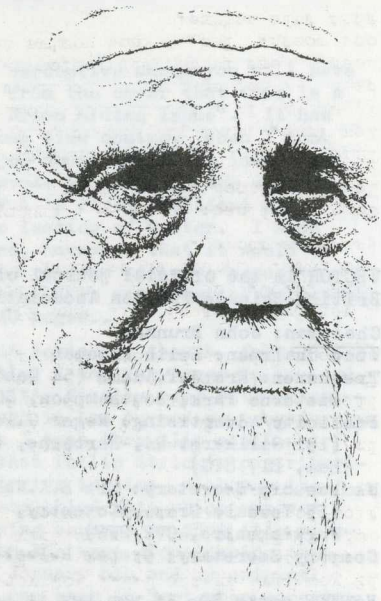
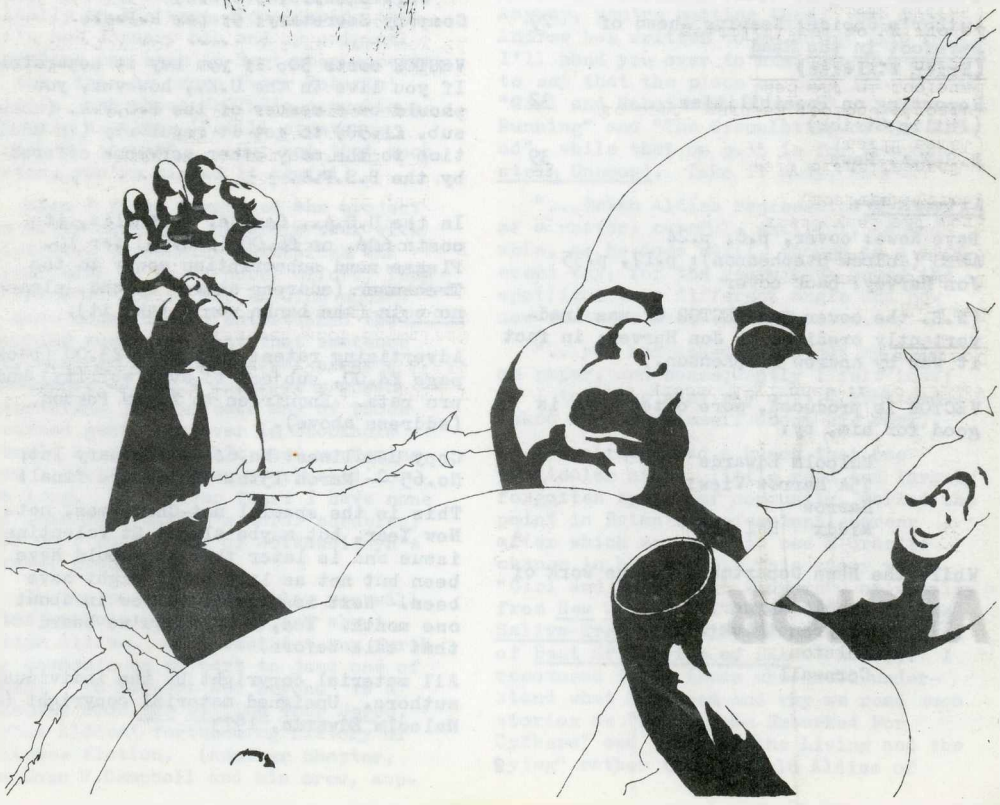
VECTOR 63

jan ~ feb 1973 30p

special
brian
aldiss
issue





VECTOR 63

VECTOR 63 :: January-February 1973

Contents:

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Dave Rowe: cover, p.6, p.24
AMES (Andrew Stephenson): p.17, p.35
Jon Harvey: back cover

(N.B. the cover for VECTOR 62 was inadvertantly credited to Jon Harvey; in fact it was by Andrew Stephenson.)

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VECTOR is the official journal of the British Science Fiction Association, Ltd.

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In the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, it costs 60¢, or $6.00 ($A6.00) for 10. Please send subscription money to the Treasurer (address above) — and, please, no coin (the banks won't take it).

Advertising rates: full page £3.00 (back page £4.00, subject to availability) and pro rata. Enquiries to Roger Peyton (address above).

Copy deadlines: No.64 — February 1st; No.65 — March 15th. These are final!

This is the special not-Christmas, not-New Year, but maybe almost St Valentine's issue and is later than it should have been but not as late as it might have been. Next issue will follow in about one month. Yes, I know you've heard that tale before.

LEAD-IN

The more perceptive among you will have observed from the cover that this is a "Special Brian Aldiss Issue". It has been a long time coming. When I took on this job about the first idea I had was to devote an issue to the work of the B.S.F.A.'s first President and Britain's leading sf writer. I soon discovered, however, that it would be impossible to give adequate space to both Brian Aldiss and Robert P.Holdstock in just 40 pages....

No, but seriously though, folks, this is something I was very keen to do, and I'm glad it's finally come into being -- even though it has turned me prematurely grey. As I type this, I'm still not certain that Philip Strick's contribution will arrive in time, although the hastily-scribbled note which arrived this morning assures me that it's practically on its way. Considering that it's now January 8th and my original deadline was back in September sometime, I take this to prove Peter Roberts' little joke about VECTOR's marvellous elastic deadline ("still stretches after 62 issues"). (But not that much, Peter: you've missed it again!)

When I first suggested the project to Harry Harrison, he wrote back with alacrity, expressing enthusiasm and describing it as "a nobel effort, long overdue". Now in the ensuing months I have occasionally entertained the nagging suspicion that that sentence may contain a typographical error somewhere -- but I think it's worth reprinting just in case any of those learned gentlemen over in Stockholm should be reading this, and wondering how I could have been overlooked for so long. (And never fear: I have none of Jean-Paul Sartre's moral scruples; nor do I suffer any of Solzhenitsyn's travel problems.)

In the pages which follow you will find various articles by and about Brian Aldiss. I'll restrict any further comments on my part to just one of them. "To Barsoom and Beyond" is a chapter from The Billion Year Spree, Brian Aldiss' forthcoming history of science fiction. (Another chapter, on John W.Campbell and his crew, appears in New Worlds Quarterly 5.) The chapter can, of course, be read independently of the rest of the book, but Mr Aldiss has asked me to point out that it is extracted from the longer work, "otherwise various references -- for instance to Mary Shelley, whom I consider a key figure of the development of sf -- will seem obscure or irrelevant, which they are not".

It remains to say something about the illustrations to this issue. I asked Dave Rowe and Andrew Stephenson if they would like to produce a couple of full-page illustrations each based on scenes from Aldiss stories. Dave came up with the cover, inspired by Greybeard, and the illustration on p.6, from Non-Stop. He also did the portrait on p.24. Andrew's two pieces (no disrespect to Dave) perhaps require a few more words of explanation. Anyway, you're getting them. And since Andrew has written to me doing just this, I'll hand you over to him, pausing only to say that the piece on p.17 illustrates "Girl and Robot with Flowers", "Soldiers Running" and "The Circulation of the Blood", while that on p.35 is for Frankenstein Unbound. Take it away, Andrew:

"...Brian Aldiss represented my idea of a writer: careful, skillful, dependable, as he does still, though in a different way, for the years have moved the spotlight to a different angle and now new features cast their shadows.

"...you had asked me to put my life on paper, and consequently I felt lost; so I took the easy way out: I went and asked the man himself about his work.

" I already had a hunch that one particular story, little read and largely forgotten by the sf community, marked the point in Brian's professional career after which we began to see a drastic change in his style. This story was "Girl and Robot with Flowers", originally from New Worlds but anthologised in The Saliva Tree ((and in the revised edition of Best SF Stories of BWA -- M.E.)). I recommend it to those who would understand what happened and why we read such stories as "The Day We Embarked For Cythera" and "Orgy of the Living and the Dying" rather than the old Aldiss of

robots and worlds torn asunder. So I felt that this would have to be one of the stories illustrated, along with two others to demonstrate the change. One was a natural: "How To Be A Soldier" (originally "Soldiers Running"); Brian himself suggested the other: "The Circulation of the Blood".

"Of course, that dealt only with Brian Aldiss as he has been seen to be. What I wanted also was Brian Aldiss as he is, and here I had an incredible stroke of good fortune.

"When I telephoned him and explained that I had been asked to illustrate some of his works for VECTOR, I learned that the first draft of the first Brian Aldiss sf novel for several years had just been completed; and furthermore, if I wanted, I could come and read it through and make what I could of it.

"Needless to say, I had a good read through that manuscript as soon as I could; indeed, I read it so soon afterwards that it was still uncorrected. Nevertheless I read the whole of it, errors and all, in an afternoon and part of the evening, wholly absorbed and feeling a great sense of relief sweep over me as I realised that here we had the old Aldiss and the new: the two have combined their respective skills of narrative and style to produce a story that is at once entertaining and deeply philosophical.

"The story follows the adventures of a man from the future who meets the real Dr Frankenstein and his monster; he also meets Mary Shelley, the creator of them both, and it is in explaining these events that the full power of the narrative unfolds. The novel is enormous in its scope, yet simultaeneously it is personal. Whilst dealing with what must be the most time-worn of themes it manages to be wholly original in its treatment of the Frankenstein myth: the people and the monster are wholly credible, while holding as true to the original book as is fair to it. In a way it is an improvement on the classic tale; most definitely it is both complimentary and complementary.

"Its name is Frankenstein Unbound.

"Finally, I want to thank Brian Aldiss for his kindness and his help in the preparation of these two illustrations. I have tried to do justice to his thoughts and the feelings he expressed in his stories; if I have succeeded then I am glad, but I see now that the Frankenstein Unbound piece falls short of the work which was its inspiration, and I can only hope that others may do better."

There you are. Obviously, not having read the new novel I can't say how well Andrew's illustration works in relation to it; but I must say that taken by itself it's a really tremendous piece of work, and I only hope the size reduction and printing doesn't diminish its impact too much.

1973 looks like being a big year for Brian Aldiss the sf writer, because apart from The Billion Year Spree and Frankenstein Unbound, Locus reports that he has completed a second sf novel, The Eighty Minute Hour. It has just occurred to me that this gives me the opportunity to use up a piece of something which has been languished unused in the VECTOR file, causing me no little embarrassment. This is the tape which Ken Bulmer recorded for me at Chessmancon. I forget exactly how this arose, but I think I had asked Ken if, in my absence, he would try to record interviews with the two Americans present, Harry Harrison and Larry Niven. Ken, however, went one better: he worked out a brief list of questions and cornered pretty well every sf writer present with them. Not only Harrison and Niven, but also Aldiss, Shaw, White (James, that is), Pohl and Wollheim (two Americans, did I say?). And I've had them ever since, causing Ken to throw me out of the Globe a couple of months back and kick me into the gutter (and he looks so peaceful!). Anyway, bits of them will be cropping up in VECTOR in the near future, but I may as well take this opportunity to reprint what Brian Aldiss said about The Eighty Minute Hour while discussing work in progress:

"It is subtitled 'A Space Opera'. It's literally an opera. It takes very much the traditional form of opera, in that it's about a lot of things being juggled at once, like a juggler's multicoloured balls. There's the CapCom treaty, the moving of the International Date Line, the introduction of universal contraception, the discovery of something unpleasant on Mars, and various other things. And every now and then the characters — who seem at the moment to number about 200, and will have to be cut down rather severely — drop whatever

they're doing and sing a little song about science. For instance, "Evolution Bothers Me" -- that's one title that occurs to me. It's really an attempt at a space opera. Quite straightforward. Anyone could read it."

It also occurs to me now that the first Aldiss sf story was published in 1954, which makes this year his 20th in the business. So you could say this issue is something of an Anniversary Tribute and indeed you'd be half right: a tribute, yes; but the anniversary is purely coincidental. Still, let me just conclude this by saying that if the next 20 years produce as many fine stories, sf or otherwise, we shall be very fortunate.

This is a rather overcrowded issue of VECTOR, and as a consequence lacks book reviews, fanzine reviews, letter column or any of those other features you wait for with bated breath between issues. I could probably fit one of them into the space remaining, but have decided instead to extend this editorial bit, taking in letters and the like, until it fills all the remaining space. There are a number of things I want to cover, so I may yet find there's insufficient space. Let's start with letters, of which we did not in any case receive many.

We did hear, at length, from no less a person than Robert P.Holdstock "small furry animals dismembered at popular prices", whose brilliantly-argued criticisms will probably lead of the next VECTOR lettercol. We heard from Gene Wolfe, who liked it: it reminded him of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. And John Piggott, who didn't like it very much: it reminded him of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. Going back to earlier VECTORs, we heard -- too late for inclusion last time -- from Frank Smith, who makes a fair point about James Blish's article in V.61: "Blish holds up the television series 'Star Trek' as converting "a lot of people to sf who wouldn't touch it with a 10 foot pole before, because to them sf meant monster movies". Well, firstly, I don't believe that a lot of people have been converted to sf through 'Star Trek' -- not in this country anyway -- and, secondly, the situation is now worse, because if you mention sf now, people think immediately of 'Star Trek'". Sparked off by the Peter Tate interview but not specifically related to it was a letter from expatriate Mike Coney, who suggests, somewhat controversially, that it is Verne and Wells, rather than Niven and Heinlein, who are no longer relevant. This mention gives me a chance to give a little plug to Mike's first novel, Mirror Image, published by DAW Books (95¢). This will be reviewed in the next issue, but in the meantime let me urge you to get a copy: it's well worth a few hours of your time. A good long letter from Barry Gillam, adding to the sf criticism arguments, will certainly find its way into the next full lettercolumn. His letter concludes: "I'd like to say that I'll await each issue and try to comment on them (and they do deserve more response than you've gotten so far), but in a fortnight I start my active duty in the Army Reserve and I will probably neither be home nor have time for either reading VECTOR or writing to you." My condolences, Barry. It's always seemed odd to me that so few American fans seem to get caught out by the military, although if American fandom is like British fandom -- as I'm sure it is -- most of them must be around the right age. Why is this, I wonder? Can some American reader enlighten me?

Then we heard from Franz Rottensteiner over there in Austria, too busy to review the new Asimov novel for VECTOR. Pity. Still, he gives a rundown on his current activities which don't appear to leave much room for such things. Apart from a full-time job, he also works as an editor for a German publishing firm and as a consultant to McGraw-Hill in the U.S.A. In addition, he says he reads up to 15 (!) non-sf books per month for another German publisher. And he produces 360 pages per year of his fanzine UARBER MERKUR (no doubt well worth getting if you have a reading knowledge of German). Busy man! He also gives a run down of McGraw-Hill's forthcoming sf line, which I may as well quote:

"Next spring they'll start with Lem's The Invincible and Memoirs Found in A Bathtub (translated by Christine Rose & Michael Kandel), A.&B.Strugatski's Hard To Be A God, Stefan Wul's Temple of the Past and my own View From Another Shore (an anthology of European sf); fall will see two or three more Lems: probably Robot Fables & Cyberiad, and The Invest-

continued on p.36

to barsoom and beyond

(E.R.B. AND THE WEIRDIES)

BRIAN W. ALDISS

> I glanced up to find the great orb still motionless in the centre of the heavens. And such a sun! I had scarcely noticed it before. Fully three times the size of the sun I had known throughout my life, and apparently so near that the sight of it carried the conviction that one might almost reach up and touch it.
>
> "My God, Perry, where are we?", I exclaimed. "This thing is beginning to get on my nerves!"
>
> Edgar Rice Burroughs:
> At The Earth's Core

Let's compare two novels published in 1923. Both qualify as science fiction. One was written by H.G.Wells, one by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

In Men Like Gods, one of Wells's little men, a Mr Barnstaple, drives in his car into the Fourth Dimension, and there finds a utopia of beautiful and powerful (and frequently nude) people. With him is a diverse group of his contemporaries who do their best to wreck the utopia. Barnstaple defeats them with utopian aid, and eventually returns through the dimensional barrier, back to the real world.

Pellucidar, after a brief prologue intended to establish the 'reality' of what follows, is the story of a world at the hollow centre of the Earth, the Inner World, where one David Innes searches for his lady love. He is reunited with her after many strange adventures, travelling through savage country populated by monsters and primitive creatures.

Described like this, the two novels sound not dissimilar. Both are fantasies, both use people as symbols, both have their excitements. Yet their differences are many.

The Fourth Dimension is perhaps as unlikely as a Hollow Earth, and Barnstaple's adventures no more probable than Innes's. However, Wells's fantasy device, the fourth dimension, serves merely to lead us to his utopia; the utopia is so much the thing, that the feasibility of the device which gets us there does not much matter, provided it is dealt with briefly and interestingly. On the other hand, Burroughs's Inner World is the whole story, and the narrative is largely taken up with the stones and arrows loosed there, and the fangs and claws bred there.

Burroughs's characters are exotic and bear strange and beautiful names, of which perhaps the best is Pellucidar itself. Barnstaple is allowed his handle 'Mr' throughout, while the characters he is involved with are based on real politicians of the day, such as Balfour and Winston Churchill.

The action in Men Like Gods is leisurely, so that there is plenty of time for discussion, which mainly consists of contrasting our world unfavourably with utopia and airing Wells's ideas about world government. In Pellucidar, events move fast; one threat succeeds another, one scrape succeeds another; conversation is practically limited to threats, or to explanations of what has happened or is about to happen.

When Barnstaple returns in his battered old car to our world, it is a recog-

nisable dull world of hotels with waitresses serving tea, the "Daily Express", the "Times", chat about Poland, the Chinese, and sport. Our world in Pellucidar is represented by a telegram from Algiers, the finding of a mysterious telegraphic instrument buried in the Sahara, a call to action!

In short, Wells's is a serious tale, enlivened by a little humour, whose main aim is to discuss entertainingly the ways in which mankind might improve himself and his lot. Whereas Burroughs's story is pure fantasy adventure which we do not for one minute take seriously.

The publishing history of the two novels is also interestingly in contrast. Wells's novel was published in hardcover in 1923 and only achieved paperback publication forty-seven years later![1] Burroughs's novel was serialised in "All-Story Cavalier Weekly" in 1915, to appear in hardcover in 1923, since when it has made many paperback appearances.

Which of the two is the 'better' book? If the question has any meaning, my answer would be that Pellucidar is the better. If one's choice of company lies between a fatigued schoolmaster and and inspired anecdotalist, one's better bet is the anecdotalist.

Burroughs, in this novel, writes about as well as he can write, which is not very well but very serviceably, while his fertile imagination pours out lavishly the details of his preposterous world. Wells appears constipated beside him. Wells's novel is laborious, and, whatever it was in 1923, it takes an effort to read now, whereas Burroughs still slips down easily. With Burroughs you have (moderate) fun; Wells here gives off what Kingsley Amis characterises as "a soporific whiff of left-wing crankiness".[2]

So why does one obstinately respect Wells the more? It must be because, whatever else his failings, he is trying to grapple with what he sees as the real world, whereas Burroughs — however expertly, and he can be a mesmerist — is dishing out daydreams.

Linked with this is another important distinction between the sort of fiction the two men are writing. Wells does not expect us to identify with his stuffy little central character; Barnstaple is just an ordinary fellow, not held up particularly for approval or ridicule. The characters who surround him are mildly satirised, though not grotesques. And all this may account for the reason why Wells was never a popular author as popular authors go. Whereas all Burroughs's main characters can claim the old title 'hero' — not only in the novels dealing with Pellucidar but in all the other Burroughs series, Tarzan's jungles, Napier's Venus, Carter's Mars. Burroughs wants us to identify, to sink into his dream-countries and exclude the outside one. Barsoom is a million miles from Wessex.

Wells is teaching us to think. Burroughs and his lesser imitators are teaching us not to think.

Of course, Burroughs is teaching us to wonder. The sense of wonder is in essence a religious state, blanketing out criticism. Wells was always a critic, even in his most romantic and wondrous tales.

And there, I believe, the two poles of modern fantasy stand defined. At one pole stand Wells and his honourable predecessors like Swift; at the other, Burroughs and his imitators, like Otis Adelbert Kline, and the weirdies, horror-merchants, and the Never-Never-Landers, such as H.P.Lovecraft, and so all the way to Tolkien. Mary Shelley stands somewhere at the equator of this metaphor.

At the thinking pole are great figures, although it is painfully easy to write badly; at the dreaming pole are no great figures — though there are monstrous figures — and it is terribly difficult to write well.

Although reading is for pleasure, one should try to be pleased by whatever can reward with the highest pleasure. A swimming pool is a poor place in which to swim when there is a great ocean nearby.

Burroughs, in his proliferating series and titles, is one of the most commercially successful authors of this century, certainly the most commercially successful science fantasy author. His sales still grow. His influence has been immense, and often deadening.

It was Edgar Wallace's boast that he always kept his stories clean — by which he meant sex-free — however much blood was shed. Edgar Rice Burroughs could say the same.

The creator of Tarzan was born one year

after the creator of King Kong, in 1875, in Chicago. As a young man, he enlisted in the US Cavalry, and saw something of a West that was still Wild, meeting men who had fought Sioux and Apache. Later, he was discharged, tried gold-prospecting, and then ran through a series of miserable jobs, including railroad cop and candy salesman. He was into his thirties, married and with a family to support, before he tried his hand at writing. His success was immediate.

Burroughs published some seventy books, fifty-nine of them during his lifetime. His world sales have probably topped one hundred million, gasp, gasp. His Tarzan character alone has appeared in countless films, comic strips, and comic books, and has been imitated by other hands in countless variations.[3]

Eight years after writing his first story, Burroughs was able to purchase rolling acres and a Press Baron's palace near Los Angeles. This site is now the township known as Tarzana — the word made flesh, or at least bricks and mortar. When in his sixties, in World War II, Burroughs was appointed war correspondent and spent some time in Hawaii. He died in bed one day in 1950, while reading a comic book. He left behind readers all over the world and a staunch body of fans which is known, proudly and collectively, as ERBdom, from the initials of their hero's name.

His first published story was a six-part serial which ran in one of the grand old pulps, "The All-Story", in 1912. This was "Under the Moons of Mars", now better known under its later book title, A Princess of Mars. With this first effort, Burroughs brought the novel with an interplanetary setting into science fiction to stay.

Burroughs launched out on a series of interconnected novels set on the Red Planet, which was known to its inhabitants as Barsoom. A Princess of Mars was published in book form in 1917, soon to be followed by two sequels, The Gods of Mars (1918), and The Warlord of Mars (1919). As one of his more literate admirers put it, "To the schoolboy in his early teens, Burroughs can open magic casements with the best... Those who read him at the right age owe a great debt of gratitude to Edgar Rice Burroughs" (Roger Lancelyn Green: Into Other Worlds).

Wafted by mystical and Blavatskian means across the gulfs of space, John Carter finds himself on Mars. In no time, he finds himself opposed to a great fifteen feet high Martian, green, four-armed, and sharp-tusked. Action and blood follow thick and fast in all Burroughs's books. A hasty ingenuity is his.

Yet the world of Barsoom, its history and geography, is painted in with a generous brush. Barssom is dying, its seas drying, of the old civilizations little is left but ruin and deserted cities; its tribes, which vary in skin-colour, are deadly enemies. In the first book Carter falls in love with the princess, Dejah Thoris, a beautiful red woman. All Martian women are oviparous, although this does not stop them mating with Earthmen.

Here is a colourful passage where a company of green Martians and their animals, together with Carter and Dejah Thoris, move across one of the dried-out sea beds:

> "We made a most imposing and awe-inspiring spectacle as we strung out across the yellow landscape; the two hundred and fifty ornate and brightly coloured chariots, preceded by an advance guard of some two hundred mounted warriors and chieftains riding five abreast and one hundred yards apart, and followed by a like number in the same formation, with a score or more of flankers on either side; the fifty extra mastodons, or heavy draft animals, known as zitidars, and the five or six hundred extra thoats of the warriors running loose within the hollow square formed by the surrounding warriors. The gleaming metals and jewels of the men and women, duplicated in the trappings of the zitidars and thoats, and interspersed with the flashing colours of magnificent silks and furs and feathers, lent a barbaric splendour to the caravan which would have turned an East Indian potentate green with envy.
>
> "The enormous broad tyres of the chariots and the padded feet of the animals brought forth no sound... and so we moved in utter silence... The green Martians converse but little, and then usually in monosyllables, low and like the faint rumbling of distant thunder."
>
> (From the chapter 'Sola Tells Me Her Story').

This passage also shows Burroughs's carelessness -- to speak of turning

potentates green gives the game away, for this is clearly what he is doing, by transposing an Eastern sumptuousness to Mars. Nevertheless, the first three novels make an enormous paella of colour, mystery, and excitement for a hungry adolescent stomach.

Unfortunately, Burroughs could never resist ruining a good thing. The success of his trilogy of Martian novels led him to continue with more sequels, until we find him still spinning them out into the 1940's, with Synthetic Men of Mars and so forth. But Burroughs never claimed to write for anything but money.[4]

Tarzan of the Apes was Burroughs's second story. It was published in 1912, also in "All-Story". It reflects to perfection the wish to escape from urban civilization, where there are lousy jobs like railroad cop going.

Mystery surrounded John Carter's birth. Tarzan's origins provide a perfect invitation to day-dreamers; in Burroughs's immortal words, "the son of an English lord and an English lady nursed at the breast of Kala, the great ape". Rousseau's Noble Savage has been ennobled. Tarzan is not only the great killer of the jungle; he is also Lord Greystoke, heir to a fortune in England, and the plot of this first Tarzan novel juggles effectively between these incongruities.

Is Tarzan science fiction? His ability to talk 'apish' makes him a borderline case. But there is no doubt that he is a magnificently successful embodiment of fantasy; if the blood of Mowgli, child of the wolves, runs in his literary veins, then he in turn has fathered many fictional progeny, and must surely be accounted at least one of the godfathers watching over Tolkien's legions in Middle Earth.

ERB's reincarnation of noble savagery (bad ideas never die) came swinging through the trees on to cinema screens very early in his career. The first Tarzan movie was produced in 1917, since when Ape Man movies have proved more permanent on the screen than custard pies. At one time, Tarzan was played by Buster Crabbe, who then went on to the title role in Universal's Flash Gordon serials, inspired by Alex Raymonds elegant science fantasy strip. One of the most popular Tarzans was Johnny Weismuller in the Thirties. There was also a newspaper comic strip based on Burroughs's novels and scrupulously drawn by Hal Foster; this strip was later taken over by Burne Hogarth.

At first, Burroughs seemed genuinely interested in working out the complex, if fictional, problems which would confront a man with such a conflicting inheritance as Tarzan's. In The Return of Tarzan, these problems are already being laid aside in favour of a rather trite exposure of the decadence of civilization compared with the ethical codes of the jungle. Already, duelling Frenchmen, beautiful Russian countesses, unsavoury Europeans, brutish black men, survivors of Atlantis, and lost treasure-cities ruled over by lovely priestesses, are creeping in, until Africa bears about as much relationship to reality as does Barsoom.

Burroughs could resist anything but success.

Tarzan of the Apes was followed in time by some two dozen sequels, straggling on throughout ERB's career -- and after! Tarzan also makes a guest appearance in a third series he was hatching at the same time as the first two, the Pellucidar series, which commenced with At The Earth's Core, first published as a serial in 1914.

The donée of this series is that the Earth is hollow. Its inner lining supports a whole world of savage tribes and amazing creatures. This is Pellucidar. Pellucidar is lit by a miniature sun burning in the centre of the hollow; the sun has a small satellite revolving round it in a twenty-four hour orbit. Inner Space indeed!

To enquire whether Burroughs derived this idea from Nils Kilm is idle, though the similarity of concepts is striking. The truth is, that when one is hard up for secret worlds, one can find them under the Earth, in a puddle, in an atom, up in the attic, down in the cellar, or in the left eyeball: and all these vantage points have been explored by hard-pressed fantasists. Furthermore, we need no longer enquire whether extrapolations of Mars or Venus derive from such astronomers as Lowell or Arrhenius; for the generations of writers now close ranks and begin to derive their ideas from one another. This is known as a continuing debate.

David Innes, Burroughs's new hero, arrives in Pellucidar via a giant mechanical mole, boring down through the

Earth's crust. There he undergoes a number of remarkable adventures which parallel fairly closely the crises, hairbreadth escapes, and cliffhangers of Carter and Tarzan. Only the cliffs are different. Burroughs is in fine form in at least the first two novels in this series, At The Earth's Core (book-form 1922) and Pellucidar (book-form 1924), and something of his excitement and interest in creating a new world comes over.

Here is a passage from the first of the two novels, which shows, even in slight abridgement, the dextrous way Burroughs had of moving along from one exotic focus of interest to another, with a smoothness that perhaps no other fantasy-writer has managed. David Innes and his friend Perry are taken to an arena to watch the punishment of two slaves — one a man, one a woman — watched over by the ruling race, the Mahars:

"For the first time, I beheld their queen. She differed from the others in no feature that was appreciable to my earthly eyes, in fact all Mahars look alike to me; but when she crossed the arena after the balance of her female subjects had found their boulders, she was preceded by a score of huge Sagoths, the largest I ever had seen, and on either side of her waddled a huge thipdar, while behind came another score of Sagoth guardsmen...

"And then the music started — music without sound! The Mahars cannot hear, so the drums and fifes and horns of earthly bands are unknown among them. The "band" consisted of a score or more Mahars. It filed out in the centre of the arena where the creatures upon the rocks might see it, and there it performed for fifteen or twenty minutes.

"Their technique consisted in waving their tails and moving their heads in a regular succession of measured movements resulting in a cadence which evidently pleased the eye of the Mahar as the cadence of our own instrumental music pleases our ears. Sometimes the band took measured steps in unison to one side or the other, or backward and again forward -- it all seemed very silly and meaningless to me, but at the end of the first piece the Mahars upon the rocks showed the first indications of enthusiasm that I had seen displayed by the dominant race of Pellucidar. They beat their great wings up and down, and smote their rocky perches with their mighty tails until the ground shook...

"When the band had exhausted its repertory it took wing and settled upon rocks above and behind the queen. Then the business of the day was on. A man and a woman were pushed into the arena by a couple of Sagoth guardsmen. I leaned far forwards in my seat to scrutinise the female — hoping against hope that she might prove to be another than Dian the Beautiful. Her back was toward me for a while, and the sight of the great mass of raven hair piled high upon her head filled me with alarm.

"Presently a door in one side of the arena wall was opened to admit a huge, shaggy, bull-like creature.

"'A Bos', whispered Perry excitedly. 'His kind roamed the outer crust with the cave bear and the mammoth ages and ages ago. We have been carried back a million years, David, to the childhood of a planet — is it not wondrous?'

"But I saw only the raven hair of a half-naked girl, and my heart stood still in dumb misery at the sight of her, nor had I any eyes for the wonders of natural history."

(Chapter VI)

Again, Burroughs never knew when enough was enough. Six Pellucidar novels were published in his lifetime, and a seventh, Savage Pellucidar (1963), was cobbled together after his death. One of the six is Tarzan at the Earth's Core (1930).

In 1932, "Argosy" began to serialise the first novel in Burroughs's fourth major series. This time the setting is Venus. Carson Napier is a typical Burroughs hero, even down to some oddities surrounding his birth, for he was the son of a British army officer and an American girl from Virginia, born in India and brought up under the tutelage of an old Hindu mystic who taught Carson many odd things, "among them telepathy"!

Also conforming to precedent, Burroughs frames his narrative in introductory matter which mentions real names and places, to ease one into the incredible happenings which are to follow.

The framework in Pirates of Venus mentions David Innes and Pellucidar, for the author seems to have had a vague idea of linking his entire oeuvre together, rather in the way that Anthony Trollope provided links within his Barchester novels.

This new Barsoomian Barchester, although generously supplied with strange topography, people, and adventures, never has quite the zip of the Martian series. But then, Venus has never been the best planet for the imagination. Its shrouded surface has damped the creative urge. Drawing out a very slender thread of reasoning, the Swedish astronomer Arrhenius proclaimed in 1917, "everything on Venus is dripping wet", — and the depressing thought has stuck.[5] The writerly imagination has been clouded.

Burroughs's Venus possessed a year-long axial rotation, so that it always turns the same face to the sun, and regions of ice surround the hot equatorial region. Mile-high trees grow in the tropics.

Three more Venus novels followed the first, in true Burroughs fashion, and a fourth was started but not completed. World War II got in the way. Burroughs died in 1950, a man of seventy-four still dreaming up wild refuges for his somewhat gory imagination.

Besides the novels mentioned, he wrote many others, some of them also in series. The Moon Maid (serialised in 1923) launched a series which depicts an inner world on the Moon. No wonder that Burroughs founded his own publishing house, still flourishing in Tarzana, California, to cope with his massive output!

Many readers consider Burroughs's best novel to be The Land That Time Forgot (first published in book-form in 1924). It consists of three novelettes, each purportedly written by a different person; they are, The Land That Time Forgot, The People That Time Forgot, and Out of Time's Abyss. The beginning of the story contains echoes of both Poe and Conan Doyle, where a submarine is drawn towards an uncharted magnetic island, sighting icebergs as it goes. On one of the island's rare beaches, a dead man is sighted, reminding one of the crew of a prehistoric man. They find the subterranean channel of an inland river flowing into the sea; the submarine navigates the channel, thus entering the world of Caprona, or Caspak as it is known to its inhabitants.

And what inhabitants! The mystery of this lost world is solved, typically enough, by a story told to Bradley while he is imprisoned in a foul pit in the Blue Place of the Seven Skulls. Evolution is not a unitary process involving all phyla on Caspak; it is an individual process. The tribes through which the sailors have passed from south to north are each representatives of an upward evolutionary process; all individuals pass through this evolutionary process, in their own bodies recapitulating a whole cycle from tadpole to fish to reptile, and so to the ape, and from then -- if they are lucky — to Man. The women lay their multitudinous eggs into warm pools.

This evolutionary fantasy is nicely worked out, and the stages well visualised, although the novel is blemished by its cast of disagreeable Germans and stage Cockneys ('"Wot s'y we pot the bloomin' bird, sir?"').

Wherever they are set, all Burroughs's novels are vaguely similar, heroes and incidents being often transposable, as crocodile-fights were transposed from one Tarzan film to the next. Since the people are almost characterless, beyond bearing exotic names, they experience nothing of the difficulties of personality with which we all wrestle in real life. ERB specialised in unreal life, and his novels offer to a remarkable degree every possible facility for identifying with the hero and day-dreaming through his triumphs. No harm in such facility, perhaps; but self-exploration is as important as self-indulgence, and there is always the possibility of becoming permanently drugged by such brightly coloured pipe-dreams.[6]

So what, finally, are we to make of ERB, that supreme example of the dichotomy of taste, between critics who see no virtue in him, and fans who see no fault?

A peculiar feature of Burroughs's output is the frequency with which mystery surrounds birth. The lead figures in the major series all have oddities attending their infancy, except for David Innes. This is most extreme in the hero of the best series, John Carter of Mars, who could almost pass for Ayesha after a sex-change. Carter

recalls no childhood, has always been adult, and remains at about the age of thirty. Other instances of children, like Tarzan lost to or estranged from parents, are many — a comic example is the eponymous cave girl in a lesser series which begins with The Cave Girl (1925); she is revealed to be the daughter of a vanished count and countess. The women of Mars, like the women of Caspak, are oviparous; in other terms, children are born away from or rejected by their mothers, rather as Tarzan is fostered by an inhuman creature. More widely, in psychoanalytical terms, to live on the Moon or another planet is to accept loss of contact with humanity.

Was there confusion as well as an attempt to glamorise his own origins in ERB's statement, "I was born in Peking at the time that my father was military adviser to the Empress of China, and lived there, in the Forbidden City, until I was ten years old"? (in "Edgar Rice Burroughs, Fiction Writer.)

Sexual dimorphism is common in Burroughs's world, as the hideous males of Opar in the Tarzan series differ markedly from the beautiful females. (Though in Tarzan and the Ant Men (1924), it is the females, the Alalis, who are hideous because they have achieved sexual dominance). The males generally have a tough life, though rarely quite as hazardous as in The Land That Time Forgot, until they finally win the hand — and little more than the hand — of some attractive girl.

Despite a considerable amount of nudity in ERB's novels, no sexual intercourse is mentioned or even implied; we might be in a prepubertal world. This is bowing to more than the literary conventions of the times. Thuvia, maid of Mars, spends fifteen years as a "plaything and a slave" of the egregious White Martians, and runs around naked to boot, yet survives to flaunt her virginity in the very title of her novel!

Yet the danger of sex is always there. One industrious critic, Richard D.Mullen, has calculated the omnipresence of the threat of rape in Burroughs's world, and found female virtue in danger no less than an obsessive seventy-six times in the novels written between 1911 and 1915! The menaces include a marvellously miscegenously-inclined throng of apea, usurers, black sultans, negroes, green, white and yellow Martians, cavemen, hairy men, monster men, orang-utans, and Japanese head-hunters.[7] In every case, chastity is preserved.

In Carl Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections, he recounts the vivid psychosis of one of his female patients, who believed that she had lived on the Moon. She told Jung a tale about life there. It appears that the moon people were threatened with extinction. A vampire lived in the high mountains of the Moon. The vampire kidnapped and killed women and children, who in consequence had taken to living underground. The patient resolved to kill the vampire but, when she and it came face to face, the vampire revealed himself as a man of unearthly beauty.[8]

Jung makes a comment which could stand on the title page of this book*: "Thereafter I regarded the sufferings of the mentally ill in a different light. For I had gained insight into the richness and importance of their inner experience." Without imputing mental illness to Burroughs, I believe that Jung provides a key to fantasy-writing in general, and to the echoing of themes. He does illuminate something compulsive and repetitive in Burroughs's output.

For this reason, it is foolish to protest that the Burroughs books depart from facts — that an oviparous woman is a contradiction in terms, that Mars has no breathable atmosphere, that a child raised by apes would be incapable of learning human language when older, that Venus rotates and is intolerably hot, that a sun inside the Earth would turn it into a nuclear bonfire, and so on. Burroughs is not interested in the facts of the external world. As one critic has observed, by doing so he throws away many advantages — for instance, by not preserving the distinction that Lowell clearly made between old Martian sea-beds and barren plateaus, and thus forfeiting a more incisive realisation of his Barsoom;[9] but Burroughs was reporting from his own internal Pellucidar. Burroughs's Mars is like Ray Bradbury's later Mars; it reports on areas which cannot be scrutinised through any telescope.

A failure to make a simple distinct-

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i.e. The Billion Year Spree

ion between two sorts of vision, the Wellsian and the Burroughsian, or the analytic and the fantastic, bedevils all criticism, especially sf criticism — as well it might, for the distinction is particularly hard to draw in science fiction. Lowell's Mars — in its time the latest factual study science could produce — is now itself as much a fantasy world as Barsoom!

One further general point before leaving Burroughs. ERB's stories are much like Westerns, and the Chicago in which he was born still retained elements of a frontier town. The vanishing redskin was not far away in space or time. Burroughs often wrote about him, directly or indirectly; his writings are a welter of racial fantasy — even Tar-Zan means "White Skin" in the language of the Apes. Any critic whose piercing vision has found in Poe's work obsessional fears of coloured people will achieve as much in Burroughs's work with one eye tied behind his back.

Burroughs fits very neatly into Leslie Fiedler's synthesis of the myths which give a special character to art and life in America. Fiedler's synthesis culminates in his The Return of the Vanishing American. The one passage in that volume which deigns to mention Burroughs is so apropos to the hordes of odd-coloured and -shaped creatures which were about to descend on twentieth-century man via science fiction that it must be quoted.

Fiedler, putting his case against the American male, shows how the image of a white girl tied naked to a stake while redskins dance howling round her appeals to both our xenophobia and a sense of horror. Often such images were used as crude magazine illustrations.

> "And, indeed, this primordial image has continued to haunt pulp fiction ever since (often adorning the covers of magazines devoted to it); for it panders to that basic White male desire at once to relish and deplore, vicariously share and publicly condemn, the rape of White female innocence. To be sure, as the generations go by, the colour of her violators has changed, though that of the violated woman has remained the same: from the Red of the Indians with whom it all began, to the Yellow of such malign Chinese as Dr Fu Manchu, the Black of those Africans who stalk so lubriciously through the pages of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan books, or the Purple or Green Martians who represent the crudest fantasy level of science fiction."[10]

This theory does not hold water — or rather, holds more water than Fiedler thinks, for Sax Rohmer, the creator of Dr Fu Manchu, was an Englishman; and we have seen that the two most likely sources of Burroughs's Mars lie in Gulliver of Mars and She, both written by Englishmen. Americans are not alone in obsessional fears about sex and colour. Indeed such fears are also observed in deepest Africa. Suffice it to say that Pocahontas and Ayesha really started something. With those mother-figures, the guilts of their respective doomed continents merge. Burroughs let the spectral Red/Black/Yellow/Green men into sf, and they have been on the war-path ever since — all the way to the stars!

Burroughs marks a retreat to the primitive. Other writers took other paths in their flight from urban culture and rational thought. The prime attraction of George Allan England's Darkness and Dawn, first published in 1912, was that it presented a picture of a great city -- New York — in ruins. Two modern Rip Van Winkles, Barbara and Allan, wake on the forty-eighth storey of a skyscraper to find that they have slept for some fifteen hundred years and that civilization has crumbled away all about them.

England (1877-1936) wrote several other serials for the pulps of this period, among them The Empire of the Air and The Golden Blight, as well as two sequels to Darkness and Dawn. Like Wells, and unlike most of his fellow writers, he was a socialist, with a small if not a large S. His characters are conventional, his prose slightly pretentious. He has not worn as well as Burroughs, although he was once regarded as Burroughs's rival.

As much might be said about Otis Adelbert Kline, though his imitation of Burroughs seems fairly open. Kline's Planet of Peril was published in serial form in 1929 and set on Venus. An inevitable sequel followed. Later, Kline moved in on Mars with The Swordsmen of Mars, and in on Tarzan with Tam, Son of the Tiger, and Jan of the Jungle — made indiscriminately into a Universal film-serial, just as Tarzan had been. And

so on.

Others of the great obscure include Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint, authors of The Blind Spot (1921) polished off adequately by Damon Knight in a chapter entitled "Chuckleheads" in his In Search Of Wonder; and Ralph Milne Farley, an ex-senator from Wisconsin, whose The Radio Men of 1924 was followed up (or down) by The Radio Beasts, and The Radio Planet. There are also Ray Cummings, best remembered for The Girl in the Golden Atom -- Gulliver down the microscope -- Charles B.Stilson, Victor Rousseau, and J.U.Giesy, author of the attractively-titled Palos of the Dog Star Pack, which ran as a serial and of course spawned sequels.

Croft, the hero of "Palos", travels to that distant star by astral projection, the means by which John Carter reached Mars, or the anonymous traveller in the 1741 A New Journey to the World in the Moon reached the lunar world. Mysticism in one form or another never dies, and sf has its due freight.[11] It may be regarded either as another form of retreat from the materialist problems of urban culture, or as a convenient plot device to remove a hero far and fast from an everyday situation to a bizarre one; these alternatives do not necessarily conflict.

One way of escape lay through the macabre, to the shadowy worlds where the rational could be set aside by the supernatural. Whatever we care to say about Burroughs's worlds, he does present us with a great frieze of prancing and capering beings, full of pulp life, engaged in hearty struggle with their contemporaries and their environment. On Hodgson, Merritt, Lovecraft, and their ilk, the shadow of the grave lies as heavy as it did across Poe; these practitioners lie nearer what we have termed 'the dreaming pole' than does ERB.

William Hope Hodgson, born in Essex in 1875, served in the Merchant Navy. He was a courageous and active man, killed in the trenches in 1918, in the war that killed Saki and millions of others. Hodgson's total output is modest, and he never wrote a really perfect book; yet he produced two novels which have embedded in them visions as colossal and impressive as any mentioned in this volume. They are the basis for a reputation which has grown slowly since Hodgson's death. Of course, he is not in DNB, and no standard reference book mentions his name.

The House on the Borderland (1908) is a strange house indeed, a massive stone affair in which the narrator lives with his old sister. The house is built over a pit, from which swine-things (another submerged nation?) emerge and go through the traditional uncanny, nocturnal and nauseous antics of all swine-things.

So far, so undistinguished. But the centre of the story is something different. The pit is in some vague fashion connected with the universe. The narrator stands transfixed at his window while time accelerates outside. The sun begins to whirl across the heavens until it is an arc of fire, a sun-stream.

> "From the sky, I glanced down to the gardens. They were just a blur of a palish, dirty green. I had a feeling that they stood higher than in the old days; a feeling that they were nearer my window, as though they had risen, bodily.....
>
> "It was later, that I noticed a change in the constant colour of the gardens. The pale, dirty green was growing ever paler and paler, towards white. At last, after a great space, they became greyish-white, and stayed thus for a very long time. Finally, however, the greyness began to fade, even as had the green, into a dead white. And this remained, constant and unchanged. And by this I knew that, at last, snow lay upon all the Northern world.
>
> "And so, by millions of years, time winged onward through eternity, to the end -- the end, of which, in the old earth days, I had thought remotely, and in hazily speculative fashion. And now, it was approaching in a manner of which none had ever dreamed....
>
> "All this while, the steady process of decay was continuing. The few remaining pieces of glass, had long ago vanished; and, every now and then, a soft thud, and a little cloud of rising dust, would tell of some fragment of fallen mortar or stone....
>
> "It might have been a million years later, that I perceived, beyond possibility of doubt, that the fiery sheet that lit the world, was indeed

darkening.

"Another vast space went by, and the whole enormous flame had sunk to a deep, copper colour. Gradually, it darkened, from copper to copper-red, and from this, at times, to a deep, heavy, purplish tint, with, in it, a strange loom of blood.

"Although the light was decreasing, I could perceive no diminishment in the apparent speed of the sun. It still spread itself in that dazzling veil of speed.

"The world, so much of it as I could see, had assumed a dreadful shade of gloom, as though, in very deed, the last day of the worlds approached."

As the house crumbles, the sun begins at last to slow down. Finally, it hangs in the sky, stationary, like a bronze shield. The air falls as snow round the shell of the house. The Central Suns approach. Earth itself is a forgotten thing.

What did this overpowering spectacle of the Remote mean to Hodgson?

His mystical vision, which comes through clear and unforcedly, carries an echo of the mystical initiation of Harmarchia, in the fourth chapter of Haggard's Cleopatra ("Behold the world that thou has left," said the Voice, "behold and tremble"); but Hodgson's scope and verve are his own. The whole vision, a mingling of astronomy and psychic experience, extends through several chapters — a bravura piece of writing, full of wonder, excelling in its scope anything written up to that date, and bursting far beyond the tawdry horror story in which it is set.

The Night Land (1912) flares into similar magnificence and dies into unreadability. Here Hodgson makes the strategic error of embedding his main story, which set far into the future, within a preposterous seventeenth century framework, and of writing in mock-antique. It is a very long book, and a reader may be forgiven if he never gets to the end even of the abridged edition, issued in 1921; yet within its length appears a morbid drama of great and powerful splendour, the drama of the Last Redoubt.

This drama is set far in the future, where the remainder of humanity wait under seige. The old world has been laid waste by "Monsters and Ab-human creatures", which have been permitted, through the agency of long-past human science, to pass "the barrier of Life". The Last Redoubt is a pyramid, seven miles high, set on a desolate plain.

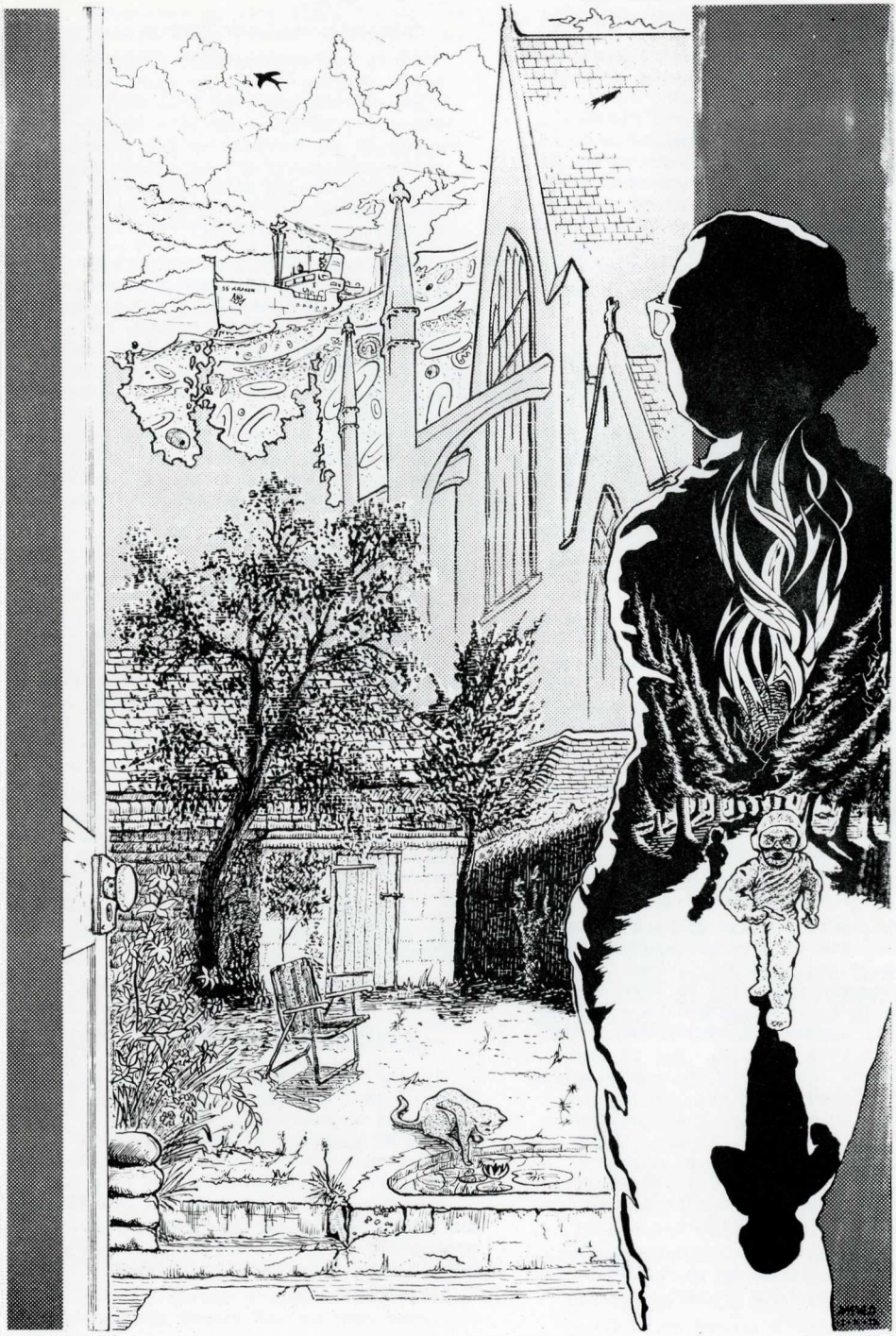
The Redoubt is powered by electricity drawn from the Earth. Fantastic creatures gather on the plain from the Night Lands, awaiting the exhaustion of this power. Greatest among these creatures are the Watchers. The Watchers are enormous, immobile, silent, and have been so throughout unknown thousands of years, awaiting the end that must come.

"Before me ran the Road where the Silent Ones Walk; and I searched it, as many a time in my earlier youth had I, with the spy-glass; for my heart was always stirred mightily by the sight of those Silent Ones.

"And, presently, alone in all the miles of that night-grey road, I saw one in the field of my glass — a quiet, cloaked figure, moving along, shrouded, and looking neither to right nor left And thus it was with these beings ever. It was told about in the Redoubt that they would harm no human, if but the human did keep a fair distance from them; but that it were wise never to come close upon one. And this I can well believe.

"And so, searching the road with my gaze, I passed beyond this Silent One, and past the place where the road, sweeping vastly to the South-East, was lit a space, strangely, by the light from the Silver-fire Holes. And thus at last to where it swayed to the South of the Dark Palace, and thence Southward still, until it passed round to the Westward, beyond the mountain bulk of the Watching Thing in the South — the hugest monster in all the visible Night Lands. My spy-glass showed it to me with clearness — a living hill of watchfulness, known to us as The Watcher of the South. It brooded there, squat and tremendous, hunched over the pale radiance of the Glowing Dome.

"Much, I know, has been writ concerning this Odd, Vast Watcher; for it had grown out of the blackness of the South Unknown Lands a million years ago; and the steady growing



nearness of it had been noted and set out at length by the men they called Monstruwacans; so that it was possible to search in our libraries, and learn of the very coming of this Beast in the olden-time."

This compelling situation has a brooding quality which reminds us of the tale Jung's woman patient told him about the monster -- in her case a vampire -- tyrannising everyone on the Moon. The situation in The Night Land is never resolved, as perhaps some trauma in Hodgson's personal life was never resolved. We are left with the image of those monstrous things, implacably sitting out the span of humanity, and infinity

What can one say of the great A.Merritt? It is a name that still stirs the dusty pulses of old-time fans, who recite the names of his fantasies like a litany. Merritt is really not a science fiction writer, but his dreamy, suffocating tales were reprinted in science fiction magazines and well-received.

Abraham Merritt (1884-1943)[12] went much further along the fantasy trail than Burroughs. At least one may look into the night sky and observe Mars and Venus, and have something to speculate upon; Merritt fled to never-never-lands without benefit of Morris. His heroes are for ever stepping through strange jewels, galloping through great doorways in mountains, discovering stairways leading down into extinct volcanoes, or arriving at temples full of unhallowed mysteries in some lost oasis. He is right up the dreaming pole.

Merritt's best-known titles, The Moon Pool, (and its inevitable sequel, The Conquest of the Moon Pool), The Ship of Ishtar, Seven Footprints to Satan, Dwellers in the Mirage, and Burn, Witch, Burn!, all appeared in the flourishing pulps from 1919 to 1932. Two of them were filmed. Merritt's overheated style exactly matched his plots, which were up to here in serpents, feathers, fur, great black stallions, freaks, naked women, evil priests, golden pigmies, talismen, monsters, lovely priestesses, sinister forces, and undefined longings. Merritt believed in fairies.

"I heard a sweet, low-pitched voice at the other side of the tower trilling the bird-like syllables of the Little People---

"And then -- I saw Evalie.

"Have you ever watched a willow bough swaying in spring above some clear sylvan pool, or a slender birch dancing with the wind in a secret woodland and covert, or the flitting green shadows in a deep forest glade which are dryads half-tempted to reveal themselves? I thought of them as she came towards us.

"She was a dark girl and a tall girl. Her eyes were brown under long black lashes, the clear brown of the mountain brook in autumn; her hair was black, the jetty hair that in a certain light has a sheen of darkest blue... (etc., etc.)... Her skin was clear amber. Like polished fine amber it shone under the loose, yet clinging, garment that clothed her, knee-long, silvery, cobweb fine and transparent. Around her hips was the white loin-cloth of the Little People. Unlike them, her feet were sandalled.

"But it was the grace of her that made the breath catch in your throat as you looked at her, the long flowing line from ankle to shoulder, delicate and mobile as the curve of water flowing over some smooth breast of rock, a liquid grace of line that changed with every movement.

"It was that -- and the life that burned in her like the green flame of the virgin forest when the kisses of spring are being changed for the warmer caresses of Summer... (etc.)...

"I could not tell how old she was -- hers was the pagan beauty which knows no age...

"The small soldiers ringed her, their spears ready."

(Dwellers in the Mirage, Ch.VIII)

As the critic Moskowitz perceives, Merritt was "escaping from the brutalities and injustices of the world". His world ends not with a bang but a simper.

Merritt's later stories turned progressively to the darker side of the occult, which was just about where H.P.Lovecraft began.

So we come to that kind, lonely and influential man, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, born 1890, departed this life 1937. With him, the flight to the irrational has become complete. Darkness rules at the dreaming pole. His literary ancestry includes Poe and the remarkable Lord Dunsany (1878-1957), who wrote many delicate fantasies of never-never-lands while soldiering in the Coldstream Guards in the Boer War and the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in World War One, and living at other times a sporting outdoor life. Lovecraft is a prisoner of the library and the cold damp hand. Horror, the abnegation of personality, seems to be his only permanent interest. Although horror can make a good literary seasoning if sparingly used, like salt it makes an indigestible banquet. The conclusion of Lovecraft's first story to be published, "Dagon" (1919), shows how he means to go on:

> "The end is near. I hear a noise at the door, as of some immense slippery body lumbering against it. It shall not find me. God, that hand! The window! The window!"

The macabre, the eldritch, is Lovecraft's province. He developed a demoniac cult of hideous entities, the spawn of evil, which were seeking to take over Earth — Cthulhu, Yuggoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, the Magnum Innominandum, and other titles which recall anagrams of breakfast cereal names. He had a fondness for the device used by Hodgson to conclude the main manuscript of The House on the Borderland, the first person narrator who continues desperately scribbling his journal until the very moment that he goes insane or that his head is bitten off by the menace. (Indeed, the conclusion of the House on the Borderland manuscript is perhaps the model of "Dagon" a few years later: "There is something fumbling at the door-handle. O God, help me now! Jesus -- The door is opening -- slowly. Somethi--")

Here, even Merritt's world of titillation and adventure has faded and gone. The only culture possible in Lovecraft's universe is a fevered search for old books of black magic. Attempt anything else, and the monstrosities start tramping dankly up from the foundations.

Ghastly writer though Lovecraft is, predictable though the horrors are, somewhere buried in his writing is a core of power that remains disconcerting when all the adjectives have fallen away like leaves. Colin Wilson indicates this quality when he says that Lovecraft's writing holds interest as a psychological case-history, even if it fails as literature. "Here was a man who made no attempt whatever to come to terms with life. He hated modern civilization, particularly in its confident belief in progress and science. Greater artists have had the same feeling, from Dostoevsky to Kafka and Eliot... Possibly future generations will feel that Lovecraft is 'symbolically' true."[13]

This is arguable. Lovecraft's hatred of science and progress is part of a hatred of life. And the mistrust of science, its ends and means, finds more rational expression in later science fiction authors like Ray Bradbury, who has acknowledged his debt to Lovecraft. Indeed, Lovecraft's influence on the field has often been through later writers -- not always fortunately -- for talented, intelligent and sensitive writers like August Derleth (whose memoirs in Walden West are much to be cherished) and Robert Bloch (perhaps best-known for his novel Psycho) may have been deflected from their true course by Lovecraft's too easy vein of grave-haunting. Perhaps as much is true of the unreadable Clark Ashton Smith. (Ah, but how I loved his "City of the Singing Flame" as a lad!)

One or two of Lovecraft's stories rank as science fiction, for instance "Herbert West -- Reanimator", an exercise on a Frankenstein theme. West's life-work is the reanimation of the dead. The First World War provides him with plenty of corpses. Lovecraft is about his old business of chilling the blood, however ludicrously:

> "For that very fresh body, at last writhing into full and terrifying consciousness with eyes dilated at the memory of its last scene on earth, threw out its frantic hands in a life and death struggle with the air; and suddenly collapsing into a second and final dissolution from which there could be no return, screamed out the cry that will ring eternally in my aching brain:
>
> "'Help! Keep off, you cursed little tow-headed fiend -- keep that

damned needle away from me!"

(From Dagon and Other Macabre Tales)

One may find Lovecraft funny, and his most dramatic effects overloaded. But he had and still has staunch supporters. August Derleth and Donald Wandrei founded a publishing imprint, Arkham House, in 1939, simply to publish the treasured works of HPL in a form more permanent than magazines; and those early publications are now valuable, scarce, and much sought-after. Truly, friends are better than critics.

Notes

1. Leisure Books Inc., North Hollywood, Calif., 1970
2. Kingsley Amis: New Maps of Hell, Ch.1. (1961)
3. By way of comparison, to show how the pace has hotted up since Wallace's and Burroughs's day, the James Bond novels of Ian Fleming had sold seventy million copies by 1967. Films of the Bond novels are highly profitable. Box Office takings on "Diamonds are Forever" (1972) totalled £24,568,915, in its first twelve days of release in some 1000 cinemas round the world. (Figures given in "The Gilt-Edged Bond" by Roger Eglin and Iain Murray, in "Business Observer", Sunday 16 Jan., 1972.)
4. "I was not writing because of any urge to write nor for any particular love of writing. I was writing because I had a wife and two babies... I loather poverty... " Autobiographical article in "Open Road" magazine, Sept. 1949, quoted in Ch.XII of Richard Lupoff's sympathetic biography, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Master of Adventure.
5. For an investigation of imaginative treatments of Venus through the years, see my Farewell, Fantastic Venus! A History of the Planet Venus in Fact and Fiction, 1968.
6. And worse than drugged. "The Story of Kirk" in Robert Lindner's The Fifty Minute Hour, and Other True Psychoanalytic Tales (NY, 1954), relates the case of a young man, Kirk, who identified with an interplanetary hero much like John Carter, whose adventures spread over a long series of fantasies; though the evidence presented by Lindner suggests that the series might be, not Burroughs's, but the Lensman series by E.E.Smith. By coincidence, the hero has the same name as Kirk's (an assumed name). Soon, Kirk is away with his fictional namesake, "far off on another planet, courting beautiful princesses, governing provinces, warring with strange enemies". The identification becomes part of a self-sustaining psychosis, which Lindner ameliorates only with great difficulty. (This "Story of Kirk" is included in Best Fantasy Stories (1962), edited by the present writer.) I am indebted to Dr Leon Stover for evidence that 'Kirk' is, in fact, the pseudonym for the politician who later wrote science fiction himself under another pseudonym -- Cordwainer Smith.
7. For the full list, consult "Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Fate Worse Than Death" by Richard D.Mullen, the Elder. ("Riverside Quarterly", Vol.IV, 3).
8. The dream is related in Chapter IV, "Psychiatric Activities", of Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 1963.
9. Richard D.Mullen: "The Undisciplined Imagination: Edgar Rice Burroughs and Lowellian Mars" in SF: The Other Side of Realism, edited by Thomas D.Clareson, 1971.
10. The Return of the Vanishing American, by Leslie A.Fiedler. The chapter on "The Basic Myths, III: Two Mothers of Us All". To be guided entirely by Fiedler's theories would probably cause one to see the alienations surrounding the births of ERB's characters as explicable in terms of the latter's rejection of his European (or European cultural) ancestry. "What a lovely American dream -- to be born as a fatherless Indian boy from a husbandless Indian mother, to have no father at all, except for the Forest itself: all fear of miscegenation washed away in the same cleaning metaphor that washes away our European ancestry," says Fiedler ("The Basic Myths, III").
11. For a discussion of mysticism in one sf magazine of the thirties see Leland Sapiro's "The Mystic Renaissance: A Survey of F.Orlin Tremaines 'Astounding Stories'" ("Riverside Quarterly", vol II,

Nos. 2-4).

12. Once one has read Damon Knight's description of Merritt's appearance, one never forgets it: "Merritt was chinless, bald and shaped like a shmoo". (In Search of Wonder, Ch.II).

13. The Strength to Dream, by Colin Wilson, Ch.I (1962). Since publishing this book, Wilson has increasingly fallen under the spell of Lovecraft, whom he likens to W.B.Yeats and Peter Kurten, the Dusseldorf murderer. He has written two novels which utilise the Lovecraftian cult of Cthulhu.

FRONTIERS OF LITERATURE

Since sf is becoming increasingly accepted as a respectable literary medium, we have decided that it would be appropriate from time to time to ~~make~~ give examples of writers who are doing their bit to push back these literary frontiers. We have three examples to hand, all particularly worthy of close attention.

The first is a short story: "Culture Shock" by Perry A.Chandelaine, which was published in the May 1971 issue of Analog (pages 113-136). Unfortunately we can no longer remember what this story was about, but we noted down various passages from it which demonstrate the author's highly individual use of the English language, his economical storytelling, and the demands he makes on the intelligence of his readers.

On p.115 we find the following sentence:

> "The Project had had to expand John Loanne's C and C -- Communications and Cryptographic -- department to include the special Public Relations and Information section affectionately known as PuR and I which had been quite successful in allaying human fears about the alien visit, thus permitting the visitor's ship to come directly to Moonbase on termination of their twelve-year trip instead of the far-out Martian orbit."

Got that? On the same page, an as-yet unintroduced character is mentioned:

> "Happy Honey is George W.Honeywell, graduate of Harvard, twenty-six years old, and a real noncony..."

Six pages later (p.121) a new character makes his appearance and we read:

> "It ... had to be Happy Honey, otherwise known on his birth certificate, if nowhere else, as George W.Honeywell, recent Harvard graduate cum laude, twenty-six..."

On page 118 we learn some of the strange characteristics of doors in the scientific establishment in which the story is set:

> "She opened the mahogany paneled door displaying a matronly-shaped leg, high heels, a subdued gray sheath conservatively decorated with a small silver brooch."

Later that same page, the lady who opened the peculiar door nearly suffers an unfortunate mishap:

> "Her left hand held a technician's notebook; her right hand flew to her mouth, where she stifled a sharp, sudden expostulation."

A close shave. But just as well in view of the fact that seven lines previously she had been unable to prevent it happening:

> "'Disgusting. Simply disgusting,' her puritan spirit would expostulate.'

But perhaps the best moments in the story come on pages 130 and 131. Here, our hero Michael (who aside from being handsome is also highly intelligent and incredibly quick on the uptake) is listening to an account of a theory to solve whatever problem it was that the story was built around:

> "What Dr Markstein reports on is the need for a new science of the objective-subjective. This is almost analogous to our findings

Continued on page 31

from the easy chair

HARRY HARRISON

That's where I have seen Brian so many times, in his easy chair, I in mine across the room. The house is quiet and the world asleep; fatigue is in the air but held at bay by the Teachers close to hand, quick to soothe the soul as well as the throat for perhaps another cigar. There is good talk also in the air, exchange that sparkles, great ideas conceived, friends appreciated in warm terms, the sods of the world dismissed with knowing laughter. All is at ease. Drink follows drink like the flapping of a great brown bottle, and neither the time nor the occasion can be faulted in any manner.

How many times have we set thusly? Not enough. When we both work we work very hard, so that when the time comes to relax we enjoy it hugely. Better together, we have discovered as the years go by. The most awful places become bright for me when Brian is there to share their awfulness. Rio de Janeiro springs instantly to mind. There were Americans who went there and returned shaken and swore never to leave their sacred home shore again. The Cariocas were mad -- absolutely! The food too spicy -- deliciously! The heat incredible -- wonderfully! Perhaps I would have grouched myself if Brian had not been there, for to him all this madness had some hidden purpose, which we worked hard to discover. We spent endless hours on the brass-railed porch of a bar on the ocean with Jim Ballard, who was coolly at home in this seventh level of hell, while people came and went around us and life pulsed and throbbed in the street beyond with a ferocity unknown in the cooler north. Brian was very much at home in all this, absorbing it and making it a part of him.

The editor of this journal would like a personal appreciation of Brian and has suggested that I write it. I agreed instantly; there is nothing I would like better to do. But it is not easy. I could do Tricky Dicky Nixon a lot easier, or General Westmoreland; it is always easier to point out gleefully all the failings of those you loathe; it is like writing a scathing review of a bad book. What do you say of a good book? Great read, I enjoyed it, wow. Harder to do with a good man, someone I feel I have known all my life.

Well we can start with that; a good man with all that means. Integrity, fast becoming out of style in this world of images. The Aldiss you see is the Aldiss there is. I will not cite anecdotes but can only say that through the proverbial thick and thin I have always known that Brian was there like a solid island in the rushing river. And there have been some thick times indeed. He is a friend to count upon in a world where loneliness is the word.

It is strange, perhaps a little disconcerting, that our backgrounds are very much the same although we come from different countries and never met until the fifties. We are of an age, raised in those gray days of the depression before the war, finding in science fiction one of the few alleviations of that drab flatness. While I was buying second hand sf mags at a nickel apiece -- and turning them back in steadily, three for one -- Brian was browsing the Yank mags in Woolworths.

We found the same grail, Astounding, which may explain why we have just collaborated on the editing of more than 400,000 words of mind-blasting copy for The Astounding-Analog Reader. All changed for both us when the heavy hand of the Army landed on our shoulders and we were pulled into its sweaty khaki embrace. Same Army. People have wondered about this. Norfolk? New York? But...? Same Army. The Soldier Erect or Bill, The Galactic Hero; it is the same Army. We entered it and came out of it alive, which is a victory of sorts right there, still sane — another victory — to face that even grayer postwar world.

Things slither by and it is 1959 and I am living in Denmark, Brian in his town house in Oxford, and the conventions arrive each Easter. Each one better than the one before; they made fine conventions in those days at the dawn of the world. Meat pies were thrown, fire escapes scampered down, hilarity ruled. Our annual pilgrimage to the Eastercon became one of the highlights of the year. I would return to Denmark refreshed enough for a whole year's work; surely Brian breathed the same tonic atmosphere. Then, with the science fiction star in ascent, we began meeting in more exotic parts of the world. Trieste; the Italians started an sf film festival and invited us down. Oh my. Kingsley Amis was there, his presence only adding a note of grace to the joy of life, as did Jim Ballard's in Rio, to a week of unconstrained enthusiasm. We crossed the border into Yugoslavia many times that week, with wives and families, sampling the strong slivovitz and great black olives of the land. Brian was taken by the country and, with his wife Margaret, learned the strange tongue that passes for a language there, and the two of them returned for a lengthy visit in a dying Land Rover, a visit that produced that mighty book Cities and Stones. We exchanged cards and letters at irregular intervals and roughly arranged a meeting in Makarska on the blue Adriatic. With the precision of movement that occasionally haunts us we arrived on the shore within half an hour of each other. That was a fine summer.

If I am being too biographical please excuse me, but that is the nature of the beast. A friendship, a person, does not exist in isolation; incident and circumstance become memorable, memories pile up into a thick volume of cheer. Everything becomes part of it. There was at least sixty-five stone of English and American science fiction flesh in Brian's sturdy Volvo last Easter when we came on the sheep in the narrow lane up near the Welsh border, and every ounce of that flesh still vibrates with joy at the memory of the sheep fleeing ahead of the car between the hedges, tail going like a propellor, of Brian roaring along behind it with the car, encouraging it with sweet words to leave the roadway. Moments of fine memory like this each add their leaf. Sunset at Stonehenge, late fall, wind like a knife with dusk falling, not a soul in sight — would there had but been a fan there to record it! — feeling the loneliness and distance of those stones. That's when the Stonehenge book began, just there. Or plunging into the ocean at Great Yarmouth one Easter midnight, just because it was there; or into the Baltic, chill as the Antarctic; or the Atlantic at Rio, where the entire ocean drops down upon you; or the Sea of Cortez in Mexico or other oceans, seas, lakes; another leaf falls.

I am afraid that this is not at all the sober appreciation that perhaps the editor wanted; if not I apologize. Ask someone else to tell you the date of Brian's birth, the schools he attended, teeth he has had filled: I am sure those facts are most interesting and I look forward to reading them one day. But that is not the Brian Aldiss I know or the one I can write about with such pleasure. My Aldiss is a man who laughs a great deal and makes jokes that double one with laughter, who reads a good deal and knows what he has read and can write about it and tell you about it, who can lift a pint of beer with the best of them and knows all the best places to lift that pint, who appreciates life with an appreciation greater than that of anyone else I have ever known, so great that it gives little squirts of life to those around him, even the walking dead ones who twitch sharply before slowing down again.

Others will tell you about the writer and critic Aldiss — the best, absolutely the best — so I will abstain. My contribution, from the easy chair, drink in one hand and cigar in the other, is simply one of raising that drink in a toast to the man for whom I have the most profound friendship, to

one of Britain's foremost gentlemen of letters -- science fiction's leading gentleman of letters with no one even in second place -- a toast that I wish all members of this organization would join me in drinking.

Good luck, good health Brian, the best of everything to you always.

-- Harry Harrison

a transatlantic view

JAMES BLISH

Perhaps the rarest of all Brian Aldiss publications is not by Aldiss at all, except for incidental comments. Its title page tells the story:

ITEM FORTY-THREE

Brian W.Aldiss: A Bibliography
1954-1962

Compiled by Margaret Manson

With Annotations by Brian Aldiss

It was completed in Oxford in December 1962 and printed in Birmingham in an edition of 500 copies. When Brian came to New York with Margaret (by then Mrs Aldiss) in 1966 to receive the first novella Nebula ever awarded -- for "The Saliva Tree" -- they brought with them a small stack of these 28-page pamphlets. They stayed with me and my (also new) wife in our Riverside Drive apartment, and when they packed to leave, he forgot to include the remainder of the stack, down by then to perhaps 10 copies. When I called his attention to this omission, he replied characteristically, "Oh, do whatever you think best with them". I'm now down to three, having given the rest to such places as libraries and the Science Fiction Foundation.

Bibliographies invariably confuse me, and this one is no exception, so my description will doubtless be confusing too. It lists, in two different ways, 122 items of fiction, all ostensibly science fiction (though I have my doubts about at least one quite important entry); plus 28 "miscellaneous writings other than fiction". Of the first 122 numbered items, a dozen are translations of works also listed under their English-language titles, though for some reason seven additional translations are not given independent numbers. Similarly, 14 items given independent numbers are English-language editions of items listed elsewhere under other titles, though there are also nine such instances which are not numbered. Finally, each of the two English-language reprints of Non-Stop under its original title is given a separate number, instead of the practice followed elsewhere of listing all three printings under one number. Thus the actual number of fiction works listed (as opposed to titles) is 93 -- still an impressive number for eight years' work, especially considering that a number of the entries are books. (Item 43 is non-fiction -- Item Forty-Three itself.)

The singular value of this pamphlet for me is that it covers only work done while I was still living in the States, ending three years before I had even met Brian, and enabled me to winnow out those productions of the beginning of his career which were then available to me (with typical insularity, I took no British magazines): 22 works in all. Even here, I was thrown into a slight panic by the annotation for item 46, "Judas Danced" (1958), which reads: "This was my first story to be published in the States", while its magazine attribution is to Science Fantasy, which I had thought an exclusively British journal; was I going to have to account for 14 additional titles from that magazine, one of which is dated 1954? The solution, however, is provided by item 47, '"Judas Danced" as "Judas Dancing"', attributed to the U.S. magazine Star Science Fiction for January 1958, which I vividly remember as my first

encounter with any Aldiss story; clearly, the annotation should be moved down one item.*

"Judas Dancing" (as I encountered it) was a little over 5000 words long, and basically impressionistic -- editor Fred Pohl in Star was trying to be almost as experimental as Michael Moorcock was to be later — and would not look out of place among Aldiss productions of 10 years after. Of it, the author's annotation goes on to say, "I forget now what I was trying to say, but I had a good title". (Obviously, Fred slightly disagreed.) It is listed, on the last page of the bibliography, as one of a dozen stories Aldiss would like to see in an imaginary collection of his work up to then. It is not in Aldiss' first British collection, Space, Time and Nathaniel, for the obvious reason that that was published in 1957; but when Aldiss was making a selection from this book for his first American collection, No Time Like Tomorrow (1959), he added it, and it also appeared in his next British collection of the same year, The Canopy of Time.* However, it is not represented in the first edition of Best SF Stories of Brian W.Aldiss (London, 1965, only three years after he made up the imaginary list).

Those two U.S. collections (the other being Galaxies Like Grains of Sand, 1960) are reminders that magazine stories and novels were not the sole sources of Aldiss I had available during the period. They add 16 more stories to the list, which, subtracting two items which are the collections themselves, brings the number of works I could have read through 1962 to 36. (I won't pretend that I did read all of them, or have yet, but I think I've come pretty close.)

The earliest Aldiss (in order of composition) to appear in the States is "Outside" (1954), which is represented in both the 1962 ideal collection and the 1965 "Best" collection. It is nevertheless a short account of a rather familiar sf situation, the small group of people imprisoned in a house or similar environment for reasons they do not remember, do not understand and do not question until one of them is jolted out of the daily routine by an anomaly. The reason turns out to be not particularly ingenious, and though the ending contains a "snapper" or second surprise, it's easy to see it coming despite the fact that it's inconsistent with premises the author has just laid down in the preceding paragraph. No budding genius visible here.

"Psyclops" (1956) is closer to being original in both concept and language: a six-months-old foetus being aroused into telepathic communication with his father -- from whom a starship is rapidly taking him away and out of range -- to be given instructions about how to cope with an emergency after he is born. Though the difficulties in understanding are stressed throughout, the problem is solved far too easily (incredibly so, in my opinion; I can see no reason to believe that it could be solved at all); and the vocabulary and command of grammar of the foetus are equally incredible, though I must confess that given the same technical dilemma, I couldn't even today think of any better way to resolve it. Verdict: the chief effect is of a growth in boldness.

"The New Father Christmas", which belongs to the same year (and like "Psyclops" made the 1965 "Best" collection, but does not appear in the 1962 list of favourites) resembles both in depicting powerless people in an extremely confined situation, and at the same time looks forward to the machine-dominated world with hardly any humans in it which recurred two years later as the backdrop for "But Who Can Replace A Man?" Despite a few small, vivid ingenuities, I still find it callow.

If these in fact represent the best that Aldiss was writing at that time, as he still thought in 1965, they offer no particular reason for anybody to have taken special notice of him when they were first published. They read, in

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* While I'm at it, I might as well clear up a tiny error as well. Item 88, "Safety Valve", is undated and is attributed to Future Science Fiction BRE. I was almost dead certain that this U.S. magazine had never had a BRE, and sure enough the M.I.T. Index shows that this story did appear in the States; the date is 1959.

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* The publication of this book in that year was what occasioned the U.S. title of my last Okie book, The Triumph of Time, to become A Clash of Cymbals in Great Britain. I don't regret the change.

fact, like better-written versions of the kind of thing Robert Sheckley churned out in enormous quantities beginning a few years earlier than the period of Item 43 and extending beyond it. But I remind the British reader that in the States no Aldiss was published until 1958, and the three early pieces I've briefly described didn't become available until a year later. By that time, Aldiss (as Margaret had the perception to remark in her brief introduction to the bibliography) was tentatively on his way, as he has been ever since, to becoming a very different sort of writer -- in fact, as is now obvious, a whole new set of writers.

Eight 1958 Aldiss works have been published thus far in the States, but we did not see four of them until two years later, and a fifth one year later. Of the three we did see that year, I have already described "Judas Dancing"; the other two were "Poor Little Warrior!" and "But Who Can Replace A Man?" (which became the Stateside title of the 1965 "Best" collection). Both were instant successes and have been multiply reprinted since, so I need not summarise them, but they deserve a few critical comments, or, I should more honestly say, puzzlements.

"Judas Dancing" was unique and far in advance of its time. The other two are, mostly, not. "Poor Little Warrior!" is in theme a retread of L.Sprague de Camp's 1956 "A Gun For Dinosaur" (which of course Aldiss may not have encountered at the time) with a new and idiosyncratic ending, but remained an Aldiss favourite in both 1962 and 1965. "But Who Can Replace A Man?" is a retread of "The New Father Christmas", but this time with a happy ending, and it is not on the 1962 list; of course its popularity is all the justification it needs for his having chosen to reprint it in 1965, but I sometimes wonder whether he might not be as baffled by the enthusiasm for it as I have been by the popularity of my own 1952 "Surface Tension", which I thought pure hackwork when I wrote it. Both the Aldiss stories are one-punchers and still quite in the Sheckley vein on the surface. What, then, did make the difference here? I can only guess, but that guess is that they are more vivid, more richly written, and more deeply felt -- especially in characterisation -- than previous efforts which we had seen from him, let alone anyone else. Mechanically, they seem for the most part quite commonplace, but they rang with conviction (an effect a gifted author can sometimes pull off without being in the least aware of it at the time). They still do.

In 1959 we got our first look at what Aldiss could do (then) at greater lengths, first with the 31,000-word Vanguard from Alpha (published in England the previous year as Equator) which appeared as half of an Ace Double; and then with Starship, a slightly abridged version of Non-stop. Now, I have no opportunity to recheck my impression of the Ace novella, because when my wife and I moved to England nearly four years ago we either gave away or threw out all our paperbacks to lower shipping weight. My memory of it is of a rather leisurely story, not strikingly original but with a far higher quota of exotic sensual detail than I would have expected from him at the time. The effect, I recall, was rather like reading good Jack Vance, for me an altogether agreeable feeling. Non-Stop, on the other hand, is still widely known. It was, and remains, the only one of the many attempts to treat the situation set up in Heinlein's "Universe" and "Common Sense" to be completely successful on its own terms. It was stupid of the publishers, and unfair both to Aldiss and the readers who might not have encountered the Heinlein stories, to throw part of its effect away by their title change, but I think this is a minor matter. If a work is a good one, it will be re-read, and enjoyed just as much the second time even though one now knows exactly what happens in it; and this is a good one. For the first time, we had been confronted with Aldiss Major.

Had we but known it, in the same year we were also confronted with another portent: the publication in F&SF of "Space Burial", an 18-line verse -- a field in which Aldiss was to become extensively and seriously active a decade later.

After Starship, 1960 gave us nothing in the States but a major let-down: a novel (though again part of an Ace Double) under the title of Bow Down to Nul, serialised in England in the same year as X for Exploitation. This was a completely standard Ace novel, about a slave revolt on a harsh alien planet. It was of course well written, and full of plot excitement, but the fact remains that it essentially had nothing to say and did not require a man with the gifts

of an Aldiss to turn it out. I assume in charity that it was one of those jobs a professional writer sometimes takes on because he needs the money, like the Star Trek books Brian so deplores my doing. But at the time, it looked like a long step backward.

The lost ground was regained and passed by a good distance in 1961. This year saw the publication of The Male Response, of which Aldiss said in Item 43: "Perhaps my favourite novel, though financially a failure. The publishers called it SF". He was obviously implying that he wouldn't so call it, and neither would I. Essentially, it is a satirical novel of African politics in the tradition of Evelyn Waugh, though other threads are woven into it. It contains what I think the funniest scene in all of his work: A computer salesman in England is demonstrating to a customer who is an African potentate the various models available, with elaborate technical explanations of their various capacities. Asked finally which one he would like, the potentate replies: "A red one, I think. Yes, I think my people would like that".

Another 1961 novel, The Primal Urge, was certainly sf; this is the book in which everyone in England has a disc implanted in his forehead which glows faint pink to deep red whenever he or she feels sexual desire. This is inherently a comic idea, and to Americans the notion of the legendarily reserved English voluntarily adopting such a gadget had an extra fillip. I doubt that this book made much money either, but both were certainly surprises. Though there had been much incidental wit in the previous Aldiss works we had seen, nobody, I think, had even suspected that he could also be a superb comic novelist.

The major event of this year, however, was the magazine publication of all five of the "Hothouse" stories, with their irresistible combination of poetry, high imagination, and the re-emergence in full efflorescence of the Vance-like feeling for exotic colour. There was a little criticism of the celestial mechanics involved, in which I was one of the offenders (I now think it doesn't make a damn bit of difference -- it shrinks to complete insignificance beside the series' triumphs in all other departments), but the general response was one of amazed excitement. The series as a whole won the 1962 Hugo for the best short fiction of 1961; and, in 1962, a book version of the series (abridged, the bibliography says, by about 8,000 words — the full text can be found in the Faber & Faber Hothouse of the same year) appeared as The Long Afternoon of Earth.

Thus, by the end of the period covered in Item 43, Brian Aldiss' sun had fully risen in the States, despite the fact that we had seen less than half of his work. When Judy and I visited England for the first time in 1965 for the World Convention, we were not at all surprised that he was the Guest of Honour, and I doubt that anyone else was, either.

--- James Blish

author's choice

BRIAN W. ALDISS

KEEPING AHEAD OF BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD

Some strange things happened in the nineteen-sixties. It was the decade when more children than ever before came crowding through the flimsy gates of flesh into our world, and when more foetuses than ever before were quenched before they tasted the knowledge of life. Maybe it was because of all the overcrowding, but the sixties was also the decade when more and more people decided to throw away an old life-style and try a fresh one.

Established ways of life appeared unsatisfactory. All kinds of new ways of life were invented. Their very newness made them exciting and dangerous. The danger was often increased by the use of drugs. Drugs help you throw your old mind away; many people never found need of another one. The decade ended with the Sharon Tate murders and the trial of Charles Manson, hippie Christ, rapist, murderer, life-style man. It certainly was a bloody sunset.

When I wrote the first fragment of Barefoot in the Head, towards the end of 1966, the decade looked different. Not sunset; high and early in a golden afternoon. In England, we had had the flower-power thing and succulent post-pubertal voices were still singing about Coming to San Francisco. The high count of discarded foetuses and mutilated daughters in the garbage-cans of Haight-Ashbury was not then public knowledge. The good trips Aldous Huxley had enjoyed on acid still lent their blessing to a whole lot of squalor.

The drop-out acid movement, in other words, sounded pretty good. Especially when you compared it with that big machine of the going political world, where it was observable that many nasty things were happening in a whole lot of countries, under the holy name of Law and Order.

I'm just a timid middle-class man, with the in-built predeliction of my class for Law and Order. What I don't want is too much Law and Order. Also, I have a sneaking respect for squalor, from the literary squalor of what used to be called la vie boheme onwards. I need to enlarge on that point, because it is an important part of "Barefoot".

"Civilization is the distance man has placed between man and his excreta". That was the epigraph I used in my 1964 novel, The Dark Light Years. Every now and again, civilization suddenly looks more like a psychosis than an achievement. That's when I think of my epigraph, because there is something sick in the way mankind tries to forget or ignore its animal nature. The craziest invention in the history of the world is not the internal combustion engine, getting such a bad press these days, but the flush toilet, which has propelled us further from Mother Nature than rocket ever took us from Mother Earth. It is the most fatal discontinuity of all ecological cycles. That which was of the soil is returned not to the soil but to a sewage plant and thus to the sea. And nine-tenths of our domestic water is expended launching it on its voyage. (I'm aware that Sweden now has a vacuum-extraction process; but bucket

and shovel are better for crops and humility.) Dark Light Years thought along these lines, comparing the hygiene-phobia of mankind with the mysticism of a perfect gentle race of creatures called the utods, who accepted their own excrement.

Law and Order — or anarchy and excrement? I was not sure which was better. I wrote "Barefoot" to find out which I preferred. Not to keep you in suspense, I came out on the side of ... well, against anarchy, let's say. Part of the excitement many people have found in "Barefoot" is because the debate was live to me as I wrote it.

Which brings us to a parallel theme. The trouble with anarchy is that it takes you back in time. The world is too thickly populated for anarchy. You have to accept Organization, if you accept reality.

The hero of this novel is Charteris. Charteris goes on a trip and comes to see himself as a sort of Messiah. Others con him into accepting the role. Charteris and his followers drive off through Europe, imagining that their anarchy is taking them in a new direction. Instead, they are speeding straight down the old roads to the Stone Age. They are retravelling history. Now that must be a mistake. And I guess that's why I can't accept the idea of a 'hippie culture' intellectually, however sympathetic I may be emotionally. You wind up with a Crucifixion. As so often happens, Nature followed Art, and Charles Manson emphasised my point for me.

There's also a strain in the novel and the poems which asks whether we are yet able to go ahead in any evolutionary fashion. We belt across the M-roads of our Western culture — the automobile may be new but we are equipped still with the brains, eyes, reflexes of the Stone Age.

I speak diagnostically, trying to conceal the warmth I still feel for my canvas, and for the figures moving in its tragic landscape. If I make it sound past-derived, that's a mistake. It's a future-derived book. Let's use that word humility again; if the West shows continued arrogance, fails to show humility, one day the Third World will reach for their fair share of Earth's riches. They may strike as they strike in "Barefoot". Psychotomimetic chemicals are so cheap to make and deliver. Nuclear weapons are out of date; a blanketing of LSD-derivative is just as effective. And takes you back to the Stone Age just as fast.

"Barefoot" is a poetical novel of ideas. I've emphasised the ideas in this article. The language will have to speak for itself. I fell inside the idiom, with the result you see in the book.

There's philosophy in it, too; mainly the rather suspect philosophy of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, because that fitted my theme exactly. Those two, camping in towns, half-eating, mashing science to fit their maze of ideas, are the very mirror of hippie philosophers. In these cases, philosophy, which should be a coherent system of ideas, is worn like a patched coat over anarchy of thought. So with Charteris.

When "Barefoot" was reviewed in Vector, the critic commented that "It is much influenced by Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, teachers who — I must be candid — strike me as being as shallow as, say, Hoerbiger and Blavatsky, and infinitely less relevant to contemporary western man than the Buddha, Patanjali and the Masters of Zen" — a comment which won a place in Pseud's Corner in Speculation. But of course it was shallow and muddled philosophers I needed; profound and lucid ones would have signified that I approved of the goings on of Charteris and Co. My attitude, to make matters boringly clear, is one of sympathy without approval.

I've no wish to claim too much for "Barefoot"; it must work out its own destiny. But it might help a few readers to point out that a number of substantial ingredients lie below what some (not the author) may regard as the filigree of its style. Maybe it's worth saying, for instance, that "Barefoot" has a strong love story which is not without its ironies or its bearing on Charteris's relationships with his fellows. Despite herself, Angelina loves him and is faithful to him, though he proves himself shallow and cold-hearted; but he does come at last, in age, to see her and love her — only by then she's sick of him. "Heard too many of your speeches in my time," she says. Thus speaks woman married to self-styled intellectual.

Are there any other contenders for the claim of being a European sf novel? The notes for "Barefoot" were often written on the spot, from Jugoslavia

and Strasbourg to Loughborough and Belgium, where I saw the broken STELLA ART sign glowing in the dark ("Stella Artois" is a nutritious Belgian beer!). Not to mention the hotel in Metz. And there's a passage in "Drake-Man Route" written in a SAS jet heading for Copenhagen from Arlanda.

I tried to make it all at least contemporary, if not futuristic. And still Stanley Kubrick makes no move in my direction...

--- Brian Aldiss

Continued from page 21

> with respect to the Eridanian's description of the scientific method." As was her wont, she waited for Michael to catch the overtones.'

Well, having waited a bit she continues through six solid paragraphs of explanation, while Michael's razor-sharp mind wrestles with those elusive overtones. Then bingo!:

> '"Are you trying to tell me that those principles of Eridanian science are analogous to the new science of the subjective-objective alluded to by Dr Markstein?"'

A word of warning: Mr Chandelaine has published a number of stories. He apparently considers "Culture Shock" to be among his best.

* * * * *

Our other two examples fail to reach these Olympian heights, but nevertheless deserve mention. The first is a novel, half of an Ace Double: Lord of the Green Planet, by Emil Petaja. The very first paragraph of the novel sets the tone:

> "Captain Diarmid Patrick O'Dowd of T.S.S.F. X-Plor, Magellanic Division, groaned. He hurt. His stunned brain groped to pull itself up by its bootstraps. His rolling tumble, when the seat ejector popped him up and out of his disabled ship (before in truth he must become a black chunk of toast which the lifesaving procedure suggested), had been inelegant in the extreme."

Any explanations, however far-fetched, of that parenthetical comment would be welcomed. Further down the page we read:

> "He snapped open his eyes. Yes. Grass. His nostrils whiffed in damp loamy soil, and his wondering eyes blinked at gold-lamina verdure brushing his chin."

And over the page:

> "His misery was pricked through with sharp astonishment; he arched his gurgling gape upwards..."

Unfortunately we cannot report on later developments in the story, as we never reached them.

* * * * *

Lastly, we have a publisher's blurb. It is perhaps unfair to pick on a thing like this (so we are told), but it is as well to remember that even blurbs are written by people; and in many cases even by quite eminent people, such as the editor of the series. In this case we are looking at one of the new DAW line, Dinosaur Beach, by Keith Laumer:

> "... Dinosaur Beach is a Nexx Central station located millions of years in the past, in the Jurassic Age. But shortly after Ravel's arrival, the station is attacked and destroyed, and Ravel begins a terrifying odyssey through time. For the attackers were another time-tampering team from still a different future era. And Ravel himself is not only in growing danger but the human world as we know it..."

That's all for this time. Contributions to this column gleefully received.

reporting on possibilities

PHILIP STRICK

When it's time to liven things up a bit in a discussion on science fiction, I like to bring in a reference to Report on Probability A. It's a shorter and more manageable Aldiss novel than Barefoot in the Head, but it invites the same extremes in readers' reactions, from fury to bafflement, and I have come to think of it as the quickest method of establishing whether or not an sf enthusiast is prepared to take his devotions seriously. If science fiction is to remain a subject worth arguing over and defending, it must continually expand, explore, and extend -- and that means it must fling itself headlong at the ramparts of our society and attempt to breach them. Society is unlikely to take much notice, as Wells discovered, but that's beside the point. If enough people become convinced that a change has to be made, it will eventually take place, reinforced with all the normal protestations of gloom and joy; science fiction, while hardly a clarion call, has no reason to restrain its enthusiasm for the Apollo programme or to conceal its distaste for Vietnam. And it has the advantage of being able to work by exaggeration — you can ridicule in sf with a freedom that would be impossible in such other areas of commentary as the newspaper editorial or the television chat show. These are points with which the devotees are unlikely to argue, and yet one only has to produce a few examples to discover that mere lip-service is being paid to the concept of science fiction with teeth and that what the fans really want is a rehash of Doc Smith. Which, sadly enough, is largely what they're getting.

The beauty of Report on Probability A is that it challenges all conventional methods of telling a story, by taking them to extremes. The most painstaking detail is given to the description of non-events in a static situation -- three men keeping an obsessive watch on the house of their former employer -- with the result not that the possibilities of the narrative are exhausted but that an extraordinary vista is opened up of motives and their consequent actions. The book is crammed with information, and yet the dazzling clarity of the picture it conveys serves to illuminate not a single precept or neatly-proven moral but, on the contrary, a whole army of questions. Characteristically, Aldiss finds his inspiration for this from the Victorians, narrowing their elegant, industrious agony down into the symbol afforded by Holman Hunt's painting "The Hireling Shepherd", the one in which a rustic youth shows a death's-head hawk moth (an improbable mid-afternoon capture, I've always thought) to a maiden apparently rather more concerned with the youth's personal proximity. At first glance, the painting couldn't seem plainer, although scarcely worthy of Carlyle's verdict in 1853: "the greatest picture I have seen painted by any modern man". But after that glance, "The Hireling Shepherd" quickly ceases to be self-evident and the troubles begin. While few people would interpret it too readily as Hunt intended, I imagine, the lackadaisical sheep in the background are a useful guide. Hunt explained the painting (he found it necessary to explain all his work) as an allegory on sectarian quarrels within the Anglican church: the shepherd represents the clergyman of the day, more concerned with pedantic detail (that's the moth) than with the super-

vision of his flock, who are consequently left free to get into all kinds of trouble (like wandering into wheatfields).

I can't recall that I ever took one glance at "The Hireling Shepherd", nodded wisely, and said "Well of course it's an allegory on sectarian quarrels within the Anglican church", and I have a suspicion -- heretical as it may be -- that something in Hunt never accepted the painting in such artificial terms either. The relish with which he gives each grass-blade its measure of life, the poetry he applies to the sun-freckled avenue of trees in the background, the devotion with which he sets out the characteristic Surrey slopes in the distance -- these are the seemingly irrelevant details which bring the painting so much to life you can almost hear it murmur, almost smell the fresh-picked apples. Studying the work, despite its patches of startling, almost lurid, colour, one is far more aware of the spirit of Renoir than of Anglicanism. There's some awkward modelling here and there, and the shepherd's face seems a little unlikely, but the general impression is of a richly absolute reality in which laziness and passion are the dominant moods. The youth has trumped up an excuse to lean over the girl's shoulder, while she is inclined to let him know that no excuse is necessary on so mellow an afternoon; it seems a clear case of mutual seduction, with some promising extrapolations in view.

Yet there are complications, even as we watch. That title, "The Hireling Shepherd", suggests the boy is in the girl's employment, which in turn suggests uneasy matters of class distinction, of tension and dissension in times ahead, and more particularly that the girl has engineered the whole thing (doubtless littering the field with unusual lepidoptera so that her innocent employee will eventually approach her clutches). If you question the extent to which a title can affect your interpretation of a painting, try looking at the same scene with an alternative caption in mind -- like "Little Orphan Annie", "Home on the Range" or even "The Hand-Reared Boy". It's surprising how the perspective changes. Hunt's label transforms the would-be idyll into an encounter clouded with uncertainty, a quicksand of complications and moral instability -- and in this context the troublesome death's-head moth, wings spread wide in a most unmothlike pose, assumes a considerable potency which is subtly reinforced by the darkening well of trees behind it. Welcome it or not, there is a chill in the afternoon, and the shadowed sheep stir in restless expectation.

With Report on Probability A, Aldiss has translated the Hunt method into an exact literary equivalent. Like the most certain aspect of "Hireling Shepherd", his novel is about a fascinating woman (whose description in fact matches the painting) who may or may not have encouraged the men in her husband's employ to attempt her seduction at some point in the past. Entranced by her, they remain in orbit about the house she occupies, and wait for glimpses of her at the windows; around them, the equipment of their former trades -- gardener, secretary, chauffeur -- lie neglected, just as Hunt's shepherd no longer has thoughts on his mind. That they occupy the various outhouses disposed around the garden and are apparently allowed to do so despite the antagonism of the girl's husband (who is, one gets the impression, a writer), has seemingly bothered a lot of readers no end. Again this is where Hunt's lesson, I think, is valuable: take the picture literally, and you're in trouble, but take it surrealistically and it makes all kinds of troublesome sense. Let's have a go with Probability A. Firstly, suppose the three men do live in the garden, as we're told. Unlikely? Maybe, but how can we know all the facts about the couple in the house, Mr and Mrs Mary, as we never meet them? It's not impossible that they feel responsible for the hirelings who have been sacked for reasons of jealousy. It's not impossible that Mrs Mary rather likes having them around, reinforcing her sense of being irresistible. Almost any plausible reason can be worked out. The fact that Aldiss leaves it for us to do means neither contempt nor negligence; on the contrary, it's only common sense.

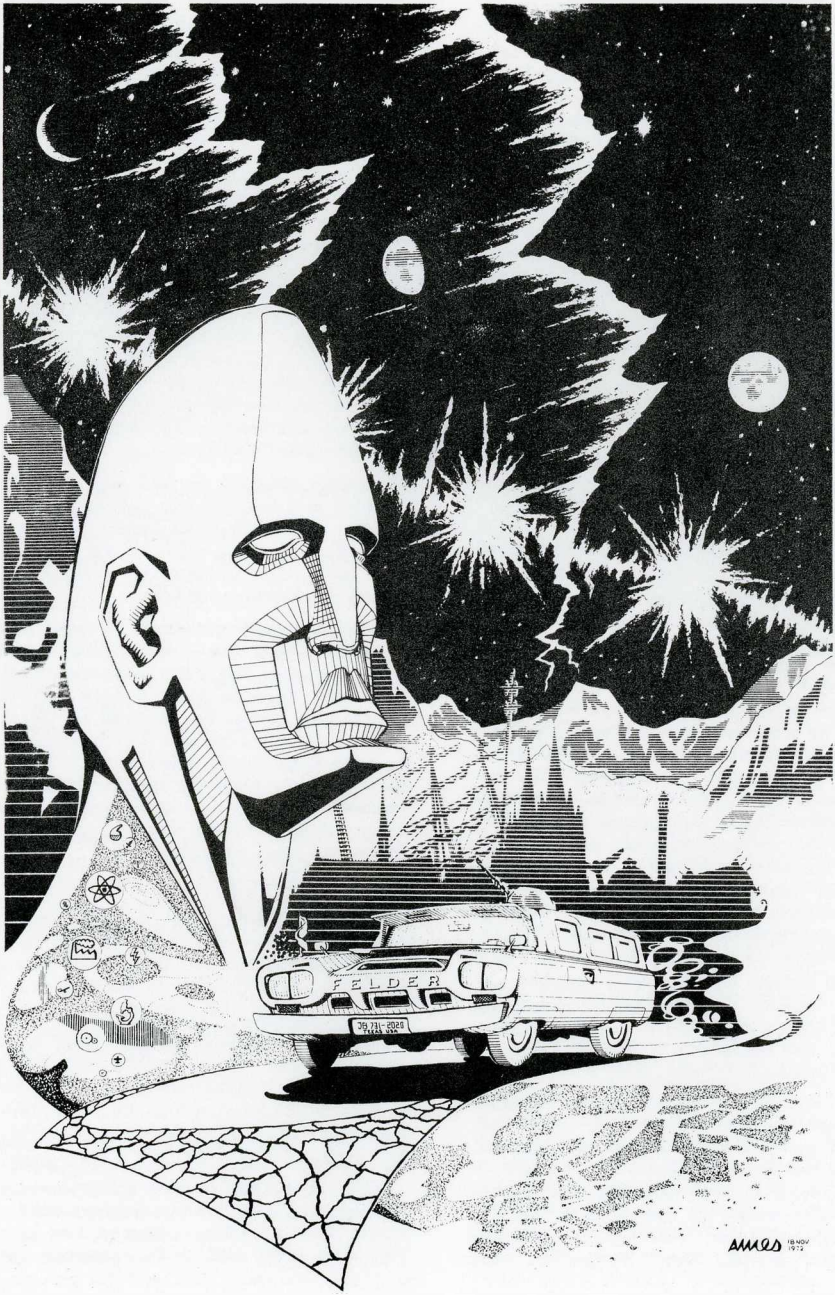
But let's go a step further and interpret the situation un-realistically. The men have been fired. If this action were justified it would mean that Mrs Mary won't exactly vanish from their thoughts -- she means too much to them. Loving her, they would want to be as close to her as possible every day, and if this meant hanging about outside the house in the street after work, or regularly chatting up the tradespeople for

snippets of information about her, or intercepting her mail, or even leaving for Australia and sending her a Christmas card once a year, the frame of mind would be the same as is so vividly illustrated by the manner in which they are introduced to us by the novel. Their obsession with the house, and all that can be deduced about Mrs Mary from a distance, is an emotional condition — and not, I would say, an unnatural or unfamiliar one. And if they have been sacked without reason by a possessive Mr Mary, the result would surely be much the same: an aggrieved longing for the good old days, the cushy job, the attractive and appreciative mistress, a gloomy comfort to be derived from the spectacle of anything going wrong in the house of Mary. One is hooked by the events of one's life; tear out the barbs and the scars remain. If the watchers had been through a dozen jobs since leaving Mrs Mary, they'd still be straining to glimpse her through the windows of their memories.

So, comes the next question, what? Granted the men are allowed to be there, what happens? Well, in strict 'Mary' narrative terms, a tremendous amount happens — like washing up, and preparing lunch, and a tiff between husband and wife. Most traumatic of all, the cat that's been stalking their pet pigeon for days finally manages to make the kill. World-shattering? Indeed yes. Just as Hunt's blades of grass merit all the dignity of independent existence, each life as distinct and important as the next, so the tiny enclosed world of the Marys is susceptible to tragedy of appalling immensity. As is always obvious, they live in perpetual instability, and the murder of the pigeon (delicately, almost subliminally linked with a former bereavement) means upheavals that from our point of view — as always, on the other side of the glass — look to be worthy of Strindberg. How can one ever know, the novel gently asks, what sorrow means to someone else? All one can learn, rather reassuringly, is that one is human enough to sympathize, and to care. What may be inconsequential to us may be the ruin of someone else; never disregard, only observe. That it's a policy which can work superbly, even if only occasionally (in practice), is illustrated by the microscopic detail of the novel, exploring every physical phenomenon, every piece of furniture, every geographical relationship. Just as one gasps at the perfection of the bubbles in the Millais painting of Ruskin, or at the gloss on Hunt's apples, seeing them as if they never happened before, so Probability A makes one follow, hypnotized, the account of how planks are set side by side on a floor (their colour 'approximately of tawny hair'), or how the roof leaks when it rains. And the result is that when something extraordinary slips by, just on the edge of one's vision, as it were, one catches it with a heightened attention -- and like the death's-head hawk moth it casts its influence. One of the stories in Probability A takes place up the road from the Mary house, where we never see it; but from time to time the consequences go by -- including that extraordinary glimpse of a car with four men in it covering their eyes. What's been going on we can only guess at, what will happen next is an infinity of probabilities. It's just what the Pre-Raphaelite style was all about.

The science fiction aspect of Probability A is provided by the 'other-dimensional' spectators, on other planets, at other times, all watching each other with varying degrees of incredulity. And the circularity of it all is completed by the revelation that Mrs Mary herself is a watcher, gazing through her television set at an endless vista of other lives. All we learn, do, are, comes from other people, the novel reminds us, and that means that knowledge is being endlessly pumped around the world like air, constantly refreshed, constantly the same. All that the individual can add to it is interpretation, which means that all information should be given equal weight, equal assessment. If science fiction is the art of persuading us to think again, Report on Probability A is one of its finest achievements. In conscious homage to Holman Hunt, it is a novel of passionate richness and invention, with a sense of humour that takes it well beyond anything the Pre-Raphaelites could manage. We're lucky to have the book. We're even luckier to have Brian Aldiss.

— Philip Strick


FELDER
AMES 18 NOV 1972

Continued from p.5

igation. The original contract ((with Lem)) comprises ten sf books: the novels Memoirs Found in A Bathtub, Eden, Return From the Stars, His Master's Voice, The Futurological Congress and The Investigation, plus the collections Stories, The Cyberiad, Tales of Pirx the Pilot and Star Diaries of Ijon Tichy. The Invincible is licensed from Ace Books (hence Wendayne Ackerman as translator). McGraw-Hill are also very eager to do the book on sf ((Fantastyka I Futurologia)) and the futurology Summa Technologiae, but are still searching for competent translators: of the ten (or so) people tested so far, only a few are adequate, and only Prof. Kandel is really excellent. But actually it will be more than 10 or 11 books, for some of the cycles run to 450-500 pages (Pirx, Ijon Tichy), thus The Cyberiad will be published in two volumes as Cyberiad and Robot Fables.

Franz also commented on Tony Sudbery's comments on my comments on Solaris (are you still following this?), but since these largely repeat what he has said elsewhere I'll confine myself to a brief extract: "Luckily I see no necessity to choose between Stapledon and Capek on the one hand, and Lem on the other; but it may well be that Lem finally emerges as a much more important writer than either of the two ... I see no great reason to enter into polemics at this moment; by the end of next year, when 4-5 more Lem books (however, only sf) will be available, the readers will be in a better position to judge, and then the intellectual poverty and incompetence of the writers who are now considered "masters of sf" will become apparent — at least to the more intelligent readers. We are lucky in that at least The Cyberiad will be excellently translated -- and I am curious to see what you'll say of the long novella "In Hot Pursuit of Happiness" (73 pages in MS) that I have in my anthology -- although the original contains even more linguistic tricks, Lem tells me."

Needless to say, Franz's opinions do not necessarily reflect my own; although I am prepared to accept that we may have to clear a space at the top for Mr Lem, I do not believe the appearance of his books in translation will cause a revelation after which readers will throw out all their other sf, realising suddenly for the first time how rotten it all is. Particularly not intelligent readers, who ought to be quite capable of judging a book's worth from presently available referents.

This brief rundown of letters seems to be extending rather a long way. And we heard from Cy Chauvin, with a long letter on sf criticism, Solaris, and John Brunner's speech in V.60. Cy also sent along a revised version of the review printed in V.62...such are the vagaries of transatlantic mail! Sorry about that, Cy. And James Blish, who thinks Philip Strick was too kind to Silent Running (and I must agree with him) and adds another couple of arguments in favour of reviews. And, finally, Mark Adlard, who commented on Joanna Russ's article. This will undoubtedly appear in the next 'Mail Response' but right now We must confess that We have been clearing out Our desk and, although We know We must have put it somewhere safe, just at the moment We have to admit that We, er, can't find it...

Among others, we did not hear from well-known Australian professional writer and part-time leper John Brosnan, probably just as well as we are not equipped with protective gloves with which to handle letters.

Well, there are more letters than I thought there were, but nevertheless they only include two from members about V.62. It would be nice to get more. Although obviously there isn't room to print everything, believe me all letters are received with equal gratitude. Some sort of feedback from the membership at large, however brief, however general, would be very helpful. Are you happy with VECTOR? If not, why not?

What's this dropping on the doormat? Another issue of SPECULATION?? Good God, they'll be bringing back the dodo next!

This is actually the second 1972 issue of Britain's second-best serious fanzine (heh heh), and therefore may be taken as an indicator that it's back on a schedule which might be described as 'occasional' without stretching the meaning of the word too far.

The mixture is very much what you'd expect, although this issue seems somehow a little thin, despite its 54 pages. There's Fred Pohl's Chessmancon speech,

seemingly reprinted largely in the hope that it will stir up controversy; a good piece of faan fiction by Brian Aldiss; an interesting article on Robert Silverberg by Brian Stableford; some photos from Eurocon; decidedly sub-standard book reviews; the usual good lettercol, which this time eschews controversy by omitting to print my own exceptionally rude letter; and a somewhat uninteresting editorial. In all this is hardly one of the all-time great issues, but it's nevertheless well worth your time. If you're living in this country, interested in intelligent discussion of sf, and solvent, you're mad not to subscribe. (20p per copy, 5 for £1.00, from Peter Weston, 31 Pinewall Avenue, King's Norton, Birmingham 30.)

Did I say the right thing, Pete? Will you burn those negatives now?

There will be an exhibition/seminar on sf at the American Embassy on the 26th-27th January, from approx. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will be talks, films, panels, etc.; speakers to be chosen by Philip Strick. There will also be display space, and non-profit outfits can sell material.

Entrance is free, but those intending to go must register their names in advance, as these will be checked at the door.

For further information, you should write to:

Bob Baker
Dept. of Student Affairs
United States Information Service
American Embassy
Grosvenor Square
London W.1.

Or telephone 01-499 9000 x 617. If you should encounter any difficulty, it would probably be disastrous helpful to mention that you heard about it from George Hay.

ERRATUM: I've just noticed an error in the last paragraph on p.4. The third sentence should read: "It takes very much the traditional form of space opera..." Of course, mention of this single omission does not mean that I am unaware of the existence of various typos. Unfortunate, of course, but largely unavoidable.

Books received:

From Gollancz: The Byworlder, by Poul Anderson, £1.75 (Fairly interesting new novel about an alien visitor to the solar system.); Nebula Award Stories 7, edited by Lloyd Biggle Jr., £2.50 (Includes the 1971 winning stories by Poul Anderson, Robert Silverberg and Katherine Maclean, plus runners up by Stephen Goldin, Kate Wilhelm, R.A.Lafferty, Edgar Pangborn, Gardner Dozois, George Zebrowski, Joanna Russ and Doris Pitkin Buck, and articles by Damon Knight, Poul Anderson and Theodore Sturgeon. To be reviewed.); Rule Brittania, by Daphne Du Maurier, £1.90 (Longish novel about American takeover of Britain which encounters stubborn Cornish resistance.); Gray Matters, by William Hjortsberg, £1.80. ("A projection of life in the 25th century where people have been reduced to Cerebromorphs---disembodied brains stored in tanks..." This was being talked about as an award contender, but I don't think enough people had read it. To be reviewed.); Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, by Robert C.O'Brien, £1.40 (Marvellous children's novel, winner of the Newbery Medal. To be reviewed next issue, but don't wait until then.); The Time Masters, by Wilson Tucker, £1.80 (Updated reissue of one of Tucker's early novels, well worth resurrecting. Tucker is one of the best -- and one of the most under-rated -- modern sf writers, and anyone who hasn't read Year of the Quiet Sun, The Lincoln Hunters, Wild Talent, and (especially) The Long Loud Silence should do so at the earliest opportunity. This one is a good introduction, and incidentally preferable to the U.S. paperback, which omitted the last page of the manuscript.)

From Faber & Faber: A Clash of Cymbals, by James Blish, £1.75 (Reissue of this famous novel, fourth and last of the "Cities in Flight" series. Required reading.); A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!, by Harry Harrison, £1.90 (This novel had Auberon Waugh raving in The Spectator a couple of weeks ago, and really it isn't hard to see why. To be reviewed next issue.); Jack of Shadows, by Roger Zelazny, £2.00 (A new, and worthwhile-looking fantasy novel. The last couple of years haven't been too good for Zelazny, critically, but he

seems to be on the way back now.)

From Sidgwick & Jackson: Volteface, by Mark Adlard, £1.60 (A sequel to Interface. Haven't read it yet, but it looks rather better than its predecessor.)

From Cornmarket Reprints: Worlds Apart, edited by George Locke, £2.50 (A beautifully produced volume of facsimile reprints of sf stories from Victorian and Edwardian popular magazine. Rob Holdstock -- yea, I went straight to the top for this one — will be reviewing it in the next (?) VECTOR.)

From Arrow Books: The Lady's Realm, £1.50 (Speaking of facsimile reprints, this a well-produced volume drawn from the pages of the magazine of the same name in 1904-5. What is an sf magazine doing with an anthology drawn from an Edwardian woman's magazine? You may well wonder. You might also care to speculate on what Woman's Own, or whoever, did with their unexpected copy of Creatures of Light and Darkness!)

From Pan Books: Towards Infinity, edited by Damon Knight, 35p (Pretty good basic anthology with stories like "The Witches of Karres" (Schmitz), "Resurrection" (Van Vogt), "Who Goes There?" (Stuart/Campbell), "In Hiding" (Shiras), "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (Sturgeon).)

From Panther Books: Gray Lensman, by E.E.'Doc' Smith, 35p (Fourth of the Lensman series. Once upon a time, I must confess, I read and enjoyed all six of these (discounting the abominable Master of the Vortex, which was too much even for me, even then). Memory records that I thought this the second best of the series, after Second-Stage Lensmen. Skimming through it now, I have to admit that it reads rather like Jennings Conquers the Galaxy. What can I say, except "Holy--Klono's--Iridium--Intestines!")

I have now received further information on the sf seminar at the American Embassy. The programme is as follows:

Friday Jan.26th

9.30 a.m. Man on the Moon (films)

10.30 a.m. The Frankenstein Legacy (panel on the influence of the Gothic novel on sf, with Aldiss, Amis, Conquest)

12.00 a.m. Science Fiction Film (film of Forry Ackerman)

2.30 p.m. Night of the Living Dead (At last!!)

4.30 p.m. The Celluloid Time-Machine (discussion on sf film led by Richard Roud, director of NY Film Festival)

Saturday Jan.27th

10.00 a.m. Journeys to the Universe (films)

11.00 a.m. The Illustrated Future (Someone called Peter Weston on sf covers, followed by discussion with Brian Aldiss on sf artists)

12.30 p.m. The Heat of a Thousand Suns (animated film)

2.30 p.m. History of SF from 1938 (film of Isaac Asimov)

3.00 p.m. Shaking the Foundations (James Blish comments on above, on Asimov, and on current American sf)

4.30 p.m. The Shape of Inner Space (Brian Aldiss on British sf and its similarities with and differences from American sf. Followed by Aldiss and Blish in general discussion and argument)

This sounds like a very interesting two days. I hope this issue of VECTOR will be distributed in time to notify you. But remember, you must notify them in advance if you're going.

The Fanzine Foundation again. Hartley Patterson sent a note denying that John Muir was ever involved with the Manchester University Sf Group. And I have heard from two separate sources reports that Joanne Burger (who bought a lot of stuff at the auction) has been saying in American fanzines that a lot of these items do carry a BSFA stamp. What about that then? /// This is a good moment to plead to fanzine editors who are also BSFA members: I do like getting fanzines, and do try to comment. How about it? /// Next issue, which should follow about a month after this, will feature an immense article by Philip K.Dick (38 pp. in MS), plus Bob Shaw, Poul Anderson, Peter Roberts (?), and the usual features. /// DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!!

BSFA news

edited by Archie Mercer

ERRATUM ? This column recently identified the winner of the Ken McIntyre Award for fanzine artwork at the 1972 Convention as probably being Martin Pitt. This may indeed be the case. However, the column was working at the time from somewhat vague data, and it is now apparent that the probable winner was a certain Jim Pitts. Nobody has actually corrected the column on this point -- perhaps someone would care to confirm the winner's identity?

KEEPING UP WITH THE LIBRARY On Saturday 2nd December 1972, the B.S.F.A. Book Library was moved from Liverpool to London, where it is to be administered on the Association's behalf by the S.F. Foundation. Watch this column for news of its becoming operational again, and the address for borrowers to use.

A great many thanks are due to Elaine Wash for looking after it so efficiently for several years -- we all hope her health will now show a dramatic improvement.

ROBIN RIDES AGAIN The "Round Robin", or circular correspondence chain, is back with us again. This time it calls itself the Postal Fan Group, and is organised by Graham Poole, 23 Russet Road, Cheltenham, Glos, GL51 7LN, to whom enquiries should be made.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Brian H.Lombard (32), P.O.Box 4490, Cape Town, South Africa. Anywhere.

John E.Stith (25), 9704 Beachwood Av., Seabrook, Maryland 20801, U.S.A. Music, tennis, electronics. (He describes himself as an analyst for an orbiting astro observatory.)

David M.Bath (24), 5 Fairwater Grove West, Llandaff, Cardiff, CF5 2JN. Reading (hobby). U.S.A.

John E.Rupik, 12 Talbot Gdns., Sheffield, S2 2TE. Occult, comparative religion, philosophy. Runs a mag sell/swop service. USA, Europe.

Gillian M.Holloway, Dale Hall, Elmswood Rd., Liverpool, L18 8DQ. Linguistics, stamp collecting, rock climbing. Anywhere.

Graham Poole (20), 23 Russet Rd., Cheltenham, GL51 7LN. Tape recording, cinema, TV, writing, music. Anywhere.

SMALL-ADS

(Members' small ads are inserted free in this column) free free free

WANTED Copy of J.G.Ballard's "4-Dimensional Nightmare", either in the hard or paperback edition. In good condition, please. Peter Linnett, 13 Grosvenor Rd., West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9PU.

WANTED In clean condition, the following:

"All the Colours of Darkness" (Biggle) (SFBC edition)
"City at World's End" (Hamilton) pb
"Far Stars" (Russell) hardcover
Write: Tony Triggs, 15 Myrtle Ave., Portchester, Hants.

WANTED "New Writings in SF" Nos.10, 12 & 13 in good condition. Up to £1 offered for the three.

FOR SALE "New Worlds" 173 - 197 inclusive, mint, in official binders. Any offers?
...Glen Blakeborough, 90 The Avenue, Highams Park, London E.4

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1272 Bath, David M.: 5 Fairwater Grove West, Llandaff, Cardiff, CF5 2JN.
407 Clarke, I.F. (Prof.): 17 Cameron Drive, Bearsden, Glasgow, G61 2NH
287 Holloway, Gillian M.: Dale Hall, Elmswood Rd., Liverpool, L18 8DQ
1273 Rupik, John E.: 12 Talbot Gdns., Sheffield, S2 2TE
1270 Lombard, Brian H.: P.O.Box 44907, Cape Town, South Africa
1271 Stith, John E.: 9704 Beachwood Av., Seabrook, Maryland 20801, U.S.A.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

932 Blakebrough, Glen D.: now 90 The Ave., Highams Park, London E.4
999 Kemp, John: now 10 Shepton Rd., Great Sutton, Ches., L66 4RA
457 Steel, S.D.: now 10 Houghton Rd., Penwortham, Preston, Lancs (he's been there before)
938 Stephenson, Andrew M.: now 19 Du Pre Walk, Wooburn Green, High Wycombe, Bucks.

STATISTICS

Members with inland addresses (incl. B.F.P.O.)	254
Members with overseas addresses	26
Total membership therefore	280