

carol gregory

Vector 79 \$1:60p



Rutherford Knights and Mambo dancing days

Ray Read.



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Contents:

Lead-in.....3

Alternative Technologies
For Spaceship Propulsion/
Bob Shaw.....7,24

The Roger Elwood
Interview.....10

Letters.....14

The Infinity Box
Douglas Barbour
John Clute
James Corley
James Goddard
Brian Griffin
Chris Morgan
David Pringle
Martin Ricketts
Brian Stableford
David Wingrove.....17

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* This is the special Valentine's Day issue

of Vector: it is for J, wherever I may

find her...

* VECTOR 79 has been produced by Chris

Fowler with his most faithful buddy,

* the IBM Selectric 82C. The IBM wishes

* to thank NPT, IBM and the University of

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* Steve, Brian and Sarah, and Colette; for

* reasons too various to mention.

* The editor is now going to sleep for

* a long time, waking up only in time to

* not receive any Valentine's cards.....

Bitter and twisted, Fowler, bitter and
twisted. Don't be so pessimistic -
you never know your luck...

Bobo. Very droll. It would be the first
time for four years. Four years.
Think about that for a while.

(Continued on page 30)

LEAD IN

*Ye gods, Fowler, what have you done to Vector? It's twice as big. I feel
lost in these huge pages. And you've changed size halfway through a volume.
What are all those libraries going to do?*

Don't ask me, Spiby, I'm not a librarian. I expect they'll sort something
out. Anyway, this format is much more attractive to advertisers and for
book-store sales; and it allows more scope for lay-out and design.

Which you don't seem to have made much use of...

Be fair, Spiby - this is my first go on an A4 size issue. And it has all
been done in five days - or more accurately, nights - and on the last
three I've totalled five hours sleep. But next issue...

*I seem to have heard that one before. Still, you have managed to get
the Bob Shaw article into print at last, even if Bob Jackson did beat you
into print with it in Maya. Pretty smart operator that Jackson. And I
see the Elwood interview finally got in.*

True - thanks mainly to the sterling efforts of Ian Thomson, who transcribed
it from three hours of tape; and Martin Hatfield, who edited it down to a
manageable length.

*I see you've restored the Letter Column; and shortened the Review section.
Could that have anything to do with all that flak you've been getting
about "lack of balance"?*

Please, Spiby, don't you start on about that. It's bad enough having Little
Mal getting his knife out and sticking it in me. I answer all that at the
end of the Letter Column.

*I still reckon you only put the Letter Column back so as to get more mail.
As if I don't have enough trouble in the morning getting up all those
stairs with the sacks of letters and books and fanzines and...*

Never mind, Spiby, you'll have a quiet time on Monday. Nobody ever sends me
anything on Valentine's Day.



Carol Gregory

BRIAN STABLEFORD

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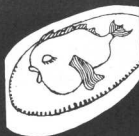
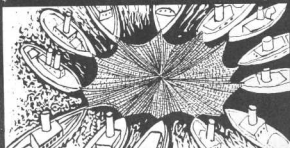
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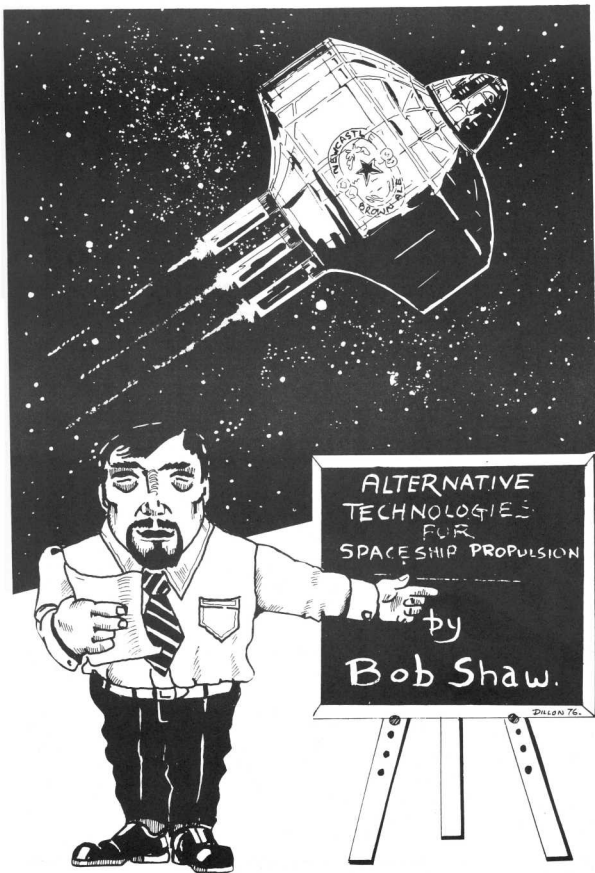
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Edward Allen, Cliff Lawther

FROM FABER

THE LAST FISH





I expect you're all wondering why I brought you here tonight...Heh! Heh! Heh!

Well, you must admit this is a bit like one of those old movies where an assorted bunch of people find themselves invited to spend a week-end at some really creepy, out-of-the-way spot. I got a couple of mysterious, anonymous notes telling me to come here, and a strange map - just like in the movies. The main difference is that in a film the weekend guests always find themselves incarcerated in a huge, gloomy, draughty, creaky place, miles from anywhere, with no means of escape. And nobody could say that about Owen's Park. Could they? They're fake fans if they do. But, come to think of it...the hall porter does look a bit like Boris Karloff.

This has got me wondering what crimes we all committed in the past. Who did we mortally offend and wants to take revenge on us? Hands up anybody who has ever kept a magazine belonging to the BSFA chain library. Hands up anybody who has ever used Science Fiction Monthly to wrap up fish and chips. Hands up anybody who has ever sent a fan letter to Space 1999. I thought so ... quite a few of you. That means you'll all start disappearing, one by one. If I'm not mistaken, some people have already started vanishing from the back of the hall! It's funny, but that happened during my last talk, as well...

This talk is going to be about alternative technology, but the subject of Space 1999 has cropped up... and, in a way, it features alternative technology, too. I mean, the technology in it is impossible, and that's a genuine alternative to all this plausible stuff that people like Niven and Asimov and Clarke keep churning out. I missed the first two episodes of Space 1999 - for some reason, that's how I think of that show - because I pay 10p a week for the TV Times, to get extra programme information, and it kept on saying that it began at 7.30, whereas it really began at 6.30, and I kept switching on too late. "Just another readers service from Independent Television Publications..." Mind you, it sometimes takes me about an hour to find the programme pages in the TV Times and Radio Times anyway, so I might have missed those episodes regardless.

I do know, for example, that in Space 1999 they are journeying around the galaxy on the Moon, but I never found out what propelled the Moon out of the Solar System. All I know is it must have been one hell of a powerful explosion, because they reach a different planet every week, and if you grant a high density of stars - say they're about four light years apart - that means the Moon is belting along at 200 times the speed of light! Luckily for Commander Koenig and company, the retro rockets on those Eagle craft seem to be pretty effective - even though they only emit little puffs of smoke, more in keeping with somebody having a crafty drag down in the toilets - and they can always land and chat to the local inhabitants. The residents of these planets all speak English - which is a very lucky thing, too - because I run into language difficulties when I go as far abroad as Italy or Holland or Macclesfield.

Other things I'd like to know about Space 1999 are: are they going to show us the vast underground factory which builds the Eagle spacecraft? (A minimum of four of these machines explode or suffer spontaneous combustion every week, so there has to be a big production facility.) When are we going to be told that Barbara Baltes is really a robot? Why does everybody in the Moonbase whisper at the time? Why do they get Moon gravity outside the Moonbase and normal gravity inside it? (Maybe that's why everybody whispers and looks gloomy - they're introducing extra gravity to the situation.)

Thinking it over, the key to some of these mysteries could lie in something I've already mentioned - the fact that the Moon is travelling at 200 times the speed of light. This means that time in the Moonbase is running backwards, and all the characters in it are heading into their own pasts instead of their futures. Martin Landau is contemplating Missions that are even

more impossible; and Barry Morse is extending his hunt for the Fugitive into inter-stellar space. "That was no one-armed man, Jansen - that was an inhabitant of Rigel 19 waving his proboscis, and you can't touch them for it."

Back at the main subject of the talk - Lunar Rock: Will it Ever Be As Popular As Martian Country And Western? ... No, that can't be right - that's Graham Charnock's talk. Mine is about alternative technology space drives. As you know, space flight is the most common theme in science fiction, and the fact that Moon landings have been accomplished in reality has wiped out whole areas of speculation which many a writer relied upon to earn his living. NASA is taking the bread and butter out of the mouths of science fiction authors, which is not only an immoral thing to do - it's downright unhygienic! Driven out of what used to be their own private territory, sf writers are becoming poorer and poorer. Things have reached the stage at which some of them have to use their Access cards to weigh themselves. Every time I have to take some money out of the bank I feel ill for a couple of hours afterward - I think it's called a withdrawal symptom.

There is, however, a ray of hope for the future in that present day space technology is not really adequate or suitable for the tasks it has to accomplish, partly because of the fantastic expense involved, partly because of inherent weaknesses in our whole concept of the space rocket. All the big space powers are looking around for other more efficient, more reliable and more economic ways of getting hardware into the sky, and it is quite possible they will turn to science fiction for fresh, original ideas - for which, I hope, they will pay an appropriate fee. This notion isn't as far-fetched as it might sound, because many leading space technologists have acknowledged the stimulus they get from science fiction. Only the other day I read an article by a big man in the communications satellite business who said he had lost millions of pounds because in 1947 he had thought of, but failed to patent, Arthur C. Clarke. People even come up to me and ask technical questions. Questions like: "If you put a hole in the middle of a Gemini spacecraft, would it make it Apollo?" Or, "Up there, in the emptiness of space, what would Isaac Asimov have to push against?"

Of course, not all the ideas that science fiction has put forward for space ship propulsion are worth following up. A giant gun about a mile high which fires people into space in a bullet is obviously not feasible - partly because of the tremendous accelerations involved, but mainly because you'd never get enough leather to make a holster for it. And it's no good talking about building it underground, with the muzzle at ground level, because it's against the law to have a concealed weapon. You see, it's practical little details like these trip up some of our most visionary thinkers, but which us hard sf writers have built our reputations on.

A compatriot of mine, who has an equally down-to-earth approach, has pointed out on TV the difficulties that Bell got into when he invented the telephone - it was absolutely no use to him until he invented another telephone that he could ring up. Then he got carried away and invented a third telephone, and when he rang up the second one it was engaged. That's what's called technological redundancy.

In contrast to some of the quaint old ideas in science fiction, the proposal for a new type of space ship propulsion unit which I'm going to outline to you has all the advantages of being inexpensive and totally practicable. The inspiration came to me one evening while I was sitting at home in an armchair ... (have you noticed that chairs are good for sitting on? I keep half a dozen of them round the house for no other reason) ... idly toying with a half-pint whisky shandy. My intellect was wrestling with some of the great imponderables of our time, questions like: "Why was the book, The Man Who Folded Himself, written by David Gerrold and not John Creasey?"

Actually, the inspiration came in two parts - just the way Arthur Koestler said it should. That's the way you do creative thinking, by taking two imaginative elements out of your mental stock and synthesizing them into something entirely new. I was sitting there watching my television set... (have you noticed that TVs are good for watching? I experimented with watching fridges for a while, and then sideboards, but after this period of trial and error I settled on television sets.) ... and a commercial about saving energy came on. It explained, the way they always do, that a big percentage of the heat loss in a house occurs through the windows. That's where your heat goes - right out through the glass of the windows. This information wasn't new to me, but - under the benign influence of the whisky shandies - my intellect was in a highly receptive state, and the stuff about the behaviour of window glass seemed to hang in the forefront of my mind, reverberating in a cryogenic chill. (I copied that last bit out an Analog editorial.)

It's amazing the things which reverberate in the mind after you've had a few drinks - that's why you have such interesting conversations in pubs. The part that I like best is when non-of pub customers start talking about things which we - as science fiction fans, usually with some awareness of science - tend to regard as our own conversational stamping ground. I remember sitting in a little country pub once having a pint with the landlord. Although this was in the Spring, it was a bitterly cold day outside - a fact which seemed to have a depressing effect on mine host. Quite out of the blue, in the middle of a conversation about the price of lettuce, he announced that he had worked out exactly why it was that the weather had become so unseasonal in recent years. My interest perked up at once because I had been speculating about the same thing ever since I saw that "Horizon" programme on BBC which told us that a new Ice Age was going to start the following Tuesday afternoon.

"It's these leap years that's doing it," the landlord explained. "They keep sticking in this extra day every fourth year, and they're all adding up and putting the calendar out of step with the seasons."

Although he didn't realise it, this man was a living proof of Weston's Theorem - invented by Pete Weston - which postulates that interest in science fiction usually springs from an underlying appreciation of astronomy. I spent a good thirty minutes with this man trying to make him understand what is actually meant by the terms "year" and "day" and why there's no cosmic linkage between the two, but I simply failed to get through to him. However, this is straying from the point.

The second part of the discovery I was talking about came later on that same evening, when my gaze happened to fall on the second inspirational element, the vital catalyst - which in this case happened to be the inside back cover of the Radio Times. You've noticed the way in which certain publications are associated with different types of advertising - the Daily Telegraph for jobs; Penthouse for saucy French undies; the old Astounding for surgical trusses. Not that there's all that much difference between the latter two ... between saucy undies and trusses, I mean ... in the little illustrations they look equally complicated and disconcerting. Well, the back cover of the Radio Times used to be devoted entirely to ads for garages and greenhouses. Nowadays it tends to be given over to glossy adverts for Peter Stuyvesant - the cigarettes the tobaccoist refuses to sell you unless you produce your passport; and dry Martini - the drink the wine merchant refuses to sell you unless you can produce a licence to fly a seaplane.

At the time I'm speaking of, however, it was still garages and greenhouses, and I got to pondering about the famous Greenhouse Effect. For the benefit of anybody who hasn't read the science column in Figure It's Weekly, I should explain that the Greenhouse Effect is a scientific phenomenon, all to do with

changing the wavelengths of radiation, by which greenhouse glass refuses to allow heat to pass out through it, thus keeping the greenhouse nice and warm. This was the point at which the two halves of the inspiration began to come together, reaching critical mass.

There's something funny here, I thought, taking a delusory slip from my whisky. In an ordinary house the glass in the windows lets all the heat out - but in a greenhouse the glass keeps all the heat in!

Suddenly the inspiration was complete.

It dawned on me, there and then, that we could solve all our home heating problems... and save the countries of the West billions of pounds in energy bills... simply by taking the ordinary glass out of our windows and replacing it with greenhouse glass!

The idea was so devastatingly simple that for a moment I thought there had to be a flaw in my scientific reasoning. But no! There was no denying the facts... window glass lets heat out, greenhouse glass keeps heat in. Q.E.D. I celebrated the discovery by finishing off the Scotch - reflecting that I could probably afford it now that the Government was likely to vote me an honorarium of a million or two. Then I toddled off to bed, too excited even to bother with my nightly digestive biscuit and cup of Slippery Elm Food.

The big let-down came on the following morning while I was having my usual breakfast of two lightly poached aspirins. There was a flaw in my scientific logic, and I cursed myself for not having spotted it immediately. I had done a lot of research while writing my "slow glass" stories, and I knew for a fact that the glass factories did not manufacture two different types - one for ordinary buildings, and one for greenhouses. My gleaming inspiration of the previous night had been the tawdry glitter of fool's gold. (That last sentence was little literary bit I put in a writing practice in case they ever revive Planet Stories.) The realisation that I had been wrong lay in me heavily for a while - just like a Brian Burgess meat pie - but then I began to rally as the day wore on. I asked myself: "Would Einstein have given up so easily? Just when things were getting tough, would he have abandoned all his sculptures?"

I think I have pointed out before that it wasn't a huge IQ which made Einstein a great scientist; it was his simple and childlike approach - and, for all I know, I might even be more simple and childlike than Einstein.

Returning to the problem, I decided that my basic premise about greenhouses had been right, but that I had not been in possession of sufficient facts to construct a viable theory. Some vital clue was missing, but what could it be? (This is just like an episode from "Microbes and Men" - isn't it?) By this time I was hot on the intellectual trail and I consulted my library of science reference works, spending hours going through astronomic works such as The Penguin Dictionary of Shells; The Shell Dictionary of Penguins; Teach Yourself Embalming; Stand and Deliver - A Treatise on Overcrowding in Maternity Homes; Bionic Men - Would You Let Your Transistor Marry One?; Black Holes - A Successful Treatment Without Surgery. I even glanced through a manual on dog handling, hoping it might give me a strong lead, but to no avail. This is a weird thing about reference works - I never seem to get anything out of them. I've had Rogot's Thesaurus for years, and so far I haven't managed to get a single word out of it. So, it was up to my unaided powers of scientific deduction.

The basic problem was that the manufacturers produced only one grade of glass for normal domestic and commercial use - and yet when sheets of this glass were put into a greenhouse, their physical

THE FAN INTERVIEW

THE ROGER ELWOOD INTERVIEW conducted at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday, 15th November, 1970 by CHRISTOPHER FOWLER; transcribed from three hours of tape by IAN THOMSON, MARTIN HATFIELD and CHRISTOPHER FOWLER, edited by MARTIN HATFIELD.

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CF: You appeared on the science fiction scene in 1971 with the news that you had contracts for a large number of anthologies. You were very much an unknown quantity. No one knew much about you. What were you doing prior to this period?

RE: You make me sound like a ghastly apparition! I started out in professional publishing circles in 1962, only a year out of high school.

CF: You would have been nineteen then?

RE: That's right. I'm thirty-two now, thirty-three January 1976. My first publisher was, professionally, was with Jim Warren in his *Famous Monsters Magazine* - an interview with John Carradine. I then started writing for some film magazines, and over the next two years I wrote and edited, sold and sold over 1,700 articles to the various film magazines. I also sold a fair amount of original fiction of my own to mystery magazines, etc. During that period I didn't sell any science fiction of my own. I've subsequently sold some science fiction. I started editing science fiction nine years ago.

During the period of 1966 to 1971 I actually edited, by myself or with others, fourteen anthologies.

CF: There were reprint anthologies; and you were working with Vic Ghidalia?

RE: Yes, and Sam Moskowitz, but not together - on different books. I also had experience in magazines based upon certain network TV shows such as *Thrillers* and *The Munsters*. So I had a great deal in both areas: editing and writing.

Prior to my professional work I'd been reading science fiction since the age of eight years. My father had been reading science fiction since the *Gernsback* era of the '20s through the '30s. So, I really have an extensive background in science fiction than some of the people who seem to criticise a sudden appearance on the scene.

At least I have the professional credits. Many of the people who are critical have no professional credits at all; which is not to say that their opinion is without value.

One person said: "You have to work yourself up from the ground (literary) and go gradually. You've come on the scene suddenly." Well, it's not suddenly, it's been close to ten years that I've been doing anthologies. The progression from reader to reprint anthologies to original anthologies to novels is the ideal way to do it.

CF: What most surprised people was your announcement, which appeared in such magazines as *Locust*, that you had a large number of publishers tied up to do original anthologies. Do I have a note that you had forty anthologies planned.

RE: At that point, yes. But they didn't happen all at once. In the month, I didn't have forty anthologies signed. That took place over a period of six months, a year, two years and half, should be said, gradually, one at a time, but the first anyone heard about me was that I had signed up forty anthologies, and consequently, antagonism was created. I think my problem at the time was a public relations one, and a timing one.

CF: When you made the announcement, did you have writers commissioned to do stories, or were you going to the publishers with just the idea for an anthology on a theme?

RE: At the time you reach forty anthologies, you have to have some writers signed up. You can't suddenly sign up forty anthologies and then wait for the writers. In some cases, writers were signed up; in other cases, writers were contacted and their approval and participation promised. In either case, the anthologies having been signed, I may have quoted the contents fully broken down in terms of actual commitments from writers. By the time we reach that third group, I've established successful relationships with groups numbers one and two. There was nothing wrong in saying to the publisher, some of the possible contributors include Barry Malberg, Paul Anderson and Bob Silverberg. Of course this is a matter of how extensive their own commitments are by the time we sign it up. I have worked with these people before, so there is no reason why I cannot work with them again. Which is a perfectly honourable way of doing it.

CF: Essentially, you were going to publishers saying: "I would like to produce an anthology which would potentially include material by such-and-such writers..."

RE: It was not only the writers, because at the time original anthologies were not extremely prevalent. You had the *New Dimensions* series, the *Orbit* series and scattered anthologies. Some people are saying, rightly or wrongly, that I completely cut out the original anthology market outward. Some people are saying I blew it up. Suddenly, you had not only the Roger Elwood series, but you had these anthologies from six to ten other editors, and they were all coming at once. It showed readers that the original anthology was dependent on as a fairly regular source of material. Before this happened, the magazines were the only regular source of original material. The anthologies were coming out and they spread the word, and on your private source. Some people feel that the swift movement of the original anthology has contributed to the demise of the decline of several magazines. Now, ironically, I'm shifting to books and magazines.

CF: How did you convince so many publishers that the projects were viable in financial terms?

RE: I'd had enough success with reprint anthologies to have to point back to track success. Opening sales point of view was that the reprint anthologies have done a minimum number of sales, and that I had a certain number of sales elsewhere. The potential of anthologies was the number of stories they can get to other places should be substantially greater. Plus, I have relations with some of the top authors in the field, and the number of stories of these authors should make them very successful. At the time science fiction was beginning to flourish, a success record in stories at universities, science fiction films, etc. I put all this together into rather a pattern, a master outline, and I presented it to publishers and most of them agreed that the potential was quite strong.

CF: You were able to capitalise on the growing interest in science fiction and on your private experience and relationships with authors.

RE: I also helped perpetuate it, though I say that modestly. Plus, frankly, some individuals call or write to a publisher, and then send one very small letter saying: "I have a great idea for an anthology" and then never follow it up. Some will call a publisher up and if the secretary puts them off, they'll give up.

My letters were, on average, of single spaced pages, two or three pages long. One was five pages long, and with facts, which I gave the names of authors who would be available. In each case I enthusiastically and genuinely believed on the theme. If you're concerned about enthusiasm I try to apply to everybody. I do not have any reservations about anthologies being sold, as opposed to Sam Smith's, to publishers.

I had a writing career, from which I derived my income, parallel to my editing career. If you have a book because you have to pay for a daily living then you're pitching the book as you would automobiles or insurance. It doesn't matter how the same way as if you're genuinely interested in the book itself. I have said many times to publishers: "An anthology is 20% of the money, 70 to 80 per cent of the advance, and have an ideal situation. I'm interested in how literature in the book is. The book is good; it'll be successful in the long run."

That fact indicated I wasn't after contracts to grab money from the publisher. I was a limited condition and trust which was responsible for publishers selling these books strongly.

My publishers really have been, almost without exception, top-notch, going to the most trustworthy relationships. The fans and occasionally some of the writers have felt that relationships with them have been beneficial.

CF: So you think it is a little difficult to be enthusiastic about each book when you have forty in preparation?

RE: It's easier then. A very poor analogy is a car battery. The very first you have problems with it. If you leave it in the shop or garage. If you keep it running it's a fine battery in the long run.

My enthusiasm actually builds on itself, and it's a good thing. I may have said that if you see you've sold forty or eighty anthologies, you have the success in the back of you, an excellent foundation to perpetuate the enthusiasm.

CF: One criticism, as reviewers see it, is the criticism that you are doing up your different anthologies. Are you able to devote time, as is necessary, to editing each individual anthology. There are two points in the criticism that you took on to many commitments to maintain quality.

RE: According to the fans - the fan publications - the level of quality is exceedingly up and down. According to the so-called professional publications, *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, etc. - the level of quality is far more consistent.

There was a syndicated review in a dozen American newspapers, primarily in the eastern part of the United States. They were talking about science fiction anthologies in general, and said that the level of quality was down and will do more anthologies than two or three editors put together is Roger Elwood. Why is it so hard to continue selling anthologies to publishers? Why are his anthologies gaining such dominance? The reply was this, and it'll be in it. It said that the reason is the reason is that his anthologies are consistently better than anybody else's.

Bob Silverberg is a friend of mine. If you take ten anthologies, deny one, and multiply by ten years, multiply his number of negative reviews by eight times - because I've theoretically sold eight times as many anthologies - the percentage of negative reviews any greater?

CF: I haven't been able to read all your anthologies...

RE: It would take a superhuman being!

CF: ...but the reviews in the American fanzines and promises suggest that Damon Knight's *Orbit* anthology series might range from very good to excellent. There seems to be less variability. One of your anthologies - *Locust* - is a very good one. It can be very, very good. One of the stories appeared in *Locust* - top thirty best stories of the year. The problem is that you have to do a large number of anthologies edited by Roger Elwood. They perhaps have very similar authors. He picks one, and it may be *Future City* - or a bad one which puts him off the whole original anthology idea.

RE: If one assumes that the variety is an intense. There are two individuals in science fiction, who are quite respected. Between them they have probably edited eight to ten anthologies. Fully half of those anthologies have been "crucified" in the fan press, just torn into little pieces and tossed into the wind. They're well-known in science fiction - look at how their anthologies are criticised, and they have done so few.

I work with experienced, well-regarded veterans and newcomers. I've worked with Paul Anderson, Bob Silverberg, Barry Malberg. You would also perhaps understand my attitude to a large number of standards because they are the actual creators of the material.

CF: As an editor, however, it is your task to choose the best material, and if there is something wrong with a story to go back with the writer with it.

RE: Let's take *Showcase*, which I did for Harper. Dave Martwell reviewed it in *Locust* and called it "second-rate imitation". That same anthology was reviewed by a review service called *Virginia Kings*, who is notably friendly to Howard Brown. The reviewer, or her ghost reviewer, rated it as an extremely good story. With a wide range of diverse stories, and even had the words "highly recommended". Here we have a professional review of a science fiction novel, somewhat antagonistic to science fiction, praising the book. The fans' response would be: "They're not really doing science fiction". The point is this: if it continues to appeal only to those people who really love science fiction, it will not grow.

CF: I personally feel that science fiction is a literature, and should be judged by exactly the same criteria as literature. I think it is to an extent what you're saying - that Fans...

RE: ...are looking for the unique, the different, the original. The reviewer, or her ghost reviewer, remotely duplicates something that's been said before, they dismiss it without regarding the science fiction technology. The reviewer is also that trap. His stories are almost consistently extremely well written. Joyce Carol Oates, who is a very good writer, was a reviewer in the United States. wrote a review of *Future City* by Damon Knight. She called it one for me for Robert Merrill. She called it one

where if another editor had suggested the same material, they might not have published it. That sounds terribly egotistical, but in certain cases it has been a genuine fact.

CF: It's been suggested that publishers may like to have you as an editor, because they feel that you're used to the idea that you have the same restrictions that they have. So what you produce is going to be OK for them, rather than that you have a greater critical judgment, or editorial judgment, than another publisher might have. RE: The irony of it is that the total acceptance of what I put into a book allows me the freedom to publish stories, novels, which the publisher, operating under the same editorial tactics, might not have published. Readers might say, "Well, they take him because he's a complete success story." Well, I've been able to obtain flexibility in that perspective, and publish novels, short stories that publishers might have rejected from anyone else.

CF: Exactly how successful have your many original anthologies been? I appreciate the success of the Lamer original novels. But I've read that some of the anthologies have had rather poor sales, which has put publishers off running such series in the future. How big a percentage have been put off by bad sales?

RE: I was dropped from Putnam/Berkley because of poor sales, although I was taken over by another publisher. Out of 80 anthologies, sales have gone as high, in hardcover, as \$10,000 - 20-30,000 per book, and in paperback, not every title. "They've gone as high in paperback as \$125,000." The publisher says that *Double Head* would be put off by bad sales of *The Other Side of Time*. I don't really know because I don't know what the publisher's costs are on a particular book. I know that a number of books have earned out their advance and are paying additional royalties. A number have not. In some of those cases the publisher has taken some books from me because I have previous free books these days which even break even. I had that Harcourt, Brace book, *Double Head*, which remained last year, according to Publishers Weekly, one million books. And I know only one out of 83 anthologies have remained. The rest are apparently still going on. The *Continuum* series started in 1971, and I'm still going on, and my conjecture on sales is, honestly, that these books will earn the writers and myself from 4-10,000 dollars, in additional royalties, beyond the advance.

CF: So there's only a small group of publishers that have been put off by the poor sales of your anthologies?

RE: It could be 10%, it could be 30. There are some which are completely turned on as a result of good sales. Even if, in some cases, the fact that a book doesn't sell doesn't earn out its advance - that could be based upon the fact that the advance was too high, that publisher has simply broken even. Or, made a little money. He can look at certain of his other books which lost a lot of money. Today, a publisher doesn't like to lose money, but will realize that every book he publishes will not make money. They tend to take the books that break even or make a fair amount of money in comparison to those that actually lose money. Overall, there have been many disasters. There have been some. But there have been harder science fiction books that have sold between 20,000 and 30,000 copies. That's very good for hardcover science fiction. The average hardcover science fiction book technology sells between 3,500 and 10,000 copies. Most of size fit within that group. You'll have the exceptions, such as *Double Head*, which go *Whoa!* - "Good Heavens!" - You have the other exceptions, such as one or two of mine, which may sell out in 100,000 copies. 95% of my hardcover books have fitted within what science fiction would like to sell. Of course, not all the 83 have been hardcover. Four or five of the paperbacks have sold less than 100,000 copies. Some have sold 50-80,000 copies. Some have gone into 100,000 or more. In most cases it fits with what most authors have had in mind, in that pattern have been at the upper end of the spectrum rather than at the lower.

CF: Now coming back to your magazine, *Gynergy*: Is it going to be a good magazine, with a good distribution system have you got, because it seems from what I've read that distribution is absolutely vital to the success of a science fiction magazine.

RE: Quarterly at the beginning. As far as we knew the distribution will be top notch, because the relationship with the distributor and this publisher is quite a comfortable one. As good as, if not better than *PSF* and *DAISY*. I think it to be as good as, or better than *Analog*.

The difference is that *Amazing* and *Fantastic* and *PSF*, which comprise after all one half of the science fiction publishing industry, are, primarily, one or two man operations, published by people literally as family

operations. That's not to knock it. We tried to analyze why *Analog* is so successful. One reason is something that we'll never be able to touch: it's longevity - it's been around for a period of 30 years.

CF: It's also to do with the fact that it's published by Coward, Macmillan, and the only one with a big distribution.

RE: An amazingly good publisher with a track record in terms of magazines. They have a lot of muscle in distribution. Well, Web Offset is in a less grandiose position, because they don't have the *Vogue* and the *Elites*. They publish, I believe, some different issues of one-shots, quarterlies, every year. They have large magazines, and are also a major printer. They print *Cornetstone* magazine, I understand, for Simon and Schuster books. They have their own printing facility, they are the printer as well as the publisher. Now, *Amazing* doesn't have that advantage. I don't think I have told me, in fact, that they could ride with the magazine for a year, even if I only have one, because they figure that their printing operation has made money on that magazine.

CF: I read the print-run's going to 150,000?

RE: I'm not going to be evasive on purpose, but I just don't know how many it is going to have to sell to be viable. It could be 40%, it could be 50, it could be 60. I don't know. I don't know.

CF: There's no way I could answer that.

RE: In there going to be any distribution over now?

RE: They would see like to have it over here. That'll be good, because this is one case where my personal passion is to have this magazine totally representative of what I can do in science fiction. That sounds terribly all-encompassing. The writers will be allowed true creative freedom within the framework of sex and so forth. I want this magazine to be a *House of Elms* magazine, as well as representative of the best. Because here we have no restrictions on what we can do from publishers! None! Total, absolute freedom. I'm even hiring the cover artist for them. We're negotiating with *Nelly* from *Black Gauchon*, who are, after all, key names in the field. This is my total, creative freedom.

CF: You've got some TV or film projects - is there anything you can tell us about those at the moment?

RE: I don't think I should hypothesize about anything that is going to happen. It doesn't go through, it creates a credibility gap. Whatever my critics may say about *Angels* in the Sky, I've rarely, I've rarely, raised about a project that hasn't materialized. I don't know about it, I know about it, because I don't talk about them. I don't build up expectations. When you hear an announcement about *Gynergy* - it is a fact! Period. And there's no credibility gap that way. For that reason, I'd like to maintain that. Second, perhaps, suffice to say that my dream has been to get into movies or television, and one or more of these dreams may be materializing soon.

I would probably never direct, but I might write a screenplay. There might be a story out there. After all, when one does as much as I do, and with an imagination, one is a producer. A producer, in the case of the movie business, is the person who brings the actors together. That, to me, is a thrilling possibility.

CF: Have you ever thought that your skills might perhaps be better exercised as a publisher of science fiction magazines, or a producer, with other people editing under you?

RE: That's interesting. There was a line of great criticism of me, that I was being minus an editor. I put together a proposal, and got agreements from three key anthropologists in the field, and I was going to make their own selections of books for me, as the editorial director. That's comparable, I wouldn't be the publisher, because I was already a publisher. The programme would be to edit the three books. Because I spent a great deal of time, money on phone calls, everything. And that raised the great criticism of me, that I was being minus an editor. Well, he's trying to set up these three other editors that he could edit through them, by proxy. He's trying to do the job of an editor, separated from it. Whereas his presence would be to make the selection of books. That's the old theory of, once burnt, do I really want to try it again? The reaction to what I've been doing is, I've been doing it, I figure, if I get into trouble editing my own books my own way, make my own mistakes, I would be in a position to arrange a situation where other people edit their own books for me. I might as well do it myself.

CF: To a certain extent you've had a bad press in the fanzine. There have been lots of criticisms. How do you feel about science fiction fandom?

RE: I would work with any fanzine in the field, apart from *Blackboard*, the one with the nutcase, because this is something to me that is reprehensible. But with the others, certainly.

CF: Have you attended any conventions at all?

RE: I attended Philcon, Westcon, Discon and one or two others. I'm being invited as an special guest of honor to Confection number 12 in Michigan.

By and large - with my strength it sounds manipulative - I get along best with people when I'm in a room by myself, or three or four, or very well. When I'm with a whole bunch of people and must address them, I'm not a public speaker, and I'm scared to death. I'd be scared to death if I were a group of people who were my advisors, or if I were of them presented me with an award or something. Under the best of circumstances, I find it difficult even, to get up in church and give my Christian testimony. It's just the way I am, a shortcoming or whatever. When I'm in a room by yourself, it's kind of a relief. It's relaxed. I'm not a professional life. So getting in front of a large group of people is not my best situation. I'm not, when I'm more intimate, it's worked out pretty well.

CF: I think that covers all the points. Roger E. Elwood, thank you very much for your time.

James Corley: 30 Empire Ave, London E13

No you're still crying wolf on this fictitious letter column - "the next issue" - pull the wool over my eyes. I've been waiting for a letter column before, but I believe the intention is to give my opinions about the contents of the last issue.

I have no opinions about the last issue. Well, that's not strictly true. But I'm worried about putting anything in black and white. I may regret later. For instance, I'm beginning from his prodigious output that Brian Stables is actually a front for a dozen black-listed Communists, and I wouldn't want to draw the attention of the Special Branch to myself. I don't know what a "critic" is and I'd prefer it if someone else raised the question. I don't want to seem either ignorant or intrusively nosy. Nor do I want to give the impression that I'm insanely jealous of his raw untamed energy and amazing erudition. I am, of course, but I don't want anyone to know it.

There are also things unwritten with Vector which I do not want to discuss. Reins were not to secrecy before showing me January's issue. So obviously I'm not going to mention the lady called Jerry at the Newcastle SF Convention. I'm not going to mention the fact that I proper matter to discuss in a serious forum like Vector's letter column, even if there was no other way to get it out. It's not the next convention by other means.

Of course, I could write to tell you that in spite of the way Christmas affected my eye - I might be a bit blurry. I'm not going to mention me from cover to cover. But if I were everybody would start thinking "Bla! Mayfair!" and I'd be in a position to write about it. Writing about it would be simple drunkenness.

Actually, I'm tempted to write and congratulate you on the way you stuck a banner headline of Andrew O'Connor's piece. I've never seen it was an article instead of a book review. There's nothing I admire so much as weakness. I don't think I'd like to see the book review gave away to the fiendish hordes who are giving you flak about having too many book reviews.

I could even go on for ages about how good I thought the last issue was, and how everybody contributing to it was so inclusive, perceptive

deep, rich glow of magic, and few words are wasted. The editors' introduction is unobtrusive and quietly-wise, and they have provided plenty of solid, useful information concerning all the authors.

DECADE: THE 1960s edited by Brian W. Aldiss
and Harry Harrison; Macmillan; London; 1977;
£3.95; 287 pp; ISBN 0 333 18002 5

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

I take issue with what Messers Aldiss and Harrison. In less than three hundred pages of spellbinding stories they have encapsulated the zeitgeist of 1940s sf. With a longer introduction (10 pages) and more stories (18) this anthology is much superior in coverage and depth of analysis to its predecessors - The 1940s and The 1950s. But these eighteen stories are not the best representation of the activity a couple of exceptions they display great originality and are, above all, entertaining.

Then the 1940s were the years of Astounding, and then the 1960s were the years of New Worlds. But the usual explanation for the success of Brian Aldiss' introduction stresses the importance of the Moonrock revolution which gave writers a new kind of space to write in, and there, and there. The three major British writers most closely associated with New Worlds are all dead, and the last of them, the one who wrote "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy by the Great Artiste of the Universe," C. J. Roberts with his touching story of life as an "Maneater" (which first appeared in *Interzone* and was later collected in *Interdimensional page Claims*), and Michael Moorcock with, of course, a Jerry Cornelius tale. The last named American writers to its stable, particularly Thomas M. Disch, represented the New Worlds fear of the horror story of the 1960s, "Descending," and Norman Spinrad, who wrote the Jerry Cornelius novel I mentioned, known as Pamela Zoline. In view of Brian Aldiss' frequent poetic references to her story, I thought I would mention it. It was a dead card for inclusion. (I'm not sure I was: it's brilliantly audacious and dangerous, and it's a very good science fiction story, by an author new to me, is "GRAVITY" by Harvey Jacobs. This is a very good story, set at sea, and the space program. It succeeds much better than Barry Malberg ever managed to, and is the most joyful I

But the 1960s were not only New Worlds. There was concern over the increasing power of computers, over equality (which all too often means pulling down to the level of the worst), over freedom, and over the plight of the Third World. These four topics are covered in excellent, thought-provoking stories by (respectively) Gordon K. Dickson, Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Robert Silverberg and Brian Aldiss himself. There are even a couple of takes alien-and-spacechip stories by Keith Laumer and Kingsley Amis.

When I mention that Philip K. Dick, Frederik Pohl and Roger Zelazny are in *Decade: The 1960s*, too, it sounds like a roll-call of all the top names of what was the most important decade in SF. It is still assemble a "why weren't they included?" list. Cronin Le Guin is more of the 1970s. I don't know if I should mention her omission. But I would like to have seen stories by Samuel R. Delany (who gets only a brief mention), Larry Riven (who gets no mention at all), and John Varley (who was somewhat more comprehensible during the 1960s). Larry Riven (to demonstrate the point) is mentioned in the introduction but disappears completely with the onset of the new wave) and Harlan Ellison (who won more awards for all the anthology editors than the rest of them combined). Ellison is mentioned in the introduction but doesn't get a mention for his own fiction or for his great achievement as editor, *Dangerous Visions*! Yes, I am quibbling. And I am sure that the book is a fine, fine anthology, a fine tribute to an exciting era and good value for the price. What more needs to be said?

DEUS IRAE by Philip K. Dick and Roger Zelazny
Doubleday; New York; 1976; 182 pp; ISBN 0 385
04527 1

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

The question which comes to mind immediately is, "Why should these two collaborate?" Certainly Dick lacks the style and poetry which characterize the best of Zelazny, but Dick's plain, blunt approach has always both complemented his plot complexities and suited his usual "small-man" protagonists; Zelazny lacks depth and (for the last eight years) a sense of direction, too, but Dick's depth and direction, while they may have fluctuated

from book to book and become a little more refined, have undergone no radical change over the last twenty years. Further, each of these two writing alone is assured of much publicity, good sales and a great many reviews. So where is the advantage in collaborating? The novel itself provides no answer to the question.

Drugs Iran is, in large part, allegory. Dick's influence is strongly in evidence throughout (dystopian future, drug-induced vision, phocomelia, autofac, "aliens" who speak English omniscient superbeing who die, etc), though the novel is slower to develop and more deeply philosophical than any of his previous work. Of *Belaxxy* there is little obvious sign save for three short chapters, 5, 6 and 17, of which the first is pure Zelazny at his best.

Because so much of the latter two-thirds of the book is indisputably allegorical, the reader must look out for hidden meanings elsewhere, too, though it seems clear that the authors intended to extend the story of the Old Testament face value - rather like the Old Testament, which St Augustine called an "allegory of fact". But this is insufficiently complex for Hegel and Schlegel. In consequence, they use their characters as mouthpieces to debate the merits of two religious systems, employing a host of literary and theological references, mostly German. ("A" level German seems to be a pre-requisite for intending readers.)

The flawed *Damn Race* can best be imagined by considering a mixture of Dick's fine novel *Be Bloodmoney* (subtitled *How We Got Along After the Bomb*) and the *Blues Brothers* (a musical comedy with an anticlerical slant) in place of God. The limberless cripple - phocomelia - with an electric guitar and a guitar amplifier, is the character of the latest novel, but now his name is Tibor Mc Masters, and his compensating talent is that he is the greatest blues guitarist since Robert Johnson (aureate). He is producing a mural for a church of the Holy Spirit in the town of New Hope (aureate). The U.S. administrator responsible for detaching the bomb some years earlier) is the town's mayor, Pete Hands. Tibor is forced to leave on a slow, painful pilgrimage to find the man-god and study his face and his words. Tibor is a Jew, but there is no enmity between the churches. Tibor is on good terms with the Christian minister of his town, and he is a friend of the town's acolyte, Pete Hands. For a variety of reasons Pete eventually joins Tibor on his quest, which turns out to be both successful and unsuccessful.

Tibor's encounters during the pilgrimage contain most of the allegory. The proud, but failing, computer and the gigantic, avaricious worms are easily interpreted but, to complicate matters, the latter are also the "fairy tale, the fable, fairy tale (to the extent that an appearance of the Tin Woodman would not have seemed out of place) and irony. The last is the fiction of the "fairy tale" which, while experimenting with drugs, receives a vision — which Dr Abernathy interprets as being from God — in the shape of a talking clay pot (empty, and in the shape of a "fairy tale" — the home of the Worms — as Tibor's home-site and the site of the great mural of the God of Wrath. Much of the other allusion is difficult to explain, but can be seen either as great and buried, or as a brilliant

But is the novel entertaining? Alas, not very. It has its moments and in the end is partially satisfying, but moves far too slowly, sacrificing commerciality for unnecessary depth and obscurity. But with reputations such as Dick and Zelazny have, almost any joint work would be judged disappointing. It's tough at the top.

SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg:
Gollancz; London; 1977; £3.80; 245 pp; ISBN
0 575 02191 8

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

According to Robert Silverberg, this is his final act of novel. If hope he'll change his mind but, until he does, here is a magnificent finale to two decades of writing. Shadrach in the Furnace is unmistakably Silverberg. It displays the ultimate development of most of his more recent stylistic traits and fictional concerns, being impeccably researched (medicine, Mesopotamia and a guided tour of several world capitals), richly androlous in its approach, often touching on the most intimate with the prospect of death, inevitable rather than plotted, and told in the present tense.

Dr Shadrach Mordecai is personal physician to Genghis Mao Khan, Chairman of the Permanent Revolutionary Committee, which means ruler of the world. But it is the world of 2012 - a sick world, its population down to two billion and many of those dying of the organ-rot

virus, from which only the highest echelons are preserved, so that few people care who rules the world anyway. He is Mao's obsession - he is the love of his life. He is at least 70 years old, inhabits a tiny room in the U.S.ulator (from which the pitiful struggle of the outside world - the "Trama Ward") are visible - and he is the only person in the world who goes regular spare-part surgery to maintain his health and strength. Shadrach has been in the hospital for years, and he is the only person who keeps him constantly advised of the Khan's health; indeed, he is the most trusted, most intimate person in the Khan's life. Despite being only 36, American and black, Shadrach is also the functional head of the three schemes aimed at George Mao's long-term domination of the world. He is the one who succeeded in Project Avatar, which will transfer the Khan's personality to a new body. The new body will be a young black man, and to provide the new body is Mungu, the Khan's pleasant but incompetent heir-apparent. But Mungu is in a bad way, and he is afraid to die or suicide? Who will donate his body now?

The plot is slow and the action slow, but Silverberg unfolds the world of 2012 and its characters in such breadth and depth that the novel's claims compelling from start to finish. It's a shame it seems as if Bradshaw Woodcral, faced with a terrible choice, will immerse himself in self-pity like David Selig in *Dying Inside* or Lew Nichols in *The Stochastic Man*, but Silverberg is cleverer than that. He provides an astonishing plot twist (but logical, always logical) and a marvellous upbeat ending.

Clearly, *Silverberg* in the *Purnance* is one of Silverberg's very best works. Perhaps Shadock's is his best. *Silverberg* is a man of affairs and his Great Personal Dilemma, but he is much more of a popular, heroic figure than Shadock. *Silverberg* is a man who wants to enjoy that *Dying Inside*. There is some backpacked Silverberg in the latest novel, too, but it is not as much of a problem as in time it's transpersonalism, dream-death and - believe it or not - carpentry! and some fairly good, but not great, writing. *Silverberg* is a sudden shafts of wit - far removed from the broad humour of *Up the Line* and much too subtle for *Shadock*. *Silverberg* is a novel of brevity - which enliven *Shadock*. This is a book that is so good that it is a pleasure of laughing at one's own credulity. It may mean that he is becoming less uptight about the reception of some of his novels and will ret. But it is a good thing that Silverberg's future work might contain more emotion, more feeling. I hope so, though I may be grasping.

Come back Robert Silverberg; sf needs writers of your quality.

A VERY LONG WAY FROM ANYWHERE ELSE by Ursula
Le Guin; Gollancz; London; 1976; £2.25; 94
pp. ISBN 0 573 03181 1

Reviewed by David Wingrove

I glanced at the spine of the book, passive on the library shelf; shook my head. Opening the first few pages (a quick glance at the attractive cover) checked out the same whether this was the elusive Drusla Le Guin (could there be more than one? I was hardly thinking rationally). Yes. A quick read of the front flap revealed that this was her first mainstream novel. 94 pages. Home.

Sitting in Loraine's (ignoring World of Sport - an easy task...) I read the book in an hour. A seventeen-year-old story about sex and love. I was a little confused. It is a "confused" adolescent love story. It is his book. Natalie Fields is 18 months older than he is. She is a very beautiful, very platonic relationship and its development is half of what this book is about. The other half is the relationship between the two forms the other half. Was is a social animal but in his sociability merely a product of the social environment. He is never crude, and her examination of such questions is subtle and intelligent. But played with the teenager's need to associate, to be admired, to be loved. The strange relationship - with Natalie - true relationship not marred by the spectre of sexual experience. The relationship is touching. That circumstance force it to develop otherwise is (almost) the tragic element. But the relationship is touching. But intelligence triumphs - as it must - and our narrator arrives at the final page with a confidence that he knows how to behave. Which is not to say that he conforms; but I don't wish to give every-

The writing is austere and simple; not a profundity of prose but an economy of style that is fitting to the manner of the tale.

properties mysteriously changed. Why? Well, it was Sherlock Holmes who said to Doctor Watson: "When you have eliminated all other possibilities the one which remains, no matter how unlikely, is the best that Conan Doyle could think up on the spur of the moment." With this truism in mind, I suddenly remembered the reports which have been in science journals lately and which state that vegetables are intelligent. Could it be, I wondered, that vegetables are even smarter than we think they are? Could they be changing the properties of greenhouse glass by mental control, so that they would be kept warm and healthy?

Some of you think this idea is a little far-fetched - this notion that vegetables have thoughts and feelings - but is it any more fantastic than some of the things which Einstein asked us to accept in his various theories of relativity? Do you really believe that two men can stand on each end of a moving train, and flash signals to an observer on the bank without getting thrown off by the ticket collector?

These reports that vegetables have nervous systems and are telepathically aware of their surroundings are perfectly correct, and I even foresee the day when - perhaps by hormone treatment - we'll be able to give them mobility. There might come a day when vegetables will be accepted as domestic pets, and there's no doubt that in some ways they are more suitable for this role than animals. For example, vegetables like to feed on manure. So you could have this situation where the average citizen goes out for a stroll in the evening with his pet cabbage on a lead. It would be trotting along behind him - on its little roots - unfouling the footpath!

You might even find keen gardeners writing to the newspapers and complaining about how every time they put dung on their roses some thoughtless vegetable-lover allows his pet turnip to stray in and clean the place up. Obviously, there's a whole new field of research here, in deciding which vegetables are the most efficient in modifying glass. I myself suspect the tomatoes, because every time I stare into a greenhouse at them I see them turning a little red.

The more I thought about all this, the more certain I became that I had hit on the only logical answer. Therefore, to save all those billions of pounds on heating bills, all we had to do was put all our glass into greenhouse frames, wait until the tomato plants, etc., inside had altered its transmission properties by mental control at the sub-atomic level, then take it away and install it as windows in our houses. Once that was done, all the heat would be kept in, the country would be rescued from the clutches of the oil sheiks, and the national debt would be wiped out in a couple of years.

The only thing which prevented me from immediately phoning the Prime Minister and giving my idea to the nation was the sobering realization that all the big, powerful combines would seize on it and make even more money than they have now. In particular, the giant glass manufacturers would make vast fortunes overnight and I didn't like the idea of that - mainly because when I was in junior school I was once spat on by a boy called Pilkington. This deeply philosophical consideration decided me to keep my discovery to myself, but I give it freely to everybody at this convention.

Some of you - the ones who remember the title of this talk - are saying to yourselves: "What has all this to do with space ship propulsion?" Actually, most of you are saying: "What a load of old cobblers!", but some of you are saying: "What has all this to do with space ship propulsion?" Gerry Webb is, anyway, if he's here.

The answer lies in a straightforward, logical development of the basic idea. To make a really efficient drive unit, all you have to do is to take a piece of

greenhouse glass and fashion it into a tubular shape and attach it to the back end of your space ship. Up in space the unshielded heat of the sun will pour into this tube and, as we have established that the heat will not be able to escape out through the glass again - the temperature inside will quickly build up to a tremendous level. If you feed water into one end of the pipe it will explode into steam and be exhausted through the opposite end at great speed, producing the thrust needed to propel your spaceship.

Now, if there are any members of the British Interplanetary Society in the audience, they'll no doubt be thinking to themselves that they can see a major objection to the Hot Water Bottle Drive I have just outlined. Those of you who aren't technically-minded might think it is something to do with the glass of the drive pipes perhaps losing its properties and cooling down. This could indeed lead to a sort of story situation in which Dan Dare is up front piloting the ship when he notices a loss of power and sends the engineer, Scotty, back to investigate. Scotty immediately realises what is happening, so he picks up the intercom and goes: "Oh, Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are cooling!"

But that's comicbook stuff - the real drawback of the Hot Water Bottle Drive which will be troubling all the propulsion engineers in the audience is the old one about reaction mass. They'll be saying you could never carry enough water to give the ship interstellar, or even interplanetary range. This is a perfectly valid objection - I've read "The Cold Equations" and I know all about this sort of thing - but I'm sure you'll be both pleased and relieved to hear that, through my researches in another scientific field altogether, I've come up with the answer to that one as well.

The inspiration came when I was considering a problem in nutrition. In general, researchers in this field are concerned with lack of nutrition, but in my case the problem seems to be an excess of it. And I've noticed that other members of the beer-drinking fraternity have the same affliction, the scientific name for which is Brewers' Goitre, or, in really severe cases, Drayman's Droopy. The really intriguing thing about Brewers' Goitre is that it is most prominent in people who don't drink very much beer at all.

When I come to a convention I find a lot of people congregated in the bar and, as I like to socialise with them, I sometimes buy a glass of beer and just sort of toy with it for a while to keep the others company. The trouble is that when I occasionally do drink the pint of beer, I immediately gain about two pounds in weight. I've checked with other beer-drinkers and they confirm the same thing - every time they have a pint of beer they gain a couple of pounds in weight as well. Now, the really intriguing scientific aspect of all this is that a pint of beer weighs only one-and-a-quarter pounds!

This means that three-quarters of a pound of mass appears from nowhere!

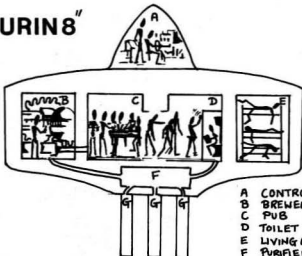
Incredible though it might seem, this process of matter creation within the human body is well authenticated - and it doesn't only happen with booze. Anybody who is a bit fat will tell you that eating just one measly little two-ounce cream bun makes them a pound or two heavier the next day. It's even possible that the entire mass of the universe was created by people eating cream buns and drinking beer, but I'm not interested in cosmology - it's much too airy-fairy and theoretical for me. I prefer to stick to solid, provable facts - such as my discovery about beer.

What, you must be saying to yourselves, does this new discovery of Shaw's do to the Second Law of Thermodynamics? Where, you must be wondering, does this extra fluid come from? Well, I don't know where the extra fluid comes from, but I know where it goes. And this knowledge is the final building block needed

for the design of the perfect spaceship.

You start off by installing a small but highly efficient brewery. Next to it goes a well-designed pub with an atmosphere that is conducive to sustained drinking; and beside the pub you, of course, have a toilet. The outlet from the toilet leads into a purifying plant, which receives roughly one and a half pints of liquid for every pint that has been drunk in the bar. Out of every pint-and-a-half of fluid that gets purified, one pint is re-circulated back to the brewery - as part of a self-sustaining closed ecology - and the extra half-pint is fed through control valves into a cluster of greenhouse glass pipes which provide the motive force. Living quarters and a control deck make up the other major components.

"YURIN8"



- A CONTROL
- B BREWERY
- C PUB
- D TOILET
- E LIVING QUARTERS
- F PURIFIER
- G DRIVE TUBES

With this ship you can go anywhere in the Solar System, provided that you have a crew of dedicated people who are willing to sit in the bar, day after day, drinking free beer, with no thought in mind other than getting mankind to the stars. Oddly enough, I think we could round up quite a good space ship crew right here in this hall.

Before you start rusing away and building a ship, I should perhaps warn you that life on board wouldn't be all beer and skittles. The beer-drinking complement would be a vital part of the ship, and heavy demands might be made on these occasional. For instance, if the ship got into a dangerous situation the Captain, up in the control room, would pick up his microphone and say: "Increase speed to Boose

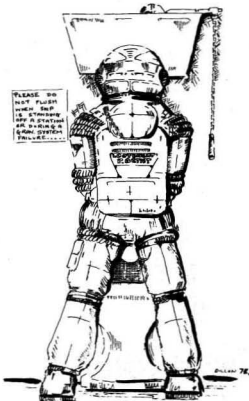
Factor Eight", and all the toppers down in the bar would have to start drinking twice as fast, whether they wanted to or not. It could be hellish.

Nevertheless, just in case my services are ever called upon to get us to the moons of Jupiter, I think I'll go out to the bar and put in a little practice...

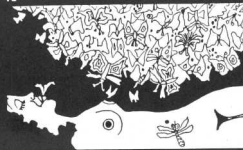
This is the text of a talk given by Bob Shaw at the Mancon at Owens Park, Manchester, at Easter, 1976. It first appeared in *Mays*, and is reprinted here by permission of the author and Rob Jackson, editor of *Mays*.

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The editor also has a very few signed copies of the cover from V73/4 by Paul Dillon, at \$1/50p each.

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BRIAN BOLLAND



(cont from p. 3)

Is it really necessary to make these big jumps of location, Fowler. You know I get jet-lag hopping between more than two pages. Bm....Have we got this whole page to ourselves? No - we haven't! What are those in the bottom 'left-hand corner? Strange naked women! The V-C's wife won't like it.

Surely I must have noticed them before, Spiby. They are two of Judy Watson's strange naked women which she sent me. They've been lying around the room for ages. I ought to be more careful - they embarrassed the Little Red-Haired Girl quite considerably. Anyway, no-one can complain, because they are sf - in fact, they are illustrations of the opening of Judy's sf novel The Women Factory, as is a full-page panel called "The Original Sex Machine" which should be in the next issue.

Bm.. very interesting. I've just been having a look in the Judy Watson portfolio - you're not going to publish this one are you? The fans won't like it. They will march from the statue of Hugo Gernsback in Gas Lane and storm the gates of number 72...

They'll never make it through the jungle in the front garden. We are quite safe here. Anyway, having got over your shock over the Watson artwork, what do you think of the covers?

I see you have Carol Gregory on the front again. I thought she was miffed about that "pre-naphanite" reference?

No, you're wrong there. And you'll also notice that in a sustained drive against sexism, I have May Griffiths on the back cover.

Very nice. So what are you going to put in the next issue?

We shall probably finally put into print Dave Wingrove's article on sf and rock music. Most of the other material to hand is going in the special M. John Harrison issue.

And what will be in that issue?

Well, we have critical articles on hand from David Wingrove and David Pringle; an interview conducted by my good self; and possibly some material coming from other New Worlds writers who have worked with M. John Harrison. Not to mention photographs of the man himself, climbing up things and so on. It will probably be out in Vector 81, due in early June.

You're turning Vector into New Worlds - that's what the fans will say. Mark my words, Fowler, a storming of number 72 will take place if you're not careful.

You underestimate the intelligence and open-mindedness of the readership, Spiby. Your judgment is faulty.

Fowler, it is four in the morning, and everything about me is faulty at this time. For goodness sake, wind it up....

Your wish is my command.

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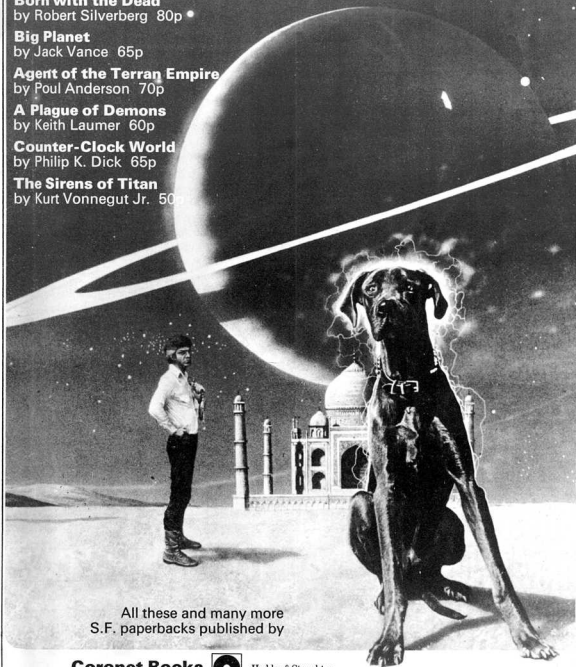
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