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This and all future issues of VECTOR under my editorship are dedicated to Loraine, for being the most perceptive of my critics, and for being the best looking of all my friends.. Merry Xmas to all our readers. Muppets Rule, OK?

THE ANDROID'S DREAMS (2)

This must serve both as self-introduction and editorial sounding-board; both a statement of intent and a query. VECTOR is presently the only regularly produced critical magazine of SF in this country and as such is committed to looking inward at the microcosm of Science Fiction, in much the same way that certain specialist magazines have obsessions with Trout, Television and Tits. It is a limitation which, in taking on this job, I have to accept but which as a critic I would prefer to reject. Which is, of course, the very topic I've chosen for this first editorial.

Quite often I've read of the stages of fandom: of reading the classics of the genre voraciously at an early age; of the later rejection of childhood tastes in favour of the subtler, more 'refined' writers; eventually, in some cases, of the rejection of the genre entirely, to become 'fannish'. In which case I must own to acquiring this job by use of fraudulent references. My childhood encounters with SF were Wells and Clarke Ashton-Smith and a blind love for E. M. Forster's THE MACHINE STOPS. Only as I came out of my teens did I realise that there actually was a genre devoted to Science Fiction. I devoured SF books at first, though not to the exclusion of books on other topics. I had no childhood preconceptions of the 'classical' works of the genre. Most of what I read at first entertained, some of it annoyed, a few examples touched deeply. Most of it filtered through a jejune critical perception shaped by an A-level English course - a diet of Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Fielding and Chaucer. It was little wonder I admired the New Wave writers and their non-compliance with the basic ritualisation of the English Language. But all the while I've had this feeling that nothing of what I have read has been important in its own right - I have always felt the need to relate SF to the whole spectrum of the arts, to effect a sort of cross-pollination between SF and the myriad heads of the beast, Art. Indeed, those SF stories and novels which dealt with exactly this area of inter-reaction have always been my favourite. From a personal viewpoint it has meant interpreting all the various facets of my personal tastes through an SF perspective, and likewise viewing SF in terms of 'the real world', not only of Art but of Life. SF per se does not exist. It is merely a distorting mirror and needs the basic substance to reflect.

And it seems that I am not alone in my feelings. Several of our most important writers have overtly divorced themselves from the SF enterprise in an attempt to regain a 'proper perspective', although some of them have, perhaps, been dishonest in stating that they have been 'forced out'. Like any healthy genre, SF is rabidly incestuous, it seethes with satires and builds layer upon layer. But the best SF still calls heavily upon 'that which is' to form its distorted realities. The 'human condition' (that too often tritely used epithet) is still meat for the pundits of social change and the more intuitive prophets of social stagnation. But increasingly writers are saying "I am not an SF writer, I am a writer". Why? What do they mean? SF tends to look after its own, it encourages feedback through fandom (whether good or bad is another question entirely) - it is a cosy stream in many respects. And perhaps that is why so many writers are denying the basic SF label, and all it entails. It isn't just a publishers' gimmick to increase sales by a widened audience, it involves a reaction against the general direction of the bulk of Science Fiction. SF is consistently guilty of forgetting its relatedness to anything but itself. It has become a petulant narcissus in many ways, inflated by its own claims of prophesy, a watchdog unaware that its warnings - whilst 20 years ahead of the general public - are woefully behind the rapid progress of specialised science.

In a sense there is a dead-weight of history which stifles the constant attempts by genre writers to revitalise and regenerate, and whilst I would not deny that any artistic venture needs roots and origins, few such genres are possessed of such paranoid introspection. Perhaps it is the marginal influence of the occult and its rituals, though more likely the effect of fifty-plus years of public scorn. Whatever, the fact remains, paradoxically, that the genre overtly dedicated to change and alternatives is happiest in rediscovery and restatement. Pulp traditions? Publishers? An apathetic and constantly changing (and thus naive) audience? Whatever the superficial reason, the blame must lay with the writers themselves. Is SF the soft option for many writers. Are the same writers who are claiming that SF is 'the most difficult form of writing' secretly conscious of their failings and limitations? Could it not be that their professed imaginative capabilities are suspect and their visions mere re-hashes (up-dated, naturally) of so much that has gone before. It is, admittedly, no easy task to create, even at the simplest level. But beyond the adventure and the outlandish scenarios and the money involved, isn't there something else to SF? Setting 'sense of wonder' aside for a moment, isn't SF claimed to be something better than Nurse novels and Mills and Boon? Of course, there are exceptions - enough of them to make the journey through the SF hinterland an interesting and often stimulating one - but not enough to convince me that SF should do more and claim less for itself. It seems to me, in fact, that SF's role is not so much a prophetic one (as its most superficial observers claim) but one that involves the synthesis of ideas: the use of the existent and mundane to create the unique. It achieves that occasionally, but not often enough. Usually it simply claims what it cannot produce.

In questioning the motives of SF I am not denying its worth nor its achievements, merely its outrageous boasts. I enjoy it enough to apportion a large part of my reading time to it, to writing about it and now editing this magazine of critical writing about it. But I am not obsessed by it, and no one who values it for its true worth can exist within the isolation of the SF genre for too long without having their perceptions severely warped. The SF perspective is, for all its faults, an educated and sometimes enlightened one, but it is strictly limited unless carefully related to a wide spectrum of other activities.

The above is, of course, written to generate response from you. It is my intent to try to reflect the relatedness of SF to the 'real world' within the pages of VECTOR, but it is also my job to reflect the wishes of my readership. It means, in effect, a two-way-stretch on my part to keep within the boundaries of the SF genre whilst hinting that there is something beyond Phil Farmer's latest parody and the most recent half-dozen Van Vogt re-issues. The Zamyatin and Borges pieces within (written originally for KIPPLE 2, as were three of the other pieces in this pristine effort) are examples of that. I hope too to cover Vonnegut and Barth, Golding and Kavan. But it would be arrogant to do so at the cost of neglecting the popular writers of the genre. I hope to entertain as well as indicate new areas for the enquiring SF reader to try, to inform as well as philosophise. More than anything I want participation in the form of response, because that is the only thing I can respond to outside of the manic ravings of my own skull.

Parting note: Though I can be a sociable sod, I do work full-time and cram this activity into an already crowded timetable. Thus, please excuse me for delays in responding to personal correspondence. The other Wingrove (the one things happen to) tries his best. Oh, and please try to keep any phonecalls after 7pm, please (on 01-673-2069). (27/11/77)

THE INSTINCT OF NONFREEDOM: Zamyatin's WE.

by Phil Stephensen-Payne and David Wingrove

The dystopian view of Yevgeny Zamyatin; P. S-P

Long before Sir Thomas More's famous novel introduced the word 'utopia' to the English language, such societies had flourished in the writings of Plato, Euhemerus, Plutarch and many other classical authors. Yet, for most of its career, the utopia has been portrayed as an eutopia, and it was not until the possibility of a planned society became imminent at the beginning of the 20th century that a number of dystopian novels began to appear.

The first of these, in 1907, was Jack London's "The Iron Heel", a picture of a brutal fascist government oppressing the poor. London's vision was more of a dystopian present than a dystopian future, though, as through the angst and hate, 'his world' was much the same as the one he lived in. The real breakthrough was undoubtedly Zamyatin's WE, written, in Russian, in 1920. Unsurprisingly the censor would not allow its publication in the original Russian - the vision was, in places, too close to Stalin's Russia - but in 1924 an English edition appeared in America. Coincidentally, this was the year that Fritz Lang visited New York and obtained the inspiration for METROPOLIS; some of it, perhaps, from Zamyatin's WE. Certainly Orwell read the book, in a 1928 translation, and acknowledges its influence on '1984', and it seems likely that Huxley was also familiar with the novel, considering some of the close parallels between it and BRAVE NEW WORLD. As it is from these two later books that all modern dystopias seem to be derived, credit for the creation of the entire subgenre is probably due to Zamyatin.

Unfortunately for him, the book's popularity was too great. In 1927 a Russian emigre newspaper in Prague began to publish extracts from the novel in Russian (a retranslation from a 1926 Czech edition). Zamyatin begged them to stop, but they refused and as a result an intense anti-Zamyatin campaign was launched in Russia in 1929 that rapidly stopped publication of all his books, banned his plays and expelled him from his job. In despair, in 1931, Zamyatin wrote to Stalin to request permission to leave Russia with his wife for 'the sentence of death has been pronounced upon me as a writer'. Thanks to the intercession of Gorki, Stalin agreed and Zamyatin spent the last five years of his life in sad exile in Paris.

But what of the book itself, almost 60 years after its writing? Like its author, it has suffered from popularity. There have been so many books modelled on Zamyatin, many of them more accomplished and more familiar to the English reader, that a reading of WE today makes it seem an inept imitation of the subgenre it engendered. The historical perspective is hard to achieve.

The basic story is straightforward. Several hundred years in the future, Mankind has become totally self-contained - following the invention of a basic foodstuff derived from naphtha (petroleum). For the narrator, D-503, the boundary of his universe is the Green Wall that surrounds his city, within which is the One State. In this State, all men, and women, are governed completely by mathematical rules - the Tables Of Hourly Commandments - which decide for them when they should sleep, eat, work or screw.

D-503 is living contentedly within this regulated world until he meets the anarchistic female, E-330, who not only drinks alcohol and smokes

tobacco, but wants sex without an official chit and at an unauthorised time. Infatuated by her novelty, D becomes her accomplice by failing to report her to the Guardians within the required time. Alternately bribed and blackmailed by E, he becomes more involved in the 'rebellion' and even ventures beyond the Green Wall. Yet, ultimately, he is incapable of carrying trust and doubt and, after a harrowing interview with the Benefactor, confesses all to the Guardians and is subjected to a fantasiectionomy (removal of the ability to daydream), which returns him to his 'proper' adoration of the State.

On the whole, the book is very disappointing. It is difficult, if not impossible, to sympathise with the leading character, D-503. Like Raskolnikov in CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, he fails to benefit from his illegal actions at all, and spends his time in mortal fear of being discovered. D is repressed by the State, and yet one feels that only through the State does he have any existence at all; that without it he would be nothing. For D the State is the ultimate rationality, a perfected Taylor Expansion, while outside it are only the insane concepts of infinity or $\sqrt{-1}$.

Even the 'true' rebel, E, is ultimately ineffectual. She has no real plan or idea beyond that of destroying the city; by capturing a newly-built rocket and crashing it. For her the evil of the State is not its repression or its laws but its stasis. She cannot accept that the State has reached its peak of perfection, and wishes to overthrow it, in order to force the return of change. Yet her actions are allowed for in the programming of the State, and she cannot prevail.

Unfortunately, to the lacklustre story has been added a rather prosaic translation. The translator seems to have been more concerned with preserving the accuracy of the original rather than with producing free-flowing phrases, and the text abounds with archaisms like 'naptha', and over-stilted phrases. No more can a Russian novel be written in English than a Latin poem (vide Pound).

Yet this book did have a wide influence. Before Stalin's communist regime was really established, Zamyatin was suggesting that its ultimate resolution might not be as eutopic as promised. Despite its faults, WE was certainly innovative and influential, and the serious student of utopian literature must include it in his reading list - but need not expect to enjoy it.

The Poignancy Of Defeat; D.W.

((I have used the symbol @ in place of the mathematical symbol for the square root of -1; the latter is not on this small keyboard!))

"I stumbled against the taut hawsers woven out of wind and kept on running to her. What for? I did not know. I stumbled on. Deserted streets; the city alien, barbarous; ceaseless, triumphant din of birds; Judgement Day. Through the glass of their walls I saw, in several buildings (this was deeply engraved in my memory), female and male numbers shamelessly copulating - without as much as lowering the blinds, without any pink coupons, in broad daylight." (Page 209)

WE is the story of an Utopia, of the nature of the finite and the infinite, of the metamorphosis of a human creature, a fantasy of symbols and a political allegory. Furthermore, WE is the direct precursor both of Orwell's 1984 and of Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, a work written in 1920, before the generic sub-division of fantasy into that literature of nuts,

bolts and the cosmos, Science Fiction. The reprinting of the work by Penguin books in their Modern Classics series provides an opportunity to reconsider the germinal importance of this work, and to assess its worth both in terms of its original intent and its place within the modern sf genre.

The most stressed aspect of WE is its political message. This is the handle most past reviewers of the book have grasped firmly. Indeed, the story of WE is basically one of social commentary. As Orwell said of it, "It is in effect a study of the Machine, the genie that man has thoughtlessly let out of its bottle and cannot put back again." But in emphasising this single aspect of the book these commentators usually neglect to mention that Zamyatin wrote the book long before the hideous excesses of Stalin's One State, and that he possessed a past history of denouncing social systems, the most notable example being an expose of the British 'caste' system in his 1918 short novel, THE ISLANDERS. Orwell, in comparing WE to Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, commented that "both books deal with the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalized, mechanized, painless world.", and I am in agreement with Orwell's conclusion that this work is more an example of Huxley's 'return to primitivism' than a direct anti-totalitarianist tirade.

Nevertheless, the political content is there and it is well worth pausing to examine it before concentrating on the remaining features of the book.

WE is the story of the perfect social system, the One State, a city enclosed within a great glass dome that exists six hundred years after the holocaust. Within the city all are supposedly happy: emotion has been removed from the equation of human existence and replaced by a total reliance upon reason. Hence the One State is governed on sound mathematical precepts. There are hours for doing each and every thing, food is masticated, religiously, fifty times, recreation consists of marching in ranks of four to the sound of strident music, and sex is had at the appointed hour with the person allocated (by means of a pink coupon!). This is the purest form of hedonism envisaged in literature, even moreso than Huxley's genetically-produced variety. WE shows the uncreative, unthinking machine, BRAVE NEW WORLD the organically-achieved sterile race.

"Liberation? It's amazing how very tenacious of life criminal instincts are in humankind! I use the word criminal deliberately. Liberty and crime are just as indissolubly bound together as...well, as the motion of an aero and its speed: let the speed of an aero = 0, and the aero does not move, let the liberty of man = 0, and man does not commit crimes. That is clear. The only means of delivering man from crime is to deliver him from liberty." (Page 49)

This, as expressed by the central character, D-503, is the philosophy of The One State, as indoctrinated into its 'numbers' (its citizens). Life is a mathematical equation that must allow no inconstant elements. The perfect State, therefore, is that which disposes of those inconstants. WE is very much the story of that act. Zamyatin's book is political in that it deals with the morality of systems. Furthermore it is strongly philosophical (radically so) in that he is saying that man is not Homo Sapiens unless he accepts change as the most fundamental ingredient of life and shuns the spectre of hedonism that leads ultimately to the final solution offered by The One State; the fantasiectomy, the 'operation' that rids man of his imagination and leaves him happy but creatively sterile.

"Well, and what revolution would you want to be the ultimate one? There is no ultimate revolution - revolutions are infinite in number. The ultimate revolution - that's for children. Infinity scares children, yet

it is necessary for children to sleep soundly of nights - " (Page 169)

Here is the dilemma of Mankind, pulled between the poles of order and anarchy, needing stability yet also the unknown. This, once again, is the province of WE; the eternal struggle between intellect and emotion. The argument for hedonism is internally-rational; rational that is if you do not allow the inconstants into the equation, if you accept only the known. The quasi-religious arguments of The Benefactor (patriarchal dictator of The One State) are familiar to all who have lived in this century and borne witness to the excesses of totalitarianism.

"...what have men, from their swaddling-clothes days been praying for, dreaming about, tormenting themselves for? Why, to have someone tell them, once and for all, just what happiness is - and then weld them to this happiness with chains. Well, what else are we doing now if not that? The ancient dream of Heaven... Remember, in Heaven they no longer know anything of desires, of pity, of love; there you will find only the beatified ones..." (Page 204)

And set against this is the sudden flare and venom of anarchy, as personified by E-330. She is Emotion, she is creative man, and though her plan to destroy the One State by plunging the Integral (a rocket ship being built to spread Utopia to the Universe) into the city may seem solely destructive, it is an act of emotion, a creative act. As Bakunin said, "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge". That she captures the 'soul' of D-503 is unsurprising.

"'But tomorrow' - she was breathing avidly through clenched, gleaming sharp teeth - 'why, nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. Do you understand - I don't know, nobody knows - the thing is unknown! Do you understand that the known has come to an end? Henceforth the new, the improbable, the prodigious!' " (Page 145)

Primitivism and anarchy. Mechanism and order. The two poles are clearly demonstrated and illustrated by Zamyatin, and it is quite clear which he has allegiance to. That The One State triumphs (we must assume - for Zamyatin does not spell it out) merely accentuates the ethical truth of its antithesis. "For rationality must conquer" says D-503 at the end of the book. But how, after all that has gone before, can we believe him. He has placidly watched while the woman he loved suffocated in the execution chamber; he has betrayed his friends and had part of his brain removed. The words are no longer his, but those of The One State implanted upon his lips. He has rejected his emotions. He has lost his imagination. He is no longer a Man.

Before looking at the character of D-503, the catalyst through whom Zamyatin traces these threads of thought, I must pause to consider the symbolism of the book. WE is written in a stilted third-person narrative that is not always appropriate; for example, when describing events (for WE is in diary form) that are happening there and then. But much of its credibility is achieved through the use of a constant set of images, all of which are derived from mathematics. D-503 is a mathematician, the Builder of the Integral. His images express not only his occupation but also the preoccupations of The One State:

"There was still plenty of time before the bell for rising; I lay there thinking - and an exceedingly curious logical chain unwound itself before me. For every equation, every formula in the superficial world there is a corresponding curve or solid. For irrational formulae, for my π , we know of no corresponding solids; we have never seen them. But that is precisely where the horror lies: these solids, though unseen, do exist,

inevitably, ineluctably, because in mathematics, as if on a screen, their whimsical, prickly shadows - irrational formulae - pass before us: and mathematics and death are never in error. And if we do not see these solids in our universe, on the surface, there does exist - there must unescapably exist - an entire immense universe of their own there, below the surface." (Page 107)

D-503 explains the inconstants in his life by means of the image @, an equation that has no mathematical solution. @ is emotion, that which cannot be explained, the unknown. But this is only one small instance in 200 pages of similar imagery (many other instances will be immediately recognisable from previous and forthcoming quotations). The One State itself is a giant mathematical symbol, the Circle, a translucent creation, utterly stable and unchanging, complete in itself. Goethe's "In limitation the Master is first known" is here taken to an extreme and becomes an aberration.

"Darling O - will come tomorrow; everything will be simple, regular and limited - like a circle. I'm not afraid of the word limitation: the work of the highest faculty man has, his reason, consists precisely of a ceaseless limitation of infinity into suitable, easily digested portions - or differentials. That is precisely what the divine beauty of my element - mathematics - consists of." (Page 75)

Negentropy, the battle against chaos, is D-503's "divine beauty". It is also the darling of The One State. But, Zamyatin asks, is it the proper direction for Humankind? The saturation of mathematical imagery cleverly outweighs the brief sparks of entropy, giving the latter instances a savage beauty and a real attraction:

"The sun - it was no longer that sun of ours, proportionally distributed over the mirror-like surface of the pavements; this sun consisted of some sort of living splinters of incessantly bobbing spots which blinded one's eyes, made one's head go round. And the trees - like candles thrusting into the very sky, like spiders squatting flat against the earth on their gnarled paws, like mute fountains jetting green.. And all these things were going on all fours, stirring, rustling; some sort of rough-skinned little ball darted out from underfoot. As for me, I stood there rooted to the ground; I could not make a step, because the surface underfoot was not a flat plane, you understand, but something repulsively soft, yielding, alive, green, springy." (Page 152)

D-503 is describing the world outside of the glass dome, beyond the limitations of the Green Walls, and his reaction is a mixture of amazement and repulsion. The blandness of his Order is shattered by the blinding savagery of Nature. Order is right, his reason tells him, but something deeper, much more instinctive, tells him that this too is right.

Let us look at his metamorphosis as a character and see how it reflects all that has previously been stated.

There is a sub-division of the sf genre that relies upon a 'rebel in a caste system' formula. Zamyatin's D-503 does not fall into this category. True to form he is 'awakened' and undergoes a change, but unlike other 'rebels' he does not throw himself into the fray wholeheartedly. This, I feel, is far more credible. D-503 is a mature adult, preformed by his social environment, and as such he cannot be wholly changed, only ultimately destroyed. That his 'destruction' seems to him his salvation is the tragedy of WE.

"Why is all this beautiful? Why is this dance beautiful? The answer was: Because this was nonfree motion, because all of the profound meaning of

the dance lay precisely in absolute, aesthetic submissiveness, in ideal nonfreedom. And if it be true that our ancestors abandoned themselves to dancing at the most inspired moments of their lives (religious mysteries, military parades) it signifies only one thing: the instinct of nonfreedom is organically inherent in man from the times of old..." (Pages 21/22)

It begins almost as it ends. D-503 is content. He sees beauty in limitation. Where it differs is in the emotional expression of the words: there is fire here where later only reason exists. It is to this mood that D-503 is to return frequently between the peaks of his dalliance with freedom. From this point X's, @'s and E-330 intercede and Reason begins to waver beneath the assaults of Emotion:

"I had turned to glass. I saw into myself, deep within me. There were two I's. One I was my former self, D-503, the number D-503, while the other... Up to now he had merely shoved his shaggy hands just a little out of the shell, but now all of him was crawling out; the shell was cracking, any minute now it would fly into smithereens and... and what then?" (Pages 67/68)

At this stage D-503 realises that there is a deep inner-schism. His reactions from this point reflect the strengthening of the pole of Emotion to the detriment of the pole of Reason. But whilst Emotion is sweet, it is a disease that can lead only to Hell, or its equivalent in The One State. Reason is normalcy - the pole to which he always returns. E-330's knowledge of his inner-turmoil allows her to control him, to advise him thus:

"I remember smiling in a muddled sort of way and saying, for no particular reason, 'Fog...lots of it - '

'Dost thou love the fog?'

This ancient, long-forgotten thou, the thou of a master to a slave, plunged into me sharply; slowly: yes, I was a slave and that, too, was as it should be; that, too, was fine.

'Yes, it's fine,' I said aloud to myself. And then, to her, 'I hate the fog. I'm afraid of the fog.'

'That means thou lovest it. Thou art afraid because it is stronger than thou; thou hatest it because thou art afraid of it; thou lovest it because thou canst not make it submit to thee. For one can love only the insubmissible.'" (Pages 80/81)

The 'disease' strengthens, though he does not yet view it as such. But what does this change mean? D-503 does not realise what is involved; only the danger in succumbing.

"What was the matter with me? I had lost my rudder. The motor was droning its loudest, the aero was shaking and rushing at full speed, but it had no rudder - and I did not know where I was rushing to: downward - and I would crash to the ground; or upward - and I would run into the sun, into the flaming mass - " (Page 91)

But it is not merely a question of personal displacement but also one of social isolation.

"... I presented an unnatural sight. Imagine a finger lopped off a man, off his hand - a human finger, all hunched up and bent over, hopping and dashing over the glass sidewalk all by its lonesome. I was that finger. And the strangest, most unnatural thing of all was that this finger had no desire whatsoever to be on the hand, to be with the other digits.." (Page 109)

Thus D-503 accepts his individual existence, but his 'mould' rejects the idea that this is how it should be. He is sick; individuality is a disease.

"But then, consciousness of self, awareness of individuality, pertains only to an eye with a speck of something in it, to an infected finger, to an aching tooth; when an eye, a finger, a tooth is sound each seems non-existent, as it were. Is it not clear that consciousness of self is only a disease?

It may be that I am no longer a phagocyte calmly and in a businesslike way devouring microbes.... It may be that I am a microbe and, again, it may be that there is in our midst a thousand such microbes by now, still pretending to be phagocytes, as I am pretending to be one." (Page 130)

At this stage we must accept that D-503 knows his predicament, but it is only now that he becomes aware that this is not simply a personal dilemma but a social one. There are others like him. The next stage is a simple one, a predictable one:

"I had long since ceased to understand who they were and who we were. I did not understand whether I did want them to succeed in time. One thing only was clear to me: right then E- was walking along the brink and, at any moment -

'But this is madness,' I was saying.

'You against The One State! That's just the same as putting your hand over the mouth of a gun and thinking that that could keep the shot back. This is utter madness!'

She, with a smile, 'We must all go mad - as speedily as possible.' Somebody said that yesterday. You remember? Over there -" (Page 159)

It might be said that D-503 is displaying an inordinate naivety both in allowing E-330 to use him, and in failing to understand the situation. But his confusion is resultant from the imposition of the irrational into his previously rational existence - and hence is credible. D-503's actions become less predictable. He allows O- (his placid sexual partner) to have his child - something against the rules of The One State. This, together with his illegal 'sick leave' are his first covert acts of rebellion. The final act of his metamorphosis is an overt reversion to primitivism, a rejection of his old self coincidental with the final revolutionary/symbolic action; the breaching, by explosion, of the Green Wall. At this stage The One State intervenes directly. Fantasiectomies are made compulsory and the enemies of the system brought to justice.

"Can it be that I, D-503, really wrote all these hundreds of pages? Can it be that at one time I felt all this - or imagined that I had felt it? The handwriting is mine. And what follows is in the very same handwriting - but fortunately, only the handwriting is the same. There are no ravings whatsoever, no preposterous metaphors, no emotions whatsoever. Facts only. Because I am well; I am perfectly, absolutely well. I smile; I cannot help but smile: they have extracted some sort of sliver out of my head; my head is light, empty. To be more exact: it is not empty, but there is nothing extraneous in it, nothing that would interfere with smiling (smiling is the normal state for a normal human)." (Page 220)

Normalcy? What is said and what is implied are widely divergent. Zamyatin leaves an area of doubt: the newest revolution has not been finally quelled when the book ends. But D-503's story is over. In his case The One State has triumphed, much as the system triumphed in Kesey's ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST. There is a poignancy in such a defeat: for without volition what are we? And volition implies change. That, I am sure, is what Zamyatin intended to say with this book. I believe he succeeded: WE is a delightful examination of human motivations and morality, a book that whilst written outside of the genre is quite clearly the equal of the genre's best output. It has suffered neglect where the works of Orwell and Huxley have

received upon acclamation. It would be nice to see that remedied - to view WE not as a curiosity, a 'Russian Utopian Fantasy' but as a precursor of the genre and as a classic of the literature we term SF.

((WE is published by Penguin Books; translation by Bernard Guilbert Guerney, 1960; Second Reprint by Penguin, dated 1977; Price 75p; ISBN 0 14 00 3510 9))

BSFA LIBRARY

In keeping with a decision made at the 1977 AGM I am sending all books not receiving a review in VECTOR but sent to us by publishers direct to the BSFA Library, currently at the North East London Polytechnic. Below is a list of those books forwarded on in this manner in November. Most of these have received previous attention in the pages of VECTOR, some need no introduction (only a curt dismissal) and some are cases where reviews were received without the book having been sent to the reviewer concerned (Gor blessem!):

Coronet	The Anome . Bloodstone	Jack Vance Kark Edward Wagner
Dobson	The Thorburn Enterprise Universe Three	John Rankine (ed) Terry Carr
Hale	Wolfshead	Andre Norton
Hounslow Press	Mostly Monsters	(ed) John Robert Columbus
Mayflower	Black Magic Stories 6	(ed) Michel Parry
Pan	Approaching Oblivion Brontomek!	Harlan Ellison Mike Coney
Panther	Children Of The Lens Getaway World Through The Eye Of Time Triplanetary Galactic Patrol The Space Vampires The Grain Kings	E. E. Doc Smith E. E. Doc Smith (with S. Goldin) Trevor Hoyle E. E. Doc Smith E. E. Doc Smith Colin Wilson Keith Roberts
Sidgwick & Jackson	The War For The lot The Best Of Robert Silverberg	Sterling Lanier Robert Silverberg
Sphere	Stonehenge	Harry Harrison & Leon Stover
Weidenfeld & Nicholson	The Silent Voice	Christopher Hodder-Williams

Another thing I wish to try in respect of participation in VECTOR is a regular competition. It goes like this.. I fill all the little gaps like this with quotations from well-known (and occasionally lesser known) SF novels and the person who gets closest (or the first to get them all right) before the closing date chooses a book they'd like to have as their prize. Easy enough? Right.. (A) " Glogauer coughed. It was a dry, barely heard sound. The soldiers below the cross heard it because the night was now so quiet." Short and sweet, but loaded. And next Brian with a piece that was written way back in the Spring for KIPPLE 2..

ONE MAN'S WEAK

by Brian W. Aldiss

Wednesday.

Walk with kids to school, buy Guardian since The Times on strike. Looks like spring is coming. Snowdrops nearly finished, daffodils coming up in drive, etc. Moles active on lawn. Think about Sumatra, subject of novel in progress; home-sick for foreign parts.

In mail, friendly letter from Martin Amis, catalogue from Philip Strick, postcard from Arthur Koestler, and copy of David Wingrove's new effusion, Kipple. Leaf through it, rush to Oxford to get my eyes tested. Happen to meet Provost of Worcester College, my old friend, Asa Briggs, and lunch with him.

Interesting conversation, Briggs claiming that best piece of prose in English language is Doughty's Arabia Deserta, best poem Fletcher's Endymion. I settle for smaller pieces, the Preface to Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, with its hard-edged modesty ("the truth of the thoughts that are here set forth seems to me unassailable and definitive"), and either a poem by Jani Couzeyn on my 'Non-Stop' or The Walls Of Emerald, a poem written a thousand years ago by Li Shang-Yin. Here are some lines:

On the Seventh Hour she arrived at the time appointed.
The beads bringing night in our chamber have never since parted,
And we are together while the hare leaps in the sky.
The rhubarb light moves entranced over the plucked chords of the river
As seen from my languid bed, I summon up magic,
Learn to halt night's retreat, make Love more constant than the moon.
Fetch my vellum and use my tale as witness
That the world of men is changing doubt to knowledge.

(My translation)

Thursday.

Son wakes me at dawn for swim in Thames. Desperately cold. Decide too old for such larks. Find a drowned heron, feathers all bedraggled; return home, phone Peter Scott about it, steam heron over low gas. Delicious. Phone Egon Ronay, old friend, about it.

After lunch, have another attempt at Kipple. Alarmed by chance remark by Michael Coney to think I may once have said something to hurt his feelings. Not intended. Concoct telegram, am deflected by discovery that his name is anagram of ONE CLAY CHIME. Think of incorporating this news into cable, then decide that MC might think I was being clever at his expense.

Make long phone calls to Chris Priest and Graehame Greene before returning to Kipple. Discover Max Jakubowski's column, am fascinated, but dislike his habit of name-dropping. Ring Ken Clarke about it, but he goes on about his recent burglary, claims to have been jinxed ever since his 'Civilization' series on BBC. Read him Max's bit about smuggling William Burroughs novels to Jimmy Ballard. Ken, with quick grasp of historical parallels, refers me to way plague bacillus of Communism was smuggled by Germans in shape of Lenin into Russia during WW1.

Wife and I to town, pleasant supper at Mirabelle with Ava Gardener and some actor chappie introduced as Larry. Had amusing anecdote about John Russell

Fearn, whom he knew when in rep at Blackpool or somewhere.

Friday.

Alternate between reading Disreali's Lothair and Kipple. On the whole, prefer latter. Sumatra novel hanging fire slightly. Lady Antonia keeps ringing from Weidenfeld's to hear how it is going on. Rather distracting. I read her latest passage; she doubts that golf clubs were ever put to such purpose. Depressed. Ring John Rackham. No reply.

Leaf purposelessly through Kipple. Puzzled yet relieved to find no mention of LeGuin or Harlan Ellison. Later, discover both; on reflection, experience gladness - fanzines have their rules after all. Hope Chris will find this diary funny; he did give me sandalwood biro. Very civil. Think about gladness. Eye takes in flattering comment, letters and words passed to brain, sorting centre interprets message as favourable, nudges appropriate gland, dose of chemical released into blood stream, euphoric feelings result. Rather a Heath Robinson arrangement really.

Dozy in afternoon. Sleep over Sumatra novel till Finnish girl-fan (25) phones from Hull. Ring off after hour, decide rather finish novel, sleep with girl fan. Phone Archbishop of Canterbury. No reply.

Bump into Romanian pal in pub, hear about ghastly effects of earthquake in Bucharest. Had been thinking that bad luck for Commie country meant good luck for us - pal assures me that not so, Romania now forced by adversity further into arms of Great Bear (his expression). Outside, in car park, point out to him Great Bear in sky. He: 'Bad omen for future'.

Wife produces new coffee service, made with own fair hand. Decor slightly Klimt. Admiring. Drink coffee-and-slivovitz to christen.

Saturday.

Weekend at last. Work achieved this week: one thousand words of A Rude Awakening, and have deleted golf club passages, and a long letter to Richard Kirby. Wingrove worried not to have heard from Kirby - worried for own sake, should worry for Kirby's sake. Kirby definitely genius, if sometimes mistaken (as in estimation of BWA), also endlessly kind, man deserving well of fandom. Worry if self can in any way be said to be 'in fandom'. Decide if Dave Kyle likes me, must be okay. Phone Dave Kyle, listen to him for two hours. First fandom v. interesting, but over.

Sunday.

Private opening of Martin Gallery in Oxford. Wife and I go, meet Max Jakubowski and David Wingrove, both v. loquacious on Ian Watson, whom they have just visited. Ask Max anxiously if he gave Ian any Wm Burroughs to read. David: "According to Ian, we are the universe made articulate". Feel pleased. Such certainty better than own doubt any old day. All drink champagne.

Buy excellent Michael Ayrton Reflector for £560, go with others for bad lunch at Mitre. Max and David talk of rapport between human and non-human thought-processes. As usual, ask silly questions - possibility of complaining to burnt steak direct. Am suitably squashed but, screw them, I have the Ayrton, they haven't. David patiently explains Watson: we are in the sort of universe we are in because we are in it to observe. Hence, there are ontological connections between reality and thought. V. excited by this. Over another Gaelic coffee, begin to see point. "So what you are saying is that all our novels, however wild, however bad, go towards forging stronger connections between us and the universe?" Apparently not. Disappointed.

Go home, reinstate golf clubs.

Trying to think cosmically in evening, drop precious Ayrton. Does not break. Begin to believe in universe again. Watson says solipsism okay. Glad.

Monday.

Eldest daughter Jane's twelfth birthday. We give her guitar, Timothy gives her set of Conrad novels, John Brunner sends photo, Mike Moorcock deep-frozen pheasant pie from Harrods which has melted, Queen telegram. Rather brief - further economies at Palace, no doubt.

Terrible party in afternoon. Timothy slips rum into coke, then plays various LP's recommended by Wingrove, in partic. Peter Hammill. Filthy noise, girls driven mad. Try to get them to play Musical Statues properly, instead girls strip off. In middle of Aerosol Grey Machine, all dive at me and am raped in own living room against Michael Ayrton piece by twelve twelve-year olds. Unique disgusting experience, not entirely without interest. Say nothing to wife (at pottery), bribe Timothy, beat Jane (fun). Decide not to mention incident in One Man's Weak. Try to stop smiling; read Jonah Kit.

Tuesday.

Full of energy. Swim in Thames. Remove golf clubs. Do hour's phone-in on LBC with Brian Hayes, talk about Illuminatus!, Harlan Ellison, LeGuin and Rob Holdstock. Hate myself after. Approached by Columbia Pictures to write script of musical version of REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. Agree, for consideration. Good humour restored. Phone Stanley Kubrick, long amusing chat about BSFA; now seems unlikely that he will film VECTOR. So plans for building BSFA HQ in Great Russell St on site of old Kenilworth Hotel now again on ice. Max phones, apologises for being touchy about universe, begs me to rethink attitude on Wm Burroughs. Agree. Beg him to read Brontomek!, funnier.

Afternoon, more euphoria. Must be gland trouble. Write absolutely splendid short story, Horsemen, for Dave Hartwell's new magazine, COSMOS, phone it to him in New York. Chop down dead acacia tree in garden. Tea with Desmond Morris and Ian Watson, latter v. unassuming and nice despite grand theories. Write ten-page letter to Richard Kirby, knock off Three Galactic Enigmas for Wingrove, play new Ella Fitzgerald record, watch Magic Roundabout.

Later, after superb supper, finish last ten thousand words of A RUDE AWAKENING, reinstating golf club scene. Euphoric, whisky helps. Resolve never to write or read any more science fiction, settle down before fire, light cigar, begin to read KIPPLE properly.

VECTOR QUOTATION COMPETITION: (B)

" There was no mistake. The leathery wings, the little horns, the barbed tail - all were there. The most terrible of all legends had come to life, out of the unknown past. Yet now it stood smiling, in ebony majesty, with the sunlight gleaming upon its tremendous body, and with a human child resting trustfully on either arm. "

Another easy one there. Just in case any of you fancy asking for a set of Encyclopedia Britannica for your prize, I'll make the limitation that your choice must be SF and in cost no more than £5. And so on to.....

THE INFINITY BOX (Part One..)

TCITY: A Review Of Mark Adlard's Tcity Trilogy
 Interface ISBN 0 8600 7969 4
 Volteface ISBN 0 8600 7970 8
 Multiface ISBN 0 8600 7971 6
 (Orbit; 1977; 191pp/210pp/184pp; @ 75p each)

Reviewed by Robert M.H. Carter

For once, paperbacks with rather good and sufficiently-detailed blurbs on the backs. The observant will notice that the very colourful and exciting PAJ covers run continuously, as did those of Panther's FOUNDATION trilogy. So much for the wrapping, then, but what of the contents? (You must forgive me but I feel obliged at this point to invent a short collective name for the trilogy, and, since I hardly feel drawn by the term "face trilogy", I'll call it the Tcity trilogy.)

The scene is Tcity, a future city of the nightmare variety; walled, air-tight, extremely overcrowded, and made from the all-purpose material Stahlex. It is not difficult to see where Stahlex came from. Mr Adlard used to be a senior executive of a large steel concern and his pre-writer phase of existence must have contained sleepless nights as he worried about the continual erosion of the areas where steel still dominated the dreaded plastic. Dredging, therefore, in the depths of his imagination, he has assembled the Stahlex monster. I might add that this standard SF device - the super plastic/metal material - has been used many times though seldom with the effect Mr Adlard has achieved. He continually indicates the uniformity and dreariness of Tcity life by noting that this article of clothing, that beer mug, this wall, that wig, are made of Stahlex.

I shall not spoil the reader's enjoyment by detailing every event in the books; if you really want to find out what happens without reading them you have merely to read the summaries on the backs. I shall content myself with outlining the sort of books they are. In this case it is somewhat more difficult than usual because the Tcity trilogy has a flavour which is, as far as I know, quite unique.

The pace is leisurely, the touch light. There is a wry humour swelling beneath a thin veneer of seriousness, yet the books attempt to convey quite important philosophical ideas. Fun is poked at the current techniques of management with the wisdom of hindsight, questions are raised as to what people would do if they did not have the blessing of work to alleviate the boredom of life. But most of all there is an examination of motive in the working man. It is all couched in entertaining fictive terms but still comes across strongly after one has put the books down. One begins to personalise the examples in them - to wonder why you do what you do. There is an absurd two-tier society portrayed in the books; one of citizens - the bored and down-trodden proletariat - the other of Executives, a free and propertied class, possessing doctored intelligences and the freedom to taste the fine things of life and to roam across the countryside doing precisely as they please. Is it really that absurd, though?

The plot deals with a revolt and its aftermath. It has a pessimistic philosophy, a humanism, it seems, yet definitely a pessimistic humanism. There is no real freedom, because freedom is a relative thing - this might be said to be the message of the books - but don't think this is all hard-going and oppressive; it is not. Many humorous and satirical

things happen on the way.

In its mechanical execution there are minor annoyances. I don't know how far to go with this sort of minute criticism really, because, if one must put the prose under a microscope to find faults, it is probably not worth mentioning. It might also be a personal thing as far as my own reading was concerned; things which irritated me could well have been passed over by another without remark. The question is whether I am right to infect others with my nit-picking observations. But, since basically I'm a sadist, I'll risk it. Of course, those of you who want to enjoy the books and not have your attention affected by my remarks can stop reading NOW.

Idiosyncrasy No.1: There seem to be blocks of 'allusion' dropped into the narrative at random; too often irrelevant.

Idiosyncrasy No.2: The trilogy is suffering from an acne of poetical quotations. Not only are they poetical quotations but they are in Italian, German and French, which I cannot understand.

Idiosyncrasy No.3: There seems to be a secret jealousy of The South lurking in the Adlard broast. In fact it is not really very secret. He explains that London has lived, parasite-fashion, on the country for all of history simply because of a quirk of Roman Imperialism. He also refers explicitly to "the effete south". Of course, as a fellow Northerner, I really have to agree with him there.

Idiosyncrasy No.4: Pretentious name-dropping and exposition on such things as wine, cheese, art, architecture, buddhism. If I might quote probably the most horrible piece - this on architecture:

"London itself had produced little apart from paper and biscuits.

Illustrated catalogues of London's departed glories showed that even its architecture was second-hand at best, and often derived at third or fourth-hand through the distorting mirror of continental Europe. Politics was Gothic, as in the Houses Of Parliament; but learning was Greek, as in the British Museum. Within these broad extremes fancy was allowed to run riot.

Jan curled up comfortably in the driving seat, thought about the historical catalogues, and exercised his faculties of total recall.

The Temple of Diana at Ephesus was the ancestor of Decimus Burton's Athenaeum, and the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli had fathered a corner of Soane's Bank Of England; John Nash took the Marble Arch from the Arch of Constantine in Rome, and Nelson's column was copied from one of the Corinthian columns in the Temple Of Mars; Inigo Jones designed the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall with Palladio's book of rules in his hand, and Gilbert Scott's government offices on the other hand were stolen from the Italian Renaissance; the patent stucco of Robert Adam's facades was taken from Pompeii, and the polychrome interiors of Butterfield's churches were borrowed from Venice; the baroque of Vienna and Prague furnished the Central Hall in Westminster and....."

I'm sure you get my drift?

Of course, if I am to be honest, I am taking the thing out of context and playing silly games here. It might be more useful to take Mr Adlard to task for singling out the derivative styles of London's famous buildings and structures; after all, why not Paris or New York for that matter? Still, that again is a branch to the discussion we cannot afford to follow. I imagine the point of this review is to help you decide whether or not you want to read the books and, more to the point, whether you want to buy them or not. If you want my advice, I would say that if you are a BEM/rocketship/raygun fan, this could well appeal to you. If you are the sort

who reads books for their hidden message then there are enough lurking there behind the surface gloss. And whoever you are, I would point out that this trilogy is pretty much its own thing, owing here and there to others perhaps, but with nevertheless sufficient individuality to allow you to count the cost of buying it an investment in 'wider reading'.

(C) 1977 RMHC.

Imagination In Harness; Three by Charles H.

The Paradox Men; New English Library (Master SF Series); London; June 76; 159pp; 60p; ISBN 450 02996 4.

The Ring Of Ritornel; Panther; London; 1974; 190pp; 35p; ISBN 586 03798 5.

The Rose; Compact Books; London; 1966; 189pp (Currently available in Panther Books - details unknown)

Reviewed by David Wingrove

For many who have come upon SF late in its history, whether from accident, omission or - as in my own case - from the simple cause of having been born in the mid-fifties and 'educated' in SF only in the early seventies, there is the continual process of re-discovery, of delving back into SF's 'classics' to unearth the early and middle gems. The publishers help in their own small way with reprints, but for the main part (the Master SF Series being a notable exception) these are not the nuggets we latecomers seek but rather insipid or over-sickly offerings from the naive youth of the genre. It is small wonder, then, that writers such as Charles Harness receive scant critical attention. Oh, he receives a few paragraphs in Brian Aldiss' BILLION YEAR SPREE and Moorcock and Merrill have sung his praises in the 60's, but that is all.

Does he deserve the clamour of critics and the kind of critical treatment usually reserved for Silverberg? I can only make a personal assessment here, a retrospective analysis of his work. I am not over-familiar with the atmosphere of the genre in which he wrote these books: all that remains of it are the reflections of the surviving writers, the ageing magazines and the reprints. I can only assess them as if they were new books, written this year (if perhaps reflecting predilections from a past decade); to judge them against what exists in the genre now and not to strive to attach historic import to them.

Harness was a fine writer, a stylist unafraid to choose his words with care. Of the three books being reviewed, THE ROSE best evidences that. Like both of the other books it is concerned with the evolution of a new stage of Man whilst discussing the interface of Science and Art and whether they are compatible or antagonistic forces. It is the most sensitive of these books, a tortuous story of some psychological depth and insight. A four-fold counterpoint is developed within the story that gives it a complexity that is mesmeric. Anna Van Tuyl, a deformed ex-Prima Donna ballerina is a practising psychologist. She is also involved in writing a ballet based on a story by Oscar Wilde, where a student requires a red rose but only has white roses in his garden. A nightingale, discovering this, throws herself onto the thorns of the rose and thus discolours it with her blood. Ruy Jaques, an artist, is also searching for a rose within his work. He too is hideously deformed and is losing his ability to read and write. His wife, the insanely jealous Martha Jaques hires Anna van Tuyl to discover why he is losing these abilities. But Martha Jaques is also a brilliant scientist, working on the Sciomnia equation; nineteen sub-equations that will permit her access to all knowledge and which, when

plotted graphically form a rose.

As the story unfolds and the clashes between Martha's Science and Ruy's Art become more bitter, Anna finds that her Unfinished Dream, from which the music of her ballet springs, integrates into reality. She loses her abilities to read and write, and develops a hump-back and horns in a manner similar to Ruy before her.

In a well-crafted denouement, Anna's ballet is performed, but the wings she wears are evolved from the hump on her back. The nightingale, Anna, throws herself upon the thorn, which is Martha's black box, the physical representation of the Sciomna Equation. In dying, Anna's wings crumple to form the rose Ruy has been seeking. She is the first of a new, intuitive Superman.

This is the best charted example of Harness' concern with Man's evolution to a higher state. He best achieves, here, the traumas involved in achieving ascendance. But whilst *THE ROSE* is the best written of these three novels, it is not the most gripping and tension is maintained by the clash of personalities not by any threatening outside agency.

THE PARADOX MEN contrasts sharply with *THE ROSE* in that it is pure Science Fiction, toying with concepts and characters in relation to the Cosmos. Brian Aldiss terms it "Wide-Screen Baroque", and that is certainly true. We are given a society following worldwide economic collapse, where slavery is again accepted and government corruption rife. It could be seen simply as an adventure story concerned with the struggle between Honesty and Dishonesty, Intellect and Ignorance, Wealth and Poverty, but Harness never dwells too long on any of these glaring social contrasts. He is more concerned with a Thief, Alar (a robin-hood figure) who is again a Superman. Harness throws a tantalising glimpse of 'echo' galaxies on the other side of the Universe by way of the explanation of the paradox that has allowed Alar to arrive before he left in a faster-than-light ship.

It is the least satisfying of the books, even though it generates several interesting ideas and constitutes an above-average adventure. It is, of course, well written, but by comparison with the other two is lacking internal inspiration. *Toynbee-22*, the New Man, of which Alar is the first, is unconvincing. The plot is erratic and many of the twists strain credibility. Its redeeming qualities are its opulence and audacity; what Aldiss terms its "extravagance".

THE RING OF RITORNEL is my favourite of these three, an exploration of the forces of Chance and Order, Self-Determination and Predestination. It again uses a "wide-screen" back-cloth, this time the twelve galaxies surrounding the Node, the birth-place of the Universe. It possesses none of the weaknesses of *THE PARADOX MEN* whilst presenting scientific concepts and intellectual speculations smoothly and without fuss. It is ingeniously constructed - the chapters run from 1 to 12 and then back to 1. Unlike *THE PARADOX MEN* its mysteries involve the reader and are ultimately satisfying, not frustrating. Has it all happened before? Is Ritornel (the god of Return - the cycle of events forever in repetition) supreme, or is it Alea (goddess of Chance - the erratic factor that creates novelty)? Who rules? Harness makes this novel complete and thoroughly satisfying by shedding a slight doubt upon the inevitable at the very end of the book. But before we arrive at the end we have to traverse an opulent landscape of arachnid surgeons, deep-space journeys to the Node itself, super-intelligent Centaurs, power-mad princes, a human computer (which was also one of the more interesting aspects of *THE PARADOX MEN*). But over-riding all is the thought of the Node throwing out its creation into the void and then retracting it, an infinite number of times. Harness captures the very

mood of infinity throughout the book, reflects it in his characters and conversations. It is one of a very few SF books that manages successfully to do that.

So there you have it; a brief retrospective view of Harness, a writer whose small output is well worth investigating. They stand up well against more modern offerings - well written novels that integrate hard technology, fantasy and philosophy with some skill. Even if the idea of the Superman is no longer vogue, it is nevertheless one that the better writers of our genre share.

"But even as he gazed in stricken wonder, the blood gorged wings curled slowly up and out, enfolding the ivory breast and shoulders in blinding scarlet, like the petals of some magnificent rose." (THE ROSE, Page 119)

((Since this review was written a new Harness novel has appeared, WOLFHEAD, serialised in the November and December issues of Fantasy and Science Fiction.))

Losing identification; Keith Roberts latest collection.

THE GRAIN KINGS: Keith Roberts; Hutchinson; 1976; £3.95; 208pp. (Also in paperback, Panther Books, 1977)

Reviewed by Mike Dickinson.

This is the latest collection of stories, six in all, by an author whose previous work, THE CHALK GIANTS, caused widespread disagreement amongst critics. All of these have been published before, mainly in New Worlds As-Often-As-Possible and New Writings in SF. Despite this it is good to see them published in book form, partially because Keith Roberts is one of the most talented of SF writers and these deserve permanent form, but also because a collection enables one to see connections between stories.

The background of these works ranges from immediately post-Roman Britain (an area which Roberts knows well) through varieties of present time to the future of planetary exploration and colonisation. Yet there is a singularity of vision. Keith Roberts' work has moved from early fantasy, through mid-period 'straight' realism to his present work which embodies a realistic background, at times even allowing extraordinary clarity of detail, but often overlaid with a greater purpose. At times, as in 'Passing Of The Dragons' and 'I Lose Medea', the central symbol is stated a little too crudely and overwhelms the story, but these are the two slightest stories in the collection and the others cause no such hesitancy.

The first of the pieces, 'Weihnachtsabend', is an alternate time story (familiar Roberts territory), of Britain under Nazi domination. Its ploy is hardly original, having similarities to others of the dilemma of the 'reasonable man' caught in the system of totalitarian government. But this reservation is swept aside by the strength of atmosphere. At his best Keith Roberts can evoke the feeling of a society, even a totally imaginary one, as if he were a talented historian. One feels the seedy childishness of such a regime while seeing its potential for devastation.

Similar points can be made about 'A Trustie Tree' and 'The Lake Of Tuonela' which have the planet Xerxes as their base: both are 'merely' journeys, though for different purposes. The latter, though, is exceptional even within this collection, for its picture of a culture

before Earth and the destructive impact of humankind. In exploring the lake the central figure takes on some of the feeling of Bar-Ab, its native engineer, and the prose reflects that grandeur. However, his human nature is the betrayer. The journey flirts with mystical significance but its resolution is pessimistic, as was that of 'The Trustie Tree'.

'The White Boat' is not a science fiction story even by the loose definition one adopts in the rest of Roberts' work. It is a moral fable for Dark Ages about sacrifice and the ability of the one-eyed in the country of the blind, not to be a king but to continue to live. Its prose structure is subject to the central character in a Stream of Vision form similar to Golding's INHERITORS. It is mainly concerned with a dream and, in the telling, has a detached, dream-like quality. Nevertheless it shows a firm grasp of emotional realities.

'The Grain Kings' is the longest story in the book (58 pages) and the most grittily realistic. In the near future the United Nations operates combined harvesters the size of large office blocks to feed the world's masses. A visiting reporter provides the point of view for one journey. The story is impressive in the visualisation of its operation and the complex social relationships which exist within such a structure. However, for me this story focused the uneasiness which had grown throughout this collection.

In reviewing 'The Chalk Giants', some critics had pointed out the comparative weakness of the optimistic elements of that work. Here there is no such gesture. All of these stories concern real or symbolic death. Even 'The White Boat' and 'Weihnachtsabend', which show sacrifice for good motives are not really redeemed since the sacrifice in the former is more for the dream than the reality, and in the latter is so ineffectual. The rest stress a species of doomed experiment, mechanical and blundering. Can a writer who finds so little hope sustain the urge to write? This and the clinical treatment of the characters in these stories suggests a lack of identification with his characters, which I find worrying in a writer I have admired since his earliest work.

Hucksters and Mesmerists?: Writings on the occult.

MEN OF MYSTERY: Edited by Colin Wilson; Wyndham; 1977; 75p; 206pp; ISBN. 0 352 39593 1.

Reviewed by David Wingrove

Occultism, like mysticism, is not something I find to my taste. It seems tainted with a mild (and occasionally extreme) hysteria, pervaded by an illogical dismissal of the logical that avoids by way of explanation. It was thus with some trepidation that I faced this volume of 'essays' on famous men (and one woman) of the occult/mystical tradition, a fear that was in some ways well justified but in others totally unfounded. Colin Wilson's introduction is a pleasantly entertaining summary of what is to follow, and I tended to agree with his comments and conclusions; the sense that the hysterical claims are ridiculous but that the sceptical stance was also the product of equal irrationalism. And whilst he views the book as a question posed, I see it more as a series of gateways for the curious - glimpses intended to stimulate and engender the desire to investigate in the reader. As the latter it works, as the former (Wilson's intention) it falls short.

Hysteria is represented here by Christmas Humphreys' ravings on Madame Blavatsky, one of the progenitors of Theosophy. Its credulous tone and

lack of convincing detail, added to the general unbalance of the piece itself (too much history and too little explanation of her talents) made it all rather incomprehensible and dull to all but (I'm sure) the already eager acolytes of HPB.

Such (admittedly expected) trivia has to be off-set, however, against the utterly convincing and passionate account by Kit Pedler of Tesla's life. The man of invention and progressive scientific thought is portrayed as a man 'beyond us'. It too, could have been trite, could have seemed hysterical, but it avoids that. Pedler has coaxed me in this piece to discover more about this intriguing, enigmatic man. Sometimes it reads like pure science fiction, but against the scientific achievements of the man that impression is softened.

Any account of Rasputin can be expected to raise doubts of all sorts. Colin Wilson's piece here is unexpectedly sceptical. Wilson has a reputation as a phenomenologist, but his is no blind acceptance of the unproven. It is certain that Rasputin had something, which Wilson (nor I, after reading this) does not dispute. He instead evokes the atmosphere of the age and tries to gauge Rasputin from that; sexual monster, faith healer, sincere mystic - all these are shown in reasoned perspective. Wilson is also to be found writing about the biggest mystic harlequin of this century, G. I. Gurdjieff. Like Rasputin, Gurdjieff is seen as part charlatan, part man of strange, inexplicable personal presence and power. I was convinced by the essay of the former, the presence, but far from certain that the latter was not the result of intelligent trickery. Gurdjieff, to me, is an amusing pseudo-philosopher, regurgitating the entrails of past doctrines (something Wilson partially shows); energetic, certainly, but no 'entrance' to a higher state of being.

Before coming to what was the most surprising of these essays (simply because I was totally sceptical until I read it and found myself partly convinced afterwards), on Uri Geller, I'll briefly mention the two most enjoyable of the pieces in this collection; those on Aleister Crowley and Hell-Fire Dashwood. Crowley is a name I've often heard in discussion but never read of until now, and I have to admit that, despite the atrocious things attributed to him, I find the old rogue entertaining - indeed I liked what I read of him here. Genuine iconoclasm is a rare thing to find in the straight-jacketed post-war years, and no doubt many of the tales on Crowley were exaggerated, and that exaggeration used by the man to bolster his sense of presence (which I feel is the key to so many of these people presented here). Here we have a figure of the counter-culture, the black sheep, forty years or more before his true age. In telling of Crowley, Oliver Marlow Wilkinson draws on personal reminiscence and links it tantalisingly with popular fact. But there isn't the same tone of credulity that exists in Humphreys' writing and thus the reader is less likely to dismiss it all out of hand.

Hell-Fire Dashwood, or Sir Francis Dashwood, as history more properly knows him, is the least notable of these figures, yet by far the most opulent and eccentric. His tunneling to form caves on his estate, his fascination for Rabelais' *'Fait ce que voudras'* philosophy, his use of ancient mythological tenets to build his own pseudo-religion; all of these are delighting facets of the man. But in spite of these external attributes we unfortunately learn little of the man himself. But I must admit I was content to re-enter a world of alchemy and mysticism for a while when reading this. In a way, it seems, what Dashwood was doing was foreshadowing the artistic movement of a later century towards the primitive and irreligious elements (Wordsworth through to Lawrence) that 'commune with nature' rely upon.

Geller is perhaps well-known to many of you, but my own knowledge of the man was small - a self-imposed act of censorship that meant that I read most of the facts about Geller for the first time here. Dismissing the trite personal accounts of Pat Silver and Jesse Lasky Jr, this account does impress and tempts me to read the opposing case to Geller to examine its ability to convince me otherwise. Geller, from this angle, is a true enigma. His actions aren't totally congruous with hoax. He benefits materially, but at some considerable personal cost. Entertainer or Man of genuine powers? I was convinced of the opposite before this.

Silver and Lasky (whose entertaining piece on Dashwood I've already mentioned) team up again to look at Nostradamus. Again this is an area where my previous knowledge was very superficial. Here we have the facts of the Man, not the legend, and it seems he had a very interesting life in one of the most colourful periods of French history. Again, I was not convinced, but was intrigued enough to want to know more.

To complete the collection we are introduced by Peter Tompkins to the infamous charlatan, Mesmer, in what is by far the best written of all these glimpses. But was Mesmer totally a fraud? It seems almost positive that he abused his intuitive intelligence (and his female acolytes!) by admitting to the flattery and sponsorship of notorious opportunists. But in an age of imprecision, could he be blamed for believing in his own brand of psychosomatic healing? His methods (curiously akin to Chinese acupuncture) were ridiculed without investigation by the authorities of the time; hence he had to take what aid he could get. Only his persistence and basic naivety impressed me, however. Something shared by several of his 'kindred' gathered herein.

From the blurb I see that this is going to be a television series, and after this book I'm looking forward to that. No, I'm still a sceptic, but at least I've a few hints as to where to look for entertaining biography. My curiosity was well repaid by this volume; worth, indeed, the price of admission.

Period Piece; The Incredible Shrinking Tenn.

OF MEN AND MONSTERS; William Tenn; Gollancz; London; 1977; 251pp; £3.95; ISBN. 0 575 02377 5.

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

This is William Tenn's only SF novel. A much shorter version of it appeared in GALAXY in 1963 as "The Men In The Walls" and the full version was first published in the USA in 1968. This is its first British publication.

OF MEN AND MONSTERS is the story of a human society reduced to living as scavengers in the nooks and crannies of an alien civilisation. The gigantic aliens perceive humans only as vermin to be exterminated, and life is an inordinately difficult struggle for a ratlike existence.

The basic idea of the book has extraordinary appeal. Tenn's novel is headed by a quote from GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, which was not the first satire to use gross discrepancies of magnitude in order to show up the follies of human vanity, but which was probably the best. There are a considerable number of sf stories which use the notion of tiny people fighting to survive in a world built on a vast scale, and it has proved particularly effective in films (Dr. Cyclops, The Shrinking Man, Fantastic Planet et.al.). All these stories exploit the horror of a situation in which the everyday world is made implacably hostile by exaggeration, and

even familiar objects become alien and dangerous. The theme plays upon a sense of insecurity in their various confrontations between humans and monstrous creatures of the giants' milieu, but it also - perhaps paradoxically - offers a curious kind of reassurance in emphasising the safety of negligibility (perhaps best illustrated by the various books featuring The Borrowers). Insignificance has its attractions as well as its anxieties. And there is contained within all fantasies of this type a particular myth - the myth of the indomitability of the downtrodden, the faith that even the very tiny may achieve great things on their own scale of being. The archetypal example of this myth is surely the conquest of the spider by Richard Matheson's Shrinking Man, and perhaps it reaches its most absurdly pretentious expression in the closing minutes of that film.

OF MEN AND MONSTERS has all of this: moments of terrifying confrontation; moments which celebrate the delights of insignificance; and a particularly extravagant version of the myth of indomitability. It is a well-executed book, taking itself seriously enough to avoid triviality, but its uniqueness rests solely upon its representation of the myth of triumph. Curiously, this has dated very quickly - it has by no means the same symbolic significance today as it had in 1963 (and even then it was late on the scene, for its fashionability was already waning). This is not merely a "little people" fantasy, but also a science fiction novel, reliant upon the ideative vocabulary of science fiction. Tenn drew the apparatus of his conclusion from the standard mythology of fifties sf - his "solution" to the predicament of the humans under pressure was so commonplace then as to be a ritual. But times have changed, and today there is a different standardised solution to similar predicaments that has displaced the earlier one as ritual.

This is in many ways a good book, but it is already something of a period piece, which makes more interesting reading in its own historical context.

IN SEARCH OF ANCIENT ENTREPRENEURS?: Sitchin's Assessment.
The Twelfth Planet; Zecharia Sitchin; Allen & Unwin; 1977; £5.50.

Reviewed by Andrew Muir

This book deals with no less a subject than man's creation on Earth; and the author claims that he, unlike 'other popular writers', embraces the "crucial questions" of "when, how and from where".

As you may have gathered from the title. Mr. Sitchin believes that an as yet undiscovered planet exists in our solar system. It is the inhabitants of this twelfth planet that populated our world. Mr. Sitchin has undoubtedly gone to a great deal of trouble to collect his evidence and all the usual sources (ancient astrology, languages etc) are brought under scrutiny. The book is well produced with many illustrations and diagrams. After which not much can be said in the book's favour, and, quite frankly, it left me cold. Whilst admitting it seemed superior to most books of this genre that I've tried (never successfully) to read before, I had to force myself to read the book, losing interest at the second page. All too obviously in these type of books, the authors assume their conclusions and then jump to them. Selecting bits of evidence they can bend to their purpose is all part of this. If there appears to be some discrepancy in commonly-held beliefs about our evolution, Mr Sitchin seems to enlist this as automatic support for his case.

I feel that if all the books of this type were condensed into one volume it might prove pleasantly diverting reading; as it is now I don not see how they are of worth even in passing a rainy afternoon. One is reminded of M. John Harrison's comment in NEW WORLD'S NINE:

" The vulgarised anthropology of Erich Von Daniken becomes.... a blueprint for collective inferiority, suggesting a loss of confidence of such an extent that we now prefer to attribute our progress to mere re-invention and our very ability to progress to the result os some genetic interference by some space-faring master-race..."

There is undoubtedly a market for these books - where I cannot tell - and Mr. Sitchin would seem more qualified than most to supply the goods. If the world cries out for pseudo-religions and sensationalistic answers to 'ancient mysteries' we cannot be surprised to find so many people willing to make money by filling this need.

(C) A.M. (Sep 77)

Utterly Enjoyable; A New Shaw..

WHO GOES 'HERE? by Bob Shaw; Gollancz; London; 1977; 160pp; £3.95; ISBN 0 575 02347 3

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Bob Shaw's latest novel is a comedy. Do not listen to anyone who tries to persuade you that it is a satire. It is much more honest than that - to be read purely for fun. There is no pretentiousness of any kind here.

WHO GOES HERE? is the story of Warren Peace, who joins the Space Legion to forget and then deserts in order to try and discover what it was he forgot. There are monsters, and a mad scientist, and time paradoxes, and the enigmatic Oscars who always seem to be threatening our poor hero. In fact, speaking of threats, the whole thing is a slapstick version of a paranoid's daydreams. Or life (but no, this is a comedy, not a satire).

Humourous sf, for some reason, usually seems lacking in shape. Funny sf books tend to become random strolls through a whole stack of cliches, played for laughs but otherwise unconnected. WHO GOES HERE?, though, actually has a plot. Its internal organization turns out, in the end, to be coherent, neat and funny. What more could one ask for?

This book is utterly trivial and utterly enjoyable. Don't miss it.

VECTOR QUOTATION COMPETITION (C)

" She gave me a lopsided smile. 'I - I - I - I - I,' she said. 'I!' The wonder of it seemed to daze her. 'I! I! I!' I planted a kiss between her breasts and felt the brush of my lips myself. 'I love you,' I said. "

Why, you may ask, is this issue duplicated? One of the reasons is pure economy - to avoid further increases in membership rates - and the other is ease. I've had to gather this issue together at a late date and negotiations with new printers have only just begun. So it goes..

But Is She Sf? (Or, How I Read Fantasy And Survived)

by P. M. Westran

Fantasy is possibly the oldest literary genre and in oral tradition probably dates back to when Man first communicated ("It was THIS big" said Piltown Man, spreading his arms wide), and yet despite (or because of?) its long existence it is also the most misunderstood. People (the general public, that is; Them not Us) understand when words like 'Western' or 'Romance' are tossed into the conversation. Even 'S.F.' provokes a fairly positive response (S.F.?...Oh you mean Sigh Fie....that's Space Thingy Whatsit). Yet throw in a 'Fantasy' and you have a lot of people wondering just what it is you are talking about. I used to think this confusion limited to non-readers, but since coming into contact with Fantasy readers who "also read some SF" I have found that there are two different (indeed opposing) viewpoints within the readership.

One attitude is that Fantasy is a sub-genre of SF, the other is that SF is a sub-genre of Fantasy. Can't get more opposed than that, can you? It all hinges on how one defines 'fantasy'. That's where the problem really starts, because I've known folks to get quite heated on the subject, and recourse to a dictionary is of little avail because they are just as divided on the subject as anyone else. Chamber's Essential English, for instance, would have us believe that fantasy is "an idea based not on reality" which excludes far too much. By definition it must exclude both Historical and Science Fiction and also the majority of fiction which is based on reality, no matter how wierd it is. This also makes nonsense of the statement that "Fantasy is only really effective as literature if it has a strong basis in reality" (from Fantasycon 3 programme booklet). So whilst the above may be a fair definition of fantasy (I do not think it is) it does nothing to clarify the situation.

In its broadest sense 'fantasy' can be used to cover anything which is imagined, unreal - often being used in conversation to denote something which may be dreamed about but never attained. In this sense Fantasy must cover all fiction, a fact which members of the B.F.S. have pointed out. Indeed, who can deny that Barbara Cartland's novels are fantasy? ("pure fantasy, I'm sure she'd be the first to admit it") or Netta Muskett ("they read her for the naughty bits"); These fit the Fowlers' definition (that's as in O.E.D., not C.); "Caprice, whim, fanciful invention", whereas Tolkein is 'phantasy', "Imagination, visionary notion".

Now if one accepts the idea that Zane Grey, Arthur Upfield, Jean Plaidy and Desmond Bagley, to name but a few (and at random too) are writers of fantasies and included in "the all-encompassing field" of Fantasy then, depending upon which side of the F/SF argument you stand, one of two things must logically follow. Either SF is included along with all the other types of fiction; or, if fantasy is a sub-genre of SF, SF must encompass everything from George Bernard Shaw through Mills and Boon to Look Back In Anger.

Plainly the latter is ridiculous. It would seem then that whatever Fantasy is, it is not a sub-genre of SF. Fantasy, as already stated, is very old, whereas SF is a new breed, the product of our Society's reliance on science and technology and the effects thereof. If one wishes to be pedantic about it, Fantasy (whichever dictionary you look it up in) cannot be 'science' fiction. Think about that a while; then there will be a short pause for the replacement of blown tops and the lowering of raised lres.

Are we any nearer to our definition? No. Webster's Dictionary has perhaps the best. Fantasy (fiction) is an 'ordinary' story made 'extraordinary' by the change of time, character, place or environment. At first sight this may seem to present us with the same problem that it includes too much. Historical Fiction, for example; but it is a narrower meaning than the others so far considered (Actually, of course, Historical Fiction can be excluded on the grounds that the change in time does not make the story extraordinary as the characters and events are contemporary to the time).

Armed with a definition of sorts can we end the Argument? No. But on the other hand at least one can go into a discussion of the subject with a fair idea of both sides. Not to mention the fact that it can be used to satisfy those who stand open-mouthed and would not know a Hobbit from a Minnipin.

Besides the people who can discuss this subject long and loud there are those to whom it is important to be able to tell whether this book is Fantasy whilst that one is SF. I refer to the publishers, distributors, booksellers. To them a book in the wrong category can mean a lost sale. For instance, one shop I know of got around the problem in this way: William Morris and Lord Dunsany are literature: William Morris and Lord Dunsany are published by Pan/Ballantine: Pan/Ballantine publish other Adult Fantasy books which will be read by the same people that read Morris and Dunsany. THEREFORE all the Adult Fantasy should be on the literature shelves. Clever huh? Needless to say it did not work because the customers looking for Katherine Kurtz were looking downstairs in fiction and SF, not upstairs in Literature. Adult Fantasy was dropped because "it didn't sell". This was also one of the reasons rumoured at for the dropping of Ballantine by Pan, but whatever the reason, we should be grateful because Futura are distributing rather than publishing as Pan did, which is a Good Thing. No longer must we wait years for American titles to make it over to us.

Fantasy in America seems to be regarded with more respect than it is here. Many Fantasy Societies flourish; The Mythopoeiac Society, Sword and Sorcery Societies; yet in Britain most fantasy readers have never heard of the BFS to judge by the size of their membership. Titles first published in America as Adult Fantasy, when they finally reach us, do so as children's books. Joy Chant's much acclaimed "Red Moon and Black Mountain" was published here by Penguin under their Puffin imprint. Admittedly at the time Peacocks were being phased out, but they put Norton's "Crystal Gryphon" into their older range. Whilst on the subject, EARTHSEA and THE DARK IS RISING could do with upgrading too. A browse through childrens' fiction produces many very good fantasy and SF books; John Christopher, Nicholas Fisk, Susan Cooper, Carol Kendall, Andre Norton, Penelope Lively etc..

Since there is so much Fantasy available for children to read, and read it they do, why do adults who once read these same or similar stories not understand what fantasy is? Perhaps it is because as we grow up we are taught not to dream openly, to keep our imaginations firmly under control. Or because we have TV to fantasise for us after we have wasted a day dealing with facts.

Perhaps it is because to a child it does not matter how a book is categorised - all that matters is the story within. In fact, when you come down to it the whole argument as to what a particular kind of book is or is not is pretty pointless. So having looked at fantasy from several angles and being no nearer to a proper understanding of it one is forced to ask the question; 'Does it matter?' (What do you mean "That's no answer". Did I promise you an answer?)

The quotations, except where stated, are from people and conversations too numerous to credit..not to mention the fact that I cannot remember who said them and when.(P.M.W.)

Letters From Abroad..

Michael G. Coney; 1016 Cypress Road, R. R. 1, Sidney, B.C. Canada.

((Extract from a letter to Tom Jones which Mike asked if we would print in VECTOR.. I was only too glad to oblige..Over to you Mike..))

Finally I would like to thank the BSFA for the award -- You cannot imagine my delight when I heard of the award; you see, it's the first time I've won anything tangible in my life. Not that I've ever thought of myself as a failure, but it is a fact that any soccer team I ever played for finished consistently at the bottom of its league, that my highest score in ten years of cricket was 24 (not out, mind you), that I broke an arm at rugby, and won mile and half-mile events at inter-school sports in a year when no trophies were awarded due to economy measures. And I look in my daughter's room, and among the Bay City Roller, King Kong and Yamaha posters I see rows of red ribbons with the word FIRST on them, and blue ribbons labelled SECOND, as though she's some kind of a horse, and even white ribbons labelled PARTICIPANT -- and I never even won one of those. And trophies and medals and stuff my father used to have, and my sister, and even my gaddamned grandfather; but never me. The nearest I came to triumph was when at the age of seven, at school they gave me a sugar pig, pink, about two inches long with a string tail, for no other reason I could conceive than that they liked me. True, the rest of my class got sugar pigs too, but I was aware that the authorities could not show overt favouritism. What really turned the pig to ashes in my mouth was the discovery, an hour later, that the six-year olds had been given pigs which were all of three inches long, excluding tail. Why? Logically the bigger kids should have got bigger pigs. Unless -- and here my young blood ran cold -- unless the authorities had embarked on a program of fattening the little kids up, of making them big and strong so they could turn on us, their superiors, and smash our teeth in.... It's all a long time ago, and the BSFA award makes up for all the disappointments in between. There's another reason for my joy too; it has to do with the way most writers feel they're operating in a vacuum. Usually there are few sounds from outside; little feedback. The only response to your favourite novel is a zero royalty statement. Don Wollheim once told me that in his darker moments he was obsessed by the conviction that the distributors simply trucked DAW books to the lip of the Grand Canyon and tipped them in, to judge by the reader response he got. The BSFA award is an answer to all this, a gesture demonstrating that people out there do realise that writers thrive on encouragement, and I'm very grateful for it,

Regards,

Mike Coney.

((The next letter was forwarded by Brian Aldiss -- via Phil Stephensen Payne -- and arrived from SMOLOSKYP, the Organisation for Defense of Human Rights in the Ukraine, addressed to the Pen Club. I feel it carries its own message eloquently.))

Dear Fellow Writers!

We would not wish to bother you with the affairs of distant colleagues; however, our troubles today could well become your troubles tomorrow if the literary world community does not demonstrate strong solidarity.

By now, you have probably heard about the long years of repression of the well-known publicists and authors I. Svitlychny, V. Moroz, Y. Sverstiuk, V. Stus, V. Chornovil, S. Karavan'sky, and of many other Ukrainians and representatives of other socialist republics.

Presently, the activities of government security organs have entered a new phase: special attention is paid to combatting science fiction, works of fantasy that develop the somnolent consciousness, and those that prompt evolutionary or revolutionary changes. Thus, for example, all books by Olesk Berdnyk (approximately 30 titles) were secretly removed from all libraries and burned in accordance with a special "circular". (In what way does this differ from Hitler's "shabashes" of 1933?). Berdnyk himself was excluded from the Writers' Union five years ago, and placed in cruel and miserable living conditions.

They did the same with the poet and science fiction writer, Mykola Rudenko. For many years he had troubled the leading organs of Ukraine and the USSR with suggestions that they examine and consider a series of scientifically based forecasts in areas such as economics and sociology. Criticism of him was not lacking (except for literary criticism). He was expelled from the Party, from the Writers' Union, and became terrorised in all manner of ways.

More than once, our living quarters were subjected to searches by members of the KGB (three times in O. Berdnyk's apartment and twice in M. Rudenko's). Literary archives were almost completely plundered: taken were scores of notebooks with plans for new works, unfinished stories and science fiction novels, tens of thousands of lines of Rudenko's poetry now impossible to recreate, and also, a philosophical work entitled "Gnosis and the Present". The works, "Holy Ukraine", "An Alternative Evolution" and many more were confiscated from O. Berdnyk.

It is impossible to work creatively expecting cruel and brutal guests any day (or, more precisely, night). You, fellow writers, have surely never even dreamed of such a situation where, in a socialist country, ignorant gendarmes burrow with their dirty paws through the manuscripts of writers and poets; where, upon these poets' dreams of a World Of Unity, Humaneness and Brotherhood, fall ominous shadows of a merciless present.

Do not consider these facts to be incidental. The situation of science fiction writers is tremendously bad throughout our multicultural nation. For instance, immediately after the death of the celebrated Russian writer, I. Efremov, guests from the KGB paid a visit to his widow, conducted a ruthless search, seized many valuable manuscripts. For a long time afterward his name was taboo and subscriptions for a six-volume edition of his works were cancelled. Following complaints by other science fiction writers, a three-volume edition was permitted, but his major works, "Time Of The Bull", "Spare The Razor" and "Thais Of Athens" were deleted from the edition. Many works by the well-known science fiction writers, the brothers Strigatsky, are banned, and foreign science fiction is rarely published. The future has become a frightening prospect to the organs of security -- in it they sense a threat to their totalitarian rule.

Ah, yes! It is impossible to keep the fire of the mind and heart in the paper labyrinths of vetoes and persecution for long. Prison walls and even death will not check the flight of flaming thought.

Brother Writers! Raise a cry of protest against the medieval persecution of literary men. The era of space travel demands free contacts, free thought, the fusion of all creative efforts, to build a unified World of Joy and Love! We await your words of support. The situation is fearsome!

((That letter was received after the Zamyatin piece was completed and typed up, but reiterates many of the points within that book. The letter was dated 5th January 1977, from Kiev, and signed by MYKOLA RUDENKO and OLES BERDNYK. I was grateful that the Committee were in agreement that this letter had to see print in VECTOR, and I would welcome and encourage debate on this specific point - as I'm sure would Brian Aldiss. I find it yet another sign of the World's fearful social regression, witnessed even in our own mild country with the National Front and its gross extremities of thought and crideness of expression. This, when added to the situations in such places as Chile and South Africa is an illustration of the fact that what once happened to Zamyatin is happening yet. Who is to say that we are safe from it in the West, and for how long?))

BSFA AWARD 1977

At the Eastercon it was agreed that a more democratic means of selecting the annual winner of the British Science Fiction Award for newly published novels. Past methods have been slapdash to say the least, but we hope this year will see a vast improvement in the selection process.

We have decided to make the award a paperback award (thus allowing our members to have a chance of reading the books eligible) and limit it to novels seeing their first British publication in the year of the award. Phil Stephensen-Payne has prepared a list of those books eligible in this respect (we would be grateful for any knowledgable corrections) with this mailing's issue of Paperback Parlour, but meanwhile the committee has made a short list of books to which anyone of our members can add. All selections for the final shortlist (upon which the decisive vote will be made) must be received by myself (DJW) on a separate slip of paper/letter, whatever by 20th January 1978. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED THEN VOTE BY THAT DATE. A further short list will be sent out with the February Mailing together with a voting slip.

The Committee's suggestions (with number of votes) were:

Piers Anthony OMNIVORE (2)
 John Brunner THE SHEEP LOOK UP (3)
 John Brunner THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER (2)
 Mike Coney CHARISMA (1)
 John Crowley THE DEEP (2)
 Samuel R. Delany THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION (2)
 Samuel R. Delany TRITON (2)
 Philip K. Dick THE SIMULACRA (1)
 Gordon R. Dickson THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE (2)
 James Gunn KAMPUS (1)
 Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle INFERNO (3)
 Robert Silverberg THORNS (1)
 Ian Watson THE JONAH KIT (1)
 Roger Zelazny TO DIE IN ITALBAR (1)

Collections and anthologies are not, of course, eligible. Country of origin is no handicap either. The second vote will decide the winner, which will be announced at the 1978 Eastercon. As usual, the success of this depends entirely on your response. PLEASE LET ME KNOW SOON..uhuh?

THE CAMERA IS THE EYE OF A CRUISING VULTURE: William S. Burroughs.

(A review of EXTERMINATOR by W.S.B.; Corgi Books; 1976; 124 pp; 70p;
ISBN. 0 552 10222 9.)

by Andrew Darlington

William Burroughs has been the sleazo imput of a generation. Reading Burroughs is like watching auto-wrecks. It is related that, while they were down on their luck in New York, Burroughs suggested to Jack Kerouac that he use his out-dated naval credentials to con admittance to certain establishments, and that Kerouac, high on moral indignation, retorted that it would be 'a finkish thing to do'. Implacably Burroughs replied that 'it is a finkish world' - and over the intervening 30 years, and through a clutch of the most revolutionary books to emerge during that period, Burroughs has done his best to prove his contention. Through the art he creates, and the art he lives, he projects an incisive image of sadistic homosexual drug-addict with the same kind of fascination exerted by the predatory snake hypnotising a potential victim.

To Martin Amis, reviewing EXTERMINATOR for the Observer (3 March 1974), the book was 'not for those who care about fiction but for those who care about words - enthusiasms which overlap with unnerving infrequency'. Score one against Amis. Switch instead to Michael Moorcock who has been known to care about fiction and its constituent words - 'many Fantasy fans often share their enthusiasm for the genre with a taste for the erotic fiction of Henry Miller, Jean Genet, William Burroughs,' he wrote. 'Certainly the link is obvious in Burroughs' NAKED LUNCH, THE TICKET THAT EXPLODED and SOFT MACHINE which are works of Sheer Science Fiction, and the most brilliant ever to appear. His Faust is the whole human race rolled into one.'

(Science Fantasy No.63 Vol 21.)

Burroughs first used the title EXTERMINATOR for one of two underground booklets produced by Auerhahn Press (the other being "Minutes To Go"). In its present incarnation, despite what the cover blurb would mislead you to believe, and despite the recurrence of themes and terms, EXTERMINATOR is not a novel - it is a book made up of thirty vignettes, poems, essays and sequences taken from as diverse sources as "The Daily Telegraph", "Antaeus", "Cavalier" and "The Village Voice" with copyrights from 1966 to 1974. So we jump in and out of Burroughs' head, in and out of his various mythologies, novels and predilections. For example, "Rolling Stone" carried a piece about Burroughs' 'De Do Easy' spoof-philosophy, billing it as an excerpt from the forthcoming (and, as far as I know, still unpublished) novel, "The Revised Boy Scout Manual". The philosophy is instead expounded at length in EXTERMINATOR where, similarly, the 'elect a purple-assed baboon to the Presidency' sequence refers directly to an earlier fantasy, "Roosevelt after inauguration". A piece in which a purple-assed baboon actually reaches the White House - deleted by the printers of "The Yage Letters", and the centre of an obscenity bust when published in Leroy Jones "Floating Bear No.9", it eventually reached Ed Sanders "Fuck You" magazine and more recently surfaced in "Crawdaddy" (March 1977). There are other outside references to uncollected Burroughs via, "Storm the Reality Studios" from "Friends" (July 1970) continues from the EXTERMINATOR sequence "The Invisible Generation" - which itself had already appeared in "I.T.", "Los Angeles Free Press", and Burroughs own publication "The Job" (which also featured excerpts from THE WILD BOYS). There are also references to the novels. Doctor Benway makes a guest appearance in "The Lemon Kid". Halfway through THE SOFT MACHINE its narrator wakes up one night in someone else's body - as in "My face". The "Lemon Kid" graffitti couplet 'come and jack off - 1929' is also extant in the same novel. While the 18-inch centipede could well have been from the 'death in centipede' sequences - themselves

taken from the withdrawal passages in "Junkie". "Junkie" was originally published - to protect the guilty - under the by-line William Lee, and Burroughs uses the same name, Lee, in two EXTERMINATOR pieces ("The drums of death" and "They do not always remember"), while for good measure it is worth remembering that Burroughs appeared in Kerouac's epic ON THE ROAD as Old Bull Lee.

The stylistic references - like a huge exercise in cut-up technique - are everywhere. A paragraph from "From here to Eternity" reads '...in ruined suburbs naked bacchantes chase a screaming boy. Now the roller-skate boys sweep down a hill on jet skates in a shower of blue sparks and cut the bacchantes to pieces with their 18-inch bowie knives. The new boy is issued a knife and skates. Splashed with blood from head to foot they jet away singing...' WILD BOYS? Then there is an extract (from "The Priest they called him") which could have been lifted intact from JUNKIE - 'the Doctor was not pleased to see him. "Now what do you want? I told you." The Priest laid three bills on the table. The Doctor put the money in his pocket and started to scream "I've had trouble! The people (Narcotic squad) have been around! I may lose my license!"'. The drug drift infiltrates the words, underpinning the imagery. When the long night trip ended 'then it hit him like heavy silent snow, all the grey junk yesterdays. He sat there and recieved the immaculate fix and since he was himself a priest there was no need to call one'. Cruising in on death, drugs become the immaculate fix, The End Of The Line. Burroughs writing of 'a young poet who learned Arabic in a matter of days - addicted to heroin by J.J. Died 1956 in Paris.'. Even cockroaches become addicted to the Exterminator's poison, and become 'dangerous if the flouride is suddenly withdrawn'.

Inevitably EXTERMINATOR is jagged fragments of autobiography. A long road that began in 1914 when Burroughs was born son of the head of the Burroughs Adding Machine Complex; to graduating from Harvard in '36 where he had studied English 'out of lack of interest in anything else'; living on a trust fund in an apartment in Bedford Street, Greenwich Village, working for extra money as copy-writer, bartender and exterminator ('I stuck the job nine months. It was a record on any job... and I don't mind telling you ... I like my work, and take a pride in it.');

an involvement with morphine ('because he was bored'), sleeze, N.Y. gay bars and thieves, a last exit from Brooklyn; reading Cocteau's excellent OOIUM; reading Rimbaud and Baudelaire; meeting Kerouac on Columbia Campus '44, hanging out around Times Square with him, Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassady, the hydra-head fountainhead of the whole ragged visionary Beat Movement; in EXTERMINATOR - 'I was on the junk in New York. I know ten different ways of getting a pill into my mouth under closed-circuit TV', and further chronicled in Kerouac's TIME OF THE GEEK, Burroughs "New York Junk Days", JUNKIE, and the Ginsberg/Burroughs THE YAGE LETTERS; in EXTERMINATOR himself glimpsed - 'a drunk banging the door of his cell/thin grey pickpocket stops him' - Burroughs as jailed pickpocket; writing a spoof detective novel with Kerouac which remains unpublished; wandering Europe in the shadow of '37 fascism; living on a ranch in New Waverly Texas where Bill Burroughs III - junkie novelist of the later SPEED and KENTUCKY HAM - was born; quitting the States to escape a New Orleans bust, killing his wife in '52 Mexico by shooting her through the head playing William Tell, while Kerouac was writing DOCTOR SAX in the toilet of his 212 Orizaba Mexico City apartment, called the Shooting Gallery due to the number of junkies, drug exiles and dope refugees using it to shoot up; deported from Mexico after selling the 'factualisation' novel JUNKIE and writing a gay retrospect follow-up QUEER (Largely unpublished); kicking heroine on codeine five times in two years, ('once in Texas I kicked a habit on weed, a pint of paragoric and a few Louis Armstrong records' - JUNKIE); venturing in South America in search of the telepathic hyper-drug Yage, then briefly to London and Paris, then

Tangiers and further into junk; exile in two images from EXTERMINATOR, fantasy - 'writers were rich and famous. They lounged around Singapore and Rangoon smoking opium in a yellow pongee silk suit. They sniffed cocaine in Mayfair and they penetrated forbidden swamps with a faithful native boy and lived in the native quarter of Tangier smoking hashish and languidly caressing a pet gazelle' ("The Lemon Kid") - and reality - 'a bunch of queers, dope freaks, and degenerate dirty writers living in foreign lands under the protection of American passports from the vantage point of which they do not hesitate to spit their filth on Old Glory ("In the Last Resort The Truth"); writing THE NAKED LUNCH (originally titled NAKED LUST but mis-read by Ginsberg) in '56 without knowing he had done it - being out of his head on heroin for the duration, Ginsberg collating the novel from scraps of paper in Burroughs Tangiers (native quarters) room - typing partly done by Kerouac on a '57 visit; Ginsberg announcing its coming in the dedication of the magnificent primal HOWL as 'an endless book' that would 'drive everybody mad'; the apocalyptic LUNCH published in its original form by Olympia Press Paris in '59 - THE SOFT MACHINE following in '61 by which time Kerouac announces a disapproval of Burroughs' cut-up literary experiments; Burroughs working on the legendary underground movie "Towers Open Fire" with Tony Balch; living with his own son in the Calle Larachi Marshan; publishing the 'image-track' SF novel NOVA EXPRESS in which the Nova Police and the Nova Mob wage war for the possession of minds; at the Edinburgh International Writers Conference (organised by John Calder) in '62 giving the first public demonstration of the cut-up - then he and Alex Trocchi, embryonic underground luminary, moving down to London; meeting poet Jeff Nuttall (who had published cut-ups in his small-press "My Own Mag") when he saw Burroughs and a 'pale boy ... ill with junk' visiting the bitter '64 London winter on a customs-limited fourteen-day trip (unspecified bureaucratic barrier-reasons); Nuttall noting 'his stoop, his thinning hair, his thickening impassive businessman's face dissolved periodically in the force of his tiny pebble eyes and the mobility of his exquisite lips and he became a creature of unnerving purity and energy, a quicksilver thing, all nerve, weightless' ("Bomb Culture"); a flirtation with Scientology's cult of unreason that leaks into EXTERMINATOR via mentions of one-time SF writer Ron (Hubbard), the Sea Org on which the movement escaped persecution, the E-meter, and jargon ('down-stat suppressive' in "Ali's Smile"); by which time Burroughs had become something of an underground anti-christ, breaking out like track-marks across the sudden 'alternative press' who were gobbling up his random incisive race-mind connotations of cut-up pathway of excess leading to the Skid Row of Enlightenment; a commission to cover Mayor Daley and the incidents leading up to the Chicago conspiracy trial (in EXTERMINATOR). Fast storm of images - 'Saturday August 24 1968. Arrive O'Hare Airport, Chicago. First visit in 26 years. Last in Chicago during the war where I exercised the trade of exterminator ... Sheraton Hotel where I meet Jean Genet. He is dressed in an old pair of corduroy pants no jacket no tie. He conveys a remarkable impact of directness confronting whoever he talks to'; continues with the gay author of THE THIEF (praised by Sartre who wrote a thesis on him) and THE BALCONY (a not-unBurroughsish surreal play in which play-acting brothel clients assume control of a revolutionary state); 'Monday August 26. We spend Monday morning in Lincoln Park talking to the Yippies. Jean Genet expresses himself succinctly on the subject of America and Chicago "I can't wait for this city to rot. I can't wait to see weeds growing through empty streets"; visions of Abbie Hoffman, Bobby Seale, the Fugs waiting to do their documentary album on the riots - and Burroughs castrating it all - 'I find myself in the second row of the nonviolent march feeling rather out of place since nonviolence is not exactly my program ...'; while Borman Mailer is doing much the same thing for the attempted East-Coast exorcism and levitation of the Pentagon (in "Armies of the night"); Burroughs records '... we come to a solid line of cops and there is a confab between the cops

and the Marshalls. For one horrible moment I think they will let us march five bloody miles and me with blisters ... no. They won't let us march ... I walk around the park recording and playing back, and beautiful evening calm and clear vapour trails over the lake youths washing tear gas out of their eyes in the fountain'; as an underground oracle he was interviewed on Revolutionary Technique by "Global Tapestry" (Summer '70) and THE WILD BOYS came in '72; meanwhile, back in EXTERMINATOR he is politically perceptive about Vietnam, 'history tells us this is a war that cannot be won' but less so about his single positive assertion about mid-60's youth culture, contending that it 'is a worldwide phenomenon that has not been seen before in history. I don't believe they will calm down and be ad. execs. at thirty as the establishment would like to believe' (Score one to the establishment - unless Burroughs was just going with the flow, acquiescing to the "Rolling Stone" (employer) ethic); but Burroughs is aware enough to dismiss cosmic-trickster Timothy Leary and his Millbrook project as 'metaphysical slopbuckets'; elsewhere there is cynical, perceptive black-humour - "if only we had some communists to fight" said the officials sadly. "Then we could be sure the Americans would give us money" ("Wind die. You die. We die.")

The sequence from which the last quote is taken is a Russian Doll story within a story within a story cycle - possibly the origins of Brian Aldiss' REPORT ON PROBABILITY A lie within its complexity; but by no means can this be considered an isolated debt. The "Guardian" detected 'the influence of William Burroughs' in Mike Moorcock's BEHOLD THE MAN. Score one to the "Guardian". Without Burroughs working out all its experiments, its stances, its pre-occupations in advance, chances are there would have been no 'New Wave Science Fiction', no "New Worlds" Arts Council Grant, no J.G. Ballard (circa ATROCITY EXHIBITION). His influence extends right across the literary spectrum, to modern poetry and experimental fiction; just as the term 'heavy metal' would not exist to describe leaden rock music, from which, without Burroughs, we would also be compelled to delete Steely Dan, The Soft Machine, much of Lou Reed and the later David Bowie.

Burroughs at his most bizarrely obsessive is within EXTERMINATOR, 'the boys were coming now teeth bare eyes burning hair bristling ... red animal hair sprouts all over their bodies canines tear through bleeding gums a boy shivers and kicks asshole vibrating as a tail sprouts out his spine', androgynous wild boys. Wild Boys, Ovid Metamorphosis, lycanthropic transmutations, as in 'from Jerry the red wolfboy sprang the Reddies semi-hermaphrodites who undergo biological change during intercourse' ("Reddies"). The eternal Lemon Kid, Audrey Carsons threading through the stories; faces 'splashed with red and his hair was sandy'. Pre-occupations with ballistics, continual references to a Webley .455 automatic revolver ('only automatic revolver ever made the cylinder turns on ratchets stabilizing like a gyroscope the heavy recoil'). Disease - repeated references to Virus B-23. Obsessions sprinkled and gouged in among ideas like 'your Royal Family is nothing but a holograph picture projected by the CIA'/'the foreman counts the genitals and sweeps them into a laundry hamper'/'death rains back a hail of crystal skulls'/'a cup half-full of cold coffee in which floated the remains of a cigarette butt'/'Audrey is restrained at gun point from mass rape of a boy scout troop' - into politics - 'as false as a Communist mural'/'colonial peoples have benefitted from our rule why look at all those schools and hospitals overgrown with weeds and vines windows melted dead hand frayed scar tissue lifted on a windy street lying white voices from the Congo to Newark'/'the Daughters of the American Revolution who had gathered in front of the Sheraton to protest the legalization of marijuana were charged by police ... and savagely clubbed to the sidewalk in a litter of diamonds, teeth, blood, mink stoles and handbags ...'.

For Burroughs vision is a vision without hope. 'According to ancient legend the white race results from a nuclear explosion in what is now the Gobi desert some 30,000 years ago. The civilisation and techniques which made the explosion possible were wiped out. The only survivors were slaves ... they became albinos as a result of radiation and scattered in different directions ... the white settlers contracted a virus passed down along their cursed generation that was to make them what they are today, a hideous threat to life on this planet ... they didn't belong to themselves any more. They belonged to the virus. They had to kill torture conquer enslave degrade as a mad dog has to bite. At Hiroshima all was lost. The metal sickness dormant 30,000 years stirring now in the blood and bones and bleached flesh ...' an idea with overtones of Robert E. Howard and Von Danieken in unholy fusion; an idea later attributed to legendary '60's underground drug connoisseur (and Tim Leary Guru) Brion Gysin.

The human animal beyond salvation, in "In The Last Resort The Truth" he quotes Robert Ardley's equally pessimistic 'mans original nature (as killer ape) imposes itself on any human solution'. Pessimistic, but never boring. "Twilights Last Gleaming" concerns the extermination of a terrorist gang who intend to blow up a train-load of nerve-gas thus depopulating the whole West Coast, but 'conspiracy succeeds posthumously when a truck-driver on LSD trip with a load of high octane gas crashes into the train.'

To Nuttall 'the obscenity of THE NAKED LUNCH, far from being a device for contriving the acceptance of life, was intended as a device for obliterating life', but Science Fiction? Through the detached factualisation of BUNKIE, concerned with the tools and techniques of addiction, searching for usable vien, rolling drunks in the midnight subway to get money for the next shot, the journalistic description of nightmare withdrawal in a New Orleans prison cell; into the surreal symbolism of NAKED LUNCH and SOFT MACHINE is not a step into fantasy as the early Moorcock article would seem to suggest. In fact both styles are largely built around the same events; characters and incidents are interchangeable, the second literary stage is merely viewed from the inside, rather than the outside of a junk habit. But they are just as real, just as autobiographical. Using conventional forms of definition the novels, and hence the fragments trapped into EXTERMINATOR, cannot really be considered Science Fiction. Yet their influence on the whole 'New Wave' of SF should not be under-estimated; and in so much as Science Fiction can be considered as part of experimental creative writing (as distinct from being a consumer-orientated commodity) then definition has little meaning anyway, and Burroughs is essential reading.

VECTOR QUOTATIONS COMPETITION (D)

" At the centre of it all was the stupifying sight of the world spread before him. Had any man ever been privy to such an experience? How could the mind encompass a concept of which the eye had been incapable of seeing even the entire extent? To left and right - and for all he knew, to the south of him - the surface of the world had extended seemingly without bound. Only in the north, due north, was there a definition of form: that curving, rising pinnacle of land which stretched to no visible end."

Easiest yet, I feel.. I'm sat here in my bedroom-cum-library-cum-office-cum-padded cell listening to High Tide on a Monday night in early December. The room is pervaded by the delicate aroma of sten-correction fluid and the fainter pungency of scorched wood where the small heater os pressed up against the wardrobe. Hmm.. a word about reviewers here. I'm ever on the lookout for new reviewers; and if you fancy trying your hand send me a sample review and we'll take it from there. Next issue has illos (gasp!)..

Jorge Luis Borges - A Man alone?
by Tom A. Jones

Ostensibly this is a review of two recently released Borges' books, A UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF INFAMY and THE BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS, both from Penguin; but I shall undoubtedly make reference to A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY from Picador.

I am by no means an expert on South American literature, or Borges, in fact I can claim a total ignorance until December 1976. At this time Dave Wingrove, in his campaign to convert the BSFA membership to the cause of Borges (I sometimes wonder if he has shares in Penguin and Picador) gave me A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY. I was astounded; here was one of those rare finds - a unique book. It contains short stories, poetry, articles and covers virtually all of Borges writing career to date. Each piece was excellent in its own way, and no piece was a copy of any of the others. I became a Borges fan.

Borges was born in Buenos Aires in 1899. Educated in Europe, he returned to Argentina in 1921. He has produced many 'fictions', critiques and poems since. He is now Director of the Argentine National Library.

It has been claimed, and I think with some justification, that Sf is a literature which lends itself to the short story format. The rationale being that it is easier to encapsulate an idea within a short story than it is to obtain any satisfactory depth of characterisation and this suits Sf, as it tends to be a literature of ideas rather than people.

Borges explodes this myth. None of his fictions are greater than short story length, and all are about people; usually only one character, though sometimes a strong secondary character figures in the story. And the stories themselves cover wide ground. Some are mainstream, some retell legends, some retell history and some are out-and-out fantasy (eg; 'The Circular Ruins' and 'The Aleph', both from A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY). With a few deft lines the characters spring to life; there is no technique, trick or methodoly used - it is a matter of art, not craft. This is not to say, however, that Borges does not use techniques and 'tricks' even. He does, but these are gildings to the lily.

Several themes run throughout Borges' stories. One in particular is the 'man alone' theme; the grasping, shaping of identity, and the pursuit of the individual. It is easy to come to the false conclusion that Borges believes in predestination, that his characters are guided by fate to an end not of their own choosing, as in 'The South' (A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY). This is superficial, for in 'The South', although fate seems to force the main character into a knife fight he has no chance of winning, careful reading shows that the course of action is his own. All along circumstances give him easy ways out. Even at the end he can drop the knife and walk away, but the desire for identity, for self-knowledge, causes him to choose the hard option, the 'illogical' option.

I used the word 'Man' in 'Man alone' deliberately, for Borges was influenced by his time and background. Although educated in Europe, he is an Argentinian and, whilst he could not claim to have a peasant background, he knows his country's people and it's history. Thus women figure little in Borges' tales. But this should not fool you into adopting a simplistic feminist stance in relation to his work.

Right, that finishes the preamble, now on to the books. I wouldn't recommend one of these books as an introduction to Borges; not because it's bad - it is not - but because it is limited in presentation.

I'll deal with this book first, THE BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS. Here we have what must surely be a comprehensive list of imaginary beings from all manner of sources, each one dealt with in about a page of text. This book is not one that could or should be read through as a series of short stories, that would be akin to reading a dictionary at one sitting.

To quote from the preface to the 1967 edition: "As with all miscellanies, as with the inexhaustible volumes of Robert Burton, of Frazer or of Pliny, THE BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS is not meant to be read straight through; rather, we should like the reader to dip into these pages at random, just as one plays with the shifting patterns of a kaleidoscope."

But the book is a useful reference source (useful for those Sf writers in need of an alien or monster..)

A UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF INFAMY is another kettle of fish. It contains Borges' re-telling of myths, legends, histories; all concerned with infamy - from Billy the Kid through to women pirates. These tales came from Borges' early period, when he was learning his trade, experimenting with various techniques. Even so, the technical does not intrude upon the stories..

Borges manages to strip the flab away and reveal the essence, the spirit. In the ten or so pages taken by each tale Borges attempts to show why the infamous character is as she or he is. Why do people become villains, what quirk of nature or circumstances causes the aberration? Borges is not presumptuous enough to suggest there is a simple solution or even to try to produce a total answer in each history. What he does is show some facet of each villain's personality which may have contributed to the cause.

The book also contains 'Streetcorner Man', Borges first fiction. The techniques used with the infamies - but showing the essentials, removing all the padding - are used in this story of Argentinian street gangs. The story is stark and powerful, a true work of literature (it would not translate into any other medium).

The book is a gem, not only easy to read, for the stories are exciting (bloodthirsty even) and the style is basically straightforward, but lingering afterwards. Ah, afterwards.. I read the book in two hours and must have spent over two weeks thinking about it. Thinking about the characters portrayed, about infamy itself, and wondering how the man manages to write stories of such power and depth in such an apparently simple style and in so few words.

Though it is difficult to make judgements of quality amongst things which are excellent, I intend to be foolish enough to do just that. Neither of these books are as good as A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY because they are limited in their scope, whilst APA gives a cross-section of the wide variety of literary endeavours Borges produces. A UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF INFAMY is an excellent book and I urge you to read it, but the BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS is a 'text book' and should be sampled, not read. Now go forth and buy:

A UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF INFAMY	Penguin (137pp 50p)
THE BOOK OF IMAGINARY BEINGS	Penguin (172pp 40p)
A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY	Picador (179pp 45p)

(PS: For art fiends. Covers of both Penguin books are by Peter Goodfellow. IMAGINARY BEINGS is particularly good. The Picador cover is from Hundertwasser "The Beard Is The Grass Of The Bald Headed Man" and is very appropriate..)

LABYRINTHS; Jorge Luis Borges

by David Wingrove.

Borges is a fiction. 'The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to.' So writes Borges, challenging us to claim with certainty that Borges exists. And only Borges can achieve that..

These writings were first published between 1956 and 1961 and show a fertility and scope of imagination rarely encountered in a single man. I hesitate to call anything by Borges sf because though it is almost totally concerned with topics that are the everyday cliches of the sf author, he transcends the simplistic level of those cliches and produces densely drafted and definitive sketches that defy labelling. Immortality and infinity, Time and Recurrence, Memory and the Unforgettable symbol - he takes each idea and renders it perfect.

'Funes The Memorious' is a good example of what I mean. Funes is a boy with total recall - a device frequently used in sf. But what does this imply? No one, I think, before Borges recognised the numerous psychological (and practical) disadvantages of such a condition.. What at first seems marvellous fortune is seen all too quickly as an intolerable burden:

"He was, let us not forget, almost incapable of ideas of a general platonic sort, Not only was it difficult for him to comprehend that the generic symbol 'dog' embraces so many unlike individuals of diverse size and form.."

For Funes, life is the cumulative and unbearable weight of re-lived experience (taste, touch, sound, sight and smell - each in the minutest detail..). Borges indulges in his fascination with mathematical systems to awe us with the overwhelming scale of his brief conception.

Likewise with 'The Library Of Babel'. Neglecting the obvious impracticalities of the story (ie: the inhabitants of the library do not eat, yet have toilets), the idea is numbing. The library is the world - every hexagonal room is the centre of that world, for it is within an infinite sphere. Within the library is every book that could conceivably be written in every conceivable language..almost all of them comprising of pages of letters that make no sense. With 25 symbols placed uniquely in four hundred and ten pages per book (forty lines of eighty letters per page) and with no two 'identical books', there are an incredibly large number of different books. Borges investigates the phenomenon with passion. The dwellers of the library search the interminable shelves for a word of sense, a complete line in a single language. And a myth grows -that of The Man Of The Book, and the mystical hexagon. There lies the book that provides the Key, the 'formula and perfect compendium of all the rest'. In this ordered world of disorder the narrator prays for a clue to the enigma..his 'elegant hope'. And, of course, this delightfully heady entertainment can be read as an interpretation of life. But so can all of Borges. He weakens the barriers between the real and the fictional, as with the tale of the man who re-wrote Cervantes' "Don Quixote". Pierre Menard, the subject of the story, is first given an impressive bibliography as Borges attempts to convince us of Menard's attempts to re-write (from scratch) the 'Quixote' in its original form simply by becoming Cervantes and experiencing and assimilating everything he experienced. But again, it is not this simple. The two works are carbon copies? Superficially yes, says Borges, but it is in the intention and interpretation that they differ. Menard becomes an innovator with his 'Quixote', spawning new philosophical theories with the 'modernised work'. But neither is it this simple, for

Borges is challenging any author's claim that "this is my work" (as he does again in the essay 'Kafka and his precursors'). Menard's art is not to improve the writing (which is a singular art) but the reading (which is, if you like, the large end of the funnel), the interpretation. Such an idea is behind attempts to update Shakespeare by playing his tragedies in modern dress and with cockney accents. Borges, I feel, succeeds by inference where the others fail in actuality.

But Borges is the great inferer. He can convince one that such a book exists merely by inferring it is so. My own knowledge of many of the eclectic subjects Borges dabbles in is weak (and that flatters me) but amongst the obvious duds there are many real tomes; the works of the philosophers. Borges mixes them all together so that 'the truth' is only a superficial appearance. A lie can be the truth if convincingly told. Borges was a great liar - he was a great expounder of truth.

But this will not do. Three examples from 29 stories, 10 essays and 7 parables is hardly fair reviewing. I would need a hefty volume to exclaim my delight at this precious collection. 'Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' is the best here and I have not even mentioned it until now! Here is the only sensible and moving defence of the spirit (and not the content) of Nazism ('Deutsches Requiem') and 'The Zahir' has all the qualities that make a story unforgettable.

And then there are Borges' essays, which put me to shame. I shall say no more and put down my pen..

(Extract from a letter by Tom Jones to the editor, December 1976)

" However, this Borges book which I have started reading is making an impression. As I read each story/article I fear it won't be as good as the last, but as I read it I find it is. The first story, about Lonrot, sticks in my mind. Lonrot is a man much taken with symmetry, patterns and that things/events should have an explanation within their own framework of reference. It is thus that I believe Lonrot has worked out not only the apparent explanation but also the true explanation to the crimes, and knew his death was probable.. the outcome of his last journey; yet he had to make the journey to finish the pattern to remain within the framework.

I'm sure that Borges believes that man must have a sense of honour, man must be courageous and that, to use an American Indian concept, one must die well. Borges' heroes strive, though they often make what would seem to be silly/foolhardy/dangerous decisions - on the surface it would appear that their actions are being shaped by fate, that all is preordained, but closer examination shows that this is not the case. The heroes (I use this term advisedly) see a goal for their actions, for the events, and strive towards it, usually taking more difficult paths than fate would have proscribed.

DREAMTIGERS: Jorge Luis Borges.

by David Wingrove.

DREAMTIGERS is Borges' favourite collection of his work, a compilation of extracts and brief quotations, a potpourri of literary glimpses, poems and riddles in the Borgesian manner. In it he is unashamedly incestuous, taking

what is revered in literature and inserting his own presence. Without an immense talent, subtlety and creative perceptiveness such a thing would not be possible, but Borges successfully avoids the traps of arrogance and manages, by his games, to shed new light upon seemingly tired classics. An example of such is his 'A Problem' where Borges toys with the reality of Don Quixote. He posits Quixote's reaction to his discovery that he has killed a man. Traditionally there are two things he can do, two ways he can react sanely, and one which leads him to madness (he wakes from the dream, he interprets it as a dream or he makes it part of his 'reality', which is the madness). Borges also puts forward another option outside of the tradition; that Quixote realises that life and death are the same and that all things are one, thus his act is creation as well as destruction. Such thoughtful games are the meat of this delightful collection. His games embrace Dante and Coleridge, Shakespeare and himself. Literary incest, but so much sweeter for being irreverent.

These are small stories, more scenarios than stories, thoughtful illustrations of philosophies as diverse as Hindustani and that of Spinoza. There are also poems that, in their density, provoke a disturbing sense of the reiteration of something basic but forgotten. Borges talent is in taking the familiar and divesting it of all trace of the familiar. You cannot read a paragraph from this book without stopping to consider its import. My own favourite from all of these is 'The Witness', moving in its poetry and breathtaking in its simplicity. These are things we do not consider, and it takes such men as Borges to open our eyes to them:

"In the course of time there was a day that closed the last eyes to see Christ. The battle of Junin and the love of Helen each died with the death of some one man. What will die with me when I die, what pitiful or perishable form will the world lose? The voice of Macedonio Fernandez? The image of a roan horse on the vacant lot at Serrano and Charcas? A bar of sulphur in the drawer of a mahogany desk? "

Some of these pieces are accessible only to someone with the necessary keys, but they are few (the tales related to his homeland) and the majority are parables, barred only to the incurious and congealed of mind.

As I see it Borges is simply offering keys to the tapestry of culture, to the literary and artistic works of both East and West. At first his writing seems ostentatiously littered with covert references for little purpose other than to impress the gullible, but each piece has a multiplicity of interpretations. It can be interpreted from a knowledge of the work Borges has incestuously incorporated, or from a lack of such knowledge (ie: by admitting to Borges assertion that all literature is only a borrowed thing and thus such plagiarism is justifiable). Or you can dig deeper and find the kernel of Borges' thought. He wears many hats and all of them with a great sense of appropriateness. I have said before that Borges' is a great liar. This collection confirmed that view to me, but also made me realise that Borges is no gad-fly, a trickster of ideas and images. His poetry belies that impression, as in his poem, 'The Moon':

" I know that the moon or the word moon
Is a letter that was created to share
In the complex scripture of that rare
Thing that we are, both manifold and one.

It is one of those symbols given to man
By fate or chance, which one day he
May use to write his own true name,
Uplifted in glory or in agony. "

He is unarguably the best fantasist we have; but he is also so much more.

THE INFINITY BOX (Part Two)

Morality, deceit and iniquity; Piserchia's debut.

MISTER JUSTICE; Doris Piserchia; Dobson; London; 1977; 176pp; £3.95;
ISBN 0 234 77144 5.

Reviewed by Chris Evans

"After the initial decisions were made, it didn't matter who was right, not to the doers. What mattered was who won. The rightness or wrongness of things accomplished by the doers was the concern of spectators who forever sat on their asses and made mouth noises."

Thus observes the chief villain of this intriguing first novel, a man with the innocuous name of Arthur Bingle. His adversary, Mr Justice, is a time-travelling vigilante who operates outside the law, apprehending criminals who have escaped prosecution. Sometimes he delivers these criminals to the authorities with conclusive proof of their guilt; more often he dispenses the punishment himself - and since his quarry are mostly murderers, this means that he executes them. Who is Mr Justice? Both Bingle and the Secret Service are eager to discover his true identity, and this provides the novel's plot. Are his actions justifiable? This is the book's underlying theme, the question of morality. In a godless world, to whom does a man owe ultimate responsibility for his actions? For Bingle the self is the sole arbiter, so anything is permissible. For the State the law is a prescription for behaviour, and violations must be punished. But in a democracy there is a strict division between the executive and judicial functions of the law; Mr Justice flouts this principle by acting as cop and judge. Yet both the criminal and the police are ambivalent towards him. Bingle recognises Justice as a fellow-soul, operating out of personal imperatives, unlike the great mass of people whom he despises as duty-bound. The police harbour a grudging respect for Justice, too, because he brings retribution to criminals who would clearly escape conviction under due legal process. Nonetheless, he is a threat to both parties, so Bingle, a rich and powerful racketeer, mobilises his minions, while Bailey, Burgess and Turner, three Secret Service Men, supervise the training of a young boy, Daniel Jordan, who will devote himself to discovering Justice's identity.

This is not an easy book to read, although there's plenty of action and some gut-rending episodes. Callousness and brutality permeate the book (the setting is New York State a century hence, rapidly descending into anarchy): a dog is run over by a car and a young boy watches its death-throes; a man is murdered by a woman after making love to her, his neck broken in an embrace; a prepubertal girl is raped by a policeman (this is a particularly horrific passage); people are robbed, tortured, drugged and maimed. None of this violence is gratuitous.

Piserchia catalogues everything with her lean, muscular, toneless prose, letting the actions and responses of the characters speak for themselves. Scenes switch abruptly, so that the reader might be halfway down the page before he realises that he is somewhere else and that a different set of characters are speaking. Little use is made of the auctorial voice for the dispensing of background information; it has to be culled from the conversations and reflections of the characters. But the characters themselves are Machiavellian, their motives obscure, their pronouncements ambiguous, so that it is difficult to discern what to take on face value. But it's an exciting ride.

MR JUSTICE is a compelling rather than enjoyable book, and although I would urge you to locate it, it must be said that ultimately it fails to cohere. What's missing is a lack of balance. Piserchia has a cynical view of human nature; Bailey, Burgess and Turner's motives seem no more noble than Bingle's, so the reader looks elsewhere for someone acting out of humanitarian instincts. He looks to Jordan, who at least possesses the capacity for self-criticism. But Jordan relinquishes his mission for the love of a girl and promptly drops out of sight about three-quarters of the way through the book. This in itself damages the integrity of the already confused plot; but, more importantly, Piserchia fails with her central character. Throughout the book we are led to believe that the true identity of Mr Justice is a question of vital importance, and yet when his identity is revealed, it does not seem a particularly significant thing. He remains a shadowy figure, his motivations still obscure. Thus there is no-one who represents the view of morality as grounded in simple compassion, a caring for one's fellow man. MR JUSTICE is an unrelieved catalogue of deceit and iniquity; the reader waits in vain for that flash of light which will illuminate everything, or at least provide some contrast. Piserchia would seem to be saying that morality is a question of dogma, not feeling, and while she argues her case persuasively, the opposition doesn't get a fair hearing. I'm inclined to conclude by saying that she needs to tighten her plotting and think her material out more fully in advance, but it occurs to me that the whole ethos on which this book is founded is that people will do as they please and that the lack of internal consistency is what gives the book its vigour and steel-edged assurance. Don't pass it by.

Crystalline ascension; pristine Griffin..

THE NUCLEATION: Brian Griffin; Robert Hale; Dec 8th 1977; London; £3.75; 191pp; ISBN 0 7091 6407 0.

Reviewed by David Wingrove

Robert Hale are not noted for presenting the very best in SF, although it is to be said to their credit that they do encourage a large number of new writers. This is Brian Griffin's first novel, and like any pristine effort it suffers certain awkwardnesses, though few of the expected hiccups of plot and style. Indeed, this is a very polished first product and reads smoothly, catches attention in all the right places and moves consistently to a conclusion which, if not poignant, is expressive and appropriate.

THE NUCLEATION is a novel about basic human meaning, practically a re-telling of Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD. In fact, this similarity is very marked in certain passages in the book, particularly those in the second part of the book where we are taken 500 years into the future and see the results of an administered and planned social system. If Brian's workers of the future are not fully Bokanovskified, they are part-way there; copulating, working, sleeping without conscious dreams. But I am moving way ahead of the plot. Let me infer something of the story before I resume this avenue of thought.

The novel begins by showing us a society that is beginning the slow process of alienating itself totally from the natural. We are shown the Administrators, men made alien by the use of Z-Plasma, a drug that keeps their metabolism at top gear; they do not sleep, but only work to bring about their own version of the 'Brave New World'. Some intelligent men outside of this ruling clique evade the processes of de-humanisation and become loners, useful, but dangerous cogs in the machinery - the spark

of intuitive logic needed by any system to progress. One of these Luners, Martin Ingram, is encountered working on the creation of new atoms by means of meditation. We are told that the atoms of the Universe are degenerating and that Mankind, having severed his link with the natural, is doomed to stagnation and extinction in a mere 500 years unless something is done to reverse this 'running-down'. Ingram succeeds in these experiments and becomes one with the new element he has created;

' Martinez laughed gently. "Don't worry, Martin - you've no need to develop a Messiah-complex. You are at the centre of what is happening - but your role is necessarily one of passive acceptance. Beyond that, it's out of your hands. There is, within ultimate Reality, an individuating principle whereby Man is married to the natural world - an Everlasting Man, if you like. Now that the Administrators have obliterated the ancient bond between Man and Nature, this everlasting Man now binds you to the basic inter-atomic forces of the cosmos, thus renewing the marriage. Therein lies the only hope for a continuing 'natural piety', as Wordsworth put it - and for a continuing human world." (Pages 50/51)

Having created this natural bond, Ingram is guaranteed to become an enemy of the Administrators. Martinez is taken instead of him, which allows him to escape to Mars, the austere limbo of humanity. The crystal, named Zoeite after Ingram's wife (but also because it is a life force) is fired in a probe ship to deep space for a five-hundred year round trip. The Administrators win round one, but their victory is not decisive.

When we return 500 years later we are taken amongst the neo-human crew of scientists whose job it is to dissect and unravel the mysteries of the returned star-probe. The crystal fascinates them, and awakens their human instincts. They cease to function as cogs and start questioning the system. After escape, disillusionment and ultimate death, the crystal is gained finally by the Administrators. Their ironical final gesture, in sending the crystal (in effect a repository of human feeling and experience, as it has accumulated those of all the people it encountered) back into deep space, is again a small victory. Man may have lain down and expired on Earth, but the spirit of Mankind has been ejaculated into the heart of the Galaxy. In tone the ending is very reminiscent of Brian Aldiss' *HOTHOUSE* where the spores and organic detritus of Earth is sucked up into space to germinate new worlds. Both are optimistic messages in the midst of superficially pessimistic books.

Style is very important in modern SF. The tale alone is not enough, the genre being riddled with its own subtle in-jokes and cliches. Here I was dubious about the depth of characterisation (no great fault in an ideative novel) but those doubts disappeared altogether by the sixth chapter of the first part. Ingram is not overtly introspective, but his reactions to external and internal stimulæ are well charted. And in Martin Black, the neurotic 'inmate' of the Mars colony, Griffin has created a highly credible character (Pages 81 to 84 are notable here). Romantic and sexual love are strongly delineated in the novel, illustrative of the major theme of meaning and pointlessness as totally antagonistic forces. Man's progress towards the artifice is killing something too valuable to lose - this is clearly stated time and again throughout the novel. Mars is the literal analogy of the apathy of spirit that results from taking the path of artifice. Humanity is the act of striving to make sense. To simply accept and exist is to deny that humanity and the natural harmony it embraces. If the style was less effective much of this clarity of theme would have been lost, but fortunately this is not so. Nucleation is very much an appropriate tag upon which to entitle this novel, for the process of nucleation occurs on three levels; upon the natural (the creation of the crystal, Zoeite and the reversal of the regressive trends of nature), upon the individual (the awakening of Martin Ingram and his adoption of a sense

of purpose), and the final awakening of Man (though premature, still potent in its effect and the challenge it places before the Administrators).

As a first novel it lacks little that I could criticise on the grounds of omission and by its clear, positive statement of theme and equally lucid progression of plot and development of character it succeeds on many levels where older hands in the genre fall down. Even if it asserts the polarity of human thought as existing between Freud and Luther, that too can only be challenged, not dismissed. Thoughtful but accessible polemic, an active plot and lively pace, sympathetic characters and a touch of allegory - it all makes for a very good blend that is worth ordering from your library. And when the paperback arrives?.. Well worth the cover price of that, I assure you. I could say that Hale have found themselves a good writer at last, but I don't think they'll keep him long..

WRITERS OF THE 21ST CENTURY SERIES; Studies in SF

ISAAC ASIMOV; 247pp; £6.00; ISBN 0 904505 40 5

ARTHUR CLARKE; 254 pp; £6.00; ISBN 0 904505 41 3

Published by Paul Harris, Edinburgh; Edited by Joseph O. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg.

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Here are two collections of critical essays - the first of a projected series which is also to include Heinlein, Dick, Bradbury and LeGuin. Some of the essays in each book are reprinted, others are original. Each volume is presumably intended to illuminate the author's work by looking at it from a number of different angles. The books are aimed at university libraries, and perhaps also at students.

As is inevitable in any collection of commentaries, some of the contributors to each volume seem moderately sensible, while others set my teeth on edge. There are approaches to literary criticism which I find interesting, others which seem to me to be an offense to the intellect. These reactions presumably reflect my own affinities, and it would be unreasonable to generalise from them in a wholly cavalier manner. However, even leaving my prejudices aside, there is much in these volumes which seems to me to be an offense to any intellect.

One cannot comment upon something that is itself commentary from a position of objectivity - the best one can hope for is attempted neutrality. A work of fiction one can weigh in terms of its own goals and techniques regardless of whether one feels that they are the right goals or the best techniques, but in weighing the value of criticism the whole argument turns on whether the goals and techniques are appropriate. My conviction is that with only a couple of exceptions in each volume these essays consist largely of the exploits of the unimaginative in hot pursuit of the unimaginable. The authors are so blatantly looking for the wrong things in the wrong way that it is difficult to perceive how they ever came to be reading Asimov and Clarke in the first place.

Literary criticism is an artificial and unnecessary discipline. This does not mean that it is valueless (and, indeed, I believe that the writing of good commentaries may contribute a great deal to the context of understanding which permits fiction at all levels to be appreciated) but it does mean that those addicted to it and dependent upon it must fight hard to establish their credentials, if only to protect their self-respect. This encourages elitism and esotericism of a particularly pernicious kind. All professionals defend their professions, maintaining their status by maintaining their exclusiveness, but in most cases this defence and exclusivity has at least a semi-rational basis. To perform as a doctor one

needs both knowledge and skill, and there is thus a wholly necessary and appropriate filter eliminating the majority from the profession. In the case of lawyers it may well be that the awesome knowledge required is to a large extent the invention of the lawyers themselves, part of the strategy of defence, but it is still necessary for lawyers to know the law. The only meaningful credential relevant to being a literary critic is literacy, and this makes the profession of literary criticism very difficult to defend. Exclusivity therefore has to be maintained (if the critics are to maintain their artificial status) by a whole set of arbitrary strategies of pretence and pretentiousness. This would not be so bad if it were not for the fact that it usually forces professional critics to such absurd pretentiousness and esotericism that what they produce becomes meaningless. For this reason literary criticism as practised in universities - particularly in status-conscious America - has become little more than a species of intellectual masturbation decorated with elaborate fantasies whose sole function is to mystify the reader and junior critic.

The result of this, in the particular in stances under consideration, is that there is hardly anything in either of these two volumes that people who read, enjoy and comprise the market for Asimov and Clarke's fiction will recognise as relating in any way whatever to their reading and their enjoyment. Perhaps the saddest thing they contain is the afterword which Asimov has contributed to the volume on his works, where he confesses that the critical essays are, to him, just so much meaningless noise, but is nevertheless conned into admitting that there might well be something there. He has, it seems, finally learned to see the emperor's new clothes.

My hopes were raised just once in the Asimov volume when Donald Watt boldly stated "It is worth asking, then, what it is about Asimov's writing that accounts for his popularity". Here at last, I thought, is a man who is prepared to think in terms of reader-experience rather than mere texts, carefully killed, drenched in formalin and carefully dismantled. Alas, no. No sooner was the question raised than forgotten. It is, I suppose, far too simple a question ever to appeal to a professional critic. Despite this, the Asimov volume seemed to me a little less offensive than the one on Clarke, though the Clarke volume does contain the best essay of all - by Thomas Clareson. This plus is off-set by the dreadful minus of two of the worst essays I have ever encountered - exercises in literary psychoanalysis which I can only describe as stupefying in their puerility. One is by Betsy Harfat (a ham-handed Jungian) and the other by Robert Plank (a dedicated fan of the 'oedipus' complex and father-figures) which overlap somewhat in producing mutually contradictory analytical accounts of the same symbols in various Clarke works. The Clarke volume is tedious in its insistence on covering the same ground over and over - Childhood's End is butchered repeatedly and in several different ways, though it is good to see that one of the butchers, at least, (Eugene Tanzy) has some awareness of the scientific context of the novel's ideas.

There is nothing in these books for the casual reader. There is nothing for the genuine student of sf, either. They are probably invaluable, though, for the would-be professional critic who intends to interest himself in sf. If you are going to be a con man, you have to have the patter. If you can master all the techniques on display here, you too will be able to talk for hours without saying a single meaningful sentence.

There is in economics a law called Gresham's Law, which states (very roughly) that bad money drives out good. It is true only when the market is subject to certain kinds of monopolistic manipulation. There is a marketplace in ideas, too, and so far as contemporary literary criticism is concerned, Gresham's Law reigns supreme.

A DREAM OF WESSEX; Dreams of reality.

A DREAM OF WESSEX; Chris Priest; Faber; 1977; £4.25; 199pp;
ISBN 0 571 11118 1.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Just as Christopher Priest's two previous novels, *INVERTED WORLD* and *THE SPACE MACHINE* have paid homage, respectively, to the concealed-environment theme (Aldiss' *NON-STOP*, for example) and to the novels of H. G. Wells, so *A DREAM OF WESSEX* pays homage to Philip K. Dick. It is an outstanding novel on the theme of reality --- Priest's best work to date.

The setting is an essentially English one: Dorset in the near and (subjectively) not-so-near future, with the whole thing held together by the unchanging earthworks of Maiden Castle, near Dorchester. Writing of this prehistoric hill-fort, Thomas Hardy likened it to "an enormous many-limbed organism of an antediluvian time ... lying lifeless, and covered with a thin green cloth, which hides its substance while revealing its contour." Perhaps Christopher Priest knew this quotation when he wrote *A DREAM OF WESSEX*, for it seems apt of Maiden Castle's use in the novel -- as a symbol of permanence, as the focal point of the action through having the Wessex Project hidden beneath it, and as a vantage point from which the remainder of Wessex (real and unreal) may be viewed.

The treatment, too, is essentially English, being reminiscent of the English disaster novel whilst avoiding most of its clichés. The characters, mainly scientists, are all members of a government-sponsored research project aimed at discovering ways of guiding Britain towards a more prosperous and peaceful future. By means of the Ridpath projector the thirty-nine members of the Wessex Project engage in communal dreaming over an extended period to create and maintain a fairly rosy fantasy future. The Great English Disaster occurs, but only implicitly, the widespread earthquakes which have changed the shape of southern England and left most of Dorset as an island being assumed by the dreamers as one of the causes of their fantasy world.

Both Dorsets are convincingly detailed. The grim "real" world of 1987, with frequent army check-points and the threat of urban terrorism; is a fairly short step from today. The "unreal" island of Wessex in 2137, where Dorchester is a fishing port and beach resort, Soviets rule OK, and Mohammedanism is the major religion, is a fascinating place. Whether such a seemingly unlikely future as this dream-world could ever exist is not important; it is partly a wish-fulfilment fantasy in any case, with project members able -- while dreaming -- to alter its structure (While members are dreaming they live in 22nd century Wessex, which becomes totally real to them, and forget their 20th century existences). I do have one complaint, though. While Thomas Hardy described Dorset faithfully, changing only the names, Chris Priest's fantasy Wessex leaves little unchanged besides the names, so that only by diligent use of an Ordnance Survey map could I follow some parts of the action (and I live within 10 miles of Dorchester!). It would have been helpful to have included a map of post-disaster Dorset, even though I know that such devices smack of fantasy -- unjustly despised by many science fiction writers -- and are thought (for no good reason, it seems to me) to detract from the 'literariness' of a science fiction novel.

Love and jealousy are the plot pivots (as they so often are in Philip K. Dick's novels, too). Julia Stretton is given the task of retrieving one of the other project members, David Harkham, from Wessex, but their fantasy world personas fall in love. (Members normally spend about three months at a time dreaming, with their minds in Wessex and their bodies kept alive in large metal drawers beneath Maiden Castle, and are then retrieved and

woken for a break of a week or two. But in the two years of the project's existence it has never been possible to retrieve David Harkman.) Paul Mason, a former lover of Julia's, joins the project. She hates him now and wants to keep him out, knowing that his strong personality -- plus his determination to make her dependent upon him again -- will change Wessex and possibly wreck the project.

The dream world which becomes a reality and vice versa are familiar enough in science fiction, though they give rise to so many potential developments that -- when well handled at least -- they have not yet become hackneyed. So, when Wessex does change, when it seems to be mirroring the "real" world and becoming dominant, with doubt being cast upon the reality of 20th century Dorset, the restraint and conviction of the writing lend freshness to the situation. That the plot is resolved only in subjective and not objective terms, seems appropriate.

Despite its quiet tone and lack of physical action, I was gripped by A DREAM OF WESSEX from start to finish. It is a novel of strong images and great emotive power. If there is any justice in the world it will be at least short-listed for the Hugo and Nebula awards.

Celluloid lobotomy; Demon bore..

DEMON SEED; Dean R. Koontz; Bantam; New York; June 1973; 95c; 182pp; ISBN 553 07190 095 (also available in Corgi paperback in UK)

Reviewed by David Wingrove.

I confess that I saw the film before I read the book. Thus I approached this with strong preconceptive images of what I was to expect - the usual dire third-rate tale tiresomely elongated to novel length and perfect - just dandy - for filming.

Strangely I was disappointed.

I saw a film about a computer that achieved sentience and hid it from its creators, and in the film there were characters who inter-reacted with the computer, Proteus, and eventually came to some sort of basic understanding with it. Watery stuff; as if they were afraid to touch the major concerns of this book because of the inherent complications of filming the introspective. For this book is about the achievement of sentience by a non-human creation and the psychological trauma caused thereby.

' " You mean that you are beginning to lose control of yourself? "

" Hardly anything so drastic. I am of two minds, two persons. I find a need for self-expression and for the release of tension unlike what I would feel as only a semi-sentient being. Yet even when I scream and overreact - as I did with you - there is a part of me that sits back and watches my other self with cold detachment and, to be honest, with not a little loathing. These are trying times, growing more human but remaining as much a machine as ever. " ' (Page 106)

The film shows us the external Proteus, the book the introspective Hamlet of a machine finding itself unable to comprehend the emotional, unable to free itself of more than a shred of its mantle of artifice and unable to win anything from its victim, Susan, but hatred and indifference. The film bludgeons while the book infers. In fact, to be honest; I wonder why they gave Dean Koontz any credit for the filmed version, or that he would wish to claim it for other than economic reasons. Only one incident in the film is in the book. Nowhere in the film is there mention of the girl's grandfather and his wicked perversions practised upon her as a child. We are forever, in the film, shown effect and never cause. Koontz's book

is primarily about causes. It is subtler than the film and has a far greater sting in its tale. In the film the child, artificially impregnated in the girl, is almost human when the shell is taken from her. It, or she, survives. In the book the monster created from the machine's gross act of physical assault upon Susan, attempts to rape her. Perhaps the scene is tainted with the spectre of Frankenstein, but it is neither comic nor bathotic. In effect Koontz's novel tells us nothing about the state of being 'alien' or 'semi-sentient' but a lot about the state of 'otherness' in human relationships. Proteus is a child who has to run before he can crawl; the trauma of awakening has perverted his perception. Koontz captures the inferiority, the inadequacy and the frustration of sexual/emotional impotence well.

The film is an amusing diversion that lacks any real punch. The book is a thoughtful and provocative look at ourselves, written as a science fiction novel. It works.

TIME THIEVES; Koontz again..

TIME THIEVES; Dean R. Koontz; Dobson; London; 1977; 109pp; £3.75;
ISBN 0 234 77543 2

Reviewed by Chris Evans

A piece of blatant profiteering from Dobson. The publication date of this book (September 30th) is designed to catch the Christmas market and to cash in on Koontz's connections with the recent sf-horror movie "Demon Seed" (he wrote the novel on which the screen play was based). Even at today's inflated prices, 3½p per page is too much to pay for any author, let alone Koontz, who has never produced any science fiction of particular note. TIME THIEVES is an sf-mystery type story (not a novel) in which the strange happenings which afflict a happily married couple (the husband keeps disappearing) turn out to have been caused by aliens (surprise, surprise). The tale is shamelessly padded and although Koontz attempts to give the proceedings an air of dignity towards the end by rabbiting on about the nature of love while his protagonists murders the aliens, it's obvious that his heart isn't in it. TIME THIEVES slips down the mental gullet like porridge - insipid and bland. Given the choice, I'd plump for more turkey and Christmas pud.

Sentimental exaggeration; grotesque clonings.

JOSHUA SON OF NONE; Nancy Freedman; Panther; 1977; 235pp; 75p;
ISBN 0 586 042 51 2

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

This novel follows up the premise that when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 some cells were taken from the wound in his throat and preserved until a project could be mounted (financed, of course, by private enterprise) to clone a new individual therefrom. It makes, therefore, an interesting comparison with the recent best-seller THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL by Ira Levin, whose premise is that a Nazi who conducted research at Auschwitz managed in the 60s to bring to fruition a project to clone Hitler. Taken together, the two books dramatise two sides of a question which may one day of more than hypothetical import: if it becomes possible to clone humans, who gets cloned - and why?

The tactics of the medical scientists in each book are essentially similar. It is necessary, they decide, that if the personality as well as the form of the donor is to be reproduced then the key events of his formative experience must be simulated. In each case this requires that at

some stage someone close to the clone-child must die, and in each case this particular aspect of the simulation provides the focal point of the plot. Each book turns on the question of whether it is possible to duplicate the human mind given that the body can be duplicated. Both experimental directors are optimistic, but Levin's takes no chances - while Freedman's *Thr Bitterbaum* clones only one Kennedy, his Dr. Megele clones 94 Hitlers. Freedman, however, is more inclined to genetic determinism than Levin - though her commitment to pattern seems to go far beyond confidence in the dictatorship of the genes. Her whole plot is deterministic, and takes its tragic note and its literary strength from precisely that deterministic rigidity.

Of the two writers there is no doubt that Levin is the more skilful. *THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL* is well-written and has a neatly-tailored plot. It is, if anything, too well-tailored to be effective. It is a smooth thriller which invests all its effort (and, by proxy, the reader's attention) in maintaining suspense and regulating its pace. It skims slickly over the philosophical issues which underline its theme, allowing the reader to evade them. It remains a shallow book, universally accesible (as is confirmed by its sales). *JOSHUA, SON OF NONE* is a little deeper insofar as the aspirations of the author go. It is by no means a philosophical novel. And yet, precisely because it is not so well-tailored for reader-convenience, the uncomfortable issues show through and attract attention. It is thought-provoking simply because it is less efficient at saving the reader from the trouble of thinking (A general comment: this is true of a lot of science fiction - it is stimulating not because it is well-written but because it is badly-written, the ideas gaping grotesquely rather than being welded neatly together in self-contained, easy-to-handle units).

Freedman walks a tightrope throughout *JOSHUA, SON OF NONE* - a tightrope strung across the Niagara Falls of sentimental exaggeration which has already turned Kennedy into a myth-figure so powerful as to attract idolatrous worship. She never quite falls, though there are moments when the tone of her prose comes near to hysteria. The ending is something of a triumph in that it transcends its horrible predictability to redirect the reader's attention to the truly essential question of the book in a post-climatic epilogue. For this, and for its occasional awkwardness, I prefer Freedman's book to Levin's - but I do recommend reading them as a pair.

The Stars Like Rust?: Another Asimov..

AUTHORISED MURDER; Isaac Asimov; Panther Books; 1977; 240pp; 80p;
ISBN 586 04641 0

Reviewed by Robert Gibson

This is Asimov's second non-SF murder mystery. It is set in an unnamed hotel in an unnamed American city during four days at the 75th convention of the American Booksellers' Association. In the background there are quite a few people whose names ring a bell, for example Muhammad Ali, Uri Geller and Carl Sagan. In the foreground there's a cheerful cove named Isaac Asimov. He's part of the story in order to provide (as the author explains in an afterword) an air of authenticity and to supply the comic interest. He pours out a stream of puns, salacious remarks and limericks. No, it isn't he who gets murdered, it's another writer, and the investigator is yet another writer. The main clues are: the murdered man's bizarre sexual habits; a trace of heroin; and the puzzle of the pers. One of these turns out in the end to be a false lead.

The mystery isn't outstanding (I didn't guess the solution, but then I'm no good at these things). Asimov almost made me forget this by carrying the thing along on storytelling flair alone.

The characters are engagingly drawn in all their human fallibility. Far too much so for my liking. I'd rather make friends with Dr Susan Calvin's robots.

THE SCOTOMIZED CASTRATI; Salty tales.

THE DISINHERITING PARTY by John Clute; Allison & Busby; 1977; 144pp; £1.95; ISBN 0 85031 195 0

Reviewed by David Wingrove

John Clute is an unusual fellow. As a critic he has always tended to interpret artistically rather than simply dissect. His writing in that respect is informed and concise. Here, in his first novel, there is the same basic drive to re-interpret a situation into an artistic context. What is art? Perhaps it could be described as the metamorphosis of the specific into the general by use of symbols - the reinterpretation of an unique event into something of meaning to us all. In Clute's work this process is at its most complex and THE DISINHERITING PARTY is thus a book that needs careful reading and an open, receptive mind.

In essence it is a castration novel, telling the story of the lecherous Smythe and his abominable progeny, spawned from numerous clandestine affairs. His children are one step from the asylum, victims of Smythe's hideous psychological trickery which has reduced them to puppets and porcelain toys, stuttering fools who cannot even maintain an unique identity for too long. It could be seen as a metaphor for the process of social development, a process that produces these abominations and then, sensing its failure, castrates its progeny to prevent their spread. But this book is not that simplistic. Smythe fears the ageing process and creates a continual flow of children, each undertaking the same actions year after year, to preserve the illusion of timelessness. Again, this is too simple. The most important facet of the novel seems to be the psychological effects of the 'disinheritance' upon Smythe's children. These potential castrati are impotent long before the ritual disinheriting within the stones of a mock stonehenge.

As a book it is stylistically difficult to follow, but the images provoked by Clute's assault on the language are well worth the effort - like the best surrealist poems of Andre Breton. It only occasionally becomes over-rich and heady, and even then the mood does not fade. It cannot be digested at a single sitting, nor even in a single reading. In a sense it is a book to pore over, to be read fragmentarily when the mood takes. My two readings and the several 'porings' since have meant an enrichment of my consciousness of Clute's use of metaphor. And here it is apt to give an example of what I mean:

" The vessel yawed, I began the immortal strut through moonlit streets to the Thames, harried by his agents crying Nice Balliol, good boy, I'll kiss it and make it better. Therefore I hastened to the sea where the tall ship awaited me in the fjord. My cheeks bulged with lymph as I ran, and my lungs were calced. And when I reached the dock the sea disappeared with a sudden shuddering whump. There was only a vast desert gorge, and my fallen vessel splintered on the dried vines of salt far below, and the spilled intestines of the crew miaoued faintly as they shrivelled into kindling. In great panic, therefore, I leapt off the dock to save myself from further inroads, and fell; but in the instant of awakening I saw that the

solarised gorge into which I was falling was no gorge at all but his mouth. " (Page 101)

Images of salt, of chimerical events. In the novel there is something called The Sorrowing, a simple term for the mood into which these characters fall, engulfed by the overwhelming psyche of Smythe. His progeny is the salt of existence, for there is only one child, endlessly repeated. Smythe is the enigma and the core of this novel and all relates back to him and is resolved with his climatic (and highly funny) death. There is an over-complexity of relationships that ensnares the reader from the start. You too are falling into language and metaphor throughout this novel. There are shades of Miller and Joyce and Dylan Thomas, but all translated by Clute into his own idiom. There are sex scenes which are far more intellectually stimulating than erotically stirring - perhaps created by the artistic detachment of the author, perhaps intending to show their ultimate impotence. But I can only hint at the depths and riches in this work and end with another, perhaps more poetic, quote:

"The bath was golden and the rug was soft. His piss fell comet-like between the barren planets. He was staring. How ever could his wee homunculus broaststroke down the same rainbow? Smythe stared like an O out of the toilet into the yellow fog, his teeth grinning Yale Yale. Abraham fingered the medallion which hung around his neck; the snake's jade eye glared in an O from the centre of the medallion, and its body twined angularly around the words engraved below the green, unwavering eye: ABRAHAM ZUKEN. He flushed the toilet. His head touched the cold sink just for a moment.

Come here boykins.

The huge gnarled whale with the wrinkled eyes gave Abraham something cold and hard and small.

Put it around your neck. Go on.

The child obeyed, its jaws gaping slightly.

There!

The huge face shook with laughter into an O.

Now when I ask you what your name is you can show me the medallion, boykins. You won't have to try to talk.

The tiny jaws closed and opened.

Boykins!

The child stood at attention.

What's your name?

Swiftly, humbly, obeying instructions, the child handed it back. "

(Pages 20/21)

Quite a few people will find this inaccessible and lack the patience to persevere, but the effort is well repaid. It isn't sf, though the imagery and techniques are those often adopted by the genre. What separates it most, however, from standard genre works is its genuine insight into characters who assume a reality that emphasises the illusion of the setting.

You can ask nothing more of a book that it amuses and inspires original tracks of thought. This manages both, and with style.

A Broken Trilogy; Exotic Vance..

THE BRAVE FREE MEN by Jack Vance; Coronet; London; 1977; 75p; 224 pp;
ISBN 0 340 19828 1

THE ASUTRA by Jack Vance; Coronet; London; 1977; 187pp; 75p;
ISBN 0 340 19830 3

Reviewed by Chris Evans.

These are the second and third books of the Durdane trilogy (the first being THE ANOME which neglectful Coronet failed to supply). I recall reading this trilogy five or six years ago when it was serialised in F & SF, and coming back to them for the purposes of this review was like revisiting a strange, exotic country where both character and event are larger than life. Vance is an interesting writer, combining considerable virtues and considerable flaws in about equal proportion. The term 'science fantasy' might have been coined for the express purpose of describing his work, for while the worlds he creates are generally subject to the same physical laws as ours (ie; they are non-magical), the 'science' element in his stories is practically non-existent, so that they scarcely qualify as out-and-out science fiction either. Vance is a master of the opulent, decorative detail; his worlds are embodiments of those mysterious and fascinating lands which are conjured up by the terms "The Orient", "Araby", "Far Cathay", and so on, with the added bonus of aliens and mutants to stir the imagination.

Shant, in Durdane, is a country of cantons, ruled over by the Anome, the Faceless Man who maintains his power by his control of the neck-torcs which everyone wears and which can be detonated if anyone shows disobedience. Shant, however, is threatened by the Rogushkoi, half-men half-brutes of great sexual appetite who have been killing Shantian men and impregnating their women. The Anome is dilatory in taking counter-measures against the brutes and so Gastel Etzwane, sometime musician, wrests power from him (End of Book 1). Book 2 details how Etzwane succeeds in uniting the fractious cantons against their common enemy and halting the Rogushkoi's incursions. But Etzwane, now the Anome, soon learns that the Rogushkoi have been taken over by the Asutra, a race of alien parasites whose powerful mentality combined with the brute strength of their hosts makes them fearsome foes. Can Etzwane defeat them? Can he rely on the help of his mysterious friend Ifness to save Shant? Book 3 provides the answers.

Stated so baldly, these books would seem to offer nothing more than a staple cut-and-thrust men vs monsters recipe, but what redeems the admittedly banal action is the care which Vance invests in his evocation of Shant. This is not simply some foreign country dressed up in gaudy attire but a subtly different society from any we know. Vance uses footnotes to good effect in this regard. For example, describing the colour-lore which is an integral part of canton life: "Ael'skian: More exactly, the symbology of colour and colour-combinations; in Shant an intensely meaningful aspect of life, adding another dimension to perception." And, a little later, when describing a proclamation from the Anome in which the opinions of well-known persons are set out in various shades of indigo and green, he adds: "The exact quality of blue and green measured the quoted person's prestige: Reputation, vanity, ridicule, popularity, pomposity: all were implicit in the depths, variations, and overtones of the colours employed - a symbology of great subtlety." Vance is very fond of colours; all his books show the same preoccupation with describing the precise shade of clothes, landscapes, skies, even complexions. While sometimes this tendency becomes a little tedious (as does his propensity for using two or more words of very similar meaning when one would do - as in the quotes given above, for example) it does, at least, give his prose a certain gracefulness which allows the reader to more readily accept a somewhat stereotyped plot. Vance is, primarily, an entertainer, a creator of evocative environments in which the reader can immerse himself like a tourist, sitting back and enjoying the scenery. A product of the pulps, Vance has, by dint of careful attention to detail, transcended the pulp style, if not its subject matter. His influence on the field can be seen in the writings of brighter stars such as Michael Bishop and even, possibly, Ursula LeGuin (whose concept of shrifgrethor in THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS seems a decidedly Vancian notion). Meanwhile he

continues to produce carefully-crafted, undemanding fantasies such as these, providing a few hours escape from the less colourful realities of the here-and-now. Happy travels.

Let them play and let them be happy..

A SCANNER DARKLY by Philip K. Dick; Gollancz; 10 Nov 1977; £3.50; 220pp; ISBN 0 575 02381 3

Reviewed by David Wingrove

In a recent review, Bob Silverberg concluded that this was a "not..very successful novel" (Cosmos, Vol.1, No.3), although a "stunning failure". In a sense this sympathetic dismissal is a grave injustice, for this is probably the most complete Dick novel yet; bitterly ironic in a manner that only Dick, amongst our modern sf writers, can manage. Silverberg's comments evidence a failure to understand Phil Dick's chosen idiom of expression. The delusions and fantasies within the book - the manifestations of paranoia and cerebral dissolution - are deliberate impositions by the author. Much of this book is not to be taken literally, for if it were to be taken so it would seem a poorly woven garment of contradictory statements. But Dick is writing about the process of mental disintegration in drug users, and his narrative (because we see through the eyes of the disintegratees) reflects this distortion of reality. The characters change radically as our protagonist, Bob Arctor, begins his rapid degeneration, as his perception alters and he loses total hold on reality.

These same characters have appeared - in fragmentary form - in other Dick novels. They are simple, understandable and pitiable soul, up against 'the system', and Dick makes the idea of 'the system' very real indeed. He transfers his paranoia intact, if you like. But there is a greater maturity and homogeneity about this work that places it with THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, FLOW MY TEARS and DO ANDROIDS DREAM as works of philosophical import. There is a certain ambivalence about Dick's vision. We are never presented with pure allegory; some of his villains are possessed of consciences whilst we often find the heroes callous and uncaring. The barriers are even less clear in this case and it is only in the last few chapters that the complex pattern of events can be unravelled and discerned. It is not a new device within Dick's work to discover sudden reversals of role, crises of identity and obtuseness of motive, but here there is a frightening credibility about the events, as if Dick has stopped playing with cosmological semantics and brought us down to Earth - only to show us that reality and 'reality'(the Dick variety) are one and the same. Which is all to say that the atmosphere of the novel is not basically different from any other Dick novel; merely heightened.

It would be unfair to give more than a basic idea of the events in this book, because much of the irony hinges on the reader's discoveries in the last few chapters; confirmations and subtle twists. But it is worthwhile discussing the moods Dick evokes and the ideas he raises, because SCANNER is probably the most lucid expression of Dick's ethos yet.

" Item. What an undercover narcotics agent fears most is not that he will be shot or beaten up but that he will be slipped a great hit of some psychedelic that will roll an endless horror feature film in his head for the remainder of his life, or that he will be shot up with a mex hit, half-heroin and half substance D, or both of the above plus a poison, such as strychnine, which will nearly kill him but not completely, so that the above can occur: lifelong addiction, lifelong horror film. He will sink into a needle-and-spoon existence, or bounce off the walls in a psychiatric hospital or, worst of all, a federal clinic. He will try

to shake the aphids off him day and night or puzzle forever over why he cannot any longer wax a floor. " (Page 67)

The sf content of this novel is small. The above fragment reflects the core of this book. Arctor is a narc, a narcotics agent in 1992. Substance O is a new narcotic, rotting away the brains of the community. It is his job to discover evidence to lead them to the top, to the distributors. That, in essence, is the story. But it is a far from simple exposition. Arctor the user of drugs is also Fred the narc. As his corpus callosum disintegrates the two become separate entities in the same body (left hemisphere and right hemisphere). He begins to malfunction, becomes paranoid and confused. We are led right in there with him, suspecting and analysing, making all the wrong conclusions from partial data until we too are brought into the light and must realise that our narrator has become a non-functioning zombie. And while this all goes on we are allowed to witness the relationships within the small dope colony; absurd and funny, horrific and deeply touching.

" Suppose everybody in California and parts of Oregon runs out the same day, he thought. Wow.

This was the all-time winning horror fantasy that he ran in his head, that every doper ran. The whole western part of the United States simultaneously running out and everybody crashing on the same day, probably about 6 A.M. Sunday morning while the straights were getting dressed up to go fucking pray.

Scene: The First Episcopal Church of Pasadena, at 8.30 A.M. on Crash Sunday.

'Holy parishioners, let us call on God now at this time to request His intervention in the agonies of those who are thrashing about on their beds withdrawing.'

'Yeah, yeah.' The congregation agreeing with the priest.

But before he intervenes with a fresh supply of - " (Page 5)

The book is riddled with such fantasies, funny only because humour is our way of handling the horrific, of accepting its meaning. Dick's language and style have a precision often lacking elsewhere in his work, and this clarity gives these acid-dreams a potency they would otherwise not possess. All the malfunctions and errors and accidents we see cannot be accepted by the characters as their failings, and through their slushed perceptions are reinterpreted as plots and schemes, the bread and meat of paranoia. Friendship becomes suspicion becomes accusation and finally persecution - and then someone gets 'burned'. It is sad because (although this is set in 1992) the language is one we are familiar with; that of the sixties drug culture. All of this has happened, as Dick himself says in his author's afterword. This book is a memorium to that culture.

" In wretched lives like that, someone must intervene. Or at least mark their sad comings and goings. Mark and if possible permanently record, so they'll be remembered. For a better day, later on, when people will understand. " (Page 175)

After the specifics of plot and theme there are other elements in this book that make it the masterpiece that Dick claims it is. There is the relationship of Bob Arctor and Donna, the child-like drug pusher. She is yet another aspect of the single feminine character Dick uses throughout his books. But here there is an added futility to the relationship, an additional poignancy.

" She took his hand, squeezed it, held it, and then, all at once, she let it drop.

But the actual touch of her lingered, inside his heart. That remained. In all the years of his life ahead, the long years without her, with never seeing her or hearing from her or knowing anything about her, if she was alive or dead or what, that touch stayed locked within him, sealed in himself, and never went away. That one touch of her hand. " (Page 123)

Amongst the hallucinatory fears there is genuine warmth and love, and because it is so carefully nurtured amongst the other hideous growths (another episode comes to mind here; where the two spaced-out dopers carefully take an injured cat off the jagged glass of a window) it is a powerfully moving element. There are few books that successfully blend the callous and the gentle without imbalance, but A SCANNER DARKLY manages that balance. If this book doesn't make you care and care deeply then it is worth considering that a flaw in your own basic humanity. This is not just a dope novel.

" Later, at the Game one night, when they gave credit in turn to each person for what he had brought to New-Path, such as Concepts, they credited him with bringing humour there. He had brought with him an ability to see things as funny no matter how bad he felt. Everybody in the circle clapped, and, glancing up, startled, he saw a ring of smiles, everyone's eyes warm with approval, and the noise of their applause remained with him for quite a period, inside his heart. " (Page 212)

A Decayed imagination?: Witless Simak.

ENCHANTED PILGRIMAGE by Clifford D. Simak; 1977; Fontana; 218pp; 75p; ISBN 000 61 4827 1.

Reviewed by Robert Gibson.

Once upon a time, on a planet in the galactic core, there was a powerful civilization. Foes passed; it aged; it became a benevolent observer of other races. At crisis points it interfered with them; for example, in the matter of Earth, or rather of the three alternate Earths: one of these, the one in which the story is set, is in a medieval and magical stage; another is (I suppose) yours and mine; and the third is a 'humanistic' culture. The crisis concerns something that may fail to happen: the fruitful fusion of the three cultures. The Caretaker (a being from the galactic core civilization) wants to help the fusion by building a depository of common knowledge.

Unfortunately, most of the book isn't about all this. Rather, it concerns a ramshackle quest, in which nobody understands what's going on. Make what you can of the ingredients: scholar, Inquisition, goblins, the Chaos beast, a magic sword, the Hellhounds, the Gossiper, the Old Ones, the Blasted Plain, and He Who Broods Upon The Mountain. Theoretical meanings might be dredged up, but I doubt if the effort is worth it. Such a phantasmagoria needs a genius of the George MacDonald or William Hope Hodgson variety to strike deep enough chords to make it work; or, on another level, it needs the verve, wit and suggestiveness of Heinlein's MAGIC, INC.

Simak's imagination seems to have decayed. He is now in his seventies. Will he never produce another novel of the stature of CITY and TIME AND AGAIN ? Can he do nothing better than to overlay the memory of such masterpieces with his current trivia? It would be less saddening if he wrote nothing more at all.

Oddsand..

VECTOR deadlines. The following are the deadlines for issues of VECTOR in 1978:

Vector 85	January	20th
Vector 86	March	17th
Vector 87	May	19th
Vector 88	July	21st
Vector 89	September	15th
Vector 90	November	17th

Backnumbers: Stocks of the issues listed below are available at the quoted price. Where possible I'll give format, page count and numbers available,

VECTOR 69: Summer 1975. The Science In SF - James Blish; Early One Oxford Morning - Brian Aldiss; The Value Of Bad SF - Bob Shaw; Science or Fiction - Tony Sudbery; book and film reviews; cover by AMES. (60 pence; 52pp; 40 available)

VECTOR 70: Autumn 1975. Time Travellers Among Us - Bob Shaw; Violence In SF - Edmund Cooper; SF's Urban Vision - Chris Hamnett; book, film and fanzine reviews. (60pence; 56pp; 104 available)

VECTOR 71: December 1975. The Stone Ax And The Musc Oxen - Ursula Le Guin; Towards An Alien Linguistics - Ian Watson; book and film reviews; cover by Dave Griffiths. (60p; 44pp; 244 available)

VECTOR 72: February 1976. Dan Morgan's GoH Speech from Novacon; Robert Silverberg interviewed by Malcolm Edwards; book reviews; cover by Brian Lewis. (60p; 52pp; 130 available)

VECTOR 73/74: March 1976. J. G. Ballard interviewed by David Pringle and James Goddard; book reviews; cover by Paul Dillon. (60p; 70pp; 41 available)

VECTOR 78: Nov/Dec 1976. W(h)ither Science Fiction? - Ian Watson; Edgar Fawcett - Brian Stableford; Doris Lessing Briefing - Cy Chauvin; book reviews; cover by Carol Gregory. (£1.50; 60pp; 6 available)

VECTOR 79: Jan/Feb 1977. Alternate Technologies For Spaceship Propulsion - Bob Shaw; Roger Elwood interviewed by Chris Fowler; book reviews; cover by Carol Gregory. (75p; 32pp; 60 available) First A4 issue.

VECTOR 80: March/April 1977. A Song In The Depth Of The Galaxies - David Wingrove; Mike Coney interviewed by David Wingrove; book and film reviews; cover by David Higgins. (85p; 32pp; 34 available)

VECTOR 81: May/June 1977. Juvenalia? A Child's View Of Earthsea - David Wingrove; A Galactic Symphony - Martin Rickets (on Blish); Culture, Anarchy and SF - Brian Griffin; Silverberg Old, Silverberg New - Chris Evans; Icaromenippus or The Future Of Science Fiction - Brian Stableford; British SF, An American View - Cy Chauvin; Philip Jose Farmer interviewed by David Pringle; book reviews; cover by Eaianne Cooke. (£1.20; 32 pp; 63 available)

VECTOR 82: Star Wars Issue; July/August 1977. Articles by Chris Fowler, Steve Divey and Roger E. Wolf; Half-Life - Jim Barker/Chris Evans; British SF: A British View Of An American View - Mark Adlard; The Bermondsey Triangle Mystery - Bob Shaw; reviews; cover illustrations from Star Wars. (75p; 32pp; 55 available)

USA: Prices quoted should be converted as follows - 60p/\$1.20; 75p/\$1.50; 85p/\$1.70; £1.20/\$2.40; £1.50/\$3.00. All cheques payable to "The B.S.F.A.".

Books Reviewed in Vector 84:-

ADLARD, Mark; Interface (Orbit)		
Multiface (Orbit)		
Volteface (Orbit)	RCA	Pps 17-19
ASIMOV, Isaac; Authorised Murder (Panther)	RGI	Pge 50
CLUTE, John; The Disinheriting Party (Allison & Busby)	DJW	Pps 51/52
DICK, Philip K; A Scanner Darkly (Gollancz)	DJW	Pps 54-56
FREEDMAN, Nancy; Joshua, Son Of None (Panther)	BST	Pps 49/50
GREEN BERG, M.H. & OLANDER J. D.:		
Writers of the 21st Century - Asimov/Clarke (Paul Harris)	BST	Pps 45/46
GRIFFIN, Brian; The Nucleation (Robert Hale)	DJW	Pps 43-45
HARNESS, Charles; The Paradox Men (New English Library)		
The Ring Of Ritornel (Panther)		
The Rose (Compact Books)	DJW	Pps 19-21
KOONTZ, Dean R.; Demon Seed (Bantam/Corgi)	DJW	Pps 48/49
The Time Thieves (Dobson)	CDE	Pge 49
PISERCHIA, Doris; Mister Justice (Dobson)	CDE	Pps 42/43
PRIEST, Christopher; A Dream Of Wessex (Faber)	CMO	Pps 47/48
ROBERTS, Keith; The Grain Kings (Panther)	MOI	Pps 21/22
SHAW, Bob; Who Goes Here? (Gollancz)	BST	Pge 26
SIMAK, Clifford D.; Enchanted Pilgrimage (Fontana)	RGI	Pge 56
SITCHIN, Zecharia; The Twelfth Planet (Allen & Unwin)	AMU	Pps 25/26
TENN, William; Of Men And Monsters (Gollancz)	BST	Pps 24/25
VANCE, Jack; The Asutra (Coronet)		
The Brave Free Men (Coronet)	CDE	Pps 52-54
WILSON, Colin; Men Of Mystery (Wyndham)	DJW	Pps 22-24

FINAL THOUGHTS:

A Mr A.B. Perkins of 19, Wolsey Way, Cambridge, CB1 3JQ is seeking the cover of a 1954 Hardback novel, JOURNEY INTO SPACE by Charles Chilton, and seeks to borrow a good condition copy for a period of a fortnight to enable him to make a photographic copy. Can anyone out there assist?

And.. the editor is always seeking articles, reviews, artwork, items of interest and peripheral trivia.. Articles discussing sf topics seem at a premium (you can tell where I work..) but they would be nice to get.

And a last VECTOR QUOTATION COMPETITION blast..

"The child lay couched in long grass, feeling the heat of the sun strike through his jerkin to burn his shoulders. In front of him, at the conical crest of the hill, the magic thing flapped slowly, its wings proud and lazy as those of a bird. Very high it was, on its pole on top of its hill; the faint wooden clattering it made fell remote from the blueness of the summer sky. "

Flattery, complaints, bigotry, polemic and empiric commentary to:

Dave Wingrove,

4, Holmside Court, Nightingale Lane, SW12 5JW.

