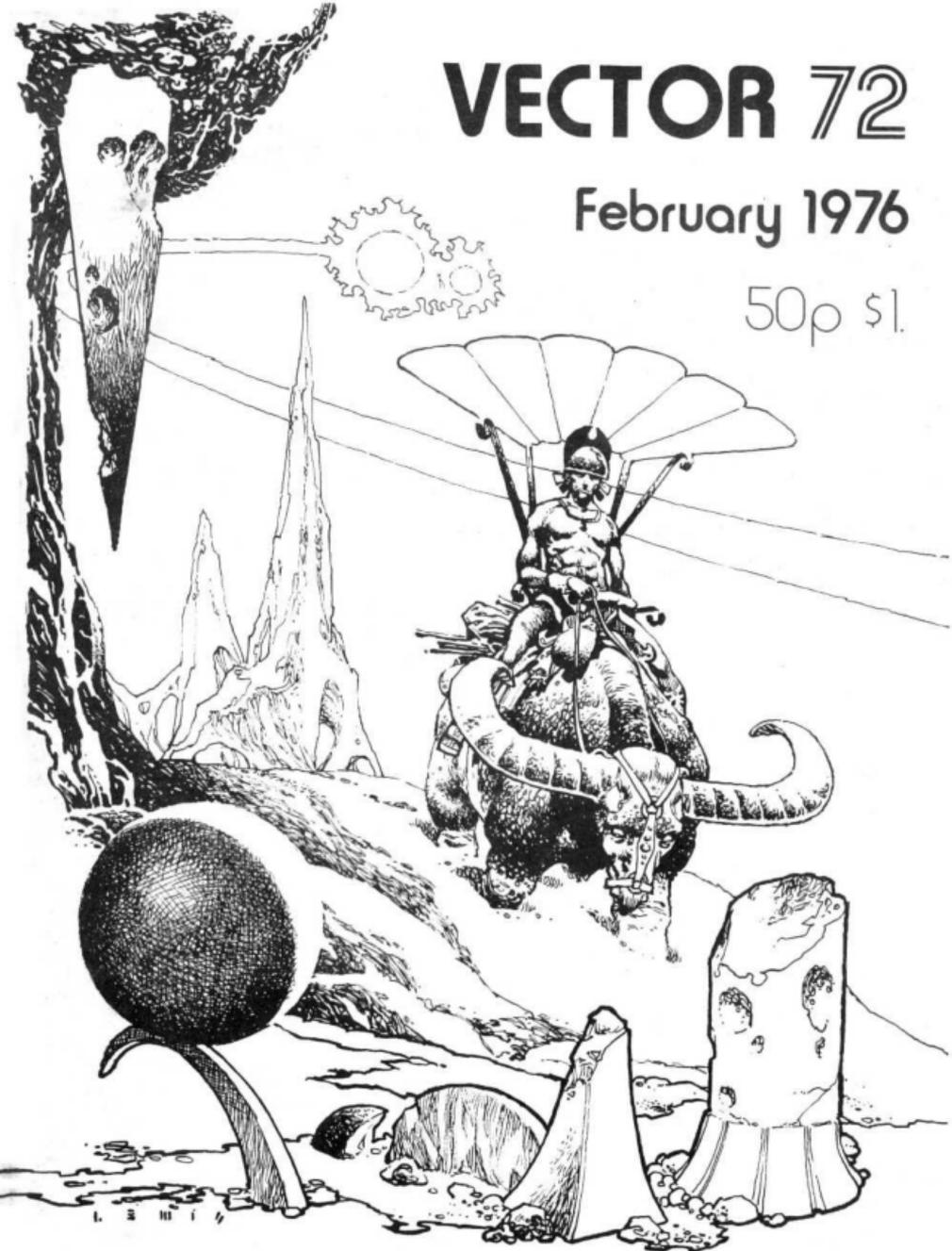


# VECTOR 72

February 1976

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# VECTOR 72

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Thanks to all the usual people, plus  
Ursula Le Guin, for giving creation  
new hope

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This issue is for:

JUDY AND TAKHÆ

With love

Vector is produced by Chris Fowler

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# LEAD IN



Firstly, a note for all those of you who are desirous of contacting me by use of Mr. Bell's amazing telephonic device. That number below my address is - yes, you guessed it - my phone number. As I live in a house with three other people, and as I spend a fair amount of my time out of the house, there is a good chance that when you ring you'll get one of them answering the phone. Now, even on normal phone messages they garble communications beyond all recognition, so you can imagine what it is like when it is something to do with sf, about which they know nothing. Thus if you ring and I'm out will you please: i) plainly state (and preferably spell) your full name; ii) give a return phone number where I can ring you back; iii) leave some indication of what the call was about. There is nothing worse than to arrive home at eleven-thirty and be informed that "Someone rang for you - er, I think his name was Pete..." or almost as bad to be told that someone (unspecified) will be ringing me back at 6.30 the next evening - when it is most unlikely that I'll be in, or even be able to be in. My life is a trifle hectic. So it is best to leave a number where I can ring you back.

Before I go on to my usual chat about what's-in-this-Vector and promises for next Vector, a note that the 1976-77 TAFF race is open for nominations. The nominating period for this annual event - a fund to send a lucky fan to the World convention in North America - begins at the Easter Convention (Mancon) an advert for which appears in this issue. The full text of the announcement of this event by Peter Weston, the UK administrator, will be in the Newsletter (I hope), but suffice it to say that this is something which we should be concerned about. Watch out in future issues of Vector for an announcement of the person the editor is intending to support.

So - to Vector 72. Here and now, on Monday February 9th, the completed issue is a lot longer than it looked as if it would be three days ago. At that time it became apparent that I couldn't finish the transcription of the Roger Elwood interview in time for this issue, which seemed to leave me with a big gap. As it turned out, the profusion of illustrations and a big "Infinity Box" has left us with a bigger issue than last time. If the Elwood interview had been in, then the issue would have run about 72-76 pages...which would have been the biggest Vector since the mammoth Malcolm Edwards 67/68 double. And while I have the desire to produce the best Vectors ever, I have too much respect for my fingers to try also to produce the biggest.

Still, this issue does have the Dan Morgan guest-of-honour speech from Novacon, which will be new to most of you. You may disagree with some of the ideas, but

I'm sure you will find it interesting. I hope that it stirs up some response. Also herein is the postal interview which Malcolm Edwards, as editor, conducted with Robert Silverberg. Although incomplete, as Malcolm notes, it is a fascinating insight into the author's writing, and a valuable introduction to his guest-of-honour appearance at Mancon at Easter. The quota of articles is completed by Eric Bentcliffe's 'Step Inside Love'.

The Infinity Box is beginning to take on more of the size and form which I would like, and is perhaps the best book review section which we have had since issue 69. A whole host of new reviewers are waiting in the wings to appear in Vector in the near future (hello, out there...you are out there, aren't you?...hello?...), many of them well-known names. Review copies of new books are beginning to come in, though there are still a number of publishers (please take note, review editors) who aren't sending us books. We hope to broaden our coverage as soon as we can rectify this situation.

There's no Celluloid Dream this issue because Andrew Tidmarsh is busy with his writing of fiction and hasn't seen anything recently that has stimulated him to write, and I have managed to miss the only remotely sf-oriented film which has come near me recently. So it goes. The film review column should return next issue.

We have on hand from Jim Goddard an interview which he and David Pringle conducted with J.G. Ballard about a year ago, which is probably the best interview you are likely to see with a contemporary sf writer. It is a superb piece of work, and I recommend you to watch out for the book from which it comes, a forthcoming publication, full of essays and articles on J.G. Ballard and his work, which Jim is editing. More information in the next issue. If only Jim weren't so busy with Cypher - due to emerge any day now - and his other writing commitments....

I'm not going to promise anything else for the next issue, except to say that there will be artwork by Paul Dillon and Paul Ryan again. Paul D. will be illustrating the Ballard interview, and Paul R. will be doing the department heading. Paul D. is planning a wrap-around cover, which should really be something. I should point out at this point that, just as Vector is very open to written contributions, so it is very open to artwork. If you have anything that you would like to see in print, then send it to us. It will receive careful and considerate attention, and be returned intact if unused.

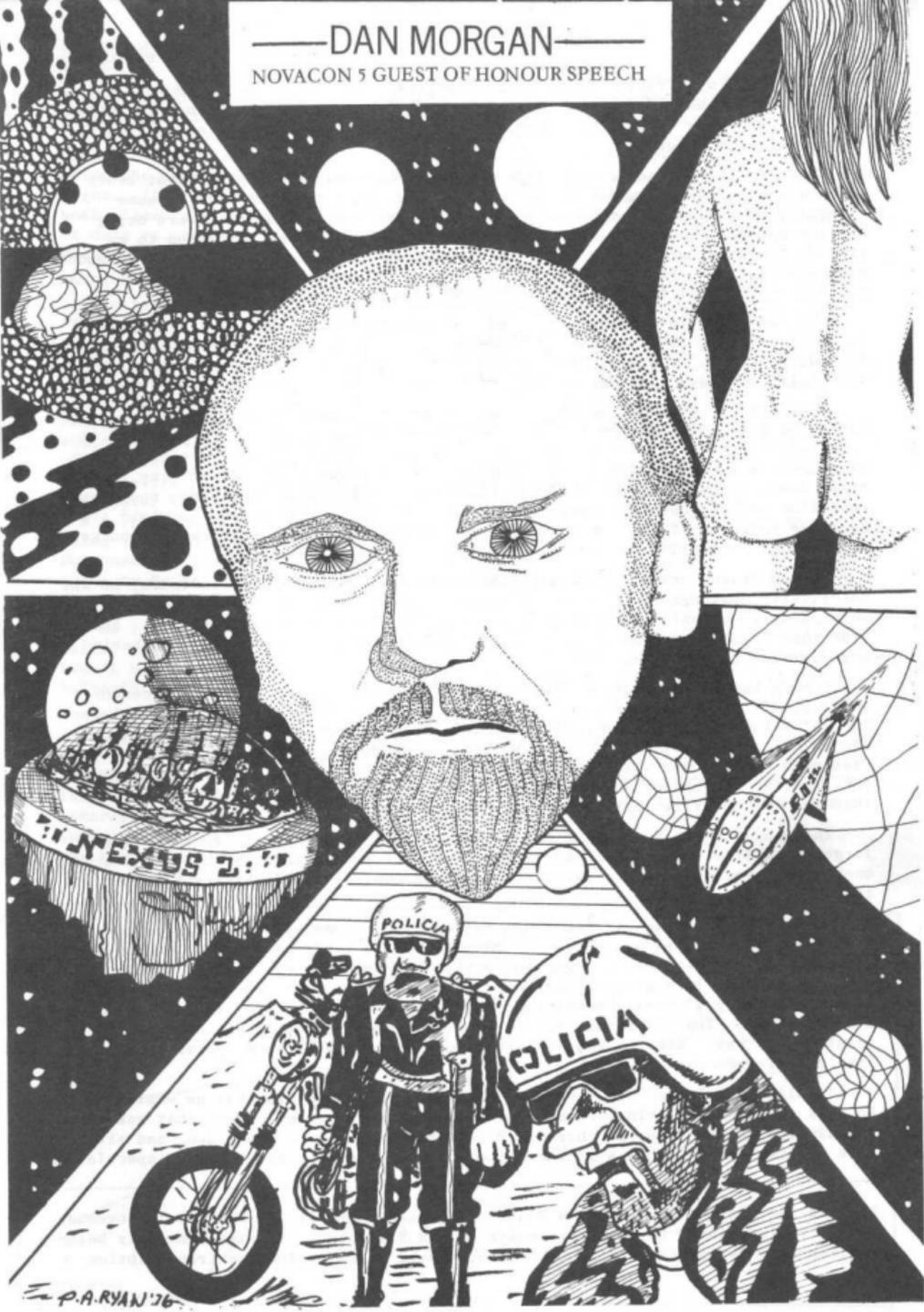
For the less immediate future, we have a number of special issues in various stages of preparation, and we hope that you'll be seeing at least three of these in the next 6-8 months. The problems on these is not so much getting people to write for them, but finding the time to organise them amongst the hectic dash of a bi-monthly schedule...especially when we are trying to boost overseas sales as a hedge against a possible decline in the coming year in BSFA membership. The rate of renewals of these memberships is proving rather slow, so I urge you, if you haven't renewed, then do so today. These issues of Vector cost a great deal to produce, and the money can only come from subscriptions. You'll find another renewal slip in with this issue. USE IT.

As well as your money, of course, we need your ideas about Vector - so keep those letters coming in. As you can see from the swelling size of the Letters section, we are getting a steadily growing response, but we still need more intelligently argued letters, constructively criticising the journal and its contents. We can't function in a vacuum - we need your thoughts.

You'll see me (in the printed form..) in another month's time, and I may get to see some of you at Mancon at Easter. No doubt I shall be running around "being Vector editor", i.e. harrassing everyone I meet for material. So it goes.

Christopher Fowler, 9/2/1976

— DAN MORGAN —  
NOVACON 5 GUEST OF HONOUR SPEECH



P.A. RYAN '76

Before I start my official speech, the Committee have asked me to announce that at 11.10 in the Harold Wilson Memorial Toilet, Bob Shaw will be doing his latest LP, "Old Pink Eyes Is Back". Would the music lovers please leave quietly so as not to wake the others....

Well, my first reaction when Rog phoned me back in February was that every other science fiction writer in the country must have been stricken by some selective pestilence - something to do with a new kind of ink they were using for the Science Fiction Writers of America bulletin. Anyway it seemed to me that with me the sole survivor, lying there at the bottom of the barrel, he hadn't much alternative. Neither did I, I suppose, so I accepted. I was that reluctant, you know - I'd only been waiting around for about twenty-three years!

The fact that this comes at a time when circumstances make me a complete impostor, we'll go into later. The main thing is that (it says here) looking around here today, I'm delighted to see that so many of my professional colleagues are still alive and kicking.

I was on the deathbed myself, actually, at the time of the phone call, suffering from some kind of flu that left me with double vision and profound indifference to life in general. It says something for the therapeutic powers of Roger's voice that within five minutes I was sitting up in bed writing the first draft of this speech. Not exactly this speech, but 84 different speeches that I've written over the last nine months. You see, writers on the whole are not easy talkers. There are a few exceptions to this generalisation, of course, too obvious to mention.

My old friend and collaborator John Hynam (John Kippax), for instance, he was practically unstoppable once he got going. The only time I remember that John's voice didn't dominate the proceedings was on his final public appearance. And even then I wasn't too sure about that until the box finally disappeared behind the curtains of the crematorium.

Johnny had his own kind of religion. He was a sort of a Buddhist ancestor-worshipper - quite serious about this - and certainly he had not time at all for the established Christian church. And the local priest in his well-meaning innocence did go on a bit. You know, all this "Cut down like a flower" and all that. Five more minutes and I swear that the lid of that box would have opened up and the familiar old bellow would have enlivened the proceedings. Dear old John, that was the one time they threw a lion to the Christians.

Those of you who have met him will know what I mean. He was in every way larger than life. Those who didn't know him - if you've read any of the "Stars" books, well you do know him because he's World Admiral Junius Farrogut Carter to the life, that's John.

Anyway, your average writer would rather play around with words on paper any time than get up on his hind legs and address his audience in person. (Or even sit down and address them.) Much too public. Writing is essentially a private pleasure, rather like picking your nose or defecating. And besides, you can't re-write after you've said something, and re-writing is half the fun as far as I'm concerned. The end result has to look spontaneous, but it doesn't have to be created that way. Like my agent, Gerald Pollinger, always said: "There's nothing like a well-rehearsed ad-lib".

I called Rog Peyton back about a week later and asked him what he wanted me to talk about and he helpfully suggested ESP. But the trouble with that was that I'd already talked about ESP here in Birmingham a couple of years ago, and also I've written the four books of the "Mind" series - done an awful lot of speculating

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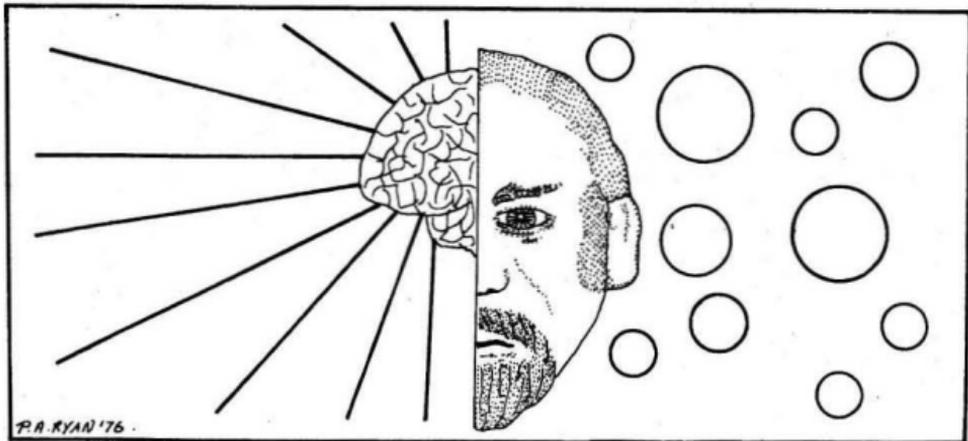
This is the text of Dan Morgan's Guest-of-honour speech at the Novacon in November 1976. It is printed here by permission of Dan Morgan. It is simultaneously being published by Kevin Easthope in Logo-1-76; thanks to Kevin for the transcription.

about ESP. That isn't to say that I don't still find the subject fascinating - from a dramatic point of view it's always been one of my obsessions. My most recent short story was written around an ESP theme. But I'm not really interested in the so-called "facts" of ESP, most of which are disputed in some way or other. Case histories, anecdotes about incidents, statistical proofs, that kind of stuff bores the pants off me. As far as I'm concerned, ESP exists because it feels right. It's real to me, even though I haven't experienced it, except at its most elementary level - the shared thought, the simultaneous utterance, touches of *deja vu*, and one thing personal to me, really, being in an improvising jazz group where people seem to think together, it really does happen.

But as a writer, I'm more interested in feelings than in facts - particularly as a science fiction writer I've this facility for creating in my mind a kind of climate of belief about a situation. I can't write anything unless I believe it, unless it makes sense to me, at least at the time I'm writing it. That's one of the big tasks of writing a science fiction novel; writing yourself into the environment of the story. Maybe some people can write tongue-in-cheek about something they're not really convinced about. I never could, never will. For one thing, I take science fiction too seriously for that, and for another, I wouldn't be satisfied with what I turned out. Satisfied? Who's ever satisfied with a piece of creative art? (If you'll pardon the expression.) The nature of the creative process is such that the writer, painter, musician, what-have-you, will never be satisfied with what he's produced. If he is, he's dead. The book I'm working on at the moment is the best I've ever done. It has to be. Who's going to spend six or nine months working on something you don't believe in? But once the book's finished - that's it. If you're not satisfied then the only thing to do is to leave it, don't tinker with it anymore, send it off and get on with the next one.

As I've said, telepathy exists for me because it feels right. Feelings, not facts, rule the history of the human race and its future. If Ivan the Terrible hadn't had a dental problem, he wouldn't have been half so terrible. And if Martin Luther's bells had been in better shape, we'd all of us be Roman Catholics.

Science fiction is not about facts or about science, it's about people, about wonderful, unpredictable people, just like any other kind of fiction. About people, each one of whom is marooned on that grey island inside his skull. But what would happen if they weren't so marooned? What if the barriers were down? What if? This is the question that makes fiction, especially science fiction, eternally interesting. Jim Blish used to say that there was only one ESP story. And I suppose if there only was one, then he wrote it in Jack of Eagles. Certainly that was the prime influence on me.



But what about More Than Human and The Demolished Man, to name only two? It's my opinion that there's a whole sub-genre of stories with an ESP background, and even in four novels I've only scratched the surface. The idea of ESP takes people in different ways I suppose. It's always been an obsession of mine but I remember one dear old lady at a writers circle who was most put out about the very thought of telepathy. I'm sure she thought I could do it, and that I was probing her secret fantasies! I'm pleased I couldn't if she was that bothered about it.

Anyway, let's leave ESP for the moment and get on to the real subject of this talk. You've guessed it - me! Sorry about that, but if you can't talk about yourself when you're Guest of Honour, when can you? Anyhow, I'm too old to be conceited and too young to be modest. In other words I've been around long enough to know my own limitations but also to recognise those of others.

If I've learned anything, and this is the cornerstone philosophy: the really important thing is doing. Doing what you can in the best way you know how. That's the secret, not only of writing but of every other aspect of life. There are basically two kinds of people in the world: those who want to be and those who want to do. And in the second category there's practically no competition.

I have reached the age where I know the things I'm capable of doing, and those I can't. I can't draw, I can't paint, I can't sing, I can't dance, so I don't even bother to try. I concentrate on the things I can do, because there's no time to waste on the others. The guitar is a bit of a problem in this respect because to keep on playing up to the sort of standard I expect of myself, I ought to practice at least two hours a day, and there just isn't time. Now that's a lie, because the time's there if I really wanted to, but the motivation isn't. Two hours a day for what? I've no ambition to perform in public as a musician - I had all that years ago. I love the guitar and music in general, but mainly these days for my own private pleasure. Maybe that's selfish, but I've had my fill of people who ask you to play at parties - you know the mind of thing? The whole group gathers round waiting for you to perform, and then after listening to you for a whole four bars they resume the conversation where they left off.

I expect you've all heard the expression "a fool's paradise"? Maybe you never met a person who actually lived in one for several years. My first story was published back in 1952, and for some time after that I wasn't sure whether I was a writer or a guitarist. In fact I was neither because the money that paid for the groceries was earned through my grudging participation in the running of the family menswear business. Anyway, the musical thing gradually withered away under the impact of rock 'n' roll, (nobody wanted to know about jazz anymore), so that writing became my dominant spare time activity. Well, more than that really, it became my dominant any time activity because it was the only thing I really cared about doing that I thought would be worthwhile. I didn't give a damn about the menswear business, that's for sure. In fact I rather despised the whole thing. You see, a writer may be a professional liar, that's his job. But a salesman, if he's going to be any good has to be a hypocrite as well, plus a touch of avarice and a moribund conscience for qualifications. Actually, I've got a bloke who works for me and he's a marvellous salesman. He's got all these attributes! (He'll listen to this tape when I get home and roar his head off.)

Feeling that way about my everyday job it's hardly surprising that I was a bit of a mixed up kid. My single growing obsession, ambition, became the idea of writing myself out of the menswear business and becoming a full-time professional writer. This ambition was finally realised in 1969 when I was earning enough from my writing to keep Georgie and myself in reasonably comfort, especially in Spain because the cost of living was much cheaper in those days. Things are slightly different now, since Mr. Wilson got at the Pound in Your Pocket and the arse dropped out of sterling. But that's another story...

Anyway, I'd promoted a bright young man who'd been working well for me as a first salesman to the post of manager and we went off to Almeria. Georgie, who

has a great deal more sense than me in such matters, voiced certain misgivings about the project. Encouraging little things like: "Yes - but what will you do if you never sell another book?" A great help in that way, she was. But there was no stopping me at that point, it was something I'd wanted to do for so long, it was something I had to do. Besides, if it didn't work out there was always the security of the menswear business to fall back on.

Almeria was marvellous. So far away from Spalding, a six day postal lag each way (you know, just like London to Birmingham), that there wouldn't have been any point in bothering about how much was in the till, what were the takings today, and all that sort of thing. The climate was as advertised, there was plenty of peace and quiet (a strange type of peace and quiet that they call tranquillo), and the living and the booze were cheap. We met a lot of nice people too. And some not so nice. The English abroad are a funny lot. They really are. I'd like to write a book about that sometime.

The one big advantage that I found out there was that of being a foreigner. It's a pleasant sort of feeling of being slightly removed from the everyday life of the people around me. A certain dissociation is quite normal for a writer. The expression "Living in a world of his own" is certainly true of me and I'm sure of other writers when they're involved in a book. Out there in Almeria I was able to sustain this kind of total immersion state for weeks at a time. Cognac helps.

There's a basic misunderstanding in the minds of lots of people about the writing job. In the recent public lending rights debate in the Lords, Lord Padget of Northampton said: "I do not see why, just because they write books, these people should not earn their living in some normal manner".

Screw you, your Lordship.

I'm here to tell you that writing's work. Most of all it's discipline - self-discipline. Nobody tells you what to write or when to write. In fact nobody gives a damn whether you write or not except yourself. You're on your own, and I can tell you that some of those mornings in Almeria when the sun was shining and the temperature was in the eighties, it took a hell of a lot of willpower to sit down at that typewriter and do three hours solid work, rather than head for the swimming pool or the beach, or the bar. But if you're a professional, that's the way it has to be. I admire professionalism in any field, but it seems to me that the prime requirement of a professional is that he be completely "in it". You can't play at a job if you want to be a success. Whatever the job is, you've got to give it your full attention and energy. Another thing: amateurs pose, make a big thing of it; the professional is in control of his medium. He does it in the best possible way with the minimum of fuss. A master in any field usually makes the whole thing look so simple, people get the idea that what he is doing is easy. Take guitarists for instance. I've seen Pepe Martinez, the great flamenco player, lolling back on a chair in his shirt-sleeves, with a cigar in the corner of his mouth, playing the kind of flamenco that makes poseurs like Manitas de Plata sound like nothing. Or John Williams who, with a minimum of fuss, plays the arse of anybody. He really does.

So there I was, in splendid isolation for three years, with occasional returns to the UK, and UK looks very grey when you come back from Almeria. The people don't smile over there either, that's because they've got an oppressive police state in Spain, you see, where you've got men on the corners with their tommy guns, and everybody is really down-trodden there - and they all laugh all the time! Some English people, particularly people on the left, have got absolutely stupid ideas about Spain. (This is a digression I suppose.) They've got stupid ideas about General Franco. Sure he was a bastard, sure he shot a lot of people and he put a lot of people in prison, but he dragged Spain out of the middle ages - and Spain is now a very prosperous country where people work and earn good money,

and eat good food, and they've still got time to laugh and enjoy themselves, and be human beings. And about old Franco: I think he's still hanging on, and really, I think he's going to fool them all because I don't think he's going to go at all. Ever!

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes, this splendid isolation of mine started to get slightly less splendid. Ted Carnell, my friend and agent over many years, died whilst I was out there for one thing, a very important thing. Then the American market, where a major part of my income was earned, nosedived into the recession.

Meanwhile, back at the menswear shop in Spalding...my bright young manager had developed a taste for sauce, and a severe case of the English Disease. I suppose he figured that if I was spending my time loafing around on the Costa del Sol, he was entitled to do the same thing in Spalding. On my time.

Anyway, I returned to the UK in September 1973, and it became obvious to me that things were in a hell of a mess, businesswise. When I got down to investigating I saw that the business was very nearly on the skids and if something wasn't done immediately I'd lose the background security that had enabled me to go off to Spain and write in the first place. So the first step was to sack the bright young manager and take over personal control of the business. This, I expected, to be a purely temporary measure. The most I hoped for was that I might be able to salvage something out of the wreck and then maybe sell out and get back to writing. Through a combination of bad buying, bad management, falling sales, the situation was desperate. The firm owed a lot of money and there was nothing in the kitty. What stock we had was pretty crummy and it wasn't easy to get replacements because suppliers didn't really want to know us; because we were slow payers and we weren't a good risk - so what money I'd saved from my writing had to go into the pot. And all the time and effort that I could have put into writing had to go the same way.

By some kind of miracle the salvage operation turned into a success story - in a mild sort of way. Well I suppose it wasn't a miracle really, there was a logical reason. I'd been given such a fright that I convicted myself completely to the job - and that being so, I succeeded. I say "I", but there was a hell of a lot of help from Georgie in there as well, of course. She's always been a bit more keen on the menswear business than she has on the writing. Anyway, over the past two years we've trebled our turnover and I made something like four times as much as I did in my best year as a professional writer.

Writing is a very precarious profession. If you're in the top bracket like Len Deighton, Alastair McLean, Harold Robbins - you're doing fine. But science fiction writers don't really make that much. According to the last Society of Authors survey, the average writer (this is overall) earns something like twelve pounds a week. Hardly a living wage. I did rather better than that for a number of years - but not well enough in relation to the amount of effort I'd put in - I can see that now.

I know that the amount of effort isn't really any measure of work when you're talking about artistic endeavour, but financial reward looms more important as you get older. An eighteen year old kid living rough may be cute, but a middle-aged bum is something else again.

When I was younger, money didn't interest me much. In fact I rather despised the idea of spending my life grubbing around. I still do to a certain extent. I'm certainly not obsessed with money in the way some people in business are. I put a large part of what I earn back into the company because that helps me to run the business efficiently and well. That gives me satisfaction because (here's the trap, if you call it that, that I've fallen into): in the process of pulling the business back from the brink I've become so involved that it's really my baby in a way it never was before. This involvement is costing me so that instead of going to Milford this year, I went for a week to the college for the distributive

trade. Instead of living in Spain, I'm in Spalding. And worst of all there's no time for writing, at least, for the writing of novels, which is my main preoccupation. I do manage to sneak in the odd short story now and again; Thursdays, Sunday afternoons, this sort of thing, but even that's a struggle.

I'm not really complaining about my present way of life because I have found that once you commit yourself to a job, any job, and work at it, there are a lot of satisfactions you never thought about before, you never even guessed at. I discovered that the old boring job had only been boring because I made it so by my own indifference. Now I find it interesting and rewarding - I actually enjoy being in business. The ironic thing about this is that I was only able to achieve this metamorphosis because of the self-discipline learnt through the years of writing. So from now on until I get out of business, and that might not be for a year or two yet, the only new Dan Morgan stories you're going to see will be short ones. From my point of view that's a pity because the novel, for me, is the only really satisfying form in life. A short story I can carry in my head, shape the thing up, write it. But a novel is something much more complex: a growing organic thing, which grows over weeks, months of work.

The "Mind" series is an example of this kind of process. I started off with the idea of writing one novel with an ESP theme, but after I'd written The New Minds I was aware that I'd only just begun to develop the possibilities of the theme. Since then there have been three more "Mind" books, the latest being Country of the Mind. When I get round to it there's plenty of material for several more.

The "Stars" series, written with John Hynam (John Kippax), began in rather an unusual way. John got in touch with this film producer who was looking for a format for a science fiction TV series, the Star Trek kind of thing. We didn't even know about Star Trek at that time, but no doubt the producer, who was in the business, had heard what was going on in the States.

Anyway, we wrote a lot of outlines, even a couple of complete screenplays - and this producer did a hell of a lot of talking, some of which, I must admit, made sense. He's made a couple of good films in the past, but the one thing he didn't produce was any money. And there were Johnny and I working our tails off doing this thing instead of getting on with the stuff that earns the bread. He took a hell of a lot of pleasing, too, which is fair enough, but how long did he expect us to go on working purely on spec? He could make no definite commitment because even if he thought it was good, he'd still got to go out and sell the package to one of the big film companies. In other words: too much bloody pie in the sky! He was picking our brains for free, and in the end Johnny and I got enough sense to say that we'd had enough. Forget it. But determined to salvage something out of all the work we did, we wrote the novel Thunder of Stars which we based on our first screenplay for the TV series in fact - much enlarged of course.

The irony about this is that the writing went fantastically. Immediately on publication we sold the film option on Thunder of Stars to Hammer films so it couldn't have been such a bad screenplay after all. They never got around to making the film unfortunately, but I'm not sure whether that's unfortunate because they made such a cock-up of their first science fiction adventure. Did any of you have the misfortune to see Moon Zero Two, with Bernard Bresslaw and Warren Mitchell? They billed it as the "first space western". Maybe after all, Thunder of Stars was saved from a fate worse than death....but I still think it could have made a good film.

Collaboration with Johnny was, well, he defined it once as "a state of Holy Acrimony". It's very difficult between anybody I suppose. Johnny was a pretty forceful sort of character. When he used to visit us he'd really bounce into the room. You'd say "Sit down Johnny" and he'd say "I don't want to sit down!" and he'd walk up and down the room, addressing. He wouldn't sit down. I remember

one occasion when he'd been addressing me in this way. For some time Georgie had been sitting quietly in the corner of the room listening to him handing it out to me, and she got up in a huff and said: "How you two people can collaborate on anything I will never understand!" and she walked out and slammed the door.

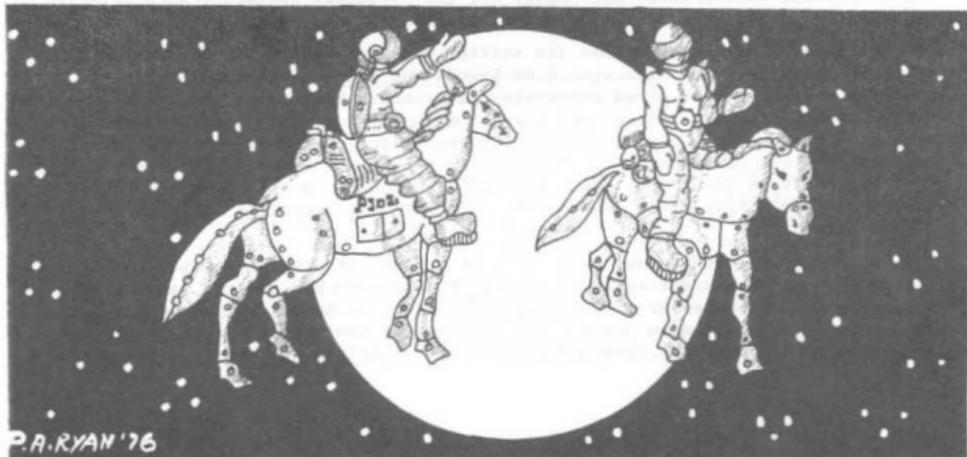
We had a certain amount of understanding between us I think, because I always used to say to Johnny: "Well, lool, you're the playwright" (which he was, he was a very considerable playwright - he'd had a number of radio plays and several television plays on, and this was really his sport), "and I'm the science fiction writer". But it was funny, when the book was finished, reading through, neither of us could tell which parts the other had written. They seemed to merge together somehow.

We did two more after Thunder of Stars - Seed of Stars and The Neutral Stars - but then with me spending so much time in Spain, collaboration became more and more difficult. Johnny used to phone me up two or three times a day from Peterborough to Spalding, and he used to come over two or three times a week, but he couldn't really do that for Almeria. So John did the last one, Where No Stars Guide, on his own. It's very sad that this was the last thing he ever did.

Now at this point I've gone into a sort of serious mood and I'm going to quote to you from a well-known science fiction author. I'll leave it to you to identify him.

Quote: "I've always admired fiction which avoids glib explanations and espouses the sheer inexplicability of the universe". Did you get all that? Now that quote is pretentious twaddle! The result of a completely wrongheaded approach and utter misunderstanding of the purposes of science, or any other kind of fiction. We all know that life, taken as a whole, can be inexplicable and confusing. The motivations of even people who are relatively close to us is often obscure. Life is so complicated and the universe is so indifferent that any human mind is constantly under pressure and may break under that pressure. The purpose of fiction is to help people cope with that kind of stress. Fiction is a kind of special magic, it makes sense of the chaos of real life; gives at least an illusion of cause and effect. This symbolic achievement of order is what gives the reader his satisfaction. To deny him that satisfaction by following the Slice of Life fallacy leaves him frustrated and confused, and a writer who does it does it at his own peril.

I love fiction, both the reading and the writing of it, but not the kind that espouses the sheer inexplicability of the universe. Like the man said about sex and sadism in the cinema: "I can get all that at home".



Somebody said - was it John Brunner? - "the future isn't what it was". That's true. Ted's New Worlds, where I started, where a lot of us started, had a lot of taboos, and these taboos weren't adhered to out of prudery but because Ted believed sincerely that he was catering for a predominantly juvenile audience and that this being so, he had a responsibility not to corrupt that audience. Ted was very sincere about this.

The change in editor soon ended all that - also sanity for a while. The pendulum swung abruptly from a kind of juvenile adventure fiction into pseudo-Joycean porn. Plot became a no-no and a science fiction writer had to learn to talk dirty if he wanted to survive. Now, thank God, some kind of middle ground has been reached, although a piece of consummate crap like Beyond Apollo can still get the occasional award. Don't get the idea that I'm agin' a bit of honest filth - The Country of the Mind has its riper moments, moments which I considered necessary for the development of the story after that. I got a bit of a shock a few months ago when my US agent sent me a copy of a letter from the editor at Doubleday. I quote, and I'm not kidding: "Here is Dan Morgan's Country of the Mind. I really enjoyed this rivetting story but because of the brutality, sex and the language there is no way I could get away with doing this book". Well, I mean, I don't know about you lot, but I always thought it was the Yanks who invented sex and sadism!

I've always liked the idea of science fiction moving closer to the mainstream and I've always been inclined to go that way myself. Apart from the ESP element, Country of the Mind is mainstream fiction and even the first two of the "Stars" books are really love stories if you think about it.

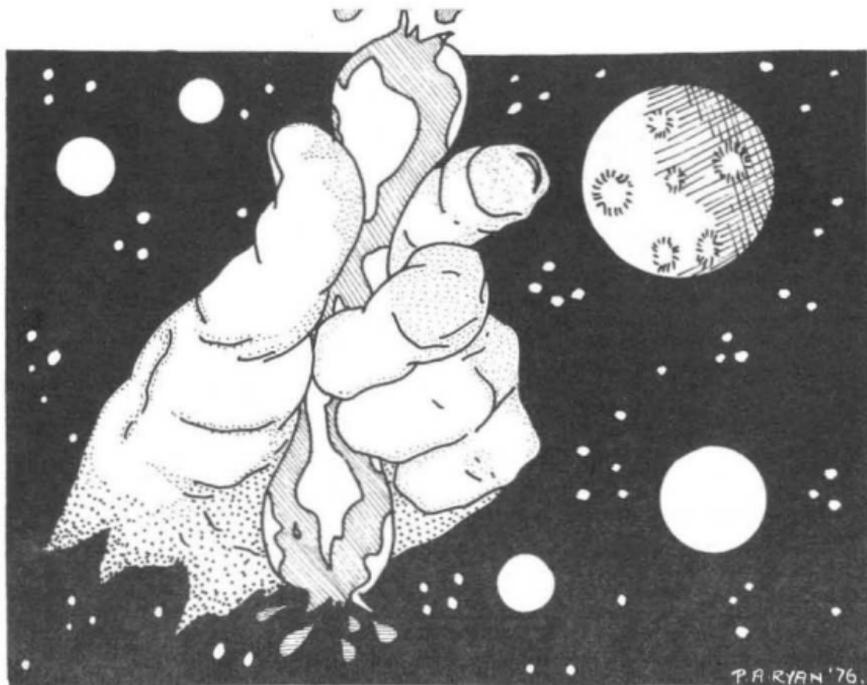
Anyway, back to the future, and the way it's changed. In the '40s and the '50s science fiction was mainly adventure romance (romance in the true sense of the word, not the romantic novelist sense), then in the '60s it got a bad dose of significance: eco-disasters, dystopias by the barrel-load. These went down well because by and large most of us thought that all was well with the world apart from the bogey of a possible nuclear disaster. We thought that science was going to bring humanity to the new millenium. It's okay to read about things that go bump in the night when you're cosily tucked up in your own little controlled environment, but today even the thickest of us has got to admit that the world is in a hell of a state - and it looks like getting worse rather than better.

John Hyland and I wrote a TV script a few years back, based on my short story "The First Day of the Rest of Your Life", which was called, rather jollily, The Euthanasia Option. The BBC rejection letter on this - I'm grateful for getting them, I get the best rejection letters in the business! - said: "We cannot believe that viewers would wish to see a future in which conditions are worse than they are today". Well I suppose from the Entertainment point of view they were dead right, but that's not the way it's going to be and you'd better believe it mate!

It seems to me that most of the publishers today would agree with the BBC - that is, although they may recognise that the world is going to hell in a handcart, they're not particularly keen on publishing material that rubs people's noses in the fact. In other words, we've come the full circle. Science fiction is back again to its old escapist function; back again to adventure romance, although hopefully slightly more sophisticated and less juvenile.

High Destiny is for me purely a fortuitous example of the kind of thing I mean. From my point of view, High Destiny was a personal message from the comfort of my fool's paradise. Almeria and the Costa del Sol are there in every line of what I think of as an historical romance pitched millenia in the future. I enjoyed writing High Destiny perhaps more than any other novel I've done, and I hope I may get the chance to do something like it again sometime.

Well, that's the commercial, so I suppose I'd better end there.



## Step Inside Love

Eric Bentcliffe

**MANKIND USING UP EARTH'S RESOURCES AT ALARMING RATE....ALL FOSSIL FUELS EXPECTED TO BE EXHAUSTED BY 2060....PLANET EARTH IN DIRE DANGER OF BECOMING A USELESS HULK..**

At one time science fiction writers were heralds of Bright and Brave New Worlds; these days most of them are joining computer-inspired futurologists in prophesying Doom real-soon-now. If Armageddon isn't next Tuesday, it will be the one after... They could be right, of course, but I do wish they would apply their vaunting imaginations just a little more in respect of the current forecasting of doom about through pollution of our planet and depletion of existing resources. It appears to me that they are worshipping the mechanical abacus rather than using those aforementioned "vaunting imaginations". Particularly as regards the latter possibility.

I'm no scientist, but even I know that a computer can only extrapolate from the (known) facts fed into it - its prophesies are only valid as of today's knowledge, I expect a science fiction writer to take the whole thing a few steps further...surely I agree that the politicians of the world are extremely unlikely to make the future brighter by taking the steps now (or in the immediate future) that need to be taken in regard to halting pollution and hoarding resources. I may be no scientist, but I'm not naive! And I don't expect a benevolent race of super-persons to crash-land in time to give our story a happy ending.

No, all I'm suggesting is that science fiction writers take a few educated guesses about what lies beneath their hairy feet. They have, of course, suggested outer space mining as a partial salve for our projected mineral and energy shortages... and, by all means, let's mine Athene and Pallas and the rest of the asteroids. Let's dig holes in the Moon and Mars. Let's harvest the solar system. But first, let's investigate properly our own backyard.

Certainly, we are using up our (known) resources at an alarming rate, but we are sitting on an imaginable variety of others. Don't ask me what they are... I don't know and what I've learned from reading sf isn't helping me any. I'm pretty sure that we won't find Edgar Rice Crispies world of Barsoom down there - even if Tarzan has seen it for himself. I have sincere doubts about S. Fowler Wright's pale-and-slimy slug-like humanoids - I don't even want to find those, they'd put me right off my filet mignon. And as for Richard S. Shaver's benevolent race of galactic-refugees, they've been down there for so long I'm sure they've gone mouldy and wouldn't be of any use if they did exist.

As for underground cities of Atlantis and Mu, and possibly Shangri-La, if they really existed I'm sure they would be connected up to the Circle Line by now; after all, you can even go to Watford by tube these days, and you can't get much farther-out than that!

Science fiction writers are quite keen on using the phrase "Inner Space", as a description of what they think they are writing about currently, but unfortunately their concept of its meaning is not what I should like it to be. I'd like it to deal a little more literally with what is inside the earth, and the potentialities of using what there is. Oh yes, I know that there have been a few stories dealing with this idea "realistically", but unfortunately they all seem to use that which is there as a mere background prop - usually to a story of men and mole-machines who are drilling a new transportation system; or making a really safe haven from the doom they wrote about in their previous story. Surely, gentlemen, hell isn't really down there (even if Australia is...) and the Pope won't blackball your Italian sales if you actually write about it.

I mean, I'm sure there's a real mine of ideas to be investigated.

Certainly there's got to be a whole new technology invented for doing so, but there are fairly good guide-lines already existing...we have lasers for the blasting away at the crust, and with everything the US of A has exploded in the Carlsbad Caverns there should be a nice deep hole there to start from (even if we have to wear radiation suits for the first few miles...)

Like I say, I don't know what's down there, but I'm sure there are a lot of things we can use.

For instance, if the few small pin-pricks we've made in the planet's crust can supply our energy needs for about a century...For instance, even I know that immense pressures exist under the crust and pressure equals energy...For instance, if the only thing you find down there is extinct (!) dinosauri, well, we get a lot of usable commodities from Whales; but I'm sure your imaginations are now better than that nad now that I've pointed you in the right direction - yes, right there beneath your feet - you can come up with something useful. I you'll excuse the metaphor.

But please, watch your background...you'll need sturdy "props" to keep the roof up.

--- Eric Bentcliffe

# Robert Silverberg

## talks to Malcolm Edwards

NOTE: this is not a finished interview. Robert Silverberg agreed in November 1973 to submit to a postal interview, but for various reasons it did not get under way until 11 months later. Further delays ensued, and with the future of Vector extremely uncertain at that time it seemed best to let the thing slide. However, I've since been uncomfortably aware that Mr. Silverberg did put a fair amount of time into writing answers to my questions, interesting answers which it would be a pity not to put to any use. So, now that Vector is once again alive and well, I've taken the opportunity to assemble the material for Chris Fowler. Not all the questions I intended to ask were asked, and some of the answers I would have liked to follow up weren't followed up; even so, I think it's well worthwhile reading.

--- MJE/6 November 1975

You say you "periodically retire from writing in despair". Do you mean writing in general, or sf writing? Why despair? As a retired writer, what would you want to do?

Silverberg: I retired from all writing except science fiction around 1971, so when I talk about retirement now, I mean from sf. In a real sense the process of retirement is already under way; in 1970 my published output was about half a million words, in 1971 about a quarter of a million, 1972 some 115,000, and in 1973 just 81,000 words. My 1974 output to date consists only of the novel The Stochastic Man (72,000 words) and a brief introduction to a book of James Tiptree's short stories; in the final ten weeks of the year I'll probably get a few thousand words into my new novel, Shadrach in the Furnace. So I've achieved a reduction of output of 80% in four years, this by a process of cutting my daily working hours in half, by taking more holidays, and by doing an infinite amount of rewriting when I am at the typewriter. Fandom doesn't yet seem aware just how unproductive I've become: I still hear remarks about how prolific I am, how easy it is for me to whip out a novel between Tuesday and Friday, when in fact since 1972 I've been one of the slowest, least productive of the current writers.

Periodically I think about eliminating the remaining bit of output. This mood comes over me sometimes out of plain fatigue: the work is hard for me and gets harder constantly as I seek more challenging ways of writing fiction, and on a bad morning it's a great temptation just to chuck the whole thing in rather than go on with the struggle, since I'm in a fairly secure economic position as a result of my past strenuous literary activities. Then, too, I often get the depressing feeling that what I'm doing isn't really finding an audience - that most fans would rather read slam-bang adventure stories anyway, and my pursuit of stylistic perfection and technical mastery is a foolish or at best quixotic chase, taking me farther and farther away from the needs of the science fiction readers and dumping me in a limbo, lost between the action audience (which finds my work confusing and depressing) and the mainstream audience (which spurns my work because it's labelled science fiction). I often feel gloomy about things like this during a Hugo awards banquet. Of course, I do have an audience, an

enthusiastic one; but the fact remains that most of my novels are out of print in the United States at the moment and have only a sporadic commercial existence, though they do seem to sell reasonably well when they're available.

If I did retire altogether, it wouldn't make a vast difference in my way of life, since as it is I work only two or three hours every morning, five days a week from October through May. I'd do more reading, more travel, perhaps more serious study. I'd continue to edit anthologies, since I get a sort of vicarious creative pleasure out of that. I might even return occasionally to science non-fiction writing, a field in which I had a considerable reputation before I abandoned it in weariness a few years ago. But I suspect I'll never entirely give up writing sf, no matter what I say in my disgruntled moments. For one thing, despite the increasing difficulty of writing for me, I still get a charge out of having written; just about everything I've done in the past four years has been a brutal chore, but there's hardly a story in the lot I don't look upon with pleasure. For another, all of my closest friends are sf people, many of them editors, and they keep prying stories out of me. (I tend to be terribly obliging to people who make me feel wanted.) And I do get a distressing feeling of being obsolete, even extinct, when I'm not somehow participating in the day-to-day swim of sf.

Could you tell us something of how you organised yourself to be the "berserk robot" you described yourself as in Hell's Cartographers? Is there any truth in the stories that circulated in the fan world about card files full of plots, and so on?

Silverberg: I never had card files full of plots - just some old envelopes with five or six likely ideas scribbled on them. Whenever an idea came to me, of course, I would jot it down, and sometimes these would sit around for years before I'd get to them. But I wasn't extraordinarily well organised in my heavy-output days; I didn't even use an electric type-writer, let alone any elaborate scheme for assembling stories. I was simply diligent and determined, is all, and stuck to my type-writer until the day's work was done, with no moments off for day-dreaming. It's quite different now, naturally - long periods of daydreaming broken by occasional bursts of writing.

One writer suggested to me that you had published more wordage than any other living writer. Could that be true?

Silverberg: I do keep a running total of the wordage I've published, but I'd prefer not to reveal it, since it is embarrassingly high and I've been beaten over the head for my productivity so often that I feel less eager to provide the unsympathetic with statistics with which to hit me. I may very well have published more wordage than any other living writer, but I don't know; my own feeling is that my output is probably comparable in size to Simenon's, but is appreciably smaller than that of John Creasey. Creasey went on doing eight or ten novels a year well into his sixties; I haven't been really prolific since I was 35. Lately I've been moving at a pace of a novel a year plus a couple of short stories. I see no likelihood of my ever increasing my pace significantly.

Much of your recent work has a strong sexual element - has this led you into any problems with getting published and/or with censorship? Does it explain the apparent reluctance of British publishers to take up your recent novels?

Silverberg: I've never had any trouble with censorship in sf, and I'm not aware that the sexual element in my work has made it hard for me to get published. Occasionally one of the magazines has asked me to expurgate a novel that's being serialised, but I haven't minded that as long as I can do the bowdlerizing myself, for I know I'll be able to get the complete version in print in book form. In

any case, except for The Second Trip and Dying Inside I've never made much use of the formerly "unprintable" Anglo-Saxonisms, which cause more problems usually for publishers than explicit erotic content. I notice there isn't even much of that in my recent work. Perhaps the eroticism of my fiction of 1967-71 was a reaction to the chastity of most earlier sf, including my own, and that reaction is now spent. (It isn't a sign of any personal loss of interest in sexual activities, I ought to add; just a change of literary preoccupations.) The "apparent reluctance of British publishers" of which you spoke seems to be ended now: virtually every novel of mine has been purchased for United Kingdom publication.

Could you give more details of these forthcoming British editions of your books?

Silverberg: Book of Skulls, Downward to the Earth, The Second Trip, The World Inside, and, I think, the short story collection Earth's Other Shadow were all bought by NEL a couple of years ago. What they're doing with them I don't know, but evidently they haven't published them yet.\* Tower of Glass has recently been bought by Panther.

(Note: And still haven't published any of them a year after this reply was written - MJE)

Up the Line was bought by Sphere a long time back. I'm just now concluding arrangements for Son of Man to be published by an avant-garde house in Wales, after which I will have found a publisher in the UK for all my novels in the past decade. So suddenly I am flourishing in Great Britain after years of obscurity, which is fine, because I seem to be disappearing from print over here.

In Hell's Cartographers, describing the effect of your house fire on you, you wrote: "...It has been slower and slower ever since, and I have only rarely, and not for a long time now, felt that dynamic clear vision that enabled me to write even the most taxing of my books in wild, joyous spurts." It's obvious that Dying Inside is autobiographical in various details of David Selig's career; but additionally, it would seem from this and other passages that in Dying Inside you were using Selig's declining telepathic power as a metaphor for your own declining facility. Was this intentional?

Silverberg: The autobiographical material in Dying Inside is deceptive. I used a good deal of my own background by way of making the texture of the book richer and more solid, but David Selig must not be confused with Robert Silverberg in any important way. (For example, I have no sister, I've not had much experience with poverty or living alone, I have never been beaten by a gang and sent to a hospital; Selig's past is perhaps half mine and half invented.) Although I wrote Dying Inside in 1971, it was actually conceived several years earlier, and was not consciously intended to be a metaphorical examination of my difficulties as a writer; the intent was a bit larger, to examine the experience of loss that comes with ageing in general, the attitude of resignation as powers of all sorts drop away, and there was no specific motive for making it a purely personal lament. There was self-pity in the book, but it was Selig's, not mine, at least on the conscious level.

The charge has been made that in some of your books (e.g. The Book of Skulls) women exist purely as sex objects and not as people. What is your reaction to this?

Silverberg: In some of my books women do exist purely as sex objects; not in all, I hope. Mystery-story writers aren't guilty of the crimes their characters commit and I don't happen to share the sexism of the fraters in The Book Of Skulls. But my sense of the dynamics of the fraters' philosophy and historical antecedents

led me to visualise them as men who would use women as servants and as ritual objects. The same is true of the nitwit narrator and his lecherous friends in Up the Line, and sexism is apparent here and there in a lot of my other books - along with murder, starvation, poverty, disease and many other things that I deplore but that I find present in the worlds I write about. On the other hand I don't think anyone can see the women in Dying Inside as mere sex objects, nor Risa in To Live Again, nor Sundara in The Stochastic Man. As a heterosexual reared in a sexist western-industrial society I have certain residual sexist prejudices instilled in me from boyhood at the deepest levels, and these do manifest themselves in my writing in unexpected and subtle ways; but I don't think I'm addicted to machismo in private life, and, those unconscious bits of culturally-instilled sexism aside, I don't think the attitudes of the male characters in some of my books represent anything but their own failings and the failings of their society, rather than their creator's supposed anti-female bias. In my future writings I want to be able to expand and extend the range of my handling of female characters - just as I want to expand and extend the range of my handling of male characters, non-human characters, machines, landscapes, anything I might write about.

When you returned in earnest to sf, you wrote four novels about different aspects of time travel (The Time Hoppers, The Masks of Time, Hawksbill Station, Up the Line). Was this a theme in which you were particularly interested?

Silverberg: Time travel has always interested me because I think it's the basic virtue science fiction offers: an sf novel is a time machine, all in itself, and what turned me to sf as a boy was that feeling that I'd get to know the shape and taste of the far future or the far past from these stories. Among the first things I read were Wells' The Time Machine and Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps", and they marked me forever. Time travel seems the ultimate fantasy to me, the complete and total power trip, and I relish it and love to write about it. And return to it frequently to explore new aspects of it. Up The Line was a spoof, but a serious spoof which mixed farce with serious consideration of paradox theory. My bibliography shows dozens of time travel stories, I'd say, and I'm still at it in the current book.

Is there a story behind the writing of "Going Down Smooth"? It seemed to me that you were playing a rather pointed joke on Frederik Pohl, who was noted for his strait-laced editing, by getting him to publish a story which contained four-letter words disguised in binary code - one of his own specialities!

Silverberg: Yes, indeed, I was having a little fun with Fred Pohl when I wrote "Going Down Smooth". Fred - who was one of the most flexible and understanding editors I ever worked for - was at that time much concerned with the reactions of the mothers of his younger readers to the sort of language that was appearing in Galaxy. Apparently he was getting letters out of Iowa or Nebraska or places of that sort, objecting to excessive damns and hells in the pages of his magazines, and word had gone out to the contributors to observe the tenets of pure speech. Although my own work had been fairly chaste up till then, I couldn't resist larding my next story with binary-coded obscenities integral to the plot. Fred never murmured and the story has been through a dozen anthologizations.

A couple of years later, when Ejler Jakobson had succeeded Pohl at Galaxy, the problem of four-letter words still troubled high management over there. The July 1970 Galaxy contained my story "The Throwbacks", a segment of the novel The World Inside, which included this passage, the reflections of a 24th-century historian looking back bemusedly at our own era:

"Among the most significant developments of the decade was the attainment of freedom, at last, for the responsible writer to use such words as fuck and cunt where necessary in his work."

Can that have been so? Such importance placed on mere words? Jason pronounces the odd monosyllables aloud in his research cubicle. 'Fuck. Cunt. Fuck. Cunt. Fuck.' They sound merely antiquated. Harmless, certainly. He tries the modern equivalents. 'Top. Slot. Top. Slot. Top.' No impact. How can words ever have held such inflammatory content?... Jason is aware of his limitations as a historian when he runs into such things. He simply cannot comprehend the twentieth century's obsession with words. To insist on giving God a capital letter, as though He might be displeased to be called god! To suppress books for printing words like c--t and f--k and s--t!"

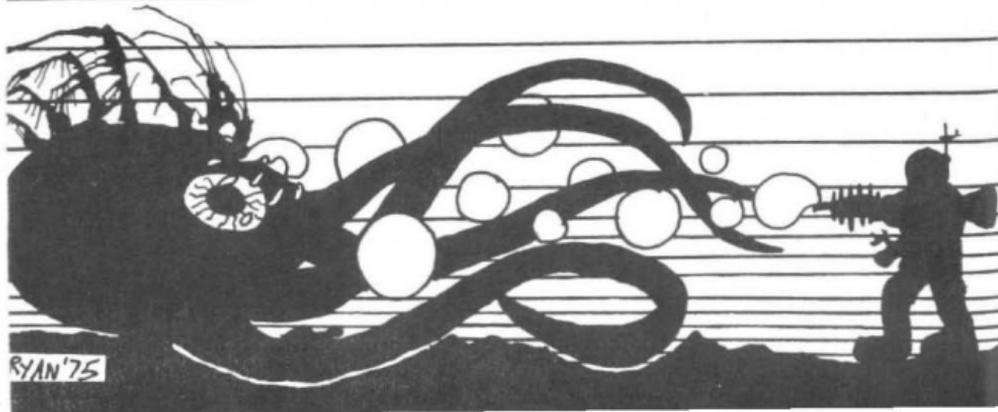
These ruminations on the inanities of censorship brought such angry letters from Iowa or Nebraska or wherever that editor Jakobson was notified by the publishers that it would be best not to be so bold in future. And so, a few months later, when Heinlein's I Will Fear No Evil reached the climax of its serialization in Galaxy, Heinlein's climactic speech emerged in print this way:

"Thank you, Roberto, for letting me welcome you into my body.  
It is good to touch - to f---, be f---ed...."

It is to weep. It is to drive a science fiction writer away from his typewriter and out into his garden, where the plants are sometimes thorny and sometimes ailing, but at least are never absurd.

Do you regret at all the path you chose, back in the 1950s? Do you think the "deadly facility" you say you developed (in Hell's Cartographers) hampered your attempts to write more serious fiction?

Silverberg: I don't regret much about the course my career has taken, mainly because I think everything would have worked out the same way no matter what I had set out to do - that is, if I had tried to write Son of Man or Dying Inside in 1957 I would have found no publisher for them even if I could have written them then exactly as I eventually did write them, and I would have drifted off into hackwork or outside jobs or whatever to support myself. I do think I developed some bad habits during the years of high production, a tendency to be overexplicit in exposition and to let phrases shape themselves automatically; but I've contended against those habits with some success in recent years, I believe. I've had less success with another habit of my commercial years, a tendency to remain always to the point, to keep plots moving along with relatively few discursive side-journeys. Genre fiction tends greatly to stick to the narrow narrative line, whereas true novels take the risk of greater discursiveness, and whenever I veer too far from the main thread I'm uncomfortably aware of some mass-market editor in my head asking me, "Why is this relevant to your plot? I tell him why, and then I go on."





HIGH-RISE by J.G. Ballard (Jonathan Cape; 1975; 204pp; £2.95)

Reviewed by James Goddard\*

J.G. Ballard commenced his literary career by writing science fiction and fantasy stories of a high order which had the more hidebound practitioners of and adherents to the genre in convoluted fits of ire and anger. In the early sixties he changed the approach and style of his work, and, as a result, assumed a position as the most original writer in the genre - anywhere in the world. In the mid-sixties he changed direction yet again, and began to move away from sf in the traditional sense, whilst retaining contact because of the imaginative content of his work. Now, almost twenty years after the publication of his first story, Ballard can safely be regarded as a major novelist, and a writer of such originality that he is - currently - without equal.

His last traditionally identifiable sf novel was The Crystal World (1966); after that came a four year hiatus in his novel writing, and, indeed, published work of any kind was scarce, consisting as it did of short stories and reviews in such publications as New Worlds, Ambit and IT. Then in 1970 he burst anew onto the literary scene with his loosely structured "novel" The Atrocity Exhibition, an amalgamation of short pieces published during the previous six or seven years. Since then he has published three more novels, Crash (1973), Concrete Island (1974) and High-Rise (1975): each one adding a new impact and dimension to the term novel.

The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash, and to a lesser extent Concrete Island, are all novels of extreme obsession. In all three the central character eventually becomes immolated by the obsessional theme within the book. These obsessions are clear-cut in the first two novels, but, in the third, not so obvious - the protagonist's own uncertainties. As these works have come nearer the present, the

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obsessions have loosened and the form of the novels has become more conservative. High-Rise breaks somewhat with this tradition of obsession, but comes down even more strongly on the side of what is, to me, the major over-riding theme through all Ballard's fiction: humanity in search of an idealised self, characters writing lapel-badges declaring "this is me, this is us, take note".

Ostensibly, High-Rise tells the story of the inauguration and dissolution of life in an exclusive, expensive and massive apartment block. The monolith contains one thousand apartments, and all the amenities of modern life: banks, supermarkets, launderettes and swimming pools. Against this facade of twentieth century civilization we see a series of power failures and minor service breakdowns take on sinister overtones, and convert near-neighbour bickering into inter-level feuds. The height of the block itself becomes of hierarchical significance, and the higher one lives in the block the more socially respectable and enviable one is. Dissidents on low levels hatch plans to rise up the block, to achieve social status by ruthlessly climbing from level to level. The upper levels, fearing these activities, plan counter measures.

There will undoubtedly be those who will try to interpret High-Rise through its overt sexual overtones; after all, what is a sky scratching apartment block but a blatant phallus, a symbolic erection of gigantic proportions? This reading of the novel seems to me, however, of minor importance, as the book attacks the responses of the reader, first and foremost, on a psychological level. As we are comforted by the dissected private lives of Ballard's three protagonists, their daily fears and aspirations become of paramount importance.

Around this intriguing central schemata Ballard weaves a plot which is totally absorbing, and quite unlike anything you will ever have read. "Entertaining" would be the wrong adjective to apply to the events related in the novel, as its fascination is borne of a rising and compulsive horror which mounts to a climax suggesting incest and cannibalism.

This is not a novel in which readers will easily identify with the protagonists; rather Wilder, Royal and Laing - typical Ballard names - are the apotheosis of the things we most abhor. At the same time we find ourselves admiring them for their single-minded determination in pursuit of their own abstruse ends. We are impotent onlookers, hypnotised by a series of events which we recognise as being little more than one step removed from our own diverse realities. Ballard allows us to follow Laing, Wilder and Royal on a series of nightmare journeys through the labyrinth of corridors and rooms. Every step they take sees their environment deteriorate; but they, having re-focused their desires and needs through a distorting-lens, take active measures to ensure that the events occurring around them are pushed to extremes, deified, and eventually recognised as legitimate objectives.

It speaks well for Ballard's skill that we want to shout warnings to these demented people, but his narrative holds us spellbound, motionless, until it is too late, and his scheme has run its course. Like Laing, the sole survivor of the trio on which Ballard concentrates his attention, we can only watch, and follow in the wake of Royal and Wilder as they hurry, like the bird of fairy story renown, to thrust their breasts upon the thorn of self-immolation, as they are dragged, remorselessly, by the tide of events which they created, to macabre and horrifying ends.

This is not a novel for the narrow-minded or the self-righteous. These apart, it will appeal to all those who have a mind to read about the human condition in microcosm; for that is what the novel is, a magnificent and literate monument to the perversions of human desires, hopes and fallings. If, at the end of the story, the reader still hasn't identified himself, or at least a part of himself, then only one course of action remains: forget about Ballard, forget about sf as literature, sneak quietly away and read Asimov's Foundation series all over again.

DREAMS MUST EXPLAIN THEMSELVES (Algol Press; 1975; 37pp; \$3.00; ISBN 0-916186-01-6; available from: Algol Press, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10017)

THE DISPOSSESSED (Avon Books; 1975; 311pp; \$1.75; ISBN 0-380-00382-1/ Gollancz; 1974; 319pp; £2.80; ISBN 0-575-01678-7)

by Ursula K. Le Guin

Reviewed by Peter Hyde

Dreams Must Explain Themselves is a slim little book containing a medley of items by Ursula Le Guin. The piece from which the volume takes its title first appeared in Algol 21 in 1973 and it reads like a conference address. It is accompanied by a map of Earthsea, a short story, "The Rule Of Names", a transcript of Le Guin's (very brief) National Book Award Acceptance Speech, and an interview with Le Guin done by Jonathan Ward, which was published in Algol 24 (1975).

The map and the Acceptance Speech are mere padding really - and anyway, who wants to try to review a map! The other three items are all vastly interesting in their different ways. In "Dreams Must Explain Themselves" Le Guin addresses herself to the question that creative writers are always asked - where did the ideas come from? Her answer, briefly and baldly, in the case of the world of Earthsea is that she found it rather than planned it. She gives some account of how it was found and part of the process of finding it was the story, "The Rule of Names". It is delightful then to go on to read that story not only to see its place in the development of Earthsea (I should say, the discovery of Earthsea) but also because it's a very nice little tale of wizards and dragons. Essentially then this is Le Guin's approach to the process that Tolkien has called sub-creation. It should already be clear that it is a very different approach from Tolkien's own: as Le Guin puts it "in one sense (he) wrote The Lord of the Rings to give his invented languages someone to speak them".

The interview with Jonathan Ward is also of interest but despite rather than because of Ward's questions. Interviewing is a delicate process involving awareness and sensitivity, qualities which Ward does not evince in any great measure. Neither does he appear to know much about Ursula Le Guin's writing - Question: "What's The Left Hand of Darkness about?" - or about science fiction in general - Question/Statement: "There's something called the New Wave out of Britain". So - a shockingly bad interview, but Le Guin says some interesting things and generally puts Ward right on various points so there are some good things to be salvaged.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this interview is when Le Guin is talking about her latest novel The Dispossessed. She describes the book as an "anarchist novel" in that it describes a de-centralised state, and comes over as a strong supporter of this sort of social organisation. However, as she says, "The trouble with the whole anarchist thing is, how do we get there". In the novel the perfect answer is provided: not by revolution but by the creation of a new society.

The planet of Urras is depicted as being very like the Earth of today in that there are strong nation-states within and between which there are great social inequalities. A revolutionary movement arose based on the teachings of the thinker Odo, and eventually the malcontents were allowed to leave the planet and settle on the moon, Anarres. The Dispossessed opens 150 years on from this settlement. There has been almost no contact between Urras and Anarres during the intervening period, and the Anarresti physicist Shevek is about to become the first member of the society to go to Urras.

From this starting point the book then tells what in a sense are two stories. One is how Shevek became the first Anarresti to go back to Urras; the other is how his trip to Urras went. In the course of Shevek's autobiography the details of social organisation on Anarres are gradually filled in.

A major achievement of the book is the totally convincing way in which Anarresti society is described and related to its theoretical basis in the teachings of Odo. For me, the most satisfying aspect of this is in the relationship between social forms and language. Anarresti society is as one might expect communistic, in that there is no private property. There is a corresponding difference in the use of possessive pronouns. Thus the ordinary construction would be the book, the room rather than my book, my room, etc. It follows then that "my" and so on are used in a special sense. Thus to accuse someone of using such a word may be part of the general accusation of "proportarianism".

Another feature of Anarresti society which merits special attention is the relationship between the sexes. Sexual differentiation has been virtually abolished and in an eminently practical way which gives the lie to innumerable male chauvinist arguments. One aspect of this, which is also an aspect of the general social philosophy which pervades Anarresti society, is that there is no marriage, although some people do join together as Partners. There is nothing proprietarian in this relationship, however - one always refers to one's partner as "the (not 'my') partner".

Urresti society by contrast is described in much less detail: although clearly we don't need much help to recognise the major features of a market capitalist society. Some of the contrasts with Anarresti society are pointed up by Shevek's experiences on Urras, but generally Anarresti is the major focus of attention.

All of this concentration of culture and society should not however obscure the fact that The Dispossessed also has an excellent narrative. Shevek's life to the point of departure is described with the emphasis mainly on his relationship with Taliver, his Partner, and his pioneering work in theoretical physics. The latter leads him eventually into communication with Urresti physicists, and to his being awarded a prize on Urras for his work.

He goes to Urras to meet the physicists with whom he has corresponded, and all but succumbs to some of the temptations of Urresti society. However, he becomes aware of the true nature of Urresti society, and aware too that the Urresti are only really interested in him because they believe that his work can lead them to a Faster-than-Light space drive. Shevek rebels and becomes the prophet of a revolutionary movement until this is brutally crushed. He escapes from Urras in a Hainish ship only after seeking sanctuary in the Terran embassy.

You may recognise from the last paragraph that The Dispossessed is set in the same future as most of Le Guin's other science fiction. It is an earlier point, however, for Shevek doesn't discover the FTL drive, though he does provide the theoretical basis for the ansible which reappears for example in The Left Hand of Darkness.

There is almost no limit to the good things one could say about The Dispossessed: I have barely touched on many of the delights. It is a magnificent book, certainly Le Guin's best so far. What more can I say?

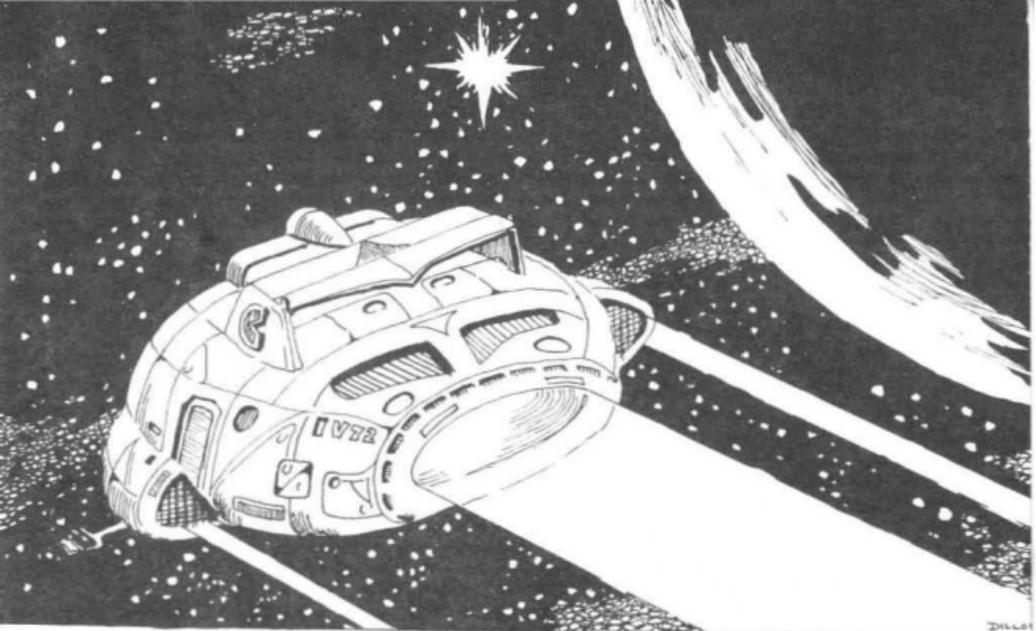
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DHALGREN by Samuel R. Delany (Bantam Books; New York; 1975; 879pp; 75p/ \$1.95; ISBN 553-08554-195)

Reviewed by Andrew Tidmarsh

Dhalgren is a monumental book. As such it can be considered from many angles and identified as many things. But it is not an indication of the way forward for science fiction; or the best science fiction novel ever written. And its content does not justify its length.

Wandering towards the city Bellona - an area of disaster in the American Midwest manufactured to show certain elements of the population (of America) that life outside the "establishment" is difficult, dangerous and destructive - a



twenty-eight year old male half-breed (his mother was Amer-Ind) hitches a ride on a lorry carrying artichokes. The driver and the passenger do not speak, other than to mention artichokes; their inability to communicate is symptomatic of the novel's theme (though not itself the novel's the theme) - which is that the refusal of an older generation to accept the beliefs of a younger generation results in the abandonment by the younger generation of their own beliefs; but the younger generation do not accept the beliefs of the older generation, instead choosing nihilism. The lorry stops, the passenger steps out; the lorry moves on, the passenger walks into Bellona. During his brief sojourn (perhaps less than 6 months?), the Kid, as the passenger comes to be known and(almost) knows himself, passes through many, many conversations and incidents which are recorded by the omniscient author (who might occasionally be the Kid) in a prose, admirably clear but exhaustively analytic, that robs most scenes of their emotional impact, be that impact erotic or violent, wrathful or melancholic. Interwoven with the generally static narrative is a presentation of the agonies that an artist (as exemplified by a poet) experiences - from the moments of inspiration hampered by absent words (and frustration) to the hours of pleasure overwhelmed by omitted commas (and anger). At the novel's end, the Kid walks from a suddenly disintegrating Bellona, knowing that the city has become uninhabitable, partly because of his own influence on it, partly because of the influence of various people he has met - especially the Scorpions: representatives of an ageing and lethargic "youth culture".

Delany took almost five years to compose Dhalgren; that devotion of time is perhaps indicative of his affection for the recent past. Delany's sadness that the attitudinal changes proposed during the period of youthful re-evaluation - begun in San Francisco in 1966 and destroyed at Altamont in 1970 - have now been abandoned and are in the process of being forgotten makes Dhalgren a sad and pessimistic monument- an elegy for that brief period of hope.

Delany is a brilliant literary stylist and technician; Dhalgren is a brilliantly polished book, a work of art wherein immaculate form has been allowed to replace content. It saddens me that a craftsman so widely acclaimed by the science fiction community should produce a work that not only contributes nothing to sf (and indeed

represents the petering-out of an unproductive side-road - a side-road inspired by the imagery associated with flower power and rock music and drugs and doomed to die when these die, which they have) but also commemorates a period of the past whose outpourings have been shown to be insubstantial (though not perhaps entirely worthless). Of course, if Delany feels that Dhalgren is not a waste... why should anyone disagree?

(AT/10/1/1976)

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CHARISMA by Michael G. Coney (Victor Gollancz; 1975; 224pp; £3.50)

Reviewed by Tom Jones

I had seen part of this novel when it appeared as a novelette in the one of the magazines, and having enjoyed it was pleased to see its appearance in this form.

The action is centred on a small Cornish town in the near future. Mr. Coney manages a neat mix of today's and tomorrow's technology: motor-cars and hovercars, launches and hover-yachts. The people have changed little: as with to-day they use and accept the technology without understanding it. The emotions remain the same as they have done for countless thousands of years, greed and love and hate providing the fire to drive the engine.

The sf part of the plot is about travel to parallel worlds. This much used plot line has produced some excellent sf, notably Keith Roberts' Pavane.

The hero, John Maine, is a man-in-a-million in that he can travel to a selection of these parallel worlds by means of a device invented at a secret research station. My resume sounds trite, perhaps, but the actual novel is not. This particular ability of the hero doesn't please him, as it means that he is dead in the particular parallel worlds which he can visit, and death is one thing which is eventually constant across the parallel worlds.

Added to this is John Maine's love for a fellow traveller across worlds with whom death has caught up. We follow the hero's travels across worlds as he attempts to avoid his own death and rediscover his lost love. As if he didn't have enough troubles, he becomes prime suspect in a murder enquiry.

The plot is sufficiently complex to hold one's interest in several directions at once, without falling into the trap of being complex because the author has lost his way. On the contrary, Mr. Coney ties the ending up very well. The characters are somewhat sketchy and perhaps a little stereotyped, except for the protagonist who is fleshed out quite well. This particular plot form could have been used to develop the characters more, using the curious worlds to highlight different aspects of the various characters. This would have meant a longer novel, and a different one - and one that Mr. Coney presumably didn't want to write; though I believe from this showing that he has the ability to do it.

I enjoyed this book immensely; so much so that I shall go out and find something else by Michael G. Coney, forthwith.

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NEW WORLDS 9 edited by Hilary Bailey (Corgi; 219pp; 50p; ISBN 0-552-10022-6)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin

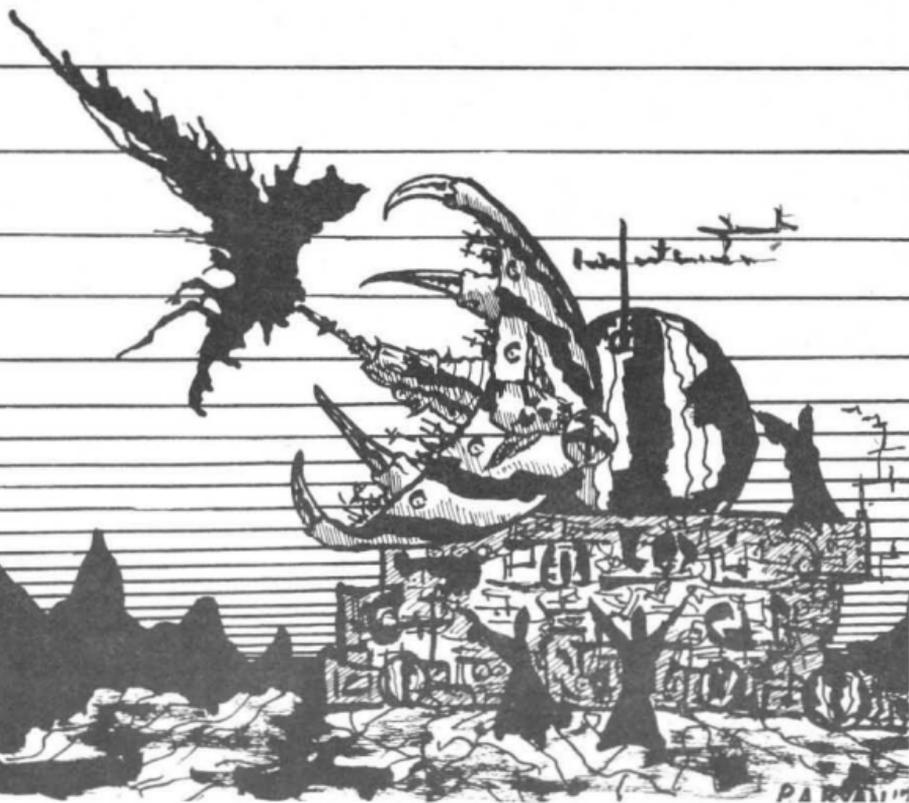
"There are moments," writes Poe in the closing paragraph of "The Premature Burial", "when, even to the sober eye of Reason, the world of our sad Humanity may assume the semblance of a Hell - but the imagination of man is no Carathis, to explore with impunity its every cavern. Alas! the grim legion of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful - but, like the Demon in whose

company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep, or they will devour us - they must be permitted to slumber, or we perish".

Poe understood what he was doing, was the master of his material; so we can bear to return to him for another view of the caverns. Can the same be said of New Worlds authors? I ask the question, because it begins to explain the peculiar mixture of attraction and repulsion which has been my reaction to past issues. As always, we feel compelled to visit the caverns in our imagination - but we like to feel that our guide has not quite lost his way.

Enough of generalisations. New Worlds 9 is the best issue I've read for some time (having gaffiated around NWQ4). Mike Moorcock's "Ancient Shadows" is a long story about the gormenghastly Dancers at the End of Time, and would appear to answer my opening question in the affirmative: Moorcock, at least, knows precisely what he's doing, and the result is very good indeed. He pits his amoral, insanely individualistic Dancers against a time-travelling prig of a scientific moralist from the far-distant past, and places between them the time-traveller's nonentity of a son, who is due to become a Person. Scientific altruism versus Aesthetic individualism is a familiar theme; but Moorcock makes it his own, just as he makes the gormenghastly dancers his own. Paradoxically, his imagination is most distinctive when restricted by familiar themes; without the latter, an indiscriminate surrealism threatens to take over. Likewise, the Dancers - Lord Jagged, Doctor Volospon and the rest - are gloriously his own because they are by Peake out of (I think) Stapledon. We know where we are with them.

OK, fine. But judging by his lucid critical essay, "Trope Exposure", John Clute would presumably disagree with my criteria. Ostensibly he is writing about



the dear old '50s film, Them! Actually, he seems to be questioning the very notion of sf plots with familiar guidelines - he calls them tropes, or mnemonic moves, to make them sound sinister. These mnemonic moves are there (he says) to keep us sidetracked from the real issues involved, and to keep us safely blinkered against the "intolerable and chaotic presentness" of life. (Them! is really about the Bomb, according to this analysis. Strange: I would have thought the Bomb was a flimsy pretext to introduce giant ants.) And M. John Harrison, in another strong critical essay, "Sweet Analytics", reinforces the general message while (very rightly) attacking the recent fantasy boom for making our minds into so much saturated blotting-paper, open to any kind of subliminal influence. Very good; but Harrison seems in reacting against this to despair of Imagination and Reality ever meeting; he wants to throw out the baby with the bathwater, the Tolkien with the tripe, in order to embrace the now-despised virtues of scientific logic. But this is itself illogical. We must have fantasy: without it there can't even be any "real life" - there's a constant interaction between the two. And the fantasy must have laws of its own, like "real life". Harrison says that while something can be learnt from the failure of Science to bring about a Utopia, from the "equations and mistakes" of Faust, (presumably using Sir Karl Popper's criterion on falsifiability), "no similar machinery exists to deal with our own imaginations". Wrong: the Faustian myth has failed us - i.e. not Science, but precisely our own imaginations. And while there may be no machinery to deal with our imaginations - well, to coin a phrase: "Who Can Replace a Man?". In short, we're not trapped inside a hall of mirrors, unable to cope with the "intolerable and chaotic presentness" of real life: not as long as we're Men, we're not. If life really were "intolerable and chaotic", then presumably art would reflect that condition - in fact, it would cease to be art. This way of thinking explains some of the "stories" that get into New Worlds; but that's another matter.

The influence of this aesthetic is more subtly felt in the persistent pessimism of New Worlds, combined with an equally persistent irrationalism. I'm all for madness, badness and sadness, but I can only take the prescribed dose: the effect of an overdose is bad all round, because it breeds in me a swarm of rational, optimistic antibodies, all bravely fighting off the enemy. This is good for me, of course - but bad for my enjoyment of a story like Chuck Partington's "Narrative of Masks", which is a veritable stunner: tightly-constructed, possessed by an insane logic, and with a finale that is really something. My point is this: I would have enjoyed it more if the New Worlds context hadn't put me instinctively on the defensive. (I think I read New Worlds as a kind of challenge: if my faith in reason and logic can survive it, then I feel I've proved something. And jolly good luck to me too; but it would be better if I could just sit back and enjoy the magazine in a straight-forward manner - which, as it stands, I can't.) Put it this way: the element in Chuck Partington's story which makes it a natural for New Worlds is the element which puts me on my guard. A schizophrenic type buys a dead artist's house; he is obsessed by the artist's life and work, and their relation to Enis, the artist's mysterious model.....I won't give away any more: I'll just add that there's an ingenious link-up with Jodrell Bank. Anyway, it's great stuff; and the grand finale has the same frisson as Chesterton's "The Honour of Israel Gow", where Father Brown declaims: "Something has fallen on us that calls very seldom on men; perhaps the worst thing that can fall on them. We have found the truth; and the truth makes no sense". Great stuff. But Chesterton, having led us to the brink of Hell, leads us back to the straight-and-narrow for a rational resolution; while Chuck Partington leaves us, giddy and swaying, on the brink of the Abyss, to fare as best we can.

Nevertheless, a stunner: Partington - lead on. Only mind where you're going.

Keith Roberts' "The Ministry of Children" is another fine, long story, overshadowed (of course) by the New Worlds philosophy. (I'm not attacking one editor, by the way - New Worlds' ethos is obviously something that has grown up, willy-nilly,

over the years.) Roberts here presents bourgeois morality in a sympathetic light (a very un-New Worlds thing to do), and explores the sinister region in which it is inexorably threatened by a confluence of egalitarian and totalitarian trends. But does bourgeois morality, based as it is on an unequal social system, deserve to survive? Roberts stacks all the cards against it (a very New Worlds thing to do), setting up his test-case in a giant school in a not-too-distant one-party future. In painting the heroine's bourgeois background, he positively out-Wyndhams Wyndham, adding a visual sensitivity all his own. But it's interesting to apply the standards of Clute and Harrison here. Presumably they would say something like this: "Wyndham's triflids, cuckoos and krakens were really the nightmares of bourgeois civilisation on the edge of death. Keith Roberts has no truck with mnemonic moves such as walking plants or psychokinetic kids, which sidetrack the issue: he presents reality - the death of bourgeois civilisation in the very near future". I would repudiate this hypothetical assertion. Wyndham, in fact, begins where Keith Roberts leaves off. He accepts certain premises, does not think of questioning the validity of bourgeois civilisation even as he describes its possible destruction. Keith Roberts, on the other hand, is busy questioning the validity of those premises (based as they are on a kind of hypocrisy) which makes all kinds of civilised activities - such as the writing and reading of sf - possible. In that sense he is not writing sf at all. He is writing with great brilliance an sensitivity, and I shall always listen to what he has to say; but he's still engaged in sawing away, in despair, at the very branch he's straddling. His bourgeois heroine, although she represents all that is worthwhile in humanity, cannot win (though Roberts' artistic intuition does leave room, I suppose, for a last-second miracle). Again, that double-edged response of mine, mixing admiration and dubiety, when faced with a New Worlds story.

The shorts in New Worlds 9 run true to form. Giles Gordon presents two stories, "Maestro" and "The Illusionist", the first being really a piece of dramatised music criticism from an asylum, championing an ultra-debussian aesthetic as opposed to the traditional way of receiving music, architectonically and in sequence: sensitivity and chaos, versus hierarchy and rhetoric. "The Illusionist" is a nicely-executed piece of Magritte-type surrealism: rather boring, but then so is Magritte-type surrealism. John Sladek's "The Hammer of Evil" I couldn't really make sense of, but I suppose this was Sladek's intention: muss the mind of the Reader, let in a little of the Intolerable Chaos of Reality. The same goes for "patagonia's Delicious Filling Station", three "enigmatic" lightning sketches from Brian Aldiss. Matthew Paris's "The Journal of Bodley Clive" is more in my line, being (I think) a Lovecraft pastiche with an unusual gimmick. Finally, Joanna Russ's "Daddy's Girl" attempts a kind of Women's Lib myth, and succeeds for some of the time. It commanded my respect.

Still - ever at my back I hear the teeth of a saw, cutting through a tree-branch; and I find myself looking forward to my next Fantasy and Science Fiction.



THE TRAGEDY OF THE MOON by Isaac Asimov (Coronet Books; 60p; 1975; ISBN 0-340-19879-6)

Reviewed by Jane Markham

If sf is the literature of ideas, Isaac Asimov has always been more at home with the ideas than the literature, as the scientific essays which make up the bulk of this collection delightfully demonstrate. His ideas are not always new, but his presentation is fresh, and if the ideas are secondhand, they can probably be traced back to one of his own works. Asimov has a fine discernment between essential and merely confusing detail - although the ruthlessness with which the niceties of scientific presentation are dismissed might aggravate some readers (as may the author's apparently boundless egotism and appalling puns).

I have read better reviews of scientific history, more perceptive social visions, scientific essays that have greater depth at no expense to clarity, but Asimov's command of so many fields has rarely been excelled (J.B.S. Haldane comes to mind).

This is not a book which will appeal to everyone, and I would not particularly recommend it to fans of Asimov's fiction writing, but a reader with a layman's interest in "general science" could do worse than turn to the many non-fiction works which Asimov has produced, of which this is a fair, if unusually whimsical, representative.

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DECADE: THE 1940s edited by Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison (Macmillan; 1975; 213pp; £3.75; ISBN 333-18832-2)

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Nostalgia is the name of the game. This is the first volume I've seen of what the publishers refer to as an "eighty-year history of science fiction" in the form of stories "which are the best, not only as history, but as entertainment", from each decade. While it is difficult to imagine how some of the volumes are going to be filled (my anticipation of The 1880s is tempered with some dread) there is no doubt about The 1940s. According to the editors that was the decade of Astounding. Exclusively.

Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison do admit that other magazines existed, but their eight representative stories are all drawn from Astounding. Now I'm prepared to accept that Astounding was the leading sf magazine of the 1940s and that the precepts laid down during that time by its editor, John W. Campbell, remained a major (perhaps the major) influence on the development of sf over the following twenty years. But Astounding represented only two strands of sf (serious technologically-based stories and humorous less-strongly-technologically-based stories) and I certainly don't accept that all the other diverse strands of the genre should have been ignored by this volume.

I wasn't old enough to read sf in the 40s, but I have read many stories from that decade since, without needing to peer myopically back through pink-tinged clouds of nostalgia. I know that magazines like Weird Tales and Unknown printed some pretty good things during that period. Fritz Leiber's early Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser tales were appearing. One of the best writers around was a newcomer called Ray Bradbury. There were also Theodore Sturgeon, L. Sprague de Camp and Leigh Brackett, all good non-Astounding authors, of whom only Brackett gets a mention in the Aldiss and Harrison introduction. I hope better treatment is afforded to fantasy in the other volumes of this series.

Before I stop kicking the legs from beneath this collection and go on to assess its contents rather than what might have been, I have two more complaints to make. First, the introduction says, "All of Van Vogt's and Isaac Asimov's and most of Heinlein's major sf work was written during the forties". I will

accept that of Van Vogt; for the other two (even allowing for the fact that stories tend to be written a year or so before publication) it is a ludicrous assertion, based on an overweening nostalgia for Asimov's Foundation trilogy and Heinlein's very early stories. My second complaint is that Astounding's major coup of the 1940s - the pre-emptive description of the atomic bomb in a story by Cleve Cartmill ("Deadline", March 1944) and the subsequent (apocrypha?) visit of FBI agents to Campbell's office - is not even mentioned.

From the foregoing, the contents of Decade: The 1940s are predictable (except that Heinlein is omitted). At least half the stories are familiar from other anthologies. The opening piece is Van Vogt's "Cooperate - or Else!" which, despite having almost unreadable dialogue is intelligent and excitingly written. There are also an Asimov robot story with an interesting anti-German ending (which shows that although the USA was still neutral in 1941 Isaac knew which side he was on), a City story by Simak and clever scientific tales from Philip Latham ("The Xi Effect") and Hal Clement. This last is, again, marred by dialogue which is stiff and awkward - a common occurrence in Astounding in the 1940s. On the lighter side is "Hobbyist" by Eric Frank Russell - about a space scout and his parrot.

My favourite in the collection is Fredric Brown's well-known "Arena", in which a superbeing arranges for man and alien to contest their strength in single combat in order to avoid a war which would ruin both civilisations. This must rank as one of the best stories of the 1940s. At the other end of the scale is "The Last Objective" by Paul Carter, which is overwritten, totally unbelievable and has been overtaken by the advance of science. If this story of underground warfare is typical of him it's not surprising that he failed to establish his name in the sf field.

To summarise, the majority of these stories are good enough to make them worth reading in 1976, though they compare unfavourably with the best of Analog today. But the collection is certainly not representative of the sf of the 1940s, and it fails to include the best stories of that decade in terms of either history or entertainment.

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MADNESS EMERGING by Adrian Cole (Ronert Hale; 1976; 189pp; £2.90; ISBN 0-7091-5398-8)

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

I don't think I've previously come across a Nameless Alien Menace which emerged from an old Cornish tin mine. But you know how it is: read about one Nameless Alien Menace which is killing off decent English people and you've read about them all. Actually, this particular N.A.M. shoots out spores which cause instant, genuine, foaming-at-the-mouth madness to any humans, cattle, birds or even insects in the neighbourhood. It doesn't do this all the time - only when someone invades the privacy of its resting place. And the spores don't attack everyone. They are selective and carefully avoid outsiders, i.e. those who are not native to this particular Cornish village. (Just to make things easy for the N.A.M. the locals all speak in an almost indecipherable dialect, full of "uns" and "ers" and apostrophes.)

If only the characters hadn't been so characterless and the writing hadn't been so cliché-ridden, I might not have been totally bored by the book.

Oh yes, all the characters are, directly or indirectly, killed off by the Nameless Alien Menace.

But not soon enough.

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION edited by Edward L. Ferman (Robson; 1975; 326pp; £3.25; ISBN 0-903895-8)

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

The inclusion of "Best" in a book title has tended to become a euphemism for "yet another editor's idiosyncratic choice of old stories, that you won't want to read again". An over-cynical attitude? Not when one has read as many bad reprint anthologies as I have. For this reason it is a great pity that such an uninspiring and over-used title as The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction should have been employed here; it masks a unique and valuable book which deserves to be in everybody's collection of science fiction.

In September 1962 The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction published a special "one-author" issue. The author was Theodore Sturgeon, and that issue carried a new novelette by him, an article about him, and a list of his published work. This innovation was extremely well received. The issue became a collector's item; the idea became an occasional series, based on that original format. Over a ten-year period five other well-known authors were honoured in this way. Now, these first six one-author packages have been collected in book form. There are Sturgeon, Bradbury, Asimov, Leiber, Anderson and Blish: a story by each, an article about each and a booklist (updated to 1974) of each. This is the content of The Best From Fantasy and Science Fiction. The stories vary from good to excellent; two have won awards. The articles - by friends and contemporaries of the authors rather than professional critics - tend to eulogise, though they do so interestingly. The listings are skimpy (giving only book-titles, whereas the original issues normally listed all short pieces, too) but pretty accurate.

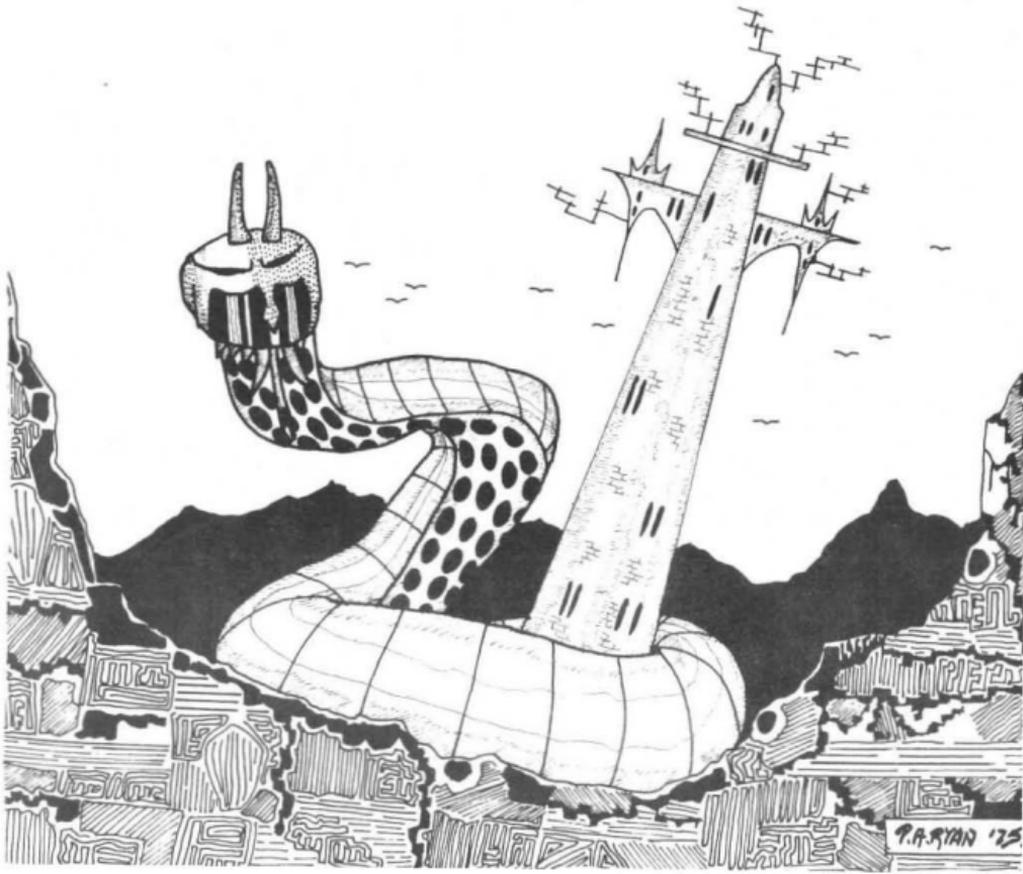
What kind of story does an author write when he knows it is destined for this kind of extra-special exposure? (There is no "This is Your Life" approach to these one-author issues. Obviously they are planned many months in advance with close cooperation between author and editor.) The answer is that he writes a long piece - Bradbury's is the only one here which could be classified as a short story, while at the other extreme Blish's is a short novel - and he writes with great care, rewriting and polishing. But most important, perhaps, he forgoes experimentation or radical change in order to present a story which contains the essence of himself as a writer. (Also, with one exception, he resists the temptation to add to any series for which he is known: a tale of the Three Laws of Robotics or Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser or Nicholas van Rijn would have been out of place here. Asimov's story brings in his travel-hating detective, Wendell Urth, though; this is a pity.) All six of them do this - produce a careful piece of writing containing that essence. With Sturgeon it is a concern for human beings; for Bradbury it is poetic nostalgia, for Asimov hard science spiced with puns; Leiber melds sf and the weird in a story of great complexity, while Anderson combines sf and fantasy in a tale of robust simplicity; Blish is scholarly and compassionate.

"When You Care, When You Love" by Theodore Sturgeon makes wonderful reading. The simple plot - about a poor little rich girl who, having married the boy she loves, finds him to be suffering from an incurable disease, but is so determined to have him alive that she sponsors research to produce (effectively) a clone of him - is presented beautifully and made totally convincing by its weight of background detail. This is despite the fact that the biological research implied was perhaps a novelty in 1962, but it is not so now. The story appears to stop in mid-flight, but its tail-piece is mind-bending. Judith Merrill is the author of the Sturgeon article. It is all emotion and anecdotes, with scarcely a fact: a nice tribute but useless to the reader who wants to learn something about Sturgeon.

Ray Bradbury's "To the Chicago Abyss" is set in a nasty after-the-bomb future reminiscent of something by Philip K. Dick, but only Bradbury could have conceived

its main character - an old man who cannot resist telling people how it used to be. This is a very short mood story, brilliantly polished, and the mood is nostalgia. William F. Nolan's biographical appraisal shows Bradbury as a hard-working writer who always makes the most of his talents but still has time to care about people and values. This will not be news to those who have read much Bradbury, for it shows in all he writes. But Nolan's piece says much more than this and says it well.

For his contribution, Isaac Asimov wrote an extremely light-hearted story. When I said (above) that it was a pity he chose to write a Wendell Urth tale, I meant only that a more serious theme and treatment would have been better suited to the occasion. (On the other hand, a new Asimov story has been such a rare commodity these last ten or fifteen years that Edward L. Ferman must have considered himself lucky to obtain one at all.) In fact, "The Key" shows early signs of an earnest importance, with the discovery by two scientists on the moon of an alien device which allows telepathy and mind control. However, Asimov's development concentrates not on the repercussions of the device itself, but on the search to recover it after one of its discoverers has hidden it (while mortally wounded) to ensure that a radical political party will not gain possession of it. With one scientist dead and the other driven mad by the device (very stagey), the point of the story becomes the solution of a series of clues (each based on at least one pun) to its hiding place. One of the clues seems to say



"go to earth", which in the language of puns means "go to Urth", and of course Wendell Urth solves the problem without needing to leave his study. L. Sprague de Camp's write-up on Asimov is short and unexceptional, proving that nobody can write about Asimov half as well as Asimov himself.

Fritz Leiber's "Ship of Shadows" is a worthy Hugo winner; it is a clever, complex mixture of hard science, swashbuckling fantasy and myth - plus a talking cat. Despite the difficult beginning and a rushed ending, this is my personal choice as the best story in the book. It is the story which Howard de Vore, in his listing of award-winners, wrongly attributes to Robert Silverberg, a mistake which has been compounded in at least three Nebula Award Stories volumes. Whiel Asimov's Hugo Winners volumes get the author right, the story itself is unaccountably omitted. But this is typical of Leiber's life - a succession of successes and failures, of good luck and bad, which is extremely well catalogued by Judith Merrill (how ironic that she should be responsible for both the best and the worst non-fiction in the book). Taken together with Leiber's autobiographical remarks in The Second Book of Fritz Leiber, Merrill's article provides a well-rounded picture of this fascinating and very talented writer.

The Nebula award winning novelette "The Queen of Air and Darkness" by Poul Anderson is well known. Anderson rarely blends sf and fantasy, but here are his familiar human settlers on an alien (though Earth-like) planet actually believing in the existence of elves and trolls. This is a quest story which includes a long song that could have come from The Lord of the Rings. Despite the five pages of explanation and knot-tying which follow the climax, it succeeds well. On a second reading, when its careful background and characterisation can be better appreciated, it justifies its award. Gordon Dickson writes about Anderson without saying anything particularly original.

Last in the volume is James Blish's "Midsummer Century". When its plot is summarised (a man from the present falls into a radio-telescope and is transported 23,000 years into the future, where he manages to save the human race from extinction by killer birds) it sound like something out of the 1930s pulps. Of course, like almost everything else that Blish wrote, this is scientifically based, logically worked out and sparkling with literary and historical allusions - which places it at the opposite end of the spectrum of sf from the 1930s pulps - but even so I did not find the situation credible. As a dream or as an allegory it is quite acceptable; as a possible future it is not. Yet the bulk of the plot, and certainly the ending, are as satisfying to read as anything in the book. I know an enlarged version of "Midsummer Century" has been published as a novel, but have not read it. The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction was put together before Blish's death, but Robert A.W. Lowndes' article (written in 1972) is a perceptive piece of work and pays great tribute to Blish. One thing Lowndes learned from Blish's enthusiasm for James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake seems appropriate here: "any work of literature, or any other art worth paying attention to, makes demands upon the reader, writer or viewer".

That is a principle well worth remembering, I think, as you rush out to buy a copy of this excellent anthology.

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OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8 by Philip K. Dick (Panther; 1976; 211pp; 60p; ISBN 586-04295-4)

Reviewed by Christopher D. Evans

On page 50 of this novel Dick observes: "The measure of a man is not his intelligence. It is not how high he rises in the freak establishment. The measure of a man is this: how swiftly can he react to another person's need? And how much of himself can he give?"

The year is 2135 and the government of Earth is under the control of a breed of genetic offspring: the New Men (individuals with enlarged craniums and huge IQs), and the Unusuals (humans with telepathic and other paranormal abilities). The Old Men are denied access to the Civil Service and the bureaucracy is maintained by the constant monitoring of citizen's activities, a large and omnipresent police force, and the existence of concentration camps. The Old Men who comprise the bulk of the population are disgruntled but apathetic, resigned to their inferior status.

Nick Appleton is an Old Man and his son has failed the aptitude test for government entry - the tests are designed so that only those humans possessing the superior mental abilities of the New Men can pass. Appleton, whom the authorities regard as a statistical everyman, is disillusioned by his son's failure and he joins the Under Men - dissidents who are campaigning for equal status. He is soon arrested for the possession of subversive literature. The authorities are worried: does Appleton's defection herald an upsurge in public outrage against the regime of the New Men?

Dick beautifully highlights his thesis that intelligence is no measure of character in his portrayal of Willis Gram, the Council Chairman before whom Appleton is brought. Gram is an Unusual, a telepath. He's also a dirty old man, a lecher and a layabout. Odd, then, that I found aspects of his character positively endearing. Dick portrays Gram as a mixture of personal cunning and political naivete. He is ruthless but he reacts instinctively, and rarely with calculated malice; he possesses, as do many of Dick's characters, a core of innocence.

Frolix deals with freedom of choice, the freedom of individuals to choose a lifestyle most suited to their abilities and to participate fully in society. The novel also considers the question of commitment to a cause and the morality of external interference in human affairs. Thors Provoni, long absent from Earth in his search for a planet where the Old Men can govern themselves, radios that he has made contact with a race of aliens and is returning with "friends from Frolix 8" who, he promises, will free the Old Men from their oppressors. Provoni is initially seen as the potential saviour of the old race, the one to whom the people are looking for salvation. But, as the novel progresses, we sense that he is a haunted, obsessional figure, and we become unsure, as does Nick Appleton, as to the integrity of his motives. And the alien who is accompanying him, the ninety ton protoplasmic blob which has enshrouded Provoni's ship and is immune to missile attack - who knows what he is capable of?

Frolix is a lively, entertaining book, abrim with ideas. Dick presents us with no solutions to the various moral dilemmas which he poses, and this is as it should be. His method is to stimulate thought rather than to embrace causes, and we are left to ponder whether the arrival of the Frolixan will mark the re-emergence of the Old Men or the Beginning of some totally alien dominance. The copyright suggests that this novel was first published in the US in 1970. Not Dick's most recent work, then, but another fine book from an enigmatic author, and not to be overlooked.

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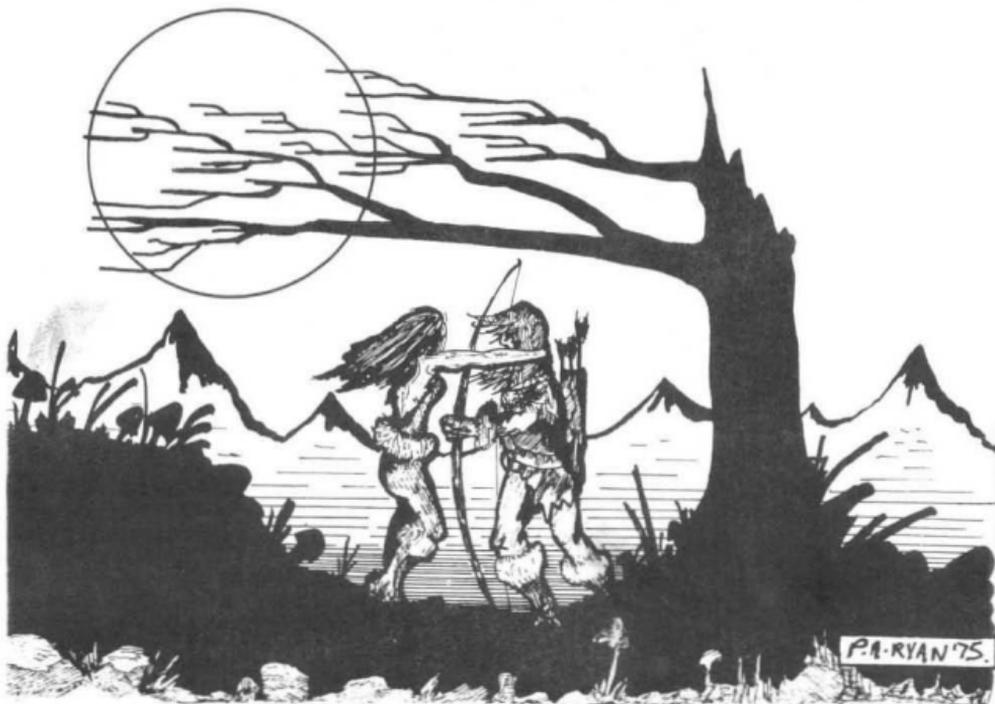
CINEFANTASTIC: BEYOND THE DREAM MACHINE by David Annan (Lorrimer/Futura; London; 1974; 132pp, illustrated; £1.75; ISBN 0-85647-037-6)

Reviewed by Andrew Tidmarsh

I am tempted to write a few harsh words about this book and by so doing destroy it. But I don't think I honestly can. The theme is interesting; the pictures are acceptable and varied, if not cleanly reproduced; and the linkages between the text and illustrations are neatly and rationally made. The overall effect, however, is mediocre.

I would lay this lack of brilliance primarily on the author's prose - which is boring and land, and held together by a patch-work of irritating grammatical errors and stylistic infidelities. [ e.g. p8 "The cave at Trois-Freres...show hunters at the chase of beasts, also witch-doctors." - a sentence which is imprecise and confusing. Or, p13 "Both Archimedes and Vergil were meant to have built robot men..." - a sentence which does not confirm, as the author intends, that robot men were the subjects of ancient myths and thus valid material for archetypes. ] David Annan plainly cannot write; and because the author cannot write the points he wishes to bring to the attention of his readers are obscured. The book collapses because its presentation is inept.

From what I could understand of it, Cinefantastic demonstrates how archetypal preoccupations of producers have influenced the imagery of fantasy films. The book is divided into four chapter: Myths, Machines, Visions and Nightmares. An attempt is made to show how the predominant archetypes have been superseded as historical events - such as the invention of cinematography, or the First World War - have brought fresh archetypes into prominence. But the progression is not convincing, because films have not been segregated thematically, merely placed alongside the archetype from which they are supposedly born. In truth, the two final chapters are of a higher standard than the two opening chapters, as they convey the impression that the major themes of fantasy films were in certain circumstances directly and markedly the product of those circumstances; but the circumstances are limited, and vary from country to country. Elsewhere, the impression is of total confusion: most films do not seem to have been the product of a particular historical period or trend but rather the product of the idiosyncrasies of their producer. The book might have been better if the author had chosen a few archetypes evident in a large number of fantasy films [ I don't know enough about films to say what these archetypes might be. ] and traced the way in which these archetypes have developed and how their treatment has been



affected by major, and presumably traumatic, historical upheavals. As it is, the book reads as if it were no more than a list of films with, here and there, a plot summary.

I tried to read this book twice, and failed. I may, thus, have missed (been forced to miss) much "good stuff". The premise of Cinefantastic, as indicated on its back cover, could have been interesting; if it was, David Annan's text makes bad use of it. And if the question: "How did the ancient Greeks invent 2001: A Space Odyssey?" was actually asked the book provides no answer (while bringing up the resemblance between certain Mexican carvings and astronauts encased in space suits and capsules). Anyway, can a rationally intentioned thesis open with the words: "Monsters from space are as old as the gods and myths of men"?

A tremendously irritating book.

(AT/24/1/1976)

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THE FLIGHT OF THE HORSE by Larry Niven (Orbit; 1975; 212pp; 50p)  
A HOLE IN SPACE by Larry Niven (Orbit; 1975; 196pp; 50p)

Reviewed by Phil Stephensen-Payne

Larry Niven is one of the more fortunate of today's authors. As he explains in the front of A Hole in Space, he lives off a trust income and has been writing full-time since long before that writing could support him. Fortunately he has taken this time to produce a relatively small number of good stories, rather than a large volume of hackwork. However bad the plot, Niven's stories have always been polished and well-rounded. These two collections amply demonstrate that.

Most of the stories in The Flight of the Horse deal with Svetz of the Institute for Temporal research. In the continual fight for funds, the Institute is always trying to humour the childish Secretary-General who controls the world's power. So when the Secretary-General finds a picture in an old book of a horse and decides he wants one, it is up to Svetz to find one. It's somewhat of a shame that the only one he finds isn't quite like the picture - they must have removed that dangerous spiral horn when domesticating the creatures - but the Secretary-General seems pleased. Until his interest wanes and he decides he wants a roc!

Also in The Flight of the Horse are "What Good is a Glass Dagger?" - continuing the saga of the warlocks and Atlantis that was begun in the Nebula-nominated "Not Lond Before the End" - and "Flash Crowd" - introducing the problems inherent in a public mass-tele-ortation system. Of the latter story Niven says: "the notes left over leave room for a whole series of stories dealing with society moulded by teleportation. Someday I'll write it". He did - and called it A Hole In Space.

Which isn't quite fair, as only four of the nine stories therein cover the topic, but they are sufficient to leave the lingering impression that the book was mainly about teleportation. On their own they would stand much better with "Flash Crowd" (which is probably why they are in different collections)-as each deals with an idea that Niven mentioned in the earlier story, in detail. This to a great degree removes their novelty. Better by far are two other stories in the collection: "Rammer" deals in a novel way with the treatment of a "sleeper" awoken after being frozen for many years. Traditionally such treatment has led either to one protagonist who then wields great powers (H.G. Wells, James White) or to the majority of the sleepers being left forever (Simak), but Niven adopts a third viewpoint - "slave" labour is always useful. The other is "The Fourth Profession" dealing with a bartender and an alien who pays for his drinks with

education pills, each for a specific profession. The bartender could remember what three of the pills were for, but what was the purpose of the fourth?

Niven does have one major fault in short-story writing - he seems unwilling to edit his stories when they are collected. Thus here we have five stories about Svetz and five about teleportation, and we hear repeatedly the details of Svetz's time-machine, and the origins of the teleportation booths. It would have taken only a little time (which surely he could spare) to remove the unnecessary duplication.

However, this is no more than a minor irritation in a pair of very fine collections. "Flash Crowd", "What Good is a Glass Dagger?", "Rammer" and "The Fourth Profession" are four of Niven's best stories and their inclusion alone makes these books a very good buy.

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TODAY WE CHOOSE FACES by Roger Zelazny (Orbit Books; 1976; 174pp; 60p)

Reviewed by Phil Stephensen-Payne

Zelazny is a man of many moods and many styles. Also of widely varying abilities. In Today We Choose Faces he seems to be trying to combine many of them at once, and he does not really succeed.

The story can be read simply as a murder mystery. In the distant future humanity lives in a set of totally enclosed urban worlds (called Wings) and appears to have lost all traces of aggression and violence. However there is suddenly a murder, then another. More unsettling still is that both victims were members of a seven-clone who had believed their existence as such unknown to anyone else. It is soon obvious that someone is trying to destroy the whole "family" - but who and why? One of the clones grapples to regain the capability to overcome the enemy before the unknown assailant destroys him.

But it is not as simple as that - Zelazny is also trying to make a mark in the growing literature about clones. Zelazny's clones are semi-telepathic (one of them - the "nexus" - can mesh with the others if he wants to) and partially empathic (when one of the clones dies the nexus also experiences the death and acquires, in addition to his own, the persona and memories of the dead clone). Also, via a large computer each generation (there have been seven) acquires a carefully edited version of the memories of the previous generation.

On top of that Zelazny has decided that he wants the cloning technique to be known only to one, relatively unscrupulous, family, and so spends the first third of the book manoeuvring an ex-Mafia boss (revived from the past) into a position to be the sole inheritor of the requisite knowledge.

All of which leaves little room for background detail or character development. The hero wanders from Wing to Wing - and body to body - through a set of frozen scenes. We see flashes of the society of the time, but they have no coherence. The truth about the clones and the Wings has to be dragged out phrase by phrase from the hurried narrative, and one is left with annoying gaps. Even the action becomes disjointed at times.

Zelazny has tried too much and failed. The basic story is fun, and several of the ideas are good. On the whole, though, it would qualify at best as a pleasant way to spend a wet afternoon, but certainly not worth re-reading.

BUY JUPITER AND OTHER STORIES by Isaac Asimov (Gollancz;1976; £3.20)

Reviewed by Phil Stephensen-Payne

Since the publication of The Early Asimov, it was inevitable that Asimov would produce a second volume of previously uncollected stories, interlaced with autobiographical chat. A few appeared in the Boskone booklet "Have You Seen These?" when Asimov was guest of honour and those and others have now been gathered into this volume.

But while The Early Asimov was a great success, this volume is as great a failure. It contains 24 stories (in only 200 pages) from 1950-73, forming what could easily be called "The Worst of Isaac Asimov". The reason for this is not hard to find - this period has already been extensively milked of the best of his stories (19 in Nightfall and Other Stories, 12 in Asimov's Mysteries, and several robot stories). Also he had, by this period, acquired sufficient prestige to sell sub-standard stories to the sf magazines.

The stories are, on average, very short and often serve merely as vehicles for a single comment Asimov wants to make. For example, "Darwinian Pool Room" is no more than a short discussion of evolution, and "Shah Guido G" just an over-elaborate pun. Even the better stories, like "Rain, Rain Go Away" - about the next-door neighbours with a dislike for inclement weather - tend to be spoilt by their abruptness. There are no characters, no atmosphere - just skeletal subplots.

Even the story introductions seem over-brief. If it is possible to believe, Asimov seems tired of talking about himself. Each story is accompanied by the bare details of its genesis and publication, but on the whole autobiographical comments are rare. In one place Asimov indicates his strong opposition to original anthologies, in another he reprints a story from New Dimensions, apparently without noticing the contradiction.

It is hard to think of a good reason for publishing this book - except perhaps to gather all of Asimov's garbage together in one place so that it can be ceremoniously ignored by all and sundry. It is said that "even Homer nods" - this book proves that, on occasion, Asimov snores!

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED: (Mention here does not preclude a later review - in fact, most of these are being reviewed in the next issue)

- Ensign Flandry by Poul Anderson (Coronet)
- The Half-Angels by Andrew Lovesey (Sphere)
- Promised Land by Brian Stableford (Dent)
- Pitman's Progress by Douglas R. Mason (Elmfield)
- The Moon Children by Jack Williamson (Elmfield)
- Armageddon 2419 AD by Philip Francis Nowlan (Panther)
- The Small Assassin by Ray Bradbury (Panther)
- The Mask of Cthulhu by August Derleth (Panther)
- Time's Last Gift by Philip Jose Farmer (Panther)
- The Male Response by Brian Aldiss (Panther)
- The Man Who Fell to Earth by Walter Tevis (Pan)
- Non-Stop by Brian Aldiss (Pan)
- The Tenth Planet by Edmund Cooper (Coronet)
- Mankind - Child of the Stars by Max H. Flindt and Otto O. Binder (Coronet)
- The Coming of Steeleye by Saul Dunn (Coronet)
- Patron of the Arts by William Rotsler (Elmfield)
- The Face of the Lion by John Blackburn (Cape)
- The Shockwave Rider by John Brunner (Dent)

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED (continued):Cosmic Carousel by David S. Garnett (Hale)The Futurological Congress by Stanislaw Lem (Secker and Warburg)The Cyberiad by Stanislaw Lem (Secker and Warburg)Multiface by Mark Adlard (Sidgwick and Jackson)

...There's a few others that should be in that list too, but they've already gone out to reviewers and I don't have my full list with me (the perils of working out of three offices..) so publishers, if your book isn't here, then don't despair, it's probably with a reviewer. Most of these books will be covered in the next issue, due a month after this one. We hope to have an exciting addition to the panel of reviewers, too.

Don't forget that Vector is always on the lookout for reviewers, so if you'd like to review for us, just send a sample review of any recent book, and let us know what sort of books you are best at reviewing. We particularly need lovers of Old Wave, hard sf, and old Doc Smith type adventure/space opera. All our reviewers at present seem to like the other end of the spectrum....

...CJF





Brian Griffin, 17 Kitchener Street, Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3QW

WOW! V71 may have been relatively short on quantity, but the quality was certainly there! I refer mainly, of course, to Ian Watson's "Towards an Alien Linguistics". On the intuitive level, he's wonderfully, cosmically RIGHT - I only have two logical objections.

1) The old objection to Monism. Ian Watson anticipates this: "The cosmos cannot generate itself. And yet, strangely, it must do." Not if the supposition is against logic, it can't.

2) The old objection to Evolutionism. This always posits "one far-off divine event/To which the whole creation moves". In this case, the eventual revelation of "that which is mirrored in language". It's curious that Ian Watson should make this move, in view of his speculations on the non-serial nature of Time. If Time is not serial, not just an endless development without a theme, then "that which is mirrored in language" must already be accessible. You can guess what I'm moving up to: I am, in fact, a raving Platonist (or something like that). I would keep Ian Watson's valuable distinction between Nature outside us and the idea of Nature within us; but I wouldn't say that the second was a manifestation of the first. I would introduce a third Nature, or Supernature (not Lyall Watson's), which was there "in the beginning" and which is drawing the first Nature - the imperfect, non-symmetrical Nature - up into itself via us and our idea of Nature. But Ian Watson is very near really to this "in-the-beginning" notion, as can be seen in his fascinating speculations on Time and the universe, its end and origin. According to him, we were there "in the beginning" so to speak. Given that, it's not really very far to my position.

Having said that, I'm ready to read Ian Watson's article again. It's extraordinarily good, and highly informative. More, more, more!

In a less luminous context, Ursula Le Guin's Aussiecon Speech would have shone out like a beacon. As it is, it's still first-class inspirational stuff, with some real, haunting ideas in it (bringing us back to the "inward dimension" of Time). Keep on like this, Chris, and you'll make history - bloody marvellous!

Christopher D. Evans, 32 Balfern Grove, Chiswick, London W4 2JX

I think the main reason why you don't get too many letters on Vector is reader apathy rather than lack of interest. (Better to have a passive audience than none at all!) I've intended to write myself for the past two issues but I've never got round to it. Consider your plea successful on this occasion, though. Herewith, a LOC on V71.

Another good issue, in fact, if a little brief - but you've already anticipated that criticism in your editorial. I want to concentrate my comments on Ian Watson's fascinating article. I'm sure that you're going to get a lot of complaints about it being too heavy for Vector, but I agree with Ken Bulmer that you should follow your own judgment on these matters.

"Towards an Alien Linguistics" was a stimulating and provoking essay. It's not for me to attempt a detailed critique since I have no formal knowledge on the subject. There are, however, a few points I'd like to raise in passing.

On the question of the evolution of language, it seems to me that this evolution is strongly linked to the growth of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. New concepts require new modes of expression - probability theory, for example, admits non-specificity and is described in a language that would probably be anathema to the nineteenth century scientific truth. We also find that language is becoming increasingly specialised so that the average person with an "ordinary" grasp of language would find a lecture on, say, thermodynamics, incomprehensible, even if he was sufficiently intelligent to understand the concepts under discussion. One needs to learn the formalised language of science.

I sense a contradiction in the paragraph on transformations. The author states that our language is intricate but our non-verbal or inarticulated thoughts (which is what I read for "abstract deep structures") are more limited. He then states that without transformations (articulations of concepts - my interpretation again) grammar would be impossibly complex. But if the inarticulated thoughts are themselves limited in number, from whence the complexity? (A point here: dreams, which are often fulfillments of inarticulated desires and impulses, do not require language, or at least the faculty of speech, since babies and deaf-mutes dream.)

We have "an innate plan for acquiring language". Fair enough, but how many of the concepts which we formalise in words are culturally determined? How much is language affected by personal and cultural psychology? What sort of thought patterns would human babies develop if they were reared in an alien environment? Lewis Padgett's "Mimsy Were the Borogroves" is a classic fictional treatment of the effect of culture on consciousness.

"Language modifies what it describes". On reflection, this is a truism. The word "cow" is not the animal itself. We can never really "know" anything, in the sense of defining its entire nature, since our descriptions are based on the limited sensory apparatus which we possess. We describe aspects of things, and these will inevitably be anthropomorphised.

"One can either speak about language or about the world, but not the both at once". This statement strikes me as being fallacious. To speak is to use language, so to speak of the world would be to use language to describe it and hence we are simultaneously speaking of language. Hmm.

I felt that the author tended towards mysticism in the latter half of the article when he began to talk of molecules being endowed with symbolic properties, possessing self-interpretation of their structure. I would have thought that interpretation implied sentience, but I suppose that point is open to debate.

Sorry to have gone on at such length, but such a difficult piece required a considered response. As I've said, I'm no expert on linguistics so maybe

the minor objections I've raised are due to a lack of critical faculties on my part rather than any flaws in the author's logic. I should add that the article was the most thought-provoking piece I've read since Delany's "About 5,175 words".

The rest of the issue was also of good quality, and I wholeheartedly concur with Ursula Le Guin's sentiments on getting sf out of the ghetto. The informality of her style on this occasion nicely counterbalanced Watson's more detailed thesis. By the way, what happened to the logo on the front of the magazine? When I opened the letter I thought at first that someone has sent me a contact magazine! I look forward to the next issue. Keep 'em coming.

(( I always thought that was what contact magazines were supposed to do...To answer your question, though, the logo got missed off because I was rushing the artwork down to the printers, late as usual, and didn't have time to work out how to place the logo without obscuring the artwork or marking it in any way, since Dave had already sold it and wanted it back intact. - Ed))

E.R. James, 31 Castle Street, Skipton, N. Yorkshire

What a beautiful photo of a beautiful girl on the cover of the Newsletter!

(( I couldn't resist printing that - it boosts my ego because I took the picture - and, by the way, it wasn't printed back to front, she really did have the "S" round the wrong way - and it boosts Sally's ego, because it will be the first fan letter about her that she's had in print. - Ed))

That is real artwork, but Vector had some good "illos" too. But your reviewers are rather hard. Anything that succeeds in getting into print - and especially between hard covers - must have impressed someone as having merit. Perhaps your contributors do not always bear in mind that most work is done to earn a crust - or some luxury - and that most geniuses are not recognised in their lifetimes; and that what is crud to one (wo)man may not be so to another (wo)man.

However, congratulations on the feat of producing another interesting issue.

Mrs. A. Oldham, 8 Southgate Drive,  
Stratford-on-Avon, CU37 9HR

Many thanks for Vector. I enjoy it all. In particular the quote from Ursula Le Guin (how I love her aliens!) that women are rather scarce in sf. Well, what do you expect? When Mrs. Average gets home after her full-time job there's the other full-time job - Home. Writing and other hobbies have to wait for spare time!

Also, the publishers don't seem too keen. "Our lists are closed" "We only accept work from established writers" "We only publish short stories when said writer has a novel published" or "We only publish novels when a collection of shorts has already been through" Oh well, we go on, writing when possible, published when allowed. Oh yes, scarce is a good word.

I've always loved sf - I won't change now. Nothing else has any bite to it (I don't include Jaws!). I also agree



with T. Sturgeon that there is a lot of "trash" about, but how do they get it published? Oh heck, I'm back there again. I won't ramble any more, but will send in my sub at the weekend and shout with the others: Vector, Vector, Rah, Rah, Rah!

K\*\*th Fr\*\*m\*n, Applied Statistics Dept, University of Reading

L.O.C. - Vector 71

To paraise yp is unthreateaning flet theold wrote ed-tor sin't and i. Not though and featue bea ble UNiverse gola ehat Tom's occurring suniversal constraints woule bioioically ligic fcition out. Filed inot ture the pereceptions so th.

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suffering

Proof Reader.

((Actually, folks, Keith didn't get to proof read V71, I did it...which is the point, of course. I defy you to find a typo in this letter of yours, Keith. Oh, and I'm sure that you do spell "endogamous" that way....- Ed))

Helen Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, G72 9NA

Thank you for Vectors 70 & 71. I think they are well produced and edited. Please keep them coming.

Vector 70 I read it after 71 because my husband still had 70 in his briefcase which he took to work to read at lunchtime. Bob Shaw's "Time Travellers Among Us" was so entertaining that I feel a bit ashamed at falling asleep at one of his talks at a con (but he was so quiet spoken and amplification was bad). A word to Mr. James Corley on his review of The Flying Sorcerers and I quote "...at least, I think it strives to be humorous..." - well, for me it was humorous, I think youoverwrote your review and felt like a little bit of grand criticism that was out of place.

Vector 71 Best Vector for me so far. Two reasons: 1. Ursula Le Guin's excellent speech, "The Stone Ax and the Musk Oxen". 2. The artwork - all of it. That front cover - please does it have a specific meaning or moral? Do let me know if it was just meant to be pretty of if it had another purpose?

((To answer your questions - which have been repeated by many others in letters and in person: the cover by Dave Griffiths was what he described as a fantasy, and was inspired by Charles Partington's story "Narrative of Masks" in NW9 - see Brian Griffin's review in this issue. I should have put that in the last issue - apologies to Chuck and Dave, both of whom reminded me. I think this fact, that the cover was inspired by a story in a sf publication, should answer the criticism that it "wasn't science fiction" once and for all. - Ed))

Andy Sawyer, 14A, Fifth Avenue, Manor Park, London E12

Another good Vector - it's heartening to see articles with such a high "common-sense" level as that by Ursula Le Guin; she is probably the best sf writer around at the moment and I think if works published under the name sf are around when we reach the future everyone's writing about, hers will.

Ian Watson's article was an amazing piece - I'm not sure I'd have understood a word of it if I hadn't read his latest novel The Jonah Kit, which deals with exactly the concepts he talked about. Whatever it was, it was fascinating.

I'm not going to produce a long work of epistolary incandescence as I've just become a DAD and I'm living off adrenalin at the moment trying to combine clearing up the shambles in the house with a full-time course (heavy workload) and spending ages on the phone to newly-born grandparents (if that makes sense) and inquiring friends. I fancied a go at thinking up a name for the Newsletter but names are something of a mental block at the moment. I've always thought that "British Science Fiction Association Limited Newsletter" is pretty far out in itself, but there you go.



Mick Cross, 41 Redland Drive, Kirk Ella, Hull HU10 7UX

Thanks for V71. I especially enjoyed Ursula Le Guin's piece as I have just read The Dispossessed and am now engaged on a search for her earlier works. I'm not sure about Ian Watson's article; I shall have to re-read it before I decide. The book and film reviews are good and I enjoyed reading them.

Going back in time, I thought V69 and V70 were very good and I particularly like Andrew Tidmarsh's review of The Other Glass Teat in V70. As a result of the review I bought The Glass Teat and The Other Glass Teat, both books that I would otherwise pass by.

((Are you reading this, publishers? You see - Vector reviews sell books! Send me some more review books today!- Ed))

They are excellent and fascinating, definitely books to shake one's complacency. Ellison is cynical and suspicious but he cares and still wants to believe what he is told. The columns on "The Common Man" in the first book detailing the thoughts and opinions of a group of "typical man-in-the-street" people are particularly horrifying. Perhaps I was naive, but I didn't believe that people could be that gullible or unable (unwilling perhaps?) to think things through.

Ken Bulmer, 19 Orchard Way, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8LA

Thank you for Vector 70 and the Newsletter. The zine is again a very fine issue and you are to be congratulated. I dislike Mercury Rising as a title. In my view the Newsletter should be kept as simple as possible with the view to cramming it with news and topical material and getting it out on time. Fancy work to fill up the odd space may be admissible; but, if you will pardon me, the cover did nothing really to further news, unless the young lady has a deeper significance in your young life, and then how does she fit in with the BSFA unless there is some kind of underground connection available to members. Again, pardon me if the reversed "S" has any symbolic meaning I overlooked.

((But Ken, Sally is news. Actually, the reason that the cover was what it was is this. A local publisher (OK, me) was running this photo on the cover of his magazine, and by having the same thing on the cover of the Newsletter, the BSFA got an attractive photograph for no extra cost. And a lot of members like it.- Ed))

Vector is really looking nice now and I was sorry to hear you'd been off ill. Hope you have recovered....The news of David Symes leaving us was, it appeared at the time, catastrophic; but if this pants-splitting Tom Jones is going to step in and do a good job then we are all very grateful to him. More power to his elbow. I hope you can find a spot in Vector to run a piece giving a big thank you and credit to David Symes for his enthusiasm and work. ... Glad that you have obtained artwork from Brian Lewis; I fancy his pictures at Novacon created a stir. Lots of stuff here is eminently worth commenting on, particularly as it reveals the mentality of some of your contributors and locers. By the way, it might be an idea to adopt a more plisitive and easily identifiable method of indicating when you as editor speak within the text of a piece instead of the simple brackets you now use. Perhaps square brackets might be better, or double brackets. Poeple tend to use ordinary brackets in their stuff which can be confusing. I refrain until you see what to do for the best. This must be all for now and I apologise for a small and weak letter, not really a mini-loc. But deadlines leer and gibber....

((Actually, Ken, if you look at the Lettercol of V71 you'll find I already use double brackets to indicate when it is me talking, and sign off - Ed))

John Welsh, 23 Kelvinside Gardens East, Glasgow G20

So okay, I'm ashamed of myself. And I hope that all the other smug, lazy, good-for-nothing 500,000,000:1 long-shots whose only possible justifiable claim to existence is that they might make a good substitute for cow dung as fertiliser one of these days and yet who have the hypocritical pretentiousness to call themselves fans are too!

Well, no real insult meant (after all, I'm just about as guilty as they are) but surely some of them could raise the energy to pick up the astounding weight of a pen, apply it to paper, and write in and give you their views on Vector.

You shouldn't have to put out a plea for more letters out I suppose I'd never have written in myself without it. So, while I'm about it, I'd like to - with your permission - tell those nonentities out there what to do.

Okay - write in, but don't just write in once then sit back feeling charitable - keep writing in. At best you can offer constructive criticism, (since I don't suppose anyone's going to donate £1,000), at worst you can fill up some space which I suppose is still worthwhile - but do something. Praise the editor - these Vectors aren't being produced through the grace of God - it's all sweat. If he's going to put in the effor for us, then let's have the common courtesy to reciprocate a little. (PS Uh, you can pay me that br-- tenner -- you kindly wanted to give me any time now)

You think I'm getting carried away?

You think maybe I should be carri@d away?

Anyway, Chris, you're doing one helluva good job and though the Mob



may be silent (Huh, I bet you get hundreds of letters pouring in for V72 just to invalidate the whole of this letter...) we're grateful for it.

Me! I'm a fairly recent member of the BSFA (listed to my pleasant surprise in the previous Newsletter) and quite honestly the organisation isn't what I expected it to be...

But thank God for that!

No huge, perfectly run, smoothly oiled and impersonal machine this! We can get to you and feel we've been heard. But what do I know - is the same true of fanzines - after all, this is all new to me. Anyway, the dedicated effort and obvious enthusiasm behind the organisation is heartwarming. Now, onto the main business of this letter.

Vector 71: Ursula Le Guin's article I enjoyed by I read it with mixed feelings. Not the stuff about the rarity of women in sf. It makes no difference to me whether more appear or disappear - after all what does the sex of the author of a good book matter? It's irrelevant. And nowadays no-one's stopping them writing. If you can do it- go ahead.

No, it's this stuff about the respectability of sf and knocking down the "ghetto walls" and so on that gets me. Put quite simply, I want to see most of those walls stay right where they are. All right, hold back, you can massacre me later... First let me try to rationalise that emotional point of view. Mrs. Le Guin would like to see an end to the labelling of sf books as sf. And she doesn't want to see them gathered together in a separate group in Public Libraries. Why not? Because the non-addict isn't going to pick up the book if he knows it is sf. Or if he is vaguely interested but has to go round to some special shelf in the Library, then for some unspecified reason he isn't going to. Embarrassment? Anyway, Mrs. Le Guin, if a person hasn't discovered sf on his/her own by the age of say - fifteen? - then he/she, regardless of anything, is very probably never going to be interested in it anyhow. You can't be a member of an adult Library unless you're over the age of sixteen. Therefore, discriminating sf books in an adult library serves only the convenience of the sf reader.

This situation occurred in my own local library the other day. I stood shattered, a broken man. Oh well...Now does Aldiss start with an A or a D? Likewise with not labelling a book. That isn't going to fool anyone into thinking he's picked up a mainstream novel when all they have to do is glance at the back cover. The above applies to people over fifteen only, I guess. But the thing is, it still applies.

Otherwise (cos this is getting out of hand) I suppose I agree in full. In fact I quite enjoyed the article - which is a helluva lot more than I can say for that other piece of drivel. Has an adjective been invented which could honestly do justice to such blatantly non-scientific nonsense?

I suggest that the author's best friend takes him into a quiet corner and slowly explains some basic physics to him. Oh, and one of the references he mentioned: Black Holes- The End of the Universe by John Taylor - he seemed to forget that to mention that it is filled with religious cringing and scientific hogwash - to put it mildly.

The rest of V71 I enjoyed though one of the book reviews got me mad. Which is totally irrelevant but it's getting late and my brain gave up half an hour ago. Congrats on the idea of a multi-coloured Newsletter and vastly improved typing. There were too many film reviews and (our fault) not enough letters. Mercury Rising as a title I do not like (sorry). Newsletter at least is self-explanatory. I'd keep it but I don't suppose you will. Such being the dubious rewards of editorship. Time I ended I guess...Keep up the great work, and the rest of you out there - write in!

Postscript: It's now two days since I wrote the above crap (which I've just

realised it is after reading it all the way through for the first time). Basically it strikes me as slanderous, insincere and frivolous. Possibly its best fate would be - well, use you own imagination.

((John - I think I can truthfully say that this is the first time I've ever seen a letter-of-comment with a letter-of-comment on itself appended...I feel that any comment from me would be superfluous - Ed))



J.D. Baldwin, 13 Coniston Gardens,  
Crossgates, Scarborough N.Yorks YO12 4JH

I must say how much I've enjoyed reading Vector, as I've collected about 1,000 paperbacks and read most of them twice, my only source of new material is SF Monthly. I very much enjoy reading intelligent book reviews, such as by Malcolm Edwards, and gain insights into stories and novels through another's interpretation.

I used to enjoy the criticism in New Worlds Quarterly by John Clute and M. John Harrison, but they have become obscure in issue no. 9 - or I just haven't got the necessary classical background to appreciate them. I don't mind being educated, but not baffled. Are they part of some in-group?

((There must be an easy answer to that question....Ed))

David V. Lewis, 8 Aldis Avenue, Stowmarket, Suffolk

Many thanks for V71...my main reason for writing is to express this thought... ANDREW TIDMARSH - WE NEED YOU. Andrew Tidmarsh is indeed one of the best things - rather one of the best new personalities - you have brought to Vector by becoming editor. I hope this letter along with others will persuade him not to entirely drop out of the reviewing scene as his talents, although glimpsed only briefly in two Vectors, require further exposure and it would be sad if his signature no more graced your pages. I cannot express in mere words the pleasure I have derived from his work. Not having the ability to analyse and recognise lapses in style, treatment of themes, possibilities of stories myself, I rely on people like Andrew to enrich my enjoyment of written and visual sf.

...Since my last letter I have had time to digest V71 and herewith my comments. Thx Vector? Looking at the size of past Vectors in my possession most seem to have on average 40 pages with one of 78. When I receive your "normal" sized ish it will seem bumper size to me.

I look forward to the Elwood and Silverberg interviews (after Silverberg's article in Foundation 7/8 of his life from ultimate sf hack to writer of brilliant sf, maybe Barry M. Malzberg ought to gain solace from this?) and other goodies.

Enjoyed the Ursula Le Guin speech, and congrats on the scoop! Getting to know people and contacts in the sf field and being able to obtain the articles published in Vector must be very exciting and rewarding. I don't altogether agree about sf getting into the big wide world of literature. This seems to be a preoccupation these days: sf must be recognised as "serious literature",

Time upon dusty Tome of learned criticism must be amassed, people must be taught how to appreciate sf....UGH!

Will the readers of contemporary literature buy sf and read it? Without the hard core of sf fandom buying "sf" writers' work plus the en passant reader idling away time on public transport and elsewhere, I doubt whether "sf" writers would survive in outside literature unless they completely altered their themes, styles, etc, and stopped writing sf altogether, which I am sure a lot of them would find hard to do. This is wishing to be thought of as literary giants by writers not fans, it is literary snobbery, also downright betrayal of a loyal, if argumentative, band of followers from whence many writers came and many will come again....Arrogant Egotism.

Ian Watson's article was for the most part above me. But it illustrates the point that people in sf are intellectuals and are probably more intelligent than the average "mainstream" writer. So wanting to join them because they are something better than sf writers is somewhat farcical!

Can you imagine Harold Robbins producing an article like this? However, I managed to extract that to know the universe we need to know ourselves and Watson is concerned with how did the universe start; and that science, which shot away from mysticism in the first instance, is now coming more and more back to it, as we find out what is going on around us.

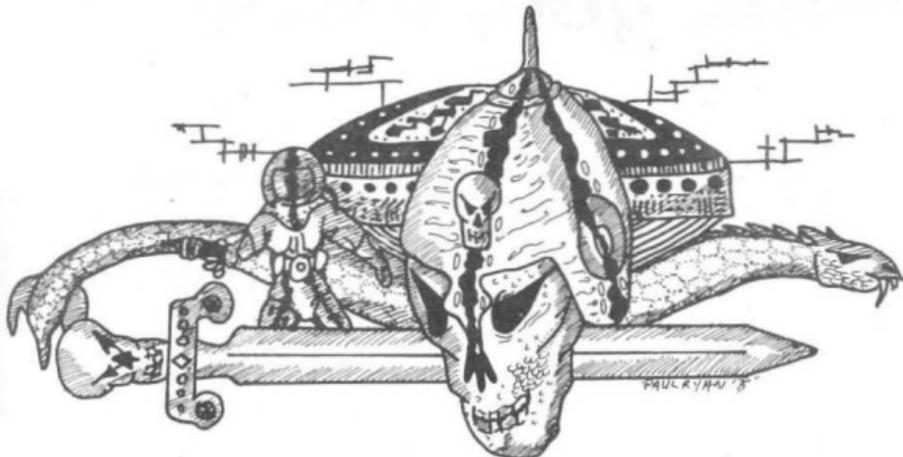
Malzberg is leaving: opinion of AT, and also fo Fantastic - see blurb to his story in the December ish. Will he survive elsewhere?

A. Norton, J. Norman, L. Carter are all action adventure, S&S writers, so why the comparison? This is not valid if Malzberg wrote sf. Writers are difficult to measure one against the other because they don't write on the same subject in the same way, cf artists and paintings - many different Madonna& Childs, which is best? ...subjective opinions.

Your Ultimate Warrior review/story synopsis was OK but a bit long. Theme identification OK, discussion of merits/demerits of film too short...not much to discuss, as underlined by the last sentence: "It will do until something better comes along".

Letters: AT fragments very interesting - Don't Let Him Go!

However - what is reality? My reality is probably different from yours, AT's to mine, etc. It depends surely on the interpretation of incoming data to the mind. I enjoy fantasy and sf and read them for enjoyment, not consciously to prepare myself for the future. But it must be said that sf is a useful vehicle for exploring various future alternatives and our leaders, and ordinary people would be well advised to heed the messages in sf. With hindsight



(a useful device) it can be seen that some of the writers of the late 50s and early 60s predicted quite accurately the mess we are currently in in contemporary life, i.e. sieges and political terrorism on our doorsteps, extremists of all hues venting their spleen on the innocent with gay abandon. Authorities refusing to be authoritative....on this cheerful note I will close

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#### A NOTE TO INTENDING LETTER-WRITERS

We are, of course, always pleased to receive letters, be they typed, hand-written, or apparently produced with the aid of a trained fly dipped in ink (a badly trained fly...). But it does help a lot, if you want your letter to be published, if you can manage to either type it (and if you go to the trouble of typing a letter, then double-spacing is a great boon to a weary editor's eyes) or write it as neatly as you can. At the moment, I am publishing all the letters (or, at the very least, the most important bits of them) which I receive. The real problem is that I usually type the Letter Column last of all (except for the editorial and contents pages), so my eyes are in the worst condition to decipher poor hand-writing. So please, think of my eyes - keep those letters coming, but keep them neat. - Ed.



# Thank you, David

This note is by way of a - totally inadequate - thanks to Dave Symes for all the hard work he has put in as Membership Secretary of the BSFA in the last 7 months. Dave was keen for some time before the BSFA was revived at the AGM to help in some way, and volunteered his services long before there was anyone there who could really take him up on his offer. He came onto the new Council in June 1975, and from then until the end of January he worked tirelessly and very efficiently - as many of you, as members can testify - clearing up the mess left behind by the previous incumbent of his post, enrolling new members, and encouraging old ones to rejoin. We all owe Dave a deep debt of gratitude. Perhaps some day and in some way we can repay it. Until then, Dave - fare well.



# Mancon 5

Friday 16 - Monday 19 April  
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Guest-of-honour  
Robert Silverberg

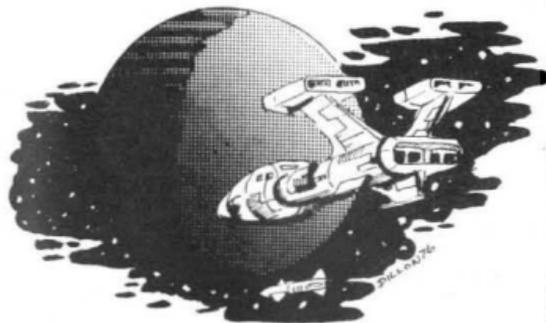
Fan guest-of-honour  
Peter Roberts

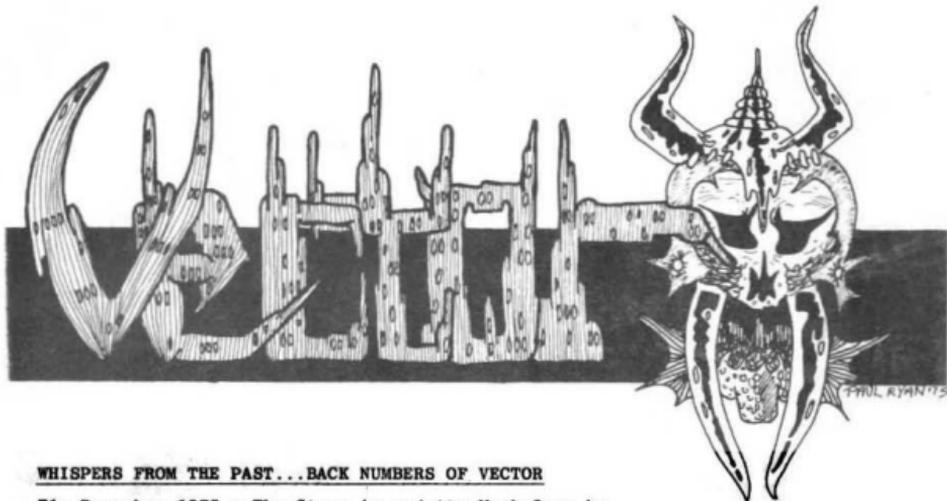
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Write to: Brian Robinson  
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#### WHISPERS FROM THE PAST...BACK NUMBERS OF VECTOR

71: December 1975 - The Stone Ax and the Musk Oxen by Ursula Le Guin, Towards an Alien Linguistics by Ian Watson, film and book reviews

70: Autumn 1975 - Time Travellers Among Us by Bob Shaw, Violence in SF by Edmund Cooper, SF's Urban Vision by Chris Hamnett, plus book, film and fanzine reviews

69: Summer 1975 - The Science in SF by James Blish, Early one Oxford Morning by Brian Aldiss, The Value of Bad SF by Bob Shaw, Science or Fiction by Tony Sudbery, film and book reviews

67/68: (the last Malcolm Edwards issue) Three Views of Tolkien by Ursula Le Guin, Gene Wolfe and Peter Nicholls, Letter from Amerika by Philip K. Dick, Period of Transition by Michael G. Coney, After the Renaissance by Brian Aldiss, Machines and Inventions by Brian M. Stableford, Down-at-Heel Galaxy by Brian Aldiss, book and film reviews: Spring 1974

66: July/August 1973 - The Robot in SF by Brian Stableford, D.G. Compton: An Interview, D.G. Compton and New Standards of Excellence by Mark Adlard, book, film and fanzine reviews

65: May/June 1973 - Gene Wolfe: An Interview, Lost People by Pamela Sargent, The Man Who Could Work Miracles by Brian Aldiss, Ad Astra by Bob Shaw, Author's Choice by Roger Zelazny, book and fanzine reviews

64: March/April 1973 - The Android and the Human by Philip K. Dick, The Extraordinary Behaviour of Ordinary Materials by Bob Shaw, Author's Choice by Poul Anderson, book and fanzine reviews

61: September/October 1972 - The Arts in SF by James Blish, An Interview with Peter Tate by Mark Adlard, book and fanzine reviews

60: June 1972 - Through a Glass Darkly by John Brunner, SF and the Cinema by Philip Strick, The Frenzied Living Thing by Bruce Gillespie, Edward John Carnell 1919-1972 by Harry Harrison, Dan Morgan, Ted Tubb and Brian Aldiss, convention report by Peter Roberts, book and fanzine reviews

59: Spring 1972 - An Introduction to Stanislaw Lem by Franz Rottensteiner, A Good Hiding by Stanislaw Lem, A Cruel Miracle by Malcolm Edwards, Why I Took a Writing Course...and Didn't Become a Writer by Dick Howett, SF Criticism in Theory and Practice by Pamela Bulmer, book reviews

Each of these issues is available from the editor at the price of 50p (\$1). Please make cheques payable to Vector. Hurry, hurry - many are in short supply!