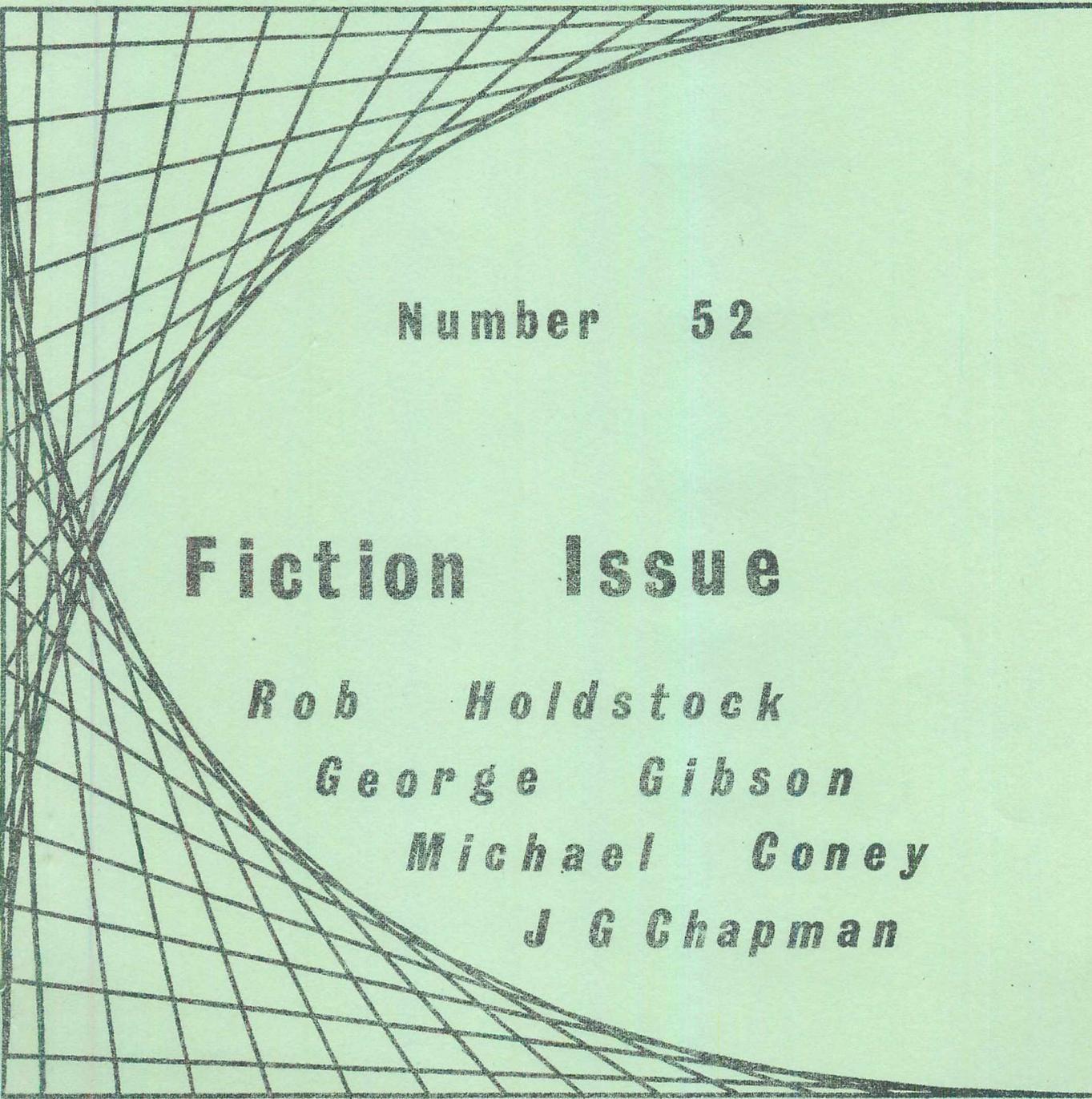


VECTOR



Number 52

Fiction Issue

Rob Holdstock

George Gibson

Michael Coney

J G Chapman

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Contributions are welcome on any subject related to sf.

Editor

For five years I had read sf, before, just over a year ago, I began to take a more active interest in sf. For some reason I had continued to pay my subscription to the BSFA in return for four years of a rather mediocre VECTOR. This started to improve about two years ago, and as it did so my interest rose until I found myself taking over VECTOR. Before this I really had no idea of what the average BSFA member was like.

Last year I decided to do something about this by going to the annual convention. I didn't know what to expect, whatever it was was not realised. Probably I had hoped for a gathering of intelligent people who would spend a weekend talking about sf and associated topics, as readers and writers. And, as far as I was concerned, "associated topics" could include anything and everything.

This was not to be the case. What I actually discovered was more natural. The first sign of things to come was the sight of a drunk (at 5:00 pm) falling down the stairs. After some delay (I didn't know anyone present) I got talking to some interesting people. Eventually it turned out that there were only a few present who had come along for more than just a booze up. These people soon found each other and spent most of the weekend talking, at bars and in quieter parts of the hotel.

Writers? I managed to talk to most of the half a dozen or so present for a while, some more than others. I couldn't really see why they had come. In the end I put it down to ego, for anyone with anything published seemed to spend some time signing books.

Will I be going again? I sigh, and say yes, for I did enjoy myself despite the revellers. This is the only chance that most have of getting together to talk about sf. Maybe this is a futile pursuit. But you get nowhere by doubting absolutely everything you do.

As you can see, the Easter convention really is, as it claims, "something for everyone." This year's gathering is in Oxford. Maybe I will see you there?

Fire King

by

Robert P Holdstock

In the center of the World was the Magma; liquid fire compressed by countless tons of liquid rock.

In the center of the Magma sat the King.

He was the King of Hell Fire Furious and he had not moved since the early days of life upon the cold, stark surface of the World. He was a shapeless ball of fire suspended in the liquid magma, resting in complete tranquility, in the static society of the burning core.

But now he was bored.

And so, from the Magma there came life. From the amorphous liquid there came the King, his fiery figure coalescing slowly from the shapelessness.

He stood tall and broad, clothed in streamers of molten rock with flame for hair and flame for spirit. He was a King awoken and he was a King caught up in an insurgence of desire to ride the cold tunnels of the Earth's mantle and burst, again, onto the surface, there to ride in glory across the flat plains and rugged continents. To ride, a menace to the Gods and a defiance to the wind, to ride with his army of fireclad soldiers and BURN the life of that two dimensional horror to a nasty black cinder.

He cried, "MY STEED! QUICKLY!"

And as, from the depths of the fire world, the tall flaming horse came snorting and galloping to its master: so he called for his escort. Then he swung into the saddle, twisting the reins so violently that the stallion screamed. Screamed streamers of fire from its wide, flaring nostrils, yet the horse obeyed its master, for its master was the King of Fire and could not be disobeyed.

They rode out of the World's core, out of the heat and out of the fire.

They rose above the world of scalding rock and rivers of liquid crystal.

They rode through passageways cut aeons before, into the coldness of the Mantle.

Three hundred strong, they flamed through the darkness. A troop of yellow and orange splendor, led by the King. He rode his mount with a relentlessness that becomes the evil. The animal screamed as its flanks were assaulted, yet it ran faster and faster, tore upwards and along the corridors. A great animal of fire, ten foot from hoof to brow, and with teeth as long and as brilliant as the strongest, most polished of ivory knives.

And seated tall and prominently upon its back, the King. His red beard and strong face flamed bright yellow and his cloak was a cloak of sparks; intense sparks that flowed behind him as he rode, and swirled away to nothing long after the double column of Knights had vanished into the darkness ahead.

There are a thousand worlds beneath the crust, a thousand worlds of darkness and silence.

There was a world of darkness called Three Caverns. In each cavern there was a lake, a large lake, each a lake of rippling water, washing softly against granite shores. A hollow sound of water falling from great heights filled the eerie spaces and echoed through the sombre darkness

On the shores of the lakes lived a race of beings, silent dwarfs who never spoke and never smiled.

Now they sat on the damp rock, staring across the black water listening to the sounds of horses running. A low monotonous drumming that had begun in the distance and which grew louder as the hours passed.

After many hours the sound of the men shouting as they rode through the tunnels of the mantle world could be heard, with the whine of the horses as they strove to find a footing on the rough cut and moist rock of the tunnel floors.

Across the waters in the distance there was a flickering of light. The dwarf people huddled together with deep set eyes staring at the outlines of the cave mouths. Many cave mouths, all now faintly illuminated as the approaching firebeasts drew nearer, nearer, nearer.

A voice thundered through the caverns, booming and billowing as it reverberated from the dank, green slimed ceilings of stone.

"I AM THE KING OF THE FIRES OF HELL!"

And three hundred voices screamed their salute with such force that stones slipped from the cavern walls and tumbled into the trembling waters. The whole of the cave world rocked and vibrated with the ear splitting roar of avalanche and voice.

The dwarf people fled in terror and vanished into the crooks and crannies of the cave wall, to crouch whimpering as out of the tunnels there burst the King of Fire. Resplendant upon his glowing steed, trailing a streamer of flame, he tore across the water and reined to a stop in the center of the lake.

Where the steed stood, lowing and screaming with the torture of the bit that cut deep its flaming flesh, the waters of the black lake spat and sizzled, boiled and steamed.

The King laughed, laughed loud and such that his laughter rang through the trembling cavern. From the tunnel mouths his escort of nobles and soldiers poured as liquid gold from a scorched cauldron. They vomited from the silence into the tumult of a world gone mad. They rode their horses into the lake waters and there reined to a stop to stand arrayed, a column of brilliance and fire assaulting the darkness with unwavering persistence.

They blinded the dwarfs, for the dwarfs had never seen light. They burned the water until the lake stood dry and hollow, a deep pit in which blind fish flapped and died.

And the King of Fire laughed and turned his mount to face the huddled dwarfs.

He rode across the dry lake and charged his fiery steed up the shore onto the slab of cold stone that was the communal hearth place of the dwarf population.

The dwarfs grunted, unable to voice a scream, and huddled deeper into the cracks in the cavern walls. They watched with terror absolute the apparition of the man of fire as he cantered toward them, a fireball of incandescent flesh, and rode them down.

As his sword of steel slashed at the tortured figures, the rest of Hell's Escort charged, shouting, across the lake and up to join the slaughter.

Through the gloomy corridors of the Mantle world, across great empty caverns and along the granite banks of swiftly flowing underground rivers, rode the King of Fire.

For miles in all directions the thunder of hoofbeats could be heard. A low murmur in the still air that grew in magnitude to reach a climax with a thunder-clap. The column of fire stormed past on horses running as fast as such beasts are able. Their riders crouched low over the mane, gripping hard the reins and watching always for the unexpected, a chasm, a rock fall, a pool of quicksilver.

Their cloaks of fire streamed for many yards behind them as they onwards and upwards, following the route to the surface of the World, following the passageways carved so long before and which the King only half remembered. It had been a long time since last he had ridden the damp stone road from the core to the cold plains of the Topland - plains that crawled with the blood of the core, lava flows and molten metals, hot, yet so cold by comparison with the center. Plains they were that echoed to the belch of volcanoes and which shuddered with the shifting of landmasses to make way for more congealing magma.

The King knew that he would not be happy there. But he knew that there were beings, alive and flourishing despite the cold. Those beings would have to be subdued. At all costs they would have to know, be made to know, who was the ruler, who commanded the fires of Heaven and Hell, be they core or mantle, and who was the master of the very rock on which they stood.

In a cave, in a vertical fault, guarding the entrance of the final passage to the stark, cold surface, sat the Man of Ages. He had been old when first the King of Fire had ridden to the surface. Now he was considerably older.

He sat, warm in his rock home, and watched the gloomy cavern below. He was high on the fault, perhaps a quarter of a mile. There was a steep slope to the floor of the cavern and, well in the distance, the entrance to the passages of the Mantle. A river snaked across the rock floor, thin and silvery and passing with scarcely a murmur.

But there was a different murmur today; the monotonous undertone of horses.

Into the space galloped, streamed, the emissaries of Hell, led by their King, a figure of flame and yellow fire. He reined-to in the distance and peered up the fault to where he could see the darker pit that was the home of the Man of Ages.

Then he spurred his mount on, spurred it till it raced with a fury and a violence that it had scarcely before known. It leapt across the river and landed surely upon the farther bank. Without breaking its monstrous stride the horse streaked towards the slope and began, rapidly, to ascend.

"SO, MAN OF AGES!" Boomed the King of Fire, "WE MEET AGAIN!"

"Yes," said the Man of Ages, softly. "we do so meet. It has been many years."

The King laughed, stared at the withered creature before him. "OH, MANY YEARS." he said, with a mocking in his voice. "I hoped you would be dead by now; your bones white and stark in your hovel."

"I am the Man of Ages," said the Man of Ages. "I can never die..." he paused, glancing at the arrogant King above him, "except by your sword."

"YEA, OH, YEA," cried the King with delight, "EXCEPT BY MY SWORD OF FIRE!" He drew the sword with one swift motion. The flaming blade burned bright before the old man. The Man of Ages watched it with an emotion akin to apprehension.

"DO I PASS?" cried the King, his voice loud, his breath hot and steamed. He restrained his horse with difficulty - the mount whinnied and belched fire, twisting its head to escape the burning bit.

"It is no longer even warm upon the surface." said the Man of Ages. "It is very cold, and there is a civilization."

"A CIVILIZATION?" cried the King, his eyes alight with the thought of conquest. "What sort of civilization?"

"they are a vast and advanced people who cover the Topland from the icy poles to the luke warm tropics. They are at harmony with their world and have many years of life and achievement before them. YOU MUST NOT PASS!"

"BUT I AM THE KING!"

"AND EVEN SO," screamed the Man of Ages, "YOU MUST NOT PASS!"

"OLD FOOL!" screamed the King. The sword of fire flashed once, twice.

"Taste of burning steel, you interfering old man!"

As the life-blood drained from the Man of Ages, the King rode on. And his knights followed him with a growing passion for a kill.

It was a thirst that would never be quenched.

The icy winds of the surface blew hard and merciless down the corridors of the crust world. They sang round curves and through potholes, whistled through the chimneys and chasms. They brought the winter to the surface, to the hidden worlds just below, and to the King of Fire they brought a new and fearsome sensation.

He reined his horse to an uncertain stop. Behind him the now silent escort of knights and nobles ceased their maddened race to the surface and sat high in their saddles, tasting the cold air.

Now the cloak of fire, that the King had so proudly worn, was dwindled. There seemed a starkness, a whiteness, a coldness about his whole appearance. The burning flame was extinguishing, slowly, yet relentlessly.

And should that happen, the King would die.

Ahead, in the darkness, beings, small and afraid, scurried and shuffled. Further still was the Topland and its civilization that now the King would never see.

He turned his horse and rode slowly through the ranks of his knights and nobles, and back down to where lay the dead Man of Ages.

"I'm cold." said the King of Fire.

ULTIMATUMSRA

by

Michael G Coney

Earliest memories are of the square room. Square walls, square ceiling. A hollow box, a cube of nothing among eternal, infinite solidity. Mother tells me this is the room, and she also, but only sometimes, speaks of the world. The world is different from the room, somewhere else, and I think it must be the same place as Outside, where goes to and comes from with the sticks, crying.

At the end of the room has always been the fire, licking and sparkling and crackling as the new, old wood catches.

x

Shadows dancing in sympathy on the walls. Playing in streaks of black from the table, the chairs to the walls, blinking and shifting as though thrown by my arms when mother is out. Outside. And the bottles on the table, the empty, empty, half-full, full bottles which I must not drink from, or I shall die. Mother drinks them, and mother is older, and mother will die sooner, because she drinks from the square, green bottles with white labels. If I don't drink from them, I will not grow old.

Your father. Your father was a brave man. Father? What is father? Your father built this home for us, for you and I, son. We are safe here, he made us safe, but he drank. He drank from the square, green bottles. We must eat now.

x

The bottles scintillate on the wooden table, alive in the glow from the fire. The crimson glints on them and comes back darker, greener. Then the fire goes dim, white ash and twinkling sparks, and makes soft noises as it settles, and mother says again, we must eat now. I like to eat.

Open the cupboard and there they are, the cans, bright labels, she tells me what they say and I know each one, Campbell's condensed soup, Fray Bentos Corned Beef, Heinz Baked Beans, in Rich Tomato Sauce, lots and lots of them, the cupboard is big, from floor to ceiling and wall to wall, it must be almost as big as Outside. When I was much smaller there were more cans. Row, row, row of cans upwards and backwards and sideways through time, measuring the units of time by the diminution of the rows. Time passes slowly... so slowly, I think. I don't know for sure, but I think time passes very slowly.

x

A beautiful glitter of falling sparks as a spent stick settles! Leap up, arms cartwheeling, flailing shadows leaping across the walls! STOP IT! Mother, hair black, greasy-matted falling across her face, mouth agape, screaming, striking me, striking me again. I sit down. Silence and pain.

x

Do you remember when the room shook? When the whole room trembled and shivered? The room trembled? The room can't tremble. The room is the room. It is here, it is all. Here can't tremble. The chairs, the table can tremble, if I jump on them when mother isn't here.

Sit here, son. Sit here. You must always sit here, not in front of the fire. NOT IN FRONT OF THE FIRE. And keep still. No. Get me a drink. (Row, row, row of bottles in another cupboard) Thank you. You're a good-son. Your father... Your father was good. Your father drank, he didn't make it, he never made it, never. Bless you, son, you're all I've got. Know that? You're all I've got, you're all... She's asleep.

Thought I was asleep? No, son, I've got to watch over you. I can't sleep, not like your father. Your father was a bloody big swine, do you know that? Confined in this bloody prison, it's no life for a boy, he should have made it bigger, he had no guts. Shackling a boy in this dungeon by his own idleness, what sort of a man is that? He should be here, now, to see you, your face all pale, a bloody troglodyte entombed in this grave. Bloody shame... This time she really is asleep.

Get up and see the fire. Why not? Look, I can make shapes on the wall. Arms outstretched, pointing, just as if there were two of me, me and meme. Mother and me and meme. Three of us here in the room, one sleeping and two dancing; I suppose it would have been like this if father had not drunk and died. Circle, circle, swish, swish, no matter how fast I swing my arms, the shadow keeps up with them. I try to take it by surprise by suddenly reversing, but it is too smart for that. Of course, -it is meme. It knows everything I am going to do, at the exact moment when I am going to do it. Round and-
WHAT THE BLOODY HELL ARE YOU DOING? The pain, blow upon blow.

x

Mother gone. The room empty, except for me, and when I get up from my chair, meme. I dance about, jumping and kicking, making shadows flash and fly about the walls. I like this best. I don't mind mother gone, because then I can be two, all by myself, and I know what is going to happen. I never quite know what is going to happen when mother is here.

Mother back, crying, lips trembling. Mother's always crying when she gets back. Her arms full of sticks. Kicking the door slowly shut with her heel, the heavy steel door that closes with a clunk, ponderous. Shutting me off from Outside... No, you can't go Outside. You're not old enough. When you are grown up you can go out. You are too young. Smoke, her back to me, subject closed. Smoke filling the room as mother piles on the sticks. We used to burn oil, son, but the oil ran out. Typical of your father.

Speculation on the sticks.

The sticks are melancholy in solid form. They are, to mother, the physical evidence of the lid she once knew, which she describes to me sometimes as being like Outside, and yet different. An inconceivable difference. She brings the sticks in under her arm, and the sadness in them, the death look, passes to her face as the tears glisten; and sometimes the sticks glisten and drip in sympathy. Rough, dead, yet organic. She dumps them on the floor near the fire and they shift quietly, rustling into the most comfortable communal position.

(Added to my diary recently when, at the age of fifteen, I felt that perhaps I wasn't making myself very clear. On my fifteenth birthday my mother pulled out a heavy old book from the cupboard and said here son, here is a dictionary for you. There are words in it, when you open it up, all sorts of words which mother never showed me on my slate, so never found their way into my diary. I have cheated though. Here and there I have gone back and altered what I wrote, years ago.)

X

A day is a unit of time. What is time? Time passes; see, you grow older, your legs grow longer. But mother's legs don't grow longer, they seem to shrink. Once they were much longer, and held her body higher, so that she towered over me; now I am almost as tall as she is... Almost as strong... DEFY ME, WOULD YOU? Sorry mother, always sorry.

Does time, then, go backwards for mother, that she grows shorter? She brings sticks once a day, therefore a day is the time which elapses between one load of sticks and the next. A day is a long time, and yet the time which elapses when she is Outside, collecting the sticks, is longer than a day, although within that day. Time doesn't make sense... Sometimes, when she is Outside, I wonder whether time exists. It is connected with movement, I know that. Some days, when I feel strong and mother is away and I am lonely, I dance around the room all the time with meme, and time passes very quickly. But when I am unwell and I sit by the fire, time trickles, drawn out until I think it has stopped, and mother will never come-back, she is frozen motionless Outside, bent over a pile of gnarled sticks.

X

Today I am fourteen, and mother called the room a prison again, crying before even she went for the sticks. When she came back she just flopped on the bed and the sticks rattled to the floor around her, and I crunched through them to get to her, and she looked up but she wasn't looking at me, she was looking past my face. I turned around and meme was giant on the wall, hand outstretched to mothermother. I looked back at mother and her face was all twisted and her eyes looked like the bottom of a bottle when you look at it endways on; concentric and blank. I watched her a long time, her face kept wriggling, her mouth open wide, funny moaning noises, staring at meme.

She slept for a long time, then.

X

(I look back at my diary and I don't like it, I feel that when I wrote the last bit it was what my dictionary means by a Milestone. So, cheating again, I am pushing in a few extra leaves. This is what my dictionary calls Editing.)

the room is a perfect and I am inside it. But where is mother?	the room is a perfect and I am inside it. But where is mother?	the room is a perfect and I am inside it. But where is mother?
--	--	--

(An early, abortive attempt to codify the nature of things when mother is Outside).

Speculation on the nature of the room, with reference to Outside.

The room can only be complete when mother is here with me. When she goes? there is in effect a spacial vacuum. A negation.

The walls, I think, extend in thickness forever, except for the Outside that mother goes to. This is another hollow cube, this unseen Outside. A hollow cube connected to this cube by a short passage. So therefore we have

two connected hollow cubes in infinite solidity. This explains the apparent negation in para. 1. The two rooms must be considered as a whole, then there is no inconsistency, as there was in the earlier diagram.

Is Outside square, like this? I asked her. She looked at me as though she didn't understand. Perhaps Outside is round, a hollow globe like the light-shade. ARE YOU MAD? she asked loudly and the empty space of the room became more solid, filled with thick sound. What was the purpose of the light-shade? The fire gives the light.

I don't like this shouting, because to me it suggests that if one day she shouted loud enough, the room would solidify and there would be nothing but infinite wall. Certainly there is a definite oppression when she shouts and I sense that the room shrinks, ever so slightly. But would infinite wall mean nothing? Surely it would imply the opposite, everything. Because the room itself, the air in it, is nearer to nothing than the solid wall.

x

Can I go Outside? I ask her sometimes, and she says not yet, anyway you don't go to Outside, you go outside. Well, can I go Outside, then? When you're older son.

x

Why? Why is the room? Why is the room here, around us? KEEP YOUR ARM DOWN! For that matter, why are we, you and I, mother?

Because we are, she says. There was a saying, she says. I think, therefore I am,

But the room doesn't think? Yes, I see. I think the room, the walls, therefore they are. I call them into existence. MOTHER! YOU ARE NOT THERE! I shout, trying hard. But she is, therefore I still think she is, in spite of myself. And she slaps me, hard, and again I try to think she isn't there.

x

She is there for a long time, we, the room, the walls, are there for many years, which is a great number of days. ((Why don't the sticks run out, like the oil?))

x

Sixteen now, mother says. You can come Outside with me today and gather some sticks. You are old enough now. Outside! At last I can go Outside!

Leap up, joyful, forgetful. SIT DOWN DAMN YOU. Crack, brain ringing crimson, black, Black shadows across my brain.

x

Out in the open air. The open air. Things I read in the dictionary begin to make sense. How wrong I've been about things. How terrible Outside is, no wonder mother cries. The wind on my face. Moving air, like when mother opens the door to get the sticks. Why does the air move? I don't like it. Nothing above me. Nothing. A screaming void, don't look up, don't look back. DON'T LOOK BACK! Mother pushing, shouting, shepherding me out across the black glass plain. Green grass, look, she says, green grass coming through at last after sixteen years.

x

Here I can see rooms from the outside, broken rooms sticking out of the glass plain. Shadows. Shadows everywhere, thrown by the petrified branches. On the white, shattered walls, thrown by the Sun!

HERE'S THE MAN IN ICE-BOX NINE

by

J. G. Chapman

The Siege of the Penguin Army

The drill was already penetrating deep into the Antarctic crust when the penguins laid their siege.

The south magnetic pole, slowly wandering in its orbit of drift, was then under the coast of King George V Land. Here it was, therefore, that the drilling station had been built, its purpose to obtain geomagnetic sample of the core. A few miles down the coast had been a huge rookery of Emperor penguins, established long before the coming of the Antipodean Research Expedition. But established no longer, for the penguins had decided to move to the site of the expedition's drilling station, where now they stood in broken ranks, like a dissipated army of privates whose officers had deserted them.

Dimitri came into the control room, unzipping his environmental suit.

"They're standing all over the landing field now, and all round the supply and working areas. It's damn useless trying to shoo them away, even with percussion caps and flares. They just flap away a few yards and then come back. I haven't got the heart to shoot the bastards. Anyway, there's too many."

"How many are there now?" asked Gonzalez.

"I make it over ten thousand. The whole colony must be here by now."

Pilate, the radio operator, was off-duty but he had been sitting in the control room, for the company of talking to Gonzalez.

"They like us. That's the only explanation. Maybe somebody has been throwing out breadcrumbs."

"Oh funny!" said Dimitri sarcastically. "You'd better radio the Gallery Islands base and ask them to send over their zoologist. We'll let him sort out the problem while we get on with our own."

The problems of the engineers were the ice-holes. The rock beneath the ice-cap was honeycombed with sun erranean caverns. These had been filled over the ages with ice. When the drill bit suddenly encountered the change from hard rock to soft ice, it would begin to race and overheat. Twice it had seized, necessitating a complete replacement of the head each time. To combat this a sensory module, using ultrasonic detectors, had been installed in the drill head. The module was indicating that yet another ice-hole would be reached in about forty eight hours time.

Over the Doomed Giants

Michener, the zoologist, flew the single engined seaplane low, beneath the cloud base. Here and there the monotony of the grey seascape was broken by icebergs. Floating diamond mountains. They brought to his mind the irresistible suggestion of doomed giants. Sad, one-way travellers setting out to see the world.

Presently the continental coast broke the horizon. Soon he had located the orange domes and huge yellow rig of the drilling installation. These man made interruptions in the composition of white mountains and crystal glaciers created a wonder world picture of supersaturated colour. He wondered if it was this that had attracted the penguins. He thought not.

Radioing his arrival to the installation, he landed his seaplane in the tiny harbour. He was tying up to the mooring buoy when Gonzalez pulled out in a rubber dinghy to meet him.

"Glad to meet you Michener," he said. "It's not often that we get company dropping in here."

"Thanks. I hope I can help. I can't really see the big problem though, unless someone's allergic to birds."

"No. I like them myself. But they've established themselves on the landing field. Nothing but a seaplane can get in or out. Unless they're removed our supplies will have to be parachuted in, and some of our equipment's too delicate to stand that sort of thing."

They had reached the shore. Walking through the penguin hordes to the station, Michener was puzzled by their behaviour. The nest-building activity one would expect if they were intending to establish a colony, was absent. Instead they merely stood in groups, as if they were patiently awaiting something. The only activity was when individuals and small groups made their way down to the sea to look for food.

The Sensory Module

Michener woke the next morning and still had no solution to his problem. Finding the living quarters empty, he ate breakfast, then went across to the control room, which occupied most of the orange dome next to the rig. As he'd expected, all three men were there. Pilate had apparently just finished his night-watch over the instruments. He stood behind the other two who were seated at the control consoles.

"You're all up and working early, aren't you?" remarked Michener.

"Stay and watch the fun," replied Pilate. "We're just about to hit an ice-box. These two are as worried as hell they're going to bust up the bit again."

"Apart from the time it would waste, a turbo-head this size costs more than you'll earn if you live to be ninety," said Dimitri, still not looking up from his instruments.

"What's the chance of losing it then?"

"Actually it's not too bad. With the experience from the others, we should be able, we should be able to get past this and lose only some sweat. We've had six successful transitions and only two failures. This is the ninth and, I hope, the last. After this we should be finished with the honey-combed strata."

"Five minutes to go," called Gonzalez. "These are the instruments to watch," he added for Michener's benefit, "they're transmitted from the sensory module on the head. This one is the head temperature. That's the environmental temperature, rotational speed, and that's from the sonic sensor which detects density transitions or, in other words, ice-boxes. Just before we hit one we have to cut back the power, otherwise the head races and seizes through overheating. On the other hand, if we cut back too far it stalls and freezes

solid in seconds. This isn't so bad, but we still have to bring it to the surface to re-start it."

"Sounds pretty tough."

"It is," said Dimitri, "and it was me who said we wouldn't need a computer control system. One more head lost and that saving disappears."

"Twenty seconds," called Gonzalez, then "ten, five, cut power."

A switch was thrown, but apart from the meter readings there was no indication of the fantastic power being controlled.

Gonzalez suddenly shouted "The temperature's falling too fast! Increase five per cent., make that forty, full power back. This is fantastic! It's still not responding. The speed's way down."

A shudder went through the building, coming up through the rocks and the packed snow. Nine miles down below them the drill bit had sheared through.

Dimitri shrugged bewilderedly as Gonzalez turned to face him.

"The bloody thing must have broken right off the shaft."

"You've still got readings from the sensory module," Michener pointed out from behind Gonzalez' shoulder.

"There would be," he muttered. "It's a radio link up the hollow shaft. Look at the environmental temperature!"

They looked. The dial read absolute zero. A long silence, then

"If that's for real it's no wonder it broke. It'd be as brittle as glass."

Gonzalez sat still looking. "Oh it's for real, don't let the fact that it's impossible fool you." He tapped the glass face of the dial. "If it was broken or malfunctioning the needle would be at centigrade zero, not minus two-seven-three."

As the two engineers willed the impossible needle to be at a mere zero and not at the point of absolute cold, it began to swing across the scale and then, with damped oscillation, stopped again.

"Well," said Pilate as if he were tiring of this electronic joke, "what's it reading now?"

"Thirty-seven, body temperature." Gonzalez too was wearing a strained smile.

The Hole in the World

While Gonzalez put on his environmental suit the others went over to the drilling rig. Built around the base was a large square structure which protected the surface mechanisms of the drill. Entering through wide folding steel doors Michener saw that the stark, unheated hall also served as a hangar for a caterpillar tractor and odd pieces of machinery. But dominating the hangar, like the statue of a primeval god in its alien temple, was the oil-glistening column of the drill shaft which disappeared through floor and roof. The shaft was thicker than Michener had imagined. He estimated its diameter at around twelve feet, then realised that it would have to be large to withstand the tremendous torque generated in penetrating the lithosphere to such immense depths. It was the low-pitched sound of the engines, rather than any visual clues, which told him that the drill shaft was now slowly rising out of its housing in the floor.

"What's going to happen?" he asked Dimitri.

"We're pulling the shaft back up a little; then when we bring up the first section joint we'll unhitch it. The shaft, as you know, is hollow and Gonzalez is going to go down it with a hoisting lift. At the bottom he'll attach

it to the old drill bit and pull it up, then he'll go down with a new one and fit it onto the shaft end. In the old days we'd have had to pull up the whole shaft; it would have taken days, possibly weeks."

Pilate had been opening a large crate near the drill column; inside, packed in grease, was the new turbo-drill head. He took the heavy pieces out using a reef pulley. "It's made in three segments," he explained to Michener, "That way it'll fit into the shaft. The pieces only come together when they're fixed onto the bottom. Ugly things aren't they. All those teeth. Always reminds me of a piranha fish. Now they'd be devils if they grew to this size. I was working on a job in Brazil once..<"

His reminiscences were interrupted by the entry of a silver figure shining in the harsh bare lighting. It was Gonzalez in his environmental suit. This protective clothing had been adapted from the space-suits of the astronauts. It would protect its wearer from the severest of Antarctic conditions. Now, wearing air cylinders for the descent, the engineer looked even more like a spaceman. As if to greet his arrival, a relay clicked and the lifting motors shut off.

"Looks like I'm just on time, the section joints arrived," he remarked.

Dimitri operated remote controls. Above them, near the apex of the drilling rig, mechanical claws gripped the top section of the shaft. At floor level in the hangar, other clamps gripped the top of the now exposed second section. Motors began to whine again and the top section began to revolve, unscrewing itself from the rest of the shaft and then lifting out through the roof. A shrill cold wind immediately blew through the hole it left and Dimitri brought it down a few feet to block the opening.

The hollowness of the shaft was exposed. Not at all a simple tube; but rather three tubes, one inside the other, like Chinese boxes. In operation mineral oil was pumped down the outer one, the middle tube brought a silt of rock suspended in oil, to the surface, where the rock was filtered out and the purified oil re-circulated.

It was over the centre tube, however, that Dimitri was fitting the lift mechanism which ran on massive girders across the roof. Amounting to a tangle of gears and brakes, the twin cables for the lift were fed in from the outside. Surprisingly the power cable was much thicker than the thin steel suspension wire. Gonzalez clambered onto the lift base, a spidery structure of girders festooned with mechanical handling devices and arc lamps.

"What if the temperature really is absolute zero?" asked Pilate.

"The suit should stand it for a few minutes, but I'm coming stright back up if it is. Anyway, at that depth, thirty seven is more likely. You'll know where to find me if you want me," he remarked as he pressed the control to descend.

The Total Blank of Zero Existence

This is no place for claustrophobes, thought Gonzalez as the lift accelerated him down the interior of the shaft. In the bright light of the working lamps he could see, standing next to him, a grotesque figure, it was himself reflected in the polished metal walls, as if they were fairground distorting mirrors. The parody of himself only emphasised that he was cut off from any human contact for the next twenty minutes, until his high speed descent brought him to the sensory module where the sonic detectors would give him a one-way transmitting link with the surface.

Sitting down across two steel pipes, he looked through the open fretwork of the lift floor. Once the acceleration to maximum speed was complete and the sensation of falling was over, he was in a subjectively static world, trapped in a steel spindle whose walls curved above and below him into pin-points of nothingness. Outside the drill tube was a region which had been undisturbed for millenia until this 'invagination' of the surface. He was bringing transitory life to what had been a total blank of zero existence.

When at last the buzzer that warned of deceleration sounded, he rose to his feet to brace himself. Far below the pin-point of blackness had changed into a circle of light. 'There shouldn't be any light down there' he thought and switched the lamps on the lift off to see if it was a freak reflection. The circle of light became brighter and grew as he approached it. Gonzalez took the lift down the last hundred feet under manual control, emerging from the bottom of the broken shaft into a cavern whose walls glowed luminously through a coating of melting ice.

On the surface they returned to the control room where the audio relay from the drill head was connected to loudspeakers. The sound of the lift, as it came into range, was clearly transmitted, then came Gonzalez' voice, distantly emitting an exclamation of surprise. A splashing noise, which came nearer, was Gonzalez paddling through a rainbow mixture of oil from the fractured drill, and melted ice.

"Hello, can you hear me?" said the distorted echoing voice, meaning it more as an announcement of his presence than as a question. "I'm in some kind of weird cave, the ice hole's melting fast and the water is draining off somewhere. Temperature must be around blood heat. The strangest thing of all is that these walls are luminous, it's as bright as day in here. I'm banking on the chance that it isn't radioactive, our rock samples have shown no sign of it. There must have been something pretty odd going on down here, the drill head's fragmented into tiny pieces. There's no other explanation except that it met a region of absolute zero temperature... Then I think the shock wave it made breaking up must have opened a fault and brought a hot magma stream near here. Anyway the remains of this head aren't worth salvaging. I'll bring the sensory module up and just shove the rest into a corner of the cave. End of report, see you."

The listeners above heard splashings and sounds of the mechanical handling devices scraping metal across rock. Then there was a long period of silence, broken eventually by footsteps and a dragging sound, as if Gonzalez were moving something by hand. Next the whine of the lift which faded away as it ascended the shaft towards them. For some reason it seemed he wasn't bringing even the sensory module to the surface.

The Renaissance of the Oldest Man

Michener went with Dimitri to the shaft head to meet Gonzalez on his return. Pilate, tired after his nightwatch, chose to remain in the warmth of the control room.

The lift arrived with its human cargo. It was beyond reason? Gonzalez had gone alone, but was not alone on his return. With him, half leant against the framework of the lift and half supported in Gonzalez' arms, was a limp naked man.

"What in god's name is this?" asked the stunned Dimitri as he helped to lay the body down on the floor. "You didn't find it down there did you?"

"I didn't take it with me, did I?" replied Gonzalez. "I was moving debris across the cave when I found a passage leading out of it, I went along that for a few yards and came into another cave. It was man made... perfectly regular, and the walls were covered with carvings of some sort. I didn't stop to look though, because lying in the middle of the room was that. I picked him up and brought him straight back here."

Michener was standing over the body, "Gonzalez, you've probably made the most amazing and important discovery in the history of archaeology. A man from an ice-box! To find a perfectly preserved human-being from an age when the Antarctic was a warm region, before we thought man had evolved, will shake the scientific world like nothing since Darwin."

"It'll shake them all right," said Gonzalez, "take a closer look at him, he's breathing."

Past the unbelievable cortical shores, outside the protecting net of rationality, the man from the ice-box was breathing, and breathing more strongly now that they had brought him into the warmth of the living quarters. The body had been wrapped in blankets for the short journey across from the shaft, the small procession they created was solemnly witnessed by the immense crowd of penguins; to these it seemed a spectacle of importance and they had formed a close-packed but silent aisle down the empty centre of which the scientists hurried with their burden.

The resurrected man was put into the care of Michener who, without much confidence, pronounced it to be a case of suspended animation. Pilate was told to radio the Ballery Islands and get their doctor over immediately with all the necessary supplies. Dimitri, in a moment of political sophistication, ordered him not to reveal the reason for the request because of the two-hundred foot high receiving antennae at the American and Soviet bases.

The hibernating man had begun to twitch his limbs when Pilate returned. "The doctor isn't coming here and neither is our friend going to the base hospital," he reported.

"What!" exclaimed Dimitri. "Didn't you tell them it was of the utmost urgency? I'll go back and talk to them myself."

"Not even yourself could get anyone over." Pilate was sarcastic now, like the others, his emotions were on edge. "Some volcano's blown its top, the base is all right, but their airstrip is out of action now as well as our's. You can't even get your seaplane in Michener, they say the bay's covered in floating pumice-stone."

And so the separate lines of fate spun themselves into a single thread?

"You see! You've discovered me too soon," said the woken man.

The Omega Philosophy

"My god!" he speaks English," someone shakily said. "Who are you?"

"I'm the man from the ice-box," he replied. "And what was I doing there? you want to know. Well, I was doing nothing, and since you want to know how long I've been doing it, I'll tell you ... longer than would mean anything to you. Someday I'll have to come into this world, but it won't be your world then. No doubt my final destiny exists but all fate has for me now is accidental disinterment and a quick return. I have to go." He stood up, wrapping the blanket more firmly around him.

Gonzalez got up and stood in front of him, "You're staying after I brought you all the way up here. Anyway, where do you think you're going, wandering around like that at the south pole?"

The man made no answer to this question but said he was sorry for the trouble he'd caused. He walked to the door and, as if in a hallucinatory state, the others followed him outside, Michener and Dimitri, Gonzalez and Pilate. As they followed through the congregation of penguins the blankets gave the man the semblance of a robed high priest. Inside the hangar they watched as he climbed onto the lift and threw their blankets onto the floor. Naked he descended back into the womb of the earth.

"Well tell us who you are," shouted Dimitri down the shaft.

They waited twenty minutes for a reply, sitting around the loudspeakers in the control room. Then a voice, distorted by the amplification, boomed over the speakers and chanted, as if in ritual:

"I'm the first man, I'm the last man. The Archetype of the Race, the Master Mould. I am Adam and the victim of Armageddon."

As these terminal words echoed through the room, and the environmental dial swang back to zero, Dimitri turned and began to make out a technical report that the drill path be re-aligned.

Outside the penguins began to leave.

Ultimatumbra

continued from page 10

And other shadows on the walls, thrown by nothing I can see, always there unmoving, photographed for eternity. Photographed. Like the photographs of father which mother showed me. They are there on the crumbling walls. Shadows of trees with no trees to throw them.

x

Gathering sticks for the fire. A man's job. A man at last. Fight the fear of the uncovered sky, mother by my side. There's nothing, nothing to fear. Only the glass, black ground, the frozen black sticks, protruding, grotesque. And the infinite sky.

Finished. Both loaded head-high. Back to the door. The door in the white wall, mother and I, to the long, steep steps beyond. To the room, soon. Across the plain we walk side by side to the door.

x

WHAT'S THAT? There's somebody else. Somebody else? Mother and me, that's all. WHO'S THAT? There, against the concrete-white wall, by our door, there! SOMEBODY STOOPING, HAND TOWARD THE DOOR! No. No. It's only a shadow. Just a shadow on the concrete wall. It doesn't move.

For a moment it looked exactly like a man, trying to get in.

POST-SCRIPT

by

George Gibson

Down Wind

When the news came the ships were dotted along those broad, unsignposted highways of the sea - the Great Circle tracks of the Western Ocean. "Home, captain," said the crew. "Take us home." And the masters, grim faced, shrugged and gave the orders that turned the ships for home.... And the white-capped Atlantic seas, rolling endlessly from the west, lifted the sterns on which the ports of registry sang like the song of an old shantyman, Gothenberg, Hamburg and Hull; Antwerp, Le Havre and Southampton... And the winds that blow eternally in the middle latitudes sent the funnel smoke trailing far ahead of the ships. The wind from the west "A fair wind and a following sea," said the crews. "We'll soon be home."

Astern, great cloud masses built up, towering cumulus with the anvil-shaped thunder-heads gleaming a ghostly white, and black menacing nimbus hiding the horizon in dark grey mantles. The rain-squalls came hissing over the water and the ships disappeared in driving curtains of rain; rain that drummed on hatch-covers; swirled and gurgled in the scuppers; ran in rivulets off drum-tight, canvas boat-covers. The crews sloshed cheerfully about the decks, oil-skins gleaming, clearing the scuppers and slackening rain-taut halliards and guy ropes. In between the squalls the sun shone fitfully through the ragged driving clouds.

A man fell sick. He vomited incessantly, he complained of diarrhoea. His shipmates gathered round sympathetically. The masters thumbed through the "Shipmaster's Medical Guide". And then another fell sick...and another... like a black plague, the sickness swept through the ships. The worried masters sent urgent calls for help, but there was no one to answer. A dreadful lassitude fell upon them and one by one they crawled to their bunks; and one by one they died...slowly and painfully...in a welter of black vomit and bloody excreta, they died.

In the furnaces the fires died to cold, grey ash. The needles in the steam gauges slumped to zero. The mighty pistons and massive crankshafts slowed to a halt. The dynamos failed and the light faded, and in the cabins merciful darkness hid the dead staring eyes and the poor tormented faces. The chattering pumps were silenced and the engine rooms were still and hushed - cathedrals of oil-shined steel and yellow brass. In deserted wheelhouses the wheels stood still and motionless, the telegraphs showed full-ahead, and only the compass cards moved as the ship yawed to the vagaries of wind and sea. In the empty alleyways, doors banged monotonously to the roll of the ships, until the hinges gave way and the doors fell aslant the doorways.

So they drifted, lifeless hulks, barnacles crusted thick on the boot-topping and weeds grew long. Sea-birds roosted along the gunwales and awning spars, and the decks were white with their droppings. The paintwork flaked and peeled and the red rust spread like an angry rash. In the night satiated rats, unhindered, frolicked about the moon-washed decks.

Caught in the mighty circulation of ocean currents they drifted ... down to the tropics to founder in forgotten gales; up to the Arctic to be clutched and crushed by the eager ice; to ground on unknown shores for the years to rust and rot them and leave gaunt ribs jutting from the sand, like the bones of fossil creatures...

Sailor come home....

Long Hot Summer

A dense pall of sulphurous cloud covered the land and with the dawn there came only a dim, unnatural twilight. In the fields the grass was parched and shrivelled and from the trees the brown leaves fell in a monstrous autumn. Under the hedgerows and along the grass verges, in thousands the dead birds lay. Each tiny, crumpled corpse with its gaping yellow beak, and bright unwinking eyes. In the pastures the cattle stood bewildered. To their urgent udders it was morning, but to the scorched retinas of their eyes it was night-time still. In the sky, to the east where the city had stood, flickered a strange pallid light - a ghostly aurora in deathly dance. And in all that silent landscape nothing moved - nothing. This was the peace beyond understanding. This was the peace of the Atom.

Then there came, along the highway, one who walked under the gloomy sky with a curious, stiff-legged, lurching gait, one who stared with blank unseeing eyes. Behind him came another - and another, and more and more...in a grey somnambulist tide they came, men, women and children, and the only sound was the shuffling of endless feet on the hard, dusty road. And each one walked alone. Each mind locked into an eternal moment of horror. These were those who, in random jest, the gods of blast and fire had spared. These were the walking dead.

As the day darkened imperceptibly into night, they began to fall, one by one, slowly and wearily sinking to the ground to lay quite still, like puppets with slackened strings. Puppets discarded by some idiot puppet-master who had tired of the play and turned indifferently away.

All through the long summer they lay in the sun and the gently falling rain, and the crows came and the rats, and the half-wild dogs and the blow-flies... and the bodies heaved with a new, febrile life. Downwind men gagged at the stench of carrion meat.

But long before the first snows of winter whitened the land, the bones were clean and sterile and the rotting rags had blown away. In the night the white skulls gleamed with a faint phosphorescence.

VISION OF TOMORROW

Phil Harbottle

For a number of years now, I have been actively engaged in rehabilitating the reputation of the late British writer John Russell Fearn. At the same time, my researches have led off along other tracks, and to other writers, and I have amassed some material towards a general history of British sf, from the pre-war days to the late fifties. Background work for my book on Fearn, *THE MULTI-MAN*, put me into contact with several British writers who were once contemporaries of Fearn, and who are still active and even better-known today.

This involvement with the past of British sf has imbued me with a very deep concern for its present and its future. Whether it has in any way qualified me to help shape them is, I admit, questionable, and I expect a storm of condemnation (or perhaps total ignoring) from the more radical elements in British sf who are busily engaged in creating a new image for British sf - in many cases to vivid and commendable effect. We are in no way seeking to compete; we believe that there is ample room for both of us. We do feel strongly, that there is a void in British sf at the moment, in that there is no 'traditional' sf magazine being published. We hope to fill that void with our new magazine *VISION OF TOMORROW*.

You'll have noticed that I have begun to talk of 'we', and I must point out that *VISION OF TOMORROW* is not my brain child. The idea for the magazine was conceived by Ron E Graham, a veteran Australian enthusiast. In recent years, Ron has felt increasingly that a new sf magazine was needed, not only to serve the British market, but the whole Commonwealth - and especially for Australian expression. Several Australian authors have produced outstanding work in recent years, and there is, in that country, a definite talent that deserves a platform.

Ron and I came together when he independently decided that there was a need to reprint the best of Fearn's work. He decided to launch his own company to do this. Ron also asked me to sound out several British writers for their reaction to a proposed new magazine. The response was unanimously in favour! Accordingly, I resigned my job and became an employee of the "Graham Group" (besides his sf interests Ron owns a number of successful engineering companies in Australia), to wit, managing editor of a new publishing company.

Our reprinting of work by pioneer writers will be separate from the magazine, which will be of new stories only. It is our intention to publish stories by new writers, providing a new outlet for talent that has hitherto been denied expression in the sf field. Already we have bought stories from young writers who are BSFA members. At the same time, we will be featuring material by well known writers, such as, Ken Bulmer, Ian Morgan, John Rankine, E C Tubb, William F Temple and many others, whilst Australian contributors include Lee Harding, David Rome, and Jack Woodhams.

This is a new venture; our plans are many and varied, but are essentially fluid. We want your suggestions to help guide us on our way. All interested persons can contact me, with manuscripts or ideas, at 27 CHESHIRE GARDENS, WALLSEND-ON-TYNE, NORTHUMBERLAND.

BOOKS

NEWS & REVIEWS

GILES GOAT BOY or The Revised New Syllabus by John Barth
(Penguin 8s 6d)

At first sight this may seem a daunting book; eight hundred pages of unmodern idiom, announced as an allegory, advertised as profound and prophetic, and acclaimed by the critics in terms which often translate to "formless" and "shambolic"; and all this from a writer whose previous work has progressed from a mildly metaphysical and very-black little comedy to a gross and grossly unreadable pastiche of a picaresque novel. One fears the worst.

I come to allay those fears. My own path into the novel was eased by its gimicky introduction, which happens to be to my taste; and thereafter I found it effortless and thoroughly enjoyable reading. Since writing The Sot-Weed Factor, John Barth has realised the virtues of clear plotting; this is simply a good story, spiced with bawdy sentimentality and sheer high spirits. It's not an important or significant book; however grand its intentions it fails in its pretensions; but it's great fun.

George, the Goat-Boy, a foundling of uncertain parentage, was raised among the goats and on attaining manhood sets out into the world to save mankind and prove that he is a Messiah and the Son of God. Or, in the language of the novel, he sets out into the campus to pass studentkind and prove that he is a Grand Tutor and the GILES, the only son of the computer WESCAC which runs New Tammany College; for this world is one great university and its people are all students or dons. The Revised New Syllabus, itself dictated by the computer, is the gospel of his adventure in the campus and his teachings to it.

As his old Syllabus, Barth takes the whole of human mythology, and in order that his scriptures might be fulfilled the Goat-Boy is programmed to live out the common features of all legends of saviours and heroes. As God he's mainly Pan-Dionysus, but consistency makes no demands on him and he's also Apollo, Aphrodite and Diana; as hero he's Arthur, Orpheus, Hercules, Theseus and Odysseus; as lawgiver he's Oedipus, Moses and Christ; he's Buddha, he's Mahomet, he's Mao Tse Tung, and for all I know he's Uath Mac Immomuin and Osiris as well.

Also he's Alice. With its campus setting, its rolling burlesque eighteenth century prose and its comprehensive mythological allusions, Giles Goat Boy is a modern academic's dream - delirium, wet dream, nightmare, and the-sort of dream from which you wake laughing fit to choke.

The legends from which it is composed make this sure to be a good story, and with its exuberant style it is superb entertainment. There would be nothing else to say if it weren't that it has gained the reputation of being something more. To those who regard a complex and intricate web of allusion as valuable in itself - and there have been examples not a thousand reams from this page - to them, pfui! The mythological structure is clever, certainly, but if it is supposed to be an examination of the idea of a hero and the nature of a prophet, its basic flippancy and superficiality are shown well enough by the facile and sophisticated discussions on these topics which crop up from time to time.

Is it an allegory? The idea of life as a college course is a purely technical device; the tale, by its nature, had to be told in a fictitious world, and Barth, an academic, didn't go far afield to invent one. The parallel is never lived out, only talked out, and this shift of language ((blessed = passed, damned = flunked, etc.)) quickly become irritating. The passage in which Barth recounts the history of the twentieth century in the terms of his campus is purely an exercise in translation; it adds nothing to the novel, says nothing about the twentieth century, and is the most boring part of the book.

Is it satire? The passage I've just described perhaps tries to be; it doesn't succeed. Conversely, the idea of a college course as a life yields a few gibes at Academe; but on the whole the nearest we get to satire is caricature, as in the pictures of the endearing American Peter Greene, who lost his left eye after stoning his reflection in a mirror, and the equally endearing Russian, Leonid Andreaich Alexandrow, who lost his right eye in a similar incident.

Is there anything we can impressively compare it to? We can only say what it's not quite like: it doesn't have the cobwebby psychic undertow of Alice in Wonderland, the fervent moral position of Catch-22, or the precise insight of Ulysses. Ultimately - and that's no great distance - it's trivial and shallow. Never mind; it's a good read, very jovial and splendidly bawdy, and this is a beautifully produced paperback edition.

Tony Sudbery

Future Perfect ed by H Bruce Franklin
(Oxford University Press S21/6)

reviewed by
Fred Oliphant

Here is an anthology of stories and essays which should stir the fancy of the adventurous reader, whether he be a dilettante or a connoisseur. Mr Franklin has collected between two covers some of the more unusual sf to come our way in a long time.

Sub-titled "American Science Fiction of the Nineteenth Century," the book contains a cross-section of the literary styles of the last century as written by a medley of authors. That some of the styles are difficult and, in certain cases, archaic, should be expected. I suspect that this will be a barrier to its popular appeal. However, the stories are interspersed with short essays which are always informative, and often a valuable aid to the full appreciation of the author and his fiction.

The editor, an associate professor of English at Stanford University, includes "proto-sf" by a number of America's most famous writers of the last century, such as Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, and Bierce, as well as many more humble exponents. Both Hawthorne and Poe are analysed in depth, and presented as in direct confrontation, perhaps at opposite ends of the spectrum. Yet this is only one of Mr Franklin's interesting deductions, for there then follows a series of stories which he has selected to illustrate the recurrent themes in sf that are now familiar to us all; such themes as automata, medicine, psychology, four-dimensional space and time travel.

This book merits a wide audience, but as the editor states in his introduction, "A different kind of reading." The book signals a reappraisal of sf at one level, while doing much to demolish the bastions of those stubborn people who still protest that sf is a non-entity for the "literatum doctor."

Monkman Comes Down by Eric C Williams
(Male 18s)

reviewed by
Gerald Bishop

A light hearted story of a rather stupid spaceman who goes into suspended animation while in orbit. The reviving apparatus freezes until the craft is in such a position, a thousand years later, that the sun can unfreeze the affected relay. When Monkman, our hero, wakes, he finds that he is in an odd orbit, and that he has lost contact with Earth, so he makes a manually-controlled landing in Asia. He is taken to a vastly changed Rome, in an air-ship, where he is hypnotically taught the language of the day. He believes that he is the victim of a communist plot, and it is some time before he realises that the communist party has been defunct for hundreds of years. He is taken on a world trip, but breaks off half way through and returns to Rome. Here he spends his time walking and meeting people, learning about the time in which he finds himself. He gets into a fight and kills a man. He is sent to a reservation, in Switzerland, for people found to be socially unacceptable. Here he becomes involved in a plot to send rockets, with atomic war heads, to destroy Rome. Monkman is asked to press the button, but his nerve cracks. He sets out for Rome, across the mountains, to warn his friends of the plot. When he arrives he learns that the colony was part of a plan to turn him pacifist, so that he can fit in with the non-violent society of the time.

This is a very good book, the character of Monkman is beautifully worked, and that of the other characters does the author credit. Mr Williams also uses the scenery to full advantage, so that you can actually see the landscape.

The economy of the world is based on a logical idea, grow crops in the Mediterranean, reclaim the Sahara to grow more crops, and site heavy industry at the unproductive poles.

There are, however, a couple of points on which I disagree with Mr Williams. First of all, I do not believe that Homo Sapiens could ever breed out of itself the instinct of violence. Also, such a utopia would need a reservation for the small but dangerous dissenting minority. The colony in Switzerland was created for Monkman, with actor inmates. No "utopia" can be perfect.

This is a very well thought out book that can either be taken seriously or light-heartedly, depending upon how the reader feels at the time, and there are few books that can do this.

The World Jones Made by Philip K Dick
(Sidgwick & Jackson 18s)

reviewed by
Bryn Fortey

Science fiction has often been dubbed the literature of ideas. This may or may not be true; but one thing is, if it is ideas that you want then Philip K Dick is the author to read.

The World Jones Made first appeared in the USA in 1956, but don't be put off by its age. It is vintage Dick, ideas abound like snowflakes in a blizzard.

Floyd J Jones is blessed (?) with the gift of limited precognition. He can see one year ahead with greater clarity than he can see the present. Using this gift, and a political platform involving the "Drifters" - mindless blobs of protoplasm floating in outer space, he sets about taking over the world. He succeeds. The "Fedgov" is overthrown, to be replaced by world peace, enforced by "Relativism". But there are other factors to be considered, not least being the Fedgov implemented experiments with a race of artificial mutants.

The ideas flow at a fast and exciting pace, proposing a 21st century that you won't have pictured before. But if a world dictator depends upon limited precognition, is one year enough? And what is the true nature of the artificial mutants? Or the 'drifters'?

The story has been constructed within the normal confines of sf. Dick has coupled his mastery of the popular form with the production of a serious work of fiction, with a blending of readability and serious intent. This is Dick's strength, although sometimes his failure. His novels can be so easily enjoyed at a superficial level that there is a danger of overlooking the underlying intentions.

A Trace of Memory by Keith Laumer
(Mayflower 9s) >

reviewed by
Brian Reils

Legion, a down and out genius and experienced combat man, is hired by Foster, a mysterious millionaire who suspects that he has been suffering from amnesia for several hundred years, and is subject to some nebulous threat. It turns out that Foster is an extra-terrestrial, of a race which repairs its own bodies at intervals. But memory is a form of cellular damage. Thus one's past would have to be reinstalled artificially.

Considerable difficulties are overcome, rather too easily, and Foster sets out for home. He is followed by Legion who finds that some oddments given him by Foster have made him the subject of unwelcome attention. Foster finds that home is not the near utopia that he left.

Often the characters are vignettes rather than personalities, but they serve to carry the action. More seriously, some of the narrative is marred by a flippant "private eye" style. However, the action is smooth and the ideas are good. Not great sf but if, like me, you generally enjoy Laumer's work, then this is worth your money. Don't, incidentally, be put off by the cover which would be more at home on a comic.

The Rose by Charles Harness
(Sidgwick & Jackson 18s)

reviewed by
Rob Holdstock

The intellectual struggle between the scientist and the artist is most vividly portrayed in this novel. It may be a secondary consideration to the novel, but for me, as a one hundred percent scientist, it is the primary consideration. If Martha Jacques, wife of the leading man, reflects well the shortsightedness of the scientist, then Roy Jacques is the epitome of the one tracked mind that is the artistic temperament. It is frustrating, therefore, that Harness has biased the narrative towards him.

The personal feud between the husband and wife is aggravated by the attention that Roy Jacques pays to the leading lady, Anna van Tuyl, who is both artistic, being a composer and ballet dancer, and scientific, being a psychiatrist by profession. She has scored music to the story of the Rose and her secret hope is that she might one day dance the part of the Nightingale which, in the ballet, sacrifices itself so that its blood might turn a white rose red.

This is the primary theme of the novel for, although Anna doesn't realise it, she is the Nightingale in a ballet that encompasses the whole of society. A society that is changing, a society where science is fading to be superceded by art.

The terminal theme of a super-human order, just beginning to arise is somewhat hackneyed but, remembering that this book was written in the early fifties, here it is possibly quite original. It is certainly a theme that is done effectively and, even to a scientist, beautifully. Indeed, contrary to the author of the forward, I found this book VERY well written and full of character.

Past Master by R A Lafferty
(Rapp & Whiting 92s)

reviewed by
Roy Mortimore

Philosophy and metaphysics are rarely light reading by any standards, but Past Master exploits, in a clear and absorbing style, speculative concepts.

The plot visualizes the colonised planet Astrobe, where the olden Age in material wealth is the central theme of living. Every desire is sated, but there are many people unhappy with this bounteous state. For some unknown reason they establish the slums of Cathead and Barrio, with some pretty revolting living and working conditions.

Worried rulers whisk Thomas More, the creator of the original utopia, across the centuries and light years, in the hope that he will diagnose the trouble. More, who is Planetary President Designate, wanders around collecting pieces of the puzzle, and some odd ones they are.

The strong, alive character of More contributes to the sense of reality which is balanced by the weird retinue of followers that he collects: Copperhead, the necromancer; Rimrock, the intelligent seal-like creature; Paul, with a bone splinter in his brain; and Evita, the ageless girl-woman. Lafferty weaves cyclic civilizations and the validity of "Cogito Ergo Sum" into the story; where, for once, the dialogue sparkles throughout. There is a magic and almost haunting quality about this book.

Nebula Award Stories 3 ed by Roger Zelazny
(Gollancz 30s)

reviewed by
Gordon Johnson

An intriguing collection which covers a wide range of sf "types"; ranging from the traditional Analog fare to the newest of the new styles. I admit to being an advocate of the old "solid plot", with a tingle of adventure in it, but much to my surprise I enjoyed all the more evocative frame-by-frame offerings which appear here. The stories are not solely Nebula winners; they are chosen from those nominated for awards.

Ballard's Sculptors of Coral D is a piece which dissects the conflicts between people who are all defective in some manner or another or other. It is excellently written, but once again Ballard's pre-occupation with destruction shows itself.

Harlan Ellison gives us Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes, a fantasy which is uncannily similar, in its character portrayal, to the preceding story. I enjoyed the interplay between the characters, but found the background personnel a trifle more real than the star players. I got the feeling that this was intentional.

Mirror of Ice by Gary Wright held me in suspense right to the end. The sheer force of the writing throws one's mental picture of the sled from one steep ice hill to the next twisting bend in the course.

Delany appears with Aye, and Gomorrah. It had me puzzled for a time, until the problem showed itself. It turned out to be not such a problem after all, but the basic premiss of the story left out one thing that I thought was missing, hope.

The tragi-comedy of Leiber's Gonna Roll the Bones is such that one can only savour it as an afterthought. While reading it one is too immersed in the action of the story.

Behold the Mam, from Mike Moorcock, is a brilliant construction of biblical times, which portrays Christ as a fake, or does it?

The last story, Weyr Search by Anne McCaffrey, is a finely plotted work, with only one point against its inclusion here; it is only the first third of a novel (see Analog Oct 67; Dec 67; Jan 68).

If the Nebula Awards (and the associated anthologies) are up to the same standard, we should have no complaints, and Gollancz can justifiably consider themselves onto a good thing.

The Jewels of Apor by Samuel R Delany
(Gollancz 25s)

reviewed by
Michael G Coney

189 pages shot with action and sparkling with colour. This, according to the blurb, is Delany's first book. Science fiction or fantasy, call it what you will, this is by no means a humble beginning for the author of Babel-17 and The Einstein Intersection. The characters are life size plus; their quest for the jewels of the title breathless. The plot? Well you can't have everything. It serves as an adequate vehicle for the action, and there is a neat little puzzle as to which of the protagonists is the goodie, and which the baddie.

Restores by Anne McCaffrey
(Rapp & Whiting 25s)

reviewed by
Doreen E Parker

A kidnapped girl, marauders from space who kidnap their victims as cattle, an overcrowded planet trying to overcome the population problem and, at the same time, to repel the invaders, a mad doctor, a power mad Regent, drugs which turn a sane man mad, Machiavellian politics and the horror of "restored" human beings. A space opera! But do not be put off, it is a space opera with a difference. The story is told by the kidnapped girl, Sara, in the first person. She has humour and charm and a propensity for jumping in feet first with her eyes closed and getting out with dexterity.

Sara is a nurse in a mental home, looking after the former Regent. She becomes involved when she discovers that he is drugged to keep him incapable. Having freed him from the drugs, she escapes with him. The pace of the story is fast and readable. The adventures that they have to establish that the rightful heir, Maxil, is competent to rule upon reaching age; to stop the doctor from revealing that Sara has been restored; to repel the invaders; and at playing politics, are hair-raising.

The characters are well drawn, although I found Harlan to be the usual space opera "hero". Maxil is convincing as the young man who is accused of being impotent (at 16!). Garlot is brutish enough as the heavy, and the doctor is sinister enough to evoke a wince. But I knew that all would be well in the end. There is a brief glimpse of friendly monsters, but my favourite character was Ferril. I liked his bystander manner.

This book is not for the "new wavers" nor for the addict who likes his sf "handl." But if you like a fast moving story with a streak of romanticism, then you will like this.

MACDONALDUSE

The gap since the last VECTOR has seen the growth of the new sf list from Macdonald into an established entity. This now consists of seven titles, at once notable for their variety.

The list was started in style by Farewell, Fantastic Venus!, edited by Brian Aldiss, aided by Harry Harrison. This is, as the subtitle claims, "a history of Venus in fact and fiction." It also acts as a minor history of sf; ranging as it does, from the early romantics (John Munro and George Griffith) to a somewhat surrealistic Isd trip thing. On this journey it passes through the firmly established work of Poul Anderson (The Big Rain and Sister Planet), thus showing us sf at its surest and most accomplished.

There are also descriptive scientific pieces ranging from The Story of the Heavens by Sir Robert Ball (1882) to Some Mysteries of Venus Resolved by Sir Ber ard Lovell (1967).

The basic premiss is that the growth of this scientific knowledge has led to a demystification of Venus. But Venus will always be a little more fantastic than the now orbited moon. The speculation has gone back to the symbolic, along with the speculation of many sf writers.

This then is a book of extracts and short stories with a theme. The parts that make up the whole have been carefully selected to show man's attitude towards Venus, the planet. Initially unknown, a site for man's utopias and

(continued)

fantasy worlds. Then it became 'scientificized', the work of Anderson shows man tackling the problems that he might really have to face when he reaches the planet. Now that science has taken over these speculations it has once again turned to symbol, but man has changed during the 20th century and the symbol is a very different one.

The rare event, of an anthology with a theme, is repeated in the other Macdonald anthology Four for the Future. Edited by Harry Harrison, this collection is based on the theme of sacrifice. It includes four stories, by Aldiss, Anderson, Blish and Harrison, that appeared in the 'sacrifice' issue of Kyril Bonfiglioli's Impulse SF. Another story has been gathered from each author. All have appeared before but what the hell. Here we have an anthology that is just that, not just a dressed up 'supermag', and you can't really go wrong with these writers.

The first novel was William F Temple's The Fleshpots of Sansato. Reduced to its plot (as some people insist on reducing) it is no more than a cleverly organised intergalactic spy thing. What impresses about this book is its humour. It is to sex in sf what Candy is to sex in pornography. We are offered a host of incredible perversions and delights. The action is set in the intergalactic playground of Sansato, and as the publisher's catalogue would have it.

Sansato was a town a man could never become satiated with - it would kill him first. But for Ray Garner, sent by Sidereal Intelligence to trace a missing agent, tasting the exotic pleasures of this intergalactic playground was a duty he would rather have been spared.

They may be new to sf, but this doesn't stop them from producing the same meaningless blurb.

Not so impressive was The Thunder of Stars by Dan Morgan and John Kippax. This tells of a "Space Corps" man who has deliberately destroyed a space ship containing 500 emigrants, and of his "trial" at the subsequent public inquiry. A bit like a tv plot moved a few hundred years. Nothing distinguishes this book from many others. At least the writing isn't positively bad.

Brother Berserker, by Fred Saberhagen, is his second book about the "berserkers" - "vast machines programmed to destroy human life wherever they find it." This time they find it on the unique planet of Sirgol. Unique because its position in space makes it the only place where time travel is possible. The book is of the four dimensional fight between man and berserker. Broken up into three "past time" sequences, linked by the men of "today" who are trying to fight off the berserker attack. As a whole it succeeds, except for the parts where he resorts to the "time paradox" excuse to get him out of tight spots.

Two other books in the list, that I have not seen, are Too Many Magicians by Randall Garrett and The World of Ptavvs, by Larry Niven.

Macdonald have established their list with reasonable offerings. A future highlight is John Brunner's Stand on Zanzibar.

Bomb Culture by Jeff Nuttall
MacGibbon & Kee 36s

reviewed by
Michael Kenward

It is not just art today that is born under the shadow of the Bomb. This book sets out to discuss the effect of the Bomb, as seen by Jeff Nuttall, on the youth movements that have risen and fallen since 1945. To have any credibility, this theory must assume that there has been a complete change in the "philosophy" of individuals born since 1945. This is Nuttall's belief, for he says:

"The people who had passed puberty at the time of the Bomb found that they were incapable of conceiving of life without a future."

"The people who had not yet passed puberty at the time of the Bomb were incapable of thinking of life with a future."

Is this enough of an explanation of the apparent rejection of materialism by a growing part of the community? No matter how large a trauma is caused by the Bomb, I cannot accept that this is the sole force that has shaped the philosophies of young people. It is more likely that it is the scientific revolution, and its gradual erosion of the shortages of food, that is removing the instinctive competition that has kept people fighting one another for the means to survive.

A more far sighted view of the shaping influences of today is presented in Don Fabun's book The Dynamics of Change (see VECTOR 51): His view of a workless society, in which not everyone can expect to work, would seem to be more fundamental than the view of a "Bomb" society.

But this is not really the most important thing to come out of Bomb Culture. Disregarding the Bomb part (but not ignoring the strong influence of CND on youth) then we are left with a detailed discussion of youth movements and influences since 1945:

The book is divided into five sections: Pop/Protest/Art/Sick/The Underground. Personal reminiscences dominate the sections devoted to Protest and The Underground. The other sections present a short "history" of recent popular art movements.

When reading this book you are forced to ask yourself why Nuttall wrote it. Was it to get back "in"? Was it, as has been suggested, because he has come through the nihilism of the Underground into something more constructive? There is definitely something unsavoury about the "Underground's mental bathysphere and the awesomely photogenic world of the hippies." (David Widgery in OZ 17). But surely this is better than there being no more than a small group of drinking comrades with great ideas. The existence of the "plastic" hippie and of his Underground press, enables others to contact new ideas. They are stimulated. Bomb Culture gives the impression of nostalgia for the good old days, when the number of drop-outs could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

While I didn't agree with all that Nuttall has to say, I was interested in this personal view of the Underground, which has been remarkably silent when it comes to discussion of its roots and philosophies.

FILM PAGES

CHARLY starring Cliff Robertson, directed by Ralph Nelson ((CIRO))
Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes (Pan 5s)

reviewed by
 Vis Hallett

I don't suppose that there are many people reading this who have not, at some time, come across Daniel Keyes short story about Charly Gordon, the moron who has an operation to give him intelligence and promptly overtakes everyone else, until the process reverses and he is again a moron. It has been re-printed so often that I am afraid one's reaction is to say "Oh no, not again!"

Please don't let this overfamiliarity put you off either the novel or the film.

Of the novel I will content myself with saying that at 5s it is money well spent. It has been expanded by inserting flashbacks to Charly's childhood; scenes at the bakery where he works; and an expansion of the characters, notably the two women Miss Kinian the teacher, and Fay the artist, who teach him about emotions. One's sympathy for Charly is increased because of the greater knowledge of his suffering ((without his even knowing that he was suffering, until after he has the greater intelligence to see)).

The fact that it is slightly too long as a novel is outweighed by the knowledge that it will come to the attention of people who would otherwise never get to see the short story. Above all it remains Flowers for Algernon.

So, astonishingly, does the film. Sensitively directed by Ralph Nelson, it sticks absolutely to the spirit of the novel, if not to the letter. Because it is a film, there has been some telescoping of events; but the effect of this is just to carry it part way back to the simplicity of the short story.

It very obviously has been a labour of love for the star, Cliff Robertson. His Charly Gordon is also mine. From the very first establishing shot of him happily playing on a children's slide, I knew that here was a visual image to match my mental one. Never playing him for pathos, never mugging for laughs ((save where Charly himself would)), always keeping the integrity of the character, Robertson cannot be faulted. So gradual is the progression from moron to genius that when Charlie starts to be haunted by Charly it is a shock to see both and realise that they look like two utterly different human beings. One moment especially stands out from the rest of the performance. Charly is taken to a bar and encouraged to play the juke-box. As he is choosing the tunes the barman switches the whole thing off, leaving Charly with the conviction that he has broken it. To get it going again he starts to sweet-talk it and the barman switches it on. As the juke-box lights up, so does Charly's face. It glows with happiness and his whole body expresses his joy. It is not an actor's expression, it comes from someone who has complete rapport with the character. It is real acting to get that sort of conviction.

The other parts are very well played (Algernon too), and the film is beautifully shot in Boston. A word too about the music. Had they used an ordinary score the effect could have been sentimental. In fact the score is by Ravi Shankar, the Indian composer, and it is perfect. Although it never sounds oriental there is an edge to it which gives it a different feel. Never intrusive it suits the film completely, but one feels that it would also stand up to playing in isolation.

The film is moving, funny, sad, charming, but never soft. It never loses sight of the fact that it is dealing with the mentally retarded, and it does indeed make one look differently at the Charly Gordons of this world. - - -

FILM BITS

2 out of ten of the top box-office attractions in the USA in 1968 were sf. 2001 was the only British made film in the list. Planet of the Apes was one of the top ten, all of which grossed over \$11 000 000.

Logan's Run is to be filmed.

Val Guest is currently directing When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth.

The Bed Sitting Room, an "after the bomb" comedy containing just about every English actor, is currently being completed by Dick Lester.

The Futures A contemplation with film, at the National Film Theatre

"A light-hearted contemplation of what mankind is likely to face during the immediate and long term future, using-films of all kinds and interviews with science fiction writers and other experts."

NFT programme: February-March 1969

This programme of films is devised and introduced by Philip Strick and will be shown on Wednesday 19 March, at 6.15 and 8.30. It is a John Player presentation.

Likely to be included are prizewinners from the Trieste Science Fiction Film Festival. No more details are available at the moment, but it is hoped that BSFA members may be able to become NET members for the evening. For further details contact further details contact the editor at 145 Portland Road, London W 11 (01 727 8978).

It isn't very often that the cinema and sf have resulted in a happy combination, but many of the better results of this pairing have found their way onto the film club circuit. I have recently come across Fritz Lang's Metropolis, a 40 year old silent film on the man/machine theme. While this film lacks the subtleties that later sf and cinema show, the sets are grand and the people would seem to have been choreographed rather than directed. / Also of interest are The Committee, which seems to have been slipped in as second feature at several cinemas, and Invasion of the Body Snatchers, a decidedly anti-communist film from the McCarthy era.

Mail Response

From Tony Sudbery Cambridge

I don't like the statement about authors in your editorial (VECTOR 51):
 "Without the attraction of a professional magazine it appears that writers are not willing to flex their critical faculties. This is not unexpected or unreasonable as -unpaid writing is unpaid overtime for a writer." Well, in my naive way I had thought that writers - together with artists of all sorts, and some scientists - were living half in utopia, and were among the few people who are not alienated from their work. Innocent as I am, I thought writers wrote from a sense of personal involvement with thir writing - because writing is what they most of all want to do - and payment was extraneous and ex post facto. Overtime forsooth!

All due respect to John Brunner, but H G Wells, Kurt Vonnegut, Brian Aldiss, and Jorge Luis Borges are not "assigned to some subsidiary category and dismissed of serious attention:" I mean that "all due respect"- his own novels The Brink, and The Crutch if Memory were, I believe, given serious attention ((personally I think The Crutch of Memory is his best novel)); I just don't see what he's bellyaching about. Let's not forget, though, that there is a thing sometimes called "pure science fiction" which is not necessarily literature at all, but which is nevertheless worthy of serious attention. Literature isn't the only worthwhile thing in our culture.

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From John Chapman Leeds

I enjoyed the interview with Tom Disch very much, although I couldn't disagree more about the importance of "science" in Ballard's stories. For one thing his scientific rationales are generally extremely shallow and almost universally fallacious. Surely the central point of all Ballard's novels, both long and short, is the relationship between man and a distorted environment: science being used as an excuse to warp the world into quasi-surrealistic landscapes. Indeed, ever since You? Coma? Marilyn Monroe his involvement has been with science ((geometry/architecture)) as a fragmenting agent in our phenomenological view of the world. This is even more obvious in The Great American Nude, published in AMBIT, and which basically has the same theme. Taking the science in this as a criterion, someone like Asimov say, is ten times as good a writer as Ballard. Ballard's genius lies, of course, in his literary merits and certainly not in the scope of his scientific imagination.

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Under the web

Engines of dubious intention,
Bulky, drably green and mongol-round,
Wander in the streets and sometimes notice
A playing child to nudge, a youth to crush;

Belegged pylons, hunched above attention,
Trailing wires beneath their many arms,
Bustle squarely on the strait horizon
Over fields lying passive to their march;

While Daddy-long-legs on the tasty whitewash
And a beetle strolling on a tax form
Celebrate their strangling ascendance
Over mere flesh, mere work, mere life.

Tony Sudbery

Nearing

Across

The barriers that

Stand

Between a man

And all he loves.

Across

The void that

Links the Stars,

Now can I touch the

Fires of more

Than one

Corona.

Beyond all confines

Of my mind.

To see outside and into

And around

The very essence of

My spirit wild.

Across the fearsome barriers of pain,

Towards that state of mind

That all men find

When they are called

And no man finds

Till

Day is done and

Night the shadows daubs with

Blackness

And tranquility

Robert P Holdstock

BITS

TOP TEN

The following is a list of the top ten British sf writers, taken from the recent BSFA poll.

- 1 Brian W Aldiss
- 2 Arthur C Clarke
- 3 John Brunner
- 4 Harry Harrison
- 5 J G Ballard
- 6 E C Tubb
- 7 Eric Frank Russell
- 8 John Wyndham
- 9 Mike Moorcock
James White

BOOKS

Some interesting books that have recently been published. These will mostly be reviewed in the next issue of VECTOR.

- BLACK ALICE by Tom Disch & John Sladek (W H Allen 25s)
 THE YEAR'S BEST SF - 2 ed Harrison & Aldiss (Spt. L.e 5s)
 THE JEWEL IN THE SKULL by Michael Moorcock (Mayflower 5s)
 THE MAD GOD'S AMULET (3/6)
 THE SEEDY by Robert Ray (Panther 5s)
 SANDS OF MARS by Arthur C Clarke (Sphere 5s)
 RITE of PASSAGE by Alexei Panshin (Sidgwick & Jackson 22s)
 TWILIGHT JOURNEY by L P Davies (Sphere 5s)
 FRONTIER OF GOING - An Anthology of Space Poetry selected by John Fairfax (Panther 5s)

- PERSONS by Roland Puccetti (Macmillan) non fiction
 COSMICOMICS by Italo Calvino, translated by William Weaver (Cape 25s)

Occasionally books that are not sf or even fiction come along. These are still of interest to those who read sf. It would be helpful if reviewers, present and future, would let me know of any interests that they may have in fields associated with sf (science, philosophy, etc.).

In reply to Dav Garnett's letter in VECTOR 52, Ronald Whiting (of Rapp & Whiting) tells us that they are publishing Philip K Dick's DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP and Philip Jose Farmer's FLESH, sometime in 1969. They will also be publishing Anne McCaffrey's novel DRAGONFLIGHT. This is the novel of which WEYR SEARCH is part (see the review of NEBULA AWARDS THREE in this issue).

VENTURE is to split from F&SF in the spring, as a separate magazine. It plans to feature a short "action-adventure" novel in each issue. Perhaps at the same time, they can do something about British distribution. F&SF seems to be almost impossible to pick up casually on the news stands.

NEW WORLDS: 22 years old and still ahead of its time

They refuse to settle down. Now a new distributor has taken over this side (Moore-Harness), and they've changed the size. If you still have difficulty in getting hold of NWS, then it can be obtained for 5s (post free) from 271 Portobello Road, London, W 11

CONVENTION: Who knows what will happen in Oxford this easter?

The convention newsheets have, so far, been remarkably uninformative. If you want to know more about this annual event, then address enquiries to Anne Keylock, 67 Shakespeare Road, Hanwell, London, W7

RADIO TIMES: January 30th: John Wyndham 'Has Science Fiction a Future?'

"My own hope for the future is that 'science fiction' may become a category exclusively reserved for the cartoon-strip, horror films, and space opera, and the best of luck to it.

Then we shall all know what we are talking about, and writers may once again be allowed to deliver their fantasies on their own merits, unbranded save by the author's name."

MATERIAL: The usual desperate plea for articles, letters, reviews, cover illustrations etc. If you want to discuss something before committing yourself to paper, then don't hesitate to get in touch.

LIBRARY: The BSFA library has some 10 000 volumes in it. Why not make use of this invaluable facility.

POSTERS: The BSFA needs someone to design posters for display at Conventions etc.

NFT STOP PRESS: The evening will take the form of a number of short films, mostly complete in themselves, covering several aspects of the future.

GLOBE: First thursday of every month. SF gathering in the Globe, which is in Hatton Gardens ((just behind Gamage's)). Nearest tube: Chancery Lane. Come and get stoned with your favourite writer (most have been known to turn up some time or another).

MORE ABOUT THE NFT: Brian Aldiss will be taking part, along with experts on associated subjects, who will discuss such topics as over-population, fashion, pop music, and so on.

