

S F

DAMIEN
BRODERICK

~
Vonnegut

COMMENTARY

FIRST

ISSUE

JOHN
FOYSTER
~ Decline of SF

GEORGE
TURNER
~ IQ and SF

JANUARY

1969

BRUCE
GILLESPIE

~
Dick
-2001 Revis

RAISON D'ETRE

This is one magazine that does not need an editorial. The articles, reviews, and comments included form the type of material I hope to feature in future issues.

There is an Editorial, because this is not the only type of material I hope to use. Insofar as s f concerns private myths, extrapolative dreams and scientific and philosophical ideas, it includes nearly everything the mind can concoct. For me, science/speculative fiction is not so much a range of magazines or books listed under a large ugly heading "S F"; not so much to do with a genre that publishing executives consider only when everything else is read. It has little to do with intimate knowledge of Science - my own training is with literature and history, and many s f readers may be more concerned with engineering or the social sciences than those "hard science science" fields that s f is supposed to illuminate. S F does involve glimpsing beyond the generally accepted structure of Reality. Gernsback and Campbell, two pioneer magazine editors scorned those who said "it couldn't be done". It (space flight and all that) has been done. The recurrent challenge to us is that "you cannot think that way; you cannot skip or doubt reality - you cannot create something quite new from words alone". It comes down to Originality. People who read s f are generally looking for something well off everybody else's beaten track. Are they getting it? Should they be looking for it, even?

Most of the contributors to this issue would question whether the S F Field (those who profess the faith) is meeting the challenge. The English magazine NEW WORLDS claims that it is the only magazine in the world still engaged in the enterprise of Originality, of seeking new structures, new worlds. John Foyster might claim (unless I've misinterpreted him again) that the challenge must be met within the Field. If it is not met, Science Fiction as a whole must change or perish. Others like myself would hope that there may be many not even touched by the "ghetto" who have the s f spirit, work in an S F State Of Mind, and that their efforts may bypass all the traps and crudities of the genre. Which leaves the pivotal question: What is the s f state of mind?

Fortunately, it is still an open debate. After two years, few people are willing to be dogmatic about NEW WORLDS, William Burroughs, or other self-conscious "experimenters". There are many who are willing to maintain twenty- and thirty-year old loyalties to writers such as Asimov, Sturgeon, Campbell, and Heinlein, writers who have dropped out of the field or lost most of their old verve. Fresh thinking is needed from and about both groups, and all the shades of opinion in between. A good case is needed to answer the attacks made by myself and others in this magazine about the American scene, but so far this case has not been forthcoming. A good anti-neocosmittb argument is needed to test the assumptions of the mind-expanders. I am a partisan on many

S F C O M M E N T A R Y

N U M B E R O N E

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S F C O M M E N T A R Y is EDITED in the interests of better s f by
 BRUCE GILLESPIE, of P.O. BOX 80, BASSING MARSH, VICTORIA 3840, AUSTRALIA,
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 towards little extras, such as illustrations.

NOTE COPY: As this issue was meant for January 1, and the next issue for
 February 12, you may form your own conclusions as to the actual publication
 date.

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THIS LIST IS CONTINUED ON THE BACK
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of these issues, but for that reason alone, I would welcome the views of as many dissenters as possible. The issues have been fought about, but not nitted out in an unmalicious atmosphere.

In Australia we are in a unique position to carry out this task. With more luck than skill, we are able to purchase many of the magazines and books from both America and Britain, and the Melbourne S F Club has been more than slightly instrumental in bringing about his enviable state of affairs. We are not involved in any of the behind-the-scenes personal friction which sometimes/^{overseas} s f relationships. In Australia we have skilful reviewers and observers, who have already been exercising their intellectual muscles in AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, KAPARLAN, THE LENTOR, and other amateur journals of s f commentary that have sprung up from time to time.

And yet another? Bernie Bernhouse called this journal "ASPERE", Gary Woodman wanted to know if I was publishing fiction (i.e. another LENTOR) and I still do not know how rigidly I should define the magazine's policies. S F COMMENTARY will be primarily a contributor's magazine, with generous incentives for people who want to pay for their copies with contributions and letters. It will be a magazine that will try to keep its finger on the pulse of the S F Field, and at the same time reach well beyond it to those many people who have some interest in s f, but are ignorant of, repelled, or bored by the twilight world of Fandom. S F COMMENTARY will be a forum, the participants of which want to improve s f as well as talk about it. As an Australian magazine, I want to feature local content as much as possible. But so did other editors, and they felt let-down by the response. If we can publish new reviewers and general writers it can only improve the magazine and the quality of fan-writing in general.

If this sounds like a wishy-washy "all things to all men" style of editing, it is only because I put as wide an interpretation on the term "s f" as I can. S F is a modern body of legends, and most of our contemporary legends turn out to be s f. S F expresses the mysticism that has arisen around Science - the multiple forms of irrationality generated by what was supposed to be the rational touchstone of the modern world. S F includes all the traditional types of story - doomsday, gadget, alien worlds, etc. You name 'em - you could write an article about them. At the other end of the scale are the very serious arguments about Criticism in general that inevitably arise when S F Criticism comes up for discussion - several interesting discussions are emerging around the local scene at the moment, so I will wait until they spill over onto these pages.

One advertisement I placed stated that "I aimed to be forced out of my own fanzine". As you may observe, horror-stricken, this aim is not achieved in this issue. Let's say that I wrote what I thought had to be written at this particular time, and nobody else was doing quite the same thing. Perhaps this situation will be remedied.

Gary Woodman wanted to know if I would be publishing fan fiction. At the moment - not in this magazine, although I could always run a special amateur fiction magazine issued free with S F COMMENTARY.

Illustrations? As you may observe, there are none. I am no artist myself, I have not had time to commission drawings, and for the first issue I thought it best to give the customers their money's worth - 60+ pages of fascinating type. But that is not to say that the magazine will not be printing illustrations in future... even Leland Shapiro drops an odd cartoon around the high-powered pages of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

To JOHN BANGSUND, editor of AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, who suggested I call this issue of the Journal "ASER REJECTS". All the articles except George Turner's Reviews and his article IQ IN SCIENCE FICTION, and my IT'S THAT FILM AGAIN! and the last sections of several columns, were originally scheduled to appear in that magazine. The unfortunate tale of why there was no room for them has already been told by John himself. ASER was dying while interest in it (including contributions) was still growing. John's enviable ability to rally the loyalty of science-fictioners everywhere, brought forth a flood that has rarely been seen before in amateur publishing, of brilliant material from Australian and overseas contributors. John not only taught me everything I know about this game, but he also gave me some of his best articles to kick off the first issue. Can I say thanks enough? (BUT this is also the last issue in which we will feature material intended for ASER. All contributions destined for John's magazines should go to him, and all S F COMMENTARY material should go to the address given on the Contents Page).

To GEORGE TURNER, the most helpful local author any of us is likely to meet. Without even seeing the first issue of the magazine, he contributed several thousand words of the kind of commentary that any editor in the country would be proud to feature. As John Bangsund has already said, What would we do without him?

To JOHN FOYSTER, backbone of Melbourne fandom and s f critic extraordinaire, who like DAVID BROWDERICK, occasional, brilliant, s f writer and critic, hoped to make ASER with these articles, as publication faltered and page size decreased. Thanks to both of you, and (needless to say) may I welcome you back to these pages soon? The same goes for BOB TOOMEY, unknowingly shanghaied into this issue. Welcome again anytime.

To +++ LEIGH + EDMONDS +++ who enjoys watching the little white sheets come out of the slot on the other side of the duplicator, and who printed this issue. Leigh, with Diane Bangsund and Bernie Bernhouse, runs BATAFLAN, the best fansine in Australia not talking about s f.

To LEE HARDING, silent barracker, and all the others who endured the inception of this magazine. It's not another ASER, WARRACON, or RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, but you'll enjoy it anyway, Lee (especially if I can welcome back one name/long absent from local publication).

To those who have already sent me letters - the magazine's Letter Column commences next issue.

S Y N O P S I S

Moorecock (ed.) NEW WORLDS Nos 178-188

Dass: PICNIC ON PARADISE

Anthony S. Margroff: THE RING

Silverberg: THE MASKS OF TIME

Baxter (ed.): THE PACIFIC BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SF

Delaney: THE BRIGHTEN INTERSECTION

Harrison: LAKE ROOM! LAKE ROOM!

REVIEWS BY:

GEORGE TURNER

BRUCE GILLESPIE

ROBERT TOOMEY

NEW WORLDS No. 178 (Dec-Jan 1968)
No. 179 (Feb. 1968)

Reviewed by BRUCE GILLESPIE

What hope is there for a magazine that has steadfastly ignored public opinion (or whatever you want to call NW's 15,000 former readers) and in the process has become incomparably better than any American magazine at its peak? NEW WORLDS looks good, reads consistently well, and is still a reasonable price for hard-hit fans who pay A.70c for ANALOG. Yet the readers have ignored the gloss, the critics remain indifferent, and we in Australia remain consistently amazed that we get any copies at all.

Moorecock's new stable of authors remains ready to contribute brilliant pieces for (according to rumour) next to nothing. New authors such as Sladek, Zeline and Colvin, and even to some extent, Disch, have stacked their * Come now, I can hear John Foyster moaning. All right, John, I amend that to read "better than any American magazine appearing since I started reading sf". I'll take your word for it that ASCENDING beat them

professional lives on the success of the magazine. For instance, in Issue 178, Disch's LINDA & DANIEL & CELE was a bit too sick for my taste. It did have the virtue, long absent from American magazines, of being funny. The precise point of Giles Gordon's THE LINE-UP ON THE SHORE escaped me, but the rest of this tent observation of disintegrating vision deftly presents a moment of conflict more accurately than most pros can plot a love scene.

The dazzling highlights of Issues 178 and 179 are the last two stories in the Acid War series by Brian Aldiss and C.C. Shackleton (another "Lucas Parkes"?). The style, rather than the quality, has varied wildly from story to story, ranging from a satire on logical method in the first (MULTI-VALU NOTORIAL, No. 174) to AUTO-ANCES-TRAL FRACTURE's ridiculously successful attempt to bring Joyce to sf, or vice-versa. Maybe Mr. Shackleton was employed as pun-writer, or serves as + As I discovered one issue later, the stories are not in order and SERPENT is not the last. It could have been.::: ++ Aldiss has since admitted the non-de-plume.

Aldiss' super-ego, keeping an editorial leash on this latest attempt to fly away altogether. The most astonishing thing about the story is that it works - humour defines but does not dominate the conflicts of the whole visionary drama. Page 22's seduction-scene, which should become the most famous passage in s f, is matched in structure, if not in quality, by the morbid overtones of the Ballardish car-wrecking scene. The numbness and sense of dissatisfaction at the end of this story leads onto *THE SECRET OF KENDALINI* in Issue 179. This is a totally different story, resolving the high madness of Belgium into the ordered disintegration and self-perception of Charteris' final vision. Gone are the mistresses, pop groups and cars, and remaining alone is one of Aldiss' most remarkable heroes (beating Eddie Bush by a long chalk) who resolves, in grand pathos, into an image on the landscape. In advance of these stories' collation and publication, may I call the forthcoming novel the greatest in s f history?

Fritz Leiber seems to have despaired of American s f as much as those of his colleagues who have disappeared from the field altogether. Gold might have published *THE SQUARE ROOT OF THE BRAIN* (No 179) in *GALAXY*'s heyday, but only Moorcock appreciates today the kind of desperate, jittery humour presented in this story in which all humanity is judged by some discarded extracts from the *UNIVERSAL AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA*. No wonder the Venusians went home. No. 179 is actually dominated by Harvey Jacobs' *IN SECLUSION* in which the 20th-century's Adam and Eve battle it out in the only way they know how with the hoppiest, sexist monster ever. Robert Mills might have printed this eight years ago (if *IN SECLUSION* could have been written eight years ago) but only in *NEW WORLDS* these days can science/speculative fiction show its funny side.

Nothing but praise, you see - but still I am worried. In Issue 179, in the issue in which the 20th-Century's best sceptical traditions adorn the printed page, Moorcock includes *BARBARELLA AND THE ANXIOUS FRENCHMAN*, which juxtaposes the visual equivalents of NW's fiction (Pop art, *BARBARELLA*, *ALPHAVILLE*) against a righteously boring polemic against the new French taste for "bad films and comic strips". Implicit in the conservative tone of the piece is a rejection of most of the best and/or most experimental elements in his own magazine, or else I've completely misinterpreted the article.

The only alternative theory, also shown in the stolidly sensible Editorials and reviews, is that Moorcock and his American expatriate colony still have no idea what they are up to. This contrasts with other artistic revolutions of the 20th-Century: the cinematic New Wave owes most of its original impetus to the critics of *CAMIERES DU CINEMA* magazine, which was capable of propagandizing, explaining and fostering the new approach. Earlier still, Leavis' *SCRUTINY* and similar journals of the thirties and forties "explained" Pound and Eliot to intellectuals and public alike. American fans seem to have developed a paranoia about England's "New Wave", but what are they worried about? The great fiction is not accompanied by the kind of criticism that can lead to a permanent rechanneling of effort within the s f field as a whole. At the moment, without a revolutionary rationale to justify its efforts, I can only see the magazine's sales sinking lower and lower, the Americans departing home to a barren s f field, and the whole enterprise remaining just a glinting memory. Aux armes, citoyens?

(*NEW WORLDS* serials will be reviewed separately - see *ASFR* 18. But why is the best third of *AN AGE* left out? Aldiss doesn't need the money that desperately - or does he?)

NEW WORLDS Nos 180, 181,
182, 183.

Reviewed by BRUCE GILLESPIE

WHAT IS THE EXACT NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE? means Mike Moorcock on the cover of NEW WORLDS 183. Well may he ask. Issue 181 is dated April 1963, No 182 turns up in July, and 183 of this monthly fans - I mean magazine - finally leaves the press in October. It did not seem that long between Australian deliveries, but the year must have gone more quickly than I realized.

Not that Moorcock's problems were solely dictated by distributors and creditors. After the splendid issue reviewed above (No 179) the standard of the fiction falls off badly for three issues. The staggered schedules may have been an attempt to stall for time until something readable turned up. Whatever the explanation, Moorcock did not stall long enough (or is it really Moorcock and Collis? NW has had more sub-editors than ASER).

Langdon Jones' extravaganza had its points, but looks naked in an issue containing two other pieces of fiction. To be fair to Jones, his EYE OF THE LENS makes a valiant effort to convey meaning and prop up the rest of the magazine. More importantly, Jones' apologetic in the LEAD-IN is the only coherent defence so far of the NEW WORLDS approach to fiction. Jones writes, in part, that "For too long we have had the opportunity of seeing only works with a strong and rigid surface formation.. It is clear that (a) revolution is urgently needed. In the average novel today, a very great part of the total wordage is completely superfluous." And the EYE OF THE LENS stories are "the first stories I have produced which say anything worth saying". We'll take your word for it, Mr. Jones. This explanation alone, as a partial explana-

tion of the whole NEW WORLDS (non?) achievement, deserves an article in itself. I haven't the time at the moment. I query whether the raising of the "subconscious" into the conscious structure of a story achieves much. Apart from anything else, it would cease to be the subconscious. The stories themselves? The middle one THE COMING OF THE SUN holds together well, and has some vivid, if nasty imagery. The first story THE HALL OF THE MACHINES is the prelude to something-or-other not noticeably included in this issue. The third story THE EYE OF THE LENS, uses far more stereotyped images, and does not remotely fulfill the themes announced in the second. Possibly the stories form a trilogy of prose-poems with beginning, middle - but not an ending. However, the whole project is far more interesting than anything Ballard has done in recent years.

As a reader, I dislike being made a fool of. To find that THE SERPENT OF KARDALINI is not the last in the Simon Charteris series, and that the stories have not been printed in order is a blow indeed. You could fool me, mate. Just what Aldiss is up to will now have to wait till novelization, and he had better provide an explanation for his con-trick. (Or is it just another mistake of Moorcock's?) At any rate, wherever DRAKE-MAN SCOUT (No 182) fits in the plan, it is by far the least exciting so far, and is the only story of the series so far that could not stand alone as a short story. Having written the main episodes of the novel, Aldiss seems now to be merely filling the gaps. Why not publish BARKFOOT IN THE HEAD and be done with all the suspense?

Issues Nos 181 and 182 are uniformly mediocre. Collis and Lundie's WEATHER MAN meant well, but little. The prose at first sight is scintillating... but quite unmemorable. Disch has in another little "sickie"- 1-A. The anti-war sentiments are expressed

through an idea fresh fresh from Burgess' WAITING SEED, and prose slickly representative of most of Disch's minor stories.

For both these issues, the material included was not nearly as depressing as that deleted. This is the only way I can view the (non)conclusions of Joel Ess's VALVE TRANSCRIPT (which was shaping as a fine little "entertainment", before it just... stopped) and Carol Emshwiller's mudbath-paddle METHAFRILENE HYDROCHLORIDE SOMETHINGS NEELS. Not even the worst of American editors just chop endings from stories. To give Mike Moorcock his due (and I try to, I try...) I may have badly misinterpreted the intentions of the authors. The question remains: how many misinterpretations can a magazine stand before it is unreadable?

I don't want to sound like a grouch. Maybe it is Melbourne summer weather, or the result of reading four US magazine serials in succession, but I cannot bring myself to say that a magazine that prints one good issue in four is all that better than IF or ANALOG or any other current journal. I'm on the point of retracting any and all praise of NEW WORLDS (and the gross mutilation of BUG JACK BARRON does not help matters - see ASER 19).

On the other hand, Issue 183 is very good - good fiction and plenty of it, a conclusion of sorts to BUG JACK BARRON, and some assurance that NEW WORLDS has at last halted down the financial skids. CASABLANCA is Disch's best story anywhere for quite some time. It actually varies the inevitability of the Disch ending, although the suspenseful knuckles-in-the-belly development of the story seems to head in but one direction. Disch is still a sucker for the "good solid story" style (one of the few working for Moorcock, as others have pointed out) but he does have the reader hurrying to the end. He also directs the reader's attention above the story-

line towards the figures of the typical American, weebegone, never-say-die, prejudiced tourists who witness the end of the world (or is it only the end of their world?). Disch's glazed surfaces reflect ourselves, for once, and the result is merely reductio ad absurdum, not reductio to rigor mortis.

Harvey Jacobs gains my award for Best New Writer of the Year. Obviously, he is not a new writer. He is at least as much a craftsman as Disch. Although still unknown in the s f ghetto, IN SECLUSION, EGG OF THE GLAK, and now DISTURBANCE OF THE PEACE form a formidable trio for any author in any year. The themes of the latter story are hardly original. It is the Grand Old Theme that Jacobs himself enunciated in EGG OF THE GLAK and I have quoted in the FICTION MACHINES column: "That's the danger of human contact. It breeds humanity." However, it is pleasant to see an author who chooses the s f field and simultaneously tacks his colours to such an inclusive, basically sound banner. In DISTURBANCE OF THE PEACE we are shown the reverse side of EGG OF THE GLAK, whose mad high jinks formed the happiest fantasy of the year. No high jinks or mad conceits in this latest story - Mr. New Yorker, encrusted with suit-and-tie, bank account and the dust of the city itself, is forced for a few moments to see through the eyes of somebody else than himself. Unfortunately this attempt at human contact destroys the person touched. Floyd Copman's Day In the Life of a Louse is narrated with comprehension and a tactile, terrifying empathy that could only be imparted by a master of the written word.

To round off this issue, No 183 features items as diverse as Langdon Jones' BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN II (which is an article for a Bangsam fanzine, if ever I saw one) and James Sallis'

BUBBLES, whose prosiness nearly obscures a nicely-told FOSF-style "fable".

The review section of NEW WORLDS still ranges from mediocre to terrible, and my plea for better criticism and self-justification, still stands. However the magazine as a whole lurches on, remains readably, and is occasionally magnificent. Can we give even this modest praise to any other publication in the s f field?

G E O R G E T U R N E R reviews:

PICNIC ON PARADISE

by JOANNA BUSS

Ace Special.

For PICNIC ON PARADISE Ace have found, for once, a sensible and accurate flyleaf blurb. It is provided by Hal Clement, and I quote:

The yarn is a cluster of alien worlds evolving against the background of Paradise: the harsh physical one of Alyz, the overly simplified deterministic one of Machine, the wishful-thinking, artificial one of Gunnar. The most fascinating thing is watching the picknickers choose what parts of the world around them they want to believe; some learning to accept more of it as it's hammered home to them, some learning to duck the more intolerable realities more efficiently than before....

That sums up my general impression but there is much more to the book than that. Miss Buss is a Cornell BA and now teaches writing there (insofar as anyone can teach that); she is a produced playwright and something of a poetess. The playwright shows, to advantage, in the strict construction of the novel, the teacher shows in the accurate handling of language

and the poetess shows, more subtly, in her relation of language to form and in flashes of intense association wherein meanings sputter like sparks from simple words and exchanges.

The plot is a dependable old-timer. A tough girl from the past is summoned to guide a party of far-future people (ingrainedly soft and, because of their cultural background, mostly psychopathic in Alyz's appreciation) in a march from danger to safety through hostile territory. Her problem is less the hostile ground than the helpless people. The dangers are not overly great as hostile environments go, and her failures are mainly due to the inability of her charges to come to grips with the realities they have been civilized away from. They do not all survive.

On this base she has constructed an allegory of different types of reality (or different visions of reality) pitted against each other. Those who compromise or accept fresh vision win out; the others do not. If this sounds like the bones of a Campbell editorial, don't be put off, because Miss Buss is a deeper psychologist and logician than Campbell. She never digs deeply into her characters or theme, but presents the thesis intelligibly and does not force her incidents to hammer a point. The incidents are normal and expectable and the reactions believable; her handling of them is neither ordinary nor expectable. Nor is her heroine one of those irritatingly superior beings who know all the answers against all probability; she meets her various Waterloos where her understanding fails her.

If there is a nit to be picked, it is the author's choice of a lass from ancient Tyre as heroine. S F writers have a disastrous love of this person-from-the-past bit, and none of

them have ever handled it with any sense of the past to give it life. Witness the literary slaughter of Thomas More in Laffery's PAST MASTER. Miss Bass has no discernible sense of the "feel" of an ancient civilization and her Alyx might as well have been a healthy outdoors Amazon of our own day, but I found it easy to forget this and accept her as a competent person with a contemporary viewpoint.

It is in the writing, often subtle and rarely ordinary, that the charms lie. The book can be recommended on two levels, as a good, salty adventure or -- for those with literary training and insight -- as an unspectacular but sound piece of good writing.

THE RING

by PIERRE ANTHONY & ROBERT E MARGROFF

Ace Special

Anthony and Margroff's THE RING, however, is a spectacular and thoroughly unsound piece of bad writing. Why it took two people to do it is beyond me; either could have tossed it off with one hand, and perhaps that is what they did. A couple of fingers each.

The book's basic fault lies in the presentation of the central idea, the Ring itself. In one of our familiar sadistic futures, the retributive aspect of "justice" is applied through the Ring, and electronic cum psionic device attached to the finger of the malefactor. The wearer is unable to commit a crime, or even a moral misdemeanor, without getting a severe shock; in fact he can't even think about it without meeting instant "justice". Now, such a device postulates an enormous sophistication in the conceptions of right and wrong, and the authors have none such in them; they offer a morality straight out of Sunday School. It is doubtful if the Ring-wearer could so much as cross a

road without collecting shocks sufficient to distract him to his doom under the nearest car. One is left wondering how even a barbaric culture, much less a highly developed one, could be quite so innocent of basic psychology and philosophy.

In addition, the plot is kicked off by the hero committing one of those asinine doomed-to-failure actions which writes him off immediately as the nit least likely to succeed. The plot itself is the one about the tough young man seeking revenge for his cheated father, and works itself out with the same tired old fistful of "surprises". Her has the sadistic future anything new to offer.

I have written elsewhere that I see no point in wasting a reader's time by reviewing bad books, and my only justification for treating this one is a sense of having been let down by the series of Ace Specials, which have so far been appreciably above the dreary average. When a series is good, you can't simply ignore a bad choice and pretend it doesn't exist.

THE MASKS OF TIME

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

Ballantine Original.

THE MASKS OF TIME came to me highly recommended as the novel wherein Silverberg at last forsook hackery and set himself to the business of good writing. This was interesting because over the last two years there has been a notable improvement in the man's style, but this novel shows him leaning ^{over} backwards to be a "good" writer and making the mistake of trying too damned hard. It is by no means a bad novel any more than it is an outstandingly good one, and it certainly augurs well for the Silverberg of the future, but it is not as taut or as generally competent a work as his MAN IN THE MASE, serialised in IF.

The subject is one curiously like those which preoccupy Heinlein in his periodic proddings at philosophy, but is better and less pretentiously treated. A man from AD 2999 arrives on December 25th, 1993 (a date which prepares us for the ultimately religious aspects of his acceptance). There is no way of deciding whether he is or is not a fake, and he slides out of all traps seeking to pin him down. He is, he insists, a tourist who wishes to observe this world, not to advertise his own. Wherever he goes he creates havoc on a scale our protest-marchers might envy. Deliberately? Maybe; he makes it hard for anyone to decide. The story concerns the attempts to work out what he represents and to extract advantage from his visit.

A strong sub-plot concerns a young scientist on the track of total liberation of the energy of matter, and this unfortunately involves some doubtful talk re the advisability of unleashing such a discovery on an unprepared world. The two plots are brought together quite skilfully and believably, to provide the climax and prepare the reader for an ambiguous but satisfactory ending. Throughout the 30,000 words Silverberg never loses control of this treacherous material, and that says something for his emerging abilities. The story bristles with difficulties which he generally surmounts without showing the effort. Not the least of these successes is his handling of some incidental but ultimately important homosexuality; he treats it simply as something that exists, without sentimentality or partisan overtones. Other writers should take note, and ponder.

The weakness lies in his patent determination to be a better than hack s f writer. He overdoes it and makes a mistake which bedevils literary beginners -- he gives wordage

instead of solid material. He interpolates pages of explanatory and atmospheric prose which must be categorized as bad writing simply because they are unnecessary. You can skip them all and not miss a useful detail or an illuminatory comment. Highly compressed statement holds more literary and dramatic value than extended prose -- but it doubly difficult to write. *MAN IN THE MAZE* had a less challenging theme but was much better written simply because it concentrated on essentials and let the pretty bits go.

Still, this is far better than average Silverberg, and one can no longer pass over a new novel of his as being automatically expendable.

(EG: Silverberg is no "literary beginner" George, although you probably mean that he just appears to be at times. Rumour attributes up to 3 million words to Silverberg, of which his s f is but a tiny percentage. But like Balzac and Zola among others, Silverberg may have found that such a background is not always helpful for anything better than hack writing).

THE PACIFIC BOOK OF
AUSTRALIAN SF

Edited by JOHN BAXTER

Pacific Books (Angus & Robertson)

THE PACIFIC BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SF is a dull book, but I propose to rat thoroughly on my principles and examine it in some detail, not as an entertainment but as an investigation of how and why the local product falls short of even average quality. And if this takes me beyond the accepted province of a review I merely snarl and say "I'm gonna do it, anyway".

With one exception, there is nothing wrong with the conceptions of the stories gathered here; eleven of the

twelve could have been written into perfectly acceptable items of modern s f. The question: Why weren't they?

The failures are of technique. And that is a literary problem.

Kit Denton's BURNING SPEAR is satisfactorily done within the limits he set himself, but ^{the} limits are too narrow. It is one of those little mood pieces which everyone likes to do once in a while, even if only to use up an idea which refuses to jell into a rounded whole, but this one is too insubstantial to evoke response other than a question mark. It ends in midair because there is no solid ground to support it. The failure is one of visualisation, and the soap opera dialogue helps not at all.

Frank Roberts' IT COULD BE YOU is one of those essays in the macabre which fail not for lack of craft but for lack of restraint. He launches what purports to be (if we are to take John Baxter's foreword as correct) an attack on the excesses of TV participation games. In fact he presents a savagely exaggerated assault on human nature, showing his players as barbaric primitives who will stick at nothing in their hysterical greed for money. And "nothing" includes the public murder of the loser, even if winner and loser should be husband and wife. The reader simply doesn't believe him; the satire is vitiated by the overstatement. The writing is competent but the treatment is not. What Roberts had was a happily spiteful comedy of contemporary pre-occupations - dressing it up as grand guignol took the bite out of it.

Lee Harding's THE EVIDENCE is a failure of technique, plus a failure to appreciate the principle underlying the suspense story. He has attempted something for which he has not (or at that time had not) the equipment to grapple. The theme is guilt and ultimate judgment -- an enormous theme

which must either be examined at length or presented in a single effective facet as anecdote. (Anecdotes should be studied by all of us; many are literary masterpieces expressed with utter economy. Take, for instance, that famous sick joke: "But, apart from all that, Mrs Lincoln, did you enjoy the play?" That one line contains a world of comment and implication. And in the one line the story is complete). Lee struck a middle course and tried to flesh out his anecdote with a suspenseful build-up; it did not come off because a major element of the suspense story was missing. One wondered satisfactorily, and then kept on wondering with a sense of mounting irritation because one was being told nothing; there were none of those tiny indications of solution which titillate without revealing. One did not feel the menace of his Watcher; one was told that he menaced the protagonist, but he should have menaced the reader also. I could not avoid a feeling of: "For God's sake, Lee, get on with it". And at the end I did not care as I should have done because the shock was one we have suffered too often before.

Of Martin Loman's AN OUNCE OF DISSENSION John Baxter's remarks: "The fact that this story appeared in the top-paying and world's top-ranking s f magazine indicates that, as a story at least, it came off". Since the magazine was the often semi-literate ANALOG, the value of the puff is questionable. Well, there is little wrong with the writing as such; it is middle-of-the-road s f aimed at a definite editor and competent for its target, which means that it is one of thousands like it. It is, alas, couched in that aren't-I-the-clever-one style which disfigures so much of the work of Eric Frank Russell; it is, in fact, a typical Russell story. The clever Terrestrial outwits the silly local yokels. The error here is a lack of

literary tact. But it was written for a specific market notable for the lack. One would like to see what the "Martin Loran" team can do with a less chichi type of tale.

Colin Free's *THE WEARER IN THE UNDERWORLD* is utterly competent. He is a stylish writer, but his talent is wasted on this doom-laden piece of conventional dreaming about an unlikely future, unredeemed by an ending which is conventionally grisly without illuminating anything. But there was nothing to illuminate. The nightmare future has to be very original indeed to stir our hackles these days and must to achieve anything, relate to ourselves rather than to figures in an artificial milieu. This one does not relate. The failure is in the mediocrity of the conception, and talent can do little about that.

Damien Broderick is (to judge from a very slight acquaintance) a sensitive and thoughtful man, and Baxter's description of his work as "...undisciplined, eccentric, gloriously individual..." This combination of characteristics can produce pyrotechnics; why, then, does *ALL MY YESTERDAYS* fail? The clue lies in that word "undisciplined", by which Baxter probably inferred free-wheeling and outre, but which too often turns out to mean merely slipshod. In connection with this story, that is what it means. Baxter also writes "... if he had more patience with the medium..." Whether he intends "medium" to stand for *style* or *prose* in general I cannot decide from the context, but that he says it at all reveals his doubts. The story reads like the work of a man who has dashed off a yarn and nailed it at once, without revision or any real care for the result. The style is not internally consistent and does not always match the mood of the story -- particularly in the final tag line. The neat flash of insight is too often marred by cliché expression, robbing it of force.

Baxter claims that it contains satire on "... immortality, religion and psychiatry". So it does, in an off-hand way, and perhaps these were, in Broderick's mind, the *raison d'être* of the piece. But they are incidental, decorative but not forceful, and not really integrated into the total conception of the story. In the short story all the elements must come to climax at once, or the ending becomes tacked on to round off the work. That is what it becomes here, and the tag line misses its effect by being too patently thrown away. The thrown-away line is difficult to bring off; ask any playwright. The failure probably lies in Baxter's deadly reference "... if he had more patience with the medium..." Broderick is careless to the point of being contemptuous of it and that is no way to write. Yet the tale has its incidental values, and he could write well if he set himself to it, but the dashed-off first sketch rouses impatience in any craftsman.

FOR MEN MUST WORK by Frank G. Bryning, is a conventional tale by a competent, conventional writer. It might have impressed us in 1935, when this sort of thing was being done ad nauseum. There is little wrong with it as magazine fiction; it simply has nothing to say to us.

Stephen Cook's *FINAL FLOWER* is less a story than another mood piece which does not come off. In writing it he fell for the old trap of using evocative words instead of evocative method -- "coruscating", "sulphurous slopes", "sheer beauty", and so on. It doesn't work and never did, because the essential visualisation is not communicated. What, for instance, is "sheer beauty"? It is a doubtful adjective miscoupled with an abstract noun, and conveys nothing at all. Nevertheless the tale shows promise of better things, and it is a pity to discover that Stephen Cook is dead.

BEACH, John Baxter's own contribution, is yet another mood piece and is, expectably, the most literate item in the book. Over-written, certainly, but in the mood piece this is not always a fault. It is, however, too long for its content. 4000 words is 2000 too many for the slender theme. It is probably experimental (we all try this sort of thing sooner or later) but only a master craftsman can do it successfully, and Baxter is not that. But let us blame no man for striving beyond his reach; it is a necessary experience in the art. When he succeeds we applaud fast enough.

Bertram Chandler's ALL LACED UP is the most successful story in the collection, in that Chandler has been content to do what he knows he can do well. He is at all times an unpretentious writer who stays within his limits and rarely turns out a failure. This is backbone s f, the solid and unspectacular work to which forms the springboard from which the more adventurous launch their flights. Without the Chandlers to hold the s f line the Sturgeons and Aldisses and Delanoy might never have been heard of.

Ron Smith's STRONG ATTRACTION is for me the one story which fails because of its unacceptable theme, miscegenation between unrelated species. The writing is competent without being notable, but I simply cannot visualize a reptiloid species being sexually interested in human women, and Smith makes only an unsatisfactory token attempt to justify it. Such an occasional match can be thought of as a unique moment of perversion, but on the racial scale it becomes intolerable. Disbelief is not suspended.

THERE IS A CROOKED MAN by Jack Wodhams, appeared in a 1967 ANALOG and is plainly tailored for that market. It has a good, if unoriginal basic idea, but the twist is predictable before we are halfway through. It has any number of individually amusing

gimmicks, but is related in a deliberately fragmented style which is intended to give pace but in fact succeeds in being a strain on the memory; one is for ever fitting the bits into position. It is too long for its slender premise. And the dialogue is appalling.

All this adds up to a very poor collection, considered as entertainment, but was worth publishing if only to hold the mirror to the deficiencies of the local scene. There is much promise here, but little fulfillment. One cannot doubt that, of the twelve, Harding, Free, Broderick, Baxter and Smith have the stuff of literature in them, but they are showering promise on arty bric-a-brac. Material has to be strong before the artists can attack it with the powerful weapon of words; the day of the arty trifle is over, thank God. It was once recommended that the young writer cut his teeth on such things, and forgetfulness is full of the stuff. Form and gracefulness are no longer enough to win the plaudits of even the lunatic fringe of languishing worshippers, and subtlety for its own sake evokes only impatience. The literary scene is alive with intellectual muscle wedded to solid craftsmanship, and only the determinedly strong survive on better than mediocre levels.

The five I have named all suffer from the same defect - inattention to the basic principles of fiction - and none of them need do. Their themes also are too slight; they should hunt bigger game. Their treatments do not fit their themes; form and matter are inseparable in literature and must be the subject of thought and experiment before even a draft is begun. Style need not be the subject of great concentration; if the visualisation is solid, the style will shape itself; clarity of language is style. (The

more ornate styles -- as with William Burroughs and, less successfully, J.G. Ballard -- are used for special effects and are idiosyncrasies not to be imitated or considered as especially good writing, which they too often are not. Delaney and Zelazny should also be avoided as models; their techniques are still very imperfect though both are achieving mastery).

Bertram Chandler's story is the most successful in this collection because its parts add up to a consistent if undistinguished whole. The anecdote is the core of the thing, so character is sketched in just sufficiently to differentiate the protagonists; no more is necessary because the conception does not permit examination of them in detail. The amount of action is properly calculated to move the story without diversion or waste of words. The climax is presented straightforwardly, without any dangerous trick striving for effect. The narrative method (first person in this case) is conversational, the tone of any man relating an amusing anecdote, and works perfectly because that is precisely what he is doing. The dialogue is undistinguished but does not need to be more. It is the talk of ordinary people, and sizzling wit or subtle profundity would be out of place; it is moderately naturalistic (truly natural dialogue is an artistic impossibility and would bore you stiff) and is properly proportioned to the needs of each scene.

Now, this is art. Minor art, certainly, but it produces the only truly enjoyable tale in the book.

Those with immortal longings in them may snort that it is mere carpentry. Of course it is. So are the plays of Shakespeare. They are carpentered to the last detail and they are the monument of the language. Shakespeare is was a great tradesman as well as a great artist, and would have been

less of either had he not been both.

Which is to repeat that our local writers must pay more attention to the basic aspects of their art. (All creative work is art, and don't let anyone tell you differently). The most unnerving aspect of this collection is the fact that so many of those represented are established professionals in more than one literary field.

R O B E R T T O C M E Y reviews:

THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION

by SAMUEL R DELANEY

Ace Books 40c

(EG: EINSTEIN INTERSECTION is already one of the most-reviewed books of the last decade. Most of the reviews have ^{been} confusing, however, and a sensible reappraisal 2 years after first publication will only do service to the book. Besides, despite Bob's fears, IE did win a Nebula Award, and has now reached Gollancz's yellow-jacketed English hard-back series.

Ditto for following review, of MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! Now that it has reached permanence in Penguin Books, a Retrospective Review can only help.

So, if we must set precedents in the first issue of S F COMMENTARY - Retrospectives are just as welcome as any others, and maybe more so. After all, even SLAN keeps being reprinted).

In speaking of certain books, not necessarily science fiction, critic John Simon asks: what are they "if not layers over layers of literary fragments shored against our ruins - bodies of myth coated with universal history coated with human experience?" He might very well have been speaking of THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION. "The

central subject of the book is myth," Delaney writes in an excerpt from his journal that serves as a chapter heading. It is just that - a richly lush tapestry of myths woven from the wealth of dreams that comprises mankind's questing journey from the darkness to the light. Myth, as Delaney obviously realizes, is just truth grown old, forever renewing itself and forever being recast into different shapes and shades.

The setting is the far future and old Earth has changed, but not beyond recognition. Mankind is long gone and in his place, inhabiting what is left of his cities and bodies, and using what is left of his artifacts and memories, is a new race - not quite man nor yet quite alien. In a prose that is filled with echoes and evocations Delaney retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, their love and their tragedy. Along the way of his Journey to find his lost Friza, Lobey, the central character and narrator, meets many people. He meets Spider a dragon herder who is doomed to play the tragic roles of Judas Iscariot and Pat Garrett, each of whom betrayed in the name of friendship. He encounters Green-Eye, the very image of Christ and hunts for Kid Death who is Billy the Kid and Satan, the one who has taken Friza from him. Kid Death, christened Benny William (Billy the Kid's real name was William Bonny), can control almost everything in the world except Green-Eye or music. Lobey eventually comes to a large city and there he meets the Dove, the sexual symbol for a world where almost anything might emerge from a mother's womb. She helps point him the way, but in the end ("Endings," Delaney writes, "to be useful must be inconclusive".) Lobey discovers that the power to return his love resides within him.

Bare outline comes nowhere near telling the story. The author's writing is so telescoped, so completely

trimmed of every unnecessary word, that only by quoting the entire book could I tell the story. And the impulse is to quote the entire book, verbatim, and point at it and say: "Look, in your hands you hold a wonder." It is that literarity, a really good novel, good beyond hope. It is by turns, and often simultaneously, profound, funny, touching, sad, epic and always, always graceful. That his characters are symbols does not prevent them from being human in the sense that a structure of empathy bridges the gap from them to the reader; that the landscape they wander across is alien does not mean it is incomprehensible, rather it is more vivid than the very world we live in and we see every colour and hear every sound.

A few incidental points. Other reviewers seem so flabbergasted by TEI that they can't think of much to say about it or the story. A few call it a work of art, of which there isn't a much doubt, and the other a genius, of which there isn't a shred of doubt. At least two took issue with the cover, calling it garish and inappropriate. Well, the book is garish, too, and the cover (by Hugo winner Jac Jack Gaughan) illustrates exactly a scene in the book - something that covers don't do too much these days. The monster (which Judith Merrill calls a "red daemon thing" leading me to doubt whether she read the book) is rendered with a fair degree of accuracy, as are the surroundings right down to the insane colour-television sets.

Another reviewer, I think it was Badrys, asked what the book was doing being published by Ace at all. The answer, of course, is that it is of + Come now, Bob! See George Turner's article on IQ, Genius, and related topics - 3 geniuses a century.... perhaps.

a type that only a paperback publisher of s f would touch. The pity of it is that such a novel as this will probably go down with the rest, and be buried under the deluge of crap that's coming out these days, unless someone pricks up his ears and notices it like they did with Vonnegut's SIRENS OF TITAN. And then we'll probably lose Delaney, something we cannot afford to do. Not if he can write them like this. This is the book to give to people who sneer at science fiction. (I've already given away about ten copies of it myself, plus several that people have just started reading and walked off with).

MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!

by HARRY HARRISON

Berkley Books 60c

The cover blurb reads: "An s f novel about New York City, Year: 1999 - population 35,000,000." And so it is. As in Ellery Queen's CAT OF MANY TAILS and even Isaac Asimov's CAVES OF STEEL, though to a slightly lesser extent, the hero of Harrison's novel is the city itself. It is also about life, love, death, murder and survival. Mr. Harrison has appended an exhaustive bibliography to the end of his story, as an indication that he has researched carefully (and it shows) and means the book to be taken seriously (which it should).

At this population level, says Mr. Harrison, we have reached the saturation point, where all of our efforts are going into producing enough to maintain the bare minimum necessary for survival. The major problem, of course, is what might happen if a relay broke down, if a cog slipped. If all our efforts are going to produce the minimum, then the slightest difficulty would result in less than the minimum being produced. This never happens - not quite - but

* BG - but of course it did happen in New York 1967 during the power blackout.

the threat of it happening hangs over the entire story like a deathly pall.

Harrison's prose, as always, is a delight to read. Lean and swift, there is no cramming and no superfluous wordage. Harrison measures out his writing with a micrometer to a close tolerance and never says more or less than he intends to say. It is the kind of style that is unobtrusive and smooth, yet completely under control of the author at all times, carrying a feeling of conviction and realism. There is very little evidence of pulp writing, and even the alternate-attitude chaptering is necessary to this kind of story.

There are a few minor points where I disagree with Harrison. In the squalor and overcrowding he shows us, where there is an abundance of filth and garbage, few means of eliminating waste (some of the people go so far as to evacuate in the corner of their rooms, as there aren't any toilets available) and inadequate medical facilities, you would expect plagues to rage through the city. But they don't, and no reason is given.

Also unexplained is the reason why Harrison's main character Rusch remains in a job that demeans him to the extent that his job does. Granted, jobs are few and far between, but surely he could find work as a bodyguard, or even go on the dole. Finally Harrison puts a great deal of the blame upon the Catholic Church's birth control policies and the legislation derived therefrom. It is hard to believe that in a few years they will not move towards a more enlightened and realistic policy, and it is equally hard to believe that people will follow it if it does not.

Still, this is a serious novel, seriously told. He shows us that is we ourselves who can prevent this happening. After reading MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! most of us will try.

THE ANTI - BODHISATTVA

KURT VONNEGUT'S

SIRENS OF TITAN AND CAT'S CRADLE

Danien Broderick

The adult or mature version of primal narcissism is, of course, "cosmic consciousness", or the shift from egocentric awareness to the feeling that one's identity is the whole field of the organism in its environment. But if this is not to remain a purely contemplative state; if, in other words, the liberated man is to return to the world like the bodhisattva, he will seek the means of expressing his sense of being "at one with the whole world in pleasure and love". Because the means are aesthetic his approach to the world is, as Marcuse suggests, that of Orpheus, "the priest, the mouthpiece of the gods", who tames both men and beasts by the allure and magic of his harp... For in the value system of civilization, the artist is irrelevant. He is seen as a mere decorator who entertains us as we labour...

The liberative artist plays the part of Orpheus by living in the mode of music instead of the mode of language. His entire activity is dancing, rhythm for its own sake, and in this way he becomes becomes a vortex which draws others into its pattern... The high art, the upaya, of a true bodhisattva is possible only for him who has gone beyond all need for self justification; for so long as there is something to prove, some axe to grind, there is no dance.

-Alan W. Watts PSYCHOTHERAPY EASTWEST

The quest for purpose and significance bids fair as the most intransigent defining characteristic of the sapient condition. The limit cases of its conclusion are the numinous or the nihilist, apocalypse and absurdist. And yet these limit cases are in intimate relationship, their polarity is the integrity of the mandala, the "two" faces of a moebius strip. Plato wondered of his Republic, "if we could contrive some magnificent myth that would in itself carry conviction to our whole community." Vonnegut's acerbic novels are a timely investigation of that putative identity.

"All persons, places, and events in this book are real." This disarming piece of nonsense is merely comic, until we look at its complement: "Nothing in this book is true." From the beginning, the exuberant puzzling tension of both novels is established quite boldly. In antithesis, both categorical declamations strain in mutual contradiction - and mutual invalidity. Vonnegut has us by the throat, and we laugh while we choke.

Stripped to the core, of course, SIRENS OF TITAN is surely the

longest shaggy-dog story ever told, while CAT'S CRABBLE is a vaudeville prat-fall with the world as metaphor. They are enormous intellectual jokes, and in bad taste at that. They are sick jokes of such gentle bitterness that they make tears. They are painful as a spastic's steps.

As literature, the novels are difficult to place. They are sold as science-fiction, and they certainly come within the bounds of our amoeboid genre. That is, they invoke the mystique if not always the methodology of science; moreover, both plots hinge on quasi-scientific entities such as flying saucers and ice-nine. At another and obviously deeper level, they satirise the genre specifically and scientism in general: vide the delightful "chrono-synclastic infundibulum" and the terrifyingly abominable Snowman Dr. Hoenikker.

Yet they have an appeal outside the ingroup of science-fiction aficionados. For the last decade and a half, the vogue has been for "anti-heroes", more recently for "anti-realism". Heller's CATCH-22 was a brittlely cynical instance of the latter. I have chosen to invent (discern?) a fresh category, within which I believe Venneгут's novels sit most easily and with the greatest opportunity for illumination. The anti-bodhisattva novel (I apologize for the bastard terminology, but criticism is a bastard business) depends on a specific, and largely Eastern, view of man-and-the-universe. Its hero is an (again putatively) enlightened, a liberated, man in a world where freedom is vastly and cruelly ordered, or alternatively where order is a shallow pocket-view of rampant anomie.

In my opening quotation Watts suggests some of the existential implications of Taoist liberation, or in the new Western terms, Dasein-analysis. Tao, being-in-the-world, is rendered impotent by division, by cerebral categorisation and manipulation. Spontaneity cannot be forced, for then it becomes deliberation. Yet out of spontaneous lawlessness comes the ineluctable Tao, serenity in an absurdity which transcends itself into an integrated unfolding.

Venneгут winds skeins drawn out of this concept, and its reverse, the anti-bodhisattva theme, in and out of a vast tapestry. Bumfoord is the very mirror of Watts' bodhisattva-artist, skewed, reversed, yet clearly recognisable. He is "the mouthpiece of the gods": "You should believe..." says Bumfoord, "because I, as head of this religion, can work miracles... I can work the miracle of predicting, with absolute accuracy, the things that the future will bring." He has been placed, by the infundibulum, "beyond all need for self-justification", and indeed his "entire activity is dancing." He dances a spiral from the Sun to Betelgeuse, he dances "over his golden jungle gym in Newport" for the reverent delight of "the same idiots one finds in toy stores", he dances the dreadful leitmotif piped across the light-years by the Trolfadorians to their "disgustingly paltry ends".

And if ever any bodhisattva experienced Watts' "'cosmic consciousness' - the feeling that one's identity is the whole field of the organism in its environment", it is Bumfoord whose node is a "place where all the different kinds of truth fit together as nicely as the parts in your Daddy's solar watch", where "everything that ever has been always will be, and everything that ever will be always has been." He has been

liberated into ubiquity, yet his characteristic adjective is "punctual". In his "cosmic consciousness" he has instigated deceit, destruction and death. As a final irony, he never learns just how paltry the ends of the Magellanic machines were.

The novel shimmers with Doppelgangers. Malachi Constant, the man who yearns to fulfil his name, to carry "a first-class message from God to someone equally distinguished", is a minor analog of the whole human race which has laboured for its history to carry the replacement for Salo's space-ship. Humanity itself is merely an analog of Salo, the messenger designed to be completely "dependable, efficient, predictable and durable", to carry a message for eighteen and a half million years. There is a Tao, albeit a flawed and mean Tao, and its progression is as ineluctable as might be wished.

The book aches with lies and deceptions. With Salo's assistance, Ramfoord designs the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. Its motto, "I WAS A VICTIM OF A SERIES OF ACCIDENTS, AS ARE WE ALL", is precisely, and on a scale previously unimagined, what we are not. Its practice, ensuring equality by handicaps, is the essence of fraud. Its predegonemon, the Martian War, is the most inhuman publicity stunt. Its end, the delivery of the replacement piece, serves a Higher Power's most definite, if grotesque, purposes.

And when happiness ensues, it has equivocal roots. "Look forward to being really in love for the first time, Bea," promises Ramfoord. "Look forward to having nothing but the dignity and intelligence and tenderness that God gave you - look forward to taking those materials and nothing else, and making something exquisite with them". Certainly Bea in her moment of triumph - "when my son and I walk together to that ladder and climb it, we will not be doing it for you, or for your silly crowd" - transcends her earlier artificial sense of dignity, but she retains no linear sense of identity through which to rejoice in her moment.

And the final, moving scene is illusion. Unk is not what Malachi Constant was - aggressive, loud, childish, wasteful, parvenu; but he is not a man. He dies in illusion, as programmed by hypnosis as any computer.

The book folds back into itself, like a box of mirrors. The final image is compounded of fragments. It is, wryly enough, more Pangloss than Candide for we are brought back to the beginning:

Everybody now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself.

But mankind wasn't always so lucky. Less than a century ago, men and women did not have easy access to the puzzle boxes within them.

They could not name even one of the fifty-three portals to the soul... (But) Outwardness lost, at last, its imagined attractions.

Only inwardness remained to be explored.

Only the human soul remained terra incognita.

This was the beginning of goodness and wisdom...

Indeed, outwardness, the desire to know "who was actually in charge of all creation, and what creation was all about", brought only three results: "empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death." Yes? Of course not. It brought liberation from the control of the Trolfamadarians; the false bodhisattvas danced their directed dance to the freedom of the human race. And even the message: Greetings. Is it as inane as it looks? It could have been: War!....

The point is, then, that Vonnegut whips his tongue from one cheek to the other. CAF'S CRADLE, the inverse of SIRENS OF TITAN, is no more conclusive.

Someday, someday, this crazy world will have to end,
And our God will take back things that He to us did lend.
And if, on that sad day, you want to scold our God,
Why go right ahead and scold him. He'll just smile and nod.

In the first novel, God the Utterly Indifferent was invented and had his uses:

Oh, Mankind, rejoice in the apathy of our Creator, for it makes us free and truthful and dignified at last... Oh Lord Most High, what a glorious weapon is Thy Apathy, for we have unsheathed it, have thrust and slashed mightily with it, and chaptrap which has so often enslaved us or driven us into the madhouse lies slain!

Nobody is as malleable as he who believes himself undetermined. In the second book, Bokononism preaches the reverse. "Humanity is organized into teams, teams that do God's will without ever discovering what they are doing... Nice, nice, very nice - So many different people in the same device." Opiates become the religion of the masses: "Bokonon, cynically and playfully, invented a new religion... Truth was the enemy of the people, because the truth was so terrible, so Bokonon made it his business to provide the people with better and better lies."

The destruction of life by ice-nine, is sheerly due to the irresponsibility of its inventor, and whole ghostly philosophy of militarism. "No cradle, no cot," is precisely and chillingly the truth, but lies like karass and Fro Patria enable human beings to scuttle their sense of responsibility. If there's Somebody Up There, whether They like you or not, there is some chance of eventually discovering the fifty-three portals to the soul; when the only outside entities are foma, the earth locks into eternal winter.

Bokonon is a full-blown anti-bodhisattva. This time he even resembles the valid article. Yet, fantastically, he hurls his mountebankery in the world's face:

"Don't be a fool! Close this book at once! It is nothing but foma!"

and

"I thought this was trash."

"Of course it's trash!" says Bokonon.'

It is difficult to know what to make of the last paragraph in the book. It is the typical final resort of the escapist to "make a statue of myself, grinning horribly, and thumping my nose at You Know Who",

IN SCIENCE FICTION
- AND ELSEWHERE

NOTES more or less at random

FOR AN UNWRITTEN ARTICLE

GEORGE TURNER

The concept of "Intelligence Quotient" has exercised a strong and usually pernicious influence on the s f writer. There was a period in the late thirties when no tale was complete without reference to the IQ of villain or hero or both, generally on the supergenius level, although Theodore Sturgeon preferred, in his covertly sadistic way, to deal with morons.

Van Vogt presented us with superdupers with ratings in the two to four hundreds, but we didn't believe in them because they behaved just as you and I might if we had psi powers instead of guns. But then, Van Vogt never had a sense of proportion, only of size. And now, after all these years, he has written a tale THE PROXY INTELLIGENCE (IF October 1968) which brings back all the old thirties nonsense and then some. He resurrects the Great Galactics of ASYLUM (if you can remember back that far) and these boys have IQs ranging up to -- hold on to something screwed down -- 10,000...

..even if an IQ of 10,000 existed we couldn't recognise it, let alone measure it or conceive what it meant. For practical purposes we can't measure with any accuracy an IQ of more than about 140. At that level there is an error of some 5%, no matter which tests are used, and reported results of 160 and higher are so unreliable as to be valueless. A recent report (in TIME) of a lad with an IQ of 134 is utterly meaningless...

..to make it worse, there is no certainty just what is being evaluated in an IQ test. No psychological definition of "intelligence" exists. Rather, it might be better to say that you can take your pick of definitions, and be pretty sure that no test evaluates any of them...

..it may be that what a good IQ test really measures is your ability to use your intelligence. This is to some degree supported by the often dramatic variations in a person's test results taken at different periods in life and under different stress or health conditions. Most tests are designed so that these variant conditions are ironed out in the course of the test, and compensating techniques give an approximately "normal" result under all but extreme conditions. But a consideration of "real"

figures can make you wonder just what was being measured.

We can design a test for a drunken man which will show reasonably well his capacities when not drunk, and he will pass it on his usual level -- compensating factors will produce his "sober" figure. But if you give him the "sober" test without the compensating factors, the result may well be moronic. So intelligence is not a stable part of the makeup, like the quantity of blood or the number of bones.

So there's a possibility that IQ is indeed a measure of your ability to use what you have, not an absolute measure of what you have to use...

- ..possession of a high IQ has little to do with genius. Techniques have been devised for estimating the IQs of great figures of the past, and such titans as Shakespeare and Da Vinci (generally credited with genius) don't show up too well.

What, then, is genius? We don't really know that either. The dictionary definitions help little.

There may well be several kinds of genius. Shakespeare's would seem to have been an ability to see past the surfaces of thought and give his vision immortal form through a huge talent for discussing what he saw in superb verse. (Please observe that I do not see genius as simply a gigantic talent. A vast talent may be impressive but dull, whereas genius lights a blaze in the observer. Genius communicates its vision). Da Vinci's gift appears to have centred on an immense curiosity, bolstered by the painter's ability to see completely and in his own terms, without the misdirection and obfuscation caused by the findings of others. Edison's ability may have lain in a sort of mental topology, a capacity to interconnect unlikely ideas to produce an unexpected third - his productions were useful because he was at heart a severely practical man who didn't waste time on visionary nonsense. Rembrandt, on the other hand, poured all his genius into a supra-real endeavour, seeking to express more than his medium could manage, and coming very close to forcing it to his visionary will.

Whatever genius is, we can be pretty sure it will never be discovered via an intelligence test...

- ..that last note makes hash of my idea that IQ is the measure of your ability to use your mental equipment. S. and Da V. made plenty of use of theirs, but seem to be doubtful on the IQ scale. I have never seen estimates for the other two...
- ..for practical purposes a series of aptitude tests is of more value than an IQ test. The meaning of an IQ test is still the subject of much psychological argument (Eysenck, who has constructed hundreds of the things, cogily refuses to commit himself too far on their meaning, value or reliability) but the meaning of the aptitude test, when evaluated by an experienced adviser, is clear and fairly accurate.

When an aptitude test turns out inaccurately this is often

because the evaluator has mistaken the nature of the aptitude showing up in the test, and this is sometimes the case when one talent looks like another.

For instance, an evaluator with an artistic cast of mind may take an aptitude for form arrangement and spatial judgment as evidence of an aesthetic bent, whereas they may equally well be the symptoms of mathematical ability. Most tests contain built-in protection against this sort of confusion, but it still can happen...

- ..yes, I know my own IQ, thank you, and am resigned to it. It doesn't distress me to feel that I am not destined (save by unimaginable accident) for immortality. No, I won't tell you the figure, but I am not interested in the colour of your linen, either...
- ..there used to be a group called MENCA, which, so I am told, specialised in a high IQ membership. I wonder what the hell they thought they were up to? No elite is ever useful to itself, only indulgent ...
- ..labouring all this into an essay would be a waste of time. Think of the research! Besides, one tires of battling over mountains to discover molehills...
- ..nevertheless, someone should do some work on the relationship, if any, between IQ and genius. (Give me genius and you can stick your IQ!) I must read Koestler's ACT OF CREATION again. It bears heavily on the point, even if you have reservations about his premise...
- ..how many real geniuses have there been? (The word is too easily bandied about these days by worshippers of any fascinating talent). I can think of Shakespeare, Da Vinci, Edison, Rembrandt, Jesus, Buddha, Beethoven, Socrates, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristotle, (what a century that was!) Michelangelo, Goethe. Just a baker's dozen. And, of course, Einstein.

Possibles are Dickens, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Dante, Moliere, Racine, Descartes, Wagner, Picasso, Goya, Confucius, Lao-Tse, Plato, Alfred the Great, Octavius Caesar and perhaps a dozen more.

Maybe two or three per century.

Now wonder we don't know much about genius. We rarely recognize it until the holder is dead -- unless by the left-handed method of killing him ourselves, as with Jesus and Socrates (who would, I suspect, have got on well together)...

oo oo

EG: We must get these books on our Contents Page sometime - Shakespeare on Medieval Legends, Aristotle's Science Column, Buddha's Guided Tour of Nirvana. And where is Newton, George? Anybody with Leaving Physics or above is going to very upset at that omission.

things, a glance over the shoulder - often to the time when the complainant first started to read science fiction. But I'm going back twenty years - some eight years before I started reading SF.

Something must have jolted^{me} into this reverie, and I admit that reading James Blish's anthology THE DREAM'S THIS MORNING was the cause. The bulk of these stories (all but one, in fact) were published ten years before the anthology was compiled! Ten years or more! May I review some of the changes in science fiction since 1938, without claiming to be all-inconclusive? 1938-- stories become pulpish: 1934 - thought variants, the big idea becomes all: 1938 - Nevins, same gimmick, smoother writing: 1945-6 - rise of more "human" SF: 1950 - sociological sf. Finis. End. Kaput. No more changes. Nothing. There are very few stories being published today which would not have been at home in the magazines of 1950-1 - a period of some 16 or 17 years. Yet the stories of that time just couldn't have appeared in 1938-4!

Let me crib a little closer to our time and claim that 1954 has been the beginning of the end, as seen in 1937. I take you back an equal period, to 1940, and examine some of the writers to appear first in the interval 1940-1953:

Anderson, Blish, Boucher, Brackett, Bradbury, Brown, Cartmill, Chandler, Clarke, Clement, Dickson, Gunn, Harness, Jones, Knight, Kornbluth, MacDonald, McIntosh, Matheson, Neville, Oliver, Pohl, Schmitz, Shiras-Smith (both Cordwainer and G.O.) and Jack Vance all appeared by 1950 (and are therefore mentioned in Day's INDEX ((thank you, Bob Smith)) and my memory would add these from the next couple of years - Budrys, Dick, Farmer, Miller and Vernegut - though doubtless I have left out several names. Now who can we set against this lot, from a second period of 14 years - Jack Sharkey? Henry Slesar? Aldiss (English)? Ballard (English)? Delany? Zelazny? It doesn't amount to many, and unless C.C. MacApp is your version of Kris Neville, and Fred Saberhagen is a latter day Bradbury, I feel you are going to be in difficulty raising a good opposition team.

Of course it would be obvious to argue in turn that the great writers of the last fourteen years have not yet reached their greatest heights. However, the gentlemen (and ladies) listed for 1940-1953 not only started writing in that period but also got fairly near their respective peaks: exceptions are Chandler, Dickson, Smith and Vance. I guess I just can't see Larry Niven as another Hal Clement.

Nor was 1940 a good year to pick, and therefore unfair. Going back another year would have picked up such mediocrities as Asimov, Bester, Heinlein, Leiber, Sturgeon and Van Vogt. But these names are not necessary - the argument is quite strong enough without their assistance.

OK, so we will admit that the last 14 years of publishing have not introduced many good writers, and that the magazines have declined somewhat. Does this necessarily mean that sf is not as good as it was? I think so, and I'd like to bring forward a little more evidence. In VAIDRO 170 Buck Coulson published the result of his short story poll. He states that the majority of his voters were "relative newcomers to science fiction". The first ten publication dates are 1941, 1954, 1938,

Noone else reviews the magazines because noone else can bring himself to read them. That is the only explanation I can suggest for the moment. At the same time no part of s f publishing needs reviewing &/or some good old-fashioned kicking around more than the magazines. They were the mainstay of the field. Are they now? We hope not, but the more pernicious elements of their influence are easily seen. For better or for worse, here is the only regular S F Magazine Review Column. As you can see, the first two sections were scheduled to appear Elsewhere. As for the rest? I'm only up to August so far (on the 11th December) It's been that sort of a year.

FICTION MACHINES

Bruce R Gillespie

FEBRUARY 1968

GALAXY
IF
AMAZING
FIRST
ANALOG

The fiction appearing in February's American magazines is worse than January's... if possible. March's offerings will probably reach new depths of mediocrity. The only highly entertaining piece of short fiction was Charles Harness' new story (believe it or not) appearing in AMAZING.

THE MILLION YEAR PATENT is probably an ANALOG reject, as it follows the lines of Harness' recent series based upon (of all things) patent-examination. The plot consists of little more than an exposition of a series of space-time paradoxes as applied to the time-limit provisions of American patents, but Harness adds a gleam of wit that appears nowhere else in this month's fiction.

Any new story by Brian Aldiss is worthy of mention, but TOTAL ENVIRONMENT (GALAXY) is disappointing. Aldiss' unshakable urbanity seems best suited to the difficult job of drilling unwieldy regiments of words, and complex battleplans of ideas, into novelistic strategies as admirable as ROTEGUCE. Aldiss' characteristic attitude is the sympathetic, but definitely raised eyebrow. In TOTAL ENVIRONMENT he carefully constructs an experimental situation that could even be currently contemplated by sociologists - an artificial environment testing the validity of Malthusian predictions in particular regard to the Indian population. However, the map of this "environment" remains a static piece of architecture without particularly involving

us with its pitiable inhabitants. Little "happens" in the story, and both beginning and ending are ambiguously uninformative. After nearly convincing us of the horror of his creation, Aldiss seems content to sit back, rub his hands (smugly?), and dismiss the story as just another entertainment turned out on a rainy afternoon.

Which is perhaps the most penetrating comment I can make on this month's batch anyway. No editor seems to be working from anything more than a sense of duty. Nearly every story is either unforgivably badly written (IF's and ANALOG's offerings, in particular), or stale repetitions of stale ideas, or both. If you also indulge in the masochistic practice of reading all the magazines all the way through, and you live in the Country of Perpetration, you may be able to suggest some reasons for the current downswing.

The only functions that the magazines still perform well, or at least as well as they ever did, is in the provision of features and reviews. Isaac Asimov continues to inform entertainingly (even the discovery of gallium provides a good yarn) and the other science columnists still inform the amateur with varying degrees of amusement or profitability.

After a partial slump in prosine book-reviewing, the prospects seem interesting for at least the rest of the year. Judith Merrill's reviewing has improved greatly over the last few issues of F&SF - her comments and predictions about today's trends, rather than formula "Recent Publications" material, are probably already influential on American publishing in general. For example, February's reviews of experimental fiction on the outskirts of science-fiction not only register a movement that has even been noticed in Australia (SOFT MACHINE already banned), but also persuade publishers that there is such a market among those not satisfied with fifteenth reprints of FOUNDATION and the latest collection of Campbell's mind-warpeners.

Last mentioned, but pre-eminent in interest, is the startling change that Algis Budrys has introduced to his GALAXY BOOKSHELF. Lee Harding's theory is that Pohl has at last removed some theoretical censorship that kept Budrys' reviews just a little vague, and now he is free to say what he always meant to say. The last thing I might have expected from a very dull American February was some genuine back-scratching bitchiness (in the form of Budrys' Best for the Year). Not even J.L. Foyster could best some of these comments. Surely the only solution to prodon's problem is for Budrys to take over all the magazines, and convert them into an American NEW WORLDS. Nobody in America would read it, but I sure would.

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MARCH-MAY 1968

ALL
AMERICAN
MAGAZINES

Would you believe... a short story starring Lee Harding in May's ANALOG? Anyway, character Carl Wade of James Blish's SKINSIGN has a beard, is a photographer and writer. On the other hand, the photographer bit is only an alias, and Wade is only a best poet captured by some Things in

metallic suits. A mere shadow of Mr. Harding, in fact. Far more astonishing than this moment of recognition, is one's delighted realization that Blish twits Campbell and his readers in their own magazine. A consideration of Wade's brisk, arrogant assumption of Godlike power, simultaneously simple, revolting and pitiful lances the guts from the Anvil-Reynolds genre that has swaggered through ANALOG's pages for years.

It is a measure of slight, if noticeable improvement in the American magazines over the last three months, that SKYSIGN is not the best of the bunch. There are several contenders.

Harvey Jacobs' EGG OF THE GLAY (FSF March 1960) is even funnier, with a measure of wild, uninhibited lunacy not seen since Harrison's BILL THE GALACTIC HERO. Hero and villain battle it out for an egg of great rarity and uselessness, which is captured, recaptured, swapped between beds, and finally hatches. The theme of this mad chase, however, is sex. If the topic is fifty years out of date elsewhere, it is has never before been treated quite like this in a science-fiction magazine.

Mr. Ferman, despite his assiduous efforts to become the Non-Editor of all time, has let slip an issue of astonishing quality - April's EGGF. It contains no less than three good stories.

Bruce McAllister has been one of the few really talented "finds" of IF's "First Story" campaign of the last few years. WITHOUT A DOUBT DREAM is his best so far. Very few writers, except those like Ballard that make a habit of it, have so capably delineated the difference between romantic daydream and nightmare, and fused both elements into one absorbing story. If another Pohl "find" Larry Niven can win Hugoes and bore us with SLOWBOAT CARGO, then I would hope Mr. McAllister may, in the future, write a similar amount to much better effect.

K.M. O'Donnelle (alias the new editor of AMAZING and FANTASTIC) tidies up some of the less frivolous implications of Heller's CATCHE-22 into FINAL WAR. Marginally science-fiction, this story does not so much display the pacifist placard, as endure in the memory as a pacifist state-of-mind.

In the same issue, Ron Goulart entertains frothily with MUSCADINE, about the robot novelist who "is talking more and more about how he's betraying his talent. About ending the mockery in suicide." It is my suspicion that GALAXY magazine (amongst others) is entirely staffed by Muscadines, minus "all those built-in bits of creative talent and best-seller instinct."

I said before that this was an astonishing three months. Nothing short of Campbell's astrology, Zelazny's Hinduism, and Harry Harrison's sheer good luck could explain the appearance of the best short story of the quarter, if not the year, in AMAZING (dated April inside the cover, but June on the outside). I suspect that Brian Aldiss' latest (?) masterpiece SEMI DEE VICTORIOUS is at least a year old, and possibly more, as it seems to have been written to elaborate and clarify some of the themes of AN AGE (CRETACEOUS!)

The shorter story's brevity is more convincing than AN AGE's

complexity. There are obvious traces of Philip Dick's methods and Aldiss uses one of Dick's basic themes as a starting-point - the non-existence of the apparently real world. However, the three or four other themes developed in only 20 pages could only be Aldiss'. Indeed, it would be unforgivable to reveal any one of them, except to say that Aldiss' current obsession with total cultural breakdown (Acid War Stories) may already be noticed in SEEDS ARE VICTORIOUS. Whatever you make of the ending, it is impossible to recall it without uttering a mental guffaw.

I wish I could say the same about the fact that, out of 74 pieces of short fiction published March - May, only six are worthy of comment. (For Sturgeon Jurists, that makes 3%).

CONTRACT:

For the past dozen years, ANALOG has been persistently - and as loudly as possible - calling attention to the fact that BOUSING WORKS (!!!!!!!)
- Editorial, ANALOG March 1968.

WIFE:

Like a fool I told her everything. Everything.... That is the danger of human contact. It breeds humanity.

- Harvey Jacobs: THE EGG OF THE GLAX, ESSE March 1968.

and THE CURRENT OBJECT OF AMERICAN XENOPHOBIA:

Mr. Del Rey's speech (as Guest of Honor at the last Worldcon) was short, terse, and intense. He held his audience right in the palm of his hand and made a powerful argument for old-fashioned story-telling in science fiction as against the so-called "New Wave" writers (or "The New Ripple", as Lester called the movement, which has centred around the British magazine NEW WORLDS).

- Lin Carter: BACK AT WORLDCON, IF April 1968

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JUNE - SEPTEMBER 1968

ALL AMERICAN
MAGAZINES

If any American magazine gained ludes in 1968, it was GALAXY. The decade that has passed since it was last published monthly has seen the loss of H.L. Gold as Editor, Fred Fohl's attempts to maintain Gold's standards, and Fohl's final capitulation to, and eventual promotion of, the mediocrity of current s f. Fohl has been unable to decide what to do with GALAXY since he took over. Financial restrictions seem to have forced the abandonment of the best layout standards in s f history. After the Gold proteges grew lazy under Fohl's more tolerant eye, a lesser breed of young writers bounced in from IF magazine. Fohl's one great achievement has been to keep Cordwainer Smith writing. But even Smith died. During 1967, GALAXY was featuring the most uniformly dreary fiction since - Ray Palmer's AMAZING?

The problem has been since 1961, the Two Magazines Policy: out of GALAXY and IF, which should publish whose slushpile? Since 1968, Pohl has been building up IF's readership (after an ill-starred attempt to make WORLDS OF FICHTERLOW better than then both) until, two Hugo Awards, later, he has succeeded in creating an IF Market (teenage/sub-adult), The IF Story (appropriate to that age-group in a gory way), and has maintained enough support from enough undiscerning people to call the magazine a success.

Now, after at least five years of neglect, it is GALAXY's turn again, although IF is already suffering from Pohl's volte-face. The average quality of the fiction has been slowly rising over the last year, Algis Budrys' GALAXY BOOKSHELF column keeps attracting attention, GALAXY authors are now given cozy little biographies, GALAXY goes monthly from the June issue...

...And GALAXY runs competitions on How to Solve the Vietnam Problem? The first impulse of Australian readers upon seeing this bombshell was to laugh uncontrollably, and then lapse into embarrassed silence. How could anyone connected with s f be so stupid...? Whom does Pohl think will notice his \$500 suggestions, except other GALAXY readers? Does GALAXY have a wide distribution in Saigon? No act could better illustrate Pohl's whole attitude to s f and editing: loads of fannish enthusiasm, a working, though ungenerous budget, but no idea how to run a distinguished magazine. And again Pohl's June Editorial reveals the extent to which he (deliberately?) misunderstands the whole function of magazine s f, when he says "Now, what group of people in this country are most skilled at inventing futures? Why, we are!" If you keep repeating that, Fred, somebody might actually believe you.

This battle-cry is not supported by the Fiction Contents of the magazine, at any rate. As I have already said, there is a slight improvement, but only within the limits of the old categories. Mack Reynolds' HOW WE BANNED THE BOHES (June), for instance, is better-than-average Reynolds. For once, it could not fairly be called "just an ANALOG reject". But there is still the same old didactic dialogue, slow-motion action, and word-wastage: all faults scrupulously well-learned at the knee of JWC. However, the punchline of the story is new to me, and that I appreciate. :::: Brunner's FACTSHEET SIX, well-plotted and -constructed, is Brunner's best hack story for some years, but it still bread-and-butter fiction :::: Even Aldiss' recent GALAXY offerings (DREAMER SCHEMER, and WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG) are very slight powderpuffs compared with/^{his} recent NEW WORLDS stories, or even his TASTE FOR DOGFOOD-EVENS of last year.

But GALAXY did publish the only first-class story for four months (cf. 6 during March-May) : McGRUBER'S MARVELS, by R.A. Lafferty. Three novels in one year have only improved Lafferty's short-story style, which has always been bright, and is occasionally visionary. If anything, his prose is now even more compact, more allusive, creating in a few pages the strands of feeling which knot tightly into the brilliant climax. Another self-justifying Lafferty cosmos pictured perfectly.

But one good Lafferty story in twenty science fiction magazines? This makes depressingly unappetizing fare, and like Revelation's Angel, I am tempted to spew them all out of my mouth, for they are neither hot nor cold, but - worst sin - merely mediocre.

MAD MAD WORLDS
7 NOVELS OF PHILIP K DICK
PART ONE

Bruce R Gillespie

This article celebrates its first anniversary this month. The seven novels discussed were available at that time in Australian bookshops. Few of them are now. However, the article remains the same because only two novels, both unobtainable in Australia have appeared since then. CRACK IN SPACE, COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD and THE ZEPHYR will be discussed in the third article in this series. The paucity of Dick criticism has been improving since this article was written. This literature, as well as any comments on these articles, will be discussed after all three articles have appeared.

NOVELS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

CLANS OF THE ALPHEANE MOON
ACE books F-809
First published 1964

DR BLOODMONEY
or HOW WE GOT ALONG AFTER
THE BOMB
ACE books F-887
First published 1965

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE
FURNAL hardback
First published 1962

THE THREE STAGNATA OF
PALMER ELDRITCH
McFADDEN-BARTLELL 60-240
First published 1964

I

On my desk sit seven novels by Philip K. Dick, all of which, except MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, were first published in 1964 or since. Judith Merril, in November 1967's FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION reviews two more novels not yet arrived in Australia. Doubtless there are others that Australian readers have not even heard about. It is perhaps Dick's astonishing output that has prevented any serious estimation of his work.

On the one hand, one might be tempted to label him a "hack" and leave it at that. It seems obvious that Dick is one of the few s-f writers living entirely upon the proceeds of his writing. Therefore, reviewers such as Algis Budrys obviously consider that, because of this fact alone, Dick is not writing anywhere near to his "best form". On such a view, however, we are never likely to see Dick's "best".

Dick is also faced with the problem of poor presentation of some of his editions, and the ludicrous titling or retitling of some of his works. Serious critics probably just ignore a book entitled CLANS OF THE ALPHEANE MOON, a title which, in fact, hides one of Dick's best

Novels. One can only wince at the retitling of the superbly ironic ALL THE MARSHEN as PARTIAN TIMESLIP.

Dick's output raises a further obstacle, the one to which I alluded before. At Dick's current rate of production, nobody will be able to see the direction of his work for many years, and even then, the sheer volume of his work will make a proper estimation nearly impossible. As has already happened, only the hardbacks will be considered, and some work such as his "Ace" titles will be ignored. To date, I have seen four reviews of MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, but none of DR BLOODMONEY. In other words, Dick seems to be a good example of a writer beaten by the market which is his only support. His final place in the s f field, whether measured in Hugo awards or booksales, will never be great unless both the "average critic" and the "average s f reader" know which of his books are worth reading, and which may be laid aside as mere "money-spinners". In Australia, we are further handicapped: it took three years for any edition of MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE to reach Australia. For the general s f reader, there is the problem that Dick is no longer submitting material to the magazines. Do you blame him for that?

After virtually stating that I am beaten before I start, I shall now reverse position, and attempt some assessment of Dick's work during the last few years, in spite of all the difficulties. Besides Dick faces worse difficulties at the hands of the critics than at those of his publishers. Dick seems to have had a curiously rough time from those eminent people that American s f magazine editors laughingly call "reviewers".

Not that Dick has been given the thumbs-down by Miller, Budrys, and Merrill. On the contrary, their praise has been lavish and sweet. Unfortunately it is either so vaguely and overwhelmingly enthusiastic as to be quite untrustworthy, or else the reviews are plain wrong. Miss Merrill, in particular, has never actually examined Dick's work thoroughly enough to give some estimation of what he is up to, and to what degree he is successful in each of his novels. The general acclamation for MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE (supported by the masses in the form of Dick's only Hugo) and the virtual ignorance of DR BLOODMONEY and FALLEN ELDritch (except by Budrys) seems to firmly indicate that very few people have any idea of where Dick's best writing is headed, if in any direction at all; or what are his fundamental methods and concerns. The reasons may lie in those problems already outlined. At any rate, s f as a literary fraternity is doing a great disservice to Philip Dick.

However, most people widely read in science fiction do regard Dick's work as "important". As mentioned before, I've never actually seen a bad review of his books. Most reviewers confess themselves "confused but impressed" and take the blame for any of Dick's faults, as faults in their own perception. Nor and more readers are becoming enthusiasts, or at least interested spectators.

The feeling is that Dick is "great", or that at any minute he is going to do something great, or simply the cry is: "Keep an eye on him." Presumably this is all very pleasant for Mr. Dick, but he must

snigger sometimes. Only an author with a captive and uncomprehending audience could hand his public the statement: "I have written and sold twenty-three novels, and all are terrible except one. But I am not sure which one."

Nobody has ever accused Dick of being stupid, unoriginal or dull, but no reviewer I have seen has been able to put his finger on the ways in which Dick is "intelligent, original and fascinating". One can at least try.

Part of the problem is that Philip Dick's novels all have several characteristics that divide him from other s f writers, and tend to sever communication with the average s f reader. As one can so easily point out, quite often passages in his books, although seldom whole books, are badly written by any standards. Like Algis Bufrys, I cannot help feeling that this is mainly a result of the astounding speed at which Dick must work. One would not go so far as to suggest that his books are all tape-recorded rather than written, but it seems likely that some of his novels (especially *FEELERHATE TRIP*) may not have been reread before being sent to the publisher's.

Besides this, the printers sometimes seem to have performed some unsightly atrocities on his novels (although this complaint seems universal). From *FEELERHATE TRIP*, for example, one might read the following assaults on good sense and the English language:

And, as if the words magically impelled the unseen presence, a gray, faint shape moved urgently down the hall toward him and Carol. Commissioner Dale Hunes, all right: eager, busy, pressed on by his business. (p 14)

The following could only be a printer's error (I hope):

"Jesus," Nicholas said. And moved, reflexively, toward a nearby end-tap of the circuit.....

Dick is also subject to some of the sentimentality we generally associate with the other s f writers, but his direction is usually away from this approach. When sentimentality does appear in full coporific splendour, (Barney Meyerson and Emily Knoff in *FALMER BELDRITCHE* for example) it is usually so undermined by the framework of the novel that it is made necessary rather than repellent.

These complaints are quibbles at best, but they are factors that prevent Dick from writing with the bland smoothness of writers as visibly "professional" as Isaac Asimov or Damon Knight. I am not saying that the "other sort" of s f writer is a master of language or is not subject to sentimentality. I do think, however, that the faults of the older professionals do not disturb and annoy the reader in quite the way Dick's faults do. His best writing stands in glaring contrast with his worst.

However, there are other features of his writing that far more noticeably cut him adrift from both his fellow writers and s f readers. Most disturbing are the illogicalities of plot and character with which he tends to undermine what might otherwise be regarded as

"perfect" stories in the best of American s f traditions. In many of his novels (although he toes the line in his short stories) he appears to set himself and the reader a multi-obstacle race which both writer and reader have only a fair chance of completing. The reader drops out first, and nurses a bruised and weary psyche to the end of the race. Afterwards he files a strong internal protest, and either refuses to take up the challenge again, or approaches it with great trepidation.

Or, there are the readers who enthusiastically take the obstacles with Dick, but still finish the course feeling dissatisfied. For instance, DR. BLOSSOMQUIET exposes or includes in rapid succession a mad nuclear scientist, a phocomelus (read the book to find out that one), the dropping of The Bomb, an orbiting disc-jockey, and such post-war mutations as a telepathic miniature Siamese twin enclosed within the skin of his "normal" sister. Not to mention a sketch-map of the post-Bomb civilization of the West Coast of the USA.

The sheer weight of "ideas", symbols plot-factors, or whatever can be suffocating. They are introduced at surprising intervals, and are juggled around in dizzying succession. ((4-12-1968: I have just realized that this description could equally well describe a Van Vegt novel - there's a thought for an article!)) Later I will look at the brilliance of all this. At first sight, however, the whole book might seem quite alien to even the most hard-boiled s f fan.

Compared with the best qualities of Dick's work, the illogicalities in his character development may also seem only a quibble. However, Dick's noticeable inability (shared by nearly all other s f writers) in the field of "characterization" has its own drawbacks. In each of Dick's novels, all the action is seen through the mind's eye of one or other of his characters. This use of the "viewpoint" character has its own special brilliance. However, such an obviously managed character elicits about as much sympathy from the reader as his favourite television camera. The onus of identification therefore should logically be thrown back on the shoulders of the author, as in Fielding's TOM JONES for example. However all we are ever likely to see of Dick's face in his own novels is a mocking smile. This technique leaves even his best work oddly centreless. Other s f authors solve this problem by using only one character as the viewpoint of the novel. This reinforces the suspense element of the story, and evokes some sympathy for the protagonist. But Dick's novels are jigsaws of identifications. In few of his novels does Dick bother to complete the picture.

One is justified in spending so much time on the faults of an author only if his abilities more than tip the scale in his favour. In Philip Dick's case, his faults are the same kind of thing as his great qualities. It is necessary therefore to differentiate between the "bad" and the "good", in order to approach "the good" at all.

I have used THE THREE STRIGATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH as the touchstone for this discussion simply because it is my favourite Philip Dick novel. Although the other books will not be discussed in chronological order, most were published within a short space of time (1934-5).

Most reviewers note the homogeneity of Dick's work, especially when considering how young he must have been when his first novel appeared. SOLAR LOTTERY (WORLD OF CHANCE) now over 15 years old, is in style and proficiency, little different from most of its successors. Among the books of the last decade, any division cannot be made according to chronology. My main categories would be in terms of the complication of Dick's plots. In this respect, DR. BLOODMONEY and MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, and possibly CLANG OF THE ALPHANE MOON occupy a different category to the others. PALMER ELDRITCH is perhaps in a third category (shared only by TIME OUT OF JOINT?) - it is a complete success, in that it adequately accounts for the complexity of a Philip-Dick-World, yet turns on a quite simple central image - Palmer Eldritch himself.

As mentioned above, Dick sees each of his worlds (a different one for each book) through the eyes of his protagonists, not through those of the Omniscient Author. Dick has a plot-formulating "system" much like that of Dickens and the Victorian novelists. The viewpoints are interleaved in alternating chapters. Often, however, instead of constructing a total world from various viewpoints, Dick falls into the same trap as Dickens. He creates a number of worlds within the one novel, worlds which only marginally enmesh with each other. The logical result of such a disintegrative process is something like his 1938 failure THE SIMULACRA. There are about ten characters too many, a vast number of virtually unconnected settings and occurrences, and the final "climax" scours into an anticlimax of the most disappointing kind.

In PALMER ELDRITCH Chapter One opens with young businessman Barney Mayerson and "co-worker" Roni Fugate (who wanders around the novel for awhile, then disappears). Mayerson is attached to Perky Pat layouts, and is normally confined to the hothouse conditions of a vast New York City on a completely artificial Earth.

Within the same chapter we meet Richard Enatt, ceramic-war sales representative, whose wife was once Barney's. Enatt doesn't last the whole novel either (nothing so crude as being killed: he simply ceases to be mentioned), but his wife is the main reason why Mayerson stays sane later in the novel.

Second main protagonist is Lee Bulero, head of Perky Pat Layouts. He is the businessman threatened most by the return, or non-return, from another Solar System (I don't think we ever find out which) of potential rival Palmer Eldritch. Thus an extraordinarily small number of main characters for Dick are juggled around between Earth and Mars.

On Mars a seemingly large percentage of the human population have

been drafted as "colonists" and left to rot. They do have money, however, and their main occupation is the use of the drug Can-D and the Perky Pat wish-fulfillment layouts.

I did not mean to tell even a part of the story (a scurrilous practice never perpetrated by oneself) but even in this description one may see Dick's basic methods, and catch a glimpse of the ambitiousness of this (or any other of his) novels. Such a matrix of characters, settings and "ideas" does not solidify into an imaginatively satisfying novel by itself, but must be coerced into the mould. Alternatively, a central idea could perform this function at one coup.

Although Dick's crisp plotting must be seen as one reason for the success of *FALLING ELDORITCH* this factor entirely fails to account for the unique piquancy and importance of the work. Much has been said about Dick's use of "ideas", or "symbols" - that conglomeration of features of current civilization that Dick recombines over and over in his novels. This has been called "social satire".

However, any view of Dick as a satirist, a commentator on the ills of our own society, would completely miss the essence of Dick's work. Dick's worlds are seldom complete and fully-imagined, and there is an odd inappropriateness in the combinations. In *FALLING ELDORITCH* Can-D has obvious links with LSD and ^{the} current obsession by the popular press with the alleged wide-spread use of drugs. However, this book was presumably written in late 1963 or early 1964, before Leary was anything more than a name on the medical register, and LSD still meant "money". In fact, Can-D is far more important to Dick as a major element of a larger plot - it is the background for the introduction of the mysterious new drug Chew-Z.

The Perky Pat layouts are slightly changed ring-ins from an earlier short story (*BAKS OF PERKY PAT*; *AMAZING* Dec 1963) and their purpose is to provide a centre for one of the most effective chapters in the novel, when the inhabitants of Mars escape their grubby existence into characters of the Perky Pat game.

Perhaps I am emphasizing too strongly the "use" to which Dick puts his symbols. Their peculiar attractiveness lies in their intrinsic fascination for both writer and reader independent of their particular importance to the novel as a whole. His "ideas" are never "themes" of his novel, but parts of a created world which is itself the "theme", the imaginative concern of the novel. Although such fluid and illuminating symbols are very important elements in Dick's novels, one could never say that they are what his novels are about. Such reviewers as Judith Merrill and Schuyler Miller approach Dick's novels in precisely this way. They give the impression that Dick's novels are large fruitcakes, whose only importance is their miscellaneous contents, and not the taste of the whole cake. Therefore they cannot account for the novels. Dick's problem is adding the contents coherently so there is a cake, and not chaos.

Between the reviewers and myself, it is extremely difficult to locate exactly the source of Dick's fascination to readers and his

undoubted importance to s-f-ologists. The traditional approach that I have used so far (criticism in terms of Plot-Character-Description) raises more problems than it solves. It is only in novels such as PALMER ELDritch, in which Dick punches his way out of his self-made paperbag, that we find a clue to his real power.

In this novel Dick finds a centralizing symbol that is adequate to the whole book - the figure of Palmer Eldritch himself. However, this central idea is not so much important because of Dick's use of it re. Plot, or Characters, or because it is such a good "Idea". To approach Eldritch or the novel itself in this way, is to see the flame and cloud, feel the blast and wind, and not to notice the exploding atomic bomb.

Palmer Eldritch is first introduced as the shadowy competitor to Leo Buler. The mystery surrounding Eldritch's appearance in the solar system is a brilliant Plot Device, one of a kind at which Dick is adept. The element of suspense gnaws at the mind, but it is only used by a master of the best kind of melodramatic fiction in order to evoke total interest in the novel. For awhile, Eldritch the mysterious figure is overshadowed by the importance of the drug Chew-Z that Eldritch is trying to market to the Martian colonists. In Chapter 5, we are confronted with the first encounter with the drug. B Buler, the victim/protagonist, in this chapter thinks he has uncovered the full effects of the drug. The effects already described are shattering. Buler's first encounter however, could have come from the pages of any one of several novels on the same theme (including Knight's WHEEL'S RAVENMENT). The hallucination (Eldritch appearing as a little girl; the killing of the "girl" and the appearance of the tombstone for Palmer Eldritch) is fascinating, because it seems to reveal the full potentialities of Chew-Z.

However, we still hope that Palmer Eldritch will eventually be pinned down, the hallucinations will stop, and all will be explained (as in all those other s f novels). Knowing Dick, some readers will already be suspicious of such an outcome. What is most important to notice about this passage is the sharp contraction of Dick's language. The stylistic "faults" disappear and the growing sense of sheer terror engendered by the agonizingly lucid pattern of Dick's prose cuts away at the foundations of the reader's most elementary sense of normality.

However, Dick has not yet fully spread his wings (or should we say, dug in his beak). The novel has yet to take on its full splendour. Barney Mayerson, sent by Buler to Mars to sabotage Eldritch's efforts to proliferate Chew-Z, ironically tries to use the experience to gain a personal foothold on existence. At the same time, this same concept of "existence" is carefully and simultaneously eroded away by Dick's prose. Perhaps Dick's only "satiric" barbs of this novel are thrust against the American business-ideal. Mayerson remains devoted to his employer and determined to carry on "business as usual", no matter what. Therefore he takes Chew-Z in an attempt to expose the drug, and incidentally, to find some personal peace.

In Chapter 10, Dick carefully and powerfully disintegrates Mayerson's entire personal world until neither he nor, the reader find it possible to distinguish between the "facts" and the fantasy. Palmer Eldritch (appearing as a physical figure) "lands" on Mars to do a deal with Mayerson. Eldritch's inhumanity is obvious. He is "gray and bony, well over six feet tall..", there is a "ravaged quality" to his face, we see his "enormous steel teeth... welded to his jaws...", his right arm was artificial... and he was blind... but replacements had been made."

Mayerson attempts to negotiate with the "real" Palmer Eldritch, but he succumbs again to Chew-E, and his wish fulfillments take him back to his former wife. Past and present merge, but Dick's prose treats the scene in exactly the way that Mayerson sees it - as factual reality, not fantasy. When Mayerson emerges from his ex-wife's apartment:

"Will you be back before I go to bed?" Mournfully, she followed him to the door of the concept, here in building 11188504 - counting outward from downtown New York - where they had lived two years, now.

"We'll see," he said, and opened the door

In the hallway stood a figure, a tall gray man with bulging steel teeth, dead pupilless eyes, and a gleaming artificial hand extended from his right sleeve. The man said, "Hello, Mayerson." He smiled; the steel teeth shone.

"Palmer Eldritch," Barney said. He turned to Emily. "You've seen his pics in the Homeopages; he's that incredibly famous big industrialist." Naturally he had recognized Eldritch, and at once. "Did you want to see me?" he asked hesitantly; it all had a mysterious quality to it, as if it had all somehow happened before but in another way.

"Let me talk to your husband a moment," Eldritch said to Emily in a peculiarly gentle voice; he motioned and Barney stepped out into the hall. The door shut behind him; Emily had closed it obediently. Now Eldritch seemed grim; no longer gentle or smiling he said, "Mayerson, you're using your time badly. You're doing nothing but repeating your past." (pp 148-9)

In some of his most effective prose, Dick both presents a clear, factual narrative, and uses it to undermine the whole concept of "clear facts". Mayerson's memory is not his own, but we are not yet sure of the mode or purpose of Eldritch's control of it. At the same time Dick insists upon Mayerson's desire for a return to normality as itself a fantasy - he sees his ex-wife as still an obedient, helpful wife. In this passage, however, the reader may still distinguish between the unreality of the Chew-E-induced nightmare, and the "real-life" business-deal which Eldritch is trying to negotiate with him.

Quickly he returns to Emily's apartment, and for several pages he seems to be successfully negotiating his dream-reality. It looks as if he might actually find something upon which he can base his

dream, if not his life. However Dick continues to knock away the struts from under this attempt, in a brilliantly delineated process which is far too complex to describe here. We become first totally aware of the implications of the whole novel when:

"Something's gone wrong," Barney said. "Eldritch must have lost control. I better find him... Goodbye," he managed to say, and started toward the door, groping for escape.

From behind him Richard Knott said, "Wait".

Barney turned. At the breakfast table Emily sat with a fixed, faint smile on her face, sipping her coffee, and across from her Knott sat facing Barney. Knott had one artificial hand, with which he held his fork, and when he lifted a bit of egg to his mouth Barney saw huge, jutting stainless steel teeth. And Knott was gray, hollowed out, with dead eyes, and much larger than before; he seemed to fill the room with his presence. But it was still Knott. I don't get it, Barney said, and stood at the door, not leaving the apt and not returning; he did as Knott suggest; he waited. Isn't this something like Palmer Eldritch? he asked himself. In pics... he has an artificial limb and steel teeth, but this was not Eldritch

...And, all at once, he grinned at Barney, grinned - and one dead eye flicked off, as if in a mechanical wink.

It was Palmer Eldritch now. Completely. (pp 146-7)

Moyerson cannot fully accept the situation, and neither can we. However Dick continues to force upon the reader certain conclusions that would seem unacceptable in a lesser book. During the rest of the novel everyone who has taken the drug Chow-E becomes subject to the ubiquitous presence of the three "stigmata" of Palmer Eldritch - blind eyes, artificial limb, steel teeth. Dick expertly traces the conversion of the whole of existence into the playground of Eldritch's mind. The figure that was merely mythic at the beginning of the novel has become godlike by the end.

Which brings me to the only serious point of dissatisfaction I have concerning this novel - I query the seemingly superfluous use of religious symbolism and reference throughout the novel, especially the bland attempt in the last chapter to "explain" what Palmer Eldritch "is". The Little Lecture is inane after the superbly imagined experience created in the previous pages. The religious element is useful only to extent to which it illuminates one point: because of it, Dick's vision widens to such an extent that we are faced with a world (possibly one of the few in all literature) where the mere idea of a benevolent, or even omnipotent God, seems ludicrous. Humanity is completely cut off from those resources of both objective and spiritual reality that normally give him the self-assurance to keep living.

How does Dick do it? How does he prevent the book from becoming as mad as the world pictured?

Most obviously, because of his own extreme intelligence and tough-mindedness which can coolly evaluate chaos without either falling into

it, or indulging himself in it. One could expect no author, however great, to create this book and survive, if he really extended his own resources and conducted a genuinely radical enquiry into the nature of man under such stress. After all, what is left of man when subjected to such pressures? Dick is not able to create characters (rather than mere "viewpoints") that are strong enough to be called representatives of humanity. Dick's own attitude is still too abstract and limited to really appreciate the full implications of the world of PALMER ELDRITCH. But Dick does not conduct his novel like a Dostoyevsky. Dick's prose is his own superlative "melodrama", the compact, brilliantly (rather than extensively) imaginative prose of Hugo, Dickens at his best, and a very small number of other science-fiction writers. From this point of view, THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH is one of the few masterpieces of recent science fiction.

III

However, although a touchstone, PALMER ELDRITCH is only one of many Philip Dick books, and certainly is not representative of his more usual methods. It is a summit, but the vegetation on the slopes is of quite a different hue.

Possibly the best book to discuss in contrast to PALMER ELDRITCH is the vastly over-rated Hugo-Winner THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. This novel won its award several years ago, but it took five years to reach Australia in any form. Since it was published in the same year as, and presumably beat into second or third place ALL WE MARCELLI, the best magazine serial of that year, my anticipation was high. Such hopes were toppled by my first reading. Although the reviewers unanimously call this Dick's best book, and despite the Hugo Award itself, I can still only admire the book partially, and scratch my head wondering what the fanfare was about.

To some extent, HIGH CASTLE is a textbook demonstration of Dick's best qualities. The prose is never less than incisive, and the average effect is probably as good as PALMER ELDRITCH. The first paragraphs of the novel, for instance, superbly catch a mood of sharply observed normality that, at the same time, warns the reader that a great deal of information is being withheld. "Instant tea from the five-cent wall dispenser", "American Artistic Handicrafts Inc.", the passing cable car, and, more noticeably, the "women in their long colorful silk dresses" might be just part of any normal San Francisco scene. But any experienced Philip Dick reader will immediately recognize these facts as part of a facade. The passage has Dick's own brand of suspense in every line - the "explanation" that begs further explanation. The effect is so uniformly maintained throughout the novel that Dick's ultimate failure to provide an explanation for the whole of his creation, proves especially disappointing.

Special attention has been paid by HIGH CASTLE'S apologists towards the kinds of writing in the novel that are new for Dick, and probably unique to this book. Immediately called to mind is Chapter 14, in which Dick comes closest in any of his writing to a genuine exploration of the emotions and intellectual standing of one of his characters. Mr.

Nobusku Tagomi, the Trade Mission official and expert in the Japanese game of I Ching finds his world crumbling under the pressure of the events of the novel. Dick's writing is as powerfully abstract as ever (the elements in Japanese thought violated by such a disintegration are analyzed and pondered), but Dick is far more concerned with his character as a victim than as an active viewpoint. One need only compare Barney Mayerson (whose personal suffering is never a point at issue) and Tagomi to see the difference.

However, Dick's wider perceptions within this novel are ultimately wasted. As in all of his novels, both the plot construction and variety of symbols prevent the exploration of the viewpoint of any one character. For instance, the variety and alternation of characters is far more dizzying than in PALMER ELDRITCH. In Chapter I we meet antique-dealer Robert Childan and Frank Frink, indefatigable fighter against the reigning fascist governments, and we first hear of Tagomi. Chapter Two brings Tagomi, the mysterious "man from Sweden" Mr. Baynes, and we return to Childan. Chapter Three introduces perhaps the best-sustained character of the novel, Juliana Frink. From then on, Dick's shuffling of this large, mixed bag of characters is fluid and interesting, but sometimes is just confusing and detrimental to the flow of the novel as a whole.

The problem is that each of these characters has equal status in the plot, or the reasons are left unclear why some characters are emphasized more than others (Tagomi and Juliana Frink compared with the others). If Dick adopts this highly patterned structure to maintain reader interest, then he fails. Because each of Dick's characters is interesting in his or her own right, the reader constantly hopes for long sequences fully developing the possibilities of a couple of the main characters, instead of watching the construction of a jigsaw in which no character fully completes the pattern.

Again, if Dick adopts this structure in order to present a composite picture of a fully imagined world (in which Japan and Germany won the Second World War and jointly occupy America) then I would say that he completely fails. Each character has interests and a viewpoint too small to see the whole picture. We know little more about the society of such an America at the end of the novel than we do at the beginning. Dick has shown many times that he is no political scientist, and his failure to illustrate how such a political system would affect the lives of those who live under it, is lamentable. In contrast to PALMER ELDRITCH, whose world is fully developed, but only credible within the novel, HIGH CASTLE, more than any other novel that Dick has written, is of the "What if...?" variety. However, Dick seems incapable in this novel of fully extrapolating the possible effects of fascism on America (unbelievably mild, for most of the characters), or of fully constructing his own bizarre type of novel, in which the reader does not normally bother to ask if it could "really happen."

IAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE therefore seems a very different book from PALMER ELDRITCH. The problem is that Dick depends on the same sort of manoeuvre as in PALMER ELDRITCH in order to unify and order his book. Dick needs a meaningful central symbol as the axle of his

world.

However, he overplays his hand, tries to found the book on two central ideas (I Ching and Hawthorne Abendsun, the "man in the high castle") and fails to make either of them fully relevant to the whole book. As with Falner Eldritch at the beginning of his book, I Ching has the kind of mythic importance that lends suspense and flavour to the novel's whole proceedings. However the evocation of the Japanese life-style and dependence upon a precognitive machine/game (or whatever) is ultimately a static device - it aids the plot but is not the plot - its use does not polarize conflicts and settle issues. It remains interesting background, and little more.

Hawthorne and his book THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY (a science-fiction jaunt in which America and the Allies won the war) are initially even more fascinating to the reader than is I Ching. Dick wants this figure (who remains vague and mythical to the end of the novel, instead of acquiring the reality of a character) to be the cruz of the action. But the main disappointment of the novel is to find that the last chapter, centring on Abendsun, provides a complete anticlimax to the novel. Dick's splendid structure collapses into purposelessness because the author can find no way to centre-stone the arches.

These two symbols, as well as all the other fascinating ideas that festoon the narrative, and could only have been invented by Philip Dick, ultimately have no meaning to the reader. They remain static within the novel. They do not change shape and illuminate the reader's view of the newly-created world, but merely remain a part of it. It is due only to Dick's basic skills that the novel does not seem quite irrelevant until the end, however. It is "good entertainment", but much of the entertainment is in the suspense of the plot. We expect a climax as brilliant as that in, for instance, TIME OUT OF JOINT, but the anticipation goes unrewarded. THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE is like a car full perfectly-working machinery, none of whose pieces connect with each other. The vehicle just does not go.

I want to mention CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON briefly - mentioned, because it belongs chronologically with this batch of novels; but mentioned briefly, because it arrived in Australia some years ago in an Ace edition neither reissued in paperback nor hardbound editions.

CLANS is nearly as successful as FALNER ELDRITCH, but will probably be forever doomed to obscurity by Ace's presentation and title. Dick finds a central idea that is artistically fully satisfying and fully explored - pathological "madness". It is seen in two ways - as institutional (the political organisation of a mental hospital left abandoned on an Alphane Moon) and personal (Chuck Rittersdorf's personal problems). The tribes of the Alphane Moon are named after various sorts of mental illness that were present when the satellite was a mental hospital (Paras = Paranoics, Skitzes = Schizophrenics, etc.). The antics of the clan politicians are set off against the antics of Rittersdorf desperately trying to escape from his wife, and seeming to go mad in the process. Perhaps Dick's comedy is even too tough-minded: his superlatively sane treatment of the

whole novel strikes one as almost too urbane. However Dick is always at his best when he seems most detached from his material. Only then is he able to assemble it into a clearly observed unity. When Dick becomes too fascinated by his self-created trees, the reader has no hope of seeing the wood.

CLANS OF THE ALPINE MOONS is a near-masterpiece. It must be read by any serious reader of Dick - if you can buy it.

IV

Dick's novels fall into two main categories (as I outlined at the beginning of this article). There are those with a fairly simple structure, based on a strong central "idea" (PALMER ELDWITZ and CLANS). Then there are Dick's "circuses" - farragoes of ideas and characters which have their nearest equivalent in Fellini's films, and which often fail for the same reasons (to be fair to Fellini, I hardly think Dick will ever manage an $3\frac{1}{2}$). Dick's Christmas puddings are often so constructed as to sabotage the whole purpose of the novel in general, i.e. the dynamic exploration of an imagined world.

DR BLOOMONEY, or, HOW WE GOT ALONG AFTER THE BOMB is clearly one of Dick's "circuses", yet unlike HIGH CASTLE leaves the reader considerably refreshed, if not fully satisfied.

Dick seems to be writing another extrapolative novel of social evaluation, and the first chapter is the nearest he has ever reached to the realist novel of contemporary "normality". The first paragraph of the novel, for instance, has a peculiarly neutral tone, as it describes a scene decked with all the trappings of modern American civilization.

The mood does not change for several pages until recognizably Phil dickian phenomena start to raise their abnormal heads. The psychologist Dr. Stockstill and "heavily-accented" Mr. Tree could only be figures from a Philip Dick novel. For at least two chapters, one is tempted to think that Dick has completely missed the boat this time. The ideas are, for awhile, mere cliches and ludicrously gauche caricature of Dr. Bluthgeld/Mr. Tree (who has that "twisted quality" about him) nearly make a farce of the book before it starts.

Again it is made plain that Dick cannot write about "objective social reality" (a la Flaubert, Conrad, etc.) but his mind immediately turns to what we call "abnormality" in order to construct his own "normality". In PALMER ELDWITZ the distinction between the two terms almost disappears. In DR BLOOMONEY the terms are reversed rather than fused into one. It is impossible to think of Dick writing a novel as truly extrapolative or as highly derived from traditional Western humanist tradition as, for instance, Miller's CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ. Dick's vocabulary converts all his material into one or other of his "mad worlds".

It is odd that DR BLOOMONEY succeeds where HIGH CASTLE fails. It is in essence a far less original novel than the latter. Post-Bomb stories are legion, and one hopes this will be one of the last.

However, instead of a cliched idea dragging the novel into mediocrity, it provides DR BLOODMONEY with a built-in advantage. Instead of needing to build an entire world from scratch at the beginning of the novel, Dick is able to use the Post-Bomb tradition itself as a factor in his plotting. The s f reader "knows" from very long conditioning that a primitive society is the only logical result of an all-out atomic war, so Dick needs only to define a small part of this primitive world in order to create his own fully consistent background to the novel.

In DR BLOODMONEY we are told little more about the postulated socio-eco-political America than we are in HIGH CASTLE, but due to this extra background of traditional responses, the reader finds the actual world of DR BLOODMONEY far richer and more fascinating than that of the former novel. The same can be said for Dick's ideas in this novel. Apart from such critically important original "characters" as Hoppy Harrington and Walt Dangerfield, Dick validates Bill Keller by presuming on our "knowledge" that mutations will inevitably abound after an atomic war. The world of DR BLOODMONEY would seem doomed by Dick's multiplicity of characters (about ten major ones) and allusions. Fortunately the background provides a firm stage for the "action" of such flimsy props.

After the first chapter, the rest of the novel transcends all cliches. Dick has never before felt so free to indulge himself in obviously theatrical gestures. The strength of the narrative is such, however, that these gestures do not tend away from the centre. The reader is not marooned at the side of the novel. In no other Philip Dick novel is one so invited to jump a "credibility gap". Of course the novel's action is impossible, and so is all of Dick's work. I for one could not care less. The secret to this flamboyancy, which gives beauty and importance to ^{the work} which would be insanely grotesque elsewhere, of course lies in Dick's prose. Never before has it risen to such gaudily florid heights. Not that Dick suddenly becomes a Marlowe or Shakespeare. His lucidly factual, but almost impetuous prose carries off these grand gestures.

After tracing the complex fight between Hoppy Harrington, Bill Keller and Bluthgeld (who can activate orbiting nuclear satellites with his mind), Dick resolves the conflict in a piece of action, which, for the moment, totally disorients the reader. His equilibrium is only restored when Dick reconstructs the seeming chaos at the end of the novel into some strange sort of new reality. Edie Keller, the little girl, is trying to prevent Mr. Tree (Bluthgeld) from continuing to activate the nuclear weapons, so threatening to wreck the world still left after the last atomic "war":

Edie said, "Listen, Mr. Tree - " And then she stopped, because there was no longer any Mr. Tree there. The dog turned, whined, and within her Bill moaned.

High up in the air, a tiny black speck blew and tumbled; the girl watched it drift as if it were caught in some violent spout of wind. It was Mr. Tree and his arms stuck out as he rolled over and over, dropping and rising like a kite... Something had hold of Mr. Tree and it was killing him. It lifted him higher and higher,

and then Edie shrieked. Dr. Tree suddenly dropped. He fell like a stone straight to the ground; she shut her eyes and her dog, Terry, let out a howl of stark dismay. (p 121)

The gesture is overwhelmingly vivid. This passage perfectly illustrates the best of Dick's writing, not to mention his superbly skilled employment of the "viewpoint" character to detail an emotional reaction felt by the reader as well. Dick's joke is that "Hoppy did it" - the world of Dr. Bloodmoney is one in which only one psychic monstrosity could kill another. Both action and joke are numbing.

This novel stands up so well compared with the others, however, because it is rich enough to include possibilities other than the monstrous.

Early in the novel, for instance, Dick's prose takes quite an unexpected turn into naturalism in Chapter IV (a "flash-forward" sequence occurring before the dropping of the Bomb) where he depicts a scene of almost cosy domesticity. (p 48). This type of prose is not repeated in the same way, but in the rest of the novel there is a sense of some basic normality which is "plagued and controlled by, but must accept the abnormality within it. Even within the passage just mentioned, the family conversation is ironically concerned with Edie's "brother".

Towards the end of the novel the traditional image of the "town meeting" is turned on its head. A natural meeting-place for primitive America becomes the gathering to hear Walt Dangerfield in his satellite read OF HUMAN BONDAGE and provide an anchor of sanity for the world below.

Dangerfield himself is probably the most positive element in the book. He is a character who has so turned a personal catastrophe (the death of his wife; his capsule turned into an eternal satellite instead of a mission to Venus) into a necessary and humanitarian blessing, that he acquires the stature of a saviour. However, Dick is never an allegorist. His emphasis falls on the plight, and triumph of Dangerfield as a person, rather than as a symbol for anything. It is through Dangerfield that Dick describes one of those "visions" entirely peculiar to science-fiction. As the mad Dr. Bluthgeld again sets out to ruin the world, Dangerfield sees the explosions across the rim of the horizon, while plagued with growing heart pains induced directly from below by Hoppy:

And then he thought he saw something. Beyond the window of the satellite - a flash far off, along the rim of the Earth's darker edge. What was that? he asked himself. An explosion, like the ones he had seen and cringed from seven years ago... the flares ignited over the surface of the Earth. Were they beginning again?

On his feet he stood peering out, hardly breathing. Seconds passed and there were no further explosions. And yet it frightened him. Like the pain inside him, it was too odd to be dismissed... I feel ill, he repeated to himself, resuming his litany based on his great discomfort. Can't they get me down?...

For his own needs he put on a tape of Bach B Minor Mass; the

2001 : CREDIT CHECKLIST

Direction and Production: STANLEY KUBRICK

Script: STANLEY KUBRICK & ARTHUR CLARKE

Director of Photography: GEOFFREY UNISWORTH

Art Director: TONY MASTERS

Associate Producer: VICTOR LEWTON

CAST:

Bowman: KEIR DULLEA

Foole: GARY LOCKWOOD

Dr Heywood Floyd: WILLIAM SILVESTRE

Michaels: SEAN SULLIVAN

Malversen: ROBERT BEATTY

Snyslov: LEONARD ROSSITER

Hlena: MARGARET TYZACK

Nick Miller: KEVIN SCOTT

British MGM

Cinerama/Super Panavision

Metrocolor

140 minutes

MUSICAL SCORE:

Available - Soundtrack on
MGM records, Stereo SIE 185T

1.37 ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA
(Richard Strauss)

Karl Bohm conducting
Berlin Philharmonic Orch.

4.04 REQUIEM FOR SCORANO, PEELO-
SCORANO, 2 MIXED CHOIRS AND
ORCHESTRA
(Gyorgy Ligeti)

Francis Travis conducting
Bavarian Radio Orchestra

6.55 THE BLUE DANUBE
(Johann Strauss)

Herbert Von Karajan conducting
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

5.50 LULU AETERNA
(Gyorgy Ligeti)

Clytus Gottwald conducting
Stuttgart Schola Cantorum

5.12 ADAGIO from GAMME BALLET SUITE
(Khatchaturian)

Gennadi Rozhdestvensky cond.
Leningrad Philharmonic Orch.

7.56 ATMOSPHERES (Ligeti)

Ernest Bour conducting
Sudwestfunk Orchestra

All recordings originally by
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON GESELLSCHAFT

All of these pieces except the REQUIEM
are available on a CBS record
"MUSIC FROM TWO SPACE SPECTACULARS".

There will be a series of articles, John decided. George Turner wrote first, Lee Harding answered, Mungo MacCallum offered his acid drop, and I my meanderings. Nothing much really. With a bit of luck and quite some help from a few hyper-intelligent film-watchers, we managed to decode a puzzling film. A drop in the bucket, we thought. An unnoticed defence against the absurdities of overseas and local reviewers. It would all be forgotten soon.... MGM's biggest bomb will disappear where all great misunderstood films go, and the public will ignore it as effectively as they ignored CITIZEN KANE, or anything else great from America.

Somehow, doom never fell. 2001 threatens to become MGM's most successful film (ahead of GONE WITH THE WIND?). It is still running in New York, and after seeming to fulfill gloomy predictions in Melbourne, opened again at the Dandy on Boxing Day. Kubrick has become a guru instead of a pariah.

More remarkably, we were not alone in gaining some hold on the film (in AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW No 17). The interpretation we pounced upon (or, those elements we agreed about) has been substantially echoed by at least two other critics, and Kubrick himself. We didn't agree with Arthur Clarke, but he doesn't seem to have seen the film at all. There were the expected moronic reviews, but they did not go unchallenged. Not unexpectedly, the worst review came from GALAXY Magazine (Lester Del Rey), with Ed Emsh's cooing and aching not far behind (F&SF). Within the s-f magazines, only Delaney showed that he had watched the film at all carefully.

The remarkable commentaries that I have seen, come from David Austen of the British FILMS & FILMING and Walter Breen of the astonishing fanzine WARECOH. Kubrick was interviewed in FLAIBOY (in one of the few issues admitted to Australia). More directly connected with the film are two records released of the musical score, and Clarke's Book of the Film which squelched along to comfort us in the absence of its mentor.

And to round off an annee extraordinaire for science fiction, 2001 returns. With others, I will roll along to gasp, purr, and blow my mind at one of the few films I could see for the fourth time... and the fifth... and the sixth. I was even thinking of (famous John Bongsund quotation) turning S F COMMENTARY into a 2001 fanzine, but there seem to irrational elements in the s f community who would object violently. Some have even vowed to read no more on the film.

On that heretical note, let us adjourn to the Book of the same name. No excuse for not reading

GEORGE TURNER reviews

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

by ARTHUR C CLARKE

(Arrow British paperback)

Reviewing Arthur C. Clarke's book comes as a labour. It fits into my category of ho-hum novels, but must be noticed because of its respectable antecedents. It solves none of the problems raised by Kubrick's handling of the theme and illuminates

nothing. The resemblances are, apart from the plot and scenery, superficial; the treatment is pedestrian and the viewpoint wildly apart from that of the film.

Whatever you thought of the film, it presented food for thought and alternatives of interpretation (unless you belong to the opposition who dismissed it as a load of junk). The novel settles firmly for the interpretation I dismissed as silly and juvenile, and throws the religious symbolists out of the window. Clarke's intelligences beyond the stars are not mere watchers. They interfere by kicking primitive humanity on to the road to technological advancement. They are Big Daddy.

The plot follows the film fairly closely until the matter of the Star Gate is reached, and here Clarke and Kubrick part company firmly and finally. Clarke's handling is traditional and tired. Bowman is transported by "space pod" to a far region, where he spends a few minutes in a "familiarising" room; then Big Daddy forces him to re-memorise his life backwards until at the foetal stage he is reborn as the Space Baby. And Space Baby launches himself across the cosmos to the environs of Earth. At this point Clarke seems to have had little idea what to do with his creation, and in fact says so. The closing lines:

Then he waited, marshalling his thoughts and brooding over his still untested powers. For though he was master of the world, he was not quite sure what to do next. But he would think of something.

We will never know what, and it is hard to care.

So, after than 10,000,000 dollars worth of extravaganza, we're property again, unable to do a damn thing for ourselves. The novel is too long for its material and contains nothing to arouse controversy or even interest. It is no bonus to Clarke's reputation. One suspects that somewhere along the production line Kubrick and Clarke differed uncompromisingly and that the better artist fortunately had his way.

BRUCE GILLESPIE REVIEWS:

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Review by DAVID AUSTEN

FILMS AND FILMING July 1968

P. 24

2001 was simultaneously released in most countries (even Melbourne!), and so most published reviews were written within days of each other. By contrast, the ASFR articles were written (with the exception of George Turner's) after 2nd and 3rd viewings. Breen says that he saw it twice.

Kubrick was interviewed after the film's success was assured.

However, the publication dates are all similar (ASFR 17 being the latest only because of misadventure), so the impressions must be taken as simultaneously and independantly arrived at. The views expressed in ASFR are therefore not as esoteric as they appeared at first sight. By the same token, we were not influenced by American or English critics.

Kubrick litters his film with birth/death symbols, so it is not surprising that Austen's main point, like Breen's and ours should be that:

Somewhere in space man will find his last great adventure. Soon he will make the ultimate voyage of discovery. Whatever he finds will so alter his concept of time, the perspectives of his history, and his fundamental beliefs that it will require the most rapid evolution if he is to adapt and survive. The change in man will have to be made so quickly and so thoroughly that he will emerge a new creature.

This interpretation leaves open the question of how far man may "change" before becoming unrecognizable, and how compulsive this change will be. Austen's point is that 2001 is an analogue, a simulacra, of the process of metamorphosis. It is not an extra-pictive newsreel of the change itself. It doesn't matter a damn whether Bowman the character is killed by HAL (the character) or not. The film only comes to life as it reaches beyond its props.

So Austen must, as we had to, trace the possible webs of meaning surrounding the film's "plot". If he can, he must also pin down the "limits of ambiguity". A friend of mine nitpicked at the film and my view of it: "But you can make anything out of any film if you want to". Unfortunately you cannot, if you look at the whole of any piece of art. Choose widely varying patterns of interpretation if you will, but fit all the parts of any one interpretation into some whole jigsaw pattern. It is not good enough for Arthur Clarke to say both in an interview and in his novel, that Dave is conveyed to a room on Jupiter or Saturn, or wherever. Just how does this overliteral view connect with any of the images in the so-called "psychedelic" sequence? Not to mention the minor problem of Kubrick's "Beyond the Infinite" tag on the whole sequence. Perhaps a few problems might have been avoided if all reviewers had followed the critical rule-of-thumb that every part of a piece of art should be important in itself, and as a part of the pattern of the whole.

Austen does his best. He tells the "story" of the film in detail, grafting the flesh of his interpretation to this well-observed skeleton. His main line of argument is roughly the same as Breen's, Delaney's, and ours' - that the tragedy of the computer (Man's technology) and the near-tragedy of man, can be best described as a "communication breakdown". After treating the Ape Sequence with little comment, Austen proceeds to self-correct an earlier mistake. He originally listed four parts to the film, but of the cut in the middle of the "Down of Man" sequence he says:

In one twenty-fourth of a second Kubrick has projected us some three million years through time to the turn of the 21st century.... By juxtaposing the bone with the space-craft the film succinctly demonstrates that although man has created a fantastically complex technology his emotional state has remained relatively unchanged. This one cut says more than, for example, the whole of PLANET OF THE APES.

This is precisely the point Kubrick had in mind in the first place when he made the film in three parts.

Austen agrees with Breen and ourselves in his evaluation of the banality of the dialogue and the importance of the music. Austen expresses well a central point about the film:

At first the dialogue seems somewhat banal and pedestrian, but one can soon accept it as being quite naturalistic. .. Although the media, from videophones to comsats, become increasingly more sophisticated, the message is as garbled as ever. As a means of communication, words are almost as inefficient as smoke signals. To deal precisely with the complexities of the future we shall have to rely even more on the unambiguity of symbols.

As Austen might, and should have, added to this comment, the failure to assimilate emotionally the changing data supplied to us about the universe extends through every frame of the film. Necmen fight over waterholes, American astronauts communicate nothing between themselves (or with the Russian scientists), Dave misunderstands and underestimates the computer. It is only as HAL's intelligence is disconnected that Man starts to seek a personal understanding of the universe, and only at the end of the film that he finds it. And, as Austen showed me for the first time, part of HAL's failure is his inability to distinguish between live and dead humans:

The danger lights flash and the moving lines on the registering oscilloscope gradually flatten out. This is how death must look to a statistician.

Even Bowman's macabre sketches help to confirm this impression of HAL's.

As for most commentators, including ourselves, Austen's account of the last sequence is the least satisfactory section of his overview. He fails to account for it, by not pursuing his statement that everything in the film is deliberate. I have my interpretation (of course) of the last section. Austen does not commit himself, but he cannot say of this section alone that

This final stage of David's journey can be seen simultaneously on several levels which accumulates a meaning beyond logical analysis.

The rest of the film invites, not resists, analysis. Why opt out on the last sequence, after writing what has turned out to be the most sensible review of 2001?

THE BLOWN MIND ON FILM

by WALTER BREEN

WARECON No 24

P. 16

Breen's analysis is far more leisurely, and almost slipshod in structure. At the same time, it claims to comprehend those "Limits of Ambiguity" I have already talked about. Says Breen:

I salute Clarke and Kubrick for creating, then, what must be

called the first genuinely esoteric or occultist film so far put across to the public.

One could ask cynically why a "truly occultist" film has attracted millions of viewers and is paying its way in a medium in which even CLEOPATRA was struggling to cover costs? As Lee Harding made clear in his notes, if the occult is at the base of the formal organization of the film, it is certainly not the element that emotionally engages the viewer.

Breen does not help his case by appealing to Arthur Clarke as his authority. Breen makes out a dubious case that Clarke had far more to do with the intellectual framework of the film than anyone else is willing to credit. Breen bases his case almost entirely on the evidence of Clarke's s f writing. A risky basis indeed. CHILDHOOD'S END is a cosy yarn, with an unexpected, well-written ending which rips from the fabric of the novel just because of these qualities. As I have said myself, Clarke's original script may have set out to dramatize the ending of CHILDHOOD'S END, but to suggest that there is any workable intellectualized occultism in the rest of the book....! George Turner is still right in saying that Clarke was the scientist, and Kubrick the artist, and that it was this conjunction that was so successful. Kubrick is the former stills-photographer; Clarke the former '40s-early '50s s f writer. Enough said?

Breen focusses two points in particular which had eluded me. The emphasis on the background music and the un-narrative development of the film has led many people, including John Bangsund and Kubrick himself to talk of the film as a "visual symphony". But symphonies (or at least my favorites) rarely proceed as slowly, good-humouredly, and/or programmatically as does 2001. But a musical analogue does seem most appropriate. Breen suggests the musical form nobody else mentioned - Opera. He describes both opera (especially Bayreuth stagings of Wagner) and 2001 examples of "multi-media", thinking of (a) the resemblance of the last sequence to "psychedelic" displays (including strobe lights, split frame films, optical illusion painting) in overseas art galleries; and (b) the suitability of opera itself to Kubrick-style cinema. The baroque staging and ponderous pace of some opera would fill the bill. But, knowing much less about opera than 2001, I will leave the music-fans to fight this one out.

Breen also nicely summarizes points about the surface banalities of the film that others have settled, but not so well. The dialogue, the attitudes of Floyd and others to the space journey, and the astronauts unresponsiveness to the journey ahead, may be all summarized by Breen's law: "Over any sufficiently long time, any social process tends to deteriorate". This law is universal, obvious, and wryly true for most aspects of the film. The non-communication theme is again illuminated by the accepting, compliant attitude of the astronauts; by the failure to match up to the constantly renewed environment. HAL is most ^{sure} grugly certain of his powers, and he/it is least capably of making/necessary metamorphosis.

The function of banal material here appears roughly analogous

to the function of seemingly banal village band music in Mahler symphonies, themselves of Wagnerian intensity and scope, portraying mood sequences, making often definable multilevel dramatic points without being programme music in the Straussian sense.

Karajan's BLUE DANUBE is about as lyrical as the workhorse will ever be, but there is the humour of its inclusion, as well as the pleasure.

Breen's conclusion from all this is the centre of his argument:

Clearly anything that is to revive the Sense of Wonder has to be more extreme... (Clarke stated at the Lunacon that) what people want is a cuddly universe whereas he and Kubrick wanted to show it the way it is.... Confronted with some overmasteringly super-human force, any mind -- apeman, human or computer -- is forced into another level or realm of operation (or misoperation), even at the cost of drastic change in the body it inhabits.

That is Breen accepting Clarke's "We Are Property" theme, which is rather different to Kubrick's "We must Change/Communicate just to Stay Alive" emphasis.

Breen's argument is slicker, more memorable, more stimulating, and less tenable than anything else I have seen on the film. Austen's review is far less ambitious, but perhaps more successful. Breen talks about LSD (as Breen often does) but Kubrick himself is contemptuous towards the idea of using LSD to aid artistic experience. The Buddhist references are also Breen-inspired not 2001-directed.

But Breen's perceptions sort out the viewer's first emotional impressions of the film. One of his diversions superbly sums up the effect of hearing the THUS SPEAKS ZARATHUSTRA music for the first time as it is used in the film:

It would have been too easy to assume that either Clarke or Kubrick had heard the opening ZARATHUSTRA Dawn fanfare under some such conditions as I did. It was played at San Francisco's planetarium show on Stonehenge, Spring 1967, at the very moment of equinoctial dawn as the sun rose over similarly shaped monoliths precisely aligned, and the similarity is uncanny. I will never again hear it without visualizing the Stonehenge scene -- awesome in the highest degree -- then the climactic recurrences of 2001.

Even Breen cannot provide an all-embracing "explanation" of the film, i.e. a proposition that will illuminate every part of the film in relation to every other part, and to a central concept. Is it Breen's oversight, through eccentricity or for lack of trying? Is it the film's fault?

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: STANLEY KUBRICK

PLAYBOY September 1968

P. 85

The director himself does not provide such an "explanation". One even suspects at times that PLAYBOY interviewed Clarke instead of Kubrick. There is no trace of the vein of wit, of irony-as-a-

state-of-being, that laces every film he makes. The Kubrick legend is demonstrated only in a few good (re)quotes:

ON THE FILM:

How much would we appreciate L'ONA LICA today if Leonardo had written at the bottom of the canvas: "This lady is smiling slightly because she has rotten teeth" - or "because she's hiding a secret from her lover"?

The very nature of the visual experience in 2001 is to give the viewer an instantaneous, visceral reaction that does not - and should not - require further amplification.

I will say that the God concept is at the heart of 2001.... When you think of the giant technological strides that man has made in a few millennia can you imagine the evolutionary development that much older life forms have taken? They would emerge from the chrysalis of matter transformed into beings of pure energy and spirit. Their potentialities would be limitless and their intelligence ungraspable by humans. These beings would be gods to the billions of less advanced races in the universe, just as man would appear a god to an ant that somehow comprehended man's existence. They would possess the twin attributes of all deities - omniscience and omnipotence... They would be incomprehensible to us except as gods.

ON EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE:

I think it was a prominent astronomer who wrote recently, "Sometimes I think we are alone, and sometimes I think we're not. In either case, the idea is quite staggering".

ON MORALITY:

(Discussing Ettinger freezing techniques) Of course, it would be something of a letdown if, 300 years from now, somebody just pulled the plug on us all, wouldn't it?

Man has been turned loose from religion and has hailed the death of his gods. Man in the 20th Century has been cut adrift in a rudderless boat on an uncharted sea; if he is going to stay sane throughout the voyage, he must have someone to care about, something that is more important than himself.... God is dead, but the bomb endures.

We're fortunate, in a way, that our body, and the fulfillment of its needs and functions, plays such an imperative role in our lives; this physical shell creates a buffer between us and the mind-paralyzing realization that only a few years of existence separate birth from death.... The very meaninglessness of life forces man to create his own meaning.... The most terrifying fact about the universe is not that it is hostile but that it is indifferent.

ON MIND EXPANSION:

Actually, up to now, perception on the deepest level has really, from an evolutionary point of view, been detrimental to survival; if primitive man had been content to sit on a ledge by his cave absorbed in a beautiful sunset or a complex cloud configuration, he might never have exterminated his rival species - but neither would he have achieved mastery of the planet.

One of the things that's turned me against LSD is that all the people I know who use it have a peculiar inability to distinguish between things that are really interesting and stimulating and things that appear so in a state of universal bliss the drug induces on a "good" trip. They seem to completely lose their critical faculties and disengage themselves from some of the most stimulating areas of life. Perhaps when everything is beautiful, nothing is beautiful.

So much for Breen and Bernhouse.

Most of the rest of the interview is completely non-quotable in an s f-orientated magazine. It was new to a friend of mine (especially after-death freeze techniques) so it may be good propaganda for the Good Old Cause. But s f propaganda ^{in 'LA 730'} is nearly the equivalent of preaching to the believers, anyway. It's Gernsback-thru'-Campbell-and-Clarke "What's the future like up there?" material. Some of it is so "Gee Whiz" earnest that it could have come from a '40s ASCENDING. Come to think of it, when you consider the reading program Kubrick indulged in before making the film, it probably did. The main difference between Kubrick and the prozine "Science" writers is that Kubrick has actually read the relevant authorities.

The interview did not contain the sorts of things I wanted to know about the film, the sorts of things that can only be revealed by the director. Kubrick's metier is film-making, not RAND-Corporation research. What are the cinematic roots of the film? Did he follow the ideas of any school at all, for he has certainly veered widely from the Hollywood-naturalist style of his pre-2001 films? David Austen suggests FLASH GORDON IN MARIENBAD. This may be accurate, as Resnais' influence is still the most contagious in modern cinema. If Kubrick is conducting his own private cinematic revolution (which was my impression after first viewing) it is difficult to pinpoint the object of rebellion - unless it be all films previously made. There is no compensation in this interview for a non-discussion of the film's aesthetics. Maybe this is where we have all tripped up. We've discussed ideas, effects, symbols, and every other red herring in the film. We have not discussed the Art of 2001. Or have we? "Visceral cinema", "Wagnerian multi-media" and "message is the medium" are hardly explanations.

THE SCIENCE FICTION
MAGAZINES

NEW WORLDS

Strange - nothing from this erst-while, solidly "New Wave" journal.

With 3 issues in 6 months, maybe 2001 was but one of the casualties. Moorcock probably thought FILMS & FILMING or CANNERS could do the job better, anyway. (Now that's the one review we haven't had, and probably the most important to Australian cinema opinion. Any of our readers subscribe to CANNERS DU CINEMA?)

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION August 1968

How right Moorcock was may be judged from the lamentable mess served up by the American magazines. To add to the humiliation - the prozine reviews seem to be the only ones (except TIME magazine) to miss the point of the film entirely.

The one exception is Samuel Delaney, who shares 4 pages with Ed Enshwiler. Delaney has little opportunity to develop an argument of any originality, but the space given him by Ed Ferman has been used as well as possible. How could anyone better express the mood of the film than:

Machines on the vast cinerama screen, showing jewelled Lunar and trans-Lunar nights, dance, offer themselves to one another, supplicate and entreat each other: in one scene, mechanical hands bear a corpse before an implacable, sperm-shaped space ship whose computer brain has possibly gone ".half crazy over the love of you..."

Delaney's review is particularly interesting to Australian, and probably all, viewers because he was fortunate enough to see the whole film before Kubrick was forced to cut it.

Throughout this centre section of the movie, Kubrick carefully creates a gravity-less universe; as the film progresses, concepts like up and down disintegrate under the cinerama medium. In the un-cut version we were given a long and lyric sequence of Gary Lockwood walking, running, jogging about the walls of a great, circular room. The original length of the scene gave the audience time to make the very difficult translation of their own physical movements into this new space. Now the scene is considerably truncated... the hold is a little looser.

and

People talk to one another, make speeches, listen to orders (and in the un-cut version, one set of orders is run twice verbatim to great ironic effect), and only moments later do we realize that the information content is nil.

All of which only confirms some points made hesitantly by other reviewers.

GALAXY Magazine July 1968

Lester Del Rey is distressed about 2001. It is not the s f film he had been hoping for. One shudders to think what he was hoping for - something a little lower than the APES perhaps? In a two-page review Del Rey manages to show a complete misunderstanding of the functions of all art (including his own genre and short stories) and not just

of Kubrick's film: Says Del Rey:

Finally we get an endless run of obvious and empty symbols on the screen, followed by our hero in a strange room.... This isn't a normal science-fiction movie at all, you see. It's the first of the New Wave Thing movies, with the usual empty symbolism.

I had thought that all communication was symbolic, in lieu of telepathy (and t.p. contact would also be structured by a language), but I may be wrong. Del Rey doesn't say what Kubrick was going to use instead of symbols. In fact, I think Del Rey even wanted to meet The Alien - that's the most original thought on the film. so far! (Like ALL JUDGMENT FLED out of CHILDHOOD'S END).

ANALOG November 1968

Harry Stine is no less puzzled than Del Rey, and his carping are just as futile. I know that 2001 is a "sterile" film - sterile of women and children, perhaps, but not of ideas. The main problem with any brickbats thrown at the film is that Kubrick has anticipated them all and already thrown them back in the reviewers' faces. Frustrating, ain't it?

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12 page checklists on That Film again do little to win friends and influence subscribers. Purely a private, fannish project, in fact, helped out by George Turner. None of this is anywhere as good as the film anyway. So, my New Year's message to all is

S E E 2 0 0 1 A G A I N

and then write me long letters of comment about it.

MELBORAMA

The MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB has been running for many years. While import quotas prevented American publications from entering Australia, the Club was the main distribution point for any and all science fiction that Mervyn Binns could discover. During the last few years, it has maintained that function, as well as becoming a social club, and centre for one of the world's few science fiction Libraries.

Now it is (again) in trouble! I feel guilty when urging all those who can to keep up the standard - because of my outlandish address of the last few years (33 miles WNW of Melbourne) I have been able to attend very few meetings myself. The Secretary and main standard-bearer Mervyn Binns, wants interested members to turn up (during January) on Wednesday and Friday nights, and thereafter on Wednesday nights. Paul Stevens, of the associated MELBOURNE FANTASY FILM GROUP offers films frequently, although a schedule for the year had not been drawn up at the time of writing. From my point of view (admittedly a skew angle) the main problem seems to be the direction of Club activity. Is social activity enough? The club is trying a Discussion Night during January (before this issue appears) with George Turner as Guest Speaker. Just the sort of thing S F Clubs should do, wouldn't you think? But if this kind of activity does not achieve anything, then Merv feels he must close the club.

The address of the MELBOURNE SCIENCE FICTION CLUB is 19 Somerset Place, Melbourne, 3000 and is situated behind McGills. (It is virtually invisible, unless you know to enter the door of McGills Bulk Store, scramble between the cobwebs up two steep forbidding flights of wooden stairs, and enter trembling into the Cavern of Barbarella at the top. It's all a cross between a Carbonari hideout and the high-rise apartment in BAREFOOT IN THE PARK.)

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Melbourne and Sydney are blessed by several other competitor "fanzines" (= Fan Magazines = amateur Roneced journals).

The magazine for several years, the magazine that inspired most of the others, has been ASFR. Its last issue is announced in No 19. To replace it, John Bangsund will edit *SKYTHROP* a magazine that will include, as well as S F fandom, or, could I guess? - Thomas Love Peacock Fandom, Thomas Hardy Fandom, Beethoven Fandom, Politics Fandom. Unmissable (Subs, etc - P.O. Box 19, Ferntree Gully, Vic.3158).

The same address for Leigh Edmonds', Diane Bangsund's and Bernie Bernhouse's RATAFLAN MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS, mentioned already. Leigh is also Official Editor of the APA-A organization (AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA), limited to 25 members, but still open to about ten members. You do thirty copies of one fanzine, send it to Leigh, with \$2 yearly subscription, and you get back copies of 14+ other fanzines. Next mailing February 10; minimum contribution per six months - 6 quarto pages.

Naturally I have kept Ron Clarke's MENTOR til last because he is a Real Competitor - articles on S F and associated topics, plus amateur fiction. Fortunately Ron lives in Sydney, so I cannot pour sugar in his duplicator, or steal contributions from him. The worst of it all is that MENTOR is entertaining local material. Ron's address is: 78 Redgrave Rd., Northhurst, NSW 2076

