine roles in writing of the first order. Obsession is the sustenance of every good writer, but then, perhaps, a straight interpretation of this story will not do. It is not merely about sexual roles but stresses the need for a purposeful life. As the central character says in the penultimate line: "Take my life but don't take away the meaning of my life". A challenging comment certainly, and a story that forces you to re-evaluate your conception of the male-female relationship. A beautiful story; everything a short story should be. The best in the book.

"The Big Space Fuck" by Kurt Vonnegut Jr: that title itself is a dangerous vision! The story: Earth is a "shit-hole", polluted to the hilt, and the USA is shooting 400 lbs of freeze-dried sperm to the Andromeda Galaxy to perpetuate the human species. And there is a law that parents can be sued by their children for mistakes made in their upbringing... And so it goes. Irrational, unbelievable but with its own Fortian logic and it makes its point better (and of course quicker) than a sixty-four thousand word novel by a lesser writer. Not for the faint-hearted, but another masterpiece from the warped mind of the man himself.

"Bounty" by T.L. Sherred: a touching introduction. The story was good but the idea of stamping out crime by violent means is questionable. Too trite. My own thought was: "that's not the way it would happen!"

"Still Life" by E.M. O'Donnell: E.M. O'Donnell is Barry M. Malberg, and this piece is well up to his usual standard. The words flow as smooth as silk. His delicate portrayal of the emotional and psychological strains upon an astronaut is excellent. The "twist" at the end is, in retrospect, predictable, but no less effective for that reason. Very good indeed.

"Stoned Counsel" by B.B. Hollis: a day in the life of... story about a future where legal cases are fought by two lawyers who are drugged and linked to one another mentally. By tempering each other's subjective version of the case they ultimately come to a decision. A humorous piece, nicely handled by Hollis.

"Monitored Dreams and Strategic Cremations" by Bernard Wolfe: this should not have been in A.D.V. Not because these two stories are not well written (though I think even that is questionable in parts) but because even before I reached Mr Wolfe's atrocious afterword I knew that here was a man who didn't care a damn for the genre. If one single author has made my blood boil in the last five years, it has been Wolfe. "The Hiquit Position", the first of these two pieces, is about naps, a melodramatic piece redeemed by a moving description of a dog's agony. "The Girl With Rapid-Eye-Movements" which is about telepathy (or ESP as Mr Wolfe calls it) never makes it for several reasons. His distaste for rock music is tasteless and poorly directed, his use of technical terms is

very often inaccurate, his "scientist" is only too willing to tell the first stranger who comes along (all of whose books he just happens to have read!) all that is going on. The original conception is good, but the handling of it is terrible.

These faults would not, in themselves, be a reason for rejecting these two stories (although the 38 pages they occupy could have been used far more profitably). But Bernard Wolfe's afterword must be read to be believed. It is arrogant, condescending and (most annoying of all when you care about something) inaccurate and plainly superficial. He actually claims that he goes beyond the sf writers in their contemplation of the human aspect of life, the sf writers (he actually says this verbatim) "being so busy writing their highly imaginative TV scripts for "Lost in Space" and "Star Trek"."

He has the effrontery to admit that he has read no sf since 1948 and then dismisses it as a genre of "scientific hangere-on". Ellison has much to answer for in allowing Bernard Wolfe into this anthology, and on re-reading Ellison's famous introduction I was sickened. My reaction was by no means lessened by the literary standards of the two pieces - they were nothing exceptional. Los Tempe Modorae can keep Wolfe, of certainly doesn't need him.

"With a Finger in my Eye" by David Gerrold: a surrealist romp, much better than the usual Gerrold standard, dealing with a philosophical aspect, the nature of reality. Again there is nothing dangerous in this vision, it has been done better elsewhere.

"In the Bar" by Piers Anthony: the last story in Volume 1. A highly polished tale, nicely restrained, which delivers its message perfectly (even if it didn't put me off meat as was, I believe, Anthony's intention). It is a good essay on the nature of intelligence and the subjectivity of morality. I would like to see more stories using this framework (an alternate universe tale where Prime Earth has a one-way entry to countless alternatives) because Anthony could use these "trappings" to greater effect. Otherwise, faultless.

"Soundless Evening" by Me Len Hoffman: very short but good. There were similarities here to Phil Dick's excellent "The Pre-persons". Not up to Dick's standard by nevertheless well worth reading.

by Gahan Wilson: another story that would have been better left out of this anthology. I can see no future for Wilson's "viewwords" if they are all of this standard. Sexton Blake come back, all is forgiven.

"The Tent-tube Creature, Afterward" by Joan Hermann: excellent. A real breath-catcher. This is so gentle and restrained. One of the best I have read; sensitive and sensible, a rare combination. It tells in a very brief story (and without preaching) one man's relationship with an intelligent being of Man's own creation.

"And the Sea Like Mirrors" by Greg Benford: a "survival" tale with several interesting ideas. The hero is a competent man, a self-centred realist. I didn't really like this even though it was well-written and the details accurate. Too cold, too inconclusive.

"Red Shirts are White" by Evelyn Lief: this is one of those delightful stories that sf occasionally shelters under its wing. All colours are banned by decree and only white is allowed. On all logical grounds this is a silly story, but the very idea sheds new light on our legal morality and the occasional stupidity of imposed conditions. (Again, I must compare this to Bradbury, who can do this so well.)

"Tissue" by James Hallis: Hallis is a writer in every sense of that word. He presents us with two amusing narratives, "at the fitting shop" and "33rd American dream". The former is a tale of puberty future-style, where the

adolescent goes off to the store (a cross between Harrods and the underground system at Bank) to buy a penis. The latter is a dense macabre, a mock-horrific send-up of child guidance tomes. Pace and presentation are both perfect. What more can I say?

"Elouise and the Doctors of the Planet Vergasoo" by Josephine Saxton: apart from the humorous "raison d'être", this story was highly memorable. The pretext was incongruous to the theme, that of perfect/imperfect humanity and their inter-relationship.

"Chuck Berry, Won't you Please Come Home!" by Ken McCullough: I didn't like this. A tick is fed on blood and then becomes the size of a large water-melon, and then the fun begins...or nearly. The pseudo-philosophical language, interspersed with exclamations such as "Uah!" did little to help. Full of Americanisms. But there are some good things in this short piece, particularly when the story tenses towards the humorous. Something about the overall presentation sankled, however, and prevented my enjoyment of this one.

"Epiphany for Aliens" by David Kerr: well-written. The anthropological aspect of the discovery of a colony of Neanderthals is nicely balanced against the psychological insights Kerr gives into the three major characters. A good story if rather a standardised formula: ritual mating, retribution and the ultimate scientific analysis of the corpses. The message is that Man is over-curious and inhibited. A "formula" story - which Kerr admits in the afterword - but of the better kind.

"Eye of the Beholder" by Burt E. Filer: another "Rollerball" somebody will say. Not at all, I retort. Harrison's story was nothing as rich as this. Filer's is a much more credible vision, undiluted, powerfully written and with a spine-tingling climax. It tells of the normal man, content on his "aspirilla", "syrched-in" to the diverse pursuits of the Champion, and of the boredom of the Champion who has everything he wants but can never keep anything. I would have liked to see this developed to novel length, even at the expense of the deeply-moving finale. (After all, why not two versions?)

"Is He Glower" by Leonard Tushnet: a man with cancer has himself frozen for future awakening when the disease can be cured. Is he dead or not? Tushnet goes into the legal considerations without missing an angle or a detail. Quite amusing but now outdated: this is already happening in the USA and Canada.

"Zero Gee" by Ben Bova: a technically "hard" sf tale. Apart from its sexual element it is hardly a dangerous vision. Unstimulating even if it is well drafted. The message, or theme, was vague.

"A Mouse in the Walls of the Global Village" by Dean R. Koontz: a vivid description of the imperfect being in a perfect world. The story is a metaphor in itself - a scream to break the silence. Most memorable, and we have yet to see the best of Koontz.

"Getting Along" by James Blish: according to your viewpoint this is either the lowpoint or one of the highpoints of the anthology. A hilarious romp through the nether-worlds in epistolar form. The late James Blish, ably assisted by his wife Judith Ann Lawrence, displays his considerable skill as a writer. The Shelley, Wells and Lovecraft parodies are superb. Marvellously subdued sexual humour (that Fielding would have been proud of) and a knock-out punch-line ending. Excellent, James - we miss you.

"Totenkuch" by A. Parra (y Figueredo): an enigmatic conversation between the author and the reader. I usually enjoy the directly abstract (if you'll forgive the paradox) fiction typified by Robbe-Grillet and Borges, but in this short story the references are too diverse, too personal perhaps to have the intended effect.

He intends to "promise a satisfaction that is withheld", but the promise is not powerful enough and so our frustration is dampened. I followed this carefully as the Nazi atrocities were a subject I do care about intensely. Parra seems to infer that people remember these atrocities only as pseudo-sexual titillation. He seems to prefer apathy to intensity, but it is an interesting approach even if this isn't of in the broadest definition of the genre. It does, however, make you think.

"Things Lost" by Thomas M. Disch: *Non-Stop* meets *Camp Concentration* meets *The Immortals*. When death is only a symbol, what is it a symbol for? Disch answers this in the penultimate entry. I would like to have seen the complete novel, *The Pressure of Time*, of which this was to be the opening sequence, but which Disch has discarded and has not, to date, returned to.

"With the Bentfin Boomer Boys" by Richard Lupoff: the second novella-length story in this book. Lupoff intended that the language tell the story, which it does (and you'll have to read it to understand exactly what I mean by that). I was engrossed. A gripping story; space opera with a deeper meaning. Without preaching Lupoff manages to depict racism in its rampant glory, in its pathetic decline and finally in its resurrection. There are all sorts of beautiful and memorable things; the power-full (as well as being powerful) description of vodu; the battle sequence; the patchwork reconstituteds; the E'techal (sterfish creatures derived from men). We are plunged into a galaxy where every minority group has its own planet with its own problems and solutions. Civilization proves as unworkable as the lack of it, and in the end Lupoff hints that there is no clearest solution to the problem of prejudice. It exists - so you do your best.

The language of the whites of "New Albama" deserves a mention, occasionally reminiscent of Burroughs (William), a "aura" stated brogue, heavy and drawing. "Y Bi Moores? Headlines allasame aylagame allafine allatime. Win win win. So: Why no fixin sidewalkcracks, street-lights, build some houses, kill some lowlows, and some schools? Afterward uvvora."

Le Guin and Wilhelm top this, but it's close.

"Leslie Metable" by M. John Harrison: a story that is nine years old at the time of writing this review...fits in with the NMQ formula...dedicated to Jerry Cornelius. Harrison sums it up better than I could in his afterword (a nice piece of self-criticism). An allegorical treatment of a philosophical concept.

"Last Train to Kankakee" by Robin Scott (Wilson): a Rip van Winkle tale of a professional criminal awakened in the future - where there is no outlet for his only talent. He kills himself only to find he has "missed the train" and is eternally damned. The nature of his damnation is a stunner... a humorous touch but only average by Scott-Wilson's normal standards.

"Empire of the Sun" by Andrew Weiner: Earth is at war with the Martians - or is this one man's delusion? A nice story which gains in confidence as it proceeds.

"Ozymandias" by Terry Carr: this slows in pace midway but picks up well and ends poignantly. Resurrection is again the theme, Carr sketching in details of his future society piece by piece as the tale progresses. The images were amazingly vivid, the pathos of the awakened giant nicely portrayed.

"The Milk of Paradise" by James Tiptree Jr: I have yet to be disappointed by Tiptree. This story is no disappointment. He is one of the rare few writers who can use words as pure argument without resorting to verbal bluebooking. "Beautiful" is the single-word comment that comes to mind. This is a story concerning the subjective nature of beauty. You have the impression with Tiptree that he chose each individual word with care - as with the afterword. It flows.

And those were the stories.

A, DV, like DV contains a good deal of information on and comment by Ellison and his host of writers. Like the fiction, some of it is good, some bad, typified at one extreme by Andrew J. Offut (the lower-case lettering is his, not mine!) and at the other by Bernard Wolfe. I enjoy this sort of commentary, and am glad that of is a genre that can generate not only stories of this exceptional standard but also these few insights into the inspirations and aspirations of their creators.

I must include a word on the art. In general it was below Emshwiller's usual standard. Possibly the process of reducing original sketches into small black and white prints detracted from the intended effect. Each story is illustrated (some quite concisely) individually, using what Emshwiller describes as a "two-dimensional cinematic technique". The ideas are generally very good, however, and deserve a second look once the stories have been digested.

I have only left to register my overall impression of this anthology. I was impressed. My scepticism upon Ellison's ability to pull two rabbits from the one hat rapidly metamorphosed into a healthy admiration. There are no many good things in this that I can only recommend it whole-heartedly (and despite Bernard Wolfe and Gahan Wilson, whose stories, even so, were not without some saving graces). I think this was much closer to Ellison's original conception of DV: more diverse; much more experimental; far less predictable. The genre has changed and the stories DV and A, DV have produced have been - as much as anything - a major factor in that change. Hopefully this collection will be available in England shortly, and a third volume, *The Last Dangerous Visions* is due for publication any time now...

Three rabbits?

(David Wingrove wrote this review and submitted it before we knew of or received copies of the Millington edition of A, DV. - Ed.)

THE HALF-ANGELS by Andrew Loveasy (Sphero; London; 1975; 35p; 158 pp; ISBN 0-7221-5034-3)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This is good, but flawed, fantasy. While Andrew Loveasy is letting his story speak for itself - which he does for the most part - then the book is compelling and well worth reading. A very Jungian witch-king on a far-distant world lives on in spirit, after death, in order to eradicate the break in the cosmic order of things that followed upon his consorting with the wrong sort of witch-wife, and the subsequent arrival of two witch-daughters in whom Evil threatens to overcome Good. His world loses all sense of cosmic absolutes, being given over to warring camps of magic-wielding dictators and their helpless creatures. No-one can henceforth call his mind his own: fair is foul and foul is fair, nothing is certain. But the dead witch-king has broken the barrier between the worlds in order to raise up a hero who will judge the surviving witch-daughter (who has escaped from her father's power), pronounce her Good or Evil according to absolute criteria, and perform justice accordingly. This hero is the new owner of an antiquarian bookshop (in our world); and the link between the worlds is an ancient book with a hypnotic grid-design for a frontispiece, and illustrations that are seen to move after progressively-shorter lapses of time—.

If this grabs you, then Mr Loveasy is your man. While he keeps to this story, his book is powerful, convincing, and something special. Whatever my qualifying remarks - read it!

Still, it is flawed, and the flaw only really comes to the surface in the last two paragraphs. These constitute an unexpected twist, certainly, but

unexpected in the wrong sense: I can't accept Andrew Lovejoy's ending, my whole being rejects it, because it makes nonsense of everything that has gone before. Perhaps inexperience accounts for this: *The Half-Angels* is his first published work of fiction, and perhaps the coda is simply a "twist ending" that doesn't come off. If so, it's an incredible blunder. I've tried to persuade myself that I'm missing the point, that the author is here plumping for an ultimate moral relativism: what is Good in one world may be Evil in another. But no: that doesn't make sense either. One must face the fact that, given Mr Lovejoy's ending as it stands, the worlds at the opposite poles of his cosmos are mysteriously connected, but there's no ultimate reason why they should be. The author himself seems to reject the cosmic analogies.

The result of this is a kind of cosmic schizophrenia: our hero from the antiquarian bookshop, once he's translated into another world, becomes literally another person, with no memory of his previous existence to speak of, and no possibility of returning. In the end, he simply accepts this and wanders off with a couple of obliging girls he has picked up in his new life. Very nice, too: but fantasy must obey psychological reality, and we know that this could never happen, whatever else might be possible. A man can't exist without a past to refer back to; a fact which is admitted by the hero's previous bewilderment, his anxious desire to return to wherever he came from.

(I'm still trying to make sense of Mr Lovejoy's last two paragraphs; and the only other positive sense I can think of is that we're supposed to see the original protagonist, the witch-king, as an incompetent blunderer. But if you're going to write about a witch-king, and make a serious tale out of it - why pick on a criminally incompetent witch-king in the first place? No, no, it won't do.)

The basic elements of this sort of fantasy must connect logically, and with the utmost clarity. The initial link-up between the worlds is all-important: it must be convincing, be it C.S. Lewis's wardrobe into Narnia, or the dear old Tardis. In Andrew Lovejoy's case, the magical Book, with its moving illustrations and grid design (bearing the basic Patterns of Language, or something like that) is convincing. But the Book alone is not enough to transport the hero; and there's a good deal of subsequent mumbo jumbo with magic circles, incantations, and infinitely-reflecting mirrors.

"Then, as he looked, one of the images of himself far away behind the others moved, and as it did so he jerked and fell through the mirror, as that which was known as Edward Harris disintegrated into thousands of tiny pieces of light." (pp 45-6)

This is all a bit too ingenious - there's a sense of strain, as if Andrew Lovejoy is not yet in total possession of the knack of connecting two continua. I think this art of connecting the worlds is all of a piece with the sense of cosmic absolutes - which is where, as I say, Mr Lovejoy finally disappoints. (And he disappoints all the more because, right up to the very end, he shows every sign of leading us up to something marvellously right.) Perhaps the great model here is George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, in which the hero's bedroom merges imperceptibly into a fairy landscape, which in turn leads ultimately back to the hero's home in space-time. The whole of Creation is a seamless fabric - or should be, anyway.

However, these flaws don't prevent the main body of *The Half-Angels* from being wholly absorbing and unpredictable, while obeying an inner logic. If Andrew Lovejoy will only read his own tale aright, he will see this logic; and since he has mastered the art of keeping to this logic, he should produce something very good indeed. *The Half-Angels* is only good - which is, admittedly, rare enough.



(By the way, those with weak hearts should be warned that *The Half-Angels* contains a sentence beginning thus: "As they attempted to travel even further away to reach the tiny planets beyond the stars ---" (?) (p 100). Actually, this doesn't spoil your enjoyment of the story: just ignore it.)

ROOTS OF EVIL: BEYOND THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS edited by Caylon Cassaba (Corgi; London; 1978; 191 pp, 30p; ISBN 0-552-10072-8)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

The title of this anthology is not in strict accordance with the Trade Description Act. Of the twelve stories, three - four, if you include "Daisies", a good quickie from Fredric Brown - characterise plant life as being, if not actually benign, then neutral, or more aligned against than sinning. And the sub-title and the short introduction to the book must be the most contrived for some time, cashing in as they do on the recent craze for real-life "talking broccoli". The fact is, that a subject anthology like this has much less genuine unity than a mood-collection or author-collection. For instance, there's no common factor connecting David B. Keller's "The Ivy War" (an old *Amazing* story, vintage 1930, which reads quaintly enough these days but is still good fun) with Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" (a shadowy symbolic fantasy which reads rather stodgily at first, but lingers long in the mind), save the appearance of actual plant-life, natural in the first case, nurtured in the second. In other words, this anthology should definitely not be read quickly. The changes of mood and intonation are too violent for that; while on the other hand a quick reading would result in a growing sense of vain repetition - after all, there are limits to the ways in which fictional vegetables can wreak terror or work magic. The woods of these stories vary greatly, but the plots do not. Still, taken in moderation, this is a good, enjoyable collection.

My own favourites are Margaret St Clair's "The Gardener" - funny, snuddery, unpredictable, totally fantastic and utterly convincing; I must re-read "Prott" sometime - and Clifford Simak's "Green Thumb" (a haunting answer to those who will insist that mathematics is the only conceivable cosmic language). These are well worth looking up, if you don't know them already. The runner-up is a good, wistful Fritz Lieber fantasy, "Dr Adams' Garden of Evil", which has affinities with "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (always a good thing to have affinities with). It's interesting to compare Lieber's story with John Collier's "Green Thoughts", which treats of a similar theme. The Collier story is rather self-consciously "well-written", and is fascinating enough, to be sure; but the Lieber, while being very clumsily written, has much more zest, and exhibits just the right amount of unholy glee when the inevitable transformation of Man into Plant takes place. Collier is cold with it, and this is somehow disagreeable in the wrong sense.

Of the others, Welle's "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" needs no introduction. Typically, it is sandwiched between "Rappaccini's Daughter", which is hardly of at all, and a piece of marvellously-unsubtle horror from Clark Ashton Smith, "The Seed from the Sepulchre". ("The pit! the pit! said Palmer - 'the infernal thing that was in the pit, in the deep sepulchre! --'"! Masly Wade Wollman's "Come Into My Parlor" is good solid fare, suspenseful and not too predictable. Mary Elisabeth Cammack's "The Tree's Wife" supplies some nice whimsical relief. Hester Holland's "Dorner Cordulanthus" features a vegetable man-eater from the Palaeozoic Age -- a nice twist to an otherwise predictable story (vintage 1925).

Final word: worth buying for the Simak and the St Clair. And "Rappaccini's Daughter" suggests that Nathaniel Hawthorne may actually be worth reading.

THE MASK OF CTHULHU by August Derleth (Panther; 1976; St Albans; 175 pp; 60p; ISBN 0-580-04139-7)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This is, for the most part, Holiday Horror Reading, the literary equivalent of an average Vincent Price movie. (I automatically snarl him as the narrator and most of the characters.) In three words: good unhealthy fun. Derleth has a total facility which is by no means to be despised: he aims at the broadest possible Gothic effects, and for the most part he succeeds. (The only dud in this collection of six stories is the shortest, "Something in Wood", the coda of which must surely test the credulity of even the faithful.) All the stories are assembly-line jobs: how else can one explain sentences like "(The house) wore an air of foreboding formidableness"? (And there's a good deal more where that came from.) Like Vincent Price, Derleth loves to go completely over the top; like Price, he positively invites our laughter, especially when he's busy bashing the life out of adjectives like "hellish", "damnable", "stojic", "ominous" and (of course) "aldritch". And, as in the case of a Vincent Price movie, there comes a point at which talent becomes married to genuine vision - Poe's, or, as in this case, Lovecraft's - and produces a genuine thrill.

For thrills, the first story, "The Return of Hastur", is the best; partly, no doubt, because Lovecraft had a hand in it, and partly because the other five stories are all variations on the same theme. Predictability is their essence: if you're bored by the prospect of watching the inexorable, age-old Trap closing round an obviously-doomed central figure, always through the mediation of aldrithic texts or paraphernalia - then don't read on!

Of course, if the stories were predictable and nothing else, they would be worthless. However, what they unerringly repeat, at such considerable length, is what we want to hear: the Mythos! For some time now I've been llooglog on the edge of the Cthulhu Mythos; I haven't actually read and echt-Lovecraft, only the work of his disciples. But Derleth has drawn me in deeper, and I'm beginning to see what all the fuss has been about. On the individual level, the Mythos draws on authentic memories of old childhood nightmares; while on the racial level - and I think that, even when strained through Derleth, the Mythos does reach this level at times - it captures our conviction that somehow, sometimes, somewhere, Outer and Inner Space become the same thing, and Nature is spiritualised. Only the spirituality has turned evil - that comes through at times, and is not easy to laugh off. And so we enter that semi-real area of being in which "primitive" magicians like Castaneda's "Don Juan" exist: some primal unity for Man and Universe at a Higher Level. But this primal unity has been closed to us, because something very nasty indeed has happened to that Higher Level; so that, by the time of St Augustine and the rise of Christendom, things were separating out into the mechanistic, externalised universe of Science, plus belief in some heavenly Unity from which this world is divorced. The Racial Nightmare has occurred (is occurring?); and it is this nightmare of primal spiritual schism which the Lovecraft mythology evokes. (I'm not, of course, suggesting that we should all start believing in Yo-Sottboth, Shuh-Higgureth, Cthulhu and the rest; that is, I'm not yet ready to be taken away.) C.S. Lewis, in his sf trilogy, went a long way towards re-spiritualising the universe on a purely imaginative level; reading Lovecraft, on the other hand, apart from being fun, is perhaps faintly therapeutic. Primal Screen Therapy, in fact. Perhaps it's just as well that Derleth, the mediator, makes the proceedings so persistently laughable. We don't, or shouldn't, like Primal Horror that much.

These stories date from 1928 (vintage *Weird Tales*) to 1957. They haven't dated much. Curiously, the only really serious piece of datedness is magical, and occurs in "Something in Wood" (*Weird Tales* 1947). In this story, a New York art critic comes under the influence of Cthulhu via a wood carving (and is, of course, doomed in the usual manner). Derleth wants to show us this man's

critical judgment being shaped by the Great Old Ones, so he makes him suddenly assume the cause of the Roy Harris 3rd Symphony (perhaps the most popular symphony of the 40s), and denounce the work of the Soviet symphonist "Hlantanovich". Now in post-war New York there was only one other work to rival Harris in the symphonic charts; and that was the 7th Symphony of Shostakovich, the "Leningrad". Therefore "Hlantanovich" must be a scathing reference to Shostakovich. But if Dzerzh had known any of the Russian composer's more fashionable works (admittedly the "Leningrad" is pretty shallow) - and especially if he had known the 4th Symphony (which didn't reach the West until the early sixties) or the 8th Symphony, then he would have known that if any composer has ever expressed the music of the Great Old Ones, that composer was the late Dmitri Shostakovich. The Roy Harris 3rd Symphony is a marvellous work, but the music of the Great Old Ones, or the Great Race of With, it is not.

PILLAR OF FIRE AND OTHER PLAYS FOR TODAY, TOMORROW AND BEYOND TOMORROW by Ray Bradbury (Bantam; 1975; New York; 113 pp; 40p; ISBN 0-553-02173-089)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

There is a madness at the heart of things; or, to put it plainly - Death is bad. This madness can be faced, transcended, healed through Man, or the divinity in Man, but if the initial madness is denied - if we persuade ourselves (as Lyle Watson seems to do in part of *The Romeo Error*) that Death is really OK, or something to be abolished in the cause of humanitarian progress, or simply an illusion - then Man is denied his place in the true order of things, and dies spiritually.

This is the paradox Bradbury explores in *Pillar of Fire* (first staged in 1973, in California). William Lantry awakes after lying in suspended animation for 200 years, and comes to the conclusion that he is one of the Walking Dead, come to bring back Death - the psychological reality of it - to a world that has banished it behind a facade of blameless rationalism, sunny rituals and efficient crematoria. Because they don't believe in death, people don't die - even when you kill them; because they've lost all sense of what Death is. They go through the biochemical motions, but they don't really die.

Lantry is a madman, a murderer who kills in the name of Poe, Bierce, Lovecraft and the rest (whose works have, of course, been destroyed); yet in a world of robotically-programmed automata he represents humanity, because Man is the creature who has to face up to the meaning of darkness and death, giving them significance. In this stage adaptation of his early short story (first appearance 1944), Bradbury works with swift assurance, in a series of widdly-fantastic blacked-out sketches, showing Lantry's inevitable doom; and the last fiery exchange between Lantry and his chief persecutor, the head of the Peace Squad (a rough sketch for Captain Batty in *Kahrenheit 451*) - even if it is appropriated from Poe - is a dramatic masterstroke. I'd love to see a professional performance of this, preferably on an open stage like the one in the Assembly Hall at Edinburgh, where I once saw a pretty good *Doctor Faustus*. After all, if they can still go on producing a sketchy piece of work like Marlowe's, why not Bradbury's *Pillar of Fire*? Lantry makes a gloriously-ranting central figure; and Bradbury's final ballfire scene above the Great Incinerator compares well with Marlowe's. The play takes about 45 minutes to read, and is just right for its length. Bradbury knows his theatrical stuff - after all, he started out as an actor - and his expertise is shown in the intelligent and down-to-earth introduction, which stresses the value of simplicity in production.

*Kaleidoscopes* is much less obviously a candidate for dramatization: as Bradbury admits, the scattered spacecraft-crowd, each one isolated in the void after collision with a meteor, could be dramatically represented in thirty different

ways. But Bradbury suggests several simple and convincing stage effects involving large, black turning wheels, or even a simple bookcase-like structure, with everything blacked out except for the actors (who start out, before the collision, by doing a quick Star Trek routine in the orchestra pit). And he has simplified the characterisation, so that all the parts are roughly equal in dramatic weight. There's something lost there, of course, but that's show business. Hollie and Appletree, for example, share out pieces of the action that originally belonged to Hollie alone; and Appletree, a cheerful cynic in the original, takes on the original Hollie's sense of lonely futility. Both characters lose definition thereby, but all in the cause of good theatre. I'm sure - I trust Bradbury's dramatic sense. I'm not altogether sure that *Kaleidoscope* would work as a short one-act; but it could be a very rewarding experiment. The basic idea after all, is bold, simple and profound - i.e. the stuff of good theatre.

(By the way, Bradbury tends to introduce dramatic variety by shamelessly plagiarising himself: in *Kaleidoscope* we meet with the atomic nuclear shower from *Leviathan '99*, featuring Churchill, Hitler, Roosevelt and Co.; and in *Pillar of Fire* he dramatises the death of morbid imagings with a quick flash to Wars and the burning of proscribed works of Poe, Bierce etc. as in "The Evilies". And why not? The only argument against it would be that outsiders in the audience might not catch on quickly enough. In *Pillar of Fire*, I think the grafting could have been more carefully done, as well.)

*The Foghorn* is short and simple; all you need is two actors, a modest rail-off platform, a light, a foghorn, and one Quadrophonic Beant from 20,000 Fathoms. (He's quadrophonic in my imagined production, anyway.) It would be worthwhile doing - if only for the Beant.

For an average member of the public (like me), this book is most certainly worth buying for *Pillar of Fire*; especially if (like me) he doesn't have it to the original short-story version, which is available only in mongrel-collections like *S is for Space* and various anthologies. It's really an impressive piece of work, all 84 pages of it, and - but you don't need me to appreciate it for you, do you. Go and read it!

UNIVERSE TWO edited by Terry Carr (Dennis Dobson; London; 1976; 255 pp; £3.50; ISBN 0.234-77122-4)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

In *Vector 62*, Barry Gillen referred to *Universes 1 & 2* as being "distinguished only by their blandness". (The reference was to the American Ace edition, from which the Dobson edition has been blown straight up, complete with typos - surely, on p 221, "aud" should read "mute", "foolness" "foolishness", and on p 71 "conversation" should surely read "covention"). Blandness? I didn't find this to be the case with *Universe 2*: on the whole it's an enjoyable, reliable, thoughtful anthology of original stories, and I'm glad I read it.

At this point I'd better present my criteria. Some time ago Brian Aldiss - one of the most brilliant writers now operating, in or out of sf - made a terrible prophecy: he said that sf was going the way of mainstream literature - was, in fact separating out into "highbrow" and "lowbrow" categories. (i.e. presumably the thickies could then carry on reading Asimov and Clarke, while the elite could concentrate of reading and understanding *Report on Probability A*.) Well, I'm very glad to report that, if Terry Carr's anthology is anything to go by, this disastrous felinepation has not yet happened. People can still write good, easily readable sf with as good an eclectic kick as anyone with an unjaded palate could reasonably expect.

In this case, the two best stories are the first and last: these are Pangborn's "Tiger Boy" and Bob Shaw's "Retrospective". I'm glad I read the

Pangborn: it's basically "religious" sf, but not at all pious or pseudo-mystical. The setting is a post-holocaust village settlement, reminiscent of Sauli Rowitto in the second part of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (complete with nearby monastery). A boy - the illegitimate son of a local priest - is born without the ability to speak, and grows up silent and isolated. But he learns how to whisper to himself, strictly in private; he is, in fact, a born poet. And he is in some strange way connected with the rumours of a superhuman "tiger boy" from the wilds, who visits the outskirts of settlements and lures away the very young and the very old. This tiger boy plays magical music on his pipes, and is escorted by an extraordinary tiger. Eventually, the poet meets the vile Mueician - and you must read on from there. There's a distant thematic relationship with *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, too; the Tiger Boy represents the transcendent, total knowledge which is denied by everyone in the village, including the monks and (except for his one solitary amour) the priest. But enough from me: you that have eyes to read, read on.

I'm also glad I read Bob Shaw's "Retroactive". I was feeling distinctly below par when I started it, and felt distinctly above par when I finished it. The story is similar in mood to *The Palace of Eternity*; similar in theme, too, for it concerns a group of homeless, wandering men - one of them in particular - and how the beginnings of a working relationship is established between them and - well, eternity. Eternity is here represented by the Paladovians, who can travel in Time as freely as we do in Space. There are none of the complications of *The Palace of Eternity*, as the Paladovians, unlike the Egonas, are wholly incarnate; but there is the same sense of wonder, of revelation. If this sounds like heavy stuff, I can only say that Bob Shaw brings it all off without departing from his usual smooth, effortless-seeming narrative style for one moment; and without dimming for one moment the playful nuts-and-bolts atmosphere of sf adventure. Vintage Shaw, I think: a real pleasure. For some time now I've thought of him as the still, small voice of British sf - and if you think that's faint praise, please look up the Biblical references!

There are subtle thematic relationships between the main stories in Terry Carr's collection, giving it a nice unobtrusive style. For instance, in Grant Davis' "My Head's in a Different Place Now", the action also ends up in eternity - but a very different sort of eternity, the kind that Carlos Castaneda deals in. Two drop-outs, male and female respectively, use their social welfare money to take a trip (in every sense) into deepest Mexico, finally ending up somewhere near Tucatan; with them is their young daughter. Here they try to make a final, irrevocable break with the firestorm Western *Logos* - and they succeed, with the unwilling help of a down-at-heel local shaman. I found this increasingly absorbing (the story is well-documented), and unpredictable. The portrait of dropout psychology is an outstanding success: the two exemplars presented here are not satirised, are allowed to speak for themselves, are presented as real people; and if they become caricatures, it is themselves who are the caricatures. This is apparently Grant Davis' first published story, and I for one am prepared to read more.

The afterlife, if not eternity, is also the setting of Harlan Ellison's "On the Downhill Side". This is one of two places in the collection - the other is the Silverberg story - in which Terry Carr has let a Big-Name do his own thing, and to hell with traditional ideas of sf. I'm certainly not putting Ellison down - the story held me throughout, and I felt that something very important was happening at the climax; but this piece could surely be graced with "poetic-diversions to good effect. Strangely enough, it reminded me of the film-fantasies of Jean Cocteau, *Orpheus* and *La Belle et La Bête*: there's the same impressive symbolical showmanship, and the same lingering doubts as to how much Matter there is beneath all that Manner. The proceeding, also, are dominated by a "God of Love", who is neither Christian nor Pagan, but *theatrical*. Still, it's good theatre; and Ellison convinces you, at the climax, that he's really

describing ultimate spiritual dissolution and rebirth in a New Orleans graveyard.

It's possible, though, that a long, cool look might reveal Garard F. Conway's "Funeral Service" as the better story. It, too, is concerned with dissolution and (possible) rebirth, though it doesn't enter Ellison's theatrical afterlife and it keeps its language and imagery at a steady level of competence. The basic idea is not original: an unsuccessful young man employs the services of a Recall Agency to bring back, literally, the memory of his father - the old man's mind being housed in a robot simulacrum - and thereby to change his own past for the better. But Conway's use of this robot-memory idea is convincing and, in the end, really impressive, without being self-consciously "original" in the Ellison manner. He lets it speak for itself, and is content with that.

Mild you, I'm not praising stolidity as a virtue: I think, for example, that William Roteler's prose, in "Patron of the Arts" - the original short story version - is rather stolid, and that the story suffers slightly because of that. Ideally, it should have been written by Roteler and Ballard: Roteler would have supplied the idea, and Ballard would have embodied it in a "Studio 5, the Stars" atmosphere. As it is, "Patron of the Arts" has little distinctive atmosphere. But the idea is good, and is presented with clean competence. It's all about Woman, Art and Patronage, and their interrelationships - the particular art-form involved being the cubic three-dimensional "geometric" portrait. In other words, in competent hands it can't fail to be interesting; and Roteler is competent. In the end, it's more than interesting: you could say that sterility comes into this one too. As to characterization, Roteler casts himself as almost impossible task as far as the central female protagonist is concerned. She has to be incredibly mercurial, an unrealized female chaos awaiting the bid of her maker. Unfortunately, the lady in question tends to sound merely half-lit - but only for a paragraph or so. Perhaps Roteler brings it off more successfully in the full-scale novel (see Vector 73/74). Still, the short story is well worth a read.

I won't say that Robert Silverberg's "The Day we went to See the End of the World" isn't worth reading, but I will say that it's the one real disappointment in this collection, albeit an interesting one. Heaven knows, Silverberg is no dud writer: the problem here is that he's being too clever for his own good. He has the raw material for a good sf end-of-the-world story: a group of pseudo-sophisticates at an awful cocktail party, discussing their trips in the new Time Machine to the End of the World. It starts off well, with an evocation of giant crabs crawling before a dead ocean under a bloated Red Sun - just as in Wells' *The Time Machine*, and some the words for that. Starting from here, Silverberg could have related the giant crabs to the dismal present of the party-guests, and written a good but-if-the-end-of-the-world-HAS-ALREADY-HAPPENED story. But no: he has to be too clever, he has to show his superiority to sf conventions. So: first he multiplies the number of incomputable ends-of-the-world until it becomes obvious that the Time Machine is a fake, a device to distract public attention from what is going on in the "real world" - as is, by implication, sf itself. Then he concentrates on being superficially "relevant" as the guests chatter on, it becomes obvious that their Environment is hopelessly poisoned, that the Powers are noking each other to hell, that the latest President has been assassinated (again), that anarchy rules in the streets - all the usual things. The guests mention these things casually while discussing their travels to the End of the World. Get the point? Moral: don't trust time machines, and especially don't trust sf notions that distract you from the real issues of the day. Meanwhile, a good sf story has just gone west: you can catch a glimpse of it, before Silverberg starts being clever. He should have stuck with Wells' giant crabs.

My point is driven home, once more, by a story that, by keeping strictly within sf conventions, makes a profound impression: Gordon Rind's

"Stalking the Sun", which is also about the end of the world. The Sun is dying, and the last men are devolved, ape-like creatures; yet paradoxically they are also like gods, living at one with the magical forces of nature. Here the story links up with Grant Davis' "My Head's In A Different Place Now": these last two men have forsaken the Logos of civilisation and fallen back into their natural matrix - a process which began (though they don't know it) in the "present" of the time-travelling hunters, who end up tragically hunting their own species. There's plenty to think about in "Stalking the Sun" - yet for the most part it reads as a straight up adventure about trophy-hunting in the far future, without verbal showmanship or "sophistication". In short, this is a nice footnote to Etapledon.

R.A. Lafferty seems to be a law unto himself. He doesn't show off like Ellison, nor does he assume the superiority of Silverberg; yet he does have a genuine sophistication. "A Special Condition in Summit City" reads swiftly and smoothly, and is not unlike Christopher Amiel's "A Rope By Any Other Name", in that a mind-scrambling device is involved, and verbal chaos ensues throughout a whole city. But there the similarity ends. In the case of the Antil story, the moral is perfectly clear; but on finishing the Lafferty one's first reaction is to think: but this is just too trite! Then (if you're wise) you give the story the benefit of a double-take - and the truth is, it seems at the time, the Truth begins to wash over you. Anyone who has thought at all about the nature of language itself is bound to be fascinated. In fact, Lafferty brings you right back to the Logos: I really like the unity of this collection. And he reinforces my general moral; that you don't have to raise your stylistic voice in order to be profound.

Universes 2 features a number of shorts whose main function is to act as discontinuities between the main holdings. Of these, the most substantial is Pamela Sargent's "The Other Perceiver" - a bitter and pointed joke about how we perceive the modern world (in the Berkeleyan sense). "The Man Who Waved Hello" by Gardner B. Dozois, I found undistinguished: it's an unoriginal little dystopian vision, with all the usual features. Nicely realised, I suppose - but oh for the good old days when Orwell and Huxley were the only prophets of doom! Gene Wolfe's "The Handless Man" is about a man whose torso-sized head grows between and below his shoulders, and how he finally makes it with a girl. It's a grotesque little joke, but not at all sick, and worth a few good laughs. Finally, Joanna Russ's "Useful Phrases for the Tourist", or how to make friends among the alien inhabitants of Loctrine. (COMPLIMENTS: You will undoubtedly be here tomorrow.) This is clever, and made us laugh - though I could have sworn I'd seen it before somewhere.

THE OPENER OF THE WAY by Robert Bloch (Panther; St Albans; 1976; 172 pp; 60p; ISBN 0-588-04321-0)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

Treat this one as a kind of purely verbal horror comic, and you won't be disappointed it is, in fact, good holiday horror reading. Of the twelve stories assembled, (vintage *Weird Tales*, most of them, dating from 1928 to 1943), eleven of them skim effortlessly over the surface of the mind, and have just enough to them to engage the imagination and intelligence of the reader. The odd-one-out is, strangely enough, the title story - all about ancient Egyptian curse surmounted statue of Anubis. This is actually the only isopt story in the collection, being written in a terrible worst-of-*Weird-Tales*-style, and ending on a decidedly unconvincing note. Don't be put off by it: skip right on to "The Cloak", which is the one about a man who buys a cloak off an ageing vampire costumer. No doubt you'll know exactly how it ends, but Bloch's treatment is crudely

effective; and, after all, perhaps his version was the first. "Secton" brings us another ancient Egyptian curse - that of the Scarabaeus Beetle - and is, once more, effective in its horror-comic way. "The Fiddler's Fee" is similarly effective, and is such more unpredictable and original, concerning as it does an apprentice of the sinister violin-virtuoso, Paganini, and how he sells his soul to his master's Master. It's still horror-comic stuff, but Bloch uses every crude trick in the trade, and the result is fun. (The whole collection has the virtue of improving as it goes along.) With "The Manikin" we enter Lovecraft country, and are presented with a typically doomed central figure; but his fate is a horribly-original one.

It would be easy to be superior about the next story, "The Strange Flight of Richard Clayton". It appeared in *Amazing Stories* in 1939, and the "science" in it is incredibly crude. It's about the first manned flight to Mars; something goes wrong, and the eponymous hero, alone in his spacecraft, finds himself cut off from Earth, and at the wrong end of a voyage that will last ten years (for the purpose of this story, anyway, although the spacecraft seems to possess some sort of atomic drive). But forget the crudity of the conception; approach it at the comic strip level, and enjoy it. Actually, the basic idea has real substance, and concerns the subjective nature of time. In its crude way, it is as thought-provoking as, say, Langdon Jones's "The Great Clock".

"You're Truly, Jack the Ripper" is the one story in this collection that provides something of what one is led to expect by Robert Bloch's billing as "the author of *Psycho*". The basic idea - that the Ripper belonged to an ancient cult, who sacrificed his victims in exchange for eternal life - has been used since; but Bloch was probably the first to use it, and in any case his version has subtlety (together with the usual comic-strip crudity). As in several of these stories, the ending is outrageous by not, somehow, dart in "The Seal of the Satyr" Bloch stays with ancient cults; and the story once more shows his ability to get across a serious idea while painting in crude primary colours. In this case the theme - classical scholar gets mixed up in sacrificial rites to the god Pan - is similar to that of Daphne du Maurier's subtly-crazy tale "Not After Midnight".

"The Dark Demon" is for me the high point of the collection. Again we're in deepest Lovecraft country: this time the doomed central figure is an author who gets all his ideas direct from the Dark One, the Demon Messenger. Eventually he becomes convinced that "the Day" is at hand: the day when the Dark One will finally become incarnate in him ---. This one was quite creepy enough for me, thank you; and it threw some light on one of the stronger sayings of C.S. Lewis: "It is a serious thing - to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you do meet, if at all, only in a nightmare." (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, Fontana, p. 108) Brrr-brrrr! Gone cold for the time of year, don't you think?

Finally, in "The Faceless God" Bloch stays in Lovecraft country but brings the theme back to ancient Egyptian curses. The Curse of Nyarlathotep the Faceless, the Mighty Messenger, Stalker among the Stars, the Lord of the Desert. An evil doctor, hardly less disagreeable than Nyarlathotep himself, tries to appropriate a statue of the god; and finally, during a climax which Nyarlathotep himself makes a guest appearance in, meets his fate in the desert. The whole story is outrageous, but convincing.

To conclude: an enjoyable, varied collection, swiftly-g assimilable, to be read in idle holiday hours in trains. Robert Bloch provides a brief but interesting introduction, in the punky Hitchcock manner.



STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE by Rod Serling (Santam; New York; 1975; 151 pp; 45 p; ISBN 0-553-02632-125)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

There's little, really, to review in this one. *The Twilight Zone* was a half-hour fantasy-end-of-spot on American TV in the 50s and 60s, and Rod Serling wrote the screenplays. In preparing some of the stories for book publication, he simply transposed every detail of the screenplays into clear, blameless prose; and the result is precisely what you might expect. Most of the ideas behind these old stories are good enough, if familiar; and one of them "Walking Distance", about a tired Madison Avenue executive who literally revisits his highly Bradburian childhood, manages to be memorable. But being tailored to TV, these ideas were initially presented in necessarily simple, watered-down form, gaining in visual immediacy but losing a great deal of depth. Rendered into prose, the stories lose immediacy while not gaining appreciably in depth; and this makes for rather curious reading. One is vaguely interested, one reads on, but is never really awake; and when the imagination works at all, it tends to produce television images (in black and white). You could call this a book for people who don't like books, but who like being half-awake in front of a TV set.

The paradox is that the original shows were probably entertaining enough. A hypochondriac calls his soul to the Devil in return for everlasting life; a man finds himself alone in the world, without an identity (this turns out to be a very simple version of the "CUTL project" in Brian Aldiss's "The Soft Predicament"); aliens land and prepare to conquer the world by dividing it against itself; a lifelong puritan is terrorized by an anthropomorphized one-eyed bandit in Las Vegas ---. I wouldn't mind seeing some of the original shows; but I can't raise much enthusiasm for the book.

I've a confession to make: one of the stories seems to be about an android baseball-player, and I just can't force myself to read it.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW INDEX, 1923-1973 edited by H.W. Hall (Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan 48226; 1975; 438 pp; \$45.00; ISBN 0-0103-1054-8)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

The appearance of SFBSI 1923-1973 makes me hope that, in spite of everything, the BSFA Magazine Library still lives. But in any case, a fan with access to any extensive magazine library should be able to make very good use of the *Index* which covers reviews of everything from Edgar Rice Burroughs to Ursula Le Guin, in every magazine (and a few *季刊*) from *Amazing* and *Horror of Horror* to *Speculation* and *New Worlds Quarterly*. A directory of magazines is included, listing every relevant issue in chronological order; there is also an alphabetical title index; but the main part of the book (344 pp out of 438) is taken up with alphabetical Author Entries, listing in each case Author, alphabetically-arranged titles of reviewed books, bibliographical details, and location of reviews. As to reviews, in each case a specific issue of a magazine is indicated (volume, issue number, and date), pagination of review is questioned, and finally the name (if any) of the reviewer. All this is arranged in neat, clear double columns. *Tom:*

BOYLE, PENE

Element 76. New York, New American Library, 1967.  
180 pp 67-14726 \*

FSF 33(2): 36-34. Ag. 1967. (J. Merril)

\* Library of Congress card number

I've only one general complaint: some of the codes for the magazines - ASF for *Analogy*, FASF for *Fantastic Science Fiction*, NWA for *New Worlds Science Fiction* as opposed to NWR for *New Worlds* itself - are confusing. Still, a decoder is provided. Pseudonyms are handled decently: titles are listed under author's real name, while the pseudonym is indicated in the bibliographical details.

ELISH, JAMES

More Issues at Hand, by William Atbeling Jr. - - -

Cross-references are provided.

The more you think about the sheer amount of information encapsulated herein, the better it seems. Quite obviously, all of groups within grasping distance of a really good magazine library should close to on their local librarian, urging him to buy the *Index*; and if the *Foundation* people don't know about it, someone should tell them quickly.

It is like God - It is a great Sea; and the more you look, the more the prospect widens. So it's very good to have such a compass as this. For instance, I've only just discovered John Russell Fearn, a British writer of the 40s who seems to have been a kind of Grandpa Moses of sf, using very crude and naive means to achieve genuinely impressive effects. But so far I've only read one of his stories: what was the rest of his work like? The *Index* tells me that Fearn's novel *Limbo* (Hingswood, England, World's Work, 1947) was reviewed in *Fantasy*, the *Magazine of Science Fiction* (British: editor Walter Gillings, according to the directory) for August 1947, on page 66. Andraia (A Voice from the Choir) Simavski has written at least one sf novel and a volume of "Fantastic Stories". The latter was reviewed in *F&SF* for December 1943, by Avram Davidson; the former was reviewed in *Analogy* for November 1965, and in *F&SF* for February 1968 (by Judith Merril). Those reviews would be useful. P.D. Shapponski - presumably the Cyclic Time Theorist - wrote an sf novel called *The Strange Life of Ivan Osookin*; according to the *Index* this was reviewed in something called *Son of WSFA Journal* for January 1973. There must be countless books and crannies that can be profitably explored with the aid of the *Index*. This book will lead you to Les Johnson's unique issue of *Outlands* (Winter 1946); that cranny will lead you to flash publications like the *TLS* and *The New Statesman*. (After 1970, all of reviews are listed, whether in sf magazines or not.)

I should point out that not all the reviews indexed are of sf proper: to qualify, a review has had to be of an sf-related book (after 1970), or located in an sf magazine: that's all. So the *Index* lists reviews of Jung, Gerald Heard, Bertrand Russell, Hegler, Spinoza, Rudolf Steiner; and of course plenty of science fact, psychology and sociology. I think this is a good thing: Rudolf Steiner, for instance, is a figure who has never been taken seriously by the Establishment, which is a great shame. But his book *The Redemption of Thinking* was reviewed in *Authentic Science Fiction* (under E.C. Tubb's editorship) for November 1936; so if you haven't read the book, and have access to the magazine - read the review! (The book's worth reading, I can tell you that much.) The fact is, that the sf ethos is a great breaker-down of barriers, and a great shover-up of what used to be called Philosophy before that discipline split apart into Dialectics and "Linguistic Fallacy". (But who wants to read Arthur Bouchar's review of *A Century of Punch Cartoons* in *F&SF*? M.W. Hall, the mastermind behind the *Index*, is Serials Librarian at the University of Texas; and this shows in his indiscriminate lust for all-inclusiveness.)

The emphasis of the *Index* on reviews poses certain questions. For someone inside of reviews are, after all, important only up to a point. Who, for example, is likely to be helped at this late stage by a review of Van Vogt's *The War Against the RuZz* (reviewed in all the big sf magazines in the 1960)? Either

\*probably a failure, according to the Directory: failures are, rather confusingly, lumped together with General and Library Magazines

you're already an addict, in which case you've either read the book or are ready to take a chance with it; or else you're just not interested. The same could be said perhaps about reviews of all the Big Names - Aldiss, Asimov, Beisslin, Simak, Sturgeon, Silverberg, et al. There will, of course, be borderline cases: Blieb's *Titan's Daughter* looks like one of his back jobs, but the reviews in *Analog* and *New Worlds* (September and June, 1981) could dispel any doubt.

Trouble is, the person inside sf - as opposed to those who are merely "doing" it as some kind of college course - will already have a good idea of what he's after. It could be that the SPBRI will prove most useful of all in the Fresh Department: it can direct you to reviews of Gore Vidal's *Mecanic* (*Analog*, *PASF*, etc1984), De la Mare's *Eight Tales* (an Arkham House edition (*Luna Monthly*, 1972), Zanislin's *Wn* (*Analog*, 1980, plus a host of more recent reviews in general magazines), Egon Friedell's *The Return of the Time Machine Worlds of If* (1973), Capek's *An Atomic Phantasy: Brakitt* (*Analog* and *Galaxy*, 1952), Robert Graves's *Match the Northwind Rise* (*Science Fiction Adventures*, 1956; *Luna Monthly*, 1970), John Cowper Powys's *Up and Out* (*Nebula*, 1957), and Skinsour's *Walden Two* (*Demon Knight* in *PASF*, Sept 1980). In the Fresh Dept. I've only come up against one glitch, so far: in the entry for Pierre Versin's *encyclopedie de L'Utopie, des Voyages Extraordinaires et la Science-Fiction* I found incomprehensible references to "EREdom" (which I couldn't find in the decoder) and *Vistas and Reviews* (which I couldn't find in the Directory of Magazines, either General or SF).

Besides the Big Names of sf, there are those who might be called the Great Ones; and in this department, too, the Index can be of real help. It can direct you to reviews of titles by Stapledon such as *Quadra* (with Murray Leinster) (reviewed by Sam Moskowitz in *Science Fiction Plus*, a Gernsbeck publication, for June 1953), *To the End of Time* (reviewed in most sf magazines 1953-4), and *Worlds of Wonder* (reviewed in *Fantasy Book* and *Flying Saucers from Other Worlds*, 1967, 1969). There have been recent reviews in *Luna Monthly* of Wallis's *The Wealth of Mr Waddy* and *Star-Begotten*, both unfamiliar titles to me.

Back in the mainstream of sf, reviews of the not-so-big names - people like R A Lafferty, Gordon Eklund, Mike Conroy, Gordon Dickson (supply your own names), who can be excellent in a self-effacing way - will be of real use. And those who feel they need a guide round the Prolific Heaven Ones - the Index lists reviews of 19 Harrison titles, 25 Moorcock titles, 48 Brunner and 48 Silverbergs - will surely find profit here.

Enough, enough! Mr Hall and his research team have been producing an annual SF Book Review Index since 1970 - a diary-making thought. Perhaps after their labours on the monumental (11 x 8½") 1973-73 Index, they just can't stop! But one thing is sure, I think: this mighty volume can be accurately described as indispensable - especially for those who are awed by the sheer accumulated weight of half a century's sf, but are put off by anything that looks like a Critical Guide.

OTHER TIMES vol 1 no 2 (80p; published by and available from P.F. Layouts Ltd; temporary address: Broomfield 176, Peckham Rye, London SE22 9QA)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This is a rather rushed review, and I hope it does justice to a publication that merits the serious attention of anyone interested in what is happening, worldwide, to our world.

Most of the glamour of this issue is provided by adapted extracts from Mike Moorcock's forthcoming novel, *The Adventures of Una Pearson and Catherine Cornelius*

in the *Twentieth Century*, in which various temporal agents attempt to mould history: these extracts begin with the Russian Revolution, touch on the disintegration of the United Kingdom, and end with a rather nebulous Russian-dominated peace at the turn of this century. What a marvellous perpetual-motion machine Moorcock is! The fact that (as far as I can see) his characters lack any sense of lasting values, tends to make these episodes instantly-forgettable: after all, if change and revolution are the only realities, then events blur and disintegrate a few seconds after they've happened. But that's Moorcock's world; and there's no doubt that while you're actually reading, you are vividly entertained.

The rest of the issue is certainly varied. Edward Bryant's "Teleidoscope" is gripping - again, as long as you're living strictly for the moment, this is good stuff. It's all about this man's attempt to get out of the spiritual Schwarzschild radius, or Event Horizon, that imprisons him within the insane fragmented mini-cosmos of his own personal black hole. Perhaps I shouldn't complain that the story is insanely fragmented, though I can't help thinking that good art should be able to convey insanity, fragmentation, etc., without itself assuming these qualities. In other words, Edward Bryant shirks the sheer artistic challenge of this theme, and simply throws everything at us, the whole cosmos. I suspect that some of this fragmentation is simply botched art. But "Teleidoscope" is really interesting, and I shall probably read it again (and possibly change my mind: read it yourself, and see what you think.) But a word to the Art Director: my eyesight could definitely have done without the psychedelic layout of pp 16-17. This seems based on making the story physically unreadable, and just about succeeds.

Of the other stories, I felt compelled to read Gregory Fitzgerald's "The Stone Sermon" (called "The Stone-Cutter's Sermon" on the contents page). This begins well enough, develops with increasing strength, and ends inconsequentially. It's about the relations existing between art (the stone sculpture of a Madonna-and-child), life (an actual mother-and-child who seem to exist in sympathy with the sculpture), and financial patronage (self-important, hypertense representative of the Artistic World). Quite a theme; and Fitzgerald's treatment of it leaves abiding images in the mind. The illustrations - all those massive, bleeding breasts - I found singularly inappropriate; but then, I suspect that my view of the story does not coincide with that of the author.

Michael Stall's "Without Extension" begins in 1984-country, with Senecy Deprivation taking the place of the Rat-Cage; but it soon develops into a surprising, coherent and absorbing metaphysical fantasy. But whereas "Teleidoscope" ends well, "Without Extension" ends poorly. (I don't know, actually: already, a few hours later, I feel it ends rather well. In fact, this story made a deep impression on me.) The *Other Times* authors have plenty to say, but sometimes run out of the means to say it, or of developing the implications. This is especially true of Gary Carey's "Stepping Sideways": Mr Carey has number of interesting things to say, about zeitgeist that spawned the Third Reich, and about various parallels in our own time. But if this example is anything to go by, he is not naturally gifted as a short-story writer: so that the end-result is an uneasy mixture - a not-too-well-managed alternative universe story (I was just plain confused, myself), plus a number of interesting speculations which may, or may not, be based on fact.

The two most complete stories, artistically speaking, are more modest in their ambitions. These are Hugo Raes' "A Sunrise", which is a serious attempt to portray alien eroticism - this in on the whole convincing - and "Heavy Metal" by Dave Blachoff, a drug-type description of the ultimate in feeble-rock concerts, with an unexpected climax.

The rest of the fiction consists of three very short stories by Cecil Helman, all Zoo and surrealism, two of which meant nothing to me. And there's a really funny comic strip, featuring Odmond, the Displaced Hero.

What else? There's humour, of a kind, represented by the art portfolio of Postal Sculpture and "Landusairy" (ecological art) by Robin Klasebolt and Stuart Knowles, and the Interim Report of Packaged Emotions Products, delivered by its chairman, Mr J.C. Whittaker. Bill Meyer's documentation of subway graffiti is included in the portfolio. Ken Campbell's "Ferret Column" is certainly humorous - in a way - so are a couple of self-advertisements by Heathcote Williams. Ken Campbell makes me smile (nervously); there's no answer to Heathcote Williams; and as for the rest - the art portfolio - the main point of it seems to be a carefully controlled pointlessness (I might except Bill Meyer from that) which may or may not be significant, according to how you see it. I myself see it as a sign that *OT* is not so much revolutionary as post-revolutionary; it reminds me of the solemn, elaborate art-jokes of Auberon Quin in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, Chesterton's vision of a static, post-revolutionary London. Perhaps Chesterton was a truer prophet than Wells.

There are a couple of related articles - "Leading a Whore to Culture" by Paul Hammond and Patrick Hughes, and "Hold my Hand, I'm a Stranger in Paradox" again by Patrick Hughes. "Leading a Whore" seems (I'd swear) to be trying to say something about how perception works, using examples of verbal and visual puns, double meanings, plays upon words and finally, obscenity and metathesis. This held my attention, and is clearly, methodically argued (Mind you, I disagree with the premise: can we really get outside perception in order to study it? However.) "Hold My Hand" is, really, just a collection of paradoxes, old and new: it allowed my attention to wander.

There is also Peter Koch's "Oblongota (sic) Sonata". This is an essay in verbal paradox, and on how poetry must be rescued from the professionals and the academics: I found it confused, but worth a read. (The *medulla oblongata* - not *ota*, as it is spelt throughout the essay - is apparently the archaic power-complex of the human brain: Peter Koch thinks it's got us all in its grasp.)

Poetry is represented by Philip Jenkins (I liked his "On the Beach with Eugene Bowdin") and Bart Schierbusk's "Running and Stranding Still" sequence, one of which got through to me. There is also an unclassifiable piece of prose by David Caver, called "Earthquake", which may, or may not, signify something of real importance concerning how the word relates to the world. There is (while I think of it) a lively letter from Philip K. Dick featured on the letterpage, telling us how Dionysius lives in the US.

If this review has left the impression of a lively mixup, then it has done its job. A great deal, or nothing at all, could happen to *Other Times*; but I'm really interested in the outcome. Apparently Issue Three will feature Ray Bradbury and Ian Watson, which has got to be promising.

THE OCTOBER COUNTRY by Ray Bradbury (Panther; 1978; St Albans; 173 pp; 50p; ISBN 0-585-04229-8)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This should not be mistaken for the original 1954 collection, which was a bumper bundle of 18 stories. This Panther collection represents only 12 of those stories; the reason being that the missing ones appear in *The Small Assassin*, issued by Panther earlier this year. But there's a real bonus in the shape of "The Traveller", which wasn't in the original *October Country*, and is taken from the out-of-print 1948 collection, *Dark Carnival*. "The Traveller" is good Bradbury, even if it shows him at a stage when he has not quite divested himself of Weird Tales type crudity; it was something of a find for me. It concerns Bradbury's family of everyday shape-changers, coffin-dwellers and necromancers - in particular

Cecy, the "April Witch" who can enter into the life of anyone, and anything, and her Uncle John, the black sheep of the Family who turned informer. John's relationship with Cecy is very complex, and utterly convincing: definitely worth a read

The other twelve stories? All I can say is, that I first met them when I was fourteen - and nearly twenty years on they're still growing, coming alive like the pictures on the epidermis of the Illustrated Man. Of the ones I've re-read in this Panther edition, I thought "The Jar" came across particularly strongly; and I noted how subtly it is related to "Shelton" and "The Quark". How is it related? Read them, and find out. If you're like me, you'll read these stories initially out of sheer appetite for the weird and wonderful: their meaning grows up with you. Of the others, "Touched with Fire" and "The Scythe" belong to the Death-in-Operation side of the Bradbury spectrum. So does "There was an Old Woman" - the one about Aunt Tildy who managed to cheat Death - which came over as particularly rich and strange the last time I read it. "Homecoming" brings us back to the Family: it concerns Timothy, the odd-boy-out among his elderly cousins, who is half-magical and half-"normal". This one was also growing sturdily the last time I encountered it; and for that reason I refuse to lift an analytical finger in explanation or discussion. "The Emigrant" was one of the first stories - the other was "The Fall of the House of Usher" - that made me realize you could actually bring nightmares to life on the daylight printed page; and that, if executed rightly, the exercise could be strangely reassuring, as well as rivetting. (After all, if other people had entered those regions, then they were no longer so frightening.) "The Wind" is good, straightforward horror. The last time I read "Uncle Einar" (another story about the Family) I thought it was rather insubstantial; though I may have been in the wrong mood.

Re-reading them just now, I was particularly surprised at the way the two satirical stories - "The Watchful Poker Chip of B. Matisse", and "The Wonderful Death of Dudley Stone" - have developed over the years: they've become much more vivid. "B. Matisse" - the one about George Garvey, the personified Norm, and his strange interaction with the world of the avant garde - is full of rich insights (again, I've no intention of describing them here); but a few words about "Dudley Stone" might be in order. Stone is the literary lion of the 1930s who suddenly stops writing and retires to a New England town "called Obscurity by a dextling sea-shore called the Past", dying in order to live. This story should be read by all in the Eng. Lit. departments of the world, by all the metropolitan critics and cultural hangers-on of a half-alive civilization; but, of course, this will never come to pass - because "Dudley Stone" blasts their foundations sky-high. It reveals that in our time mainstream literature has become almost incompatible with life, mainly because of the ludicrous religious veneration of authors (and, more recently, because of all the psychoanalytical debunking which is only the other, sacrilegious half of the same coin). But, obliquely, "Dudley Stone" has a message for the af world also. Stone could not live as a man and be a famous mainstream author; but writers like Ray Bradbury could, and still can, combine writing and living - precisely because of the much-deplored ghetto conditions in which they grew up. The ghetto protected them. They were not Literature; they were not Culture; they were not gods like Hemingway or Faulkner; so they were free to live. And because they were free to live, they produced much of the real, living, unforced literature of the time.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST by Peter Meneges (Corgi; 1978; London; 240 pp; 75p, ISBN 0-552-10147-1)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This is billed as "a novel of ultimate horror", and is likened by the blurb to *The Exorcist*. This is rather a shame, because Peter Meneges' novel is a pretty good thriller in its own right, and not without subtlety. True, there are black magicians involved; there is a quick sequence of vomiting and attempted rape; children are involved; there is (guess what?) explicit sex between human and superhuman agents; and the central climax, which is nicely stage-managed, could be mildly unsettling if read too late at night, though I must say I got through it without batting an eyelid. But the black magicians are portrayed as, finally, a rather pathetic bunch of perverts who are simply on the wrong tack altogether; and the region explored by Peter Meneges in this novel is that region of being which can either be the ultimate horror, or the ultimate Beauty, according to the nature of the person entering it. He is also dealing with the theme of a possible reconciliation of ancient unities, destroyed long ago by the civil war between Good and Evil. In other words, the novel is sensationalistic, but not mindlessly so.

I should quickly add that Peter Meneges touches no these themes, rather than explores them, rather in the manner of a good, fast-moving film. This, of course, suggests the book's obvious weakness: the author has written it very much with those slick, made-for-TV films in mind. Everything is externalised; the action and dialogue often follow the pace of a screenplay rather than that of a novel; you hardly ever get inside the characters. The heroine - the chic American wife of a mindless high-powered executive type - is obviously played by Carol Lynley; she doesn't really exist as a character in a novel, she's just an image you see in your mind's eye, except in the central climax; and then she's just a piece of helpless flotsam in the grip of an Archetypal Force. The chief black magician is rather more vividly characterised - he's rather reminiscent of Gregory Persimmon in Charles Williams' *War in Heaven* - but even he's obviously played by Robert Morley. (The novel's action takes place chiefly in Cornwall, after two brief spells in New York and London.) And the heroine's toy young son, who becomes a battle-ground of black magical and archetypal forces, are straight out of a US commercial for breakfast food. But then, Peter Meneges is a very commercial writer: he takes London and Cornwall and swiftly transports them into mid-Atlantic, where (in theory) they will command a larger market; so that a tuxedo, pipe-smoking Cornish spinster can suddenly come out with sentences like "She's not very big over on your side. Only a couple of bar bobs over made & out Stateside". (This kind of thing is, I'm afraid, pervasive throughout the novel.)

Still, *The Nature of the Beast* is worth a quick read. It's the kind of books that reminds you of quite a few other books, as if Mr Meneges were cashing in on the strong associations - and to good effect, for he's a competent technician. Thus, the first manifestation of paranormal power in the two children brings John Wyndham's *Chocky* to mind. There's a bit of Celtic philology thrown in, convincing enough to serve its turn; this follows the M.R. James tradition. The Celtic paganism is straight out of John Cowper Powys; and the increasing proliferation of wild beasts around the heroine's mysterious rented house in Cornwall brings on all kinds of associations - the climax of C.S. Lewis's *The Narnia*, the Celtic paganism of Charles Williams' *The Place of the Lion*. The beasts have a superhuman protector who seems to demand animal sacrifice (*The Lord of the Flies*, and Kingsley Amis' *The Green Man*). All right, so Peter Meneges is eclectic, and commercial; but he knows precisely what he's doing. He takes all these elements, and makes his own pattern out of them - a relatively crude and simple pattern, but definitely his own: *The Nature of the Beast* is thoroughly unpredictable.

Menegaz is good at keeping the action going, and the supernatural forces are convincingly portrayed, both when they are played down and when all the stops are finally drawn out in the central climax. He's less good at rationalizing what happened, after the event (he reminds me of Lyall Watson in this respect: in fact, Menegaz' conscious philosophy seems to have been borrowed from Watson's *Supernature*); but the supernatural events themselves are vivid and coherent enough for this not to matter too much. This is a good example, in fact, of a novel being better than its author; because Peter Menegaz' style never rises above the competently-descriptive, and is occasionally hyphatic and gooey to an incredible degree. (For example, straight after a scene of violent battle, we find this attempt at poetic description: "Slowly raining herself, DeDee stretched and yawned, looking at the last of the stars twinkling before God came and took them in for the day." p 205 - I swear!)

NEW STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE by Rod Serling (Bantam; 1975; New York. 122 pp. 45p; ISBN 0-553-06800-125)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

Considered purely as a reading-matter, and not just as a nostalgic recreation of Rod Serling's old TV series, this is much more acceptable than *Stories from the Twilight Zone*, the other collection I've reviewed. Here, Serling has made a real attempt to remove his material, and only occasionally do we feel as if we're reading a kind of précis of a TV screenplay. Still, it's undeniable that Serling is, first and foremost, a good TV writer; and all these stories are conceived in essentially, visual, concrete terms, so that we sometimes feel frustrated at not being able to see the action. Repeatedly we find ourselves having to reconstruct, rather laboriously, the kind of physical detail that belongs in a shooting script; and this is really a negation of the imagination. Serling spends a lot of time setting up the action in visual terms, when he could do the same job much more economically in a few imaginatively-chosen sentences.

But in *New Stories* these defects are much less in the fore; and there's no doubt that the ideas behind Serling's plots are strong, simple and intelligently presented; and even when presented at second-hand, so to speak, they overcome the handicap surprisingly well - in this collection, anyway. If you want a completely effortless read, with a few good ideas lurking in the subliminal dark to pounce out at you, then Serling delivers the goods.

The best story in "The Midnight Sun". As usual, Serling takes a standard at-type idea - so standard as to be almost a cliché - and presents it in strong, simple dramatic terms, while introducing a distinctive twist. The Earth has (surprise, surprise) inexplicably wandered out of orbit, and is falling into the Sun, most of the plot is taken up with describing the inevitable doom of civilization, as experienced by two female characters in a New York apartment house. But Serling frames all this within another idea, and I found this other idea striking, and haunting. He puts it across almost subliminally; which is, I suppose, fitting for a master of the TV medium. The original show must have been quite something.

"The Shelter" is built round an even more hackneyed situation: for the Shelter is a fallout shelter, and the plot takes us through the last half-hour or so of a Yellow Alert, with the veneer of civilisation swiftly cracking as the Bomb comes in on New York. Of course, we've grown used to living with the Bomb now; and this, together with the reference to Khrushchev in "The Whole Truth" dates the collection, which first appeared in 1962. Let's face it, we've accepted the Bomb; why, it must be all of ten years since I had my last nuclear holocaust nightmare ---. But Serling's presentation of this old-fashioned horror is



intelligent, beginning with a cosy surprise birthday party for the kindhearted neighbourhood doctor (the UK equivalent of Andrew Cruikshank), who, as it happens, is the only man in the neighbourhood to have built a fallout shelter in preparation for the Worst - just large enough for himself and his family. A well-set-up situation, in fact; and once the Yellow Alert is on, the suspense is real enough. The only defect is some trite harmonising from the doctor.

"The Big Van Winkle Caper" is about a gang of train robbers who hide themselves and their bullion in a cave in the middle of the Mojave Desert, go into suspended animation for a hundred years, and wake up to what they hope is freedom in a new world, their fantastic haul having long since "cooled off". This is, quite simply, a good story, nicely worked out in terms of strong, simple drama (even if the blurb-writer does give the game away).

"The Night of the Mask" is about how a drunken, down-at-heel Santa Claus in a Christmas store suddenly finds himself faced with the continuous creation of gifts. This is very neo-Dickensian, very sentimental, and in the end I found myself liking it. As always with Serling, the central idea is worth reading, even over stretches of flat prose.

"Showdown with Rance McRae" also deals with myth-turned-reality - the myth of the American West. This time the pathetic, temperamental "ster" of a lousy TV Western series finds himself facing the gun of the real Jesse James. This is played strictly for laughs, and is largely successful - except for the purely visual gags, of course. It would be even funnier on the little screen.

Finally, "The Whole Truth" is a neat fable about a used-car dealer who buys an old crock which is being haunted by the spirit of Truth: while he possesses the car, he is constrained to tell the Whole Truth at all times. This would be much funnier on TV - a good character actor like Walter Matthau could do a lot with it. As it is, just reading about his incredulous expressions, his double-takes, his popping eyes etc, isn't enough. But, as always with Rod Serling's plots, the idea is intelligently worked out; and when politics is brought in, the story becomes a convincing parable about Capitalism, Communism and the Whole Truth.

#### WHEN I WAS A BOY, I WATCHED THE WOLVES

1: The Men Inside (Lancer Books; USA; 1973; out-of-print)

The novel concerns the agonising life of a disciple of the Muir Institute, condemned to return over and over to the corruptions of the weak and aged and to bring them to life.

The entrance is always the most difficult operation, involving a traumatic ministriation. Once within the patient's body actions must be swift or eruption from the dying creature's cancerous guts will be catastrophic. Trained manipulation of the cutting implement quickly excises the diseased tissue. The exit is discreet. Afterward, the patient will be cured and the disciple can return to life-size with the pride of the saviour upon him. (Alternative ending: though the patient will be dead there will be no punishment. One life each year is a tolerable payment for the disciple's loyalty.)

2: In the Enclosure (Robert Hale; London; 1976; £2.95; 190 pp; ISBN 0-7091-5311-2) (Original Edition: Avon; New York; 1973; 96c; 190 pp; ISBN 0-380-15073)

A man is writing a book, but he doesn't know why or for whom he is writing. He - with two hundred and fort-seven kindred spirits - has been placed in the enclosure and is regularly interrogated so that his captors might learn what his latest book is about. He, though able to talk at length about geology, is

unable and unwilling to understand what is happening. As with most well-adjusted aliens, Quir (for it is he!) is a casual, though obsessive, fucker. He also, in odd moments between interrogation and intercourses, writes the journal from which his pitiable story can be read. Finally, after twenty-nine months of captivity and a neat betrayal of an unknown associate (not, of course, a paradoxical collision of words), Quir resolves to escape. With the assistance of a female, Mala, and an ever-dependable phallo/spaceship he effects a return to the planet of origin. And the revelation is most depressing.

The author does not yet know what his next novel will be about; he will soon be told by the Muse, his master.

*In the Enclosure* is not a straightforward novel; Malzberg is too conscientious and committed a writer to accept a one-dimensional book. However, his chosen techniques of substantiation may make his work appear confusing, impenetrable and perhaps even boring. His writing style would seem a major problem in that he favours long construction with numerous modifying clauses and subclauses. Such style is perhaps a consequence of a desire to "get inside" a character's head: most of Malzberg's work (novels and short stories) is apparently written by the character it purports to discuss. A strict "stream-of-consciousness" presentation, tempered by a pervasive paranoia, lends length and confusion to any narrative. Though *In the Enclosure* is a novel of entrapment it is not a novel which one becomes entrapped in. The prose style is simple, the penetration of Quir's character deep and clean.

Further confusion arises from Malzberg's use of the metaphor. On the surface, *In the Enclosure* discusses the captivity and escape from captivity of a party of aliens who came to Earth to peacefully give knowledge to Earth; it seems to me, however, to be an examination of the difficulties facing a writer working in an unnatural genre (i.e. sf; and "unnatural" in that one would not seem "qua lived" to write of without knowledge additional to that to be derived from the living of one's life). Such an interpretation may have sprung to mind only as a consequence of Malzberg's announcement of retirement (from sf, not from fiction); other interpretations will perhaps spring to mind at other times. Malzberg's novels are invariably about matters other than what they seem to be about. Lower/higher levels (meanings?) are not always, indeed not often, discernable; one's comprehension can never be complete. For this reason, and for others, Malzberg is a writer whose work deserves to be read and re-read.

The prime reason, however, why an audience widely exposed to sf might find Malzberg "difficult" is that he does not write sf. His novels and stories may occasionally be decorated with a spaceship or with an alien or with a chunk of astronomical lather, but they are not about spaceships or aliens or extranautics. Even those most scientifically "hard" novels, *The Falling Astronauts* and *Beyond Apollo* are concerned less with hardware than with software to be found within a human body. Perhaps all of Malzberg's work can be said to be an investigation on a psychological level of the various inter-relationships of man and his environment. (Reference to the novel *Underlay* - wherein a small-time gambler most ironically loses his wife, his money, and his life because of his involvement with a race-track - ought to dispell the conceit that "environment" is invariably a concept with "scientific" overtones.) Such inter-relationships, and such investigation, have not often been the subject matter of sf, though J.G. Ballard has written about them. The scope, however, of Malzberg's work is wider than that of Ballard, although both authors examine the psychology of "technological" man. (An admission: since discovering Malzberg, J.G. Ballard has been displaced as my favourite author; I can no longer bear to read Ballard, still greatly enjoy to read Malzberg.)

The reading of Malzberg ought, then, to both widen one's conception of sf and draw one toward fiction which is not petulantly labelled science fiction.

3: Guarantee (Pyramid Books; New York; 1975; \$1.25; 128 pp; ISBN 0-315-03734-4)

How unfortunate for the Skipstone - that magnificent and unique vessel - to lurch headily into the black galaxy. How unfortunate for pilot Lena to be trapped and be forced to reside with five hundred odd slowly weakening dead men in a dime-store volume of space - into which no one can look but from which ALL can look out. How fortunate, however, for there to be an escape, for there to exist the fabled "lachrymotic" drive (murmurs of approval, vast applause from the audience) through which the Skipstone could skip. How grateful we should be that Lena found not hell but salvation, hurried not to a cinder but emerged fresh and alive upon the streets of Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. Fresh and alive, and prepared to walk the streets beyond the ghetto.

NOW, AS A MAN, I RUN WITH THE WOLF-PACK

--- Andrew Tidmarsh, 13/4/1976

STAR PROBE by Joseph Green (Willington; London; 1976; £3.00; 162 pp; ISBN 0-8000-057-5)

Revised by James Corley

Someone, somewhere, (and this slowly honed sharpness of mind will continue throughout the review I'm afraid) once said something to the effect that there are only 3, or perhaps 7, basic stories, all others being variations on a theme. Probably it was Shakespeare who was always nicking other people's stuff, and said almost everything anyway.

If of a strong case was made out, for all I know by Donald Wollheim, to bring the number down to two: the wonderful invention deriving from Wells and the wonderful journey, which those sprang from Verne. Depending on personal proclivity the exact number is almost infinitely variable, if you believe it's all crap (or as Darko Suvin would say a literature of cognitive estrangement) the number is one, or if you can't bring yourself to credit such a ridiculous idea it would equal however many books you've read.

But to begin with it does look as if Joseph Green is rewriting *Rendezvous with Rama*, which itself was predicated by a similar plot from James White (if it was he, though I can't quite remember the title, I'd certainly recommend it). It started off something like:-

"We interrupt your regular Sunday programming for a newflash...astronomers detected an unidentified light about two billion kilometres out in space. All agree this is very unlikely to be a natural phenomenon... Our solar system is about to be visited by something - someone! from another star system."

Which is how *Star Probe* starts. But to resurrect this story as soon would be impossible. Mr Clarke's visiting alien spaceship was surely, to use the adjective which Arthur C. has made his very own, the ultimate. Name, that vast detailed, and apparently reasonable creation, was a star in its own right. And Clarke did not make the mistake, like Niven with *Ringworld*, of diminishing his wonderful invention with less inspired ridiculous wonderful journey. Rama was a feat, a veritable tour de force, which will be unequalled for many years.

Obviously Mr Green is aware that his legs are not long enough to follow in Clarke's footsteps. He cleverly, and wisely, concentrates on the reverse of the coin, the unnamed alien probe is relegated to the background, a mere byplay for the characters to dance around. It quickly develops that his chosen theme is neither invention nor journey but the far older Battle of the Sexes.

Harold Bantson, president of Rocketa International, personifies Man - scientific/aggressive/creative/cynical/reasonable. He immediately begins to organize a launch to intercept and capture the visitor because "The technological gains from being able to study an interstellar rocket should be enormous". Could anyone argue with such a sensible analysis? Oh yes they could, they will.

WorldGov's own space programme is in the doldrums. Woman, in the shape of form of Jodie Curran, leading figure of the New Friends of the Earth, is lobbying strongly that "There are too many hungry children in South America for us to let WorldGov burb up still more billions on useless space programs".

Harold, a more humane man than W.C. Fields ever was, argues reasonably that spin offs from space research - weather satellites and so on - are doing more than anything else for the starving millions. But Woman is illogical/inward looking/unreasonable/emotional and also liberated, for Jodie is also Sarcoma, guerrilla leader of FOE, who can not only make life difficult for Harold with protest marches but can also kidnap him at the crucial moment.

As if he didn't have problems enough! For the year is only 2011, development money is tight and the rocket can only make it one way, it can stop the probe but it'll pass so close to the sun that the astronaut gets fried. Ain't no-one in his right mind gonna pick up that bag of eggs.

Luckily Harold has a son, a fine lad physically but with the brain of a vegetable. He also has a father who used to be an ace astronaut, and who, before passing on, fed his brain patterns onto a computer tape (and which well-known sci books does that remind you of? These days everything's been done before). Now only Sarcoma stands in the way...

The plot goes on predictably and entertainingly enough. Woman is hedded but not won over. It's not all that important. There is a deeper level and in spite of its radically different approach *Star Probe* is the most engrossing novel to come my way since that aller-ago *Rendezvous with Rama*. In *Rama*, the kernel is the intellectual game of putting together, probably for the first time ever, an interstellar ship which might actually be viable in terms of existing technology (although since the origin was alien Clarke added several things outside the known). In *Star Probe* Green hangs onto a superficially trite story the far more interesting infrastructure of the contemporary argument: in what direction should science be heading? The Probe itself is nothing more than a Christmas Tree bauble.

Quite predictably he suggests, with a commendable lack of didacticism, that space research is a Good Thing. In fact he gives the last word to Arthur C. Whatshisname himself, quoting in a postscript a speech from the Trieste SF Film Festival 1971:

"I think the space programme has been largely responsible for this surge of interest in ecology - those wonderful photographs of the planet Earth had a tremendous psychological impact. It's no coincidence that we became aware of the ecological crisis at the precise moment when we saw our beautiful green planet hanging over the lifeless moon. What we need now is not less science nor less technology but more of both - but they must be carefully planned."

A laudable hope but then if authors are notorious optimists, at least the surviving ones are. Those who really believed in their doom-ridden glimpses of the future long ago gave up creating a literary heritage, rushed in their life insurance and got blindingly drunk. Mr Green for one is an optimist, he believes that science unrestricted is beneficial to mankind. A pity Sarcoma did not have at hand the statistics about the number of ICBlms in relation to the number of weather satellites, a pity she didn't ask to see the planner who was going to change the ratio, but the author always gets the last word in these matters.

And that I realise is what was so engrossing about this book - I disagree with every word of its underlying philosophy. Rockets International does not exist but FOE, the friends of the Earth, does. The reasonableness of the real life organisation is shown by the fact that they have not yet kidnapped Mr Green, in spite of his malign treatment of them. However, if you want to change this policy by democratic participation, you can get a membership form from:

9, Portland Street,  
London W1V 1DG

Remember: ROCKETS DESTROY THE OZONE!

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN by Christian Leourier (Millington; London, 1976; £3.00; 176 pp; ISBN 0 86000-061-3)

Reviewed by James Corley

My dear friend J.C. Heinz tells me that science fiction has been going through a lean period in La Belle France since the great days of Cyrano de Bergerac and Jules Verne. Outside the Garlic Curtain Heinz is the acknowledged expert on the subject having seen Planet of the Apes on television and once having read a review of Robert Merle's *Malouf* (in V59 actually). Now that *The Mountains of the Sun* has augmented this vast fund of experience he concludes that our continental neighbours are achieving to corner the market in stories of a post catastrophe nature and will doubtless soon be introducing REC legislation to ban all other types of fiction.

The catastrophe here is a Flood which has reduced civilisation to a tribal level, add to this a shift in the magnetic poles allowing a period of intense cosmic ray bombardment which causes physical regression in some of the tribes, then to complete the pot-pourri throw in the occupation of a Martian colony which, centuries after the disaster, is about to embark on a reconquest of the mother planet.

From a chauvinistic Anglo-Saxon viewpoint the ensemble is not ambitious in terms of originality. Heinz is working on a theory that indigenous post catastrophe stories peak dramatically shortly after a nation gains hold of R-bombs to play with, certainly the French acquired their atomic toy rather later than the rest of us, but once the initial euphoria wears off there will be an equally sudden decline, already observed in Britain and America. Fortunately unconscious of this psycho-social determinism, though still flushed with the novelty of the power to blast the world back into the stone age, Leourier, described by Millington as "France's leading young master of science fiction", reveals his national heritage by concentrating on the internal politics of the three groups of humanity he writes about (Gauls de Gaulle abolished the popular post-war system under which every male adult was allowed to be Prime Minister for a period of five minutes; even so they are still paramount in the political area - a simple Corps Diplomatique plate enables your car to reside on a double yellow line for unlimited periods. Basic Traffic Warden training includes a warning about possible nuclear retaliation.)

Cal, the book's hero, rebels against the taboos and myths which keep his agricultural tribe isolated in their valley. He realises that by destroying the myths he can usurp the power of the chief and take control himself. Crossing the Mountains of the Sun he discovers a tribe of retrograde nomads. One of these, Au-Yang, ostracised by the hunters because of a stunted leg, steals horses and the tribal prisoners and takes off with Cal back to the village. The hot pursuit of the primitive nomads persuades the villagers to break their taboo and head for fresher pastures. Encamping in the defensive

haven of a ruined city they encounter a Martian exploration party who are inclined to break their own politically imposed taboo about non-involvement with native affairs.

The various diplomatic ploys which go on form the essence of the book: between Cal and his chief, among the Martians, and a final coup d'état by An-Yang, now cured of his limp by science, against his own leader. It's tempting to think that the conclusion, with advanced Martians, pastoral villagers and even retrograde nomads living in harmony, was an allegorical rationale for letting Perfidious Albion into the Common Market.

Probably not though. The young master shows no awareness of us at all. Heiss cannot provide us with any statistics concerning the level of penetration of British sf across the Channel. His package tour investigations of the cheaper Mediterranean lands revealed only the Americans, principally Doc Smith and Flash Gordon, fighting alongside the Teutonic might of Perry Rhodan. A barrier as formidable as the Mountains of the Sun seems to isolate us. The young master is more sophisticated than the above mentioned but the American influence is unmistakable. Indeed the Frenchness of the book needs a keen eye to detect.

Disappointingly, from this foreign land there is no emergence of a radical new approach, nothing to equal the overwhelming novelty of Stanislaw Lem's Polish *Solaris*. It is a competent novel nevertheless, though whether Leourier would merit the description of a "leading young master" in the wider pool we are familiar with is highly disputable. Lacking originality of plot, which the vast majority of books do anyway, the quality of writing must be a criterion, and here a foreign writer is at the mercy of his translator. *The Mountains of the Sun* was translated by the Berkley Publishing Corporation who translate such as you would expect a corporation to translate - rather pedestrian and bland. Ca va as Vonnegut might say. Connoisseurs of catstrophe will appreciate the drama of watching sentences eleven clauses long, doubtless a poetic flow of rhetoric in the original language, collapsing under their own weight, but the pleasure is only occasional.

All things considered, it comes out as a pleasant enough book, not a great vintage but an acceptable with ordinaire. It will win no Hugo awards unless the French, as happened with the recent Prix Goncourt, start soliciting votes with bricks through windows and petrol bombs. You have been warned. SPMA.

A final novelty incidentally is the publisher - Millington seems to have appeared on the scene very recently yet besides being prepared to take chances with unknowns like Leourier they also boast an impressive list of established authors from Roger Zelazny to Marlow Ellison, their dust cover art work by W.P. Phillips is very impressive and the price, a standard £3 for the two hardbacks I've seen, is set at a reasonable point on the inflationary spiral. (NB Contracts should be sent to me care of the editor, Mr Millington.)

DECADE: THE 1950s edited by Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison (Macmillan; London; 1978; 219 pp; £3.95; ISBN 0-233-18001-7

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Let me state at the outset that this is an entertaining collection, much better than its predecessor *Decade: The 1940s* which I reviewed in Vector 72. True, the sf of the 1950s was more literate and more thoughtful than that of the previous decade, while less time has passed to damn its predictions and date its styles and themes. So it was easier for the editors to fill this volume with good stories than the last, but they have done more than that and have produced a well-balanced anthology which is representative of its time.

And what were the characteristics of 1950s sf? To précis the introduction, they were the appearance of the soft sciences alongside physics and chemistry as acceptable theme material, and the advent of "second generation" writers who had grown up on the 1930s pulps and wanted to produce something better. The results were new ideas, experimentation and higher literary standards. Indeed, the cream of 1950s novels (by Bester, Dick, Miller, Sturgeon and Kornbluth & Pohl) compares well with the standards of 1978. The introduction also mentions Asimov's *The Naked Sun* (sic); the 1950s were obviously more experimental than I had thought. On a more serious note, it's a pity that the introduction refers to Murray Leinster as one who is "still writing today", ten months after his death.

Only one of the twelve stories ("The Star" by Arthur Clarke) can be said to have suffered from over-exposure, though most of the others have been anthologised somewhere since their original magazine publication. "The Star" is also the only Hugo winner (or final nominee, even) in the collection.

True to the introduction's promise, the two opening stories are concerned with the new themes of ecology and psychology respectively. James H Schmitz's "Grampa" is a puzzle story centring on alien ecology. This is a fairly typical Schmitz, with a juvenile hero showing up adult inflexibility. Katherine Maclean's "The Snowball Effect" explores the chain-letter syndrome. The point is that neither of these stories would have been acceptable to the editors or readers of sf magazines in the 1940s.

Another psychology story later in the book, "The Two-Headed Engine" by Henry Kuttner, is unmistakably of the 1950s, because it takes the trouble to explain the derivation of its title (Milton's *Lycidas*) and the ramifications thereof, while a hallmark of stories of the 1960s and 1970s has been that the reader is left to work out such things for himself. But Kuttner's tale is well-paced despite the lecturing, it suffers only from a predictable ending.

Two authors who could not justifiably have been excluded from the anthology are Ray Bradbury and Cordwainer Smith, though neither is shown to his best advantage by the choice of story. "The Pedestrian" by Bradbury is a naive extrapolation of the escalating trend (of the early 50s) to stay in and watch TV. It succeeds only as satire, and even this aspect has diminished with the passing years. (I mustn't be too critical here; obviously "The Pedestrian" was selected because of its 1950s flavour, and certainly it has something to say.) "Scanners Live in Vain" was Cordwainer Smith's first published story, with his inimitable style not fully developed. It's enjoyable still, but his later work tends to be better. Richard Matheson and Howard Pohl are largely ignored today, so I'm pleased to see a good story by each included here. Another very good story - perhaps the most powerful and least dated in the anthology - is "The Edge of the Sea" by Algia Budrys, which tells of one man's single-minded determination to salvage a mystery capsule from a stormy sea. In essence it's a character study, which makes it one of the first such in sf.

The last story is an anomaly. It is Philip Jose Farmer's "Sell on! Sell on!" which, despite having been published in the early 1950s, is very much of the 1960s. It is a parallel worlds satire, sharp-edged and magnificent. Plotting the way to the next decade, it makes the perfect tail-piece. And its denouement symbolises the fate of more traditional sf during the 1960s.

Of course, several good authors of the decade have been omitted. In particular I would like to have seen contributions from James Blish, Philip K. Dick, Robert A. Heinlein (one of his strongly anti-Russian stories, perhaps, because of its relevance to the 1950s), Fritz Leiber, Theodore Sturgeon and John Wyndham. But obviously there is a constraint of space. Harrison and Aldiss have done a good job here, and I recommend this anthology.

THE FOREVER WAR by Joe Haldeman (Weidenfeld & Nicolson; 1975; London: 238 pp; £3.50; ISBN 0-297-77001-2/Orbit; 1976; London: 238 pp; 60p; ISBN 0-8000-7882-5)

Reviewed by Ian Watson and Chris Evans

This novel, by Vietnam veteran Joe Haldeman, who has also published a short autobiographical novel about his experiences (Mr Yagp, Salt Ribcabs & Winston, 1972 - now out of print, though a limited number of autographed copies are available from the author, according to a quarter page ad in *Locus* 188), has just won the Nebula; and one can easily see why - as well as why this was an unfortunate choice.

*The Forever War* is slick, tough journalism-fiction out of the *Andromeda* and certainly an impeccable adventure novel, so far as plot and action - and a whole lot of realistic location go; and the idea of a star war fought under Einsteinian time-distortion contrivance is fascinating (you can find yourself fighting ships that come, technologically, from the future, if your own time distortion on this battle is greater than the enemy's!) besides providing the hero with a life-span of 1200 years objective Earth history.

But, on balance, Haldeman's is a chromium-plated world; however many casualties and wreckage it sustains, and however many bodies are muled. It relies on chromium-plated shorthand, too: nova bombs, tachyon torpedoes, collapse jumps, all click in slickly - but nothing much gets worked out in depth.

Actually, the bit of Haldeman equipment described in most detail is the old Heinlein fighting suit out of *Starship Troopers*, with only a few modifications. And indeed the reason why the book has been so lavishly praised in America is that it is an anti-Heinlein novel: a turning of *Starship Troopers* on its head, a conscious presentation in the light of Vietnam of war not as glorious but as stupid and meaningless, trumped up by a future Pentagon on the basis of lies, equivalent Vietnam-wise to the Tonkin Gulf incident. The enemy is so enemy; they never attacked. Once started, it's difficult to stop the war, because the enemy are in fact a natural clone, who don't think the same way as humans. By the end of the book, the human race has also cloned itself into one collective entity called Man; and communication with the enemy-clone becomes possible.

Clone-consciousness is presented as a) a step ahead, since the war gets stopped, and Man the Clone is benevolent; b) completely incomprehensible; c) and many case breeder worlds for "normal" humans remain, whether our hero resorts for a tear-jerker cliché ending: "Old-Timer has First Child". And all live happily ever after. Which seems to be evading all the interesting issues. If clones are better, why? What is clone-consciousness? (The most that we learn about this is as follows: "...he said that I a priori couldn't understand it. There were no words for it, and my brain wouldn't be able to accommodate the concepts even if there were words. All right, it sounded a little fishy, but I was willing to accept it" (p 233) - Well, really?) Has Man turned into his Faceless Enemy? Is this his downfall - or his redemption? The really interesting ideas are all sidestepped for the tear-jerker finale. Given the Vietnam inspiration, too, and the book's nominal anti-war posture, it seems ironically unfortunate that the Enemy should correspond to the old cliché of Faceless Bordes (the Chinese, the Cong) and that there should be no mental accommodation whatever; simply a retreat back home to Mainstreet, Middletown USA. Nothing has been learnt. The war, too, is a disgusting and Moody mistake, but the action, gliding along courtesy of the chromium-plated technology - even if this ripe bodies to shreds time and again - is also (because there is no other real theme) intoxicating; and thus I would say that the book subverts its anti-war theme - just as it does not come to terms with the upshot of the war - and one prime reason why this happens is that the book relies on so much slick shorthand. Curiously, repulsive as the ideology of



*Starship Troopers* is, *Starship Troopers* remains the better book: more coherent, more thought out in its philosophical implications, and the way the technology reflects these.

*The Forever War* is a damn fine read; and it's all wrong.

--- Ian Watson

A few years ago when the Old Wave/New Wave controversy was at its height, one of the major criticisms levelled at traditional sf by the newer practitioners of the genre was that its fiction was all about hardware and that the human situation was not convincingly portrayed. In retaliation the older writers complained that the new sf placed too much emphasis on psychological conflict and stylistic experimentation to the detriment of content. Both arguments raised relevant objections. On the one hand, a preoccupation with gadgets and an engineering manual mentality, on the other hand an obsession with form which often resulted in obscurity and pretentiousness. In recent years, however, the better sf authors have combined the strengths of both approaches to produce work which is both entertaining and realistic on a human level. Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* is such a book, ostensibly space opera but in reality a significant contribution to the genre.

Comparisons with Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* are inevitable since both novels deal with the function of the military in interstellar war. But whereas Heinlein made no attempt to hide his sympathies for the armed forces, Haldeman, himself a combat veteran, is far more ambivalent in his approach. One senses some residual affection for the bonhomie of the army but this is overlaid by an awareness of the intransigence of the military mind and the blurring of individual identity by a marshalling into units. In *The Forever War* both these factors are accentuated by the nature of the conflict: central command is physically remote, light-years away, and the soldiers are severed from their relatives and friends on Earth by virtue of the relativistic effects of interstellar travel. Whereas Heinlein glossed over or ignored the problem of time dilation, it is the central theme of *The Forever War*. The troops are literally eliminated, they exist in a vacuum, shuttled from campaign to campaign, their ties with Earth inexorably withering, their futures statistical improbabilities - few will survive.

The strike forces comprise both men and women, and promotion is determined by combat efficiency alone. Haldeman does not dwell on this innovation, as a lesser writer might be tempted to; instead he shows that copulation is the only real pleasure remaining to the troops and that mixed sex units are essential to their psychological well-being. Contacts are generally casual, although Mandella, the narrator, gradually develops a deeper relationship with Murtagy Potter - and any author who can make a soldier of that name credible must be doing something right. Eventually, however, they are posted to different units and Mandella fears that they have become irreversibly separated the anquerra of colossal jumps by which the starships travel will force them not only light-years but centuries apart.

The early chapters, which deal with the training of the troops on a trans-Plutonian planet, are absolutely convincing in their technical detail. The soldiers wear hermetically sealed units which amplify their movements and increase their effective strength. The suits are not merely plot devices to enable the author to effortlessly move his characters from planet to planet. Haldeman explores the dangers inherent in their design, thus reminding us that technological developments do not spring full-blown from the laboratory, an assumption implicit in much American science fiction. The author's concern for his raw materials is evident throughout; there is plenty of invention in this book but none of it is gratuitous.

Haldeman's vision of Earth in the near future, based to some extent on Toffler's *Future Shock*, is also very plausible. He presents us with a kind of failed Utopia, a planned society which functions smoothly but is essentially lifeless. Crime is virtually non-existent since anti-social traits can be diagnosed and corrected at an early age; homosexuality is condoned in order to ameliorate the population problem; the people themselves live in domed cities, many tedious jobs being performed by machines so that the individual has more leisure time or may be simply unemployed. Yet still the old resentments linger on and the good intentions have gone sour. The troops, returning to Earth after a campaign, find that their personal knowledge is hopelessly out of date. Society cannot accommodate them and they are forced to re-enlist.

Despite its many subtleties, *The Forever War* is above all a vivid and enthralling adventure. Haldeman displays a considerable mastery of his materials by way of his depth of imagination and his plotting ability. The novel is filled with technical details worthy of Arthur C. Clarke, yet its characters move with a life of their own. So say that this is a highly promising first novel would be to do the book a great injustice - Haldeman could very well collect a Nebula this year at his first attempt.

--- Chris Evans

THE LAST DAYS OF THE PEACEMAKER by L.P. Reeves (Robert Hale; London; 1978; 192 pp; £3.60, ISBN 0-7091-3328-0)

Reviewed by Chris Evans

8 am: The doorbell rings. Our intrepid reviewer, head fuzzy with sleep and that Monday Morning Sickness, staggers out of bed and stumbles to the door. The postman thrusts a parcel into his hands. Ah, he thinks, books for review, eagerly tearing open the package to see what goodies lie inside. Temporarily discarding the paperback he examines the hardcover which will, no doubt, be an invaluable addition to his library. *Thomas Silverberg*, perhaps, or *Rob Heinsohn's* first novel. He groans.

7 pm: Okay, so you've had a hard day, but think it out rationally, someone has to review the Robert Hale this month and it just happens to be your turn. Approach the book without prejudice, give it a fair chance. Go ahead, open it. .

"The bridled dog who sat down in the middle of Hag's Lane to deal with a sudden uncontrollable itch would have been better advised to move the extra couple of yards to the dubious sanctity of the narrow grass verge to deal with his problem, though even so it was doubtful if the wildly bucketing grey car would have missed him."

Ten days later:

7 pm: Our reviewer sits at a table, gazing at the blank sheet of paper which he inserted into his typewriter fifteen minutes ago. He stares down at the threadbare carpet, looks up at the ceiling, peers through the window. He sighs. Surely there must be some original, intelligent comment he can make about the book? Maybe, he thinks, the ingestion of a moderate amount of alcohol would sharpen his critical faculties.

11 pm: Our reviewer returns to his task, enlivened by a sudden flash of inspiration while at his local. The plot! He can talk about the plot. Now that's new. Our hero is involved in a car crash and loses his memory. He wakes up to find that the Reds, for some reason, have dropped a nuclear bomb on London. But it's not really that bad, since the gave forty-eight hours warning so that everyone could

evacuate in time. The British Government, now ensconced in the safety of Ravrognia, issue a statement to say that Havelock-Temple - a sort of British Henry Kissinger who was conducting peace negotiations in Geneva at the time - had somehow caused the Reds to get mad and zap our capital city. Havelock-Temple, who known as the Pacemaker, is wanted for treason. With me so far? Twist number one: it turns out that our hero, known hitherto as George, recovers his memory and discovers that he is Havelock-Temple. I must admit that you could have floored me with a feather when the author sprang that one on me. But that's not all. At the end we learn that it was all a dream. Havelock-Temple is really dying in hospital of a stroke and all that was gone before in the fantasy of a disordered mind.

That seems a pretty pertinent comment on which to end. Goodnight.

THE UNHOLY CITY by Charles G. Finney (Panther; St Albans; 1976; 125 pp; 30p; ISBN 0-586-04305-5)

Reviewed by Chris Evans

A curious book this, a tone of singular uniqueness, as the author himself might put it. Finney has a baroque, convoluted style which lends itself to burlesque. *The Unholy City* reads as if Edgar Rice Burroughs had tried to write *Candide*. The cover would have you believe that it's "a masterpiece of weird adventure" but both appellations are inaccurate. Although the book is often genuinely funny and occasionally quite thought-provoking, it lacks the consistent brilliance which separates the very good from the excellent. And weird? That conjures up visions of Lovecraftian intrigue. Unusual in setting maybe, but everything else is pretty down-to-earth.

The story, on a surface level, is fairly conventional. A plane crash deposits the narrator in the middle of a strange land. He starts up with one Vic Ruiz who leads him to the city of Heller-Way, the unholy city which as soon recognise as a stylised version of a twentieth century American metropolis. In some senses the book is a tirade against capitalism, for although Finney holds up various targets for scorn, his abiding concern is with the pervasive influence of money on all levels of society. Malabide, the narrator, has pooled the cash taken from the passengers killed in the plane crash and he is able, despite his unkempt appearance, to move freely from the grubbiest drink house to the smartest restaurant simply by the requisite bribery of a waiter or doorman. The two men drink a lot, a heady brew called axelack. The author describes the effect: "...although the first swallow of axelack sometimes burned and caused a slight sense of stricture in the vicinity of one's tabilitw, the next swallow relieved the stricured feeling". Ruiz and Malabide spend most of the book in a semi inebriated state, thus allowing the author to make trenchant comments on society without sounding pompous.

Ruiz has premonitions of death and he wishes "to crowd into the least remaining hours all the beauty and all the joy I have hitherto missed". They decide on a bacchanal, seeking out the company of girls and dining expensively. But inevitably some unforeseen occurrence intrudes to prevent the consummation of their desires. A tiger is stalking the city and various factions of society are in revolt against one another. The simple, casual happiness which they crave continues to elude them. Ruiz and Malabide are hopelessly hemmed in by circumstance.

I'm disappointed by the way in which Panther have packaged this book. Dressed in a rather lurid cover, with a misleading blurb, it gives no hint of the underlying irony of the narrative or the author's anxious concerns. A reader looking simply for an exotic adventure story is hardly likely to be receptive to the deeper content of the book, while someone with a penchant for rhetoric would probably ignore it altogether. Which is a shame, for it is a thoroughly enjoyable romp, witty and incisive.



P.H. HYUN '76