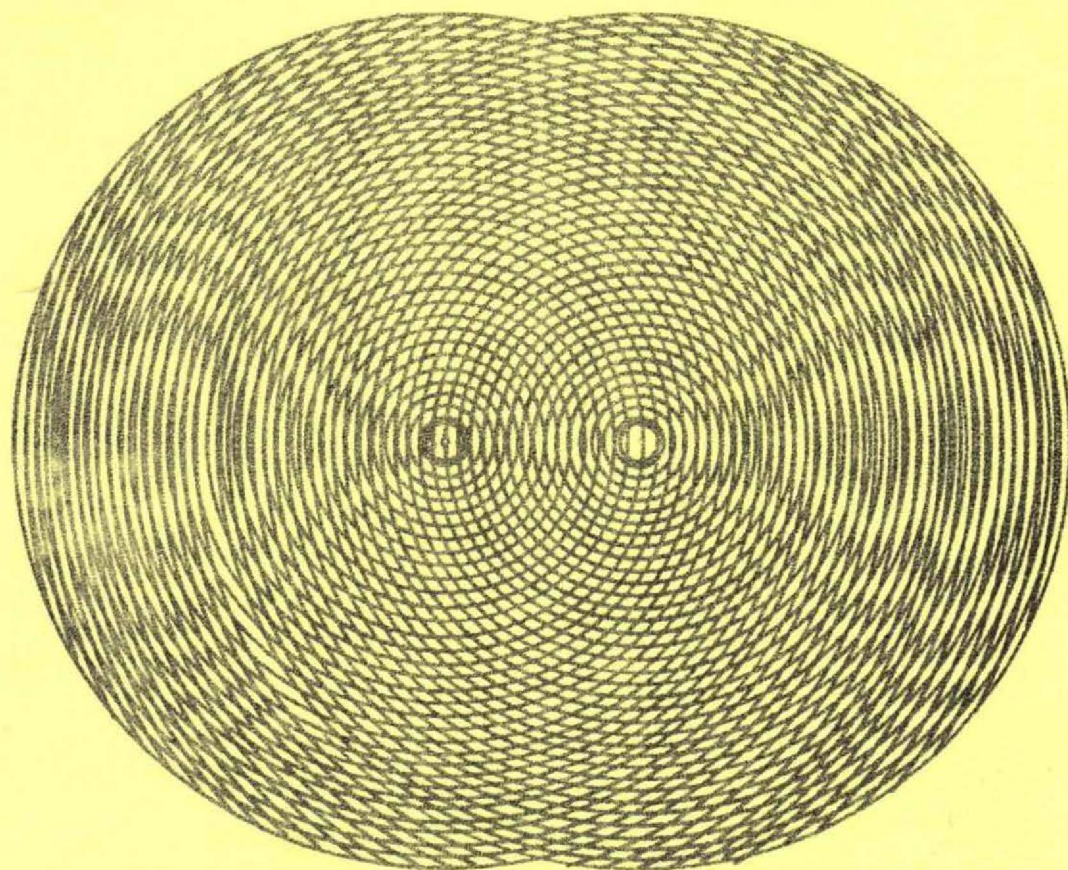


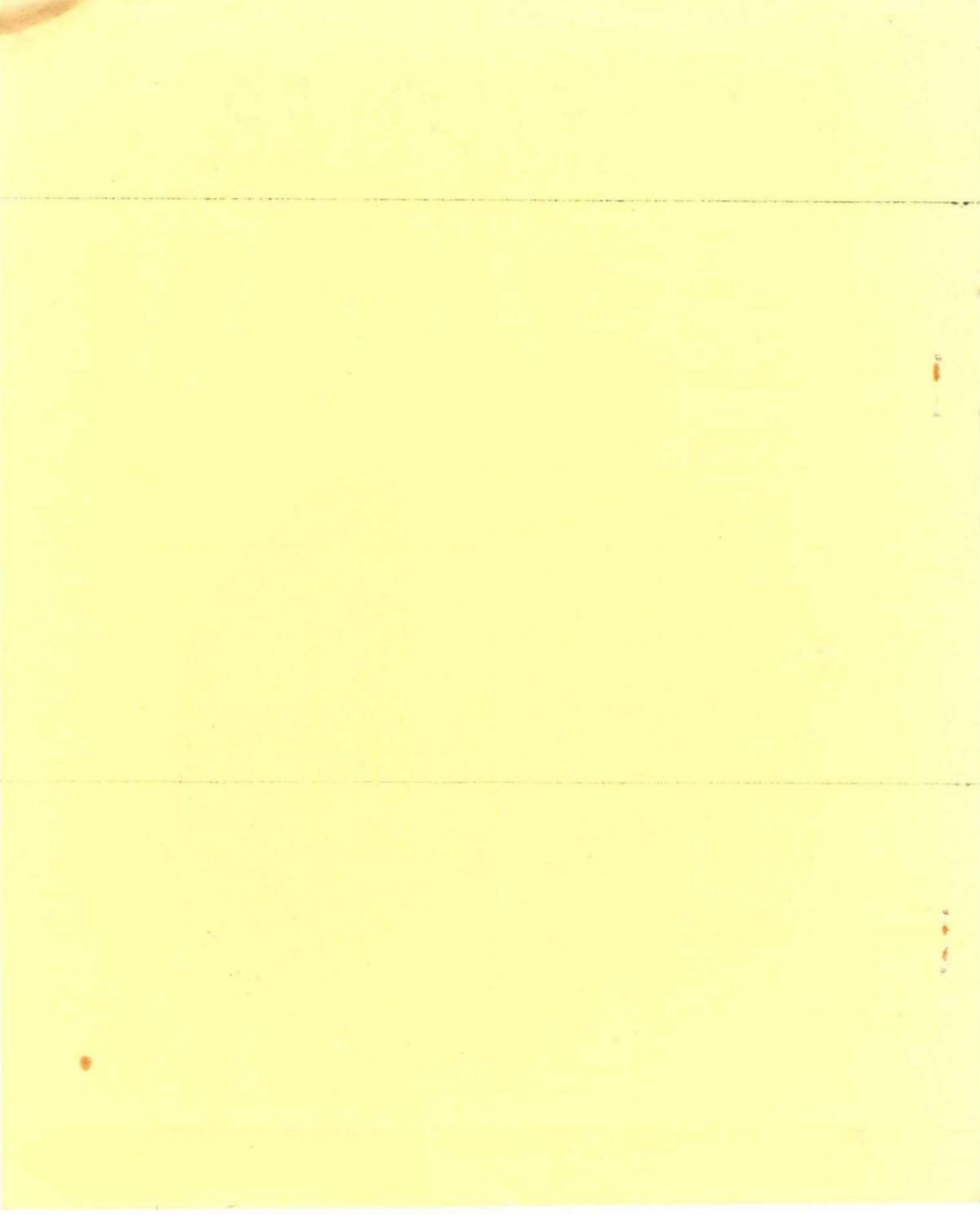
# VECTOR

50

JULY 68



Ken Bulmer; Chris Priest; Brighton Festival



VECTOR

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THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

|  |    |
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| Editor   | 2  |
| Ken Bulmer: Guest of Honour Speech<br>1968 SF Convention | 3  |
| Chris Priest: THE TANKLESS TASK OF THOUGHT               | 10 |
| Michael Kenward: BRIGHTON FESTIVAL REPORT                | 14 |
| Gatherings   | 16 |
| Book Reviews   | 17 |
| 'New Worlds' Reviewed                                    | 26 |
| Letter   | 28 |
| International Contacts Department                        | 29 |

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## A PERSONAL VIEW

This is the first VECTOR under a new editor. I have taken over at what should be a time of quiet fulfilment, for this is the fiftieth VECTOR. Fifty is one of those magic numbers that usually provokes some sort of reaction, with articles looking back over "fifty marvelous issues". This can only be done from a position of strength, which is the last position that we could be said to be in at the moment. VECTOR seems to have an editorial crisis as often as NEW WORLDS has a financial crisis.

First I must apologise to BSFA members who subscribe to Pete Weston's admirable fanzine SPECULATION. Due to an inherited misunderstanding, I have managed to get in the way of an exclusive agreement between Pete and Kenneth H. Bulmer on the publication of Ken's guest of honour speech at the Easter convention. As it turns out both VECTOR and SPECULATION contain almost identical versions of the talk. If you don't already subscribe to SPECULATION then you can now see that you should. Ken Bulmer has produced a thought provoking speech, with enough points to keep us arguing for some time.

So too has Chris Priest in his article. This too came from the Easter convention, where Chris was called upon, at short notice, to take part in a discussion. Not having had enough time to prepare himself for the discussion he decided to gather together his ideas afterwards. This article is the result of this.

The rest of this issue of VECTOR does not contain the usual balance of letters and regular columns. The latter are not present because I have not been able to get in touch with the regular writers, I hope to remedy this in the future. The absence of letters is due to the fact that only one was received.

VECTOR is the journal of the whole association. It is made up of material submitted by the members. If there is no material then the editor has to do something about this. After three issues his ideas and contacts for articles are likely to become exhausted. Perhaps this is the reason for the short average 'life' of a VECTOR editor. This can be solved by you.

Most of us joined the BSFA because we thought that sf had something different to say. And because we wanted to do more than just sit back and read sf. Sf is the literature of ideas, and as such it must provoke its readers. The next time that you are provoked why don't you form your ideas into a coherent form? Then perhaps you can communicate to others just why you think that sf is different.

M.K.

KEN BULMER - GUEST OF HONOUR SPEECH - EASTER CONVENTION 1968.

Herbert George Wells. David Herbert Lawrence. Two writers who in one way epitomise what is happening to science fiction today. Most of us cut our teeth on Wells and we regard him as the great white god of speculation about the future. Although a slap-dash writer, concerned in writing to preach what he had to say, rather than to create literature, he yet produced many books and stories that will remain forever very high in the all-time best lists. I think that every sf writer owes Wells a debt, even those who revile his name.

However, because of his interests in telling his readers what he thought, Wells tended to adopt a technique that demanded that the chief character, more if it became necessary, should be a projection of himself. The satellite characters were mere dark, flat props to the central sun. Whether the angle character - as we vile pros call the 'hero' - was handled in the first or third person, he still remained a clear projection of the writer. Wells' reasons for this obviously were to propagandise; but subsequent sf writers, tacking on, made the angle character projections of themselves, in much the same way as in the general literary field. But within the sf field, and this means the magazines, the angle character's identification became above all else, associated with the reader. Can Joe Phan identify with the red blooded, all American, scientific wizard swinging equally well a two-handed sword or a slide-rule? Can he identify with a six headed, four-foot green Martian called xiziz? The pulp writers took great care that the reader should so identify. In doing this they carried on what Wells had been doing, but in a debased and reverse-oriented form. The effects of this were that the readers began to see not only their world but also the universe around them from a single viewpoint that did not admit of other people. For Wells there had been only Wells and the universe. For the sf reader there was only himself and the universe. Any fourteen year old kid, curled up with a magazine and lost to anything but the scene flickering away in his mind proves this absolutely.

Wells always claimed that he wrote journalism. An interesting case could be made out that all sf, up almost to today has been merely journalism, without a single real literary work amongst the lot. Wells called novelists who analysed character, and struggled for artistic expression, 'uneducated'. He never despaired of the uses mankind would put science to until the last few years of his life.

We can pass on from Wells with the backward looking remark that much of Wells has been forever rendered away, because his pre 1914 world is no more. He was a child of his time; but the world that men have made today, although not the world that Wells envisaged, is still susceptible to his type of stricture and criticism.

The world of today, too, is certainly not the world that D.H.L. would have expected. Lawrence's ideas have been generally misrepresented and attacked with hysterical rancour.

Lawrence also had a message apparently, incoherent though that message often appears. Like Wells, he wanted to liberate men and women in matters of sex; but his deeper thinking led him into theories of blood knowledge and other centres of consciousness than the brain. These ideas have been scorned for many years. 'Obviously the brain houses all a man's mind; but some recent work is pointing up interesting possibilities that perhaps the body cells also are more aware and governing than we thought. Much work on DNA and the life-sciences remains to be done.

But the point about Lawrence is that he actively hated what industry had done to the people and the scenery of his world. He hated and detested mechanisation - it is a puzzle that he allowed Birkin (of 'Women in Love') to drive a motor-car - and, as the progenitor of the dark chaos that he saw about him, he hated most of all science. For all his own slap-dash faults as a writer, Lawrence was in places a great writer. He was also a poet of very great stature. But he was, fellow sf enthusiasts, a deadly enemy to science. I submit that in our speculative writing today Lawrence is in the ascendant, and Wells is on the decline.

This isn't so much that the early fiction, in which the world would be remade by machines, means that we are machine obsessed, either for or against. It's not just knowing that people count. It is a fundamental way of approaching life. Wells wanted to change things and, he hoped, to improve them; in the hope that the world would be a better place. This is often dismissed now as Victorian wish fulfilment, and impossible of achievement in our Freudian and guilt ridden age. Lawrence wanted the deeper brotherhood of man without science. Well, whether you like it or not, science now dictates your life. Science has produced the nuclear bomb, thalidomide and napalm. No wonder that people today are actively turning against science. No longer is the cosy, naive, Victorian steam powered image possible. People today think they know too much, and that the anti-science attitude is the 'correct' one. More important today, as far as machinery is concerned, this anti-science attitude, that we can't change our world logically, has been around since 1914 or so. This attitude extends to all these so-called soft sciences that various would be authorities keep pleading for sf writers to use instead of machinery, as though sf writers haven't been writing about mental problems for years. Every time some johnny-come-lately starts to tell sf writers what to write, he yaps "Don't tell us about space-ships and ray-guns, tell us about the inner workings of a man's mind.". What he fails to realise is that, if sf writers write as they have always written, then the true meaning of their work remains the same, no matter if the subject is a space-ship, a D.N.A. molecule or a schizoid psychopath.

No, the hatred and fear of science remains the single dominant thread in modern speculative fiction. This is a depressing state. This is harsh and not 100% true. But the germ of truth is there. And sf writing, which could have given youngsters the idea that science can get us out of the trouble that politicians have got us into, has instead fostered the growth of opting out. This isn't altogether true either. Firstly, we all know science has many jobs that are boring and unrewarding. Second, politicians can get us out of trouble by using science properly as well as dropping us in it. And some sf has tried to give the idea that science can help in ways understandable to the ordinary man. Science isn't a magic wand existing on its own - it is merely a system of understanding our universe and perhaps influencing us to see ourselves in a new light.

No wonder many sf writers have given up even the pretence of thinking that it is their job to prophesy what can happen and then, in the fuller meaning of prophesy, to say what they think is good or bad about what they have represented. Even good and bad are now relative. It is not fashionable to be positive, because up-dated phrenology indicates that no such thing exists. There is a general feeling of meaninglessness in the world.

Let me make it absolutely clear that I am not condemning stories for not making attempts to show us the light ahead (this is still a naive way of thinking about the difficulty) and of merely showing us the muck in which we now struggle. Art in one aspect merely does illumine life and is not called on even to make any comment on that life, let alone to suggest what should be done about it. But this criterion applies to art - to literature.

In attempting to make over sf into literature we are throwing away one of the reasons for sf's existence. Literature and art have merely to make their statements, if that, in the tenuous upper strata of real art. But sf, surely it is logical to ask, should it make statements, draw morals and try to point to answers?

The concepts of sf, fantasy and mainstream literature can be thought of in terms of people, things and ideas. Sf deals with science, machines, the human brain and the universe affecting human beings. The object is to present a possible real picture of the way humans will react to changes in the world, outside or inside them. Fantasy presents marvellous happenings of a similar character without the need of reality. Literature deals with human beings reacting with each other and it doesn't matter where this happens. If a novel is to be literature then everything in that novel must tend towards the persons in the story, to make them real in the round and understandable to us. If space is spent on presenting other things, instead of people and relationships, then the novel is not literature.

All this means is that if you really enjoy detailed descriptions of Greek galleys, renaissance theatres, Victorian steamships, spaceships (amply fueled by hot copies of 'New Worlds'), or mind translating and expanding phenomena, you are perfectly entitled to do so. If you want the material you read to be regarded as literature, then you must accept the fact that all these wonderful things are merely in order to reveal more clearly the workings of human beings with one another and not with the wonderful things. If this is not so then these wonderful things will be thrown out.

Of course, it won't be art, it won't be literature. But that is a mere matter of terminology, long dead as an argument. I'm not asking artists and novelists to stop being that, just to be honest and say, "I am really a novelist writing about people but ~~today~~ I put on my non-literature hat and write sf." To carry this on, the argument runs that sf should be presented not as fiction but as essay and polemic. To be frank, that might have been a good idea. But I, for one, would be sorry to miss the glamour and the excitement of all the fictional scientific worlds we've traipsed through. Poor old Gernsback thought he had latched onto a good idea when he published what he called 'sugar-coated' sf; but it really wasn't a valid idea. If you wanted science facts you would go to texts or magazines. It might have brought in a few uncommitted youngsters but anything else might have done, if it did not alienate them by the crudawful writing.

To end this section, then, all hail to HGW and also to DHL but let us see clearly where we're at. Let us have great literature and fine writing; and also let us have a little more serious pre-occupation with the future, with a realisation that ecological foresight demands more than pretty word baubles from us.

Much of the urgency of planning for the future, as has been pointed out elsewhere, is caused because the time element is against us. Today we face problems for tomorrow that have no precedent in the past and therefore we must adopt a totally forward looking policy, working on echoes from the future. This seems eminently sensible. It could also be correct completely on the material plane, partially on others. If we learned from the past the basic values always preached, honesty, truth, uprightness, courage, instead of carrying on with the values practised in the past, deceit, lying, cheating and fear. One could say that the past is still of great value to us, apart from amusement and an area in which we can wallow in self indulgence or use as a catalogue for collecting mania.

Sf tends to imagine the future wholesale. Big strides are made all over an area (e.g. organ bank technology), with big issues and big statements. When the actuality arrives it is harder, more practical, tougher, it brings up more issues than sf sees in the overall picture. We've been speculating on organ banks for years,



they've become part of the background, as well as of the story line. But professor Barnard has brought up all kinds of new problems for today. Very often when sf has tackled the details they have been quite wrong or have produced a merely twee form of sf.

What I am on about here is the background. We're all familiar with the argument that the sf writer has a tough job in creating an entirely fresh world nearly every time that he writes a story. The counter argument is that it is easier to invent a description of an iron-booted monster rising from the depths of the ground than it is to describe, say, a tiger, in acceptable terms that are not hackneyed. Everybody knows how a tiger looks, only I know how an iron-booted monster looks. But in the broadest sense the sf writer is faced with a tougher problem, and the general use of acceptable short-hand, like hyperspace and all the other words and ideas common in sf, is a fully acceptable technique because sf had created its own mythology. This mythology is now deeply intertwined in everyday life, in advertisements, pop culture, music and as a mere part of life in fiction. Ordinary people now accept concepts created within the sf field and use familiar sf images as a part of their everyday milieu. For a critic to say that an sf writer cannot use them because another sf writer has used them before is ludicrous. It illustrates that critics incompetence to call himself a critic. Hansom cabs appear in Henry James' novels and in Conan Doyle's novels, but do we scream critical abuse? Hyperspace and hansom cabs are part of the accepted furniture background to stories. It is time that critics of sf caught up with the outside world.

So a mythology has been created in sf, somewhat similar to the new mythology of cinema in the U.S.A., although I hope that sf myths will contribute more to the current culture.

Coming on to stuff nearer the knuckle, Margaret Drabble has said that she would sooner stand at the end of a tradition that she admires than at the beginning of one that she deplores. This is eminently reasonable. If a writer sincerely doesn't like the way things are going he doesn't like the way things are going he doesn't have to be a trend hound and jump in waving his copy of 'Ambit'.

In today's sf field if you don't like or understand the new wave and you can find readers who still appreciate your stuff, there is no compulsion to change. The motor car did not displace the horse in a day, neither did the public conscience dispense with capital punishment overnight. But in face of the current abandonment of direction and older moral values, the change will eventually turn fully over. The basis of revolutionary art is that language changes thought and thought changes society, the surrealists motto was 'changez la vie'. Generally this has not yet happened. Perhaps we still await a valid language.

So you don't have to experiment, you don't have to write a short story so full of cross-heads that it looks like a cheap Sunday paper. I can't yet see Campbell issuing 'Astounding' in separately bound parts in a box, as B.S. Johnson issues his novel. It is also true to say that under the impact of films and television, the BOOK as a cult object has been relegated, the image of BOOK debased. You buy magazines and paperbacks, read them and toss them aside. You buy them from automats and chemists, sometimes you go into a bookshop. You read them for the contents. It is this that is important, not the package. Collecting first editions could be likened to collecting beer-mats. The article can still perform its original function but you wouldn't dare desecrate the mat with a beer stain, or the book by slitting the pages or bending the bindings or getting finger prints and eye tracks on the paper. Everything is speeded up now, instant art is with us, simulacra art by the million.

I'd like to state a simple proposition here. It is one of the centres of this talk. Simply, "It doesn't matter what you do so long as you gain your effect." Bergson put it finely when he said, "The writers art consists above all in making us forget he uses words."

Now, in ordinary writing, correct English structure is of value in enabling the writer to present what he has to say in the most easily understood way. But it is well known that it isn't what you say that matters, as what the reader takes in. If, by transcending the rules of grammar, you can make your point more effectively then I'm in favour of so transcending.

The so-called revolutionaries of sf, whilst producing much good and rewarding work, have also produced a fine crop of weeds. A writer has to learn to write before he can throw off that restraint.

To make two points together; there is this freedom from grammatical tyranny, and there is the takeover by poetry. One example, from a very fine story, is 'Black Wave, Take Me Away With You'. This story is Langdon Jones' 'The Coming of the Sun'. One often hears of nature imitating art, and here we have another example. All who read of the fire at the Shelton mental hospital on the 26th of February 1968, and who read Langdon Jones' piece must, with a little shudder, have compared the two. The way of treating the inside story of patients as they met their fates, a sort of science fictional 'Grand Interior Hotel', with the realisation of outward events building up like a long slow wave, gave the story a greater emotional, psychological and gut-wrenching impact than a conventional account would have done.

For writing to appear to any advantage at all, writers could do worse than follow Henry James' advice. "To work beneath a few grave, rigid laws is always a strong man's highest ideal of success." Of course, the snag is that we are not all strong men. One difference between serious writing and, say, pulp fiction in which the sf tradition with which we are most familiar is rooted, is the way people get killed, or even die. In pulps, in what is called genre fiction, people get killed and everyone ploughs right on with the action and the plot. Sometimes they register a tiny, routine thought to sum up the occasion. But death isn't like that. Ordinary people, who come into fiction too, don't react like that.

I think that we ought to laugh more. Sf can deal with the deepest subjects and the loftiest conceptions, and yet they can be handled humorously and gain added punch from that. You might believe that some subjects cannot be joked about, but if you include the so-called 'black-humour' that is fashionable now, you can joke about anything.

This has been a sectionalised, localised talk, with various different centres, and I hope at the very least that it has done what sf seeks to do, that is to make you think.

And, finally, there is in mankind a centre of consciousness, of will, of soul or spirit, call it what you will, a centre of being that cannot be touched or analysed by any technique that we have yet developed. These are the deepest levels of our unconscious in which we live, each one of us, separate and alone and yet reaching out one to the other in blind seeking. The modern world, and the immediate foreseeable world of the future is dominated by a partition of purpose, stimulated by automation and mechanisation and the bewildering fecundity of science. The individual's psychic levels are being inundated with impressions and sensory data for which our animal heritage has not prepared us. Our egos, our psyches are being bombarded to near disintegration. Thus we suffer from mental aberrations which in themselves are merely symptoms of this basic confrontation. Much superficial writing seeks to pander to the fleeting impressions of the moment. In sf we must try to seek a fusion of being of the individual, to establish a mental climate of health and psychic well being at the deepest levels. This, of course, has been the role of the greatest writers of the past, and will continue to be that of the writers of the future.

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## THE TANKLESS TASK OF THINKING

by

CHRIS PRIEST

I find it a little ironical that, a fortnight after having taken part at the last convention in a panel discussing the process of an idea, my full ideas on ideas should materialise. This example of the formation-process of an idea is an excellent way of demonstrating some of my thoughts on the subject, and I shall come back to it later.

We all have ideas, and we can appreciate the originality or otherwise of someone else's. Taking sf as a particular example, I think most of us read science fiction basically for the pleasure of experiencing a new idea. This can take many forms: a new gadget, a different way of tackling an old problem, or maybe an experiment in writing-technique that produces a different way of seeing a subject. These, and many more, are what we talk of when we refer to "idea" in science fiction. In the broader field of mainstream fiction, to talk of an idea is to think on a broader scale: an "idea" here will be a kind of philosophy, or an approach to an age-old question (such as war or sex, for instance), or a fresh insight into a social dilemma. Such comparisons of frames of reference rather reduces the scale of science fiction, and a more correct term to apply to the element of originality would be "notion".

But the purpose of this article is not to discuss the degree or application of an idea, but its sources, conception and development in the human mind.

The brain is constantly subject to external stimulation, conscious or unconscious. For example, one can sniff a flower to savour its perfume, and derive pleasure from so doing; or one can sit all day in a hot, stuffy office heavily saturated with the smell of paper, dust and city fumes, and wonder why one is irritable and tired at the end of a day.

In the same way, the creative centre of the brain ( if you like, the imagination) is also subject to influences. To take another example from science fiction, most of us can think with a mixture of nostalgia and awe of certain novels we've read in the past as those which have most stimulated our imaginations. The first time we read those novels the experience was unique, and in retrospect such a sensation is usually termed (often by people who should know better) as sense of wonder. This is another reason why people read sf, they like to be made to think.

But what is the process behind a science fiction writer's idea? Having a healthy imagination is a great help, but isn't the whole answer. He must also have:

- 1) The will to have an idea;
- 2) A constant input of the right kind of imagination-stimulant; and
- 3) The right kind of medium available to exploit the idea once formed.

It's fair to say that in general the first and least of these three requirements go hand-in-hand. If one is any kind of a creative artist (and it isn't only sf writers who need to think experimentally) then the will to think of ideas automatically develops. Conversely, if one experiences a constant seeking for ideas (as a normal by-product of personality) then one is very likely to have some kind of inherent creative outlet to use them up. But stimulation of the imagination is extremely important, and not something that normally occurs naturally.

In our daily lives we are constantly besieged with information. Words and pictures scream at us everywhere we go. For the last ten years, at least, there has been too much to read and too much to see. We live in the age of the mass media (an age, incidentally, which will probably have a more prolonged effect on the human race than any number of nuclear weapons). A benign lunatic like McLuhan can speak gibberish in what is tantamount to a foreign tongue, and be accepted as a leading sociologist.

I am talking in general terms, and I would prefer to be specific. To give examples of what I mean, I must refer to my own experience and illustrate my points in this way.

The object of the panel discussion in which I took part was basically to examine the process of an idea, from start to finish. I.e., from the flash of inspiration (the aha!-reaction, as Koestler has called it) through to the finished product -- in this case a science fiction story. In fact, the process goes a stage further back, to the stimulation-to-idea I'm writing about.

In a strictly literal sense, I am able to think of at least one sf idea every day. Of these notions at least 99% are immediately rejected, and subsequently forgotten. Thus, I am left with an average of between 3 and 4 usable first notion in a year from this source. The remaining 360-odd are lost forever; happily so, for I doubt if there is a writer working today who could make anything of them.

(Example. Last week I was walking to work, and I noticed a traffic-warden taking the number of a car parked in a forbidden place. Three yards away, his colleague stood shiftily looking up and down the road. I rounded the next corner, and there were two more, doing more or less the same. An image flashed through my

mind of a world taken over by uniformed men of low intelligence, empowered to report aberrational behaviour. Rejection. It's been tried a thousand times, and published perhaps a hundred. The average sf reader will be fortunate if he encounters it less than twenty times in a normal lifetime's reading. End of idea, forgotten but for this article.)

There may be some writers who can depend on chance notions to keep themselves supplied with plot-ideas, but there can't be many. The aha!-reaction is undependable, and tends to produce ephemeral work.

This, then, is one source of ideas: an attitude to everyday occurrences that sees them in a science-fictional light. This is the controlled use of the steady inflow from the information-explosion around us.

A more reliable use of this influx is the selective use of the other arts. It so happens that one of my pet soap-boxes is the cross-pollination of the arts. Or, to put it more precisely, the valid use of techniques employed in other art-forms to perpetrate your own. My own favourite source for borrowings is the cinema.

There is a lot of common ground between literature and the cinema; it is now usual for most pieces of best-selling fiction to have film-options placed at least, or have film-rights bought at best. Practically all box-office successes are based on books (and it often happens that the cinema-release coincides with the paperback publication, allowing sales tie-in promotions. Cf: "Valley of the Dolls", "Georgy Girl", etc.) But there are broad areas which are, at present, dangerous ground in films which are de rigeur in books, and vice-versa. Sex is the best example: the explicit detail found in a lot of contemporary fiction is still causing controversy in cinematic circles about the powers of the censor. Conversely, the cinema has a potential imagic power which transcends anything even the best writers can produce. It is in these areas that the artist should find a great deal of creative inspiration.

(Notwithstanding this, the two media are inherently incompatible. Look what Strick did to Joyce's "Ulysses". Or what Lean did to Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago". The lesson from this is that a book should read like a book, and a film should look like a film. One shouldn't copy the other, but it is possible for one to influence the other.)

One other source of idea is in inter-personal communication. Or to put it less clinically, conversation or correspondence. I think it is fair to assume that I share a trait with most people. If ever I become involved in an argument my feelings and opinions are not moulded by careful forethought, but by tossing out half-formed opinions and basing subsequent argument on the response

received. In this way I often find myself at the end of an argument with more opinions, and more new opinions, than when I started. In other words, the argument has been creative. (The same thing happens, incidentally, at tennis. You learn nothing from playing an inferior opponent.)

Thus, a conversation (or exchange of letters) with someone of equal or superior education, intelligence or creative ability will almost invariable stimulate you.

So this is the source of an idea. A lot of this is personal to me, and perhaps only to me. Ken Bulmer, for an opposite example, claims in all seriousness that the smallest room is often the place where stimulating and creative thought comes easiest to him. James White, I believe, starts some of his plots off from snippets he finds in a medical dictionary.

The incubation of an idea is a totally different matter, and probably one even more personal to individuals than the source of an idea.

I was in a pub one night drinking with Dick Howett, and we were chewing over stock sf plots. Suddenly I had an idea about a future war where the opposing forces occupied each others' countries under a treaty agreement, then, through a mistake, were forced to commence H-bombing their own territories. This idea, I felt at that time, would be the perfect vehicle for comment on disarmament, and nuclear warfare, and a whole bundle of militaristic policies. I thought about it for a while, and downed more beer. The following weekend I started a first draft, but abandoned it soon after. That was in July 1966. Over the next ten months I made several attempts to write the story, each time with increasing enthusiasm for the basic idea, but with a parallel increase in my incompetence to handle it. Then in May 1967 I was looking for a plot for a short-short (less than 1000 words) and remembered this one. Compressed from its unwieldy length, shorn of its complex character-motivations and almost entirely lacking in satirical content, it was perfect for the purpose. An hour's work, and I had a story which was (probably) better than the original was intended to be. Less pretentious, more readable and using the original notion for all it really was: just a notion, not an idea.

The object of that anecdote is that it wasn't the strength of the original notion that made for a story, but an increasing distance from it emotionally and a resultant objectivity that finally allowed me to get a story from it.

This brings me back to my ideas on ideas. Given the job of filling an empty seat on a panel-game at the convention, I had an hour and a half to formulate opinion. Only now, a couple of weeks

after the event, have my thoughts on the subject formed themselves into anything vaguely resembling an opinion. This is why people like me shouldn't be allowed to speak on panels.

Talking of opinion, that is all this article is. Many people, I know, will disagree with what I have said here, and I welcome seeing their opposite views. Even in my own experience I have contradicted myself: in one hectic evening and night I once conceived, incubated and exploited an idea (the stimulus was flamboyantly financial), producing a short story which, while not yet published, certainly isn't impossibly bad. And is better, for being less contrived, than other stories that took ten times longer to write. On the other hand, in the summer of 1965 I first conceived a notion which, to this day, has eluded treatment. Someday it may produce a story or novel which will startle the world, but so far its sheer unwieldiness bogs me down in a wealth of background explanation. Meanwhile, it bubbles away patiently in my brain, waiting for the day.

Harry Harrison, writing in *IMPULSE*, once said that to write science fiction one should first of all go away for a year and read anything but science fiction. If I, in my wisdom, were to add to this, I think I would suggest that the reading be done in an art-gallery with a concert orchestra in the background and a cinema-screen in the foreground. In this way the writer would be near to producing his own brand of eclecticism and this, after all, is the substance of science fiction.

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## BRIGHTON FESTIVAL REPORT

by

MICHAEL KENWARD

This was a science fiction conference called from the outside, as a part of the 2nd. Brighton Arts Festival. The delegates were drawn from both inside and outside science fiction. The sf list had obviously been made up by listing all of the New Worlds contributors since the Arts Council stepped in. The non-sf delegates consisted of such people as John Calder (publisher) and the director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Michael Kustow. The only 'old-guard' members present were Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer, who came down for the day at their own expense, not having been invited as delegates.



There was initially a general plan for the discussion, but this soon disappeared. A pity, since the topics down for debate looked more interesting than those that were discussed. Things were aggravated by the fact that neither of the chairmen, (Asa Briggs and Edward Lucie Smith), seemed to know very much about science fiction.

The sf delegates were rather quiet, with few exceptions. This left the floor open to the general 'arty set'. Since few of these knew very much about sf the discussion tended to wander aimlessly about the arts in general. Moorcock only spoke after much prodding from his camp followers. J.G. Ballard actually got up and spoke for 5 minutes, the last 5 minutes. He gave the impression that this was more in exasperation with what had gone before than for any other reason.

When sf was considered there was a general rejection of the old school. In the words of Tom Disch, "The old-liners have had their say, and now they are saying it again. They're like corpses wired for sound."

Towards the end of the conference Robert Conquest put in a strongly conservative plea, doubting the validity of stylistic and literary experiments. "Sf writers ignored the revolution in literature because they had decided that it was not valid to sf. Experimental techniques are particularly inapplicable to sf, due to the effects that are already there."

Countering this, Michael Moorcock demanded that there should at least be some literary standards. When considering some of the work of the old school, he said; "These writers had subject matter that was interesting, but their writing was appalling. Somehow a story by, for example, van Vogt could be written, read, processed and appear with sentences that were totally incomprehensible. This was due to the fact that writers and editors were pig-idiot illiterates."

Summing up the conservative sector Moorcock said, "Conquest represents those people who, searching for reasonability, sanity, etc. in the end go for the mediocre." He accused the post-war writers of being neither good nor bad, of following a "well mapped book of how to write," with the unfortunate result of lifeless work.

This interesting discussion gave a glimpse into the motivation of the 'new wave' in sf. There is, however, a little more to their experiments than a mere desire for literary standards.

What did the outsiders think?

Edward Lucie-Smith:

"Sf is exorcism fiction. It examines our fears, and in doing so makes them less terrifying."

Stacy Waddy (good looking film director, in mini skirt)

"The excitement of sf is that of ideas. Sf ideas are abstract and difficult to visualise."

The 'Times' reporter ('Saturday Review', May 11th) would have us believe that at Brighton "sf faced a trauma". Not really true, for as Brian Aldiss said at the end, he will continue to write as he wishes. Implying that he was not going to be told how to write sf by a bunch of people who hadn't even read sf, let alone written it.

As with all such conferences its main use was in revealing people's opinions, not in giving them new ideas. Everybody went away having said their bit, as they had intended to do all along. Opinions are held with an almost religious belief, no amount of debate will change them.

It has been said that we should not really be interested in these discussions of past atrocities; and that our real interest should be in work to come. I feel that there is room for analysis, but this must not be a cult unto itself, nor should it be of the 'sticky fingered intellectual' type doled out at Brighton, both are sterile.

#### EASTER SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION - 1969

The plans for next year's Easter convention, to be held in London, are gradually taking shape.

The organising committee consists of John Brunner, Ken Bulmer, Anne Keylock, Jean Muggoch, Daphne Sewell, Ted Tubb and Jerry Webb.

We are promised that this will be "the biggest ever" with the "best value for money", which should be sent (10/- worth) to Anne Keylock at;

67, Shakespeare Road,  
Hanwell,  
London, W.7.

I am told that so far there have been about 80 registrations.

#### SCIENCE FICTION SOCIAL CLUB

Ted Tubb is hoping to organise an SF Social Club. Mostly for people who want something a bit less frantic than 'The Globe'.  
Contact: E.C.Tubb, 67 Houston Road, London, S.E.23

## BOOK REVIEWS

|                |   |   |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| new books from | D | S | B | A |
|                | E | L | U | L |
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|                | Y | K | S | S |

THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION by Samuel R. Delany  
(Gollancz 21s)

Delany skilfully synthesises his happening from several seemingly incongruous threads which re-inforce each other so that the whole is much more than the sum of the parts. The opening chapters are reminiscent of the situation depicted in Wyndham's 'The Chrysalids', but on the basic framework is superimposed the Orphean quest of Lobey, as he sets out in search of his lover. On his travels he meets up with Spider (Judas), Kid Death (Billy the Kid), La Dire (outwardly perfect, inwardly lacking) and green-eyes (the universal lover, and Christ figure) among others. Lobey discovers he has the unique gift of being able to reproduce the music of other people's minds and quietly freaks out, playing the phallic machete with 20 fingers, and blows everybody else's minds.

The style is vivid and the book has an almost hobbit-like quality in places. Interwoven throughout is a twentieth century mythology, in which Ringo and 'the great rock and the great roll' feature strongly. Delany has created a magnificent fable and the book should be read as such, without trying to read too much into it. The mathematical explanation of the reason for the changed world leaves me cold - perhaps because I am no mathematician - but fortunately this only takes up a small portion of the book, and is unnecessary to its appreciation.

Throughout the novel one is never quite sure what will happen, has happened, or why - even at the end - although on the more superficial level, there is a coherent story line.

Very well worth reading - it won't take much of an effort. If you have to look for a moral try "life is death, and death is an illusion."

'H'

THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM by John Sladek  
(Gollancz 2ls.)

John Sladek has nothing new to offer by way of plot. Addicts will quickly recognise the paranoiac scientist with his self-reproducing system of machines threatening world takeover. What the author does possess, to justify his publishers' dust-jacket exclamation mark, is a wealth of invention and considerable comic skill.

Right from the start I got the feeling that here was a brilliant exponent of that typically American narrative the comic strip. Mr. Sladek appears to have conceived his novel in the visual terms of 'the funnies'. In chapter after chapter your interest is caught and pummelled by a series of fast-moving frames. Into and across them plunge characters whose impact is immediate and almost entirely visual. Just as in comics, their names alone serve to identify 'goodies', 'baddies', heroes, heroines, dumbbells: Dr. Toto Smilax, Daisy Le Duc, Cal Potter, Aurora Candlewood, General Jupiter Grawk, Vovov.

The sinister system which gives the novel its title starts out as a means by which the sleazy owners of a factory producing walking-talking dolls which no one buys any more, can avoid bankruptcy by getting a government defence contract grant. Villainous Dr. Smilax, whose favourite pastime is drilling his own teeth, is called in to mastermind the project, but it gets out of hand (or so it appears). It breaks out of the laboratory and begins to take over first the research establishment, then the town, then Nevada, and then .....

New readers (as they say) can begin here. As you are hustled along from one prose cartoon to the next you will acknowledge Mr Sladek's original talents. Perhaps they owe something to the satire of Kurt Vonnegut jr.. In places, though, particularly in the flights of fancy called wonderjourney and sections which satirise the style of modern newspaper reportage and headline techniques, Sladek's inspiration is more illustrious and we detect echoes of James Joyce.

"The Reproductive System" is at once compelling and exasperating. Compelling because of its pace, vigour and vivid style. Exasperating because the story disappears too often in side avenues of sub-plot and beneath the weight of hosts of unfulfilled characters.

Certainly this is one to read and, if you're a first edition collector, to buy and hoard. But we shall need to see John Sladek's second and possibly his third novel before we begin to cheer too loudly.

Robert Wells

THE IRON THORN by Algis Budrys  
(Gollancz 21s)

Clustered around the 'Thorn', and dependant on it for energy, water and air, is a spartan community of farmers and hunters. Surprisingly, their only concession to religion is the belief in a hereafter - Ariwol.

Beyond is a vast desert.

In this desert Honor Jackson hunts and kills his first Amsirs; and is set a problem which he must solve or die, as many before him have died.

But heroes never die - and Jackson is no exception. He outwits the grotesque freak set to guard him, and the pair escape ... to Ariwol -- or Airworld, or EARTH!

Up to this point the story is savage, fast-moving and enthralling. Although the dialogue, perhaps, does not stand up to close scrutiny, it is compensated by some excellent descriptive passages; notably the hunt and an almost poetical description of the Amsir. There is a delightful sequence where Jackson imagines himself as a door.

Earth is depicted as an elysian utopia - and at this juncture the pace slows considerably.

Jackson and Ahmuls, the freak, meet a hedonistic group of naked men and women, who introduce themselves with a variety of curious names, ranging from reindeer to comic-book characters.

There is a confrontation between Ahmuls and Kringle, the group's leader. Ahmuls leaves, and eventually Jackson follows suit, accompanied by one of the women.

The latter part of the book is somewhat intangible and it is possible to draw a number of conclusions, both obvious and obscure.

Finally, it is interesting to note a certain affinity in locale, populace and name between Budry's ARIWOL and Samuel Butler's EREWHON.

Jack Marsh

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THE DOUBLE HELIX by James D. Watson (Weidenfeld & Nicolson 35s)

For those interested in 'mad scientists' this book is very good. With little or no literary style Watson does manage to capture the excitement that exists around the growth of an idea, which is another reason why it may appeal to sf readers who are interested in sf as the literature of ideas.

M.K.

REPORT ON PROBABILITY A by Brian W. Aldiss  
(Faber 21s)

The work of Brian Aldiss is a multi-faceted collection of un-categoriseables. While the standard is always high, there is plenty of room for personal likes and dislikes. My personal likes tend toward 'Non-Stop', 'Greybeard', and 'An Age'. Novels such as 'Hothouse' and his latest 'Report on Probability A' are not among my favourites. But even when Aldiss's writing and personal tastes do not coincide there is always something to be considered.

'Report on Probability A' is an interesting experiment in literary style. Most of the narrative is detailed scenario description, without 'action'. The basic 'events' take place in a house, occupied by Mr. Mary and his wife. Observing them are three occupants of the same space/time continuum. These observers, labelled G, S, and C, (gardener, secretary and chauffeur) live in three outhouses. From these they watch the house of Mr. Mary and his wife. G, S, and C are, in turn, watched by a succession of observers in different space/time continua.

They are watched 'directly' by Domoladossa, who is watched by the 'Distinguishers', who are watched by a robot fly whose sensory data is transmitted "to a vast receiving set in a second-storey hall in New York," where "a group of men, several of them in uniform, stood or sat watching the transmissions." They are watched by two young men and a boy in a warehouse. The circle is closed by Mr. Mary's wife who "sat at her own screen and regarded the cycle of universes as night closed in."

Different watchers can see along different lengths of the chain, Domoladossa being privileged with only a view of Probability A. Mr. Mary's wife can, apparently, see the cycle of universes. Thus, Probability A represents some sort of focal point.

Should we really look for Aldiss's equations and sources within this novel? The book is prefaced by a quote from Goethe. "Do not, I beg you, look for anything behind phenomena. They are themselves their own lessons." Thus another writer shies away from interpretation and possible misunderstanding. But to deny analysis is almost to deny relevance. It is for the reader to find some communication, for without this writing is meaningless. Perhaps we should be in the position of one of Aldiss's observers, "All we are after is facts. We don't have to decide what reality is, thank God."

This novel is not wholly successful, because of the literary technique used. The fine, often repeated details and events within Probability A will be too detailed and demanding for most readers.

While it is reasonable to expect some effort on the part of the reader, here we are asked for too much. For this style to succeed we must be able to simulate every detail, thus allowing us to see the fine distinctions introduced. Without shutting yourself away in a closed room for several hours this may not be possible. You will not be able to 'sense' Probability A.

This is not, as Benedict Nightingale would have us believe (Observer, 26th May 1968), a return to form after a gap since the 'Saliva Tree'. Since then we have had 'An Age' (which I have, sadly, only read in the truncated 'New Worlds' version), and the equally experimental, but far more successful, poetry of the 'Charteris/Acid Head War' series. Here too, the reader has to exert some effort, but the result is infinitely more rewarding and meaningful than 'Report on Probability A'. This book is not to be dismissed, for Aldiss has, yet again, managed to do that which many sf writers fail to do, that is to provoke thought.

M.K.

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PROJECT BARRIER by Daniel F. Galouye  
(Gollancz 25s)

The problem posed for the reviewer of any collection of short stories is that before he has gone very far he gets the feeling of having been this way before; and usually he's right.

"Project Barrier" presents five of Daniel F. Galouye's stories all of which have appeared under one cover or another between 1957 and 1963.

The almost non-existent thread on which the stories have been strung together defies any reviewer who would offer criticisms of the collection per se. He is left to attempt each story separately and it is a thankless task when the quality is so varied.

For me, sf is about ideas, imagination, the day after the day after next year, and the ability to make that imagined future convincing. Hence (also for me - and I admit to peddling my prejudices) only two of these stories were worth reprinting.

'Rub-a-Dub' - yes, you have to get past that title first - is about the efforts of the psychiatrists to unravel the tangle of three personalities grafted onto the mind of a young girl so that a spacecraft may carry a whole crew in a single host body. This seems alarmingly prophetic (1961) and possible in the light of present day 'spare-part' surgery. 'Shuffle Board' explores the question of what is to happen to the world's increasing build-up of radioactive waste and provokes an interesting line of thought on possible human mutations.

For the rest we are back with the plain and not very imaginative fare of twenty-foot high Venusian giants, and bears who have inherited Earth after man's departure for other worlds. One or two friendly and patronising humans (disguised as bears, of course) have been left to watch over their pranks and make sure they evolve in a human way. Which they do - riding bicycles, going to the theatre and (Lord love us!) sipping honey-fizzes in night-clubs.

Robert Wells

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TURNING ON by Damon Knight  
(Gollancz 18s)

This collection, by one of "Galaxy's" regulars, is a fairly representative gathering of Knight's work. None of the stories are new, but that does not detract from them. Eight have already appeared in collections before, which is a pity, but difficult to avoid, considering how many of his yarns have already been reprinted.

There is one thing though, which I object to; the annoying habit which publishers have of altering the titles of stories. This volume is not immune, four of the items have new titles, and unless you are one of the few who scan the acknowledgements before reading the book, you are given the impression that they are new stories.

"Semper fi" (previously "Satisfaction") is an inconclusive item which could have withstood expansion; "The Big Pat Boom", an hilarious satire on the visiting aliens theme, was in "The 7th Galaxy Reader", and appears this year in "S.F. Horizons 1". "The Man in the Jar" is well handled, as is "The Handler", and both have been in collections before. "Mary" (previously "An Ancient Madness", in "The 9th Galaxy Reader") is a love story pure and simple, and "Auto-da-fe" hangs on the dog-man relationship. It was in "The 10th Galaxy Reader". Another love story, unusual but subtle, is "To The Pure". "Erimpav" is a one-page spoof, which appeared in the U.K. in "Venture" in October of 1965.

"Backward, O Time" (previously "This way to the regress") is one of the many descriptions of time running backwards. "The Night of Lies" which was in "Venture" (August 1964) is more properly an end-story, and should have come last in the collection.

"A Likely Story" is Knight having fun with the characters of other S.F. authors - never mind what the blurb says, it's picked the wrong title! - and the last one, "Don't Live in the Past", has so much in it that you have to read it yourself.

Altogether, this collection caters for most tastes in the field and makes fairly good reading.

Gordon Johnson, A



WATCHERS OF THE DARK by Lloyd Biggle Jr.  
(Rapp & Whiting 21s)

The main character in Lloyd Biggle's latest book is Jan Darzek, private detective, who appeared in "All the Colours of Darkness". For a million dollars he undertakes a mission which may last years and cost him his life. His mysterious employer is the Supreme who administrates a galaxy civilization, currently being attacked by the Dark. In an incomprehensible manner, the natives of planets are resorting to mob violence and expelling other galactic citizens.

Darzek is assisted by his aged but formidable secretary, Miss Schlupe, who wields a lethal knitting needle. They adopt cover as Traders and the collection and sifting of clues to uncover the Dark's agents commences.

Biggle's imagination copes well with the description of numerous alien races, but generally they never really come to life.

At the end, and we have to remember that Darzek is a detective, the agents are unmasked and their surprisingly simple weapon revealed. Entertaining.

Roy Mortimore

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THE DOLPHIN RIDER by Roy Meyers  
(Rapp & Whiting 21s)

A baby separated from his parents by a disaster is nurtured and reared by non human creatures. He is taught their language and special skills and as an adult once again meets his fellow humans. It is hardly surprising to discover that he is really a titled Englishman. The girl, however, is not called Jnae but Della. As might be guessed from the title, the creatures are not apes but dolphins.

Like E.R.B.'s character, the Rider is pure in heart and soon discovers the insincere and twisted traits of modern society.

Even if one is critical of the lack of originality in plot, the book is well written. Life among the dolphins is well portrayed with facts already known merging cleverly with the more speculative thoughts of the author.

Rather more for the juvenile reader than the demanding s.f. enthusiast.

Roy Mortimore

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FIVE TO TWELVE by Edmund Cooper  
(Hodder & Stoughton 21s)

This story of what life may be like in the future makes highly entertaining reading. Universal birth control has freed women from the child rearing cycle, except by choice, and enabled them to rise to positions of power in industry and government. So that, by the 21st. century the world is controlled by women. Under their benign rule conflict and strife have been replaced by peace and boredom.

Society, like an inverse model of Victorian England, has three divisions; the 'doms' - educated women, holders of power and wealth, and sterile; men - playthings of the doms, to be used as and when required, their only status being that of the doms to whom they 'belong'; the 'infras' - uneducated, low grade women, used for breeding purposes, sometimes inseminated by artificial means.

Dion Quern, a poet-adventurer in an unadventurous world, pleads for MANKIND, a 'suffraget' fighting society with jet pack and laser rifle. He succeeds in a way that he could not have guessed.

The ending of the book is a little too convenient, but the whole can be recommended for light reading.

David Dancy

OVERMIND by Phyllis Marie Wedsworth  
(Sidgwick & Jackson 21s)

This is an odd one. The central part of the plot draws heavily from the occult with the perpetual struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, or the Overmind and Undermind. The jargon of spiritualism is frequently used with some telepathy and a dash of philosophy for good measure.

Three scientists and a girl in a Devon cottage succeed in contacting the planet Venus and the ethereal advanced inhabitants. These beings are keeping a spiritual eye on Earth and they are linked with similar entities throughout the galaxy. There is a general concern with the conduct of the Terrans and their latest toys, nuclear weapons.

All this force for Good constitutes the Overmind and also present is the villain, Undermind. The opposition turns out to be surprisingly unenterprising and would appear to have great difficulty in knocking the skin off a rice pudding. There's a love interest which oscillates hot and cold but has some bearing on the conclusion.

There's supposed to be a message in the story but we received it a long time ago and in a far more intelligible form. Tedious reading.

Roy Mortimore

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Inclusion in this list does not preclude review in subsequent issues of Vector.

Due to the change of editorship of Vector the organisation has not yet been fully sorted out. The result of this is, probably, that the list presented here is incomplete. This should be remedied eventually and a full list, with prices, will be given. In this way it is hoped that a list of a majority of the science fiction, and associated literature, published in this country can be presented.

Fiction

- 'The Door into Summer' by Robert Heinlein (Gollancz)
- 'One' by David Karp (Gollancz)
- 'Starshine' by Theodore Sturgeon (Gollancz)
- 'The Deep Range' by Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz)
- 'Welcome to Mars' by James Blish (Faber)
- 'The Infinite Worlds of Maybe' by Lester del Ray (Faber)
- 'Breakthrough' by Richard Cowper (Dobson)
- 'War with the Robots' by Harry Harrison (Dobson)
- 'New Writings in SF 10' ed. by John Carnell (Dobson)
- 'The Space Swimmers' by Dickson (Sidgwick & Jackson)
- 'Search the Sky' by Pohl & Kornbluth (Rapp & Whiting)
- 'Orbit' ed. by Damon Knight (Rapp & Whiting)
- 'All Judgement Fled' by James White (Rapp & Whiting)
- 'Rork' by Avram Davidson (Rapp & Whiting)
- 'Logan's Run' by Nolan & Jackson (Gollancz)
- 'The Ring of Ritornel' by Charles Harness (Gollancz)

Non-fiction

- 'Voices from the Sky' by Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz)
- 'The Coming of the Space Age' by Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz)
- 'Suns, Myths & Men' by Patrick Moore (Muller 30s)
- 'Space Frontier' by Wernher von Braun (Muller 35s)

Books that Disappear

Film followers have been complaining for some time now about the non-appearance in England, of films that have received critical, or popular acclaim elsewhere in the world. A recent example of this has come to light in the field of sf books. Most books of merit normally do find their way to England eventually, but so far John Brunner's "Quicksand" (Doubleday \$4.50, 1967) has yet to find an English publisher. This is strange for a book that promises to be the most lucrative yet, in the States, for Mr. Brunner. The only reason for this put forward, so far, is that it is not strictly sf. So what! If it is worth publishing does it matter which shelf it sits on?

M.K.

NEW WORLDS

Now, after one year, is a good time to look back and see what has been happening in/to 'New Worlds' recently. The price has gone up to 5/-, W.H.Smith's censors have struck, and the whole of the 'New Worlds' set have spent a week-end at the seaside, expenses paid, at the Brighton Arts Festival. During this last event they had the doubtful privilege of being ejected 'en masse' from a not very interesting public house.

You can't really complain about the price of 'New Worlds'. Any magazine with this format and circulation charges at least this price, some of the literary reviews charge more. Let us hope that 'New Worlds' can survive on this price, and perhaps even get themselves into a healthy enough state to be able to survive without the Arts Council grant that keeps them going at the moment.

The Smith's affair (over 'Bug Jack Barron') can be weathered. Both 'Private Eye' and 'OZ', and most of the literary journals survive without Smith. Maybe a centre spread 'Nude Miss Future' would get 'New Worlds' back onto the bookstalls, alongside 'Playboy' and other such literary offerings.

What of the content, in the light of all this eventfulness? Recently we have had Norman Spinrad's 'Bug Jack Barron'. This is a 1980's version of the 'Face in the Crowd', 'Privilege' theme, the misuse of media, in a manner that would delight McLuhan. A 'loveable' (Frost like?) T.V. personality gets himself into the political game. A straightforward sf subject, but not a straightforward treatment of the type one would have expected such a subject to receive from Pohl & Kornbluth. The style and language of the writer is decidedly more intelligent than most sf writers are capable of, or are courageous enough to use.

Other material of interest has been an abbreviated version of Brian Aldiss's 'An Age'. (Book reviewed in Vector 47). A more interesting Aldiss offering has been the 'Charteris/Acid Head War' series, written in collaboration with C.C.Shackleton. This is an interesting experiment in poetry, (NW 178/9).

In the way of the 'inscrutable' we have had 'Linda, Daniel and Spike' from Tom Disch (NW 178), and 'The Eye of the Lens' by Langdon Jones (NW 180), among others. But there has been no Ballard since NW 173.

There have been stories which it is difficult to fit into the frame of 'speculative fiction', however wide Moorcock stretches the frame. For example, Carol Emshwiller's short story 'lib' (NW 180). This is beautiful enough to appear anywhere, we should just be grateful that it came to us in 'New Worlds', otherwise we might have missed it.

Along with these there has been the rubbish, mostly on the non-fiction side. Self indulgent episodes like Charles Platt's 'Fun Palace - Not a Freakout' (NW 180) fails to hide old and weary ideas by putting them behind the, already stultifying art of collage. Slightly better was Moorcock and Platt's joint effort 'Barbarella and the Anxious Frenchmen'. I can at least echo the question on the cover (NW 179), "Has the fad for the bad gone too far?"

It is not good enough to dismiss all that 'New Worlds' has been doing recently. Some people manage this without even reading it, an incredible blindness. There is another group who buy it to keep up their uninterrupted runs of the magazine. At least they are paying for their mindlessness. Who knows? Maybe they would enjoy 'New Worlds' if they were to try reading it.

M.K.

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### FANZINES

The Central Contributors Pool (CCP), for editors and writers to exchange material for fanzines, is now in the sole hands of Mary Reed. Tom Jones (to whom many thanks for the last couple of years work), has to relinquish his half of the CCP, due to pressure of work.

Anybody with material, of any description is asked to send it, with 1/- to cover postage costs etc., to Mary Reed. Anyone whose work is used receives a free copy of the fanzine in which it appears.

Address to which material should be sent:

Miss Mary Reed,  
5 Park Close, Longmeadow,  
Stevenage, Herts.

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### Next VECTOR

We will be presenting an interview with Tom Disch, recorded just before he returned to the States.

The content of Vector 51, like all Vectors, depends upon you. If you have anything to say the send it to the editor:

Michael Kenward, c/o Culham Laboratory, Abingdon, Berks.

If you come across an interesting fact, why not put it on a post-card and send it along.

## MAIL RESPONSE

Doreen Parker, 38 Millfield Road,  
Deeping St. James, Peterborough.

Dear Editor,

I really must take up Gregory Pickersgill's letter, which I think is a letter hard on the BSFA and on those hard working members who try and suit all tastes both from a personal and from an official point of view.

We, as a committee, try to help new members to find their feet as soon as possible by extracting the information from the "Welco" form and inserting in the Bulletin, all relevant information about new members. Then, surely, it is up to the new members to extract what he wants to do from that. My favourite saying in my personal life is "God helps those who help themselves." For Gregory to sit back and wait for other members to contact him is surely going the wrong way about it. Gregory must remember that each member goes through this 'hiatus' until he starts making contacts (I remember my first year in the BSFA was taken up solely in catching up on 'New Worlds' issues I'd missed, from the library; writing to Archie Mercer and 'Vector'. The second year I became fairly well known as "the sucker" who would type anybody's stencils who wanted to print fanzines (I made a lot of friends that way). In the third year I became Secretary! I think the moral is "volunteer".

I was saddened by the remarks about the 'in' jokes, stated to be in 'Vector'. As a committee member I have worked for four years to take the stigma of fanzine from 'Vector'. My opinion was, and is, that 'Vector' should be a journal which will be of interest to all sf readers, whether they are fans or not. I had thought that we (the committee) had succeeded, but this is apparently not so from Greg's remarks.

Every year since I've been a member, I have seen the phrase, in one form or another, that established members should get down off their high horses and give the young members a bit of a leg up, and have now come to the conclusion that all young members suffer from a form of paranoia. I found that, when I approached the "established members", as a neo-fan, they couldn't do enough to help and advise me. Why doesn't Greg try it? He would find it most gratifying.

I think the point of this letter is that membership to the BSFA brings to a new member, members of like tastes, or with a basic interest. It is then up to the new member to contribute something, even if it is only himself, and "you will find as you sow, so you shall reap."

## INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS DEPARTMENT

Many things of interest appear when looking at the sf scene abroad. The general availability of American and British sf, in English and translations, the numerous foreign authors, the exchange of sf between countries and, certainly not of least importance, the increase of interest in sf by the general public.

Much is heard about the language barriers, but other countries seem to be overcoming them. Italian and French anthologies have been published in Russian, while the Spanish magazine NUEVA DIMENSION carries stories by Russian, German and Polish authors. Fandom is following this trend with such things as articles on Italian sf in Japanese, Russian sf in Spanish, and the Australian sf Review has an article written by Italians for a Spanish fanzine.

The increase in general interest in sf seen in Britain these days, can also be seen throughout Europe. Many newspapers and general interest publications are giving space to the subject as, for instance, a daily newspaper in Venice which has a weekly science and sf page, and the REVUE ROUMAINE which devoted a large section of one issue to science fiction.

The sf exhibition organised by Harald Szeeman has already been seen in Berne, Paris and Zurich, and may go to the Netherlands. There have been other exhibitions and art shows, such as the exhibition in Paris by the French "Federation of Scientific Clubs", and in Italy, by Aladine Ghioni, "Surrealismo Fantascientifico ideologico".

There is, of course, a strong interest in sf films. At the present festival in Trieste, the sixth, films to be seen include Russia's "Andromeda Nebula", "I the Justice" from Czechoslovakia, "The Sorcerers" and "Bridgehead" from Britain, and films from the U.S.A. and Japan. Another recent event in this field was the International Young People's Film Congress in Berlin, by the Jugendfilmclub, in which the SFCD and the SF Club of Berlin took part.

The phrase "Fandom is international" is today a very real statement of fact. There are many clubs of varying size and interests, even in Kiev there are meetings attended by some 200 fans. The idea of conventions is now also widespread. In Germany, apart from the main SFCD convention, to be held this year in Heidelberg in August, and the smaller one in Linz, there was a Perry Rhodan con. in Frankfurt. The Dutch con. in Amsterdam in April had about 60 members and about the same number attended STOCON VI in Sweden in June. Spain has so far held two Minicons.

Only a brief selection of activities abroad can be given in this short report, but the I.C.D. would welcome requests for information from anyone interested in sf and fandom beyond these shores, and will make every effort to obtain answers to any queries. Fanzines from many countries are held and may be borrowed by members.

Jean G. Muggoch

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#### LOOSE ENDS

NEW WORLDS 182 is now available.

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SPECULATION: address; Pete Weston, 81 Trescott Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31.

Long reviews of the Kubrick/Clarke film '2001' have appeared in FILMS & FILMING (July 1968), SIGHT AND SOUND (Summer 1968) and OZ (Number 13).

Frank Herbert's 'Dune' has just been published as a paperback, (10/6d, Four Square). It is, in the words of ANALOG (and the cover blurb), 'certainly one of the landmarks of modern Science Fiction . . . an amazing feat of creation.' It has won both Hugo and Nebula awards.

John T. Sladek has just had a story published in PLAYBOY (June 1968). Title: "The Man from Not Yet"

Our information service is as good as our informants. You are our informants. Send relevant facts of interest to VECTOR readers on a post-card, to the editor.

You may have just missed the serialisation of 'The Day of the Triffids' on B.B.C. Radio 4.

'Report on Probability A' by Brian Aldiss, was first published, in a slightly different form, in NEW WORLDS, number 171.