Vector 78

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Copy date for Vector 79: Friday, 24th (provisional) Dec, 1976

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Proof-reading by Terry Corbin and Florence Russell; in different ways,
Heroes of the Revolution both
Collating/stapling/etc., by Keith Freeman, Martin Hattfied, Tom Jones, David
Wingrove, and the editor

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Printed by Sanderson Design and Print Ltd, 18 Portman Rd, Reading

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This issue is for J. eternal hope...
It's only words/But words are all I have/To take your heart away.

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Vector's ISSN is 0308-0448

Opinions stated herein should not be taken to be those of the BSFA

This issue of Vector is available for
50p (£1). It is regularly available
in the UK to members of the BSFA
(annual subscription - £4.00 -
all enquiries to Elke Stewart) or by
direct subscription to the editorial
address, at £4.40 for six issues.

Vector subscriptions outside the UK
are $7, 12 issues for $12, or
$1.50 per issue air mail) to indi-
viduals; institutions: 12 issues for $16.
Equivalent rates elsewhere. Please
send sterling cheques or money orders,
payable to "Vector", or, failing that,
cash in US dollars.

Back issue availability on page 59
Print run this issue: 600

Vector 78 has been produced singlehand-
dedly by Chris Fowler, with a little
help from an IBM 82C, and a great deal
of support from Dora, Florence, Terry,
Steve, Brian and Sarah: thanks folks,
it's pointless without you.
Boho, Fowler. Vector going to printer tomorrow and you haven't written your editorial again, I see.

Be careful, Spiby. I balance on a knife edge. I am tired. It is late. I am Not In The Mood.

Cop-out, Fowler, cop-out. Your loyal readers are going to want to know why you've chosen to reduce the central 32 pages of the magazine so much more than usual...

To try to clear the backlog of reviews, that's why. I'm just trying to pack more into the same number of pages.

Don't give me that. I know you've been taking kick-backs from magnifying-glass makers. Anyway, aren't you going to tell them why the Bob Shaw piece isn't in?

I was hoping no-one would notice that. It was going to be in, but I didn't get the illustrations in time. But the readers are getting Cy Chauvin, Brian Stableford and Andrew Tidmarsh instead. And Bob Shaw will be in next time.

Who's this Carol Gregory you've got on the front cover? She's not that incredibly pre-Raphaelite artist from Leeds, is she? Who doesn't like Eisenstein?

I rather wish you hadn't used that description, Spiby. I think she is rather sensitive about being told how pre-Raphaelite she looks. Though I must admit that a dislike of Eisenstein is a negative factor. Anyway, she's a very talented artist, and will soon be in the professional magazines.

OK - so much for this issue. What lies and false promises are you going to make about the next issue?

Well...if this experiment in greater reduction of type-size works, then the next issue should finally clear the reviews backlog, and have the Elwood interview, and will definitely have the return of the letter-column.

I'll believe a letter-column when I see it, Fowler. You said it would be in this issue...

Yes, but I didn't get any letters. How can I run a letter-column with no letters? All the hacks are sending their letters to that ratbag Jones in Bracknell.

All right, so make an appeal. "Make an editor happy. Send him a letter today!"

So I'll do it. Now leave me alone. I am tired. It is late. An overwhelming sense of the Pointlessness of it All overcomes me. The Intolerable Chaos of Reality is seeping into my room. The Pain of Existence assails me....

Ah, our old friend the Existential Dilemma raising its ugly head again. Tell the truth, Fowler. We all know what is really wrong...

(cont. p. 58)
W(H)ITHER

SCIENCE FICTION?

Ian Watson

I was on a panel at a science fiction convention recently, where I said that I thought that science fiction ought to aim to put itself out of business; that the ambition of SF should be to become obsolete. This suggestion caused a certain amount of surprise in the audience, and it was apparently misunderstood by those people, since some of the feedback afterwards was that I'd said that SF is now obsolete because Man had now advanced scientifically to the point where there is nothing left to speculate about any more. We've landed on the Moon, unraveled the Genetic Code somewhat, transplanted hearts, etcetera - so SF can now shut up shop.

I'd like to expand on what I said on that panel, because it is open to misunderstanding, and it is rather a vital point. So I'm entitling this article "W(h)ither Science Fiction?" to ask two questions in one. Firstly, which way should SF go? And secondly, what's all this business about SF aiming to wither away, like the Marxist vision of the State?

Beginning with the idea that Man has advanced scientifically to the point where there's nothing left to speculate about... I know there's a school of thought which points out that 90% of all scientists who have ever lived are alive today - and that we've nearly reached bedrock in Physics, Astronomy, Biology. We know roughly what to look for to get the Final Answers. In Physics, give us a few more years, a few more particle accelerators, and we'll know what the ultimate basis of matter is; we aren't remotely in the same situation as in the 18th Century before the splitting of the atom. In Biology, we know what the genetic code is; we just need more refined techniques to read it perfectly. Or in Astronomy, a few more radio telescopes or satellite experiments and we'll be able to estimate the total mass of the universe at last and decide once and for all whether it's expanding towards Last Death or will collapse back in again. 100 years ago scientists hadn't the foggiest idea about subatomic structure, DNA, red-shift, radio and X-ray astronomy and all today's fundamental building blocks. But for us today, possessing this knowledge, it's only a matter of fine tuning henceforth; 90% of really fundamental breakthroughs have already been made.

Well, I don't agree with this for a moment. Nor does the history of modern science lend much backing to this view. Essentially it's a view based on the idea that science progressively discloses Absolute Truth to us. That science is objective and rational in method; that its findings are based on a hard, cool look at raw data, and represent The Facts.

But scientists never look at "raw data" in an unbiased way. There's so much thing as raw data. Scientists have to have a theory before they set out to prove their theory. That theory is usually conditioned by the dominant orthodoxy of the time - and heretics can be punished as sternly as by the Spanish

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Inquisition; only not with burning at the stake, so much as by cutting off research grants, rejecting research papers, refusing tenure at universities.

A recent study of Apollo scientists (1) (who were about to have their theories proved one way or the other by actual lumps of rock) showed that subjective and irrational elements run deep in science — and may even be essential to its existence. The scientists polled gushed the idea of the unbiased observer with a range of negative reactions from hoots of laughter to downright rage. They insisted that bias was necessary (a) to motivate you to work energetically, and (b) to maintain critical debate, from which truth emerges. Still, they added, you had to make a clear distinction between being "respectably biased" — and downright cheating. Cheating is out. But actually, what is "cheating" in science?

Consider the case of Immanuel Velikovsky. (2) Velikovsky's seemingly outrageous idea that the solar system was, within near-historic times, behaving rather like a snooker table at the start of a game (with Venus, newly born out of Jupiter, and Mars and Earth crashing into each other and rebounding) was backed up by the specific predictions (about the temperature of Venus, the Sun having an electric charge, radio pulses from Jupiter and so on) which were errant nonsense at the time of the publication of Worlds in Collision in 1950, but which have since turned out to be spot on; prompting the current re-investigation of Velikovsky's ideas. However, the interesting thing here isn't so much whether Velikovsky was right or wrong or half-right, so much as the sheer rage of most scientists at him in 1950. In fact, their behaviour was so paranoid as to attract the attention of American psychologists. The editor of Macmillan who signed the contract with Velikovsky was sacked and the book hastily transferred to another publisher following threats from academics to boycott buying Macmillan textbooks, or write any more textbooks for the firm, unless Macmillan publicly dissociated itself from Velikovsky. The reputable Science News Letter carried denunciations of the book, before publication, from respectable scientists who hadn't even read it yet. The curator of Hayden Planetarium who was also chairman of the astronomy section of the American Museum of Natural History, and who was preparing a favourable review of the book and wanted to stage a planetarium display based on the ideas in it, was sacked brusquely, told to quit his office the same day, and has been boycotted from any job in astronomy ever since. Major scientists such as Harlow Shapley and Otto Struve joined in this witch hunt. Science was so bitterly opposed to the sheer existence of Velikovsky's ideas that it was prepared to go to almost any lengths to squash them.

More recently, we saw the curious episode of the abrupt rise and fall of Polywater (a sort of rubbery form of Kurt Vonnegut's ice-nine in Cat's Cradle) from first "discovery", through a popularity boom when hundreds of papers were being published describing how to make polywater in the lab and what its properties were, to its sudden downfall when — lo and behold — it no longer existed; and had never existed! This was a sort of counter-Velikovsky Effect when everybody leapt on to a zany bandwagon about something way fundamental indeed - water, the source of life - and even manufactured material that did not exist. Looking back on the Polywater episode, a Princeton Chemistry professor (3) claims that "the polywater phenomenon has further verified the efficacy of the scientific method" — on the grounds that a new theory was fervently and rapidly tested to destruction. Yet the same professor admits that investigators might have changed their minds simply because after a time some major journals such as Science announced that they were "fed-up" with Polywater and didn't want to print any more papers on it. In this changed climate of opinion, could a lone scientist stand out any longer without being seen as a crank — and even seeing himself as one? Could he continue to think in terms of producing genuine polywater? No, exit polywater from the scene — no doubt just as well, considering what happens in Cat's Cradle.
In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Thomas Kuhn analysed the way in which one scientific orthodoxy will be defended quite bitterly, until it has so many loopholes in it that it visibly cannot serve; whereupon an abrupt gestalt switch will take place to another, new orthodoxy, which may very well be the opposite of the old one - though that doesn't mean it is the true and final one, let me add. But you to anyone who puts forward the new orthodoxy before its time has come. An example in geology is plate tectonics - the theory that the Earth's surface consists of six major rigid plates moving relative to one another. The theory of continental drift, under a new name - Sander theory when Wegener put it forward in 1912; a textbook cliché now. But does that mean that it will remain a textbook cliché in 2080? Maybe by then Velikovsky's colliding planets will be what pulled the continents apart. Well, I'm being flippant here; but the point is that science remains permanently provisional. So if we think we know everything, or nearly know it, we're fooling ourselves.

How does this apply to SF? I would say that working within the framework of what we know scientifically at the moment, and what we can extrapolate as possibilities, SF has every right - and duty - to re-invent science, provided that this is loosely within the compass of Reason, baseline 1776, 77, 78... By this I mean that faster than light spacedrives are on for us (even though current calculations prove their unreasonable, as of now) not merely as plot devices for getting from A to B - because faster than light drives are not outside the compass of Reason; they can be thought about, lucidly enough, as possible future technology. I say "loosely" within the compass of Reason, because actually SF can be too technically accurate. It can be accurate in the context of its time - and plain wrong. A good example of this is Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker*, where Stapledon wants to write about a mental voyage contacting life in the galaxy but ties himself to the James Jeans theory of how planets were formed (by the close approach of one star to another, tearing off a gob of matter to randomize into planetary) - by which theory planets would be relatively rare. Stapledon had to spend an awful lot of time speeding through barren stars before he could get down to the subject of his book; whereas, writing it now, when the dominant theory is that planets are a normal byproduct of star formation, he wouldn't have had this problem, caused by being too scrupulous! At the same time I respect him for working within the compass of Reason of his time. That's what makes him an SF writer, whereas David Lindsay's magnificent *Voyage to Arcturus*, where the mode of travel is bottling starlight, which contains "back-rays", is a fantasy for it was written outside the compass of Reason; even though some new cosmological speculations about Action at a Distance logically require what are in effect "back-rays". Does this mean that a book can be no SF at one period, and then fortuitously become SF later on? No. Because *Voyage to Arcturus* wasn't written within what I'm calling the Compass of Reason, of its period. SF should and must take liberties with scientific orthodoxy; but what is known now, and more importantly, what is known not-yet-to-be-known, but which is still potentially knowable, should be the starting point: and into this latter category fall the central enigmas of Why Life Is, Why a Universe Is, Is there any structural relationship between Life and a Universe, What is the evolutionary potential of Man and Man's Mind - the growing tips of scientific speculation, and at the same time "unknowables" which we can still ask relatively informed, if outrageous, questions about.

It's partly because of the contradictions between writing within the framework of (a) the expectations of the SF genre, and precisely how much readers, publishers, reviewers will allow the SF writer to explore; versus profitably rehashing old ground and sticking to stock clichés; and (b) the framework of what we know now, when SF declares itself to be about the Future, the Alien, the Other with by definition we can't know, that I think Barry Malzberg has opted out of SF. His 1976 novel *Galaxies* is a set of misadventures towards a novel, rather than a novel, partly as a satire on genre limitations, reader-demands, publisher-demands; partly because he knows that ideally
be should be writing what cannot yet be written, by definition. To quote
Malzberg: "This is not a novel but merely a set of notes for one. The novel
itself remains unutterably beyond our time, and hence outside of the devices
of fiction... These notes are surely as close to the narrative as anyone of
this time can get, because the novel cannot be written for almost two thousand
years... the very language of the techniques necessary to write it will not be
ours for two millennia". So Malzberg opts out. He is right in what the book
should have been about - and just try to imagine any writer two hundred years ago,
let alone two thousand, being able to write or even conceive the meaning of
such sentences as "this book cannot be written for almost 2000 years!".
Malzberg isn't as trapped as he thinks. But he is wrong, science-fictionally,
(though not sociologically) in writing it as a satire. He takes refuge in a
word, in literature - bip, slick literature where black holes and tachyons
become a deliberate kitche, a stylishly employed nonsense, to ornament a stretch
of prose.

Quite a lot of SF today is taking refuge in literature. I think the
much-touted convergence between SF and literature is a Bad Thing, for it makes
SF simply part of the literary game, to be played smartly and stylishly
(as opposed to clumsily and crudely, as in the old days). This particular
literary confusion, SF, should henceforth be served with chopsticks, not a
shovel. But it is only a confusion; a sub-category of literary art. I've
read a lot of recent stories which are written beautifully beyond the dreams -
or capacity? - of the pulp writers of the 30s or 40s; yet which amount, in
spirit, to a mere gastronomy of words, which have forgotten that the point of
food is to nourish, to fuel, to build. I don't suggest that meals shouldn't be
served well, on principle; they should be. Everything should be done as well
as possible. Nor am I ignoring the fact that the art of cookery, and the art
of eating together, play an important role in human communication and interaction
rituals. Cookery and the art of eating builds communication as well as body
protein; but the whole business can become grotesquely exaggerated, and too
often is, in the affluent West - till it becomes non-functional, over-specialised,
a dead end. Likewise, overstressing the literary virtues of the new SF is to
lose the point of SF. Which is not to say that anything should be badly written;
just that if it is only well-written and that's all - even though it perpetuates
Alien Consciousness, Black Holes, what have you, as icing on the cake of the
enduring human condition that literature so cleverly reveals to us - then it's
not enough.

The point is that the human condition isn't enduring; nor is it art; nor is
Man as we know him/her. I'm not talking about the prospect of nuclear war or
extinction of the species by pollution or whatever cause, but simply about the
fact that we are an evolving, changing species. Literature is part of the
evolutionary process. It only has meaning within this biological and social
context. And what is unique about SF is that it consciously takes as its subject
matter this sense of Man changing within and by contact with the physical universe
at large - which is a very different thing from its subject matter being "the
human condition" which most Great Literature is supposed to be about; for most
Great Literature assumes that the human condition is unchanging down the ages.
This may be true in the short term, but it is certainly not so in the long
term - or we wouldn't have evolved into the beings we are now, we'd still be
frozen in Nature, without language, without tools, without culture. SF can aim -
at least in theory, even if in practice it betrays this a lot of the time - at
this far view. That's what Malzberg was talking about: the ideal of SF, the look
into the future, the look at change, really radical change; and the paradox of
how we are to guess at it from our baseline here. SF isn't a sub-unit of the
Novel, since the Novel - which we tend to assume to be so representative of the
Human Condition, the obviously valid art form par excellence of our culture,
for discussing Man - is only a creature of the last 200 years. SF has split off
from the mainstream of fiction, yes. But it mutated; it became something else.
It became a more "naked" literature (with the attendant "embarrassments" of nudity; visible imperfections by the standard of the "well-dressed" book) because it takes as its subject the idea of life in the universe, rather than simply ideas about contemporary living patterns. What we think of as Classic Literature is really a subconscious literature, wrapped up short-sightedly (though with microscopic attention to detail and style) in the near-present, or more accurately the cultural backing of the near-past.

I was recently reading Lyall Watson's *The Roman Error* with its extraordinary reports and speculations about the faith-healers of the Philippines who can materialize and de-materialize matter from inside the body; about Kirlian photography of human and plant auras; about the possible existence of a mental field, or hierarchy of mental fields, which may explain ghosts, astral projections, reincarnation and many other inexplicabilities - which until now have been outside of science, but are now fast becoming possible science. There are plenty of democted books on the market about Atlantis, Flying Saucers, Charities of the Gods etc, where fast and fancy trip each other up in a hopeless tangle; and it's possible to interpret these books as a sign of Western decadence, the failure of faith in technology, the resort to a bankrupt spurious mysticism drawing wildly upon all and every tradition, every nook and corner for its proofs. Lyall Watson's book doesn't read to me like an irrational one. Acupuncture, for instance, demonstrably works; and what is acupuncture based upon? The existence of invisible force-fields, lines of force in the body. A whole lot of fundamentally mysteries about the nature of life and relationship between life and the common at large are about to open up; when they do, there will be a whole Grand Canyon of them to explore - and they will radically alter our present provisional concepts of Life, Death, Evolution, Mind, the Universe. Which is what SF already does - as an entertainment medium. It explores the unknown, rather than sophisticating our knowledge of the known. What does the Great Tradition of the Novel have to say about these areas? Precious little, on the whole. It can't have. It cannot take them for its main theme and still be the Great Traditional Novel; it has to subordinate them to exploring the consensus Human Condition, whereas the truth is that the Human Condition and all our current understanding of it is subordinate to larger, still mysterious areas which are only just now opening up. Fundamental mystery and "alieneness", human or nonhuman, can only be a plot device within the Novel, not its prime theme - whereas it can be the prime theme of SF. To be sure, great writers - Dostoevsky, Balzac, Strindberg - have touched upon these ones; but Strindberg's Inferno, for instance, has to be treated by the literary critics as the "factual records of a diseased mind" or as "angular transmuted into art" or as "making symbolism the bridge between naturalism and the occult and in so doing greatly influencing Dadaism and Surrealism" - it has to be treated as a literary phenomenon, or as a biographical footnote to the author of Great Plays. So, outrageous speculations (in this case alchemical) must be subordinated to the ordinary, the normal, the human tragic condition, albeit of a mind at the end of its tether. Consequently Strindberg remains safely literary, when all's said and done. SF by contrast sets out to explore the unknown; for SF to turn around and apologise that it is at all really just a literary metaphor for the human condition in an era of scientific breakthrough and technological impact, seems a miserable cowardice - even if the literary laurels of new-on respect from critics and academics are an agreeable enticement. In some respects even, though rooted in modern Western science (and indeed needing to be written with the Compass of Reason conditioned by this, to be science fiction) SF is also almost verging on the mystical tradition of the East or the worldview of American Indians, on what would till recently have been classified as sorcery - worldviews which are now becoming possible science; for essentially SF is about alternative reality, alternative kinds of beings, alternative humanity, alternative Earths. It's a medium for alternative worlds. So there's a paradox here, that SF should work within the Compass of Reason, yet push out constantly from this (at a time, be it said, when this compass is plainly enlarging). To choose to use science
ideam and possible-science ideas as kitsch, as stylishly employed rococo, to produce baubles of Art, because the art world has decided they can be classified fashionable, strikes me as very unfortunate, at a time when on all sides there really are signs of a process of radical change in the directions of a higher evolutionary state of society and human consciousness, mediated by our science and technology; as well as great pressure for this. SF has to think harder. SF has to generate new thoughts about the world, Man, Mind, the Universe. And this - here's paradox number two - is the hard task; for how can one think what is as-yet unthought? How can one really write about Aliens or Future Man, even if one feels one has to? Well, SF can certainly try to mimic the experience of these, and the more convincing the mimicry the better. Still, the temptation is to use the genre-cliches programmed into SF, as mere decoration, a meaningless elegant shorthand whose form signifies more than its content, and lapses back into literature - just as Barry Malzberg at the end of Galaxies lapses back from the Black Hole to a small town in New Jersey, as something utterly amazing in itself. I see his point, I see why he has to end this way, and bid adieu to SF in the process (assuming that it really is adequate) but I'm not knocking the book as much, for I find it extremely thought-provoking. But I still think his solution is wrong, and unnecessary. SF isn't ruled out, simply because we haven't yet the conceptual tools to indicate the Alien, or Future Man who will also be quite alien to us - whilst this is what SF is nominally about. SF can try. This is what it is all about. And it is at least able to show what is needed. This is why we read SF - even if we're frequently disappointed by what we read. This is also why, is seeing Man as part of an evolutionary growth process and in seeing SF as a "baked" literature trying to grapple with the implications of this, I suggest (perversely, it may seem) that SF is a way of thinking which should be trying to put itself out of business - because one day SF will be as obsolete as a stone axe - because it has fulfilled its specific role, thrown up by the present stage in historical, cultural, mental development, of creating a climate of thought and feeling about Future Man who awaits us; and because there will be other, finer tools. But meanwhile there is SF - and let's at least fashion that stone axe as well as we can! This is why I think that SF writers (far from treading well-worn ground and doing what they know that they can do) should try to write what they can't yet write - in order that we, as humans, can think what we can't yet think. Perhaps the language of SF is all wrong. Perhaps we can't write this sort of thing in current normal languages - and what we need are new symbolic languages of greater precision and power, produced by close co-operation between psychologists, linguists, mathematicians and communication engineers; and that actually fiction would be too imprecise, too foggy, to be written in them (or perhaps too terms, too simple-mindedly explicit) (4). But we can mimic this future; we can suggest it, for the present. (The trouble with much non-SF being that it mimics what is already here - SF has to mimic what isn't here yet.) And that's why I said, on the Manchester panel, that SF should aim to phase itself out of existence. Then it will have succeeded.

We must remember that science is still very junior; the human race is very junior. SF can contribute to the growing-up of Man - entertainingly, if it is a sort of toy; and there's nothing trivial or unserious about toys; they're vital to the learning process - and artistically, for there's no reason for it to be crafted clumsily or carelessly. SF is about perspective; the view into distances. To put SF itself into perspective, it is a small part of a very long process of change and evolution of human life and consciousness. Right now it can and should be a growth-tip of that process. It may fall to the Barbarians, who churn out programmed trash, or to the Aesthetes, who would make it purely decorative, merely an aspect of the Craft of Letters; however its real role is an evolutionary one, and if there's to be any evolution, there must be a withering away of the earlier stages - which we are still at, right now.
We are at an early stage in human history; an early stage in consciousness. Over the past ten million years, as Lyall Watson remarks in his first book Supernature, Nature has equipped us with an enormously cerebral cortex of seemingly unlimited capacity. Yet we use only a minute part of it. We are only partially aware of ourselves. "At the moment, we are like a small family of squatters who have taken over a vast palace but find no need to move beyond the comfortable, serviced apartment in one corner of the basement." (5) So far we have only had brief glimpses into the other rooms. I think that human physical science is only in its infancy; life science and the science of consciousness are only in their infancy too. I think, that we are on the brink of the most exciting breakthroughs in our understanding of the Cosmos, of our own consciousness - and in what way cosmic and consciousness may be related.

This is basically what my own SF books are about. The Embedding, among other things - such as political and ecological unscrupulousness - is about the relation between Mind and Nature, the relation between language, the logic of human thought and the logic of Nature. The Jonah Kit, among other things - again, unscrupulousness - is about the possibility of a rapport between human and non-human thought processes, the non-human in this case being one of those "aliens" we share our planet with, the whales; as well as about the idea that mind and universe are inter-related - that we are in the sort of universe we are in because we are here to observe it: what, then, is the connection between thought and reality, cosmologically? My next novel due out (in January '77) The Martian Inca, is about the possibility of extending our fragmentary knowledge of ourselves, by grasping our own thought processes "externally" in a mind of visionary projection on to the outside world of the inward world of thought; along with ideas that such access to the rest of the "vast palace" of mind is not only possible, but is actually programmed in us evolutionarily by the dynamics of the universe in which we have evolved.

This is the area I intend to go on exploring in my own SF in the future. I don't want to label it "inner space", because I feel sure that "inner space" and "outer space" are intimately linked, through the patterning of the universe; and because I'm in no way against Outer Space, Space Travel, etc. I don't see NASA essentially as an expensive public sideshow, the money for which could be better spent on human beings on this world. I look forward with the greatest excitement to what we will find out directly about Mars, Jupiter and if at all possible (and I hope it will be possible) the Stars - and don't see this as a contradiction of the expansion of human consciousness, but rather as a complement to it. The really stupid and dirty waste is the whole nuclear weapons, missile, bomber, submarine and general warfare expenditure - compared with which the money spent on Space is really very small indeed.

Yet the Arms Races, and human political madness continue. We are very like a baby with a live hand grenade for a rattle. To be realistic, tragedies and disasters are a very plausible part of our future soon. So I haven't felt able to write purely upbeat books. They wouldn't be an honest model of where we are at present. People have complained to me that The Embedding and The Jonah Kit end in complete disaster. So many hopes are raised, so many are brutally dashed. My answer to that is that the potential breakthroughs in understanding in both books almost succeed. Success is conceivable. That it isn't actual is, I think, a true reflection of the world we inhabit - the world of babies with hand grenades. But that it is still conceivable is, I think, something hopeful, something verging on triumph.

However, the really triumphant breakthroughs in human consciousness and human exploration of both inner and outer space worlds together - the coming evolutionary climb - will mean that science fiction which anticipates this dual evolution (technological and mental): the science fiction which seeks to mimic it, before the event, which seeks to create a climate of expectation of radical change, will no longer be necessary; because the reality will have overtaken
us, and we will be as aliens to the infant humans we still are today (whose achievements, needless to say, show great potential). Then we can put aside our kindergarten toys - which in no way diminishes those toys, least of all that important learning-joy which is science fiction.

(1) Ian Mitroff, "On studying the Moon scientists" New Scientist, 27.12.73
(2) Euan Mackie, "A challenge to the integrity of science?" New Scientist, 11.1.73
(3) Leland Allen, "The rise and fall of polywater" New Scientist, 16.8.73

EDGAR FAWCETT-GHOST IN THE
MANSION OF SCIENCE
FICTION HISTORY
BRIAN STABLEFORD

The reprinting of works of "antique" science fiction in sets designed primarily for sale to American universities has become fashionable. Two series by the Gregg Press, two by Hyperion Press and one set by the Garland Press have rescued pre-Gernsbackian scientific romances and placed them alongside notable works from within the SF establishment. British novels like Robert Cromie's Plunge into Space, Percy Greg's Across the Zodiac and even David Running's Star Luneaire scheduled for such recovery, are Otto Gail's Shot into Infinity (German), Eric Cox's Out of the Silence (Australian) and Charles deFontenay's Star (French). It seems curious, therefore, that one of the most significant American contributors to science fiction avant la lettre should have been completely ignored.

Edgar Fawcett was not only a writer of science fiction, but a man who wrote a manifesto for such a genre thirty years before Gernsback. In the "pistolatory prose" to one of his speculative novels, The Ghost of Guy Thyrle (1885) (1) he had the following to say:

"Perhaps I am only a poor pioneer, in the direction of trying to write the modern wonder-tale. It seems to me that this will never die till what we once called the Supernatural and now (so many of us!) call the Unknowable, dies as well. Mankind loves the marvellous; but his intelligence now rejects, in great measure, the marvellous unallied with sanity of presentation. We may grant that final causes are still dark as of old, but we will not accept mere myth and fable clad in the guise of truth. Romance, pushed back from the grooves of exploitation in which it once so easily lived, seeks new paths, and persists in finding them. It must find them, if at all, among those dim regions which the torch of science has not yet bathed in full beams of discovery. Its visions and spectres and mysteries must there or nowhere abide."

He goes on to discuss in general terms the nature of Romance, reaching the following conclusion:

"Romance is a shadow cast by the unknown, and follows it with necessary pursuit. It can only perish when human knowledge has reached omniscience. Till then it may alter with our mental progress in countless ways, but the two existences are really one. Books like "Zanoni" and "A Strange Story" thrilled us in earlier years. Nowadays we want a different kind of romanticism, a kind that accommodates itself more naturally to our intensified sceptic tastes."

And finally, he makes this judgment:

"To make our romances acceptable with the world of modern readers, we must clothe them in rationalistic raiment... I should name them "realistic romances" - stories where the astonishing and the peculiar are blent with the possible and accountable. They may be as wonderful as you will, but they must not touch on the mere flimsiness of miracle. They may be excessively improbable, but their improbability must be based upon scientific fact, and not upon fantastic, emotional, and purely imaginative groundwork."

(Cont. on page 47)
THE INFINITY BOX

All the Vector regular reviewers plus honoured visitors and new faces survey the latest publications in the field. John Brunner finds the Two Cultures “alive and sick in the United States”... Brian Stableford takes Corgi Books to task, and finds Dave Kyle’s SF History “facile and juvenile... as history, in any meaningful sense of the word - it is a joke”... John Clute looks at M. McIntyre and her “American Pale” novel... Mike Dickinson gets “kenged” by Vernor Vinge... John Harvey gets to like James White... David Wingrove proves more and more prolific as he examines Silverberg, Dick, Hux, Aldiss, Cordwainer Smith and gets incensed by David Downing’s Future Rock... Peter Hyde looks at Children of Dune and finds it “a disappointment”... Brian Griffin discovers the delights of Vonnegut and The Magic of Findhorn... Chris Evans displays opposing feelings about Silverberg and McCaffrey... James Corley ploughs loyal through the slush-pile of Hale review books... Chris Morgan looks at some good things from British newcomers, and had ones from American names...

...and David Pringle just fails to make the deadline with his review of Low-Flying Aircraft, the latest Ballard collection... which means a wait until January to read this, along with James Corley on Brian Aldiss, more by David Wingrove on Philip K. Dick, plus lots more by Chris Evans, Chris Morgan, Brian Griffin, Brian Stableford, John Harvey, plus whatever else comes in in the next two months.
This book results from the 1975 lecture series offered at the ICA under the same title. All ten lectures are represented, though not all by transcript. Edward de Bono's contribution is a paper written for publication elsewhere that covers much the same ground as his talk. Harry Harrison spoke in the morning at the very of his audience, and the essay here is one that was compiled by him after the talk. Alvin Toffler has only a few paragraphs here, the rest of what he said being on offer in the same capacity which has often been provided an * coordinately elaborate multidimensional commentary on the genre, exposing its strengths and weaknesses, its functions and its uses. These pieces are the work of intelligent, thoughtful writers, and though each in its way is narrow, there is nothing narrow about the whole. Better than all the pseudo-biographical studies and fantastical diatribes this book conveys something of the philosophic undercurrents of the genre's real imagination, and reveals many of the ways in which it relates to the real world about us and to the unreal worlds that are only potentially there.

Papers designed for verbal delivery are not necessarily equally interesting in cold print— they are, we in speech, orchestrated for performance and relate not only to the usual in approaching this collection, therefore, the reader cannot not expect the standard-size efficiency typical of cold prints. Be must explain polynomials, slightly lurid metaphors, fiddling phrases, and cleverly guides the reader in this introduction to the pieces by setting the appearance of the speakers and describing the style of delivery as well as for instead of opening the unbiographical nature. This is a good strategy.

Reading the book makes us wish that I had attended the lectures themselves, to have experienced instead of consuming them as secondhand. This is not to say that they lose a great deal in transcription. Only the read slightly awkwardly—one of them being Peter Nicholls's own piece, whose lurid metaphors are slightly unusually on the page. The other being Harry Harrison's summary of the text, which, understandable, lacks vigour (something that could never be said of a live Harry Harrison performance).

Peter Nicholls sent his set made in finding people who would have interesting things to say, and even awkwardly the slaves, which is to say the whole of the text indeed. There is an astonishing range in the substance of the comments and the perspectives employed. Some of the speakers had axes to grind that were peripheral to the sale topic, but the fact that science fiction remains supplementary to their main concerns do not render these articles any the less interesting. Edward de Bono came to talk about lateral thinking, Alvin Toffler about future shock and non-catastrophic scenarios, John Taylor about apocalyptic in science and John Brunner about the end of mankind. As to science fiction, if at all, uniquely or by way of comparison. But their thoughts were to appear in the text. Far more remarkable, perhaps, are the indirect approaches surveyed by Alan Garner and Philip V. Dick. Garner offers an autobiographical account of psychological experiences and rearrangement, and his book is his two works and their imaginative (mythical) content. Dick goes even further, offering an account of the universe and man a relationship with it that is either pure science fiction or rather advanced. He has a wealth of such bizarre statements too essays which stick more closely to the point, look a little pale. Drusilla Le Guin, the moral of painless vanity, offers a measured and slightly patronizing account of the way SF writers might aspire to write proper novels. There is a devastating argument by Thomas W. Adair, seeking to explain the literary shortcomings of SF in relation to the particular species of audience demand which control it. If only it were done in a scholarly and lucid manner conducted in more detail, this could be the basis for a comprehensive sociological account of the work and gratifications of the genre. In the midst of all this, drifting in a haze of bewilderment like one of his own archetypal characters, is Robert Shealey, whose piece is redolent with erudite and delicate wit.

Of all the books on science fiction which have flowed forth in recent years this is by far and away the best. It is a great jumble of ideas, all-but-trackless, but an equipment for beginning to understand what SF is all about. It is useless for the purposes of providing an


Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Here we have yet another big, gaudy SF picture-book. It is nicely produced, using good quality paper, and not terribly expensive. Cheap, in fact, is a good way to describe it in more ways than one.

The pictures are standard fare. If they are not precisely the same illustrations from the same issues of the magazines as those we have seen before they are not necessarily different. They have not been chosen for their originality (as for their beauty, or for their technical quality) but rather to show some aspect of the essential popular science fiction. Novelists may help to make the pictures exciting and attractive to the committed SF fan, but it will not help to make them interesting to anyone that burden must be assumed by the text. The text, in this case, is not up to the job.

The text is supposed, in this case, to illustrate the pictures by providing a historical account of science fiction, thus establishing a contextual background against which the illustrations might be set. Even if the job were done properly there would still be a problem. I feel, somehow, at a loss for words. The text and the pictures are two rather separate, if perhaps independent, analyses, but the fact is that the job was not done properly.

There are, if one wants to be simple-minded about it, the species of history one tells you what, where, when, and how. The other three to explain why. Science fiction history hasn't, in the past, avoided the usual species of historical thought and, unlike the work of the present and previous attempts at the pseudoscholarship, it has proved immediately inadequate.
This book is part of a series entitled "Bibliographic Guides for Contemporary Collections", whose concept, according to the foreword, was derived from a realization that many librarians, teachers, and lay persons lack in-depth guidance to subjects of current interest. The other books in the series are on Cities, Cooking for Entertaining and Progressive and Duckwinking, which suggest that we are not so far in the wilderness of academic pursuits that proud noble souls might suggest. Anyhow, the book attempts to provide a basic guide to science fiction. It has four main sections: pre-1970, 1970-1972 ("The Scientific Romance"), 1972-75 ("The Germanic Genre") and 1976-78. The third section has an introduction on the kind of items prominent in the period, followed by a list of the most important titles, including data of initial publication and also on current availability and price. Each title carries a one-paragraph annotation which summarizes the plot of the story and offers some slight critical comment upon it. Certain titles, marked with stars, form a "core collection" - a basic library of the genre.

Section 1 notes 50 items, section 2 has 79, section 3 has 74 and section 4 has 79. Those noted as juvenile novels (86 items) and a series of appendices covering "History, Criticism and Biography", "Bibliographies, Indexes and Teaching Aids", "Magazines and Book Reviews", "Pulp and Magazine", "Literary Awards". There is also a core collection checklist and a list of collections held by various universities in the USA.

An enterprise of this magnitude cramming into 471 pages is bound to have its shortcomings. It is easy to point out errors of omission, especially in view of the fact that the compilers of the various sections may have a slight version of blind spots. Many minor American works are limited while notable English writers (William Hope Hodgson, Edwin Lester Arnold, Marie Corelli, Robert Hichens, Robert William Cole, John Martin, Edan Phillips, John Clugston) are left out and some of the most important French writers (Camille Flammarion, J. R. Rosny aîné, Claude Farrere, Maurice Renard) are ignored. Some of the modern Latin European writers are noted, but older ones (Ferdinand Raynal, William J. Barlow, Tolstoy) are not here. Similarly, it would be easy enough to quibble about the editors' selection of a "core collection", which - even granted the American bias means strangely equipped in omitting Clarke's City and the Stars and Vanceton's Sirens of Titan and containing nothing at all by Jack Vance, Harry Kuttner, Robert Sheehy, Charles Harness, Harry Harrison and many others. This kind of quibbling, while not irrelevant, would be possible in respect of any set of editorial judgments. Conceding the editors their patriotic prejudices and minor failings, however, it seems to me that there are some more serious problems.

The worst aspect of the book is the way that some of the books listed are annotated. The annotations in Section 1 and 2 are by Robert Philmus and Thomas Clareman respectively, both of whom are completely executed, but Iver Rogers, compiler of Section 3, and the 2 authors of Section 4 - John Pfeifer and Joseph de Haller - are not in the same league. Here is Rogers' notation to Conan the Conqueror: "The SF reader should know the Conan books which have inspired dozens of others in the so-called sword and sorcery vein."
Comas is a barbarian who wanders around pre-Carabian Europe as a street fighter, lousing around, and playing the role of an Escorial at the margins of these activities. The SF element is minimal, but the sword and sorcery books are often called SF because they are written by SF writers. The Comas books are racy, action-packed, and involve some supernatural and monstrous elements. At least one is required reading, any will do.

This is not helpful. It fails to describe the content of the Comas stories in any meaningful way. It ends about instead of analysis. Whether the Comas books belong in the SF tradition is quite irrelevant. What should be provided is information and guidance, not a catalogue of results. The expression of approval or disapproval might justifiable be included in such a review and in a thorough work, but it would never replace the informational content of the annotation. The example I have chosen is an extreme one, but sections 3 and 4 are unfortunately replete with reactive opinions, which displace a good deal of useful information and analytical comment. In a book with the ambitions and pretensions of this one, such conduct is unacceptable.

Secondly, it is to be regretted that more ignorance (to be differentiated from editorial bias or poor judgment) sometimes shows through the following, the next section. The only work listed by John Taine is Comas Lines, one of the author's earliest and perhaps, according to Taine, the most important and the most typical of Taine's work to be found in the evolutionary fantasies (The Time Stream, The Iron Star, Before the Dawn, The Crystal Burde and Three of Life's Worries) that are of interest to the student of SF. Similarly, though Haldeman's Martian Odyssey collection and The Black Flame are noted, The New Adam - his important contribution to the superman-and-supernatural mythology of Williams - is not. But the work summarized in the grand quest detective story Far in Babylon - the two novels he wrote which are relevant to the architecture (the Boy on the Trouser Tracks of Ferment and Many Dimensions) are not mentioned.

Andre Maurois' Private Universe is included, though it contains only a couple of fragments from an imaginary future history, while The Neighbors of Beria and The Thought-Reading Machine - both significant SF novels - are omitted. Merrit's ship of fiction and The Face in the Abyss are noted, but the one place he wrote with any interest relative to scientific speculation, The Metal Monster, gets not a footnote.

I do not think that any of these misleading omissions arises from editorial judgment - which would have to be open to criticism - but from simple carelessness and unfamiliarity with the literature. Such incompleteness on this must undermine what could have and should have been a most worthwhile endeavour. The astrophysical interlude that has been around for so long without any interest being shown in its status as a special category that putting together a reasonable reference collection must be a librarian's nightmare.

Many students of the genre, where the field is not changing and where time is limited, could find the kind of summary notation this book appears to provide an immensely helpful guide to his studies. But there is more great opportunity for guiding the innocent, there is also considerable opportunity for material and the Anatomy of Vagner is, alas, misleading in many respects.

It would be unfair not to comment on the book's strengths as well as its weaknesses. It is, in many ways, a useful guide to the themes contained in the literature and their historical distribution. But it must be used with care - ideally only by those who are already aware of its shortcomings (although, of course, they are the people who need it least). It is difficult to estimate whether the usefulness of the book might be totally outweighed by its capacity to mislead. At worst, it could guide research which is already channelled away from the main direction an effort to further into stagnant backwaters, and I fear this may be its face. Done properly, it could have done so much to alleviate that problem.


Reviewed by Chris Borys

Faber's answer to the Collins/Sunday Times best SF is a patchy package of eleven sea stories and one reprint from Science Fiction Monthly by one new writer, without a named writer. In the case of Haldeman and Holdstock can no longer be classed as new writers, now that he has one novel (also from Faber) in print and a second one awaiting publication, so his one contributor might be misplaced in the volume. One, "The Time Beyond Age," is in good stead. As an experiment into the process of ageing, two children are isolated and artificially aged at the rate of a month per day. They survive, marry and write, while a team of medical researchers keeps them disease-free. As the subjects' ages increase to a hundred, then a hundred-and-fifty, ten-foot postage and a much is kept for vague of any further physical or mental development. The quiet appeal of the writing adds realism, thereby amplifying the bittersweet nature of the whole project (set in the 2050s), right up to the grimly climactic. The second Holdstock tale is much poorer.

For my money the author who shows up best here, just beating Robert Holdstock into second place is Michael Reilly, with a long novel, "Galactic Mage," and a reasonably long short-stories and one novel) is an after-the-bomb future where people have returned to a medieval level and developed ESP. Despite following such a well-trodden path, Michael Reilly manages to maintain reader interest. As haswit, and authority, talent for conveying time and place, and a knack for using just the right word. Once he learns to strengthen his plotting and to curb his liking for philosophical contemplation he may become a very good writer indeed.

Some distance behind in Cliff Lether with "Spider Mail," a story of life on North Sea oil-rigs and town-minded space stations after 1887 for their is an unexpected disaster. This is a juvenile adventure story, but good of its kind.

Martin Ricketts offers two competent but unsuprising tales which might have gone down well twenty years ago. One concerns a couple of space scouts who unravel an improbably saintly life cycle. The other is about the losing - and finding - home. This is the great void between Earth and Proxima Centauri during the first few FTL flights.
Robins Douglas (the only female present) and Edward Allen contribute three stories each with very little originality or credibility between them.

I cannot believe that this volume represents the best of Britain's up-and-coming SF writers: certainly Martin Hildesley, Steele and Rickitt have had better work published elsewhere. But while Counterparts is something of a misnomer (an overstatement, anyway) there is enough good stuff to make it worth borrowing from your local library.


Reviewed by Chris Morgan

You know how some pop groups capitalise on a good single by using it as the title track of an LP and filling the rest of that with one or two good songs and a load of rubbish? It happens with short story collections, too.

"In the Problem Pit" is a good novella which appeared in FAST in 1977. It is a story between jury service and national service, a problem-solving group of Americans of varied age and sex is must up to a comfortable cave, away from all outside influences. Participants may volunteer or wait to be drafted. The group is not united until it has solved sufficient (self-suggested) problems, which may be of a personal, local or national nature. This is a common technique in the 1980s, and the average duration of a group is three weeks. I am full of admiration for the idea, which offers great scope for characterisation and theme treatment, though I feel the author could have done more rather more with it.

The closing story in the collection is twenty years old and still a joy to read. "The Man Who Ate the World" tells of a time when people are forced to over-consume in order to maintain full employment in a heavily-automated world. Only the rich can afford to live moderately in this toypy-turpy economy: the poor must occupy palaces, never eat and spend their lives in plastic, wasteless consumption. Such an upbringing turns Boxey Trimm into a compulsive consumer. As an adult he consumes more and more, becoming a big problem.

There are two other stories here from the 1960s which make good reading ("To Has Another Mountain" and "What to do Until the Analyze Comes") but the remaining eight pieces (including two articles from Clarion anthology) vary from okay to pretty poor. There's also a time paradox tale dug up from Planet Stories, 1961 vintage.

As most of the better stories here are easily available from other sources I suggest that all except the complete omnibus you should give this particular collection a miss.


Reviewed by Chris Morgan

a sprawling adventure set in a mutated, post-Ridden North America some five thousand years after the event, this has a wealth of background detail (in the manner of a Jack Vance novel) but lacks depth and originality.

A young warrior-cum-prize-cum-goodman of American descent is sent south-westwards across North America to seek the marvels of our long-since civilised countries - computers in particular. He is picked by some and mistreated by others. Is is tall, strong, ruggedly handsome, clever and a talented telepath. With his goonClinton, a large mutated moose, which is intelligent and telepathic. Along the way they are joined by a small brown bear, which is - believe it or not - another telepathic and of human intelligence. But Morgan's prospects of becoming a second Dr. Doolittle are diminished by the fact that half the animals around are the tawdry speci fied of the U.S.L. - an evil brotherhood dedicated to the eradication of decent, god fearing heroes.

And most animal life whether controlled by the U.S.L. or not - has grown, via radiation-induced mutation, so that sea mammals are two foot long, rabbits are as big as porcupines, and snapping turtles are the size of a small car. There is even a giant frog with eyes you can shoot out, which weighs five tons making it look small over a hundred feet at a time. (Totally impossible, in my humble opinion.)

But it isn't only the animals which strain on a credibility: the characters all polinate master into goodies (too good to be true) and haddies (too bad to be true). This means that the outcome (the goodies will win hands down) is predictable from the early stages. The course of the action is so prearranged that two surprises Hiero saves a beautiful girl in prisons, of course) from a nasty death. He is captured by the U.S.L. but manages to expand his mental powers sufficiently to escape. Then he falls in love with the girl. Then they meet a powerful old wizard who is on their side. There are attacks by animals, pirates and the U.S.L. and so on. Eventually, Hleros is able to clese the gap and tell his story as his children adopt the common point of view of a Victorian novelist, employing twenty-first-century allusions and displaying knowledge of which his character cannot be aware. But this constantly, sometimes admitting that he is so uncertain of cause of origins.

The writing style is patchy but frequently purple and peppered with keywords. For example: "At this first hour came the Doctor in the ship. From what foul den or lurking place it issued one may never know." (p. 25) "dying" (in an obscure Scots word meaning "doleful") "stamped in mud and all the unmelancholy and cruelty were the adept miranda of the U.S.L." (p. 247) Very over-craftsmanship, methinks.

You should have gathered by now that Hiero's Journey is full of incident and a sense of wonder, but it is really only a vehicle in which the author can take his readers for a guided tour of the larger-than-life background. Though Morgan is the plot is rich and varied and the mix of these birds, at the unspeakable ignorance of this type keep... But the background isn't all that good (as attests that ridiculous fifteen-tow frog). A compare Edgar Pangborn's Swamp Yankee, the Journals of Lee and The Compass of Glory, which are superficially similar to Hiero's Journey, shows up the latter is a very bad type Edgar Pangborn's prose are subtle, poetic and beautifully told. With the latter is one of these things, being closer to ERB's Martian tales.

I have that Hiero's Journey was well-received when it appeared in the USA, but I cannot imagine why.
Wanda Polkcy's first novel had been long awaited when it came out a year ago in the States already, but truthfully Science has managed to scrimp the intemperate translation and we have the book now, poor thing, along with badly blurb from Joanna Russ and Roger Zelazny (we had to get the other copy, so that we know that The Exile Waiting is better, that there has been a faltering-rounded. It is a sort of space opera about relationshing a space-napper, a new generic mix frequently to be found in the works of younger American SF Writers influenced by the models provided by Joanna Russ, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany, though not Ursula Le Guin. Youd think of a kitchen sink but everything else - there is a good clean and abed clean, guess which one of them falls in love, guess which can of those ones emotional Blackmail to almost break up the romance and man, there are two human females both hungry. It turns out fals for love, one a high-ranking slave who can had to keep her emotions under check, the other - who is also the protagonist and may-be-the-lawbreaker who is in tied by bonds of paranormal empathy to a family of touchstone girls and a wicked uncle but who eventually finds strength through love and obeys to escape with her. His name is to the poetical paranoia-snap male from the stars to fall in love with the paranormal empath; there is a cave city at the end of time run by a Van Vogtian paranoid cult from which genetic freaks are excluded but there all remain chums in the tunnels beneath the town and have a lot of paranormal powers to relate to each other with and to help the protagonist with in the fight together; there are starships, regular tunnels, intersellar trade, high politics, armed confrontations, chased, duel, wind and sand, weapons, mercurialic alien slaves, plastic foam, and the sun is to be buried on Earth (where it all happens) Sturgesque scenes also, there are all the forms of love, not excluding the sociological, all made us sway an ABC. The book in dead easy to read.

Space-nappers seem to be the coming thing these days in a review to be published elsewhere, I began to try to get to grips with what the hell we've had of paranormal naps in the past, like this one and Hunter's Exile and Delany's Shadow's and Perchick's and Foster's and Bryant's and so forth's and even Russ's The Female Man, and I'd like to paraphrase the battle of the American Dais napper and go on from it. What seems to define this sort of story is a deep axial assumption that no matter how superficially divergent from our own and insistently within the prism of mathematics the characters of a book may be, deep down inside everybody is capable of combating with everybody else, deep down inside true relationships are available for everybody for free or nearly. There may be a few plot difficulties, but essentially all the baroque cuards that give this kind of story a sort of local colour (the way Sunday painter do) proves in the end to be base facade, epiphenomenal obfuscations, like the other (I suggested) the same pell-mell inter-subjective semantic to the rhetoric, if not the reality, of the writers' workshops and conferences which have proliferated through America in recent years, insane intensa maglion where writers-to-be meet each other and as starfam is at a atmosphere that comprises against universal banalism (the wicked uncle in the Exile Waiting's) and can uncalmically with a version of plebiscitary selfhood one is more familiar with in studies of non psychology. Harlery (i.e. non-oceanic) version of plebiscitary selfhood may be seen in the women of Robert A. Heinlein's 1960s children of John Wayne, though its prime generic avatar may well be the love-vailetten of Theodore Sturgeon or Stanley Ted - in fact easy American Dais nappers can be read as transforming sexuality through the intact sociocultural relevance of a hospital setting... The of books that come out of this very American forcing house - nurse romances being merely the lowest common denominator lacking writers' workshops and conferences obviously assuage profound though hopefully unsmoothed needs in the readership, as adolescents do tend to the oceahm when it's free (i.e. democratic), and perhaps can't. We mustn't blame or blunder for clashing internal with chase links in the human condition, or blame them only when they confuse market savvy with virgins. Dogpaddling in the oceanic phlogiston dream, story in which the chidren of John Wayne copulate in the plastifoam with the woman of Robert A. Heinlein in a city at the end of time (or moon with a data van) tend to get up the nose, like cologne.

As usual with this kind of tale, The Exile Waiting has a very complicated but unconvincing plot, which serves as a sort of father-liquor (the wicked uncle) for the young and confused. (Or far into the future of the Earth) dollate and unpeopled by one semi-underground city where glooms. the docah-thief protagonist enter our Van all trammelled up in her constructed Suicide, but though and eaten by his being encountered the paranormal post. as he's still on route from the stars with the corpse of an irrelevant old Earth lady who wanted to be buried on her home planet, one day he gains the means to blame or blunder for clashing internal with chase links in the human condition, or blame them only when they confuse market savvy with virgins. Dogpaddling in the oceanic phlogiston dream, story in which the children of John Wayne copulate in the plastifoam with the woman of Robert A. Heinlein in a city at the end of time (or moon with a data van) tend to get up the nose, like cologne.

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In this "reality" all have, or in it a fragile illusion that each one is. In a future world, James Taverner loses his basic existence and becomes an "unperson". Police General Felix Buchman is intrigued by this situation and initiates events that change his own consciousness and leaves him in no doubt that this is no illusion. This existence, what it means "to be".

"It would be funny, he thought, if it were happening to somebody else. But it's happening to me. No, it's not funny either way. Because there is real suffering and real death passing the time of day in the world. Ready to come on at any minute."

This is Dick through Taverner, the Phil Dick of 1977, not the harlequin of pyrotechnical philosophies but a man beloved by the fans, a selection, by a set of circumstances, so similar to those of Taverner that this could almost be a fictional biography. He could well have written a story that matched with him against the system; one that "pulled the flag pole", but Dick in Dick and above that. General Felix Buchman is no weathering fascist. He acts because he must; a higher morality hangs his service, Taverner's eventual sacrifice to the political system [my emphasis] for his own safety, is justifiable and Dick makes it clear that he understands the motivations of the others as well as these against aginst.

This is a novel by comparison with all else that Dick has written; as strong in theme as the man in the Dick Castle yet without light relief, without contrast. But it is typically Dick in all other respects. Telepaths and "after" in genetic experiment of which Taverner is a part, "outlaws" (flying cars) and strange experimental drugs form part of the tapestry of life. We are hurled instantly into a police state of horrifying proportions: the blanks are a closely dying race due to a compulsory sterilization programme; the students beneath the ground live humated rats, kept there by the army-trooper "police" force; there are street check points and a pervasion of bureaucratic demands upon the individual. Dick seems to ignore this. That all this, whilst exploring the facets of personal growth in a society of constant and rising adversity, creates an atmosphere in which the social morality of Taverner's world is made questionable.

Taverner is a "winner" at the beginning of this book, a man without doubts. But the wheel of fortune turns swiftly and discards him at the bottom. He becomes a "loser", admittedly a man of great inherent capabilities, but with a conseguirative nature. Yet Dick could not have done better.

"But what are you, them? A man who has his picture taken all the time that some one ever eaten or heard of." (page 36)

Tung the enigmatic Kathy (herself a product of the sick system) and her visions of the future, and this revelation, which is given slowly to him, providing the tension of the book. Only by extracting meaning from their environment can Dick ever hope that this inner crafted irreality of Taverner's world is cohered in the logic of the psychotic Kathy. She is forever turning a question back upon itself, scaring and confusing, complex and unanswerable. Her role is all too a study of continuums, a dance on anarchic music which terminates abruptly. And this is all so real, so achingly real that even the trapline must become credible; even Cheeford Charlie, the capable is not to be made credible in this world (and of Taverner's subjective reality?)

Characterisation in Dick's major achievement in this novel. Taverner and Kathy are strong, complex individual and Alys are on a different level of complexity. General Buchman explains himself this way:

"I am like Byron, he thought, fighting for freedom, giving up his life to fight for freedom. Except that I am not fighting for freedom; I am fighting for a coherent society."

One has the feeling that despite all else Dick would endorse that view.

Alys in a woman who is neither own nor own; a woman whom even the powerful Buchman fears. She is freedom incarnate, without power, and therefore beyond good and evil. That we learn that she is the fulcrum of the strange happenings in the novel is unsurprising. Through her we get a multi-dimensional view of perception and feel back the attenuated shift of reality. Her death in the release of this tension and the beginning of comprehension: "Reality is back with us, Taverner!" is a relief (and a relief itself) and, with that, prone to the hazards of existence. That is so accordingly "used" in understandable terms in terms of the world Dick chooses: that Buchman can do nothing else in comprehension of the argument. Taverner is betrayed, framed for the murder of Alys, and that to him is the final revelation.

This is all heavy metaphysical stuff, but Dick is enjoyable even at dimmost moments. Moreover, the purely irrational things within him books are those which make him unique ad
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a writer. The small touches of pathos (Emily Furnissman's rabbit which tried to be a cat and failed: Buchanan's meeting with the black man in green dress L. Hopkin's a dream of the all-night filling-station) are unforgettable. They, along with cheerful Charley and the all-too-human characters, make this a unique book.

Like the Hum to the Big Castle, this book is rooted firmly in reality. Without that anchorage an exploration of 'reality' would be unconvincing. It is easy to imagine by drug (a perception drug here) is predictable in view of Dick's past record. But, How Many For Last Year, The Three Billion of President Harris? but hardly a fruit.

Dick is the great explorer of the interfaces of morality and immorality. Within this novel these aspects emerge into each other with surprising ease whilst the layers of reality and hallucination shift and combine consistently. That Dick is little known outside of this class of fantastic genre is, to me, incomprehensible. But then Dick explains that too.

"The blue vaisselle made by next am: Dominic... wound up in a private collection of modern pottery. It remains the same this day and is much treasured... And, in fact, by a number of people who know ceramics, openly and genuinely cherished... and loved." [Page 304]

And in that same way I admire Dick's work: "openly and genuinely cherished. And loved."


Reviewed by David Wingrove

Before my own humble effort trembled on the page of this book the brilliant encyclopaedia of the book by Malcolm Edwards in SF (Vol 2 no 12) I bought the book on the recommendation Malcolm gave there (and the advice of a "concerned" friend) and can now add my own endorsement and my own impression to his.

Biographical sketches have a charm of their own, for a genre all their own. This genre study, therefore, is somewhat peculiar in that it is now in a mere medium format. It will convince few who are not already aware of SF's true opulence, that much is the case; it may well scare away the (late, occasional reader of "sci-fi" trilogy). There is a strong undertone of "truth" that the uninterested will glean an understanding of the arguments. Look here are lists of the very best, a machine-guns of what they wrote and wrote... and times it does seem that way. Bob Silverberg discuss the "beneath reason" that was his younger self. Harry Harrison acknowledges his early lapse and feels no better and was content to write straightforward but exciting narratives. Alfred Bester talks of his "education" on the magic books while Damon Knight makes the interesting seems like a mockery for socially and socially devastating. Perhaps they were. Frederik Pohl comes nearest to the truth when he talks about the recent academic "discovery" of SF, with its acceleration of everything good and bad in SF. Brian Aldiss.

whose path in unique amongst these "grip-soldiers" revives, giving a very picture of a childhood shattered suddenly by public school and army life, with his subsequently determined literary aspirations.

Malcolm thought Damon Knight's "sketch" materialisations of a found in the different, undercurrent significance during a hotchpotch of confused and often material recollections. Though I can admire his writing ability and editorial capacity I would refrain from social contact at all costs having read this piece.

Buster in rather self-deprecating and at times touching as he conceals so much more than he ever reveal. Silverberg is a man, of course, the most impressive in the book, although much of his material has been retabulated in general recent interviews he has granted. Nevertheless, there is much here that has not been repeated, and as a study of literary re-birth it is, I believe, unique.

Harry Harrison comes across as a charming man estranged over-wrapped through layers of literary enlightenment. That he has, to a great extent, succeeded in an endorsement of his own (something that could be said of each of these men "survivors").

Frederik Pohl gives only a brief impression of what many have been a highly excellent and incident-ridden life, perhaps the most frustrating of these six pieces.

Brian Aldiss introduces a lyrical section of his early childhood in Durham, Norfolk, that makes for the abruptly metamorphosed image of a discussion of modern SF. I was ready to lance the delightful vision of Buster in the region and thirite from which so much of Aldiss' literary motivation has obviously stemmed.

After the six essays are brief notes by the authors on "How to Read", which again emphasise the wide disparity in motivations, methods and interests. Aldiss offers information; Pohl struggles with four sides a day "basic". Knight spends hours "getting the names right". Harrison demands absolute alliance and authoritarian. Pohl offers a biographical life observing and noting; Silverberg - well, and his short section for yourself.

Here are then all the varied aspects of SF as epitomised in six of its creators. Here is humour and solemnity in the service of our comic two, and do I now seem to be displaying a "closed-shop" attitude? If so then it is not only as undesirable even-compensation for the insulting ignorance of the main media. And the writers? Yes, they're somewhat defensive too, but nevertheless ever-willing to criticise the bad in SF which is where I am.

Perhaps we are now witnessing the inevitable finings of SF. Perhaps we shall have to criticise us, we are and self-destructive, encompassing both the idiotic and the inspired for the sake of an amorphous vision. Perhaps


Reviewed by David Wingrove

But here warn in the afterglow of the Victorian perspective I have time for thought. The very
mile fades, exchanged for an expression of concern. Cognition. Parallel worlds are fragile creatures: one word, one concept, out of place and the nonsense will fail. Mr. Harrison completes the course here without
tapping a barrier - a clear round - but one has the feeling that the pencil was an
yard for something else (the human placenta, the furan hydrogen, A. R. Amis, and Dick's The Man in the High Castle
are genuine warts in the construction of alternate worlds: Transplastic
tunnel however, is merely an axe's in continuity.

"What could have sustained the Empire?" Harrison
Leave Germany divided in its primitivisms, Spain and Portugal in the hands of
various colonials and America as a colony: 'that's for starters'.

But what does that entail?

According to Mr. Harrison it would prolong the
world of Free Enterprise in all its Victorian glory; and in a sense aspect of the
British in well drafted. Nor the view (the
"Victorian perspective") Harrison presents is
second-hand from Kipling and Waugh, Verne
and Conan Doyle. It is a fictional alternative,
still-born - no idea by courtesy of Harry
Harrison's excellent humour.

Paradoxically, the major strengths of this
book are also its weaknesses. By inference
the opulence of an extended "Victorian perspective" (which Harrison delights in
showing we live in a world of Victorian
totality) would entail a large working-class
on the poverty line with all the accompanying
evil. Harrison never shows this. His
eyes are firmly fixed on great people and
great events. In which from the shoulders
of those who fall, those who suffer
but never anyone important. Exploita-
tion of Labour is accepted along with the
prostitution, Victorian morality, and all
the other things that made it moral.
Masculine and feminine he is content to accept
Egyptian economics and cory politics.
The intelligent reader will provide his own
perspective and this is fine. But the
attack on Harrison's account of the
Vernian adventure of great wit, inventive-
ness and literary insight.

Reading this novel too literally one would
believe that Harrison preferred the world
of privilege and order, of anxiety and calm
"program" to our own age, and superficially
the world picture he presents is preferable to
our own one (at least, as seen through the
eyes of the life of the medium today, who
has broken through into our Alpha-2
parallel!). But who would welcome again the
injustice and racism of the Victorian good
man, with his Victorian world view despite its
order and despite our own
enforcement of this idea. Modern life
was as black as a criminal and Harrison
Motive Room: Make Room! would have
fit it, nor was 'Enron Tony' as Harrison
would have us believe.

But I enjoyed this book for its adventure,
its escapist qualities and its superbly
humorous prose. The technique card-board
as it were - gave excellent
service: Lord Amiel, Verne's stories, G. A.
Harrison, Richard Daley et al. I've ex-
cluded its faults but barely more its praises.
This to far, far better than literature's dire
parallel world adventures (Billy Queen
mates the Continental) yet I was sorry
in and Harry Harrison, on this showing a
potentially excellent writer, content to hit
the lower-scoring of the two possible targets
presented to him.

Mr. Harrison's handling the apocalypse of this sub-
gene, a much neglected room in the SF house I
recommend this book for its wit and
entertainment if not for its sincerity. But
then, why should the writer provide anything?

A TOUCH OF INFINITY
Reviewed by David Wingrove

"Who is this Mr. Pan?"

"An American by the name of it, a New
Yorker. I'd guess - most of his stories seem
to be set in that area...""An SF writer?"

"Author of Spartacus it was on the cover.
None of these stories have been published
before, though..."

"So what is he like then?"

"Competent enough. Harrison and competent. He
seems to like theological subjects."

"An intellectual?"

"How do you say that? No, he just likes talking
about God and the nature of man - side
mentioning stock SF situations I suppose..."

"A fraud?"

"Now you're putting words into my mouth. So,
he writes a good story when he tries. No
alpha worlds or novel social organisms -
but good, solid, hard-core SF situations."

"Like early Asimov?"

"Something like that. His profundity is
transparent, but his ideas are sound. 'The
Meal' is a good example of that. He tells
me that there's a price to be paid for
everything..."

"That's new is that?"

"Nothing, I guess... but it's nice to be
reassured..."

"So why did you finish the book?"

"A sense of duty, I guess. Chris sent me the
book for review, that was the only reason.
But I was no optimist and I hoped for
something better. 'The pragmatic ego' and
'The egg made up for the house' - or most of
it. In another nineteen stories Homer
Wingrove..."

"So you liked it after all?"

"No, only eleven two... and perhaps 'The Pool
for being so tidy.'"

"So he can write?"

"Yes, he can write. But he can't write SF yet. He
can only write it's gimmicks in a main-stream
manner. He might become an SF writer one day if he ever learns in resi-
lind the nature of social change...""Worth the 70p then?"

"I didn't pay 70p!"


Reviewed by James Carley

Despite its respectable lack of sex gravity, Mindmeal will be required study material for Star Trekker as they boldy wait for the BBC to boldly repeat the reruns of the reruns of the reruns again. Meanwhile yet another twisted supernatural tale is on the move at Strel. Goodwin has bolded control of the Star Fleet Command for a minor Federation Crisis. Boobadought and a Eozaeul type assimilation on the SSP enterprise is boldly being done wolly CIWIC with a panzeel. The Galabian has ever dured the dance before. Even the titkible Scoopy. In defiance of the laws of space, time and copyright, makes a guest appearance alongside his dumb in the 1500 ship, Columbus's kilonox that sailed off the edge of the world and of course 2001's blank soulless Those sacrificially weird Trekkist will use Warp Factor Ten to capture those rogue cartouche, if only to course on the first war for longot, more mankind life-form to escape to Compu 1500 into 924 before deciding whether this slim but occasionally genuinely witty pieceback should be bought - you'll have to go to a bookstore that stocks American imports coming across. The Yarible meets the Terror of the Bum.

Although the tubby highbrow world-devour has decided to boldly warp out of night in Mindmeal, Captain Kirk's crew, through the associations and application of an advanced Star Fleet triangle to a roll-over antenna, provide a diguise for the hero of How You Age It during a fancy dress ball. Separate variously possessing powers of invisibility, the onus is on the hero to keep track of Shilling's thin and nimble nerve nnosed mixed up in a wave of gangland intentions may well a trible unlikely but the authors have cunningly solved the feasibility gap by asking their tale against the background of a World SF Convention. This, and clever allowing both feet of the plot to touch the ground at the same time, makes it just about work for their abducted-memorised reporter hero. But only arrival of steel at an imagination of clip could have penned the complete and comic possibilities of a ballroom full of dassels dreamed up as Captain Marvel, The Devil, Spiderman as Alligator and snapshot monsters of the Galaxy. "These aren't suits, they're science fiction food". The character tells a bemused Chicago detective. Well, [I'll give him half marks for that].

And for something completely different! Mindmeal tells of a essay going on around a man with an aldeatic memory and powers of teleportation. Certainly it a different! For one thing the wild memered reporter has been replaced by a down at heel communist and the World SF Convention by a cheap, shabby strip club. Oh, I don't know though, I heard this story about. Back at the novel. Oliser's world is far more downbeat than the froach of How You Say it! We present a fascinating study of a character on his upper as the untroubled head of a Giant Corporation tries to force him to use his powers for other ends than a spiritual cleansing. Perhaps it is not surprising the hard-bitten world of crime than SF with the hero concentrating on squeezing sub-Chandlerian wisecracks out of a lifestyle in which one high spot was the day he ate a a burger of oats and eggs. It's such a shame someone threw a bucket of water over the ending.

In surprising contrast to these lightweight offerings in First Sight, Mindmeal is Surprising because I'd never considered Morgan a major writer. This may have had something to do with his touch yourself to play the guitar manual which after five years of amateur study, this produce one of the complaints from the neighbourhood. Still, Bert Morgan varied no better. This latest book is an order of magnitude above, for example his pen portrait of Richard Barton after a heavy night in a nightclub. Morgan is a writer If there are no surprises on the investigative front, the novel is a familiar urban moral society in conflict with the Outside agricultural suburb and its militantly internally. What is more, the linear. line in the density of the writing: it's closely plotted survey of the frightening control mechanisms required in a concentrated, introverted world which has grown too complex for men to make their decisions for themselves. With fault in both the sociology and cybernetic it couldn't be classed as a precomic novel but it's still an impressive one, a clear story with treatments of similar themes such as J. J. Gass in The Godshait who must love the world. It's vogue in some by deeper in 53, and when the almost mandatory escapes through the air-conditioning ducts has been replaced by a trip down the outside of the too high city there is the same feeling of adventure. But again, with Mindmeal, the ending seems to have been rushed; the denouement is satisfactory enough, but the actual writing annoys the theme in a minor torrent of clichés - one British writer lacking in imitations or do they need the royalties that? In any case the fact that Morgan in British doubtless means Concrete Horizon won't get the attention it deserves. The Americans have a fondness about these things and often with less reason.

A classic way of gaining with praise is a fly comparison with Aldous Huxley in a book review. It's remarked that Huxley advocated doping the world into quiescence with soma but leaving the readers to read Point Counter Point would subdue them more effectively. Though that's a parrilysnip. The Sunday Times once reflected this ambiguous title on the Joy Wackers, which also Takes the world, but there the similarity ends. I'm thinking of writing to the SF revealing that Puisnaff used to get bashed to see if they compare Goo in Shakespeare. In fact. The Joy Wackers are nothing spring from these shorts published in the fifties in Fantastic Universe, Starling Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories. Hardly the dizzy heights of EngLit but right
"back in the gutter" where I feel more at home.

The connecting theme is the development of Hemonica, the science of applied happiness. Although happiness is so basic an imperative as sex and violence it has been largely ignored as not a last-resort wrap-up because of the appalling dullness of truly subprime folk. So Caine's book has the advantage of novelty while by concentrating on the few odd-balls whom the mystery falls he keeps a conventionally dynamic story-line.

Starting as a simple mixture of Yankee know-how and diluted Zen happiness rapidly conquers the world but then needs to mutate itself with liberal quantities of the old home juice. Eventually the dark utopia produced by its Panglossian/pharmacological techniques becomes as desirable as Dan Morgan's euthanasia. As inevitable conclusion Gunn suggests that we retain balance and keep digging the garden. Xelis Leper agrees that business comes before pleasure: his collection of short stories deals mostly with melancholy, the career, the mums and women all by way of the Bureaucrats, out on the frontiers of civilization, where a man's got to do what a man's got to do and hang the consequences. General Patton would have been proud of these guys.

But what would a straight-talking machinist make of the existentialism of J. C. Quinn? Leper is a writer of wide talent; he ranges from horror to tragedy, from the stories tailor made for Analog to stories tailored for Dangerous Visions and all points in between. Variability isn't always an asset. As the individual stories may be the collection hedges together uneasily, the frame of reference jumps casually forward to today. Even in an anthology - good editor can occasionally impose a sense of coherence and unity, here it's lacking. And that brings us up to the point the Leper has been on the widely anthologized that you're almost certain to have read at least one of these stories before. Multiple publication may be good for an author but too often it short-changes the reader. How can we read but with wretchedly excusing hi-lo and I hope old Beergut doesn't pinch that line.


Reviewed by Brian Griffin

This must be one of the best subject-anthologies around. Just about every story in a vintage, evolving a variety of moods, from the jokey to the wondrous; and as you read on you become aware of subtle interconnections between the stories. Wells, M. G. Lessi's "The Fear" - surely the most vertiginous tale ever written - has the same sort of over-all repetitive pattern as Dostoevsky's "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man", which likewise spays the common. The Dostoevsky is, in fact, a kind of wilder, darker, vaster

Christmas Carol, with a typical modern intellectual playing the part of Scrooge. The idea of a man hovering between life and death during an operation (to make a very crude point of what is, really, a much more notable point in the modern world) with a fairy story with Conrad Aiken's excellent metaphysical fantasy, "Mr. Arcularis". You could say that the Aiken story is a prequel to J. P. Ransley & Johnson's tale. Though it is well worth a read (and it is not as predictable as it seems on first reading). It's the kind of story that illuminates areas of your experience you previously assumed to be wholly paranormal and private.

The theme of Eternal Rejection in "Mr. Arcularis" is echoed, unfortunately, in Hugh Kippling's "The Dreamboat Boy". This is a rapids at which the actual experience of dreaming is described. The basic idea behind "The Dreamboat Boy" takes it in turn with Ernest Waugh's "Lord Moundraff", which has always been a favourite of mine - perhaps because it is, in the end, a kind of infernal version of Kafka's "The Door in the Wall".

As Damon Knight says, John Collier's "Interpretation of a Dream" could be a parody of "Lord Moundraff"; but it's a very good joke in itself, that main feature being an irresistibly sort of literary Keatier effect.

There are, no doubt, more resonances between the stories in this collection Perchance to Dream is a book to be read and re-read for its best and worst. Unfortunately, suffice it to say that James Thurber's "The Spider and the Fly" and "The Story of the Spider and the Fly" is (if you can imagine it) a very English, very Greene-like version of Bradbury's Something Wicked this Way Comes. It involves two brothers born minutes apart one born effortfully into the light, the other somehow struggling to make him in pain and darkness. Henry Kuttner's "Dream's End" is just great: it succeeds in defining (imaginatively) just what constitutes uniqueness and individuality, and in all about a doctor who tries to cure an insane patient in the least direct possible way, without (the proper) getting infected. Anthony Pacifico's "Occurrence at Slay Creek Bridge" deserves recommendation Fritz Leiber's "The Secret Bongs is disarmingly light in touch for a story about a husband and wife who are on paraldehyde, watchful, and the brisk of madness there are definite touches of the Dostoevsky in later a presentation of their visions.

It's nonetheless memorable, and echoes some of the most metaphysical implications of the Alien, Wells or Dostoevsky stories. It is also well that the plot line is an SF freak and has corresponding (more) sort of comment on an fantasy and SF generally, straight from the herma's mouth.

Lastly comes 'The Circular Ruins' by Borges. At first (for I'm one of the few people who have not yet read Borges) I was disappointed: it seemed stilted and overwrought. Then, just over two hours later, the truth stared
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to bit in You.

1 repeat - this is a classic anthology, reprinted with introductions. It makes you think again about dream, and things generally. Come to think of it, I’ve been dreaming with renewed vigour lately.


Review ed by Brian Griffin

Running: shrinks the back cover BawS; Unnecessary Brackets: Apart from the title story, which is adequately unassuming, this just ain’t worth agreeable. The eye is fairly held out of weird tale, mostly from the foregin barley alone, really, those min supporting strings, especially 'The Man Who Lost Himself', which isn’t even used in the second tale either. It’s written for the Saint Mystery Magazine), and is spread thinly over 27 pages. Three of these 'Little Fears' Told on Ame - - . 'The Devil’s Tolkien and 'The Bugger Man Made Me! You’ can be enjoyed, providing the reader isn’t in a pleasantly unfitted state of mind. there’s certainly nothing special about them. 'A Quiet Funeral' is an interesting oddity. A Paranoico-Mageous horror story, the kind of queer little lingo - the Weird Tailor' is an interesting oddity. The book is a collection, about a tailor who is employed to make a suit out of the Cloth of Fate. Rather dubious, and spread pretty thin - but atmospheric, and it stays in the mind.

I like the title story, which is very broad. M. M. James. But there’s only 20 pages of it, and it was one of the Strenuous Summer. Put in what they made the film.


Review ed by Brian Griffin

I am not going to attempt a rip judgment on this book. Much of it made like fantasy and SF, and as much appeal to me; but if Paul Hawkes is to be believed, it is also the gospel (text). This poses problems. But I would say this chapter 4-9, especially, will repay the attention of anyone who has read C. S. Lewis’s The Abolition of Man, or Him_TP reading Lady of the Lake or Onward Steiner.

Findhorn is a small community on the North-west coast of Scotland (an address is provided for correspondence) founded by an ex-RAF man and his wife. The Caddys, ie very much a product of occult societies and positive thinking - an authoritative, abulian type who may perhaps be a kind of creative witch in the Diet Cador ell, and as such goes through an essentially simple and sincere persona who really goes into trance ad receives directions from - well, from somewhere, though her husband declares that the source of this direction is quite simply. God, who he is, and who he is in woman (and I wouldn’t dispute her sincerity either) who claims to receive direction from devic presences (angels, formative spirits of the natural world, of which man forms a part) with her/his help. Peter Caddy and his wife began placing vegetables in a rubbish heap beside the caravan site where they were living on their upper, back in

the fifteen. The ‘land’ was mainly occupied of man, but with the aid of compost and the formative influence of the divic presences, it soon produced a phenomenal yield, in quantity and quality, that could not be explained. In the scientific book. The garden has by now become something more like a wooded estate, but it was only the beginning. Rumours have spread over the years, until the Findhorn Foundation is now spiritually-facilitating community, with a membership of hundreds, and growth of the community itself rather than that of the garden, which remains no a symbol in Findhorn, apparently, spiritual regeneration in the role rather than the exception, and everyone of the village that has ‘discovered’ the garden’s growth (Stockhausen’s wife) is convinced that it, and similar communities, represent the first flowerings of the New Age’ in which we will have our dividends - through understanding, not force - of the natural world.

The other chief member of the community is Robert Cramble. scholar and recentee - a thoroughly presenting al - to speak for himself - who is sensitive to the world of the ‘elementals’, and first met the great god Pan just off Princes Street in Edinburgh (Whatever that is, it can’t be a dog - surely, some elementals himself - all are familiar to Cramble, and with his as mediator they enter the Findhorn community so that the band between man and the world of the elementals (for eg longed to, to the elementals, something of his) is being re-forged. Findhorn is, in fact, the beginning of a new worldwide web of cosmic powers, not hieratic and costumed as in ancient times, but democratic in spirit - no doubt, man has to lose his sensitivity and awareness in order to develop his intellect.” says Cramble. ‘The time has now come when the sensitivity is gradually being reawakened, a time in which man will return his intellect while heightening his awareness.’ As to how this great change is coming about, the book is not very vague; but on page 150 (if you look hard enough) Cramble seems to be reasserting Tedee Steiner’s emphasis on what Steiner called the ‘mystery of Golgotha’.

Cramble is not a intuitive. He explains that ‘golgotha’ - ‘the cross’, etc., are the thought forms, which are the elementals with us, have no factual asmanice. But to ignore the thought-forms, as we do, is to ignore the reality behind them. As a result, our attempts to dominate Nature through science means to a diminution of that very understanding whereby we can truly find our place in Nature. The Findhorn community is (among other things) an attempt to renew that understanding.

I find all this fascinating - partly as a fantastic fiction - after all, the forces and elementals are to such the same phenomenon as the gnomes in Shakespeare’s The Palace of Menace, and relate to, in much the same way - and partly as supposed reality. (The Devon, or archetypal growth principle, illuminates the idea of phallic in madonna philosophy.)

For the rear, I reserve judgment. The first 152 pages are taken up with the author’s arrival in Findhorn, the first impressions, and with fictionalized spiritual biographies of the founders. The second part deals with Peter Caddy’s adventures in Tibet, which echoes Jung’s experiences of the East.) Pages 113-169 are the heart
...of the book, and definitely worth reading. After all, the book becomes a catalogue of people associated with the Christ-figure, and their testimonies. These range from a California Christ-figure called David Spangler, to Lady Devi Dutt (a niece of the Very Prime Minister). Both ends of the spectrum would arouse the some suspicions of St. John Wrenshall (of New Worlds), who would not dare point out that Findhorn could be an irrational growth-point for something far from design and I would take his point no doubt we must live with myths, but we should be cautious of the relation they bear to reality. There is a lot of loose talk, of comic white value, in The Magic of Findhorn, and one sometimes finds very many of the influences mediated by the Findhornians, and good, none of them bad and none one - certainly not Paul Hawken - seems able to distinguish between them. The reaction against intellectualism (he called) has gone too far.

One naturally suspects a certain amount of plain trickery. But if there has been, then it is of the Gellar variety i.e. by sleight-of-hand it几分 to the right questions. The DNA model of life, superb though it may be for certain purposes does it actually explain our experience of life? If not, than something like Dowie presences on the scene, and right now. One can be to any clear about the relation of symbolism to belief, of myth to reality, when making such an assumption, and among the Findhornians only Robert Crobie seems to have the slightest bite.

Paul Hawken himself is one of the few brave Americans. Whole Earth Journalists, and as such he is in an appropriate role to rather than to travelogue. he gives us an outsider's, a semi-exceptional viewpoint. This is fine, as long as he stays descriptive; but when he tries to explain he gets rather out of his depth. His main fault is in inability to see any spiritual alternative other than individualism and Group Living, so that the Findhorn community, having (rightly) rejected individualism, seems as a kind of mythical holiday camp in which everyone is part of the Dionysus. Admittedly, this viewpoint seems to be shared by Peter Caddy, the founder of the community, so that Hawken is probably reflecting the spirit of the place. Daily Robert Crobie, a former psycho-analyst, the lone "intellectual" among these mind-blowing people, seems to have understood that the chasm between Man and Nature can only be bridged by a new kind of creativity, neither a lone individual nor a group experience. Yet curiously, Hawken manages to get this across by mythologising Crobie, making him into a Tolkaresque magician who by his mediators he has created. The result is, Lewis and Anglie. This chapter - "The Wizard Must be the Sif King" - obviously owes something to Tolkein's "Of Faery Stories". This is affective hunting. But is it fact, or fiction? At any rate, even in so, does Paul Hawken make this clear, Carlo Carbonada created the wrong sort of precedent, born.

There is little plot in the novel and even another adventure. Alya, a female thief from ancient Greece, is transported by accident 9,000 years into the future. Her escape is not recognised and put to use. A seemingly比利地, the greatest danger lying within the group itself is a kind of psychological class. In this class is the heart and soul of the book, and unfortunately Ms. Ruse's examination whilst very good as far as it goes, does not solve anything deep enough. To Alya, the tourists are pampered children, dependent upon drugs and a stable environment, a naive collection of "machines" with a predilection for rigorous self-analysis. The future is a place where the Findhornians and the future is in which it exists is based for psycho-analysis, but half for the all-human. The destructive forces at work on the (almost) unavowed journey towards a new world is the recognition even the most basic rules of survival, and the complete failure of either party to understand the other in the most last and memorable moment of the book.

While there is a total (and possibly intentional) failure to evoke any sense of external danger, Ms. Ruse does manage to stir up in Alya's reader, though not in the novel programmes. Alya's love affair with machine, an "emotional" rebel, is certainly one of the most original literary relationships in any book. In an age where psychotherapy in the rules rather than the exception, Machines has opened out, sickened by their obsession for deep self-analysis. You can only sympathise when he says to Alya: "I doubt the have feelings. They talk about their compassion and their reactions and their impressions and their interactions and their patterns and their awareness and the depth that they are conscious of their Town rebellions and their unanswerable insights until I went to visit..."

But there is always the feeling lurking in the murky depths of my mind that Ms. Ruse was talking of America today rather than the Parsons of the future. True, I sympathised with Machina's account to his world, with Alya's story of her two young lovers who brutally killing of Umar after he had left Machine die through his infatuation, but all the while there was the feeling that Ms. Ruse was scoring points against contemporary American society, and whilst that is a worthy enough target for her work, her presentation in this case lacked both strength and conviction.

Ms. Ruse is far from explicit in tracing the emotions of her characters and never really allows us an insight into any of them, even Alya. This is a weakness in a book which depends upon the psychological conflicts of its characters, and one which reminds me very much of Leiber's Big Time, and Delaney's The Einstein Interference - also small novels - which were flawed in the same way. I enjoyed the subtle interplay at times but found too
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often that I was being made to do all the work rather than merely participating in the flow of ideas between author and reader.

Unlike Primo Levi (who is quoted on the cover opposite) I could and frequently did put this book down at first, finding only the last seventy pages or so compulsive. It is frustrating to see such an obvious talent as Lez Amm hint at something so much more (especially when translated) well away. Nonetheless this is worth reading for a first novel (and a Nebula candidate at that) it stands up well in my company. Over-ambitious and under-flushed it may be, but worth the fifty pence? Yes, I think so.


DECISION AT DOOM by Anne McCaffrey; Corgi: London, 1976; 221 pp; £5; ISBN 0-552-10102-1


Reviewed by Chris Evans

Three attractive paperbacks from Corgi, whose covers have improved appreciably of late. But just as clothes do not make the man, so the inferior cover design leaves something to be desired. McCaffrey has done herself as a writer, these being the ability to characterise and to explore the inner emotions of the characters, but on the whole her writing lacks pizzazz. The basic problem, I think, is that of credibility. McCaffrey never quite manages to make the activities of her characters and the situations in which they move convincingly real.

RESTORED begins quite promisingly with an account of a woman kidnapped by an alien Creature in Central Park who finds herself in enforced labour on a distant planet, Lothar, suffering from partial amnesia and mild cultural shock. The early chapters are a pretty convincing portrayal of someone exploring a strange environment and gradually recovering her memories. After her escape from the instigators and the beast labelling the plot takes on a familiar guise: a detective has usurped the best of power on the planet and is involved in (via the inevitable romantic attachment) in the restoration of the monarchy and the saving of Lothar from the evil Mili, alien who is threatening the planet. There is a space battle between rival 'natives' during which the opposing fleets carry out mass annihilation more suited to space-going vessels than to ships in aerial combat. The entire confrontation reads like an adaptation from a Dan Dare strip. I didn't believe a word of it.

Lothar is described as having been a mediavon culture which the alien overlords have brought rapidly to maturity so that the people are engaged in an industrial society still retaining many of the trappings of feudalism. This is an interesting idea and could have formed the basis of a novel in itself. But in Restored the concept is expanded; it seems merely as a convenient device for the creation of a pseudo-monarchical system of government with its lords and ladies and all the trappings of the court. Within this setting the alien characters, sometimes quite entertainingly delineated, struggle with their roles and eventually escape.

The same is true of Decision at Doc; which has an interesting theme but a treatment of the adolescents. A group of colonists leave an overpopulated Earth to settle on Doose, a planet which appears to have no dominant species. Even after arriving, however, they discover a village inhabited by cat-like creatures, the Hurub. The Principle of Non-Competition prohibits the colonists from exploiting the native inhabitants of the planet,这让 planet by a race of a race following the mass suicide of a race in an earlier experiment. The colonists concede that they should return to Earth, but they are unable to understand any the prerogatives of the world did not reveal the presence of the Hurub settlement. The Hurubians are civilised and friendly but somewhat mysterious. With the arrival of officials from Earth they will probably vanish. At this point, too, I was satisfied with the premiss of each began to grove a little uneasy. The colonists are visited several times by various delegations to distinctly business-like situations on Earth. Given the probability that such travel will be indefinitely expensive in the near future, especially for an overcrowded Earth with strained resources, it seems hardly likely that any such colonising programme would be carried out in the manner that the author describes with one-bush rochets arriving on Doose in rapid succession. Likewise, Transport nurses. All plausibility finally vanishes near the end of the book with a six-year-old child conducting negotiations with the Hurubians. It would require a writer of some genius to make such a scene convincing and to invoke the irony so clearly intended but slapped with unmerited implausibility.

McCaffrey is essentially a small canvas writer, more comfortable with a small cast which allows her to explore her characters and, more importantly, an uncompassed plot which does not make impossible demands on the reader. The SNIPE WHO BANG is a series of sequential shrines, in, I fear for these reasons, the best of these books. The brain of a baby girl is removed from her deformed body and installed in a controlling machine. The girl retains the mental characteristics of a woman and is psychologically adapted to her role. McCaffrey is more at ease within the cruel environment of the ship and the conflicts between the alien beings and human passengers have a better ring of authenticity than the notion of Gorlot in Restored and the dreadful Landru in Decision at Doc. As an observer of human emotion, McCaffrey can be acute. Her abilities are primarily descriptive rather than analytical (but a film in itself) but are confined to impulsm which sprang from basically "good" intentions like capable of creating characters which win our sympathy but not those which engage our disgust. Her villages are invariably stereotypes. She also has difficulties with the movement of a story, especially in describing what seems to be an immediate bearing on her protagonists and in creating a convincing background. Her characters move through a comic-book landscape, real people with nowhere to go.


Reviewed by David Wingrove

Brian Wilson Aldiss is a writer who embraces all styles, all genres and yet has never spoken out in any voice but his own. The Malacian Tapestry is the latest, and one of the most successful, of these, the richness, the amusing anodes and the disturbing philosophical undercurrents - such
quite rightly underplayed — are, to me, the important facets of any work by Brian Aldiss. This is his finest yet—a masterpiece.

I hesitate to elucidate upon the plot because, like Markovits, Aldiss presents us here with yet another of his cumulative digressions, bent on uncovering and communicating, however, even knowing the outcome and with the benefit of considered afterthought I am compelled once again to start at the beginning.

It is known to many good books unread to contemplate and acclaim a genuinely completed volume — Malacia is good enough to warrant an exception.

Perian is an actor, a profession little demanded in economically-depressed Malacia. His bohemian lifestyle—scoffing meals and funds, mooning and drinking—is shown to us from the start. As we observe life through his eyes, the originality—attitude, where change has been abolished for several millennia, gradually emerges. Is this act far in the future or in an alternate world to ours? Perian neither thinks about this nor cares to think: his philosophy is to accept the social framework of Malacia (such as it is to the divided Italy of Machiavel's day) and try to climb, by fair means or foul, into the higher echelons of the rich and powerful. He becomes acquainted with the nature of religion in Malacia through Perian's everyday dealings with the powers of superstition and darksome, the natural and the higher realms, as we have both the good and the bad in Man (though it is generally held in Malacia that Man has descended from Satan). Later, these are to play a crucial part in Perian's re-evaluation of his life, but for now the power, his becoming, merely an integral part of his life, to be accepted but not considered.

Perian is a charming character and even his small sacrifice carries the essence of innocence. His world is hidden under Malacia's crowd. His motif for doing so is an obsession with the selfish Armida Hoyola (whom he wished to have) so to "act" in the makemakescope production and there is, of course, the incentive of a full stomach and beer money. Armida's father, Andrus, in an influential man with a wealth of knowledge and considerable power. Perian recognizes the opportunity of ascending in the social order and sets out to gain Armida's favour (and means to use it). We see from the beginning of marriage. That achieved his main prove himself worthy of her in the cold, calculating eyes of Andrus Hoyola.

I must pause before I continue, for part of the impact of this book lies in Aldiss' skillful use of a "dumb show" (as in the pantomime scene in Hamlet). Otto tells the story of Princes Malacia, the piece they are to produce with him. This proves to be a fairly accurate, if not exact, parallel to the fate of Perian; telling of the betrayal of Prince Mediciua by his most trusted friend, General Gerald. Some lovers' unfaithfulness and hero is now rejected, their ability as a subtle but compelling storyteller is never better. We are moved by Perian's self-contained view of Malacia and begin to accept his value judgments.

The poor are pitiful, yes, but that is the way it is and the way it would do something about it; the rich are powerful, yes, but again it is the way things are and they know best how to hold the reins. And so we begin to accept Malacia as Brian Aldiss meant to work the audience down about our cares.

The idea of Gurdjaffian seem to have an attraction. Acting through the Perian'sehicle of philosophy that a single action is only one of an infinite spectrum of actions carried out at that instant. This seems to be at the core of the enigma of Malacia, at the heart of religion. And through the channel of a Perlan, the narrator and protagonist of this tale, few books have that effect; there are always far too many other good books unread to contemplate. In a sense, Malacia has become accustomed to be the soul protagonist. Man descended from the reptiles and the goats; winged men and astres; wizards and acedial animals (dinosaurs); magic aslone and the dark at the gate. The man, he seems, has accepted the nature of the enigma — Perian's father, a permit scholar, who describes it thus:

"It has well been divided by the scholar that our world is only one of a number of eternally coeval worlds of innumerable possibilities. To make an extreme case, human men may have been wiped out entirely — say at the great battle of Utanakobquestales, over three million years ago. We need a world in which one of the other human races has become superior and Malacia never existed..."

Alchemy with philosophy even where the truth is obscure. In this story of Prince Mediciua — and his best friend, Cuy, indulge in cerebral sport with his beloved, etc in turn rejects him.

Thus, in a nutshell, the story.

As we reach the denouement we find Perian a mellowed and much more considerate character, the same charming personality but without his colourful faults. He has rejected the creed of revolution offered him by the followers of Otto but he has also rejected the escapism of the society in which he lives. He has suffered spiritual visitation and a crushing emotional blow and his simultaneous allows for a most touching finale.

The story, as given above, is only the skeletal skeleton of the body of Aldis's most opulent work. The book is a panorama, forever glowing at the world beyond Malacia while gorging our senses with every sight, sound, and scent to be found in the city. It is almost a picaresque novel contained within one city; Perian travels about Malacia meeting judges and artists, actors and merchants — he is the protagonist. Malacia has all the flavour of the ancient Juglasia captured so well in his travel book Cities and Stones, and it is fun trying to track down the geographical whereabouts of Malacia (read to see).
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The packaging deserves a mention. *Scanners* is replete with a flashy dust jacket, a black and white etching evocative of the atmosphere of the novel. Scattered amongst the text are several full-page illustrations (all by G. E. Ifalpni, one by Francesco Maggiotto), each one beautiful, supplanting the text in that it is in no way a cliché that nowhere, still, on the cover or in the listing notes, is it mentioned that this is SF. If this is an attempt to deliberately conceal the origins of the publisher's label then I wish it luck — it deserves to be most sold.

In recent years our best SF has had a cold and austere taste to it typified by Le Guin and Silverberg. This book is a delight, as deep as anything by these two yet so warm, an engaging and attractive it suggests that we are only now beginning to see the best of Brian Aldiss, and if so than the field of SF may flourish in response in the coming years. Aldiss reminds not to repeat a successful formula, I wish, we could.

Hugo and Nebula, without a doubt....

**THE BEST OF CONWAYMERE SMITH** by Cordwainer Smith. Ballantine; New York—July 1975; $7.77 (28 pp introd.); $5.85; available on import from future; 733 pp; 0-345-24561-4

Reviewed by David Wingrove

It is rare to come across a writer like Cordwainer Smith, a man with the patience and vision to construct an alternate universe in its totality. The SF novels and short stories produced by Smith between 1925 and 1966 were set in a future he had constructed in great depth: his stories linked by a multiplicity of events, threads, and mythical figures. Which is not to say that this "best" collection is unique, for it reads like a disconnected novel (in the manner of Wolfe's *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*), twelve stories that trans Smith's "mythological" future history across ten million years.

The introductory essay by J. J. Pierce, complete with the "illusion from the instrumentality of mankind" (a placing of Smith's works in proper time sequence) is an ambitious commentary on Paul Lichtenberg and is a fascinating glimpse into the range of influences assimilated by the man, Lichtenberg and transmitted into fiction by the writer, Smith.

We spread to the stars and conquer the cosmos: his expansion throughout the universe is rapid and he begins to "manage" nature. Thus far Smith's vision can be likened to Heinlein's. The difference: history is secondary to the quasi-religious theme of the loss and rediscovery of man's humanity. Read a single story in isolation and the difference is only slight. Smith's influence through the years is seen in this book does indeed assure! and it is wholly evident in this collection the stories are presented in an "historical" sequence, progressing from 8,000 AD through to 18,000 AD.

"Scanners live in Valo" was written in 1945 and shows considerable involvement for such an early piece of work. The scanner is an adaptation to live and work in space (an idea long before "Starship", 1946.) and the story tells of their reaction to the news that they may have become "obsolete". Pierce compares Smith to Silverberg, and the comparison in valid.

Even at this stage the depth of Smith's creation is quite staggering. The prose is clumsy but then this is a story about clumsy beings who only became human fully when "crashed".

The Lady Who Crashed the Soul is a beautifully sensitive story with a considerable wealth of detail — both technical and psychological. Helen became a robot after child; her life heightened by total media coverage for the first fifteen years of her life. She meets a star sailor, Mr. Gray-No-More, who was spent 50 years bringing a welcoming to Earth in the month of his subjective life). This is a simple love story with a difference: strong moral undertones and a genuinely touching ending.

The Game of Men and Dragon Planets has been discovered, a means of travelling in two dimensions across vast distances in space. It brings its accompanying dangers - strange forces that destroy life and leave men mindlessly insane "playfighting", a means of combating these dangers. We develop, and telepathic man, a partner in the emotions of cats, fight the "rats and dragons" in the depths of space. Beautifully told.

'The Burning of the Brine'. This story impressed upon me the SF is losing a lot by neglecting the emotional and the psychological. Smith takes the boat from both worlds and provokes both an intellectual and emotional response from the reader. His language is simple but the underlying philosophy deeply considered, and well presented. This is another story about 'deep space' and tells of a Captain Magnus Innamo and his final voyage in the planeteering starship No-Pviment.

'The Crimes and Glory of Commander Sussal'. Nowhere is it more obvious that Smith regards these tales as his future's "myth" (like the Odyssey, King Arthur, etc.) and this intriguing tale tells more about the future than the words of the grand space opera. We have our first mention of Haryol, the "bell" planet, and also an obscure glimpse of the future of man on other planets.

"Golden the Ship Eae, Oh Dh Oh!". The beauty of the best SF is that it has a timeless quality. Whereas mundane literature will often become dated and meaningless, SF, as it reaches each new generation, remains as fresh as ever, ideas — for the main part — still live! The more it is detached from everyday life (i.e. towards fantasy) the more so this is true. Likewise technology and scientific discovery are all ancillary forces. Here, Man defeats a battle invader by means of a race of men (a clumsy million mile long spaceship). Van Vogt takes the cake! This is a very short, very compact story rich in its references to the instrumentality.

'The Devil Lady of Clove Town'. A novella of considerable complexity. Smith constructs the story of Joan of Arc in an SF idiom. This is almost a fairy-tale. Everything is pre-determined and the characters (all are waiting for Joan to undertake her role). It is an optimistic view of the very vague in terms of mathematical possibilities — Gurdjieff strikes again!

Clove Town in the annniversary of the Undereople, the workers of Smith's future. Universe created by Man from animals in human form, who are prepared for the days when Fignh and D John (D — drug laden humans in the rebellion of love. Smith's exuded Christianity surfaces in this story. It is a story about faith. But his satire can be atonished; his use of ritual and magic is restrained...
and the "religious" concepts are moving because they are not "anger-and-spice" theories. D'Jinna's "love" is an ensemble of the spiritual, the revolutionary and the practical. The adage that they are outnumbered and outgunned by man but themselves make the gauntlet (fulfilled but optimistic) to try to change things. She knows they cannot succeed, but she also realizes the value of heroic (and well-publicized) failure.

Smith used a style of writing of Chinese derivation (Pierce informs us) in this story, and it is most attractive. He hints that the science and expected is about to occur then narrows the poetic and totally surprising at an in the next paragraph. For example:

Humans are people, the underpeople are the equivalent of machines, to be treated as such. The dead Lady Fanc Abash (in robot form) is about to be "killed for revolt." We are prepared by Smith for this eventuality. He talks to the robot "I am for yourself. Read my brain. I am a robot. I am a woman. You cannot disabuse people. I am people. I love you. Furthermore you are people. Yes, think. We love each other. Try to accept." "I - I cannot," said the robot marginally. His milky eyes seeming to spin with excitement. "You love me? You mean I'm alive? I exist?"

How often has Phil Dicks done this, for example, to be at a critical moment and lifted the reader into the sublime?

It is interesting to note the "myths within myths" Smith creates. He tells us of the historical inaccuracy of the folk-songs, paintings and dramatizations that have arisen from these events, and states here the "real" facts can be easily verified from scientific records. Smith hints that he is leaking backward from a time that is very much like our own (now); where "chance" and "incident" are accepted as important defining factors in life, and where diversity is valued above uniformity.

This is the tale most concerned with the *Rediscovery* of Man's humanity. The strong pietistic nature of Smith (ala, as Lineberger, was an advisor on Foreign Policy for Japan of State and an authority on Psychological Warfare) surface here in the 1919-1920 as the underpeople die happily, showing declarations of love at their destined executioners (ala Michael Valentia Smith).

"Under Old Earth." The Instrumentality of Lords "equal" mankind (400 years of life without work, unhappiness, pain or fear) everywhere except is the Gehalt. under old Earth. The lord Sir Odin goes down into the Gehalt to learn how to be really very happy man and meet strange, unassailable forest from the stars. Smith thrown in a hundred of ordered and leads us a merry dance.

"Mother Kittos' Litttle Kittos" This is the only story to deal directly with Morestilia (Old North Australia) and describes the ingenious defense mechanism devised by the wealthiest people in the universe to guard their wealth. I'll leave the thief, Benjacson) to discover what the Kittos are.... A morbidly erotic tale.

"Alpha Malph Anelevare." This is the culmination of the "Rediscovery" and the personal discovery of one man and his woman of love and true happiness, love and hope, good and evil, none of which longed for them while they were beneath the "control" of the Instrumentality. We meet C'Olll (C' cat) for the first time in this touching love story, and encounter a few more of the wonders of Smith's future.

"The Ballad of Lopit C'Olll". The social manner Smith describes throughout in its own terms) quite credible. If these wonders came to pass it would happen as Smith depicts it, an elite and a slave class, creators and created. It is a familiar theme to SF but rarely investigated at this length. The underpeople must work to live, we learn; if they become sick or bankrupt they are "terminated" and replaced, as if children they fail in their lessons are "terminated".

This is the story of the Lord Jocovanc and his unsullied love affair with C'Olll, a beautiful girl girl (geisha-type). It is also the story of how the underpeople win their civil rights.

"A Planet named Shayol." This is the final and finest story in a fine collection.

A powerful climax. It is an SF interpretation of Dante's "Inferno." Shayol is a planet which changes humans into abominations, a planet inhabited by an over-friendly virus/intelligence that sustains and promotes human life and growth. Opposums of the Empire are sent to Shayol for punishment. They suffer intense pain but are given to experience overwhelming pleasure at the same time in the form of the drug super-sandmuse. Provided by a benevolent Instrumentality.

A man, Marcus, is sent to Shayol for committing the "unnatural crime." He becomes a walking "culture-dish," growing spare parts galore which are prized from him at regular intervals, deep-frozen and shipped throughout the universe as "protection." Even "false" has the economic role to play in Smith's schemes.' Marcus is a man, Marcus, a joyous-borrowing people through nightmare and fantasy, the incredible and the markedly real juxtaposed.

Having completed the book the plot details have blurred, only the last story retains any individual identity. The early Smith reads much like the late Smith; it is all part of the same complex vision. Go-Captains and Habermans, compadrones and homuncular, masked and crime; these are only a few of the mondehe he presents to us. The prose is simple, but rarely ineffective and the immediate appeal is emotional. But that is occasional. These are future "myths" and the future of nuclear mythology. Beneath the simpler veneer is a world of philosophic richness. I enjoyed the book immensely and can only hope Ballantine will package the remaining twelve Cordwainer Smith's stories in a similarly converted manner.

That else can I say? Recommended without reservations.

Review by Brian Aldiss.

In his introduction to Nova 1, Barry N. Malzberg defends the relatively new idea of the original SF collection, as against the old "best of," anthology tradition, by the idea of a good one; in fact, the ideal original SF collection would compile the maximum of variety and originality with the minimum sense of unity, according to the old Renaissance manner of treating the idea. This would supply us with something neither the anthologies (concentrating as they do on individually excellent stories, at the expense of unity) nor the magazine can provide.

Nova 1 certainly has variety. In fact, until around page 70 I thought it was going to be a slavish; polished book, flattening easily over a variety of themes, but leaving the reader feverishly unfulfilled. J. B. Priestley's "The Higher Things" - an efficient and amusing tribute to Stanley Weinbaum's Hannibal van Wanderpoots - does just this, settling finally and rather belatedly on the theme of body-mind dualism, and expanding into a vision of an all-saving future for van Wanderpoots has finally found something actually do that hasn't been free to get lost in the fog of the wind. Yet when it's all over, nothing has been settled: a few problems have been touched on, and that's all. Then there's Cham Davis's "Hominization." The basic theme is the collapse of social unity comprising six members. (It wasn't really more than that. It's an original and charming idea, well worked out.) This is one of those stories that someone calls up all the other SF tales of the Golden Age; not because it's derivative (it isn't) but because the author obviously meant it to do just that. It exists very much within the context of the whole SF output of the last thirty years, and seems much more plausible than it gives. You could force it into line, thematically, with other stories in the Nova collection; but you'd be doing the story a disservice.

Gene Wolfe's "The Morats of War" is likewise good, as far as it goes. The scene is some future war, in which human constants have been, by and by Hunsiders - Homo Organum (Army Replacement Simulations), or MORAH. The story is narrated by a reporter who has somehow disguised himself as a MORAH in order to experience the life of the men on it, until uncertainty sets in and we're no longer sure that the narrator is human. The story is vivid and detailed, and Wolfe fits it beautifully with the notion of the MORAH being redefined by one of their creatures entering the sub-human world he has created, and bearing everything the MORAH have to bestow. Good stuff - but again, these issues are raised rather than dealt with.

For me, at any rate. Nova I only got off the ground (taking me with it) around page 70. With Brian Aldiss's "Swastika!". This is Aldiss at his best - plain and unambiguous, and he's done the same for that: taking the form of an interview, conducted by Aldiss, with Adolph Hitler (who lives in retirement at Ostend under the name of Geofrey Danglevaut), it is a fast five pages of the Prussian tradition, and also very true in its summing up of the world situation since 1845. It isn't just a political piece; either: it fits in with Aldiss's deep-seated preoccupations, and it fits in with Hitler's personality. According to Aldiss's Hitler, 1945 will be the beginning, not the end, of the war; the time of the Dictators is upon us. (See Jung, Dreams, Memories, Reflections, pp 357-358). Unless of course, we can somehow stop out of the order of things represented by the Dictators, and see, that is, the stress of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" can be realized. Within the framework of this question, Gene Wolfe's "The Morats of War," and the van Wanderpoots story, take on a clearer meaning: How do we become Man?

But suppose we do not succeed in becoming Man? Robert Silverberg and Barry Malzberg readily supply visions of ultimate failure. The Silverberg - "A Happy Day in 2381" - is based upon being yet another trip to Dystopia by an unambitious but generally competent character, The better the visit of one Nickanor Garumab (a sociocomputer from Hail, one of the cities on Venus, which has been transformed) to Earth, which has become a planet of "urban megalomaniac megacitys comprising whole cities piled one on the other. The globalization in 75,000,000,000 and rising; it is hard to believe that there is anything left of the old". People are constantly having it off with each other, all being interested in what everyone else is doing, and everyone else in what everyone else is doing. Good stuff, impossibly told.

If we can do succeed in becoming Man? Robert Silverberg and Barry Malzberg readily supply visions of ultimate failure. The Silverberg - "A Happy Day in 2381" - is based upon being yet another trip to Dystopia by an unambitious but generally competent character, The better the visit of one Nickanor Garumab (a sociocomputer from Hail, one of the cities on Venus, which has been transformed) to Earth, which has become a planet of "urban megalomaniac megacitys comprising whole cities piled one on the other. The globalization in 75,000,000,000 and rising; it is hard to believe that there is anything left of the old". People are constantly having it off with each other, all being interested in what everyone else is doing, and everyone else in what everyone else is doing. Good stuff, impossibly told.

Harrison Weinbaum, in "Furinna: Eyes", presents a future of wholly unmitigated failure Man's great step onto the Moon was, apparently, the prelude to total blunders: we didn't make it to the Moon, "nothing ever happens on the Moon". Only the drugs, the dropout, remains. "Perhaps the true mirror of the invisible only assumes us at the moment of someone's death there; to carry on our complacent complacency is the preface from our history". Here Weinbaum sets up a Dunwich alliance with C. S. Lewis. For Lewis, of course, the Moon was not up there to be written about, but was the beginning point of a Man's spiritual landscape: it was not cut up here on an object of territorial ambition and general vainglory. But whereas Lewis was well acquainted with the spiritual landscape, Weinbaum can only shrug with smirkathy. "Just a speculation, I'm not very good at this sort of thing." The Moon, after Man's withdrawal,
remind us of Connery himself, with whom he is well acquainted. His rendition is only qualified by the suppressed rage of disappointment that comes to the fore at the climax of the story. Men cannot escape their history, anyway.

"And This Did Dante Do", an SF poem by Ray Bradbury - and one of his best - approaches the same questions by an indirect and fantastical route. Either the cityscape represents a final lack of meaning, a denial of Man, or else it does possess meaning - as one of the circles of Dante's Hell. Meaning - even such a terrible meaning - is merely better than no meaning, for while there is meaning there is at least the possibility of Man. If there is a Hell, then there must be a Heaven; and in Goethe's Faust (the Devil is an active agent) Satan's redemption (The Meuse-Mall au terme) seems to be built into the creation of Man. But Bradbury's attitude to the Judeo-Christian tradition can be ambivalent (see "The Last City on Earth") - isn't Hell too great a prize to pay for meaning? Am I the whole Man-making, meaning-creating tradition of Maslin civilization a terrible trap? He lets the question hang in the air; but not before he has stated it in terms of the most vivid fantasy.

Until its very last paragraph, David Gerrold's "Love Story in Three Acts" works to contribute something of new value to the lines of Love 1, then, suddenly, it dissolves into pure methods by using a singularly uninspired C. Herry type adding Gerrold's tautness to have been (C. Herry, plus Sex, plus Circuity + Love Macbeth in Involved, minus Inspiration. Very disappointing.

Now the more optimistic side of the collection, which is represented by an excellent short story and a very good novella. In Naomi Mitchison's "Mary and Joe", Man (or, if you like, Woman) really seems to be missing through, despite the police and the "Last City on Earth". It isn't. Man is remarkable.

This is the best piece of SF recasting genetics I can remember reading, and, asbufit the sister of J. B. 3 Maldeech, the science is it is really convincing. It is also deeply thought-provoking. Am. Herry Harrison has given it a companion piece, E. M. D'Odenal's "In the Pocket", which creates the bearing of diseased tissue (literally diseased, yet at the same time the incarnation of Original Sin) from the opposite direction, being very pseudomaric. It closely offends the Witchcock story, but I didn't find it very distinguished in itself. Basically, it's a variation on Asimov's "fantastic Voyage".

Last, but certainly not least, there is the novellalet by Gordon Dickman, "Jean Dupray". This is the "rattling good yarn" mentioned in the blurb - and it is, too, with its last-and Western and Hider-Segard associations. It's all about the spiritual point of contact between Man and Allos on Alpha Fradinu, and the two is the young man out of one of the Mithers. They are the descendants of man and Earth, and is half-alien in spirit - the first human to find himself in this position. The story omits, in creating adventure-story terms, the resulting struggle. It is about the making of a boy into a man - and it is about the making of Man, his creation, in terms of a whole new context on Alpha Fradinu. Very good story-telling, with a mysticism that is wholly integrated into the story.

Verdict. This is a nice collection, nicely balanced on the whole, with a few exceptional items in it. Typical, however, seem to be proliferating these days, so page 84 we have "Praetorius" for "simulations", on page 85. Wanderports is a famed sub-jacient who becomes a "mysterious more", of all, on p. 51. Bradbury's novella "Hercules" - hardly a thing you can miss, for crying out loud - is butchered to lines ten, "milcentum" becoming "Adannus".


Reviewed by Chris Evans

New Silverberg collections seem to be proliferating at the present time, as publishers frantically gather together his final offerings. The five books and three volumes of his recent works have appeared within the last three years, two of them ("Schwartz Between the Galaxies" and "In the House of Double Minds") in magazines in this country. It is interesting to examine in the light of Silverberg's retirement and with particular reference to the interview which appeared in Vector 76/77 in which he explains that he gradually develops a sense of ailing fitness to writing. Similarly the same - those of selfselection and world-motion - manifest themselves in the stories which make up this collection.

Thom O'Menbehver, the astronaut in the title story, returning from an abortive Mars mission, in which his companions have died, suffering from guilt and a loss of purpose. Thus nanother. Silverberg's recent work "Schwartz Between the Galaxies", testifying about the astral life-forms on other star-systems because the real world is saw a galactic melting-pot. Thus, Cameron, the physicist in "Schwartz Between the Galaxies" is important; in fact, the whole novel is important. It is one of those few books which is really and truly a novel. This aims are Silverberg the famous astronaut and Silverberg the celebrated science fiction writer? Page 10 of "The Feast of St Dionysus".

Obviously they had never heard of him. Mars they even worse that a spacecraft from Earth had lately journeyed to Mars? Probably not. Such matters for fear of children paralyzing with astonishment at finding themselves in the presence of a genuine astronaut. Here they could heave the burden of fame.

A passage which could have had its genesis at a convention with a bored Silverberg surrounded by admiring fans. Still, it is the work and not the man that we must judge, is Silverberg 10, as always, amimitely the artist.

In the title story, the protagonist's alienation and guilt-ridden conscience serves affectively to描绘 the myth of the astronaut as the apotheosis of the all-American man, the supercompetent frontiersman. O'Donnel is a man, obsessed by memories of the abortive mission and increasingly fascinated by the ritual of a strange cult in the desert, that has detached the worship of the gild of wise. Or is the desert settlement merely a fantasy? No matter, for the real interest lies in the
interplay between the rational half of Oxenshuer's mind, as represented by the astronaut, and the once dormant but now increasingly important mystic element of his persona, as represented by his growing affinity with the Gルーシス. Oxenshuer seems to come into his own in their celebrations and revelries, to forsake rationality forever and drown himself in

In "Schwartz Between the Galaxies", the main character's rejection of the real world has made himypomunenest, though it, too, carries a string. Schwartz is a man born out of time, devoted to the study of different cultures but lacking the raw materials for his work in a vacuum isolated and information have seared all ethical barriers. This idea of world-wide racial uniformity is not new, Anthony Burgess used it in "The Wanting Seed" and Ursula K. Le Guin in "The Left Hand of Darkness" Silverberg's story in the first live encountered which explores one of its implications: if all mankind becomes alike, then we lose all frame of reference with which to judge our society and the social system (significantly a new) journeys around the world delivering lectures condemning the loss of cultural diversity to homogenized by unappreciative audiences, dreaming all the while that he is on a starship or surrounded by aliens with whom he can swap information on customs and life-style. "Schwartz" is also the "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty", although Silverberg's hero is far more aware of his surroundings than Thurber's (he, like Oxenshuer, is undergoing a nervous breakdown) and this somehow makes his sufferings less poignant than Mitty's.

"Trips" is less successful, an idea to search for a plot, Thurber Oxenshuer and Schwartz are in great distress, Cameron's disquieting fascination with his world melts results in an epiphany. Parallel world story becomes commonplace in SF and although Silverberg has his protagonist shuffling through a veritable smorgasbord of alien and streamed the fact that he is not on any real quest (in part from a vague search for counterpart for his real world) seems to make the story a story but a mere of loosely related scenes. Towards the end, Silverberg attempt to introduce a little drama but the does not mechanism which he chooses is too predictable.

The two remaining stories in this volume are on slightly different themes, "In the House of Double Minds" is the closest approach to a "pure" story, that is, one in which the plot is the most important. The "double minds" are children who have had the same hemisphere of their brains separated in order to develop them into wizards. Silverberg conveys his fascination with this idea in his descriptions of the children's training and the story is thoroughly absorbing - so absorbing that at the end I wanted to know more about the strange, almost oriental world in which it is set.

The final story, "This Is the Road", is a fantasy in a similar mode to "Nighthawks" in the same volume. The same fascination which Silverberg himself approached when he says, ""...these are our childhood"" (interview, Vector 76/77). The character lead echo these sentiments at the end of this tale of a post-technological Earth with its diverse array of peoples greatly evolved from present-day human is permanent. The experience are fleeing from the Earth, a tribe of sub humans who are revisiting the countryside. In order to finally escape they must give up the wagon in which they have been travelling in addition to most of their personal possessions, and afterwards tell all the companions: "nothing matters, Shadow, nothing except learning to accept what comes". Personally, I find this philosophy unacceptable, but there is no doubt that Silverberg is a very eloquent exponent of his lack of concern.

looking at the collection as a whole, it becomes clear that the stories strongly reflect many elements of present-day Beat Con snob society Two Silverberg protagonists with a global Californian in Schwartz", a homeless bunch of Huxleyans in the little story, the areas of rootlessness which seem to possess so many Americans in "Trips" and their obsession with material possessions in "Road". Only in "Minds" does he really break free from current preoccupations. In order to explore a science fiction theme, and even this story owes something to the non-figurative fiction with eastern mysticism and philosophy. "Minds" is the most refreshing story in the book; a sense of decay and resignation pervades the other stories - clinical in their execution. They are the work of a talented but tired mind. For this reason, Silverberg's retirement from writing may ultimately prove to be a wise decision, for it is possible that after a period of reappraisal he may eventually return to the field ready to tackle his delectable but undeniably literary ambition to a vision of the world in which resignation gives way to a modicum of hope.

RATNER'S MDA by Don Delillo (诺普; New York. 1978: 234 pp. $10.00)

Reviewed by John Brunner

increasingly, even though belatedly, the American literary establishment is trying to come to terms with this area of the modern world where creativity and immanence make themselves manifest through scientific, technical and mathematical channels rather than as they are conventionally regarded as artistic ones.

Welcoming this as I do, any prospective purchaser might be deceived by the fact that Delillo's image is that it's a mere sort of mishmash on the road to a much-wished-for reconciliation. Here's what is promised by the blurb:

"Delillo...has concentrated his unique talents on a central paradox of our age, the dissolution and chimeras of the scientific.

One brightens One perks up. One thinks of the perceptive reviewer who said of Huxley's The Black Cloud that he would recommend it not for its story but for the thought it gave into the scientific power dream. One tends to hope for the same on a grander scale's novel in which the scientists will be neither misunderstood nor essential monsters, a fair and honest depiction of a world in which what scientific work at matter to everybody, and it regarded as important - like politics, like business, like belief.

We read - oh how we need - fiction that can cope with the implicit realities of the Middle East where scientific research pays for its existence in cold hard current...
Outstandingly Fainerer's Star is about mankind's first communication from the stars, which proves to originate from our own ancestors. One can surmise the fact turns out to be about the diurnal fact that the Two Cultures are alive and well in the United States.


Revised by Brian Griffin

I didn't know what to do when I received this review copy. The last time I read a Vonnegut didn't come until Vonnegut's work has become so wonderfully respectable. The reviews were concerned with Vonnegut's quirky little tricks. To Schlegel the idea of 'serious people' should take Vonnegut 'seriously', and that Vonnegut has advanced from diagnostician to exorcist, finding in intemperate comic art the magical analogical line the temporary relief of existential pain. Vonnegut: This seemed to confirm my worst fears, and in true that, since he became academically respectable, Vonnegut's creative output seems to have suffered badly - judging by the reviews. Anyway...

But meanwhile I had to review this checklist. I did not enjoy the reviews, and carried no Vonnegut's work has become so wonderfully respectable. The reviews were concerned with Vonnegut's quirky little tricks. To Schlegel the idea of 'serious people' should take Vonnegut 'seriously', and that Vonnegut has advanced from diagnostician to exorcist, finding in intemperate comic art the magical analogical line the temporary relief of existential pain. Vonnegut: This seemed to confirm my worst fears, and in true that, since he became academically respectable, Vonnegut's creative output seems to have suffered badly - judging by the reviews. Anyway...

The Checklist is pretty well exhaustive up to 1972 (thus, arguable, covering the author's best creative years, so far anyway) - unless you insist on finding out about Vonnegut's pseudonymous work, which is regularly massive in extent. None of this in dealt with by me. Mrs. Hubben says, "The purpose of the present Checklist is to uncover the most identically stories.

The Checklist deals with all Vonnegut's novels and collections (accounting for 25 stories in all), from Player Piano (1952) to Hapgood (1971), listing in each case the first edition, followed by all the other US, Canadian and British editions, plus Book-of-the-Month-Club mention, together with bibliographical details (the printing, pagination, binding, etc.). Interspersed with these are footnotes of little pages (as in William Nolan's The Brudbury Companion, though the Vonnegut Checklist is on a much smaller scale - and much more neatly arranged).

The same sections dealing with fiction book publication of five stories, then the first magazine appearance of forty-four stories,
The essay is a book review titled "Cosmic Perspectives for Collectors." The review is written by Brian Stableford and appears in Volume 35 of "Book Reviews." The review focuses on the works of the author Vonnegut, specifically his book "Checklist." The essay discusses Vonnegut's contributions to science fiction and his impact on the genre. The review also touches on other works, such as "Star Rover," and provides a critical assessment of their impact on the field of science fiction. The essay concludes with a discussion of Stapledon's "Cosmic Perspective," noting its philosophical implications and its relevance to understanding the universe. The review is part of a larger discussion on the influence of science fiction on modern thought.
"There is no death. Life is spirit, and spirit cannot die. Only the clod and dust pass over a cleft with the chisel of Form that shapes it, ever plastic, ever crystallizing, only to melt into the flux and to crystallize into fresh and diverse forms that are animal and that melt back into the flux. Spirit alone endures and continues to build upon itself through successive and endless superpositions as it works upward toward the Light. What shall I be when I live again? I wonder. I wonder." (p. 503)

"A Christian" - there is a superficial appearance in Stapledon's work of a kindliness which at work "(but careful, Comrade, lest you give yourself away of Faustian flirtation..."

"A Scientist" - there is the superficial appearance in Stapledon's work of an all-embracing understanding and a kindliness in his contemplation of what he calls the "extremities" of thought that he presents and how tempering them with his own, mild, optimistic, he cleverly and gently and consistently to the latter.

As a young man, a scientist, at a party, attracted to him by his erudite manner, he listens to the Scientist's analysis of human life. He has a vision of Man into understandable component parts. It is the familiar argument of technological programs versus standards of living: well-sounding pacific in its implications, and Stapledon counters this in his familiar mode with a slide. There are aspects of both that ring true, and Stapledon's view was presented in the years preceding and immediately following the war. The question was raised in many guises, by Laurence, Manley, and Tolkien, in verse and in prose. But nowhere is the idea given as well as this.

This almost becomes SF, if it did not have a solid basis in life, in its recognition of the early generation of SF writers, prophetic without counting the cost.

The argument develops into one which examines the legitimate realm of scientific investigation, and Stapledon infers that there are things Science cannot rationalize, religious experience, art, love. Again, science meets acceptance andDriver, beautiful but inscrutably.

Once again the Scientist is presented to us in a sympathetic light. He is not preaching theories but his deeply held convictions.

"A Mystic" - like both the Christian and the Scientist, the Mystic has rejected his old life (and loves) to follow a "calling.

The Mystic is descending and self-abnegating. The following opens the mystic's response:

"Foul, how can I tell you what I am? How can I describe sight to the born-blind?" I disagreed with Mr. Aldiss here: I find the ideal compelling of the four dialogues. The Mystic is consistently self-congratulatory and intolerable. As Mr. Kirby points out in his afterword, Stapledon himself was in the early 1950s and was a man of unusual experience, the Mystic and the Scientist are not the same.

But the other side of the coin is the most sympathetic of the four. If the mystic is to achieve a theme fully developed in Dostoevsky, he accepts the insignificance of a single being, and that to the same end, in a description. (p. 360)
Richard Kirby writes an epilogue in the form of an essay on the philosophical basis of Stapledon's work. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, he gives a definition to the phenomenon witnessed in the last decade is SF. He writes:

"Thus Stapledon regarded not only his non-fiction but also his fiction as being conjectural approximations to truth."

These "conjectural approximations to truth" are the trademark of our better, perhaps our BP...

Mr Kirby criticises Stapledon for showing these four "types" as imperfect incarnations of their "traces". But to do otherwise would have been to lose all philosophical value. Add the other is right and there is no argument: no exchange of views. Typical people hold these views (and I know acquaintance of who fit each would perfectly). Imperfect as they are Mr. Aldiss notes in his introduction that there were intended much larger series of "conversations". Perhaps an encounters with a fellow philosopher would have gone to the core of his philosophy.

In any case, I believe Stapledon was attempting to depict the entire human peculiar man and his follies. To show that "man" striving for spiritual perfection he wills to highlight his moral illiteracy.

As I have already mentioned, this can be read as a codicil to much work on Star Maker and Last and First Men. It pervaded our lives from the same microscopic viewpoint. It is a difficult volume and requires some attention and patience, but the rewards are great and to devotees of Diet Stapledon it is a fascinating and illuminating experience.


Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Sweetwater is, I suppose, a juvenile novel. Although the only clue to this is the fact that the ad is on the back flap and for other juveniles do of the same class of no so many good juvenile SF books, Sweetwater is a good deal better written and more mature than the commonplace mass-produced genre work.

Apart from the trivial point that it features a juvenile protagonist there are several aspects of the book that will appeal to the sophisticated reader. It is a very conservative book, placing high value on tradition, on paternal authority, on family and community loyalty, and it presents these values in a manner loaded with analogies, for the secure world which all these things represent is, in the plot, slowly and irreversibly decaying. Nothing is something which is always attractive to adolescents, who are trapped in a situation of read and leaving the lack of security into uncertainty. This is also a book much concerned with darkness and loneliness and learning and modern creativity - all characteristic adolescent preoccupations.

The plot, simply, is the story of a hard-pressed community living in a semi-submerged city on an alien world, and of its invasions by the forces of a cruel civilisation at its worst. Incapable of love, the community cannot, in the long run, prevail - but it can react, and it tries hard.

Neither the plot nor the text of the work would normally attract my attention. But Sweetwater has a powerful thing going for it, and that is the fact that its writing is, in every sense of the word, beautiful. The machinery is too strong at just one point, where the protagonist's alien sector is described as "the Ultimate Ugly". Otherwise, this is proof of a quality too rarely seen in science fiction.


Reviewed by David Ringrose

I can remember an issue of 'Best of' del stock with the comment of no the quality keeps up improving. This is a highly articulate volume, evidence of an increasing sophistication of expression within the genre. But this bloom of literature does not mean a death of well-pinted and captivating stories; we, quite the contrary if the genre is perhaps a little less naive and innocent delightful tissue in the modernism; it is, in compensation, rich to cultural reference and deep in the investigation of the human condition Intellectual fun. Perhaps more so than the usual anthology of 'bests', but fun ever so, and definitely moving in parts.

'Changelings' - Lisa Tuttle Lisa Tuttle is fast becoming one of our away. I have begun to look out for her stories in the same way that I search out those of Dick, Silverberg, Disch. Tiptree and Alasides. This is a one of a kind work.future where rebellion in any form is muted by medical means (drugs, operations and, less obviously, with education) and a passive crass intellect state evolves. Lisa glassens behind the scenes and takes a deeply personal look at the effect on one ordinary family (and at the horrifying power of the media in promoting a social policy). Like a Dhal, she shows how slowly and the result is achingly readable.

'The Santa Claus Compostion' - Thomas M. Disch "Father Christmas" Santa Claus and the 1970s and "Father Christmas" Santa Claus. This was, however, written by Disch and therefore his political content is to be expected. Corruption simm out not even a pair of new cowboy boots upset the truth. Read it; it's delightful.

"A Galaxy Called Rome" - Harry N. Malzberg This is a set of notes towards a novel. Malzberg never takes the direct path and for that reason I find him always readable if sometimes depressing and nonsensical and with that I come to the sudden realisation.
A highly polished examination of all the possibilities inherent in an SF story of this type.

"The Custodioons" - Richard Cooper. Mr Cooper demonstrates an excellent mastery of English. His style is simple, without any affectations, and so pure as one could wish for. Preoccupation is the chosen subject, which Cooper deals with intelligently.

This story alone justifies the existence of this collection. The delightful mixture of a very quiet tone and the beautiful captured by Miller is a Canticle for Leibowitz is used with considerable awareness by Richard Cooper.

A chilling vision: the impact not lessened by the fact that we have seen this outcome before, but (author) strengthened by that which proceeded the universe. I too have felt that need to search out all I can about an author, but - I hope - never with such purpose, but Maldean, whilst giving the "human viewpoint, totally ignores the question of alienation. This SF with a "commission" of sorts, and of course, good entertainment.

"The Lord is Coming to Save Us" - Joe Hallden. This is the last section of the Nebula-winning novel The Forever War and is only slightly different from the comparable section in the novel. I enjoyed it immensely first time and did so once again Malcolm's doing (as a comparison with Hallden to his other, but much more) gives us a unique view of everything and anything as it happens. The technical details were just interesting second time around, as was the concept of Khaos, the cloned humans feel such a race would die through lack of
recently, and the rest - Girard, Jeffreys, Tincrowdor and Warshay - are appearing for the first time in a widely distributed publication. As an editorial policy, this is, of course, to be applauded, but it is surely questionable as to whether the work should appear in an expensive hardback version (and it should be remembered, too, that of Silverberg's 'familiar' writers, two - Tiptree and Eiffinger - are virtually unmentioned in the book, so that the whole call action is likely to seem strange to the British buyer.

Short stories, unlike novels, can be reprinted independently; by a process of 'natural selection' the best work appearing in the magazines and anthologies can be creamed off two to three-year selections, and it is inevitable that the good stories in MSS will shortly appear elsewhere, in better company.

The collection as a whole is vulnerable. Unlike a novel, MSS cannot be a long-term investment; available for frequent reprinting if popularity warrants it. As the good stories reappear and the mediocres are passed by, the collection as a whole will become redundant. Should it not, therefore, be a ephemeral publication itself - a paperback?

In this volume I am, in no way running down Robert Silverberg's qualities as an editor. This edition of MSS contains no very exceptional stories of the classic genre. Tiptree's 'Grill god was plugged in' from previous volumes, but it is full of good, readable, and interesting stories. Eiffinger's 'Target: Berlin', in which the second world war is postponed until 1994 and fought with cars, instead of plagues as an economic measure, is pleasantly eccentric. James Tiptree Jr's 'The Psychologist Who Philippa'd Do Awful Things To Rats' is a competent version of an old myth in a reordered form. Girard's 'The Alternates' is indeed a promising place, with some rough edges - suggesting that this is an author who ought to be more used to the craft. The best story - I must confess 'Secret Rider', adage and economical - but it is impossible in the very nature of the exercise that a whosonever is of the usual variety in a collection of a hundred stories. A potential Nebula winner, the process of recording, of re-presentation, and re-collection would still go on. Let us have quick and easy access (as all the significant original anthologies give us) to rapid paperback reprints, and let the survivors accumulate in inexpensive hardback editions in their own good time.


Reviewed by Brian Stableford

J. B. S. Haldane has made an extremely significant, if indirect, contribution to the literature of the scientific imagination. His essays, Deedumus or Science and the Future, provided the blueprint for future society which was worked over so caustically and unpromisingly by Aldous Huxley in Brave New World, and another essay, 'The Last Judgment', was surely the seed of Clif Stivodod's Last and First Men, producing a prospectus for the evolutionary future of mankind and calling for a proper timescale in the building of such speculative futures. Again, in the essay 'Possible Worlds' he produced the famous quintessential which has since become a sacred text in the
philosophy of so many SF writers.

"Our only hope of understanding the universe is to look at it from many different perspectives. However, my own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose." I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. That is the reason why I have so much philosophy myself, and must be my excuse for dreaming.


As a speculative scientific essayist, Walford was rivaled in imagination only by Wells. Had he cared to develop some craftsmanship as a writer, he might have been a literary figure comparable to Stapledon. As it was, though, his fictional ventures are little more than finger-exercises. There is the fragment of future history in "The Last Judgment," the children's stories collected in "My Friend Mr. Lantey," and the incomplete scientific romance "The Man With Two Memories," now made available by the Merlin Press. This last is, as one would expect, a medium for some intellectual and imaginative vision, a book full of ideas. It is an ambitious work, provocative in many ways, but it bears the self-indulgent hallmark of work undertaken by a man more knowledgeable than with wholly serious intent. Certain Malloian idiocies are present. And there are some very minute twists, including the conceivability of earth-moon-mars which William Blake, as a novel, assumed by Iliadic standards, is possessed, I fear, by an awful leptitude.

The narrative is an account rendered by one James Marchian of a second set of memories he has acquired, belonging in one bog of the planet Ul-3. The attempt to build an alien world, to describe its society via the autobiographical account of one of its citizens, is undertaken with less care and logic than one might suspect, and the attempt to present it as a dramatic account and a work of experience is hardly there at all. Even greater than there is far too much of Walford the novelist and none at all of his hypothesis. Walford the novelist, this is a first draft, it would, however, be a shame if Walford were not to have been so much science fiction only by the vicissitudes of Manley's "After Many a Summer" and C. S. Lewis's "Out of the Silent Planet" (both of whose denizens are partly modeled on him). The Man With Two Memories, although not a good book, deserves to be in print, to speak for the man himself. Though it is not for the casual reader it is a book which will hold a certain fascination for students of the scientific imagination and its history. I hope that the Merlin Press can make a modest profit from their enterprise, and I thank them for their effort.


Reviewed by Peter Hyde

There is no deduction from the dust jacket that Terminus is anything other than Peter Edwards' first novel. If that is indeed the case, it is a remarkable achievement. Certainly, the basic setting is mundane issue: the twenty-second century, most of the world uninhabitable after two nuclear wars with what remains, Europe and Northern and Central Africa, united in the republic of - you've guessed it - Eurasfice. But from this base Edwards creates a novel rich in imaginative power, characterization and writing style.

Eurasfice society, although nominally democratic along very English lines, is in fact increasingly being controlled by members of the middle and upper classes. "The Stigmata," a sort of mystical-monotheistic framework (the same is splendidly inappropriate since membership is inherited by 108th degree to 50th degree) of Mr. Samuel, the novel's hero, is one of the few saving of the Stigmata's increasing power and plans for over- domination. He has already persecuted the organisation in an attempt to expose its plans but now languishes in Camp Desadan, a prison colony on Mars.

Then a number of events occur which unexpectedly give to Amber the opportunity to resume his struggle against the Stigmatics. First, a mysterious assassination attempt is made on Amber and his two friends Shi Ling and Shauvelay. The prison governor, himself a Stigmatic in India, calls for a scientific and a medical and a musical press conference. Thus when a mysterious alien city is discovered and convicts are needed to evacuate it, Amber and his friends are sent there. They are spent from Amber and responds, albeit unwillingly, to Amber's request for help. So Amber formulates a plan to kill the Stigmatic leader, Dismus (on Mars in pursuit of a mind-influencing drug), stabs him to death and then reveals information about the Stigmatics which he had gained away on Earth. Amber's preparation comes to a shattering and tragic culmination in the central city, while his mysticism are over-valorized has the last word.

The great strength of Terminus in its characterization. Too often in science fiction characters are merely cardboard cut-outs, placed on a board, whose activities merely enable the development of the plot. In Terminus the characters are all-important, and the development of their lives, and their character, is clearly not the stuff of characters, but rather that of their variously named heroes: "Dionysus" (near Earth) and "Dionysus" (near Mars) in particular is the main character: Amber, Shauvelay, Dismus, etc., but also to minor characters like the prison governor, the bookish named Roger (Dionysus) Morton. Jovially there are some weaknesses, notably Seymour Warz, a post-graduate student who has developed the drug which Dismus is after. His character is rather undeveloped, and his acting not the stuff of characters, nor the stuff of characters and he does not therefore really ring true.

In no way has the Terminus has a fault it is that the novel is not entirely true to Eurasfice society: the rise of the Stigmatics, the increasing size of the penal colony on Mars and co., whilst they are outlined are not really very convincing. But perhaps the emphasis on social classes are here just as a backdrop for what is essentially a story about people - even the plot is really very slight to support a novel of over 300 pages.

So, a remarkably impressive first novel, and Manhattan for its writing and characterization.
BOOK REVIEWS

and for one delightful piece of writing. The civil service of the day goes under the splendid name of the Bureausaurus ("a large reptile with an egg-sized brain").

THE BEST OF ROBERT SILVERBERG stories by Robert Silverberg; Pocket Books; New York; Feb 1978. 254 pp; 0-671-80282-8

Reviewed by David Wingrove

There are a number of "best of" volumes on the market at this moment, mostly packaging the shorter pieces (or extracts from longer works) of the giants of the field. Aeschylus, Leiber, Herbert, Simak, Clarke, Asimov, Pohl, Wohl, Wells and Ve Vogel have all been presented in this fashion. Now it is the turn of the masterful Silverberg, and this is perhaps the most exactly perfect format put on the market yet. Pocket Books, Lisa Myhre, undertook a chronological presentation of the subject's work, serving theoretically to illustrate that particular author's literary development. In this case, there are also brief circumstantial notes by Silverberg; too brief for my personal taste.

Is this really the "best" of Silverberg presented here? That question must be asked, as all the above are here: "Dissidence", "Passengers" and "Good News from the Vatican", but only in "Nightwing", so obviously part of something much larger, and we really saw of the great talent that is as "Silverberg, the human Touch to Nightfall" written in 1954 and published in 1958 was an eye-opener for me. I had not read it previously and was amazed at the literary standard achieved at the substantial point taken by the young Silverberg.

Carnalism as the subject and the gradual acceptance of it as a survival factor.

The characters come at first rather wooden - cold, stonewall - but Silverberg's confused reactions to his circumstances are, on consideration, must realistic. Many writers would be proud to reach this standard after decades of writing.

Silverberg managed it instead with "Dissidence" which was based on the obvious references to Silverberg's personal interests at that time. The same Galaxy still plays but which Silverberg is subdue - that is until Oyser inside with the essays on Kafka and Asimov, Sophocles and Zulifidem.

"Nightwing" (1958) was inspired by Borges' "Nightwing" (1928) which was inspired by Borges' "The Labyrinth of the Birds" (1959) which was inspired by the obvious references to Silverberg's personal interests at that time. The same Galaxy still plays but which Silverberg is subdue - that is until Oyser inside with the essays on Kafka and Asimov, Sophocles and Zulifidem.

"The Sixth Sense" (1984) is a nice short, quickly forgotten and with little psychological depth. Silverberg usually elicits like a pleasant scent long after reading his work.

This is a puzzle story utilizing the "unusual adaptability structure" of a short story. The leads foretelling of all the pages here

"Flies" which follows was (the Dangerous Visions offering, overshadowed by many other startling stories in the anthology.)

I enjoyed the fresh approach when I first read it. Several re-readings its grandeur other resonances, basically concerning its inner truth and the insights it gives upon human reaction to violence. Silverberg himself acts here that this was a template for much of his later work and as such has an importance if only for that reason.

"I am a Bureausaurus" was interesting if annoying. The amount of time travel was gradually solved by means of notes in the text but I would much preferred it. But the story is not about time paradoxes. It is about people - the prisoners are a billion years back in time. I liked the character Barrett very much and reading this has prompted me to take the novel version off the shelf. (I guessed the ending, but it spelled nothing)

"Passengers" is a very much in the same vein as "Be Purchased People" (Pohl in the recent Final Stage anthology) and depicts the controlled use of humans by aliens. Whereas the Pohl story accepted the situation i.e. in fact used as a social reason, Silverberg's piece it is presented - as an anonymous thrust that cannot be committed. The abuse of our bodies and minds in such an improbable action perhaps the ultimate threat, control of their own personal circumstances being such individual's desire Stories much such as this have a built-in horror factor and it is the degree to which this is brought out that makes Silverberg's (written so much earlier in 1967) in that more threatening because of the ambiguous nature of the maniacs. 'Passengers' also acts as a watershed in this book, the first story to be written in the first-person narrative style that has come to be synonymous with Silverberg and which has allowed him such psychological depth.

"Nightwing" (1958) establishes on this use by 1958th reading and I still cannot believe that Silverberg wrote this from scratch in 1958. The depth of the social matrix he portrays in such as to make every fantastic device he presents to us convincing. The style is so rich, the presentation is so tight and social custom so subtle that I must add it to Silverberg's genius if his claim is true. It is a relaxed and absorbing tale of the Third Cycle (eight or two thousand years from now) and the guile of Earth as an alien invasion army. Like the heat of everything, its simplicity belies its underlying depth and complexity.

"Dissidence" is my favorite Silverberg short, and in my opinion the best he ever wrote. If you cannot feel sympathy with Tom Hawk your soul (or whatever you would like to term it) is dead. Perhaps it is also the most didactic of Silverberg's works with its obvious comment on subjective states and morality; that we all commit genocide in somebody's terms, humanitarians or vegetarians, we all have in lies, eat, breathe.

It was therefore somewhat deplorable to have his long-out-of-print 'Good News from the Vatican' as the final piece. Clever enough in its own right it is as rough as the above. C. Charts a gibb EF jokes, a two-fingered average, if you like.
Nevertheless I enjoyed this collection, even if I had encountered almost all of the stories beforehand. It is nice to have all these in one volume, and the comments by the editor himself are invaluable to a Silverberg-phile such as myself. The possible criticism as to the format was that there was no bibliography (which would entail quite a few pages of Silverberg) as there is in the Sphere collection. Perhaps a British edition would remedy that.

Now I can only agonise with impatience the Pocket Books text of Barry Malzberg. Perhaps Silverberg has not given us an introduction and be as kind about Malzberg as Malzberg was about him. Not perfect but still a very good introduction to the work of one of our finest writers.


Reviewed by Peter Hyde

Dune, winner of both the Hugo and Nebula awards, has been widely acclaimed as the greatest science fiction novel of all time. For Frank Herbert, it represents a great triumph, yet ironically it was also in a sense a disaster. A disaster because it invited further instalments yet intrinsically made it impossible for them to match the original.

Certainly, if ever a book cried out for a sequel, it was Dune at the level of grand strategy the situation is in a pregnant and tense. Paul Hadi, Duke of Arrakis, has been elected to the Imperium. He has been hailed by the Frere of Dune as their Lisan Al-Ghay, their Messiah, and now stands on the verge of the holy war which will envelop the counting planet of the Imperium. The situation is similar to the scenario at the personal level, too. Paul is in a hurry to marry the Princess Igtah, daughter of the dead emperor, and his Frerean wife Chiar is doubtful of her assigned role of matricide who could read Dune and not ache to find out what happened next?

That Dune is no hard to follow reflects the nature of its strengths. Perhaps one of its greatest merits is the solidity and believability of the social structure in which the action is embedded. The basis of this is a fairly conventional feudal system with the hereditary emperor, the great houses and a socially rigid class system. The latter, of course, is not explored in any detail since the main actors are either aristocrats, Frere of Bene Gesserit, of whose more below. A delightful piece of technological determinism makes feudal weapons and feudal social structure the dominant factor which negates the effect of inner-based weapons more akin to the general level of technological development.

Into this feudal system more excellently innovative elements are introduced. The Combine Monarch Ober Advancer HCEPTSTIRCH which has a virtual monopoly in a beautiful device to explain the unearned wealth of the Emperor and the aristocracy: not either or, but simply profits. A second element is the mysterious, unprimed and slightly sinister Space Guild, one leg of the power balance with the Empire (which, to be sure, which has a total monopoly over intraplanetary travel and transport.

But the most interesting creation is the Bene Gesserit, an organisation of women dedicated to an ambitious breeding programme intended to produce the Kwisatz Haderach, a male Bene Gesserit whose powers would enable him and them to go beyond space and time. Meanwhile, the Sisterhood has evoked a menace of body and soul and awareness of specially the myriad social signals given off by people) which is a conclusion of which was the awesome power of Voice by which a man could speak in a way that would have absolute authority for a particular bearer.

Embraced by this social order yet in many ways outside is we find the Frere of Dune. We inhabit, however, a world which is a cacophony of gregarious and prescriptive voices, melange. Dune is a fascinating creation and so are its people. The implications of the society of Dune are examined in interesting and logical conclusions. On the one hand, the technology of moisture control and reclamations distinctive, stilltents, moisture seals and most members of all the deathstalk. On the other hand, the implications for speech and custom are traced out: them to kill someone is "to take their smell" (literally) and crying becomes an extremity act which occurs only as a result of intense emotions. The deathstalk, the Frerein kill it and they go in awe of Paul when he sheds a tear after killing Jumie. Other aspects of Frere culture are related - the casual nature in the lives of outside, the lack and the fierce self-reliance.

Finally, the whole description of Frere life is rendered more convincing by the judicious use of words derived from Arabic which gives just the right flavour.

The characters too are beautifully drawn, not just the complex major character of Paul Atreides, one of true heroes, but also the apparently unmemorable destiny but other important characters too, such as his mother Jessica, the new Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, and the Frerein Stilgar. No too are more minor characters like Gurney Hufeld, LietRoyat and the intriguing Imperial emissary, Count Petrage.

With these major elements and many lesser details e.g., mountains and the imperial Serdakill, Frank Herbert created an all-purpose plot which runs on many levels. Some of the main themes are the Imperial/Harkonnen plot against Frerein Atreides, Pauls by and his evolving relationship with the Frerein. The plot unfolds both at the grand level and the personal level in a balanced progression and at the same time the nature of the particular universe in which it takes place likewise becomes clearer.

This pinpoints the first major problem which Dust Hasheish, the immediate sequel to Dune comes up against: the main features of the social order are already well known and understood by the reader. Certainly further aspects do become clearer in the course of the book, but the sense of discovery which would possess a reader of Dune is

Dune Hasheish is a disappointment in another way too for its story, although quite complicated lacks the broad canvas of action which Dune depicts. Finally, of course, the jord and the creation of Paul's empire happen offstage, He takes the crisis gap before Dust Hasheish takes up the story. But secondly, whilst it is concerned largely with the machinations of Paul's enemies against him, its events can only be described as small-scale.

The plot is in question is entered into by the remnants of the old established order the
The plot is a subtle one for it involves maneuvering to life the Atreides war master Duncan Idaho. To the Ilians, the war master was a god, and this image is what has been done for to pole before—restoring his original memories. In doing this Paul is faced with the ultimate temptation—to have the same compulsion for his concubine Chertak who has died giving birth to their twin children. Paul forever ultimately triumphs over temptation. Defeats his tempter and then blindness the Frerean irrevocably to his memory by voluntarily accepting the traditional Frerean custom for blind men (for such he has become) and walking out into the desert alone to die.

Just as one of the strengths of Dune is its characters, so is this one of the weaknesses of Dune Messiah. In particular the motivations of the arch plotter Scytale, the Ilians are particularly unclear. It is hard to tell if one of the strengths of the characters in Dune is their essential humanity: Dune Messiah seems to me to be all the more run of tom will for its use of silence. In this, I think Frank Herbert falls into employing a common tactic of SF writers, to use silence not as a characterization device but as a means of making characters who are behaving largely as humans, seem human and to be done. Thus, the Ilians' particular trick is that he is a faceless man and can take on any appearance he wishes and this talent is made material use of in the conspiracy.

For all its flaws—and perhaps bravery can be added to those already enumerated—Dune Messiah does still leave the reader wondering what will happen next. Although Paul has left the stage, the fate of his mortal ally and his children Ghulima and Lato, all of whom are 'prophets' (of which more later) remains unknown. In Children of Dune which is intended apparently as the completion of the story this challenge is taken up.

Children of Dune starts very promisingly. After 80 or so pages a complex and interacting situation to wrong. One placed which has much of the feel of Dune itself. Nine years have passed and Alia's personality has become taken over by one of the strongest of her forbears—Paul's old enemy, Farad'in, Darth Vladimir Herkomes. The Lady Jessica after a sojourn on Caladan has returned to Dune apparently reconciled with the Bene Gesserit and is in search of strands of hope for the yet not given up. Her daughter of Shelden IV plots with the remnant of the defeated imperial Ser'dkor to place her son Farad'in on the imperial throne which Alia occupies an Agent. A mysterious bill appears in the desert to oppose the deification of Paul Muad'Dib and none say that it is the man himself returned or ever dead. In this fraught situation the twins Lato and Ghulima seek their own destiny.

At this point one thinks that somehow against all the odds Frank Herbert has managed to catch Dune but unfortunately from here on things start to go off the rails, and the narrative theme becomes too complicated a complex set of plot and counter-plot is developed with actors several times using each other to further their own ends. However, with Lato, Jessica, and whatever other powers and all pursuing their own objectives and Idaho, Beldar and Scytale acting with varying degrees of ill-faith as true and false agents for the principal plotter things just aren't done out of hand. A fake preacher has appeared to either major events happen off-stage or major plotter suddenly become quiescent. This applies particularly to the latter stages of the book where a major anti-plot has been creeping in—writer and reader alike wondering how it can be made to end. The ending is quite fitting (you can guess who comes out on top) and ingenious but all rather harrased.

I won't go into the many complications of plot and counter-plot, but two themes recur throughout. Perhaps the predominant one is that of Abomination. The term occurs in Dune Messiah but it is only in Children of Dune that its meaning is elucidated. To describe a vessel whose body underlies the age old arcana of cloth or metal it is apparent from the sidewalk to a dying woman mother whose memories (and those of her predecessors) are then transmitted to her successor. If a pregnant woman undergoes the ordeal her child is 'prophets' cognizant at birth and with access to the memories of all her forebears. The problem is (as happens with Alia) that one of the multifarious complications within may assume control Abomination therefore is a problem. It features as a major items through its happening to Alia and though Ghulima's and Lato's struggles in their different ways to come to terms with being prophets, although in the story it is something they inherit. If you like, from Paul (this seems involve incompetence, but who can say what the children of the Enigma Melrath ought to be like? It is important, too, in Jessica's concern to find Lato to use if he is, in fact, Abomination.

The other interwoven theme concerns the spice cycle. For the first time the spice cycle is made manifest and the 'deep sand vectors', the creatures which turn into sandworms, referred to as Dune are named as sandworms. In Messiah it becomes apparent that the ecological transformation of Dune begun by Liet-zyne a father in threatening the mandrout and in turn the storms and ultimately of course, the spice, is a constant. But it happens have not been able to let this happen, this creating her a corner on a very valuable market with a relatively fixed demand and declining supply. Others, however, are not so content—notably the older desert Frerean who intently understand the impending doom of the worms and who are prepared to do anything to slow them. A simple availability of water into and the Preacher are other who eventually it becomes apparent that their different ways have their actions guided by the essential point about Children of Dune is this; it is in itself an elaborate and complex tale, with interesting characters and quite a stunning climax. Yarn it not for the fact that it is the culmination of the Dune trilogy, it could only be judged. Despite its shortcomings, the story is still one of the best ever. However, since it is the final of the Dune saga, it must be judged by Dune's standards, and as such it must be seen as a disappointment.

Dune was too good.
I don't mean to suggest that I am not quibbling because Mr. Downing's students do not denounce with my own, to a great degree they do. However, it seems a strange paradox (but, I suppose, one to be expected) that the most liberal form of expression (of which rock is one, SF another) has a disturbingly extreme number of blinkered commentators conservative beyond the staunchest reactionary. And so here we see Mr. Downing who met at least in part the interaction of SF and rock (why aim Chapter 8? — but more later). He finds and fails missed quotations (Samuel). The situation is clear (the blunder) this with "explains the wild, cosmic, frenetic and mainstreamed minstrel world of Future Rock — rather than-travellers disguised as electronic Pied Piper's a minstrel (Impeus' music today) is it Mr. Downing's fault that he failed to live up to that classic of hyperbole? I must answer, in this case it is. Two pages do not pass without the committing of some atrocity. A few examples:

1) "A book concerned with the future in rock music must begin with Bob Dylan." (P.11.) Why? Dylan is to modern SF-oriented rock what Samuel Butler is to modern literary SF. The original Jotun in both cases was never the same. Perhaps Dylan was the emblem of the East Coast folk/rock symbolisms. But certainly he is ever at the heart of the SF-rock movement.

2) "Like most SF literature it is not rooted in the perspective of the present, but in a future set at exaggeration of present tendencies (P.36.) He argues for the conclusive realms of social prophecy and am philosophy, and his telepathic reading the genre, for that reason, suffers badly.

3) "Thematically it is an updating of George Orwell's 1984." (P.63 - on Bowie's 'Diamond Dogs') It is nothing of the sort. It is the antithesis of that novel. Antithesis to the whole of Orwell's writing.

4) "But in a situation of profound social change it is easy to see how a book like 'The Chrysalids' could serve almost as a revolutionary handbook. (P. 12.) On an SF-visionary handbook - in Camp Concentration possibly, The Dispensations certainly, but The Chrysalids?

5) "Musical doodling of some of their recent offerings' (rocking - of Pink Floyd's rock music) Not only is this inaccurate - they began with "musical doodling" - but also is the type of unknowledgeable and imperfect distaste offered by the Ignorant.

6) "It would be easier to see them as a return to 'pop' (P. 116, on EL). Has he not heard "Kara Evil"? Cold shortman they are, but Pop? I think not.

7) "Imagining the Maltese cross sung at speed over a rock backing. Imagine a sub full of drummers singing. Imagine the sound of music performed by the inmates of Charlestown under the direction of Marquis de Sala. P.113, on Wagner a "Nahash Destructive Humankind". With this crisairs and childishly innocent (and somewhat he dare he a quotation from a personal relation: one of many as does used. This "paranoid-predicts" (to facts of hearing the receding)? Is it because they are more than three chords and one time signature. Mr. Downing? (and) must apologize immediately for my own rather trite response I

8) "Exploration can also express a refusal to face the realities of an existing situation" (p.116) Surely experimentation is never a refusal to face reality but exactly the opposite.

9) "— the force of the future was in retreat" (p. 118) On rock between 68 and 76) Is it talking of the revolutionary music which is not SF-rock, which modern flight is in the same years and blossomed in the next few.

10) "It is tempting to talk of "psychical deception" (p.118) How about other (almost clearly) and fails interpretation and fails to understand the motivations of the Rosenberg phenomenon.

11) He claims the profusion of mystic cults that would have done credit to declining Rome" (p. 128) and these ghosts, with the full Zen-Buddhist trip (read pages 121 onwards, I could scarcely believe he was serious).

And there are numerous other examples in my thirty sides of notes. It is very more my intention to produce a 'list of faults' in place of a review, but this book warrants it. What angered me most about the book was its superficial character, the 'I don't understand this so it's obviously beyond those worries out there' attitude, to a breach of the Tradus Description Act meaning the name is of the phenomena. He assumes it grew out of Dylan's side as a mystical one. He ignores rational argument again and again and even resorts to petty vilification at some stages. Moreover, the central theme - the musical olf, if you like - of the book is a name (Chapter 1) in your local bookstore (no, I implore you - don't buy it. Just read chapter 5!) and you'll understand. We begin by attempting to define a certain situation through its literary offerings like a Mohammedan asked to lecture on the Talmud. His Lects examination of Tom Waits, Marque and Co. whilst devoting whole chapters to Dylan, Leonard, Bowie, Lou Reed (?), Jackman Brown and Joel Mitchell). Neil Young (folk singer?) emphasize his interest. The publishers didn't want a book on Dylan but Mr. Downing wanted to write a book on Dylan chapter 13 he says. "I was interested in Dylan (you've read that far - and even suffered the chapter on country music - so you're likely to read to the very end, and thus) and write a chapter on 'Love', not making even the statement 'appearance' of linking it to SF. It's the heart chapter in the book; perhaps a fair comment on the sincerity of this editor? For the other 13 chapters he annotates names of (Spencer, Burr, Hunter, Lawrence, Arthone) and quotes (Samuel, Backer, R. D. Leving, Laidley, Philip E. Dick. Rosettler) in all the inappropriate places (almost as a game of responsibility - a common allergy of many of today's rock composers)."
Reviewed by Brian Stablom

There was a time when people were frightened by the idea of the atom bomb. Nowadays, says Dr Strangeley, we have learned to stop worrying. The effect of this historical change upon the mythological context of science fiction is that it seems more up to date in science fiction than fiction. At least, it may seem more likely to succeed. We read The Long Loud Silence, Aes and Essence, On the Beach, Dhalgren, M. P. Holland's book has a similar scheme of the novel placed it in the present, the future or the past. The destruction of the world was the focal point of the myth.

Nowadays things are different. The post-holocaust world has become, in the contemporary imagination, a romantic millenium. In today's fiction the holocaust is no longer the focal point of the myth, and it is no longer immediate but remote a legacy and a memory. The image of the ruined world has become a kind of postscript Cokewhake, where heretics thrive and the monuments of barbaraism and speculation are left standing. This is just the story of old, only to be fought and vanquished. These days, we no longer live in the world now - anyway, and it is not such a nightmare to imagine it crushed and deformed. The post-holocaust world has become a respectable venue for heroic fantasy and marvellous questioning. We read Damnation Alley and Merv's Journey and California. A novel, rather sickly (but quite clever) Romanticism has even made its way onto TV in The Survivors. Will it be long, I wonder, before we are all back on track with J. G. Ballard from the celebration of wrecked worlds (The Dedicating World) to the celebration of the process of wreckage and disintegration (Crash, High Risk) (see the Armageddon)?

I cannot help being slightly alarmed by this trend - and not least by the commentators and the contemporary artistry that goes into the glamorousation of ruination. The work of Ballard and Zelazny and perhaps, I mean, I should find a new way of meeting the last Tribesman - "A Motorcycle Quasi Epic and Science Fiction Master" as its author has it - is definitely lacking in artistry, and that it's glamour has no guts. But it amazes me as a literary gift, and a social critic, and I am thus compelled to regret its failings.

After the holocaust, says the gospel according to this particular myth-maker, the Bell's Angels will come into their own. The freedom they love will be theirs, and life will be one long routine of Aggro, punctuated by the occasional gang bang. The men might ultimately inhabit the Earth, but they will have the time until everyone else has finished with it. The plot is in standard. The angel who falls there he Ought To Be More To Life discovers herself with the nomadic tribes who also came into their own but not until much blood has flowed under the bridge. It is easy to see where some Vizies add up - an abandoning hero to his bumbling fulfilment and continues the tale of slaughter in a journalistic voice. Who needs characters when you can have battling?

This book is unadulterated garbage, but I cannot help a nagging suspicion that it may turn out to be popular garbage. There may well be people who feel that we must still enjoy the spirit of the age. Some will rejoice in its andiana romanticised violence, its lowered obsession with maturbatory motorbike riding. Care is due.

THE DREAM MILLÉNIUM by James White; Corgi; London; 1978; 65p: 272 pp
Reviewed by John Harvey

The setting for The Dream Millenium is an abandoned space ship travelling at sub light speed. Its crew and passengers life forms are suspended in animation while the ship, directed by its computer, explores the universe for a new world to sustain the colonising mission. Not a particularly new concept, but one which James White has brought a new look. That ability, to take an old, tired idea and turn it into something original, is probably one of the most rare and valuable gifts writers can possess. All too often an idea is declared 'played out' when all it needs is a little imagination to breathe fresh life into it. Imagination is just what James White shows he has in abundance in this book.

White is that 'cold sleep' the passengers on the ship dream. At first they are ordinariness, pleasant dreams but gradually they become more and more realistic and frightening. The crew find that the images they are dreaming are part of the lives of people and animals of which they have little, if any, knowledge and yet the experience is filled with vivid detail. The dreams begin to haunt the crew during their periodic awakenings, with such an extent eventually they become afraid to go back to 'sleep' and, in fact, one colonist carries out his return rather than return to his dreams. Not only do their memories of the dreams become more intense but do their memories of past events in their own lives. This quickly leads to the development of power of total recall of events, emotions and even scents and smells. The individual can literally relive his memories, both pleasant and unpleasant.

James White uses the crew's dreams and heightened memory to produce a novel in which the setting is constantly changing. They are dreams of the lives and daemons of dinosaurs and birds: memories of an overcrowded violent Earth from which the colonists are escape. Incidents on board the space ship during the awakening periods and even a space battle sequence when the ship encounters hostile aliens.

James White has handled a complex piece of plotting extremely well to produce a very readable science fiction novel. While being very much a space ship story, it is far more than just space opera. The characterisation is successful so that the reader can identify with the crew and the descriptions of an overcrowded Earth of the future are believable. Although the story's problems and mysteries are well resolved in a clever ending which although not a shock ending, has a good twist to it. I have never disliked James White's fiction, but I could not have been more amongst my favourite authors. The Dream Millenium has gone a long way towards changing my opinion.

THE TIME TRAVELER by Verne; Vtg: DAW; New York; 1976; 87 pp
Reviewed by Mike Dickson

I am sure that, dear reader, you have experienced that peculiar sense of guilt from buying a faithful, honest adaptation of a book having read the question on the back cover, even to discover a novel sensationalised as 'the classic of swords and the ageless power of sexuality' signpost another blandamed path
to civilization' is really both intelligent and sensitive does not remove that first sentence. However, with The Mixing a new element emerges - the blurb which is more intelligent than the book. For one thing it not only defines mixing (a pratonga to wit) but also strives to make it applicable to the plot, something Vernon Vinge has no qualms about neglecting to do. It also states the central problem:

"How to demonstrate that science is worthwhile and how to keep the mediaval nations from discovering their potential for cosmic mischief."

Not deathless prose admittedly, but that second half interested me - a significant advance on Starship, etc's formula of scientist as magician. However, that is precisely what the book does not set out to do. It runs into a rather thick-air chase.

The plot can be briefly summarised:

Spindly archeologist Bjaal and pilot Joninne Leg-Bot, who 'combined a squat, slab-like body with a clever mind and a crippled personality' are surveying Giri. We have little evidence of our crippled personality except her hunching back of Bjaal, but her clever mind is evident in such remarks as this:

"These hills must be lousy with native copper and I'll bet the 'argon' class of words have to do with mixing. (In fact they are map telines 'Keg' for example meaning to kill - goddity?)."

AND

"This is only the fifth time in thirteen thousand years that the human race has run across another intelligent species - or even artefacts of another species. It would be full (sic) of a surprise to me if there weren't a lot of unanswered questions."

However, she does make one remark to which I can give qualified agreement.

"Well, I speak this Enlish lingo better than English."

We have many examples in the dialogue of the English that she does speak. She has however, the same sort of phrases which, by the greatest of coincidences make her attractive to one of the natives - a prince who also coincidentally almost entirely lacks put powerless himself. The vast expansion of primitive politics and flight from the horrid natives, accompanied by the most powerful acolyte of the Guild (the man with the telepathic gift). However, even the Guild's power would seem to have certain odd limitations since they can 'rearr' rocks from the moon to squash a wil-lamium army, but cannot move the vital communications station from an island in the middle of a dangerous lake to its safe shore.

Finally Joninne gets herself kinged (brain tissue jumbled) saving her lover, but is not killed! She is transported from the planet in a grievous state.

She is partially cured (how men can only guess) but the doctor warns:

"It is possible she will never again be able to reason at the highest levels of abstraction."

This hardly seems to be a convincing blow judging from earlier parts of the book. The conclimatory thought of Joninne is:

"She had lost much that was of value, but she was no fool. She knew a happy ending when she found one."

Ab, there's nothing like brute damage for a happy ending! Well, if that makes the book sound unreadable, at least with pleasure. It is. I certainly am not proud of having finished it. In fact, I felt 'hungry'. A certain narrative pace in all it presents - definitely no consideration of the wider implications hinted at by the blurb. For connoisseurs of exotic names it does offer extra, though, besides Leg-Bot (what?) we are given Papefu Morabga, Thea Laga, Thengale de Prov, and Pollo-age-Shotefe. The natives also have colourful oaths such as 'blood and bile'.

Of course it could be a pistuctive but if it is wonderful in execution and ought not someone to have told DAW?
Edgar Fawcett was born in New York in 1847. He published his first novel, *Assas Eros* in 1871 and his last, *The Vulgarians*, in 1900. He died in England the following year. He published, in all, more than forty novels, and registered copyright on some twenty others that were not published. He also had five plays produced and published nine volumes of poetry and verse drama.

He was, according to Stanley Harrison (3) "constantly importuned by the thought that he was destined for literary obliquity", and, it seems, justifiably so. The Penguin Companion to Literature does not acknowledge his existence. He was constantly at war with critics and publishers, and scornful of the public, and became something of a celebrity in consequence - but it did not lead to more favourable comment on his books and he was forgotten soon after his death.

The majority of his prose works fall into two categories - melodrama and realistic novels which may be seen within the tradition of American literature to belong to the same genre as the novels of Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser. An important minority of his novels, however, belong to the category he labelled "realistic romances". In the prose quoted above he lists four more: Douglas Duncan (1888), *Solarian* (1889), *The Romance of Two Brothers* (1891) and a story called "The Great White Emerald". In addition to these there is a psychological puzzle story, *The New Hero*, whose plot sounds rather reminiscent of Guy Endora's *Man From Limbo*. Among the unpublished manuscripts which he copyrighted are *The Destruction of the Moon* (1892) and *Man From Venus* (1893). But it is *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle*, published in the same year as Wells' *Time Machine* that I want to describe here.

Guy Thyrle is the discoverer of a drug called Oarline which enables the consciousness to leave the body and journey instantaneously wherever it is directed by the effort of will. Thyrle enlists the help of his friend Vincent Ardiilange in his experiments, but in their private lives they are in competition for the same girl and Ardiilange takes advantage of the cataleptic state of Thyrle's body while he is off exploring to have his declared dead and his body cremated. Thyrle's disembodied self is thus unaccounted. Though he manages to thwart Ardiilange by contriving a manifestation which drives the guilty man to suicide (but also results in the death of the girl) he is desperate to find some form of release from his existential state.

Thyrle sets out on an odyssey through the known universe. His disembodied consciousness descends into the earth, finding cities and fossils buried in the solid strata, and then into the bowels of the planet, where he finds a subterranean fire which confirms his belief that planets are cooled stars.

He goes to the moon, where he finds the remains of a great civilization on the non-dead world. Then he transports himself to the planets of the stars. On a planet of Canopus gold is common and the savage, dwarfish inhabitants use wooden money. On a world of Virch in Andromeda the dominant species is reptilian, on a world of Vindematrix in Virgo it is leonine. On yet another there are intelligent avians. A whole host of worlds are uninhabited or now dead, and he wonders at the entire panoply of evolutionary possibilities set out before him. He goes on, searching for a clue to the solution of his predicament:

"He swept onwards, past systems of unrecorded stars. Here it was the same as among those astral cohorts which the sky-gazers of earth had seen visually to observe and count. Sun, moons, planets, asteroids, in numbers incalculable!
Worlds that yet were floating cells and wreaths and ragged rifts of vapour; worlds that yet were prodigious heavenly bonfires, fed by showers of attracted meteors and even by occasional vast cosmic comets; worlds that teemed with a beauty eclipsing the conception of man; worlds hideous beyond all human belief; worlds just born, youthful, matured, dying or dead; worlds of sin, degradation and debauchery; worlds of chastity, idealism and peace; worlds in which not a single animal or vegetable shape bore the faintest likeness to those we meet on earth; worlds in which trees thought and spoke and saw, worlds that were earth in miniature or a thousand times magnified; worlds in which wolves, serpents, tigers, birds and countless other creatures of undesirable sort, had won mastery, and risen by inflexible laws of evolution to that same superiority over their primary conditions which marks the ascendancy of earthly man over his ancestral ape.

Here were the same appalling distances between system and system. On and on he sped, yet contiuously space unfolded new proofs of its awful fecundity.” (pp. 252-253)

In the end, Thyrle tries by a supreme effort of will to appeal to God Himself, to ask what hope there is for him. He projects himself into the world of spirits - a sightless world of voices - and converses with one of them. He is told that his situation is unique, unplanned, and must be suffered for all eternity. He asks about God’s omnipotence and mercy, and is answered cryptically, in the dialogue following it seems that God is not quite what Thyrle had imagined, and is perhaps for him unimaginable. But in the end the voice offers him a solution: if he can find another man who will voluntarily give up his life, to allow Thyrle to share his body at the moment of death, and hence death itself, then release may be obtained. Armed with this answer, Thyrle takes his quest back to earth.

The Ghost of Guy Thyrle is an important book for several reasons. It is one of the earliest flowerings of the cosmic imagination in literary form, standing chronologically between Camilla Flammarion’s Lumen and Olaf Stapledon’s Star Maker. Its principal springboards for imaginative flight are the astronomical discovery of the infinite universe and the Darwinian theory of evolution. As the quotes show the combination of these guided Fawcett to the notion of a universe filled with alternative worlds and life-forms just as the same combination guided Wells in the years immediately afterward. There is no one else in American literature of this period whose imaginative reach and ambition can be compared to Fawcett’s as represented by this novel. His other novels are more parochial in concern, focusing far more on psychological notions, but they do include Solarion, a novel about a dog with artificially augmented intelligence. (Students of coincidence might care to take note that this, too, anticipates one of Stapledon’s speculative exercises.)

It is, I think, something of a tragedy that the American SF critics and historians do not seem at all concerned about this important writer within their own literary heritage. Why are The Ghost of Guy Thyrle and Solarion not in print alongside A Plunge Into Space and Across the Zodiac? Certainly not because they are of inferior quality as novels - they may have a tendency to melodrama, but no more so that their contemporaries. No the manuscripts of the SF novels which Fawcett copyrighted still exist, and if so, why are they not put into print now as examples of American scientific romance? That they are known is obvious in that they are listed in the bibliography of Harrison’s book on Fawcett. It could, perhaps, be simply a result of the fact that Fawcett is not blessed by a mention in Bailey’s Pilgrims Through Space and Time or any of the other inadequately researched forays into the history of science fiction. If so, it is a pity. If research into the literature of the scientific imagination in American universities is to be guided by works which contain serious errors of omission then that research will inevitably be crippled until those errors are rectified.
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DORIS LESSING
BRIEFING
Cy Chauvin

Doris Lessing has approached science fiction from the "outside", so to speak; she
has gained her reputation from writing contemporary fiction, and has not been a
self-conscious author of science fiction in the sense that Brian Aldiss, Robert
Silverberg and Joanna Russ have been (to name three prominent writers who have
written outside the science fiction field, but who are still largely identified
with it). I am not sure if her approach to sf is radically new or different;
all good writers are eccentrics, and her visions are more her own I suspect
rather than any quality held in common by writers generally specializing in
mundane fiction.

The two Lessing novels which I have read and have found to contain science
fiction elements are Briefing for a Descent into Hell (1971) and The Memoirs
of a Survivor (1975).

The first, Briefing for a Descent into Hell, is about a man discovered on
the London streets who is suffering from amnesia and fails to respond to
treatment. He dreams of being a sailor, and mumbles what seems to be gibberish
to the two doctors in charge. They discover he is a professor of Classics at a
university, and his name is Charles Watkins. He is married with two sons.

The crux of the whole novel depends on whether you believe Watkins is mad,
or whether you believe something altogether different - that he is not Watkins
at all. That he is an alien, who has somehow come to "Planet Earth":

"You will lose nearly all memory of your past existence. You will each of you
come to yourselves, perhaps alone, perhaps in the company of each other, but
with only a vague feeling of recognition...Some of you may choose not to wake,
for the waking will be so painful, and the knowledge of your condition and
Earth's condition so agonizing, you will be like drug addicts: you may prefer
to breathe in oblivion." (p. 133)

This is how Watkins feels; towards the novel's end, he confesses to one
of the other patients in the hospital that he has something to remember. "There's
something I have to reach. I have to tell people. People don't know it but it is
as if they are living in poisoned air. They are not awake...they are living
like zombies and killing each other." (p. 374) Watkins' "madness" seems to have
been provoked by a long letter he received from Rosemary Baines - or, alternately
that the letter woke in him some other form of consciousness. Ms Baines was,
greatly moved by a talk Watkins gave on education, and the raising of children;
she was "stung awake" by his ideas:

"I sat by the window that night and I thought: Don't let it go, don't forget it.
Something extraordinary did happen. Perhaps during that night while I sat looking
into a suburban garden, I was quite like a child of three, four, five, a creature
quite different from the person she was doomed to grow into. I remembered things
I had forgotten for years...Before the trap had shut."

Children have a different sort of consciousness, a different sort of
awarness from adults: we can see it in people's child-like wonder and delight,
and it is really an infectious sort of enthusiasm, altogether different from
the rational and carefully planned adult gaiety. Ms Baines' letter is all
about a change in her life, and (ripple effect) changes she sees in others. The letter is probably the most eloquent piece of writing in the novel; and it has power not only as a piece of fiction, but as a call for people to "change their hands" (look at life differently).

The novel is a collage: letters, interviews with the "mad" patient, straight narrative, poetry, stories the patient has written and possible dream sequences all combine in a most aesthetically pleasing fashion (Stand on Zanzibar was constructed far more cleverly - and originally - than is Descent, but not as smoothly, alas). The science fiction elements of the novel are contained in what could be interpreted as its "dream sequences": depending on one's interpretation of the novel, of course. A man on a ship (we are never given a name, but assume it is the protagonist) which is searching for a Disc, or Crystal, which from the description Lessing gives, is obviously a flying saucer or UFO. "Our expectations had been for aid, for explanation, for a heightening of our selves and of our thoughts," he says. The ship encounters the Disc those aboard it have been searching for, and all are transported aboard (in a mysterious, ethereal fashion) except for our narrator. He builds a raft, leaves the ship and goes to shore. There he discovers a strange deserted city (built in unconventional, fashion, and roofless), cleans a deserted square in preparation for the Crystal's return (its schedule seems to follow the phases of the moon). A large troop of baboons invades the city, overpopulating it and (later) fighting for food. He rides on the back of a great White Bird across the sea of the dead and participates in primitive, bloody rituals in the jungle.

There are some beautiful sections in this portion of the novel: "A creature looking at its image, an ape or a leopard leaning over a pool to drink, sees its face and body, sees a dance of matter in time." This particular passage indicates the difference in the way of readers and mundane ones approach fiction. According to Samuel R. Delany, "Science fiction literalizes the language, and casts it into a sort of real mode that you just don't have with any sort of discourse. There are so many new sentences. The actual gallery of sentences is much larger that you have in mundane fiction..." He turned on his left side. That doesn't mean he's twisting and turning. No, in science fiction there's a little switch. These sentences are suddenly cast into the foreground of their literal meaning." (Algol, Summer 1970, p. 18) Delany also mentions Bester's The Stars, My Destination, where at one point the protagonist is undergoing synesthesia: his senses of smell, sight, etc. are switched. So when Bester says, "His skin was raised with the taste of lemons," he is not speaking metaphorically. Likewise, this phrase from Lessing's novel is both a striking metaphor and has a scientific basis (the atoms that compose our bodies are in constant motion, "a dance of time"). Readers conditioned to this sort of approach will interpret Lessing's novels differently from those exposed to it. Is it illusion or reality?

In the novel's middle portion, there is a section in which the narrator gives a rambling, vague account of his view from the Crystal. There is a short segment about a briefing on Venus for a Descent Team here, and it is obviously science fiction: but this section of the novel is merely presented as the "contemporary mode" which is "preferred" to a more "whimsical" version (complete with Roman gods) which presents the same message: that Earth must be changed, that it must be altered in some way, before it progresses to such a state that it threatened the well-being of the entire social system. We know that some exterior force works upon our narrator, but Lessing leaves it open to us whether we accept this viewpoint, or fantastic metaphor ("Mercury the Messenger...divides himself effortlessly into a dozen or so fragments, which fall gently through the air on to the Earth, and the Battalions of Progress are strengthened for the Fight.")

The Memoirs of a Survivor, in contrast to Briefing for a Descent into Hell, has more definite science fiction elements. It is a disaster story - or, more
accurately, the story of life during the breakdown of civilized society. There is no atomic war, no alien invasion, or raging plague; only slow, gradual breakdown of civil services. Food becomes scarce, electricity is not available, trains and buses run more infrequently, gangs roam the streets, people move from their homes and leave them empty. The cause for all this is not given; nor is the name of the country or city in which it happens (but details in the novel clearly set it in England, probably London, though the effects of the breakdown are worldwide). Even the name of the narrator is left unmentioned (like her earlier novel, this helps give Memoirs an aura of mystery, cut off from the ordinary reaches of time and place).

The story is quite unmelodramatic. A girl of 12, Emily, is dropped into the narrator’s flat by an unknown man, who asks that she take care of the girl. The relationship between the two changes in different ways throughout the novel, as the young girl quickly grows into a woman and learns to cope with the outside world, which is becoming more barbaric all the time.

But like Briefing for A Descent into Hell, Memoirs has a mystical side, too, and it is this that makes the novel exceptional, and not just another example of the British disaster novel subgenre. It is a world on the ‘other side of the wall’. The narrator says:

“I had to admit that there was a room behind the wall, perhaps more than one, even a set of rooms, occupying the same place as - or rather overlapping with - the corridor... I looked at the glow and pulse of the yellow ((spot on the wall)), looked as if I were listening, thinking - and then I was through the wall and I know what was there.”

The wall is an ordinary one; it forms one side of her flat - and so these rooms on the other side of the wall may seem an illusion, a dream. This world beyond her apartment wall is intensely appealing, and reflects in many ways (or at least seems to reflect) her emotional states at various times in her life. “The rooms were empty, had been for some time. Years, perhaps. There was no furniture... I did not go in but stood there on the margin between two worlds, my familiar flat and these rooms which had been quietly waiting all this time.”

Portions of the description of this world beyond the wall are obviously symbolic, such as the section where the narrator walks into a room where people are diligently putting pieces of cloth on a carpet, matching up the pattern; the narrator finds a piece (her piece?), places it in the pattern, then drifts away.

At the end of the novel, Emily, her boyfriend Gerald, their cat and the narrator are together in the flat; it is winter and they have been threatened by juvenile gangs. The narrator sees a yellow stain form on the flat wall, and she calls the others to her - and a strange transformation takes place.

“Both walked quickly... out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether... And now it is hard to say exactly what happened. We were in that place, which might present us with anything - rooms furnished this way or that and spanning the tastes and customs of millennia; walls broken, falling, growing again; a scene, perhaps, of people matching pieces of patterned materials on a carpet...”

Just as in her earlier novel, the question arises: is this transformation meant to be real, or is it an illusion? The clues in Memoirs are more definite: the title is The Memoirs of a Survivor, and the book is cast as a reflection, as a looking back - by a narrator who expects her audience to be familiar with what happened. “We all remember that time. It was not different for me than for others.” And (about comparing experiences): “Yes, it was so, it must have been, I wasn’t imagining things.” (My emphasis)

Lessing's description of the tiro's entry into "another order of world altogether" matches (in its jumbled, kaleidoscopic details) the typical of convention of entry into other dimensions. What makes Lessing's novel different
from most of is her lack of explanation for these conventions. How does the narrator enter into these rooms beyond the wall, this different "order" of world? There are no alien beings, no star or teleportation, no 'holes' in space, no reality altering drugs of the sort Philip K. Dick writes about; there is not even a fairy godmother tapping the narrator on the shoulder. The conventions of sf have an advantage in that their verisimilitude is already established; there is no need for the author to explain how a spaceship can travel from planet to planet. It is "common knowledge".

In a good science fiction novel or short story, the sf elements are not mere gimmicks or trappings, but have a significant effect and influence on the actions and feelings of the characters, its plot, and even its literary style. By this standard, Memoirs is important, since the novel's imaginative trappings affect at every turn the characters. Anthony Robertson, in his article "The Science Fiction of Doris Lessing", says: "The mind under pressure does not break down but through/through to contact with the cosmic experience that was once shared by all men". This is a very strange of theme (Silverberg's Downward to The Earth is the best recent treatment of the idea); but Lessing develops it originally. Her novels approach it obliquely, with great subtlety and elegance. As Robertson points out, however, for the novels to mean anything to the reader, he or she must believe in "revelatory madness" - in the possibility of transcendent experience. This is easier for the steady reader of sf than for the mundane, since the heat of desire with changes in consciousness, and the alien or unusual viewpoint.

Alexei Panahi, in his review of Briefing for a Descent into Hell, makes a related point: "Lessing endorses her protagonist's fantasies. They are the most serious things she can imagine. Like any good sf writer, her sympathies are with her fantasy and not with objective opinion". (Amazing, June 1973, p. 104) That is why we feel such disappointment when "normality" triumphs, and the protagonist does not remember what he was so desperately searching his conscious for; it means nothing to him, and he does not even have time to discuss it over dinner with Mr. Madeo, the woman he wrote him such a heart-felt letter. Likewise, the mystical ending of Memoirs gains power for the same reason.

Both novels might be interpreted as novels of "growth". In Memoirs, when Emily is first brought to the flat with her cat, she says little and stays in a small side room by herself. At first she merely regards the narrator as an "elderly person", as someone to provide for her; but the narrator gradually wins her trust. In the interim, Emily wanders out to talk with the young people on the street, the small bands gathering to leave the city for the countryside. She even forms a commune with some others, and leaves the narrator for a time. A couple of sentences seem to sum up the entire novel: "So much was happening, and every hour seemed crammed with new experience. Yet in appearance all I did was to live quietly there, in that room..." The novel's "action" is interior: in the narrator's emotions, and in the world behind the wall.

In Briefing for a Descent into Hell, Charles Watkins (or the man of changed consciousness and memory who inhabits Watkins' body) is changed more slowly. He is confronted with the problem of desiring to know about his past self, but unwilling to lose his present identity (something the doctors and all his past friends seem bent on destroying, to return him to "normal").

In these two novels, Lessing seems to be saying that knowledge is derived from intuitive sources, rather than from objective experience. I have found that the two novels were more relevant to my personal life than any other fiction I've read since Earth Abides, and the novels seemed to have peculiar connections to other books I've read on psychology, the counter-culture and sf criticism. Alexei and Cory Panahi especially are worth quoting, and comparing:

"In these last brief one hundred and fifty years a new revolution in lifestyle has occurred... all our old familiar customs have collapsed. Until we rebuild our minds, we will be in agony, unsure of anything, including our very survival.
We need to make new integrations. Our need is overwhelming. We need to move beyond the limited particularities of sensible perception and play again with the universals of feeling and ideas, and thereby discover new life giving alternatives." (Extrapolation, May 1972, p. 140)

Lessing's two novels are nothing if not about mental survival; about alternate points of view. The Panshins say that all of presents (in symbolic form) what goes on inside ourselves when "we face our limitations and then suddenly redefine ourselves - in terms of confrontations with powers, beings and places that are not objectively known to exist." ("The Search for Renewal", Fantasy, July 1973)

This is exactly the sort of situation Lessing deals with in these two books - and why, as I've said, we are so disappointed with the protagonist's failure in one novel, and overjoyed at the success in the other.

It is also illuminating to compare the two remarks of the Panshins with a statement Alan Watts makes in "The Book (On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are)". Watts seems to share with both Lessing and the Panshins the same dissatisfaction with present day society, and agrees that we must achieve an altered state of consciousness. His suggested means to this end parallels Lessing's and the Panshins':

"Just as sight is something more than all things seen, the foundation or 'ground' of our existence and our awareness cannot be understood in terms of things that are known. We are forced, therefore, to speak of it through myth - that is, through special metaphors, analogies and images (my emphasis) which say what it is like as distinct from what it is. At one extreme... 'myth' is false, falsehood, or superstition. But at another, 'myth' is a useful and fruitful image by which we can make sense of life..." (p. 12-13)

At another point in his book, Watts comments (favourably) on science fiction, and says "one of the best ways of understanding what goes on today is to extend it into tomorrow" (p. 42). He sees it as containing two morals: that neither order - nor chance - must win, and that the more things change, the more they remain the same. He stresses the need for balance and wholeness in life.

How does this relate to Lessing? Well, one critic characterised her as a "novelist of affirmation" - she sees the dark side of life, but does not believe it is the only nor the most significant facet of life (in contrast, perhaps, to someone like Thomas M. Disch, whose latest collection is entitled Getting Into Death). She believes in the need for "survival, human dignity, and hope" - an attitude that most closely resembles that projected by Ursula Le Guin in her fiction, I think. Neither automatically equates realism with pessimism, yet deal with their characters honestly. There is a balance, as in the Tao that has influenced Le Guin's fiction so much: the yin and the yang. The melancholy happiness, the joyous despair. Let me close with an illustration of this duality from Briefing for a Descent into Hell:

"Again, the air was filled with the longness of the sunset hour. I was melancholy enough to cry, or to hide my head under a blanket - if I had got one, and slide with my sadness into a regression from the light. But the scene was too magnificent not to watch..." (p. 47)

--- Cy Chauvin, June 1976
The novel is the story of a man who is gradually losing touch with the world outside of his head: the physical and social world. That he is a writer is not incidental; that he is aware of the gulf between production and ambition is the core of his problem. For many years he has insulated himself from the true and painful knowledge of an inadequate personality, an unsatisfactory marriage, a total failure to transcend the niche (and recognition) acquired easily as an adolescent. A child is born: the man realises that he is growing old and becoming weak and still has not done what he wisely, publicly promised he would do. What else do young writers promise than that soon - "when I have some money in the bank from writing this trash" - soon they will write a great novel. He reacts in the only way he can: he creates a more pleasant world into which he can slide. He assumes, first of all, the personality of his ever-concealing pseudonyms, then the personality of the main (characterless) character of his fiction. Both steps take him into smaller worlds, over which he has more control. Both steps take him further from reality, from a coming-to-terms with his own limitations.

As always, Malzberg is concerned with a disintegrating mind.

Stop.

A day has passed: my conception of the novel has changed. Now, I see that it is a limited book, that it deals with only a few of the problems that a writer faces. Let me make public that I hope, I wish to be a writer. (Let us ignore that though several years were spent writing SF stories I no longer can. I can write what I have known, have seen, have felt. Too much SF is unconvincing because it is unnatural.) I have not so far produced a worthwhile story, and will not do so if I continue with my present job. However, I write voluminously at work. I was beginning to think, judging by the favourable words of my boss, that I was writing well. Today I have been proved wrong. Or, I have not grasped that I am not valued for my writing ability, as merely a hack who is employed to generate ungrammatical, shallow poems (ah! strange insight) from which untalented Minister can pick up an emotive word or phrase. No Civil Servants are administrators; it is of no importance that we might wish - as I do - to make an artistic statement through our work, and, moreover, to give everything we have, to display all our knowledge and perception, in everything we do. No; what we are is unimportant - we can submerge our personalities and our uniqueness (merely) so that some "hard-pressed" person can more quickly read two misleading words than a paragraph that is truthful and complete. Now I know why so many Civil Service documents are incomprehensible, why so much use is made of the tautological "also", the delaying "however", the clumsy "with respect to". The requirements of time push aside any inclination Civil Servants may have to use language properly; if one can save two seconds by omitting an important conjunction why notice that the resulting sentence is inaccurate or meaningless. (One, of course, can pursue this terrifying misuse of language to make a strong case that one cannot understand what one cannot express, that what one cannot think/speak/write about one cannot know. Isn't language man's most precious possession.) Malzberg's book is weak in this area.
We are told that Jonathan Mervit proposes to write "great novels"; we are told that he has written only crud. We are shown why: his prose style is inadequate. Also, the quotes from his novels show why he is falling apart. Somehow, though he has so long denied its existence, he is writing about his life; he is trying to grow up. It is too late, he fails. We understand then why Mervit has never broken with Mack Miller and the Survey Team. Though he can speak and tell stories, he has not learnt how to write and therefore writes about nothing. Mervit's novels are shown to be flimsy, disposable contracts; SF, by implication, is shown to be an artificial fiction, to have been built by Hugo Gernsback and not to have grown since. My quibble that Malzberg does not explain why Mervit did not mature, though seeing that he should, is insignificant beside the author's greater achievement: he has not only shown how difficult is the life of a writer and how often a writer frustrates his own ambitions; he has also shown why Science Fiction is so adolescent fiction (so young!) and why it will become an adult fiction if the Fiction is placed before the Science. (Maybe, this is something I had unconsciously realised: I can only successfully write Science Fiction if first I can write Fiction.) I retract my earlier negative statement.

To coin a phrase: "Malzberg is a true hero". He is a mature writer, his is adult fiction. What more need one say.

On the third day:

One needs say more about the analogy already drawn here between the Civil Servant and the hack writer. I have learnt that in my work ambition is futile, that to be accepted, even to be successful, I can write in any and fashion I choose. What beautiful, enlightening prose I could write will be treated with so little respect as any ugly, misleading prose I have written or, worse, will be made unattainable by the foolish encouragement of a lax and clumsy prose style. Perhaps I am pushing the point to a ludicrous extreme. Certainly, young writers of fiction have been sidetracked by unwarranted praise— as Jonathan Mervit was (if only he had known); but not all. I believe there are more incentives (than money) to draw a young man to literature than to the higher echelons of the Civil Service. I also believe that some people are aware that good prose is valuable, that good prose is more insightful, moving and informative than bad prose. A fool, surely, is a man satisfied with the unstructured outpouring of an adolescent (of any age). But...it is useless to talk of the quality of prose when standards are non-existent— either unnecessary (as in the Civil Service) or never sought (as in Science Fiction).

Now, to pin this argument to the wall. Science Fiction has for too long run on without critical control, without the guidance of critical standards. This situation may have been, in the past, tolerable and may have contributed to the disdain with which the term SF (or Sci-Fi) is generally greeted. But it does not seem sensible— or even possible— for this aimless blundering to continue. After all, we all know what a great future SF has. Without motivation, without a desire to be better than ever, better always than the past, there can be no progress; there can be only stagnation and death. A meaningful and constructive dialogue between readers and writers is required. Maybe—who can say?— Malzberg quit SF because he saw that his audience would not benefit further from books more advanced than those he had already written; perhaps he has reached the limit of the audience to apprise what he was writing. Are we reassured because Malzberg is such a talented writer; is our sophistication really so great. We may have lost Malzberg, and Silverberg, and Disch, and Ellison. Do we wish to lose La Guin, or Aldiss, or Priest? Michael Bishop, Gene Wolfe, Ed Bryant? (Though we would not be losing them. They would be losing us; they would be doing things we could not grasp. Have I just bared my Science Fiction-is-a-ghetto soul? People make ghettos.)

I cannot end on this point.
ANDREW TIDMARSH

I must turn again to the novel, and, always, always, to its author. I must—I really must—tell you that I think the novel is little more than a series of cliches; that in order for the book to be effective its reader must take to be truth everything he reads. This makes the book less appealing. One cannot dismiss Herovit and his childish enamourments as mere fabrications: no. Malzberg intends to ridicule his protagonist (which might less be Herovit than SF itself?) and therefore must convince that Herovit is real. If we dismiss Herovit we must dismiss everything around him. If we dismiss Herovit we might as well not read the novel. (That is my feeling; others might find the surface sufficiently entertaining.) But if we accept Herovit we accept everything around him: we accept his easy passage to stardom as an author, we accept his relationship with his literary agent and that agent’s circumstances; we accept that SF fandom comprises young people who know what they are avidly read, that SF authors lack self-respect because of what they write, that writers can only write if drunk. I recognize these things as cliches; they could actually be totally true; that would be irrelevant to this argument. Of course, Malzberg writes to devastate the field of science-fiction, to show that its limitations are self-imposed, arise from the inability—or refusal—of those to whom SF is most precious to widen their horizons, to lift their eyes from the page of a magazine to someone’s face. Yet, Malzberg’s use of cliches reduces the scope of his novel. Herovit’s World may not be Science Fiction but its background limits its audience appeal to one familiar with SF. (I hope I’m not, by making such a statement, again endorsing my own narrow horizons. What portion of the casual readership of SF has any knowledge of fandom?) OK: I’ve made a fool of myself again. I may see many cliches in the novel that most of its readers won’t see. Yet, there is some truth in what I was saying. The novel’s audience will be limited: not by the novel’s content but by the way it is packaged.

I could go on. (What possibilities there are in ‘SF as a commercial publishing category; discuss’. I won’t. I would like to end with a penetrating insight, or a provocative question; I can’t. I can only trail away, leaving you with the thought that whatever SF is—is it many things?—we, the fans and the aspiring authors, have moulded it. We can make it what we want, what I want. We can change it, repackage it; dispense with it entirely. Most of all, we can love it without understanding love.

--- Andrew Tidmarsh, 19/6/1976
Dear Fandom,

During the last few months I have been swamped with letters (bo-hum...) pleading for copies of O’Ryan, which is a fairly new British fanzine. To all those nutters I must now publicly apologize that the zine can no longer exceed the number of 200, unless aided by yourselves. The simple reason in that my pocket just will not allow it, even as much as it wants to.

Without subscriptions O’Ryan cannot extend its readership (unless through trade). I know subscription is an ugly word to many people but it just cannot be helped. So, if you do want O’Ryan desperately then I’m afraid it is the only answer. Again, sorry.

But you do have the fulfillment of knowing that for £1.00 per year (or the equivalent) you will receive a litho, forty page plus, art-filled, literature-packed, fan-shitting, humorous and serious, fanzine! Hope to hear from you...

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LEAD-IN (cont)

All right, smartyboots, what is really wrong?

What is really wrong, editor, is that you have allowed your emotions to seize control of you again. You have failed to Think Rationally. You have allowed yourself to hope.

I suspect I lose the drift of your argument, Spiby...

Bullshit, Fowler, bullshit. You know exactly what I mean. If I were to hint that the Little Red-Haired Girl has been replaced by...


....another....

SPIBY!!! BE SILENT!!!


I allow you your own type-face and this is the way you reward me. False innuendo. Dangerous statements. If you are not careful I shall not allow you into my editorial pages again. BE WARNED!

Forgive me, mighty editor. Spare me the wrath of your blue pencil.

Just this once, Spiby.

Good. Now get on with your editorial...
TALES FROM TIME AND SPACE - BACK NUMBERS OF VECTOR

70/71 (double-issue) Aug/Sept 1974 - Robert Silverberg Interviewed by Chris Fowler, Opening Minds by Brian Stableford, book and film reviews; cover by Brian Lewis

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The editor also has a few copies (autographed) of the Paul Dillon award-winning cover from Vector 73/74 at 50p each