

VECTOR 67~68

double issue featuring
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PHILIP K. DICK
URSULA LE GUIN
PETER NICHOLLS
BRIAN STABLEFORD
PHILIP STRICK
GENE WOLFE
and others

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REMEMBER — WE NEED YOUR
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LEAD~IN

Now, before you go any further, please move your eyes back to the previous page and note my change of address. This applies to the BSFK powers-that-be; to correspondents; and even, God willing, to alert publishers' publicity departments.

Given the circumstances, it is something of a miracle that you have this issue at all. (So please don't complain that it's unbalanced with a proportion of reviews that exceeds sanity. I know, I know. But apart from my upheavals, I believe Bob Shaw is similarly placed at present, and Peter Roberts has been busy finishing his M.A. dissertation, to name but two. This is the special Dunkirk Spirit issue of VECTOR.) What the future holds at present I don't know. I do know that our notice at this place expires at the end of the week, and that our new flat currently features such desirable features as loose wiring trailing from every socket, and a loose fireplace casually scattered around the living room floorboards. Not to mention no furniture, no electricity, and faulty plumbing. But it's all good fun (I mean that, oddly enough), despite the impending necessity of bivouacking with relatives for a while. Whatever the inconvenience, it beats paying rent.

So, you can expect some changes in future VECTORS. Most of my spare time recently has been taken up with such fun activity as ripping down old tiling (great, except when you hit your knuckle with the hammer, an action for which I proved to have a debilitating propensity), painting, and cutting six-months-grown grass with a pair of shears (less elevating, I found). Now, if Pete Weston can turn SPECULATION into a paediatrician's fanzine (not feet, ignoramus — babies), I see no reason why VECTOR shouldn't henceforth concentrate on gardening, home decorating, and general domestic stuff. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get a photo of our new home to go on the front cover — but this can be remedied in future. I have a whole set of fascinating articles lined up for next time, including the first of a series by John Broonan on skin care; Rob Holdstock (whose name I always type wrong) on 'Household Pets: a Guide to Domestic Torture'; Chris Priest on 'Twenty Four Ways of Having Fun with Dwarf Conifers'; Leroy Kettle on choosing your first colour tv; and many others. Watch for it.

* * * * *

Last issue I innocently poked a little fun at some flying saucer books, thus arousing the ire of Brian Stableford, who thought I was playing into their hands by publicising the books — any publicity is good publicity, etc etc — and of Gerg Pickersgill (there's a typo there, but I rather like it) and Peter Roberts who thought I should devote the editorial space to more important topics, such as them. I don't care, though — I'm going to do it again. But this time it's a rather better book that I have to review. This is Christopher Evans's Cults of Unreason (Harrap, £3.00, 264p., ISBN 0 245 51870 3).

This is a study of a cross-section of cults and beliefs (selected, says Dr Evans -- reasonably enough -- so as to keep the book down to reasonable size). The overall theory which Dr Evans seeks to establish is that as we gain more information about the nature of the universe our actual understanding of it diminishes, and that these various beliefs serve to plug this widening gap, acting as a kind of psychological Polyfills. In fact, his book does no more than establish the groundwork for this hypothesis -- but this is no reason to miss it, because instead it gives a magnificently entertaining account of the chosen cults and their practices.

At least half the book is devoted to the most successful of writer of all time, our old friend L. Ron Hubbard. Evans provides a concise and very informative biography of this most inventive man, and his adventures with first Dianetics and later Scientology. Although he never misses an opportunity to point out the absurdities of these cults (though with marvellous self-restraint he resists, throughout the book, the temptation to mock), one cannot help feeling that Evans has considerable admiration for Hubbard. And one can see why, for he emerges as a figure of great resourcefulness and panache, and when one sees him becoming apparently trapped late in his career by his tediously earnest disciples at a time when he seems anxious to throw it all up and enjoy his fortune, one cannot help feeling sorry for him. One has only to glance at some of the literature of Dianetics and Scientology to understand the admirable job Dr Evans has done in cutting his way through the jargon of the cults and explaining it in as reasonable and consistent a way as it is capable of supporting. Also, he has performed a considerable feat in piecing together a true account of Hubbard's career from the mass of contradictory statements available.

The rest of the book is divided into three sections: "The Saviours From The Skies" -- UFOs, the Aetherius Society, etc; "Black Boxes" -- Wilhelm Reich, and so forth; and "The Mystic East (or Thereabouts)" -- Gurdjieff, Subuh, Lobsang Rampa, and others. Not all of this is light-hearted; it's hard to laugh, for example, at what happened to Wilhelm Reich. But the material on the Aetherius Society, at least, is quite hilarious, as is much of the rest.

But, as I say, Dr Evans resists the temptation to poke fun. He adopts the role of neutral observer, describing the inanities but refusing to actively criticize them. (Some of this reads a little like a careful defence against possible lawsuits, adopting the well-tried PRIVATE 'YE 'some people might be led to believe that...' technique.) I felt the book lost a little of its early fascination in these more fragmented accounts. Nevertheless, I commend it to your attention as a wonderfully dispassionate survey of some of the most fascinating fringe beliefs of our time.

* * * * *

I have in front of me (courtesy of Gerald Bishop) a complete listing of the Hugo results, so I'll use them to fill out the remaining space. It occurs to me that I never gave the final Nebula results here either, so I'll slip them in, in parentheses:

- Best Novel: The Gods Themselves (Asimov) (Nebula Award Winner)
 2: When Harlie Was One (Gerrold) (Nebula 2nd)
 3: There Will Be Time (Anderson)

continued on p.79

three views of tolkien

1. the staring eye ursula le guin

They were displayed on the new acquisitions rack of the university library; three handsome books, in the Houghton Mifflin edition, with beige and black dust jackets, each centered with a staring black and red Eye.

Sometimes one, or two, or all three of them were out; sometimes all three were there together. I was aware of them every time I was in the library, which was often. I was uneasily aware of them. They stared at me.

The Saturday Review had run a special notice upon the publication of the last volume, praising the work with uncharacteristic vigor and conviction. I had thought then, I must have a look at this. But when it appeared in the library, I shied away from it. I was afraid of it. It looks dull, I thought — like the Saturday Review. It's probably affected. It's probably allegorical. Once I went so far as to pick up Volume II, when it alone was on the rack, and look at the first page. "The Two Towers". People were rushing around on a hill, looking for one another. The language looked a bit stilted. I put it back. The Eye stared through me.

I was (for reasons now obscure to me) reading all of Gissing. I think I had gone to the library to return Born in Exile, when I stopped to circle warily about the new acquisitions rack, and there they were again, all three volumes, staring. I had had about enough of the Grub Street Blues. Oh well, why not? I checked out Volume I and went home with it.

Next morning I was there at nine, and checked out the others. I read the three volumes in three days. Three weeks later I was still, at times, inhabiting Middle Earth: walking, like the Elves, in dreams waking, seeing both worlds at once, the perishing and the imperishable.

Tonight, eighteen years later, just before sitting down to write this, I was reading aloud to our nine-year-old. We have just arrived at the ruined gates of Isengard, and found Merry and Pippin sitting amongst the ruins having a snack and a smoke. The nine-year-old likes Merry, but doesn't much like Pippin. I never could tell them apart to that extent.

This is the third time I have read the book aloud — the nine-year-old has elder sisters, who read it now for themselves. We seem to have acquired

three editions of it. I have no idea how many times I have read it myself. I re-read a great deal, but have lost count only with Dickens, Tolstoy, and Tolkien.

Yet I believe that my hesitation, my instinctive distrust of those three volumes in the university library, was well-founded. To put it in the book's own terms: Something of great inherent power, even if wholly good in itself, may work destruction if used in ignorance, or at the wrong time. One must be ready; one must be strong enough.

I envy those who, born later than I, read Tolkien as children — my own children among them. I certainly have had no scruples about exposing them to it at a tender age, when their resistance is minimal. To have known, at age ten or thirteen, of the existence of Ents, and of Lothlorien — what luck!

But very few children (fortunately) are going to grow up to write fantastic novels; and despite my envy, I count it lucky that I, personally, did not, and could not have, read Tolkien before I was twenty-five. Because I really wonder if I could have handled it.

From the age of nine, I was writing fantasy, and I never wrote anything else. It wasn't in the least like anybody else's fantasy. I read whatever imaginative fiction I could get hold of then — Astounding Stories, and this and that; Dunsany was the master, the man with the keys to the gates of horn and ivory, so far as I knew. But I read everything else too, and by twenty-five, if I had any admitted masters or models in the art of fiction, in the craft of writing, they were Tolstoy and Dickens. But my immodesty was equalled by my evasiveness, for I had kept my imagination quite to myself. I had no models there. I never tried to write like Dunsany, nor even like Astounding, once I was older than twelve. I had somewhere to go and, as I saw it, I had to get there by myself.

If I had known that one was there before me, one very much greater than myself, I wonder if I would have had the witless courage to go on.

By the time I read Tolkien, however, though I had not yet written anything of merit, I was old enough, and had worked long and hard enough at my craft, to be set in my ways: to know my own way. Even the sweep and force of that incredible imagination could not dislodge me from my own little rut and carry me, like Gollum, scuttling and whimpering along behind. — So far as writing is concerned, I mean. When it comes to reading, there's a different matter. I open the book, the great wind blows, the Quest begins, I follow. . . .

It is no matter of wonder that so many people are bored by, or detest, The Lord of the Rings. For one thing, there was the faddism of a few years ago — Go Go Gandalf — enough to turn anybody against it. Judged by any of the Seven Types of Ambiguity that haunt the groves of Academe, it is totally inadequate. For those who seek allegory, it must be maddening. (It must be an allegory! Of course Frodo is Christ! — Or is Gollum Christ?) For those whose grasp on reality is so tenuous that they crave ever-increasing doses of 'realism' in their reading, it offers nothing — unless, perhaps, a shortcut to the looney bin. And there are many subtler reasons for disliking it; for instance the peculiar rhythm of the book, its continual alternation of distress and relief, threat and reassurance, tension and relaxation: this rocking-horse gait (which is precisely what makes the huge book readable to a child of nine or ten) may well not suit a jet-age adult. And there's Aragorn, who is a stuffed shirt; and Sam, who keeps saying 'sir' to Frodo until one begins to have mad visions of founding a Hobbit Socialist Party; and there isn't any sex. And there is

the Problem of Evil, which some people think Tolkien muffs completely. Their arguments are superficially very good. They are the same arguments which Tolkien completely excluded, thereby freeing Beowulf forever from the dead hands of the pedants, in his brilliant 1934 article, "The Monsters and the Critics" — an article which anyone who sees Tolkien as a Sweet Old Dear, by the way, would do well to read.

Those who fault Tolkien on the Problem of Evil are usually those who have an answer to the Problem of Evil — which he did not. What kind of answer, after all, is it to drop a magic ring into an imaginary volcano? No ideologues, not even religious ones, are going to be happy with Tolkien, unless they manage it by misreading him. For like all great artists he escapes ideology by being too quick for its nets, too complex for its grand simplicities, too fantastic for its rationality, too real for its generalisations. They will no more keep Tolkien labelled and pickled in a bottle than they will Beowulf, or the Elder Edda, or the Odyssey.

It does not seem right to grieve at the end of so fulfilled a life. Only, when we get to the end of the book, I know I will have to put on a stiff frown so that little Ted will not notice that I am in tears when I read the last lines:

".... He went on, and there was yellow light, and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was expected. And Rose drew him in, and set him in his chair, and put little Eleanor upon his lap.

"He drew a deep breath. 'Well, I'm back,' he said."

— Ursula K. Le Guin

2. the tolkien toll-free fifties freeway to mordor & points beyond hurray!

gene wolfe

Way out somewhere south of Mars think of a flat, hot country and a small, dirty boy who knows nothing. (Who is Richard Wagner?)

One-eyed Woden with his spear and long beard running. Thor. The rainbow-Bifrost bridge to Valhalla. But much more than that: swords and helmets and pine trees; totemic wolves, women in armour, spears, dragons, twined little men hammering forbidden gold in the mouth of a cave.

At one point Legolas says: "Green are those fields in the songs of my

people; but they were dark then, gray wastes in the blackness before us. And over the wide land, trampling unheeded the grass and the flowers, we hunted our foes through a day and a night, until we came at the bitter end to the Great River at last.

"Then I thought in my heart that we drew near to the Sea; for wide was the water in the darkness, and sea-birds innumerable cried on its shores. Alas for the wailing of the gulls! Did not the Lady tell us to beware of them? And now I cannot forget them."

Thus Legolas.

Earlier far, there was Oz. Oz was a place you could go to; this was the great and striking fact about it. I spent a good deal of time for twenty years or so in trying to figure out how to do it, and found the answer at last.

(Today, while I still had my pajamas on, one of the children came running into the house shouting, "Balloons!" and as I always do I ran out into the yard to see them — there were three of them, all lovely — go over. A red, white, and blue one spangled with stars and eagles came closest, and just while it was over our house let out a roar and a flash of flame as the pilot slowed his descent with a blast from his burner. Far higher than the balloons a silver 707 floated, as it seemed, silently by, on its way to O'Hare.)

I bought The Lord of the Rings in hardcover, in the first American edition, in 1956, the year I graduated from college (June) and was married (November). The purchase took place somewhere between these two pivotal events. I was living at the L. B. Harrison Club in Cincinnati, which was a lot like living in a YNCA; and I was a young engineer with a job at a time when a young engineer could get a job in any company in America by walking into the personnel office and announcing his willingness to get on the payroll. If I'd had the brains of a gnat I'd have started moonlighting, but I didn't, and nobody ever told me.

I believe I read of it in the review column in F&SF, but I can't remember for sure now. If it was F&SF, then F&SF had a deal then (I think) by which you could order books through the magazine. For the first time in my life I was making enough money to order hardcover books new — you know you've got it made when the captain of the other team says, "We get two guys if you take him", when your girl picks you up in a pickup truck with a mattress in the back, when you can buy deluxe editions new, for cash, because you want to read them, and not worry about it. (And while I'm on this, when the hell is somebody going to bring out a real deluxe edition of LotR, with Tim Kirk plates? Have you seen the dust jacket on Foster's A Guide to Middle-Earth? And why the hell couldn't our civilisation — and it is a civilisation for as long as it produces men like Tolkien, though no longer — which spews out tons of drek, have done that tiny \$5000 thing for him while the old Master of Middle-Earth was still alive?)

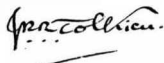
I rationed the books: one chapter a day. I still remember. And I wrote him and he wrote back. But that (I have just looked it up; I keep his letter tipped into my original old hardbacked copy of The Return of the King) was much later, in 1966. His letter is postmarked Oxford, 7:15 pm, 7 Nov 1966. Whatever, whenever, the text of any letter of his should not be kept private. Not because it is valuable, but because it is dear to us. In 1966 he wrote me:

7th November, 1966.

Dear Mr. Wolfe,

Thank you very much for your letter. The etymology of words and names in my story has two sides: (1) their etymology within the story; and (2) the sources from which I, as an author, derived them. I expect you mean the latter. Grig I derived from Anglo-Saxon, a word meaning a demon, usually supposed to be derived from the Latin Grogus - Hell. But I doubt this, though the matter is too involved to set out here. Warg is simple. It is an old word for wolf, which also had the sense of an outlaw or hunted criminal. This is its usual sense in surviving texts. I adopted the word, which had a good sound for the meaning, as a name for this particular brand of demonic wolf in the story.

Yours sincerely,



Gene Wolfe, Esq.,
27 Betty Drive,
Hamilton,
Ohio,
U.S.A.

+ O.E. warg
O.H.G. German warg
O.Nor. vargr (also
"wolf" apkr. of
legendary kind)

So you see I have been called 'Esquire' by J.R.R. Tolkien. It makes me feel small and sturdy; and though I often feel small in other connections, feeling sturdy is a rare experience.

"While they were halted, the wind died down, and the snow slackened until it almost ceased. They tramped on again. But they had not gone more than a furlong when the storm returned with fresh fury. The wind whistled and the snow became a blinding blizzard. Soon even Barahir found it hard to keep going. The hobbits, bent nearly double, toiled along behind the taller folk, but it was plain that they could not go much further, if the snow continued... Even Gimli, as stout as any dwarf could be, was grumbling as he trudged."

Where was I? In the fifties, those good old days when you could buy an eight-inch switchblade in any pawnshop, when mankind was wholly confined to the planet Earth (Tolkien's Middle-Earth, a direct translation of the Norse Midgard — but how did the Norsemen, who thought the sky the skull of Ymir and the sun Freyr riding a golden boar, know that Middle-Earth stood between Muspellheim the fire and Niflheim the land of endless dark?), when memories of the Second World War were stronger than now seems possible.

and every phase of life, without exception, was dominated by the veterans of that war. I want, as the late politician used to say, to make one thing perfectly clear. Mordor is not Nazi Germany. If it were, I, reading Loth at that time would certainly have caught it. Sauron does, in some respects, remind us of Hitler — particularly in so far as his great intelligence would seem to correspond to Hitler's claims to genius (it is persistently forgotten that Hitler was the Marx, as well as the Stalin, of his movement). But Sauron is kindly in a terrible way (as certain of the Roman Emperors were, for example) while Hitler always remained the leader of a paramilitary gang. Similarly, Sauron's seemingly semi-independent barons may remind us of Nazi chieftains like Himmler and Goring (just as the Nazgul suggest the very name of Nazi); but they prove upon examination to be captured and now-tributary kings, an origin quite different from the German lower middleclass beginnings of most of the leading Nazis. Moreover, and for me most convincingly of all, the orcs are not in the least like the German soldiers of the Second World War, and still less like those of the first. They are in fact strikingly similar to the worst American soldiers.

Still less, of course, is Mordor the USSR. Bloodstained as it may be, the USSR professes an idealistic and democratic philosophy — or at least an idealistic and democratic rationale. Mordor is fiercely and unashamedly evil, and without being aristocratic, elitist. In the fifties the cold war was at its height, and, believe me, if Loth was a reflection of that war (which historically it could not have been, since most of it was written before the onset) I would have caught it.

What, then, is Mordor? And much more important, what is 'the West'?

Clearly and obviously, Mordor is a subdivision of Hell. No one acquainted with infernal tradition will require to have this pointed out to them, and I dare to point it out only because so many people today seem never to have bothered to learn what Hell is like. (The best modern fictionalized look inside is *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. It is dedicated to J.R.R. Tolkien.)

But there is more than that. Look and listen to the shire as Frodo finds it when he returns from the wars: "And looking with dismay up the road toward Bag End they saw a tall chimney of brick in the distance. It was pouring out black smoke into the evening air... The great chimney rose up before them; and as they drew near the old village across the Water, through rows of new mean houses along each side of the road, they saw the new mill in all its frowning and dirty ugliness: a great brick building straddling the stream, which it fouled with a steaming and stinking outflow. All along the Bywater Road every tree had been felled... 'Don't 'ee like it, Sam?' he ((Ted Sandyman)) sneered. 'But you always was soft.'... 'Yes, this is Mordor,' Frodo said."

And Mordor is America. And England. (It is not a coincidence that the trolls in The Hobbit speak cockney; artistically it is a mistake — but it is a mistake because it is too near the truth.)

But if Mordor is England/America, the West is (paradoxically) exactly what Tolkien says it is: the Western Europe of the past. You will find the Rome of the late Empire in Gondor, the middle ages in Dol Amroth, Old England in the Shire, Bronze Age lake dwellers in Esgaroth, even the old stone age among the Mooses. This is the force that Tolkien ought to raise against Mordor: the memory of what we once were, because we have become something alien to ourselves.

Whether or not this endeavour can succeed no one can now say. Nor even

if it stands the best chance of success, or a better chance than the other great line of attack, the Utopian. But surely it is a fight worth fighting, and Tolkien, in fighting it, stood shoulder to shoulder with Morris and Wagner (whose operas I found in illustrated children's books when I was too young to know what they — or anything — were) and Malory (as Lafferty today stands shoulder to shoulder with Tolkien).

— Gene Wolfe

anatomy of a romance

peter nicholls

He never knew it, but I had a love affair with J.R.R. Tolkien, and I'm sorry that he's dead.

Like all love affairs, especially those that begin adolescence, it went through many stages — passion, jealousy, eventually petering out into a worn affection which may have lacked the first, fine careless rapture, but which remained one of the solidities of my literary life.

Your young Tolkien fan of today has it too easy. All sorts of books of commentary are available (mostly unutterable fatuous, it's true). But primarily, what he misses is that original breathless gap that took place between the publication of volumes one, two and three of Lord of the Rings.

I may well have been the first person in Australia to read Fellowship of the Ring. It was 1954, I was 15 years old, and my father was fiction critic of The Melbourne Age, a morning newspaper. Fellowship of the Ring was one of a pile of books that arrived one day, prior to publication. I pulled it out at random, began to read, and didn't get to sleep until about 3 in the morning. 15 is a hell of an exciting age to meet Tolkien for the first time — probably the best age.

But there I was, emotionally identified with Frodo setting off the Eryn Huil towards Mordor, and it took months, MONTHS — almost a year, as I remember — before I found out what happened to him. Even longer, because Frodo's story is not picked up until half way through The Two Towers. Worse still, a paralysed, Shelob-stung Frodo was captured by orcs at the end of The Two Towers, and again, that dreadful wait. I swear I almost went mad. The final volume was not published until 1955. That was the year the other boys found girls, but mine was a lonelier and a nobler fate. Alone, unarmed, I mentally strode forward into Mordor over the intervening months. My brow became so set in what I took to be an expression of grim determination that my mother thought my forehead had begun to shrink.

That was the period of passion — total, uncritical passion. There were no flaws in the book. As soon as I finished the third volume, I read the other two again. Back in the real world I was discovering Pound and Eliot, but teenagers have little sense of incongruity. My literary sophistication was rapidly increasing in some areas, but, thank God, it left my passion for Tolkien untouched.

In those days, of course, there was almost no one to share the passion with. The three volumes were hard to come by, and expensive. Tolkien's rise to bestsellerdom was a remarkably slow business. Lord of the Rings was what is known in the trade as a 'sleeper'. But I liked that. It was a private thing with me. It's hard to describe the sense of violation I felt in later years, when Tolkien had become a campus fad in the States. The first lapel button I saw with 'Frodo lives' inscribed on it really hurt. How dare these Johnny-come-latelies take my book?

However, jealousy is a passion which affects the potential adulterer more strongly than the absolutely pure. And by the sixties, I was no longer as true to Tolkien as I had been. In some ways my enjoyment of the books was even stronger. It was certainly better informed, because my own academic training, after a brief and unconsummated liaison with science and medicine, had reverted to a wholly traditional Arts course, with English Language and Literature as the major 'honours' elements. The English Language section of the course involved a study of Middle English, Old English, and Icelandic. Tolkien's name kept popping up in these contexts. There he was in Middle English, with a glossary to the Gordon edition of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Turning to Anglo-Saxon, there was Tolkien's famous essay, "Beowulf, the Monsters and the Critics". Even in Icelandic, there were Christopher Tolkien's editions of several of the sagas — Christopher being J.R.R.'s son.

And, too, there was the historical and linguistic knowledge that I had lacked before, which showed me many of the sources of Tolkien's Middle Earth, and gave the book itself a more far-reaching resonance. Anglo-Saxon for the Rohirrim, Celtic languages for the elves, and so far as one could tell (and with a certain amount of prejudice implicit?) Turkish for the orcs. Not real Celtic or real Turkish, of course.

This was where my uncle's anecdotes began to fit in. I was thirsty for information about Tolkien at this time, and my uncle seemed a likely source. Uncle Ross (whose name I most recently saw, to my horror, as one of the four judges for a new Australian National Anthem) had won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford in the late thirties. He was at Magdalen, and his tutor was C.S. Lewis (who found his written work 'jejune' — he had to look it up in the dictionary). Ross had many stories about Lewis, and also some about Tolkien. Tolkien was known to Ross as the don who could be seen striding across quadrangles muttering to himself in no known language. Hindsight shows us that this visible sign of eccentricity was not so eccentric after all. There was no doubt that my uncle was one of the first people, in this Age of Middle Earth at least, to hear Elvish — and that from the lips of its creator. Ross couldn't tell me whether the language he heard was Quenya or Sindarin, but that was a detail. The significance was that this was fifteen years before Lord of the Rings was published.

The significance is this. Even the critics hostile to Tolkien usually admit that one extraordinary thing about Lord of the Rings is its detail and self-consistency; especially extraordinary are the 103 pages of appendices at the end. Usually a writer thinks of a plot, and builds up its background as he goes. There is no doubt that Tolkien found his world

first; and in that world, it was language that he first discovered. He invented Elvish years before he wrote Lord of the Rings. This method of creation is less literary, perhaps -- at an altogether more primal level -- than the usual. I am reminded of the case in Lindner's book, The Jet-Propelled Couch, where one of the psychiatric case studies is that of an adolescent who invented a science fictional world so real to him, that he was under the delusion that it was the real world. What we think of as the real world was no more than a serial nightmare he suffered every night, when in that freer and more romantic place he laid down to sleep. So detailed and compelling was this conviction, supported by such a weight of evidence, that for a time the psychiatrist, Lindner, began to share the delusion himself. (Brian Aldiss says in Billion Year Spree that this case -- which had haunted him for years, as it had haunted me -- was a true one, actually based on the boyhood of Paul Linebarger ('Cordwainer Smith')). I'm sure, intuitively and without actual proof, that Middle Earth was like that for Tolkien. There is ample evidence that the real world was antipathetic to him.

Middle Earth is presented with such conviction, I believe, because it came boiling up out of the deepest desires in Tolkien's subconscious. Lord of the Rings is not a consciously crafted piece of literary artifice. He is describing what for him is actual. This dichotomy, which is probable much simpler than what really happened, is not, I hope, just a piece of slick lay-psychologising. I believe it has profound implications for our understanding of the creative process generally, if true. I don't know if Jung ever commented on Tolkien. I'm sure he would have been interested.

But I was speaking of my potential infidelity to Tolkien. It happened for a variety of reasons. One was that I was going through a very mild crisis of faith. I had not been raised as a Christian -- my father, a renegade Presbyterian lay-preacher turned journalist, was more interested in socialism than in God. But many of my friends at university (an unusual number, I now realise -- it was one of the social phenomena of the late fifties) were undergoing some sort of religious conversion. This was partly because some of the most charismatic teachers on campus were Catholics, and others were Anglicans of the highest. I became interested in all sorts of religious subtleties, and my friends (some of them clergymen by now) recommended me to read the novels and essays of Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis. I found a sort of pre-Raphaelite flatulence in Williams' mysticism, self-indulgent and over-precious. It turned me off. I liked Lewis much better -- his hearty style seemed immensely full of common sense by comparison, but it, too, began to pall quite swiftly. He had a sort of port-wineish Bellocian nostalgia, an insistent platonism whereby he invested objects in the real world with a glowing religious significance which sometimes seemed to rob them of their simpler human value. He nagged, and there was something a little too comfortable, effete and intellectualised about it all. Some of these feelings rubbed off -- perhaps unfairly -- on Tolkien, who, as I learned about this time, was a great friend of Williams and Lewis, and (very much to my surprise) a Roman Catholic.

More important than this mild ideological distrust of Tolkien, though, was the extent to which I was left unmoved by his other writings, which I eagerly sought out. The Hobbit, interesting as an introduction to Lord of the Rings, is very obviously for quite young children: it has a sort of old-fashioned jolliness about it that comes to seem downright twee. Farmer Giles of Ham is only a five-finger exercise.

My vague doubts about Tolkien coalesced and took shape when I read the essay "On Fairy Stories", which had just been reprinted as part of a thin volume, Tree and Leaf. This really was a disappointment. Tolkien had written such a compelling fairy story himself, yet he spoke about them in such simplistic terms, placing an uncomfortably C.S. Lewis-like emphasis on a vague, abstract 'joy', which I found begged all the questions I wanted to ask. The essay shed little light on Tolkien's own creation.

But the spectacle of an artist not wholly articulate about his art is nothing new. What was really saddening, especially since this essay was not the work of an old man (it was written in the 1930s) was the whole-hearted revulsion from all things twentieth century -- a vision of a modern ugliness which seemed for Tolkien to have no redeeming feature, but was something to be escaped from. I disliked this -- it seemed much an Oxonian shrinking from experience. It reminded me of my uncle Ross's story about C.S. Lewis ending a lecture with the words, "And then the Renaissance came, and spoiled everything."

Thus began my disillusionment, my infidelity. My next reading of Lord of the Rings was my last for some time. The features of the beloved suddenly seemed, in an aggressively literary-critical young man's harsher light, to have flaws. The poetry was the first thing to make me wince, especially that of the elves. The dying falls -- the, somehow, nineteenth century-ness of it all. The elves, when they sang, no longer seemed ancient, dignified, other-worldly creatures to me; they sounded like Victorian aesthetes pretending to be medieval -- Rossetti or Morris or George MacDonald.

Then there were the women. The Oxford donnish attitude towards women that seemed to be shared by Tolkien, Lewis and Charles Williams, was to see them as symbols rather than people -- to put them on an embarrassing and dehumanising Petrarchan pedestal. But here, meditating on Tolkien, I began to realise that my disenchantment was beginning to go too far. True, his women aren't very well done, but he had the good sense to leave them very much on the fringe of things. In this respect, at least, he knew his limitations.

Coming back to the present, I leave you to imagine those difficult years of schizophrenia, when I felt unhappy about Tolkien's writing, while still recognising that it was something I cared about deeply; and when, despite my own infidelity, I felt jealousy about his appropriation by a generation of readers who had found him a decade after I had.

On Tolkien's death, I read Lord of the Rings again. My view has changed once more. The radical flaws I seemed to have found in Tolkien (and it would be churlish and out of place to enumerate them all) are still very visible to me, but they do not, any more, destroy the central solidity of the story. Again, there is no place here for more than the briefest analysis.

I wrote in Foundation 5*, "Tolkien tends towards ... images of a more abstract and general kind ... a language imprecise, but sufficiently charged with emotion that the less experienced reader automatically fleshes out the details according to his own fantasies (or nightmares), and then innocently assumes the effect to be Tolkien's skill rather than the vividness of his own imaginings." Ursula Le Guin (to whom I had sent a carbon of the article) wrote to me, "the point is dead-center correct, I think, and quite important; only I interpret it the other way round. It is a sign of Tolkien's fundamental superiority -- his genuine, timeless

* Due any year now. (HWE)

power."

I remain a little confused, now, about this central question. I do believe that in Lord of the Rings Tolkien — quite unselfconsciously — revived the primal strength of narrative per se. It is a story rather than a novel, and it taps such powerful feelings about life and death, about courage, nobility and fear, about a time when science and religion could be one and be called magic, that it remains one of the great stories. I am moved by it still; and I am moved, too, that a whole generation of young readers, especially in America, can find — why not use an old-fashioned word for an old-fashioned phenomenon? — inspiration from it. (I seem to have recovered from my earlier 'hands off' policy.)

Maybe Ursula Le Guin (who I understand is contributing to this issue of VECTOR on the same topic) is right. Maybe Tolkien's genius lay in providing an entrance and a route to potent forces that lie in everybody's imagination, but which, without a Tolkien to help, may never be given a conscious shape. This is the fundamental strength of the great storyteller.

Tolkien was unhappy in the twentieth century, but not crushed by it. He created a world in which common people could find a channel for their aspirations, where the action of individuals could overthrow the forces of evil. We all wish, living as we do in a world that offers the most limited opportunities for clear-cut action, and where the enemy himself cannot always be identified, that this were so still. That is why young left-wing radicals can find inspiration in the writings of a deeply Tory old man. I have written elsewhere about why I believe that there are greater writers of fairy stories than Tolkien. (I mean nothing pejorative by 'fairy story'.) But no other, I imagine, will ever give me the pleasure that Tolkien once gave a younger, and perhaps better and more responsive self.

I did love him. I have read his books more often than books which I consciously consider much greater. When he died I was not deeply saddened — I should live so long and so successfully! — but I was moved to recollection. It was no longer a passionate feeling I had about his books (and therefore him — in a primitive way I identify books with their writers), but it was a lasting and warm affection.

— Peter Nicholls

THIS ISSUE IS LATE (as you may have noticed) for a variety of reasons, which I really haven't the heart to go into in detail. Suffice it to say that VECTOR 67 was completed and sent to the printer towards the end of September, whereafter things went wrong. The end result is this double issue. Inevitably, some of it is a little out of date: the editorial, book reviews and letter column are the ones I did for no.67, without any alterations. Things which would have been said in the editorial of no.68 must go unsaid; various letters will be a long time seeing the light of day; the books for review (and the reviews on hand) are multiplying greatly. On this latter topic, Chris Priest points out that his review of THE MAN WHO FOULDED HIMSELF has partly been superseded by events: the preliminary Nebula recommendations have closed, and guess which book was leading the field! VECTOR 69 will probably not appear until after Tynecon, and will be the last under the present management. Two years is enough.

PHILIP K. DICK

LETTERS FROM AMERIKA

1. THE INVISIBLE (JUNE 6th 1973)

This letter deals with a most melancholy subject, but one which is becoming brighter: the Watergate disclosures. An article in the June 11th **NEWSWEEK** let the American public in on what may be the most dismal and horrifying aspect of all this: that in the years 1970, 1971 and 1972 (and possibly now) a secret national police, operating outside the law, existed in this country, probably under the jurisdiction of the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department; it acted against the so-called "radicals", that is, the left, the anti-war people; it struck them again and again, covertly everywhere, in a variety of ugly ways: break-ins, wire-tapping, entrapment ... all with the idea of getting or forging evidence which would send these anti-war radicals to prison. The basic M.O. was of course the typical Watergate sort: a crude jackboot night burglary of locked files, carried out with no class and much arrogance, as if they felt they could not be caught.

What I myself find personally frightening in all this is that the November 1971 burglary of my house in San Rafael, California, which I've written a number of letters to friends about, fitted this M.O. My locked files were blown open and all my business letters, documents, all cancelled checks everywhere in the house, correspondence, etc., all were systematically taken — an enormous job that must have taken either a long time or many people. It was a massive commando-type hit, and it seemed to baffle the police (many objects of financial value, for example, such as gold cufflinks, were not taken; it seemed obvious to me at the time that money was not the goal of the hit, as one finds in regular burglaries, but rather information on me or information that I had, information supposed to be in my house, in particular in my locked fireproof files). I was an anti-war "radical" and quite outspoken against the government in this regard. I have always believed that the motivation for this hit was political. But that it might have been carried out by a paramilitary extension of the U.S. Government itself — that never really seemed plausible to me. Now I realise how naive I was; how naive we all are.

Last night a reporter came to visit me, to discuss this hit on my house, this massive burglary back in November of 1971, with an idea of trying to get the case reopened in connection with the emerging nationwide pattern of Watergate strikes going on with particular ferocity at that time of that particular year. I feel very frightened, thinking that my own government might well have done this to me, but as I say, the clouds are clearing at last — I guess, anyhow — and we are seeing these monsters, this nocturnal Gestapo that actually tried to take out the domestic left, brought finally to justice.

There had always been many hints that some branch of the authorities was involved in the burglary on my house, and perhaps in the two that followed during the period of February-March 1972 while I was in Canada,

in which the rest of my papers were taken; for example, a peculiar reluctance by regular legal investigatory agencies to get involved; they would look into it and then — silence. For months I have written, for example, again and again, to the police up there to ask if any arrests or convictions have been made, if any new evidence has come to light, if any of my possessions have been recovered. No answer. None, not even a printed form. As if a black curtain of silence had set down — the day after the burglary, after which at least six policemen came out, there was no record at all at the Marin County Sheriff's Department of a burglary having been reported that night in that area. Even my own phonecall was not on the police log-book. And so forth ... plus the then-perplexing accusation that I had done the burglary myself.

I sensed that they did not want to look into it and were seizing on any pretext not to that they could. But they seemed personally to like me; it wasn't based on any real or imaginary hostility toward me. In fact, one police sergeant warned me that I was in extreme danger in staying on there in the house, that much more could happen, that I had enemies as he said to me 'who some night might very well shoot you in the back while you're asleep. Or worse.' I then asked him what the 'or worse' might mean, but he said I really would not want to know. He suggested because of this threat to me, this invisible danger that had culminated in the hit on my house but which was not over, that I leave Marin County. He also said, this police sergeant, in the presence of other police, 'Marin County doesn't need a crusader. So I left; this is why, actually, I did not return to the Bay Area from Canada, and why I was so depressed up there, wanting to come back to the U.S. but fearing to. At last I came down here to Fullerton where I had never been before, 600 miles to the south of the Bay Area, and sort of laid low for months, my tie cut, my trail cut, frightened and confused and depressed, not understanding what had happened but fearing it would happen again.

When I was in Canada I applied for Canadian citizenship, and I think with good reason. I sensed — as I say — that the federal authorities or anyhow some weird sick branch of them had been behind the hit on my house, and I was disgusted and demoralized and did not want ever to return to my own country. As perhaps you know, I tried suicide in Canada, but was helped out of it by the Vancouver Crisis Center. GÖran Bengtson of Swedish TV wrote me asking if I would fly back to San Francisco, at their expense, for an interview with him for part of a TV documentary on the elections, in which I would describe what had happened to me in full; he thought it seemed a meaningful experience in terms of what the US political climate was becoming. Being afraid, I refused. Now I wish I had flown back and been interviewed and told all this, but would anyone have believed me then, back in March of 1972, before the Watergate disclosures? I hardly believe it myself. And yet now — I wonder if the terror, the invisible police strikes and assaults on us, on the "radical" anti-war left, will begin again someday or have even ended. Are we safe? Is it over at last? It has been two full years of fear for me, waiting for the jackboots in the night to come again.

I might also mention another aspect of the ugly methods used by the secret political police against the left: political entrapment, an analog of the sort of entrapment often used by undercover narcotics agents. Only in the area of politics it is sicker by far ... I found myself up against what appeared to be a true Nazi*, warped and vicious and pathological, who

* He was a formal member of an organization, under its direction evidently, but I had no inkling of it until the night of the hit on my house — on the phone he blew his cover and gave me a code response. Later he described his organization to me at length, without identifying it.

was in the complicated process of blackmailing me into committing an indiotable act: for example he wanted me to murder someone ... well, this part is too gruesome to go into, but tonight on TV on the news we learned that those under scrutiny in the Watergate West affair having admitted hiring Nazis, actual American Nazi Party members, to wipe out in illegal ways the political opposition to Nixon here in California, using as always campaign contributions. So this, too, is coming out, their use of such creatures, certainly the worst types alive.

Ab, what this republic has come to, and so swiftly. I hope the tide has turned. But I wonder — I really feel that the right-wing fascists will make another attempt before they give up. I still listen for the jackboots, and maybe always will.

II. NOB HOLE (SEPTEMBER 1ST 1973)

Since I last wrote, the magnitude of the despotic gang of professional, organised criminals who came to power legally (as did Hitler in Germany) is increasingly revealed to the US public. We Americans are now faced precisely with the situation the German people of the 1930s faced: we elected a criminal government to 'save us from Communism', and are stuck with that government. It has the power to destroy those who would overthrow it, whether legally or illegally. I myself feel that when you discover you have a government committing an almost endless list of crimes, and which when caught will not own up and resign, then whatever crime you commit against this government to overthrow it is only in a legal sense a crime, not in a moral sense.

On the authority of Nixon we have secretly (to us, anyhow) been bombing a neutral country. This alone, especially since forged documents were produced for Congress and the people, makes the executive branch party to a felony of the highest order; there is no law, no legal mandate, allowing them to do this, and every dead and injured man in Cambodia destroyed by these bombings is as much a victim of criminal action as if he had been a US citizen shot on the streets of New York. Are their lives less valuable than ours? What we do, under statute law, when we apprehend the man who shot an innocent person on the streets of a US city is to try him and then most likely send him to jail. As I see it, of all the crimes the Nixon crowd has done, this bombing secretly year after year of a neutral country is the worst.

This brings up the question of the proper moral response and attitude of the US citizen who did not know this — like Germans who, after World War Two, discovered, and I think on the most part sincerely for the first time, the existence of the extermination camps. Suppose he, the average German, had found out about it when Hitler and his crowd were still in office? What loyalty did he, this citizen, owe his Führer? Of course, one thinks at once, what could he do in any effectual sense? Write to the newspapers? Tell his friends? Hire a lawyer and instruct him to indict Hitler? Well, what can we do here, we Americans? Individually? Certainly, the practical issue prints out the answer: nothing. But morally — this is another question. The two must be separated. Often in life these two issues confront each other. "I feel morally," a man says, "that I should or should not do this, but they can make me do it, or as the saying goes, they can't make me do it but they can make me wish I had." Under these circumstances, the normal person, understandably, capitulates. And yet — there is the fundamental philosophical dictum that goes, "I

should behave in such a way that if everyone did it, good would come of it, rather than evil." I believe this supercedes all other wise sayings such as, "Don't stick your neck out" or, "Nothing will come of it and you'll be in a heap of trouble."

I think that we Americans must now face the fact that although the Nixon government came to power legally, this fact is not important, any more than it was regarding Hitler. We must face the fact that we have a criminal mob running this country, doing an incredible number of things all the way up to murder, and, this being so, we owe them nothing, nothing at all, in the way of complying with their laws. When you discover you have this sort of syndicate government, then you must (one) withdraw all support, and (two) fight it in any way you can. I do not mean merely through the ballot box; this criminal mob has something like three and a half years to go, and there is no real difficulty in creating a dynasty; they simply get one of their number in as the next tyrant. What I advocate is anything that will pull them down. They are not our leaders; they are our tormentors and they are now and have been for some time bleeding us and ripping us off and using us and oppressing us. Their great national political secret police is probably powerful beyond our ability to imagine, and by their own admission they infiltrated — and beguiled into overt illegal acts — every anti-war group in this country. They beguiled the anti-war left, which is to say the Opposition, into breaking the law so that the members of the left could then be arrested and the left destroyed. As I understand it, no single conviction has yet been obtained in court against anti-war agitators because again and again it came out in testimony that these undercover infiltrators were not merely police informers but were in fact agents provocateurs. (And earning good money for this, too; many were paid \$1,000 a week, which would make such activity an enticing profession, at least to those lacking in any sense of honour.)

To be enticed into breaking the law by an undercover agent of the US government posing as your friend, and then, when you have been convinced and do so break the law, to find him no longer wearing a beard and jeans but with a tie and suit, testifying against you in court ... This turns a nation into a paranoid camp of frightened hostility, because the girl you love, the friend you trust — who knows which, how many of them — maybe everyone you know — is being paid not only to watch you but to egg you into breaking the law. This dissolves the cement that binds men together. And I suppose this fact is favourable to government policy, too. This aids in dissolving political opposition, and hastens the setting-up of the totalitarian state, which, as with Hitler, is the final goal.

Well, when I read my Vancouver speech, printed in VECTOS, I see that I was right in at least one assertion: the tyranny of the 1984-type is here. I may be wrong that the kids are our best bet in combatting it (look what happened at Kent State: flowers against guns, and the guns won), but then let me alter my original speech and say this: let us all, here in the US, of whatever age, adopt the view, the behaviour of the kids which I described. In my speech I told of a bright-eyed girl who stole several cases of Coca Cola from a truck and then after she and her friends had drunk all the Coke, she took the empties back and traded them in for the deposit. A number of letters criticised my lauding the girl for this act, but I laud her still and would say, let us all do this in a sense, not a literal sense but in the sense that we will not do honest business with a mob syndicate that has taken over our government. I have no specific act in mind. What I do have in mind, though, may shed light on why I saw in that girl, and in the bizarre rip-offs she got into, a quality of transcendent value. Because of my anti-war views, expressions, and activities,

the authorities decided they could do without me, and after spending a long (and probably quite expensive) time trying to catch me breaking the law, they at last went to this girl, who they knew to be my closest friend, and asked her to give perjured testimony against me. They — the police — pointed out to her that, my house having just been robbed, they could put together a good case and indict her for that, were she not to comply with what they wanted. "No," she said. "I won't say Phil did anything he didn't do." The police inspector said, "Then you may go to jail." The girl thought it over and then once more said, "No, I wouldn't be telling the truth." And, I found out later, she waited for weeks in fear of being arraigned.

My point is obvious: you can't lean on that sort of person; you can't convince them that stealing crates of Coca Cola is wrong and you can't convince them that giving perjured testimony against a friend in order to save themselves is right. She decides inside, an inner-directed person, and that is that. Even if the consequences to her are quite serious. And — she did not even tell me about this at all, voluntarily, this set on her part which I would call heroic, until months later by chance I found out.

So I am saying: okay, the kids can't overthrow the tyranny. But the tyranny is there, and far more dreadful than we had ever imagined. But I say, let us sabotage that tyranny in whatever manner, legal or illegal, that seems viable. We owe nothing to the Nixon despotism; they are admitted criminals. I am not trying to lay forth a blueprint for revolution. But that is the key word, unless the courts turn the bastards out, which is not likely. We may have to revolt; we should, if they remain in office. This may not be, in an individual sense, practical; they will mow us down. But I think they are mowing us down now, not only the 'us' here in the US but Asian people who are also 'us'. I would hate to think that my money bought a bomb that a B-52 dropped on a hospital or village in a neutral country; would this not make me culpable? Just as culpable as the pilot who dropped it? After all, he was only following orders. How are we distinct? I bought it; he dropped it. And the people are dead. People who in no sense whatsoever harmed us.

— Philip K. Dick

WERSE VORSE (the editor accepts no responsibility for this bit)

A vaulter named Monsieur Renault
 Attempted the world's highest vault
 He came down on a Simca
 Parked next to the YMCA —
 I'm afraid that his vault was no gault.

— John Brunner

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Breakfast of Champions

by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
Jonathan Cape; 296p.; £2.25
ISBN 0 224 00888 9

Reviewed by
Malcolm Edwards

Kurt Vonnegut is big business these days. Breakfast of Champions has spent a couple of months at the head of the PUBLISHERS WEEKLY bestseller list (though it has now been displaced by the latest novel by the author of Valley of the Dolls, Jacqueline Susann: a book entitled — either with self-conscious irony or total inappropriateness — Once Is Not Enough.) According to the figures, this novel has sold high on 150,000 copies in the U.S.A., and no doubt it is enjoying similar success — on an infinitely smaller scale — in this country. How many of these people, one wonders, are going to set aside the predisposition to search out the good qualities in a book on which they have invested a not-inconsiderable sum, are going to see through the squirmingly adulatory promotional flak, and realise (it's easier to do, believe me, with a book you got free) that what its 296 pages amount to is (to borrow one of the book's recurring expressions) doodley-squat.

Well, maybe Vonnegut realises it, at least. Readers of THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, or, failing that, of Again, Dangerous Visions will have encountered this quote:

"After Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut began work on a novel called Breakfast of Champions He gave it up, however, and it remains unfinished. I asked him why, and he said, 'Because it was a piece of ——'"

Breakfast of Champions is ostensibly the title of the destiny-laden meeting of two men. Kilgore Trout is the author of innumerable paperback science fiction novels, always packaged and sold as pornography. The first indication of literary acceptance in his life is his invitation (at the behest of an old admirer, one Eliot Rosewater) to the opening of the Mildred Barry Memorial Arts Center Here he will meet Dwayne Hoover, a deranged Pontiac dealer whose encounter with one of Trout's novels will convince him that he is the only man in a world of robots, impelling him to a series of acts of appropriately cosmic significance. He runs somewhat amok, and bites off Trout's finger.

I'm sorry — I hope I didn't give away too much of the plot there. But anyway, the story, such as it is, is only a thin connective thread in this literary junk heap. That's what it is: Vonnegut, again, says as much himself:

"I think I am trying to clear my head of all the junk in there — the assholes, the flags, the underpants I'm throwing out characters from my other books, too. I'm not going to put on any

more puppet shows

"So this book is a sidewalk strewn with junk, trash which I throw over my shoulders as I travel in time back to November eleventh, nineteen hundred and twenty-two."

All right, then, it isn't much of a book. Vonnegut writes well enough — God knows you won't have any trouble reading this. But the story lacks inspiration, the usual Vonnegut drollery tasters distastefully on the edge of all-American folksiness (left-wing folksiness, admittedly, but folksiness nevertheless). It isn't long before one starts to realise that behind the facade of easy wit there's nothing there. Perhaps the key moment comes when one starts to skim ahead of the text, looking for the next of the many drawings which litter the book (some of them, actually, not too bad at all).

But it's easy, really, to forgive Vonnegut this one lapse. After all, as Stanislaw Lem says: "Every author is free to produce work of different value; there is no law against a great epic master allowing himself a novel of pure entertainment." Having cleared the junk from his head, one could look forward to the first work of the new, reinvigorated Vonnegut. The trouble is that in the attitudes he expresses in this novel, Vonnegut seems to be doing his best to deny himself any future as a novelist. Consider this passage:

"... I thought Beatrice Keedler ((a novelist)) had joined hands with other old-fashioned storytellers to make people believe that life had leading characters, minor characters, significant details, insignificant details, that it had lessons to be learned, tests to be passed, and a beginning, a middle, and an end.

"As I approached my fiftieth birthday, I had become more and more enraged and mystified by the idiot decisions made by countrymen. And then I had come suddenly to pity them, for I understood how innocent and natural it was for them to behave so abominably, and with such abominable results: They were doing their best to live like people invented in story books. This was the reason Americans shot each other so often: It was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books.

"Why were so many Americans treated by their government as though their lives were as disposable as paper tissues? Because that was the way authors customarily treated bit-part players in their made-up tales.

"... I resolved to shun storytelling. I would write about life. Every person would be exactly as important as any other. All facts would also be given equal weightiness. Nothing would be left out. Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order, instead, which I think I have done."

That's an effective and seemingly heart-felt statement (and as such stands out only too clearly in this book). But where does it leave Vonnegut? Any novel, any work of fiction, is an artificial scenario drawn from some combination of elements in external reality and in the author's imagination; as such it is committed to differentiating between things, representing some as more important to its purpose than others. Abandoning this, relinquishing any form of novelist's control, the result is likely to be formlessness, chaos — as this book shows all too clearly. Vonnegut has even evolved a characteristic phrase to describe the process. In Slaughterhouse-Five, you will remember, the recurrent

phrase was 'so it goes' — an expression of fatalism, perhaps, but in any case an expression of something, some attitude. In Breakfast of Champions, on the other hand, the sections of narrative conclude time and again with the words 'and so on' — no attitude at all, just a vague, airy wave of the hand.

Of course, he may well prove me entirely wrong (after all, the people in Breakfast of Champions — one may detect a subtlety here — act as much like storybook characters as any storybook characters ever have) and come back as strongly as ever in his next book. Nobody could wish it more devoutly than I. As it stands, though, it looks dangerously as if Vonnegut has written himself straight down a cul-de-sac.

So it goes.

Volteface

by Mark Adlard

Sidgwick & Jackson; 210p.; £1.60

ISBN 0 283 91832 5

Reviewed by

Tony Sudbery

"Birth, and copulation, and death," pronounced Eliot brutally. "That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks." With a change in the emphasis, this summary is echoed by one of the characters early in Mark Adlard's new novel. "Birth, copulation and death," he cries despairingly, "Is there anything else?" As he speaks, this character appears as a skeleton; he is sitting in a pool of light that has stripped his flesh away into invisibility. The bar which features this ghouliah gimmick comes at the end of a pub-crawl that has powerfully symbolised the "futile circle" of birth, copulation and death, making a brilliant preparation for the proposal to introduce a fourth element into life: work.

Eliot's three elements quite fairly exhaust life as it is seen in most of literature. Only the greatest novels — Middlemarch, Anna Karenina, perhaps The Rainbow and a few others — make an explicit theme of man's need to be involved with something outside himself, i.e. to work. It is one of the virtues of the science fiction genre that this theme is often implicitly present, but again it is only in one of the genre's masterpieces, Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano, that the theme is examined explicitly. Volteface is quite clearly on the same race-track as Player Piano, and constantly demands comparison with it.

The world of Volteface — the same world that Mark Adlard described in his earlier novel Interface — is one that has no natural place for anyone to work but the handful of Executives who, with their artificially enhanced intelligence, can easily cope with the few demands for human control presented by the fully automated economy. For this modicum of work, and for their high intelligence, they are rewarded with status, virtually unlimited luxury, and, most precious of all, with space. The rest of humanity, herded together in the nightmarishly crowded cities, have nothing to do but be born, copulate and die (often by trampling), filling in between times with pub-crawling and tri-di viewing. There is no production for them to work at (automation has seen to that), no politics (society is static, having reached an optimum organisation), no art (creativity has been extinct for some time), no science, exploration or scholarship. To her surprise, the Chief Executive of Teity finds that the quality of life in these circumstances

leaves something to be desired; it is this discovery which leads her to propose that the Citizens should be provided with work.

The Chief Executive has a joyless, puritanical attitude to work. It is not to be work that anyone might want to do, or think worth doing -- not the sort of thing that people today choose to do in their leisure time. Rather than attempt to revive cultural, academic or hobbyist activity, which would seem to be the natural form of work for this society, the Chief Executive instead revives an artificial type of commerce, concerned with selling trinkets, essentially a sort of game (incidentally, why is there no sport in Teity?). By exploiting the possibilities of automation and the enhanced intelligence of the Executives, the number of jobs is narrowed down still further: in this commercial set-up there is no production, no advertising, no design, no research and development, only a little distribution and a lot of management. (Since Mark Adlard, as critic, never fails to shake a stick at authors who devote to technical matters which are certainly no less interesting than his business matters, I feel I must point out that the management details of the trinket project are described at some length.)

All this is a little hard to swallow by itself, but it is quite palatable if regarded simply as a device to focus attention on management, for there follows a brilliant satire on present-day business. The project is organised along twentieth-century lines so as to minimise its efficiency and maximise the number of jobs it creates. In further pursuit of this end, the computer's personnel specifications are deliberately shuffled, so that no job is held by the right person for it. Mark Adlard gleefully points out how this faithfully mimics present-day methods of appointing staff, and gets great sport from the results. An aptly-named Sales Manager, Featherstone-Brainleigh, provides a particularly rewarding target, which Adlard hits so often and so hard that I can't help suspecting some personal animus strengthening his arm.

This is every bit as funny as the similar satire on businessmen in Player Piano; in fact Mark Adlard's writing has a suggestion of bitterness which gives it a sharper edge than Vonnegut's more good-humoured fun. But the satire, though it is in the middle of Player Piano, is not at its centre, and the same serious concerns are present in Volteface. At this deeper level the contrast between the two writers becomes more marked, and I must confess that I find Adlard's misanthropy. He presents an appallingly arid vision of the passivity and sterility of human nature when mankind no longer has to work for its collective living, whereas Vonnegut gives us a picture of irrepressible human inventiveness, facing the cruel logic that says it is bound to defeat itself but still fighting on even after its defeat. It is a mark of the difference between the two attitudes that the people in Vonnegut's world rise up and demand work, whereas in Adlard's world it is given to them from on high.

Wisely, Mark Adlard never gives us any reasons for the death of creativity, but simply presents it quite convincingly as a fact. (It is supported, for example, by his portrayal of the Citizens as a remarkably well-behaved lot; vandalism, the signal of frustrated creative drives, seems to be unknown in Teity.) However, I feel it must be related to the lack of serious purpose in the Citizens' lives, both as an effect (for if there is nothing serious to do, then there is no chance for serious human relationships to form, and so nothing for serious art to be about) and as a cause (for if people knew how to be

creative, there would be creative work to do). This is just speculation, and I have an uneasy suspicion that there may be deeper reasons for believing Mark Adlard's gloomy vision.

However, in making their lives so empty, Adlard has deprived his people of more than the economic stresses and creative drives whose absence he notes; he has also removed curiosity, and with it the possibility of scientific or academic work. Evidently he sees science and exploration not as cultural activities but merely as parts of technology and trade, which will automatically cease when technological and economic development are no longer required. This depressing denial of any independent spirit of inquiry is made easier to reject by its being unconscious; apparently Mark Adlard just doesn't miss it. This can be seen in the very first scene of the book, the first of three which take place in the bars of Toity and are intended as a triptych representing the futile progression of birth, copulation and death. The pictures of copulation and death are pretty direct; but the first scene is set in a bar whose theme is the Moon, with drawings of the early Apollo spacecraft and a film of the first Moon landing. It is only by an esoteric argument involving Diana, goddess of the moon and also patroness of childbirth, that this can be taken to symbolise birth; its main function is as a symbol of futility. But most directly, it symbolises exploration, and hence man's involvement with something outside himself, i.e. work. The rest of the novel proceeds to try to persuade us that work cannot help the futility of human life; but to me there is a kind of philistinism in equating the futility of lunar exploration with that of managing the trinket business.

The amateur philosophising in this review is an attempt to rationalise my instinctive rejection of the bleakness of Mark Adlard's vision. It is a mark of the seriousness of his writing that, setting out from a criticism of his novel, one ends up arguing about fundamental questions of human life. Other straws to clutch at are provided by the sparks of spirit in his main character, James Twynne, who regards himself as a seeker after truth — this being manifested chiefly in an inexhaustible ability to quote Dante in Italian, thus giving a commentary on his world which, alas, I cannot follow; and in his glum recognition of the futility of life. But Twynne's progress offers little comfort: although he is the only character who shows any ability at the business game, he nevertheless loses to the other players, and the message of futility is rammed home again. Eventually one is left with the spark of life in the two Shakespearean rude mechanicals, Tosh and Wal, who, bored with their task of supervising a robot building labourer, start to tinker with its controls. The robot gets out of control, slits Tosh's throat under the impression that he is a bag of cement, and dumps him in the concrete-mixer. I don't know what poor Tosh has done to deserve this, unless it's dropping his sitches (I would have loved to see Featherstone-Brainleigh in that concrete-mixer), but there, says Mark Adlard, is the fate of human initiative: to be smothered in concrete. (Again, the contrast with Kurt Vonnegut: this scene occupies the same place near the end of the book as the marvellous scene in Player Piano, where the robot helicopter, incapacitated by a rifle bullet, "flounders off clumsily, still haranguing the town. 'Beeby dee bobble dee beekle! Noozle ah reeble becjee ...'") The nearest thing to a happy ending is in the story of emotionally-crippled Ventrix, terrified of sex after a slip-up in her automated education, and physically-crippled Wilkins, mangled by Toity's automatic refuse disposal system, who find true love as dis-

embodied brains suspended in a computer. The final scene shows another of the Executives about to embark on some more copulation.

I hope I have given some idea of the complexity of Volteface, with its proliferation of sub-plots, and of the vividness and completeness with which Mark Adlard describes his future world. His writing is generally very accurate and immediate (so much so that the occasional carelessness shows up to an unfair extent — one stubs one's toe on the odd unconsidered cliché which would pass unnoticed in a lesser writer). But his pessimism is contagious. Like much of the best sf, like James Thynne's business ability, Volteface will doubtless be ignored.

When Harlie Was One

by David Gerrold
Ballantine; \$1.25; 247p.
ISBN 345 02885 6 125

Reviewed by
Cy Chauvin

I may have read this book at the wrong time, since just before starting it I reread James Blish's classic critical work, The Issue At Hand. With my critical sensibilities thus sharpened, all the flaws in When Harlie Was One stood out much more glaringly. James Blish remarks at one point in his book that every new generation of writers needs to be reminded of various basic techniques of fiction writing, and the truth of that became painfully apparent as I read Gerrold's novel.

Portions of When Harlie Was One have appeared in GALAXY over the last four years, and the complete novel has been nominated for the Hugo and Nebula awards this year. David Gerrold has written a number of other novels (though he is perhaps best known as a writer for — and about — Star Trek); the only other one of his novels I've read is The Man Who Folded Himself, which I found shallow but with pretensions towards significance. The same could probably be said of Harlie. In both books, Gerrold has taken well-worn sf ideas (time travel paradoxes in The Man Who Folded Himself, and computers/artificial intelligence in Harlie) and reworked them, attempting to explore all the implications and ramifications of the idea in order to produce what might be called the 'ultimate' work on each. A worthy goal, and Gerrold has perhaps derived more supplementary material from these two basic ideas than any other writer; but in both cases he has failed to translate this material into competent fiction.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple: there is a conflict between David Auberson, one of the men who has helped to build and develop H.A.R.L.I.E. (Human Analogue Robot, Life Input Equivalent), and the board of directors of the company which has financed the HARLIE project, who want it discontinued since they see no immediate economic profit for the company in maintaining HARLIE. Other plot threads involve Auberson's problems with his love life, HARLIE's questions about his existence and purpose, and various disputes and misunderstandings between HARLIE and Auberson. The plot is involving, but only on a superficial level; there is none of the real dramatic quality that is found in the best novels and short stories.

The reason for this is tied up with two major flaws in the novel: the lack of real, individualised characters, and the excessive lecturing dialogue. There is little physical description of any of the

characters in the novel, or of their environment; I guess that it's around Los Angeles, California, mainly because that's where Gerrold lives. There is no attempt that I can see at making the characters distinct individuals, or at making one person's conversation different from another's — let one character swipe another's line of dialogue in the endless lectures/discussions, and I doubt if anyone would notice. They all talk alike. Instead of injecting genuine characterisation and emotion into his novel, Gerrold substitutes what Blish would call 'phony realism' — i.e., 'the minute description of the entirely irrelevant'. In The Issue at Hand, Blish mentions a number of examples of this failing, the most prominent of which is 'the manipulation of cigarettes'. In the first scene of the novel, this is precisely all that Gerrold describes (although he is slightly original, in that he substitutes marijuana cigarettes for tobacco ones!). At a number of other points in the novel (particularly the scene in which Auberson talks privately with the chairman of the board, between pages 56-62), Gerrold also spends considerable time (comparatively) describing the smoking ritual. Gerrold does hint at one point that Auberson's dependence upon marijuana is related in part to some of his emotional difficulties, but that seems like an afterthought.

A fault of equal importance is the excessive lecturing in When Harlie Was One. I've complained about this previously in VECTOR in reference to stories by Poul Anderson; but Anderson's lecture-spouting characters look tongue-tied when compared to Gerrold's. In fact, When Harlie Was One almost rivals Heinlein's I Will Fear No Evil in its percentage of dialogue vs. straight narration.

To a certain extent, Gerrold has an excuse; it is difficult to dramatise a novel in which one of the main characters is a computer. Computers cannot 'act' in the sense that men (or robots, or aliens) can; they can only talk. So there is going to have to be an unusual amount of dialogue in the novel. But only rarely do any of the other human characters act, either; the 'drama' in When Harlie Was One seems to consist almost entirely of people sitting around and arguing with each other on various profound, or semi-profound subjects. Considering the craze for basing sf novels on Greek myths, by the end of the book I couldn't help but wonder if Gerrold drew his inspiration from Plato's Dialogues.

The problem with When Harlie Was One is exactly that: it is more a collection of dialogues and separate discussions than a novel. Auberson and HARLIE become involved in a lengthy discussion on love, but little of that emotion is dramatised in the novel. There are lectures/discussions on fluidics and computer systems in America that read as if they were adapted from some article on the subject — but in a good of story we want not only the 'science' but also the 'fiction', the characters' reactions to the science. And there is too little genuine effort on Gerrold's part to portray this realistically, in my opinion; he is caught up instead in unravelling the story of a power struggle in an electronics company (which is all the novel's plot boils down to), and in experimenting with a novel in which all the characters are infected with verbal diarrhoea — and it is a shame that Gerrold did not learn from I Will Fear No Evil that the result of this, more often than not, is shit. Talk, talk, talk — at one point in the book, Auberson and HARLIE even begin using 'Huhmmm' and 'Hummmmm' in their typewritten conversations.

Gerrold also slips up occasionally in the novel on point of view.

At one point he jumps from telling the reader what Auberson is thinking to telling what Annie Stimson (Auberson's lover) is thinking and then back again, all in the course of only two pages. Elsewhere, Gerrold suddenly jumps from Auberson's mind to that of Carl Elzer, treasurer of the company. Except for these instances, the novel is told entirely from Auberson's point of view. As James Elish says, it is perfectly acceptable to write a novel from several points of view, so long as each is strictly separated from the others. But flitting from one character's mind to another's, in the way Gerrold does, in the middle of a scene and without even a break in the text, is simply careless craftsmanship on the author's part.

On the evidence of this book I'm tempted to say that I'll be glad to see Star Trek revived, so Gerrold can go back to writing for it and stop polluting the printed page. But his short story "In The Deadlands" (in With A Finger In My I, Ballantine, 1972), flawed though it was, exhibited considerable originality and skill, and makes me think that there just may be a real writer lurking beneath Gerrold's thick layer of dull prose. I only hope Gerrold lets him go free before he (and his potential readers) suffocate.

The Man Who Folded Himself

by David Gerrold
Random House; \$4.95; 148p.

Reviewed by
Christopher Priest

- Q. What's that you're reading?
- A. I've just finished, actually. It's David Gerrold's new novel, The Man Who Folded Himself.
- Q. But it's not available in England, is it?
- A. Not yet, although Faber & Faber will be publishing it here in November. I got hold of a copy because the American publishers sent me one. They think it's going to win the Nebula this year.
- Q. So it's been nominated?
- A. Not yet, as far as I know.
- Q. Not even by Harlan?
- A. Not even by Harlan.
- Q. What's the book about?
- A. Do you mean what is its plot? Or do you mean what is it about?
- Q. Well ... both.
- A. To answer the second part first, it is not about anything ... unless, that is, you're prepared to count narcissism as a literary theme. As for the plot ... I kept remembering Robert A. Heinlein, and how well he'd written the plot a few years ago. But then I felt sure that Gerrold couldn't possibly have been influenced by either "By His Bootstraps" or "All You Zombies—", because I remembered how sensitive he was when people thought he'd borrowed the idea of the Tribbles from Heinlein, and he's hardly likely to lay himself open to that charge again. No, he must have made up this plot from scratch ... or at least, he thought he did.
- Q. So it's as good as Heinlein?

A. I didn't say that.

Q. But is it a good book?

A. Without being any more evasive than necessary, it all depends on how you define a 'good' book. If you mean, is it a polished, readable, clever book ... then, yes, it is an absolutely excellent book. On the other hand, if your demands of a book are marginally more sophisticated, then you might find it lacking. For instance, if you expect a book to contain even the most rudimentary forms of characterisation, subtlety, description or originality ... then perhaps you should look elsewhere.

Q. You mean it hasn't any of those qualities?

A. Not as far as I could see.

Q. That's a rather damning thing to say.

A. I suppose it is.

Q. You'd better start substantiating it.

A. OK. Let's take them one at a time. Which would you like first?

Q. Let's start with originality. You've mentioned "All You Zombies—". You don't mean that there is only one character, who —?

A. I'm afraid so. One character who is effectively the only character. He is himself, and his own father, and his own mother, and he inseminates, and

Q. I thought "All You Zombies—" was a pretty good story.

A. So did I.

Q. So how about subtlety?

A. That's rather more difficult. You see, subtlety is a positive quality which exists in a negative way. Subtlety depends on what is not stated, or what is understated. It isn't something that exists in a book by being put there ... but a writer like Gerrold thinks of a reasonably subtle idea, describes every last possibility with great relish, and renders the idea unsubtle by so doing. For instance, in a book of this sort, it strikes me as rather a subtle notion that because the character's life is wholly determinist, and that that character exists simultaneously in many different forms, then the concept of his own impending death would be one which would run as a leitmotiv throughout. But not Gerrold, even though his book actually starts — in a sense — with his central character's own death; when Gerrold starts realising that his character is going to die he brings in aged versions of the character to make warnings about attending his own funeral ... something like that. Anyway, whatever subtlety he might have wrought is lost.

Q. How about the characterisation?

A. Considering Gerrold has only one character to describe, he doesn't make too good a showing of it. Considering also that one character is seen through his whole life, and continues to talk, act and think in exactly the same way from beginning to end, the showing is even poorer. There isn't really much in the book on this subject that I can quote from to demonstrate, but try asking me about the descriptions.

Q. How about his descriptions?

- A. Good question. Mr Gerrold's character is about to have sexual intercourse with himself. First, he does it in a homosexual way:
- "So this is love.
 "The giving. The taking.
 "The abandonment of roles. The opening
 of the self. And the resultant sensuality
 of it all. The delight. The laughing joy."
- Q. Doesn't he write short sentences?
- A. Yes ... but wait for the obliquity of heterosexuality:
- "— slid into me.
 "He was around me and inside me, his
 arms and legs and penis; we rocked and moved
 together, we fitted like one person. He
 filled me till I overflowed, kindled and
 inflamed —
 "We gasped and giggled and sighed and
 moaned and sang and laughed and cried and
 leaped and flew and —
 "— dazzled and burst, exploding fireworks,
 surging fire —
 "We rustled and sighed. And died. And
 hugged and held on."
- Q. He writes short paragraphs too.
- A. All the way through.
- Q. The one thing you haven't mentioned so far is the writing-style. Quoting passages out of context is all very well, but can the man write or can't he?
- A. Can I answer that question with another question?
- Q. If you wish.
- A. All right ... what do you think of this review so far?
- Q. This one? The one ostensibly by Christopher Priest about a book by David Gerrold?
- A. Yes.
- Q. I'll have to be brutally frank.
- A. Help yourself.
- Q. I think it stinks. Do you want to know why?
- A. Yes ... but I think I'm ahead of you.
- Q. It's a bad review because you're being clever at David Gerrold's expense.
- A. You're taking sides with Gerrold.
- Q. I'm trying to be impartial.
- A. So was I when I started this.
- Q. It doesn't show.
- A. OK ... here's the answer to your question about his writing-style. Gerrold is clever at his own expense. I've sat here with you for half an hour, and I've tried to be serious and I've made a few

wisecracks. But I caught the method from the book. There is hardly a page in the novel where Gerrold doesn't write at least one too-clever paragraph, or make a quip, or say something outrageous to draw attention to himself. It is, like this review, trading on cheap effects.

Q. So you admit it's a partial review.

A. You've talked me into it.

Q. So what have you got against David Gerrold?

A. Not a thing in the world. I don't like to see a writer showing off, when, with a little more care, thought and love for his craft, he could probably produce a halfway decent book. That's all.

Q. Talking of love, how do you know that Gerrold doesn't love this book, that when he reads this review it isn't going to cut him to the quick?

A. I don't.

Q. You wouldn't like anyone to do it to you.

A. I know.

Q. How's your conscience?

A. Hurting. But then it hurt me to read the book, because, you see, for all its excruciating faults it is still a positive book. It isn't something you can ignore; I suppose that's in its favour.

Q. Finished?

A. Almost.

Q. You're still doing it.

A. I know. It's so easy I could go on and fill a book like this.

Q. Is he going to get a Nebula?

A. I expect so.

The Anome

by Jack Vance
Dell; 95c; 224p.

Trullion: Alaeor 2262

by Jack Vance
Ballantine; \$1.25; 247p.

Reviewed by
Malcolm Edwards

In science fiction we have, if nothing else, our fair share of readily-identifiable individualists. One thinks of Philip K. Dick, repeatedly pulling the carpet of reality from under his readers' feet;

of R.A. Lafferty and his pirilated metaphysics; of J.G. Ballard, and the blood spurting from the angle between two crashed cars and Elizabeth Taylor's thighs. Yet there is surely no odder character than Jack Vance.

When you get right down to it, Vance is a pulp writer who has survived and prospered in a more sophisticated age, not by abandoning any of the elements of his old STARTLING STORIES material, but by

refining and honing them to the point where, when he is impelled by a worthwhile idea, they provide him with a subtle and successful set of tools. As a pulp writer — the man who wrote, for example, Big Planet — there were two things which set Vance apart from the ruck. There was his style, exotic and strangely mannered, though nevertheless prone to cliché; and there was his fecundity of invention, his seemingly inexhaustible ability to devise odd, attractive cultural milieux. The banality of most of his plots was thus cleverly disguised.

The basis of his success is, apparently, a lively interest in anthropology. It is hard to believe that the majority of Vance's alien societies do not have their counterparts somewhere on this world; but equally, it is very hard to pin him down so that one can say with certainty that this Vance culture is based on that terrestrial example. There is always the possibility that he might really have invented it all, which makes him a good deal more elusive than, for example, Robert Silverberg, who has made recognisable use of American Indian sources, or Ursula Le Guin, who may indeed be making it all up, but is nevertheless prejudged by her background.

The reason for this is probably tied up with his style. Vance has made increasingly intelligent use of his extensive vocabulary so that in his worlds even commonplace objects can seem strange and new. This is particularly apparent in Emphyrio, a novel which can quite easily be read without realising that its setting is essentially a mean Northern industrial town.

Yet Vance rarely puts his talents fully in harness; it may be that there are only two stories in which they are quintessentially expressed — The Blue World and "The Moon Moth". Generally speaking, he can be seen at his best when his protagonist is a member of the society being described, and he is disappointing when the protagonist is an outsider (and yes, I know that the protagonist in "The Moon Moth" is an outsider; the difference here is that he is trying to get on the inside). In the latter instances — typified by Big Planet and the Tsohai quartet, in both of which the story is that of a man trying to escape from a planet on which he has unwillingly been dumped — the books, although entertaining, are not much more than incident-packed exotic travelogues.

When he decides to work from inside one of his creations, Vance habitually tells the story of a single individual being born and growing up to find his place in society — a *bildungsroman*, if that isn't too pretentious a term. Further, it is inevitable that this man will come into conflict with authority, because the culture is stratified, highly institutionalised, hedged about with rigid codes and arbitrary judgements, and his personal goals cannot be fulfilled by following the path set out for him. He is destined to become proscribed in some way, to escape apprehension and death, and to eventually play a key part in overthrowing the system. In sociological terms, these are classical studies of anomie.

It's particularly appropriate, then, that Vance's latest novel in this mode should be titled The Anome (it certainly suggests that he knows what he's at). This fits squarely into the pattern outlined above (which has previously maintained The Blue World, Emphyrio and To Live Forever) with an additional promise of variety.

On the planet Durdans are four continents; the chief of these, Shant, is a collection of 62 cantons with little in common 'save

language, music, color symbology and submission to the rule of the Anome (sometimes known as the Faceless Man)'. The child Mar, later to become Castel Etwane, is born in a community called the Chilites. These are an authoritarian religious community worshipping a divine female entity, Galexis. The women of the society are held to be inferior: their tasks in life are to bear children and to perform menial tasks (under harsh conditions). Males enter the service of Galexis, worshipping under the influence of an hallucinogenic drug. They are required to maintain an exaggerated state of ritual purity which precludes any physical contact with women. This creates a certain difficulty in continuing the species, which is solved by an establishment called Rhododendron Ways: a road along which the young women have their cottages, where wayfarers can stop and stay (for a fee) — institutionalised prostitution, in fact.

Here Vance is pursuing one of his favourite secondary themes — making fun of religion. The frequency and relish with which he assaults this target makes it obvious that this is a pet obsession. I'm not sure that the institution of the Chilites is quite as absurd as the Temple of Finuka in Euphryia, but it is certainly memorably ridiculous.

The young Etwane rebels against the strictures of this community, and manages to escape; his mother, not so lucky, is taken from her cottage and set to work in the harsh conditions of the tannery (i.e. workhouse). Again, there is a similarity to Euphryia in that it is the parent (the sole parent — Vance's youths rarely have two) who suffers for the child's sake, having instilled in him, by more or less subtle means, the spirit of rebellion. However, The Anome differs from the earlier novel in that Etwane still has the possibility of legal recourse; he has not yet been forced into illegal action. He sets off to enter an appeal with the Anome.

The authority of the Anome derives from the use of torcaz collars containing an explosive which are fastened around the necks of all adults of Shant. The Faceless Man and his assistants, the Benevolences, are able to detonate the explosive, and thus 'take the head' of any wrongdoer. Since they retain anonymity, nobody can ever be sure that loose talk will not reach the Faceless Man's ears and thus result in the speaker's death. The justice of the Anome is supposedly impartial and available to all. In the city of Garwy, where he supposedly resides, are booths where, for a fee, anyone may petition the Anome. It is to Garwy that Etwane comes to seek a dispensation from the Anome to free his mother.

As in most of his stories, Vance is here presenting a static society. We do not know exactly how long the Anome has been the supreme authority of Shant, but it is certainly more than a thousand years. Thus the creation of this society becomes essentially 'given' — it is as it always has been; there is no need to explain how it came to be so. This is fortunate, because it is difficult to envisage how such a society could have come about; how the wholesale adoption of the torcaz could have been accomplished. The mechanics of the system in operation are similarly unlikely. It emerges that there are only three people able to detonate the torcaz (the Anome and two Benevolences) — a situation reminiscent of the often-ridiculed set-up of Fohl's A Plague of Pythons.

Why, then, does Vance avoid being merely ridiculous, where Fohl



clearly did not? Here we return to the stasis in which Vance's societies are fixed. We do not take his culture seriously as a culture; rather, we sit back and admire the ingenuity with which they are constructed. Vance does make an occasional gesture towards filling in the history, but this tends to be colourful rather than convincing, describing a few unusual events without giving any real sense of the world's history as a continuing process:

"Then at last Piaziame was assassinated, the plotters were immediately apprehended, sealed into glass balls, and suspended on a cable running between a pair of spires. For a thousand years the balls hung like baubles until one by one they were struck by lightning and destroyed."

'For a thousand years ...' -- how easily Vance skips an inconvenient millenium!

The reason why the systems are never dynamic is essentially that they are elaborate card-houses, poised delicately on the shakiest foundations: it only takes a breath of wind to send the whole thing toppling. (When Vance has one of his characters refer to the Chilite community in The Anome as 'a marvelous offrontary', he seems to be recognising this artificiality.) Much of the fascination of reading Vance lies in the baroque embroidery with which he decorates his creations. His time-locked societies develop elaborate, decadent arts, rituals and institutions. Vance takes great delight in carefully describing these, and other odd aspects of his worlds; one suspects that, for him, the main pleasures are over before he ever actually starts writing a story. The setting is the chief focus of his interest (and this explains why Vance stories which begin with every sign of the author lavishing great care on his work too often begin to look, well before the end, as if the writing was becoming an unwelcome chore).

In The Anome, Vance has devised a continent-wide system of balloon-powered railways -- an improbable (though not impossible) concept, whose workings are delineated with loving care. And, as always, he excels in devising odd musical instruments and describing their workings and range, both in the small instruments played by the wandering musicians of the book, and on a much larger scale:

"He came to the Aeolian Hall, a musical instrument of pearl-gray glass three hundred feet long. Wind collected by scoops was collected into a plenum. The operator worked rods and keys to let pent air move one, two, a dozen or a hundred from among the ten thousand sets of glass chimes. A person who wandered the hall experienced audible dimension, with sounds coming from various directions: tinkling chords, whispers of vaguely heard melody, thin glassy shiverings, the crystal-pure tones of the center gongs; hurried gusts racing the ceiling like ripples across a pond; fateful chimes, pervasive and melancholy as a sea bell heard through the fog."

As a novel, The Anome is perhaps a little disappointing, though its virtues heavily outweigh its faults. After Etzwane fails to get satisfaction from the Anome, the plot becomes (as one could have predicted from the outset) a search to discover the identity of the Faceless Man. In this, Etzwane is aided by the mysterious Ifness (Vance's talent for naming occasionally borders on genius), who has been accompanying Etzwane for his own unexplained purposes. Ifness is

easily the most interesting character in the book, but unfortunately the revelation of who he is falls rather flat and causes a lapse in the book's mood from which it does not fully recover. Later, he is arbitrarily removed from the scene in a rather unsatisfactory manner, leaving Ettvane alone at a crucial point. The Anome is unmasked — according to the book — through the application of Inforce's specialised knowledge, but in fact the method by which he is traced would have worked equally well without any such aid, and its simplicity makes the long-term survival of the system even more implausible. The trouble with card-houses is the suspicious ease with which they collapse.

The novel ends on a point of unresolved crisis, obviously set up for its sequels. It is the first part of a trilogy: the other two parts (The Brave Free Men and The Asutra) have been serialised in P&SF (as was this book, then called The Priceless Man), but have not yet appeared in book form. I therefore reserve comment on them, as P&SF are known to extend their unkindest cuts to the novels they publish. One of Vance's worst habits is to start more series than he can usefully finish (it's an infuriating habit in a writer who tends to lose interest). Perhaps in this case — unlike the incomplete Star Kings series and the so-perfunctorily ended Tschai quartet — he will see it through, exploring his world in full detail. Let us hope so: if he does, The Anome is going to be the first book of a very fine Vance trilogy indeed.

Trullion: Alastor 2262 (a complicated title, which AMAZING STORIES managed to get wrong six times out of seven when they serialised it (nice one, Ted)) is also nominally the first book of a series, though in this case the apparent overall structure is much looser. The Alastor Cluster is a group of some thirty thousand stars with three thousand inhabited planets. Trullion is numbered 2262 among these. The five trillion inhabitants all submit to the authority of one man, the Connatic, who is given to wandering anonymously from world to world (any resemblance between the Connatic and the Anome must be put down to their similarity). I suspect that future volumes will have nothing to do with Trullion, and their only connection with this book will be their supposed locale, plus the occasional fleeting appearance of the Connatic. Hopefully, these future volumes will also be rather more successful; Trullion (as I shall call it, for brevity's sake) is one of Vance's weaker novels, though not without moments of interest.

Part of the trouble, I think, is that Glinnes Hilden, our hero, has nothing to rebel against. Trullion is an easy going world, with minimal government; its people pursue a friendly, laxy life on a world where everything they need is easily available. The people seem to be based on everyone's idea of the South Sea Islanders, though their gentle habitat of fens and islands is more original. Glinnes is a conservative character, for a change; others want to force 'progress' on Trullion, while he wants to maintain the traditional ways of life. So, like many another Vance hero, he is opposing regimentation, limitations on freedom. But unlike his predecessors, he is not up against an established system, so he never quite seems to know where to push. He is in conflict with various sets of individuals in this novel, but although these individual conflicts threaten to cohere into some overall theme they never actually do so. The result is a fuzzy texture to the novel.

Worse, having no system to describe, Vance seems at a loss for something to write about. He eventually seems to settle for the game

which he has devised for this book: hussade, seemingly somewhat derivative of American football (though I don't know enough about that game to be sure -- perhaps an American reader could confirm or deny the supposition). For long stretches, Trullion bids fair to become perhaps the first fully-fledged science fiction sports novel -- a somewhat doubtful distinction, it must be admitted. But then, quite suddenly -- it happens on page 166: it's that sudden -- Vance loses interest, and hussade is forgotten. For the remainder of the novel, Vance's coolly exotic style cannot mask the fact that he is falling back on some rather poor clichés. The plot becomes a mixture of intrigues and hostilities, involving people like the nomadic Trevanyi (who are not a little reminiscent of gypsies) and the starmenters -- space pirates, black beards and all. There are some good moments, but really this is very routine stuff. Vance fans will find some things to like in this disappointing novel, but anyone seeking an introduction to his work would be well advised to steer clear of Trullion; Alastor 2262, and to give The Anome a try.

New Writings in SF 22

edited by Kenneth Bulmer
Sidgwick & Jackson; £1.75; 189p.

Reviewed by
Tony Sudbery

Kenneth Bulmer is John Carnell's successor in the job of providing a solid backbone to the body of British sf short stories in the New Writings in SF series. You can sneer at this series as prolonging an outworn mode past its time, or welcome it as evidence of health in a living tradition; that seems to be a matter of personality and mood. Personally, and at the time of writing, I feel inclined to do the latter.

I am therefore glad to report that Kenneth Bulmer's editing seems to be following the same lines as John Carnell's. His first volume has a substantial core of competent and enjoyable traditional sf. He gives us Harry Harrison being very funny about military and civilian inflexibility, James White being ingenious and intriguing in his Sector General format, and Christopher Priest, Britain's answer to Larry Niven, building a weird world which doesn't quite hang together, I think, but is fun to think about and makes a satisfying hard-core finale. (You may have thought that Christopher Priest was a long-haired, avant-garde layabout, but that must be a security cover.) As Full Supporting Programme we have, in descending order, Sydney J. Bounds telling an unoriginal but acceptable quarantine story, E.C. Tubb doing something boringly Freudian with a female life support system, Donald A. Wollheim pushing Velikovsky, John Kippax cracking a silly joke and Laurence James just being silly. We also get Arthur C. Clarke and Kenneth Bulmer conspiring to cheat the reader by reprinting the introduction to Rendezvous With Rama, which is worthless out of context and doesn't justify the use of Clarke's name as a lure on the cover. This isn't even supporting programme, but a trailer.

Which leaves Brian Aldiss's "Three Enigmas". Well, there are three of them, and they are enigmatic. They have to be read several times, and two of them at least are well worth it. They are quite different from anything else in the book -- different from anything else in sf -- but they recognisable arise from the tradition represented by the other stories. As you can see, I'm floundering. The best thing I can do is

to reproduce Aldiss's instruction in his introduction: "Consider them as painters, as Tiepolo's engravings crossed with de Chirico's canvases". Yes, do that, if you know who Tiepolo and de Chirico are; but at any rate please read them. Slowly. And then read them again. These short pieces show the sf tradition justifying itself by generating something new and strange and beautiful. It strikes me as somehow appropriate that when I went to get out my History of the World's Art to try to find what Tiepolo and de Chirico were supposed to suggest to me, my finger slipped on the shelf of Spring Books bargains and I found myself settling into my armchair with a Pictorial History of Jazz. These pieces shift in that sort of way.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

(Being an expanded version of the 'Books Received' column, aimed in vain pursuit of comprehensive coverage.)

From Collanca:

The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume Two, edited by Ben Bova, 422p., £2.90 ISBN 0 575 01735 X

This is the first of two volumes of (so it claims) novellas, stories of these lengths having been excluded from the first anthology. The editor arrived at a final list of 24 stories, of which 4 had to be omitted for various reasons (slightly odd in the case of The Time Machine, which is surely out of copyright). Ten of the remaining stories are in this book, with the other ten to follow in a later volume. Long time if readers are sure to be familiar with most of these: "Call Me Joe", "Who Goes There?", "Nerves", "Universe", "The Marching Morone", "Vintage Season", "...And Then There Were None", "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell", "Baby is Three", and "With Folded Hands". Nevertheless, I think the Del Ray and Williamson stories are making their first appearance in this country. Like its predecessor, this is clearly destined to become a basic item in any sf collection. But I wish the SFMA would show a little consistency (just a little; I don't ask much). Robert Silverberg's introduction to the first book stated that stories over 15,000 words were excluded; logically, therefore, all the stories in this new volume should exceed that length. But "The Marching Morone" certainly doesn't; and if "Call Me Joe" does it's a very close thing. All right, word lengths are tricky things — but nobody can get away from the fact that "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell", at around 9,000 words is not only far too short to be in this book but is also clearly shorter than "Scanners Live in Vain", the Cordwainer Smith story in the first volume! It seems to me that if you're going to embark on a project like this you might at least do it right.

Mirror Image, by Michael C. Conely; 223p., £2.20 ISBN 0 575 01726 0

This received a rather garbled review in VECTOR 64. Our reviewer (all right, me) said: "extremely well plotted and well thought out ... a very impressive debut". A most enjoyable piece of solid sf storytelling. Don't miss it.

Time Out Of Mind, by Richard Cowper; 159p., £1.90 ISBN 0 575 01697 3

For long stretches this looks as if it may develop into something very special, but unfortunately when the big climax arrives it's rather garbled, as if Mr Cowper was making it up as he went along, and was better at setting up mysteries than explaining them. Worth reading,

though, for the nicely mounting sense of unease which permeates the book.

Heritage of the Star, by Sylvia Engdahl; 246p., £1.60 ISBN 0 575 01669 8

When this book appeared in America last year the title was This Star Shall Abide and the author was Sylvia Louise Engdahl. Somehow the two combined to give a quite off-putting aura of spinelessness. Now, with a somewhat better title and an abbreviated author's name it's a good deal less unattractive — which is just as well, as this actually isn't bad at all. Noren is a young lad whose world is an odd, mysterious place. Noren's people are a largely agrarian people; the Scholars and Technicians, who live in the City (where no villager may enter), have an advanced technology which they keep to themselves, apart from treating the grain every year, providing fertile eggs to breed fowl, and giving the villagers drinkable water. Why is the untreated soil poisonous? Why will drinking untreated water drive you mad? Why is heresy such a heinous crime (convicted heretics being handed over to the Scholars, never to be seen again)? Noren, as you may have guessed, wants to know all these things, and eventually he finds out. The experienced sf reader will be a couple of steps ahead of him all the way, but the trip is nonetheless entertaining. Miss Engdahl has worked out her situation well, and constructed her plot very ably about it. Reminiscent of some of Heinlein's juveniles, which can't be bad.

The Crystal Gryphon, by Andre Norton; 234p., £1.50 ISBN 0 575 01616 7

I read somewhere that this belongs in the 'Witch World' series, which may explain why I didn't get on with it. (An alternative explanation might involve the fact that I never get on with any of Miss Norton's books, which I find turgid in the extreme.) This seems to be a sword and sorcery story, and as such is written in a sword and sorcery style, a dreadful thing based, like most such efforts, on misguided attempts to be like Tolkien, and a sad belief that this can be accomplished by constructing your sentences backwards. Opened I the book at a random page, and — "Kinsman, you forget yourself. Such speech is unseemly, and I know shame that you could think me so poor a thing as to listen to it". Et cetera, interminably. Still, if you like books where people call one another 'kinsman' and 'know shame', this may be for you. It's quite cheap. (Why, incidentally, are children's books so much cheaper than adult books? They're no more cheaply produced — in fact Collings's children's books often look a good bit better than their adult titles. Explanation anyone?)

From Faber & Faber:

Midsummer Century, by James Blish; 106p., £1.60 ISBN 0 571 10330 8

Even Blish nods. This seems to be an attempt at a 1930's-style sf adventure — an English-language equivalent of Stanton A. Coblenitz, perhaps. It's enjoyable in a trivial sort of way, this story of an English astronomer accidentally catapulted 25,000 years into a future where the remnants of mankind struggle for survival against the regime of the Birds. But this sort of thing isn't really Blish's forte — it's so far beneath his usual aim. The real Blish is glimpsed in an attempt (not really successful) to graft on some philosophical discussion of levels of consciousness and e.e.p. The opening chapter is a strange affair — for all that he now lives over here, James Blish seems to entertain some funny ideas about this country, not least in giving a native of Doncaster a Midlands accent. Another real and valid

objection to this book is its size: those 106 pages include quite a lot of white space. I'm not sure that there's any real distinction that can be drawn around this borderline length, but I would have called this a novella rather than a novel. I would have thought that a couple of short stories, at least, might have been added to flesh it out a bit. Not exactly a Best Buy as it stands.

The Stainless Steel Rat Saves The World, by Harry Harrison; 191p., £1.90 ISBN 0 571 09956 4

This only arrived the day before yesterday, so I haven't had the chance to do more than glance at it. More adventures of Slippery Jim diGrim, of course, so on past experience one expects a very enjoyable, if forgettable, read. Like the previous volume, this has a magnificently silly cover illustration, which is credited this time ... and turns out to be by Harry Harrison himself! Nice one, Harry.

From Sidgwick & Jackson:

The Invincible, by Stanislaw Lem; 221p., £1.95 ISBN 0 283 97962 3

This reads a bit wooden to me, though I've only skimmed it. The translator is not named, but her previous main claim to fame was as the translator of Perry Rhodan. Like Solaris, this is a second-stage translation: Polish to German to English. Tony Sudbery will be reviewing this in a future issue, if I prompt him often enough.

The Fingalnan Conspiracy, by John Rankine; 190p., £1.75 ISBN 0 283 97954 2

Oh well, I suppose at least it makes the rest of the Sidgwick list shine by comparison. The first sentence is: "Flogging the last erg from a failing power pack, York reckoned he might still do it." And it gets worse!

The Three Eyes of Evil, by A.E. Van Vogt; 218p., £1.95 ISBN 0 283 97983 6

Reprints two old Van Vogt Ace Doubles — "Siege of the Unseen" and "Earth's Last Portress" (also known as "Recruiting Station"). In the former, a man has an accident which reveals a third eye hidden in his forehead; soon enough, he finds that with the aid of this new eye he can see, and pass into, a different world existing contiguously with our own. When he wrote this, I believe Van Vogt was under the influence of the Bates system of improving eyesight by chucking away your glasses. Maybe he was having trouble seeing the typesetter keys. "Earth's Last Portress" is a lot more fun, a typical large-scale Van Vogt farraço, dating from his most productive period in the early 40s.

From Sphere Books:

Deathworlds 1-3, by Harry Harrison; 157, 160, 157p., 30p. each ISBNs 0 7221 4350 8, 0 7221 4351 1, 0 7221 4352 4

These three novels are almost the epitome of good modern sf adventure, fast and furious and immensely entertaining. Also, each is a good bit better written than the last, Harrison having matured into a very considerable craftsman. Definitely not to be missed. There's an air of finality about the last volume, but one can't help hoping for another. Any chance, Harry?

Conan the Adventurer, Conan the Warrior, by Robert E. Howard; 192p., 30p. each ISBNs 0 7221 4688 4, 0 7221 4689 2

Although virtually the entire series has now been published in the U.S.A., Sphere seem to be planning to issue them in the same cock-eyed sequence as did Lancer Books over there. These two come fourth and fifth, as I recall (I may be wrong, but I can't be bothered to go and check), though it's always possible that Lin Carter and L. Sprague de Camp may have more of their egregious pastiches in the works (I suspect that when they have finished with it the saga will cover Conan's entire life, starting with Conan the Toddler and ending with Conan the Octogenarian). Conan is, of course, one of the legendary heroes of pulp fantasy, lurching his bloody way through a patchwork prehistoric world, clawing his way up the social ladder until he eventually becomes king of Aquilonia. Modern readers (even accepting that Howard was writing some 40 years ago) will find the white supremacist attitude which they embody rather hard to stomach. They may also wonder at the marvellous restraint which Howard's narrative displays. Here's a good bit, from "The Slithering Shadow" (in Conan the Adventurer):

"Three men confronted him at the foot of the marble steps, and he struck them with a deafening crash of steel. There was a frenzied instant when the blades flamed like summer lightning; then the group fell apart and Conan sprang up the stair. The oncoming horde tripped over three writhing forms at its foot: one lay face-down in a sickening welter of blood and brains; another propped himself on his hands, blood spurting blackly from his severed throat veins; the other bowed like a dying dog as he claved at the crimson stump that had been an arm.

"As Conan rushed up the marble stair, the man above ... drew a sword.... He thrust downward as the barbarian surged upon him. But as the point sang towards his throat, Conan ducked deeply. The blade slit the skin of his back, and Conan straightened, driving his saber upward as a man might wield a butcher-knife....

"So terrific was his headlong drive that the sinking of the saber to the hilt into the belly of his enemy did not check him. He caromed against the wretch's body ... the other, the saber torn through his body, fell headlong down the stair, ripped open to the spine from groin to broken breastbone. In a ghastly mess of streaming entrails the body tumbled...."

Good stuff, eh? I must say I rather like the image in the first paragraph, of a one-legged horde falling over (not altogether surprising)! Granted, some of these stories have a considerable, primitive drive — but really, their survival says little for the sophistication of the audience (oh, I enjoyed them a few years ago, I admit — but at least I had the excuse of being an immature teenager). Conan is hardly an edifying character, not least in his penchant for monosyllables. Robert E. Howard would surely have concurred with James Bligh in his dislike for said-bookies — but in keeping with his hero's intellectual capacity, his standard phrase, from which he seldom deviates, is not 'he said' but 'he grunted'.

In the American edition, these books at least boasted superbly-executed Frazetta covers, but although these paintings are reproduced in these editions, something very nasty has happened to them in the hands of Acorn Litho, of Feltham, Middlesex (an obscene place-name if ever there was one) and they are almost unrecognisable.

New Worlds 6, edited by Michael Moorcock and Charles Platt; 263pp., 40p.
 ISBN 0 7221 6201 4

With the addition of Charles Platt as U.S. editor, New Worlds now boasts an even more impressive list of names on the title-page, although cynics might be impelled to comment on the remarkable contribution to this issue from the Art Editor. I haven't yet read the bulk of the stories, but this is a solid looking collection which will doubtless repay your attention. However, since Michael Moorcock's Introduction draws particular attention to the critical material, it seems appropriate to look at that instead. We can rule out, of course, Charles Platt's brief "Introduction to New Readers" (which is actually an introduction to New Worlds, for new readers), a puff which might have carried more conviction if, having invoked his name, he had checked up on how Jerry Kozinski spells it.

John Clute's critical vocabulary is certainly extensive. His contribution, an exegesis of Blish's work peculiarly entitled "Scholia, Seasoned With Crabs, Blish Is" (which reeks of some clever anagrams), begins well enough, with a little parody of Ulysses, not inappropriate in this context. Unfortunately, success seems to go to his head, and, scribbling madly away with a pencil in one hand, and the microprint edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (complete with handy magnifier) in the other, is soon handing down sentences like:

"Difficulties of gist apprehension, and general fibrillation of the affect, are not in this case intensified by any dalirium parataxis from the pen of Donald A. Wollheim as he wields it with his thumb throughout The Universe Makers, that inimitable fan's vede secum for the sniffing out of security risks and for the identification of echt-sf on the high road of 'Future Predictions', through his expedient refusal to mention James Blish at all."

A few pages of this gets hard on anyone, not just those who thought parataxis were a fleet of minicabs. The substance of this article (albeit drawn primarily from Northrop Frye) is most interesting; unfortunately Clute's prose, generally fevered, here often deteriorates into terminal logorrhoea. Incidentally, anyone led to wonder why Clute introduces a totally irrelevant plug for E.C. Tubb's Dumarest series may find it relevant to know that Clute works (or worked) as a reader for Arrow Books, the publishers.

M. John Harrison, on the other hand, is quite comprehensible but none too interesting. "Filling Us Up", his contribution, smacks too much of a man faithfully toying the party line — in this case, that laid down by Moorcock in his contentious and ill-thought-out Introduction to New Worlds. Thus, Harrison includes the obligatory sneer at sf fans (based, in his case, more on prejudice than first-hand knowledge), the suggestion that the sf label is a hindrance rather than a help (here based on a downright untruth, when he blames the lack of success of Disch's 33 on its publication as sf, whereas in fact the book's dust jacket explicitly denied that it could be thought of as science fiction). Moorcock's editorial included an inexplicable condemnation of criticism in sf fan circles because of its reluctance to be insulting; in apparent response to this, Harrison is as insulting as anyone could wish. Readers who feel that there is a vital distinction between criticism and abuse should take note. Harrison's actual thesis concerns poor thinking in sf — an argument for which a good case could be made out, but not by using (as Harrison does) quotes out of context from action-adventure sf novels. In the case of Coney's

Mirror Image, at least, the book is completely misrepresented.

There is a suspicion about all of this that the criticism in New Worlds is playing favourites. It wouldn't be alone in this, by any means, but that certainly doesn't excuse it, particularly in view of the superior and, yes, patronising attitude it takes. Consider the tediously persistent attacks on Donald A. Wollheim, dragged in quite irrelevantly by both Clute and Harrison. Is it unjustified for the reader to recall the animosity which has existed between Moorcock and Wollheim?

Both Moorcock and Harrison write like disaffected fans; they may have defected from sf fandom, but they have retained its rather unadmirable propensity to review books by attacking people. In both cases it's a waste of ability -- and a waste of opportunity, because God knows the sf field could stand a good dose of strong criticism. But it should be criticism of fiction, not sneering at attitudes. Is this really your new critical vocabulary, Mike? There used to be a lot of it in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, you know.

From Arrow Books:

Kalin, by E.C. Tubbs; 192p., 35p. ISBN 0 09 907640 3

Part of what John Clute described as a "fine, modest, rounded, professional quest-for-lost-Earth sequence". Oh, I've no argument with this assessment, only with its context.

From Panther Books:

The Steam-Driven Boy, by John Sladek; 189p., 35p. ISBN 0 586 03802 9

Sladek has given us two of the best funny sf novels ever. His short stories don't show the same degree of comic inventiveness, unfortunately. I found this collection a little thin. It's saved by the inclusion of his complete set of parodies of sf writers. Not all are successful -- he doesn't catch the flavour of Cordwainer Smith at all (despite some fine incidentals, such as the family of fox people, F'Red, F'Annie and their little boy F'art), nor does he have any success with Arthur C. Clarke, beyond the brilliant anagrammatizing of his name into Carl Truhacker. However, he is superb with Philip K. Dick, hilarious with Isaac Asimov and the Three Laws, and cruel with Robert Heinlein. And one mustn't forget the obvious target, Ballard, with whom he deals effectively, if not with the same concise brilliance of James Cawthorn's parody of a few years back. The best thing in Sladek's condensed novel is the title of the first section.

NEXT ISSUE will also have a lot of reviews, though not quite the excess in this one. Mark Adlard will be reviewing Brian Aldiss's tremendous new novel Frankenstein Unbound, undoubtedly the best thing to emerge from Mary Shelley's novel yet, "Monster Mash" notwithstanding. Definitely a graveyard smash. Graham Charnock, a middle-aged book-seller, will be looking at Ballard's Crash from a safe distance. I have carried over from this issue a review of Anderson's There Will Be Time by Rob Holdstock, and one of Orbit 11, by Cy Chauvin. Also reviews of a couple of Robert Hale books by Vic Hallett. Chris Morgan has got the latest New Writings volume, and something else. And I hope to have reviews from Pamela Sargent, George Zebrowski, and others.

PERIOD OF TRANSITION

MICHAEL G CONEY

The late E. J. Carnell: It could be that you aren't cut out to be a novelist. I have known it happen. Brilliant short stories but the long material not quite jelling. (letter May 6, 1971)

Michael G. Coney: This I am confident enough to refute. I am probably the best of novelist never to have sold a novel. My time will come. (letter June 1, 1971)

It was worth hunting through the rejection slippage to unearth that pearl. Reading further in my letter I find that I discussed two writers whose novels, I felt, did not afford me the same enjoyment which I obtained from their short stories; these being Bradbury and Ballard. In both instances the reason was the same; the author's novel was merely an extension of his typical short story, linear development with no convolutions of plots; a straight series of events with very little suspense element. There was no climax at the finish because there were no problems to solve, no sub-plots to knit together. Instead the hero walked off into the sun, or the rain, and the book had finished before the story. Ballard has since realized the faults inherent in this style of novel writing and has challenged the principle of linear narrative, even the principle of plot itself — but this is something of an evasion. He is still responsible for *THE CRYSTAL WORLD*, which was vividly boring, and *"The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral L"*, which was vividly fascinating. Bradbury has realized his limitations and mostly confines himself to the short stories so admirably suited to his style.

To a man accustomed to turning out short stories the thought of 60,000 words provokes apprehension. How to find enough to say? How to sustain the pace, the interest? How to sustain the mood, to prevent the serious condemnation of our civilisation from degenerating into farcical satire, or vice versa? How to remember what happened ten chapters back, to remember that Asta is due west of Pallahaxi as the grummet flies, to remember that Susanna's eyes are blue? How to justify spending the time on the thing in the first place, when rejection will mean weeks, possibly months of wasted work?

The late E. J. Carnell: It is certainly not the worst novel I have ever read, although five minutes after putting it down I was unable to recall the names of the characters or, indeed, the plot. (letter circa 1968, destroyed instantly therefore exact date not available, following submission of

THE THREE HUNDRED YEARS' INSANITY.)

Michael G. Coney:

(Silence lasting six months.)

SYZYGY was my next novel, three years later, and I was aware of all the problems -- but by then I had noticed a recent tendency for my short stories grossly to overrun their length due to excess plotting. I was having to dispose of scenes, problems, philosophies briefly, when I wanted to dwell. I was writing sequels to stories and sequels to sequels. So the novel was the next step, and I took no chances. SYZYGY was one of the most carefully-written novels of all time -- which was itself a danger.

I re-read my favourite novels by Wyndham, Simak, Fleming, Amis, Steinbeck and others objectively, to see how it was done, cataloguing where the climaxes came. In order that the locale should be convincing I set the story around my ex-home in Ashpington, Devon, thinly disguised as the planet Arcadia. I used acquaintances as characters. I wrote notes and drew maps and compiled dictionaries and character dossiers. I wrote out the main plot in précis and divided it into twenty chapters of 3000 words each, constructed a vast number of sub-plots and tied them all together into one stupendous climax, with sub-climaxes spaced equally along the way.

Then I wrote SYZYGY. On re-reading it, it seemed, you know, not bad at all. Quite good. Certainly not as laboured as I had expected. This was probably because the story departed from the original synopsis around chapter 4, only returning at rare intervals and at the climax. I had learned my first lesson: it is impossible to tell a story based on too rigid a synopsis. A minor facet of a person's character revealed in chapter 5 might totally invalidate a major incident in chapter 15.

The late E. J. Carnell: I liked SYZYGY. (letter November 5, 1970)

Michael G. Coney:

(following problems in selling SYZYGY) The publishers are fools. The time has come for what I believe is called an agonising reappraisal. I will rewrite it before the publishers get sick of the sight of it in its present form. (letter April 3, 1971) (See subsequent letters at the head of this article.)

Managing a hotel in the West Indies can be a relaxing occupation, particularly when the staff are on strike. With the hotel empty I was at something of a loss -- so I plunged straight into MIRROR IMAGE.

Around chapter 10 I found that I had, incredibly, over-estimated my ability as a novelist. I have always constructed the endings of my stories first, so that I know what I am aiming at. I had no ending for MIRROR IMAGE, and worse, I had no idea what happened after chapter 10. The implications of the basic premise had been so numerous and interesting that maybe I'd looked on the book as a lifetime project -- I don't know. I panicked and threw it aside, and became fascinated by a jigsaw-puzzle piece of plotting which needed charts and timetables and finally emerged as a satisfactory novel-length oddity called FRIENDS COME IN BOXES.

Here, then, is the principal difference between the novel and the short story from the writer's point of view: the novel must be more carefully planned -- unless the writer has a mind so devious that he can

retain every detail of future development, while writing always a few chapters behind his thoughts... My mistake realised, I plotted out the remainder of MIRROR IMAGE on paper and finished writing it, adding a couple of chapters at the start for good measure. The second lesson: despite lesson one, some sort of rough synopsis is necessary. In addition to its obvious purpose it has the psychological benefit of persuading the writer that the novel is virtually finished, even though he is struggling through chapter 3 at the time.

One of the biggest problems facing a part-time writer is time; particularly as regards the novel because, no matter how thorough the synopsis, if the writing drags on for months, the thread will be lost. I recently read an article in Daniel Say's Vancouver fanzine by M. G. Compton. Apparently it takes Compton several months of spare time to complete a novel. I could never write on that basis — I don't have the patience — and I have the greatest admiration for Compton, to be able to produce such excellent books in that manner.

Shaken by my experience with MIRROR IMAGE, I wrote a few shorts until the next Caribbean labour dispute gave me the chance of a new experience: the possibility of devoting myself to a short period of full-time writing. I had my plot all ready and, very approximately, I noted down the major incident in each of twenty-odd chapters of 3000 words each, and sat down — in a borrowed cottage overlooking the sea — to write a chapter a day. At the beginning of each day I wrote a rough précis of what today's chapter was to be about. Three weeks later A LEGEND OF DOWNWAYS* was completed — painlessly, easily, in about four hours writing time daily. This was the milestone. The mechanics of novel writing had been mastered; with the confidence derived from this I was able to tackle more ambitious projects. And to me, confidence is all-important.

The late E. J. Carnell: Happy to be able to send you here-with three copies of the Ballantine agreement for SYZYGY. (letter November 4, 1971.)

Leslie Flood: I have pleasure in sending you herewith the contracts in respect of the American sale of MIRROR IMAGE. (letter April 11, 1972.)

I am happy to report sale of A LEGEND OF DOWNWAYS to DAW Books Inc. (letter September 18, 1972.)

Enclosed are contracts for a further sale to DAW Books, FRIENDS COME IN BOOKS. (letter September 26, 1972.)

Michael G. Coney: A merry Christmas and happy New Year to you and yours. (letter December 6, 1972.)

In the world of science fiction it is a peculiar fact that our finest writers are never satisfied, are constantly striving to develop; maybe this desire for new directions is why they are science fiction writers in the first place. It is a creditable trait, but dangerous in that it can lead to frustration for the writer when he cannot achieve what he attempts, because the printed word can only convey just so much meaning. This in turn can result in loss of entertainment value to the reader, as the

* Retitled THE HERO OF DOWNWAYS by DAW Books (HJE)

BRIAN WALDISS

AFTER THE RENAISSANCE

My mentality is fogged by what Sam Horkovitz would call 'concepts that the mind cannot stomach', but what I'm going to try and do here is to tell you in simple terms — terms so simple even I can understand them — some of my feelings about the present, which of course relates closely to the position from which one writes.

My feelings are basically this: that we are at the end of the period of Renaissance. Whenever you set the period of the High Renaissance — the 16th century, let's say — it forms a clear epoch down which we have moved. The golden dawn I suppose was in the 15th century. It was an age that was throwing off many of the set forms of the past; an age of scepticism, when new knowledge was accumulating, new enquiries. One had a certain mixing of society: pagans sat down at cardinals' tables; famous villains became notable patrons of the arts; aristocrats became musicians, and vice versa; monks became mathematicians, and all the rest of it. The feeling was of what we now know as the Renaissance man — a man of all kinds, who would embrace all realms of activity and knowledge. That you should be a good horseman and swordsman, and that you should also be able to turn a good sonnet and have a good prose style. Everything in that age seemed possible, and there were people like Leonardo da Vinci to testify to the proposition.

If you study the history (and there are lots of people reading this who have studied it more closely than I have) it seems to me that one of the key notes of the epoch was this mixture of science and the arts, such as we find in da Vinci's notebooks. Art and science had not separated out, and the development and understanding of the laws of perspective can be seen as one of the keys to the conquest of Nature, which was then to go ahead. The power of positive thinking has brought us a long way along the same trajectory, and along to the targets that were set up then; and in large measure I think those expectations have been fulfilled. Of course, when you've fulfilled your expectations, you have to begin anew and develop other expectations. To put it in a nutshell, you could say that the Borgias and the other rich families of Renaissance Italy pointed the way, gave the nod, to space travel. We are now living out their dream, every man's dream of living beyond his income.

That cycle has now ended. You've only got to look at the current state of painting, for instance — chaps tracing white squares on white squares — to have a feeling that something big has ended. We realise now that in fact all is not possible. Technology we see in many ways is now engaged in putting patches on earlier bad technology. It's pothetically obvious, but the understanding of disease, immunology and asepsis, together with the development of medicine, have had the effect of lowering the mortality rate of children; as a result, we have an overpopulated world. We are now being presented with a bill --

this is what I'm saying — a bill for those four centuries of Renaissance thinking, and we're now seeing that the expense ran fairly high.

At present we're far more preoccupied with the ruination of Earth than with the rehabilitation of Man. That original Promethean flame has led, all too quickly, to the nuclear holocaust.

In case you think this is an exercise in pessimism, it's not. I'm just stating what I, at least, believe to be a fact, and could produce evidence that seems to indicate the truth of it. I don't think all is lost by any means, and one of the things that has been gained is a tremendous fund of knowledge and experience, which we have now got to gather and learn to pool.

What interests me — and the other idea that I'm trying to shuffle together here — is that religion is one of the things that has been shucked off — the old standard religions. Although there are a lot of little crackpot ones around, the overriding dogma that had this country in its grip for a long time is dying; and I believe that it is possible to see a counterbalance to that in the new ecological knowledge we've gained — the understanding of Earth as a spaceship, if you like. It's only in this century that we can understand the beautiful simplicity that lies behind the beautiful complexity of all the cycles in process in our planet at the same time, like the insides of some extraordinary celestial watch.

The concept of recycling is now familiar to us, from the pages of John Campbell's *ASTOUNDING* if nowhere else; everyone understands — even outside the readership of this magazine — that things have to be recycled. It's a simple law: there's only so much material, so many elements, renewed by constant metamorphosis of forms. In our generation we have witnessed the first tentative steps into space, that first tentative walk on the moon; it all helps rub in the message. Earth has to make its way like a spaceship, recycling its abundant, but by no means infinite material through countless, countless generations of lives of all kinds, from the smallest gnat to — well, we won't mention any names — to the whale, using the sun as a super power source.

The stuff of everything — I won't give it to you in technical terms; that's not really my business — the materials of everything, from the first amoeba in the sea, through all those lovely dinosaurs, down to the Anglo-Saxons and Jutes with their furniture, the Carboniferous forests — everything is still living and a part of this process. We are ourselves a part of it. And it seems to me that the established religions are crazy in these terms, because if you accept the New Truth, then it follows that we ourselves are going to be ground down in that same astonishing machinery — no, not machinery; let's not call it machinery; it *isn't* machinery — in the unceasing cycles of Earth that carry everything away, but are never lost, but come up again in other forms. That Omar Khayyam thing:

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled

Right? The same idea of the recycling of things. We will be ground down to provide the basis for other lives, other life forms, which are going to occur throughout the remaining millions of years of Earth's history. And, to help me, we are part of this huge cycle of nature, and there's nothing that science or technology can do about

that.

There we are. The dream of immortality I think is part of the technological dream of getting something for nothing. I don't believe it myself, because I think that individual deaths and the deaths of phyla — their grinding down — form part of this vital self-renewing process of the planet. OK. We understand how global water circulation works, the whole business of the moisture moving from the sea up on the wind, the clouds, and falling back, being passed round again. The same fructifying process obtains for life, and that's all the immortality there is. It's impossible to see under those circumstances how the survival of the individual has any meaning. It has no meaning, is beyond the compass of science or religion. If there were some eternal eye up there, some god — some chap up there in a dirty bathrobe — still individual life would have no meaning, any more than the individual life of a sparrow has meaning to us. Significance, beauty ... they lie not in any dirty little private hopes or fears, but in the multifarious, the perpetual flow of life. Perhaps that has meaning.

Right, let's go back to the end of the Renaissance and try and tie that in, in a ragged way. If my diagnosis is correct, and we are at the end of a long epoch, then it explains the general confusion in society, ambiguity and puzzlement. The prophets of doom and the prophets of optimism are at war. To speak of science fiction, it seems to me that you echo this conflicting situation best by putting ambiguity into your stories; in that way, they may ring true.

Every epoch as it finishes must have some signposts to the next epoch. The trick is to read the signposts — there are so many up there — to see which lead to dead-ends, and which lead ahead. Science fiction is surely one of the ways you can try your hand at reading the signposts, to see which way matters are going. This is why I would opt very strongly for having just as many forms of science fiction as can possibly be tolerated by the market. Never mind what we tolerate as individuals — live and let live, have them all, do the reading. I don't think that think-tanks do the job as well as science fiction because they're generally government employed, unlike science fiction writers.

As for the growing mistrust of machinery and the growing mistrust, maybe, of science — much as it irks some people, it could be a positive sign, I think, to the future; it could be one of the positive signs to a post-Renaissance age. I believe it's impossible to think for one moment of abandoning technology and machines. I'm not a Luddite at all. But I do believe that there is a positive value in distrusting technology and its grey parent, in not placing our blind trust in them in other words, in attempting to bring them under better control. At present, the dying seas and lakes and the rest of it seem to indicate that we don't control them. We don't even control the controllers, or know who the controllers are. But I tell you something's got to be done. The traffic outside, buzzing along like a thousand mad Harlan Ellisons, the whole pace of life bearing down on us. One of the possible reasons, I think, is that we are turning from the faith in technology and exploitation, which was a very necessary stage of development, to an understanding of Earth's processes. A lot of the science fiction writers I like, I think are turning in that direction, and are trying to work with rather than against Nature. It seems to me that there's a whole ecological movement going towards that thing.

Now, what I said about Earth's life cycles and the abundant, but not

infinite, materials, was cast, you'll notice, in vaguely scientific terms. In fact, what I was saying is also very close to what can be said in religious terms — all that stuff about Time like an ever-rolling stream. If you look at a Bible, you'll find references to this same cycle, the sense of "the dust returning to the earth as it was...." At the same time, the concept of a cyclic Nature is also in Eastern thought; it's embraced in at least some of its elements in Hinduism and Buddhism. And maybe, just maybe — this is what I'm finally getting around to saying — there could be in what you might call this Whole Earth religion a possibility of a synthesis that could embrace East and West. It might provide common ground. It might provide common ground between capitalist and communist countries, who have both got the same hang-ups; to complete your Five-Year Plan is just as damaging to an environment as to make your profit. Same exploitive urges at work.

Those, and the new mystic religions, and the hangover from the old religions, could possibly come together on this uncertain and tricky ground of whatever you call it: the Whole Earth movement, could come together and achieve a synthesis for the future, for a new epoch. That's my thought, and that's really all I want to say except to add this: that I think mine is a very optimistic view of the future. I'm a cheery soul, and I believe very strongly in the future, all futures.

— Brian W. Aldiss

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Brian M Stableford ~ Machines and Inventions ~ Deus Ex Machina: SF & Technology, II

In the first part of this article I set out to explore science fiction's attitude to the identity of the machine as it was personified by the robot -- the anthropomorphous machine. I began with the robot rather than with the machine pure and simple because the robot in sf was (and still is, to a large extent) pure fabrication. The robot is a hypothetical entity and his role is purely symbolic. It is far easier to use the robot in order to gain an insight into the relationship between society and the machine than to use the machine itself, because the machine-as-symbol is always confused by the real existence of machines. It must be expected that an analysis of the role of the robot would give a much clearer and more detailed image of the pattern of change in social attitudes to the machine. Only in the light of the evolutionary chain which was derived from part one, therefore, can we expect to realise the full significance of the pattern which emerges from a consideration of the role of the machine in science fiction.

* * * * *

Volume 2 of the Science Fiction Writers of America's Science Fiction Hall of Fame contains two stories which come from outside the science fiction establishment, and which antedate the incarnation of science fiction as a social phenomenon in 1926. They are "The Time Machine" (1895) and E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909).^{*} Neither of these stories was written within a paradigm bearing the remotest resemblance to the sf paradigm, but the attempt by the SFWA to annex these stories into the history of the field is easily understandable by virtue of the fact that early science fiction employed its machines in the same way that Wells and Forster employed theirs. There are only two threads of thought apparent in embryonic (i.e. pre-1937) science fiction, and those are the attitudes embodied in "The Time Machine" (that the machine was a device for performing miracles) and "The Machine Stops" (that dependence on miracle-machines encouraged laziness and would lead to tragedy).

It was not important, in these times, to know how a machine worked. What was important was what it did. The invention of a machine was an act of creative genius. It was not the product of rational thought and process. Scientists were loners who maintained laboratories in their houses. They were almost always eccentric. In this kind of context, the machine became part and parcel of the miracles which it accomplished.

^{*} But don't go running to look them up there. According to the Introduction of the Gollancz edition of the anthology, neither story was available for inclusion. Odd, since the Wells, at least, is surely out of copyright... (BNP)

Science fiction appeared to have no more notion of where machines came from than a small child was supposed to have of where babies came from. The spaceships and time machines and metal transmuters which appeared in the heroine's father's attic might just as well have been found under gooseberry bushes. The idea of machine-making as an ordinary human activity, requiring neither genius nor creativity, was simply not present in embryonic science fiction.

Perhaps, then, it is not in the least surprising that there should be a recurrent image of man reduced to helplessness and decadence by machines. If the machine is the gift of spontaneous generation rather than the fruit of human endeavour it is quite easy to envisage a mechanical society in which man is only a passenger and parasite — the society of "City of the Living Dead" (Laurence Manning and Fletcher Pratt, 1930) or of "Twilight" and "Night" (John W. Campbell — as Don A. Stuart — 1934 and 1935). It is noticeable that after "Twilight" and "Night", Campbell wrote a story called "The Machine" (1935) in which the machine which runs society packs its bags and leaves, so as to save mankind from the fate which he envisaged in the earlier stories. It is no accident that the machine of this story did not arise as a result of the labours of men, but quite simply dropped from the skies.

In this era, therefore, man and machine existed virtually independently. In the real world machines were transforming society, and the fact that machines were transforming society inspired Gernsback to incarnate science fiction, but for ten years science fiction never socialised the machine and never connected it to the common man. Science and technology were for geniuses, creators and madmen. And their creations might eventually kill the American Dream stone dead.

Critics have often complained of a trend towards anti-science fiction within the hallowed walls of the science fiction establishment, but this complaint is utterly redundant. Gernsback, Bates and Tremaine sold a fiction of miracles that was ninety per cent optimism, but in its assumptions as regards the place of science fiction in society it was as anti-scientific as any contemporary black comedy which is aware that it is we who are abusing science rather than science which is abusing mankind.

Part One of this article began its dealings with the robot in 1937. It could not have begun any earlier because the symbol whose use I was exploring simply could not come into being until then. While machines were something which evolved quite apart from men, how could there be a meaningful man-machine relationship symbolised by an anthropomorphic machine?

The story which typifies the attitude of sf to the machine in this period independent of either the "Time Machine" current-of-thought or the "Machine Stops" tradition is "Call of the Mech-Men" by Laurence Manning, in which the machines are as alien as any invader from outside the galaxy.

By 1937, the cosmic perspective which had evolved in early sf had attained enough flesh, courtesy of Tremaine's ideastive paradigm, to accommodate people as well as space and time. John W. Campbell insisted on the human reaction in the stories which he bought for ASTOUNDING, and gradually science fiction adopted the idea that man was in some way responsible for the technological boom. Ingenuity began to replace genius. The professional engineer began to replace the lone eccentric professor, and he began to adapt his machines rather than

orienting them whole with a flicker of his magic wand.

Necessity replaced serendipity as the mother of invention.

* * * * *

The first ten years of Campbell's reign, from 1937-47, were characterised by a developing awareness of the machine as an extension of man's capabilities. We have already seen that this dynamic humanised the robot to the extent that the robot became a parody of the scientist/eccentric. The machine itself, however, was subject to no such personification. The machine story in this period had as its dominant concern the awesome power which the machine could lend to man. The archetypal stories of this period are a series of eleven by George O. Smith, ten of which were collected together under the title Venus Equilateral. The first story appeared in 1942, the last in 1945. John Campbell said of the series:

"In essence, Venus Equilateral represents the basic pattern of science fiction — which is, equally, the basic pattern of technology. First starting from an isolated instance, the effects (of the space station as an instrument in interplanetary communication) spread outward through the culture. Scientific methodology involves the proposition that a well-constructed theory will not only explain every known phenomenon, but will also predict new and still undiscovered phenomena. Science fiction tries to do much the same — and write up, in story form, what the results look like when applied not only to machines, but to human society as well." (1)

In the first story, "QRX — Interplanetary", the space station is introduced to the readers. In "Calling the Empress" it becomes necessary to contact a ship in space, and this is accomplished in a matter of hours. In "Recoil", it becomes necessary to invent an energy gun, and this is accomplished in a matter of days. In "Lost Art", an electronic device (known simply as a 'tube') is discovered in the Martian desert and the rest of the series is devoted to adapting it to establish two-way ship communication, making bigger and better energy guns, tapping solar power, powering matter transmitters and — eventually — matter duplicators, and finally rendering Venus Equilateral and the whole ancien regime quite obsolete.

The heroes of the Venus Equilateral series are the engineers. They need only scribble on a tablecloth to solve any problem which presents itself to them. They are brilliant, but Smith makes every reasonable attempt to portray them as ordinary, if exemplary, members of the human race. They drink, they swear, occasionally they flirt with secretaries, and they never look down on the untechnically-minded. The arch-villain of the later stories is a lawyer, but he too makes every attempt to exploit the technology made available by the Venus Equilateral personnel, just as they are prepared to go into court to argue with him on his own ground.

The scientists of Venus Equilateral are worlds away from the attic-inventors of an earlier age. They might be considered as direct descendants of Richard Seaton of E.E. Smith's "Skylark" series, but they are by no means such masters of magic. Their inventions do not spring full-grown and armour-clad from their brains. The attention which Smith pays to such things as blueprints and machine-shops and calculating machines and experiments may be somewhat cursory, but they

are all part of his model of scientific progress. Perhaps more important, George Smith's scientists are fully paid-up members of human society, while Edward Smith's Seston — though he rides a motorbike, wears sweaters and talks in slang — is always a very special member of the human race, as remote from the common man as the fabulous Skylark.

The simplistic view of machines as miracle-workers also disappeared in this phase. The problems of men living with the tremendous power of machines was sensitively explored in Robert Heinlein's "Blowups Happen" (1940) and Lester del Rey's "Nerves" (1942). There is no question here of scientists being something apart from society. The question of the political and commercial exploitation of machine-power was the most well-tryed theme of the time. Jack Williamson's "Crucible of Power" (1939) is perhaps the archetypal investigation of this question, but it is also handled in the later "Venus Equilateral" stories, especially "Pandora's Millions", which concerns society's adaptation to the matter duplicator, which can produce unlimited copies of anything from raw matter. It is typical, however (one might almost say inevitable), that Smith's solution to the problem is neither social nor political, but consists merely of pulling another rabbit out of his scientific hat. In order to save the capitalist world, the Venus Equilateral engineers come up with an uncopyable alloy which becomes the new medium of exchange. As per usual, they pull off the trick in a matter of days. Smith never even poses the question of any other type of solution — like, for instance, putting the duplicating machine under communal ownership.

This attitude was virtually universal in the science fiction of the age. The problems caused by the machine would be solved by the machine. Science would answer all its own questions. The idea that society might evolve its own solutions to machine-problems just did not appear. In this era the science fictional answer was always a corollary miracle. Sometimes, as in "Nerves", the miracle was ninety-nine per cent perepiration rather than a hundred per cent gadgeteering, but miracle it was nevertheless.

And the scope of the machine-miracle was, of course, virtually limitless. A.E. van Vogt never went into a novel without introducing a Machine (or several Machines) which could be invoked at any point in the plot to explain any awkward eventuality. The World of Null-A (1945) had its Games Machine, Masters of Time (alias Recruiting Station, 1942) had a different machine to effect every literary transition in the plot, and "The SeeSaw" had a time machine which went out of order and charged a man with so much temporal energy as it swung him pendulum-fashion through time that it caused the birth of the universe in the legendary big bang. It was van Vogt more than any other writer in this, his most productive period, who made the Deus of Deus ex machina redundant.

The one qualification which existed with reference to the power of the machine at this stage was the idea that beside the machine, man looked somewhat helpless. In van Vogt's stories, the man always became a superman and reduced the all-powerful machines to the relative status of electric toasters, but this was not usually the way of things. In "Minsky Were The Borogroves" the parents are unable to prevent the seduction of their children by toys from the future which educate them to a different way of looking at the world. In "Killdozer" (1944) by Theodore Sturgeon and "It Happened Tomorrow" (1943) by Robert Bloch the machine which turns, Frankenstein-fashion, on its user is a formid-

able enemy. It is interesting to contrast the latter story with Clifford Simak's "Skirmish" (alias "Bathe Your Bearings In Blood", 1950) which appeared in a different phase of science fiction's development. The chief concern of "It Happened Tomorrow" is clearly the power latent in the machines which are part of everyday life, but "Skirmish" is built around the idea of betrayal of man by the machines in his environment, and the question of power is not a dominant theme in the story.

Although the stories of this period incorporate the scientist into society, and make him far more recognisably "one of the boys" than pre-Campbell of there remains an odd distancing effect in the actual relationship between man and machines. It seems incongruous now that Venus Equilateral, the most gadgety of all science fiction's produce, should resort to finding its most important device buried in the sands of Mars rather than drawing it up on a tablecloth in Joe's bar. But this is hardly an isolated example. The Lensmen got their lenses from the Arisians. Brilliant though he was, Henry Kuttner's Galloway Callegher, who starred in the five stories later collected as Robots Have No Tails, could only invent miracle-machines while blind drunk, and invariably failed to remember how the deed was done. And the omniscient machine which causes all the trouble in Murray Leinster's "A Logic Named Joe" (1946) owes all his talent to a production accident. The mad scientist had merely become the eccentric or idiosyncratic scientist. The trendy "Blowups Happen" even featured a neurotic scientist. Although science was now regarded, for the most part, as a normal human endeavour, the produce of science — the machines themselves — tended to retain the taint of alienness which had been their hallmark since "Call of the Meek-Men". This is part and parcel of the whole syndrome of mechanical answers to mechanical problems. Campbell could insist that the stories he published consider the effects of the machine on society, and the politics of machine exploitation, but for a long time the science fiction story portrayed the machine problem as a problem which came from outside society rather than inside. It was not yet realised that a machine problem was just as implicitly social as it was scientific, and that when the day came when the ever-ingenious Venus Equilateral team couldn't come up with an answer in five days (probably because of a shortage of tablecloths) society was just going to have to live with the problem and adjust to it.

The change of attitude which marked the end of one phase and the beginning of another in this instance can be located to within a few months. The transition which I have referred to as having taken place in 1937 was, in fact, fairly gradual, and took years rather than months to effect. So did the later change of emphasis which I shall locate around 1960. But the attitude to the machine which remained rampant from 1937-46 died abruptly. 1947 was a new year, with new attitudes.

The earliest story I can locate which typifies the new intellectual climate is Theodore Sturgeon's "The Chromium Helmet", which appeared in ASTOUNDING for June 1946, but the story which perfectly illustrates the transition was not published until March 1947. It is "The Equaliser" by Jack Williamson. Williamson has described this story as a companion-piece to "With Folded Hands —" (July 1947) but the companionship is by no means obvious unless one considers the context of this change of attitude. "With Folded Hands —" was, of course, the robot story in which we identified the abrupt change of attitude in part one of this

articles.

"The Equalizer" deals, as was the tradition of the 40s, with a machine which puts illimitable power at the fingertips of every man and woman who can wind a couple of wires round a stick. The immediate consequence, of course, is freedom. No man need work for another. The city — a social conglomerate made necessary by work relationships — becomes obsolete. The cities are deserted. All weapons become meaningless, and the world dictatorship falls without a blow being struck. Total anarchy is inevitable.

However, the story is not about that limitless power. The obsession with miracles has died completely. The awesome power made available by the equalizer is simply taken for granted. Williamson does not bother to tell the reader about it until the story is over half way through. The story focusses instead on the returning members of the political 'Squareddeal machine' who have been stripping a dark star of its uranium. They do not know what has happened. They cannot understand what has happened. The only thing that Julian Budd, the Squareddealer, is certain of is that the dictatorship which he served has been betrayed. The story is saturated with the idea of betrayal, just as "With Folded Hands —" revolves around the betrayal of the Humanoids' initial purpose by their machine logic.

As we have seen, the phase of which "With Folded Hands —" was typical was of short duration with respect to the robot. By virtue of his nature, the robot could be brought into direct confrontation with man, and he was. But a man could hardly go into the boxing ring to fight a machine that was not man-like. Instead of this, the theme of the machine-story remained saturated — almost obsessed — with betrayal for more than a decade.

* * * * *

In "The Chromium Helmet" a man builds a machine to help him invent more machines, and it enslaves him instead — not in the same crude fashion that might be found in a pre-1937 story, but in a much more insidious and underhanded way. Again, the 40s mode of thought is obvious in the way that the ingenious engineers set out to subvert the evil influence of the machine and set everything to rights by finding a scientific answer, but very soon this type of solution was no longer taken for granted. "E for Effort" by T.L. Sherred (ASTOUNDING May 1947) contained in toto the new attitude, free of all the influence of the old thinking. As a story, it was remarkable in several ways which have been pointed out by different critics, but the most remarkable thing of all has drawn no comment from those who have sought to explain its special place in the history of science fiction. "E for Effort" was the first sf story which was thoroughly conscious of the fact that the attitude it represented was tied to the social implications, not the scientific implications, of the Second World War and the explosion of the atom bomb.

"E for Effort" concerns the attempt made by two men to exploit a chronoscope. Sherred ignored pulp conventions in the way he constructed the story, using unsteretyped characters with non-Anglic names, and in doing so he showed up by contrast the tremendous extent to which even ASTOUNDING was hidebound by pulp formula. This essay, however, is not primarily concerned with literary merit, but with the whole new set of assumptions embodied in the story.

The chronoscope (it is not referred to as such in the story, where it is simply called 'the machine') is invented by a man named Laviada. He is not a genius, nor is he eccentric. Sherred takes it for granted that the man need have no special qualities in order to invent a machine. The story contains no discussion whatsoever of exactly what the machine is capable of and what it is not. From the moment it is revealed that the machine can see backwards in time its talent is taken for granted. The scientific background of the machine is unimportant. The miracle aspect is unimportant. The sole point at issue throughout the story is how the machine is going to be used. Throughout the pre-1947 era there were basically only two uses to which an invention might be put. Either it could make the villain rich or it could make the hero rich. The former usually involved commercial exploitation at the expense of the human race (usury); the latter usually involved commercial exploitation to the benefit of the human race (a reasonable profit margin). The atom bomb killed that attitude stone dead. The limitless power of the machine which had besotted science fiction writers for so long was no longer a hypothetical plaything, but an actuality. Sherred's story, and the stories which belonged to the same phase of sf, were concerned not with power but with responsibility.

Laviada and Lefko, in "E for Effort", see their machine as a means to put an end to war. In order to effect this they adopt a course of action which is extremely devious. Sherred assumes that such deviousness is necessary. He further assumes that even when the course of action he describes has done everything that could reasonably be expected, it still will not be enough. Sherred's thesis, simply stated, is that political and military power are totally irresponsible, and that machine power delivered into the same hands becomes extremely dangerous. The last thing that the military would want to use Laviada's machine for is to put an end to war.

It is not really surprising that such a black vision should be the net result of the effects of the second world war. I have related "E for Effort" to the atom bomb, as Sherred himself does, but it is not only Hiroshima that gives weight to Sherred's argument. The post-bomb science fiction era is also the legacy of the firestorming of Dresden and Tokyo, the V1 and the V2 and the experiments of the Nazi scientists in the concentration camps.

Herbert Marcuse says:

"Auschwitz continues to haunt, not the memory but the accomplishments of man -- the space flights; the rockets and missiles; the 'labyrinthine basement under the Snack Bar', the pretty electronic plants, clean, hygienic and with flower beds; the poison gas which is not really harmful to people; the secrecy in which we all participate. This is the setting in which the great human achievements of science, medicine, technology take place; the efforts to save and ameliorate life are the sole promises in the disaster." (2)

This is the thinking behind "E for Effort". Small wonder that following the end of the second world war the robot was reified, and the machine changed from miracle worker to demon. Sherred later contributed three more stories to this era in science fiction, and the same attitude was implicit in all of them. Only one -- "Cure Guaranteed" (1954) -- was a machine story (the others featured wild talents). This concerned a machine for curing the common cold, a machine which -- apparently -- was capable only of benign usage. But "Cure Guaranteed"

is as much a tragedy of betrayal and misuse as "E for Effort".

Relatively few stories were as black in their outlook as "E for Effort". "The Little Black Bag" by Cyril Kornbluth (1950) describes an attempt by a discredited doctor to become rich using a medical bag from the future, and shows how he betrays the purpose of the instruments, and how they eventually betray him in horrible circumstances. This Island Earth (1953, based on magazine stories published in 1950) had Earth sentenced to death by a strategic computer in an interstellar war. And "Wake For The Living" by Ray Bradbury (1947) had an intricate mechanical coffin trap a live man.

The rest of the stories in the era, however, filled a spectrum which ranged from acute bitterness about the fruits of machine technology to simple cautionary tales about relying too heavily upon machines to solve problems.

The bitter vein is perhaps best illustrated by Cyril Kornbluth's "The Altar at Midnight" (1952) in which the inventor of a space drive is driven to alcoholism by contemplation of the ugly scars which his drive etches on the faces of the men who use it. There are also the stories which question the morality of the scientist in releasing work which can lead to weapons of increasing destructive power, notably Fredric Brown's brief allegory "The Neapon" (1951) and L. Sprague de Camp's "Judgment Day", in which a bitter scientist publishes the secret of the doomsday weapon because he feels that mankind deserves to destroy itself.

The less extravagant stories which simply reflect a vague disenchantment with the power of the machine are exemplified by Clifford Simak's "Limiting Factor" (1949) and "So Bright the Vision" (1955), Philip K. Dick's "The Preserving Machine" (1953) and "Autofac" (1955), and Sprague de Camp's "Aristotle and the Gun" (1958).

There are few stories belonging to this phase which take a positive view of the machine. "The Evidable Conflict", by Isaac Asimov (1950), for instance, shows the machines which run society cheating in order to cover up for the shortcomings of the human angle in society. They'd Rather Be Right by Mark Clifton and Frank Riley is a weak and watery Sherred-type story, in that it ends with a dramatic appeal to society to be sensible, instead of the cold conviction that it won't be:

"There is still a challenge facing man That challenge is Bossy. She will not command you or cajole you. She does not care whether you are made immortal or whether you would prefer clinging to your thin and single-valued ideas and prejudices -- and die She is a tool who will heat your homes, or bring you entertainment, or cook your food, or bathe the baby, or walk the dog, or figure your income tax. She will do all these things as she is commanded, and not care whether they are big or small. Because Bossy is only a tool.

"She can also give you a tremendous comprehension in time, the nature of which we do not yet even dream. She can give you immortality. But you must rise to her requirements. You cannot make use of the tool unless you comprehend something of the laws of the universe governing life." (3)

In They'd Rather Be Right, Clifton and Riley try to have it both ways. They love their machine (Bossy is the only machine called 'she' in this whole era of sf) and they desperately want society to love her

too. As the first paragraph quoted above demonstrates, Bossy can be virtually all things to all men. At the same time, however, they are fully aware of the Sherred syndrome, and so Bossy has the interesting additional facility of making people — but only nice people — immortal. The new political/military stereotype villain is deliberately excluded from enjoying Bossy's greatest favours, emphasising beyond all rationality the fact that Bossy is the common man's machine. Yet throughout the story people in general hate Bossy, and even the title suggests that she will be rejected. It is significant that the inventor's polemic speech in Bossy's favour concludes the book. We never get to hear the opposition case, let alone learn the outcome of the debate.

It was in this era that the machine was finally seen as a normal product of ordinary man. It was socialised completely. Paradoxically, however, the socialisation of the machine was associated with a whole host of new doubts about its place in society. The distancing effect that was evident in the early forties between man and machine did not wholly disappear despite the fact that science was now accepted as a normal human activity, and there was no longer any need to find crucial inventions buried in the sands of Mars. The alienness of the machine now manifested itself in quite a different way. The mad scientist of the thirties now found his counterpart in the mad machine — the machine which drew its power in some inexplicable fashion without reference to any of the rational processes of science. Eric Frank Russell twice had space travel discovered by ordinary people making ordinary materials behave in extraordinary ways (in "And Then There Were None" (1951) and "Flux X" (1956)). "A Pilbert is a Nut" by Rick Raphael (1959) featured an atom bomb made out of plasticine and "Maybe Just A Little One" by Reginald Bretnor (1953) has an atom bomb made from Mexican beans. This same kind of distancing effect is seen in "The Nine Billion Names of God" by Arthur C. Clarke (1953) and, in its ultimate form, in Fredric Brown's "Answer" (1954), whose computer-complex produces the classic line, "Yes, now there is a God."

In closing the discussion of this phase in the development of sf's attitude to technology, I must mention a story called "We The Machine" by Gerald Vance (1951). This is basically a re-telling of "The Machine Stops" modified to the new mode of thought. The story is literary garbage churned out by one of Ziff-Davis's house writers but in many of its facets it symbolises the content of the sf machine story in this era. As the mechanical society begins to fail, the attention of the reader is directed primarily to the arbitrariness and the insanity of its actions. Men are assaulted by cigarette-machines, have their throats cut by book shelves and are poisoned by food-dispensers. There is no hint of the steady, ordered degradation of "The Machine Stops". When the hero finally penetrates the depths of the machine complex, he finds there a gigantic human brain co-ordinating the mechanical synapses. Brains-in-boxes were not uncommon in the earlier days of sf — Lloyd Arthur Eshbach's Tyrant of Time (alias The Time Conqueror in 1932) was one; there was also Dopovan's Brain by Curt Siodmak (1943), and even Captain Future's team included one — but in those days there had never been any question about the status of the brain. It was simply a brain apart from a body. Vance's brain has, however, become a part of the machine. It has no claim to humanity — it is simply an instrument. This intricate marriage of man and machine is an accurate symbolic rendition of the paradox quoted earlier — than machine making had come to be recognised as an ordinary human activity at precisely

the time that society was stimulated to worry about the relationship between man and machine.

During the latter part of this period, man and robot were in confrontation. The whole period was one of doubt and question. The whole nature of the man/machine conflict represented in this phase demanded that eventually the confrontation should be resolved. In the meantime, society increased its mechanisation. Machines became part of ordinary life — the television and the car passed from being luxuries to being standard consumer goods. The thinking machines of science fiction progressed towards realisation in the development of the computer, which gradually invaded daily life in accounting and data collection. Eventually, sputnik went up, and then a man went into orbit. By 1960 the whole question of man v. machine was redundant. The fact that the second world war continued to haunt technological achievement did not stop technological progress in society. The result of the confrontation between man and robot was inevitable in the development of society throughout the fifties. The robot had to win. Man and the machine had to learn to love one another, or at least to live with one another. Our image of man had to expand to include machines.

The traitorous machine petered out in about 1960. The last story which I can identify as being associated wholly with the post-47 phase is "I Remember Babylon" by Arthur C. Clarke in that year. The transition from this period to the next is, however, a slow one and not easily located to within a year or so. As late as 1965 stories like "Computers Don't Argue" by Gordon Dickson — about a computer snarl-up which results in a man being sentenced to death and executed after having trouble with a book club — are not uncommon, and are at the very least transitional. In addition, early stories like Fritz Leiber's "The Man Who Made Friends With Electricity" (1962) which are clearly identifiable with the new consciousness, still have betrayal as a theme.

But slowly the main emphasis of the sf story developed an entirely new outlook — one which placed man and machine in the same concept-space, and concentrated on the ontology of the machine and machine personality.

* * * * *

The 1960s in sf was the era of the cyborg. It was not simply that there was a vast proliferation of brains-in-boxes, but rather that the brain-in-a-box became a key symbol in the thinking of the time. In part one of this essay I identified Philip K. Dick as one of the key authors in developing this line of thinking, in that he amalgamated the concept-spaces of man, android and robot. The parallel symbolic fusion of man and machine can be seen in a series of stories by David B.unch which appeared throughout the 60s and which were collected into book form as Moderan in 1971.

Moderan is a superb compendium of images of man absorbing and being absorbed by machines, not merely in physical terms, but psychological as well.

"Out of the hospital, out of the nine-months mutilation, out of the nine-months magic, released and alone. The steel-spliced doctors knew they had made a monster With my portable flesh-strip feeder, my book of instructions for new-metal limb control, my plastic mechanical tear bags (for even a King must sometimes

cry, you will allow) and all the other paraphernalia to get me started, or at least to sustain me until I should attain my Stronghold sanctuary, I sailed out from the hospital steps, the arrogant doctors watching. Something like a small iron frigate from the Old Days, I guess I was, loaded to the gunwales and standing forth on end." (4)

And:

"Stalog Blengue, peotal first-class, flesh-robot overseer of a block of air-conditioning machines for many a soul-lost year struggled up to a train. "How we have used ourselves!" he shrieked. "How we have been put upon by 'discoveries'." He tore off a piece of 'replacement' and held it up in tin fingers. The green blood seeped from the arc where the 'replacement' alloy had joined flesh." (5)

Bunch's prose is dedicated solely to his imagery. He writes with only cursory reference to plot and his manner of presentation is highly stylized. It is hardly surprising that in a field which owes virtually all of its literary traditions to the pulp medium Bunch is far from popular. Yet the same symbols which Bunch constructs so carefully are at the heart of a great deal of the SF of the last 12 or 13 years.

One of the earliest stories of the new phase was "The Ship Who Sang" by Anne McCaffrey (1961), which features a spaceship operated by a human brain, with a modicum of assistance from a human pilot (a 'brawn'). There is no empirical difference between Helva and the cyborg in "We, The Machine" and Demonvan's Brain, but there is a great deal of difference in attitude inherent in the story. Demonvan's brain was simply a brain maintained by a machine. The brain in "We, The Machine" becomes mechanized by its new situation. In "The Ship Who Sang", the syndrome is reversed. The machine which maintains the brain becomes mechanized by virtue of its function. Brain and ship are a unity — Helva — capable of forming relationships with other ships, and with brawns. "The Ship Who Sang" gave rise to a series of stories about Helva and her problems — human, mechanical and strategic.

The personification of the car has also been a dominant theme in the sixties. Direct organic analogy, as in Robert F. Young's "The Quest of the Holy Grille" (1964) and David Gerrold's "Afternoon With A Dead Bus" (1971), is becoming fashionable, and is gradually replacing the theme of the car as weapon-cum-horse-mum-suit of armour (H. Chandler Elliott's "A Day on Death Highway", 1963; Harlan Ellison's "Dogfight on 101", 1969; Richard Matheson's film Duel, 1972). Perhaps the most representative story along these lines is Roger Zelazny's "Auto Da Fe" (1967) which combines both themes by pitting a matador against a number of cars in the arena. It is also interesting to note that the sixties counterpart to the man v. robot boxing match of the fifties is the man v. robot car race in "The Ultimate Racer" by Gary Wright (1964).

The personification of the computer has also been a developing trend in recent years. Whereas Clifton and Riley insisted at great length that their Dossy was only a tool, the writers of the sixties tended to be quite happy to let their machines out-think them and help them out of sticky situations which they could not manage themselves. In 1946, "A Logic Named Joe" created problems by its willingness to tell anybody anything. In 1966, Theodore Sturgeon's Oracle in "The Nail and the Oracle" created problems by refusing to answer questions on the grounds that the questioners were not to be trusted with the

answers. And David Gerrold's Harlie (in a series of stories dating from 1969, later incorporated into the novel When Harlie Was One in 1972) handles his mentor's love affair, designs a GOD machine, tape phones and rifles other computers. On being instructed to stop tripping out because his purpose is to think logically, Harlie demands to know what the purpose of human beings is.

The blending of the human role with the mechanical is probably at its ultimate in Harlan Ellison's "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes", whose eponymous heroine is either a whore or a fruit machine.

I pointed out in part one that Philip K. Dick's essay "The Android and the Human" is a clear demonstration that Dick believes that the current of thought represented above is a reflection of what is happening in society. Further evidence for this point of view is provided by John Sladek's satire The Muller-Fokker Effect. The Muller-Fokker effect is the total transcription of man onto computer tape. If the ideas which I have extracted from the sf of the sixties are not also trends in the society of the sixties, then Sladek's social satire along exactly these lines becomes quite meaningless.

It is not possible at this stage to suggest what might happen in the future. Undoubtedly, the pattern of thought which I have investigated in this essay is still changing, but until we have the complete pattern, we cannot map that change. I am in no position to select the story which will set the next trend. However, a new view of the role of the machine in society, and one which seems to me to be singularly appropriate to the age, is expressed in "Holdholtzer's Box", by David H. Bunch (1971). Alvin Toffler, in Future Shock, has already pointed out the contemporary trend towards the retailing of experience. And we all know the world is overcrowded. Holdholtzer has designed a machine which meets the problem by catering to the trend. The protagonist asks him:

"Do you consider civilised, modern man to be essentially gullible, willing to pay good money to risk his own destruction in a fairly meaningless experience, or set of experiences, triggered by not only the spirit of adventure but also by the hope of commemorative awards or real money gains as well, such as your medals, which I assume, in time, could give an individual pretty substantial business advantages, or real money powers, over other individuals who did not have, and could not get, the coveted awards of which you have just spoken?" (6)

Holdholtzer laughs.

* * * * *

In summation, therefore, the history of sf may be divided into four periods with regard to attitudes to the machine. Two of these periods may be further subdivided with special reference to the role of the robot, which symbol is used as a specific representative of the relationship between man and machine.

The crucial dates associated with sf's changing attitude to the machine are 1937, 1947 and 1960, and they mark the transition of the machine's role from miracle-worker through instrument of power through antagonist to a place within the concept-space which we label humanity. This process is not simply a literary evolution of ideas — it is a way of looking at the changing role of the machine in society. It is a perspective which can be employed, and which is employed, by writers

and by readers in shaping their attitudes to the society in which they live, and in forming their opinions about the merits and the progress of that society. This, I believe, is the function of science fiction. (By function I do not mean to imply that this is why people write it, or why people read it. People read sf because they like it. I am merely observing that this is what sf is used for. This is what people do with it.) Science fiction is the only form of fiction extant today which is appropriate to the mode of symbolisation which I have described in this essay. Sociologically speaking, science fiction is one of the most important and rewarding sources of perspective in the whole spectrum of contemporary art.

Science fiction is widely criticised in literary circles because it is unreal. With respect to the chain of thought explored in this essay, that criticism is simply not true. The status of the machine in sf is very little different from the status of the man. Only the roles played out by the machines and the men are different. The machine in sf, whether it be a robot or a computer or a matter transmitter or a chronoscope is only another character in the plot. The fact that its form is imaginary does not make it unreal, any more than the fact that the human characters in any kind of story are imaginary makes them unreal.

Science fiction is socially reflective fiction about real things. In this essay I have attempted to map the equivalences between science fiction and attitudes in society, and to investigate the way in which that equivalence is manifest. If science fiction were only fantasy — a purely imaginary fiction without reference to reality — the patterns which I have isolated simply would not exist.

Is this, or is this not, a meaningful sequence of attitudes?

1926-37. The machine is a miracle-worker. There is little or no correlation between man and machine. The robot as a symbol does not exist, except as part of the Frankenstein tradition.

1937-46. The machine comes to be seen as an extension of man, who is infatuated with the power potentially at his disposal.

1947-60. Following the explosion of the atom bomb, man's infatuation for the machine vanishes. The way in which the vast power of the machine actually becomes manifest results in cynicism and anxiety. There is a feeling of betrayal and the machine is now seen to be in confrontation with man.

1960- . Eventually, the machine becomes integrated into society and social life to the extent where confrontation and the feeling of betrayal become redundant. It is no longer appropriate to consider man without his machines. The machines are now an integral part of contemporary man. The robot, which has been a powerful symbol for twenty-odd years, goes into decline. The relationship which it symbolised is becoming an identity.

— Brian M. Stableford

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BRIAN W. ALDISS

down-at-heel galaxy

The early and mid-fifties formed a period of great richness for sf (although we did not notice at the time). Magazines sprouted and proliferated as never before, in a last glory before the onslaught of paperback — in much the same way, I imagine, that all the crack stage-coach runs in this country were at their peak in the very years the railways were rendering them obsolete.

Smith's bookstalls were flooded with covers celebrating marvels of astronomy and space-engineering, much as they now sport anatomy and the freaky electronics of pop. Then it was that one bought one's first GALAXYs, PROSEs, THRILLING WONDERS, IFs, SPACES, FANTASTICS, and the lesser but delectable breeds, all of which seemed to be edited by Robert Lowndes: FUTURE, ORIGINAL, and DYNAMIC. These magazines were not imports but British reprints.

Among the clever new names, one searched particularly for those of Richard Matheson, William Tenn, Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick, Walter Miller, and — if one was smart enough — J. G. Ballard. They were all short-story writers; the sf magazines were their ideal medium; and none of them was as much fun as Robert Sheckley.

The typical Sheckley appearance was in GALAXY, edited by the celebrated madman H. L. Gold, where he appeared beside other celebrated madmen like Alfred Bester and Theodore Sturgeon. Madmen are essential to sf. We still have madmen today, but often the madness gets into the style rather than the story, as with Harlan Ellison and some of the layabouts in NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY. Sheckley kept his madness honed to a fine point by writing clear English about utterly convincing impossibilities. After all the sober-sides in ASTOUNDING, it was marvellous to read a man whose characters never scored victories (though they rarely suffered utter defeat), whose planets were lunatic and draughty, whose aliens pursued totally insane rituals (like the Dance of the Reciprocal Trade Agreement), whose technologies were generally dedicated to perfecting robots which lured and squeaked, and whose spaceships were never airtight.

That whole epoch, and the entire Sheckley thing, comes back very clearly as one reads this omnibus* — which is possibly an adverse criticism, for we have a somewhat one-dimensional view of Sheckley here. All the stories come from the fifties, when Sheckley was young and clever. Now he's old and clever, experience has had him by the lapels like one of his malfunctioning robots, and it would have been valuable to have been offered a few later fruits from his tree.

Those later fruits have a taste of acid to them, a fragrance of corruption, and a feel of loss, which makes the best of them more memor-

* The Robert Sheckley Omnibus; edited and introduced by Robert Conquest. (Collins, £2.75, 320p.)

able than the earlier ingenuities which Conquest rightly celebrates.

"But these are futile gestures. The truth is, we have lost Xanadu irretrievably, lost Cicero, lost Zoroaster. And what else have we lost? What great battles were fought, cities built, jungles conquered? What songs were sung, what dreams were dreamed? We see it now, too late, that our intelligence is a plant which must be rooted in the rich fields of the past."

("The Mnemone", 1972)

There's a note he never sounded in the fifties. Sheckley had no roots in the past then. Nor could he write such a funny-poignant tale as his "Zirn Left Unguarded, The Jenghik Palace In Flames, Jon Westerly Dead" (published in NOVA 2, edited by Harry Harrison, 1972), in which Sheckley tenderly mocks the romantic-savage-analytical mode of science-fantasy of which he always had such easy mastery. And in this year's NOVA 3, there's his "Welcome to the Standard Nightmare", which is all that Sheckley ever was: the old ingenuity is still there, and a whole planet surrenders to one Earthman; but the mood is darker, the etching done with an acid that bit deeper into the copper than once it did.

The story ends with the words: "For the Lorians were an advanced and intelligent people. And what is the purpose of being really intelligent if not to have the substance of what you want without mistaking it for the shadow?" In the fifties, Sheckley's characters were travelling too fast to worry about what was substance, what shadow.

My disagreement, then, is with Robert Conquest, not with Sheckley. He could have given us a more dimensional study of Sheckley. That has not been his intention. He admires Sheckley's skill in telling an ingenious story, and he includes those stories which seem to him best to exemplify this rare ability.

The result is a portly volume containing one Sheckley novel, IMMORTALITY, INC., and a dozen short stories, among them several well-known and beloved by the sf fraternity, such as "Pilgrimage to Earth", "A Ticket to Tranai", "The Prize of Peril", and "The Store of the Worlds". Not a bad story among them.

Many of these stories use as their material the basic Shecklian preoccupations: the awfulness of institutions and corporations, the craziness of trying to establish a relationship with anyone, the arbitrariness of society's mores, the difficulties one can get into with women, the sheer down-at-heel ghastliness of the galaxy. These, you might say, are almost anyone's preoccupations; no disagreements or surprises there. The nice, the odd, thing about Sheckley's preoccupations are that they are all counter-balanced by their very opposites. The TV company that exploits you to the point of death is scrupulous to a pernicky degree; the girl genuinely loved you, but it was just a financial deal; it's as efficient to hold citizens up in the street and rob them as to collect income tax, terrestrial fashion; your wife is perfectly nice, but when you find her in her lover's arms, it's because you refused to keep her in stasis; uncomfortable though we may find most worlds, there are races who are worse off, and leap from sun to sun complaining of the cold. In effect, Sheckley's madness is presented with a disarming reasonableness. At least his future's no worse than the present. He's telling you a story, not presenting a case.

Somewhere in the Sheckley hierarchy is another preoccupation. It would be too much to call it a hope. But ever and anon comes the thought

that there might be a system of non-material things when circumstances fall out less laughably than in our world. Conquest introduces us to several stories of this nature. IMMORTALITY INC. is Sheekley's version of the Afterlife — several Afterlives, in fact. But it is no more satisfactory than this life — Sheekley is no Bradbury or Finney, forever dreaming of a bright childhood world; he's too much of a realist for that. When a somewhat Asimovian machine is invented by a super-race which can provide answers to all the most baffling philosophical questions of the universe, there is nobody around to phrase the questions properly; the God is useless. Even the Almighty makes an almighty hash of things in one of these stories, calling all the robots up to Heaven on the day of final Judgment, and leaving mankind below on the battlefield. Sheekley's is a universe of makeshift lives — Kingsley Amis coined the perfect term for it: a comic inferno.

The story here I find most touching (I once anthologised it myself) is "The Store of the Worlds". The protagonist finds happiness. He gets a whole year of it, and it costs him everything he has. Admittedly, the year includes a maid who drinks, trouble in the office, a panic on the stock market, and a fire in the guest room; but it is a year of ordinary family life, containing, in Sheekley's phrase, desire and fulfillment. Nobody's on the run, nothing shoots at anything, everyone is comprehensible.

Like Orwell, Sheekley is an utopianist. Unlike all other utopianists, Sheekley's and Orwell's ambitions are almost dauntingly humble — just to be left alone, to have a drink, a girl, a stroll in the park, a room to yourselves. Only one fancy that more fun would go on in Sheekley's shack than Orwell's. (An eccentric parenthesis: I've always suspected that Orwell wrote 1984 after reading van Vogt; maybe he wrote ANIMAL FARM after reading Sheekley.)

Robert Conquest hopes to introduce the civilised pleasures of Sheekley to a readership beyond the sf audience; in his introduction, he likens himself to Belloc introducing Ernest Bramah, or E. C. Bentley introducing Damon Runyon. Bramah is a good touch, for there is something of a Kai Lung about Sheekley. He reminds me too of another excellent story-teller, 'Saki', H. H. Munro.

Unless I am mistaken, Conquest also addresses himself to the sf readers. First he warms their hearts by telling them what they long suspected (but are reassured to hear from anyone with credentials as imposing as Conquest's), that H. G. Wells is every bit as much the artist as Henry James; then he slips it to us that James is "a model of unpretentious clarity compared with many more recent phenomena". Here, one experiences three or four bodings, in anticipation of yet another Conquest-Amis tract on the worthlessness of anything in sf written since Mike Moorcock attained the age of puberty. Fortunately, the crisis is avoided; Conquest is too intelligent to attempt praise of Sheekley by dispraise of lesser breeds (as Amis in THE SPECTATOR recently praised Arthur Clarke's pleasant but rather empty new novel by drubbing nameless offenders who prefer other recipes to Clarke's).

Possibly a youthful VECTOR audience would like the reminder that Robert Conquest and Kingsley Amis, with a little help from their friends, performed immense feats of missionary zeal in support of sf back in the fifties, when sf was becoming tentatively established in Britain. Conquest's knowledge and Amis's wit — not to mention Amis's knowledge and Conquest's wit — were extremely effective in silencing the mouldy rumblings of chaps like J. B. Priestley and Arthur Koestler (who had heard of sf but didn't like what they thought it was) and, more positively,

in ensuring that sf was received on a serious level and regarded as writing rather than delirium.

In so doing, they put many writers in their debt — a debt which they have admittedly been working off at a rate of knots in the last few years, by posing as proprietors of the whole thing. True, this role has been carried with a certain naughty air, and a delicate reluctance actually to name names, which has mitigated its preposterousness -- as if they themselves were unsure whether to play Elder Statesmen or Old Pretenders.

However, this volume is a great success, a product of Conquest's love and dedication to the art as well as a celebration of Sheckley's skills. Many a writer would wish as distinguished an anthologist — most of us have to patch our own stories together. Who knows, perhaps it is even a token of better things; but no, the clock has stopped too firmly in the fifties. What we have to rejoice in is that the fifties was a very good time; and Sheckley was and is a very good writer; while, for all my quibbling, Conquest is a very discerning critic.

— Brian W. Aldiss

continued from p.46

frantic attempts of the writer to achieve new means of expression lead to obscurity or obsessional meanderings. Meanwhile, the hacks continue to churn out their garbage. Where is the answer? Is a man doomed, by the very fact of being an sf writer, either to write himself into an intellectual dead end, or become a hack? What has happened to the entertainment value of the early Aldiss, Heinlein, Ballard, Silverberg, Ellison, Zelazny? These men are brilliant writers — Aldiss's mainstream work has all the verve his recent sf lacks — yet what are these strange byways they are exploring now?

With LEGEND OF DOWNWAYS I found that I could write a novel as easily as a short story and, since I write for fun, I came up against the problem of where to go next, and I began to understand more about Aldiss and Ballard than I'd ever gathered by reading their books. However, when somebody reads a book of mine I want him to grasp instantly what I am getting at, and I want him to become totally involved in the story and the characters, and I want him to put it down at the end — if he does not immediately start again at the beginning — with shaking hands and glistening brow, and turn to the girl who is lying at his side, and say: you must read this book by Coney. Right now...

So I cannot take the intellectual road, neither can I become a hack. I have found the answer in seeking after greater realism with an intensely personal style of presentation and attention to characterisation which is intended to involve the reader completely in the sf environment. I am not borrowing techniques from the mainstream — but I am seeking to produce stories which will compare in style and development with the very best the mainstream has to offer, yet will remain inescapably sf. Since DOWNWAYS I have written three novels. The first was straightforward adventure, an expansion of two GALAXY stories. The second is about a girl, an autumn mayfly. The third is about a summer of young love. All three are very definitely sf. What I am hoping, is that they are also very definitely stories -- and entertaining ones.

— Michael G. Coney

SF AND THE CINEMA

Philip Strick

christopher Fowler

THOUGHTS ON THEM.....Philip Strick

A fickle lot, the human race. No sooner invent something (like, say, the cinema), and they want to improve on it. No sooner develop it to a state approaching perfection (like, perhaps, the internal combustion engine, insofar as such a compromise could ever be termed perfect), and they want to render it obsolete. Change, that's the thing; change, and be changed.

More than any other kind of film-making, science fiction movies are about change, wanted and unwanted. They take one look at complacency and beat its head firmly on the floorboards. Martians come from our skies, giant ants come from our sewers, global plague comes from nowhere, and missiles come from just the other side of the North Pole. Tear it down and start again. Watch the skies and maybe things will be better the next time around. Change, adapt, evolve. Wells said it loudest and best, if not first, and the cinema carries his echoes, pessimism and all, for us to hear today. The Starchild in 2001, hovering before us like the next rung on an incredible intergalactic ladder, tells us, in the spirit of War of the Worlds, that survival may not be easy but it's worth a life or two.

But the human race, a fickle lot, are not what you might call keen to change. Life is constructed from ritual: the rising sun, the beating heart, the domestic pattern. Disruption brings panic and breakdown. Kick the traces and you may never be able to find them again. Routine, order, symmetry — might these not contain the secret of immortality?

More than any other kind of film-making, science fiction movies show us hanging on to what we've got. The world is destroyed in order to save it, as happens perpetually in Roger Corman's films (The Day The World Ended, The Last Woman on Earth, Gas-s-s, etc.). The past entices us in last year's habits, last century's mistakes; to escape them we must learn to understand them, as Luis Buñuel perpetually reminds us (Viridiana, Simon of the Desert, Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, etc.). Messages for the future are being sent off every day, yet we fail to recognise they'll be interpreted in tomorrow's terms; we must find the locks and break them open, use the past not to confine us but to guide us, as Jean-Luc Godard perpetually suggests (Le héris, Alphaville, Weekend, etc.).

To change, then, or not to change. Perhaps because writing is such an antisocial business, science fiction seems to deal with misfits more often than with the status quo, although they are misfits who seldom seem to derive much advantage from their bids for independence. Winston Smith is the most frequent point of reference, but Captain Nemo, Wells's Time Traveller, Frankenstein or Gulliver would serve as well. Like their creators, they are men for whom dissatisfaction has sunk deep into the bones, stirring them to search for alternatives. Since these may well prove to be as routine, as constricting as the environments abandoned in their favour, what matters is the search rather than its conclusion.

It's not too clear what the Starchild will actually do at the end of 2001, and identical Antiochmaxes are to be found in, to take them at random, Fahrenheit 451, No Blade of Grass, Silent Running, or A Clockwork Orange. But they'll doubtless think of something.

With THX 1138, which has at last crept off the Columbia-Warner shelf after two years and may be glimpsed at selected cinemas if you are particularly faithful, the victory of the toiling misfit, clawing his way up through the underground levels like a hairless 007 until he staggers into the open air, once again seems peculiarly unrewarding. A huge oval sunset behind him, sinking like a punctured balloon, silhouettes his indecision as the credits roll and the occasional bird wallows overhead. From a brightly antiseptic world that had enclosed him and maintained him in drugged contentment, he has escaped to no more than the chill of approaching night. A choir lets rip on the soundtrack to cheer his spirits, but something stronger is needed for the rest of us.

Feeling back along the thread of the narrative, it's not too difficult to find the points at which the film's logic has become tangled and credibility has snapped. THX (Thex for short) has been driven to rebellion by the loss of his mate, LUN. They had recently discovered sex, which is forbidden and practically unknown thanks to everyone's daily drug intake, and LUN has been liquidated after becoming pregnant. As Philip Wylie or Robert Heinlein would rush to confirm, however, totalitarianism just isn't going to work that way; the masses can be kept far more sensibly high on enthusiasm and low on birth-rate by being fed contraceptive pills, thus allowing sex its full measure as a soporific. And it seems a trifle unreasonable that the organisers of the future society shown in the film should deny the population its natural functions while offering holograms of nude dancers as televisual stimulation. Small wonder that THX, brow furrowed with contradictions, prefers to watch a programme in which truncheons belabour a writhing victim.

In order to rouse THX from conformity, his cell-mate deliberately gives him the wrong drug ration. What puts the idea into her head is not clear. It could be something to do with Donald Pleasence, who claims to have found a way to manipulate the gigantic central computer to suit his own purposes, and seems to have plans for THX as potential revolutionary material. Or it could just be a general conviction that human nature will survive any dehumanising process somehow and that vague flickers of love have illuminated LUN's purpose. The risks within an environment controlled by technology are customarily pointed out with the greatest glee in science fiction, and George Lucas's story is true to form: the fringes of THX's world are haunted by stunted predators who scavenge from the society that excludes them, while unstable equipment and inefficient operators cause frequent explosions in the workshops.

In one sudden sequence, anticipating the lethal breakdowns that Michael Crichton has since portrayed in Hegeworld, a robot walks joltingly into a wall, backs off, tries again, and keeps up the attack until someone notices the malfunction. Another shot, naggingly brief, shows a lizard placidly patrolling some electric cables, thus illustrating the impossibility of exterminating all random factors. And what finally allows THX his equivocal getaway is the computation that the task-force allocated to pursue him has exceeded its budget and must accordingly be recalled. These signs of essential weakness in a would-be perfect system are greatly reassuring, but the reassurance is emotive rather than rational — they raise more questions than they resolve.

Does THX 1138, then, take us a step further than the classic in this area, Alphaville? In theme, Godard leaves Lucas standing; Lemmy Caution's

errand of rescue combines brute force with the nostalgia of Eluard, while THX has only the vaguest idea of why he's being awkward and charges off in a recalcitrant fast car like the villain of the most conventional policier. The performances, too, unforgettable in Alphaville, are required to be no more than serviceable in THX: Robert Juvall (since become known to a much wider audience for his work in The Godfather) is excellently impassive, Pleasence is as eccentric as ever, and Maggie McOmie is touchingly vulnerable in her lightly freckled scalp. The enduring interest of the film lies elsewhere — in its soundtrack (a multilayered stir of electronic echoes, in which individual voices are often lost among the simultaneous transmissions), in its editing (by Lucas himself in a style that blinks like the signal lights on a computer bank), and in its settings.

Coming out of Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope studio, THX 1138 is often stunningly impressive to look at — not because it glitters with hardware in the manner of 2001, but because it so frequently disposes of sets completely and encloses its characters in plain white. Cast into prison, THX becomes one of a tiny handful of criminals adrift in a bleached vacuum where the only colour is the flesh of face and hands, distances are incalculable and darkness is unknown. The scene has an intensity reminiscent of Beckett, with its futile scufflings and impotent speeches, endlessly repeated. As with the love-making between THX and MJH, also isolated in an infinity of blankness, Lucas moves his cast like participants in a ballet with formal, almost languid gestures. The sense is strong of private will being submerged beneath an unending exterior control.

Finally, THX 1138, like all the best of, has a sense of humour. The mechanical cops are its happiest invention, their heads glowing chromium, their voices glowing reassurance. In the background, a blandly cheerful commentary assesses tolerance levels of men being 'conditioned', genially gives the statistics of the latest disaster, and answers a steady stream of calls for advice with the phrase "What's wrong?", spoken as though nothing ever took more than a few seconds to put right. When THX goes to his daily confessional to dispose of any worries he may have, he is repeatedly interrupted by words of encouragement and sympathy in a meaningless flow. At such times, THX 1138 succeeds nicely in using its future to apply scorn to the present; the method is hardly new, but it can still work wonders. Quite what we should seek to change, and why, the film doesn't make clear, and thus it misfires as any kind of dire warning. But what matters, as I said, is the process of change itself, and I can recommend THX wholeheartedly as a lively study of the process in action.

--- Philip Strick

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THE FINAL PROGRAMME.....Christopher Fowler

As a long-time reader of Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius stories, it was with some trepidation that I waited for the opening of Robert Fuest's film of The Final Programme (ABC release). I need not have worried: Fuest is entirely true to the theme of the first Jerry Cornelius novel, and indeed to the whole ethos of Moorcock's English assassin. Even the appearance of the two main characters, Jerry and Miss Brunner, is amazingly close to the original NEW WORLDS illustrations. The director — who also wrote and designed the film — is to be congratulated for having made of the novel a compelling parable of the perils of science.

The world of Jerry Cornelius is our own, extrapolated just a little into the future: a world where Amsterdam has been bombed into radioactive dust by the Americans, Trafalgar Square is a dumping ground for wrecked cars, and a London-based American major (an import from A CURE FOR CANCER?) sells MiGs to Asians -- and, along the way, a Phantom to Jerry. This jet is just one of our hero's battery of technological toys, which include everything from a Sikoraki helicopter to a needle-gun. Against this chaotic background of a society in collapse, in which time itself is coming to an end, is played out the drama of The Final Programme. It involves Jerry Cornelius, Nobel Prize winner, his conflict with his drug-addict brother Frank, and his incestuous relationship with his sister Catherine. Further, it concerns computer-programmer Miss Brunner and her quest for a new being.

The film opens in the wastes of Lapland, with the funeral pyre of old Cornelius, Jerry's father. The event is attended by Jerry and an old scientist colleague of his father. Dr Smiles -- played with just the right hint of madness by Graham Crowden (who seems to specialise in this role: he plays it twice in O Lucky Man!) -- is intent on obtaining a microfilm left behind by old Cornelius in the hands of Frank. Smiles heads a trio of scientists aiding Miss Brunner, and she eventually persuades Jerry to aid her in an attack on the country house where Frank holds the microfilm, and has Catherine imprisoned in a drug-induced sleep. The attack is far from simple, however, for the house is booby-trapped with a variety of devices, including hallucinates -- which induces pseudo-epilepsy -- and the more mundane nerve-gas. As might have been expected from the director of the Dr. Phibes films, the decor of the house is dazzling, vast glistening rooms in stunning ultra-modern style. Frank escapes with the microfilm, but this is not the greatest tragedy: in a needle-gun fight between the brothers, Jerry accidentally kills Catherine. The scene ends with him seriously wounded, prostrate with grief.

Jerry recovers, and the search for the microfilm continues across the world. In a climactic fight, Jerry disposes of Frank. This fight, like the previous one, yields some moments of high humour. "I'm going to stitch your balls to your thighs, Jerry." "Who told you I had any?" "Everyone's got thighs."

While this is going on, Miss Brunner recovers the microfilm, and satisfies her unusual appetites by 'absorbing' the scientist who Frank has been meeting -- a facility which she has already demonstrated on Jenny, a girl she and Jerry meet in London. A nice touch is achieved at the moment of absorption: as Miss Brunner sinks down on her victim to suck him in, the camera switches to focus on an orange-squeezer. Jerry's suspicions regarding this second disappearance are the occasion for some of the distinctly black humour, with sexual overtones, in which the film abounds. "Where's Baxter?" "He's inside." "Inside who?" Unfortunately, the point of this may not have come across: to the uninitiated, it is not entirely clear what Miss Brunner is doing.

From this point the film moves rapidly to its conclusion. Miss Brunner's project is nothing less than the creation of an all-purpose, immortal, hermaphrodite super-being. Requiring a man to fuse with her to form the new being, she inveigles Jerry into a fight with her lover and slave, Dimitri, in which he is injured. Weakened, she can bend him to her will. In an electronic womb/fusion chamber, the pair make love and unite, in a scene of weirdly beautiful photographic effects. The new being emerges to the strains of religious chanting, but all is not well. The final product of science, creation for a new age, is no super-being, but a throwback. With the classic line, "A very tasty world", Cornelius Brunner

exits into the sunset.

The second half of the 20th century has taken as its mythology science, and Jerry Cornelius is the myth figure for his times. He is man the technologist, amoral and ruthless, making the best of the chaos his science has created. He is excellently portrayed by Jon Finch, who combines sophistication, coolness, and black humour with a perfectly-calculated touch of evil. This dark element, which underlies the whole film, breaks through notably at two points: in the fight between Jerry and Dimitri, played for laughs until the latter picks up a hook and gouges out a wound in Jerry's arm; and in the scene where Miss Brunner tortures Frank. Jenny Runacre brings to the part of Miss Brunner a perfect mixture of cool beauty, ruthless determination and sadistic sexuality. The relationship between her and Jerry Cornelius is suitably ambivalent, equal parts of love and loathing. Derrick O'Connor makes an excellent Frank, out of his mind on drugs like Tompodex ("can't you feel those millions of years just waiting in your spine?").

The theme of a cycle of time ending runs throughout the film, from the flash-back discussion with Professor Nira to the watchee which continually stop. Thus is one of the themes of the novel brought out. In fact, little is altered: the country house is moved, Jerry's car is changed. Fuset embroiders a little on the myth — his Jerry lives on chocolate digestives, and wears brown nail varnish — but his scenes, his dialogue, and indeed the music have the mark of truth.

The Final Programme is wild, bizarre, and bitterly satiric of our scientific age. It is highly entertaining, at times visually overwhelming, and strongly recommended.

— Christopher Fowler

WHO KNOWS what will be in the next issue? Not I. There may be John Brunner's long article, if he's sorted out his barn by then. There may be something by James Bligh. There's a Brian Aldiss article which I've been planning to reprint from THE BOOKSELLER for a long time. There's a transcript of an Edmund Cooper speech. There are a lot of reviews, some of which are mentioned elsewhere in this issue. One alteration is occasioned by Graham Charnock managing to ~~lose~~ lose the copy of CRASH which I sent him. I have more reviews by Cy Chauvin and Barry Gillam, and hope also to have a review of THE EMBEDDING by Samuel R. Delany and a review by John Brunner of James Tiptree's first collection of short stories. (I have heard John describe Tiptree as the best new sf writer of the last decade and, not having read many of his stories, I'm looking forward to finding out why.) Also Philip Strick (eh, Philip?) on BILLION YEAR STREE. And there will be Peter Roberts' fanzine reviews, which got squeezed out this time. (Sorry, Peter.)

The first of the Philip K. Dick letters has appeared variously in SF COMMENTARY and THE ALIEN CRITIC; the second in SF COMMENTARY only. Both are reprinted with the permission (indeed, at the suggestion) of the author. "After The Renaissance" is based on a talk delivered at the 1972 British Eastcon; it has been revised somewhat by the author for its appearance in these pages.

THE MAIL RESPONSE

Joanna Russ
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I hate being pushed into the position of defending Causes but somebody's got to. I am a coward at this, but I'm also offended. On p.6 (of VECTOR 64) I got to a joke in Phil Dick's article about rape — which is about as funny as lynching — and wondered why female sexuality is such a tittery subject. It isn't for women (although we sometimes laugh at men's jokes about rape, usually nervously), and women never tell such jokes among themselves/ourselves, nor do we find rape funny at all when talking among ourselves. "Let us hope it is a female sewing machine" — the obligatory nervous/macho assurance that he isn't queer, by God! (although many of the readers of VECTOR must be, by simple statistics) So I skipped and came up with Bob Shaw, and his cute idea about the wife who's cheating on the yoghurt money (her husband's money, of course) to spend more money on her hair-do. Of course, no one intends this to offend — that's the problem. A Pakistani who sincerely and honestly believed in women's soullessness is a respectable object compared with this kind of stale silliness — and in science fiction, bless us all, which is forward-looking, daring, etc. etc.

Possibly nowhere but in Yemen (not even Pakistan) is a literary audience wholly male. Now it is understandable that men can titter at women and women's sexuality (the only aspect of women that exists in these kind of jokes, aside from vanity, stupidity, etc., the usual components of the stereotype). But how on earth can either the writers or the editor of VECTOR imagine that I, myself, can regard myself or any woman, in this light?

In the United States the idea is beginning to cross certain vec minds that perhaps it is not polite to talk publicly in this way, that stale silly jokes are even worse (because more thoughtless) than outright, thought-through, explicit bias, and that those weirdy female creatures (or limn-wristed gays out there) are in fact part of your audience.

The first feminist complaint usually provokes a giddy hysterical response of tee-heeing, or (worse) shrill denunciation of my lack of a sense of humor. Let Mr Edwards turn his female sewing machines (isn't that cute?) into black servants who may have their balls cut off by their (human) presumable masters; and his housewife and her yoghurt into the servant/maid and the employer, and then see how funny the jokes look. This is the only way I can see of bringing home to thoughtless people just what it is they are in fact doing.

Honest to God, the blasted inanity of it! "Regrettably" past the menopause. Tee hee again. What on earth is regrettable about it or magical about it or so utterly embarrassing about it that grown men revert back to nine-year-olds? I am tempted to say, rather savagely, that if Dick (or Lem) had any idea of what it means to live in a society which has no reliable (or until recently legal) method of allowing you to control your fertility and all sorts of exquisitely awful ways of punishing you for it (from botched abortions to illegitimacy to losing your job to sole care of any and all children for 18 or more years after birth to viciously enforced guilt over not keeping a baby) they would not make these jokes. But if they had any idea of the above they would, of course, be feminists like me & would be writing letters like this to other idiots.

- * I'm not sure that that last statement hangs together, but let
- * it pass, let it pass. In case you're wondering why this letter
- * refers to me in the third person, the explanation is that it
- * was sent to John Brunner (with instructions to pass it on to
- * me), with the apparent intent of having him put me in my place.
- * I sent copies to both Philip Dick and Bob Shaw, asking for
- * their comments. Unfortunately, I haven't yet heard from Philip
- * Dick, but here is Bob's reply:

I'm sorry if I offended Joanna Russ, mainly because I don't like hurting anybody's feelings, partly because it suggests that once again my literary judgement has been at fault. My idea of turning a Ford car into a lie detector was, of course, completely absurd; but when I sat down to write it I felt that I ought to make the lie it detected utterly trivial and harmless, so I picked the one about the yoghurt allowance (if anybody actually gets such a thing) as being completely inoffensive. And the reason I wrote about a man detecting a woman's lie is that being a man I tend to use males as viewpoint characters. You could have knocked me over with Vic Feather when I found myself being accused of male chauvinism.

Dare I hope that in my case Joanna overreacted because she was upset about other things? It can screw your temper up a bit when fanzines containing gratuitous insults are sent to you without your even asking for them. In my fanzine writing I never deal with my pro activities, preferring to keep the two things separate. But last year an American fan writer kept dealing with me exclusively as a pro and in his reviews kept saying things like "Shaw cannot think" or hinting that I must have marital problems because some of my story characters do. At that time things were piling up on me a bit and I made a clump of myself by overreacting, which I would not have done at other times, and I suspect I lost a lot of my American friends because of it. I'm not trying to draw any conclusions about Joanna's frame of mind at the time she wrote her letter, but — in the light of the experience I have just mentioned — I hope she won't be permanently angry. Fandom to me is a place in which it is possible to find good and interesting friends, and fanzines are the prime instrument. If it turned the other way and fandom became a source of enemies I would lose interest.

- * Yes indeed. It's not without significance, I feel, that I've
- * been typing these last few pages at fair speed, but having
- * finished copying out the above I packed up for about an hour and
- * a half, and read an old SPECULATION instead (how about that,
- * Pete?). It takes all the pleasure out of it. Both John Brunner
- * and I responded to Ms Russ, incidentally, and I have another
- * letter from her on file, still less pleasant than the above.

- * It occurs to me, in regard to the above that, for this issue at
- * least, the title of this column is about as inappropriate as it
- * could possibly be!

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Brian Stableford's description of the development of the robot theme is neat and convincing, and lays down a valuable basis for discussion. But I can't accept the conclusion he draws from his findings, namely that the development was determined solely by external social concerns. For a start, he makes no serious attempt to establish this conclusion; he only points to some difficulties (which I think are easy to get round) in the obvious alternative explanation, and his arguments are all of the form "My explanation must be right: what else could it be?" Which is always a weak form of argument; the answer is all too likely to be "something you haven't thought of". If he had pointed to the external conditions that were influencing the development of the idea, his argument would be much stronger; but in fact he makes absolutely no reference to the general concerns of society at the time he is considering. Also, the time scale involved seems to preclude his sociological explanation; the development he describes is surely far too rapid to be mirroring any change in the general concerns of society at large.

I would rather go for the explanation he rejects, that the development he describes is almost entirely an autonomous intellectual one. I don't mean it proceeds without any references to influences from outside the sf field, but I think these will be intellectual influences rather than societal ones. Of course the two are inter-related, and in particular an intellectual process is often set into motion by a social impetus; but once this has happened, the characteristically faster rate of intellectual development surely means that, over short periods at least, it can be regarded as autonomous.

Of course, as Brian points out, this approach is powerless to explain the original form of the idea of a robot in science fiction; but that is no objection to using it to examine its subsequent development. In any case, I can't see that Brian has given anything in the way of explanation, rather than description, of this original idea; and I think a perfectly satisfactory explanation can be given in terms of the general structure of ideas and attitudes of American sf of the twenties and thirties.

My contention would be that American pulp sf — the Gernsback tradition — was born in a wholehearted acceptance of technology. Its origin was hardly a literary one at all — as people never tire of saying, it had more to do with POPULAR MECHANICS than with anything that was happening in any literary world — and its whole ethos was utterly opposed to the romantic philosophy that had dominated (hadn't it?) most forms of art for the previous century. It was incapable of understanding the romantic rejection of technology, the Faustian themes that went along with it or the Frankensteinian ones that were its immediate expression. All this is obvious, I think, in Ralph 124C41+, and at least until the fifties this ethos determined the development of sf. Up to the late thirties nobody with any intelli-

gence was writing in the genre (or if they were, like E.T. Bell, they didn't choose to use their intelligence in this activity). So when people like Asimov entered the field, their first thought was to clarify and make explicit the structure of thought they were using — without in any way altering that structure. Hence the Three Laws of Robotics. Later these definitions would be explored and tested for consistency, but the basic attitudes that gave rise to them would still be operating, and the symbols and concepts of sf could only develop inside the boundaries of these attitudes.

Given this basic attitude of welcome towards technology, I think it is hardly surprising that the robot in sf should first be seen as an extension of man's control of his environment, as Brian notes, and that there should be almost universal hostility to the Frankenstein theme. This view also explains what Brian's social thesis cannot, the attitude of tenderness towards robots and the very early tendency to make them feminine and lovable, as in "Helen O'Log". What is operating here is the sentiment that makes all ships feminine. And Brian's query as to why there was no neo-romantic rejection of robots in sf becomes easy to answer: that possibility simply wasn't compatible with the basic attitudes of the genre. (In actual fact, of course, it did happen and there was a strong element of 'back to nature' in the sf of the fifties. By this time the hermetic walls of the genre had begun to leak and romanticism was trickling in.)

Reading through Brian's account of the development of ideas about robots in sf, and bearing in mind this controlling attitude of confidence in technology, it becomes hard to see it as anything but a simple process of influence and dialogue, with ideas suggested by one writer being picked up, explored and debated by others. I can see no sign of his mysterious social control. The direction in which one might indeed look for external influences is towards the mathematicians, psychologists and engineers who were, equally independently of social concerns, asking the same questions about robots as science fiction writers at about the same time. I'm not sure of my dates here, but I think the logician Turing was posing the same question as Asimov in "Evidence" — how do you tell a robot from a man? — at almost exactly the same time. Brian sees this question as part of an attitude to robots which he is trying to fit into a sociological paradigm — 'man identifies the machine as part of himself'. I see it, as I think Asimov, Turing, Shannon, Skinner, Chomsky and so many others saw it, as an aid to answering a question that needs no context — what sort of thing is man?

The rest of this issue needs detailed comment too, of course. I'm overjoyed to see J.G. Compton getting so much attention — I hope this will help give him something more like the reputation he deserves. It's interesting to see that The Missionaries is his least favourite book (after giving it a favourable review in V64, I obviously have to make some retraction). He thinks there are too many viewpoints; but this was one of the things that I liked about it. By writing entirely convincingly from inside the skins of each of the three members of the Wordsworth family, he demonstrates an astonishing range of sympathy that I count as one of his great strengths as a writer. I would have thought that this required so much effort as to make it impossible for Compton to find the objectivity to say coolly that there are 'too many viewpoints'. The fact that he can do this suggests that his insight comes quite naturally to him, and so he tends to undervalue it.

This is related to an aspect of Compton's writing that I find particularly interesting, though I haven't attempted to analyse it

properly. Mark Adlard comments on his consciousness of class distinctions; but I am equally struck by his eye for the oppositions between different age groups and political attitudes. Compton observes this particular sort of comedy with a detached, ironic glance, yet with sympathy for all his characters. I find this particularly remarkable in The Quality of Mercy (where it's hardly a comedy that he's observing). The comparison that springs to mind (well, it's just sprung to my mind) is with Aldous Huxley; and I rather think that comparison might work out to Compton's advantage.

- * Ah, Tony, it's a pity you never got around to writing that
- * article on Compton that you were going to do for me once upon
- * a time (but how about the one on Olaf Stapledon, old buddy?).
- * I suspect it would have been very interesting.

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A comment or two on Brian Aldiss' excellent essay on H.G. Wells ((in V65)). I wouldn't agree that William Golding's The Inheritors is the first masterpiece dealing with prehistoric man. There are at least two earlier, one French — La Guerre du Feu by J.-H. Rosny aîné, first published in 1908 — and one Danish, the earlier sections of Den Lange Rejse by Johannes V. Jensen, which appeared not many years later.

A fairly good English translation of the latter exists under the title The Longest Journey. I don't know about English versions of the Rosny (except for its not quite so good sequel) but a handsome reissue of it was published in 1956 and may still be in print. Both deserve the highest recommendation.

Then elsewhere Brian declares: "A mass audience expects to be pandered to. Wells never pandered." But he had a mass audience — as did Shakespeare, Conrad, Kipling, and any number of others — which seems to deny the first sentence. It isn't only bucksters who under-rate the public taste; the intelligentsia do it even more.

I have heard (perhaps Brian will correct me) that toward the end of his long career Wells considered himself a has-been, a forgotten man. Then World War Two came along and suddenly he was bestowed by young American GI's eager and honored to meet him.

But the foregoing represents mere quibbles about a fine study.

I hope a small response to that lovely lady and lovely writer, Ursula LeGuin, won't seem ungracious. Her objection to the Hugo selection system may well be correct. But really, does it matter much? Any award is pleasant to receive, and I'm duly appreciative of such as have come my way. However, they're all ephemeral. Can anybody offhand remember who won even the last half-Jensen Nobels for literature? The only valid selector is time. In a hundred years we may know who today's important writers are.

- * Perhaps so; nevertheless the mechanics of the voting transferal
- * system which decided the awards last year seemed peculiarly
- * tortured and rather unjust. I hope the decisions were more
- * clearcut this time — and of course, ephemeral or no, congratu-
- * lations to you, and to Ursula LeGuin, for each carrying off
- * yet another (two each this year). Actually, I took you up on

* your (presumably rhetorical) question about the Nobel prizes, and discovered, somewhat to my own surprise, that I could indeed name the last six winners — though you only have to go a couple of years further back to reduce me to helplessness. Asturias, Kawabata, Beckett, Solzhenitsyn, Neruda and Boll, if you're interested. And they call NIVERSIDE QUARTERLY the highbrow * fanzine!!

***** That's it, then. Virtually no response at all to the last issue. Admittedly, it hasn't been out long enough to get any response from the U.S.A.; but then, I've had virtually no response from them to V65. Also, nervous readers may have been deterred by me putting a September 1st deadline for this issue when the last wasn't distributed until the last week in August. But I'd have hoped that a few people would have cottoned on that there had been delays in printing and distribution. No such luck, it seems. I wonder why I bother sometimes.

I did hear, at considerable length, from Philip Payne, who has been catching up with old VECTORS during a period of illness, an activity certain to cause a relapse, I would have thought. Unfortunately, I find it difficult to extract parts of his letter to publish. He makes some good points about book reviewing (though I felt he weakened his case by holding up as a good example my review of Rendezvous With Rama last issue, which I thought rather hasty and uninformative), though I disagree when he suggests that "you must give a book for review to someone who is familiar with that field of sf and, preferably, with the work of the author in question". No, I'd have said that one should (obviously) avoid giving a book for review to someone who one knows beforehand is going to dislike it for what it represents rather than what it is. One would not, for example, give Ted White a Charles Platt book to review, or vice versa. But beyond that, I don't think I'd like to set restrictions.

Philip also comments on the Dick article in V64, and gives some suggestions for a fanzine storehouse scheme which would turn Peter Nicholls' hair white (not to mention depriving him of the small corner of his office not already inundated by the BSEF library). And he closes by pointing out, quite unkindly, some of the things which I have promised for future issues at various times in the past which have never actually materialised. But I'm unrepentant: The Brian Aldiss speech is in this issue; the Edmund Cooper one will be included next time, now that I've transcribed it; the Barry Gilman letter was quoted from in V65; the Rob Holdstock letter was me being sarcastic at his expense, something which I have thus far omitted to do in this issue (though I haven't done the editorial yet...); I'll cure the Harry Harrison article will turn up eventually (won't it, Harry, please?). No, the only instance where my plans went permanently astray was with an article Mike Moorcock promised to do once upon a time, and then missed the deadline for. Nobody's perfect.

I also heard a couple of times from Bert Lewis, but, the state of the Edwards desk being still more chaotic than usual at the present time, I can't just now lay my hands on the first, and longer letter. It isn't lost, just interred. And from E.R. Jones, who is almost unique in acknowledging practically every issue (but, sadly, too briefly to quote). And from Tom Roberts, who is giving his class at the University of Connecticut fanzines to read, and is forming the opinion that, in this sphere, British is best. Too right.

continued from p.4

(Nebula 3rd was Dying Inside (Silverberg))

Best Novella: The Word For World is Forest (LeGuin)(Nebula 3rd)

- 2: The Gold at the Starbow's End (Pohl)
3: The Fifth Head of Cerberus (Wolfe)(Nebula 2nd)

(Nebula Winner was A Meeting With Nebus (Clarke))

Best Novelette: Coat Song (Anderson)(Nebula Award Winner)

- 2: Patron of the Arts (Rotsler)(Nebula 2nd)
3: Basiliak (Lillison)

(Nebula 3rd was The Animal Fair (Bester))

Best Short Story: Eurema's Dam (Lafferty)

The Meeting (Pohl & Kornbluth)

- 2: When We Went To See The End of The World (Silverberg)
3: And I Awoke and Found Me Here on The Cold
Hill's Side (Tiptree)(Nebula 2nd)

(Nebula Winner was When it Changed (Russ))

(Nebula 3rd was Against the Lafayette Escadrille (Wolfe))

From here on there are no Nebula equivalents:

Drama: Slaughterhouse Five; 2: The People; 3: Silent Running.

Professional Editor: Ben Bova (AMALOG); 2: Donald A. Wollheim (DAW Books); 3: Ted White (AMAZING & FANTASTIC)

Professional Artist: Frank Kelly Fosse; 2: Jack Gaughan; 3: John Schoenherr.

Fanzine: Unrungen (Mike and Susan Glicksohn); 2: Locust (Charlie & Dana Brown); 3: Algol (Andy Porter).

Fan Writer: Terry Carr; 2: Susan Glicksohn; 3: Richard E. Geis

Fan Artist: Tim Kirk; 2: Bill Rotsler (as usual...); 3: Grant Canfield.

Special Award: Pierre Versins (for his French encyclopaedia of sf)

And that's it. If you're like me you look at the placings in the novel category and weep. If you're Robert Silverberg, I suppose you're probably resigned to it by now. Nice to see Lafferty winning an award at last. Shame that Gene Wolfe missed out (though the Novella category was far and away the strongest, if that's any consolation). Let me just finish this issue, on the subject of awards, by suggesting you all read three books, which to my mind are the only serious contenders for next year's BSFA Award (read and vote!): Frankenstein Unbound (Aldiss); The Farthest Shore (LeGuin); and The Fifth Head of Cerberus (Wolfe).

continued from page 63

(2) H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969. p.247.

(3) H. Clifton & F. Riley, They'd Rather Be Right. In ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION, April 1955 (British edition). p.108.

(4) D.R. Bunch, Moderan. New York: Avon, 1971. p.41.

(5) ibid. p.231.

(6) D.R. Bunch, "Holdholtzer's Box" in Protostars, ed. D. Gerrold. New York: Ballantine, 1971. p.146.

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