

PAPERBACK INFERNO

Price 15p

49

PAPERBACK INFERNO — issue 49, August 1984. A publication of the British Science Fiction Association, edited by Joseph Nicholas, assisted by Judith Hanna. (Editorial address: 22 Denbigh Street, Fimlino, London SW1V 2ER.) ISSN 0260-0595. Entire contents copyright 1984 by The British Science Fiction Association Limited on behalf of the individual contributors, who retain all rights.

CONTENTS

<u>Blood On The Racks</u> — Chris Bailey	1
Mary Kaldor's <u>The Baroque Arsenal</u> , Peter Pringle's & William Arkin's <u>SIOP</u> , Malcolm Dando's & Paul Rogers's <u>The Death Of Deterrence</u> , Robert Aldridge's <u>First Strike</u> , Duncan Campbell's <u>War Plan UK</u> , Jim Garrison's & Pyare Shivpuri's <u>The Russian Threat</u> — Joseph Nicholas	3
Robert Sheckley's <u>The Robert Sheckley Omnibus</u> — Jeremy Crampton	9
William Rollo's <u>The Big Wheel</u> — Martyn Taylor	9
C. J. Cherrryh's <u>The Pride Of Chanur</u> — Helen McNabb	10
Sydney J. Van Scyoc's <u>Darkchild</u> — Alan Fraser	11
Stuart Gordon's <u>Fire In The Abyss</u> — Graham Andrews	12
Robert Boyer's & Kenneth Zahorski's <u>Fantasists On Fantasy</u> — Sue Thomason	12
Harry Harrison's <u>Rebel In Time</u> — Martyn Taylor	13
<u>Also Received</u> — Joseph Nicholas	14
<u>Letters</u> — Chris Bailey, Mary Gentle, Gene Wolfe, Sue Thomason, Jack Stephen, Philip Collins	14
<u>Illustrations</u> — Judith Hanna (pages 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15), various sources (pages 4, 6, 8)	

BLOOD ON THE RACKS

Chris Bailey

Interzone again, and the buzz-word in issues 7 and 8 is "radical". The editors are evasive about this word in issue 7 — "interpret that adjective as widely as you want" — and more forthright in issue 8, explaining that they are looking for "radical, hard SF", "a fiction that is as radical and hard as the implications of the new technology". The word's denotations of change and extremes seem intended by the Interzone editors here, but I am mindful of the root — as it were — significance of "radical", as in "fundamental" or "inherent"; if you like, "essential to being", and therein lies my quibble, that I have found only two of the nine stories in these two issues to have probed some vital, human concern. The reader might also be forgiven if, on the evidence of these two issues, he sometimes interprets "radical" as "arty/trendy/pretentious/whimsical".

Or "dehumanising". This aspect of issue 7's contents provokes an open letter to the editors in issue 8 from the magazine's designer, Abigail Frost, with specific reference to Michael Blumlein's "Tissue Ablation And Variant Regeneration", though I suspect she implicitly included Bruce Sterling's "Life In The Mechanist/Shaper Era" ("...a clock, a biofeedback monitor, a television screen, all wired directly to his op-

tic nerve"). The Blumlein piece is savage, describing in academic detail the surgical dismemberment (without anaesthetic) of a "Mr Reagan". Technically, the story is brilliant but, as Abigail says, the simple tit-for-tat morality — the common man's revenge on Ronald Reagan — is not commensurate with such a degree of pitiless, clinical cruelty. (It is the cruelty that catches the eye, and one forgets that the story also carries a workable science fiction idea.) I feel it is little excuse that Blumlein is aware of what he is doing. The story stands as if written by Mengele, and my blood ran cold. Dehumanising, indeed.

Issue 8 is a less harrowing, though not necessarily better, read. There are two stories by new writers and it is encouraging to see that Interzone continues to honour its promises in this direction. Maria Fitzgerald's "Experiment With Time" is a slight fable but with some well-written passages suggestive of the dislocated sequences found in dreams, and in this respect it compares usefully with Kim Newman's "Dreamers", wherein the writer strives too hard for effect in his dream scenes, mitigating the impact of a punchy science fiction ending. Two pieces also from the genre big names, one being "Strange Memories Of Death", a posthumous piece from Philip K. Dick. This contains some typically intriguing thoughts on psychosis which, alas, are not developed. J. G. Ballard's "What I Believe" is, I believe, a waste of three pages that might have found a better use. It is accurately described as a "surrealist's catalogue":

"I believe in the designers of the Pyramids, the Empire State Building, the Berlin Fuhrerbunker, the Wake Island runways.

"I believe in the body odours of Princess Di.

"I believe in the next five minutes."

You get the idea. The piece was originally written for the French market and probably reads better in that more gastronomic language; a sorbet providing a few moments' pleasure but no real nourishment.

Issue 8 also has a new story from Andy Soutter, already notorious for "The Quiet King Of The Green South West" from issue 4. "McGonagall's Lear" is an inviting title, but as one reads one comes to the conclusion, as with the previous story, that Soutter's talents tend towards the capricious rather than the meaningful. Two of the characters are called "McGonagall" and "Presley"; an aircraft belonging to "Hess" is discovered. In the Kim Newman story mentioned above, dream-tapes feature John F. Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe; characters imprecate by the names of Jacqueline Susann and Stanley Kubrick. What is going on here? Previous Interzones have brought us Edgar Allen Poe, the entire cast of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Marilyn Monroe again but this time with Bobby Kennedy, characters named Borges, Galtieri and, God help us, Mengele. Would Michael Blumlein's story have had even slender justification if patient Reagan and Dr Biko been dubbed Brown and Green? Unfair question, because the story probably would not have been written, but what I do think is appearing in stories such as these is a parasitism, a means to an end admittedly, but still a short cut round the creative process. Why go to the trouble of creating a doddering autocrat when you can wheel on Ronnie, why both-

er creating an image of lubricity when Marilyn can wobble across the page? I enjoy literary games and appreciate a certain degree of know- ingness, but reject cheap symbolism and inconse- quential cleverness.

But on to those two "life-enhancing" stories mentioned earlier, both examples of genuine creation. I have heard little that is bad re- ported of Geoff Ryman's "The Unconquered Country" in issue 7, and quite right too. The story is said to be about Cambodia. Ryman has never visited the Far East, but in this case a lack of first-hand knowledge becomes a positive virtue as the author, able to eschew mundane data, creates an astonishing ur-country, an evoca- tion of all oppressed nations. The story cap- tures a vital — perhaps radical — sense of what it feels like to belong, to a people, to a community; and of the reconciliation of extrem- es, to be caught between life and death, when everything you have is nothing but is still all that there can be. I felt the story lacked nar- rative direction in places, but it compensated with its vision of an integrated mankind, nature and technology. Interzone seems fond of sur- realism, but the images of "The Unconquered Country" — perhaps because they are not pure surrealism — are quite remarkable enough for me:

"The refugees discovered that the houses could climb, and perch on thin spider legs. They could cling to each other's backs. As the refugees swarmed, the houses rose up into haphazard towers, tall lopsided heaps of housing, waves of it, with no streets between them. The People had to walk up and over each other's houses to get to their own, or squeeze through narrow passageways past houses turned into tiny shops or brothels. They shouted at each other to be quiet, and fended off new, creeping houses with brooms."

After this, Scott Bradfield's "Unmistakably The Finest" seems a lesser piece, but achieves a similar degree of excellence. Bradfield's "The Flash! Kid" (Interzone 5) won quick popularity from British readers, and the editors are justifiably proud of their discovery. The new story is similar to the Ryman in its assertion of human values standing firm against the impos- itions of the outside world; in this case, con- sumerism, including as bizarre — and terrify- ingly probable — a US "church" as you are likely to find anywhere. I enjoy the economy, pace and detail in Bradfield's writing — re-read the first page of this story to see what I mean.

Interzone's editors tell us that many of their readers have been asking for more depart- ments, and quite rightly they reply that their precious pages should be used for fiction — there are plenty of other journals containing interviews and the like — but they make a token gesture with a book reviews page. That in issue 8 is by Mary Gentle and is a considerable im- provement on the previous issue, where David Pringle fawned over Moorcock's unsatisfactory New Worlds anthology and Colin Greenland sharp- ened his style at the expense of the authors re- viewed and their potential readers (memo: cut out the crap, Colin). The letters in issue 7 are something of a joke, too. If nothing other than adulation drops through Interzone's letter box then I stand reproved, but publishing a page of pats on the back scarcely adds to the maga-

zine's dignity. I know that it needs help and likes its struggles to be as public as possible, but can it be regarded as a serious publication when it prrens itself so ridiculously? (The letter from J. G. Ballard is especially intriguing. After the ritual deployment of the world "radical", he goes on to praise the cover of issue 6 and to say how the magazine generally "looks very good". But it only "arrived this morning". Did he read it?)

I get oatty because I feel that Interzone should be important, dammit. Many people seem to be saying, "I don't like it much, but it's all we've got". Quite; and it does seem to be

averaging one blinder an issue, which I guess is not too bad to be going on with. After a so-so start, I thought that issues 3 and 4 were very good, but since then have sensed a vague personal dissatisfaction, the gist of which might be "less surrealism, more realism".

However dissatisfied, though, I always remember that the magazine was launched, and continues to survive, in the middle of a ghastly recession. Instead of weeping into their beer, the editors at least got off their bums and did something, and their achievement to date, if not quite dazzling, has at least been worthwhile.

REVIEWS

Mary Kaldor — THE BAROQUE ARSENAL (Abacus, 294pp, £2.95)

Peter Pringle & William Arkin — SIOP (Sphere, 225pp, £2.95)

Malcolm Dando & Paul Rogers — THE DEATH OF DEFERENCE (CND, 114pp, £1.95)

Robert Aldridge — FIRST STRIKE! THE PENTAGON'S STRATEGY FOR NUCLEAR WAR (Pluto Press, 325pp, £4.95)

Duncan Campbell — WAR PLAN UK (Paladin, 445pp, £2.95)

Jim Garrison & Pyare Shivpuri — THE RUSSIAN THREAT: ITS MYTHS AND REALITIES (Gateway, 344pp, £4.95)

Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

To say that we live in a technological society is to state the obvious. The real question is what we actually do with that technology — whether we understand how it affects us, in order that we can control it and thus make the best use of it; or whether we are so dazzled by it, and by the ingenuity that generates it, that we let it roar on of its own accord, dragging us helplessly in its wake. The answer, I have no doubt, is the latter, probably as a result of what Alvin Toffler termed "future shock" — with something like 90 percent of all the scientists who have ever lived alive and working today, new developments and discoveries come upon us so fast that our ability to comprehend how they will affect us has been quite overwhelmed. Our wisdom thus lags behind our knowledge — so far behind that all chance of it ever catching up may have gone forever.

Nowhere is this lag more evident than the nuclear arms race, to which we devote a staggering amount of ingenuity but next to no wisdom. Never mind that we may sooner or later be obliterated in a nuclear war; the vast quantities of money and other resources being poured into the development of newer, more sophisticated and more expensive weapons are killing us now. In 1976, the UN's Centre for Disarmament calculated that the \$17 billion the world spent on arms every fortnight would be sufficient to provide everyone in the world with adequate food, water, education, health and housing for a full year; and now, eight years later, the situation can only have worsened. While the Pentagon commissions design studies for a supersonic cruise missile with radar-reflecting "stealth" capabilities, 150 million people in central and southern Africa are on the verge of starvation due to drought, inappropriate agricultural strategies and huge reductions in the West's aid budgets;

while President Reagan pressures the US Congress to approve funds for the manufacture of binary nerve gas weapons, 400,000 children in the Third World die of malnutrition and diarrhoea every day; the annual cost of the US Air Force is larger than the combined government budgets of every nation in Africa; and so on and so on. If this isn't an obscene distortion of our priorities then I don't know what is — and nor are we in the developed world immune to these distortions. The standard line about arms spending (much used in this time of recession and high unemployment) is that it generates jobs — which is true, up to a point, yet the arms industry is so capital-intensive that, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated in 1981, for an expenditure of \$1 billion only 76,000 jobs would be created in the "defence" sector compared to 92,000 in transport, 5r 100,000 in construction, or 139,000 in health, or 187,000 in education. And this is to leave aside the argument that arms spending helps fuel inflation because, although the workers get paid for what they do, they do not produce goods and services which can be bought and sold in the economic market-place. In other words: the more a nation spends on arms, the more its economy suffers. A recent OECD study indicated that the two advanced industrial countries with the lowest post-war growth rates, Britain and the USA, spent over 30 percent of their total R & D budgets in the "defence" sector, while the two countries with the highest post-war growth rates, West Germany and Japan, spent less than 7 percent of their R & D budgets on arms. And the disparity is likely to worsen — discussing the US Department of Defense's Annual Report to Congress for the 1985 fiscal year in the 15 March 1984 issue of The New York Review Of Books, Emma Rothschild asked: "Does it matter for the character of America's scientific institutions that the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency's new 'strategic computing' programme is in the process of transforming academic computer science? Does it matter for American competitiveness that Japan's ten-year programme on the cognitive, linguistic and engineering foundations of computing will be civilian, while America's will be concerned with robot reconnaissance vehicles, radiation-resistant wafers and missile defenses, with 'speech recognition' in the 'high-noise, high-stress environment (of) the fighter cockpit', and with 'voice distortions due to the helmet and face mask'?" She concluded: "Mr Reagan's principal opponents are not asking these questions; (yet) they are questions about the militarization of the political life, the scientific potential and

the economic society of the richest country in the world." An inevitable conclusion must be that, if something like 90 percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive and working today, a large and increasing number of them are working for the arms industry.

Mary Kaldor's The Baroque Arsenal is a study of their output; specifically, of the military establishment's desire for ever more complex and hence ever more expensive weaponry, and of the structural rigidities and inherent conservatism which lead it to prefer such "baroque" systems. "Baroque armaments", she says in her introduction,

"are the offspring of a marriage between private enterprise and the state, between the capitalist dynamic of the arms manufacturers and the conservatism that tends to characterise armed forces and defence departments in peace-time. On the one hand, soldiers and weapons designers have clung to particular notions about how wars should be fought and the kinds of weapons with which they should be fought. These notions are largely drawn from the experience of World War II; they justify certain military roles, the existence of military units to carry them out, and the maintenance of certain types of industrial capacity. On the other hand, competition to win contracts and stay in business allied to rivalry between the armed services and the various branches of government has led to an ever-increasing technological effort. The consequence is what is sometimes called 'trend innovation' — perpetual improvements to weapons that fall within the established traditions of the armed services and the armourers.

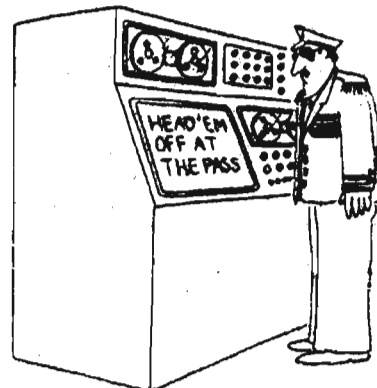
"As it becomes more and more difficult to achieve 'improvements', the hardware becomes more complex and sophisticated. This results in dramatic increases in the costs of individual weapons. But it does not increase military effectiveness. On the contrary, as I shall try to show, 'improvements' become less and less relevant to modern warfare, while cost and complexity become military handicaps: sophisticated weapons are difficult to handle; they go wrong; they need thousands of spare parts; they absorb funds that could otherwise be used for training, practice, pay, ammunition, etc.; and they are prime targets." (pp 4-5)

The bulk of her arguments in this regard appear in her final chapter, where she discusses both examples of weapons systems which are so expensive that the generals might not wish to risk them in actual combat and so complex (and hence so prone to failure) that they spend more time being repaired than being used, and the deepening crisis in the military-industrial complex as a result of all this; her preceding chapters are devoted to examining how matters have reached this pass. The problems, it appears, are not confined to the West; the USSR is also suffering from them, in part because its technology lags behind the West's and, in trying to follow the West's lead, is making almost exactly the same mistakes. Its problems are also due, again in part, to its political structure; since all decisions are taken centrally, there's little incentive for change, which means that it continues to make its mistakes for a good deal longer. Where it scores over the West, however, is in

its emphasis on quantity rather than quality, simplicity rather than sophistication (it's an interesting fact, for example, that the Russian AK-47 is generally considered the best assault rifle in the world, precisely because it's made as cheaply, even as crudely, as possible, and has the fewest feasible number of moving parts); hence its often alleged superiority in conventional arms, which is partly the West's fault for emphasising the wrong things in the first place.

Kaldor's most interesting chapter, however, is that on "The World Military Order", in which she examines how the military establishments of almost every nation are linked, one way or another, to either of the superpowers, and thus — especially as regards Third World nations — how their development is jeopardised and their independence thwarted. The overall conclusion of her book, though, is disappointingly woolly: a summary of the trends that have emerged from her preceding chapters, some speculations on the possibility that low economic growth as a result of increasing arms spending might lead to "external military adventurism" (i.e., war), a brief glance at the ideas of what's becoming known as "alternative defence", and then the utopian suggestion that we endeavour to construct a society which doesn't need armaments. This last does not convince: most people want some sort of defence, if for no other reason than that they feel insecure without it; given the rising costs of present weapons systems — late last year, for example, The Observer calculated that, if present trends continued, by the end of the century Britain would only be able to afford to build one aircraft, two tanks and half a frigate...and then be unable to pay for anyone to operate them — the simpler and cheaper systems proposed by "alternative defence" are inherently attractive; and I feel that she should therefore have given them much greater weight.

As though to emphasise the military establishment's misuse of technology, a central chapter in Peter Pringle's and William Arkin's SIOP demonstrates how, even when it buys its equipment off the shelf, it still has no idea of what it's getting for its money. Attempting to upgrade its Worldwide Military Command and Control System (WMCCS, or Wimax for short) in the early 1970s, in order to integrate its communications systems and automate its data processing facilities, the Pentagon eventually awarded a contract to Honeywell for the supply of a set of business computers (of all things)...and then spent years trying to modify them to fulfill a military function, continually lowering the operating standards they had to achieve until the criteria could be met, ignoring or demoting those engineers who protested at the Pentagon's



mistake. The computers are now in full-time service; they are apparently not only no more capable than those they've replaced but also crash, on average, once every 35 minutes.

The bulk of the book, however, concerns the history of the development of the SIOF — the Single Integrated Operational Plan that unites every aspect of the West's tactical and strategic nuclear forces and provides its commanders with a variety of options for their use — from the SAC's "massive retaliation" of the fifties through McNamara's MAD and Schlesinger's "flexible response" doctrines of the sixties to the "limited nuclear war" scenarios of today, describing how the weapons are controlled and how they would be used. In a way, it makes thrilling reading — as in the sense of a thrill running up and down the spine, because it's truly extraordinary that anyone can rationaly determine how these essentially irrational weapons of mass destruction could ever be used. One wonders, really, if the nuclear weapons planners are quite all there — indeed, some of what they propose has a decidedly dreamlike quality. More dreamlike than most is the idea that the US President might actually have the time to decide how to respond to a Soviet attack:

"...The military, with their highly sophisticated sensors and computers giving them 'real time' information of 'events' as they happen, would be able to present persuasive arguments to the President that their information had more relevance than any political considerations.

"The Pentagon advisers will be clamouring to get the President to execute 'their' particular military option, from a host of 'instant' plans drawn up from the information flowing from their pet warning devices. The President will certainly not be left alone in the White House Situation Room for a moment's reflection before he makes the most important decision of his life." (p 189)

And the Soviet leaders would of course be in exactly the same position... In addition, the authors say, the President wouldn't have a choice anyway:

"In the present SIOF only one choice before the President is still convincing. That choice is the Major Attack Option — releasing more than a thousand warheads in a single strike against Soviet forces — the same option, in fact, that was open to the President in the 1950s. The limited options, which are all subject to the generals' instant interpretations, have as their purpose fighting and winning a war. It means that today's Single Integrated Operational Plan is no longer a single plan ensuring deterrence; it is a mere symbol of a bygone age when being able to co-ordinate the threat of a massive nuclear response was thought to be good enough to deter the Soviet Union." (p 199)

The title alone of Malcolm Dando's and Paul Rogers's The Death Of Deterrence sums up what this implies: that MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) has long since been abandoned and that the emphasis now is and has for some time been on fighting and winning a nuclear war — on, as National Security Council Document 16 has it, "prevailing with pride". Come to that, certain US commanders are now denying that MAD ever was part of their strategy — an extract from a 1979

Senate Armed Services Committee hearing (which for some reason appears twice in this book) has a General Jones, then Chief of the Joint Staff, pointing out that US strategy has always been to target military and command facilities rather than (as the MAD doctrine implies) cities and industrial facilities. In this respect (although the book doesn't make this plain), Jimmy Carter's Presidential Directive 59, setting out the order of targeting priorities, was nothing more than a codification and restatement of existing practice...although it had the useful side-effect of making that practice public, thus contributing to the heightening of public awareness of the nuclear arms issue.

The Death Of Deterrence is intended to do the same, taking all the complex arguments about counterforce strikes and warfighting doctrines and boiling them down into an easily digestible form under such chapter headings as "Present Arsenals", "US Targeting", "The New Weapons", "Mr Reagan's Arms Budgets", "Britain's Part", and "Your Next War". In this respect, the book perhaps oversimplifies the arguments — and in addition suffers from having been written before the arrival of cruise missiles in the UK in November 1983, which fact is covered only in the postscript — but if taken as an introductory primer holds up very well indeed. (In fact, anyone who doesn't know much about the subject is strongly advised to read this book before attempting any of the others.) It in any case scores well in its statistical compilations — tabulations of force distributions, numbers and types of warheads, accuracy, counterforce potentials, etc. — drawing together a large amount of information and virtually justifying itself through that alone. To study its tables is to realise over and over again that the technological lead in the nuclear arms race has always been held by the USA; that the USA has always indulged in selective misuse of the figures to justify its desire to develop and deploy newer, "improved" and more accurate weapons; and that unless the process is halted soon then by the 1990s the USA will have in place a first-strike capability that, with both sides in a state of "launch on warning" readiness, will so destabilise what's left of the "balance of terror" that it will help to provoke rather than prevent a nuclear war. (As Theodore Draper put it in an exchange of letters in the 31 May 1984 issue of The New York Review Of Books, "The side that first succeeds in perfecting such weapons — assuming they can be perfected — will face the other side with the alternative of helplessly watching its military targets blow up or retaliating with less precise and less discriminate weapons. What may be weapons of deterrence to one side will appear to be a deadly threat and intolerable disadvantage to the other side. Such technological rivalry is exactly what the nuclear arms race feeds on.")

The USA's emerging first strike arsenal is explored in greater depth in Robert Aldridge's First Strike! The Pentagon's Strategy For Nuclear War. Aldridge is a former missile designer who resigned from his job with Lockheed



(the manufacturers of the Trident missiles) when the moral qualms about what he was doing began to overwhelm the joy of solving complex engineering problems — spurred on by the military's search for ways to cheat on the SALT I accords almost before they'd been signed — and his book is freighted with an insider's knowledge of not only what the weapons are designed to do but also how they are designed to do it, with chapters on anti-submarine warfare, CJI and ABM defences as well as on Trident ("the ultimate first-strike weapon", as his chapter-heading puts it), MX, cruise, and what are now known as "Star Wars" systems. Despite the technicalities with which he has to deal Aldridge's exposition is clear and straightforward, particularly with regard to the comparisons between US and USSR capabilities that the military are always making:

"Most, if not all, intelligence estimates concerning the Soviet threat come from the very source that wants to build the weapons to counter it — the Pentagon. As a matter of policy the Pentagon deals with worst case scenarios. That means they specify what it is possible for the Soviets to do rather than what they are likely to do. Since the Pentagon has been set up as the sole authority, and since it has a monopoly on most of the relevant information, what data trickles down to the public is slanted, fragmented, or buried so deep in an impenetrable mass of superfluous information that the key facts are lost." (p 266)

And he then goes on to demonstrate, with the aid of their published statements, just how military and political leaders have acted to mislead or deceive the American public, all claiming that they are being forced to act in response to Soviet moves but knowing damn well that it is their own propaganda that's goading them along. (A recent example of this sort of manipulation was given in a report of Caspar Weinberger's latest submission to the US Congress that appeared in *The Guardian* for 19 June 1984, in which he claimed that the USSR now possesses 8000 more nuclear warheads than the USA. Two US researchers, William Arkin and Jeffrey Sands, who had access to the information on which he'd based his claims, pointed out that: "Part of the warhead inflation simply reflects the Defense Department's use of Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty counting procedures without explicitly admitting that this is done. These rules represent an upper limit on the number of warheads allowed on each missile, not a count of actual warheads deployed." Nor was this Weinberger's only deception; he firstly assumed that the USSR has reloads available for their whole range of nuclear systems, and secondly that all its dual-capable systems (which can be fitted with either conventional or nuclear warheads) have been deployed as nuclear weapons. The purpose of all this is of course to provide an excuse for yet another round of vastly expanded military procurement by the Pentagon, despite the fact that, as Arkin and Sands put it, "Virtually every analysis of the nuclear balance notes that, while the Russians have more nuclear delivery systems, the United States has more warheads" — and it is of course the warheads that matter, since they are what do the damage.)

Aldridge's conclusion, drawn from a perception shared by Mary Kaldor, is that the US arms

build-up is to a large extent fuelled by the profit motive: the desire of large (and increasingly inefficient) "defence" contractors to continue making money not just by satisfying existing Pentagon demands but by creating new ones — the classic "tail wags dog" syndrome in which the scientists and technologists design new weapons to solve "problems" which the military doesn't identify as such until it decides to issue contracts for them, leaving the politicians to provide *post hoc* rationalisations for the building of the weapons in the first place (and, considering the extremely cosy relationship between the Pentagon and the arms manufacturers, it's inevitable that sooner or later the weapons do get built). In this respect, and bizarre though this speculation may seem, it's an interesting question as to whether the current ideas about limited nuclear war and first-strike options stem from the military's own perceptions of what it has or might have to face, or whether they were sparked by the arms manufacturers' desire to build new types of weapons for which new doctrines to justify them had to be developed...



But if American leaders have been guilty of misleading the American public, their deception and deviousness is as nothing compared to our very own Home Office, charged with the organisation of civil defence for the UK in the event of a nuclear attack yet extremely reluctant to tell anyone what this actually entails. As Duncan Campbell demonstrates in *War Plan UK* — first published in 1982 to expose the planning behind the subsequently cancelled "Hard Rock" exercise — it entails calculated cynicism at the highest levels, with downright lies often being put about at the lower levels to keep the public quiet. (A policy helped by our outmoded Official Secrets Act — at least in the USA, and elsewhere, they have Freedom of Information legislation which prevents persistent overclassification of such matters of essential public concern.) "Civil defence" is interpreted by the Home Office as the protection not of the population but of the government; you and me will be left to die on the surface in our ridiculous *Protect And Survive* shelters while they and the military commanders retreat into their hardened underground bunkers to direct both the course of the war and the subsequent recovery and reconstruction.

Except that there wouldn't be any recovery or reconstruction, since the UK is so crowded with targets that no area would escape attack; those who weren't killed immediately would die later of burns and radiation sickness (never mind starvation and cold as a result of the recently discovered "nuclear winter" phenomenon, not covered in this book). This, Campbell explains, the Home Office utterly fails to take into account, firstly by ignoring half the probable

targets (the original "Hard Rock" targeting list, after scrutiny by other government departments, was stripped of most of the important installations on the spurious (because they're already known to the USSR) grounds that identifying them would prejudice national security), and secondly by deliberately downplaying the effects of nuclear explosions. Burns and radiation sickness are apparently left entirely out of account, and blast effects reduced by so much that they no longer make sense. (And that's just in respect of the human casualties — the damage to industry, agriculture, health and transport facilities, water and power supplies, and the environment in general it doesn't consider for one moment. What a nuclear attack on this country would mean for all these, and indeed the likely scale of such an attack, is investigated in exhaustive — and sometimes highly technical — detail by Stan Openshaw, Philip Steadman and Owen Greene in Doomsday: Britain After Nuclear Attack (Blackwell, 296pp, £4.95), which I recommend unreservedly to all except those seeking a soothing bedtime read.) When invited to justify the figures and methods it uses, which although nominally derived from the same sources produce profoundly different conclusions from those reached by everyone else, the Home Office's only response is an embarrassed mumble. That its scientific advisers allow themselves to be party to this deception, and in so doing prostitute not only themselves but the whole process of scientific reasoning — which depends for its validity on the work's availability for checking by others — is, quite simply, a disgrace. It is the singular merit of War Plan UK that, working largely from official sources and painstakingly collating the information with the results of his own researches, Campbell has exposed the sorry history of "civil defence" and shown up the Home Office's preparations as the self-serving sham they are.

His conclusion is uncompromising:

"If Britain is to have real civil defence, then it must be part of the 'total defence' of the country, embracing alternative defence; we must give up a defence that is predicated on the destruction of the territory and cities of another, for in so doing we only wreak equal vengeance on our own heads. If we do not do this, then civil defence becomes merely a means of making nuclear weapons more thinkable, threatening and usable.

"John Clayton, the former Home Office Scientific Advisory Branch Director, suggests that the purpose of the 'element of Home Defence' is that 'a potential attacker must be persuaded that the nation is ready to accept and survive an attack'. That is an impossible impression to give. It is untrue. To accept a nuclear attack is an obscene, disgusting thing to ask of the population. What matters 'freedom' of 'a way of life' in a radioactive wasteland?

"It is easy to generate emotion, of course, about nuclear war. It is also easy to whip up hysteria with propaganda about vile and dangerous enemies in eastern lands. That too is an appeal to the viscera and not to the cranium. Such attitudes create and are embedded in political doctrines that currently offer no escape from nuclear weapons and war, by accident or design. No one can say for certain to what level of population and 'survival' (or not) the post-nuclear war world

will come. It does not matter. What will matter is our failure to take evasive action first, now." (pp 387-388)

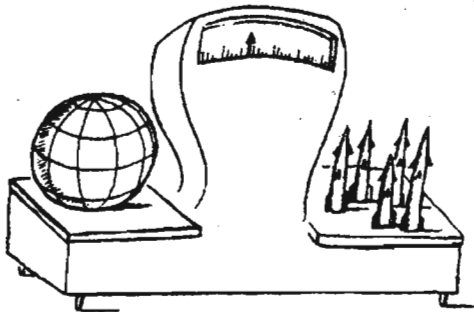
The latter (as one might expect) he interprets as independent, unilateral British initiatives towards nuclear disarmament (with which I'm wholly in agreement), which at the very least would help to break the existing superpower stalemate. Exactly which initiatives, and in which order, is a matter for debate (I have my own programme, which involves a series of step-by-step moves that would take a minimum of ten years to complete, but this isn't the place to rehearse such ideas); and although the whole idea may be dismissed as a gamble, it remains a matter of historical fact that (a) all moves by all nations to either arm or disarm have only ever been taken unilaterally, and (b) no arms race has ever ended in anything other than war.

The question, at present, is whether the nuclear war we all fear would start by accident or by design. The emerging consensus (if such it can be called) is that it will be by accident, either by simple failure of the control and/or detection systems — Pringle's and Arkin's SIOP lists numerous occasions on which the USA has believed itself to be under attack by the USSR, only to discover that some 10 cent transistor or similar has blown (or, on one occasion, that a technician responsible for running a training tape through a computer didn't know how to turn it off again) — or because, during an international crisis, one side or the other feels threatened enough to launch its missiles first, in anticipation of their possible elimination by the other's — as The Death Of Deterrence points out, numerous psychological studies have shown that the stress to which military and political leaders are subjected during such crises so impairs their decision-making abilities that they cannot foresee the consequences of their actions, or how those actions will be interpreted by the other side; thus the world may lurch into nuclear war through nothing more than blind panic.

Western strategists would have us believe otherwise, of course, and tell us that if war does come it will be the fault of those "vile and dangerous enemies in eastern lands", poised to roll across the world in an orgy of conquest at the slightest sign of weakness on our part. To debunk this paranoid mythology and, by explaining the context in which the Kremlin formulates its foreign policy, to replace fear by understanding is the task Jim Garrison and Pyare Shivpuri set themselves in The Russian Threat: Its Myths And Realities, a thorough and sober analysis of why the USSR acts the way it does. They address themselves specifically to the objections and queries raised by those who know nothing of the Soviet Union beyond what they've learned from the media, breaking their subject down into chapters with such subheadings as "Why is the USSR in Eastern Europe?", "What about Afghanistan?", "What about the Cruise missiles and the SS20s?", "Do the Soviets have bigger and better bombs?", "Do the Soviets outspend the West?", and so on, providing within these sections a clear and comprehensive summary of the



world situation as both sides see it and of the factors that generate and sustain their rivalry. A good deal of the book's statistical information, and the information it gives on the various different classes and types of weapons, inevitably repeats (and often amplifies) that contained in some of the others, but the authors' main purpose in discussing this data is to demonstrate how each side manipulates the figures to "prove" how much weaker than the other it is. The West's standard approach to assessing the European balance, they point out, is to understate its force levels first by omitting all the French forces, then the UK Polaris and US Poseidon submarines assigned to Europe, followed by all the US troops that would be flown to Europe in an emergency; and to overstate the Warsaw Pact forces by including absolutely everything in the Soviet and Eastern bloc armoury, right down to the divisions on the Chinese border (which couldn't possibly be withdrawn to fight in the West because such would constitute an open invitation to the Chinese to invade) and the obsolete and broken-down tanks used by the reserve and training divisions. Another distortion much beloved of Western strategists, especially those who not so long ago were trying to justify President Reagan's "window of vulnerability", is to count up only the land-based missiles on each side, ignoring the fact that (as stated earlier) it's the warheads they carry that really matter (as a general rule, Soviet technology is so far behind the US's that it can mount only 3-5 warheads on each missile compared to the US's 10-14), and also the fact that whereas the USSR has some three-quarters of its warheads mounted on land-based missiles the USA has two-thirds of its warheads on bombers and submarines; in other words, the "window of vulnerability" strategists' comparisons are quite meaningless. And so on and so on — Soviet figures are much harder to come by, but the Kremlin no doubt engages in much the same manipulation of whatever data it feeds its public. And, as the authors point out, all such comparisons are meaningless anyway, since when both sides have enough nuclear weapons in their arsenals to destroy the world ten times over it doesn't really matter that one side can do so only four times to the other's six: strategic superiority has long since ceased to exist, no matter what you choose to count.



But the authors' main focus, and the context in which their discussion of the misuse of statistics is placed, is on the political dimension — on each side's view of the other's aims and interests, on why the known-long-in-advance deployment of SS20s was invoked to "justify" the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles, on the so-called "window of vulnerability" and how it had more to do with the Pentagon's desire to buy a new ICBM than with the formulation of a new military doctrine. Particularly valuable is

the authors' second chapter, which takes up nearly a third of the book and is devoted to comparing interventions in developing and non-aligned nations by the USSR (which the West naturally hasn't been slow to criticise) with similar interventions by the USA (about which the West has been rather more reticent), thereby demonstrating that neither side is any "whiter" or more morally respectable than the other. The catalogue of US interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, for example, makes particularly depressing reading (although, since the book was published shortly before the October 1983 invasion of Grenada, there's no mention of that — which, however you look at it, was a flagrant violation of international law) — just as the USSR has constructed a buffer zone between it and its perceived enemies, so, it seems, is the USA attempting to do the same.

The book concludes with a chapter entitled "Can There Be Peace?", to which the authors' rather dismal answer is "no" — or at least not with the way the world is presently constituted. The truth, as they put it (and I'm inclined to agree with them), is that the struggle between the two superpowers — one landlocked and the other surrounded by ocean — is really one for geopolitical influence: the desire to not only have a voice in world events but also to mould and control them so that they produce a result which strengthens one side at the expense of the other. In this context, "the Russian threat" is very often a device used by the USA to legitimise its foreign policy aims, and vice versa, with ideology deployed as a distorting mask and the nuclear weapons with which each side supposedly holds at bay the threat posed by the other merely a means of gaining additional leverage in international affairs. This latter, particularly when (as it is in the West) allied to theories and proposals for the actual use of such weapons, has multiplied our present dangers to the point where the nuclear arms race is now almost completely out of control. The only way in which it can be brought back under control, and the final catastrophe averted, Garrison and Shivouri state, is by consciously remaking our view of the world; by ceasing to regard each other as ogres to be feared and learning instead to understand each other.

Such a change requires a tremendous conceptual shift — but as George Kennan, the reformed architect of the Cold War put it in a 1980 speech, an extract from which appears in this book:

"For the love of God, of your children, and of the civilisation to which you belong, cease this madness. You have a duty not just to the generation of the present — you have a duty to civilisation's past, which you threaten to render meaningless, and to its future, which you threaten to render non-existent. You are mortal men. You are capable of error. You have no right to hold in your hands — there is no one wise enough and strong enough to hold in his hands — destructive powers sufficient to put an end to civilised life on a great portion of our planet. No one should wish to hold such powers. Thrust them from you. The risks you might thereby assume are not greater — could not be greater — than those which you are now incurring for us all." (p 327)

And as the authors themselves say:

"Ambassador Kennan took thirty-five years to change his mind. We haven't got that sort of time. Our time is now. We have only to overcome our ignorance and apathy to express our strength." (p 327)

Absolutely. If nothing else, the halting of the nuclear arms race will represent the long overdue triumph of wisdom over ingenuity.

Robert Sheckley -- THE ROBERT SHECKLEY OMNIBUS
(Penguin, 392pp, £2.50)

Reviewed by Jeremy Crampton

This collection of short stories and one novel has been dug out of the 1950s with an archaeological respect for the young author of the period — then, Sheckley was only in his late twenties. Actually, this edition is a re-exhumation; the volume was first published by Collanz in 1973, reprinted by Penguin in 1975 — and then allowed to disappear.

Some of the stories do not really survive their exhumation; they show unmistakable signs of age and tend to read like bad fan fiction. In one, a hunt is organised by aliens for three "Mirash" bulls, who turn out to be (yes, you've guessed it), human beings' (we Win Through, however). Yet Sheckley's humour does suffuse all the stories here, despite the Mark 2 blasters and the "AAA Ace Planet Decontamination Service" — most of them were published in H. L. Gold's Galaxy, which favoured social satire, ironic-humour, and psychology: exactly the kind of thing to be found in this volume. (Sheckley was in fact a frequent contributor to the magazine.)

The humour is generally light-hearted rather than black, despite this edition's horror-like cover. For example, in "Something For Nothing" a rather hopeless drifter (a popular Sheckley character) is suddenly bestowed with a Utilizer, a device that grants one's merest wish provided one has an "A" rating. Our hero is soon wishing for such various luxuries as money, palaces, dancing girls, and even immortality. The rub? "A" ratings aren't concerned with social class but credit standing, and if you can't pay then it's off to the quarry with you to hew stone for other people's palaces. In such circumstances, the bosses are only too pleased to let you have immortality for nothing.

But while this is all very amusing, there is little more to some of the stories than the way Sheckley tells them. Take this away, and they begin to seem rather pointless — an example is "Ghost V", about a "haunted" planet; the solution will no doubt appeal to teenage readers (the age at which I first encountered Sheckley), but it's not exactly the stuff of today. They're a bit like Asimov's robot stories, about various violations of their robotic rules, although with a more Sladekian touch — amusing at the time, even slightly serious, but whether you'd read (say) a fanzine instead is debatable.

I did mention that this collection contains a novel. This is Immortality, Inc., and it differs from the short stories in quite a few respects. The humour is toned down and of a darker hue, the social comment sharper, the future world in which Blaine, the protagonist, re-awakes — after being revived from a seemingly fatal car crash — is a cynical USA, complete with the subjugation of ordinary people to the demands of big business. Blaine's revival, to us miracu-

ous, turns out to be for part of an advertising campaign, although in the event he is never used. As he tries to make his way through the often frightening future world that has discarded him, Sheckley shows us the scale of its deterioration. It is a major piece of sustained imagination, despite its tacky and unwelcome nature; although I do not believe in the notion of "SF as prediction", the novel is nevertheless damning in its implications.

So, despite the humour, this is the final impression imparted by this collection: Sheckley's satirical nature, which is what informs his better stories, rather than the flippant tone conveyed by the earlier half of the collection.

William Rollo -- THE BIG WHEEL (New English Library, 285pp, £2.25)

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

If you look hard enough in the right place, it's possible to discern — just — a nascent school of younger British SF writers who, while they have eschewed the dewy-eyed "Gosh, wow, science ushers in the millenium" unbridled enthusiasm of many of the more "successful" SF writers, still retain an interest in the physicalities of their creations rather than the metaphysicalities of their more immediate British predecessors. Of course, John Brunner has been ploughing this furrow for years, but there has always been a trans-Atlantic savour to his work which is absent in that of these newer writers. This is neither vice nor virtue, simply a characteristic by which they may be known. While I daresay there are others, the names of Langford and Scott Rohan spring readily to mind, and if he lacks Scott Rohan's integrity of plot and Langford's humour William Rollo still has much in common with them. These writers seem — to me, at least — to be trying to amalgamate the best aspects of the American tradition with the best of the British, and while they are not yet wildly successful they are worth reading.

The near future that Rollo postulates has a climatic change for the warmer on the way, brought about — at least in part — by our present day destruction of the forests and our perverse, willful refusal to build, build, build nuclear power stations, and fast breeders for preference. By the time the novel is half over, London is forgotten, neck deep in sand, and the human species has been reduced to a deep shelter in Colorado, a big cold store in Chelyabinsk, outposts on the Moon, Mars and Callisto, and two big space stations, one American and one Russian. In view of what has gone before, it comes as no surprise when the last 2000 humans busily set about reducing that number to 1000, and all ideologically sound. The surprise lies in the manner of reconciliation, at the hands of a British double agent and a ham-acting supercomputer.

In many ways, this is an entertaining novel

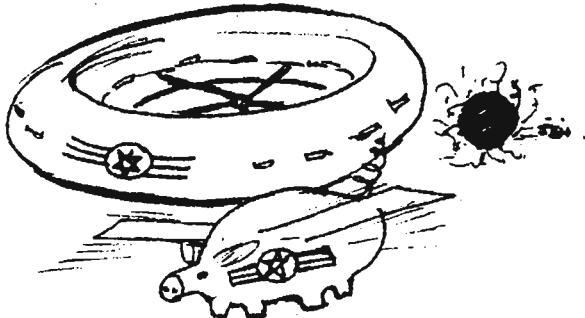


-- preposterous, perhaps, but entertaining. When it comes to the nuts and bolts of the exploitation of space Rollo certainly appears to have done his homework. No nuclear-powered rockets here, just hydrogen propellant, and the wagon train is on its way from the ESA base on Callisto just as the final curtain is coming down on civilisation as we know it. On Callisto they are building an interstellar ship, a fact mentioned in passing but not used in any way in the story except to provide an explanation for the aforementioned load of hydrogen. The minor characters convince within their context -- they aren't real people but, as Tom Wolfe has shown us, "real people" don't get sent into space. When it comes down to eyeball-to-eyeball time, these characters trot out the superpower clichés without the words ever seeming false in their mouths. Within the story as Rollo has structured it the courses of action adopted are perfectly credible, although the Americans have never shown any real talent for the long-distance rescuing of hostages.

But then they have a British secret agent with them this time, so all will be well.

At times, it is a little difficult to tell whether Rollo is writing with his tongue in his cheek or not, but two examples of his guying the genre in a quietly outrageous way bring me down on the side of humour. Our hero is recalled to London from Dartmoor, a journey he makes in 3 hours by dint of two helicopter rides and a spin in a Hawk trainer. Anyone wondering at this rather bizarre behaviour might think that any helicopter could have picked him up on the moor and deposited him the 200-odd miles away on Horseguards Parade in rather less than 3 hours; and they might be right. Similarly, Rollo has our hero's girlfriend die in his arms, the only American casualty of the rescue, most likely killed by a bullet from his own gun. Oh, the bravery, the stiff upper lips, the laughter!

Which brings us to the flaws in this story, in the shape of our hero Richard Morgan. As an adventurebook hero he passes muster, being a fairly close cousin to Adam Hall's Quiller (who makes a good model for the hero of such a thriller). Equally, there is nothing amiss with Rollo's characterisation of him -- Morgan is a little squeaky clean and lacquer bright, but in a genre which presupposes Douglas Fairbanks playing The Black Pirate rather than Peter O'Toole playing Lawrence Of Arabia this is not out of order. What is out of order is Morgan within this context.



The "Big Wheel" is the Pentagon in the sky, a military space station. Its commander comments that its occupants are "primarily in the business of killing Reds". The Americans have foreseen the ecological disaster, and the project to build in absolute secrecy a deep shelter in which the American establishment may live out the next several aeons in recycled luxury is co-

ordinated from the Wheel. Just as things are beginning to get a little hot down below, the Americans allow onto the Wheel a man they know to be a spy, masquerading as a meteorologist. It's difficult to read these sections of the book without being deafened by the sound of pigs' wings. There is just no way the American military -- paranoid and a little less than omnipotent as they and all military machines may be -- would allow Morgan onto the Wheel, not even with the man from Langley saying it's all part of some long-nurtured plan. (Especially with the man from Langley saying...) In view of the fact that Morgan turns out to have been an American sleeper all along this is an infelicitous and unnecessary plot device.

Once the action gets going, our polymath hero just happens to be on hand when any special feat of derring-do is required. He lends a hand when the Wheel begins to spin rather faster than it ought. It is into his cabin that the mutineers push the captain before they leave the outside doors open, giving Morgan a chance to set new records for hard space survival sans suit, among other heroics. It is he who devises and leads the assault on the Tycho base despite the presence of "real" soldiers. And so on. I know it is useful to have a superhero on hand when the end of life on Earth is nigh, but I do wish that Rollo had organised his plot to give Morgan a more credible rationale for his feats of super-heroism. As it is, the story smacks of having had the set-pieces decided upon first and then the rest of the plot sketched in around them. To almost quote the biggest wheel in spy thrillers: "Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. Three times is author's desperation". This springs, I feel, from the basic mistake of making Morgan an ostensible Englishman, with the ramifications echoing through the entire novel.

What Rollo has given us is pretty much a state-of-the-art near-space cataclysm thriller. None of the hardware couldn't be picked up today if you had a sufficiently high security clearance. None of the imaginative works are outstandingly original. Which doesn't matter so very much, in that Rollo has assembled the fairly standard components of a spy thriller, shuffled them around a little, and then presented them in a neat, workmanlike package. This may not be my favourite book of all time, but it is a good example of its type, and if that's the sort of book you're looking for then you can do much, much worse than William Rollo's The Big Wheel.

C. J. Cherryh -- THE PRIDE OF CHANUR (Methuen, 224pp, £1.95)

Reviewed by Helen McNabb

The Pride Of Chamur is a typical Cherryh story. Cherryh's space is large, and occupied by many different races who manage to coexist because merchanting is a universal constant. People, irrespective of their number of limbs or what they breathe, are liable to want things which others have to sell. Across a variety of novels which use this background, she has explored different types of aliens; sometimes humans briefly enter the story, sometimes they are central, but it is the aliens which make her stories different. If The Pride Of Chamur had been written with humans instead of hani as the central

characters the novel would have lost much of its impact. The hani are feline humanoids and seem not too alien on first acquaintance, but as they are developed one learns, for example, that the spaceship crews are all female because the males are so temperamentally unstable that they have to stay at home. It is this sort of detail that makes an adventure story into something more interesting.

The plot concerns Pyanfar Chanur, a hani captain, who takes on board her ship an unknown alien fugitive feeling from the kif, another alien race, thus precipitating an all-out attack by them on her and anyone who helps her. Relations between the hani and the kif have apparently always been uneasy, but the trouble which flares because of this new alien is unexplained even while they are dealing with the consequences. The fugitive is human, a race unknown to the hani and the other races in that area of space, but why he is so important to the kif remains undiscovered until the end, when all the various races — hani, kif, mahendo'sat, stsho, and others — have aligned themselves on one side or the other for the final confrontation. This last is further complicated for Pyanfar by a dynastic challenge necessitating her urgent return home.

The plotting is more than adequate, and the pace carries one along. The characterisation is good and the style eminently readable. It may be a spaceship story, which many people dislike, but Cherryh's have more depth and imagination than most of their kind. The Pride Of Chanur is not one of her best novels, but it is far from being her worst. If you don't dislike spaceship stories and space battles, and do like a well-written story that requires some thought to understand the motivations of the characters involved then I recommend it you; it certainly shortened a very long train journey for me.

Sydney J. Van Scyoc — DARKCHILD (Penguin, 250pp, £1.95)

Reviewed by Alan Fraser

Sydney J. Van Scyoc -- according to the biographical notes at the front of this novel -- is a lady who lives in the San Francisco Bay area with her husband, two children and a home full of dogs, cats, birds, reptiles and horses, and who writes SF as well as looking after that lot, growing roses and citrus fruit, and reading in her spare time(!).

Darkchild is the first volume in her "Sunstone" trilogy and is set on the planet Brakrath, settled ten thousand years before by the occupants of a colonising starship which crashed there on its way to another, more hospitable planet. Because they were thought lost, the occupants were never rescued, and remained cut off from the rest of the developing galaxy for nearly all that time. Needless to say, they lost their technological skills early on, and now have a feudal society ruled by the barohnas, a matriarchal elite with very special powers that are unique in the galaxy. The ordinary people have also developed a unique trait, that of hibernating through the long, bitter Brakrathi winters.

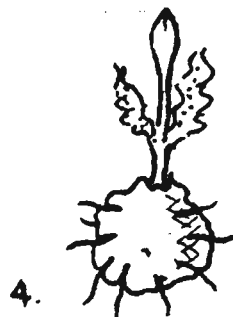
Khira, the protagonist, is a barohna's daughter whose destiny is one day to undergo an arduous and more than likely fatal trial to det-

ermine her ability to become a barohna herself. All of her elder sisters have tried and failed, and this winter she is alone in the barohna's palace while her mother is at her winter throne in the peaks. Khira's only company would be the Arnimi, a scientific team from a more advanced planet who are studying the life styles and human variations of Brakrath, but they have gone in their ship to explore the southern mountains and will not return until the winter is nearly over. In the dead of winter, Khira's solitude is disturbed by the sound of a ship which arrives and departs in the night. Someone tries to gain admittance to the palace to obtain shelter from the cold, and to Khira's surprise it is a young, thin, dark-haired, bronze-skinned boy, totally unlike anyone of her own race. He has been left by the ship, and cannot speak either her own language or any other. In the first chapter of the novel, the boy had been abducted from a primitive village, taken aboard the ship, and had a metal helmet lowered over his head which robbed him of his entire memory; but we learned that this was not the first time that this had happened to him and that the tribe from which he was stolen were not his own people. Almost immediately, for the fingernail that was torn off in his struggle to evade capture is still missing, he was discovered by Khira as a refugee from the snow.

For the rest of the winter, Khira enjoys the companionship of the boy, and christens him "Darkchild". She teaches him to speak, and the history of her world and her people. She becomes deeply attached to and protective of him. However, when the Arnimi return they instantly recognise him, and tell her he represents a terrible threat to her and her people. They advise her to put him out into the snow to die immediately before disaster befalls Brakrath.

The subsequent narrative tells who Darkchild really is and why he is so dangerous to the people of Brakrath. We are also shown the power of a barohna to use her body as a channel to capture the sun's rays in the native Brakrathi rock known as "sunstone" and thus bring spring prematurely to the mountain valleys. Scyoc also describes how a barohna's daughter must change in order to acquire her mother's powers, and how Khira must go through her ordeal and gain her own powers in order to save both Darkchild from his fate and the people of her planet from destruction.

Scyoc has written an entertaining book which succeeds despite its starting disadvantage of going where so many others have gone before. I know that some of my fellow reviewers hate writers who inflict trilogies upon us, are constantly irritated by planets peopled with star travellers who have lost all their technology and returned to feudalism, and who also think that Penguin's list is now not what it should be. In truth, Scyoc's revelation of Darkchild's true



nature is not really a surprise, but her best creation is the power of the barohnas over sun and stone, which may not be entirely believable but is in my experience an original invention which gives the story an air of freshness that you might not expect to find in it. The novel reaches a satisfying conclusion, but enough of the questions raised from the first chapter onwards are left unanswered for one to want to at least try the next volume in the series.

I hadn't heard of Sydney J. Van Scyoc before now, although she has apparently been writing SF since 1960. I hope that the subsequent volumes fulfill the promise of this one, and that she doesn't fall into the trap of writing an endless stream of boring sequels.

Stuart Gordon — FIRE IN THE ABYSS (Arrow, 322pp, £1.95)

Reviewed by Graham Andrews

Stuart Gordon's Fire In The Abyss was first published in the USA, by Berkley, in August 1983. Now Arrow have seen fit to bring out a British edition, no doubt to capitalise on the wild success of the same author's Smile On The Void. Indeed, the two novels share a common approach; they are written in a style which can best be described as sub-Vonnegut, or even sub-Trout, with its laboured "irony" and sledgehammer "wit".

The story-line of Fire In The Abyss is more interesting in synopsis than in the telling. Briefly: as part of a US Navy experiment, some hundred-odd people are abducted from their native time-zones and brought forward into the twentieth century. These so-called "Distressed Temporal Immigrants" (!), or DTIs for short, include an Egyptian princess, Nefertari Mery-Isis, and a Spanish conquistador who rejoices in the name of Bernardino de Oveido de Azurara. But the main character is one Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a real-life step-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, who'd been "lost at sea" in 1583. Their mission impossible is to (a) overcome the inevitable culture shock, and (b) survive against all the odds.

Time-travellers from the past who become stranded in the twentieth century represent a well-worn SF theme, but not yet a defunct one — for example, David I. Masson's "A Two-Timer" and Karl Alexander's Time After Time. But Fire In The Abyss does not belong in such good company. Sir Humphrey Gilbert is quite a fascinating, non-nonsense character, but the author can't resist pushing him way over the top — as in this scene from Chapter 13 (entitled "In Which Sir Humphrey Meets Psychohistory"):

"But...there is still a...king...or a queen..."

"Yes. Queen Elizabeth the Second."

"Queen Elizabeth the Second??? Does she... does she...is she in good health? Is she a great monarch? Is England happy under her?"

"England is not exactly under her, and not exactly happy."

"I felt I was drowning again. Tell me the truth, man!" (p 121)

So it goes...

To sum up, then, Fire In The Abyss displays all the satirical subtlety of a sawn-off shotgun. It reads like a cross between A. E. Van

Vogt's (dire) Cosmic Encounter and almost any one of the "bodice-ripper" historical novels that Gardner F. Fox churned out during the fifties. But perhaps I'm being unfair — to Gardner F. Fox!

Robert H. Boyer & Kenneth J. Zahorski (eds.) — FANTASISTS ON FANTASY (Avon, 287pp, \$3.95)

Reviewed by Sue Thomason

This is one of those books that demonstrates very nicely the difference between my fun and other people's work. It's a collection of twenty-one pieces of writing-about-fantasy by eighteen fantasy authors (James Thurber, Ursula K. Le Guin and J. R. R. Tolkien are each represented twice). I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, but I'll bet that the innocent and eager (American) students who took the Fantasy 101 course this book is obviously designed to teach were soon bored out of their minds.

The main interest of the anthology, for me, lay in reading what authors whose work I already know and enjoy have to say about fantasy; how they work, what they look for in other people's work, what things are important in the attempt to record a fantasy world, the place of moral and ethical values in fantasy, the necessity of balance between the forces of entertainment and enlightenment. It's fascinating to see who disagrees with whom, and about what, who loves what and who hates what. There's a cracking good argument, for instance, between Ursula Le Guin and Katherine Kurtz about how heroes ought to talk. It's intriguing to hear Tolkien talk about the sub-creation of a self-consistent fantasy world in terms of splitting pre-existent white light into pretty colours and patterns which display part of the total pattern (Saruman, thou shouldst be living at this hour!). And although only eighteen writers are allowed to speak for themselves, it's surprising how many friends and relations in the world of fantasy-making they consider. Thurber discusses the Oz books and Alice, Andre Norton's list of where good ideas come from begins to sound like Who's Who in Fantasy, and the Grand Old Men (mostly Chesterton and MacDonald) do their inimitable stuff.

Where the book becomes less enjoyable is all too obvious. The editors have supplied each author with a trite potted biography and patronising critical introduction, and their essay prefacing the volume as a whole is twice as bad. There are a number of careless and very misleading errors; for example, I'm sure that Foundation, Britain's premier academic journal of SF criticism, will rejoice to find itself described as "a low-circulation British fan magazine", and I can well imagine C. S. Lewis's expression on finding himself introduced as "an Anglo-Catholic" (!). Teachers and students alike will enjoy having their heads patted while being told how they can teach and study this book most effectively, and as a librarian I can't say how grateful I am to be told where to shelve it — the editors obviously consider all of us too stupid to work out what the book is about for ourselves.

I'm also alarmed by some of the sweeping (and wrong) generalisations that the editors serve up as Received Truth. Consider this, for example:

"Writers from both sides of the Atlantic are represented here, but it is interesting to

note that while the authors representing the first half of the century are primarily British, the representation from about 1965 on is predominantly American. There is also a shift in terms of gender: before 1965, primarily male representation; after 1965, primarily female. Thus our table of contents -- partly by design, partly by happy coincidence -- accurately reflects current trends in the fantasy field."

Rubbish. If you believe fantasy starts at George MacDonald and ends at Le Guin and Kurtz, you'll believe anything. The editors aren't even consistent in tracing influences -- MacDonald and Lewis and Tolkien are in, but Charles Williams isn't. The collection is biased towards writers who are "juvenile", or at least acceptable to children and young adults -- no Cabell, no Delany, no mention of Elizabeth Lynn or Patricia McKillip, but Susan Cooper is in, and so is Mollie Hunter.

Finally, most of the more substantial contributions, and those from the better-known authors, are reprinted from works easily available elsewhere -- from the library, if not the bookshop. Tolkien gets a letter to Auden (published in The Letters Of J. R. R. Tolkien) and (of course) an excerpt from "On Fairy Stories". Both of Le Guin's essays are taken from The Language Of The Night. Sir Herbert Read's interesting contribution, "Fantasy (Fancy)" turns out to be Chapter XI of his literary critical work, English Prose Style. Although I did enjoy meeting many old favourites and seeing what they looked like in each other's company, there would not have been enough new material in the book to persuade me to buy it. Shame, really.

Harry Harrison -- REBEL IN TIME (Granada, 271pp, £1.95)

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

"Professionalism" is a curious concept, embracing as it does the surgeon who is expected to be never less than perfect, a superman, and the professional footballer who is paid for playing with less skill and panache than the less favoured "amateur". There are writers at both ends of the spectrum, and at all stages in between, as often as not moving up and down a scale without firm demarcations, inspired one day, hacking out a contractual obligation the next. Harry Harrison is a reliable professional writer. He knows the tricks of his trade and how to use them, unlikely to produce a badly structured book. He can play the game in his sleep and, like many tired old soccer pros, knows how to give the impression that he is putting in a sound performance when he is, in fact, leaning on the advertising hoardings, getting his breath back and having a sly cough and a drag. Rebel In Time looks good, but in reality Harrison is only going through the motions. All the ingredients seem to be present -- a core of novelty, little snippets of erudition, chapters with hook endings to hurry the turning of the page, recognisable characters. Something, though, is missing.

The story is fairly simple. Loony racist Colonel McCulloch uses a "time machine" at his secret place of work to leg it back to the days immediately preceding the American Civil War. In his hand luggage he takes plans for the Mark

11 Sten gun -- the automatic weapon a child could build with a Meccano set -- and enough gold to establish a factory to turn out enough Sten guns to ensure the victory of the Confederacy. In pursuit of said loony goes our noble hero, Sergeant Troy Harmon. After a short chase, there is a battle at Harper's Ferry, McCulloch is killed, and the good guys get to still win the Civil War. It may not be the stuff of classics, but a craftsman like Harrison ought to be able to forge it into something exciting with a modicum of effort. For the first, contemporary, half of the book the mechanics of the telling do just that. The action bowls along with Harrison doing all the right things very precisely and competently. Up to then, it is a highly polished performance. Then Harmon heads back in time and the life goes out of the story. I can't say whether or not Harrison lost interest, but I know I did. When professionalism is thorough it can be interesting, but when it becomes perfunctory it is just irritating.

While there is never any doubt that Harmon will get his man, the prospect of seeing just how a black detective succeeds in ante bellum old Virginia has its intriguing aspects, which Harrison ignores. He presents Harmon as an educated man -- he even knows Latin! -- yet has him woefully ignorant of his country's history. Can there be any educated, intelligent black American who doesn't know precisely what happened when John Brown took his boys to Harper's Ferry? I doubt it, and I do not buy Harmon's ignorance for anything but a thin plot device. Harrison transforms him from credible human being to cypher in the time it takes to turn a page.

The cover blurb proclaims the novel concerns "ultimate paradox", and time paradoxes are staples of SF, notions you might think an old pro like Harrison would know backwards. You might think that, but you might be mistaken. 120 years after the Civil War there ought to be some hint of whether McCulloch has been successful if, as Harrison suggests, the past is fixed. But that would stop the plot, so Harmon has to go back, arriving neatly in the parallel branch of time that Harrison postulates. (Now isn't that lucky? Isn't it just.) But this doesn't explain how Harmon manages to get his message in a bottle to his friends back in the modern day, or how one of those friends manages to jump back into the exact same parallel branch...which may not have been a parallel branch of time at all. Harrison isn't exactly at his clearest in this area, and after an unwonted degree of consider-



ation I am still uncertain about his notion of time paradox.

Rebel In Time is a very disappointing novel. Harrison addresses himself to a specific audience which might be characterised as "the railway traveller". Certainly, were I at Euston with nothing between me and two-and-a-half dreary hours to Liverpool but the contents of the station bookstall then, mindful of Harry Harrison's reputation, I might well choose this

ALSO RECEIVED

Piers Anthony — BIO OF A SPACE TYRANT, VOLUME 2: MERCENARY (Avon, 373, \$2.95): the title says it all.

Michael Moorcock — THE WEIRD OF THE WHITE WOLF (Granada, 155pp, £1.95); THE

BANE OF THE BLACK SWORD (Granada, 171pp, £1.95): because Arrow still hold the rights to Elric Of Melnibone, Granada can only publish volumes two to six in the revised "Elric" series; it's all the more strange, therefore, that they should

novel. But I might not choose a Harrison novel the next time. He can do much better than this, and really ought to have done much better than this.

To return to the original analogy, were Harry Harrison a footballer and I his manager he would be in for a rough session in my office on Monday morning after a performance like this. Definitely not up to scratch.

choose to start with volumes three and five. Still, the "Elric" stories remain by far the best of Moorcock's sword-and-sorcery output: vigorous, colourful, and with a sense that he was actually trying to do something new and different with the genre's basic archetypes rather than simply retail a set of sub-Conan thud-and-blunder tales.

E. E. "Doc" Smith — SUBSPACE ENCOUNTER (Granada, 239pp, £1.50): the famous lost sequel to Subspace Explorers! Edited and with an introduction by Lloyd Arthur Esbach! Gosh!!! Wow!!!! Bleuch!!!!

LETTERS

A nice, meaty set of letters — straight on in, then, with CHRIS BAILEY:

"Guidance, please, on the BSFA's current policy towards the reviewing of magazines. Should we be tackling them or not?"

"Nobody, I think, denies the importance of the periodical in the past history of SF. The received wisdom seems to be that the directions the genre has taken were signalled in the following publications: Amazing and Astounding in the 1930s and 1940s, F & SF in the 1950s, Galaxy, If and New Worlds in the 1960s. (Very approximate, I know, but I hope that's close enough.) The tradition is that the trends of SF were set in the magazines. But then the 1970s (gross generalisations again) showed little magazine activity of note — though it's just conceivable that we're not standing far enough back from the period — and showed a strong movement towards the crafted, literary novel.

"You, I know, are an advocate of the latter trend. Are we now going to say that the magazines are not worth the time and effort? Putting it bluntly, and keeping my own opinions out of it, I'd like to know if I'm wasting my time or not. And if we are going to review the magazines, shouldn't there be some coherence to the party line? The present arrangement is rather haphazard, with me tackling F & SF or Interzone when I have the energy and inclination and you printing what I write when I have the space and inclination. I don't review all issues of those magazines and I don't consider other publications at all — nor, I admit, before you cry 'go ahead, then', do I have the capacity to do so. But all or nothing? After all, a new quarterly was launched in this country a couple of years ago, so somebody somewhere still thinks that the magazine has a part to play."

I make no comment — not because I can't think of anything to say but because I'd simply be repeating Chris's comments. I've been aware of the inadequacy of Inferno's coverage of the magazines for quite some time, but have little idea of what to do about it, both because of the extreme difficulty of acquiring reviewers who regularly read all the magazines and because

of the near-impossibility of providing comprehensive coverage in any case. But I would welcome any and all responses to the above — perhaps those who subscribe to the BSFA's Magazine Chain service would care to comment?

Chris continues:

"Blue guitars, for Mary Gentle. There's a painting from Picasso's 'blue' period which later inspired a poem, 'The Man With The Blue Guitar', by Wallace Stevens. The poem is very long and knotty, even by Stevens's standards, but so far as I can tell it's about the artists' — any artists' — struggle to capture the nature of reality. The section I quoted from concerns the apprehension of the 'monster' of creation, and as such it makes a nice gloss on the events at the end of The Book Of The River. But because I like the poem and the painting doesn't do a thing for me, I assumed in my conceit that it had to be the poem that Ian Watson was referring to, when quite possibly he was just paying a passing homage to Pablo or, even simpler, enjoying the euphony of the words. Perhaps he'll let us know?"

And from MARY GENTLE herself:

"I don't know which of us is right (and ultimately it won't matter for the reader coming to the books cold) but I took Peter Beere's Urban Prey and The Crucifixion Squad as comedy — looking back on them, I can't quite pinpoint why, but the violence, etc. seemed very similar to Tom And Jerry, or perhaps Eccles and Bluebottle getting blown up for the umpteenth time. I think it's the vocabulary, too; the first page refers to the night as 'a gelid sopping thing, as raw and ragged as a half-healed knuckle'; and then there's 'decay ran wild like the rabid pox of the gods, and milky steam gobbled out like the clammy fetid breath of unhealthy demons'. Is that straight? It's way over the top!"

Yes and no. Yes, because the violence, etc. was clearly overdone (if Beere was straining for effect, he was straining too hard — the surest sign of a hack); and no, because he was clearly relishing the violence in question. His blood and guts, far from being merely comedic, struck me as wholly pornographic.

But let's move on to more serious books —

John Crowley's Little, Big, reviewed by Sue Thomason in issue 47. GENE WOLFE has this to say:

"In her review, Sue Thomason says, 'But too much obscure literary referencing leads to (justifiable) charges of academic elitism, plagiarism and clique-incest'. I don't know what the British situation with regard to plagiarism is, but here in the US plagiarism is an accusation that can easily become the basis for a lawsuit. Quite frankly, to call charges of plagiarism justified because John Crowley took Sylvie and Bruno from Lewis Carroll's book is absurd. But not trivial. It seems to me that it's foolish of reviewers to make such statements and of magazines to publish them. Even if no one objects, they are untrue; and sooner or later someone is bound to object."

SUE THOMASON replies:

"I'm rather horrified that I've so annoyed Gene Wolfe. I went back and re-read my review of Little, Big, and I also checked 'plagiarism' in the OED (my usual working dictionary). This gives 'the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another'. The usage examples given show the term as one of literary discourse, not defining the precise legal meaning of 'plagiarism', and I was so using it. Not only do I not know the American legal definition of 'plagiarism', I don't know the English one. I think he and I have managed to get our intentions crossed, and this is partly due to my inadequate expression (I didn't think that the review was the right place to go into the problem discussed below) and partly to our very different world-views: he as 'American' and 'professional writer', and me as 'English' and 'worried reader'.

"Firstly, I must say that I did not intend to accuse Crowley as an author, Little, Big as a work, or anyone in particular of plagiarism. I thought I'd made it clear in the review that I'd moved from discussing the novel as a unique artefact to discussing a general condition of modern literary fantasy.

"The second point to clarify is that I was (and am) trying to discover the ethical boundaries of plagiarism, not its legal ones. To turn the problem on its head: what is originality? There is a great demand that SF and fantasy writers be original; like the Cretans in Mary Renault's The King Must Die, we do not demand that our art be good, merely that it be 'new', 'fresh', 'original'. Renault saw this as the mark of a decaying culture. Perhaps she's right -- what has 'originality' got to do with the archetypal situations on which most fantasies are based?

"Is there a difference between taking one's inspiration direct from life (either the 'real life' of the world or the 'inner life' of the imagination) and taking it from other people's perceptions? Are great works of art based on other works of art as original as great works of art based on direct perception of 'life'? When Auden writes a poem 'about' a painting, when Tchaikovsky writes music 'about' a play, are they piggybacking on other people's creativity? Shakespeare nicked his plots from Holinshed, Chaucer cribbed Filostrato for Troilus And Criseyde and practically the whole extant canon of mediaeval literature for The Canterbury

Tales -- I guess because 'retelling' was the in thing to do for writers in his day. If it was good then, why is it not good now? How far is (say) an author artistically justified in borrowing tropes, insights, images, strings of words from another author? At one end of the 'borrowing' continuum, there is an enriched literary work, in an enlarged, deepened, intricately networked universe of discourse, that throws new light on both itself and its source-material. At the other end, there is the work that is boring because it's full of deliberately obscure references, put there to show how clever and widely-read the author is, and full of derivative ideas because the author doesn't have any of her own. The work that is intimidatingly and inaccessibly 'literary', perhaps in reaction to the endless, mindless stream of Conan rip-offs...

"My own feeling is that artistic merit, and hence ethical if not legal justification for borrowing, is bound up with the author's conscious intent to remind the reader of another book for some particular purpose. I'm sure Crowley means the reader to be reminded of Lewis Carroll -- but what if we've never read or heard of Lewis Carroll? Does the book fail if its underpinnings are thus kicked away? An interesting comparison is Heinlein's The Number Of The Beast, which is stuffed full of literary titbits that Heinlein enjoys, so that his readers can enjoy 'remembering reading the Oz books' or 'remembering reading about John Carter' too. But the more detailed such catalogues become the more private the book gets, until at last it has a sympathetic and informed readership of one -- the writer. Or look at, say, Lanark, where Alasdair Gray tackles the problem of plagiarism by listing and detailing his sources within the framework of the book. One of the things Lanark is 'about' is creativity; and by God Gray is a stunningly original plagiarist.

"But then I'm doing it here. How many books have I referred to already as shorthand for steps of the argument? How many people have I lost in confusion along the way because they haven't read the books I've read? Is all literature, is all thought ultimately recursive?

"Finally, I do apologise for offending Gene Wolfe. But I stand by what I meant to say, and on third re-reading of my review still think I more or less did say it."

From which it should be clear that the initial difference arose from different interpretations of the word "plagiarism" -- but the points Sue raises are interesting and important ones, on which I would welcome further thoughts from any interested party. As I would on the matters raised by JACK STEPHEN:

"Thanks to Judith Hanna for her illuminating review of Delany's Tales of Neveryon and Neveryona. On reading it, several points struck me about the 'modular calculus' and double re-



flections in the systems of writing and exchange.

"The first is that Delany's analogy for double reflections producing a 'new content' rather than restoring the original does not hold. Using two mirrors, he produces a 'new content' (the back of his T-shirt) in the second mirror. This mirror trick may be simple enough to perform, but its analysis is not.

"The only way to produce the 'new content' in the second mirror is by turning yourself. It is not the act of reflection but the act of turning which, by changing the image in the first mirror, causes the 'new content'. The 'new content' cannot be observed in the second mirror without this turning. The second mirror does not, then, reflect the original reflection (the reversed T-shirt front) nor, therefore, doubly reflect the original scene. By Delany's analogy, then, you have to change the original scene (by turning) to see the 'new content', which seems to invalidate the analogy. It is, of course, impossible to reflect the original reflection anyway; introducing the second mirror automatically changes it.

"This brings me to my second point. The 'new content' can actually be seen in the first mirror, without turning yourself, by placing the second mirror in an appropriate position (behind you). I would argue, though, that this 'new' content is not really new at all, but latent in the original reflection (though unobservable), similarly as the back of the T-shirt is inherent in its front. The second reflection, in this case, changes the 'value' of the first, though itself representing only a (reversed) aspect of the original scene. If we apply this reasoning to Delany's situations it leads to the conclusion that any change of 'value' on a double reflection in the writing and exchange system is latent in the original system. This may be what he meant, after all, but isn't how he said it, and it seems to me to represent a much more complex relationship -- but one which can restore confidence in the mirror analogy.

"It makes little difference to the four term chains of reflections in the writing or exchange systems anyway. For writing we have real object: spoken word: ideograph: written word, where to me the latent reflections are real object = ideograph and spoken word = written word. In the exchange system (real object: exchange value: token: money) I can only really consider exchange value = money as a latent reflection, though if the token is shaped like the real object there is latency in that case.

"However (my third point), I have reservations about whether the 'direct' reflections in the writing system (real object/spoken word; spoken word/ideograph) bear any relation to each other at all. I cannot see that the spoken word 'reflects' the real object in any way other than to bring it to mind, which requires a prior identification of the two. Otherwise we should be able to comprehend the words for real objects in any language (at least in the language's infancy) since they would 'reflect' the real objects. Is this true for early languages? I doubt it. It also fails to take into account words for 'objects' which are abstract or otherwise 'unreal'. Similar objections apply to any 'identifications' between spoken words and ideographs, though probably not between ideographs and written words (in writing's infancy).

"These quibbles apart, what I thought Delany

was writing about was the nature of reality and how it can be changed in subtle ways by various agents seemingly inconsequential in themselves but far-reaching in their effects -- which is a good enough definition of science fiction."

JUDITH HANNA responds:

"There's certainly another level inherent in the two books. As Jack says, the analysis of the two mirror 'double reflection' trick is by no means simple, for the reasons he adduces and others besides. Delany's introduction of the mirror trick, in the tale of Old Venn, plays upon the impossibility of reflecting the original scene by using a second mirror -- for that shows a 'new content' (as Jack says, reflected in the first mirror) -- and when that new content is your own back it's something that can't be seen by turning yourself around. The fact that this 'new content' is inherent or latent in the original scene considerably enriches the visual metaphor Delany is playing with.

"It's interesting that the 'latent' relationships (i.e., inherent in the nature of the related terms) are those separated in the chain by a mediating term which, as it were, stands as a mirror and thus supports the 'reflection' metaphor.

"It is, of course, a fundamental tenet of linguistics that spoken language and written words bear no necessary relationship to either the real object (referent) to which they refer, or the mental concept of the object (signifier) they denote; and that the basis by which any language works is a prior identification between whatever sign -- spoken, ideographic, or written -- and whatever (real object or abstract concept) it signifies.

"Delany's two mirror double reflection system opens up fascinating problems of trying to describe in words the implications of this visual phenomenon; that it raises more questions than it provides solutions for is a problem if you want answers, but a strength if you like (as Jack clearly does) teasing out those questions. The fact that, as I said in my review, 'Whether what you see when a reflection in a mirror behaves according to the laws of light can be applied to the way ideas behave when humans reflect on them is dubious' only adds to the fascination of trying to decipher these intricate intellectual puzzles that structure Delany's fictions."

And finally, from PHILIP COLLINS:

"I don't know how you arrange the artwork but the later pictures by Judith looked decidedly rushed. A great pity, this, as she's a good artist -- the pictures in the early pages (I particularly liked the robot reading the book and the dragon in the basket) are really first class. In comparison, the fuzzy barfing and the pigmy shooting the dinosaur look sadly only half completed."

JUDITH comments:

"I'd have said that the pictures earlier in the magazine were competent but uninspired, while the barfing fuzzy and the pigmy shooting T. Rex with a bazooka were freer and more expressive in execution, a style more difficult to carry off but which I find more satisfying. Anyhow, I'm delighted that you took notice of the artwork."

WAHF: nobody, since everyone who wrote in has been quoted to some degree.