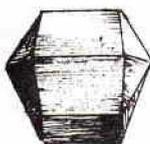
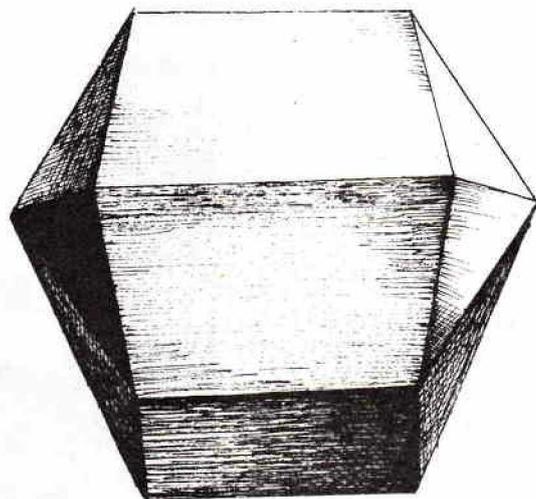


VECTOR 88

75p



Frank Herbert
interviewed

Jul - Aug 78

THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY

The Tolkien Society was founded in England in 1969, and is now a Charity registered in the U.K. It provides an international focal point for the many people interested in the works of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, and most especially in THE HOBBIT and his epic THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

Its members are kept in touch by the bulletin AMON HEN, which contains news of Society events, book reviews, short articles and members' letters. The journal MALLORN contains longer articles on Tolkien's works, which can range through the fields of literary criticism of Tolkien and allied writers, Middle-earth geology and political economy, the Elvish languages and members' own poetry and short stories in the Tolkien tradition. In addition, occasional booklets are published which deal in depth with matters of interest to the Society.



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The Society is in close contact with other allied Societies in the field of fantasy and speculative writing, and exchanges publications with them. These publications, together with a collection of fantasy fiction donated by members, and the Daphne Waters Memorial Collection donated by her father, form the Tolkien Society Library, from which items may be lent to U.K. members. Several members of the Society have also made their private reference collections of Tolkien material available to the membership and bona fide scholars. The Society deposits its publications in the British Library, other copyright libraries in the U.K., and the Wheaton and Marquette collections in the U.S.A.

In June 1972 Professor Tolkien honoured us by agreeing to become our Honorary President, offering any help he was able to give. Since his much regretted death he remains our Honorary President 'in perpetuo', at the suggestion of his family, with whom we continue to enjoy friendly relations.

The Society organises two national meetings each year: the A.G.M. and Dinner; and the 'Oxonmoot', an autumn weekend in Oxford spent visiting places of interest to the Society. Local groups, or 'smials', have been set up throughout the world.

Membership of the Tolkien Society is world-wide. The annual subscription is at present, (1978): U.K. and Europe £3.00; U.S.A. \$7.00; Australia \$5.50. This covers all the regular Society publications issued during the year of membership, including surface postage world-wide. Airmail subscription rates are: Europe £4.00; U.S.A. \$14.00. Aus. \$12.00. Subscriptions should be sent to the Membership Secretary, Mr. L.E. Simons, 11 Regal Way, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 ORZ, from whom details of library subscriptions and family membership may also be obtained. U.K. members may covenant their subscriptions at a fixed rate for seven years, and may also pay by standing order. The Membership Secretary will supply the relevant forms on request. Please make all cheques, money orders etc. payable to 'The Tolkien Society'.

General enquiries about the Society should be addressed to: The Secretary, Mrs. J. Yates, 14 Norfolk Avenue, London N15 6JX. Please enclose a stamped addressed label, or International Reply Coupon if writing from overseas.

Vector⁸⁸ Jul-Aug78

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The Android's Dreams

- an editorial

Owing to Bob Sheckley's recent illness, I was unable to interview him in time for this issue and thus have once again delayed the special issue. Nevertheless, I've enjoyed putting this issue onto stencil: from a personal viewpoint it has introduced me to two new authors (new?) who I've become addicted to - O'Brien and Tennant. I've also noted a marked increase in feedback: the letter column is extremely abbreviated and comment is still coming in. It does seem that Sf is on one of its periodic upswings. Whether or not it will maintain a larger readership after such media successes as STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS or whether it will again 'go into Slump' remains to be seen. There's a lot on the shelves at present, but still no sign of a British Sf magazine. VORTEX was a temporary hope, but the material and bias left much to be desired in terms of reaching a large audience. There are rumours of NEW WORLDS being resurrected in a smaller, less formal form than it was, but again that doesn't fill the gap. British Sf currently needs a regular, large circulation magazine to keep the short story form alive over here, particularly when there is only one regular anthology series in existence, and that (ANDROMEDA) apparently moving to an U.S. bias in its selection of stories.

It might be argued that the short story form was very much an American approach to science fiction - stemming from the pulp tradition: but the work of such as Aldiss, Ballard, Moorcock and MJ Harrison would seem to belie that. The only place where that particular strain of writing seems to be alive is in literary publications such as BANANAS, which allows very little in the way of diversity. Not everyone wants to write that way. The alternatives are (i) to leave the genre and write for other markets - losing the peculiar charm that Sf as a genre has (ii) to write at novel length and pray that a publisher will take the risk (iii) to shelve the idea of writing Sf altogether. I'm, of course, hoping that someone is going to shoot me down by proposing further alternatives, suggesting markets, pointing to the light at the end of the tunnel. It is, though, a depressing prospect. Several possible reasons have been suggested to me: that the economics of an Sf Magazine in Britain leave much to be desired; that there just isn't the new talent over here as there is in the States; that the short story form is no longer the essential form of Sf, and is being replaced by the novel; that those with the clout no longer have the desire to encourage the evolving generation of Sf writers. How much truth lies in any of those suggestions, I alone cannot say. I tend to feel that the economics are not quite right, and that perhaps the short story form is dying; neither of which thoughts are consoling. Today's aspiring Sf writer has a harsh apprenticeship ahead of him/her.

Moving away from the above topic, I'll just waffle to the bottom of the page about forthcoming attractions in VECTOR. Issue 89 will (at last!) be the long-promised Robert Sheckley issue. Issue 90 will have an interview with Fred Pohl together with articles on LeGuin and Hamilton and Brackett. Then (into 1979!) I'm planning issues on Bob Shaw, Chris Priest and Richard Cowper. And perhaps now is the time to mention that I am keen to elicit material for the special Worldcon Issue (copy date at the end of May): particularly articles on Continental & non-Anglo/American science fiction. Which is as far ahead as I'm currently looking.

FRANK HERBERT

pb



an
interview
by
david
wingrove

Art Janacek 1977

DW: You've been a science fiction writer since the fifties. Has it always been your job?

FH: Well, I've been a journalist. I would write my own stuff in the mornings and work the newspapers in the afternoons.

DW: And you're still doing this?

FH: No, no. I haven't been for about ten years now.

DW: When did you actually get into science fiction writing?

FH: In the early fifties.

DW: Was it through just reading it?

FH: Partly. I'd been writing other things - adventure, suspense, pulp stuff. But science fiction struck me as a field which was wide open. Big elbow room. The imagination could just take off and play any game it wanted - as long as it was fanatical (laughs).

DW: I notice you seem to have a fascination with the legalities of people's behaviour. This is particularly evident in the Gowachin courtarena.

FH: The Dosadi Experiment? You know, you can use science fiction - if you're entertaining - as a place to play analogue games. You can talk about racism, you can talk about over-legalisms, beaurocacy, super-crowding. You can say whatever: one of these assumptions that we don't question.

DW: How did the original idea of Beausab come about? Was that a natural development of this thought?

FH: Well, I just figured that there was no natural predator for beaurocracy and that this was an unnatural situation, because there are natural predators for almost everything else.

DW: A sort of formalised anarchy?

FH: In a way, yes. A kind of ombusman with clout (laughs).

DW: Another very noticeable thing is that you take a lot of care in developing different species. I'm thinking of things like the Pan Spechi and even, in a way, your future-Human societies.

FH: I think the whole question of aliens is glossed over in our society, and a lot of it is glossed over in science fiction: and I'm trying very hard not to do that. I know I'm not always succesful but I work hard at it. Carl Jung said one time that before we could understand what it was to be human we would have to really meet an alien intelligence.

DW: Which would define our humanity?

FH: An alien intelligence, per se, has to have characteristics that don't jive with what we believe is intelligence.

DW: Can we truly, then, understand what is alien? Because alien is something we can't experience.

FH: I think you can understand 'alien' the way the theologians have finally decided they will understand God. By negatives.

DW: Everything that surrounds the gap in the middle.

FH: Yes (laughs).

DW: I read 'Dune' three or four years ago, and it's still very fresh with me; and the thing that struck me about that was that everything was so meticulous. You couldn't quibble about it - you couldn't say "that's out of place, that seems wrong". It seemed as if you had spent years and years just getting the details right.

FH: Six years. And a year and a half of writing on each book. In fact, the three books are one book in my head.

DW: Is there ever plans to branch out from that, or is that it for 'Dune' ?

FH: I may come back to it, but I don't talk about work in progress. You use the same energies to talk about work that you use to write it, and I'm

very jealous of those energies.

DW: You don't wish to waste the time that could be used creating?

FH: That's right.

DW: How did you react to Star Wars? It's a question I've been dying to ask you, because I saw the film and thought there were bits of 'Dune' throughout that.

FH: Well, either deliberately-borrowed-by-accident or not, they raided a great many science fiction stories, I think. But it's hard to say how they did it or whether they were really being derivative or whether the science fiction itself has become an acceptable part of our mythology.

DW: Do you think he was trying to create something from all the parts?

FH: Well, I saw pieces of Ted Sturgeon's work, Larry Niven's, Barry Malzberg's. I saw things that were recognisably out of their stories. And my own feeling about it - and strangely enough I've had confirmation from other science fiction writers, not all of them, but many of them have agreed with me on this - is that Star Wars bored the hell out of us because it was cliche'd to us.

DW: Who's been writing it?

FH: Yes.

DW: I think that a lot of people found that the actual plot itself and the dialogue was very much a cliché throughout. But some of the ideas - presented visually - at last there was a movie that...

FH: ..In the long run I think Star Wars will have acquainted a larger audience with things that are passe with science fiction but which are groundwork for the ongoing creation of science fiction.

DW: So you think the science fiction movie takes off from here?

FH: Oh, indeed. Yes, indeed. We've just been building a wider audience, that's all. When you write a novel - a mainstream novel - there are certain conventions that your readers accept. An adventure or suspense film, now, has certain conventions that people accept. They know how these things work and in the US we have been very heavily conditioned by the jump-cuts of the advertising which get a great deal of information in about 30 seconds. All of these things are part of the accepted conventions of the medium. Now, science fiction had not spread its conventions over quite that wide an audience.

DW: It hadn't the command of the media, really, to do that?

FH: But now it has the biting clout, because it makes money. So, I only hope that it doesn't become the darling of the academics so that the life is..

DW: Choked out of it..

FH: Analysed out of it. People should read it because they enjoy it, and go to the film because they enjoy it.

DW: Going on to a very specific point, again on films. They were making a film of 'Dune'. How far did that get?

FH: I've no idea. I'm supposed to be called in as technical adviser whenever they begin principle photography. There has been no information coming my way, no signals that they are beginning principle photography. In fact, the last word I had was that they had put it in the back-burner and probably turned the burner on. So, I don't know what's going on.

DW: And how long has that situation been in existence?

FH: Well, this has been going on more than six years now. There was a hiatus

caused by the death of the person who originally purchased the film rights.

DW: You find this a little wearying at times?

FH: Well, I'm going on to other things. I've other things to do.

DW: Talking of new things, then. The Dosadi Experiment. It's already, to you, an old thing. Beausab - the whole idea, from Whipping Star and going back to stories like 'The Tactful Saboteur' - how many of these threads are you actually putting together? Are you visualising a compact universe, resulting from your stories?

FH: No, quite the contrary. Not a compact universe - a quite diverse universe - one with complexities piled on complexities. One which absolutely demands of its participants that they adjust to each other or fall by the wayside.

DW: No matter how the adjusting is done?

FH: That's right. That the stringencies of the interface between different civilisations, different alien cultures, demand new ways of adjusting. And, of course, I'm doing other things. I'm poking a little fun at over-legalising and, alternatively, over-beaurocracising our civilisation.

(1) I'm a devotee of C. Northcote Parkinson. Very much so (laughs). A genius of a man. The marvellous thing - that day on that beach in Malaysia - when he suddenly saw through to the truth of beaurocracy: that they don't perform a service, ultimately - that they become a parasite.

DW: Yes, it's very much an organism, isn't it?

FH: Yes, it is. It's an organism which drains civilisation. It could be argued, and with a great deal of merit, that the Roman civilisation died of beaurocracy - as much as anything else.

DW: Of having too-neat offices..

FH: It's a kind of disease.

DW: Working in an office you see the forms it takes.

FH: Oh yes..

DW: It seems that the people with the work piled on their desks are the people who are working and the people with the empty desks are the ones whose jobs have gone sterile. Though that's not always the case..

FH: No. In fact, a clean desk often means that the person is getting things done efficiently, which, in a beaurocracy, is a very dangerous way to live.

DW: Because they'll start looking for people to manipulate, to occupy their time?

FH: Yes. Beaurocracy eventually becomes a make-work process. I don't know what it's like in Britain, but in the US one person is actually producing something, that is, something marketable - is adding to the Gross National Product - to support two people who are, in some instances, supplying needed services and, in some instances, dragging their heels, you might say.

DW: That's very much the case in Britain. The services section of the population grows and grows year by year.

FH: But the services get poorer and poorer.

DW: I think, as the classic example, the British Navy is always quoted - where it started off with so many sailors and a few administrators and now is mainly Administration with a few sailors and a couple of boats.

FH: Yes (laughs).

DW: Again, on specifics, as far as Dosadi is concerned, I noticed Dosadi itself was a world where food was precious as much as in Dune where water was precious.

FH: There are lots of things that are money, that we don't recognise as money. Wheat is money.

DW: How much of this comes from personal experience, from journalism, from seeing these things?

FH: A journalist, if he is alert and stays in the business long enough, becomes somewhat of a generalist. If you have an active curiosity and feed your curiosity. And I would say that just about half of the ideas that I play with - probably, I'm guessing - come from a journalistic background. Interviewing and story-searching that takes you down strange avenues, you see.

DW: What form of journalism did you mainly partake in?

FH: Oh, I was a yellow journalist. I loved to turn over rocks and look at things scurry, because our society tends not to examine its sacrosanct assumptions and - for very good reasons, I think - wants to believe that people are what they say they are and that conditions are what they are presented as being. But it doesn't take a child or a genius to see that sometimes the king is naked.

DW: That is very much the classic role of the journalist, which is very often forgotten.

FH: And I think it is a very necessary role in the society in the United States. I don't know what it's like in Britain, but it is a safety valve, really. Here, in Britain, you have the monarchy to protect you from revolutionary change - which I think is a very good service. In the United States we have the fourth estate (laughs).

DW: How did you react to Watergate, then, being very much involved in journalism?

FH: Oh, I think that Richard Nixon was created as much by the people who opposed him as by the people who supported him; people need their scape-goats and Richard Nixon never was successful in concealing what he was. We get the kinds of government we deserve, you know? In any republic or democracy this is true. Very true.

No, I look on Nixon as a very sad figure. He was a product of the culture which projected him, you see. I don't think there was any day in history when Richard Nixon woke up, twirled his moustache and said "Ah-hah, today I'm going to do an evil thing". (laughs) No, he did what he thought was right because that's the way he'd learned to perform in a society which presented these things as right.

DW: Do you think there's such a thing as genuine evil, then?

FH: Oh, I think there's a bit of it around. But I don't think that Nixon was genuinely evil. I think that he behaved in the office more-or-less the way Kennedy behaved and Johnson behaved - and perhaps with a bit more moral rectitude than some of his predecessors. But, he had a fatal flaw. He was an unsympathetic character.

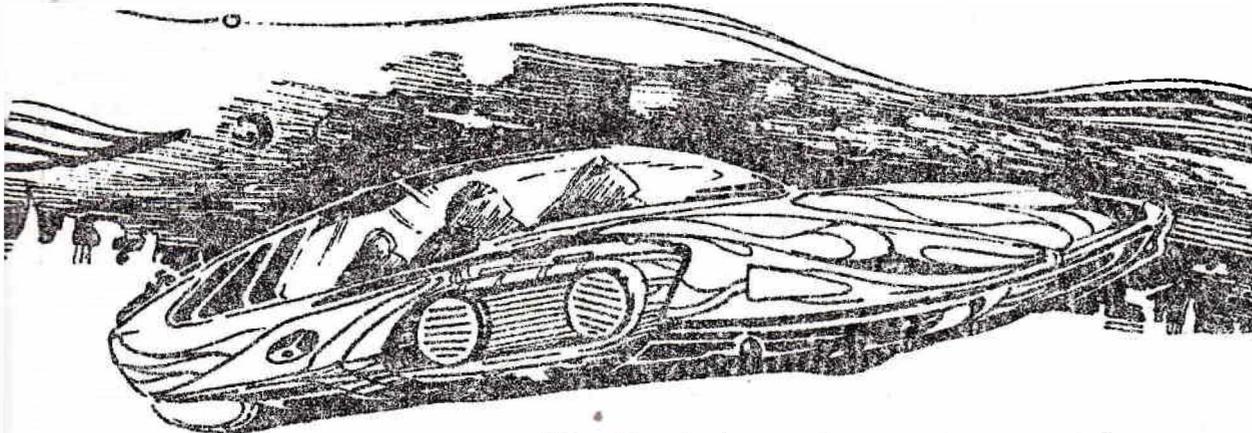
DW: He didn't have the sort of persona that Carter has?

FH: No, he had no charisma. And that's always fatal. It's essentially a Greek tragedy, you see. He didn't stand there beating his chest like Prometheus and say "But I just did what Kennedy did, you know, and Johnson, and Eisenhower.." And everybody says "Yes, but we don't like you.." (laughs).

DW: It surprises me, then, in that case, that they're actually selling Richard Nixon t-shirts in America.

FH: But why should that surprise you? He's a kind of pathetic figure. People are probably feeling shamefaced. They say "Well, our civilisation created him. Why did we make him the only one to wear the hair shirt? (laughs).

DW: Perhaps it's surprising to us because the British in character are very much less excessive. In fact, they're secretive in their own way and reticent.



FH: Oh, but you have your scandals.

DW: Oh, we have our scandals but they're quickly shovelled

FH: ..shovelled under the carpet. Yes, of course. We tend to bring them out and analyse them and say "well, what did he really mean by that?" and "how did I participate in that?" and "perhaps I should discuss this with my psychiatrist?"

DW: Has that ever been a major factor in your stories? I know a lot of American science fiction writers do this. Fred Pohl's GATEWAY has every alternate chapter with a robot psychiatrist. Is it ever something you've particularly concentrated on in any of your stories, any of your work?

FH: I'm well aware of the currents of psycho-analysis in our culture. I was a student of Jung's - not directly, but second hand; one of my Mentors was a student of Jung's - and my feeling is that the unexamined assumptions are available to us through our actions - either individually or as a society. What the society does as a whole - if you ignore what it's saying it's doing. Don't look at the rationalisations and protestations, look at what's happening, look at what the 'thing' is doing.

DW: The actual thing-in-itself..

FH: Yes, look at the thing. Right. This is like throwing a searchlight on history.

DW: Do you believe in the historical process?

FH: Oh, indeed I do. I think that its complexities are not all that easy to unravel, but they're there. Oftentimes what you see is only the current at the top, boiling on the surface.

DW: It's very much something that I get personally out of your writing.

FH: I like to get underneath and look at it..

DW: You're showing the surface there for the first, say, hundred pages of a book, and then you're slowly burrowing deeper and deeper till you get to the end.

FH: Yes, that's right. That's a deliberate action on my part.

DW: That's conscious? Yes..

FH: ..I like to take things that everybody says "Well, you know that's true because it's true". All assumptions that we have, when we ultimately come down to the point where we believe it because we believe it.

DW: And not because it's actually true?

FH: Yes.

DW: You say that Jung was one of your Mentors - if at second hand. From that, what books do you like reading?

FH: Oh, I read non-fiction mostly. I'll read fiction occasionally, chewing-gum for the mind on an air-plane, that sort of thing - or under similar circumstances. But most of the fiction I read is on the recommendation of people whose taste I trust.

DW: Are there any particular writers - and I'm not particularly thinking of science fiction writers - who you admire. I thought you might like Hesse, being a student of Jung's.

FH: Oh, yes. And James. I'm a fan of the Irish poets - Yeats, Guy de Maupassant, Po, O Henry. The incisive exposition of character. And I read a great deal of poetry, because poetry is compressed meaning. A great deal of effort goes into putting an enormous amount of stuff in a very small space.

DW: It's been said that the nearest thing to science fiction writing is poetry because you have that density of image. It's not always true - in fact, in many cases, it's not - but when it's written well, it's written densely. The ideas are all there.

FH: I have been known to write portions of my work as poetry and then mine the poetry and restore it to prose.

DW: Is that one of many techniques you use to write?

FH: One of many.

DW: Do you ever find you come across a writer's block?

FH: Thus far I've never had one.

DW: Is this because you approach it in so many various ways?

FH: Also, I approach it professionally. What do I do? I write! I sit down at the typewriter, put paper in it and work.

DW: And you revise a lot?

FH: Oh yes. I think a good story has to start growing in the middle. When it starts enriching outward to both ends, that's when you know it's going well.

DW: So you've never got an opening scene in mind?

FH: Oh, oftentimes. That doesn't mean that the enrichment of character or the drama, the suspense, doesn't take place after you begin with that scene. I've been known to write the last chapter of a book before I've completed it.

DW: And work towards that?

FH: Oh yes.

DW: I had the impression that it was revised because it's constructed so well that by the end all is practically revealed, the things that were unclear at the start are certainly clear by the end. And it has a very hard skeleton, if you like.

FH: A lot of work has gone into the plumbing. I plot heavily.

DW: You do?

FH: I like to know my characters very well. I'll make file folders on the characters. I may have a character who walks on stage at the age of 25 - but I know where that character was born, parentage, schooling, friends, trauma, enjoyments, likes and dislikes. I know that person as though he were my brother. Perhaps better (laughs).

DW: Because you can get under the surface, yes. Obviously, as a journalist you are observing people, but are you looking for particular things in people when you're studying them - or observing them?

FH: The nuances which make character are products of so many things that what you look for are signals that separate people. Why does this person behave this way and that one another way? Why are these two people on a collision course? It's a psycho-analytic job in a sense except that you control the psyche to a degree.

DW: You can fashion it. You've admitted you're a Jungian. How do the theories of Freud affect you?

FH: Oh, I think Freud has his fixations. Well, so did Jung. And I think these come out in what he believed. I would say that his rejection of Adler, (2) for example, was ill-timed and a mistake on his part.

DW: In what way?

FH: Power seeking power is a very strong motive in our society. Most of the politicians that I know are driven by this. It's a flaw in all political systems - that the people who usually get into power want power for power's sake.

DW: As a thing in itself.

FH: Yes. And this is the essential flaw of totalitarian governments.

DW: Their ultimate downfall?

FH: Yes, and the saving grace of a democracy or a republic is that occasionally we can throw the bastards out. And get a new set of bastards (laughs)

DW: Do you think much changes about human nature?

FH: Oh, I think that the words 'Human nature' is a sort of catchall that doesn't mean too much anymore. The sophistication of the people who observe their own participation in history and the way others perform is increasing. And that certainly must have its influence on whatever we believe is 'human nature'.

DW: So it's really the recording process that is becoming more sophisticated, not Man himself?

FH: Oh yes. And computers are going to make a quantitative difference in this because they are storage and retrieval systems above all else.

DW: I notice that there's not a great deal of scope for robots in your stories. In Phil Dick's stories, for example, the simulacrum is a standard thing of the future.

FH: I believe we've tried slavery and have found that it is more dangerous to the slave owner than it is to the slave.

DW: And you think that lesson is deep-rooted?

FH: I think it's very deep-rooted, yes. I think there is a hardcore of very sane distrust in most of civilisation towards the free lunch.

DW: Do you think this is a modern thing Since Roman Times, if you like?

FH: I'd say since the Middle Ages. But perhaps it's 12th to 14th century. Since that time. When you see factory workers revolting against the automated factory, I think you're sensing this - not that this is going

to stop the automated factory, because most factory workers, caught in the clutches of union hyperbole, are going down a primrose path, I believe, that is not going to pay them in the end. They are reducing the quality of what they produce. And this is where the automated factory can beat them. You see what I'm saying? If they let it beat them.

DW: I don't know how it is in America, but in Britain you have this trend now - and it's a small trend, I admit - to go back to hand-made goods.

FH: It's getting very strong in the US.

DW: As almost a reaction to this.

FH: Of course.

DW: A reaction to the machine age.

FH: To the machine that makes a very nice product that will last quickly..

DW: Not longer but.. (both laugh).

FH: And instead you can make one by hand that your great-grandchildren will be passing on to their descendants. We support that sort of thing, personally, my wife and I. We have had our furniture hand-made, for example, by cabinet makers.

DW: You don't like utility living?

FH: I don't feel that I really own anything. I'm a steward of certain things and my stewardship certainly will be judged in the centuries to come not only on the basis of some artistic interpretations of what we've done, but also of how the things endure.

DW: Are you conscious of endurance, as far as being a writer is concerned?

FH: Yes. Also of the extent of time. Take, for example, a science fiction writer who writes a story about 25000 years in the future. In a very real sense, while you're writing that story, you live out there. Then you come back to this time. Well, these are primitive times.

DW: And you react differently? Do you find that?

FH: 2,500 years ago, if you look back - that was primitive times, wasn't it? All present time is primitive in terms of this kind of time development.

DW: Do you get a personal sense of that in your own writing?

FH: Oh yes, very much so.

DW: When you look out of the window and see petrol-driven cars.

FH: Oh, indeed. Quite primitive. At least, the conditions around me are quite primitive.

DW: It's an amusing concept.

FH: And not only amusing. I think it's quite accurate. If you could be transported back, let's say, five thousand years, what would you find around you? See, you've lived here now - how old are you?

DW: Twenty-three.

FH: Right. You've lived here for twenty-three years. You go back five thousand years. What would you find around you?

DW: It's very hard to visualise..

FH: Primitive times! Very much so. You wouldn't have any indoor plumbing. No medical facilities as you understand them. Your food would be catch-as-catch-can, probably.

DW: In fact, I don't know whether you've heard of it, but they had an experiment down in Devon..

FH: Oh, I know about this. The primitive-living experiment?

DW: That's it. The Bronze Age one. And they've all fled back to their comforts after a while.

FH: Of course. I know of such an experiment in the United States where the people cheated. They took canned goods (both laugh).

DW: Perhaps that's something we haven't discovered about the Bronze Age yet.

FH: I don't think bronze cans would work very well.

DW: How in fact do you see the future in personal terms, not just in fictional terms - or perhaps it's the same thing for you? Is what is in your books the way you visualise the future?

FH: I keep looking for surprises. And I know I'll find them.

DW: You haven't actually sat down to set out the model in your head of what's going to happen?

FH: Oh no, because I think that's another dead end. There is no such thing as the future. That's a protestant delusion because it says that predestination is it, you see. It's the future and all we're doing is waiting for it to happen.

DW: You're very much an advocate of free-will then?

FH: Well, in a sense, yes. But more, I would say, an advocate of the accidents of the universe. I really do believe that we live in an Einsteinian and Heisenbergian universe, where relativity is the name of the game. Not fixed courses. We are not on a railroad track.

DW: And do you think the rules will ever change?

FH: Oh, indeed. I think rules will change. You see, this is asking for absolutes when you say 'rules'.

DW: Hmm. It's very much against what the universe is about.

FH: Yes. Of course.

DW: A thought, here, in fact, which was spawned by something I read in THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT, about getting down to what things actually are and people defining things. When they actually define 'that's how an atom moves', 'that's the pattern of something', do you ask the question then 'why does it do that?'.

FH: Of course. You must. I think that absolutes always occur in very isolated circumstances. The single rule to explain everything means you're very localised. You haven't moved out into a broader universe. And the same thing is true of what we usually call 'scientific progress'. When we discover something - the way an atom moves or the way the DNA molecule spirals round - what we've done essentially is open up a new door on things we don't know.

DW: And people crowd into the room and explore it?

FH: Yes.

DW: Do you think that will be the continuing pattern of scientific development?

FH: I don't see how it can help but be. That's the way the universe plays its games.

DW: Every sixty years people will channel their thoughts into certain dead ends and then someone will break out into another room?

FH: Well, I don't know that I'd put a sixty year beat on it, because I think the beat is different. But the universe continually surprises us, in the sense that things are not what we thought they were a generation

ago.

DW: Have you ever thought of writing a novel on that idea?

FH: I use this - I think it's an insight - regularly, but I haven't thought of doing just that because I think that again is an idea that you would have to people with interesting people and flesh out in dramatic ways, and that changes the character of it, you see.

DW: But the idea is in the back of your head?

FH: Well, ideas are a dime a dozen. Ideas don't make stories. People make stories.

DW: Do you find, then, that you - you've said already that you have files on characters - sit down and look at several files and say 'these are the people I've got'?

FH: When I said that I meant that I will have the concept of a story, the broad concept, the structure, and then I people it.

DW: But you never find you have odd characters?

FH: Left over? Oh, no.

DW: You never get a character developing in mind without a story to go with it?

FH: No. Because I build the characters for the story and the story for the characters. It's an interacting situation.

DW: Going back to what we were saying earlier. How do you react to Toffler?

FH: The voice crying in the wilderness. Future shock, that is, I'm sure, what you're meaning. Well, Toffler, I think, has put his finger on a human characteristic which, at its core, we usually call 'conservatism'. Now, 'conservatism' is bred in the bone - and I think for very good survival reasons. It didn't do to go out and pick any fruit you saw in the forest and eat it because the damn thing might be poisonous. But somehow we learned that was poisonous, that not, this cures gastritis and this gives you visions of God (laughs).

DW: Or visions of what God isn't..

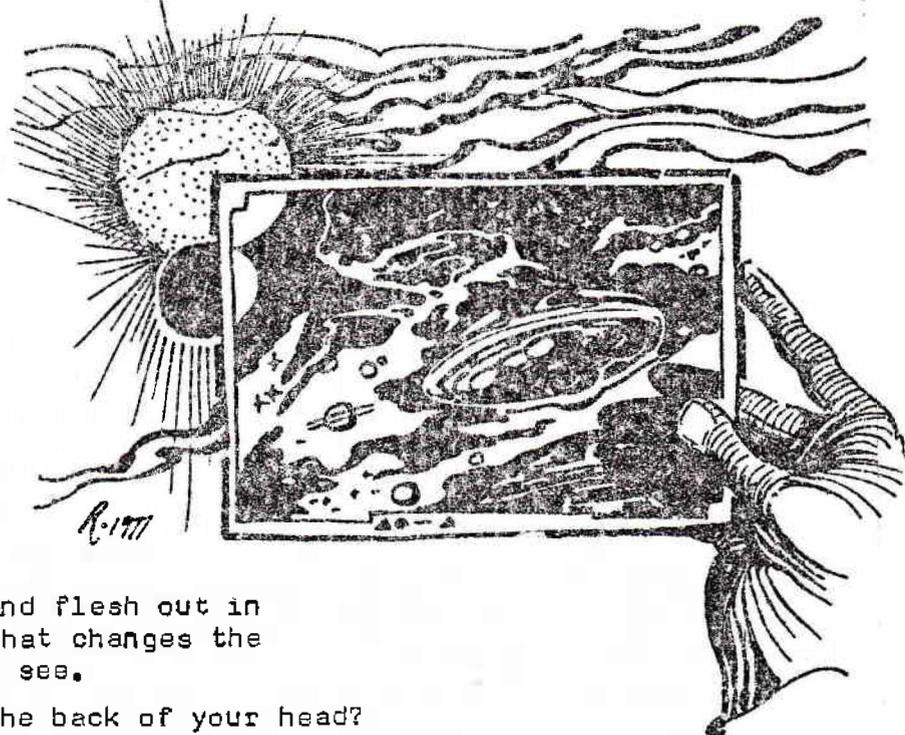
FH: Or makes you drunk. We've done that with a sort of toe-in-the-water conservatism all through human history.

DW: And hence you get these sharp reactions against it.

FH: Yes.

DW: Like the youth movements of the sixties.

FH: That, I think, is the essence of what Toffler is talking about when he talks about 'future shock'.



- DW: So, what he is talking about, basically, is something that's always been there?
- FH: Yes, that's right. There always has been 'future shock'. Yet it moves. (laughs).
- DW: Jumping a bit. You say you like poetry, you like reading - not particularly fiction books - do you get involved very much in other art forms? Music?
- FH: Yes.
- DW: Do you paint?
- FH: No, no. I was a professional photographer and still know quite a bit about it, although I'm probably ten years out of date with some of the developments, because I haven't kept it up. I'm interested in visual arts - other people's painting and so on. I like nothing better than to get in a good coffee house with a good poetry reading.
- DW: Have you found any while you've been over in London?
- FH: Not yet, I haven't, no. But I haven't really had too much spare time. It's usually work all day on the script..
- DW: Do you take lengthy holidays at times?
- FH: Oh, I've been known to take a month off or so..
- DW: And what do you like doing in your spare time?
- FH: Fishing. Sailing. I love to race a sailboat. A great sport. I also like to fly an airplane - that sort of thing. And I think one of the things I'm going to pick up on in the next few years is sail-planing. I've already had some instruction in it. I'll get my ticket and do it. I feel every ten years you should pick up something new.
- DW: And get deeply involved in it?
- FH: It's what you should do. Kind of renew your ability to adjust to the marvellous things that are around us in this civilisation.
- DW: Have many things over the last..ten years or so genuinely surprised you in that way? Anything that's come along, out of the blue?
- FH: No, I'm afraid not. But I keep hoping.
- DW: Have you ever found that after a while your wonder at the world begins to diminish? Or does it, in fact, increase?
- FH: Oh no, no. Because I am continually surprised by people and their wonderful inter-actions and by the permutations of society - that sort of thing. I did an extensive journalistic trip through the commune movement in the US and marvelled at it.
- DW: Did part of that go into the novel HELLSTROM'S HIVE?
- FH: Well, it's hard to say that it did and hard to say that it didn't. I don't consciously recall ever mining that, no. But we're all products of what we learn, you know.
- DW: Do you ever find yourself recognising things - first of all, perhaps, do you ever re-read your stuff very much?
- FH: Not very much, no. Not unless I'm going to do a sequel and need to get into the beat of it - which I did with Dosadi, of course. I read WHIPPING STAR. In fact, I went right back through the Jorj X McKie file for that. But that's to build the kind of verisimilitude that the surround has. It's necessary for a story. It has to happen sometimes.

- DW: And do you recognise parts of your previous self when you do that? Can you see certain of your earlier characteristics?
- FH: Oh yes, partly. I don't know of a writer who wouldn't like to go back to some of his work and re-write it. In fact, I've recently had the pleasure of doing that. You see, what's happening here is that I'm writing a sequel to a book and it deals with a previous book - so I don't like to talk about it too much. Collect the energy that's going into the book, you see. If I talk about it I use that up on the tape.
- DW: And do you find the books that you read influence what you're writing at the time?
- FH: Oh, I'm sure they do. Why wouldn't they? If you gain something from what you read...
- DW: You assimilate it all into the mix.
- FH: Of course. We stand on each other's shoulders, and on the shoulders of history. I'm sure that's true. And always have done... Have you any final questions?
- DW: I don't think there are any final questions. At least, I've not prepared any.
- FH: That's true.

* * * * *

Notes:-

- (1) C. Northcote Parkinson: PARKINSON'S LAW or THE PURSUIT OF PROGRESS. - 1957. Available in Penguin Books.
- (2) Alfred Adler was an Austrian psychiatrist (1870-1937) who was at first closely associated with Freud but later split to form his own school of psycho-analytic thought, rejecting Freud's views on infantile sexuality and proposing his own views on infant inadequacy and the drive to overcome such. In his view this drive formed personality and life-style and was the basis of neurosis. He is also a progenitor of Penis Envy.

* * * * *

THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT By Frank Herbert: Victor Gollancz: London; 1978; 336pp; ISBN 0 575 02490 9; £4.95.

Reviewed by David Wingrove.

There have been several attempts to chart the possible reactions of Man under extreme pressure. Silverberg's THE WORLD INSIDE dealt with the forms of alienation resultant from high density living and lack of privacy. Brian Aldiss' shorter 'Total Environment' dealt with much the same theme, but examined it as an experiment: concluding that such conditions can cause radical changes not only in Man's social behaviour but also in his physical and psychological orientation. Silverberg shows the world as world, Aldiss an aware microcosm of the world under experimental conditions: it remains for Frank Herbert, in THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT, to present us with a world that is subject to an experiment in forced evolution - of which it is kept unaware.

Without decrying either of his precursors, Herbert's novel treats this theme with a great deal of maturity and succeeds in examining far more than Aldiss or Silverberg. Like the former he realises that a society under extreme stress will pare things back to the essential, will develop certain nuances of behaviour and new levels of understanding. In DOSADI, as in Aldiss'

TE, the superfluous has no place. However, there is a richness to Herbert's world that is more akin to Silverberg's cold-but-crowded future than to Aldiss' teeming-but-stable present. There is a complex hierarchical structure at the core of each. In each the mechanics of the social organism are explained with clarity, the forces are shown. Only in DOSADI is there the sense of genuine participation within that organism. Like Aldiss, Herbert gives the dual perspective of outside and inside, linking both by having his protagonist experience the mystery of observation and the revelation of participation. Unlike Aldiss, Herbert has his viewpoint character gel with the inside, becoming 'Dosadi' in much the same way as one would imagine T.E. Lawrence became 'Arab'.

The viewpoint character is one readers of Herbert may find familiar. Jorj X. McKie was the protagonist of WHIPPING STAR, a prequel in many ways to this novel. WHIPPING STAR provides a lengthy excursion into the complexities of the Consentiency, Herbert's envisaged future galactic society, but it lacks the intensity of visualisation of DOSADI. THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT benefits from its prequel, however, in that the Consentiency is an unobtrusive and thus acceptable vehicle for such complex hypothesising. The settings and customs of the Consentiency, the sentient creatures of the Federation and their mores and talents are familiar to Herbert and he projects that familiarity. Despite its complexity, Dosadi is not entirely unaccessible to the outsider - ourselves, the readers. No, we are drawn slowly into the Dosadi experience, becoming gradually aware of the price of life in a world where food is acutely short (so much so that garbage is the standard diet of those on the 'Rim', the savage breeding grounds of both the Gowachin and Human stock of Dosadi), where the ground is saturated with toxic chemicals; a place where Niccolo Machiavelli would have been one of millions, trying desperately to escape the Rim and find a place in the poison-free City. It is, without doubt, masterfully achieved; the web of emotional, cultural and political tensions is delicately woven.

The story can be viewed from several perspectives. From McKie's personal viewpoint it runs like this: he is chosen by the Gowachin (a toad-like alien race) to investigate, and eventually justify, their illegal experiment on Dosadi (achieved by kidnapping humans and gowachin over a very long time scale and sealing them away on Dosadi: a planet enclosed by a Caleban - a sentient star); he discovers - from his participation inside - that Dosadi has produced something with which the gowachin cannot cope, revealed by his own inadequacies amongst them; finally, he assimilates their culture and becomes 'dosadi'. It is in the second stage of this development that I feel the book achieves most - by its contrast of McKie (so talented outside, so capable there) with the ruthless and precise dosadi inside.

" It put him at a disadvantage not knowing as many of these people by sight and name as he should. They, of course, had ready memories of everyone important around them and, when they used a name, often did it with such blurred movement into new subjects that he was seldom sure who had been named. He saw the key to it, though. Their memories were anchored in explicit references to relative abilities of those around them, relative dangers. And it wasn't so much that they concealed their emotions as that they managed their emotions. Nowhere in their memories could there be any emotive clouding such as thoughts of love or friendship. Such things weakened you. Everything operated on the strict basis of quid pro quo, and you'd better have the cash ready - whatever that cash might be. McKie, pressed all around by questions from the people in the conference room, knew he had only one real asset: he was a key they might use to open the God Wall. Very important asset, but unfortunately owned by an idiot. "

(- Page 206)

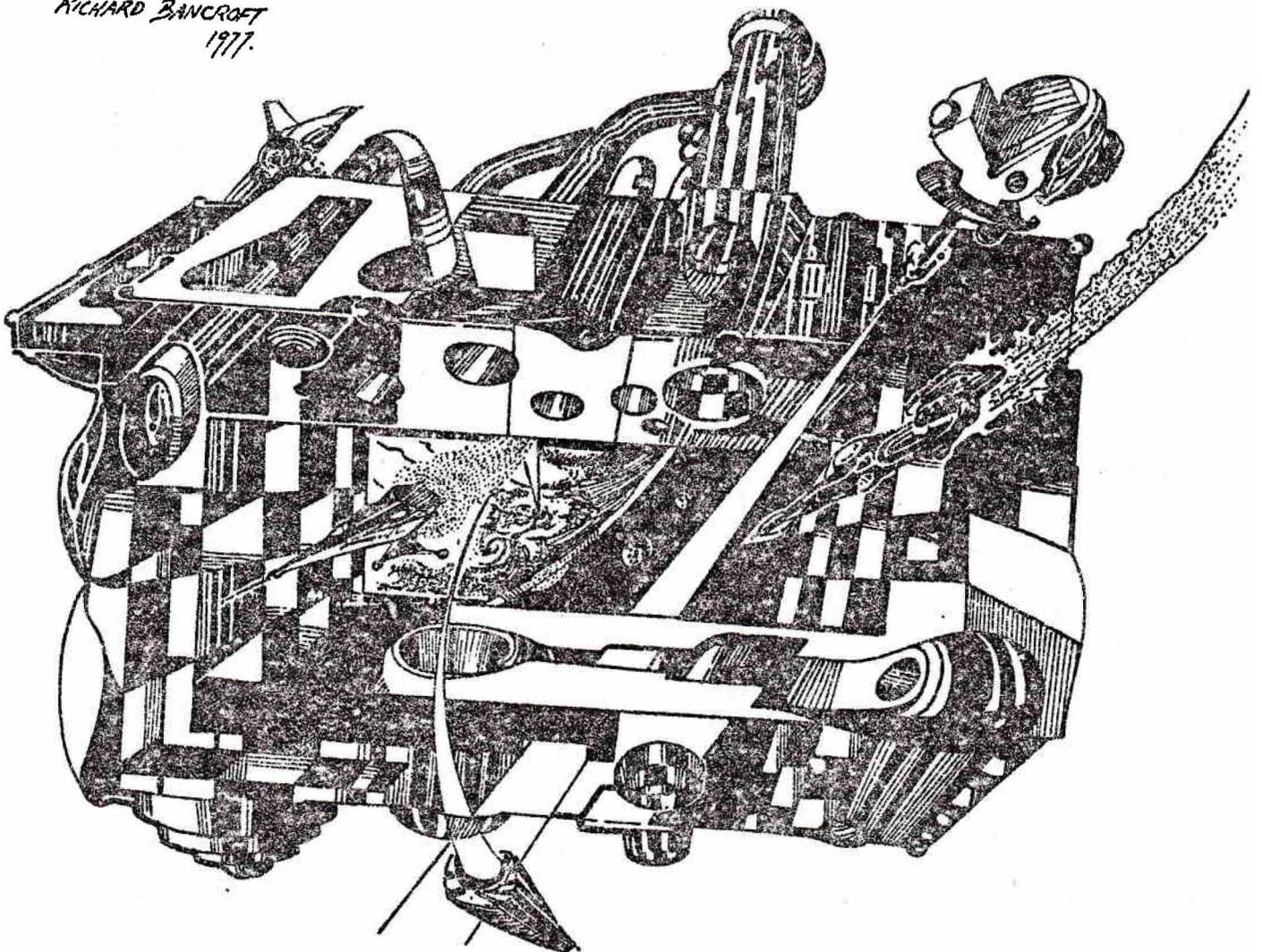
There is something of the rampant paranoia here that was such a well observed part of DUNE. Indeed, there are similarities throughout between the two books.

Dosadi throws up no single Muad'dib: its specialty is a whole race of totally competent political animals - bred to survive and dominate through an instinctive awareness of other people's weaknesses. The opening up of Dosadi at the end of the book and the scene where McKie (subtly changed by a literal merging with dosadi - read the book, I'll say no more here) faces and overcomes the Gowachin hierarchy by using its own legalities, hints that there may be another book. It is certainly a situation that requires further expansion, despite the hint in the very last paragraph that McKie will provide the balance to this new cultural intrusion.

I have left the explanations brief: Herbert himself provides a neat essay on the Consentency in the May 1977 edition of *Galaxy*, 'The Consentency - And How It Got That Way', which coincided with the first part of the four-part serialisation of *THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT*. The plot is everything one would expect from the author of *DUNE*, tight enough to follow, yet with enough enigmas to tease the intellect throughout. Like all of Herbert's work it is initially difficult to assimilate all the data being fed to you, the reader: but the eventual effect is a cumulative one - of depth and opulence. The physical action avoids the trite and naive and nicely counter-balances those tense but static moments when alien cultures meet and play their deadly games of intellect.

Of the various studies in stress in science fiction, it is the most meticulously crafted and examined, whilst remaining the most readable: always a good recommendation. I found it most satisfying.

RICHARD BANCROFT
1977.



Terminal Choreography

p20

by Andrew Darlington

An Overview of Michael Moorcock's "Dancers At The End Of Time" Stories

On their first meeting Brian Aldiss perceived that the 17-year old Michael Moorcock 'assumed dandified airs, as much to amuse himself' as for the benefit of others (9). This assumption of airs has since become a familiar component of the Moorcock persona, but it has never seemed as dandified as it appears in his latest story-cycle, "The Dancers at the End of Time." The Dancers are 'a people possessing limitless power and using it for nothing but their own amusement, like gods at play' (5). The cycle is an affectation of vast invention, a series of largely dilettante poses and skilful sophistry, an absurd comic extravaganza set amid, and eventually beyond, the penultimate decadence of world's end. If Moorcock's work can be interpreted in autobiographical terms then this latest phase of his writing reflects a sense of well-being, a mellowing, and a maturity that nevertheless provides just as distinctive a set of motifs as the brittle frustrations and violence that surfaced through the dark malevolence of the Elric stories and the other early writing. And as if to counter the implied superficiality of the Aldiss observation he has one character state that 'it is sometimes the case that the greater the extravagant outer show the greater has been the plunge by the showman into the depths of his own private conscience; consequently the greater the effort to hide the fact'(5). In keeping with this credo "The Dancers at the End of Time" is a game of wit and occasional self-indulgence. And - unlike the Elric stories, deaths are exceptionally rare. Daphnish Armature and her son Snuffles die, but then, as he is merely her parasite appendage, perhaps he does not count; and two of the Lat brigand musicians are eaten by Eurypterids (water scorpions), but as they are not exactly human perhaps they don't count either!

The universe is drawing to a close, the race faces extinction, yet seldom is there any attempt by Moorcock to seriously portray a world-end society millions of years hence as Brian Aldiss did in 'Hothouse', as Olaf Stapledon did in 'Last and First Men', as Arthur C. Clarke did in the short story, 'Old Hundredth', or even as Jack Vance did in his mythologies from 'The Dying Earth'. That does not appear to be Moorcock's intention. Instead his decorously fantastic characters merely fritter their immortalities and their limitless power (power originally absorbed from the energy of whole suns which is stored in the 'rotted' sentient cities of antiquity - one of which, significantly, is called Tanelorn). They use this power to create living dinosaurs made of edible jelly, to create entire continents complete with miniature wildlife, or blazing cities made of water, or whole worlds within which they act out the entire military history of the Earth. They alter their bodies, alter their sex, become beasts, collect space and time travellers in menageries, hold endless parties of polite sophistication and bizarre excess. Perceptively a writer in the 'Glimpse' fanzine pointed out that 'this decadent life-style is the ultimate expression of the creed of aestheticism popular among the intellectuals of the late 19th century - the idea that the only undeniable reality in human existence is the response of the brain to the impressions it receives from the senses'.

A short story, "Waiting for the End of Time" had appeared as early as 1970 in the ill-fated "Visions of Tomorrow" magazine, (10) and although it is not strictly a part of the 'Dancers' cycle it could have been a germination point of the idea. The story features two hermaphrodite human beings with limitless

powers who attempt to come to terms with the contractions and imminent death of the galaxy. Although the story lacks the wit and sophistication of the later cycle it does provide the introduction of the concept of a cyclic universe. Moorcock was to reiterate the idea in "The End Of All Songs" when it is suggested that the escaping Jherek Carnelian and Mrs Amelia Underwood could have travelled forwards in time - not backwards - into Earth's prehistory.

The cast of the 'End of Time' proper is extravagant. There is the Duke of Queens, named after the legendary area of New York. He lives in an inverted palace, and is led to believe that he has killed the masked and suicidal Lord Shark the Unknown in a duel (6). There is Mistress Christia and Everlasting Concubine who chooses 'to reflect with consummate artistry the desires of her lovers of the day', even to the extent of becoming the guiltless child Catherine Gratitude from whom Werther de Goethe learns of guilt and sin (5). De Goethe himself is one of the few natural-born denizens of the End of Time, and glaufts the Romantic sense of fulfillment that his name implies, through a created environment of storms and bare rock. Life, he opines paradoxically, 'has no meaning without misery' - in an age when there is no misery. Then there is My Lady Charlotta of Beneath Lake Billy the Kid, whose menagerie initially held the doom-propheying Yusharip. The alien was stolen and bartered for Mrs Amelia Underwood, and later travels the Universe with Mrs Underwood's original captor, the gloomy giant Lord Mongrove. For Mongrove the eventual death of the universe merely provides a vindication of his pessimistic life-philosophy. There is also Argonheart Po, Bishop Castle, Gaf the Horse in Tears, Li Pao the ex-chairman of a 27th-century Chinese Peoples Republic, Abu Thaleb the Commis-sar of Bengal, Captain Oliphant, Korghon of Soth, and O'Kala Incarnadine who takes the form of a bear, a gorilla, a goat, a sea-lion or a rhinoceros.

As the list suggests, and as Moorcock admits, there is an effect of 'sensation piled on sensation but rooted in nothing' (1). They 'play mindless games, without purpose or meaning, while the universe dies' around them. The most effective sequences consist of the introduction of elements foreign to the age. In "Constant Fire" Moorcock regurgitates the strutting, egotistical Fireclown Emmanuel Bloom, the Messianic custodian of the Holy Grail, from his 1965 novel "The Winds Of Limbo" (a title which occurs, obliquely, in the trilogy). "Ancient Shadows" brings two austere time-travellers, Dafnish Armatrice and her son, the 60-year old child Snuffles into the hedonistic 'rotting paradise' to provide some of the cycles most traumatic moments. For the first time Moorcock calls the End-of-Time postulates into question. For the first time he seems to be peeling back the layers of 'dandified airs'. Hinting that by this tactic - the irreconcilable clash of contradictory ethics - the mythos can be used for a serious purpose. Similarly, in the taut and well-written "Pale Roses" the element of long-extinct virginal purity is recreated for an ultimately trivial - if dramatically effective - purpose.

Then, of course, there is the unique temporal journeyings of Jherek Carnelian. This surreal odyssey begins in 'An Alien Heat', the novel which Moorcock chose to recommend because 'it has probably the broadest appeal and is the funniest and probably the most humane' of all his work (11). Carnelian is the natural born son of 'the most artificial of all creatures' (5), The Iron Orchid, who often wears a profusity of breasts. Carnelian also seems to be the latest incarnation in the name-alike 'champion eternal' karma, heir to Jehama Colyrahlias, Jerry Cornell, Jhary-a-Conel, Jermays the Crooked, (James Colvin?), and inevitably - from Moorcock's 'novels of inhumanity' - Jerry Cornelius. Jherek, incidentally, gets a single mention outside the 'End of Time' stories, in The Champion of Carathorn. Carnelian is an eternal naive existing in a state beyond knowledge of death or fear,

beyond good or evil. A perverse amoral Eloi, essentially benevolent and well-meaning in an universe where such concepts have become all-pervading. In Aldiss's phrase he not only assumes, but embodies 'dandified airs'. He observes all with the same bemused amused ambivalence. Faced with the end of time he asks 'why would you wish to save the universe?' with a genuine degree of perplexity at the absurdity of the suggestion. He meets, liberates, and attempts to woo Mrs Amelia Underwood, an involuntary time-traveller from 1896 whom he merely concedes to be 'the most beautiful human being apart from himself'. Although the chaste romance began as an affectation, it becomes an obsession, and when she is snatched back to the time of her origin he makes the first of two forays into the past in attempts to recover her. Carnelian acquires a convenient time machine from Brannart Morphail, a club-footed hunch-backed scientist. Morphail belongs to My Lady Charlottina's menagerie, is an expert on Time Machines and has 'always affected a somewhat proprietorial attitude towards Time.'

The machine used by Carnelian 'was a sphere full of milky fluid in which the traveller floated encased in a rubber suit, breathing through a mask attached to a hose leading into the wall of the machine'. It is remarkably similar to the device used by Karl Glogauer in 'Behold The Man which was also a 'sphere full of milky fluid in which the traveller floats enclosed in a rubber suit, breathing through a mask attached to a hose leading into the wall of the machine'. Glogauer, the erstwhile Christ-figure and refugee from Breakfast In The Ruins later makes a guest appearance in the trilogy's third volume, as Sergeant Glogauer of the Lower Devonian Guild of Temporal Adventurers. But in the meantime Carnelian is bunning amok in the 19th century, encountering further references to related Moorcockiana. In Dead Singers (12) Jerry Cornelius rides a bicycle which is a time machine. In The Hollow Lands, during his second trip to 1896, Carnelian rides a bicycle he believes to be a Time Machine.

A large percentage of the humour is based on similar misinterpretations of the past by the people of the future. Billy the Kid was thought to have been a 'legendary American explorer, astronaut and bon-vivant, who had been crucified around the year 2000 because it was discovered that he possessed the hindquarters of a goat'. Carnelian has 'a toy fish tank, capable of firing real fish'. The people of the End Of Time throw a Ball - within a ball that was 'inclined to roll a bit'. Moorcock also makes numerous satiric references to the movie industry. There is a legend in which 'Casablanca Bogard wielded his magic spade, Sam, in his epic fight with that ferocious bird the malted falcon'. There is 'Mutinous Caine... cast out of Hollywood for the killing of his sister, the Blue Angel'. Whereas Pecking Pa 8th - last ruler of the age of Tyrant Producers was the co-ordinator of whole civilisations-as-movies. Producer of epochs known as 'The Four Loves of Captain Marvel', "Young Adolf Hitler" and 'a remake about the birth of Christ' in which 'Pecking Pa played Herod himself'. Yet, considering the immensity of time, and of human history that has supposedly passed, the End of Time seems to have a remarkable predilection for the couple of centuries around our own!

But then the fin de siecle late 1800's has long been another of Moorcock's 'assumed airs', from the affectionately recounted anarchist passages in Breakfast In The Ruins to the elaborate Verne pastiche of Warlord Of The Air (the hero of which, Captain Oswald Bastable, also appears in the Devonian, to flirt with Mrs Underwood). In Oswald's other starring-role novel, The Land Leviathan, Moorcock nodded in the direction of H.G. Wells; and on his second time trip Carnelian meets and discusses time machines with the same Mr Wells. He finds the writer to be 'a narrow-faced, slight man with a scubby moustache and startlingly bright pale blue eyes'. During a train journey Wells tells Carnelian 'People often ask me where I get my

incredible ideas. They think I'm deliberately sensational. They don't seem to realize that the ideas seem very ordinary to me'. Gauchly and naively eager to please, the time-travelling Jherok replies 'Oh they seem exceptionally ordinary to me'. During the conversation it is hauntingly possible to recall the jerky film footage of the real Wells, and re-hear the writer's ridiculously high-pitched voice forming the sentences; a sensation that it is just as tantalisingly tactile when Carnelian meets George Bernard Shaw (with whom perhaps he should have discussed 'Back To Methuselah' or 'Man and Superman'). Shaw is observed correcting proofs, 'a red-bearded sardonic looking man with eyes almost as arresting as Mr Wells, dressed in a suit of tweed which seemed far too heavy for the weather'. Erotic autobiographer Frank Harris is also there, and is instrumental in setting up the climax of the novel. A scene which features a garish night at the Cafe Royale with nasty triple-eyed aliens, coquettes, guests from the End of Time, and temporal disruption materialising amid the plush elegance of Victorian London. It is one of the most comically effective moments in the whole trilogy, and is one which leads directly to Jherok Carnelian and his lost love Mrs Amelia Underwood being cast back (or forward) in time to the desolation of the Palaeozoic where the second part of the trilogy leaves them.

Time, it appears, is cyclic - but it is also spiral. In fact, any theory about its nature 'seems to apply in societies which accept the theory'. Throughout the stories there is talk about mega-flow and the Chronon Theory which harks back to Moorcock's Pepin Hunchback stories (13), and which plugs the whole phantasmagoria into the superstructure of the multiverse. A multiverse which, unlike Time, is conceded to be finite (through concepts like The Conjunction of a Million Spheres). Moorcock writes that 'there is a particular theory which suggests that with every one discovery we make about Time, we create two new mysteries. Time can never be codified, as Space can be, because our very thoughts, our information about it, our actions based on that information all contribute to extend the boundaries, to produce new anomalies, new aspects of Time's nature'. The multiverse mythologies overlap. Characters in 'Pale Roses' speak of Eric of Marylebone (Elric of Melnibone), they use the ornithopter, a device used by the Dark Empire of the Hawkmoon stories; and as 'The End Of All Songs' opens on an increasingly thronged Lower Devonian beach, time travellers Una Persson and Miss Brunner appear (or are alluded to).

Mrs Persson features in the three novellas collected into 'Legends From The End Of Time'. The stories are interposed by comments from Your Auditor who supposedly transcribed the texts from the tales of Mrs Una Persson - one of the Guild of Temporal Adventurers. Thus the series of novellas 'assume the character of legends rather than history'. The fourth of the stories (8) - featuring Doctor Volospion's Menagerie of Forgotten Faiths - was told by one of Mrs Persson's colleagues, an anonymous 'Chronic Outlaw' (in much the same way as Captain Bastable supposedly related 'Warlord Of The Air' to Moorcock's grandfather in 1904). Mrs Persson previously featured in Moorcock's 1975 novel 'The Adventures of Catherine Cornelius and Una Persson In The 20th Century'. In 'The End Of All Songs' she helps to return Carnelian and Mrs Underwood to the relative stability of the End of Time and later follows them to watch Lord Jagged implement his time-recycling scheme to save the Earth as the Universe ends and the revels are, temporarily, disrupted. Miss Brunner has an equally complex history. In 'The Final Programme' she and Jerry Cornelius were fused into the 'perfect hermaphrodite being' in the form of Cornelius Brunner; and the character was resurrected in the singular for 'A Cure For Cancer' as Captain Brunner, and later into 'The Lives And Times Of Jerry Cornelius' collection.

There is one final cross-over worthy of mention, Lord Jagged of Canaria, the 'fantastico in yellow', the unique and ubiquitous manipulator of fates. Jagged is the only one of the Times-End denizens to appreciate the dilemma facing Dafnith Armatuze, and the only one to elicit her approval. Jagged hangs forever around the outer edges of Cornelian's travels in time, gradually assuming an insidious presence until it finally becomes clear that he is not one of the natives of the End of Time at all, but is from the 21st Century, nearer the era of Mrs Underwood. He is also, in the face of universal apathy, intent upon averting the inevitable death of the race, and of time itself. To further this end he not only fathered Cornelian in the first place, but kidnapped his bride, and, incognito, became Judge Jagger who sentenced Cornelian to death in 'An Alien Heat', and the reporter Jackson who assisted Cornelian's escape in 'The Hollow Lands'. He could also be behind the character Ltd. Michael Jagger of 'Warlord Of The Air'. Lord Jagged's ultimate fate and subsequent travels in time are not fully explored. But then, as Mrs Amelia Underwood explains to My Lady Charlottina towards the end of the trilogy 'the tale is not yet finished, I regret. Many clues remain to be unravelled - threads are still to be woven together - there is no clearly seen pattern upon the fabric - and perhaps there never will be'. As this quote suggests, even though she ultimately rejects the meaningless facade of the End of Time for the harsher reality of dynasty-founding in the Palaeozoic, Mrs Underwood adjusts much better to the rigors and contradictions of Time Travel than does Jherek Carnelian.

There are no ultimate conclusions to the 'Dancers at the End of Time' mythology. But then, as Moorcock's multiverse unfolds not in neatly encapsulated batches, but in inter-related sequences without apparent end, perhaps none were to be expected. But the mythos is a significant new phase in Moorcock's development, and is technically his best, even behind the gaudy facade of deliberately assumed incoherence. At one point, for example, apparently addressing Moorcock, Carnelian suggests that 'I was born so that you might be supplied with raw materials with which to exercise your own considerable literary gifts'. Yet behind the obvious self-indulgence the aesthetic credibility rating is definitely in the ascendant.

In keeping with the allusions to Mrs Underwood's time, the titles of the stories are taken from period poems, from "Dregs" (4), "A Last Word" (2) and "Transition" (5) written in 1899 by Ernest Dowson. From W.B. Yeats, (6) "The Song of Theodolinda" by George Meredith, (8) and the 1896 poem "Hothouse Flowers" by Theodore Wratislaw (1). Poems are also quoted from Alfred Austin and from Ernest Wheldrake's "Posthumous Poems" of 1881 which were 'rediscovered' by Moorcock.

But Moorcock's own prose is not without its poetic images. Evocatively he writes 'she told him the story of Sir Parsifal as the gold, ebony and ruby locomotive puffed across the sky, trailing glorious clouds of blue and silver smoke behind it'. Neither is the writing without its perceptive humour. Trapped by a policeman of 'massive bovine dignity' Carnelian fires a deceptor-gun, filling the room with naked female warriors of the late Cannibal Empire period, painted green and blue, decorated with small skulls and finger-bones, carrying clubs and spears. 'I knew you was ruddy anarchists' pronounced the policeman triumphantly.

In the late 1970's Michael Moorcock is one of the few writers who stand beyond genre, by becoming a genre himself. People read Moorcock who would claim neither to read Science Fiction or Fantasy. But these latest, highly-readable stories deserve a wider-than-just-cult appreciation.

The DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME cycle:-

- (1) "AN ALIEN HEAT" (1972 MacGibbon & Kee Ltd/Mayflower) ISBN 0 583 12106 3 : 158pp: 60p)
- (2) "THE HOLLOW LANDS" (1975 Hart Davis MacGibbon/Mayflower) ISBN 0 246 10876 : 180pp: £2.75/60p)
- (3) "LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME" (1976 Harper & Row/W.H. Allen) A Collection made up of 5/6/7:182pp;£3.50)
- (4) "THE END OF ALL SONGS" (1976 Mayflower) ISBN 0 583 121055: 307pp;96p
Serialised in VORTEX magazine Nos.1,2 & 3 throughout 1977)

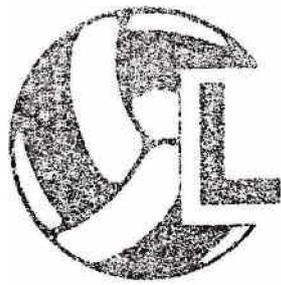
NOVELLAS:-

- (5) "PALE ROSES" from "New Worlds No.3" (1974-Sphere Books. Illustrated by Jim Cawthorn. Also "BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR" edited by Terry Carr: USA Ballantine 1975)
- (6) "WHITE STARS" from "New Worlds No.8" (1975-Sphere Books. Illustrated by Mal Dean.)
- (7) "ANCIENT SHADOWS" from "New Worlds No.9" (1975-Corgi Books. Illustrated by Jim Cawthorn.)
- (8) "CONSTANT FIRE" from "New Worlds Quarterly No.10" (1976-Corgi Books Illustrated by Jim Cawthorn.)

OTHER SOURCES:-

- (9) "THE SHAPE OF FURTHER THINGS" by Brian Aldiss (Faber/Corgi)
- (10) "WAITING FOR THE END OF TIME" featured in 'Moorcock's Book of Martyrs' by Michael Moorcock (Orbit/Quartet:76)
- (11) An interview published in 'CLUB INTERNATIONAL VOL 4, NO 3 March 1975
- (12) "DEAD SINGERS" featured in "THE LIVES AND TIMES OF JERRY CORNELIUS" by Michael Moorcock (Quartet).
- (13) "THE TIME DWELLERS", an anthology by Michael Moorcock.

* * * * *



LEEDS

79

its Yorcon

Nostalgia's the thing at the moment, so why not come along to the THIRTIETH BRITISH EASTER SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION in LEEDS next year... after all, it is where the very first convention was held back in 1937. We can't guarantee the attendance of a youthful Arthur C Clarke...nor the other twelve bold attendees; we can't promise beer at 4d a pint; travel by steam train and Leeds City Tram is also out...but we can guarantee a good time to be had by all. Leeds as a site is central to all road and rail connections in the North...just 2½ hours by rail from London. The Hotel is the four star LEEDS DRAGONARA, a purpose-built establishment right in the centre of town. Our GUEST OF HONOUR is British SF author RICHARD COWPER of CLONE, KULDESAK and ROAD TO CORLAY fame. There's a full programme of items, including films; a talk by Philip Strick of the BFI; there'll be the Guest Of Honour speech, a series of panels; an SF quiz; banquet; a welcoming party in the fan room on the Friday night; book room; art show;....and for the first time, a fan floor...more than just a room, it'll be an experience. Then of course there'll be other activities...both planned and impromptu. All in all something for everyone.

DRAGONARA HOTEL LEEDS APRIL 13 - 16th

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Right...SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP costs £2.50; ATTENDING MEMBERSHIP costs £5.... hotel rooms of course, are extra. For full details and/or joining, write to:- Alan Dorey, 20 Hermitage Woods Crescent, St.John's, WOKING, Surrey, GU21 1UE. We look forward to hearing from you, and then seeing you at Easter 1979.

IN MEMORIAM

The piece below is reprinted from CHECKPOINT (July 1978) verbatim:

MIKE ROSENBLUM DEAD: (Ron Bennett) "Science fiction fans throughout the world will be shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death on 28th June of Britain's Mr Science Fiction, John Michael Rosenblum.

"Mike Rosenblum, who owned one of Europe's most extensive and complete collections of science fiction was a leading personality in fan circles for over forty years, having been instrumental in organising the first British convention, in Leeds in 1937.

"During the war years, Michael's FUTURIAN WAR DIGEST was the focal point for British fandom and its importance in linking different pockets of fandom scattered by the war cannot be overestimated.

"In the early fifties, with the formation of the Leeds Science Fiction Association, Michael again took a leading role, this time as publisher of the high quality fanzine, NEW FUTURIAN. Sadly, business pressures afforded Michael insufficient time to continue publication and for the last few years Michael had worked in several capacities for the BSFA as and when time allowed.

"Michael was completely without animosity. He was knowledgeable on most literary matters and with a wealth of entertaining anecdotes about books and writers was always certain of a ready audience. He was generous too, as most convention attendees will bear witness (and he was known to have underwritten at least one TAFF campaign).

"That Michael will be missed is all too obvious." (RB)

J. Michael Rosenblum Memorial Fund:

Phil Rogers and Keith Freeman have decided to make an appeal for a Memorial Fund and, after discussions, it has been decided that Phil will open an account designated as described above, to remain open until the 30th September 1979. After that date, Phil, Keith, a member of fandom and a member of the family will form a committee to decide what form the Memorial should take.

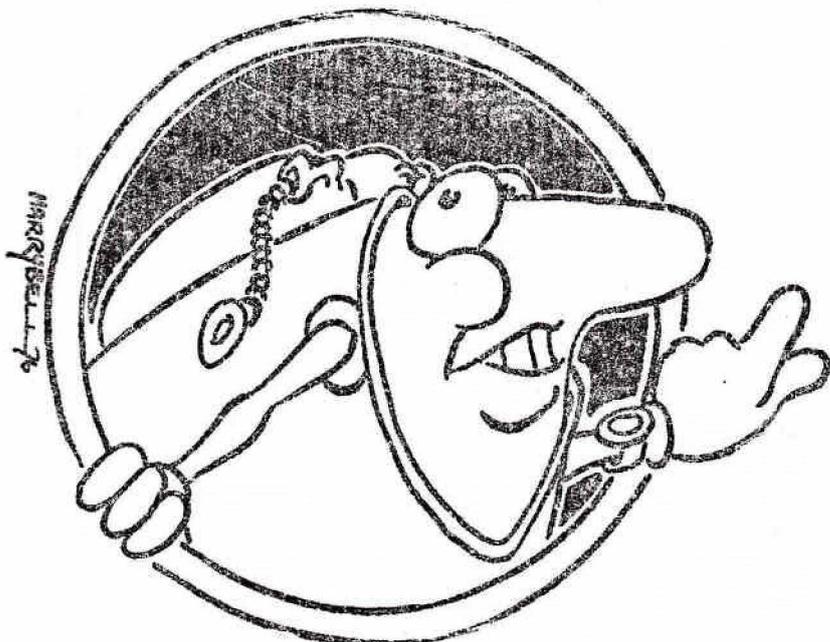
From my own knowledge, Michael was a science fiction enthusiast, an outstanding Vice-Chairman, a life member of the BSFA and a happy member of St. Fantony.

Should you wish to make a contribution to this fund, please send your donations to:-

J. Michael Rosenblum Memorial Fund,
69, Brumby Wood Lane, Scunthorpe,
South Humberside, DN17 1AA.

(DER)

The
Infinity
Box



THE KNIGHTS OF THE LIMITS by Barrington J. Bayley: Allison & Busby; 1978; 218pp; £3.95 ISBN 0-85031-215-9

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

This is a collection of nine short stories, one dating from 1965 and the rest from the seventies. They are the cream of Barry Bayley's short fiction and represent his considerable strengths as a writer, each one developing complex and innovative ideas in a bold and striking manner.

Over the past thirty years there has been a steadily-growing demand for sf writers to pay more attention to the kind of priorities used by critics to assess the merit of mundane fiction. There have been many complaints about the lack of characterisation in sf, the inadequacy of background construction, the inability of sf writers to be wholly convincing. The attitude which is suspicious not merely of the practicality of these demands but also their pertinence has usually been greeted with a sneer and dismissed as a kind of ill-disguised philistinism. The contention that the demand for sf to live up to the same standards of evaluation as mainstream fiction would lead to ideative sterility is dismissed on the grounds that the sf being criticised is already ideatively sterile. Occasionally, however, works crop up which make the decision worth appealing yet again, and The Knights Of The Limits offers very good grounds for such an appeal.

The demand that sf should be more convincing in terms of its characterisation is basically a demand to the effect that the sf reader ought to be able to find not only recognisable human beings but also a recognisable weltanschauung inside the fiction. A common demand is "show, don't tell" - a demand that characters should reveal themselves by their actions and by their interactions with their environment. Effectively, this means that the characters' personalities should be such as to be encodable in the stereotyped patterns of signals that may serve for character-recognition in the contemporary world. Nothing must happen that is not convincing, nothing must be that is not convincing. The only speculative elements which can be incorporated into such a schema are, of course, those which are already familiar (though not necessarily by courtesy of earlier sf). There is a good deal of speculative material - indeed, there are whole speculative areas - which simply cannot be approached in this way.

The Knights Of The Limits contains very little in the way of characterisation. There is no comprehensively-described background material. It contains not a single story which is 'convincing' in the sense that the reader will immediately feel comfortable and in total command of the reader-experience. It is, in fact, a marvellous extravaganza of ideas which presents a series of challenges to the imagination. At least two of the ideas are extraordinarily abstruse, and at least two of them are absurd, but each one has the merit of striking the reader's cognitive certainties with all the force of a gauntlet, and only an intellectual coward can fail to find them fascinating.

Some examples:

In "The Exploration Of Space" a knight on a chessboard is animated by an alien intelligence whose perceptions go far beyond the three-dimensional continuum accessible to the human imagination. I know of no story which comes closer than this one to fulfilling the exhortation in the dedication of Abbott's Flatland, which asks the inhabitants of spaceland to grapple with the concept of multidimensional space.

"The Bees Of Knowledge" is the story of a castaway who finds refuge among the Bees of Handrea and encounters (so far as he is able) the wonders of their Hive Mind and their expertise in higher mathematics.

"Me and my Antronoscope" is an exercise in speculative cosmology in which life exists in the lacunae of a rigid universe, where men travel from "world" to "world" through solid rock, and know little of the possibilities concealed in this matrix.

"The Problem of Morley's Emission" concerns the effects of a cultural 'force-field' analogous to a magnetic field, which extends by virtue of the polarity between the individual and society and is connected with some very odd phenomena of crowd behaviour.

"The Cabinet of Oliver Naylor" features the thospitron (a device for synthesising pseudorealities), the velocitator (which has given men the freedom to roam the universe at will) and the hylic potentiator (otherwise known as the matter-bank), and takes the fiction of crime-fighting and analytical philosophy into territory previously unexplored.

This is a collection which has the power to pluck at the strands of the web confining the imagination. It will help you to see possibilities you never saw before. It is a book which will reward you not only in the reading but in re-reading several times. In this day and age £3.95 is moderately cheap for a hardback book, and if you can scrape it together it will prove, in this instance, to be well invested, probably in more ways than one. It is emphatically not for the narrow-minded, but my only hope for the future of sf (and the world) is that this will not make it too esoteric.

THE DARK TOWER, AND OTHER STORIES by C. S. Lewis (Collins; London; 1977; £3.95; 158 pp; ISBN 0 00 222155 1)

Reviewed by Brian Griffin.

The Dark Tower itself is a fragment - a 91-page fragment, but still very much unfinished. Lewis wrote it, probably, in 1939, immediately after Out Of The Silent Planet: the last paragraph of that novel, with its reference to time travel, anticipates the first paragraph of The Dark Tower, in which four academics (including Ransom and MacPhee) are gathered round a 'chronoscope' in the manner of Wells's The Time Machine.

The chronoscope is an application of Dunne's serial time theory: using the 'Z substance' which is the biochemical secret of all precognitive dreams, the machine projects pictures onto a screen --- ie., it has objective dreams which can be viewed as on T.V., only hyper-realistically.

The Dark Tower is the setting of most of these objective 'dreams'.

This is only the beginning. As the plot begins to unfold, enigmas multiply furiously. Who is dreaming these dreams? Where, and when, is the dark tower? Why is one of the protagonists in our continuum also present in the 'dream' continuum, together with his fiancee? Why is the Dark Tower itself an almost-completed replica of the new University Library? What is the part played by this doubling in the drawing-together of the two probability-worlds? (Lewis doesn't call them that, but that is what they are. The 'dream world' could almost be called Probability A).

Enough answers are given, or at least suggested, in the succeeding pages to make The Dark Tower compulsive reading --- and not, in spite of the absence of two pages in the original MS, and the lack of anything like a conclusion of any kind, ultimately disappointing. Certain awkwardnesses indicate that this is a first draft, but it goes along at an irresistible pace, and is too pregnant with possibilities to be anything other than stimulating and haunting. (I especially like the pseudo-mathematics uniting the two probability worlds). The Dark Tower probably played an essential part in the evolution of what became That Hideous Strength: and I think it actually enhances our enjoyment of the final book in the published trilogy.

If you like Lewis, acquire the book somehow: it's worth it for The Dark Tower alone.

Filling up the volume are After Ten Years, a tantalising 20-page fragment, refashioning the final stages of the siege of Troy (this was a projected novel), and four short stories --- 'The Man Born Blind' (previously unpublished), 'The Shoddy Lands', 'Forms Of Things Unknown' and 'Ministerin -g Angels' (originally published in F&SF). These are all worth reading. And there is a really useful preface with notes.

A RUDE AWAKENING by Brian W. Aldiss (Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1978; £4.50; 205pp; ISBN 0 297 77448 4)

Reviewed by David Wingrove.

I must emphasise from the start that this book has nothing whatsoever to do with science fiction. This is, in fact, the third part of the Horatio Stubbs saga and we follow our young adventurer into Medan, Sumatra in 1946 as the British prepare to pull out and leave the Dutch occupying force -s to the far-from-tender mercies of the TRI (the Indonesian Freedom Movement) under Soekarno.

This is the other side of Aldiss, the writer. Here he is pure entertainer, an astute humourist portraying the vascillating nature of human morality as expressed in the character of Horry Stubbs. Being a tale of army life, both language and metaphor are highly coloured - expressing a joyousness in the face of adversity:

"Two frogs lay clasped together, one on top of the other in a shallow puddle - it had rained heavily at sunset. The frogs were motionless, staring ahead into a cold Nirvana of amphibian copulation. I directed a scalding jet of piss on them with such force that they were flipped over, showing their death-yellow bellies. I laughed as I pissed, churning them up, watching them struggle." (P.13)

Medan has much in common with Malacia, Brian's other fantastic creation. Both are places teeming with life, full of inexplicable strands of

existence, danger and pleasure balanced precariously in the back streets. And Horry Stubbs has much in common with Perian de Chiolo in that both are young men who think they know it all. They are surrounded by exotic societies they think they understand. In both cases events overtake them and they are shocked into a rude awakening as an inkling of the true nature of life seeps through.

There are crucial differences between this recent-historical fiction and the fantasy that is Malacia. In Malacia there is only a limited awareness that there can be other states of existence than theirs, whilst the British troops in Medan know there is a far more sombre and sobering world back in Blighty. Thus some of the opulence of Medan is tempered. But this is more than accounted for by the delightful humour, mainly based in the intricacies of the body's functions, but embracing the whole exotic experience:

"I heard the sound of a pump, wheezing like an asthmatic trying to climb the Great Pyramid with his grannie on his back. " (p.76)

"With his terrible low hairy brow, his glistening nostrils, his blubber lips and stooped gait, one shufti at him would have saved Charles Darwin ten years of intensive research. " (p.85)

"I dragged my trousers up and buckled my belt, reflecting on the mystical aspects of a good crap. " (p.144)

They are all illustrations of Brian's exuberant, exaggerated sense of humour. The metaphors are, for the main part, outrageous, yet they are, effectively, a foil against which the serious business of Horry's maturation is set.

Medan, like Malacia, is "a gigantic organism of light and shade" (p.118). In Malacia, Perian begins to change following the dinosaur hunt. Here we have Horry encountering death after a crocodile hunt (perhaps a deliberate parallel, perhaps unconscious on Brian's part). The book does not so much change as become more poignant. Nothing of the external hubbub changes - only the internal workings of Sgt Horatio Stubbs. But this poignancy penetrates deeply. As Horry stands at the funeral of the three Dutch soldiers killed by the TRI on the crocodile hunt, he is almost philosophical:

"Although I couldn't tell what the old boy with the dog-collar under his uniform was saying, I hoped he was making reference to the white-hawks and the beetles, and having a word to say about how the tropics are much better than the cold climates at setting life and death slap up against one another, practically in a copulating position. " (p.173)

It is possibly his first insight into the true nature of the East. Horry is very much an alien, surrounded by tunes (Terang Boelan) that are familiar and yet incomprehensible. The nearest he can approach is between a young girl's legs. His communication is limited to a few pidgeon phrases, ironically used. When he compares himself to the insects, drawn to the bright light of Medan and certain to fall, burned, into the open mouths of lizards, he is closest to realising his own nature. It is, though, a stoical realisation:

" How could it matter what happened to me, provided I was not wounded or killed, as long as I remained part of that exotic bustle, that great obscure traffic of various businesses? " (p.188)

It is an incredibly selfish view, yet it is an honest one. When he greets his comrades with 'Merdeka!', the Indonesian word for 'freedom', he has no

comprehension of its true meaning. How could he? Horry is still wedged firmly in an Imperialist perspective, unable to come to terms with the new socialist mood of the world (and I'm drawn here to make a comparison between Stubbs and the protagonist of Fowles' *THE MAGUS* who, in a very similar manner, fails to comprehend the meaning of 'eleutheria', the Greek word for freedom).

It is a fascinating journey through Horry's eyes and despite the antipathetic undercurrents this is a joyous book with its doctrines illustrated in the phrases "better jungle than desert" (p.188) and "let it piss down..let it always be extreme" (p.69). As with the previous two volumes, I found myself roaring with laughter at times, at others nodding sagely. And, of course, it is a book that shouts the joys of sex - that one constant amongst the vascillations of Horry's moods:

"That perfume, that motion, that unity - they made the most eloquent of all languages, the most convincing of all communications. " (p.203).

I'm looking forward to the next volume.

GLORIANA, or the Unfulfill's Queen a Romance by Michael Moorcock.
348pp; £4.95; Allison & Busby; 1978

Reviewed by Maxim Jakubowski.

Skimming through the back pages of *VECTOR* and many other critical journals devoted to Science Fiction, one could almost get the impression Michael Moorcock has the plague, or that, at any rate, he is still the public enemy number one of the genre. For such a prolific writer, it is indeed astonishing to note the sheer rarity of reviews and critical material devoted to his work.

Well, isn't it about time this criminal neglect was repaired?

Particularly so since his previous novel, *THE CONDITION OF MUZAC* (Allison & Busby, 1977) surprisingly won the Guardian Prize for Fiction. Jerry Cornelius, a darling of the intelligentsia?

Moorcock might not be everyone's example of what SF writers should be about, and he for one would happily agree, but he is after all the editor who remains paramountly responsible for bringing literacy, wit and intelligence back into the shady realms of SF. Yes, remember *NEW WORLDS*! Without Moorcock's inimitable energy and devotion, and the exhilarating excesses of *NW* in its heyday, today's Science Fiction would be so much poorer, do believe me. But Moorcock's only reward, outside of the devotion of a small, but obviously prejudiced group, has been to gain the reputation of a pariah, a boisterous writer of sword and sorcery fantasy epics who brought the field into disrepute. Some people have conveniently short memories!

Thus, after Silverberg, Ellison, Malzberg and other quieter forgotten practitioners, we lose another author to the mainstream. Where he belonged all the time, where we all belong, but that's another story and another controversy (n'est-ce pas, Ian Watson?).

GLORIANA, which this review of sorts is supposed to be about, is Moorcock's latest novel. Long awaited, coming shortly after the completion of the Jerry Cornelius and "Dancers at the end of Time" series, A work of trans-
-ition signalling a new era of Moorcockiana, a last ironical bow to the past and its colourful fantasies, an elegant *divertissement*, a serious reflection on the nature of myth and romance. Well, it's all those things and more.

I am confident that John Clute, in his forthcoming major study of the works of Michael Moorcock (also from Allison & Busby; scheduled for later this year), will comprehensively integrate GLORIANA within the cycles within cycles that permeate and criss-cross the Moorcock oeuvre. Suffice it to say that, even subdued or in heavy disguise, some of our old friends are still present: Una, Korzeniowsky, Prinz Lobkowitz, Hira, Master Schelyeanek, etc... all healthy protagonists of previous novels and stories, minor actors in a grand design that is slowly becoming apparent in Moorcock's work as the succeeding titles pile up on our shelves. Wasn't it Mike himself who, in one interview or another, claimed kinship with Dickens...

Dedicated to the memory of Mervyn Peake, GLORIANA is a novel unlike any other in the Moorcock canon, a splendid tale of an apocryphal England, sorry, Albion, where a golden age of plenty and revels has succeeded dark times (reminiscent of the evil Granbretan of the Runestaff series) but where evil and corruption always remains a stone's throw away. The idea is not new, but Moorcock's use of the alternate world theme liberates it from the narrow encompassing borderlines of SF where people like Phil Dick, Keith Roberts, Ward Moore and even, more recently, Kingsley Amis' ALTERATION had circumscribed it. London is still the capital of Albion, but it is now a phantasmagoric creation that bears no servitude to history, a murky domain of alleyways and smokey warrens, resplendent gardens and most of all, an awesome palace, which is at the very centre of the book. Moorcock's royal palace is a creation of genius, a truly magnificent feat of imagination that will not be forgotten soon: passages within passages, secret worlds buried under the surface of reality, courtly denizens and shadowy inhabitants, civilizations of violence and decay tripping through the darkness of forgotten chambers and passages, It's Gormenghast and much more. In fact, Angela Carter, a connoisseur of the macabre and the erotic, found a beautiful formula for the palace in her, favourable, review of the book in the Guardian: it "is like a brain, or, more, like a concretisation of the unconscious."

After so many hastily written books, it is nice to see Moorcock taking his time at last and really exercising his craft. Never before GLORIANA has he achieved such a plentiful style, weaving words and moods without ever having to resort to the pseudo high-language so often concocted by other fantasy writers. Sumptuous prose always tightly under control even when the plot perversely reaches its tragic bloodbath of a finale, Moorcock convincingly demonstrates that where there is division, confusion and perversion, there can also be unity, clarity and purity.

GLORIANA, if ever my enthusiasm here is giving you the wrong idea of a complex, highly literate novel, is also a great read. Full stop. How will the Queen ever achieve orgasm? How will wily Quire manage to plot Gloriana's downfall? Who are the teeming throngs who live within the walls? Will the Arabs take over? What about the Poles? Although it might miss its public, GLORIANA is, before anything else, an ambitious attempt at creating a popular novel, at blending the exigencies of literacy with the pleasures of plot and adventure in a novel manner for our psychological and socially-conscious 1970's.

It is also a very funny book.

Well, is this a panegyric or a review?

GLORIANA gave me great pleasure: it is fiction writing at its best; a craftsman in full possession of his powers as Moorcock is here is a joy to behold. Enough said.

(c) 1978 Maxim Jakubowski.

HOTEL DE DREAM by Emma Tennant; Penguin; 1978; 169pp; 75p; Originally Victor Gollancz - 1976)
 THE CRACK by Emma Tennant; Penguin; 1978; 112pp; 75p; Originally Jonathan Cape - 1973, as THE TIME OF THE CRACK.)

Reviewed by Cyril Simsa.

Emma Tennant is an interesting writer. Not only is she a 'mainstream' writer who writes fantasy, but she also edits a 'mainstream' literary quarterly (BANANAS) in which she encourages other writers to do the same.

So what's new?

- she's very successful at it. Her magazine continues to grow in circulation, and it receives Arts Council Support. One of her novels, HOTEL DE DREAM was a runner-up for the 1976 Guardian Fiction Prize (the same prize that Michael Moorcock won in 1977 for THE CONDITION OF MUZAK). Now, Penguin Books have issued two of her novels in paperback for the first time, and are promoting her as "an exciting new writing talent". Both novels are readable and, at times, extremely funny; HOTEL DE DREAM in particular displays a very subtle, very acute and biting brand of satire, as she defines each character through their fantasies.

The hotel of the title is the Westringham, a seedy boarding-house run by Mrs Routledge and her butler, Cridge, an unsavoury (if pathetic) troglodyte who dwells in the basement, emerging only reluctantly. Mrs Routledge lives in constant fear of having her hotel shut down by somebody or other: the owner, Mr Rathbone, or maybe a chance-visit health inspector. In the meanwhile, she tries to impress all and sundry with tales of a fictitious childhood, and her guests spend day and night in bed, disturbing their dreams only for tea.

Mr Poynter dreams that he is in a city, a beautiful city of his own design. Miss Scranton dreams that she is on a vast, sandy beach with lots of other women, and not one man in sight, men being used only for ritual mating, after which they are "left in the olive grove to die". Miss Briggs goes to a Royal Garden Party, where Lord Olivier looks at her, "eyes moist with admiration"; but all is not well in this timeless dreamworld. The arrival of a new guest, Cecilia Houghton, a novelist who is struggling to finish a trilogy, coincides with a gradual change in the nature of the dreams. They are becoming uncontrollable, interacting as they shouldn't. They are becoming more concrete, more real. The inmates begin to dream about each other, affecting one another's actions through their dreams. Simultaneously, the fantasised characters of Mrs Houghton's novel rebel against their author, becoming protagonists of Emma Tennant's.

As the story progresses, 'dream' and 'reality' intertwine until it is impossible to be certain which is which. Nor does it matter. The book has grown into a conflict of the dreamers and the dreamed, and ultimately no-one wins; the last dreamer remaining in the papier mache ruins of Mr Poynter's city confesses to himself that "there was so little time to lose, if a new state was to be built on the foundations of the old - and (he) lacked the imagination to start anew." (p.165)

Throughout HOTEL DE DREAM, Emma Tennant comments upon the power of dreams, and the God-like role of the author in creating people and places. Melinda, the heroine of Cecilia Houghton's trilogy, complains (p.57): "Often she wished that Mrs Houghton was less intellectual and observant, and was a writer of ordinary romances: that way there would be fewer sexual hang-ups." All the truisms of Mills and Boon are hilariously demolished, as Melinda and

her boyfriend, Johnny, refuse to cooperate with their creator. And Cridge's attempt at killing Mrs Routledge - by writing a novel about her death - is one of the funniest things I've read in a long time.

HOTEL DE DREAM is an entertaining book, and contains some truly perceptive moments.

THE CRACK is an earlier novel, though that does not prevent it from being an accomplished one. At its best, the book manages to be uproariously funny and hair-raisingly frightening in alternate paragraphs. A crack has opened in the Thames, and North London has been devastated. Through the bizarre and desolate landscape wanders Baba the bunny-girl, whose overriding concern is finding a new bunny costume with which to replace her old one.

What would you do if you saw a bunny-girl running past on a summer afternoon?

- a lot of people follow her, or try to, or at the very least fall in addle-brained love. A lot of other people are more preoccupied with getting across the crack in order to reach the "other side". Each one sees the other side as a new, and potentially better, land onto which they project their own ideas of what they want, apparently oblivious to the thought that someone else might have ideas of their own. All of them are driven by some cause they see as advantageous, if not exactly worthy, and in the end only one escapes going to the other side, and faces the future instead.

There are no characters in THE CRACK, merely caricatures - wonderful, exaggerated caricatures that are created and killed off simply at auctorial whim. There is the Hampstead socialist who tries to build a dirigible balloon out of life-jackets. There are the two Psychoanalysts who believe that the salvation of Mankind lies in regression through the birth trauma. There are Academics and Roman Catholics, Capitalists and Feminists. There is a gentleman Genius Explorer who returns to London during Chapter 19 having just circumnavigated the World. And finally, of course, there is the sooth-sayer, Medea.

THE THIRD POLICEMAN by Flann O'Brien (Picador; 1974; 173pp; 80p; ISBN 0 330 24158 3)

Reviewed by John Brady.

'Human existence being an hallucination containing in itself the secondary hallucinations of day and night... it ill becomes any man of sense to be concerned at the illusory approach of the supreme hallucination known as death.'

DE SELBY

Unmentioned in critical surveys of hell's cartographers to date has been the posthumously published fantasy The Third Policeman by the Irish author Flann O'Brien. It has now appeared in paperback for the first time and I propose to expand what would have been a brief laudatory review into an introduction to the work of this unfamiliar and colourful writer.

I borrow, or more precisely, steal my graphic title ((originally AN IRISH COMIC INFERNO)) from the pioneering study of SF by Kingsley Amis

published almost eighteen years ago. It is regrettable that since he wrote New Maps Of Hell, Mr Amis has reneged from being an advocate of innovation (eg. urging SF writers to 'bring sexual matters into better focus') to a stern conformist denouncing the unorthodox (eg. 'Experimental prose is death'). Evidently Ballard's subversion of his readers' erotic complicity - in The Atrocity Exhibition and Crash - gave Mr Amis more than he bargained for. And not only him; but I digress.

Born in Co. Tyrone in 1911, the third of a family of twelve, Flann O'Brien was baptised as Brian O'Nolan. During his literary career, he seems to have used as many pseudonyms as he had brothers and sisters, Partly due to his father's occupation - involving the family in periodic moves - Brian's experience of primary school was desultory, which may explain why his natural curiosity was only gradually stifled. When the family moved to Dublin, his attendance at (secondary) school improved. Indeed, as a significant portion of his writings testify, he developed an interest in physics and chemistry that began to rival his passion for languages. However, when he entered University College, Dublin, it was the Arts Faculty that bid him welcome. He was to become one of the most illustrious and well-remembered students the college had ever been favoured with.

Before he entered the civil service in 1935, Brian had enjoyed himself in almost every literary capacity at the University. Not content with editing and writing most of the output of his own humorous magazine Blather, he initiated a collaborative project subtitled the 'Great Irish Novel' to be written by three of his closest friends with Brian contributing the religious segment. It never materialised. Presumably spurred on by this foray into large-scale fiction, Brian was soon gestating his own G.I.N.; its unassuming title At Swim-Two-Birds (reprinted by Penguin 1974).

The plot, as he explained, was simple: "It would concern an author, Dermot Trellis, who was writing a book about certain characters who, in turn, were revenging themselves by writing about him. The characters would be drawn from legend, history, imagination and the works of past writers. Conventional notions of Time would be scorned. Past, present and future would be abolished, and the work would exist in a supra-Bergsonian continuum - communicating simultaneously on several planes of consciousness and also on various sublimated levels."

It sounds more like Finnegans Wake than somebody's first novel, and even a casual reading of At Swim reveals that Brian fails to live up to his stated master-plan. Certainly even Joyce - whose Portrait Of An Artist was a major influence - would have found it an arduous task to maintain the peerless beginning, or rather, beginnings of this singular debut. In 1938, Grahame Greene - then Longman's reader - had little hesitation in recommending it for publication. Joyce received an autographed copy which is thought to be the last book he read. He marked the passage that includes the following: "a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity."

But the outbreak of World War II did more than nip in the bud the acclaim that would have been the author's due in more propitious times. In just over a year, Brian had completed a second novel, The Third Policeman and must have felt that war or no war, its publication was assured. To his chagrin, Longmans turned it down and knowing it to be a more achieved work, Brian contrived to mislay the MS. In retrospect, the publishers' rejection is easy to understand. With an invasion of Britain no longer a remote possibility and confronted with a fantasy that portrayed hell's overseers as bizarre - though recognisable - officers of the law, the risk of 'publish and be damned' was obviously too great. Twenty years later, when At Swim-

Two-Birds was re-issued and widely praised, he preferred to write a pastiche of The Third Policeman which was published as The Dalkey Archives instead of coming to terms with the unfortunate rebuff.

During those intervening years, Brian had poured all his inspiration into a newspaper column 'Cruiskeen Lawn' in The Irish Times written under the pseudonym Myles na Gopaleen (Though it was normally translated as Myles of the Little Horses, the author used to insist the name should be Myles of the Ponies, saying that the autonomy of the pony must not be subjugated by the imperialism of the horse). Brian's inaugural deed had been to exploit the letters column almost to the point of libel. Intrigued, the paper's flamboyant editor Robert Smyllie arranged a truce meeting and invited the versatile upstart to write a regular column. 'Cruiskeen Lawn' appeared in October 1940, in Gaelic at first, then in English on alternate days. As the war ran its course, the 'foreign' language gained the ascendancy. The Best of Myles (published in '68 by MacGibbon & Kee, later by Picador) covers this period when Brian was at the top of his comic bent. In later years, alas, an old Irish malady (the Powers-that-be) took its intoxicating toll so that his own catch refrain (in At Swim) 'A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN' acquired a tragic overtone he was only too well aware of.

The most accessible items (discounting his Research Bureau - an inflated misnomer pace de Selby) are the playful anecdotes about Keats and Chapman, many of them inspired by the most outrageous puns. If you think these come mainly in two varieties, insipid and excruciating, then you couldn't hope for a more entertaining initiation than via Brian's elaborate build-ups. Judge for yourself from the following melodramatic sample which I quote in full:

An ancestor of Keats (by the same token) was concerned in the dread events of the French Revolution. He was, of course, on the aristocratic side, a lonely haughty creature who ignored the ordinances of the rabblement and continued to sit in his Louis Kahn's drawing room drinking pale sherry and playing bezique. Soon, however, he found himself in the cart and was delivered to execution. He surveyed the dread engine of Monsieur Guillotine, assessing its mechanical efficiency and allowing it some small mead of admiration. Then, turning to the executioner, he courteously presented his compliments and prayed that he should be granted a simple favour on the occasion of his last journey - that of being permitted to face away from the guillotine and lean back so that the blade should meet him in the throat rather than that he should adopt the usual attitude of kneeling face down with his neck on the block. "I like to sit with my back to the engine," he explained.

The precision of individual details and poetic turns of phrase gives substance to the comedy of his best prose. He also possessed a pedantic streak which was wont to flower into dense verbiage when inspiration ran sluggishly. The spectres of editorial deadlines haunt many of the 'Cruiskeen Lawn' pieces and the surprising thing is how readable and undated the majority of them are more than thirty years later.

Others before me have speculated about the novels that never were because of his commitment to journalism, a short-sighted view that underestimates Brian's failure to tackle the problems of form and structure in his extant novels. The unmistakable exception is The Third Policeman which I mentioned at the outset. A thesis could be written disentangling the SF elements from the fantasy but lack of space - and inclination - preclude this.

The philosophical inspiration of Brian O'Nolan's masterpiece is usually taken to be Huysman's Against Nature and the writings of J.W.Dunne (e.g. The Serial Universe). Parallels of both theme and character are easily drawn. I contend, however, that these disparate works enabled Brian to liberate his second novel from the suffocating influence of Joyce. This is a perpetual challenge dogging Irish novelists who wish to innovate. Beckett appeared to be solving it (before he wrote himself into an impotent full stop) after he adopted French as his first language.

Like At Swim-Two-Birds, The Third Policeman is narrated in the first person singular but unlike the earlier novel, its matter-of-fact opening chapter gives no hint of the comic inferno to come. With the help of another man, John Divney, the protagonist murders a rich old farmer for his cash-box and then is double-crossed by his partner. Divney engineers his death when he tries to retrieve the money. The transition to the afterlife is rendered almost imperceptible in a passage that transfigures its narrator's impressions. Recall the quote from de Selby I placed at the head of this review and which is one of two epigraphs to The Third Policeman. De Selby is an imaginary savant and purveyor of pseudo-scientific theories that are as original as they are useless. Nevertheless, in true academic fashion, they have inspired an endless series of commentaries and dissertations. It is to finance publication of his definitive 'De Selby Index' that he had agreed to commit the murder in the first place.

Now deceased and still obsessed with finding his ill-gotten gains, he journeys across an unfamiliar and hyperphysical landscape wondering how the previous day's wintry weather has been supplanted by high summer, a cunning reversal that allows the author to lavish his talents on descriptions of his native scenery. Our dead hero meets up with Martin Finnucane - the captain of the one-legged men - and they make an alliance after he shows him his own wooden leg. They part and, following Martin's directions, he visits a nameless police-barracks in the middle of nowhere and enlists the help of Sergeant Pluck and his assistant MacCruiskeen. He is quite unaware that he has delivered himself up to his tormentors, both of them incarnations of de Selby. His soul (called Joe) has a speaking part and dispenses 'helpful' advice until both of them become enthralled by the inventions of infinite progression and regression dreamed up by the sinister MacCruiskeen. As the policeman says a propos his spear that tapers beyond the point of visibility "...you could spend half an hour trying to think about it and you could put no thought around it at the end."

The narrator's reflections on this increasingly oppressive domain mostly take the form of anecdotes on the life and work of his mentor, de Selby, and these necessitate scholarly footnotes galore. This satirical device, which mocks at the blind-alley mentality of countless theses in both the arts and sciences, allows the author to intersperse philosophical speculations without disrupting the events of his narrative.

The Sergeant is a cyclomaniac convinced that "people who spent most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles ... get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycles as a result of the inter-changing of the atoms of each of them and you would be surprised at the number of people in these parts who nearly are half people and half bicycles." The Law's solution is to steal and lock up these models of mechanical efficiency!

It is the image of the wheel itself that permeates the second half of the book, aptly reinforcing its cyclical structure. As the author himself said: "Hell goes round and round. In shape it is circular and by nature it is interminable, repetitive and very nearly unbearable." The latter idea

comes strangely from the author of At Swim-Two-Birds where the characters created by Trellis are given a degree of autonomy. By contrast, the unnamed protagonist of his next novel - though he visits eternity and solves the mystery of the third policeman - is doomed to wander forever the comically policed inferno of his own devising. Seldom has a fantasist implicitly moralized throughout his work - by making the punishment fit the crime - without ever boring his readers. Altogether, an intricate and subtle allegory that culminates with three consummate chapters forming one of the most powerful endings it has ever been my privilege to read, and read again.

'Evil is even, truth is an odd number and death is a full stop.' Thus begins the closing paragraph of At Swim-Two-Birds which, reservations aside, is a first novel of astonishing richness and breadth. To have immediately surpassed it is the measure of Brian O'Nolan's achievement. In the doing, he reveals to us that death is only a comma and which of us can say with certainty that the sentence ever ends...

MIND OF MY MIND by Octavia E Butler (Sidgwick & Jackson; 1978; 169pp; £4.50; ISBN 0-283-98425-2)

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Octavia Butler is one of the rising generation of American sf writers, and I think that she will prove to be one of the best. Mind Of My Mind benefits from being read in connection with her first novel, Patternmaster, not because it is dependent upon it but because it shows a line of development in her work. Both novels are intense psychological melodramas in which powerful minds confront one another and battle for supremacy in a strange metaphysical arena, but whereas the context of Patternmaster is a far future scenario of the relatively easy-to-handle pseudo-feudal variety, Mind Of My Mind brings the warfare into the here and now to give its theme much greater immanence and bite. The plot is one of rebellion - daughter against father and revolutionary ideals versus dogmatic conservatism - and the contest is hard fought and suitably dramatic. The tortured human relationships are sometimes a little too lurid, and the metaphorical language used to describe the "mind-web" which the daughter sets up is rather crude, but the vigour and thrust of the whole is sufficient to make such complaints into minor quibbles, and gives every reason to expect that the author will do even better in times to come.

HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE by Michael G. Coney (Pan; 1978; 70p; 192pp; ISBN 0-330-25226-7)

Reviewed by David Wingrove.

In the past I have commented upon Mike Coney's use of 'the familiar transposed'. There are certain factors I have come to expect from Coney's better books: a setting familiar in nature to the West Country; a preoccupation within the tale with fishing and the sea; a streak of die-hard anti-beaurocracy. These things are all to be found in HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE. We are presented with a planet similar to Earth but possessing its own peculiar idiosyncracies. Mike Coney takes pains to explain this to us in his foreword. There is the grume, (a sea thickened by excessive evaporation) a war, (merely an excuse for beaurocratic subterfuge) and two adolescent lovers (Alika-Drove and Pallahaxi-Browneyes). The mix hints immediately to anyone with a cursory knowledge of Coney's work that this is another novel emphasising emotion rather than intellect. Again there is the concerted

attempt to capture all the nuances of relationships, and in HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE Coney has succeeded in creating his most complex and compelling characters whilst retaining his essential warmth as a storyteller: for Coney is a storyteller of the first order. I read this novel at a single sitting, totally engaged by the struggles of young Drove.

As before, I shall not concern myself with the plot but rather concentrate on character and theme - for this is far more than a simple ideative work. The 'gimmicks' are well used, I'd better add, and the sf element beautifully incorporated (allowing the most delightful of endings) but they are embellishments to what Mike Coney is attempting to portray in this novel.

HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE is basically about the awakening of the adult consciousness. It is in the tradition of English 'summer tales', where boys become men. Its setting in a land alien does not detract from its essential simplicity: it describes that special time when from the confusion of sensory impression and hedonistic delight the sensitive probe of intellect begins to gather and shape emotion, to mould and examine its contours and channel it in the form of juvenile love.

Coney's examination begins with the reactions of Alike-Drove (Drove of the town of Alike) to his parents. His father is seen to be a typical civil servant, enmeshed in the webs of his illogical routines, resorting to physical violence whenever at a loss. But in the delightful descriptions Drove makes of his mother, Coney's skill is marked:

"My mother is short and I am tall for my age, so that it is impossible for us to keep in step as we walk. She trots along beside me, legs going like pistons, and insists that she puts her arm through mine, so that the pair of us reel along the street like drunks. Added to which she talks incessantly, looking up at me all the time and smiling fondly and generally giving the impression that a very peculiar relationship obtains between us. I find myself praying that people think she is an old prostitute I have picked up, and to emphasise this effect I try to assume a shamefaced look - which is not difficult under the circumstances." (p.30)

There is, within that, a sense of the comic reminiscent of Alexei Gogol, and a grace of observation that would not seem out of place in Miller. Which is high praise, and whilst it isn't justified for the book as a whole, it must be appended to certain sections. Coney constructs this impression carefully until, by the end of the novel, each sentence is loaded with a meaning derived from earlier observations. It is done with considerable craft and singles this out as Coney's finest work.

At first Drove's impressions seem merely another example of imperfectly argued empirical philosophy, but Coney makes us realise, as the tale develops, that Drove is moving towards a far more reasoned perspective of life. He is changing. The actions he partakes in and bears witness to destroy his youthful arrogance, replacing it with a more modest and far more intelligent sense of balance. This is easily illustrated from the text. At the end of the first third of the novel, Drove makes the following observation:

"I believe that there is a point in our lives when our characters crystallise like an ice-devil; when, after all the uncertainties, the external influences, the subjection and irresponsibility of childhood, a person will decide: that is the way I am going. I have seen it all, I have listened to the views of my parents and teachers, and although I concede

that there are facts I do not yet know, nevertheless my character is now so formed that I will not be thrown by new facts. They will increase my knowledge of the world but they will not change my attitude to that world or my conception of my own role in that world. At last I know enough of other people to know when I am right." (p.67)

But, of course, such dogmatism cannot last long when war, love and the awakening of intellect take hold of a youth, and so we are shown Drove's 'progression' from this blissful state of superior 'knowing' to the abject misery of awareness as facts enter his life and change his attitudes and conceptions. And when he is finally parted, irreconcilably, from all the aspects of his previous self, it is with a very different voice that he describes his actions:

"I felt guilty when I walked into the compound every morning after a warm night's sleep in a comfortable bed, to meet the sad wrecks beyond the wire. Often I would smuggle food to them, and an occasional small bottle of distil - for drinking; the stuff was much too precious to waste as fuel. Nevertheless, no matter what I did, I felt obscurely that I was in the wrong, and their reproachful eyes as they accepted the gifts from my warm hands reinforced this feeling. They needed me for what I brought them, yet they hated me for what I was." (p.186)

It is a maturation that embraces one of the most touching love stories within sf - one that is neither falsely chaste or cloying, but very real in its marvellous, stumbling, romantic way.

HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE has far more between its covers than I've hinted at within this review; there is the mythology of Phu and Rax (the hot sun and the cold planet - a simple symbology that permeates every page of this book) linked to its astronomical - and real - analogue. There is the curious social/animal structure of Erto and Asta (the two nations): the telepathic and passive Iorin, the beast-like Iox. And then there is the grume, central to the plot. But it was my intention to avoid mentioning the plot and so I shall: it is, in itself, very well crafted, emphasising by its homogeneity those aspects of the book I have mentioned above. It is an extremely satisfying work, unabashedly romantic but far from myopic in its pursuit of the emotions. It is probably one of the most entertaining and enjoyable books you'll encounter between soft covers in 1978.

FLOATING WORLDS by Cecelia Holland (Sphere; 1978; £1.50; 542pp)

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid.

One never knows before starting what a book is going to be like - but I still have rather a naive impression that a blurb should give some clue. Here, though, Ms Holland is compared to both Ursula LeGuin and Arthur C. Clarke, two writers whose only similarity is that they write sf. Just another blurb writer, or in this case critic since it is attributed to the Chicago Tribune, desperate for something to say about a book he hasn't read - or who doesn't know much about sf? In the event the book doesn't stand comparison to either.

It starts rather ploddingly with events in the year 1852 of a calendar which quite obviously isn't our own. But - for me at least - the ponderous development of the plot was soon forgotten before a series of niggling disquietudes that, at the very least, indicates a remarkable lack of care on the part of the author. The first that struck me was a matter of style. The whole book is written in a series of very short,

punchy sentences. Gradually, as the novel progresses, she learns the use of the comma; but, apart from two very brief passages where they are used excessively and incorrectly, she never uses the colon or semi-colon. Sentences, therefore, have been pruned down to their barest essentials - subject, object, verb. It's a structure that is ideal for tight, short, Hemingwayesque stories so tense they don't need adjectives. But this is a long, rambling, ambitious epic that only rarely achieves that sort of tension; it needs far more, it needs world building and character building. To sustain interest over such a long story they have to be real characters we sympathise with, playing out their adventures against a backdrop that is sharp and clear and believable in our minds. We don't get it.

The setting was another of those disquietudes. A book this size needs to create a future world as fully realised as possible. Apart from the fact that she doesn't bother to stop for such incidentals as descriptions - I don't think she uses even so many as two adjectives on any one object, and similes and metaphors hardly ever appear - there are other doubts. For instance, we are told that the story takes place nearly 4000 years from now, and except for the fact that there has been an unexplained calendar change there is nothing to suggest that any upheaval has taken place that might have set back technological progress. We might, then, reasonably assume that there would be tremendous changes in society, just as our society is very different from that of the earliest Egyptian dynasties. It isn't.

True, a few technical advances do get mentioned, but they are one-and-all things that are long familiar from other sf stories set within the next century. And even some contemporary innovations, such as television sets the size of cigarette packets and hence eminently portable about the person, find no counterpart in this far future society. And then there are some plain idiocies. Fair enough, people drive air-cars: but with rear-view mirrors? The number of directions from which an air-car could be approached would necessitate one hell of a lot of mirrors: and would they really need a choke? My understanding of the complexities of the internal combustion engine is admittedly limited, yet I believe that a choke serves only one purpose - to enrich the flow of petrol. Petrol comes from oil, and it is well known that our reserves of oil will be exhausted in a century or two. How, then, can an air-car 4000 years from now run on petrol? Another point, since these same soon-to-be-exhausted fuels are a major contributory factor in our modern pollution, where does the pollution come from that is so prevalent outside the domed cities 4000 years from now?

Still on matters of hard science, Ms Holland gives the impression that the 'artificial' cities (whatever that means) of Saturn and Uranus are massive spheres, with the city occupying the entire inner surface. I checked it up: Saturn and Uranus do have such a thing as gravity.

And in 4000 years I would expect social changes. Granted, she does grace Earth society with the name 'anarchy'. Then she treats its operation - dollar and cent economy, private businesses, unemployment, etc. - as if it were no different from contemporary western society. Which makes the reference to Ursula LeGuin in the blurb singularly inappropriate, since it is abundantly clear that Ms Holland either has not read THE DISPOSSESSED, or else has learnt nothing from it.

Even the names: only 1000 years ago this country was inhabited by people with names like Eofrith, Aethelwulf, Hengist, Caedmon. In 4000 years can we still expect Paula and Tony and Jefferson and Fisher? And why are nearly

all the names English?

There's an awful lot in this book that seems to come straight from the sf of the 50's and early 60's, and I'm not thinking just of the rather limited social and technical imagination - which strikes me mostly as if Ms Holland just hasn't bothered trying. For instance, it is an old and honourable tradition in sf that aliens are used to make some point about racism - and it crops up here, only far more stridently and with far less subtlety than you will find in anything but the most blatantly propagandising pamphlet. I cannot but applaud her liberal sentiments: I cannot but decry her method of stating them in this work of fiction. Everybody but the liberal 'anarchists' of Earth are, to varying degrees, bad, and, true to the middle line, the heroine is Paula Mendoza, hence Spanish-American, hence the mid-point in colour. Beyond Earth we have the copper-coloured Styths of Uranus and Saturn, and the white Martians who do everything to show who they represent short of whistling 'Dixie'. Both bandy about insults like 'fascist' and 'nigger' as if they're the only ones they know. The Styths use humans as slaves. The Martians call the Styths 'boy', and operate a racial purity league that is a cross between the Klu Klux Klan and the Nazi party. We've had it all before, and done better on just about every occasion. This amateurish lack of subtlety only serves to rob the book of any point it might have had to make.

But there's still the story? One last possible refuge of merit? Ah yes, the story: another 50's hangover with a little coy sex just to add the aura of modernity. Admittedly, there is a female hero as some sort of sop to feminism, but since the characters hardly reach past the level of cardboard cyphers distinguishable only by their names, it hardly makes much difference. The setting, as I've said, is 4000 years in the future. Mutated humans, the Styths (where does that name come from?), occupying 'artificial' cities on the gas giants Uranus and Saturn, are conducting piratical raids against Martian ships and colonies. Though Earth is only loosely associated with the extremist governments of the other human worlds, and despite her being a woman (the Styths keep their women veiled or in harems), the unemployed Paula Mendoza suddenly finds herself on the team to negotiate with the Styths. By seducing the Styth leader, Saba, she gets them to accept a trade agreement, then returns to Uranus with him where she bears his child.

Which is okay to this point, but she cannot sustain this unity of narrative for the full length of her book: because at this stage it fragments into a series of separate incidents, rather like a series of television scripts strung together - as the Martians and Styths take turns to attack Saba and the treaty. It reads as if Ms Holland decided to write a long novel, regardless of whether she had the plot to fill it, and thus cobbled this string of incidents together.

There are good points, though. The love-hate relationship between Paula and Saba's best friend (with strange and unexplained powers), Tanuojin, really does manage to put some flesh on two characters at least. And the underground living and subsequent captivity of Paula following the Martian coup on Earth for once allows her sharp, biting sentences to convey tension and excitement. If only she had managed the same for the whole book it could have been very good indeed. But such tension would be too much for such a long novel, perhaps even a novel of any length, and Ms Holland, on the evidence of this book at least, just doesn't have the ability to provide the other prerequisites of a novel.

It remains, therefore, except for the length, just the sort of mediocre nonentity of a novel you could safely pick up at a station bookstall to

while away a boring journey without bothering too much about what it is you're reading.

THE LAST DIASTER by Hugh Walters (Faber; 1978; 136pp; £3.50; ISBN 0-573-11153-X)

Reviewed by Brian Stableford.

A solar eclipse happens a few minutes early and astronomers realise that the moon is spiralling in toward the Earth, with collision due in five years. They do not waste time wondering what happened to the principle of conservation of momentum but look wildly about for a plan to save the world. Luckily, an eccentric Welshman has been building an antigravity device in his back room. The idea is to build a much bigger one and ship this up to the moon, situating it at the point on the moon's surface which is on the line between the centres of gravity of the Earth and its satellite. There, once activated, it will push the Moon back into a respectable orbit (the device has to be on the Moon because the Moon always keeps the same face turned to the Earth, so that the crucial point is a stable geographical location).

Anyone but a moron will notice immediately that this is a non-starter. The reason that the Moon keeps the same face turned to the Earth is that its period of rotation matches its orbital period (i.e. its day is the same as its year). If the moon were to begin spiralling towards the Earth this would no longer be so. What price saving the world?

Hugh Walters presumably has a mental age similar to that of his target audience (3½) and obviously knows no better, but it is hard to explain why the editor who accepted this book is also a manifest *cretin*. Perhaps they just don't care.

SUNSHINE 43 by David G. Penny (Robert Hale; 1978; £3.75; 175pp; ISBN 0-7091-6519-0)

Reviewed by David Wingrove.

From time to time you encounter a book that is genuinely delightful, that engrosses you and leaves you feeling wistful and somehow changed. David Penny's most recent offering from Robert Hale, SUNSHINE 43 (For Free, I'm told) is such a book - well worth asking for at your local library.

It has a similar atmosphere to Simak's CITY and dwells on much the same territory (though without the world going literally to the dogs). There is the Wordsworthian idea of nature reclaiming the land after Man's passing, the image of the last city dying as its systems malfunction. But it is far from that simple. David Penny has a good sense of stylistic economy and balance his poesy with a strong plot, good characterisation and a not unattractive sense of emotive nostalgia.

This is the tale of the strange misfit, Abram, an original artist (a fact which is contrasted against the pseudo-artistic dabblers we are shown in the City before it crumbles) possessed of a sharp intellect and a strong libido. His adventures are told in some of the chapters, whilst in others we meet the equally attractive Meta. In describing Meta, Penny astutely avoids the pitfalls of cliché and she is far from being a female archetype. Yet another character is the loveable Wargraves (surely closely related to Simak's Websters?). Their eventual inter-reaction binds the book perfectly.

I'll keep it simple and say that I even think it would be worth the price of £3.75 (as doubtlessly it will never reach paperback - none of Dave Penny's books seem to..) to have this on your shelves. It prompted me to get his THE SUNSET PEOPLE from my local library. And no regrets there either.

ANTICIPATIONS, Edited by Christopher Priest.
Faber & Faber; £4.60; UK; 1978; 214 pages.
Scribner's; £8.95; USA.

An opinion by Maxim Jakubowski.

This review is late, very late. It has taken me an inordinate amount of time to complete, suffering various rejected drafts, lingering malignantly on my mind through both the office hours of the day and record-playing late-evening hours of time. I'm not searching for excuses, but why?

I was genuinely looking forward to ANTICIPATIONS. It's Chris Priest's first anthology; in a way it is a state-of-the-art volume, featuring new stories by eight of the foremost practitioners of the art of Science Fiction presently resident in Britain. I know all the contributors on a personal basis and five, at least, are good friends. I have been compiling best of British and US reprint anthologies for French publishers for years now and every writer who appears in ANTICIPATIONS (except Sheckley - other anthologists have plundered his oeuvre faster than I could) has regularly been featured in my selections. So why does this volume both naggingly disappoint me and depress my faith in SF in the UK today? Could it be I'm having second thoughts at having commissioned new material from four of these eight writers for my own forthcoming anthology of International SF? No. Bob Shaw has already sent his story in, and it's just great: a hilarious ghost story 'The Cottage of Eternity' which, believe it or not, is also pure hard SF, whereas his contribution to ANTICIPATIONS, a yarn called 'Amphitheatre', I find lacklustre and commonplace, despite the fact that Bob claims it to be "one of the most personal I've ever written, one which tries to express an emotion rather than an intellectual concept". Maybe it's me, then? Did my dutiful sense of wonder metamorphose and vanish through too close a contact with the dreaded Moorcock and NEW WORLDS? Is the New Wave bad for your health? What is the sex of the angels? Is there sex after death? I read it twice, but still 'Amphitheatre' was no more than a run of the mill adventure story set on another planet, where the hunter becomes the prey and sees his attitude to life (and a woman) subtly altered as a result of an alien encounter. Emotions? I could find none on my personal detector!

In fact, the general coloness, the resigned unenthusiastic mood which emanates from this anthology boils down to this very lack of emotions therein. So, I began to wonder, could Chris Priest himself be to blame? How far does the influence of an anthology editor's personality extend, when I know by experience that he is, in fact, mostly keeping his fingers crossed that the selected writers approached and commissioned will come up with the goods, avoiding the need for too many rewrites?

As much as I have admired and approved of Chris Priest's steady rise to the top ranks of our SF writers, I've always had a few nagging doubts as to how good he really is. INVERTED WORLD (and I've already committed myself to print on this score) is a stunning achievement by any standards, but I've always been somewhat dissatisfied by his other, generally well-received, novels. If you'll excuse the capsule reviews, INDOCTRINAIRE is a clever exercise, THE SPACE MACHINE a gentle, if over-long minor entertainment while, to be more specifically critical, FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND and A DREAM OF WESSEX are potential masterpieces, severely flawed by characterisation which fails to come alive. I do not mean that the protagonists

of these two important novels are two-dimensional, far from it, but vital as they are to the plot, structure and general feel of the novels to which they belong, I never felt they transcend the professional exercise in character-building Priest puts them through. Alienated, contradictory or pathetic in turn, they always remain, in my eyes, characters of a novel, never engaging my sympathy or achieving that higher status where one might really believe that they are made of flesh and blood and capable of suffering, bleeding or weeping. They only go through the motions of life. Most Priest characters are this way inclined; a typical example occurs where the coldness and accuracy of his style in fact defuses what is basically an emotional situation in the popular story 'An Infinite Summer' (in fact, the title story of his forthcoming collection), which, to be fair, I reprinted in France at an early stage. I get the feeling that Chris as a person is as naturally cold as he is intelligent and this dimension of frozen emotions permeates his writing. The imagination, the situations are superb, but the characters fail to gel, live and die without striking that responsive chord in the pit of my stomach (or in my heart).

This coldness in attitude has from Chris onwards spread to most of the contributors of the anthology. Chris' own story 'The Negation' fits into an evolving cycle of tales set in the "Dream Archipelago", Chris' forthcoming locale answer to Vermillion Sands and other geographical vortex points for the unveiling of private mythologies so dear to British SF writers. A clever, if somehow nebulously enigmatic tale of an ill-adjusted soldier cum scholar in the contradictorily quiet front-line of an unexplained war. Its mood of expectancy, intellectual boredom and, later, challenge is well-drawn if suspiciously reminiscent of Italian writer Dino Buzzati's novel THE DESERT OF THE TARTARS (1940). But, yet again, the characters never jump out of the page and say "I'm alive, believe in me, do!": you never feel concern for them in their ventures and when the story ends your unengaged emotions are still rusting away out there in reader's land in neutral gear (of course, this never happened in INVERTED WORLD where it was the situation which gripped you by the seat of the pants).

Bob Sheckley and J.G. Ballard's short contributions are definitely minor for authors of their stature: 'Is THAT What People Do?' and 'One Afternoon At Utah Beach' (guess who wrote which?) In both cases, professional, competent story-telling but no more. No sparks, no shakings of the Earth. And isn't that another genuine disappointment, considering the brilliance these two most idiosyncratic writers exhibit in more usual circumstances? Their voices here are muted and blend in quietly with the flat terrain that surrounds them.

Tom Disch, another writer whose intellect and deep-frozen emotional stance is already well-established, though fully integrated with his craft and themes - unlike Chris Priest - contributes 'Mutability', an intriguing excerpt from a coming novel. Although I feel anthologies should restrict themselves to self-contained stories, I must confess it's my own favourite piece in this volume, a dazzlingly clever and erudite prose servicing a deceptively simple slice of future life. Well up to the standards of 334, 'Mutability' augurs well for Disch's next books after his over-long sabbatical in the land of pseudonymous gothic romance. The writing is splendidly calculated in his sideways if directionless (due to it being excerpted out of context?) glance at the intellectual consequences of immortality. More, please.

Harry Harrison's 'The Greening Of The Green' is no more than a painfully extended Irish joke and is sadly out of place in such an ambitious compendium. I don't know why, but Harry Harrison when writing in a minor vein always reminds me of ITV situation comedies: funny sometimes but mostly hollow, whileas, more often than not, BBC Television comedies feature an added element of wit. I've never been partial to Irish jokes anyway, so please

accept these opinions as prejudiced.

And now to Ian Watson whose 'The Very Slow Time Machine' I did, sort of, like but never puzzled out to my entire satisfaction. Another writer whose emotional fire has never been very conspicuous (although I do keep detecting strongly repressed misogynous traits in his novels, but that's another review altogether), Ian Watson dispassionately and, I suspect, slightly tongue in cheek, serves up a witty morsel of speculative concepts cleverly entwined round an old established SF theme to great, if puzzling, effect. To give away the plot would spoil the reader's enjoyment of this story which I think is going to grow on me the way some records often do after an initial disappointing spin.

Brian Aldiss' 'A Chinese Perspective', by far the longest at 73 pages of the stories in this anthology, is another of his supremely elegant excursions into the Zodiacal planets' system he has been building up in various stories over the last few years. A philosophical discourse, which paraphrases the quest journey of fairy tales of old in an advanced technological setting, Brian Aldiss' novella has sufficient hard SF ideas at large to furnish a handful of lesser novels. Nevertheless, 'A Chinese Perspective' never lives up to expectations and ultimately fails in moving me, when the two main characters arrive on a future Earth and are obliged to confront a reality they were previously unwilling to accept fully (though many other writers wouldn't, I venture, mind authoring failures of this quality...). Yet again we witness a case of severe emotional freeze-out of the characters, so unlike the warmth Aldiss usually imparts in his stories (the specifically Oriental influences at work admittedly contribute to this). The story is naturally immaculately written but, in the end, its sterile perspectives will, I think, see it considered in years to come as minor Aldiss.

Having thus cleverly cancelled several good cases of friendship I can now become less personal and antagonise a publisher by categorically stating that the cover illustration of the Faber edition is both cheap and nasty in all its green and yellow geometrical dullness and simplicity (as was a suspiciously similar Dave Griffiths effort for the Supernova 1 anthology, also at Fabers). No, I'm not recommending yet another Chris Foss waltz of the sleek and bulky spaceships, but surely hardcover volumes could be packaged better?!

So, all in all, an interesting failure of a book. An impressive line-up of authors, but no real unity of inspiration outside the previously mentioned generally distant tone of coldness. If this is the state of SF in Britain today, I'd be dead worried considering the wealth of talent emerging over in the U S of A (to mention but a few: Varley, Bishop, Martin, Cover, Zebrowski, Sargent, Tiptree, Sterling and, in particular, Gregory Benford whose IN THE OCEAN OF THE NIGHT impressively demonstrates that blend of real emotions and speculative ideas modern SF should be all about). But I think the poor showing of the contributors to ANTICIPATIONS is no more than a fluke: they have shown they are capable of better work - there's hope yet!

All you rabid SF readers out there in the BSFA, esteemed sons of Hugo Gernsback and Newcastle Brown Ale, don't get me wrong: ANTICIPATIONS is not as bad as it might appear from the above review. It's just that confounded coldness and lack of emotion that bugs me. Get the book (albeit in paperback - soon from Pan) and see where you disagree with me.

((As this is a book I've read several times now - a review of it may appear elsewhere from my own thoughts - and as I have no opportunity to write locs to VECTOR, I must take this opportunity to say I feel Maxim's evaluation is rather harsh. The anthology is weak in many of the ways he mentions, but its strengths are many and his ideas of the worth of the Aldiss and Priest stories underestimate them considerably. As I say elsewhere: it's half of an excellent anthology - DW))

found in a batch^{4b}
a lettercol..

((There's a lot in this issue and thus my comments will either be non-existent or, at best, telegraphese..stop))

Philip Muldowney: PLYMOUTH.

" In the eight years since the Heidelberg Worldcon, Continental and English/American science fiction seem to have grown further apart, rather than closer together. Strange really when in political terms we have (or have supposed to) grown closer together. Yet Sf seems to be burgeoning on the continent in just as great a way as it is over here. But the two do not exactly seem to have met closely. Thinking of the non-English/American writers that have been published here. The Perry Rhodan series, Stanislaw Lem, the Strugastsky brothers, Maxim Jakubowski's French anthology TRAVELLING TOWARDS EPSILON, a few anthologies of Russian sf, and what else??? I would be grateful to be enlightened. "

In certain respects the English/American hegemony of sf is a bit like the sf field itself. Insular, set apart from the mainstream of literature, not wishing to be tainted by the impurities outside the genre. The SFWA's treatment of Lem (whether justified is another argument), and the whole flow between non-English speaking sf and other languages. Sf writers seem glad to roll in the shekels of translation rights - and a lot of those there have been - yet curiously coy to recognise any of the sf of the rest of the world. What, of the many BEST OF annual anthologies, makes any attempt at covering anything outside English? Perhaps only the Harrison/Aldiss anthology makes any attempt at all.

Of all the flood of academic and art books on sf recently, how many have made any attempt to examine any influences outside the English speaking world? Damn few. As far as most books seem to be concerned, there was Verne and Wells, and then the whole American pulp scene. Campbell and the Golden Horde. The rest of the world is nowhere. Why?? We know the reason why. Most critical writers have not the time, knowledge, ability or inclination to examine anything beyond the convenient bounds of the little pond. Which is very sad..."

((The next two arrived the same morning - strangely complimentary...))

Ian Watson: OXFORD.

" I should have written earlier to say thanks for the magnificent coverage you gave my books in the last VECTOR; and must plead inordinate busyness (turning cartwheels round the room and so on...). Forgive.

Jim Baen hasn't bought THE JONAH KIT, by the way, as you report in ODDSAND.. That is already paperbacked by Bantam in the States. What he has bought is THE MARTIAN INCA, ALIEN EMBASSY, MIRACLE VISITORS and my short-story collection upcoming from Gollancz in the next six months or so, THE VERY SLOW TIME MACHINE (title story being the one in Chris Priest's ANTICIPATIONS).

..Michael Coney points to the problem of writing for an audience or for yourself in his letter: the danger of becoming incomprehensible through pushing communication with yourself to the limit. Sure, the world might catch up (Finnegan's Wake) or sufficient people make the effort (Dhalgren),

but it might just happen not to be worth catching up, for self-dialogue may have reduced discourse rather than expanding it at all. Literature is communication; and one must have the ideal that one is communicating with others, not just with oneself. There is a tacit social contract involved in the act of being a writer; so one must envision an audience, and this is no bad discipline for actually putting one's thoughts in order and making them more comprehensible and meaningful, rather than less. As I said in my interview, when I wrote THE EMBEDDING for myself it was no good; when I was forced to write it for others it became a better book. Even artistic conventions are no bad thing; is Persian art hamstrung by accepted patterns? Is Japanese poetry?

Michael G. Coney: General Delivery, Sidney BC. CANADA.

" This is a quick response to the excellent VECTOR 86, written before I became completely bogged down in a morass of joists and lintels and absorption fields. It is prompted by the Ian Watson content.

Ian mentions the publishing history of THE EMBEDDING; in particular the two re-writes he did for John Bush. Now, I distinctly remember sitting in a bar with John a couple of years back -- I think it was the Hotel Georgia in Vancouver during one of those flying visits he pays all too rarely. During a discussion of Gollancz writers, SF and others, talk turned to the subject of Ian. I don't think I'd met Ian at the time, or even read him; we're somewhat isolated, over here. John remarked on this fellow who'd sent him a manuscript, rewritten it to order in rapid time, and then done a further timely rewrite, by which time, as John put it, "I realised the fellow meant business."

He was talking about Ian, of course. It seemed to me there was a useful lesson there. Even if THE EMBEDDING had been a lousy novel - which it wasn't - it would have stood a better-than-average chance with John because of Ian's obvious enthusiasm, willingness to learn, and desire to give John what he wanted. And it's an answer to those who look on all publishers as ogres and enemies.

When I finally did meet Ian, briefly at the Manchester Eastercon, the enthusiasm was still there, coupled with a dynamism, so that now I am left with the after-image of Harlan Ellison dipped in Chlorox. I can see why -- as he says on page 16, -- Ian doesn't re-read his books on publication. It's because he can remember every word of them. "Ten years -- if then -- when I perhaps begin to forget what is actually in them...." Wow. I have the greatest difficulty in retaining the plot of the novel I'm working on, and I have to write the characters' names on a piece of paper, kept close beside the typewriter. I have a suspicion that my problem is not, as I would like to think, a genetic defect and therefore something else I can blame on my mother, but is in fact the cumulative effect of six years of O'Keefe's Extra Old Stock Malt Liquor, a local beer whose alcohol content is 5.65%, which I drink because other Canadian beers have an alcoholic content of only 5%, and which I'd dearly love to introduce Bob Shaw to if ever I can persuade him to visit B.C. Drink O'Keefe's, and you can forget the beginning of a sentence before you get to the end -- like I did then.

So, what I think we have in Ian is some kind of prodigy, and I hope, despite the gloomy sentiments expressed in my last letter, that he stays with us for a long time. I wish him every success with his US editions.

((And, drifting from the contents of 86..on to a selection of comments on the contents of 87 - severely edited in attempt to avoid repetition..))

David Pringle: NELP Dagenham, ESSEX.

" I was particularly pleased to see the piece on Bananas in VECTOR. It is indeed an interesting publication, and one which will appeal to many SF readers. It has a whiff of New Worlds about it. I bought the first issue

three years ago because it contained a J.G. Ballard story ("The Air Disaster") and I've been reading it ever since. Talking about Ballard - I found Rob Carter's review of The Four-Dimensional Nightmare a little disconcerting, in that he talks about 'earlier masterpieces', 'the latest generation' and so on. He's probably quite right: there are lots of new young readers out there who have scarcely heard of Ballard, for whom The Four-Dimensional Nightmare is a new book. It's now -- what? -- 15 years since that collection first appeared. It's a sobering thought that there are probably some young readers of Ballard who weren't even born when it was first published. Christ. Suddenly Ballard is one of the classics, a Grand Old Man. All this reminds me of recent reactions to Bob Dylan and his Earl's Court appearances -- the way the press went on about "aging hippies" and so on. There was a great play on the fact that today's 16-year olds weren't even born when Dylan's first album came out. All very depressing. Memento mori. But quality -- nay, let us say genius -- rises above time and fashion. Dylan was just bloody brilliant at Earl's Court, and the stories in Ballard's collection are masterpieces and speak to 1978 just as surely as they did to 1963. These facts need to be asserted. If any of your younger readers haven't listened to Dylan or haven't read Ballard I just hope they get out there now and do so. They're not for an age but for all time, etc."

((I think that both Rob Carter's excellent review and David's comments above reiterate something it's easy to forget - that sf has a 'new generation' of readers every few years: its turnover is very high. Which has some slight relevance to what follows..))

Lee Beadman: ISLE OF MAN.

" I agree with your reply to Chris Priest's letter concerning reviews of relatively old books. Reviews of reprints are very important in view of the newcomer to Sf. Here I speak from personal experience because on the strength of the reviews in VECTOR 86 I went out and bought THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, BABEL-17 and REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. Books which I otherwise would not have bought.

However, Chris Priest's idea of allocating them to their own section seems a good one - if only to stop people from thinking they were brand new books. Besides the above reasons for reviewing reprints, I also think that for books which are relevant to today it is important to keep them alive, as it were.

Furthermore, a review of a reprint can also be used to show an author's progression (or lack of same) over the years, if it is placed alongside a review of a brand new book. See the reviews of LORD OF LIGHT and THE HAND OF OBERON by Zelazny in VECTOR 86.

((Or...))

Joseph Nicholas: CAMBERLEY.

" I cannot but agree with Chris Priest's comments about reprints. True enough; certain books, such as LORD OF LIGHT and THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION are worth extensive retrospectives of the kind that Corley and Jones turned in last issue (86) - but this certainly shouldn't apply to good reprint material just because it is good. Most of the paperback reprints - the vast majority of them, in actual fact - can be shuffled off into a "Books Recieved" column concerned more with listing their new availability than in commenting on them, although a couple of lines wouldn't come amiss now and then. The reviews should concentrate on the new books, those that have been published in this country for the first time; a concept which includes both hardbacks and paperbacks in its scope, which is as it should be, as I imagine that very few of us can afford to buy hardbacks on anything but the most irregular of bases. Here, of course, the length of the review depends on the worth of the book in question; I daresay that a great many new paperbacks could be dealt with in the manner of Phil Stephenson-Payne's Paperback Parlour - ie., with brevity

and concision. Only the best need reviews of a thousand words or more - and you're unlikely to get more than one or two of those an issue (not because of space considerations, but because the books themselves aren't there to be reviewed in such depth.)

((And - continuing this, and previous discourses...))

Christopher Priest: Harrow, MIDDLESEX.

" I hope your editorial problems concerning 'censorship' do not occupy too much of your lettercolumn space, as it's a particularly wearying debate, but I'd like to add to them briefly. I have no time for moral guardians; the Rogerses and Gilberts of this world. Their idea of pandering to the "maximum audience" with "minimum offence" simply produces pap...similar, for instance, to American TV. However, they do have a point when they remark that VECTOR is not a personal publication.

The difference between censorship and editing is simple. (Talk of sexual content and four-letter words is a red-herring). Censorship is a process which CHANGES meaning. Editing is a process which CLARIFIES meaning. Bear this in mind, whether or not you are dealing with "offensive" material, and you won't go far wrong.

(On a personal note, I'd like to point out that you censored the letter of mine published in Vector-87. By removing several sentences from my letter you CHANGED a semi-serious and wry remark into what appears to be a serious and none-too-bright suggestion. Please print this disclaimer in the next Vector...and indeed if you print anything else from this letter, do not censor it. I dislike being pissed about.) (Oops, sorry!)

((Chris refers to the paragraph about digging up the original review where he went on to say...and I quote...))

... "There are a few old hands who would give anything to re-read Charles Platt's perceptive review of EARTHWORKS.... And now I find that Vector's business manager has sent me a review-copy of Wells' IN THE DAYS OF THE COMET. First published 1906. What-ho...if we dig back through the files, we're sure to find some pushy young fan, the Charles Platt of his day, taking Wells to task for "breaking the rules" or whatever the contemporary obsession was. Can anyone lend me the Vectors for 1906/7, please? "

((Okay, Chris? And thus..on with the new letter..no reprints..))

Moving on to the letter from Tom Jones. He talks of certain 'facts' about the publishing business. 'Facts' they are not; opinions, more like, and rather ill-informed opinions to boot.

He says: (1) Publishers publish to make money, not to improve the quality of life or the standards of literature. Wrong. I'm happy to tell you that in my experience almost every publisher I have ever met has seen his role as having a commitment to life and literature. People do not go into publishing unless they believe in literature. Even in these miserable, unprofitable times, publishers are still taking a chance. Take, for example, Faber, who in the last two or three years have published several first sf novels: Turner, Holdstock, Kilworth; as well as an anthology of new writers, as are Futura and Sidgwick, and probably many more I can't think of at the moment. New writers are chancy in publishing; there is no guarantee of profit. (Yes, publishers have to make a profit to stay in business, but I can tell you as a fact, not an opinion, that if a publisher sincerely believes a book is a good one, he will put literature before profit).

Tom Jones says: (2) The only function of editors is to choose books that will sell. Wrong. The actual choosing of books is a relatively small part of an editor's work. A good editor is an author's best friend: he will work with the author to clarify his text, will oversee the whole practical process of making a manuscript into a book, he will act as a liaison between the author and various other publishing departments, he is a diplomat, dictator,

sob-sister, ally, and God-knows what else.

Tom Jones says: (3) To find out what the audience wants you walk into W.H. Smiths to see what's in stock. Wrong. Firstly, if you think about it, the books on display in a bookshop are the ones that haven't been sold! Secondly, even if we assume that the books on sale are the ones which will eventually be sold, walking into W.H. Smiths is a far from reliable guide to the needs of an audience. At best, it is a guide to W.H. Smiths buying policy, which, although it is not widely known to the public, is actually selective, and aimed - for commercial reasons - at the widest expectation of sales. If you believe that the book-buyers at W.H. Smiths know what the audience wants, then the Tom Jones method is fairly reliable; if, on the other hand, you think that the best books are not necessarily the most commercial, then perhaps you should seek some other rule.

Tom Jones says: (4) The easiest way to sell sf is to write for The Audience. I won't say he is wrong...but has he ever tried it?

((This next one I almost ran in the review column...))

Chris Morgan: WEYMOUTH.

"..I can't in all honesty withhold my opinion in the case of Grahaeme Young's review of The Ophiuchi Hotline by John Varley (VECTOR 87: p.29-30). This reviewer seems to have spent so much time searching the book for a poetic style (which isn't there) that he failed to realise what an exhilarating and technologically innovative book it is. Varley isn't a poet, like Delany. Nor is he an outstanding literary stylist like, say, Brian Aldiss. He doesn't write each paragraph as a separate work of art; instead he creates his effects by the cumulative build-up of one page after another. And he employs shock-tactics, throwing in another plot element, or an innovation, or a bit of sex, whenever things look like slowing down. This is not necessarily a less worthy approach to the writing of literature than the poetic one, but it certainly gives a novel more pace.

In an interview in Dick Geiss' SFR 22, Varley (who is a young American; The Ophiuchi Hotline is his first novel) implies that he was influenced by Larry Niven. This is obvious. Varley's slick, fast-moving, technologically-inclined writing is very reminiscent of Niven's, except that Varley seems to possess more imagination. It's nice to see (in the same interview) Varley acknowledging his own indifferent style.

Let's get down to specifics. Grahaeme Barrasford Young claims that this novel is unoriginal with an uninteresting story-line (I paraphrase, but not unfairly, I believe). On the contrary, many of the elements here are either original or new slants. A middle-ages woman in a youthful body (the fashion) has been condemned to death for genetic research (a Crime Against Humanity). But a corrupt politician rescues her and tries to gain her loyalty. She tries to escape, is killed by his guards and resurrected as a clone. For the last half-millennium Mankind has been exiled from Earth by strange, invincible aliens, and forced to live on other planets and moons of the Solar System. For the last 400 years other aliens have been broadcasting a non-stop stream of information (much of it advanced technology) from the direction of the star 70 Ophiuchi, which Mankind has been picking up and using; this is the Ophiuchi Hotline Technology. Developed from this information includes the means of manipulating small black holes and tapping them as power sources, null-suits which are impervious to everything, and intelligent vegetables which can become a symbiont of Mankind. And there's (as they say) much, much more. Perhaps even too much; a common first novel failing.

As to whether it's an interesting story, well, de gustibus non est disputandum, but it had me on the edge of my seat, unable to put the book down until I'd finished. I guess you'll have to get it and read it to find out which of us you agree with. ((WAHF: Roger Waddington; Andy Sawyer; Tom Jones; Cyril Simsa; Paul Fraser; Phil Rosenblum; Bill Little; Greg Hills; Alex Pillai, Richard McMahon... oh, and Don West too... So it goes...))

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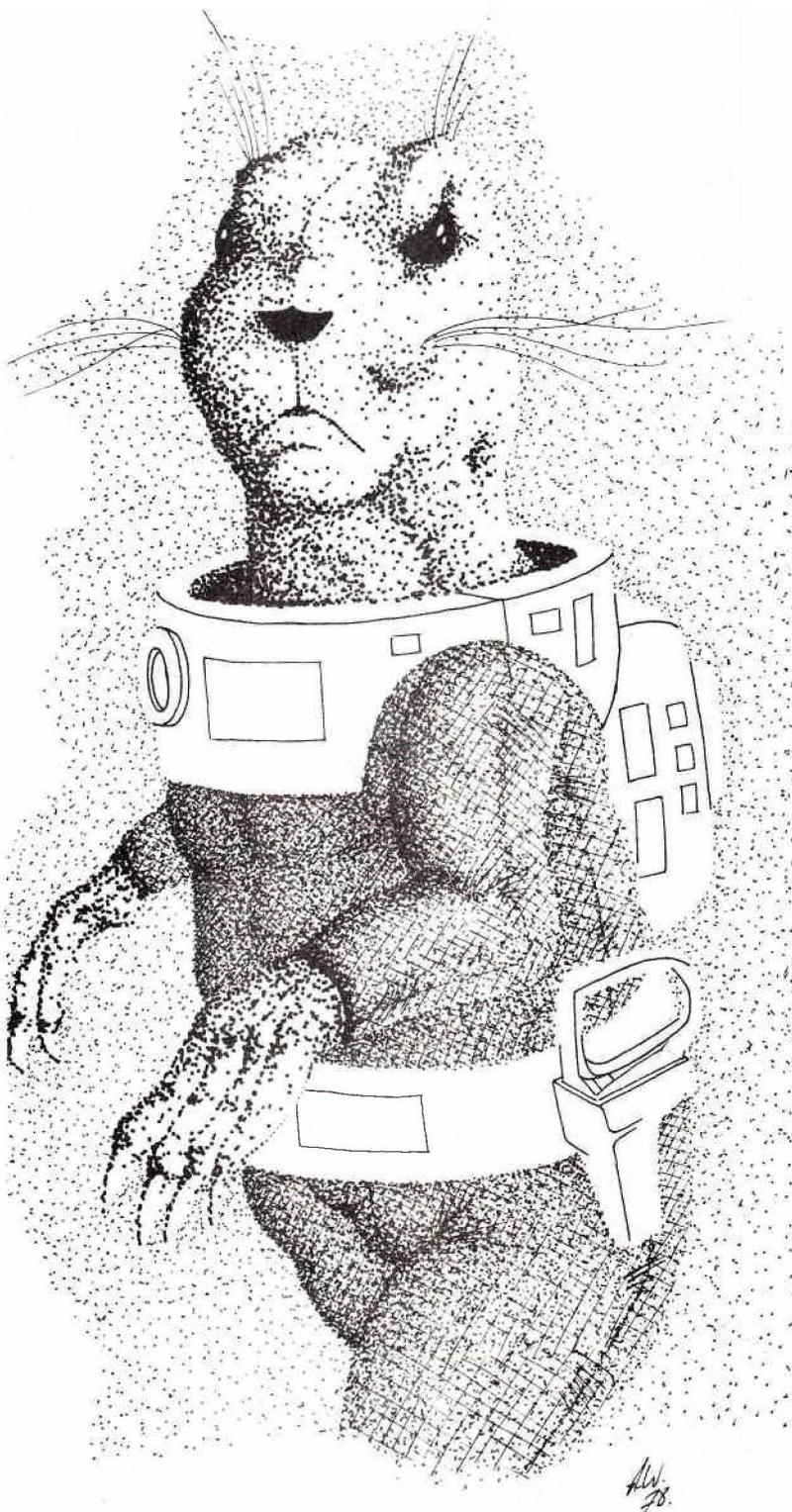
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I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WRITING WAS A NOBLE OCCUPATION...



ONE MAN'S AFFAIR WITH THE MUSE...



I THOUGHT I'D BE ADMURED AND REVERED!



I THOUGHT MY CHILDREN WOULD LOOK UP TO ME!



BUT MY ELDEST SON HAS NO PATERNAL RESPECT...



HE TELLS EVERYONE I'M A WASTE-PAPER MANUFACTURER!!



CHARACTERS: VIM BARBER
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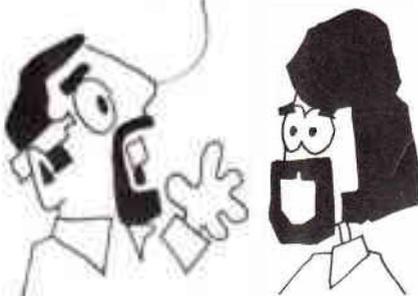
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SOMETIMES I LIKEN SF WRITERS TO ARTISTS



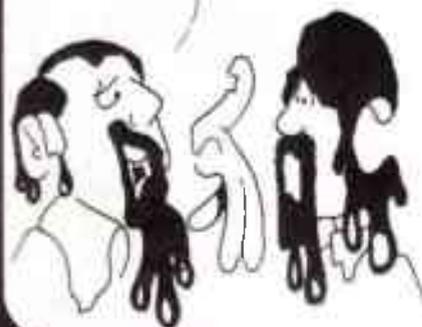
BALLARD REMINDS ME OF PICASSO: WARPED AND GEOMETRICAL



ZELAZNEY IS LIKE BLAKE - GRAND AND MYTHICAL



MOORCOCK IS LIKE DALI - VIVID AND EXTRAVAGANT



AND ME? WHO DO I REMIND YOU OF?



I'D SAY THAT YOUR WORK WAS INSPIRED BY ALL THOSE ANONYMOUS ARTISTS WHO DECORATE LCC WALLS!

