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**Rickard on Blish's
After Such Knowledge**

Speculation

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Cover by Bob Rickard, illustrating Blish's 'AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE'

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(Telephone 021-459 1573)

A STATEMENT OF FAITH

In Donald Wollheim's excellent little book THE UNIVERSE MAKERS (Gollancz £1.50, March 1972), he states on his second page that;-

"Science fiction shaped my life, and I can truthfully say I am marked by it in every way. Through it and my associations with its readers and writers I have found my profession, my life, my philosophy, my hobby, and, yes, my wife and friends."

I find it splendid to see Wollheim's entirely unequivocal acknowledgement of his indebtedness to science fiction and fandom, an admission as obviously true as it is all too-rare to see from someone who has been so fundamentally moulded by the field. Amid all the moaning and complaining from Australia about the low standards of SF, it is good to see Donald Wollheim's statement of faith, as indeed the whole book is such a statement. For better or worse he has decided firmly - and a long time ago - that this is the stuff for him, and he loves it.

I want to go on record as agreeing entirely. Not that I have spent my own life, so far, or would necessarily want to spend it, quite so exclusively steeped in science fiction, but I too find it impossible to imagine what sort of person I would be today if I had not begun reading Astounding in 1957.

(Continued on Page 61)

AUG 8 1972

THE SPECULATION PHOTOPAGES - FOURTH YEAR RUNNING!

For four years Spec has carried photopages of British conventions, in 1969 & 1970 put together and printed in Germany by Waldemar Kunning and other German fans. After the Heicon pages, though, which cost me £20 I decided that the costs of printing over there were too steep.. and besides, I wanted to try my own hand at the technique of putting photographs together.

Last year's Worcester picture-pages came out quite well, I was relieved to see, and subsequently appeared in MRU (Germany), and in Italian, Belgian, & Swedish fanzines - and also in Gray Boak's Cynic. Flushed with success I've tried again this time with pictures taken at Chester, and these will similarly appear in the various Continental fnz and also in Mike Meara's Lurk for OMPA. I didn't have quite such a wide selection of views to choose from this year, but almost everyone who attended CHESSMANCON is shown, as best as I could.

Picture 1: (top to bottom, left to right) Marilyn 'Fuzzy Pink' Niven & Larry Niven, GoH, John Brunner, Jim White, Harry Harrison, Donald Wollheim, Sam Lundwall, Brian Burgess with meat pie, Jim Blish and Gerald Bishop (top right). Next row down; Anne McCaffrey, Keith (from Ireland - sorry, no surname), Waldemar Kunning, Tony Edwards, (Con chairman); then with camera, Mervyn Barrett, Ken Bulmer, Ted Tubb. And at the bottom left-hand corner, an attractive French femme-fan whose name I don't know - could it be Chantal Plancon?

The observant will also notice lurking in a window of the Blossoms Hotel is Vernon Brown; immediately below and to the right of Tony Edwards is Rosemary Pardoe, and directly beneath Ted Tubb is Ian Williams.

Picture 2: More microphones, you might think, than one of those scenes of a U.S. Presidential address - I think I counted eight at least on the table in front of Fred Pohl, shown speaking here on the Saturday afternoon of the Con. Also shown on this picture is Vic Hallett.

Picture 3: Larry Niven preparing notes for his GoH speech - on future developments in planetary engineering. Placing microphones are Gerald Bishop and a French fan - no-one seems to know who he was, but I think it could be Jacques Guidod. Am I correct, somebody?

Picture 4: Bottom left corner is Daphne Sewell, then unknown lady, Anne Keylock with two of her many Pokes, Jill Adams at top right, and Ethel Lind-

Picture 5: Fred Hemmings entering the Fancy-Dress Parade as 'Technicolour /say. Time Machine' - the clock was painted brilliantly in red, white and blue; rather a good idea, I thought! Dave Kyle in the foreground, sundry other fans in background. Bottom right is Ken Cheslin in happy mood.

Picture 6: Top view shows the auction, with (l. to r.) Ken Eadie, Marjorie Edwards, Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, Phil Rogers. Bottom view shows three German fans at lunch - Holger Müller, Horst Evermann, & Gerd Hallenberger.

Picture 7: Registration desk at a quiet period, (l. to r.) Jenny Campbell, Linda Partington, Mary Burns, Marjorie Edwards.

CHESSMANCON was a fairly big convention as they go - I'm told that at least 240 people were recorded as having attended. It certainly was enjoyable and successful and, with the various European visitors, goes towards proving my belief that the British Eastercon bears the same relationship to other European (& UK) conventions that the US Worldcon bears to the US regional events. In other words, no real need to start separate Eurocons - we already have them!



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Chessmancon 1972

I'm telling you Ken, I remember when he was just a promising newcomer.





PHILIP
STRICK

ROBERT HEINLEIN is generally regarded as the Grand Old Man of science fiction. Now aged 64, he has the distinction of having won four Hugo Awards * (for DOUBLE STAR, STARSHIP TROOPERS, STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, and THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS), which is the surest possible indication of the extent to which his work has been accepted by SF people even if his influence on other writers, while much remarked upon, is less easy to pin down.

The first important point to make about Heinlein's background is that he went to the U.S. Naval Academy, and while I don't suppose that many of you know, any more than I do, what it's like in the U.S. Naval Academy, if you want a fair idea all you have to do is to read a few Heinlein stories.

Since that experience he seems to have had a very clear picture of what authority is about, of what the structure of society should be, of the way in which instructions should be given and the way they should be carried out. And I think more importantly, and perhaps more insidiously than this, he seems to have emerged from the Academy with the view that society should be administered in military terms. Very broadly, I think that one can interpret Heinlein's writing throughout his career as having presented a justification for this view.

* A record unequalled by any other writer except Harlan Ellison. How times have changed! (PRW)

While a gunnery officer in 1934, Heinlein ignored a severe illness while he was on duty and as a result was retired as permanently disabled (this was at about the age of 27). Now disablement and the practice of ignoring personal discomfort when higher things are at stake are further vital aspects of the Heinlein perspective; his characters illustrate these qualities repeatedly - it's become a cliché to say that in the typical Heinlein story the hero will be tough and resourceful but with a physical disability of some kind.

He may have an arm or a leg missing, but he will nevertheless be far stronger, far more capable, far more sensible, far more sensitive, and far better informed than any of his contemporaries. It is unavoidably tempting to relate this remarkable person to Heinlein himself, to hypothesise that even if he were not intelligent, if he were not well-read, he would nevertheless like to think that he was - and further, that he would regard his own opinions as very likely the best there are under any circumstances.

Please don't misunderstand my comment as being one of denigration; these are the things I love Heinlein for. I think that the limitations of his characters are ones of normal human fallibility, which although he may be at pains to obscure it, emerges just the same. Which is as it should be.

Whether Heinlein is an honest or dishonest writer by intention, I regard him as an honest writer by achievement, although I know there are many who will want to argue with that. The reviews of his latest book *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL* call it 'decadent', 'corrupt', 'depraved', 'worthless', and these are adjectives which can be slung at Heinlein (with any other you care to pick) with various degrees of justification at any stage in his career. Such extreme reactions, however, are no reason for supposing that Heinlein merits no further study, nor for assuming that his readership is largely out of sympathy with him. It's too often accepted, I think, that controversy and depravity are synonymous.

As every successful SF writer should have, Heinlein has behind him a number of fairly accurate prophecies. Arthur C Clarke and his satellites is one example; with Heinlein it was a radioactive weapon which he suggested would be a means of ending the Second World War in a story set only three years ahead of the time when he wrote it, and which in general terms predicted the development of the post-War 'balance of terror'.

But my interest in Heinlein - and I suspect my interest in other science fiction writers - does not come from an enthusiasm for technical know-how, his scientific accuracy, or in whether his statements ultimately prove to come true or not. What chiefly interests me is the extent to which Heinlein is different from other writers, the way his personality emerges through the themes he picks and the characters he chooses to represent those themes. Secondly, my interest is in the way he puts his message across, the way he elects to tell a story.

Perhaps it would be best to take that second point first, because it's not really arguable that Heinlein has never had any difficulty, ever, in presenting what he wanted to say. He is one of the most fluent, one of the most hypnotic, one of the most persuasive writers in the business. The awards for *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND* and *MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS*, neither particularly admired for their polemic by SF fans, are explicable in that both novels make absolutely fascinating reading. The incidents in them, the conversations, the concepts, simply the sheer readability of them are hooks which Heinlein has always been able to bring to bear on his readers.

Which is not to deny that the man cannot be damned infuriating. There is his habit, so common in *STRANGER* that one could cheerfully tear out pages by the handful and fling them across the room, of ensuring that you will at all times be clear about who is saying what to whom by inserting the appropriate name at the

beginning of each remark. As a literary device this is defensible, but one might point out that the way in which each character speaks can also be used as identification, that one risks the alienation of the reader by presenting him with a set of characters who all talk in exactly the same way. But then Heinlein wants all of his characters to talk in the same way.

I should again comment that I don't intend this to be a criticism of Heinlein, even while it's an element in his style over which I have to overcome my irritation with every fresh reading. Like his predictable heroes, it's a necessary part of the identity of Heinlein's writings. The raucous, rousing, cheerful sense of personality in a writer is what I want from science fiction - there's not enough of it in there. The ideas, yes, the extrapolations, the crazy notions, all these are fine, but what we don't have enough of is personality.

So what does Heinlein do with his? What does he say in his novels? Let me approach this point by referring to what he himself wrote in 1947 on the subject of writing speculative fiction. He described what he considered to be the three basic plot situations (boy meets girl; the little tailor; the man who learned better).

He provides a throwaway example of the first theme; "You can have it free. Elderly man meets very young girl. They discover they are perfectly adapted to each other, perfectly in love, soul mates. Don't ask me how; it's up to you to make the thesis credible." Sound familiar? One can recognise that in several of Heinlein's later stories, elderly man meets very young girl, they discover they are soul mates... Heinlein added: "If I'm going to have to write this story I want to be paid for it." One might hazard that he is, by now, a very wealthy man.

Next is the little tailor theme, the little guy who becomes a big-shot. Another generalisation that can reasonably be made about Heinlein at this point is that most of his heroes make no particular claim to intellectual distinction. One of my favourite examples is the hero of GLORY ROAD, who has nothing better to do than lay his hands on Irish Sweepstake tickets and lie around on beaches waiting for the lucky number to come up.

He's the perfect Heinlein character, - he has bummed around the World a little, he's been in the Armed Forces, he's in good physical shape, and he's at a loose end. It should be possible for him to turn his hand to anything - but his problem, you see, is the decision as to what direction to take. The problem is solved for him by the appearance of one of the most beautiful women imaginable who has (as it happens) a quest for him to follow, keeping him busy for at least two hundred pages.

Perhaps I'm being a little unfair, but it seems to me that Hugh Farnham in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD is similarly a 'little tailor', an inconsequential example of middle-class anonymity simply waiting to fall into the starring role in a new fantastic existence. I know that Hugh himself would disagree with me about this; he is a practical, sensible realist, responding to emergencies, crises, and petty difficulties (like a dyspso-maniac wife and a son who questions his authority) with what is described very plausibly as the most reasonable possible attitude.

He responds volubly and reasoningly - the characters in Heinlein's work always have a very good reason for what they do, and they're never backward in telling you what those reasons are. Instead, stopping us dead in our tracks like a cross between a Gorgon and the Ancient Mariner, their persuasiveness is insidious and irresistible.

But there are also some newer stories in the book: 'Pennies Off a Dead Man's Eyes', '!!!The!!!Teddy!Crazy!!Show!!!', and 'Ernest and the Machine God'. These stories are much better than the earlier ones, but they are still deeply flawed. In 'Pennies Off a Dead Man's Eyes', for example, the SF/Fantasy aspect of the story is that one man can make himself invisible - but even though this plays a crucial part in the action of the story it is never explained or justified in terms of what happens. It's merely a deus ex machina. Harlan writes quickly and sharply in this story, but when you're finished with it there's nothing left to hold onto, and any probing reveals many damaging and fatal flaws.

Having said all this, I want to end on a different note - a note of admiration. OVER THE EDGE includes Harlan's story 'The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World'. This story was one of the best in DANGEROUS VISIONS, and I think it indicates just how much potential Ellison has. Unlike most of the items here it does not depend merely on pyrotechnics, but has a solid base of thought-out characters and action.

It's not only the work of a talented author, it also shows signs of craftsmanship; - and that, unfortunately, is what is missing from the rest of the book.

- Creath Thorne, 1972

THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS, by Brian Aldiss (Faber, £1.75)

Reviewed by Pamela Bulmer.

Since reading THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS I have spent some time pondering on precise words to describe it. Partly because of its personal nature, the highly personal response it is likely to evoke, and not least because of the specific form the author has adopted, it is a slippery book to assess.

So far as I am aware it is the first book of its kind written by a science fiction writer, with his particularity honestly and specifically - thought not dogmatically - in mind. Brian Aldiss' journal - or commonplace book - covering a period of about a month has, as he hopefully anticipates in the introduction, 'a curious charm', a phrase I would have hesitated to use without the author's previous approbation because of the faintly patronising aura which now surrounds the word 'charm'.

The format has decided advantages for the author and reader, but at the same time carries considerable drawbacks; it has none of the sharpness, the discipline, the intellectual strength one could expect from a book of essays or a thesis; nor is it fair to expect this. What it does have is a quality of spontaneity, of liveliness, inventive ingenuity and argumentative acumen. It is not as personal or intimate as a diary, so that the reader is spared the embarrassment of trespassing into a private life but can enjoy the friendly familiarity of a bland presentation rather than a searing exposure.

This glimpse of Brian Aldiss at home is enjoyable not just because of his very obvious and tangible personal happiness, but because it conveys a real delight in living, a quality of commitment and response to life indispensable to any writer of substance.** Many of the details of personal living may seem trivial, but when they surround a well-known name, a status which Brian has now achieved with appearances on radio & TV, in the Colour Supplements and with a Bestseller to his credit, they have a certain fascination in revealing the ordinary side of successful men.

(Cont/d)

** A response to life which was amplified in Brian's memorable 'Environment' speech at CHESSMANCON. Watch for it, wherever it may appear! PRW

Of course success as a writer does carry certain obligations and a need to maintain certain standards. I winced more sharply at "Margaret, heavy with child.." because it appeared on the first page of a book by Brian Aldiss than if it had been written by a hack writer.

The content is a gallimaufry of themes and ideas, spiced with that ingenuity of speculation that is a hallmark of anyone interested in SF, and there is a most refreshing lack of birchiness. He justifies SF unobtrusively 'SF is its own justification', and also as an 'education for change'.

The chapter entitled 'M.E.R.O.'s Sinai Project, 1957-70' will evoke nostalgic reminiscences from any SF addict, reader or writer; I've indulged in this kind of extrapolative exercise so often, not just among SF friends who are technically adept at the game, but with other friends with greater intellectual agility. It seems to me that if you can't make this speculative leap you're only half alive.

Some of the delights in this book include the breathless enthusiasm of the chapter 'A Perfect Posited Image of the Book', where a sense of communication is dominant and successful; the potted biography of New Worlds, and his version of the 1957 World Convention (blissfully unaware of the traumatic goings-on behind the scenes - as a convention-goer Aldiss makes the mistake of assuming that those who appear to be doing the work are actually doing it); the children's creative accomplishments - our own house is full of plays, books, poems, pantomimes, magazines, comics, all containing the end-tag 'A Bulmer Publication' - it is as well to be reminded that all parents think their children are unique!

A number of issues emerge through the mass of fascinating trivia. This kind of one-sided discussion can be frustrating to the reader, especially here where the author touches a subject and does not explore it further, or pursues a subject on what the reader may feel are erroneous suppositions. Such as the idea, for example, that education ought to be more than mere fact-stuffing, and the inference that the whole problem could be solved if we ceased cluttering-up the brain with facts and were linked up with computers via wrist-wards.

There is not the space here to discuss Dr Chris Evans' theories on the nature of dreams, and many of the other ideas embedded in this 'speculative layer cake'. THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS is difficult to discuss fairly because the author, presumably in an attempt to be inoffensive, presents only half of the present-day picture, concealing as much of what he thinks as he reveals.

I am as ignorant now of Brian's political, philosophical, religious (or moral if you like) convictions as when I opened the book. Perhaps this is a good thing; but in any case the final result is a highly provoking work that contains one piece of superbly magnificent illogic. Acceptance of the proposition 'What exists is possible' does not prove the validity of its inverse, 'What is possible exists'. Oh no! - you can't do that 'ere !

- Pamela Bulmer.

The question left unanswered is why should Brian Aldiss produce such a book? In the short-term it must be because he wanted to, and I suspect this had the appeal of a new and unusual writing project at a time when Brian was apparently casting about for a direction (HAND-REARED BOY, BAREFOOT, at this time). It also proves that Brian Aldiss can get published just about anything he may produce, but for me the real reward is that the book shares that exuberance and personality which comes through so strongly in Brian's occasional letters and fanzine pieces. I also happen to believe that Brian Aldiss will be one of those writers whose life will be of considerable interest to posterity!

PRW

THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE by Brian Aldiss. (Doubleday \$5.95; Faber £1.50)
A VERY PRIVATE LIFE by Michael Frayn. (Collins, £1.05)

Reviewed by Tom Shippey.

Most science fiction fans are likely to approach both these books with some reluctance. One is by an experienced SF writer who has recently been fairly contemptuous about traditional SF; the other by a 'mainstream' writer taking over a mode with which he is not familiar, a procedure which might also imply some degree of contempt. It is an effort to consider these books fairly, given these reactions, but they do at least deserve a trial; and it is possible that in some ways they do manage to express something which traditional SF writers and fans are not aware of, or not prepared for.

To take the Brian Aldiss collection (of 14 short-stories) first; the major difficulty felt by most readers, I imagine, is that like many modern works this one depends very much more on simple juxtaposition than on overt spelled-out clearly-signalled plots. Characters' motivations are obscure; it's often unclear whether things are 'really' happening or not; and several stories contain two or more apparently separate plots, sometimes printed differently (Roman & Italic type in 'The Day We Embarked for Cythera', eg). It is the reader's job (if it's anybody's) to make some meaningful relation between these.

Once you get used to it, this can be a simple technique and in fact a rather aggressive one (since there isn't anything you can argue with); as one can see at its simplest in the 'story' (?) 'Confluence'. This claims to be a report from a research fleet to the 11-Million year-old culture of Myrin, part of the language of which is then provisionally listed. The general tone is mildly satiric (the story first appeared in Punch), through the simple device of putting down two English 'translations' for each Myrinian concept, and of course implying an equals sign. Thus we get:-

ORAN MUDA - A change of government; an old peasant saying, meaning, 'The dirt in the river is different every day', or

PAN WOL LE MUDA - A certainty that tomorrow will much resemble today; a line of manufacturing machines.

These two pairs are further related (if you happen to notice it) by the word MUDA, as by the implication of activity/essential changelessness. All this does give a picture of a type of culture, and contains a criticism of our own; criticism reinforced by an occasional delicacy of perception, suggesting that we too could enrich our experience by attending to, and having names for our own feelings:

NO LEE LE MUN - The love of a wife that becomes especially vivid when she is almost out of sight.

PAT O BANE BAN - The ten heartbeats preceding the first heartbeat of orgasm.

It's possible (indeed very easy) to lay too much stress on what is after all the slightest of stories; but the point is that even though Aldiss doesn't say so, there isn't really any doubt as to what he is presenting here - the familiar statement about Western over-mechanisation. But is it fair that he should use technique to present views that could later be comfortably denied? Or is this the 'harlot's privilege' -- power without responsibility?

Some of the answer is given by what is to me the best story in this collection, 'The Orgy of the Living and the Dying', which uses some of the book's repeated themes; an East/West contrast; typographical alternation; a sense of misery.

The basic story here is of an English relief-worker, Tancred Frazer, in India in the Year 2000, guarding a food-camp in a drought and famine. He gets a phone-call from his wife; leaves camp for a while to commit adultery with the Indian doctor Sushila; returns to find the camp captured by a gang of raiders; but in the end uses the vibrations of the air-conditioner to break down a wall so that he can escape and drive off the raiders. A simple story, on one level. The other level is created by the series of single lines, in different type and ruled off, which cut across the basic story-flow. These are at first sight random, the voice of Tancred's wife in England:-

and the daffodils were almost over by the end of the first week in April
or of Sushila:-

you've always been sheltered what do you know of suffering or death
or of the beggar-women outside, along with bits of T.S. Eliot, or Heinrich Heine. In the end these are explained - the 'infrasound' of the air-conditioner, weakening the mud walls, has also set up a deep and killing resonance in Frazer's body, leading to his destructive thoughts and memories. This level, if considered gives a touch of symbolism to Frazer's breakout. The Heine poem which he obsessively remembers contrasts der heisse Sommer, the summer of youth, with the winter in the heart, and asserts threateningly that this relationship will change with age.

In Frazer the killing summer of the Indian drought seems associated with his own emotional deadness, his Western destructiveness and machine-mindedness (as Sushila asserts). And yet at the end he uses that destructiveness for what must be a good purpose, shuts off the infrasound, cures himself in a way that the more passive Indians cannot. The crossing levels (only briefly sketched here) make this a very powerful story. While the technique is essentially that of 'Confluence', the attitude expressed is a more confident one, and the author seems more deeply involved.

Several other stories have Indian settings, all of massive degradation. One of Aldiss' preoccupations is the impossibility of getting personal misery across to people like us or Tancred Frazer, who, however sympathetic we might be, aren't there and can't really believe it. In 'Down the Up Escalation' he imagines (among other sequences which I cannot entirely relate to the main one) a new religion of 'swapping', by which one offers oneself to death in exchange for the murdered Vietnamese orphans, etc, seen every day on the television. And yet this is only a gesture. In the end his 'swapped' character realises it is only a one-for-one swap and so dies napalmed with an unsaved baby screaming in his shadow. The story is not SF and barely even fantasy.

As in 'Swastika', or 'That Uncomfortable Pause Between Life and Art', or 'The Village Swindler', you are meant to think: this looks unreal, it's presented as fantasy - but is it? And as with 'Confluence', the appeal is essentially a direct one, confusing though the footwork may be. So direct, and implying such an authoritative position for the author that I for one feel alienated most of the time. If Aldiss was a starving, napalmed peasant, now, I'd feel guiltier..

Perhaps four of the fourteen stories are relatively straight SF/Fantasy types, two of them, 'The Circulation of the Blood', and '...And the Stagnation of the Heart', dealing with the discovery of a longevity virus, and then with its application to Indian conditions. 'The Worm that Flies' is rather like HOTHOUSE or 'Old Hundredth', a dying world full of immortals, to whom Blake's 'worm' is re-introduced and named as Death.

'Super-Toys Last All Summer Long' is a fine, economical little tear-jerker about the little boy whose Mummy doesn't love him, but doesn't know that it's because he's a robot, like his Teddy. Aldiss works the ironic switches in this story with casual ease - anybody would be impressed by it.

The overall conclusion from the book, (ungratifying though it may be) is that Aldiss has not abandoned traditional SF because he ran out of talent, as I had tended to believe. On the other hand, altering your technique is not a sure road to success, though it may be one to a kind of critical standing. The best of the new-style stories ('Orgy', anyway) are first-rate, and genuinely could not be done in any other way. But some of the others are lazy.

In 'The Day We Embarked for Cythera', for example, much is made of a feeble syntactic paradox dependent (if you think about it) on the perfect phase of the English verb-system; the end of 'The Circulation of the Blood...' has a very perfunctory plot-switch, while its companion piece spends more energy on punning than on construction. In such cases Aldiss is exchanging one convention for another - and if he wants to be conventional he does have a natural talent for the old-style SF ones. But at his best he can be remarkable.

Michael Frayn's A VERY PRIVATE LIFE shares some faults with the Aldiss collection. However, reading it made me aware once more of the virtues of even the hammiest traditional SF - in particular, of its ability to see that even the stupidest people do not do things for no reason at all. By contrast, the whimsical lack of background of A VERY PRIVATE LIFE makes you wonder all the time what it is that makes everyone in it so damned silly. Partly, the lack of background is deliberate.

Frayn sets out to present a love-story of the future, whose heroine, Uncumber (as her name suggests?) lives a life of almost total emptiness. The emptiness exists on at least three levels; physically, since no-one of her class ever leaves home, but makes all contacts (including sexual ones) by holovision; emotionally, since feelings are either produced or damped-out by drugs; even linguistically, for when Uncumber breaks out to find her lover (he dialled a wrong number on the holovision) she finds that he can't speak her language.

As a result, quite large sections of the book are in French (the language of the 'Sad People', or marauders); Esperanto (I think?) the language of the 'Kind People', or police; and something else I don't recognise at all, which is the language of Noli, her middle-aged and unglamorous lover. Since the aim is to convey emptiness, should one complain that it succeeds?

It is possible, I think, to put forward one major grouse. This is that all along Frayn expects you to judge all events by the standard of his own present culture, or sub-culture. You are supposed to know that spontaneity is good, that drugs are bad, that living apart from other classes is wicked, etc. The main method of conveying all this is very heavy irony, eg on the first page, describing Uncumber's family's little shut-in house:-

'For this will be in the good new days a long, long while ahead, and it will be like that in people's houses then. So the sight of the mud and grimy leaves outside would scarcely be of much interest. Then again, windows might let the air in, and no-one could want the congenial atmosphere of the house contaminated by the stale, untempered air of the forest...'

I have underlined three of the most heavily-loaded words; indeed, I take back the word irony - what is used here is just plain sarcasm. I don't think one even needs to disagree with Frayn's general assumptions to resist being worked on

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in this way. Other scenes are worse, especially towards the end, when Uncumber freezes to death after an accident. She dies, but is revived and rings up her family to tell them she's been dead. They take it so calmly for her taste, and we are offered a little scene showing us how bad it is to stifle one's reactions with drugs; but (as I thought disgruntledly) why shouldn't they take it calmly? After all, we've been told that being dead at this time does not equal being permanently dead; and in that case 'dying' is about as important, genuinely, as a knock on the head.

Frayn and Uncumber want a 20th-Century reaction to a future event; and that takes us back to the basic lack of understanding in the novel, the idea that moral and proper behaviour is a constant, not affected by circumstance. In fact Aelfric, Uncumber's father, does explain at one point why everybody retreated into their shells, but the reasons given are unflaggingly 20th-Century (it sounds as if they didn't want to fill in their census forms).

There is no technical or technological reason for it, though there is some vague talk of an 'air shortage'. In the same way large parts of the novel (eg the irony that 'Kind People' = police; 'Animals' = lower classes) are comfortable English mid-century New Statesman stuff, with a general line that class-distinction, though very powerful, (for Uncumber even corrupts Noli in a way, like Lady Chatterley and the gamekeeper) are also wrong, and not to be encouraged.

The novel has a point to make (see above). It has, however, nothing of the consistency of the enclosed societies of Asimov's NAKED SUN (Solaria and the C/Fe culture) for example. It therefore suffers from a shallow, individualistic concept of character, seeing nothing of the way in which people and cultures are formed unconsciously by their particular necessities, with all that implies.

OS

It was so long a criticism of science fiction that even on planets of far galaxies, everyone behaved like the inhabitants of Podunk High School, Ohio, that it is pleasant to be able to turn it back. Like the Savage in BRAVE NEW WORLD, Uncumber projects a recognisable present-day ethic and expects us to leap at it in natural sympathy.

It's strange that Michael Frayn, so viciously observant in THE TIN MEN, or TOWARDS THE END OF THE MORNING, should be so restricted here. A thought one might recommend to him (and to Brian Aldiss) is that it obviously takes a special kind of training and of vision, even, to write the old Murray Leinster-style, Analog SF - the attitudes of which are best expressed, in my memory, by Frederik Pohl's equally plotless but ideologically quite different story, 'Day Million'.

- Tom Shippey, 1972

KEN BULMER.. "I thought you would like to know that I've been appointed editor of NEW WRITINGS IN SF. Ted Carnell had built it up into a highly successful series and I have a mandate to keep it that way. Still to appear is the last volume he edited, and this will be out some time later on this year. I'm now actively engaged in gathering material for issue No.22, which I believe will be published some time in the Spring of next year, and No.23 for the following autumn. I understand that writers who have sent material to Ted will be dealt with by Les Flood and Irene Carnell, who are taking over the E.J. Carnell Literary Agency, and I hope will make a good go of it. NEW WRITINGS is a big thing for me to take on, and I'm also bearing in mind the possibility that it might increase frequency of publication to three or even four per year."

(Ken's address: 19 Orchard Way, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent).

SPECULATION

SOLARIS by Stanislaw Lem (Faber & Faber, £2.00; Doubleday \$5.95)

Reviewed by Tony Sudbery

Solaris is an impossible planet. Its orbit defies all the laws of celestial mechanics. Its surface is almost entirely covered by an ocean, not of water but of some organic colloidal material which displays continual activity as parts of it dry and harden into fantastic structures, in intricate and apparently meaningful patterns. The ocean appears to be a vast living creature.

The mysteries of the planet have given rise to the new science of Solaristics, and the action of the novel starts as the young Solarist Kris Kelvin joins Station Solaris, a research establishment hovering permanently about half a mile above the ocean. He finds that one of its three staff has committed suicide and the other two are acting very strangely. Their behaviour begins to make sense to Kelvin when he gets his own "visitor" - a woman from his past called Rheya, for whose suicide he has always felt responsible, materialises one morning in his room. Each member of the staff is haunted by such a visitor, indestructible and unavoidable.

The novel relates the development of Kelvin's relationship with Rheya and the relationship of the Solarists to the ocean, centred around their attempts to make contact with it. Interleaved with this narrative is a history of the science of Solaristics; it becomes clear that this has developed into a religion, with Contact replacing Salvation. No understanding of the planet has ever been achieved; the science has been betrayed by the inability of the scientists to think in other than anthropocentric terms. This is symbolised by the "mimoids", formations on the surface of the ocean which mimic inanimate objects, particularly human artifacts, but will not react to human beings themselves. This is a double symbol, describing not only man's tendency to see only the things he is familiar with, but also the fact that his lack of insight into the true nature of other things is accompanied by an equal lack of insight into his own nature.

This theme is reinforced in the final section of the novel, when the Solarists find a way of destroying the visitors and it is used on Rheya, with her own consent but without Kelvin's. He is furious; unlike the others he had begun to accept the ocean's creatures as part of its reality rather than part of himself. After this there are signs of success in the attempts at Contact, but Kelvin hides these from the others, who prepare to leave Solaris, convinced of their failure. Kelvin remains; heartbroken at the loss of Rheya he flies out to an old mimoid and sits humbly at the shore of the ocean, willing to accept the ocean's terms and waiting for a new "cruel miracle".

That might be the outline of a superb example of real science fiction. The descriptions of Solaris itself are fascinating, and the interest of the novel lies equally in these and in the relation of the human characters to the planet. Lem uses Solaris as a parable of men's experience of the external world and of each other, which is a central concern of science fiction. And like any good example of anything, it does not meet one's preconceived ideas of what it ought to be. The mysteries in the novel are never explained; but this is an essential part of Lem's central point; that we cannot hope to understand the universe until we take a more humble attitude towards it and stop treating it like a machine that we have made ourselves.

However there's another rule of SF that Lem cuts off and throws away, only this time he's sitting on the wrong side of the cut. "Bad science never made good science fiction"; not always true but certainly true that bad science never made intelligent discussion of science, and Lem's science is hopelessly bad. His ocean constructs the visitors out of molecules consisting of neutrinos held together by magnetic fields, which is a trick roughly equivalent to constructing a house out of

bricks consisting of water held together by safety pins. Perhaps this is excusable - neutrinos, after all, are pretty esoteric objects and fair game for any author hunting for a noun to insert in a piece of gobbledygook - but should we excuse the ignorance displayed by an author who can talk of "precise measurements of the planet's density, from which its albedo and other astronomical characteristics were determined", and who thinks it reasonable that the use of X-rays should be banned by UN Convention "because of their harmful effects", when all his characters sheerfully brandish "gamma pistols"? And if we do excuse it, can we really think that this author has anything significant to say about scientific understanding?

Mere ignorance isn't the worst of it. Lem has an objectionable habit of putting a brazen face on his ignorance by assuming a spurious air of authority. And his nonsense is not confined to specialist areas like physics and mathematics; there is an extended passage of it early in the novel when Kelvin, suspecting that he might be suffering from a consistent delusion, convinces himself that this is not so by proving - that the delusion is consistent.

This is only the most glaring example of a disregard for logic which is apparent throughout the novel; inconsistencies and absurdities are liberally scattered through it. All this, for me, shows that Lem just isn't competent to handle his main theme of man's knowledge of the external universe. However, though the main thread of the novel is broken in several places, there are some good things among the beads that fall off it.

The chief is Kelvin's relationship with Rhexa, which is convincing in a way that is rare among treatments of human situations in science fiction. It is not perfect, having a tendency to progress rather jerkily, but this in itself can provide some poignant moments, as when one suddenly switches from seeing Rhexa as an alien encumbrance on Kelvin to realising that she is herself a sentient being - to herself, indeed, she is a human being - trying to deal with an impossible emotional situation.

Another remarkable feature of SOLARIS is the extended description of the formations on the ocean's surface. Even stripped of their symbolical significance they represent an astonishing feat of sustained imagination. They clearly derive from the similar passages of imaginative description in Olaf Stapledon's novels, particularly STAR MAKER - but this is not to denigrate them; Stapledon is not a bad master to follow. His influence shows in a number of ways in SOLARIS, not always with such good results as these descriptive passages; the pseudo-mystical vapourings about an "imperfect god" are also reminiscent of STAR MAKER.

Indeed, the message of humility in the face of the cosmos that Lem preaches is essentially Stapledonian, but Stapledon conveys this message by his tone, rarely making it explicit - humility is an integral part of his personality as a writer - whereas with Lem it is just the reverse. Although he preaches humility his tone has a tendency to acquire a hard, arrogant edge, which is illustrated in the examples I have given of his insolent way with scientific fact.

It shows again in his satirical history of Solaristics, in which he gives full rein to his scorn for science and scientists. This lays itself open to direct comparison with the similar section in Karel Capek's WAR WITH THE NEWTS, and it suffers badly from the comparison. Capek is immeasurably funnier, angrier yet at the same time warmer, and he shows a much deeper understanding of what science is about (and what it ought to be about).

Thinking back on SOLARIS, it seems a pity to have criticised it so harshly - together with unusually satisfying human interest there is so much imagination and such closely organised symbolism that it ought to have been a very good novel. It nearly is. I would like to see what happens when Lem works on a theme he really believes in, rather than one that he thinks he ought to believe in.

JOHN BRUNNER:

WRITING SCIENCE FICTION IN THEORY & PRACTICE

This isn't quite the first time I've been asked to talk about writing SF at a convention - in fact the first time was considerably worse than this one because I had practically no warning. What happened was, I went to the States for the first time in 1964, to attend the Baycon, and when I got there I let everyone know I'd arrived safely, and they said splendid, the first item on the programme is supposed to be E.E. Smith on "How to write a science fiction novel" - only he's too ill to attend, it's up to you instead. Well, that was about Tuesday, I imagine, so I thought okay, I have plenty of time to make some notes and think of a few brilliant witticisms - only things kept getting in the way and when I eventually staggered on to the platform, all I took with me was a blank sheet of paper.

My notes !

So I cheated, and after making some convincing abstract remarks about general principles - which filled a little of the hour they'd given me - after that I got the audience to plot a novel for me. Which was kind of fun, because there were about 300 people present, and in any group of 300 SF fans there are bound to be a few loud mouths ! And it started off fine - I said, what sort of novel shall we make it? So someone said "ethnological", and I said how about simplifying that, shall we make it "a clash of cultures", okay? And they said okay, and they kept the ideas coming nicely until the hour was up, which was fine - but.

And this is a very large but!

There were exactly two people in that audience who put people into the story, and - here's a moral for every aspiring SF writer - both were professionals: Bob Silverberg, and Harlan Ellison.

Everyone else was ready with contributions about how a totally mechanistic society might work, or a totally aesthetic society, but nobody - nobody at all - except the two professional writers, even mentioned the question of the characters who were going to act out the story when we'd got the plot straight.

I trust the point has sunk home, complete with barbs, and is quietly festering? If there is anyone here who has ambitions to write SF, who is excited by the rise and fall of galactic empires and doesn't take an interest in the people on his own home street, I counsel him to go up to his room by way of a convenient chemist's shop and write on his forehead with vitriol - backwards, so he can read it whenever he looks in a mirror - the following slogan: "Science fiction, like all fiction, is about people."

I won't invite him to add the obvious corollary: that all too frequently stories

get into print, inside and outside the specialist SF magazines, which aren't about people at all. I won't even tell him to write, "should be about people" - because until you get to the stage where you take the assumption for granted you simply are not a writer of anything more ambitious than the copy they put on breakfast-cereal packets.

I keep harping on this point, it's because for me it's a sine qua non. You may have a computer-like facility with words - you may be able to make a living by your typewriter, even, but you may still not be a writer. So what I am in fact talking about is not so much about writing as being a writer.

Now let me find out something about you lot. There's an apocryphal story they tell about John Steinbeck, which I should like to be true; he was invited as guest lecturer to some very prestigious college in America, to address the creative writing course. Before his talk he got very drunk, and he came on stage and said, how many of you want to be writers? So every hand dutifully went up, and he said, "Then why the hell aren't you writing?". And wobbled away.

Well, I have a keen suspicion that a great many of you have probably tried your hand at this craft. I know more or less how many people there are at this convention making a living out of writing; let's just check out the rest. How many here have ever been paid for anything you've written? Count it all in - a contribution to the local paper, anything !

I see. I thought so ! Scratch a science fiction fan and you find an aspiring writer, don't you ?

Every con. I go to, I meet scores of people who would like to write. Who may even actually do it now and then. But who don't make out when they try, and often ask me why. Is it because editors only buy stories from people who are willing to go to bed with them, or who send them a crate of scotch along with every MS? Or words to that general effect...

No, dear Brutus, the fault is not in our stars. As in every other kind of human activity, if you've got what it takes, you get where you want to go. And what is more you stay there. I add the qualification to take care of such exceptions as Adam Diment, who made - what was it? - 28 thousand pounds from his first year as a published writer, including film sales, and hasn't been heard of since. Nor, I gather, will be likely to be heard of again. You are not going to get picked up and packaged by a wealthy promoter. It seldom happens once in a lifetime, let alone twice !

Well, what does it take, to become a successful writer ?

Good question...

I'd better be frank. I don't honestly know - at least, I don't know everything about the answer. I do know some - well, some guidelines on the way to success. I do know, for example, that unless now and again you find yourself in the situation where you would rather stay home and pound the typewriter - or scratch away with your pencil, or whatever: quill pen? - than buzz that fabulous bird you met at that party last Saturday....

I think it was Isaac Asimov who did that beautiful deadpan analysis that writing is a dangerous addictive drug - and he was right, point by point. Writing is both compulsive and habit-forming. If you're lucky enough to possess more than one major creative talent, as in the case of Samuel Delany, for instance, who is a pretty good singer and guitarist, or over here B.S. Johnson who is also a very competent film-director, as well as a novelist, one aspect of your total creative gift may displace the others for the time being. By and large though it remains true: you won't make it unless now and then you're grabbed by the ears by one of

your own ideas which demands and demands and demands expression and won't let you lie down in peace.

So from now on I'm assuming that this audience falls into three categories: people to whom this has already happened - the smallest group; people who can believe it might happen in their own case; and people who are sure it never will but are sticking around because they'd like to know a bit more about the mechanical process of writing a story or a novel.

I will consequently address the rest of my talk primarily to people who fall into the middle group: who can believe in this sort of creative process happening to them, and actually want to help it along when it arrives.

Because you can.

Nobody can make you a writer if you don't possess at least a smidgin of the intrinsic talent. But someone who's been there - like me - can at least help to steer you clear of some of the most dangerous pitfalls facing a novice. There's an old saw about it being impossible to convert somebody who isn't already trembling on the brink; similarly, you can't help a would-be writer who isn't already very nearly there by himself. But you can tell him what brambles to avoid, what traps and time-wasters lie in his path to eventual success.

Which is what I'm basically here for today, I think.

So !

Let's consider the plight of three people who may, for all I know, actually be at this convention. Let's call them - with due deference to Womens Lib, I'll call all of them Mister because there are going to be brick-bats as well as bouquets flying around - let's call them respectively Mr. Ringer, Mr. Rapper and Mr. Knocker.

They're all queueing up outside the entrance to their own idea of success.

Mr. Ringer, first.

Mr. Ringer's situation looks like this. He has been much enthused by a science fiction writer tremendously: someone with a marked personal talent, such as Philip Dick or Roger Zelany. He has always fancied his own ability as a writer. The warm - one might say hot - enthusiasm generated by the aftermath left in his mind by one of the stories his personal idol lately published has persuaded him to adopt the same style and approach, and he is firmly convinced that he's receiving unjust rejection slips from editors who ought in fact to be sending him cheques because his work is just as good as half of what they actually do print.

Well, Mr. Ringer may be right. His work may indeed be just as good - in other words, he may have a comprehension of the structure of a story, he may be able to write adequate dialogue, he may be able to present ideas which, if not original (I can only think of about two original ideas offhand that I've had in my entire writing career and I'd rather not name them in case someone convinces me even they have been done before !) - like I was saying, he may be able to wrap and package his ideas in a very competent format.

But not his.

You put on a suit by a West End tailor, which the original customer didn't pay for and which wound up in a misfits shop. I don't know if they still exist outside London, but there are half a dozen I know of there. Even if, on the measurement chart, he appeared to be your size, you won't wind up with a suit that looks as though it was made for you, without further alterations - right ?

Similarly, you cannot put on someone else's individual writing style, no matter how accurately you can imitate it.

You are not he.

Mr. Ringer is no doubt chewing his nails over the mounting pile of rejection slips. But regardless of whether he has a talent of his own or not, he's made a cardinal error in putting on someone else's West End misfit. If he does have a talent of his own, he's going to make the kind of impact he hopes for, just as soon as he is prepared to settle for a Burton suit, so to speak, which is made for him and not someone else - in other words, let him go on admiring his idol, but let him stop trying to duplicate the impact this idol makes.

Because he is himself unique. He's one reader out of millions. He's most likely in a tiny minority in having this colossal admiration for this one particular writer, he cannot recreate his idol's effectiveness by copying its outward trappings because he is not the same person. When he learns to utilise the immense fund of common writing techniques which constitute a sort of shared pool on which every writer draws, adding his own style as a gloss on top of it, he will wind up not with what his idol is already doing - has done, and emphasise that past tense ! - but something which he, he alone, is doing because he is the person he is.

So much for Mr. Ringer. Now let's turn to Mr. Rapper - oh, I ought to explain just in case there's anyone in the audience who doesn't get the double entredrés. If you do, excuse me. Mr. Ringer, at the door of success trying to get in, is also "a ringer" - i.e. a substitute. Mr. Rapper is the guy who can rap - i.e. sou d off at the mouth. As for Mr. Knocker - well, we haven't got to him yet, but I imagine everyone here knows what "knocking copy" is.

Okay, we're back on the threshold with Mr. Rapper. In some ways I regard him as among the saddest of all aspiring writers, because there can be no doubt about his ability to set words down on paper - the only flaw is, he can't or won't reach a wide audience. He may, for instnce, be a highly-esteemed fanzine contributor. He may in the ccurse of a year turn out as much wordage, and what is more, wordage that gets into duplicated or offset form, for limited circulation, as much wordage as a lot of writers who make a comfortable living from their work. He may have his own circle of admirers - and what's more, their admiration may well be justified. He is indisputably articulate, and he may be witty too, or perceptive, or - you name it, he doesn't lack valuable attributes.

The one he doesn't have, however, which could have made all the difference, is persistence.

Persistence, moreover, not just in the sense of application to the indispensable routine of his potential career - in other words, here's the guy who can't be bothered to mail out a script to the second-best market when the first has turned it around, because for him it's the best, or the easiest. And he's got the easiest, like the fanzines he contributes to, so he won't stick at the grind of submission until the third-best professional market picks him up, and then use that as a stepping-stone to the second, and then to the best... No, the least adverse result sends him back to his own small enclosed world, where he can reply on praise if not on payment.

But one additional kind of persistence is also lacking: the persistence to look over a finished draft and say, "Can I get that into twenty per cent fewer words? Can I make the same point more clearly, more economically, more cogently?"

He can't be bothered.

So he's going to go on being Mr. Rapper, the guy who churns out so much fluent wordage, and suffocates his burgeoning aptitude as a writer under a mass of fanzines. He's the guy who, on paper, is the counterpart of the successful party-guest; he's not a conversationalist, so much as a chatter... if you follow me. His work will always be read with approval by a small circle; he will always

complain about not being able to turn his hobby into a career.

And he might even, at some stage, change his name to Mr. Knocker.

There certainly isn't a professional writer in the audience today who hasn't at some stage detected a note of Mr. Knocker in himself. I've found a lot of him in myself. Mr. Knocker is the guy who says, perhaps with good grounds, "Hammond Innes's last book went into a first printing of 65,000 hardback copies! Alastair Maclean's books are always bought for filming! Len Deighton had to run away to Ireland to escape a million-pound tax-demand! Now I wrote a murder mystery set on an archeological site - or : I wrote a novel about a war-time commando raid, or about brainwashing spies - and all I got out of it was enough to pay the rent until I'd finished the next one ! Why aren't I sitting in a hotel in the Bahamas ? I damned well ought to be if those publishers of mine hadn't slipped up !

The fault, dear Brutus...

Yes, it happens to all of us whom the lightning hasn't contacted yet. And, alas, it happens to lots of us who have been struck - as though the striking of the lightning turned on the reflex which hadn't previously been perceptible. But stop and think for a moment.

There is a considerably better chance, if you're going to make the grade as a writer at all - there's a considerably better chance of the lightning striking and turning one of your books into a best-seller than there is of your winning on the Premium Bonds. Last time I inquired I was told that the odds are about nine thousand one hundred to one against any individual bond picking up a prize - no matter how small. (I know what that feels like; I've had a hundred quid in there for about five years, and I still haven't won a fiver!)

But if we are to believe the survey which Richard Findlater carried out, for the members of the Society of Authors, a few years ago, only about one person in six who takes his writing seriously enough to join that society makes more than about twenty quid a week from it. It was a good sample, by the way, on which they based that conclusion: an unheard-of proportion of about forty-nine per cent of the membership replied, when most surveys have to be satisfied with around fifteen. So I think we can take it as an accurate reflection of the state of affairs.

Mr. Knocker has wormed, or struggled, or written his way into an enviable position - at least as far as, say, Mr. Ringer is concerned. Mr. Knocker is already a very exceptional person, one of that select handful of writers who can, after a fashion, live off his earnings. If only it were not for the fact that Mr. Knocker is forever complaining about the more affluent of his colleagues, those who are indeed nursing ulcers in the Bahamas or wherever, he would stand an excellent chance, say about ten thousand times as good a chance as anyone here in this room, of joining their ranks. Mr. Knocker, in short, is as much his own worst enemy as Mr. Ringer, or Mr. Rapper. Given that each, all or any, of them possesses a respectable talent and a modicum of intelligence, each is respectively cutting his own throat.

Well, if that little recital has done its job, it's made a few shivers go up and down a few spines, and it may even with luck have disillusioned any representatives here of that faction which I invariably seem to meet when I talk about writing as a job, whose members demanded in an aggrieved tone why their manuscripts written in crayon on old sandpaper came back from Analog postage due. It may have cleared the air for the real purpose of this session: which is answering your questions. If it's possible - no guarantees !

-- John Brunner, 1971

TONY ROGERS: Mr Brunner, I've often seen adverts for writing schools on the backs of magazines. Are these any good, and what do they offer?

J.B: Really, very little indeed. The worst - notoriously the worst, is the American Famous Writers School. Somebody did a quick survey of that and discovered that in fact they are making false claims in their advertising which really ought to have got them banned from the mails. The assurances about the work being personally checked by people like Fred Baldwin prove to be total rubbish. They have a group of people who sit in little cubby-hole offices commenting upon MS according to a set of printed instructions so as "not to discourage the clients". This is not quite the way to learn how to write!

One hears occasionally that people have benefitted from a course with the Fleet Street School of Journalism. Personally, though, I cannot think of a single science fiction writer apart from A.E. VanVogt who ever took one of these writing courses and claimed to have any benefit from it at all. David (Gerrold) can you add to that list?

GERROLD: Larry Niven. Larry says he was on a correspondence course from the Famous Writers School, for I think about a year. This was before he sold anything. After about a year he started selling to Fred Pohl. Fred was giving him some advice and so Larry cancelled his membership and they came around to him and said "We'll give you the rest of the course for free, because you're selling regularly". Larry said No, because they wanted to use his name as 'one of those who made it' sort of thing. He wouldn't let them do that. But he does think it helped him get started.

J.B: One can't help wondering, though, whether it was the instruction he got, or the opportunity that a disciplined pattern of work gave him to polish his own ability. Certainly the element of discipline, the detachment from one's own work which enables one to do a bit of editing of one's own writing, this is absolutely indispensable.

In a course from a writing school, if nothing else, I can see how it could work one into the habit of getting a certain amount of work done at a certain time, as it were, giving one a sense of obligation to one's writing, rather than continuing in the sort of hobby mode, where one has an odd hour to fill and sits down at the typewriter. That certainly isn't going to get you anywhere.

JAMES BLISH: I'm not clear about Mr. Knocker. In what way do you mean that he is cutting his own throat?

J.B: What I have in mind is the sort of syndrome where a writer, because he hasn't had the lightning strike him, becomes paranoid about it. Where he starts losing confidence in his own ability, starts trying to change his spots in the hope that doing something that somebody has already done will lead him to this magic million-seller.

Let me give an example from the cinema. I don't know if you all saw THE TENTH VICTIM last night, but I have never seen a film go so completely out of control as that one. With a director of that kind of reputation, he should never have let this happen. It strikes me rather like this. They must have had the script finalised when the first James Bond picture opened in Italy, So I suspect they rewrote their script on set in order to get all the James Bond-type trappings in. This is what I mean about Mr Knocker cutting his own throat. He's got paranoic

about not being a best-selling writer, and he's desperate, trying to shift his ground, trying to change his style, running after anything and everything rather than relying on his own talent, which has brought him this far, to get him the rest of the way.

UNKNOWN: Supposing you came up with a brand-new idea for a story something really new and completely outside the styles of any other magazine and publishing company, where would you sell it?

J.B. I don't know where I'd sell it - but I know where I'd send it. To PLAYBOY, immediately. Whether it would stick there is another matter, because that is about the fattest paying slot in the business and every month there must be two or three hundred writers chasing it.

MARK ADLARD: To what extent should a writer allow his own interest in writing stories to be diverted by the wishes of the editor?

J.B. A very difficult question. Because, you see, there are two kinds of editorial advice. One is what you might call 'cutting to size' and the other is constructive, and should be taken very much to heart by an aspiring writer. Perhaps the best editorial advice I've ever had in my life was from Don Bensen, when he was at Pyramid Books. Do you remember a serial which appeared in New Worlds under the title of 'Put Down This Earth', and later as 'The Dreaming Earth'? The original serial was I think about 50,000 words long, as a 3-part serial in NW. When I sent the carbon out to America I received about four closely-typed pages from Don Bensen, explaining what he thought was wrong with it.

This is something which no writer likes to have happen to him, and so it was about 48 hours before I actually plucked up the courage to read them, and when I finished I said 'My God, he's right', and sat down, rewrote the book completely, added about 10,000 words of new material, and it came out very much better.

Now this is constructive interference on the part of the editor. It is not saying you MUST do something! It's much more a case of 'it didn't work for me, and here's why it didn't'. And if the writer agrees with the editor's comment then very definitely he should act upon it - and promptly.

On the other hand there are, alas, editors who attempt to impose their own personality on writers, and particularly if the writer is an aspiring novice, this can be very harmful. To have your burgeoning talent trampled upon by a heavy-weight with sharp spikes in his boots is not a good earnest for the future. One suspects, for example, that Robert Silverberg is extremely lucky to get out from under his original routine, as it were, of writing stories by the yard, from the roll. He was very fortunate that he was able to break out of this at a time when his individual talent was still tough enough to come dancing back in the 'new wave' Silverberg. But I can think of a number of writers - who I certainly am not going to name - who seem to have been afflicted with editorial pressure at a very early stage of their career and have retained a sort of 'sat on' look ever since!

DAVID GERROLD: Could you go into a little more detail about that 'editorial pressure'?

J.B. Well fortunately I can't say that some of the experiences I have heard about are still common practice, because thank goodness, for quite some years now, I've been in the state that if an editor tries to meddle too much with my work I can say 'up yours!' and take the MS away. The worst kind of editorial interference, worst of all, is the kind where the editor doesn't even bother to tell the writer what he is doing. Many people will remember, for instance,

what happened to the American edition of THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME, where I really blew my stack and got to the stage of writing around to reviewers saying 'kindly do not review this book, it's not the text I submitted', and carbons for the personal attention of the President of the New American Library. That was, like I say, the worst kind of interference in that the first thing the writer knows about it is when he gets the complimentary copies. Fifty-five changes I think I counted, in the first chapter.

On the other hand a forceful editorial personality - John Campbell is the outstanding example in our field - will very often impose his own view of what shape a story ought to have, what moral a story ought to have, that kind of thing. I sent a story to my New York Agent about six months ago called 'The Easy Way Out'. Obviously as a matter of routine it went to the best-paying market first, it went to Analog, and John Campbell wanted me to change the ending. It was a sort of 'man learns lesson story', this rich pampered slob eventually finds some kind of reliance in the ruins of a smashed spaceship, real moral stuff you know! and then the guy who helps him gets clunked over the head in a fit of bad temper. Campbell wanted the ending of the story, changed, but I said NO, send it to Galaxy instead. But if the ending of the story had been changed, the whole argument would have been shifted to a totally different axis, to one John Campbell's favourite axes, that is, 'There are some people who just ought to be slaves'. Well, I don't agree with that, so I wasn't going to let him put a different slant into the ending.

BOAK : How much liberty do you think an editor should take in putting his opinions on to a writer. A writer has to sell to a market as well as sell himself. Where do you draw the line between putting forward what you want to talk about and what you think will sell - especially when you're a beginner?

BRUNNER: Agreed you do have to work with a market in mind if you want to be a steady-selling professional. On the other hand, often a market - an editor doesn't know what ~~he~~ wants until it arrives on the editorial desk. I would never advise a beginning writer deliberately to slant his material in order to try and appeal to an editor's known prejudices. I would much rather say to him: make that story a damned good story, and regardless of whether it agrees with his personal bias or not, an editor will buy it on its merits as a piece of writing. And this is always, I think, the best first step. Later on perhaps, when you have your craft ability under control, you may be able to apply it, for the sake of making a story, to something that you don't personally feel is right. You may take something which you disagree with, and apply your craft to it, to make a strong story. But I think it's very dangerous for a beginning writer to try and slant what he's doing toward the known prejudices of some editor or publisher with whom he's not in agreement.

UNKNOWN (female) Could you tell me about lengths of stories, because different magazines seem to take different lengths. Do you yourself write the story first and see how long it is, or cut it down or boost it up in order to make a sale?

J.B. In 99 cases out of a hundred I write to the natural length of a story and then look around for a market which is after that length of material. This is from my point of view the ideal approach - I've sold all lengths of stories, from 700 words to nearly a quarter of a million. Science fiction is a

particularly good field in this respect because one can find a home for a story of almost literally any length. There are some fields in which the length-category lines are absolutely exact. For example there was an interview with the Guardian a little while ago with an retired Army Officer who writes romances for Robert Hale. They insist on 156 pages, neither more nor less. He is doing maybe six or eight of them a year though, so it must be congenial!

DAVID BERRY: Would you say there is a tendency for overblown short stories to be put into short novel spaces ?

J.B. The short-story market in the SF field is by no means what it was a few years ago. Although the size the market reached at one stage - when I think I counted 47 English language SF magazines, all being published at the same time - this was really disastrous. Because it meant that everybody and his great-uncle were hauling out from the bottom drawer their stories which had been rightly rejected in 1932, and they were finding their way into print. I think this overblown extension of the short-story market did us a great deal of harm. For instance, somebody picks up an issue of Horrible Worlds, that is not due to survive its second number, and he discovers in it these stories which were probably rejected from Weird Tales, with a new front sheet put on, and he says to himself 'this is awful' And rightly so - and this is very bad for science fiction.

Similarly, now, we have a boom in S.F. novels, and I think a high proportion of them are novelettes padded out, or even basically short story ideas. But I don't see any way of avoiding this while SF remains a very steady seller. I remember Anthony Cheetham of Sphere books saying that they can print 25000 copies of any SF novel, and sell them all regardless of how good or bad the novel is.

UNKNOWN Could you expound on the various markets open to buy various grades of science fiction?

J.B. That's a tall order: Basically, you take a selection of magazines, see what a particular editor seems to like, and look at what you've written yourself. For instance, you would hardly send a wistful little fantasy about trees actually being inhabited by humanoid spirits called nymphs and dryads to John Campbell!! On the other hand, F & SF might very well pick it up, if it was decently written.

My personal favourite among the SF magazines has for many years been F & SF simply because of the catholicity of its range. It's not the best-paying of the magazines, but it's certainly the one I enjoy hitting the most, because I can be certain that my story is going to wind up among good respectable, highly-literate and competent company.

On the other hand there have been many issues of Analog recently which have a sort of factory mass-production stamp on them. Not a single story in an entire issue which didn't appear to have been forcibly pressed into Analog - shape. This struck me as being very sad.*

But of course this is because the longer an SF writer works in the field, the less likely he is to concentrate on magazine short stories. If he's a very successful short-story writer like Robert Sheckley he's now selling his short-stories to Playboy and other top magazines. If he has only worked his way through selling short stories, he's now finding it much more profitable - and more emotionally rewarding - to publish novels.

* Don't forget that John's comments refer to early 1971, before the sad death of John W Campbell.

FRED
HEMMINGS

When one has written something, no matter what the length, and you find you're not satisfied with the result, are there any basic tests to decide where you've gone wrong?

J.B.

My first recommendation: put the story away in a drawer and don't think about it for at least a week. Go back to it with your mind as free as possible of the memory of the fun you had putting it down on paper. You've got to be able to picture the story in your mind as a reader, from the editor on to the mass audience, is going to see it.

Put it away for a week and quite possibly the most glaring flaws will suddenly hit you. I do this invariably with my books, and going back I find the most obvious things to put right - like I've used the same word twice in one sentence. Silly little stylistic faults of that kind. Or a long passage of short dialogue where I've suddenly switched speakers and lost count of who's saying what. This kind of thing is fatally easy if you're working very fast.

Similarly, with a week's detachment, you may be able to spot other things like needless adjectives and adverbs, which often weaken a story's impact. You can often spot that you've shot all around the precise meaning you were aiming for - you've bracketted it and have never been on target. You can recognise this by seeing that you have a lot of descriptive words - adjectives and adverbs again - clustered in a mass, whereas what you were actually looking for was one precise phrase, one exact image which would wrap all these up.

One other thing which I think can be usually done with a fair degree of detachment by the author himself, and that is to look at the beginning and end of the story, and to see how close to the beginning the theme of the story is stated, and how close to the end the climax, the point, occurs. If you have a story with a long, slow buildup that doesn't advance the action and doesn't set a mood that is indispensable, condense it. Get your introductory matter as close to the beginning as possible, everything that is necessary for the progress of the story to the point at the end, and then get on with the story.

Make certain the reader knows everything that is indispensable to his understanding of the characters, at the point where he needs to know it. If for example one of your characters is irascible, show him losing his temper with somebody at the beginning, if that's going to be the thing that causes the climax. If you can insert just that amount of descriptive material that is necessary to make the reader picture, or feel, or smell the important elements in the settings, you have enough description and you don't need to pile on extravagant detail. You need just enough to make the reader understand the situation in which the character is involved. "

- John Brunner, 1971
(Discussion recorded
by Waldemar Kummig).

May 5th 1971. "The independent television companies have banned the proposed commercials planned to launch the new monthly magazine, Front Page. The magazine contains articles with such headlines as 'She killed hundreds - for kicks', and 'Tortured by hooded fiends'."

Called 'Front Page - true stories of crime and war', this paper will evidently report in depth on some of the more gory news items from the daily events around the world. I haven't seen a copy but does anyone remember Death, Merdeka the Chosen's magazine in Cyril Kornbluth's 'Shark Ship'? We now appear to have the magazine; but where are the Compact Ships?

MARK ADLARD is one of those rarities, a person who grew up and went through his life without discovering science fiction and then who fell upon it with tremendous relish in recent years. Mark had plans to write at length about the non-pulp 'English' tradition of science fiction, and as he says, "I suppose I am an example of someone who suddenly discovered what SF might do without ever having seen a SF mag. But having discovered the field I then felt as if I wanted to swallow the whole thing, Knights of St Panthony and all." Or as Mark said after my brief talk on old SF magazines at CHESSMANCON, "You have filled me with nostalgia for things I have never known". Rather good, that.

Many of you will have noticed that Mark's first novel INTERFACE appeared from Sidgwick & Jackson last year, despite the fact that Speculation omitted to make any reference to the book. The omission was caused by the fact that I was looking for a reviewer for INTERFACE - and hopefully there should be more about this novel elsewhere in the issue. Mark's new book comes out in the Autumn.

It's quite an achievement to have a novel accepted without previously going through the usual grindstones of the short-story SF market, and I think it especially unusual because of Mark's background, then as Sales Manager for one of the GKN steel companies in South Wales. He is thus one of the few people in SF fandom, or professional-dom for that matter, who has progressed very far up the management hierarchy; and as a junior sort of Marketing Manager myself I already know just how much of an unknown area the world of business is, so far as science fiction writers are concerned. PRW

TWENTY YEARS AFTER PLAYER PIANO

By Mark Adlard

MOST PEOPLE spend half their conscious hours, or one third of their lives, in some kind of business environment. The way they spend the rest of their time is largely determined by activities within the business environment. But you wouldn't think so from reading modern fiction.

If they study novels on Alpha Centauri they can be forgiven for thinking that Earthlings open their eyes only in the evenings, at weekends, or on holidays and that their material possessions grow on trees. By the same token they will probably conclude that approximately 75% of Earthlings have been left legacies, or were born of rich parents, or are writers or somekind of artist, or by some means or other are independent of the workings of an invisible economic system.

One reason why the business world is under-represented to such an extraordinary degree in fiction must be that writers are ignorant of, and frequently hostile to it. This applies with stronger reason in the case of industrial activity and heavy engineering, largely as a legacy of the Industrial Revolution and that species of London provincialism which has had such a firm grip on the English novel until recent times.

Dickens must have been influential, too, with his powerful stereotypes, -- Ralph Nickleby, Tigg Montague, Paul Dombey, Merdle, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, and his other villainous businessmen -- even if they colour our thoughts now at only third or fourth hand. Rouncewell, the "good" ironmaster in BLEAK HOUSE is a minor figure.

Since Dickens' day businessmen, or at least successful businessmen, have usually been evil. Graham Greene's Sir Marcus Stein, the boss of "Midland Steel" in A GUN FOR SALE is a classic reincarnation of the type. Further documentation would be superfluous. Let Mount Doom, which stands like a blast furnace in Tolkien's wastes of Mordor, serve as a symbol for the writer's fear and hatred of the business world, and in particular business based on metals and engineering.

Since 1900 there have been very few attempts really to understand the business world. Thomas Mann used his family background to write BUDDENBROOKS. The Edwardians did something; Conrad in NOSTROMO, Wells in TONO-BUNGAY, Bennett in CLAYHANGER, and Galsworthy intermittently in the Forsyte series. In the USA Dreiser worshipped at the shrine of big business with his trilogy about Frank Cowperwood, while Upton Sinclair in THE JUNGLE and Sinclair Lewis in MAIN STREET and BABBIT threw mud at it. *

I have suggested that the supply of novels about "business" is poor because writers don't know much about it, but there is also evidence that the demand is poor because people don't want to know about it. People think business is boring. If you peek through the cigar smoke in first-class railway compartments you'll see that the businessmen themselves are reading Ian Fleming, just as their predecessors read Edgar Wallace. And the people who follow the fortunes of Lewis Eliot in Snow's STRANGERS AND BROTHERS series are, in my experience, people who are a long way outside those "corridors of power" in which the action takes place.

So what's the fuss about?

This: it is an incredible and perhaps unhealthy thing that fiction should ignore a third of a mature man's necessary experience of this life. How can fiction possibly "hold a mirror up to nature" if it ignores such a colossal chunk of it? My point is very similar to that made by Aldiss in relation to masturbation, in his interview in Penthouse ("-- it always amuses me that children in books are supposed to have no sex lives... David Copperfield, Tom Brown, or Little Nell... I thought it was time someone redressed the balance.").

Now the important thing is that SF would seem ideally suited to solve this problem. On the supply side there are writers who have had a deeper commitment to the work-a-day world than is typical of the mainstream, frequently through involvement in science and technology. On the demand side, the "boring" elements can be removed by the transposition of previously humdrum commercial procedures to a future age. Voila!

In fact the business world almost seems to offer itself for science fictional treatment. The growing pressure of commercial activities on everyday life, the increasing size of business units and the multinational company, the explosion in technology, and the need to manage very large numbers of people, and so on, are all aspects of our contemporary world which virtually beg for extrapolation and analysis.

* Our own Philip Jose Farmer wrote one 'mainstream' novel, THE FIRE AND THE NIGHT, modelled on his own experiences in a Pennsylvania steelworks.

And what has happened? Well, ...

To take the negative aspect first, some writers change just about everything except the business and industrial environment in their stories. The commercial activities in Capek's *RUR* and *THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE* take place in what are quite clearly 1930s offices with telephones and calendars on the walls. Poul Anderson's *Van Rijn* (incidentally a flagrant crib from *Falstaff*) milks the Milky Way strictly in accordance with those principles of economics laid down by Adam Smith in *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS* in 1776. Nolan's protagonist in *LOGAN'S RUN* is troubled by Bessemer sparks in a fully-automated Pittsburgh, although the Bessemer process was obsolescent at the time of writing the novel.

On the other hand there has been some brilliant writing about advertising, in a large number of short stories, and one must at least mention Pohl and Kornbluth's *THE SPACE MERCHANTS*. **

Kornbluth also tackled larger questions of general administration in *THE SYNDIC*, and it is indeed this larger perspective which is so often missing. Heinlein shows some practical insights; Bester can describe a businessman under pressure, and Silverberg's weary administrators recuperate in web-foam chairs or flop into their nutrient tanks. But it is the larger perspective which is important.

It seems to me that untill writers have access to comprehensive data banks or until novels are written by teams of specialists, one must be prepared to accept errors of extrapolation in SF based on specific facts. The sight of Bessemer sparks in Pittsburgh doesn't depress me - in fact it cheers me enormously to think that the Americans will be that far behind us!

But it does seem important to me that SF writers should make allowance for the managerial world changing very considerably. It is just not good enough to have highly futuristic technology and advanced economic systems being administered by Dickensian businessmen who have substituted a vidscreen for a high stool.

Curiously enough the best illustration of my point is furnished by the man who is a team of experts in himself - the Good Doctor, Isaac Asimov. But I cannot resist side-tracking, for a moment, to the 1920s' writer John Taine (mathematician Dr Eric Temple Bell) whose advice on 'Writing a Science Fiction Novel' is published in *OF WORLDS BEYOND* (Advent).

Taine clearly regarded the various sciences as being in compartmentalised boxes, and advised writers to stick to their box, as it were. The flavour of the advice is best given by quotation: " - only the man with exceptional opportunities and corresponding natural endowments can hope to do satisfactory fiction in both the physical and the biological sciences, or in either of these and the engineering sciences... Less gifted aspirants will probably get the most out of their talents if they invest all they have in just one of the physical, the biological, and the engineering sciences... The mixing must be done with skill and caution, and the particular one of the three in which the writer is most proficient should dominate the theme. A man who is at home in physics but all abroad in biology can make some terrible mistakes when he attempts a story based on the genetics of oysters -."

If the world does finally destroy itself, and our friend from Alpha Centauri finds that essay among the rubble, he will know how we managed to do it!

** Perhaps because advertising, Mark, is one of the few areas of commercial life in which SF writers have often been employed - Fred Pohl himself, Jim Blish as a PR man, and so on. Thus writers get experience on which to base such stories.

However, one can believe that Asimov, knowing that he wasn't one of the "less gifted aspirants", decided to invest in all of the sciences. The results are there to see, and they are very impressive. In SUCKER BAIT, for example, his teams of experts are able to show a contempt for each other's disciplines which is thoroughly intimidating.

But how could the Galactic Empire of the FOUNDATION trilogy have grown until it stretched from arm to arm of the double spiral without some knowledge of management science? Never mind Hari Seldon, the level of managerial ability shown by Asimov's galactic administrators is on a level with that required to run a sub-post office in Woking, or a gaoler's office in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County.

I doubt whether, throughout the length and breadth of the Galactic Empire, a man could be found capable of running even a small hydroponics factory with any degree of efficiency. No wonder the energy systems were reverting to coal and oil. Asimov forgot to swot up on one of the new sciences - management science.

Whereas Heinlein, with his interest in authority, did at least try to find out something about modern management methods. In STARSHIP TROOPERS, the Colonel explains the concept of "line and staff", and the training programme of his troopers seems to require at least a nodding acquaintance with the "games theory" of Neumann and Morgenstern.

But since 1952 there has been no excuse for other authors to repeat Asimov's dereliction. Because that year marked the appearance of Vonnegut's PLAYER PIANO, and things in science fiction should never have been the same since.

- Mark Adlard, 1972

INTERFACE by Mark Adlard, Sidgwick & Jackson £1.50

Reviewed by Peter Weston

After reading only four chapters of INTERFACE I wrote to Mark Adlard and said how very impressed I was. The remainder of the book didn't change my admiration for the extent of Mark's accomplishment here.

Let me explain the 'interface' of the title, which turns out to refer to the growing chasm between Art and Technology. Not an entirely new concept, C.P. Snow, but in Mark's future world of 2100 the gap has widened until artists of all kinds - and that means writers as well - have become so totally excluded from a 'real' world taken over by Science that, devoid of a subject matter, the whole business of artistic creativity has disappeared.

This I take to be what the novel is really all about, and in the light of his article above (which follows the line of the book's argument - or vice versa - almost word for word), I should imagine Mark feels it is a genuine matter for concern. So immediately I can award bonus points to this New Author for producing an SF novel with a 'message' - they're pretty rare. What, by comparison, would you consider to be the fundamental point of first-novels by - say - Ted White, Samuel Delany, or for that matter Christopher Priest?

Hold on there, you'll complain, I don't usually rate a book by the presence or absence of a message. Nor do I; the strengths of INTERFACE lie elsewhere. The plot-line is one such strength, logically and cleverly worked out and utilising Mark's own knowledge and experience of industry.

And now we are starting to approach that characteristic I can best sum up as the sheer richness of the novel, a certain quality of depth behind every action, every piece of dialogue.

(Continued on Page 41)

THE CRITICAL FRONT: ON CRITICISM

There are so few books written about science fiction that we cannot overlook two new works, by James Blish and by Donald Wollheim. The first, published about a year ago, is intended to be a fairly rigorously critical volume and is reviewed by John Foyster; Wollheim's book on the other hand is more of a compendium of personal opinions and history by one of SF's most well-known editors. It is reviewed here by Tom Shippey. When published, Brian Aldiss's forthcoming monumental work THE BILLION YEAR SPREE will be reviewed here by Philip Strick.

MORE ISSUES AT HAND by William Atheling, Advent 1970, \$5.00

Reviewed by John Foyster.

This volume is dedicated to four fan-editors, not the least of whom is one Richard E. Geis. But the real dedication involved is that of James Blish, who seems to have read more bad science fiction than you and I dreamed of, Horatio. Nevertheless I, anonymous decipherer of page 5 and recipient of a cruel '(sic)' (page 111), here take to paper with no intent of emulating Sir Blish in his pursuit of the putrid; indeed, contra.

Daring Willy Atheling, wielder of wild yet wistful words, here upholds and actually magnifies the reputation formerly crowned by THE ISSUE AT HAND. Blish, in that ugly cant phrase so popular with the intellectually-distressed, 'knows where it's at'.

A couple of years ago the SFWA published a round-robin titled "Criticism - Who Needs It?" An ever-watchful providence has kept the circulation of this object appropriately low, though there is one item in it which would bear saving. And friends, it has been! The introduction to MORE ISSUES AT HAND is more or less James Blish's contribution, and though it does not represent Blish at his best (a point to which I shall return) it most certainly deserves hardcover publication.

In this introduction James Blish writes in general terms about criticism as he sees it. Anyone who has read THE ISSUE AT HAND will already possess a quite accurate knowledge of Blish's attitudes and idiosyncrasies, but it is nevertheless fascinating to see him weaving and bobbing around these at times.

Take, for example, his often-proclaimed attitude (which appears on the dust-jacket of this book) that 'A good critic is positively obliged to be harsh towards bad work'. This theme spreads through the introduction, but in the years since 1964 Blish has only thought it worthwhile to add one essay on bad writers/writing to his hardcover work; an essay on Abraham Merritt written in 1957.

Mr Merritt, it is widely rumoured, published the bulk of his work rather earlier than that. There is a passing reference to this in the introduction, but it skids wide of the truth. Readers are invited to compare the two volumes. It is not, as James Bligh suggests in the introduction, that Atheling has softened

his tone, or that his anger is directed towards the work rather than the author. It is simply that James Blish avoids the bad books (at least, if this collection is representative of his criticism). It is hard to say why this should be so. Increasing age is not a good example; but perhaps an increasing preoccupation with James Branch Cabell is a better.

These essays are selected from a period of fourteen years. In that period Blish's most important essay was "A Question of Content" - but it has already been printed in THE ISSUE AT HAND. Nevertheless some worthwhile things of a quality not far distant from that high point are included in this volume.

There are three essays on major writers (not my opinion - Blish's). The essay on Heinlein I must count a failure because it, like all the other essays I have read on this writer, failed to give me the slightest inkling why Heinlein's novels of the fifties have caused so much of a stir. Heinlein's work has always seemed to me insipidly bland (if you can imagine that) and the only explanation I am able to offer for the interest in him is that in a TV-oriented society, readers prefer half-digested pap to the normal coarse bill-of-fare offered by SF.

Heinlein's 'political' endeavours seem very much a McLuhanistic 'telling-it-like-it-is-or-as-much-as-the-sponsors-allow-but-you-needn't-worry-about-that-because-we-are-all-honourable-men'. Paul Goodman has remarked that there are members of society for whom the mass-media are the only reality; under the circumstances the role of a writer who more-or-less does the thinking for the reader can be at least slightly understood. *

But if Blish has failed there it may be only my own stupidity; at worst he has only been unable to improve on the efforts of others. The essay on Algis Budrys has become, sadly, a reflection on promise not fulfilled. Blish's appreciation of Budrys's earlier works is thoughtful and accurate - and more than a little heartrending.

The essay on Sturgeon is incomplete; as is admitted this was largely written for a Sturgeon Appreciation Issue of F&SF. There is more to it than that. Even allowing that such an essay would naturally tend to be laudatory, I cannot imagine the work of a writer as wide-ranging (yet, as Blish notes, as single-minded) as Sturgeon. If a book can be written about Robert A Heinlein, then the same can most certainly be done for Theodore Sturgeon. And James Blish is the person to write it. Science fiction, it seems to me, has reached the stage at which some long-range and intensive examinations can be made, and the results published.

The remaining essays here are slightly more general. The first chapter investigates some problems of definition. Chapter two is Blish's survey of the talent in the room. He is generous to most 'criticis of science fiction', the only possible exception being Sam Moskowitz, who isn't a critic at all. This is also revealing in the light of the abjuration to be 'harsh towards bad work'. Is Blish really so sympathetic towards the writings of his fellows, one wonders?

In Chapter eight, Blish uses some of the magazine reviews which were a most satisfactory aspect of the earlier book. Here he tackles the subject of psi in Campbell's Astounding, and also a couple of R.A.W. Lowndes' magazines. The January & February 1957 issues of Astounding contained a bit too much psi for J. Blish, apparently. 'This would be dull enough for readers not sharing Mr Campbell's enthusiasm,' he remarks, following a trend which has continued to the present day; the belief that John Campbell likes psi stories.

*. Slight noted and hotly refuted, John. Like hell!

The evidence, alas, indicates something rather different. Consider, when did JWC publish that Dianetics article? When did JWC begin to feel the pressure from Thrilling Wonder Stories and Startling Stories, and the rumours of new magazines such as F&SF? And how long before that was it that Ray Palmer ran the circulation of Amazing way up by using nutty cult articles/stories? Which magazine has climbed in circulation while others suffer losses? Which policy would you favour?

But so much for oversights. The article on Lowndes is again too short, but what there is brings out rather well the nature of Future & Science Fiction Stories.

'Science-fantasy and Translations', the ninth chapter, makes some nice distinctions and is a counterbalance to chapter three. Thus we have 'it seems perfectly clear to me that a man with no respect for facts (scientific or otherwise) is going to be too poor a reporter to write acceptable fiction', which is used as a stick to beat a number of writers, the first being Brian Aldiss. Blish takes the view that to be useful ('to have any value as social criticism') SF must be believable. This may be an interesting theory, but it seems to me to have little practical use. I don't think many readers of SF want it to be useful or believable - it is certain that the 'escape value' view of SF is very strongly represented these days. *

Finally, in a chapter titled 'Making Waves', we have a survey of currently important writers in the guise of an examination of the 'New Wave'. Most of James Blish's opinions here are identical with my own, ** (though rather better expressed), and I think it would be wise not to make comments in those areas. However there are one or two points which arise and cannot be ignored.

The discussion of J.G. Ballard's short stories on pages 127-128 seems to be too easily generalising. What Blish says in essence is that those stories which don't fit an obvious series in Ballard's work actually make up another series. This is much too easy to say without thinking, and that seems to be the case here. Blish seems to be talking about the stories collected in THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION (well, he says as much but you wouldn't think so from the earlier sentences in the discussion). (Cont/d)

* Surely you confuse the point, John. Stories can be believable and useful and yet also rich in escape value. The 'escapist' stories of - say - Larry Niven can be believable through their respect for facts and their attempted consistency with the real world as we know it, in a way which something like AN AGE or HOTHOUSE can never be. (What's more, Niven is more fun!)

** And mine. The last page of the book ('a tiny group of drunks and hangers-on') repeats my editorial viewpoint in Spec.-26. Not that I have any monopoly on reporting; what does hurt a little is the book's dedication ('To Bangsund, Bergeron, Geis & Sapiro - Keepers of the Flame') and the credits on Pages 6-7 which list every possible first-appearance of material except the Speculation review of BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD (8 pages) and the SPECULATION Conference speech, 'The Good, the Bad, the Indifferent' (6 pages). Heck, Chapter 10 even uses my title for a sub-heading! I felt disappointed to miss out on my miniscule share of the glory and tackled JB about this. He said he forgot to mention Speculation, which I find to be as unlikely a remark as if he had suddenly said that he considered Judith Merrill and Sam Moskowitz to be the two greatest critics that science fiction had yet produced. Has James Blish ever forgotten anything, ever? alone the source of the birth of his book?

Now what is true is that Ballard's personality strongly affects his work, so that a story by him is relatively easy to identify. Thus there is a wholeness about the Ballard short stories which isn't really shared by the stories of any other writer (with the possible exceptions of Sturgeon & Bradbury). But, for example, 'Thirteen to Centaurus' does not seem to me to fit any 'identifiable, conventional series', and it is certainly not part of the 'condensed novel' series, which is what Blish is really seeking to identify.

In the latter part of the chapter some space is devoted to what Blish dubs 'mythology'. Now what James Blish means by 'myth' is not quite what James Campbell or Mircea Eliade mean by 'myth'; indeed, as Blish uses the word it is not far removed in meaning from "fairy tale". But let that pass. Blish takes the opportunity to hop into Zelazny's CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS which 'tries to turn Egyptian mythology into a serious science fiction novel.'. (The use of mythology in that sentence will tell you a good deal about what Blish means by mythology). Nevertheless the works of Delany and Zelazny also contain genuine mythic elements and these are alluded to in passing (Page 137, and perhaps carelessly). But it is here that the lack of an overview - a really long piece by Blish examining many facets of science fiction - is made painfully apparent.

For there is one writer whose work has scarcely any non-mythic aspects, is a major success in the sense of having had a lot of novels published, and to whom eleven words are devoted in THE ISSUE AT HAND. While James Blish there noted that Leigh Brackett writes/wrote space opera ('a cliché') he doesn't seem anywhere to have attempted to explain the success of her novels and indeed the success of space-opera as a form.

In the chapter on 'gadgetry' Blish calls for a return to the writing of 'daydreams', but for some reason he has not done the same for the more universal daydream. Yet the appeal of Leigh Brackett's space operas is precisely that they follow a simple ritual which is thoroughly familiar but which doesn't lose any magic as a result. Rayguns and invisibility can become boring, but not the eternal quest.

Here, as elsewhere, my regret is that Blish has not been able to follow up particular byways. I think most readers will find the same; that MORE ISSUES AT HAND is an excellent volume - but oh, that James Blish could take the time to write a long essay. In SFR-42, Marion Zimmer Bradley notes that 'reviewing is a mug's game'; for most of us this is true - but James Blish is a notable exception.

- John Foyster, 1971

THE UNIVERSE MAKERS: SCIENCE FICTION TODAY by Donald A. Wollheim, Gollancz £1.50
Reviewed by Tom Shippey.

Too much SF criticism falls into two categories. The first and worst is written by "outsiders"; typically, by a graduate student of English who doesn't know much about SF but sees it as a nice open field by comparison with Shakespeare's sonnets or the love-life of Thomas Hardy. Most of the MA and PhD dissertations produced on this system remain mercifully unread; their typical fault is that a small sample of material is used as a wholly inadequate basis for a large and shiny intellectual construct or thesis ("SF is post-Freudian.... - is related to adolescent body-images ... - is a continuation of archetypal mythic patterns" etc).

There is an opposite type of criticism with an opposite fault, exemplified I regret to say, by THE UNIVERSE MAKERS. No-one can deny that Wollheim is an 'insider', that he knows a lot about SF and has access to a large sample of SF material. But he is not good at creating intellectual constructs, i.e. at giving this book a shape and an argument. Too often, large bundles of facts and insights are tied up with very slender threads of assertion. If you just don't believe the assertions the book becomes useless except as a compendium of separate observations.

The sort of thing that can go wrong is this. Wollheim clearly has a rather uncertain relationship with Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS (not surprising, if he had anything to do with the Ace edition of that work). He thinks it's important, and moreover cannot attack it without appearing to be against Youth - which would be like defiling Motherhood and cheering for the Man-eating Shark. Still, he has very little sympathy with the book, as is shown by his total misunderstanding of the phrase 'Middle Earth' (from Old English middangeard 'the middle enclosure', of three in the Old English cosmogony, of nine in the Old Norse, cp O.N. mithgarth, mithgarths-ormr), and by his heart-stopping suggestion on page 13 that it might contain "contradictions of speech.." To explain the success of THE LORD OF THE RINGS and so end on an optimistic note, he works out the argument that it contains an opposition of Pure Good and Pure Evil, outdated concepts now making a fresh appeal.

But if the Ring itself shows anything, it is that no-one is Pure Good - no-one is good enough to use the Ring without corruption. And that applies to Gandalf, Galadriel, Boromir, Denethor, Sam Gamgee and Frodo himself, not to mention Gollum (who, in his development from Smeagol, turns out to be not exactly Pure Evil either). Wollheim has seen that the reaction to Tolkien is a phenomenon that needs explaining, but has jumped much too quickly to a simple explanation; it spoils the whole ending of his book.

A more serious case is the continuing argument a) that there are two branches of SF, a Wellsian one and a Vernian one; b) that the latter is represented by John W Campbell and Analog; c) that this movement is a narrow-minded, nationalistic, propaganda organ for the military/economic Establishment. This last theory is so laughable to anyone who remembers Campbell bellyaching about going into Vietnam back in the early '60s (when complaint wasn't fashionable) that I don't want people to think I've made it up. The main discussion of Campbell is found on pages 74-79, but on page 22 Wollheim asserts:-

"It's not an accident that the one magazine (i.e. Analog, because it's 'Vernian', TS) espouses racism in its ugliest form, puts forth arguments in favour of slavery (Yes, I said slavery!), and insists on the deliberate revision of stories to include statements of the right of financial greed to triumph over idealistic ideas."

An experienced SF reader can see what truth there is in this. Analog certainly does provide a lot of stories set in extreme capitalistic societies, e.g. Paul Anderson's Van Rijn series, or the interminable set about Telzey Amberdon by Jim Schmitz. It has also run many stories about slavery, often (like Randall Garrett's 'The Destroyers', December 1959; or the Lloyd Biggle serial 'The World Menders', Feb-April 1971) suggesting that freeing slaves is as hard as enslaving them. But the first story I ever read in Astounding as it was then, was Heinlein's CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY, which (as should be obvious to the meanest intellect) is about slavery and on the whole agin' it!

Wollheim, again, too readily simplifies a literary situation for a moral point. If he'd spent some time on the increasing stridency and bad temper of both Campbell and Heinlein, and the way in which they took to loading their stories with morality, he would have had something; after the Laumer novelette called 'The Plague' in the November 1970 issue I nearly stopped reading Analog myself. (Thank God for Ben Bova!) But the paragraph quoted above is just false. The 'racism', for instance?? I remember Campbell supporting Wallace, but took it that, like his interest in psi, which Wollheim doesn't like either, it was a result of his usual cross-grained theory that there was an Establishment of ideas that had to be resisted.

One should note, also, that the paragraph quoted seems to be addressed to someone who doesn't read Analog at all. That makes this book rather dangerous. The blurb says it's meant both for the aficionado and for the general reader; but in my opinion, while an aficionado could get a lot out of its separate comments on single writers, the general reader who can't challenge large-scale assertions being made, is going to get a very false picture indeed. In other words if you read Speculation, it's all right for you. But DO NOT recommend it to your more ignorant friends.

I wish I'd had more space to give to the book's frequent successes, such as the composite 'future history' in chapter 9, the remarks about Andre Norton's DAYBREAK 2250 in chapter 13, the piece about Kornbluth or the qualified rejection of New Worlds; but Wollheim is too aggressive himself to expect a mild response.

- Tom Shippey, 1972

INTERFACE (continued)

Where a more usual beginner would give only the bones of his clockwork plot, Mark has embellished and elaborated with what can only be called Culture, with a capital 'C'. Very impressive but initially a bit off-putting, for one suspects Mark is only showing-off his obvious erudition. How much of that is really yours, Mark? What business does an industrial salesman have with poetry, music, art, literature? All the sales managers I've known can barely write their

Eventually we discover that the lead characters all have /name! artificially-enhanced intelligence; that the cultural loading is Mark's way to demonstrate the society which might evolve between genius-level people without very much to do with their time. Another plus - for a good attempt at showing SF supermen in action.

Finally, I simply cannot fault Mark Adlard's skill with words. He writes very fluidly indeed, with excellent descriptive passages and some really fine use of imagery with none of the self-consciousness expected of the novice.

Unfortunately there are, I think, two weaknesses in the novel. On the level of entertainment, INTERFACE suffers because it is paced too slowly. The plot is all there, but it unfolds so gradually that the feeling is easily aroused that there is no story, and this impression lasts until - suddenly - it is all

The other fault is more fundamental. I believe that Mark set /over. out to write about the alienation caused by technology, to 'do another Vonnegut' if you like. But with what result in the end? Despite all the good bits we get mixed up instead with the City of the Plebs, and the Revolt Against the Evil System. This is a pity; I think you missed your real target, Mark, and ended up with too many SF clichés instead.

And for all your good intentions, where is the economic life of Tcity? What do the people do all day, where is their government, their politics? And tell me who buys all that Stahlex and you can keep Newcastle Brown Ale!

AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE

The James Blish trilogy of four novels

Reviewed by Bob Rickard

I want to begin by establishing my respect for James Blish. He is undoubtedly a scholar - through his works and in person he projects an impression of a quiet, almost sinister clerk (like his own characters of Roger Bacon, Ruiz-Sanchez and Theron Ware), which is redeemed by a sense of poetry and art, and a curiously bland humour. He has exceptional integrity as an SF writer, over and above that gained from his stance on the standards of criticism (as William Atheling jr.) and from his own efforts in pricking some of the pomposities that abound within the field... he has also taken a lot of criticism himself, besides surviving enough Milford sessions to know how to take it.

Blish, however, seems to be unique in at least one respect - there is a large percentage of SF readers who get very little entertainment value from much of his work (at least the four serious novels above), and who, on the whole find him difficult to read and understand - and yet he is (and has been for a long time) acknowledged as one of the masters of the field. A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, for example, is mandatory reading.

I think there is more to this problem than an inherent laziness in the reader or reviewer, who, especially when bemused by 'serious' subjects and large helpings of metaphysics and discussion of theological dogma, will quite understandably be reluctant to comment upon what he thought the author was trying to achieve and whether it came over. BLACK EASTER seemed to polarise opinion more effectively, and when the heralded sequel DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT arrived the reaction was extreme to the point of hostility.

To say that they were bad, or that one didn't understand them, and leave it at that is not enough. A writer of Blish's stature doesn't need defending, but I do feel that it would be wrong to dismiss these 'difficult' novels as the occasional self-indulgence every author is entitled to, simply because the author's technique, or message, got in the way of the story. Nor would I agree that Blish had set his sights too high with this project. Always a respecter of precedents (like Cabell's Florian), Blish has had many noble and comprehensive precedents before him in classical and modern reading for the exploration of philosophical profundities, and science-fiction (in the broadest sense) seems to be the perfect medium for such exploration today. Even the apparent outsider of this set (DR MIRABILIS) seems an acceptable form of science-fiction within fixed limits when Roger Bacon's quest for the 'science of sciences' is viewed in the medieval sense of 'science' as Knowledge.

Indeed, one can imagine the Blish of the 'forties, his eyes glinting in the light of the torch John Campbell was carrying in the put-the-science-into-science-fiction campaign, eager to go one step further having realised SF's value for dramatising 'serious issues'. This vision seems to be shared by many of today's serious writers (Nabokov, Colin Wilson, Borges, Gore Vidal, Ira Levin, William Burroughs, the list is endless) in the tradition of Wells (as opposed to Verne).

Blish has never been a fluid or easy narrator, nor does he consider himself (I think) a born story-teller, but nevertheless he does have some interesting stories to tell; so it is strange to see that when he tries to deal with the area of philosophy/metaphysics and religion (which is essential to the common theme of the AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE set), he seems to retreat further into the strange persona of the sinisterly introvert and bookish clerk, which is where the communication problems are generated. This is a very different Blish from the author of FALLEN STAR, NIGHT SHAPES, the CITIES IN FLIGHT series and the STARTREK revamps.

Taking as understood that erudite or scholarly science-fiction is a rare phenomenon within the field, and that the average reader leans towards (and is weaned on to) the technological categories, there have been far too few opportunities to learn how to cope with SF of the type presented in this set. One could therefore make a reasonable case for the story existing on several levels which must nevertheless hold the reader on the first level quite simply by being an exciting story or situation well told. In fact it was on this level that most of the criticism (particularly of EASTER and JUDGEMENT) was made.

Blish, we know, is a careful and knowledgeable man and aware of what he is doing. So why is it that many people have expressed bewilderment, even disappointment at the progressive deterioration of these novels? I think it is possible to identify firstly, in his techniques, certain distinct but inter-related characteristics which can give us clues; and secondly, from an examination of the theme of AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE we can gain more insight into Blish's metaphysical entanglements and judge his success in their solution.

The first point is that most of Blish's characters seem impervious to reader identification (except in rare instances); we can sympathise with them but not cross the barrier that makes the characters real. This seems to be aided by a curious lack of sentiment - his principals are coldly cerebral to the point of being almost surreal, and their constant analyses more logical than rational.

This is not to say that Blish is not empathic - he consistently shows a grasp of motivation (in the Jungian manner) and renders these observations in anything other than journalistic cliches. Brian Aldiss, in a letter to SPECULATION 25, said that he thought "... nostalgia always implied a setting aside of critical standards". It is the sort of implication Blish would be aware of (though he might not totally agree with it), since he has been instrumental in the improvement of critical standards.

It is as though Blish has been pre-occupied with the mental life of his characters and has seen only the ways it can be strengthened, whereas nostalgia (or sentiment) might more readily be construed as a weakness, thereby demanding a more careful treatment. If Blish's main concern was the progress of the story rather than the development of characters it would be understandable that he should avoid a delicate area like sentiment. It is interesting to note, however, that the two novels in which the development of a character has been critical to the progress of the story (DR MIRABILIS, CONSCIENCE) have been the best received and most memorable of the four. However, many of his characters are either cardboard mouthpieces for his cerebration or, at the other extreme, larger than life. This seems quite logical: lofty themes against cosmic backdrops tend to breed bizarre characters (in the tradition of Bester, Sturgeon, Harness, and even Cabell, all of whom he admires greatly). And yet Blish misses the mark more often than not, because they lack this vital spark of life that makes for successful drama.

Secondly, Blish has a tendency to avoid action in the story and deals with it in retrospective thought or discussion - a method which he obviously feels more his style. In fact he confessed (in The Issue at Hand) that CONSCIENCE was deliberately plotted so that "...most of the drama is dialectical" and hinges on the "...elaborate four-way argument which is the essence of the piece". This is a pretty good description of EASTER and JUDGEMENT too, and encapsulates a technique which, when used to this extent, produces an anti-climactic quality of sameness, also undermining the characters, which is all the more regrettable when one remembers the fine pitch of excitement in such of his novels as TITAN'S DAUGHTER, THE WARRIORS OF DAY and JACK OF EAGLES. Blish seems fond also of sending teams to planets (CONSCIENCE and most of the stories in ANYWHEN) ostensibly so he can use his favourite technique of the "elaborate four-way argument". In EASTER and JUDGEMENT (although not a new planet but certainly a changed one is involved) the four principals could be interchanged with the four in CONSCIENCE, could even be different facets of one person, such is their sameness. We need constant reminding as to just who is saying what - and that is something Blish does too infrequently.

A third point is that quite early on in his career Blish was manifesting consistent characteristics in his style : even in the first edition of In Search of Wonder Damon Knight was describing him as a waspishly precise scholar. Yet whilst this precision was creating a slot identifiable as Blish's own, it did relatively little to help make his meanings clear. Consider, for example, this slice of tortuous prose, from DR MIRABILIS :

"Best to abandon that for the time being, and make still a third introduction - this time strictly confined to its purpose; if the second introduction were on the verge of becoming another volume of Roger Bacon His Universal Encyclopedia of all that was known or knowable in the world, it would not suffer for being held back awhile; nor would Clement suffer the lack of it, or know he so suffered until he saw it; after which if God allowed him wisdom, he could not but forgive, and learn; or else what was knowledge for ?"

Almost to a man, Blish's characters rationalise with such painful exactitude that one could be forgiven for thinking that Blish was under the impression that wealth of detail is the essence of conveying a sense of reality. As Atheling he has written: "The minute description of the entirely irrelevant does not constitute realism". Does this mean that the minute description of the directly or indirectly relevant is any more acceptable as a constituent of 'realism' ? Either way, it seems to suggest that to Blish 'realism' is an important ingredient of a successful story, and it is clear that he prefers to place more emphasis on mental than environmental realism. When this is coupled with pedantic statements like "The lion doesn't lie down with the lamb here because Lithia has neither animal, but as an allegory the phrase is apt", most of the reader's natural interest is soon dampened.

Concurrent with the element of sameness in characters and treatment is the quality of the atmosphere, which tries to be one of interest but generally succeeds only in creating a sense of frustration and futility. Blish, in fact, might almost be aware of this when he talks through the most successful of all his heroes, Roger Bacon, of "... the luminous moment when task transforms itself into mystical experience ...". Could Blish be expressing an aspiration here ? (I think it likely in the light of the overall idea and approach to the

four books, especially JUDGEMENT; and I will amplify the point later on). In the meantime, though, Bacon continues: "... and the temptation is to turn illumination into an orgy and never stop at all". One can almost feel Blish's irony as he penned this home truth.

Again, it is virtually a pre-requisite for a Blish character to be tired-out by the long struggle that has been his (mental) life (eg. Dr. Hilstrom in 'How Beautiful with Banners'; Naysmith in 'A Dusk of Idols'; Ruiz-Sanchez in CONSCIENCE; Simon de Kuyl in 'A Style in Treason', etc.) In that latter story someone makes a casual remark about an old universe afflicted with listlessness, in which everyone feels it "... difficult to remember who one was supposed to be".

All of these characteristics make for a pretty formidable obstacle course and it is only the most determined who finish, and the most persistent who manage to catch some meaning. The question to be asked now is "Why?" Why does Blish make things so difficult for his readers? I would like to offer an opinion - but I must start with two assumptions: that Blish IS a master of his trade, and that he has been honest with us, NOT confused us deliberately. The only avenue left to explore is the image of the clerk blinded by his own illumination.

The fact that Blish has formulated this set means that all four novels say something about a common problem, tackled in different ways and at different times. It is a problem that means a great deal to Blish because like all good symbols it mirrors Man's relations with the Universe, and he feels that he has to understand that in order to understand the things that really trouble him, ie. matters of Faith and Conscience. What more natural for a writer than to explore them through his work. Blish is also aware that one can solve this problem (or understand these matters) by simple acts of Faith or Conscience; so much of the conflict revolves, in his own mind and on paper, around the relative merits and processes of rational thought and simple but total belief.

Like most serious writers, he is a man of many interests, being a blend of musician, scientist, philosopher, and poet, the better to accomplish the art of expression. He tends, like most wide-ranging scholars, toward Goethe's concept of 'the whole man'; indeed at times through his works he expresses all the pietism and pansophism of Goethe. It seems natural, then, that Faust would appeal to Blish as a really meaningful symbol of modern man, and all four books are in essence a continuation of the Germanic philosophical tradition.

Originally the myth was an anti-semitic, anti-catholic cautionary tale which Marlowe, in the fifteen-nineties, turned into a drama in which the luckless Faustus was eternally damned for his temerity. Thomas Mann traces the subject back to Simon Magus, Theophilus, and even St. Augustine, suggesting that the legend's value lay in nothing more salutary than the avoidance of pacts with the devil. It is forever to Goethe's credit that he saw beyond this to the archetype of Faust as "... the apotheosis of the hero as a representative of striving and seeking humanity", and that the active pursuit of Knowledge and Truth could be a redeeming quality. It was this element of optimism which contributed to the terrific expansion and popular awe of science at that time and since, and which in turn crystallised still further explorations of the fundamental theme (eg. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Wells's Time Machine, The Shape of Things to Come, etc.)

To be fair, Blish has used his ingenuity too - in ANYWHEN, for example, several stories are set in a galactic playpen which man's knowledge has won

for him, and yet he has brought along with him the old diseases that beleaguer our species, like lust, greed and cruelty, which have always been poor exchange for the lives and innocence of the Noble Savage (alien or human). Blish's science-fiction, in this respect, has always been ripe and timely stuff. But above and beyond the technological and temporal dilemmas facing Man as a consequence of his Knowledge, Blish is entranced by Faust as a cabalistic symbol of Man - ie. Man in relation to the Macrocosm (the manifested Universe) and to the Microcosm (the inner space between the particular and the infinite). In terms of Blish's technique this means dramatising the dialectic around such matters as Innocence, Faith, and Conscience. His characters tend to adopt extreme and specialised points of view; the action of these stories lies largely in the conflicts between these attitudes.

Blish's classic four characters seem to embody distinct facets of Man's approach to the problems arising out of Knowledge. They consist of two fairly straightforward ones who represent the extremes of scepticism and belief; and two complex ones representing the esoteric and the exoteric approaches to Knowledge. It is between these last two (the magician/priest and the scientist respectively) that most of the discussions take place; although they have similar motivation, their methods of rationalisation are different (as different as the approaches of orthodox science and religion) and so too are their consciences. Both of these points can be seen operating in this quote from EASTER, in which Theron Ware states the classic case for the opening of Pandora's Box :

"But the real fact of the matter, Dr. Hess, is that I think what I'm after is worth the risk, and what I'm after is something you understand perfectly, and for which you've sold your own soul, or if you prefer an only slightly less loaded word, your integrity, to Dr. Baines -- Knowledge."

Centuries of writers have chased the attainment of absolute power/Knowledge (which, as Valery points out, pits man's baser instincts against the incorruptibility of human Love and Faith) through dozens of religions and situations, for it is powerfully dramatic material - so it is with an element of sadness that I note that Blish doesn't manage to add anything one way or the other to the fundamental arguments. In the first three books and a good part of the fourth we see him dramatising in terms of causality and dogma - and thus effectively and with visible frustration trapping himself in a Manichean universe of duality which could not be resolved with his given premises.

It is tempting but impossible in this format to explore the full ramifications and history of the Manichean heresy, and the accompanying concept of the Anti-Christ, which has an important relationship with the Faust theme. It is concisely expressed in the words of one who bore the title of Anti-Christ, and wrote of the struggle between God and Satan for his soul - God won, he said, "... now, I have only one doubt left - which of the twain was God ?" This heresy - that ultimate Evil must perfectly balance ultimate Good in the phenomenal universe - is the *bête noire* of the orthodox Western Church, which has the fundamental Mosaic law that God (before Whom there is no Other) is Good - indeed Blish occasionally reflects upon the Islamic aphorism "Justice is Love" to underline this point of view.

However, it is in this mode that Blish chooses to explore the processes of conscience with almost dispassionate precision, dissecting the miniscule emotions of his characters as they wallow in their confusing inability to resolve good and evil. Ruiz-Sanchez seems confused to the point of religious paranoia, oscillating wildly between heresy and dogma (at one point he makes

a statement that anyone who disagrees with the Church "...lacks intelligence" and "background"). Also this clerk of the future seems strangely ignorant of the policies of the Church toward other lifeforms. I came across a reference recently which suggests that Pope Pius XII declared that men on other worlds may be already living in a state of Grace, without redemption by the Son of God. Certainly Blish (in The Issue at Hand) hints at his awareness of this - but whether Ruiz-Sanchez knew it or not it only makes his floundering the more pitiful and an unbelievable piece of indulgence, and the whole conclusion of CONSCIENCE seems pointless.

I must confess to being puzzled by this, and am unable to decide whether it was intended as a wicked satire or a damp but well-meant portrayal of the inability of a man to prevent his own (mental) dissolution, explored in a similar format to that favoured by Colin Wilson, for example.

Now we come to the place of JUDGEMENT in this scheme of themes. Bob Toomey (in ENERGUMMEN 9) doubted whether it would have made sense at all without the comprehensive synopsis of EASTER grafted on as a prologue, saying that Blish is talking through his hat when he calls JUDGEMENT a novel, independent of EASTER. His point is a good one, but in the light of the universality of the Faust-theme and the historical progression (or deterioration if you like) of Blish's technique in relation to the subject, it is incomplete.

JUDGEMENT seems to be a new departure in style and purpose for Blish. I have given you some idea of his philosophical complexities, and this novel is no less, but probably more complex. In BLACK EASTER we get the final, bitter (and what Goethe called the) 'profoundly serious jest' of the scholar slipping into cynicism. It is not surprising that at some time all that frustration, hair-splitting and tension, looming (partly visible but mostly hidden like icebergs) through much of his work up to that time, should break in a long repressed release.

If CONSCIENCE and EASTER were his confessions of doubt, then JUDGEMENT was the release and penance. The tone of it is different - Blish seems to have accepted at last the fantasy element of EASTER and was quite happy to turn to a more naive and romantic conception of religion as an esoteric poetry of archetypes, which in this case almost succeeds in creating a mystical serenity. The comparative freedom and deliberate but uncontrived stylistic forms also indicate some break from the cruel vicissitudes of the other three novels.

Only one thing prevents Blish from achieving a near mystical serenity, and in this I agree with most of the other reviewers; the intrepid four are supplemented by a cast of superfluous and farcical characters and passages, and their removal would considerably improve the quality of story. Nevertheless I still feel it was written more out of conscience than with an eye to monetary gain - perhaps he had been 'advised' to pad out the book.

Blish has taken a long time and a circuitous route to realise in a novel the universally unifying powers of Love. The young Bacon describes his motivation as a "... lust to know, which I count most Holy", and it seems now that Blish is in a position to understand finally not only the motivation of Faust, Wagner, and the Student, but the nature of Mephistopheles, and how closely they are related. Now as before, what will follow is a mystery, for even the nature of Blish's serious writing seems to have altered.

- Bob Rickard, 1972

It may be just as well for you, Jerry, that I have been so tardy in publishing of late, for last Summer I recall being completely enraptured by the idea of face-lifting Speculation into a much more 'chatty' magazine about personalities first. I voiced these ideas at the second Speculation Conference last June and met with great disapproval from Philip Strick and Mark Adlard in particular; in the end my last issue was a compromise settlement - but I was pleased with the way it turned out, and you may be seeing more of the same.

I mention Philip and Mark, incidentally, because they are in what I regard as an 'earlier' stage of development than myself, if that doesn't sound too ridiculous. After another five years of reading SF criticism (as I told 'em) it will be interesting to see what are their opinions then. And the same for Bruce Gillespie, whom I suspect to be my doppelgänger in everything except the one tragic fact that I began five years before he commenced publishing. Oh!, for I am now an Old Fan and Tired...

Incidentally, this heresy is by no means a recent phenomena; I see from my own file of ancient back-issues of Speculation that I was jumped on as long ago as 1965 by my old pal Charles Platt for publishing what he called "Zenith True Confessions" instead of criticism. (Zenith being the former name for my serious little fanzine that had dared to publish a bit of gossip about Campbell...)

Chris Priest, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Mx.

Dear Pete, "I thought Tony Sudbery's review of INDOCTRINAIRE was excellent. That isn't to say that I have been swept away on a tide of happiness by his last paragraph; the many adverse criticisms he made saw to that. But I felt that it was that rare beast; a fair and accurate critical essay. If anything it tended too much to the generous, but perhaps that could be accounted for by the fiver I sent him.

It seemed to me to be a particularly telling point that this review should have appeared in a fanzine... OK, OK, I know SPEC is the greatest, but it's still dun for fun. I begin to see what other writers have meant when they've criticised the state of reviewing. Before INDOCTRINAIRE was published I felt that SF-writers had it pretty good so far as reviewing is concerned. But let me tell you about INDOC, without, I hope, succumbing to the temptation to make it an ego-trip.

It was published about 18 months ago, without publicity. Nearly 70 review copies were sent out, and around 20 reviews actually appeared. Of those that appeared in mass-circulation papers, only two went into it in any depth. They were in New Scientist and the TLS .. and both reviewers were personal friends. The rest were "mentions": a brief plot-summary followed by a couple of phrases of journalistic critical tags ("Kafkaesque" was the most common).

The whole nonsensical thing about this was epitomised for me by the 'review' that appeared in - of all places - the Burton-on-Trent Daily Mail. The writer waxed lyrical about my brilliance, compared me favourably to H.G. Wells, and then finished off with a word-by-word transcription of the jacket-blurb... so I suspected he hadn't read it at all. Quite honestly I think it would be almost better to have no reviews at all than these thumbnail cameos.

Tony Sudbery's review contained - I think - not a single phase of journalistic claptrap. When I read it, I experienced alternate moments of chill, enlightenment, despair, pleasure.. and overall a renewed faith in SPECULATION's reviewing reputation.

Apart from that, if I could pick up the loose ends of a nine-months old discussion... Malcolm Edwards questions my opinion that THE BLACK CORRIDOR is a better book than TIGER! TIGER! I think that Bester's novel has more than a slight edge over Moorcock's in terms of enjoyment, but I was being rather high-minded

about political content. At the time I wrote the 'View of Suburbia' piece, I was at the end of a long consideration of why I thought SF - as a form of literature - was basically shoddy. It seemed then (as it does now) that political naivete was a very implicit cause.

I believe that all good literature has a political purpose, and SF particularly so. THE BLACK CORRIDOR does have a political tub to thump, and so in this sense it has greater claim to being 'literature' than, I feel, TIGER! TIGER!, and is, therefore, a 'better' book. (Even though, and this is where my argument gets a bit shaky, I think THE BLACK CORRIDOR is shoddily written and derivative)."

* Problem is though Chris that it takes me so long to publish these excellent reviews of your books! How long will it be before we discuss your new one, FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLE? You tell me, Graham Charnock. Of course the freedom of comment encouraged in a fanzine can work the other way, as I'm sure you'll remember Chris when I mention Dick Geis' review of INDOCTRINAIRE which similarly made no concessions to journalistic convention. And, Wayne Jobling, I don't have to like a book before reviewing it; personally I was not at all happy with INDOCTRINAIRE but I thought Tony Sudbery made some good points. I didn't like THE BLACK CORRIDOR either....

Mike Moorcock, London.

Dear Pete, "I'm afraid I'm a bit out of touch and found all the contributions this time somewhat dull, but that may be my subjective reaction. I don't think it's a good idea using people like Conquest and Strick - decent non-professionals seem to write livelier and far less pretentious articles.

I don't remember the comparison of THE BLACK CORRIDOR and TIGER! TIGER!, but I'd certainly agree with Malcolm Edwards - BLACK CORRIDOR doesn't begin to rate with T.T. on any level whatsoever. T.T. is very good.

Tony Sudbery: I've changed my mind about Philip K Dick since 1966, and, frankly, haven't read anything since THREE STIGMATE. I think to some extent I was enthusiastic about Dick's potential, and haven't found that he's developed it. A lot more interesting writers have emerged since 1966 (Disch, Sladek, etc) and others like Silverberg have hit new and more exciting veins so I'd like to make it plain to one and all that my stuff on Dick is nearly six years old and my enthusiasm has waned - though I still think Dick was good for the time and at the time, particularly in MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE."

Roger Waddington, 4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, Yorks.

Dear Pete, "And Philip K Dick? My conclusion is that he began writing with serious intent, but as soon as he saw that he wasn't making that much impression he thought 'to hell with them all' and started churning out potboiler after potboiler, with maybe an occasional serious tome to test the temperature. THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE was one, and maybe THREE STIGMATA..., but the rest of his books are just entertainment, designed as such and designed to sell; and most of them are variations on the same theme, the aforementioned nature of reality, the use and misuse of power, and how to get stepped on..

Yet he's such a good writer that these themes come up fresh and new each time, with different twists; and I'd say that it's these well-known and loved situations that draw the Dick fan, more than any startling new concepts that might burst upon them (and these have been noticeably absent lately). I see him as the Agatha Christie of SF, writing the same sort of stories, in the same mould (one would hesitate to call it a rut), providing variations of the theme and with the same cast of characters."

Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol 4.

Dear Peter, "It may shock you to find me writing a LoC on Speculation; but after thirteen issues sent in trade a point of intersection has been reached, namely the work of Philip K Dick, one of the two SF writers I can actually comment on! I have, incidentally, written a fairly long piece on Dick which I intend to publish in Mor-farch 4. For the moment, however, I shall take a lunge or several at the anti-Dick faction and at Tony Sudbery in particular.

I'm sure all of us can think of several writers who we know are competent and worthy, but whom we simply don't enjoy (Saul Bellow & Norman Mailer are two that occur to me). Tony Sudbery's equation of Dick's novels with an onset of 'flu is similar to my highly subjective reaction to Mailer; however the objectionable part about Tony's article is that he attempts to rationalise this dislike, presumably from the dubious assumption that "what I don't enjoy, must be bad in itself". I know that by attacking the article I'm not going to change Tony's view of Dick, because his spurious criticisms are not the cause of his dislike but just a collection of oddments uncovered when hunting for a justification of a personal antipathy with the author. Nonetheless such provocation shan't go /ignored...

Tony Sudbery's mode of criticism is annoying in itself. He sets up a false target with exaggerated praise (mostly culled from a few inanities in John Brunner's 'The Work of P.K. Dick') and then knocks it down with some ease; even I'd agree that Dick is not a "brilliant" writer, nor a "superb craftsman in every way" - such a suggestion could only come from a fanatic with little or no outside reading. But Dick is a genuinely interesting writer and an entertaining one.

Prolific authors are not generally noted for stylistic beauty. The passage quoted from TIME OUT OF JOINT is entirely nondescript I agree, but not particularly bad in context. I could throw back a few good passages but the exercise would be somewhat worthless. Philip Dick is not normally praised for his style, which is competent and able though unexceptional in itself.

Now of course we come to the heart of the matter; Tony Sudbery considers the theme of reality to be unimportant, frivolous... * Well, what can you say to something like that? What theme could be more important? It simply dwarfs everything else, for if your reality is illusory then the things that seem to matter are also illusions - insubstantial, meaningless trivialities.

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE is, despite Tony's crusading blindness, centred on the meaning of reality. "We are all insects", says Tagomi, "groping towards something terrible or divine." The macabre conclusion shows just how terrible the final truth is; their world is not the real one but a nightmarish sham. ** Earlier Baynes considers the universe of Axis domination; "A psychotic world we live in. The madmen are in power." If this is not the genuine world, the insanity of it all is explained. But knowledge of the truth through the I Ching, the answer to the surrounding madness, leads to utter despair; you must live in an unreal world, a vicious and meaningless one, and you can do absolutely nothing about it. How much for the "theme of conquest and government" that Tony considers most important?"

* No he doesn't; he clearly said the question we were left asking was not "What is reality?", but "What does Philip K Dick mean by reality?". Which is, as Tony says, far less interesting. And Dick's ending, he concludes, is ultimately a meaningless piece of frivolity.

** If the people in the world of MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE have to live and die in their world, like it or not it is not an illusion, is it? Not to them...

Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.

Dear Peter, "I don't particularly want to join in the Philip K Dick debate (although I'm very glad that it is being conducted) because I have already written between 15,000 - 20,000 words about the recent novels of Dick, in SF Commentary Nos 1,2,4, & 9. All issues except No.4 are out of print at the time of writing, but given enough encouragement I'm willing to photocopy material for anybody who is interested.

Re Dick, I've never said he was easy reading; but then it's almost an insult to call a book "easy reading" anyway. The same goes for SOLARIS - it's a magnificently introspective, serious book, so I wouldn't expect to flip through it. Would you? "

* No comment, Bruce; but here's someone who wants to rip into you over your own comments last issue about Poul Anderson...

Pat McGuire, 237 S. Rose St., Bensenville, Ill. 60106, USA

Dear Peter, "Even though in Spec.-29 the battle has already been carried out of the review pages and into the letter column I can't very well let you or Bruce Gillespie have the last word on Poul Anderson.. It seems incontestable to me that Anderson thinks he knows something about "real politics" and that he believes that this knowledge finds its way into his stories. He says in the afterword to his story in Harrison's SF: AUTHOR'S CHOICE,

'It's not enough to know how a spaceship works; ships have crews and crews have organisation. Engines operate under the laws of economics as well as the laws of thermodynamics. The people who built them reached the decision to do so through decision-making processes. These human mechanisms are known. You can find them in a book or in a visit to City Hall.'

The fact that the word "liberty" has become so debased a coinage as Mr Gillespie rightly states, might, one would think, tend to make him look favourably on someone who has spent twenty-five years explaining in fairly close detail what he means by the term. But no, Mr Gillespie objects to what he takes to be Anderson's nineteenth-century liberal rhetoric, and would prefer that at the least Anderson switch to nineteenth-century Marxist rhetoric such as "class structures" and "wealth distribution". (Gillespie also implies, for reasons which are not at all clear to me as a graduate student in politics at Princeton University, that the latter rhetoric is somehow more 'scientific' or 'modern', but this is a side-issue.)

He also reproaches Anderson for not portraying the likely political systems of the future. This first of all begs the question of whether the business of science fiction is prognostication at all. Certainly many authors including Anderson and also Gillespie's beloved Lem, have, for example, portrayed faster-than-light interstellar travel, which is about as improbable a development as one can readily imagine. As Anderson, at least, well knows.

However, if we grant Mr Gillespie his quaint 1920's notion of science fiction, then I would like to know what he finds impressive about 1984. This work, as one might hope Gillespie would have noticed, is a reworking of Zamiatin's WE (itself dependent on Wells) into a denunciation of Stalinism. I consider 1984 a great book, but it is hardly prognostication; Stalin's system began to come apart within four years of the publication of 1984.

But to be generous, even now we can simply congratulate Mr Gillespie on his mastery of doublethink, and grant both of his contradictory points at once. We will then come to the question that both you and he ask, do political systems ever devolve? * Well, I would be willing to make a small wager that they do, although of course 'devolution' presupposes a set of indicators for evolution in the first place, and there might be some difficulty in agreeing on those.

In any case, this is not the real issue. The question is, rather, does it ever happen that a political system is more profitably comparable to one which preceeded it by a number of years than to one which came immediately before it? I think the answer is 'yes', beyond any doubt. I would be willing to argue that Europe in the twelfth or thirteenth century was on the whole more "advanced" than was Rome in the 1st Century BC. Whatever you may think of serfdom it is a clear improvement over latifundia-type slavery. But the fact remains that Rome had extensive trade, important cities, and a money economy; and some semblance of "rule of law", and republican institutions. It is clear, then, that Rome will be more useful than the Middle Ages for some comparisons with modern times.

When we consider further that Anderson's stories often take place in newly-founded colonies the argument becomes even more certain. Europeans did descend on a large scale to slave-holding -- though here with some few concessions to humanitarianism -- in the Americas. It was also in America that certain obsolete medieval ideas on the roles of king and parliament were combined with even older ideas of republicanism and democracy, and restored to a function in government. It was in Gillespie's own Australia that the medieval idea of the welfare state underwent one of its first modern resurgences.

As to whether Anderson "should" write in some of his stories about fairly 'pure' market economies, or whether he should be so 'relevant' as to always explore mixed or socialist economies; or whether he should always write about governments at least as omnipresent as those now prevalent... well, I should hope that one of the purposes of science fiction is to present alternatives to the current state of affairs, for the sake of a clearer perspective on things-as-they-are if for nothing else.**

Finally I think that you should keep in mind that all Politics ("politics" as a study - I think "political science" is a bit presumptuous, given the state of the art) is divided into two parts; description and prescription. I think you underestimate Anderson's concern with the latter. He is interested in 'freedom' not only as a concept of government but also as a concept of philosophy. On this level, nineteenth-century capitalism - as well as fourteenth-century feudalism, which Anderson has also treated at length, - become more 'relevant' to the current situation.

In answer to your own plea (Spec-29, Pp.44), someone has written about the other side of the events in MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS. His name is Robert Anson Heinlein. Consider the "pro-Federation" 'Solution Unsatisfactory', (Cont/d)

* I wasn't actually allying myself too closely with Bruce's views, Pat. I don't have enough knowledge of political systems to know about devolution of societies for certain; I was really asking out of curiosity.

** For various reasons I've recently begun to up-rate my opinions of Anderson's work considerably (he'll be relieved to hear!). The van Rijn stories appear to me to be unusually realistic for SF. Perhaps economic laws will change more than Poul imagines, but they certainly won't be ignored, as so many other SF stories seem to do. A proper regard for money-grubbing as a reason for human activity seems refreshingly true to life, if a trifle cynical.

'If This Goes On' (in which the U.S. is the only isolationist country in the world before the Revolution, and its policy presumably changes afterward), BEYOND THIS HORIZON, 'Coventry', 'The Long Watch', in which a lunar-based coup is defeated; most of the Juveniles, in which a Federation is postulated and more-or-less approved of, (exceptions: BETWEEN PLANETS & RED PLANET); the favourable detailing of parliamentary procedures and the condemnation of violence in DOUBLE STAR; the heavily-Americanised but nonetheless internationalised world of STARSHIP TROOPERS - the here is Filipino, remember, ... Enough?

There have always been people warning fans not to take Heinlein so literally, but no-one seems willing to listen. Heinlein is quite capable of adopting for a story a position which he himself does not hold. You may notice that the guiding philosophy of the Federation in STARSHIP TROOPERS is precisely the party-platform of the evil-if-not-duped Humanist Party in DOUBLE STAR. Those two books were published only three years apart. Are you going to tell me that Heinlein's views reversed completely in that period? *

I am impressed no end by the fact that you have got Robert Conquest - of necessity the patron saint of an SF fan in Russian studies - to do a book review for you. He does a good job, but next time I hope he will try his hand at some work a bit more challenging than a gimmick anthology."

Mark Adlard, 'Four Ways', Ham Lane, Lenham, Nr. Maidstone, Kent.

Dear Peter, "I'm sure that everyone interested in the welfare of SF is permanently indebted to the Amis/Conquest team, NEW MAPS OF HELL, the SPECTRUM anthologies, and their more general bashing of conventional culture in defence of SF, all did a great deal to make SF acceptable to a larger public and to win for it a kind of attention which I believe is still lacking in the USA. But the continuing assumption of joyous philistinism by Amis and Conquest is now redundant. They now have the appearance of kindly and accomplished gentlemen who once helped a lame dog over a stile, but who upon seeing the animal frisking about in the next field are sorely tempted to kick its backside for presumption.

Thus a short while ago we had Kingsley Amis doing his 'Lucky Jim' act in Cypher-4, complaining that SF was taking itself too seriously, and pretending that he couldn't understand what Ballard meant by 'inner space' (although J.G. Ballard's concept of inner space was specifically acknowledged in the introduction to SPECTRUM-3 as "obviously within the conventions of science fiction").

And now we have Robert Conquest in Spec-29, doing a Wellsian no-nonsense act and maintaining that talking about Henry James, "especially in the SF context" is "a notable act of treason". They remind me of literary men who go slumming in their old haunts and are horrified to discover that the pubs have been renovated.

Now that the general corpus of '50s SF has been accepted and digested by a wider public (due in no small part to the Amis/Conquest partnership) it would be a good thing if both writers and reviewers of SF made sure that they knew what "the dear old mainstream experimentalists of 40-50 years ago" actually did. A grasp of the technical innovations introduced by James and Conrad, for example, would inhibit the "po-faced exhibitionist attitude" which Conquest so rightly deplores, and might choke off some of the silly-clever "experimental" writing which thinks itself contemporary.

(Cont/d)

* Yes, I think that is what I do believe. Which leads to the interesting question of what on Earth soured Heinlein so completely within 3 years (less, actually, since DOOR INTO SUMMER comes between DOUBLE STAR and STARSHIP TROOPERS and that is a 'light' rather than 'dark' book)?

But if Amis and Conquest continue to act like doting fathers who feel obliged to chastise their children every time they show signs of outgrowing their adolescence, they will begin to reduce the great debt of gratitude which is owed to them by the SF world.

Many people would support a contention that Asimov and Clarke were the most dominant figures in the period to which Amis and Conquest have given most attention. There is a parallel between these two writers which has some bearing on the point I am making. The introduction to the stories collected in NIGHTFALL contains Asimov's shameless confession that he doesn't know anything about writing ("As far as writing is concerned, I am a complete and utter primitive... I just write any old way it comes into my mind... etc") and he goes on to say how depressed he is that 'Nightfall' itself, written at the age of 21, should still be considered his best story.

Clarke is much more of a conscious artist (which is confirmed, I think, by the interview reported by Philip Strick in Spec-29). But in the introduction to the stories collected in REACH FOR TOMORROW he says this:-

"'Rescue Party', which was written in 1945, was my first published story and a depressing number of people still consider it my best. If this is indeed the case I have been steadily going downhill for the past ten years, and those who continue to praise this story will understand why my gratitude is so well controlled."

I find that very interesting.

Many people before the First World War would have supported a contention that Hugh Walpole and Compton Mackenzie were the most promising novellists of their time. They were both about 30 years old. Walpole had written MR PERRIN AND MR TRAILL; Mackenzie had written SINISTER STREET. They both went on writing for many years, and they both continued to be popular. But neither of them produced anything better than those early works. The direction of the English novel changed in the 1920s. They both ignored the technical innovations which were then taking place, and competently soldiered on into oblivion."

* Two points, Mark. Despite their protestations I don't think either Clarke or Asimov really believe themselves that 'Rescue Party' and 'Nightfall' are their two best stories, respectively. Each, I suspect, knows that the praise which the stories generated is due more to the basic idea of each story, both winners, than to any stylistic perfection. Here we come to a point which Fred Pohl raised at Chester and upset a lot of people for his pains; that in SF, style is the last thing any serious writer should worry about. That form follows function and the style which most economically and completely conveys all these things is the right one for the story.

Alex Eisenstein, 2061 W. Birchwood, Chicago, Illinois 60645, USA.

Dear Pete, "Every time I see my name in Speculation, my blood begins to boil... I may be wrong about TIGER! TIGER! vs. 'The Stars My Destination', but I'll never know if I never see a copy of the English edition of Tiger! Tiger! At this point I'd be willing to accept the loan of that edition from some kind soul, having been unable to get one from elsewhere!

Douglas Barbour rightly points out that Chris Priest spoke too soon and read too little in connection with the politics of Gully Foyle (or Bester). What Barbour misses is that Priest was looking for political affiliation, and beyond that, despite a professed generalisation of 'politics' to cover all major social interaction, careless Chris was really fishing for leftwing doctrine.

Again he missed the boat, as Barbour makes obvious; Gully Foyle is an egalitarian populist, who all but shouts "Power to the people!" The crucial difference between Foyle and most real-life leftists is that Foyle is not a demagogue; he is truly a liberator, truly a man in revolt - against society, servitude, ... and self. Had Chris read further than the first forty pages,* glaring political action would have confronted his shaky preconception of the book, but even before that he should have detected its political nature; in its first few pages Bester outlined the social and cultural background of the story, which has as its major element after teleportation, that is, a colonial uprising based on economic differences (albeit the latter are described rather superficially).

Chris complained that Bester had deliberately fashioned Foyle as an apolitical nonentity-of-record.. but again, had the critic read further, he should have seen that this characterisation is consistent with the effects - and common populace - of the "gutter" society passingly portrayed in the course of the novel. Would a jack-jauter harbour political ideology in his heart?

Among all your shoddy critics, Chris Priest most effectively displays the sensibility of the dead; he falls asleep over Anderson and cannot read more than 40 pages, on his second attempt, into Bester's most well-remembered story (indeed, that author's most engaging work, for all that it may not be half the novel it should be...). When may we expect his interment?

Of course, we also suffer at your hands, the judgment of Paul Gilster that two-thirds of MORE THAN HUMAN is "technically incompetent". I suppose he would prefer 'Slow Sculpture' to 'Baby Is Three'? Nine-tenths of the folk who write to or for you, Peter, don't know what they're up to, I swear!

I still vote for Kirk Douglas as Gully Foyle in any screenplay, - certainly over Anthony Quinn. (Chris Priest has absolutely no sense of casting).

Now for Malcolm Edwards, who notices that the British edition differs from the serial version in the line "Vorga, I kill you, etc" (As I've noted in my earlier letters, the US paperback edition and the version in the Boucher TREASURY OF SF follow the magazine version, at least in this particular matter.)

Malcolm ponders the effect of changing the final word: "'deadly' has all sorts of connotations that 'filthy' lacks completely, which make the phrase memorable"... so he says. (I remember, too, that Pete Weston himself told me in person at the '67 Eastercon, that "filthy" seemed a 'silly' word, in context; Pete, are you sure you're not still pulling Malcolm's strings?). Yes; well, the converse is also notably true. To be blunt, killing is, of necessity, a deadly activity, each and every time... How can neither of you see that "deadly" is a stupid redundancy, whereas "filthy" is the properly emphatic adjective in this case? Must I explain, really, what a filthy death is? (Cont/d)

* Chris Priest:- "One thing I would mention to Douglas Barbour, is that I did read the whole of TIGER! TIGER!... but it was several years ago. The thing started because I was made curious by a remark of Tony Sudbery's as to why Gully Foyle is thought of in fannish circles as being one of SF's all-time Great Heroes. It took only the first few chapters of re-reading to find this out, to my own satisfaction, and the rest of my remarks sprang from this. I take Barbour's point about Foyle coming to a kind of political commitment by the end of the book... but I still believe that the book as a whole is politically naive."

I wonder at Malcolm's comment, concerning the description of Foyle's first transformation: "Told, admittedly, rather than shown..." In what way could Foyle's change in outlook be more clearly "shown"? By means of introspective exposition (in a third-person narrative, yet)?

I also wonder if one can say (as Malcolm does) that SF is "politically naive"; relative to what? The erudite certainty of M. Edwards? Other literature? Present-day mainstream? (You're kidding, Malcolm!) I tend to doubt that SF is read for reassurance, political or otherwise. And why are fans of a certain stripe constantly attacking the "political naivete" of Poul Anderson, but not of Ursula LeGuin? What makes an ersatz Orient so much more elegant and creative as an e.t. culture, than one which is recognisably Western in derivation? Why do people deride Anderson's use of feudal organisation and motifs in technological societies, yet give LeGuin a by?

I see Bruce Gillespie saying that "liberty" is a neologism of the last century.. he should be more careful of his phrasing, or else he should stick his head in an unabridged dictionary. Also, I didn't know that "liberty" ever described a particular system, in anyone's lexicon, even Anderson's. Of course "liberty" has been used as a slogan; it appears today on the coins of many nations, but most prominently on those of the USA (...perhaps the latter fact is the reason people like Bruce detest the word so). Nevertheless, the abstraction represented by the word "liberty" has hardly become a dated subject, notwithstanding Bruce's wishful assertions. He, and fellows like him, are fond of invoking Orwell, for some odd reason; I wonder what they think Orwell would say of their notions of political sophistication, were he alive today? I wonder what they think 1984 is all about, if not the matter of basic human liberty? I hardly think Anderson's concern with the subject is as simple-minded as Bruce and David Redd make out; I'd wager his philosophy goes well beyond the exclusivity of Patrick Henry's exhortation.

Incidentally, I imagine that Fred Pohl was surprised at the assertion (from Graham Charnock) that he might be a "right-winger".

Why are so many people who appear in Speculation afflicted with such obvious bad taste? Graham Charnock makes himself look an idiot by claiming that THE NEW MACHIAVELLI and such "are worth a hundred TIME MACHINES". Is he serious? KIPPS, MR POLLY, and even THE NEW MACHIAVELLI simply are not read today by the book-buying public. THE TIME MACHINE, WAR OF THE WORLDS, and THE INVISIBLE MAN are. That was Pohl's basic point; from there he went on to this idea: if Great Literature is that which survives, then this is it. To use Graham Charnock's own words, I must conclude that he is "a peculiar chap... one can only feel sorry for a man so spiritually and intellectually impoverished that he" prefers the free-love agitprop of ANN VERONICA to the intense visionary substance of THE TIME MACHINE.

James Blish burnishes the graven image of Damon Knight to a high lustre, and I guess that's expectable, but it's an awful lot of puff for (a) Knight as the editor of ORBIT, which is hardly the middle-of-the-road vehicle Blish says it is, and certainly no stronghold of fine writing - in fact, a lot of it is worse than embarrassing; and (b) knight the critic, whose most damning cuts are all misplaced, when closely examined. *

The factual matter expressed in Blish's talk is interesting, but the deliberate deletion of names at certain spots is very irritating; a history with important names absent is something less than a true history. (Cont/d)

* Really, Alex? I'd like to see you develop that argument at length!

I can well understand why Blish doesn't name Jakobssen as the editor of Super Science, considering the explicit slight (partly gratuitous, even if true) and Jakobssen's present position of importance, but the other folks made anonymous are the objects of nothing more than minor embarrassment. Even more perplexing, as the identity of Jakobssen is fairly obvious, though the others are not.

An odd inconsistency develops from Blish's praise for ORBIT and his low opinion of most Nebula Award winners (this latter has been stated by him elsewhere, in somewhat stronger terms than in Spec-29), inasmuch as ORBIT has, until recently, dominated the Nebula awards. If the Nebula-winning stories are poor to mediocre, what does that make ORBIT?

I think there is some significance to the "tide of fashion" noted by Blish in the appendage to his essay in organisational anthropology; I think the reception accorded stories like RINGWORLD and TAU ZERO (and even, to some extent, 'The Sharing of Flesh', which won a Hugo at St. Louiscon), in its disregard for faults of story sense that in bygone years would rarely get by, indicates a great hunger for stories that delve into realms of speculative science and of primary wonder for the universe at large. I think the cause lies, simply, in reaction to the sterile garbage purveyed ad nauseam by ORBIT, NEW WORLDS, QUARK, et al for too many years past.

Finally, Robert Conquest delivers some brutal blows for mainline SF, yet I feel they are in service of a book that doesn't much deserve them. Not that his opinions on the stories themselves are necessarily unfounded, but I feel he allows them too much latitude. As he observes, the Blish story ('We All Die Naked') is basically ridiculous, yet Conquest is fairly mild toward it. If the Silverberg story is the most enjoyable, it is nevertheless borderline SF at best. Is this collection (THREE FOR TOMORROW) really a good example even of "standard" fare? The content is far from 'speculative' today, even in the older, Heinleinesque sense of the term.

" - SF is a literature for children and adults, and submits to adolescent criteria at its peril - ". How perfect and succinct! I hope Mr Conquest will allow this epigram a wider circulation? "

David Redd, 66 Augustine Way, Haverfordwest, Pems.

Dear Pete, "Musing on SF's 'conservative backlash' makes me think about the stories which could be written, but aren't. Let me quote from Kumar: 'On the Formation of the Solar System' in the October 15, 1971, Nature:-

/Kumar computed the stable orbits for small bodies such as planets circling stars./ "It is clear that increasing the mass of Jupiter and/or increasing its orbital eccentricity makes the orbits of the "small" planets such as the Earth, unstable. A small planet, when put in one of the unstable orbits, will tend to collide with one of the primaries, or it will be thrown out of the system. Some stable periodic orbits exist, but they are located either very close to one of the two primaries or very far away from both of them."

So, if a star has any planet or companion larger than Jupiter, there'll be no other planets. The explorers from Earth will have very few staging posts among the stars... except on scorched planets close in, like Mercury, or on frozen wildernesses whose suns seem no nearer than other stars. Human exploration of the Galaxy under these conditions, now there's a story.

But who's going to write it? It's genuine SF, taking a scientific fact and extrapolating the consequences for humanity. And you don't see writers tackling new ideas very often in SF these days. (Remember the howls of astonished

pleasure when Keith Laumer invented a new possible-world gimmick in WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM .. when Bob Shaw invented slow glass?) I just flipped through the Speculation Book Guide, looking for old-fashioned SF of this type. You can guess how discouraged I was.

You may say the idea isn't new. There aren't enough suitable planets, so humanity will have to use some of the unsuitable ones. An old idea? Yes, but not in the way it affects human history now. There is a story there, and it could be a good one. I'm sure John J Pierce and his friends would love to read it. In fact, if you keep your eyes open, ideas like this have been cropping up regularly - the new planet in the Crab Nebula, for instance. The ideas are here if the authors want to use them. In the last decade the ideas haven't been used, because either the writers or the readers weren't interested.

So, if people really are becoming interested in the old-style SF again, there's every opportunity for the return to basics to be fruitful. If not ... well, there are always enough new readers for rehashes of the old stories to sell. But I would really would like to see SF return not to the old plots, but to the old interest in the new which made it what it was.

Do you agree with me, Pete? Or is SF something else to you?"

* You shouldn't have to ask, if you've been reading your Speculation for the last five years. Who's going to write that story? Well, I hope you are, David; you're the published professional-type writer around here. But even ignoring Lester Del Rey's 'The Years Draw Nigh' (1951) which explored that particular idea, I agree that there are plenty of astrophysical discoveries around to be utilised. Two writers at least have been doing this.. no prizes for guessing who has written about a neutron star, an exploding galaxy, a contra-terrene planet, the inside of a star-cluster, a nova within an adjacent solar system. There's a pretty good yarn in the latest Analog by Joe Haldeman. Surprisingly good in fact.. it mentions collasars but doesn't really do much with them, but is otherwise a up-dating and humanising of STARSHIP TROOPERS.

OTHER LETTERS RECEIVED... Brian Stableford, who enclosed a massive essay on Robert Silverberg, which I hope to publish next time; David B Williams, former SFR columnist who has now decided to try writing for himself, instead of reviewing; Malcolm Edwards who promised to send reviews this time but didn't; Valdis Augstkalns; Dick Tiedman who was 'finished' with the last Heinlein novel; Tom Burke, who thinks Keith Roberts is one of SF's best craftsmen; David Pringle who still likes what was called the 'new wave'; Kenneth Mardle; Piers Anthony, who has been killing-off top fanzines in droves by sending them his long article on collaboration; Mike Meara, who was impressed; A.G. Prior; Mitchell J Swedo; Angus Taylor of Toronto who agreed with Doug Barbour; Dave Piper and the usual happy letter; Roger Earnshaw who points out that in RINGWORLD Niven mentions six Kzin wars over several centuries; Wayne Jobling who writes in shrill, silly complaint; Graham Boak who says anyone who praises CITY OF ILLUSIONS over WIZARD OF EARTHSEA has lost their sense of wonder; A good long letter from Darrell Schweitzer, on both Philip K Dick & the GULLIVER vs CANDIDE thing. A pity I ran out of room for this one - I'll pass the comments on direct to Pohl & Sudbery, Darrell; Letter from Gretchen Schwenn who apparently lives in Redd Boggs' post-box, says that in California people already wear Philip K Dick-style clothes; Another good letter from David Redd on the disappearance of the Compact New Worlds crowd; and a last good, quotable letter from Dave Hulvey - who though seriously about starting a cult on Aldiss' "backward time-flow theory"; doesn't care much for Dick; and thinks Anderson's OPERATION CHANGELING in F&SF was an over-reaction to the hippie group and the U.S. peace movement. Sorry Dave - no more room. // Perhaps you'll all write again for the next issue? I hope so.

RON BENNETT'S SS WK YY RR AA CC KK BOOK SERVICE.....

Ron Bennett, British School, SHAPE, BFPO 26(use 3p stamp as for inland mail).

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<u>MOST THRILLING</u> #1, #9. fg @ 10p	57:5,8. fg @ 50p
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Ron Bennett, British School, SHAPE, BFPO 26.

Note: due to delay in publishing this advertisement, some of the above items may now be sold. However, Ron will still welcome your enquiry; Full list available.

EDITORIAL (Continued from Page 1)

Perhaps in some ways I might conceivably have been better off without discovering science fiction - there is a chance that without its distractions I could have learned a little more, progressed more surely in the Real World of business (although indirectly SF did help me to get started on my present career); but what sort of talk is that, anyway? What's the use of a life without an interest, and what more absorbing interest than science fiction?

Of course Wollheim's book will be used as ammunition against him; "Well at least I have done some other things" said an acquaintance, "Wollheim doesn't know anything except science fiction and that's nothing to be proud of."

Enthusiasm ought to be tempered with moderation but it is so easy to submerge into the private cosmos of SF fandom. Or am I talking about two distinct things here, science fiction itself and its fandom, as parallel but separate attractions?

The case for fandom is clear enough; despite occasional comments from self-made 'intellectuals' like J.G. Ballard ("a slim young man who told me that there were some extraordinary types at the convention and that he was thinking of leaving pretty smartly" - Aldiss reporting the first London World Convention, in THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS, Pp 103.) and otherwise-affable types such as Dr Christopher Evans, who confided in a 1971 letter that he had attended several conventions and had yet to meet anyone genuinely interested in new ideas.

Take, for example, that young American girl Mary Goodaw, who came along to the Giffard last year to cover the Easter Convention for the Worcester Evening News. She appeared on the Friday, and I was then amused to see that she stuck with the convention in a state of dazed fascination, right up to the Riverboat trip on the Monday morning.

Afterwards she wrote and enclosed a copy of her long, serious report from the paper. "They wanted me to write about what you people were like," she said, "as if you were Martians, or insects. I'm afraid the article is a bit dry compared to the good humour and fun evident throughout the convention - and the pleasure I had myself." There's another convert!

Or my pal Vernon Brown puts the argument in a recent BSFG Newsletter: "Believe it or believe it not," he says, "basically I'm one of the quietest bods one could meet. But in fact I've made more friends and acquaintances during the few years I've mixed with fandom than I ever did before."

It's clear that fandom itself needs no defense from me or anyone else; it can be an excellent excuse both for lively sociality or for long, solitary evenings - who would doubt it?

It is when we consider science fiction itself that we find more attacks being made on its supposed faults. Critics have told us endlessly what is wrong with science fiction; writers indulge in self-flagellation at the least excuse; the fanzines are full of shrill complaints.

This does annoy me and it is one of the reasons why I like Wollheim's viewpoint so much, for he is not afraid to boast openly what is right about science fiction. And this does need emphasis.

Take the case for Brian W Aldiss, for instance, who has made his name, his fame and fortune through science fiction. And yet in the last half-dozen years it has been evident that Brian has allowed himself to be driven almost to the point of despising science fiction and all that it stood for.

We had the tragi-comic spectacle of an SF writer trying to write SF in ever-different ways, trying to dissociate himself from the rich SF heritage, escaping from a supposed 'ghetto' by attempting to write 'mainstream' fiction. Is an ordinary novelist so much more worthy than a science fiction writer?

Well there's nothing wrong with ambition and I congratulate Brian on his successes with HAND-REARED BOY. I accept some of his strictures about the field; but in the excitement I do think Brian had forgotten what he was, always had been, and arguably was best-suited to remain; a science fiction writer.

I'm happy to report that the nine months of intensive research into SF that has been necessary for his book THE BILLION YEAR SPREE seem to have given Brian a renewed faith in his calling, a new humility, almost. I suspect he had not actually read or re-read much science fiction for some years, and the experience seems to have reminded him of the many good things that have been created over the years. We can now even agree about Heinlein for example, and I'm sure I haven't changed my opinions.

As an aside I hope that publication of the 130,000-word BILLION YEAR SPREE will be an important occasion for SF and it will prove whether or not I'm correct in believing that Brian has come to love science fiction again, openly and unashamedly.

There was a lot of truth in Doug Barbour's comment in my last issue that 'the best kind of criticism must be delivered with love.' Can Franz Rottensteiner truly love science fiction anymore? Does John Foyster? Does even Bruce Gillespie really love SF in this, the winter of his discontent?

From the fact that all three appear to read just about every new SF story published I suppose they must still like the stuff in their own ways. But I can't recall seeing Franz Rottensteiner admit he has ever liked anything beside this odd Stanislaw Lem hang-up; and the track record of the other two is not very much better.

I'm thinking about the reviews and comments made in various of John Foyster's own publications, in ASFR and in Science Fiction Commentary in case it should not be obvious, the latter produced and edited by Bruce Gillespie. In these sources in recent years we have seen attacks upon almost every major SF writer, excepting a few who are specially favoured (such as Lem, Dick, Aldiss, and Lem again). Frankly, some of these attacks (especially Rottensteiner's) border on hysteria:-

"STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is an attempt to eliminate normal heterosexual love from the world; a narcissist's attempt to simplify the world.... it is otherwise a megalomaniac fascist fantasy."

It seems to me that though there is a need for criticism, the most violently destructive criticism sometimes, it does make a difference who has delivered that same devastating blow. Any author so provoked has a perfectly valid right to demand; "Put up or shut up".

This would be no defense in the case of a cudgelling from a Blish or a Budrys; we know they are well able to practice what they preach. But to the best of my knowledge neither Foyster nor Rottensteiner have yet sold an SF story of their own. That makes them both very vulnerable indeed. What, after all, can an amateur writer really know about creating a story if he has not had proof of his ability confirmed through a sale? What are his opinions really worth? Dan Morgan says it in the latest Vector: it is much harder to create the shoddiest novel than to tear it apart afterwards.

While upsetting people to greater or lesser extent, I'd also like to tackle Bruce Gillespie in his editorial for SFC-23, where he accuses various people (myself included) of Selling Out. Bruce believes that people are publishing the fanzines they think they should publish (i.e. light-hearted "chatty" fanzines due to the evil influence of Arnie Katz) rather than the kind they really want to publish (which in Bruce's eyes MUST be the ultra-serious magazines such as SFC itself).

Now ignoring the fact that last Summer I would cheerfully have agreed in exactly reverse sense to that intended (I would have said that I was indeed only publishing the fnz. I felt I ought to publish - Speculation - instead of the fnz. I really wanted to produce - a fannish fanzine), Bruce really is talking through his Australian headgear.

Down, poor chap, with a dose of 'flu he views the world through melancholic and inconsistent eyes. In an early paragraph of this editorial he bites hard on a largely illusory bait (he "wouldn't care a damn" if anyone should say that SFC was not their idea of a fanzine) with the inference that no-one has the right to tell others what they should and should not publish.

And then in the next few paragraphs he disapprovingly puts the Finger on sundry other editors for not doing things his way. That's the way I used to sound in my third issue, Bruce, not my twenty-third. Tolerance is a two-way deal.

Having upset the Australian fans I must admit that they have a lot more life in them than do we slothful British. Helpfully, in The Penultimate Blimp Ron Clarke has charted the growth of fanzine publishing in Australia during the last few years. In 1971 the results show that 22 titles at least were published, (of which 8 were new that year), and a total of 118 issues appeared during that year.

Just by chance a new British fan, John Piggott, has carried out a similar survey on the British scene, which must have been a much easier job. In his own slim publication The Turning Worm he reports: "In the six months between July and December 1971, can you guess how many new fanzines I received? Four."

Well, John obviously doesn't get everything produced, but even so that's a pretty telling indictment. I know I have played my own part in the debacle, as the once-bimonthly schedule of Zenith has dwindled into two issues of Speculation in the past sixteen months. Mark Adlard says that in explaining Spec's non-appearance I sound like him giving excuses to a customer for the non-delivery of steel; be that as it may I think I have some quite good excuses, at that.

During those sixteen months I have:-

- * Founded and been chairman of the local SF Group (and produced a rigidly monthly Newsletter),
- * Attended night-school twice a week, three hours an evening, and sat two stiff sets of exams in things like Commercial Law & Accountancy,
- * Ran the 1971 Easter Convention and two Speculation Conferences,
- * Changed my job from the disintegrating BSA to a new company where I have to work an awful lot harder,
- * And last, but by no means the least of my problems - oh no! - my wife has had a baby girl (April 19th) which has certainly kept us busy.

All that besides the 'post-Convention blues' to which John Piggott attributes my apparent inactivity.

When I see those monthly, 90-page issues of SF Commentary, with justified margins yet, I often wish that Bruce Gillespie, too, would get married.... That would soon fix him!

The first issue of Turning Worm was otherwise quite an interesting little thing when it appeared just prior to CHESSMANCON, in which John Piggott contrived to say some slightly silly things in advising British fandom to forget the supposed 'Golden Age' of fanzine writing in this country, while in the same breath admitting that he hadn't even seen such magazines as Hyphen, Aporrheta. John then proceeded to berate everyone else for their failure to publish more often, and this, I'm afraid, is where I began to grump; if there's one thing fandom DOESN'T lack it is those who want others to do what they are not willing (or able) to do themselves.

Take Ian Williams, for instance, a promising new fan when he surfaced last year in the far wastes of Sunderland, Co. Durham. In a fairly recent letter on my last issue, Ian advised:-

"I do believe you need to rethink about Spec. It is too hidebound, staid and polite. Mechanically reviewing dull books that have been out for a couple of years, criticising Fred Pohl for his ignorance of CANDIDE's publishing history, criticising Chris Priest for criticising TIGER! TIGER! Christ who cares about these outdated and outmoded affairs? Start setting trends rather than limping along in your hidebound fashion. A rejuvenated Spec could set British fanzines alight again!"

Not denying that there could be a lot of truth there, Ian's letter says something about British fandom these days - instead of newcomers being fresh, keen, enthusiastically ready to reform fandom, they are content instead to tell poor old sods like me to wake up their ideas. Dammit, I have been publishing for nearly nine years, how am I expected to find the energy to set anything alight at this late date, if Ian cannot do it in the hot flush of youth?

Students of the preposterous may care to note that Ian Williams recently abandoned his own fanzine Maya in disillusionment after publishing two issues; happily John Piggott was able to return after his mixed start, to cover himself in glory with the second issue of Turning Worm. This was so good that if Malcolm Edwards was clearly the Golden Boy of 1971, then John already deserves some similar accolade for his work this year.

Turning Worm is so impressive because it is literate, well-written and it has interesting, vital things to say, taking as its subject matter the doings of British fandom in fine detail. I doubt if Bruce Gillespie would approve, but if U.S. and other overseas sympathisers really want to know what is happening in our odd little British microcosm they can do no better than TTW.

John adopts the form so successfully used by Creath Thorne in Ennui and by John Berry in Maverick, writing all his material himself and telling in detail of his progress through fandom. He writes a very good report on the events at Chester this year, only restricted by the rather cramped company he appeared to keep for the entire convention, and revealing between the lines that he apparently didn't have that much of an exciting nor interesting time. Like Dr Chris Evans John didn't meet anyone despite being surrounded by the most fascinating people for three or four days.

He also writes a very long and perceptive fanzine review column, and this, with a good selection of letters and retorts, completes an excellent 40-page issue. It may not sound very much; but it is one of the most hopeful things to happen to British fandom for a long time.

The lettercolumn in TTW, incidentally, contains two items too good in their own ways to let pass without comment. First there is a really superb letter from Archie Mercer concerning John's previous remarks about the 'Golden Age' in the UK. This is followed by an incredible letter from Terry Jeeves which seeks to argue, one, that British fandom isn't any deader than it has ever been, since the numbers of things produced are pretty much the same as ever (thus ignoring completely any question of quality, which is what John was originally concerned with); and two, that "Slant, Triode, Ape and Orion were good fanzines... Hyphen was, I feel, slightly inferior. It had good material but in general was rather flimsy and lacking in experiment. The colour was a bit off-putting too."

(John Piggott, 17 Monmouth Road, Oxford, UK)

SOME STRANGE THINGS HAPPENED AT CHESSMANCON

CHESSMANCON, as you can probably imagine from this year's photopages, was a very good convention.. despite the forebodings held by almost everyone due to the ever-shifting hotel and almost total lack of communication from the Convention Committee.

As things turned out, The Blossoms was an excellent hotel and was nearly incredible for the way in which it welcomed the most eccentric of its guests... Better, certainly, than even The Giffard last year (and I think the guest/staff relationship there was pretty good). The staff of the Blossoms must go on record as being about the friendliest and most professional of any hotel that I have seen,

The little barman who cheerfully served singlehandedly until five in the morning, only to reappear at half-past nine to polish his glasses before the next onslaught... The porters who - far from hounding fans away from their little pursuits, actually helped them to put insulting messages on to the hotel notice-board, and gleefully took part in the Mammoth Paper Aeroplane Contest down the stairwell.

You don't get that sort of cooperation very often and we were all suitably grateful to the hotel management and the ConComm for a job well done. Of course the hotel was really too small for the size of the event - that hall just could not accommodate the numbers who wanted to cram in, especially for the Saturday evening Fancy Dress Parade.

The physical geography of the place was unfortunate, too, because the presence of three small bars and at least two separate lounges meant that there was no real centre point (like that magnificent lounge at the Giffard) where you could be sure of meeting the people you wanted. I spent a lot of time wandering from one room to another, looking... that, and too many late-night films must have contributed to the general dearth of room parties, at least of the number and standard usually enjoyed at a British convention.

Several unusual events happened at Chester, however, and I would like to tell you about them to the best of my ability now:-

1. The Odd Case of Brian Aldiss,

who for once in his life completely miscalculated the extent of his popularity. In an advertisement in the Programme Booklet, and on lots of little postcards which appeared strategically on every flat surface, the following message was printed:-

"Friends, I solicit your vote to help me represent Britain in the Eurocon Awards (Trieste in July). My suggestion for voting in the novel category is BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD: A European Fantasia (Faber £1.50 and Corgi 30p) - A modern-style novel about the Acid-Head War

which covers the Continent, from Belgium right down to Southern Italy and Yugoslavia. My name is known in Italy. My books are translated there, and I've been both Guest of Honour and Judge at the Trieste Film Festival. Please vote for BAREFOOT - or Aldiss novel of your choice!

- Brian W Aldiss."

Rarely can any campaign have been so counter-productive. "Peter", said Ethel Lindsay to me, "Is Brian really serious? It's a joke, isn't it?" She could not understand, and neither could anyone else, how Brian could have had the bare-faced (bare-footed?) nerve to so blatantly promote himself.

It was generally felt that this was a bit much even for 'lovable' Brian, and in a fairly spontaneous reaction a lot of people voted instead for an author who deserved to be nominated just as much as Brian Aldiss, and who would never, under any circumstances, even dream of soliciting votes. And as a result of course, James White's ALL JUDGEMENT FLED was nominated as the British entrant for the Europa Award.

(I'm happy to add as a postscript that to my complete surprise Speculation was also nominated as the UK's entrant in the fanzine category; something I had not expected. That helps to compensate for the fact that this year Spec has not been nominated for the Hugo - and no wonder! - losing its place, deservedly, to that same SFC from Australia. Just a reminder, though, that Spec has in fact now been nominated for the Hugo on five separate occasions - hardly a record, however, for Yandro established the all-time distinction so far of being nominated SEVEN times before getting an Award.)

2. Who Said What to Whom and Why?

The Sunday Times carried an unusually 'meaty' account of the annual convention this year. "A growing rift in the ranks of writers is apparent," it proclaimed. "They seem a convivial lot, but in private disparagement is rife: 'He fancies himself as a prophet - a Jeremiah', growls one. 'You can't take him seriously', shrugs another, 'he's still in a world of space-opera.'"

It would be very interesting to know who first obtained the ear of the man from the newspapers. I suspect that the one who 'shouldn't be taken seriously' is a reference to Guest-of-Honour Larry Niven - and who could possibly have said that?

The very next paragraph continues with a quote from Brian Aldiss, "Basically you can divide SF writers into highbrow and lowbrow," he says, making it clear that he himself prefers the imaginary worlds of writers like Plato and Swift."

Isn't that revealing? The only trouble with remarks like those are that they give away an awful lot about the state of mind of the person being quoted. And later, after Frederik Pohl's talk had, for the first time ever at a convention, actually generated a real argument among the professional writers present, Brian let the mask slip completely. It was clear whom he regarded as 'lowbrow' - at Chester it was Messrs Niven & Pohl.

Fred's argument was very broadly that the very last thing an SF writer should worry about was style, and did that get some people hopping mad. Fred Pohl handled the session beautifully however, controlling the debate, letting both sides have their say, and cutting short Harry Harrison in full bombastic flow (Harry tended, this year, to rely on his personality rather than actually having anything much to say, both in this argument and in his own talk during the Con.)

That should be a very interesting discussion which I hope will appear in the next issue of Speculation. I have not yet heard the recording of the meeting but I'm told that it is even now on the way to me.

3. How British Fandom Sold Its Heritage

"This will probably be the last time that you'll see fanzines like these for sale at a British convention," I said, "and if we must sell our heritage then I intend to get a good price for it."

Or similar words. That was what I said at the opening of an impromptu fanzine auction on the Saturday night at Chester during which I sold a large part of what I believe to be the B.S.F.A.'s irreplaceable Fanzine Foundation. It is a rather strange story I have to outline here, and it began when I wandered innocently into the Con. Hall during an auction of left-overs which hadn't been sold earlier in the day; - artwork, old books, and the like.

Roger Peyton and Peter Roberts were ferreting amongst a pile of cardboard boxes which were bulging with fanzines, and which the ConComm. knowing nothing about fanzines was proposing to sell by the box, sight unseen. Rog to his credit had realised that some of the things in those boxes were worthy of better treatment, as I discovered when a complete file of Hyphen slid out onto the floor. Then Peter and I started to burrow.

I realised that I had seen this lot before; in 1965 when I had examined the entire BSFA Foundation (one of the four people, I think, who have ever seen it!) and carted it down from Liverpool, where it had rotted since 1961, to the home of Charlie Winstone whom we hoped would be the new custodian (and where it subsequently rotted quietly until a year or two ago due to Charlie's ill-health.)

The BSFA was never interested in the Foundation, has never given any particular encouragement to the production of fanzines despite the tremendous work it might have done in making the past accessible. The Association has always believed as a fundamental tenet of its Constitution that it has some sort of duty to serve science fiction, not fandom, although there is no evidence that the BSFA has ever done anything whatsoever that has helped SF.

You can see that I believe the BSFA could with profit re-examine its reason to be; but leaving that promising argument, the fact remains that the Foundation was allowed to die - never having lived, really. This despite the fact that it contains the private collections of fans such as Eric Jones and others who gave so much material to the Cause. Or should I say 'contained'? For in 1970/71 or thereabouts a Northern fan by name John Muir acquired the FF from Charlie, seemingly without the authority or consent of the BSFA who indeed had until very recently completely 'lost' the collection.

Here the story degenerates from fable into hearsay. When I protested to the BSFA Chairman at Chester that the fanzines about to be auctioned appeared to belong to the BSFA, at least in my opinion, he evidently confronted John Muir who 'explained' that these were only duplicates and/or part of his own collection which had been sold to him by Charlie Winstone.

That's all right then - or is it? Doesn't it sound pretty thin to you? I mean, Charlie as a 1963-fan, like me, never built up much of a collection himself and so I can't see how he could pass on many 1940's fanzines to John Muir. Things like Acolyte, Spaceways, LeZombie, early post-war Ken Slater Fantasts, and that complete run of Hyphen just don't grow on trees.

But the salient point is that the BSFA believed John Muir, and so instructed me to proceed with the auction. After making the position clear to the audience I did so, and though I shouldn't say as much, had a great deal of fun in selling off the more valuable items as well as trying to provide grab-bags which everyone could afford.

It really was a perfect audience for the sale - there were two or three American fans who knew what the material was worth and had money to buy it - and compete with each other! There were several British fans (Peter Roberts, Mike Meara, one or two others) who knew what the things were worth and unfortunately didn't have the money - or at least not enough. And there were a few dealers in the front row, who kept up the tempo of fast bidding and high prices.

Initially I had to share time with the artwork and old book-merchants, but it quickly became clear that it was fanzines which were wanted, and a sort of hush descended on the hall when everyone heard the sort of prices being offered. "Eight pounds, nine pounds, gone" for Hyphen 1-13, and similar amounts for the other two parts into which I broke the set. Mike Meara managed to acquire one part, Joanna Burger gleefully snapped up the others and nearly everything else going.

Poor Peter Roberts, destitute student that he is, tried so hard to empty his pockets for prized items (and I tried to let him have some of them) that the audience gave him a round of applause when he finally succeeded in gaining an almost-complete set of Skyrack. The books and artwork were forgotten; the auction went on for two hours and raised, I think, over £60. (Hyphen went for either £17 or £27; I forget which. Jim White & Bob Shaw were duly incredulous.)

Here is the joker, however. After the Con. I heard by word-of-mouth (which may be incorrect, don't forget) that John Muir had not donated his (?) fanzines to CHESSMANCON after all. Oh no. He had offered them for auction on the understanding that the ConComm kept 15% of the proceeds, the rest going to him. Now this is a statement which I have been unable to check; but if true, it makes me wish that I had given the things away!

The Rest of Life in Miniature

Unfortunately that will have to suffice for my remarks about CHESSMANCON at least for this issue, although I had intended to ramble on about a few other odd incidents that caught my attention at the time. But as usual I have left the writing of this editorial to the last minute and time has beaten me; I have been unable to put anything like as much work as I would have wished into the last few pages; indeed, in places they are embarrassingly close to first-draft.

I did want to mention that the third SPECULATION Conference took place according to plan in Birmingham on June 24th, accompanied by a fine, woozy party the evening before. The Conference was reasonably successful I feel, despite a minimum of organisation by the sponsoring Birmingham University, and of the four speakers at least three - John Sladek, Geoff Doherty, and Edmund Cooper delivered good talks. Forry Ackerman, who honoured us with his presence at the conference said that Cooper's talk was one of the three best talks about SF he had heard - which surely must be praise indeed! By contrast Philip Strick read passages from stories for 1½ hours and was pretty heavy going; "I've never seen such a bad speaker with so much self-confidence" said a fellow-listener.

Otherwise; I did want to mention newcomer to Speculation Tom Shippey, one of the nicest people you could wish to meet, awesomely well-read and lecturer in Medieval English at Birmingham University (Tom speaks at least 7 languages including Old Icelandic), and yet an SF reader of longer standing than I am. Not a scrap of the usual scholastic arrogance - and a great sense of humour, too.

The other newcomer is a little smaller and a lot noisier; Alison Weston, born 19th April and weighing 9lb 7oz; blue-eyed and fair-haired, and already very fond of her Dad. We hope you'll see her at NOVACON! Congratulations, too, to Tom Shippey, whose wife also delivered a baby girl last week. And with that double triumph, this really will have to be the end of Speculation-30! - Peter Weston

SPECULATION BOOK GUIDE - June 1972

From Gollancz:-

A MAZE OF DEATH by Philip K Dick, £1.80. Reviewed in the last issue of Speculation
NEBULA AWARD STORIES No. 6, ed Clifford D. Simak, £1.90. Seven stories, 'Ill Met
in Lankmar (Leiber); 'Slow Sculpture' (Sturgeon); 'In The Queue' (Laumer); 'By
The Falls' (Harrison); 'Continued on Next Rock' (Lafferty); 'The Second Inquisit-
ion' (Russ); 'The Island of Doctor Death & Other Stories' (Gene Wolfe. This is
the most ORBIT-like of the Nebula collections yet, a bad year, I feel.

RINGWORLD by Larry Niven, £1.90. Hugo- & Nebula-winner, this novel doesn't really
deserve such an honour, but it was awarded I feel because Larry Niven was felt
to have earned the highest honours. The awards went to the man, not the book -
even so it's good fun, with a lot of intriguing ideas.

CAN YOU FEEL ANYTHING WHEN I DO THIS? (& 15 other stories) by Robert Sheckley,
£1.80. An excellent little collection of some really barbed, witty tales.

CONSCIENCE INTERPLANETARY by Joseph Green, £1.90. Part of this novel has been
appearing in the magazines during recent years, as tales of the future when man-
king has to decide whether or not to exploit or isolate other planets.

HOLDING WONDER by Zenna Henderson, £2.00. Twenty stories by the author.

PATTERNS OF CHAOS by Colin Kapp, £1.90. I don't think Colin Kapp would pretend to
know a great deal about writing, and having met him once I know he doesn't - that
is, didn't - know a lot about other science fiction stories. However, he does
know how to write an entertaining novel. Not outstanding, but very readable.

KULDESAK by Richard Cowper, £1.80. Quite an interesting novel of the Underground
City Run by Giant Computer. Trouble is, it's been done before.

A POCKETFUL OF STARS by Damon Knight, £1.90. Nineteen stories from Milford
Conferences over the last 15 years. Too many have appeared elsewhere.

OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES by Bob Shaw, £1.80. A novel built around the idea of
Bob's 'Slow Glass' story in Analog. To be reviewed.

REPORT ON PLANET THREE by Arthur C Clarke, £2.20. A collection of essays by Arthur
Clarke, 23 sections dealing with interplanetary travel, machine intelligence,
and general speculations about the future. Rather an up-dating of PROFILES OF
THE FUTURE, though slighter. In fact there isn't a great deal of new 'meat' in
the book, for anyone who has read Clarke's ideas elsewhere. Still recommended
reading for all SF fans, however.

FROM DOUBLEDAY

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, thirteen stories by John Brunner, \$5.95. A set of some of
John Brunner's best stories from the past few years.

MIDSUMMER CENTURY by James Blish, \$4.95. A new novel of time-travel into the
future. To be reviewed in future issues.

THE GODS THEMSELVES by Isaac Asimov, \$5.95. The first Asimov novel since NAKED
SUN in 1957, recently serialised in Galaxy/If. To be reviewed.

HAWKSHAW by Ron Goulart, \$4.95, another novel in 'Things Fell Apart' tradition.

WHAT ENTROPY MEANS TO ME, by Geo. Alec Effinger, \$4.95. Billed as 'an allegorical
fantasy', this one by a Clarion ex-student completely lost me.

AHEAD OF TIME, ed. Harry Harrison & Theodore J Gordon, \$4.95. A collection of 14
essays dealing with various hypotheses recently conjectured by leading scientists.

Trust Harrison to think of this - and the result is stranger than science fiction!

NEBULA AWARD STORIES SIX, ed Clifford D Simak, \$5.95. (see above)

TWENTY-ONE BILLIONTH PARADOX, by Leonard Daventry, \$4.95. Original novel, fair.

GROUP FEAST, by Josephine Saxton, \$4.95, original novel, SF/Fantasy.

PIG WORLD by Charles W Runyon, \$4.95. Future revolution in USA. Rubbish.

CAN YOU FEEL ANYTHING WHEN I DO THIS? by Robert Sheckly, \$4.95 (see above).

FROM DOUBLEDAY (CONTINUED)

THE WRONG END OF TIME by John Brunner, \$4.95. A new novel, but not one of John's very best, I feel. A little slow to get moving.
A POCKETFUL OF STARS ed Damon Knight, \$5.95. See above.
ECODEATH by Jon Watkins & E.V. Snyder - whoever they may be. \$5.95, but avoid this, it is one of the worst SF novels ever written. I could even do better myself.
MARS, WE LOVE YOU, ed. Willis McNelly & Jane Hipolito, \$6.95. This is what one of the US fan-reviewers called a 'useless' book. Certainly the idea is sound, but - I don't know - it's been a long time since Mars has excited many SF writers or readers, and it somehow shows. A tired collection, in the end. Not exactly 'useless' - but you've read most of this before, and what good are excerpts from Schiaparelli's notes, Lovell's work, bits of DOUBLE STAR & WAR OF THE WORLDS?
NEW DIMENSIONS, ed. Robert Silverberg, \$5.95. Another collection from Silverberg, this one I suspect aimed to be a 'quality' product. Not that it entirely succeeds for me, and in fact I think only the Farmer story has any great degree of wit. Nevertheless, 14 original stories by (mostly) top writers. Can't be bad...

From Faber:-

BEST SF STORIES OF BRIAN W. ALDISS, 80p. This is the revised edition of the works of BWA, and I think it a jolly confusing thing to do - revise the contents of a collection. Why not simply issue a 'Volume 2' and leave the original title alone? Besides, there was some good stuff in that original selection. This is also a book to be recommended, of course - more representative, 'straighter' than A MOMENT OF ECLIPSE. Required reading for SF newcomers. (Faber Paperback edition)
FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND, by Chris Priest, £1.75. A second novel from Chris, and I think it a lot better, more unified, than INDOCTRINAIRE. Which is strange since Chris wrote it in a strange, gimmicky way, cut up into bits. Graham Charnock was going to review it here, and hopefully will do so in my next issue.
VAR THE STICK by Piers Anthony, £1.95. Only someone completely dead to the sounds & nuances of words could ever call a book 'SOS THE ROPE', which to this day I know as S.O.S. etc. Which is again strange since Piers Anthony is a pretty good writer. VAR THE STICK is no great title either, but it's a good book!
BEST SF FIVE by Edmund Crispin, PB reissue, 65p. A classic of ten years back.
NINE PRINCES IN AMBER by Roger Zelazny, £1.75. Malcolm Edwards was going to review the book in this issue, but he's too busy with Vector. Hopefully next time will see a review; I shall be interested since I thought this was all about nothing, lacking even the sense of word-imagery which has been all that has recommended recent Zelazny novels since (but not including) LORD OF LIGHT onwards.

From Gollancz (postscript)

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN by Ursula LeGuin, £1.80 (I think). Speaking of Malcolm Edwards reminds me that he is also going to review this new novel from Miss LeGuin, who has gained a tremendous reputation in a short space of time. Sadly, I don't think this book adds anything to that, in fact it detracts a lot... The theme is wrong for her, a hoary old idea of a fantasy world which is doomed before it begins.

From Faber (postscript)

THE DAY AFTER JUDGEMENT by James Blish, £1.60. "Beautifully written" claims Geoff Doherty at the SPEC-III Conference, yet most people seem to think it well below the level of BLACK EASTER, and even J.B. himself admits it was written rather hastily. Reviewed and discussed by Bob Rickard elsewhere in this issue.

SIDGWICK & JACKSON:

OUT OF THEIR MINDS by Clifford D. Simak, £1.60 new novel, originally published in the U.S. by Putnams.

WHAT'S BECOME OF SCREWLOOSE by Ron Goulart, £1.75. Ten stories by the author.

TIMESCOOP by John Brunner, £1.50, new novel, originally published by Dell PB, '69.

NIGHTWINGS by Robert Silverberg, £1.60. We have been trying to obtain a review of this for some time - hopefully a long article about Silverberg will appear next issue. NIGHTWINGS was an Award winner a year or two ago.

CHILDREN OF TOMORROW by A.E. VanVogt, £1.75. Another new VV novel

THE BATTLE OF FOREVER by A.E. VanVogt, £1.60. Yet another new VV novel. Edmund Cooper at SPEC-III said that VanVogt races through his plots so fast that the impact of violence and drama was lost - when solar systems can be destroyed so casually the idea loses its impact. "An early Philip K Dick" commented Strick.

POSSIBLE TOMORROWS, ed. Groff Conklin, £1.60. Five good stories - 'Dead Past' by Isaac Asimov; 'Something Strange', Kingsley Amis' one & only SF story - here because of the author's 'Name' I suspect, rather than because it is a particularly good story; 'Unit' by J.T. McIntosh; 'Gone Fishing' by James Schmitz; 'Big Ancestor' by F.L. Wallace. Stories not otherwise accessible, good collection.

FROM DOBSON:

RING OF GARAMAS by John Rankine, £1.75, A new novel.

OTHER BOOKS:

TWO PLANETS by Kurd Lasswitz, old-time 'classic' German SF novel, newly-translated, and published by the Southern Illinois University Press. A huge book, reputed to have been a seminal influence on such people as Wernher Von Braun. \$10.00

SCIENCE FICTION CRITICISM: An Annotated Checklist, ed. Tom Clareson. A bibliography of SF Criticism compiled from just about everywhere. Pilot versions of this listing have appeared in Extrapolation; this bound volume comes from the Kent State University Press, at \$7.00. It will be an essential work for future researchers, in conjunction with such projects as Hal Hall's SF Book Review Index.

PAPERBACKS RECEIVED:

From Ballantine:-

TIME'S LAST GIFT by Philip Jose Farmer, 95c. New novel - very straightforward, for Farmer; in fact I'd even call it 'slow'. Essentially a historical essay.

FIRST PERSON PECULIAR by T.L. Sherred, 95c. Unusual collection - Four novels, 'E for Effort'; 'Cure', 'Guaranteed'; 'Eye for Iniquity', 'Cue for Quiet'. Recomm.

PROTOSTARS, ed David Gerrold, 95c. Anthol. of new writers, most of whom are not very good at writing. I think I prefer the more experienced authors.

THE REALITY TRIP by Robert Silverberg, 95c. New collection, and an excellent one.

TIMETRACKS by Keith Laumer, 95c. Good, Mickey Spillane stuff. Not Laumer's best.

THE RESURRECTION OF ROGER DIMENT, by Douglas R Mason, 95c. Original novel, good.

SEED OF STARS by Dan Morgan, 95c. Sequel to 'Thunder of Stars'.

THE TAR-AIYM KRANG, by Alan Dean Foster, 95c. A sort of synthesis of EARTH BLOOD & Delany's NOVA, a space-opera full of colour and imagination.

PLUNDER by Ron Goulart, 95c. A novel of Jack Summer, galactic newshound. (Beagle)

Adult Fantasy Series: (all at \$1.25 except if noted)

THE WORLD'S DESIRE by H. Rider Haggard & Andrew Lang; DERYNI CHECKMATE by Katherine Kurtz; DOMNEI by James Branch Cabell; XICCARPH by Clark Ashton Smith; DISCOVERIES IN FANTASY, ed Lin Carter - four 'forgotten' authors; THE LOST CONTINENT by C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne; BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW, by Lord Dunsany (collected stories); LOVECRAFT - A LOOF BEHIND THE CTHULHU MYTHOS, by Lin Carter.

From Ace:-

THE COMPLEAT WEREWOLF & OTHER STORIES, by Anthony Boucher, 75c. Brilliant collection
WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES, by H.G. Wells, 75c. THE WORLDS OF THEODORE STURGEON, Nine
stories - all good - but the most recent written in 1958. Come back Sturgeon!
CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON by Philip K Dick, 75c (reissue); THE GENERAL ZAPPED AN
ANGEL by Howard Fast, 75c. Nine recent stories; ON THE SYMB-SOCKET CIRCUIT by
Ken Bulmer, 75c; WILDSMITH by Ron Goulart, 75c; THE DRAMATURGES OF YAN by John
Brunner, 75c; THE GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN by Philip K Dick, 75c; EMPIRE OF TWO
WORLDS by Barrington J. Bayley, 75c; DREAD COMPANION by Andre Norton, 75c;
WEB OF THE WITCH WORLD by Andre Norton, 75c; SORCERESS OF THE WITCH WORLD, by
Andre Norton, 75c; THE BARONS OF BEHAVIOR by Tom Purdom, 75c; THE MAD KING by
Edgar Rice Burroughs, 75c; PERRY RHODAN Nos. 11 & 12, 60c each.
TECHNOS by E.C. Tubb/A SCATTER OF STARDUST by E.C. Tubb, (novel & collection of
short stories, some of which are very good), 95c; RENDEZVOUS ON A LOST WORLD by
A Bertram Chandler, / THE DOOR THROUGH SPACE by Marion Zimmer Bradley, 95c;
THE DRAGON MASTERS/FIVE GOLD NBANDS, by Jack Vance, 95c.
UNIVERSE TWO, original collection ed. Terry Carr, 95c; one of the number of volumes
of all-new stories being put out by various publishers. Of the thirteen stories
here, only a small number are what I would call really good; some of the others,
including some by very well-known names, are distinctly poor. Read it and see.

From Lancer:-

OPERATION CHAOS, 95c; the world where magic works, by Poul Anderson. Excellent.
ASSIGNMENT IN TOMORROW, ed. Frederik Pohl, \$1.25, a 1954 Doubleday collection that
I'd forgotten. There are some excellent items here - they don't often write SF
like that any more. 'Mr Costello, Hero' (Sturgeon); 'Matter of Form' (Gold), etc.
CLOAK OF AESIR by John W Campbell, 95c; A kind of John Campbell memorial volume of
some of his own best stories (a companion, I suspect, to the stories published in
the book 'Who Goes There'). People forget just how good a writer Campbell was...
INFINITY THREE, edited by Robert Hoskins, 95c; The previous two volumes of this
original collection have been erratic, this preserves that variance in quality.
Of the fifteen stories, however, I would class a good number above average, and
there are one or two very good items. Authors included are Clifford Simak, Robert
Silverberg, Ron Goulart, Barry N Malzberg, Dean McLaughlin, Gene Wolfe, etc.
INTO THE SLAVE NEBULA by John Brunner, 95c. A reissue, I believe, Fine space-opera.
OVERLAY by Barry N Malzberg, 95c; A new novel in Malzberg's usual style.
STARBLOOD by Dean R Koontz, 95c; A new novel about a 'man' who is more than human.
SEVENTEEN SHIP/SEVENTEEN SHOCK, by Jack Williamson, the two late '40s novels about anti-
matter from Astounding. A little dated but good ideas and excitement. 450 pages
THE TIME MASTERS by Wilson Tucker, reissue, 95c. / \$1.25.
THE WATERS OF CENTAURUS, by Rosel George Brown, 95c; STAR WOLF by Ted White, 95c.
WOLFSHEAD by Robert E Howard, 95c THE DARK MAN & OTHERS, Robert E Howard, 95c.

Other Publishers:-

DAW BOOKS - Donald A Wollheim's own publishing company - has launched itself with
4 titles; THE MIND BEHIND THE EYE by Joseph Green (GOLD THE MAN); THE PROBABILITY
MAN by Brian Ball; SPELL OF THE WITCH WORLD by Andre Norton; THE BOOK OF VANVOGT,
new stories by VV. Each is 95c. A good start - with more good things to come.
AVON - PARTNERS IN WONDER, Harlan Ellison in collaboration, 95c; YOUNG DEMONS, a
collection about 'amazing' children. Bradbury, Lafferty, McCaffrey, etc. 75c
ARROW - SOLAR LOTTERY, Philip K Dick; THE JAGGED ORBIT, John Brunner; YEAR OF THE
QUIET SUN by Wilson Tucker; LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH by John Boyd, att at 30p.
PAN- THE PEOPLE TARP, Sheckley; PALACE OF ETERNITY by Bob Shaw; 100 YEARS OF SF, ed.
Damon Knight, (Vols I & II) S IS FOR SPACE/R IS FOR ROCKET, Ray Bradbury, all 30p.

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