



VECTOR

45



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VECTOR 45

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Neither the editor , nor the B.S.F.A. are necessarily in agreement with opinions expressed within. All communications for VECTOR 46 should be sent to the editorial address : Phil Muldownney, 7, The Elms, Stoke, Plymouth.

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EDITORIAL.

PHIL MULDOWNEY.

* * * * *

The editorship of VECTOR jumps about like the veritable jitterbug. It must do so again before long. I am only editing VECTOR pro-tem for the next few issues, and a permanent editor for VECTOR is urgently needed. That is dealt with more fully in the Bulletin however. Apologies for typing errors and other mistakes that may have spoiled the quality of this issue. I plead inexperience. If anyone can do better, I will be the first to relinquish the post!

Away from these mundane things.

It seems that after many years as the outcast of the literary world, the pariah dog of literature, sf has finally been accepted into the fold. Wonder of wonders, a Science Fiction (or should that be Speculative Fiction?) magazine has actually received a grant from that body of literary worthies, the Arts Council. At £1800 it is a very substantial one as well. Especially when compared to the other magazine grants given by the Arts Council. In appearance at least, NEW WORLDS is now one of the best fiction magazines on either side of the Atlantic.

In the July issue of BOOKS AND BOOKMEN there were three articles by Pat Williams, John Brunner, and Tom Boardman respectively, under the collective title 'The Breaking silence; SF 1967.' It is indeed a change to have articles on sf in a literary journal written by people who have a detailed knowledge of the field.

Pat Williams' article has a most imposing title, that might daunt one at first: 'Ulysses in Space' subtitled, 'Myth, hope and prophecy in the odysseys of tomorrow.' Phew! Has some literary subeditor been at work? It is a most interesting article however. Pat Williams pinpoints the appeal - or at least some of it - that sf has for me, and I think for a lot of others as well. She also makes a detailed comparison between Homer's ODYSSEY and sf. An interesting and perceptive article.

In his article, 'One sense of wonder slightly tarnished' John Brunner is in a nostalgic mood. Examining some of the attraction that sf held for him when he first started reading it, and the attraction that it holds for him now. He looks back on the pulp stories of the forties with fond memories, but his tastes have changed. He asks the question what will the new

young readers have to stimulate their sense of wonder? He goes on to list many of the writers who I myself have found stimulating and exciting. Cordwainer Smith (the late Dr. Paul Linebarger), Roger Zelazny, Thomas Disch, Samuel Delany, Michael Moorcock, David Masson, and others. Like sf itself, tastes change.

In his article 'Where have the SF flowers gone?' Tom Boardman is in a pessimistic mood. He says that in the forties there were at least twenty sf writers of promise, and in the fifties they were followed by writers like Poul Anderson, Robert Sheckley, Brian Aldiss and others. But, Tom Boardman asks, where are the promising authors of the past few years. He lists the winners and highly recommended 1965 Nebula winners, most started writing in the forties and fifties; only Larry Niven, who started writing in 1963, can said to be of the present generation. Tom Boardman examines Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, and Philip K. Dick as the best writers of the last ten years. He ends the article with a sort of 'Tip for the top' the writer's most likely to succeed in the next years, like the movie magazines are so fond of. Roger Zelazny, Tom Disch, Charles Platt, Thom Keyes, and Ian Colvin are the writers he names. Well, what is your opinion? The first two, the Americans, Disch and Zelazny, have been writing for several years and I would strongly agree with this choice. The others however. Charles Platt? Well, the stories he has written for NEW WORLDS have been very interesting, but I do not think he has written enough on which to base such a statement. Thom Keyes? Is he still writing sf? He wrote several stories for SCIENCE FANTASY, and a few for NEW WORLDS, but I cannot remember reading an sf story of his for quite a long time. His first novel had nothing to do with sf, but was the story of three members of a pop group. I may be particularly dense or something, but can someone please tell me who Ian Colvin is? I have looked through NEW WORLDS and cannot see a single story of his. There is a James Colvin, but is he not Michael Moorcock's alter ego?

What of other new writers. I would have thought the position is hardly as bleak as Tom Boardman paints it. What of Delany, Roberts, Leguin, Gotlieb, Niven, Saberhagen, and the other new writers from IF and NEW WORLDS?

Another rather suprising bit of information is that the Oxford and Cambridge examination Board have set a paper based on science fiction books, as the alternative to Chaucer, in their O Level English literature paper. The sf books that are the set ones are Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451, H.G. Wells THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, and a book by John Wyndham that I cannot quite remember. Can anyone help me. An interesting development, at least it will help the author's sales!

Well there it is. Hope you enjoy this issue. Letters of Comment and material will be very much appreciated. If you have something to say why not write an article, or letter? Deadline for VECTOR 46 is August 31, or as soon after as possible.

WILL 21st CENTURY CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO LIVE ?

By AUDREY WALTON.

* * * * *

One thing should be clearly understood, I am not a vegetarian, so therefore have no meat-axe to grind! This article is merely the extension of an idea sparked off by the arrival of a yellow form through my letter-box last week. In words as colourful as the paper on which they were printed, it urged me to join the British Vegetarian Association and stated that I should: 'Live and let live!' This jolted me and set me thinking hard; will wars in the 21st Century be fought, not for power or glory, but simply for FOOD? If so, this surely opens new and rich fields of speculation to the science fiction writer.

Will overpopulation force Mankind to feed himself by artificial and vegetable means in the next Century? This really is a terrifying thought, when you consider it carefully.

The question provides endless material for the sf writer's ingenuity and wit. Plots without end could be based on this all too real problem. A world famine caused by the need to feed too many mouths on dwindling resources, is a very dramatic background against which an exciting situation could be beefily enacted. Just imagine, a clash between the vegetarians and the meat-eaters. The vegetarians claiming that one meat-eater was depriving five of their own fraternity of essential food, and demanding that all agricultural land given over to meat raising should be used for the cultivation of rice or grain. Think what a marvellous villain a mad farmer in control of the world food supply would make! There he would be, sneering into his thick black beard, and glorying in his castration chambers, his doping factories, his sweat boxes and his batteries, completely unmoved by the pathetic plight of the starving populace, striving desperately to depose him.

The United Nations' Survey at the end of 1965 definitely stated that SIX times as many people could be fed on land given over to vegetable rather than animal culture. Perhaps, even more could be fed today, when we have highly mechanised machines capable of harvesting root crops and even cabbages; this amazing automation is achieved by using various attachments on a base unit. This unit can also be used, in a limited degree for harvesting fruit. A hero whose job is to remote control one of these tractors by using an electronic box of tricks, will

not be at all unlikely in the 21st Century.

Any writer could delve with hopes of rich rewards into the possibilities opened up by remote control systems. After all, the many varied forms of automation are just as exciting as the dangers of space flights and planet colonisation, which are now beginning to get a bit dull and everyday. On the other hand, one need not look farther than the sea for another source of inspiration galore. There is no doubt in my mind that one day, a great part of Mankind will live permanently under water, with, perhaps, short holidays on land. What a wealth of ideas there is! Yes, the sea is alive with material for wonder stories and fantasy. The utterly remote strangeness of the Deep provides the mind with a great stimulus for imaginative fiction.

Another field of interest is the need to fight against the introduction of opiates; here, the sf writer could obviously have influence. Mankind, at this moment, stands on the threshold of a new way of life. Changes as radical as the discovery of fire and the mechanical inventions of the Industrial Revolution at hand. Writers, now, today, could help prevent a repetition of the disastrous effects of the social and economic changes that are bound to come.

How can we hope to end war, when Mankind's killer instinct is pandered to by the slaughter of defenceless animals for food? Even non-vegetarians like myself must often have had feelings of revulsion against the idea of factory farming animals, and the gory horrors of the abattoir. Remember, these distasteful practices will have to be stepped up as the population increases. What then?

In primitive times, it was a question of kill or be killed, and Man was both the hunter and the hunted. There was then some dignity in the situation, because the odds were even, and besides, Man had not yet learned how to support himself by growing and harvesting grain. But, when the first grain was sown, Mankind laid the seeds of his release from the sordid bonds of the grim necessities of survival within the animal kingdom. How many centuries will it take before he gathers his rich harvest; a wholesome livelihood based on a respect for all living creatures? The sf writer need not look far for a crusade, if he wants one.

There is no longer any need for Mankind to slaughter in order to live! Of course, in the very beginning, vegetable and grain cultivation was much bedevilled by hazards; bad weather could cause famine and great hardships, while Winter brought with it an inevitable shortage of vital food supplies. Small wonder that very few early Men survived beyond the age of twenty!

Today, however, Mankind faces no such dilemma, for instance, the drastic effects of famine in India could have been prevented if the modern resources available had been used to the best advantage. It is hard to credit that life-giving grain was allowed to rot because the taste was unfamiliar, surely there was some method of changing the flavour? But early Man had no resources to fall back on; he could not plan ahead because he had no records, nor technology or mechanisation. Advance knowledge of the weather is now available to farmers; food can be preserved and stored indefinitely, and winter brings few hardships that cannot adequately be solved by modern technology and know-how.

The Oceans are teeming with untapped supplies of plankton and it is now possible to manufacture artificial protein from a fantastic number of very unlikely sources of material, such as feathers, etc. It is quite obvious that nobody needs to starve in the 20th Century let alone the 21st, however big the population explosion happens to be. Here again, we find ourselves with stupendous scope and unlimited material for story backgrounds!

It is clear that food wastage might create very serious problems in the next Century. No doubt, there will be still unscrupulous people who will try to create artificial shortages for their own ends. Speculation as to how the ordinary person of the future will protect himself against overcrowding, social injustice and even shortages of the bare necessities of life, could lead to an entirely new sort of hero and heroine in science fiction. Instead of a near super-human glamour boy, so unattainable in the vastness of space, our hero could have his feet firmly on the Earth's rich brown surface.

These new type people will certainly face a hostile environment right here on Earth which could prove even more difficult to cope with than on any alien planet's territory. The science fiction writer does not need to seek for the Moon, there are hundreds of plotworthy problems that might arise in simply defending the basic human rights against the crushing onward march of an indifferent technological advance. This inhuman monster, which if it is not tamed by forethought and much soul-searching, may cripple mankind far more horribly than any bug-eyed colleague on Lunar's dark side.

One trembles to think what it will be like when the heat is really on and there are more than twice as many hungry mouths to feed! Who will be in charge of our vital food supplies in years to come? Who will prevent great cities from gobbling up the precious agricultural land as more and more people demand houses? There is a very great danger that future generations may have to face famine and disease merely through mismanagement of vital resources. What an Aladdin's cave of

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of plot and counter-plot we have before us! What vast possibilities for drama, pathos and sheer human interest! My mind simply boggles at the endless permutations.

Surely it is a worthy cause to draw attention to these facts? Only an enlightened public opinion will ensure development along the path to human plenty and human dignity. It would be pathetic if Mankind has clawed its way to Outer Space merely to become well-fed slaves! Human dignity in the midst of plenty is well within the reach of Modern Man, if he will only stretch out his hand and take it. The writer's responsibility is perhaps, greater than it has ever been before and the last three decades of the 20th Century offer him a field so vast, so bursting at the seams with new ideas that he should shout with joy at being privileged to ply his pen, (or typewriter), in times of such great moment and adventure!

* * * * *

APOLOGIES DEPARTMENT.

With reference to the postscript to 'WHICH GOES TO SHOW, which appeared on Page 4 of VECTOR 44. To quote from DEGLER I72 dated 10 March 1967.

' Note; the story about Harlan Ellison in Degler I70 is, we have been told, largely innacurate. However, this item appears to be part of a personal matter between Harlan and others in Hollywood. The item was told us by a third party; we wish to apologise for any misunderstanding which its publication may have caused.'

The B.S.F.A. also apologises for any misconceptions that the article may have caused.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

A fan column BY

MALCOLM EDWARDS.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE, with a VECTOR that provokes happy memories of the Archie Mercer administration of three years ago!

Yes, three years. Shut your eyes for a moment, and they seem like a bad dream, a sickness, a self-delusion that the B.S.F.A. was a 'prestige' organisation. Think of the sterile little magazine that looked so nice but was never read, and compare it with a VECTOR that does what it should, that keeps members in touch, is warm, human and personal. There's no mystery to me that the Doreen Parker/Ken Slater show of recent months, "editorrible" and all, has attracted so much in the way of letters, material and interest. After all, there is such a thing as providing what the readership wants!

Here's me going on as if I actually had something to do with the VECTOR production line, as if I had any idea what to talk about. Charles Legg complains that there is no fan news in this column. Not knowing any fan news, or even whether there is any fan news, I felt a bit nonplussed on hearing this. And then by borrowing a few current fanzines, I managed to learn quite a lot.

The fuss about the WSFA has died down, but now there's this business about the 'Pong'. Yes that's right, the 'Pong', as in bad smell. And bad smell there is about a move by the New York World Convention Committee to replace the 'Hugo' for best amateur magazine with a fan award.

Now I ask you, if you were a fanzine editor, would you want something sitting on your sideboard labelled 'Pong'? Imagine a visitor asking "what is it"- and imagine the involved embarrassed explanation that would follow! One experience of this and the thing would be hidden at the back of the box room!

If I were a fanzine editor I'd be just a little annoyed at a high-handed, unnecessary, and foolish change in standard award-giving practice. There ought to be some hard and fast rules about these yearly presentations. Reamy with TRUMPET, Rolfe and Meskys with NIEKAS, and the DOUBLE BILL dynamic duo refused to accept if they win one. Latest news is that the New York Convention Committee has decided to withdraw the name 'Pong' from the fan awards, due to adverse reaction from fandom.

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Then there's this other business in American fandom, about the Amazing-Fantastic-Ultimate-Publishing Company policy of paying only token amounts for reprinted material. Some dedicated fans want to launch a boycott, so that all of fandom stops buying the magazines and show the evil publishers the error of their ways. Two reasons why this idea is laughable; one that the whole of fandom has never united for any reason, and two that if they did, it would be an insignificant proportion of Sol Cohen's total sales. In other words, I doubt that he is losing any sleep.

Closer to hand, there is a blitzkrieg pending over the OMPA mess. After many years successful operation, this one and only British Amateur Publishing Association is in trouble, due mainly to an Official Editor who hasn't done anything for nine months. Brian Jordan has been sitting on organisation magazines and records, and President Archie Mercer has threatened to get things moving by storming Sheffield. Whether any members are sufficiently interested to make OMPA a going concern again after so long, is open to doubt, particularly since the BSFA sponsored Publishing & Distributing Service continues to draw in newcomers and grind out carbon-copy new magazines.

Has PaDs ever produced anything worth reading? I don't know much about the history of the organisation except that it sprang full grown from the ruins of the 'New Wave' era and (rumour has it) is still haunted by Charles Platt's ghost.

I may be unkind here, but a recent mailing provided me with what I assume is a typical cross-section of material, and it was nearly all terrible. PROTEUS was running the dullest fan-feud ever. Nearly all was bad, hardly a spark of imagination, literary talent or of interest.

As far as other fanzines are concerned, there's a new and more sickeningly-perfect than ever issue of TRUMPET now available from Desmond Squire, 24 Riggindale Rd, Streatham, London SW13 3/6. Not only is this a glossy Playboy-like fanzine, but it is also extremely well-written, making me sincerely glad for the thousandth time that I don't actually edit a magazine of my own to be shown up in comparison.

The Christmas issue of QUIP is finally out, 100 pages worth waiting for, with a mainly . . . content and the occasional serious item. I liked almost everything in the magazine.

Finally, Cringebinder Publications present LES SPINGE named after the famous Stourbridge Fan Leslie P. Hinge who first used the Darroll Pardoe pseudonym. Number 17 arrived recently, slim, neat and funny, and available on request from 11 Cheniston Gardens, London W.8. I get this as one of the 'perks' with this column, and I think I have earned another couple of issues.

CONSIDERING HOW TO RUN.

BY

TONY SUDBERY.

' An examination of Michael Moorcock's editorial pronouncements.'

I NOTES FROM UNDERWHERE.

* * * * *

1 'It's the job of good entertainment to throw fresh light on the human condition.' (Moorcock, NW 165 p2.)

Hands up all those who thought the job of good entertainment was to entertain well? OK, well you know better now- don't you?

2 'We feel that those who want 'art' and those who want 'entertainment' in sf may simply be quarreling over terms.' (Moorcock, NW 144 p.2.)

Just ask them in non-terminological terms and you'll see. Unrelieved light is wearying.

3 'All good entertainment is art of its kind, all good art is entertaining. (Moorcock,ibid.)

Good! Good! I wish he'd remembered this when he wrote no. 1. But verbal trickery is in sight; what criterion is to be used to decide when entertainment is good? Aesthetics is notorious for the semantic shifts to which its terms are liable; some of them are suggested in the above three quotations. The ground is beginning to slip.

Consider a Torquemada crossword puzzle or a William Morris wallpaper.

4 'We enjoy good escapism and will always publish good escapism alongside more serious fiction. (Moorcock, NW 159 p.4.)

If you're not a philistine, you've got to have terms which differentiate between 'fine art' (Lawrence) and 'activities on a par with smoking' (Leavis). Moorcock's choice of 'good entertainment' and 'escapism' is unfortunate. This isn't just a quibble; I am objecting to the tone of contempt automatically manufactured for Moorcock by the second word. If, having recognised that there are two categories, you delimit the higher category by setting up a criterion abounding in big words, (like 'human condition'), then your net at once becomes too coarse and too much slips through into the lower category. You neglect a number of factors which should be higher in any scale of values than pure enjoyment. It is purblind oversimplification to

lump these two together as escapism.

Apart from which, this use of the word is plain wrong. Enjoyment is not the same thing as escapism. The term belongs to psychopathology, not criticism. An escapist is one who compensates for the inadequacy of his actual life by means of fantasy lives. Escapism is this activity, and so it describes not a kind of literature but a possible use of literature. If there is a kind of literature which can be fairly labelled escapism, it is presumably that which can only be enjoyed in an escapist fashion. I suppose pornography must, if you choose the right definition, be escapism; adventure stories certainly needn't be; mystery stories usually can't be, and the mystery story is probably the commonest form for traditional sf. (Hmmm. The sort of traditional sf that I read, anyway.) Of course, there's nothing necessarily wrong with escapism.

An escapist - and each of us is an escapist on occasion - enjoys a narrative by identifying with one or more of the characters in it; but despite current doctrine, this is not the only, or even the usual way of enjoying a narrative. Good literature indeed empathy, escapism induces identification, but good entertainment may induce neither. P.G. Wodehouse writes good entertainment - certainly on a par with smoking Senior Service - but only the subject of a psychological or sociological case-history would identify with his characters.

Bob Parkinson nearly said a good thing in VECTOR 39; 'good literature seeks to bring the reader into closer contact with reality, escapism takes him further away from reality.' (That's a paraphrase.) Entertainment often has very little effect on his distance from reality. Consider again the crossword puzzle. It's not irrelevant.

5. 'If your first insistence is on the accuracy of the science, obviously you should be reading THE NEW SCIENTIST and SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN and knocking off the sf habit altogether. (apocryphal NW 155 p.127.)

.....and if you don't stay there where you belong, you grubby little technologist, we'll let loose the Nova Police.

6. 'If writers are to describe the advanced techniques of the Space Age, they must invent writing techniques equally as advanced in order properly to deal with them. (NW 142 p.2; Burroughs quoted by Moorcock. I wonder which of them was responsible for the glaring unsplit infinitive.)

Specious.

7. 'We even have a science which strives to understand the essential nature of things; Ontology. (Moorcock, NW 158 p.3.)

Not so.

8. 'Whether (Harness) is talking about Relativity, Nuclear Physics, Toynbee's theories of History, philosophy in general, or duelling, one gets the impression that he really understands what he is writing. (Moorcock, NW I46 p.II4)

Hence No.7, which was postulated (not actually asserted) in THE NEW REALITY. Moorcock really should know better than an authoritative tone for authority in an sf author.

Better be explicit. I am not attacking Harness; his scientific and metaphysical songs are no worse than those of most sf writers, and when a subject is directly relevant to one of his stories it is one that he does know about: ballet in THE ROSE (the howler about 5/4 time is excusable), philosophy (only marginally relevant, according to Moorcock) in THE NEW REALITY (for 'philosophy in general' read 'pre-1900 philosophy').

9 'Art is too personal to supply a prism for the world to use (for focussing its hopes and fears) Moorcock, NW I58 p.

Bad art, yes; good art is too personal not to supply such a lens.

10. 'Ballard is not advocating a general overthrow of the prose form as we know it' Moorcock NW I67 p.I48.)

11. 'The social novel is dead. (Ballard, NW I67 p.I48)

Then so are we.

12 '.....Kingsley Amis's Brilliant novel ONE FAT ENGLISHMAN. (Ballard, NW I42 p.I27.)

A sop! It must be a sop.

13. 'The fantastic story (is) an area of popular literature into which muck of sf falls, where sensational use of the fantastic is included for its own sake- its purpose being to excite the emotions for a little while. (Moorcock, NW I60 p.3.)

How could anything excite the emotions but for a little while? The latest theory of criticism, I understand, has it that art works by evoking emotions and that high art is judged by the demand that the emotion should be precise and specific. Doubtless this is as wrong as all other general aesthetic theories; but it clearly contains an important part of the truth. Also, what is wrong with the use of anything for its own sake?

14. 'What must be avoided is the sad attempt already made by some writers to earn 'respectability' by writing sf denuded of all its essential qualities, conforming to the conventions of the social novel and producing space stories that, aside from being set in a spaceship or on Deneb VI, are really stories of manners, not of ideas- and unsatisfactory because of their setting (Ibid.)

Who does he mean? If anyone knows, will he please tell

me? I want to read the stories- Moorcock's criticism may well be justified, but he's probably missed the point.

I5 'There are two rough divisions in fiction, of course, and all sf should fall into one of these. There is the social novel and novel of ideas. (Moorcock, ibid.)

And, of course, it's quite obvious where to put Jane Austen, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence and THE WAY OF ALL FLESH.

I6 'If it is to retain its character as a literature of ideas, sf must emphasise its fantastic elements rather than rid itself of them. (Moorcock. Ibid.)

Apparently sf criticism is to do the same.

I7 'Sf must develop its own standards, its own conventions, and it must take its subject matter from every possible source. Otherwise it will remain what it was until fairly recently - the fat, intelligent, often sardonic, colourfully-dressed eunuch of literature. (Moorcock, NW I66p.I56)

A great phrase, a fine cadence ; the victory of form over matter. Sf is not a person, not a national literature; if it were either, demands like Moorcock's might make sense. What sort of thing is sf, anyway? Surely, just a form which writers are free to use or not to use, as they choose. What characterises it? Not its subject matter, if no. I8 is to have even the appearance of sense. Remembering that we're talking in Moorcock's language, let's say that it's the superficial subject matter that distinguishes sf, the images and symbols, the tools that it uses to work with its real subject matter.

Moorcock's requirements, then, are that every subject must be discussed in this specific manner; given a subject, it is decreed that some poor fool somewhere has got to sit down and write an sf story around it.

Never mind that the theme would be far better treated in a different idiom - sf has got to do it too. Moreover, this story has to be a story of ideas, which appears to mean (a) that it has to treat of the great abstract problems of human existence, and (b) that it has to do so symbolically and allegorically. Any writer wishing to attempt a more concrete discussion, or a different sort of discussion, is forbidden to do so in the framework of sf.

Moorcock is entitled to claim that sf is suited to the type of serious writing that he admires. What nobody can do is to prove that other sorts of achievement are impossible in the genre. We can only wait until the attempts are made and then judge them individually. I would claim that sf is ideally suited to non-allegorical, realistic literature of ideas; and on the other hand that it already boasts a number of serious, if minor, successes that are not of the literature of ideas at all.

The last few dicta hardly chime with Moorcock's championing of utterly conventional, in content utterly unremarkable - which is not to say unsuccessful or unstriking - 'social' stories like I REMEMBER ANITA...

The ghetto mentality shown in these quotations is not what one would expect from Moorcock. It is of historical interest only that the elements of a certain type of popular fiction of the twentieth century were found useful by serious writers like Ballard, Golding (some say) and Burgess (but did anyone else feel it as a smack in the eye when Burgess turned to the spy story?)

18. 'Don't you think that the 'kitchen sink school' is out of date as the sort of sf we were attacking? (Moorcock NW 151 p.122)

Old fashioned, out of date, outmoded. (NW 142-170 passing)

Moorcock constantly makes appeal to fashion that is out of place in serious comment; and dangerous to him as liable to boomerang. What could be more passee, comes the retort, than symbolism, surrealism and modernism generally? It would be a wrong-headed retort, of course. The whole modernist movement is old enough - well over fifty years - to be seen in perspective and assimilated into conventional art. The audience can understand its attitudes and idioms, the artist can use its techniques freely without feeling constrained to use them exclusively. Such a fusion is producing vital literature, as with contemporary American novelists like John Barth and William Butler. The assimilation has now reached the stable stage where the proportions of convention and modernism used by a writer do not affect his pose as progressive or conservative - I need only point to a good conventional writer like B.S. Johnson.

I am using rather stilted terms. Modernist does not equal modern, nor conventional 19th century. The former term refers to a wide movement in the arts, whose scope I have indicated, which rumbled in the 1900's and 1910's and chattered in the '20s and '30s; the latter refers to the 19th-century novel in its natural and continuous (but not slow) development since then.

In a needful attack on the sf conservatives, those who would (why?) prevent the publication of what they dislike, Moorcock said 'You can imagine their ancestors looking with suspicion on the wheel, the King James Bible or the steam engine muttering that no good would come of it.' (NW 159 p.2) I can imagine his ancestors deriding Bach, Jane Austen and Brahms. There's room for everyone; there's need for everyone.

And for those who missed them,

19 'The true subject of science fiction is inner space

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(Ballard, folklore)

which is philistine, and

20. 'Of course, to any religious person who is not a fundamentalist, God is an abstract ideal. (Moorcock, NW 158 p.2)

which is an admirable prescription for how things should be, but hardly works as a description of how things are.

Pinprick prack peck, niggling finicking pinpricks.

A statement of attitudes only, often unargued and no doubt merely irritating. Moorcock irritates me, but should I scratch myself in public?

Irrelevant sniping? Unimportant (check my references) sentences? quoted (check my references) out of context? with their significance (check my references) distorted? Fuller fare follows.

But first, fannish experience teaches me, avant-garde-fannish and derriere-gar de-fannish alike: better be explicit (as said before). I do not attack (as should have said before) Moorcock as editor or Ballard as writer; I speak not of the good things they have done, only the silly things they have said. (This does not mean that I like everything they have done (nor this that I dislike....(nor this...(nor this... nor...))))

Enough? Say more, lay more reservations state more attitudes, let justice be seen to be done in 625,000-line 19,000-inch superfine supertex detail?

NW 151 was a good editorial.

NW 159 was a good editorial.

NW 162 was a good editorial.

NW 166 was a good editorial.

....

...lay down the needle and take up the stylus.
Fol ows fuller fare, fairer argue.

THE HARRISON LETTER.

The first of what we hope will be a regular column.

BY
HARRY HARRISON.

* * * * *

I have the most recent VECTOR to hand and am obsessed by nostalgia, and perhaps the fact that my name is not mentioned once in this issue, I feel the need to communicate with my fellow members now across the sea.

For the first time in many years I missed a BSFA con, and it was very traumatic. My thanks to everyone who signed that fine card sent from Bristol: I only wish I had been there to sign it too. How were the meat pies this year? Is Burgess still charging 4/6 for a pint of milk after midnight? Did Slater ever get his voice back? Was Jim White drinking as heavily as usual? Did anyone buy Aldiss a drink? Do Merrill and Disch make a noisy enough American substitute for Harrison? Will I ever get an answer to these questions?

Some members may not know that I have reluctantly fled your highly taxed shores. After an argosy that resembled one of the Mercer's motorbike tours, including camping the summer on the shore in Italy and a wild ocean voyage on a Greek freighter, we reached New York City. Stayed there just long enough to ruin the kidneys on the overproof American drink (Beefeater Martinis are out this year, Bombay gin martinis are in) then trekked across this gigantic country in the same old green van that con-goers know so well. And an interesting trip it was, though headwinds slowed us so that it took 4 days to cross Texas alone, with the rooting out of SF types along the way. Drank cheerfully with Galouye, Oliver, Farmer, Scithers and such (after having drunk cheerfully in New York with Blish, Knight, Pohl, Ley, Santesson, Campbell, Sheckley, etc.). Looking at this makes me realize that the U.S. is an SF paradise (if you like to drink) which I suppose is a good enough reason for reemigrating to these shores. But there is nothing to read except adverts in the sunday papers, one can't find draught Guinness (that would slay Ken M.) and the commercials on TV run longer than the programs.

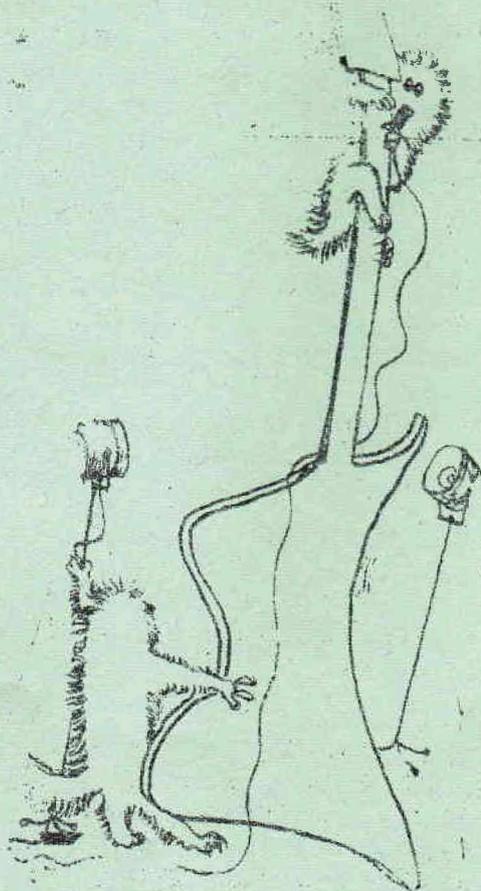
In any case we made it. We have bought a house just a few miles from Mexico in the southern part of San Diego. Any visiting BSFA memebbers are invited to drop in. (Show your visa and the club secretary will reveal the address.) So it looks like we will be here awhile.

It has been 10 years since I last attended an American convention, and I wonder if they stand up as well as the fine British product? I'll find out. There is a Westercon in Los

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Angeles in July, and the worldcon in New York in September. I shall attend them both and send my classified report to VECTOR.

Wait, yes, there was one more thing wanted to mention. Do you realise that all the houses here have central heating? Terrible. Tries out the membranes and I'm sure it softens the cerebral cortex. Nothing really beats a nice little four-inch bar, electric fire, or a smoking lump of coal the size of a walnut.



THE LITERARY WORLD: REVIEWS AND COMMENT.

In which VECTOR adopts a serious mien, and suitably donnish air.

* * * * *

IN DEFENCE OF DAVY.

BY TOM JONES.

In VECTOR 43 there was a review, using the term in its widest sense, of Edgar Pangborn's book DAVY. At the time of reading the review I had not read the book but nevertheless I thought the review was a bad one, and one of the best hatchet jobs for a long time. I have just finished reading the book and after reading the review again I see that it is even worse than I feared.

Mr Morgan obviously greatly dislikes the style of writing used, and he allows this to cloud the whole review. I am not saying that if a reviewer dislikes a book he shouldn't say so, but if a reviewer is biased from the start against a book for some reason, and Mr Morgan admits that he was biased after reading the note on page 4 even before the book starts, then I believe that he should not review the book, as he obviously has no chance of being objective about it.

Here I hope to answer some of the points made by Mr. Morgan. Throughout, Mr. Morgan attempts to ridicule the book by the use of silly trite remarks, the only thing this does is emphasise the defects of the review. One such remark is the last one that Mr. Morgan makes, to quote, '..but how anyone in possession of all his marbles could even categorise it as sf..' the ridiculousness of this remark is self apparent. After all, stories about what happens after an Atomic War, which take place about 400 years in the future, usually are categorised as sf, aren't they?

Mr. Morgan particularly dislikes the note at the front of the book, and this seems to bias him against the whole book. This is about as sensible a thing as disliking the book because it's dedicated to someone you don't like. I will readily agree that the note is silly, but to start to make a judgement using this as a basis, is even sillier.

Mr. Morgan quickly gets through a synopsis of the plot giving as clear a picture as a third rate blurb. On the way, he stops to make a sarcastic remark about Davy finding his 'long-lost-daddy.' If Mr. Morgan had looked at the book closely he would have seen that it was never decided that the man in question was Davy's father, but the relationship between the two was such that Davy wanted the man to be his father, and the man

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wanted Davy to be his son.

I get the feeling that the remark about the part where Davy steals a golden horn from a mutant is sarcastic, if this is not so, then I apologise, but say that part of the blame lies with Mr.Morgan because of his other sarcastic remarks. The remark made, was that the above mentioned episode was 'rather touching'. Whether sarcastic or not, I agree with the remark, it was a very moving piece of writing. It showed the expansion of Davy's character at the beginning of the stage of life where one starts to get some of the qualities that we associate with manhood.

The review says that after the death of Davy's father, Davy 'Once more strikes out to seek his fortune (to coin a phrase', and once again Mr.Morgan cannot resist the quick sarcastic remark. What Mr.Morgan says is also not wholly true, the main reason for Davy leaving the people he has been with -they're called the Rumley's Ramblers - is the death of his father. As one of the characters says to another, 'Laura, it's a strange time for a man when his father dies. He's not qu with himself for some time, Laura, no matter was his father a good man or not, no matter was he a good son to his father or a bad one.'

The review then goes on to say that Davy meets a youth who turns out to be a girl, as Mr.Morgan says, 'in true Shakespearian manner...' I only assume that this comparison with Shakespeare is a compliment. Seriously though, it is obvious from the book that for a woman to do anything at that time, she must disguise herself as a man. We are then told by the review that Davy immediately, '..declares his love and marries the girl.' I don't know how Mr. Morgan deduces that, but certainly not from this book. The fact that Davy makes love to the girl does not mean that he has fallen in love with her. Throughout the book Davy makes love to several girls. Eventually Davy does fall in love with the girl but he never marries her. This last point is obvious if one bothers to note some of Davy's comments about some of the footnotes.

From Mr.Morgan's review one would assume that the story ends with the heroes setting sail across the Atlantic, but this is not so. They find an island, and some of the most moving parts of the book take place there.

Mr. Morgan really dislikes the fact that the story is told in the first person singular, but this is the whole point of the book, it is supposed to be an autobiography, and these tend to be written in the first person. For the book to have been written in any other form would have ruined it. By using this form, the character of Davy was alive, and the other characters came alive with him. The 'cracker barrel philosophy, randy meanderings, and general navel contemplation are exactly what one would expect. They also help because they stop the first

person narrative from becoming boring as it can so often do. A first person narrative often resolves into a ' Then I did this, then I did that... then I met him...then I met her... ad nauseam type of thing. But by setting the supposed author's thoughts down as they occur, Pangborn avoids falling into this trap.

Fortunately Mr.Morgan's views don't seem to be held by many, as DAVY only polled four votes less than Fritz Leiber's THE WANDERER which won the 1965 Hugo award for the best novel. Finally I can only say that this is a very adult novel, those who say that there is no sex in sf should read it. The only complaint anyone could level against it with validity is that the language used is not the sort you would show an eight year old kid, none the less, the use of the words does make the story more realistic.

* * * * *

IN DEFENCE OF MORGAN.

BY DAN MORGAN.

Wow! That's me told off, ain't it? Glad to know you Tom Jones. You say what you mean, and that's always something worth doing. It's what I was trying to do, believe it or not. The review was a sincere reflection of the feelings kindled in me by the book - and if a review isn't supposed to be that, then what should it be.

I must say that I resent the suggestion of bias. I stated quite clearly in para 2 that I opened the book with eager anticipation. Surely that's hardly an indication of pre-formed antipathy ? My first misgiving was on reading the note on Page 4 - which you agree is 'silly'. I didn't judge the book on this, but on its style and content as a whole. The quotation of the note was used because I believed (and still believe) it to be a fair and representative example of the style. And, yes, Tom -you got the message- I greatly dislike the style of writing! Furthermore I am not alone in this ; vide Schuyler Miller, a manifestly pro-Pangborn writer, who says at the end of his ANALOG review of Pangborn's latest book, 'He has never written a bad book, though he has written books that many science-fiction enthusiasts don't like'.

If many science fiction enthusiasts dislike Pangborn's books, then this would seem to indicate that these books may well be bad sf - I'm not saying that they are, because I Haven't read them all - but surely sf enthusiasts are the obvious people to judge sf books, aren't they? This could lead us into a discussion of the nice distinctions which could be made between a 'bad' book in the general sense, and a 'bad' book in the sf sense, but I'm not going to get tied up in that one at the moment. Neither am I going to re-open the old argument as to

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What is, or is not sf -- but I would suggest that the placing of a story 400 years in the future does not necessarily make it sf - any more than the placing of a story in the past disqualifies it from being sf.

About the matter of Davy's paternity - you can't have it both ways - the implication is that the man is his father, and within the context of the story Davy acts as if this were true.

I cannot imagine why you suspect me of sarcasm in my mention of the mutant and the golden horn passage- this was one of the few nuggets of real stuff in the book, as far as I was concerned.

About the business of setting sail across the Atlantic - It's some time since I read the book, and I don't have a copy to refer to, but I seem to recall that Davy does set sail after the passage on the island; motivated surely by the death of his wife- be she common law wife, or otherwise. This would seem to be a pretty important ingredient of the story - and would further indicate quite clearly that Davy's relationship with the girl was something rather more than the matter of casual seduction which you imply. (Will whoever has the book please check on this matter of fact? - maybe I misunderstood, or re-wrote the thing in my head, or something.)

On the point of first person narration - I do not dislike the method, but I do have an appreciation of the difficulties involved in the use of this particular technique, to which I have given considerable thought and in which I have conducted a certain amount of personal experiment. Pangborn uses the technique badly, falling into several of its more obvious traps, amongst which are the afore mentioned cracker barrel philosophy and navel contemplation - ie a boring diffuseness that obscures the story line. I would refer you to Bill Temple's recent book, where the first person technique is used to real purpose - that is, to reveal character concisely and obliquely.

In conclusion I would like to suggest that THE WANDERER won the Hugo Award, albeit by only four votes, because presumably the voters did have their marbles, and recognised it for what it undoubtedly is, the better work of science fiction. Just how, and whi it is the better book, I shall to proceed to explain in my review.

THE WANDERER. BY FRITZ LEIBER.
(Pub. Dobson 25/-)

Reviewed BY
DAN MORGAN.

Recent events have prompted some heart-searchings about the function of a critic. It seems to me that this consists of something more than reading a book and recording an opinion such as : 'I like it' or 'It stinks!' A critic is quite within his rights to say either of these things, but he should also give his readers some idea of his reasons for coming to whatever conclusion he did reach. If he does this, he gives his readers the opportunity of comparing their own opinions with his - and, if they disagree, presumably the right to fire guided missives at the editor pointing out that the reviewer is a great hairy twit. If, on the other hand, the person who reads the review has not yet read the book - then perhaps a favourable review will make him read the book. Likewise, if the reader is convinced in advance that the reviewer/critic is a great hairy twit, then an unfavourable review might make him more inclined to read the book. In the long run it doesn't matter which of these impulses motivate the reader, just so long as people keep on reading books and thinking about what they have read.

Now about the current subject, Fritz Leiber's THE WANDERER. Let me first declare an interest. Along with Asimov, Bester and maybe a dozen more, the name of Fritz Leiber is one that goes way back in my sf reading and stirs warm associations of wonder and enjoyment. Leiber, more than most, has always had something extra. Back in the early 1950's he was producing stories like A BAD DAY FOR SALES and A PAIL OF AIR; and when a writer turns out stories of this calibre it is a fair indication that, given the stamina and inclination, he may some day write a full length novel of stature.

Leiber is a professional in the best sense of the word. Writers like him don't drop out of a tree overnight and become one-shot wonders; they work at it for years and years, learning and perfecting the technique of story telling. Sometimes they turn out the odd stinker - like the SILVER EGGHEADS, for instance -but hell! even Papa Hemingway had his off days.

THE WANDERER is a big book, in every sense. Much longer than the average sf novel, it is also that much better in many respects. A 3000 word short story can be too long, if it is badly (ie uninterestingly) written. THE WANDERER is, at a rough guess, somewhere around 100,000 words, but at no point did I feel that a single one of these words was wasted. If you want to understand what I mean, read and re-read Chapter 36. P.276 and seq - if the sheer visionary poetry of Tigerishka's story does not knock you for a loop, call in at your doctor's surgery right away - you may well be dead, and not know it.

In chapter One, Leiber introduces us to the first of

his enormous cast of characters: Margo Gelhorn and Paul Hagbolt, Wolf Loner, a Chichester figure somewhere in mid-Atlantic, Captain Sithwisc, of the luxury liner Prince Charles, Sally Harris and her boyfriend Jake Leshar, at Coney Island, Don Guillermo Walker, a second rate actor who is on his way to bomb the palace of the president of Nicaragua, Dai Davies, a Dylan Thomas type welsh poet, and his British novelist friend Richard Hillary. And this is just the beginning; from there on the big picture just builds and builds, showing us a cross-section of humanity as it is affected by the arrival of THE WANDERER.

Leiber keeps the story going at a cracking pace all the way through. There's always something happening, usually several things at once, and more important - you're always curious to know what is going to happen next. All this, despite the fact that the entire book contains not one new sf idea. Stated bad y the plotline would read like a string of cliches - but then, what plotline doesn't? Leiber has me going for him because he introduced me to to such a huge cast of characters and made me care about what happened to them. That's more important than trying to shock the reader with way out ideas. To coin a phrase: 'The proper study of mankind is man' - and Leiber has clearly majored in this study. What's more - he likes cats, so I couldn't possibly argue with him. Get it! Read it!

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NEBULA AWARD STORIES.I. (for 1965)

(Pub. Gollancz, 25s. 253pp)

Selected by the Science Fiction Writers of America.

Edited and introduced by Damon Knight.

Reviewed BY
TONY SUDBERY.

So here it is, all democratic and official; those who are qualified to say, proclaim these as the best sf stories

One novel: LUNE: no, not here. Two novellas (a tie), a novelette (that word; here would have been a good place for a definition), a short story. Four more short stories (or three and a novelette?), the 'highly commendeds', all better than the winner.

Roger Zelazny won two awards, those for novelette and novella. The novelette, THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH, is a big fish story set on Venus. The fish, of the species Gorgon, is the resolving factor in a situation of stalc, abandoned love. The situation and the characters are well conceived and presented, and so is the background of deep sea fishing (I don't know why Damon Knight opposed this story to 'scientific' sf). The whole scintillates with Zelazny's stylish wit, witty style. A good start.

The longer story, HE WHO SHAPES, is not so

successful. What He who Shapes is dreams, for psychotherapeutic purposes, and Zelazny warns: Shaper, shape thyself before thou shapest another shaper. I suppose the device of a car accident in the past used to define and control character is not as artificial as it seems; but it's certainly hackneyed, and weakens the story. There is a more basic flaw in the central situation; being psychological, this is where the scientific and literary failings combine. The Shaper is prevailed upon to use his skill to show visual images to a girl blind from birth, and the subject of the story is the tensely strained relationship that this sets up. However, Zelazny does not seem to fully realise what an upset the sudden accession of sight would be, and there has been some work on this. (Richard Gregory's paper on it makes a pretty moving novella in itself.) Finally, the mosaic technique used doesn't quite come off; the chips are too small. These are fundamental criticisms, but it is such an intricate story that they don't dismiss it entirely.

James H. Schmitz's BALANCED ECOLOGY and Larry Niven's BECALMED IN HELL are both good sf stories. The first scientific depth and detail in favour of idea in the balance between idea and plot; but the idea - a familiar one, but I won't say which is well imagined here. Niven's story, better, concentrates on one feature of its (again familiar) idea and integrates the (sub-) scientific discussion with the plot in the best sf fashion. It takes one of those space ships whose control network is a human nervous system and points out a difficulty in isolating the fault when it breaks down. It is marred by a desperate facetiousness.

In 'REPENT, HARLEQUIN !' SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN, Harlan Ellison tells a standard sf myth, the nonconformist one, not particularly well or originally, but definitively. He summarises all the other stories on this theme - a clever trick, I suppose, but it's still a 12-page-long-cliche and a great bore. Badly written after the first paragraph, which is a quotation from Thoreau: he'll have done sf a service if he discourages people from writing any more of these stories, but I can't believe this is likely enough for the story to merit an award.

COMPUTERS DON'T ARGUE, by Gordon R. Dickson, is an epistolatory tragic-farce with very little to do with sf. It's the sort of trifle that writers turn out to air a private annoyance. All the same, it's compulsive reading, with the dead linear plot structure that has the effect of making one - that is, me - enjoy reading a story again and again. (cf IN HIDING.)

The quality may be uncertain in the middle, but the collection ends with two fine stories (British and best). First, THE SALIVA TREE, Brian Aldiss's brilliant encapsulation of Well's sf novels. This has a clever idea (quite subtly presented), a gripping plot and great atmosphere of period and district. I am

Sure this will become a much-anthologised story.

As if to point out that THE SALIVA TREE is not a stylistic pastiche, it is followed by a fine example of Victorian prose in J.G. Ballard's THE DROWNED GIANT, which is about a drowned giant. I am not a great expert on Ballard, but I think this the most successful of what stories of his I have read; nor a great fan of his, but I find it the best story in the book. Of course, it 'says' something, but it's not hard to discover what, it's worth saying and it's said well. More to the point, the story is simply a thing of beauty.

The stories have individual blurbs, and we have to make the usual eyeball-twisting effort not to see them; otherwise no complaints, only a nagging feeling that, granted these stories form a good collection, there surely must have been better ones published somewhere in 1965.

* * * * *

Normally, books reviewed in VECTOR are review copies, which are sent to the library, and available to the membership as a whole. I wish however, to give a wider review service. Thus I must stress that the following books, although reviewed in VECTOR, are the editor's personal property, and are not available from the library - as yet. If you want to read them, you can always buy them!

* * * * *

BABEL 17
(Pub. ACE 40 cents) BY SAMUEL R. DELANY.

THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION. Reviewed BY
(Pub. ACE 40 cents) BRWN FORTEY.

These two recent publications are amongst the most important put out by ACE for some time. The blurb on the back of BABEL 17 describes Delany as 'a rapidly rising star of the science fiction cosmos'. Like me, you may find this phrase a trifle off-putting rather than encouraging. But in this case there is an element of truth present. Delany is a writer to watch, and to read. I feel confident that he is capable of achieving a position equal to the very best writing within the genre.

BABEL 17 starts slowly, for the first thirty odd pages nothing much happens. Then, when, all at once the reader is thrown in the deep end, and it keeps up right to the end.

Rynda Wong, the postess given the task of deciphering

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Babel 17 before it enabled the Invaders to defeat the alliance, is a thoroughly believable character. Cleverly conceived, well written, and human.

Ideas abound, at a fast moving pace. The interstellar ship crew members, products of cosmetisurgery, are fantastic creations, reminiscent of that strange exotic universe of Cordwainer Smith. As also, are the shadow-ships of the Spccelli Snap, and the workings of the Discorporate Sector.

The main character of this novel is a poetess, and Delany himself is a word poet comparable to even Zelazny. Both possess a fast flowing narrative style combined with a sometimes fluorescent power of description. BABEL 17 tied with Daniel Keyes' FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON for the SFWA's Nebula Award for the best sf novel of 1966. One can well understand why. It will be published in this country by Victor Gollancz, in the near future.

Delany's startling descriptive power is even more to the fore in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, a story set in the far flung future but linked with ancient myths. As Lobey, the new Orpheus, travels across Delany's fantastic future Earth, so the reader can also follow the author's journey across Europe.

This is accomplished by the inclusion of passages from the 'Author's Journal'. Though in this case it is quite successful I hope this one use of the gimmick will not herald a host of copyists. Less carefully handled, this style would only serve to interupt the story and annoy the reader.

In this 'Author's Journal' Delany states that; 'Endings to be useful must be inconclusive.'

The ending to THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION is, as he obviously meant it to be, inconclusive. This is my only grumble with the book, but it is far outweighed by its good points.

Get both these books. Travel through space with Rydra Wong and her strange crew as she battles to unravel the mysteries of the language weapon in BABEL 17. Follow the adventures of Lobey as he meets such beings as Kid Death and Spider in the world of THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION.

They deserve reading.

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A PLAGUE OF DEMONS. BY KEITH LAUMER.
(Penguin Books. 170 pp. 3/6)

Reviewed BY
PHIL MULLOWNEY.

This novel was published in a shorter version in Frederick Pohl's WORLDS OF IF in In 1964. It has all the hallmarks of that august journal.

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Keith Laumer's most well known hero is, of course, RETIEF, and A PLAGUE OF DEMONS follows in the same tradition. Cardboard characters, good clean cut super hero winning out against all odds, menacing but thick-skulled aliens eventually defeated, etc, etc. You can fill in the rest yourself, most of the ingredients of the space op ra are here; except perhaps the damsel in distress which is a thankful absentee.

A plot synopsis. Well, our hero (an American secret service man, what else?) in the course of his investigations, discovers that these nasty dog-type aliens are killing people and stealing their brains! He is rumbled however (a ham-handed type agent this) and after much fast action he escapes to the house of his friend and superior. After deep consultation, our hero is turned into a superman with the aid of PAPA (Power Assisted Personal Armament). The aliens track him down, his friend is killed and he escapes. There is the traditional sort of chase, which includes a trip across the Atlantic in a tanker, and pursuit across the U.S.A., with numerous fights killing the aliens etc etc. Eventually he is caught, and killed? Eventually he recovers consciousness to find himself in control of a fighting machine, fighting some unknown battle between Good and Evil. The brains are used to control the fighting machines, however they are purely automatons. Our hero is the first human mind to recover consciousness and the sense of his former identity. After some excursions our hero 'wakens' the human minds in other machines, and they finally beat the alien entities in one grandstand battle.

Sounds corny? Maybe because it is... And yet, despite the stereotyped characters, and the numerous built in faults, Keith Laumer writes with a certain panache. He is one of the better 'adventure' sf writers, with an easy flowing style that carries you with it. As long as you don't stay too long to look at the faults, then it is quite good.

So, it all depends what you want. If you want intellectual excitement, vivid ideas, and good imagery, you will not find that here. But if you want a book that is undemanding, with which to take a short escape from reality, a mild opiate, then this is your book. I have read worse.

* * * * *

Well, here it is, the New NEW WORLDS ! Large format , glossy paper, Arts Council grant and all. After the vicissitudes of the past months, NEW WORLDS has survived, and is again back on a regular monthly publication. A most impressive one it is too, the new size roughly 8" by 11", and the high quality paper, and the whole layout gives a very satisfying impression of quality. The magazine must still be judged by its contents, however, no matter how fine the packaging.

To start with there is the first part of CAMP . CONCENTRATION, a serial by Thomas Disch. It is most interesting. From the first part it is not clear if it is sf (speculative or science fiction) or not. A young poet, a conscientious objector from some American war, presumably Vietnam, is taken from his normal prison to the strange Camp Archimedes . Here he lives a life of comparative ease and luxury, the only compulsory thing being to keep his diary. There are various marvellous oddball characters, who Disch has the knack of making realistic. Only at the end comes the hint of things wrong, a genius making drug that rots the brain. It is too soon to judge. Some very good writing, although I personally do not like the diary type technique. Also the bad language while valid in context has too much of the air of 'Look folks' aren't we daring! '

After Disch the short stories come as anti-climax. THE DEATH MODULE J.G. Ballard, another story in the new Ballard style. Colour me ignorant, it left me cold. 1937 A.D. an inconsequential time travel piece with paradox by John Sladek . Maybe there is some deeper significance in it, but it escaped me. THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE by P.A. Zoline. Another Ballard type piece, again difficult to describe. Throw in some characters and imagery, and mix well. I enjoyed it better than the Ballard story though, presumably I missed something..... NOT SO CERTAIN by DAVID MASSON, a good and rather amusing piece about the difficulties of language, and complications with alien speech. I rather liked it, I think I have not read a story quite like it before. IN THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD, an annoyingly inconclusive piece by Roger Zelazny. It is part of a series, or a projected novel. It has that blend of exotic fantasy and realism of which Zelazny has become a master. It promises much

What else? A leading article that regurgitates what Moorcock has been saying on and off for the last thirty editorials EXPRESSING THE ABSTRACT, a brief but interesting review of the work M.C. Escher by Charles Platt. SLEEPS DREAMS AND COMPUTERS, an article that says little that has not been said before. Poetry by George Macbeth, book reviews, and an examination of the Eatherly myth by Brian Aldiss.

A full and interesting issue. However the short stories are still poor- some of them- and I still get that feeling that I am missing something. Is the fault in me?

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THE MAIL RESPONSE.

Letters of comment, which are invited/requested/ appreciated and somewhat edited.

* * * * *

Archie Mercer, 9 Cotswold Rd, Bedminster, Bristol 3.

I see that you have obtained custody of the stock of standard covers, which haven't been used since I quit the editorship lo, those many aeons ago. I see you've also obtained access to a guillotine. (Alternatively, to the old stencil only.)

((Both of which do not apply to this issue.PM.))

I've already mentioned to Doreen that in my opinion her Report belongs mainly if not entirely in the Bulletin rather than Vector. Anyway, her Report this time would practically fill a Bulletin issue on its own.

I didn't realise that Bryn 40 could write sermons.

Re the origins of the B.S.F.A., the two who were most responsible for its foundation were Dave Newman and Ted Tubb. Dave Newman gaffiated shortly afterwards (Charlie Winstone and Steve Oakey were mild compared to his gaffiation) and Ted Tubb resigned from the committee on the grounds of lack of time. But they dominated the Kettering-discussion at the 1958-Con that culminated in the thing's being officially founded. Concern at fandom's then-diminishing numbers seems to have been the point uppermost in the minds of most of those involved at the time, but (a) recruiting has never been the Association's only aim by any means, and (b) the various aims do tend to react boostfully on each other. Thus, higher literary (or etc.) standards tend to produce more recruits which(ideally) gives the Association a bigger 'voice' to press for higher standards, and so on.

Vic Hallett, 130 Cherry Hinton Rd, Cambridge.
Roje Gilbert, 84 Chesterton Rd, Cambridge.

We deplore the use of 'A Cringebinder publication' at the foot of the contents page. VECTOR is the official publication of the BSFA and the impression generated by this phrase would hardly endear us to the sf world at large.

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Referring to KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, we do not think that it was lack of knowledge that sent the brontosaurus - the word knowledge is totally inapplicable to nonintelligent animals - one of the latest theories is that the dinosaurs died from constipation owing to the evolution of angiosperm. Generally the article was badly written, but only needed a little revision. We are glad to see articles from the newer members, but we feel that greater attention should be paid to the quality and content of the writing.

As an example of the type of competence in grammatical construction and use of English we would like to see, Chris Priest's book review is exemplary. In fact, the book reviews were, in general, excellent, except for the annoying omission of author's in Terry Jeeves'.

At last Mike Ashley has found his vocational niche! And very well he does it too.

As for the poor mail response, would Mr Brian Hill care to expand his reasons for disagreeing with the Mercers's opinion of WATCHERS IN THE GLADE? A flat statement of views is barely relevant nor particularly valuable.

Although the contents were below par, the layout was attractive, and the front cover pleasing.

Tom Jones, 27 Lansbury Avenue, Rossington, Yorks.

Congratulations on the presentation. The cover is superb, I will once again say that Eddie Jones is as good an artist on the sf scene and better than most.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER interesting. I liked the jibe about the missing link, after all, why couldn't evolution have occurred in rapid mutations instead of gradual change, maybe there was no missing link in between.

I always enjoy book reviews, some of them are better than the books My vote for the best hatchet job this issue goes to Terry Jeeves.

THE BIRDS'S EYE PEOPLE -ugh, what a horrible pun, Jim Groves should be ashamed! I heard somewhere that at such low temperatures the water in the body can't liquefy and is irreparable damage. One question, that doesn't seem to have been raised is whether one will be able to live in a future society if things do work out. It would be somewhat ironic to be revived only to die because you couldn't get a job.

We also heard from Bryn Fortey, A.B. Ackerman, and Dave Rowe. Thank you!

Well that is it, apologies again for the typos, next issue should be out mid September.



