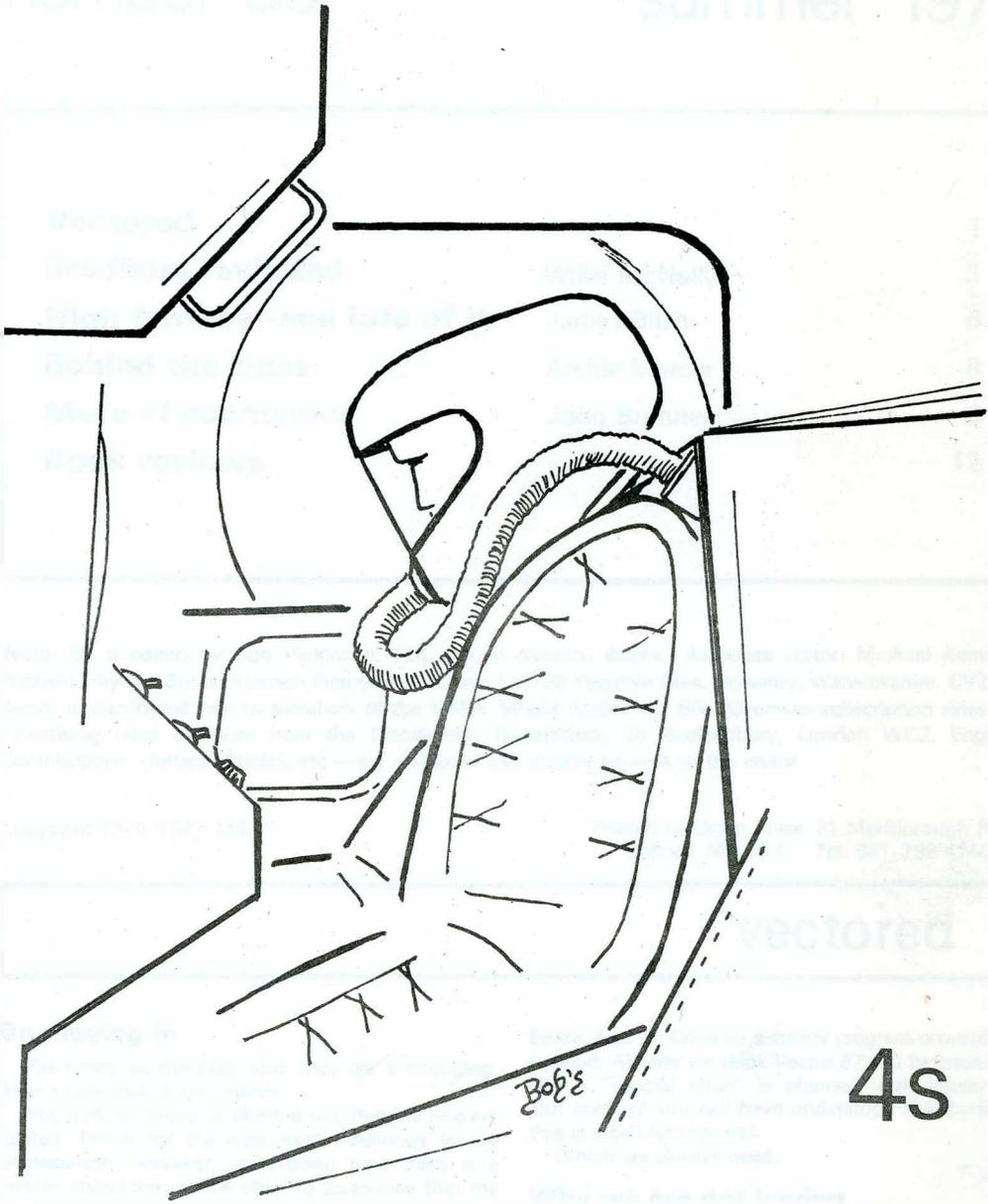


VECTOR

Science
Fiction
Review

summer 1970



4s

Blish's fantasies; Fanzines
Bradbury revisited; Brunner on money

VECTOR

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review
number 56 summer 1970

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vectored

On moving in

The times, as the poet said, they are a-changing. After a new look, a new editor.

Not, it must hastily be pointed out, that the two are related. Praise for the new format belongs to my predecessor. However, at takeover time there is a certain obligation on the chair to announce that the man-in-residence has changed, and after giving due thanks to one's predecessor, to say a little of the future.

The future—because this first issue will be at least half an inheritance anyway.

And after that much depends on "material received." We do not envisage sweeping changes. Michael Kenward stays "on the staff" as Associate

Editor. And we hope for a steady progress onward and upward. Already we think *Vector 57* will be interesting, and a "special issue" is planned with *Vector 58*. But some of you will have understood that buried in this is a call for material.

Which we always need.

Why we are not having a Heinlein issue

What then is the current state of the art?

Roger Zelazny, in *Riverside Quarterly* (vol. 3, no. 3) revealed that Cordwainer Smith once lost three thousand years. The dates were 6000–9000 AD, and they were notes in a book left in a restaurant on the

Isle of Rhodes. I count this a minor revelation—that Cordwainer Smith, who dealt with the possibilities of an indefinitely varied future, had structured that future as carefully as ever Heinlein did in *his* series.

I chose this as a starting point because (with the possible exception of J. G. Ballard) Heinlein seems to be the one writer consistently discussed by the amateur magazines—and it seems to me that he is getting more than his fair mileage. He is not the best, possibly not even the most influential of the writers of 'mainstream' sf. I suspect that, for newer sf writers, C. Smith (whatever you personally may feel about him), has had considerably greater influence.

And when the BSFA ran a checklist survey, it was Clifford Simak who polled just twice the votes of R.A.H.

Somebody called Simak "an essentially religious writer". There is a degree of truth in that. In *Why Call Them Back From Heaven?* for instance, the theme is not so much Cryonics as "What will they do to be saved?" I wonder if this is the reason behind the disparity between votes and discussion? Heinlein writes disputative politics of the sort that we can argue with. But in the end it is the human concerns of Simak and Cordwainer Smith that strike us as more important.

The purpose of this is simply to say: we shall not be having a Heinlein issue. But if someday it becomes possible to have a Simak, or a Cordwainer Smith issue (or is there someone else whom you'd rather see?), then we shall only be too ready.

Consider, for example, Robert Silverberg.

The interpretation of roses

Actually Rilke's phrase was "... not to interpret roses." If you are interested in sf and literature and have not read the *Duino Elegies* then do so—at least the first, second and ninth elegies. Not only do they deal with themes familiar to sf readers—with man and superman—but if the signs are to be trusted, these are going to be the keys to sf during the next decade.

Certainly, in *Thorns*, Robert Silverberg has done what Rilke advised against—successfully interpreted roses. The lush, ephemeral blooms and the briars equally.

Then, sf has always had a certain sympathy for the monsters, ever since Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. For the external monsters, that is, with their all too human insides, as against the human beings with their inner, monstrous devilry.

The central trio of *Thorns*—heroes and villains all—each have their grotesquesnesses, their gothic-baroque images. Minner Burris, the spaceman who has been taken apart and re-assembled out there among the stars. And Lona Kelvin with her hundred children. And over all—Chalk—the communications puppet-master, who for entertainment is to make high tragedy out of these two lives.

Chalk is a magnificent villain, drawn as a part for Orson Welles. Welles as he played Wolsey in *A Man For All Seasons*.

But for entertainment, mere entertainment did I say? At the heart of what Chalk does is the novelist himself, living from the tragedies of real people. What hurts is that Chalk does this to real people, but what of the material from which the artist writes? Perhaps it is this self-identification that keeps Duncan Chalk from being the absolute villain that he is billed to be.

The grotesquesness of his appearance should have been clue enough, that he inflicts upon himself the pain that he lives by, and that the observation upon pain with which he opens the book should be repeated by the spaceman Burris at its close.

We in the West have taken the rose as our symbol of beauty, observing that its colours are of blood and snow; that of all the things that we *might* have taken, it grows upon thorns which scratch and tear. And we make our Art from the same elements. Silverberg has understood this without ever having to say it explicitly.

He has done a number of things. He has somehow caught the vast, not-quite-arbitrary, sheer complexity of the universe in which we *have* to operate.

And somewhere along the way sf seems to have acquired an education. The newer writers—Delany, Zelazny—have arrived with it. The older ones—Sheckley and Silverberg—seem to have gone off and learned it. But there is an important sign that we are moving from a phase of raw native genius (what there was of it) to a perhaps self-consciously educated phase. It is an improvement. With time we may be able to move out of this also, into a third phase, to be able to say with Hemmingway, about pictures and books and life,

"You just look at the pictures without prejudice, and you read the books with as open a mind as you have, and you live life."

(Across the River and into the Trees, Ch. 27)

Aftermath

I wrote this far, and then went to *Sci Con 70*—knowing that there would probably be something to write from that. I stayed a day longer than I had intended, met again friends that I had not seen in years, and made a few new ones. But afterwards I am not sure just what I should talk about.

If there was a theme to *Sci Con 70*, then it was something like "Conservation." But not a simple conservation—more a recognition that (despite what the newspapers have been saying since they put men on the Moon) we are not in control of our environment, but now because the consequences of what we do are so varied and beyond our original intentions that we are going to be spending more and more of our time dealing with side effects.

Then, at the end, they showed the Wells/Korda film *The Shape of Things to Come*, with all its optimism about the future.

It was as interesting for the things that they missed as for the things that they thought of. The early, war scenes had the disturbing quality of Phil Dick's *Man in the High Castle*, in the way in which they were close, yet subtly different from what we remember from the newsreels. But it was the later scenes, with their hopeful, believing propaganda about Progress that seemed most alien. At the end, Oswald Cabal's impassioned speech about how we must go on, onward and outward to the stars, and how there is no end to progress, no stopping it, delivered with a glitter that was supposed to be visionary, assumed either laughable or frightening proportions. Behind me somebody whispered, "He's mad, you know."

So it seemed.

But I wonder what it is that we are not thinking of, now, that will make *our* future look on us thus?

Bob Parkinson

Bradbury revisited

Willis E. McNelly

The Apollo Astronauts had just landed ten hours earlier. A graying, long-haired middle-aged man was addressing a packed college lecture hall. He spoke boldly.

"Why do I write science fiction? My God, in this age that sees us on the moon and will see us reach the stars, what else is there to write?"

Ray Bradbury grinned and peered through his thick-lensed glasses. "To tell the truth," he added, "I don't think anything else is worth writing, and I'm sure that the literature of the future," he paused at the ambiguity, delightedly, "the literature of the future will be science fiction."

The college was located in a suburb near Los Angeles, Bradbury's home, but it could have been one of many colleges or universities throughout the country. Bradbury is a popular lecturer, a good one, and, with the exception of Kurt Vonnegut, the only writer of science fiction respected by the academy. His audiences are appreciative, not only of the intrinsic interest in his subject matter, but of his style and personality. He is witty, unselfconscious, and incredibly charming. "Isn't it great to hear a good lecture, for a change," one irreverent student was overheard to say.

The lecture itself was a variation on Bradbury's most fundamental theme: contemporary literature, to reflect its age, must depict man existing in an increasingly technological era. Man must be the master of the machine, not its slave or robot. Bradbury's writing, like that of W. B. Yeats, whom he greatly admires, is an art that firmly recognizes its dependence upon life. Bradbury would agree with Yeats in "The Circus Animals' Desertion,"

I must lie down where all
the ladders start,
In the foul rag-and-bone
shop of the heart.

The no-car paradox

Paradoxically—and to some of his friends it seems almost a perverse paradox—Bradbury does not drive a car even though he lives in the freeway capital of the world. He stoutly maintains that his refusal to learn to drive is not a simplistic anti-machine phobia, but the result of a subliminal healthy appreciation of the automobile. His aversion springs from the hegira his family made from the Midwest to Los Angeles in the depths of the depression. The roads were strewn with hulks of broken cars, he recalls.

"But I don't mind not driving. I walk. Everywhere. I take busses and read while I'm waiting

for them and while I'm on them. And I use the time to observe, to make notes, to let my unconscious mull over my experiences until a story emerges.

"Driving takes too much of your mind, I think," he said before the lecture. "When I walk or ride trains or busses, I don't have to concentrate on what I'm doing and the ideas can churn around inside."

He has been described as a fantast in the tradition of Poe, Dunsany, or even of Kafka, an optimistic Kafka, to be sure, but like the Austrian, nonetheless. And a critic of the stature of Gilbert Highet has called him one of the most original American authors. Others, less friendly, maintain that Bradbury's style is over-enthusiastic, his characters shallow, and his situations redolent of a nostalgia for a time that never was. Science fiction fans, on the other hand, always anxious to achieve some respectability for their overly-maligned enthusiasm, claim that Bradbury is the harbinger of great writers someday to emerge from their field.

Intellectual love affair

There is a degree of accuracy to each of these assessments, of course. In one sense he is a visionary who writes not of the impediments of science, but of its effects upon man. *Fahrenheit 451* in the final analysis, is not a novel about the technology of the future, and it is only secondarily about censorship or book-burning. In actuality it is the story of Bradbury, disguised as Montag, and his lifelong love affair with books. If the love of a man and a woman is worth notarizing, so also is the love of a man and an idea. A man may have a wife or a mistress or two in his lifetime and the situation may become the valuable seedstuff of literature, but that same man may in the same lifetime have an endless series of affairs with books, and the offspring can become great literature. For that reason, Bradbury feels that Truffaut was quite successful in translating the spirit of the novel, and the viewer who expects futuristic hardware or science fiction gimmickry will be disappointed in the motion picture. "Look at it through the eyes of the French impressionists," Bradbury suggests. "See the poetic romantic vision of Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Seurat, or Manet that Truffaut evokes in the film, and then remember that this method was his metaphor to capture the metaphor in my novel."

"Metaphor" is an important word to Bradbury. He uses it generically to describe a method of comprehending one reality and then expressing that same reality so that the reader will see it with the intensity of the writer. His metaphor

in *Fahrenheit 451* is the burning of books; in "The Illustrated Man," a moving tattoo; and pervading all of his work, a generalized nostalgia that can best be described as a nostalgia for the future. Another overwhelming metaphor in his writing is one derived from Jules Verne and Herman Melville—the cylindrical shape of the submarine, the whale, or the space ship. It becomes a mandala, a graphic symbol of Bradbury's view of the universe. Bradbury achieved his first "mainstream" fame with his adaptation of Melville's novel for the screen, after Verne had aroused his interest in science fiction. Perhaps *Moby Dick* will forever remain uncapturable in another medium, but Bradbury's screenplay was generally accepted as being the best thing about an otherwise ordinary motion picture. John Huston's vision was perhaps more confining than Ray Bradbury's.

Essentially a romantic, Bradbury belongs to the great frontier tradition. He is an exemplar of the Turner thesis, and the blunt opposition between a tradition-bound Eastern establishment and Western vitality finds itself mirrored in his writing. The metaphors may change, but the conflict in Bradbury is ultimately between human vitality and the machine, between the expanding individual and the confining group, between the capacity for wonder and the stultification of conformity. These tensions are a continual source for him, whether the collection is named *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, *Dandelion Wine*, or *The Martian Chronicles*. Thus, to use his own terminology, nostalgia for either the past or future is a basic metaphor utilized to express this tension. Science fiction is the vehicle.

The American Wilderness

Ironic detachment combined with emotional involvement—these are the recurring tones in Bradbury's work, and they find their expression in the metaphor of "wilderness." To Bradbury, America is a wilderness country and hers a wilderness people. There was first the wilderness of the sea, he tells his college audiences. Man conquered that when he discovered this country, and is still conquering it today. Then came the wilderness of the land. He quoted, with obvious approval, Fitzgerald's evocation at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: "... the fresh, green breast of the new world ... for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent ... face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder."

For Bradbury the final, inexhaustible wilderness is the wilderness of space. In that wilderness, man will find himself, renew himself, and there, as atoms of God, he will live forever. Ultimately, then, the conquest of space becomes a religious quest. The religious theme is sounded only on occasion, in such stories as "The Fire Balloons," where two priests try to decide if some blue fire-balls on Mars have souls, or "The Man," where Christ leaves a far planet the day before an earth rocket lands. Ultimately the religious theme is the end

product of Bradbury's vision of man, implicit in man's nature.

Bradbury's own view of his writing shows a critical self-awareness. He describes himself essentially as a short story writer, not a novelist, whose stories seize him, shake him, and emerge after a two or three hour tussle. It is an emotional experience, not an intellectual one; the intellectualization comes later when he edits. To be sure, Bradbury does not lack the artistic vision for large conception or creation. The novel form is simply "not his bag." Rather he aims to objectify or universalize the particular. He takes an individual, a specific object, or particular act, and then shows it from a different perspective or a new viewpoint. The result can become striking insight into the ordinary, sometimes an ironic comment on our limited vision.

An early short story, "The Highway," illustrates this awareness of irony. A Mexican peasant wonders at the frantic, hurtling stream of traffic flowing north. He is told by an American who stops for water that the end of the world has come with the outbreak of the atom war. Essentially untouched in his demi-Eden, Hernando calls out to his burro as he plows the rain-fresh land below the green jungle, above the deep river, "What do they mean 'the world?'" he asks himself, and continues plowing.

Mixing the media

Ray Bradbury is perhaps the most popular writer in America today. His stories have been anthologized in over 300 different collections, and he could probably retire on his royalties without writing another word. After some ten million words—his own estimate—he feels almost physically ill unless he can spend four hours a day at the typewriter. His aim is to work successfully in virtually every written medium before he changes his last typewriter ribbon. His plays have been successfully produced both in Los Angeles and off Broadway. He is currently researching the history of Halloween for a TV special slated for fall 1969, and he still collects his share of rejection slips for short stories, novellas, or movie scripts, with a larger share of acceptances.

Thus far Bradbury has refused to publish his poetry. He has too much respect for the form to do it badly, but he believes that after thirty years of trying to get the better of words, he may be able to write serious poetry someday. He is currently engaged in writing, with composer Jerry Goldsmith, a cantata entitled "Christ, A Flesh of Stars." When it opens next year, the public may get some notion of his abilities as a poet. He reads poetry incessantly, an hour or two a day, and returns to Yeats, Donne, Kipling, Poe, Frost, Milton, and Shakespeare. He is already an accomplished parodist in light verse, and his version of "Ahab at the Helm," to the meter of "Casey at the Bat," convulses college audiences who are not accustomed to seeing any elements of humour in Melville.

Beyond poetry or light verse, the short story, the novel or the drama, the motion picture

script is the one form that Bradbury feels may be the greatest of all. There is no doubt in his mind that the cinema is the greatest art form, with an ability to move men more profoundly and perhaps more ethically than any yet devised by man. The cinema script then, deceptively easy to write on first glance, is the most demanding literary form. Screen writers, Bradbury maintains, are too prone to let the technical skills of cinematography carry the weight of the artistic impact. As a result, the ideal of art—to impose an artistic vision upon an order of reality—suffers, and the resultant vision is darkened.

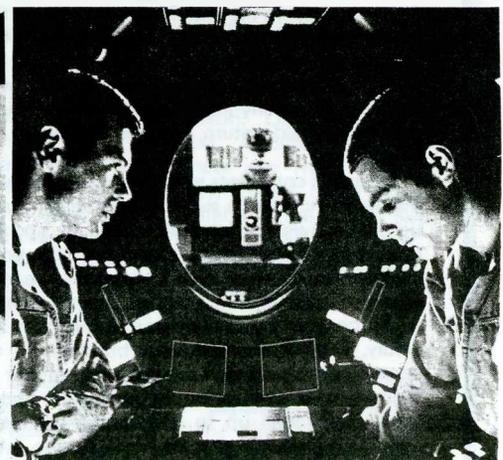
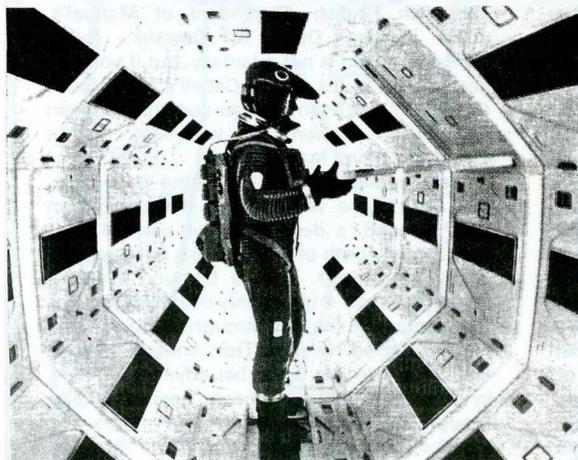
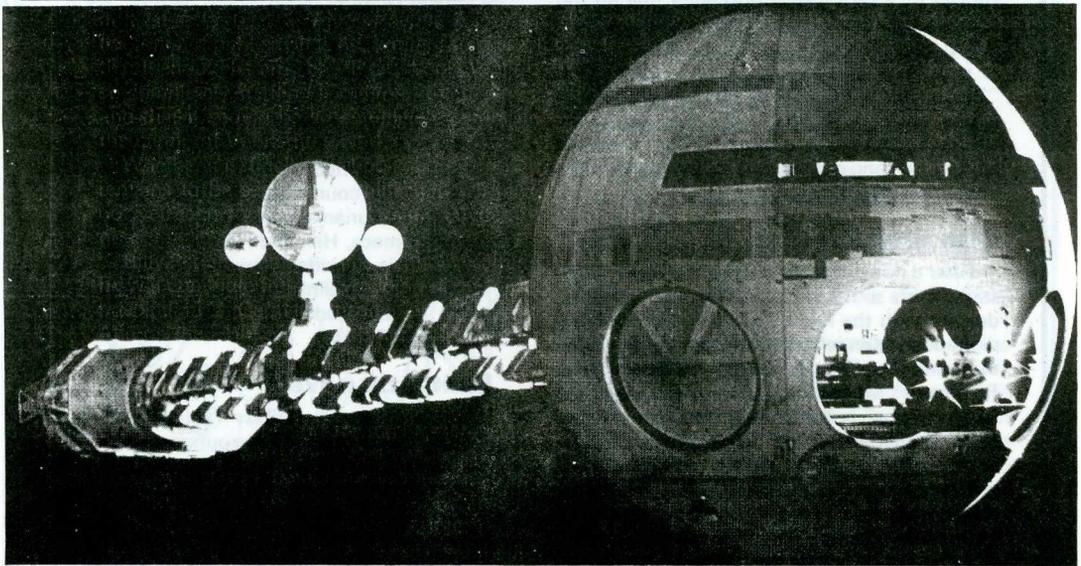
As to science fiction itself, Bradbury and other practitioners of the form feel that its antecedents may be found in 2500 years of history. Too often classed as a mere offshoot of fantasy, imaginative literature, utopian fiction, or the Gothic novel, science fiction only

recently has been recognized as a respectable literary genre in its own right. Thus it reveals its own standards, its form, and its discipline with an interior unity and distinctive rules. These characteristics, under the control of skilled literary craftsmen like Bradbury and Vonnegut, are beginning to mark science fiction as a viable literary form. What bothers Bradbury, in the end, is the unwillingness of critics to apply to his work and that of other skilled science fiction writers the proper standards of the form itself. When that is finally done, Ray Bradbury will remain its prophet.

Willis E. McNelly

California State College, Fullerton

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MGM presents
A Stanley Kubrick Production
2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Now on
Second
Release

High fantasy —and lots of it

Fantasy fans who like their favourite reading to be l-o-n-g as well as good have an unusual opportunity in the current revival (in the States, anyhow) of the early 20th Century American novelist and essayist, James Branch Cabell.

Most readers probably have at least heard of his most famous work, *Jurgen*, which was the subject of a sensational obscenity trial lasting two years, with a verdict in favour of the author late in 1922. It is not so well known that *Jurgen* is part of an immensely larger work, called "Biography of the Life of Manuel" (although it was never published under that title). The definitive Storisende edition of this, a limited edition and long out of print) is 18 volumes long, containing 20 works.

Clay Shakespeare

After a non-fiction prologue, the main action starts with a novel called *Figures of Earth*, dealing with the rise of an early 13th Century pig tender, Manuel himself, to the overlordship of an imaginary Provençal-like country named Poictesme. Most of this rise is accomplished by deception, outright treachery, and magic; there is a fair amount of fighting but most of it is inconclusive. Early in his career, Manuel makes ten life-size figures of clay (hence the title) which are animated by magic; one of these becomes a god, and the other nine, eventually certain famous literary figures (including Shakespeare). In the end, Manuel vanishes, the last person who sees him is Jurgen, then a little boy, who to avoid being spanked for being out so late, makes up the story that Manuel was taken spectacularly into Heaven with promises that he would return as the Redeemer of Poictesme.

Manuel's conquests were accomplished with the aid of nine lords who, with Manuel, made up the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion, and the next book, *The Silver Stallion*, tells what happened to seven of them after he disappeared, and how his legend grew in the meantime. It is a peculiar book; the fates of the lords are wildly, if ironically, fantastic, but there is no central figure except the brooding memory of Manuel, who appears at one point as a ghost. What it all adds up to is summarized rather ambiguously by the middle-aged Jurgen, who also refers in passing to a peculiar dream he has had since he saw Manuel die.

James Blish

Both these volumes are now available as Ballantine paperbacks. There are two succeeding books, both out of print. One, *Chivalry*, is a collection of short stories which was much admired by Mark Twain; the next, *Domnei*, is about the life of Manuel's eldest daughter. There is no fantasy at all in *Chivalry*, and only a little in *Domnei*.

At the present moment, *Jurgen*, the next volume, is out of print for the first time in its 50-year history, but second-hand hardcover copies are not hard to come by, nor are copies of the Penguin or Avon paperbacks — or, most libraries have it. It is the story of the dream Jurgen mentioned in *The Silver Stallion*, in which, in the course of a search for justice, he visits an Arthurian kingdom, an isle of pleasure, ancient Greece, Hell and Heaven, among other places. This is widely thought to be Cabell's finest book; certainly it should not be missed, but it is best read after *Figures of Earth* and *The Silver Stallion*.

Fantastic novels

There follows a fantasy (actually, three of them) about Manuel's youngest daughter, called *The Witch Woman*. It seems probable that Ballantine will be reprinting this eventually, although no contracts have been signed yet. The next volume, *The Lines of Love*, is more short-stories, not fantasies; and then a novel about an English descendant of Manuel's, John Bulmer, Duke of Omskirk, called *Gallantry*. It too is not a fantasy, but if you can find it, read it; it's one of Cabell's best works, though with an even stranger construction than *The Silver Stallion* (It will also delight Georgette Heyer fans.)

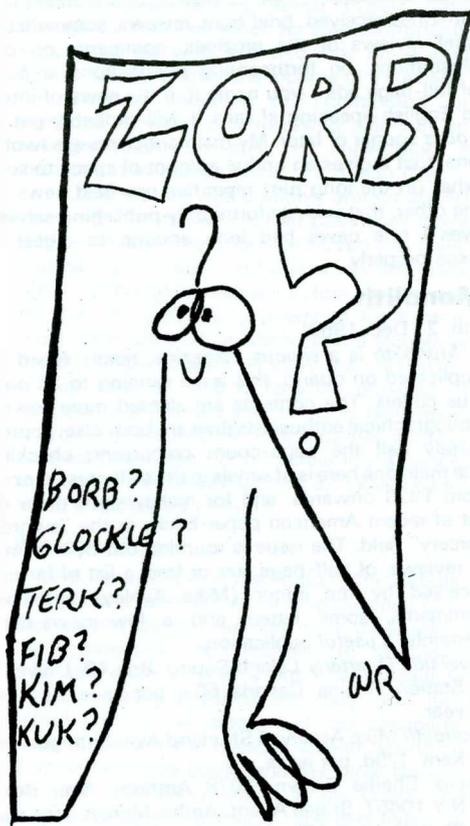
Next comes another Ballantine paperback, *The High Place*, which is the story of Florian de Puyange, a descendant of both Manuel and Jurgen (both of whom make brief appearances as ghosts). This is Edmund Wilson's favourite Cabell. It is certainly marvellous, and is high fantasy all the way through. In *Jurgen*, the hero is offered Helen of Troy, and refuses her, lest she fail to live up to her advance notices; in *The High Place*, Florian gets a similar though not identical offer, and makes the mistake of accepting. Like *Jurgen*, too, *The High Place*, has a dream structure, although again it is far from a conventional one.

There follows a collection of short stories, *The Certain Hour*, which deals with crucial moments in the lives of Manuel's ten clay figures; despite which ancestry, only one of the stories is a fantasy.

The next volume is a collection of nearly negligible verse, and a play which is simply an adaptation of one of the short stories.

At this point Manuel's blood-line moves to America, and there follows a series of novels about his descendants in Virginia. Not only are these quite mundane, but I think them also to be pretty bad; they are quite early work despite their late position in the chronology of the story.

We return to Major Cabell with *Something About Eve*, in which one of the Virginia Manuelides becomes involved with a demon whom we first met in *The Silver Stallion*, and finds himself pitch-forked into a search for Antan, the Kingdom of Yesteryear. His adventures by the way are not only thoroughly fantastic, but also among the funniest Cabell ever wrote – no mean endorsement, for almost all Cabell's work shows a fine sense of comedy. Ballantine has contracted for this and it may well have been published in their edition by the time you read these notes.



The Biography ends with another dream novel, *The Cream of the Jest*, which brings us full circle back to Poictesme, though the dreamer is an early 20th Century American. There are no present plans to put this in paperback, but it was a best-seller for years, and copies of the Modern Library edition are all over the landscape. There is a non-fiction epilogue which also tells what happened to the missing two Fellows of the Silver Stallion, but like the prologue, it is primarily for specialists; and a genealogy of everybody in the whole work, *The Lineage of Lichfield*, which is outright impossible to find – I have been advertising for it among Cabellians for three years – and of no interest except to specialists.

Reading list

For the new reader, then, let me summarize what is available or should be search out, in the order in which the books should be read:

- Figures of Earth* (Ballantine)
- The Silver Stallion* (Ballantine)
- Jurgen* (o.p. but easy to find)
- The Witch Woman* (o.p. but possibly coming from Ballantine)
- Gallantry* (o.p. and hard to find)
- The High Place* (Ballantine)
- Something About Eve* (coming from Ballantine)
- The Cream of the Jest* (o.p. but easy to find).

There are good things scattered among the other volumes of the Biography (I particularly like the prologue and epilogue, *Beyond Life* and *Straws and Prayer-Books*), but these eight contain its essence. In addition, one of the three stories which comprise *The Witch Woman*, called "The Way of Ecben", is available in a Ballantine collection edited by Lin Carter, *The Young Magicians*

A fanzine called KALKI

There is a Cabell fandom too. The James Branch Cabell Society, including such familiar faces as Poul Anderson, Lin Carter, Fritz Leiber, Bob Lowndes, George Hay, Bob Parkinson, Paul Spencer and Harry Warner. They publish a quarterly, typeset, offset magazine called KALKI, available in the U.K. at two guineas a year from James Blish, "Treetops", Woodlands Road, Harpsden (Henley), Oxon.

And, if you have not met Cabell before, we envy you the first time.

Since receiving the above article, we have heard that English paperbacks rights of "Figures of Earth", "The Silver Stallion" and "Jurgen" have been sold to Tandem Books, who plan to issue all three within a year. Keep your eyes open.

– Ed.

Behind the Zines

Archie Mercer

A few years ago, *Vector* ran a column entitled "Behind the Scenes", by-lined "Malcolm Edwards". Mr. "Edward's" identity has never been publicly revealed—though I have heard authoritative-sounding rumours. That's by the way, though. The object of the column was to present "fanzines" to a public that was not entirely aware of them and their purposes.

The term "fanzine" is used within the sf field for any magazine published specifically for fun rather than for profit. *Vector* itself might be classed as such—though it takes more trouble over the quality of its contents than some. And at the other extreme you may find a youngster putting out a messily-duplicated wad mainly of low-quality amateur fiction.

(That youngster just possibly may be one of tomorrow's successful professional writers, though equally possible he may lose interest and fade rapidly from the scene. It is a known fact that some professional sf writers get their first start through fanzines—Michael Moorcock over here, Harlan Ellison across the Atlantic. Other writers discover fanzines only after having become professionals—John Brunner used to frequent their pages at one time, even issuing a few himself. And so on.)

Anyway, I have been asked by Bob Parkinson to do something for *Vector* vaguely on the lines of the old "Malcolm Edwards" column. This is it.

Riverside Quarterly

(vol. 4 no. 2: Jan. 1970)

RQ is devoted to serious comment and criticism of fantastic literature. This issue contains 80 pages, 8 in. by 5½ in. in size, lithographed in blue ink to a slightly shrunk typeface.

Just how the magazine came to have its title may be known to long-time readers, but it escapes me. Possibly it's simply part of the general eccentricity of its principal editor and proprietor, Leland Sapiro, an eccentricity well (if confusingly) illustrated in his editorial.

Featured are three lengthy articles. The first, by Sandra Miesel, is concerned with the philosophical background to Poul Anderson's stories. This subject could have been better handled than it is here, where the semi-tabular style and copious quotations from Anderson's fiction tend to bewilder. The second, "Notes on the Work of J. G. Ballard" by Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie, I happily leave to those with some interest in this author's work. The third, by Richard Kyle, traces a detailed if circumstantial case for Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Martian" stories having been inspired by certain works of Rider Haggard, particularly *Cleopatra*. Kyle presents his evidence lucidly and convincingly, and if I was awarding a prize for the best thing in this issue I would unhesitatingly give it to this.

There are also several shorter articles, one of particular interest by Harry Warner Jr. on the reaction of various fanzines to the Apollo 11 flight.

Other contents include a number of poems (three of them by *Vector* ed. Bob Parkinson, you may be interested to note) and a letter-column (as is only to be expected) mainly of reactions to the previous issue

of *RQ*. There are various bits of artwork, all well-reproduced, some worth looking at. This particularly applies, I think, to Sandra Miesel's own illustrations to her article, apparently reproductions of ancient Scandinavian designs.

All in all, this *RQ* is a competent production job with several things in it that I find to be of interest. I would venture to suggest that you'd probably say the same.

Locus

(No. 49)

Locus is currently the news-zine for sf fans who want to keep in touch with each other as well as with the professional field. (This sounds like an ad, I'm fully aware, particularly as I happen to be its British agent. I'm trying to keep this mention strictly factual.)

This particular issue comprises 20 pages of American quarto, duplicated on (mainly) a sort of turquoise paper. The contents—which includes (as usual) various supplements stapled in the main magazine—gives all the news about sf fans that it is able to get hold of—here the obituary of an old-time fan, here a brief report of a small convention held at Harpur College (wherever that is), a list of changes of address, and so on. A column of Movie Notes, an annotated list of fan-zines received, brief book reviews, somewhat less brief reviews of the prozines, comments on cover illustrations, on forthcoming publications, a couple of full-page ads—you name it, if it's news of interest to English-speaking sf fans it will probably get into *Locus* sooner or later. My main criticisms are twofold: one, that it gives an undue amount of space to somewhat (in the long run) repetitive pro-field news, and the other, that with its fortnightly publishing schedule (yes!) one never had long enough to digest any issue properly.

Monolith

(no. 2: Dec. 1969)

Monolith is a serious magazine, neatly typed and duplicated on quarto, this issue running to 34 pages plus covers. The contents are slanted more towards bibliographical enthusiasts than anybody else, approximately half the page-count comprising checklists. The main one here is of serials in the sf/fantasy prozines from 1923 onwards, and for makeweight there is a list of recent American paper-backs in the "sword 'n sorcery" field. The issue is rounded out by a number of reviews, of half-page size or less, a list of fanzines received by the editor (Mike Ashley) with brief comments, some letters and a few news-items. Certainly, a useful publication.

Riverside Quarterly Leland Sapiro, Box 40, University Station, Regina, Canada. 60 c. per issue, \$2.00 per year.

Monolith Mike Ashley, 8 Shurland Ave. Sittingbourne, Kent. 1/9d. per issue.

Locus Charlie Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave. Bronx, N.Y. 10457. British Agent: Archie Mercer, 10, Lower Church Lane, St. Michael's, Bristol BS2 8BA. Sterling subscription (to British Agent) 5 for 12/6d. 10 for 25/-.

More SF economics

John Brunner

Some four years or so ago, in an article I wrote for *Vector* and entitled THE ECONOMICS OF SF, I rashly promised that provided people went on buying my work at a reasonable price then by 1967 I would turn out my long-awaited epic, *Soul Slaves of the Umpteenth Continuum*, and that would make all my previous efforts look like Kid-dee Com-ics.

Well, I'm pleased to report that I *did* write an epic during 1967 – or at least I finished it early in that year. It was actually called *Stand on Zanzibar*, but never mind. As a result of this, it occurs to me that there are probably quite a lot of aspiring writers Out There who might like to have some footnotes to the career of the imaginary SF writer, Mr Theokurt Frishblitz, whose progress I mapped in that article from his first sale to *Unused Planets* (proceeds about £10), by way of Year Five when he was making about £1500, right through to Year Ten when he was comfortably supporting his wife and two kids on around £2500–2800, roughly the income of a successful salesman operating on commission, or someone running a hairdressing salon in an average catchment area, or supervising a department in a large store in a British city.

I stated that he was probably around 35–40 years old; the intervening four years have made it likely that he could have achieved this level, had he started out a trifle later, by the early 30s' . . . although of course inflation has taken its toll and the purchasing power of his income must have diminished. Perhaps the trouble is that he simply looks a bit older than his years; he has, after all, had to face the prospect of supporting those two kids of his as teenagers!

Now I think that Mr Frishblitz has actually entered Year Fifteen of his career in his middle thirties. Let's arbitrarily say he's 37. Where is he? What's happened to him?

No awards

Well, he hasn't won the Hugo or the Nebula, though he's been within striking distance of it. But he has learned his craft very thoroughly; he's competent, he's reliable (to the point that he's never broken a publisher's deadline without giving advance warning), and he's gifted with a fair amount of self-discipline, such that given the choice between spending £10 on reference books and the same amount on LPs', collecting which is his hobby, he buys the reference books . . . and gets nearly as much fun out of them, which is a consolation.

In spite of this lack of honours on the grand scale, in spite of never having had a runaway best-seller, Mr Frishblitz is nonetheless, if not wealthy, at least extremely well off, in this Year Fifteen of his writing life.

You see, some time around the Year Ten where we left him previously (the stage at which he'd acquired the sort of regular readership that encouraged publishers to do business with him), his agent began to make his backlog pay off for him. He had already started selling translation rights, at low but acceptable rates, such as \$400 for a book in Germany or Italy, and a handful of these would drift in without warning during any given year, increasing his income by a matter of some hundreds of pounds . . . and all "found money", in the sense that he didn't have to spend any more time at the desk to earn it.

Books from the past

But that was only the start of the story. Long before Mr Frishblitz joined his agent's list, he'd marketed some novels on his own to Trump Books of New York, receiving originally an advance of \$1000 (£357 at the then-current rate of exchange), and after the first half-dozen an increase to \$1500. In the contracts he signed at a time when he was merely happy to have *something* to show for his efforts was a pretty little clause informing him that if, five years after first publication, the book in question was out of print, he could serve notice on the publishers to reprint it or hand the rights back. This is known as a "reversion clause".

Well, some of those books sold to Trump did warrant reissuing, and currently the firm is reprinting them at a rate of about two a year, paying the same fee as specified in the original contract on the print-order they feel to be justified. This means that Mr Frishblitz is being sent an extra payment of some \$750–1000 . . . via his agent, who had nothing to do with the original sale, and is clipping off his ten per cent. Does this annoy Mr Frishblitz?

It does not. It was the agent who located the newly-appointed SF editor at the New York paperback house Mr Frishblitz had previously done no business with, who likes Frishblitz's stories and has *carte blanche* to buy both originals and reissues. For said editor Mr Frishblitz, since about Year Ten of his career, has been putting some of his unreissued early books through the typewriter again, polishing dialogue, eradicating repetitions, explaining

away problems that the first time around he cheated on because he was in a hurry, and in general bringing the text up to his current standard.

Revisions of this kind take, on average, a fortnight – much as he detests copy typing – and bring in, from the second sale, at least as much as he made the first time and occasionally much more (\$1500–2500), thus increasing his total earnings from these novels to something like the typical advance he can now command.

Moreover, when he first wrote these novels, very few British publishers were operating SF lines; those that did were concentrating on American writers and on those maverick British best-sellers like Wyndham and Christopher. More and more firms in London are open to SF submissions now, and some of these revised novels, six, seven, eight or even nine years old, are scheduled for their first British publications in both hard- and soft-cover forms.

Abruptly, from being moderately well-off, Mr Frishblitz has now become distinctly prosperous. One novel in particular, which sank like a stone when it first appeared in America but which he was always very pleased with, has done him proud the second time out. Its dismal fate, he's convinced, was due to the awful title Trump saddled it with, *Twenty Tentacles of Loathsome Lust*, printed in lime-green on the belly of an out-of-drawing BEM.

This time, it's appearing in revised form under his original title, *To a Mind Diseased*, and all

the publishers involved – American pb, British hard- and British soft-cover – have politely asked his opinions about the jackets of their respective versions. (He wasted three working days trying to draw what he wanted, but he enjoyed that even if he's no bloody good as a designer . . .).

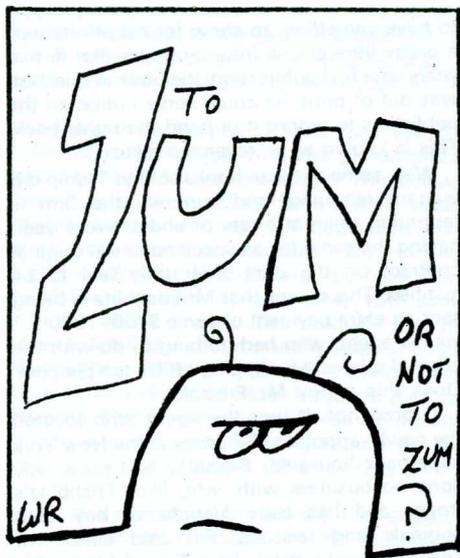
When all the returns are in, this one book – over seven years, admittedly, but at the cost altogether of only about three to four months' working time – will have grossed him more than £2000. Things are looking up for Mr Frishblitz! Immediately his agent started exploiting his backlog in this fashion, his income went up by over £1000 p.a.

For his current projects – three planned for the 1970–71 financial year – he already knows he is going to receive at least £4000. Trump have a new line which regularly pays \$2500 net, after agent's commission, £900 plus. He has a contract to deliver a book in the spring for that fee, which has also been accepted in outline as a two-part serial in abridged form. The firm reissuing his old novels is so pleased with them that he also has an offer of \$3500 advance for his next original, and his agent is saying, "Stall the bastards! We'll get \$4500!". Simultaneously, an American hard-cover firm is murmuring suggestions of \$2000 plus fifty per cent of paperback reprint royalties; if the advance on the pb is \$5000 or up it will be as profitable or more so to deal with them, and there's the added benefit of reviews of the kind that only a hard-cover edition can attract.

And he has a novel in mind, entirely speculative, which he thinks he can bring off but which he doubts any publisher in New York would put down hard cash for in advance; it's too different from his previous work. However, even if it means taking the family to Cornwall instead of the Costa Brava, he is determined to tackle it. Because if it does work out as well as he hopes, it ought to command an advance of at least \$3000 from a hardback house and a pretty fat pb advance as well.

Moreover, those British publishers aforementioned, who know from *nothing* about SF except that if a paperback novel sells 100,000 in the States it should sell 20,000 in Britain, are quite willing to put down £250 for a hardback by Frishblitz now in the expectation of sharing the paperback proceeds. Mr Frishblitz is not terribly happy dealing with such companies, but his agent bears the brunt of them, so that's okay.

There was a time in Mr Frishblitz's life when he lived in the shadow of impending disaster. Such a disaster would have been, for instance, a report from his wife that one of the kids was refusing to eat canned beans any longer. Those days passed with the advent of his rights reversions. He kept vaguely in touch for some time with a former colleague at the advertising agency which, in a fit of bravado,



he quit in order to turn freelance: a man of about the same age, with the same kind of home and the same kind of family. The other day he bumped into the guy by chance, and learned that he was now head of his department in another company.

He was driving a larger and more luxurious car, but it wasn't his — it was company property. He was sporting a very expensive suit, but it was showing signs of wear; Frishblitz, who puts on a suit only to visit a publisher or his agent, was dressed in a much more comfortable outfit of sweater and slacks. He was prepared to make an evening of it, and was ordering another round, when his ex-friend apologised for having to rush away and entertain a client. In passing, it emerged that unless the client placed his account with the agency there was going to be some "rationalisation" and almost certainly there would be a redundancy or two.

It occurred to Frishblitz, supping his last half-pint on his own before wandering back from the pub, that he could choose whether he worked an eighteen-hour day, and his old acquaintance had to put up with it when his boss decreed he should.

In purely financial terms, the latter might be making a trifle more per year. In terms of opportunity to relax, get around, plan his own life, Frishblitz concluded, he was by far the better off of the two of them.

Gambling publishers

Frishblitz, to sum up, around Year Fifteen, is at the much-envied stage where all those years of worrying about where the next quarter's mortgage payment would come from are starting to pay off. If Frishblitz decides he needs to take half a year off to plot his next book, and then another half-year actually writing it, there are three or four publishers who will gamble half the advance for it to pay for his working time, whether or not it ultimately proves publishable. (If it doesn't he won't work the trick a second time, but at least he has the opportunity of doing it once when he feels he must.) He may have to live on fish and chips when the half-advance runs low, but that's up to him.

And this is the big advantage he's starting to appreciate. As a freelance writer with a wife and two kids, he had to use his own judgment in choosing a home and confine his ambition to what a mortgage company would permit him. It would be nice to move to a more luxurious home, but he has lots of friends in the district, and what he would spend on removal might just as well be spent on an extension at the back of the house, and no one will complain that he isn't living up to the standards expected of an executive in the XYZ Advertising Corporation. If he decides he needs exercise, he won't have to fit in his jogging around the local streets before breakfast so that he can

catch the 7-59 and arrive on time at the office; he can do it whenever he wants. If he decides he can afford to change his car, and fancies a Reliant Scimitar, no one is going to tell him that the proper car for a man in his position is a Rover 2000 like everyone else's.

He has one drawback. He's carrying all his own overheads. Everything his friend in the advertising agency can charge to the firm, he has to pay for himself: from phone-calls to typing paper, it's his own lookout. (At this standard of operation, it may well cost him between £5 and £10 per week simply to keep up with what's going on, what with postage, entertainment, and everything else. His friend in advertising, therefore, almost certainly disposes of much greater purchasing power than he does on an income of £4000 p.a. The friend probably offers visitors a glass of Scotch; Mr Frishblitz offers them tea, or if it's been a good month, sherry. But he spends a month on his annual holiday, and drives to half a dozen different towns at leisure. His pal takes his holiday when he's allowed to, and has to get back to the office regardless of whether the money has run out or not.)

Mr Frishblitz is learning about perspective, you might say! He envies his friends who open splendid cocktail-cabinets and say, "What'll it be — gin, Scotch, vodka, sherry, beer?" He envies the friends who keep a boat at Woodbridge and religiously, every weekend from May to October, pile the family into the car on Saturday morning and vanish until Sunday night. But *he's* the one who got the all-expenses paid trip to Mexico!

Mr Frishblitz is, as the saying goes, in the lifeboat, Jack . . . just so long as he continues to enjoy his job.

It isn't me

Footnote to the foregoing footnote: *please, readers, do not make the same mistake that several people made the first time I discussed Mr Frishblitz's career. He, like his name, is a composite, an averaged version of at least six and probably more like ten SF writers with whom I've discussed sales, earnings and fringe benefits. I've deliberately made him differ in detail from every last one of them, and above all he is **not** yours truly. There are SF writers who make a hell of a lot more than he does; there are some who struggle along on a mere fraction of his income. Anyone who is thinking of trying to make a living out of writing SF, though, should know what his 50/50 chances are . . . and that's roughly what I've tried to depict in Mr Frishblitz's career.*

I, personally, make more than he does, and I make it in a very different way. But all the advances listed, all the deals described as being made by him, could very well happen to someone in his position.

So could the problems.

BOOKS

News and reviews

Only when it hurts

Slaughterhouse Five

by Kurt Vonnegut
Jonathan Cape 30s

"I've found out why people laugh," Valentine Michael Smith said. "They laugh because it hurts... because it's the only thing that'll make it stop hurting."

That Kurt Vonnegut has been going to write a book about the bombing of Dresden, which he survived, should have been obvious from at least as far back as *Mother Night*. And after the forward publicity it is not entirely surprising that it should be an — er — funny book. What is so completely startling is the *form* that it takes, and that it should be so completely central to the canon of Vonnegut's work.

Whether it is, finally, *the* book about Dresden remains to be seen. But I think that we have not yet seen the end of that tragic city. So it goes.

Billy Pilgrim is adrift in time. Without warning he will commute from his wedding night to the hospital in a German prisoner-of-war camp. And on the night of his daughter's wedding he is whisked off to the familiar Vonnegut planet of Tralfamadore, where the inhabitants are truly four-dimensional creatures who see everything as happening, having happened, and will happen — and hence inevitable. It is a novel about not being able to do anything about it.

Think about it. The nature of that central event was that Vonnegut (as does Billy Pilgrim) survived the fire bombing in *Schlachthof-funf* while up above in Dresden 135,000 people died. So it goes. And there was no reason why. It was simply something that happened.

Vonnegut circles that event, trying to make it a part of the total four-dimensional event that is Billy Pilgrim — "somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore" — and yet catering to our three-dimensional sensibilities by closing towards that crucial event (I cannot call it a climax) — almost by refusing to speak about it. There are no sophisticated philosophies, simply unavoidable events. So he postscripts each death except one in the book with a "so it goes" — in turn compassionate, ironic, tragic, comic and banal. The universe is deterministic and determined.

Yet I do not think that Vonnegut has accepted this. When death is avoided, Vonnegut says it in this way:

"Nobody was hurt, thank God, because both drivers were wearing seat belts. Thank God, thank God."

But that may just be the irony, for in less than a page one of them is dead (so it goes) — and as a consequence of that crash. Perhaps it is just that I am unable to accept that four-dimensional, determined world.

Irony is the controlling mood of the book, but then Vonnegut's humour has always been ironical — compassionate. The cosmic, catastrophic, custard-pie vein in *sf* can be left to people like Sheckley. Vonnegut's laughter is informed by pain. Irony is meaningless, unavoidable pain. Here the laughter informs us of that pain, and is muted by it.

It is the opposite of (say) Sheckley in another way too. Because Vonnegut's concern seems to be, in the face of the unavoidable, to give us (everybody) dignity.

This book is central to Vonnegut's writing. You will meet, among others, Eliot Rosewater, Kilgore Trout, the Rumfoord family, Howard W. Campbell, Jr. (how does he get away with it?). The only books I could not find in it were *Cat's Cradle* and *Player Piano*, and I discover the Rumfoords did make a brief appearance in *Cat's Cradle*. *Player Piano* I have not read for a very long time. And there are the other elements from Vonnegut's books — so that I would advise reading this only after the others.

Above all there is the simplicity.

I do not know anybody else who writes with the dedicated, deceptive simplicity of Vonnegut. And with the years he had developed, almost unobserved, a sparse style in which the events happen, one at a time, after the manner of a tour through a picture gallery. I get the impression that *Slaughterhouse Five* could not have been written any earlier, because the techniques for it did not exist.

In the end the book is a failure. Vonnegut says as much. It didn't do — it couldn't do what it was intended to. That much was impossible. But it is still a tremendous book. Possibly (give me a month or two to get used to it) the greatest book Vonnegut has written — and that is no mean compliment. Out there people have been objecting to its science fiction content, but that is their hang-up. Vonnegut does what he does deliberately. It is an event, and you will have to accept it as that.

I would advise you to read it, but Vonnegut as writer says: if you're going to, you have done. And I would have prophesied that it would change you, perhaps only slightly (because that is part of what is meant if I said it would move you), but on Tralfamadore they would say that you always were like that.

Read it, anyway.

Bob Parkinson

Outcrop

by Colin Cooper
Faber 28s.

At Blacklady Products Ltd industrial relations are perfect. Absenteeism is practically non-existent and output is high and efficient. Without further comment and judged against the current backcloth of industrial life, such a state could be labelled science fiction or even fantasy — take your pick.

The interest of Habbet's — a firm of industrial consultants — is aroused. This makes good sense — a formula to yield such business efficiency would certainly be the equivalent of an industrial Philosopher's Stone.

Marchmont, a Habbet's man, infiltrates the Blacklady organisation. A practising lecher, he appears to collect most of his intelligence from the female members of staff. One disconcerting fact he uncovers is that retired employees of Blacklady do not enjoy retirement for long — they die.

The undercover investigation continues, with bed interludes, in a classic detection fashion with Marchmont's examination of the principal characters; Freda from personnel, Peggy from services, Mr D. A. Dundry (DAD) the managing director, and Ibbotts the technical director. When the seduction stakes slow down the alcoholic Mrs Dundry is introduced as a sex booster shot.

Finally the secret and simultaneously threadbare ethics of Habbet's are revealed. Cooper has caught some of the reality of industrial management in this story, and there are spasms of genuine humour. The book might be classified as an sf second cousin to *Room at the Top*. Whilst off the usual sf-beaten track it is fresh and entertaining.

Roy Mortimore

The Left Hand of Darkness

by Ursula LeGuin
Macdonald 30s.

Gethen is a world enjoying near permanent arctic conditions whose population, while human, are hermaphrodite subject to a periodic oestrus when they may function as either male or female. A set of good ideas, perhaps not wholly original, but I was frequently impressed by the breadth and depth of Mrs LeGuinn's knowledge as the implications of these assumptions are revealed.

An envoy from the Ekumen, a benevolent co-ordinating body of human civilisation, is sent to invite the membership of the Gethens. The real story concerns the relationship between this man, Genly Ai, and a Gethenian aristocrat, Estraven, who attempts to further his aim, first in his own country, and then another. It did seem unlikely that the Ekumen officials, who are represented as superhuman, should choose someone as gauche and unsophisticated as Genly Ai but, this accepted, the portrait of an idealistic but not too bright young man whose philosophical meanderings con-

tain some rather dubious mysticism is a convincing one. The way in which Genly Ai and Estraven, despite their cultural handicaps, come to accept one another as a man who is also a woman and a permanently sexed male who is not a pervert is described with sensitivity and is sometimes moving.

In places, particularly early in the book, the writing tends to be leaden, ten words doing the work of one, and I was left feeling that the admirable setting was not exploited as it deserved. One the whole, however, it is worth persevering with the slowness and sparse plot for the background and the flashes of real insight. Certainly it is the best piece of work by UKLeG I have read to date.

Brian A. Roll

This book will also be the subject of an essay by John-Henri Holmberg in VECTOR 57—Ed.

Thorns

by Robert Silverberg
Rapp & Whiting 25s.

The characters and events in "Thorns" speak for themselves in Silverberg's customary precise and sparse style that doesn't bog down in too many explanations or too much contrived history.

Test-tube babies were a four-day wonder a little while back, so though Silverberg's setting in some unspecified future maybe, logically, somewhat behind the times, he still manages to be ahead of them in his handling of that theme and others. Some facets of the society of "Thorns" loom uncomfortably close.

There is Chalk, the press-baron of press-barons, who has taken the phrase "I do not report news, I make it" to heart and does so, skillfully.

Lona Kelvin was once "news" as the donor who provided ovae that were fertilised and brought to full term artificially. As the virgin mother of centuplets the resultant publicity and controversy has a familiar ring and content to it. The whole experience has left her emotionally unstable and suicidal.

Minner Burris was once "news" as the only survivor of a three-man expedition to a new culture which used the three as guinea-pigs to show how they could improve human beings. He returned to Earth with an improved body; except that, to himself, Burris is a freak, a monstrosity. He withdrew to brood in isolation. However, he is still potential "news" and Chalk makes a bargain with him. If Burris were to step back into the lime-light, Chalk will pay for the years of medical research needed to perform a successful brain-transplant, which is the only way Burris has of regaining a human body, Burris agrees.

Unknown to him, however, Chalk has had Lona Kelvin approached and the suggestion made that if she were to become friends with, and perhaps more than that, with Burris, Chalk just *might* be able to pull the right strings that

would get Lona two of her children for her to bring up as her own. Lona agrees.

In a blaze of publicity, Lona and Burris begin a tour of the pleasure spots of the Solar system — at Chalk's expense. However it is out of more than the profit to be made out of the publicity that Chalk has paired them off. He is sufficiently wealthy for money to be no reason for his actions. Lona and Burris are totally unsuited for one another — the friction of their relationship grows as this becomes more and more apparent, and this is what Chalk has counted on from the start. Chalk is a mental vampire. The profit he makes on the relationship is nothing compared to the mixture of raw and subtle emotions generated by it. These emotions are what Chalk needs and craves.

Plot and sub-plot come to a climax. Burris goes his own way; Lona goes to Chalk to demand he fulfill his part of the agreement. Chalk attempts to fob her off by suggesting another arrangement. How Lona finds out that Chalk is a mental vampire came a little too slickly for my taste: a character all but buried since chapter one pops up to tell All. On finding this out, and that Chalk can give neither what he promised — no one is rich or powerful enough to pull *those* strings that will get Lona two of her children, and a successful brain transplant or transfer is still decades ahead, no matter what the money poured into it — they are forced to accept things as they are. Since they found a little comfort in each other they come together again. Chalk's satisfaction over this event is short lived. They wreak poetic justice upon him, which leaves them free.

Outlaw of Gor

by John Norman

Sidgwick and Jackson. 27s.

Once more Tarl Cabot (of *Tarnsman of Gor* fame) is transported to Gor by the mysterious Priest Kings, and once there is involved with such monosyllabic delights as the ost (an elastic species of snake: a foot long in one paragraph, a few inches in another), the sleen (six-legged, carnivorous, vicious) and the tarn (large, black, yellow-beaked), with only his sword-arm, brains, or a fortuitous coincidence to get him out of tight spots.

In between the customary fighting, intriguing, kidnapping and carousing there are the usual extracts from *A Guide to Gor for Terrestrial Visitors*, e.g. "A Gorian day is divided into twenty Ahn. . . . Each Ahn consists of forty Ehn, or minutes, and each Ehn of eighty Ihn, or seconds." And comments on the customs, some nice, mostly nasty, of the various cities on Gor e.g. "Pikes on the walls of Gorean cities are often surmounted with the remains of unwelcome guests. . . . Indeed in Gorean the same word is used for both stranger and enemy."

In a concluding note to the story, the surmise is made . . . that Cabot did indeed enter the Sardar mountains. I will not speculate on what

he may have found there. I do not think it likely we will ever learn. J. N." However with a few loose ends left sprinkled throughout the narrative a prophecy, or two, left unfulfilled, and a villainess making good her escape with a threat of vengeance . . . What odds on *that* happening?

Richard Barycz

The Einstein Intersection

by Samuel Delany

Sphere 5s.

Samuel Delany is intrigued with mythology and, as he writes, this is the central subject of *The Einstein Intersection*. In the book the world of the future is changing, undergoing a transition that cannot be explained in terms of a scientific rationale. Delany proceeds to do so using the language of myth, in which the wisdom of the human race is enshrined. The images of mythology are ever-recurring: TEI deals with the two primordial images basic to all myths: the encounter between superhuman personalities, and the interaction of death, rebirth and immortality. Lobey and Friza act out the drama of Orpheus and Eurydice; Kid Death, Green-Eye, Spider, that of Satan, Christ and Iscariot; surrealistic Karma in which the psychological transmigration of souls has occurred. They are saddled with this spiritual heritage which cannot be repudiated. However, their fates are not predestined: this heritage can be increased or diminished by the deliberate and voluntary action of each individual.

The story-line of the novel deals with Lobey's search for Friza and then, after he had lost her for the second time, his quest to find and kill Kid Death. However, in my opinion the enigmatic Green-Eye dominates the second half of the book. The fate of Green-Eye is completing the transition; his is the image of the Messiah whose death will bring the new order. Green-Eye dies but Lobey discovers that death can be overcome and Green-Eye's resurrection seems certain.

My only difficulty with this book was that certain parts remained obscure and incomprehensible, even the ending to some extent. But as Delany writes, "Endings to be useful must be inconclusive." This apart, it remains evident that Delany's poetical imagery, combined with his odd syntax to enhance the effect, has been a major factor in the creation of this excellent novel. Only Delany's prose could do justice to the theme.

Kevin O'Malley

Junk Day

by Arthur Sellings

Dobson 25s.

Arthur Sellings died without writing a masterpiece — at least it has not been published if he did. But at least Sellings was consistently readable and entertaining. His ideas were not new, but he handled them fairly neatly. *Junk Day* is set in a devastated world. And it is part

of the meaninglessness of it all that we are not offered a reason for the devastation. Furthermore, the only person seen to be looking for a reason is clearly not quite all there – a loser groping for the security that an explanation would offer.

Douglas Bryan – the lead character – has no such need. He is an ex-painter living off the junk that surrounds him until he discovers that a minor crook (Barney) has risen from the ruins to organise the survivors. Barney has printed money and is using his wits to live off the people. Bryan does not like this and sets off to liberate the workers.

Bryan's naivety is a little out of character for an artist, but the image is restored by his incompetence and failure to catalyse this "cultural revolution." The image of the scientists that turn up is what you would expect from Sellings, who prefers the eccentric outsider to the organisation man. The scientists accept that it is the opportunistic entrepreneur who has the right to rule. And who is to say that humanity would pick itself up quicker under an egalitarian humanitarian regime? Just as the communistic dictator may be good for emerging states, so may the Mafia be a better model for post-holocaust survival.

But what is the role of the artist and rebel in this society? Or any society come to that? Sellings has asked this question before and he did not come up with any meaningful answers then either. His is a strictly personal and pessimistic vision. Sellings was not a deprived artist. He was a fairly skilled word arranger, but he does point to an area that is of interest today.

Michael Kenward

VORTEX: New Soviet Science Fiction

ed. C. G. Bearne

MacGibbon & Kee, 1970: 30s. (£1.50)

"Among the greatest figures of the detective story must be counted Sir R. de Conan-Doyle, whose famous character Sir Lock Holmes influenced many later generations of . . ."

You think that's funny?

Nor do I, but it's the closest analogy I can find to the sloppy, patronising – and by extension insulting treatment accorded to this collection of (in general not at all bad) Russian SF stories.

The firm responsible isn't alone. It seems to have almost the force of a law of nature that the moment SF is mentioned all publishers abandon their regular norms of quality, fire their proof-readers, and in general toss out into the market something that has been granted the treatment which might be appropriate for a collection of toilet-wall graffiti assembled by a not-especially well-regarded academic who lacks the influence to make his objections carry weight.

Listen: this is *one sentence* from the introduction.

"At present there are amongst them (SF writers – JKHB) scientists with world reputations – Fred Hoyle, Arthur Clark, Isaac Azimov,

Leo Szillard, to name just a few."

And in naming four writers, the editor, who is also the translator of this introduction, has contrived to spell *three* of their names wrong . . .

On the next page – Hell's perishing bells! Desmond Bernal is not only one of this country's leading scientists, but a Lenin Prize winner to boot! His initials are J. D. What do we find here? "G. Bernal!"

I am *sick and tired* of this kind of fucking around with SF, regardless of its origin. I am sick of self-important, ignorant editors. I am sick of reviewers who wouldn't know a vacuum tube from a transistor, who set up as incontrovertible authorities on the impact of science on modern life and consider that anyone who has bothered to take time out and learn what machines actually are affecting our world and how they work are dirty-nailed mechanics, not worthy of being permitted to cross the threshold. Above all, I am sick to *death* of people like this Mr. Bearne, who – simply because it's a science fiction book he's editing – won't get off his fat bloody arse and go check the spelling of a name that's internationally famous.

Accordingly, carbon copies of this review are going not only to MacGibbon & Kee, but also to the cultural attache at the Soviet Embassy, Kensington Palace Gardens, London W 8. If you would, one day, like to have a presentable version of the burgeoning Russian boom in SF available to an English-speaking public, why don't you write to the guy as well? Maybe we can get Mr. Bearne fired.

John Brunner

Satan's Slaves

by James Taylor

New English Library 5s.

If you read Tom Wolfe's recent *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* you might have been surprised to find the hippie psychedelia including bits and pieces of sf. Michael Kenward mentioned *Stranger in a Strange Land* last time, but the list includes Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End* also. The bizarre cults we seem to associate with California (which, to me, has always seemed to be a colony of the 21st Century) must pick their models from somewhere, and are entirely capable of converting sf speculations to a way of life.

But it might be of interest to find out why these exotic societies form – what sort of need they satisfy.

Unfortunately James Taylor's book, for all its advertising, is not that book. It is in fact a very bad book, part of that curious undertow to British journalism which gives a voyeur's eye view while condemning. It preaches hate rather than love, perhaps because love would involve an attempt to understand even if it did not condone. It may be that the cults are sick, but to this observer Mr. Taylor's world is worse. If you are entertained by disgust, maybe this book is for you. But I think not.

Bob Parkinson

I Sing the Body Electric

by Ray Bradbury
Hart-Davis 30s.

At the same time as they bemoan the secondary role of people in science fiction some critics accuse Bradbury of turning his back on the technological society. He is chastised for being sentimental, and for living in a non-existent pastoral past. This new collection (18 stories from between 1948 and 1969) certainly does nothing to suggest that Bradbury has surrendered to the machine. But this would not really be a good thing: it helps to have Bradbury sitting in his individual ivory tower sending out reminders that it is the people that matter.

Bradbury does not hate the machine – he just treats it with a cautious disrespect. The title story of the collection is not written by a twentieth century luddite. An "electric grandmother" is hired to look after three motherless children. The machine is secondary to the personalities of the people, and the puppets.

Machines are not inherently bad, but they are under man's control and can easily be misused. In "Night Call Collect" the only person on Mars manages to torture himself using an automatic telephone system. And "The Lost City of Mars" lives on as machinery.

The machines, or rather the motor car, is seen as a maker of communities in "Yes, We'll Gather at the River". A new highway is built to straighten out a kink in the road and to bypass a small town. Unfortunately the town lives off the constant flow of travellers needing sustenance for themselves and their cars. As the old road is "killed", so the town dies.

As Kurt Vonnegut shows in *Player Piano* it is the unthinking manipulation of the machine that we must beware. Bradbury says no more than this, but he clothes his concern in a more poetic, florid even, prose. It can sometimes obscure the content, but this does not turn it into the marshmallow that some critics would have us believe. *I Sing the Body Electric* is, without doubt, one of this year's best collections of short stories (not all of the stories are sf by the way), and there are a lot of collections around.

Michael Kenward

Informed Sources

by Willard S. Bain
Faber 30s. (pb. 18s.)

Judith Merrill reviewed this book in F & SF back in 1968 when it was published as a mimeograph by "The Communication Company, New York." Now Faber have done us a good turn by bringing it out, in print, on this side of the Atlantic.

Informed Sources purports to be twenty four hours of telex output in a news agency of that name. The lead story of the day is the (presumptive) death of a (possibly mythical) leader of the "Peripheral Underground Movement," called Robin the Cock. And at first the novel seems to be a satire on the wire services. But within the bureau there is revolution

brewing, incipient anarchy, and the cops moving in. And somewhere there is a running review of the book itself.

New readers are warned not to give up before page 30. By that time you will have enough information to read the telex messages properly, and it is worth pausing to do just that. The characters have no more names than JB, FX or EL, but at times the headings are as important as the text.

Experimental, I do not expect it to start any trends. But it is witty, entertaining, at times hilarious; and afterwards you too may know "what's happening."

Bob Parkinson

Labyrinths

by Jorge Luis Borges
Penguin 8s.

Labyrinths is a welcome issue, making available the work of a man who has been scandalously under-represented in British publishers' lists. Jorge Luis Borges is one of the world's most important contemporary writers; a pure science fiction writer, and patriarch of a burgeoning school of Latin American writers that is one of the most interesting developments in present-day world literature.

This volume contains most of the stories from *Ficciones*, the earliest and most famous of Borges' collections, together with ten other stories from the same period, most of which have not been published in Britain before. These metaphysical and labyrinthine inventions are the most approachable, and in my opinion the best, of his writings, although Borges has professed himself "tired of labyrinths". Some of his later works, short "parables" of an even more extraordinary density than the fictions, are also included here, as are a number of essays. The essays have the same appeal, and at times are barely distinguishable from, the fictions. His very latest work – a return to pregnant, atmospheric narratives like *The South* (included in *Ficciones* but not here) – is not represented.

This edition has a preface by Andre Maurois, and is introduced, edited and large translated by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. The translations are new, and (according to "The Arts This Week") more literal than those by Alistair Reid and Anthony Kerrigan to which Borges devotees have become accustomed. I do not find them so effective, and I do not think this entirely the result of the familiarity of the others.

Tony Sudbery

In November, Jonathan Cape are publishing another Borges anthology, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*.

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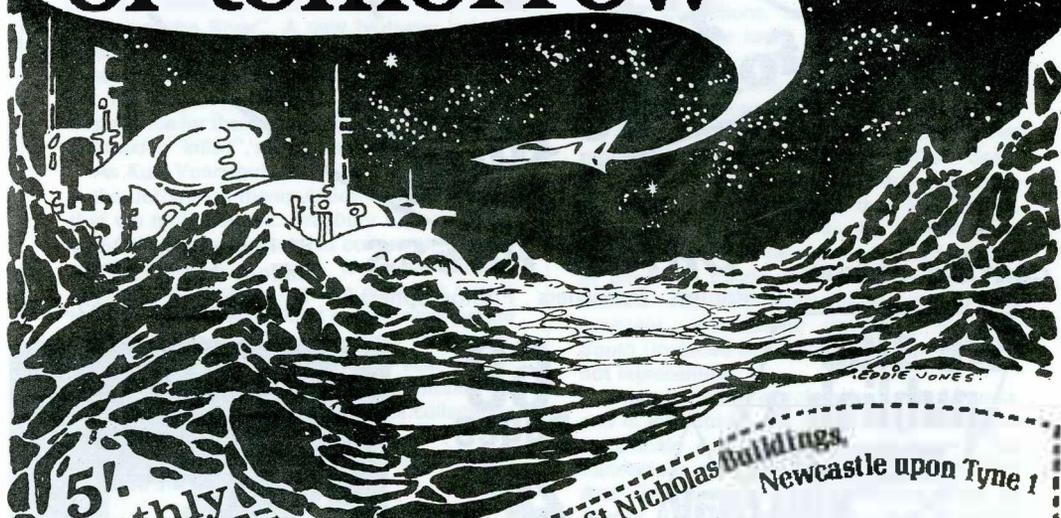
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