LIVING WITH AUTOMATION

VECTOR

VECTOR

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ARTICLES

FEATURES

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THE PUBLISHER'S LOT

by

ANTHONY CHEETHAM

Non-fiction and science fiction Editor of Sphere Books

The aim of this article is to answer the question "what goes on in the science fiction department of a paperback publishing firm?". The first point to get straight is that no such department exists. S.F. is, despite all assertions, considered a nut cult. It is not unusual for a paperback firm to employ no one who reads or likes the genre. In such cases books are often bought without being read, purely on the author's name. Unfortunately the results do not tend to discourage this policy, for the extraordinary fact is that most S.F. paperbacks sell about the same number of copies whatever the author, the title or the price. There are of course exceptions, and other firms besides the two I have worked for may have a different story to tell.

What is the reason? Again we come back to the nut cult: paperback publishers are selling their wares in the first instance not to their public but to booksellers, who are not, on the whole, S.F. readers themselves. They therefore order all S.F. titles in much the same quantities, unless a name like Asimov or Bradbury rings a cash register in their minds.

So much for pessimism. On the brighter side is the fact that at least four paperback publishers have enthusiastic S.F. fans entrenched in their editorial departments, including John Boothe and William Miller at Panther, Diane Lloyd at Corgi and Oliver Caldecott at Penguin. This has led to some stiff competition for the most widely sought after authors. The standard advance paid for the rights to an S.F. title is between £150 and £250; Ballard's latest book The Crystal World is reputed to have gone to Panther for around £1,000; Frank Herbert's Dune went for over £1,000 to New English Library; William Temple's Shoot at the Moon went for £750; and a number of authors (Bradbury, Heinlein, Clarke) fetch sums of £500 or over.

This in turn has led to signs of a new approach to marketing S.F. In order to justify large advances, publishers must ensure that the books sell in considerably larger quantities than the standard S.F. titles. Even with a 5s. price tag, a £1,000 advance means a sale of 50,000 copies before the advance

is covered. The publisher's solution is therefore to try and lure the general reader as well as the addict by presenting the book as general fiction. Panther tried this with Shoot at the Moon. They also plan to publish The Crystal World as their star title early in 1968. The same publishers broke new ground by bringing out Isaac Asimov's Foundation trilogy in a Christmas gift pack. This is a healthy development, since it widens the potential science fiction readership. Previously when Penguin brought out Wyndham and Wells as general fiction one had the feeling that this was because they were rather ashamed of the "science" tag.

Another influence in this direction is the cinema; Fantastic Voyage, Fahrenheit 451 and the forthcoming Space Odyssey 2001 (Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C.Clarke) all show that genuine hardcover S.F. can be successfully filmed for general release to adult audiences. The sales figures for Asimov's and Bradbury's two novels prove that the books must have sold to a large number of readers outside the usual S.F. circle.

A third and more important factor in widening the S.F. readership has already been widely discussed: the increasing number of writers who are turning away from the methods and plots of the 50's in favour of a more complex and craftsmanlike approach: Ballard, Aldiss, Brunner, Disch, Zelazny, Vonnegut and Delany, among others.

I do not, however, believe that S.F. will ever be wholly accepted as a sub-category of general fiction in the same way as detective stories or westerns. I am convinced that the majority of S.F. readers remain firmly committed to the more conventional adventure story. Fandom made this point pretty explicitly when they voted Heinlein's The Moon is a Harsh Mistress to the top of the poll for last year's Hugo Award. Anyone who compares the Nebula list (awarded by the Science Fiction Writers of America) to the Hugo (awarded by S.F. readers) can see the widening gulf between the two camps. There is a real danger that the publishers of the "new" S.F., in trying to woo the general reader, will only antagonize the fans of the "old". The real bitterness of some of the views expressed in VECTOR's correspondence columns about James Ballard shows that the process is already well advanced.

A further gulf between S.F. and general fiction is obviously the amount of technical conventions about space/time travel, aliens and technological gimmickry which the S.F. reader accepts without a murmur but which many of the general public would place on the same level as the Batmobile or Superman's dreaded Kryptonite. Mysteries and westerns have their conventions too but these are easily understood and raise nobody's eyebrows.

Finally, and this is a rather more personal view, I believe

that there is essentially a contradiction between the aims of fiction and science fiction. Ordinary novels (stand by for another woolly generalisation) are about people as individuals; S.F. is about situations, and people as social groups. I cannot remember the name of a single S.F. hero unless he's part of the title. It is always the situation which is memorable (which is why so many novels are rather thinly spread short stories); the hero is generally just a pair of eyes through which the reader can see what's going on. If he was anything more than one-dimensional I believe that he would get in the reader's way and obstruct his view of the story's central theme.

For these reasons Sphere's S.F. list tends towards the mainstream. My personal preference is for a well written adventure story set against an imaginative sociological or technological background - overpopulation, advertising, politics, religion, colonialism, automation, space/time travel, E.S.P., warfare, alien life forms etc. I do not like intellectual whimsey, humour, scientific gobbledygook for its own sake or medieval sorcery in fancy dress. I have tried to balance the list between classics hitherto not published over here and contemporary authors writing today. The "old" tend to be individual titles plucked from U.S. publishers' backlists, such as Bester's Starburst and Sturgeon's Caviar; the contemporaries tend to be regular authors whom we try to preserve from other publishers' clutches - Brian Aldiss, Robert Silverberg, Samuel Delany and Philip K. Dick.

We have tried, as far as possible, to bypass the system whereby a book is published first in the States, a year later as a U.K. hardcover and two years later still as a U.K. paperback. A time lag of four years is ridiculous but sometimes unavoidable - Samuel Delany's Nebula Award novel Babel-17 will not appear on our list before October 1969, although it won the award in 1966. Most of our list is now bought direct from the U.S., except in those cases where the author insists on seeing himself in hardcover first (not entirely to his advantage, since the hardcover house also keeps 50% of his paperback royalties). A second exception is with British authors who always go into hardcovers first if they can find a taker. Brian Aldiss and L.P.Davies are the only ones on the list so far, but I hope there will be others.

Our present programme envisages one title per month. It would be easy to double or even treble this, but at present the market doesn't seem to exist. U.S. paperback companies print between 100/120,000 copies of each title; the U.K. figure is 20/30,000 (about a third of which are sold in the Commonwealth). If you want more titles please buy more.

Before signing off, I would like to use this opportunity to establish some sort of contact between a publisher and his market. Any views, comments, criticisms or appeals are most welcome. If anybody sends me a full length MS (rather than a single story), it will be read within a week. If anybody could send me a list of

ten favourite authors/titles, I gladly offer a copy of any S.F. title on our list in exchange.

Anthony Cheetham

APPENDIX: SPHERE SCIENCE FICTION

Already Published:-

Jerry Sohl	The Time Dissolver	3/6d
Jerry Sohl	The Odious Ones	3/6d
Damon Knight	Analogue Men	3/6d
August Derleth	Far Boundaries	3/6d
Brian Aldiss	The Primal Urge	3/6d
Robert Silverberg	Needle in a Timestack	5/-
Leo Szilard	The Voice of the Dolphins	3/6d
(Theodore Sturgeon	Some of Your Blood - not published as sf)	3/6d

1968 Publications:-

Jan.	Brian Aldiss	The Saliva Tree	5/-
Feb.	C.M.Kornbluth	The Syndic	5/-
Mar.	Harrison & Aldiss (eds.)	The Year's Best Science Fiction	5/-
Apr.	Theodore Sturgeon	Caviar	
May	E.C.Tubb	Ten From Tomorrow	
June	Philip K. Dick	Counter-Clock World	
July	Lloyd Biggle, Jr.	The Fury Out of Time	
Aug.	Frank Herbert	The Eyes of Heisenberg	
Sept.	Alfred Bester	Starburst	
Oct.	Robert Silverberg	To Worlds Beyond	
Nov.	A.E.van Vogt & E. Mayne Hull	The Winged Men	
Dec.	Kurt Vonnegut	Canary in a Cat House	

1969 Publications:-

Murray Leinster	The Space Gypsies
Murray Leinster	Miner in the Sky
Murray Leinster	The Waning Asteroid
S.R.Delany	Babel-17
S.R.Delany	Captives of the Flame
S,R.Delany	The Towers of Toron
S.R.Delany	City of a Thousand Suns
Philip K. Dick	The Variable Man
Philip K. Dick	The Game Players
Damon Knight	Turning On
Michael Moorcock	The Ice Schooner
L.P.Davies	Twilight Journey

THE HARRISON LETTER

A FOND FAREWELL

Harry Harrison

I'm most unhappy that this letter has to be my letter of resignation. Believe me, it is from force of circumstance, not from any other motive.

I started this letter in the first place in order to keep in touch with all my friends in British fan- and prodom. With 3,000 miles of land and another 3,000 of water in between I felt more than a little cut off. So the letters gave me an excuse to say Hi! and chat a bit, and their existence in VECTOR reminded others of my continuing survival and gave them a chance to get in touch. I could visualize old Archie Mercer chuntering away through his beard as he hammered at his typewriter, and fond mists of nostalgia arose. And down there in Dorset, gnawing the cartilaginous knuckle of his discontent, Pete Mason grumbles my way because he has never gone to a convention and got pissed. It is all so homelike that, if I were given to weeping, I would weep.

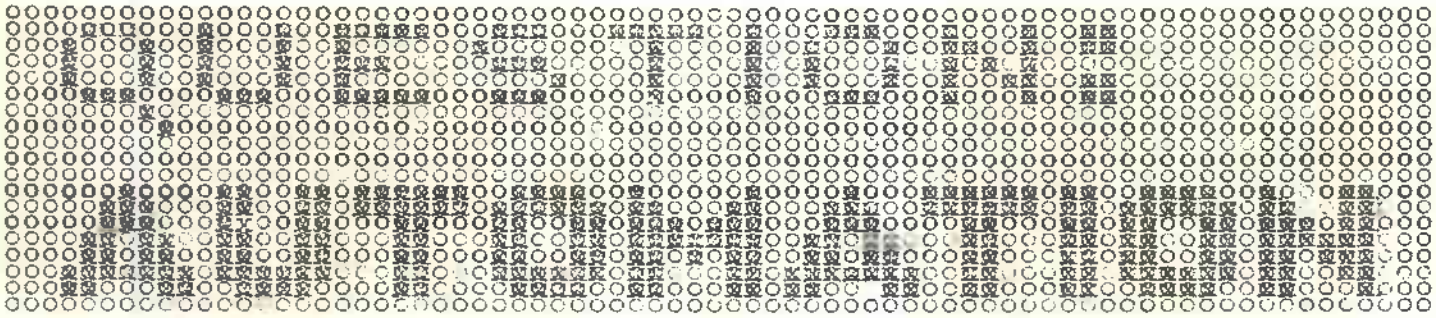
I'll try not to stay away from VECTOR too long. I'll try to make the coming Eastercon the last one I shall miss for awhile. I'll try.

But America sneaks up on me, friends. I'm doing twice the work I did in dozing Britain or the nodding Continent, and yet the waters of Despair rise higher. Prices in this part of the world must be seen to be believed. Ten years away prepared me not for the impact. As much as I dislike it, I must buckle down and work a Little Bit Harder. This means that the old fanac must go by the board.

But all hope is not lost. I am starting a letter column in AMAZING and welcome contributions. Hopefully copies of this excellent journal shall penetrate your Misty Isles and you shall revel in the glories of its pages. There is even a LONDON LETTER (by Brian Aldiss, of course) so you can feel at home. I hope that you will read and enjoy and - pro or con - write me about it. Perhaps a little bit of fanac will slip into the pages of AMAZING and it will be the better for it.

So - nodding my head to the grumblers about my name-dropping - I shall drop no names. I'll say simply that I miss you all very much and wish I were there with you now. I wish it were now con time in some exotic watering place, with the British Easter snow

(continued on p. 23)



One answer is contained in this utopia by Stephen Young:

The primary notion behind my utopia is the possibility of separating the international transfer of information, required on so large a scale by any highly industrialised society, from the exercise of authority or power in that society. So, while complex and advanced computing techniques allow for the efficient interchange of information about people's needs and wants - so essential for the wellbeing of any communistic society - the exercise of control is entirely decentralised, devolving onto the local community group committees.

Despite the almost complete control which each individual exerts over his own activities, this society in no way involves any agrarian notions, indeed I think it only conceivable in a society with enough automated machinery to totally remove the need for menial and dehumanising work, and a sufficient development of computer-aided thought to prevent anyone being unable to pursue the activity of his choice as a result of low intelligence.

So people in my utopia would live in fairly small district groups, say about twenty toa town the size of Cambridge. Each group would be run by a large and fluid committee,at whose meetings anyone could turn up and vote. This would decide which sort of houses to select from the wide range of automation-built, self-erecting dwellings available and where to put them, and it would arrange the appropriate compromises as to who was to live in them. They would discuss with the directors of the district school, theatre, cinema, etc. what they were doing and why. School education would continue until the age of 13 or 14, after which any desired knowledge could be obtained from the computer console in each house, which, as well as providing instruction in any subject, to any level of difficulty, would be able to print out any book in any language on demand. Thus the need for separating out young people into universities at an age when they could contribute most to, and gain most from, their home communities would be entirely obviated.

No money or personal possessions above a certain basic

minimum would be necessary. On moving to a new town, one would be provided with temporary accommodation during the two or three days required to erect one's own house, using the highly simplified automatic cranes provided. Inter-urban transport would be by little electric cars running on concealed electronic guides under the road. These would have as controls simply a lever indicating whether the vehicle was to turn right or left at each choice point in the logically constructed road scheme, and an accelerator/decelerator control. It would be physically impossible to hit anything in one of these cars. No one would mind if one always kept to the same car, but as all would be identical and there would be more than enough to go round there wouldn't seem to be much point. Few, if any, clothes would be necessary in the almost universally temperate controlled environment. Those which were wanted, together with food, etc, would be supplied free from local stores. The prodigality of the energy required by the ubiquitous heating plants would be accounted for by the use of the world's nuclear stockpiles in fission reactors.

The point is that once you've got rid of the capitalist, predominantly plastic goods in the form of all types of household and personal necessities and luxury goods are genuinely free, and, given an adequate recycling scheme, the process is not necessarily even wasteful. (And, of course, dreary tasks such as washing up and cleaning clothes, furniture, etc. are wholly obviated.)

Given the absence of personal property, theft, of course, vanishes, but previous systems involving this principle have always involved widespread voluntary restrictions on consumption and a very ascetic way of life. Similarly, it is well known that in a highly stable, coöperative society (i.e. one in which no ascendancy by high intelligence or facility for gaining property is possible) such as I've been describing, crimes against the person drop almost to nil. However, in the past such societies have always had the corresponding disadvantages of rural isolation and intellectual stagnation. Members of the societies I envisage would all live in towns, venturing into the countryside solely for pleasure. Each town, and even each locality, would have facilities for culture and entertainment far exceeding those available in London today, together with the facilities for humanistic and scientific research available in a large university today.

Medicine would be largely prophylactic and hence capable of automation. Of course a few doctors would still be required, but since all the cases would be"interesting",they wouldn't be too difficult to recruit. Lawyers, policemen, civil servants, soldiers, magistrates, social workers and politicians would vanish entirely. The self-programming computer would eliminate the computer programmer, but I envisage all the world's most intelligent individuals assisting the computer in difficult

situations merely by their day-to-day interactions with it through the multiple access computing system.

Psychiatric knowledge would become more widespread, and those today confined in prisons and mental hospitals as unsocialisable would, with the assistance of their friends and neighbours, be able to live an almost normal life. The unnecessary mental and physical stress caused by sex in present society would be removed by the application of radical contraceptive measures such as the automatic provision of every girl with a sophisticated contraceptive device at puberty. This would be removed when she decided to have a child. (Naturally the six-monthly prophylactic medical examination would entirely eliminate venereal disease.) These very free sexual and economic conditions would probably make marriage a much less institutionalised affair.

I recognise that this society will make moral demands on its members far exceeding those made at the present. However, I've tried to show that the advance of technology, the availability of abundant free energy, and a minimum of social engineering can reduce these demands to a not inconceivable level (compared at least to the unique combination of saintliness and the absence of all those more important and attractive human traits summarised by the term "intellectual pride" demanded by all previous actual attempts at a utopian society).

THE CITY OF THE FUTURE: THIS ISSUE'S COVER

Bob Rickard writes: The foreground has one of the Archigram Group's walking cities. The background is a type of city the Japanese have been playing around with in their architectural schools - a Wall City - and the clusters in and on it are some of Peter Cook's plug-in city units.

ATOMIC

by AUDREY WALTON

The well worn cliche that history repeats itself may well be painfully applicable to the Automation Revolution, in whose frightening grip we now, unhappily, find ourselves. Many parallels may profitably be drawn between a possible future and the known past. We have only to apply our knowledge of what happened to man's physical well-being during the early part of the Industrial Revolution to what may happen to man's mental and cultural well-being during the Atomic and Technological Age ahead to see how similar these positions really are. What will evolve from the present anti-taboo ridden and permissive society? The old values are crumbling away, but will these new ideas bring

misery to countless millions who are unable to adapt themselves to changing mental demands and changing conditions of labour and leisure?

It is well known that the Industrial Revolution transformed not only the techniques but also the organisation of industry. The Automation Revolution may well transform the techniques and organisation of the whole human society; it may also alter the actual nature of man, turning him from a creative, aggressive adventurer into a conditioned, timid stay-at-home. It is obvious that the telephone and television are slowly killing the written word, photography and collage are strangling visual art, while electronics supplants the mechanic and programmed, remote-controlled transport must, inevitably, replace the driver. When we live in windowless houses with their controlled atmospheres and artificial daylight, what will happen to man's love of natural beauty and his deep desire to be at one with Nature? Why, the 21st-century man in his hygienic surroundings, where menial and mechanical tasks are non-existent, may well look back on our present life as filthy and pathetic!

The series of varied inventions which so radically altered the techniques of industry were prompted by a desire to increase trade, which was sparked off by the acquisition of overseas colonies and the rich new markets to be found in America. Today's inventions, such as the computer and other aids towards complete automisation, are prompted by a desire to keep our heads above the adverse economic waves by using our superior brain-power instead of our mechanical skills as we did in the 18th century. Many look upon automation as a blessing, but are we really adequately adjusting ourselves to this new force? When all machines become subject to automatic control, what is going to happen to the men who now operate them? There is no doubt that the complete integration of fully automatic machines, which do not need man as as intermediary, will soon be the norm throughout industry. These self-loading machines will also unload themselves and will be coordinated by electronic controls and activators. They have one great advantage, they mean that radioactive material can be used without danger to human life, but who is considering the danger to human minds - who is thinking of the unwanted ones?

During the 18th century, techniques in weaving were drastically altered, first by the introduction of Kay's flying shuttle and later by the application of steam power to looms. Whereas the shuttle only enabled one weaver to do the work of two, modern machine tools can do the work of thousands. The machine makes man as worker redundant. How primitive the old hand spinner, who held a bunch of corded wool under one arm and twisted a few inches before attaching it to a wooden revolving spindle, now seems when measured against, say, a modern man in Japan, pressing a button to send a remote-controlled train speeding along without a driver in absolute safety and also

perfectly on time! The question arises, has man really evolved in pace with his machines or has his inventive genius merely stunted his efforts towards the pursuit of happiness by reducing his individual creativity? Have machines always been a threat to the spiritual and mental welfare of mankind?

The spinning jenny brought with it modern methods which were followed up by rollers and eventually by Arkwright's use of water power. Previous to the use of the jenny, linen thread had been used for the warp, but the application of the jenny to the combing process made it possible to produde a thread hard and firm enough to serve this purpose. In present times, nylon thread and other man made fibres have made durable and cheap clothes easily available to all and fashion has now a prominent position in everyone's life, instead of being a privilege enjoyed by the rich alone. In the future, automation may make it possible for humans to live in an artificially created atmosphere in which clothes will be unnecessary but worn merely as ornaments and not for utility or ethical reasons.

By 1780 the invention of the mule had made it possible for English woven cotton to compete favourably with fine Indian fabrics, because Bell's revolving cylinders had also made it possible for one man and a boy to do the work of 200 men in this branch of the industry. Today's photographic techniques and advanced printing methods almost overshadow and nearly diminish the great inventors. Every age has had its pioneers, its seekers after knowledge, but will automation stamp out this inventiveness in mankind? Will human beings become a lazy band of knob pushers, seeking only pleasure or illusions of happiness in a fuggy dream induced by pot, LSD or more harmful drugs? Is our own cleverness going to prove our undoing?

The organisation of the cotton industry had also undergone drastic changes, but while the working techniques had improved the conditions of the workers themselves had deteriorated until they were less than manor serfs and worse off than many Negro slaves who, at least, were <u>sometimes</u> treated kindly by their masters, whereas the hapless industrial labourer got no quarter whatever, and his children were starved and beaten. Very soon now, the computers will take over most jobs that once held white collar status and some degree of dignity. In Japan the car production line has already been married to a computer which provides parts as and when required for each individual vehicle, making a varied production line possible. Machines are now capable of processing, handling, sensing and controlling, and the need for workers is shrinking as it did in the 18th century. Transport, banking, insurance and medicine are all making increased use of automation. A new philosophy of production is engaging some of our best minds, new management considerations are being closely examined, conditions of labour are under microscopic scrutiny and new steps towards better education are all in the modern air, but will they have effect soon enough? More people will

have leisure and be able to travel, but will they be happy, will their minds be satisfied? Is there any real guarantee that the Automation Revolution will not bring the same kind of human misery that accompanied the Industrial Revolution?

No really sincere person could deny that under the Domestic System the hand loom weaver had achieved a pleasant, relaxed and rural existence which, whatever the New Wave lot may say, except for a lack of really good anitation, was very nearly ideal. The factory system robbed the weaver of his craftsman's heritage and made a mockery of his very considerable skills. It took him from his pleasant garden and very comfortable cottage and placed him in a damp, dusty, unhealthy hovel while he had to adapt himself to unfamiliar production methods for near starvation wages. Thus the Weaver's Golden Age gave way to the might of the power loom and the worker suffered poverty and distress while the rich got richer and trade expanded. Today we see rising unemployment coupled to rising dividends; it should make us pause a moment to reflect on the perils of social and economic changes. To get the Automation Revolution into full swing, there will need to be heavy capital investment and this implies that the workers will once again find themselves in a very weak position indeed. They may be unable to have any say in the education of their children and also be unable to prevent these children from becoming drug addicted in a society which no longer really has any need of them as responsible citizens or workers, a society that will probably be run by and for an intellectual and political elite.

Here and now, in this transitional period of history, the Automation Revolution could threaten men's minds in the same way as the Industrial Revolution abused their bodies. Look about you in the shops and what do you see? Painting by numbers! Draw a dot! Electronic music machines! Do it yourself kits in all manner of shapes and sizes, which need so little skill that even an idiot could assemble them! Man's ability to create, his very right to be an artist may be in very grave danger. Automation could take away his right to think creatively, just as machines took away his right to create with his hands. Battery and machine farming are undermining his hard won right to till the soil and to tend his domesticated amimals. This love of the land has been a civilising influence throughout history. It is all very well to look down one's nose at so-called menial tasks such as washing up and lifting heavy loads, but one should not forget the very genuine pleasure to be derived from the performance of such tasks. There is a wonderful remedial quality about digging potatoes from the dark soil, of feeling the dampness of the earth on one's bare hands. Man is part of nature and he may be very foolish to forget this vital fact. Tha atomic bomb has given him the ability to destroy himself physically; automation and drugs give him the power to destroy himself mentally as well.

Aren't we humans the lucky ones?

NFT SF FORUM

A REPORT by MICHAEL KENWARD

British Film Institute Science Fiction Forum
With film director Pierre Kast and sf writers Brian Aldiss, A.C. Clarke and John Brunner (who stood in for the indisposed Ballard)

The forum was organised by the B.F.I. as a part of their season of sf films "More Than Human". There was, however, no over-emphasis of the cinema in the discussion. Much of the session was devoted to finding the reasons why the participants chose sf as their medium. This is shown by the first question, "Why do you write science fiction?".

Brian Aldiss said that he liked to argue, and that sf was the field for argument. John Brunner likes the fact that sf stretches the muscles of his imagination. Arthur Clarke put forward that sf is that branch of literature that is about reality. A point that was taken up, and accepted, in different ways by all present. Aldiss said that Wells was concerned with criticism of his own time, while at the same time saying that the future would be different, if nothing else. Pierre Kast said that he thought that sf was one of the ways of fighting against the world of today.

It is strange to find that, after starting this line of thought, Arthur Clarke said that "the message in sf is incidental". In all fairness this followed the comment that the most important role of sf was to entertain. This too was accepted by all. It would have been interesting to have heard Ballard's views on this subject.

The reasons put forward by Aldiss for his assumption that sf is of today seemed to be very pessimistic and purely cynical. Earthworks was written on the assumption that in the future perhaps it would arise that "things would be so bad that it may be better to use the bomb as a sort of nuclear detergent". He also noted that an underlying belief in much of the sf of the past had been that at least the future would be clean. So far the opposite has been the case, "dust and ashes are now our lot". "The whole place is so bloody awful but we don't notice it." This tirade ended up with a promise that it is going to get worse. It is surprising, considering this, that he could summon up even the muted optimism that closed Greybeard.

It was sad to hear John Brunner continually excusing himself

for writing sf. He emphasised that he writes material other than sf, and he tried to convince us (or maybe himself) that sf is becoming accepted, and is no longer the sole realm of addicts. He also said that "the separating of sf as a form is merely a booksellers' fiddle, for convenience," to enable them to put books in some order on the shelves. Not exactly the tone of a writer who believes that he is working in a valid genre.

The discussion that centred around the cinema was decidedly ambivalent. Pierre Hast told a sad tale of film producers who were afraid of science, knew no fiction and hence were terrified when a director wanted to make an sf film.

Arthur Clarke hinted at great things to come from Space Odyssey, on which he collaborated with the director, Stanley Kubrik. So far 10,000,000 dollars have been spent, most of this on 250 special effects, rather than on big stars. He promised that "the finale will put the lsd boys out of business". I hope that nobody from the British Board of Film Censors was present, having banned The Trip. Clarke also said that he thought that this would be the last sf film not shot on location.

It was suggested that this film would either start an sf film boom, what with the gradual death of the spy film, or kill the chance of it ever happening. A perceptive question from the floor evoked the response from the platform that much of the difficulty in producing sf films was in conveying abstract ideas into visual realities. And that it is difficult to choose those images that will evoke the required feeling of tomorrow in a randomly constructed cinema audience.

There was also some comment on the sloppiness of directors who did not bother to remove the blatantly incredible from their scripts. The example was put forward of a boob perpetrated in This Island Earth in which uranium is made from lead, which is equivalent to making coal from ashes. While being a trivial point in itself it does point to a couldn't care less attitude to sf among some film makers, many of whom are only interested in magnified ants and grasshoppers.

We can only hope that Space Odyssey will open up the way for the quality sf film. I am sure that Arthur Clarke will not have allowed any obvious blunders into the script. In this way he may have helped to set the standards for the future.

This represents the more important, in my opinion, points brought up during the forum. Several other topics were discussed but in the nature of such colloquia there was much jumping around among different subjects. There was an interesting section devoted to discussing the work of Ray Bradbury, which was almost unanimously rejected as being too pretty and hiding the reality of life behind poetry.

(continued on p. 23.)

BOOK REVIEWS

SPACE RECITATIVE

THE COMING OF THE SPACE AGE by Arthur C. Clarke Reviewed by
Gollancz, 30s. M.J.Freeman

The familiar yellow cover heralds a splendid and catholic anthology of "accounts of man's probing of the Universe", culled from over thirty years assiduous collecting and reading by Arthur Clarke. The arrangement of the book is interesting - there being six themes: The Coming of the Space Age, Three Pioneers, Uses of Space, New Frontiers, Society of Space, Space and the Spirit.

The fantastic story of the German rocket weapons is succinctly covered, and ironically included is a denigratory "Editorial on Goddard" from the New York Times of 13th January 1920. Of value are the potted autobiographies of the three great pioneers of astronautics - Goddard, Tsiolkovski and Oberth. R.S.Richardson's unusual and diverting Space Technology of a Track Meet is well worth reading, as is Herman Muller's thoughtful article on extraterrestrial life forms. For me the most absorbing morsel is the section devoted to the society and culture of space - ingenious explorations of the problems our world will meet at the interface with alien civilisations and concepts. An account by C.S.Lewis explores the various philosophical and theological questions posed by contact with alien cultures and religions, and Sam Moskowitz deals ably with religion as a science fiction theme.

Whilst a knowledge of astronautics - or science - is not mandatory for the sf reader, an awareness of the basic principles (whether of time travel or symbiosis) must surely lead to a greater appreciation, and development of the critical faculties by the reader. Although the content is so fascinating one could wish that the layout and format were better. An index would be appreciated and the acres of print could do with leavening - either by adding illustrations or a better layout and typography. However, one mustn't quibble too much; at the comparatively low price of thirty bob one gets a compendium of thought provoking and informative material. And if you can't buy it - then run, don't walk, to your friendly neighbourhood librarian to borrow it!

ONE by David Karp
Gollancz, 21s.

Reviewed by
Colin Denbigh

The one common factor linking novels set in a future Organised Benevolent State is that man would find it unendurable. Utopia, in human terms, is more than flesh can bear. The imaginative and individual minds so necessary for its foundation would become its first victims. Stifled in the mother State's sticky womb they would revolt, kick out for rebirth into a less predictable incarnation. Not a revolt in terms of upraised bloody swords but of equally sharp criticism. Their refusal to conform would sow the seeds of rebellion - the bloodbath would follow - unless the State struck first. The mild though secretly egotistical Professor Burden, central character in One, finds himself cast in this dangerous role. An untrustworthy though unwitting heretic, his is the ultimate crime against the fixed society. The pale-eyed and intense inquisitor Lark quivers at Burden's scent like a ferret at the rabbit hole. Lark accepts the unspoken challenge and goes to work with all the absorbed ruthlessness of a child who pulls off the legs and wings of a butterfly to see if it will continue to move without them. Though no longer the somewhat vain and pompous butterfly, Burden does move.

David Karp's novel has been compared favourably with George Orwell's classic 1984. Personally I would not rate it so highly, although One is well worth reading. The character Burden did not involve me as deeply as did Winston in 1984, nor is Karp's prose as vivid as Orwell's. Thoroughly professional at all times as it is, for me the words lack lustre and paint a grey world in this chilling possible future. The effect might very well be intentional, yet combined with the less than endearing personality of Burden it adds up to a book I would not term memorable.

BEST SF STORIES OF CLIFFORD SIMAK
Faber, 21s.

Reviewed by
Roy Mortimore

Seven stories from the imaginative Simak with his usual masterly characterisation. Even the robots and computers spring to warm life in this excellent collection. The computer in love in Lulu and Richard Daniel, surplus robot, from All The Traps Of Earth are typical examples.

Founding Father describes the Immortal on a long starship voyage and the rather dangerous method of counteracting boredom. Alien immigrants to Earth and Terran immigrants to an alien planet give two balanced but quite different stories in Immigrant and Neighbour.

These stories have all been published before, but an index of readability is the enjoyment of seeing them again in this collection.

MISTER DA V. AND OTHER STORIES by Kit Reed
Faber, 21s.

Reviewed by
Graham Charnock

Faber have chosen this collection to introduce Kit Reed, whose stories have been appearing in magazines, notably the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, for some years, to the English hardback sf buying public.

The stories are a mixed bunch and cater for a wide range of tastes (which, one can't help thinking, must inevitably alienate some proportion of Kit Reed's potential audience at least some of the time). The title story, for example, reminds me of nothing so much as a typical piece of lightweight woman's magazine fiction. This one, in which Mister da Vinci himself, although always off-stage, is brought into a down-to-earth, female-orientated American household, and To Te Taken in a Strange County (delicious pun), where a small town with a mid-west feel to it has developed its own equivalent to the National Health, may prove too much even for the most inveterate sf reader's credulity. Stories such as these seem to derive from, and are probably best served to, a technical ingenuousness which is totally feminine. They're written in a style, distortedly adolescent, which one would think tongue-in-cheek if done once and never repeated.

On the other hand stories such as Devotion and Automatic Tiger emerge as eminently readable. Devotion, with an almost surrealistic humour, replaces the woman in the usual man/woman love/hate relationship with a pair of teeth and sits back to watch developments. (Kit Reed seems to be fond of this sort of story device; she tried something similar, less successfully, in Sisohpromatem - not included in this collection - which took the central metaphor from Kafka's story and, for no apparent reason other than the exercise, inverted it.) Automatic Tiger relies strongly and effectively on mood, on the pathos of the gradually decaying mechanical tiger contrasted against the renewed energy and vitality of the man transformed by it.

The best runner in the field however, is Judas Bomb, a moral fable which will never cease to be germane as long ss the gulf of misunderstanding that separates adult and adolescent continues to exist.

If you're a woman, you might get something out of these stories, something in the woman's point of view that I've missed. If you're an American woman you almost certainly will. If you belong to either of these categories you'd probably be well advised to buy or borrow this book. If you don't then you proceed, as always, at your own risk.

SINISTER BARRIER by Eric Frank Russell
Dobson, 21s.

Reviewed by
Colin Denbigh

This tale of the discovery of and subsequent conflict with demoniac parasites, implacable and invisible enemies as old as man, compensates for a poor start with a well developed and thrilling climax.

Having appeared originally in 1939, Sinister Barrier has clearly been given an up-to-date facelift. At times the scars of literary surgery are only too apparent and produce a strange blend of raw enthusiasm and artistic maturity. A typical example is the mention of Hiroshima's A-bombing two pages after the hero and a multitude of rash rescuers have rushed to a scene of scorched devastation - an explosion of suspected atomic origin - blithely indifferent to the harmful effects of radiation exposure. Luckily, they are not asked to pay for their stupidity.

The opening chapters contain a number of other irritating faults ind improbabilities. A man falls sixteen floors to a concrete sidewalk; his body, although squashed to a"crimson sponge", manages to bounce nine feet after impact. The engineers of E.F.Russell's future - a.d. 2015 - cannot construct two "skyway" roads to cross at right angles three hundred feet above street level without a humpback bridge at the intersection.

For those who reach page 67 and are still reading the prospects improve. Chapter Six begins well and for several pages contains some very fine writing. By this time the whole mood of the narrative has undergone a subtle change - for the better. The menacing horror of the seemingly invincible Vitons, the frailty and vulnerability of the humans - the contrast is well exploited. A number of authentic press reports of occult phenomena are introduced to support the story's internal logic. One gets the feeling that comes from learning a most unpalatable truth; Russell's devilish Vitons seem to hover behind one, waiting to feed. Certainly some of the evidence is stretched to fit the theory, but the uneasiness remains.

The closing chapters build up to an exciting and well sustained crescendo, in which the Christmas tree fairy who substitutes for heroine is not missed for a moment. Although our hero wins her at the end I felt he deserved more after his titanic efforts for mankind's salvation.

Characterisation is barely adequate, Wohl the police officer being the only believable creation. The man/women dialogues are - as is so often the case in sf - puerile.

A final note about the book - as a book. The printing is slovenly, several pages being enprinted so badly that reading was difficult. Possibly this reject was considered good enough for review by the BSFA. If so this must be a new departure in salesmanship - putting the spotty fruit on top of the barrow!

THE NEW MINDS by Dan Morgan
Corgi, 3s.6d. 158pp.

Reviewed by
Beryl Mercer

This book is described as "a novel of the sixth perception" - namely telepathy - and is something of a pot-pourri of several other books on a similar theme. There are echoes of Heinlein's Time for the Stars (telepathic twins); there are overtones of John Brunner's Telepathist (a powerful telepathic talent locked in a hideously deformed body); and there is a touch of Kuttner's Mutant (paranoiac cruelty associated with telepathy).

However, all the aforementioned works were set in America; Mr. Morgan's book has a British setting, with a British political angle thrown in to provide extra interest. Most of his characters are lively and well-drawn, though the reviewer found Peter Moray to be a singularly faceless and vaguely-defined personality. Which is rather a pity, since Peter is what might be termed the romantic lead of the book. However, Mr. Morgan is far from being the first author to make his villain far more interesting and believable than his "goodie"!

He also has the gift - in the opinion of the present writer, an enviable one - of being able to tie up all his loose ends neatly and credibly. Although this cannot be classed as a brilliant novel, it is certainly worth reading. Psiophiles (to coin a word) are advised not to miss it; psiophobes (to coin another) will tend to leave it strictly alone anyway...

It is understood that a sequel is already in process of being written, and it should be interesting to see how Mr. Morgan develops his theme. It is also hoped that the reader will be given more details about the motivations. personalities, etc., of his characters.

BEYOND THIS HORIZON by Robert Heinlein
Panther, 5s.

Reviewed by
Vic Hallett & Tony Sudbery

In the Utopian world of the future, where personal duels are the only outbreaks of violence, one of its citizens finds that a revolt is being prepared.

That is the start. From this it becomes a rather shapeless book which abruptly changes direction in mid stream, but a book none the less which is compulsively readable and, in spite of being written in the forties, one which has many more ideas than the much praised but empty Stranger in a Strange Land (now reissued by Four Square at 7s.6d.). ----VH

Certainly the economic and social ideas at the beginning of this novel are sounder than most of Heinlein's, but they get no development whatsoever. The following intrigue and adventure is inconclusive and only mildly interesting; the final section is irrelevant, unoriginal and inconsequential. The only Heinlein book that is not readable, this has nothing to offer Heinlein fans or anyone else. ----AS

WAR WITH THE ROBOTS by Harry Harrison
Dobson, 18s.

Reviewed by
Charles Partington

I read this book, as I always do with a Harrison, expecting to be entertained. I was not to be disappointed. It's entertaining, definitely, but it is also a book that can be read once and then put aside. I had stumbled across two of the nine stories before, The Velvet Glove and The Robot Who Wanted to Know. Both had stuck only vaguely in my memory and they had to be read again before the endings struck that chord of familiarity - thus failing my test of a good story.

The title of the book seems wrong in context, eight of the yarns revolving around the robot's desire and willingness to help the human race, until the last story is reached, the title story and without doubt the best in the collection. Here is Harrison at his best, and I felt that this one more than made up for the slight greyness of the others.

PAPERBACKS BRIEFLY

by Vic Hallett

The Saliva Tree and other strange growths by Brian Aldiss (Sphere, 5s.): This includes Aldiss's superb Wells pastiche for which he won the Nebula award; funny, witty, horrifying and entertaining. The other strange growths include a couple of science fiction stories, a couple of murder stories and a couple of history stories; the only word to describe the whole is rich.

The Sirens of Titan by Kurt Vonnegut Jnr. (Hodder, 3s.6d.): This wild story is the funniest of Vonnegut's books, although both Cat's Cradle and God Bless You Mr. Goldwater are better written. Its story concerns the effect of a Chronosynclastic Infundibulum on its hero and further than that I am not prepared to venture. A very good 3s.6d.worth.

Best From New Worlds No. 2, ed. Michael Moorcock (Panther, 3s.6d.) Another collection from recent issues containing among others You Come Marilyn Monroe by J.G.Ballard and Kit Reed's joke title (which is little more) Sisohpromatem.
A good collection at the price.

The Syndic by Cyril Kornbluth (Sphere, 5s.)
What happens when the gangsters rule the world. An excellent read. It doesn't hold water but the writing is very good and the book is exciting.

Sleeping Planet by William Burkit Jnr. (Panther, 5s.)
A Russellesque story of an alien invasion foiled by Terran knowhow and bluff. Solid, violent and quite fun.

The Circus of Dr. Lao by Charles Finney (Penguin, 3s.6d.)
A small circus comes to a one horse Arizona township during the 'thirties. It is run by a Chinaman and the exhibits are all mythological creatures. The novel is a very heavy-handed attempt at fantasy. The only character to emerge at all is Apollonius of Rhodes and the whole thing finishes with an incomprehensible list of epigrams and missed plot details to sloppily end a sloppy book. If this has any merit I will welcome instruction in it.

The Watch Below by James White (Corgi, 3s.6d.)
A handful of people, trapped in the experimental survival tanks aboard a torpedoed merchant ship, build up a working society which becomes the basis of their descendants' social structure. Parallel to this there is the story of a space fleet racing towards Earth whose occupants also have to build a fresh life for themselves and their children.

I like James White as a short story writer but I am afraid that, much as I tried, I could find nothing in this to persuade me either that the central idea is plausible or that it is imaginative enough to be anything but deadly boring.

A COUPLE OF ANTHOLOGIES

Tony Sudbery

Groff Conklin's admirers will find him really scraping the bottom of the barrel in Seven Come Infinity (Hodder, 3s.6d.), another collection aimed at the very large market that now exists for golden age sf. Simak, Russell and Leinster are represented with routine stories; only Raymond F.Jones's Discontinuity and William Tenn's The Servant Problem stand out as at all different. For the rest, the ideas are unremarkable, the situations familiar and the writing more or less competent. Nevertheless, there are those who will get great enjoyment from these 288 pages. I know; I'm one of them.

A far better collection from the golden age is Tandem's The Mindworm (3s.6d.). No editor is credited, but I suspect that this is Bleiler and Dikty's second series of annual Best SF.

A Century of Great Science Fiction Short Novels, edited by Damon Knight (Mayflower, 5s.) includes Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and an interesting tale by Karel Capek, omitting only The Invisible Man from the Gollancz edition. Would that Heinlein's abysmal Gulf had been the one to go. Still, five evenings' solid entertainment for five bob can't be bad.

BOOK NOTES

At Swim-Two-Birds, which was discussed by Bob Parkinson in VECTOR 47, has now appeared in Penguin at 6s.
Eyre and Spottiswoode have reissued Titus Groan with eight new illustrations by the author and an introduction by Anthony Burgess; it is appearing simultaneously as a Penguin Modern Classic.(Eyre and Spottiswoode, 50s.; Penguin, 10s.6d.)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Mike Ashley

Well, most people seem glad that FYI is back again, so here's hoping it will once again be regular. I'm a bit behind deadline as I write, thanks to merry old Christmas, but I'm sure Tony won't mind! (Nurses bruises)

From Leroy Kettle (Coventry) come the following queries: Is Christopher Anvil John Campbell? Simply, no. Christopher Anvil is the pen-name of Harry C.Crosby (a name if ever there was one!). John Campbell (who I believe is, or was, under some kind of contract not to write for ANALOG whilst he is editor) has only used the pseudonyms of "Don A.Stuart", under which his unforgettable Who Goes There? appeared, and Arthur McCann (which he used strictly for articles). Karl Van Campen has also been used. Is Jon DeCles Keith Roberts? Again, as far as I know, no. John DeCles is the pen-name of US fan Don Studebaker. Keith Roberts is his own namw so far as my records show.
Have the following novels ever appeared in magazine form?:
Greener Than You Think/Ward Moore -- not to my knowledge
One in Three Hundred/J.T.McIntosh -- Yes. It is made up of the following three stories:- One in 300 (Feb 53), One in a Thousand (Jan 54) and One Too Many (Sep 54), all in F&SF.
With a Strange Device/E.F.Russell -- don't think so.
Lost Legacy/Robert Heinlein -- Yes. It originally appeared as Lost Legion by Lyle Monroe in the Nov 41 SUPER SCIENCE STORIES
From Peter Roberts (Bristol): What paperback novels/short story collections have been published by Theodore Cogswell, Cordwainer Smith and Raymond F.Jones? (I've got The Wall Around The World by TRC, Space Lords by CS, and Man Of Two Worlds & The Non-Statistical Man by RFJ, but I've been unable to discover anything else.) Well, your collection cuts things down a bit. Cogswell's the awkward one. He's certainly written enough to warrant a further collection, and may well have an original novel in paperback, but poring back over various booksellers' lists for the past few years reveals nothing. Cordwainer Smith however has the following: The Planet Buyer (Pyramid Books) at 3/6, and I believe there is a collection Quest of Three Worlds in paperback, but I've never seen this, so couldn't be sure. R.F.Jones has several out. The Deviates is one of the Galaxy Novels series at 3/6, as well as the two you mention, Man of

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

John Ashley

Two Worlds also obtainable under the title Renaissance. I don't think there exist any others by these authors still in print. For other novels your best bet is to buy the magazines.

From Greg Pickersgill (Haverfordwest): I wonder if you can help me trace a story which absolutely defies all my resources. It is one of the James White "Sector General" series, the basic plot dealing with, I think, a telepathic dinosaur. I believe it has appeared somewhere in NEW WORLDS but as my collection is incomplete... I would be very grateful if you could shed some light on this problem for me?

Not being an ardent James White fan I can't say that I've read this story. It certainly doesn't fit into any of the "Sector General" ones I've read, which are all but about two or three. Can anyone help here???

/Vic Hallett has a suggestion on p. 31./

Mike Ashley

THE HARRISON LETTER (continued from p.6)

coming down, inedible bangers for breakfast, fine beer at all hours (being a resident of the con hotel), friendship and good cheer at all hours as well, the very lifeblood of a convention, and all the rest of the memorable things that make up a convention.

My friends, I miss you all and look forward to seeing you again as soon as is possible.

Harry Harrison

NFT SF FORUM (continued from p.14)

An sf film to look forward to in the future is being made in India by Satyajit Ray; it is called The Alien and stars Peter Sellers, as an Indian!

Soon, perhaps, the film makers will realise that sf is a unique genre that contains anything and everything. Specify those things that you wish to include, just about any combination, and someone, somewhere, will have written the required sf story.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

New Writings in SF10 ed.John Carnell (Dennis Dobson, 18s.)
SOL 43 (Thomas Schlueck, 3 Hannover, Georgswall 5, Germany)
GALAXIE 44 and FICTION 169 (3F each; OPTA, 96 rue de la Victoire, Paris-9e.)

L E T T E R S

OUCH!
or
The Teeth that Bite the Hand that Rocks the Cradle Rule the World

from Bob Parkinson:

Bear with me a moment if I revive old debates; the situation may not be quite what it has seemed.

That J.G.Ballard, whether for good or ill, is one of the more important influences on current "progressive" science-fiction,is, I think, indisputable. Also, that the man has talent was demonstrated by the early Vermilion Sands stories, if by nothing else.

Orthodox opinion has it that NEW WORLDS was J.G.Ballard's prophet; and that in a converse direction it has been this man's influence that has been responsible for many of the current trends in avant-garde "speculative fiction" - including fractured story structures, surrealism, inner space, psychologically significant landscapes, and catastrophe in the form of burned, frozen, crystallised or inundated worlds. Whether it is true or not, there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the Ballard influence has extended past the wave of neophyte British writers to some of the more experienced authors. Only the authors themselves can speak authoritatively, of course; but it would be surprising if attempts to find Ballard influences in - for example - Brian Aldiss' latest novel An Age were entirely unfruitful.

It is therefore interesting to discover a recent review by J.G.Ballard of The Year's Science Fiction in the GUARDIAN of the 29th December, 1967. Here is the man responsible more than anyone for the shift from "outer space" to "inner space", calmly assessing the Scene; but the results are quite other than expected.

On NEW WORLDS, for instance:

> "Fitted out with a larger format, lavish illustrations and typography, the resuscitated 'New Worlds' has only one thing missing - vitality. ...the new magazine can only be regarded as a failure..."

There is always a danger in lifting such passages out of context, but I do not think that I have misrepresented the above passage. The same article goes on to lay into the Science Fiction Writers of America, classifies Roger Zelazny and Samuel R.Delany with the "old-guard" (but accepts them on their own terms), and finally devotes a paragraph to Aldiss' An Age.

At the time of writing I have only read this novel in the version serialised in NEW WORLDS. Therefore I am liable to a number of pitfalls in assessing it. But I would have said that

in his own way Aldiss was entering "inner space" fiction here; making allowances for the disparate talents of Aldiss this is what we understood of Ballard. That if this is not in the way of nomination for "classic of the twentieth century" (or even "best of Aldiss"), it is still a serious effort to break through old forms, to write "progressive science fiction. So:

> "With Brian Aldiss's An Age one is back to the Home Counties school of English science fiction led by John Wyndham. ...Well-told but suffocatingly cosy... the novel turns the whole universe into a suburb of Bognor Regis."

Now as a personal view I would say that Ballard is being overly harsh. I have to. My own name has appeared briefly within the ranks of the avant-garde, my own vitality is in question. But this is beside the point. If J.G.Ballard turns out to be a conservative after all, who then do we blame the whole current situation on? I cannot detect the fringes of irony anywhere in this article. On the contrary, it is a carefully reasoned, reasonable review. If it is a curious dada joke, then it is a very obscure one; but the only immediate alternative explanation is that there are two people of the same name. If so, apologies are in order to both of them.

But if not -

Then, as Bob Dylan has it, "Times they are a-changin'."

BIOENGINEERING AND VIETNAM

from Peter Roberts: I fail to see what Roje Gilbert or anybody else can find "attractive" in the idea of "breeding big cats intelligent enough to tell the difference between an American and a VietCong". With all the enormous possibilities of bioengineering, it is sad that the author can think of nothing more worthwhile than to use this science for the production of sentient weapons. Also it was hardly very bright to place this right opposite Harry Harrison's statement that overy sf writer had signed a statement protesting against US involvement in Viet Nam.

/Well, it seemed a good idea at the time. My personal views are the same as yours, possibly stronger --AS/

THE EDITOR'S PLACE

from Tom Jones: All editorial comments affixed to Chas Legg's letter were childish and not only childish but next to insulting; you seem to have deliberately misunderstood everything Chas said, which would have been sensible but for your remarks.

from Mary Reed: You really shouldn't put editorial comments in the middle of letters. The normal custom is to wait until the end of the letter before making your reply.

from Chas Legg: I'm all for editorial comments in letters. It's so difficult trying to have a discussion in a vacuum, you must agree.

[illegible]

THEMES IN SF

from Chas Legg: I see no reason not to have sparrow sausages. They'd probably be delicious! Now, extending this back, I believe that the equivalent thing happens in sf. Plots and themes aren't touched because people just don't think of them in an sf way. It's a pity really, because I'm sure that some fields not touched at the moment by sf could become enjoyable to read about. You have missed my point entirely. Sf has an advantage over other forms of literature in so far as it can include far more subject matter than normal fiction. I.e., space travel may not be fair game to historical fiction, but historical fiction can most certainly be fair game to sf if treated properly. I am not for including sf themes into mainstream literary themes and methods. In fact I would much like to see the reverse.

/But why? Surely, even if any theme can be treated in sf without contradiction, not every theme is suitable for this treatment. The "sparrow sauaage" quotation from Richard Poole's article covers both arguments; I doubt if they would be delicious/

CONGOING AND NAME-DROPPING

from Archie Mercer: I note Harry Harrison's little lecture at the end of his Worldcon Report. However, what seems to have escaped Harry's attention is that my conreps in fanzines and his outwardly similar reports in VECTOR are not at all the same thing. The average fanzine conrep is written largely for the benefit of those who were there, and they like seeing their names in print. The conscientious fanzine conreporter, therefore, endeavours to find excuses to mention as many of the attendees' names as is reasonably possible. Harry's reports, on the other hand, are of (at present) American professional sf writers and editors, for BSFA members.

It is only fair at this point to place on record my observation that this present specimen of his columnar art not only mentions Names, but also contrives to say interesting things about the people concerned. Not just that X was there, but that X did this or that, said thus or so. Had the previous Harrison Letters been similar, I would have had no complaint.

from Kenneth McIntyre: To comment on Mr. Peter Mason's remarks in VECTOR 47 regarding the Harrison Letter. Of course, I realise that as Mr. Mason admits he's not a congoer, the H.H. conrep could give the impression of a drunken orgy - or somesuch. So I suggest that he takes steps to correct this weakness, turns over a new leaf and becomes a congoer!

/Mr. Mason did explain that he couldn't go to conventions because he has to work over Easter, but this part of his letter was cut for reasons of space.

Can anyone teach us this new dance, the congo?/

ARE HUMAN BEINGS ANIMALS?

from Gregory Pickersgill: Replying to Audrey Walton, human beings are animals, we retain far too many of the typical animal

stimulus-response synapses to have the gall to class ourselves otherwise. We are inherently cruel, especially the young, proving the point that only intensive conditioning makes us what we are.

THE GHETTO EFFECT

from Martin J. Pitt: Surely the close feedback between authors and the assumed previous knowledge is only perfectly normal for a developing section of the arts. The poets, painters, authors and musicians in any developing field have always been very aware of and influenced by the work of others in the same field. Moreover, modern avant-garde non-sf also requires a literary knowledge not likely to be possessed by the average reader, in the same way that much modern art caanot be properly appreciated without some regard for previous development. Admittedly, the ghetto effect was most striking when science fiction, like much of its readership, was adolescent and although it was this that limited the area of a writer's work rather a lot for some time, the precepts laid down were the bases for a lot of very entertaining fiction. I find it very exciting that modern sf is drawing its material from so many sources inside and out of these standards so that the borderline between what is and is not sf is becoming ever hazier, as are the borders between the classical sciences. I'm all for the simply entertaining and also the so-called literary side of sf.

ON NEW WORLDS

from Bob Charlesworth: As I see it NEW WORLDS exists to satisfy two ambitions - firstly to make a profit, and secondly to present the best stories available in its particular field. Without profit no business can exist for long, and so this must be a major concern of the publishers. It would be disastrous to rely on the Arts Council grant, which must always be considered as an emergency income.

The financial failure of the "old style" NEW WORLDS must be avoided at all costs, because a second failure would probably mean the end of NEW WORLDS once and for all. The magazine must become self-supporting and this can only be achieved by selling enough copies. It is for this reason that I disagree with the people who cry out for a return to the "good old days" of NEW WORLDS. It is surely obvious that the magazine must aim for a new market because the support given to the magazine intthe past hasn't brought financial success.

Because of this a new style magazine has been created which presents a thoroughly professional image. To me the magazine provides a sorely needed "serious escape" from the rest of the sf magazines available.

There is nothing quite like NEW WORLDS available at the moment in sf. It should appeal to reasonably intelligent, serious minded people and will probably find a good market amongst the student population of the country.

I don't consider myself to be particularly intelligent, but I don't have any great problem in understanding (and enjoying) most of the material published, so I discount the remarks of the

people who say that the magazine publishes unintelligible stories. Sure, some are complicated and difficult to understand but the vast majority are easily understandable. And it's still the only sf magazine that I really look forward to. I hope that enough people will buy it to make it a success.

from Robert J.M.Richard: NEW WORLDS...a nice slick, well illustrated magazine well printed on glossy paper. It's a crime that the stuff outside this medium isn't even good sf. What of the prospective sf fan browsing in the bookstalls, attracted by the glitter and the promise... he buys...and tries to read...and discards it, thereafter prejudiced against sf forever. Specialisation and experimentation can only come successfully when the basic needs are catered for...a sound evolutionary mechanism.

WHAT DOES "SF" MEAN?

from Gerald Bishop: I was talking with a friend who said he didn't like "Sci Fi" and I decided to try to convert him, so I lent him a copy of Drunkard's Walk by Frederik Pohl. When he gave it back we had a merry natter on sf, and I pointed out that Drunkard's Walk was not really Sci Fi because it did not deal with science but was sf, which could be translated as speculative fiction, because the story was based in the near furure, or as sociological fiction, because the story dealt with the study of a group (the university staff) in a fixed environment (the university) and their reactions to certain stimuli (the death urge).

ON THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS

from Tom Jones: Phil Mulcowney is talking s load of rubbish; Heinlein's book was one of the first true novels I've read in sf, a novel being a piece of writing which can stand as literature and not just a story, though it was that as well. The fact that the sentient computer didn't fall into Phil's framework of belief as to what a sentient computer should be like cannot be a criticism of the story, after all one man's view of a sentient computer isn't another's. The novel deserved the Hugo it got.

A BRITISH FANTASY AWARD

from Phil Mulcowney: You know the way it stands at the moment it really is a bloody mess. What gets me is this adjudication committee. It makes the whole thing utterly absurd. I thought the whole idea of the award was to give it to the book the membership thought the best published. But this way, with ten books given to an adjudication committee who can select any one of those ten books, no matter how many actual nominations it got, no matter how good the committee is, it has no right to present an award that supposedly has been voted the best book by the whole of the BSFA. It is damn ludicrous.

Who are the sub-committee anyway?

THE EDITORS' PAGES

BRIAN HILL'S NEWS SPOT

August, New York: Hugo Gernsback died on August 19th aged 83.

September, New York: Hugo Award Results

Best Novel.....The Moon is a Harsh Mistress by R.A.Heinlein
Best Novelette...The Last Castle by Jack Vance
Best Short Story.Neutron Star by Larry Niven
Best Magazine....WORLDS OF IF
Best Artist.....Jack Gaughan

Fan Awards

Best Magazine....NIEKAS, ed. E. Meskys & F. Rolfe
Best Artist.....Jack Gaughan
Best Writer.....A. Panshin

December, London: B.W.Aldiss had a short story in the Dec, issue of NOVA. A.C.Clarke and P.Strick (organiser of the recent NFT season of sf films) discussed sf films and sf with Tony Bilbow on LATE NIGHT LINE-UP on BBC2 on Dec.16. Michael Moorcock published an article in the MORNING STAR of Dec. 28 entitled Thinking our way through to 2117.

January, Britain: Sf magazine price increases due to devaluation: AMAZING, FANTASTIC and F&SF now 4s; ANALOG now 6s.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, APOLOGIES, PROMISES and suchlike

We apologise most sincerely for the poor quality of the printing in V47. This was due to a fault in the duplicator, which has now been repaired. We also apologise for the lateness of this issue, which was caused by illness in an editor's household and by further printing difficulties.

Our thanks to all those who answered the appeal for book reviewers. They will be hearing from us when the reorganisation of the reviews system is complete.

The next issue of VECTOR will contain a symposium on that curious phenomenon, sf fandom. If anyone has views to air on this subject, we will be glad to hear from him,or her,or it.

LOOK FOR SOME VIEWS

of Tony Sudbery's

Having established a VECTOR office by clearing the various paraphernalia from the hallway, study and sitting-room and turning the spare room into what my wife calls "a model of editorial squalor", I decided to repeat the process inside VECTOR itself and sweep the debris of my opinions and rash, ill-judged statements into a single pile, put a name on it and call it a column.

So, atop this dusty pile, here I sit and grumble at contributors and letter-writers. I can't state all my disagreements with Audrey Walton's article in this issue; it would take too long. Wherever Mrs. Walton is most certain that everyone must agree with her, there I most disagree.

For a different view of the possibilities of automation, and an analysis of the slow "accidental revolution" that this century has seen without recognising it, I recommend Michael Harrington's "optimistic study of decadence", The Accidental Century (Pelican, 6s.

I'm rather depressed by the number of people who oppose the "entertainment" and "literary" aspects of sf. They seem to have lost sight of a third factor, the one which made George Orwell single out sf as the most worthwhile of the trash he found in boys' weeklies in the thirties. Orwell called this feature "intellectual curiosity"; others have used the term "a sense of wonder".

On this entertainment question, the exchange between J.G. Ballard and Arthur C. Clarke that Michael Henward (p.13) wanted to see after Clarke's remark that the most important role of sf was to entertain had in fact already taken place in print. Clarke made the same claim in the introduction to his anthology Time Probe; Ballard, reviewing the book in the GUARDIAN, complained about "the familiar intransitive use of 'entertain'", and wanted to know who sf is supposed to entertain.

Speaking of Ballard's GUARDIAN reviews, I can't agree with Bob Parkinson (Letters) that the latest one shows Ballard as a conservative. It seems to me that this is the familar sight of an extremist's rejection of less extreme progressives.

Department of profound thoughts: "The nervous strain inside the ship was nerve-racking" (Murray Leinster, The Corian's Disaster

Quiz corner: What writer of traditional sf, writing in the '30s and '40s, whose style and methods often prefigure Vladimir Nabokov's, won (jointly with Samuel Beckett) the first award of an important international literary prize in 1961? Answer: Jorge Luis Borges, one of whose stories is included in Michael Moorcock's new anthology The Traps of Time, due out from Rapp & Whiting this spring.

How timely Time is. David Masson's first collection is called The Caltraps of Time (Faber, 21s.), and Allen Lane's latest glossy science book is The Voices of Time (ed. J.T.Fraser). This tome

contains an article by Professor Herbert Dingle claiming to disprove special relativity. His argument shows how easy it is to neglect the relativity of simultaneity - which ugly but impressive phrase describes one of the most basic and hardest to grasp of the postulates of relativity. Inventors of faster than light drives would do well to pay more heed to it.

Faber are filling a serious gap with Best SF Stories of C.M. Kornbluth, excellently edited and introduced by Edmund Crispin; and rumour, busy as ever, reckons another gap will soon be filled when Britain gets a new sf magazine.

B I T S

by Vic Hallett

Re Mike Ashley: Quest of Three Worlds is published by Ace Books of New York. On the "telepathic dinosaur" question, the only Sector General I can think of that fits this description is Trouble with Emily (a teleporting dinosaur) now reprinted in Hospital Station published by Corgi.

Whilst on the subject of James White I am pleased to be able to say that when tackling a novel that depends on plot and not characterisation he is still his old charming self. His new novel All Judgment Fled (to be published by Rapp & Whiting this spring) more than makes up for The Watch Below.

Yet another hard cover publisher enters the sf field; Robert Hale with Aftermath by George Corson. I hope that this volume is not a portent of the series as a whole as it is entirely abysmal. Trying to be honest and outspoken it only succeeds in being boring.

I would like to know how in fact Panther did with Shoot at the Moon. My opinion as a bookseller is that they alienated both the sf reader and the general reader but this may be just a local reaction.

They are interestingly reversing the trend in February when they publish William Burroughs' Nova Express as a science fiction title.

I'll also fit in some film news here. On release:

The Wild, Wild Planet — An Italian film.
Lightning Bolt — Another Italian film.
Both have possibilities as spectacle.
The Tenth Victim — From Robert Sheckley's story The Seventh Victim.
Night of the Big Heat — From John Lymington's novel.
These two share the same programme.

Your two editors recently saw a full length French cartoon entitled Le Theatre de M. et Mme. Kabal. We went with interest as we had heard that this would be the shape of the cinema in twenty years' time. For myself I can only say thay I enjoyed it enormously. It was as if James Thurber's ideas and techniques had become blended with Charles Addams' ideas and techniques and produced a film on the sex war with splendidly macabre supporting animals. I incline to think that if the "twenty years on" statement is true then this is the Walt Disney of its time byt nothing more serious.

Finally I have a complaint to make. Blurbs are often bad but few are as bad as the one Tandem have put on Gods For Tomorrow (ed. Hans Santesson); a highly misleading blurb to a very good anthology.

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